

November  
2025

# Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report



***Páirc na hAbhainn,  
Athenry,  
Co. Galway***



ASH Ecology & Environmental

Ash Ecology & Environmental Ltd.  
Directors: Aisling Walsh, Robert Morrison  
Tel: 089 4991181 / Company Reg: 630819 /  
Office: Monine Kilfinane, Co. Limerick  
Full membership of the CIEEM

## Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1	Purpose of the Report.....	4
1.2	Competency of Assessor.....	4
1.3	Project Description.....	5
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>6</b>
2.1	Desk Based Studies .....	6
2.2	Habitat Survey .....	7
2.3	Appropriate Assessment Methodology .....	7
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Stage I Appropriate Assessment.....</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1	Source-Pathway-Receptor Approach and Identification of Zone of Influence.....	11
3.2	Description of Relevant Receptor-Source-Pathway Connections between the proposed development site and European sites Identified.....	11
3.3	European Sites within the Zone of Influence.....	15
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Screening Assessment of Likely Effects .....</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1	Habitat Loss/Alteration .....	15
4.2	Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species .....	15
4.2.1	<i>Direct Impacts</i> .....	15
4.2.2	<i>Indirect Impacts</i> .....	15
4.3	Habitat/Species Fragmentation .....	16
4.4	Changes in Population Density.....	16
4.5	Impacts to Water Quality .....	18
4.5.1	<i>Direct Impacts</i> .....	18
4.5.2	<i>Indirect Impacts</i> .....	18
4.5.3	<i>Surface and Foul Drainage</i> .....	18
4.6	Climate Change Impacts .....	19
<b>5.0</b>	<b>In Combination Effects of Plans &amp; Projects .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Screening Statement Conclusions.....</b>	<b>21</b>

### **Tables**

Table 1	European Sites within 15km of Site
Table 2	Finding of No Significant Effect (FONSE) Statement

### **Figures**

Figure 1	Site Location Map
Figure 2	Aerial Photo & Drainage Network
Figure 3a	Proposed Site Layout
Figure 3b	Surface Water and Wastewater Drainage Layout
Figure 4	Habitat Map
Figure 5	Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 15km of Site
Figure 6	Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within 15km of Site
Figure 7	Closest Lesser Horseshoe Bat Records
Figure 8	2019-2024 WFD Catchment Drainage Information

### **Appendices**

Appendix A	Registered Practice of CIEEM
Appendix B	Plates

---

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose of the Report

A Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) was undertaken by Ash Ecology & Environmental Ltd (AEE) on behalf of Galway County Council (GCC) for the proposed residential development of 16 no. two storey houses at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. The proposed site layout is shown in Figure 3a and the surface water and wastewater drainage plan is shown in Figure 3b.

It provides information on, and assesses the potential for, the proposed development to impact on the Natura 2000 network (hereafter referred to as European sites).<sup>1</sup>

An AA is required if significant effects on European sites arising from a proposed development cannot be ruled out at the screening stage, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. It is the responsibility of the competent authority to make a decision as to whether or not the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report was compiled as part of this application (AEE, November 2025) along with an Ecological Impact Assessment (AEE, November 2025) and should be read in conjunction with this report. The EIA Screening Report includes assessments of potential impacts on various environmental factors, including biodiversity, and outlines measures to minimise any identified risks.

### 1.2 Competency of Assessor

This report has been prepared by Aisling Walsh whose qualifications includes an MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation (TCD), B.Sc. (Hons) Zoology (NUIG), B.Sc. Applied and Aquatic Science (GMIT) along with a Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement from the Institute of Acoustics. Aisling is the Managing Director of Ash Ecology & Environmental Ltd and has over 18 years of experience providing environmental consultancy and environmental assessment

---

<sup>1</sup> The Natura 2000 network is a European network of important ecological sites, as defined under Article 3 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, which comprises both special areas of conservation and special protection areas. Special conservation areas are sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I, and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, of the Habitats Directive, and are established under the Habitats Directive itself. Special protection areas are established under Article 4 of the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC for the protection of endangered species of wild birds. The aim of the network is to aid the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

In Ireland these sites are designed as European sites - defined under the Planning Acts and/or the Birds and Habitats Regulations as (a) a candidate site of Community importance, (b) a site of Community importance, (c) a candidate special area of conservation, (d) a special area of conservation, (e) a candidate special protection area, or (f) a special protection area. They are commonly referred to in Ireland as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

services. Aisling has written numerous Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA), Screening for Appropriate Assessment Stage I and Stage II Natura Impact Statements, Environmental Impact Assessments/Statements, Badger Surveys, Bat Surveys (Aisling is a Licensed Bat Ecologist) and Habitat Surveys. She has also provided input and reviewed Ecological and Environmental assessments for several EIS and EIAR and conducted numerous noise surveys for EPA licenced facilities. AEE is a Registered Practice of the CIEEM (see Appendix A).

### 1.3 Project Description

The proposed development is located at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway (see Figure 1). The existing site comprises improved agricultural grassland habitat with some grassy meadows (see Figures 2 and 4).

The proposed development comprises:

Construction of 16 no. houses located on a greenfield site accessed from the existing Páirc na hAbhainn housing estate (see Figures 3a and 3b). The proposed dwellings are two-storey in height and comprises of:

- 8 no. 3-bedroom semi-detached houses
- 8 no. 2-bedroom terraced houses

Construction of hard and soft landscape works including new roadways and paths, provision of 32 no. new car parking spaces including two universal access parking spaces, provision of 8no. cycle parking, public open space, public lighting, signage, boundary treatments and all associated infrastructure and site developments work necessary to facilitate the proposed development.

The site is located on a greenfield site to the south of the existing Páirc na hAbhainn housing estate, Athenry, Co. Galway and accessed via the existing road network in the estate located at Baunmore, a regional road connected to the R347 Dublin Road. The red line boundary of the site measures approximately 0.651 hectares and is triangular in shape. The site is bound by the rear boundary blockwork walls and timber fencing of Páirc na hAbhainn estate to the north, and a natural stone wall to the east and south. The western boundary line has no designated fence or wall. The site topography is steep, sloping approximately 5.5 metres from its lowest to highest point. The most significant gradient is located at the north-east corner of the site.

The proposed development will connect to the existing foul water and surface water drainage systems in the area. For foul water drainage, the development will connect to the Athenry Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP D0193). Irish Water has confirmed feasibility of the water connection without infrastructure upgrade by Uisce Éireann (Pre-Connection Enquiry reference CDS25006844).

For surface water drainage, the development incorporates Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) features including a Graf Eco Bloc attenuation tank with hydrobrake optimum outflow control device, road gullies, silt trap and Class 1 petrol interceptor. Surface water will be attenuated on-site before controlled discharge to the existing surface water network. A detailed Surface Water and Wastewater Drainage Plan is provided in Figure 3b. All drainage infrastructure will be designed

and constructed in accordance with Irish Water's Code of Practice for Water Infrastructure (IW-CDS-5020-03) and Wastewater Infrastructure (IW-CDS-5030-03). The steep topography of the site has been addressed in the drainage design through the incorporation of appropriate attenuation and flow control measures.

A Planning Stage Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be required for the main environmental management measures such as noise, dust, water pollution prevention, etc.

## **2.0 Methodology**

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared with regard to the following guidance documents, as relevant:

- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, September 2021)
- OPR Practice Note PN01. Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021)
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision)
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle (European Commission, 2000)
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2019)

The above-referenced guidance sets out a staged process for carrying out Appropriate Assessment. To determine if an Appropriate Assessment is required, documented screening is required. Screening identifies the potential for effects on the conservation objectives of European sites, if any, which would arise from a proposed plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects (i.e., likely significant effects). Significant effects on a European site are those that would undermine the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats and/or the QI/Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species of a European site(s).

### **2.1 Desk Based Studies**

A desk-based review of information sources was completed. Information contained on the websites of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) was reviewed.

