

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING

Oldcastle, Public Realm Enhancement
Scheme, Co. Meath

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current document provides a Screening for Appropriate Assessment of the public realm enhancement scheme 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. This report assesses whether the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 site network.

The closest Natura 2000 sites are the White Lough, Bens Loughs and Lough Doo SAC (001810) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (004232) which are c. 7.3km and 7.8km from the proposed scheme respectively. These sites are designated for several terrestrial and aquatic habitats and aquatic species. There are no important features of conservation concern on the proposed development site or in the immediate vicinity that would be affected and / or that would result in the proposed development having significant adverse impacts in terms of the structure / function of the local Natura 2000 network.

No direct impacts on any Natura 2000 site are anticipated from the proposed development as the site is not within 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.

Based on the assessment of the proposed scheme at Oldcastle, Co. Meath, and all possible impacts, it is concluded that the proposed development will not result in any significant adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 network. Therefore, it is concluded that a Natura Impact Statement is not required for the proposed development.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecofact Environmental Consultants Ltd. have been commissioned to carry out a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) of a proposed Public Realm Enhancement Scheme in Oldcastle, Co. Meath. The proposal includes upgrades to the town square and connecting roads. The extent of the proposed scheme with relation to the Natura 2000 network is shown in Figure 1.

The current document provides an Appropriate Assessment Screening for proposed Public realm Enhancement Scheme at Oldcastle, Co. Meath. Appropriate Assessment is required under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), in instances where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site. Natura 2000 sites are those identified as sites of European Community importance designated under the Habitats Directive (1992) or the Birds Directive (2009). This report assesses whether this development is likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 site network. Effects upon the conservation objectives and qualifying interests (including habitats and species) within the affected designated areas are considered. The current document meets this requirement by providing a Screening Assessment of the development and follows the guidance for screening published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG, 2010) '*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities*'.

According to DoEHLG (2010), screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive:

- (1) Whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, and;
- (2) Whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

The current Screening Assessment therefore sets out to determine whether the proposed plan alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on the Natura 2000 sites within the study area.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). When assessing the significance of potential effects, DoEHLG (2010) recommends that "*a precautionary approach is fundamental and, in cases of uncertainty, it should be assumed the effects could be significant*".

1.1 Legislative context

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora - '*The Habitats Directive*', has been transposed into Irish law by The European Community (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 (S.I. No. 94/1997).

The 1997 Regulations were updated in 1998 by The European Communities (Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 1998 (S.I. No. 233/1998) to include Council Directive 97/62/EC which served to update Council Directive 92/43/EEC, adapting it to technical and scientific progress made in the intervening years.

The 1997 Regulations were again updated in 2005, by The European Communities (Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2005 (S.I. No. 378/2005). This amendment served to consolidate the main nature conservation legislation enacted in Ireland, meaning The Wildlife Act 1976, The Wildlife



(Amendment) Act 2000, The European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997, The European Communities (Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 1998, and to draw direct reference upon Council Directive (2009/147/EC) on the conservation of wild birds – ‘*The Birds Directive*’.

The Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) whereas the Habitats Directive does the same for habitats and other species groups with Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). It lists certain rare habitats (Annex I) and species (Annex II) whose conservation is of community interest. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SPAs and SACs, both of which will form part of Natura 2000, a network of protected areas throughout the European Community.

Article 6, paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Habitats Directive state that:

‘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 subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In the 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.

6(4) If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.’

In case C-323/17 People Over Wind and Peter Sweetman v Coillte, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) ruled that mitigation measures could not be taken into account when undertaking a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA). If mitigation measures are required to reduce or avoid a significant adverse effect, then Appropriate Assessment is required. The safeguards set out in Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive are triggered not by certainty but by the possibility of significant effects. Thus, in line with the precautionary principle, it is unacceptable to fail to undertake an appropriate assessment on the basis that it is not certain that there are significant effects.

