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# Natura Impact Statement for a single house at Ballyeelinan, Ardmore, County Waterford

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Requirement for an Appropriate Assessment

This Natura Impact Assessment (NIS) was prepared for a proposed single house at Ballyeelinan, Ardmore, County Waterford, at the request of David Leahy Architects. Based on the location of the proposed development site and the proximity to sites designated under the Natura 2000 network, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) for the proposed single house has been prepared in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This NIS will allow the Competent Authority, in this case Waterford County Council, to undertake an AA of the proposed development, as required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

### 1.2 Aim of the Report

This NIS has been prepared in accordance with the current guidance (DoEHLG, 2009, Revised February 2010), and it provides an assessment of the potential effects of a single proposed residential house at Ballyeelinan, near Ardmore, County Waterford on European sites in the vicinity.

An NIS should provide the information required in order to establish whether or not a proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on certain Natura sites in the context of their conservation objectives and specifically on the habitats and species for which the Natura 2000 conservation sites have been designated.

Accordingly, a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts of this application was carried out in January 2026 by Colin Barton of Cork Ecology.

This assessment allowed areas of potential ecological value and potential ecological constraints associated with the proposed development to be identified and it also enabled potential ecological impacts associated with the proposed development to be assessed and mitigated for.

### 1.3 Regulatory Context

#### *Relevant Legislation*

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) recognises that certain species of birds should be subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitats. The Directive requires that EU Member States take measures to classify the most suitable areas as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex 1 of the Directive. As an EU Member State, Ireland is required under the terms of the Directive to designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the protection of:

- Listed rare and vulnerable species
- Regularly occurring migratory species
- Wetlands, especially those of international importance, which attract large numbers of migratory birds each year.

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires that Member States designate and ensure that particular protection is given to sites (Special Areas of Conservation) which are made up of or support particular habitats and species listed in annexes to this Directive.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive also call for the undertaking of an AA for plans and projects not directly connected with or necessary to the management of, but which are likely to have a significant effect on any European designated sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs).

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC), which came into force in December 2000, establishes a framework for community action in the field of water policy. The WFD was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 722 of 2003). The WFD rationalises and updates existing legislation and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBDs). RBDs are essentially administrative areas for coordinated water management and are comprised of multiple river basins (or catchments), with cross-border basins (i.e. those covering the territory of more than one Member State) assigned to an international RBD. The aim of the WFD is to ensure that waters achieve at least good status by 2027 and that this status does not deteriorate in any waters.

### *Appropriate Assessment and the Habitats Directive*

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora – the ‘Habitats Directive’ - provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of European Community interest, at a favourable conservation status. Articles 3 - 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. Natura 2000 sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision-making tests for plans or projects affecting Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA:

“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.”

Article 6(4) deals with the steps that should be taken when it is determined, as a result of appropriate assessment, that a plan/project will adversely affect a European site. Issues dealing with alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures need to be addressed in this case.

Article 6(4) states: “If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of

overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.”

#### *The Appropriate Assessment Process*

The aim of AA is to assess the implications of a proposal in respect of the conservation objectives of a designated site.

The AA is an assessment which must be carried out by the competent authority which confirms whether the plan or project in combination with other plans and projects will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European site.

Screening for AA shall be carried out by the competent authority as set out in Section 177U(1) and (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as follows:

(1) A screening for AA of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.

(2) A competent authority shall carry out a screening for AA under subsection (1) before:

(a) a Land use plan is made including, where appropriate, before a decision on appeal in relation to a draft strategic development zone is made, or

(b) consent for a proposed development is given.

The competent authority shall determine that an AA is not required if it can be excluded, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or project will have a significant effect on a European site.

Where the competent authority cannot exclude the potential for a significant effect on a European site, an AA shall be deemed required.

Where an AA is required, the conclusions of the AA Report (NIS) should enable the competent authority to ascertain whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of the European site. If adverse impacts on the integrity of a European site cannot be avoided, then mitigation measures should be applied during the appropriate assessment process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site remain. Under the terms of the Habitats Directive consent can only be granted for a project if, as a result of the AA either (a) it is concluded that the integrity of any European sites will not be adversely affected, or (b) after mitigation, where adverse impacts cannot be excluded, there is shown to

be an absence of alternative solutions, and there exists imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project should go ahead.

Section 177(V) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) outlines that the competent authority shall carry out the AA, taking into account the NIS (amongst any other additional or supplemental information). A determination shall then be made by the competent authority in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site, prior to consent being given.

## **2 Methods**

### **2.1 Appropriate Assessment**

This NIS has been prepared with reference to the following:

- European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2027). 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 (2006). Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice.
- European Commission (2007). Clarification of the Concepts of: Alternative Solution, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.

The EC Guidance sets out a number of principles as to how to approach decision making during the process. The primary one is 'the precautionary principle' which requires that the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 should prevail where there is uncertainty.

When considering the precautionary principle, the emphasis for assessment should be on objectively demonstrating with supporting evidence that:

- There will be no significant effects on a Natura 2000 site;
- There will be no adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site;
- There is an absence of alternatives to the project or plan that is likely to have an adverse effect to the integrity of a Natura 2000 site; and
- There are compensation measures that maintain or enhance the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

This translates into a four-stage process to assess the impacts, on a designated site or species, of a policy or proposal.

The EC Guidance states that “each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required”. Consequently, there may not be a need to proceed through all four stages in undertaking the AA.

The four-stage process consists of the following:

**Stage 1: Screening** – The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether or not these impacts are likely to be significant;

**Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment** – The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 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 impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts;

**Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions** – The process which examines alternative ways of achieving objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site;

**Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain** – An assessment of the compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

In complying with the obligations set out in Articles 6(3) and following the guidelines described above, this screening statement has been structured as a stage-by-stage approach as follows:

- Description of the proposed project;
- Identification of the Natura 2000 sites close to the proposed development;
- Identification and description of any individual and cumulative impacts on the Natura 2000 sites likely to result from the project;
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above on site integrity. Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects;
- Description of proven mitigation measures.

## 2.2 Statement of Competency

This NIS was carried out by Colin Barton of Cork Ecology. Colin graduated from the University of Aberdeen in 1992, with a BSc. Honours degree in Biology (Ecology) in 1992. Colin established Cork Ecology, an independent environmental consultancy specialising in birds, in November 2001. Colin has carried out a number of EIS and NIS assessments for a variety of projects including terrestrial and offshore wind farm projects and smaller projects such as single house developments.

## 2.3 Desk Studies and Consultation

Information on the area of the proposed development and relevant designated conservation sites was reviewed as part of the preparation of this statement. The following data sources were accessed in order to complete a thorough examination of potential impacts:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) online database - aerial photographs and maps of designated conservation sites, information on habitats and species within these sites and

information on protected plant or animal species; conservation objectives, site synopses and standard data forms for relevant designated sites.

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- Information pertaining to water catchments.
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) – Information pertaining to protected plant and animal species within the study area.
- Architectural information regarding the proposed development.
- Waterford County Council Planning Website – Information on planning history in the area.

## **2.4 Assessment Methodology**

The proposed development was assessed to identify the potential ecological impacts and from this, the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the proposed development was defined. Based on the potential impacts and their ZoI, the Natura 2000 sites potentially at risk from direct, indirect or in-combination impacts were identified. The assessment considered all potential impact sources and pathways connecting the proposed development to Natura 2000 sites, in view of the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the site's Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special Conservation Interests (SCIs).

The conservation objectives relating to each Natura 2000 site and its QIs/SCIs are cited generally for SACs as "to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected", and for SPAs "to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA" (e.g. NPWS, 2025a).

As defined in the Habitats Directive, the favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- The habitat's natural range and area it covers within that range is stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future;

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- The population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future;
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Where site-specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) have been prepared for a European site, these include a series of specific attributes and targets against which effects on conservation condition, or integrity, can be measured. Where potential significant effects are identified, then these SSCO should be considered in detail.

### 3 Screening

#### 3.1 Description of the proposed Development

David Leahy Architects will shortly apply to Waterford County Council for planning permission for a single residential development in Ballyeelinan, near Ardmore, County Waterford. The proposed site is approximately 10.15 hectares in area and is part of a total landholding of 20.6 hectares.

The proposed development will consist of:

(i) demolition of the existing single-storey detached dwelling and associated structures on the site; (ii) construction of a new detached, single-storey replacement dwelling, incorporating an internal courtyard, a combination of pitched roof forms with limited flat roof elements; (iii) works to the existing private laneway and site entrance, including upgrading of the internal driveway and on-site circulation areas; (iv) all associated site works, including boundary treatments, landscaping, planting, terraces, drainage, foul and surface water services, on-site wastewater treatment system, water supply, and; (v) all ancillary development works necessary to facilitate the proposed development.

An extract from the planning drawings is shown in Figure 1.

#### *Wastewater Treatment*

A site suitability assessment including percolation tests at the proposed development site was carried out by Geoenvironmental environmental consultants Ltd. Based on this assessment, a Wastewater Treatment System (WWTS) for a minimum of seven people and 52.5 Sqm Pressurised Soil Polishing Filter was proposed to serve the house.

The wastewater installation will comply with the 2021 EPA Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (EPA, 2021). The treated wastewater from the proposed WWTS is to be pumped from a sump chamber using 2" rising main to a 50mm distribution manifold connected to 7 \* 32mm lateral percolation pipes. Each lateral will be 6.25m in length. The 7 \* 32mm lateral pipes are to be located at 1.25m intervals and placed over a (8-32mm) 250mm layer of distribution stone. The distance between the perforations should also be 1.25m. To ensure uniform effluent application over the entire length of the lateral trench, the first and last perforations in the lateral will be located one-half the perforation spacing from either end of the lateral i.e. 0.625m. The pipes should be overlain by (8-32mm) 150mm of protection stone and a minimum of 200mm of topsoil above this to the new surface of the raised area. Each of the 3/16" (5mm) orifices should be protected by orifice shields.

The invert of the 250mm distribution stone should be located no deeper than 0.1m below existing ground level to ensure a min of 0.9m to solid bedrock encountered at 1m bgl. The pipe work should be laid on the 250mm distribution stone and overlain by 150mm of stone. The 150mm of protection stone should be overlain with a geotextile and the excavated topsoil relaid on top.

Surface water will be drained to soak pits.

Further details of the WWTS are presented in Appendix A.

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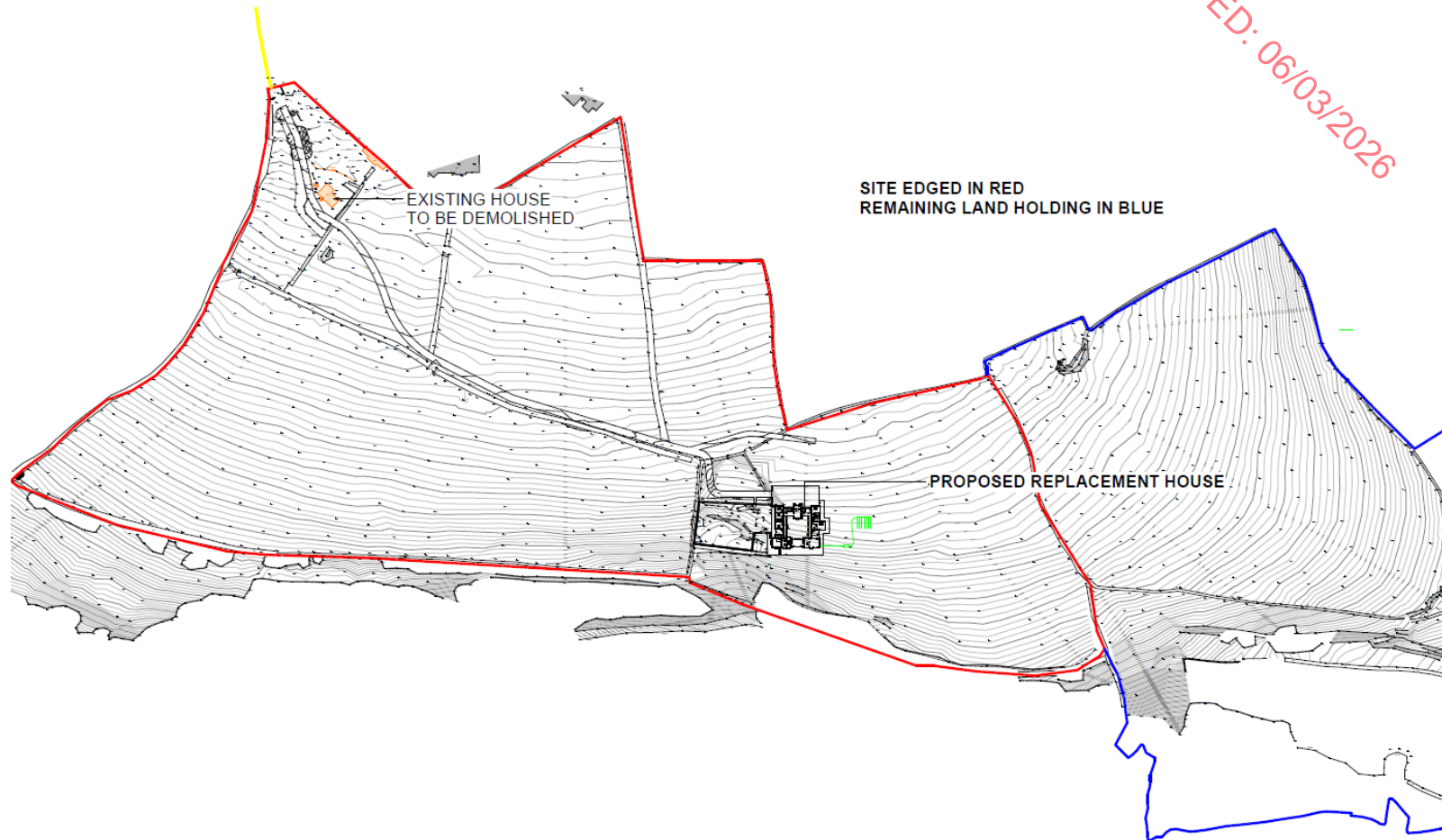


