Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

& Natura Impact Statement

for proposed

Housing Scheme
at
Cornamaddy, Athlone, County Westmeath

in accordance with the requirements of
Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive

by

CAAS Ltd

for

Westmeath County Council

CAAS Ltd, 2nd Floor, the Courtyard, 25 Great Strand Street, Dublin 1

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Document Control

	Author/Reviewer	Date
prepared by	Karen Dylan Shevlin	Various dates to 05 April 2024
technical assistant	Callum O'Regan	
reviewed by	Paul Fingleton	10 April 2024
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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

CAAS has been appointed by Westmeath County Council to carry out prepare this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) for the proposed housing scheme at Cornamaddy, Athlone, County Westmeath (the proposed development). This AASR and NIS have been prepared to assist the competent authority in conducting Appropriate Assessment for the proposed development.

1.2. Report Structure

This report sets out an overview of the methodology utilised for this assessment. It then describes the proposed development and associated works, followed by a description of receiving environment of the lands to which the proposed development relates, and any relationships to European sites. Subsequently the factors that determine which European sites are included in the report are described and the selected European sites are identified.

The proposed development and its potential sources for effect are then examined in the context of the receiving environment, connectivity to the relevant European site and their sensitive ecological features i.e. screening for AA. Subsequently, sites that are identified as having a likelihood for significant effects advanced to the next stage of the assessment process and a Natura Impact Statement is advised where mitigation measures need to be applied to prevent adverse effects to European sites. The proposed development is also assessed for in-combination effects arising from other plans and/or projects is also taken into account as part of this report.

The assessment is undertaken in view of the Conservation Objectives, known sensitivities and threats and pressures on the Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests for each European site, which are provided in Appendices II, III and IV. Appendix V and VI provide supporting information on the AA process and the legislative background, and author competencies respectively.

2. Methodology

2.1. AA Screening overview

Screening for AA identifies any likely significant effects on European sites arising from the project (for the purposes of this report, the “project” is herein referred to as the “proposed development”), either alone or in combination with other projects or plans. The proposed development and receiving environment of the proposed development are examined in order to determine:

- Whether the project can be excluded from AA requirements because it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site.
- Whether the project will have a potentially significant effect on a European site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, in view of the site’s conservation objectives or if residual uncertainty exists regarding potential impacts.

The proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site and therefore will be considered as to whether it may have a potentially significant effect on any European site in screening for AA.

2.2. Relevant guidance

This AASR is prepared in line with the relevant legislation (ref s1.3), is based on best scientific knowledge, and has utilised ecological expertise, with consideration of the relevant guidance, including the following:

- *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management,* Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021;
- *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC,* European Commission Notice, Journal of the European Union, 2021;
- *Commission Notice: Managing Natura 2000 sites - The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC",* European Commission 2018; and
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities,* Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009.

2.3. Assessment

2.3.1. Desktop review

The desktop review provides supporting information for conducting the SPR model and establishing a ZoI. The identification of the "'Conservation Objectives" (COs), "Qualifying Interests" (QIs) and/or "Special Conservation Interests" (SCIs) of European sites requiring assessment as part of this review, is an integral part of the screening for AA process.

QIs are the habitats and species (flora and fauna) listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive respectively, for which each Special Area of Conservation (SAC) has been designated under the Habitats Directive. SCIs are bird species listed within Annexes I and II of the Birds Directive for which each Special Protection Area (SPA) has been designated under the Habitats Directive. Under the requirements of the Habitats Directive, the threats and pressures on the ecological / environmental conditions that are required to support QIs and SCIs, with specific regard to the COs of each site, are considered as part of the assessment.

The COs or Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) for each site aim to achieve and maintain the favourable conservation status[1] for a particular habitat or species at that site. COs define the requirements for the favourable conservation condition of the QIs or SCIs at a given European site by setting targets for attributes which define the healthy characteristics of a given habitat or species.

Note: where detailed SSCOs have not been prepared for any European site, the below First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives apply:

European site type	First Order Site-specific Conservation Objective[2]
SAC	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected
SPA	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for the SPA

The following databases are utilised in the preparation of this AASR: the National Biodiversity Data Centre[3]; the NPWS[4]; the EPA[5]; data collected for the most recent Article 12 and 17 conservation status reporting cycle, 2019; and, *The Status of Protected EU Habitats and Species in Ireland* report

[1] Favourable conservation status of a species can be described as being achieved when:
'*population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.*'
Favourable conservation status of a habitat can be described as being achieved when:
'*its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable*'.

[2] NPWS Conservation Management Planning website.

[3] NBDC datasets available here

[4] NPWS European sites information and mapping available here and here respectively

[5] EPA datasets available here

(NPWS, 2019). Based on these resources, the desktop review is also comprised of the following elements:

- Identification of European sites within one or several zones of Influence (as defined in s 2.3.3) established using the source -pathway-receptor model (as defined in s 2.3.2);
- Review of the NPWS site synopses and Conservation Objectives for European sites within the zone(s) of influence for which potential pathways from the proposed development area have been identified; and
- Examination of available data on protected species' and habitats' distribution, trends and abundances – where relevant.

Supporting information on threats to individual sites and vulnerability of habitats and species is also reviewed in the following documents where relevant:

- Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission *"Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland"* (NPWS, 2019);
- Ireland's Article 12 Report to the European Commission *"Bird species' status and trends reporting format for the period 2008-2012-"* (NPWS, 2012)
- Site Synopses[6]; and
- NATURA 2000 Standard Data Forms[13].

2.3.2. Source-pathway-receptor model

The assessment of potential for significant effects on European sites is conducted following a standard source-pathway-receptor (SPR) model, where, in order for an effect to be established, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. EC guidance[7] outlines the types of effects that may affect European sites. These include effects from the following activities:

- Land take
- Resource requirements (drinking water abstraction etc.)
- Emissions (disposal to land, water or air)
- Excavation requirements (removal of soil and vegetation)
- Transportation requirements
- Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning

This guidance is taken into consideration when applying the SPR model to this AASR.

Examples of a source, pathway and receptor are:

- Source(s) – e.g., pollutant run-off from proposed development
- Pathway(s) – e.g., groundwater connecting to nearby qualifying wetland habitats; and,
- Receptor(s) – e.g., qualifying habitats and species of European sites

Thus, in the context of this report, a receptor is a QI or SCI, or an ecological feature that is known to be utilised by the QIs or SCIs of a European site. A source is any identifiable element of the proposed development that is known to interact with the QI, SCI, or any ecological processes underpinning a QI or SCI. A pathway is any connection or link between the source and the receptor[8], for example a river.

When all three elements of the SPR model are in place, a pathway for potential effect is identified to that European site. The pathway, receptor and source for effect are then examined further by conducting a desktop review, in the context of the receiving environment and the characteristics of the proposed development, in order to establish a Zone of Influence for potential significant effects.

[6] NPWS (2019); NPWS Database of protected site data and associated documents for each European site; available here. Accessed March 2025

[7] Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission Environment DG, 2001

[8] Receptor example: a Qualifying Interest or Special Conservation Interest of the European site in question in the context of their known sensitivities and Conservation Objectives

2.3.3. Zone of Influence

The Zone of Influence (ZoI) (as defined in the relevant guidance[9,10]) is informed by the SPR model and is the geographical area over which a proposed development could affect the ecological receiving environment in any way that could result in potential significant effects on the Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests of a given European site, in view of the Conservation Objectives of each site.

2.3.4. Characterising potential significant effects

The characterisation of a given effect as significant or not involves the consideration of several factors. The terms and factors used to characterise potential effects[11] in this report, in accordance with the relevant guidelines, are:

- Positive or Negative:
    - Positive - a change that improves the quality of the environment e.g. by increasing species diversity, extending habitat or improving water quality (may also include halting or slowing an existing decline in the quality of the environment).
    - Negative - a change which reduces the quality of the environment (e.g. destruction of habitat, removal of foraging habitat, habitat fragmentation, pollution).
- Extent: the spatial or geographical area over which the impact/effect may occur under a suitably representative range of conditions (e.g. noise transmission under water).
- Magnitude: the size, amount, intensity and volume of an impact/effect. Magnitude is quantified where possible and expressed in absolute or relative terms (e.g. the amount of habitat lost, percentage change to habitat area, percentage decline in a species population).
- Duration: defined in relation to ecological characteristics (such as the lifecycle of a species) as well as human timeframes (e.g., five years, may be short-term in the human context or other long-lived species, but would span at least five generations of some invertebrate species). In addition, the duration of an activity may differ from the duration of the resulting effect caused by the activity (e.g., if short-term construction activities cause disturbance to birds during their breeding period; longer-term implications could be failure to reproduce that season). The Duration of impacts and effects may be described as the following, defined in months/years:
    - Short
    - Medium
    - Long-Term and Permanent, or
    - Temporary.
- Frequency: The number of times that an activity or impact occurs. This will influence the magnitude and/or duration of the resulting effect (e.g., a single person walking a dog will have very limited impact on nearby waders using wetland habitat, but numerous walkers will subject the waders to frequent disturbance and could affect feeding success, leading to displacement of the birds and knock-on effects on their ability to survive).
- Timing: The timing of an activity or change may result in an impact, or have different magnitude of impact if it occurs at different times of a given year versus others (e.g., if it coincides with critical life-stages such as a bird species bird nesting season)

[9] *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021.*

[10] CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Version 1.3, updated September 2024. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

[11] Parameters adapted from CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.3 (updated Sept 2024). Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

- Reversibility: An irreversible effect is one from which recovery is not possible within a reasonable timescale or there is no reasonable chance of action being taken to reverse it. A reversible effect is one from which spontaneous recovery is possible or which may be counteracted by mitigation. It is possible that certain activities can cause both reversible and irreversible effects.

2.3.5. Assessment of significant effects

The CIEEM (2018)[10] guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment define an ecologically significant effect based on a variety of questions and factors, such as:

- is the project and associated activities likely to undermine the conservation objectives of the site, or positively or negatively affect the conservation status of species or habitats for which the site is designated, or may it have positive or negative effects on the condition of the site or its interest/qualifying features?
- is the project likely to result in a change in ecosystem structure and function?

The guidance also recommends that consideration should be given to whether:

- any processes or key characteristics will be removed or changed
- there will be an effect on the nature, extent, structure and function of component habitats
- there is an effect on the average population size and viability of component species.

The OPR Guidance[12] on conducting Appropriate Assessment for developments defines likely significant effects as the following:

Likely means a risk or possibility of effects occurring that cannot be ruled out based on objective information.
Significant effects are those that would undermine the conservation objectives of the European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. The significance of ecological impacts depends on:

- the ecological characteristics of the species or habitat, including their structure, function, conservation status and sensitivity to change, and/or
- the character, magnitude, duration, consequences and probability of the impacts occurring.

When the SPR models is conducted and the Zone of Influence is established; European sites (and their respective QIs and SCIs) that occur within this zone are examined with supporting surveys conducted, if necessary, to ultimately determine whether or not there is a *likelihood of significant effect* on a given European site. This is carried out by assessing objective information such as: the nature of the source for effect; the nature of the pathway; the distances involved; the QIs/SCIs (or 'receptors') involved, their threats, pressures and sensitivities; and consulting best scientific evidence/literature when required.

As such, the presence of all three elements and the identification of a pathway for potential effect, does not automatically constitute the likelihood of significant effect to a European site, and is dependent on factors such as character, magnitude, duration etc. However, the absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism is sufficient to conclude that there is no potential effect(s) and thus no further consideration required.

Where a likelihood for significant effects to any European site is established to be present, and/or the lack of significant effect cannot be ruled out based on the precautionary principle[13], mitigation measures are required and the project must proceed to Stage 2 AA, where a Natura Impact

[12] OPR (2021). Practice Note PN01 on Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.
[13] With regard to Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, and case law C127/02 Waddenzee

Statement (NIS) is compiled in order to apply relevant and / or tailored mitigation measures intended to prevent adverse effects to the QIs/SCIs of the European sites involved, in view of their Conservation Objectives.

2.4. Supporting ecological surveys

2.4.1. Ecological walkover

The initial ecological walkover was conducted on the 3rd of May 2023, where the site was assessed for potential to supporting Annex I habitats or Annex II species. Habitats were examined using Fossitt (2000)[14] and Smith (2011)[15]. The site was also examined for direct or indirect connectivity with European sites, for example; direct hydrological connectivity via a watercourse between the proposed development and a European site, or ex-situ foraging potential for SCI species. Any relevant features were recorded using Arc GIS Survey 123 for subsequent analysis.

2.4.2. Winter bird surveys

Following the initial ecological walkover, winter bird surveys were carried out for the proposed development for the winter season of 2023/2024 on the following dates (see Appendix V for survey metadata):

- 14th November 2023
- 13th December 2023
- 14th December 2023
- 10th February 2024
- 11th February 2024

Surveys were conducted over 5 days with a total of 30 hours. Surveys followed NatureScot (2017) guidance[16] and Gilbert *et. al*. (1998)[17] for methodology for vantage point wintering bird surveys, species specific requirements, and for the frequency of surveys to be carried out in the winter season considering the nature of the site. All surveys were carried out by ornithologist Laurance Manning, on behalf of CAAS. All data was recorded using Arc GIS Survey 123 for later analysis and mapped using Q GIS 3.2. The surveys focused on the proposed development site with one vantage point location required due to the size and topography of the proposed development site; a small hill on the southern boundary of the site provided one clear vantage point of the entire site. The proposed development was also walked each survey day and checked for signs of use by foraging SCI species such as geese – for example droppings. During these walks any breeding bird species seen or heard were also recorded.

