

SCREENING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Oldcastle, Public Realm Enhancement
Scheme, Co. Meath

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) of the proposed development at Oldcastle, Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, Co. Meath. The proposed development involves upgrading the main square and adjoining streets, installing pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures, enhancing heritage assets, upgrading street furniture, landscaping and resurfacing.

The report has assessed the potential impact of the proposed development on the environment. The proposed development does not fall under any category within Schedule 5 (10) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) for Mandatory EIAR. The EIA Screening Assessment considers that the overall impact on the receiving environment will be low. Therefore, it is not considered that an EIA is required at this time. It is recommended as best practice, that a biodiversity/ bat survey of trees in the area is conducted prior to the commencement of construction works and vegetation removal. It is also recommended that project documentation states that the construction contractors will draw up a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), as project documentation currently only states that contractors will draw up a Construction Waste Environmental Management Plan. Lastly, as part of the proposed development site is located within a 'Zone of Notification' (Section 12 of the National Monuments Act), an Archaeology Report should be prepared.

Unlike screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), screening for EIA can have regard to mitigation measures. However, a screening report cannot design mitigation and can only consider mitigation that is in the actual project proposal – and there are currently no mitigation measures proposed.

A Screening for Appropriate Assessment report has also been prepared alongside this report and has determined that no direct impacts on any Natura 2000 site are anticipated from the proposed development. This is because the proposed development site is not located within, or connected to, any designated area. The potential for indirect and cumulative impacts on the Natura 2000 networks was also assessed. It was concluded that no significant impacts would result from the proposed development.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecofact was commissioned to carry out a Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) of the Proposed development at Oldcastle, Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, Co. Meath. The location of the proposed scheme is shown in Figure 1. This EIAR Screening determines whether an EIA is required for the project.

EIA comes from EU environmental policy. The initial Directive of 1985 and its three amendments have been codified by Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011. Directive 2011/92/EU has been amended in 2014 by Directive 2014/52/EU. Together these comprise the EIA Directive.

The EIA Directive aims to ensure a high level of protection for the environment and human health. It requires that an assessment of the likely significant effects a project will have on the environment is carried out, where relevant, before development consent is given.

The EIA Directive is transposed into Irish legislation by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Both the EIA Directive and Irish legislation set out in detail the entire EIA process.

Tobin Consulting Engineers and Meath County Council provided documentation outlining the development plans. These documents were reviewed and used to inform the screening process. The following documents were provided:

- Landscape Plan
- Plan for the carpark upgrade
- Concept Development and Options Selection
- Oldcastle Public Realm Plan 2021
- Oldcastle Public Realm Implementation Action Plan Version 1, January 2022
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report of the Public Realm Plan for Oldcastle, Co. Meath (FERS, 2021).
- Arboricultural Assessment & Impact report (CMK, 2023)
- CAD files of proposed development area

The screening was carried out utilising an adaptation of the Screening Checklist in European Commission guidance (2017). These criteria are as follows:

- Characteristics of the Proposed Development
- Location of the Proposed Development and
- Characteristics of Potential Impacts.

1.1 Legislation

The EIA Directive, Council Directive 85/337/EEC 1985 on the '*Assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment*' is designated to ensure that projects likely to have a significant effect on the environment are subject to an assessment of environmental effects prior to consent being given. The most recent amendment of this Directive is by Directive 2014/52/EU of 2014. The 2014 EIA Directive was transposed into National law by the *European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018)* and the *European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (No. 2) Regulations 2018*.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Screening is conducted according to a two-stage process. The first step of screening is to determine if the project is a class set out in Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and is therefore subject to mandatory EIA. The second stage considered significant effects of the project on the environment and EIAR requirement for a sub-threshold development.

2.2 Mandatory EIA Thresholds

The proposed development at Oldcastle, Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, Co. Meath falls under the definition of a project in Article 1(2) of the EIA Directive. Therefore, the current project was compared to the development criteria and thresholds as outlined in Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2001 (as amended). This was to determine if the development proposed for Oldcastle, Public Realm Enhancement Scheme meets the development thresholds that require mandatory EIA, or if the development is sub-threshold to these criteria. The criteria for urban development (Schedule 5 Class(b)) are outlined in Table 1. The current project was compared to the criteria as outlined in item iv.

Table 1 Part 2 of Schedule 5 Infrastructure projects (urban development, Class 10(b)) thresholds.

Item	Criteria
(i)	Construction of more than 500 dwelling units.
(ii)	Construction of a carpark providing more than 400 spaces, other than a carpark 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.)