Figure 1 – Extract from Planning Drawings of the Proposed Development

### 3.2 Site Location and Surrounding Environment

The proposed development site covers a total of 10.15 hectares and is located in a rural area in the townland of Ballyeelinan, approximately 4 km north-east of Ardmore, County Waterford. The site will be accessed via the existing entrance to the existing house in the north-west of the site. The proposed site consists of improved grazing and is surrounded by agricultural land, which is also predominantly improved grazing and coastal grassland/scrub.

#### *Habitats and Notable Species*

The proposed development lies within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (Site Code: 4192). This site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for five bird species:

- Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*);
- Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*);
- Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*);
- Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*);
- Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*).

The Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA site synopsis (NPWS, 2015) states that the SPA supports a nationally important population of breeding Chough, a Red Data Book species; 11 breeding pairs were recorded from the site in the 1992 survey and 11 pairs in the 2002/03 survey. The low heath and agricultural farmland on the cliff tops provides good foraging habitat for this species. The site is also of importance for its Peregrine population (5 pairs in 2002). Both Chough and Peregrine are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

In addition, the site has important breeding seabird populations, centered around Helvick Head. Nationally important populations of Cormorant (65 pairs), Herring Gull (117 pairs) and Kittiwake (1,037 pairs) occur – all seabird data from 1999 (NPWS, 2015).

In addition, Kittiwake is currently Red-listed on the most recent Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland status review, while Chough, Herring Gull and Cormorant are currently Amber-listed and Peregrine is Green-listed (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021).

### 3.3 Natura 2000 Sites Identified

In accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, a list of Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the proposed development has been identified and described according to their site synopses, qualifying interests and conservation objectives. In addition, any other sites more distant than this, but potentially connectivity to the proposed development were also considered. The Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the proposed development may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas via source-receptor-connector pathways such as flight paths, ecological corridors or water courses.

For significant effects to arise, there must be a potential impact facilitated by having a *source*, i.e., the proposed development and impacts arising from construction, a *receptor*, i.e., the European site and its qualifying interests and a subsequent *pathway* or *connectivity* between the source and receptor, e.g., a water course. The likelihood for significant effects on the European site will largely depend on the characteristics of the source (e.g., nature and scale of the construction works), the characteristics of the connector pathway and the characteristics of the receptor, e.g., the sensitivities of the Qualifying Interests (QI) habitats or Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species to changes in e.g. water quality.

There are six Natura 2000 designated sites in the vicinity of the proposed development. These designated sites, the distance to the proposed development at the closest point, a summary of the qualifying interests and information on Water Framework Directive (WFD) Catchment areas are summarised in Table 1. Based on this information, these designated sites have been screened In/Out of further assessment depending on whether there is deemed to be a source-receptor pathway connecting the proposed development to the designated site.

A full site synopsis for each of these designated sites is available on the NPWS website (<https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>).

Information on WFD water subcatchment areas and flow networks was sourced from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Water Maps website (<https://www.catchments.ie/water-map/>).

More distant Natura 2000 sites have been screened out on the basis of distance to the proposed development and a lack of a source-receptor pathway connecting the proposed development to the designated sites.

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**Table 1 Designated Natura 2000 sites with potential connectivity to the proposed development (WFD Subcatchment Maail\_an\_Chairnigh\_SC\_010)**

Designated site	QI/SCI habitats and species	WFD Subcatchment	Screened In/Out
Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (Site Code 4192) Distance: Within SPA	Chough Cormorant Kittiwake Herring Gull Peregrine	Same Subcatchment	Screened In – The boundary of this SPA overlaps with the proposed development, therefore there is potential for impacts on the SCI species of this SPA.
Ardmore Head SAC (Site Code 2123) Distance: 3.5 km	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts European dry heaths	Same Subcatchment but no direct hydrological connectivity	Screened Out - No significant effects on this SAC are anticipated given the distance from the proposed development and the fact that there is no direct hydrological connectivity. There will be no significant effects upon the QI of this site from the proposed development.
Blackwater River (Cork Waterford) SAC (Site Code 2170) Distance: 4.1 km	Estuaries Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks Salicornia Mud Atlantic Salt Meadows Mediterranean Salt Meadows Floating River Vegetation Old Oak Woodlands Alluvial Forests Freshwater Pearl Mussel White-clawed Crayfish Sea Lamprey Brook Lamprey River Lamprey Twaite Shad Atlantic Salmon	Subcatchment Goish_SC_010	Screened Out - This SAC is in a separate WFD subcatchment to the proposed development. There is no hydrological connectivity and therefore significant effects upon this site will not arise.  The QI species for this SAC will not use the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA and therefore will not be affected by the proposed development.

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	Otter Killarney Fern		
Blackwater Estuary SPA (Site Code 4028) Distance: 8.3 km	Wigeon Golden Plover Lapwing Dunlin Black-tailed Godwit Bar-tailed Godwit Curlew Redshank Wetland and Waterbirds	Subcatchment Goish_SC_010	Screened Out – This SPA is in a separate WFD subcatchment to the proposed development. No significant effects on this SPA are anticipated given the distance from the proposed development and the fact that there is no direct hydrological connectivity. There will be no significant effects upon the SCI species of this SPA from the proposed development.  The SCI species for this SPA will not use the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA and therefore will not be affected by the proposed development.
Helvick Head SAC (Site Code 0665) Distance: 9.2 km	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts European dry heaths	Subcatchment Colligan_SC_010	Screened Out - This SAC is in a separate WFD subcatchment to the proposed development. There is no direct hydrological connectivity and therefore significant effects upon this SAC will not arise.
Dungarvan Harbour SPA (Site Code 4032) Distance: 9.5 km	Great Crested Grebe Light-bellied Brent Goose Shelduck Red-breasted Merganser Oystercatcher Golden Plover Grey Plover Lapwing Knot Dunlin Black-tailed Godwit Bar-tailed Godwit Curlew Redshank Turnstone Wetland and Waterbirds	Subcatchment Colligan_SC_010	Screened Out – This SPA is in a separate WFD subcatchment to the proposed development. No significant effects on this SPA are anticipated given the distance from the proposed development and the fact that there is no direct hydrological connectivity. There will be no significant effects upon the SCI species of this SPA from the proposed development.  The SCI species for this SPA will not use the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA and therefore will not be affected by the proposed development.

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### 3.4 Identification of Potential Impacts

The boundaries of the proposed development overlap with the boundary of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (Figure 2). Based on the precautionary principle, in a worst-case scenario and in the absence of mitigation, there is potential for impacts on the five SCI species (Chough, Cormorant Kittiwake, Herring Gull and Peregrine) of this SPA.

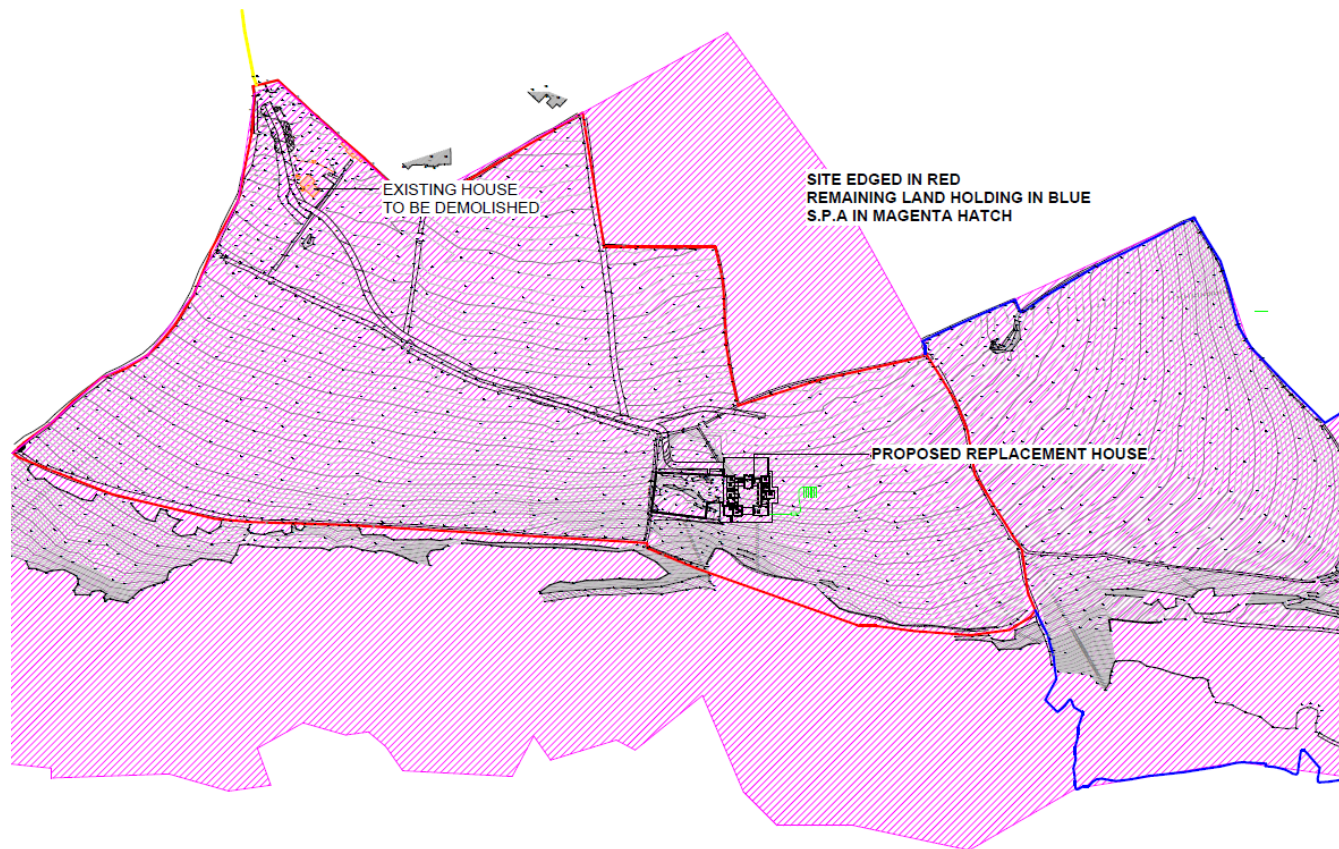


Figure 2 –Layout of Proposed Development in relation to Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (hatched area)

Therefore, following an evaluation of the relevant information including the characteristics of the proposed development and the potential for significant effects on the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA and the SCI species and with regards to the tenets of the precautionary principal, it is considered that it is not possible to exclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a likely significant effect on this European site.

