

November  
2025

# Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report



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



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## 1.0 Introduction

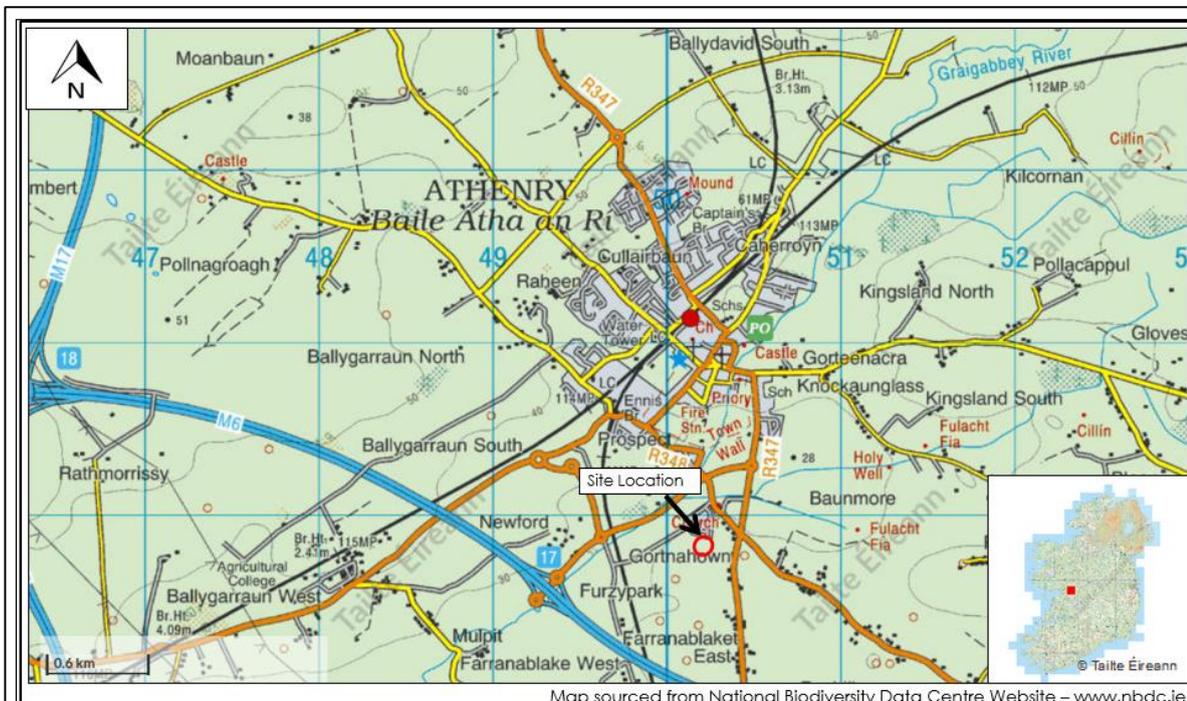
### 1.1 Purpose of the Report

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Assessment was undertaken by Ash Ecology & Environmental Ltd (AEE) on behalf of Galway County Council (GCC) for the construction of 16 no. two-storey houses comprising 8no. 3-bed semi-detached houses and 8no. 2-bed terraced houses and all associated site development works and infrastructure provision at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway as shown in Figures 1 and 2. The Proposed Site Layout is shown as Figure 3a, Proposed Landscape Plan as Figure 3b and the Proposed Waste Water and Surface Water Drainage Plan is shown as Figure 3c.

The existing site comprises improved agricultural grassland with some grassy meadows and traditional stone wall boundaries.

Other reports consulted to compile this EIA Report were:

- Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report (AEE, November 2025)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) Report (AEE, November 2025)
- Confirmation of Feasibility Letter from Uisce Éireann
- Proposed Landscape Plan (Paul Keogh Architects, Drawing No. 2526/PA/008/B, November 2025)
- Outdoor Lighting Report (CBS Consulting Engineers Ltd, 10 November 2025)



**Figure 1** Site Location Map





discretionary provisions of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2019 (Unofficial Consolidation) (annotated) 30th May 2019. The requirement for a 'sub-threshold' development to be subject to EIA is determined by the likelihood that the development would result in significant environmental effects which may arise due to the location of the development or the characteristics of the development. The EIA screening exercise outlined below has examined the project with reference to the relevant thresholds and criteria.

The 'Screening stage' ascertains whether the project's effects on the environment are expected to be significant, i.e. the project is 'Screened' to determine whether an EIA is necessary. Projects listed in Annex I of the Directive are automatically subjected to an EIA because their environmental effects are presumed to be significant. Projects listed in Annex II of the Directive require a determination to be made about their likely significant environmental effects. The Member State's Competent Authority make that determination through either a (i) case-by-case examination or (ii) set thresholds or criteria.

The purpose of Screening is to determine whether or not an EIA is required for a particular project listed in Annex II of the EIA Directive. Projects listed in Annex II will hereafter be referred to as 'Annex II Projects'. Screening has to implement the Directive's overall aim, i.e. to determine if a project listed in Annex II is likely to have significant effects on the environment and, therefore, be made subject to a requirement for Development Consent and an assessment, with regards to its effects on the environment. At the same time, Screening should ensure that an EIA is carried out only for those Projects for which it is thought that a significant impact on the environment is possible, thereby ensuring a more efficient use of both public and private resources. Hence, Screening has to strike the right balance between the above two objectives.

This report meets the requirements of Directive 2014/52/EU and has been prepared with regard to the relevant guidelines from the European Commission, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and EPA. This report has been prepared to allow the Competent Authority (CA) to prepare an EIAR Screening Conclusion Statement.

## **1.2 Competency of Assessor**

This report has been prepared by Aisling Walsh MCIEEM, AMILP, MSc. who is a Full Member of the CIEEM (the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management). Aisling is the Managing Director of Ash Ecology & Environmental Ltd (AEE) and has over 18 years of experience providing environmental consultancy and environmental assessment services. Ash Ecology a Registered Practice of the CIEEM. Aisling has extensive experience in compiling Screening for Appropriate Assessment Stage I and Stage II Natura Impact Statements, Environmental Impact Assessments/Statements and Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment.

Her qualifications include a MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation (TCD), B.Sc. (Hons) Zoology (NUIG), B.Sc. Applied Aquatic Science (GMIT). She also has a Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement from the Institute of Acoustics and is an experienced Hydrologist and has conducted numerous Flood Risk Assessments for planning applications. Aisling is a member of Bat Conservation

Ireland and an associate member of the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) and a qualified noise technician (Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement, Institute of Acoustics).

## 2.0 The Screening Process

### 2.1 Legislation

This EIA screening report has been prepared to meet the requirements of EU Directive 2014/52/EU and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2019 (Unofficial Consolidation) (annotated) 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019. The requirements for Screening are contained in Article 4 of the EIA Directive, Annex IIA, and Annex III to the Directive. The relevant provisions of Article 4 are cited below.

*Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU*

#### *Article 4(2)*

*[...] for projects listed in Annex II, Member States shall determine whether the project shall be made subject to an assessment in accordance with Articles 5 to 10. Member States shall make that determination through:*

- (a) a case-by-case examination; or*
- (b) thresholds or criteria set by the Member State.*

*Member States may decide to apply both procedures referred to in points (a) and (b).*

#### *Article 4(3)*

*Where a case-by-case examination is carried out or thresholds or criteria are set for the purpose of paragraph 2, the relevant criteria set out in Annex III shall be taken into account. Member States may set thresholds or criteria to determine when projects need not undergo either the determination under paragraphs 4 and 5 or an environmental impact assessment, and/or thresholds or criteria to determine when projects shall in any case be made subject to an environmental impact assessment without undergoing a determination set out under paragraphs 4 and 5.*

#### *Article 4(4)*

*Where Member States decide to require a determination for projects listed in Annex II, the developer shall provide information on the characteristics of the project and its likely significant effects on the environment. The detailed list of information to be provided is specified in Annex IIA. The developer shall take into account, where relevant, the available results of other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment carried out pursuant to Union legislation other than this Directive. The developer may also provide a description of any features of the project and/or measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.*

#### Article 4(5)

*The competent authority shall make its determination, on the basis of the information provided by the developer in accordance with paragraph 4 taking into account, where relevant, the results of preliminary verifications or assessments of the effects on the environment carried out pursuant to Union legislation other than this Directive. The determination shall be made available to the public and: (a) where it is decided that an environmental impact assessment is required, state the main reasons for requiring such assessment with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Annex III; or (b) where it is decided that an environmental impact assessment is not required, state the main reasons for not requiring such assessment with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Annex III, and, where proposed by the developer, state any features of the project and/or measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.*

#### Article 4(6)

*Member States shall ensure that the competent authority makes its determination as soon as possible and within a period of time not exceeding 90 days from the date on which the developer has submitted all the information required pursuant to paragraph 4. In exceptional cases, for instance relating to the nature, complexity, location or size of the project, the competent authority may extend that deadline to make its determination; in that event, the competent authority shall inform the developer in writing of the reasons justifying the extension and of the date when its determination is expected.*

