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Proposed Residential Development, Athlumney, Navan, Co. Meath

Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Requirement for an Appropriate Assessment

ORS was appointed by *Albert Developments Ltd.* to provide the necessary information to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article 6 (3) Appropriate Assessment for the proposed development consisting of an 83-unit residential development located at a 6.14ha site in Athlumney, Navan, Co. Meath.

The purpose of this Appropriate Assessment is to determine the appropriateness of the proposed project, in the context of the conservation status of the designated ecological site or sites within the determined Zone of Influence of the proposed plan or project. In Ireland, an Appropriate Assessment takes the form of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), which is a statement of the likely impacts of the plan or project on a Natura 2000 site, namely Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The NIS examines the direct and indirect impacts that the plan or project might have on its own or in combination with other plans or projects on one or more Natura 2000 sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives. The details of this report are supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) completed by ORS Ecologists for this development (Document Reference No.: **252656-ORS-XX-XX-RP-EN-13d-001**).

1.2 The Aim of the Report

This Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared in accordance with the current guidance (DoEHLG, 2009, Revised February 2010), and it provides an assessment of the potential impacts of the development at Athlumney, Navan, Co. Meath, on sites designated under the Natura 2000 network.

The NIS provides the information required 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.

1.3 Regulatory Context

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 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. SPAs are selected for bird species (listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive) that are regularly occurring populations of migratory bird species, species that are particularly threatened, species vulnerable to specific changes in their habitat, and rare species. The SPAs are of international importance for these birds.

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 Appropriate Assessment 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

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sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs). This is explained in greater detail in the following section.

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 the status does not deteriorate in any waters.

1.4 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 set out the decision-making tests for plans or projects affecting Natura 2000 sites. **Article 6(3)** establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"*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

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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."

1.5 The Appropriate Assessment Process

The aim of Appropriate Assessment is to assess the implications of a proposal in respect of a designated site's conservation objectives.

The requirement for Appropriate Assessment is transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2010 (as amended). The 'Appropriate Assessment' itself 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 Appropriate Assessment shall be carried out by the competent authority as set out in **Sections 177U (1)** and **(2)** of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as follows:

Section 177U (1) states:

"*A screening for appropriate assessment 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."*

Section 177U (2) states:

"A competent authority shall carry out a screening for appropriate assessment 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 Appropriate Assessment is not required if it can be excluded, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, 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 Appropriate Assessment shall be deemed required.

Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Report (Natura Impact Statement (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 appropriate assessment either (a) it is concluded

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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 Appropriate Assessment, taking into account the Natura Impact Statement (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.

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2 Methodology

2.1 Legislation and Guidance

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 (2021). 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.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (2021). Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, OPR Practice Note PN01.

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 on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site.
- There are compensation measures that maintain or enhance the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network and its individual sites.

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, the Council may not need to proceed through all four stages in undertaking the Appropriate Assessment.

The four-stage process is:

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.

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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 the 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.

The OPR Guidance states that "a European site will only be at risk from likely significant effects where the Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) link exists between the proposed development and the European site". Determining whether an S-P-R linkage exists between the proposed development and a European site requires identifying the three components of the S-P-R model:

Source: "identify characteristics of the proposed development such as the nature, size and location and the types of effects, such as direct emissions or loss of habitat".

Pathway: "identify the existence and characteristics of pathways, such as waterbodies or air, that could link European sites and their Qualifying Interests to the proposed development".

Receptor: "establish the location, nature and sensitivities of the qualifying species and habitats, the ecological conditions underpinning their survival and the conservation objectives specified to maintain or restore favourable conservation status".

In complying with the obligations set out in **Article 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.
- Identification of the Natura 2000 sites with an established S-P-R link with the proposed development.
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above on 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

Author

This Natura Impact Statement was carried out by Olivia Hamilton BSc (Hons), MSc. Olivia holds an honours degree in Environmental Science from the University of Galway and a master's degree in Conservation Behaviour from ATU Galway. Throughout her education, Olivia developed a strong foundation in environmental management, environmental impact assessment, and ecological survey techniques. She has applied this knowledge in a variety of

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roles, including serving as the lead marine biologist aboard a research vessel, where she conducted and led marine mammal surveys.

Olivia has field experience in surveying bats, mammals, birds, habitats, plants, and invasive species. As a Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), she is well-versed in the latest ecological surveying methods, data collection practices, and scientific report writing. Her professional portfolio includes conducting Biodiversity Chapters for Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIARs), Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Reports, Flood Risk Assessments, as well as completing complex Appropriate Assessments (AA), Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Reports (PEARs), and Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA) for a range of clients.

Co-Author &Reviewer

This Natura Impact Statement was co-authored and reviewed by Seán Burke, BSc, MSc. Seán has a bachelor's degree in science – Single Honours Biology from Maynooth University and a master's degree in Ecology & Biodiversity from Stockholm University. His academic experience has provided fundamental training in scientific methods and a strong knowledge of the theoretical background of biological and ecological processes. Seán has previous experience working in the agri-food sector developing biological control agents for the suppression of fungal pathogens which provided hands on experience in learning laboratory techniques and studying ecological interactions. His more recent work experience with ORS has provided the opportunity to conduct a wide range of ecological services including macroinvertebrate sampling, bird surveying, habitat assessment and classification, preliminary bat surveying, mammal surveying, and ecological impact assessment as standalone reports and as part of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Biodiversity chapters. This experience has been applied to projects of varying sizes across commercial, industrial, and residential projects.

Reviewer

This Natura Impact Statement was reviewed by was reviewed by Richard Edwards, BSc (Hons), PhD, FHEA, MRSB. Rich is a molecular ecologist with over 20 years' experience working on interdisciplinary projects. A former academic research leader in bioinformatics, genomics, molecular ecology and evolution, Rich is a creative problem solver across a broad range of biodiversity and ecological sciences. He specialises in identifying pragmatic solutions that maximise mutual benefits. He has published over 80 peer-reviewed works, including papers in Nature Ecology and Evolution and Molecular Ecology, and over thirty bioinformatics tools. Rich joined the Environmental Services team at ORS in July 2025, bringing strengths in large-scale data analysis, automation, and scientific/technical writing. His experience at the forefront of applying genomic techniques to conservation and biodiversity challenges, including non-native invasive species, positions the ORS team to adapt rapidly to changes in technology relating to biodiversity management and biodiversity net gain legislation. Since joining ORS, Rich has focused on ecological survey reporting and assessing the ecological impacts of construction projects, particularly with respect to Appropriate Assessment Screening and Biodiversity Management Plans.

2.3 Desk Studies & Consultation

Information on the site and the area of the proposed development was studied prior to the completion of this statement. The following data sources were accessed in order to complete a thorough examination of potential impacts:

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- National Parks and Wildlife Service - Aerial photographs and maps of designated 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.
- NPWS Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities, 10 December 2009 (as revised 11 February 2010).
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites (2001).
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive (2018).
- NPWS (2013). The Status of Protected EU Habitats and Species in Ireland.
- Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- Information pertaining to water quality, geology and licensed facilities within the area.
- Myplan.ie – Map-based information.
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) – Information pertaining to protected plant and animal species within the study area.
- National Planning Application Database.
- Meath County Council.
- EPA Online Maps.
- Bing maps & Google Street View – High-quality aerials and street images.

2.4 Assessment Methodology

The proposed development was assessed to identify its 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 combined 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*".

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

- Its natural range and the area it covers within that range are 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

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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, these SSCOs should be considered in detail.

2.5 Field Survey

This NIS is supported by 2 no. field survey days carried out on the 11th of November 2025 and the 7th of January 2026.

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3 Site Details

3.1 Description of Proposed Development

The proposed development will consist of the construction of 83 no. residential units comprising 22 no. 3-bedroom, 2-storey semi-detached houses, 21 no. 3-bedroom, 2-storey terraced houses, 20 no. 3-bedroom, 3-storey terraced houses, 6 no. 2-bedroom, 2-storey semi-detached houses and 14 no. 2-bedroom, 2-storey houses on a site of c.6.14 hectares. In addition, it is proposed to provide 0.02 hectares of public open space (10% of residential zoned lands) along with additional F zoned lands, 166 no. car parking space and all associated site development and landscaping works.

An indicative site layout is presented in **Figure 3.1**.



Figure 3.1: Proposed layout of the residential development. (Source: Reddy Architecture + Urbanism – Please refer to the full-scale drawing submitted as part of the planning application – Drawing Reference No.: BVN-1D-02-SW-XXX-DR-RAU-AR-1102).

3.2 Site Location and Environs

The proposed development site is located *ca.* 1.5km east of Navan town centre, Co. Meath (ITM Coordinates: 688578, 767993). The site is bounded by agricultural lands to the north, with the 'Tubberclaire Meadows' residential development located to the south and west. Lands currently undergoing development are located to the east.

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The nearest water feature to the proposed development site is the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream located on the western boundary of the application site.

An assessment of aerial imagery provided an overview of the land use and habitat types present in the vicinity of the subject site. According to these images, there is a mixture of land use in the surrounding landscape. The land use to the east and northeast of the site is predominately agricultural with field parcels demarcated by hedgerows and treelines with scattered agricultural and residential units. The land immediately east of the site is undergoing development. Lands to the south are dominated by extensive residential areas. A stream bounds the western site boundary with an agricultural land parcel beyond this. The River Boyne and River Blackwater converge in Navan town centre *ca.* 1.3km from the site boundary. The River Boyne then flows east and north away from the application site. A mixture of agricultural fields and residential areas lie between the site and the River Boyne to the north. Sections of riparian woodland are present along the banks of the Boyne. The River Boyne ultimately flows off the east Irish coast *ca.* 28km northeast of the application site.

An examination of the extent and quality of waterbodies in the vicinity of the proposed development is included in **Section 3.3.2**.

The site location map and overview of the land use and surrounding habitats is presented in **Figure 3.2**.



Figure 3.2: The proposed site boundary and surrounding landscape.

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3.3 Environmental Considerations

3.3.1 Topography

There is slight variation across the site with regards to topography as there is a raised area in the northeastern extent of the application site boundary. The northeast corner of the site lies at *ca.* 48m AOD, while the majority of the site at its centre lies at *ca.* 46m AOD.

3.3.2 Hydrology

The proposed site is located within the Boyne_140 Sub-Basin; Boyne Catchment; Boyne_SC_110 Subcatchment; Hydrometric Area 07.

The principle hydrological feature within the vicinity of the proposed works is the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream (EPA Code: 07F17) located on the western boundary of the application site. The stream flows in a north direction and meets the River Boyne (EPA Code: 07B04) *ca.* 460m north of the site. The River Boyne flows into the Irish Sea *ca.* 30km northeast of the proposed development site.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) runs in 6-year cycles with the most recent data being generated between 2016-2021. The Directive takes rivers, lakes, estuaries, groundwater and coastal waters into consideration and each waterbody can be awarded one of five statuses: High, Good, Moderate, Poor, and Bad. Additionally, waterbodies can be assigned a risk level ("At Risk", "Not at Risk", "Review") which represents the risk of the waterbody of failing its WFD objectives by 2027. The WFD aims to achieve good status for all rivers, lakes and transitional and coastal waters in the EU. Achieving good ecological status for surface waters is critical to this.
According to the EPA maps, the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream and River Boyne have a WFD status of 'Moderate' and the risk status is under review.

