



The map displays the Carlow County Council area with various noise action plan zones. A prominent orange and red zone follows the River Suir through Carlow. Other zones are shown in yellow and green, primarily in the central and eastern parts of the county. Major roads like the N80 and N81 are marked, along with towns such as Carlow, Tullow, Bunclody, and Graigueamanagh. The map is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue gradient.

# Carlow County Council

## Noise Action Plan 2024-2028

## Document Control

**Client:** Carlow County Council  
**Project Number:** 16068A-20  
**Prepared By:** Carlow County Council  
**Document No.** 16068A-20-R01-02-F02  
**Date:** 15 December 2024

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## Executive Summary

The Environmental Noise Directive ('END') (2002/49/EC) aims to establish a European-wide system for identifying sources of environmental noise, informing the public about relevant noise data, and taking the necessary steps to avoid, prevent or reduce noise exposure.

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

Under the Regulations, the 31 Local Authorities are designated as Action Planning Authorities responsible for making and approving Noise Action Plans in consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency (the 'Agency'), and the Noise-Mapping Bodies<sup>1</sup>.

This Noise Action Plan is for the administrative area of Carlow County Council and takes into account major roads.

This Noise Action Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Regulations and is aimed at strategic long-term management of environmental noise from transport systems, and is based on the results of the strategic noise maps which informed assessments of population exposure and harmful effects of noise.

The results have been used to identify areas within Carlow County to be subject to noise management activities during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan should funding and resources be available. These areas are referred to as Priority Important Areas.

Carlow County Council will, subject to relevant collaboration with the Noise Mapping Bodies, resources and funding, assess these Priority Important Areas and confirm the relevant noise management measures for each Priority Important Area, including processing of cost-benefit analysis and health benefits.

Additionally, the Noise Action Plan considers areas potentially free from long-term noise effects caused by human activity, with the aspiration of preserving their environmental noise quality. These are referred to as Candidate Quiet Areas.

This Noise Action Plan includes Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening checks following the processes outlined in the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report *Development of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Methodologies for Plans and Programmes in Ireland (2001-DS-EEP-2/5)* – Synthesis Report (Appendix B; SEA Checklist). The SEA screening concluded that no SEA is required.

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<sup>1</sup> Noise Mapping Bodies: Local Authorities; Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII); Irish Rail; and relevant airport authorities

The Noise Action Plan includes an assessment to determine if it is required to be subject to an 'Appropriate Assessment' under the Habitats Directive. The screening assessment concluded that the implementation of the Noise Action Plan in isolation or in combination with any other Action Plans is not directly related to the conservation management of any Natura 2000 site in the assessment area. It was determined that there is no likelihood of a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Consequently, there is no need to conduct a 'Stage 2 AA' for the purposes outlined in Article 6(3) of the Habitat Regulations.

This Noise Action Plan is supported by a four-year programme for implementation (2024-2028), with progress reported to the Agency on an annual basis. It is underpinned by a set of overarching noise policy principles outlined in the **Noise Policy Statement**. These noise policy principles are supported by a series of **Responsible Aims** for managing noise issues within Carlow County.

## NOISE POLICY STATEMENT

Carlow County Council will adopt a strategic approach to managing environmental noise from major roads within its functional area, and will aim to:

- **Prevention** – manage the risk of additional members of the community being exposed to undesirable noise levels where it is likely to have significant adverse impact on health and quality of life.
- **Protection** - protect areas which are desirably quiet, or which offer a sense of tranquillity through a process of identification and validation followed by formal designation of ‘Quiet Areas in open country’.
- **Mitigation** – identify and prioritise appropriate mitigation measures to reduce noise levels where they are potentially harmful.

## RESPONSIBLE AIMS

Carlow County Council commit to the following Responsible Aims during current and future noise action planning:

**RA\_1 - Policy and Guidance Development** – Encourage the integration of noise considerations into the ongoing process of policy and guidance development, and actively promote existing policies and guidance related to noise.

**RA\_2 - Working Groups** – Participate in technical working groups pertinent to the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive and with the assistance of the Environmental Protection Agency, a Round 4 Noise Action Plan Implementation Working Group shall be established.

**RA\_3 - Noise Mitigation** – In collaboration and consultation with relevant Noise Mapping Bodies, noise management interventions shall be applied on a priority basis during existing maintenance and improvement programs, where appropriate. This application will be based on a relevant evaluation of whole-life costs and benefits.

**RA\_4 - Protection** – Assess and, where appropriate, propose Candidate Quiet Areas to the Environmental Protection Agency for designation as Quiet Areas in open country by the Minister.

**RA\_5 - Prevention** – Evaluate and condition planning proposals for noise sensitive development near major noise sources.

**RA\_6 - Community Engagement** – Commit to proactive and inclusive engagement with communities and collaboratively address noise issues for the improvement of our shared living environment.

**RA\_7 – Manage Noise Complaints** – Review and respond to all environmental noise complaints in accordance with our complaint procedures.

**RA\_8 - Regulatory Engagement** – Report the progress on the implementation of Noise Action Plans, including the investigation and implementation of noise management measures in Priority Important Areas, and the assessment of Candidate Quiet Areas in open country for preservation of environmental noise quality, to the Environmental Protection Agency on an annual basis.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Noise Action Plan

The Environmental Noise Directive ('END') (2002/49/EC) is a European Union legal instrument vital for protecting public health and the environment by addressing the adverse effects of environmental noise.

The END was transposed into Irish Law by the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006<sup>2</sup> (S.I. 140/2006) (the 'Regulations'). The Regulations were revised by the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018<sup>3</sup> (S.I. 549/2018) and amended through the European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 2021<sup>4</sup> (S.I. 663/2021).

The END does not set any limit values or prescribe noise management measures to fulfil its aims. Through the establishment of noise regulations, the execution of strategic noise maps and implementation of Noise Action Plans, the END strives to raise public awareness, prevent and reduce environmental noise, and preserve environmental noise quality in areas where it is good.

In Ireland, it is recommended that the Noise Action Plans support Policy Objective 65 from the National Planning Framework 2040<sup>5</sup>, which states:

*"Promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations through national planning guidance and Noise Action Plans."*

This Noise Action Plan, and its subsequent implementation, is critical to ensuring Carlow County Council achieves the aims and objectives of the END, compliance with national policy and to address local environmental noise issues.

### 1.1.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a formal and systematic process (including the stages of Screening, Scoping and Environmental Assessment) designed to assess the potential significant environmental impacts of implementing a plan or program before deciding to adopt it.

The requirement for SEA for plans and programs is outlined in European Directive 2001/42/EC ('SEA Directive'). In the context of transport sector plans (which could include a Noise Action Plan), this directive is implemented in Irish law through the European Communities (Environmental Assessment

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2006/si/140/made/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/549/made/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/si/663/made/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>5</sup> National Planning Framework 2040: <http://www.gov.ie/en/project-ireland-2040/> [Accessed December 2024]

of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004<sup>6</sup> (S. I. 435/2004). This legislation has been amended by the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) (Amendment) Regulations 2011<sup>7</sup> (S.I. 200/ 2011).

SEA screening has been undertaken with respect to this Noise Action Plan, to firstly consider the applicability of the Regulations, and then consider if this Noise Action Plan would likely give any significant environmental impacts and therefore that further SEA would be required. SEA Screening has concluded that no further SEA work is required.

### 1.1.2 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

The primary purpose of the Directive 92/43/EEC ('Habitats Directive') is to promote the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora across the European Union. The Habitats Directive is transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011<sup>8</sup> (S. I. 477/2011) ('Habitats Regulations').

The European Environment Agency has designated a network of protected areas ('Natura 2000' sites) covering Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

This Noise Action Plan has been assessed to determine if it is required to be subject to an 'Appropriate Assessment' under the Habitats Directive. The screening assessment determined that there is no likelihood of a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Consequently, there is no need to conduct a 'Stage 2 AA' for the purposes outlined in Article 6(3) of the Habitat Regulations.

### 1.1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The Regulations designate the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the national authority (the 'Agency') responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Regulations and for reporting information relating to strategic noise mapping and Noise Action Planning to the European Commission in accordance with Article 10(2) of the END.

The Agency provides guidance, which for Round 4 is currently at draft stage ('draft EPA Guidance'), on the required activities to be undertaken during the implementation of the Regulations. These requirements have been fully accounted for in the preparation of this Noise Action Plan.

Under the Regulations, the 31 Local Authorities in Ireland are designated as Action Planning Authorities responsible for making and approving Noise Action Plans in consultation with the 'Agency', and the Noise-Mapping Bodies (NMBs)<sup>9</sup>. This Noise Action Plan is for the administrative area of Carlow County Council.

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<sup>6</sup> [S.I. No. 435/2004 - European Communities \(Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes\) Regulations 2004](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/si/435/made/en/print) ([irishstatutebook.ie](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie)) [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>7</sup> [S.I. No. 200/2011 - European Communities \(Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/200/made/en/print). ([irishstatutebook.ie](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie)) [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/477/made/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>9</sup> Noise Mapping Bodies (NMBs): Local Authorities and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)

Further details on the roles and responsibilities of all parties in respect of their obligations under the Regulations and the collaboration required to deliver the priorities of this Noise Action Plan are set out in **Table 5**.

#### **1.1.4 Scope of the END**

The END applies to environmental noise to which humans are exposed in built-up areas, in public parks or other quiet areas in an Agglomeration, in quiet areas in open country, near schools, hospitals and other noise sensitive buildings and areas. Noise sources required to be considered within the study area are detailed in **Section 1.2**.

The END does not apply to noise that is caused by the exposed person, noise from domestic activities, neighbourhood noise, noise at workplaces or noise inside means of transport or due to military activities in military areas.

Strategic noise maps are strategic tools and should not be used for the assessment of local noise nuisances or planning decisions.

## **1.2 Scope of the Noise Action Plan**

This Noise Action Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Regulations and is aimed at strategic long-term management of environmental noise from transport systems referring to the results of the strategic noise maps to inform assessments of population exposure and harmful effects of noise.

The strategic noise maps for Carlow County have been prepared by the responsible NMB and pertain to the calendar year 2021 for noise from the following source:

- Major roads - sections of road with a flow threshold of 3,000,000 vehicle passages per year).

The Regulations require the strategic noise mapping to be based upon an assessment year of 2021. However, due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions and the operational impacts of the pandemic, noise contour results for 2021 may not be fully representative. The greatest anomalies in transportation noise during this period are likely associated with airport noise, which saw significant reductions in air traffic, and therefore a reduction in most noise contours with fewer people shown to be affected by aircraft noise. Rail and road traffic travel during this period saw some reductions, but not as significant as air travel, therefore the use of the 2021 assessment year for these sources is deemed representative for the purpose of the Round 4 action planning.

There have been three rounds of strategic noise maps and Noise Action Plans in Ireland (2008-2013, 2013-2018 and 2018-2023) with this Noise Action Plan for Carlow County being Round 4 (2024-2028)<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> The European Commission allowed for one additional year for the Round 4 Noise Action Plans, reducing the five-year implementation period to four-years.

The first three rounds of strategic noise maps have been developed using computation methods set out in Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 (S.I. 140/2006). For Round 4, Member States are required to use the Common Noise Assessment Methods for Europe (CNOSSOS-EU). This change in methodology makes a direct comparison of the Round 4 noise exposure statistics with the previous three rounds methodologically complex.

For the noise action planning process, the Regulations require<sup>11</sup>:

*“Each action plan or revision of an action plan shall address priorities which—*

*(i) may be identified on the basis of exceedances of any relevant noise limit value or other relevant criteria established by the Agency [EPA] in accordance with subparagraph (3), and*

*(ii) shall, in the first instance, address the most important area or areas, as the case may be, established by strategic noise mapping.”*

Furthermore the Regulations require each Action Planning Authority to *“determine the measures to be included in an action plan.”* Finally, the action plan must *“have as its objective that of also protecting quiet areas in an agglomeration and quiet areas in open country”*.

This Noise Action Plan therefore includes the identification of existing noise emissions, the identification of Priority Important Areas based on an assessment of harmful effects and details of noise management measures for consideration and evaluation at implementation stage. The Noise Action Plan also includes discussion of Candidate Quiet Areas.

### 1.2.1 Noise Indicators

The Regulations specify two main noise indicators which must be used in the preparation of the strategic noise maps:

- $L_{den}$  – the annual average noise level for the day, evening and night periods and is designed to indicate overall annoyance; and
- $L_{night}$  – the annual average noise level for the night-time periods, from 23:00 – 07:00 hours, and is designed to indicate sleep disturbance.

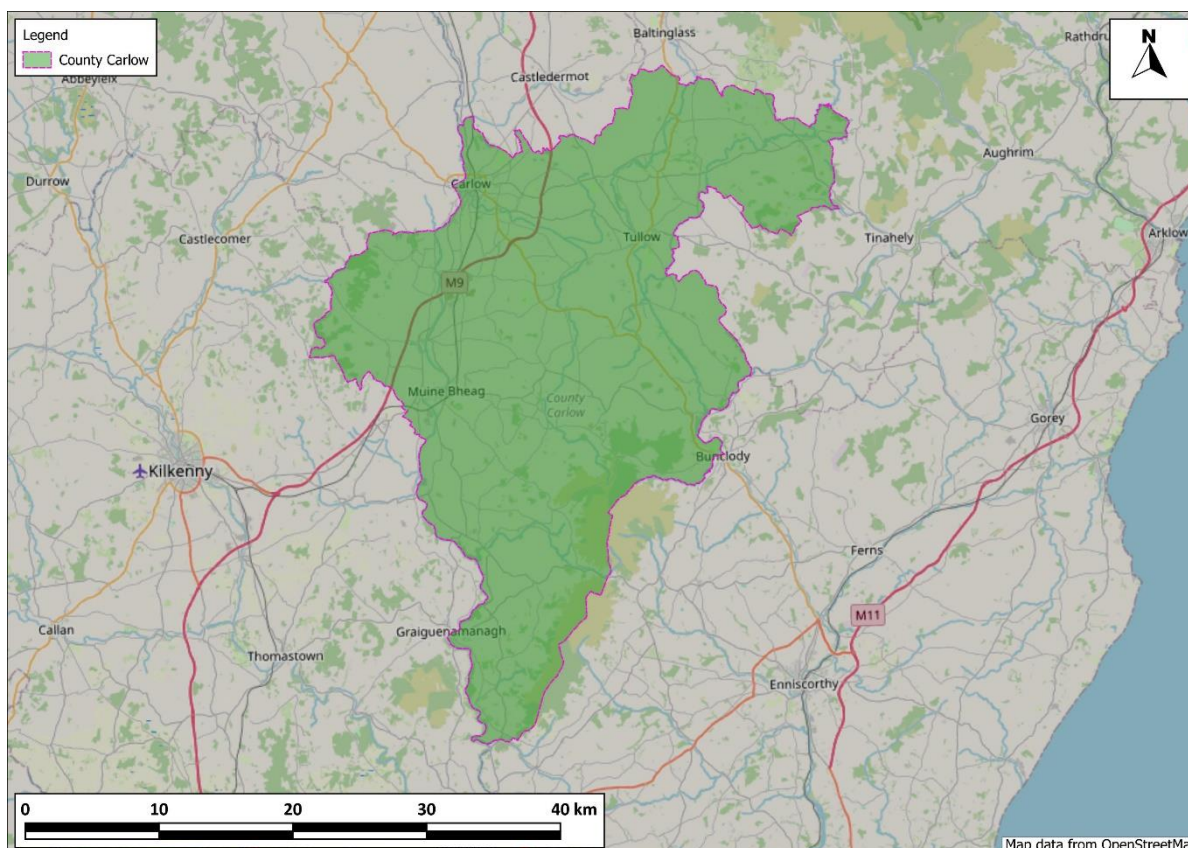
## 1.3 Carlow County

The extents of Carlow County as defined in the Regulations, are shown in **Figure 1**.

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<sup>11</sup> Regulation 12(2)

**Figure 1: Carlow County Boundary**



A summary of the population in Carlow County is given in **Table 1**.

**Table 1: Total Population<sup>12</sup>**

Action Planning Authority	Total Population
Carlow County Council	61,968

The total length of major roads included in the Carlow County strategic noise maps is summarised in **Table 2**.

<sup>12</sup> Based upon analysis from CSO Census Data (April 2022) which was provided at Small Area Population Statistics (SAPS) level, and GeoDirectory Data points (Q4 2021)

**Table 2: Summary of Strategic Noise Map Sources**

Noise Sources	Total Length/No. of Sites (metres, m)
Major Roads	62,603m

The number of noise sensitive buildings (Schools and Hospitals) within Carlow County and considered by the strategic noise mapping, are summarised in **Table 3**.

**Table 3: Total number of Noise Sensitive Buildings**

Noise Sensitive Building	Number of Noise Sensitive Buildings
Schools	29
Hospitals	1

### 1.4 Structure of the Noise Action Plan

The Noise Action Plan covers the overarching principles of the noise action planning process, including the existing international, national and regional noise management legislation and guidance, a description of the noise mapping process, and methodologies advocated in the draft EPA Guidance for identifying and addressing the most important areas, as established by the strategic noise mapping.

The Noise Action Plan includes a four-year implementation plan. Progress will be tracked through annual reports to the Agency throughout its execution. The Noise Action Plan includes an update on the implementation progress of the measures set out in previous Noise Action Plans, and identification of the specific areas within the administrative area to be considered for noise management measures or as Candidate Quiet Areas in open country for the preservation of environmental noise quality.

### 1.5 Round 4 Timetable

A timetable of the key activities for the development and implementation of the Noise Action Plans for Round 4, and delivery to the European Environment Agency (EEA) by the Agency, is set out below:

- July - December 2024: Deadline for Noise Action Plans, publishing Noise Action Plans, and summaries of Noise Action Plans submitted to the Agency; and
- January 2025: Noise Action Plans to be reported to the EEA by the Agency.

### 1.6 Consultation

The consultation process included three categories of consultees:

- The public;
- Stakeholders; and

- Statutory Environmental Authorities (for screening for a Strategic Environmental Assessment report.)

### 1.6.1 Public Consultation

Carlow County Council prepared the Carlow County Council: Draft Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 (16068A-20-R01-01-D01, 10 October 2024), which was issued for public consultation 16 October 2024, ending 26 November 2024.

One consultation response was received from the public, in addition to those from external sources. A summary of the submissions and responses to them is provided in **Section 11**.

## 1.7 Acknowledgements

The background mapping used in the figures presented in this report are taken from OpenStreetMap (© OpenStreetMap contributors. See: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>).

## 2 Noise Management Legislation and Guidance

### 2.1 Noise and Effects on Health and Quality of Life

#### 2.1.1 Environmental Noise Guidelines (World Health Organization, WHO), 2018

Noise can have a significant and disruptive effect on everyday life. Since the implementation of the Regulations, there have been extensive studies into the links between environmental noise exposure and health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) in its publication ‘Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region 2018’<sup>13</sup> and ‘Night Noise Guidelines for Europe 2009’<sup>14</sup> has also presented several key health outcomes including: noise annoyance; sleep disturbance; cardiovascular health; mental health, wellbeing, and quality of life; and children’s learning.

The Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region provides recommendations for protecting human health from exposure to environmental noise originating from various sources including road traffic, railway and aircraft noise.

The recommendations include guideline values using  $L_{den}$  and  $L_{night}$  metrics in terms of the onset of health effects.

However, no single noise metric best correlates with all adverse health outcomes associated with environmental noise effects, and health effects can be correlated with more than one metric. The noise metrics which are generally considered to best correlate with the different health effects, and are the subject of this Noise Action Plan, are set out in **Table 4**.

**Table 4: Noise Metrics and the Associated Health Effects**

Noise Metric	Health Effects
$L_{den}$	Cardiovascular disease, Cognitive impairment, and Annoyance
$L_{night}$	Sleep disturbance and Wellbeing

Existing international, European Union and national noise management legislation and guidance is shown in **Figure 2**, with brief summarises provided in **Section 2.2**.

<sup>13</sup> Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, World Health Organisation, 2018

<sup>14</sup> Night Noise Guidelines for Europe, World Health Organisation, 2009



**Figure 2: Existing Noise Management Legislation and Guidance**

International	WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region (2018)				
European Union	Directive 2002/49/EC (END)		Directive 2015/996		
	Directive 2020/367		EC Zero Pollution Action Plan		
	EU Phenomena Project – 2021		EEA Environmental Noise in Europe – 2020		
National	EC (Environmental Noise) Regulations, S. I. 549/2018		EC (Environmental Noise) Regulations, S. I. 663/2021		
	Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992	Irish Roads Act 1993 (Revised 2023)		Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC) Licensing	
	Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework – 2017	National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030	Climate Action Plan – 2024	National Roads – 2040	
	TII Guidelines – 2014		Draft Interim National Guidance for the Consideration of Transportation Noise in the Design of New Residential Development		EPA Noise Action Planning Guidance, 2024

- Legislation in R4 NAP
- Policy/Strategy in R4 NAP
- Research/evidence supporting R4 NAP
- Guidance in R4 NAP

## 2.2 European Union Legislation and Regulations

### 2.2.1 European Communities Directive 2002/49/ EC

The Environmental Noise Directive ('END') (2002/49/EC) relates to the assessment and management of environmental noise. It is the main instrument of the EU to quantify noise pollution levels and trigger actions within Member States.

