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INTRODUCTION

5.1 SLR Consulting Ireland was commissioned by Anthony D'Arcy Ltd. to prepare a Biodiversity chapter which forms part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) prepared in support of the continued use and extension of the existing sand & gravel pit at Ballymacoonoge, Glentire & Ballynamonabeg Tds., Co. Wexford (the Site).

Background

5.2 This Biodiversity Chapter forms part of the EIAR documentation to support the planning application for the proposed development.

General Description of the Site

5.3 The overall application area covers c. 23.2 Ha. and is located c.9.5 km southeast of the town of Enniscorthy and c. 0.5 km south of Ballaghkeen (The Ballagh) village, refer to **Figure 5-1.** The existing sand & gravel pit is located within the townland of Ballymacoonoge and the extension area, comprising a single arable field, is located within the townland of Ballynamonabeg. The Site is bordered by the L20411 and L6033 local roads to the west and east respectively. The surrounding area consists primarily of agricultural lands.

Brief Project Description

Project Overview

5.4 The proposed development being applied for under this planning application is shown in plan on **Figure 2-2**, and in cross section on **Figure 2-3** in Chapter 2 of this EIAR, and will consist of:

- Continued use of the existing sand & gravel pit for completion of extraction and restoration (c. 4 hectares) under planning permission ref. 20191259);
- Extension to the existing sand & gravel pit over an extraction area of c. 11 hectares;
- Extraction to final level two metres above the groundwater table;
- Screening berms and operational landscaping
- Continued processing of sand & gravel using permitted mobile screening plant located on the pit floor
- Continuance of use of the existing permitted access and internal access road to / from the R744 regional road
- Continuance of use of existing permitted ancillary facilities: Office, portaloo, storage container, wheelwash and fuel storage tank
- Phased and final restoration of the lands to agricultural use.
- Proposed duration c. 18 years plus 2 years for final restoration, total permission duration of 20 years;
- Within an overall planning application area of c. 23.2 hectares.

Construction Phase (Screening Berms, Fencing & Topsoil Stripping)

5.5 The overall extraction development plan is shown in **Figure** 2-2. It is anticipated that the construction stage works as outlined below would be carried out within a 3-month period.

- Construction of perimeter fencing.
- Topsoil will be stripped to obtain access to the underlying sand and gravel resource and will be placed in landscaped screening berms for future use in final restoration of the extraction area.

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Operational Phase (Sand & Gravel Extraction / Processing – Phased Extraction)

5.6 The proposed operational phase will see the completion of extraction in the existing permitted extraction area and sand and gravel extraction carried out within an extraction extension area of c. 11 hectares. The final extraction scheme is shown in plan on **EIAR Figure 2-2** and in cross section on **EIAR Figure 2-3.**

In compliance with condition 17 of the existing planning permission:

"*No extraction of sand and gravel shall take place below two metres above the level of the water table."*

Extraction within the existing pit is carried out as a dry extraction operation above the groundwater table. It is proposed that extraction within the extension area will also be carried out two metres above the groundwater table.

It is proposed to extract the sand and gravel on a gradual basis with the extraction face advancing firstly southeast from the existing pit, followed by a phase moving southwest and then lastly southeast, as shown on **EIAR Figure 2-2**.

A loading shovel will excavate the sand & gravel material from the working pit face and transport it to the existing permitted mobile screening plant located within the existing central processing area located within the pit floor.

The mobile screening plant will be relocated onto the pit floor of the extension area as the operation of the extension area and restoration of the existing pit progress to minimise transport of material internally within the site, thereby reducing fuel costs, emissions and potential disturbance from noise and dust. The location of the mobile plant on the naturally screened pit floor will minimise any impact of the development on the local residences from dust, noise and visual intrusion.

Restoration Phase (Reinstatement to Agricultural Lands)

5.7 It is proposed to return the worked lands to agricultural lands - refer to Landscaping and Restoration Plan shown on **EIAR Figure 2-4**, in line with the well-established restoration practice in place at the existing pit.

Purpose of this Report

5.8 The purpose of this biodiversity chapter is to inform the Planning Application to Wexford County Council by Anthony D'Arcy Ltd. in respect of the proposed development at The Ballagh. This chapter forms part of the EIAR that will be submitted with the application for permission to assist the competent authority to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed project.

Evidence of Technical Competence and Experience

5.9 Field surveys were conducted by SLR Project Ecologists Lorcan Kelly, Kieran Moynihan and SLR Senior Ecologist Faolán Linnae. This Report was prepared by SLR Project Ecologist Victoria Molloy and Faolán Linnane. A technical Review of this report was carried out by SLR Associate Ecologist Micheal Bailey.

5.10 **Lorcan Kelly** holds a BSc. in Science (Zoology) from University College Dublin and an MSc. in Applied Ecology and Conservation from the University of East Anglia. He joined SLR in September 2023 and is a qualifying member of CIEEM. Lorcan has experience of bird surveys from working on wind farm projects within Ireland. He has written various PEA reports, AA Screening reports and species-specific ecological impact reports.

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5.11 **Victoria Molloy BSc (Hons)** has over four years' experience as a consultant ecologist and is a Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). She holds a BSc. in Zoology from the University of Galway. Victoria has prepared a range of survey reports and impact assessment reports for a variety of project types including extractive, renewable energy, forestry licence applications, housing, road, and industrial developments. She is also responsible for carrying out a range of surveys to inform these assessments including preliminary ecological assessment (PEA), habitat, ornithological, and marsh fritillary surveys. Victoria is also involved in the Irish Pollinator Monitoring Scheme and carries out regular pan trapping and pollinator transects during the summer months as part of this survey.

5.12 **Kieran Moynihan** is a Project Ecologist with three years of consultancy experience, specializing in ornithology, bat ecology, ecological assessment, and construction-stage ecological supervision (ECoW). He excels in survey design, data analysis, and technical inputs for EcIAs, AA Screening, and Natura Impact Statements, with a strong track record supporting wind farms, industrial developments, quarries, and regeneration projects. Kieran's expertise includes habitat classification, bird and bat surveys, GIS-supported data management, and protected species assessments. He is skilled in technical reporting, mitigation design, and on-site ECoW support, underpinned by a BSc (Hons) in Ecology & Environmental Biology from University College Cork and advanced training in bat acoustics and bird identification.

5.13 **Faolán Linnane BSc (Hons) MSc** – Faolán Linnane is a Senior Ecologist with SLR and has worked in consultancy since June 2021. Faolán holds a BSc in Environmental Science (Zoology) from University College Cork and an MSc in Marine Biology from University College Cork. Faolán gained valuable and transferable bird survey skills with the Curlew Conservation Programme on completion of his MSc. His experience in consultancy includes on a large infrastructure development, habitat surveys and a variety of bird surveys including vantage point watches, breeding wader surveys, breeding raptor surveys and goose roost surveys. Faolán has prepared a number of EcIAs, AAs and NIS reports for a wide range of projects

5.14 **Michael Bailey** holds a BSc. in Biology and Ecology from the University of Ulster and an MSc. in Quantitative Conservation Biology from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He has extensive experience in ecological studies and assessments across a range of sectors in Ireland and of agricultural, mining and renewable energy projects across Africa. He is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM).

Legislation and Policy

Legislation

5.15 The following legislation are relevant to this report:

- The EIA Directive (2014/52/EU);
- The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC);
- The Birds Directive (2009/147/EC);
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 - 2015.
- The Wildlife Acts 1976 as amended;
- Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000, 2010, 2012;
- The Flora (Protection) Order 2015.
- The Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2020 - PART XAB.

5.16 The details of this legislation are summarised in Appendix A of this report.

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National Planning Policy

5.17 The National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030[1] sets out objectives relating to biodiversity.

Local Planning Policy

5.18 The relevant local planning policies have been extracted from Volume 1 of the Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028. These policies are specific to "*Chapter 13: Heritage and Conservation*" and are concerned with the policies and objectives relating to biodiversity. These are detailed further in Appendix A.

[1] https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/files/4th_National_Biodiversity_Action_Plan.pdf Last accessed December 2025

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METHODOLOGY

5.19 The methods used to carry out the survey of the Site, to evaluate the ecological value and to prepare the biodiversity chapter is outlined in this section. The assessment methodology for this proposal was developed using the standard professional impact assessment guidance published in 2018 by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Scope of the Chapter

5.20 The scope of this Biodiversity Chapter is to identify potential impacts likely to occur as a result of the proposed extension of the quarry at Ballaghkeen, Co. Wexford, and to determine if the effects on biodiversity are significant in the absence of mitigation. The scope of the report includes the provision of mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures as required.

Study Area

5.21 The study area for the desk study and field surveys was identified through considering the nature of the development, the size and location of the project and the ecological features likely, or known, to be present. The experience gained from working on similar projects was also used to determine that the study area chosen was both sufficiently sized and proportionate for the proposed works.

Zone of Influence

5.22 The ‘zone of influence’ (ZOI) for a project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects because of the proposed project and associated activities. This is likely to extend beyond the project site, for example where there are ecological or hydrological links beyond the site’s boundaries. The ZOI will vary for different ecological features depending on their sensitivity to an environmental change (CIEEM, 2018).

5.23 The ‘zone of influence’ for the project can be identified through review of the nature of the proposed development / works, the presence / absence of surface water receptors, the presence of ecological connectivity to the wider landscape and distance from known ecologically sensitive sites.

Baseline Data Collection

Desk Study

5.24 A desk study was carried out to collate the available existing ecological information on the Site. The Site and the surrounding area were viewed using existing available satellite imagery using Google maps[2] and Bing maps[3] .

5.25 The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)[4] and the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)[5] online resources were accessed for information on sites designated for nature conservation and on protected habitats and species known from the 2 km grid squares T03S, T03T, T03X, and T03Y. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Maps[6] were accessed for

[2] https://www.google.ie/maps Last accessed December 2025
[3] https://www.bing.com/maps Last accessed December 2025
[4] https://www.npws.ie/Last accessed December 2025
[5] https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/ Last accessed December 2025
[6] http://gis.epa.ie/Last accessed December 2025

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other environmental information, such as surface water features, relevant to preparation of this report.

5.26 Wexford's County Council's website[7] was accessed for information on relevant planning policy, while the planning portal[8] was accessed for information on other proposed or permitted developments within the Site and immediate surrounding area.

5.27 Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI), published by BirdWatch Ireland and the RSPB NI, is a list of priority bird species for conservation action on the island of Ireland. The BoCCI lists birds which breed and/or winter in Ireland and classifies them into three separate lists; Red, Amber and Green; based on the conservation status of the bird and hence their conservation priority. Birds on the Red List are those of highest conservation concern, Amber List are of medium conservation concern and Green List are not considered threatened. The BirdWatch Ireland website[9] was accessed for information on birds of conservation concern.