2.4.3. Survey limitations

One additional survey date for January 2024 had to be repeatedly cancelled due to recurring unsuitable weather conditions. The wintering bird survey season is October–March inclusive and the survey effort covered the majority of the wintering bird season. Therefore, it is considered that the survey effort is sufficient to support the Appropriate Assessment process for the proposed development.

3. Description of Proposed Development

The proposed development site is located to the northeast of Athlone town, and surrounded by residential development that is under construction to the east, the Cornamagh Cemetery to the west, agricultural land to the north and the N55 route to the south (Figure 3.1, Figure 3.2). The

[14] Fossitt, J (2000) *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland.* Heritage Council
[15] Smith, G. F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hara, K., Delaney, E (2011) *Best Practice and Guidance for Habitat Surveying and Mapping.* Heritage Council
[16] Scottish Natural Heritage, 2017. Recommended bird survey methods to inform impact assessment of onshore wind farms, Ver. 2.
[17] Gilbert, G., Gibbons, D.W., & Evans, J. (1998) Bird Monitoring Methods: A Manual of Techniques for UK Key Species. The Royal Society for the protection of Birds, Sandy, Bedfordshire, England

proposed development is comprised of 94 (no.) residential units comprising of 8 (no.) apartment blocks and 86 (no.) houses and open spaces. Existing boundaries of a mix of treelines, copses of trees, hedgerows, a stone wall (shared with the boundary of Cornamagh Cemetery), along with 3 large mature trees within the proposed site, will be retained / have been integrated into the proposed operational phase design (Figure 3.2).

- 94 (no.) residential units, consisting of: 86 (no.) houses and 8 (no.) apartments.
- Vehicular access, though the neighbouring the Grace Fields estate to the east of the proposed site (currently under construction) Figure 3.2.
- Connection to wastewater infrastructure under construction to the northeast of the proposed development (Figure 3.4) as part of ongoing works along the northern boundary of the proposed site permitted under ABP 31851.
- All associated site development and infrastructural works including amenity spaces, landscaping, open space, boundary treatments, vehicular parking, bicycle parking, utilities, internal roads, footpaths and shared surfaces, site clearance and temporary construction compound development.

Figure 3.1. Location of the proposed development

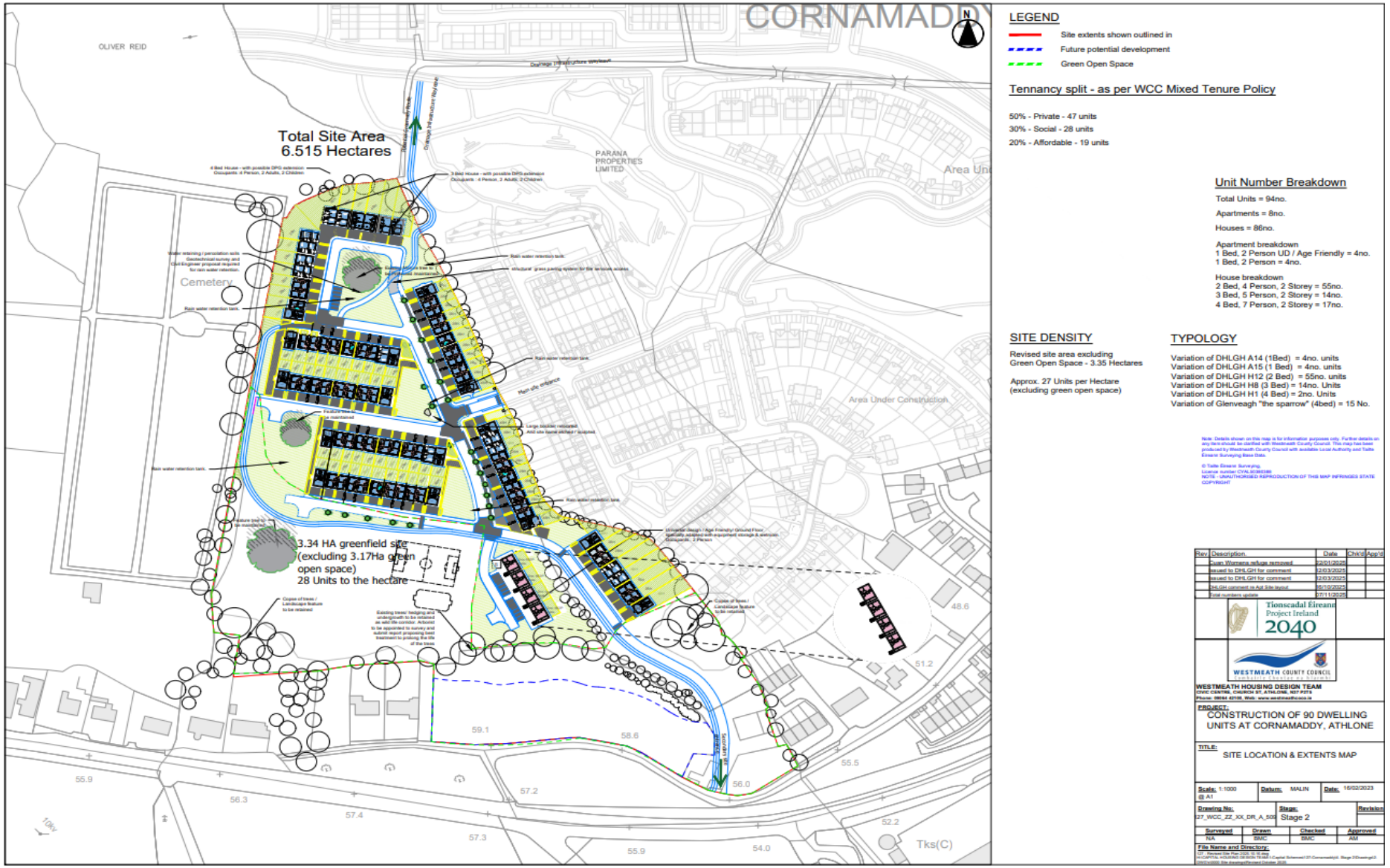


Figure 3.2 Plan of proposed development

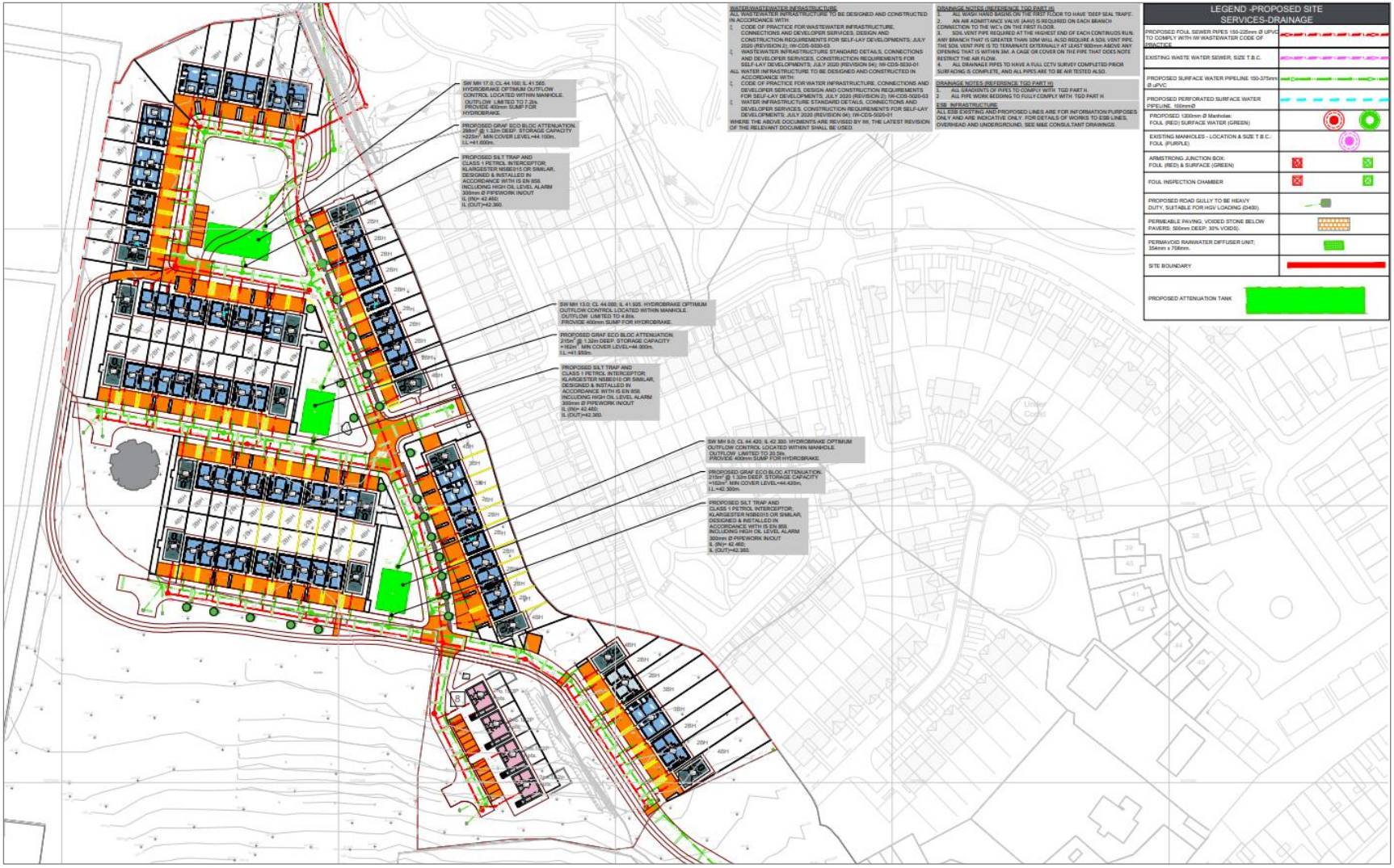


Figure 3.3 Proposed wastewater and surface water drainage design (1of 2)[18]

[18] Source: SDS Design Engineers – adapted from original drawing for clarity. See accompanying drawing set for full version.

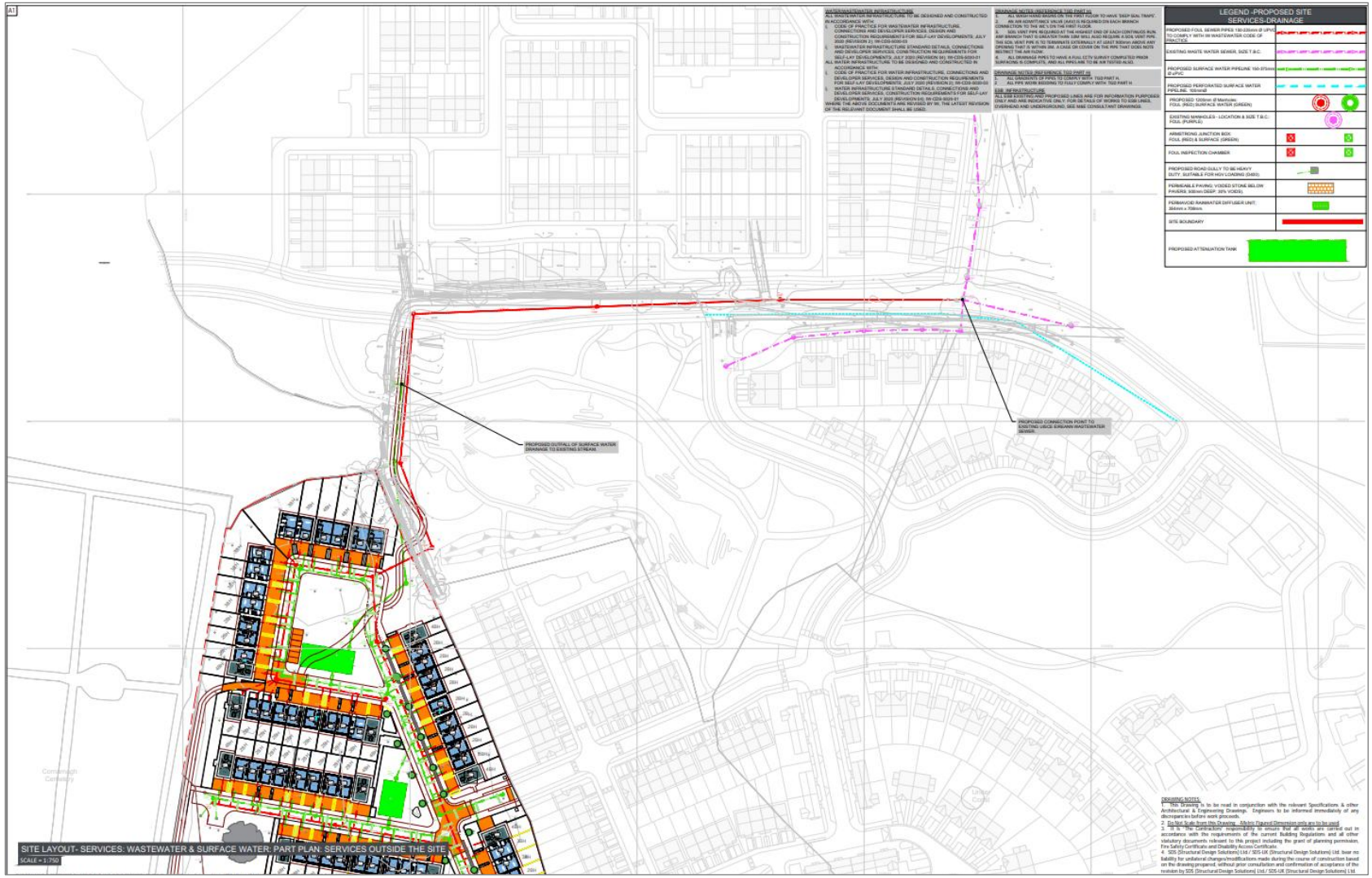


Figure 3.4 Proposed wastewater and surface water drainage design (2 of 2)[19]

[19] Source: SDS Design Engineers – adapted from original drawing for clarity. See accompanying drawing set for full version.

