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**Information to Inform Stage 1  
Appropriate Assessment & Natura Impact Statement**

**Report for *Thomas and Selina Gill***

**Report by *FitzGerald Ecology***

**June 2026**



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

FitzGerald Ecology was commissioned by Thomas and Selina Gill, the applicants for the proposed development at Deerpark West, Co. Mayo, to prepare an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report. The purpose of the report is to determine whether the proposed development, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on areas designated as 'European sites' for nature conservation. This will enable Mayo County Council, the competent authority in this case, to fulfil its obligations under the Habitats Directive's Article 6(3).

The AA Screening Report was prepared by FitzGerald Ecology in compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, as transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. Its purpose is to guide and support the competent authority in deciding whether the proposed development has the potential to significantly affect one or more European sites, given their Conservation Objectives.

FitzGerald Ecology, as the author of this AA Screening Report, has thoroughly considered the best scientific knowledge and concluded that the proposed development does have the potential to significantly affect European sites within the zone of influence, specifically the Clew Bay Complex SAC. Therefore, the proposed development requires an Appropriate Assessment, which in turn necessitates the production of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) (see Section 5 below).

### 1.2 EXPERTISE AND QUALIFICATIONS

This AA Screening Report was prepared by Alexis FitzGerald B.A. M.Sc. ACIEEM and Emmet Nyhan B.Sc. M.Sc. All fieldwork was completed by Alexis FitzGerald.

Alexis is the Director of *FitzGerald Ecology*, which was established in 2015 as a botanical and ecological consultancy, based in Dublin, Republic of Ireland. Alexis holds an honours degree in Natural Sciences, with a specialisation in Botany, from Trinity College Dublin and obtained a distinction in his Masters in Biodiversity and Conservation from the same institution. During his career, he has completed multiple Ecological Impact Assessments (including EIAR Biodiversity Chapters), Appropriate Assessments and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal reports for residential and infrastructural projects across the Republic of Ireland. Ecological monitoring and conservation projects have also been a mainstay of his career. These have been completed both in his previous three-year professional role as Consultant Ecologist for Scott Cawley Ltd. ecology consultancy, and for his current *FitzGerald Ecology* consultancy. He is an expert at habitat surveying and vascular plant, charophyte and bryophyte identification, developed over more than 11 years of intensive study in university, professional ecological surveying and with natural history groups such as the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) and the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club (DNFC). He also has extensive professional experience with vegetation and habitat classification, mapping and data analysis (including Fossitt (2000) classification, EU Habitats Directive Annex I habitats and statistical vegetation analysis tools such as Irish Vegetation Classification (IVC)), as well as rare, protected and invasive plant species surveying and monitoring. He also has experience with specialised bat, bird and terrestrial mammal surveys. He is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Emmet is a Graduate Ecologist at Fitzgerald Ecology. He holds a B.Sc. (Hons.) in Plant Biology from University College Dublin and an M.Sc. in Biodiversity & Conservation from Trinity College Dublin. His professional experience includes disturbance monitoring, conducting productivity counts and public engagement for BirdWatch Ireland, and working as an Herbarium Technician for Trinity College Dublin. He also has experience in moth trapping and identification, and has participated in the All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey over multiple consecutive years. Through his employment with Fitzgerald Ecology, he is expanding his knowledge and skills in habitat and vegetation classification, mapping, report writing, vascular plant and bryophyte identification, bat surveying and data analysis, Appropriate Assessment, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals and Ecological Impact Assessments.

### 1.3 LEGISLATION AND POLICY

#### 1.3.1 Legislative Background and Screening Methodology

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of May 21, 1992) and the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC of November 30, 2009) identify habitats and species that are important for conservation in Europe and require protection. This is achieved in part by designating sites that contain significant examples of habitats or populations of species, known as 'European sites'. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are designated for wild birds, while "Special Areas of Conservation" (SACs) are designated for natural habitat types or other species. Together, these sites form the "Natura 2000" network. To safeguard European sites in the context of land use planning and development, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive mandates the assessment of the potential impacts of plans and projects on European sites, as follows:

*"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site<sup>1</sup> 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."*

In accordance with Article 7 of the Habitats Directive, the provisions of Article 6(3) also apply to SPAs under the Birds Directive. These requirements are transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), including Part 5 thereof.

The first step in determining whether a plan or project requires an Appropriate Assessment (AA) is referred to as "Stage 1" or "AA Screening". The purpose of this screening is to determine whether the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on areas designated as being of European importance for nature conservation ("European sites"), in view of the best scientific knowledge available. This enables the competent authority to fulfil its obligations under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

The responsibility for carrying out AA Screening lies with the competent authority, which in Ireland is the relevant planning authority for each plan or project, such as the local authority or An Coimisiún Pleanála. It is the competent authority's duty to carry out AA Screening, as specified in Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The AA Screening Report, therefore, is not an AA Screening Assessment in itself but provides the competent authority with the necessary information to carry out its AA Screening.

At this stage in the process, the Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report evaluates the potential effects of the plan or project on European sites within the zone of influence, in consideration of the sites' Conservation Objectives, and the relevant Irish and EU legislation.

The threshold test to determine whether an AA is required is if the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. It is not necessary for the proposed development to definitely have significant effects on the protected site to trigger the requirement for stage 2 of the AA. A mere probability or risk that such an effect exists will satisfy the requirement for an AA.

Applying the precautionary principle, if objective information cannot exclude the possibility that the proposed development will have significant effects on European sites, then a risk will be found to exist. An AA will be required if objective information indicates that a significant effect on a European site cannot be excluded, and will not be required if such an effect can be excluded.

In cases where there is doubt as to the absence of significant effects, an AA must be carried out. If a proposed development is capable of having any effect (even if it is not significant) on European sites, an AA will be required. The mere possibility of there being a significant effect on European sites will give rise to a requirement for an AA under Article 6(3), without the need to establish such an effect.

The term "likely" in Article 6(3) means less than the balance of probabilities. It does not require hard and fast evidence that such a significant effect is likely, only that there is a possibility that this effect is likely.

In assessing whether there is a risk of a significant effect on European sites, the characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the site concerned by the relevant plan or project must be taken into account. The competent authority must consider all these factors when making a decision on whether or not an AA is required.

Applications for developments (as well as plans or projects) that are unlikely to have any appreciable effect on European sites are exempted from the requirement to undergo Appropriate Assessment (AA). This is to avoid a situation of legislative overkill where all proposed developments that may have any effect on European sites are caught by Article 6(3) activities. However, at the screening stage of Article 6(3), a low threshold must be met before proceeding to stage 2 AA.

To ensure best practice in conducting AA Screening (see Section 1.3.2 below for Guidance documentation), the following five steps should be followed:

1. Gather all necessary information and data, such as the details of the plan or project, environmental data for the area, and the European sites in the zone of influence.
2. Analyse the potential impacts of the project on the receiving environment, especially on the European sites in the zone of influence.
3. Evaluate the impacts against the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites to determine if they constitute "likely significant effects" as set out in Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.
4. Consider the potential for likely significant effects to arise from the combination of the impacts of the plan or project with those of other plans or projects.

5. The final stage entails the issuance of a statement indicating the outcome of the AA Screening. Although the AA Screening Report may provide a recommendation, the competent authority retains sole responsibility for completing this step.

### 1.3.2 Guidance

The following guidance documents have informed this AA Screening methodology:

- European Commission (2021). *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission, Brussels;
- Office of the Planning Regulator (2021). *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*. Office of the Planning Regulator, Dublin;
- European Commission (2019). *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. European Commission, Brussels;
- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2010). *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin;
- NPWS (2010). *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Circular Letter NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin;
- European Commission (2000). *Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle*. European Commission, Brussels;
- European Commission (2013). *Interpretation manual of European Union Habitats EUR28*. Directorate-General for the Environment, European Commission, Brussels.

## 2 ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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### 2.1 DESK STUDY

A desk study was completed in March 2026 to inform the AA Screening with regard to the ecology in the vicinity of the proposed development and in the surrounding area. It must be noted that the outputs of a desk study are limited by the quality and quantity of data on the local biodiversity/environment that is available, and these limitations have been considered when completing this desk study. The following resources (mostly publicly available) were availed of as part of this desk study:

- National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) data on European Sites, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs), including GIS shapefile data, available from <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data> and <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites> – Appendix I and Figure 2 provide locations and descriptions for all of the protected sites within the vicinity of the proposed development site.
- Data on protected species available from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC), at <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map>.
- Data on waterbodies (including courses and names of watercourses, Water Framework Directive status/risk, etc.) which is downloadable from the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at <https://gis.epa.ie/GetData/Download>.

- Data on hydrogeology, soils and geology of the area available from the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) at <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/Groundwater.aspx>.
- Mapping and orthophotography available from Ordnance Survey Ireland at <https://osi.ie/>.
- Recent and historic orthophotography available on the Tailte Éireann GeoHive website, at <https://www.geohive.ie/>, and on Google Earth, at <https://earth.google.com/>.
- Information on planning applications and land zoning available from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, at <https://myplan.ie/national-planning-application-map-viewer/>.
- Information on local planning applications available from the Mayo County Council website at <https://www.mayo.ie/en-ie/>.
- Information on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland (NPWS, 2025a, 2025b and 2025c).
- Information on the extent, design and nature of the proposed development as provided by the applicant's design team.
- A recent (2024) ecological report on the proposed development site, entitled "*Woodland and Biodiversity Plan Deerpark West, Murrisk Co. Mayo*", by Aster Environmental Consultants Ltd.

