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DESIGNING AND DELIVERING
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JOHN STREET GRAIN STORE, NEW ROSS

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Prepared for:

Wexford County Council

Comhairle Contae Loch Garman
Wexford County Council

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Core House, Pouladuff Road, Cork, T12 D773, Ireland

T: +353 21 496 4133 | E: info@ftco.ie

CORK | DUBLIN | CARLOW

www.fehilytimoney.ie

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

REVISION CONTROL TABLE, CLIENT, KEYWORDS AND ABSTRACT

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report to Wexford County Council for John Street Grain Store.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) was commissioned by Wexford County Council ('the Applicant') to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) for the proposed improvements to lands at the rear of the Grain Store at John Street, New Ross, Co. Wexford, hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development', with associated lands referred to as the 'Proposed Site'.

This report presents an examination of whether the Proposed Development is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) and is based on best available scientific knowledge. This report has been prepared to inform the competent authority in completing their statutory obligations in relation to Appropriate Assessment, as required by Article 6(3) under Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive).

1.1 Legislative Context

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The Directive requires that where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, while not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the site, it will be subject to 'Appropriate Assessment' to identify any implications for the European site in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. Specifically, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

> *"6(3) Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (Natura 2000 sites) but likely to have 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."*

The competent authority must carry out a screening for appropriate assessment to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site. If it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the Proposed Development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site, an appropriate assessment of its implications for the European Site(s) in view of the Site's conservation objectives is required to be carried out.

The provisions of Article 6(3) do not apply where the proposed plan or project is 'connected with or necessary to the management of the site'.

In this case, considering the nature of the Proposed Development as described, the Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site(s), and is therefore not exempt from the AA process.

1.1.1 European Sites

'European sites' consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated for habitats and species of community importance, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated for birds. The habitats and species for which European sites are designated are termed 'Qualifying Interests'[1].

1.2 Statement of Authority

This report was drafted by Shannon Burke. Shannon holds a B.Sc. (Hons) in Plant Biology and a Ph.D. in Environmental Biology from University College Dublin. She has been working in ecological consultancy for over a year, during which she has carried out surveys and prepared AA reports for a variety of projects in several industrial sectors.

This report was reviewed by Steven Tooher ACIEEM. Steven holds a B.Sc. (Hons) in Zoology and a M.Sc. in Environmental Resource Management, and has 10 years' experience in ecological consultancy. He has coordinated the delivery of ecological surveys and reporting for large-scale projects across various industries in Ireland and the UK.

[1] The specific named bird species for which a SPA is selected are called the 'Special Conservation Interests' (SCIs). However, in practice, the common terminology of Qualifying Interests (QIs) applies also to SCIs (and is used in this document for simplicity) as per OPR (2021).

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Site Description

The Proposed Development is located to the rear of the Grain Store**,** John Street (R700) in New Ross, County Wexford. The site is c. 0.11 ha in area, and is located in the town of New Ross, adjacent to the River Barrow and upstream of the crossing point to Rosbercon, County Wexford. Refer to Figure 2-1.

The Proposed Development is bordered by the John Street carpark to the north, the Grain Store and John Street to the east, Bridge Street to the south and the River Barrow to the west. O' Hanrahan Bridge (R723) is located c. 120 m south of the proposed development. The profile of the site is generally flat with a slight downward slope towards the River Barrow.