The aim of the END is to:

*"... define a common approach intended to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritized basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise."*

### 2.2.2 Commission Directive (EU) 2015/996

Commission Directive EU 2015/996 replaces Annex II of the END and describes the common assessment methods for road, rail and air traffic noise and industrial noise sources, developed within the CNOSSOS-EU project.

Shortly after the publication of Directive 2015/996, some formatting and typographical errors were identified which were addressed in the Corrigendum<sup>15</sup> which was published in 2018.

### 2.2.3 Commission Directive (EU) 2020/367

Commission Directive EU 2020/367 replaces Annex III of Directive 2002/49/EC in describing the assessment of health effects under END.

The Directive adopts the exposure response functions published within WHO Environmental Noise Guidance, 2018 for the number of people highly annoyed (HA) and highly sleep disturbed (HSD) from road, rail and aircraft noise. The Directive also adopts the calculation of Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD) with respect to road traffic noise.

### 2.2.4 European Union Zero Pollution Action Plan (ZPAP), 2021

The European Commission Zero Pollution Action Plan (ZPAP) was adopted in 2021. The vision for 2050 under the ZPAP is for air (including noise), water and soil pollution to be reduced to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems. This is translated into key 2030 targets to speed up reducing pollution at source.

The target for noise includes reducing the share of people chronically disturbed by transport noise by 30%. This target has not been transposed into Irish legislation, however, may be in the future, and therefore should be considered in future iterations of Noise Action Plans.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.ecac-ceac.org/documents/ecac-documents-and-international-agreements> [Accessed December 2024]

### **2.2.5 European Commission Assessment of Potential Health Benefits of Noise Abatement Measures in the EU (Phenomena project), 2021**

In 2021 the findings of the EU Phenomena project were published. The study aimed to define the potential of measures capable of delivering significant reductions (20%-50%) of health burden arising from the environmental noise of roads, railways and aircraft, and to assess how relevant noise related legislation could increase the implementation of the most effective measures, while considering the constraints and specificities of each transport mode.

The project relied on a combination of policy research, consultation, health economics and environmental assessment. Individual noise abatement measures were examined and their health impact quantified leading to a shortlist of the most effective combinations of measures for each transport mode.

For roads noise, the measures considered included low noise road pavements, low noise zones (speed reductions) and new legislation at an EU level for a low noise tyre fleet. For rail noise, the noise abatement solutions included smooth tracks, quieter vehicles, smooth wheels and quieter tracks.

The analysis found that combination of the road noise abatement measures could achieve health burden reduction by 2030 in the range 18-24%. For rail noise, health burden reductions by 2030 were in the range 37-52%.

### **2.2.6 European Environment Agency (EEA) Environmental Noise in Europe - 2020**

The report summarises the many reviews of evidence on the relationship between environmental noise and specific health effects, including cardiovascular disease, cognitive impairment, sleep disturbance, tinnitus and annoyance.

It is estimated that, in the EU Member States and other western European countries (excluding Turkey) the number of people suffering various health outcomes from the exposure to environmental road noise in urban areas in 2017 was 29,500 for ischemic heart disease (IHD), 12,525,000 for high annoyance, 3,242,000 for high sleep disturbance and 7,600 due to mortality (from noise related IHD)<sup>16</sup>.

## **2.3 National Legislation and Regulations**

The END was transposed into Irish Law by the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006<sup>17</sup> (S.I. 140/2006) (the 'Regulations'), establishing a unified framework for mitigating and minimising the adverse consequences of environmental noise exposure. They identify organisations responsible for noise mapping and the development of strategic noise maps and action plans.

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<sup>16</sup> Table 3.5, Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, World Health Organization, 2018

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2006/si/140/made/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

The Regulations were revised by the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018<sup>18</sup> (S.I. 549/2018) and amended through the European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 2021<sup>19</sup> (S.I. 663/2021). A summary of these Regulations is presented in the following sections.

### **2.3.1 European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations, 2018 (S. I. 549/2018)**

These Regulations replace the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 140 of 2006) and provide for the implementation in Ireland of a common approach within the European Community to avoid, prevent or reduce, on a prioritised basis, the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise.

The Regulations designate the Environmental Protection Agency as the National Authority for the purposes of the Regulations. The Agency's role includes supervisory, advisory and coordination functions in relation to both noise mapping and action planning, as well as reporting requirements for the purpose of the Directive.

### **2.3.2 European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations, 2021 (S. I. 663/2021)**

This Regulation amends the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 (S.I. 549/2018), setting out methods for harmful effects, considering ischaemic heart disease (IHD), high annoyance (HA) and high sleep disturbance (HSD) and requiring each NMB to report details of these harmful effects as part of the noise mapping work.

The Regulations also amended the boundaries of the existing Dublin and Cork Agglomerations and defined a new Limerick Agglomeration.

### **2.3.3 Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992**

In Ireland, statutory provisions relating to environmental noise pollution come primarily from the Environmental Protection Agency Act (1992).

The Act identifies noise as a form of environmental pollution and contains provisions for dealing with noise deemed *“a nuisance or would endanger human health or damage property or harm the environment”*.

With regards to noise, Section 106-107 is most relevant:

- Section 106 gives the relevant Minister certain powers to regulate noise that may give rise to a nuisance or be harmful to health or property;

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/549/made/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/si/663/made/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

- Section 107 gives power to local authorities or the Agency to serve notice requiring measures to be taken to prevent or limit noise from any premises, processes or works; and
- Section 108 sets out a process whereby noise issues may be taken to District County, which may make any order requiring that the person or body responsible for the noise to take measures for the prevention or limitation of the noise in question.

There is no clear official or statutory guidance which could help promote the effectiveness or clarity of the provisions within the Act; however, within the framework of the Regulations the Agency may consider it appropriate to develop such guidance in the future.

### 2.3.4 Roads Act, 1993 (Revised 2023)

In Ireland, the Roads Act, 1993<sup>20</sup> (revised 2023<sup>21</sup>), outlines the responsibilities of the roads authorities for the maintenance and construction of public roads. Under section 77 of the Roads Act 1993, power had been given to the Minister to make regulations requiring relevant road authorities to take measures to mitigate the effects of road traffic noise and to specify limits for road traffic noise which, if exceeded, would require mitigating action from the road authorities. However, Section 77 was repealed under the Public Transport Regulation Act, 2009<sup>22</sup>. There are no Irish statutory noise limits or standards governing road traffic noise for new or existing roads.

### 2.3.5 Integrated Pollution Prevention Control (IPPC) Licensing

The Agencies Integrated Pollution Prevention Control Licensing terms require that certain bodies must limit environmental pollution caused by industrial activities to obtain a license to operate. The criteria relating to noise pollution are outlined in the Agency publication “*Guidance Note for Noise: Licence Applications, Surveys and Assessment in Relation to Scheduled Activities (NG4)*”- 2016. This document recommends a ‘Best Available Technique’ approach to the assessment and mitigation of noise pollution. The document contains typical limit values for daytime (55 dB L<sub>Ar,T</sub><sup>23</sup>), evening (50 dB L<sub>Ar,T</sub>) and nighttime (45 dB L<sub>Ar,T</sub>) noise, at sensitive locations, from licensed facilities. Alternative limit values are provided for quiet areas and areas of low background noise.

### 2.3.6 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework, 2017

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a high-level strategic plan to guide development and investment over the coming years. In addition to setting aims associated with infrastructure and investment, targets are also set around social outcomes.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/1993/act/14/revised/en/html> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>21</sup> <https://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/1993/act/14/revised/en/html> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2009/act/37/enacted/en/print> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>23</sup> The Rated Noise Level, equal to the L<sub>Aeq</sub> during a specified time interval (T), plus specified adjustments for tonal character and/or impulsiveness of the sound.

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework recognises the importance of noise management which is implemented through the following objectives 52 and 65:

National Policy Objective 52: *“The planning system will be responsive to our national environmental challenges and ensure that development occurs within environmental limits, having regard to the requirements of all relevant environmental legislation and the sustainable management of our natural capital.”*

National Policy Objective 65: *“Promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations through national planning guidance and Noise Action Plans.”*

### **2.3.7 National Development Plan (NDP) 2021 – 2030**

An investment strategy and budget that aims to transform Ireland and support the largest public housing program in the history of the state.

The plan sets out the broad direction for investment priorities over the coming decade and pledges to allocate public investment of €165 billion across all sectors and regions of Ireland. The plan aims to prepare Ireland for population growth of approximately 1 million between 2016 and 2040 and help deal with the ongoing challenges of COVID-19 and Brexit.

### **2.3.8 Climate Action Plan, 2024**

The Climate Action Plan (CAP24) is the third update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan. It sets out a roadmap for actions to halve emissions by 2030, and reach net zero no later than 2050.

CAP24 implements carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceiling with a view to accelerating the actions required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland’s social and economic development.

### **2.3.9 National Roads 2040**

National Roads 2040 (NR2040) is Transport Infrastructure Ireland’s long-term strategy for planning, operating, and maintaining the National Roads network. The strategy has been developed to support the delivery of National Planning Framework 2040 objectives and to align with the Department of Transport’s National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland. One of the key visions for the strategy is that the national road network should be environmentally sustainable:

*“Environmental sustainability is the bedrock for social and economic sustainability in Ireland; avoiding and where unavoidable mitigating environmental impacts including climate change, air quality and noise as well as biodiversity impacts of National Roads.”*

While the strategy primarily addresses decarbonisation and the need to reduce greenhouse gas and carbon emissions as outlined in the Climate Action Plan, there are opportunities for mutual gains for noise reduction through active travel, integrated mobility, maintenance and improvement works on the existing national road network.

The strategy recognises the importance of avoiding, reducing and mitigating adverse environmental impacts such as noise. Section 3.4 of the strategy states:

*“Transport infrastructure can bring about social and economic benefits, such as enhanced mobility, access to markets and social participation. However, the development and management of transport*

*infrastructure must avoid, reduce and mitigate adverse environmental impacts, such as harmful emissions from transport (GHGs, air quality and noise impacts), and direct and indirect impacts to biodiversity and/or habitats, as well as to neighbouring properties and communities adjoining the National Roads network.”*

### **2.3.10 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Guidelines for the Treatment of Noise and Vibration in National Road Schemes, 2004**

Considering the absence of standardised methods for the assessment of road traffic noise the then National Roads Authority (NRA) published the ‘Guidelines for the Treatment of Noise and Vibration in National Road Schemes.’ These guidelines establish noise design objectives for both the construction and operational phases of new road schemes. Following a review of similar guidelines in the UK and adapting methodologies in line with the requirements of the END, the NRA proposed an operational design goal of  $L_{den} \leq 60$  dB free field value. This means that any Environmental Impact Assessment Report for a new road scheme must consider this target concerning any nearby sensitive residential properties likely to be impacted.

The guidelines advocate a structured approach to mitigate road traffic noise as much as practicable, acknowledging that it may not always be feasible to achieve the design goal completely. Measures such as alignment adjustments, barrier construction e.g., earth mounds, and the use of low noise road surfaces are recommended to mitigate adverse effects during road construction. Responsibility for noise mitigation policies concerning new sensitive properties near road scheme lies with the relevant Planning Authority.

### **2.3.11 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Good Practice Guidance for the Treatment of Noise during the Planning of National Road Schemes, 2014**

A review was undertaken by the NRA to assess the effectiveness of noise guidelines in environmental impact statements and other studies related to national road schemes. It examined current practices in Europe and beyond, as well as revisions to UK guidelines on noise prediction.

The review sought to evaluate how well noise mitigation measures aligned with the NRA's noise design goals and identify both good practices and potential shortcomings in current approaches. Based on findings from the studies, the Good Practice Guide provides supplementary advice for acousticians, traffic engineers, and others involved in road planning. It emphasises that the guidance serves as a framework rather than strict requirements, aiming to promote and support good practices tailored to individual project contexts.

### **2.3.12 Draft Interim National Guidance for the Consideration of Transportation Noise in the Design of New Residential Development, 2021**

In the absence of Irish planning guidance for new residential development and the consideration of transportation noise local authorities in 2021 prepared draft guidance under a subgroup of the NIECE National Local Authority Noise Working Group.

This draft guidance includes an overarching aspiration that good acoustic design should be implemented from the outset of the design of new residential developments.

### **2.3.13 Association of Acoustic Consultants of Ireland (AACI), Advice for Local Authority Officers Involved in Enforcement, Assessment of Noise Reports, and Drafting of Noise Conditions for Planning Permissions and Permits, 2021**

The report aims to ensure that noise assessments and conditions are consistently and effectively applied to protect public health and environmental quality. It offers detailed advice on interpreting noise reports, setting appropriate noise limits, and implementing mitigation measures. Additionally, the report highlights best practices for noise monitoring, reporting procedures, and enforcement actions to ensure compliance with noise regulations.

This guidance document does not constitute an official government code of practice, nor does it provide an authoritative interpretation of law or government policy. It is included in the Noise Action Plan for reference purposes.

### **2.3.14 National Sustainable Mobility Policy, Action Plan 2022-2025**

A comprehensive strategy to enhance public transport safety, decarbonise the transport sector, and expand sustainable mobility options across Ireland. Key actions include annual public transport safety reports, awareness campaigns, infrastructure renewal, and speed management measures. The plan also focuses on developing fuelling infrastructure for zero-emission buses, transitioning bus fleets in major cities to low/zero emissions, and enhancing cycling and pedestrian infrastructure. Additionally, the policy aims to improve regional and rural transport services, promote inclusive access, and encourage sustainable travel over private car use through a series of targeted initiatives, all while ensuring public engagement and evidence-based decision-making.

### **2.3.15 Draft Moving Together: A Strategic Approach to the Improved Efficiency of the Transport System in Ireland, 2024**

Aims to overhaul Ireland's transport system to enhance efficiency and reduce dependency on cars, addressing economic, environmental, and societal impacts. This strategy, aligned with Climate Action Plan 2023 targets, emphasises reducing carbon emissions, congestion, and improving air quality. It highlights the economic costs of congestion and stresses the personal toll on health and community life. The report recognises the need for systemic changes to achieve climate goals, advocating for policies that promote shared and public transport, and address noise pollution and air quality issues associated with car-centric travel. It calls for collaborative efforts across government sectors and society to implement 35 recommendations aimed at transforming transport behaviours and infrastructure, focusing on accessibility, safety, and sustainability while acknowledging the role of noise pollution in urban congestion.

### **2.3.16 Draft EPA Noise Action Planning Guidance, 2024**

The Agencies guidance for strategic noise mapping for Round 4 using the CNOSSOS-EU assessment methods is published in five parts:

- Part 1: Requirements
- Part 2: Calculation Methodology & Noise Modelling
- Part 3: Noise Exposure Assessment
- Part 4: Publication and Reporting



- Part 5: Harmful Effects Assessment

The Agency provides guidance on noise action planning, which for Round 4 is currently at the draft stage. These documents are referred to collectively as the 'draft EPA Guidance'.

## 3 Regional Noise Management Policy and Guidance

### 3.1 Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Carlow County Development Plan (CCDP) sets out Carlow County Council’s policies and objectives for the proper planning and sustainable development of the County from 2022 to 2028.

Chapters in the plan which are most relevant to this Noise Action Plan include:

- Chapter 5 – Sustainable Travel and Transportation
- Chapter 6 – Infrastructure and Environmental Management

The above chapters, in summary, include the relevant aims to:

- Maintain and improve the effectiveness of the County’s road network, supporting and providing for more sustainable modes of transport within an integrated land use and transportation framework while supporting the transitioning to a lower carbon-based climate resilient future; and
- Seek the provision and maintenance of high quality infrastructure networks and environmental services in conjunction with other statutory bodies which seeks to complement the overall economic and settlement strategy, contributes to sustainable development and is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### 3.2 Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region

The RSES was prepared by the Southern Regional Assembly to provide a long-term strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development in the southern region. The strategy contains a policy objective for noise under Regional Policy Objective 131 which echoes the National Planning Framework Objective 65:

*“It is an objective to promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and the environment. It is also an objective to support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations through national planning guidance and Noise Action Plans for major urban centres as considered appropriate.”*

The RSES supports the development of strategic noise mapping and pro-active management of noise through noise action planning, including highlighting the importance of quiet areas.

### 3.3 Local Noise Management Policy and Guidance, and Infrastructure Projects

While currently, no TII Primary Road Projects are planned for the Carlow County Council administrative area during the life of the Round 4 Noise Action Plan, it is understood that there may be works on the existing national road network within the administrative area of Carlow County Council. While not their primary purpose, these would have the potential to impact on the noise environment both positively and negatively.

At present, Carlow County is served by the following national roads:

- N/M9 – Dublin to Waterford
- N80 – Tullamore to Enniscorthy
- N81 – Tallaght to Tullow

### **3.4 Other Relevant Plans, Studies and Measures**

#### **3.4.1 Speed Limit Reductions**

A County wide speed limit review is carried out every five years as required by the Guidelines for Setting and Managing Speed Limits in Ireland 2015. While not the primary purpose, reduction of speed limits has the potential to have a positive impact on the noise environment.

#### **3.4.2 Carlow Graiguecullen Local Transport Plan**

Carlow County Council prepared Carlow Graiguecullen Local Transport Plan, which aims “to provide long-term transport improvement plans for [Carlow and Graiguecullen] and ensure there is increased sustainable travel for trips to work and education, as well as on business, for social purposes, shopping and visitor travel.”

#### **3.4.3 Carlow County Council Climate Adaptation Strategy 2024 - 2029**

The Climate Adaptation Strategy developed by Carlow County Council contains goals, objectives and actions to combat climate change by reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions, and adapting to changing climate conditions. Among its strategic goals, which also encompass noise management, are the following objectives:

- Objective 2 – Infrastructure and Built Environment
  - Increased capacity for climate resilient structural infrastructure is centred around the effective management of climate risk, informed investment decisions and positive contribution towards a low carbon society.
- Objective 7 – Mobility
  - Sustain transport networks throughout impacts of climate change and develop more sustainable adaptation methods of mobility.

## 4 Responsible Authorities for Action Planning

### 4.1 Action Planning Authority

Carlow County Council, in its role as Action Planning Authority in accordance with the Regulations, is responsible for making and approving Noise Action Plans in consultation with the Agency and the Noise Mapping Bodies responsible for the noise-map involved. The Regulations do not explicitly assign sole responsibility to the Action Planning Authorities for owning or implementing the measures outlined in the Noise Action Plans.

Carlow County Council recognises that the competencies and responsibilities required for successful implementation of the Noise Action Plan extend beyond their sole jurisdiction. Therefore, collaboration and consultation are essential for the development and implementation of noise mitigation measures, where necessary. The views of Carlow County Council and the Action Planning Authorities on the roles and responsibilities necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the Noise Action Plan are set out in **Table 5**.

Carlow County Council are committed to identifying noise mitigation measures in collaboration and consultation with the Noise Mapping Bodies, that offer benefits to public health and are cost-effective, contingent upon available resources and funding.

Acknowledging the current funding shortfall for dedicated noise mitigation measures under the Regulations, Carlow County Council will explore all future opportunities for support with delivery partners and other relevant sources until any specific arrangements through the Regulations are established.

**Table 5: Carlow County Councils View on the Roles and Responsibilities Required for the Successful Implementation of the Noise Action Plan**

Organisation	Strategic Noise-Mapping Body (NMB) Responsibility	Noise Action Plan Preparation - Responsibility	Noise Action Plan Implementation - Responsibility
<b>Carlow County Council (CWC)</b>	Consult, engage and collaborate with the NMBs	Action Planning Authority responsible for making and approving action plans, in consultation with NMBs.	Detailed evaluation of Priority Important Areas, in consultation with NMBs, including identification of noise mitigation measures and implementation of those measures within the Local Authority’s areas of competence and responsibility, subject to resources and budget.
<b>Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)</b>	NMB responsible for making and approving strategic noise maps for major roads designated as national roads.	Consultee during action planning, with consideration of issues resulting from the strategic noise maps within their area of responsibility including identification of priority important areas to be included within the Noise Action Plan.	As part of the detailed evaluations of the Priority Important Areas conducted by the Action Planning Authorities; consult, engage and collaborate with the Action Planning Authorities to agree noise mitigation measures for locations within TII’s areas of competence and responsibility (National Roads) and agree the strategy for implementation of same in respect of resources, timelines and budget.
<b>Irish Rail</b>	NMB responsible for making and approving strategic noise maps for major railways.	Consultee during action planning, with consideration of issues resulting from the strategic noise maps within their area of responsibility including identification of priority important areas to be included within the Noise Action Plan.	Consult, engage and collaborate with the Action Planning Authorities to identify and agree noise mitigation measures for areas within Irish Rail’s areas of competence and responsibility and implementation of same subject to resources and budget.

