

Appropriate Assessment Screening: CIVIC OFFICES



For: DBFL Consulting Engineers
Date: November 2023

Note

Works, plans, methodologies, materials, and infrastructural requirements are based on the client's brief, draft plans, and drawings provided to Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants.

Statement of Authority

This Appropriate Assessment Screening has been carried out by suitably qualified and experienced professionals of Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants.

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1 Introduction

Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants has been commissioned by DBFL Consulting Engineers to carry out a Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for the proposed Civic Offices development which includes Active Travel and road links in Roosky, Co. Monaghan. The purpose of this project is to deliver a new headquarters building for Monaghan County Council, together with access and active travel links that will enhance connectivity to the wider Roosky lands and Monaghan Town.

This AA screening exercise aims to determine whether the proposed construction and operation of the development may have the potential to impact the conservation objectives and overall integrity of any Natura 2000 sites significantly or indeterminately and to consider whether any mitigation measures are required in order to avoid or reduce impacts to European sites. This screening assessment is based upon desk research and fieldwork carried out by suitably qualified ecologists.

All designated sites relevant to the proposed development have been reviewed for potential impacts or pathways for impacts. This is followed by an ecological assessment of the project area. Section 4 of the report comprises the AA screening that focuses on any potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites and their conservation objectives.

This report has been completed to provide information regarding the ecological status of the proposed site of works. This report has also been completed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article (6)3 Appropriate Assessment Screening of the proposed development. The legislation and methodology for this are detailed in the following sections below.

1.1 Proposed Works

The proposed works of this project focus on the development of the Roosky area of Monaghan town which includes the construction of a new road through Roosky as there are plans for the construction of civic offices here. Current land use of the site and surrounding areas include agricultural, residential and amenity which are all highly accessible by foot, bicycle, and car via the Ógie Ó Dufaigh Way.

The purpose of this report is to provide an assessment of any impacts the proposed development may have upon Natura 2000 sites during construction and operation. Full site layout of the proposed development can be seen in Appendix A. .

2 Legislative Context

The methodology for this Appropriate Assessment Screening statement is set out in a document prepared for the Environment DG of the European Commission entitled ‘Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC’ (European Commission, 2021). This report and contributory fieldwork were carried out by guidelines given by the Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government (2009, amended February 2010) and guidance given by the Office of the Planning Regulator (2021).

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

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site given the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public”

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

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

2.1 Appropriate Assessment Process

The appropriate assessment process has four stages. Each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. If, for example, the conclusions at the end of Stage One are that there will be no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site, there is no requirement to proceed further. The four stages are:

1. Screening to determine if an appropriate assessment is required
2. Appropriate assessment
3. Consideration of alternative solutions
4. Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest/Derogation

Table 2.1 Appropriate Assessment Process 4 Stages

Stage 1. Screening

<p>This is to determine if an appropriate assessment is required. Screening is the technique applied to determine whether a particular plan would be likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site and would thus warrant an Appropriate Assessment. The key indicator that will determine if an Appropriate Assessment is required is the determination of whether the development is likely to have <i>significant environmental effects</i> on a Natura 2000 site or not.</p>
<p>Stage 2. Appropriate Assessment</p>
<p>This step is required if the screening report indicates that the development is likely to have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Stage 2 assesses the impact of a plan or project on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, with respect to the site's structure, function, and conservation objectives. Where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of these impacts is also required.</p>
<p>Stage 3. Assessment of Alternative Solutions</p>
<p>If it is concluded that, subsequent to the implementation of measures, a plan or project will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, it must be objectively concluded that no alternative solutions exist before the plan or project can proceed.</p>
<p>Stage 4. Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest/ Derogation</p>
<p>Where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain but imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist for the implementation of a plan or project, an assessment of compensatory measures that will effectively offset the damage to the Natura 2000 site will be necessary.</p>

Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd has been appointed by DBFL Consulting Engineers to undertake the first stage of the above process: an AA Screening exercise to allow DBFL to determine whether the proposed development has the potential to have any significant or indeterminate impacts on the conservation objectives and overall integrity of any Natura 2000 sites.

This assessment is based upon desk study and fieldwork carried out by suitably qualified ecologists. This document includes a description of the development in Section 3. Any sites within 15km of the proposed development and any other relevant sites are then reviewed for potential impacts or pathways for impacts. Sections 4 and 5 of the report comprise the AA Screening that specifically focus on the potential for impacts on Natura 2000 sites and their conservation objectives.

2.2 The Source-Pathway-Receptor Approach

Consideration has also been given to the 'source-pathway-receptor approach.' This is a standard tool in environmental assessment.



Figure 2.1 Source-Pathway-Receptor Approach

The source-pathway-receptor concept in ecological impact assessment relates to the idea that for the risk of an impact to occur, a 'source' is needed, e.g. a construction site; then a 'receptor', in this case, sites designated for nature conservation; and finally a 'pathway' between the source and the receptor, this could be a watercourse that links the development site to the designated site. Even though there might be a risk of an impact that does not mean that it might necessarily occur, and if it does occur, it may not be significant. Identification of a risk means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor (in this instance, this is any Natura 2000 sites).

2.3 Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening

This report provides stage one: Appropriate Assessment Screening. It aims to establish whether a plan or project is likely to affect a Natura 2000 site. The study is based on a preliminary impact assessment using both publicly available data and data collected during site visits and ecological surveys. This is followed by a determination of whether there is a risk that the effects identified could significantly impact any Natura 2000 sites.

The need to apply the precautionary principle in making any key decisions about the tests of AA has been confirmed by European Court of Justice case law. Therefore, where significant effects are likely, possible, or uncertain at the screening stage, AA is required.

3 Description of the Project and Local Site Characteristics

3.1 Site Location and Background

The site is located within the townland of Roosky in Monaghan town. In terms of local demographic context, Monaghan town has a population of circa 7,000 and is the largest town in Monaghan. St. Davnet's Hospital, Glaslough street, Dublin street, the Ulster Canal Greenway and Monaghan Harps GAA are surrounding the site. Current land use of the site and surrounding areas include agricultural, residential and amenity which are accessible by foot, bicycle, and car via the Ógie Ó Dufaigh Way. The site of the proposed development is not within an area designated for the conservation of nature.