2.2 Desk study

To determine the likely effects of the project on the environment, information was collated via a desktop study. The EPA website (www.epa.ie) was accessed to collate information on soil types and air quality and water quality within the area. The GSI website was accessed to identify groundwater in the area (www.gsi.ie). The National Parks and Wildlife Service (www.npws.ie) website and associated online maps were accessed to compile information on local designated sites for nature conservation. The National Biodiversity Data Centre Records (biodiversityireland.ie) were accessed to identify the presence of Annex II and Annex IV listed species (under the EU Habitats Directive) in proximity to the study area. The National Monuments website (www.archaeology.ie) and associated online maps were accessed to compile information on sites of archaeological importance and zones of notification within the study area. The Meath County Council website was accessed to identify any development plans for the area and to access the Meath County Development Plan (2021-2027). The An Bord Pleanála website (www.pleanala.ie) and EIA portal websites ([/housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com](http://housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com)) were also accessed to identify developments in the area.

Google and Bing Orthophotography were accessed online in order to gain a better understanding of the study area surrounding the proposed development. All documents reviewed are included in the bibliography section of the current report. All maps were produced in QGIS.



2.3 Guidelines

The current EIAR screening report follows this guidance as relevant:

- European Commission (2017a) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Screening
- European Commission (2017b) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2018) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment
- EPA (2022) Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR)
- European Commission (2001) Guidance on EIA Screening
- OPR (2021) Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

For EIA, likely significant effects are based on a ‘likelihood’ or ‘possibility’ of significant effects on the environment occurring. This is based on the precautionary principle. Whether the effect is significant will depend on factors such as the type, extent, duration, intensity, timing, probability, and cumulative effects of the potential impact, as well as the sensitivity of the environment. In this context, what may be significant in relation to one project may not be in relation to another. This underlines the importance of a case-by-case assessment.

EPA draft guidelines define a ‘significant effect’ as an effect, which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment. The same draft guidelines provide useful definitions in relation to quality of effects, significance of effects, context of effects, probability of effects and duration and frequency of effects.

Measures to avoid, prevent or reduce any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing a project are commonly referred to as ‘mitigation measures’. Unlike screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), screening for EIA can have regard to mitigation measures. However, an EIAR Screening is not a “mini” EIA. A screening report cannot design mitigation and can only consider mitigation that is in the actual project proposal.

Where risk is identified and where the most reliable information leaves doubt as to the absence of a significant effect(s), then the precautionary principle must be applied.

The source-pathway-target model provides a way of assessing whether significant effects are likely to arise. It considers the source of likely impacts, the environmental factors that could potentially be affected, and the pathway by which those impacts may occur.