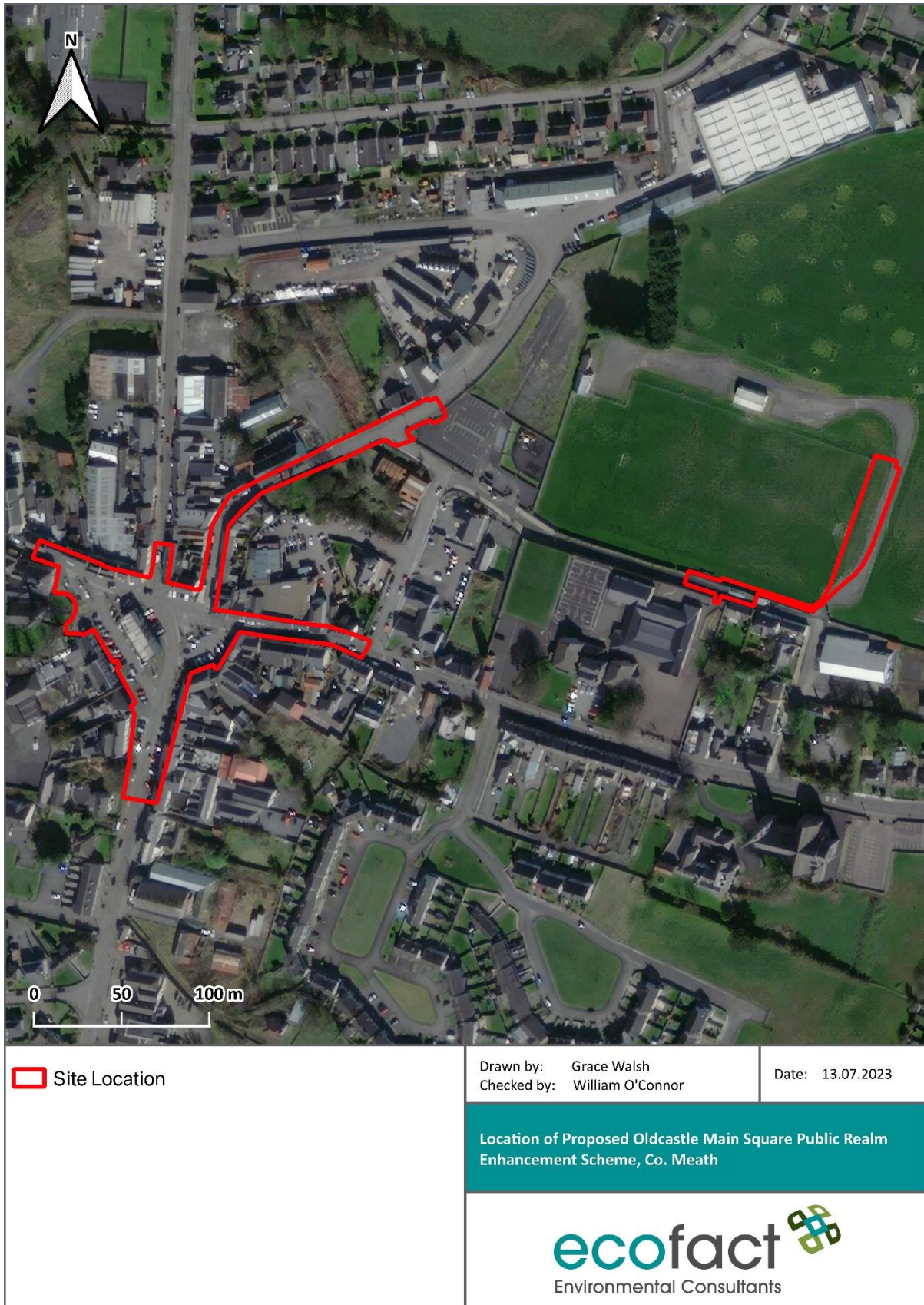


Figure 1 Location of proposed development site at Oldcastle, Co. Meath.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Consultation

The following bodies provided information for this report, via publicly available sources:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS);
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC);
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
- Loughs Agency

2.2 Desk study

A desktop study was undertaken to identify the extent and scope of the potentially affected designated Natura 2000 sites within the current study area in relation to the development site. The desktop study identified the qualifying interests (species and habitats) relevant to the designated sites within the area.