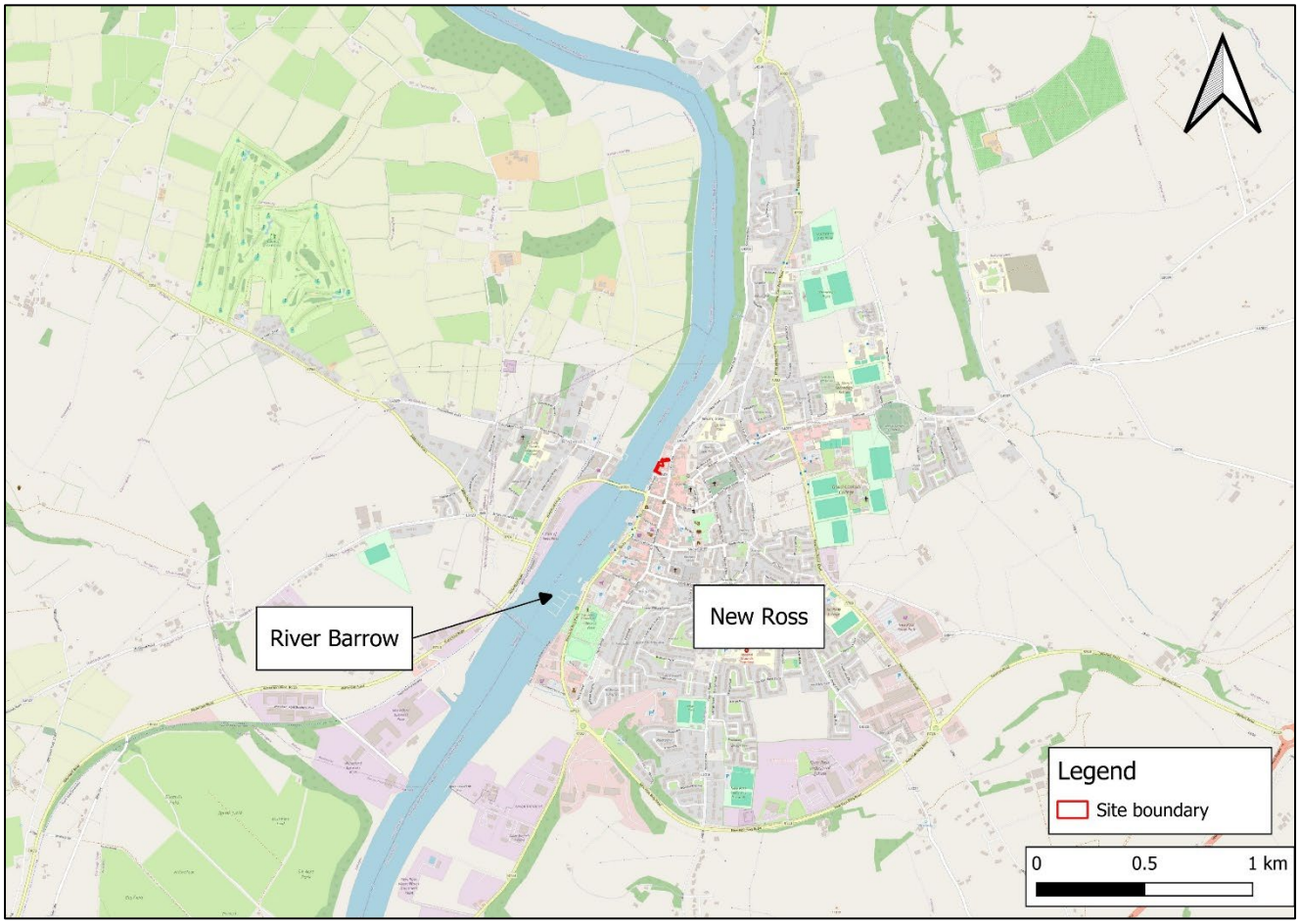

Figure 2-1: Proposed Development Location

2.2 Project Description

The Proposed Development includes two new main pedestrian access routes to serve the Grain Store. A gently sloped pedestrian access route along the riverside will connect the plaza to Bridge Street, while tiered external stairs and landscaping will connect the plaza to John Street.

The description of works is as follows:

- Relocating existing steps on Bridge Street to the east.
- Removal of existing railings separating footpath and parking bays along Bridge Street and replacement with new solid guarding, planting and seating.
- Removal of section of parking bays along Bridge Street to facilitate footpath widening to improve pedestrian connectivity.
- Partial demolition of section of the wall between Bridge Street (abutting No.2 Bridge Street) to facilitate new connecting gently sloped pedestrian access route to new Plaza area in current yard. The new access route to be provided with solid guarding and walls with planting and seating.
- Removal of existing concrete base alongside proposed new gently sloped pedestrian access route to provide soft landscaping at water edge.
- Removal of roof and section of walls surrounding Open Storage.
- Lowering stone wall between the yard area and the river and between proposed plaza and rear of properties on Bridge Street to 1100mm above ground level.
- Removal of all redundant above ground and below ground services.
- Demolition of Ground finishes (Part tarmac, part concrete) to the yard area to facilitate new public Plaza including hardscaping, soft landscaping and seating.
- New tiered external stairs and landscaping from John Street to the Plaza level (on top of part of previously approved extension to The Grain Store, John's Street).
- Demolition of palisade fencing to the side of the building between John Street and Public car park and removal of 3 No. carparking spaces in John Street Carpark to improve pedestrian connectivity.
- Repointing & cleaning of all existing and retained stone walls.
- Associated planting and landscaping works.
- Signage and wayfinding.
- External lighting.
- All associated site works and services.

The proposed layout is shown in Drawing 19-104-Planning-P-100, submitted with this planning application.

The sequencing of the project programme will be managed by the appointed Contractor at tender stage. The construction phase is expected to occur over a period of 18-21 months. Construction works will occur between the following hours:

- 08.00 to 18.00 on Monday to Friday.

2.2.1 Drainage Proposals (Post-construction)

A detailed Drainage Planning Report has been prepared by Brunner Consulting Engineers (2025) and is submitted with this planning application.

Post-construction surface water run-off from the Proposed Development will be directed to underground drainage through slot drainage channels. The drainage network will collect at the existing surface water outfall chamber, where it discharges to the River Barrow via a non-return flap.

Proposed drainage infrastructure is designed for a 1 in 100-year storm event, and will decrease existing surface water discharge rates by 20%.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Guidance

The assessment was conducted in accordance with the following guidance:

- European Commission (2021). Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Commission Notice (2021) Brussels, 28.9.2021 C (2021) 6913 final.
- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG, 2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin (2009, updated 2010).
- European Commission (2019). Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) (2021) OPR Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.

3.2 The Precautionary Principle

Having regard to the European Commission Communication on the Precautionary Principle (European Commission, 2021) the:

> *"absence of scientific evidence on the significant negative effect of an action cannot be used as justification for approval of this action. When applied to Article 6(3) procedure, the precautionary principle implies that the absence of a negative effect on Natura 2000 sites has to be demonstrated before a plan or project can be authorised. In other words, if there is a lack of certainty as to whether there will be any negative effects, then the plan or project cannot be approved."*

Where significant effects are determined to be likely, or where there is uncertainty regarding the likelihood of significant effects, the Proposed Development will be required to undergo Appropriate Assessment, which will require the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

3.3 AA Screening Process

AA screening is carried out in accordance with the below steps:

1. Establish whether the Proposed Development is directly connected with or necessary for the management of a European site, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive;
2. Based on the nature of the Proposed Development, establish zones of influence for potential impacts arising from the Proposed Development;
3. Determine connectivity between the Proposed Development and each of the European sites within the Search Area, based on the established zones of influence, and the ecology and distribution of the relevant QIs;
4. Identify the impacts of the Proposed Development that may result in significant effects (from the Proposed Development in isolation) on relevant European site(s);

5. Assess whether significant effects may arise from the Proposed Development in combination with other plans/projects; and
6. Determine the requirement of AA, based on whether significant effects are deemed likely, or possible (in accordance with the precautionary principle).