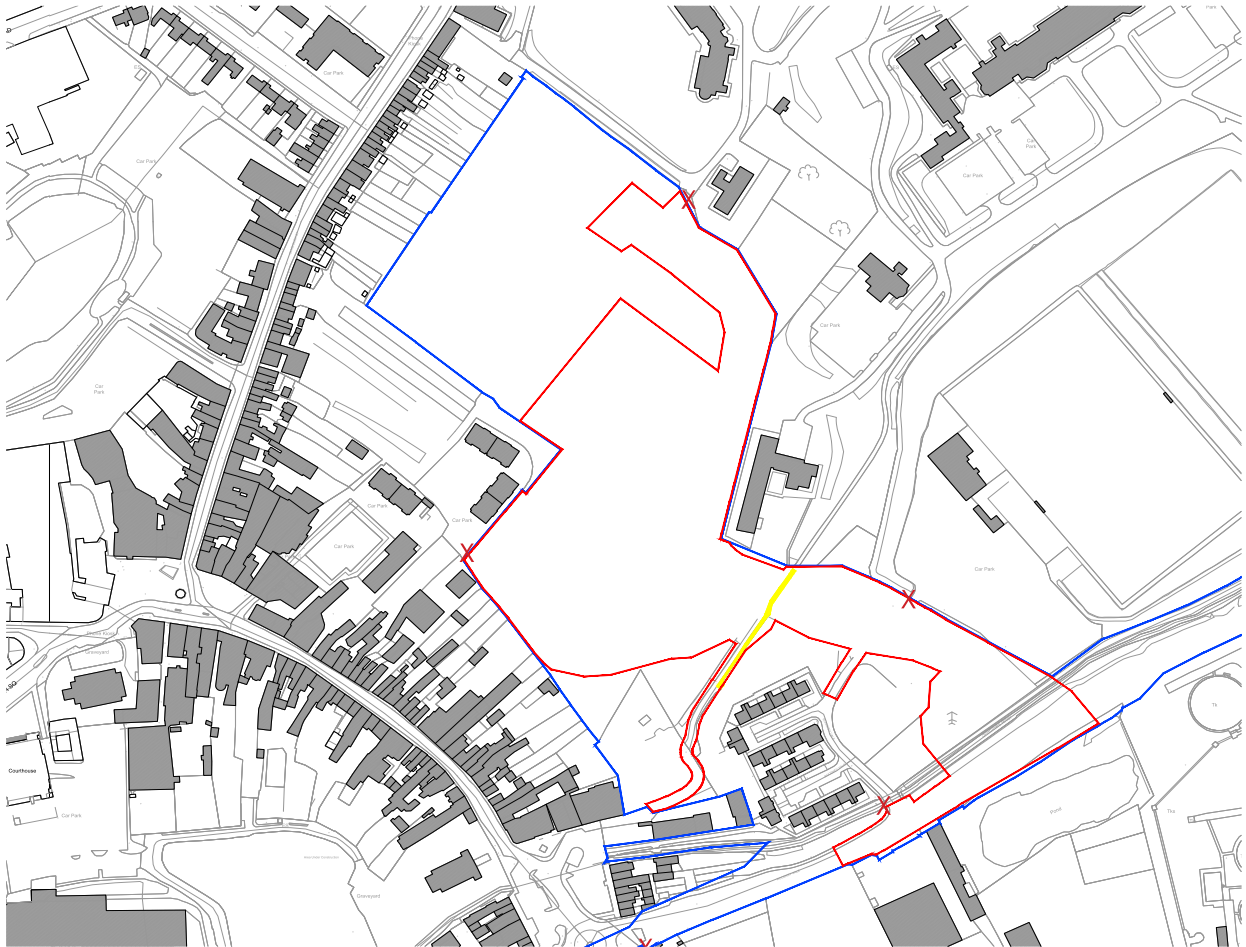


Figure 1. Site Location (from drawing no. MCC-XX-00-DR-HJL-AR-0001 by Henry J Lyons)

There are a large number of companies expanding across a range of sectors and in conjunction with the economic growth of the town there has been a steady increase in the local population. According to the National Planning Framework (NPF), although Monaghan is located within the Northern and Western Regional Assembly Area, it is also part of a North East functional area where a key driver is the Dublin- Belfast cross border economic corridor. Monaghan also lies on the strategic transport corridor from Dundalk to Sligo. One aim of the NPF is to ensure more efficient use of land within and contiguous to the existing built up areas of cities and towns, and which will act as a catalyst for regeneration. The NPF places much emphasis on strengthening the border area generally, to balance development nationally by harnessing potential for development and building on emerging opportunities for cross-border development.

3.1.1 Surface Water

Recorded within the proposed development site was the River Shambles. which runs along the Ulster Canal. The River Shambles (EPA code IE_NB_03S010500) is a 1st order tributary of the Blackwater (Monaghan) River (IE_NB_03B010800). The WFD River Waterbodies Risk Projection for both watercourses is *At Risk*. The WFD River Waterbodies status for the period 2016-2021 was *Poor*.

3.1.2 Ground Water

Groundwater vulnerability is a term used to represent the natural ground characteristics that determine the ease with which infiltrating water and potential contaminants may reach groundwater in a vertical or sub-vertical direction. Subsoil permeability indicates how readily water from the surface can permeate through to the groundwater below.

The proposed development site is within the Lough Neagh & Lower Bann catchment and the Blackwater sub catchment. The groundwater vulnerability within approximately half of the site is recorded as moderate and high whilst the other area is recorded as low. The subsoil vulnerability is recorded as low within the entirety of the proposed development site. There are no pathways to any designated sites.

3.2 Description of the Proposed Works

The proposed development will consist of the following:

- i. Construction of a new civic office building consisting of:
 - a. office accommodation with a cumulative gross floor area (GFA) of 5,601 sq.m distributed over 3 floors incorporating entrance foyer, office spaces, meeting rooms, staff canteen, Council chamber, public counter and reception desk, welfare facilities, internal landscaped courtyards and supporting spaces;

- b. external plant enclosure and single storey ESB substation and storage room at ground level; and
 - c. covered services enclosure at ground level containing waste store room, plant, water tanks, UPS room, power distribution and supply rooms, and fire escape.
 - ii. Surface car parking spaces and drop-off area.
 - iii. Bicycle parking spaces.
 - iv. Improvement works to existing road infrastructure and the provision of pedestrian, cycle and vehicular links comprising:
 - a. extension (approx. 120m in length) to existing vehicular route on Slí Ógie Uí Dhufaigh along the route of the existing Ulster Canal Greenway;
 - b. realignment of portion of the existing greenway;
 - c. construction of a priority junction on existing roadway serving Roosky Vale at the interface with the extended Slí Ogie Uí Dhufaigh;
 - d. provision of a new 13m clear span bridge over the River Shambles;
 - e. provision of new combined vehicular/pedestrian link, 'Quarry Walk' (approx. 460m in length) comprising a 5.5m vehicular carriageway, two-way cycle track, footpaths, and roadside SuDs swale;
 - f. provision of a replacement vehicular access to Monaghan Harps GAA club and associated pedestrian links;
 - g. upgrade of existing pedestrian route (Davnet's Row) to Diamond Centre; and
 - h. upgrades to the existing Infirmary Hill Path to improve link to Old Cross Square.
 - v. Works to facilitate potential future pedestrian and cyclist connections to the adjoining Diamond Centre and the existing public right of way known locally as 'Pump Entry'.
 - vi. Signage is to be erected consisting of:
 - a. Wayfinding signage at 4 locations; to the south-west at Davnet's Row Plaza, to the south along Davnet's Row, to the east at the junction between Infirmary Road and Davnet's Row and at the proposed entrance on Infirmary Road.
 - b. Building identity signage comprising 2.1m x 2.1m backlit logo panels on the north-east and south-west facades at building entry points and will include 300mm high text to read Monaghan County Council.
 - vii. Provision of surface water attenuation, diversion of existing watermain infrastructure and provision of new surface water, foul and watermain infrastructure.
 - viii. Associated earthworks, utilities, landscaping, boundary treatments, lighting, roof-mounted solar PV on the civic office building and all ancillary site development works.