Only those features of the proposed development that have the potential to affect the integrity and conservation objectives of the identified Natura site and SCI species have been considered. The following areas were examined in relation to potential impacts from the proposed development on the identified Natura 2000 site:

- Habitat loss and fragmentation;
- Noise and disturbance during construction;
- Surface water runoff and wastewater discharges;
- Spread of invasive species;
- In-combination/Cumulative impacts with other proposed/existing developments.

### **3.5 Assessment of Significance**

This section considers the list of European conservation sites identified in Section 3.3 (Table 1). It can be considered that all designated sites considered, with the exception of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA can be excluded from the remainder of the Appropriate Assessment process. This is based on the distance from the proposed development to these designated sites and the fact that these sites are outside of the Zone of Influence of the proposed development, with no direct hydrological connectivity and that no direct or indirect significant effects are predicted to arise.

### **3.6 Screening Conclusions**

The proposed development is directly connected to the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. Therefore, following consideration of the location of this Natura 2000 site in relation to the proposed development, and the potential impacts that may occur, this project must proceed to the next stage of Appropriate Assessment, namely the Natura Impact Statement.

## 4 Stage II – Appropriate Assessment

### 4.1 Introduction

The main objective of this stage (Stage 2, Natura Impact Statement) in the Appropriate Assessment process is to determine whether the proposed development (either alone or in combination with other plans, programmes and projects) will result in significant adverse effects to the integrity of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA with respect to this site's structures, species, functions and/or conservation objectives. This stage also outlines the mitigation measures that should be taken in order to avoid any negative impacts of this application, should it receive consent.

In this section, the Natura 2000 site identified in the previous section will be described in greater detail in terms of the site characteristics and conservation objectives.

### 4.2 Site-specific Conservation Objectives

For the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA, the Site-specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) were reviewed in light of the proposed development and the potential impacts that might occur.

A SSCO aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and;
- The specific structure and functions which 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.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is 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.

The SSCO for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA were downloaded from the NPWS website (NPWS, 2025a). Any potential threats to the attributes and targets as defined in these SSCO were assessed and where necessary, mitigated for.

### 4.3 Natura 2000 Sites Identified

#### Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (Site Code 4192)

*Summary of NPWS Site Synopsis (NPWS, 2015)*

Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA is a linear site situated on the south-west coast of Co. Waterford. It includes the sea cliffs and land adjacent to the cliff edge between Helvick Head in the east and Ballyquin townland in the south-west.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Chough, Peregrine, Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake.

The site supports a nationally important population of breeding Chough, a Red Data Book species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive; 11 breeding pairs were recorded from the site in the 1992 survey and 11 pairs in the 2002/03 survey. The low heath and agricultural farmland on the cliff tops provides good foraging habitat for this species. The site is also of importance for its Peregrine population (5 pairs in 2002).

In addition, the site has important breeding seabird populations, centered around Helvick Head. Nationally important populations of Cormorant (65 pairs), Herring Gull (117 pairs) and Kittiwake (1,037 pairs) occur, as well as smaller populations of other breeding seabirds: Razorbill (28 pairs), Fulmar (135 pairs), Shag (6 pairs), Guillemot (664 pairs), Great Black-backed Gull (8 pairs) and Black Guillemot (10 individuals) – all seabird data from 1999. Raven breed on the cliffs and there is a cliff-nesting colony of House Martins. Other species which breed within the site include Rock Pipit and Stonechat. The seabird colony at Helvick Head has been monitored at intervals since the Operation Seafarer project in 1969/70. In addition, more detailed population studies have been carried out on the Kittiwake colony.

The full NPWS synopsis for this site can be read in Appendix B.

#### *Site-specific Conservation Objectives*

SSCOs for this site were prepared in 2025 (NPWS, 2025a). The overall aim of the SSCOs is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the five SCI species (Chough, Cormorant Kittiwake, Herring Gull and Peregrine) at the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA, as defined by the attributes and targets summarised in Table 2 to Table 6.

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**Table 2 Summary of Conservation Objectives for Chough for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (NPWS, 2025a)**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Population size	Number of breeding pairs	Breeding population is increasing	Applying 2021 survey criteria gives SPA population estimate of 2 - 9 (1992), 7 - 12 pairs (2002/03) and 3 - 7 pairs (2021).
Population trend	Percentage change	Population trend stable or increasing	The population trend for the site is considered declining in the short term (i.e. 2002/03 - 2021) and more broadly stable in the longer term (1992 - 2021) based on assessments of change in the numbers of known 'confirmed' and 'probable' pair records only; and including all 'possible' breeding pair records for the site, applying 2021 criteria (Colhoun et al., 2024).
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per confirmed pair	Sufficient to maintain population size target	For Co. Waterford, a figure of 1.79 fledglings per successful pair was estimated by Trewby et al. (2010), using data from 14 breeding pairs. However, this estimate is based on one year's data, and may not be sufficiently representative for the SPA, and wider. Overall, there is a lack of robust representative Irish data to determine a more quantitative target for breeding productivity.
Foraging habitat: quality and quantity	Hectares (ha)	Maintain sufficient quality and quantity of coastal grassland and other relevant habitats to support the population targets.	Grazed habitats with short swards of <5cm are typically preferred, and areas of bare ground, where soils are easier to probe e.g. paths, along with earth banks and stone banks. Maritime vegetation on cliffs, especially in spring, is also favoured. Thus, sufficient foraging habitat within 350m of the coastline, where Chough are known to breed, is essential to support breeding pairs.
Food availability: prey biomass	Quantity per unit area	Maintain adequate levels of prey biomass (including preferred	Chough feed largely on invertebrates (e.g. ants, spiders, worms, insect larvae such as crane fly larvae, leatherjackets and dung beetles), at or near the soil surface where prey items are more accessible. In warmer

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		invertebrate prey items such as leatherjackets, dung beetles, etc.)	<p>weather, Chough can be seen picking off surface active insects, e.g. spiders, including from heather plants (Trewby et al., 2010).</p> <p>The dosing of livestock with veterinary parasiticide treatments (including anthelmintics) has knock-on consequences with respect to invertebrate density in grasslands on which Chough depend (Gilbert et al., 2019).</p>
Distribution of roosting sites	Spatial distribution	The distribution of preferred roosts is maintained.	<p>Post-breeding, Chough are highly social, forming mobile flocks that can travel several kilometres to feed (McGrath, 2022). Family groups form 'nursery' flocks in July, returning to nest sites to roost. By late summer, these flocks, along with non-breeding subadults, begin to converge pre-dusk at communal roost sites, departing post-dawn (Trewby et al., 2010; Blanco et al., 1993). Roosts are usually near good foraging habitats, like grazed dune systems, with peak attendance in late summer or early autumn, post-breeding.</p> <p>Mine Head, with highest recorded counts of c.29 Chough post-breeding season, is a notable communal roost site for the SPA, though attendance did drop in the autumn of 2008 as birds dispersed further west to the Ardmore to Whiting Bay section of coast (Trewby et al., 2010).</p>
Disturbance	Intensity, timing, frequency and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact upon Chough in the SPA	<p>Factors such as intensity, frequency, timing, duration of a (direct or indirect) disturbance source and location (e.g. if access to preferred food sources is restricted), must be taken into account to determine the potential impact upon the targets for population size, population trend, productivity rate and distribution of roosting sites. Further, site fidelity (e.g. pairs to nest sites while breeding, or flocks to roost sites at other times), weather (e.g. prolonged cold spells) and predation/competition should also be factored in.</p> <p>Coastal breeding pairs spend up to 80% of their time within 350m of the nest site (Trewby et al., 2006). For this SPA, 82% of all foraging</p>

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			observations were within 300m of mean high water (Trewby et al., 2010). Impacts are likely to be highest near nest sites (e.g. on coastal cliffs where available foraging habitats are more limited in total area) and at roost sites.
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**Table 3 Summary of Conservation Objectives for Cormorant for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (NPWS, 2025a)**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Breeding population size	Number of Apparently Occupied Nests	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	In 1987, an estimated 80 pairs of Cormorant bred at this SPA (Lloyd et al., 1991). Similarly, 83 pairs were recorded in 1999 (Mitchell et al., 2004) and 73 pairs in 2018 (Burnell et al., 2023) an overall decline of 9% since 1987.
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per breeding pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	There was no productivity data available for this species in this SPA. Further monitoring and research work is required in order to identify a minimum productivity rate for this species at this site and at the national level.
Distribution: extent of available nesting options within the SPA	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain a stable or increasing population	Distribution encapsulates the number of locations and area of potentially suitable nesting habitat for the breeding population and its availability for use.  Historically, Cormorant in this SPA have been recorded breeding at Seaview to Ballycurreen, Ballynamona, Mine Head, Helvick Head and Crobally to Paulsworth.
Forage spatial distribution,	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and	Cormorant diet consists predominantly of small benthic and pelagic fish captured by pursuit diving, typically over shallow (<10m) freshwater,

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<p>extent, abundance and availability</p>		<p>available forage biomass to support the population target</p>	<p>estuarine, and marine environments (Grémillet et al., 1998; Hatch et al., 2020a).</p> <p>Woodward et al. (2019) reviewed the foraging ranges of seabird species and provide estimates (i.e. overall mean; mean of maximum distances across all studies; and maximum distance recorded) of Cormorant foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 7km, 26km, and 35km respectively.</p>
<p>Disturbance at the breeding site</p>	<p>Intensity, frequency, timing and duration</p>	<p>Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site</p>	<p>Disturbance events at the nest site/breeding colony level can result in a reduction of overall productivity and even lead to the abandonment of the breeding colony.</p> <p>Exposure to recreational activities, such as kayaking, may disrupt breeding birds.</p>
<p>Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony</p>	<p>Intensity, frequency, timing and duration</p>	<p>Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on breeding population</p>	<p>Cormorant can make extensive use of the waters adjacent to their breeding colonies for non site-specific maintenance behaviours (e.g. courtship, bathing, preening) as defined in McSorley et al. (2003). Additionally, this species may engage in maintenance behaviours outside of the breeding colony but not in the water.</p> <p>Exposure to recreational activities, such as kayaking, may disrupt breeding birds.</p>
<p>Barriers to connectivity</p>	<p>Number, location, shape, and area (ha)</p>	<p>Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA</p>	<p>Breeding Cormorant may require regular and efficient access to waters ecologically connected to the colony in order to forage as well as to engage in other maintenance behaviours.</p> <p>Woodward et al. (2019) reviewed the foraging ranges of seabird species and provide estimates (i.e. overall mean; mean of maximum distances across all studies; and maximum distance recorded) of Cormorant foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 7km, 26km, and 35km respectively.</p>

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**Table 4 Summary of Conservation Objectives for Kittiwake for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (NPWS, 2025a)**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Breeding population size	Number of Apparently Occupied Nests	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	<p>Ussher and Warren (1900) state that Co. Waterford had no significant Kittiwake colonies while Kennedy et al. (1954) and Ruttledge (1966) only mention Dunmore East as a breeding colony in the county.</p> <p>However, a significant Kittiwake colony was established at Helvick Head at some point in the past, with an estimated 1,483 pairs recorded in 1987 (Lloyd et al., 1991). The population estimate in 1999 for Helvick Head was lower, with 934 pairs. This combined with an additional 103 pairs at Ballymona brought the overall SPA total to 1,037 pairs (Mitchell et al., 2004). Based on a 2018 survey the SPA has experienced an acute decline with only 65 pairs recorded, which were restricted to Helvick Head. This equates to a decline of 96% since 1987 (Burnell et al., 2023).</p>
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per breeding pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	<p>There was no productivity data available for this species in this SPA.</p> <p>Further monitoring and research work is required in order to identify a minimum productivity rate for this species at this site.</p>
Distribution: extent of available nesting options within the SPA	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain a stable or increasing population	<p>Distribution encapsulates the number of locations and area of potentially suitable nesting habitat for the breeding population and its availability for use. Typically, this species is a cliff-nester on ledges of offshore islands, sea stacks and inaccessible areas of coastal mainland (Hatch et al., 2020b).</p> <p>Nesting Kittiwake are now entirely located at Helvick Head in this SPA.</p>
Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	<p>Kittiwake is a surface feeding seabird and primarily piscivorous (e.g. sandeels, herring, gadoids), with some invertebrates (e.g. euphausiids, amphipods) in the diet also recorded (Hatch et al., 2020b).</p>

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			Woodward et al. (2019) provide estimates (i.e. overall mean, mean of maximum distances across all studies, and maximum distance recorded) of Kittiwake foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 55km, 156km, and 770km respectively.
Disturbance at the breeding site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	Disturbance events at the nest site/breeding colony level can result in a reduction of overall productivity and even lead to the abandonment of the breeding colony.  Disturbance contributes to increased energetic expenditure, which can result in increased likelihood of mortality or reduced fitness (if energy expenditure is greater than energy gain) and, in turn, negatively impact population trends.
Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	Seabird species can make extensive use of the marine waters adjacent to their breeding colonies for non site-specific maintenance behaviours (e.g. courtship, bathing, preening), as defined in McSorley et al. (2003).
Barriers to connectivity	Number, location, shape, and area (ha)	Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	Seabirds, particularly during the breeding season, require regular and efficient access to marine waters ecologically connected to the colony in order to forage as well as to engage in other maintenance behaviours. Woodward et al. (2019) provide estimates (i.e. overall mean, mean of maximum distances across all studies, and maximum distance recorded) of Kittiwake foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 55km, 156km, and 770km respectively.