The desktop data sources used to inform the assessment presented in this report are as follows (accessed in November 2025):

- Online data available on European sites and protected habitats/species as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie) including conservation objectives documents
- Online data available on protected species as held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) from [www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie)
- Information on the surface water network and surface water quality in the area available from [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)
- Information on groundwater resources and groundwater quality in the area available from [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie) and [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie)
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from [www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie)
- Information on the location, nature and design of the proposed development supplied by the applicant's design team
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Athenry Local Area Plan 2024-2030

## 2.2 Habitat Survey

The site was visited 29<sup>th</sup> August 2025. Habitats were identified and classified according to Fossitt (2000)<sup>2</sup> and Smith *et al.* (2011)<sup>3</sup>. A habitat map is shown as Figure 4. Photos of the site are attached in Appendix B. The main habitats onsite were:

- Improved agricultural grassland (GA1) – The dominant habitat covering the majority of the site, consisting of ryegrass-dominated sward typical of agriculturally managed fields. This habitat is of low ecological significance.
- Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2) – A strip of grassy meadow habitat along the northern boundary of the site, adjacent to the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate. This habitat is of low to moderate ecological significance.
- Stone walls and hedgerows (BL1/WL1) – Old stone walls along the eastern and southern boundaries, with intermittent hedging including hawthorn and bramble, providing potential habitat for small mammals, birds and invertebrates.
- Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3) – Block walls and timber fencing along the northern boundary separating the site from the existing estate. These were of low ecological significance.

No High Risk Invasive species listed on the S.I. Regs 477 were noted onsite e.g. Japanese knotweed, Giant Hogweed, Indian Balsam.

## 2.3 Appropriate Assessment Methodology

### 2.3.1 Regulatory Context

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna better known as "The Habitats Directive" provides the framework for legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 of the Directive provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of

---

<sup>2</sup> Fossitt, J. (2000). *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, G.F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hora, K. and Delaney, E. (2011) Best practice guidance for habitat survey and mapping. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC which codified Directive 79/409/EEC) (better known as "The Birds Directive").

Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

*"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication 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".*

The Habitats Directive is transposed into Irish law through the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), as amended, and the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Part 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, outlines the requirements for screening for appropriate assessment and appropriate assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive require an Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects to prevent significant adverse effects on European conservation sites, also known as Natura 2000 sites. In this particular case the purpose of Appropriate Assessment is to assess the potential impacts of the proposed activities on the conservation objectives of European sites. The assessment will determine whether the plan would have significant adverse effects upon the integrity of each site in terms of its nature conservation objectives.

The integrity of the site has been defined as "the coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, that enables it to sustain the habitat, complex of habitats and/or the levels of populations of the species for which it was designated" (European Commission, 2018). Where negative effects are identified other options should be thoroughly examined to avoid any potential damaging effects prior to implementing the plan.

### **2.3.2 AA Process**

The European Commission's Methodological Guidance (EC, 2021) recommends a 4 stage approach:

**Stage 1: Screening** Determining whether the plan 'either alone or in combination with other plans or projects' is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

**Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment** Determining whether, in view of the site's

---

conservation objectives, the plan 'either alone or in combination with other plans or projects' would have an adverse effect (or risk of this) on the integrity of the site. If not, the plan can proceed.

**Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions** Where it has not been proven that measures considered will not avoid or mitigate the adverse effect on the Natura 2000 site, then an assessment of the alternatives will be required; and if none are acceptable then stage 4 is required to be considered.

**Stage 4: Assessment where no Alternative Solutions Exist & where Adverse Impacts Remain** This will involve assessment where the Plan is considered to result in adverse impacts on the Natura 2000 site and no alternative solutions remain – the imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) test must be met before authorisation, permission or adoption of the Plan is agreed. This includes the agreement of compensatory measures.

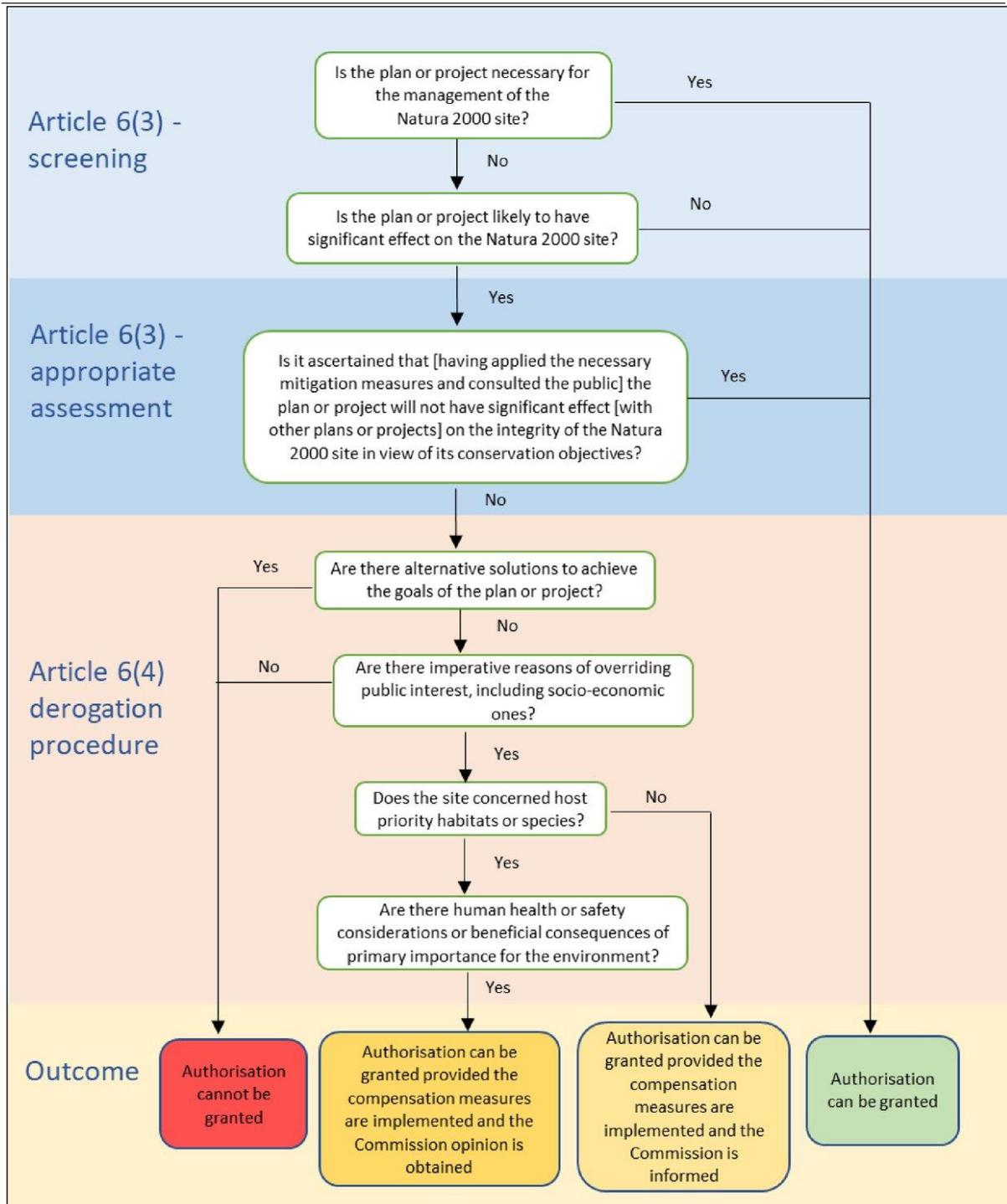
This report covers Stage 1 of Appropriate Assessment - Screening. The outcome of each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. Screening for Appropriate Assessment involves the following steps:

1. Description of the project and local site characteristics
2. Identification of relevant European sites in the Zone of Influence
3. Assessment of likely effects - direct, indirect and cumulative
4. Screening statement and conclusions

The outcome of each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. Screening for Appropriate Assessment involves the following steps:<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 of Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, September 2021)



---

## 3.0 Stage I Appropriate Assessment

### 3.1 Source-Pathway-Receptor Approach and Identification of Zone of Influence

In establishing which European sites are potentially at risk (in the absence of mitigation) from the proposed development, a source-pathway-receptor approach was applied. In order for an impact to occur, there must be a risk enabled by having a source (e.g. water abstraction or construction works), a receptor (e.g. a European site or its Qualifying Interest(s) (QIs) or Special Conservation Interest(s) (SCIs) species), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. pathway by air for air borne pollution, or a pathway by a watercourse for mobilisation of pollution). For an impact to occur, all three elements must exist; the absence or removal of one of the elements means there is no possibility for the impact to occur.