4 Ecological Assessment

4.1 Desk Study

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

4.1.1 Designated Sites

Sites designated for the conservation of nature in Ireland include:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
- Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs)
- Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs)

SPAs and SACs are prime wildlife conservation areas in the country, considered to be important on a European as well as Irish level. SPAs and SACs are designated under EU Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), as amended.

NHA is the basic designation for wildlife in Ireland. These are areas considered important for their habitats or species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. They first entered into European Law under the 1976 Wildlife Act, these were then transposed into Irish law with the 1997 Natural Habitats Regulations (S.I. No. 94 of 1997) finally gaining full statutory backing in Ireland with the passing of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000.

pNHA sites were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995 but have not since been statutorily proposed or designated. These sites are designated as being of significance for species and habitats. While not afforded the same protection as sites protected under the Habitats Directive, they are subject to protection through the following mechanisms:

- Agri-environmental farm planning schemes such as GLAS (Formally the Rural Environment Protection Scheme)
- Forest Service requirement for NPWS approval before they will pay afforestation grants on pNHA lands
- Recognition of the ecological value of pNHAs by Planning and Licencing Authorities.

All relevant designated sites were considered during the desktop study stage of this screening assessment to assess the potential for significant effects upon their Qualifying Interests / Special

Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives. This stage of the process is used to determine whether any of the designated sites may be 'screened out'. That is, they can be regarded as not being relevant to the process, having no potential to be significantly affected or impacted upon.

4.1.2 The Zone of Influence (Zoi)

The proximity of the proposed development area to European sites, and Qualifying Interests (Qis)/ Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of European sites, is of importance when identifying potentially likely significant effects. During the *initial* scoping of this report, a conservative approach to ZOI has been used, which minimises the risk of overlooking distant or obscure effect pathways, while also avoiding reliance on buffer zones within which all European sites should be considered. This approach assesses the complete list of all QIs/SCIs of European sites in Ireland (i.e. potential receptors), instead of listing European sites within buffer zones.

This follows Irish departmental guidance on AA:

"For projects, the distance could be much less than 15 km, and in some cases less than 100m, 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" (DoEHLG, 2010, p. 32).

Following the guidance set out by the National Roads Authority (NRA, 2009) as well as the more recent guidance of the Office of the Planning Regulator (2021), the proposed development has been evaluated based on an identified Zoi with regard to the potential impact pathways to ecological features (e.g. mobile and static). The Zoi of the proposed development on mobile species (e.g. birds, mammals, and fish), and static species and habitats (e.g. saltmarshes, woodlands, and flora) is considered differently. Mobile species have 'range' outside of the European site in which they are QI/SCI. The range of mobile QI/SCI species varies considerably, from several metres (e.g. in the case of whorl snails *Vertigo* spp.), to hundreds of kilometres (in the case of migratory wetland birds). Whilst static species and habitats are generally considered to have Zois within close proximity of the proposed development, they can be significantly affected at considerable distances from an effect source; for example, where an aquatic QI habitat or plant is located many kilometres downstream from a pollution source. Hydrological linkages between the proposed development and European sites (and their QIs/SCIs) can occur over significant distances; however, any effect will be site specific depending on the receiving water environment and nature of the potential impact.

The above approach has been taken, along with the guidance given by the OPR (2021) on assessing zone of influence using the source-pathway-receptor model as detailed in Section 2.2.

- A 'source' is defined as the individual element of the proposed development that has the potential to impact on a European site, its qualifying features and its conservation objectives.
- A 'pathway' is defined as the means or route by which a source can affect the ecological receptor; and
- A 'receptor' is defined as the Special Conservation Interests of Special Protection Areas (SPA) or Qualifying Interests (QI) of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for which Conservation Objectives have been set for the European sites being screened.

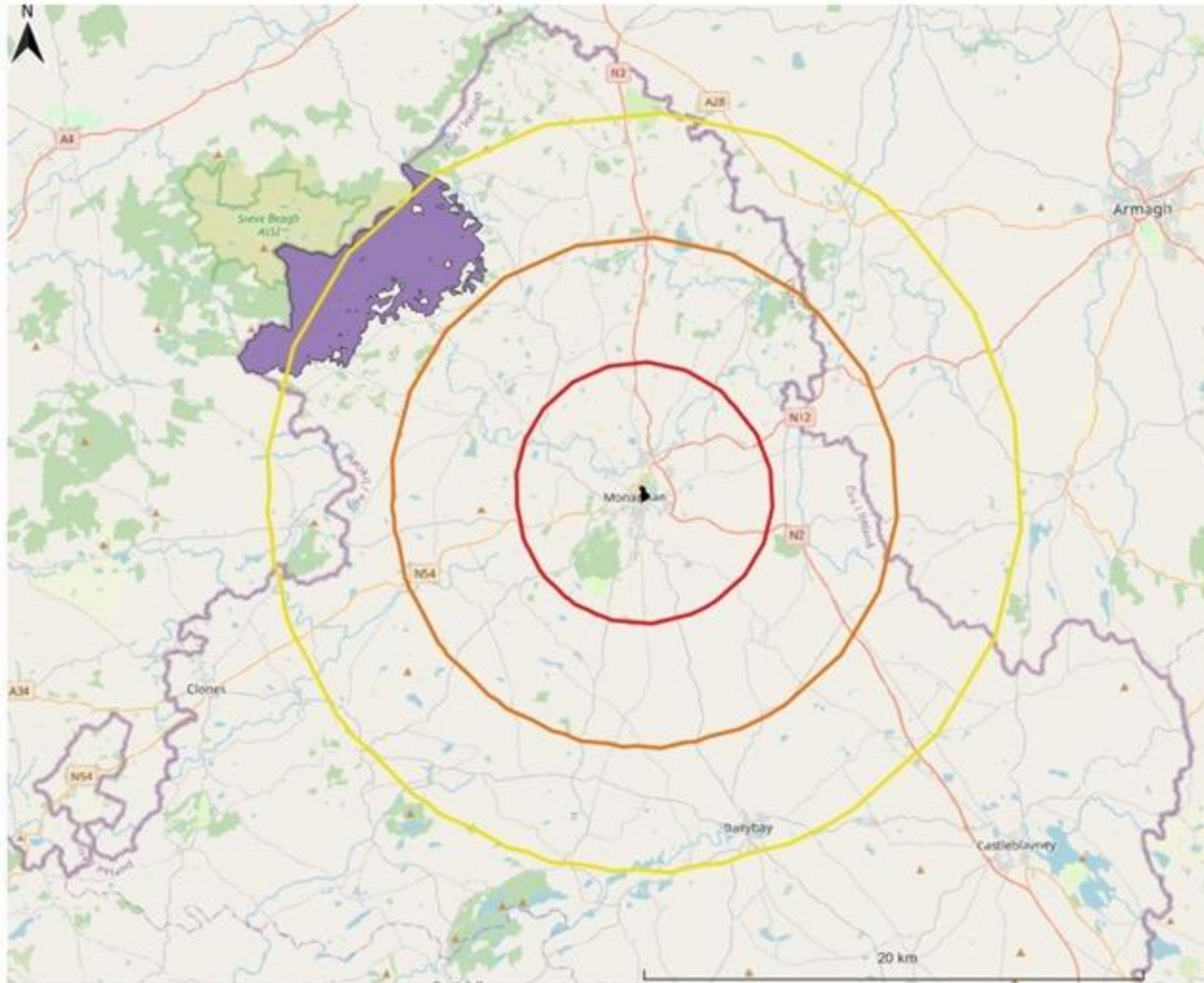
The source pathway-receptor model was used to identify a list of European sites, and their QIs/SCIs, with potentially links to European sites and it is these that are termed as 'relevant' European sites/QIs/SCIs throughout this report

