

PARKING POLICY REVIEW FOR ATHLONE TOWN CENTRE

This review of car parking standards is being carried out in the context of the current economic climate and is an effort to encourage the establishment of new small business enterprises and the expansion of existing small businesses in the centre of Athlone.

Overall land use and transportation policy for the Athlone Town Centre area is being set within the context of Smarter Travel 2009 and includes the following objectives and measures:

- To support commercial activity in the town centre and underpin its retail function.
- To contribute to an attractive, vibrant town centre benefiting consumers and businesses.
- To reduce, in accordance traffic management policy, extraneous traffic including HCVs through the town centre utilising available alternative routes;
- To improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and the less mobile;
- To create a pedestrian friendly environment in the town centre area through the provision of footpaths, pedestrian lineages, traffic calming, landscaping and enhancement of civic spaces;
- To encourage and facilitate walking and cycling through increased sharing of road space, and provision of cycle parking facilities.
- To reduce dependence on the private car.

Parking for development is normally provided in accordance with the Council's parking standards. Parking requirements are currently based upon a graduated scale favouring town centre development where reduced parking standards apply. Relevant extracts from the Athlone Town Plan are cited below. In the overall assessment of parking demand, due cognisance should be taken of broader transportation policies in relation to Smarter Travel (2009) and the Council's town centre management policies including objectives to underpin and actively support vitality and viability of the town centre and the visual enhancement of that area.

Where, having regard to parking standards, there is shortfall in the provision of necessary parking required by a particular development, current provisions require that a contribution to the Council towards the cost of provision of parking benefiting the development be made in accordance with the provisions of Section 48 and 49 (where relevant) of the Planning & Development Acts 2000-2010.

However, the Council wishes to further encourage the consolidation of existing business within the town centre. In this regard, the Council proposes to eliminate the need for a contribution in certain cases as outlined in red below. This change is a Variation to the Policy outlined in Part 3.6 Development Management Car Parking Standards of the current Athlone Town Plan quoted below.

Current Policy-Part 3.6 Car Parking Standards – Athlone Town Plan 2008 - 2014

Part 3.6 PARKING STANDARDS

It will generally be required that developments that are residential, commercial, industrial or otherwise, shall comply with the parking standards.

The Council shall seek to control the provision of parking in town centres and has a policy to encourage alternatives to car commuting. Within designated central town locations a lower standard of car parking provision shall apply, as set out in Table 11 of the Athlone Town Plan 2008-2014.

The Town Centre Parking Standards, will apply in the following 'designated areas':

- The area west of the river centred on Connaught St., O'Connell St., High St., Main St., Castle St., Pearse St., and east of the river centred on Church St: Church St., Mardyke St., and Irishtown Upper; and extending northwards as far as St Kieran's Terrace and Grace Park Road and the Railway line and southwards as far as Inis Oir, as shown on the Athlone objectives map.*
- In addition for small development in town centres (e.g. small extensions) the planning authority will exercise discretion in relation to car parking requirements and in some circumstances no parking requirement will apply, in the interests of encouraging town centre development.*

Proposed Part 3.6 Car Parking Standards – Proposed Variation

The Town Centre Parking Standards, will apply in the following areas:

• *In Athlone the area west of the river centred on Connaught St., O'Connell St., High St., Main St., Castle St., Pearse St., and east of the river centred on Church St: Church St., Mardyke St., and Irishtown Upper; and extending northwards as far as St Kieran's Terrace and Grace Park Road and the Railway line and southwards as far as Inis Oir, as shown on the Athlone objectives map.*

For small scale development as listed below and within the area described above, no parking requirement will apply, in the interests of encouraging town centre development and the consolidation of existing business:

- *Extensions up to 100% of the net floor area of an existing business premises up to a maximum of 150m²*
- *New small business, the net floor area of which is below 150m²*

This change in policy will have the effect of reducing the cost of starting or expanding a business in Athlone Town Centre and will support the viability and vitality of the town centre area.