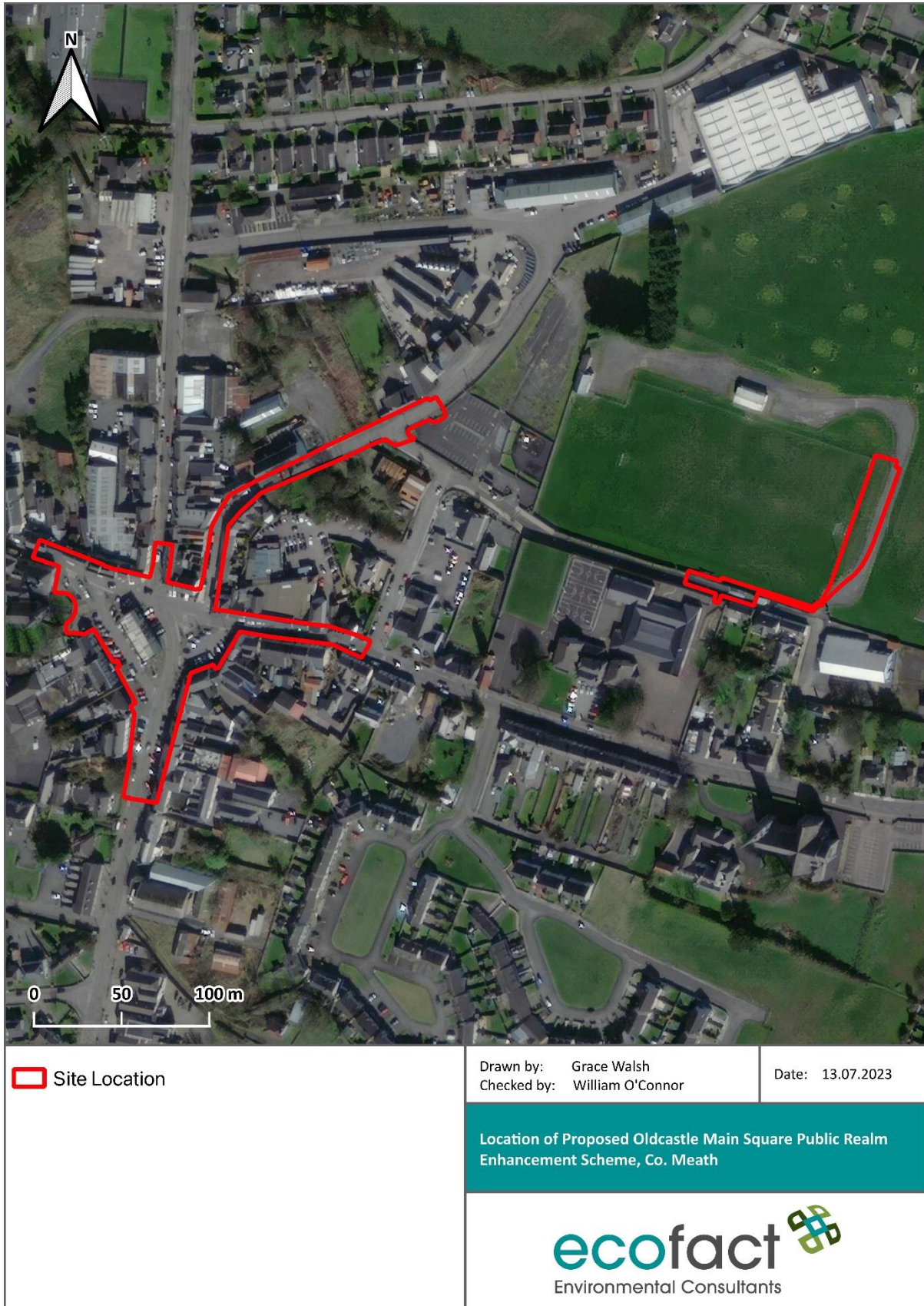


Figure 1 Location of proposed development site at Oldcastle, Co. Meath.



3. SCREENING

3.1 Mandatory Threshold Screening

The project documentation provided demonstrates that the proposed development involves the renovation of the main square at Oldcastle, Co. Meath. The proposed development involves upgrading the main square and adjoining streets, installing pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures, enhancing heritage assets, upgrading street furniture, landscaping and resurfacing. Tree planting and the inclusion of rain gardens as part of the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDs) will help to improve biodiversity.

The proposed development site covers an area c. 0.9ha in size and is considerably below the 10ha threshold requiring mandatory EIA (Table 1), as outlined in Schedule 5. Therefore, the development is sub-threshold to mandatory EIA and mandatory EIA is not required.

Table 2 Screening for the Oldcastle, Co. Meath development against mandatory EIA thresholds.

Site Location	Oldcastle, Co. Meath
Proposed Development	The proposed development involves upgrading the main square and adjoining streets, installing pedestrian crossings, traffic calming measures, enhancing heritage assets, upgrading street furniture, landscaping and resurfacing
Does the Proposed Development meet or exceed the thresholds for Mandatory EIA as set out in Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Regulations? (Yes/No)	No
If Yes – The development requires EIA No Sub-threshold Screening Required	
If No – The development is a ‘sub-threshold’ development which must be screened for potential significant effects on the environment	
Conclusion	
Is the class of development listed in Part 1 or Part 2, but does not have a threshold listed? (Yes/No)	Yes
If Yes – The development requires a Sub-threshold Screening	
If No – The development is not listed in part 1 or Part 2 and no thresholds have been set. Therefore no screening is required unless requested by the CA.	

3.3 Sub-threshold Screening

As the development does not meet or exceed thresholds for mandatory EIA, a sub-threshold screening will be carried out. To determine whether the project will require EIA, the following screening will be completed based on Criteria in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). According to the ‘Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development’, (DoEHLG, 2018) the assessment of the likelihood of significant environmental effects arising from a project requires professional judgement. The nature and size of the proposed development needs to be considered, in addition to the environmental sensitivity of the receiving area and the potential effects of the development.



3.3.1 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Archaeological sites are included in the Sites and Monuments Record under the provisions of Section 12(1) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994. Section 12 (3) of the 1994 Amendment Act states that written notice must be given to the Minister or Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht a minimum of two months prior to the commencement of works at, or in relation to, a recorded monument. Furthermore, 'Zones of Notification' exist around some historical areas or monuments which indicate areas where the possible impacts of a development on a site/ monument need to be particularly considered (OPR, 2021b)

Sites and Monuments Record's online maps (maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment) indicate that there are two recorded architectural sites within the boundary of the proposed development. One such site is the railings at the entrance to St. Bride's church (c. 1815) and the second is a monument of a cross (c. 1960). Four recorded monument are present with 25m of the proposed development site boundary and are associated with St. Brides church. The west of the site is located within a Zone of Notification and just outside of the site boundary, sits Saint Brides church.

3.3.2 Landscape and Visual Impact

The proposed project will have a visual impact as the project involves upgrading the main square and adjoining streets. However, as the project is proposed for an existing urban area, this impact is unlikely to be significant. According to the Meath County Council Website, there are no protected views or prospects at Oldcastle. The development site is, however, located within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). However, only infrastructure (e.g., roads, pavements) will be modified as part of the project. Building facades will not be developed. Therefore, the development is unlikely to make a significant impact.

