



FLYNN
FURNEY

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Fair Green Playground Development,
Athboy, Co. Meath

Document Details

Client: Meath County Council

Project Title: Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Document Title: Fair Green Playground Works Athboy

Prepared by: Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd

| Rev | Status | Date | Author(s) | Approved by |
|-----|--------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| 02 | Draft | 18/11/2024 | ID | BF, JMA |
| 03 | FINAL | 20/11/2024 | ID | BF, JMA |

Contents

| | | |
|-------|--|----|
| 1 | Introduction and Description of Proposed Development | 4 |
| 1.1.1 | Surface Water | 5 |
| 1.1.2 | Groundwater | 5 |
| 1.1.3 | Invasive Species Records | 5 |
| 1.1.4 | Habitat Assessment | 5 |
| 2 | EIA Screening Methodology | 6 |
| 3 | Screening Assessment | 6 |
| 3.1 | Mandatory EIA Screening Assessment | 7 |
| | Sub-threshold EIA Screening Assessment | 7 |
| 3.3 | Characteristics of the Proposed Development | 8 |
| 3.4 | Potential Impacts by EIA Topic | 10 |
| 4 | Conclusion | 11 |
| | References | 11 |

1 Introduction and Description of Proposed Development

Screening is a process used to establish whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for a proposed development.

The proposed development will consist of:

- A new Playground which is accessible to pedestrians via the existing entrances and footpaths along the Fair Green in Athboy.
- 1.2m high safetop weldmesh fencing, galvanised and powder coated green, will be installed to the perimeter of the play area
- 5 no small/semi mature trees to be relocated within the park – no mature trees to be removed
- All associated site works.

Figure 1 – Proposed playground and site location.



1.1.1 Surface Water

No watercourses are crossed by the proposed works sites. The Athboy River runs 140m southwest of the proposed works site. The Athboy River is part of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC/SPA. An EPA biological quality station is located 60 upstream of the site of the proposed work and was last surveyed in 2006. This station was assigned a Q-value score of four. The Athboy River was described by EPA (2024) 'The macroinvertebrate fauna indicated that two of the seven stations surveyed on the Athboy River were in a satisfactory ecological condition in 2020, Kilskeer (0050) and Johnsbrook (0070). These sites improved from moderate ecological condition in the last survey period. The paucity of sensitive macroinvertebrate taxa and dominance of pollution tolerant taxa indicated moderate ecological conditions persist near Dogstown (0020), which also had high percentage cover of algae. Enriched conditions were again evident on the Athboy at all sites downstream of the Bridge near Clonleason House (0100, 0300, 0400 and 0500).'

1.1.2 Groundwater

Groundwater vulnerability is a term used to represent the natural ground characteristics that determine the ease with which infiltrating water and potential contaminants may reach groundwater in a vertical or subvertical direction. The scheme's area has a high groundwater vulnerability. No works at depths greater than 1m are planned.

1.1.3 Invasive Species Records

The Wildlife Acts, 1976 and 2000, contain several provisions relating to Invasive Non-Native Species (*INNS*), covering several sections and subsections of the Acts. It is prohibited, without a licence, to plant or otherwise cause to grow in a wild state, in any place in the State, any species of flora, or the flowers, roots, seeds or spores of invasive flora listed on the Third Schedule.

Articles 49 and 50 of the aforementioned Acts set out the legal implications associated with alien invasive species. Schedule 3 (*the Third Schedule*) of the regulations lists non-native species subject to the restrictions of Articles 49 and 50, which make it an offence to plant, disperse, allow dispersal or cause the spread of invasive species.

No Third Schedule invasive species were found during the site survey.

1.1.4 Habitat Assessment

The proposed works area is located within the amenity parkland of the Fair Green, which conforms to Amenity Grasslands (GA1) with Treelines (WL2) of oak (*Quercus sp.*), horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) around the perimeters of the park. Areas of Ornamental/non-native shrubs (WS3) are also found around the entrances to Fair Green Park. The dominant habitat type in the area surrounding the Fair Green is Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3), which includes private dwellings, commercial buildings, pathways and roads. No habitats of higher than low local importance are found within or adjacent to the site of works.

2 EIA Screening Methodology

Screening is a process used to establish whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for a proposed development. There are several steps in the screening process.

The mandatory requirement for an EIA is generally based on the nature or scale of a proposed development, as set out in Annex I and II of the amended Directive. This identifies certain types and scales of development, generally based on thresholds of scale, for which EIA is mandatory.

The European Commission (2017) has published a Guidance on Screening document (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended 2014/52/EU) which summarises the need for an EIA based on specific measures and/or limits, according to predefined criteria such as the project's characteristics, location and/or certain project features such as a project's potential impacts.