## 5 Summary of the Results of the Noise Mapping Process

### 5.1 Review of Round 3 Noise Action Plan (2018-2023)

The Round 3 Noise Action Plan aims were to:

- Produce noise contour maps of the environmental noise environment from Major Roads in the Carlow County Area;
- Summarise the areas of land, number of people and number of dwellings exposed to specific noise ranges from Major Roads in the Carlow County area;
- Provide information of potential noise hot-spots to be assessed, and tools for planning authorities in protecting the noise environment adjoining the Major Roads;
- Provide a tool for monitoring the trends in environmental noise adjoining Major Roads;
- Assist in the development of an environmentally sustainable future in the Carlow County Area; and
- Provide information to the Noise Action Planning Authorities in the production of the Noise Action Plan.

The Round 3 Noise Action Plan had the focus to manage exposure to environmental noise where necessary, aiming to prevent or reduce noise to minimise the number of people affected by traffic noise emissions. The actions taken were strategic and represented the best practice approach to environmental noise mitigation and the limitation of exposure to environmental noise.

Road traffic was indicated as the dominant noise source within Carlow County. The onset levels for assessment of road noise in the Round 3 NAP were 70 dB  $L_{den}$  and 57 dB  $L_{night}$ .

The Round 3 Noise Action Plan used the “Calculation of Road Traffic Noise” UK national method for producing the strategic noise maps for roads, which was in line with the recommendations at the time of the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006. As a result, a back-end calculation was necessary to convert the CRTN values to the required  $L_{den}$  and  $L_{night}$  values.

In line with draft EPA guidance in “Guidance Note for Noise Action Planning”, Round 3 Noise Action Plan set new thresholds for the assessment of noise mitigation measures, as well as the thresholds for the assessment of noise preservation measures, to be consistent with the EPA recommended onset levels.

The Round 3 NAP also utilised a decision support matrix to identify areas which should be prioritised for actions relating to noise intervention or noise management measures.

It was proposed that areas indicated to be subject to environmental noise levels above the assessment threshold would be evaluated by field surveys in order to validate the noise mapping results. In instances where noise levels were confirmed to be unacceptably high the Action Planning Authority would propose the implementation of appropriate measures to reduce the effects of noise exposure, subject to funding being available.

Areas of favourably low environmental noise exposure were to be preserved through management of any activity which could impact on the acoustic environment, and considering the noise impact of any future development at the early stages of the planning process, in order to minimise any adverse effects on the local soundscape, and provide protection for relatively quiet areas.

A number of noise reduction mitigation measures were considered to be suitable dependant on the surrounding environment of an affected area. These included physical measures, as well as non-physical policy measures. The Noise Action Planning Authority endeavoured to manage exposure to environmental noise using the most appropriate measures. The measures stated in Round 3 to be utilised in built up areas included, where necessary:

- Traffic Management;
- Encouraging more environmentally friendly forms of transport such as cycling and walking;
- Encouraging the use of public transport;
- Implementing traffic calming measures; and
- Encouraging the use of low noise road surfacing.

The APA also would consider the use of the following in the planning process, where necessary:

- To integrate the recommendations of noise action plans into future development plans;
- To integrate the mapping as a tool for land use planning;
- To ensure that future developments are designed and constructed in such a way as to minimise noise disturbances due to environmental noise; and
- To integrate environmental noise planning guidelines into planning processes to ensure that new developments give cognisance to environmental noise pollution and noise mitigation.

The APA would consider noise screening where necessary by investigating the suitability of noise screening structures, and would aim to protect the future environmental noise climate by early incorporation of noise action planning into the planning and operational stages of future developments.

## 5.2 CNOSSOS-EU:2020

The European Commission (EC) published Directive 2015/996<sup>24</sup> established common noise assessment methods according to the END. It replaced Annex II of the END, removing the Interim Methods and now requiring that Member States apply the Common Noise Assessment Methods for Europe (CNOSSOS-EU) for the noise modelling of road, rail, aircraft and industrial sources.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32015L0996&from=PT> [Accessed December 2024]

The use of CNOSSOS-EU has since been transposed into Irish Law via the European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 663/2021) and has been used to produce the strategic noise maps and to calculate the noise exposure statistics and harmful effects (see **Section 5.3**) for roads, rail and industry, where applicable.

Two result formats have been prepared for the noise indicators specified in the Regulations,  $L_{den}$  and  $L_{night}$ :

- 10m grid format – where the model outputs a result every 10m in a uniform grid. These results are used to produce the strategic noise maps; and
- Façade receiver format - where the model outputs a result at receiver points digitised at the façades of residential, school and hospital buildings. These results are used to calculate the exposure statistics and harmful effects (see **Section 5.3**).

The model was configured to output results down to the reporting requirements of the END (55 dB  $L_{den}$  and 50 dB  $L_{night}$ ) and the levels required for the calculation of harmful effects.

The model, and calculations for the strategic noise mapping were undertaken by TII, adopting the draft EPA Guidance (Part 2: Calculation Methodology & Noise Modelling).

## 5.3 Noise Exposure and Harmful Effects

### 5.3.1 Noise Exposure Assessment

The first three rounds of strategic noise maps have been developed using computation methods set out in Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 (S.I. 140/2006). For Round 4, Member States are required to use the Common Noise Assessment Methods for Europe (CNOSSOS-EU). This change in methodology makes a direct comparison of the Round 4 noise exposure statistics with the previous three rounds methodologically complex. The Round 4 noise exposure statistics for Carlow County are presented in the following section.

Exposure statistics are assessed independently for each noise source, and are summarised for the noise metrics across the noise exposure bands defined in the Regulations. The population exposure statistics have been rounded to the nearest 100 as required by the Regulations.



**Table 6: Number of People in Dwellings – L<sub>den</sub>**

Noise Exposure (dB L <sub>den</sub> )	Major Roads
55-59	1,600
60-64	600
65-69	500
70-74	200
>=75	0

\*exposure statistics rounded to the nearest 100.

**Table 7: Percentage of Total Population Exposed to the Noise Source – L<sub>den</sub>**

Noise Exposure (dB L <sub>den</sub> )	Major Roads
55-59	2.59%
60-64	0.91%
65-69	0.83%
70-74	0.29%
>=75	0.00%

**Table 8: Number of School Buildings (& Hospital Buildings) – L<sub>den</sub>**

Noise Exposure (dB L <sub>den</sub> )	Major Roads
55-59	02 (00)
60-64	00 (00)
65-69	02 (00)
70-74	00 (00)
>=75	00 (00)

**Table 9: Number of People in Dwellings – L<sub>night</sub>**

Noise Exposure (dB L <sub>night</sub> )	Major Roads
50-54	800
55-59	500
60-64	200
65-69	0
>=70	0

\*exposure statistics rounded to the nearest 100.

**Table 10: Percentage of Total Population Exposed to the Noise Source – L<sub>night</sub>**

Noise Exposure (dB L <sub>night</sub> )	Major Roads
50-54	1.19%
55-59	0.85%
60-64	0.32%
65-69	0.00%
>=70	0.00%

**Table 11: Number of School Buildings (& Hospital Buildings) – L<sub>night</sub>**

Noise Exposure (dB L <sub>night</sub> )	Major Roads
50-54	01 (00)
55-59	01 (00)
60-64	00 (00)
65-69	00 (00)
>=70	00 (00)

### 5.3.2 Harmful Effects Assessment

The European Communities (Environmental Noise) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I. 663/2021) sets out the assessment methods for harmful effects, which considers ischemic heart disease (IHD), high annoyance (HA) and high sleep disturbance (HSD).

Ischemic heart disease is calculated for road traffic noise only, whereas high annoyance and high sleep disturbance are calculated for road traffic, railway and aircraft noise.

The exposure of harmful effect is assessed independently for each source. Where the same people are simultaneously exposed to different noise sources, the harmful effects may not, in general, be cumulated, however can be compared to identify proportional significance.

The method determines harmful effects on population within an assessment area, rather than an accurate assessment of possible health effects at any specific building or location.

Whilst the Regulations set out the equations to be used for calculating harmful effects, it does not define noise thresholds above which health effects should be calculated for, nor does it stipulate the assessment bands that should be used (0.1 dB, 1 dB or 5 dB), these have been provided by the Agency, and are as follows:

- The calculations for harmful effects should be undertaken in 1 dB assessment bands
- The assessment of harmful effects should be undertaken above the following thresholds:
  - **Road traffic noise:** 53 dB  $L_{den}$ , 45 dB  $L_{night}$

Harmful effects have therefore been calculated from population exposure statistics in 1 dB bands for the noise level thresholds set out above using the calculation methodology set out in the Regulations.

**Table 12** presents the calculated harmful effects in the case of noise from major roads for Carlow County. As railway noise and aircraft noise thresholds are not exceeded within Carlow County, there is no associated assessment of harmful effects for railway and aircraft noise respectively.

**Table 12: Health Effects (Major Road Noise)**

Harmful Effect	Number of People	% of Population*
Highly Annoyed (HA)	585.99	0.95%
Highly Sleep Disturbed (HSD)	166.77	0.27%
Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD)	0.5	<0.01%

\*Total population for Carlow County = 61,968

### 5.3.3 Strategic Noise Mapping Figures

The model calculations provide results outputs every 10 metres, which were used to produce the strategic noise maps.

The strategic noise maps are noise contour maps, a graphical representation illustrating the distribution of noise levels over a geographical area. The colours of the noise exposure bands are indicated in the legend, with darker colours representative of higher noise levels.

The Regulations do not set out noise limits which are permissible or impermissible in relation to environmental noise, however, do set the noise exposure bands to be reported, which are reflected in the strategic noise maps. In the absence of noise limits, it could be assumed that the closer the

calculated noise level is to the highest noise exposure band set out in the Regulations the more undesirable it is.

The strategic noise maps are shown in the following figures for the two noise indicators specified in the Regulations,  $L_{den}$  and  $L_{night}$ .

- Figure 3: Strategic Noise Map –  $L_{den}$  – Road Traffic – Major Sources
- Figure 4: Strategic Noise Map –  $L_{night}$  – Road Traffic – Major Sources

## 5.4 Key Insights from Strategic Noise Mapping

### 5.4.1 Population Exposure to Noise

There are 2,900 people in dwellings exposed to noise from major roads greater than, or equal to, 55 dB  $L_{den}$ . This trend is also reflected for the total population exposed to levels greater than, or equal to, 50 dB  $L_{night}$ . No rail or aircraft noise sources were assessed.

The percentage of the total population in dwellings within Carlow County that are exposed to noise from major roads greater than, or equal to, 55 dB  $L_{den}$  is 4.62%.

The percentage of the total population in dwellings within Carlow County that are exposed to noise from major roads greater than, or equal to, 50 dB  $L_{night}$  is 2.36%.

### 5.4.2 Harmful Effects

The calculation of number of people Highly Annoyed indicates that 585.99 people are at risk of high annoyance from major roads. This equates to 0.95% of the population at risk of high annoyance from major roads.

The calculation of number of people Highly Sleep Disturbed indicates that 166.77 people are at risk of high sleep disturbance from major roads. This equates to 0.27% of the population at risk of high sleep disturbance from major roads.

The calculation of number of people experiencing ischemic heart disease indicates that 0.50 people are at risk of ischemic heart disease from major roads. This equates to less than 0.01% of the population.

Figure 3: Strategic Noise Map – L<sub>den</sub> – Road Traffic – Major Sources

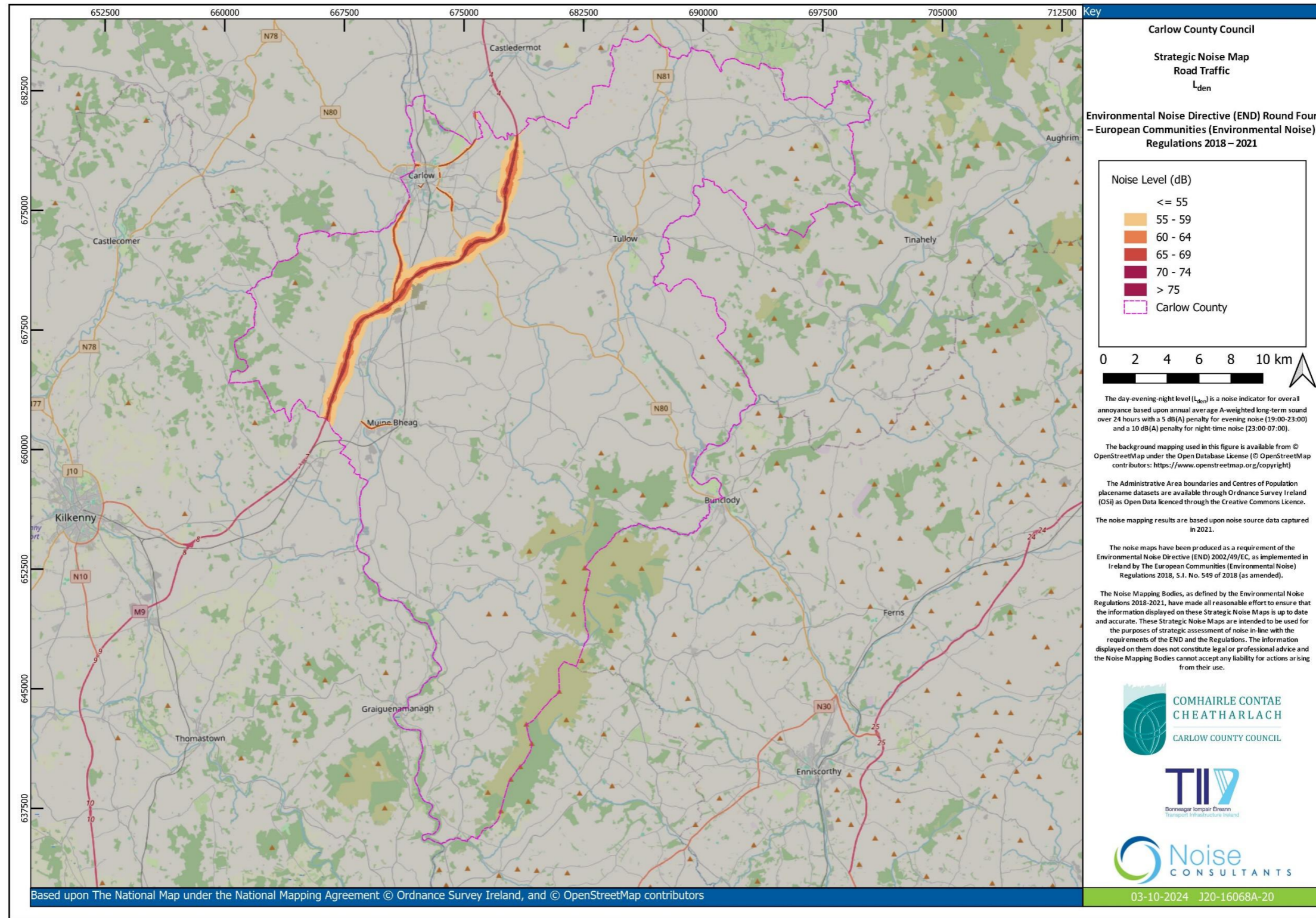
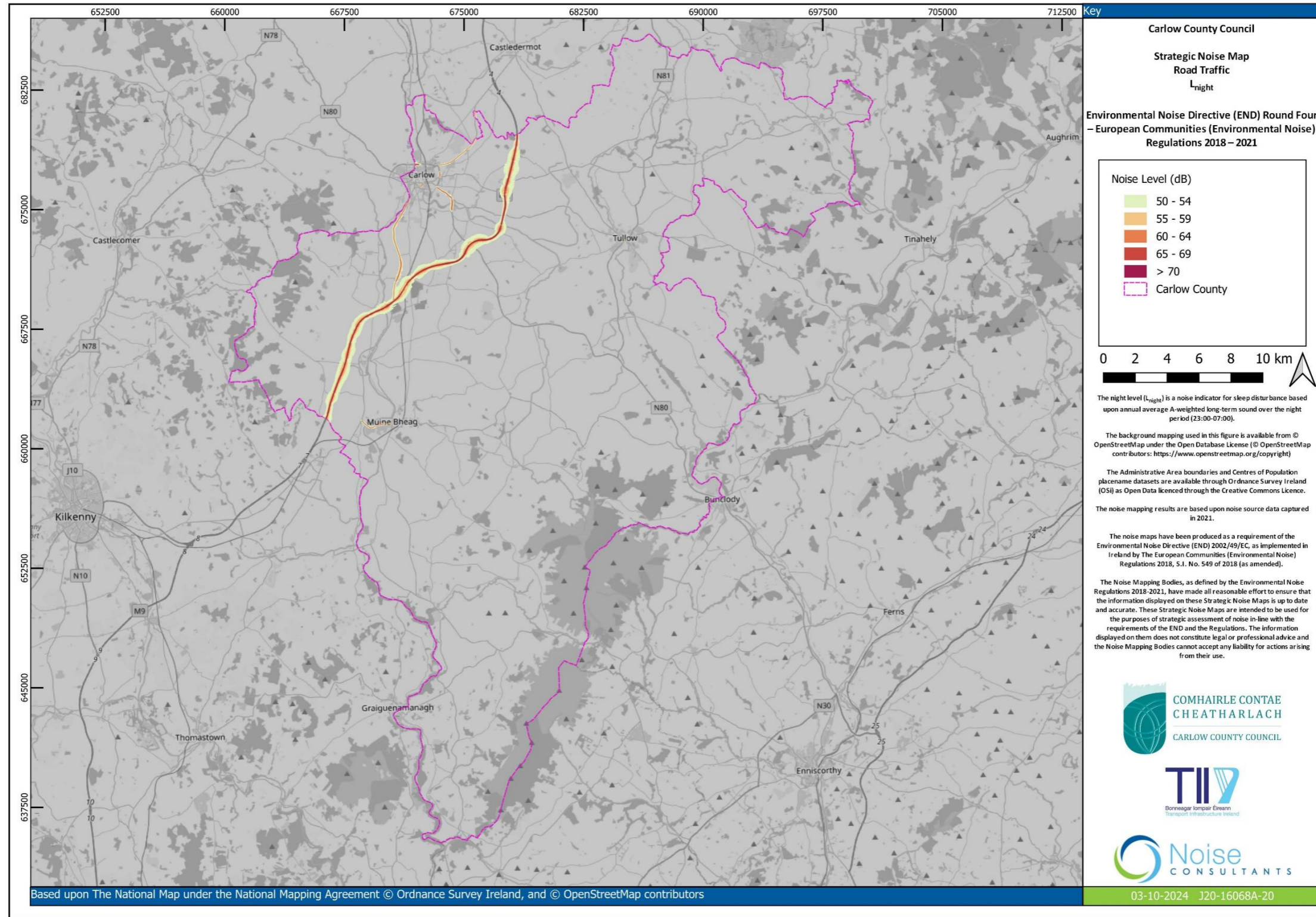


Figure 4: Strategic Noise Map – L<sub>night</sub> – Road Traffic – Major Sources



## 6 Approach to Identification of Areas to be Subject to Noise Management Activities

### 6.1 Regulatory Background

The Regulations require that Action Planning Authorities address “*priorities*” and “*the most important area or areas*” with a view to identifying “*measures*” that will help “*avoid, prevent or reduce*” the “*harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise*”.

The draft EPA Guidance provides further guidance on these concepts, and sets out a recommended approach to identifying priorities:

1. **Important Areas (IAs)** – these are locations exposed to environmental noise which may be harmful to human health, such as high annoyance, as indicated by WHO *Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region* (WHO ENG 2018)<sup>25</sup>;
2. **Most Important Areas (MIAs)** – these locations are a sub-set of Important Areas where the health effects are highest, typically through a product of noise exposure levels and the number of people highly annoyed; and
3. **Priority Important Areas (PIAs)** – between 5 and 10 Most Important Areas or group of similarly affected Most Important Areas, identified, through a prioritisation process, as those which will be evaluated and addressed during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan.

### 6.2 Scope

The Important Areas, Most Important Areas and Priority Important Areas within Carlow County have been identified with respect to noise from major roads.

The identification of areas to be subject to noise management activities due to noise from railways, airports and industrial activities is outside the scope of this Noise Action Plan.

### 6.3 Overview of Process

The process of identifying Important Areas, Most Important Areas and Priority Important Areas within Carlow County is Stage 1 of a two-stage process for the determination and implementation of noise management actions.