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**Table 5 Summary of Conservation Objectives for Herring Gull for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (NPWS, 2025a)**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Breeding population size	Number of Apparently Occupied Nests	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	Ussher and Warren (1900) state that Herring Gull was the main breeding gull species on the Co. Waterford coast at that time. Combining survey estimates from different count sections from 1985 and 1987 leads to an overall estimate of approximately 325 pairs (NPWS internal files). An estimated 125 pairs were recorded breeding at this site in 1999 (Mitchell et al., 2004) indicating a decline. However, the population was estimated to be 228 pairs in 2018, an increase of 82% compared to the 1999 estimate but a decline of 30% from the mid-1980s (Burnell et al., 2023).
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per breeding pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	There was no productivity data available for this species in this SPA. A lack of comprehensive Irish data precludes the identification of a minimum productivity rate for this species at the site and at the national level.
Distribution: extent of available nesting options within the SPA	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain a stable or increasing population	Typically, coastal Herring Gull colonies are located along rocky coastlines with cliffs, islets and offshore islands (Mitchell et al., 2004). Herring Gull nesting areas are widespread throughout the SPA and have been recorded breeding in most subsites within the SPA since the Seabirds Colony Register (1985 - 1988).
Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	Herring Gull is a generalist and opportunistic feeder and can forage over both terrestrial and aquatic habitats. Its diet includes fish, fish offal, bivalves, gastropods, crustaceans, squid, insects, other seabirds, small land birds, small mammals, terrestrial insects, earthworms, berries, carrion, and a wide variety of human refuse (Weseloh et al., 2020).

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			Woodward et al. (2019) provide estimates (i.e. overall mean, mean of maximum distances across all studies, and maximum distance recorded) of Herring Gull foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 15km, 59km, and 92km respectively.
Disturbance at the breeding site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	Disturbance events at the nest site/breeding colony level can result in a reduction of overall productivity and even lead to the abandonment of the breeding colony.  Disturbance contributes to increased energetic expenditure, which can result in increased likelihood of mortality or reduced fitness (if energy expenditure is greater than energy gain) and, in turn, negatively impact population trends.
Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	Seabird species can make extensive use of the marine waters adjacent to their breeding colonies for non site-specific maintenance behaviours (e.g. courtship, bathing, preening), as defined in McSorley et al. (2003).
Barriers to connectivity	Number, location, shape, and area (ha)	Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	Seabirds, particularly during the breeding season, require regular and efficient access to marine waters ecologically connected to the colony in order to forage as well as to engage in other maintenance behaviours.  Woodward et al. (2019) provide estimates (i.e. overall mean, mean of maximum distances across all studies, and maximum distance recorded) of Herring Gull foraging ranges from the nest site during the breeding season, which are 15km, 59km, and 92km respectively.

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**Table 6 Summary of Conservation Objectives for Peregrine for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (NPWS, 2025a)**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Population size	Number of occupied territories	Breeding population is increasing	The 1991 national survey recorded 6 occupied territories in the SPA, and the 2002 national survey reported 5 (NPWS internal files). The 2017 national survey, meanwhile, found only one occupied territory in the SPA, and 5 previously occupied sites were vacant (NPWS internal files).  Coastal Co. Waterford held 8 Peregrine breeding sites in 1900 (Ussher and Warren, 1900), 11 occupied territories in 1981 (Norriss and Wilson, 1983), 23 occupied territories in 1991 (Norriss, 1995), and 8 occupied territories in 2017 (NPWS internal files).
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per territorial pair	Sufficient to maintain the population size target	In 1981, 73% of Peregrine pairs on the Waterford coast bred successfully (Norriss and Wilson, 1983). In the 1981 - 1986 period, the productivity rate on the Waterford coast was 0.95, with 43% breeding success (McGrath, 2002). In 1991, only 26% of pairs on the Waterford coast bred successfully (Norriss, 1995). Only 1 fledgling was recorded in the SPA in 2017. A lack of comprehensive published annual data precludes the identification of a minimum productivity rate for this species at this site and at the national level.
Distribution: extent of occupied territories within site	Number and distribution of occupied territories across site	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain the population	Peregrine defend nesting territories, with mean nearest neighbour distances between pairs in districts of Britain ranging from 2.1 - 9km (Ratcliffe, 1993). The mean nearest-neighbour distance between pairs on the Dingle, Iveragh, and Waterford coasts in 1981 was 4.8km (Norriss and Wilson, 1983).
Foraging spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat, and available prey biomass (i.e. small-	Peregrine have a generalist diet, feeding largely on birds caught in flight, and require sufficient prey populations of small- to medium-sized birds, though other prey items including small mammals are also taken. At coastal sites in Scotland, auks, petrels, Fulmar, Black-headed

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		to medium-sized birds, mammals) to support the population target	Gull and Oystercatcher are also taken (Ratcliffe, 1993). Most prey items are caught within 2km of an eyrie, rarely beyond 6km, and hunting areas of neighbouring pairs can overlap (Harvey et al., 2009).
Disturbance to breeding sites	Intensity, timing, frequency and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact upon the breeding population	Activities above a nest are more likely to cause disturbance than those below. Disturbance and persecution of breeding Peregrine on the Waterford coast has been an issue for decades. McGrath (1987) noted that all eyries studied in south-east Ireland were subject to some degree of casual disturbance, likely causing some breeding attempts to fail. McGrath (2002) surmised that persecution has constrained the breeding population in south-east Ireland, and surveys in 2002 and 2017 found that nests in this SPA had been deliberately interfered with.

#### 4.4 Site Visit

A site visit was conducted on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026. The terrestrial habitats within the proposed development site were classified using the classification scheme outlined in the Heritage council publication *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossitt, 2000). The proposed site consists of improved grassland, equivalent to Improved agricultural grassland (GA1), as per Fossitt (2000).

Images from around the proposed site are shown in Figures 3 to 8.



**Figure 3** Habitat within proposed site, from SE corner looking N, showing improved grassland and bordering stone wall with brambles



**Figure 4** Habitat within proposed site, from SE corner looking NW towards house location



**Figure 5** Habitat within proposed site, from SE corner looking NW towards house location



**Figure 6** Habitat within proposed site, from SE corner looking W towards Ardmore



**Figure 7** Habitat within adjacent landholding, from NE corner of site looking E



**Figure 8** Habitat within proposed site and adjacent gorse coastal habitat (outside site), from SE of house location looking W

A walkover ecology survey was conducted within the proposed site on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026. A total of 132 birds of 17 species were recorded within or flying over the proposed site during the walkover survey (Table 7).

**Table 7** Numbers of birds recorded within the Proposed Site during walkover bird survey in January 2026

Species	Number recorded within site	Number recorded flying over site
Woodpigeon ( <i>Columba palumbus</i> )	0	1
Curlew ( <i>Numenius arquata</i> )	0	1
Herring Gull	0	6
Hooded Crow ( <i>Corvus cornix</i> )	1	0
Jackdaw ( <i>Corvus monedula</i> )	0	2
Rook ( <i>Corvus frugilegus</i> )	61	0
Blue Tit ( <i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i> )	1	0
Wren ( <i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i> )	7	0
Starling ( <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> )	0	5
Blackbird ( <i>Turdus merula</i> )	4	0
Robin ( <i>Erithacus rubecula</i> )	5	0
Stonechat ( <i>Saxicola rubicola</i> )	7	0
Dunnock ( <i>Prunella modularis</i> )	1	0
Pied Wagtail ( <i>Motacilla alba yarreli</i> )	1	0
Meadow Pipit ( <i>Anthus pratensis</i> )	25	0
Rock Pipit ( <i>Anthus petrosus</i> )	1	0
Goldfinch ( <i>Carduelis carduelis</i> )	3	0
<b>Total number of birds</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Number of species</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>

Rook and Meadow Pipit were the most frequently recorded species within the proposed site during the survey, accounting for 65.2% of all birds recorded.

Species that were not recorded on the walkover survey but are considered likely to regularly occur within the site based on the habitats present include Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), Magpie (*Pica pica*), Chough, Great Tit (*Parus major*), Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) and Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*). Species such as Raven, Kestrel and Peregrine are also considered likely to pass through the proposed site.

### *Bird species of Conservation Concern*

BirdWatch Ireland (BWI) have compiled a list identifying bird species of high, medium and low conservation priority in Ireland, based on several criteria (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021). There are 54 species currently included on the Red List. A total of two BWI Red-listed species (Curlew and Meadow Pipit) were recorded within the proposed site on the January 2026 walkover survey. Meadow Pipit is considered likely to occur within the site regularly throughout the year and is likely to breed within the site. One Curlew was seen flying over the site on the January survey, and this species is likely to occur within the site in low numbers in winter months.

Meadow Pipit was previously Red-listed in Ireland, as there was a short-term decline (over a 13-year period) of more than 50% of their breeding population (Colhoun & Cummins 2013). It is considered that the population declined suddenly because of severe winters between 2009/10 and 2011/12. However, data from the Countryside Bird Survey (CBS) indicate that the population has been in recovery since 2011 (Crowe *et al.*, 2014).

Although Meadow Pipit was still Red-listed as a breeding species in Ireland in the most recent status update, this is because this species is considered to be of global conservation concern by Birdlife International, rather than due to any decline in numbers in Ireland (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021).

Curlew is Red-listed in Ireland as there has been declines in the breeding population and range as well as the wintering population in both the short- and long-term periods (Gilbert *et al.*, 2021).

### *SCI species*

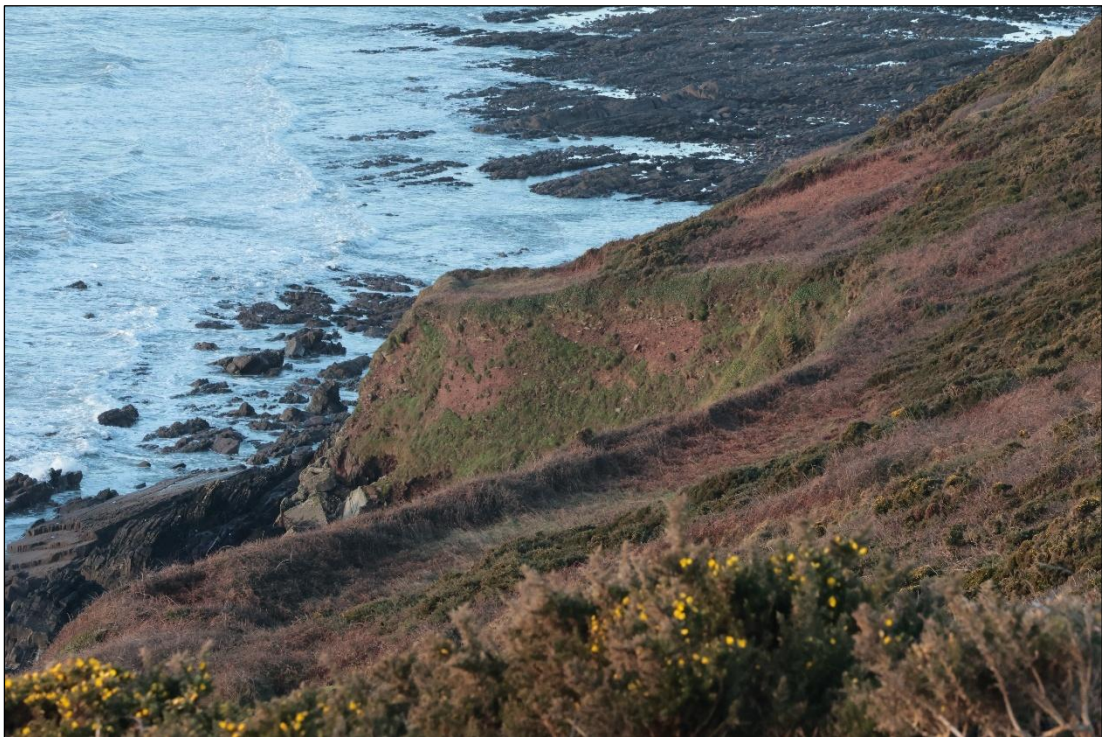
There are five SCI species listed for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (Chough, Cormorant Kittiwake, Herring Gull and Peregrine) and the overall aim of the SSCOs for this SPA is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of these species within the SPA.

