

Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report and Determination for Proposed Variation 7 to Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 (November 2020)



Planning Department

Galway City Council

Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023.....	3
3.	Proposed Variation No. 7 to Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023.....	4
4.	Assessment in terms of Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended.....	7
5.	Consultation.....	10
6.	Determination.....	101

1. Introduction

Galway City Council proposes to make a variation to the *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023* under Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening is the process for determining whether the Proposed Variation would warrant a SEA. As part of the SEA screening process, consultation is required with Environmental Authorities.

A summary of Proposed Variation No. 7 to the *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023* is as follows:

- Amend the Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map to extend the existing Specific Objective – Bus Route (GTS) to provide for a link through RA zoned lands from College Road to Lough Atalia Road.
- Amend Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the Galway Transport Strategy projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network.

It is necessary to vary the Development Plan to facilitate these changes.

The assessment in this report takes into consideration relevant criteria set out in Schedule 2A 'Criteria for determining whether a plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment' of the SEA Regulations (as amended), the observation received from the Environmental Authority (EPA), the *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023*/variations and accompanying environmental reports. It is also informed by the *Screening for AA Report for Proposed Variation No. 7 to the GCDP 2017-2023 (September 2020)* which concluded that the Proposed Variation, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have significant effects on any European Sites.

2. Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023

The *Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 SEA Statement* and accompanying Environmental Report outlined that the SEA process was integrated throughout the preparation of the Development Plan and guided the preparation of development scenarios for the city. The overarching Core Strategy of the Development Plan supports strategies, policies and objectives for the protection of the city's environment. The Development Plan includes supporting the *Galway Transport Strategy 2016-2035* (GTS) and the GTS is primarily reflected in the Core Strategy and Chapter 3 Transportation. The SEA process of the Development Plan concluded that, after taking account of the measures which have been integrated into the Plan, which provide for and contribute towards environmental protection, environmental management and sustainable development, the Plan is mitigated so as not to have significant adverse environmental impact. A full review of the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 will commence January 2021.

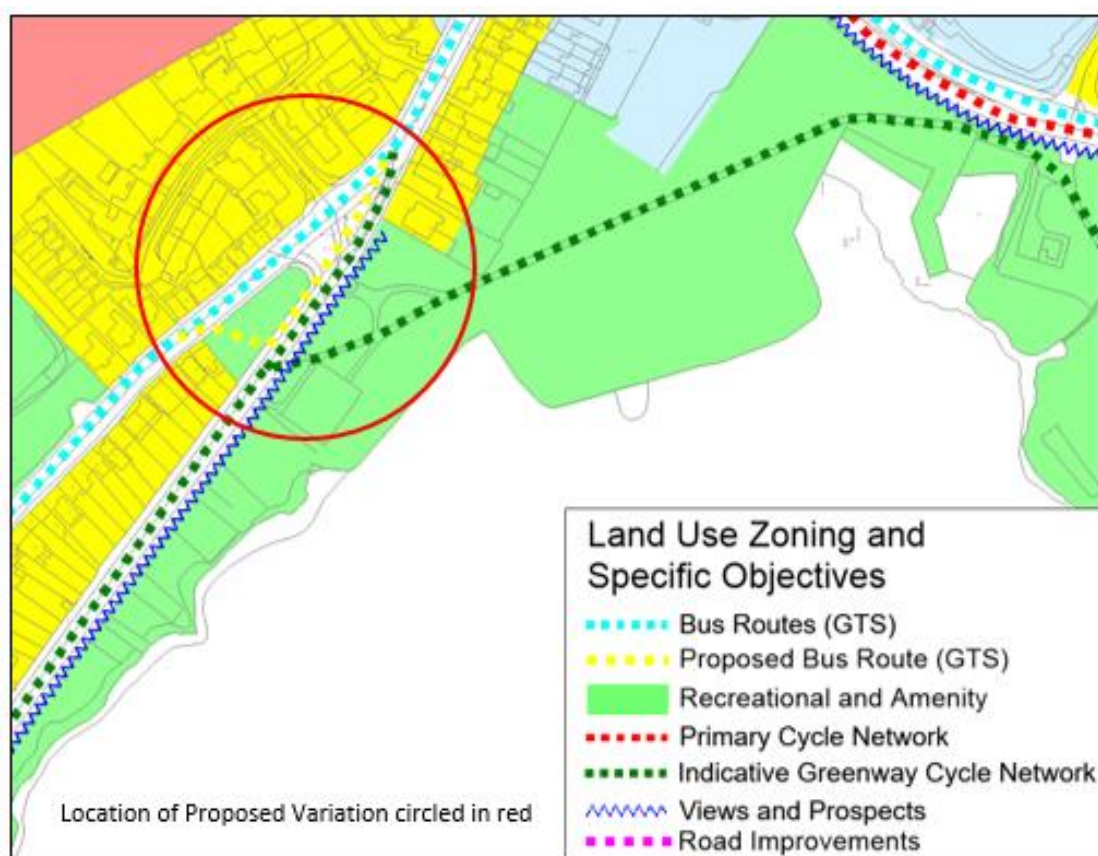
3. Proposed Variation No. 7 to Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023