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<sup>25</sup> Environmental noise guidelines for the European Region, WHO 2019. Available at: <https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/9789289053563> [Accessed October 2023]

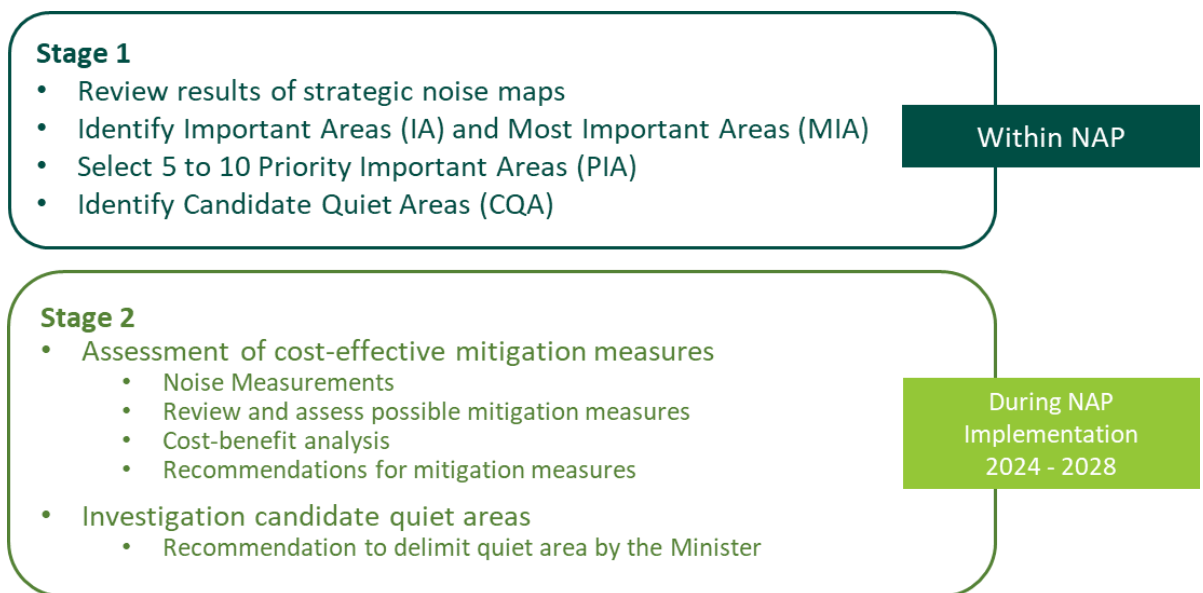
Stage 1 includes using the results of the strategic noise maps to identify the number of people and noise sensitive properties exposed to levels above the guideline levels within EHO ENG 2018. These guideline levels for road traffic noise are set out in **Section 6.4** below.

The findings of the Important Area process are then used to inform an automated process within Geographic Information System (GIS) software to generate raster heatmaps of the relative number of people highly annoyed due to noise in a given area, referred to as Most Important Areas. The Action Planning Authority, in consultation with the NMBs, prioritise the Most Important Areas to identify those which are to be addressed during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, referred to as Priority Important Areas.

Stage 2 of the process takes place during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, and focuses on undertaking an assessment of each of the identified Priority Important Areas including identification of appropriate noise mitigation measures.

An overview of the two-stage process is set out diagrammatically in **Figure 5**.

**Figure 5: Overview of Recommended Approach to Determine Actions to be Undertaken, and Quiet Areas in Open Country to Delimit**



## 6.4 Important Areas (IAs)

There are no statutory noise limits currently in place in Ireland. Under the Regulations, the EPA recommend other criteria used for the evaluation and implementation of noise management and reduction actions within the area covered by the Noise Action Plan, specifically the approach to identifying Important Areas, Most Important Areas, and Priority Important Areas.

As advocated in the draft EPA Guidance, the WHO ENG 2018 guidelines are used in setting the “*other relevant criteria*” under Regulation 12(2) for identifying Important Areas. For major roads, which are within the scope of this Noise Action Plan, the criteria are: 53 dB  $L_{den}$  and 45 dB  $L_{night}$ .



The guideline levels are relevant for the reduction of harmful effects from environmental noise on human health, and a summary of the number of people in Carlow County which experience environmental noise above these levels is summarised in **Table 13**.

**Table 13: Important Areas - Number of People in Dwellings**

Noise Source	WHO Guideline Level	Number of People in Dwellings Exposed to Level Above WHO Guideline
Road Traffic	53 dB L <sub>den</sub>	3,874.50
	45 dB L <sub>night</sub>	3,492.82

## 6.5 Most Important Areas (MIAs)

The results of the Important Areas have been used to inform the identification of Most Important Areas. The process of identifying the Most Important Areas is set out in the draft EPA Guidance and is an automated process within GIS software which uses the results of the strategic noise maps assigned to population statistics in areas with exposures greater than the Important Area criteria.

The assignment of population to the calculated noise levels is set out within Annex II of the END (CNOSOS-EU) and provides building level statistics across Carlow County. Following the method in Annex II of the END, the harmful effects due to noise are statistically assessed and used to generate a gridded “heatmap” of values which represent (approximately) the number of people highly annoyed per 100m<sup>2</sup>, which is in-line with the approach set out in the draft EPA Guidance.

Using the heatmap, the areas of higher concentrations of people highly annoyed (HA) are identified and delineated as a digital polygon. The draft EPA Guidance sets a density criterion of 15 or more people per 100m<sup>2</sup> as being the most appropriate for Most Important Areas in main urban areas, with lower criteria of 10 and 7.5 people per 100m<sup>2</sup> appropriate on the edge of urban or in rural areas.

It is crucial to emphasise that the approach to identifying Most Important Areas is of a statistical nature and pertains to the entire population encompassed by the noise maps. It should not be construed as a precise assessment of harmful effects for specific buildings, nor are the extents of the Most Important Areas definitive. Instead, they are indicative in identifying areas with a relatively high number of people highly annoyed due to noise.

### 6.5.1 Most Important Areas Summary

A summary of the Most Important Areas identified within Carlow County using the draft EPA Guidance density criterion of 7.5 or more people per 100m<sup>2</sup> is given in **Table 14**. Where Most Important Areas are identified with a density criterion of 10, these have superseded identified areas of the lower density criterion of 7.5, where the 7.5 HA areas wholly contain the 10 HA areas. Using this criterion and selection methodology, 9 Most Important Areas were identified within Carlow County, as shown in **Figure 6**. Of these, 3 areas were identified as having a density criterion of 10 or more, and the remaining 6 were identified as having a density criterion of 7.5 or more.

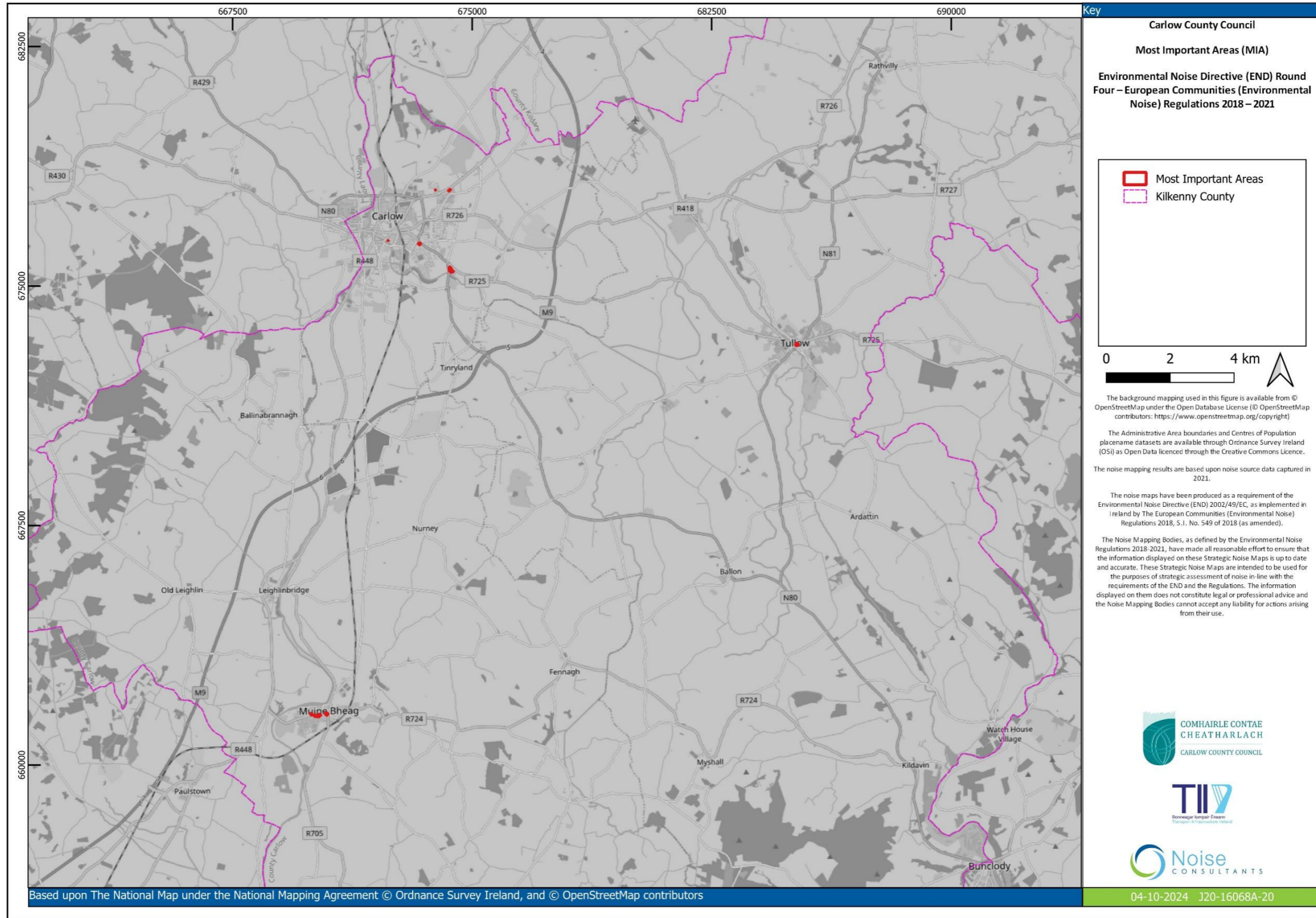
**Table 14: Most Important Areas (MIAs) Summary**

Action Planning Authority	No. of MIA*		Harmful Effects Statistics**		
	Major Roads	Total Population	HA	HSD	IHD
<b>Carlow</b>	9	394.12	75.18	22.73	0.08

\*The total population inside all Most Important Areas (MIA)

\*\* Total harmful effects inside all MIA (the harmful effects presented in this table are determined from a statistical approach across the whole population covered by the noise maps, and should not be considered to be an accurate assessment of the possible health effects at any specific building)

Figure 6: Most Important Areas (MIAs)



## 6.6 Priority Important Areas (PIAs)

The Most Important Areas established within Carlow County are summarised in **Table 14**. Given the number of Most Important Areas identified, a process has been undertaken to identify which Important Areas exceeding the draft EPA guidance density criterion of 15 and 10 people per 100m<sup>2</sup> should be considered a priority (Priority Important Area), for which an assessment of noise mitigation measures will be undertaken within the life cycle of the Noise Action Plan and those deemed justified implemented subject to funding and resources.

The identification of the Priority Important Areas has been undertaken by Carlow County Council in consultation with NMBs and relevant stakeholders. The draft EPA Guidance recommends that between 5 and 10 Priority Important Areas are selected.

To inform Action Planning Authority decisions on the selection of Priority Important Areas, consistent with the requirements of the draft EPA Guidance, associated statistical information has been developed for each Most Important Area, including:

- Noise source identifying the Most Important Area, i.e., major roads
- Area (m<sup>2</sup>)
- Total population
- Number of people highly annoyed (HA)
- Number of people highly sleep disturbed (HSD)
- Population increased risk of ischemic heart disease (IHD)
- Number of dwellings
- Population noise exposure above END threshold values:
  - Major road traffic noise exposure in 5 dB bands ( $L_{den} 55 \rightarrow 75$  dB,  $L_{night} 50 \rightarrow 70$  dB)

The Priority Important Areas are summarised in **Table 15**, and were selected by Carlow County Council based upon those Most Important Area or groups of Most Important Areas with the greatest number of people and consideration of other factors such as planned road maintenance works and traffic plans and projects.

The selected Priority Important Areas cover, statistically, 75.18 people highly annoyed (HA), 22.73 highly sleep disturbed (HSD) and 0.08 people at increased risk of ischemic heart disease (IHD), with the potential to benefit from consideration of noise management measures.

**Table 15: Priority Important Areas (PIA) Summary**

Action Planning Authority	No. of PIA		Harmful Effects Statistics**		
	Major Roads	Total Population*	HA	HSD	IHD
<b>Carlow</b>	9	394.12	75.18	22.73	0.08

\*The total population inside all Most Important Areas (MIA) associated with the Priority Important Areas (PIA)

\*\* Total harmful effects inside all MIA associated with the PIA (the harmful effects presented in this table are determined from a statistical approach across the whole population covered by the noise maps, and should not be considered to be an accurate assessment of the possible health effects at any specific building)

Figures of the Most Important Areas, and Priority Important Areas are included in **Appendix B**. Noise management measures to be considered in the assessment of noise mitigation for the identified Priority Important Areas are set out in **Section 8**.

The progress of investigating these measures will be reported to the Agency throughout the life cycle of the Noise Action Plan.

## 7 Approach to Identification of Areas to be Preserved for Environmental Noise Quality

### 7.1 Regulatory Background

The Fourth Schedule of the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 (S.I. 549/2018) requires Action Planning Authorities to set out actions in relation to measures to preserve Quiet Areas. Under the Regulations, the scope of this Noise Action Plan for Carlow County includes consideration of delimiting Quiet Areas in open country. Currently, there is no universally accepted definition by EU Member States<sup>26</sup> of what constitutes a Quiet Area; however, they are generally considered as areas where environmental noise levels are deemed to be good, undisturbed by noise from traffic, industry or recreational activities, and therefore protection should be considered in the context of new development.

As required by the Regulations, the strategic noise mapping for Carlow County considers noise from major roads, and does not include noise from lower-flow roads. The lack of data at lower noise levels is a limitation in identifying areas that are truly undisturbed and provide public amenity.

In developing this Noise Action Plan, Carlow County has not identified any Quiet Areas in open country as candidates for delimitation. The focus during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan will be on the long-term strategy and associated policy and actions outlined in **Section 9**. These include a policy principle to protect desirably quiet areas, consultation with the Agency, and subsequent consideration of their formal designation as Quiet Areas in open country. Responsible Aim RA\_4 aims to assess and, where appropriate, propose Candidate Quiet Areas in open country for designation, in consultation with the Agency.

The process of delimiting a Quiet Area in open country is informed by an investigation by the Action Planning Authority. If the investigation identifies a benefit in delimiting an area as a Quiet Area in open country, the evidence is submitted to the Agency for consideration in consultation with the Minister. Successful applications result in the official delimitation of the Quiet Area in open country.

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<sup>26</sup> European Parliament, Towards a comprehensive noise strategy, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department A: Economic and Scientific Policy, 2012

## 7.2 Other Considerations

A desirable outcome of the Regulations is for further increases in environmental noise to be prevented, where practicable, to support the objectives of sustainable development.

Therefore, it is for responsible authorities, including Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála, to consider appropriate noise management measures, beyond the consideration of noise mitigation for the areas identified through the processes described in **Section 6**. This is consistent with National Planning Policy Objective 65, which supports the aims of the Regulations through national planning guidance.

The appropriate use of the planning system can be used to help avoid, or minimise, the adverse impacts of noise without placing unreasonable restrictions on development. There are two main scenarios in development where noise could be viewed as a material consideration:

### 1. Bringing people to noise

- New housing, hospital, school, nursing home etc developments near to existing road, rail, industrial or airport noise;
- Noise levels outside the façade, in gardens, in public open spaces;
- Noise levels inside the building.

### 2. Bringing noise to people

- New or altered roads, railways, industrial sites or airports or commercial developments which would alter the noise environment in the vicinity of noise sensitive locations.

To effectively employ the planning process for consistent noise exposure avoidance or mitigation, it is deemed beneficial to incorporate guidelines on noise exposure levels during the initial proposal and design phase of planning applications. Descriptions of guidance adopted by Carlow County Council are set out below.

### 7.2.1 ProPG: Planning & Noise - New Residential Development

The *Draft Interim National Guidance for the Consideration of Transportation Noise in the Design of New Residential Development* (2021) (described in **Section 2.3.12**), which the Local Authorities have cognisance of, recommends that consideration is given to the potential impact of transportation noise in line with Professional Planning Guidance (ProPG) on Planning & Noise: New Residential Development (ProPG, 2017).

ProPG was published in May 2017 by the Acoustics and Noise Consultants (ANC), Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and UK Institute of Acoustics (IOA). Its primary goal is to aid in planning to deliver sustainable development by promoting good health and well-being in relation to noise. It encourages the use of good acoustic design process in and around proposed new residential development, having regard to national policy.

Any issues related to noise should be given consideration at the earliest stages of the development process to facilitate streamlined decision making in planning. ProPG follows a systematic, proportionate, risk based, two-stage, approach.

Stage One is an Initial Site Noise Risk Assessment which should be conducted to establish the level of risk from noise, not including any mitigation measures. There are four noise risk categories (negligible, low, medium and high). The outcome of this assessment should not directly inform a decision, rather to allow for the consideration of good acoustic design.

Stage Two is a full noise assessment including four recommended key elements:

- Element 1 - demonstrating a “Good Acoustic Design Process” avoiding “unreasonable” and preventing “unacceptable” acoustic conditions;
- Element 2 - observing “Internal Noise Level Guidelines”;
- Element 3 - undertaking an “External Amenity Area Noise Assessment”;
- Element 4 - consideration of “Other Relevant Issues”.

To support proposals for a development an Acoustic Design Statements should be produced which will aid recommendations formulated by the decision maker.

### **7.2.2 Acoustic Ventilation and Overheating, Residential Design Guide (AVO)**

In 2020 the ANC and IOA jointly published the Acoustic Ventilation and Overheating, Residential Design Guide (AVO), which provides an approach as to how the competing aspects of thermal and acoustic comfort can be managed, which is particularly important in situations where acoustic requirement may call for closed windows.

It is recommended in guidance for action planning authorities prepared by the Agency that AVO guidance should be used after reasonably practicable attempts to use good acoustic design to achieve the internal target levels recommended by the ProPG have been exhausted.

### **7.2.3 BS 8233:2014: Guidance on sound Insulation and Noise Reduction for Buildings**

BS 8233:2014 is intended to provide recommendations for the control of noise in and around buildings. It suggests appropriate criteria and limits for different situations, which are primarily intended to guide the design of new or refurbished buildings undergoing a change of use rather than to assess the effect of external noise sources. The guidelines for noise levels in a residential property are generally in accordance with WHO Guidelines for Community Noise and Night Noise Guidelines.

The standard suggests suitable internal noise levels within different types of buildings including residential dwellings for steady external noise sources. BS 8233:2014 recommended maximum ambient noise levels, as summarised **Table 16**.



**Table 16: BS 8233 Recommended Internal  $L_{Aeq}$  Target Levels for Overall Noise in the Design of a Building**

Location	$L_{Aeq, 16hr}$ (0700-2300 hrs)*	$L_{Aeq, 8hr}$ (2300-0700 hrs)*
Living Rooms	35 dB	-
Dining Rooms	40 dB	-
Bedrooms	35 dB	30 dB

\*see BS 8233:2014 for caveats and notes

Regarding noise levels in external amenity areas, BS 8233:2014 states:

*“it is desirable that the steady state noise level does not exceed 50 dB  $L_{Aeq,T}$ , with an upper guideline value of 55 dB  $L_{Aeq,T}$  ...it is also recognized that these guideline values are not achievable in all circumstances.”*

BS 8233:2014 also provides guidance on appropriate internal noise levels within different types of workplaces such as offices. In designing buildings to control noise levels internally, BS 8233:2014 suggests the following sequence:

- a) assess the site, identify significant existing and potential noise sources,
- b) measure or estimate noise levels and evaluate layout options;
- c) determine design noise levels for spaces in and around the building(s);
- d) determine sound insulation of the building envelope, including the ventilation strategy;
- e) identify internal sound insulation requirements;
- f) identify and design appropriate noise control measures;
- g) establish quality control and ensure good quality workmanship.

**7.2.4 ISO 19488:2021 Acoustics: Acoustic classification of dwellings**

The purpose of the international standard is to aid developers to specify a classified level of acoustic quality for a dwelling. The document can be used as a tool to characterise the quality of the existing housing stock.

The document does not have legal status, unless adopted by national or relevant authorities. An additional purpose of the standard is to help national authorities and standardisation organisations to develop or revise national building regulations and acoustic classification schemes.

## 8 Prevention, Protection and Mitigation Measures

### 8.1 Introduction

The management of noise within the Carlow County Council administrative area adopts three approaches:

1. **Prevention** – measures which seek to avoid additional members of the community being exposed to undesirable noise conditions. Preventative measures consist of planning policy in respect of not locating residential developments and other noise sensitive buildings in potentially noisy environments and in particular adjacent to transportation infrastructure.
2. **Protection** – relates to the preservation of environmental noise quality through the identification of Candidate Quiet Areas in open country, and the processes of investigating Candidate Quiet Areas for delimitation as Quiet Areas in open country; and
3. **Mitigation Measures** – relates to the identification and prioritisation of appropriate mitigation measures to reduce and/or mitigate noise levels in areas where they are potentially harmful to human health.