Appendix 1 Relevant Extracts from Athlone Town Plan 2008-2014

Parking policy is an important element in planning and transport policy. The level of car parking provided, its location, fee structure and enforcement levels can all have a considerable effect on car use and traffic flow patterns. The availability of convenient and affordable parking in an area can influence people's decision on their mode of travel and has the potential to be a powerful travel demand management tool.

If demand management policies are being implemented then a reduction in the number of parking spaces may be desirable in congested urban areas. This can only be utilised where public transport provides a viable alternative. Car parking policies must consider various needs such as people with disabilities, commercial vehicles, taxis, motor cycles, etc; consider the conflicts between all day parking and short stay; and consider the need for good advance signage. In addition, a reduction in parking standards in town centres encourages development in such areas which might otherwise be forced to locate where land has lower value. Providing for additional parking in towns encourages further use of private cars and makes public transport a less attractive or viable option. Access to the town centre is essential for the successful operation of business. Where journey lengths require use of motorised transport and public transport in the form of local bus services or commuter rail services is not available, provision must be made for use of private vehicles, and this includes parking facilities. It is accepted that journeys to the town centre are often multifunctional and that shared use is made of public parking facilities to an extent not experienced in out of centre locations. For this reason town centre locations are identified as part of this plan, where appropriate town centre parking standards will apply.

P-IF10 It is the policy of the Council to ensure the provision of adequate parking facilities to facilitate commercial activity and residential development and to maintain a free flow of traffic in the urban area.

O-IF16 To manage on-street and off-street car-parking and to accommodate longer term parking in less convenient and under utilised off streets or car parks.

O-IF17 To require the provision of adequate parking facilities with all new development, where practicable. Where this is not possible or desirable, developers will be required to contribute towards the cost of public parking facilities in accordance with the adopted Development Contribution Scheme.

O-IF18 To favour purpose built off-street car parks including multi-storey car-parks, in preference to on-street parking.

O-IF19 To seek the provision of off-street car parking in new residential development.

O-IF20 To seek the provision and improvement of parking arrangements for disabled people.

O-IF21 To provide a car park at O'Connell Street.

O-IF22 To examine siting opportunities and provide for a multi-storey car park in the Town as part of a mixed use scheme

