

MWP

Planning Statement
Ballycar Wind Farm Project

Ballycar Green Energy Ltd.

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1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared by MWP, on behalf of Ballycar Green Energy Ltd. (the Applicant), to accompany a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application for a proposed wind energy project in County Clare, named Ballycar Wind Farm.

The application is made under section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, as directed by An Bord Pleanála following pre-planning discussions (ABP ref: ABP-312193-22). The Ballycar Wind Farm proposal includes 12 wind turbines, substation, met mast, access tracks, borrow pit, deposition areas, and grid connection. It is envisaged that the project will exceed a 50-megawatt (MW) capacity scale. It is a project of strategic importance by reference to the requirements of sections 37A(2)(a),(b) and (c) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The report provides a concise overview of the planning merits of the proposed development. The purpose of this planning report is to provide details which will assist An Bord Pleanála in determining whether the proposed development is in accordance with the planning and sustainable development of the area, and accordingly whether planning permission should be granted for the proposed development. The report is set out as follows:

- **Section 2: Site Description** - This section provides a description of the site, its context, and the relevant planning history;
- **Section 3: Description of proposed development** - This section describes the proposal;
- **Section 4: Planning Policy Framework** - This section outlines the national, regional and local planning policies relevant to the application site and proposed development;
- **Section 5: Planning Assessment** - This section provides an assessment of the principle of development and other relevant considerations; and
- **Section 6: Conclusion** - This section summarises the key points set out in the report.

This Planning Report comprises part of a suite of application documents, which also includes an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS). All documents should be read in order to have a full understanding of the nature, location and extent of the proposed development.

2. Site Description

2.1 The Site and Environs

The proposed development is located in a rural area of southeast Clare to the east of Woodcock Hill and approximately 3km northwest of Ardnacrusha, 3km northwest of Limerick City and Suburbs and 7km east of Sixmilebridge. **Figure 2-1** shows the proposed development site boundary. The area within this boundary is 104.7ha.

The proposed wind farm and associated infrastructure lie within the townlands of Cappateemore East, Ballycannan West, Ballycannan East, Ballycar South, Ballycar North and Glennagross (or se Glenagross, Glennacross).

Existing land cover at the site is a mix of Pastures and Coniferous Forests. The majority of the site consists of pastures while the more elevated, areas of the site are composed of coniferous forest, which is owned and managed commercially. The surrounding land includes some pastures and lands principally occupied by agriculture. A large commercial quarry lies beyond the north-eastern boundary of the site. Two local roads run in a north - south direction on either side to the proposed windfarm site.