4.1.3 European Sites

SACs are sites of international importance due to the presence of Annex I habitats and/or Annex II species listed under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). SPAs are designated for the protection of bird species listed on Annex I of the Bird Directive (2009/147/EC), regularly occurring populations of migratory species and areas of international importance for migratory birds. The European sites correspond to those that were subject to Appropriate Assessment.

There is one European site within 15km of the proposed works at Roosky. Due to the proximity of the proposed development to Sliabh Beagh SPA (approximately 11km), potential impacts arising from the proposed development will be assessed. Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA is approximately 40km away also requires assessment due to the potential pathway for impacts through hydrological connections. Kilroosky Lough Cluster, lies c.19km to the west of the proposed development. However it is not hydrologically or otherwise connected to the area proposed for works and will therefore not be assessed in this screening.

The purple area in the figure below shows Sliabh Beagh SPA.



**SPA sites within a 15km radius of proposed developments
Roosky**

Client: DBFL Consulting Engineers

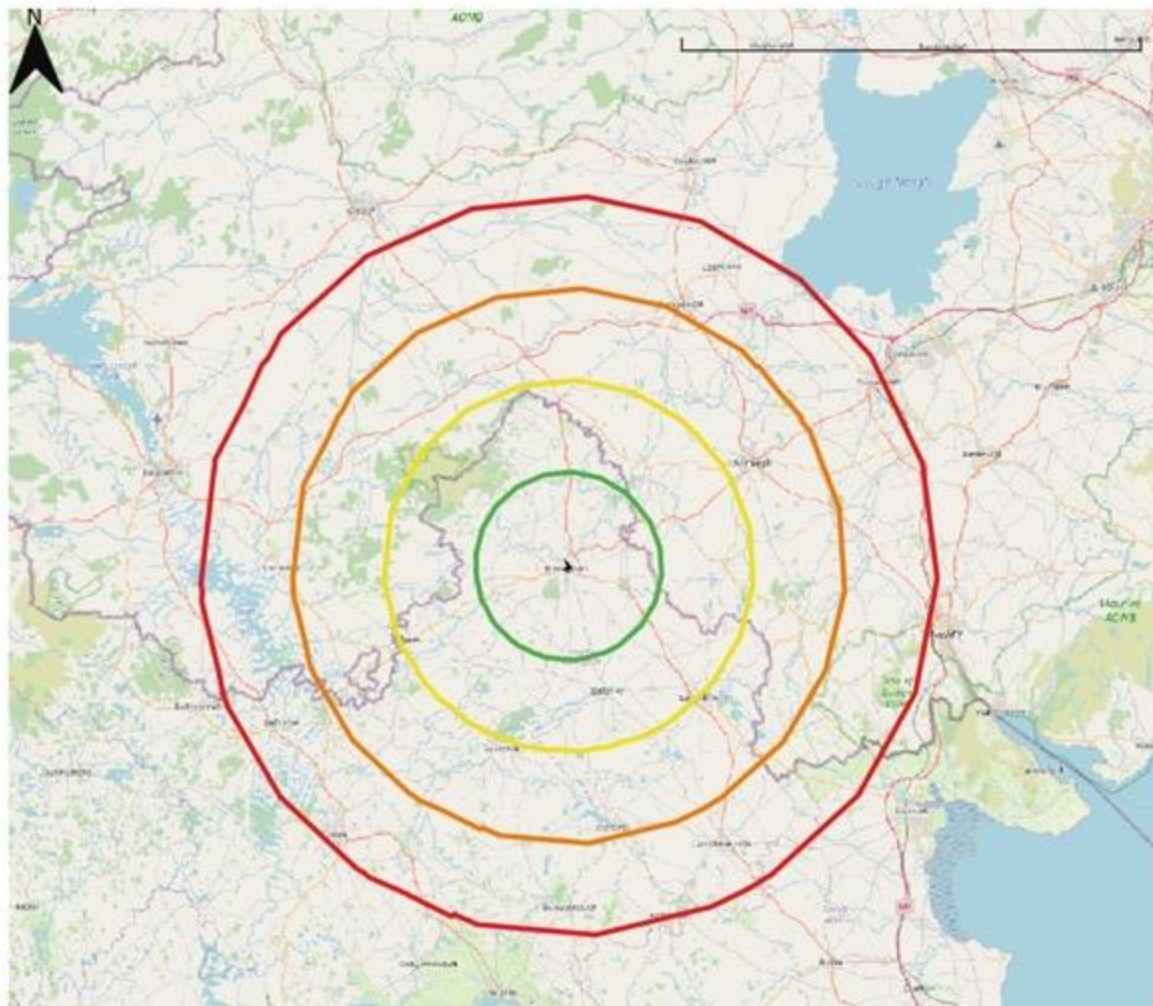
Legend

-  5km buffer
-  10km buffer
-  15km buffer
-  Sliabh Beagh SPA



Disclaimer: This map has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services described in the contract or agreement between Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants and the Client. Any findings only apply to the aforementioned circumstances and no greater reliance should be assumed or drawn by the Client

Figure 4.1 SPA sites within the Zone of Influence



**Proximity of Lough Neagh to proposed developments
Roosky**

Client: DBFL Consulting Engineers

- Legend**
-  10km buffer
 -  20km buffer
 -  30km buffer
 -  40km buffer



Disclaimer: This map has been prepared in accordance with the scope of services described in the contract or agreement between Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants and the Client. Any findings only apply to the aforementioned circumstances and no greater reliance should be assumed or drawn by the Client