3.4 Desktop Study

3.4.1 Establishing Zones of Influence

3.4.1.1 Potential Impacts of the Proposed Development on the Receiving Environment

Having regard to the nature and scale of the Proposed Development as described in Section 2, the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the receiving environment are considered to be limited to those listed below. These are examined in more detail in Table 3-1, and a corresponding zone of influence is proposed for each potential impact, with justification.

- Habitat loss and/or degradation;
- Surface water quality perturbations;
- Noise emissions; and
- Dust emissions.

Table 3-1: Establishing Zones of Influence

Impact	Potential sources of impact	Zone of Influence
Direct (physical) habitat loss	*Construction Phase* • Earthworks, demolition *Operational Phase* • No notable impacts	*Impacts are generally restricted to the construction footprint, plus 10 m in all directions to account for root protection zones of very large trees, in accordance with BS 5837:2012*[2]. The zone of influence for direct habitat loss is 10m.
Surface water quality perturbations	*Construction Phase* • Earthworks/demolition and the presence of vehicles/machinery onsite. • Storage and use of petrochemicals. • Storing and use of cementitious materials *Operational Phase* • No notable impacts.	A downstream zone of influence of 10 km has been applied. Beyond this distance, potential contaminant concentrations arising from the Proposed Development are considered unlikely to be measurable, or to give rise to significant effects. This precautionary distance reflects professional judgement, taking into account the substantial increase in flow volume within this reach, including the confluence of six tributaries, which provides considerable dilution and dispersion capacity, even under conservative flow conditions.
Noise emissions	*Construction Phase* • During the construction phase (18-21 months) there will be increased human, machinery and vehicle activity on site, with working hours between 08:00 - 18:00 (Monday to Friday). The most notable source of noise is likely to be during breaking works associated with demolition. *Operational Phase* • No notable impacts	Typical noise emissions of a mini excavator fitted with a hydraulic breaker have been precautionarily estimated at 83 dB_{AeqT} at a distance of 10m. This is in accordance with BS5228:2009. In this scenario, noise levels would reduce to 55 dB(A)[3] at around 250 m in free-field (i.e. unobstructed) conditions, based on standard distance attenuation calculations. However, the proposed works area is largely enclosed by existing boundary walls and adjoining buildings, which will act as physical barriers to line-of-sight noise propagation. Notably the River Barrow is separated from the Proposed Site by an existing flood wall.

[2] BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations.
[3] The threshold of 55 dB is based on thresholds set by the Environmental Noise Regulations (S.I. 140/2006) and incorporated into Wexford County Council's Noise Action Plan 2024 - 2028.

Impact	Potential sources of impact	Zone of Influence
		These structures will interrupt and absorb part of the noise energy and will limit the spread of construction noise to the wider area, such that actual noise levels experienced outside the site boundary will be substantially lower than those predicted using simple free-field calculations. The Proposed Site is located in the centre of a busy town, such that baseline noise levels are quite high, relative to more isolated areas. Taking all of the above into consideration, the zone of influence for noise emissions has been set at 50 metres.
Dust emissions	*Construction Phase* • Earthworks/demolition and the presence of vehicles/machinery onsite. *Operational Phase* • No notable impacts	Earthworks and demolition works have the potential to produce large quantities of dust. Considering the enclosed nature of the Proposed Site, the zone of influence for dust emissions has been set at 50 metres.

3.4.2 Identification of Relevant European Sites

The OPR (2021) recommend that the scope of AA Screening should consider the following:

- Any European sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area;
- Any European sites within the likely Ecological Zone of Impact of the plan or project. 15 km is often the 'default' zone of influence, as recommended for plans by DoEHLG (2010) but for certain projects could be much less than that, in some cases less than 100 m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects; and
- European sites that are more than 15 km from the plan or project area depending on the likely impacts of the plan or project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, bearing in mind the precautionary principle. For example:
    - In the case of sites with water dependent habitats or species, and a plan or project that could affect water quality or quantity, for example, it may be necessary to consider the full extent of the upstream and/or downstream catchment.
    - In the case that the plan or project area is located within or adjacent to habitat, which may be functionally linked to a European site[4]. For example, impacts on suitable foraging habitat up to 20 km outside the boundary of a SPA designated for greylag goose (*Anser anser*) and pink-footed goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) may be considered, based on their core foraging range (SNH, 2016).

3.4.2.1 Search Area

For this AA Screening, a search for European sites within 20 km of the Proposed Development was undertaken, to account for SPAs designated for pink-footed and/or greylag goose. For the purpose of this report, this area is known as the 'Search Area'.

3.4.3 Gathering QI Distribution Data

Based on the assessment of connectivity, data was collected on the distribution of relevant qualifying habitats and species of European sites deemed to be connected to the Proposed Development. Sources included:

- 2019 Article 17 Spatial Data (NPWS, 2019);
- Conservation Objectives documents of the relevant European sites (available at: https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites); and
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC, 2025).

Based on the zones of influence established for the Proposed Development (see Section 3.4.1), Article 17 spatial data and NBDC records were gathered from up to 100 m around the Proposed Site, and up to 10 km downstream.

[4] Functional connectivity refers to the presence of habitat that is important for mobile animal species. The habitat in question may lie outside the boundary of a designated site, but owing to its proximity and its suitability, it may provide an important resource for the species protected by the designated site.

Only records from within the last 10 years were considered. Unless justified otherwise, species records older than 10 years are treated as historic and not reflective of current baseline conditions.

3.5 Field Surveys

Ecological field surveys were conducted by Fehily Timoney ecologists on the 16th of December 2024. Survey methodologies and scope relative to potential QI species are set out in the following sections.