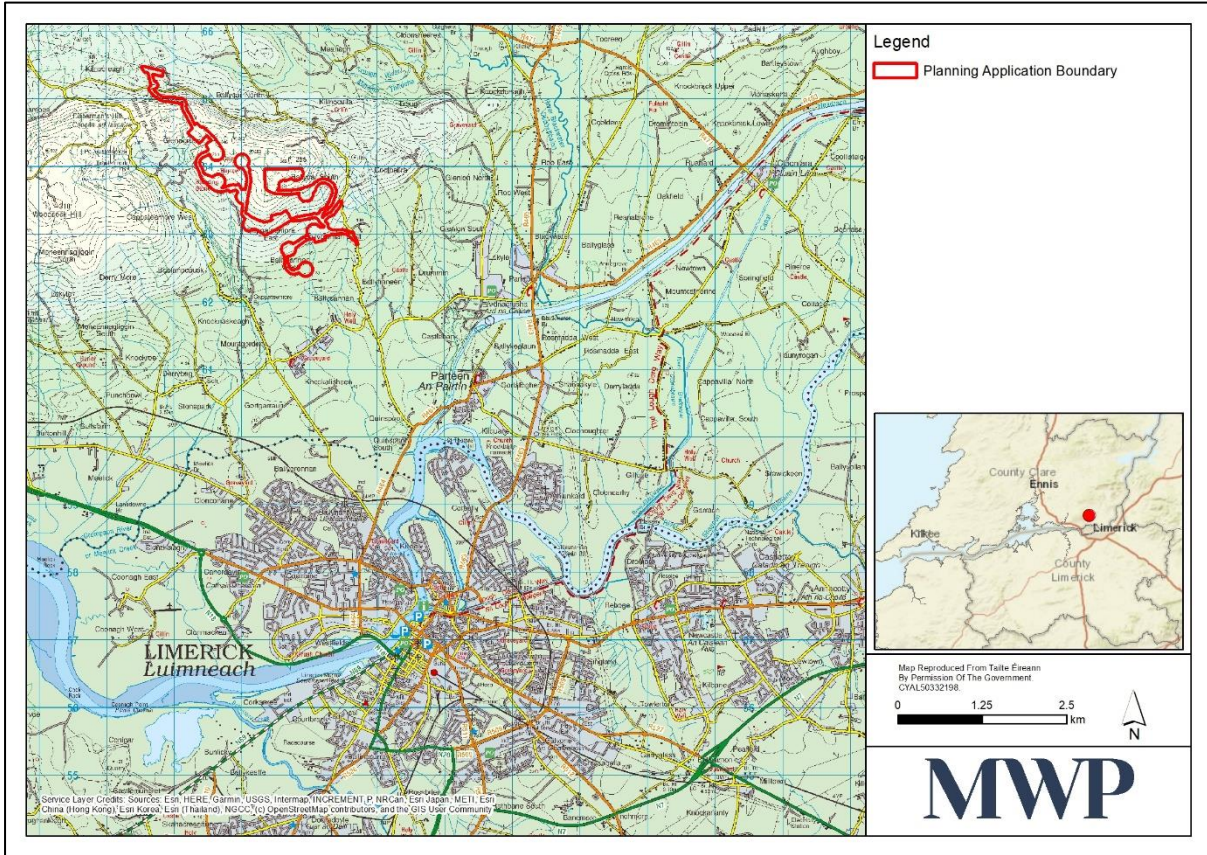


Figure 2-1: Planning Application Area and Site Location

2.2 Planning History

There are no planning applications associated with the subject site available through Clare County Council’s online planning application search facility.

Extensive consultation was undertaken in relation to the project including meetings with both An Bord Pleanála and Clare County Council. Details of the consultation methods and outcomes are set out in **Volume II Chapter 1** of the **EIAR** report accompanying the planning application.

2.3 Designation

The development lands principally lie within wind energy areas outlined in the Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) for County Clare as follows (**Figure 2-2**):

- Strategic for wind energy development (All turbines); and

- Acceptable in Principle (associated infrastructure and access tracks).

All of the proposed infrastructure have been subject to the same robust constraints, buffers, and environmental studies regardless of location and wind energy designation.

Other relevant designations and features such as archaeology, ecology, and landscape are identified in other supporting reports and not repeated within this planning report.

