

# Report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening

OPW Modular Homes,  
Rathdowney

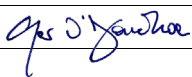
Prepared by: Moore Group – Environmental Services

28 April 2023



On behalf of The Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland on behalf of the Department for  
Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

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## Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
EEC	European Economic Community
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
GIS	Geographical Information System
LAP	Local Area Plan
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
pNHA	proposed Natural Heritage Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
WFD	Water Framework Directive

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. General Introduction

This report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening contains information required for the competent authority to undertake screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of the construction and operation of a development of modular homes at Rathdowney, Co. Laois (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) to determine whether it is likely individually or in combination with other plans and projects to have a significant effect on any European sites, in light of best scientific knowledge.

Having regard to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – 2021 (the “Planning Acts”) (section 177U), the purpose of a screening exercise under section 177U of the PDA 2000 is to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

If it cannot be *excluded* on the basis of objective information that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site then it is necessary to carry out a Stage 2 appropriate assessment under section 177V of the Planning Acts.

When screening the project, there are two possible outcomes:

- the project poses no potential for a likely significant effect and as such requires no further assessment; and
- the project has potential to have likely significant effect (or this is uncertain) unless mitigation measures are applied, and therefore an AA of the project is necessary.

This report has been prepared by Moore Group - Environmental Services to enable the competent authority to carry out AA screening in relation to the Proposed Development. The report was compiled by Ger O'Donohoe (B.Sc. Applied Aquatic Sciences (GMIT, 1993) & M.Sc. Environmental Sciences (TCD, 1999)) who has over 27 years' experience in environmental impact assessment and has completed numerous Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports and Natura Impact Statements on terrestrial and aquatic habitats for various development types.

## 1.2. Legislative Background - The Habitats and Birds Directives

Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive is transposed into Irish Law inter alia by the Part XAB of the Planning Acts (in particular section 177U and 177V) which governs the requirement to carry out appropriate assessment screening and appropriate assessment, where required, per Section 1.1 above.

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992) on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) is the main legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the European Union (EU). Under the Habitats Directive, Member States are obliged to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which contain habitats or species considered important for protection and conservation in a EU context.

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) on the conservation of wild birds), transposed into Irish law by the Bird and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 as amended, and the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended, is concerned with the long-term protection and management of all wild bird species and their habitats in the EU. Among other things, the Birds Directive requires that Special Protection Areas (SPAs) be established to protect migratory species and species which are rare, vulnerable, in danger of extinction, or otherwise require special attention.

SACs designated under the Habitats Directive and SPAs, designated under the Birds Directive, form a pan-European network of protected sites known as Natura 2000. The Habitats Directive sets out a unified system for the protection and management of SACs and SPAs. These sites are also referred to as European sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the requirement for an assessment of proposed plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6(3) establishes the requirement to screen all plans and projects and to carry out an appropriate assessment if required (Appropriate Assessment (AA)). Article 6(4) establishes requirements in cases of imperative reasons of overriding public interest:

**Article 6(3):** *“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications 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.”*

## 2. Methodology

The Commission’s methodological guidance (EC, 2002, 2018, 2021 see Section 2.1 below) promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

Stages 1 and 2 deal with the main requirements for assessment under Article 6(3). Stage 3 may be part of Article 6(3) or may be a necessary precursor to Stage 4. Stage 4 is the main derogation step of Article 6(4).

**Stage 1 Screening:** This stage examines the likely effects of a project either alone or in combination with other projects upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. In order to screen out a project, it must be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the Proposed Development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

**Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment:** In this stage, there is a consideration of the impact of the project with a view to ascertain whether there will be any adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are predicted impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts is considered.

**Stage 3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions:** This stage examines alternative ways of implementing the project that, where possible, avoid any adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

**Stage 4 Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain:** Where imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist, an assessment to consider whether compensatory measures will or will not effectively offset the damage to the sites will be necessary.

To ensure that the Proposed Development complies fully with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and all relevant Irish transposing legislation, Moore Group compiled this report to enable Laois County Council to carry out AA screening in relation to the Proposed Development to determine whether the Proposed Development, individually or in combination with another plan or project will have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site.