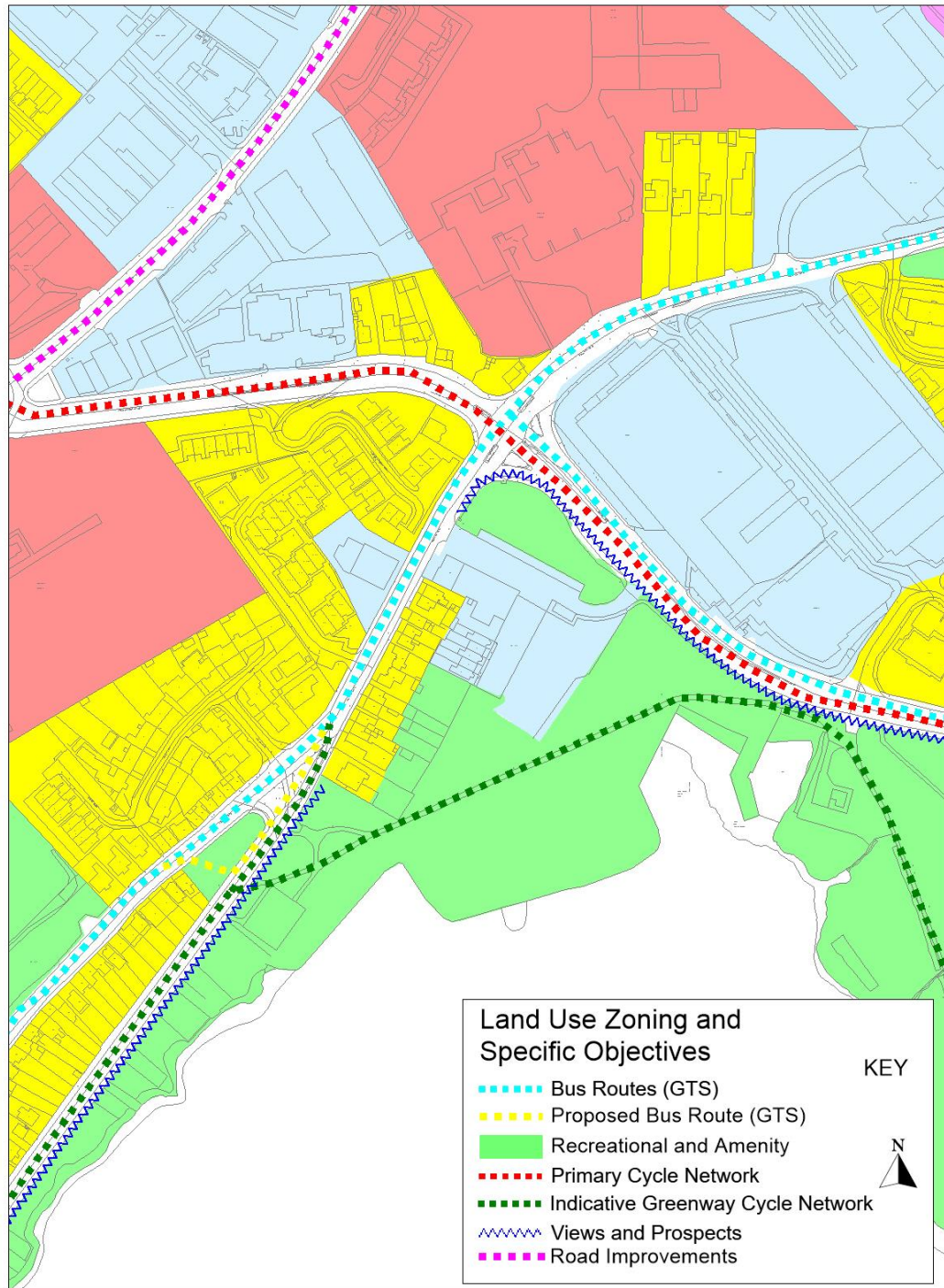
Galway City Council as a Planning Authority is proposing to make a variation to the Galway City Development Plan 2017- 2023 as provided for in Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Proposed Variation is presented below:

Amend Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map to Extend the existing Specific Objective – Bus Route (GTS) to provide for a link through RA zoned lands from College Road to Lough Atalia Road.

This relates to the Galway Transport Strategy Bus Route objective, the route of which is mapped on the City Development Plan Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map.

The following extracts from the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map shows the modification to the Bus Route (GTS) which constitutes the Proposed Variation highlighted in Yellow.





Map of Extract of Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map showing Proposed Variation – Proposed Bus Route (GTS)

Amend Chapter 3, Section 3.10 Specific Objectives (additional text highlighted in red):

Traffic and Road Network

Implement the traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the provision of the City Centre Access Network as part of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and support any additional land requirements where deemed necessary through design along the associated route and acknowledge that the objective to deliver the City Centre Access Network and associated traffic management and infrastructural changes has priority over other objectives including land use zoning objectives along identified routes.

Public Transport

Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the provision of the 'Cross City Link' as part of the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and support any additional land requirements where deemed necessary through design along the associated routes and acknowledge that the objective to deliver the Cross City Link and associated traffic management and infrastructural changes has priority over other objectives including land use zoning objectives along identified routes.

Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the development of a public bus network in accordance with the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and support any additional land requirements where deemed necessary through design along the associated routes and acknowledge that the objective to deliver the public bus network and associated traffic management and infrastructural changes has priority over other objectives including land use zoning objectives along identified routes.

Cycling

Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the development of a cycle network including for a core, secondary and feeder network in accordance with the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and support any additional land requirements where deemed necessary through design along the associated routes and acknowledge that the objective to deliver the cycle network and associated traffic management and infrastructural changes has priority over other objectives including land use zoning objectives along identified routes.

The purpose of the variation is to accommodate a minor realignment of the bus route which is proposed to be routed through RA zoned lands located at the junction of College Road and Lough Atalia Road. The change proposed has been brought about as a result of the continuing design process of the Cross City Link project. The Cross City Link will support improvements to public transport routes with high frequency bus services linking the eastern and western suburbs of the city through the city centre. It will also provide for high quality pedestrian and cyclist facilities.

The modification to the Bus Route objective at this location will enable detailed plans for the Cross City Link to advance to consent application stage. The Cross City Link is a key project of the Galway Transport Strategy and is reflected in the City Development Plan Policy 3.4 *"Support the GTS proposals to prioritise public transport movements in the city centre through the implementation of a designated public transport route, the Cross-City Link"*. It is also supported by the National Transport Authority (NTA) through the Galway BusConnects programme. This realignment will also have the potential to allow the redundant road space to be used for amenity purposes.

The changes proposed have been brought about as a result of the continuing design and implementation process of key Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) projects namely the City Centre Access

Network, the Cross City Link, the Public Bus Network and the Cycle Network. The amended wording extends support for these projects.

