

# Part 8 MEMO

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| <b>To:</b>      | Noelle McGinley, Senior Executive Architect                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>From:</b>    | Ian Lacey, Senior Executive Planner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Date:</b>    | 23 <sup>th</sup> of April 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Subject:</b> | Part 8 AA/EIA Requirements in relation to the proposed construction of 50 Residential units and associated site development works including internal roads, paths, paving, parking, drainage, landscaped public open space, street lighting and boundary treatments. A foul sewer and separate storm sewer will be provided and connect to existing drainage infrastructure. Harbour Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. |

## 1. Project Description

The Housing Section of Westmeath County Council proposes the development of 50 residential units and associated site development works including internal roads, paths, paving, parking, drainage, landscaped public open space, street lighting and boundary treatments. A foul sewer and separate storm sewer will be provided with connection to existing drainage infrastructure.

### 1.2 Details Received:

The documents provided for the purposes of determination are as follows:

- Drawings and Plans
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report
- Environmental Assessment Screening Report

### 1.3 Overview:

The application site is located within Mullingar Town, the 1.56 hectare site is located on lands to the north of the town centre. The site is accessed off the local road L1001 Longford Road. The site is to the north-east of Longford Road, to the north of Lady Aberdeen Cottages and road access is provided from the local road L6725 located to the north of the site. The proposed development includes the development of a mixed and varied unit types as detailed in table 1 below:

| Proposed House Types                   | Bedrooms | Bed spaces per unit | Target Area |
|----------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|-------------|
| 4 Bed x 5 (House Block 1)              | 4        | 7                   | 128sqm      |
| 3 Bed x 8 (House Block 3)              | 3        | 5                   | 103sqm      |
| 2 Bed x 8 (House Block 3)              | 2        | 4                   | 87sqm       |
| 2 Bed x 15 (House Block 2)             | 2        | 4                   | 85sqm       |
| 2 Bed x 1 (House Block 2 – End facing) | 2        | 4                   | 84sqm       |
| 2 Bed x 1 (House Block 4)              | 2        | 3                   | 67sqm       |
| 1 Bed x 2 (House Block 5)              | 1        | 2                   | 51sqm       |
| 1 Bed x 10 (Apartment Block)           | 1        | 2                   | 53sqm       |

Table 1 – Development Breakdown



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Page 2 | 9



Fig 3 – Google aerial image dated 2026

### 1.4 Appropriate Assessment:

The subject lands are not located within or immediately adjacent to any European Site (designated SAC/SPA). Lough Owel SAC and Lough Owel SPA are the 2 identified closest designated sites located 3.01km to the north-west of the proposed development. These sites are upstream of the development. Lough Ennell SAC and Lough Ennell SPA are identified to be 3.07km and 4.05km south-west of the development and have an identified hydrological pathway

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report submitted with the proposal concluded that the proposed development is not foreseen to have any likelihood of significant effects on any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

### 2. Recommendation:

Having reviewed the preliminary documentation associated with the above-named project which includes the proposed development of 50 No. new residential units and associated site development works including internal roads, paths, paving, parking, drainage, landscaped public open space, street lighting and boundary treatments. A foul sewer and separate storm sewer will be provided and connect to existing drainage infrastructure located at Harbour Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. It is considered, based on a preliminary assessment, that a **Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) & Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** are not required at this time.

## Part 8 MEMO

It is therefore recommended that the project proceed to detailed application design in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations (as amended), based on which the Planning Section will issue final determinations.

Considerations are set out as per the associate headings hereunder.



