An Coimisiún Pleanála

PROPOSED KILMARTIN SOIL RECOVERY FACILITY

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

DECEMBER 2025

PUBLIC

An Coimisiún Pleanála

PROPOSED KILMARTIN SOIL RECOVERY FACILITY

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

TYPE OF DOCUMENT (VERSION) PUBLIC

PROJECT NO. IE-40000103

OUR REF. NO.IE-40000103.R03

DATE: DECEMBER 2025

WSP in Ireland

Town Centre House
Dublin Road
Naas
Co Kildare

WSP.com

QUALITY CONTROL

Issue/revision	First issue	Final	Revision 2	Revision 3
Remarks	Draft	Final for Issue		
Date	03/04/2023	10/12/2025		
Prepared by	Niamh Doyle	Robert O'Hagan		
Signature				
Checked by	Steven Tooher	Luis Iemma		
Signature	ST			
Authorised by	Ruth Treacy	Luis Iemma		
Signature	RT			
Project number	IE-40000103			
Report number	IE-40000103.R03			
File reference	https://wsponline.sharepoint.com/sites/IE-40000103			

CONTENTS

TABLES

FIGURES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Kilmartin Junction 14 Limited has commissioned WSP Ireland Consulting Ltd ('WSP') to carry out a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA Screening) in support of an application for the development of a soil recovery facility (the 'Proposed Development') at lands at Kilmartin, Coynes Cross, Newcastle, County Wicklow (the 'Site').

This screening for Appropriate Assessment forms Stage 1 of the EU Habitats Directive assessment process and has been undertaken in order to comply with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. This report is intended to aid the competent authority (in this case An Bord Pleanála – hereafter referred to as ABP) in determining whether the Proposed Development is likely (alone or in combination with other projects) to result in significant effects to Natura 2000 Sites (also referred to as 'European Sites'). Further steps are to be determined by the findings of the screening assessment. The Site location is indicated in Figure 1-1 below, along with an aerial overview.

Figure 1-1 - Aerial overview of Site with Application Boundary for the Site shown.

Under the requirements of European Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (the 'Habitats Directive'), it is necessary to consider

whether a proposed plan or project may have Likely Significant Effects (LSE) upon areas of nature conservation importance designated under the Directive, so-called European, or Natura 2000 sites. European Sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated for habitats and species of community importance, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)[1] designated for sites recognised for supporting important populations of birds. This requirement is translated into Irish law through The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) ('The Habitats Regulations').

The features for which a European Site is designated are referred to as 'Qualifying Interests' (QIs) for SACs, under the Habitats Directive, and 'Special Conservation Interests' (SCIs) for SPAs, under the Birds Directive. In this report, QIs and SCIs are collectively referred to as 'Qualifying Features' (QFs).

The Habitats Regulations and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) place a duty upon 'Competent Authorities' (in this case ABP) to consider the potential for effects of proposed developments upon European Sites (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) prior to granting consent. Should likely significant effects be identified at the initial screening process (Stage 1), it is necessary to further consider the effects by way of an 'Appropriate Assessment' (Stage 2), the findings of which are reported in a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). Further details of the applicable legislative context are summarised within Section 1.2.

The aims of this Appropriate Assessment Screening are to:

- Introduce the Proposed Development;
- Identify any European Sites which may be adversely affected by the Proposed Development;
- Identify the potential environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Development with the potential to result in adverse effects on the identified European Sites either alone or in combination with other plans/projects;
- Identify whether any of the impacts associated with the Proposed Development are likely to have significant effects on any of the European Sites identified and hence determine whether further assessment of those effects is required or not (i.e. through Appropriate Assessment).

A non-statutory pre-consultation process was carried out with prescribed bodies and other parties over 25 May 2023–26 June 2023 to seek their comments and observations about the proposed development. This process is fully documented in the Pre-Consultation Report prepared by WSP and provided within the SID application submission. All comments and observations received have been considered in the preparation of this AA Screening Report.

During the non-statutory pre-consultation process, NPWS were contacted via the Development Applications Unit (DAU)[2]. No response was received from NPWS in the submission received from the DAU.

[1] SPAs are identified through the criteria outlined in Directive 2009/147/EC, (the codified version of 79/409/EEC as amended) on the conservation of wild birds (the 'Birds Directive') but designated and protected under the Habitats Directive.

[2] The DAU centrally manage the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage role in relation to development proposals.

Inland Fisheries Ireland advised that down-stream dilution effects on any pollutants (e.g. sediments) entering the watercourses as a result of the Proposed Development should not be considered as a reasonable justification for screening out of any likely significant effects potentially arising from planned/unplanned releases to surface water in the Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

1.2. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

1.2.1. EUROPEAN UNION HABITATS DIRECTIVE

Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive sets out the need for 'Appropriate Assessment' of plans or projects which have potential to affect the integrity of a European Site (SPAs and SACs as well as proposed SPAs (pSPAs) and candidate SACs (cSACs)) based on their proximity, or connectivity to the Project):

- '*Any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall undergo an Appropriate Assessment to determine its implications for the site. The Competent Authorities can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned*' (Article 6.3).

1.2.2. THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (BIRDS AND NATURAL HABITATS) REGULATIONS 2011

The Habitats Directive is translated into Irish law through The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) ("The Habitats Regulations"). Part 5 of the Habitats Regulations sets out the circumstances under which an 'Appropriate Assessment' is required. Section 42(1) states that a screening for Appropriate Assessment is required for any project which is not connected with or necessary for the management of a European Site but which, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the European Site.

Section 42(2) expands on this, stipulating that a Competent Authority must carry out a screening for Appropriate Assessment before consent for a plan or project is given, or a decision to undertake or adopt a plan or project is taken. To assist a Competent Authority to discharge its duty in this respect, Section 42(3)(a) gives them the authority to direct a third party to provide a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and Section 42(3)(b) allows them to request any additional information that is considered necessary for the purposes of undertaking an Appropriate Assessment screening. An NIS must include such information or data as the Competent Authority considers necessary to enable it to ascertain if the plan or project will affect the integrity of a European Site. Where a Proposed development is deemed, through Appropriate Assessment, to have an adverse impact on site integrity, a NIS also needs to include:

- The alternative solutions that have been considered and the reasons why they have not been adopted;
- The imperative reasons of overriding public interest that are being relied upon to indicate that the plan or project should proceed notwithstanding that it may adversely affect the integrity of a European [Natura 2000] Site; and,
- The compensatory measures that are being proposed.

Section 42(6) requires that the Competent Authority determines whether or not (on the basis of objective scientific information presented through the screening process) the plan or project both alone and in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site.

Section 42(9) requires the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement to inform the Appropriate Assessment process, where the screening process cannot exclude the possibility that a plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, could have a significant effect on a European Site.

1.2.3. THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)

The Habitats Directive was transposed into Irish law in a planning context, through Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). This sets out the circumstances under which an AA is required, the stages of that assessment which must be undertaken, as summarised above, and the responsibilities of the Competent Authority in considering whether to approve consent for proposed plans or projects.

Section 177U(1) of the Planning and Development Act states "*A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.*"

Section 177U(4) of the Planning and Development Act states "*The competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or a proposed development, as the case may be, is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the draft Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.*"

Where likely significant effects upon a European Site are predicted, or cannot be ruled out, it is the responsibility of the Competent Authority to undertake an AA under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, informed through an Natura Impact Statement (NIS), to determine whether the proposed plan in combination with any other plan or project would adversely affect the integrity of a European Site in light of its Conservation Objectives.