A review of published literature was undertaken in order to collate data on the receiving environment; a range of additional sources of information including scientific reports produced by, and information on the websites of the EPA and NPWS were also reviewed. Information sources reviewed as part of the current assessment included NPWS site synopses, as well as protected species data held on the NPWS / NBDC online databases. The Meath County Council website was accessed to identify any development plans for the area in addition to the An Bord Pleanála website (www.pleanala.ie) and EIA portal websites ([/housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com](http://housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com)). A full bibliography of information sources reviewed is given in the reference section. Online aerial imagery was accessed to characterise the nature of proposed works locations near the Natura 2000 network. All maps were produced in QGIS.

2.3 Assessment Methodology

The current Screening for Appropriate Assessment follows this guidance as relevant:

- DoEHLG, (2010). *'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities'*
- Office of the Planning Regulator, (2021). *'Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.'*
- European Commission, (2001). *'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.'*
- European Commission, (2007). *'Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC: Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interests, compensatory measures, overall coherence and opinion of the Commission.'*
- European Commission, (2018). *'Managing Natura 2000 Sites. The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.'*

The European Commission guidance (2001) prescribes a staged process and the need for each stage being dependent on the outcomes of the preceding stage. These stages are: (1) Screening for Appropriate Assessment; (2) Appropriate Assessment; (3) Assessment of Alternative Solutions and (4) Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest test, and compensatory measures (EC, 2001).



According to DoEHLG (2010), Stage 1 Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive: (1) Whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, and; (2) Whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

A project or plan may only pass at the Screening stage if there is no reasonable scientific doubt remaining as to the absence of impacts on the Natura 2000 network. DoEHLG (2010) states that any Natura 2000 site within a likely zone of impact should be considered, with a distance of 15km recommended, but this is evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, sensitivities of receptors and potential for in-combination effects. The threshold at the first stage is a very low one (as per Finlay Geoghegan J. in Kelly -v- An Bord Pleanála 2013/802 JR). Screening must be approached on a precautionary basis with the safeguards set out in Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive triggered not by certainty - but by the possibility of significant effects.

DoEHLG (2010) outlines that there are 3 potential outcomes of a Screening for Appropriate Assessment, as outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1 DoEHLG (2010) potential findings and outcomes for Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

Finding	Outcome
Project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of a designated site	Stage 2 (AA) is not required
No potential for significant effects	Stage 2 (AA) is not required
Potential for significant effects identified, or potential for impacts is uncertain	Stage 2 (AA) is required and a Natura Impact Statement will be prepared

3. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

The proposed Public Realm Enhancement Scheme is located in Oldcastle, Co. Meath. The proposed scheme will include:

- Upgrades to the main square, adjoining streets and public spaces with high quality pedestrian facilities.
- Provision of new pedestrian crossings throughout the main square.
- Develop the main square as the focal point of the town centre.
- Traffic calming in the main square and adjoining streets.
- Introduction of time-restricted parking.
- Enhance the setting and interpretation of heritage assets.
- Street furniture rationalisation and upgrade.
- Rationalisation of overhead cables and relocation of services underground.
- Landscaping and public realm upgrades, preserve and enhance trees and vegetation.
- Improve street lighting throughout extent of the works.
- Widening of footpaths.
- Resurfacing of carriageway.



4 IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT NATURA 2000 SITES

4.1 Rationale for Appropriate Assessment Screening

Article 6 assessments are required under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), in instances where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site. Natura 2000 sites are those identified as sites of European Community importance designated under the Habitats Directive (Special Areas of Conservation, here after referred to as SACs) or the Birds Directive (Special Protection Areas, here after referred to as SPAs).

Following the guidelines set out by DoEHLG (2010) Appropriate Assessment Stage 1: Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3); i.e. whether a plan or project can be excluded from Appropriate Assessment requirements because it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site; and the potential effects of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives, and considering whether these effects will be significant.

According to DoEHLG (2010), screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive:

- (1) Whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, and;
- (2) Whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

The proposed development does not comply with the first screening test (i.e., the proposed works are not directly connected to or necessary for the management of any Natura 2000 site). The current Screening Assessment therefore sets out to determine whether the development, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on the Natura 2000 sites within the study area.