Although no Chough were recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development on the January 2026 walkover survey, it is considered that the species is likely to forage and fly through the proposed site based on the habitats present. The SPA breeding population of Chough was considered to be between three and seven pairs in 2021 (Table 2). Although the proposed site predominantly consists of Improved agricultural grassland (GA1), as per Fossitt (2000), which is not considered an important foraging habitat for Chough, there are areas of coastal grassland and low heath adjacent to the proposed site that offer better foraging habitat (Figure 9). The habitats in these areas will not be affected by the proposed development and will remain available for foraging Chough after construction of the proposed house.

The cliff habitat immediately south of the proposed house is shown in Figure 10. This habitat is considered to offer predominantly foraging habitat to Chough, rather than breeding habitat, as the cliff faces appear to contain few natural crevices for nesting. On this basis, construction of the proposed house is not considered likely to cause disturbance to breeding Choughs from the SPA, due to limited breeding habitat in the vicinity of the development, and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).



**Figure 9** Example of coastal grassland habitat to the south of site boundary wall, outside of the proposed site, with improved grassland habitat within the site boundary



**Figure 10** Coastal habitat immediately south of proposed house location, outside site

Cormorant was not recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development on the January 2026 walkover survey, however, birds are likely to feed offshore. Cormorants typically nest in colonies, building nests on the ground at coastal locations such as cliffs, stacks and offshore islands (Burnell et al., 2023). The SPA breeding population was estimated to be 73 pairs in 2018 (Table 3). The cliff habitat immediately south of the proposed house (Figure 4) is considered unlikely to offer suitable breeding habitat for Cormorant, as the cliffs are low and grassy down to the sea, with limited opportunities for nesting.

Kittiwake was not recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development on the January 2026 walkover survey, however, birds are likely to feed offshore, with highest numbers occurring in the summer months. Kittiwakes nest on rocky cliffs in colonies, and the SPA breeding population was estimated to be 65 pairs in 2018, all located at Helvick Head, approximately 15 km east of the proposed site (Table 5).

A total of six herring Gulls were recorded flying over the proposed development on the January 2026 walkover survey. The species is considered likely to occur in the vicinity of the proposed development throughout the year. Herring gulls typically nest in a variety of coastal habitats, including rocky coastlines, cliffs and offshore islands (Mitchell et al., 2004). The SPA breeding population was estimated to be 228 pairs in 2018, and Herring Gull nesting areas were widespread throughout the SPA (Table 4). The cliff habitat immediately south of the proposed house (Figure 10) may be suitable for breeding Herring Gulls, although the cliffs are low and grassy down to the sea, with limited opportunities for nesting.

Peregrine was not recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development on the January 2026 walkover survey, however it is considered that the species is likely to fly and hunt through the proposed site based on the habitats present. It is considered that Peregrines are unlikely to breed on the cliffs in the immediate vicinity of the proposed house as the coastal habitat immediately south of the proposed house does not represent typical Peregrine nesting habitat, with no high rocky cliffs or ledges for nesting (Figure 10). The 2017 national breeding survey recorded only one occupied Peregrine territory in the SPA, with five previously occupied sites vacant (Table 6).

### *Mammals*

Two rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) were recorded within the proposed site on the January 2026 survey, and there were signs of fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) runs seen within the site. These species are considered likely to use the site regularly. Pygmy Shrew (*Sorex minutus*) and Bank Vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*) are also likely to occur within the site.

Bat species such as Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Leisler's Bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) are likely to forage along the treelines and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site. The open fields where the proposed house will be situated are less likely to be utilized by foraging bats as they typically prefer to forage along linear features such as hedges, rather than flying over more open habitat such as farmland.

### *Ecological Assessment*

The proposed development is located within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. An ecological appraisal of the proposed site indicates that it consists predominantly of improved grassland, equivalent to Improved agricultural grassland (GA1), bordered by fences, with some walls and hedgerows (WL1), consisting of

species such as Hawthorn and Bramble as per Fossitt (2000). The habitats recorded within the proposed development do not correspond to habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

The majority of bird species recorded within the proposed site were found in hedges and small areas of cover around the boundary edges of the site. Following construction of the proposed house, the boundary hedges and majority of the habitats within the site will remain in place and will therefore remain available to bird and mammal species in the area for foraging and breeding.

A full landscaping plan has been prepared for the planning submission, and a copy of the integrated Land Management and Sustainable Living Planning Supporting Statement (Appendix C) and the Site Analysis and Zoning Plan (Appendix D) have been included as part of this NIS.

### 4.5 Consultation

No specific consultation with NPWS was undertaken regarding the proposed development. However, a previous planning application within the Galley Head to Duneen Point SPA in County Cork contained a copy of a letter from NPWS to Cork County Council dated 12<sup>th</sup> March 2007, outlining the NPWS position regarding SPAs for Chough.

The NPWS letter states that “with regard to the Chough, the scientific advice available to the Minister suggests that development of single rural dwellings does not in general represent a threat to the Chough or its habitat”. A copy of the NPWS letter is attached in Appendix E.

### 4.6 Potential Impacts

Potential impacts relate to habitat loss, changes to water quality (during construction and operation), the spread of invasive species and disturbance effects during the proposed works. Based on the *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provision of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission (EC), 2018 and most recent guidelines from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2022) impacts are listed as significant using a combination of professional judgement and criteria or standards where available, if impacts have the potential to have a significant impact on the ecological integrity on the habitats and species for which the site is designated.

The potential impacts associated with the proposed works are discussed below with respect to their likelihood to have significant impacts on European sites.

As part of this assessment, direct, indirect and in-combination impacts on the five SCI species (Chough, Peregrine, Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake) for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA were considered. Direct impacts refer to habitat loss or fragmentation arising from land-take requirements for development. Indirect and secondary impacts do not have a straight-line route between cause and effect, and it is potentially more challenging to ensure that all the possible indirect impacts of the project/plan - in combination with other plans and projects have been established.

Potential impacts were identified as follows:

- Potential impacts from loss of habitat
- Potential impacts from noise and disturbance during construction

- Potential impacts from surface water runoff and wastewater discharges
- Spread of invasive species
- In-combination impacts

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*Potential impacts from habitat loss*

The proposed development is located within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. An ecological appraisal of the proposed site indicates that it consists of improved grassland, equivalent to Improved agricultural grassland (GA1), bordered by fences, with some walls and hedgerows (WL1), consisting of species such as Hawthorn and Bramble as per Fossitt (2000) (see Section 4.4). The habitats recorded within the proposed development do not correspond to habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive.

The proposed development site is located within Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1) habitat (Figures 3 to 8). This improved grassland habitat within the development site could potentially provide limited foraging habitat for Chough, however, this species typically prefers close-grazed habitats with short swards of <5cm, along with areas of bare ground, where soils are easier to probe e.g. paths, along with earth banks and stone banks (Figure 9 and Figure 10). Maritime vegetation on cliffs, especially in spring, is also favoured (NPWS, 2025a). The existing improved grazing habitat within the proposed development is not ideal or valuable foraging habitat for Chough.

Based on the lack of valuable Chough foraging habitat within the proposed development, the proposed development will not result in any significant loss of foraging habitat for Chough in the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. The majority of the Improved Agricultural Grassland habitat within the proposed site will remain intact following construction of the proposed house, and will be managed to maximise the potential for foraging Chough habitat as outlined in the integrated Land Management and Sustainable Living Planning Supporting Statement (Appendix C) and the Site Analysis and Zoning Plan (Appendix D).

The total area of the footprint of the proposed house, garden and access road is approximately 0.4 hectares, while the total area of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA is 784.3 hectares (NPWS, 2025b). The estimated area of Improved Agricultural Grassland habitat lost as a result of the proposed development would therefore be approximately 0.05% of the total area of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. However, this is considered to be an over-estimate as some of the proposed development will remain as grassland habitat in the form of gardens for the proposed house.

Overall, the potential impact of habitat loss within the SPA for Chough is considered to be negligible, based on:

- The small footprint of the development in relation to the size of the SPA;
- The habitat that will be lost is predominantly Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1), which is not a valuable foraging habitat for Chough;
- No coastal grassland/cliff habitat will be disturbed as a result of the proposed development;
- Following completion of the proposed development, the majority of the Improved Agricultural Grassland habitat within the proposed site will remain intact, and will be managed to improve species diversity as outlined in the integrated Land Management and Sustainable Living Planning Supporting Statement (Appendix C).

Based on the lack of suitable foraging habitat within the proposed development for Cormorant, the proposed development will not result in any loss of foraging habitat for this species in the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. The cliff habitat immediately south of the proposed house (Figure 4) is considered unlikely to offer suitable breeding habitat for Cormorant, as the cliffs are low and grassy down to the sea, with limited opportunities for nesting.

On this basis, construction of the proposed house is not considered likely to cause disturbance to breeding Cormorants from the SPA, due to limited breeding habitat in the vicinity of the development, and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).

Based on the lack of suitable foraging habitat within the proposed development for Kittiwake, the proposed development will not result in any loss of foraging habitat for this species in the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA.

Kittiwakes nest on rocky cliffs in colonies, and the SPA breeding population was estimated to be 65 pairs in 2018, all located at Helvick Head, approximately 15 km east of the proposed site (NPWS, 2025a). Based on this distance, it is considered that construction of the proposed house is not considered likely to cause disturbance to breeding Kittiwakes at the Helvick Head colony. Construction is also considered unlikely to cause disturbance to any kittiwakes foraging off the coast of the proposed development, due to the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).

Based on the limited suitable foraging habitat within the proposed development for Herring Gull, the proposed development will not result in any significant loss of foraging habitat for this species in the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA.

The cliff habitat immediately south of the proposed house (Figure 10) may be suitable for breeding Herring Gulls, although the cliffs are low and grassy down to the sea, with limited opportunities for nesting. If Herring Gulls do nest in the vicinity, construction of the proposed house is not considered likely to cause disturbance to breeding birds during the breeding season, due to limited breeding habitat in the vicinity of the development, and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point). In addition, it should be noted that the majority of the land between the proposed house and the cliffs to the south is not in the Client's ownership.

Peregrine was not recorded in the vicinity of the proposed development on the January 2026 walkover survey, however it is considered that the species is likely to fly and hunt through the proposed site based on the habitats present. The Improved Agricultural Grassland habitat that will be lost as a result of the construction of the proposed house is not a valuable foraging habitat for Peregrine.

It is considered that Peregrines are unlikely to breed on the cliffs in the immediate vicinity of the proposed house as the coastal habitat immediately south of the proposed house does not represent typical Peregrine nesting habitat, with no high rocky cliffs or ledges for nesting (Figure 10).

On this basis, construction of the proposed house is not considered likely to cause disturbance to breeding Peregrines from the SPA, due to limited breeding habitat in the vicinity of the development, and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).

Overall, the area of improved grazing habitat lost as a result of the proposed development would be negligible compared to the total area of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. No coastal grassland/cliff

habitat will be disturbed as a result of the proposed development. Following completion of the proposed development, the remaining Improved Agricultural Grassland within the proposed site will be managed to improve the species diversity as outlined in the integrated Land Management and Sustainable Living Planning Supporting Statement (Appendix C). On this basis, it is concluded that habitat loss from the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the ecological integrity of the habitats and species for which the site is designated.

*Potential impacts from noise and disturbance during construction*

Potentially increased noise and disturbance associated with construction works could cause disturbance/displacement of SCI species from the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA in the vicinity. Disturbance associated with construction works could cause sensitive species to deviate from their normal, preferred behaviour, resulting in stress, increased energy expenditure and, in some cases, impacts on reproductive success.