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

Variation No. 03, ATP 2008 - 2014

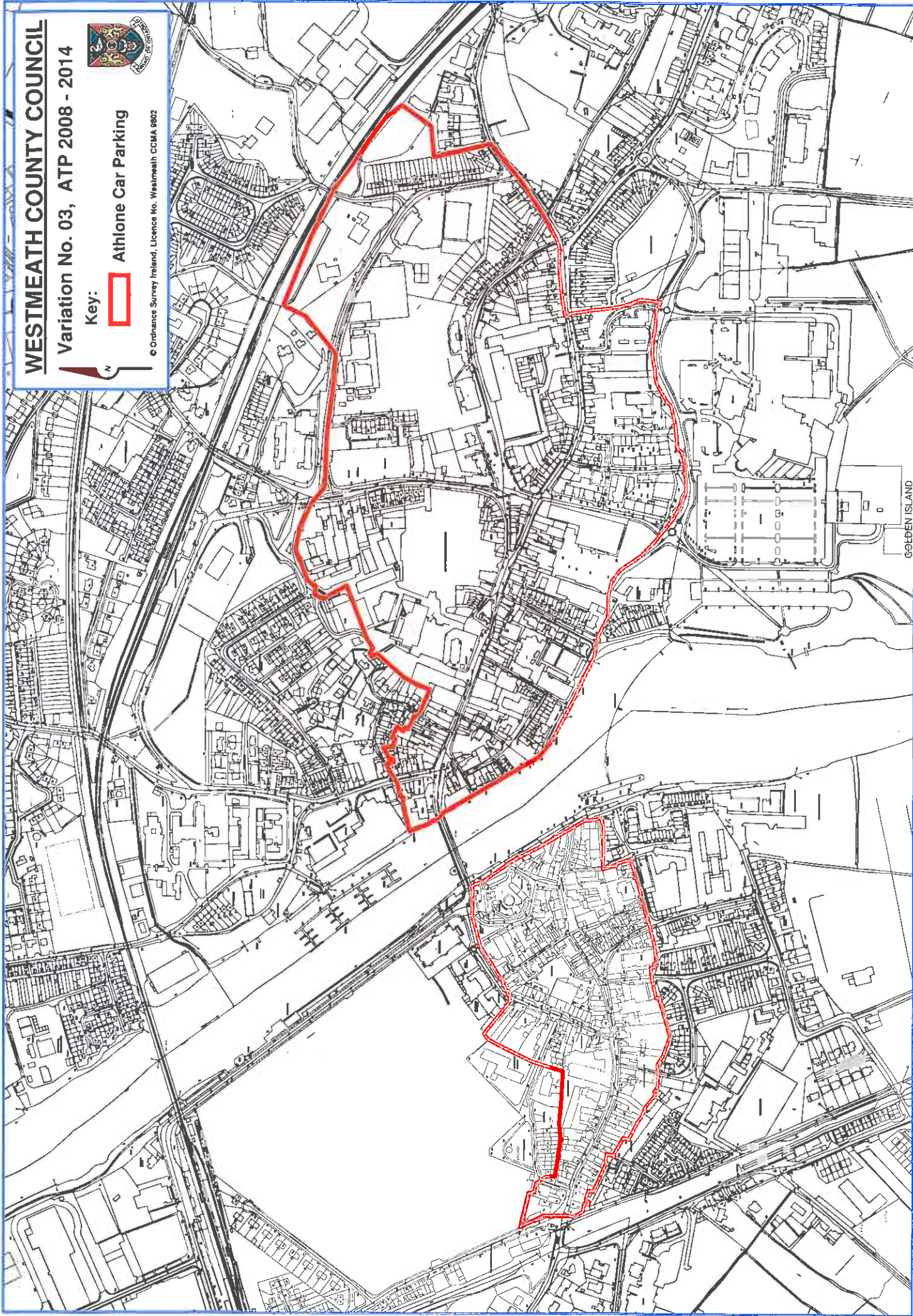


Key:



Athlone Car Parking

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GOLDEN ISLAND

Stage 1, Screening for
Appropriate Assessment

For
Proposed **Variation No. 3**
of the
Athlone Town Development Plan
2008 to 2014

**Parking Policy Review for
Athlone**



1 INTRODUCTION

Athlone Town Council is currently preparing **Variation No. 3 of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 for the review of parking policy in Athlone** in accordance with Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC requires an appropriate assessment of land use plans and variations to such plans with respect to ecological implications of any plan or project, whether within or outside a designated site, which does not directly relate to the management of the site but may impact upon its conservation objectives. Therefore, the purpose of this screening report is to consider whether, based on best scientific knowledge, the plan will have potential impacts upon the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites, and if so, the development where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negative effects.

NATURA 2000 sites are protected habitats for flora and fauna of European importance. They comprise **Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)**, designated under the Habitats Directive and **Special Protection Areas (SPAs)**, designated under the Birds Directive.

This appropriate assessment screening is carried out in accordance with the methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6 (3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive. The findings of the assessment are that **the proposed variation does not require a full appropriate assessment.**

In the preparation of this assessment reference has been made to the following documents in particular;

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities. December 2010
- MANAGING NATURA 2000 SITES. The provisions of Article 6, of the 'Habitats' Directive 92 / 43 / CEE
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92 / 43 / EEC.
- Guidance document on Article 6(4) of 'Habitats Directive' 92 / 43 / EEC
- Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) Circular letter SEA 1 / 08 & NPWS 1 / 08 dated 15 February, 2008.

An appropriate assessment (Stage 2) would have been required if the variation was likely to have a significant impact on Natura 2000 sites. A review of the CDP and the proposed variation found that there are sufficient policies and objectives to ensure these habitats continue to be protected within the policy of Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 following implementation of the proposed variation.