## 2.2 CONSULTATION

The Development Applications Unit (DAU) of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) was sent a consultation letter by email on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2026 (DAU Reference No. G Pre00129/2026). The letter included an outline of the proposed development, a summary of the ecological receptors in the zone of influence of the proposed development and a request for any comments on the proposed development. No response was received up to the point of submission of this planning application.

Bat Conservation Ireland (BCI) was contacted by email on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2026 with a request for any available records relating to bat species, in particular Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), within the vicinity of the proposed development. Any further comments on the proposed development were also requested, with particular emphasis on records relating to commuting routes, roost sites and foraging habitats in the surrounding area. Records in close proximity to the proposed development were highlighted as being of particular relevance. In response, BCI advised that relevant records and data requests should be directed to the NPWS (who were also contacted on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2026).

## 2.3 ECOLOGY SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Surveys for habitats, protected, rare and invasive plant species, winter birds, terrestrial mammals, amphibians and reptiles, along with an assessment of any trees and built structures for their suitability for bat roosts/bird nests, were undertaken within the proposed development site on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026 and 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026 by Alexis FitzGerald B.A. M.Sc. ACIEEM. The surveys were conducted with reference to Smith *et al.* (2011), National Roads Authority (2009) and CIEEM (2024). Given the very small size and fully accessible nature of the site in question during the survey, the entire site was fully walked over in detail. No transects or sampling points were established, as the entire site was thoroughly surveyed and examined. All plants (both native and non-native) and habitats present were recorded, as well as any other ecological features of note, including invertebrates of note, potential roosting features for bats and any other features. Birds and mammals were recorded as incidental observations during the systematic walkover survey, as per standard multidisciplinary ecology survey methodology, as discussed in National Roads Authority (2009). The above approach is consistent with standard

ecological survey practice for sites of this scale and type and ensured that all baseline conditions were accurately recorded.

The habitats on-site were classified according to the Irish Heritage Council classification system (Fossitt, 2000). The abundance of each species present in each habitat was recorded using the percentage scale<sup>1</sup>. The locations of any rare and non-native plant species were also recorded. EU Habitats Directive Annex I habitats were classified as per Commission of the European Communities (2013), also with reference to the corresponding national habitat survey reports and descriptions, particularly NPWS (2025b). The nomenclature for the Annex I habitats also follows Commission of the European Communities (2013), with any abbreviated names for the habitats following NPWS (2025b). Vascular plant taxonomy and nomenclature follows Stace (2019), whilst bryophyte taxonomy and nomenclature follow Atherton *et al.* (2010).

This survey provided baseline ecological information on the site in question with regard to any ecological features relevant to Appropriate Assessment.

## 2.4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

The proposed development site (1.51 acres in total) is located internally off the R335 regional road at Deerpark West, approximately 2.2km from Murrisk and the applicant's parental home. The development will consist of the construction of a single-storey bungalow (area 219.64m<sup>2</sup>), attached garage/storage (18.38m<sup>2</sup>), packaged wastewater treatment system and all associated site works and landscaping. The proposed development will be located internally on the site, situated within an open area of existing woodland, occupying a modest 12.3% of the total site area (see Figure 4 for building outline). The proposed development will retain the surrounding woodlands in entirety and incorporate significant managed planting/woodland regeneration along the existing pathway and in the field in the west of the site, resulting in a net-gain to the existing woodlands on-site of 0.74 acres (see Figure 4 for planting/woodland regeneration areas). The proposed dwelling has been configured with a low roof profile and will utilise appropriate materials for its setting, such as timber cladding and a green roof system that will primarily act as a Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) component, which will embed the proposed dwelling into its surroundings, ensuring it remains inconspicuous from public view. Similar plant species to what are occurring naturally on-site, including some seed/seedlings sourced from within the clearing and nearby woodland, will be sown on the proposed green roof system on the building, such that native plants will naturally establish on this new habitat. The proposed development would be permanent. The construction period of the proposed development would be approximately 12 months in duration. The main building structure (post-foundation) would be completed in approximately 6 weeks as it is largely pre-fabricated off-site and arrives pre-packed. No piling or blasting will take place during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development. Overall, the proposed development will enhance the surrounding environment with the proposed net-gain to the surrounding woodland, and with the introduction of a sensitive energyefficient architectural intervention that is sensitive to the local and surrounding context.

<sup>1</sup> Percentages were recorded as follows: 0.1, 0.3, 0.5, 0.7, 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, etc., continuing in 5% steps to 100%.

## 2.5 RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

### 2.5.1 European Sites

The proposed development site, as depicted in Figure 1, is not located within any European site. The nearest such designation is the Clew Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation (SAC), located approximately 8.83 metres from the site boundary at its closest point (and c. 71.11 metres from the main works area where the building location is proposed). There are an additional five SACs in the wider vicinity of the proposed development, namely Brackloon Woods SAC, Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC, Oldhead Wood SAC, West Connacht Coast SAC and Newport River SAC. No Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are located within the zone of influence of the proposed development.

All of the European sites in the vicinity of the proposed development can be seen in Figure 2 below. Appendix I provides the Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests (QIs/SCIs) and Conservation Objectives of the European sites in the wider vicinity.

### 2.5.2 Habitats

The proposed development site does not contain any EU Habitats Directive Annex I habitats. The habitats recorded within the proposed development site (see Figure 3), classified according to the Heritage Council classification system (Fossitt, 2000), are presented below. The plant species lists for each habitat are included in Appendix III.

The site is located within a rural setting and is dominated by areas of Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1), Scrub (WS1), Amenity grassland (GA2) and Spoil and bare ground (ED2), with a Hedgerow (WL1) present along the western boundary of the site. Wider areas of woodland occur surrounding the site to the south-west, north, east and south-east. The Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1) (see Plate 1) within the site is comprised predominantly of *Quercus robur* (no *Q. petraea* or their hybrid, *Q. × rosacea*, were found anywhere on-site), with a diverse understorey including *Ilex aquifolium*, *Betula pubescens*, *Corylus avellana* and *Rubus fruticosus* agg., along with a well-developed ground and bryophyte layer indicative of well-established acidic *Quercus* woodland. At least 61 vascular plant and bryophyte species were recorded growing in the woodland on-site, indicating a high level of species diversity. This woodland does not correspond to Habitats Directive Annex I habitat [91A0] Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles, as the woodland lacked the characteristic *Quercus petraea* canopy component associated with this habitat. This is consistent with the standard and explicit NPWS (2025b) interpretation of this Annex I habitat type.



Plate 1. Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1) on-site, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026

The Scrub (WS1) habitat (where the proposed building would be entirely located) (see Plate 2) is characterised by dense stands of *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and *Hedera helix* s.l., with occasional *Quercus robur*, *Corylus avellana* and *Ilex aquifolium*, and supports a range of fern and grass species typical of semi-natural woodland edge habitats. Areas of Spoil and bare ground (ED2) occur along the access track and disturbed areas of the site, supporting early successional and grassland species such as *Agrostis capillaris*, *Plantago lanceolata* and *Trifolium pratense*. The Improved agricultural grassland (GA1) located toward the western extent of the site is well-grazed by sheep and thus is dominated by *Lolium perenne* and *Poa trivialis*, with occasional broadleaf species including *Rumex obtusifolius* and *Ranunculus repens*. The Hedgerow (WL1) is dominated by *Rubus fruticosus* agg. with occasional *Ulex europaeus*, *Prunus spinosa* and *Holcus lanatus*.



Plate 2. Scrub (WS1) habitat on-site, with pole frame and rope, the latter showing the exact layout and height of the proposed building, 17<sup>th</sup> May 2026

### 2.5.3 Flora and Fauna Species

During the desk study, no records of any Annex II flora were found within c. 2 km of the proposed development. Furthermore, field surveys conducted at the proposed development site did not document the presence of any Annex II flora species. No non-native plant species were recorded within the site during the field surveys.

The desk study returned records for one Annex II marine mammal species within c. 2km of the proposed development site: harbour seal *Phoca vitulina*. This is a Qualifying Interest (QI) species for the Clew Bay Complex SAC, beside which the site is located (see Figure 2). Given the marine habitat designated for marine mammals in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site, it is assumed that habitats directly adjacent to the site are occasionally utilised by harbour seal.

Furthermore, according to the desk study, there are records for the Annex II species otter *Lutra lutra* within c. 2 km of the proposed development site. This is also a Qualifying Interest (QI) species for the Clew Bay Complex SAC, as well as the Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC (see Figure 2). No evidence of otter presence was recorded on-site during the field surveys.

Records also occur for the Annex II species freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera* within the Newport River catchment. This is a Qualifying Interest (QI) species for the Newport River SAC (see Figure 2). However, there is no hydrological connectivity between the proposed development site and the freshwater sections of the Newport River catchment. Therefore, there is no potential for indirect effects on habitats utilised by freshwater pearl mussel.

The desk study also returned records for a number of bird species within c. 2 km of the proposed development site, including wetland and coastal-associated species, including Eurasian curlew

*Numenius arquata*. Furthermore, fieldwork on-site revealed a population of c. 10 house martins *Delichon urbicum* foraging over the scrub. A single cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* was also heard calling in lands to the south of the site. While SPAs occur within the wider surrounding area (see Figure 2), none of the recorded bird species are SCI species for these European sites. Furthermore, the proposed development site does not provide supporting habitat of relevance to the conservation objectives of these SPAs. Therefore, these species are not considered further in this assessment.

There were no records for the Annex II lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* recorded within c. 2 km of the proposed development site, according to the desk study. No suitable potential roost features (PRFs) for lesser horseshoe bat were recorded within the site either. Records for Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* and soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* were returned during the desk study within c. 2 km of the proposed development site. Two natural PRFs were identified on trees (split trunk on large mature *Betula pubescens* tree, gap at base of split; also split branch on separate *Quercus robur* tree) adjacent to the scrubby clearing on-site. No external evidence of bat presence was observed on either PRF.