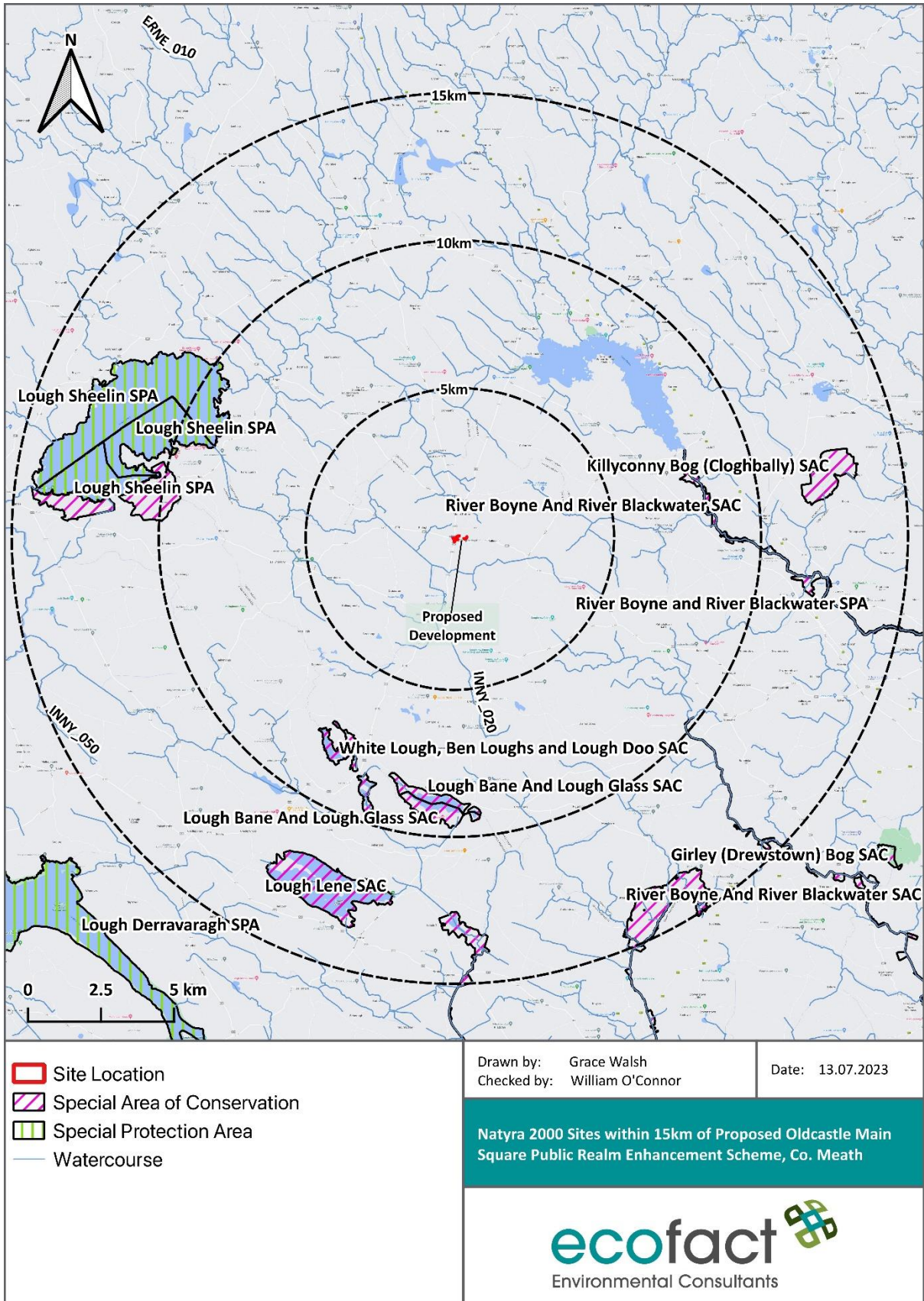


Figure 2. Location of proposed development site in relation to the Natura 2000 network



4.2 Natura 2000 sites considered for the proposed works

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) considered in the current screening are listed in Table 1. There are no Natura 2000 sites within the boundary of the proposed development site. Other Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the development site are included in Table 1. These designated sites will be considered further in relation to potential impacts arising from the proposed development.