An overview of watercourses in the vicinity of the subject site is provided in **Figure 3.3**.

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Figure 3.3: Watercourses in vicinity of the site.

Biological Q-Values

A summary of most recent Biological Q-ratings from the watercourses at points close to the site is provided in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: Biological Q Values for River Boyne Watercourses (Source, EPA).

Station ID	Station Name	Result
RS07B011800	Slane Rd Br Navan	3-4 - Moderate (2024)
RS07B042010	d/s Broadboyne Br (RHS)	4 - Good (2024)

3.3.3 Geology & Hydrogeology

Teagasc soil mapping indicates the site is underlain primarily of till derived chiefly from limestone and is Carboniferous in age. It is deep well drained mineral and mainly basic. The site is underlain by the Lucan Formation which is described as dark limestone and shale.

According to GSI groundwater maps, the site overlays a 'Locally Important Aquifer – Bedrock which is Generally Moderately Productive'. This is described as an aquifer capable of supplying locally important water supplies. The groundwater vulnerability index at the site is classed as high.

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3.4 Habitats and Species within the Application Site

Habitats

Habitats at the site were identified and classified according to 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000). Habitats were appraised and evaluated according to their occurrence as protected habitats under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and for their capacity to support rare, threatened, and endangered species. The condition and evaluation of the habitats recorded were classified in line with 'Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping', The Heritage Council (2011).

A map of the habitats identified is included in **Figure 3.4**. **Table 3.2** provides an overview of the habitats recorded across the site and an ecological evaluation of the habitats recorded. Further information regarding the habitats located on site can be found in the accompanying EclA (Document Reference No.: **252656-ORS-XX-XX-RP-EN-13d-001**).



Figure 3.4: Habitat classification of proposed site with indicative site boundary.

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Table 3.2: Evaluation of Habitats within the Study Area				
Habitat Classification	**Description**	**Species Recorded**	**Condition**	**Evaluation**
GA1 – Improved Agricultural Grassland	The primary habitat type within the application site is improved grassland dominated by grasses, thistles, dock and Ragwort. Common agricultural herbs are also present. The long grasses and uneven topography in the northern plot of the application site supports a small flock of Snipe and offers potentially suitable breeding habitat.	Common Ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) (d), ryegrasses (*Lolium* spp.) (a), clovers (*Trifolium* spp.) (a), docks (*Rumex* spp) (f), plantains (*Plantago* spp.) (o), *Ranunculus* spp. (a).	Good	Local (High)
 **Plate 1: GA1 – Improved agricultural grassland**. The primary habitat type within the site boundary. Photograph facing southwest.				
WL1 - Hedgerow	Hedgerows bound the southern and western site boundary. A hedgerow is also present in the centre of the site and located in the adjacent field parcel. Common native species are	Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) (d), Buckthorn (*Rhamnus* agg.) (a), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) (a), Ivy (*Hedera* spp.) (a), Bramble (*Rubus fructicosus*)	Moderate	Local (High)

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	present throughout with occasional immature trees.	(a), Elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.) (a), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior)* (f), willows (*Salix* spp.) (o)		
 **Plate 2: WL1 – Hedgerow.** Hedgerows border the southern and western site boundary. Photograph facing west.				
ED1 – Spoil and Bare Ground	A small portion to the east of the site consists of disturbed ground and exposed soil from continued vehicular movements. An additional large excavated area is present within the northern land parcel.	N/A	Poor	Local (Low)

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Plate 3: ED1 – Spoil and Bare Ground. A large patch of excavated spoil is located within the northern field. An additional spoil mound is located to the southeast of the site. Photograph facing east.

BL3 – Buildings and Artificial Surfaces	A paved roadway services the site and connects the site with the roundabout northeast of the site boundary.	N/A	Good	Local (Low)



Plate 4: BL3 – Buildings and artificial surfaces. A paved roadway connects the site with the local roundabout and adjacent developments. Photograph facing northeast.

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FW4 – Drainage Ditch	A drainage channel in the centre of the site adjacent to an existing hedgerow and separates two field parcels. The channel joins the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream adjacent to the western site boundary.	N/A	Good	Local (Low)



Plate 5: FW4 – Drainage Ditch. The drainage channel adjacent to an existing hedgerow joins the nearby watercourse. Photograph facing west.

FW2 – Depositing / Lowland Rivers.	The Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream flows adjacent to the western site boundary beyond the boundary hedgerow. The drainage channel associated with the site joins this stream. This watercourse flows north where it joins the River Boyne *ca.* 640m north of the site.	N/A	Good	Local (High)

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Plate 6: FW2 – Depositing / Lowland Rivers. The Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream flows adjacent to the site along the western boundary. Photograph facing west.

WS2 – Immature Woodland	A number of young Alder saplings are present in the western extent of the site.	Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) (f)	Good	Local (High)

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Plate 7: WS2 – Immature Woodland. Extensive young Alder saplings are present in the western extent of the site. Photograph facing north.

Species abundance and analysis of indicator species has been classified according to the DAFOR scale: d = dominant, a = abundant, f = frequent, o = occasional, r = rare.

Flora

No rare or protected flora species protected under the Flora Protection Order (2022), listed in Annex II and IV of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/ECC), or listed in the Irish Red List were recorded during the survey. The current list of plant species protected by Section 21 of the Wildlife Act, 1976 is set out in the Flora (Protection) Order, 2022, which super cedes orders made in 1980, 1987, 1999 and 2015.

It is illegal to cut, uproot or damage the listed species in any way, or to offer them for sale. This prohibition extends to the taking or sale of seed. In addition, it is illegal to alter, damage or interfere in any way with their habitats. This protection applies wherever the plants are found and is not confined to sites designated for nature conservation.

Invasive Species

No invasive species listed under the 'First Schedule' of the European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024 (S.I. No. 374/2024) were recorded during site walkover. Despite this, best practice measures for the control of invasive species are recommended in **Section 5**

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of this report. These measures will ensure that translocation of invasive species does not occur during development. This is imperative as the adjacent stream has the potential to spread invasives beyond the extent of the subject site in the absence of mitigation.

Birds

Bird surveying was carried out on an ad hoc basis – observing birds that either flew overhead or were observed perching, nesting, or foraging of the course of the survey. Birds in the vicinity of the site were also identified via birdcall identification. Bird species and the number of individuals were recorded along with their conservation status in Ireland. Care was taken to avoid double-counting individuals.

The majority of bird activity observed at the site were individuals passing over the site and were common resident species such as corvids, gulls and Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*). The two notable observations on the 11th of November were a single adult Snipe (*Gallinago Gallinago*) and a flock of *ca.* 40 Goldfinches (*Carduelis carduelis*). The Snipe was flushed from the southern section of agricultural grassland and was utilising the extensive Ragwort growth as cover. The ground was slightly waterlogged at the time of survey following a period of extended rainfall, making it a suitable foraging ground for the wader. Repeated surveys on the 07th of January 2026 resulted in repeated observation of 9 no. Snipe which were also flushed from the northern plot during walkover. The ground composition between the northern and southern plots is similarly comprised of long grasses and coverage of ragwort, thistle, and dock species, providing cover for foraging Snipe. The uneven ground in the northern parcel could potentially serve as breeding habitat for Snipe. The conservation status of this species is red, therefore it is recommended that this habitat is retained during the breeding season (March-August) and exempt from site clearance works during this period. Should works be required within the breeding season, pre-clearance surveys should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to determine presence of breeding Snipe, and mitigation measures informed appropriately. Recommendations may involve a cease of works until birds have dispersed.

A large flock of Goldfinches were noted on the 11th of November in both the agricultural parcel perching on the Ragwort and were additionally recorded in the southern boundary hedgerow. An additional flock of 15 no. individuals was observed perching within the western boundary hedgerow within the northern plot. The site does provide suitable foraging habitat for birds however the nesting capacity of the site is limited due to the lack of mature trees and shrubs within the hedgerows. Overall, the site is considered to be of moderate importance to local bird populations.
The hedgerows within the site are planned to be retained, with additional planting of native trees, woodland, a pond area and wildflowers. Local bird populations will benefit from these compensatory features in the long term.

Mammals

Survey techniques employed on this site investigation utilised direct observation methods, looking for tracks, footprints, and other signs such as scat and faeces. The mammal survey focused on identifying signs of mammal activity within the site boundary such as movement corridors, droppings, hair, dens or setts, and evidence of foraging.

There were a number of minor movement corridors noted during site surveying. These runs were noted near the southern extents of the site with small gaps noted within the hedgerow. It is possible that domestic animals from the adjacent residential area are passing through the

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site. It is also possible for Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) to be active in the area, however there were no identifiable signs of Red Fox activity at the site. Surveying carried out on the 07th of January 2026 observed one instance of Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) active within the northern field plot. No burrows were observed during walkover.
There were no signs of protected mammal activity at the site i.e. Badger (*Meles meles*) and Otter (*Lutra lutra*). The site lacked suitable features to support Badger setts and Otter holts or couches.
The shrubby growth of the herbaceous agricultural grassland and hedgerows provides commuting and foraging habitat for local mammal populations. The habitats at the site, particularly edge habitats, could support small mammal species that were not recorded during surveying such as Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and rodents. The site is considered to be of low - moderate suitability for local mammal populations.

Amphibians and Reptiles

The drainage channel north of the application site could potentially support Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*) by serving as movement corridors. The channel is unlikely to serve as a breeding habitat, given the flow rate of the channel. In addition to this, the water levels in the channel will fluctuate seasonally and climatically. For these reasons, it is unlikely for the drainage channel to support other amphibian species, such as Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*).

The application site did not display any suitable habitat for Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*). The site is subject to regular, minor disturbances via construction works in the neighbouring developments to the east and northeast. The site also lacks suitable basking spots for lizards.

Records of Rare, Protected, Invasive, and Notable Species

A desktop review of NBDC online records was carried out to assess whether the presence of any rare, threatened, or notable species records were available within the vicinity of the proposed site. The subject site lies within 2km grid squares N86Y and N86Z. A summary of recorded species gathered from the NBDC database within the past 10 years is provided in **Table 3.1**.