5.28 All bird species are protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 – 2018 but for the purposes of this report only records of species within the last 10 years that are Red or Amber-listed on BoCCI or listed on Annex 1 of the Birds Directive are included from records held by the NBDC and NPWS web searches (see **Table 3**).

5.29 The conservation status of mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish and protected flora within Ireland and Europe was determined using one or more of the following documents: Wildlife Acts (1976 - 2012), the Red List of Terrestrial Mammals (Marnell *et al*., 2009), Ireland Red Lists No.5: Amphibians, Reptiles and Freshwater Fish (King *et al*. 2011), The Flora (Protection) Order, 2015 (S.I. No. 356 of 2015) and the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

5.30 The documents reviewed to assist the preparation of this report include: the Natura Impact Statement for the project (SLR, 2024), previous EIS (Atkins, 2015) and Natura Impact Statement (Atkins, 2015) for the Site.

Field Surveys

5.31 An ecological field survey was conducted on 24 July 2025 by SLR Ecologist Lorcan Kelly to determine the baseline ecology and to determine its ecological value. The weather conditions during the field survey were dry, light breeze and cloud cover of 8 oktas. Further surveys were carried out as a result of the PEA findings which are outlined in **Table** 1 below.

5.32 The approach to the field surveys is based on accepted standard practice and methods. Habitats within the study area were classified after '*A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*' and were assessed if they comprise Annex I habitats under the Habitats Directive. The dominant plant species present in each habitat type were recorded during the field surveys and this is considered sufficient to allow accurate classification of the habitats present.

5.33 Incidental sightings or evidence of birds, mammals or amphibians were also noted during the habitat survey and the habitats within the study area were evaluated for their potential to support protected species. Trees or structures suitable for bat roosts and potential suitable bat foraging were noted where they occurred within the study area. Trees or structures within the study area were visually inspected from the ground level for Potential Roost Features (PRFs) where it was considered likely that they may be suitable for use by roosting bats. Potential

[7] https://www.fingal.ie/ Last accessed December 2025
[8] https://planning.agileapplications.ie/fingal/search-applications/ Last accessed December 2025
[9] https://birdwatchireland.ie/Last accessed December 2025

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roosts/ roost features and bat foraging habitat were evaluated using the criteria set out in the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines

5.34 Invasive species were noted where present. For the purposes of this report "invasive species" are those which are subject to Regulation 49 of the Habitats Directive as listed in Part 1 and Part 2 of the Third Schedule within the Directive.

Table 1 Summary of Site Surveys

Survey	Brief Description	Timing
Preliminary Ecological Assessment and PRF survey	An initial survey to identify any major constraints, including habitats, wildlife corridors, resting places for protected species (e.g. otter holts, badger setts), suitability for use by breeding / wintering birds and classify the site for suitability for use by bats.	24th July 2025
Targeted Mammal Surveys	Targeted mammal surveys with the use of camera traps (under licence by NPWS) have been carried out continuously between October 2025 – January 2026. Traps were deployed at the entrance to any burrows within the hedgerows which were deemed potentially suitable for use by badger or at other signs such as suspected latrines on Site.	16th October 2025 – 23rd January 2026
Nighttime Bat Walkover (NBW) and Static Detector Deployment	A single NBW survey was conducted in August along with the deployment of a static detector and was carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines[10]	26th August 2025 – 10th September 2026
Winter bird surveys	Winter bird surveys were carried out to assess the potential/actual use of the Site by Wintering birds with a particular focus on Qualifying Interest species of the Wexford Harbour and Slobs Special Protection Area (SPA) which lies within 9 km of the Site.	20th November 2025 4th December 2025 18th December 2025 02nd January 2025

Limitations

Desk Study

5.35 Desk study data is unlikely to be exhaustive, especially in respect of species, and is intended mainly to set a context for the study. It is therefore possible that important habitats or protected species not identified during the data search do in fact occur within the vicinity of the site. Interpretation of maps and aerial photography has been conducted in good faith, using recent

[10] https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Resources/For-professionals/Bat-Survey-Guidelines-4th-edition-AMENDED-27.03.24.pdf?v=1711530492&_gl=1*1krtfkz*_ga*MTk0MTM2Nzg5MC4xNzYxMDQyMzcz*_ga_G28378TB9V*czE3Njc3ODQ1NDMkbzQkZzEkdDE3Njc3ODYyNzkkajYwJGwwJGgw

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imagery, but it has not been possible to verify the accuracy of any statements relating to land use and habitat context outside of the field study area.

5.36 The lack of ecological records returned in the data search does not conclude the absence of a species. Such an absence of records may simply indicate an under-recording of the area.

5.37 In accordance with CIEEM's Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys[11], the details of this report will remain valid for a period of 18-months from the date of the survey, after which the validity of this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether further updates are necessary.

Field Survey

5.38 The field surveys were conducted within the recommended survey period for habitat surveys of April to September and within appropriate seasons for mammal, bat and wintering birds. Weather conditions were considered suitable for all surveys. Access to third-party lands was not permitted, but visual inspection of adjacent habitats could be carried out from the Site.

[11] CIEEM (2019) Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys

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ASSESSMENT APPROACH

5.39 The ecological evaluation and assessment within this chapter has been undertaken with reference to relevant parts of the 2018 Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland developed by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, September 2018). Although this is recognised as current good practice for ecological assessment, the guidance itself recognises that it is not a prescription about exactly how to undertake an ecological impact assessment (EcIA); rather, they "*provide guidance to practitioners for refining their own methodologies*". For the full guidance, refer to https://www.cieem.net/data/files/ECIA%20Guidelines.pdf . The approach to impact assessment also has regard to advice set out in the EPA draft guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR) published in August 2017.

Important Ecological Features

5.40 Ecological features can be important for a variety of reasons and the rationale used to identify them is explained in the text. Importance may relate, for example, to the quality or extent of the site or habitats therein; habitat and/ or species rarity; the extent to which such habitats and/ or species are threatened throughout their range, or to their rate of decline.

Determining Importance

5.41 The importance of an ecological feature should be considered within a defined geographical context. The following frame of reference has been used in this case, relying on known/ published accounts of distribution and rarity where available, and professional experience:

- International (European);
- National (Ireland);
- Regional (Leinster);
- County (Wexford);
- Local (i.e., within circa 5km); and
- Site (limited to the red line boundary of the Site).

5.42 The above frame of reference is applied to the ecological features identified during the desk study and surveys to inform this report.

5.43 In assigning a level of value to the population of a species, it is necessary to consider its distribution and status, including a consideration of trends based on available historical records. Examples of relevant lists and criteria include species of European conservation importance (as listed on Annexes II, IV and V of the Habitats Directive or Annex 1 of the Birds Directive), species protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 - 2018 and BoCCI.

5.44 The approach to impact assessment, as set out in CIEEM guidelines, only requires that ecological features (habitats, species, ecosystems, and their functions/processes), that are considered to be important and potentially affected by the proposed development are carried forward to detailed assessment. It is not necessary to carry out detailed assessment of receptors that are sufficiently widespread, unthreatened, and resilient to impacts from the proposed development and will remain viable and sustainable. Therefore, for the purposes of this report, only ecological features of Local importance or greater and/or subject to legal or policy protection have been subject to detailed assessment.

Impact Assessment

5.45 The impact assessment process involves the following steps:

- identifying and characterising potential impacts;

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- incorporating measures to avoid and mitigate (reduce) these impacts;
- assessing the significance of any residual effects after mitigation;
- identifying appropriate compensation measures to offset significant residual effects (if required); and
- identifying opportunities for ecological enhancement.

5.46 When describing impacts, reference has been made to the following characteristics, as appropriate:

- Positive or negative;
- Extent;
- Magnitude;
- Duration;
- Timing;
- Frequency; and
- Reversibility.

5.47 The impact assessment process considers both direct and indirect impacts: direct ecological impacts are changes that are directly attributable to a defined action (e.g., the physical loss of habitat occupied by a species during the construction process). Indirect ecological impacts are attributable to an action, but which affect ecological resources through effects on an intermediary ecosystem, process, or feature (e.g., the creation of roads which cause hydrological changes, which, in the absence of mitigation, could lead to the drying out of wet grassland).

5.48 Consideration of conservation status is important for evaluating the effects of impacts on individual habitats and species and assessing their significance:

- Habitats – conservation status is determined by the sum of the influences acting on the habitat that may affect its extent, structure, and functions as well as its distribution and its typical species within a given geographical area.
- Species – conservation status is determined by the sum of influences acting on the species concerned that may affect its abundance and distribution within a given geographical area.

Significant Effects

5.49 The 2018 CIEEM guidance sets out information in paragraphs 5.24 through to 5.28 of the guidance document which describes the concept of ecological significance. Significant effects are qualified with reference to an appropriate geographic scale, and the scale of significance of an effect may or may not be the same as the geographic context in which the feature is considered important.

5.50 A significant effect, for the purposes of EcIA, is defined as an effect that either supports or undermines biodiversity conservation objectives for '*important ecological features*' or for biodiversity in general. Conservation objectives may be specific (e.g. for a designated site) or broad (e.g. national/local nature conservation policy) or more wide-ranging (enhancement of biodiversity). Effects can be considered significant at a wide range of scales from international to local.

5.51 The nature of the identified effects on each assessed feature is characterised. This is considered, along with available research, professional judgement about the sensitivity of the feature affected, and professional judgement about how the impact is likely to affect the site, habitat, or population's structure and continued function. Where it is concluded that an effect

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would be likely to reduce the importance of an assessed feature, it is described as significant. The degree of significance of the effect takes into account the geographic context of the feature's importance and the degree to which its interest is judged to be affected.

Cumulative Effects

5.52 Cumulative effects can result from individually insignificant but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time or concentrated in a location. Cumulative effects can occur where a proposed development results in individually insignificant impacts that, when considered in-combination with impacts of other proposed or permitted plans and projects, can result in significant effects.

5.53 Other plans and projects that should be considered when establishing cumulative effects are:

- proposals for which consent has been applied but which are awaiting determination.
- projects which have been granted consent, but which have not yet been started or which have been started but are not yet completed (i.e., under construction);
- proposals which have been refused permission, but which are subject to appeal, and the appeal is undetermined;
- constructed developments whose full environmental effects are not yet felt and therefore cannot be accounted for in the baseline; or
- developments specifically referenced in a National Policy Statement, a National Plan, or a Local Plan.

Avoidance, Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancement

5.54 Where potentially significant effects have been identified, the mitigation hierarchy has been applied, as recommended in the CIEEM Guidelines. The mitigation hierarchy sets out a sequential approach beginning with the avoidance of impacts where possible, the application of mitigation measures to minimise unavoidable impacts and then compensation for any remaining impacts. Once avoidance and mitigation measures have been applied, residual effects are then identified along with any necessary compensation measures, and incorporation of opportunities for enhancement.