Table 1. Designated Natura 2000 Sites and associated Qualifying Interests within 15km of the proposed development site at Oldcastle, Co. Meath.

Natura 2000 Site	Distance (km)
White Lough, Bens Loughs and Lough Doo SAC (001810)	c. 7.3km southwest
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (004232)	c. 7.8 km east
Lough Bane And Lough Glass SAC (002120)	c. 8km south
River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232)	c. 8.2km east
Lough Sheelin SPA (004065)	c. 8.6km northwest
Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC (002340)	c. 9.5km west
Lough Lene SAC (002121)	c. 11.7km southwest
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC (000006)	c. 11.9km east



5 POTENTIAL FOR EFFECTS

Table 2 Summary details of the designated Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed Public safety Enhancement Scheme, Oldcastle. Co. Meath, considered in the current screening.

Natura 2000 Site	Qualifying Interest	Location in relation to development site	Potential pathway for impacts (Yes/No)	Potential Impact & Source			Pre-assessment Screening
				Direct	Indirect	Cumulative	
White Lough, Bens Loughs and Lough Doo SAC (001810)	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i> spp. [3140]	This habitat is shown in Map 2 of the conservation objectives and is located c. 7.4km from the proposed scheme (NPWS, 2021a)	No	None	None	None	This site is designated for aquatic QIs. There is significant geographic separation between the proposed scheme and the SAC of 7.4km. There is no hydrological connection between the SAC and proposed scheme. There is no interaction between the SAC and the proposed scheme. Therefore, there is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts
	<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]	This species is shown in Map 3 of the conservation objectives. It occurs in the northern area of the SAC c. 7.3km from the proposed scheme (NPWS, 2021a)	No	None	None	None	
River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (004232)	Alkaline fens [7230]	This habitat is not mapped in the conservation objectives of the SAC. Main areas are located to the west at Lough Shesk, Freehan Lough and Newtown Lough (NPWS, 2021b). These are located c. 13.5km from the proposed scheme.	No	None	None	None	The site is designated for two habitats associated with freshwater. There is no direct interaction between this SAC and the proposed scheme and therefore no potential for direct impacts. This site is geographically isolated from the proposed scheme by 7.8km and there is no hydrological connection between the it and these
	Alluvial forests with	This habitat is shown in	No	None	None	None	



Natura 2000	Qualifying Interest	Location in relation to	Potential	Potential Impact & Source			Pre-assessment Screening
	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]	Map 3 of the Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2021b). This habitat occurs just upstream of Drogheda c. 50km east of the proposed scheme.					QIs. In addition these habitats occur over 13.5km from the proposed development site. There is no potential for indirect impacts to occur due to geographical separation and lack of a hydrological connection. There is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts.
	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]	This species occurs in the SAC but its migration is blocked by artificial barriers on the lower reaches of the Boyne. This species occurs at least 7.8km from the proposed scheme (NPWS, 2021b).	No	None	None	None	The site is designated for three aquatic species. These would not occur within the area of the proposed scheme and the SAC is located a considerable distance away. There is no direct interaction between this SAC and the proposed scheme and no potential for direct impacts.
	<i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]	This species occurs in the SAC at least 7.8km from the proposed scheme (NPWS, 2021b)	No	None	None	None	This site is geographically isolated from the proposed scheme by 7.8km and there is no hydrological connection between the site and these QIs. There is no potential for indirect impacts to occur.
	<i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	Occurs throughout the SAC and is located c. 7.8km from the proposed scheme at its closest points (NPWS, 2021b)	No	None	None	None	There is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts.
Lough Bane And Lough Glass SAC	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic	This habitat is shown in Map 2 of the conservation objectives and is located	No	None	None	None	This site is designated for aquatic QIs. There is significant geographic separation between the proposed