## 2.1. Guidance

This report has been compiled in accordance with guidance contained in the following documents:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 rev.)(soon to be superseded by EC Guidance in prep.).
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018).
- Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive (EC, 2021).
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2021).

- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021).

## 2.2. Data Sources

Sources of information that were used to collect data on the Natura 2000 network of sites, and the environment within which they are located, are listed below:

- The following mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data sources, as required:
  - National Parks & Wildlife (NPWS) protected site boundary data;
  - Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) mapping and aerial photography;
  - OSI/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rivers and streams, and catchments;
  - Open Street Maps;
  - Digital Elevation Model over Europe (EU-DEM);
  - Google Earth and Bing aerial photography 1995-2022;
- Online data available on Natura 2000 sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie) including:
  - Natura 2000 - Standard Data Form;
  - Conservation Objectives;
  - Site Synopses;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre records;
  - Online database of rare, threatened and protected species;
  - Publicly accessible biodiversity datasets.
- Status of EU Protected Habitats in Ireland. (National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2019); and
- Relevant Development Plans;
  - Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027

## 3. Description of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will consist of 42 no. single storey semi-detached units; all units will be accessed by an entrance off the Kilcoran Road, to the southeast of Rathdowney. Each unit will have private rear garden spaces and semi-private front curtilage areas. Works will include pavements, public lighting, planting strips and verges, roads and car parking areas. The development will be connected to the existing wastewater treatment infrastructure.

A habitat survey was carried out by Moore Group on 8 December 2022. Areas which were highlighted during desktop assessment were investigated in closer detail according to the Heritage Council Best Practice Guidance



for Habitat Survey and Mapping (Smith *et al.*, 2011). Habitats in the proposed development area were classified according to the Heritage Council publication “A Guide to Habitats in Ireland” (Fossitt, 2000). This publication sets out a standard scheme for identifying, describing and classifying wildlife habitats in Ireland. This form of classification uses codes to classify different habitats based on the plant species present. Species recorded in this report are given in both their Latin and English names. Latin names for plant species follow the nomenclature of “An Irish Flora” (Parnell & Curtis, 2012).

Signs of mammals such as badgers and otters were searched for while surveying the study area noting any sights, signs or any activity in the vicinity especially along adjacent boundaries.

Birds were surveyed using standard transect methodology and signs were recorded where encountered during the field walkover surveys.

The proposed development is situated within a field of improved agricultural grassland (GA1), supporting typical species such as Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*), Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Curled Dock (*Rumex crispus*) and Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). The southwestern boundary of the site is defined by a stone wall, and a hedgerow runs along the northern boundary, growing along a shallow and relatively dry drainage ditch, with Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Ivy (*Hedera hibernica*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). This habitat is classified as (WL1).

No flora or terrestrial fauna species or habitats of national or international conservation importance were noted on site during the survey.

There were no invasive species recorded at the proposed development site.

Figure 1 shows the Proposed Development location and Figure 2 shows a detailed view of the Proposed Development boundary on recent aerial photography. Figure 3 shows the layout of the Proposed Development.