4. Receiving Environment

4.1. Overview

The proposed development is located within agricultural land at Cornamaddy, on the eastern outskirts of Athlone town, County Westmeath (Figure 3.1). The proposed site is bordered by agricultural land to the north and residential development currently under construction to the east. The N55 road is just south of the proposed site, and there are several smaller residential developments and industrial estates in the wider areas surrounding the site. There are extensive areas of agricultural lands to the north of the proposed development between the proposed site and Lough Ree.

4.2. European sites

Lough Ree and its associated European sites of Lough Ree SAC (site code: 000440) and Lough Ree SPA (site code: 004064), are approximately 1.3 km from the proposed development site, at the closest point (Figure 4.1). These sites are designated for bird species that are sensitive to disturbance, habitat loss and loss in ex-situ foraging habitat, and habitats which are sensitive to hydrological changes and pollution.

The QI and SCI habitats and species for which Lough Ree SAC and SPA are listed in Appendices I and III. Several other European sites occur in the wider area of the proposed development site, however there is no surface hydrological or groundwater connectivity with any of these additional sites (see Figure 4.1, Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.3).

4.3. Relationship of proposed site to European sites

SCI species can commute up to 20 km for ex-situ foraging outside of typical foraging sites / designated SPA areas, and the proposed site is within core foraging zones for species such as Whooper swan[20] that Lough Ree SPA is designated for. However, winter bird surveys carried out to support this AASR showed no SCI species utilising the site for ex-situ foraging or roosting. Therefore, based on findings from onsite surveys, it is likely that the proposed development site is not of value for SCI species and the proposed removal of grassland habitat to facilitate the proposed development is not a source for effects for SCI species.

A small agricultural drain to the north of the proposed development site connects to the Kippinstown stream. This stream joins with the Garrynafela (IE_SH_26S021660) and empties into Lough Ree SAC and SPA at Balaghkeeran Bay, approximately 1.6 km from the proposed development site (Figure 4.2). As mentioned, a direct, surface hydrological connection is proposed between the proposed development and Lough Ree via an open drain which connects to the Kippinstown stream in order to facilitate surface water drainage in the operational phase of the proposed development. This will constitute a permanent hydrological connection through surface water runoff between the proposed site and Lough Ree SAC and SPA resulting from the proposed Housing Scheme development. Lough Ree SAC and SPA contain Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests that are sensitive to hydrological (surface and groundwater) interactions (Appendix I).

4.4. Ecological walkover and site characteristics

An ecological walkover survey was conducted on site on the 23rd of September 2023. The walkover informed what surveys were required in order to support an AASR, and to identify any pathways or receptors for potential effect as a result of the proposed development. The site is composed almost entirely of agricultural grassland with mature trees occurring within the site and along the boundary hedgerows (Figure 3.1). No invasive species were recorded on site. There are areas of rush and

[20] Scottish Natural Heritage (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Guidance. Nature Scot, Version 3.

wetter conditions to the north of the site, and dryer areas or rank grassland to the southern end of the site.

Potential ex-situ foraging and over wintering habitat was identified in this agricultural grassland to the north, and the dryer areas to south of the site. As mentioned, Lough Ree SPA is approximately 1.3 km north of the proposed site, which is designated for species such as Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus)* and Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus)*. The grassland habitat within the proposed site was identified as having characteristics that are suitable for over wintering and/or ex-situ foraging by these species. The proposed site is also within the core foraging range of 5 km for Whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)[21]. Therefore, wintering bird surveys were carried out to ascertain the value of the amenity grassland habitat for SCI species of surrounding SPAs.

4.5. Hydrology

There is a small stream to the north east of the proposed site, the Kippinstown stream (IE_SH_26S021660), which joins with the Garrynafela (IE_SH_26S021660) and empties into Lough Ree SAC and SPA at Balaghkeeran Bay, approximately 1.6 km from the proposed development site (Figure 4.2). This stream is connected to the proposed development site via agricultural drains north of the site.

There is a shared groundwater body between the proposed development site and Lough Ree SAC and SPA. The Athlone Gravels groundwater body is shared with part of both European sites to the north (Figure 4.3). Lough Ree SAC is designated for Alkaline fens (7230) which are groundwater dependant habitats and therefore sensitive to any pollution to groundwater.

The operational phase of the proposed development will connect to the Kippinstown stream directly via a small open drain north of the site in the operational phase of the proposed development, to facilitate surface water drainage outflow from the site (Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4). Flood risk mapping for the proposed site and surrounding area shows that the proposed site is not located within any areas with potential for flood risk (Figure 4.4).

[21] Scottish Natural Heritage (2016). Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Guidance. Nature Scot, Version 3.

Figure 4.1 European sites within in the vicinity of the proposed development boundary[22]

[22] Source: NPWS datasets. Accessed 11th November 2025

Figure 4.2. Location of surface waterbodies[23] relative to the proposed development

[23] Source: EPA datasets. Accessed: 11th November 2025

Figure 4.3 Groundwater bodies[24] relative to the proposed development and European site

[24] Source: EPA datasets. Accessed: 11th November 2025

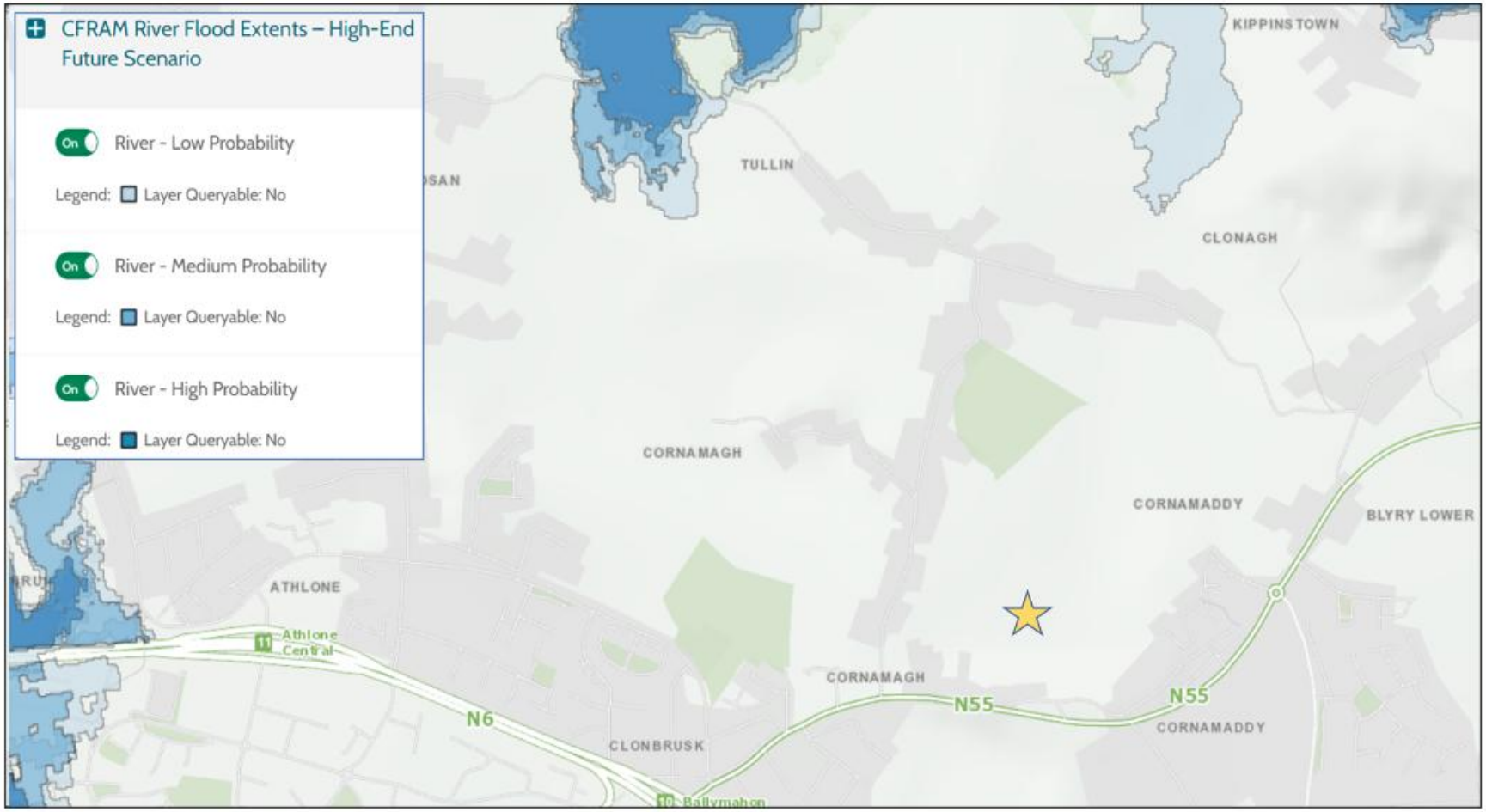


Figure 4.4 Flood risk[25] mapping[26] for the proposed development

[25] **High-End Future Scenario** extents were generated taking in in the potential effects of climate change using an increase in rainfall of 30% and sea level rise of 1,000 mm (40 inches):

- **Low Probability** flood events have an indicative 1-in-a-1000 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 0.1%.
- **High Probability** flood events have approximately a 1-in-a-10 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 10%

[26] Source: Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) predictive rivers flood mapping tool. Accessed at: Flood Maps – Floodinfo.ie on 11th November 2025

4.6. Winter bird surveys

Surveys were carried out during the peak winter foraging season for foraging SCI species with 5 days covering 30 hours of the peak wintering season (see also s 2.6.3 Survey limitations).

No SCI species (i.e., those designated for SPAs) utilised the site for ex-situ foraging over the entire survey period. A small number of records were gathered for SCI species flying over the proposed site (Table 4.1 and Figure 4.5), namely black-headed gull (*Larus ridibundus)*, whooper swan (*Cygnus cygnus)* and lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus).* These individuals were likely commuting to or from nearby foraging grounds, but the proposed development does not introduce any obstacles for flight paths in its operational phase.

Table 4.1 Flight lines of SCI species over the proposed development area

Species		SCI species?	No. of individuals	Date recorded	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Black-headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	Yes	3	13 December 2023	North
Black-headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	Yes	1	14 December 2023	North
Whooper Swan	*Cygnus cygnus*	Yes	1	14 December 2023	North
Black-headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	Yes	5	10 February 2024	Northeast
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	Yes	4	11 February 2024	West
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	Yes	2	11 February 2024	West

Other bird species that are not SCI species were recorded at the same time as the winter bird survey from point counts and flight observations, and showed a good diversity and abundance of species on site. These results are presented in Appendix VI and VII.

Figure 4.5 Flight lines of SCI species recorded over the proposed development area

4.7. Zone of Influence (ZoI)

Regarding hydrological connectivity to European sites, an agricultural drain to the north of the proposed development site connects to the Kippinstown stream, which is directly connected to Lough Ree approximately 1.6 km downstream. Therefore, the ZoI for hydrology extends to the Lough Ree and the associated SAC and SPA.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposed development, and the temporary (i.e., under one year) timeline for the development, the ZoI for construction phase impacts such as dust and noise are not expected to extend beyond 500 m of the proposed development. There are no European sites within this radius. However, depending on climatic conditions, dust from the construction phase could enter the Kippinstown stream which is in close proximity with the proposed development.

