

Kerry County Council

Castleisland Masterplan Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Reference: 305565-ARUP-XXXXXX

| 9 February 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared by Ove Arup and Partners Ltd (Arup) on behalf of Kerry County Council in connection with the Castleisland Town Center First Master Plan and Public Realm Plan (hereafter referred to as the ‘Plan’).

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that any plan or project, which is not directly connected with, or necessary to the management of a European site, but would be likely to have a significant effect, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, should be subject to an Appropriate Assessment (AA).

1.2 Report Aim

This AA Screening Report has been prepared to provide information for the ‘public authority/competent authority’ regarding the potential for ‘Likely Significant Effects’ (LSE) of the Plan, on European sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the Plan.

The Plan covers the settlement area of Castleisland, Co. Kerry (Figure 1).

1.3 Plan Background

The Masterplan presents the Castleisland Town Centre First Masterplan, incorporating a detailed Public Realm Plan. The primary objective of the Masterplan is to set out a clear and actionable strategy for the future development and revitalisation of Castleisland’s town centre with a central location at ITM 500017, 609835.

1.4 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC) (the ‘Habitats Directive’ provides the legal protection for habitats and species, with Articles 3 to 9 providing legislation protection to the EU wide network of sites known as the Natura 2000 site network. Natura 2000 is a network of protected sites which comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) (referred to as European sites within this report). SACs are protected sites designated under the Habitats Directive. They are high quality sites that contribute significantly to the conservation of a large range of habitats and species.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA whilst Article 6(4) sets out the Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) and compensatory measures where Likely Significant Effects (LSE) on European sites cannot be excluded.

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) (as amended), and by Planning & Development Act 2024, Part 6 Chapter 2 Appropriate Assessment of Plans. In the context of the Plan, the governing legislation is principally the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No 477/2011) as amended by S.I. 293/2021 (hereafter referred to as the Habitats Regulations).

1.5 Relationship with the SEA Directive

In the preparation of this AA Screening report, the approach has been conducted in parallel with the requirements of the SEA process (2001/42/EC as transposed into Irish law). Article 3.2(b) of the SEA Directive expressly links to AA. The SEA process requires that an environmental report is prepared to accompany a Plan for public consultation. Following the consultation period, the plan may be finalised in its issue form. To facilitate an informed assessment under both processes, it is necessary to consider both the draft and final versions of the plan.

1.6 Report Structure

The report is structured below:

- Section 2 provides an overview of the Plan;
- Section 3 outlines the AA process and provides important definitions;
- Section 4 outlines the guidance, data and methodology used to inform the assessment;
- Section 5 sets out the European sites under consideration;
- Section 6 details the assessment for effects and screening;
- Section 7 provides a summary and conclusion.

2. Description of the Plan

2.1 Overview

The Castleisland Masterplan will provide a strategic roadmap to address the social, economic, commercial, cultural, and environmental challenges and opportunities facing the town. It will propose a series of interventions, projects, and policy recommendations that aim to regenerate and re-energise Castleisland as an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

In addition to establishing a long-term vision, the Masterplan will:

- Identify short, medium, and long-term projects for implementation.
- Align these with relevant government funding streams to ensure deliverability.
- Provide a framework to guide all future development works within Castleisland.
- Reflect local needs through community consultation and engagement.

To ensure that the Castleisland Masterplan is robust, locally informed, and strategically grounded, its development will follow a comprehensive and structured methodology. This process is designed to provide a deep understanding of the current conditions within the town, engage meaningfully with stakeholders and the community, and produce a visionary yet deliverable plan that can guide future development in a cohesive and sustainable manner.

2.2 Geographic Area

Castleisland is strategically located at the intersection of two primary national routes: the N21, which links Tralee to Limerick, and the N23, offering direct access to the N22 towards Farranfore. Figure 1 outlines the redline boundary of the plan area.

This advantageous position places Castleisland centrally within County Kerry and provides exceptional connectivity to major towns such as Tralee and Killarney, in addition to proximity to Kerry Airport, situated approximately 10 km to the southwest.

This high level of accessibility establishes Castleisland as a significant hub for both residents and visitors, facilitating efficient movement throughout the region and beyond. The town plays an important role as an economic centre for the surrounding area, supporting agriculture, small-scale industry, retail, and essential services. As a result, Castleisland not only sustains the local economy but also strengthens its function as a gateway for trade, tourism, and transportation within the broader regional framework.

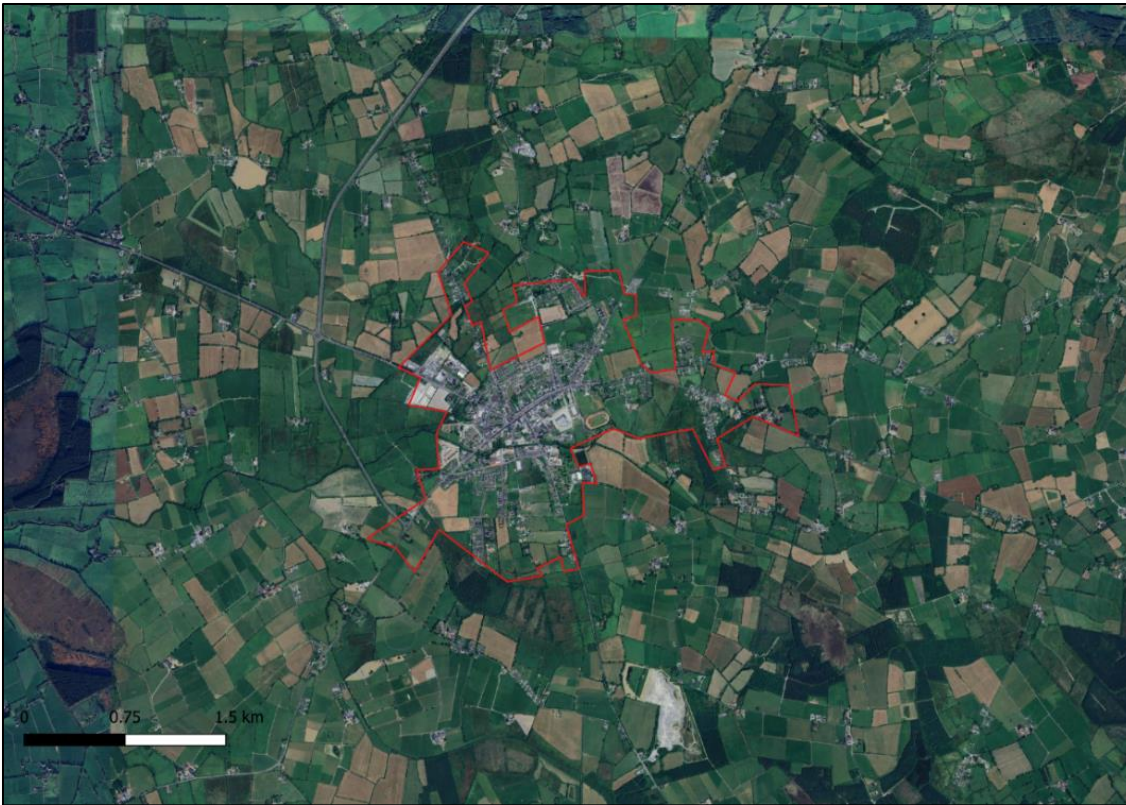


Figure 1 Indicative Plan Area

2.3 Plan Objectives

The Castleisland Town Centre First Masterplan sets out a clear, coordinated strategy to revitalise the town, strengthen its economic and social role, and enhance its natural and built environment. Its objectives are structured around eight integrated themes, each addressing a key dimension of Castleisland’s long-term development. The overall Plan objectives are to:

- Deliver a clear, actionable roadmap for the sustainable regeneration of Castleisland.
- Reinforce the town’s role as a vibrant, accessible, and welcoming market town.
- Support compact growth, prioritising adaptive reuse, infill development, and town-centre living.
- Enhance public realm quality to improve safety, accessibility, placemaking, and vibrancy.
- Stimulate economic resilience by addressing vacancy, supporting local businesses, and encouraging investment.
- Protect and celebrate the town’s heritage, cultural identity, and architectural character.
- Improve connectivity and movement through active travel, public transport, and reduced car dependency.
- Expand and integrate green and blue infrastructure, supporting biodiversity and climate resilience.
- Strengthen community wellbeing through enriched recreational, cultural, and civic amenities.
- Provide a phased implementation and funding framework to deliver long-term, achievable change.

The Community objectives focus on fostering civic pride and active participation by encouraging ongoing engagement from residents, while providing inclusive community spaces that reflect local needs and identity. A further priority is to support and celebrate the Irish language and the area’s rich cultural heritage.

Under the Age-Friendly theme, the plan aims to make Castleisland a safe, walkable, and accessible town for older residents by improving crossings, lighting, and rest areas, and ensuring that essential services and age-appropriate amenities are readily available.

The Schools objectives centre on delivering Safe Routes to School and improving connections between schools and the town centre, while also promoting shared use of community-school facilities and creating spaces that support youth activity and engagement.

For Sports, Leisure & Recreation, the plan seeks to provide inclusive recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, expand nature-based amenities such as greenways and active travel routes, and deliver key projects including a Community Active Recreational Space and the enhancement of the Town Park.

Within Daily Basics, the focus is on ensuring everyday essentials remain easily accessible within the town centre, resisting the movement of services and retail to peripheral locations, and strengthening the evening economy while maintaining accessible parking for residents and visitors.

The Tourism, Culture & Heritage theme includes conserving and interpreting local heritage assets, improving wayfinding and visitor circulation, and growing sports tourism, cultural activities, and festivals. It also prioritises reinvigorating Main Street as Castleisland's core cultural, social, and commercial spine.

Under Sustainability & Resilience, the plan promotes low-carbon living and renewable energy initiatives, alongside expanding green spaces, biodiversity networks, and nature-based solutions. It also commits to integrating SuDS and climate-resilient design into public realm and infrastructure projects.

Finally, the Prosperity objectives aim to support local businesses, SMEs, and new enterprise, enhance digital infrastructure and remote-working capacity, and improve shopfronts and streetscapes to attract footfall and investment. Strengthening skills development and workforce resilience forms a key component of this theme.

Section 7 of the Masterplan sets out a suite of twelve integrated regeneration initiatives designed to rejuvenate Castleisland's town centre, improve public spaces, strengthen community life, and support long-term economic and environmental resilience.

1. Strengthening the Town Core – Main Street Public Realm Project

A major public realm enhancement across Main Street, divided into three character areas (Main Square, Market Quarter, Community Quarter). The initiative focuses on transforming the street into a pedestrian-friendly, vibrant civic space with improved seating, landscaping, accessibility, and opportunities for outdoor dining and events. Key elements include:

- Conversion of Chapel Lane into a one-way street to significantly reduce traffic volume and simplify movement patterns, while creating more space for footpaths, and public realm improvements.
- Traffic-calming measures, including raised crossings, speed tables, and chicanes, to promote low-speed, local-only traffic and deter rat-running
- Improved pedestrian infrastructure, such as continuous, widened footpaths, accessible crossings, tactile paving, and increased lighting to ensure safety and inclusivity for all users.
- Greening and placemaking, incorporating planters, rain gardens, seating, and local art to create a welcoming, interactive, and socially vibrant space
- School and community involvement, including workshops with students and residents to co-design elements and promote ownership and care of the space

2. Strengthening the Town Core – Mart Area Masterplan

Regeneration of the Mart Quarter through street redesign, widened footpaths, traffic calming, safer routes to school, improved landscaping, and redevelopment of key opportunity sites to create stronger links between the Mart, Main Street, and surrounding neighbourhoods. Key elements include:

- Widened and continuous footpaths of Mart Road, improving pedestrian safety and comfort.

- Formalised on-street parking bays, integrated into the streetscape without compromising pedestrian flow or aesthetics.
- Upgraded street lighting, improving visibility and safety while enhancing the evening atmosphere and promoting extended use of the area.
- Tree planting and landscaping, bringing greenery, shade, and seasonal interest to the street, while also contributing to biodiversity and microclimate regulation.
- Boundary realignment on the northern side, creating additional public space through modest land take and ensuring symmetry with the improvements already delivered on the Mart frontage

Development of Mart Quarter Project, includes

- Complete physical reshaping of the Mart Road to incorporate wider footpaths, dedicated cycle lanes, and permanent traffic calming infrastructure.
- Install permanent greening features (rain gardens, street trees, planters) and enhanced placemaking elements to support a vibrant community space.
- Formalise the separation between Mart operations and Chapel Lane pedestrian routes through new boundary treatments and entrance reconfiguration.
- Undertake boundary realignment on the northern side of Mart Road to enable widened footpaths and consistent streetscape treatments on both sides.
- Complete tree planting and landscaping to establish a high-quality green urban corridor.
- Integrate upgraded infrastructure to support formalised on-street parking while maintaining pedestrian priority and visual harmony.
- Encourage active frontages and passive surveillance to foster street safety and vibrancy.
- Facilitate the reconfiguration of the Mart entrance to support operational efficiency and improved interface with the public realm.
- Explore potential for traffic management along Chapel Lane, Mart Road and An Ríocht/ Main Street Junctions
- Improve pedestrian safety with widened footpaths, enhanced crossings, tactile paving, and increased lighting.
- Installation of upgraded street lighting to improve safety and atmosphere.

3. Adaptive Reuse of Buildings – Unlocking Potential

Repurposing vacant and underutilised buildings into mixed-use spaces such as housing, cafés, community rooms, coworking hubs, and creative studios. Includes façade improvements, a design guide, incentives, and temporary activation of empty units.