While Article 4(2) defines a common Screening approach, to be adopted by Member States, Article 4(3) requires that the competent authorities consider relevant criteria when deciding whether EIA is needed, i.e. the type/characteristics and size of Projects, the sensitivity of Project locations, as well as the potential impacts the Project may trigger. These criteria are listed in Annex III to the Directive. Where Member States require that a case-by case examination be conducted for Annex II Projects in their national legislation, then the Developer must submit the information required about the Project in accordance with the detailed requirements in Annex IIA to the Directive (see Article 4(4)). The Developer shall, when submitting the information, take the available results or data from other relevant assessments of effects on the environment, carried out pursuant to other EU legislation than the EIA Directive (e.g. SEA, see the Annex to this Guidance Document on Links with Other EU Instruments), into account. Furthermore, the Developer may enclose information about the Project's features and the measures envisaged to avoid or prevent potential significant adverse effects on the environment. The Competent Authority in Member States must issue its decision, on whether a proposed Annex II Project is to be subjected to the EIA procedure or not, based on the information provided by the Developer in accordance with the detailed requirements in Annex IIA (see Article 4(5)). The authority is also required to take any other relevant assessments, carried out on the effects on the environment pursuant to other EU legislation than the EIA Directive, into account. Finally, the Competent Authority must make its decision on whether EIA is required or not within the time period specified in Article 4(6).

The 2014 revisions to the EIA Directive introduced several amendments (e.g. to Annex III, which lays down the criteria to determine whether the Projects listed in Annex II should be subject to an EIA) and added a number of new provisions to the Screening process, including a timeframe within which the Member State's Competent Authority must reach a decision on whether an EIA is required or not. A new Annex IIA is to be used in the case of screening determination (i.e. information to be provided by the developer on projects listed in Annex II), which consists of:

**A description of the project, including in particular:**

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

**A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the project.**

**A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, or the project on the environment resulting from:**

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

The criteria of Annex III shall be taken into account, where relevant, when compiling the information in accordance with points 1 to 3.

The Directive also amends Annex III "Selection Criteria referred to in Article 4(3)". The details to be considered in the new Annex III are as follows:

**Characteristics of proposed development:**

The characteristics of project, with particular regard to:

- the size and design of the whole project,
- cumulation with other existing and / or approved development,
- the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
- the production of waste,
- pollution and nuisances,
- the risk of major accidents and / or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate changes, in accordance with scientific knowledge
- the risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).

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### **Location of proposed development:**

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by projects must be considered, with particular regard to:

- the existing and approved land use,
- the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,
- the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:
  - a) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
  - b) coastal zones and the marine environment;
  - c) mountain and forest areas,
  - d) nature reserves and parks,
  - e) areas classified or protected under national legislation, including Natura 2000 areas
  - f) designated by Member States pursuant to Directives 92/43/EEC and 2009/147/EC,
  - g) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality
  - h) standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is
  - i) considered that there is such a failure,
  - j) densely populated areas,
  - k) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

### **Type and Characteristics of potential impacts:**

The likely significant effects on the environment proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Annex, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in Article 3(1), taking into account:

- the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),
- the nature of the impact;
- the transboundary nature of the impact,
- the intensity and complexity of the impact,
- the probability of the impact,
- the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.
- the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and / or approved projects;
- the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

In compliance with the requirements of 2014/52/EU, this EIA Screening Report provides details of the information specified in Annex IIA, taking account of the criteria in Annex III.

In summary Projects can be placed into one of the following categories:

- those that exceed the thresholds laid down and therefore have a mandatory requirement to prepare an EIS; and
- those projects that are sub-threshold and must be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they are likely to have significant effects on the environment;
- projects that fall under Annex II (13) (a) of the Directive for Any change or extension of projects listed in Annex I or Annex II, already authorised, executed in the process of being executed.

## 2.2 Guidance

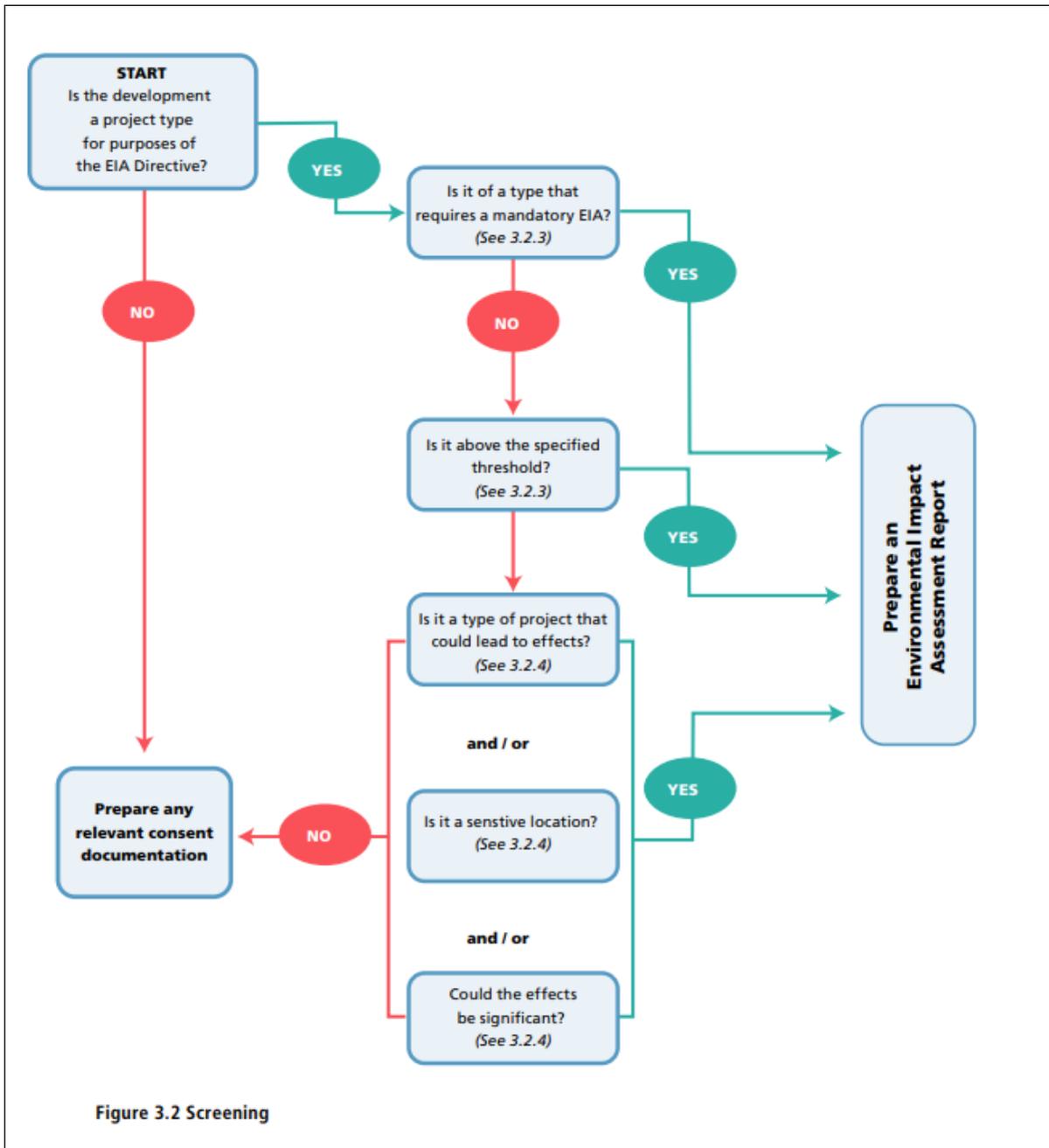
Screening is the process of deciding whether a development requires an EIAR. The particulars of the assessment procedure are adopted through European Directives and correlate to the provisions set out in the Planning and Development Act 2001 (as amended). An EIA is required to be carried out as part of an application whereby the proposed development exceeds the limitations of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The methodology for screening generally considers the following documents:

- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);
- Planning and Development Regulations 2018 (as amended);
- Directive 2011/92/EU;
- Directive 2015/52/EU;
- Transposition of 2014 EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) in the Land Use Planning and EPA Licensing Systems – Key Issues Consultation Paper (2017; DoHPCLG);
- Preparation of guidance documents for the implementation of EIA directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) – Annex I to the Final Report (COWI, Millieu; April 2017);
- European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018;
- Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (2003; DoEHLG)
- OPR Practice Note PN02, Environmental Impact Assessment Screening (2021)
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' (Environmental Protection Agency, May 2022)
- Environmental Impact Assessment – Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (2018; DoHPLG);

Using the above documents, it has been possible carry out a desktop EIA Screening using the best available guidance while operating within the applicable legislation. It is noted that Directive 2014/52/EU has been transposed into Irish Legislation through the Planning and Development (Amended) Act and Planning and Development Regulations 2018.