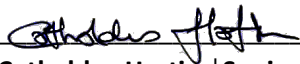
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**Ian Lacey | Senior Executive Planner**  
**Westmeath County Council Planning Section**

27/04/2026

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**Date**



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**Cathaldus Hartin | Senior Planner**  
**Westmeath County Council**  
**Planning, Transportation and Economic Development**

28/04/2026

## 3. Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Stage 1 Preliminary Examination

### 3.1 Legislative Context

The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 which transpose into Irish law both the European Union (EU) Directive 2009/147/EC (the Birds Directive) and the Habitats Directive and list habitats and species that are of international conservation importance and require protection. This protection is afforded in part through the designation of areas that represent significant examples of habitats that support populations of listed species within a European context, known as Natura 2000 sites. An area designated for bird species is classed as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and an area designated for other protected species and habitats is classed as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Together, SPAs and SACs form the Natura 2000 network of protected sites.

The Habitats Directive requires competent authorities to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects that, alone and/or in combination with other plans and projects, would be likely to have significant effects on one or more Natura 2000 sites. The assessment process is divided into a Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment and where required, a full Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

### 3.2 Natura 2000 Sites

Note: European Natura 2000 sites include SACs, cSACs, SPAs and pSPAs, but not NHAs. This Stage 1 screening assessment covers Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the development boundary. In addition, any other sites further than this, but potentially within its zone of influence were also considered. The zone of influence may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas by virtue of hydrological connectivity, atmospheric emissions, flight paths, ecological corridors, etc. The measurements used here are taken from the closest point along the proposed work area to the SAC / SPA.

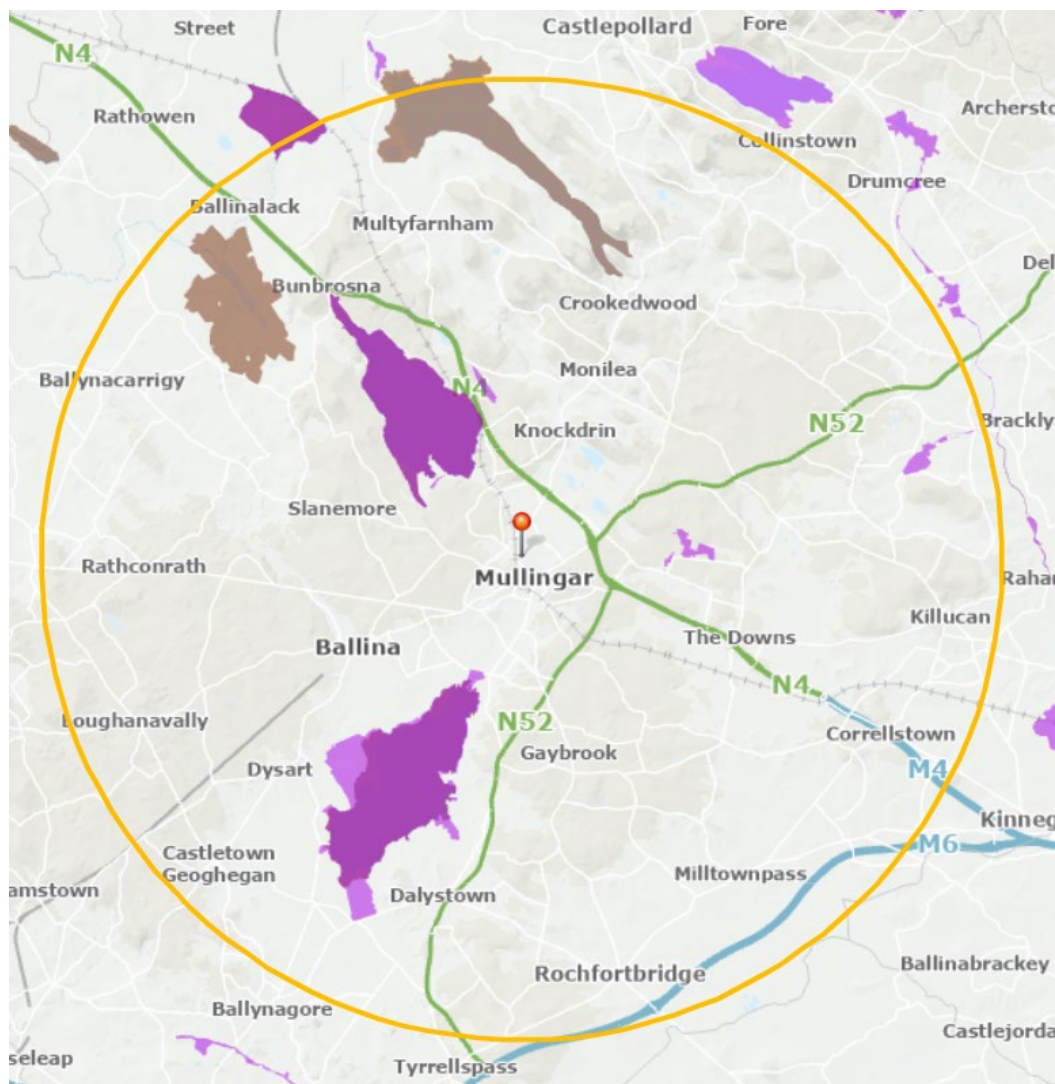
Sites situated with 15km of the proposed works, are set out at **Table 1** below. The site synopsis' and details of the conservation objectives of these site are available at: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac> and <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa>