3.5.1 Habitats

Habitats were assessed and classified in accordance with Fossitt (2000). Observations were made regarding habitats' affinity to those listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

3.5.2 Otter

A dedicated otter survey was carried out on 16th December 2024. The surveyed area comprised the Proposed Development footprint, as well as 200 m upstream and downstream. Surveys primarily comprised a search for holts and couches, but also included a search for signs of otter activity, such as prints, spraints (faeces), feeding remains and anal jelly as per the below guidance.

- Chanin P (2003) 'Monitoring the Otter *Lutra lutra'*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 10. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Reid, et al., (2013) National Otter Survey of Ireland 2010/12. Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 76.
- NRA (2008) Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters Prior to The Construction of National Road Schemes.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Desktop Study

4.1.1 Identification of Relevant European Sites

Table 4-1 provides details of the QIs of the European sites identified within the Search Area of the Proposed Development, for which connectivity is deemed to exist. For each European site, the approximate distance and direction from the Proposed Development is presented, with justification for inclusion or exclusion.

Table 4-1: Identification of European Sites within the Search Area

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interests [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Distance from Proposed Development	Assessment of Connectivity	Connectivity (Y/N)
River Barrow and River Nore SAC [002162]	**Habitats** • Estuaries [1130] • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Reefs [1170] • *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] • Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation [3260] • European dry heaths [4030] • Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] • Petrifying springs with tufa formation (*Cratoneurion*) [7220] • Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles [91A0] • Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0]	<1 m west (Adjacent)	The Proposed Site is directly adjacent to this SAC and there is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow. The SAC boundary is within all zones of influence as set out in Section 3.4.1. Given the proximity of the SAC, there is also functional connectivity for mobile aquatic fauna QIs - otter, salmon, all lamprey species, twaite shad and white-clawed crayfish. Therefore: • **Connectivity for habitat loss** • **Hydrological connectivity** • **Connectivity for noise emissions** • **Connectivity for dust emissions** • **Functional connectivity**	Y

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interests [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Distance from Proposed Development	Assessment of Connectivity	Connectivity (Y/N)
	Species • Desmoulin's whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* [1016] • Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* [1029] • White-clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* [1092] • Sea Lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* [1095] • Brook Lamprey *Lampetra planeri* [1096] • River Lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis* [1099] • Twaite Shad *Alosa fallax fallax* [1103] • Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106] • Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355] • Killarney Fern *Trichomanes speciosum* [1421]			
Blackstairs Mountains SAC (000770)	• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* [4010] • European dry heaths [4030]	11.1 km NE	This SAC is outside all the zones of influence as set out in Section 3.4.1. This SAC is designated for habitats only, so there is no functional connectivity. Therefore: • No connectivity for habitat loss • No hydrological connectivity • No connectivity for noise emissions • No connectivity for dust emissions • No functional connectivity	N

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interests [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Distance from Proposed Development	Assessment of Connectivity	Connectivity (Y/N)
Lower River Suir SAC (002137)	**Habitats** • Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation [3260] • Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0] • *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles [91J0] **Species** • Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* [1029] • White-clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* [1092] • Sea Lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* [1095] • Brook Lamprey *Lampetra planeri* [1096] • River Lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis* [1099] • Twaite Shad *Alosa fallax fallax* [1103] • Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106] • Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355]	14.2 km S (direct) 17.3 km (downstream)	This SAC is outside all the zones of influence as set out in Section 3.4.1. This distance from this SAC is just inside the upper limits of home range for male otter, in accordance with Reid et al. (2013). There is functional connectivity for otter. Functional connectivity also exists for salmon, twaite shad and all lamprey species. Therefore: • No connectivity for habitat loss • No hydrological connectivity • No connectivity for noise emissions • No connectivity for dust emissions • **Functional connectivity**	Y

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interests [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Distance from Proposed Development	Assessment of Connectivity	Connectivity (Y/N)
River Nore SPA (004233)	• Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* [A229]	9.3 km NW (direct) 12.8 km (upstream)	This SPA is outside all the zones of influence as set out in Section 3.4.1. Kingfishers are known to stay relatively close to their nests (up to 500 m, in accordance with the survey methodology rationale set out by Cummins et al. (2010)). There is no functional connectivity for Kingfisher. Therefore: • No connectivity for habitat loss • No hydrological connectivity • No connectivity for noise emissions • No connectivity for dust emissions • No functional connectivity	N
Slaney River Valley SAC	**Habitats** • Estuaries [1130] • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*) [1410] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation [3260] • Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles [91A0]	15.2 km NE (direct)	This SPA is outside all the zones of influence as set out in Section 3.4.1. The River Slaney is in a different catchment and completely hydrologically isolated from the Proposed Development. There is no functional connectivity. Therefore: • No connectivity for habitat loss • No hydrological connectivity • No connectivity for noise emissions • No connectivity for dust emissions • No functional connectivity	N

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interests [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Distance from Proposed Development	Assessment of Connectivity	Connectivity (Y/N)
	• Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0] **Species** • Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* [1029] • Sea Lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* [1095] • Brook Lamprey *Lampetra planeri* [1096] • River Lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis* [1099] • Twaite Shad *Alosa fallax fallax* [1103] • Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106] • Otter *Lutra lutra* [1355] • Harbour seal *Phoca vitulina* [1365]			
Bannow Bay SPA (004033)	• Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046] • Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048] • Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140] • Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141] • Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142] • Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156] • Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	19.5 km SE (direct)	This SPA is outside all the zones of influence as set out in Section 3.4.1. The Proposed Site is outside the core foraging ranges of all QI species in accordance with SNH (2016) and DAFM (2020). Therefore: • No connectivity for habitat loss • No hydrological connectivity • No connectivity for noise emissions • No connectivity for dust emissions • No functional connectivity	N

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interests [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Distance from Proposed Development	Assessment of Connectivity	Connectivity (Y/N)
Hugginstown Fen SAC [000404]	• Alkaline fens [7230]	19.1 km W (direct)	This SAC is outside all the zones of influence as set out in Section 3.4.1. This SAC is designated for habitats only, so there is no functional connectivity. Therefore: • No connectivity for habitat loss • No hydrological connectivity • No connectivity for noise emissions • No connectivity for dust emissions • No functional connectivity	N

Based on the information presented in Table 4-1, connectivity exists between the Proposed Development and the following European sites:

- River Barrow and River Nore SAC
  - Connectivity for habitat loss
  - Hydrological connectivity
  - Connectivity for noise emissions
  - Connectivity for dust emissions
  - Functional connectivity for otter, twaite shad, salmon and all lamprey species.
- Lower River Suir SAC
  - Functional connectivity for otter, twaite shad, salmon and all lamprey species.