Figure 4.2 Proximity of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA to proposed development

Table 4.1 Designated sites, qualifying interest, designation, and distances from the proposed development

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interest	Designation	Approximate Distance from the Site
Sliabh Beagh SPA 004167	Conservation objectives version 1 (23/09/2022) 1. Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> [A082]	SPA	11km
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA	1. Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> 2. Great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> 3. Whooper swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> 4. Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i> 5. Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> 6. Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i> 7. Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i> 8. Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i> 9. Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> 10. Cormorant <i>Phalacrocoracidae</i> 11. Greylag goose <i>Anser anser</i> 12. Shelduck <i>Tadorna</i> 13. Wigeon <i>Mareca</i> 14. Gadwall <i>Mareca strepera</i> 15. Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	SPA	60km (hydrologically)

	16. Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> 17. Shoveler <i>Spatula clypeata</i> 18. Coot <i>Fulica</i> 19. Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> 20. Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population 21. Roost sites		
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The above initial screening has identified two SPAs (Sliabh Beagh SPA and Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA), which require further consideration in this assessment. Any other Natura 2000 sites are at a greater remove and have no identifiable connectivity with the proposed works. Given the nature and scale of the works, there is no known pathway for impacts between the proposed works and the remaining Natura 2000 sites. These are therefore not considered further in this assessment.

4.1.4 Potential Impacts on Conservation Interests

The NPWS (2022) states that the overall aim of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC is “maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest”.

Sliabh Beagh SPA is of conservation interest due to the presence of Hen harriers *Circus cyaneus*. The Sliabh Beagh SPA is comprised of the majority of the upland areas of Sliabh Beagh which extends from County Monaghan to Northern Ireland. This area is of particular importance to Hen harriers due to the nesting habitats it provides such as a mixture of forestry (mostly the early stages of new and second-rotation conifer plantations) and tall heather in the bogs and heath habitats along with important foraging areas which include open bog, moorland, young conifer plantations and hilly farmland. This site also holds ornithological significance due to the presence of Merlins *Falco columbarius* and Peregrines *Falco peregrinus*.

According to the Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine (2012), Hen harriers are known to travel between 7km and 11km to forage. However, research conducted by DAFM (2012) also stated that although they travelled great distances to forage, they preferred foraging in second rotation thicket forestry and low intensity managed grasslands. These habitats do not occur on the site of the proposed development. The NPWS (2021) states that hedgerows within the SPA provide another important foraging site for Hen harriers, Merlin and Peregrine falcons.

According to DAFM (2018), the main threats and pressures on Hen harriers include forestry activities, uncontrolled burning, the development of wind farms along with peat extraction. It is clear that Merlin, Peregrine falcons and especially Hen harriers rely on the habitats present in Sliabh Beagh SPA. Given the absence of any suitable habitat for these species within the zone of influence of the proposed development, *ex-situ* impacts may be excluded from consideration in this assessment.

Table 4.2 Assessment of Potential for Impacts on Qualifying Interests of Sliabh Beagh SPA

Assessment of Potential for Impacts on Qualifying Interests of Sliabh Beagh SPA			
Qualifying Interest/ Conservation Objective	Relevant to Proposed Works	Potential for Impacts	Rationale
Hen Harrier <i>Circus cyaneus</i> [A082]	No	Nil	The proposed project does not have potential to impact on this species. The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to impact on this species and the habitats provided by new and second rotation conifer plantations along with the heather of unplanted bogs and heath in the Sliabh Beagh SPA. There is no complete source-pathway-receptor chain and therefore this Natura 2000 site may be excluded from further assessment.

4.1.5 Potential Impacts or Pathways for Potential Impacts on Sites Outside 15km

4.1.5.1 Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA

Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA is protected because its wetlands are of international importance (supporting over 20,000 winterfowl birds such as Pochard *Aythya ferina*, tufted duck *Aythya fuligula*, goldeneye *Aythya fuligula*, cormorant *Phalacrocoracidae* and coot *Fulica*) along with the variety of breeding bird assemblages which occur there. Habitats which occur within the SPA include swamp, fen, wet grassland and swampy woodland. None of these habitats occur within the site of the

proposed development. This SPA is being considered in this AA screening due to its location downstream of the site of the proposed development.

The main threats to the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA includes water pollution, habitat loss and degradation, climate change, habitat disturbance and recreation, invasive species and overfishing. Although the site is heavily dependent on water quality, it is unlikely that the SPA would be significantly impacted by any works associated with the proposed development due to the large hydrological distance (over 60km) between the proposed development and the SPA.

Given the very limited scale of works at the River Shambles, no requirement for instream works, distance from Natura 2000 sites located downstream, short duration of works and significant opportunity for dilution from other rivers downstream (in particular the Monaghan Blackwater, it is considered unlikely that any likely significant effects will be incurred upon any Natura 2000 sites downstream.

Any suspended solids which may enter the watercourse adjacent to the works area are likely to be minor in nature and settle within close proximity to the works area downstream. It is likely that average levels of suspended solids observed in the receiving watercourse after rainfall events are higher than those that may be observed from any suspended solids which may enter the watercourse as a result of works.

Table 4.3 Assessment of Potential for Impacts on Qualifying Interests for Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA

Assessment of Potential for Impacts on Qualifying Interests of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA			
Qualifying Interest/ Conservation Objective	Relevant to Proposed Works	Potential for Impacts	Rationale
Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to

			significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Whooper swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Bewick's swan <i>Cygnus columbianus bewickii</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Tufted duck <i>Aythya fuligula</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Scaup <i>Aythya marila</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.

Goldeneye <i>Bucephala clangula</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Cormorant <i>Phalacrocoracidae</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Greylag goose <i>Anser anser</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Shelduck <i>Tadorna</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Wigeon <i>Mareca</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site

			of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Gadwall <i>Mareca strepera</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Mallard <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Shoveler <i>Spatula clypeata</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Coot <i>Fulica</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to

			significantly impact on this species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Waterfowl Assemblage wintering population	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on these species due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.
Roost sites	No	Nil	The nature and scale of proposed works does not have potential to significantly impact on this habitat due to the large distance between the site of the proposed development and the Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA.

5 Field Surveys

Fieldwork which contributed to the report and to the accompanying Ecological Impact Assessment was carried out over a number of dates in August and October 2022 by FFEC. Field surveys were carried out in July and August 2022 by NM Ecology Ltd.

A habitat map of Roosky is given in Fig 5 (below) and also in Appendix B.