4. Civic Centre

A new multi-use civic facility—potentially created by reusing existing Main Street buildings—to house community services, tourism information, learning spaces, exhibition areas, and a digital hub. It may be delivered as a single building or a network of buildings

5. Connecting Communities – Green Links & Blue Corridors

Creation of a town-wide network of walking and cycling routes, improved wayfinding, river corridor enhancements, access to nature, park-to-town connections, and exploration of long-term greenway links to neighbouring settlements.

Creative Wayfinding and Inclusive Mobility Infrastructure

Trailheads and Entrances Create distinct and welcoming entry points at key locations throughout the network.

Integrated Recreational Facilities Establish a variety of experiences along the routes—including sensory paths, educational features, and fitness zones—with play spaces and exercise points that serve diverse user groups.

Linked Public Spaces Introduce or enhance small-scale public spaces—such as pocket parks and town squares—along the Green Links to create places for rest, gathering, and community interaction

Safer Routes to School Incorporate and implement the proposed ‘Safer Routes to School’ project

Wider Regional Connections Promote the longer-term development of strategic links between Castleisland and neighbouring towns. Explore the potential transformation of the historic disused railway line in the Castleisland area into a dedicated greenway.

Neighbourhood Connectivity Corridors Explore and enhance direct, safe and accessible linkages between housing estates, schools and recreational facilities through a network of localised green corridors

Blue Infrastructure Building on the town’s strong connection to the River Maine, this element of the project will focus on restoring, celebrating and integrating the river corridor as a central feature of Castleisland’s identity and ecological network. The initiative will explore opportunities to improve access to the river through new viewing platforms, riverside walkways, and pocket parks that encourage residents and visitors to engage safely with the water environment.

6. Castleisland Town Park Project

Expansion and enhancement of the Town Park into a nature-rich recreational space featuring nature trails, wetlands, woodland walks, informal play, SuDS features, and improved links to schools and the river walk.

A Nature-Based Town Park for Castleisland An additional space to the Town Park could be developed as a nature-rich, multi-functional green space combining passive and active recreational areas.

Linking to the River Walk and Sports Facilities Strong physical and visual connections will be established between the town park and Castleisland existing river walk, forming a continuous green corridor through the town. Pathways will be extended to nearby sports clubs, schools, and residential areas, encouraging active travel and supporting healthier lifestyles.

Woodland and Wetland Trails Existing woodland and wetland areas—currently underutilised—will be sensitively upgraded with raised walkways, boardwalks, and nature trails to allow immersive exploration while protecting sensitive habitats.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Eco-Infrastructure SuDS features such as rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable paving will be integrated throughout the park to manage surface water and enhance biodiversity.

Adventure and Natural Play Zones Play areas will be integrated into the natural landscape, using timber, boulders, water, and planting to create imaginative, open-ended environments for children.

Existing park contains good stock of existing parkland trees. Existing features should be maintained and minor improvements such as seating or picnic areas to be explored

Long term park expansion should be considered to provide a wetland ecological focused park which would provide flood storage areas during flood events and include nature play elements and learning opportunities.

7. Ivy Leaf Park Community Regeneration Project

Upgrading the Ivy Leaf Arts Centre and creating a surrounding pocket park and nature-based gathering space, improving access, visibility, heritage interpretation, and connections to residential areas.

An aim is to develop a new green space at the core of Castleisland, centred around the Ivy Leaf Art Centre. This pocket park will provide a serene environment for visitors and create additional spaces for community

activities, thereby extending the centre’s functional footprint. The surrounding lands, with their mature trees and historic headstones, will be carefully integrated into the design, ensuring that the nature park and gardens respect and enhance the site’s cultural, historical, and ecological value.

8. Castle Heritage Regeneration Project

Enhancing the medieval Castle site for public access, conservation, interpretation, landscaping, and potential creation of a feature bridge linking the castle grounds to the river walk.

The Castle Heritage Regeneration Project envisions transforming the castle site into a vibrant heritage space. This initiative seeks to enhance public access, interpret the site’s rich history, and integrate it into the broader cultural and economic fabric of Castleisland.

It is envisioned to include a feature bridge to connect the river walk to the heritage park, however any potential river crossing will need engagement with landowners, adjacent neighbours and the wider Castleisland community.

9. Environmental Improvements – Revitalising Streets & Spaces

A programme of shopfront upgrades, façade enhancement, planting, pollinator-friendly landscaping, art installations, pocket parks, SuDS integration, and visual improvements to strengthen the identity and attractiveness of Main Street and surrounding areas.

Enhanced Landscaping & Biodiversity

Improve streetscape quality through movable planters, tree planting, and new green areas that contribute to a more inviting and biodiverse town centre. These enhancements will offer shade, improve aesthetics, encourage social interaction, and support traffic calming efforts. Features such as bird boxes, insect hotels, and pollinator planting can reinforce the town’s environmental credentials.

Sustainable Drainage Integration (SuDS)

Incorporate SuDS elements like rain gardens and tree pits into the streetscape design to improve stormwater management, reduce localised flooding, and enhance biodiversity—while also contributing to a more natural, pleasant pedestrian experience.

10. Gateways Enhancements

Improving major entry points and roundabouts with landscaping, signage, lighting, and public art to create memorable, high-quality gateways that reflect Castleisland’s identity and encourage visitors to stop and explore.

11. Events and Animation – Branded Events Calendar

Expanding and coordinating a year-round programme of festivals, markets, sports events, and cultural activities to strengthen community life and boost tourism, supported by cohesive town branding.

12. Public Realm Plan (Cross-Cutting Initiative)

A full public realm strategy covering Main Street and adjoining streets, addressing movement, access, parking, street design, planting, lighting, safety, and placemaking.

Section 9 outlines the implementation plans for these initiatives and those relevant to AA Screening are described as follows. Full details are outlined in the Plan.

Section 8 of the Plan establishes a comprehensive framework for transforming Castleisland’s public realm into a safer, more attractive, accessible, and people-centred environment. The key objectives relevant to this AA Screening are described below, full details are outlined in the Plan.

1. Improve Safety, Movement, and Accessibility

Introduce wider footpaths, safer junctions, tactile paving, and accessible crossings.

2. Enhance the Quality and Functionality of Main Street

- Reconfigure Main Street into three character zones—Main Square Quarter, Market Quarter, and Community Quarter—to support social interaction, events, active frontages, and community life.
- Formalise parking and reorganise carriageways to create more space for people.

3. Strengthen Placemaking and Identity

Provide new public spaces, pocket parks, gathering areas, outdoor seating zones, and high-quality street furniture.

4. Integrate Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity

- Increase vegetation, street trees, pollinator-friendly planting, and soft landscaping along Main Street and adjoining streets.
- Incorporate SuDS elements—rain gardens, permeable paving, and tree pits—to manage stormwater while enhancing ecological value.

5. Improve Connectivity and Wayfinding

Strengthen pedestrian and cycling connections between neighbourhoods and the town centre.