Table 3.1: NBDC Species Records within Grid Square N86Y and N86Z

Species Name	Record Count	Date of Last Record	Designation
Invasive Species			
Butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*)	1	09/01/2021	Invasive Species: Medium Risk Invasive Species (2013 Report)
Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)	3	18/02/2024	Invasive Species: High Risk Invasive Species (2013 Report)
Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)	1	08/07/2024	Invasive Species: EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation No. 1143/2014, Regulation S.I. 477/2011 (Ireland), High Risk Invasive Species (2013 Report),

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			Regulation S.I. 374/2024 (Ireland), Invasive Species: Detailed Risk Assessment >> High Risk
Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)	2	27/09/2025	Invasive Species: Medium Risk Invasive Species (2013 Report)
Three-cornered Garlic (*Allium triquetrum*)	5	01/04/2024	Invasive Species: Regulation S.I. 477/2011 (Ireland), Invasive Species: Detailed Risk Assessment, Invasive Species: Medium Risk Invasive Species (2013 Report), Regulation S.I. 374/2024 (Ireland), Invasive Species: Detailed Risk Assessment >> Moderate Risk
Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*)	2	16/04/2024	Invasive Species: EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation No. 1143/2014, Regulation S.I. 477/2011 (Ireland), High Risk Invasive Species (2013 Report), Regulation S.I. 374/2024 (Ireland), Invasive Species: The Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985
Birds			
Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)	6	03/01/2023	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)	6	03/01/2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*)	2	29/11/2020	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Great Spotted Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos major*)	2	17/02/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)	7	03/03/2022	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List
House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)	2	12/04/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)	2	02/09/2022	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)	8	12/02/2021	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, EU Birds Directive >> Annex I Bird Species Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List

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Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)	9	25/11/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, EU Birds Directive >> Annex I Bird Species
Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)	10	03/01/2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)	27	02/05/2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I >> Annex III, Section I Bird Species Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*)	6	02/05/2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)	8	16/09/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*)	5	01/04/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section I Bird Species
Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)	8	15/11/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)	3	23/05/2023	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)	2	13/12/2020	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section III Bird Species Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List
Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*)	3	12/07/2022	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)	7	08/01/2025	Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)	4	23/05/2023	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*)	2	30/05/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)	1	07/01/2023	Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*)	1	25/02/2023	Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*)	2	12/04/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Meadow Pipit (*Anthus pratensis*)	3	17/05/2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List

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Redwing (*Turdus iliacus*)	2	15/12/2022	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List
Rock Dove (*Columba livia*)	3	06/01/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species
Swift (*Apus apus*)	5	27/06/2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List
Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*)	3	07/06/2024	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts, Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Mammals			
Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)	91	20/09/2021	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex IV, Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Leisler's Bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*)	14	31/08/2022	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex IV, Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*)	2	31/08/2022	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex IV, Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)	29	31/08/2022	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex IV, Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)	1	31/07/2023	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)	1	01/06/2021	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex V, Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)	1	29/11/2015	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Insects			
Red-tailed Bumblebee (*Bombus lapidarius*)	8	07/04/2025	Threatened Species: Near threatened
Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet (*Zygaena lonicerae*)	2	13/06/2023	Threatened Species: Vulnerable

3.5 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 the vicinity of the proposed development has been identified and described according to their site synopsis, qualifying interests and conservation objectives. In addition, any other sites further than this, but potentially within its zone of influence, were also considered. The zone of influence may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas by virtue of hydrological connectivity, atmospheric emissions, flight paths, ecological corridors, etc. The measurements used here are taken from the closest point along the proposed work area to the

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Natura 2000 site.

For significant effects to arise, there must be a potential impact facilitated by having a source, i.e., the proposed development and activities arising out of its construction or operation, 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 existing pathway and the characteristics of the receptor, e.g., the sensitivities of the qualifying interests (habitats or species) to changes in water quality.

An initial ZoI of 15km was set to identify the European Sites that could potentially be affected by the proposed development. After this initial assessment, only those Natura 2000 sites that have any reasonable Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) connectivity were considered further.

There are 2 no. Natura 2000 designated sites (1 SAC and 1 SPA) located within 15km of the proposed site. Both of these sites have an established S-P-R linkage with the proposed development. The Natura 2000 sites and their closest points to the proposed development site are summarised in **Table 3.2,** and a map showing their locations relative to the works is shown in **Figure 3.5.** A full description of the sites and their shapefiles is available on the NPWS website (www.npws.ie) and online database (https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data).

Table 3.2: A potential S-P-R pathway exists between the proposed development and the following Natura 2000 sites.

Site Name & Code	Distance & Direction from Site	Qualifying Interests (QIs)	Screened In/Out
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC 002299	Located *ca.* 460m north of site	Alkaline fens [7230] Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and Fraxinus excelsior (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) [91E0] River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) [1099] Salmon (*Salmo salar*) [1106] Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355]	**Screened In** Potential effects could arise. A Source-Pathway-Receptor linkage exists between the proposed development and this SAC. The principle hydrological feature within the vicinity of the proposed works is the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream (EPA Code: 07F17) located on the western boundary of the application site. The stream flows in a northern direction and meets this SAC *ca.* 460m north of the site. The construction works could give rise to sufficient levels of contaminants, such as concrete dust, silt, fuels or oils, that could give rise to a pollution event. In the event of heavy rainfall, contaminants and polluted runoff could feasibly migrate into the Ferganstown and Ballymacon

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			stream and ultimately into the River Boyne and associated Natura 2000 sites. The QIs of this SAC are sensitive to changes in water quality and could be negatively affected by changes to water quality. A degradation in water quality could also reduce the availability and quality of aquatic species that are food sources for the QIs of this SAC. Effects to the food sources of these species could then adversely impact the local populations of the QIs in the SAC. With regards to the precautionary principle, significant effects cannot be ruled out.
River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA 004232	Located *ca*. 530m north of site	Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) [A229]	**Screened In** Potential effects could arise. A Source-Pathway-Receptor linkage exists between the proposed development and this SPA. The principle hydrological feature within the vicinity of the proposed works is the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream (EPA Code: 07F17) located on the western boundary of the application site. The stream flows in a northern direction and meets this SPA *ca*. 530m north of the site. The construction works could give rise to sufficient levels of contaminants, such as concrete dust, silt, fuels or oils, that could give rise to a pollution event. In the event of heavy rainfall, contaminants and polluted runoff could feasibly migrate into the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream and ultimately into the River Boyne and associated Natura 2000 sites. The QI of this SPA is sensitive to changes in water quality and could be negatively affected this. A degradation in water quality could

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			also reduce the availability and quality of aquatic species that are food sources for this QI. Effects to the food sources of these species could then adversely impact the local populations of the QI in the SPA. With regards to the precautionary principle, significant effects cannot be ruled out.

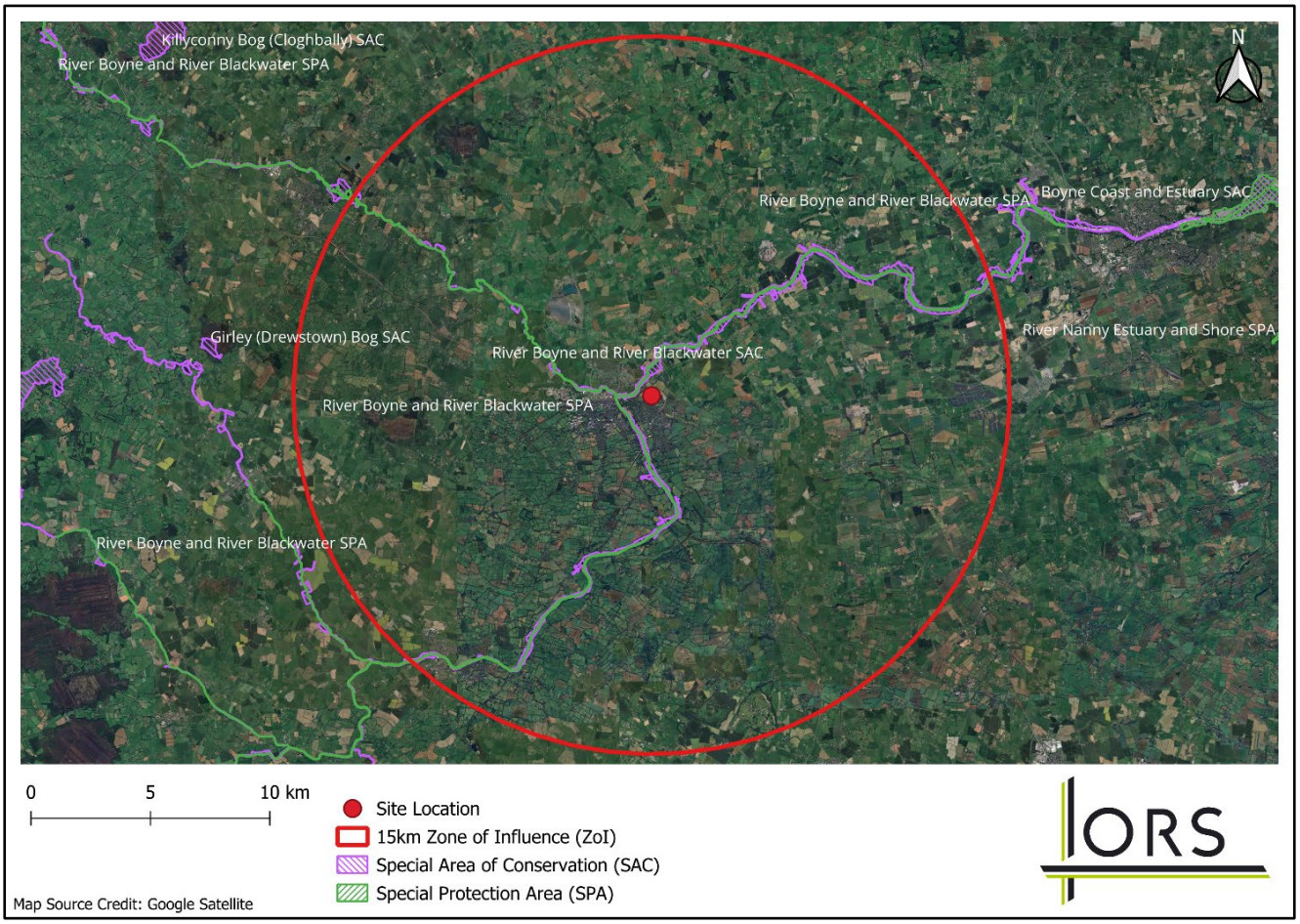


Figure 3.5: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development site.

A full description of the sites can be accessed on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (www.npws.ie), and the latest shapefiles of the Natura 2000 sites available on the NPWS online database (https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data).

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4 Appropriate Assessment

4.1 Identification of Potential Effects

The proposed development site is located at Athlumney, Navan, Co. Meath (ITM Coordinates: 688578, 767993) within the administrative jurisdiction of Meath County Council. The proposed development consists of the construction of an 83 no. unit residential development and associated site works. The nearest water feature to the proposed development site is the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream located on the western site boundary.

Taking a conservative approach, in a worst-case scenario and in the absence of mitigation, an accidental pollution event of a sufficient magnitude during the construction or operational phases of development, either alone or in combination with other pollution sources, could potentially affect the surface or ground water quality in the screened in Natura 2000 sites to an extent that undermines the conservation objectives of its qualifying interests. A reduction in water quality in these Natura 2000 sites has the potential to affect the aquatic species and habitats, and natural conditions that are required to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the qualifying interests of the designated sites.