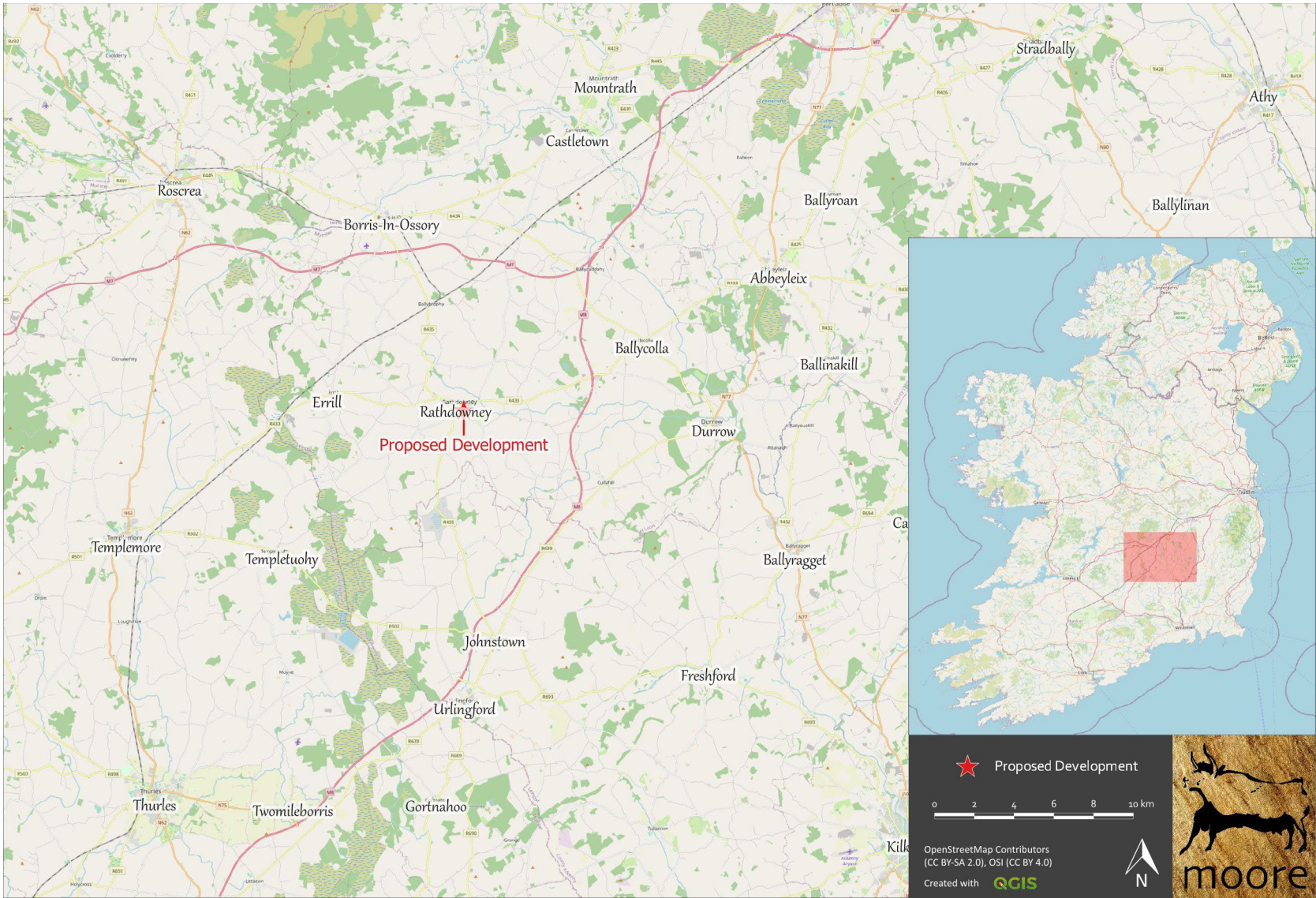


Figure 1. Showing the Proposed Development location at Rathdowney.





Figure 2. Site of proposed development on recent aerial photography.