Finally, non-native invasive species brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) and house mouse (*Mus musculus*) were recorded within c. 2 km of the proposed development site, according to the desk study. These species are common in disturbed and developed environments and may occur locally within habitats associated with the proposed development site.

#### 2.5.4 Hydrology

Water from the site drains via a minor stream forming part of the Carrowkeeran waterbody, which flows directly into Clew Bay adjacent to the site. The Clew Bay receiving waterbody is currently "Under review" according to the EPA.

### 3 ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

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#### 3.1 ZONE OF INFLUENCE

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2010) and more recently, Office of the Planning Regulator (2021), provide guidance on the selection of European sites for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in the Republic of Ireland. These guidance documents emphasise the need to identify all European sites that may be affected by the proposed development site, taking into account the potential for direct, indirect, and cumulative effects. The specific approach to be taken will depend on the scale and potential effects of the project. The guidance advises that all European sites within or immediately adjacent to the project area should generally be included, as well as those within the zone of influence of the project. Additionally, in accordance with the Precautionary Principle, any European site for which there is doubt as to whether it might be significantly affected should also be included in the AA.

The zone of influence of a project refers to the geographic extent over which significant ecological effects are likely to occur. For both plans and projects, the guidance recognises that the zone of influence must be established on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature, size, and location of the project, as well as the sensitivities of the ecological receptors and the potential for cumulative effects.

The European sites considered to be within the zone of influence of the proposed development are presented in Figure 2, with Clew Bay Complex SAC being of crucial relevance and importance in this case. Given the proximity of the proposed development to the coastline, coastal waterbodies including Clew Bay and the wider Atlantic Ocean connecting the development to other coastal European sites must also be included in the likely zone of influence. Furthermore, animals of relevance to these European sites which may occur within these waters or utilise them or the coastline are also included in the likely zone of influence.

### 3.2 ASSESSMENT AGAINST CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Guidance from European Commission (2021) describes how the “*description of the site’s integrity and the impact assessment should be based on the parameters that determine the conservation objectives and that are specific to the habitats and species of the site and their ecological requirements*”.

In accordance with the Appropriate Assessment (AA) guidance, the evaluation of potential significant effects of the proposed development on the European sites identified in this AA Screening is constrained to the Conservation Objectives of those sites. In cases where site-specific Conservation Objectives are not available, the Attributes and Targets from the Qualifying Interests in comparable European Sites are utilised.

### 3.3 EUROPEAN SITES

This section identifies all the known possible impacts that may arise from the development, and evaluates whether there are any European sites in the zone of influence for which there is a risk of development resulting in a significant effect on any of these European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. When determining the likelihood of the development having a significant effect on European sites, measures intended to mitigate the harmful effects of the project on such sites, which have been incorporated into the project as standard features (e.g. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, or SuDS, etc.), are taken account of in the assessment. This is consistent with the decision of the Court of Justice of the European Union (hereafter, ‘European Court’) in Case C 721/21, *Eco Advocacy CLG v. An Bord Pleanála* (Judgment of the Court (Second Chamber) of 15 June 2023), which stated the following: “*account may be taken of the features of that plan or project which involve the removal of contaminants and which therefore may have the effect of reducing the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site, where those features have been incorporated into that plan or project as standard features, inherent in such a plan or project, irrespective of any effect on the site*”.

Furthermore, on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024, the Irish Court of Appeal referred to the European Court a question regarding ‘generic’ versus ‘site-specific’ Conservation Objectives for Special Protection Areas, in *Power v. An Bord Pleanála* [2024] IECA 295. Specifically, the Irish Court of Appeal has asked the European Court whether valid Conservation Objectives are a pre-condition to the jurisdiction to carry out a stage two Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive. This will address the issue of Appropriate Assessment for Special Protection Areas in the Republic of Ireland for which only generic conservation objectives are currently available. However, all of the European sites within the zone of influence of the proposed development have site-specific Conservation Objectives, as can be seen in Appendix I. Therefore, there is no issue in this regard.

### 3.3.1 Habitat Loss and Fragmentation

As the proposed development site is located directly adjacent to the Clew Bay Complex SAC, and given the hydrological connectivity between the site and Clew Bay via the Carrowkeeran waterbody, the potential for habitat loss and fragmentation affecting Qualifying Interest (QI) species and habitats must be assessed. The proposed development will involve the construction of a single-storey dwelling house, associated wastewater treatment system, access improvements, landscaping (tree planting, green roof construction, etc.) and all associated site works within an existing open clearing in woodland habitat.

The proposed development footprint will occupy a relatively small proportion of the overall site area and has been specifically designed to avoid direct impacts on surrounding woodland habitat. No loss of existing Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1) on-site will occur as part of the proposed development; the existing woodland structure surrounding the development footprint will be fully retained in situ, thereby maintaining ecological connectivity and habitat continuity within the wider site. The only tree loss associated with the proposed development will comprise the removal of a single mature *Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia* specimen and minor branch trimming of a single *Quercus robur* individual at the edge of the existing clearing. Furthermore, the proposed development incorporates measures to facilitate natural woodland regeneration and native tree planting within the wider site, resulting in a net gain in woodland habitat of 0.74 acres. The proposed development will be largely confined to habitats already subject to historical disturbance and clearance within the existing scrubby clearing, which is currently characterised by regenerating vegetation and disturbed ground habitats. The woodland habitat on-site surrounding the proposed building location was assessed during field surveys and was not found to represent the Annex I habitat [91A0] Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles, as the woodland lacked the characteristic *Quercus petraea* canopy component associated with this habitat. Therefore, no Annex I woodland habitat loss or fragmentation will occur as a result of the proposed development.

Harbour seal *Phoca vitulina* and otter *Lutra lutra* are both QI species for the Clew Bay Complex SAC. Harbour seal populations may utilise coastal waters immediately adjacent to the proposed development site, while otter may occasionally utilise habitats within the wider surrounding area for commuting or foraging purposes. However, the proposed development site itself does not provide significant resting, breeding, or supporting habitat for these species. Furthermore, no direct habitat loss or fragmentation affecting these species will occur as a result of the proposed development.

While records for Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata* and other wetland-associated bird species were returned during the desk study, none of these species are SCI species associated with European sites relevant to this assessment. Many wading bird species have considerable roaming ranges; for example, breeding Eurasian curlew *Numenius arquata* have been known to travel 3–15 km from their brood in search of food (The Curlew Task Force, 2019). However, despite the coastal location of the proposed development site adjacent to Clew Bay, the proposed development site is not considered to represent functionally linked supporting habitat for SCI bird populations associated with surrounding SPAs. Therefore, no habitat loss or fragmentation effects on SCI bird populations associated with any European site will occur as a result of the proposed development.

Given the location of the proposed development site within the west of Ireland, the potential for impacts on lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* was also considered. Two natural Potential Roost Features (PRFs) were identified on trees within Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1) at the site during field surveys, however, no external evidence of bat presence was observed in either PRF, and

they are not expected to be utilised by bat species. These PRFs are also totally unsuitable for lesser horseshoe bat (which typically require caves or other deep cavities with large openings to their roosts/overwintering sites where they can swoop in to roost/hibernate without crawling) and there is no suitable roosting/hibernating habitat for that species on-site. The surrounding Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1) and Scrub (WS1) may provide commuting and foraging habitat for bats. However, the proposed development will be largely confined to existing disturbed and open (scrub) habitats within the site and will not result in any loss or fragmentation of woodland or treeline connectivity. The proposed development will not result in significant lighting effects on surrounding woodland habitats or ecological corridors. Lighting will be limited primarily to essential entrance and access lighting associated with the dwelling and will be designed to minimise light spill into adjacent woodland and coastal habitats. All external lighting will comprise low-intensity, warm-spectrum (<2700K) luminaires (Bat Conservation Trust & Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2023), directed downward and fitted with appropriate cowling or shielding to prevent unnecessary horizontal or upward light spill. Motion sensors and timers will be utilised where appropriate in order to minimise the duration of illumination and maintain dark ecological corridors within and adjacent to the site. Therefore, no habitat loss, fragmentation, or likely significant disturbance effects on any bat populations, including those associated with any European site, will occur as a result of the proposed development.

