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ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

# NATURA IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## Housing Development

***Mincloon, Rahoon, Galway***

**March 2026**

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# Document Details

| | |
|---|---|
| **Client:** | Murphy IA |
| **Project Title:** | Mincloon Housing Development, Rahoon, Galway |
| **Document Title:** | Natura Impact Assessment |
| **Prepared By:** | Ian Douglas and Ellen Irwin |
| **Reviewed by:** | Ian Douglas |

| Rev | Status | Date |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | Draft 1 | 12/02/2026 |
| 02 | Draft 2 | 06/03/2026 |
| 03 | Final | 11/03/2026 |
| | | |

# Contents

RECEIVED: 23/03/2026

## Natura Impact Statement

1 Introduction ..... 7
2 Project Description ..... 7
2.1 Development Description ..... 7
2.2 Surface Water Management ..... 8
2.3 Site of Works ..... 9
2.4 Operational Activities ..... 10
3 Potential Impacts ..... 11
3.1 Description of Potential Impacts and Effects ..... 11
3.2 Qualify Interests of European Sites and Potential for Impacts ..... 12
3.3 Summary of Potential Adverse Effects ..... 21
3.4 Cumulative Impacts ..... 22
4 Mitigation Measures ..... 25
4.1 Mitigation Measures and Construction ..... 26
4.1.1 Severe Weather Events ..... 26
4.2 Water Quality ..... 26
4.2.1 Construction Phase Impacts ..... 27
4.2.2 Mitigation ..... 27
5 Residual Impacts ..... 31
6 Natura Impact Statement & Conclusion ..... 31

## Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

1 Introduction ..... 2
1.1 Statement of Authority ..... 2
1.2 Relevant Legislation and Overall Screening Methodology ..... 3
1.3 Case law ..... 4

RECEIVED: 23/03/2026

1.4 Guidance Documents ..... 5
2 Methodologies ..... 6
2.1 The Source-Pathway-Receptor Model ..... 6
2.2 The Precautionary Principle ..... 7
2.3 Likely Significant Effect ..... 7
2.4 Desktop Study ..... 8
2.5 Ecology Surveys ..... 9
3 Project Description ..... 9
3.1 Development Description ..... 9
3.2 Site of Works ..... 10
3.3 Watercourses and Surface Water Bodies ..... 11
3.4 Surface Water Management ..... 13
3.5 Groundwater ..... 14
3.6 Invasive species ..... 14
3.7 Habitats and Flora ..... 14
3.7.1 Semi-natural habitats ..... 15
3.8 Fauna ..... 16
3.9 Birds ..... 16
4 Possible Impacts ..... 17
4.1.1 Habitat Loss and Fragmentation ..... 17
4.1.2 Changes in Water Quality ..... 17
4.1.3 Cumulative Impacts ..... 18
4.2 Zone of Influences of Possible Impacts ..... 18
5 Designated Sites and Ecological Assessment ..... 19
5.1 Designated Sites ..... 19
5.2 Cumulative and In combination Effects ..... 28
6 Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement and Conclusion ..... 33

6.1 Summary of Assessment of Possible LSE to European Sites ..... 33

7 Findings of Article 6(3) Screening Assessment ..... 34

7.1 Overall Conclusions ..... 34

References ..... 35

Appendix 1: Site Photos ..... 36

RECEIVED: 23/03/2026

RECEIVED: 23/03/2026

# Abbreviations

| Abbreviation | Term |
|---|---|
| AA | Appropriate Assessment |
| BOCCI | Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland |
| CJEU | Court of Justice of the European Union |
| EC | European Commission |
| IROPI | Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest |
| LSE | Likely Significant Effects |
| NHA | Natural Heritage Areas |
| NIS | Natura Impact Statement |
| pNHA | proposed Natural Heritage Areas |
| OPR | Office of the Planning Regulator |
| SCI | Special Conservation Interest |
| TFEU | Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |

# Definitions

| Definition | Term |
|---|---|
| Appropriate Assessment (AA) | An assessment of the potential adverse effects of a plan or project (in combination with other plans or projects) on Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas |
| Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government | The previous name the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Irish government department is responsible for housing, local government (including planning) and heritage. |
| Effect | Outcome to an ecological feature from an impact, e.g., the effects on an animal population from the loss of a hedgerow. |

| | |
|---|---|
| European Commission (EC) | The executive body of the European Union is responsible for proposing legislation, enforcing European law, setting objectives and priorities for action, negotiating trade agreements, and managing and implementing European Union policies and the budget. |
| Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) | European Directive relevant to on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora |
| Impact | Actions resulting in changes to an ecological feature, e.g., the construction activities of a development removing a hedgerow. |
| Natura 2000 / European Site | A network of sites selected to ensure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. European site" replaced the term "Natura 2000 site" under the EU (Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats) Regulations 2011 S.I. No. 473 of 2011 |
| Receptor | Environmental components that may be affected, adversely or beneficially, by the project. |
| Special Protection Areas (SPAs). | Sites are classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) which came into force in April 1979. They are classified for rare and vulnerable birds (as listed on Annex 1 of the Directive), and for regularly occurring migratory Species. |
| Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) | Areas of protected habitats and species as defined in the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). |
| Qualifying Interest (QI) | Relates to the habitats and/or (non-bird) species for which an SAC or SPA is selected |
| Zone of Influence (ZoI) | Spatial extent of potential impacts resulting from the project. |

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# 1 Introduction

ID Environmental Consultants have been commissioned by Murphy IA to provide an Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) for the construction of a 4-module housing development on a disused and overgrown site located along Rahoon Road, in the townland of Minclogh, Galway. Proposed works will involve a change of land use from a disused and overgrown site to a low-rise, medium density development consisting of 12 apartments, in 4 modules.

An AA Screening was completed by the current authors for the proposed project. This report concluded that the risk of Likely Significant Effects (LSE) upon the qualifying interests of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA could not be definitively ruled out at the screening stage. As such, a Natura Impact Statement is required.

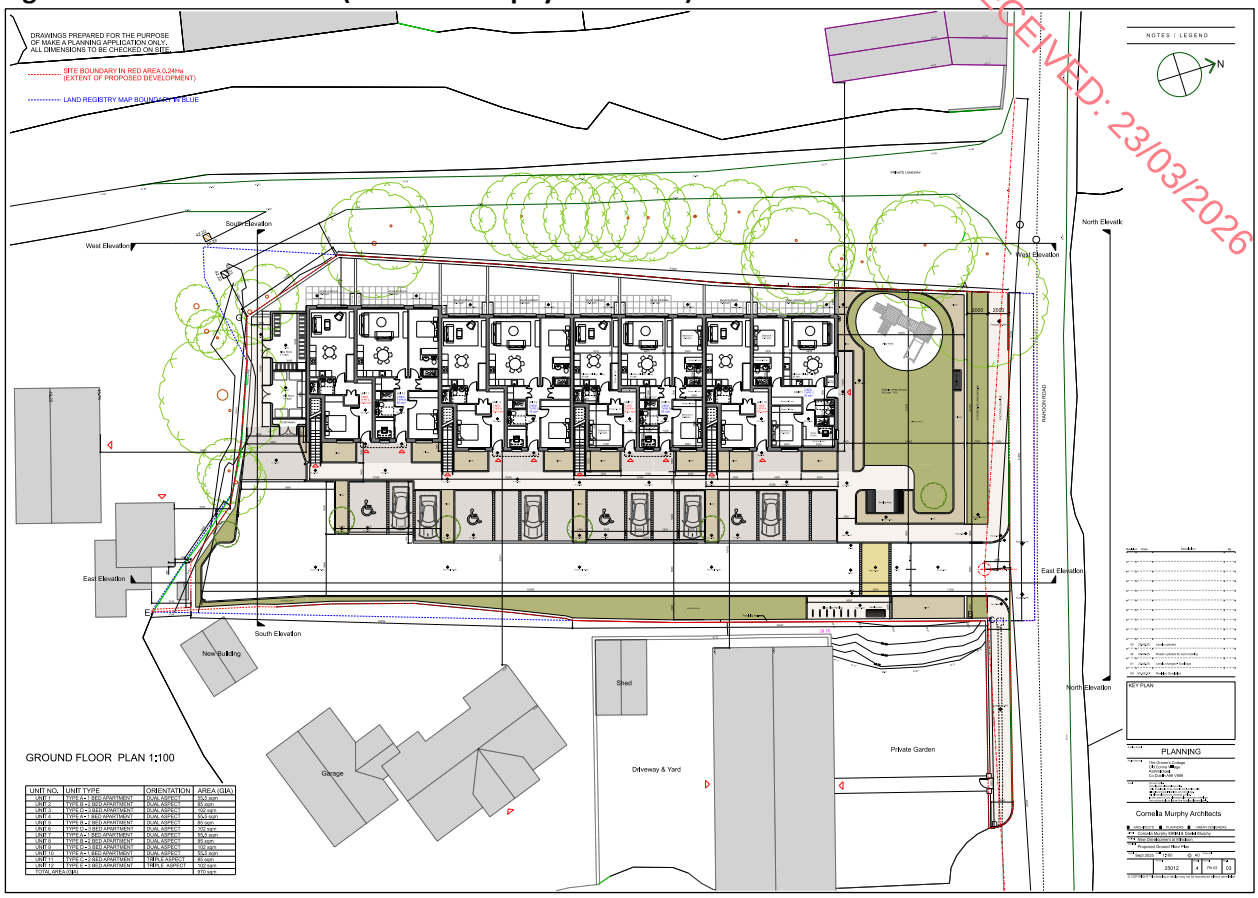
This stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) (Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is used to determine whether the proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of these European sites. This involves the identification of potential LSE to habitats and or species which form the qualifying interests of the European site in question. This report assesses the significance of potential LSE on their conservation status. Negative impacts on the integrity of these habitats or species will require the implementation of avoidance or mitigation measures to avoid progression to stages 3 and 4 of the Appropriate Assessment process as defined by the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2020.

# 2 Project Description

## 2.1 Development Description

The proposed development will involve a change of land use from a 0.24ha disused and overgrown site to a low-rise, medium density development consisting of 12 apartments arranged across 4 modules. The 2-storey development will achieve a density of 48 units per hectare of high-quality units all with private door access and private open spaces that significantly exceeds the minimum standards. A ground floor layout plan can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Ground Floor Plan (Cornelia Murphy Architects)**




## 2.2 Surface Water Management

The proposed surface water drainage network has been designed to minimise the risk of blockages and surface water runoff throughout the network, mainly through the following provisions that limit and restrict the size of pollutants entering the network:

- Sustainable Drainage System composing of Access Chambers/Manhole Chambers and adequately designed piped Networks to ensure no flooding within the pipe network system. All pipes' tanks and manholes are to be watertight and constructed to minimise the possibility of any leaks.
- The proposed SW piped network has been designed in accordance with BS EN 752 and all new infrastructure is to be compliant with the requirements of the GDSDS and the GDRCOP for Drainage Works, with minimum full-bore velocities of 1.0 m/s achieved throughout.
- Pervious paving provided to provide storage at source as well as reducing peak flows to the

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proposed Surface Water Network and provide interception of first 5mm rainfall.