6. Deliver a Cohesive, High-Quality Public Realm

- Apply consistent design principles, materials, lighting, signage, and planting across all town-centre streets.
- Phase implementation to minimise disruption and align with future mobility and transport strategies.

2.4 Integration with County Development Plan

The Castleisland Masterplan aligns with Variation 3 of the Kerry County Development Plan¹ which has been adopted to replace the Local Area Plans (LAP). Variation 3 - Castleisland-Corca Dhuibhne Municipal District Settlements' Plan, replaces the Corca Dhuibhne Electoral Area Local Area Plan 2021-2027 and elements of the Killarney Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018-2024 (settlements of Castleisland, Farranfore, Feries, Gneeveguilla, Scartaglin, Currow, Cordal, Currans) and the Tralee Municipal District Local Area Plan 2018-2024 (settlements of Knocknagoshel and Brosna). Pursuant to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC the Planning Authority has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment and prepared a Natura Impact Report (NIR) for the Proposed Variation No. 3.

The NIR states that the variation is assessed within the context of the wider Kerry CDP 2022-2028, section 1.7 of which outlines the following:

For the purposes of this plan, the conservation of species and habitats in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives is considered to be a vital component of sustainable strategies, policies, and objectives. Similarly, where the term 'at appropriate locations' is used within this plan, the protection of the Natura 2000 network inherently applies. Therefore, all policies and objectives supported by the plan are required to be carried out in a manner which does not adversely affect Natura 2000 sites. In addition, the plan only supports strategies plans and projects or aspects of same which are compatible with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

With this in mind, as the Plan aligns with the Variation 3 of the Kerry County Development Plan, there are embedded mitigation measures outlined in the relevant NIR which will cover the scope of proposed projects of the Plan.

2.5 Findings of the SEA for the Plan

The Plan is prepared by a local authority and is considered to be required by legislative, regulatory, or administrative provisions, however the Plan does not provide a framework for development consent of projects requiring EIA and will not result in Likely Significant Effects, either alone or in combination with

¹ Proposed Variation No 3 of the Kerry County Development Plan 2022-2028 | Kerry County Council | Access January 2026

other plans or projects, on any European site. According to the EPA Good Practice Guidance on SEA Screening³ (EPA, 2021), as the Plan is not of a type which falls within the remit of the SEA Directive / SEA Regulations.

3. Guidance, Methodology and Data Sources

3.1 Appropriate Assessment Stages

The AA process involves a number of steps and tests that need to be applied in sequential order.

An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. First of all, a plan or project must be screened to identify whether the potential for likely significant effects on a European site(s) exists. If that possibility cannot be excluded, an Appropriate Assessment is to be undertaken prior to any consent being granted. Consent shall not be granted if it cannot be concluded that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European site. Article 6(4) allows for consent to be granted in particular and exceptional circumstances, even if adverse effects may arise.

3.2 Definitions

3.2.1 European Sites

European sites, as defined under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011)(as amended) are part of the Natura 2000 network and include those designated as SACs, candidate SACs (cSACs), SPAs or proposed SPAs (pSPAs). These are sometimes referred to as Natura 2000 sites.

SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I² habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II³ species (other than birds).

SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and all migratory birds and their habitats.

The Annex habitats and species, for which each site is selected, are termed the Qualifying Interests (QI) for SACs and termed Special Conservation Interests (SCI) for SPAs of each site.

3.2.2 Conservation Objective

Conservation Objectives (COs) for the European sites are defined for the relevant QIs and SCIs. In its most general sense, a CO is the specification of the overall target for the species and/or habitat types for which a site is designated in order for it to contribute to maintaining or reaching favourable conservation status⁴.

3.2.3 Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

The Source-Pathway-Receptor model is used to assess where a potential effect may result by examining the source, its pathway and the receptor. As per guidance from the OPR⁵ these can be defined as follows:

- **Source:** The origin of a potential effect which may include characteristics of a plan or project that have the potential to result in effects e.g. direct impacts such as loss of habitat;
- **Pathway:** How the potential effect may occur on the source. These are identifiable through linkages that may occur through the plan or project and European sites e.g. direct pathways such as physical proximity, hydrological connections or indirect pathways such as disturbance to migrating species; and
- **Receptor:** The European site network and respective QIs/SCIs, their ecological condition and sensitivities e.g. freshwater pearl mussel is sensitive to siltation in water.

² Annex I habitats are habitats whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation

³ Annex II species are animal and plant species whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation

⁴ Commission Note on Setting Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites (November 2012) European Commission, Doc. Hab.12-04/06.

Accessed at: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/commission_note/commission_note2_EN.pdf

⁵ OPR (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01

3.2.4 Zone of Influence

A Zone of Influence (ZoI) within any assessment of projects and/or plans considers the area over which ecological features may be affected by biophysical changes as a result of the proposed plan/project and associated activities.

3.3 Guidance

The following guidance was used in carrying out the assessment:

- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 Sites: Methodical guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2014);
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000);
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2007);
- Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive (International Workshop on Assessment of Plans under the Habitats Directive, 2011);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2019);
- Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021); and
- Strict Protection of Animal Species 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 2021);
- 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 National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) 1/10 and PSSP 2/10;

The requirements for Screening for AA, and AA, for European sites, are set out in Part XAB of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) with numerous relevant rulings and opinions issues in both Irish and EU courts. AA is a process required under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive as transposed by the Planning & Development Act as stated within Section **Error! Reference source not found.**

3.4 Data Sources

The ecological data reviewed to inform this report included:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Map Viewer⁶;
- EPA- Ireland's Environment. An Integrated Assessment 2020 Article 12 web tool⁷;
- NPWS (2023) Conservation Objectives Series⁸;
- NPWS (2023) SAC and SPA Datasheets⁹;
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Designations web viewer¹⁰;

⁶ EPA Map Viewer accessed at <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> accessed January 2026

⁷ Article 12 of the Birds Directive Web tool accessed at <https://nature-art12.eionet.europa.eu/article12/> accessed January 2026

⁸ NPWS Conservation objectives accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives> accessed January 2026

⁹ NPWS SAC and SPA Datasheets accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/designated-site-data/sac-and-spa-datasheets-downloads> accessed January 2026

¹⁰ NPWS Designations web viewer accessed at <https://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=8f7060450de3485fa1c1085536d477ba> accessed January 2026

- NPWS Protected Sites in Ireland¹¹;
- NPWS The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland Web Viewer¹²;
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 1: Summary Overview. Unpublished NPWS report¹³. NPWS (2019);
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report¹⁴. Edited by: Deirdre Lynn and Fionnuala O’Neil. NPWS (2019); and
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report¹⁵ (2019). Edited by: Deirdre Lynn and Fionnuala O’Neill (2020).

