

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING  
REPORT AS REGARDS A PROPOSED PARK AT, OLDCASTLE,  
CO MEATH  
JULY 2023



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Meath County Council are in the initial phase of drawing up a design for a small brown field site (app 5,000 m<sup>2</sup>) to transform it into a Play Park for mixed uses to include items such as those listed below and in line with the concept plan in Image No.2 – Concept Plan.

- Outdoor picnic area
- Outdoor exercise area
- Toddlers play area
- Basketball court
- Table tennis
- Handball wall
- Perimeter pathway
- Planting and landscaping

The purpose of this EIA screening report is to assess if the proposal requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

The proposed development is not of a nature requiring mandatory EIAR as listed in Part (1) of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). The proposed development is of a very small scale but could be interpreted as a “sub-threshold” development. Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) sets out the information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for environmental impact assessment.

The purpose of this document is to set out the information required as regards EIA screening.

This EIA screening report concludes that the proposed development can be screened out, i.e., the preparation of an EIAR is not required in this instance.

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Background

This EIA Screening report provides an assessment of a proposed development at Oldcastle, Co. Meath as regards the criteria for determining whether a development would or would not be likely to have a significant impact on the environment, as set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended (the 2001 Regulations). This assessment is intended to assist the Competent Authority in the carrying out of its determination as to whether Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for the proposed development. This Report includes the information specified under Schedule 7A of the 2001 Regulations, as amended, being the information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for environmental impact assessment. This assessment has afforded due regard to the criteria listed in Annex IIA and Annex III of Directive 2014/52/EU.

This assessment has also afforded due regard to the document “Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment” (2018)<sup>1</sup>.

## 1.2 Structure of this Report

This Report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 provides an overview of the relevant legislation, guidelines, criteria, and methodology of Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Section 3 describes the site location and planning context of the application site including an overview of the planning history and planning policy context of the site;
- Sections 4 and 5 provide an assessment of the proposed development against relevant criteria, having regard to Schedule 7A;
- Section 6 provides a summary as the non-requirement for a sub-threshold EIAR to accompany the subject planning application;
- Section 7 lays out the conclusion of the EIA screening report.

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

### 1.3 FERS Company Background

FERS Ltd has been undertaking ecological surveys and research since the company's formation in 2005 by Dr Patrick Moran and Dr Kevin Black. Dr Moran, the principal ecologist with FERS, holds a 1<sup>st</sup> class honours degree in Environmental Biology (UCD), a Ph.D. in Ecology (UCD), a Diploma in EIA and SEA management (UCD), a M.Sc. in GIS (University of Ulster, Coleraine) and an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law (King's Inns). Patrick has in excess of 20 years of experience in carrying out ecological surveys on both an academic and a professional basis. Dr Emma Reeves, a Senior Ecologist with FERS Ltd. holds a 1<sup>st</sup> class honours degree in Botany (UCD), and a Ph.D. in Botany (UCD). Emma has in excess of 15 years of experience in carrying out ecological surveys on both an academic and a professional basis. Ciaran Byrne a Senior Ecologist with FERS holds a first-class honours degree in Environmental Management (DIT) and a M.Sc. in Applied Science/Ecological Assessment (UCC). Ciaran has in excess of 10 years of experience in carrying out ecological surveys on both an academic and a professional basis.

FERS client list includes National Parks and Wildlife Service, An Bord Pleanála, Coillte, Teagasc, numerous County Councils, the Heritage Council, University College Dublin, the Environmental Protection Agency, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Public Works.

## 2 Overview of EIA screening

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### 2.1 Legislation

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening is the term used to describe the process for determining whether a proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment and if it requires an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) by reference to the type and scale of the proposed development and the significance or the environmental sensitivity of the receiving environment.

Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU details the requirements for the screening of projects for Environmental Impact Assessment. In this regard, recital (27) of Directive 2014/52/EU states that:

*'...The screening procedure should ensure that an environmental impact assessment is only required for projects likely to have significant effects on the environment...'*

Schedule 5 of Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as Amended) indicates the categories of development and thresholds for activities that require the submission of an EIAR. The proposed development is sub-threshold, and EIAR is not mandatory.

Section 172 (1)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as Amended), details that EIAR will be required where a proposed development would be of a class specified in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but does not equal or exceed the relevant threshold specified in that part, and it is concluded, determined or decided by the competent body *'...that the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment...'*

Article 103(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as Amended) indicates the criteria for determining whether a proposed development would or would not be likely to have a significant effect on the environment, has been substituted by article 67 of European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (European EIA Regulations) to read as follows:

*'103. (1) (a) Where a planning application for sub-threshold development is not accompanied by an EIAR, the planning authority shall carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size, or location of the development.'*



*(b) Where the planning authority concludes, based on such preliminary examination, that—*

*(i) there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall conclude that an EIA is not required,*

*(ii) there is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall, by notice in writing served on the applicant, require the applicant to submit to the authority the information specified in Schedule 7A for the purposes of a screening determination unless the applicant has already provided such information, or*

*(iii) there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall—*

*(I) conclude that the development would be likely to have such effects, and*

*(II) by notice in writing served on the applicant, require the applicant to submit to the authority an EIAR and to comply with the requirements of article 105.*

*(1A) (a) Where an applicant is submitting to the planning authority the information specified in Schedule 7A, the information shall be accompanied by any further relevant information on the characteristics of the proposed development and its likely significant effects on the environment, including, where relevant, information on how the available results of other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment carried out pursuant to European Union legislation other than the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive have been taken into account.*