### 8.2 Prevention

#### 8.2.1 Planning Guidance

Applications for new residential developments in the Carlow County Council administrative area will be assessed in accordance with the policies and goals outlined in the relevant Development Plans. Where applicable, these include adoption of the principles of Professional Planning Guidance (ProPG) on *Planning & Noise: New Residential Development*, as described in **Section 7.2.1**.

Where the assessment outcome determines the likelihood of an adverse noise impact, planning applications should be supplemented by an Acoustic Design Statement carried out by appropriately qualified acousticians and competent persons<sup>27</sup>. The Acoustic Design Statement should demonstrate that all facets of ProPG have been followed.

#### 8.2.2 Noise and the Public Realm

A healthy acoustic environment in public areas depends on environmental noise levels as well as a variety of subjective factors such as the intended use of space, the preferences of people, their expectations and their attitudes and sensitivity to the sounds they hear. The management of

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<sup>27</sup> The Council's definition of competent persons is based on the EPA's interpretation in their Guidance Note for Noise in Relation to Scheduled Facilities.

environmental noise in the public realm should have a broad focus with a consideration of noise levels as well as the need to create the right acoustic environment for the right time and place.

There are synergies between the mitigation of traffic-related noise and air pollution because the source of emissions is often similar. Early input in the design of public spaces by considering air quality and the acoustic environment offers the opportunity to maximise the benefits of taking an integrated approach to design.

In designing public spaces to maximise the contribution in terms of maintaining good air quality, reducing environmental noise and improving the quality of sound then consideration should be given to measures including:

- Using novel environmentally friendly methods (e.g., Holistic and sustainable abatement of noise by optimized combinations of natural and artificial means (HOSANNA)<sup>28</sup>, funded by the European Union Seventh Framework Programme, FP7/2007–2013<sup>29</sup>) such as barrier designs, the appropriate planting of trees, shrubs, or bushes, ground and road surface treatments, and greening of building façades and roofs;
- pedestrianising streets and the use of green infrastructure to reduce the likelihood of citizens being present in locations where air and noise pollution are highest, and creating attractive, accessible places where pollution levels are lower;
- providing options for active travel along routes other than beside busy roads, making walking and cycling increasingly attractive alternatives to private vehicle use. This will reduce citizens' exposure to air and noise pollution, and potentially vehicular emissions;
- providing and protecting tranquil outdoor environments and positive acoustic environments. This may reduce annoyance for citizens living near busy roads and ensure people have options other than being indoors when they want to enjoy respite from noise;
- encouraging exercise and other outdoor recreation to improve citizens health and well-being due to health risks posed by air and noise pollution; and
- providing alternative acoustic interventions to create new positive types of sounds that mask environmental noise.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/234306> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>29</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/seventh-framework-programme-2007-to-2013.html> [Accessed December 2024]

### 8.3 Protection: Areas to be Preserved for Environmental Noise Quality

Whilst no Candidate Quiet Areas in open country have been identified in this Noise Action Plan by Carlow County as candidates for delimitation, the long-term strategy, policies and actions include a policy principle to protect desirably quiet areas and consider their formal designation as Quiet Areas in open country. Responsible Aim RA\_4 aims to assess and, where appropriate, propose Candidate Quiet Areas in open country to the Agency for designation. These are described in **Section 9**.

During the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, Carlow County Council shall consider measures to ensure the environmental noise quality in Quiet Areas in open country are preserved, with careful management of activities that would impact the acoustic environment.

### 8.4 Mitigation: Areas to be Subject to Noise Management Activities

Priority Important Areas (see **Section 6.6**), have been identified within Carlow County as those where noise management activities are to be considered during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan.

As noted in **Section 6**, the Priority Important Areas have been identified with respect to noise from major roads only, as the management of noise due to railways, airports and industrial activities are outside the scope of this Noise Action Plan and primarily with the associated authorities.

Considering the multitude and diversity of noise management options, choosing a noise mitigation measure necessitates evaluating its potential effectiveness in reducing noise exposure and adverse effects, while also considering its associated costs. The general steps in this process, which will be considered by the Action Planning Authority in consultation and collaboration with the NMBs during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, are:

1. Noise measurements at Priority Important Areas.
2. Review of the assumptions used to identify the Priority Important Areas
3. Re-evaluation and confirmation of Priority Important Areas
4. Identification of practical noise mitigation measures
5. Appraisal of noise mitigation measures monetised benefits to health
6. Financial assessment of noise mitigation measures
7. Cost-benefit analysis
8. Recommendation of noise mitigation measure(s)

Each of these steps is further elaborated upon in the subsequent sections. The appraisal of the noise mitigation measures shall be undertaken during the implementation of the plan.

#### 1. Noise measurements at Priority Important Areas

The assessment of Priority Important Areas is guided by an initial undertaking of noise measurements at locations representative of the area identified. The surveys will be conducted by the relevant Local Authority, and/ or other pertinent infrastructure owners.

The primary objective of the noise survey is to verify that the measured noise exposures accurately correspond to the results obtained from the strategic noise maps. The results of the noise measurements will service to authenticate the strategic noise models, providing a basis upon which the noise mitigation measures can be evaluated.

## **2. Review of the assumptions used to identify the Priority Important Areas**

If disparities arise between the noise measurements and the results obtained from the strategic noise maps, investigations will be conducted into factors such as road surface, traffic speeds, traffic counts, presence of barriers etc, and these findings will be compared against the assumptions within the noise models utilised for development the strategic noise maps.

## **3. Re-evaluation of Priority Important Areas**

A re-evaluation of the identified Priority Important Area to ensure the analysis is representative of the assessment year, and appropriate amendments to the model parameters have been incorporated. This is likely to be informed by consultation between the Action Planning Authority and NMBs, and may include re-running the adjusted noise model and/or a review of any noise measurements.

## **4. Identification of practical noise mitigation measures**

Carlow County Council, in consultation with NMBs will identify and agree on practical noise mitigation measures in relation to the Priority Important Areas that remain following steps 1-3 (above). The practicality of the measures will take into consideration its potential impact in terms of noise exposure and harmful effects reduction, planning, land-use, cost and available technology.

The noise mitigation measures are collectively described as a noise management framework, and can be considered both in isolation, and in combination. Consideration will also be given to measures that may result from existing road management projects and works programmes.

Examples of noise management frameworks for road traffic noise are displayed in the following figures:

- Figure 7: Road Traffic Noise Management Framework

## **5. Appraisal of noise mitigation measures monetised benefits to health**

An assessment of the identified practical noise mitigation measures, which will likely include testing of the measures using the revised CNOSSOS-EU (or other appropriate methodology) detailed computational noise model to determine the noise exposure and health benefits of the measures.

In Ireland there is no recommended method for monetising the health benefits of noise mitigation measures. In the absence of an Irish method, the draft EPA Guidance recommends that appraisals use the UK environmental impact appraisal methodology within the English Department for Transport, Transport Analysis Guidance (WebTAG) to inform a cost benefit assessment.

WebTAG provides guidelines and tools for translating the expected benefits of road, rail and aviation mitigation measures into monetary terms. WebTAG is informed by noise calculation results for a year during the implementation of the plan (2024-2028) and a future year, (typically 15 years ahead), with

and without the noise mitigation measure(s) in place. The WebTAG noise workbook<sup>30</sup> calculates the monetary value of long-term effects on sleep disturbance, amenity (annoyance), AMI (acute myocardial infarction), stroke, and dementia during the daytime, and sleep disturbance at night.

The WebTAG outcomes provide the net present value of the noise level change resulting from the assessed mitigation scheme in Pounds Sterling. This value will require conversion to Euros using the prevailing exchange rate, enabling a comparison with the estimated implementation costs.

## 6. Financial assessment of noise mitigation measures

The estimated cost of implementing mitigation measure(s) will be determined, considering costs over the measure's lifetime, encompassing construction and maintenance expenses. The selection of specific mitigation measure(s) will result from an appraisal of their benefits to health, monetised accordingly. For example, road re-surfacing with respect to road traffic noise, whereby quiet road surfaces can be an effective way of reducing road traffic noise at receptors. The characteristics of a quiet road surface generally consist of its enhanced ability to absorb sound rather than reflect it, and a smoother surface so tyres encounter fewer irregularities.

The noise reduction of a quiet road surface can be between 1 – 5 dB<sup>31 32</sup> when compared with a common dense asphalt concrete road surface type. Larger reductions are possible, particularly when replacing worn roads with optimised quiet road surfaces. The specific costs per square metre of a standard road surface compared with a quieter road surface can be commercially sensitive, however the Phenomena project (2021), discussed in **Section 2.2.5**, notes these cost increases can be 5-10%.

The financial assessment of noise mitigation would be developed through consultation between the Action Planning Authority, NMB and appropriate Local Authority departments.

## 7. Cost-benefit analysis

A comparison of benefits to health versus the cost of the noise mitigation measure. This is presented as a cost-benefit ratio (the ratio of costs over benefit). Cost-benefit ratios of less than 1.0 indicate the benefits to health outweigh the costs.

## 8. Recommendation of noise mitigation measure(s)

The final step in the process, which allows all of the noise mitigation scenarios to be compared through the outcomes of the cost-benefit analysis. The most cost-effective noise mitigation measures will be proposed in collaboration with NMBs and appropriate authorities, and will (subject to resources and funding) seek to be implemented.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tag-environmental-impacts-worksheets> [Accessed December 2024]

<sup>31</sup> J. Sliggers: Road surface label, Push and Pull for Noise Emission Reduction from Road Traffic in the NLs and EU, Informal document GRB-65-27 (65th GRB, February 2017, agenda item 10)

<sup>32</sup> F. G. Praticò, F. Anfosso-Lédée, Trends And Issues In Mitigating Traffic Noise Through Quiet Pavements, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 53 ( 2012 ) 203 – 212

**Figure 7: Road Traffic Noise Management Framework**



## 9 Long-term Strategy

### 9.1 Noise Action Plan Implementation Commitments

This Noise Action Plan is supported by a four-year programme for implementation (2024-2028), with progress reported to the Agency on an annual basis.

The Noise Action Plan is underpinned by a set of overarching noise policy principles outlined in the **Noise Policy Statement**.

These noise policy principles are supported by general commitments (**Responsible Aims**) by Carlow County Council.

#### 9.1.1 Noise Policy Statement

Carlow County Council will adopt a strategic approach to managing environmental noise from major roads with the following overarching policy principles:

- **Prevention** – manage the risk of additional members of the community being exposed to undesirable noise levels where it is likely to have significant adverse impact on health and quality of life.
- **Protection** - protect areas which are desirably quiet, or which offer a sense of tranquillity through a process of identification and validation followed by formal designation of ‘Quiet Areas in open country’.
- **Mitigation Measures** – identify, and prioritise, appropriate mitigation measures to reduce noise levels where they are potentially harmful.

#### 9.1.2 Responsible Aims

Responsible aims, which underpin the Noise Policy Statement:

- **RA\_1 – Policy and Guidance Development** – Encourage the integration of noise considerations into the ongoing process of policy and guidance development, and actively promote existing policies and guidance related to noise.
- **RA\_2 – Working Groups** – Participate in technical working groups pertinent to the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive and with the assistance of the Environmental Protection Agency, a Round 4 Noise Action Plan Implementation Working Group shall be established.
- **RA\_3 – Noise Mitigation** – In collaboration and consultation with relevant Noise Mapping Bodies, noise management interventions shall be applied on a priority basis during existing maintenance and improvement programs, where appropriate. This application will be based on a relevant evaluation of whole-life costs and benefits.
- **RA\_4 – Protection** – Assess and, where appropriate, propose Candidate Quiet Areas to the Environmental Protection Agency for designation as Quiet Areas in open country by the Minister.



- **RA\_5 – Prevention** – Evaluate and condition planning proposals for noise sensitive development near major noise sources.
- **RA\_6 – Community Engagement** – Commit to proactive and inclusive engagement with communities and collaboratively address noise issues for the improvement of our shared living environment.
- **RA\_7 – Manage Noise Complaints** – Review and respond to all environmental noise complaints in accordance with their Customer Charter.
- **RA\_8 – Regulatory Engagement** – Report the progress on the implementation of Noise Action Plans, including the investigation and implementation of noise management measures in Priority Important Areas, and the assessment of Candidate Quiet Areas in open country for preservation of environmental noise quality, to the Environmental Protection Agency on an annual basis.

## 9.2 Key Round 5 Timetables

The Round 4 Noise Action Plan timetable is set out in **Section 1.5**, with the deadline for the submission of the Noise Action Plan to the European Environment Agency (EEA) on 18 January 2025.

Specific dates relating to Round 5 Noise Action Plans are to be determined, but are expected to be:

- 18 July 2028: Deadline for noise action plans
- 18 August 2028: Deadline for publishing noise action plans
- 18 August 2028: Summaries of noise action plans submitted to the Agency
- 18 January 2029: Noise actions plans to be reported to the EEA by the Agency

## 10 Round 4 Noise Action Plan Implementation

The implementation of the Noise Action Plan spans a four-year time frame, beginning in 2024. Key measures and actions associated with its implementation have been developed which reflect the policy principles set out in the **Noise Policy Statement (Section 9.1.1)** and in support of the **Responsible Aims (Section 9.1.2)**, and with reference to key regulatory dates.

### 10.1 Key Mitigation and Protection Measures

An overview of the general prevention, protection and mitigation measures that could be considered for the management of noise from major roads within the Carlow County Council administrative area is presented within **Section 8**.

This section considers those measures in a local context, together with key local noise management related policy guidelines and local and regional projects and set out the framework that Carlow County Council intends to follow to help manage and mitigate the effects of exposure to environmental noise.

The environmental noise management measures within the framework are presented across the three policy principle categories covered by the **Noise Policy Statement**, together with a fourth supporting 'General' category as follows;

- General – Noise Management Measures
- Prevention – Noise Management Measures
- Protection – Noise Management Measures
- Mitigation – Noise Management Measures.

In some instances, measures do not necessarily stand in isolation and may be relevant for, or overlap, with other categories.

Furthermore, the measures collectively support the **Responsible Aims** which underpin the **Noise Policy Statement**.

When considering the broader framework of measures and actions aimed at mitigating exposure to environmental noise from the transport and industry sectors, it is important to emphasize that Carlow County Council, in some instances, does not have exclusive ownership or influence over certain noise sources, areas, and the measures presented in this Noise Action Plan. Many of the measures and actions will require input, collaboration, and execution by other infrastructure owners, along with support from government departments and bodies through relevant legislation and funding.

In addition to third-party collaboration, the successful implementation of this Noise Action Plan will also depend on the availability of adequate resources to execute the proposed measures and actions.

The measures are described below across each of the four categories.

### 10.1.1 General – Noise Management Measures

General noise management measures cover a range of activities to support the implementation of the Noise Action Plan including other measures across the three policy principal categories.

#### **Measure CWC\_M1: Support the Development of National Noise and Other Related Policy and Guidance**

At present there is no national policy relating specifically to noise other than specific objectives set out within a range of national plans and strategies such as Policy Objective 65 from the National Planning Framework 2040. Furthermore, there is no adopted consistent approach for Local Authorities to apply in the evaluation of noise issues at the planning application stage. Some have developed their own guidelines, and many apply the ProPG approach which is used within the UK. Development of national policy and guidelines will be the responsibility of the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC).

In addition to specific national policy and guidance relating to noise, other national policy and guidance can have an indirect impact on noise related issues. An example includes the National Speed Limit Review led by the Department of Transport and published in September 2023.

Carlow County Council will actively support and engage with the development of national policy and guidance dealing with environmental noise, planning and noise, and transportation noise, if and as proposed by the relevant national bodies, including the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and Department of Transport (DoT).

#### **Measure CWC\_M2: Noise Action Plan Working Group(s)**

Carlow County Council will support the establishment of relevant noise working groups and collaborate with the relevant NMBs in respect of noise management issues in general and mitigation measures at a Priority Important Area level.

#### **Measure CWC\_M3: Annual Report to Environment Protection Agency (EPA)**

Carlow County Council will prepare an annual report for the Agency setting out progress made in respect of the implementation of the Noise Action Plan. Carlow County Council will liaise with relevant third-party infrastructure owners in respect of progress made by them with implementing actions that may be relevant for them and their infrastructure.

#### **Measure CWC\_M4: Continued Investigation and Management of Noise Complaints**

Carlow County Council's Environment Section investigates complaints under the provisions of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992 (Noise) Regulations 1994. The Unit has regard to best international best practice guidelines and standards.

#### **Measure CWC\_M5: Stakeholder Collaboration**

Carlow County Council's Environment Section actively collaborates with a number of stakeholders in relation to potential and existing air and noise nuisances:

- **EPA - IPC Licences** - The Environmental Section collaborates with the Agency in the investigation of noise complaints.

- **Irish Rail** - The Environment Section liaises with Irish Rail as required in relation to complaints, night time works, and infrastructure projects which may increase noise levels.
- **TII & National Roads Office** – The Environment Section liaises with TII and the National Roads Office in relation to noise complaints within the county boundary.

### **Measure CWC\_M6: Ongoing Community Engagement**

A key requirement in the development of the strategic noise maps and Noise Action Plan is that the information is made available to the public in a clear, comprehensible, and accessible manner. Furthermore, the public should be consulted on the preparation of the Noise Action Plan, provided with the opportunity to participate and comment on the Noise Action Plan, and the feedback from public engagement should be considered when finalising the Noise Action Plan.

The strategic noise maps, together with background information, will be published on the Carlow County Council website and a period of formal public consultation held on the Noise Action Plan. Furthermore, engagement will be on-going through the elected representatives of Carlow County Council through the relevant Strategic Policy Committee and Local Area Committee meetings.

As part of the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, it is proposed to continue with, and build on this public engagement as part of the evaluation of the Priority Important Areas and also through engagement on relevant existing Plans and Projects.

## **10.1.2 Prevention – Noise Management Measures**

### **Measure CWC\_M7: Planning Application Advice, Conditioning and Enforcement**

Carlow County Council's Environment Section consults directly with the Planning Department advising on planning applications and enforcement of planning conditions in relation to noise emissions and have standard planning conditions in relation to the construction and operation stages of development for this purpose.

In reviewing and advising on planning applications the Environment Section will give due consideration to the existing strategic noise maps and this Noise Action Plan and in particular any Candidate Quiet Areas in open country.

## **10.1.3 Mitigation – Noise Management Measures**

### **Existing Plans, Projects and Strategies**

### **Measure CWC\_M8: Support the Implementation of Other Relevant Plans, Projects and Strategies**

There are a number of existing plans, projects and strategies which aim to deliver more sustainable infrastructure and services for the County of Carlow and its surrounding areas. The successful implementation of these will bring indirect benefits for noise reduction through encouraging more sustainable modes of transport in combination with reduced traffic volumes.

This measure aims to work collaboratively with each of these to support their implementation and engage on aspects for noise management and benefits.

## 10.2 Noise Management Framework – Summary of Actions

A summary of the proposed noise management measures is set out in **Table 17** below together with details of the proposed action(s) for each.

The table also sets out the **Responsible Aims** that each measure helps to support through the implementation of the Plan.

**Table 17: Noise Management Framework – Summary of Actions**

Measure	Responsible Aim (RA)	Measure Description	Action
<b>General – Noise Management Measures</b>			
<b>CWC_M1</b>	1 & 5	Support the Development of National Noise and Other Related Policy and Guidance	Support the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and Department of Transport (DoT), and other government departments and bodies, in the development of national policy and guidance related to environmental noise, planning and noise, and transportation noise, and assist in their implementation once in place.
<b>CWC_M2</b>	2, 3, 4 & 5	Noise Action Plan Working Group(s)	Support the establishment of and participate in relevant Noise Working Groups established to deliver the Noise Action Plan
<b>CWC_M3</b>	8	Annual Report to Environment Protection Agency (EPA)	Prepare an annual progress report regarding the implementation of the Noise Action Plan and submit it to the EPA.
<b>CWC_M4</b>	5 & 7	Continued Investigation and Management of Noise Complaints	Review and investigate all noise complaints received in a timely manner and in accordance with national and international best practice.

<b>CWC_M5</b>	3, 4 & 5	Stakeholder Collaboration	Continue liaison and collaboration with a range of key stakeholders to address noise-related issues and complaints to ensure the effective management of noise from related industry and infrastructure sites.
<b>CWC_M6</b>	3, 4, 5 & 6	Ongoing Community Engagement	Publish the final Noise Action Plan and provide updates on the progress made with its implementation.
<b>Prevention – Noise Management Measures</b>			
<b>CWC_M7</b>	5	Planning Application Advice, Conditioning and Enforcement	Review relevant planning applications for noise related issues in the context of existing strategic noise maps, this Noise Action Plan and existing or Candidate Quiet Areas in open country and condition developments as appropriate to manage impacts on ambient noise levels.
<b>Mitigation – Noise Management Measures</b>			
<b>Existing Plans, Projects and Strategies</b>			
<b>CWC_M8</b>	3 & 5	Support Implementation of Other Relevant Plans, Projects & Strategies	Collaborate with relevant Carlow County Council sections and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Party organisations to support the implementation relevant plans, projects and strategies.