The following areas were examined in relation to potential impacts and subsequent effects from the proposed development on the Natura 2000 sites identified:

- Deterioration of surface or groundwater quality in designated areas arising from pollution from surface water run-off during site preparation, construction, and operation.
- Deterioration in air quality in designated areas arising from pollution during the construction and operation of the proposed development.
- Disturbance and displacement effects.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation.
- Habitat degradation resulting from the spread of invasive species.

4.2 Assessment of Effects

The main objective of this stage (Stage 2, Natura Impact Statement) in the Appropriate Assessment process is to determine whether the proposed development at Athlumney, Navan, Co. Meath (either alone or in combination with other plans, programmes and projects) will result in significant adverse impacts to the integrity of the nearby Natura 2000 sites with respect to the site's structures, species, functions, conservation objectives and targets. 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 sites that have been 'screened in' will be described in greater detail in terms of the site characteristics and conservation objectives.

4.2.1 Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs)

For the designated Natura 2000 site that was screened in, where Site Specific Conservation Objectives were available, these were reviewed in light of the proposed development and the potential impacts that might occur. These Site Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) aim to define the favourable conservation conditions for the particular habitats or species at that site. They outline certain attributes (e.g., distribution, population structure, water quality) for

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different species and habitats with targets, which define favourable conditions for a habitat or species at a particular site. The maintenance of habitats and species within the Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation conditions will contribute to the overall maintenance of the favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level. Where available, these SSCOs can be downloaded from the NPWS website. Any potential threats to the attributes and targets as defined in these SSCOs were assessed and, where necessary, mitigated. Where SSCOS were not available, then the SSCOs of other Natura 2000 sites with comparable QIs were referred to.

For each Qualifying Interest of the Natura 2000 sites, the specific conservation objective is either to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of that interest, by defining a list of attributes and targets which are indicative of the conservation status of that interest. For habitats, the main attributes include habitat area, habitat distribution, physical structure, vegetation structure, vegetation composition, woodland structure, and hydrological regime. The main target is to ensure that the habitats are stable or increasing in area and that the other attributes are maintained or restored. For Annex II species, the main attributes are population distribution, size, structure, habitat suitability and availability whilst the targets aim to ensure that the long-term population trends of the species are stable or increasing and that there is no significant decrease in the numbers or range of areas used by the species, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation.

Table 4.1 outlines the conservation objectives of the relevant *Screened In* Natura 2000 sites and assesses the potential effects arising as a result of the proposed development.

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Table 4.1: Potential Significant Effects on Natura 2000 Site Conservation Objectives			
Qualifying Interest	**Conservation Objectives**	**Potential Threat/Effect**	**Pathway**
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC			
Alkaline fens [7230]	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens in River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:** • Habitat area - Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes • Habitat distribution - No decline, subject to natural processes • Ecosystem function: soil nutrients - Maintain soil pH and nutrient status within natural ranges • Ecosystem function: peat formation - Maintain active peat formation, where appropriate • Ecosystem function: hydrology – groundwater levels – Maintain, or where necessary restore, appropriate natural hydrological regimes necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat • Ecosystem function: hydrology - surface water flow - Maintain, or where necessary restore, as close as possible to natural or semi-natural, drainage conditions • Ecosystem function: water quality - Maintain appropriate water quality, particularly pH and nutrient levels, to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat • Vegetation composition: community diversity - Maintain variety of vegetation communities, subject to natural processes • Vegetation composition: typical brown mosses - Maintain adequate cover of typical brown moss species • Vegetation composition: typical vascular plants - Maintain adequate cover of typical vascular plant species • Vegetation composition: native negative indicator species - Cover of native negative indicator species at insignificant levels • Vegetation composition: non-native species - Cover of non-native species less than 1%	Little is known of this habitat's distribution or its sub-types within this SAC. In the absence of mitigation measures, alteration of water quality and hydrological regime could have adverse effects on habitats and species associated with this QI. Mitigation measures for the protection of water quality during the construction phase are required.	Migration of contaminants to the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream that flows into this SAC.

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	• Vegetation composition: native trees and shrubs - Cover of scattered native trees and shrubs less than 10% • Vegetation composition: algal cover - Cover of algae less than 2% • Vegetation structure: vegetation height - At least 50% of the live leaves/flowering shoots are more than either 5cm or 15cm above ground surface depending on community type • Physical structure: disturbed bare ground - Cover of disturbed bare ground not more than 10% • Physical structure: tufa formations - Disturbed proportion of vegetation cover where tufa is present is less than 1% • Indicators of local distinctiveness - No decline in distribution or population sizes of rare, threatened or scarce species associated with the habitat; maintain features of local distinctiveness, subject to natural processes • Transitional areas between fen and adjacent habitats - Maintain adequate transitional areas to support/protect the alkaline fen ecosystem and the services it provides		
Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) [91E0]	**To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* in River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:** • Habitat area - Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes • Habitat distribution - No decline, subject to natural processes • Woodland size - Area stable or increasing. Where topographically possible, "large" woods at least 25ha in size and "small" woods at least 3ha in size • Woodland structure: cover and height - Total canopy cover at least 30%; median canopy height at least 7m; native shrub layer cover 10-75%; native herb/dwarf shrub layer cover at least 20% and height at least 20cm; bryophyte cover at least 4% • Woodland structure: community diversity and extent - Maintain diversity and extent of community types • Woodland structure: natural regeneration - Seedlings, saplings and pole age-classes of target species for 91E0 woodlands and other native tree	This QI habitat is located over 17km from the proposed development site. This distance is greater when considering the hydrological distance. It is highly unlikely that contaminants from a pollution event at the proposed site would reach this QI habitat due to the distance between them. Any contaminants entering the River Boyne from the proposed development would not create significant downstream effects at this	N/A

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	species occur in adequate proportions to ensure survival of woodland canopy • Hydrological regime: flooding depth/height of water table - Appropriate hydrological regime necessary for maintenance of alluvial vegetation • Woodland structure: dead wood - At least 19 stems/ha of dead wood of at least 20cm diameter • Woodland structure: veteran trees - No decline • Woodland structure: indicators of local distinctiveness - No decline in distribution and, in the case of red listed and other rare or localised species, population size • Woodland structure: indicators of overgrazing - All five indicators of overgrazing absent • Vegetation composition: native tree cover - No decline. Native tree cover at least 90% of canopy; target species cover at least 50% of canopy • Vegetation composition: typical species - At least 1 target species for 91E0 woodlands present; at least 6 positive indicator species for 91E0 woodlands present • Vegetation composition: negative indicator species - Negative indicator species cover not greater than 10%; regeneration of negative indicator species absent • Vegetation composition: problematic native species - Cover of common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) less than 75%	habitat due to the dilution effect. Mitigation measures are not required for the protection of this QI habitat.	
River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) [1099]	**To restore the favourable conservation condition of River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) in River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:** • Distribution - Restore access to all water courses down to first order streams • Distribution of larvae - Not less than 50% of sample sites with suitable habitat positive for larval brook/river lamprey • Population structure of larvae - At least three age/size classes of larval brook/river lamprey present • Larval lamprey density in fine sediment - Mean density of brook/river larval lamprey in sites with suitable habitat more than 5/m²	Changes in natural hydrology and water quality resulting from sediment or pollutant-laden runoff reaching the waterbody during the construction phase. Potential to adversely affect water quality and therefore, prey availability in the absence of mitigation. Mitigation measures for the	Migration of contaminants to the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream that flows into this SAC.

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	• Extent and distribution of spawning nursery habitat - No decline in extent and distribution of spawning and nursery beds	protection of water quality during the construction phase are required.	
Salmon (*Salmo salar*) [1106]	**To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) in River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:** • Distribution: extent of anadromy - 100% of river channels down to second order accessible from estuary • Adult spawning fish - Conservation limit (CL) for each system consistently exceeded • Salmon fry abundance - Maintain or exceed 0+ fry mean catchment-wide abundance threshold value. Currently set at 17 salmon fry/5 minutes sampling • Out-migrating smolt abundance - No significant decline • Number and distribution of redds - No decline in number and distribution of spawning redds due to anthropogenic causes • Water quality - At least Q4 at all sites sampled by EPA	Changes in natural hydrology and water quality resulting from sediment or pollutant-laden runoff reaching the waterbody during the construction phase. Potential to adversely affect water quality and therefore, prey availability in the absence of mitigation. Mitigation measures for the protection of water quality during the construction phase are required.	Migration of contaminants to the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream that flows into this SAC.
Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355]	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter (*Lutra lutra*) in River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:** • Distribution - No significant decline • Extent of terrestrial habitat - No significant decline. Area mapped and calculated as 447.6ha along river banks/ lake shoreline/around ponds • Extent of freshwater (river) habitat - No significant decline. Length mapped and calculated as 263.3km • Extent of freshwater (lake) habitat - No significant decline. Area mapped and calculated as 31.6ha • Couching sites and holts - No significant decline • Fish biomass available - No significant decline • Barriers to connectivity - No significant increase	Changes in natural hydrology and water quality resulting from sediment or pollutant-laden runoff reaching the waterbody during the construction phase. Potential to adversely affect water quality and therefore, prey availability in the absence of mitigation. Mitigation measures for the protection of water quality during the construction phase are required.	Migration of contaminants to the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream that flows into this SAC.

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River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA			
Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) [A229]	**To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Kingfisher in River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:** • Population size - No significant decline in the long term • Productivity rate - Sufficient productivity to maintain the population trend as stable or increasing • Spatial distribution of territories - No significant loss of distribution in the long term, other than that occurring due to natural patterns of variation • Extent and quality of nesting banks and other suitable nesting features - Sufficient area of high quality nesting habitat to support the population target • Forage spatial distribution, extent, abundance and availability - Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable forage habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target • Water quality - Both biotic (i.e. Q-value) and abiotic indices reflect overall good-high quality status • Barriers to connectivity - No significant increase • Disturbance to breeding sites - Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact upon breeding Kingfisher	Changes in natural hydrology and water quality resulting from sediment or pollutant-laden runoff reaching the waterbody during the construction phase. Potential to adversely affect water quality and therefore, prey availability in the absence of mitigation. Mitigation measures for the protection of water quality during the construction phase are required.	Migration of contaminants to the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream that flows into the River Boyne and this SPA.

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The identification of potential impacts and the assessment of their significance typically requires the identification of the type and magnitude of the impacts. For example, will the impacts be short-term or long-term, direct, indirect or cumulative, and will they occur during construction or operation. This section will establish whether the potential impacts of the proposed development are likely to occur, and whether or not they are significant. These potential impacts will be examined with respect to the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites identified.

The following potential future impacts on the screened in Natura 2000 sites will be considered in detail:

- Deterioration of surface or groundwater quality in designated areas arising from pollution from surface water run-off during site preparation, construction, and operation.
- Deterioration in air quality in designated areas arising from pollution during the construction and operation of the proposed development.
- Disturbance and displacement effects.
- Habitat loss and fragmentation.

