

**PROPOSED STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
(SHD) AT CARTRONTROY, KILNAFADDOGE,
LISSYWOLLEN AND ARDNAGLUG (TOWNLANDS),
ATHLONE, CO. WESTMEATH.**

ASSESSMENT FOR SCREENING

AS REQUIRED UNDER THE 2011 EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
(BIRDS AND NATURAL HABITATS) REGULATIONS
IN SUPPORT OF THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Prepared for:
Avenir Homes Limited

**PROPOSED STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
(SHD) AT CARTRONTROY, KILNAFADDOGE,
LISSYWOLLEN AND ARDNAGLUG (TOWNLANDS),
ATHLONE, CO. WESTMEATH.**

ASSESSMENT FOR SCREENING

AS REQUIRED UNDER THE 2011 EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
(BIRDS AND NATURAL HABITATS) REGULATIONS
IN SUPPORT OF THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS



| Revision | Description | Prepared by | Date |
|----------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 | For Issue | AM/GF | 20/01/2022 |

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1. BACKGROUND..... | 1 |
| 2. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING | 4 |
| 2.1. SCREENING..... | 5 |
| 3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION | 8 |
| 3.1. SITE LOCATION AND LAYOUT..... | 8 |
| 3.2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT..... | 8 |
| 4. NATURA 2000 SITES | 12 |
| 5. STAGE 1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA | 19 |
| 5.1. ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT LIKELY TO IMPACT ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES..... | 19 |
| 5.2. LIKELY IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES..... | 22 |
| 5.3. LIKELY CHANGES TO THE NATURA 2000 SITES..... | 25 |
| 5.4. LIKELY IMPACTS ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES AS A WHOLE..... | 25 |
| 5.5. INDICATORS OF SIGNIFICANCE AS A RESULT OF THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTS SET OUT ABOVE | 25 |
| 5.6. ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT LIKELY TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES OR WHERE THE SCALE OR MAGNITUDE OF IMPACTS ARE UNKNOWN | 25 |
| 6. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT | 26 |
| 7. REFERENCES | 28 |

Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| FIGURE 1-1 SITE LOCATION MAP..... | 3 |
| FIGURE 3-1 PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT..... | 11 |
| FIGURE 4-1 DESIGNATED NATURA 2000 SITES LOCATED IN WIDER HINTERLAND. | 17 |
| FIGURE 4-2 NATIONALLY DESIGNATED SITES IN WIDER HINTERLAND..... | 18 |

Tables

| | |
|---|----|
| TABLE 4-1 DISTANCE FROM THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE TO DESIGNATED NATURE CONSERVATION SITES IN THE WIDER AREA. 13 | |
| TABLE 5-1 SUMMARY OF DESIGNATED SITES FOR WHICH POTENTIAL IMPACTS HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED. | 21 |
| TABLE 5-2 PLANNING APPLICATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROPOSED WORKS. | 24 |

1. INTRODUCTION

Ecology Ireland Wildlife Consultants Ltd. were commissioned by Avenir Homes Limited to produce a Screening Statement report in support of the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process in relation to a proposed Strategic Housing Development (SHD) at Cartronroy, Kilnafaddoge, Lissywollen and Ardnaglug (townlands), Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Avenir Homes Limited. intend to apply to An Bord Pleanála for planning permission for a site of 4.1ha for a mixed use SHD of 122 no. residential units, 46 no. student apartments consisting of 283 bed spaces, a creche (180 sq.m), and all associated site development works. The proposed development makes provision for 60 no. dwelling houses (38 no. 3 bed units and 22 no. 4 bed units), 20 no. duplexes (10 no. 1 bed units, 10 no. 2 bed units) and 42 no. apartments (16 no. 1 bed units and 26 no. 2 bed units). The duplex units will be provided over 4 storeys with 4 no. 2 beds providing a 5th storey in one feature area. The remaining 38 apartments will be provided in a 3-6 storey building. The proposed student accommodation makes provision for 283 no. bed spaces in 3 no. blocks between 4-7 storeys in height. Ancillary site works include public and communal open spaces, hard and soft landscaping, pedestrian / cycleways, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, public lighting, ESB substation and supporting distribution kiosks, and all other ancillary works above and below ground. The proposed development includes two new vehicular entrances onto the permitted Lissywollen Avenue alongside pedestrian, cycle and bus stop infrastructure. The proposal includes pedestrian and cycle linkages onto the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south and Blackberry Lane to the west.

Appropriate Assessment is required under Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive for any project or plan that may give rise to significant effects on a Natura 2000 site. A screening assessment is undertaken to establish if any proposed plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any site that has been designated under the E.U. Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), i.e. a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), or the E.U. Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), i.e. a Special Protection Area (SPA). Collectively, SAC's and SPA's are known as Natura 2000 sites. The conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites have been published by the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) with reference to the habitats and species for which the sites are designated. These conservation objectives are considered when carrying out screening and appropriate assessments for plans and projects that might impact upon Natura 2000 sites. The findings of the assessment must be considered by the competent authority, in this case Westmeath County Council (or An Bord Pleanála if appealed).

To establish whether the proposed development will potentially impact on Natura 2000 sites, a Screening Statement report, as required under Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive, has been prepared for submission to Westmeath County Council.

1.1. BACKGROUND

The study site is located approximately 1.2km to the northeast of Athlone town centre (See Figure 1-1). The site is bounded to the south by the Old Rail Trail greenway, to the southeast by Garrycastle Spar Shop and to the northeast, north and west by a local link road (permitted Lissywollen Avenue) and "Blackberry Lane". The site is undeveloped, greenfield and is currently used primarily for agricultural purposes. Vehicular access to the proposed development will be provided via the east-west link road (known as Lissywollen Avenue) permitted under An Bord Pleanála Reference 309513-21 which neighbours the proposed development to the west beyond Blackberry Lane. The total site area of the SHD application site is approximately 4.1 hectares.

The closest Natura 2000 site; Crosswood Bog SAC is located c. 1.6km southeast from the proposed site boundary. The site is located within the Upper Shannon Catchment, Hydrometric Area 26, and the Shannon River Basin District.

There are no watercourses within the proposed site. The closest waterbody is the Shannon (Upper)_120, (named on the EPA Database as IE_SH_26S021800), which is located approximately 904m south of the proposed site boundary. It is a tributary of the River Shannon. It has been given a River Waterbody Framework Directive (WFD) Status (2013-2018) of “Poor” and a WFD Risk Status of “At Risk”.

The study site lies within the 2km Grid Square “N04Q” of the Biodiversity Ireland Database. This grid square contained 2 records of the high impact invasive species Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). An invasive species and ecological walkover was undertaken in July 2021. No species listed on the Third Schedule of the 2011 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations (i.e. species of which it is an offense to disperse, spread or otherwise cause to grow in any place) were recorded within the proposed development site boundary.