5.55 It is important to clearly differentiate between avoidance mitigation, compensation and enhancement and these terms are defined here as follows:

- Avoidance is used where an impact has been avoided, e.g. through changes in scheme design;
- Mitigation is used to refer to measures to reduce or remedy a specific negative impact in situ;
- Compensation describes measures taken to offset residual effects, i.e. where mitigation in situ is not possible; and
- Enhancement is the provision of new benefits for biodiversity that are additional to those provided as part of mitigation or compensation measures, although they can be complementary.

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BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

5.56 This section sets out the baseline conditions for the ecological features considered within the Site using the findings of the desk study and field survey.

Zone of Influence

5.57 The potential zone of influence for a project such as the extension of an existing quarry is not likely to extend significantly beyond the Site largely due to the nature of the project combined with the enclosed and localized nature of the excavation work. The zone of influence is increased if there is potential for impacts on groundwater or surface or ecological connections to features outside this area that may be significantly affected.

Sites Designated for Nature Conservation

European Sites

5.58 **Table 2 and Figure 5-3** provide a list of European sites which were selected for consideration along with a description of each site and their qualifying interests. European sites are of **international importance**.

5.59 The AA Screening report provided with this application determined that likely significant effects can be excluded for the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects for the following European sites.

Table 2: European Sites Considered for Potential Effects

Site Code	Site Name	Distance	Qualifying Features
000708	Screen Hills SAC	6.01km	European dry heaths [4030], Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]
004019	The Raven SPA	7km 8.6km downstream distance	Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065], Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144], Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395], Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017], Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]
004237	Seas off Wexford SPA	7km 8.6km downstream distance	Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001], Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009], Manx Shearwater (Puffinus puffinus) [A013], Gannet (Morus bassanus) [A016], Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017], Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018], Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065], Mediterranean Gull (Larus melanocephalus) [A176], Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179], Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183], Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184], Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188], Roseate Tern (Sterna dougallii) [A192], Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193], Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194], Guillemot (Uria aalge) [A199], Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200], Puffin (Fratercula arctica) [A204], Sandwich Tern (Thalasseus sandvicensis) [A863], Little Tern (Sternula albifrons) [A885]
004076	Wexford Harbour and Slobs SPA	8.58km	Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048], Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144], Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160], Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069], Grey Heron

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Site Code	Site Name	Distance	Qualifying Features
			(Ardea cinerea) [A028], Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus) [A005], Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046], Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156], Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179], Lesser Black-backed Gull (Larus fuscus) [A183], Teal (Anas crecca) [A052], Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A038], Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157], Scaup (Aythya marila) [A062], Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162], Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143], Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149], Pintail (Anas acuta) [A054], Goldeneye (Bucephala clangula) [A067], Coot (Fulica atra) [A125], Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141], Mallard (Anas platyrhynchos) [A053], Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140], Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142], Little Grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis) [A004], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082], Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130], Bewick's Swan (Cygnus columbianus bewickii) [A037], Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050], Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017], Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395], Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195]
000781	Slaney River Valley SAC	8.67km	Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0], Harbour seal (Phoca vitulina) [1365], Twaite shad (Alosa fallax) [1103], River lamprey (Lampetra fluviatilis) [1099], Brook lamprey (Lampetra planeri) [1096], Otter (Lutra lutra) [1355], Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330], Sea lamprey (Petromyzon marinus) [1095], Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0], Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260], Atlantic salmon (Salmo salar) [1106], Estuaries [1130], Freshwater pearl mussel (Margaritifera margaritifera) [1029], Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]
001741	Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills SAC	8.75km	Embryonic shifting dunes [2110], Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation - grey dunes [2130], Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria - white dunes [2120]
000710	Raven Point Nature Reserve SAC	9.95km	Dunes with Salix repens ssp. argentea (Salicion arenariae) [2170], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria - white dunes [2120], Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330], Embryonic shifting dunes [2110], Humid dune slacks [2190], Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation - grey dunes [2130], Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]
004143	Cahore Marshes SPA	13.8km	Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140], Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142], Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050], Wetland and Waterbirds [A999], Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]

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Site Code	Site Name	Distance	Qualifying Features
000700	Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC	13.88km	Humid dune slacks [2190], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation - grey dunes [2130], Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria - white dunes [2120], Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]
002953	Blackwater Bank SAC	13.94km	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]
002161	Long Bank SAC	14.67km	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]

(Proposed) Natural Heritage Areas

5.60 NHAs and pNHAs generally do not form part of the Natura 2000 network (although some Natura 2000 sites are also designated as NHA and pNHA). However, they often provide important roles for locally or nationally important biodiversity. The NPWS provides a list of proposed Natural Heritage Areas which were selected for consideration along with a description of each site. Detailed site synopses were obtained from the NPWS website, where available.

5.61 The closest known surface waterbody to the Site is the source Ballynamona Stream located approximately 320 m from the southern Site boundary, refer to **Figure 5-4**. This stream ultimately enters sea into Wexford Slobs and Harbour pNHA [000712] approximately 8.6 km downstream of the Site. This pNHA does not currently have a site synopsis available from the NPWS describing the qualifying features of the pNHA. The section of the pNHA that would be exposed to potential impacts overlaps with The Raven SPA. In the absence of a specific description, it is assumed that the pNHA has the same qualifying features as The Raven SPA. Therefore, impacts on this pNHA will be adequately assessed in the assessment of impacts on The Raven SPA and the Wexford Slobs and Harbour pNHA and can be reasonably excluded from further consideration.

5.62 No potential pathway for impacts was identified for the remaining pNHAs listed in **Table 3**.

5.63 Therefore, pNHAs can be excluded from further consideration in this report.

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Table 3: List of Proposed Natural Heritage Areas Considered for Potential Effects

Nature Conservation Site	Distance to Site	Qualifying or Listed Features
Ballyroe Fen and Lake pNHA 000747	3.82 km southeast	• Clustered Clover (*Trifolium glomeratum*) • Other fen species
Screen Hills pNHA 000708	5.64 km southeast	Does not have site-specific synopsis. Overlaps with Screen Hills SAC 000708
Ballyconnigar Upper pNHA 000742	6.19 km southeast	• Species-rich unimproved grassland • Bird's-Foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*) • Hairy Bird's Foot-Trefoil (*Lotus subbiflorus*) • Small Cudweed (*Filago minima*)
Ballyconnigar Sand Pits pNHA 000741	6.5 km southeast	• Notable vascular plant, bryophyte and lichen communities • Bird's-Foot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*) • Hairy Bird's Foot-Trefoil (*Lotus subbiflorus*) • Lesser Snapdragon (*Misopates orontium*)
Ballynabarney Wood pNHA 000746	8.69 km northwest	Does not have site-specific synopsis. Overlaps with Slaney River Valley SAC 000781
Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills pNHA 001741	8.98 km northeast	Does not have site-specific synopsis. Overlaps with Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills SAC 001741
Wexford Slobs and Harbour pNHA 000712	9.53 km southwest	Does not have site-specific synopsis. Overlaps with Wexford Slobs and Harbour SPA 004076
Slaney River Valley pNHA 000781	9.59 km west	Does not have site-specific synopsis. Overlaps with Slaney River Valley SAC 000781
Clone Fox Covert pNHA 000755	12.08 km northwest	Does not have site-specific synopsis. Overlaps with Slaney River Valley SAC 000781
Ballyteige Marsh pNHA 001930	13.19 km northeast	• Coastal, brackish marsh with a diverse wetland flora
Cahore Polders and Dunes pNHA 000700	14.19 km northeast	Does not have site-specific synopsis. Overlaps with Cahore Polders and Dunes SAC 000700

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Killoughrum Forest pNHA 000765	16.8 km northwest	• Valuable woodland habitat • Narrow-Leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) • Greater Broomrape (*Orobanche rapum-genistae*)
Cahore Point North Sandhills pNHA 001736	18.17 km northeast	Does not have site-specific synopsis.
Donaghmore Sandhills pNHA 001737	18.85 km northeast	• Sandhill habitat with characteristic vegetation
Leskinfere Church, Clogh pNHA 000702	19.9 km northeast	• Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*)

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Habitats

5.64 Habitats present within the Site, as recorded during the walkover survey, are described in this section. Habitat classification follows that of '*A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*' (Fossitt, 2000). A habitat map for the site is provided as **Figure 5-2** in Drawings at the end of this chapter.

5.65 No Annex I habitat (under the Habitats Directive) was identified on the site. The following sections describes each of the habitats found on the Site in further detail.

Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1)

5.66 Improved agricultural grassland borders the Site to the north and northeast. These areas were not accessible for detailed survey but could be classified through visual inspection from the Site. The sward is dominated by perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) and is intensively managed through grazing. The field to the northeast has an overall patchy sward while the field to the north is much more uniform in height. Fields are enclosed by hedgerows and/or treelines and are subdivided by fences in areas. No livestock was present but there is recent evidence of poaching in the field to the northeast.

5.67 This habitat is considered to be of limited ecological value and **negligible importance** within the Site. Therefore, this habitat has been scoped out from further assessment.

Arable Crops (BC1)

5.68 The Site consists primarily of a recently harvested arable field which is dominated by barley (*Hordeum vulgare*) stubble (approx. 15 cm in height) and bare ground. Intact barley plants are present along the field margins. Floral diversity increases in proximity to hedgerows which enclose the field from all sides. Single residential dwellings are located along the eastern boundary of the field while the road network runs alongside both the eastern and western boundaries. Agricultural fields and an active quarry are present to the north and northeast of the field.

5.69 Apart from barley, which is the dominant species, this habitat also contained occasional records of annual meadow-grass (*Poa annua*), pineappleweed (*Matricaria discoidea*), and greater plantain (*Plantago major*). There are rare occurrences of sun spurge (*Euphorbia helioscopia*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*), marsh cudweed (*Gnaphalium uliginosum*), speedwell (*Veronica sp.*), field madder (*Sherardia arvensis*), corn marigold (*Glebionis segetum*), fat-hen (*Chenopodium album*), scarlet pimpernel (*Anagallis arvensis*), nightshade (*Solanum sp.*) and dock (*Rumex sp.*).

5.70 This habitat is considered to be of limited ecological value and **negligible importance** within the Site. Therefore, this habitat has been scoped out from further assessment.

Dense Bracken (HD1)

5.71 Dense bracken is located along the eastern boundary of the Site and is the dominant habitat within the unmanaged field verges. This habitat borders arable crop (BC1) habitat and is enclosed by hedgerows and/ or treelines.

5.72 Dominated by bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) which consists of approx. 60% of the floral component, with bramble (*Rubus sp.*) also abundant. Occasional creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and black-bindweed (*Fallopia convolvulus*), particularly along the field border.

5.73 This habitat is considered to be of limited ecological value and **negligible importance** within the Site. Therefore, this habitat has been scoped out from further assessment.

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Mixed Broadleaved Woodland (WD1)

5.74 Mixed broadleaved woodland is located to the southeast of the Site along the field margin. This habitat occurs in a mosaic with scrub (WS1) and exists in a sloping/ hollow area which shows evidence of historic excavation. The woodland component of this habitat is located closest to the road network and is connected to hedgerow and/ or treeline on either side. There is approx. 40% canopy cover across the entire mosaic with an average tree height of approx. 15 m. Understory is dominated by bramble.