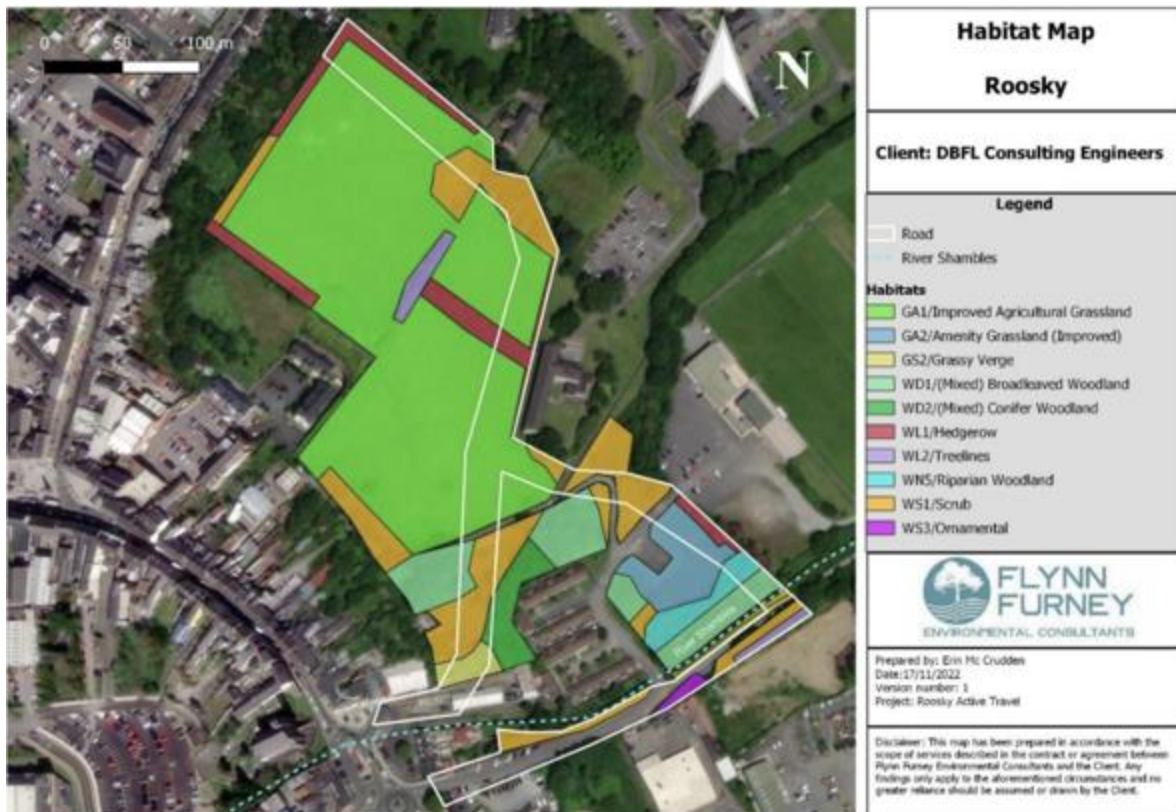


Figure 5. Habitat Map – Roosky (see also Appendix B)

Ecological interests and full survey findings are given in the EclA that accompanies this screening assessment. It was noted that no *ex-situ* Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests of any relevant Natura 2000 site were recorded during these ecological surveys.

6 Article (6)3 Screening Assessment

This Screening assessment questionnaire (EC, 2001) is used to assess whether this project has the potential to impact upon Natura 2000 sites. The consideration criteria of potential for impacts on Natura 2000 sites are detailed below.

Section 4.1.3 of this report excluded any direct impacts or pathways for impacts on all but three Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, it was considered that no further assessment was necessary in relation to these sites. The potential for impacts on Sliabh Beagh SPA, Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC and Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA required further screening.

6.1 Article 6(3) Assessment Criteria

6.1.1 Identification of Potential Impacts

No significant impacts to the above Natura 2000 sites have been identified in the screening process.

6.2 b. Description of any Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Sites

6.2.1 Deterioration in Water Quality in Designated areas due to Construction Activities

No deterioration in water quality is predicted in the Natura 2000 sites as:

- No in-stream works will be required
- The location of the proposed development is not immediately hydrologically connected to the Natura 2000 sites. The significant remove of the works from any Natura 2000 site (60km downstream) precludes any likelihood of impacts. Any suspended solids or any other potential pollutants which may enter the watercourse adjacent to the works area are likely to be minor in nature and settle within close proximity to the works area downstream.

6.2.2 Changes to water quality during the operational phase

No changes to water quality during the operational phase are predicted as:

- The operational phase of the project does not have any likelihood for impacts on water quality as surface water and foul water will be transported for treatment at the existing waste water treatment plant which is directly adjacent the proposed site of works.

6.2.3 Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Sites

Any likely changes to the Natura 2000 sites are described in the table below concerning the following criteria: reduction of habitat area, disturbance to key species, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density, changes in key indicators of conservation value, and climate change.

Table 6.1 Likely changes to the Natura 2000 sites

Likely Changes to the Natura 2000 Site	
Reduction of the habitat area	There will be no reduction in the habitat area of any Natura site. No loss of any habitat type listed as a qualifying interest of relevant Natura 2000 sites will occur.
Disturbance to key species	No disturbance to key species is predicted. The proposed site of works is at considerable remove (60km) from Natura 2000 sites. Works proposed will not have potential for disturbance of the sites in question.
Habitat or species fragmentation	There will be no habitat or species fragmentation. None of the protected species or habitats occur on the site of the proposed development.
Reduction in species density	No reduction in species density is considered likely. No potential for impact on qualifying interest species given the distance of proposed works from Natura 2000 sites.
Changes in key indicators of conservation (water quality etc.)	Water quality is one of the most relevant key indicator of conservation value for the Natura 2000 sites relevant to this work. No in-stream works are proposed. The construction and operational phases of the project are highly unlikely to cause changes in water quality given the hydrological distance of proposed works from the Natura 2000 sites. Any suspended solids or any other potential pollutants which may enter the watercourse adjacent to the works area are likely to be minor in nature and settle within close proximity to the works area downstream.
Climate change	Increased high-rainfall events under predicted future climate scenarios leading to increase in runoff is possible, however it is not likely to significantly impact the Natura 2000 sites.

6.2.4 Deterioration in Water Quality in Designated Areas During Construction

Not considered likely - as detailed above.

6.2.5 Description of any Likely Significant Impacts or Indeterminate Impacts of the Project on the Natura Sites

Based on a consideration of the nature, size and scale of the project, no significant impacts or impacts of indeterminate significance are considered likely.

6.2.6 Cumulative and In-combination Effects

The potential for cumulative impacts arising from other significant existing or permitted infrastructure is assessed here. Cumulative impacts encompass the combined effects of multiple developments or activities on a range of receptors. Potential cumulative impacts associated with the existing and permitted significant infrastructure within the same water catchments as the proposed development should be considered. As part of the Appropriate Assessment, in addition to the proposed works, other relevant projects and plans must also be considered. This step aims to identify at this stage any possible significant cumulative or in combination effects/impacts of the proposed works on the Natura 2000 sites together with other such plans and projects.