The identification of source-pathway-receptor connection(s) between the proposed development and European sites essentially is the process of identifying which European sites are within the Zone of Influence (Zol) of the proposed development, and therefore potentially at risk of significant effects. The Zol is defined as the area within which the proposed development could affect the receiving environment such that it could potentially have significant effects on the QI habitats or QI/SCI species of a European site, or on the achievement of their conservation objectives (as defined in CIEEM, 2022).

The identification of a source-pathway-receptor risk does not automatically mean that significant effects will arise. The likelihood for significant effects will depend upon the characteristics of the source (e.g. extent and duration of construction works), the characteristics of the pathway (e.g. direction and strength of prevailing winds for air borne pollution) and the characteristics of the receptor (e.g. the sensitivities of the European site and its QIs/SCIs). However, identification of the risk does mean that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the significance of the effect depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor. In this case, where uncertainty existed, the precautionary principle was applied.

### 3.2 Description of Relevant Receptor-Source-Pathway Connections between the proposed development site and European sites Identified

In accordance with the European Commission Methodological Guidance (EC, 2021), a list of Natura 2000 Sites that can be potentially affected by the proposed works has been compiled. Adopting the precautionary principle in identifying these sites, it has been decided to include all SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) and SPAs (Special Protection Areas) within 15km of the site. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed NHAs within 5km of the site are also considered, which are of national (NHA), or proposed (pNHA) national importance.

The nearest protected areas to the site are listed below in Table 1. Maps showing the 8 SAC sites and 5 SPA sites within a 15km radius of the site are shown as Figures 5 and 6. There are no (proposed) National Heritage Areas (pNHAs/NHAs) within 5km of the site, see Figure 7. The proposed works do not occur within a SAC, SPA or pNHA.

**Table 1** European Sites within 15km of the Site

Code	Site Name	Approx. Distance (as the crow flies)	Screening Conclusion
<b>SAC Sites (within 15km)</b>			
000297	Lough Corrib SAC	7.9km NE, N, NW	Screened OUT. No hydrological connection. The site drains to Clarinbridge River (~270m west) which flows to Galway Bay, not to Lough Corrib. Distance of 7.9km exceeds any zone of influence for disturbance impacts.
000268	Galway Bay Complex SAC	10.3km SW	Screened OUT. No hydrological connection to turlough system. While there is a distant hydrological connection via Clarinbridge River, the distance of ~10km downstream, dilution factors, and absence of direct impacts preclude any significant effects. Site drains away from turlough catchment. Distance sufficient to preclude disturbance impacts.
000322	Rahasane Turlough SAC	6.8km S, SW	Screened OUT. No hydrological connection to turlough system. Site drains away from turlough catchment.
000242	Castletaylor Complex SAC	11.8km SW	Screened OUT. No pathway for impacts. Distance of 11.8km exceeds any zone of influence for the proposed development.
000606	Lough Fingall Complex SAC	13.2km SW	Screened OUT. No pathway for impacts. Distance of 13.2km exceeds any zone of influence for the proposed development.
001285	Kiltiernan Turlough SAC	13.7km SW	Screened OUT. No hydrological connection to turlough system. Distance precludes any impacts.
002244	Ardrahan Grassland SAC	14.2km SW	Screened OUT. No pathway for impacts. Distance of 14.2km exceeds any zone of influence for the proposed development.
000304	Lough Rea SAC	14.7km SE	Screened OUT. No pathway for impacts. Distance of 14.7km exceeds any zone of influence for the proposed development.
<b>SPA Sites (within 15km)</b>			
004089	Rahasane Turlough SPA	7.6km S, SW	Screened OUT. No suitable habitat for SCI bird species (Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover, Wigeon, Shoveler, Coot, Black-tailed Godwit, Black-headed Gull). Distance of 7.6km sufficient to preclude disturbance impacts. Habitat consists of modified grassland unsuitable for wetland birds.
004142	Cregganna Marsh SPA	11.2km SW	Screened OUT. No suitable habitat for Greenland White-fronted Goose. Distance of 11.2km precludes any disturbance impacts.
004042	Lough Corrib SPA	12km SW	Screened OUT. No suitable habitat for SCI bird species. Distance of 12km precludes any disturbance impacts.
004134	Lough Rea SPA	14.7km SE	Screened OUT. No suitable habitat for SCI bird species. Distance of 14.7km precludes any disturbance impacts.
004168	Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA	14.7km SE, S	Screened OUT. No suitable habitat for SCI bird species. Distance of 14.7km precludes any disturbance impacts.

Code	Site Name	Approx. Distance (as the crow flies)	Screening Conclusion
<b>pNHA Sites (within 5km)</b>			
	None identified	N/A	No pNHA sites within 5km radius of the site.

The Source-Pathway-Receptor model has been applied to identify potential connections between the proposed development and European sites.

The sources of potential impacts from the proposed development include:

- Construction phase: earthworks, vegetation clearance, construction traffic, noise, dust, potential accidental spillages
- Operational phase: increased foul water loading, surface water runoff from hardstanding areas, residential activities

Potential pathways examined include:

- Surface water connections via drainage networks
- Groundwater connections
- Air (for emissions, dust, noise)
- Land (for mobile species)

The receptors are the qualifying interests and special conservation interests of European sites within the Zol.

#### Surface Water Pathways

The site is located approximately 270m from the Clarinbridge River which flows southwest to Galway Bay. Surface water from the site would drain via the proposed SUDS system to the local surface water network and potentially reach the Clarinbridge River. However, the nearest European site with aquatic qualifying interests connected to this system is Galway Bay Complex SAC at 10.3km southwest. Given the distance, dilution factors, and the residential nature of the development, no significant effects are anticipated via this pathway.

#### Groundwater Pathways

The site overlies a locally important aquifer - bedrock which is moderately productive in local zones. However, there are no groundwater-dependent European sites within the Zol that have hydrological connectivity with the site. The nearest turlough SACs (Rahasane at 6.8km and Kiltiernan at 13.7km) are in separate groundwater catchments with no connection to the development site.

#### Air Pathways

Potential air quality impacts during construction (dust, emissions) would be highly localised and temporary. The nearest European site is 6.8km away, far beyond the range of any air quality impacts from construction activities.

---

### Land Pathways

The site consists of modified grassland habitat of low ecological value. It does not support any Annex species or provide suitable habitat for SCI bird species from nearby SPAs. The distance to the nearest European site (6.8km) precludes any disturbance impacts to qualifying species.

### **3.3 European Sites within the Zone of Influence**

Based on the Source-Pathway-Receptor assessment, no European sites fall within the actual Zone of Influence of the proposed development. While 8 SACs and 5 SPAs occur within the precautionary 15km search radius, none have credible impact pathways from the proposed development that could result in significant effects on their qualifying interests or conservation objectives.

## **4.0 Screening Assessment of Likely Effects**

As the proposed development does not overlap with any European sites, none of the qualifying interest habitats or species will be directly impacted. The habitat onsite would not support any Annex II species from nearby SACs. All European sites lie beyond the Zol of any hydrogeological, air quality or disturbance/displacement impacts.

Given that all European sites are screened out (see Table 1), there are no indirect impacts by which the proposed development could potentially affect the conservation objective attributes and targets supporting the conservation condition of the qualifying interests of any European site. Nevertheless, a precautionary assessment of potential impact pathways is provided below.

A number of factors were examined at this stage and dismissed as not relevant given the absence of pathways to European sites.

### **4.1 Habitat Loss/Alteration**

As there will be no direct habitat loss of any SAC & SPA sites listed in Table 1, impacts arising from habitat loss/alteration on these protected areas are screened out.

### **4.2 Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species**

#### **4.2.1 Direct Impacts**

There will be no direct disturbance impacts on any European sites as the proposed development is located 6.8km from the nearest European site (Rahasane Turlough SAC/SPA) and does not overlap with any European site boundaries.

#### **4.2.2 Indirect Impacts**

Disturbance and displacement of fauna species as a result of construction related disturbance could potentially occur within the vicinity of the proposed works. For mammal species such as otter and badger, disturbance effects would not be expected to extend beyond 250m<sup>5</sup>. For birds, disturbance effects would not be

---

<sup>5</sup> This is consistent with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) guidance (Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes and Guidelines for the Treatment of Badgers prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes) documents. This is a precautionary distance, and likely to be moderated by the screening effect provided by surrounding vegetation and buildings, with the actual Zol of construction related disturbance likely to be much less in reality.