5.75 Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is abundant within the woodland component of this habitat. There are occasional instances of elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and elm (*Ulmus sp*.) while willow (*Salix sp.*) is rare.

5.76 This habitat is considered to be of **county-level importance** due to its capacity to support local fauna, its connectivity with the hedgerow network in the surrounding landscape and its protection under Objective NH12 of the County Development Plan. However, this habitat will not be removed or otherwise impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, this habitat has been scoped out from further assessment.

Scrub (WS1)

5.77 Scrub habitat forms a mosaic with mixed broadleaved woodland (WD1) to the southeast of the Site, in a hollow along the field margin. The scrub component of this mosaic is primarily along the slopes of this hollow area and seems to have recolonised following historic excavation of the soil.

5.78 This habitat is dominated by bramble with gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) abundant throughout. There are occasional occurrences of *Erigeron sp.* and common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).

5.79 This habitat is considered to be of **local-level importance** due to its capacity to support local fauna and its connectivity with the hedgerow network in the surrounding landscape. However, this habitat will not be removed or otherwise impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, this habitat has been scoped out from further assessment.

Hedgerows (WL1)

5.80 The Site is enclosed by hedgerows to the north, west and east/ south. This habitat is regular and consistent throughout with the exceptions being areas of the eastern boundary which transition to mixed broadleaved woodland (WD1) and treeline (WL2). The broadly uniform shape of this habitat suggests that it has been previously managed, but as of the time of survey there are no signs of recent cutting, etc. Average height of hedgerows throughout the Site is approx. 4.5 m and there are small breaks (approx. 6 m in length) along the western boundary that that provide entrances to the field. Most sections of hedgerow have a base consisting of vegetated earth mounds that is approx. 4m in width. A small section of the northern boundary sees these mounds replaced with barbed wire fencing that has been covered by vegetation. Composition of trees and shrub species vary throughout. The western boundary hedgerow is dominated by bracken and gorse with some scattered trees while the section of the northern boundary hedgerow that stands adjacent to the sand and gravel pit is dominated by hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).

5.81 Other tree and shrub species include elm (abundant), sycamore (frequent), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa* – occasional) and garden privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium* – rare). Areas of hedgerow dominated by bracken also have abundant instances of false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). Climbing species include cleaver (*Galium aparine* – frequent), ivy (*Hedera sp.* - occasional) and bramble (abundant). Frequent understory species include barley, common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and creeping thistle. Occasional understory species include tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), willowherb (*Epilobium sp.*), nipplewort, common ramping-furmitory (*Fumaria*

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muralis), black-bindweed, hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), woundwort (*Stachys sp.*) and rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*). Rare understory species include speedwell, sun spurge, wild carrot (*Daucus carota*), herb-robert (*Geranium robertianum*), common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and weld (*Reseda luteola*).

5.82 This habitat is considered to be of **county-level importance** due to its capacity to support local fauna, its connectivity with the hedgerow network in the surrounding landscape and its protection under Objective NH12 of the County Development Plan. This habitat is considered further in this report as some of the hedgerows on-site will be removed for the proposed development.

Treelines (WL2)

5.83 Hedgerows (WL1) are replaced by treelines in sections of the eastern field boundary, particularly those associated with residential dwellings and/ or mixed broadleaved woodland (WD1).

5.84 The main type of treeline present is that which directly borders the road network and dominated by sycamore with abundant occurrences of elm and rarely, ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). This treeline is relatively uniform in shape with an average of height of 15 m and connects to adjacent woodland and hedgerows.

5.85 The treeline located adjacent to the residential dwellings is more patchy and irregular, with an abundant gorse component and occasional elder and cherry (*Prunus sp.*). Notably, this section of treeline includes an approx. 20 m line of Lawson's cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) which have grown to a height of approx. 30 m and screen the associated residence from view.

5.86 The understory of the treelines on Site consists of dense bracken (HD1) habitat and its associated floral community.

5.87 This habitat is considered to be of **county-level importance** due to its capacity to support local fauna, its connectivity with the hedgerow network in the surrounding landscape and its protection under Objective NH12 of the County Development Plan. However, this habitat will not be removed or otherwise impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, this habitat has been scoped out from further assessment.

Active Quarries and Mines (ED4)

5.88 There is an active sand and gravel pit located to the north of the Site belonging to the Client and which will be extended into the Site area. The pit consists of one main entrance to the northeast and two internal tracks to facilitate movement of machinery. Ancillary facilities including a storage container and office are located to the north of the pit. Working area consists of stockpiles and soil storage. At the time of survey, the primary area of excavation was located directly adjacent to the northern boundary of the Site and slope faces were approx. 10 -15 m in height. Previously worked areas to the west are being restored to agricultural use.

5.89 This habitat consists primarily of bare ground and actively worked areas but vegetated areas along the habitat boundaries included occasional records of gorse and Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) with rare occurrences of rosebay willowherb *(Chamerion angustifolium*), colt's-foot (*Tussilago farfara*), common ragwort, scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) and *Erigeron sp.*

5.90 This habitat is considered to be of limited ecological value and **negligible importance** within the Site. Therefore, this habitat has been scoped out from further assessment.

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Species

Desk Study

5.91 The NBDC database was searched for records of rare and/or protected species from the 2 km grid square T03S, T03T, T03X, and T03Y within which the Site is located. The records of rare and/or protected species are presented in **Table 4** below.

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Table 4. Rare and/or Protected Species Recorded Within 2 km Grid Squares T03S, T03T, T03X, and T03Y

Species	Date of Last Record	No. of Records	Conservation Status	Dataset
Common Frog *Rana temporaria*	2020	2	EU Habitats Directive: Annex V Protected Species: Wildlife Act	Amphibians and reptiles of Ireland
Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*	2019	2	Protected Species: Wildlife Act	Amphibians and reptiles of Ireland
Barn Owl *Tyto alba*	2024	2	Birds of Conservation Concern: Red List	Birds of Ireland
Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*	2019	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland
Curlew *Numenius arquata*	2019	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Red List	Birds of Ireland
House Martin *Delichon urbicum*	1991	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*	2018	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland
Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*	2023	4	Birds of Conservation Concern: Red List	Birds of Ireland
Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*	2018	4	Birds of Conservation Concern: Red List	Birds of Ireland
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*	2024	5	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland

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Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*	1991	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991
Skylark *Alauda arvensis*	1991	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991
Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*	2022	11	Birds of Conservation Concern: Red List	Birds of Ireland
Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*	1991	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland: 1988-1991
Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*	2020	2	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland
Swallow *Hirundo rustica*	2024	3	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland
Teal *Anas crecca*	2024	11	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland
White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons*	2018	3	Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland
Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*	2018	1	EU Birds Directive: Annex I Birds of Conservation Concern: Amber List	Birds of Ireland
Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola*	2019	1	Birds of Conservation Concern: Red List	Birds of Ireland
Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*	2024	5	Birds of Conservation Concern: Red List	Birds of Ireland

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Groove-faced Mining Bee *Andrena angustior*	2009	2	Irish Red List: Vulnerable	Bees of Ireland
Red-tailed Bumblebee *Bombus lapidarius*	2022	3	Irish Red List: Near Threatened	Bees of Ireland
Badger *Meles meles*	2012	19	Protected Species: Wildlife Act	Badger Setts of Ireland Database
Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*	2018	2	Protected Species: Wildlife Act	Mammals of Ireland 2016-2025
Otter *Lutra lutra*	1981	2	EU Habitats Directive: Annex II and Annex IV Protected Species: Wildlife Act	Otter Survey of Ireland 1982

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Plants

5.92 The data search returned no records of threatened plant species plant species recorded within the two NBDC 2 x 2 km squares.

5.93 The following plant species which are protected under the Flora Protection Order have been previously recorded within a 10km square (T13), the border of which is located approximately 1.92 km from the Site:

- Hairy bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus*
- Heath cudweed *Omalotheca sylvatica*
- Sea stock *Matthiola sinuata*

5.94 One threatened species was recorded during the field survey, corn marigold. This species is listed as 'Near Threatened' on the Irish Red List of vascular plants[12]. Two individual plants were recorded within the arable field in proximity to the western hedgerow. This hedgerow will be retained during the proposed development.

5.95 No records of invasive plant species were returned by the desk study.

5.96 No plant species listed in the Third Schedule[13] and therefore subject to restrictions under Regulations 49 and 50 of the European Communities Regulations were recorded during the field survey. One medium impact invasive plant species, sycamore, was recorded during the field survey. Mature trees were present within mixed broadleaved woodland and treeline habitats throughout the Site. Saplings and one mature tree were also recorded within hedgerow habitat.

5.97 The plant assemblage on-site that is assessed as being of **negligible importance** due to a lack of protected and listed invasive plant species on-site. As such, notable plant species have been excluded from further consideration in this report.

Invertebrates

5.98 The data search returned records of the groove-faced mining bee and red-tailed bumblebee within the two 2 x 2 km squares. The groove-faced mining bee is listed as vulnerable and the red-tailed bumblebee is listed as near threatened in the Irish Red List of bees. No notable invertebrates were recorded during the field survey.

5.99 The habitats located along the boundaries of the Site including the arable field margins, the hedgerows, and the woodland habitats are likely to support common and widespread invertebrate species as they contain a variety of flowering plants. These habitats may also be suitable for the threatened species noted during the data search.

5.100 Invertebrates are considered to be of **local-level importance** due to the presence of suitable foraging and breeding habitat within the Site. However, these habitats will not be removed or otherwise impacted by the proposed development. Therefore, invertebrates can be excluded from further consideration in this report.

[12] Wyse Jackson, M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Cole, E., Jebb, M., McFerran, D., Sheehy Skeffington, M. & Wright, M. (2016) Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Dublin, Ireland.
[13] European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011

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Amphibians

5.101 Records of common frog (*Rana temporaria*) and smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) were returned by the desk study, specifically from the NBDC 2 km grid square T03S.

5.102 No amphibians were recorded during the field survey. The Site does not contain any streams, ponds or other waterbodies that would provide suitable breeding habitat for amphibians.

5.103 The agricultural habitats on-site are regularly disturbed due to harvesting and tilling for arable crops. The land where sand is being actively excavated is also heavily disturbed with regular machine and human activity. As such, the habitats on-site are unlikely to support a significant population of non-breeding amphibians.

5.104 The Site is considered to be of **negligible importance** to amphibians and, therefore, they are excluded from further consideration in this report.

Reptiles

5.105 The data search returned no records of reptiles. No reptiles were recorded during the field survey.

5.106 The agricultural habitats on-site are regularly disturbed due to harvesting and tilling for arable crops. The land where sand is being actively excavated is also heavily disturbed with regular machine and human activity. As such, the habitats on-site are unlikely to support a significant population of breeding common lizard.