3.3.3 Land and Soils

The Irish Soil Information System map (EPA website) demonstrates that the proposed development site is located within an urban area. Therefore the development at Oldcastle is unlikely to impact on land and soils. Immediately surrounding Oldcastle, soil type is dominated by fine, loamy drift with limestone (Elton, EPA website). However, the proposed development is unlikely to have significant impacts on the land and soils in the area.

3.3.4 Biodiversity

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) make up the Natura 2000 network of European Union Level protected sites. There are no Natura 2000 sites in proximity to the proposed development (Figure 3) and a separate Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening (Ecofact, 2023), concluded that the proposed development will not result in any significant adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 network.

Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) are areas considered to be important for the habitats present or for the presence of species whose habitat needs protecting. There are no NHA's or Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) within a 5km radius of the development area (Figure 4).

According to the National Biodiversity Data Centre Records (NBDC), several protected species have been recorded within the 2km national grid squares which incorporate the development site at Oldcastle (N58K and N57P). Species which could be using the site recorded in the area include Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Common Swift (*Apus apus*), House Martin



(*Delichon urbicum*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*). Other protected species recorded in the area include the European Badger (*Meles meles*), Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and Pine Marten (*Martes martes*), the latter of which was recorded within the study area in 2007.

All bat species in Ireland are listed on Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive. The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) maps landscape suitability for bats based on Lundy et al., (2011). The maps are a visualisation of the results of the analyses based on a 'habitat suitability' index. The index ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 being least favourable and 100 most favourable for bats. The overall assessment of bat habitats for the current study area is given as 24.67, which is considered to be a low level. Moderate habitat suitability is indicated for Pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus spp.*; 42 max).

A report was prepared by CMK Hort & Arb Ltd on the nature and condition of existing trees within the area of Oldtown proposed for development. According to the report, there are sixteen trees within the development area, all of which are a mixture of Fastigate hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata'), Tilia Greenspire (*Tilia cordata* 'Greenspire') and fastigate oak (*Quercus robur* 'Koster'). All trees were categorised as 'early mature' in age and were categorised as having mainly landscape level values. These trees likely have low bat potential due to the relatively small size of the trees, pruning practices, smooth bark and lack of vegetation (i.e., Ivy) on the trunk. Seven of these trees are proposed for removal to facilitate works. Nevertheless, trees should be surveyed for bat roosts and nesting birds, prior to removal. Likewise, from aerial imagery it can be ascertained that there are a number of mature trees present immediately adjacent to the proposed development area. Mature vegetation could be used by bats as roost sites and any potential disturbance impacts to bats should be identified prior to the commencement of works.

According to the NBDC records, there are no records of invasive plant species within the proposed development site, with a single record of Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) recorded c. 1.5km north of the proposed development site (2022).

3.3.5 Water

The closest watercourse to the proposed development site is Oldcastle stream which is a first order stream located c. 512m from the proposed development site. This stream flows in a south-westerly direction to its confluence with the third order River Inny. This river was last monitored in 2020, and the water quality status was assigned as 'good' (EPA website).

According to Irish Water's annual report (2021), Oldcastle wastewater treatment plant (WwTP) is compliant and has a person equivalent (PE) capacity of 3,500 people and is currently operating at a capacity of approximately 1,883. Therefore, the current proposed development is unlikely to significantly increase pressure on waste water treatment facilities at Oldcastle.

3.3.6 Air Quality and Climate

The proposed project is unlikely to directly impact on air quality and climate. Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) is identified by the EPA as one of the most significant pollutants to air quality in Ireland (EPA website) and is released via diesel/ petrol engines. The current development is unlikely to contribute to a significant increase in traffic or emissions.

3.3.7 Noise and Vibration

The proposed development site is located within an urban area with residential and business areas adjacent on all sides of the development site. The project is unlikely to produce noise or vibrations whilst



operational but is likely to produce emissions of both during the construction phase. According to the Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, '*an estimate, by type and quantity, of the expected residues and emissions*' for noise and vibration is appropriate for inclusion in an EIAR. It is recommended that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is included in project documentation to contain nuisances.

3.3.8 Material Assets

Material assets refers to built services and infrastructure. One of the aims of the project is to improve existing transportation infrastructure (e.g., roads, pavements) and lighting in the town centre. Existing transportation infrastructure (e.g., roads) and the flow of traffic is likely to be impacted during the construction phase. This has been acknowledged in the documentation provided, which states that '*Traffic management arrangements shall be in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual*'. The project is also likely to produce waste and project documentation states that a Construction Waste Environmental Management Plan will be drawn up.