4.2.2 Deterioration in Surface Water Quality

Site Preparation and Construction

Construction activities can generate concrete dust, sediments, oils, chemicals, and fuels that, if unmanaged, may run off into nearby streams, rivers, wetlands, or infiltrate into groundwater.

The principle hydrological feature within the vicinity of the proposed works is the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream (EPA Code: 07F17) located on the western boundary of the application site. The stream flows in a northern direction and flows into the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA.

Dust, particulate matter, or dry deposition of construction-related pollutants could affect the water quality of the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream over time. The most likely sources of dust generation at this site include soil stripping, excavation activities, and concrete works. While less significant than direct runoff, this route can contribute to water pollution over time, especially through cumulative nutrient loading or pH alterations, potentially affecting aquatic ecology within the designated site.

A pollution incident of significant magnitude, such as contaminated surface water runoff during construction works, accidental oil or fuel spills or leaks, or heavy rainfall carrying silt, sediment, or other pollutants, could enter the watercourses. This has the potential to impact the aquatic species and habitats of the Natura 2000 sites that are sensitive to changes in water quality. A reduction in water quality could reduce the abundance and availability of food resources and habitat for the aquatic species of the Natura 2000 sites, and reduce the distribution, quality and abundance of the aquatic habitats associated with the designated sites outlined in **Section 4.3.1**.

Adverse effects to the food resources of the QIs could then impact the local QI populations designated within the Natura 2000 sites. Changes in water quality could affect the vegetative structure and distribution of the habitat QIs outlined in **Section 4.3.1**. A potential pollution event arising from the works, either alone or in combination with other water quality pressures, could give rise to significant effects to a degree that could compromise the conservation objectives of

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the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA.

Operation

Surface Water

The surface water drainage network will tie into the existing system of gullies and drainage channels associated with the ongoing developments to the northeast and east of the proposed development site. The drainage network discharges surface water into the drainage channel adjacent to the site boundary and outflows into the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream. 3 no. attenuation basins are also proposed which will capture and treat excess surface water. Contaminated surface water runoff is not considered likely during the operational phase of the development, given the integrity of the existing drainage network remains robust. Significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA are not considered likely during the operational phase.

Foul Water

Wastewater connections to the site are feasible subject to upgrades and extensions to the surrounding foul water network. Foul water will enter the surrounding network once connection is established and will be subject to treatment prior to discharge. It is not considered likely that significant effects on surface/groundwater quality will occur during operation as a result of foul water emissions from site. By extension, significant effects on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA are not considered likely during the operational phase.

4.2.3 Deterioration in Air Quality in the SAC

Site Preparation and Construction

Dust, particulate matter, or dry deposition of construction-related pollutants could negatively affect the air quality in the vicinity of the Natura 2000 sites. The most likely sources of dust generation at this site include soil stripping and excavation to facilitate the works throughout the duration of the project. Dust can also be dispersed by excessive vehicular movement around the site during dry periods. A reduction in air quality at the site location is unlikely to affect the QIs of the Natura 2000 sites, given the characteristics and the diffuse occurrence of the QIs.

Operation

Excessive dust emissions from the site are not considered likely during the operational phase. Thus, significant effects on the screened in Natura 2000 sites as a result of diminished air quality are not considered likely during the operational phase of the development.

4.2.4 Disturbance and Displacement

Site Preparation and Construction

Potential effects associated with the construction phase consist of stormwater runoff in the event of heavy rainfall, which could migrate to the Natura 2000 sites and have downstream effects. In the absence of mitigation, runoff laden with silt and pollutants could disturb and displace QIs through the reduction of water quality and habitat smothering.

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Operation

An increase in contaminated stormwater runoff is not likely to arise during the operational phase of the development. Significant disturbance/displacement effects during operation are not considered likely.

4.2.5 Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

Site Preparation and Construction

It is not considered likely that the proposed development will result in the loss or fragmentation of habitats within the Natura 2000 sites during construction.

Operation

It is not considered likely that the proposed development will result in the loss or fragmentation of habitats within the Natura 2000 sites during operation.

4.2.1 Habitat degradation as a Result of the Spread of Invasive Species

Site Preparation and Construction

Invasive species were not recorded during site surveying. Additional information is available in the accompanying EcIA (Document Reference No.: **252656-ORS-XX-XX-RP-EN-13d-001**). Habitat degradation as a result of spread of invasive species is not foreseen during site preparation and construction. Best practice biosecurity methods should be adhered to in order to prevent introduction during this phase.

Operation

Invasive species were not recorded during site surveying. Additional information is available in the accompanying EcIA (Document Reference No.: **252656-ORS-XX-XX-RP-EN-13d-001**). Habitat degradation as a result of spread of invasive species is not foreseen during operation. Best practice biosecurity methods should be adhered to in order to prevent introduction during this phase.

4.2.2 Potential Cumulative Effects

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.

Any plan or existing/proposed project that could potentially affect the screened in Natura 2000 sites in combination with the proposed development, must adhere to the overarching environmental protective policies and objectives of the relevant land use plan. These policies and objectives will ensure the protection of Natura 2000 sites and will include the requirement for any future project to undergo Screening for Appropriate Assessment and/or Appropriate Assessment.

Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

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Planning policy at the local level is currently provided by the Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027. This plan contains a number of objectives and policies relevant to ecology, biodiversity, green infrastructure and nature conservation. **Table 4.2** below provides a summary of relevant policies relating to ecological protection and management.

Table 4.2: Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 Policy Objectives

Policy No:	Biodiversity Policy Objectives
HER POL 27	To protect, conserve and enhance the County's biodiversity where appropriate.
HER POL 28	To integrate in the development management process the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and landscape features wherever possible, by minimising adverse impacts on existing habitats (whether designated or not) and by including mitigation and/or compensation measures, as appropriate.
HER POL 29	To raise public awareness and understanding of the County's natural heritage and biodiversity.
HER POL 30	To promote increased public participation in biodiversity conservation by supporting and encouraging community-led initiatives.
HER POL 31	To ensure that the ecological impact of all development proposals on habitats and species are appropriately assessed by suitably qualified professional(s) in accordance with best practice guidelines – e.g. the preparation of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, Natura Impact Statement (NIS), species surveys etc. (as appropriate).
HER OBJ 30	To implement, in partnership with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, relevant stakeholders and the community, the objectives and actions of Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017 - 2021 which relate to the remit and functions of Meath County Council.
HER OBJ 31	To implement, in partnership with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, relevant stakeholders and the community, the objectives and actions of the County Meath Biodiversity Plan 2015-2020 and any revisions thereof.
HER OBJ 32	To actively support the implementation of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025 and any revisions thereof.
HER POL 32	To permit development on or adjacent to designated Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves or those proposed to be designated over the period of the Plan, only where the development has been subject to the outcome of the Appropriate Assessment process and has been carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife.
HER POL 33	To have regard to the views and guidance of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in respect of proposed development where there is a possibility that such development may have an impact on a designated European or National site or a site proposed for such designation.
HER POL 34	To undertake appropriate surveys and collect data to provide an evidence-base to assist the Council in meeting its obligations under Article 6 of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) as transposed into Irish Law, subject to available resources.
HER OBJ 33	To ensure an Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) and Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directives (92/43/EEC) and in accordance with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 and relevant EPA and European Commission guidance documents, is carried out in respect of any plan or project

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	not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site(s), either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, in view of the site's conservation objectives.
HER OBJ 34	To protect and conserve the conservation value of candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas as identified by the Minister for the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan in accordance with the provisions of the Habitats and Birds Directives and to permit development in or affecting same only in accordance with the provisions of those Directives as transposed into Irish Law.
HER POL 35	To ensure, where appropriate, the protection and conservation of areas, sites, species and ecological/networks of biodiversity value outside designated sites and to require an appropriate level of ecological assessment by suitably qualified professional(s) to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.
HER POL 36	To consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and take account of their views and any licensing requirements, when undertaking, approving or authorising development which is likely to affect plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
HER OBJ 35	To ensure that development does not have a significant adverse impact, incapable of satisfactory avoidance or mitigation, on plant, animal or bird species protected by law.
HER POL 37	To encourage the retention of hedgerows and other distinctive boundary treatments in rural areas and prevent loss and fragmentation, where practically possible. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same type of boundary will be required.
HER POL 38	To promote and encourage planting of native hedgerow species in new developments and as part of the Council's own landscaping works.
HER POL 39	To recognise the archaeological importance of townland boundaries including hedgerows and promote their protection and retention.
HER POL 40	To protect and encourage the effective management of native and semi-natural woodlands, groups of trees and individual trees and to encourage the retention of mature trees and the use of tree surgery rather than felling, where possible, when undertaking, approving or authorising development.
HER POL 41	To protect trees the subject of Tree Preservation Orders (see Map 9.3), Champion and Heritage Trees identified on the Tree Register of Ireland and Heritage Tree Database when undertaking, approving, or authorising development.
HER POL 42	To promote the preservation of individual trees or groups of trees as identified on the Heritage Maps in Volume 2 and to manage these trees in line with arboricultural best practice.
HER OBJ 36	To promote awareness, understanding and best practice in the management of the County's woodland, tree and hedgerow resource.
HER OBJ 37	To continue to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to develop and enhance Balrath Wood and to explore opportunities to develop additional sites under the Neighbour Wood Scheme.
HER OBJ 38	To review the Meath Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Survey (2011), over the life of the Development Plan, as appropriate.
HER POL 43	To promote best practice in the control of invasive species in the carrying out its functions in association with relevant authorities including TII and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport.

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HER POL 44	To require all development proposals to address the presence or absence of invasive alien species on proposed development sites and (if necessary) require applicants to prepare and submit an Invasive Species Management Plan where such a species exists to comply with the provisions of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015.
HER POL 45	To ensure that peatland areas which are designated (or proposed for designation) as NHAs, SACs or SPAs are conserved for their ecological, climate regulation, archaeological, cultural and educational significance.
HER OBJ 39	To work in partnership with relevant stakeholders on a suitable peatland site(s) to demonstrate best practice in sustainable peatland conservation, management and restoration techniques and to promote their heritage and educational value subject to Ecological Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment Screening, as appropriate, having regard to local and residential amenities.
HER POL 47	To protect the ecological, recreational, educational, amenity and flood alleviation potential of navigational and non-navigational waterways within the County, towpaths and adjacent wetlands.
HER OBJ 40	To work in partnership with Waterways Ireland and relevant stakeholders to encourage best practice biodiversity management of canal and towpath habitats.
HER POL 48	To manage, enhance and protect the wetlands of the County having regard to the 'County Meath Wetland Survey 2010' and ensure that there is an appropriate level of assessment in relation to proposals which would involve draining, reclaiming or infilling of wetland habitats.
HER POL 49	To protect the character, visual, recreational, ecological and amenity value of the coast and provisions for public access, in assessing proposals for development.
HER POL 50	To ensure that the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, coastal wetlands and estuaries are not compromised by inappropriate works or development.
HER OBJ 41	To maintain the beaches along the coast to a high standard and develop their recreational potential as a seaside amenity, subject to appropriate environmental assessments and in co-operation with the relevant agencies, in order to bring them to a Blue Flag standard.
HER OBJ 42	To undertake conservation works in accordance with best practice on the coastal dune systems subject to ecological impact assessment and Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate.
HER OBJ 43	To implement, in partnership, with all relevant stakeholders the Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington Beach Management Plan.
HER OBJ 44	To maintain and enhance our natural coastal defences to increase resilience to climate change.
HER OBJ 45	To investigate how the County's natural coastal defences, can be enhanced to increase climate resilience of our coastal communities.
HER POL 51	To preserve and protect for the common good, existing public rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility.
HER OBJ 46	To seek to identify and protect over the lifetime of the Plan further existing rights of way which give access to seashore, mountain, lakeshore, riverbank or other place of natural beauty or recreational utility (accompanied by mapping showing public rights of way).
HER OBJ 47	To seek to negotiate access to lands using permissive access agreements, where appropriate and feasible, in order to provide public access to lands for public amenity purposes.