*(b) Where an applicant is submitting to the planning authority the information specified in Schedule 7A, the information may be accompanied by a description of the features, if any, of the proposed development and the measures, if any, envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment of the development.*

*(1B) (a) Where a planning application for sub-threshold development is not accompanied by an EIAR but is accompanied by the information specified in Schedule 7A and sub-article (1A), or where an applicant submits to the planning authority such information pursuant to a requirement issued under sub-article (1)(b)(ii), the planning authority shall carry out an examination of, at the least, the nature, size, or location of the development for the purposes of a screening determination.*

*(b) The planning authority shall make a screening determination and—*

*(i) if such determination is that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall determine that an EIA is not required, or*

*(ii) if such determination is that there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall—*

*(I) determine that the development would be likely to have such effects, and*

*(II) by notice in writing served on the applicant, require the applicant to submit to the authority an EIAR and to comply with the requirements of article 105.*

## 2.2 Information required for purposes of Screening Sub-threshold Development for EIA

Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended sets out information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for environmental impact assessment. A summary of this information is provided in Section 6.

Schedule 7A provides as follows:

*'1. A description of the proposed development, including in particular—*

- (a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works, and*
- (b) a description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.*

*2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.*

*3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from—*

- (a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and*
- (b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.*

*4. The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7.'*

Schedule 7, as referenced under Schedule 7(A)(4), sets out the criteria for determining whether development listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 should be subject to EIA.

### *1 Characteristics of proposed development*

*The characteristics of proposed development, in particular—*

- (a) the size and design of the whole of the proposed development,*
- (b) cumulation with other existing development and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment,*
- (c) the nature of any associated demolition works,*
- (d) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity,*
- (e) the production of waste,*

- (f) pollution and nuisances,*
- (g) the risk of major accidents, and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge, and*
- (h) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).*

## *2 Location of proposed development*

*The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—*

- (a) the existing and approved land use,*
- (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,*
- (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:*
  - (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;*
  - (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;*
  - (iii) mountain and forest areas;*
  - (iv) nature reserves and parks;*
  - (v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and;*
  - (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;*
  - (vii) densely populated areas;*
  - (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.*

## *3 Types and characteristics of potential impacts*

*The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—*

- (a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),*
- (b) the nature of the impact,*
- (c) the transboundary nature of the impact,*
- (d) the intensity and complexity of the impact,*

- (e) the probability of the impact,*
- (f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact,*
- (g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and*
- (h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.*

## **2.3 Other Relevant Guidelines**

This Screening Report has been prepared having regard to the following guidance documents:

- Environmental Impact Assessment - Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála (August 2018)
- Draft Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, Environmental Protection Agency, 2017 (Draft EPA Guidelines).
- European Commission guidance documents on the implementation of the EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU), as follows:
  - Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Screening, European Commission, 2017.
  - Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Scoping, European Commission, 2017 (not considered relevant at Screening Stage).
  - Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, European Commission, 2017 (not considered relevant at Screening Stage).

## 3 Site location and Planning Context

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### 3.1 Development description

Meath County Council are in the initial phase of creating and implementing a design for an existing brown-field area to repurpose the area as a Play Park for mixed uses to include items such as those listed below and in line with the concept plan in Image No.2 – Concept Plan.

- a. Outdoor picnic area;
- b. Outdoor exercise area;
- c. Toddlers play area;
- d. Basketball court;
- e. Table tennis;
- f. Handball wall;
- g. Perimeter pathway; and
- h. Planting and landscaping.

The proposed development is in broad agreement with the Oldcastle Public Realm Plan. The approximate location of the proposed works is illustrated in in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5. The conceptual layout of the works (Option 2) is illustrated in Figure 6.

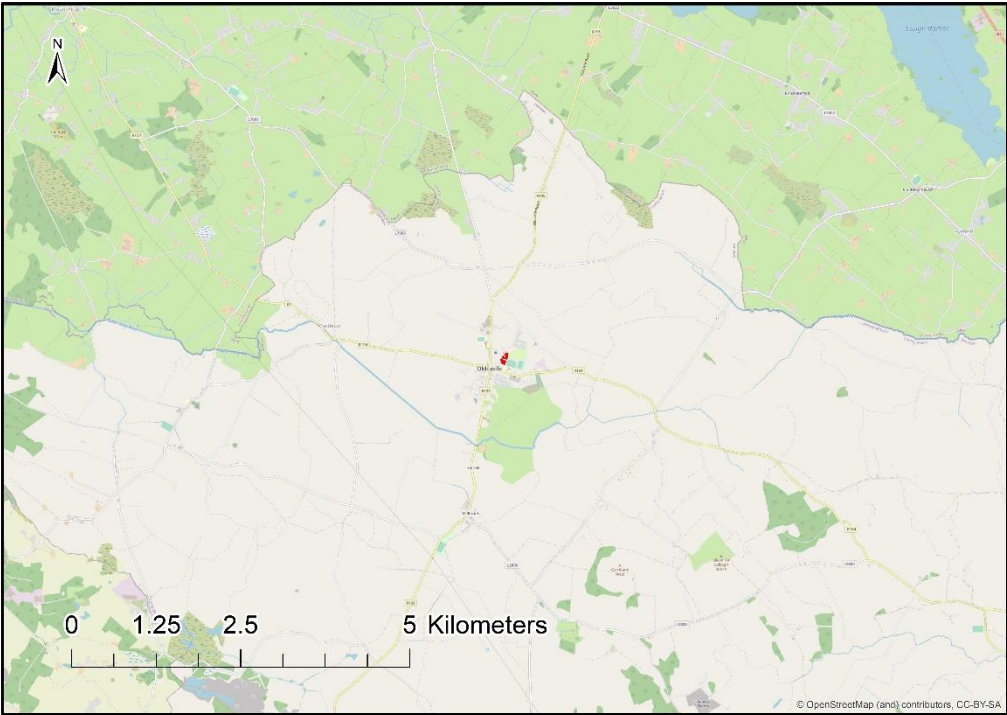


Figure 1: Approximate location of proposed works (1:50,000)