In addition, the requirements of the relevant River Basin Management Plan will require Athlone Town Council to ensure compliance with the environmental objectives set out in the RBMP. Protection of these water resources will offer protection to the Natura 2000 sites in the implementation of development objectives in the County.

2 Description of the proposed variation and general area characteristics

The proposed variation is of a financial nature in order to encourage town centre development and for the consolidation of existing developments by reducing the costs associated with establishment of new or extension of existing small and medium sized businesses in the urban area of Athlone.

Proposed variation No. 3 affects the urban area of Athlone and extends to 37 hectares, and does not encompass any Natura 2000 sites, it is however contiguous to the River Shannon which connects Lough Ree and the Shannon Callows which are both Natura 2000 sites.

The proposed Variation shall not result in any significant effects on Natura 2000 sites or the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.

3 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF NATURA 2000 SITES

NATURA 2000 sites are protected habitats for flora and fauna of European importance. They comprise **Special Areas of Conservation**, designated under the Habitats Directive and **Special Protection Areas**, designated under the Birds Directive. Site synopses in respect to SACs, and SPAs, relevant to the proposed variation are available from the NPWS website.

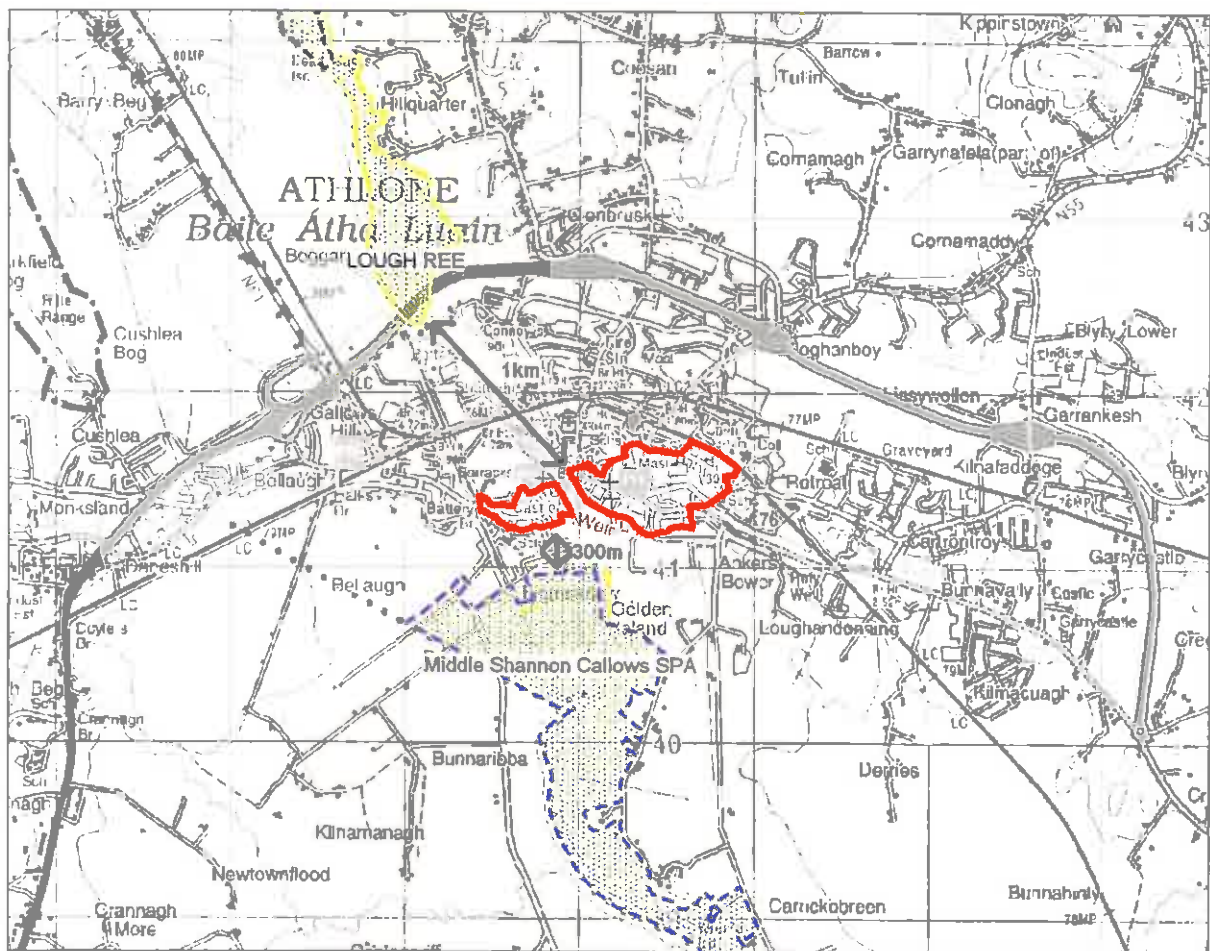


Fig 3.1 Location of Natura 2000 and other designated sites of environmental importance relative to the proposed variation.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)

Sites proposed for designation are called candidate special areas of conservation (cSAC) and are legally protected under the Habitats Directive and EC Regulations. Details of these sites are forwarded to the EU Commission and once approved by the commission; these sites will be formally designated by the Minister as SAC.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

These sites are areas of importance for birds (and often are also important for other types of wildlife). The EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) requires designation of SPAs for listed rare and vulnerable species, regularly occurring migratory species and wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year. Any development in, near or adversely affecting a SPA should avoid any significant adverse impact on the features for which the site has been designated. SPAs were given effect in Irish Law mainly under the Conservation of Wild Birds Regulations 1985 (SI. 291 of 1985).

Candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) and Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPA) in the area of the boundary of the proposed variation are indicated on the Map above and listed below.