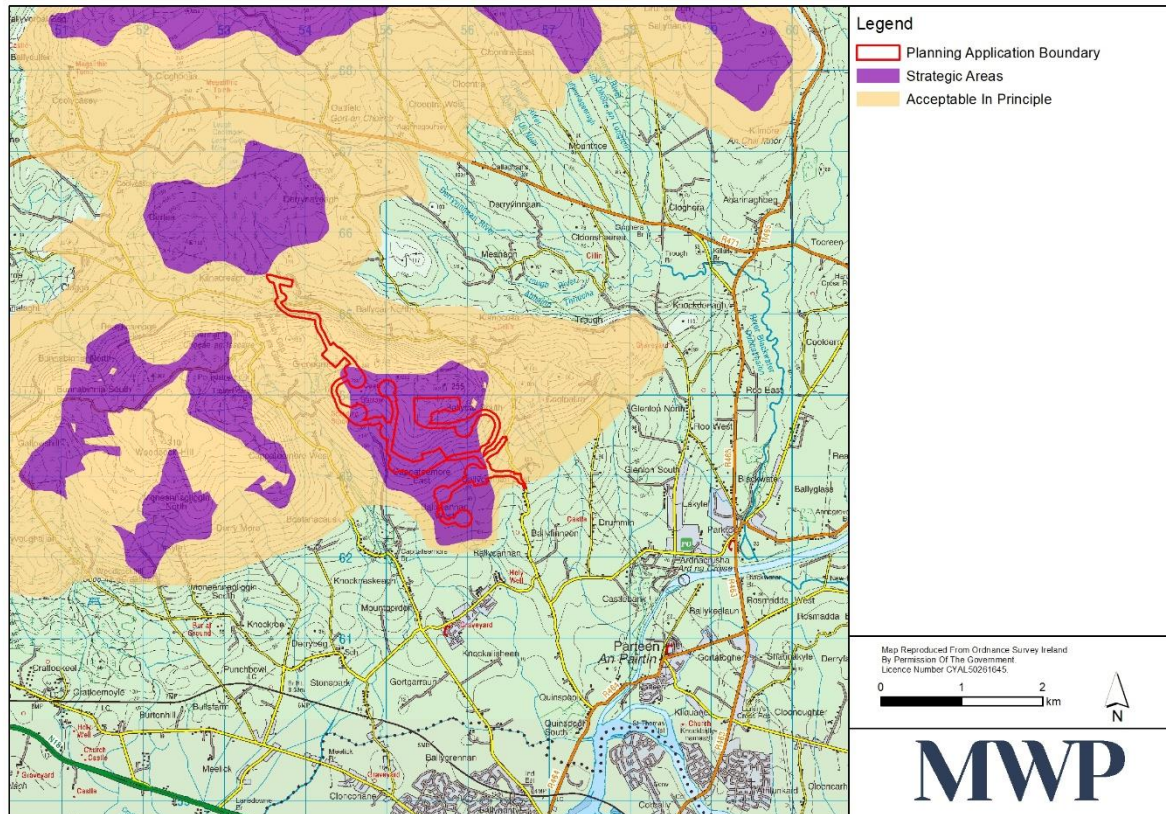


Figure 2-2: Wind Energy Zoning within the Main Site Boundary

3. Description of Proposal

The development for which planning permission is sought in the planning application (the proposed development) will include the following:

- 12 No. Wind Turbines (blade tip height up to 158m). Eleven of the turbines will have a hub height of 90m and a blade length of 68m and one turbine (T10) will have a hub height of 82m and a blade length of 68m.
- 12 No. Wind Turbine foundations and hardstand areas.
- 1 No. Permanent Meteorological Mast (90m height) and foundation and associated hardstand areas.
- 1 No. Electrical Substation (110 kV) including associated ancillary buildings, security fencing and all associated works.
- 2 No. Developed Site Entrances, one temporary entrance to facilitate construction traffic and one permanent entrance.

- New and upgraded internal site access tracks.
- Provision of an on-site Visitor cabin and parking.
- All associated underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the proposed turbines to the proposed onsite substation.
- Laying of approximately 1.5km of underground electricity cabling to facilitate the connection to the national grid from the proposed onsite substation to connect to an existing 110 kV overhead line.
- Temporary works on sections of the public road network along the turbine delivery route (including hedge or tree cutting, relocation of powerlines/poles, lampposts, signage, and local road widening).
- 1 No. Temporary construction site compound and additional mobile welfare unit.
- 1 No. Borrow pit to be used as a source of stone material during construction.
- 3 No. spoil deposition areas (one at borrow pit location).
- Associated surface water management systems.
- Tree felling for wind farm infrastructure.

In addition to the proposed development as described, there is a proposed underground connection between T1 and the proposed 110 kV substation which will be located northwest of T1. The underground connection from T1 is routed along existing forestry tracks and through conifer forestry to the northwest of the wind farm site and connects to the proposed 110 kV substation. From the proposed 110 kV substation, an underground cable is routed in a northwest direction where it connects to the existing 110 kV overhead line. The proposed 110 kV grid route is approximately 1.5km in length. 1.0km of the 110 kV grid route is proposed within existing forestry tracks. The remaining 0.5km is routed through conifer forestry. It also crosses a 3m wide local public road. A new unbound stone access track will be constructed over the 110 kV grid route on private lands to allow access for future maintenance.

A ten-year consent is being requested for this development. That is, planning consent for the construction of the development would remain valid for ten years following the grant of permission.

The applicant requests the grant of permission is on the basis of an operational period of no less than 35 years from the date of full operational commissioning of the wind farm, with permission for the onsite substation sought in perpetuity given that the substation will form part of the national electricity network. Therefore, the substation will be retained as a permanent structure and will not be removed.

The site layout is provided in **Figure 3-1**.