Residential developments lie to the south of the study site and the Athlone Bypass Road lies to the north. The proposed site is made up of a number of fields, with one large field to the north of the development site consisting of semi-improved grassland. There are a further three small fields within the ownership boundary, the easternmost of which is outside the application site. Parts of the central and the westernmost of the small fields are within the application site. These fields consist of improved agricultural grassland and dry meadows and grassy verges.

Post construction, the site will consist of an occupied residential development. While there will be additional human activity at the proposed development site during the operational phase, there will be no additional resource requirements from the surrounding environment, with the exception of water supply and surface/storm water and foul/effluent drainage to and from the operational site.

The surface water catchment will have a gravity surface water drainage network which will outfall into a dedicated attenuation tank to the north of the site. The attenuation tank has been sized to store the runoff from a 1:30 year storm of critical duration below ground, with the additional storage required for a storm event greater than 1:30 and up to 1:100 year to be stored above ground within a depressed area (detention basin) in the public open space. The depressed area has been sized such that the maximum water level in the public open space for a 1:100-year storm event of critical duration will be 300mm in depth. Full details can be found in the Civil Engineering prepared by ORS (2021).

Figure 1-1 Site Location Map



2. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT AND SCREENING

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43 EEC) sets out the obligation of Member States. Article 6(2) states that:

“Member States shall take appropriate steps to avoid, in the special areas of conservation, the deterioration of natural habitats and the habitats of species as well as disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated, in so far as such disturbance could be significant in relation to the objectives of this Directive.”

Article 6(3) states:

‘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’

The first stage of the Appropriate Assessment process involves undertaking a screening exercise, the outcome of which then determines whether it is necessary to proceed with further stages. This report forms a part of the screening exercise.

A number of documents relating to the appropriate assessment process have been referred to during the preparation of this screening report. These are:

European and National Legislation

- Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (also known as the ‘Habitats Directive’);
- Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds, codified version, (also known as the ‘Birds Directive’);
- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2015; and
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

Guidance

- European Commission (2015) Ecological flows in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive – Guidance Document No. 31.
- European Court of Justice, Case – C-664/15
- European Court of Justice, Case – C117/00
- European Court of Justice, Case – C461/13
- European Court of Justice, Case – C323/17
- DoEHLG (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environmental Heritage and Local Government.
- European Commission (2018) Managing European Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC.

- 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 (2021/C 437/01).
- European Commission (2000) Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.
- European Commission (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting European Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- Commission notice Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive (C/2021/7301 European Commission; October 2021).
- European Commission (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the ‘Habitats Directive’ 92/49/EEC; clarification of the concepts of: Alternative solutions, Imperative reasons of overriding public interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- European Commission (2013). Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission

Departmental/ NPWS Circulars

- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. (DoEHLG, 2010);
- Appropriate Assessment of Land Use Plans. Circular Letter SEA 1/08 & NPWS 1/08;
- Water Services Investment and Rural Water Programmes – Protection of Natural Heritage and National Monuments. Circular L8/08;

2.1. SCREENING

This report includes the impact assessment and testing required under the provisions of Article 6(3) by means of the first stage of Appropriate Assessment, the screening process (as set out in the EU Guidance documents).

The NPWS guidance (2009/2010) states:

“Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3):

- whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site; and
- whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening should be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, unless potential impacts clearly can be avoided through the modification or redesign of the plan or project, in which case the screening process is repeated on the

altered plan. The greatest level of evidence and justification will be needed in circumstances when the process ends at screening stage on grounds of no impact.”

The following sections (3, 4, 5 and 6) comprise the required assessment as laid out in the screening sections of the guidance documentation¹.

With regard to the screening process (Stage 1), EU Commission guidance² states:

“This stage examines the likely effects of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. This assessment comprises four steps:

- *determining whether the project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site;*
- *describing the project or plan and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site;*
- *identifying the potential effects on the Natura 2000 site;*
- *assessing the significance of any effects on the Natura 2000 site”.*

Furthermore, Article 42 of S.I 477 of 2011 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (the “2011 Regulations”) stipulates that screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site shall be carried out by the competent authority, to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European sites.

Article 42(21) of the Regulations states:

“(a) Where a public authority, referred to in this paragraph as “the first authority”, has carried out a screening for Appropriate Assessment or an Appropriate Assessment in relation to a plan or project, any other public authority, referred to in this Regulation as “the second authority”, that is required to carry out a screening for Appropriate Assessment or an Appropriate Assessment of the same plan or project shall take account of the screening for Appropriate Assessment or Appropriate Assessment of the first authority in relation to that plan or project, and of any information, including a Natura Impact Statement that was prepared for consideration by the first authority or another second authority in relation to the plan or project.

(b) In taking account of a screening for Appropriate Assessment or Appropriate Assessment in relation to a plan or project and of a Natura Impact Statement, the second authority shall consider the extent to which the scope of that screening for Appropriate Assessment or Appropriate Assessment or Natura Impact Statement covers the issues that would be required to be addressed by the second authority in a screening for Appropriate Assessment or Appropriate Assessment of the plan or project in view of the scope of the consent to be given by it, and shall identify any issues that have not, in that regard, been adequately addressed.”

¹ EC (2001) *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* European Commission.

² Paragraph 3.1 of ‘*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites. Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (Nov. 2001)

The Competent Authority, in carrying out a screening exercise shall take account of a *screening for Appropriate Assessment or Appropriate Assessment of the first authority in relation to that plan or project, and of any information, including a Natura Impact Statement that was prepared for consideration by the first authority or another second authority in relation to the plan or project.* As such any assessments carried out by other competent authorities, including previously by the same competent authority, are relevant.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1. SITE LOCATION AND LAYOUT

The site location is shown above in Figure 1-1. The proposed development site is located 1.2km to the northeast of Athlone town centre. An ecological impact assessment (EclA) was prepared in relation to the proposed development with desktop and field studies carried out by Ecology Ireland Ltd.