However, it is not anticipated that construction works associated with the proposed development will result in excessive increased noise and disturbance in the vicinity. As the current land-use is intensive agriculture, farm machinery such as tractors and silage cutters are regularly used in these fields, therefore species in the vicinity will be habituated to such activity.

As highlighted above, the habitat in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development is Improved Agricultural Grassland, which is not valuable foraging habitat for Chough, therefore birds are unlikely to use this area regularly. This area is also not likely to be used by the other SCI species (Peregrine, Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake) as the habitat is not suitable for these species.

In addition, any construction works will be temporary and short-term, and consequently any noise and disturbance associated with specific construction activities will not be of a long duration.

Based on this, it is considered that there will be no significant effects on the populations of the SCI species for the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA as a result of noise and disturbance from construction works.

*Potential impacts from surface water runoff and wastewater discharges*

Potential impacts on aquatic habitats which can arise from surface water emissions during the construction phase of the proposed development include increased silt levels in surface water run-off, or inadvertent spillages of hydrocarbons from fuel and hydraulic fluid.

It is noted that environmental control measures will be implemented during construction in line with standard guidelines. The site suitability assessment recommended that the proposed house wastewater installation will comply with the 2021 EPA Code of Practice for Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (EPA, 2021). The tank system should meet the requirement of IS EN 12566-3-2205 and SR66. Tanks are to be de-sludged regularly and all records of service work of de-sludging should be kept. In addition, the management of surface water runoff during operation of the proposed development has been built into the project design.

The design and small scale of the proposed development means there is no significant risk of any impacts arising from surface water runoff and wastewater discharges. Therefore, there will not be a significant

impact on water quality within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA due to surface water runoff or wastewater discharges from the proposed development.

*Spread of invasive species*

No high-risk invasive species were recorded within the proposed development site on the January 2026 walkover survey, and no soil or similar material will be brought onto the site during construction. Therefore, there is no risk that the spread of invasive species will occur as a result of construction. Therefore, there will be no significant effects on the SCI species population of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA via the spread of invasive species.

*Positive impact*

A full landscaping plan has been prepared for the planning submission, and a copy of the integrated Land Management and Sustainable Living Planning Supporting Statement (Appendix C) and the Site Analysis and Zoning Plan (Appendix D) have been included as part of this NIS.

The landscaping plan includes rotational grazing in some areas of the proposed site, along with the creation of biodiverse grassy swards and commitments to minimise the use of anti-parasitic treatments and to minimise using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.

These actions are considered likely to improve the condition of foraging habitat for Chough within the proposed site, thus benefitting the Chough population of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA.

*Summary of Potential Impacts on SSCOs for SCI species*

Potential impacts on the SSCOs for the five SCI species (Chough, Cormorant Kittiwake, Herring Gull and Peregrine) within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA arising from the proposed development have been summarised in Table 8 to Table 12, based on the SSCOs listed in Table 2 to Table 6.

**Table 8 Potential impacts on the SSCOs for Chough within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Predicted impact of proposed development</b>
Population size	Number of breeding pairs	No significant decline	Proposed development is not predicted to result in any decline in the SPA population size due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Population trend	Percentage change	Population trend stable or increasing	The population trend for the SPA is considered declining in the short term (i.e. 2002/03 - 2021) and more broadly stable in the longer term (1992 - 2021) (Table 2). The proposed development is not predicted to result in any

			change in the SPA population trend due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per confirmed pair	Sufficient to maintain population size target	Overall, there is a lack of robust representative Irish data to determine a more quantitative target for breeding productivity for the SPA. However, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the productivity rate for the breeding Chough population in the SPA, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Foraging habitat: quality and quantity	Hectares (ha)	Maintain sufficient quality and quantity of coastal grassland and other relevant habitats to support the population of Chough	<p>Sufficient foraging habitat within 350m of the coastline, where Chough are known to breed, is essential to support breeding pairs.</p> <p>The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change to the quality and quantity of coastal grassland or other relevant habitats, as the only habitat that will be affected is Improved Agricultural Grassland, which is not considered a valuable habitat for foraging Chough.</p> <p>Post-construction, GA1 habitat within the proposed site will be managed to improve foraging conditions for Chough (Appendix C).</p>
Food availability: prey biomass	Quantity per unit area	Maintain adequate levels of prey biomass	<p>Proposed development is not predicted to reduce levels of prey biomass within Chough foraging habitats within the SPA.</p> <p>There are commitments to minimise the use of anti-parasitic treatments and synthetic fertilizers and pesticides (Appendix C). This is predicted to increase food availability within the proposed site, and therefore benefit the SPA Chough population.</p>

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Distribution of roosting sites	Spatial distribution	The distribution of preferred roosts is maintained.	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any disturbance to roosting sites used by Chough within the SPA.
Disturbance	Intensity, timing, frequency and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact upon Chough in the SPA	Proposed development is not predicted to result in disturbance levels that would impact significantly on Chough within the SPA.

**Table 9 Potential impacts on the SSCOs for Cormorant within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Predicted impact of proposed development</b>
Breeding population size	Number of Apparently Occupied Nests	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	Proposed development is not predicted to result in any decline in the SPA population size due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per confirmed pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	There was no productivity data available for this species in this SPA. However, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the productivity rate for the breeding Cormorant population in the SPA, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Distribution: extent of available nesting options	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable nesting sites for Cormorants in the SPA, as there will be no change to any cliff habitat arising from the proposed development.

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within the SPA		maintain a stable or increasing population	
Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable foraging locations for Cormorants in the SPA, as there will be no change to any offshore habitats arising from the proposed development.
Disturbance at the breeding site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	There is not predicted to be any increase in disturbance levels associated with the proposed development on Cormorants breeding within the SPA, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on breeding population	There is not predicted to be any increase in disturbance levels associated with the proposed development on Cormorants using areas ecologically connected to the colony, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Barriers to connectivity	Number, location, shape, and area (ha)	Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	The proposed development is not predicted to result in barriers that would impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

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**Table 10 Potential impacts on the SSCOs for Kittiwake within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Predicted impact of proposed development
Breeding population size	Number of Apparently Occupied Nests	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	Based on a 2018 survey the SPA has experienced an acute decline with only 65 pairs recorded, which were restricted to Helvick Head (Table 4). Proposed development is not predicted to result in any decline in the SPA population size due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the Helvick Head colony (approximately 15 km).
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per breeding pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	There was no productivity data available for this species in this SPA. However, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the productivity rate for the breeding Kittiwake population in the SPA, due to the distance between the house location and the Helvick Head colony (approximately 15 km).
Distribution: extent of available nesting options within the SPA	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain a stable or increasing population	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable nesting sites for Kittiwakes in the SPA, as there will be no change to any cliff habitat arising from the proposed development.
Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable foraging locations for Kittiwakes in the SPA, as there will be no change to any offshore habitats arising from the proposed development.

Disturbance at the breeding site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any disturbance at the breeding site, due to the distance between the house location and the Helvick Head colony (approximately 15 km).
Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on breeding population	There is not predicted to be any increase in disturbance levels associated with the proposed development on Kittiwakes using areas ecologically connected to the colony, due to the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Barriers to connectivity	Number, location, shape, and area (ha)	Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	The proposed development is not predicted to result in barriers that would impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

**Table 11 Potential impacts on the SSCOs for Herring Gull within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA**

Attribute	Measure	Target	Predicted impact of proposed development
Breeding population size	Number of Apparently Occupied Nests	Long term SPA population trend is stable or increasing	<p>The SPA population was estimated to be 228 pairs in 2018, an increase of 82% compared to the 1999 estimate but a decline of 30% from the mid-1980s (Table 5).</p> <p>The proposed development is not predicted to result in any decline in the SPA population size due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between</p>

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			the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per breeding pair	Sufficient to maintain a stable or increasing population	There was no productivity data available for this species in this SPA. However, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the productivity rate for the breeding Herring Gull population in the SPA, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Distribution: extent of available nesting options within the SPA	Numbers and spatial distribution	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain a stable or increasing population	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable nesting sites for Herring Gulls in the SPA, as there will be no change to any cliff habitat arising from the proposed development.
Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable foraging locations for Herring Gulls in the SPA, as there will be no change to any offshore habitats arising from the proposed development.
Disturbance at the breeding site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on birds at the breeding site	There is not predicted to be any increase in disturbance levels associated with the proposed development on Herring Gulls breeding within the SPA, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).

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Disturbance at areas ecologically connected to the colony	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact on breeding population	There is not predicted to be any increase in disturbance levels associated with the proposed development on Herring Gulls using areas ecologically connected to the colony, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Barriers to connectivity	Number, location, shape, and area (ha)	Barriers do not significantly impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	The proposed development is not predicted to result in barriers that would impact the population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

**Table 12 Potential impacts on the SSCOs for Peregrine within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA**

<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Measure</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Predicted impact of proposed development</b>
Population size	Number of occupied territories	Breeding population is increasing	<p>The 2017 national survey found only one occupied territory in the SPA, and 5 previously occupied sites were vacant.</p> <p>The proposed development is not predicted to result in any decline in the SPA population size due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).</p>
Productivity rate	Number of fledged young per territorial pair	Sufficient to maintain population size target	<p>A lack of comprehensive published annual data precludes the identification of a minimum productivity rate for this species at this site and at the national level.</p> <p>However, the proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the productivity rate for the breeding Peregrine</p>

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			population in the SPA, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).
Distribution: extent of occupied territories within site	Number and distribution of occupied territories across site	Sufficient availability of suitable nesting sites throughout the SPA to maintain the population	The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable nesting sites for Peregrines in the SPA, as there will be no change to any cliff habitat arising from the proposed development.
Foraging spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat, and available prey biomass (i.e. small- to medium-sized birds, mammals) to support the population target	Peregrine have a generalist diet, feeding largely on birds caught in flight, and require sufficient prey populations of small- to medium-sized birds, though other prey items including small mammals are also taken. At coastal sites in Scotland, auks, petrels, Fulmar, Black-headed Gull and Oystercatcher are also taken (Ratcliffe, 1993).  The proposed development is not predicted to result in any change in the availability of suitable foraging locations for Peregrines in the SPA, as apart from reducing Improved Agricultural Grassland habitat, there will be no change to any terrestrial or offshore habitats arising from the proposed development.
Disturbance to breeding sites	Intensity, timing, frequency and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact upon the breeding population	There is not predicted to be any increase in disturbance levels associated with the proposed development on Peregrines breeding within the SPA, due to limited nesting habitat in the vicinity of the proposed house location, the temporary nature of construction and the distance between the house location and the coast (approximately 150m at the closest point).

### *In-combination impacts*

This section of the NIS examines whether any other plans or projects have the potential to act cumulatively or in-combination with the proposed development to adversely affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites identified, i.e., the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA.

In-combination (cumulative) impacts refer to a series of individual impacts that may, in combination, produce a significant effect. The underlying intention of this in-combination provision is to take account of in-combination impacts from existing or proposed plans and projects and these will often only occur over time.

The Waterford County Council Online Planning Portal tool (<https://waterfordcouncil.ie/services/planning/online-planning-enquiries/>) was used to identify any current or future projects which may potentially impact on Natura 2000 sites when considered in combination with the proposed development.

There are no recent granted planning applications within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. There are three recent granted planning applications in the vicinity of the proposed development but outside of the SPA with valid approval in place (Waterford County Council Online Planning Portal, 2026). These were predominantly small-scale developments, similar in scale to the proposed development:

22448 – Retention for attic conversion into living accommodation and dormer/two-storey extension to rear and sides of existing dwelling and auxiliary site services – 2022

21776 – Retention for a shed including two stables, plus relocation of entrance along with necessary site works – 2022

23334 - Section 254 Licence for the erection of new over ground fibre optic cables on existing timber poles.  
2. Erection of new poles and associated fibre optic cables - 2024

There was one application in the vicinity of the proposed development but outside of the SPA with a current request for further information:

2560636 – Planning permission for the demolition of former forge and the blacksmith's dwelling house, and for the erection of a dwelling house (part single storey and part one and a half storeys) in its place, including an internal garage, new entrance and new waste water treatment system, a percolation area and all site development works associated with the construction – 2025.

As it was concluded that the proposed development alone would have no effect on the integrity of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA (Sections 2 & 3), it is considered that an in-combination effect with any other current project will also not arise.