- Fuel interceptor designed to capture oil and hazardous substances will be installed at the earliest possible point in the development (such as hydrocarbons, metals and suspended solids) that would otherwise pollute the environment.
- Trapped road gullies to help prevent sediment and gross pollutants from entering the surface water network and thus improving the water quality discharging from site.
- Silt trap manholes to capture sediment, sand, and debris, ensuring only cleaner water passes through.
- Sealed Surface Water Geocellular Attenuation Tank to store (100 year + 20 CCF)
- Flow control (Hydrobrake) to restrict surface water discharge from site at greenfield runoff rates.

## 2.3 Site of Works

The subject site is located within the townland of Mincloon along Rahoon Road, approximately 3km Northwest of Galway City. The surrounding area is dominated by private residential dwellings and residential housing developments. Fields of Agricultural Grassland and Wet Grassland are also frequent within the surrounding area. Private residential dwellings are found immediately east and south of the site boundary. Rahoon Road which primarily connects the western part of Galway to the city centre runs along the site's northern boundary. Larger scale housing developments are common within surrounding lands.

The site of works of approximately 0.24ha is currently a disused, overgrown site of Wet Grassland (GS4)/Scrub (WS1) (Fossitt, 2000), characterised by a dominance of Creeping thistle *(Cirsium arvense)*, Yorkshire Fog *(Holcus lanatus),* Meadow Buttercup *(Ranunculus acris),* Juncas spp., and Angelica *(Angelica sylvestris).* Abundant ruderal species such as docks *(Rumex spp.),* nettle *(Urtica dioica),* bindweed *(Convolvulus arvensis)* and cleavers *(Galium aparine)* were frequent across the site. A wet drainage channel with no surface water flow recorded during field surveys (June 2025), runs from west to east through the centre of the site and along the site's eastern boundary, supporting a number of wet species. The drainage channel exits the site at the south- eastern corner, where it ultimately enters a concrete culvert extending for approximately 400m. A significant earth mound, attributed to earlier site clearance activities, is located on site. The mound is now heavily overgrown with vegetation dominated by nettles,

bramble and fern spp. A treeline consisting of Horse Chestnut *(Aesculus hippocastanum)*, Ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)*, Sycamore *(Acer pseudoplatanus)* and Hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)* bounds the west of the site. A site location map can be seen in Figure 2 below.

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**Figure 2: Site Location Map**

## 2.4 Operational Activities

During the operational phase, activities associated with the proposed residential development will be low-intensity and consistent with existing residential land uses in the vicinity of the site. Operational activities will be limited to routine domestic occupation and maintenance and are not expected to give rise to emissions or disturbances beyond those already associated with the surrounding residential environment.

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# 3 Potential Impacts

## 3.1 Description of Potential Impacts and Effects

The potential for impacts on the qualifying interests of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA that are associated with the construction phase of the proposed development are discussed hereunder. Direct impacts refer to physical impacts defined in the Departmental Guidance as 'Loss of habitat area' and/or 'Habitat Fragmentation'. There will be no works occurring within any European designated sites. Therefore, there will be no direct impacts or habitat fragmentation from this project. Having established no direct impacts or habitat fragmentation, the assessment concentrates on potential indirect impacts on the QI's of the European Site.

The potential for indirect impacts during the construction phase of the project exist. The site is located 2km north of Galway Bay which forms part of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA. The primary consideration relates to surface water quality and the potential indirect impacts on hydrologically linked habitats and aquatic species associated with the designated sites. A potential source-pathway-receptor link exists via the onsite drainage channel which leaves the site via a concrete culvert which continues to travel southwards before eventually depositing into a tributary of the Knocknacarragh. The EPA code for this waterbody is IE_WE_31K160960. This watercourse has been culverted as a result of a previous development and flows into the Kncoknacarragh stream (Knocknacarragh_010) much of which is also culverted almost to its sea outfall at Rusheen Bay and thus has connectivity to Inner Galway Bay SPA and Galway Bay Complex SAC approximately 2km downstream.

Due to the presence of this hydrological link, construction phase impacts could indirectly impact water quality within the waterbodies which flow downstream to the SAC and SPA. Applying the Precautionary Principle, in a worst-case scenario and in the absence of mitigation, an accidental pollution event of a sufficient magnitude during construction either alone or in-combination with other pollution sources, could potentially affect the water quality in local watercourses that leads to impacts upon the conservation objectives of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA. A reduction in water quality within Galway Bay has the potential to affect the aquatic habitats and prey abundance that are required to maintain or achieve the specific attributes and targets of the qualifying interests and the

conservation objectives that have been defined for these qualifying interests. Only those features of the Proposed Development that have the potential to affect the integrity and conservation objectives of the identified European sites and protected species have been considered.

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**Figure 3: Site Location in relation to the Galway Bay Complex SAC, Inner Galway Bay SPA and local Watercourses**

## 3.2 Qualify Interests of European Sites and Potential for Impacts

In general, all European sites aim to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of all qualifying interests within European sites.

Site specific conservation objectives for the Galway Bay Complex SAC are as follows:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by

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seawater at low tide in Galway Bay Complex SAC

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Coastal lagoons
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Large shallow inlets and bays
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Salicornia* and other annuals colonizing mud and sand in Galway Bay Complex SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows *(Glauco-Puccinellietallia maritimae)*
- To restore the favourable conservation conditions of Mediterranean Salt meadows *(Juncetalia maritimi)*
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Turloughs
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates *(Festuco Brometalia)*
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter *(Lutra lutra)*

Site specific conservation objectives for the Inner Galway Bay SPA are as follows:

- To maintain the favourable conservation conditions of Wetland and Waterbirds for which the site is designated
- To maintain the Favourable conservation condition of wetland habitat as a resource for the regulatory occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it

**The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:**

- its natural range, and the area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and

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- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

**The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:**

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

Table 1 below outlines the qualifying interests (QIs) of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA at risk of impact during the construction phase of the proposed development.

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**Table 1: Qualifying Interests of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the potential for impacts upon its conservation objectives**

| Annex I Habitat/Annex II Species | Description | Potential impacts | Is Mitigation Required |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mudflats and Sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] | Mudflats and sandflats have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives. Areas of mudflat and sandflat habitat are recorded within Rusheen Bay, adjacent to the Knocknacarragh stream discharge point, and so within the ZOI of the proposed development. | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this habitat due to a decrease in water quality in the Knocknacarragh, leading to downstream effects in the bay and associated habitats. | **Mitigation Required** |
| Coastal Lagoons [1150] | Coastal Lagoons have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives. The development site is not within the zone of influence of this QI habitat area in the SAC and so there is no potential for impacting the habitat. | Habitat located outside the ZOI of the proposed development. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |
| Large Shallow Inlets and Bays [1160] | Large Shallow inlets and bays have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives. Areas of this habitat are recorded within Rusheen Bay, adjacent to the Knocknacarragh stream discharge point, and so within the ZOI of the proposed development. | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this habitat due to a decrease in water quality in the Knocknacarragh, leading to downstream effects in the bay and associated habitats. | **Mitigation Required** |
| Reefs [1170] | Reefs have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives. Areas of this habitat are | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this habitat due to a decrease in water | **Mitigation Required** |

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| | recorded within Rusheen Bay, adjacent to the Knocknacarragh stream discharge point, and so within the ZOI of the proposed development. | quality in the Knocknacarragh, leading to downstream effects in the bay and associated habitats. | |
| Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] | Perennial vegetation of stony banks is a coastal habitat associated with stony beaches. The habitat has been mapped as part of the conservation objectives. The development site is not within the zone of influence of this QI habitat area in the SAC and so there is no potential for impacting the habitat. | Habitat located outside the ZOI of the proposed development. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |
| Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] | Soft coastal cliffs reaching heights in excess of 10m occur at Rusheen Bay. These support coastal grassland with very sparse vegetation cover. While surface water from the development site ultimately discharges to Rusheen Bay, vegetated sea cliffs are not sensitive to changes in inland water quality. Their conservation condition is primarily influenced by coastal processes such as wave action, erosion and physical disturbance. Given the indirect nature of the hydrological pathway, the distance involved and the open coastal environment, no likely significant effects on vegetated sea cliffs are predicted. | Habitat located outside the ZOI of the proposed development. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |
| Salicornia and other annuals colonising | Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand have been mapped within the SAC as part of the | Habitat located outside the ZOI of the proposed development. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |

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| mud and sand [1310] | conservation objectives. The development site is not within the zone of influence of this QI habitat area in the SAC and so there is no potential for impacting the habitat. | | |
| Atlantic Salt Meadows [1330] | Atlantic Salt Meadows have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives and occur potentially within the ZOI of the proposed development. | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this habitat due to a decrease in water quality in the Knocknacarragh, leading to downstream effects in the bay and associated habitats. | **Mitigation Required** |
| Mediterranean Salt Meadows [1410] | Mediterranean Salt Meadows have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives and occur potentially within the ZOI of the proposed development. | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this habitat due to a decrease in water quality in the Knocknacarragh, leading to downstream effects in the bay and associated habitats. | **Mitigation Required** |
| Turloughs [3180] | Turloughs have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives and are located outside the ZOI of the proposed development. Given the distance from the discharge point to this habitat type, no impacts are predicted. | Terrestrial habitat not hydrologically connected to the surface water drainage pathway associated with the proposed development and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |
| Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous | Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands have been mapped within the SAC as part of the conservation objectives, at Oranmore. The habitat is | Terrestrial habitat not hydrologically connected to the surface water drainage pathway associated with the proposed development and | **None Required** |

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| grasslands [5130] | not hydrologically connected to the drainage pathway and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects arising from the proposed development. | is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects. No impacts are predicted. | |
| Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates [6210] | Habitat occurring west of Salthill outside the ZOI of the proposed development. The habitat is not hydrologically connected to the drainage pathway and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects arising from the proposed development. | Terrestrial habitat not hydrologically connected to the surface water drainage pathway associated with the proposed development and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |
| Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae* [7210] | Areas of *Cladium* fen best represented near Oranmore, outside the ZOI of the proposed development. The habitat is not hydrologically connected to the drainage pathway and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects arising from the proposed development. | Terrestrial habitat not hydrologically connected to the surface water drainage pathway associated with the proposed development and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |
| Alkaline Fens [7230] | Dominated Alkaline fen located at Oranmore, over 10km from the development site and discharge point of the Knocknacarragh watercourse. The habitat is not hydrologically connected to the drainage pathway and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects arising from the proposed development. | Terrestrial habitat not hydrologically connected to the surface water drainage pathway associated with the proposed development and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects. No impacts are predicted. | **None Required** |
| Limestone Pavements [8240] | Limestone pavement located at Ballyconry, Gleninagh North and Newquay outside the ZOI of the proposed development. Limestone pavement habitat is not | Terrestrial habitat not hydrologically connected to the surface water drainage pathway associated with the proposed development and | **None Required** |

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| | hydrologically connected to the drainage pathway and is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects arising from the proposed development. | is therefore not sensitive to potential water quality effects. No impacts are predicted. | |
| *Lutra lutra* (Otter) [1355] | Otter is likely to occur within the Zone of Influence of the proposed development. Otter commuting routes have been mapped with the SAC as part of the conservation objectives. Rusheen Bay is recognised as a popular commuting area for otters. The presence of this species is positively correlated with good water quality and deterioration of same will lead to impacts upon this species.<br><br>The main threats to Otters in Ireland are thought to be: (1) habitat destruction, including river drainage and the clearance of bank-side vegetation; (2) pollution, particularly organic pollution resulting in fish kills; (3) disturbance of habitat due to recreational activities, and (4) accidental deaths (NPWS, 2009).<br><br>Potential otter habitat and otter species occur within the ZOI of the proposed development and there is potential for impacts to occur in the absence of mitigation. | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this species due to a decrease in water quality in the Knocknacarragh, leading to downstream effects in the bay and associated habitats.<br><br>This could arise due to run-off from the site that is contaminated with silt, cement, hydrocarbons or other polluting materials during the construction phase of the proposed development. These impacts may indirectly negatively affect this species and the aquatic food supply it depends upon. | **Mitigation Required** |