3.5 Methodology

In line with the relevant guidance and case law, this report consists of the below steps:

1. **Impact Prediction:** Identify the aspects of the Plan likely to affect the COs of European sites. The more general classification of impacts can include direct and indirect effects; short and long-term effects; construction, operational and decommissioning effects; and isolated, interactive and cumulative effects. A Source-Pathway-Receptor model has been used to identify the zone of influence. This also includes transboundary considerations.
2. **Assessment of Effects:** The actions of the Plan are assessed as to whether they are likely to result in significant effects on the integrity of European sites. This requires understanding of relevant QIs/SCIs and associated COs.
3. **Mitigation Measures:** Mitigation measures are identified to ameliorate any adverse effects on the integrity of any European site.

3.5.1 Impact Prediction: Identifying the Zone of Influence

The ZoI is established using the source-pathway-receptor framework and takes into consideration the scale of the Plan. There is no recommended ZoI, and guidance from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) recommends that the distance should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the plan/project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in-combination effects (cumulative).

For an effect to occur there must be a risk enabled by having a source (e.g. construction works at a proposed development site), a ‘receptor’ (e.g. QI or SCI of a European site), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a watercourse which connects a plan area to an SAC, ex situ foraging habitat for SCI birds). The principle for establishing ZoI, as outlined in the 2021 OPR Practice Note PN01⁵ applies equally to a plan level AA and so the SPR method has been used in this report.

The identification of the European sites within the ZoI has been carried out by utilising GIS datasets from NPWS including that of the European site network. The sites have been determined through the identification of the potential sources of the impacts of the Plan and their pathways for effect to European sites.

¹¹ NPWS Protected sites accessed at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites> accessed January 2026

¹² NPWS The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland web viewer accessed at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/1a721520030d404f899d658d5b6e159a> accessed January 2026

¹³ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland: Volume 1 Summary Overview accessed at https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol1_Summary_Article17.pdf January 2026

¹⁴ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol2_Habitats_Article17.pdf January 2026

¹⁵ The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report accessed at https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol3_Species_Article17.pdf January 2026

3.5.2 Assessment of Effects

Where a plan or project has the potential to undermine the COs, it must be considered as a likely significant effect upon that EU site. The assessment of effects stages determines whether the potential impacts identified using the SPR could result in a likely significant effect.

From establishing the ZoI using the SPR method, focusing on the relevant QIs and SCIs of European sites which may be at risk of likely significant effects arising from the Plan. The potential impacts of the Plan are assessed against the COs of the relevant QIs and SCIs to determine if a likely significant effect may occur as a result of implementation. Within this assessment, factors such as type, extent, duration, intensity, timing, probability and in-combination effects of the potential impact, as well as the vulnerability of the QIs and/or SCIs concerned⁵. Where the potential for significant effects is determined, the corresponding elements of the Plan are considered as adverse effects upon the integrity of European site(s). These are assessed against the COs of the relevant QIs and SCIs.

4. Appropriate Assessment Screening Assessment

4.1 Overview

The scope of the Plan has a scale of application across Castleisland. COs of relevant European sites can be accessed on www.npws.ie and have been considered as part of the screening process, but for the purposes of brevity, these have not been reproduced.

4.2 Source-Pathway-Receptor

Potential connectivity between the implementation of the Plan and European sites and their respective QIs/SCIs is identified via the S-P-R model which highlights the potential impact pathways such as land, air, hydrological pathways etc which may support direct or indirect connectivity. Where connectivity exists between the Plan and receptors, these receptors are taken forward to the assessment of likely significant effects.

4.2.1 Identification of Potential Sources of Impacts

In identifying the potential sources of impacts of the implementation of the Plan, it is important to note that this risk is an estimation based on scientific evidence and best practice. It does not constitute that an impact will occur or that it will result in ecological or environmental damage resulting in significant effects on European sites within the ZoI. The significance of the effect is dependent upon factors such as duration, magnitude and intensity of the project/plan in question and the existence of a credible SPR link. It is also determined by the extent of the exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor.

By establishing a credible source and pathway, the receptors i.e. the QI habitats and QI/SCI species are only considered where links are identified to be credible. Factors including distance between receptors and sources and the means by which the pathway through air, water, ground etc., occurs.

All objectives of the Plan have been reviewed for potential impacts. In instances where objectives have been determined to potentially give rise to construction level activities or impacts arising from the operation of sectors (recreation, water treatment etc.) a variety of potential impacts have been identified. Future infrastructure development, related construction works and the operation of services will likely occur within the Plan period however as the Plan is designed to guide the development of the plan area through a series of projects, exact details regarding construction and operation are yet undecided.

Based on the broad initiatives of the Plan the potential impacts are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Highlighting the Initiatives of the Plan and Potential Impact

Broad Initiative	Potential Impact
Strengthening the Town Core – Main Street Public Realm Project	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and impacts to surface water and spread of INNS
Strengthening the Town Core – Mart Area Masterplan	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and impacts to surface water and spread of INNS
Adaptive Reuse of Buildings – Unlocking Potential	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts
Civic Centre	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and impacts to surface water and spread of INNS
Connecting Communities – Green Links & Blue Corridors	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and impacts to surface water and spread of INNS

Broad Initiative	Potential Impact
Castleisland Town Park Project	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and impacts to surface water and spread of INNS
Ivy Leaf Park Community Regeneration Project	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and impacts to surface water and spread of INNS
Environmental Improvements – Revitalising Streets & Spaces	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and impacts to surface water and spread of INNS
Gateways Enhancements	Local scale works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts and spread of INNS
Events and Animation – Branded Events Calendar	Local scale construction works which have potential to cause disturbance impacts

4.3 Identification of Potential Pathways

Establishing the potential pathways that may exist between the source of impact and receptors of European sites was carried out in consideration of the Plan elements and the viability of direct and indirect pathways on site. This incorporates considering the geographical and topographical elements of the Plan area in addition to any in-situ features which may act as a barrier between the potential sources of impact and potential receptor European sites.

4.3.1 Characteristics of Castleisland

Castleisland is located on the River Maine which flows south west at the from the north and along the southern boundary of the settlement area (Figure 1). The River Maine flows out of Castleisland and opens out to Castlemaine Harbour SAC (Site Code 0000343) approximately 20km west of the settlement area.

Castleisland is located approximately 20km north of Killarney and approximately 18km east of Tralee. The settlement is located in a predominantly agricultural setting with pockets of apparent plantation forestry in the wider area. Castleisland is comprises residential, educational, commercial and, industrial buildings with isolated pockets of parkland. Sports facilities are apparent in the immediate surrounds of the settlement to the north and south. It is dominated by a wide main street reminiscent of a market town heritage. The N23 road is located on the outskirts of the town to the west linking to the N21 and further out the N22.

The Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code 002165) is located approximately 8km to the north, Castlemaine Harbour SAC (Site Code 000343) is located approximately 12km south, Ballyseedy Wood SAC (Site Code 002112) and Sleive Mish Woods SAC (Site code 002185) are located approximately 12km west. The Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (Site Code 002170) is located approximately 15km south west and Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC (Site Code 000365) is located approximately 12km south of the town.

Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (Site Code 004161) is located approximately 5km north of the town. Tralee Bay Complex SPA (Site Code 004188) is located approximately 18km west, Killarney National Park SPA (Site Code 004038) is located approximately 20km to the south and Castlemaine Harbour SPA (Site Code 004029) is located approximately 21 km west of the town.

Castleisland sits on relatively flat ground shaped by the River Maine and surrounding alluvial plains. The wider landscape features gently rising terrain toward the surrounding hills. Indicative locations of European Sites are outlined in Figure 2.

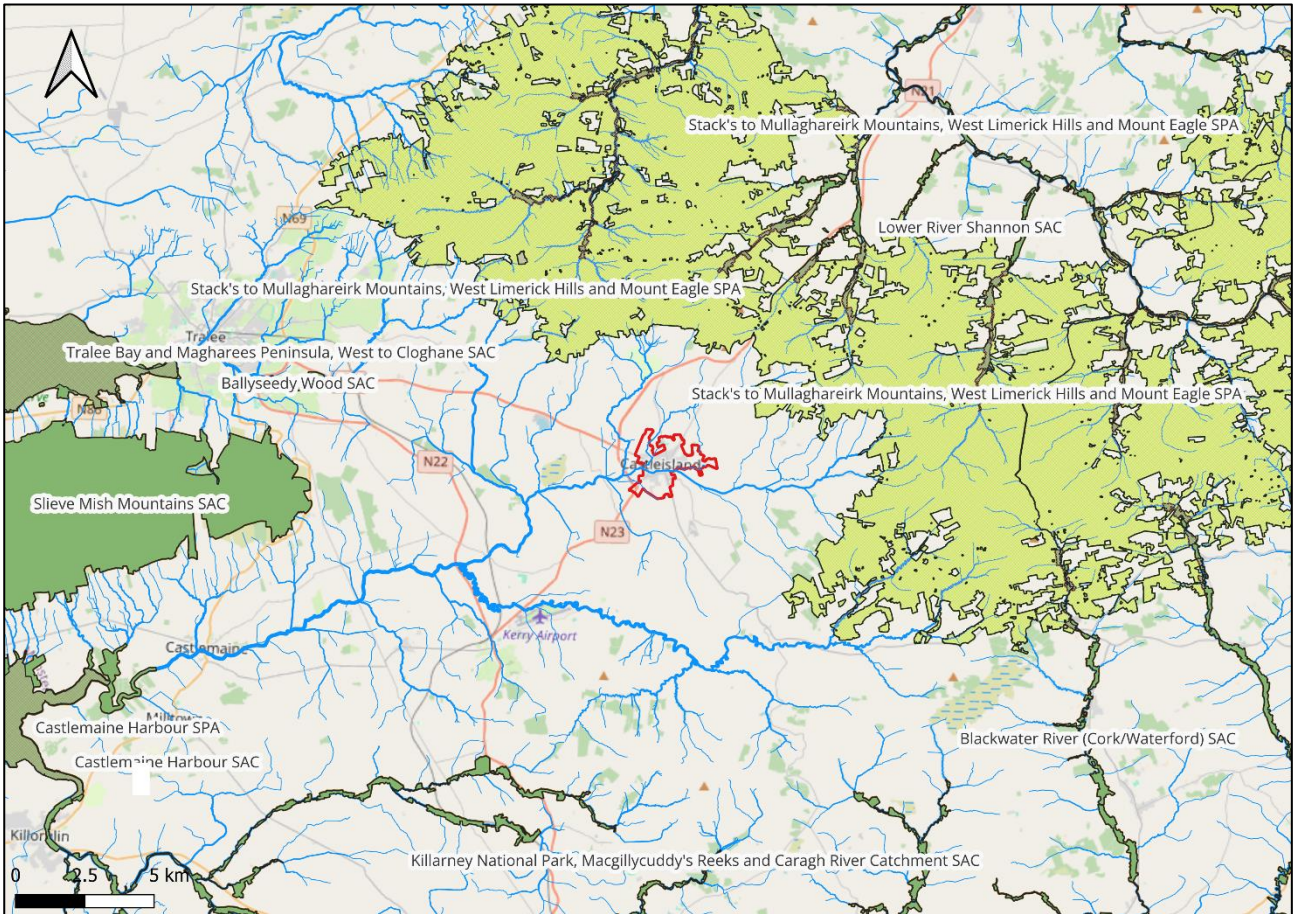


Figure 2 European Sites in the Wider Area

4.3.1.1 Hydrological Connectivity

The River Maine flow through the town which is hydrologically linked to Castlemaine Harbour SAC approximately 20km downstream. The town is not hydrologically connected to any other European site.

4.3.1.2 Functionally Linked Land

The dominant land use in the immediate and wider area appears to be agricultural land use with pockets of conifer plantation. The proximity of the town to Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA opens up the potential pathway with regards to functionally linked lands for hen harrier *Circus cyaneus*. The River Maine has potential to provide a pathway for otter *Lutra lutra* which utilises Castlemaine Harbour SAC. Killarney National Park, Macgillicuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC is designated in part for lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* therefore a potential pathway of effects is considered with regards to functionally linked land. There is potential for species from Tralee Bay Complex SPA, Killarney National Park SPA, and Castlemaine Harbour SPA to utilise agricultural lands of the settlement area.

4.3.2 Identification of European Sites with ZoI

The ZoI has been identified through assessing the magnitude and extent of proposed measures outlined in the Plan. These measures are localised and not anticipated to extend beyond the boundary of Castleisland potential pathways have been identified and therefore, the ZoI has been identified to include the extent of the Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA, Castlemaine Harbour SAC and SPA, Tralee Bay Complex SPA, Killarney Park SPA, and Killarney National Park, Macgillicuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC which are described in more detail in Table 2.

Table 2. European Sites within the Zol

Site code	Site name	Distance from Plan boundary (approx.)	Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests
004161	Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA	5km	Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>)
0000343	Castlemaine Harbour SAC	12km	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]
004188	Tralee Bay Complex SPA	18km	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]

Site code	Site name	Distance from Plan boundary (approx.)	Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests
			<p>Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]</p> <p>Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]</p> <p>Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]</p> <p>Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]</p> <p>Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169]</p> <p>Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]</p> <p>Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]</p> <p>Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855]</p> <p>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>
000365	Killarney National Park, Macgillycuddy's Reeks and Caragh River Catchment SAC	20km	<p>Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110]</p> <p>Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130]</p> <p>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260]</p> <p>Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010]</p> <p>European dry heaths [4030]</p> <p>Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]</p> <p>Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]</p> <p>Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> [6130]</p> <p>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410]</p> <p>Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]</p> <p>Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> [7150]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]</p> <p><i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0]</p> <p><i>Geomalacus maculosus</i> (Kerry Slug) [1024]</p> <p><i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p><i>Euphydrias aurinia</i> (Marsh Fritillary) [1065]</p> <p><i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p><i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p> <p><i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p><i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p><i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]</p> <p><i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p> <p><i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833]</p> <p><i>Alosa fallax killarnensis</i> (Killarney Shad) [5046]</p> <p><i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985]</p>
004038	Killarney National Park SPA	20km	<p>Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>) [A098]</p>

Site code	Site name	Distance from Plan boundary (approx.)	Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests
			Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395]
004029	Castlemaine Harbour SPA	21km	Red-throated Diver (<i>Gavia stellata</i>) [A001] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) [A053] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>) [A164] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>) [A346] Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

4.4 Consideration of Likely Significant Effects - Screening Assessment

A screening assessment using the SPR method has been carried out, assessing the potential for likely significant effects based upon the draft objectives, establishing a viable pathway for effect and the identified receptors of European sites. This assessment is provided Table 3.