5.107 The Site is considered to be of **negligible importance** to reptiles and, therefore, they are excluded from further consideration in this report.

Birds

5.108 Records of the following protected and/ or threatened bird species were returned by the desk study:

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- Barn swallow
- Common kestrel
- Common snipe
- Common starling
- Eurasian curlew
- Eurasian skylark
- Eurasian teal
- Eurasian woodcock
- Great cormorant
- House sparrow
- Mallard
- Meadow pipit
- Northern lapwing
- Sand martin
- Spotted flycatcher
- Western barn owl
- Western house martin
- White-fronted goose
- Whooper Swan
- Willow warbler
- Yellowhammer

5.109 The following bird species were recorded during the field survey:

- Barn swallow
- Carrion crow (hooded crow) (*Corvus corone cornix*)
- Common buzzard (*Buteo buteo*)
- Common chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*)
- Common woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*)
- European robin (*Erithacus rubecula*)
- Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*)
- Sand martin
- Western house martin
- White wagtail (pied wagtail) (*Motacilla alba yarrellii*)
- Willow warbler
- Yellowhammer

5.110 Most species recorded were common, green-listed species using the hedgerows and treelines bordering the Site. Some species (hooded crow, rook, and woodpigeon) were recorded foraging in the arable field.

5.111 Four amber-listed species were recorded in the Site and the surrounding area. An individual willow warbler was recorded using a treeline to the east of the Site. Sand martins and western house martins were recorded foraging above the sand and gravel pit adjacent to the Site. Barn swallows were observed foraging over nearby improved agricultural grassland.

5.112 The pit itself likely provides suitable nesting habitat for sand martins, although no nesting holes were observed along the recently worked excavation areas that border the extension area.

5.113 One red-listed species, yellowhammer, was recorded singing in agricultural lands surrounding the Site. The arable habitat and associated field margins on-site may support breeding yellowhammer, along with other passerine species.

5.114 The arable habitat within the Site may also provide suitable foraging habitat for wintering bird species. As a result, winter bird surveys were carried out at the Site between November 2025 – January 2026; these surveys are ongoing until March 2026.

5.115 Four winter bird surveys were carried out at the Site between November 2025 and January 2026; these surveys are ongoing until March 2026. The results of these surveys including species counts can be seen in **Table 12** in Appendix C. Lesser black backed gull and Black headed gull were the only bird species recorded which are Qualifying Interest features for any European site and none of these species were recorded utilising the field. The majority of the records for these species were for large congregations of birds in the surrounding fields particularly to the east and northeast of the Site. Seven individual snipe were recorded within the Site between the four surveys. Snipe is a red listed species.

5.116 The bird assemblage on site is considered to be of local level importance. The Site is not considered important habitat for wintering bird species and although snipe were recorded

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utilising the field, the loss of this single field in the context of the surrounding agricultural field dominated land use is not significant. Furthermore, following the completion of the lifespan of the project the Site will be returned to agricultural use.

5.117 Due to the diversity of species present on Site recorded during the field survey and the removal of potentially suitable breeding habitat, hedgerows, impacts on breeding birds as a result of the proposed development is considered further in this report.

Mammals

Bats

5.118 The NBDC maps was accessed to assess the bat landscape suitability of the Site and surrounding landscape for bats. **Table** 5 details the results provided for the 2km grid squares T03S, T03T, T03X and T03Y, in which the Site is located. Bat landscape suitability was constructed using records for each bat species from the National Bat Database from 2000 – 2009. The results can be used to explain patterns of species' occurrence and predict where species might occur (Bat Conservation Ireland, 2011). Higher index scores predict higher suitability for the relevant species across the local landscape, with 100 being the highest and 0 being the lowest.

Table 5 Bat Landscape Suitability Index T03S, T03T, T03X and T03Y

Species	Scientific name	Index score
All Bats	—	22.78
Common Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	36
Soprano Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*	35
Leisler's Bat	*Nyctalus leisleri*	36
Brown Long-eared Bat	*Plecotus auritus*	33
Daubenton's Bat	*Myotis daubentonii*	22
Natterer's Bat	*Myotis nattereri*	28
Whiskered Bat	*Myotis mystacinus*	11
Nathusius' Pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus nathusii*	8
Lesser Horseshoe Bat	*Rhinolophus hipposideros*	0

5.119 The overall index score of 22.78 is considered moderate to low bat habitat quality. There are suitable commuting and foraging habitats on site including hedgerows and small areas of woodland / scrub.

5.120 A nighttime bat walkover was conducted by SLR surveyors on 26th August 2025. There were no limitations to the survey and the survey was conducted in appropriate weather conditions. A 16 day static bat detector deployment was also carried out on Site spanning from the 26th of August – 10th September 2025. The results of the survey are summarised in **Table** 6 and **Table** 7 below.

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Table 6 Summary of Walkover Survey

Species	Scientific name	Walkover survey
		Total
Common pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	36
Soprano pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*	6
Leisler's bat	*Nyctalus leisleri*	4
Brown long-eared bat	*Plecotus auritus*	3
Daubentons Bat	*Myotis daubentonii*	1

Table 7 Summary of Static Detector Recordings

Species	Scientific name	Static detector recordings
		Total
Common pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	558
Soprano pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*	278
Leisler's bat	*Nyctalus leisleri*	125
Brown long-eared bat	*Plecotus auritus*	2
Daubentons Bat	*Myotis daubentonii*	2

Evaluation of Bat Survey Results

5.121 Across the activity survey and static detector deployment, a total of five species were recorded including Soprano pipistrelle, Common pipistrelle, Leisler's bat, Brown long-eared bat and Daubentons bat.

5.122 Soprano and common pipistrelle were the most abundant calls recorded with both these species having substantially more records than any other species. This is supported by the bat landscape data (**Table** 5). These species were followed by Leisler's and Brown long eared bat, which is also supported by the bat landscape suitability index.

5.123 It should be noted that Myotis calls (i.e., Natterer's bat, Daubenton's bat and whiskered bat) are difficult to identify to species level using audio calls alone, it is possible that misidentification during call analysis was made. However, when the results are compared to the bat landscape data (**Table** 5), there is moderate/low potential for these three species within the local landscape and this is consistent with the results of the survey.

5.124 Habitat features within the Site, and the surrounding area were considered as providing negligible suitability for roosting bats as the only PRFs identified within the Site was the presence of ivy on some of the taller trees. All trees, except for those along the northern boundary of the Site, will be retained as part of the development.

5.125 Habitat features within the Site and the surrounding area were considered as providing low to moderate suitability for foraging bats as the hedgerows and woodland within the Site are connected to a patch of woodland to the south of the Site that may support roosting bats. These habitats will be retained as part of the development.

5.126 Bats are protected under the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended) and Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and as such it is an offence to injure or kill a bat or disturb its resting

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place. The proposed development won't impact roosting bats as no PRFs were recorded during the Site visits. There is the potential for the loss of a small amount of commuting habitat in the form of the hedgerow along the northwestern boundary of the Site, however as all of the other boundary linear habitats will be retained the loss of this habitat will not prevent any bats from commuting effectively through the Site and into the wider landscape. As such, there will be no significant impact on bats as a result of the proposed development at any phase and therefore bats are ruled out from further assessment in this report.

Badger

5.127 The desk study returned records of badger (*Meles meles*) within the NBDC 2 km grid squares T03S, T03T, T03X and T03Y as recently as 2012.

5.128 A potential badger sett was recorded along hedgerow associated with the Site. The opening to this potential sett was partially obscured by vegetation but was located near four individual latrines that had been dug into the arable field. Other areas of the Site, including other internal hedgerows and areas of dense bracken may provide suitable habitat for badgers. The majority of these habitats will be retained as part of the development.

5.129 Camera traps (under licence from the NPWS) were deployed at 5 locations within the boundary hedgerow's / treelines where burrows were located with potential to be used by badger or where suspected latrines were located. The first camera traps were deployed on 16th October 2025 and camera traps were deployed at the Site until January 2026. None of the burrows on Site were used by badgers and as such no badger setts are located at the Site. Badgers were recorded at the suspected latrine site along the hedgerow to the northeast of the Site. As such badger are confirmed to use the Site for foraging and territory marking.

5.130 The loss of this single field as foraging habitat for badger is not significant in the wider landscape which is dominated by agricultural field land use. Furthermore, commuting habitat such as treelines, hedgerows, woodland and scrub will be retained with the exception of one hedgerow and as such badger commuting corridors will not be significantly impacted as a result of the proposed development.

5.131 During the decommissioning phase of the project the land will be returned to agricultural land and the loss of this foraging habitat will not be permanent. Significant adverse effects on badger as a result of this proposed development are not likely and therefore badger can be ruled out from further assessment in this report.

Otter

5.132 The desk study returned two records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) within the NBDC 2 km grid squares from 1981.

5.133 No tracks or signs related to otter were recorded during the field survey. There are no streams or rivers within the Site or surrounding habitats. The nearest river is the Ballynamona Stream which is located approx. 320 m from the Site and is separated from the Site by agricultural fields, residential dwellings and a local road. As such, it is unlikely that the Site represents suitable habitat for otter.

5.134 Therefore, otters have been scoped out from further assessment.

Other Mammals

5.135 The desk study returned records for hedgehog (*Erinaceus europeaus*), Irish stoat (*Mustela erminea* subsp. *hibernica*), and red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), along with the invasive species grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) and European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*).

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5.136 The northern boundary hedgerow adjacent to the sand and gravel pit contained multiple mammal entrances, likely belonging to rabbit and red fox. Areas of dense bracken to the east of the Site have potential to provide cover for mammals using the Site and are connected to a small area of woodland/ scrub. A likely mammal track was recorded during the field survey entering this area of bracken. These habitats likely to be important for other mammal species will be retained as part of the development

5.137 Therefore, other mammals have been scoped out from further assessment.

Summary of Important Ecological Features

5.138 **Table 8** summarises all important ecological features for which detailed assessment is required. The geographical scale of importance for the ecological features within the Site are summarised along with their legal status and a rationale, where appropriate, for carrying forward any features for detailed assessment.

5.139 All ecological features scoped out from further assessment have been detailed in the previous section.

Table 8: Summary of Important Ecological Features Subject to Detailed Assessment

Ecological Feature	Scale at which Feature is Important	Comments on Legal Status and/or Importance
Hedgerow	County	• Protection under Objective NH12 of the County Development Plan. "*Objective NH12 To protect individual trees, groups of trees, woodlands and hedgerows of amenity and biodiversity value, from damage and/or degradation and work to prevent the disruption of the connectivity of the woodlands and hedgerows of the county. Commercial forestry will generally be exempt, except at peripheries and/or where they have not been maintained for commercial purposes".*
Birds	Local	• All birds are protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976 and subsequent amendments during the bird breeding season (i.e., 1st March to 31st August). • Yellowhammer and snipe are red listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern Ireland.