4.8. European sites selected for screening

Using the SPR model (as described in s 2.3.2) and considering the nature of the proposed development (s 3), the receiving environment of the proposed development site (s 4), the results from supporting surveys carried out (s 2.4), the relationship to the European sites (s 4.3), and the European sites that occur within the ZoI; the following European sites will be considered for screening for AA in this report:

Table 4.2 European sites requiring screening for AA

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying feature[27]	Distance (km)
004064	Lough Ree SPA	Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) [A067], Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142], Coot (Fulica atra) [A125], Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140], Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056], Teal (Anas crecca) [A052], Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004], Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) [A053], Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038], Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065], Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Common tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193], Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]	1.31
000440	Lough Ree SAC	Active raised bogs [7110], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0], Alkaline fens [7230], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Limestone pavements [8240], Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150], Bog woodland [91D0], Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) * important orchid sites [6210], Otter (Lutra lutra) [1355]	1.36

5. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

5.1. Identification of potential effects of the proposed development

This part of the screening assessment process identifies whether the changes brought about by the implementation of proposed development could introduce sources for direct, indirect or secondary likely significant effects (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the European sites considered in this report (Table 4.2). This is examined in the absence of any controls, conditions, or mitigation measures. The construction and operational phase elements of the proposed development with potential to introduce sources for effects to ecological processes are identified below. These will be discussed in view of the Special Conservation Interests, and Qualifying Interests of the European sites, and their sensitivities, and Qualifying Interests, and

[27] Qualifying feature is used here to encompass both Special Conservation Interests (species designated for SPAs) and Qualifying Interests (species and habitats designated for SACs)

considered for a likelihood of potential significant effects. Subsequently if any impacts with potential to result in likely significant effect are identified, they will be summarised.

5.1.1. Construction phase potential effects

The construction phase will be localised, medium-scale and temporary. Considering the QIs and SCIs of the European sites being considered (Table 4.2), and their sensitivities (Appendices I, II and III), the potential effects identified from the construction phase of the proposed development are:

- Disturbance effects through noise;
- Dust; and
- Water quality (increased risk of sediment/surface run-off).

Disturbance effects through noise

The construction phase of the proposed development has potential for effects for disturbance through noise to ex-situ foraging SCI species. However, this potential effect via noise during the construction phase will be temporary (i.e., less than one year) and localised. SCI species are sensitive to disturbance effects; in general distances beyond 300m are seen to be sufficient to preclude such effects[28]. These distances can vary due to factors such as species and/or time of year[29,30]. Given that the closest SPA is Lough Ree SPA, at 1.3 km from the proposed development, this is sufficient distance to ensure that there is no likelihood for significant effects to birds within Lough Ree SPA via construction phase noise disturbance during the construction phase of the proposed development. Birds could utilise nearby lands for wintering / ex-situ foraging during the construction phase. However, due to the abundance of agricultural lands in the areas surrounding Lough Ree, and the temporary nature of the construction phase noise, this disturbance is not likely to introduce significant effects for SCI species foraging / over wintering in nearby lands.

Dust

There will be an increase in dust emissions during the construction phase of the proposed development only – due to its nature as a residential development, the operational phase is not foreseen introduce any sources for significant effects in this regard. Given the distances between the proposed development site and the closest European sites of. 1.3 km, and a ZoI for dust of 500 m for this project, the project is not foreseen to spread dust to the boundary of Lough Ree. However, dust could be introduced into the Kippinstown stream, which is directly connected with Lough Ree 1.6 km downstream, and is in close proximity to the proposed development (Figure 4.2). Therefore, there are sources with pathways for likely significant effects via construction related dust as a result of the proposed development.

Water quality (increased risk of sediment/surface run-off)

There is no direct hydrological connectivity between the proposed development and European sites in the construction phase. However, heavy rainfall during earthworks in the construction phase could increase the risk of sediment run off into local agricultural drains which link to the Kippinstown stream and then connects downstream to Lough Ree and its hydrologically sensitive habitats and species. Therefore, there are sources with pathways with a likelihood of significant effects via water quality and run off during the construction phase of the proposed development.

5.1.2. Operational phase potential effects

The operational phase effects will be localised, medium-scale and permanent. Considering the QIs and SCIs of the European sites being considered (Table 4.2), and their sensitivities (Appendices I, II

[28] Cutts, N., Hemingway, K. and Spencer, J., 2013. Waterbird disturbance mitigation toolkit. Informing estuarine planning and construction projects. Version 3.2. Accessed online 1st July 2022.c

[29] Bötsch, Y., Tablado, Z. and Jenni, L., 2017. Experimental evidence of human recreational disturbance effects on bird-territory establishment. Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 284(1858), p.20170846.

[30] Goss-Custard, J.D., Hoppe, C.H., Hood, M.J. and Stillman, R.A., 2020. Disturbance does not have a significant impact on waders in an estuary close to conurbations: importance of overlap between birds and people in time and space. Ibis, 162(3), pp.845-862.

and III), the potential effects identified from the operational phase of the proposed development are:

- Permanent loss of potential supporting (i.e., ex-situ foraging) habitat; and,
- Surface water run-off.

Loss of ex-situ foraging habitat

The operational phase will result in the permanent loss of amenity grassland habitat. Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species regularly forage ex-situ from their designated site in inland agricultural and amenity grasslands. However, this will not result in any significant effects for SCI species in terms of ex-situ foraging as roosts as winter bird surveys carried out between November and February 2023/2024 found the habitat is not likely to have any significant value for foraging or overwintering SCI species. Therefore, there are no sources for effect in this regard.

Surface water run-off

The proposed development's operational phase will connect to the Kippinstown stream directly via a small open drain north of the site in order to facilitate surface water drainage (Figure 3.3 and Figure 3.4) from the proposed Housing Scheme development. However, best practice SuDS measures will be implemented as part of the proposed development's operational phase. Such measures include: limiting surface run off in the operational phase to greenfield run off rates (Qbar); attenuation on site via 3 (no.) underground eco bloc attenuation systems with capacity for 1-in-100 year rainfall event with additional allowance for climate change and increased development; and, 3 (no.) petrol interceptors with a peak flow of 100 L/S and storage capacity of 1000L (Figure 3.3). These are standard measures, recommended as part of objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027[31] and best practice guidance on SuDS[32], and are installed regardless of relationships to European sites and thus not intended to address potential effects[33]. Therefore, there are no sources for effect in this regard.

5.2. Summary of potential significant effects

For the purposes of this assessment report of the proposed development, and considering the precautionary principle[34], the proposed development is identified as having sources with pathways with a likelihood for significant effects from the construction phase of the proposed development via water quality (sediment/siltation from surface run-off) and dust.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that an assessment of a project must consider other plans or projects that might, in combination with the project, have potential significant effects on European sites. As sources with pathways that have a likelihood for significant effects to European sites are identified in this report from the proposed development alone (Table 5.1) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required, in-combination effects will be assessed in the NIS.

Table 5.1 Screening of potential effects arising from the proposed development

Site name and code	Distance (km)	Qualifying feature[35]	Analysis for likely significant effects	Likelihood of significant effects
Lough Ree SPA	1.31	Goldeneye *(Bucephala clangula)* [A067], Coot *(Fulica atra)* [A125],	Considering the Special Conservation Interests and known sensitivities of this European site (detailed in Appendix I and III of this AASR), in consultation with	Yes

[31] In particular policy objective CPO 10.97 "Resist the discharge of additional surface water to combined sewers and promote Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDs) and solutions to maximise the capacity of towns with combined drainage systems."
[32] DCC 2021. Sustainable Drainage Design and Evaluation Guide. Dublin City Council
[33] Case law: (C-721/21 Eco Advocacy CLG)
[34] Case law: (C127/02 Waddenzee).
[35] Qualifying feature is used here to encompass both Special Conservation Interests (species designated for SPAs) and Qualifying Interests (species and habitats designated for SACs)

Site name and code	Distance (km)	Qualifying feature[35]	Analysis for likely significant effects	Likelihood of significant effects
004064		Common Scoter *(Melanitta nigra)* [A065], Tufted Duck *(Aythya fuligula)* [A061], Whooper Swan *(Cygnus cygnus)* [A038], Teal *(Anas crecca)* [A052], Mallard *(Anas platyrhynchos)* [A053], Shoveler *(Anas clypeata)* [A056], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Wigeon *(Anas penelope)* [A050], Golden Plover *(Pluvialis apricaria)* [A140], Little Grebe *(Tachybaptus ruficollis)* [A004], Common tern *(Sterna hirundo)* [A193], Lapwing *(Vanellus vanellus)* [A142]	their Conservation Objectives (Appendix IV), and the potential effects identified in S5.1 in the context of the proposed development; this SPA is sensitive to hydrological interactions as its designated species rely on the habitats of Lough Ree. There is a source for hydrological interactions during the construction phase due to the close proximity of the Kippinstown stream to the proposed development boundary, which directly connected to this SPA approximately 1.6 km downstream. Run-off and dust from earthworks during the construction phase may enter the Kippinstown stream via local agricultural drains or local groundwater bodies. As there are sources and pathways with a likelihood for significant effects to this European site via hydrology from the sources identified above, under Article 6(3) mitigation measures are required as part of a Natura Impact Statement.	
Lough Ree SAC 000440	1.36	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates *(Festuco-Brometalia)* * important orchid sites [6210], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Bog woodland [91D0], Limestone pavements [8240], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior *(Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0], Active raised bogs [7110], Alkaline fens [7230], Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355], Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]	Considering the Qualifying Interests and known sensitivities of this European site (detailed in Appendix I and III of this AASR), in consultation with their Conservation Objectives (Appendix IV), and the potential effects identified in S5.1 in the context of the proposed development; this SAC is sensitive to hydrological interactions as its designated species rely on the habitats of Lough Ree. There is a source for hydrological interactions during the construction phase due to the close proximity of the Kippinstown stream to the proposed development boundary, which directly connected to this SAC approximately 1.6 km downstream. Run-off and dust from earthworks during the construction phase may enter the Kippinstown stream via local agricultural drains or local groundwater bodies. As there are sources and pathways with a likelihood for significant effects to this European site via hydrology from the sources identified above, under Article 6(3) mitigation measures are required as part of a Natura Impact Statement.	Yes

6. Appropriate Assessment Screening Report Conclusion

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, which has been produced in order to inform the competent authority on the AA process, has examined the likelihood of potential significant effects on European sites arising from the proposed Housing Scheme, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, and evaluated the risk for potential effects in view of the Habitats Directive, taking account of the project characteristics, best information and data available regarding European sites, and in view of their Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests, and their Conservation Objectives, and with regard to the precautionary principle, and has found that the proposed development has a likelihood of resulting in potential significant effects on 2 (no.) European sites, namely:

- Lough Ree SPA (site code: 004064)
- Lough Ree SAC (site code: 000440)

Based on the findings of this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, it is concluded that the proposed project:

- is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site; and
- may have potential significant effects on the 2 (no.) European sites listed above, in the absence of mitigation measures.

Therefore, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and applying the precautionary principle[36], the potential for significant effects to European sites as a result of the implementation of the proposed Housing Scheme cannot be ruled out, and a Natural Impact Statement with mitigation to address the likely significate effects identified is required.

7. Natura Impact Statement

7.1. Introduction

The AASR presented above has identified 2 (no.) European sites with potential to be adversely affected by the implementation of the proposed development (Table 7.1). Section 177T(1) and (2) of the planning legislation[37] provides that a NIS is '*a statement, for the purposes of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, of the implications of a proposed development, on its own or in combination with other plans or projects, for one or more than one European site, in view of the conservation objectives of the site or sites' and specifies that it 'shall include a report of a scientific examination of evidence and data, carried out by competent persons to identify and classify any implications for one or more than one European site in view of the conservation objectives of the site or sites*'. Thus, the objective of the Natura Impact Statement is to analyse the potential adverse effects identified, alone and in-combination with other plans or projects, in view of their Conservation Objectives, and assign appropriate mitigation. Thereafter, the report shall examine whether the proposed development would have any remaining residual adverse effects on the European site(s) identified in the context of the appropriate and tailored mitigation measures that were designed to address such adverse effects. The metrics presented in the methodology section of this report (s 2 above) are also utilised for the NIS when considering adverse effects upon the application of mitigation measures. Supporting information relating to the European site identified, such as their Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests, threats and pressures and Conservation Objectives are provided in Appendices I-IV.

7.2. Relevant European sites

In the absence of mitigation measures, and in view of each site's qualifying interests, site sensitivities and conservation objectives, potential for adverse effects due to the implementation of the proposed development has been identified for the following European sites:

Table 7.1 European sites subject to further assessment

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)
004064	Lough Ree SPA	1.31
000440	Lough Ree SAC	1.36

[36] Case law: (C127/02 Waddenzee).
[37] Planning and Development Act 2000 (30/2000) (as amended)

Table 7.2 Characterisation of potential adverse effects on the qualifying features[38] of European sites[39]

Site name and code	Qualifying Features[38]	Characterisation of potential adverse effects
Lough Ree SPA 004064	Goldeneye *(Bucephala clangula)* [A067], Coot *(Fulica atra)* [A125], Common Scoter *(Melanitta nigra)* [A065], Tufted Duck *(Aythya fuligula)* [A061], Whooper Swan *(Cygnus cygnus)* [A038], Teal *(Anas crecca)* [A052], Mallard *(Anas platyrhynchos)* [A053], Shoveler *(Anas clypeata)* [A056], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Wigeon *(Anas penelope)* [A050], Golden Plover *(Pluvialis apricaria)* [A140], Little Grebe *(Tachybaptus ruficollis)* [A004], Common tern *(Sterna hirundo)* [A193], Lapwing *(Vanellus vanellus)* [A142]	In view of the Conservation Objectives of these species (Appendix IV) and in the absence of appropriate mitigation for surface run off and dust control during the construction phase, i.e., water attenuation on site, measures to prevent run off of soils such as silt traps, construction dust control measures, and management and monitoring on site; surface water runoff may have the potential to impact the water quality of Lough Ree SPA and as a result the prey populations of invertebrates, plants and algae that these species feed upon.
Lough Ree SAC 000440	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates *(Festuco-Brometalia)* * important orchid sites [6210], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Bog woodland [91D0], Limestone pavements [8240], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior *(Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0], Active raised bogs [7110], Alkaline fens [7230], Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355], Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]	In view of the Conservation Objectives of these species (Appendix IV) and in the absence of appropriate mitigation for surface run off and dust control during the construction phase, i.e., water attenuation on site, measures to prevent run off of soils such as silt traps, construction dust control measures, and management and monitoring on site; surface water runoff may have the potential to impact the water quality of hydrologically sensitive habitats Lough Ree SAC such a alkaline fens and eutrophic lakes, and species such as otter (Lutra lutra).