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Figure 1. Site boundary, with the immediate environs as context

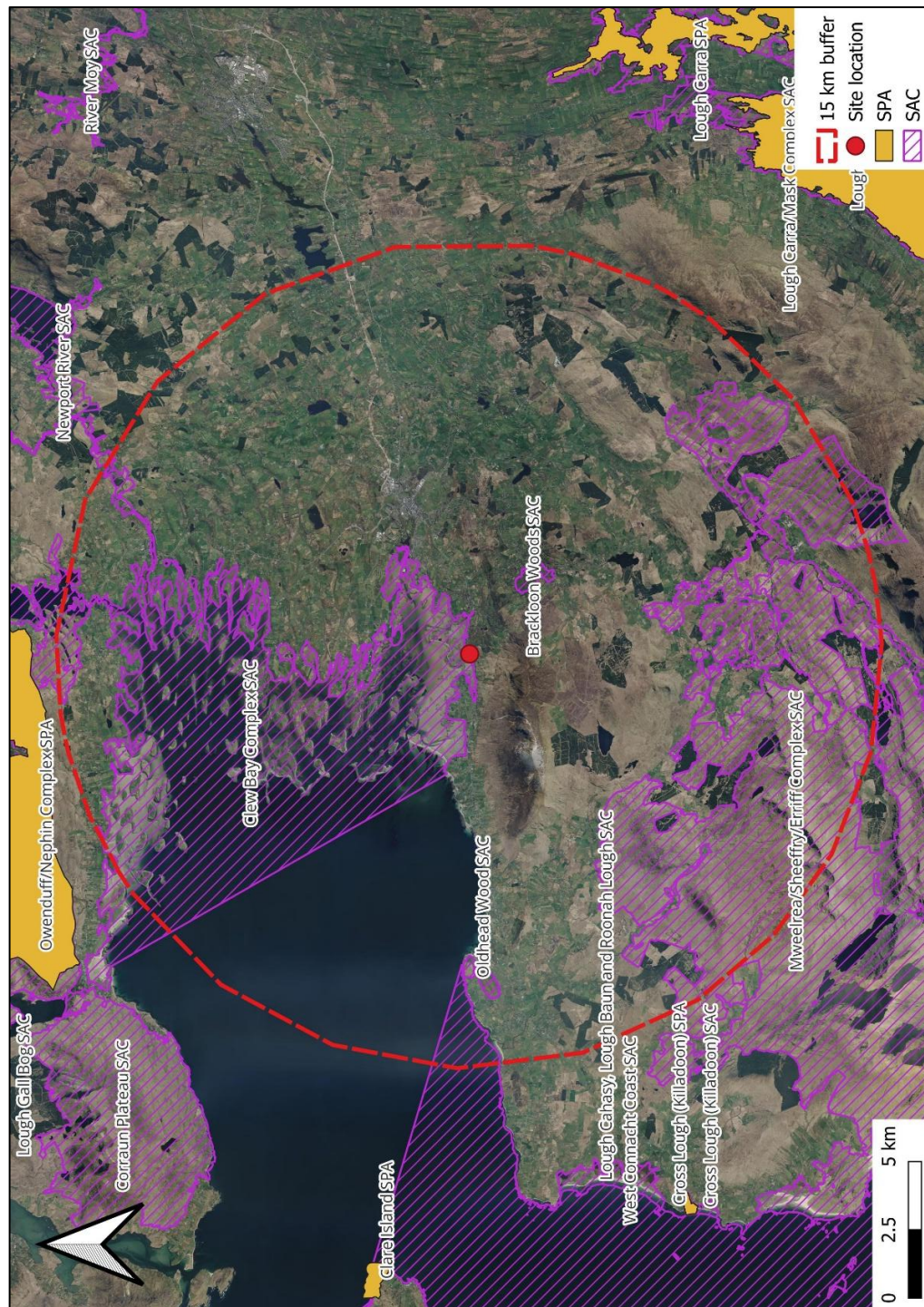


Figure 2. European Sites within the wider vicinity of the proposed development site. The 15 km buffer zone is arbitrary and does not define the potential maximum extent of the zone of influence

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Figure 3. Habitats (Fossitt, 2000) recorded within the proposed development site during the field surveys in 2026, with the Clew Bay Complex SAC boundary also shown

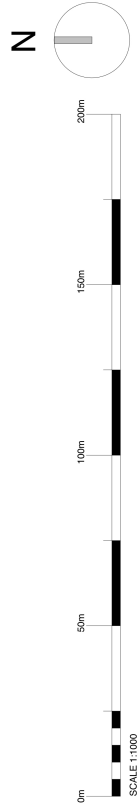
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| Rev | Date | Description | Issued by |
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(90) - SITE LAYOUT AERIAL PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT  
SCALE 1:1000



| DRAWING KEY |                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
|             | OUTLINE OF PROPOSED DWELLING         |
|             | EXTENT OF PROPOSED WOODLAND PLANTING |

|                                                      |                       |        |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------|
|                                                      | Drawing Number: SL 05 | Rev: 1 |
| Title: SITE LAYOUT WITH IMPOSED DEVELOPMENT          |                       |        |
| Project: PRIVATE HOUSE - MURRISK, WESTPORT, CO. MAYO |                       |        |
| Client: JAMES & SELINA GILL                          |                       |        |
| Drawing Status: INFORMATION                          |                       |        |
| Author: J. GILL                                      |                       |        |
| Check: J. GILL                                       |                       |        |
| Drawn: J. GILL                                       |                       |        |
| Date: 2024                                           |                       |        |
| Job Number: 81049                                    |                       |        |

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Figure 4. Outline of proposed house, with tree planting/woodland regeneration areas also displayed — red area denotes the site boundary

### 3.3.2 Habitat Degradation as a Result of Hydrological Impacts

Surface water runoff arising during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development has the potential to enter the Carrowkeeran waterbody, which flows directly into Clew Bay adjacent to the proposed development site. Given the direct hydrological connectivity between the proposed development site and the Clew Bay Complex SAC, there is potential for habitat degradation affecting QI habitats and species as a result of hydrological impacts.

During the construction phase, there is potential for sediment-laden surface water runoff, accidental spillages and other pollutants associated with excavation works, soil disturbance and construction activities to enter the receiving surface water environment. In the absence of mitigation, such impacts could result in localised deterioration in water quality within the receiving environment and indirectly affect QI habitats and species associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC, despite the site being surrounded by dense and well-established woodland as an immediate buffer.

Foul water generated during the operational phase will be treated via an on-site packaged wastewater treatment system and associated percolation area. In the absence of appropriate mitigation and management measures, there is potential for indirect effects on hydrologically connected habitats associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC.

Given the direct hydrological connectivity between the proposed development site and the Clew Bay Complex SAC, likely significant effects on the Conservation Objectives of the Clew Bay Complex SAC as a result of hydrological impacts cannot be excluded at the Stage 1 screening stage, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required on the basis of likely significant effects in relation to habitat degradation as a result of surface water impacts. This will be considered further in the context of the proposed mitigation measures in the Natura Impact Statement in Section 5 below.

*“In-combination”* effects on water quality in Clew Bay and the wider areas of the Atlantic Ocean as a result of surface water impacts must also be considered in this assessment, as there could be a cumulative impact on water quality as a result of the interaction of the proposed development with other plans or projects within the administrative area of Mayo County Council. The *Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028* (Mayo County Council, 2022) is the most current, active plan within the administrative area of Mayo County Council. Any plans or developments within the administrative area of Mayo County Council are required to adhere to the policy objectives outlined in the *Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028*, specifically those relating to the safeguarding of European sites and the preservation of water quality in Clew Bay and the wider areas of the Atlantic Ocean. These include the following core objectives:

#### County Development Plan Objective

##### Wastewater Objectives

**INO 8** *To require development in unsewered areas which includes a septic tank/proprietary effluent treatment unit and percolation area to be rigorously assessed in accordance with the accepted EPA Code of Practice Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses or the EPA Wastewater Treatment Manuals Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres and Hotels, taking into account the cumulative effects of existing and proposed developments in the area.*

##### Waste Management Objectives

**INO 10** Promote prioritising prevention, reuse, recycling and recovery, and to sustainably manage residual waste. New developments shall take account of the provisions of the Connacht Ulster Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021(as amended) and observe those elements of it that relate to waste prevention and minimisation, waste recycling facilities and the capacity for source segregation.

### **Surface Water Objectives**

**INO 16** To support, promote and facilitate the use of green infrastructure, for example green roofs, green walls, planting and green spaces for surface water run-off retention purposes, in the interests of flood mitigation and climate change adaptation.

**INO 17** To require the use of SuDS to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks.

**INO 18** To ensure new development is adequately serviced with surface water drainage infrastructure, which meets the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, associated River Basin Management Plans and Catchment Flood Risk Assessment Management (CFRAM) Plans.

### **Biodiversity, Designated and Non-Designated Sites Objectives**

**NEO 1** To review the County Mayo Heritage Plan and County Mayo Biodiversity Plan, as appropriate.

**NEO 4** To protect and enhance biodiversity and ecological connectivity in County Mayo, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife, where these form part of the ecological network.

**NEO 6** To protect surface waters, aquatic and wetland habitats and freshwater and water dependent species through the implementation of all appropriate and relevant Directives and transposed legislation and seek to protect and conserve the quality, character and features of inland waterways by controlling developments close to navigable and non-navigable waterways.

**NEO 11** To ensure that the impact of development within or adjacent to national designated sites, Natural Heritage Areas, Ramsar Sites and Nature Reserves likely to result in significant adverse effects on the designated site is assessed by requiring the submission of an Ecological Impact Assessment report (EclA), Environmental Report (ER), an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), if deemed necessary, and/or a Natura Impact Assessment (NIS), if deemed necessary, prepared by a suitably qualified professional, which should accompany planning applications.

**NEO 13** To ensure the protection of trees or groups of trees protected under Tree Preservation Orders, as well as recognise the value and encourage the retention and management of other trees and woodlands, which make a valuable contribution to the character of the landscape, ecological corridors, green infrastructure, a settlement or its setting.

### **Invasive Species Objective**

**NEO 16** To ensure that where the presence of invasive species is identified at the site of any proposed development or where the proposed activity has an elevated risk of resulting in the presence of these species, details of how these species will be appropriately managed and controlled will be required.

## Green and Blue Infrastructure Objectives

**NEO 21** *To identify green and blue infrastructure and sustainable design that supports biodiversity and natural systems to adapt to climate change, contribute to climate adaptation in the built and natural environment and provide co benefits.*

**NEO 23** *To protect open spaces, with multifunctional green and blue infrastructure in developments, with connections to the wider network of open spaces and habitats.*

Upon reviewing the planning database of Mayo County Council for the past five years, it was found that the projects within the proximity of the proposed development site are mostly minor works related to modifying existing structures, and none of these are considered likely to result in significant cumulative effects within the vicinity of the proposed development site.