RECEIVED: 25/03/2026

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| *Phoca vitulina* (Harbour Seal) [1365] | Habitat suitable for Harbour Seal has been mapped as part of the conservation objectives for the SAC within the ZOI of the proposed development. | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this species due to a decrease in water quality in the Knocknacarragh, leading to downstream effects in the bay and associated habitats.<br><br>This could arise due to run-off from the site that is contaminated with silt, cement, hydrocarbons or other polluting materials during the construction phase of the proposed development. These impacts may indirectly negatively affect this species and the aquatic food supply it depends upon. | **Mitigation Required** |

**Table 2: Qualifying Interests of the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the potential for impacts upon its conservation objectives**

| Annexed Habitat or Species | Description | Potential impacts | Is Mitigation Required |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | Inner Galway Bay supports an excellent diversity of wintering wetland birds, with divers, grebes, cormorants, dabbling duck, sea duck and waders all well represented. | Potential impacts and subsequent effects exist upon this species due to a decrease in water quality in Rusheen Bay and associated watercourses. This could arise due to run-off | **Mitigation Required** |

RECEIVED: 25/03/2026

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|---|---|---|---|
| | Surface water and groundwater pollution during the construction phase has potential to cause indirect impacts on the Wetland and Waterbirds population associated with the SPA. | from the site that is contaminated with silt, cement, hydrocarbons or other polluting materials during the construction phase of the proposed development. These impacts may indirectly negatively affect bird species of special conservation interest of this SPA and the aquatic food supply it depends upon. | |

## 3.3 Summary of Potential Adverse Effects

Potential for significant effects to the following Qualifying Interests associated with the Lower River Shannon SAC were identified:

- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]
- Large Shallow Inlets and Bays [1160]
- Reefs [1170]
- Atlantic Salt Meadows [1330]
- Mediterranean Salt Meadows [1410]
- Otter [1355]
- Harbour Seal [1365]

Potential for significant effects to the following Qualifying Interests associated with the Inner Galway Bay SPA were identified on a precautionary basis:

RECEIVED: 23/03/2026

- Wetlands and Waterbirds [A999]
- SCI bird species of the SPA (Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Teal, Red-breasted Merganser, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Common Tern, Wigeon, Sandwich Tern).

## 3.4 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts can be thought of as occurring through two main pathways: first; through persistent additions or losses of the same materials or resources, and second, -through the compounding effects as a result of the coming together of two or more effects (Bowers-Marriott, 1997).

There are no predicted in-combination effects with the developments listed in Table 3 below and Table 6 of the AA Screening Report, given that they have been screened for potential significant effects on European sites and, where appropriate, have had avoidance and mitigation measures put in place.

Where potential impacts are predicted, given the inclusion of strict Best Practice Construction Measures to be included and enforced through a Construction Environmental Management Plan, the Proposed Development will have no predicted impacts on local ecology and biodiversity or hydrologically linked European sites; therefore, in combination, impacts can be ruled out.

The Galway City Development Plan in complying with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, requires that all Projects and Plans that could affect the Natura 2000 sites in the same zone of impact of the Project site would be initially screened for Appropriate Assessment and if requiring Stage 2 AA, that appropriate employable mitigation measures would be put in place to avoid, reduce or ameliorate negative impacts. In this way, any in-combination impacts with Plans or Projects for the development area and surrounding townlands in which the development site is located would be avoided.

**Table 3: Projects reviewed for cumulative and in combination effects**

| Reference | Description of the Development | Likelihood of Significant Effects | Cumulative and In combination Effects |
|---|---|---|---|
| 304762 | Demolition of an existing house and associated outbuildings on the site; | An Appropriate Assessment Screening | None Identified - |

| | | | |
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| | Construction of 238 no. residential units comprising:<br><br>• 90 no. four bed houses<br>• 23 no. three bed house<br>• 12 no. duplex units (6 no. 2 bed ground floor apartments and 6 no. 3 bed apartments with first floor access)<br>• 20 no. one-bed apartment units<br>• 84 no. two-bed apartment units<br>• 9 no. three-bed apartment units<br><br>Development of a creche facility/community facility (258.9 m2), Development of 2 no. retail units (354.9 m2), Provision of shared communal and private open space, car and bicycle parking, site landscaping and public lighting, services, access with Ballymoneen Road and all associated site development works. | Report (AASR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was prepared for the proposed project. The NIS was prepared on a precautionary basis. The NIS concluded that the project will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site. An Comisiun Pleanala undertook an AA screening which concluded a Stage 2 appropriate assessment was not required.<br><br>Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) was also prepared which concluded that there will be no significant impacts on biodiversity given the nature, scale and design of the proposal as well as the lack of hydrological connectivity with sensitive aquatic receptors. It is considered that the proposed development will not result in the loss of habitats or species of high ecological significance and will not have any significant impacts on the ecology of the wider area. | No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project. |
| 2560375 | The development will consist of Construction of 48 no. own door apartments across 5 no. Duplex building blocks; Upgrading of existing vehicular entrance and access road including road setback along Rahoon road frontage and provision of footpaths, 3. Establishment of a right of way across the site to also serve an existing house to the south-west of the site (Eircode H91ECC6), 4. Revised boundary treatment and revised site boundaries, 5. Partial demolition of existing shed, 6. Provision of public open space areas (to include for play spaces), private open space areas, bicycle parking, footpaths, public | An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was prepared for the proposed project. The NIS concluded that with the implementation of mitigation and best practice measures as outlined in the report, it can be concluded that there is no potential for | None Identified – No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project. |

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| | lighting, hard and soft landscaping, 7. Car parking including dedicated EV charge spaces, ducting to all spaces for future electric charging points, 8. Proposed connection to existing mains water infrastructure, and on-site surface water drainage arrangements, 9. Proposed connection to sewer network including provision for on-site pumping station, together with all associated site works and services. | impact on the European Sites.<br><br>Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) was also prepared which concluded, provided the proposed development is constructed and operated in accordance with the design, best practice and mitigation that is described within this application, significant effects on ecology are not anticipated. | |
| 2560388 | Permission for development which consists of: We, O'Malley Construction Company Limited, intend to apply for planning permission to Galway City Council for development on a site located to the east of the Ballymoneen Road (L5024) in the townland of Ballyburke, Co. Galway. The proposed development is an amendment to the Maolchnoc Strategic Housing Development permitted under ABP-304762-19. The proposed development will consist of the following: 1. A change in the permitted apartment types on the 3rd floor of Apartment Blocks D, E and F from 6 no. 2-bed apartments and 6 no. 3-bed apartments to 18 no. 2-bed apartments and 3 no. 1-bed apartments (an additional 9 no. apartments in total). 2. Revisions to the floor plate of the 3rd floor of the permitted Apartment Blocks D, E and F including the omission of the permitted setback to accommodate the additional units. The proposed 3rd floor layout will match the floor plate of the lower floors. 3. Changes to the elevational treatment of Apartment Blocks D, E and F. 4. Minor amendments to the layout of the permitted central open space area including the addition of 3 no. car parking spaces to service the new apartment units. 5. Provision of additional bicycle parking spaces including accessible bicycle parking spaces. 6. The provision of photovoltaic panels at roof level of each of the apartment blocks. 7. All associated site works and ancillary | A briefing Note was completed for proposed amendments to a permitted development. A note was prepared to assess whether the proposed amendments to the permitted development would alter the conclusions of the AASR and EcIA reports which were submitted with the planning application for the permitted development. The note concluded that there will be no changes to the findings or conclusions of the AASR and EcIA submitted as part of the planning application for the permitted development. There will be no additional loss of habitat and no significant effect on KER's as the proposed amendments are minor in nature. There is no potential for deterioration of water quality and no new cumulative impacts on any ecological receptors. Provided mitigation | None Identified – No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project. |

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| | services necessary to facilitate the proposed development. | measures prescribed within the EcIA are fully implemented, there will be no significant effects on any ecological receptor or any National or European Designated site as a result of the proposed amendments. | |
| 2660043 | Planning permission for development which consists of: planning permission for the construction of a GAA facility on lands at Keeraun and Mincloon, Rahoon, Galway. Works to consist of A) 2 no. grass playing pitches, 1 no. all weather synthetic playing pitch, with dugouts, floodlighting, ball stop netting system, score board structures, covered viewing stands and perimeter fencing to all pitches. B) a single storey proposed facilities building, C) a single storey pitch-maintenance building D) a public playground area with fencing E) a looped amenity walkway, F) parking for 95 cars, 3 coach spaces, 1 drop off zones and 144 bicycle parking spaces. G) electrical generator and associated storage, H) new vehicular and pedestrian access to the site from the Clybaun Rd (L-5021-0) with signage, entrance walls and gate. Development to include all associated site works and enabling works including but not limited to; road widening and provision of footpath/cycle track and lighting to existing Clybaun Rd (L-5021-0), site levelling, internal site lighting, a proprietary onsite wastewater pumping station with a pumped rising main to the gravity foul sewer network on the Rahoon Rd (L-1017-0), all boundary treatments & landscaping, and surface water drainage system. Permission to include removal of the existing agricultural entrance and the partial demolition of the existing farm structures on the Clybaun Rd (L-5021-0) | An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was prepared for the proposed project, which concluded that potential impacts associated with the proposed development will not result in likely significant effects on the qualifying interests/special conservation interests of any European sites within the ZoI of the proposed development, in view of their conservation objectives. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required. | None Identified – No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project. |

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# 4 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation is prescribed in accordance with the EPA draft guidance on EIAR (EPA, 2017) which requires mitigation by avoidance as a first approach. Where this is not feasible, measures to prevent impacts from

giving rise to adverse effects should be adopted (e.g., design of bunded storage for chemicals). Where impacts cannot be avoided, e.g., noise generation, mitigation by reduction of impact is required to limit the exposure of the receptor to an acceptable level (often achieved by interrupting the pathway between the source and receptor).

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To prevent deterioration in water quality in the Knocknacarragh and associated watercourses, several mitigation measures must be implemented and followed. Measures have also been suggested to help protect the local biodiversity and ensure the protection of local wildlife. Although these are standard mitigation measures, their implementation will ensure the protection of Natura 2000 habitats and species, as well as local non-designated ecological receptors. The primary parties responsible for implementing these measures include the applicant and the construction team (site manager and site workers).

Mitigation is prescribed to address the impacts so that adverse effects on the European site's site integrity do not occur. Mitigation measures are set out in accordance with the European Commission guidance on the 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, (2001).

## 4.1 Mitigation Measures and Construction

### 4.1.1 Severe Weather Events

Works should be suspended if severe weather events, including any of the following weather conditions, are forecast or occur:

- 10 mm/hr (i.e. high-intensity local rainfall events);
- >25 mm in 24 hours (heavy frontal rainfall lasting most of the day); or
- >half monthly average rainfall in any 7 days.

Prior to works being suspended, the following control measures shall be completed:

- Secure all open excavations.
- Provide temporary or emergency drainage to prevent back-up of surface runoff; and,
- Avoid working during heavy rainfall and for up to 24 hours after heavy events to ensure drainage systems are not overloaded.