Where an AA concludes there will be adverse effects on the integrity of a European Site, the Competent Authority may only agree to the plan or project if:

- It is evidenced that there are no alternative solutions (Stage 3); and,
- There are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the advancement of the project (Stage 4), and appropriate compensation measures have been identified.

1.3. CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS REPORT

This report has been prepared by Steven Tooher ACIEEM, Luis Iemma CEcol MCIEEM, and Robert O'Hagan. Steven and Luis have 10 years' and 15 years' experience respectively in preparing AA Screenings and NIS reports for a range of projects in the Republic of Ireland. Robert is a Qualifying Member of CIEEM, has worked on a range of the AA Screenings for projects in the Republic of Ireland, and has over 12 years' experience working in ecology in various international settings.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING PROCESS

An Appropriate Assessment is a multi-stage process as described below. This report is aimed towards Stage 1, which involves screening for likely significant effects on European Sites.

2.1.1. STAGES OF APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Guidance on the Habitats Directive (European Commission, 2018) sets out the stepwise approach to Appropriate Assessments which should be followed to enable Competent Authorities to discharge their duties under the Habitats Directive and provides further clarity on the interpretation of Articles 6 (3) and 6 (4). The process used is usually summarised in four distinct stages of assessment.

- **Stage 1 (Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening):** the process which identifies whether effects upon a European Site of a plan or project are possible, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and considers whether these effects are likely to be significant.
- **Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment (AA)):** The detailed consideration of the effect of the plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, on the integrity of European Sites, with respect to the site's conservation objectives and its structure and function. This stage allows for consideration of mitigation proposals designed to reduce impacts upon the European Site. The results of an AA are presented in the form of a Nature Impact Statement (NIS).
- **Stage 3 (Assessment of Alternative Solutions):** The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project that avoid adverse effects on the integrity of the European Site.
- **Stage 4 (IROPI / Derogation):** Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse effects remain: an assessment of whether the development is necessary for IROPI (Imperative Reasons of Public Interest) and, if so, of the compensatory measures needed to maintain the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network.

For a Stage 2 AA to be lawfully conducted, case law has established that the AA:

- must identify, in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field, all aspects of the proposed development which can, by itself or in-combination with other plans or projects, affect the conservation objectives of the European Site;
- must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions and may not have lacunae or gaps; and may only include a determination that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any relevant European Site where the Competent Authority decides (on the basis of complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions) that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of the identified potential effects. If adverse impacts can be satisfactorily avoided or successfully mitigated at this stage, so that no reasonable doubt remains as to the absence of the identified potential effects, then the process is complete. If the assessment is negative, i.e. adverse effects on the integrity of a site cannot be excluded, then the process must proceed to stage three and, if necessary, stage four.

2.1.2. RELEVANT GUIDANCE FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

In undertaking this Appropriate Assessment Screening, the following guidance was referred to:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). Dublin. (DoEHLG, 2009);
- 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, 2018);
- Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle (European Commission 2000).
- Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.3. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2024).
- Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats (European Commission, 2013).
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2018).

2.2. DESKTOP SURVEY

A desktop review was conducted of available published and unpublished information, including a review of data available on the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) and National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) web-based databases, in order to identify key habitats and species that may be present. The desktop review included a search within a 20 km search radius for European Sites (see Section 4).

In the subsequent analysis of designated sites, particular attention was given to potential for the Proposed Development to influence a designated site. In other words, the degree of connectivity between the Site and each European Site was determined. Consideration was given to physical connectivity (e.g. hydrological), as well as functional links, which refers to the potential presence, outside a European Site, of habitat that is important for the ecological functions of QFs for which a European Site is designated. Functional links are often relevant for SPAs, as qualifying bird species often utilise a wide variety of habitats outside the boundary of the SPA under which they are protected.

2.3. ECOLOGICAL SURVEY

Ecological baseline surveys of the Site were carried out by O'Donnell Environmental Ltd. by way of a multi-disciplinary site walkover on the 9 of February 2022. Subsequently, confirmatory ecological walkover surveys were carried out by WSP on 21 August 2023 and on 18 June 2025 in order to determine whether baseline conditions had changed.

2.3.1.1. Habitats

A habitat survey was carried out 9 February 2022 in accordance with the Heritage Council's guidelines (Smith *et al.* 2011). This involved a walkover of the Site[3], where the habitats present

[3] At the time of survey, the application boundary had not yet been established. The extent of the area subject to the ecological walkover survey is illustrated in Figure 3-1.

were classified according to Fossitt (2000) and recorded on a field map. The area subject to the ecological walkover survey is hereafter referred to as the 'study area'. The study area includes areas within the Application Boundary.

2.3.1.2. Mammals

A survey for non-volant mammals was undertaken on 9 February 2022, which involved a walkover of the Site to identify any mammal species present or signs of mammal activity such as droppings, tracks, burrows etc. Observations were recorded using field notes and/or a handheld GPS unit. Techniques used to identify mammal activity followed recognised guidelines (e.g. Bang and Dahlstrom, 2004 and Muir et al., 2013).

An infra-red equipped trail camera (Browning Strike Force Pro XD) was deployed at the entrance of a suspected badger sett located centrally with the Site. The camera was deployed from 9 February 2022 to 3 March 2022.

Ground-level roost assessments were carried out to identify any bat roosting potential which may exist within the Site, in accordance with '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition)*' (Collins, 2016).

Following the ground-level roost assessment by O'Donnell Environmental, a tree climbing survey was carried out by Eire Ecology on 17 September 2022 to inspect each potential roosting feature in detail.

2.3.1.3. Birds

The presence of any avian species was recorded during the Site visit. Birds were detected using visual and aural cues. The habitats onsite were also evaluated for their suitability for birds.

2.4. SURVEY CONSTRAINTS OR LIMITATIONS

The habitat survey was undertaken outside the optimum survey period for botanical and habitat surveys. However, due to the nature of the habitats recorded within the Proposed Development Site, the timing of the survey is not deemed to be a substantial limitation in this instance. Update surveys undertaken by WSP in 2023 and 2025 found that habitats present at the Site, and the percentage coverage of these habitats, had not changed, and that the findings reported by O'Donnell Environmental were still valid.

The survey occurred outside the bird breeding season and bat activity season, and any potential limitation to data here is addressed through a precautionary approach taken within the assessment.

3. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Proposed Development is the establishment and operation of a soil recovery facility within a 17.08-hectare site at Kilmartin, Co. Wicklow (approximately 4 km north-east of Ashford). The soil recovery facility will import up to 2,160,000 tonnes of inert waste, primarily clean soils and stones from construction and development sites. Clean soil and stone will be used to progressively infill a steep-sided natural valley within the Site and raise ground levels to approximately 57mOD, tying in with the surrounding landscape. The infill area covers approximately 14 hectares.

The soil recovery facility will accept up to 100 loads per day on average (maximum 150 in exceptional circumstances) with a projected operational lifespan of up to 10 years depending on market conditions within the construction sector, followed by one year for final restoration and aftercare of the lands.