Notwithstanding this, many of the associated projects by their nature will need to go through the planning consent process which will include for all associated detailed design and supporting environmental assessments, a specific public consultation period and a consequent assessment and decision making stage.

4. Assessment in terms of Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 as amended

1.0 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PLAN HAVING REGARD IN PARTICULAR TO:
<p>1.1 The degree to which the plan sets a framework for projects and other activities, either with regard to the location, nature, size and operating conditions, or by allocating resources</p> <p>The purpose of the Proposed Variation is to accommodate a minor realignment of the bus route (GTS) objective, which is mapped on the Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map and to make amendments to Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network. The changes proposed have been brought about as a result of the continuing design and implementation process of key GTS projects namely the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, the Public Bus Network and the Cycle Network. The text allow for the consideration of additional land requirements where deemed necessary through design to support the GTS. The Development Plan includes supporting the <i>Galway Transport Strategy 2016-2035</i> and these key projects of the GTS. The Proposed Variation facilitates implementation of Policy 3.3 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS), Policy 3.4 Traffic Network, Policy 3.5 Public Transport, Policy 3.6 Cycling and Walking and Policy 3.7 Road and Street Network and Accessibility of the Development Plan. The Proposed Variation is consistent with existing transport policy/objectives and the requirements for sustainable development within the Plan.</p>
<p>1.2 The degree to which the plan influences other plans, including those in a hierarchy</p> <p>The Development Plan influences local plans and projects within the city boundary. The Plan supports the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and key GTS projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network. The Proposed Variation relates to a minor modification of the bus route (GTS) objective, which is mapped on the Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map and amendments to Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the projects. The Proposed Variation is consistent with the Plan's transport policy/objectives and the requirements for sustainable development within the Plan.</p>
<p>1.3 The relevance of the plan for the integration of environmental considerations, in particular with a view to promoting sustainable development</p> <p>The SEA process of the Development Plan/variations previously considered potential environmental impacts of Development Plan strategy, policy and objectives and the integration of environmental considerations, in consultation with the relevant Environmental Authorities. Protective policy and mitigation measures are included into the Development Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage and the Proposed Variation does not alter these measures. Any development arising from the Proposed Variation must consider safeguards and environmental considerations in line with Development Plan policy. The integration of environmental considerations, in particular promoting sustainable transport measures and environmental protection measures will be achieved through</p>

the implementation of all relevant policies and objectives within the Plan. The Proposed Variation is also subject to Screening for AA in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

1.4 Environmental problems relevant to the plan

Environmental problems relevant to the Plan were considered under the SEA and AA of the Development Plan which ensured that where potential uncertain or negative environmental affects arose they would be balanced by mitigation and monitoring measures. The SEA of the Development Plan identified for Policy 3.3 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS), Policy 3.4 Traffic Network, Policy 3.5 Public Transport, Policy 3.6 Cycling and Walking and Policy 3.7 Road and Street Network and Accessibility that there may be potential for likely significant negative impact on biodiversity flora and fauna, soil and geology, water, air and climate and on landscape environmental indicators. Unknown potential environmental effects on cultural heritage were also identified. The Development Plan incorporates mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage. They include the following listed below:

Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna, Soils & Geology

- 4.1 Aim, Context and Strategy – Strategy
- Policy 4.1 Green Network
- Policy 4.2 Protected Spaces: Sites of European, National and Local Ecological Importance

Water

- Policy 4.3 Blue Spaces: Coast, Canals and Waterways
- Policy 4.5.1 Community Spaces: Greenways and Public Rights of Ways
- Policy 9.3 Flood Risk Assessment
- Policy 9.6 Water Quality
- Policy 9.8 Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

Air Quality

- 3.1 Aim Context and Strategy
- Policy 9.10 Air Quality & Noise

Cultural Heritage

- Policy 8.5 Archaeology

Landscape

- Policy 4.4.1 Green Spaces: Urban Woodlands and Trees
- Policy 8.7 Urban Design
- Policy 10.3 Salthill