## 4.2 Water Quality

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The potential for impacts on water quality exists, which is associated with the construction phase of the proposed development. In a worst-case scenario and in the absence of mitigation, an accidental pollution event of sufficient magnitude during construction could affect the water in the onsite drainage channel and hydrologically connected waterbodies, including the Knocknacarragh and Rusheen Bay. A reduction in water quality locally has the potential to affect the aquatic habitats and natural conditions of these watercourses, which could in turn lead to adverse effects on qualifying species and habitats of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA.

### 4.2.1 Construction Phase Impacts

Potential for minor adverse temporary impacts in the absence of mitigation. Deterioration of water quality arising from the indirect effects of contaminated run-off or discharge into the aquatic environment, through siltation, nutrient release and/or contamination. In the absence of mitigation, the proposed construction phase works have the potential to result in sediment release into the Knocknacarragh. Accidental spills and leaks of fuels or chemicals during the operation and refuelling of machinery required during construction have the potential to result in hydrocarbon leaks in the absence of mitigation. The key risks to surface water associated with the Proposed Project are:

- Impacts associated with increases in suspended solids being released into waterbodies;
- Impacts associated with pollution of waterbodies by other substances;
- Site preparation and clearance works (cut/fill operations);
- Temporary access roads construction;
- Storage of Materials on site, including double-sealed tanks for any fuels stored on site;
- Wheel Wash Facility to be provided by the contractor during construction

### 4.2.2 Mitigation

**Management of Surface Water Runoff during Construction:**

Several measures will be implemented during the construction phase to manage surface water in and around the construction works and mitigate impacts on surface waters resulting from construction activity. The contractor will be required to produce a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) that will form part of an overall construction environment management plan. Mitigation measures include:

- Drainage systems need to be protected from sedimentation and erosion due to direct surface water runoff generated onsite during the construction phase. To prevent this from occurring surface water discharge from site will be managed and controlled for the duration of the construction works until the permanent surface water drainage system of the proposed site is complete.

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- All works shall be undertaken in accordance with the CIRIA document, 'Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites, guidance for consultants and contractors'
- All equipment and materials will be stored a minimum of 10m from the drainage channel.
- Portaloos and/or containerised toilets and welfare units will provide facilities for site personnel. A licensed waste disposal contractor will remove all associated waste from the site.
- The site will be kept clean and tidy during the duration of the construction phase of this development.
- All wastes produced on site will be separated at source into designated skips, which a licensed contractor will remove to an appropriately licensed facility.
- The location of surface water drains will be clearly marked and identified to all staff working on site. Drainage infrastructure will be monitored and maintained appropriately during the construction phase of this development. This will involve regular inspections, sediment control measures such as clearing and maintaining silt fences, and preventing blockages caused by debris and vegetation.
- Surface water management systems for the site, including petrol inceptors, will be installed as early as possible during the construction phase of the Proposed Development. These will be certified and maintained throughout the development's construction phase.
- Where concrete is delivered to site only chute cleaning will be permitted with the minimal volume of water possible. No washing of any plant used in concrete transport will be allowed on site. All foundation bases are to be free of any standing water prior to concrete pours, with plastic (or similar) covering material on standby in the event of sudden rainfall. Planned concrete pours are to be coordinated with weather forecasting.
- An emergency-operating plan shall be established to deal with incidents or accidents during construction that may give rise to pollution within any watercourse. This shall include means of containment in the event of accidental spillage of hydrocarbons or other pollutants. Throughout all stages of the construction phase of the development, the contractor shall ensure that good housekeeping is maintained at all times and that all site personnel are made aware of the importance of freshwater environments and the requirement to avoid all types of pollution.
- All hazardous materials on site shall be stored within secondary containment designed to retain at least 110% of the storage contents. Temporary bunds for oil/diesel storage tanks will be used on the site during the construction phase of the project as appropriate. Safe handling of all potentially hazardous materials shall be emphasised to all construction personnel employed during this phase of the project, and an emergency response plan shall be in place in case of accidental spillage. Raw or uncured waste concrete shall be disposed of by removal from the site. Any spillage of fuels, lubricants or hydraulic oils shall be immediately contained and the contaminated soil removed from the site and properly disposed of. There shall be no discharge to the existing surface water or foul water networks on site.

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- Road gullies, flow control devices, Surface Water Networks, Silt Trap Manholes, Petrol Interceptor and pipe networks shall be maintained, as appropriate and required in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations and guidelines as part of a client site management plan post construction to mitigate the risk of sediments or pollutants entering the groundwater
- Maintenance and inspection activities and frequency of proprietary systems should follow the advice provided by the manufacturer or supplier and should include a checklist for the site. Inspections should comply with all relevant Health and Safety Legislation (Health and Safety at Work), including the development of risk assessments for working close to or in water.
- Items such as the flow controls and fuel separators are located to provide easy vehicular access for inspection and maintenance.

**Installation of Silt Fencing:**

- Silt fencing will be installed in a double row 5m from the drainage channel. This will remain in place throughout f the construction phase. The silt fences will have the following design features:
    - the geotextile fabric must be entrenched at least 100mm into the ground with the ends upturned inward towards the works.
    - the fence posts will have a maximum spacing of 2m to prevent sag on the fence; and
    - the geotextile fabric will be anchored to the fence posts instead of wrapped.
- Daily inspection of silt fences will be carried out by the site management to assess the effectiveness of the measures, carry out maintenance, and determine if there has been any damage/breach to the control measures.
- The silt fences will also be inspected immediately following heavy rainfall or strong winds (equating to a yellow weather warning). Where repair is necessary, this will be carried out immediately and may require the replacement of any damaged/degraded material.
- Any accumulated silt will be removed as required from the base of silt fences and will be removed off-site. Silt will not be permitted to build up such that it reaches half the height of the fence or exceeds 15cm in height (whichever is the lesser value).
- Silt fences must remain in place until the disturbed areas within the sites have been reinstated and revegetated.
- Silt fences must only be removed during dry weather and following approval by the site manager.
- Behind the silt fencing, grass will not be cut.

**Sedi-mats:**

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- Sedi-mats will reduce sediment mobilisation in combination with standard mitigation measures outlined in this report
- Sedi-mats will be placed along the drainage channel to the east of the site to intercept and retain fine sediments mobilised during works. These Sedi-mats are to remain in place for the duration of the construction phase.

**Figure 4: An Example of the Sedi-mats to be placed along the drainage channel before the commencement of works on site.**

**Management of potentially polluting materials**

- Materials and equipment to implement the Spill Response & Control Plan must be available adjacent to all watercourses (for example, spill kits, and booms). These should be in clearly marked response points, which can be accessed by all staff.
- Drip trays will be utilized on-site for pumps and stationary equipment situated within 25m of the watercourse and spill kits will be available at these locations for the duration of the contract. Any used spill kits will be disposed of using a hazardous waste disposal contractor and in accordance with all relevant EU and Irish waste management legislation;
- All hazardous substances on-site shall be controlled within an enclosed storage compound that shall be fenced off and locked when not in use to prevent theft and vandalism;
- Refuelling of plant and machinery shall take place at least 50m away from the riparian zone using a mobile fuel bowser and restricted to designated areas on hard standing.
- Concrete mixing if required, will not occur on site and will be brought to the site by truck;
- Equipment, batching and ready-mix lorry washing and cleaning shall be washed-out on-site into a designated area that has been designed to contain wet concrete/wash waters.
- Only concrete delivery truck chutes may be washed out in this location.

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- No bulk chemicals to be stored within the active construction areas. Temporary oil and fuel storage tanks may be kept in suitable containers in the material storage area and stored on appropriately bunded spill pallets as required. Any fuel and oil stored on-site shall be stored on bunded spill pallets.

Post implementation of best practice and preventive measures as described above, there is no potential for adverse impact on the listed QIs/SCIs of the Galway Bay Complex SAC or Inner Galway Bay SPA as a result of deterioration in water quality.

# 5 Residual Impacts

Residual impacts are those that occur after mitigation measures have taken effect. If the general and project-specific measures that are listed above are employed during the construction and operational phases of the proposed works, there will be no residual impacts on the habitats or species identified within this report.

# 6 Natura Impact Statement & Conclusion

This NIS has reviewed the impacts arising from the proposed project specifically with regard to surface water quality impacts to the Knocknacarragh and disturbance to QI species affecting the integrity of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA, and found, following a Stage 1 Screening Assessment, it was determined that without the implementation of mitigation measures, significant effects on the integrity of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA could not be definitively ruled out.

**Based on the assessment of the proposed development alone and in combination with other projects and plans, including the implementation of mitigation measures, it can be concluded that no adverse effects on the site's integrity will arise, in view of the site's conservation objectives.**

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# Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Mincloon Housing Development,

Rahoon, Galway

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# 1 Introduction

ID Environmental Consultants Ltd were appointed by Murphy IA to produce an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for the construction of a 4-module housing development on a disused and overgrown site located along Rahoon Road, in the townland of Mincloon, Galway. Proposed works will involve a change of land use from a disused and overgrown site to a low-rise, medium density development consisting of 12 apartments, in 4 modules.

The following report has been completed to provide information regarding the ecological status of the proposed site of works. The report includes a general ecological assessment of the site including designated sites. This report has been completed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article 6[3] Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening of the Proposed Development.

## 1.1 Statement of Authority

This report was completed by Ian Douglas (MSc, BSc, H Cert.Ag) of ID Environmental Consultants. Ian is an Ecologist and Environmental consultant with over 10 years' experience in appropriate assessment, ecological impact assessment, habitats assessment, soil science, GIS mapping and regenerative agriculture. Ian has worked on projects including large road developments, power infrastructure projects, planning applications, planning and design of nature trails, constructed wetland creation and on farm habitat development. Ian previously worked in Ecology and Agriculture in England and Australia before taking a position with Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants in 2018. With whom he retains a position as Associate Director. Ian formed ID Environmental Consultants in 2021.

The completion of this project was also aided by Ellen Irwin. Ellen is a former student of UCD, who graduated with a degree in Agri-Environmental Science (BAgrSc, Level 8). Through this degree, Ellen has developed practical field and lab-based skills that are necessary for field/habitat surveying and soil sampling and has also gained knowledge of GIS software. Ellen has also completed modules in the areas of agri-environmental management, rural conservation and sustainable agriculture that have developed her knowledge in the policies, schemes and practices required to protect the rural environments. Since finishing her degree in May 2023, Ellen has spent the last two years working with both Ian Douglas Environmental Consultants and Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants since. During this time Ellen has gained ample experience in both ecological surveying and compiling environmental reports.

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## 1.2 Relevant Legislation and Overall Screening Methodology

The methodology for this screening statement is set out in a document prepared for the Environment DG of the European Commission entitled 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (European Commission, 2019). This report and any contributory fieldwork were carried out in accordance with guidelines given by the Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government (2009, amended 2010).

The process is given in Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and is commonly referred to as 'Appropriate Assessments' (which in fact refers to Stage 2 in the sequence under the Habitats Directive Article 6 assessment). Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the (Natura2000) site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public."

Article 6(4) of the same directive states:
"If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

It is the responsibility of the proponent of the plan or project to provide the relevant information (ecological

surveys, research, analysis etc.) for submission to the 'competent national authority'. Having satisfied itself that the information is complete and objective, the competent authority will use this information to screen the project, i.e., to determine if an AA is required and to carry out the AA, if one is deemed necessary. The competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned.