All other European sites are deemed to have no connectivity with the Proposed Development, and are therefore screened out from further assessment.

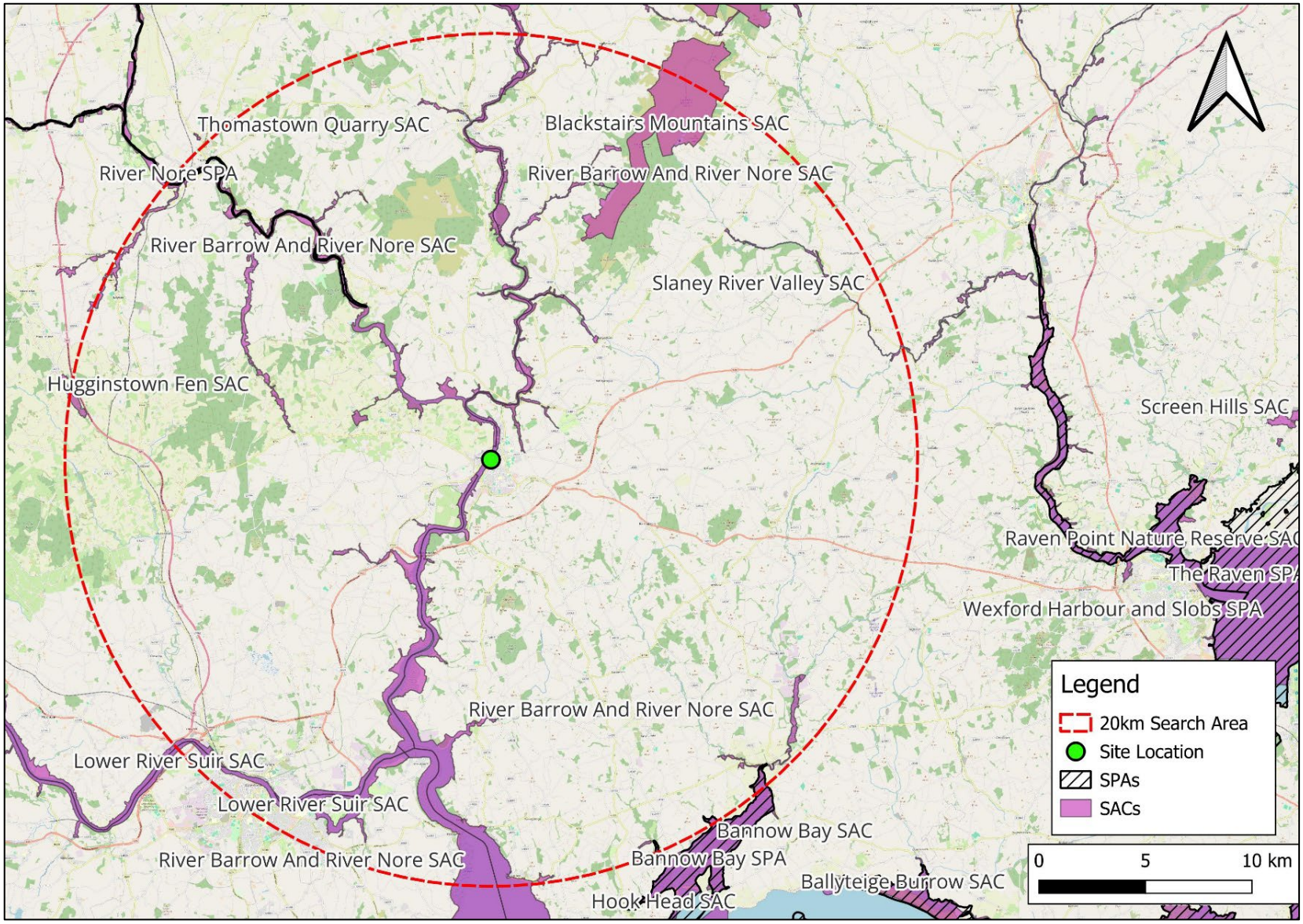

Figure 4-1: European Sites within the 20 km Search Area

4.1.2 QI Habitat Distribution and Connectivity

This section (Table 4-2) further describes the known, or inferred, distribution of the QI habitats and species for which River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and Lower River Suir, are designated. These conclusions are based on information provided in the Conservation Objectives document (NPWS, 2011), Article 17 Spatial Data (NPWS, 2019) and NBDC records.