A search of the County Monaghan and County Cavan online planning databases was carried out. A number of planning files were reviewed. Planning permission was granted for the development of an Aldi premises (Planning Application File 22240). This site is in close proximity to the site of the proposed development of Roosky (approximately 0.5km) and both sites are located adjacent the River Shambles. However, there is no potential that these developments could have a cumulative impact on water quality in Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA due to the hydrological distance from the Roosky site. Planning files for Northern Ireland were also reviewed. The planning portal for applications currently open for comment for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon (armaghbanbridgecraigavon.gov.uk) was reviewed. No projects likely to have significant cumulative or in combination effects/impacts of the proposed works on any Natura 2000 sites were found. The Northern Ireland planning portal (epicpublicplanningni.gov.uk) was also accessed. No projects likely to have significant cumulative or in combination effects/impacts of the proposed works on any Natura 2000 sites were found.

Plans were also assessed for potential cumulative effects. The Roosky Masterplan was reviewed. The nature of the works here, the absence of any qualifying interest species or habitat, as well as the significant remove of Roosky from any Natura 2000 site would make any potential for cumulative impacts insignificant. A live application – *South Dublin Street and Backlands Regeneration Project* was also reviewed. This is within the built area of Monaghan Town and does not involve any natural or semi-natural habitats. No in-stream works on the River Shambles or works that may potentially impact on this watercourse are proposed. Given the absence of any source-pathway-receptor chain, any cumulative effects arising from this proposed project may be ruled out.

The objectives and policies contained of the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025 (MCDP) were also reviewed. This plan came into effect on the 1st April 2019. The Development Plan was also subject to Appropriate Assessment (AA). The outcome of this assessment stated: 'Having incorporated mitigation measures, it is considered that the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019- 2025 will

not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of any European Site. Therefore, no further assessment is required.’ Therefore, no cumulative or in combination effects with the operation of this plan may be considered likely.

The Roosky Masterplan for the Roosky lands was prepared and adopted on the 4th of April 2022 as Variation No. 4 of the MCDP. This was also reviewed. The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance on the development options of the Masterplan area consistent with the provisions of the MCDP.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening was also prepared for the Roosky Masterplan. This concluded that a Stage II Appropriate Assessment was not required. Therefore, no cumulative or in combination effects with the operation of this plan may be considered likely.

The Dublin Street North Regeneration Plan 2022 was also reviewed. This regeneration plan was progressed in parallel with the Roosky Masterplan, as Variations 3 and 4 to the Monaghan County Development Plan (described above). This plan was also screened for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). It was determined that a Stage II Appropriate Assessment was not required. Therefore, no cumulative or in combination effects with the operation of this plan may be considered likely.

Having regard to the determination that the proposed project will not have any direct or indirect impacts on any European sites, it can be concluded that there will be no significant cumulative impacts in terms of the proposed project or from another other plans or projects in the development area.

There are no predicted in-combination effects in terms of surface water, waste water and emissions to air which could significantly impact the Natura 2000 sites. An in-combination effect can only occur when a development has a non-significant residual effect that subsequently becomes significant when combined with another project. Therefore, a project with no risk of effects (i.e. where all European sites have been screened out) cannot have in-combination effects. As this screening exercise has screened out any effects, no in combination impacts are therefore possible.

6.3 FINDINGS OF ARTICLE 6(3) SCREENING ASSESSMENT

6.3.1 Name of project or plan:

Monaghan Civic Offices.

6.3.2 Name and location of Natura 2000 Site:

Nearest relevant Natura 2000 sites are:

Sliabh Beagh SPA (11km), Kilroosky Lough Cluster SAC (19km) and Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA (40km – geographically, 60km hydrologically).

6.3.3 Description of project or plan

The proposed works will include the construction of a new civic office building, a road and crossing bridge which will be crossing the River Shambles next to the Monaghan Harps GAA grounds.

6.3.4 Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?

The project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 sites.

6.3.5 Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?

There are no predicted cumulative effects given the proposed project does not have the potential to impact habitats or species associated with the Natura 2000 sites in question. No in combination effects are considered possible. .

6.4 Assessment of Significance of Effects

6.4.1 Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site

The project is not likely to affect any Natura 2000 sites.

6.4.1.1 Direct impacts upon the Natura 2000 Sites

There will be no direct impacts upon the Natura 2000 sites because:

- There will be no land-take from any Natura 2000 site
- The proposed works are at a significant remove from Natura 2000 sites

6.4.1.2 Indirect impacts upon the Natura 2000 Site:

There will be no indirect impacts upon the Natura 2000 sites because:

- No reduction in habitat size or quality are predicted within Natura 2000 sites

6.4.1.3 Consultation with Agencies

Monaghan County Council: Necessity and Scope of this assessment agreed. Present report to be submitted to Monaghan County Council on completion.

National Park and Wildlife Services (NPWS): Present report is to be issued to Development Applications Unit (of NPWS) upon application for planning permission for the proposed development.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI): Informed Environmental Officer that present report is to be issued to IFI upon application for planning permission for the proposed development.

6.4.2 Data collected to carry out the assessment

The following sources of data were employed:

- Environmental Protection Agency Database
- NPWS protected species database and online mapping
- National Biodiversity Data Centre Database
- Historical OSI Maps
- EPA datasets for GIS mapping
- ESRI base maps
- NPWS Site Synopsis and Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 sites

6.4.3 Level of assessment completed

- Desk Study
- Site visits and survey in July, August and October 2022 by FFEC. JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Assessment - Fossitt Level III Habitat Recording

6.4.4 Overall Conclusions

In view of the best and objective scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European sites reviewed in the screening exercise, the proposed development as described here, individually/in combination with other plans and projects (either directly or indirectly) is not likely to have significant effects on any of the European sites. Therefore, it is recommended to Monaghan County Council that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment will not be required.