All plans within the administrative area of Mayo County Council are required to adhere to the above-mentioned objectives with regard to water quality maintenance and the protection of European sites. Therefore, there is no likely significant effect on the Conservation Objectives of European sites in the zone of influence of the proposed development when the development is considered in the context of other plans and projects in the area acting in combination.

In addition to the *Mayo County Development Plan 2022–2028*, consideration was also given to other plans and projects within the wider surrounding area which may act in combination with the proposed development. Mayo County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) are currently progressing the proposed Belclare–Murrisk Greenway Project within the wider Clew Bay and Croagh Patrick area. The proposed greenway development forms part of the wider Clew Bay Greenway/Bike Trail network and is intended to provide enhanced active travel and tourism infrastructure between Belclare and Murrisk. Given the proximity of this proposed infrastructure project to the Clew Bay coastline and hydrologically connected habitats associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC, there is potential for cumulative disturbance, recreational pressure and hydrological impacts to arise in combination with other developments within the wider area.

However, given the limited scale and localised nature of the proposed development, and the staggered timeline of the wider projects discussed above, and having regard to the standard mitigation measures outlined within the CEMP and CMS, the proposed development will not contribute significantly to cumulative adverse effects on the Conservation Objectives of European sites within the zone of influence, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

### 3.3.3 Habitat Degradation as a Result of the Hydrogeological Impacts

Excavation works associated with the proposed development will be limited in scale and will primarily relate to the construction of foundations and associated site levelling works within the existing woodland clearing. Excavation depths associated with the proposed development will be relatively shallow (no greater than 2 metres in soil depth) and no piling, blasting, or groundwater abstraction is proposed as part of the development.

According to Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), the bedrock aquifer underlying the proposed development site is classified as a “*Poor Aquifer – Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones*”. The groundwater vulnerability underlying the site is classified as “*Extreme*”. The site is located within the Erriff-Clew Bay hydrometric area, which is hydrologically connected to Clew Bay and the wider receiving coastal environment.

The Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC contains a number of groundwater-dependent Annex I habitats, including [7220] Petrifying springs with tufa formation, [7230] Alkaline fens, and [7140] Transition mires and quaking bogs. Accordingly, the potential for hydrogeological impacts on groundwater-dependent habitats must be considered. However, these habitats are located at a substantially higher elevation south of the proposed development site.

Excavation works will be localised and limited in extent and no significant alteration to groundwater flow regimes is proposed. Furthermore, no direct discharge to groundwater will occur as part of the proposed development.

Given the limited nature of the excavation works, the absence of piling or blasting, the lack of direct discharge to groundwater, and the separation distance and elevation difference between the proposed development site and groundwater-dependent Annex I habitats within the Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC, any hydrogeological effects arising during construction will be minor, localised, and dispersed within a relatively small radius of the proposed development site. Therefore, there are no likely significant effects on the Conservation Objectives of European sites in the Zone of Influence of the proposed development as a result of hydrogeological impacts, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

#### **3.3.4 Habitat Degradation as a Result of the Introduction/Spread of Non-Native Invasive Species**

No invasive non-native plant species listed under the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), or under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation, were recorded within the proposed development site during field surveys. Nor were any other non-native plants recorded there. While records for the invasive tunicate *Didemnum vexillum* were returned during the desktop study, this species is marine in nature and no pathway for its introduction or spread is associated with the proposed terrestrial development.

Limited excavation and soil disturbance will occur during construction, but works will be confined to the footprint of the proposed development within the existing woodland clearing. Furthermore, no materials will be transported to site either during construction or operational phases which have the potential to be contaminated with non-native invasive species from elsewhere.

Given the absence of any invasive non-native/alien plant species within the proposed development site, the limited scale of excavation works and the lack of invasive-contaminated materials being transported to site either during construction or operational phases, there is no potential for the proposed development to facilitate the introduction or spread of non-native invasive species within any European site. Therefore, there will be no likely significant effects on the Conservation Objectives of any European site as a result of habitat degradation associated with invasive species as a result of the proposed development, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

#### **3.3.5 Impacts as a Result of Disturbance and Displacement**

The proposed development may cause disturbance and displacement of fauna species in the vicinity of the site during the construction phase, but the occurrence of such disturbance events would be intermittent and staggered across the construction phase. Otters are not expected to be significantly affected beyond a distance of 150m (National Roads Authority, 2008), while birds may experience disturbance effects up to approximately 300m (Cutts *et al.*, 2009, Wright *et al.*, 2010), as construction noise levels tend to decrease to background levels at that distance. There is one European site within the disturbance ZoI, namely, Clew Bay Complex SAC, near which the proposed development site is located. Therefore, this European site is within the disturbance ZoI for bird species. However, this

European site is not an SPA and there are no known ex situ sites within the disturbance ZoI of the proposed development that support populations of SCI bird species of European sites within the wider vicinity of the proposed development.

Construction activities associated with the proposed development will include excavation of soil associated with foundation and site levelling works, operation of excavators and associated mobile plant, temporary storage and re-distribution of excavated material, installation of a packaged wastewater treatment system, and erection of a pre-fabricated single-storey timber-frame dwelling (over a c. 6 week period) and associated garage structure within the existing woodland clearing. However, the proposed development is limited in scale and duration, and construction disturbance will be temporary in nature. Furthermore, the use of pre-fabricated timber-frame construction methods will significantly reduce the duration of intensive construction activity at the site. No piling or blasting is proposed as part of the development.

Harbour seal *Phoca vitulina* and otter *Lutra lutra* are both QI species of the Clew Bay Complex SAC. Harbour seal may occasionally utilise coastal waters adjacent to the site, while otter may utilise habitats within the wider surrounding area for commuting and foraging purposes. However, no sign of otter presence was observed within the proposed development footprint. In addition, extensive areas of suitable alternative habitat remain available within the wider surrounding landscape and coastal environment for both species.

Given the temporary and localised nature of the construction works, the limited scale of the proposed development, the retention of surrounding woodland habitat and the implementation of standard mitigation measures contained within the CEMP and CMS, the proposed development will not result in likely significant disturbance or displacement effects on QI species associated with any European site. Furthermore, planning applications within the vicinity of the proposed development site are generally limited in scale and staggered in their timeline and will not result in likely significant in-combination disturbance effects on European sites. Therefore, there are no likely significant effects on the Conservation Objectives of any European site as a result of disturbance and displacement effects, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

### 3.4 SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

Table 1 below summarises the potential impacts of the proposed development on the receiving environment, the zone of influence, and European sites at risk of likely significant effects.

Table 1. Summary of likelihood of significant effects on European sites through different pathways

| Potential Likely Significant Effect and Zone of Influence (ZoI)                                                    | Relevant European Site(s) and Assessed Risk of Likely Significant Effects as a Result of the Proposed Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Habitat Loss and Fragmentation – ZoI includes the proposed development footprint and immediately adjacent habitats | <b>Clew Bay Complex SAC lies within the ZoI of the proposed development</b> – the proposed development footprint has been specifically designed to minimise direct impacts on surrounding woodland habitat and will be largely confined to an existing woodland clearing. While limited fragmentation of Mixed broadleaved woodland (WN1) will occur within the proposed development footprint, the surrounding woodland matrix will |