7.3. In combination effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or projects that might, in combination with the plan or project, have potential for significant effects European sites.

To examine potential in combination effects with respect to currently active land-use Plans, an online search of the currently active Plans[40] that are directly relevant to both the proposed development locality and the nature of the proposed development itself was carried out. To examine potential in-combination effects resulting from other projects or developments, an online search was conducted of recent Local Authority (i.e., Westmeath County Council) and An Bord Pleanála (ABP) planning applications that are within the local area and related to the proposed development. The results of these searches are discussed below.

7.3.1. Plans of relevance for in-combination effects from the proposed development

The currently active Plans that are directly relevant to the proposed development area and the nature of the proposed development are:

- Westmeath Development Plan 2021 - 2027

[38] Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests
[39] European sites brought to Stage 2 of the Appropriate Assessment process
[40] Plans that have been adopted

- Climate Action Plan 2024-2029

The proposed development has a medium-scale, temporary construction phase and the operational phase is consistent with the current site use. In combination with this, the land use zoning of the above Westmeath Development Plan 2021 - 2027 (which has also undergone Appropriate Assessment), for the proposed development area is Residential. As a result of these factors, it is not foreseen that proposed development will have any significant in-combination effects with the above plans.

7.3.2. Projects of relevance for in-combination effects from the proposed development

The search area for planning applications is defined using a combination of criteria that depend on the characteristics of the proposed development in the context of European sites, such as:

- Having direct or indirect connectivity to a European site;
- Being in close proximity to a European site;
- Being of a substantial scale relative to the conditions and/or current works taking place in the surrounding landscape;
- Having disperse emissions or far-reaching sources for effects; and/or
- Having sources for effects to ecological connectivity.

The above factors are considered in the context of characteristics of the proposed development and likely significant effects identified, and on this basis a search radius of 500 m within the last 5 years[41] was considered appropriate to search for projects with applications to the Local Authority (i.e., Westmeath County Council). Regarding applications made to the national planning body, An Bord Pleanála, the same radius of 500 m was used. Table 7.3 and Table 7.4 show the relevant permitted developments within 500 m of the proposed development from the Local Authority database and the ABP database respectively.

There are a number of other proposed developments in the vicinity of the proposed development including works which are at planning stage or underway on various sites. The database search found that the vast majority of projects within the area are relating to the construction and alteration of residential structures, all of which undergo Appropriate Assessment where required.

However, there are several projects in the Cornmaddy area, that are part of a large-scale residential development, as illustrated by the projects in Table 7.3. All of these projects are for medium to large scale residential developments that are at various stages of construction or completion at the time of writing this report. As a result of the scale of development in the local area, and the potential effects regarding surface water runoff and dust to Lough Ree's European sites, the risk for in-combination effects with these developments cannot be reasonably excluded and mitigation is required. Note: the projects listed in the ABP results are the equivalent of the respective local authority application, and this is noted where this occurs for each respective project in both Table 7.3 and Table 7.4.

[41] Planning applications have a standard lifespan of 5 years as per Section 40 (3)(b) of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended; therefore, these are viewed to be the 'live' applications, all other projects are considered as part of the site other than refused and withdrawn applications, as these would not have any in-combination effects

Table 7.3 Local planning applications[42] within the local area of the proposed development[43]

Project Code	Decision	Description	Grant Date	Project area (sq m) [44]	Distance from proposed dev. (m)	Characteristics of the potential interactions between the projects; sources and pathways	Likelihood of in-combination effects
2360047	Conditional	5-year permission for development at a site of total c.1.13ha on lands located at Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. The site is generally bounded to the west by greenfield lands and Cornamagh Cemetery, to the north by greenfield lands, to the south by greenfield lands and the Ballymahon Road (N55) and to the east by the existing Drumaconn housing estate. The development will consist of modifications to the permitted application WMCC Reg. Ref. 14/7103/ ABP Ref. PL25.244826 and concurrent application WMCC Reg. Ref. 22/577 to include the following: • Removal of the permitted creche c.260sqm and associated parking granted under WMCC Reg Ref. 14/7103/ ABP Ref. PL25.244826. The recently permitted creche granted under WMCC Ref. 22/340 will regularise childcare provision on site. The remaining area will form part of the public open space associated with the wider development at Cornamaddy (c.710sqm). Associated minor landscape revisions to the concurrent application WMCC Reg. Ref. 22/577; • Provision of 6 no. additional houses comprising 4 no. Type A1 4-5 bed 2-3 storey semi-detached units (c.166sqm area each) and 2 no. Type B 3 bed 2 storey semi-detached units (c.113sqm area each). All with associated rear gardens and 2 no. parking spaces per unit. No new house types are proposed under this application; • Relocation and minor alterations including changes to the floor levels, house plots and associated gardens and boundary treatments of the remaining units comprising 4 no. Type A1 4-5 bed 2-3 storey semi-detached units (c.166sqm area each), 2 no. Type B 3 bed 2 storey semi-detached units (c.113sqm area each), 1 no. Type D 5 bed 2-3 storey detached unit (c. 215sqm area) and 2 no. Type E1 3 bed 2 storey semi-detached units (c.112sqm area each) permitted under WMCC Reg. Ref. 14/7103/ ABP Ref. PL25.244826. No changes to the permitted floor area of these units; • Minor modifications to the concurrent application WMCC Reg. Ref.	2023-09-28	11878.10	103.59	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as above

[42] The majority of surrounding planning permissions are for developments which are minor projects with no risk of in-combination effects. Therefore, a summary list is provided here of the largest / most relevant proposed developments within the below stated parameters (i.e., excluding minor additions or edits to residential homes / existing planning permissions)

[43] Parameters used: planning application from within the last 10 years, within a radius of 500m around the proposed development boundary

[44] Project Area (sq m) calculated using QGIS

Project Code	Decision	Description	Grant Date	Project area (sq m) [44]	Distance from proposed dev. (m)	Characteristics of the potential interactions between the projects; sources and pathways	Likelihood of in-combination effects
		22/577 to include reconfiguration and relocation of the main access roads south of the planned distributor road. Readjustment of the internal shared access road parallel to the distributor road permitted under WMCC Reg. Ref. 14/7103/ ABP Ref. PL25.244826; • All associated site development works, services provision, connection to water services and connection to the section of the distributor road proposed under WMCC Reg. Ref. 22/577, public open space (c.600sqm), landscaping, boundary treatment works and car parking provision					
22340	Conditional	To consist of the following: 1) Construction of a two Storey childcare facility, including classrooms, reception, kitchen, associated staff areas and office, toilets, storage, plant rooms, circulation areas and photovoltaic panels at roof level (c.668sqm total gross floor area) 2) The proposed facility includes a secure outdoor play area(c. 595 sqm), 18 no. car parking spaces and 20 no. bicycle parking spaces. 3) Existing vehicular access onto the existing link road and provision of an internal access road, footpaths and 2 no. pedestrian access points. 4) All associated site development works, service provision, drainage works, landscape and boundary treatment works and public lighting. 5) This development will form part of a larger/future phase of the development. 6) A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of this planning application.	2023-03-07	3787.00	348.43	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as above
22253	Conditional	The development will consist of the following: • Construction of 75 no. residential units comprising: 51 no. 2 storey semi-detached and terraced houses (consisting 4 no. 2 bed houses and 47 no. 3 bed houses, ranging in size from c.78 sq.m – 120 sq.m each), and 24 no. 3 storey apartment/duplex units (consisting 12 no. 2 bed apartments and 12 no. 3 bed duplexes, ranging in size from 84sq.m to 121 sq.m each), with associated private gardens and east/west facing terraces; • All pedestrian and vehicular access roads and footpaths including a section of the planned east/west distributor road connecting to a section of the distributor road permitted under WMCC	2022-12-06	37247.60	237.58	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed	Yes – as above

Project Code	Decision	Description	Grant Date	Project area (sq m) [44]	Distance from proposed dev. (m)	Characteristics of the potential interactions between the projects; sources and pathways	Likelihood of in-combination effects
		Reg. Ref. 14/7103/ ABP Ref. PL25.244826 to the south east of the site. • All associated site development works, services provision, drainage works, residential open space (c.0.28ha) and public open space (c.0.82ha), landscaping, boundary treatment works, public lighting, 1 no. esb substation cabinets, bin stores, car and bicycle parking provision; • Provision of a new detention basin on the eastern portion of the site designed to cater for the proposed development, in lieu of the drainage works permitted under WMCC Reg. Ref. 14/7103 / ABP Ref. PL 25.244826; • This development will form part of a larger/future phase of the development; • No changes to the existing pumping station located outside the northern site boundary; A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of this application.				development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	
2360074 (ABP reference: 318736)	Conditional	Development consisting of a 10 year permission for the provision of a total of 332no. residential units along with provision of a crèche. Particulars of the development comprise as follows: (a) Site excavation works to facilitate the proposed development to include excavation and general site preparation works. (b) The provision of a total of 172no. 2storey residential dwellings which will consisting of 152no. 3 bed units and 20no. 4 bed units. (c) The provision of a total of 160no. apartments/duplex units consisting of 36no.1 bed units, 99no.2bed units and 25no. 3bed units. The apartment blocks range in height from 2 storey to 4 storey and the duplex blocks range from 2 storey to 3 storey in height. (d) Provision of a 2 storey creche. (e) Provision of associated car parking at surface level via a combination of in-curtilage parking for dwellings and via on-street parking for the creche, duplexes and apartment units. (f) Provision of electric vehicle charge points with associated site infrastructure ducting to provide charge points for residents throughout the site. (g) Provision of associated bicycle storage facilities at surface level throughout the site and bin storage facilities. (h) The provision of a new link road via adjacent lands to the west to provide for vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist access. (i)The provision of internal culverts and associated bridges along with a realignment of a section of an existing drainage channel within the site to	N/A	117861.10	240.83	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as above

Project Code	Decision	Description	Grant Date	Project area (sq m) [44]	Distance from proposed dev. (m)	Characteristics of the potential interactions between the projects; sources and pathways	Likelihood of in-combination effects
		facilitate internal access roads along with associated crossing points across the drainage channel (to facilitate pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular crossing points). (j)The creation of a pedestrian footpath alongside the local road which will connect to the existing footpath aligning the N55 National road; (k)Provision of associated open space areas, residential communal open space areas to include formal play areas along with all hard and soft landscape works for private gardens and amenity spaces along with public lighting, planting and boundary treatments to include boundary walls, railings & fencing; (l)Provision of 2no. ESB substations. (m)Internal site works and attenuation systems. (n)All ancillary site development/construction works to facilitate foul, water and service networks for connection to the existing foul, water and ESB networks. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) have been prepared in respect of the proposed development					
22577 (ABP reference: 318510	Conditional	5-year permission for development at a site of total c.10.87 ha on lands located at Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. The site is generally bounded to the west by greenfield lands and Cornamagh Cemetery, to the north by greenfield lands, to the south by greenfield lands and the Ballymahon Road (N55) and to the east by the existing Drumaconn housing estate. The development will comprise of a residential development and public open space comprising the following: • Amendments to permitted application WMCC Reg Ref. 14/7103 ABP Ref. PL25.244826 for the removal of 38 no. permitted units (not constructed) to be replaced by: Construction of 70 no. residential units comprising: 4 no. 2 bed terraced houses (c.78 sq.m each), 60 no. 3 bed semidetached (c. 96-116 sq.m each) and 6 no. 4 bed semidetached houses (c. 147 sq.m each) with associated private gardens. • The creche facility, public open spaces, landscaping, roads layouts, car parking, boundary treatment works, public lighting and all associated site works associated with the 87 no. remaining units retained as permitted under WMCC Reg Ref. 14/7103 ABP Ref. PL25.244826 will remain	N/A	108845.20	0.00	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as above