### 10.3 Programme of Works

A summary of the proposed noise management measures is set out in **Table 17** together with details of the proposed action(s) for each. The table also sets out the **Responsible Aims** that each measure helps to support through the implementation of the Plan.

**Table 18** provides a summary of the Carlow County Council measures in respect of their timescale for implementation over the period of the Plan and beyond, and the **Responsible Aims** which the measure supports, as set out in **Section 9.1.2**.

The timescales presented relate to the period of the Noise Action Plan, 2024 - 2028, and beyond, with the following definitions assumed;

- “Short term” indicates implementation by 2026
- “Medium-term” indicates implementation by 2030
- “Long-term” indicates implementation beyond 2030.

The establishment of the Carlow County Council and Noise Action Plan working groups will significantly improve the co-ordination and collaboration across all parties and will be essential to ensure successful implementation of the measures within and beyond the life of the Noise Action Plan.

Implementation is subject to resources, appropriate funding being made available and collaboration with relevant key stakeholders and infrastructure owners.

As part of the Round 5 noise action planning process, the progress of Round 4 will be evaluated.



**Table 18: Noise Action Plan Implementation**

Measure	Responsible Aim (RA)	Measure Description	Timescale	Implementation Period
<b>General – Noise Management Measures</b>				
CWC_M1	1 & 5	Support the Development of National Noise and Other Related Policy and Guidance	Short- Long-term	2024-2028
CWC_M2	2, 3, 4 & 5	Noise Action Plan Working Group(s)	Bi-annual	2024-2028
CWC_M3	8	Annual Report to Environment Protection Agency (EPA)	Annual	2024-2028
CWC_M4	5 & 7	Continued Investigation and Management of Noise Complaints	On-going	2024-
CWC_M5	3, 4 & 5	Stakeholder Collaboration	On-going	2024-
CWC_M6	3, 4, 5 & 6	Ongoing Community Engagement	As required	2024-2028
<b>Prevention – Noise Management Measures</b>				
CWC_M7	5	Planning Application Advice, Conditioning and Enforcement	On-going	2024-
<b>Mitigation – Noise Management Measures</b>				
<i>Existing Plans, Projects and Strategies</i>				
CWC_M8	3 & 5	Support Implementation of Other Relevant Plans, Projects & Strategies	On-going	2024-

## 11 Consultation Responses

Carlow County Council prepared the Carlow County Council: Draft Noise Action Plan 2024-2028 (16068A-20-R01-01-D01, 10 October 2024), which was issued for public consultation 16 October 2024, ending 26 November 2024.

During this period, one public consultation response was received. Below is a summary of the public submission and response, including those associated with external sources.

### 11.1.1 Public Submissions

A public submission was received, expressing concerns about the significant increase in traffic volume over the years and its potential adverse impacts on quality of life. The submission highlighted two main issues: traffic speed and traffic volume. Residents feel that the current speed limits in urban areas are too high, leading to safety risks and increased noise pollution. The sheer volume of traffic has also contributed to a rise in road noise, making it difficult for residents to enjoy their outdoor spaces.

Carlow County Council has committed to identifying noise mitigation measures in collaboration with the Noise Mapping Bodies. These measures aim to improve public health and ensure cost-effectiveness, depending on available resources and funding. While the focus will not be solely on the Priority Important Areas outlined in the Noise Action Plan, these areas will be prioritised during the plan's implementation, subject to funding and resource constraints.

The council will consider these steps during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, in line with the actions described in **Section 10**, specifically Measure CWC\_M4: Continued Investigation and Management of Noise Complaints. This approach reflects the council's dedication to addressing residents' concerns and improving their quality of life.

### 11.1.2 External Sources

In addition to the public consultation, external sources were contacted by Carlow County Council inviting submissions on the *Carlow County Council: Draft Noise Action Plan 2024-2028*.

Two submissions were received, and the responses to it is set out in **Table 19**.

**Table 19: Consultation Responses: External Sources**

External Source	Summary of Submission	APA Response	Action
Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)	Transport Infrastructure Ireland made a number of observations in relation to the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, noise exposure statistics and harmful effects, the execution of any related mitigation measures and the responsibility for same.	The observations are noted and it is noted that there are ongoing engagements at national level in relation to same.	Amendments to the NAP
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)	<p>DECC made a number of observations in relation to the Noise Action Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Statutory Limit Values for Noise: DECC notes that there are no statutory noise limit values in Ireland and advises against interpreting guidance as setting statutory limits. DECC requests that the Noise Action Plan does not conflate "other relevant criteria" with statutory noise limits.</li> <li>2. Quiet Areas in Open Countryside: DECC recommends further research before designating quiet areas in open countryside, as current strategic noise mapping does not provide sufficient data. This research should address public attitudes, cost-benefit analysis, health benefits, and appropriate mapping methods.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Noise Action Plan has been revised to clearly state that there are no statutory noise limits in place in Ireland. It also explains the basis for the "other relevant criteria" used in the plan.</li> <li>2. The observations have been noted, and references to Quiet Areas in open country have been included in the Noise Action Plan. The policy principles are aspirational, with implementation aligned to developments in research.</li> </ol>	Amendments to the NAP



## Appendix A: Glossary of Acoustic and Technical Terms

Noise is defined as unwanted sound. Human hearing is able to respond to sound in the frequency range 20 Hz (deep bass) to 20,000 Hz (high treble) and over the audible range of 0 dB (the threshold of perception) to 140 dB (the threshold of pain). The ear does not respond equally to different frequencies of the same magnitude, but is more responsive to mid-frequencies than to lower or higher frequencies. To quantify noise in a manner that approximates the response of the human ear, a weighting mechanism is used, which reduces the importance of lower and higher frequencies in a similar manner to human hearing.

The weighting mechanism that best corresponds to the response of the human ear is the ‘A’-weighting scale. This is widely used for environmental noise measurement, and the levels are denoted as dB(A) according to the parameter being measured. The glossary explains the acoustic terminology that is used in this Report. The decibel scale is logarithmic rather than linear, and hence a 3 dB increase in sound level represents a doubling of the sound energy present. Judgement of sound is subjective, but as a general guide a 10 dB(A) increase can be taken to represent a doubling of loudness, whilst an increase in the order of 3 dB(A) is generally regarded as the minimum difference needed to perceive a change under normal listening conditions. An indication of the range of sound levels found commonly in the environment is given in **Table A.1**

**Table A.1 - Typical sound levels found in the environment.**

Sound Pressure Level, dB(A)	Location
0	Threshold of hearing
20 to 30	Quiet bedroom at night
30 to 40	Living room during the day
40 to 50	Typical office
50 to 60	Inside a car
60 to 70	Typical high street
70 to 90	Inside factory
100 to 110	Burglar alarm at 1m away
110 to 130	Jet aircraft on take off
140	Threshold of pain

The subjective response to a noise is dependent not only upon the sound pressure level and its frequency, but also its intermittency. Various indices have been developed to try and correlate annoyances with the noise level and its fluctuations. The indices and parameters used in this report are defined below:

**A-weighting**                      A frequency weighting applied to measured or predicted sound levels in order to compensate for the non-linearity of human hearing.

<b>Acoustic environment</b>	Sound at the receiver from all sources of sound as modified by the environment, as defined in ISO 12913-1:2014.
<b>CNOSSOS-EU: 2020</b>	The common noise assessment method according to the END.
<b>CRTN 1988</b>	The noise calculation method Calculation of Road Traffic Noise 1988.
<b>dB (decibel)</b>	The unit of sound pressure level, calculated as a logarithm of the intensity of sound. 0 dB is the threshold of hearing, 120 dB is the threshold of pain. Under normal circumstances, a change in sound level of 3 dB is just perceptible. A change of 1 or 2 dB is detectable only under laboratory conditions. A change of 10 dB corresponds approximately to halving or doubling the loudness of sound.
<b>Design Goal</b>	A target limit for noise or vibration adopted during the early design stages of a project, not necessarily having a statutory basis but based on current best practice and the particular circumstances of a given scheme.
<b>Do Minimum</b>	Describes a scenario under which a road scheme that is under consideration does not proceed (sometimes referred to as "Do Nothing").
<b>Do Something</b>	Describes a scenario under which a road scheme that is under consideration proceeds.
<b>EEA</b>	European Environment Agency.
<b>END</b>	Environmental Noise Directive.
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Agency.
<b>Free Field</b>	Free field noise levels are measured or predicted such that there is no contribution made up of reflections from nearby building façades.
<b>Leq,T</b>	The equivalent continuous sound level - the sound level of a steady sound having the same energy as a fluctuating sound over a specified measuring period T.
<b>Lden</b>	The day-evening-night composite noise indicator adopted by the EU for the purposes of assessing overall annoyance. Equation below.
	$L_{den} = 10 \lg \frac{1}{24} \left( 12 * 10^{\frac{L_{day}}{10}} + 4 * 10^{\frac{L_{evening}+5}{10}} + 8 * 10^{\frac{L_{night}+10}{10}} \right)$
<b>Lday</b>	The A-weighted long term average sound level as defined in ISO1996-2: 2017, determined over the day periods over a long-term period (e.g. a year).
<b>Levening</b>	The A-weighted long term average sound level as defined in ISO1996-2: 2017, determined over all the evening periods over a long-term period (e.g. a year).

<b>L<sub>night</sub></b>	The A-weighted long term average sound level as defined in ISO1996-2: 2017, determined over all the night periods over a long-term period (e.g. a year).
<b>NAP</b>	Noise Action Plan.
<b>NPO</b>	National Policy Objective in the National Development Plan.
<b>NRA</b>	National Roads Authority.
<b>NTA</b>	National Transport Authority.
<b>PCQA</b>	Potential Candidate Quiet Area.
<b>Soundscape</b>	The acoustic environment as perceived or experienced and/or understood by a person or people, in context, as defined in ISO 12913-1:2014.
<b>Soundwalk</b>	A walk with a focus on the listening environment.
<b>TII</b>	Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
<b>WebTAG</b>	Transport analysis guidance tool for the proposal of policies and interventions to ensure a consistent approach in transport appraisal

## **Appendix B: Most Important Areas, and Priority Important Areas**



Figure 8: Most Important Areas (MIAs)

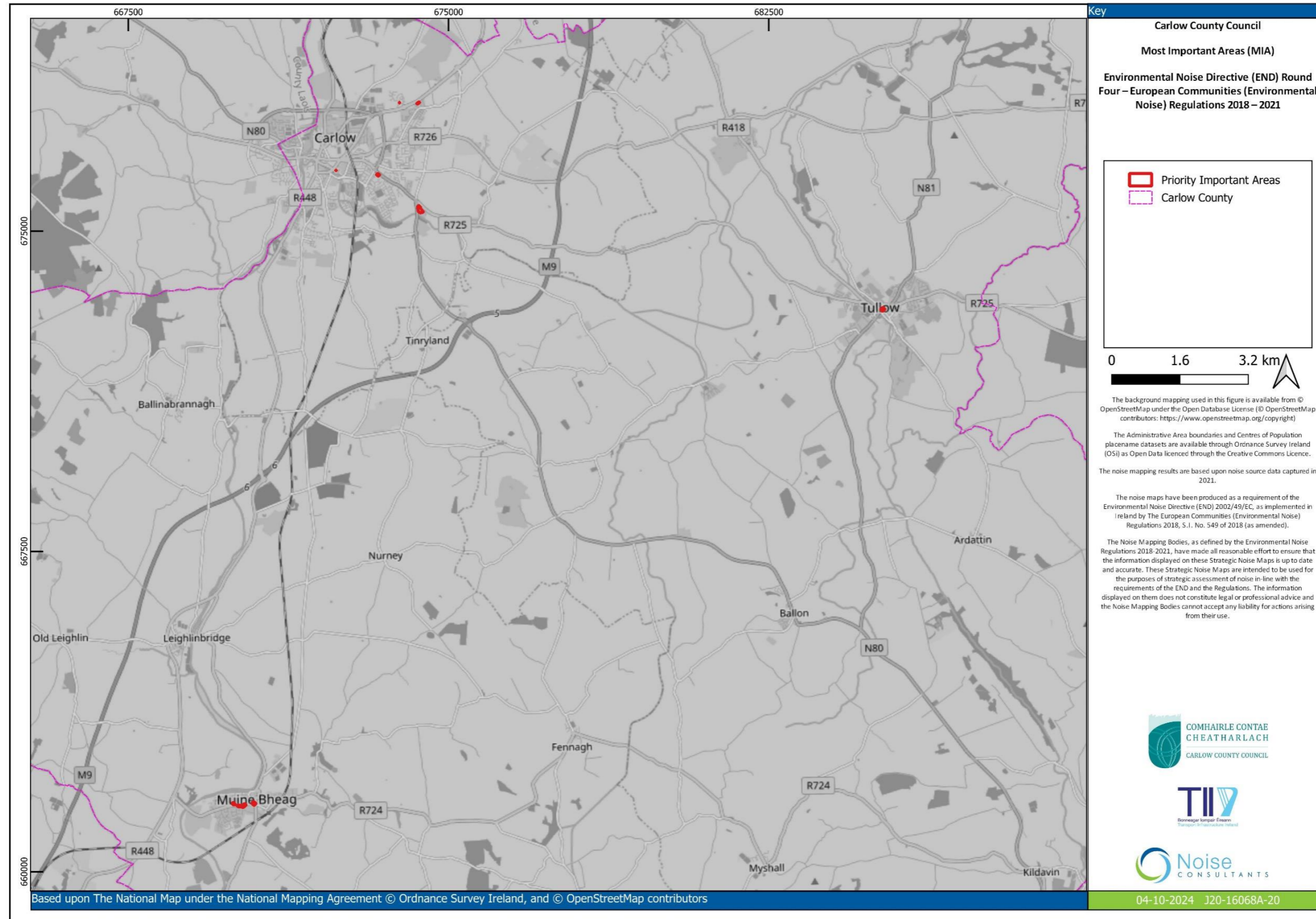


Figure 9: Priority Important Areas (PIA)



**Table 20: Carlow County Council Priority Important Area (PIA) Summary**

PIA	Source	MIA Criterion (People HA per 100m <sup>2</sup> )	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total Population*	Harmful Effects Statistics**			Number of People Above Important Areas Guideline Levels***	
					HA	HSD	IHD	Road 53dB L <sub>den</sub>	Road 45dB L <sub>night</sub>
CWC_1	Major Road	15	200	1,381.22	8.87	1.9	0.01	73.74	56.72
CWC_2	Major Road	15	5,500	701.07	12.15	4.1	0.01	35.96	35.96
CWC_3	Major Road	15	1,800	668.54	4.56	1.27	0	25.4	25.4
CWC_4	Major Road	15	12,800	436.91	17.39	5.65	0.02	106.18	106.18
CWC_5	Major Road	15	9,500	356.27	14.64	4.42	0.02	61.04	61.04
CWC_6	Major Road	15	5,300	332.27	8.49	2.62	0.01	34.24	34.24
CWC_7	Major Road	15	2,700	317.46	4.88	1.43	0.01	26.33	26.33
CWC_8	Major Road	15	2,900	289.89	2.8	0.96	0	13.54	13.54
CWC_9	Major Road	15	200	285.50	1.4	0.38	0	9.93	9.93

\* Total population inside all Most Important Areas (MIAs) associated with the Priority Important Area (PIA)

\*\* The harmful effects presented in this table are determined from a statistical approach across the whole population covered by the noise maps, and should not be considered to be an accurate assessment of the possible health effects at any specific building

\*\*\* The total population that are exposed to noise levels above the Important Areas guideline levels within the MIA(s) associated with the PIA

Figure 10: Priority Important Areas (PIA 1)

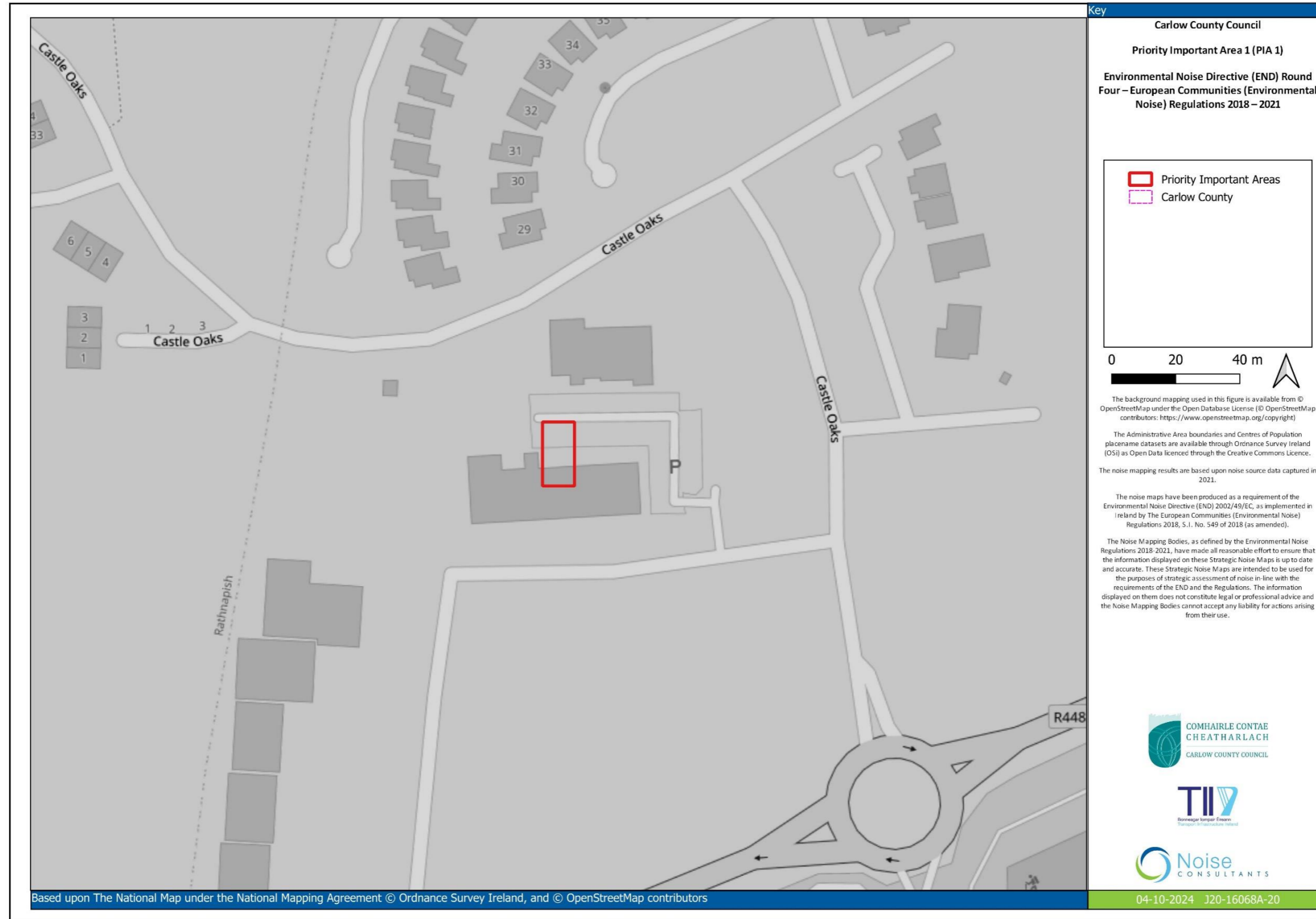


Figure 11: Priority Important Areas (PIA 2)