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Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

5.140 This section sets out the potential impacts and their effects on important ecological features shown in **Table 8.** The information available from the desk study and fieldwork has been used to identify impacts and the significant effects including positive, negative, direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. The potential effects resulting from the proposed development works and proposed mitigation measures are discussed in the following sections.

Potential Impacts

5.141 This section sets out the potential impacts and their effects on important ecological features. The information available from the desk study and fieldwork has been used to identify impacts and the significant effects including positive, negative, direct, indirect and cumulative effects.

5.142 The potential effects resulting from the proposed works proposed mitigation and / or enhancement measures are discussed in the following sections.

Do Nothing Impacts

5.143 In the absence of the proposed development the Site will continue to be used for agriculture and the habitats and species assemblage will remain the same.

Hedgerow

Potential Impacts (Construction and Operation)

5.144 During the construction phase approximately 270m of hedgerow habitat will be removed which has the potentially to adversely impact the ecology of the Site.

Proposed Mitigation Measures

5.145 A Landscape and Restoration Plan (refer to **EIAR Figure 2-4**) was prepared with regard to the 2006 EPA Guidelines on '*Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry'.* It includes c. 1,460 m2 of screen planting to the carried out as part of the commencement of the proposed development. Details of the screen planting schedule are provided on **EIAR Figure 2-4**. This screen planting will compensate for the removal of the section of hedgerow, will ensure the there is no significant impacts on ecology of the Site and will ensure an overall net positive impact on the Site ecology.

Significance of Residual Effects

5.146 With the proposed mitigation in place, there will be no significant residual effects on the ecology of the Site as a result of removal of a section of hedgerow.

Breeding Birds

Potential Impacts (Construction and Operation)

5.147 There is a potential for the loss of habitat or bird mortality in relation to the proposed development as a result of the clearance of vegetation.

Proposed Mitigation Measures

5.148 Clearance of vegetation should be done outside the bird nesting season of 1st March to 31st August. If this is unavoidable during the bird nesting season, then there will be requirement for nest checks to be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to any habitat

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destruction. If any nests are found to be present, then the removal of the vegetation would not be permitted until such time as all young have fledged, and all nests identified within the proposed works area are confirmed to be inactive. This work will be carried out and overseen by a suitably qualified ecologist.

Significance of Residual Effects

5.149 The loss of habitat for yellowhammer and snipe will be negligible as there is suitable similar grassland and agricultural field habitats adjacent to the Site.

5.150 Under the current development proposals and recommended mitigation and compensation measures in place, it is assessed that the impacts on birds will not be significant.

Cumulative Effects

5.151 In-combination effects can occur where a proposed project results in individually non-significant impacts that, when considered in-combination with impacts of other proposed or permitted plans and projects, can result in significant effects.

5.152 Other plans and projects that should be considered when establishing cumulative effects are:

- Proposals for which consent has been applied but which are awaiting determination;
- Projects which have been granted consent, but which have not yet been started or which have been started but are not yet completed (i.e., under construction);
- Proposals which have been refused permission, but which are subject to appeal, and the appeal is undetermined;
- Constructed developments whose full environmental effects are not yet felt and therefore cannot be accounted for in the baseline; or
- Developments specifically referenced in a National Policy Statement, a National Plan or a Local Plan.

5.153 There are no plans or policies in the County Development Plan which would result in significant effects when considered in-combination with the proposed project.

5.154 A search of recent (within the last five years) planning applications within 2km of the Site was carried out for applications that may give rise to in combination effects with the project (see **Table 9).** It is assumed that all planning permissions granted more than 5 years ago have been completed and therefore are considered through the existing environment section.

5.155 The recent planning applications in the vicinity of the Site are mainly small-scale domestic developments including one-off housing, extensions and conversions. There are some small-scale retail and industrial developments also. All of these planning applications are not anticipated to result in cumulative effects with the proposed project.

5.156 Therefore, the risk of significant effects on biodiversity because of the proposed project can be excluded for the project when considered in-combination with other proposed or permitted plans and projects.

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Table 9 Projects Considered for In - Combination Effects

Application Number	Development Description	Cumulative Effects	Application Type	Approximate distance
20220284	Permission for (i) Permission to construct a new 82.20m2 garage/workshop (ii)	NA - Small scale	Retention	0 km
20230084	Permission to erect a serviced dwelling house & to carry out all associated works	NA - Small scale	Permission	0.21 km
20221724	Permission for retention of domestic garage with associated works	NA - Small scale	Retention	0.28 km
20231159	Permission for retention and completion of a domestic garage/store	NA - Small scale	Retention	0.61 km
20231178	Permission to form a new entrance , construct a dwelling house, garage, effluent	NA - Small scale	Permission	0.66 km
20250015	Permission for a new 145.35m2 single and two storey extension comprising 3	NA - Small scale	Permission	0.69 km
20231049	Permission to construct a fully serviced single storey dwelling house	NA - Small scale	Permission	0.73 km
20210984	Permission for the installation of a new fire escape stairs to the first floor of a house	NA - Small scale	Permission	0.83 km
20210262	Permission for retention for an attic conversion for use as storage space	NA - Small scale	Retention	0.94 km
20250360	Permission to change the use of existing store ancillary to existing dwelling	NA - Small scale	Permission	0.97 km
20201437	Permission to install an on-site sewage treatment system in accordance with E.P.	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.02 km
20240903	Permission to revise site boundaries as a change to that granted	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.1 km
20210378	Permission for the erection of a fully serviced dwelling house, garage and all associated works	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.13 km
20211636	Permission for the erection of a fully serviced dwelling house and domestic	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.3 km
20211024	Permission for the erection of a two storey dwelling house and all associated works	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.34 km
20230781	Permission to erect a bungalow with services, domestic garage and all associated works	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.36 km
20240298	Permission for retention of extensions to the front, rear and sides of existing	NA - Small scale	Retention	1.36 km
20240005	Permission for erection of a dwelling house, domestic garage/store	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.43 km

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Application Number	Development Description	Cumulative Effects	Application Type	Approximate distance
20211837	Permission for the proposed erection of alterations and extensions to an existing house	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.46 km
20241598	Permission for the proposed change of use from existing retail use to retail	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.5 km
20240563	Permission for the erection of 2 no. extensions to the side and rear	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.65 km
20210557	Permission for the proposed erection of a fully serviced dwelling house and dome	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.73 km
20241005	Permission to erect a dwelling with services and domestic garage and all associated works	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.74 km
20241004	Permission to erect a dwelling with services and domestic garage and all associated works	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.77 km
20210699	Permission for the proposed erection of a fully serviced Dwelling House and Dome	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.78 km
20212056	Permission for erection of a new fully serviced single storey dwelling along wit	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.83 km
20210461	Permission for the erection of a dwelling house, domestic garage/store and all associated works	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.83 km
20210525	Permission to erect a dwelling with services and domestic garage	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.89 km
20210521	Permission to erect a dwelling with services and domestic garage	NA - Small scale	Permission	1.97 km
20231126	Permission for Retention of a shed to the side, and a conservatory extension	NA - Small scale	Retention	2 km

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Summary of Effects

Table 10: Summary of Important Features, Effects and Proposed Mitigation

Ecological Feature	Potential Impacts	Proposed Mitigation	Residual Effects
Hedgerow	Removal of a section of hedgerow habitat	Planned screen planting of a larger more diverse native hedgerow.	Not significant
Birds	Potential loss of suitable breeding habitat or mortality due to vegetation clearance during breeding season	Removal of vegetation outside of the breeding bird season. Pre – clearance nest checks.	Not significant

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Conclusions

5.157 There will be no effect on sites designated for nature conservation as a result of the proposed works.

5.158 None of the habitats on the Site are considered to comprise Annex I habitats under the Habitats Directive.

5.159 Overall, it is assessed that with the recommended mitigation measures outlined, the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the biodiversity, designated sites, and habitats on the Site. Provided that the proposed works are undertaken in accordance with the proposed design and best practice that is described within this report, significant effects on ecology are not anticipated. As such, the proposed works are in line with environmental and biodiversity planning policy.

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Drawings

Figure 5- 1: Site Location

Figure 5 - 2: Habitat Map

Figure 5 - 3: Natura 2000 Map

Figure 5 - 4: Natural Heritage Areas Map

Notes:

1. BASED ON 1:50,000 DISCOVERY SERIES OSI MAPPING - MAP **NO. 69 & 77**.

Legend:

LOCATION OF SAND & GRAVEL PIT

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Rev	Amendments	Date	By	Chk	Auth

SLR

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Drawing Status & Suitability Code

Client
ANTHONY D'ARCY LTD.

Project
SAND & GRAVEL PIT AT BALLYMACOONOGE, GLENTIRE & BALLYNAMONABEG TOWNLANDS BALLAGHKEEN, CO. WEXFORD

Drawing Title
SITE LOCATION MAP

Scale	SLR Project No.
1:100,000 @ A3	065860.00001

Designed	Drawn	Checked	Authorised
EW	EW	TP	TP
Date	Date	Date	Date
01/26	01/26	01/26	01/26

Drawing Number
FIGURE 5-1

Rev.

\\dir.local\eu\Offices\IE\Dublin\SLR DATA\SLR Projects\0098 D'Arcy Anthony\065860 Ballagh Extension PA EIAR\EIAR\Volume-2 EIAR Report Figs Appendix\05 Biodiversity\Dwgs\CAD\Wking\065860_FIG_5-1 RD Site Location Map.dwg

22/01/2026

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NOTES

1. Base Mapping: Google satellite ©

LEGEND

- WL1 Hedgerow
- WS1 Scrub / WD1 Woodland Mosaic
- HD1 Dense Bracken
- WL2 Treeline
- BC1 Arable Crops
- GA1 Improved Agricultural Grassland
- Site Boundary