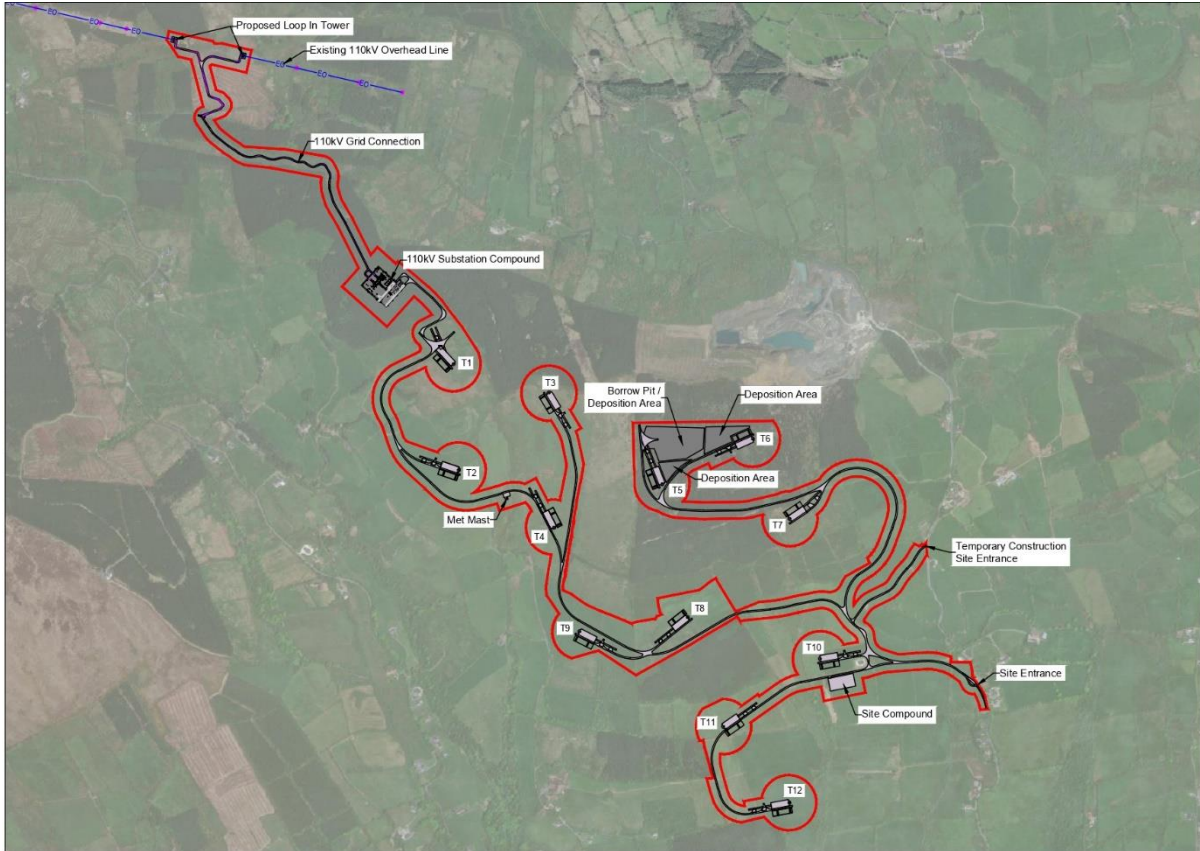


Figure 3-1: Site Layout

4. Planning Policy Context

This Section outlines the relevant national, regional and local planning policies including any new and emerging policy and development objectives relating to climate change and renewable energy.

4.1 National Policy

4.1.1 Planning Guidelines for Wind Energy (DoEHLG 2006)

In 2006, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) published Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, requiring planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála to have regard to them. The Guidelines offer advice to planning authorities on planning for wind energy through the development plan process and in determining applications for planning permission. They advise on land use and environmental issues for land-based (onshore) wind farms. They also provide clarity to prospective developers and local communities. The Guidelines are also intended to ensure a consistency of approach throughout the country in the identification of suitable locations for wind energy development and the treatment of planning applications for wind energy developments.

4.1.2 Best Practice Guidelines for the Wind Energy Industry (IWEA 2012)

These Guidelines were published in April 2012 as a best practice guide for wind energy developments, replacing the 2008 and 1994 publications of the same title. In the 2012 publication, there is a much greater emphasis on the environmental and community aspects of development, reflecting increased awareness and the need for a higher level of scoping and wider consultation. It is intended as a 'reference document' to complement the DoHPCLG's (formerly DoEHLG) 2006 guidelines and its main purpose is to encourage 'responsible and sensitive wind farm development' that takes into consideration the concerns of local communities, planners and other interested parties. The emphasis is on responsible and sustainable design and environmental practices, external stakeholder relations and good community engagement practices.

Issues addressed include:

- Feasibility Study Guidelines;
- Planning and Environmental Legislation;
- Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Wind Farm layout;
- Health and Safety/Construction and Operation; and
- Community Engagement.