The Proposed Development will require the following structures be installed and maintained for the operational life of the Soil Recovery Facility: office and welfare facilities, six parking bays for private vehicles, weighbridge and associated weighbridge cabin, one wheel wash and one spray-system wheel wash, two waste inspection bays and one bunded waste quarantine area, hardstanding area (for vehicle movement and storage), surface water drainage infrastructure from hard standing and discharge to ground (including two interceptors and two soakaways), an internal access road, internal haul roads (constructed from recycled aggregates where available), security features including security gates and fencing, and power supply. These structures will be removed from the Site at the end-of-life point of the soil recovery facility.

Approval will be sought for a connection to the ESB Network for the site office and welfare facilities. Diesel generators will be used to power mobile lighting, if required. Temporary lighting, if required, will be cowled to prevent light spillage.

The temporary relocation of ESB poles within the fill area will be required. This will be subject to prior agreement with ESB.

Wastewater from office and welfare facilities will be managed by a third-party provider, with no connection to foul water mains.

All truck deliveries will access the Site via the N11/M11 and Coynes Cross Road, with internal queuing space provided within the Site and no parking on public roads.

The existing land entrance located on R772 will be upgraded and will be retained following the completion of the Proposed Development.

A groundwater abstraction borehole will be installed to supply water for wheel washes, dust suppression, and welfare facilities, and will be retained for monitoring after restoration.

Restoration will return the Site to grassland and hedgerow habitat, similar to its pre-development state. Approximately 140 m of fence and hedgerow opposite the entrance will be temporarily removed to improve sightlines during the life of the soil recovery facility and this will be subsequently reinstated. Native species will be used in hedgerow restoration planting. The grassland land will revert to agricultural management.

Permission is sought from An Coimisiún Pleanála for a period of up to 10 years, with an additional year for restoration. The Proposed Development will require a waste licence[4] from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and aligns with national and regional policy objectives to provide adequate licensed soil recovery capacity for the Dublin and Wicklow regions.

3.2. SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

The Site is located in the townlands of Kilmartin, Co. Wicklow and is approximately 4 km north-east of Ashford (National Grid Reference of 328517E, 201025N) (see Figure 1-1). The Site is irregular in shape and is bounded to the south and north by agricultural land with some coniferous forestry to the south. Coynes Cross road is located to the west of the Site and this connects to the R772 and M11 (via Junction 14) to the south-west of the Site. An existing entrance to the Site is located on the Coynes Cross Road. A small lane is located to the east of the Site that links the L-5064 to the R761 Coast Road. The land further to the east is agricultural land.

The Site is bounded by two small streams, one to the north and one to the south of the Site (see Figure 3-2). The northern stream runs from west to east along the L-5064 road ca. 300 m north of the Site. The southern stream ('Cullenmore') runs from west to east across the southern periphery of the landholding, approximately 45 m from the Application boundary. These streams confluence ca. 600 m to the southeast of the Site and flow southwards into Broad Lough where they confluence with the Vartry River to form the Leitrim River and ultimately discharge to the Irish Sea at Wicklow town.

3.3. SITE ECOLOGY

3.3.1. HABITATS

This section describes the results of the multidisciplinary walkover undertaken by O'Donnell Environmental Ltd in February 2022.

The Site is dominated by Improved Agricultural Grassland (habitat code as per Fossitt (2000): GA1), with an area of unimproved grassland in the southern half of the Site (classified as Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2)), which occurs alongside some Scrub (WS1) and areas of disturbed ground. The field boundaries are demarcated by Hedgerows (WL1), which contain occasional mature trees. Each habitat is described in more detail in the following sections. Area coverage is provided in Table 3-1 and habitat map is shown in Figure 3-1.

Table 3-1 – Area coverage by habitat type within Site (excluding the public road)

Habitat	Habitat Code (Fossitt, 2000)	Area Coverage (ha)
Improved Agricultural Grassland	GA1	12.78
Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges	GS2	2.83
Hedgerow	WL1	0.93

[4] The proposed development will be carried out in accordance with a waste licence from the EPA or in accordance with by-product regulations, Article 27 of the European Communities (Waste Directive) Regulations 2011 (see Section 3.5 in Chapter 3.0: Project Description of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report prepared to support the SID Application for further detail).

Habitat	Habitat Code (Fossitt, 2000)	Area Coverage (ha)
Exposed Sand, Gravel and Till	ED1	0.05
Spoil and Bare Ground	ED2	0.04
Scrub	WS1	0.29

3.3.1.1. Improved Agricultural grassland (GA1)

The dominant habitat on Site is improved agricultural grassland. The regular use of fertilisers and regular grazing is evidenced by the plant species composition found in this habitat type. Perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) was dominant and other plants recorded include dandelions (*Taraxacum* spp.), broad leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), clover (*Trifolium* spp.) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*).

3.3.1.2. Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2)

This habitat type occurs (sometimes in mosaic with GA1) in the areas that are less intensively managed. While regularly grazed by livestock there was no visual evidence of significant fertiliser application. Low lying areas of this habitat may be subject to waterlogging. Plants recorded include sweet vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), vetches (*Vicia* spp.) and creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*). Rushes (*Juncus* spp.) are frequent but not dominant.

3.3.1.3. Hedgerow (WL1)

Hedgerows form the boundaries of most fields on Site. These vary in age and area but are of similar species composition with the following species present: hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), gorse, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*). Tree species recorded occasionally within the hedgerows included oak (*Quercus* spp.), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and willows (*Salix* spp.).

The hedgerow proposed for removal to facilitate sightlines is located on lands opposite the proposed site entrance comprises a somewhat low, thin and gappy layer of hawthorn, which has been planted along a post and wire fence.

3.3.1.4. Exposed sand, gravel and till (ED1)

Previous extraction works carried out on Site have created a small area of ED1 habitat in the southern section of the study area. Vegetation cover is substantially less than 50% in these areas.

3.3.1.5. Spoil and bare ground (ED2)

Imported spoil and rubble heaps located in the east of the Site are at various stages of vegetation colonisation and consist of a mosaic of ED2 with areas of Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3), representative of transitioning grassland habitat. Vegetation cover is less than 50% in the ED2 areas and increases to more than 50% with grasses dominating in areas of ED3.

3.3.1.6. Scrub (WS1)

Scrub, consisting mostly of established gorse, occurs particularly along field boundaries and drainage channels. Elsewhere gorse has largely been flailed and now occurs within grassland habitats, where scrub regeneration is likely in the absence of intervention.

Figure 3-1 - Habitats and potential roosting features as identified by O'Donnell Environmental Ltd and Eire Ecology.

3.3.1.7. Watercourses

There are no watercourses or other open waterbodies within the Application boundary. However, the Cullenmore Stream flows east approximately 45 metres south of the Application boundary at its nearest (southernmost) point. The Cullenmore joins the Dunran Demesne Stream 1.3 km to the east. The Dunran Demesne flows southeast for 1.8 km and subsequently turns south where it enters the Murrough Wetlands SAC. It flows south for 800 m where it discharges into Broadlough Estuary which is connected to the Irish Sea at Wicklow Town.