---

expected to extend beyond a distance of c.300m, as noise levels associated with general construction activities would attenuate to close to background levels.

The proposed works are approximately 270m from the Clarinbridge River and 6.8km from the nearest European site. At these distances, disturbance impacts to any Annex II species or SCI birds are not credible. The site consists of modified grassland habitat which does not support ex-situ populations of SCI birds from nearby SPAs (Rahasane Turlough, Cregganna Marsh, Lough Corrib) as it lacks suitable wetland habitat required by species such as Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, or other waterfowl.

Of particular relevance to Lough Corrib SAC is the Lesser Horseshoe Bat, a qualifying interest species. Desktop review indicates the closest Lesser Horseshoe Bat records are approximately 5.6-5.8km southwest of the site (Figure 7), which is outside the typical 2.5km foraging and commuting radius for this species. Given this distance and the absence of suitable roosting structures on site, the development is unlikely to impact Lesser Horseshoe Bat populations associated with Lough Corrib SAC.

Construction activities will generate temporary noise and visual disturbance. However, the nearest European site is 6.8km away, far beyond the distance at which construction disturbance could affect any qualifying species. Construction works will take place during normal daytime hours, further limiting any potential for disturbance to crepuscular or nocturnal species.

During the operational phase, the residential nature of the development (16 no. two storey houses on 0.651ha) will generate typical suburban activity levels consistent with the existing adjacent Páirc na hAbhainn estate. This will not result in disturbance impacts to European sites given the substantial distances involved.

Disturbance to features of interest of all European sites is screened out.

### **4.3 Habitat/Species Fragmentation**

Habitat fragmentation has been defined as the 'reduction and isolation of patches of natural environment' usually due to an external disturbance such that an alteration of the spatial composition of a habitat occurs that alters the habitat and 'create[s] isolated or tenuously connected patches of the original habitat.' This results in spatial separation of habitat units which had previously been in a state of greater continuity.

The development site does not function as an ecological corridor between European sites, nor does it support habitats or species that are functionally linked to any European site. The nearest European sites are isolated from the development by existing urban development, road infrastructure, and agricultural lands.

It is considered that habitat fragmentation of qualifying habitats will not arise from the proposed works and impacts to all European sites are therefore screened out.

### **4.4 Changes in Population Density**

---

It is not expected that the proposed works will cause any reduction in the baseline population of any qualifying species of European sites within 15km. The site does not support Annex II species or SCI birds, and the distance to European sites precludes any population-level effects. This impact pathway is therefore screened out.

## **4.5 Impacts to Water Quality**

### **4.5.1 Direct Impacts**

There will be no direct impacts to water quality within any European site as the development does not occur within or immediately adjacent to any European site boundary.

### **4.5.2 Indirect Impacts**

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) is a key initiative aimed at improving water quality throughout the European Union. It requires member states to assess, monitor, and manage their water bodies to ensure that they achieve at least 'Good' ecological status. In Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for assessing and reporting on the status of water bodies in line with the WFD.

The WFD classification system assesses the ecological and chemical status of water bodies using a variety of parameters, including biological quality elements (such as fish, invertebrates, and aquatic flora), physico-chemical elements (such as temperature, oxygen, and nutrient conditions), and hydromorphological elements (such as flow and habitat conditions). The classification ranges from 'High' to 'Bad' status, with the objective being to achieve at least 'Good' status for all water bodies. The hydrology of the water catchment area is shown on Figure 8. The site is located within:

- Hydrometric Area '29 – Galway Bay South East
- WFD Catchment 'Corrib'
- WFD Subcatchment 'Clarinbridge\_SC\_010'
- The Clarinbridge River (approximately 270m west of site) has a 2019-2024 WFD Status of 'Moderate' and is 'At Risk'
- 2019-2024 WFD Groundwater Body Status is 'Good' and 'Not at Risk'

### **4.5.3 Surface and Foul Drainage**

The potential risk to water quality during the construction phase of the proposed works (e.g. silt and harmful substances becoming entrained in surface water run-off) is minimal given standard construction management practices will be implemented through the CEMP. The nearest hydrological connection is the Clarinbridge River at approximately 270m west, with the nearest European site with aquatic qualifying interests (Galway Bay Complex SAC) located approximately 10km downstream.

Foul water from the proposed development will connect to the existing foul water network and be treated at Athenry Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP D0193). Irish Water has confirmed feasibility of the water connection without infrastructure upgrade by Uisce Éireann (Pre-Connection Enquiry reference CDS25006844), confirming adequate capacity for the proposed development.

Surface water from roofs, hardstandings, roads and footpaths will be managed through comprehensive SUDS features before controlled discharge to the local drainage network (see Figure 3b for detailed drainage plan). The surface water management system includes:

- A Graf Eco Bloc attenuation tank to store and control surface water discharge rates
- A hydrobrake optimum outflow control device located within manhole SW 6.0 (CL 37.300, IL 35.490) with 400mm sump
- Heavy-duty road gullies (D400 loading) suitable for vehicular traffic
- A silt trap and Class 1 petrol interceptor (225mm Ø pipework, IL in 35.370, IL out 35.235) to treat surface water prior to discharge
- 225mm Ø and 150mm Ø uPVC surface water pipework connecting to existing surface water network
- Connection point to existing surface water system

All drainage infrastructure will be designed and constructed in accordance with Irish Water's Code of Practice for Water Infrastructure (IW-CDS-5020-03, latest revision) and Code of Practice for Wastewater Infrastructure (IW-CDS-5030-03, latest revision), including the relevant Standard Details documents.

Given the distance to European sites (nearest 6.8km), the implementation of comprehensive SUDS with attenuation and treatment measures, connection to a WWTP with confirmed adequate capacity, and the substantial dilution factors involved (approximately 10km to nearest European site with aquatic qualifying interests), negative impacts to water quality within any European site are screened out.

#### **4.6 Climate Change Impacts**

The proposed housing development will not result in any significant greenhouse gas emissions to the air during the operational phase. While there may be a temporary and localised increase in emissions during the construction activities, the small scale and short duration of the works render these emissions negligible. Considering the limited scope of the development (16 no. two storey houses), it is concluded that the proposed works will not have any discernible negative climate change impacts on the qualifying interests (QIs) or special conservation interests (SCIs) of any European site. Therefore, the potential for climate change impacts affecting European sites, resulting from the proposed works can be screened out.

### **5.0 In Combination Effects of Plans & Projects**

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combination with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact upon European sites.

All European sites within 15km have been screened out in Section 4.0, with the nearest site (Rahasane Turlough SAC/SPA) located 6.8km from the proposed development. Given the absence of impact pathways, the distance to European sites, and the lack of direct connections to any European sites, there is no potential

---

for any other plans or projects to act in combination with the proposed works which would adversely affect the integrity of any European sites.

Key plans and projects considered include:

- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Athenry Local Area Plan 2019-2025
- Other permitted and proposed developments in the Athenry area

Galway County Council assesses each planning application requiring a Screening for Appropriate Assessment on an individual basis and requests further information accordingly depending on scale and location of development.

## 6.0 Screening Statement Conclusions

According to NPWS (2009), the Appropriate Assessment Screening exercise can either identify that an Appropriate Assessment is not required; or that there is no potential for significant effects (i.e. Appropriate Assessment is not required); or that significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain (i.e. the project must either proceed to Stage 2 (AA) or be rejected).

All European sites within 15km of the proposed development have been assessed for potential impacts. The nearest European site, Rahasane Turlough SAC/SPA at 7.6km, along with all other sites identified, were assessed for impacts from the proposed works and all impacts were screened out.