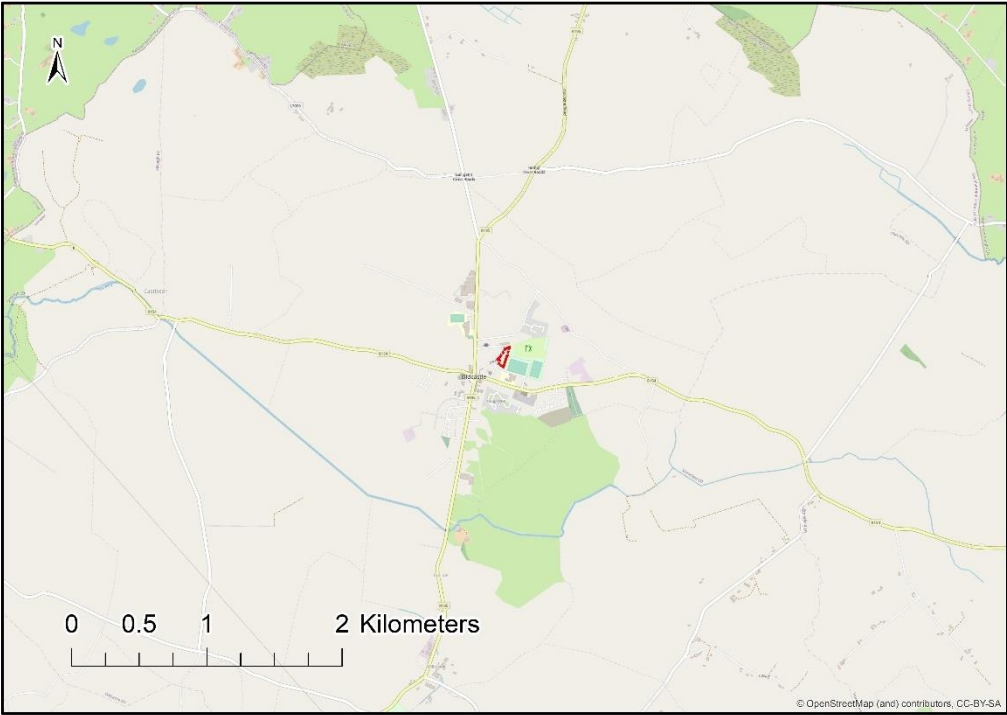


Figure 2: Approximate location of proposed works (1:25,000)

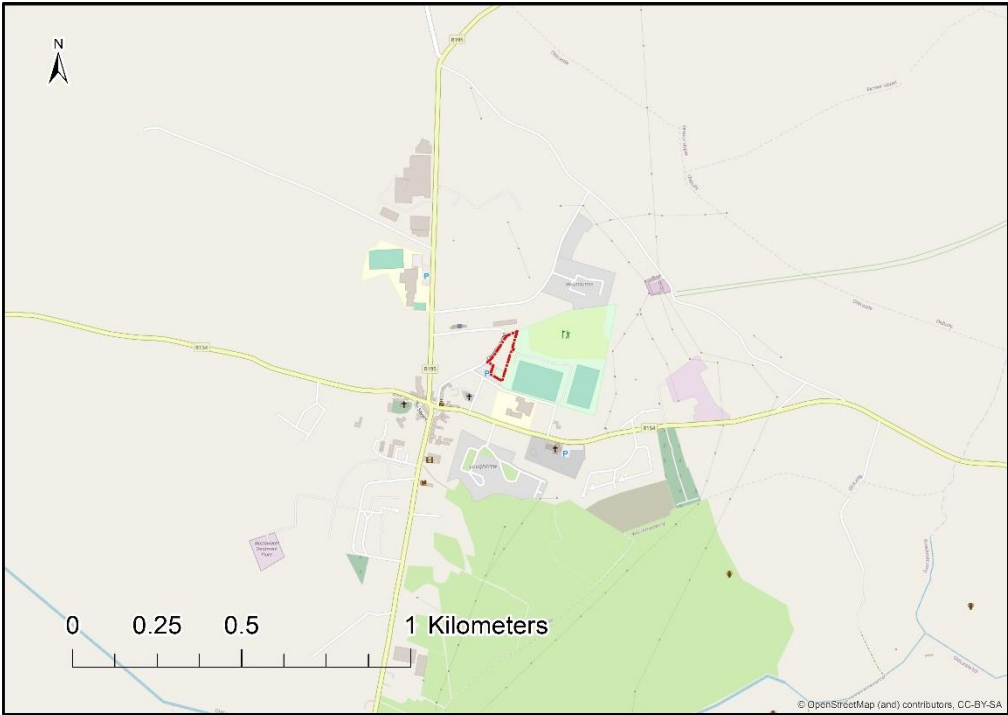


Figure 3: Approximate location of proposed works (1:10,000)



Figure 4: Approximate location of proposed works (1:2,500)



Figure 5: Extent of proposed works site area overlain on satellite imagery (1:1,000)





Figure 6: Option 2 Plan Layout

### 3.2 Planning History

A review of the National Planning Application Database (19/05/23) indicates that there are no recent planning permissions associated with the application site (please see Figure 7).