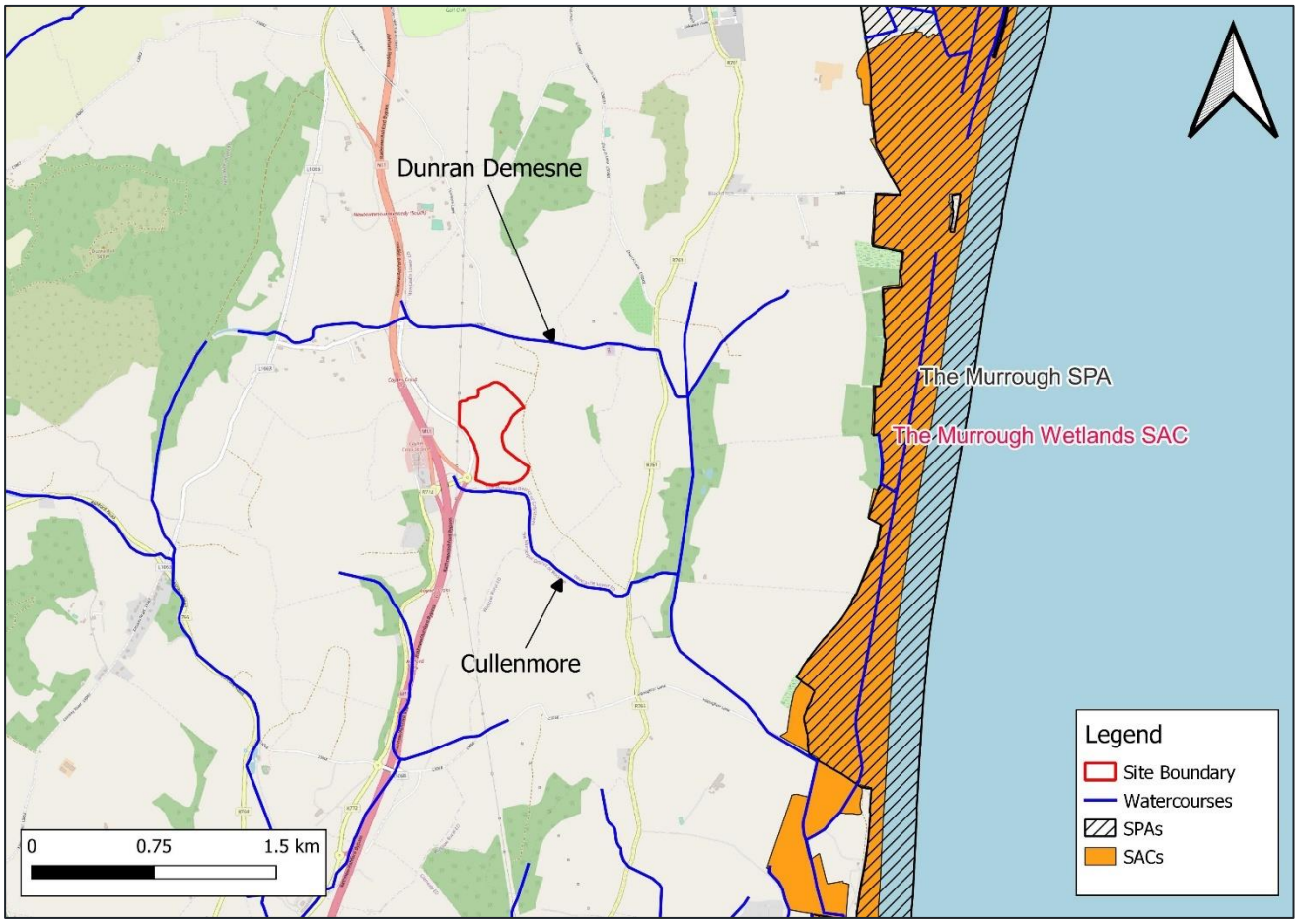

Figure 3-2 - Watercourses in the vicinity of the Site

3.3.2. FAUNA HABITAT SUITABILITY

Suitable habitat was observed onsite for breeding birds, roosting, commuting and foraging bats, and several terrestrial mammals (notably including badger). No open waterbodies were recorded onsite, which is important in terms of the Site's lack of suitability for species such as otter, which are protected under Annex II and IV of the Habitats Directive.

3.3.3. BIRDS

3.3.3.1. Desktop Results

Within the 10 km grid square in which the study area is located (O20; NBDC) there are historic records for a total of 29 species listed in at least one of the Annexes of the Birds Directive (see Table 3-2). The relevance of each Annex is outlined below.

- **Annex I:** 194 species and sub-species are particularly threatened. Member States must designate Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for their survival and all migratory bird species.
- **Annex II:** 82 bird species can be hunted. However, the hunting periods are limited and hunting is forbidden when birds are at their most vulnerable: during their return migration to nesting areas, reproduction and the raising of their chicks.

- **Annex III:** overall, activities that directly threaten birds, such as their deliberate killing, capture or trade, or the destruction of their nests, are banned. With certain restrictions, Member States can allow some of these activities for 26 species listed here.
- **Annex IV:** the directive provides for the sustainable management of hunting but Member States must outlaw all forms of non-selective and large scale killing of birds, especially the methods listed in this annex.
- **Annex V:** the directive promotes research to underpin the protection, management and use of all species of birds covered by the Directive, which are listed in this annex.

It should be noted that a species does not have to be listed in Annex I to be considered as a QF for an SPA.

Table 3-2 - Existing records of birds within 10 km grid square, which are listed in an Annex of the Birds Directive

Common Name	Species Name	Birds Directive Annex
Common Coot	*Fulica atra*	Annex II, III
Common Goldeneye	*Bucephala clangula*	Annex II
Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo atthis*	Annex I
Common Pheasant	*Phasianus colchicus*	Annex II, III
Common Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	Annex II, III
Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	Annex II, III
Eurasian Curlew	*Numenius arquata*	Annex II
Eurasian Teal	*Anas crecca*	Annex II, III
Eurasian Wigeon	*Anas penelope*	Annex II, III
Eurasian Woodcock	*Scolopax rusticola*	Annex II, III
European Golden Plover	*Pluvialis apricaria*	Annex I, II, III
Gadwall	*Mareca strepera*	Annex II
Goosander	*Mergus merganser*	Annex II
Great Northern Diver	*Gavia immer*	Annex I
Greater Scaup	*Aythya marila*	Annex II, III
Greylag Goose	*Anser anser*	Annex II, III
Hen Harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	Annex I
Jack Snipe	*Lymnocryptes minimus*	Annex II, III
Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	Annex I

Common Name	Species Name	Birds Directive Annex
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	Annex II, III
Merlin	*Falco columbarius*	Annex I
Northern Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*	Annex II
Northern Shoveler	*Anas clypeata*	Annex II, III
Peregrine Falcon	*Falco peregrinus*	Annex I
Red Grouse	*Lagopus lagopus*	Annex II, III
Red-necked Phalarope	*Phalaropus lobatus*	Annex I
Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	Annex II
Tufted Duck	*Aythya fuligula*	Annex II, III
Whooper Swan	*Cygnus cygnus*	Annex I

Source: NBDC (2023)

3.3.3.2. Survey Results

The survey yielded records for the species listed in Table 3-3. No species protected under the Birds Directive were recorded. The hedgerows, treelines and scrub onsite represented suitable nesting habitat for a variety of passerine avifauna.