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HER OBJ 48	To support the aims and objectives of the European Landscape Convention by implementing the relevant objectives and actions of the *National Landscape Strategy 2015-2025* and any revisions thereof.
HER POL 53	To discourage proposals necessitating the removal of extensive amount of trees, hedgerows and historic walls or other distinctive boundary treatments.
HER OBJ 59	To identify and map green infrastructure assets and sites of local biodiversity value over the lifetime of the Plan.
RUR DEV SO 9	To ensure that plans and projects associated with rural development will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment Screening and those plans or projects which could, either individually or in-combination with other plans and projects, have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site (or sites) undergo a full Appropriate Assessment.
RD POL 6	To accommodate demand for permanent residential development as it arises subject to good practice in matters such as design, location and the protection of important landscapes and any environmentally sensitive areas.
RD OBJ 9	To promote the retention of field boundaries and mature trees and hedgerows to protect the rural character of the area.
RD POL 12	To facilitate the development of agriculture while ensuring that natural waters, wildlife habitats and conservation areas are protected from pollution.
RD POL 15	To encourage sustainable forestry development, which is planted, managed and harvested in accordance with the Forest Service Guidelines for Landscape, Forest Harvesting and Environmental, Archaeology, Biodiversity and Water Quality.
RD POL 16	To promote forestry development of appropriate scale and character whilst ensuring that the development does not have a negative visual impact on the countryside or cause pollution or degradation to wildlife habitats, natural waters or areas of ecological importance.
RD POL 19	To consider the preservation of any tree, trees or groups of trees or woodland of special amenity or environmental value by use of Tree Preservation Orders.
RD POL 20	To require the submission of landscape plans where appropriate to accompany planning applications for rural development prepared by competent professionals and to promote the use of native trees for boundary treatment and shelter belts.
RD POL 21	To ensure that projects associated with the extractive industry carry out screening for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Article 6(3) of the E.C. Habitats Directive, where required.
RD POL 27	To ensure that development for aggregates / mineral extraction, processing and associated processes does not significantly impact in the following areas: i. Existing & Proposed Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); ii. Special Protection Areas (SPAs); iii. Natural Heritage Areas and Proposed Natural Heritage Areas; iv. Other areas of importance for the conservation of flora and fauna; v. Areas of significant archaeological potential; vi. In the vicinity of a recorded monument, and; Sensitive landscapes. World Heritage Sites.

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RD POL 44	To ensure that new development meets the highest standards in terms of environmental protection.
RD POL 52	To ensure wastewater treatment plants discharging into the Boyne catchment or to coastal Natura 2000 sites are suitably maintained and upgraded in advance of any additional loadings beyond their capacity in order to protect water quality, as required.
INF OBJ 39	To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments outlined in national policy by facilitating the development and exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County where such development does not have a negative impact on the surrounding environment (including water quality), landscape, biodiversity or local amenities so as to provide for further residential and enterprise development within the county.
INF OBJ 48	To support Ireland's renewable energy commitments by promoting the use of district heating systems in urban residential and enterprise developments, where such developments will not negatively impact upon the surrounding landscape, environment, biodiversity or local amenities.
INF OBJ 22	To ensure flood relief measures are suitably designed to protect the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, and to avoid direct or indirect impacts upon qualifying interests or Natura 2000 sites.
INF OBJ 23	To protect and enhance the County's floodplains, wetlands and coastal areas subject to flooding as "green infrastructure" which provide space for storage and conveyance of floodwater, and ensure that development does not impact on important wetland sites within river/stream catchments.
INF OBJ 30	To ensure the County's natural coastal defences, such as beaches, sand dunes, salt marshes and estuary lands, are protected and are not compromised by inappropriate works or forms of development.
INF OBJ 32	To Identify, prioritise and implement necessary coastal protection works subject to the availability of resources, whilst ensuring a high level of protection for natural habitats and features, and to ensure due regard is paid to visual and other environmental considerations in the design of any such coastal protection works. This will include the identification of coastal areas sensitive to climate change and consequent coastal erosion.
DM OBJ 11	Existing trees and hedgerows of biodiversity and/or amenity value shall be retained, where possible.
DM POL 9	To support the retention of field boundaries for their ecological/habitat significance, as demonstrated by a suitably qualified professional. Where removal of a hedgerow, stone wall or other distinctive boundary treatment is unavoidable, mitigation by provision of the same boundary type will be required.
DM OBJ 32	To encourage the use of measures specifically designed to enhance wildlife in residential schemes such as gaps/holes, should be considered and incorporated into boundary treatments to allow for passage of all wildlife including hedgehogs, bat boxes and swift bricks/boxes.
DM OBJ 42	Infill development shall take account of the character of the area and where possible retain existing features such as building line, height, railings, trees, gateways etc.
DM OBJ 77	In the assessment of individual proposals, the Council will require the following to be submitted as part of any planning application: • Glint & Glare Assessment • Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

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	• Biodiversity Management Plan • Public Consultation details • Noise Assessment • Socio-Economic Assessment • EIA Screening • Ecology Assessment • Archaeology Assessment • Traffic & Transport Assessment • Landscape and Visual Assessment • Hydrology Appraisal/Flood Risk Assessment Decommissioning/Restoration Plan
DM OBJ 88	To seek to facilitate the development of alternative energy sources where such proposals are consistent with landscape preservation, the protection of natural habitats, the protection of visual and residential amenities and Development Plan policy and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.
DM POL 35	To ensure that land use policies take account of the need to maintain appropriate distances between future major accident hazard establishments and residential areas, areas of substantial public use and of particular natural sensitivity or interest.

County Meath Biodiversity Action Plan

At the time of writing, Meath County Council is developing a new Biodiversity Action Plan for the period 2025 - 2030. This plan will align with national biodiversity policy and the county's heritage strategy and is expected to set out key actions under themes such as protecting and enhancing ecological networks, monitoring and research, habitat restoration, and raising public awareness.

Future Plans / Other Projects

In-combination effects take into consideration the potential impacts to the surrounding environment arising from the proposed development in conjunction with additional developments in the local area that are anticipated to be carried out within a similar timeframe. The National Planning Application Database planning map tool was used to identify any current or future projects which may potentially impact Natura 2000 sites when considered in combination with the proposed development.

When considering developments granted planning within the vicinity of the site, **Table 4.13** summarises planning applications in the site vicinity and provides a prediction of their potential in-combination effect with the proposed development. The predicted in-combination effect assumes the implementation of all relevant mitigation measures proposed within this report, i.e., it factors in the residual effect of the proposed development against any project identified to

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have the potential for in-combination effects. A number of planning applications have been previously granted permission at the proposed application site.

Table 4.1: Planning Applications in the Site Vicinity with Potential for In-Combination Effects

Application No.	Development Description	Location	Decision / Status	In-Combination Effect
2460415	a Large-Scale Residential Development - The (Phase 1B) development will consist of the construction of a mixed-use development comprising 322 no. dwellings, a Community Centre and Sports Hall, a Neighbourhood Centre, and a district public park as follows: A) 212 no. houses consisting of 177 no. 3-bedroom houses and 35 no. 4-bedroom houses (all houses 2-storeys except House Types F1, F2, F3 [corner], E1, E2, and E3 [corner] – (with variations to finishes); B) 26 no. duplex units comprising 13 no. 2-bedroom units and 13 no. 3-bedroom units (in 2 no. 3-storey blocks [with 8 no. duplex units abutting Apartment Block 2 in a 3-storey configuration]; C) 84 no. apartments across 3 no. apartment buildings (Block 2 [5-storeys] comprises 24 no. apartments consisting of 12 no. 1-bedroom apartments and 12 no. 2-bedroom apartments), Block 3 [5-storeys above neighbourhood centre – 6-storeys in total] comprising 36 no. apartments consisting of 14 no. 1- bedroom apartments and 22 no. 2-bedroom apartments and Block 4 [4-storeys above community centre – 5-storeys in total] comprising 24 no. apartments consisting of 9 no. 1-bedroom apartments and 15 no. 2-bedroom apartments (all apartments with balconies). D) Series of landscaped/Public Open Space areas of c.3.72 hectares including playground areas and a Public Park of c.1.65 ha of open space as well as additional communal open space for the apartments and duplex apartments; E) Provision of a c. 512 sq. m creche at ground floor of Block 2 as well as a 1,778 sq.m. Community Centre and Sports Hall (including a c.837 sqm sports hall [double height]	Within the townlands of ‘Ferganstown, and Ballymacon’ and ‘Athlumney’ Navan, Co. Meath	Permission granted (Conditional) 25/03/2025	**Quality:** Negative **Significance:** Not significant **Likelihood:** Unlikely **Duration:** Short-term

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	ancillary changing rooms, 4 no. community rooms and ancillary administration/office space rooms/ESB Substation); F) Provision of a convenience anchor retail unit (net floor space 1,000 sq. m [GFA 1,390 sq. m.]), takeaway, c. 82 sq. m, café, c. 210 sq. m, pharmacy c. 88 sq. m and General Practice Surgery c. 232 sq. m) as well as ESB substation and bins, all accommodated within the ground floor level of the neighbourhood centre to the north-west of the site; G) 693 no. car parking spaces, 289 no. bicycle parking spaces throughout the development; H) Provision of a temporary foul water pumping station (and associated storage) located within the district public park to service the scheme; I) Provision of surface water attenuation measures as well as all ancillary site development works (reprofiling of site and field drain diversions as required)			
2560539	Permission for a Large-Scale Residential Development - The proposed development will consist of 223no. residential dwellings (26no. 1 - bed, 50no. 2-bed, 138no. 3-bed and 9no. 4-bed) and a crèche. The mix of residential units consists of 155no. houses (18no. 2-bed, 128no. 3-bed, 9no. 4-bed) and 68no. apartments (26no. 1-bed, 32no. 2-bed, 10no. 3-bed). Apartments are three to four storey simplex/duplex own door apartments arranged in 5no. blocks. All housing is two storey in height. The crèche is a two storey standalone building (c.443sq.m) with allocated car parking and set down area. The proposed development includes all associated site development works including reprofiling of the site, works to an existing drainage ditch, the construction of a temporary foul water pumping station and rising main, public lighting, three ESB substations, bin and bicycle storage structures, car parking and landscaping of open space. The proposed development also provides for connections both vehicular and pedestrian to the residential development by Meath County Council known as Gort Na	Athlumney Alexander Reid Ferganstown and Ballymacon, Navan, Co. Meath	Permission granted (Conditional) 15/10/2025	**Quality:** Negative **Significance:** Not significant **Likelihood:** Unlikely **Duration:** Short-term