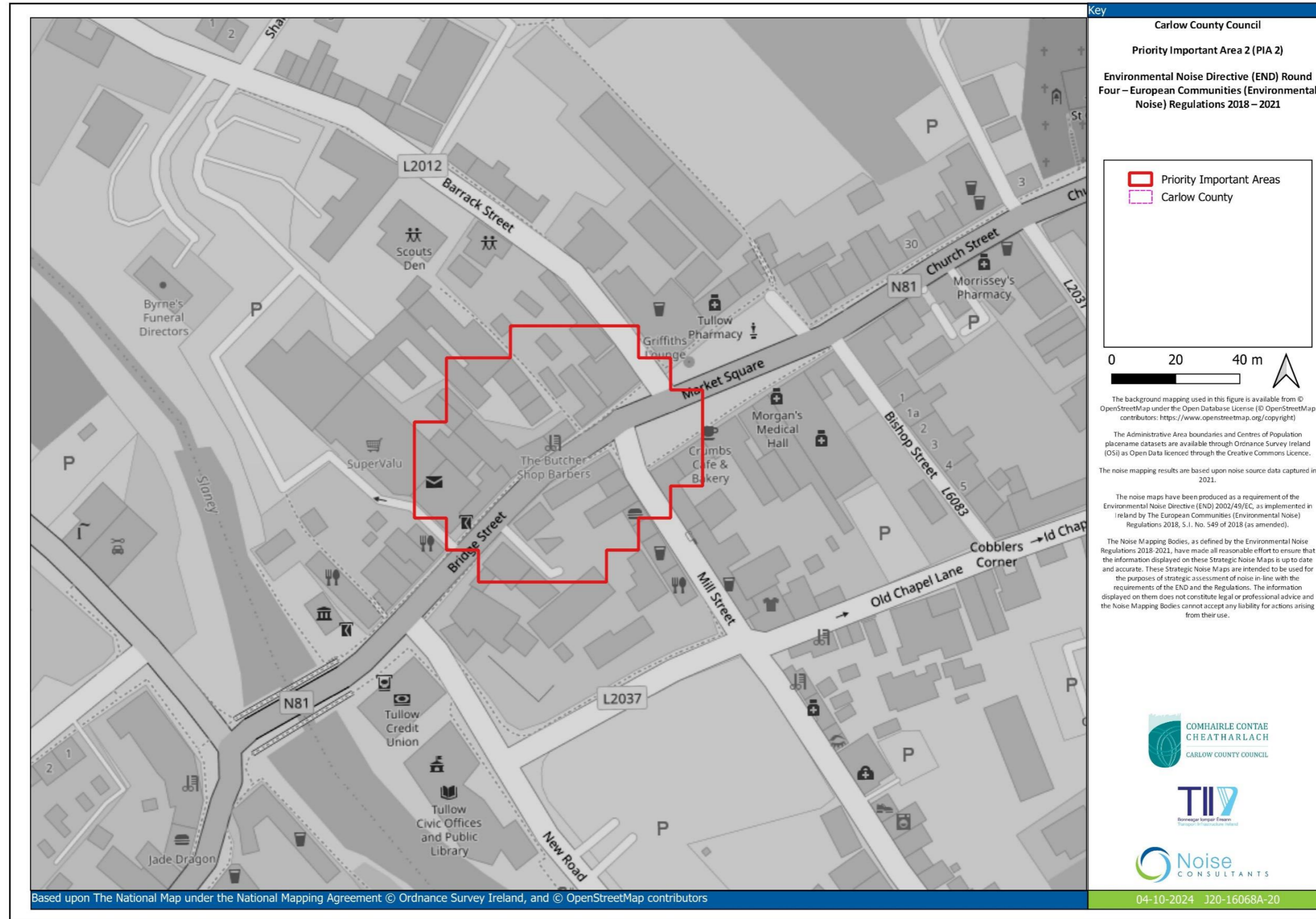
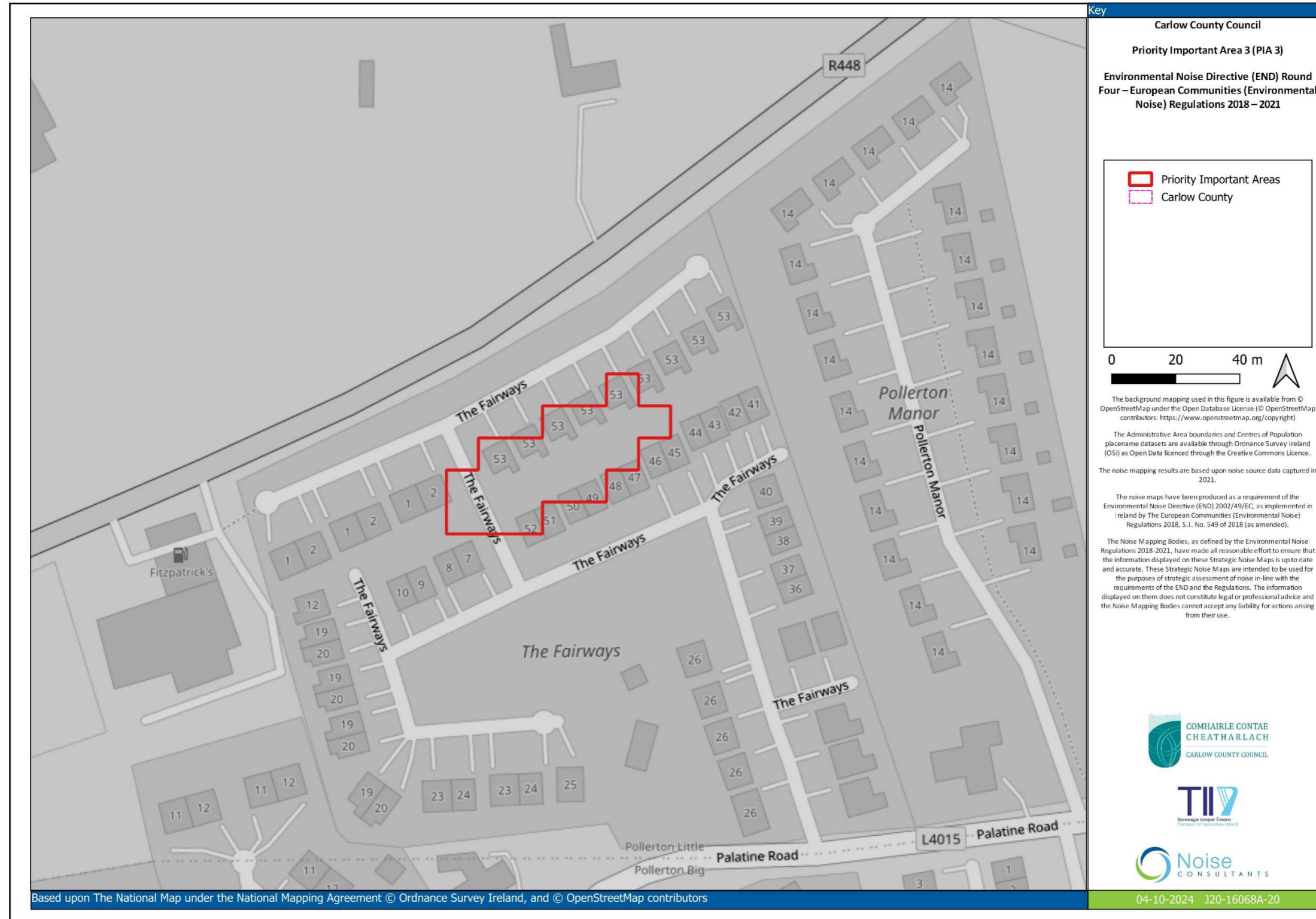


Figure 12: Priority Important Areas (PIA 3)



**Key**

Carlow County Council

Priority Important Area 3 (PIA 3)

Environmental Noise Directive (END) Round Four – European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 – 2021

Priority Important Areas  
 Carlow County

0 20 40 m

The background mapping used in this figure is available from © OpenStreetMap under the Open Database License (© OpenStreetMap contributors: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>)

The Administrative Area boundaries and Centres of Population placename datasets are available through Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) as Open Data licenced through the Creative Commons Licence.

The noise mapping results are based upon noise source data captured in 2021.

The noise maps have been produced as a requirement of the Environmental Noise Directive (END) 2002/49/EC, as implemented in Ireland by The European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018, S.I. No. 549 of 2018 (as amended).

The Noise Mapping Bodies, as defined by the Environmental Noise Regulations 2018-2021, have made all reasonable effort to ensure that the information displayed on these Strategic Noise Maps is up to date and accurate. These Strategic Noise Maps are intended to be used for the purposes of strategic assessment of noise in-line with the requirements of the END and the Regulations. The information displayed on them does not constitute legal or professional advice and the Noise Mapping Bodies cannot accept any liability for actions arising from their use.

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 Strategic Assessment Institute

Noise  
 CONSULTANTS

04-10-2024 J20-16068A-20

Figure 13: Priority Important Areas (PIA 4)

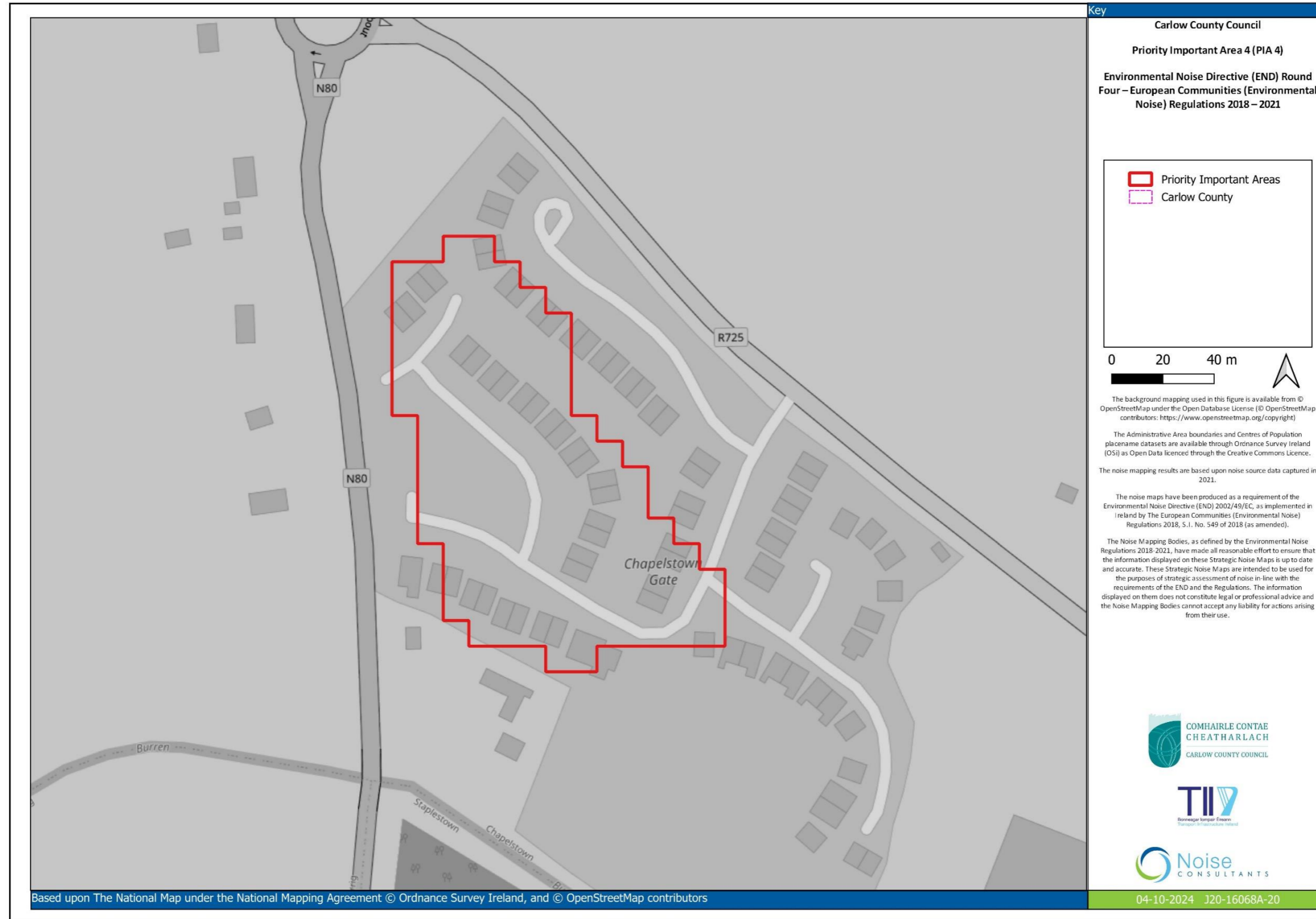


Figure 14: Priority Important Areas (PIA 5)

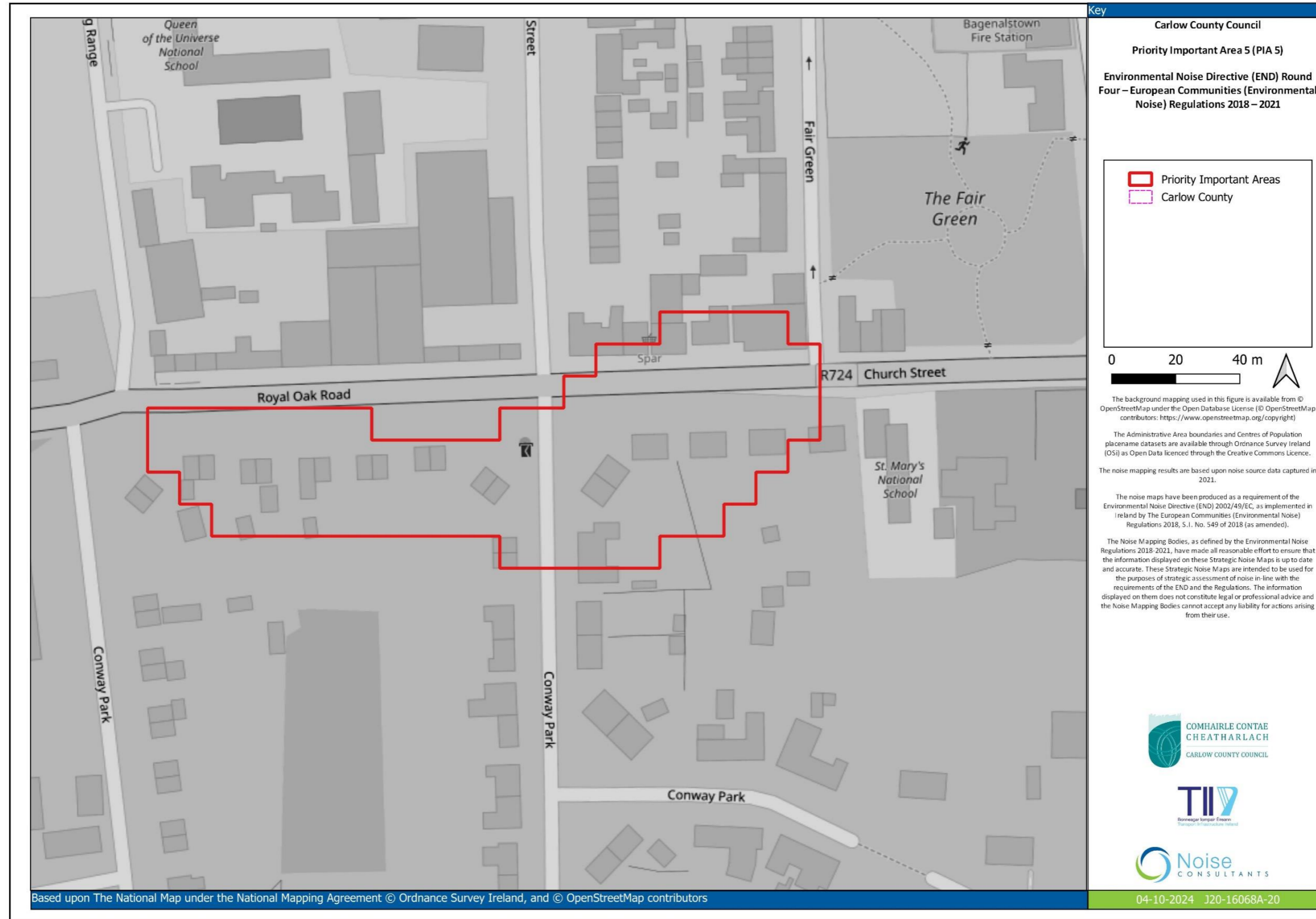




Figure 15: Priority Important Areas (PIA 6)

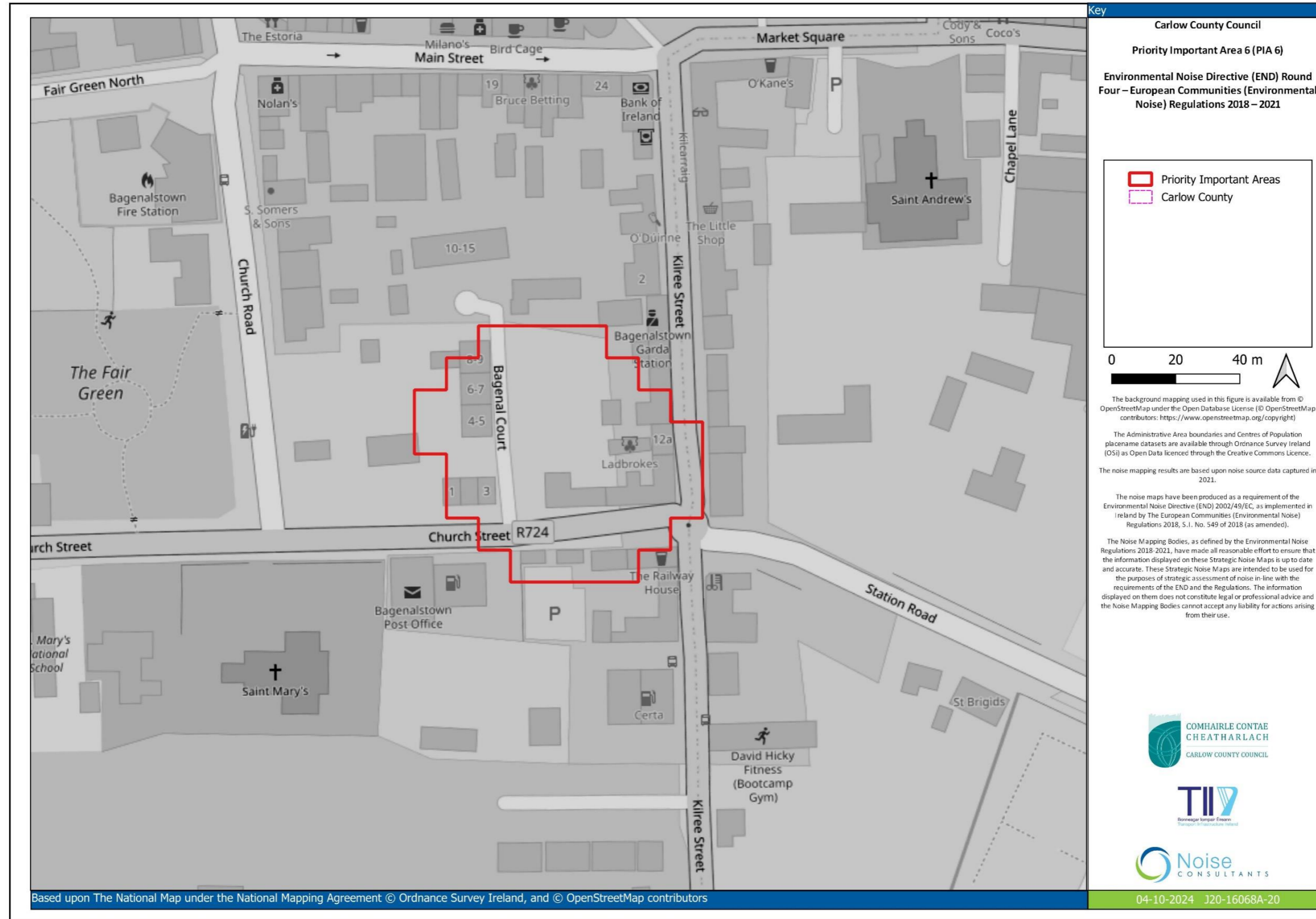


Figure 16: Priority Important Areas (PIA 7)

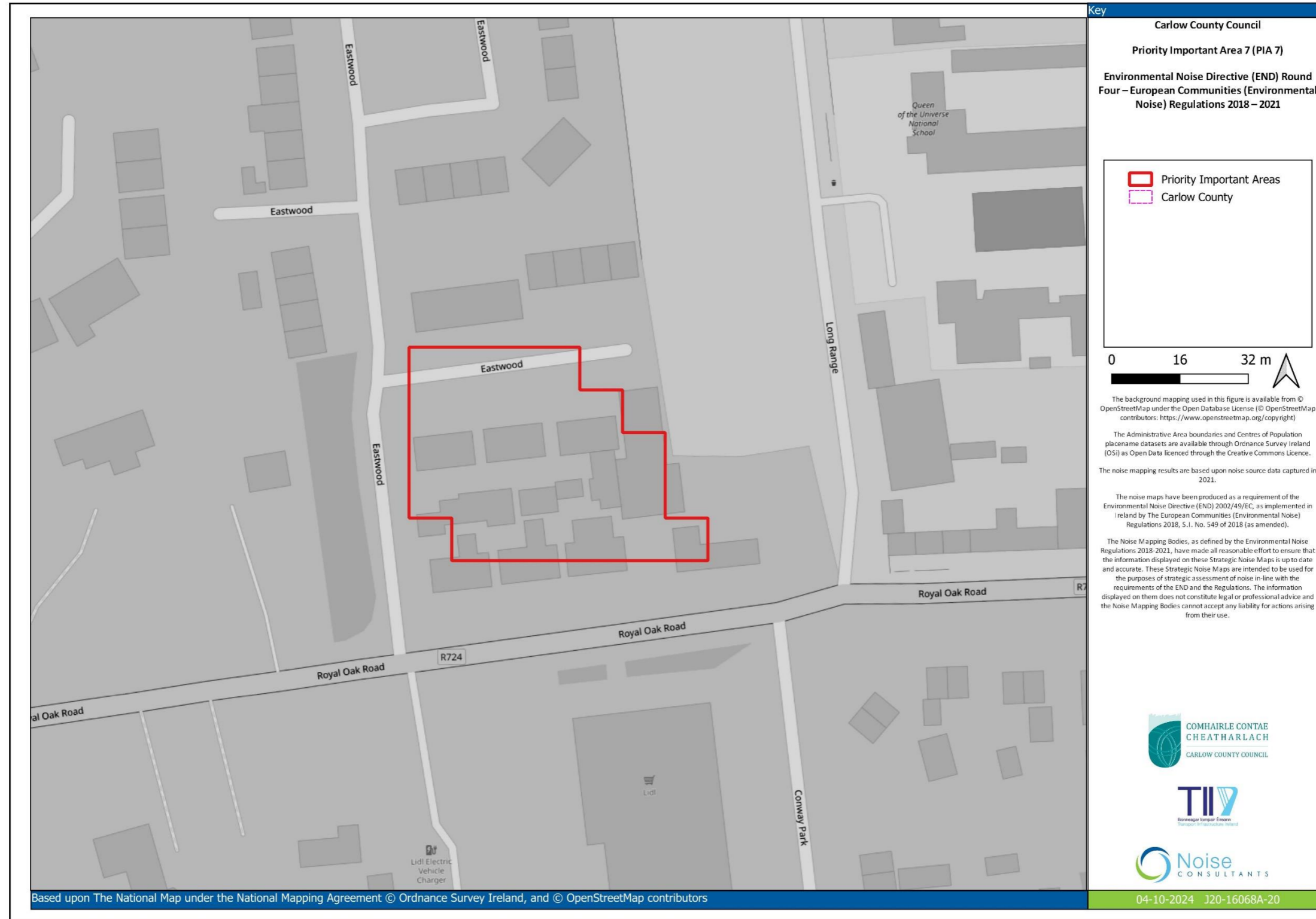


Figure 17: Priority Important Areas (PIA 8)