3.1.1 Natura sites and the conservation objectives within or adjacent to the area affected by the proposed variation.

There are no Natura 2000 sites within the boundary of the proposed variation, the closest Natura 2000 sites are Lough Ree and the Shannon Callows at approximately 1km and 300m from the variation boundary respectively as shown in Fig 3.1 above.

The Natura 2000 sites proximate to the proposed variation along with associated conservation objectives published NPWS January 2011 are as follows

Conservation Objectives for Lough Ree SPA [004064]

Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA

Conservation Objectives for Middle Shannon Callows SPA [004096]

Objective: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:

Cygnus cygnus [wintering]
Anas penelope [wintering]
Crex crex [breeding]
Pluvialis apricaria [wintering]
Vanellus vanellus [wintering]
Limosa limosa [wintering]
Larus ridibundus [wintering]

Conservation Objectives for Lough Ree SAC [000440]

Objective: 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:

Lutra lutra [1355]
Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition type vegetation [3150]
Semi natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia)(important orchid sites)* [6210]
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]
Alkaline fens [7230]
* *Limestone pavements* [8240]
Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]
* *Bog woodland* [91D0]

Conservation Objectives for River Shannon Callows SAC [000216]

Objective: 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:

Lutra lutra [1355]

Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey silt laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]

Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) [6510]

* *Limestone pavements* [8240]

* *Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0]

The site synopses, data forms and full conservation objective documents can be downloaded from www.npws.ie.

3.1.2 Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the plan or project

The zone of impact of the proposed variation by its nature, scale and having regard to the sensitivity of the receptors and in combination with other plans and projects is such that no further consideration is required in order to assess the wider Natura 2000 network.

3.1.3 In the case of sites with water dependent habitats or species

Upstream and downstream impacts do not arise by virtue of the nature of the proposed variation.

4 ATHLONE TOWN DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 – 2014: POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES CONCERNING DESIGNATED SITES

The following information contained within the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008 – 2014 provides the strategic direction for Athlone Town Council with respect to Designated Sites within its functional area and shall predominate in the consideration of any policy or development proposals which may be affected or influenced by the proposed variation.