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## 1.3 Case law

The European Court of Justice has made a number of relevant rulings in relation to when an Appropriate Assessment is required and its purpose: "*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site is to be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on that site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*" and that the plan or project may only be authorised "*where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects*".

A list of relevant rulings to the proposed project is provided below:

**Table 2: Case law relevant to this AA Screening for the Proposed Development**

| Case | Ruling |
|---|---|
| People Over Wind and Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17) | The ruling of the CJEU in this case requires that any conclusion of 'no Likely Significant Effect' on a European site must be made prior to any consideration of measures to avoid or reduce harm to the European site. The determination of Likely Significant Effects should not, in the opinion of the CJEU, constitute an attempt at detailed technical analyses. This should be conducted as part of the AA. |
| Waddenzee (C-127/02) | The ruling in this case clarified that AA must be conducted using the best scientific knowledge and that there must be no reasonable scientific doubt in the conclusions drawn.<br>The Waddenzee ruling also provided clarity on the definition of 'significant effect', which would be any effect from a plan or project which is likely to undermine the conservation objectives of any European site. |

RECEIVED: 23/03/2026

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| Holohan and Others v An Bord Pleanála (C-461/17) | The conclusions of the Court in this case were that consideration must be given during AA to:<br><br>effects on qualifying habitats and/or species of a SAC or SPA, even when occurring outside of the boundary of a European site, if these are relevant to the site meeting its conservation objectives; and,<br><br>effects on non-qualifying habitats and/or species on which the qualifying habitats and/or species depend, and which could result in adverse effects on the integrity of the European site. |
| T.C Briels and Others v Minister van Infrastructuur en Milieu (C-521/12) | The ruling of the CJEU in this case determined that compensatory measures cannot be used to support a conclusion of no adverse effect on site integrity. |

## 1.4 Guidance Documents

This report has been prepared with regard to the following guidance documents on Appropriate Assessment, where relevant:

**Table 3: List of relevant guidance documents**

| Name | Description |
|---|---|
| Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities | National guidance on Appropriate Assessment for planning authorities. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, (2010 revision) |
| Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities | Circulars issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government with guidance relating to Appropriate Assessment.<br>Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 (2010) |
| Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC | The guidance within this document provides a non-mandatory methodology for carrying out assessments required under Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive European Commission Environment Directorate-General, (2001 and updates April 2015 and September 2021). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC | Publication to the Member States with an interpretation of certain concepts in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. EC Environment Directorate-General (2018) |
| Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. | Publication relating to the use of the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000) |
| Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. Practice Note PN01. | Publication from the Office of the Planning Regulator relating to screening for Appropriate Assessment. OPR (March 2021) |

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# 2 Methodologies

This screening report was informed by a desk study of all relevant environmental information and also included a review of the ecological field survey data collected in June 2025. The screening then incorporated the following steps (broadly based on EC [2000]):

- Determine if the proposed works are directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;
- Describe the proposed works;
- Describe the baseline environment;
- List 'Relevant' European sites which are those sites potentially connected to the proposed works by source-pathway-receptor linkages; and
- Conclude if linkages to 'Relevant' sites have the potential to give rise to Likely Significant Effects (LSE).

## 2.1 The Source-Pathway-Receptor Model

The standard 'source-pathway-receptor' conceptual model is a standard tool in environmental assessment. In order for an effect to occur, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism means there is no likelihood for the effect to occur. An example of this model is provided below:

- Source (s); – e.g. Piling;
- Pathway (s); e.g. Vibration; and
- Receptor (s); e.g. Underground otter resting site at risk of collapse

The model evaluates the receptors as the qualifying interests (QIs) for which individual European sites are

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designated, with reference to the latest conservation objectives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website, or substitute detailed objectives from other European sites where only generic objectives are available.

European sites are at risk of significant effects as a result of the proposed works where a source-pathway-receptor link exists between any elements of the proposed works and the European site. In order for an impact to occur there must be a risk enabled by having a 'source' (e.g. proposed works), a 'receptor' (e.g. a SAC/SPA or their QI habitats/species), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a watercourse which connects the impact source at a site of proposed works to a SAC/SPA). The risk of the impact does not automatically mean it will occur, nor that it will be significant. However, identification of the risk does mean that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental impact occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk, and the characteristics of the receptor.

## 2.2 The Precautionary Principle

The Precautionary Principle has been defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2005) as: “When human activities may lead to morally unacceptable harm [to the environment] that is scientifically plausible but uncertain, actions shall be taken to avoid or diminish that harm. The judgement of plausibility should be grounded in scientific analysis". Reasoned application of the ‘Precautionary Principle’ is fundamental to the Screening Stage (and AA). The precautionary principle is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). It relates to an approach to risk management whereby if there is the possibility that a given policy or action might cause harm to the public or the environment and if there is still no scientific consensus on the issue, the policy or action in question should not be pursued.

The precautionary principle prevails where ‘reasonable scientific doubt’ cannot be ruled out. Known threats to QIs of relevant sites are analysed to avoid overlooking subtle or far-field effect pathways. The duration of potential effects is a key consideration, in particular, because the European Court of Justice has recently ruled—albeit in specific reference to priority habitats—that those effects to site integrity must be “lasting”.

## 2.3 Likely Significant Effect

The threshold for a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) is treated in the screening exercise as being above a de

minimis level[1] . The opinion of the Advocate General in CJEU case C-258/11 outlines:

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

RECEIVED: 23/03/2026

In this assessment, therefore, 'relevant' European sites are those within the potential ZOI of activities associated with the construction and operation of the Proposed Development, where LSE pathways to European sites were identified through the source-pathway-receptor model.

## 2.4 Desktop Study

Prior to the main fieldwork contributing to this assessment, a desktop survey of available information sources was carried out. These included:

- The NPWS Protected Species Database and Online Mapping (Updated November 2023)
- Data on waterbodies, available for download and interrogation from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) web map service (Environmental Protection Agency, 2018);
- Information on the location, nature and design of the Proposed Development supplied by the applicant's design team;
- Review of previous and current planning applications for the subject site and local area via the Galway City Councils Planning portal[2], Myplan[3] and the An Bord Pleanála[4]
- Desk research included a review of records available through the National Biodiversity Data Centre mapping system. These included rare and protected species. Records were requested for all species appearing within the study area or immediately surrounding the study area (2km)[5]. The results of which can be seen in Appendix 2.
- Data held on the NPWS Article 17 datasets for protected species[6]

[1] Sweetman v. An Bord Pleanála (Court of Justice of the EU, case C-285/11). A de minimis effect is a level of risk that is too small to be concerned with when considering ecological requirements of an Annex I habitat or a population of Annex II species present on a European site necessary to ensure their favourable conservation condition. If low level effects on habitats or individuals of species are judged to be in this order of magnitude and that judgment has been made in the absence of reasonable scientific doubt, then those effects are not considered to be likely significant effects.

[2] https://www.eplanning.ie/GalwayCity/SearchTypes

[3] https://www.myplan.ie/

[4] https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/map-search

[5] https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map

[6] https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/habitat-and-species-data/article-17

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## 2.5 Ecology Surveys

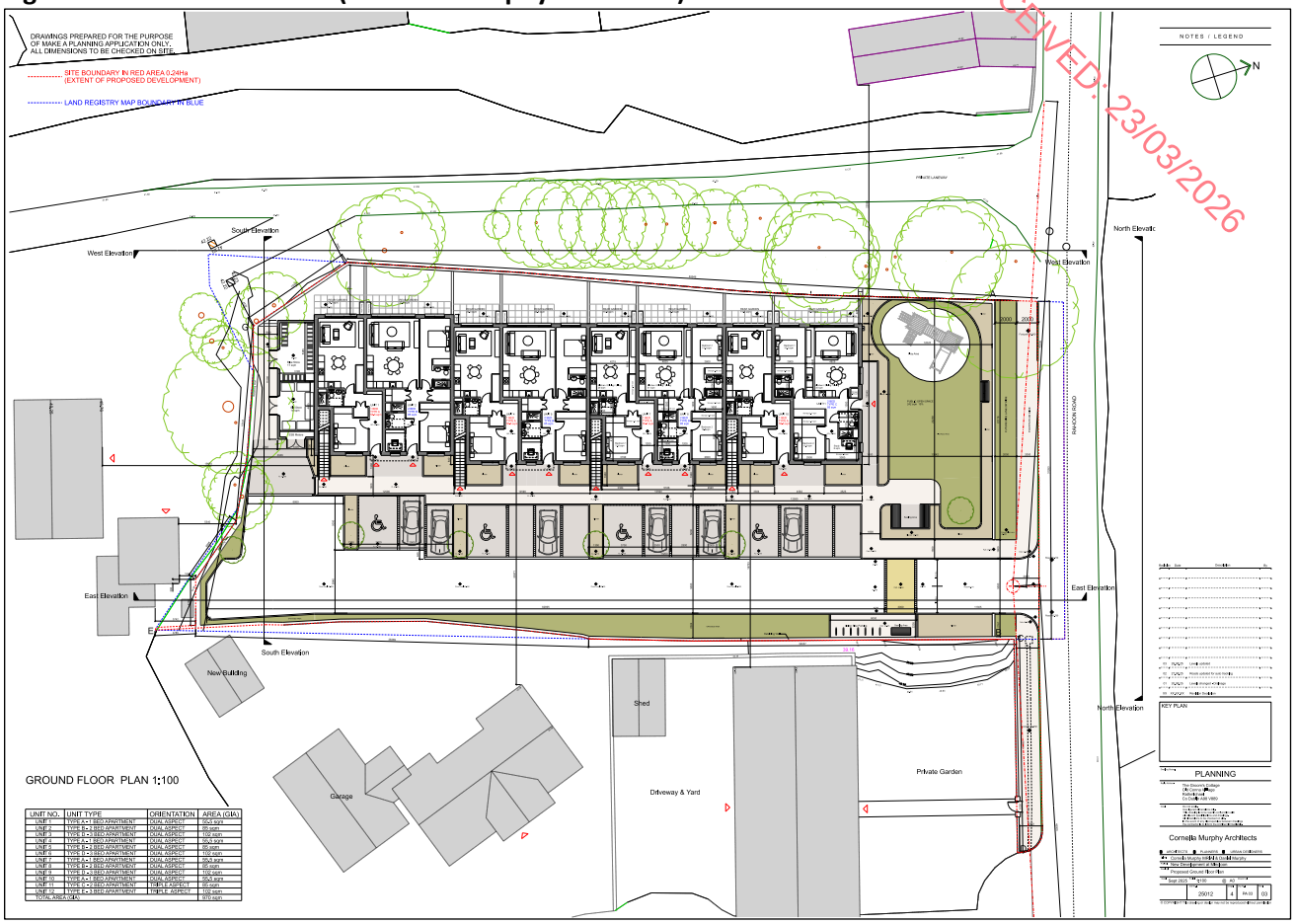
Multiple surveys have been carried out in June 2025. Habitats were identified, mapped and classified and dominant plant species were noted in accordance with the guidelines given by the JNCC (2007) and The Heritage Council (2010). Habitats were classified as per Fossitt (2000). Plant nomenclature follows the BSBI's List of Accepted Plant Names (BSBI, 2007). Fauna surveys were carried out during this multidisciplinary walkover survey for the detection of field signs such as tracks, markings, feeding signs, and droppings, as well as by direct observation. Mammal surveys followed the guidance as per NRA (2009).