Figure 2 Location of the proposed development in relation to recorded historical sites

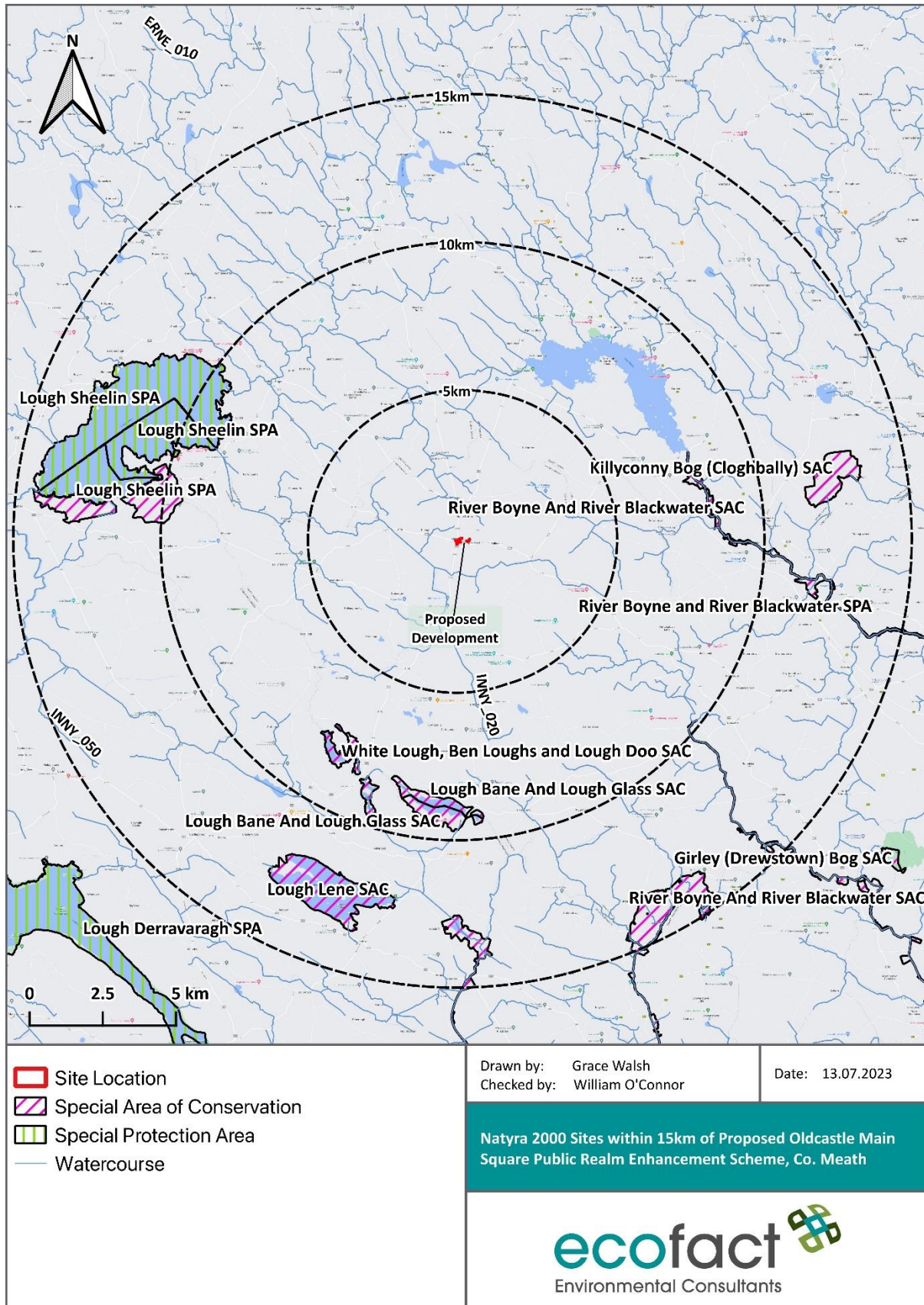


Figure 3 Location of proposed development site in relation to the Natura 2000 network