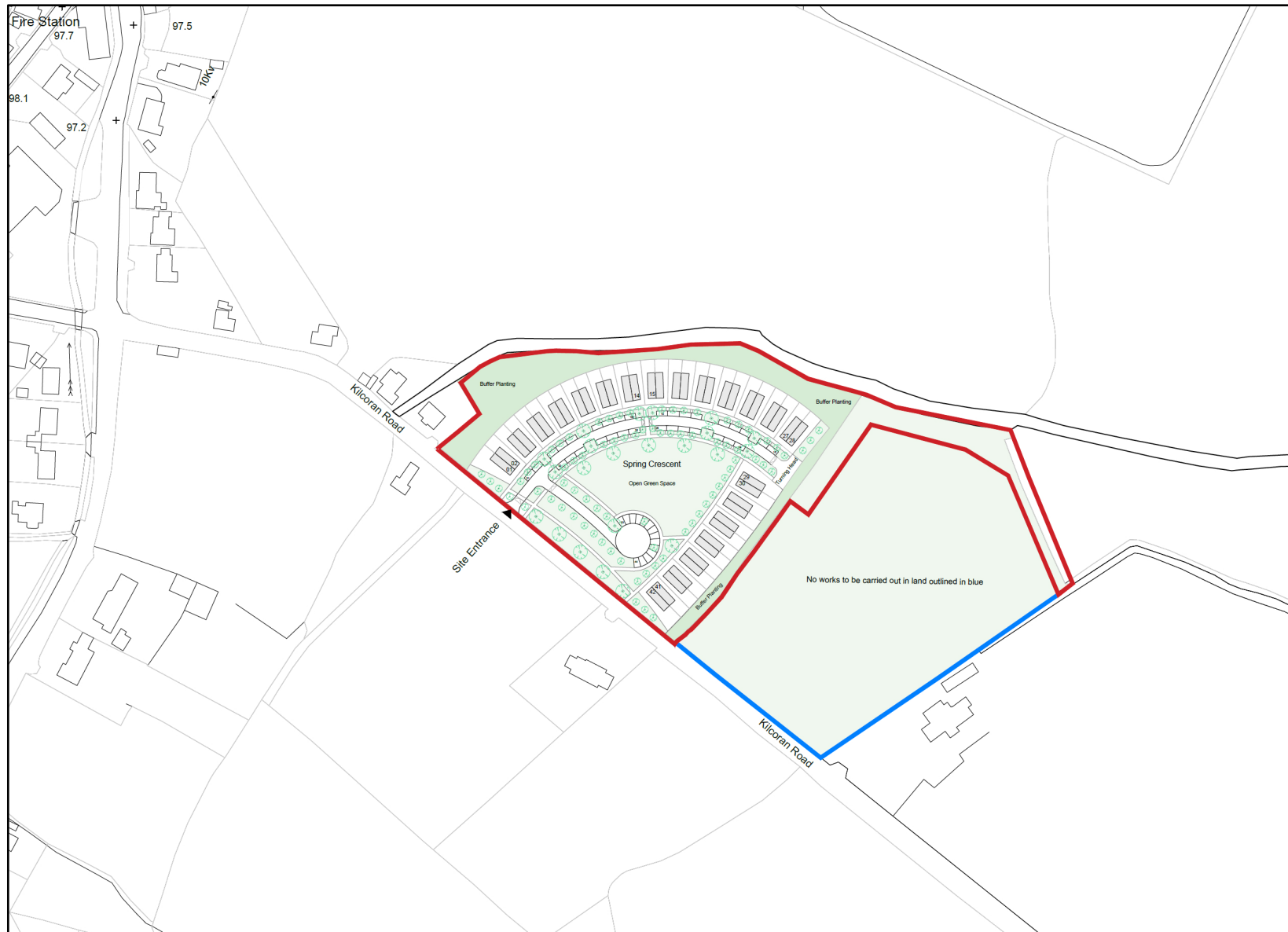


Figure 3. Plan of the Proposed Development.

## 4. Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

### 4.1. Description of Natura Sites Potentially Significantly Affected

A Zone of Influence (Zoi) of a proposed development is the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of a European site. In accordance with the OPR Practice Note, PN01, the Zoi should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source- Pathway-Receptor framework.

The European Commission's "Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Methodological Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC" published 28 September 2021 states at section 3.1.3:

*Identifying the Natura 2000 sites that may be affected should be done by taking into consideration all aspects of the plan or project that could have potential effects on any Natura 2000 sites located within the zone of influence of the plan or project. This should take into account all of the designating features (species, habitat types) that are significantly present on the sites and their conservation objectives. In particular, it should identify:*

- *any Natura 2000 sites geographically overlapping with any of the actions or aspects of the plan or project in any of its phases, or adjacent to them;*
- *any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of influence of the plan or project Natura 2000 sites located in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) that could still be indirectly affected by aspects of the project, including as regards the use of natural resources (e.g. water) and various types of waste, discharge or emissions of substances or energy;*
- *Natura 2000 sites in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) which host fauna that can move to the project area and then suffer mortality or other impacts (e.g. loss of feeding areas, reduction of home range);*
- *Natura 2000 sites whose connectivity or ecological continuity can be affected by the plan or project.*