Therefore, the proposed development will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European Site, in view of the site-specific conservation objectives and in view of best scientific knowledge, when considered in-combination with other plans & projects likely to have these effects.

Any future application in the area that has the potential to impact upon the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA will be subjected to Appropriate Assessment as required under Articles 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The

proposed development will have no cumulative impacts upon the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA when considered in combination with any other development that has been screened for no impacts themselves (Stage 1) or where potential impacts have been mitigated against (Stage 2 AA / NIS).

## 5 Mitigation Measures

In order to avoid any impacts to habitats within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA bordering the proposed development, a number of mitigation measures will be implemented and followed. These measures will protect the habitats and overall integrity of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. Measures have also been suggested that will help to protect the local biodiversity of the surrounding area and to ensure the protection of local wildlife. These are site-specific measures and their implementation will ensure the protection of Natura 2000 habitats and species, and the local non-designated ecological receptors. The primary parties responsible for the implementation of these measures include the applicants and the construction team (site manager, site workers).

- Site preparation and construction must be confined to the development site only and should adhere to all standard best practice measures and the measures outlined in this NIS. Work areas should be kept to the minimum area required to carry out the proposed works and the area should be clearly marked out in advance of the proposed works.
- All works associated with the development should be confined to the proposed development site. No disturbance to any adjacent area of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA should occur during the construction or operation of the development.
- There should be no discharges of contaminated waters to ground or surface waters from the proposed development, either during the construction or operation of the development.
- Best practice concrete / aggregate management measures should be employed on site.
- During construction, surface water on the site must be controlled and managed to avoid any impacts upon local ground or surface water receptors. Construction water should not be discharged directly into any watercourse.
- All waste associated with the development should be disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. Registered contractors should only be used. This includes any excavated soil. There must be no placement of soil or waste within any area designated as an SAC or SPA.
- The new treatment plants and percolation areas must be installed under the supervision of a suitably qualified engineer. They must be operated and maintained in accordance with the design specifications. They should be serviced and emptied regularly by a registered contractor.
- The removal of vegetation with herbicides should be minimised.
- Any landscaping should involve the planting of native Irish species that are indigenous to the site.

- Site verges and garden should be managed at a low intensity level to provide maximum habitat availability for pollinators.

## 6 Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

This NIS has been undertaken to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed development with regard to the effects upon the conservation objectives and the SCI species (Chough, Peregrine, Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake) of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. It is considered that following mitigation, the proposed development does not have the potential to significantly affect the conservation objectives of this SPA and the integrity of this SPA as a whole will not be adversely impacted.

The SCI species of the SPA (Chough, Peregrine, Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake) and their potential to be impacted upon from the potential development were considered in Section 4. It is considered that any potential impacts can be successfully mitigated against. With implementation of the mitigation measures listed in Section 5 there will be no impacts upon any designated habitat or any species dependent on these designated habitats. The attributes and targets which have been set out in order to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of these interests in the SPA will not be impacted upon.

In light of the above, it is considered that with the implementation of the mitigation measures, the proposed development does not have the potential to significantly affect the conservation objectives or qualifying interests of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA. The integrity of the SPA will not be adversely affected. Table 13 is based on the integrity of the SAC / SPA checklist (Appendix 5, DoEHLG, 2010) and demonstrates that the integrity of the SPA will not be affected by the proposed developments.

Table 13 Integrity of Site Checklist

<b>Conservation Objectives: Does the project have the potential to:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Reduce the population of key species?	No
Result in disturbance that could affect population size or density or the balance between key species?	No
Significantly reduce the area of key habitats?	No
Cause delays in progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	No
Interrupt progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	No
Disrupt those factors that help to maintain the favourable conditions of the site?	No
Interfere with the balance, distribution and density of key species that are the indicators of the favourable condition of the site?	No
<b>Other Objectives: does the project have the potential to:</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Cause changes to the vital defining aspects (e.g. nutrient balance) that determine how the site functions as a habitat or ecosystem?	No
Change the dynamics of the relationships (between, for example, soil and water or plants and animals) that define the structure and/or function of the site?	No
Interfere with predicted or expected natural changes to the site (such as water dynamics or chemical composition)?	No
Change the balance between key species?	No
Reduce diversity of the site?	No
Result in fragmentation?	No
Result in loss or reduction of key features (e.g. tree cover, tidal exposure, annual flooding, etc.)	No

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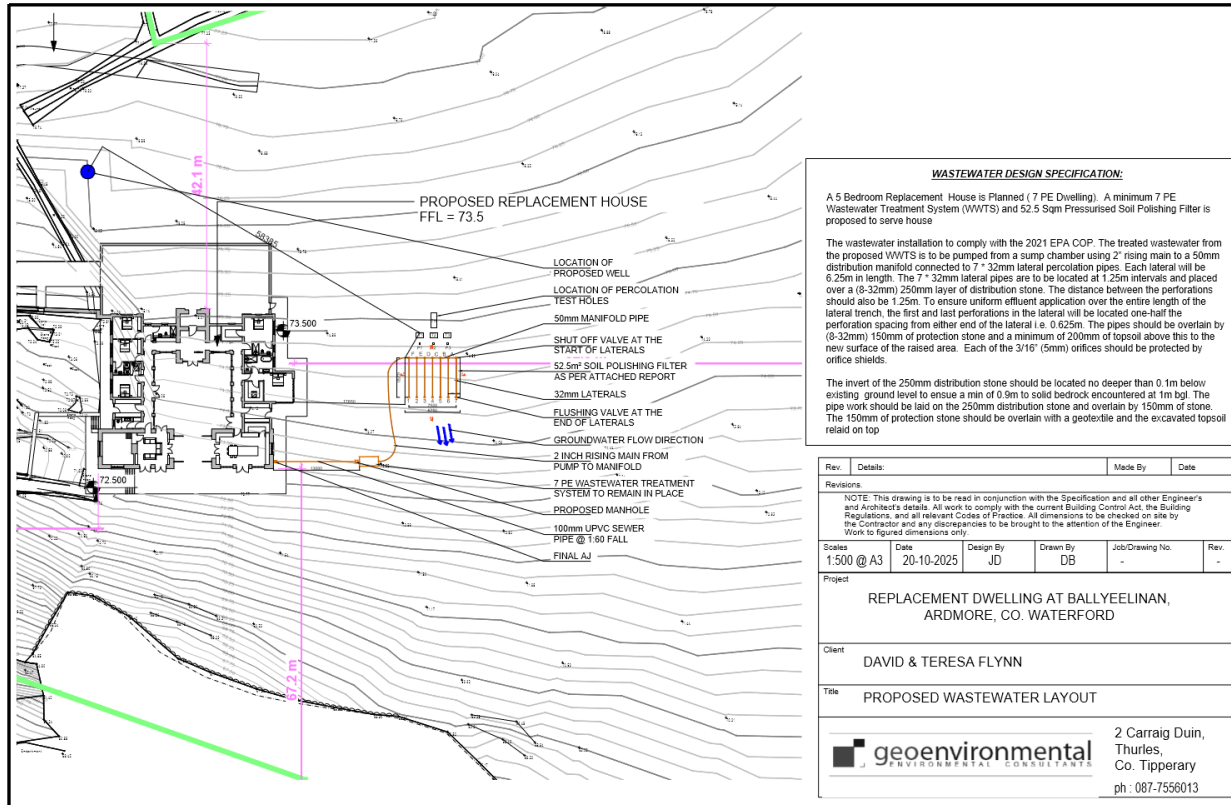
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**Appendix A**  
**Waste Water Treatment System Diagrams**

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Waste-Water Treatment System Diagrams



**WASTEWATER DESIGN SPECIFICATION:**

A 5 Bedroom Replacement House is Planned (7 PE Dwelling). A minimum 7 PE Wastewater Treatment System (WWTS) and 52.5 Sqm Pressurised Soil Polishing Filter is proposed to serve house

The wastewater installation to comply with the 2021 EPA COP. The treated wastewater from the proposed WWTS is to be pumped from a sump chamber using 2" rising main to a 50mm distribution manifold connected to 7" 32mm lateral percolation pipes. Each lateral will be 6.25m in length. The 7" 32mm lateral pipes are to be located at 1.25m intervals and placed over a (8-32mm) 250mm layer of distribution stone. The distance between the perforations should also be 1.25m. To ensure uniform effluent application over the entire length of the lateral trench, the first and last perforations in the lateral will be located one-half the perforation spacing from either end of the lateral i.e. 0.625m. The pipes should be overlain by (8-32mm) 150mm of protection stone and a minimum of 200mm of topsoil above this to the new surface of the raised area. Each of the 3/16" (5mm) orifices should be protected by orifice shields.

The invert of the 250mm distribution stone should be located no deeper than 0.1m below existing ground level to ensure a min of 0.9m to solid bedrock encountered at 1m bgl. The pipe work should be laid on the 250mm distribution stone and overlain by 150mm of stone. The 150mm of protection stone should be overlain with a geotextile and the excavated topsoil relaid on top.

Rev.	Details	Made By	Date
Revisions			
NOTE: This drawing is to be read in conjunction with the Specification and all other Engineers and Architects details. All work to comply with the current Building Control Act, the Building Regulations, and all relevant Codes of Practice. All dimensions to be checked on site by the Contractor and any discrepancies to be brought to the attention of the Engineer. Work to figured dimensions only.			

Scale	Date	Design By	Drawn By	Job/Drawing No.	Rev.
1:500 @ A3	20-10-2025	JD	DB	-	-

Project  
 REPLACEMENT DWELLING AT BALLYEELINAN,  
 ARDMORE, CO. WATERFORD

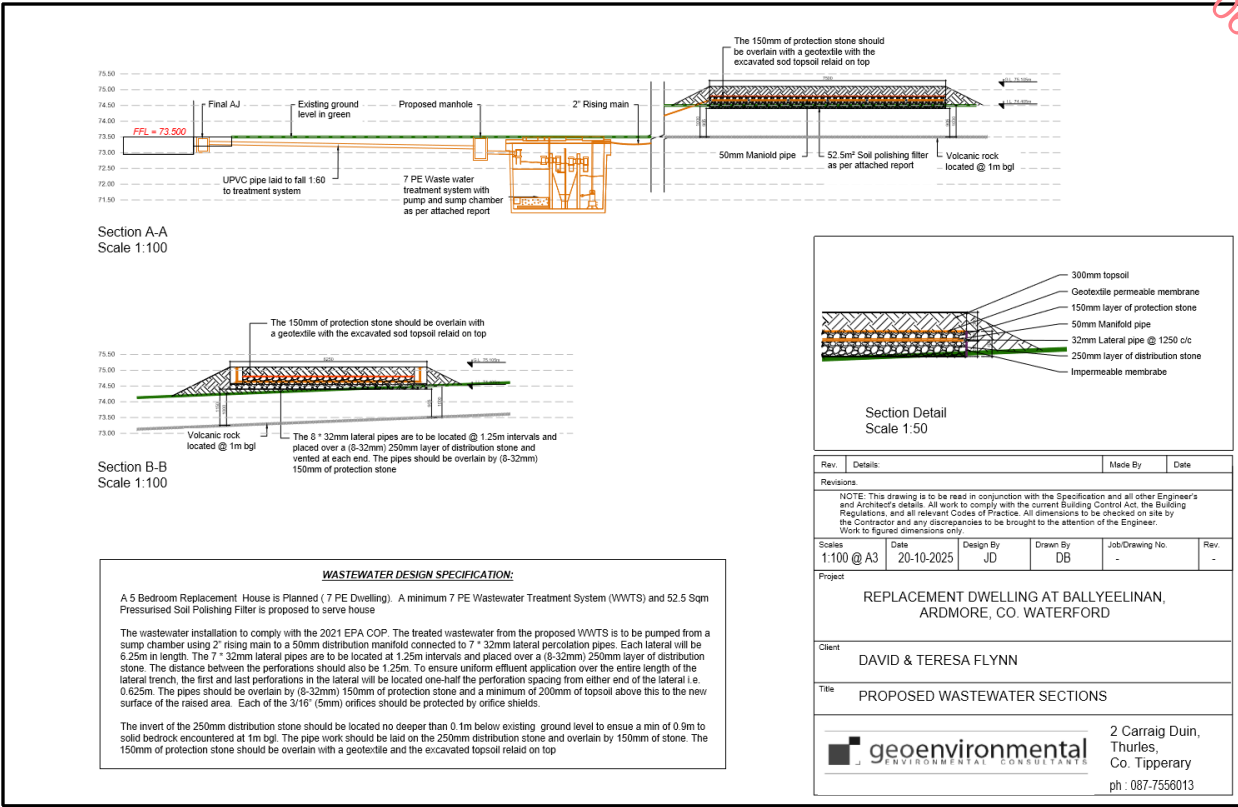
Client  
 DAVID & TERESA FLYNN

Title  
 PROPOSED WASTEWATER LAYOUT

**geoenvironmental**  
 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

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 Co. Tipperary  
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**Appendix B**

**Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA Site Synopsis (Site Code: 4192)**

**Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA Site Synopsis (Site Code: 4192)**

Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA is a linear site situated on the south-west coast of Co. Waterford. It includes the sea cliffs and land adjacent to the cliff edge between Helvick Head in the east and Ballyquin townland in the south-west. The high water mark forms the seaward boundary, except around Helvick Head where the adjacent sea area to a distance of 500 m from the cliff base is included.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Chough, Peregrine, Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake.