In conclusion, upon the examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information including, in particular, the nature of the proposed works and the likelihood of significant effects on any European site, in addition to considering possible in-combination effects, and applying the precautionary principle, it is concluded by the author of this report that, on the basis of objective information, the possibility may be excluded that the proposed works will have a significant effect on any of the European sites below:

- Lough Corrib SAC
- Rahasane Turlough SAC
- Galway Bay Complex SAC
- Castletaylor Complex SAC
- Lough Fingall Complex SAC
- Kiltiernan Turlough SAC
- Ardrahan Grassland SAC
- Lough Rea SAC
- Rahasane Turlough SPA
- Cregganna Marsh SPA
- Lough Corrib SPA
- Lough Rea SPA
- Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA

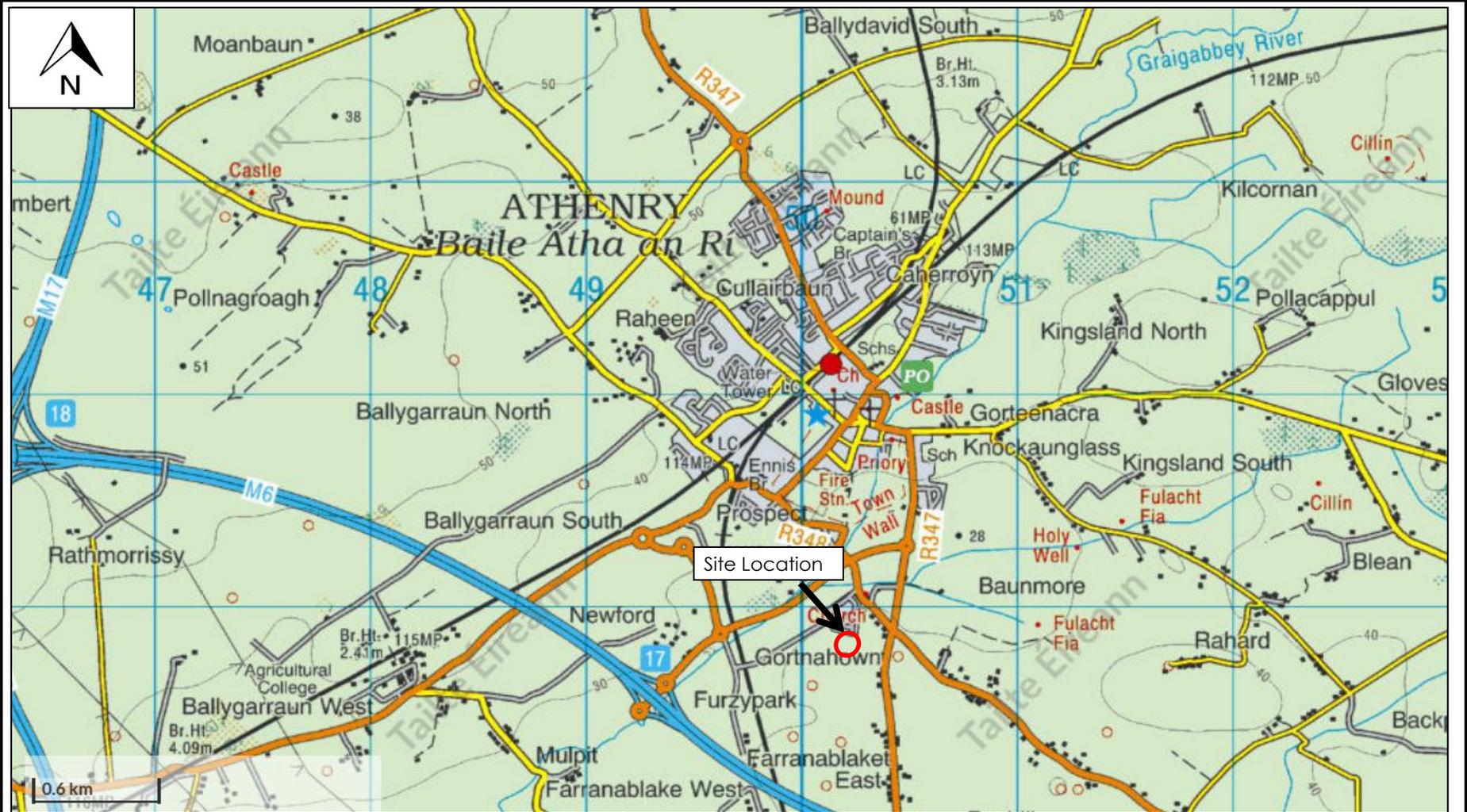
It is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will not have a significant effect on any European Site as a result of the proposed works. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is not required.

The FONSE table (Table 2) summarises the key assessment findings.

**Table 2** Finding of No Significant Effect (FONSE) Statement

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Details</b>
<b>Project Description</b>	Construction of 16 no. two-storey houses (comprising 8 no. 3-bedroom semi-detached houses and 8 no. 2-bedroom terraced houses) and all associated site development works including new roadways and paths, provision of 32 no. car parking spaces (including two universal access parking spaces), provision of 8 no. cycle parking spaces, public open space, public lighting, signage, boundary treatments and all associated infrastructure provision at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway.
<b>European Site(s) Assessed</b>	Lough Corrib SAC (7.9km); Rahasane Turlough SAC (6.8km); Galway Bay Complex SAC (10.3km); Castletaylor Complex SAC (11.8km); Lough Fingall Complex SAC (13.2km); Kiltiernan Turlough SAC (13.7km); Ardahan Grassland SAC (14.2km); Lough Rea SAC (14.7km); Rahasane Turlough SPA (7.6km); Cregganna Marsh SPA (11.2km); Lough Corrib SPA (12km); Lough Rea SPA (14.7km); Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA (14.7km)
<b>Qualifying Interests</b>	No impacts anticipated on any qualifying interests or conservation objectives
<b>Potential Impact Pathways</b>	Distant hydrological pathway via surface water drainage to Clarinbridge River (~270m) and subsequently to Galway Bay (~10km). No credible pathways identified to any European sites.
<b>Direct Effects</b>	No direct effects identified - site outside all European sites
<b>Indirect Effects</b>	No indirect effects anticipated due to distance from European sites (nearest 6.8km), absence of suitable habitat for Annex/SCI species, connection to Athenry WWTP with Irish Water confirmed feasibility (CDS25006844), implementation of comprehensive SUDS (including attenuation tank with hydrobrake flow control, silt trap, Class 1 petrol interceptor) and CEMP
<b>Cumulative Effects</b>	No significant in-combination effects identified with other developments in the Athenry area
<b>Mitigation Required</b>	Standard construction environmental controls through CEMP including pollution prevention measures, plus comprehensive SUDS including attenuation tank, hydrobrake flow control device, silt trap and petrol interceptor
<b>Residual Risk</b>	None identified
<b>Conclusion</b>	No Significant Effects
<b>NIS Required</b>	No