Table 4-2: QI Distribution and Connectivity

QI	Notes	In ZoI (Y/N)
River Barrow and River Nore SAC		
Estuaries	Present in tidal reaches of the Rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir – extending upstream near to Inistiogue, Co Kilkenny (R. Nore) and St. Mullins, Co. Carlow (R. Barrow). The stretch of the River Barrow in New Ross is tidal and representative of an estuary.	Y
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	Associated with tidal reaches of the River Barrow. Nearest mapped area is approximately 1.7 km downstream.	Y
Reefs	*Sabellaria alveolata* reefs are mapped along the Co. Wexford coast at the mouth of the River Suir in Waterford Harbour. Waterford Harbour is approximately 20 km downstream from the Proposed Development.	N
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	Coastal habitat. Not currently mapped within the SAC but all mapped examples in Ireland are coastal. >20 km downstream from the Proposed Development.	N
Atlantic salt meadows	Nearest mapped area is approximately 7.4 km downstream.	Y
Mediterranean salt meadows	Nearest mapped area is approximately 10.1 km downstream.	N
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation	As per Article 17 reports (NPWS, 2019), the criteria for the classification of this Annex I habitat are quite broad, the result being that its distribution is unclear. As a precaution it is assumed to be within the hydrological zone of influence.	Y
European dry heaths	The nearest mapped occurrences of this habitat within the SAC are in the foothills of the Blackstairs Mountains, approximately 25 km upstream of the Proposed Development.	N
Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities	The nearest mapped area is approximately 12 km upstream of the Proposed Development.	N
Petrifying springs with tufa formation	The most notable distribution of tufa springs within the SAC are in the Nore catchment, south of Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny. There are no mapped occurrences of this habitat anywhere else within the SAC.	N

QI	Notes	In ZoI (Y/N)
	The dominant bedrock in the vicinity of the Proposed Development is siliceous slate and siltstone, and there is no calcareous bedrock anywhere downstream (per GSI Map Viewer[5]).	
Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum*	Terrestrial habitat. The nearest mapped area in the SAC is approximately 3.8 km from the Proposed Development.	N
Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*	The nearest mapped area in the SAC is approximately 11.5 km downstream from the Proposed Development.	N
Desmoulin's Whorl Snail	All records for this species occur upstream of the Proposed Development, the nearest being near Graiguenamanagh (>20 km upstream).	N
Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FPM)	The only known population within the SAC is in the River Nore, broadly between Abbeyleix Co. Laois and Ballyragget Co. Kilkenny.	N
White-clawed Crayfish	All records for this species occur upstream of the Proposed Development, the nearest being near Graiguenamanagh (>20 km upstream).	N
Sea Lamprey	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
River Lamprey	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
Brook Lamprey	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
Twaite Shad	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
Salmon	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
Otter	Otters have been recorded across the entirety of the Barrow catchment, including numerous locations in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. The nearest record is a live sighting within 100 m of the Proposed Site, from 2018.	Y
Killarney Fern	The nearest record from within the SAC is just outside Tinnahinch, Co. Carlow (>20 km upstream).	N
Lower River Suir SAC		
Sea Lamprey	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
River Lamprey	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y

[5] GSI Map Viewer - Available at: https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/default.aspx (accessed 30.08.25)

QI	Notes	In ZoI (Y/N)
Brook Lamprey	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
Twaite Shad	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
Salmon	This species' range extends further upstream than New Ross. Its presence is assumed in the hydrological ZoI.	Y
Otter	Otters have been recorded across the entirety of the Barrow catchment, including numerous locations in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. The nearest record is a live sighting within 100 m of the Proposed Site, from 2018.	Y

4.2 Field Surveys

4.2.1 Habitats

The Proposed Development is located within an existing plaza where the present habitats are Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (Fossitt Code - BL3) and Scrub (WS1). There are no habitats in the Proposed Site that have affinity with Annex I habitats.

It is noted that the adjacent River Barrow (Fossitt classification - Tidal Rivers (CW2)) is tidal and is mapped as an estuary (Annex I habitat 1130)

4.2.2 Otter

No otter resting or breeding places, nor any other signs of otter activity were identified within the survey area.

4.3 Qualifying Interests Scoped In/Out of Further Assessment

4.3.1 QIs Scoped Out

Based on the results of the desktop study and field surveys, the following QI habitats and species have been screened out from further assessment:

- Reefs;
- Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand;
- Mediterranean salt meadows;
- European dry heaths;
- Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities;
- Petrifying springs with tufa formation;
- Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum;
- Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior;
- Desmoulin's Whorl Snail;

- Freshwater Pearl Mussel;
- White-clawed Crayfish; and
- Killarney Fern.

4.3.2 QIs Scoped In

The following QI habitats and species are carried forward to AA screening.

River Barrow and River Nore SAC

- Estuaries;
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide;
- Atlantic salt meadows;
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation;
- Sea Lamprey;
- River Lamprey;
- Brook Lamprey;
- Twaite Shad;
- Salmon; and
- Otter.

Lowe River Suir SAC

- Sea Lamprey;
- River Lamprey;
- Brook Lamprey;
- Twaite Shad;
- Salmon; and
- Otter.

5. SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

5.1 Introduction

This section of the report examines if the Proposed Development is likely to have a significant effect upon European sites, either alone ('in isolation') or in combination with other plans or projects.

5.1.1 Effects in Isolation

The potential for the Proposed Development to have significant effects on River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and Lower River Suir SAC, is examined in Table 5-1. The assessment is based on the likely impacts identified in Section 3.4.1 and the QIs identified to have connectivity with the Proposed Development (Section 4.3.2).

5.1.1.1 A Note on Effects from Dust Emissions

The QIs with connectivity with the Proposed Development are not notably sensitive to dust emissions, except in the context where they contribute to sedimentation or contamination of surface water. To this end, any potential effects arising from dust emissions are assessed under surface water quality perturbations.