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Ballagh Sand & Gravel Pit

Ballaghkeen, Co. Wexford

Habitat Map

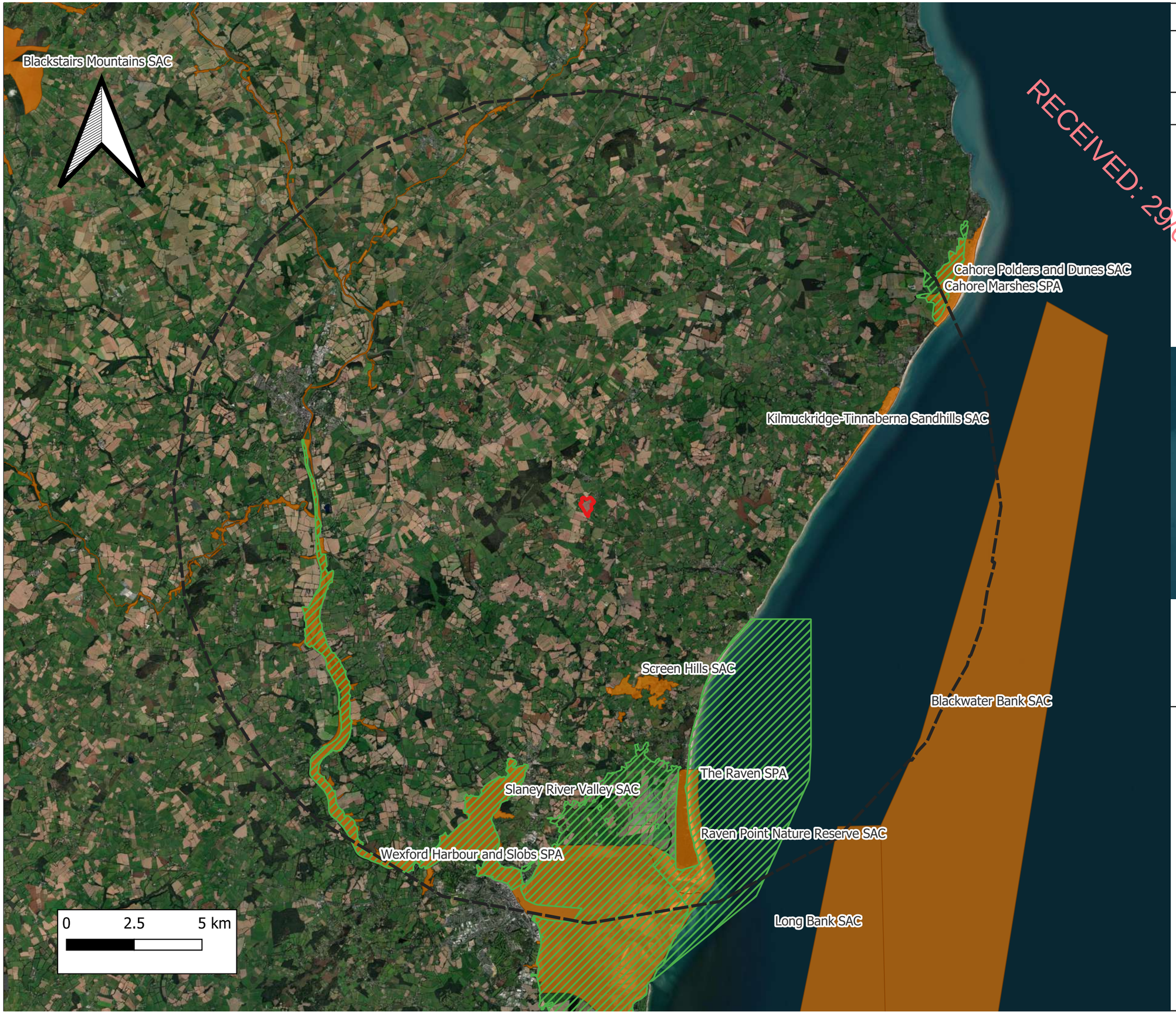
Figure 5-2

Scale: 1:2200 @ A3

Date: January 2026

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NOTES

1. Base Mapping: Google satellite © ESRI Maps ©

LEGEND

- 15 Km Radius
- Site Boundary
- Special Protection Area
- Special Area of Conservation



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Ballagh Sand & Gravel Pit

Ballaghkeen, Co. Wexford

European Sites Map

Figure 5-3

Scale: 1:110742 @ A3

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Bunclody Slate Quarries
Ardamine Wood
Donaghmore Sandhills
Cahore Point North Sandhills
Clone Fox Covert
Cahore Polders And Dunes
Ballyteige Marsh
Killoughrum Forest
Ballynabarney Wood
Kilmuckridge-Tinnaberna Sandhills
Slaney River Valley
Ballyconnigar Upper
Ballyconnigar Sand Pits
Ballyroe Fen And Lake
Screen Hills
Wexford Slobs And Harbour
Forth Mountain
0 2.5 5 km

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NOTES

1. Base Mapping: Google satellite © ESRI Maps ©

LEGEND

15 Km Radius
Proposed Natural Heritage Area
Site Boundary



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Ballagh Sand & Gravel Pit

Ballaghkeen, Co. Wexford

Natural Heritage Area Sites Map

Figure 5-4

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Appendix A. Relevant Legislation and Policy

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Relevant Legislation[14]

EIA Directive

The EIA Directive, Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Council Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997, Directive 2003/35/EC of 26 May 2003 and Directive 2009/31/EC of 23 April 2009, now codified in Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011 and amended in Directive 2014/52/EU of 16 April 2014, is designed to ensure that projects likely to have significant effects on the environment are subject to a comprehensive assessment of environmental effects prior to development consent being given. The EIA Directive was first transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations, 1989 (S.I. No. 349 of 1989) which amended the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963 (and other legislation) to provide for environmental impact assessment.

Habitats and Birds Directive

The Habitats Directive ensures the conservation of a wide range of rare, threatened or endemic animal and plant species. Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora was adopted in 1992 and aims to promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural and regional requirements. It forms the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy with the Birds Directive and establishes the EU wide Natura 2000 ecological network of protected areas, safeguarded against potentially damaging developments.

The Natura 2000 network of protected areas is known as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). In general terms, they are considered to be of exceptional importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species within the European Community. The requirements of the Habitats Directive have been transposed into Irish law through the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 [S.I. No. 477/2011]. This legislation affords protection to both Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation.

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are designated under the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) which is transposed into Irish law by the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011). Special Protection Areas (SPA) are classified under the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an 'appropriate assessment' to be undertaken for any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. An 'appropriate assessment' is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan or project on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, and the incorporation, where necessary, of measures to mitigate or avoid negative effects.

National Legislation

Flora and fauna in Ireland are protected at a national level by the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018 and the Floral (Protection) Order 2015. Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) are areas that are considered to be important for the habitats present or for the species of plants and animals supported by those habitats. Under the Wildlife Amendment Act 2000, NHAs are legally protected from damage from

[14] Please note that the summary of relevant legislation provided here is intended for general guidance only. The original legislation should be consulted for definitive information.

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the date they were formally proposed for designation. Section 19(1) of the Act states that 'Where there is a subsisting natural heritage area order in respect of any land, no person shall carry out, or cause or permit to be carried out, on that land any works specified in the order or any works which are liable to destroy or to significantly alter, damage or interfere with the features by reason of which the designation order was made'.

In addition, a list of proposed NHAs (pNHAs) was published in 1995 but to date these have not had their status confirmed. Prior to statutory designation, pNHAs are subject to limited protection under various agri-environment and forestry schemes and under local authority planning strategies such as County Development Plans.

Relevant Planning Policy

The planning policy and legislation that is relevant to the development.

Wexford Development Plan 2022-2028

The relevant local planning policies have been extracted from Volume 1 of the Wexford County Development Plan 2022 – 2028. These policies are specific to "*Chapter 13: Heritage and Conservation*" and are concerned with the policies and objectives relating to biodiversity.

Objective NH01 To ensure the protection of all designated ecological sites (as detailed in Section 13.2.1 to 13.2.11) in relevant Local Area Plans and in the assessment of planning applications and promote the restoration of sites where required.

Objective NH02 To protect and enhance the rich qualities of our natural heritage in a manner that is appropriate to its significance.

Objective NH03 To promote biodiversity protection, restoration and habitat connectivity both within protected areas and in the landscape through promoting the integration of green infrastructure and ecosystem services, including landscape, heritage and biodiversity and management of invasive and alien species in the plan making and development management processes.

Objective NH04 To protect the integrity of sites designated for their habitat and species importance and prohibit development which would damage or threaten the integrity of these sites. Such sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and candidate SACs, Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Natural Heritage Areas(NHAs) and proposed NHAs, Nature Reserves, Refuges for Fauna and RAMSAR sites. To protect protected species wherever they occur8.

Objective NH05 In assessing planning applications located in and/or in proximity to Natura 2000 sites, whether hydraulically linked or otherwise linked or dependent (such as feeding, roosting or nesting grounds) to a designated site, regard shall be had to the detailed conservation management plans and data reports prepared by NPWS, where available, to the identified features of interest of the site, the identified conservation objectives to ensure the maintenance or restoration of the features of interests to favourable conservation status, the NPWS Article 17 current conservation status reports, the underlying site specific conditions, and the known threats to achieving the conservation objectives of the site.

Objective NH06 To recognise the importance of recommended Geological Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas and County Geological Sites and protect the character and integrity of these sites where appropriate. The Council will consult Geological Survey Ireland where a development is proposed that may impact on geological sites.

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Objective NH07 To have regard to any particular management or sensitivity, contained within the individual site reports within The Geological Heritage of County Wexford: An audit of County Geological Sites in County Wexford 2018, in the assessment of planning applications located within proposed Natural Heritage Areas and County Geological Sites.

Objective NH08 To ensure that any plan/project and any associated works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are subject to Screening for Appropriate Assessment to ensure there are no likely significant effects on any Natura 2000 site(s) and that the requirements of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive are fully satisfied. Where a plan/project is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site or there is uncertainty with regard to effects, it shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment. The plan/project will proceed only after it has been ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site or where, in the absence of alternative solutions, the plan/project is deemed by the competent authority imperative for reasons of overriding public interest.

Objective NH09 To ensure the protection of areas, sites and species and ecological networks/corridors of local biodiversity value outside the designated sites throughout the county and to require an ecological assessment to accompany development proposals likely to impact on such areas or species.

Objective NH10 To ensure that traditional field boundaries, ponds or small woods which provide important ecological corridors, stepping stones or networks are protected. Where such features exist on land which is to be developed the applicant should demonstrate that the design of the development has resulted in the retention of these features insofar as is possible and that the existing biodiversity value of the site has been protected and enhanced.

Objective NH11 To protect trees or groups of trees and woodlands of particular amenity and nature conservation value and make tree preservation orders where appropriate.

Objective NH12 To protect individual trees, groups of trees, woodlands and hedgerows of amenity and biodiversity value, from damage and/or degradation and work to prevent the disruption of the connectivity of the woodlands and hedgerows of the county. Commercial forestry will generally be exempt, except at peripheries and/or where they have not been maintained for commercial purposes.

Objective NH13 To ensure applications for development include proposals for native planting and leave a suitable ecological buffer zone between the development works and any areas or features of ecological importance. To minimise the removal of hedgerow and natural boundaries, and where hedgerows are required to be removed the applicant/developer will be required to reinstate the hedgerows with a suitable replacement of native species.

Objective NH14 To work with local communities, groups, landowners, National Parks and Wildlife Service and other relevant parties to identify, protect, manage and, where appropriate, enhance and promote sites of local biodiversity value.

Objective NH15 To prepare a new Biodiversity Action Plan for the County and to implement the actions identified in the County Wexford Biodiversity Action Plan 2013, or the subsequent plan, in partnership with all relevant parties and stakeholders.