# 3 Project Description

## 3.1 Development Description

The proposed development will involve a change of land use from a 0.24ha disused and overgrown site to a low-rise, medium density development consisting of 12 apartments arranged across 4 modules. The 2-storey development will achieve a density of 48 units per hectare of high-quality units all with private door access and private open spaces that significantly exceeds the minimum standards. A ground floor layout plan can be seen in Figure 1.

**Figure 5: Ground Floor Plan (Cornelia Murphy Architects)**




## 3.2 Site of Works

The subject site is located within the townland of Mincloon along Rahoon Road, approximately 3km Northwest of Galway City. The surrounding area is dominated by private residential dwellings and residential housing developments. Fields of Agricultural Grassland and Wet Grassland are also frequent within the surrounding area. Private residential dwellings are found immediately east and south of the site boundary. Rahoon Road which primarily connects the western part of Galway to the city centre runs along the site's northern boundary. Larger scale housing developments are common within surrounding lands.

The site of works of approximately 0.24ha is currently a disused, overgrown site of Wet Grassland (GS4)/Scrub (WS1) (Fossitt, 2000), characterised by a dominance of Creeping thistle *(Cirsium arvense)*, Yorkshire Fog *(Holcus lanatus),* Meadow Buttercup *(Ranunculus acris),* Juncas spp., and Angelica *(Angelica sylvestris).* Abundant ruderal species such as docks *(Rumex spp.),* nettle *(Urtica dioica),* bindweed *(Convolvulus arvensis)* and cleavers *(Galium aparine)* were frequent across the site. A wet drainage channel with no surface water flow recorded during field surveys (June 2025), runs from west to east through the centre of the site and along

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the site's eastern boundary, supporting a number of wet species. The drainage channel exits the site at the south- eastern corner, where it ultimately enters a concrete culvert extending for approximately 400m. A significant earth mound, attributed to earlier site clearance activities, is located on site. The mound is now heavily overgrown with vegetation dominated by nettles, bramble and fern spp. A treeline consisting of Horse Chestnut *(Aesculus hippocastanum)*, Ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)*, Sycamore *(Acer pseudoplatanus)* and Hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)* bounds the west of the site. A site location map can be seen in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 6: Site Location Map**

## 3.3 Watercourses and Surface Water Bodies

The nearest watercourse to the development site is a tributary of the Knocknacarragh stream located 270m south of the site. The EPA code for this waterbody is IE_WE_31K160960. This watercourse has been culverted as a result of a previous development and flows into the Kncoknacarragh stream (Knocknacarragh_010) much of which is also culverted almost to its sea outfall at Rusheen Bay. Both waterbodies 31K160960. This watercourse has been culverted as a result of a previous development and flows into the Kncoknacarragh stream (Knocknacarragh_010) much of which is also culverted almost to its sea outfall at Rusheen Baywere

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recorded as having “Poor” water quality status from monitoing under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Period 2016-2021.

A hydrological distance of approximately 3km exists between the site of works and the outfall into Rusheen Bay. Rusheen bay is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA). Inner Galway Bay SPA is designated under the EU Birds Directive, with special conservation interest for species such as Golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), Black-throated Diver *(Gavia arctica),* Teal *(Anas crecca),* Bar-tailed Godwit *(Limosa lapponica)* and Curlew *(Numenius arquata).* The EU Birds Directive places significant emphasis on wetlands, and since they are part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds (NPWS. 2014). Galway Bay Complex SAC is designated under the EU Habitats Directive, with special conservation interest for habitats such as *Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide*, *Coastal lagoons, Reefs, Turloughs, Atlantic Salt Meadows* and Annex II species Otter and Harbour Seal.

A wet drainage channel, with no surface water flow recorded at the time of survey, runs from west to east through the centre of the site and along the site’s eastern boundary, supporting a number of wetland species. The drainage channel exits the site at the south-eastern corner, where it ultimately enters a concrete culvert extending for approximately 400m. The pathway of the drainage channel continues southwards, eventually providing hydrological connectivity with the Knocknacarragh, south of the proposed site boundary. This connection provides a source-pathway-receptor link between the development site and Rusheen Bay and its associated designated sites. This hydrological connection and its potential effects are discussed further in section 5 of this report.

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**Figure 7: Site Location in relation to the Galway Bay Complex SAC, Inner Galway Bay SPA and Local Watercourses**

## 3.4 Surface Water Management

The proposed surface water drainage network has been designed to minimise risk of blockage throughout the network, mainly through the following provisions that limit and restrict the size of pollutants entering the network:

- Sustainable Drainage System composing of Access Chambers/Manhole Chambers and adequately designed piped Networks to ensure no flooding within the pipe network system. All pipes' tanks and manholes are to be watertight and constructed to minimise the possibility of any leaks.
- The proposed SW piped network has been designed in accordance with BS EN 752 and all new infrastructure is to be compliant with the requirements of the GDSDS and the GDRCOP for Drainage Works, with minimum full-bore velocities of 1.0 m/s achieved throughout.
- Pervious paving provided to provide storage at source as well as reducing peak flows to the proposed Surface Water Network and provide interception of first 5mm rainfall.
- Fuel interceptor designed to capture oil and hazardous substances (such as hydrocarbons, metals and suspended solids) that would otherwise pollute the environment.

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- Trapped road gullies to help prevent sediment and gross pollutants from entering the surface water network and thus improving the water quality discharging from site.
- Silt trap manholes to capture sediment, sand, and debris, ensuring only cleaner water passes through.
- Sealed Surface Water Geocellular Attenuation Tank to store (100 year + 20 CCF)
- Flow control (Hydrobrake) to restrict surface water discharge from site at greenfield runoff rates.

## 3.5 Groundwater

Groundwater vulnerability is a term used to represent the natural ground characteristics that determine the ease with which infiltrating water and potential contaminants may reach groundwater in a vertical or subvertical direction. Groundwater vulnerability was assessed using publicly available data sets from the Geological Survey of Ireland GIS web viewer. Groundwater vulnerability varied from high to extreme across the proposed works' site.

## 3.6 Invasive species

The Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000, contain several provisions relating to Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS), covering several sections and subsections of the Acts. It is prohibited, without a licence, to plant or otherwise cause to grow in a wild state, in any place in the State, any species of flora, or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of invasive flora listed on the Third Schedule.

Articles 49 and 50 of the aforementioned Acts set out the legal implications associated with alien invasive species and Schedule 3 (the Third Schedule) of the regulations lists non-native species subject to the restrictions of Articles 49 and 50, which make it an offence to plant, disperse, allow dispersal or cause the spread of invasive species.

No third schedule invasive species were found within or directly adjacent to the proposed development site. A number of non-natives, medium impact invasive species were recorded on and adjacent to the site of works. Snowberry *(Symphoricarpos albus)* was frequent across the site recorded within hedgerows bordering the site. Butterfly Bush *(Buddleja davidii)* was recorded outside the site boundary adjacent to the site entrance point. No management actions are required for any species recorded.

## 3.7 Habitats and Flora

Habitats were identified, mapped, and classified and dominant plant species were noted in accordance with

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the guidelines given by Fossitt (2010). Habitats were classified as per Fossitt (2000). Plant nomenclature follows the BSBI's List of Accepted Plant Names (BSBI, 2007). The survey timings fall within the recognised optimum period for vegetation surveys/habitat mapping i.e. April to September (Smith et al., 2011).

The habitat assessment surveys described in this report have been undertaken with reference to the following guidelines and interpretation documents:

- Fossitt, J.A. (2000) A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.
- Smith, G.F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hora, K. and Delaney, E., 2011. Best practice guidance for habitat survey and mapping. The Heritage Council: Ireland.
- JNCC. (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - A technique for environmental audit.
- Commission of the European Communities (2007) Interpretation manual of European Union habitats. Eur 27. European Commission DG Environment.
- NPWS (2013) The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Habitat Assessments Volume 2. Version 1.1. Unpublished Report, National Parks and Wildlife Services. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.
- NPWS (2019). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report. Edited by: Deirdre Lynn and Fionnuala O'Neill

Habitats considered to be of ecological significance, particularly those having the potential to correspond to those listed in Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, were identified and classified as Key Ecological Receptors (KERs). Plant nomenclature for vascular plants follows 'New Flora of the British Isles' (Stace, 2010).

Field surveys focusing on flora and habitat were carried out on the 23rd of June 2025. The desktop assessment of recorded flora via the NBDC[7] recorded no species of protected flora within 2km of the subject lands. No evidence of protected species was recorded within or adjacent to the development site during field surveys. The following habitat types were recorded within the survey area.

### 3.7.1 Semi-natural habitats

The majority of the site conforms to the habitat type, **Wet Grassland (GS4)** characterised by a dominance of Yorkshire Fog *(Holcus lanatus)* and abundant rushes. The proportion of broadleaved herbs was high, those

[7] https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map

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recorded on site include creeping buttercup *(Ranunculus repens)*, creeping thistle *(Cirsium arvense),* rosebay willowherb *(Chamaenerion angustifolium)*, marsh bedstraw *(Galium palustre)*, greater bird's-foot trefoil *(Lotus pedunculatus)* and water figwort *(Scrophularia auriculata)*.

The site is bounded to the north by a **Hedgerow (WL1)** dominated by hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna).* Other species present within the hedgerow include elder *(Sambucus nigra)* and ash *(Fraxinus excelsior).* Snowberry *(Symphoricarpos albus)* was also recorded as frequent within the hedge. To the west of the site is a **Treeline (WL2)** composed of Horse Chestnut *(Aesculus hippocastanum)*, Ash *(Fraxinus excelsior*) and Sycamore *(Acer pseudoplatanus)*. Hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)* and Snowberry *(Symphoricarpos albus)* is common within the herb layer. The south of the site also supports a treeline dominated by hawthorn.

A man-made **Earth Bank (BL2)** attributed to earlier site clearance activities is found within the site. It is vegetated by abundant nettles *(Urtica dioica)* and fern spp. A drainage ditch classified as **Drainage Ditches (FW4),** runs through and along the eastern boundary of the development site. The drain supports typical wetland vegetation, with species such as meadowsweet *(Filipendula ulmaria)*, Angelica *(Angelica sylvestris)* and Marsh bedstraw *(Galium palustre)*. No Annex I habitats were found within the proposed development site.

## 3.8 Fauna

Otters (*Lutra lutra*) and Pine Martens (*Martes martes*), along with their breeding and resting places, are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife Act, 1976, as amended by the Wildlife (Amendment) Act, 2000. Otters have additional protection because of their inclusion in Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, Pine Martens have additional protection under Annex V of the Habitats Directive, which is transposed into Irish law in the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations (S.I. 94 of 1997), as amended.

Historical record checks of the NBDC database found no records of Otter within 2km of the site of works. One record of Pine Marten was found on the database dating from 2012. No habitat suitable for otter was found within or directly surrounding the proposed site of works. No evidence of Otter or Pine Marten activity was observed during ground surveys of the site or its surroundings.

## 3.9 Birds

All birds seen and heard during the site survey were recorded and are listed in Table 3 below. All of the birds recorded were typical species seen and heard in rural agricultural landscapes. No SCI species were recorded within or surrounding the proposed development site.