*The range of Natura 2000 sites to be assessed, i.e. the zone in which impacts from the plan or project may arise, will depend on the nature of the plan or project and the distance at which effects may occur. For Natura 2000 sites located downstream along rivers or wetlands fed by aquifers, it may be that a plan or project can affect water flows, fish migration and so forth, even at a great distance. Emissions of pollutants may also have effects over a long distance. Some projects or plans that do not directly affect Natura 2000 sites may still have a significant impact on them if they cause a barrier effect or prevent ecological linkages. This may happen, for example, when plans affect features of the landscape that connect Natura 2000 sites or that may obstruct the*

*movements of species or disrupt the continuity of a fluvial or woodland ecosystem. To determine the possible effects of the plan or project on Natura 2000 sites, it is necessary to identify not only the relevant sites but also the habitats and species that are significantly present within them, as well as the site objectives.*

The Zone of Influence may be determined by considering the Proposed Development's potential connectivity with European sites, in terms of:

- Nature, scale, timing and duration of all aspects of the proposed works and possible impacts, including the nature and size of excavations, storage of materials, flat/sloping sites;
- Distance and nature of potential pathways (dilution and dispersion; intervening 'buffer' lands, roads etc.); and
- Location of ecological features and their sensitivity to the possible impacts.

The potential for source pathway receptor connectivity is firstly identified through GIS interrogation and detailed information is then provided on sites with connectivity. European sites that are located within a potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development are presented in Figures 4 and 5 below. Spatial boundary data on the Natura 2000 network was extracted from the NPWS website ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)) on 28 April 2023. This data was interrogated using GIS analysis to provide mapping, distances, locations and pathways to all sites of conservation concern including pNHAs, NHA and European sites.

The nearest European site to the Proposed Development is the Galmoy Fen SAC (Site Code 001858), approximately 4.5km to the south; however there is no connectivity to this site. The River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162) and River Nore SPA (004233) lies 4.8km directly to the east.

Surface water will be contained on site using appropriate SuDS features prior to discharge to the Knockheel Stream to the east which runs along the northern boundary the golf course further to the east for a distance of 1.2 river km before joining the Erkina River c. 5.8 river km downstream. The Erkina joins the River Nore at a total distance of c. 7 river km downstream. The Erkina River is not designated until the confluence of the River Barrow where the River Nore is part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC and River Nore SPA.

The Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of the European sites in the Zone of influence of the Proposed Development are provided in Table 2 below.