# FIGURES

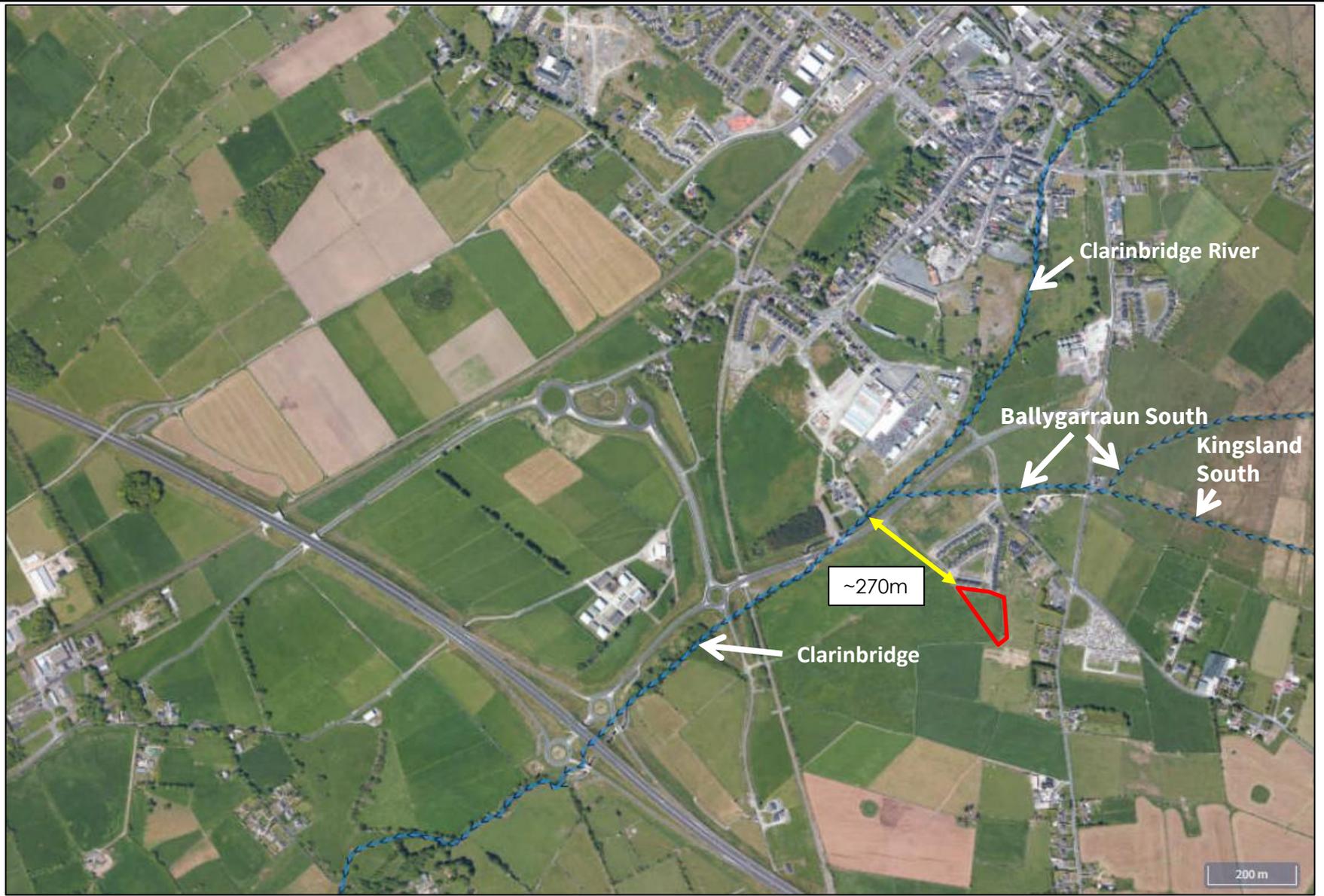


Map sourced from National Biodiversity Data Centre Website – [www.nbdc.ie](http://www.nbdc.ie)



© Tailte Éireann M52

Client <b>Galway County Council</b>		Drawing <b>Site Location Map</b>			
Job AA Screening Report					
Drawing Number Figure 1	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date Nov 25	Drawn AW



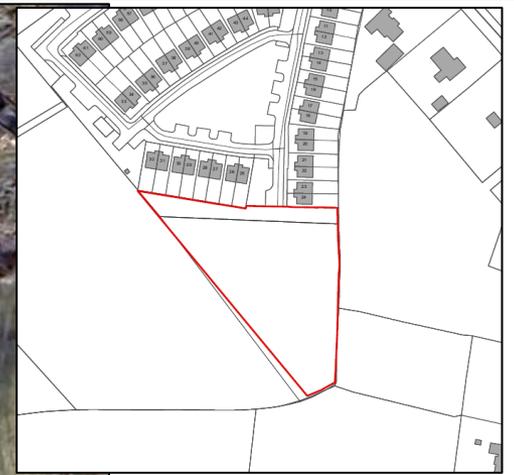
- Site Location
- Rivers



<b>Client</b> Galway County Council		<b>Drawing</b> Aerial Photo & Drainage Network	
<b>Job</b> AA Screening Report		<b>Status</b> Final	
<b>Drawing Number</b> Figure 2	<b>Status</b> Final	<b>Sht. Size</b> A4	<b>Scale</b> As Shown
<b>Date</b> Nov 25		<b>Drawn</b> AW	



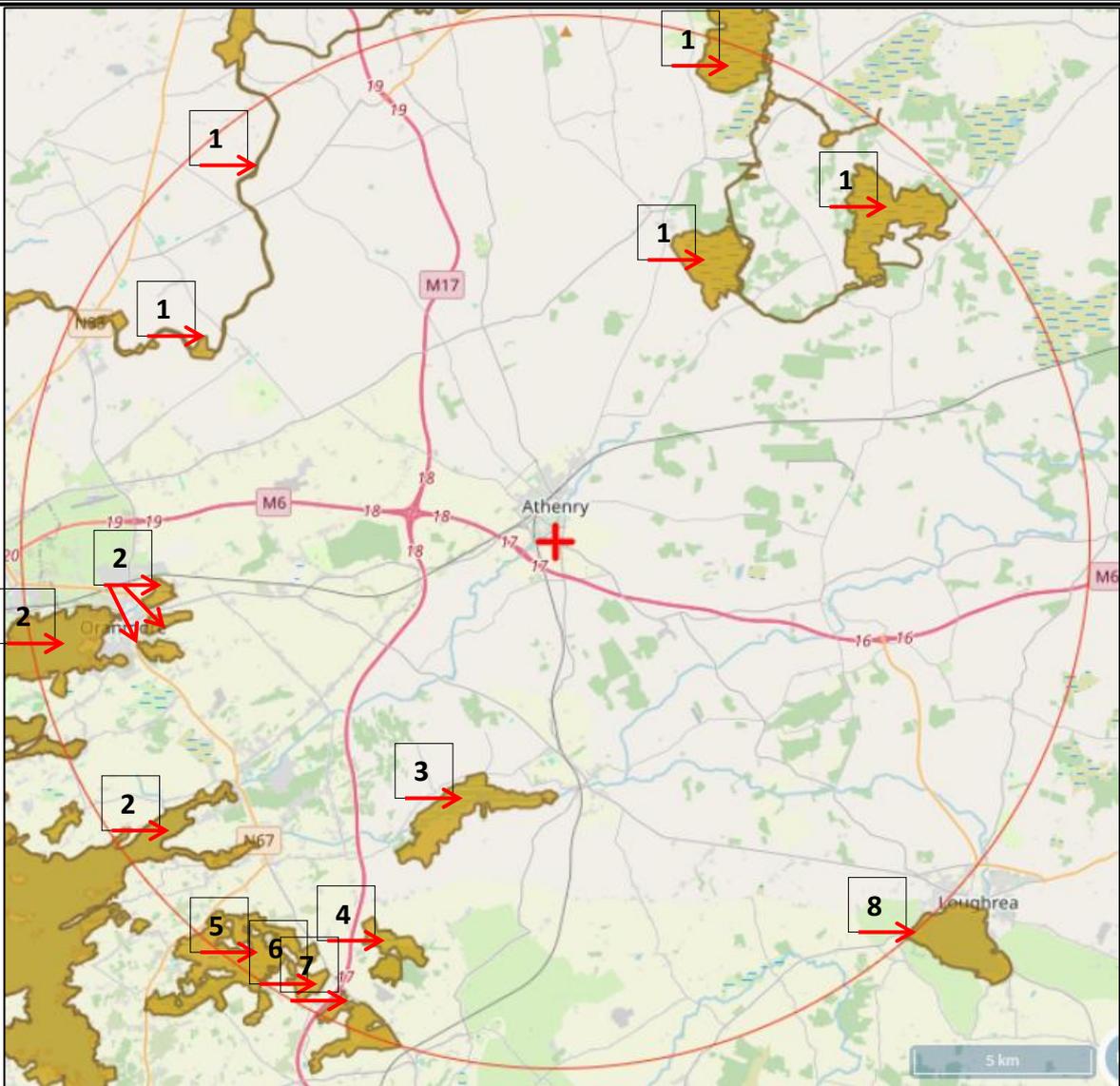




- Approx. Site Boundary
- Grassy Meadows (GS2)
- Intermittent Hedging with Old Stone Walls (WL1/BL1)
- Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1)
- Fencing
- Block Walls - Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3)



Client <b>Galway County Council</b>		Drawing			
Job AA Screening Report		Habitat Map			
Drawing Number <b>Figure 4</b>	Status <b>Final</b>	Sht. Size <b>A4</b>	Scale As Shown	Date <b>Nov 25</b>	Drawn <b>AW</b>