The Proposed Variation is to accommodate a minor realignment of the bus route (GTS) objective which is mapped on the Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map and amendments to Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the Galway Transport Strategy projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network. The text allow for the consideration of additional land requirements where deemed necessary through design to support the GTS. The Development Plan includes supporting the *Galway Transport Strategy 2016-2035* and these key projects of the GTS. The Proposed Variation is consistent with Policy 3.3 Galway Transport Strategy (GTS), Policy 3.4 Traffic Network, Policy 3.5 Public Transport, Policy 3.6 Cycling and Walking and Policy 3.7 Road and Street Network and Accessibility of the Development Plan. The Development Plan incorporates mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage. The Proposed Variation does not alter mitigation measures set out in the Plan and no additional significant impact would be expected to result from the Proposed Variation.

1.5 The relevance of the plan for the implementation of European Union legislation on the environment (e.g. plans linked to waste management or water protection)
These plans and programmes are addressed in the Development Plan and the SEA and AA of the Plan. The Proposed Variation does not conflict with any European Union legislation on the environment.
2.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EFFECTS AND OF THE AREA LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED, HAVING REGARD, IN PARTICULAR TO:
2.1 The probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of the effects
The location of the Proposed Variation is within a developed urban environment. The Proposed Variation relates to a minor realignment of the bus route (GTS) objective and amendments to Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the Galway Transport Strategy projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network. The Proposed Variation is consistent with transport policy/objectives of the Development Plan/variations which were previously assessed under the SEA and AA process. Any future development proposal must accord with avoidance/mitigation measures of the Development Plan at project level detailed design stage.
2.2 The cumulative nature of the effects
The nature of effects has been considered under the SEA and AA of the Development Plan/variations. The Proposed Variation is consistent with transport policy/objectives in the Development Plan, it does not materially alter the strategy in the Plan and is not likely to have significant effects on the environment subject to the protective measures in the Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects.
2.3 The transboundary nature of the effects
The Proposed Variation is consistent with transport policy/objectives of the Development Plan/variations which were previously assessed under the SEA and AA process. No transboundary nature of effects identified.
2.4 The risks to human health or the environment (e.g. due to accidents)
<p>The Proposed Variation relates to a minor realignment of the bus route (GTS) objective and amendments to Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the Galway Transport Strategy projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network. The Proposed Variation facilitates the implementation of transport policy of the Plan. The SEA of the Development Plan identified potential positive benefits on the population and on air and climate and material assets indicators for related policies/objectives. Potential negative or unknown environmental impacts were also identified depending on the sensitivity of local environment. The overall strategy of the Development Plan is to protect and improve the environment of the city and the Plan incorporates mitigation measures to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage (See also Section 1.4 above). The Proposed Variation is consistent with existing transport policy/objectives, the requirements for sustainable development within the Plan and does not alter safeguards in the Plan.</p> <p>The <i>Screening for AA Report for Proposed Variation No. 7 to the GCDP 2017-2023 (September 2020)</i> outlines that there is proximal connectivity to European sites. The Screening for AA Report concludes that the Proposed Variation, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have significant effects on any European Sites.</p>
2.5 The magnitude and spatial extent of the effects (geographical area and size of population likely to be affected)
The Development Plan applies to Galway City.

2.6 The value, and vulnerability of the area likely to be affected due to:**(a) special natural characteristics or cultural heritage;****(b) exceeded environmental quality standards or limit values;****(c) intensive land use**

The Development Plan includes existing policies to facilitate sustainable development and growth of the city in line with EU and national legislation. Policy is included in the Development Plan to ensure that special natural characteristics and cultural heritage are protected. Mitigation measures are included in the Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects. Any development proposal resulting from the Proposed Variation will be assessed against policy including environmental protection policies set out in the Development Plan and in line with the requirements of EU and national legislation.