3.2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Avenir Homes Ltd. intend to apply for planning permission at a site of 4.1ha for:

- The construction of a mixed-use residential development of 122 no. residential units with ancillary creche,
- 46 no. student apartments consisting of 283 bed spaces, and all associated site development works.
- The proposed development makes provision for 60 no. dwelling houses comprising 38 no. 2-storey 3-bed townhouses, 7 no. 2-storey 4-bed townhouses, 7 no. 3-storey 4-bed townhouses, 6 no. 2 storey 4-bed semi-detached and 2 no. 2 storey 4-bed detached.
- The proposed development includes 62 no. apartments / duplexes to be provided as follows: Block R1 containing 38 no. apartments (16 no. 1 bed units and 22 no. 2 bed units) in a 3-6 storey building, and Block R2 containing 20 no. duplex units (10 no. 2 bed units and 10 no. 3 bed units) over 4 storeys with 4 no. apartments (4 no. 2 bed units) in one 5th storey feature area.
- The proposed student accommodation makes provision for 283 no. bed spaces in 3 no. blocks to be provided as follows: Block S1 containing 18 apartments with 117 bed spaces over 6 storeys, Block S2 containing 16 apartments with 107 bed spaces over 7 storeys, and Block S3 containing 12 apartments with 59 bed spaces over 5 storeys.
- The proposed development will provide for two new vehicular accesses as well as pedestrian entrances onto Lissywollen Avenue east-west access road (as permitted under An Bord Pleanála Reference ABP-309513-21). Minor modifications to ABP-309513-21 are proposed to cater for these access points, alterations to cycle/pedestrian paths, the removal of a central island to facilitate the south-eastern entrance, and provision of bus stop infrastructure.
- Ancillary site works include public and communal open spaces, hard and soft landscaping, pedestrian / cycleways, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, public lighting, ESB substation and supporting distribution kiosks, and all other ancillary works above and below ground.
- Pedestrian and cycle linkages onto the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south and Blackberry Lane (L40061) to the west.

In addition to the above specified works within the red-line boundary, Westmeath County Council are facilitating some offsite works to support the project for which the applicant has confirmed written consent. These include:

- Resurfacing Blackberry Lane along the western extent of the site. A special development contribution has been agreed with the applicant for such purposes.
- Facilitating works to complete connections to the Old Rail Trail Greenway, including

- Completion of pedestrian/cycle path between Blocks R1 and S1 to the surfaced area of the greenway to the south, and;
 - Replacement of existing gated access between the greenway and Blackberry Lane (southwest of the site) with a revised arrangement with dedicated cycle/pedestrian access. Final works to be agreed with Westmeath County Council.

The proposed layout is shown in Figure 3-1. The proposed development is clearly unrelated to the management of any Natura 2000 site.

3.2.1. EXISTING HABITATS AT THE SITE

A desktop review of botanical data for the study site was undertaken by consulting available online databases to identify botanical species of interest (e.g. rare, protected, invasive) previously recorded within the relevant national grid squares that overlap the study site. In relation to the location of the proposed development study site at Lissywollen, Athlone, a review of N04Q (2km) and N04 (10km) national grid squares from the NBDC online database were completed.

No botanical species protected under the Flora (Protection) Order 2015, listed in Annex II or IV of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), or listed as species of conservation concern in Ireland were recorded during the site visits. All species recorded during the botanical survey are considered common for similar habitats in the general area.

There are no records of rare or protected plant species within the 2km grid square N04Q which encompasses the study site (after NBDC online database). The BSBI database holds a historic record for the following species listed on the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015. A record for Basil Thyme (*Acinos arvensis*) from pre-1930 from the 10-km grid square N04 is held on the BSBI database. The BSBI database also holds nine records of Narrow-leaved helliborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) from the 10-km grid square N04, the most recent being from the period 2010-2019. The NBDC database also holds records for this species with the records being from 2 km grid square N04N around Coosan Point on the eastern shore of Lough Ree, north of Athlone. The BSBI database holds recent (2020 onward) records of Short-leaved Starwort (*Callitriche truncata*) from 2 km grid squares N04F and N04K, in the River Shannon area of Athlone. The BSBI database holds two records for Red hemp nettle (*Galeopsis angustifolia*) for the 10-km grid square N04 with one record from the 2 km grid squares N04F, west of the River Shannon, from the period 1987-1999. The BSBI database holds a record of Betony (*Betonica officinalis*) from the 10-km grid square N04 from the period 1987-1999.

No records for bryophyte species listed on the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015 were found in the 10-km grid square N04 on the NPWS webmapping facility for legally protected bryophytes.

The grid square N04Q contained 2 records of the high impact invasive species Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*). Invasive alien plant species of European Union concern (IAS Regulation 1143/2014) were not recorded within the proposed development site boundary. Traveller's Joy (*Clematis vitalba*) was recorded at three locations around the margins of the smaller southern fields. This species is classified as 'risk of medium impact' invasive species (Kelly *et al.*, 2013). Montbretia (*Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora*) was recorded growing on the grassy bank close to the proposed entrance location for the proposed development. This species has not been risk assessed but has the potential to spread into habitats such as grasslands, roadsides, forests and riparian areas, where it can compete with native understory or ground vegetation.

Snowberry was recorded along the laneway which runs adjacent to the eastern side of the proposed development site. This species has not been risk assessed but can displace native species by forming dense thickets by suckering.

No Annex I habitats, those listed under the EU Habitats Directive, are present within the study site. The study site consists of one large semi-improved neutral grassland (GS1N) field on the northern side of the study site which has previously been grazed by sheep and horses. South of this large field, there are two smaller fields. The western field was classified as semi-improved agricultural grassland (GA1S) during the site walkover. The western side of the adjacent field within the study site boundary was classified as dry meadow and grassy verge (GS2) although there is no evidence for recent mowing or grazing of this field as the sward was dominated by coarse, tussocky species growing up to c.0.75-1 m high and was rank. Smaller patches of this grassy verge habitat were recorded along the eastern and northeastern boundary, next to a gravel access track. A small area of dry calcareous grassland (GS1) was recorded associated with the margins of a depression feature on the south eastern boundary of the proposed development site. This habitat is surrounded by the dry meadow and grassy verge (GS2) and a lone hawthorn tree within the field.

3.2.2. FAUNA AT THE SITE

As described in the accompanying EclA, both desktop and field surveys were carried out to describe the fauna species present at the proposed development site. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the habitats present, there was a fairly depauperate faunal assemblage recorded at the site. No bird species listed on Annex I species of the EU Birds Directive was recorded within the study site. Overall, the diversity and abundance of bird species recorded at the site is considered typical of the habitats present on the study site and in the immediate vicinity of the study site. Similar habitats are also present to a much greater extent in the wider landscape (*e.g.* hedgerows/wooded areas, arable crop, pastures, buildings and artificial surfaces and mature suburban gardens/amenity spaces). The study site also contains extremely limited foraging, commuting, breeding and resting habitats for the mammal species recorded in general. The mammal fauna recorded for the study site are terrestrial species listed of 'Least Concern' in the Irish Red Data Book of Mammals (Marnell *et al.*, 2019) and the proposed site is of low local importance for mammal (non-volant) species.

Overall, based on this current assessment, the study site is considered of lower local importance to biodiversity.