The site supports a nationally important population of breeding Chough, a Red Data Book species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive; 11 breeding pairs were recorded from the site in the 1992 survey and 11 pairs in the 2002/03 survey. The low heath and agricultural farmland on the cliff tops provides good foraging habitat for this species. The site is also of importance for its Peregrine population (5 pairs in 2002).

In addition, the site has important breeding seabird populations, centered around Helvick Head. Nationally important populations of Cormorant (65 pairs), Herring Gull (117 pairs) and Kittiwake (1,037 pairs) occur, as well as smaller populations of other breeding seabirds: Razorbill (28 pairs), Fulmar (135 pairs), Shag (6 pairs), Guillemot (664 pairs), Great Black-backed Gull (8 pairs) and Black Guillemot (10 individuals) – all seabird data from 1999. Raven breed on the cliffs and there is a cliff-nesting colony of House Martins. Other species which breed within the site include Rock Pipit and Stonechat. The seabird colony at Helvick Head has been monitored at intervals since the Operation Seafarer project in 1969/70. In addition, more detailed population studies have been carried out on the Kittiwake colony.

The Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA is an important site for Chough and Peregrine, both species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. It also supports a range of breeding seabirds, including populations of Cormorant, Herring Gull and Kittiwake of national importance.

20.1.2015

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**Appendix C**

**Integrated Land Management and Sustainable Living Planning Supporting Statement**

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Picture by DHL

## **Integrated Land Management and Sustainable Living Project – Ballyeelinan, Co. Waterford**

### **Planning Permission Supporting Statement**

25.11.2025

MANKA Landscape Design  
Ireland

## 1. Overview

This proposal outlines a visionary conservation-led development on land within the townland of Ballyeelinan, Co. Waterford, integrating high-quality sustainable human habitation with a robust programme of ecological management and stewardship. The site lies at the periphery of the designated area of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA which is of strategic importance for bird species of conservation concern (Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*, Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*, Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*).

The project is designed to go beyond basic conservation compliance by embedding the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and national biodiversity and farming policies into every aspect of the land-use, the regenerative agriculture practices, and the homestead design. By granting planning permission for a thoughtfully sited house, the local authority would be enabling custodianship of the land consistent with Ireland's commitments under EU and domestic frameworks — delivering tangible ecological benefit, community and educational value, and long-term sustainable land management.

## 2. Core Objectives

**2.1 Biodiversity Conservation** - Protecting habitats of high conservation value within the SPA-area, aligning with the Strategy's aim that "nature is put on a path to recovery by 2030". *EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030*

**2.2 Soil Health & Ecosystem Services** - Restore soil fertility, structure and biological function, step up efforts to reduce erosion and increase soil organic matter using regenerative, natural farming methods.

**2.3 Water Health & Wetland Function** - Safeguard downstream aquatic ecosystems and groundwater through natural filtration, swales, wetlands and rainwater harvesting — supporting the ambition to restore biodiversity and address nutrient and pollutant pressures.

**2.4 Sustainable Living & Demonstration** - By establishing a fully sustainable household for a young family, we show how human habitation and nature restoration can work in tandem. This provides a demonstrable model of low-impact rural living, aligning with the call for a "whole-of-society approach" (*EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030*) and active participation from land-owners and local communities.

**2.5 Demonstration of Alternatives to Intensive Farming** - Through regenerative agriculture, nature focused methods, habitat mosaics and species-friendly land management, the project will exemplify how farming and habitat restoration can be synergistic rather than conflicting.

### 3. Ecological Protection and Enhancement Measures

#### 3.1 Habitat Zoning & Stewardship

The land will be managed in zones, from more intensively managed household and garden areas (Zone 1-2) through to lightly managed orchards/pastures (Zone 3-4) and conservation-only areas (Zone 5). This graduated structure supports the idea of holistic and sustainable ecosystem use.

#### 3.2 Species-Specific Measures

- **Chough:** Maintain coastal grasslands rich in invertebrates via rotational grazing with low-impact livestock; target dung- and insect-rich pastures, plant native fruiting shrubs and manage edges for insect habitat.
- **Peregrine:** Maintain open hunting ground.
- **Cormorant, Herring Gull, Kittiwake:** Help maintain the favourable conservation condition of these species within the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA.

These targeted measures align with the ambition to show not only no deterioration but significant improvement in conservation tendencies.

#### 3.3 Natural Farming Practices

- Minimise use of antiparasitic treatments and synthetic fertilisers/pesticides.
- Employ rotational livestock grazing, biodiverse swards and native seed mixes.
- Promote nature focused methods and low-intensity permanent grassland in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy call for at least 25% of agricultural land under organic farming by 2030 and at least 10% of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features (hedgerows, ponds, buffer strips).

#### 3.4 Soil Health Restoration

- Use green manures, composting, minimal tillage, mulching and indigenous microorganisms to build organic matter.
- These practices respond directly to the priority on protecting soil ecosystems and reducing land-take and degradation.

### 3.5 Water Health Improvements & Wetland Creation

- Construct swales to slow runoff, recharge groundwater, and reduce nitrogen/pollution loading
- Create small ponds and encourage natural wetland formation, enhancing carbon sequestration, biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
- Introduce rainwater harvesting for household/garden use and local buffer strips to reduce downstream impacts.

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### 3.6 Vegetation and Habitat Structure

- Establish native tree clusters, hedgerows, field margins and wildflower strips to enhance structural diversity, bolster pollinator and invertebrate populations, provide perches and shelter, and create ecological corridors in line with Natura 2000 strategy.

## 4. Sustainable Household Design

### 4.1 Orchards & Gardens

- A heritage orchard of Irish-sourced fruit trees (via organisations like Irish Seed Savers Association or FoodTree nursery) will be planted, alongside a permaculture-based vegetable garden.
- This will support the Irish genetic diversity of crops/traditional varieties and aid Irish organisations.

### 4.2 Household Sustainability

- The proposed house will integrate renewable systems (water management, energy) where possible with a plan for long term improvements in line with developing technologies.

### 4.3 Small-Animal Husbandry

- Proposed in the future are chickens managed in secure mobile pens to aid soil enrichment and pest control within the house gardens.
- Native bees could be introduced to support pollination and biodiversity after suitable habitat is established.
- Moderate grazing animals to maintain grassland structure and invertebrate habitat for Chough feeding.
- The management will follow best-practice low-impact methods, minimising synthetic inputs, in tune with the aim to bring nature back to agricultural land through agro-ecology and low-intensity permanent grassland.

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## 5. Community, Research & Educational Benefits

- The project will be open to potential partnership with local conservation bodies and bird-monitoring groups to track populations of the key SPA-species, contributing robust data and oversight if required.
- The development will serve as a demonstration model for national and international audiences, showing how a rural household, habitat restoration and farming can integrate — supporting Ireland's national biodiversity action plans and the call for cross-sectoral partnerships.

## 6. Expected Outcomes

- Improved habitat quality for foraging Chough.
- Enhanced invertebrate populations (dung beetles, spiders, ants, leatherjackets) supporting Chough diet and indicating improved ecosystem health.
- Cleaner water entering downstream and coastal systems, reduced nutrient/pollutant loading, and greater wetland ecosystem services (water filtration, carbon sequestration) — directly in line with evidence on cost-benefits of restoring wetlands.
- Richer structural and species diversity across grasslands, orchards, hedgerows, and wetlands, contributing to carbon storage, pollination support, and ecological resilience.
- A sustainable household that embodies Ireland's climate and biodiversity commitments — providing a blueprint for combining human habitation with biodiversity gain.
- Long-term stewardship of the land by the family occupants, guaranteeing that the property is managed for the benefit of nature and community.

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## 7. Strategic Alignment

Granting permission for the proposed development is not simply a housing decision—it is a strategic investment in biodiversity and ecosystem services. By doing so, the local authority and national planning-framework will be advancing:

- **The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030:** This project explicitly supports key Strategy targets such as restoring ecosystems, increasing high-diversity landscape features in agriculture (10 % target), increasing organic land use (25 % target), reducing pesticide/nutrient loads and strengthening ecological corridors.
- **Ireland’s National Biodiversity Action Plan and the protected-areas duty:** Within a designated SPA, this development commits to raising habitat quality, strengthening species populations and integrating sustainable land use.
- **The principle of “net-gain” for nature:** The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 sets the ambition that by 2030 nature should be “on the path to recovery ... give nature back more than it takes”. This project is designed to deliver that net-gain rather than simply avoid harm.
- **Transitioning agricultural land-use:** In line with the global trends, the land will move to regenerative, low-impact management — supporting long-term resilience, ecosystem services, and rural livelihoods.
- **Community-based stewardship and demonstration:** The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 emphasises that biodiversity protection is not only for authorities but for land-owners, farmers, communities and households. By placing the family as land managers and stewards of the site, this development embraces that model.

## 8. Conclusion

This proposal shows that ecological restoration, sustainable land-management and high-quality rural living are not conflicting goals — they can be mutually reinforcing. With the support of planning permission for the house, the family becomes active stewards of the land, committed to delivering on the EU and national biodiversity agenda, protecting the key bird species of the Helvick Head to Ballyquin SPA, restoring soils and water systems, and demonstrating a blueprint for conservation-led rural regeneration in Ireland.

**Prepared for Planning Submission – Ballyeelinan, County Waterford**

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12. <https://scotlandsnature.wordpress.com/2024/04/24/every-chough-counts/>
13. <https://www.dungbeetlesforfarmers.co.uk/>
14. <https://www.fas.scot/article/land-management-for-red-billed-choughs/>
15. EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030

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**Appendix D**  
**Landscape Site Analysis and Zoning Plan**



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**Appendix E**

**NPWS Letter to Cork County Council**

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Property Extension at Galley Head - AA screening

12. APPENDIX 4 - LETTER FROM NPWS TO CORK COUNTY COUNCIL

NPWS Ref: SPAs for Chough  
(please quote this reference in all relevant correspondence)

12<sup>th</sup> March, 2007

County Manager  
Cork County Council  
Headquarters  
County Hall  
Cork

Dear County Manager

I write with reference to proposals, published in November 2006 by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to designate 14 sites mainly at coastal locations in 8 counties as Special Protection Areas (SPA) for birds under the Habitats Regulations 1997-2005 and on foot of Irelands responsibilities in implementing the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). Please find attached for information, documentation of those SPA(s) proposed for your area - Beara Peninsula SPA 004155, Sheep's Head to Toe Head SPA 004156, Galley Head to Duneen Point SPA 004190 and Seven Heads SPA 004191. The common thread in the 14 sites is the conservation of the Chough but many of the sites also qualify as SPA for other species.

The Minister has previously reminded planning authorities of the need to have full regard inter alia, to biodiversity considerations in determining individual applications for rural housing. However, with regard to the Chough the scientific advice available to the Minister suggests that development of single rural dwellings does not in general represent a threat to the Chough or its habitat.

Accordingly, I am directed by the Minister to advise your Authority that, where the Chough is the sole conservation interest in the SPA, the SPA designation should not be cited as grounds for refusing permission for development of single rural house projects within that SPA.

Please note also that the 3 months allowed under law for objections to the November proposals has now elapsed and it is the intention of the Minister to proceed promptly to completion of the designation process by putting in place a Statutory Instrument for each site, following consideration of any objection.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you and your colleagues when planning the sustainable development of your town/county/city.

Yours sincerely

*Oonagh M Buckley*

Oonagh Buckley  
Director National Parks & Wildlife Service

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