The methodology employed in this screening exercise had regard to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment published in August 2018 by the DoHPLG, together with the criteria set out in Schedule 7 and the requirements of Schedule 7A, both of the Planning and Development Regulations 2018.

The 'Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' (Environmental Protection Agency, May 2022) provide a flow diagram of the screening process which is provided in the Figure 4 below.



**Figure 4** Flow Diagram of the Screening Process (Source: *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (Environmental Protection Agency, May 2022))

## 2.3 Consultation

No consultation was undertaken as part of the current EIAR Screening report. This report has been prepared to allow the Competent Authority (CA) to prepare an EIA Screening Conclusion Statement.

## 3.0 Project Information Required by Annex II (A) of 2014/52/EU

### 3.1 Description of Project

#### 3.1.1 Physical Characteristics of the Project

The proposed development is located at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway (see Figure 1). The existing site comprises improved agricultural grassland (GA1) with some grassy meadows (GS2) and traditional stone wall boundaries (BL1) forming the eastern and southern perimeters (see Figures 2 and 4). The project involves the construction of 16 no. two-storey houses (see Figure 3).

The development comprises:

- 16 no. two-storey dwelling houses (all 3-bed units)
- Associated roads and footpaths
- Connection to existing foul and surface water drainage infrastructure
- Connection to existing utilities (electricity, water, telecommunications)
- Public open space provision (minimum 15% of site area)
- Boundary treatments and landscaping
- Ducting for future EV charge points

The proposed landscape scheme (see Figure 3b - Proposed Landscape Plan) includes a central public open space with native tree planting (*Prunus avium*, *Betula pendula*, *Sorbus aucuparia*), wildflower meadow, and mowed grass areas connected by a resin bound path. Parkland trees (*Sorbus aria* and *Quercus petraea*) and street trees (*Prunus padus* 'Fastigiata') provide structural planting. Native hedgerow screening (*Crataegus monogyna*, *Corylus avellana*, *Ilex aquifolium*) provides ecological connectivity and boundary treatment. Pollinator-friendly ornamental planting includes *Lavandula angustifolia*, *Miscanthus sinensis*, *Carex morrowii*, *Agastache rugosa*, and *Lythrum*. Boundary treatments comprise blue faced limestone walls to front gardens, rendered blockwork to public facing boundaries, and native hedgerow screening. 8no. visitor bicycle parking spaces are provided.

The proposed development site measures approximately 0.651 hectares.

The development will connect to existing foul water and surface water drainage systems. Foul water will discharge to the public foul sewer network, with a network extension of approximately 30m required to connect to the nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer. Uisce Éireann has confirmed that the Athenry Wastewater Treatment Plant has sufficient capacity for the proposed development. A Confirmation of Feasibility Letter from Uisce Éireann (Ref: CDS25006844, dated 17 October 2025) has been submitted with the application documents confirming

adequate capacity and feasibility of connection subject to the required network extension.

For surface water management (see Figure 3c for proposed drainage plan), the development will implement Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage runoff from roofs, hardstandings, roads and footpaths. Surface water runoff will be collected via road gullies (D400 heavy duty suitable for HGV loading) and conveyed through a 225mm Ø uPVC surface water network. Surface water will be treated via a proposed silt trap and Class 1 petrol interceptor prior to discharge to a Graf Eco Bloc underground attenuation system. Flow from the attenuation tank will be controlled by a Hydrobrake optimum outflow control device located within manhole SW MH 6.0 before discharging to the existing surface water network. The steep topography of the site requires particular consideration in the drainage design. A detailed Drainage Plan (Figure 3b) has been submitted with the application documents demonstrating compliance with TGD Part H, Irish Water standards, and best practice surface water management requirements.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be prepared post-planning consent detailing environmental management measures including noise and dust control, water pollution prevention, biosecurity protocols, and ecological protection measures.

Construction is expected to take approximately 18-24 months.

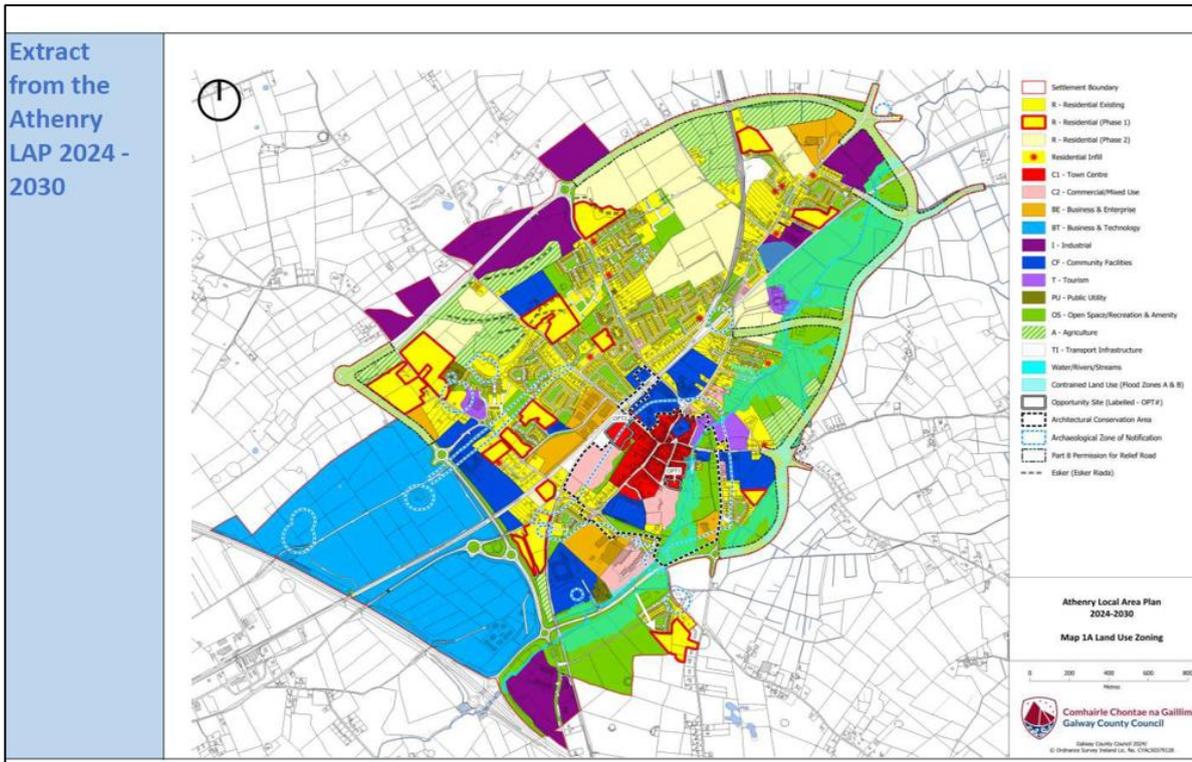
### **3.1.2 Location of the Project, with regard to Environmental Sensitivities of Geographic Areas likely to be affected**

Information on the site location, hydrology, geology, hydrogeology and ecology of the area has been obtained from records held by the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI), Water Framework Directive Maps, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) databases and on-line resources of Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (myplan.ie).

The site is located on the southern edge of Athenry town, Co. Galway, forming an extension to the existing Páirc na hAbhainn residential estate. The site is bounded by:

- Existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate with blockwork and timber fencing to the north
- Natural stone walls forming the eastern boundary
- Natural stone walls forming the southern boundary
- No designated fence or wall to the west
- The site is landlocked with access only through the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate

**Planning and Zoning Context:** Under the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, Athenry is designated as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' with capacity for expansion. The site is zoned for residential development under the Athenry Local Area Plan 2024-2030. The development aligns with strategic objectives for sustainable urban expansion and housing provision. The site is zoned "Residential (Phase 1)" under the Athenry Local Area Plan (2024-2030).