Table 3-3 - Bird species recorded onsite

Common Name	Species Name	Birds Directive Annex
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*	None
Buzzard	*Buteo buteo*	None
Chaffinch	*Fringilla coelebs*	None
Hooded Crow	*Corvus cornix*	None
Jackdaw	*Corvus monedula*	None
Magpie	*Pica pica*	None
Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	None
Robin	*Erithacus rubecula*	None
Rook	*Corvus frugilegus*	None
Song Thrush	*Turdus philomelos*	None
Yellowhammer	*Emberiza citrinella*	None

3.3.4. MAMMALS

3.3.4.1. Desktop Results

Within the 10 km grid square in which the study area is located (O20; NBDC) there are historic records for three species protected under the Habitats Directive, as well as five species classified as invasive as per the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, 2011 (see Table 3-4).

The relevant Annexes of the Habitats Directive for non-avian fauna are outlined below:

- **Annex II**: Species whose core areas of their habitat should be designated under the Natura 2000 network;
- **Annex IV**: Species for which a strict protection regime must be applied across their entire natural range; and
- **Annex V**: Species whose exploitation and taking in the wild must remain compatible with maintaining them in a favourable conservation status.

Table 3-4 - Mammal species previously recorded within the 10 km grid square.

Common Name	Species Name	Legal Status*
American Mink	*Mustela vison*	Invasive
Brown Rat	*Rattus norvegicus*	Invasive
Eastern Grey Squirrel	*Sciurus carolinensis*	Invasive
Otter	*Lutra lutra*	Annex II/IV
Irish Hare	*Lepus timidus hibernicus*	Annex V
Pine Marten	*Martes martes*	Annex IV
Siberian Chipmunk	*Tamias sibiricus*	Invasive
Sika Deer	*Cervus nippon*	Invasive
Common pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	Annex IV
Soprano pipistrelle	*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*	Annex IV
Daubenton's bat	*Myotis daubentonii*	Annex IV
Brown long-eared bat	*Plecotus auritus*	Annex IV
Leisler's bat	*Nyctalus leisleri*	Annex IV
Natterer's bat	*Myotis nattereri*	Annex IV
Whiskered bat	*Myotis mystcinus*	Annex IV

* Annex status (EU Habitats Directive); Invasive Species (Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, 2011).

3.3.4.2. Survey results

3.3.4.3. Badger

A partially used outlier badger sett was identified. It was visited twice by a badger during the period in which the camera trap was in place. It was also visited by a rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) and a fox (*Vulpes vulpes*). None of these species are afforded any protection under the Habitats Directive.

3.3.4.4. Bats

Three mature trees were noted for their suitability as bat roosts. Suitable foraging and commuting habitat were present onsite in the form of hedgerows and scrub.

4. AA STAGE 1: SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

4.1. OVERVIEW OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS FROM PROJECT

Considering the nature and location of the proposed works, as described in Section 3.1, the following effects have been considered for the works:

- Noise/Vibration emissions;
- Dust emissions;
- Surface water contamination;
- Habitat loss; and
- Spread of invasive flora[5].

4.1.1.1. Noise/Vibration Emissions

Considering the nature of the proposed works in the context of the Site's location and proposed levels of activity, it is not anticipated that noise emissions from the works will exceed existing levels so as to be environmentally significant. Taking account of the below factors, the proposal does not represent a substantial increase in existing noise levels experienced by the surrounding environment:

- The Site is currently in agricultural use, and is subject to occasional ingress of farm machinery;
- The Site is located close to (approximately 180 m) a busy motorway intersection;
- The noise impact assessment (see Chapter 10.0 of the EIAR) notes that the predicted noise levels from the proposed development are predominantly below existing background levels. Noise impacts have been deemed insignificant.

Vibrational impacts from the construction phase are expected to be negligible, considering the project will not require any interaction with bedrock nor require percussion type activities such as rock breaking.

As a precautionary measure, a 10-metre buffer from the application boundary will be used to establish the ZoI for noise emissions.

4.1.1.2. Dust Emissions

Various aspects of the construction phase, but notably earthworks, will give rise to increased potential for dust mobilisation. Wind speed and rainfall will influence the distance that dust particles can travel from site. As a point of reference, the IAQM[6] Guidance on the Assessment of Mineral Dust Impacts for Planning (2016) indicates that significant dust impacts are typically restricted to 100 metres of a source, and this is with reference to quarrying activities. As a precautionary measure, a ZoI of 100 metres has been applied to dust emissions for this project.

[5] As per Third Schedule (Part 1) of The Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations (S.I. 477/2011).
[6] Institute for Air Quality Management.

4.1.1.3. Surface Water Contamination

In the event of a leak, spillage, or leaching associated with rainfall, contaminants, such as hydrocarbons or suspended sediment, could be carried large distances downstream, providing there is connectivity between the Site and a watercourse. The potential distance travelled may extend several kilometres downstream of the Site but is dependent on the contaminant (e.g. solubility, density, mass) and the physical nature of the watercourse, including its morphology and flow velocity, which influences its capacity to transport contaminants downstream and the extent to which dilution occurs.

For this project, the application boundary and the Cullenmore Stream are separated by approximately 45 m. In considering the likelihood of the transport of a significant magnitude of water-borne contaminants from the proposed Site, Table 4-1 should be viewed as a useful benchmark. All surface water collected on hardstanding areas will be directed through interceptors and discharged to ground via soakaways, ensuring contaminants are managed in accordance with best practice.

Table 4-1 - Buffer zones for spreading organic fertilisers (DAFM, 2022)

Buffer zones for spreading organic fertilisers	
Water body/Feature	**Buffer zone**
Any water supply source providing 100m^3 or more of water per day, or serving 500 or more people	200 metres (or as little as 30 metres where a local authority allows)
Any water supply source providing 10m^3 or more of water per day, or serving 50 or more people	100 metres (or as little as 30 metres where a local authority allows)
Any other water supply for human consumption	25 metres (or as little as 15 metres where a local authority allows)
Lake shoreline	20 metres
Exposed cavernous or karstified limestone features (such as swallow holes and collapse features)	15 metres
Any surface watercourse where the slope towards the watercourse exceeds 10%	10 metres
Any other surface waters	5 metres*

*The 5 metre buffer zone is increased to 10 metres for a period of two weeks preceding and two weeks following the periods when application of fertilisers to land is prohibited as set out in Schedule 4 of the **Regulations** (check the table and map on page 7). The objective of increased setback distances at the shoulders of the closed period is to help retain as much of the applied nutrient in the field as possible thereby reducing its risk of loss through overland flow.

This is taken from the Nitrates Explanatory Handbook by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM, 2022), and provides guidance distances for the spreading of organic fertilisers (e.g. slurry). As an example, if the receiving waters were intended to provide drinking water for human consumption, it is permissible to spread organic fertiliser up to 25 metres from the water's edge. Considering the inert nature of the proposed fill material and considering the actual distance between the application boundary and the watercourse, the ingress of contaminants is considered

unlikely. In this context, the ZoI for surface water contamination is restricted to within the application boundary.

4.1.1.4. Habitat Loss

Habitat loss will be confined to within the application boundary and the area across from the proposed entrance, which requires removal of a hedgerow and fence to facilitate adequate sightlines.

4.1.1.5. Spread of Invasive Flora

The proposal involves substantial earthworks, which will include the bulk transport of soil to the Site. The transport of viable seeds and plant tissue (of invasive flora) in the soil has the potential to occur:

- Into the Site in bulk soil deliveries; and
- From the Site via accidental carriage in vehicle tyre treads, machinery tracks and the footwear of onsite personnel. 15 km has been applied for the spread of invasive flora, as a conservative precautionary ZoI[7].