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| Potential Likely Significant Effect and Zone of Influence (Zol)                                                                                                                                                      | Relevant European Site(s) and Assessed Risk of Likely Significant Effects as a Result of the Proposed Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>remain fully intact and connected at the landscape scale. No Annex I woodland habitat was identified within the footprint of the proposed works and field surveys confirmed that the woodland does not correspond to Annex I [91A0] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles. Furthermore, no functionally linked ex situ habitat supporting SCI bird species associated with surrounding SPAs was identified within the Zol, and the proposed development will not result in the severance of any identified ecological corridor linking habitats associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: no likely significant effects on the Clew Bay Complex SAC will occur as a result of habitat loss and fragmentation.</b></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <p>Habitat Degradation as a Result of Hydrological Impacts – Zol is the habitats and species located downstream of the proposed development site, including potentially in Clew Bay and the wider Atlantic Ocean</p> | <p><b>Clew Bay Complex SAC</b> – there is potential for impacts to arise as a result of hydrological connectivity between the proposed development site and the Clew Bay Complex SAC due to sediment-laden surface water runoff, accidental spillages and pollution events associated with construction activities. Given the direct hydrological connectivity between the proposed development site and the Clew Bay Complex SAC, there is potential for the proposed development to not be consistent with the Conservation Objectives of the Clew Bay Complex SAC, namely, “to maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal in Clew Bay Complex SAC”; “to maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in Clew Bay Complex SAC”; “to maintain the favourable conservation condition” of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Coastal lagoons [1150] and Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]; and to “restore the favourable conservation condition” of Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330].</p> <p><b>Conclusion: there is potential for likely significant effects on the Conservation Objectives of QI habitats/species of the Clew Bay Complex SAC as a result of hydrological impacts – refer to Section 5.6 of the Natura Impact Statement below for the proposed mitigation measures.</b></p> |
| <p>Habitat Degradation as a Result of Hydrogeological Impacts – Zol is groundwater and groundwater-dependent habitats and species within and</p>                                                                     | <p><b>Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC and Clew Bay Complex SAC</b> – excavation works associated with the proposed development will be limited in</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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| Potential Likely Significant Effect and Zone of Influence (Zoi)                                                                                                                              | Relevant European Site(s) and Assessed Risk of Likely Significant Effects as a Result of the Proposed Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| hydrologically connected to the proposed development site, including potentially within the Clew Bay Complex SAC and Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC                                    | <p>scale and localised in extent, and no piling, blasting or groundwater abstraction is proposed. Although the underlying groundwater vulnerability is classified as “<i>Extreme</i>”, the proposed development will not alter groundwater flow regimes or result in direct discharge to groundwater. Furthermore, any European sites in the Zoi with groundwater-dependent habitats are located at a substantially higher elevation south of the proposed development site. Therefore, any hydrogeological effects arising during construction will be minor, localised and will not affect groundwater-dependent habitats or species associated with any European sites within the Zoi; therefore, there is no potential for the proposed development to not be consistent with the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: no likely significant effects on any European sites will occur with regard to habitat degradation as a result of hydrogeological impacts.</b></p>                                                                                                                 |
| Habitat Degradation as a Result of the Introduction/Spread of Non-Native Invasive Species – Zoi is habitats within, adjacent to, and potentially downstream of the proposed development site | <p>Clew Bay Complex SAC – no invasive non-native plant species listed under the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended), or under the EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation (nor any other non-native species), were recorded within the proposed development site during field surveys. While limited excavation and soil disturbance will occur during construction, works will be confined to the footprint of the proposed development within the existing woodland clearing. Furthermore, no materials will be transported to site either during construction or operational phases which have the potential to be contaminated with non-native invasive species from elsewhere. Therefore, the proposed development will not facilitate the introduction or spread of invasive non-native species within habitats associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: no likely significant effects on any European sites will occur with regard to habitat degradation as a result of the introduction/spread of non-native invasive species.</b></p> |
| Impacts as a Result of Disturbance and Displacement – Zoi could potentially extend several hundred meters, depending on the anticipated levels of noise,                                     | <b>Clew Bay Complex SAC</b> – temporary disturbance effects may occur during the construction phase as a result of noise, vibration, human presence, and                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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| Potential Likely Significant Effect and Zone of Influence (Zol)                                                                                                            | Relevant European Site(s) and Assessed Risk of Likely Significant Effects as a Result of the Proposed Development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>vibration, and visual disturbance as a result of the proposed development. This takes into consideration the sensitivity of the QI/SCI species to such disturbances</p> | <p>general construction activity. However, the proposed development is limited in scale, confined largely to an existing woodland clearing, temporary in duration, and no piling or blasting is proposed. Harbour seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i> may occasionally utilise coastal waters adjacent to the site, while otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> may utilise habitats within the wider surrounding area for commuting and foraging purposes; however, no evidence of otter resting sites or significant otter activity was recorded within the proposed development footprint during field surveys, and no harbour seal haul-out sites occur within the disturbance Zol. Furthermore, no functionally linked ex situ habitat supporting SCI bird species associated with surrounding SPAs was identified within the disturbance Zol; therefore, there is no potential for the proposed development to not be consistent with the Conservation Objectives of otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> and harbour seal <i>Phoca vitulina</i> within the Clew Bay Complex SAC, namely, “to maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in Clew Bay Complex SAC” and “to maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal in Clew Bay Complex SAC”.</p> <p><b>Conclusion: no likely significant effects on any European sites will occur with regard to impacts as a result of disturbance and displacement.</b></p> |

#### 4 SCREENING ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION

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The proposed development was assessed for the potential to result in likely significant effects on European sites within the Zone of Influence of the proposed development, having regard to the nature, scale and location of the proposed development and the identified impact pathways.

Based on a detailed analysis and evaluation of the current best scientific knowledge, the assessment concluded that no likely significant effects were identified in relation to habitat loss and fragmentation, hydrogeological impacts, the introduction/spread of non-native invasive species, or disturbance and displacement impacts, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

However, given the direct hydrological connectivity between the proposed development site and the Clew Bay Complex SAC, there is potential for likely significant effects to arise as a result of hydrological impacts associated with sediment-laden surface water runoff, accidental spillages, pollution events and foul water discharge pathways during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development. Therefore, likely significant effects on the Clew Bay Complex SAC cannot be excluded at the screening stage. Accordingly, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

This report provides sufficient relevant information to enable Mayo County Council to conduct an Appropriate Assessment Screening and make a determination that the proposed development may have likely significant effects on European sites that may not be in line with their Conservation Objectives under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, and that it requires an Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), as presented below.

#### 5 STAGE 2: APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT (NATURA IMPACT STATEMENT)

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##### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is to determine if the proposed development at Deerpark West, Co. Mayo will have any significant negative effects on the integrity and conservation objectives of the European sites identified in Stage 1, either alone or in-combination with other proposed developments or plans. The legislative context for AA is outlined in Section 1.3 above. If any adverse effects are considered likely, then mitigation measures must be implemented to prevent or minimise these potential effects. These necessary mitigation measures are then assessed thoroughly and if it is determined that the proposed development will have no likely significant adverse effects on the European site(s) in question following the implementation of these mitigation measures, then it can be concluded that the proposed development poses no risk of significant adverse effects on European sites in the Zone of Influence. If mitigation measures are insufficient or absent and significant effects are predicted, then it must go forward to Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions. This AA process is collated in the form of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The Stage 1 AA Screening outlined above identified one European site that may potentially be affected by the proposed development (Table 1). Therefore, following a precautionary principle, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required in this instance.

## 5.2 EUROPEAN SITES

The above AA Screening identified the following European site in Table 2, which could be negatively impacted by the proposed development in the absence of mitigation:

Table 2: List of European sites for which there is potential for likely significant effects due to the proposed development

| Site code | Site name            | Distance (km)                                                                                                                          | QI/SCI potentially impacted                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 001482    | Clew Bay Complex SAC | c. 8.83m north of the proposed development site at its closest point (and c. 71.11 m from the closest corner of the proposed building) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harbour seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>) [1365]</li> <li>• Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355]</li> <li>• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</li> <li>• Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]</li> <li>• Coastal lagoons [1150]</li> <li>• Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]</li> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</li> </ul> |

## 5.3 CHARACTERISING POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

After identifying potential significant effects during the AA Screening process, these effects must then be described and characterised based on several parameters. This is done following guidance from CIEEM (2018) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (2009). The following characteristics are referred to, as required:

- **Magnitude** – the size, volume, amount, and intensity of the potential impact which should be quantified, when possible, for example the number of species effected, the percentage decline, etc.
- **Extent** – the quantified spatial area over which the impact is predicted to influence.
- **Duration** – the time during which the impacts are likely to occur until recovery to its previous state
- **Timing and frequency** – how often and for how long an effect is likely to occur will strongly influence the overall impact e.g., construction phase of one day compared to 6 months. Also, the timing of the development and how it coincides with important stages in life-cycles and seasonal migrations of flora/fauna.
- **Reversibility** – a reversible effect is one where recovery is possible and an irreversible effect is one where recovery is not possible. The habitat type or species impacted is key to this assessment, for example, damage to ancient woodland soils is irreversible.

The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) defines a significant effect as: An effect that either supports or undermines biodiversity conservation objectives for “important ecological features”. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for implementing conservation management plans for protected sites. Management planning for these protected sites aims to first identify and evaluate features of interest within the site, and then create objectives to conserve these features. ‘Conservation objectives’ for protected European sites are set out for the species/habitats which the sites are designated for. These objectives are then consulted to carry out Appropriate Assessments and Natura Impact Statements to determine if proposed plans or projects will have a significant negative impact on the integrity of the sites and to identify necessary management plans.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define a state of favourable condition for a particular habitat or species within that site.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat can be described as:

- *“its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing”*
- *“the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future”*
- *“the 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”*
- *“the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future”*
- *“there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis”*

European Commission (2021) guidance outlines the aspects of a proposed development or project that may impact on European sites:

- land-take (direct/indirect)
- resource requirements (e.g., water abstraction, soil/mineral excavation)
- emissions (disposal to land, water or air)
- transportation requirements
- duration and timing of construction, operation, decommissioning
- range of impact factors (e.g., noise, nitrogen deposition, turbidity)

The European Commission guidance also outlines likely effects on European sites with regards to the site-specific conservation objectives:

- reduction of habitat area, habitat degradation or fragmentation
- disturbance to species, reduction in species populations and density
- changes in ecological functions and/or features that are essential for the ecological requirements of habitats and species (e.g. water quality and quantity)
- interference with the key relationships that define the structure and function of the site

#### 5.4 THREATS AND PRESSURES ON RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES

Clew Bay Complex SAC is a large and complex coastal European site comprising a range of marine, coastal, intertidal, and terrestrial habitats along the western coastline of Co. Mayo. The SAC supports a number of Qualifying Interests (QIs), including harbour seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*), both of which are relevant to the proposed development.

Existing threats and pressures on the ecological integrity of Clew Bay Complex SAC include deterioration in water quality, coastal and marine disturbance, recreational pressures, invasive species, habitat fragmentation and changes to supporting ecological conditions within hydrologically connected catchments. Activities with the potential to affect the SAC include surface water pollution,

sedimentation, wastewater discharge, disturbance associated with human activity and habitat alteration within adjacent coastal and terrestrial environments.

Harbour seal populations are sensitive to disturbance, particularly in relation to coastal activity and degradation of supporting marine habitats. Otter are similarly sensitive to deterioration in water quality, disturbance of resting and commuting habitats and fragmentation of riparian and coastal ecological corridors. The maintenance of water quality and ecological connectivity within hydrologically connected habitats is therefore important in maintaining the favourable conservation condition of these Qualifying Interests.

The proposed development site is located immediately adjacent to the Clew Bay Complex SAC and is hydrologically connected to Clew Bay via the Carrowkeeran waterbody. Therefore, the potential for impacts relating to habitat degradation, hydrological pathways, disturbance and habitat fragmentation must be considered in the context of the existing sensitivities and conservation objectives of the SAC.