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	Glaise including the culverting part of an existing drainage ditch, removal of part of an existing hedge and existing boundary walls constructed within the Gort Na Glaise development. Provision is also made for future pedestrian/cycle connectivity to the west in keeping with Masterplan MP12. The development includes pedestrian/cycle connections onto the LRD6 and will provide a pedestrian crossing point on Old Road to the south of the application site. The development will be accessed by extending a spur off an existing roundabout junction on the new LRD 6 distributor road to the north of the application site. A portion of this spur road was previously permitted under P.A. Ref. 21-1046/ABP-312746-22. The proposed development also provides for an additional vehicular/pedestrian access to connect to the main access road proposed as part of a development to the north / north-west of the application site under P.A. Ref. 24/60415 (currently on appeal to An Bord Pleanála ABP-322341-25). A footpath and cycle path will be constructed along the western side of the application site as part of this planning application to provide access to the new development. A natura impact statement (NIS) has been prepared in respect to the proposed development and will be submitted to the planning authority with the planning application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application			
312746	Demolition of agricultural structures and construction of 98 houses. NIS submitted with application.	Within the townlands of Ferganstown, Ballymacon & Athlumney, Navan, Co. Meath	Permission granted with revised conditions 29/09/2023	**Quality:** Negative **Significance:** Not significant **Likelihood:** Unlikely **Duration:** Short-term
211046	the development (Phase 1A) will consist of the demolition of existing agricultural structures (c. 530sqm) and the construction of 98 no. residential units comprising 41 no. houses (40 no. 3 bedroom and 1 no. 4 bedroom	Within the townlands of Ferganstown Ballymacon & Athlumney , Navan , Co Meath	Permission granted (Conditional) 20/01/2022	**Quality:** Negative **Significance:** Not significant **Likelihood:** Unlikely

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	house - House Types A1,A2,B1,B2,C1,C2,D - 2 storeys; House Types F1, F2, F3, 3 storeys), facades of houses to have brick/render options in finish; 23 no. apartments (12 no. 1 bedroom apartments & 11 no. 2 bedroom apartments) in a 4 storey apartment building, along with adjoining 3 storey duplex element (block 1) comprising 10 no. duplex apartments (5 no. 2 bed apartments and 5 no. 3 bed duplex apartments) and 3 storey duplex building (block 2) fronting onto the recently constructed 'LDR6' Road comprising 24 no. duplex apartments (12 no. 2 bed apartments and 12 no. 3 bed duplex apartments), 151 no. car parking spaces & 46 no. bicycle spaces, open space and all associated infrastructure, foul and water supply (including a temporary pumping station) site development, attenuation and landscape works as well as roads to facilitate the development with vehicular and pedestrian access to be provided from the recently constructed LDR6 Road which connects to the R153 (Kentstown Road) to the south. A Natura Impact Statement will be submitted to the Planning Authority with the application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application			**Duration:** Short-term
2460066	the development will consist of a new wastewater pumping station that discharges to the inlet pipework of the Navan WWTP via two new rising main sewerage pipes. The pumping station development also includes an underground 924m3 emergency storage tank with a further 427m3 provided within the pumping station inlet chamber, wet wells and upstream sewerage network. The pumping station compound includes underground valve, inlet, wet well and flow meter chambers; and above ground structures including a control panel kiosk, operator welfare unit kiosk, wet kiosk, ESB substation, surge vessels with stair access, overhead gantry crane; and other tanks, plant and equipment. The compound also contains set down	Townlands of Ferganstown & Ballymacon and Athlumney, Navan, Co Meath	Permission granted (Conditional) 18/10/2024	**Quality:** Negative **Significance:** Not significant **Likelihood:** Unlikely **Duration:** Short-term

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	space for an emergency electrical generator, site lighting and hard surfaced internal circulation space and will be enclosed by 2.4m high security fencing with vehicle access gates. The compound will be accessed by a fenced and gated temporary road from the LDR6 distributor road. Other water and sewerage infrastructure will include the provision of a gravity sewer and a watermain from the roundabout on the LDR6 distributor road to the proposed pumping station. The proposed development also includes for a trenchless crossing under the Navan to Drogheda rail line, all landscaping and reinstatement works and ancillary site development works. A Natura Impact Statement is included with the planning application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application			
221703	The development will consist of Phase 1 of the Boyne Village Enterprise Park, and comprise construction of: 3 no. commercial high-bay warehouse units (each c. 15.81m in height) with ancillary office accommodation as follows: Unit A2 (approx. 2,570 sq. m. gross floor area including 254 sq. m. of reception/office/ancillary areas at ground and first floor levels), Unit A3 (approx. 2,058 sq. m. gross floor area including 200 sq. m. of reception/office/ancillary areas at ground and first floor levels) & Unit A4 (approx. 2,570 sq. m. gross floor area including 254 sq. m. of reception/office/ancillary areas at ground and first floor levels); New road and pedestrian access extending north from the existing LDR 6 distributor road, and a total of 73 No. car-parking spaces and 84 No. bicycle-parking spaces serving the three proposed units; Totem sign at the south-east corner of the site approx. 12.Sm tall providing c. 47.76 sq. m. of internally Illuminated signage; Relocation of existing overhead ESB power lines at the LDR 6 to new underground ducts and provision of new ESB sub-station and switch room accessed from new estate road; Road infrastructure works to the	Ferganstown & Ballymacon and Athlumney , Navan, Co Meath	Permission granted (Conditional) 31/10/2023	**Quality:** Negative **Significance:** Not significant **Likelihood:** Unlikely **Duration:** Short-term

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	north-east side of the LDR 6 to include new cycle lane, footpath, bus stop lay-by etc.; Planting & landscaping, new boundary treatments; Waste storage units serving each unit. drainage & infrastructure (including temporary foul pumping station) and all other associated works to facilitate the proposed development. A Natura Impact Statement will be submitted to the planning authority with the application. Significant further information/revised plans submitted on this application			

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5 Mitigation Measures

Section 4.2 of this report outlines the potential effects arising as a result of development works proceeding at the proposed site.

In order to reduce the likelihood and significance of potential effects upon the Natura 2000 sites identified, a series of mitigation measures is proposed to be implemented during development.

5.1 General Mitigation Measures

- The work areas must be kept to the minimum area required to carry out the proposed works, and the area should be clearly demarcated and cordoned off in advance of work commencement.
- Prior to the commencement of developments on site, the site engineer and the contractors should be made aware of the ecological sensitivity of the site and its surrounding habitats. They should also be notified of the proximity and connectivity of the site to Natura 2000 sites via the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream. They must be made familiar with the mitigation measures outlined in this NIS, and if possible, a statement signed by them acknowledging these mitigation measures should be presented to the Local Authority along with the Notice of Commencement.
- It is vital that there is no deterioration in water quality in the screened in Natura 2000 sites. This will protect both habitats and species that are sensitive to pollution within the designated sites. Strict controls of erosion, sediment generation and other pollutants associated with the construction process should be implemented, including the provision of attenuation measures, silt traps or geotextile curtains to reduce and intercept sediment release into the local watercourse. Guidelines in the following best practice documents should be adhered to:

    - Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) (2005) *Environmental Good Practice on Site (C692)*
    - Construction Industry Research and Information Association (2001) *Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites, Guidance for Consultants and Contractors (C532)*
    - Construction Industry Research and Information Association (2000) *Environmental Handbook for Building and Civil Engineering Projects (C512)*
    - Environmental Protection Agency (2015) *List of Waste and Determining if Waste is Hazardous or Non-Hazardous*
    - Environment Agency *et al*. (2015) Guidance on the Classification and Assessment of Waste, Technical Guidance WM3

5.2 Site Preparation and Construction

5.2.1 Protection of Surface and Groundwater

The main pollutants with the potential to impact water receptors are silt, fuel/oil, concrete and chemicals. The steps outlined below aim to eliminate contamination of the site's surface water runoff. The measures are advised with reference to the Inland Fisheries Board recommendations for the protection of adjacent water courses during the construction phase. They are also intended to contain groundwater contamination.

- Harmful materials such as fuels, oils, greases, paints and hydraulic fluids must be stored in

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bunded compounds well away from storm water drains and gullies. Refuelling of machinery should be carried out using drip trays.
- Only appropriately trained site operatives permitted to refuel plant and machinery onsite.
- Regular inspections to be carried out on plant and machinery for leaks and general condition.
- All manholes and gullies will be covered with silt fencing material and sandbags to limit silt and chemical run-off into surface water.
- Runoff from machine service and concrete/grout mixing areas must not enter storm water drains, ditches leading off-site, and the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream.
- Spill kits shall be available on site.
- No direct discharges to be made to waters where there is potential for cement/ residues/ oils/ chemicals in discharges.
- Stockpile areas for sands and gravel should be kept to a minimum size, well away from storm water drains, ditches leading off-site, and the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream.
- Open excavations to be backfilled immediately following installation of services, etc.
- Earthworks and the movement of plants on soil surfaces will be avoided during periods of extensive rainfall to limit silt-laden runoff and damage to soil structure.
- Pre-cast concrete should be used wherever possible. When this is not possible, any works using cast-in-place (poured) concrete must be done in the dry and effectively isolated from any flowing water or drains for a sufficient period to ensure no leachate from the concrete.
- Where concrete is being poured on site, the following concrete / aggregate management measures should include:
  - Best practice in bulk-liquid concrete management must be employed on site, addressing pouring and handling, secure shuttering, adequate curing times etc.
  - Where concrete shuttering is used, measures should be put in place to prevent shutter failure and control storage, handling and disposal of shutter oils.
  - Ready mix concrete wagons and mixers should be washed off site to minimise emissions into any local watercourses.
  - Activities which result in the creation of cement dust should be controlled by dampening down the areas.
  - Raw and uncured waste concrete should be disposed of by removal from the site or by burial on the site in a location and manner which will not impact upon the local watercourses.
  - Scheduling cement pours for dry days.
- Silt fencing should be established along the western site boundary between the works area and the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream. Silt fencing will be positioned to allow an appropriate working area and installed as per the manufacturer's guidelines. Condition of the fencing will be regularly inspected by the Environmental Manager and the fencing should be retained until all ground disturbance and silt-generating activities have ceased. The proposed location of silt fencing is provided in **Appendix A**.
- All material and earth removed should be stockpiled within a bunded area or within a geotextile barrier until required for use.
- Covers are to be provided over soil stockpiles when high wind and inclement weather are encountered, if required.
- No instream works are to take place without prior consultation with the Local Authority (Meath County Council), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Office of Public Works (OPW), and Uisce Éireann (UÉ).