In addition, there is sometimes a requirement for EIA 'sub-threshold' developments and, in this respect, it may be necessary to undertake a screening exercise to assess whether the proposed development requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

A methodology was developed to formally screen the proposed development, which was based on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) by the EPA (2002) 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' and the recent 2017 guidance issued by the EU. The screening exercise is divided into a section on Mandatory EIA and another on Sub-threshold or Discretionary EIA. In each section below a screening matrix is presented which examines the requirement for EIA according to the criteria set out in the relevant legislation. The rationale behind the responses within the matrix is provided at the end of each section.

The most recent guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment Screening has been provided by the Office of the Planning Regulator (ORP) 2021 and the EPA (2022).

3 Screening Assessment

EIA legislation sets down the types of projects that may require an EIAR. Annex I defines mandatory projects that require an EIAR and Annex II defines projects that are assessed on the basis of set mandatory thresholds for each of the project classes.

The EIA screening exercise initially assesses the development of Mandatory EIA using classifications defined in the appropriate legislation. Where no mandatory requirement is concluded, screening advances to sub-threshold development assessment, where the competent authority evaluates whether the project is likely to significantly affect the environment, with reference to its scale, nature, location and context.

3.1 Mandatory EIA Screening Assessment

Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 includes this project type:

10. Infrastructure projects(b) (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.

The EU Guidance on 'Interpretation of definitions of project categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive' (2015) interprets 'urban development' as taking 'account of, inter alia, the following:

- i. Projects with similar characteristics to car parks and shopping centres could be considered to fall under Annex II (10)(b). This could be the case, for example, of bus garages or train depots, which are not explicitly mentioned in the EIA Directive, but have similar characteristics to car parks.*
- ii. Construction projects such as housing developments, hospitals, universities, sports stadiums, cinemas, theatres, concert halls and other cultural centres could also be assumed to fall within this category. The underlying principle is that all these project categories are of an urban nature and that they may cause similar types of environmental impact.*
- iii. Projects to which the terms 'urban' and 'infrastructure' can relate, such as the construction of sewerage and water supply networks, could also be included in this category.*

The overall area of the proposed development is less than 1ha as it occurs entirely within an urban park.

Therefore, the proposal would be considered to constitute a prescribed project type but is considered significantly below the threshold of 10 hectares.

Conclusion: The proposed scheme does not fall within the mandatory requirement for an EIA as addressed in EU Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directive 97/11/EC). These proposed works are thus assessed as a sub-threshold development.

3.2 Sub-threshold EIA Screening Assessment

In cases where a project is mentioned in Part 2 but is classed as "sub-threshold development", it is necessary for a planning authority to undertake a case-by-case examination about whether the development is likely to be associated with significant effects on the environment.

While it is clearly demonstrated above that the subject proposal does not trigger mandatory EIA, it is considered prudent to establish that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and by extension would not require a sub-threshold EIA.

Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, sets out the criteria for determining

whether a development would, or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and this was transposed directly from Annex III of the 2011 Directive. These criteria are defined as follows:

1. Characteristics of the proposed development;
2. Location of the proposed development, in terms of the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development;
3. Characteristics of the proposed impacts, in terms of the potential significant effects of the proposed development.

This screening assessment uses the checklist provided in the ‘Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)’ (EC, 2017).

3.3 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

Table 1: Review of characteristics of the Proposed Development

| Screening Questions | Comment |
|--|--|
| Characteristics of the Proposed Development | Comment |
| Is the scale of the project considered to be significant? | The total scheme area is 450m ² , including all associated works. The scale of the proposed development is in keeping with the scale of the receiving setting, and surrounds it in terms of size and design, and is therefore not considered significant. |
| Is the size of the project considered significant when considered cumulatively with other adjacent developments? | No permitted or proposed projects were identified which in combination with the proposed development would give rise to significant cumulative impacts. |
| Will the project utilise a significant quantity of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water or biodiversity? | No. The footprint of the proposed development will occupy a small area of less than 0.1ha. No significant impacts to land or land area will occur. Soil and overburden material will be excavated during works most of which will be exported off site. Excavation or earthworks requirements are not considered to constitute a significant effect. No water will be abstracted from any watercourses during the construction or operation of this development. No significant adverse lasting impacts are predicted that could trigger an EIA. No protected species were found within the subject site. Possible impacts on European Designated sites were assessed during an Appropriate |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <p>Assessment Screening Report for the proposed development (FFEC, 2024). This concluded the following:</p> <p><i>“This report concludes that the proposed development would not have a significant effect on European Designated Sites and progression to a Stage II Appropriate Assessment is not required.”</i></p> <p>Almost the entire site of the proposed development is composed of amenity grassland and is of negligible biodiversity benefit. No 5 immature trees are found within the development footprint. These will be removed and replanted elsewhere in the park. Ensuring no net loss of biodiversity overall.</p> |
| Will the project produce a significant quantity of waste? | During the construction phase, normal levels of construction waste will be produced, segregated where possible and sent to an appropriately permitted waste or materials recovery facility. The waste management hierarchy will be implemented onsite, which prioritises prevention and minimisation of waste, followed by reuse and recycling. During the operational phase, no waste will be produced. |
| Will the project create a significant amount or type of pollution? | No significant water or air-borne pollution is envisaged. The proposed development is not a project type that will give rise to significant emissions or pollution. |
| Will the project create a significant amount of nuisance? | Limited disruption to local receptors (traffic and amenity use) may arise during the construction phase but this will be short-term in duration. |
| Will there be a risk of major accidents? | The proposed development is not of a type that poses a risk of major accidents, having regard to substances or technologies used. The proposed construction works will employ best practice methodologies and will be subject to the contractor’s safety statements and risk assessments. |
| Will there be a risk of natural disasters, including those caused by climate change? | Based on flood analysis data from Floodinfo.ie ¹ areas within the scheme are not within any flood risk zone. In terms of fire risk. There is no fire risk given the nature of the development. |
| Will there be a risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)? | Due to the nature of the proposed development, there is no scope for negative effects on human health during the construction phase or operation. |