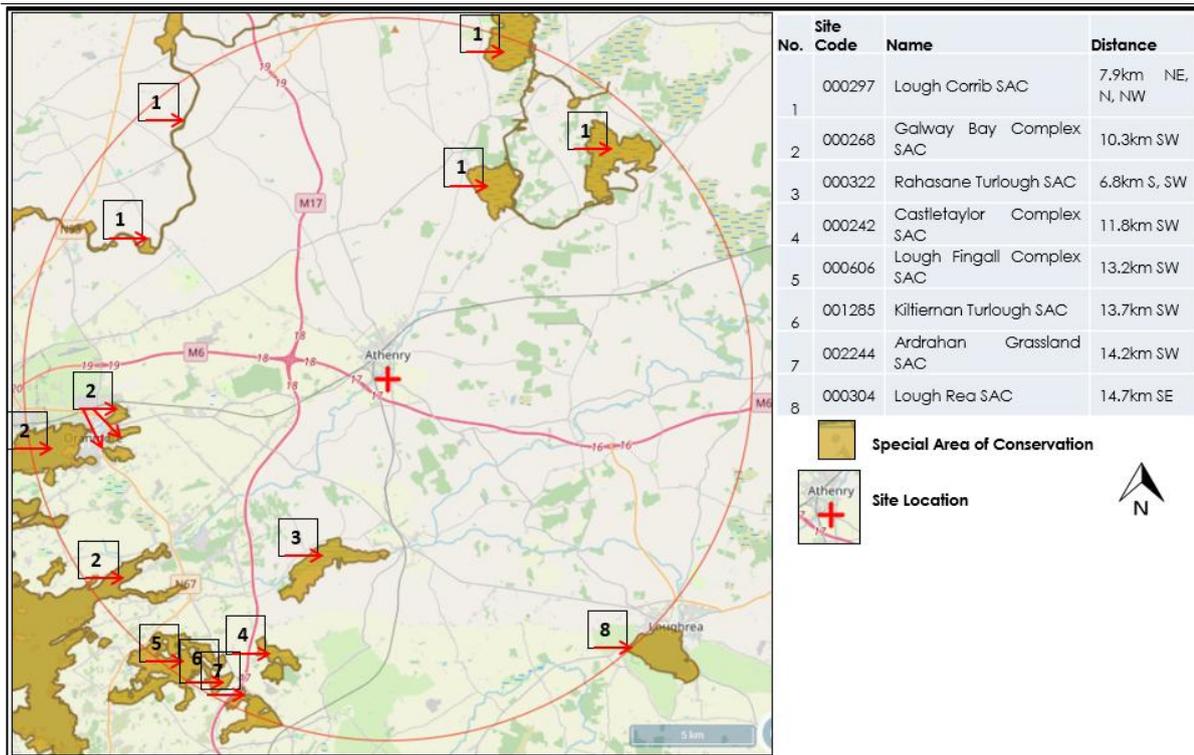
**Figure 5** Zoning Map - Residential (Phase 1)" under the Athenry Local Area (2024-2030)

### Ecological Sensitivities:

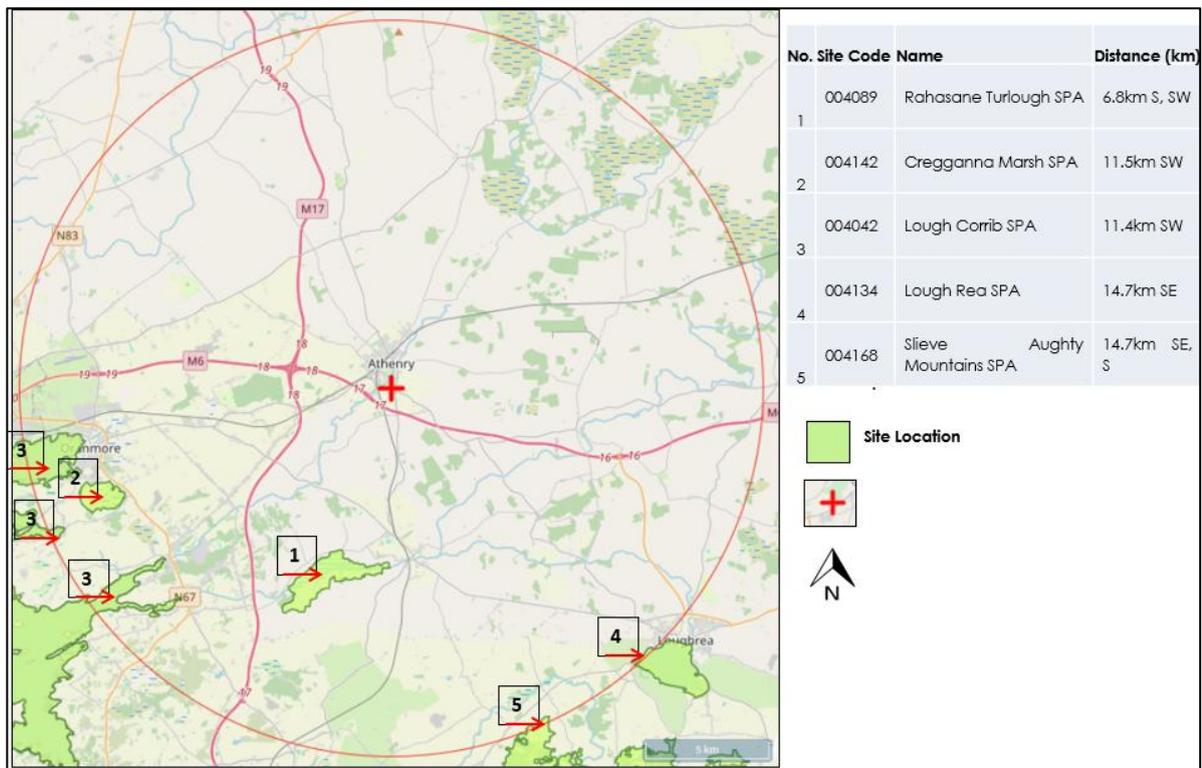
The nearest European sites are located 6.8km from the development:

- Rahasane Turlough SAC (000322) - 6.8km S, SW
- Lough Corrib SAC (000297) - 7.9km NE, N, NW
- Rahasane Turlough SPA (004089) - 6.8km S, SW

The AA Screening Report (AEE, November 2025) concluded no likely significant effects on European sites. There are no Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) or proposed NHAs within 5km of the site. SACs and SPAs within 15km radius of site are shown as Figures 6 and 7.



**Figure 6** Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 15km of Site



**Figure 7** Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within 15km of Site

The site itself comprises modified habitats of local ecological importance (site Figure 8):

- Improved agricultural grassland (GA1) - 0.55ha of species-poor grassland
- Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2) - Strip along northern boundary
- Stone walls (BL1) - Traditional boundaries along east and south providing invertebrate habitat
- Intermittent hedgerows (WL1) - Fragmented sections with blackthorn, hawthorn and bramble



**Figure 8** Habitat Map

Field surveys (29<sup>th</sup> August 2025) confirmed:

- Seven common bird species using the site (including Blackbird, Robin, Hooded Crow, Blue Tit, Wren, Song Thrush, Chaffinch)
- Potential bat commuting routes along stone walls (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat expected based on habitat suitability)
- Evidence of mammal activity (fox and rabbit tracks along field edges)
- No protected flora or invasive species on site

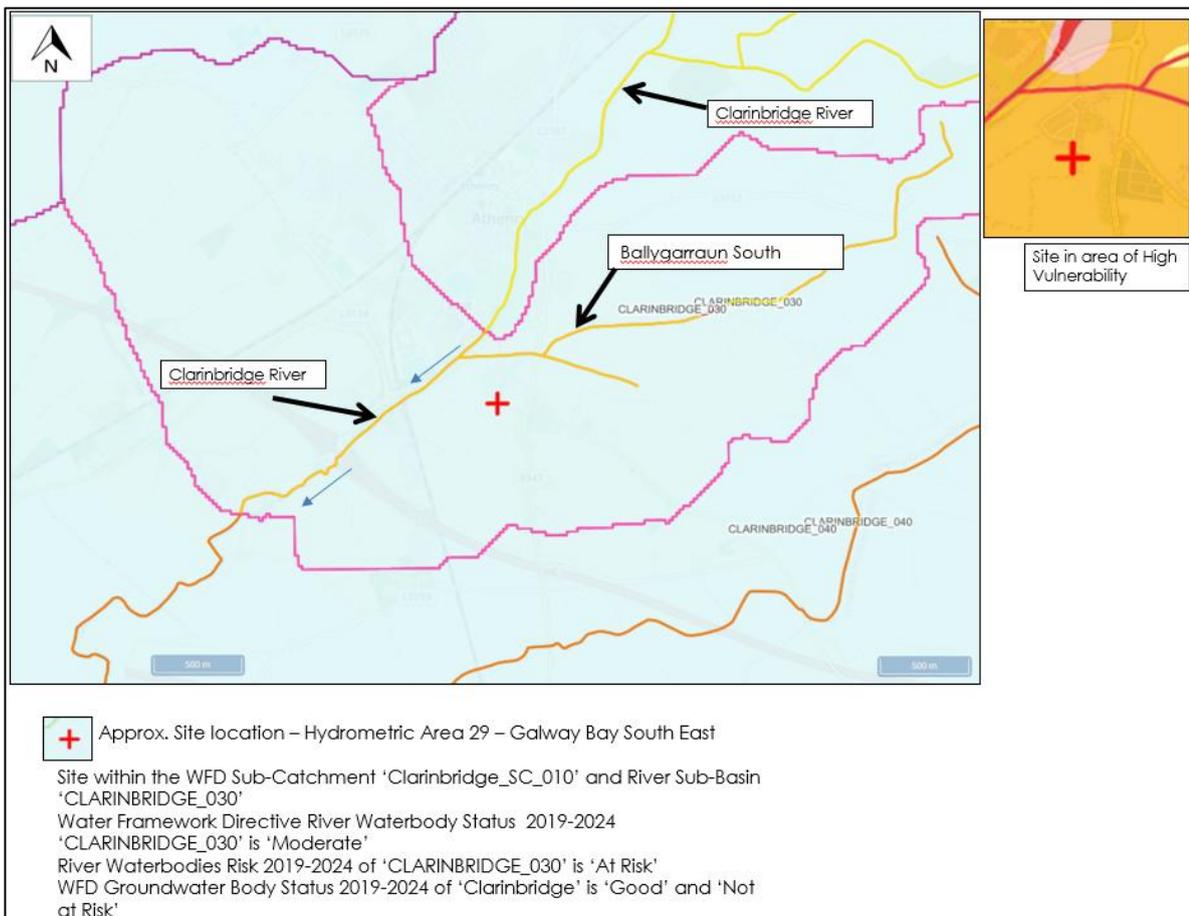
**Water Environment:** The site lies within (see Figure 9):