4.1.3 Draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines (DoHPLG, Dec 2019)

In December 2019, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DoHPLG) published proposed draft revised guidelines for wind energy developments addressing a number of key aspects including noise, visual amenity setback, shadow flicker, community consultation obligations, community dividend and grid connections. The Draft Revised Guidelines were consulted on from 12th December 2019 to 19th February 2020. The publication of the Draft Guidelines at the end of 2019 followed a lengthy review process including the issue of draft revisions in December 2013 and a Preferred Draft Approach document in June 2017. At the time of writing, the Guidelines have not yet been finalised and are not formally in place, therefore the 2006 Guidelines continue to apply to new developments. Notwithstanding this, the design and environmental assessment of the proposed project has taken due consideration of the proposed new guidelines where applicable.

4.1.4 Climate Action Plan 2023

The Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) is the second annual update to Ireland's Climate Action 2019. This plan is the first to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and following the introduction, in 2022, of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings.

The Plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. Wind energy is at the heart of the Plan with a target of 9GW of onshore wind energy by 2030 (currently around 4.4GW, WEI 2022).

The [Q1 Progress Report of the 2023 Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP23) has been published, setting out delivery of significant actions across critical sectors. It details progress on the 36 actions due for delivery and reporting in Q1 2023 indicates a delivery rate of 75% was achieved. The plan aims to support at least 500 MW of local community-based renewable energy projects and increased levels of new micro-generation and small-scale generation.

4.1.5 National Planning Framework

The Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (NPF) sets the vision and strategy for the development of the country to 2040. The NPF sets out 10 no. strategic outcomes including a 'Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society'. The various policies in this Framework are structured under National Policy Objectives (NPOs) and National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). The key policies of relevance to this proposal are:

- **NSO 8:** New energy systems and transmission grids will be necessary for a more distributed, renewables focused energy generating system, harnessing both the considerable on-shore and off-shore potential from energy sources such as wind, wave and solar and connecting the richest sources of that energy. As part of this NSO, the following is set out: 'Deliver 40% of our electricity needs from renewable sources by 2020 with a strategic aim to increase renewable deployment in line with EU targets and national policy objectives out to 2030 and beyond. It is expected that this increase in renewable deployment will lead to a greater diversity of renewable technologies in the mix'.
- **NPO 54:** Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate change action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions.
- **NPO 55:** Promote renewable energy use and generation at appropriate locations within the built and natural environment to meet national objectives towards achieving a low carbon economy by 2050.

4.1.6 Compliance with National Policy

- The development of a wind energy project at the proposed development site will contribute to achieving our national renewable energy targets and meeting the objectives of the various policies and strategies currently in place, as outlined above; and
- The 2006 Planning Guidelines and the 2012 IWEA Guidelines were consulted in considering the location of the proposed wind farm, its design and layout and also in assessing and, where applicable, mitigating its impact on the environment and the community in which it is located, with particular attention focused on the chapters of the EIAR that assess the specific impacts of wind farm development (i.e. noise, shadow flicker, biodiversity, land, soils, hydrology, landscape and visual, traffic and cultural heritage). Consideration was also given to the draft 2019 guidelines for wind energy development, however at the time of submission, the 2006 guidelines remain in force until the new guidelines are published in final form.

4.2 Regional and Local Planning Policy

4.2.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

The Southern Regional Assembly is responsible for the preparation and implementation of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region. The RSES for the Southern Region came into effect on 31st January 2020 and the primary aim of the RSES is to implement Project Ireland 2040 - the National Planning Framework. Furthermore, the Southern Regional Assembly supports the implementation of the Irish Government's Climate Action Plan.

The RSES recognises and supports the many opportunities for onshore wind as a major source of renewable energy. The RSES sets out the following Policy Objectives (RPO's) on renewable energy:

- **RPO 87 - Low Carbon Energy Future** The RSES is committed to the implementation of the Government's policy under Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-30 and Climate Action Plan 2019. It is an objective to promote change across business, public and residential sectors to achieve reduced GHG emissions in accordance with current and future national targets, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy sources across the key sectors of electricity supply, heating, transport and agriculture.
- **RPO 99 Renewable Wind Energy** It is an objective to support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on shore and off shore) at appropriate locations and related grid infrastructure in the Region in compliance with national Wind Energy Guidelines.
- **RPO 219 - New Energy Infrastructure** It is an objective to support the sustainable reinforcement and provision of new energy infrastructure by infrastructure providers (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to ensure the energy needs of future population and economic expansion within designated growth areas and across the Region can be delivered in a sustainable and timely manner and that capacity is available at local and regional scale to meet future needs.
- **RPO 221 - Renewable Energy Generation and Transmission Network**
 - a. Local Authority City and County Development Plans shall support the sustainable development of renewable energy generation and demand centres such as data centres which can be serviced with a renewable energy source (subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the planning process) to spatially suitable locations to ensure efficient use of the existing transmission network;
 - b. The RSES supports strengthened and sustainable local/community renewable energy networks, micro renewable generation, climate smart countryside projects and connections from such initiatives to the grid. The potential for sustainable local/community energy projects and micro generation to both mitigate climate change and to reduce fuel poverty is also supported; and
 - c. The RSES supports the Southern Region as a Carbon Neutral Energy Region.