Natura 2000	Qualifying Interest	Location in relation to	Potential	Potential Impact & Source			Pre-assessment Screening
(002120)	vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]	c. 8km from the proposed scheme (NPWS, 2021c) This species has not been recorded since the 1980's but the entire lake habitat is designated for the species, c. 8km south of the proposed development (NPWS, 2021c).	No	None	None	None	scheme and the SAC of 8km. There is no hydrological connection between the SAC and proposed scheme. There is no interaction between the SAC and the proposed scheme. Therefore, there is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts
River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (004232)	Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i> [A229]	This species is not mapped in the conservation objectives but occurs in the SPA c. 8.2km from the proposed development.	No	None	None	None	There is no Kingfisher habitat at or near the proposed project and the SPA is located a considerable distance from the proposed scheme area. There is no potential for direct impacts. There is geographical separation between the proposed development and Kingfisher habitat in the SAC. The SAC is located c. 8.2km from the proposed development site. There is no hydrological connection between the proposed development and the SPA. Therefore there is no potential for indirect impacts to occur. There is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts.
Lough Sheelin SPA (004065)	Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Pochard (<i>Aythya</i>)	These species occur throughout Lough Sheelin c. 8.6km northwest of the	No	None	None	None	This site is designated for several bird species and Wetland & Waterbirds habitat. These QIs are geographically



Natura 2000	Qualifying Interest	Location in relation to	Potential	Potential Impact & Source			Pre-assessment Screening
	<i>ferina</i> [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) [A067]	proposed scheme.					isolated from the proposed development by 8.6km. There is no interaction between the SPA and the proposed scheme. There is no suitable habitat at the development site for these species. Therefore, there is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts.
	Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	This habitat is located throughout the SPA c. 8.6km from the proposed development site	No	None	None	None	
Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC (002340)	Active raised bogs [7110]	This occurs on the High Bog habitat shown in Map 3 of the Conservation Objectives, with potential Active raised bog shown. This habitat occurs c. 9.7km from the proposed scheme (NPWS, 2016)	No	None	None	None	This site is designated for terrestrial habitats. The QIs are geographically isolated from the proposed development by 9.7km. There is no interaction between the SAC and the proposed scheme. Therefore, there is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts.
	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	Associated with the Active raised bogs habitat and is located c. 9.7km from the proposed scheme at its closest point (NPWS, 2016)	No	None	None	None	
	Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> [7150]	Associated with the Active raised bogs habitat and is located c. 9.7 from the proposed scheme at its closest point (NPWS, 2016)	No	None	None	None	
Lough Lene SAC (002121)	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara</i>	This habitat is shown in Map 2 of the conservation objectives and is located c. 11.7km from the proposed scheme (NPWS,	No	None	None	None	This site is designated for aquatic QIs. There is significant geographic separation between the proposed scheme and the SAC of 11.7km. There is no hydrological connection between the SAC and proposed



Natura 2000	Qualifying Interest	Location in relation to	Potential	Potential Impact & Source			Pre-assessment Screening
	spp. [3140]	2021d)					scheme. There is no interaction between the SAC and the proposed scheme. Therefore, there is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts
	Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]	This species has not been recorded since the 1980's but the entire lake habitat is designated for the species, c. 8km south of the proposed development (NPWS, 2021d).	No	None	None	None	
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally) SAC (000006)	Active raised bogs [7110]	This occurs on the High Bog habitat shown in Map 3 of the Conservation Objectives, with potential Active raised bog shown. This habitat occurs c. 12.6km from the proposed scheme (NPWS, 2015)	No	None	None	None	This site is designated for terrestrial habitats. The QIs are geographically isolated from the proposed development by 9.7km. There is no interaction between the SAC and the proposed scheme. Therefore, there is no potential for direct or indirect impacts. In addition there are no other proposed projects in the area that would lead to cumulative impacts.
	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	Associated with the Active raised bogs habitat and is located c. 12.6km from the proposed scheme at its closest point (NPWS, 2015)	No	None	None	None	



5.1 Identification of potential direct impacts affecting Natura 2000 sites

The proposed public realm enhancement scheme at Oldcastle, Co. Meath is located outside of the Natura 2000 network. The proposed works at Oldcastle, Co. Meath will not result in any direct impacts on a Natura 2000 site due to geographical separation. The closest Natura 2000 site is located c. 7.8km from the site. This is the River Boyne and river Blackwater SAC. There is also no hydrological connection to this SAC.