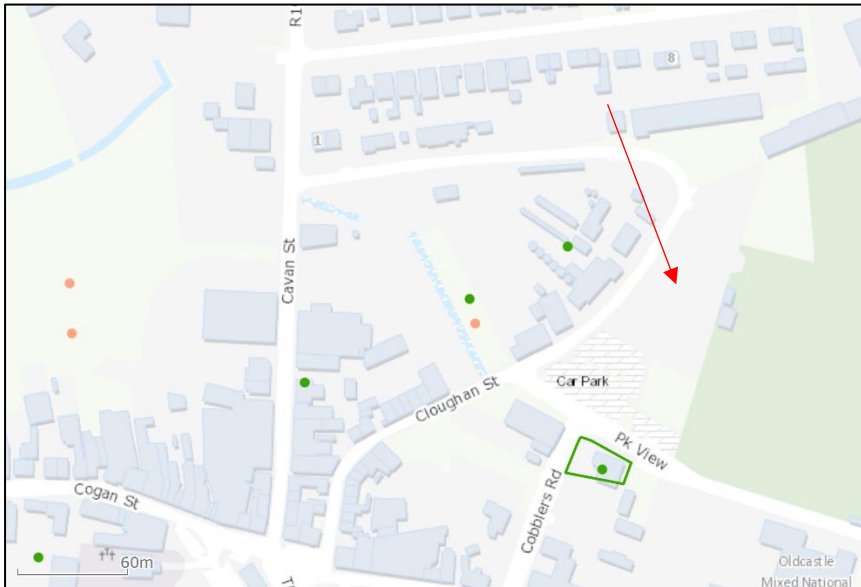


Figure 7: Screenshot from NPAD indicating location of proposed works

### 3.3 Overall Planning Context

The relevant statutory plans as relate to the application site are:

- Oldcastle Public Realm Strategy 2021; and
- Meath Development Plan 2021 – 2027.

#### 3.3.1 Oldcastle Public Realm Strategy (PRP) 2021

The aim of the vision statement for the Oldcastle Public Realm Strategy 2021 is to “...*Improve the public realm in Oldcastle through reorganising the heart of the town with the addition of new public spaces, pedestrian crossings and reorganised parking. Links to open amenity areas, heritage and tourism opportunities should be enhanced and celebrated...*”.

The objectives that were developed within the Public Realm Plan include:

“(7) *Improve links to north and setting of playground.*”

It is assumed that the proposed development is in compliance with all aspects of the PRP.

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### 3.3.2 Meath Development Plan (current)

The Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 sets out the policies and objectives and the overall strategy for the development of the County over the plan period 2021-2027.

*“... ‘To improve the quality of life of all citizens in Meath by creating an environment that supports a vibrant growing economy and a well-connected place to live, learn and do business’ ...”.*

It is assumed that the proposed development is in compliance with all aspects of the current Meath Development Plan.

## 4 Assessment of proposed development for significant likely effects – screening of the proposed development

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With regards to projects of a nature listed in Part 2 of Section 5, the proposed development was examined as regards the following categories:

### 10. Infrastructure projects

- (a) Industrial estate development projects, where the area would exceed 15 hectares.
- (b)
  - (i) Construction of more than 500 dwelling units.
  - (ii) Construction of a car-park providing more than 400 spaces, other than a car-park provided as part of, and incidental to the primary purpose of, a development.
  - (iii) Construction of a shopping centre with a gross floor space exceeding 10,000 square metres.
  - (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere. (In this paragraph, “business district” means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)

### 12. Tourism and leisure

- (a) Ski-runs, ski-lifts and cable-cars where the length would exceed 500 metres and associated developments.
- (b) Sea water marinas where the number of berths would exceed 300 and freshwater marinas where the number of berths would exceed 100.
- (c) Holiday villages which would consist of more than 100 holiday homes outside built-up areas; hotel complexes outside built-up areas which would have an area of 20 hectares or more or an accommodation capacity exceeding 300 bedrooms.
- (d) Permanent camp sites and caravan sites where the number of pitches would be greater than 100.
- (e) Theme parks occupying an area greater than 5 hectares.

The proposed development will consist of a park, improving the current characteristics of the existing environment (slightly overgrown BL3 habitat). Of particular note, the area of the site is well under 2 ha, at approximately 0.5 Ha. Urban development in this context is considered to be projects with similar characteristics to car parks, shopping centres, construction of housing developments, hospitals, sports stadiums, cinemas, and infrastructure projects such as construction of sewerage and water supply networks (European Commission, 2015). The proposed park does not fall under the

categories above. Therefore, an EIAR has not been automatically triggered for this proposed development.

The proposed development does not fall under Parts 1 or 2 of Schedule 5. Under Section 172 however, it is deemed pertinent to consider if this development could result in significant environmental effects under the category of sub-threshold developments.

Schedule 7A requires the applicant to provide the following information.

- 1) A description of the proposed development, including in particular—
  - a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works, and
  - b) a description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.
- 2) A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.
- 3) A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from—
  - a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and
  - b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.
- 4) The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7.'

#### **4.1 Description of the proposed development**

Meath County Council are in the initial phase of creating and implementing a design for an existing brown-field area to repurpose the area as a Play Park for mixed uses to include items such as those listed below and in line with the concept plan in Image No.2 – Concept Plan.