5.2.2 Disturbance and Displacement Effects

The primary sources of disturbance during the construction will result from emissions of noise,

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dust and vibrations from the subject site. Thus, mitigation measures to prevent excessive emissions are proposed in line with best practice and are listed as follows:

Noise and Vibration

The Contractor will aim to restrict noise levels to the following levels:

- Daytime (7:00 to 19:00 hrs) – 65dB
- Evening (19:00 to 23:00 hrs) – 50dB
- Night-time (23:00 to 07:00 hrs) – 45dB (measured from nearest noise sensitive location).

To minimise noise from construction operations, no heavy construction equipment/ machinery (to include pneumatic drills, construction vehicles, generators, etc.) shall be operated on or adjacent to the construction site before 07:00 or after 19:00, Monday to Friday, and before 08:00 or after 14:00 on Saturdays. No activities shall take place in site on Sundays or Bank Holidays. No activity, which would reasonably be expected to cause annoyance to residents in the vicinity, shall take place on site between the hours of 19:00 and 07:00am.

The proposed development will be obliged to comply with BS 5228 "*Noise Control on Construction and open sites Part 1*". The contractor shall implement the following measures to eliminate or reduce noise levels where possible:

- Material and plant loading and unloading shall only take place during normal working hours.
- Ensure that each item of plant and equipment complies with the noise limits quoted in the relevant European Commission Directive 2000/14/EC.
- Fit all plant and equipment with appropriate mufflers or silencers of the type recommended by the manufacturer.
- Use all plant and equipment only for the tasks for which it has been designed.
- Locate movable plant away from noise sensitive receptors.
- Avoid use of diesel- or petrol-powered generators and use mains electricity or battery-powered equipment where practicable.
- Ensure written confirmation is received from Meath County Council Planning Department when applying for extensions to normal working hours. No out of hours work to be undertaken unless written permission to do so has been granted.
- In the event that excessive noise levels are deemed necessary, Meath County Council and local residents must be suitably notified in advance of said works.

Dust and Air Quality

- Soil will not be exposed until a replacement capping layer is almost ready to be placed. This is to ensure that soil is left exposed for the minimum amount of time possible.
- Throughout working hours, dust control procedures will be assessed as appropriate, subject to the prevailing meteorological conditions.
- Material stockpiles will be strategically placed to reduce wind exposure. Materials will be ordered on an ''as needed'' basis to reduce excessive storage.
- The contractor will spray water on the surface of all roads in the vicinity of the site if required in order to minimise dust generation from the construction activities.
- Appropriate dust suppression will be employed to prevent fugitive emissions affecting those occupying neighbouring properties or pathways.
- Covers or dampening of soil and material stockpiles when high wind and dry weather are encountered, if required.

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- All consignments containing material with the potential to cause air pollution being transported by skips, lorries, trucks or tippers shall be covered during transit on and off-site.
- No materials shall be burned on-site.

5.2.3 Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

The proposed development will not result in the direct land-take or degradation of habitats associated with the Natura 2000 sites. Indirect effects on aquatic habitats associated with the Natura 2000 sites could arise as a result of surface water emissions from the site, particularly in the event of heavy rainfall. Mitigation measures for the prevention of these indirect effects are provided in **Section 5.2.1** above.

5.2.4 Habitat Degradation Resulting from the Spread of Invasive Species

- Vehicles will be required to undergo inspection prior to entry to site to ensure they are free from invasive species. Vehicles will be washed down prior to entry to site, as required.
- Any soil imported to site shall be confirmed free of invasive species prior to utilisation on site.
- Resilient and highly propagative invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) have the potential to easily establish on site or traverse downstream via emission of rhizomes to the Ferganstown and Ballymacon stream or underlying aquifer. It is important that equipment if free of rhizomes before entering the site.
- Should invasive species be encountered on site, the area should be clearly demarcated, and an Invasive Species Management Plan shall be prepared outlining methods to limit further spread on site and prevent translocation of invasive species beyond the site.

5.3 Operation

5.3.1 Protection of Surface and Groundwater

It is not considered likely that significant effects on surface/groundwater quality will occur during operation. Significant effects on the Natura 2000 sites are not considered likely during the operational phase.

5.3.2 Disturbance and Displacement Effects

Measures to prevent excessive noise and light emissions emanating from the site during operation should be considered and are listed as follows:

- Restrict noisy activities (e.g. maintenance, landscape maintenance) to daytime hours (e.g., 8:00–18:00) to avoid disturbance to nocturnal or crepuscular species.
- Where feasible, all external lighting should be directed downwards and fully cut off to eliminate upward and horizontal light spill.
- Warm-colour temperature (e.g., <3000K) LED lighting, which is less disruptive to nocturnal wildlife is recommended.
- Where feasible and safe to do so, install motion-activated lights and timers in communal or external areas to ensure lights are only on when necessary.
- Maintain unlit or low-light corridors on site to support wildlife movement and reduce skyglow.
- Plant hedgerows or trees between light sources and near site boundaries to further screen

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light emissions.

5.3.3 Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

No habitat loss or fragmentation of the Natura 2000 sites is expected as a result of the operational phase of the development. No specific mitigation measures for this aspect are proposed.

5.3.4 Habitat Degradation Resulting from the Spread of Invasive Species

No specific measures for the control of invasive species during the operational phase are proposed, provided the construction phase does not result in the translocation of invasive species to the site. Biosecurity protocols will continue throughout the operational phase. Any future soil importation or site works must confirm materials and machinery are free of invasive plant propagules.

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6 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 qualifying interests (including the habitats and species) of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA. It is considered that, following mitigation, the proposed project does not have the potential to significantly affect the conservation objectives of the aforementioned Natura 2000 sites, and will not adversely affect the integrity of the sites.

The qualifying interests of the sites and their potential to be affected by the potential development were listed in **Section 4**. It is considered that these potential impacts can be successfully mitigated. With the implementation of the mitigation measures, there will be no deterioration in water quality or impacts upon any designated habitat or any species dependent on the 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 Natura 2000 sites will not be adversely affected.

Table 6.1 overleaf follows the integrity of the SAC / SPA checklist, which shows that the integrity of the site would not be affected by the proposed development when considering the application of the mitigation measures outlined in **Section 5,** as well as the adherence to good housekeeping and best practice construction and environmental management procedures.

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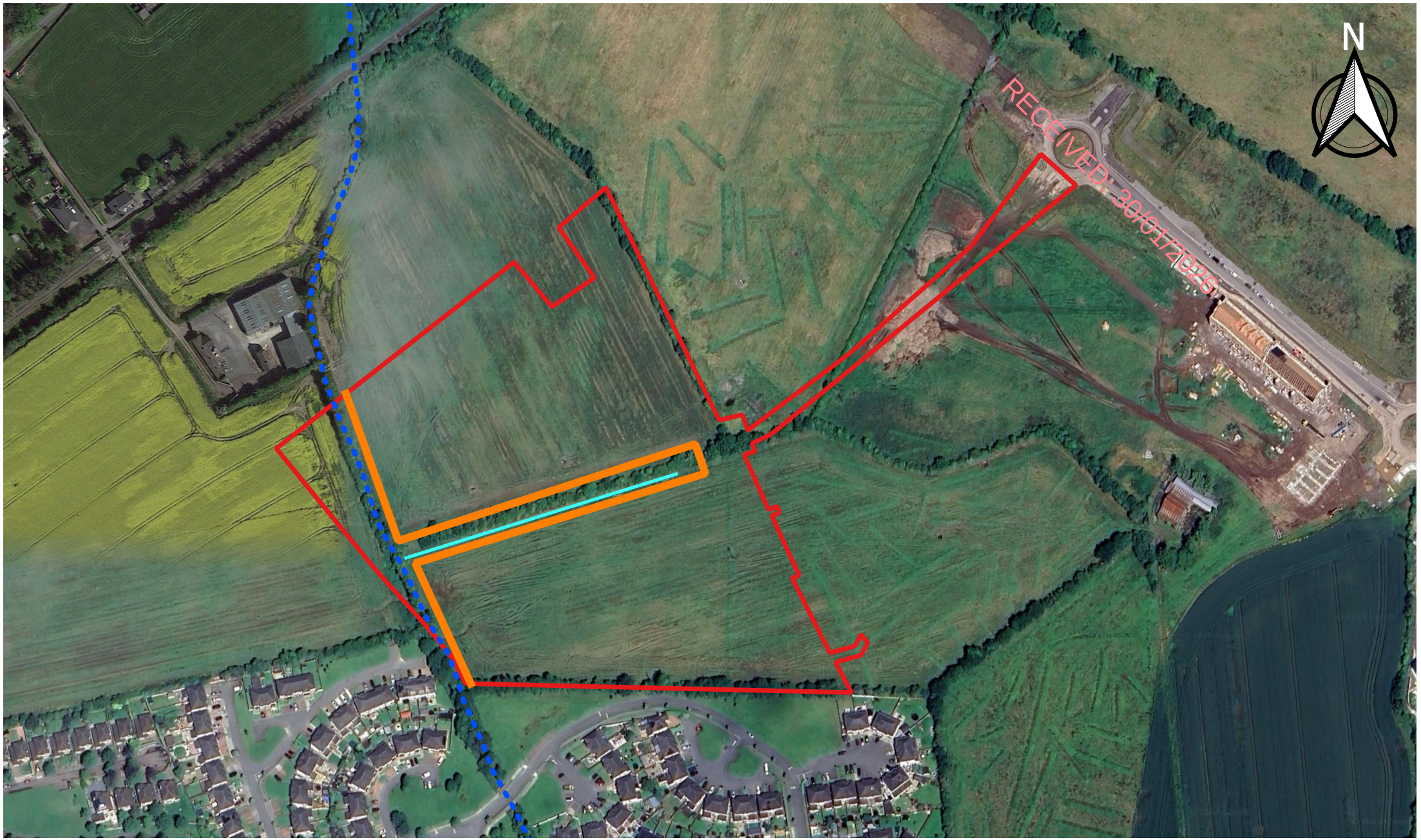
Table 6.1: Integrity of the SAC / SPA Checklist (From NPWS, Information Checklist for AA, Box 6, EC (2002) Conservation Objective: Does the project have the potential to:	Yes / No
Cause delays in progress towards achieving the conservation objectives of the site?	No
Interrupt progress towards achieving 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
Other Objectives: does the project have the potential to:	
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
Reduce the area of key habitats?	No
Reduce the population of key species?	No
Change the balance between key species?	No
Reduce diversity of the site?	No
Result in disturbance that could affect population size or density or the balance between key species?	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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Appendix A: Proposed Silt Fencing Location

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0
75
150 m
Site_boundary
WFD_RiverWaterbodies
FW4_Drainage_Ditch
Silt Fencing
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Map Source Credit: Google Satellite

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