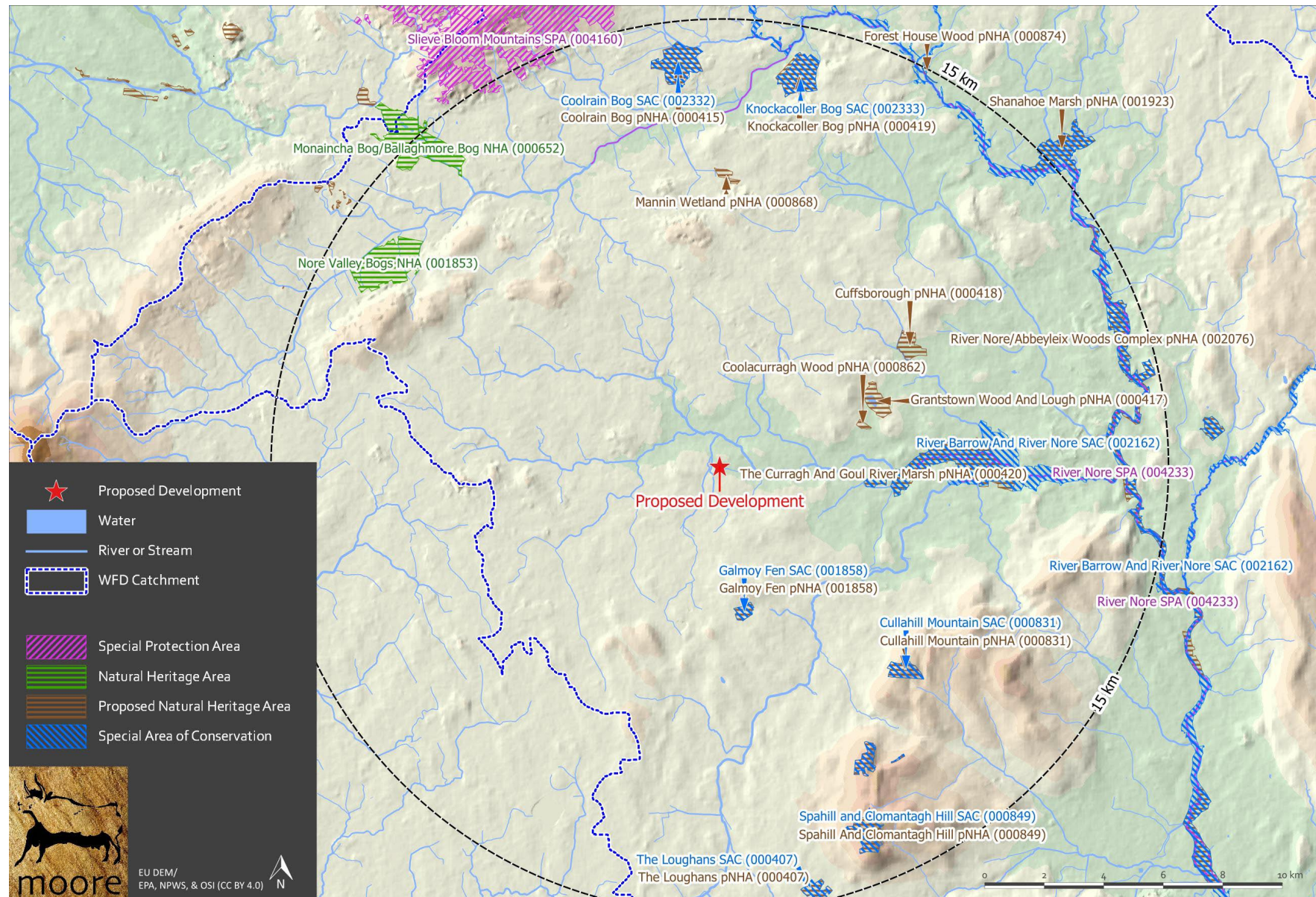


Figure 4. Showing European sites and NHAs/pNHAs within the wider Potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development.

Table 1. Identification of relevant European sites using Source-Pathway-Receptor model and compilation of information QIs and conservation objectives. \*Priority Habitats

European site name & Site code	Location Relative to the Proposed Development Site	Connectivity – Source-Pathway-Receptor	Considered further in Screening – Y/N
<p><b>River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)</b></p> <p>The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest:</p> <p>1016 Desmoulin's whorl snail <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i></p> <p>1029 Freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i></p> <p>1092 White-clawed crayfish <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i></p> <p>1095 Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i></p> <p>1096 Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i></p> <p>1099 River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i></p> <p>1103 Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i></p> <p>1106 Atlantic salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) (only in fresh water)</p> <p>1130 Estuaries</p> <p>1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand</p> <p>1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)</p> <p>1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i></p> <p>1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</p> <p>1421 Killarney fern <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i></p> <p>1990 Nore freshwater pearl mussel <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i></p> <p>3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation</p> <p>4030 European dry heaths</p> <p>6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels</p> <p>7220 * Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</p> <p>91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</p>	4.79km to the east of the Proposed Development	There is a very distant pathway c. 7 river km to the River Nore.	Yes, considered further in Table 2 below.



European site name & Site code	Location Relative to the Proposed Development Site	Connectivity – Source-Pathway-Receptor	Considered further in Screening – Y/N
91E0 * Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)  NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.			
<b>River Nore SPA (004233)</b>  A229 Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>  NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for River Nore SPA [004233]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.	4.79km to the east of the Proposed Development	There is a very distant pathway c. 7 river km to the River Nore.	Yes, considered further in Table 2 below.