**Table 4: Bird Species Recorded during Site Survey**

| Bird Species | Scientific Name | Conservation Status |
|---|---|---|
| Lesser Black-backed Gull | *(Larus fuscus)* | Amber |
| Common House-Martin (Western) | *(Delichon urbicum)* | Amber |
| Eurasian Wren | *(Troglodytes troglodytes)* | Green |
| Eurasian Bullfinch | *(Pyrrhula pyrrhula)* | Green |
| Dunnock | *(Prunella modularis)* | Green |

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# 4 Possible Impacts

The potential ecological hazards arising from the construction and operational phases of the proposed development have been evaluated and are detailed below.

### 4.1.1 Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

Habitat loss as a result of the proposed development will be confined predominantly to areas classified as *Wet Grassland (GS4)*. This habitat is dominant across the development site and supports a relatively species-poor assemblage of common grasses and herbaceous plants typically associated with altered or disused grassland. No rare, protected or notable plant species were recorded during field surveys of the site. The entire footprint of the proposed development is located within this GS4 habitat type. The proposed works will therefore not result in the loss or fragmentation of habitats of high ecological sensitivity. There will be no direct loss of designated habitat, and no fragmentation of habitats supporting qualifying interest species of nearby SAC or SPA.

### 4.1.2 Changes in Water Quality

No major watercourses occur within 250m of the site boundary. The nearest watercourse to the development site is a tributary of the Knocknacarragh located approximately 270m south of the site. A wet drainage channel, with no surface water flow recorded at the time of survey (June 2025), runs from west to east through the centre of the site and along the site's eastern boundary. From here, the drainage channel ultimately enters a concrete culvert extending for approximately 400m, before outflowing into a garden to the rear of a private residential dwelling. The pathway of the drainage channel continues to travel southwards before reaching the Knocknacarragh and eventually depositing into Rusheen Bay. Potential water quality impacts and associated effects are discussed further in section 5 of this report.

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### 4.1.3 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts or effects are changes in the environment that result from numerous human-induced, small-scale alterations. Cumulative impacts can be thought of as occurring through two main pathways: first; through persistent additions or losses of the same materials or resources, and second, through the compounding effects as a result of the coming together of two or more effects (Bowers-Marriott, 1997). Potential cumulative impacts with other plans and projects.

## 4.2 Zone of Influences of Possible Impacts

The potential ecological impacts arising from the construction and operation phase of this development are detailed in Table 4. This table also identifies the "zones of influence" for each possible effect identified (i.e. the area over which effects may occur).

**Table 5: Possible ecological Impacts and effects and their Zone of Influence (ZOI)**

| Potential Impact and Effect | Description | Zone of Influence |
|---|---|---|
| Land-take resulting in habitat loss or degradation. | The permanent loss of the habitat present in the footprint of the development and access route. | Lands within the proposed footprint of the Proposed Development and access routes. |
| Changes in water quality and quantity/ distribution resulting in habitat loss or degradation. | Reduction in the quality of retained habitat or loss of habitat from surrounding areas as a result of surface water pollution. | Changes in surface water quality as a result of works associated with the Proposed Development. |
| Noise vibration resulting in disturbance. | Direct impact on feature species reducing their ability to forage or breed. | Disturbance to sensitive ecological receptors within the site of works and surrounding the site |
| Excavation activities resulting in the temporary generation of dust in the locality of the works area | Reduction in water quality and impacts to flora as a result of dust generated during the construction phase of this development. | The spatial limit of dust impacts was established as 50m in accordance with the 'Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction'. Therefore, the ZoI for dust impacts is 50m from the |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Proposed Development boundary. |
| Spread of invasive species | Reduction in the quality of retained habitat or loss of habitat from the further spread of invasive and aggressive species into sensitive habitats, particularly dune habitats | Within the site of works and sensitive habitats surrounding the site |

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# 5 Designated Sites and Ecological Assessment

A desktop study was carried out as part of the screening process. This included a review of available literature on the site and its immediate environs. Sources of information included the NPWS and National Biodiversity Data Centre databases on protected sites and species.

## 5.1 Designated Sites

Sites designated for the conservation of nature in Ireland include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)

SACs and SPAs form the European/Natura 2000 network of sites. It is these sites that are of relevance to the screening process for the Appropriate Assessment. SPAs and SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. SPAs and SACs are designated under EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended. The following was considered when reviewing European sites:

1. Whether the Proposed Development site was located within or adjacent to any European sites.
2. Any European sites located within the Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the Proposed Development site; and
3. Any European sites located outside the ZOI of the Proposed Development site but may potentially be impacted i.e., through a hydrological or bird foraging connection.

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**Table 6: Source – Pathway – Receptor Assessment**

| Site Name<br>Designation<br>Site Code | Distance | Qualifying Interests | Likely Zone of Impact Determination |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Inner Galway Bay**<br><br>**SPA**<br><br>**004031** | 1.9km (Directly)<br><br>2.3km (Via hydrologic-al connectivi-ty) | • Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002]<br>• Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]<br>• Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br>• Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]<br>• Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]<br>• Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]<br>• Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069]<br>• Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137]<br>• Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>• Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>• Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]<br>• Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]<br>• Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]<br>• Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]<br>• Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169]<br>• Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]<br>• Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]<br>• Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]<br>• Wigeon (Mareca penelope) [A855]<br>• Sandwich Tern (Thalasseus sandvicensis) [A863] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA and so there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The SPA is located 1.9km south of the development site directly. A potential source-pathway-receptor link exists via the onsite drainage channel which as described above leaves the site via a concrete culvert and continues to travel southwards before eventually depositing into the Kncoknacarragh (Knocknacarragh_010). Due to the presence of this hydrological link, construction phase impacts could indirectly impact water quality within the watercourse which flows downstream to this SPA.<br><br>Therefore, indirect impacts cannot be ruled out with regards to surface water runoff during the construction phase activities in the absence of mitigation measures.<br><br>Due to the significant distance and the intervening-built environment, noise and disturbance impacts are not predicted during the construction |

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| | | | |
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| | | • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | phase of the development. |
| **Galway Bay Complex**<br><br>**SAC**<br><br>**000268** | 2km<br>(Directly) | • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>• Coastal lagoons [1150]<br>• Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]<br>• Reefs [1170]<br>• Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br>• Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]<br>• Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]<br>• Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br>• Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br>• Turloughs [3180]<br>• Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]<br>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]<br>• Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]<br>• Alkaline fens [7230]<br>• Limestone pavements [8240]<br>• Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br>• Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC and so there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The SAC is located 2km south of the development site directly. A potential source-pathway-receptor link exists via the onsite drainage channel which as described above leaves the site via a concrete culvert and continues to travel southwards before eventually depositing into the Kncoknacarragh (Knocknacarragh_010). Due to the presence of this hydrological link, construction phase impacts could indirectly impact water quality within the watercourse which flows downstream to this SAC.<br><br>Therefore, indirect impacts cannot be ruled out with regards to surface water runoff during the construction phase activities in the absence of mitigation measures. |

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| **Lough Corrib**<br><br>**SAC**<br><br>**000297** | 2.6km | • Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]<br>• Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]<br>• Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]<br>• Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]<br>• Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]<br>• Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]<br>• Active raised bogs [7110]<br>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]<br>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]<br>• Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]<br>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]<br>• Alkaline fens [7230]<br>• Limestone pavements [8240]<br>• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]<br>• Bog woodland [91D0] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC and there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC.<br><br>**No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.** |

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| | | • Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]<br>• Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]<br>• Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]<br>• Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]<br>• Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]<br>• Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]<br>• Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br>• Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]<br>• Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216] | |
| **Lough Corrib**<br><br>**SPA**<br><br>**004042** | 2.8km | • Pochard (Aythya ferina) [A059]<br>• Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061]<br>• Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065]<br>• Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082]<br>• Coot (Fulica atra) [A125]<br>• Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>• Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]<br>• Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]<br>• Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]<br>• Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]<br>• Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]<br>• Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857]<br>• Gadwall (Mareca strepera) [A889]<br>• Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA, and there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA.<br><br>Noise and disturbance impacts associated with the proposed development are unlikely to have any significant effect given the distance from the subject site to this SPA. |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects** |
| **Connemara Bog Complex**<br><br>**SAC**<br><br>**002034** | 9.5km | • Coastal lagoons [1150]<br>• Reefs [1170]<br>• Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]<br>• Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]<br>• Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]<br>• Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]<br>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]<br>• European dry heaths [4030]<br>• Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]<br>• Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]<br>• Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]<br>• Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]<br>• Alkaline fens [7230]<br>• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]<br>• Euphydryas aurinia (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC.<br><br>**No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.** |

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| | | • Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]<br>• Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br>• Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833] | |
| **Cregganna Marsh**<br><br>**SPA**<br><br>**004142** | 11.5km | • Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA, and there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA.<br>Noise and disturbance impacts associated with the proposed development are unlikely to have any significant effect given the distance from the subject site to this SPA.<br><br>**No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.** |
| **Ross Lake and Woods**<br><br>**SAC**<br><br>**001312** | 11.5km | • Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]<br>• Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SAC, and there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The potential for indirect effects on the QI habitats of this SAC can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this |

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| | | | designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SAC.<br><br>**No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.** |
| **Connemara Bog Complex**<br><br>**SPA**<br><br>**004181** | 14km | • Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br>• Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098]<br>• Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>• Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182] | The Proposed Development is located outside the boundary of this SPA, and there is no potential for direct effects.<br><br>The potential for indirect effects on the QI species of this SPA can be ruled out due to the lack of a source pathway receptor linkage to this designated site and the intervening distance between the development site and the SPA.<br><br>Noise and disturbance impacts associated with the proposed development are unlikely to have any significant effect given the distance from the subject site to this SPA.<br><br>**No source-pathway-receptor links and no risk of likely significant effects were identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.** |

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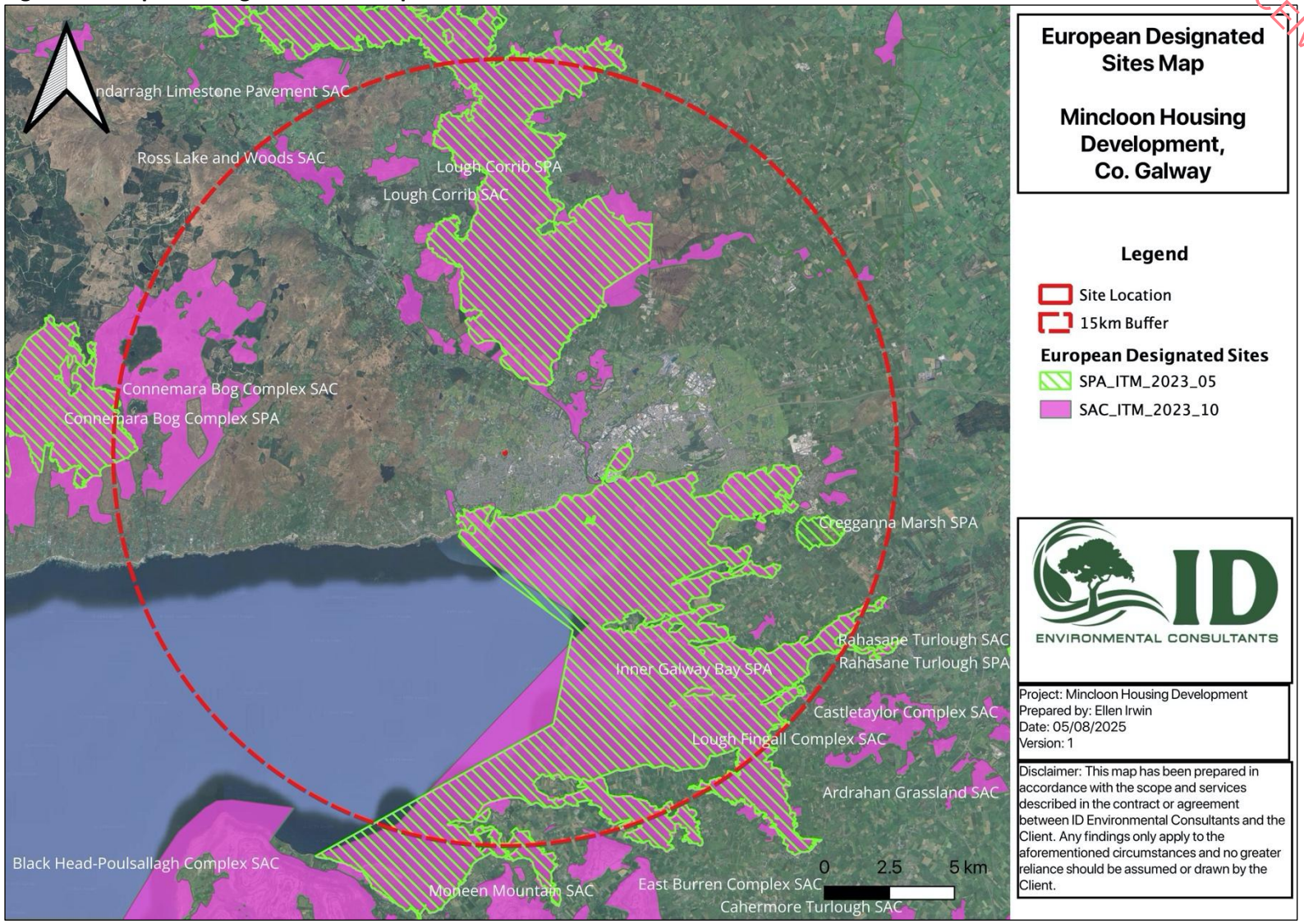
**Figure 8: European Designated Sites Map**