Figure 3-1 Proposed Site Layout



LEGEND

- Application site boundary
- Land in ownership of applicant
- ▲ Proposed site entrance
- Ⓢ Location of site notice
- S.B.S. Sheltered Bike Stands
- B.S. Bike Stands

Note: For street lighting refer to landscape architects drawings

N
↑

1:1000

ISSUED FOR PLANNING APPROVAL

Client: **AVIER HOMES LIMITED**
 Project: **THE GREEN QUARTER**
 Drawing: **PROPOSED SITE PLAN WITH ROOF PLAN**

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|---------|
| Project Name: | Phase: | Date: |
| Client: | Scale: | Author: |
| Project No.: | Revision: | Check: |
| Scale: | Drawn: | Rev: |
| Alt: | Alt: | Alt: |

Henry J Lyons
 101-1011
 01-01-2024

1 PROPOSED SITE PLAN
1:1000

4. NATURA 2000 SITES

The European network of Natura sites comprises Special Protection Areas (SPAs) - designated under Directive 79/409/EEC of 2nd April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive); and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) - designated under EU Directive 92/43/EEC of 21st May 1992, on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). The directives have been transposed into Irish law by means of statutory instrument. The relevant current regulations are the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011). A European site is defined in SI 477 of 2011 as “(a) a candidate site of Community importance, (b) a site of Community importance, (c) a candidate special area of conservation, (d) a special area of conservation, (e) a candidate special protection area, or (f) a special protection area,” and for the purposes of this screening report and compliance with the requirements of Article 6(2) of the Habitats Directive this definition of European site has been adopted.

In light of updated guidance documentation on Appropriate Assessment (NPWS, 2009 - revised February 2010) and the requirements of SI 477, the EU Habitats and Birds Regulations (2011 as amended), sites in the wider locality are considered for the purposes of assessment in relation to the proposed residential development. European sites in the wider area are shown in Figure 1-2 and listed in Table 4-1 along with the approximate distances to the sites red line boundary. A nominal 15km hinterland area has been used in this assessment with reference, where appropriate, to more distant sites which may be ecologically linked with the development area.

Conservation objectives for the European sites in the Natura 2000 network are published on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht at <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/conservation-management-planning/conservation-objectives>.

Generic conservation objectives have been compiled for those sites (SAC and SPAs) which do not yet have site-specific conservation objectives and are based on maintaining/restoring the favourable conservation condition of the habitats and species for which sites are selected.

The proposed development site is not located within or near to any designated wildlife conservation site (see Table 4-1, Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2). The nearest designated sites from the proposed site boundary are; Crosswood Bog SAC 002337 (c. 1.6km), Middle Shannon Callows SPA 004096 (2.0km) and River Shannon Callows SAC 000216 (2.0km). There are a total of thirteen Natura 2000 sites, three NHAs and fourteen pNHA sites within 15km of the application site. Table 4-1 shows the minimum distances of the designated sites from the application site boundary. The site synopses, conservation objectives and additional supporting information documents are available on the National Parks & Wildlife Service website (www.npws.ie).

Table 4-1 Distance from the proposed development site to designated nature conservation sites in the wider area.

| Site Name | Site Code | Minimum Distance (km) |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Natura 2000 sites | | |
| Crosswood Bog SAC | 002337 | 1.6 |
| Middle Shannon Callows SPA | 004096 | 2.0 |
| River Shannon Callows SAC | 000216 | 2.0 |
| Lough Ree SAC | 000440 | 2.5 |
| Lough Ree SPA | 004064 | 2.5 |
| Carn Park Bog SAC | 002336 | 3.9 |
| Pilgrim's Rd. Esker SAC | 001776 | 9.8 |
| Mongan Bog SAC | 000580 | 10.2 |
| Mongan Bog SPA | 004017 | 10.4 |
| Castlesampson Esker SAC | 001625 | 11.0 |
| Ballynamona Bog & Corkip Lough SAC | 002339 | 11.4 |
| Fin Lough SAC | 000576 | 11.9 |
| Lough Funshinagh SAC | 000611 | 14.3 |
| Nationally Designated Sites | | |
| Crosswood Bog pNHA | 000678 | 1.6 |
| River Shannon Callows pNHA | 000216 | 2.0 |
| Lough Ree pNHA | 000440 | 2.5 |
| Carrickynaghtan Bog NHA | 001623 | 3.9 |
| Carn Park Bog pNHA | 000676 | 3.9 |
| Waterstown Lake pNHA | 001732 | 4.9 |
| Clonydonnin Bog NHA | 000565 | 8.8 |
| Mongan Bog pNHA | 000580 | 10.2 |
| Doon Esker Wood pNHA | 001830 | 10.2 |
| Pilgrim's Rd. Esker pNHA | 001776 | 10.3 |
| Castlesampson Esker pNHA | 001625 | 10.7 |
| Ballynagarbry pNHA | 001713 | 11.0 |
| Clonfinlough Esker pNHA | 000892 | 11.5 |
| Fin Lough pNHA | 000526 | 11.8 |
| Ballygrenia & Ballinderry Bog NHA | 000674 | 12.9 |
| Clonlyon Glebe Bog pNHA | 000893 | 13.0 |
| Lough Nanag Esker pNHA | 000910 | 13.5 |
| Lough Funshinagh pNHA | 000611 | 14.3 |
| Feacle Turlough pNHA | 001634 | 14.9 |

Crosswood Bog SAC

Crosswood Bog SAC is located approximately 1.6km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Active raised bogs [7110] and Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120].

Crosswood Bog is located at a significantly higher elevation than the proposed development site and is not at risk from any hydrologically mediated impacts. Given this there is no source-pathway-receptor chain linking the proposed works to this Natura 2000 site, it is not considered further in this assessment.

Middle Shannon Callows SPA

The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is located approximately 2.0km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038], Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050], Corncrake (*Crex crex*) [A122], Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140], Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142], Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156], Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179] and Wetland and Waterbirds [A999].

The study site contains limited attractive habitat for any of the listed bird species of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. The open nature and regularly disturbed, rank, bare substrates within the agricultural fields with limited woody vegetation and/or linear features, is such that the site study is of low local importance for the local avian community. Given this and that there are no direct hydrological links between the proposed works and the SPA there is no source-pathway-receptor chain linking to this Natura 2000 site, and it is not considered further in this assessment.

River Shannon Callows SAC

The River Shannon Callows SAC is located approximately 2.0km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) [6410], Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*) [6510], Alkaline fens [7230], Limestone pavements [8240], Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) [91E0] and *Lutra lutra* (Otter) [1355].

Given that there are no direct hydrological links between the proposed works and the site, and that Otter are unlikely to occur within or near the proposed development site due to the nature of the habitats present there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Lough Ree SAC

Lough Ree SAC is located approximately 2.5km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* - type vegetation [3150], Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites) [6210], Active raised bogs [7110], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Alkaline fens [7230], Limestone pavements [8240], Bog woodland [91D0], Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion*, *Alnion incanae*, *Salicion albae*) [91E0] and *Lutra lutra* (Otter) [1355].