- Hydrometric Area 29 - 'Galway Bay South East'
- WFD Catchment 'Corrib'
- WFD Subcatchment 'Clarinbridge\_SC\_010'
- WFD River Sub-Basin 'CLARINBRIDGE\_030'

Current WFD Status (2019-2024):

- River Status: 'Moderate'
- River Risk: 'At Risk'
- Groundwater Status: 'Good'
- Groundwater Risk: 'Not at Risk'

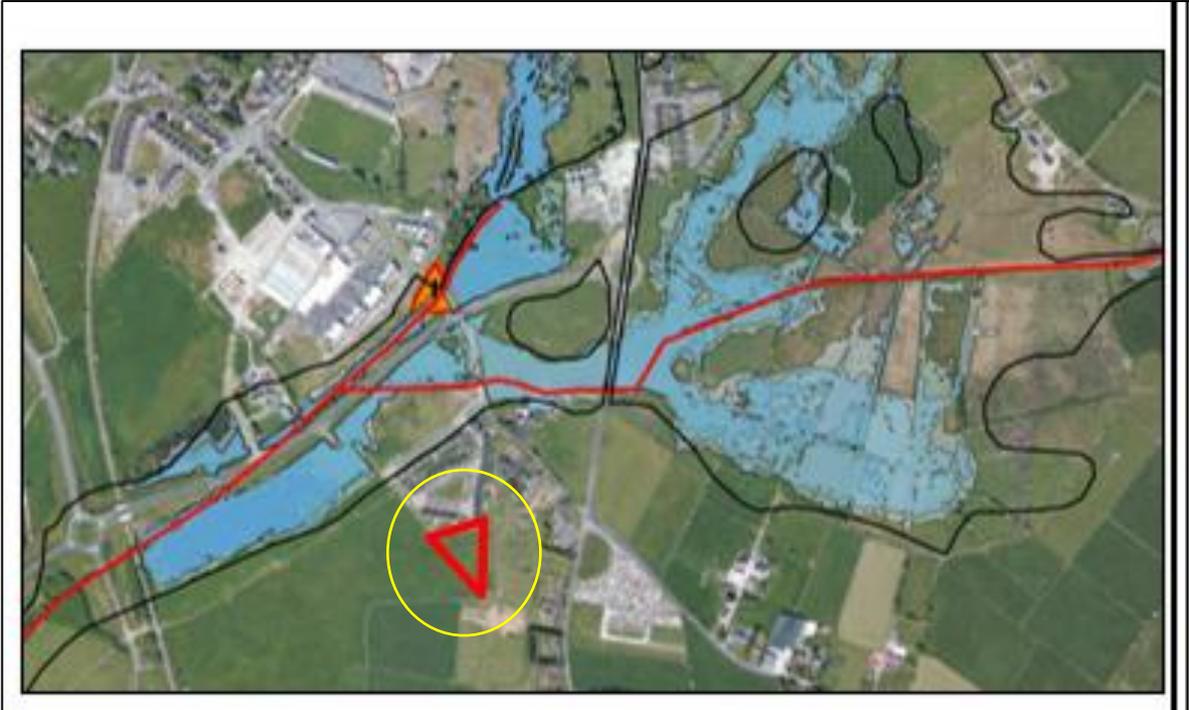
The Clarinbridge River is located approximately 270m from the site. Surface water will drain via SuDS to the local surface water network and ultimately to Galway Bay via the Clarinbridge River.



**Figure 9** Water Quality Data

**Flood Risk:** CFRAM mapping confirms the site is outside flood risk zones for the current scenario (see Figure 10). The site is located in an area of High/Extreme Vulnerability, confirming appropriate surface water management measures are required but

flood risk is not a development constraint. The steep topography of the site requires particular consideration in drainage design.



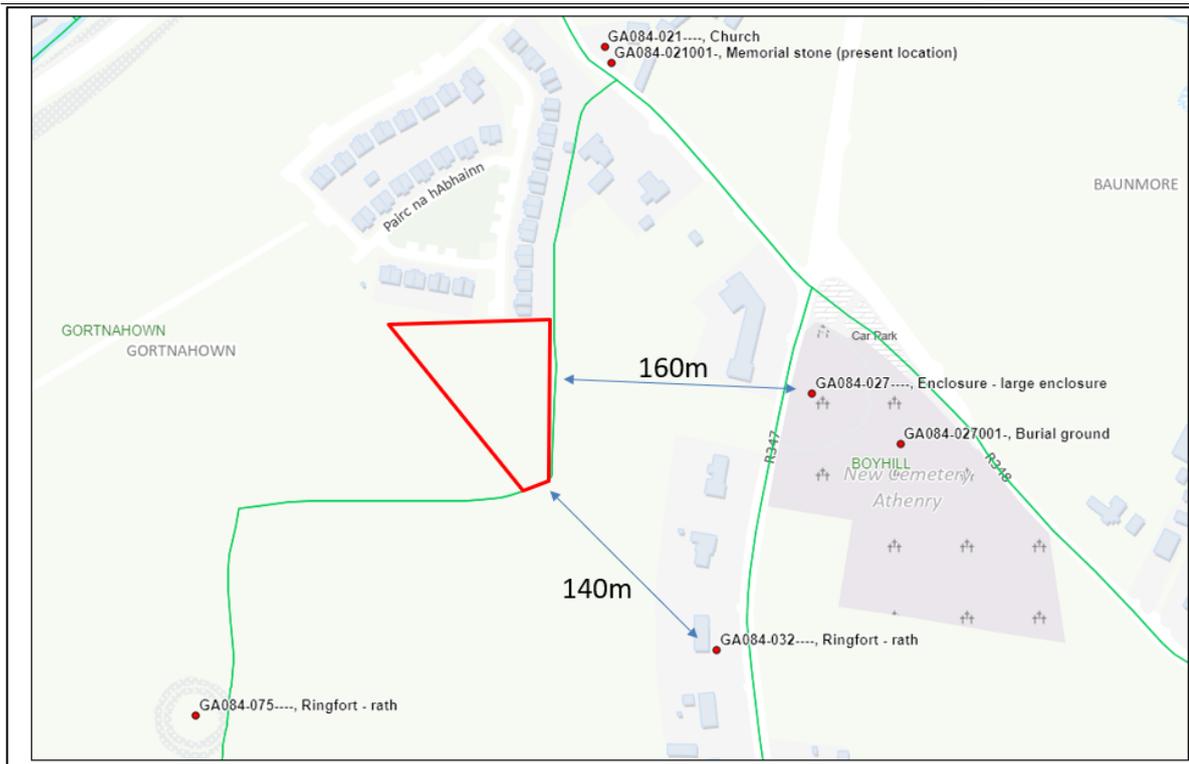
**Figure 10** CFRAM Flood Map – Not in Flood Zone, see yellow circle

#### **Archaeological and Cultural Heritage:**

The site contains no recorded monuments. The nearest Recorded Monuments are:

- GA084-021 (Church) and GA084-021001 (Memorial stone - present location) - approximately 160m to the northeast
- GA084-027 (Enclosure - large enclosure) - approximately 160m to the east
- GA084-027001 (Burial ground) - located within the cemetery to the east
- GA084-032 (Ringfort - rath) - approximately 140m to the south
- GA084-075 (Ringfort - rath) - to the southwest

None of these monuments will be affected by the development, see Figure 11. The development area comprises a greenfield site with no structures of architectural heritage value.



**Figure 11** Site and Monuments Record showing recorded monuments in vicinity of site (outlined in red)

**Landscape:** The site forms part of the agricultural landscape at Athenry's urban edge. The landscape is characterised by:

- Field patterns with stone wall boundaries (traditional dry stone construction)
- The existing Páirc na hAbhainn residential estate immediately to the north
- Transition from suburban to agricultural character
- Steep topography requiring particular consideration in development design

**Human Beings:** The site is currently improved agricultural grassland providing no public amenity value. Surrounding land uses include:

- Existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate immediately to the north (through which access is provided)
- Cemetery and burial ground approximately 160m to the east
- Agricultural fields to the south and west
- Athenry town centre approximately 1km to the north

The site is landlocked with access only through the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate, representing a logical extension of the established residential area.