## 5.2 Cumulative and In combination Effects

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Several other projects have been considered as part of the screening process. A search of the planning websites of Galway City Council and An Bord Pleanála was carried out on the 12/02/2026 and again on the 11/03/2026 as part of the desktop study. A number of planning applications were reviewed. The greater majority of the schemes were for the construction or alteration of private dwellings. Such small scale and a number of moderate scale projects in the area such as residential developments have negligible effects. Considering that the proposed project has a small-scale short term construction phase and a general operational phase that is consistent with the existing land use surrounding the site, it is not foreseen that the proposed project will have any significant in-combination effects.

Table 6 below lists a number of the larger projects noted within close proximity to the subject site. This includes an assessment of each project for LSE in conjunction with the Proposed Development that may lead to cumulative or in combination impacts or effects.

**Table 7: Projects reviewed for cumulative and in combination effects**

| Reference | Description of the Development | Likelihood of Significant Effects | Cumulative and In combination Effects |
|---|---|---|---|
| 304762 | Demolition of an existing house and associated outbuildings on the site; Construction of 238 no. residential units comprising:<br><br>• 90 no. four bed houses<br>• 23 no. three bed house<br>• 12 no. duplex units (6 no. 2 bed ground floor apartments and 6 no. 3 bed apartments with first floor access)<br>• 20 no. one-bed apartment units<br>• 84 no. two-bed apartment units<br>• 9 no. three-bed apartment units | An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) and Natura Impact Statemnet (NIS) was prepared for the proposed project. The NIS was prepared on a precautionary basis. The NIS concluded that the project will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site. An Comisiun Pleanala undertook an AA screening which | None Identified<br>-<br>No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project. |

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| | Development of a creche facility/community facility (258.9 m2), Development of 2 no. retail units (354.9 m2), Provision of shared communal and private open space, car and bicycle parking, site landscaping and public lighting, services, access with Ballymoneen Road and all associated site development works. | concluded a Stage 2 appropriate assessment was not required.<br><br>An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) was also prepared which concluded that there will be no significant impacts on biodiversity given the nature, scale and design of the proposal as well as the lack of hydrological connectivity with sensitive aquatic receptors. It is considered that the proposed development will not result in the loss of habitats or species of high ecological significance and will not have any significant impacts on the ecology of the wider area. | |
| 2560375 | The development will consist of Construction of 48 no. own door apartments across 5 no. Duplex building blocks; Upgrading of existing vehicular entrance and access road including road setback along Rahoon road frontage and provision of footpaths, 3. Establishment of a right of way across the site to also serve an existing house to the south-west of the site (Eircode H91ECC6), 4. Revised boundary treatment and revised site boundaries, 5. | An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was prepared for the proposed project. The NIS concluded that with the implementation of mitigation and best practice measures as | None Identified – No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project. |

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| | Partial demolition of existing shed, 6. Provision of public open space areas (to include for play spaces), private open space areas, bicycle parking, footpaths, public lighting, hard and soft landscaping, 7. Car parking including dedicated EV charge spaces, ducting to all spaces for future electric charging points, 8. Proposed connection to existing mains water infrastructure, and on-site surface water drainage arrangements, 9. Proposed connection to sewer network including provision for on-site pumping station, together with all associated site works and services. | outlined in the report, it can be concluded that there is no potential for impact on the European Sites.<br><br>An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) was also prepared which concluded, provided the proposed development is constructed and operated in accordance with the design, best practice and mitigation that is described within this application, significant effects on ecology are not anticipated. | |
| 2560388 | Permission for development which consists of: We, O'Malley Construction Company Limited, intend to apply for planning permission to Galway City Council for development on a site located to the east of the Ballymoneen Road (L5024) in the townland of Ballyburke, Co. Galway. The proposed development is an amendment to the Maolchnoc Strategic Housing Development permitted under ABP-304762-19. The proposed development will consist of the following: 1. A change in the permitted apartment types on the 3rd floor of Apartment Blocks D, E and F from 6 no. 2-bed apartments and 6 no. 3-bed apartments | A briefing Note was completed for proposed amendments to a permitted development. A note was prepared to assess whether the proposed amendments to the permitted development would alter the conclusions of the AASR and EcIA reports which were submitted with the planning application for the permitted development. | None Identified – No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project. |

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| | to 18 no. 2-bed apartments and 3 no. 1-bed apartments (an additional 9 no. apartments in total). 2. Revisions to the floor plate of the 3rd floor of the permitted Apartment Blocks D, E and F including the omission of the permitted setback to accommodate the additional units. The proposed 3rd floor layout will match the floor plate of the lower floors. 3. Changes to the elevational treatment of Apartment Blocks D, E and F. 4. Minor amendments to the layout of the permitted central open space area including the addition of 3 no. car parking spaces to service the new apartment units. 5. Provision of additional bicycle parking spaces including accessible bicycle parking spaces. 6. The provision of photovoltaic panels at roof level of each of the apartment blocks. 7. All associated site works and ancillary services necessary to facilitate the proposed development. | The note concluded that there will be no changes to the findings or conclusions of the AASR and EcIA submitted as part of the planning application for the permitted development. There will be no additional loss of habitat and no significant effect on KER's as the proposed amendments are minor in nature. There is no potential for deterioration of water quality and no new cumulative impacts on any ecological receptors. Provided mitigation measures prescribed within the EcIA are fully implemented, there will be no significant effects on any ecological receptor or any National or European Designated site as a result of the proposed amendments. | |
| 2660043 | Planning permission for development which consists of: planning permission for the construction of a GAA facility on lands at Keeraun and Mincloon, Rahoon, Galway. Works to consist of A) 2 no. grass playing | An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was prepared for the proposed project, which concluded that | None Identified – No potential for in-combination effects given the |

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| | pitches, 1 no. all weather synthetic playing pitch, with dugouts, floodlighting, ball stop netting system, score board structures, covered viewing stands and perimeter fencing to all pitches. B) a single storey proposed facilities building, C) a single storey pitch-maintenance building D) a public playground area with fencing E) a looped amenity walkway, F) parking for 95 cars, 3 coach spaces, 1 drop off zones and 144 bicycle parking spaces. G) electrical generator and associated storage, H) new vehicular and pedestrian access to the site from the Clybaun Rd (L-5021-0) with signage, entrance walls and gate. Development to include all associated site works and enabling works including but not limited to; road widening and provision of footpath/cycle track and lighting to existing Clybaun Rd (L-5021-0), site levelling, internal site lighting, a proprietary onsite wastewater pumping station with a pumped rising main to the gravity foul sewer network on the Rahoon Rd (L-1017-0), all boundary treatments & landscaping, and surface water drainage system. Permission to include removal of the existing agricultural entrance and the partial demolition of the existing farm structures on the Clybaun Rd (L-5021-0) | potential impacts associated with the proposed development will not result in likely significant effects on the qualifying interests/special conservation interests of any European sites within the ZoI of the proposed development, in view of their conservation objectives. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore not required. | scale and location of the project. |

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The Galway City Council Development Plan was also reviewed as part of the desktop study. The Galway City Council Development Plan in complying with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, requires that all Projects and Plans that could affect the Natura 2000 sites in the same zone of impact of the Project site would be initially screened for Appropriate Assessment and if requiring Stage 2 AA, that appropriate employable

mitigation measures would be put in place to avoid, reduce or ameliorate negative impacts. In this way, any in-combination impacts with Plans or Projects for the development area and surrounding townlands in which the development site is located would be avoided.

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# 6 Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement and Conclusion

The findings of this Screening Assessment are presented following the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

## 6.1 Summary of Assessment of Possible LSE to European Sites

A total of 8 European designated sites were identified local to the proposed development. With the exception of Inner Galway Bay SPA and Galway Complex SAC, no possible LSE has been identified as a result of the proposed development to any other European site within or beyond 15km of the subject site. No risks to the conservation objectives of any other European sites noted in Table 5 will occur due to one or a combination of the following:

- Significant buffer distance between the works area to the European site
- Lack of connectivity between the works areas and the designated area
- Size, scale and location of the proposed development
- The nature of the site's conservation objectives
- No impact or change to the management of any designated area or;
- No change to the chemical or physiological condition of any designated site as a result of the proposed works.

As outlined in table 5, Indirect impacts cannot be ruled out on the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA during the construction phase of the development. A small drain onsite flows south of the site providing connectivity with the Tonabrocky and Kncoknacarragh streams (Knocknacarragh_010). Due to the presence of this hydrological link, construction phase impacts could indirectly impact these watercourses

which flow downstream to these designated sites. Therefore, indirect impacts cannot be ruled out with regards to surface water runoff during construction phase activities in the absence of mitigation measures.

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Noise and disturbance on the QI bird species of the SPA are not predicted during the construction or operational phase of the development due to the significant distance and the intervening-built environment between the development site and the SPA.

# 7 Findings of Article 6(3) Screening Assessment

## 7.1 Overall Conclusions

In our professional opinion and in view of the best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European sites reviewed in the screening exercise, LSE upon the conservation objectives of Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA could not be ruled out at screening stage. **Therefore, an Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement is required.**

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# Appendix 1: Site Photos

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| Proposed Site of Works (GS4: Wet Grassland) | Drainage Ditch along Eastern Boundary of the Site |
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| Snowberry (Medium-impact invasive species) Recorded on-site | Treeline and Earth Mound West of the Site |
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| Outfall of Drainage Channel from Concrete Culvert, continuing as a small stream (South of site) | Outfall of Drainage Channel from Concrete Culvert, continuing as a small stream (South of site) |
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