Project Code	Decision	Description	Grant Date	Project area (sq m) [44]	Distance from proposed dev. (m)	Characteristics of the potential interactions between the projects; sources and pathways	Likelihood of in-combination effects
		unchanged. • All pedestrian and vehicular access roads and footpaths including a section of the planned east/west distributor road connecting to a sections of the distributor road permitted under WMCC Reg. Refs 14/7103 ABP Ref. PL25.244826 and 22/253 to the east of the site. • All associated site development works, services provision, drainage works, public open space (c.1.03ha), landscaping, boundary treatment works, public lighting, associated esb substation cabinets, bin stores, car and bicycle parking provision. • This development will form part of a larger/future phase of the development. • This planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement					
2360374 (ABP reference: 319902)	Conditional	Large Scale Residential Development on a site of total c. 7.31 ha comprising of a residential development and public open space comprising the following: Construction of 177 no. residential units on a gross site area of 7.31 ha, ranging in height from 2-3 storeys comprising detached, semi-detached, and terraced houses, maisonettes and 3 storey duplex apartments. 65 no. 2 bed houses, 71 no. 3 bed houses and 9 no. 4 bed houses will be provided. 24 no. 1 bed maisonette apartment units and 8 no. 3 storey duplex apartment units will be provided included all associated development works. This development will form part of a larger phase of permitted and proposed development. This planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement	N/A	71335.30	67.03	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as above

Table 7.4 An Bord Pleanála applications[45] within the local area of the proposed development[46]

Case ID	Date	Decision	Description	Distance from proposed dev. (m)	Characteristics of the potential interactions between the projects; sources and pathways	Likelihood of significant in-combination effects
318510 (LA planning reference: 22577)	2024-07-24	Grant permission with revised conditions	Amendments to permitted application. Construction of 70 residential units and all associated site works. The planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement.	Adjacent	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as equivalent application in Table 7.3 above
318736 (LA planning reference: 2360074)	2024-04-16	Grant permission with revised conditions	Large scale residential development: 10 year permission for 332 residential units along with provision of a creche, car parking, electric vehicle charge points bicycle and bin storage facilities, link road, footpath, open space areas, residential communal open space areas and site development works. Natura Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted to planning authority.	241	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as equivalent application in Table 7.3 above
319902 (LA planning reference: 2360374)	2024-09-23	Grant permission with revised conditions	Large-scale residential development: Construction of 177 residential units including all associated development works. This development will form part of a larger phase of permitted and proposed development. This planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement.	67	This project is part of a wider, large scale residential development for the area, the consent process for which was subject to applicable EIA and AA requirements. Considering the proximity of the project to the proposed development and elevated levels of development ongoing in the immediate area of Cornamaddy, the possibility of in-combination effects cannot be ruled out for dust and surface water runoff and mitigation is required. applicable EIA and AA requirements.	Yes – as equivalent application in Table 7.3 above

[45] The largest / most relevant proposed developments within the below stated parameters (i.e., excluding minor additions or edits to residential homes / existing planning permissions)
[46] Parameters used: planning applications in the last 10 years, within a radius of 500m of the proposed development boundary

8. Mitigation measures

This section outlines measures that need to be incorporated into the proposed development in order to mitigate the identified potential adverse effects on European sites that cannot be ruled out as occurring during the construction phase of the proposed development if left unmitigated.

In order to ensure that there will be no adverse effects to European sites the below stated mitigation measures have been devised and tailored for the potential adverse effects identified from proposed development, to be applied during the construction phase in order to reduce or avoid potential adverse effects from the identified sources from the proposed development on the integrity of the 2 (no.) European sites brought forward for consideration in this NIS, namely:

- Water quality (increased risk of sediment/surface run-off); and,
- Dust.

All other aspects of environmental controls and management related to the construction phase, which are not directly relevant to the AA / the NIS, such as general biodiversity measures, traffic management, working hours, etc. are provided in the accompanying project CEMP.

8.1. Water quality (increased risk of sediment/surface run-off)

Stockpiles

- The ground works operation will be carried out at a manner to ensure that material removed from the ground is taken away at regular intervals in order to reduce the amount of material that can be stored on site. Excavated subsoil layers are expected to be suitable for re use as non- structural fill subject to relevant onsite testing (GII will be conducting Site Investigation works in the future in line under the direction of Civil Structural Engineering Consultant Hayes Higgins).

Sediment and silt control

- A temporary positive drainage system shall be installed prior to the commencement of the construction works. This temporary surface water management facility will throttle runoff and allow suspended solids to be settled out and removed before being discharged in a control manner. Alternatively, a 'siltbuster' silt control unit can be used on the outfall.
- The surface water will then be discharged into the below ground attenuation tank before outfalling into the public surface water network via the permanent outfall for the site.
- By directing the surface water from the construction works through this temporary drainage system and then through the permanent attenuation tank and outfall it will ensure that:
  - site disturbance is minimised;
  - build-up of sediment is controlled;
  - the potential for erosion is minimised; and,
  - sediment-contaminated water is prevented from leaving the site.

Exclusion zone from hydrological pathway

- The appointed Contractor will engage the services of an Ecologist to advise on an appropriate exclusion zone for connecting drains and water course, and ensure that no works are to be carried out in close proximity to the existing water courses. A Method Statement and Risk Assessment will be reviewed and approved by Westmeath County Council before any works take place.

Water quality monitoring

- A programme for monitoring water quality at the outfall will be implemented as part of the construction of this development, in agreement with the Planning Authority. This programme and locations of sampling will be agreed with Westmeath County Council

Oil / diesel storage and concrete wash

- Only approved storage system for oil / diesel within the site will be permitted, (i.e. all oil / diesel storage to be located within a designated area placed furthest away from adjacent waterbodies and contained within constructed bunded areas e.g. placed on 150mm concrete slab with the perimeter constructed with 225mm solid blockwork rendered internally).
- The bunded area will accommodate the relevant oil / diesel storage capacity in case of accidental spillage. Any accidental spillages will be dealt with immediately on site however minor by containment /removal form site.
- Any significant storage of hydrocarbons is not envisaged as construction vehicles will be refuelled off site.
- The washing out of concrete trucks on site will not be permitted as they are a potential source of high alkalinity in waterbodies. Consequently, it is a requirement that all concrete truck washout takes place back in the ready-mix depot.

8.2. Dust

- The siting of construction activities and storage piles will consider the location of sensitive receptors and prevailing wind conditions to minimise the potential dust nuisance. Site management will include the ability to respond to adverse weather conditions by either restricting operations on site or using effective control measure in a timely manner before potential for nuisance occurs.
- Apply a speed limit of at least 20km/hr for on-site vehicles
- Provide water bowsers during periods of dry weather to ensure unpaved areas are kept moist. Spray exposed site haul roads during dry and / or windy weather.
- Ensure paved roads are kept clean and free of mud and other materials. Sweep hard surface roads, inside and outside the site, to ensure roads are kept clear of debris, soil or other material.
- Restrict un-surfaced roads to essential site traffic.
- Provide water bowsers during periods of high winds and dry weather conditions to ensure moisture content is high to increase the stability of the soil.
- During the proposed infrastructure works the following mitigation measures shall be implemented to minimise dust emissions:
- Construction techniques shall minimise dust release into the air.
- Protect overburden material from exposure to wind by storing the material in sheltered regions of the site.
- Regular watering of stockpiles during dry and windy periods.
- Locate any stockpiles away from sensitive receptors, (i.e., receptors sensitive to dust release). Provide tarpaulins over all unacceptable excavated materials being carted off site.
- Control vehicle speeds and impose speed restrictions, (speed can mobilise dust). The wheels of all vehicles leaving the construction site will be washed to ensure that dirt and dust is not transferred onto the public roadway.
- During dry spells and if deemed necessary monitoring of dust levels shall be carried out using the Bergerhoff Method i.e., analysis of dust collecting jars left on-site (German Standard VDI 2119, 1972). Results will be compared to the TA Luft guidelines (TA Luft, 1972). Should an exceedance of the TA Luft limit occur, additional mitigation measures, for example more regular spraying of water, shall be implemented.

- The excavating machines will be cleaned on a daily basis to ensure no excess grease and dust is left on the machine. This will be carried out at low level below the height of the hoarding to prevent any mud coming in contact with the public.

Responsibilities

- The Construction Manager and Environmental Manager are responsible updating the CEMP as needed, ensuring alignment with the mitigation stated in the NIS, and designation of personnel to the tasks relating to the implementation of each of the above measures.
- A site representative responsible for matters relating to dust management will be appointed prior to construction on site. The site representative responsible for dust management shall ensure that dust management procedures are followed and ensure monitoring and assessment of same;

9. Residual effects

In consideration of the QIs and SCIs of the following European sites that were brought forward for examination in this Natura Impact Assessment:

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying feature[47]	Distance (km)
004064	Lough Ree SPA	Goldeneye *(Bucephala clangula)* [A067], Coot *(Fulica atra)* [A125], Common Scoter *(Melanitta nigra)* [A065], Tufted Duck *(Aythya fuligula)* [A061], Whooper Swan *(Cygnus cygnus)* [A038], Teal *(Anas crecca)* [A052], Mallard *(Anas platyrhynchos)* [A053], Shoveler *(Anas clypeata)* [A056], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Wigeon *(Anas penelope)* [A050], Golden Plover *(Pluvialis apricaria)* [A140], Little Grebe *(Tachybaptus ruficollis)* [A004], Common tern *(Sterna hirundo)* [A193], Lapwing *(Vanellus vanellus)* [A142]	1.31
000440	Lough Ree SAC	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates *(Festuco-Brometalia)* * important orchid sites [6210], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Bog woodland [91D0], Limestone pavements [8240], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior *(Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0], Active raised bogs [7110], Alkaline fens [7230], Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355], Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]	1.36

Including, their threats and pressures, Conservation Objectives, and sensitivities, as examined in Table 7.2, supported by the data and information provided by Appendices I – IV; the above mitigation measures are applied for the following adverse effect identified as arising from the construction and operational phases of the proposed development:

- Water quality - via increased risk of sediment/siltation from surface run-off in the construction phase; and,
- Dust.

Upon application of these mitigation measures, the risk of pollution of Lough Ree SAC and Lough Ree SPA via surface water runoff and dust is negligible and there the proposed development poses no risk of adverse residual effects on the conservation objectives, or the favourable conservation condition,

[47] Qualifying feature is used here to encompass both Special Conservation Interests (species designated for SPAs) and Qualifying Interests (species and habitats designated for SACs)

of the Qualifying Interest habitats and species and supporting habitats of the Special Conservation Interest species of the European sites brought forwards for examination in this Natura Impact Statement, in support of a Stage 2 AA process, either alone or in-combination with other plans or project.

10. Conclusion

A Natura Impact Statement to inform the competent authority on Stage 2 AA has been carried out and found that the implementation of the proposed Housing Scheme would have the potential to result in effects on the integrity of 2 (no.) European sites, if unmitigated - namely:

- Lough Ree SPA (site code: 004064)
- Lough Ree SAC (site code: 000440)

The risks to the safeguarding and integrity of the Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives of the European sites have been addressed by the inclusion of mitigation measures that will prioritise the avoidance of potential effects and mitigate adverse effects where these cannot be avoided.

In-combination effects from interactions with other plans and projects have been considered in the assessment. The mitigation measures incorporated into the design of the proposed development allow a conclusion to be arrived at that there will be no adverse effects as a result of the proposed development either alone or in-combination with other plans/projects.

Having incorporated mitigation measures, it is concluded that the proposed development will not give rise to any effect on the ecological integrity of any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects[48]. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation in view of best scientific knowledge, in view of objective information of the proposed development, in respect of the qualifying interests and special conservation interests of the relevant European Sites, and in view of each sites' conservation objectives; it is concluded, that upon the application of the appropriate mitigation measures stated herein which address the potential adverse effects identified, the proposed Housing Scheme does not pose a risk of any adverse effects (either direct or indirect), alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, to the integrity of the European Sites assessed.

[48] Except as provided for in Section 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, viz. There must be: a) no alternative solution available, b) imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the plan to proceed; and c) Adequate compensatory measures in place.

Appendix I Supporting information on European sites[49]

In order to determine the potential effects of the proposal, information on the qualifying features, known vulnerabilities and threats pertaining to any potentially affected European sites was reviewed. Background information on threats to individual sites and vulnerability of habitats and species that was used during this assessment included the following:

- Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission *"Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland"* (NPWS, 2019);
- Ireland's Article 12 Report to the European Commission *"Bird species' status and trends reporting format for the period 2008-2012-"* (NPWS, 2012)
- Site Synopses[50]; and
- NATURA 2000 Standard Data Forms[50].

As the Conservation Objectives for the European sites focus on maintaining the favourable conservation condition of the QIs/SCIs of each site, the report concentrates on assessing the potential effects of the proposed development against the QIs/SCIs of each site and their Conservation Objectives.