- a. Outdoor picnic area;
- b. Outdoor exercise area;
- c. Toddlers play area;
- d. Basketball court;
- e. Table tennis;
- f. Handball wall;
- g. Perimeter pathway; and
- h. Planting and landscaping.

The proposed development is in broad agreement with the Oldcastle Public Realm Plan. The approximate location of the proposed works is illustrated in in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4 and Figure 5. The conceptual layout of the works (Option 2) is illustrated in Figure 6.



Figure 8: Approximate location of proposed works (1:50,000)

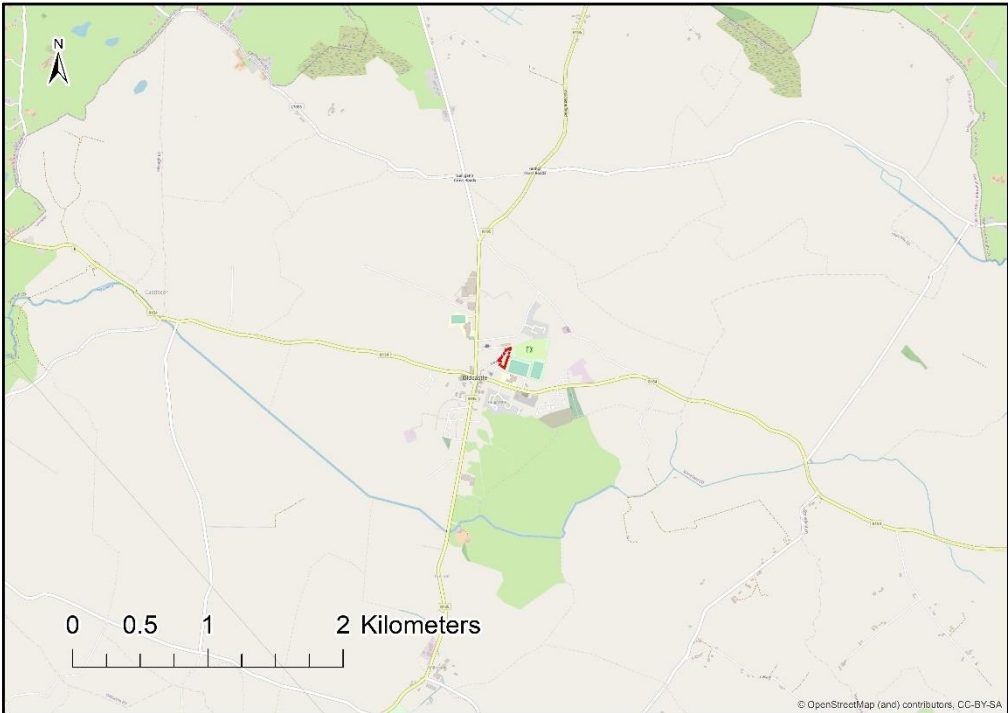


Figure 9: Approximate location of proposed works (1:25,000)

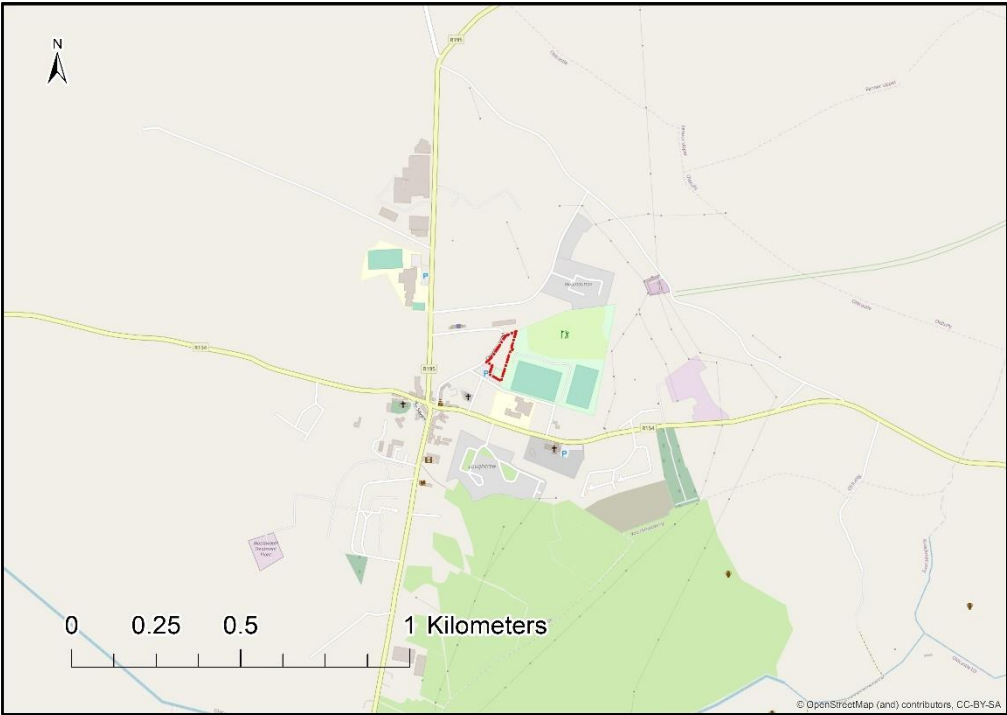


Figure 10: Approximate location of proposed works (1:10,000)



Figure 11: Approximate location of proposed works (1:2,500)



Figure 12: Extent of proposed works site area overlain on satellite imagery (1:1,000)





Figure 13: Option 2 Plan Layout

## 4.2 Description of the Physical Characteristics of the proposed development

### 4.2.1 Characteristics of Demolition phase

The intent of the proposal is to retain as much of existing site features as possible. Any potential removal of ground materials should be reused on site, for example to create mounding to allow vehicular levelled access. Any waste that cannot be retained on site (which will be minimal considering the scale of the project) will to be taken and disposed offsite (given the current nature of the proposed development site, this component should be further minimised).