## 4.2. Ecological Network Supporting Natura 2000 Sites

A concurrent GIS analysis of the proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) and designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) in terms of their role in supporting the species using Natura 2000 sites was undertaken along with GIS investigation of European sites. It was assumed that these supporting roles mainly related to mobile fauna such as mammals and birds which may use pNHAs and NHAs as ecological corridors or “stepping stones” between Natura 2000 sites.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations 2011 place a high degree of importance on such non-Natura 2000 areas as features that connect the Natura 2000 network. Features such as ponds, woodlands and important hedgerows were taken into account in the decision process and during the preparation of this AA Screening report.

The NHAs and pNHAs identified in Figure 4 are located outside the Zone of Influence. There are no areas of supporting habitat that will be impacted by the proposed development.

## 5. Identification of Potential Impacts & Assessment of Significance

The Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites considered in the assessment and therefore potential impacts must be identified and considered.

## 5.1. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

The consideration of all potential direct and indirect impacts that may result in significant effects on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the Proposed Development are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects.

<b>Identification of all potential direct and indirect impacts that may result in significant effects on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the project.</b>	
<b>Impacts:</b>	<b>Significance of Impacts:</b>
<b>Construction phase e.g.</b>  Vegetation clearance  Demolition  Surface water runoff from soil excavation/infill/landscaping (including borrow pits)  Dust, noise, vibration  Lighting disturbance  Impact on groundwater/dewatering  Storage of excavated/construction materials  Access to site  Pests	None  The Proposed Development site is located within the boundary of a field of improved agricultural grassland.  The discharge of surface water after SuDS on site via a local drainage ditch leading to the Knockheel Stream will have no significant effects on the Erkina River or the River Nore over 7km downstream.
<b>Operational phase e.g.</b>  Direct emission to air and water  Surface water runoff containing contaminant or sediment  Lighting disturbance  Noise/vibration  Changes to water/groundwater due to drainage or abstraction  Presence of people, vehicles and activities  Physical presence of structures (e.g. collision risks)	All foul water, once the Proposed Development is operational, will be contained on site and discharged to urban drainage systems.  The discharge of surface water after SuDS on site via a local drainage ditch leading to the Knockheel Stream will have no significant effects on the Erkina River or the River Nore over 7km downstream.  There is no real likelihood of any significant effects on European Sites in the wider catchment area.  The Proposed Development is located at a distance of removal such that there will be

Potential for accidents or incidents	no disturbance to qualifying interest species in any European sites.
<b>Describe any likely changes to the European site:</b>	
<b>Examples of the type of changes to give consideration to include:</b>  Reduction or fragmentation of habitat area  Disturbance to QI species  Habitat or species fragmentation  Reduction or fragmentation in species density  Changes in key indicators of conservation status value (water quality etc.)  Changes to areas of sensitivity or threats to QI  Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or ecological function of the site  Climate change	None  The Proposed Development site is not located within or adjacent to a European site, therefore there is no risk of habitat loss or fragmentation or any effects on QI habitats or species directly or ex-situ.  The discharge of surface water after SuDS on site via a local drainage ditch leading to the Knockheel Stream will have no significant effects on the Erkina River or the River Nore over 7km downstream.

On the basis of the information supplied, which is considered adequate to undertake a screening determination and having regard to:

- the nature and scale of the proposed development,
- the intervening land uses and distance from European sites,
- the lack of direct connections with regard to the Source-Pathway-Receptor model,

It may be concluded that the proposed development, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on the above listed European sites or any other European site, in view of the said sites' conservation objectives.

## 5.2. Assessment of Potential In-Combination Effects

In-combination effects are changes in the environment that result from numerous human-induced, small-scale alterations. In-combination effects can be thought of as occurring through two main pathways: first, through persistent additions or losses of the same materials or resource, and second, through the compounding effects as a result of the coming together of two or more effects.

As part of the Screening for an Appropriate Assessment, in addition to the Proposed Development, other relevant plans and projects in the area must also be considered at this stage. This step aims to identify at this

early stage any possible significant in-combination effects of the Proposed Development with other such plans and projects on European sites.