4.1 Strategic Aim for Designated Sites

There are limited published plans by the competent authority for the management of the sites these are listed above in section 3.1.1. In the absence of such official plans or objectives the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 contains a number of relevant general aims, policies and objectives for Natura 2000 sites as follows:

P-NBH9 It is policy of the Town Council to protect, manage and enhance the natural heritage, biodiversity, landscape and environment of Athlone in recognition of its importance as a non renewable resource, unique identifier and character of the town and as a natural resource asset.

SPA's and SAC's

P-NBH10 To protect plant and animal species and habitats which have been identified by the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Wildlife Act (1976) and (Amendment Act) 2000, and the Flora Protection Order S.I No. 94 of 1999.

P-NBH11 To require appropriate environmental assessment such as EIA or ecological appraisal for developments not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site, or proposed European Site and which are likely to have significant effects on the site individually or cumulatively.

O-NBH15 To protect and conserve wild bird species and their habitats especially rare or vulnerable species and regularly occurring migratory species.

O-NBH16 To protect and conserve proposed candidate Special Areas of Conservation.

P-NBH12 To apply the precautionary principle in relation to development proposals in areas identified of national nature conservation interest by requiring a scientific/ecological risk assessment to ensure that the development will not impact the integrity and habitat value of the site.

5 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA/SCREENING MATRIX

5.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

5.1.1 Brief Description of the project or plan

The variation is of a financial nature to reduce costs in the establishment and consolidation of small and medium sized business in the urban area of Athlone.

5.1.2 Brief description of the Natura 2000 sites

There are no SACs or SPAs within the boundary of the proposed Variation. Please refer to map above, which shows the closest Natura 2000 sites.

5.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

5.2.1 Describe the individual elements of the project be (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) that have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site.

Notwithstanding the absence of detailed published management plans or conservation objectives for specific sites, development which may arise as a result in this variation to the policy of the Athlone Town Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) will not give rise to significant adverse impact on the integrity of any Natura 2000.

5.2.2 Describe any likely direct/indirect or secondary impacts of the Variation (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of:

a) Size and scale, area and land-take, etc

No impact anticipated as any development arising on foot of the varied policy would be of relatively small scale.

No projects are approved which will give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts upon the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their size, scale, area and land take shall be permitted on the basis of this variation (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects).

b) Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key feature of the site

There are no Natura 2000 sites located within the boundary to which the variation applies.

The closest Natura 2000 Site is situated c. 300m from the boundary of the area to which the varied policy applies. (See map for details of nearest Natura 2000 Sites.)

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this proposed variation to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

c) Resource Requirements (Water abstraction etc.)

• None

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites arising from their resource requirements are facilitated or shall be permitted on the basis of this proposed variation to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects).

d) Emissions and Waste (disposal to land, water or air)

None

e) Transportation requirements

The successful implementation of the revised policy would result in a more sustainable pattern of development with commercial uses further facilitated to locate in the centre of the urban area, thus reducing transportation impacts.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this proposed variation to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).⁴

f) Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc.

This information is not available at this stage, however by virtue of the nature of the proposed variation there are no concerns in this regard.

No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this proposed variation to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).⁵

g) Other

No other possible impacts were identified.

5.2.3 Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:

a) Reduction of habitat area

The proposed variation does not require any land take within Natura 2000 sites.

b) Habitat or Species Fragmentation

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the ATP 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to reduction of habitat areas or species fragmentation for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this proposed variation to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).⁵

c) Disturbance to key species

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the ATP 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to disturbance to key species for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

d) Reduction in species density

By virtue of the nature of the proposed variation along with the policy protection afforded to these areas within the ATP and WCC Plan 2008 – 2014, there are no concerns in this regard.

e) Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water analysis, etc.)

No changes are anticipated arising from the proposed variation of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008 – 2014.