### 4.2.2 Characteristics of the construction phase

The general characteristics of the process, nature and quantity of materials to be used is summarised below.

The proposed development entails the creation of a park on a brown-field site, and construction activities will be of a small scale.

### 4.2.3 Main characteristics of the proposed development

The proposed development will comprise an amenity Park, which while not changing the main characteristics of the proposed site will represent an improvement.

## 4.3 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts refer to impacts that result from incremental changes caused by other past, present and approved developments, and as far as is practicable from reasonably foreseeable development(s), together with the project. Section 6.12 of the EPA *Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (Draft 2017) states:

*'The Directive requires that the EIAR describes the cumulation of effects. Cumulative effects may arise from:*

- *The interaction between the various impacts within a single project;*
- *The interaction between all of the different existing and/or approved projects in the same area as the proposed project.'*

With respect to Screening, the European Union *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening* (2017) notes that 'the characteristics of Projects, which must be considered having regard, in particular, to the size and design of the whole Project, the cumulation with other existing and/or approved Projects, the use of natural resources, the production of waste, pollution and nuisances, and the risk of major accidents and/or disasters and the risks posed to human health...'

An analysis of current and recent planning applications in the vicinity would indicate that there are no cumulative impacts foreseen as regards the potential impact of the proposed development.

#### 4.4 Location of the proposed development, with particular regard to environmental sensitivities of the geographical area

##### 4.4.1 Location Relative to Natura 2000 sites

The proposed development is not located in an environmentally sensitive location, being in the centre of the urban area of Oldcastle and at some separation from any Natura 2000 site (an Appropriate Assessment screening of the proposed works/development has been undertaken). Drone imagery of the site is illustrated in Figure 14. Drone imagery of the *environs* is presented in Figure 15 and Figure 16.



Figure 14: Drone imagery of the proposed site



Figure 15: Aerial image illustrating location relative to *environs*



Figure 16: Aerial image illustrating Oldcastle town centre

An appropriate assessment (Habitats Directive) Screening report has been prepared for the proposed development, which indicates that there are no potential significant negative impact of the proposed works/development on the Natura 2000 network.

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#### 4.4.2 *Other sensitive/Designated conservation sites*

There are no sites designated as proposed a Natural Heritage Area (NHA) or proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) within 5 km of the proposed works/development.

#### 4.4.3 Ecological Features

A site visit was carried out on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May by Dr Emma Reeve, senior ecologist with FERS. Much of the site is comprised of the habitat type BL3 – consisting of a tarmacadam surface on which ruderals have begun to gain a foothold (mostly *Poa anna*, *Taraxacum officinalis agg* and *Plantago lanceolata*). Grassland adjacent to the Stone Walls (BL1) has developed on top of the tarmac and is comprised of heavy bryophyte cover (approximately 90% *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*) with cover of fine-leaved grasses such as *Festuca rubra* and *Anthoxanthum odoratum* well-developed along with *Poa pratensis*. Numerous herbs occur, including *Plantago lanceolata*, *Medicago lupulina* and *Lotus corniculatus*. The grassland becomes more rank underneath the walls with grasses such as *Dactylis glomerata* and *Arrhenatherum elatius* with *Urtica dioica*. The walls on-site (although they may have been tidied in the recent past) host numerous herb species such as *Cymbalaria muralis* and *Asplenium trichomanes* as well as grasses such as *Poa pratensis* and *Bromus hordeaceus*. There is no evidence for Annex I Habitat, Annex II species (EU Habitats Directive) or Annex I bird species (Birds Directive) occurring at the site. Any such species are unlikely to occur in the future. The vicinity of the site may be utilised by foraging bats such as Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat, but these will not be negatively impacted upon by the development.



Figure 17: Aerial image of proposed development site

Photographs of representative habitats occurring (there was a temporary pool present on the day of the site visit) within the proposed development site are presented in Figure 18, Figure 19, Figure 20, Figure 21 and Figure 22.



**Figure 18: BL3 habitat**



**Figure 19: Grassland developing on BL3 habitat**



Figure 20: Typical vegetation occurring



Figure 21: Rank grassland adjacent to stone walls



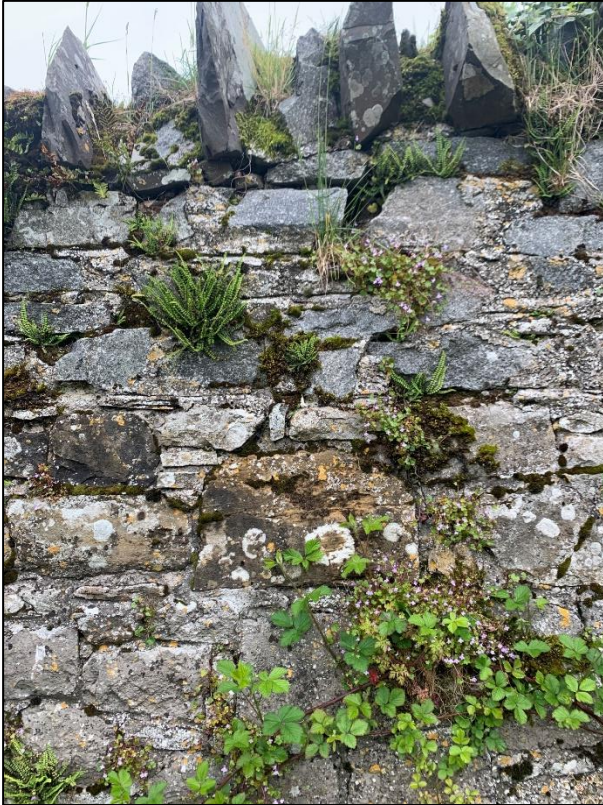


Figure 22: Stone walls

#### 4.5 Hydrology, Soils and Geology

The primary source of any impacts concerns contamination of ground or surface water. Given the location, scale and nature of the proposed development and assuming the implementation of all Best Practice methodology, etc., no negative impacts are foreseen.