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

The Development Plan includes existing policies that protect areas or landscapes which have a recognised national, European Union or international protection status and the Proposed Variation will not alter safeguards. The *Screening for AA Report for Proposed Variation No. 7 to the GCDP 2017-2023 (September 2020)* concludes that the Proposed Variation, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have significant effects on any European Sites.

5. Consultation

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

Consultee	Observation
Environmental Protection Agency	Observation received
Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment	Acknowledgement received from GSI division, no observation
Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	No comment received
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine	No comment received
Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government	No comment received
Galway County Council	No comment received

A summary of the observation from the EPA is detailed below:

Summary of Observation		
Environmental Authority	Topic	Summary
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Specific comments on Variation	In relation to the proposed amendments to Chapter 3 Section 3.10 Specific Objectives, suggest that text in the subsections on 'Traffic and Road Network', 'Public Transport' and 'Cycling', could also include the following text "subject to the relevant environmental assessments being carried out".

Summary of Observation		
Environmental Authority	Topic	Summary
	Sustainable development	Ensure that Variation is consistent with need for proper planning and sustainable development. Ensure that Variation align with higher level plans and programmes including NPF and RSES.
	Legislative Requirements	Take into account SEA legislation, guidelines and resources including for any modifications to the Proposed Variation. Highlights legislative requirements for consultation with Environmental Authorities including that a copy of determination should be made available for public inspection and sent to Environmental Authorities.
	Appropriate Assessment	Ensure Variation comply with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

The comments from the EPA are noted. The City Development Plan aligns with the NPF and the RSES, the Development Plan contains a strong focus on the protection, sustainable use and management of heritage and a commitment for development to take place in an environmentally sustainable manner. Protective policy and mitigation measures are already included into the City Development Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage. Any development arising from the Proposed Variation must consider safeguards and environmental considerations in line with City Development Plan policy.

The SEA screening process is being carried out in consultation with the relevant bodies and legislative requirements of the SEA Directive and national legislation are being adhered to. SEA guidance including that issued by the EPA has informed the screening process. The Proposed Variation was also subject to Screening for AA in compliance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive which concluded that the Proposed Variation do not have the potential to give rise to significant effects upon European sites, alone and or in-combination with other plans and projects.

6. Determination

Having considered the Proposed Variation in accordance with the criteria set out in Schedule 2A of the Planning and Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004 (as amended) and the observation received from the Environmental Authorities (EPA), it is considered that the Proposed Variation to the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 would not be likely to have such significant effects on the environment to warrant a full Strategic Environmental Assessment. This determination considers the Proposed Variation within the framework of the overall City Development Plan, taking account of the policies and objectives set out in the Plan and the *Screening for AA Report for Proposed Variation No. 7 to the GCDP 2017-2023 (September 2020)* which concluded that the Proposed Variation, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have significant effects on any European Sites. A summary of the assessment is as follows:

Summary of Assessment
<p>Proposed Variation No. 7:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend the Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map to extend the existing Specific Objective – Bus Route (GTS) to provide for a link through RA zoned lands from College Road to Lough Atalia Road. • Amend Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the Galway Transport Strategy projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network.
<p>The Proposed Variation relates to a minor modification to an existing specific objective - Bus Route (GTS) which is mapped on the Land Use Zoning and Specific Objectives Map and amendments to Section 3.10 Specific Objectives to provide additional text that further supports the Galway Transport Strategy projects including Public Transport measures, the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, and the Cycle Network. The changes proposed have been brought about as a result of the continuing design and implementation process of key Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) projects namely the City Centre Access Network, the Cross City Link, the Public Bus Network and the Cycle Network. The Development Plan includes supporting the <i>Galway Transport Strategy 2016-2035</i> and these key projects of the GTS. The Proposed Variation is consistent with existing transport policies/objectives and is not likely to have such a significant effect on the environment to warrant a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Protective policy and mitigation measures are included into the Development Plan to reduce, avoid or eliminate potential environmental effects and ensure that any potential impacts are addressed at project level detailed design stage and the Proposed Variation does not alter these measures.</p>

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

Planning Department

November 2020