5.2 Identification of potential indirect impacts affecting Natura 2000 sites

Indirect (or secondary) impacts are defined as effects that are “caused by and result from the activity although they are later in time or further removed in distance, but still reasonably foreseeable” (Bowers-Marriott, 1997).

The proposed public realm enhancement scheme is located c. 7.3km from White Lough, Bens Loughs and Lough Doo SAC and c. 7.8km from the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. The proposed scheme is considerably separated from these sites. It is located in the town center of Oldcastle, Co. Meath which is an urban area. The Natura 2000 sites and development are separated by agricultural land and urban development. There is very little habitat that would support the QIs of the considered Natura 2000 sites in the wider area. Considering the date of the proposed development, lack of hydrological connections along with large geographical separation there is no potential for significant indirect impacts to occur.

No significant risk of invasive species impacts is associated with the proposed works. There are no records of invasive species present on the proposed site or surrounding area according to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC, 2023) website. As the proposed development is situated at a distance to any of the Natura 2000 sites; standard best practice procedures during construction are sufficient to prevent invasive species introduction.

Water quality is an important indicator of integrity for aquatic Natura 2000 sites. There is no watercourse on the proposed development site. The closest watercourse is c. 440m north of the proposed scheme. This is the 1st order Oldcastle 26. The 2nd order River Inny [Shannon] is located 1km south of the site. These two rivers provide a hydrological connection to Lough Sheelin SPA. These watercourses and Natura 2000 sites are geographically isolated from the proposed scheme. With respect to the scale of the development and the distance from this Natura 2000 site, there is no potential for impacts on any Natura 2000 site to occur from water quality impacts.

5.3 Operational Phase

The operational phase of the proposed works are unlikely to result in significant impacts to the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites as the development is enhancing public spaces in Oldcastle, Co. Meath. Therefore, no impacts on any Natura 2000 sites, or qualifying interests are anticipated for this development when operational.

5.4 Potential cumulative impacts affecting the Natura 2000 site

Cumulative impacts or effects are changes in the environment that result in from numerous human-induced, small-scale alterations. Cumulative impacts can be thought of as occurring through two main pathways: first, through persistent additions or losses of the same materials or resources, and



second, through the compounding effects as a result of the coming together of two or more effects (Bowers-Marriott, 1997).

The National Planning Application Map viewer was checked to identify any proposed developments under consideration by Meath County Council website at the time of writing this report. The An Bord Pleanála (ABP) map viewer was also checked. There is one proposal in the area of the proposed development. This development (Planning Ref.: KA160212) is for the change of use of a retail unit to a take-away. To the east there is a proposal (Planning Ref.: 23422) to change the use of 2 no. commercial two storey buildings to apartments. There is one ongoing application to ABP to the north of the proposed scheme. This development (Case number: 313562) is for the change of use of a premises to a pizza takeaway. None of these developments are very large scale and are all also located a large distance from any Natura 2000 sites and therefore there is no potential for cumulative impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.

6. SCREENING STATEMENT WITH CONCLUSIONS

According to the guidance published by the DoEHLG (2010), Screening for Appropriate Assessment can either identify that an Appropriate Assessment is not required, where a project / proposal is directly related to the management of the site; or that there is no potential for significant effects affecting the Natura 2000 network; or that significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain (i.e. the project must either proceed to Stage 2 (AA) or be rejected).

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment has 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. Therefore, Stage 2 (AA) is not required (Table 4).

Table 4 DoEHLG (2010) potential findings, outcomes and conclusion for Screening for Appropriate Assessment for the Proposed Public Realm Enhancement Scheme at Oldcastle, Co. Meath.

Finding	Potential Outcome	Conclusion
Project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of a designated site	Stage 2 (AA) is not required	
No potential for significant effects	Stage 2 (AA) is not required	✓
Potential for significant effects identified, or potential for impacts is uncertain	Stage 2 (AA) is required and a Natura Impact Statement will be prepared	



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