4.2. MANAGEMENT OF NATURA 2000 SITES

4.2.1. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IS NOT NECESSARY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF ANY EUROPEAN SITE.

4.3. DETERMINING THE LIKELY PROJECT ZONE OF INFLUENCE

The 'zone of influence' for a project is the area over which ecological features may be affected by biophysical changes as a result of the Proposed Development and associated activities. This is likely to extend beyond the project site, for example where there are ecological or hydrological links beyond the site boundaries (CIEEM, 2022).

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG, 2009), recommend that the scope of Appropriate Assessment Screening should consider the following:

- Any European Sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area;
- Any European Sites within the likely zone of influence (ZoI) of the plan or project. A distance of 15 km is currently recommended in the case of plans, but for projects could be much less than that, in some cases less than 100 m, but this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in-combination effects; and,
- European Sites that are more than 15 km from the plan or project area depending on the likely impacts of the plan or project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, bearing in mind the precautionary principle. In the case of sites with water-dependent habitats or species, and a plan or project that could affect water quality or quantity, for example, it may be necessary to consider the full extent of the upstream and/or downstream catchment.

[7] In theory, soil could be transported anywhere in the country on footwear and vehicles. However, the authors of this report have considered the scale of the proposed works in this area and have deemed 15 km to be a reasonable zone of influence for the purpose of this assessment.

A distance of 20 km was assigned to search for SPAs designated for pink-footed geese (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) and greylag geese (*Anser anser*). This is based on the upper-range commuting distance of these species (Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), 2016). A distance of 20 km was also assigned to search for SACs designated for otter (*Lutra lutra*), based on their foraging ranges (Durbin, 1996).

For this Appropriate Assessment Screening, European Sites with the potential to be affected by the Proposed Development were identified based on their proximity to the Site as well as their potential to be connected to it, either directly (e.g. via watercourses) or indirectly (e.g. whereby associated qualifying species use habitats within, or in close proximity to the Site for foraging or roosting (termed 'functionally linked' habitat)).

Spatial datasets for European Sites were sourced from the NPWS (2022)[8] for use in GIS mapping.

The locations of European Sites in relation to the Site, and the 20 km search area as described above, are shown in Figure 4-1.

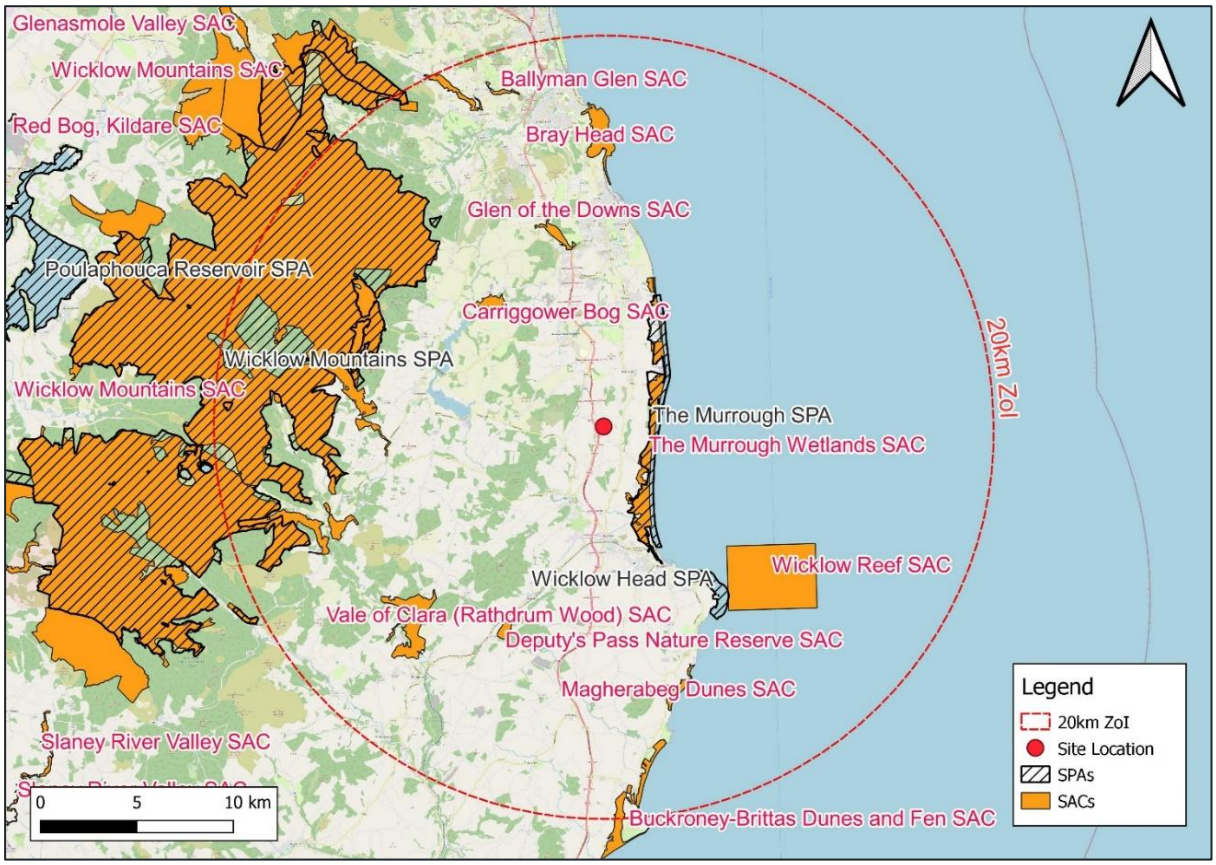

Figure 4-1 - European Sites in relation to the Proposed Development

[8] https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/designated-site-data/download-boundary-data.

4.4. IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT NATURA 2000 SITES (EUROPEAN SITES)

The results of a preliminary screening exercise are presented in Table 4-2, in which European Sites deemed to have no connectivity with the Proposed Site are screened out from further assessment.

Table 4-2 - Assessment of Connectivity

Site Name	Site Code	Distance from Site (km)	Connectivity (Y/N)	Comments
The Murrough SPA	004186	2.1	Y	Site contains suitable foraging habitat for some QF species and is notably within the commuting range of greylag[9] and light-bellied brent goose[10].
The Murrough Wetlands SAC	002249	2.1	N	No hydrological connectivity (see Section 4.1), and outside all other ZoIs. Not designated for otter.
Carrigower Bog SAC	000716	7.6	N	No hydrological connectivity, and outside all other ZoIs.
Wicklow Head SPA	004127	8.4	N	Outside all ZoIs. Designated for Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*), which is a gull and generally not associated with the habitats present onsite.
Wicklow Reef SAC	002274	8.4	N	Outside all ZoIs.
Glen of the Downs SAC	000719	8.7	N	Outside all ZoIs.

[9] SNH (2016)
[10] Clausen *et al.* (2013)

Site Name	Site Code	Distance from Site (km)	Connectivity (Y/N)	Comments
Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC	000717	10.8	N	Outside all ZoIs.
Wicklow Mountains SAC	002122	10.8	N	Outside all ZoIs.
Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC	000733	11.8	N	Outside all ZoIs.
Wicklow Mountains SPA	004040	12	N	Outside all ZoIs. Designated for merlin (*Falco columbarius*) and peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), both of which are most closely associated with peatland habitats.
Bray Head SAC	000714	12	N	Outside all ZoIs.
Magherabeg Dunes SAC	001766	12.6	N	Outside all ZoIs.