The vital role of wind energy to achieve national targets is supported and highlighted by the Southern Regional Assembly. The January 2021 Report of the Spatial Planning and Climate Action Workshops, Southern Regional Assembly discusses the target to achieve 100% of electricity from renewable sources by 203 primarily through wind energy and solar.

4.2.2 Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029

The Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029 was adopted on the 20th of April 2023 and sets the overall strategy for the planning and sustainable development within the administration boundaries for County Clare. The plan recognises the need to reduce the carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets, support indigenous renewable sources in order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and improve security of supply and the move to a competitive low carbon economy.

The plan aims to facilitate measures which will accelerate the transition to a low carbon society as set out on **CDP2.14**. The following objectives are relevant to the proposal:

- **CDP11.47- Development Plan Objective: Renewable Energy:**
 - a) To encourage and to favourably consider proposals for renewable energy developments, including community owned developments, and ancillary facilities in order to meet National, Regional and County renewable energy targets, and to facilitate a reduction in CO2 emissions and the promotion of a low carbon economy;

- b) To assess future renewable energy-related development proposals having regard to the Clare Renewable Energy Strategy 2023-2030 in Volume 5 of this plan and associated SEA and AA;
 - c) To support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on-shore and offshore) at appropriate locations and of its related grid infrastructure in County Clare, in accordance with all relevant policies, guidance and guidelines pertaining to the protection of the environment and protected habitats and species, and to assess proposals having regard to the Clare Wind Energy Strategy in Volume 6 of this plan and the associated SEA and AA, or any subsequent updated adopted Strategy and to national Wind Energy Guidelines;
 - d) To prepare a new and updated Wind Energy Strategy for County Clare during the lifetime of this plan, subject to the publication of the update to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2006;
 - e) To strike an appropriate balance between facilitating renewable and wind energy-related development and protecting the residential amenities of neighbouring properties;
 - f) To support and facilitate the development of new options and technological advances in relation to renewable energy production and storage, that may emerge over the lifetime of this Plan;
 - g) To support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production and grid injection;
 - h) To ensure that all proposals for renewable energy developments and ancillary facilities in the County are in full compliance with the requirements of the SEA and Habitats Directives and Objective CDP3.3 of this plan; and
 - i) To promote and market the County as a leader of renewable energy provision.
- **CDP6.17 Development Plan Objective: Energy Supply:** To contribute to the economic development and enhanced employment opportunities in the County by:
 - A. Facilitating the development of a self-sustaining, secure, reliable and efficient renewable energy supply and storage for the County;
 - B. Enabling the County to become a leader in the production of sustainable and renewable energy for national and international consumption through research, technology development and innovation.
 - **CDP 11.44 Development Plan Objective: Energy Security:** To promote and facilitate the sustainable development, maintenance and upgrading of electricity and gas network grid infrastructure, to integrate renewable energy sources, thereby creating a secure and efficient energy supply and storage system for County Clare which is ready to meet increased demand as the regional economy grows; and
 - To support the sustainable development of renewable wind energy (on-shore and offshore) at appropriate locations and of its related grid infrastructure in County Clare, in accordance with all relevant policies, guidance and guidelines pertaining to the protection of the environment and protected habitats and species, and to assess proposals having regard to the Clare Wind Energy Strategy in Volume 6 of this plan and the associated SEA and AA, or any subsequent updated adopted Strategy and to national Wind Energy Guidelines.

'Volume 6: Clare Wind Energy Strategy' of the development plan seeks to guide the development of wind farms within the County. The Strategy designates areas as being:

- a)'Strategic'
- b)'Acceptable in Principle'

- c) ‘Open for consideration’ and
- d) ‘Not Normally Permissible’.

All wind turbines proposed as part of the development are located within the ‘Strategic’ area. The proposal contains associated infrastructure for the windfarm which is located in the ‘Acceptable in Principle’ Area.