Table 3. Screening Assessment of the Objectives of the Castleisland Masterplan

Initiative Reference	Key Action/Objective	Source	Pathway	Receptor	Potential for LSE
Initiative 1: Strengthening the town – main street	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Interpretive signage will also be introduced to educate and engage visitors and residents Small-scale, low-cost improvements including adding street furniture such as benches, water refill stations, and bike racks <p>Introduce temporary planters with colourful flowers or small trees throughout key public spaces</p>	Construction and / or operational sources are not predicted based on high level plans.	Localised works in an existing urban environment and no direct pathway to designated sites within the ZoI, therefore considered to be outside the ZoI for effects	None	No
Initiative 2: Strengthening the town core – the mart area masterplan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the sensitive redevelopment of the sites fronting onto Mart Road, unlocking underutilised land for development. Encourage the use of front gardens as landscaped buffers between private dwellings and the public street, providing a clear transition between public and private realms. Redevelopment of Key Strategic Site at Main Street, An Ríocht Road, and Mart Road: Key Opportunity Site for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed- use development Active frontages, designed to enhance street-level engagement and provide visual interest. Opportunities for mixed- use development to the rear, supporting 	Disturbance, introduction of INNS	Functionally linked lands	<p>Localised works in an existing urban environment and no direct pathway to designated sites within the ZoI.</p> <p>Upgrades of street lighting will be in an already existing urban / lit area therefore not considered to affect any potential foraging routes for bats or roosting / foraging habitat for wintering birds.</p>	No

Initiative Reference	Key Action/Objective	Source	Pathway	Receptor	Potential for LSE
	<p>urban density while maintaining privacy and green space</p> <p>Identification of an Overflow Car Park located ideally south of the Main Street</p>				
Initiative 3: Adaptive reuse of Buildings – unlocking potential	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Adapt vacant buildings to encourage a mix of residential, business, and commercial uses which could include introducing complementary uses— retail, cafés, studios or co-working space at street level, with apartments or live-work units above. 	Disturbance effects from construction and operational phase	Functionally linked lands	<p>Lesser horseshoe bat (LHB) typically have summer roosts in old, generally uninhabited buildings and winter roosts in caves, cellars and mines. This species will typically travel up a maximum of 20km to hibernate and up to 10km during summer months. The closest SAC for this species is 20km distant and there is an apparent absence of direct ecological connectivity with barriers of roads and open lands (cutaway upland bog) between the SAC and Castleisland further decreasing the likelihood of individuals associated with this SAC to be present within Castleisland. LHB therefore are not considered a receptor for this initiative</p> <p>There are no other QI species of European Sites within the ZoI considered to be potential receptors to this initiative</p>	No
Initiative 4: Civic Centre	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Activate buildings through temporary uses (e.g., community workshops, tourism office, or a co-working test space) to build momentum and assess demand. Conduct assessments to identify candidate buildings to determine suitability for adaptive reuse and phased delivery. Prepare concept designs and planning applications for the first phase of refurbishment, ideally focusing on public-facing functions such as the tourism office and a small events space. 	Disturbance effects from construction and operational phase	Functionally linked lands	<p>Lesser horseshoe bat typically have summer roosts in old, generally uninhabited buildings and winter roosts in caves, cellars and mines. This species will typically travel up a maximum of 20km to hibernate and up to 10km during summer months. The closest SAC for this species is 20km distant and there is an apparent absence of direct ecological connectivity with barriers of roads and open lands (cutaway upland bog) between the SAC and Castleisland further decreasing the likelihood of individuals associated with this SAC to be present within Castleisland. LHB therefore are not considered a receptor for this initiative</p>	No

Initiative Reference	Key Action/Objective	Source	Pathway	Receptor	Potential for LSE
	Begin full refurbishment of selected buildings based on feasibility outcomes.			There are no other QI species of European Sites within the ZoI considered to be potential receptors to this initiative	
Initiative 5: Connecting communities – Establishing a network of green links and blue corridors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a variety of experiences along the routes— including sensory paths, educational features, and fitness zones—with play spaces and exercise points that serve diverse user groups. Promote the longer-term development of strategic links between Castleisland and neighbouring towns and destinations through greenways and shared use paths. Explore the potential transformation of the historic disused railway line in the Castleisland area into a dedicated greenway. <p>The initiative will explore opportunities to improve access to the River Maine through new viewing platforms, riverside walkways, and pocket parks that encourage residents and visitors to engage safely with the water environment.</p>	Construction effects – Habitat loss, deterioration of water quality, introduction of INNS	Hydrological connectivity.	<p>The initiative is proposed in an existing urban setting and include upgrades to existing infrastructure. The distance between the SAC and the Settlement area is 12km via the River Maine.</p> <p>The initiative proposed is localised and not proposed to include river crossings or instream works.</p> <p>The proposed works are within an urban environment where existing noise levels associated with human activities will not increase, therefore, there is no risk of disturbance of mobile species listed as qualifying interests of the SAC, such as otter.</p> <p>Standard practice of working alongside watercourses will decrease the potential for pollution and INNS entering the River Maine.</p> <p>Therefore, it is considered that given the distance between Castlemaine and with standard practices of protecting watercourses that should any discharges enter the River Maine they will have no appreciable¹⁶ effect on the conservation objectives of the SAC.</p>	No
Initiative 6: Castleisland Town park project – unleashing nature: exploring,	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> An additional space to the Town Park could be developed as a nature-rich, multi-functional green space combining passive and active recreational areas. Designed around principles of modern, nature-based solutions, the park will feature native planting, pollinator 	Construction effects – Habitat loss, disturbance, deterioration of water quality, introduction of INNS	Hydrological connectivity	The initiative is proposed in an existing urban setting and include upgrades to existing infrastructure. The distance between the SAC and the Settlement area is 12km via the River Maine.	No

¹⁶ Kelly & Ors. v An Bord Pleanála (25 July 2014) Paragraph 48 "The requirement that the effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans or projects that have **no appreciable effect** on the site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill." [emphasis added]