#### 4.6 Architecture, Archaeology and Cultural heritage

There are no protected structures or structures that are included within the NIAH survey located within the site boundary. During the construction phase of the development, there is potential to impact upon archaeological materials not yet discovered. In this instance, works will be undertaken in accordance with and subject to approval from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

With the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures and subject to necessary approvals from the Department, potential construction phase impacts of the proposal on archaeology and heritage would be neutral.

No potential impacts are identified during the operational phase as it is anticipated that issues of archaeological and cultural heritage interest will have been resolved prior to or during the construction phase.

## **5 Description of the Aspects of the Environment together with a Description of any likely Significant Effects**

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### **5.1 Landscape Character**

The landscape character of the proposed application site will not be appreciably altered – there will be no significant effect. The playground area will, in fact enhance the landscape character relative to the existing site.

### **5.2 Ecological Impacts**

There will be negligible impact on habitats other than built land and artificial surfaces.

### **5.3 Water Quality**

The primary source of any impacts concerns contamination of ground or surface water. Given the location, scale and nature of the proposed works/development and assuming the implementation of all Best Practice methodology, etc., no negative impacts are foreseen.

### **5.4 Air Quality**

Owing to the nature and scale of the project, there are no significant impacts foreseen as regards air quality. There will be no significant negative impact.

### **5.5 Noise and Vibration**

Owing to the nature and scale of the project, it is assumed that the noise and vibrations associated with the construction will be comparable with existing noise and vibration levels.

### **5.6 Architecture, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage**

There are no protected structures or structures that are included within the NIAH survey located within the site boundary. No significant negative impacts are foreseen.

## 5.7 Climate Change

The emission of green-house gases associated with the proposed park will be minimal owing to the nature of the project and the reuse of much of the material occurring. Owing to the location of the park, the proposed park is not deemed vulnerable to the effects of rising sea levels and increased storm intensity. No significant negative impacts are foreseen

## 6 Assessment of Proposed Development for Significant Likely Effects assessed against Schedule 7 and Annex III criteria

The type and characteristics of the potential environmental impacts outlined in this assessment are summarised by reference to the criteria outlined under Schedule 7(3) of the of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 1: Location of the proposed development**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>The existing and proposed land use</b>	<p><i>The site is approximately rectangular in approximately 0.5 Ha in area, comprising a brown-field site of partially overgrown BL3 habitat</i></p> <p><i>The demolition and construction phases of the proposed development will have minimal impact owing to the location, scale and nature of the development.</i></p> <p><i>As such, no potential significant adverse impacts are envisaged.</i></p>
<b>The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) resources in the area.</b>	<p><i>The site comprises of BL3, overgrown in some areas. There will be negligible impact on other habitats.</i></p> <p><i>There will be no significant impacts as regards flora, fauna or habitats occurring</i></p> <p><i>The proposed development has been subject to Appropriate Assessment screening which finds that that it can be determined with scientific accuracy and precision that there will be no adverse impact of the proposed development on the integrity of the Natura 2000 network.</i></p>
<p><b>The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to:</b></p> <p><b>Wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths,</b></p> <p><b>Costal zones and the marine environment,</b></p>	<p><i>The proposed development site is located in the urban setting of Oldcastle.</i></p> <p><i>There will be no negative impacts associated with the proposed development on the natural environment.</i></p> <p><i>The site does not contain any protected structures, monuments or sites and is not within any</i></p>

Criteria	Assessment
<p><b>Mountain and forest areas,</b></p> <p><b>Nature reserves and parks,</b></p> <p><b>Areas classified or protected under legislation</b></p> <p><b>Areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded</b></p> <p><b>(Annex III – Areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure),</b></p> <p><b>Densely populated areas,</b></p> <p><b>Landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.</b></p>	<p><i>Architectural Conservation Areas or area of Archaeological Significance.</i></p> <p><i>During the construction phase of the development, there is potential to impact upon archaeological materials not yet discovered. In this instance, works will be undertaken in accordance with and subject to approval from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.</i></p> <p><i>With the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures and subject to necessary approvals from the Department, potential construction phase impacts of the proposal on archaeology and heritage would be neutral.</i></p> <p><i>It is considered that the receiving environment has sufficient capacity to absorb the proposed development and no significant likely effects are envisaged.</i></p>