Objective NH16 To support the conservation, sustainable management and restoration of marine ecosystems in any existing or future Marine Protected Area which may be designated during the lifetime of the Plan.

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Objective NH17 To support any targeted programmes or projects which will be required to improve and restore the status of the large sedimentary lagoons of Wexford.

Objective NH18 To provide support for communities in the application of EU funded programmes such as the Roseate Tern Recovery Project, the Blackstairs Farming Futures (BFF) Sustainable farming project and other LIFE and European Innovation Partnership programmes which aim to achieve the objectives of the Habitats and Birds Directives.

Objective NH19 To implement the requirements of EU Regulations 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species and Regulation 49 and 50 of the EU (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011(S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended.

Objective NH20 To ensure the protection of natural heritage is integral to the Council's own developments, actions and methods of operation.

Objective NH21 To ensure that natural heritage and biodiversity consideration are integral to the preparation of Local Area Plans and to identify, protect and manage biodiversity through these Plans.

Objective NH22 To promote best practice in the control of invasive species and support measures for the prevention and/or eradication of invasive species as appropriate and as opportunities and resources allow.

Objective NH23 To undertake an audit of invasive species across the county and encourage greater awareness of potential threats caused by invasive species and how they can spread.

Objective NH24 To raise awareness in relation to invasive species, including making landowners and developers aware of best practice guidance in relation to the control of invasive species and leave them to adhere to same and, to ensure, in so far as possible, that proposals for development do not lead to the spread of invasive species. The Council will inform landowners of any invasive species found or reported on their property and request the landowners to take appropriate action in accordance with best practice guidance.

Objective NH25 To ensure that proposals for development do not lead to the spread or introduction of invasive species. If developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are or were previously present, the applicants will be required to submit a control and management program for the particular invasive species carried out by a competent and appropriately qualified expert as part of the planning process.

Objective NH26 To require best practice and facilitate the development of appropriate facilities to minimise the spread of invasive species along blueways and greenways.

Objective NH27 To carefully consider and implement the management of invasive species where there is a corridor, such as hydrological connections to European Sites in order to prevent the spread of invasive species to sensitive sites.

Objective NH28 To incorporate the actions of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020 (and any subsequent Plan) when managing our parks, open spaces, roadside verges and all vegetation in a way that provides more opportunities for biodiversity while being cognisant of the threat of the spread of invasive species.

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Appendix B. Site Photographs

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Photograph 1: Dense bracken (HD1) habitat bordered by treeline (WL2). Photograph taken along the eastern boundary facing southeast.



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Photograph 2: Mixed broadleaved woodland (WD1)/ scrub (WS1) mosaic Habitat Photograph taken along the eastern boundary of the Site facing east.



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Photograph 3: Arable crop (BC1) habitat bordered by bracken-dominated hedgerow (WL1). Photograph taken to the northwest of the Site facing south.



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Photograph 4: Arable crop (BC1) habitat bordered by hedgerow (WL1). Photograph taken along the southeastern Site boundary facing south.



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Photograph 5: Arable crop (BC1) bordered by hedgerow (WL1). Photograph taken to the northeast of the Site facing northeast.



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Photograph 6: Vegetated barbed wire fence section of hedgerow. Photograph taken along the northern boundary of the Site facing north.



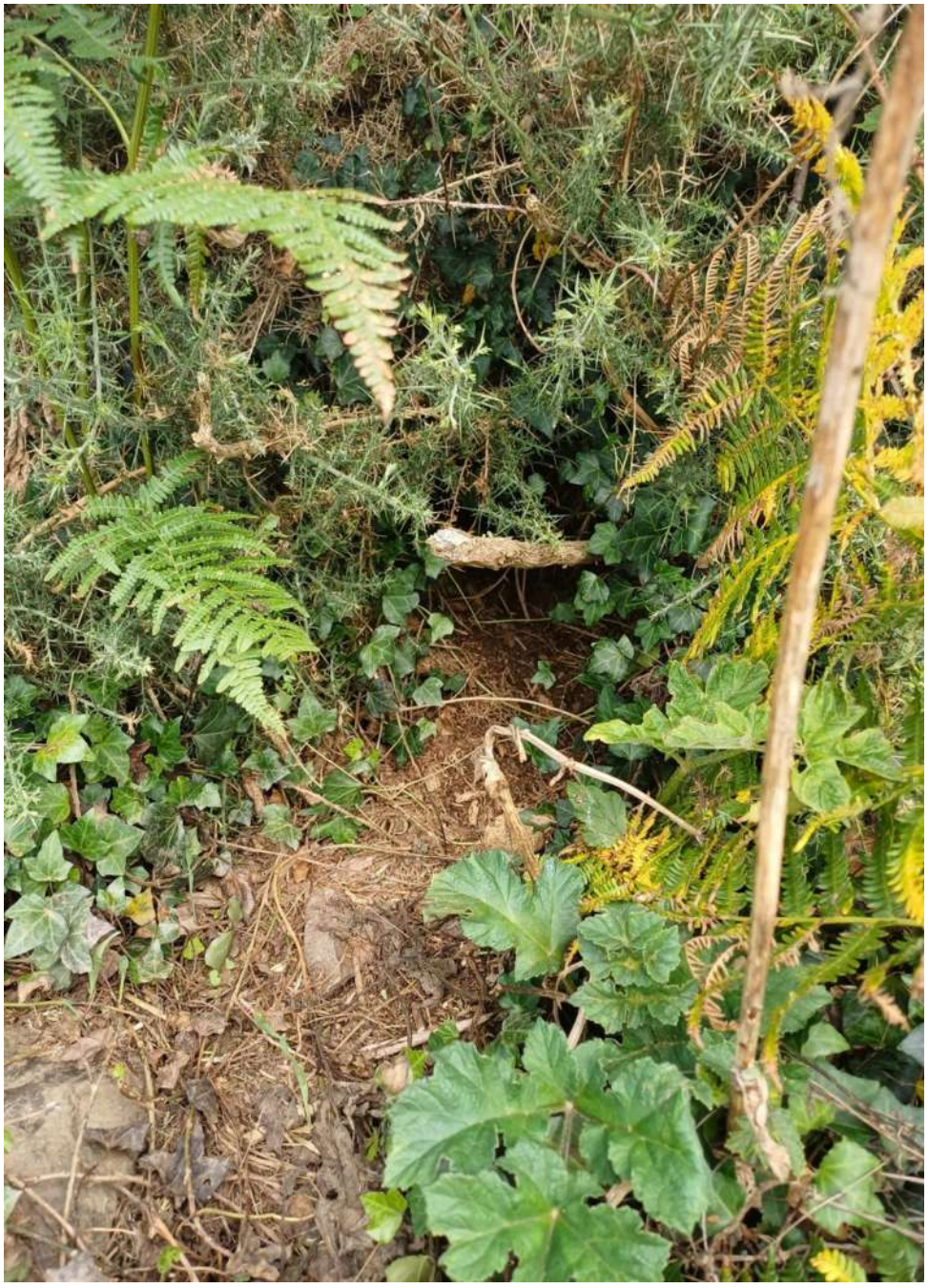
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Photograph 7: Lawson's cypress section of treeline. Photograph taken to the east of the Site facing northeast.



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Photograph 8: Potential badger sett located within hedgerow enclosing the Site.



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Photograph 9: One of four latrines located near potential badger sett within the Site.



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Photograph 10: Mammal entrance located at the base of a hedgerow within the Site.



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Photograph 11: Mammal entrance located at the base of a hedgerow within the Site.



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Photograph 12: Mammal track located in dense bracken (HD1) habitat to the east of the Site. Photograph taken to the southeast of the Site facing east.



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Appendix C. Survey Details

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Table 11: Survey Details

Date	Survey Type	Surveyor	Weather		Summary
16th October 2025 – 23rd January 2026	PEA Survey	Lorcan Kelly	Temp.[15]	12	The survey identified evidence of use of the Site by badger and other mammals and identified the requirement for further surveys including targeted mammal surveys, bat surveys and winter bird surveys. No invasive non – native species were recorded during the survey.
			Wind speed[16]	2	
			Cloud cover[17]	8	
			Prec.	9	
26th August 2025 – 10th September 2026	Nighttime Bat Walkover and Static Bat Detector Deployment	Faolán Linnane + Kieran Moynihan	Temp.	14	
			Wind speed	1	
			Cloud cover	N/A	
			Prec.	0	
16th October 2025 – 23rd January 2026	Camera Trap Surveys	Faolán Linnane	Temp.	N/A	The use of camera traps at the Site confirmed the presence of badger, however the surveys also confirmed that none of the burrows on site are used by badger. Only rabbits were recorded entering or exiting any burrows which could have been potentially used by badger. Bager were recorded using a latrine location on site.
			Wind speed	N/A	
			Cloud cover	N/A	
			Prec.	N/A	
20th November 2025	Winter Bird Survey	Faolán Linnane	Temp.	4	This survey took place between 10:00 and 11:00. During the survey 1 single lesser black back gull was recorded flying over the Site from a SE – NW direction. 15 Black headed gulls were recorded foraging in fields to the east of the Site approximately 400m away at the closest point. No birds were recorded utilising the Site.
			Wind speed	2	
			Cloud cover	2	
			Prec.	0	
04th December 2025	Winter Bird Survey	Faolán Linnane	Temp.	5	This survey took place between 11:00 and 12:00. During the walkover 3 Snipe were recorded within the Site. 56 black headed gulls were recorded 1 recorded flying east across the Site and 56 recorded foraging in nearby fields approximately 400m E of the Site at the closest point.129 lesser black backed gulls were recorded during the survey, 110 of these birds were recorded
			Wind speed	1	
			Cloud cover	2	
			Prec.	0	

[15] Measured in °C
[16] Measured on the Beaufort scale
[17] Measured in Oktas

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Date	Survey Type	Surveyor	Weather		Summary
					foraging in fields to the NE of the Site approximately 450m away at the closest point. The remainder of the lesser black back gulls were recorded to the N of the Site flying in an W – E direction toward the larger flock.
18th December 2025	Winter Bird Survey	Faolán Linnane	Temp.	9	This survey took place between 14:30 – 15:30. 121 lesser black backed gulls were recorded foraging to the N of the Site approximately 400m away at its closest point. 1 snipe was recorded within the Site.
			Wind speed	3	
			Cloud cover	8	
			Prec.	0	
02th January 2026	Winter Bird Survey	Faolán Linnane	Temp.	3	This survey took place between 09:00 and 10:00. During the survey 1 snipe was recorded within the Site. 3 lesser black back gulls were recorded flying across the Site all of which in a E – W direction.
			Wind speed	2	
			Cloud cover	0	
			Prec.	0	

Table 12 Winter Bird Survey Counts

Common Name	Scientific Name	Species Counts				
		Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Total
Black headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*	15	1	0	N/A	16
Lesser Black-backed Gull	*Larus fuscus*	1	250	3	N/A	254
Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	0	6	1	N/A	7