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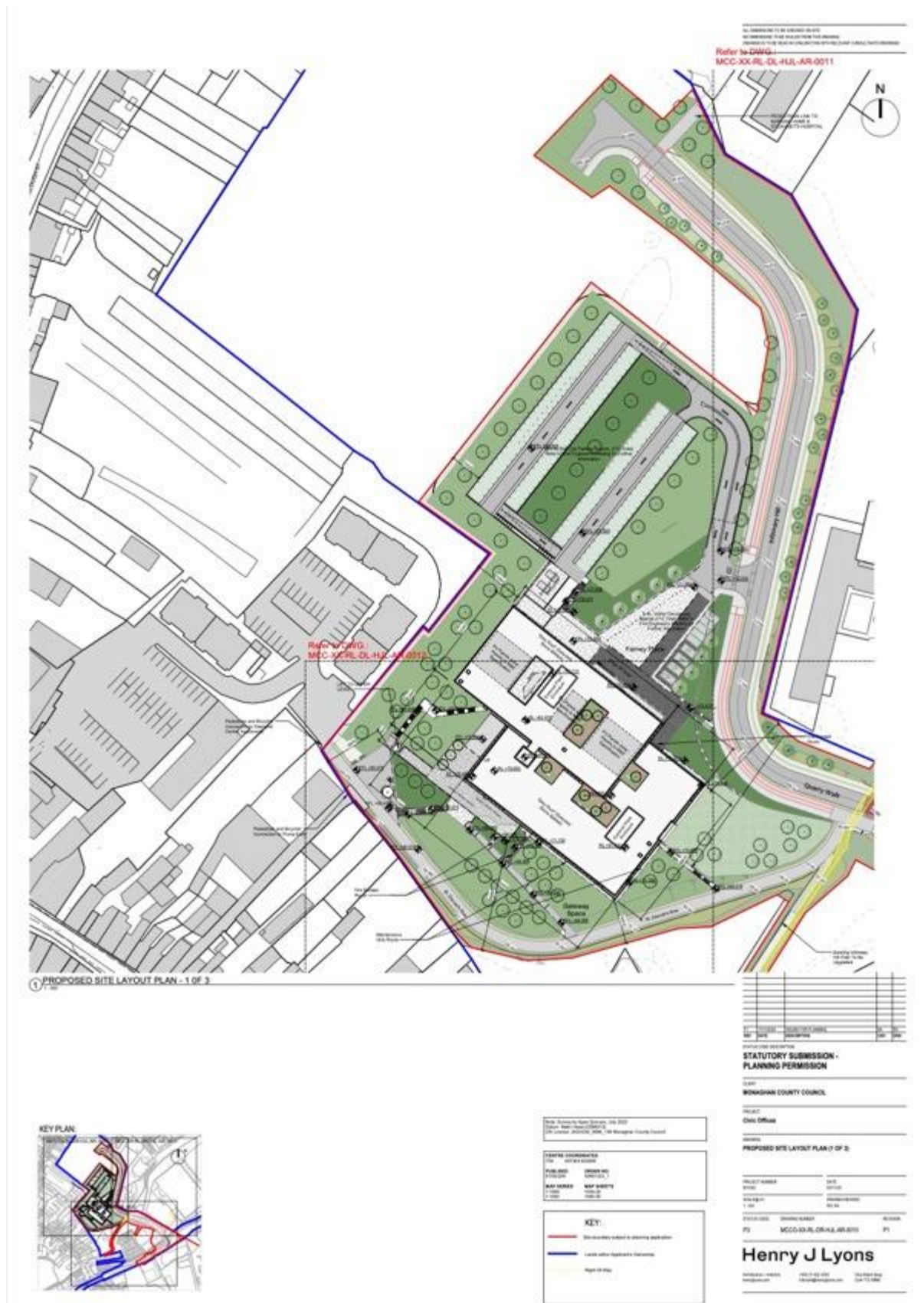
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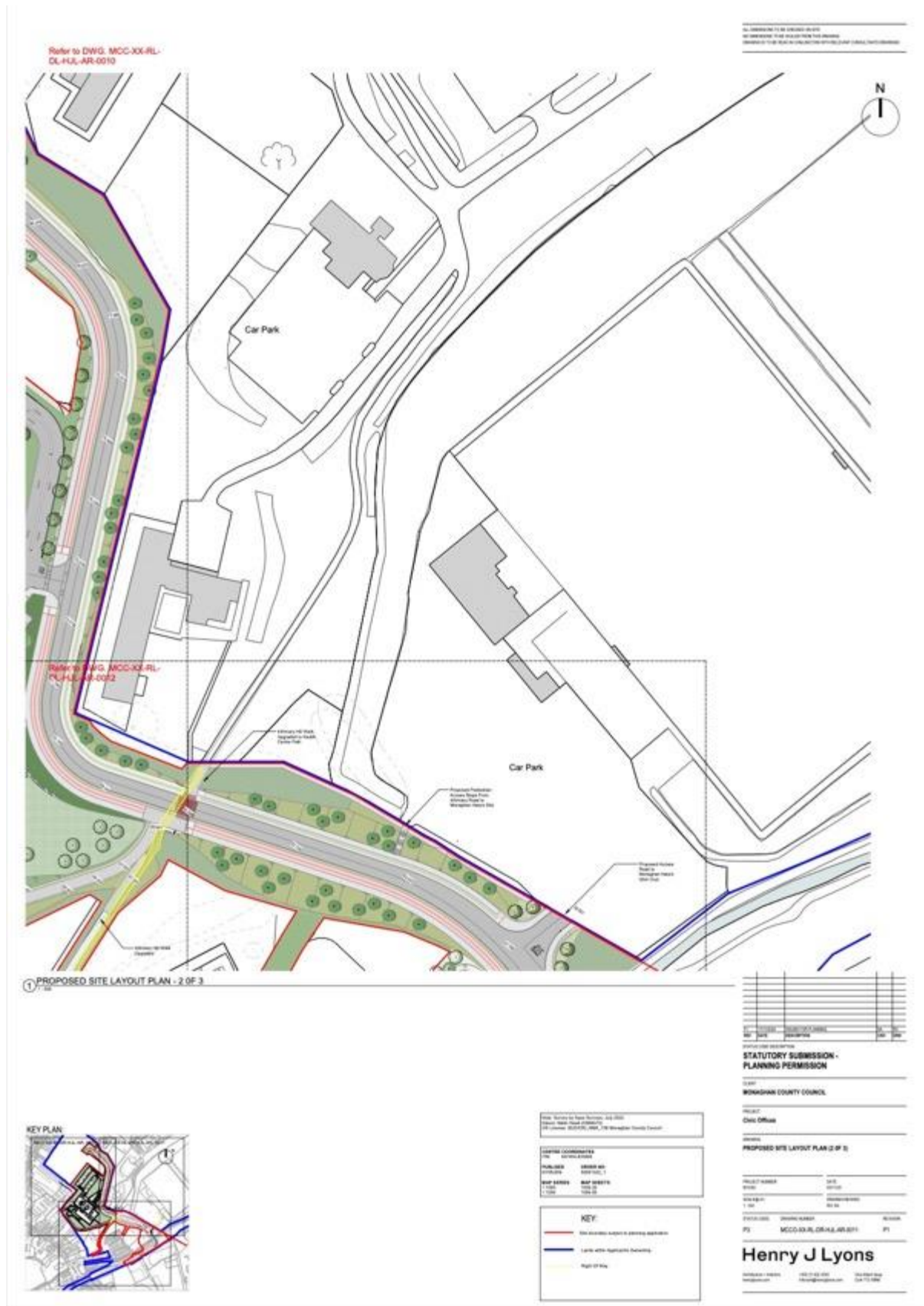
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Appendix A: Site Layout Drawings







Appendix B: Site Habitats