¹ <https://www.floodinfo.ie/map/floodmaps/>

| | |
|--|---|
| Is the combination of the above factors likely to have significant effects on the environment? | There are no factors above which when combined would result in any significant effect on the environment. |
|--|---|

3.4 Potential Impacts by EIA Topic

Table 2: Review of the location and setting of the proposed works

| Topic | Comment |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Population and Human Health | The potential impacts of the construction phase on human beings are not considered to be significant. During construction, there is the potential for temporary minor impacts related to inconvenience, dust and noise. However, the work will be short-term in duration. |
| Biodiversity / Species and Habitats | <p>The lack of any sensitive habitats and/or species within the site boundary means that the proposed development will not have any significant effects on flora and fauna.</p> <p>An appropriate assessment screening report completed by the present authors concluded the following (FFEC, 2024):</p> <p><i>“It is the conclusion of this report that the proposed development would not have a significant effect on European Designated Sites and progression to a Stage II Appropriate Assessment is not required.”</i></p> |
| Land and soils | No significant impact; the development will be constructed in accordance with best practice environmentally sensitive methods and environmental management systems. |
| Water | Good construction site practices and direct avoidance and mitigation will be in place to prevent any risk of pollution, e.g. from earthmoving works or chemicals used in construction such as hydrocarbons and cement-based products, running off the site. With best practices incorporated into the design and the construction works, the potential for significant run-off of pollutants is either eliminated or greatly reduced, and no significant residual impacts on water are anticipated. |
| Air & Climate | During construction, there is the potential for short-term minor negative impacts related to dust to occur, however, this will be short-term in duration and limited to the works area. Best practice construction site management will minimise emissions. |
| Noise & Vibration | Potential short-term noise impacts may arise during construction activities however this will be managed through best practice measures. No significant |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| | impacts are anticipated. |
| Material Assets: Built Environment | Possible effects include short-term interruptions to existing services and damage to existing systems during construction. However, no significant impact that could trigger the requirement for an EIAR is predicted. |
| Material Assets: Transportation | There will be no significant long-term impacts on local traffic or amenity use. |
| Waste Management | The development will involve limited excavation works. Possible effects include the re-use / recycle / disposal of excavated material as well as other waste generated on-site i.e. construction and demolition waste. Any effects will be negligible. |
| Cultural Heritage | The proposed development will not give rise to any significant impacts on cultural heritage. |
| Landscape | No significant impact. The proposed development is located within an urban area and will not give rise to any significant landscape or visual impacts that could trigger the requirement for EIAR. |

4 Conclusion

The proposed project is not a development for which an EIA is mandatory. In terms of scale, the proposed development falls significantly below the threshold set out in Class 10 (b)(i) in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations.

A sub-threshold EIA Screening exercise was carried out to determine the potential for the proposed development to have significant environmental effects or not.

No significant negative effects on the environment have been identified during the construction or operational phase of the proposed development. The overall conclusion of this screening exercise is that there should be no specific requirement for a full Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development.

References

Circular Letter: PL 05/2018 27th August 2018 Transposition into Planning Law of Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the EIA Directive) and Revised Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

CIEEM (2018). The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: terrestrial, freshwater and Coastal 2nd Edition

Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government(2013). Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2003). Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding sub-threshold Development. Published by the Stationery Office.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2018). Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

EIA Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (DEHLG, 2003). Guidelines on information to be contained in EIA (EPA, 2002)

European Commission Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (2017).

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (2003).

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 2022. 'Revised Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.'

European Commission (2015). Environmental Impact Assessment –EIA, Overview, Legal Context. European Council Directive (EU) 2014/52/EU of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

European Council Directive (EC) 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997 amending Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

European Council Directive (EU) 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

FFEC (2024) Appropriate Assessment Screening Report: Athboy Fairgreen Playground

FFEC (2024) Ecology Report: Athboy Fairgreen Playground

NRA (2008) *Environmental Impact Assessment of National Roads Schemes – a practical guide*. National Roads Authority (Now Transport Infrastructure Ireland), Dublin.

OPR (2021) Environmental Impact Assessment Screening OPR Practice Note PN02