Table 2: Characteristics of the proposed development

Criteria	Assessment
<b>The size of the proposed development</b>	<i>The proposed development is sub-threshold for an EIA, located on a brown-field site of approximately 0.5 Ha.</i>
<b>Cumulative impacts with other proposed development</b>	<p data-bbox="742 436 1388 593"><i>In accordance with the European Union Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening (2017), existing and/or approved projects have been taken into consideration.</i></p> <p data-bbox="742 616 1388 772"><i>No such existing and/or approved projects have been identified. The nature and extent of greenhouse gas emissions during the construction phase will be negligible.</i></p>
<b>The nature of any associated demolition works</b>	<i>Any demolition is minimal, with the vast majority of any resultant material utilised on site</i>
<b>The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity.</b>	<p data-bbox="742 931 1388 1043"><i>Minimal excavation will be required to facilitate the proposed development and the majority of extracted material is likely to be utilised on site.</i></p> <p data-bbox="742 1066 1388 1301"><i>The construction phase of the proposed development will use resources sourced off site. There may be secondary impacts associated with off-site activities, such as quarrying. These are the subject of separate consenting procedures, which consider the impacts arising at those locations.</i></p> <p data-bbox="742 1323 1388 1480"><i>No adverse significant impacts are expected to occur on the site or in the vicinity of the site through the use of natural resources owing to the scale of the development.</i></p>
<b>The production of waste</b>	<p data-bbox="742 1527 1388 1718"><i>Any waste produced as part of the proposed development during the construction phase will be stored and disposed in a sustainable manner and in accordance with all relevant environmental guidance and policy documents.</i></p> <p data-bbox="742 1740 1388 1897"><i>No potential significant impacts are envisaged on the site or in the vicinity of the site as a result of the production of any waste associated with the proposed development.</i></p>

Criteria	Assessment
<p><b>Pollution and nuisances</b></p>	<p><i>Potential impacts of the proposed development relating to pollution and nuisances include air, water and soil pollution and noise.</i></p> <p><i>Pollution impacts could potentially occur through the creation of dust and spillage of materials from the construction phase, and emissions from additional traffic during operation phase. The traffic emissions will be insignificant with regard to impact on climate (in terms of climate change).</i></p> <p><i>The proposed development is not of a scale expected to cause any likely significant impact on ambient air quality.</i></p> <p><i>The existing noise environment is characterised by road traffic and bird-song.</i></p> <p><i>Noise impacts may occur due to construction activities on a temporary basis. The temporary nature of noise impacts associated with construction activity are not expected to be significant and can be appropriately controlled. Similarly, increased traffic movements during the operational phase are not expected to have a significant adverse impact.</i></p> <p><i>Contamination and pollution to water bodies will be addressed through the implementation of standard construction management and mitigation measures to provide protection to receiving soil and water environments to ensure no significant impacts</i></p>
<p><b>The risk of accidents, having regard to substances or technologies used.</b></p> <p><b>(Annex III - The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge.)</b></p>	<p><i>The proposed development is a of a scale and nature, utilising established building materials and technologies typical of the nature and scale of such development. No potential significant impacts are envisaged as a result of the materials or technologies used.</i></p> <p><i>The risk of accidents/major disasters is similar for other developments of this scale and nature.</i></p> <p><i>The proposed development will not be vulnerable to risks associated with climate change owing to the</i></p>



Criteria	Assessment
	<p><i>nature, scale and location of the proposed development.</i></p>
<p><b>Annex III - The risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)</b></p>	<p><i>Potential impacts of the proposed development which may be relevant to human health relate to factors previously detailed, such as noise, water and air pollution.</i></p> <p><i>Pollution impacts could potentially occur through the creation of dust and spillage of materials from the construction phase, and emissions from additional traffic during operation phase.</i></p> <p><i>The nature and scale of the proposed development is not expected to cause any likely significant impact on ambient air quality. Dust levels are likely to increase in localised areas during construction, but these increases will be short-term and insignificant due to appropriate management and mitigation measures to be employed on site through the implementation of an appropriate CEMP.</i></p> <p><i>The existing noise environment is characterised by road traffic and bird-song.</i></p> <p><i>Noise impacts may occur due to construction activities on a temporary basis. The temporary nature of noise impacts associated with construction activity are not expected to be significant and can be appropriately controlled through an appropriate CEMP.</i></p> <p><i>Contamination and pollution to water bodies will be addressed through the implementation of construction management and mitigation measures ensuring that the impacts are not significant.</i></p>

Table 3: Type and Characteristics of Potential Impacts

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<b>Magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population)</b>	<i>Potential environmental impacts during the construction and operational phase of the proposed development will be localised to the application site. It is expected that the proposed development will not have any significant environmental impact beyond the application site boundaries having implemented the appropriate mitigation measures.</i>
<b>The nature of the impact</b>	<i>The nature of any impacts is expected to be of a magnitude that would not be significant, adverse, or permanent having implemented relevant mitigation measures.</i>
<b>The trans frontier/transboundary nature of the impact</b>	<i>The proposed development will not give rise to any impacts that are trans frontier or transboundary in nature.</i>
<b>The magnitude (intensity) and complexity of the impact</b>	<i>The potential impacts are not considered to be complex in nature or of a magnitude/intensity/scale to be of significance.</i>
<b>The probability of the impact</b>	<i>Having regard to the nature and extent of the impacts identified, no significant adverse impacts with a high probability of occurring have been identified.</i>
<b>The expected onset, duration, frequency, and reversibility of the impact</b>	<i>Having regard to the nature and extent of the impacts identified, no significant adverse impacts with a high frequency of occurrence have been identified.</i>

## **7 Conclusion**

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In conclusion, having regard to the criteria specified in Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as Amended); the context and character of the site and the receiving environment; the nature, extent, form, and character of the proposed development; this Environmental Impact Assessment Screening concludes that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report of the proposed development is not required.

## 8 References and Bibliography

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- [www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) – official website of the European Union, source of information on EU Directives.
- [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie) – official website of the Environmental Protection Agency.