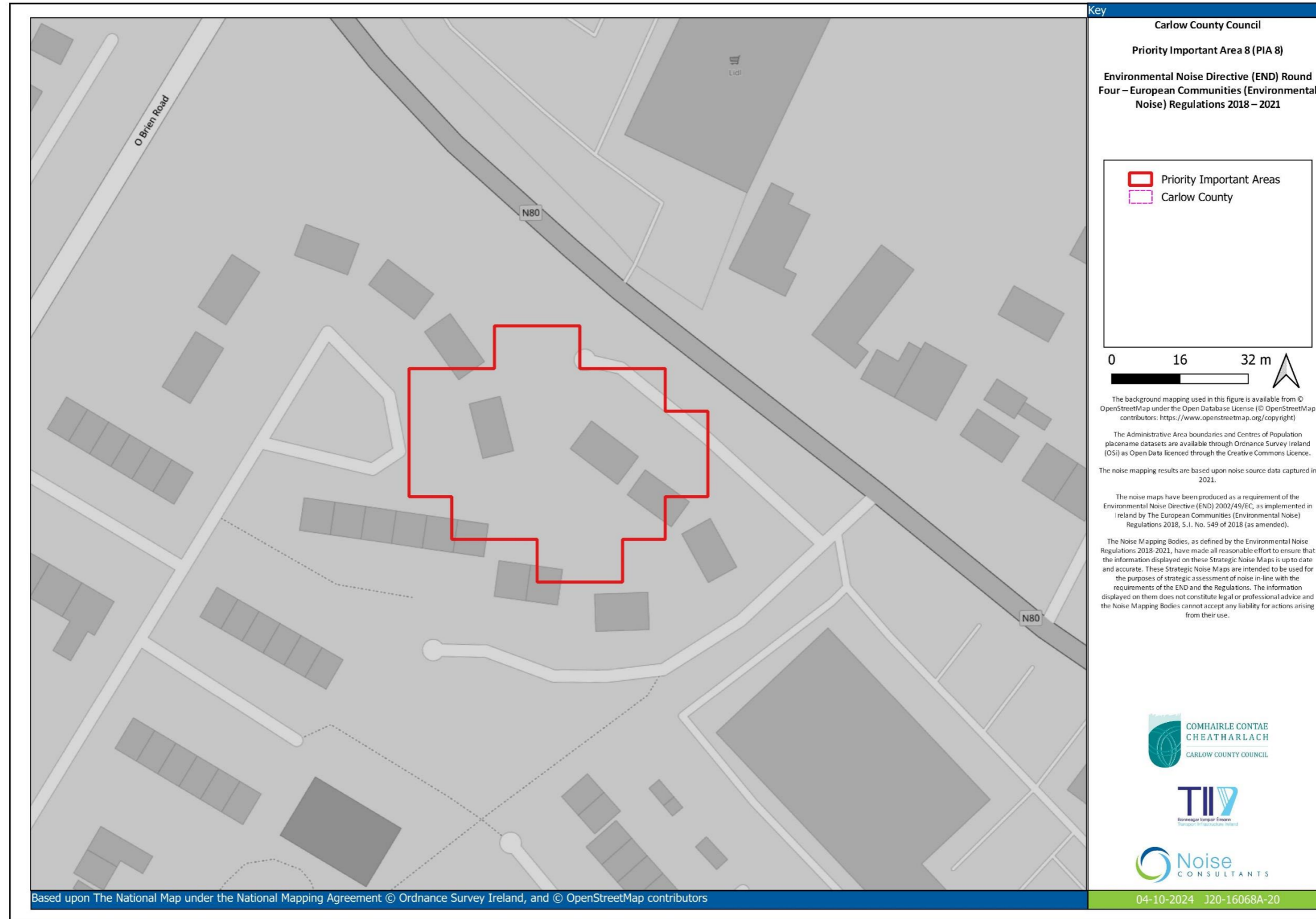
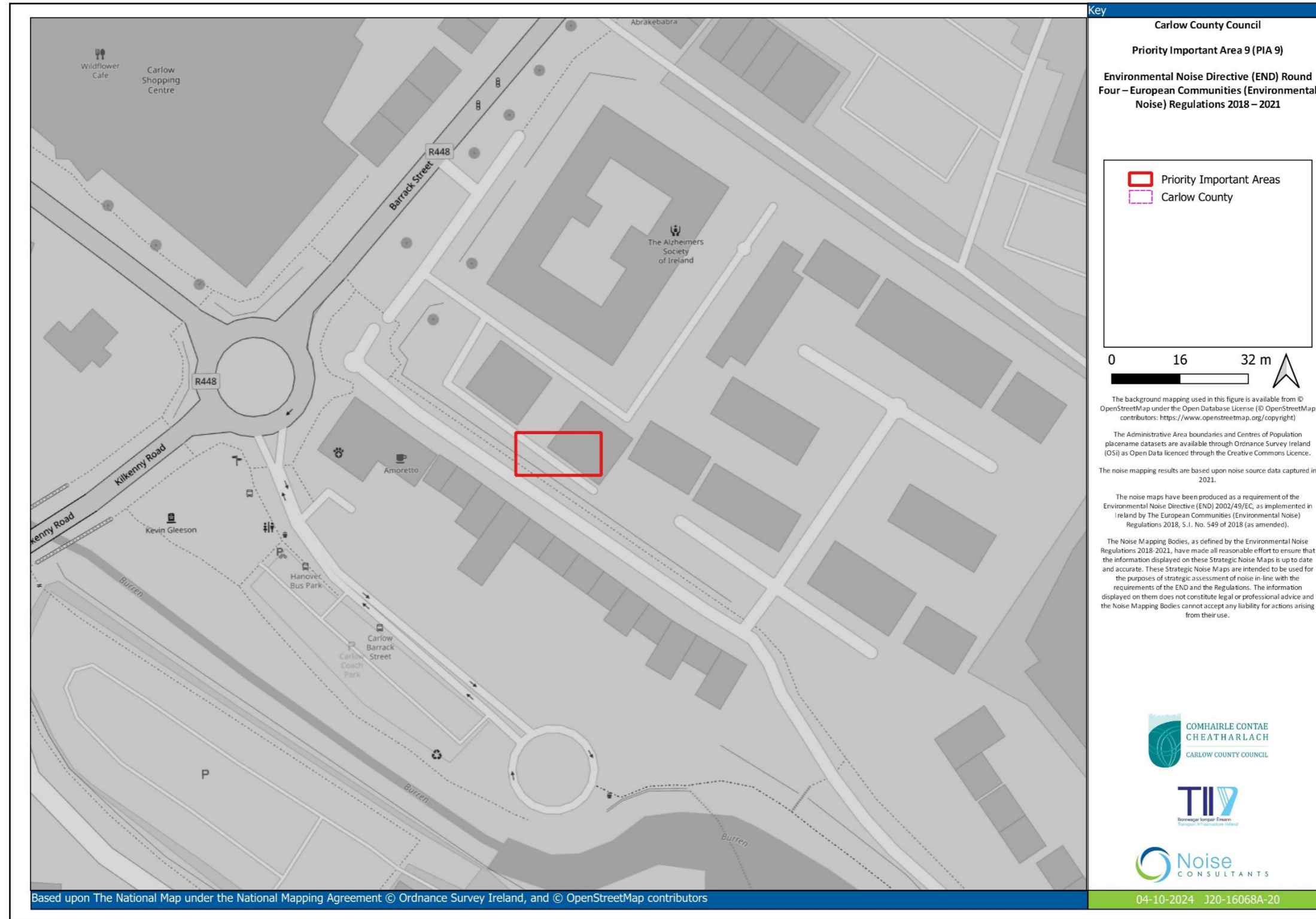


Figure 18: Priority Important Areas (PIA 9)



## Appendix C: EPA Noise Action Plan Checklist

**Table C.1 EPA Noise Action Plan Checklist**

No.	Description	END/ EPA Requirement	NAP Reference	Notes
1	Effects of noise on health outlined	Recommended	Section 2.1	Environmental Noise Guidelines (WHO, 2018), and noise metrics and associated health effects
2	Wider context of local and national policy considered	Recommended	Section 2.2	European Union Legislation and Regulations
3	Timetable – is timetable proposed which enables Action Plan to be reported on time	Recommended	Section 1.5	Timetable for Round 4 Noise Action Plan enabling Noise Action Plan and associated summary to be reported by the EPA to the EEA before January 2025
4	Are internal resources used to make and implement noise action plan outlined	Recommended	Section 1.1.3 and 4	Roles and responsibilities, and responsible authorities for action planning
5	Statement re policy regarding aims & objectives of using EPA Act	Recommended	Section 2.3.3	Environmental Protection Agency Act, 1992
6	Review of relevant Regional and Local policy or guidance on the management of environmental noise	Recommended	Section 3	Regional noise management policy and guidance
7	Agglomeration APAs coordinate to develop consistent approach	Recommended	N/A	The administrative area of Carlow County Council does not intersect or contain an Agglomeration
8	Agglomeration LAs coordinate to avoid overlaps	Recommended	N/A	The administrative area of Carlow County Council does not intersect or contain an Agglomeration
9	FCC consultation with adjacent affected APAs when drawing up major airport NAP	Recommended	N/A	No Major Airport in the administrative area of Carlow County Council
10	ICAO balanced approach element on land use management and planning considered with NAPs which include airport noise	Recommended	N/A	No Major Airport in the administrative area of Carlow County Council
11	Coordination with neighbouring APAs where noise from mapped sources crosses over County boundaries	Recommended	Section 5.2	The model, and calculations for the strategic noise mapping were undertaken by TII, adopting the draft EPA Guidance (Part 2: Calculation Methodology & Noise Modelling).
12	Consultation with EPA	Mandatory	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
13	Consultation with relevant NMBs	Mandatory	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
14	Review previous noise action plan – including reason for review	Mandatory	Section 5.1	Review of Round 3 Noise Action Plan (2018-2023)

15	Co-operate with counterparts in neighbouring States, if applicable	Mandatory, if applicable	N/A	N/A
16	Measures determined to be included in NAP	Mandatory	Section 10.1	Key mitigation and protection measures
17	Quiet areas delimited	Optional	Section 7.1	No areas identified as candidates for delimitation.
18	Public have been consulted	Mandatory	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
19	Public were given early and effective opportunities to participate	Mandatory	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
20	Result of public consultation were taken into consideration	Mandatory	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
21	Reasonable time-frames were adopted for public consultation	Mandatory	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
22	Summary of NAP to be, or has been, submitted to EPA within 1 month	Mandatory	Section 1.5	Round 4 timetable, including provision for reporting Noise Action Plan summaries to the Agency
23	Annual reports have been, or shall be, submitted to EPA	Mandatory	Section 9.1	Noise Action Plan implementation commitments including provision to report progress to the Agency on an annual basis.
24	NAP includes priorities to be addressed	Mandatory	Section 6.6	A summary of the Priority Important Areas
25	NAP includes all minimum requirements from Fourth Schedule of Regulations	Mandatory	Multiple	Sections below
26	Objective to protect quiet areas in agglomerations	Mandatory, if applicable	Section 7 and 9.1	N/A
27	Objective to protect quiet areas in open countryside	Mandatory, if applicable	Section 7 and 9.1	No areas identified as candidates for delimitation, however a policy principle is set out for the protection of areas which are desirably quiet.
28	Estimated reduction in harmful effects due to mitigation measures in the NAP	Mandatory, if applicable	Section 6.5.1 and 6.6	The estimated number of people at increased risk of harmful effects, with the potential to benefit from the consideration of noise management measures.
29	Review of implementation of the previous NAP	Mandatory, if applicable	Section 5.1	A review of the Round 3 Noise Action Plan (2018-2023)
30	Description of the agglomeration, the major roads, the major railways or major airports and other noise sources taken into account	Mandatory	Section 1.3	Description of the noise sources within Carlow County.

31	The authority responsible	Mandatory	<b>Section 4 and the Signature Page</b>	Responsible authorities for the Action Planning, and the name and contact details of the Action Planning Authority
32	The legal context	Mandatory	<b>Section 2</b>	Legal context
33	Any statutory limit values in place	Mandatory	<b>Section 5</b>	There are no statutory limit values in place in Ireland
34	Summary of the results of the noise mapping	Mandatory	<b>Section 6</b>	An evaluation of the estimated number of people exposed to noise and identification of problems to be improved, however the evaluation and implementation of noise management measures is informed by the IA, MIA and PIA process.
35	Evaluation of the estimated number of people exposed to noise, identification of problems, and situations that need to be improved	Mandatory	<b>Section 5 and 6</b>	A summary of the total number of people in dwellings exposed to noise, and those with the potential to benefit from the consideration of noise management measures.
36	Record of the public consultations organised	Mandatory	<b>Section 1.6</b>	Section to be completed following consultation
37	Any noise-reduction measures already in force and any projects in preparation	Mandatory	<b>Section 3</b>	Sets out regional noise management policy and guidance, including relevant plans, projects and studies.
38	Actions which the APAs intend to take in the next five years, including any measures to preserve quiet areas	Mandatory	<b>Section 10</b>	A summary of the key mitigation and protection measures, and the programme of works for the implementation
39	Long-term strategy	Mandatory	<b>Section 9</b>	The implementation commitments, including overarching noise policy principles and responsible aims.
40	Financial information (if available): budgets, cost-effectiveness assessment, cost-benefit assessment	Mandatory	<b>Section 8.4</b>	Methodology for the financial assessment of noise mitigation measures, including cost-benefit assessment.
41	Provisions envisaged for evaluating the implementation and the results of the action plan	Mandatory	<b>Section 10.2</b>	As part of the Round 5 noise action planning process the progress of Round 4 will be evaluated.
42	The actions which the action planning authorities intend to take in the fields within their competence	Mandatory	<b>Section 10 and 10.2</b>	Proposed noise management measures with details of the proposed actions
43	Estimates in terms of the reduction of the number of people affected (annoyed, sleep disturbed, or other)	Mandatory	<b>Section 6.5.1 and 6.6</b>	The estimated number of people at increased risk of harmful effects, with the potential to benefit from the consideration of noise management measures.
44	Completed review checklist (Appendix D) included in NAP	Recommended	<b>Appendix C</b>	Appendix C



45	Review of previous NAP: Has there been a material change in environmental noise since the previous NAP?	Recommended	Section 5.1	Review of Round 3 Noise Action Plan (2018-2023)
46	Review of previous NAP includes how undertaken, conclusions drawn and subsequent action?	Recommended	Section 5.1	Review of Round 3 Noise Action Plan (2018-2023)
47	Does review of previous NAP include: - progress against timetable, - changes in noise situation and exposures, - details of actions undertaken, - costs, - dates, - numbers of people affected or benefited?	Recommended	Section 5.1	Review of Round 3 Noise Action Plan (2018-2023)
48	Appendix D review checklist utilised?	Recommended	Section 5.1	Review of Round 3 Noise Action Plan (2018-2023)
49	Three step approach adopted to identify IAs, MIAs and PIAs	Recommended	Section 6	Approach to the identification of areas to be subject to noise management activities
50	Confirm levels used to identify IAs	Recommended	Section 6.4	Important Areas
51	Confirm population density used to identify MIAs	Recommended	Section 6.5.1	A density criterion of 15 or more people per 100m <sup>2</sup> was used for the identification of Most Important Areas
52	Evidence based alternative method used to identify MIAs?	Recommended	N/A	MIA process as described the draft EPA Guidance used.
53	Aspects considered when selecting PIAs	Recommended	Section 6.6	Identified based upon an Important Area, Most Important Area or groups of Most Important Areas with the greatest number of people, and consideration of other factors such as planned road maintenance works and traffic plans and projects.
54	Number of PIAs identified in NAP	Recommended	Section 6.6, Table 16	10 Priority Important Areas selected.
55	Rationale for each PIA included	Recommended	Section 6.6	Identified based upon an Important Area, Most Important Area or groups of Most Important Areas with the greatest number of people, and consideration of other factors such as planned road maintenance works and traffic plans and projects.

56	Approach to long term monitoring described	Recommended	<b>Section 10.1 and 10.2</b>	Measure CWC_M3 a commitment to prepare an annual report for the Agency setting out progress made in respect of the implementation of the Noise Action Plan. As part of the Round 5 noise action planning process the progress of Round 4 will be evaluated.
57	Approach to validating noise calculation model described	Recommended	<b>Section 8.4</b>	Noise management activities to be considered during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan, including noise measurements at the Priority Important Areas
58	Review of noise mitigation measures: - within responsibility of APAs - within responsibility of NMBs or other third-parties	Recommended	<b>Section 8.4</b>	A summary of the noise management activities to be considered during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan
59	Record of consultation with NMBs and third-parties when selecting feasible noise mitigation measures	Recommended	<b>Section 8.4</b>	A summary of the noise management activities to be considered during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan
60	Approach to assessing noise mitigation measures described	Recommended	<b>Section 8.4</b>	A summary of the noise management activities to be considered during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan
61	Approach to cost benefit analysis described	Recommended	<b>Section 8.4</b>	A summary of the noise management activities to be considered during the implementation of the Noise Action Plan
62	Approach to identify CQAs adopted	Recommended	<b>Section 7.1</b>	Summary of the regulatory background. No CQAs identified.
63	PCQAs identified	Recommended	<b>Section 7.1</b>	Summary of the regulatory background. No PCQAs identified.
64	CQAs identified	Recommended	<b>Section 7.1</b>	Summary of the regulatory background. No CQAs identified.
65	Approach to delimiting QAs from CQAs described	Recommended	<b>Section 7.1</b>	Summary of the regulatory background.
66	CQAs in open countryside identified	Recommended	<b>Section 7.1</b>	Summary of the regulatory background.
67	Effectiveness of local planning policies or guidance on the management of environmental noise is discussed	Recommended	<b>Section 3 and 7.5</b>	Summary of regional noise management policy and guidance, and other considerations.
68	SEA pre-screening undertaken	Recommended	<b>Section 1.1.1</b>	Summary of the SEA screening process
69	SEA screening undertaking	Recommended	<b>Section 1.1.1</b>	Summary of the SEA screening process
70	SEA undertaken	Recommended if necessary	<b>Section 1.1.1</b>	Summary of the SEA screening process

71	AA screening undertaken	Recommended	Section 1.1.2	Summary of the AA screening process
72	AA undertaken	Recommended if necessary	Section 1.1.2	Summary of the AA screening process
73	Consultation process has regard for DPER guidance	Recommended	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
74	Length of public consultation period documented	Recommended	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
75	Consultation stakeholders listed	Recommended	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
76	Consultation responses summarised	Recommended	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
77	Amendments to NAP following consultation documented	Recommended	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
78	Finalised NAP approval documented	Recommended	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
79	Approach to approved NAP dissemination described	Recommended	Section 1.6	Section to be completed following consultation
80	Summary NAP clear and comprehensible, and include a summary setting out the most important points	Mandatory	-	Noise Action Plan summaries provided to the Agency through a separate reporting process
81	Approved NAP made available within 1 month of being made	Mandatory	-	To be completed following finalisation of the Noise Action Plan
82	Dissemination uses available information technologies	Mandatory	-	Noise Action Plan summaries provided to the Agency through a separate reporting process
83	Publication and dissemination follows AIE Regulations and DECC guidance	Mandatory	-	To be completed following finalisation of the Noise Action Plan