Under the ‘Specific Area Objectives’ in section 3.3 of the Strategy, ‘Strategic’ Area is defined as eminently suitable for wind farm development and are of strategic importance because of;

- *Good / excellent wind resources;*
- *Access to grid;*
- *Distance from properties; and*
- *Outside any Natura 2000 sites*

It is noted that projects in these areas must:

- *Demonstrate conformity with existing and approved wind farms to avoid visual clutter;*
- *Be designed and developed in line with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2006) in terms of siting, layout and environmental studies;*
- *Provide a Habitats Directive Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitat Regulations if the site is located in close proximity to a Special Area of Conservation or Special Protection Area; and*
- *Be developed in a comprehensive manner avoiding the piecemeal development of the areas designated as ‘strategic’.*

Target wind energy generation from strategic areas is 400 MW

Section 4 of the strategy provides a landscape capacity analysis (LCA) of the designated areas. The purpose of this section is to advise, in broad terms, what capacity each LCA has for wind farm development and indicates the scale of wind farm developments that may be acceptable within a LCA in terms of cumulative impacts. The proposed development site is located within the Sliabh Bernagh Uplands, the assessment of this area is included in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1: Extract Strategic Guidance on Landscape Capacity for Wind Energy Development

<i>LCA’s within areas designated as Strategic Areas</i>	
<i>LCA</i>	<i>Sliabh Bernagh Uplands This LCA encompasses the Sliabh Bernagh Range and Broadford Hills.</i>
<i>Overall Sensitivity to Wind Farm Developments</i>	<i>Medium to Low</i>
<i>Appropriate size of wind farms (turbine numbers)</i>	<i>Large</i>
<i>Capacity</i>	<i>There are certain parts of this LCA that are highly sensitive due to their nature designations and scenic qualities. In particular, the foothills and mountains over-looking Lough Derg and the unenclosed bogs of Lackeragh and Glenvagalliagh Mountain. However, other areas on the north west and westerly aspects of the mountain are more robust and can accommodate number of large or medium wind farms. In the Broadford Hills areas, the areas around Woodcock Hill, Ballycar, Corlea and Knockaunnamoughily are identified as Strategic Areas. Potential Renewable Energy Generation for this area is 150 MW (LCEA).</i>

<i>LCTs in Co. Clare. LCA and Corresponding LCTs in 2006 Planning Guidelines</i>	<i>Upland Hills Upland Fringe Glacial Valley. Planning Guidelines: Moorland Mountain</i>
<i>Cumulative Advice from 2006 Planning Guidelines</i>	<i>Acceptable, depending on topography as well as siting and design of wind energy developments involved.</i>

It is considered that the proposed development will meet the policy objectives outlined above for renewable energy developments.

The proposed wind farm will directly assist in achieving national targets for energy from renewable energy, from renewable resources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production.

As shown on **Figure 2-2**, the proposed development site is located within a “Strategic Area” for wind energy development, with the Ballycar area specifically mentioned.

5. Planning Assessment

5.1 Principle of Development

The principle of the proposed Ballycar Wind Farm is fully compatible with Planning Policy at all levels of government. The case for providing renewable energy infrastructure over the traditional reliance on fossil fuels has been well documented and does not need to be addressed in any great detail in this assessment.

It is perhaps sufficient to note the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021 establishes a legally binding framework with clear targets and commitments set in law, and ensures the necessary structures and processes are embedded on a statutory basis to ensure we achieve our national, EU and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term. The Climate Action Plan implements the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings and sets a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050. Wind energy is at the heart of the Plan with a target of 9GW of onshore wind energy by 2030 (currently around 4.4GW, WEI 2022).

The common theme throughout policies at a national and regional level is the need to promote and enhance renewable energy in Ireland. This project will contribute directly towards meeting Ireland's renewable energy production targets and specific objectives for onshore wind capacity.

On a Local Level, the current County Development Plan aims to establish County Clare as a leader in renewable energy provision and a low carbon economy (CDP2.14). The project is compliant with the following County Development Plan Policies CDP 6.17, CDP 11.44, CDP 11.47. As the project is for a wind farm, it will reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and has been developed having regard to the Clare Wind Energy Strategy. The design of the proposed development does not result in material harm to the residential amenity of any property.

The project is located in an area that is considered to be eminently suitable for wind farm development according to the current wind energy strategy. The turbines associated with the wind farm are located in a 'Strategic' area for wind farm development and a portion of the associated infrastructure is located in an area that is 'Acceptable in Principle' for a wind farm. The site has been assessed as having the potential to accommodate a large wind farm.