### 3.2 Description of Aspects of the Environment likely to be Significantly Affected

Based on the site characteristics and proposed development, the following environmental aspects require consideration:

**Biodiversity:** The development will result in permanent loss of 0.651ha of improved agricultural grassland and grassy verges. Stone walls along eastern and southern boundaries will be retained where possible. The site has low ecological value with no mature trees or features with bat roost potential. This represents a minor environmental change.

**Land and Soils:** Conversion from greenfield to residential use represents irreversible change to land use. The steep topography requires significant earthworks for foundations and infrastructure which will permanently alter soil profiles and present erosion management challenges.

**Water:** Construction phase presents elevated risks of sedimentation and contamination on steep slopes requiring enhanced management through CEMP measures. Operational phase introduces additional surface water runoff requiring carefully designed SuDS management to address the challenging topography.

**Landscape:** The development represents infill within the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate rather than extension into open countryside, contributing to consolidation of the existing residential area.

**Population and Human Health:** Positive impact through provision of 16 homes addressing housing need. Temporary construction phase impacts (noise, dust, traffic) on adjacent residents within the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate. Access constraints through existing estate may cause temporary disruption.

### 3.3 Description of any likely Significant Effects on the Environment

#### 3.3.1 Expected Residues and Emissions and the Production of Waste

##### Construction Phase

During the 18-24 month construction period for the 8no. 3-bed semi-detached houses and 8no. 2-bed terraced houses, temporary environmental emissions are anticipated. Construction activities will generate noise and vibration from machinery, excavation operations and vehicle movements. The steep topography will require extensive earthworks, increasing machinery use. Dust may arise from earthworks and vehicle movements, particularly during dry weather, with erosion risks heightened by the steep slopes. Construction waste will include excavated soil and stones, concrete, timber, metal and packaging materials, with volumes typical for residential development of this scale.

Surface water run-off during construction presents an elevated risk of sediment release on the steep slopes, with potential contamination from construction materials and machinery. The challenging topography across the 0.651-hectare site

will require enhanced erosion and sediment control measures throughout all construction phases.

### Operational Phase

Once operational, the development will generate domestic emissions typical of 16 households (approximately 36-44 residents based on 2.5-3 persons per household for the 8no. 3-bed semi-detached houses and 8no. 2-bed terraced houses).

Foul wastewater will discharge to the Athenry Wastewater Treatment Plant via a 30m network extension to the nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer, with sufficient treatment capacity confirmed (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025).

Surface water from roofs, roads and paved areas will be collected via road gullies, treated via a silt trap and Class 1 petrol interceptor, attenuated in a Graf Eco Bloc underground system with Hydrobrake flow control, and discharged to the existing surface water network at controlled greenfield runoff rates (see Drainage Plan Figure 3c)

Surface water from roofs, roads and paved areas will require careful management given the steep topography to prevent increased run-off rates or water quality impacts.

Domestic waste will be generated at typical household rates of 1.25-2.5 tonnes per household annually (based on EPA National Waste Statistics 2021 indicating 0.5-1.0 tonnes per person per year with average household size of 2.5 persons), totalling approximately 20-40 tonnes per year.

Traffic generation is estimated at 80-128 daily vehicle movements based on standard residential trip rates of 5-8 trips per dwelling per day (TII Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines, May 2014), all routing through the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate access.

The introduction of street lighting and domestic lighting will alter the currently unlit agricultural character of the site. Whilst no bat roosts were identified on site, the stone walls may provide commuting routes for common bat species (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat expected based on habitat suitability).

### **3.3.2 Use of Natural Resources, in particular Soil, Land, Water and Biodiversity**

#### Soil and Land Resources

The development requires conversion of 0.651 hectares of improved agricultural grassland to residential use, representing an irreversible change in land use. The site comprises typical agricultural soils without special geological or pedological significance. The steep topography will require substantial cut and fill operations. Topsoil will be stripped during construction, with significant subsoil excavation for foundations and services to manage the challenging levels.

#### Water Resources

The development will connect to the existing public water supply network through the Páirc na hAbhainn estate, increasing demand on water resources. Surface water patterns will be significantly altered through the introduction of impermeable surfaces including roofs, roads and driveways across the steep site. The natural infiltration capacity of the grassland will be replaced with engineered drainage systems designed to manage rapid runoff from slopes.

### Biodiversity Resources

The Ecological Impact Assessment (November 2025) identifies that development will result in the complete loss of improved agricultural grassland and grassy verge habitats within the site. These habitats currently support:

- Seven common bird species observed during surveys (Blackbird, Robin, Hooded Crow, Blue Tit, Wren, Song Thrush, Chaffinch)
- Potential commuting routes for common bat species along stone walls
- Limited movement corridors for mammals including fox and rabbit evidenced by tracks along field edges

The stone walls along the eastern and southern boundaries provide the most significant ecological features on site, offering refugia for invertebrates and potential commuting routes. No mature trees are present within the site boundary, and no features with bat roost potential were identified.

The loss of 0.651 hectares of species-poor agricultural grassland will have minimal impact on ecological networks, as the site is already isolated within the existing estate. The habitats present are of low ecological value and widespread in the surrounding agricultural landscape.

The development will introduce new pressures including artificial lighting potentially affecting commuting bats, human disturbance from 16 households, and potential for introduction of non-native species through garden planting.

Without mitigation, these impacts would result in:

- Loss of limited foraging habitat for common fauna
- Potential disruption to bat commuting routes along boundaries through light spillage
- Risk of disturbance to nesting birds if clearance occurs during breeding season (March-August)
- Minor reduction in ecological connectivity through loss of boundary features if not retained

The significance and mitigation of these potential effects are assessed in detail in Section 4 against the criteria of Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations.

## **4.0 EIA Screening**

### **4.1 Screening for Mandatory EIAR**

The proposed development involves the construction of 16 no. two-storey houses and all associated site development works and infrastructure provision at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway. The site measures 0.651 ha and is zoned for residential development under the Athenry Local Area Plan 2024-2030, as shown in the zoning context provided in Section 3.1.2.

The proposed development does not fall under any category in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) that would trigger a mandatory EIAR. Specifically:

The development does not meet the threshold of 500 dwelling units as specified in Class 10(b)(i) of Part 2 of Schedule 5, as the proposal is for only 16 units. The site area of 0.651 hectares is well below the 2 hectare threshold for developments in business districts or the 10 hectare threshold in other areas as specified in Class 10(b)(iv) of Part 2 of Schedule 5. The development does not involve construction of a car park providing more than 400 spaces as specified in Class 10(b)(ii) of Part 2 of Schedule 5.

The development does not fall under any other category listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 or Part 2. Therefore, the proposed development does not trigger a requirement for mandatory EIAR.

### **4.2 Screening for Sub-threshold EIAR**

Development projects which are below the threshold requiring EIAR as set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) may still require EIAR if likely to have significant effects on the environment. Schedule 7 of the Regulations sets out the criteria for determining whether a sub-threshold development should be subject to EIAR. These criteria derive from Annex III of the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU).

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The following systematic assessment examines the proposed development against each Schedule 7 criterion under three categories:

- Characteristics of the proposed development
- Location of the proposed development
- Types and characteristics of potential impacts

Each criterion is assessed considering the source-pathway-receptor model, the magnitude and significance of potential effects, and the availability and effectiveness of mitigation measures. Where mitigation forms an integral part of project design (such as CEMP implementation, SuDS drainage, or ecological supervision), this is considered in determining whether significant effects are likely.

Based on the comprehensive assessment presented in the following tables, and having regard to the findings of the Appropriate Assessment Screening and Ecological Impact Assessment, it is concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. Therefore, a sub-threshold EIAR is not required.

The key consideration throughout is whether the likely effects are 'significant' in the context of the Schedule 7 criteria. Tables 1, 2 and 3 provide detailed assessment against each criterion, while Table 4 examines potential impacts by environmental topic.