The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to changes in key indicators of conservation value for the Natura 2000 sites shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).⁶

f) Climate change

It is considered that the LAP will not have a significant impact upon climate change. The protection of these areas is clearly indicated within the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008 – 2014. No projects which will give rise to climate change shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).⁵

5.2.4 Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:

a) Interference with the key relationship that define the structure of the site

The implementation of the proposed variation to the Athlone town Development Plan 2008-2014 will not impact on the relationships that define the structure of a Natura 2000 site. No projects giving rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives, arising from their size or scale, shall be permitted on the basis of this Plan (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects).

b) Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site

It is considered that there will be no interference with the key relationships that define the function of the County's Natura 2000 sites as a result of implementation of the proposed Variation.

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

a) Loss

Not applicable

b) Fragmentation

Not applicable

c) Disruption

Not applicable

d) Disturbance

Not applicable

e) Change to key elements of the site (water quality etc.)

Not applicable

f) Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.

As already outlined there are no Natura 2000 sites in the boundary of the proposed variation. The details above outline where Athlone Town Council have put in place policies and objectives relating to spatial planning measures to protect the Natura 2000 sites.

6 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT

6.1 NAME OF PLAN

6.1.1 Name of project or plan

Proposed Variation No. 3 of the Athlone Town Development 2008-2014, Parking Policy Review.

6.1.2 Name and location of Natura 2000 sites

Refer to Section 3 and see attached map.

6.1.3 Description of the plan or project

Refer to Section 5.1

6.1.4 Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site

No.

6.1.5 Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed that could affect the site (provide details)?

This variation is proposed to form part of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 which fits into a hierarchy of planning policy such as the, National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines.

Environmental objectives are contained within these policies and strategies to protect the environment and to maintain a sustainable environment including the protection of Natura 2000 sites.

Potential developments and effects arising from such developments arising from this proposed variation (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects) shall not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

6.2 THE ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

6.2.1 Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.

It is considered for the reasons set out above that the proposed variation shall not affect any Natura 2000 site.

6.2.2 Explain why these affects are not considered significant

By virtue of the nature of the proposed policy change, the scale of the area to which it applies, the proximity of the Natura 2000 sites, and the sensitivity of those sites it is not considered that there shall be any affects arising.

6.2.3 List of Agencies consulted:

Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), National Parks and Wildlife service.

The Manager, Development Applications Unit, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Newtown Road, Wexford.

6.2.4 Response to consultation

Response awaited.

6.3 DATA COLLECTED TO CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT

6.3.1 Who carried out the Assessment?

- Forward Planning Unit, Planning Section, Westmeath County Council

6.3.2 Sources of Data

- Existing records from NPWS website
- Environmental report for the SEA for Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014.
- Proposed variation No. 3
- Athlone Town Development Plan 2008 – 2014

6.3.3 Level of assessment completed

Desktop study

6.3.4 Where can the full results of the assessment be assessed and viewed?


This screening report is on display both in the offices, and on the website of Athlone Town Council along with the proposed Variation No.3 to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014.

6.4 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

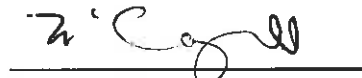
This Screening Report for the Appropriate Assessment of proposed Variation Number 3 of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 has been conducted in accordance with the *Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC and Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities December 2009* and concludes that proposed draft variation no. 3 does not require further appropriate assessment.



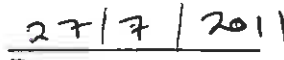
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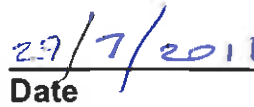
Senior Planner



Date



Director of Services



Date

SEA Screening of Proposed Variation No. 3 of the 2008 2014 Athlone Town Development Plan Parking policy review

Screening for Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with criteria set out in Annex 2A of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) as transposed in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended by Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2011

1. **The characteristics of the plan having regard, in particular, to:**
 - **the degree to which the Proposed Variation sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions or by allocating resources:**

Proposed Variation No.3, Parking policy review for Athlone, The proposed variation is of a financial nature in order to encourage town centre development and for the consolidation of existing developments by reducing the costs associated with establishment new or extension of existing small and medium sized businesses in the urban area of Athlone.