Given that the SAC is located upstream of the site and that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the Lough Ree SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Lough Ree SPA

Lough Ree SPA is located approximately 2.5km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) [A004], Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038], Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050], Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052], Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) [A053], Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056], Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [A061], Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) [A065], Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) [A067], Coot (*Fulica atra*) [A125], Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140], Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142], Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193] and Wetland and Waterbirds [A999].

Given that the SPA is located upstream of the site and that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SPA there is no potential for significant effects on the habitats within this Natura 2000 site. The special conservation interests are waterbirds and waders that are highly unlikely to occur at or in the immediate vicinity of the site given the nature of the habitats and the local landuse.

Carn Park Bog SAC

Carn Park Bog SAC is located approximately 3.9km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Active raised bogs [7110], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120].

Given that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Pilgrim's Rd. Esker SAC

Pilgrim's Rd. Esker SAC is located approximately 9.8km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites) [6210].

Given the significant distance that the Pilgrim's Rd. Esker SAC lies from the proposed development and that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Mongan Bog SAC

Mongan Bog SAC is located approximately 10.2km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Active raised bogs [7110], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] and Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150]

Given the significant distance that the Mongan Bog SAC lies from the proposed development, that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Mongan Bog SPA

Mongan Bog SPA is located approximately 10.4km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) [A395]

Given the significant distance that the Mongan Bog SPA lies from the proposed development, that there are no direct hydrological links between the site, the habitats present are unattractive for the species and the SPA there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Castlesampson Esker SAC

Castlesampson Esker SAC is located approximately 11.0km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Turloughs [3180] and Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites) [6210].

Given the significant distance that the Castlesampson Esker SAC lies from the proposed development, that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Ballynamona Bog & Corkip Lough SAC

Ballynamona Bog & Corkip Lough SAC is located approximately 11.4km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Turloughs [3180], Active raised bogs [7110], Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120], Depressions on peat substrates of the *Rhynchosporion* [7150] and Bog woodland [91D0].

Given the significant distance that the Ballynamona Bog & Corkip Lough SAC lies from the proposed development, that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Fin Lough SAC

Fin Lough SAC is located approximately 11.9km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Alkaline fens [7230] and *Vertigo geyeri* (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013].

Given the significant distance that the Fin Lough SAC lies from the proposed development, that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Lough Funshinagh SAC

Lough Funshinagh SAC is located approximately 14.3km from the proposed works at Lissywollen. The site is designated for; Turloughs [3180] and Rivers with muddy banks with *Chenopodion rubri p.p.* and *Bidention p.p.* vegetation [3270].

Given the significant distance that the Lough Funshinagh SAC lies from the proposed development, that there are no direct hydrological links between the site and the SAC there is no potential for significant effects on this Natura 2000 site and it is not considered further in this assessment.

Figure 4-1 Designated Natura 2000 sites located in wider hinterland.

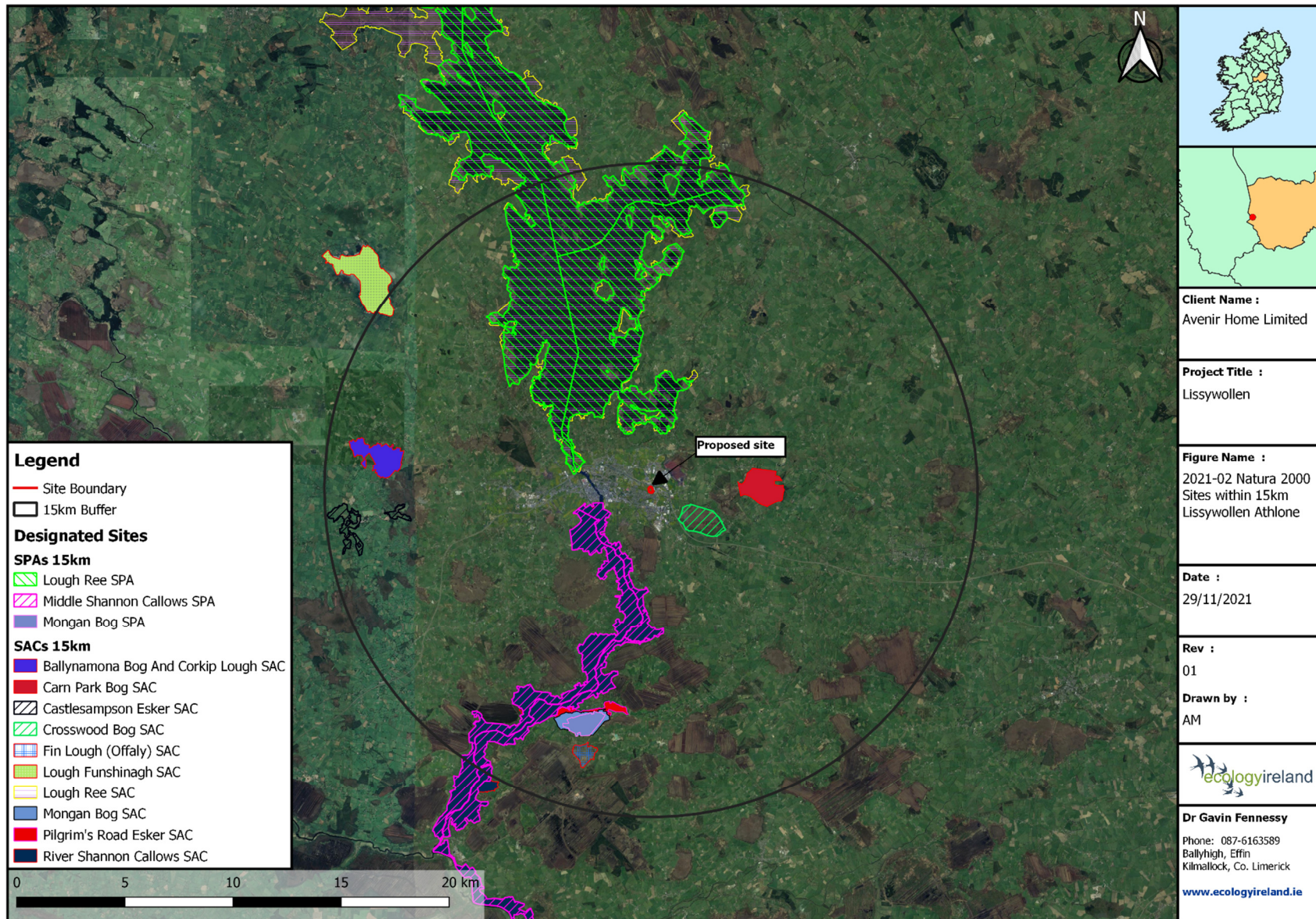
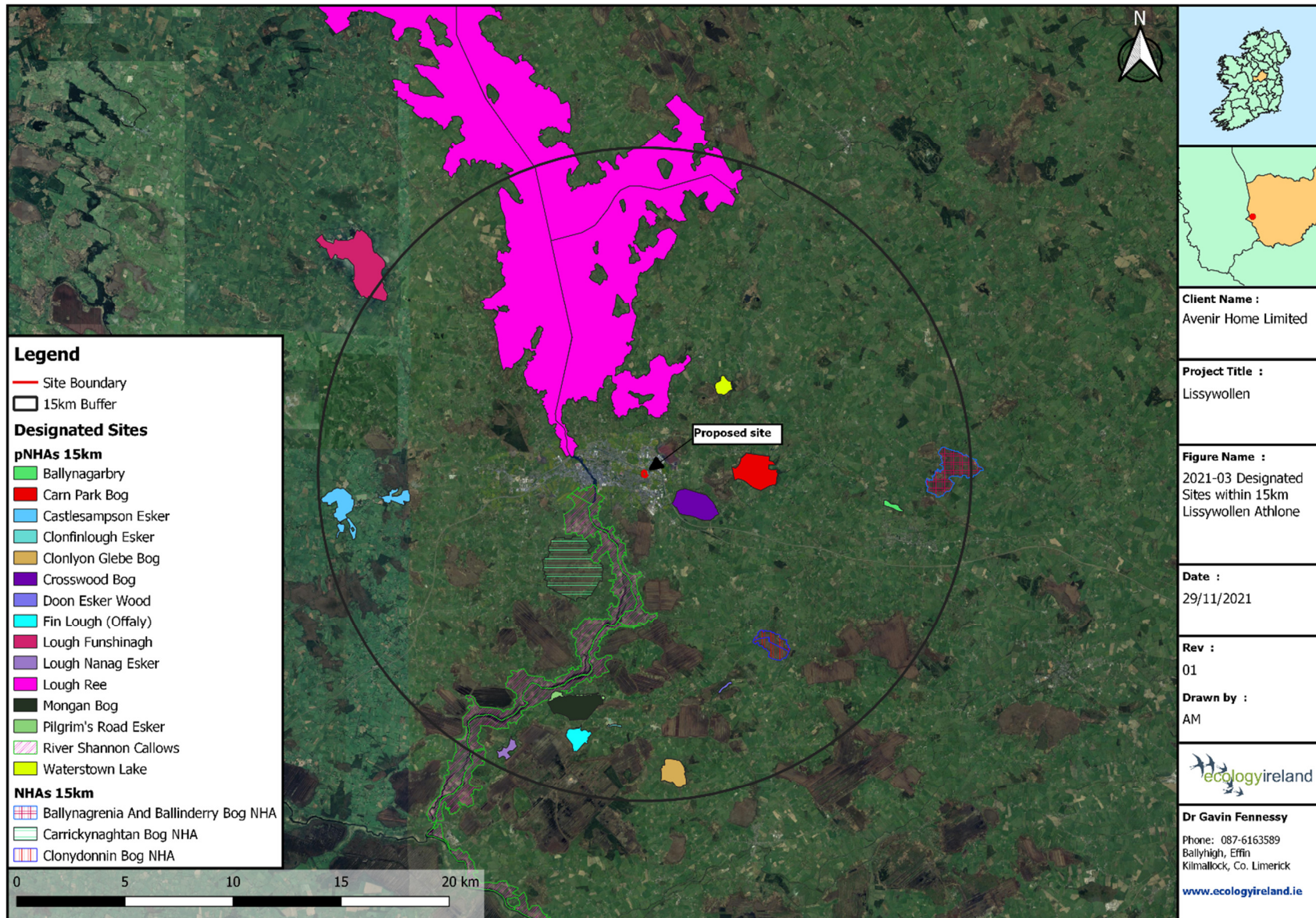