**Table 1** Characteristics of the Proposed Development

<b>The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<p>a) the size and design of the whole of the proposed development,</p>	<p>The proposed development comprises 16 no. two-storey houses (8no. 3-bed semi-detached houses and 8no. 2-bed terraced houses) on a site of 0.651 hectares at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway. This represents a medium-density residential development of approximately 25 units per hectare, consistent with sustainable settlement patterns for a Self-Sustaining Growth Town. The development footprint includes houses, internal roads, footpaths, parking, public open space (minimum 15%) and associated infrastructure. The site's steep topography requires particular consideration in design and drainage. The scale is substantially below mandatory EIA thresholds (500 units or 10 hectares) and represents infill development within an existing residential estate. Construction is programmed for 18-24 months, representing a standard timeline for this scale of development.</p>
<p>b) cumulation with other existing development and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment,</p>	<p>Athenry has experienced steady residential growth as designated in the County Development Plan 2022-2028. The development forms an extension to the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate through which access is provided. Recent developments in the vicinity include the Raheen development (29 houses) and other permitted housing schemes within the town. The cumulative effect represents consolidation of existing residential areas in accordance with the Local Area Plan rather than uncontrolled sprawl.</p> <p>Infrastructure capacity has been assessed with water supply confirmed as adequate and Uisce Éireann has confirmed sufficient wastewater treatment capacity for the proposed development (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17 October 2025). A network extension of approximately 30m is required to connect to the nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer.</p>
<p>c) the nature of any associated demolition works,</p>	<p>No demolition works are required. The site comprises improved agricultural grassland with no existing structures. The natural stone walls along the eastern and southern boundaries will be retained where possible as part of the development design. No decommissioning of existing infrastructure is required as the site has no current services.</p>

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,	Assessment
<p>d) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity,</p>	<p>The development requires conversion of 0.651 hectares of improved agricultural grassland, representing permanent but planned land use change on residentially zoned lands. The steep topography will require significant cut and fill operations. Topsoil will be stripped and stored according to best practice (stockpiles not exceeding 2m height) for reuse in landscaping and gardens, minimising waste and maintaining soil resources on site. Connection to the existing public water supply through Páirc na hAbhainn estate has been confirmed with adequate capacity, with water conservation through low-flow fittings per Part G of Building Regulations.</p> <p>The loss of species-poor grassland will be compensated through comprehensive native landscaping and biodiversity enhancements including wildflower meadow, native tree planting (<i>Prunus avium</i>, <i>Betula pendula</i>, <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>, <i>Sorbus aria</i>, <i>Quercus petraea</i>), native hedgerow screening (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, <i>Corylus avellana</i>, <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>), and pollinator-friendly planting (<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>, <i>Miscanthus sinensis</i>, <i>Agastache rugosa</i>, <i>Lythrum</i>) as detailed in the Proposed Landscape Plan (see Figure 3b).</p>
<p>e) the production of waste,</p>	<p>Construction waste over the 18-24 month build period will be managed through a Construction Waste Management Plan forming part of the CEMP. Excavated soil and stone from the steep site will be balanced through cut and fill where possible, with excess material tested and removed to licensed facilities. Construction and demolition waste will be segregated according to European Waste Catalogue codes targeting 80% diversion from landfill through reuse and recycling. Operational phase domestic waste from 16 households (approximately 20-40 tonnes annually based on EPA statistics of 1.25-2.5 tonnes per household) will be managed through Galway County Council's three-bin collection system. All waste streams are within the capacity of existing licensed waste management infrastructure.</p>

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,	Assessment
f) pollution and nuisances,	<p>Construction phase environmental emissions will be controlled through comprehensive CEMP implementation with enhanced measures for the steep topography. Noise will be managed through working hours restrictions (08:00-18:00 weekdays, 08:00-13:00 Saturdays), compliance with BS 5228 limits (70 dB LAeq), and maintenance of equipment to minimise emissions. Access constraints through the existing estate will require careful traffic management. Dust suppression will include dampening during dry weather, wheel washing facilities, covering of stockpiles, and speed restrictions. Water pollution prevention on steep slopes requires enhanced measures including terraced silt traps, reinforced silt fencing, and immediate slope stabilisation.</p> <p>Operational phase lighting impacts will be controlled through 13no. LED luminaires (AXIA 3 EVO, 25.7W, 3000K warm-white) mounted at 6m height achieving P3 lighting standard (EN 13201-2:2015) appropriate for residential roads. The lighting design minimizes light spill to boundaries and ecological receptors through careful luminaire selection and positioning (see Outdoor Lighting Report, CBS Consulting Engineers Ltd, November 2025)</p> <p>Foul water will discharge to the public foul sewer network via a network extension of approximately 30m to the nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer, with Uisce Éireann confirming sufficient wastewater treatment plant capacity (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17 October 2025). Surface water will be managed through SuDS with runoff collected via road gullies, treated via a silt trap and Class 1 petrol interceptor, attenuated in a Graf Eco Bloc underground system with Hydrobrake flow control, and discharged to the existing surface water network at controlled greenfield runoff rates (see Proposed Drainage Plan, Figure 3c)</p>
g) the risk of major accidents, and/or disasters which are relevant to the	The site is not within or adjacent to any SEVESO establishment and no hazardous substances will be stored beyond minimal domestic quantities. The development is outside flood risk zones

<b>The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<p>project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge, and,</p>	<p>per CFRAM mapping with surface water managed through SuDS design accounting for the steep topography. Standard fire safety measures per Building Regulations Part B will be incorporated including appropriate access for emergency vehicles through the existing estate. The steep site topography requires geotechnical assessment to confirm slope stability, though no unusual ground conditions are anticipated. Construction works present only typical risks which will be managed through Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013 compliance and contractor safety statements. The challenging topography requires particular attention to excavation safety and erosion control. No pathway for major accidents or disasters has been identified.</p>
<p>h) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).</p>	<p>Construction phase risks to human health will be minimised through full CEMP implementation including site hoarding, traffic management through the existing estate, and enforcement of health and safety protocols. The steep topography requires enhanced safety measures for construction workers. Dust and noise controls will protect existing Páirc na hAbhainn residents during the 18-24 month construction period. The operational development provides positive health benefits through quality housing provision including public open space for recreation. Connection to municipal water supply and wastewater treatment ensures protection of public health. Traffic calming within the development and the single access through the existing estate ensures pedestrian safety. Air quality impacts from domestic heating and vehicle emissions are negligible in the context of existing ambient conditions. No significant risks to human health have been identified, with overall positive impacts through housing provision meeting identified needs.</p>

**Table 2** Location of the Proposed Development

Location of the Proposed Development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—	Assessment
a) the existing and approved land use,	<p>The site comprises improved agricultural grassland (GA1) with some dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2) on the southern edge of Athenry. Under the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, Athenry is designated as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' suitable for sustainable expansion. The site is zoned for residential development under the Athenry Local Area Plan 2024-2030, confirming its suitability for the proposed use. The site is landlocked within the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate to the north, with cemetery/burial ground to the east, and agricultural fields to the south and west. The development represents infill development within an established residential area rather than urban expansion. The residential use is compatible with the existing estate and fulfils strategic housing objectives. Access is only available through the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate, representing logical consolidation of the established residential area.</p>
b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,	<p>The site soils are typical agricultural soils on steep topography without exceptional quality or production value. Soils will be permanently altered through development but are not of special pedological interest. The challenging topography requires significant earthworks. Topsoil will be retained for reuse in landscaping. Groundwater body status is 'Good' with 'Not at Risk' classification under WFD assessment. No groundwater abstraction occurs on site. Connection to public water supply through existing estate infrastructure confirmed with adequate capacity. Improved agricultural grassland (GA1) is of low ecological value and widespread in County Galway. Stone walls (BL1) along boundaries provide limited habitat value and will be retained where possible. No mature trees present on site. No rare or protected flora present. No mineral extraction or geological heritage sites present.</p>

Location of the Proposed Development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—	Assessment
	Natural resources at the site are neither scarce nor of exceptional quality. The development does not compromise resource availability or regenerative capacity at any geographic scale.
<p>c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:</p> <p>(i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;</p> <p>(ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;</p> <p>(iii) mountain and forest areas;</p> <p>(iv) nature reserves and parks;</p> <p>(v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and;</p> <p>(vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;</p> <p>(vii) densely populated areas;</p>	<p><b>(i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths</b> No wetlands present on site.</p> <p>The Clarinbridge River is approximately 270m distant with no direct hydrological connection. Surface water will be managed through SuDS designed for steep slopes before discharge to the municipal network through the existing estate. The steep topography requires enhanced erosion control measures. No impact on wetland or riparian absorption capacity.</p> <p><b>(ii) coastal zones and the marine environment</b> The site is approximately 10km inland from Galway Bay. No direct or indirect impacts on coastal or marine environments.</p> <p><b>(iii) mountain and forest areas</b> Not applicable. The site is improved agricultural grassland on steep slopes at the edge of Athenry town. No forests or woodlands present.</p> <p><b>(iv) nature reserves and parks</b> No nature reserves or parks affected. Nearest designated sites are European sites 6.8km away (Rahasane Turlough SAC/SPA). AA Screening concluded no likely significant effects.</p> <p><b>(v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas</b> Natura 2000 Sites: The nearest European sites are:</p>

<p><b>Location of the Proposed Development</b> The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—</p>	<p><b>Assessment</b></p>
<p>(viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rahasane Turlough SAC (000322) - 6.8km S, SW</li> <li>• Lough Corrib SAC (000297) - 7.9km NE, N, NW</li> <li>• Rahasane Turlough SPA (004089) - 6.8km S, SW</li> </ul> <p>The AA Screening Report (November 2025) concluded no likely significant effects on any European sites due to distance, lack of ecological connectivity, and absence of impact pathways. The site's landlocked nature within an existing estate further reduces any potential for impacts.</p> <p><b>(vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet environmental quality standards</b></p> <p>The Clarinbridge River (270m away) has 'Moderate' WFD status and is 'At Risk'. However, the development includes SuDS specifically designed for the steep topography for surface water treatment (silt trap, Class 1 petrol interceptor, and attenuation with flow control) and connection to Athenry WWTP for foul water via a 30m network extension to the nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer, with sufficient wastewater treatment capacity confirmed (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17 October 2025), ensuring no deterioration in water quality.</p> <p><b>(vii) densely populated areas</b></p> <p>The site is within the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate at the edge of Athenry (population c. 4,603), transitioning from suburban to rural. The development density of approximately 25 units/hectare is appropriate for this infill location within an existing estate. Infrastructure capacity has been confirmed as adequate with connections through existing estate services. The Raheen development (29 houses) and other residential developments are planned in the wider Athenry area,</p>

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

**Assessment**

contributing to managed growth of the Self-Sustaining Growth Town. The scale of development (16 units) is modest and proportionate to the receiving environment.