| Site Code | Site Name                            | Designation Type | Distance From (km) approx. |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 000688    | Lough Owel SAC                       | SAC              | 3.01km NW                  |
| 004047    | Lough Owel SPA                       | SPA              | 3.01km NW                  |
| 000685    | Lough Ennell SAC                     | SAC              | 3.7km SW                   |
| 004044    | Lough Ennell SPA                     | SPA              | 4.08km SW                  |
| 002205    | Wooddown Bog SAC                     | SAC              | 4.45km SW                  |
| 000692    | Scragh Bog SAC                       | SAC              | 4.96km N                   |
| 004043    | Lough Derravaragh SPA                | SPA              | 9.27km N                   |
| 004046    | Lough Iron SPA                       | SPA              | 9.45km NW                  |
| 002299    | River Boyne And River Blackwater SAC | SAC              | 12.17km E                  |

## Part 8 MEMO

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|--------|-------------------|-----|------------|
| 004102 | Garriskil Bog SPA | SPA | 14.54km NW |
| 000679 | Garriskil Bog SAC | SAC | 14.53km NE |

**Table 1:** Natura 2000 Sites within 15km



**Map 1:** Natura 2000 Sites in proximity to proposal.

There are an identified 11(no.) designated Natura 2000 sites situated within a 15km radius (refer Table 1 above) of the proposed site. The development works proposed are not required for the nature conservation management of these sites. It is noted that the conservation objectives for the SACs and SPAs in the vicinity are to maintain or restore favourable conservation condition of habitats and species listed as Special Conservation Interests for which the SPA/SAC has been selected.

The development site is not located within a Natura 2000 site. Consequently, there is no direct loss of habitat from within the boundaries of any Natura 2000 site and as such no loss of habitat or fragmentation of habitat for the conservation interests of any site. Therefore, it can be concluded that no direct impacts will occur on any Natura 2000 site.

## Part 8 MEMO

A Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment was prepared by CAAS Ltd Consultants to accompany the scheme. The AA Screening employs the source-pathway-receptor model (rather than arbitrary distances such as 15km) in terms of selecting Natura 2000 sites for inclusion in the AA Screening. This includes those European sites with potential indirect connectivity through hydrological pathways i.e. effects from surface water quality or quantity for 200m downstream of the scheme.

There are 2 no. Natura 2000 sites in close proximity with potential hydrological connectivity between the development site area and these SPA/SAC sites - Lough Ennell SAC south-west and Lough Ennell SPA south-west, the sites are downstream of the development and have a connection via the River Brosna.

**Lough Ennell SAC** – Qualifying interests: Alkaline fens [7230], Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140].