Initiative Reference	Key Action/Objective	Source	Pathway	Receptor	Potential for LSE
playing, embracing the green life in Castleisland	<p>corridors, wildflower meadows, and natural topography to create a vibrant, living landscape.</p> <p>2. Strong physical and visual connections will be established between the town park and Castleisland existing river walk, forming a continuous green corridor through the town. Pathways will be extended to nearby sports clubs, schools, and residential areas, encouraging active travel and supporting healthier lifestyles.</p> <p>3. Existing woodland and wetland areas will be sensitively upgraded with raised walkways, boardwalks, and nature trails to allow immersive exploration while protecting sensitive habitats.</p> <p>4. SuDS features such as rain gardens, bioswales, and permeable paving will be integrated throughout the park to manage surface water and enhance biodiversity.</p>			<p>The initiative proposed is localised and not proposed to include river crossings or instream works.</p> <p>Standard practice of working alongside watercourses will decrease the potential for pollution and INNS entering the River Maine. Therefore, it is considered that given the distance between Castlemaine and with standard practices of protecting watercourses that should any discharges enter the River Maine they will have no appreciable¹⁶ effect on the conservation objectives of the SAC.</p>	
Initiative 7: Ivy Leaf Park Community Regeneration Project	<p>1. Improve current Ivy Leaf Art Centre and develop a new green space at the core of Castleisland, connecting it to the centre of town and improving its setting in align with conservation orders.</p> <p>2. Extend and landscape the cartilage of the building to integrate with adjacent green spaces, creating a more open, accessible, and welcoming approach.</p> <p>Mixed-Use Opportunity Site: Redevelopment could create additional access route to the Centre and enhance its setting and visibility</p>	Disturbance, introduction of INNS	Localised works in an existing urban environment and no direct pathway to designated sites within the ZoI, therefore considered to be outside the ZoI for effects	None	No

Initiative Reference	Key Action/Objective	Source	Pathway	Receptor	Potential for LSE
Initiative 8: The Castle Heritage Regeneration Project	Explore the possibility of a feature bridge, connecting the heritage site with the river walk and improving approach to the castle.	Habitat loss, degradation / fragmentation and / or potential species disturbance / displacement as a result of potential construction and operational activities.	Functionally linked lands for QI species Hydrological connectivity	<p>Lesser horseshoe bat typically have summer roosts in old, generally uninhabited buildings and winter roosts in caves, cellars and mines. This species will typically travel up a maximum of 20km to hibernate and up to 10km during summer months. The closest SAC for this species is 20km distant and there is an apparent absence of direct ecological connectivity with barriers of roads and open lands (cutaway upland bog) between the SAC and Castleisland further decreasing the likelihood of individuals associated with this SAC to be present within Castleisland. LHB therefore are not considered a receptor for this initiative</p> <p>The initiative is proposed in an existing urban setting and include upgrades to existing infrastructure. The distance between the SAC and the Settlement area is 12km via the River Maine.</p> <p>Standard practice of working alongside watercourses will decrease the potential for pollution and INNS entering the River Maine. Therefore, it is considered that given the distance between Castlemaine and with standard practices of protecting watercourses that should any discharges enter the River Maine they will have no appreciable¹⁶ effect on the conservation objectives of the SAC.</p> <p>There are no other mobile QI species of the European Sites within the ZoI with potential to be found in this building.</p>	No
Initiative 9: Environmental Improvements - Revitalising streets,	1. Focusing on the repair and restoration of existing structures	No potential source of impacts anticipated arising from this initiative	Localised works in an existing urban environment and no direct pathway to designated sites within the	None	No

Initiative Reference	Key Action/Objective	Source	Pathway	Receptor	Potential for LSE
transforming spaces	<p>2. Introduce moveable street furniture that allows for adaptable public spaces</p> <p>3. Incorporate SuDS elements like rain gardens and tree pits into the streetscape design to improve stormwater management</p> <p>Upgrading properties with energy-efficient measures, such as improved insulation and window repairs</p>		ZoI, therefore considered to be outside the ZoI for effects		
Initiative 10: Gateway Enhancements – crafting memorable entrances to Castleisland	<p>1. Install flowerbeds featuring native plants at the roundabouts, complemented by welcoming signs that greet everyone entering Castleisland.</p> <p>2. Set up directional signs pointing the way to local landmarks, community centres, or upcoming festivals.</p> <p>3. Use solar-powered lights and native plants in landscaping to set an example for sustainable practices and reduce the environmental footprint of the gateway enhancements.</p>	No potential source of impacts anticipated arising from this initiative	Localised works in an existing urban environment and no direct pathway to designated sites within the ZoI, therefore considered to be outside the ZoI for effects	None	No
Initiative 11: Events and animation – a diverse calendar of branded events	Establish a centralised and dynamic events calendar is essential for promoting Castleisland’s vibrant cultural scene	No potential source of impacts anticipated arising from this initiative	Localised works in an existing urban environment and no direct pathway to designated sites within the ZoI, therefore considered to be outside the ZoI for effects	None	No

At the plan level, the initiatives of the Plan have not been identified as having LSE on the COs of any European Site. Added to this, the Plan aligns with the Variation 3 of the Kerry County Development Plan which stipulates mitigation measures in the NIR relevant to developments in Castleisland, which further provides information on there being no LSE relevant to the objectives of the Plan.

4.5 Assessment of In-Combination Effects with other Plans and Projects

In-combination effects refer to a series of individual effects that may, in combination, produce a potential likely significant effect. The underlying intention of this in-combination assessment is to take account of in-combination effects from existing or proposed plans and projects and these will often only occur over time.

Plans have been identified, which have the potential to interact with the implementation objectives for the Plan and thereby result in in-combination effects. Projects have not been considered here as these are more appropriately considered at assessment for each individual project in the initiative. Relevant plans include:

- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP)
- National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI)
- Climate Action Plan 2025
- National Sustainable Mobility Policy
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region 2019-2031

The plans outlined above have been subject to their own AA within which outlines that specific projects developed within the plans are subject to their own AA which will require mitigation to reduce effects on QIs associated with the European sites within the ZoI for this assessment..

5. Conclusion

Following a detailed Screening for Appropriate Assessment, undertaken in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), this assessment has examined the potential for the Castleisland Town Centre First Masterplan to result in Likely Significant Effects on any European site.

Using the Source–Pathway–Receptor framework, the ZoI of the Plan was defined, and all objectives and initiatives were assessed with regard to their potential to affect the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of European sites. The analysis confirms that:

- The initiatives proposed under the Plan are localised in nature and occur within a highly modified urban environment.
- No direct pathways for significant effects on European sites were identified.
- Indirect pathways—principally hydrological and ecological—were found not to give rise to likely significant effects due to distance, scale, design intent, and the application of standard best-practice measures.
- No mechanisms for in-combination effects with other relevant plans or programmes were identified that would alter this conclusion.

Applying the precautionary principle, and based on the best available scientific information, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Castleisland Town Centre First Masterplan will not result in Likely Significant Effects, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, on any European site.