Based on the above preliminary screening exercise, it has been determined that connectivity exists between the Proposed Site and one European Site – The Murrough SPA. The rest of this screening report will therefore focus on the likelihood of significant effects to this European Site. All others are screened out from further consideration.

Table 4-3 summarises an assessment of the likely presence of each qualifying species designated by The Murrough SPA being within the relevant zones of influence of the Proposed Development.

Table 4-3 - Qualifying Features (QFs) within Applicable Zones of Influence

Qualifying Feature [Birds Directive Code]	**Definitely or Likely Present within ZoI**	**Possibly Present** within ZoI	**Not Present Within ZoI**	**Comments**
Species				
Red-throated Diver (*Gavia stellata*) [A001]			X	Favours coastal waterbodies

Qualifying Feature [Birds Directive Code]	Definitely or Likely Present within ZoI	Possibly Present within ZoI	Not Present Within ZoI	Comments
Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) [A043]		X		Site is within commuting range of the SPA. Occasionally forages on agricultural land
Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046]		X		Site is within commuting range of the SPA. Occasionally forages on agricultural land
Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050]			X	Favours large open waterbodies, none of which are within ZoIs.
Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052]			X	Favours large open waterbodies, none of which are within ZoIs.
Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179]		X		Occasionally forages on agricultural land
Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) [A184]		X		Occasionally forages on agricultural land
Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) [A195]			X	Favours marine and coastal habitats.

Based on the information provided above, the following qualifying species from The Murrough SPA will be carried forward for a more detailed assessment of likelihood of significant effects:

- Greylag goose;
- Light-bellied brent goose;
- Black-headed gull; and
- Herring gull.

4.5. ASSESSMENT OF LIKELIHOOD OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Table 4-4 provides a summary of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development . Each qualifying interest considered as part of this screening is assessed against each of the potential

impacts discussed in Section 4.1. In assessing the likelihood of the occurrence of significant effects, the logic is as follows:

1. The conditions necessary for a significant effect to occur are considered, and

2. The likelihood of that effect is assessed, considering the process/emission magnitude, duration, timing and frequency, as well as the connectivity with the Proposed Development and the sensitivity of the qualifying interest to the process/emission in question.

The below definitions are relevant at this stage:

- Likely Significant Effect - Where a plan or project is likely to undermine any of the European Site's conservation objectives (European Commission, 2006);
- Possible Significant Effect - Where a plan or project has an indicated potential to undermine any of the European Site's conservation objectives, but where doubt exists about the risk of a significant effect in the current context. Nevertheless, where doubt exists about the risk of a significant effect, use of the precautionary principle requires this effect to be considered appropriately within the Article 6 assessment process.

It should be noted that this report has taken account of the 2017 European Court of Justice ruling (C-323/17 - People Over Wind and Peter Sweetman v Coillte): "Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive must be interpreted as meaning that, in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out, subsequently, an appropriate assessment of the implications, for a site concerned, of a plan or project, it is not appropriate, at the screening stage, to take account of the measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site."

With reference to the potential impacts discussed in Section 4.1, the below information is important to note in the consideration of likelihood of significant effects.

4.5.1. NOISE AND DUST EMISSIONS

For the reasons outlined in Section 4.1, noise emissions are not considered likely to result in significant increases in noise emissions to the extent that avifauna in the surrounding environment will experience significant negative effects.

Dust impacts to birds have been scrutinised in the context of poultry farms (Moe *et al.*, 2015), whereby individuals are kept indoors and are subject to unnaturally high quantities of dust and suffer negative consequences. However, this scenario does not apply to the proposed works at this Site. It is considered that the level of soil disturbance and loose soil exposure is akin to the ploughing of a tillage field. Given that this is a common practice and is common in the surrounding landscape, dust emissions are not considered likely to result in significant effects to avifauna in the surrounding environment.

4.5.2. LOSS OF HABITAT

The Proposed Development will involve the temporary loss of foraging habitat for the species identified in Table 4-3, in the context of the transition of portions of the Site from grassland to bare soil, as fill material is deposited onto the ground. It is proposed to fill the site in phases, such that only a portion of grassland will be lost at any one time. Once the desired topographical levels have been reached, this portion of the Site will be re-seeded and will remain comparatively undisturbed thereafter. Considering this scenario, and also considering

the abundance of similar habitat in the surrounding environment, the effects from the temporary loss of grassland associated with the Proposed Development are not considered likely to be significant.

Based on the information presented in Table 4-4, significant effects from the Proposed Development alone are considered unlikely.

Table 4-4 - Screening of Likely Significant Effects

Qualifying Features [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Environmental Effect	Potential Impacts	Conditions necessary for significant effect	Likelihood of significant effect	Comments
Species					
Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*) [A043] Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046] Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179] Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) [A184]	Noise/Vibration	Disturbance and discouragement from foraging.	High levels of noise (such as from rock-breaking, blasting etc.), preventing birds from accessing a key foraging resource.	Unlikely	Noise impacts are predicted to be low, and suitable alternative foraging habitat is in abundance in the surrounding landscape.
	Dust	Respiratory and eye irritation.	Substantial quantities of dust, which would resemble dust levels in an indoor industrial battery farm (per Moe *et al.*, 2015).	Unlikely	The conditions necessary for a significant effect do not exist at the Site.
	Surface Water Contamination	Morbidity and/or mortality through ingestion.	Connectivity to a watercourse, a substantial spillage event, and subsequent ingestion by a qualifying species.	Unlikely	No hydrological connectivity.
	Habitat Loss	Reduced foraging potential.	Permanent loss of an important resource.	Unlikely	Habitat loss will be temporary, incremental and will not represent loss of an important resource.
	Spread of Invasive Species	Loss of foraging habitat.	Colonisation of the Site by invasive species, resulting in the loss of an important foraging resource.	Unlikely	The Site is not considered an important resource, and the rate of loss necessary for a significant effect is unlikely. Risk will be managed through implementation of the Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP), which includes wheel washing for the fill area, boot cleaning stations, signage,

Qualifying Features [Habitats/Birds Directive Code]	Environmental Effect	Potential Impacts	Conditions necessary for significant effect	Likelihood of significant effect	Comments
					supplier controls for all imported material, and proportionate monitoring during operations and post-restoration. If IAPS are detected, treatment and two years of follow-up surveys will confirm eradication.

4.6. CONSIDERATION OF EFFECTS IN COMBINATION

As well as considering the likelihood for significant effects from the Proposed Development alone, the Appropriate Assessment Screening must also consider those effects in combination with effects associated with other plans or projects.

WSP has reviewed Wicklow County Council's planning portal website[11] and searched for planning applications within 2 km of the Site submitted in the past 5 years. The results have excluded all planning applications which have been withdrawn or declined by the local authority within the selected time period. Retention applications have also been excluded. The results are presented in Table 4-5.