Site code	Site name	Qualifying feature[51]	Pressure codes	Known threats and pressures
004064	Lough Ree SPA	Goldeneye *(Bucephala clangula)* [A067], Coot *(Fulica atra)* [A125], Common Scoter *(Melanitta nigra)* [A065], Tufted Duck *(Aythya fuligula)* [A061], Whooper Swan *(Cygnus cygnus)* [A038], Teal *(Anas crecca)* [A052], Mallard *(Anas platyrhynchos)* [A053], Shoveler *(Anas clypeata)* [A056], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Wigeon *(Anas penelope)* [A050], Golden Plover *(Pluvialis apricaria)* [A140], Little Grebe *(Tachybaptus ruficollis)* [A004], Common tern *(Sterna hirundo)* [A193], Lapwing *(Vanellus vanellus)* [A142]	F03.01, I01, B, G01.02, A04, G01.01, A08, F02.03	Hunting, invasive non-native species, sylviculture, forestry, walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles, grazing, nautical sports, fertilisation, leisure fishing
000440	Lough Ree SAC	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates *(Festuco-Brometalia)* * important orchid sites [6210], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Bog woodland [91D0], Limestone pavements [8240], Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior *(Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0], Active raised bogs [7110], Alkaline fens [7230], Otter *(Lutra lutra)* [1355], Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]	L08, A04, H02.06, G01.01, G02.09, G01.02, A03.03, A08, F03.01, D03.01.02, K03.05, F02.03, B02, E01.03, J02.04, H06.03, J02.11.02, H01.08, I01	Inundation (natural processes), grazing, diffuse groundwater pollution due to agricultural and forestry activities, nautical sports, wildlife watching, walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles, abandonment or lack of mowing , fertilisation, hunting, piers or tourist harbours or recreational piers, antagonism arising from introduction of species, leisure fishing, forest and plantation management & use, dispersed habitation, flooding modifications, thermal heating of water bodies, other siltation rate changes, diffuse pollution to surface waters due to household sewage and waste waters, invasive non-native species

[49] That have functional connectivity (ecological pathways) to the proposed development area including their Qualifying Interests, known threats and pressures

[50] NPWS Database of protected site data and associated documents for each European site

[51] Donates both Qualifying Interests (species and habitats designated for SACs) and Special Conservation Interests (species designated for SPAs)

Appendix II Qualifying Interests of SACs that have undergone assessment[52]

EU code	Qualifying interests	Article 17 report summary - threats and pressures	Threats and pressures codes	Known threats and pressures	Sensitivity of qualifying interests
[1355]	Otter (Lutra lutra)	There are no pressures facing this species	Xxp, Xxt	No pressures, no threats	Surface and marine water dependent. Moderately sensitive to hydrological change. Sensitivity to pollution.
[3150]	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation	Most of the pressures on this habitat are as a result of pollution from agriculture, forestry activities and wastewater.	A25, A26, B23, C05, F11, F12, F13, K04, K05	Agricultural activities generating point source pollution to surface or ground waters, agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters, forestry activities generating pollution to surface or ground waters, peat extraction, pollution to surface or ground water due to urban runoffs, discharge of urban waste water (excluding storm overflows and/or urban run-offs) generating pollution to surface or ground water, plants, contaminated or abandoned industrial sites generating pollution to surface or ground water, modification of hydrological flow, physical alteration of water bodies	Surface and groundwater dependant. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Highly sensitive to pollution.
[6210]	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) * important orchid sites)	The significant pressures related to this habitat are mainly associated with agricultural intensification causing loss of species-rich communities, or abandonment of farmland resulting in succession to scrub.	A02, A09, A10, C01, I02, I04	Conversion from one type of agricultural land use to another (excluding drainage and burning), intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, extensive grazing or under grazing by livestock, extraction of minerals (e.g., rock, metal ores, gravel, sand, shell), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species	Changes in management such as grazing regime. Changes in nutrient or base status. Changes to vegetation composition. Introduction of alien species.
[7110]	Active raised bogs	The main pressures on active raised bog are peat extraction, drainage, afforestation and burning.	A11, B01, C05, K02, N01	Burning for agriculture, conversion to forest from other land uses, or afforestation (excluding drainage), peat extraction, drainage, temperature	Surface water interactions. Groundwater isolated system with sensitivities related to the

[52] Including known treats and pressures and sensitivities of qualifying interests

EU code	Qualifying interests	Article 17 report summary - threats and pressures	Threats and pressures codes	Known threats and pressures	Sensitivity of qualifying interests
				changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change	bog basin. Drainage and land use management are the key things.
[7120]	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	The main pressure on degraded bogs come from peat extraction, drainage, afforestation and burning.	A11, B01, C05, K02, N01	Burning for agriculture, conversion to forest from other land uses, or afforestation (excluding drainage), peat extraction, drainage, temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change	Surface water interactions. Groundwater isolated system with sensitivities related to the bog basin. Drainage and land use management are the key things.
[7230]	Alkaline fens	The main pressures facing this habitat are land abandonment (and associated succession), overgrazing, drainage and pollution.	A06, A09, A26, J01, K01, K02, K04, L02, N02, N03	Abandonment of grassland management (e.g., cessation of grazing or of mowing), intensive grazing or overgrazing by livestock, agricultural activities generating diffuse pollution to surface or ground waters, mixed source pollution to surface and ground waters (limnic and terrestrial), abstraction from groundwater, surface water or mixed water, drainage, modification of hydrological flow, natural succession resulting in species composition change (other than by direct changes of agricultural or forestry practices), temperature changes (e.g., rise of temperature & extremes) due to climate change, increases or changes in precipitation due to climate change	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Inappropriate management.
[8240]	Limestone pavements	The main pressures facing this habitat are associated with conversion to agricultural land and housing construction, as well as scrub encroachment caused by under-grazing.	A01, A10, C01, F01, I02	Conversion into agricultural land (excluding drainage and burning), extensive grazing or under grazing by livestock, extraction of minerals (e.g., rock, metal ores, gravel, sand, shell), conversion from other land uses to housing, settlement or recreational areas (excluding drainage and modification of coastline, estuary and coastal conditions), other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern)	Erosion, overgrazing and recreation.
[91D0]	Bog woodland	Pressures facing this habitat are related to drainage, invasive species and burning.	A11, B09, C05, I02, K01	Burning for agriculture, clear-cutting, removal of all trees, peat extraction, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern),	Changes in management. Changes in nutrient or base

EU code	Qualifying interests	Article 17 report summary - threats and pressures	Threats and pressures codes	Known threats and pressures	Sensitivity of qualifying interests
				abstraction from groundwater, surface water or mixed water	status. Introduction of alien species.
[91E0]	Alluvial forests with Alder and Ash (Alnus glutinosa, Fraxinus excelsior, Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)	Many of the pressures facing this habitat include invasive species, particularly sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus), beech (Fagus sylvatica), Indian balsam (Impatiens glandulifera) and currant species (Ribes nigrum and R. rubrum) as well as some native species such as brambles (Rubus fruticoses agg.) and common nettle, along with over felling.	B09, I02, I04, I05	Clear-cutting, removal of all trees, other invasive alien species (other than species of union concern), problematic native species, plant and animal diseases, pathogens and pests	Surface and groundwater dependent. Highly sensitive to hydrological changes. Changes in management.

Appendix III Special Conservation Interests of SPAs that have undergone assessment[53]

Species code	Common name	Scientific name	Threats and pressures codes	Known threats and pressures
A050	Eurasian Wigeon	*Anas penelope*	C03, F01, F03, G01, H01, H03, H07, I01, J02, J03	Renewable abiotic energy use, marine and freshwater aquaculture, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), marine water pollution, other forms of pollution, invasive non-native species, human induced changes in hydraulic conditions, other ecosystem modifications
A056	Northern Shoveler	*Anas clypeata*	C03, F03, G01, H01, H03, H07	Renewable abiotic energy use, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), marine water pollution, other forms of pollution
A061	Tufted Duck	*Aythya fuligula*	C03, F03, G01, H01, H07, M02	Renewable abiotic energy use, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), other forms of pollution, changes in biotic conditions
A067	Common Goldeneye	*Bucephala clangula*	C03, F01, F03, G01, H01, H03, H07, M02	Renewable abiotic energy use, marine and freshwater aquaculture, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), marine water pollution, other forms of pollution, changes in biotic conditions

[53] Including known treats and pressures of SCIs

Species code	Common name	Scientific name	Threats and pressures codes	Known threats and pressures
A125	Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra atra*	C03, G01, H01	Renewable abiotic energy use, outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish)
A140	European Golden Plover	*Pluvialis apricaria*	A02, A04, B01, C01, C03, F01, G01, H03, J01, K03, M02	Modification of cultivation practices, grazing, forest planting on open ground, mining and quarrying, renewable abiotic energy use, marine and freshwater aquaculture, outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, marine water pollution, fire and fire suppression, interspecific faunal relations, changes in biotic conditions
A142	Northern Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*	A02, C03, F01, G01, H03	Modification of cultivation practices, renewable abiotic energy use, marine and freshwater aquaculture, outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, marine water pollution
A179	Black-Headed Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	A04, C03, F02, H03, J03, M01	Grazing, renewable abiotic energy use, fishing and harvesting aquatic resources, marine water pollution, other ecosystem modifications, changes in abiotic conditions
A183	Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	A04, C03, F02, H03, J03, M01	Grazing, renewable abiotic energy use, fishing and harvesting aquatic resources, marine water pollution, other ecosystem modifications, changes in abiotic conditions
A193	Common Tern	*Sterna hirundo*	C03, D01, D03, G01, I01	Renewable abiotic energy use, roads, paths and railroads, shipping lanes, ports, marine constructions, outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, invasive non-native species
A065	Common Scoter	*Melanitta nigra*	A04, C03, F02, H03, J03, M01	Grazing, renewable abiotic energy use, fishing and harvesting aquatic resources, marine water pollution, other ecosystem modifications, changes in abiotic conditions
A053	Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	C03, F03, G01, H01, H07, M02	Renewable abiotic energy use, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), other forms of pollution, changes in biotic conditions
A038	Whooper Swan	*Cygnus cygnus*	A02, A04, A06, A11, B01, C03, D02, D05, F01, F03, G01, H03, H07, K03, M01, M02	Modification of cultivation practices, grazing, annual and perennial non-timber crops, agriculture activities not referred to above, forest planting on open ground, renewable abiotic energy use, utility and service lines, improved access to site, marine and freshwater aquaculture, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, marine water pollution, other forms of pollution, interspecific faunal relations, changes in abiotic conditions, changes in biotic conditions

Species code	Common name	Scientific name	Threats and pressures codes	Known threats and pressures
A004	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	C03, F03, G01, H01, H07, M02	Renewable abiotic energy use, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), other forms of pollution, changes in biotic conditions
A052	Teal	*Anas crecca*	C03, F03, G01, H01, H07, M02	Renewable abiotic energy use, hunting and collection of wild animals (terrestrial), outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities, pollution to surface waters (limnic & terrestrial, marine & brackish), other forms of pollution, changes in biotic conditions

Appendix IV Conservation Objectives References[54]

NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives for Lough Ree SAC [IE0000440] Version 1.
NPWS (2025) Conservation Objectives for Lough Ree SPA [IE0004064] Version 1.

Appendix V Wintering bird surveys metadata

Site	Survey location on site	Weather overview	Surveyor	Survey date	Survey start time[55]	Survey end time[55]	General disturbance notes	Cloud Cover	Rain	Wind	Visibilty	Temp (deg. C)
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Top of hill - south boundary of site	Bright clear warm	Laurence Manning	14/11/2023	09:00	12:00	No human activity on site but construction on adjacent fields	0-33	None	Calm	Good	>10
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Mid lower field - east boundary	Gentle light wind. Bright sunshine. Mild temp.	Laurence Manning	14/11/2023	14:15	17:30	As above	0-33	None	Light	Good	>10
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Top of hill - south boundary of site	Bright sunshine, cold temperature, calm.	Laurence Manning	13/12/2023	09:22	16:29	As above	0-33	None	Calm	Good	0-10
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Top of hill - south boundary of site	Overcast but no rain.	Laurence ManSning	14/12/2023	08:57	12:00	As above	66-100	None	Calm	Good	0-10

[54] NPWS/Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
[55] Surveyor paused surveys every 3 hours for breaks / as appropriate for the surveys on the day (e.g., in the case of adverse weather conditions) – with a maximum of 6 hours surveying carried out in one day

Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Mid lower field - east boundary	Fair and mild with a slight breeze.	Laurence Manning	14/12/2023	13:29	16:30	As above	66-100	None	Calm	Good	>10
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Top of hill - south boundary of site	Blue skies with some cloud. Low temp. Light breeze.	Laurence Manning	10/02/2024	09:30	12:30	As above	33-66	None	Calm	Good	0-10
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Mid lower field - east boundary	High cloud cover. Light breeze. No rain. Mild temp	Laurence Manning	10/02/2024	14:03	17:30	As above	66-100	None	Calm	Good	0-10
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Top of hill - south boundary of site	Sunny with light breeze and not much cloud cover	Laurence Manning	11/02/2024	09:20	12:20	As above	0-33	None	Calm	Good	0-10
Cornmaddy, Westmeath	Mid lower field - east boundary	Sunny. Calm. Little cloud.	Laurence Manning	11/02/2024	14:05	17:30	As above	0-33	None	Calm	Good	0-10

Appendix VI Winter bird survey data – point counts of breeding birds

Species		SCI species?	No. of individuals	Seen / Heard / Both	Survey date	Notes
Common name	**Scientific name**					
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*	No	1	Both	14 November 2023	
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	Seen	14 November 2023	
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	Seen	14 November 2023	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	14 November 2023	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	14 November 2023	
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	No	2	Both	14 November 2023	Male and female
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	Heard	13 December 2023	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Seen	13 December 2023	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Seen	13 December 2023	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	