- **the degree to which proposed variation No. 3 would influence other plans, including those in a hierarchy:**

Proposed Variation No. 3, Parking policy review for Athlone has the potential to influence implementation of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2008-2014 in a minor way with no significant spatial implications.
- **the relevance of the variation for the integration of environmental considerations in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development:**

Proposed Variation No. 3 Parking policy review for Athlone provides for the sustainable development of Athlone Town in an efficient manner, providing an additional element to the encouragement of sustainable urban development.
- **environmental problems relevant to the plan:**

No potential environmental problems have been identified with proposed variation No. 3 Parking policy review for Athlone.
- **the relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste-management or water protection):**

The proposed variation has no relevance for the implementation of EU legislation

2. Characteristics of the effects and of the area likely to be affected, having regard, in particular, to

	Natural heritage		Cultural Heritage		Wider environment	
Probability of Effects	Low		High probability of impact as development arising shall be to brownfield and urban centres.	High probability of positive impacts particularly on reduced attraction of out of town commercial development.	Unknown, long term.	Potential for ongoing impacts
Duration of effects	Ongoing		Long term			Possible but unlikely
Frequency of impacts	Low		Potential for ongoing impacts			Potential for positive effect of cumulative implementation of urban based policy.
Reversibility of effects	Unlikely		Likely			None
Cumulative effects	Low probability.		Potential for positive effect of cumulative implementation of urban based policy.			None
Transboundary nature of effects	None		None			None.
Risks to human health/environment through impacts	None.		None			Proposed variation No. 3 is a financial provision with very limited potential for spatial impacts.
Magnitude, geographical and population size to be affected	Proposed variation No. 3 is a financial provision with very limited potential for spatial impacts.		Proposed variation No. 3 is a financial provision with very limited potential for spatial impacts.			Proposed variation No. 3 is a financial provision with very limited potential for spatial impacts.

3. Value and Vulnerability of the area:

Special natural heritage

Athlone contains and is adjacent to a broad range of special natural heritage assets ranging from internationally importance flocks of migratory birds to high quality habitats of European importance.

In addition to the designated environmental assets Athlone contains a broad range of important environmental assets from hedgerows and streams to species rich Esker and Fen habitats which do not have the benefit of specific statutory protection through designation.

Vulnerability: The special natural heritage assets of Athlone are not considered to be vulnerable to impact arising from the proposed variation.

Special Cultural heritage

The proposed variation relates to areas containing elements of significant special cultural heritage value including ACA's, protected structures, national monuments and all of the elements of special cultural heritage that make up a vibrant town centre such as that found in Athlone.

Vulnerability:

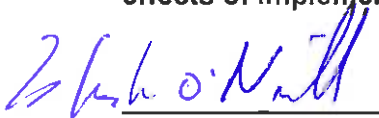
It is not considered to be the case that the special cultural heritage is vulnerable to negative impacts arising from the proposed variation, it is more likely that on implementation of the proposed variation that additional activity, and occupancy would contribute positively to the special cultural heritage of the town centre.

4. Conclusions

It is considered that policy contained in the proposed variation particularly when considered in the context of protection afforded by other policies within the Athlone Town Development 2008-2014 relating to both natural and cultural heritage shall not result in a significant negative impact. Therefore the preparation of a SEA Environmental Report shall not be required.

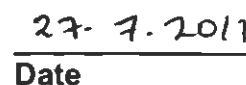
5. Screening Decision:

It is therefore considered that the proposed Variation No. 3 (Parking policy review for Athlone) of the 2008-2014 Athlone Town Development Plan shall not be subject to the requirement to prepare an Environmental Report on the likely significant effects of implementation.

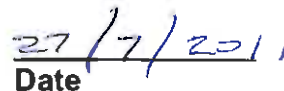

Planner


Date


Senior Planner


Date


Director of Services


Date