Table 5-1: AA Screening - Effects in Isolation

Project Activity	Potential Impacts	Screening Assessment	Likely Significant Effect (Y/N)
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)			
Estuaries			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Habitat loss Surface water quality perturbations	Habitat Loss There are no QI habitats within the Proposed Site, such that there will be no direct physical interference with any QI habitat. *No Likely Significant Effects* Surface Water Quality Perturbations The stretch of the River Barrow directly adjacent to the Proposed Site is mapped as this QI habitat. There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow, and therefore to this QI. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment directly into this QI habitat. **Potential Significant Effects**	Y
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Surface water quality perturbations	Surface Water Quality Perturbations There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow, and this QI is known to occur c. 1.7 km downstream. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment. The significance of such an event depends on the magnitude of contamination and the nature of the contaminant. However, in accordance with the Precautionary Principle, significance is assumed. **Potential Significant Effects**	Y

Project Activity	Potential Impacts	Screening Assessment	Likely Significant Effect (Y/N)
Atlantic salt meadows			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Surface water quality perturbations	<u>Surface Water Quality Perturbations</u> There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow, and this QI is known to occur c. 7.4 km downstream. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment. According to Article 17 reports (NPWS, 2019), the most notable pressures on this habitat are related to eutrophication and land-reclamation associated with agriculture, and the spread of *Spartina*. Considering the above, and considering the downstream distance from the Proposed Site (7.4 km), any deterioration in water quality resulting from the Proposed Development is unlikely to materially contribute to a deterioration in conservation status. *No Likely Significant Effects*	Y
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Surface water quality perturbations	<u>Surface Water Quality Perturbations</u> There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow. The distribution of this QI habitat is not known, but is assumed to occur within the downstream zone of influence. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment. The significance of such an event depends on the magnitude of contamination and the nature of the contaminant. However, in accordance with the Precautionary Principle, significance is assumed. **Potential Significant Effects**	Y

Project Activity	Potential Impacts	Screening Assessment	Likely Significant Effect (Y/N)
Salmon, Twaite Shad and Lamprey			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Surface water quality perturbations Noise emissions	<u>Surface water quality perturbations</u> There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment. Substantial declines in water quality could result in significant effects on all fish populations. **Potential Significant Effects** <u>Noise emissions</u> Salmon, twaite shad and lamprey all migrate to freshwater for spawning purposes - they do not spawn in brackish water. The habitat within 50 m of the Proposed Site is not representative of high-energy, erosive conditions that result in the provision of gravelly substrates required for spawning. As such, the Proposed Development will not result in the disturbance of spawning populations. Considering the location of the Proposed Site in a busy town, and considering the substantial width of the River Barrow in New Ross, it is considered highly unlikely that noise emissions will result in barrier effects to migrating populations. *No Likely Significant Effects*	Y
Otter			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Surface water quality perturbations Noise emissions	<u>Surface water quality perturbations</u> There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment. Substantial declines in water quality could result in significant effects on all fish populations, which would result in a reduction in prey availability for otter, and/or pose a risk to indirect ingestion of contaminants.	Y

Project Activity	Potential Impacts	Screening Assessment	Likely Significant Effect (Y/N)
		The significance of such an occurrence depends on the magnitude of contamination. However, in accordance with the Precautionary Principle, significance is assumed. **Potential Significant Effects** Noise emissions No holts were identified within the Proposed Site or within 200m, but it is acknowledged that a holt could be created in the interim period between the survey and the commencement of construction. Even in such an event, considering baseline noise emissions associated with a busy town, any otters holting in the environs will very likely have a high tolerance to noise emissions, which is supported by the findings of Jo et al. (2017), who noted that otters often persist in highly populated areas and are tolerant of high levels of human activity. *No Likely Significant Effects*	
Lower River Suir SAC (002137)			
Salmon, Twaite Shad and Lamprey			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Surface water quality perturbations Noise emissions	Surface water quality perturbations There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment. Substantial declines in water quality could result in significant effects on all fish populations. **Potential Significant Effects** Noise emissions Salmon, twaite shad and lamprey all migrate to freshwater for spawning purposes - they do not spawn in brackish water. The habitat within 50 m of the Proposed Site is not representative of high-energy, erosive conditions that result in the provision of gravelly substrates required for spawning. As such, the Proposed Development will not result in the disturbance of spawning populations.	Y

Project Activity	Potential Impacts	Screening Assessment	Likely Significant Effect (Y/N)
		Considering the location of the Proposed Site in a busy town, and considering the substantial width of the River Barrow in New Ross, it is considered highly unlikely that noise emissions will result in barrier effects to migrating populations. *No Likely Significant Effects*	
Otter			
Construction Phase - Earthworks Demolition	Surface water quality perturbations Noise emissions	<u>Surface water quality perturbations</u> There is existing surface water drainage infrastructure connecting the Proposed Site to the River Barrow. Unmitigated surface water runoff during construction could lead to uncontrolled release of contaminants and sediment. Substantial declines in water quality could result in significant effects on all fish populations, which would result in a reduction in prey availability for otter, and/or pose a risk to indirect ingestion of contaminants. The significance of such an occurrence depends on the magnitude of contamination. However, in accordance with the Precautionary Principle, significance is assumed. **Potential Significant Effects** <u>Noise emissions</u> No holts were identified within the Proposed Site or within 200m, but it is acknowledged that a holt could be created in the interim period between the survey and the commencement of construction. Even in such an event, considering baseline noise emissions associated with a busy town, any otters holting in the environs will very likely have a high tolerance to noise emissions, which is supported by the findings of Jo et al. (2017), who noted that otters often persist in highly populated areas and are tolerant of high levels of human activity. *No Likely Significant Effects*	Y

5.1.1.2 Effects in Isolation - Conclusion

Having assessed the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the European Sites' QIs deemed to have connectivity, it has been concluded that significant effects cannot be ruled out for the QIs listed below, with regard to the potential for unmitigated infiltration of contaminated runoff into the River Barrow during construction:

River Barrow and River Nore SAC

- Estuaries;
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide;
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation;
- Sea Lamprey;
- River Lamprey;
- Brook Lamprey;
- Twaite Shad;
- Salmon; and
- Otter.