[11] https://www.eplanning.ie/WicklowCC

Table 4-5 - Relevant Planning Applications

Project	Overview	Status (date)	Potential significant effects from project	Potential in-combination effects
Planning Applications (within 2 km, last 5 years)				
2460287 (Patrick Bourke) Distance from site: approximately 1.45 km S	Construction of a 354 sq.m. agricultural shed together with all associated ancillary works.	Conditional 30/08/2024	None. Site has not been active, and it is historically agricultural land. There is also no connectivity to surface water.	None.
2386 (Autism Initiatives Ireland) Distance from Site: approximately 0.5 km NW	Proposed conversion of existing garage to a single bedroom service unit ancillary to existing care facility and associated works.	Conditional 21/09/2023	RFI refers to potential inadequacy of onsite wastewater treatment system, thereby suggesting potential impacts to surface water or groundwater.	As surface water impacts from the Site are deemed unlikely, in-combination effects between both of these sites is also deemed unlikely, and therefore not significant.

Project	Overview	Status (date)	Potential significant effects from project	Potential in-combination effects
21956 (IIB (Invent, Innovate, Build) Ltd.) Distance from Site: approximately 1.65 km SSW	The proposed development includes: 1. Construction of a 3-storey security building (Block G, 185 sqm) and a single-storey security hut (7 sqm). 2. Amendments to PA.Reg.Ref. 17/163 and ABP.Ref.301391 for the permitted film studios, including: • Relocation of Blocks • Internal road changes, including a roundabout • Roof light installation and height raising • Block A: external access corridors/skywalks and internal changes, increasing floorspace from 9,914 sqm to 10,280 sqm. • Minor corridor relocations for Blocks B, C & F, and reduction of floorspace. • Drainage layout updated to reflect changes (site c.27.8 ha).	Conditional 21/01/2022	Small scale, permanent loss of potential agricultural foraging habitat for relevant Qualifying Interest bird species from the Murrough SPA.	Not Significant. The in-combination effects from additional loss of agricultural foraging habitat for relevant Qualifying Interest bird species from the Murrough SPA is deemed non-significant as there remains extensive potential agricultural field foraging areas with the landscape, including extensive areas closer to the Murrough SPA. Furthermore, the habitat loss caused by the Proposed Development is temporary and not additive long-term.

Project	Overview	Status (date)	Potential significant effects from project	Potential in-combination effects
201001 (Paula and John Lunn) Distance from Site: approximately 0.76 km NW	(A) Remove the existing timber decking/terrace, to the south/southwest (side), c.108 sq.m. in area. (B) Construction of a new extension, 76.7 sq.m. in area, to the south/southwest (side) comprising circulation area, kitchen, dining area and lounge on ground floor.	Conditional 03/12/2020	None apparent in planning documents.	None.
231 (Kilnorth Holdings Ltd.) Distance from Site: approximately 1.6 km NW	Development of a Solar PV Panel Array consisting of up to 30,000 m^2 (3 hectares) of solar panels on ground mounted steel frames on an 8.399-hectare site, electricity control room, power inverter unit, underground cable ducts, security fence, CCTV masts, Solar Lighting and all associated works.	Conditional 12/07/2023	RFI refers to potential surface water contamination as a result of soil erosion during severe pluvial events.	As surface water impacts from the Site are deemed unlikely, in-combination effects between both of these sites is also deemed unlikely, and therefore not significant.
22862 (Chris Fox) Distance from Site: approximately 660 m N	Removal of existing septic tank, installation of wastewater treatment unit, soil polishing filter to current standards and associated works.	Conditional 23/09/2022	Represents an improvement in prior risks to groundwater. No terrestrial or surface water connectivity to sensitive ecological features, or to the Site.	None.
21373 (Peadar and John Shortt) Distance from Site: approximately 970 m SE	Construction of a new 230 square metre farm building and hard standing, for agricultural use as a sheep shed, together with all necessary ancillary works, drainage and fencing.	Conditional 19/05/2021	Schedule of conditions includes measures to minimise risks to surface water quality.	As surface water impacts from the Site are deemed unlikely, cumulative impacts between both of these sites is also deemed unlikely, and therefore not significant.

The EIA Portal[12] was similarly checked for projects within the last 5 years in the vicinity of the Proposed Development. The nearest proposed development is approximately 5 km to the south, (planning ref. 22837- Wicklow County Council) and is for a large-scale residential development comprising 271 units. Due to the distance between the sites, these projects are considered unlikely to interact in such a way so as to lead to significant ecological effects.

A proposed upgrade to the M11 (Junction 4 to Junction 14 Improvement Scheme) stretches south from the junction with the M50 to just south of Junction 14. The broad aim of the project is to improve safety, accessibility and journey time reliability. This may be achieved through the addition of lanes, the incorporation of active travel infrastructure and an improvement of public transport links. The project footprint, according to the project website[13] could end up being adjacent to the property associated with the project discussed in this report.

However, the proposed M11 Scheme has been scoped out of the assessment because it does not present potential for spatial or temporal overlap with the proposed Kilmartin project in the short-to-medium term. The M11 scheme is still at an early stage, and funding to progress the scheme is not expected within the next four years. Therefore, no significant interaction between these projects is anticipated.

The Wicklow County Development Plan 2022-2028 was also consulted, but nothing of relevance was noted in an ecological context.

The assessment of in-combination effects has concluded that the interaction between the Proposed Development and any other plan or project is unlikely to give rise to significant effects on any European Site.

[12] Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage: https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/?referer=https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/environmental-assessment/environmental-impact-assessment-eia/eia-portal

[13] https://n11m11.ie/home/

5. SCREENING CONCLUSION AND STATEMENT

The Screening exercise was completed in compliance with the relevant European Commission and national guidelines. Article 42 (7) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 states that: "*The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required […] if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site*."

The potential impacts during the Proposed Development have been considered in the context of the European Sites potentially affected. It has been concluded that the risks posed by noise emissions, dust emissions, surface water contamination, and habitat loss are unlikely to result in significant effects to any European Site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

As significant effects on European Sites by virtue of the proposal have been deemed unlikely, it is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment is **not** required.

Additional Statement:

An Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP) has been prepared for the Proposed Development by WSP and is provided as a stand-alone document within the SID application submission. This ISMP provides biosecurity measures and proportionate monitoring to prevent introduction or spread of IAPS.

6. REFERENCES

- CIEEM (2024) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.3 (updated September 2024). Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Clausen, K., Clausen, P., Hounisen, J.P., Vissing, M.S. and Fox, A.D. (2013). Foraging range, habitat use and minimum flight distances of East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* in their spring staging areas. *Wildfowl*, **3:** 26-39.
- DoEHLG (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG). Dublin. Revised February 2010.
- (DAFM, 2022) Nitrates Explanatory Handbook. Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Durbin, L. (1996). Some changes in the habitat use of a free-ranging female otter *Lutra lutra* during breeding. *Journal of Zoology*, **240:** 761-764.
- European Commission (2000). Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle.
- European Commission (2006). Nature and biodiversity cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.
- European Commission (2018). 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.
- Fossitt, J.A. (2000). A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. *The Heritage Council.*
- IAQM (2016). Guidance on the Assessment of Mineral Dust Impacts for Planning.
- Moe, D.B, Michel, R.O., Lund, V., and Mejdell, C. (2015). Air Quality in Alternative Housing Systems May Have an Impact on Laying Hen Welfare. Part I – Dust. *Animals: An Open Access Journal from MDPI,* **5(3):** 495–511.
- NPWS (2021). Conservation objectives for The Murrough Wetlands SAC [002249]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- NPWS (2022). Conservation objectives for The Murrough SPA [004186]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

  Scottish Natural Heritage (2016) Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas.

BLANK PAGE

Town Centre House
Dublin Road
Naas
Co Kildare

wsp.com