The AA Screening Report states that given the significant distance 5.54km between the source and the SAC there will be no likelihood of significant effects. The report concludes that there are no sources with a likelihood for significant effects to this SAC as a result of the proposed development, and no further assessment is required.

**Lough Ennell SPA** – Qualifying Interests: Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [A061], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Pochard (*Aythya ferina*) [A059], Coot (*Fulica atra*) [A125]

The AA Screening Report states that given the significant distance 5.90km between the source and the SPA there will be no likelihood of significant effects. The report concludes that there are no sources with a likelihood for significant effects to this SAC as a result of the proposed development, and no further assessment is required.

In terms of operation of the proposed scheme, the flows or water quality of the Brosna River will not be altered, and the proposal does not have the potential to result in likely significant effects on the downstream qualifying interest habitats and species of Lough Ennell SAC and SPA.

### 3.3 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

The site of the proposed development is located within Mullingar Town and the site is zoned under Variation 1 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (Mullingar Settlement Area Plan).

An Appropriate Assessment for this Variation was carried out and concluded that, having incorporated mitigation measures into the Variation, it has been demonstrated that the Variation is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects to any designated European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This demonstration has been made in view of the Conservation Objectives of the habitats and/or species, for which these sites have been designated and there is no potential for significant effects either alone or in combination with other plans. However, all individual plans/projects must also be considered for their compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive on a case-by-case basis.

## Part 8 MEMO

When considered in combination with other developments which have been granted planning permission in the general area, it is not considered that the proposed development will have any cumulative impacts upon any designated sites.

It is considered that having regard to the siting of the proposed development from the SPAs and SACs (illustrated at Map 1 and Table 1 above), that the proposal would not give rise to any significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any nearby Natura 2000 sites having regard to the nature of the proposed development and separation distances involved to adjoining Natura 2000 sites.

### **3.4 AA Preliminary Screening Conclusions**

Given the localised scale of the proposed development, and the nature of the proposed development in the context of the local environment, plans and projects it is considered that the proposed development will not lead to any likely significant effects in-combination with effects arising from any other plans or projects.

It is therefore concluded that the proposed development is not foreseen to have any likelihood of significant effects on any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects and therefore any potential for significant effects on any European site as a result of the proposed development can be ruled out.

## 4. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening

### 4.1 EIA Preliminary Screening Examination

A detailed description of the proposed development has been provided in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening report prepared by CAAS Ltd on behalf of Westmeath County Council Housing Section, with drawings and supplementary reports provided.

The screening report concluded that taking account of the scale, nature and location of the Proposed Scheme that the preparation of an EIAR is not a mandatory requirement (under Schedule 5, Part 1 and 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2025). The Proposed Scheme is deemed a sub-threshold development, hence the potential for significant environmental effects arising as a result of the scheme has been evaluated, in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 7A and Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Acts 2001-2024.

As the proposed development is sub-threshold, it has, therefore, been assessed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the criteria for determining whether or not a development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment as outlined within Annex III of the EIA Directive.

The CAAS Ltd report considered the following criteria:–

- Characteristics of the proposed development
- Location of the proposed development
- Type and characteristics of the potential impacts

### 4.2 EIA Preliminary Screening Conclusion

It is considered that the EIA Screening report produced by CAAS Ltd, provides a reasonable description and assessment of the types and characteristics of the potential impacts of the proposed development in respect of each heading and that the environmental effects arising from the proposed project.

Based on review against the report identified that the environmental impacts of the proposed project can be anticipated to be localised and short-term to temporary (during construction) and permanent (after construction) and not likely to be significant within the meaning of the Directive.

It is therefore considered that the proposed social housing development at Harbour Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath (50 unit scheme on a site of 1.56ha) and given the nature, scale and location of the development works within a defined settlement of Mullingar and having regard to the characteristics of the potential impacts it is considered and concluded that the project is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental impacts and an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.