Figure 4-2 Nationally designated sites in wider hinterland.



5. STAGE 1: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

5.1. ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT LIKELY TO IMPACT ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES

The development site is relatively small in area (4.1ha) and is situated more than 1.5km from the nearest Natura 2000 sites. There are no open drains or watercourses located on or adjacent to the proposed development site.

As detailed in Section 3.2 of this report, the proposed works will be constructed on land which is already of relatively low ecological value, comprising dry calcareous and neutral grassland and improved agricultural grassland. The development site is not part of any Natura 2000 site thus ruling out direct habitat loss impacts. The project does not pose a risk for displacement or disturbance of species of qualifying interest for the Natura 2000 sites in question.

5.1.1. POTENTIAL IMPACT-RECEPTOR PATHWAYS

Potential Hydrological Links- Surface Water Run-off

There are no watercourses on or adjacent to the proposed development site. The closest watercourse; The Shannon (Upper)_020 (IE_SH_26S021800) to the proposed site boundary is located approximately 904m south. The site is not considered to be at risk of flooding.

The closest designated Natura 2000 sites to the proposed development are Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and River Shannon Callows SAC. After construction surface water from the site will be attenuated before connecting with the municipal system. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be utilised throughout the site where practical to help mitigate the adverse effects of urban stormwater runoff on the environment by reducing runoff rates, volumes and frequencies and reducing pollutant concentrations in stormwater runoff. SuDS measures which have been incorporated include green roofs, rain gardens, permeable paving and attenuation systems which promote infiltration.

The proposed site will be served via below ground gravity pipework which predominately runs below the proposed internal roads within the development. The surface water network will be fed via road gullies and rainwater from building roofs via guttering and downpipes. The surface water network will be attenuated in the north of the site and flow controlled at greenfield runoff rates and bypass interceptor, prior to outfall into the diverted 1050mm diameter surface water drainage sewer to the north.

The surface water catchment will have a gravity surface water drainage network which will outfall into a dedicated attenuation tank to the north of the site. The attenuation tank has been sized to store the runoff from a 1:30 year storm of critical duration below ground, with the additional storage required for a storm event greater than 1:30 and up to 1:100 year to be stored above ground within a depressed area (detention basin) in the public open space. The depressed area has been sized such that the maximum water level in the public open space for a 1:100 year storm event of critical duration will be 300mm in depth. Full details can be found in the Civil Engineering Report by ORS.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) will be utilised throughout the site where practical to help mitigate the adverse effects of urban stormwater runoff on the environment by reducing runoff rates, volumes and frequencies and reducing pollutant concentrations in stormwater runoff. SuDS measures which have been

incorporated include green roofs, rain gardens, permeable paving and attenuation systems which promote infiltration.

The site is divided into two main catchments. The first catchment includes runoff from all individual houses, block R2 apartment/duplexes, roads and paved areas directed into below ground drainage which outfalls to the attenuation system to the north of the site. The second catchment includes the collection of roof runoff from R1 apartment block and S1-S3 student accommodation blocks which will be collected locally and directed into rain gardens for treatment and infiltration.

Athlone agglomeration within which the proposed development is located is served by Athlone WWTP which discharges treated wastewater to the River Shannon. This WWTP has adequate spare capacity (design PE 36,000) and is currently compliant with the ELV's in the wastewater discharge licence (Irish Water Annual Environmental Report 2020 Athlone D0007-01).