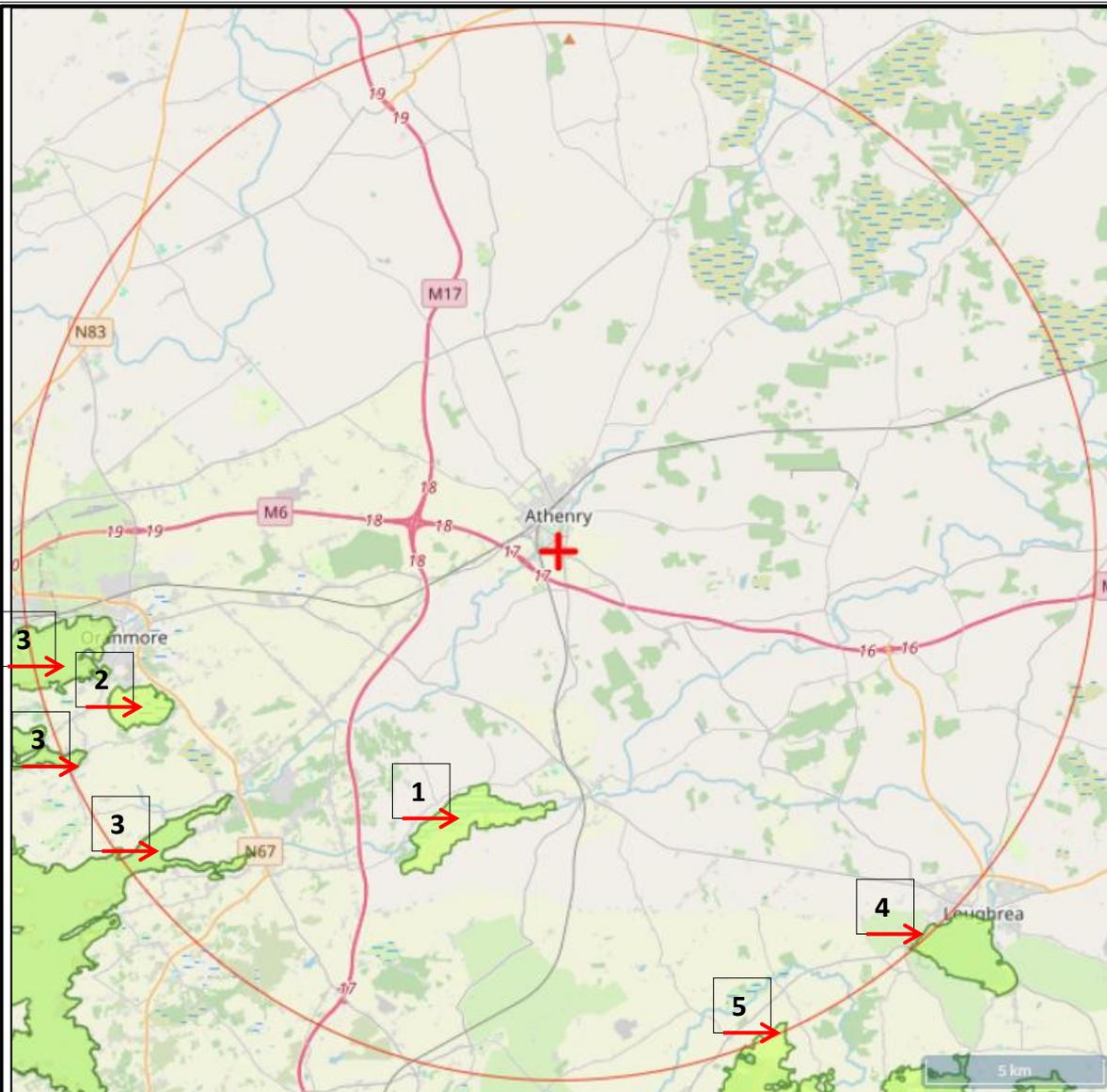


No.	Site Code	Name	Distance
1	000297	Lough Corrib SAC	7.9km NE, N, NW
2	000268	Galway Bay Complex SAC	10.3km SW
3	000322	Rahasane Turlough SAC	6.8km S, SW
4	000242	Castletaylor Complex SAC	11.8km SW
5	000606	Lough Fingall Complex SAC	13.2km SW
6	001285	Kiltiernan Turlough SAC	13.7km SW
7	002244	Ardrahan Grassland SAC	14.2km SW
8	000304	Lough Rea SAC	14.7km SE

 **Special Area of Conservation**  
 **Site Location**



Client <b>Galway County Council</b>		Drawing			
Job AA Screening Report		Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 15km of Site			
Drawing Number Figure 5	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date Nov 25	Drawn AW



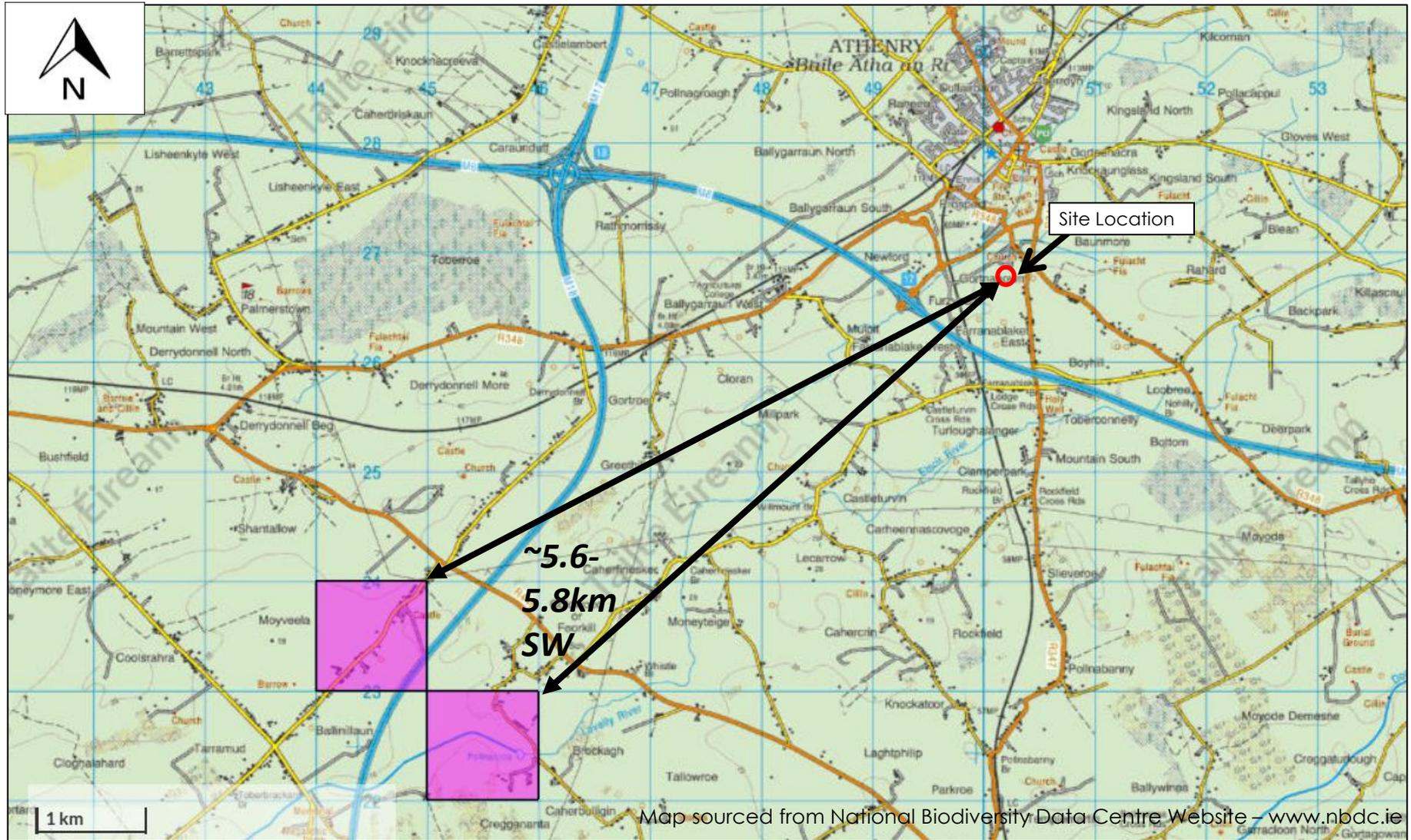
No.	Site Code	Name	Distance (km)
1	004089	Rahasane Turlough SPA	6.8km S, SW
2	004142	Cregganna Marsh SPA	11.5km SW
3	004042	Lough Corrib SPA	11.4km SW
4	004134	Lough Rea SPA	14.7km SE
5	004168	Slieve Mountains SPA	Aughty 14.7km SE, S