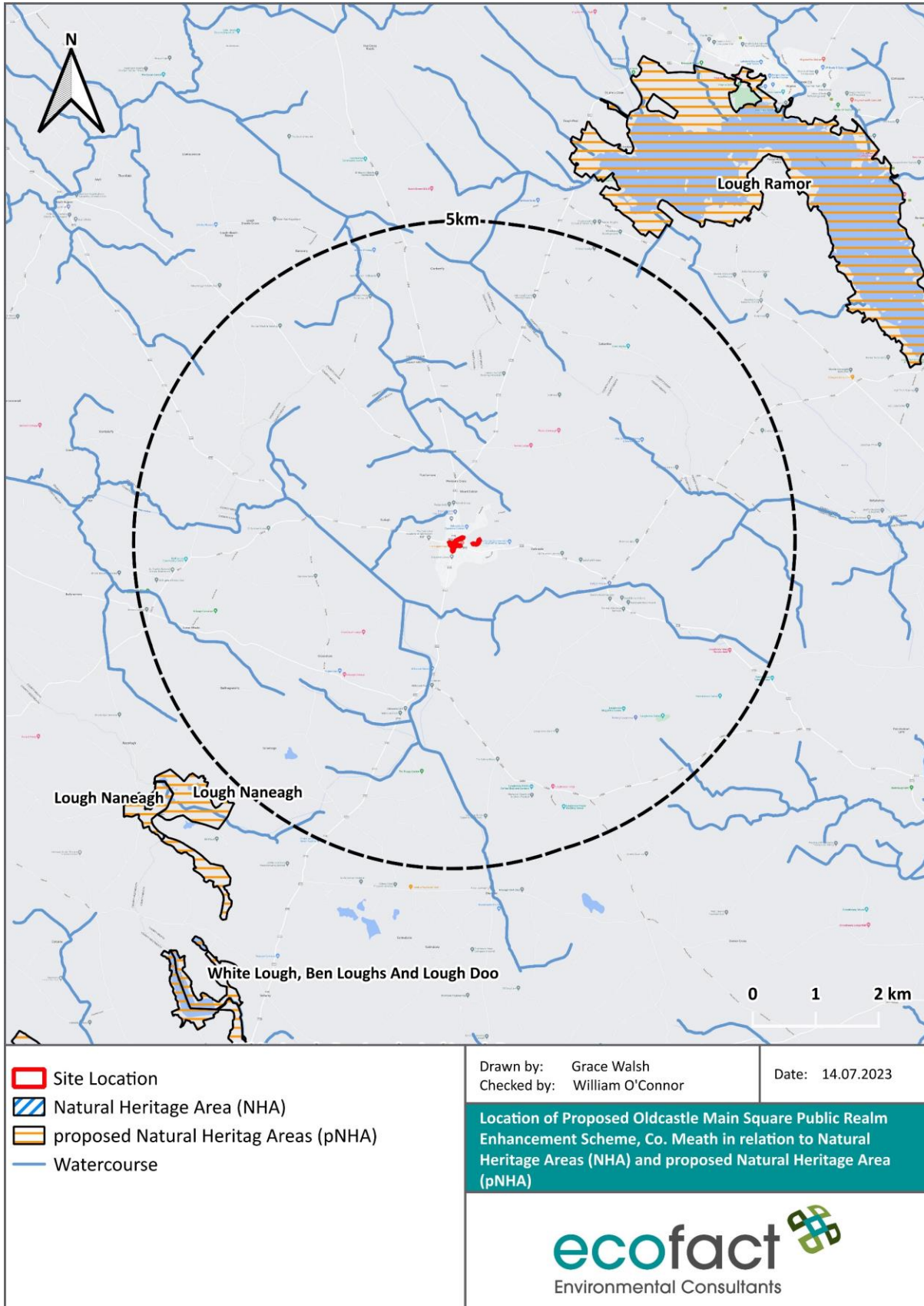


Figure 4 Location of the proposed development site in relation to NHA and pNHA. No NHA are present within a 5km radius of the site.



Table 3 Screening for EIA requirement for the proposed development at Oldcastle Co. Meath.

Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
Characteristics of Proposed Development			
Is the scale of the project considered to be significant?	No	The proposed development consists of redeveloping the town centre of small town and is small in size (0.9ha). The scale of the project (size and design) is unlikely to cause significant impacts on the receiving environment. The proposed development is not located within the boundary of any Natura 2000 or NHA sites (Figures 2 & 3), there are no watercourses onsite. There are no groundwater protection sources in the vicinity (GSI Website) of Oldcastle and the area is already an urban environment.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Is the scale of the project considered to be significant when considered cumulatively with other existing and / or proposed developments?	No	As the proposed development area is for a town centre, there are a number of planning applications in close proximity to the development area. These are small in scale and generally are for the construction/ upgrade of residential properties or small commercial premises. The scale of the project is therefore not considered to be significant when considered cumulatively with other existing or proposed developments.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the project utilise a significant quantity of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water or biodiversity?	No	<p>The size of the development is considered small, focusing on a 0.9ha area. Energy, including electricity and fuels, will be required during the construction phase. The construction process will include the use of various raw materials. No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the construction process.</p> <p>The project documentation highlights that seven trees will be removed to facilitate works. These are categorised as being ‘early mature’ in age and mainly being of landscape level value. However, 28 trees are proposed for planting within the development area and therefore, the removal of these 7 trees is not expected to be a long term loss of natural resources in the area.</p> <p>The project is unlikely to utilise a significant amount of natural resources.</p>	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the project produce a significant quantity of waste?	No	Waste will be generated during renovation works. Construction waste will be related to ground excavation. Demolitions waste will be related to the removal of rubble from any existing infrastructure (i.e., pavements, roads). Waste will	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
		<p>be disposed of in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidance including the Waste Management Acts (1996 as amended) and Waste Management Permit Regulations. Project documentation also states that a Construction Waste Management Plan will be prepared.</p> <p>Given the scale of the project, the volume of waste produced is unlikely to be significant.</p>	
Will the project produce a significant amount of pollution or nuisance?	No	<p>Typical nuisance impacts can be expected from the construction phase, relating to the production of dust, noise and vibrations and potential increase in construction traffic in the locality of the proposed development. Residential areas are immediately adjacent to the development site and details have not been provided regarding the expected duration of works. Given the scale of the project, nuisances are likely to occur during the construction phase only and be short term.</p> <p>Nuisances are not expected to be significant given the relatively small scale of the proposed development.</p>	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have a risk of major accidents, or natural disasters, including those caused by climate change?	No	Strict compliance with building regulations and environmental controls is expected to be exercised as standard. No major accidents are foreseen.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the project present a risk to human health?	No	No significant risks to human health are expected. Some noise, dust or pollution may arise during construction, but this is not likely to be major. This is because while some residential areas are adjacent to the site, development is localised, likely only spanning a short duration of time.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Is any combination of the above factors likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	No	No combination of the above factors is anticipated to have a significant effect on the environment.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Location of Proposed Development			