Crosswood Bog is located at significantly higher elevation than the proposed development site and not at risk from any hydrologically mediated impacts. Similarly, Lough Ree SPA and SAC are located upstream of the proposed development site. There is no concern in relation to hydrologically mediated effects on any of the other nationally or European designated conservation sites in the wider hinterland area.

Disturbance/Displacement of Fauna

Consideration needs to be given to the potential for disturbance/displacement impacts of fauna through noise and/or visual cues arising from the proposed development. Crosswood Bog SAC lies 1.6km southeast of the proposed works and is not designated for the protection of any qualifying interest faunal species.

The study site does not overlook any of the designated sites and given the distances between the proposed development and even the most proximate of designated sites (>1.6km away) there is no concern in relation to potential direct impacts upon these sites, in relation to disturbance or displacement effects. The special conservation interests of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA, which is located 2.0km southwest are listed above in Section 4. These waders and waterbirds species are very unlikely to occur, with any regularity, or in any significant numbers within the agricultural fields in the suburban part of Athlone. Similarly, Otter, *Lutra lutra*, the only Qualifying Interest of the River Shannon Callows SAC, located 2.0km southwest, is very unlikely to occur within or near the proposed development site due to the nature of the habitats present.

The conservation objectives/interests of the remaining designated sites in the wider hinterland of the proposed development site relate to habitats and/or flora that have no likelihood of being subject to disturbance/displacement impacts as a result of the construction of the proposed development.

Impacts on qualifying interests present in this area as a result of the proposed development can be ruled out.

Flooding

The proposed development site has been analysed for risks of flooding in accordance with the recommendations of the DoEHLG / OPW Guidelines for Planning Authorities - "The Planning Process and Flood Risk Management". The development site is not within any Flood Zone and there is no historical record of flooding occurring in proximity to the site. Therefore, potential flooding/floodplain impacts are not considered relevant in relation to this development site and any designated site.

5.1.2. POTENTIAL IMPACT-RECEPTOR PATHWAY SUMMARY

In summary, there is a potential link between the study site and the River Shannon through post-construction connection to municipal drainage and wastewater connection. Neither, has the potential for likely significant effects upon these designated sites due to the design of the drainage system and operational performance of the Athlone WWTP.

Table 5-1 Summary of designated sites for which potential impacts have been identified.

| Site Name & Code | Conservation Summary | Minimum Distance from Site (km) |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Crosswood Bog SAC 002337 | <p>The conservation objectives of this site relate to maintaining the favourable conservation condition of the following qualifying interests;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active raised bogs* [7110] • Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] <p>* indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive</p> | 1.6 km over land |
| Middle Shannon Callows SPA 004096 | <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] • Corncrake (<i>Crex crex</i>) [A122] • Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] • Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] • Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] • Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | 2.0km |
| River Shannon Callows SAC 000216 | <p>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 selected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] • Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] • Alkaline fens [7230] • Limestone pavements [8240] • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] • <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] | 2.0km |

5.1.3. DIRECT HABITAT LOSS

The proposed site is not located within the boundaries of any Natura 2000 site, does not include any habitats relating to the conservation objectives of the designated site in question, and will not require any resources from these sites, thereby ruling out any direct habitat loss from these conservation sites. No habitat loss of relevance to the Natura 2000 sites in the wider area will be lost as a result of the proposed development.

5.1.4. INDIRECT HABITAT LOSS OR DETERIORATION

Indirect habitat loss or deterioration of Natura 2000 sites within the surrounding area can occur from the effects of run-off or discharge into the aquatic environment through impacts such as increased siltation, nutrient release and/or contamination. This requires a connection between activities on site and the Natura 2000 site in question through watercourses and/or drainage. As described in Section 5.1.1 the proposed development will be connected to municipal services. The site drainage incorporates a range of SuDS measures including attenuation and outfall at greenfield rates, via a bypass interceptor to municipal drainage. Similarly, the site wastewater will be conveyed to Athlone WWTP which is operating within the licence limits and has adequate additional design capacity.

5.1.5. DISTURBANCE / DISPLACEMENT OF SPECIES

As described in Section 5.1.1 there are no species of qualifying interest for the Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC - all of which are located over 1.5km from the proposed site boundary that will be affected by the proposed works. During the ecological walkover surveys very little non-volant mammal activity was recorded on site. Given the nature, scale and location of the proposed development there is no likelihood of significant disturbance or displacement impacts on species in the surrounding area.

5.2. LIKELY IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES

The likely impacts of the proposed works at on Natura 2000 sites are discussed below in terms of:

- Size and scale and land-take;
- Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;
- Resource requirements;
- Transportation requirements;
- Duration of construction, operation etc.;
- Others.

5.2.1. SIZE, SCALE & LAND-TAKE

The proposed development site is 4.1ha in area. There will be no loss of any area of natural or semi-natural habitats as a result of the proposed development. Consequently, it is considered that the size, scale and land-take of the proposed residential development will have no impact upon the Natura 2000 sites in the wider area.

5.2.2. DISTANCE FROM OR KEY FEATURES OF THE NATURA 2000 SITES

Disturbance and displacement are not an issue for the qualifying interests of any Natura 2000 site, as there is adequate separation distance between the development site and Natura 2000 site (>1.5km overland to Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC).

Furthermore, the habitats at and immediately surrounding the works are not suitable for the qualifying interests of these Natura 2000 sites.

5.2.3. RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS (WATER ABSTRACTION ETC.)

There will be no resource requirements (including water abstraction) from Natura 2000 sites as a result of the proposed construction or occupation of the new residential development.

5.2.4. TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS

Transport requirements during the construction phase will use existing infrastructure and will not occur within the boundaries of the Natura 2000 sites under consideration. During the construction phase, there will be minor localised increases in traffic associated with the proposed works. When occupied there will be a predictable increase in the traffic in the area. However, there is no concern that this will impact upon any Natura 2000 sites. Consequently, there is no concern of likely impacts relating to the transport requirements of the proposed project and the Natura 2000 sites in question.

5.2.5. DURATION OF CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION

The proposed development will be constructed over a period of approximately 24-36 months. No potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites as a result of construction duration are envisaged.

5.2.6. CUMULATIVE AND IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS

In order to fully assess the potential impact of the proposed development on Natura 2000 sites, the project must be assessed alone or in combination with existing activities and proposed plans for the region. A review was undertaken of projects and plans of relevance in the areas close to the proposed SHD development.

A separate planning application was approved for a separate SHD of 576 no. residential dwellings at a site adjacent to the proposed development (Lissywollen SHD). This is summarised below in Table 5-2.