Species		SCI species?	No. of individuals	Seen / Heard / Both	Survey date	Notes
Common name	**Scientific name**					
Treecreeper	*Certhia familiaris*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	13 December 2023	
BlueTit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	2	Both	13 December 2023	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	2	Both	13 December 2023	
Raven	*Corvus corax*	No	1	Seen	13 December 2023	
Redwing	*Turdus iliacus*	No	1	Seen	13 December 2023	
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	Seen	14 December 2023	
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Seen	14 December 2023	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Coal Tit	*Periparus ater*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Coal Tit	*Periparus ater*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Coal Tit	*Periparus ater*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*	No	1	Seen	14 December 2023	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Seen	14 December 2023	
Hooded Crow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	Seen	14 December 2023	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Treecreeper	*Certhia familiaris*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	Seen	14 December 2023	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	14 December 2023	

Species		SCI species?	No. of individuals	Seen / Heard / Both	Survey date	Notes
Common name	**Scientific name**					
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Heard	14 December 2023	
Hooded Crow	*Corvus cornix*	No	2	Seen	14 December 2023	
Stonechat	*Saxicola rubicola*	No	2	Both	14 December 2023	Male and female
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	Seen	10 February 2024	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Heard	10 February 2024	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Heard	10 February 2024	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Dunnock	*Prunella modularis*	No	1	Seen	10 February 2024	
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*	No	1	Seen	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Seen	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Seen	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Seen	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	No	1	Seen	10 February 2024	
Mistle Thrush	*Turdus viscivorus*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	10 February 2024	
Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*	No	2	Seen	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	2	Both	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	2	Both	10 February 2024	

Species		SCI species?	No. of individuals	Seen / Heard / Both	Survey date	Notes
Common name	**Scientific name**					
Hooded Crow	*Corvus cornix*	No	2	Both	10 February 2024	
Stonechat	*Saxicola rubicola*	No	2	Seen	10 February 2024	Female and male
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	2	Both	10 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	4	Both	10 February 2024	
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Blue Tit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Great Tit	*Parus major*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Longtailed Tit	*Aegithalus caudatus*	No	1	Seen	11 February 2024	
Reed Bunting	*Emberiza schoeniclus*	No	1	Seen	11 February 2024	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Treecreeper	*Certhia familiaris*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Heard	11 February 2024	
Wren	*Troglodytes troglodytes*	No	1	Both	11 February 2024	
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*	No	2	Both	11 February 2024	
Goldcrest	*Regulus regulus*	No	2	Both	11 February 2024	
MistleThrush	*Regulus regulus*	No	3	Both	11 February 2024	
Jay	*Garrulus glandarius*	No	1	Seen	11 February 2024	
Meadow Pipit	*Anthus pratensis*	No	1	Seen	11 February 2024	

Appendix VII Winter bird survey data – flight line observations across proposed development site

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 November 2023	
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Greenfinch	*Chloris chloris*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	14 November 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	3	14 November 2023	
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	3	14 November 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	14 November 2023	
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	14 November 2023	

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	14 November 2023	
Raven	*Corvus corax*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	3	14 November 2023	
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	3	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	20	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	7	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 November 2023	
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	800	14 November 2023	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	3	14 November 2023	
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	500	14 November 2023	
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	15	14 November 2023	
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	1	13 December 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	2	13 December 2023	
Raven	*Corvus corax*	No	1	13 December 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	4	13 December 2023	
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	No	1	13 December 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	3	13 December 2023	
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	13 December 2023	West
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	13 December 2023	West
Bullfinch	*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	13 December 2023	West
BlackheadedGull	*Larus ridibundus*	Yes	3	13 December 2023	North
BlueTit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	13 December 2023	
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	13 December 2023	East

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*	No	1	13 December 2023	
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	2	13 December 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	3	13 December 2023	West
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	13 December 2023	
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	13 December 2023	North West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
CollaredDove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	3	13 December 2023	Various
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	13 December 2023	West
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	No	1	13 December 2023	Various
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	13 December 2023	
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	13 December 2023	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	13 December 2023	North
GreatTit	*Parus major*	No	1	13 December 2023	SW
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	13 December 2023	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	13 December 2023	East
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	13 December 2023	North West
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	13 December 2023	South East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	13 December 2023	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	13 December 2023	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	13 December 2023	South West
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	1	13 December 2023	North East

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	13 December 2023	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	13 December 2023	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	13 December 2023	East
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	1	13 December 2023	West
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	1300	13 December 2023	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 December 2023	West
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	4	14 December 2023	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	14 December 2023	North East
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	4	14 December 2023	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	14 December 2023	West
BlueTit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
Blackheaded Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	Yes	1	14 December 2023	North
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	2	14 December 2023	West
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	14 December 2023	West
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 December 2023	West
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	14 December 2023	North West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	1	14 December 2023	North
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	14 December 2023	West
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	14 December 2023	West
Whooper Swan	*Cygnus cygnus*	Yes	1	14 December 2023	North
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	No	1	14 December 2023	North

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	2	14 December 2023	South
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	No	1	14 December 2023	
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	5	14 December 2023	SE
Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*	No	1	14 December 2023	North
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	14 December 2023	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 December 2023	North
Sparrowhawk	*Accipiter nisus*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	2	14 December 2023	South
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	5	14 December 2023	West
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	14 December 2023	South
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	14 December 2023	South
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	2	14 December 2023	East
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	14 December 2023	North
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	7	14 December 2023	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	14 December 2023	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	14 December 2023	South
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	14 December 2023	North West
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	180	14 December 2023	North West
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	3500	14 December 2023	North
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	1800	14 December 2023	North
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	3000	14 December 2023	North
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	14 December 2023	East
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	14 December 2023	South
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	120	14 December 2023	North

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	1	14 December 2023	North
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	2	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North East
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	2	10 February 2024	North East
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	10 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	3	10 February 2024	North East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	10 February 2024	Various
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Blackheaded Gull	*Larus ridibundus*	Yes	5	10 February 2024	North east
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South West
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	2	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	3	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	3	10 February 2024	North East
LongtailedTit	*Aegithalus caudatus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	10 February 2024	West
GreatTit	*Parus major*	No	1	10 February 2024	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	10 February 2024	West

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	2	10 February 2024	South West
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	2	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	3	10 February 2024	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	3	10 February 2024	West
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	10 February 2024	West
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	2	10 February 2024	East
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	10 February 2024	East
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	10 February 2024	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Raven	*Corvus corax*	No	2	10 February 2024	North
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	No	1	10 February 2024	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	Various
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	3	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	10 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	10 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	10 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South West
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	2	10 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	9	10 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	10 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	5	10 February 2024	South West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	10 February 2024	South East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	10 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	10 February 2024	North West
Magpie	*Pica pica*	No	1	11 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	2	11 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	11 February 2024	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
BlueTit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	11 February 2024	East

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	Various
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	3	11 February 2024	West
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	2	11 February 2024	West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	11 February 2024	East
Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*	No	1	11 February 2024	North East
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	No	1	11 February 2024	East
Goldfinch	*Carduelis carduelis*	No	3	11 February 2024	South
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	No	1	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	2	11 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	11 February 2024	South East
Chiffchaff	*Phylloscopus collybita*	No	1	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	3	11 February 2024	South
HoodedCrow	*Corvus cornix*	No	1	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South West
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	No	1	11 February 2024	East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*	No	1	11 February 2024	Various
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	3	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	West
BlueTit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	3	11 February 2024	
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South West
BlueTit	*Cyanistes caeruleus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South
LesserBlackbacked Gull	*Larus fuscus*	Yes	4	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	3	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North East
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	5	11 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	2	11 February 2024	South West
LesserBlackbacked Gull	*Larus fuscus*	Yes	2	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	South West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	8	11 February 2024	Various

Species		SCI species?	Number of individuals	Survey date	Direction of flight
Common name	**Scientific name**				
SongThrush	*Turdus philomelos*	No	1	11 February 2024	South East
GreatTit	*Parus major*	No	1	11 February 2024	South
Jackdaw	*Coloeus monedula*	No	2	11 February 2024	West
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North
Wood pigeon	*Columba palumbus*	No	1	11 February 2024	North East

Appendix IX Legislative context and Habitats Directive overview

Overview of legislative context

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is a procedure carried out in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (hereafter referred to as the "Habitats Directive"). The Habitats Directive provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the "favourable conservation status" of habitats and species of European Community Interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are sites of ecological important for which habitats and species listed in the Habitats and Birds directives are designated. Qualifying Interests (QIs) are those habitats and species for which SACs are designated; and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) are those species for which SPAs are designated. SACs and SPAs are collectively referred to as European sites (or Natura 2000 sites).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect such sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA. These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive States:

> *'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public'.*

In the context of this report, the above definition relates to a project. The AA process relates to the protection of species listed in Annex I and Annex II of the Habitats Directive which form the Natura 2000 network (Article 3(1)). Species breeding and resting places of species listed in Annex IV of the Habitats Directive are nationally protected in Ireland as per Articles 15 and 16 of the Habitats Directive. The actual species listed in Annex IV do not form part of the Natura 2000 network as they are not mentioned in Article 3(1) of the Directive which defines the Natura 2000 network.

Article 3(1) of the Habitats Directive States:

> *'A coherent European ecological network of special areas of conservation shall be set up under the title Natura 2000. This network, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range'.*

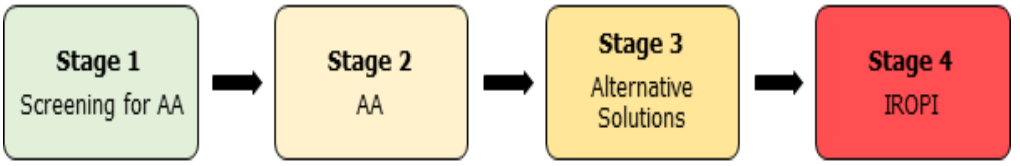
AA is an assessment of the likelihood of significant effects arising from a project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, to assess if the project will have potential for significant effect on any European site concerned, and implications in view of the Conservation Objectives (COs) for the species and/or habitats designated for that site. Where a formal consent process applies, the AA process is conducted by the relevant competent authority which makes a determination in

accordance with article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether a proposed project will have likely significant effects on a given European site as a result of its implementation.

Overview of Appropriate Assessment

The Habitats Directive and associated AA process promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. This approach aims to avoid any effects on European sites by identifying possible effects early in the project making process and avoiding such effects. Second, the approach involves the application of mitigation measures, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If potential significant effects on European sites remain, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, the approach requires the consideration of alternative solutions. If no alternative solutions are identified and the project is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effects.

There are four main stages in the AA process:



Stage one: Appropriate Assessment Screening
The process that identifies the likely impacts upon a European site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) can be compiled to inform the competent authority on conducting a Screening for AA.

Stage two: Appropriate Assessment (AA)
The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse effects mitigation measures are required to avoid or minimise potential effects. The details of these mitigation measures are then assessed in the context of the ecological integrity of the plan/project characteristics to ensure no significant adverse effects on European sites. If this assessment process shows there are no residual significant effects, then the process may end at this stage, stage two, of the AA process which are formalised in Natura Impact Statements (NIS) reports which support the overall AA process. However, if the likelihood of significant impacts remains, then the process must proceed to Stage Three.

Stage three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions
The process that examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoids adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site.

Stage four: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)
An assessment of compensatory measures, where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain, but in the light of an assessment of IROPI, it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

Appendix X Competencies

Author - Karen Dylan Shevlin is a senior ecologist with over 10 years' experience working in multiple capacities in ecology in Irish and international research institutions and organisations, and holds a MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation from Trinity College Dublin (Dist. 2013). Karen has significant skills and experience in leading research and ecological surveys of bats, birds, insects, habitats and mammals, data analysis and managing resulting reports. Karen is also a specialist in ecological theory and the impacts/effects that altering natural dynamics may have on the surrounding environment.

Karen has been the lead author and reviewer for many Appropriate Assessment Screenings, NISs, EcIAs and the Biodiversity Chapters of EIARs for a range of public and private projects and plans ranging from residential and industrial projects, to county and local land use plans, to on shore wind turbine projects. This combination of skills, knowledge and experience provides the core of the assessment process; ensuring that all data and supporting information gathered is interpreted in a manner that is grounded in best scientific knowledge, and utilised to provide robust and comprehensive assessments.

Technical assistant - Callum O'Regan is an ecological technician who holds a B.Sc. degree in Zoology from University College Cork and a Master's in Conservation Behaviour from Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology in 2021. Callum has skills in data management, analysis, and GIS mapping. Callum has also worked on preparation of a number of reports including Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIAs) and Appropriate Assessment Screenings for private and public projects of various sizes and complexities.

Reviewer - Paul Fingleton has an MSc in Rural and Regional Resources Planning (with specialisation in EIA) from the University of Aberdeen. Paul is a member of the International Association for Impact Assessment as well as the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. He has over twenty-five years' experience working in the area of Environmental Assessment. Over this period, he has been involved in a diverse range of projects including contributions to, and co-ordination of, numerous complex EIARs and EIA screening reports. He has also contributed to and supervised the preparation of numerous AAs and AA screenings.

Paul is the lead author of the current EPA Guidelines and accompanying Advice Notes on EIARs. He has been involved in all previous editions of these statutory guidelines. He also provides a range of other EIA related consultancy services to the EPA. Paul is regularly engaged by various planning authorities and other consent authorities to provide specialised EIA advice.