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any designated site (SAC, SPA, pNHA, NHA)?	No	<p>The closest Natura 2000 site to the proposed development area is White Lough, Bens Lough, and Lough Doo SAC which is located 7.3km south-west of the site (Figure 3). There is no direct connection (hydrological or otherwise) between the proposed development site and the Natura 2000 network. An AA Screening (Ecofact, 2023), determined that there is no potential for significant direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites arising from the proposed public realm enhancement scheme at Oldcastle, Co. Meath.</p> <p>The closest pNHA/ NHA to the development site is Lough Neanagh, located c. 5.3km south-west of the proposed development site. There is no direct connection between the two sites and the current project is not anticipated to negatively impact on any pNHA/ NHA site.</p>	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive?	No	<p>The proposed development is located within an existing urban area and there are no Annex I habitats present within the development site.</p> <p>Appropriate Assessment screening (Ecofact, 2023) on the area has determined that no direct impacts on any Natura 2000 site, or their qualifying interests, are anticipated from the proposed development.</p>	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive?	No	<p>According to the NBDC records, the only one Annex II listed species has been recorded within the 2km national grid squares (N57P, N58K) where the proposed development area is located. This is the Freshwater White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>), which has been recorded c. 1.1km south of the development site in the River Inny, and was last recorded in 2017. As there is no hydrological connection between the development site and the River Inny, significant impacts are not anticipated.</p>	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive?	No	<p>There are no records for any bat species within Oldcastle on the NBDC website and the overall assessment of bat habitats for the current study area is given as 24.67 (out of 100), which is considered to be a low level. Trees present at the site are unlikely to have high bat roosting potential due to pruning practices,</p>	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
		smooth bark, lack of ivy on the trunks and relatively small size. Impacts are therefore not considered to be significant, but bat surveys should be completed by a licensed ecologist prior to the commencement of works, as vegetation is proposed for removal and as there are mature trees adjacent to the site. These may have high bat roosting potential.	
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive?	No	There are no records of any Annex I listed bird species within the 2km national grid reference squares where the proposed development site is located (NBDC, 2023). The proposed development site is an existing urban area and no significant impacts on Annex I listed species are anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species protected under the Wildlife Act?	No	According to the National Biodiversity Data Centre Records (NBDC), several species protected by the Wildlife Act have been recorded within the 2km national grid squares which incorporate Oldcastle town centre. Species which could be using the site recorded in the area include House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>) and Woodpigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>). Any potential impacts would be localised and unlikely to have significant impacts, but nesting bird surveys should be completed prior to tree removal if it is to take place during the bird nesting season (March-October).	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on the existing or approved land use?	No	According to the Meath County Development Plan, the proposed development area is zoned as 'Commercial/ Town or Village Centre'. This zoning will not change.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on the relative abundance, availability, quality or regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground?	No	The proposed development is located in an urban environment and the relative abundance, availability, quality or regenerative capacity of natural resources is unlikely to be impacted. As the project proposed to plant c.28 trees within the development area and implement rain gardens, the project will likely result in an increase in biodiversity in the area.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any protected structures or recorded	No	Sites and Monuments Record's online maps indicate that there are two recorded sites within the boundary of the proposed development. These two sites are recorded with the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Records (Figure 2) . One such architectural site is the railings at the entrance	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
monuments or places or archaeological interest?		<p>to St. Bride’s church (c. 1815) and the second is a monument of a cross (c. 1960). The proposed development site is also surrounded by recorded architectural sites, the majority of which are houses which are unlikely to be significantly negatively impacted.</p> <p>Within c. 25m of the boundary are four sites recorded with the National Monuments Service Records, at Saint Brides Church. These sites are unlikely to be significantly, negatively impacted by the proposed development. However, a ‘Zone of Notification’ surrounds these sites and extends to the western part of the proposed development site. These Zones of Notification <i>‘give an indication that archaeological considerations may be an important aspect in consideration of any development proposed with the area’</i> (OPR, 2021) and an archaeology report should be prepared. However, as there are no recorded sites within the zone of notification that are within the site boundary, no significant impacts are anticipated. Archaeology has also been considered within the project documentation that states that <i>‘archaeological monitoring of excavation works during the design process’</i> will be carried out.</p> <p>No significant impacts are anticipated</p>	
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on listed or scenic views or protected landscapes as outlined in the County Development Plan?	No	According to the Meath CDP, there are no listed scenic views or protected landscapes at Oldcastle. Loughcrew and Slieve na Calliagh Hills are a landscape character area, that contains significant archaeological remains and which offers commanding views over the surrounding region. However, this area is located 4.1km from the proposed development site and will not impact on this landscape. No significant impacts are anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Type and Characteristics of Potential Impacts			
Could a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the project?	No	The proposed development site is small in size, covering an area 0.9ha in size. Development will be localised and the area will not undergo a change of use. It is not expected that the proposed development will have significant impacts on the wider geographical area.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Could a large population of people be affected as a result of the project?	No	Some nuisance impacts are expected during the construction phase of the proposed development (e.g., dust, noise). There are residential areas adjacent	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
		to the development site but these are low density areas and a large population of people are not expected to be affected by the project.	
Are any transboundary impacts likely to arise as a result of the project?	No	Construction and operational phase impacts are considered to be localised. There are no transboundary impacts anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Would the magnitude of impacts associated with the project be considered significant?	No	The magnitude of the project is considered typical of projects of this scale and unlikely to be significant.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Would potential impacts on the environment be considered complex?	No	The proposed development is not considered overly complex and will be typical of project of this scale and character. Regarding complexity it is not considered that there is the potential for significant impacts.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Is there a high probability that the effects will occur?	No	While it is likely that some level of construction impacts will occur in relation to nuisance impacts, the probability of significant impacts is low. A project specific CEMP should be prepared by the appointed contractor.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the effects last for a long time?	No	The proposed works are expected to be relatively short term and restricted to the construction phase. No effects are anticipated during the operational phase.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the effects be permanent?	No	While the developments at Oldcastle are intended to be permanent, the impacts associated with the construction phase (e.g., nuisances, dust, etc.) are likely only to be temporary during the construction phase.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the impacts be reversible?	No	Infrastructure could be removed once complete but this is unlikely. However, it is not anticipated that significant effects on the environment will arise from this project which will require the reversal of the development.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will there be significant cumulative impacts with other existing and approved projects?	No	The proposed development site is already utilised as an urban area and the improvement of this town centre is not expected to work in cumulation with other projects for the emergence of cumulative impacts. As the proposed development is in an urban area, there are several projects approved for planning permission within Oldcastle, the majority of which are small in scale and focused on the construction or renovation of residential or commercial properties. No cumulative impacts are anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
Will it be difficult to reduce the impacts?	No	The potential exists, particularly at the construction stage, for a small amount of nuisance associated with localised traffic disruption and construction noise and dust. However, for the most part, construction impacts related to this project are likely to be minimal and temporary. A CEMP should be prepared, which will help to reduce construction impacts.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



4. CONCLUSION

This report has been prepared to allow the Competent Authority (CA) to prepare an EIAR Screening Conclusion Statement. The report has screened for the potential impacts of the proposed development on the environment and the requirement of an EIAR. The proposed development does not meet or exceed any of the thresholds set out in Schedule 5 (10) (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) for Mandatory EIAR. Therefore, a sub-threshold screening was carried out for the proposed development to determine if any significant impacts on the environment are likely, and if so, whether an EIA is required.

The EIA Screening Assessment considers that the overall impact on the receiving environment will be low. Therefore, it is not considered that an EIA is required at this time. It is recommended as best practice, that a biodiversity/ bat survey of trees in the area is conducted prior to the commencement of construction works and vegetation removal. It is also recommended that project documentation states that the construction contractors will draw up a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), as project documentation currently only states that contractors will draw up a Construction Waste Environmental Management Plan. Lastly, as part of the proposed development site is located within a 'Zone of Notification' (Section 12 of the National Monuments Act), an Archaeology Report should be prepared.



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