Lower River Suir SAC

- Sea Lamprey;
- River Lamprey;
- Brook Lamprey;
- Twaite Shad;
- Salmon; and
- Otter.

5.2 Consideration of in-combination effects with other plans or projects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that:

> *"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".*

The consideration of in-combination effects with other plans or projects focused on the potential impacts of the Proposed Development that were not deemed likely to result in significant effects from the Proposed Development in isolation. This is because any likely significant effects already identified will require mitigation in any case, after which they will not have the opportunity to act in combination with those from other plans or projects.

The in-combination assessment therefore only assesses non-significant effects from the Proposed Development, which when combined with effects from other plans or projects, may result in significant effects on the European sites and QIs already identified.

In accordance with the information presented in Table 5-1, potential effects that were not deemed likely or significant were:

- River Barrow and River Nore SAC
  - Estuaries - habitat loss
  - Atlantic salt meadows - surface water quality perturbations
  - Salmon, Twaite shad, lamprey and otter - noise emissions
- Lower River Suir SAC
  - Salmon, Twaite shad, lamprey and otter - noise emissions

An important distinction to make is whether a project in isolation may result in effects that are not significant, or whether they will not result in any effects at all (see *De minimis* Effects below). Potential impacts which have been assessed to have no effect are excluded from in-combination assessment. Potential impacts which will result in an insignificant effect are carried forward to in-combination assessment.

Considering that surface water quality perturbations have been considered likely to result in significant effects on other QIs, and for which mitigation will be required, potential effects on Atlantic salt meadows are scoped out of in-combination assessment.

5.2.1 *De minimis* Effects

The term *de minimis* is referenced in the opinion of the Advocate General in relation to CJEU case C-258/11 (Sweetman v. An Bord Pleanála) as follows:

> *"The requirement that the effect in question be 'significant' exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on the site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill."*

De minimis, as defined by the Mirriam Webster dictionary[6], means "lacking significance or importance - so minor as to be disregarded".

Considering that all proposed works are terrestrial, there will be no risk of direct habitat loss as a result of the Proposed Development. This effect is therefore deemed to meet the *de minimis* threshold and is scoped out of in-combination assessment.

[6] "De minimis." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/de%20minimis. Accessed 26 March 2025.

5.2.2 Search Area

In order to capture other plans or projects with the potential to contribute to effects on salmon, Twaite shad, lamprey and otter, a Search Area for other plans or projects within 50 m of the Proposed Development was applied. This is in accordance with the ZoI for noise emissions.

Sources of information were:

- Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028[7]
- Wexford County Council Planning Portal[8]; and
- EIA Portal[9].

The search included all planning applications made within the past 5 years[10], and discounted refused applications and retention applications.

5.2.3 Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Wexford County Development Plan references the New Ross Town to Waterford Greenway including Redbridge-Mount Elliot. At the time of writing, the most notable works have already been complete in New Ross, in terms of the site clearance, removal of the old railway tracks and resurfacing. There is negligible scope for in-combination effects to arise between the greenway project and the Proposed Development.

5.2.4 Projects

Relevant planning applications within the Search Area are presented in Table 5-2, outlining the nature of each development and an assessment of their potential to act in combination with the Proposed Development so as to give rise to significant noise emission effects on SAC populations of otter, salmon, lamprey and twaite shad.

[7] Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028. Available at: https://consult.wexfordcoco.ie/en/consultation/wexford-county-development-plan-2022-2028 (accessed 28.10.25).
[8] Wexford County Council Planning Portal. Available at: https://www.wexfordcoco.ie/planning/search-planning-applications (accessed 28.10.25)
[9] EIA Portal. Available at: https://housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d7d5a3d48f104ecbb206e7e5f84b71f1 (accessed 05.09.25).
[10] Planning applications have a standard lifespan of 5 years as per Section 40 (3)(b) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Table 5-2: Planning Applications

Planning Reference	Status	Location	Project Overview	Assessment of Potential for In-combination Effects	Potential for in-combination effects (Y/N)
20211451	Granted 05/11/2021	7 John Street, New Ross (<20 m from Proposed Development.	Change of use, alterations to front (roadside) elevations, and interior demolition works.	Physical works will be restricted to the roadside and interior of the existing building. In the event that this project occurs at the same time as the Proposed Development, this project will not give rise to any notable increases in baseline noise levels. **No potential for in-combination effects.**	N
20230717	Granted 29/01/2024	21 John Street, New Ross (<40 m from Proposed Development.	Change of use, alterations to front (roadside), and interior renovations.	Physical works will be restricted to the roadside and interior of the existing building. In the event that this project occurs at the same time as the Proposed Development, this project will not give rise to any notable increases in baseline noise levels. **No potential for in-combination effects.**	N

5.2.5 Effects in Combination - Conclusion

The assessment of in-combination effects has concluded that the Proposed Development will not act in combination with any other plans or projects to give rise to significant effects on any European sites.

5.3 Screening Conclusion

The AA screening process has determined that significant effects from the Proposed Development cannot be ruled out on the following European sites and their QIs:

River Barrow and River Nore SAC

- Estuaries;
- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide;
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation;
- Sea Lamprey;
- River Lamprey;
- Brook Lamprey;
- Twaite Shad;
- Salmon; and
- Otter.

Lower River Suir SAC

- Sea Lamprey;
- River Lamprey;
- Brook Lamprey;
- Twaite Shad;
- Salmon; and
- Otter.

River Barrow and River Nore SAC, and Lower River Suir SAC, will therefore be taken forward for further consideration in a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). The NIS will assess whether adverse effects will occur on the integrity these European sites, in view of the conservation objectives.

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