## 5.5 POTENTIAL SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS ON THE QUALIFYING FEATURES OF EUROPEAN SITES

Table 4 below summarises the potential significant effects on the Qualifying Features (QIs/SCIs) of European sites in the Zone of Influence of the proposed development site:

Table 3: Potential significant effects on the Qualifying Features (QIs/SCIs) of European sites in the Zone of Influence of the proposed development site, ***in the absence of mitigation***

| Site Code | Site Name            | Likely Significant Effects (in Absence of Mitigation)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 001482    | Clew Bay Complex SAC | <p><i>Habitat Degradation as a Result of Hydrological Impacts</i> – Construction and operational phases: In the absence of mitigation, sediment-laden runoff, accidental spillages, pollutants associated with construction activities and potential failures in wastewater management could enter the Carrowkeeran waterbody, which is hydrologically connected to the Clew Bay Complex SAC. This could result in deterioration of water quality and direct and indirect effects on Qualifying Interests of the SAC.</p> <p>Specific Qualifying Interests which would be potentially affected:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1355] – indirect effects associated with deterioration in water quality within hydrologically connected habitats, which could negatively affect the Conservation Objectives for the species: “To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter in the Clew Bay Complex SAC”</li> <li>2. Harbour seal (<i>Phoca vitulina</i>) [1365] – indirect effects associated with deterioration in coastal and marine water quality affecting supporting habitats, which could negatively affect the Conservation Objectives for the species: “To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</li> <li>3. Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Coastal lagoons [1150], Large shallow inlets and bays [1160], &amp; Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-</i></li> </ol> |

|  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | <p><i>Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] – direct effects associated with deterioration in water quality of these water quality-dependent marine/coastal habitats, which could negatively affect the Conservation Objectives of these habitats, to “maintain the favourable conservation condition” of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140], Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210], Coastal lagoons [1150] and Large shallow inlets and bays [1160], and to “restore the favourable conservation condition” of Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</p> <p><i>Impacts as a Result of Hydrological Impacts</i> – Construction Phases: hydrological impacts have the potential to lead to <b>Temporary Moderate Significant Negative Impacts at an International Level</b> on QI species and habitats of the Clew Bay Complex SAC.</p> |
|--|--|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 5.6 MITIGATION MEASURES

### Hydrology and Pollution Prevention Measures

The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Construction Method Statement (CMS) prepared for the proposed development incorporate a range of measures designed to prevent adverse hydrological impacts on the Clew Bay Complex SAC during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development. These measures include:

- installation of geotextile silt barriers prior to excavation works; provision of additional straw bales and supplementary sediment control measures where required;
- avoidance of excavation works during periods of heavy rainfall where practicable;
- daily inspection and maintenance of sediment and pollution control measures throughout the construction phase;
- limitation of excavation depths to a maximum of 2 metres where practicable in order to minimise the volume of exposed material and reduce silt runoff potential;
- prohibition of on-site fuel, oil and hazardous chemical storage;
- off-site refuelling of mobile plant where practicable;
- maintenance of spill response equipment and spill kits on site at all times;
- implementation of appropriate concrete washout procedures and off-site removal of concrete truck washings and liquid wastes;
- controlled management and storage of excavated material and spoil during construction works;
- environmental monitoring of sediment and pollution control measures throughout the construction phase;
- incorporation of Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) measures, including the proposed green roof system, in order to attenuate and filter surface water runoff prior to discharge to soakaways; and
- treatment of foul water via a packaged wastewater treatment system: secondary treatment package plant followed by biofibrous media tertiary treatment modules on infiltration pad.

No alterations to the existing baseline surface water drainage network are proposed as part of the development. Subject to appropriate installation, management and maintenance, the proposed wastewater treatment system will be well within capacity for the required demand, and will not result in any deterioration in receiving water quality or adverse effects on the Conservation Objectives of any European site.

These measures will minimise the potential for sedimentation, pollution events, or deterioration in water quality within hydrologically connected habitats associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC.

#### **Ecological Monitoring and Environmental Supervision**

An Environmental Site Officer/Ecologist will be appointed for the duration of the construction phase to oversee the implementation of pollution prevention and hydrological mitigation measures associated with the proposed development. The Environmental Site Officer/Ecologist will undertake periodic site inspections to ensure compliance with the measures outlined within the CEMP, CMS and NIS. The Environmental Site Officer/Ecologist will monitor the condition and effectiveness of sediment and pollution control measures throughout the construction phase and will advise on the implementation of any additional mitigation measures required in response to site conditions or unforeseen environmental risks. Environmental supervision will also ensure that all pollution prevention measures remain effective throughout the construction phase and that no deterioration in water quality occurs within hydrologically connected habitats associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC.

#### **5.7 RESIDUAL EFFECTS**

Following implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 5.6, no likely significant adverse effects on either the integrity or the Conservation Objectives of the QI habitats/species of the Clew Bay Complex SAC will occur as a result of the proposed development, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. The hydrology and pollution prevention measures incorporated into the CEMP, CMS and operational drainage design will minimise the potential for sedimentation, pollution events and deterioration in water quality within hydrologically connected habitats associated with the Clew Bay Complex SAC. Residual effects arising during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development will be temporary, localised and not significant in the context of the Conservation Objectives of the Clew Bay Complex SAC. Therefore, residual or indirect negative effects on European sites in the Zone of Influence, or any of their Qualifying Features can be conclusively ruled out.

#### **5.8 CONCLUSION**

Based on a detailed analysis and evaluation of the current best scientific knowledge, including multiple field surveys undertaken within the proposed development site, this Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement has considered the potential impacts of the proposed development at Deerpark West, Co. Mayo on all European sites in the zone of influence, and in particular, Clew Bay Complex SAC, both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects. Potential impact pathways relating to habitat loss and fragmentation, hydrological impacts, disturbance and displacement,

hydrogeological impacts and invasive species were assessed in relation to the Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives of the Clew Bay Complex SAC.

Following implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 5.6 of the Natura Impact Statement, in my professional opinion, the proposed development will not adversely or significantly affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. Therefore, the proposed development, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not adversely affect the integrity or Conservation Objectives of the Clew Bay Complex SAC.

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## APPENDIX I: PROTECTED SITES IN THE WIDER VICINITY OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE, IN FULL DETAIL

Table 1. European sites in the wider vicinity of the proposed development site, with Qualifying Interest (QI) habitat(s)/species, Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species and Conservation Objectives displayed

| European site [with site code] and its Qualifying Interest (QI) habitat(s)/species or Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species (* = Priority Annex I habitat)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Absolute distance and location of European site relative to proposed development site                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Special Area of Conservation (SAC)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                      |
| <p><b>Clew Bay Complex SAC [Site Code 001482]</b></p> <p><u>Qualifying Interest(s) (QI):</u><br/> Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br/> Coastal lagoons [1150]<br/> Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]<br/> Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br/> Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br/> Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]<br/> Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br/> Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120]<br/> Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0]<br/> Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]<br/> <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]<br/> <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365]</p> <p><u>Conservation Objectives:</u><br/> According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (see Source below), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been designated.</p> <p><u>Source:</u><br/> NPWS (2011) <i>Conservation Objectives: Clew Bay Complex SAC 001482</i>. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.<br/> S.I. No. 65/2022 - European Union Habitats (Clew Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation 001482) Regulations 2022.</p> | <p>Located c. 8.83m north of the proposed development site at its closest point (and c. 71.11m from the closest corner of the proposed building)</p> |
| <p><b>Brackloon Woods SAC [Site Code 000471]</b></p> <p><u>Qualifying Interest(s) (QI):</u><br/> Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p><u>Conservation Objectives:</u><br/> According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (see Source below), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been designated.</p> <p><u>Source:</u><br/> NPWS (2021) <i>Conservation Objectives: Brackloon Woods SAC 000471</i>. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <p>Located c. 2.84km south-east of the proposed development site</p>                                                                                 |

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| <p>S.I. No. 260/2016 - European Union Habitats (Brackloon Woods Special Area of Conservation 000471) Regulations 2016.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                      |
| <p><b>Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC [Site Code 001932]</b></p> <p><u>Qualifying Interest(s) (QI):</u><br/>         Coastal lagoons [1150]<br/>         Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]<br/>         Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]<br/>         Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]<br/>         Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]<br/>         Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120]<br/>         Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]<br/>         Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetea</i>) [2150]<br/>         Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170]<br/>         Humid dune slacks [2190]<br/>         Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0]<br/>         Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110]<br/>         Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130]<br/>         Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]<br/>         Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260]<br/>         Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010]<br/>         European dry heaths [4030]<br/>         Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]<br/> <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]<br/>         Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]<br/>         Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]<br/>         Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]<br/>         Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> [7150]<br/>         Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]<br/>         Alkaline fens [7230]<br/>         Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110]<br/>         Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]<br/>         Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]<br/> <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013]<br/> <i>Vertigo angustior</i> (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014]<br/> <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]<br/> <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]<br/> <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]<br/> <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395]<br/> <i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833]</p> <p><u>Conservation Objectives:</u><br/>         According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (see Source below), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been designated.</p> <p><u>Source:</u></p> | <p>Located c. 7.22km south-west of the proposed development site</p> |

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| <p>NPWS (2026) <i>Conservation Objectives: Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC 001932</i>. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</p> <p>S.I. No. 55/2023 - European Union Habitats (Mweelrea/Sheeffry/Erriff Complex SAC Special Area of Conservation 001932) Regulations 2023.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                       |
| <p><b>Oldhead Wood SAC [Site Code 002281]</b></p> <p><u>Qualifying Interest(s) (QI):</u><br/>European dry heaths [4030]<br/>Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p><u>Conservation Objectives:</u><br/>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (see Source below), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been designated.</p> <p><u>Source:</u><br/>NPWS (2021) <i>Conservation Objectives: Oldhead Wood SAC 000532</i>. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.<br/>S.I. No. 262/2016 - European Union Habitats (Oldhead Wood Special Area of Conservation 000532) Regulations 2016.</p>                   | <p>Located c. 10.88km west of the proposed development site</p>       |
| <p><b>West Connacht Coast SAC [Site Code 002189]</b></p> <p><u>Qualifying Interest(s) (QI):</u><br/><i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]<br/><i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</p> <p><u>Conservation Objectives:</u><br/>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (see Source below), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been designated.</p> <p><u>Source:</u><br/>NPWS (2025) <i>Conservation Objectives: West Connacht Coast SAC 002998</i>. Version 2. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.<br/>S.I. No. 95/2019 - European Union Habitats (West Connacht Coast Special Area of Conservation 002998) Regulations 2019.</p> | <p>Located c. 11.20km west of the proposed development site</p>       |
| <p><b>Newport River SAC [Site Code 002144]</b></p> <p><u>Qualifying Interest(s) (QI):</u><br/><i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]<br/><i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p><u>Conservation Objectives:</u><br/>According to this SAC's site Conservation Objectives document (see Source below), for each of the listed QIs, the Conservation Objective is to maintain or restore the</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Located c. 12.01km north-east of the proposed development site</p> |

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favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been designated.