A review of the National Planning Application Database was undertaken. The first stage of this review confirmed that there were no data gaps in the area where the Proposed Development is located. The database was then queried for developments granted planning permission within 500m of the Proposed Development within the last three years, these are presented in Table 3 below.

*Table 3. Planning applications granted permission in the vicinity of the Proposed Development.*

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
19413	construct telecommunications infrastructure comprising of; a 21 metre multi-operator lattice tower with antenna and dishes attached, associated equipment and cabinets, fencing and use of existing access	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
19467	retain indefinitely, domestic stores & car port as constructed to the rear of the dwelling	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
20367	demolish existing garage and construct an extension to the side and rear of house; construct a single storey detached garage and retain a previously constructed extension to the rear of existing house	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
20501	construct a new sports hall, male and female changing rooms, toilet accommodation, store, social area, entrance lobby and canopy. Site works to include 6 no. new parking spaces, 2 no. new ball courts, relocating existing ball wall, re-routing of semi-public walkway and all ancillary site works at St. Fergal's College	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
2097	construct an extension to existing dwelling	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
21371	construct a single storey extension to the rear of an existing dwelling and all associated site works	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
21673	develop as follows: 1. retain the removal of the roof structure over the newly built courtyard and walls; 2. retain the timber cladding to the rear and surrounding buildings; 3. retain the additional floor space, 3 no. bedrooms at second floor level to the rear of the building; 4. retain the additional floor space 3 no. bedrooms at first floor level to the rear of the building; 5. retain the change of use of 2 no. stores to bedrooms to the rear of the building including first and second floor bedrooms as per 3 and 4 above; 6. planning permission for the change of use from Public House, Restaurant, Night Club & Residential Accommodation, including accommodation for persons seeking Internal Protection, to Guest House including accommodation for persons seeking Internal Protection, either on a short-term or long-term basis, at ground floor level including first and second floor bedrooms which are the subject to retention above, including all associated site and ancillary works at this address in accordance with the drawings as submitted	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
22265	erect flood lights , generator enclosure and all associated site works	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
22266	change of use of a domestic garage to a veterinary practice, including all associated works	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
22467	retain the demolished outbuilding and toilet block, also retention permission for an extension to rear of the premises on the footprint of the original toilet block to accommodate a stairs and a new window and retention permission for converted shop door and screen to a window at Church Street and planning permission to install a ramp to the end existing door to shop and construct a replacement storage building on the footprint of the original shed to accommodate staff lockers, W.C., sluice room and storage, also an external bin storage area and all ancillary and necessary site works	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
22473	retain first floor extension to dwellinghouse and all associated site works	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.
22501	retain extension to dwelling house and all associated site works	No potential for in-combination effects given the scale and location of the project.

There are no predicted in-combination effects given that it is predicted that the Proposed Development will have no effect on any European site.

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

The listed developments have been granted permission in most cases with conditions relating to sustainable development by the consenting authority in compliance with the relevant Local Authority Development Plan and in compliance with the Local Authority requirement with regard to the Habitats Directive. The development cannot have received planning permission without having met the consenting authority requirement in this regard.

Any new applications for the Proposed Development area will be assessed on a case by case basis *initially* by Laois County Council which will determine the requirement for AA Screening as per the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

## 6. Conclusion

There are no predicted effects on any European sites given:

- The Proposed Development is to be connected to the existing public sewer network for the treatment of wastewater.

- There are no predicted emissions to air, water or the environment during the construction or operational phases that would result in significant effects.

It has been objectively concluded by Moore Group Environmental Services that:

1. The Proposed Development is not directly connected with, or necessary to the conservation management of the European sites considered in this assessment.
2. The Proposed Development is unlikely to either directly or indirectly significantly affect the Qualifying interests or Conservation Objectives of the European sites considered in this assessment.
3. The Proposed Development, alone or in combination with other projects, is not likely to have significant effects on the European sites considered in this assessment in view of their conservation objectives.
4. It is possible to conclude that significant effects can be excluded at the screening stage.

It can be *excluded*, on the basis of objective information, that the Proposed Development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

An appropriate assessment is not, therefore, required.

A final determination will be made by the consenting authority in this regard.

## 7. References

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