Potential cumulative effects in relation to this and other developments in the area include construction related surface-water run-off, where qualifying interests associated with the nearby Natura 2000 sites could be subject to cumulative impact through hydrological or water quality impacts such as increased siltation, nutrient release and contaminated run-off arising from other developments. This project has been considered on its own and in relation to the potential for any cumulative or in combination impacts arising from any combination of the project proceeding in the future. Taking the above into consideration, along with the proposed environmental management and controls integrated into the project design here and for other projects planned or proposed in the area cumulative and in-combination effects relating to other developments are not considered to be relevant in this case.

Table 5-2 Planning Applications in the vicinity of the proposed works.

| Name of Plan/Project | Ref.Number | Address | Description of proposed development | Hyperlink to application on Planning Authority website |
|----------------------|------------|---|--|---|
| An Bord Pleanála | 309513 | Townlands of Lissywollen, Kilnafaddoge and Retreat, and partially traversing the townlands of Curragh, Cloghanboy (Strain) and Cloghanboy (Homan), Athlone, Co. Westmeath | 576 no. residential dwellings (285 no. houses, 291 no. apartments), creche and associated works. | https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/case/309513 |

5.3. LIKELY CHANGES TO THE NATURA 2000 SITES

Based on the screening statement presented above, and with consideration of the following potential impacts:

- **Loss of habitat**
- **Habitat or species fragmentation**
- **Disturbance to key species**
- **Reduction in species density**
- **Changes to key element of the Natura 2000 sites**

No likely changes to the key elements of the Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC or any other Natura 2000 site are anticipated as a result of the proposed strategic housing development at Lissywollen, Athlone. This is based on the following considerations:

- The proposed development site is not within or adjacent to any Natura 2000 site, and nor does it provide habitat suitable for any qualifying interest species of Natura 2000 sites.
- The proposed construction will take place at a site with habitats of low ecological value where no invasive species or protected species have been recorded.
- There is >1.5 km separation distance between the proposed development site and the nearest Natura 2000 site overland ruling out disturbance or displacement of qualifying interest species through noise or visual cues.
- The local WWTP is operating within the licence limits and appears to have significant additional design capacity.

5.4. LIKELY IMPACTS ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES AS A WHOLE

Based on the screening assessment, there will be no impacts on the key relationships that define the local Natura 2000 sites.

5.5. INDICATORS OF SIGNIFICANCE AS A RESULT OF THE IDENTIFICATION OF EFFECTS SET OUT ABOVE

Not applicable.

5.6. ELEMENTS OF THE PROJECT LIKELY TO SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES OR WHERE THE SCALE OR MAGNITUDE OF IMPACTS ARE UNKNOWN

Taking the above into consideration, it can be objectively concluded that no significant effects arising from the proposed development are likely to occur in relation to the Natura 2000 sites: Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC (or any other Natura 2000 site in the wider area) as a result of the proposed residential development.

6. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT

| | |
|---|---|
| Name and location of the Natura 2000 sites. | Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC and all other Natura 2000 sites in wider hinterland. See Figure 4-1 above. |
| Description of the project or plan. | Avenir Homes Limited is seeking planning permission for the construction of a mixed use Strategic Housing Development (SHD) of 122 no. residential units, 46 no. student apartments consisting of 283 bed spaces, a creche (180 sq.m), and all associated site development works. The proposed development makes provision for 60 no. dwelling houses (38 no. 3 bed units and 22 no. 4 bed units), 20 no. duplexes (10 no. 1 bed units, 10 no. 2 bed units) and 42 no. apartments (16 no. 1 bed units and 26 no. 2 bed units). The duplex units will be provided over 4 storeys with 4 no. 2 beds providing a 5th storey in one feature area. The remaining 38 apartments will be provided in a 3-6 storey building. The proposed student accommodation makes provision for 283 no. bed spaces in 3 no. blocks between 4-7 storeys in height. Ancillary site works include public and communal open spaces, hard and soft landscaping, pedestrian / cycleways, car parking, cycle parking, bin storage, public lighting, ESB substation and supporting distribution kiosks, and all other ancillary works above and below ground. The proposed development includes two new vehicular entrances onto the permitted Lissywollen Avenue alongside pedestrian, cycle and bus stop infrastructure. The proposal includes pedestrian and cycle linkages onto the Old Rail Trail Greenway to the south and Blackberry Lane to the west. |
| Is the Project or Plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)? | No. |
| Are there other projects or plans that together with the project of plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)? | No. |
| The Assessment of Significant Effects | |
| Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site. | Due to the reasons outlined in the following section, no likely changes to the key elements of the Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC or any other Natura 2000 site are anticipated as a result of the proposed residential development at Lissywollen, alone or in combination with any other plan or project. |
| Explain why these effects are not considered significant. | <p>No likely changes to the key elements of the Crosswood Bog SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and the River Shannon Callows SAC or any other Natura 2000 site are anticipated as a result of the proposed residential development at Lissywollen. This is based on the following considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed development site is not within or adjacent to any Natura 2000 site, and nor does it provide habitat suitable for any qualifying interest species of Natura 2000 sites. |

| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proposed construction will take place at a site with habitats of low ecological value where no invasive species or protected species have been recorded. ▪ There is >1.5km separation distance between the proposed development site and the nearest Natura 2000 site overland ruling out disturbance or displacement of qualifying interest species through noise or visual cues. ▪ The local WWTP is operating within the licence limits and appears to have significant additional design capacity. | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| List of agencies consulted. | n/a | | |
| Response to consultation. | n/a | | |
| Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment | | | |
| Who carried out the assessment | Sources of Data | Level of assessment completed | Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed |
| <p>Dr Gavin Fennessy (BSc PhD MCIEEM) on behalf of Ecology Ireland Ltd.</p> <p>Athena Michaelides (BSc Zoology NUIG) on behalf of Ecology Ireland Ltd.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pers. comm. with project team ▪ Associated documents/drawings. ▪ Site walkovers. ▪ NPWS online designated site data/mapping. ▪ National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) online mapping ▪ EPA online river mapping database ▪ Water Framework Directive online river database ▪ References (below) | <p>Desktop study & field study; am satisfied that this has yielded enough information to adequately complete Stage 1 Screening Statement.</p> | <p>Full results of the assessment are available in the above screening statement report.</p> |

7. REFERENCES

Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government (DoEHLG), 2009. Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities. DoEHLG, Dublin.

European Commission, 2001. Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites – European Commission Methodical Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission DG Environment, Oxford UK.

ORS (2021). CEMP for Green Quarter Project. Included with the current Planning Application.

Marnell, F., Looney, D. & Lawton, C. (2019). Ireland Red List No. 12: Terrestrial Mammals. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.

NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Crosswood Bog SAC 002337. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2021) Conservation objectives for Middle Shannon Callows SPA [004096]. Generic Version 8.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

NPWS (2021) Conservation objectives for River Shannon Callows SAC [000216]. Generic Version 8.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.