The 2006 Planning Guidelines and the 2012 IWEA Guidelines were consulted in considering the location of the proposed wind farm, its design and layout and also in assessing and, where applicable, mitigating its impact on the environment and the community in which it is located, with particular attention focused on the chapters of the EIAR that assess the specific potential impacts of wind farm development (i.e. noise, shadow flicker, biodiversity, land, soils, hydrology, landscape and visual, traffic and cultural heritage).

A community participation and engagement programme will provide a gain for the community in the form of a community benefit fund. Further details are provided in **Volume III, Appendix 1A (Stakeholder Community Report)**. This meets the requirements of the 2012 IWEA Best Practice Guidelines and the 2016 DCCAE Code of Practice, which informed both the design and execution of the community engagement programme for the project.

5.2 Design / Layout

The layout reflects the outcome of the iterative engineering and environmental analysis approach adopted during the wind farm design process which considered a number of factors including minimising any risk in terms of poor ground conditions, negative influences on the existing drainage, avoidance of sensitive ecological habitats, and any known archaeological features. The design rationale and evolution is described in **EIAR Volume II Chapter 4**.

The project also includes additional components outside the boundaries of the Development Application Area including temporary works along the turbine delivery route. There will be a requirement for replacement forestry lands, however these will be at a significant distance from the development site so there will be no cumulative impact. These lands will be subject to a separate independent technical and environmental approvals process.

5.3 Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)

EIA provisions in Irish Law in relation to planning consents are currently contained in the Planning and Development Act, 2000, (Part X) as amended, and in Part 10 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 to 2023, as amended. The EIA Directive and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, provide that in respect of an application for development consent where EIA is required, the developer (applicant) is required to prepare and submit an EIAR to the competent authority.

This Planning Application is supported by an **EIAR**. The **EIAR** includes the following chapters:

1. Introduction;
2. Project Description;
3. Civil Engineering;
4. Alternatives;
5. Population and Human Health;
6. Biodiversity;
7. Ornithology;
8. Water;
9. Land and Soil;
10. Noise and Vibration;
11. Shadow Flicker;
12. Landscape and Visual;
13. Cultural Heritage;
14. Air Quality and Climate;
15. Material Assets;
16. Interaction of Effects; and
17. Schedule of Environmental Mitigation Measures.

Each specialist impact assessment chapter includes a methodology, scoping, baseline assessments, impact assessment of the construction, operation and decommissioning phases, mitigation, any design changes to reduce or remove impacts, residual impacts and cumulative effects.

The main findings of the **EIAR** are set out in '**Volume 1 – Non Technical Summary**' of the **EIAR** report. It is concluded that with the application of various mitigation measures, there are no impacts that are considered unacceptable within the context of the planning policy framework for assessing wind energy projects and also that the proposed wind farm is supported by Government policy regarding the promotion of renewable energy and is consistent with planning guidance for the development of wind energy.

5.4 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report and Natura Impact Assessment (NIS)

This planning application is supported by a Screening for Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and **Natura Impact Statement (NIS)** prepared by MWP. The **NIS** is a report of a scientific examination of evidence and data, carried out by competent persons to identify and classify any implications of a project, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, for Natura 2000 sites in view of the conservation objectives of the sites. The NIS report concludes the following:

For the reasons set out in detail in this NIS, in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field, all aspects of the project which, by itself, or in combination with other plans or projects, which may affect the relevant Natura 2000 sites have been considered.

The NIS contains information which the competent authority may consider in making its own complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions and upon which the competent authority is capable of determining that all reasonable scientific doubt has been removed as to the effects of the project on the integrity of the relevant Natura 2000 sites.

Provided that the mitigation measures are implemented in full, it is considered that the proposed development, either individually, or in combination with other plans/projects, will not affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 Sites, namely:

- *Lower River Shannon SAC (0021650);*
- *River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077).*

6. Conclusion

This report sought to highlight the relevant policies in the context of the Ballycar project. The proposed windfarm is located in a 'Strategic' area for windfarms as per the Clare County Development Plan 2023- 2029 and a location that is considered eminently suitable for wind farm development according to the current wind energy strategy.

The development design has been informed by consultation with the public and relevant bodies. The environmental studies and assessments completed demonstrate the project would not create an unacceptable impact on the environment and residential amenity. The **NIS** assessment concludes that the proposed development, either individually, or in combination with other plans/projects, will not affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 Sites.

The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and will contribute towards achieving National and EU targets and in particular the objectives of the Climate Action Plan. It will also contribute towards Clare County Council's goal of becoming a leader of renewable energy provision.