Source:

NPWS (2019) *Conservation Objectives: West Connacht Coast SAC 002144*. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

S.I. No. 467/2023 - European Union Habitats (Newport River Special Area of Conservation 002998) Regulations 2023.

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## APPENDIX II: PLANT SPECIES LISTS PER HABITAT

Below are presented all the plant species recorded per habitat within the proposed development site during the field surveys in 2026, along with their estimated coverage according to the percentage scale; sp. = species (singular); spp. = species (plural); agg. = aggregate:

| Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1)   |     | Scrub (WS1)                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| Scientific Name                  | %   | Scientific Name                              | %   |
| <i>Quercus robur</i>             | 75  | <i>Calluna vulgaris</i>                      | 0.3 |
| <i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>       | 3   | <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>                       | 5   |
| <i>Luzula sylvatica</i>          | 5   | <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.                 | 75  |
| <i>Hedera helix</i> agg.         | 10  | <i>Hedera helix</i>                          | 10  |
| <i>Blechnum spicant</i>          | 0.3 | <i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>                   | 1   |
| <i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>     | 1   | <i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>                  | 1   |
| <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>       | 1   | <i>Luzula sylvatica</i>                      | 0.3 |
| <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.     | 20  | <i>Polytrichum</i> sp.                       | 0.1 |
| <i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>       | 3   | <i>Pogonatum aloides</i>                     | 0.1 |
| <i>Betula pubescens</i>          | 20  | <i>Campylopus</i> sp.                        | 0.1 |
| <i>Rhytidadelphus triquetrus</i> | 3   | <i>Digitalis purpurea</i>                    | 0.1 |
| <i>Rhytidadelphus loreus</i>     | 3   | <i>Juncus effusus</i>                        | 0.3 |
| <i>Pseudoscleropodium purum</i>  | 0.1 | <i>Blechnum spicant</i>                      | 0.1 |
| <i>Campylopus</i> sp.            | 0.1 | <i>Thuidium tamariscinum</i>                 | 0.1 |
| <i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>     | 0.3 | <i>Quercus robur</i>                         | 10  |
| <i>Polytrichum commune</i>       | 0.1 | <i>Dryopteris affinis</i>                    | 0.3 |
| <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>     | 0.3 | <i>Carex binervis</i>                        | 0.5 |
| <i>Hypericum pulchrum</i>        | 0.1 | <i>Corylus avellana</i>                      | 7   |
| <i>Viola riviniana</i>           | 0.1 | <i>Rhytidadelphus triquetrus</i>             | 0.1 |
| <i>Isoethecium myosuroides</i>   | 3   | <i>Dactylis glomerata</i>                    | 0.1 |
| <i>Frullania dilatata</i>        | 0.3 | <i>Geranium robertianum</i>                  | 0.1 |
| <i>Radula complanata</i>         | 0.1 | <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>                   | 7   |
| <i>Frullania fragiliifolia</i>   | 0.3 | <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>                   | 0.5 |
| <i>Sanicula europaea</i>         | 0.1 | <i>Ficaria verna</i>                         | 0.1 |
| <i>Metzgeria furcata</i>         | 0.1 | <i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>                 | 0.1 |
| <i>Dicranum scoparium</i>        | 0.1 | <i>Succisa pratensis</i>                     | 0.1 |
| <i>Diplophyllum albicans</i>     | 0.1 | <i>Viola riviniana</i>                       | 0.1 |
| <i>Oxalis acetosella</i>         | 0.1 | <i>Potentilla erecta</i>                     | 0.1 |
| <i>Stellaria holostea</i>        | 0.3 | <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>                   | 1   |
| <i>Geranium robertianum</i>      | 0.1 | <i>Salix cinerea</i> subsp. <i>oleifolia</i> | 0.3 |
| <i>Saccogyna viticulosa</i>      | 0.1 | <i>Holcus lanatus</i>                        | 1   |
| <i>Mnium hornum</i>              | 0.1 | <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>             | 0.5 |
| <i>Thamnobryum alopecurum</i>    | 0.3 | <i>Stellaria holostea</i>                    | 0.1 |
| <i>Carex sylvatica</i>           | 0.3 | <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>                 | 0.5 |
| <i>Corylus avellana</i>          | 5   |                                              |     |
| <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>       | 0.1 |                                              |     |
| <i>Polypodium vulgare</i>        | 0.1 |                                              |     |
| <i>Pseudotaxiphyllum elegans</i> | 0.1 |                                              |     |
| <i>Pellia</i> sp.                | 0.1 |                                              |     |
| <i>Dicranum majus</i>            | 0.1 |                                              |     |
| <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>           | 30  |                                              |     |
| <i>Hookeria lucens</i>           | 0.1 |                                              |     |
| <i>Lophocolea bidentata</i>      | 0.1 |                                              |     |

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| Oak-birch-holly woodland (WN1)                  |     | Scrub (WS1) |  |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----|-------------|--|
| <i>Dicranella heteromalla</i>                   | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Salix cinerea</i> subsp. <i>oleifolia</i>    | 0.3 |             |  |
| <i>Scapania gracilis</i>                        | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>                | 0.5 |             |  |
| <i>Succisa pratensis</i>                        | 0.3 |             |  |
| <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>                    | 0.5 |             |  |
| <i>Solidago virgaurea</i>                       | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Carex binervis</i>                           | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Athyrium filix-femina</i>                    | 0.3 |             |  |
| <i>Anemone nemorosa</i>                         | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Stellaria holostea</i>                       | 0.3 |             |  |
| <i>Lysimachia nemorum</i>                       | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Luzula multiflora</i> subsp. <i>congesta</i> | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Holcus lanatus</i>                           | 0.3 |             |  |
| <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>                       | 0.5 |             |  |
| <i>Vicia sepium</i>                             | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Conopodium majus</i>                         | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Veronica officinalis</i>                     | 0.1 |             |  |
| <i>Potentilla erecta</i>                        | 0.1 |             |  |

| Spoil and bare ground (ED2)                  |     | Improved agricultural grassland (GA1)        |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| Scientific Name                              | %   | Scientific Name                              | %   |
| <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>                    | 15  | <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>                    | 15  |
| <i>Taraxacum</i> agg.                        | 0.3 | <i>Taraxacum</i> agg.                        | 0.3 |
| <i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>                  | 0.5 | <i>Kindbergia praelonga</i>                  | 0.5 |
| <i>Ranunculus repens</i>                     | 1   | <i>Ranunculus repens</i>                     | 1   |
| <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>                   | 20  | <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>                   | 20  |
| <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>                       | 3   | <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>                       | 3   |
| <i>Lolium perenne</i>                        | 50  | <i>Lolium perenne</i>                        | 50  |
| <i>Poa trivialis</i>                         | 20  | <i>Poa trivialis</i>                         | 20  |
| <i>Salix cinerea</i> subsp. <i>oleifolia</i> | 0.5 | <i>Salix cinerea</i> subsp. <i>oleifolia</i> | 0.5 |
| <i>Rumex crispus</i>                         | 0.1 | <i>Iris pseudacorus</i>                      | 0.5 |
| <i>Juncus bulbosus</i>                       | 0.1 | <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>                   | 10  |
| <i>Poa annua</i>                             | 1   | <i>Rhinanthus minor</i>                      | 0.1 |
|                                              |     | <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>                       | 0.1 |
|                                              |     | <i>Calliergonella cuspidata</i>              | 1   |
|                                              |     | <i>Urtica dioica</i>                         | 0.5 |
|                                              |     | <i>Corylus avellana</i>                      | 3   |
|                                              |     | <i>Juncus effusus</i>                        | 0.5 |
|                                              |     | <i>Silene flos-cuculi</i>                    | 0.1 |
|                                              |     | <i>Lythrum salicaria</i>                     | 0.1 |
|                                              |     | <i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>               | 0.1 |

| Hedgerows (WL1)              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| Scientific Name              | %  |
| <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. | 75 |
| <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>   | 10 |



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|                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| <i>Ulex europaeus</i>                        | 1   |
| <i>Holcus lanatus</i>                        | 15  |
| <i>Prunus spinosa</i>                        | 15  |
| <i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>             | 0.1 |
| <i>Salix cinerea</i> subsp. <i>oleifolia</i> | 1   |