 **Site Location**



N

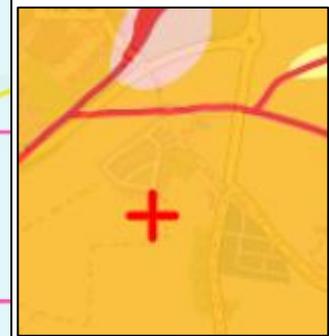
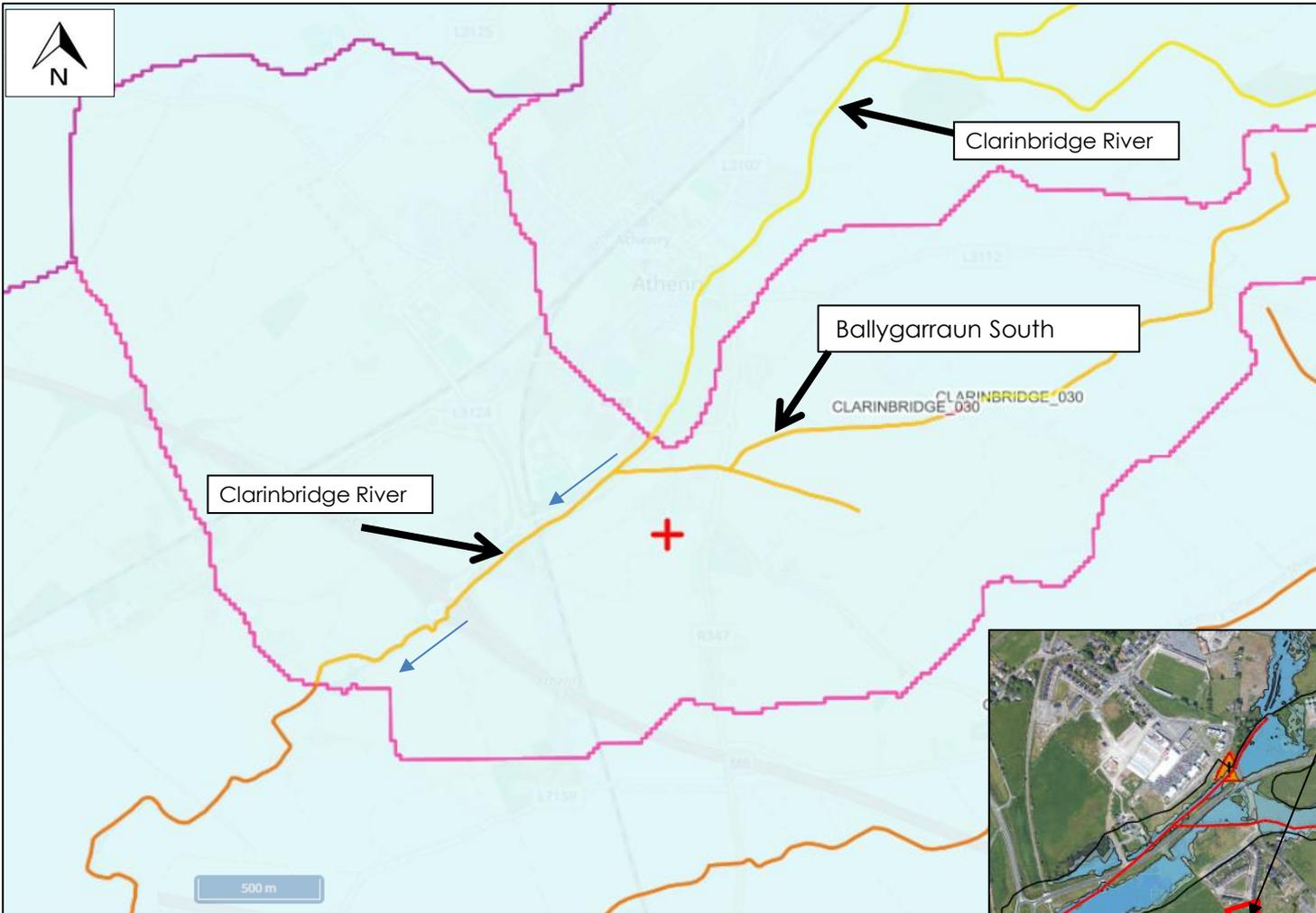
<b>Client</b> Galway County Council		<b>Drawing</b>			
<b>Job</b> AA Screening Report		Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within 15km of Site			
Drawing Number Figure 6	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date Nov 25	Drawn AW



Map sourced from National Biodiversity Data Centre Website – [www.nbdc.ie](http://www.nbdc.ie)

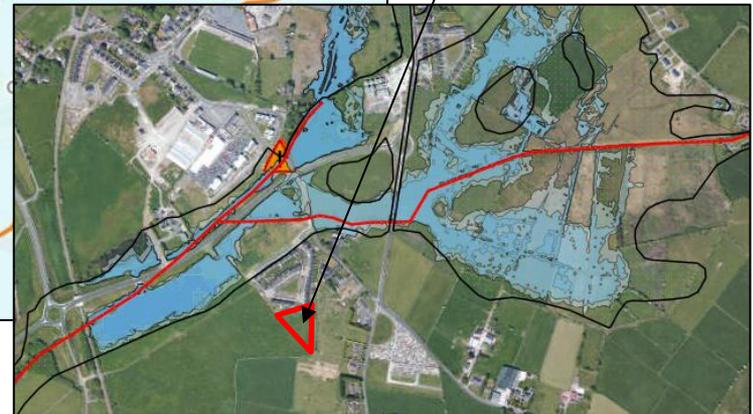
Lesser horseshoe bat records approx. 5.6-5.8km SW of site. Outside the ~2.5km foraging and commuting radius. Unlikely to use site.

Client <b>Galway County Council</b>		Drawing <b>Closest Lesser Horseshoe Bat Records</b>			
Job AA Screening Report					
Drawing Number <b>Figure 7</b>	Status <b>Final</b>	Sht. Size <b>A4</b>	Scale <b>As Shown</b>	Date <b>Nov 25</b>	Drawn <b>AW</b>



Site in area of High Vulnerability

Site not in any flood zone



 Approx. Site location – Hydrometric Area 29 – Galway Bay South East

Site within the WFD Sub-Catchment 'Clarinbridge\_SC\_010' and River Sub-Basin 'CLARINBRIDGE\_030'  
 Water Framework Directive River Waterbody Status 2019-2024 'CLARINBRIDGE\_030' is 'Moderate'  
 River Waterbodies Risk 2019-2024 of 'CLARINBRIDGE\_030' is 'At Risk'  
 WFD Groundwater Body Status 2019-2024 of 'Clarinbridge' is 'Good' and 'Not at Risk'

Client <b>Galway County Council</b>		Drawing <b>2019-2024 WFD Catchment Drainage Information</b>			
Job AA Screening Report					
Drawing Number <b>Figure 8</b>	Status <b>Final</b>	Sht. Size <b>A4</b>	Scale <b>As Shown</b>	Date <b>Nov 25</b>	Drawn <b>AW</b>

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A



Chartered  
Institute of  
Ecology and  
Environmental  
Management

Registered Practices Certificate  
April 2025—March 2026

# ASH Ecology and Environmental Ltd

has been admitted as a Registered Practice  
of the

Chartered Institute of Ecology  
and Environmental Management

on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of April 2025

Penny Lewns CEcol CEnv MCIEEM  
President

***1<sup>st</sup> April 2025***

This certificate remains the property of CIEEM. Membership is subject to annual renewal and may be authenticated by contacting CIEEM at the registered address. Company no. RC000861.

Registered Charity Number (England and Wales): 1189915.

Registered address: Grosvenor Court, Ampfield Hill, Ampfield, Romsey, SO51 9BD United Kingdom.

# APPENDIX B



**Plate 1:** Habitat made up mainly of Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1) which dominates the site area. View across the Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1) showing typical ryegrass-dominated sward.



**Plate 2:** Northern boundary showing transition from Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1) to Grassy Meadows (GS2) with fence divider. Block walls (BL3) to the rear of existing housing separate the site along the north boundary.



**Plate 3:** Old stone walls (BL1) forming the eastern site boundary showing typical dry-stone construction.



**Plate 4:** Intermittent hawthorn and bramble hedging with stone wall features (WL1/BL1) to the south providing limited wildlife corridor connectivity.



**Plate 5:** Overview of site showing dominance of Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1) showing evidence of agricultural management and low botanical diversity.