**(viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance**

No recorded monuments on site. The nearest Recorded Monuments are:

- GA084-021 (Church) and GA084-021001 (Memorial stone) - approximately 160m to the northeast
- GA084-027 (Enclosure - large enclosure) - approximately 160m to the east
- GA084-027001 (Burial ground) - located within the cemetery to the east
- GA084-032 (Ringfort - rath) - approximately 140m to the south
- GA084-075 (Ringfort - rath) - to the southwest

None of these monuments will be affected by the development. The site has been in agricultural use with no known archaeological potential. Standard archaeological monitoring condition can address any unexpected discoveries during groundworks. The landscape is typical agricultural land without special historical or cultural associations.

**Table 3** Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts

<p><b>Types and characteristics of potential impacts The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—</b></p>	<p><b>Assessment</b></p>
<p>a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),</p>	<p>Geographic Area: Direct impacts confined to the 0.651ha site at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry. Indirect impacts extend to immediately adjacent properties within the existing estate during construction (noise, dust, visual) and the estate access road (traffic). The zone of influence for ecological impacts extends approximately 100m for noise/disturbance effects on fauna.</p> <p>Population Affected: Construction phase impacts on approximately 20-30 adjacent households within the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate. All construction traffic must route through the existing estate.</p> <p>Operational phase provides housing for approximately 36-44 residents (based on 2.5-3 persons per household for the 8no. 3-bed semi-detached houses and 8no. 2-bed terraced houses)</p> <p>Ecological Extent: Loss of improved agricultural grassland affects local populations of common birds (7 species recorded), potential bat commuting routes along stone walls, and limited mammal activity (fox, rabbit). This represents a small fraction of similar habitat available in the wider Athenry rural hinterland. The site's existing isolation within the estate limits ecological connectivity.</p> <p>The spatial extent is highly localised with no impacts of county, regional or national magnitude.</p>

Types and characteristics of potential impacts The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—	Assessment
b) the nature of the impact,	<p>Construction Phase: Temporary negative impacts including noise, dust, traffic disruption through existing estate, and elevated risk of sediment release due to steep topography. These are typical construction impacts, requiring enhanced management through CEMP implementation due to site constraints.</p> <p>Operational Phase: Mixed impacts - negative through permanent habitat loss of low-value grassland and introduction of lighting; positive through provision of 16 homes addressing documented housing need.</p> <p>Introduction of domestic activities, traffic (80-128 daily movements through estate), and artificial lighting represents typical suburban infill development impacts</p> <p>Ecological Nature: Direct habitat loss is permanent but affects species-poor improved grassland. Stone walls retained where possible. No mature trees present to impact. Potential indirect impacts on bat commuting routes can be mitigated through lighting design. No impacts on designated sites or protected species breeding sites.</p>
c) the transboundary nature of the impact,	No transboundary impacts. All impacts are localised within Irish jurisdiction. The site is approximately 120km from the nearest international boundary (Northern

Types and characteristics of potential impacts The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—	Assessment
	Ireland). No atmospheric emissions, water discharges or other pathways for transboundary effects. The development is of purely local significance.
d) the intensity and complexity of the impact,	<p>Intensity: Low to moderate intensity impacts. Habitat loss is complete within the footprint but involves species-poor grassland of low ecological value.</p> <p>Construction noise will reach 70 dB LAeq at nearest receptors within estate but within acceptable limits. Traffic increase of 80-128 movements through existing estate access readily absorbed (based on 5-8 movements per dwelling per day).</p> <p>Lighting impacts minimized through 13no. LED luminaires (3000K warm-white, 6m height) achieving P3 standard with careful positioning to reduce boundary spill.</p> <p>Complexity: Impacts are straightforward though complicated by steep topography and access constraints. No complex ecological interactions due to low baseline value, no cumulative pollution pathways, standard technical solutions for slope stability. Enhanced mitigation required for topographical challenges but well-understood engineering solutions available.</p>
e) the probability of the impact,	Certain Impacts: Habitat loss within footprint (100%), land use change (100%), construction noise and dust (100%), increased traffic through estate (100%), introduction of lighting (100%), erosion on steep slopes without controls (100%).

Types and characteristics of potential impacts The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—	Assessment
	<p>Likely Impacts: Displacement of limited fauna currently using site (high probability but minimal given low existing use), construction traffic conflicts within estate (moderate probability).</p> <p>Unlikely Impacts: Water pollution (low probability with enhanced CEMP controls for slopes), introduction of invasive species (low probability with biosecurity measures), slope instability (low probability with geotechnical design).</p> <p>Most impacts are certain but of limited significance given low ecological value. Potentially significant impacts have low probability due to mitigation measures.</p>
f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact,	<p>Onset: Construction impacts immediate upon commencement (anticipated Q1 2026). Habitat loss immediate upon site clearance. Operational impacts gradual as houses are occupied (2027-2028).</p> <p>Duration: Construction impacts temporary (18-24 months). Habitat loss and land use change permanent. Operational impacts (traffic, lighting, domestic activities) permanent.</p> <p>Frequency: Construction impacts daily during working hours (08:00-18:00 weekdays, 08:00-13:00 Saturdays). Traffic through estate intermittent throughout construction. Operational impacts continuous.</p>

Types and characteristics of potential impacts The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—	Assessment
	<p>Reversibility: Construction impacts fully reversible upon completion including slope restoration. Land use change and habitat loss irreversible in practical terms. Limited ecological functionality can be enhanced through native landscaping over 5-10 years though baseline value already low.</p>
<p>g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and</p>	<p>The development forms an extension to the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate. Recent and planned developments in Athenry include the Raheen development (29 houses) and other permitted schemes. Combined, these represent managed growth of the Self-Sustaining Growth Town.</p> <p>Cumulative Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat Loss: Incremental loss of low-value agricultural land continuing established pattern of consolidation within existing estates</li> <li>• Traffic: All traffic routes through existing estate - cumulative impact limited to estate roads. Wider road network capacity adequate</li> <li>• Infrastructure: Athenry WWTP confirmed with sufficient capacity for the proposed development (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025). Connection via 30m network extension to nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer</li> <li>• Ecology: Loss of species-poor grassland and limited foraging area. Cumulative impacts on common species acceptable given habitat availability</li> </ul>

Types and characteristics of potential impacts The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction: Phased construction timelines across different sites reduce intensity of temporary impacts</li> </ul> <p>Cumulative impacts are consistent with planned infill development. The landlocked nature limits broader cumulative effects. No unacceptable cumulative effects identified.</p>
h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.	<p>High Effectiveness Mitigation Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction impacts: Enhanced CEMP for steep slopes proven 90-95% effective for noise, dust, erosion control</li> <li>• Slope stability: Engineered solutions provide complete control of geotechnical risks</li> <li>• Bat impacts: Lighting design should take into consideration the recommendations in the EcIA report (AEE, November 2025)</li> <li>• Bird impacts: Timing restrictions completely avoid nesting season impacts</li> <li>• Water quality: SuDS designed for steep slopes and treatment systems prevent deterioration</li> </ul> <p>Moderate Effectiveness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Habitat compensation: Native planting provides ecological enhancement though baseline value already low (limited improvement possible)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Types and characteristics of potential impacts</b> The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account—</p>	<p><b>Assessment</b></p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic management: Routing through estate unavoidable but timing and management reduces conflicts</li> <li>• Visual impacts: Landscaping softens appearance but development visible from surrounding areas due to topography</li> </ul> <p>Inherent Impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land use change and direct habitat loss cannot be avoided</li> <li>• Access through existing estate unavoidable</li> <li>• Steep topography challenges remain despite mitigation</li> </ul> <p>With comprehensive mitigation including enhanced measures for topographical constraints, residual impacts are reduced to minor significance levels acceptable for infill development in this location.</p>

**Table 4** Potential Impacts by EIA Topic

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
Population and Human Health	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: The development provides 16 residential units addressing documented housing need in Athenry, a designated Self-Sustaining Growth Town. Construction phase impacts on adjacent residents (approximately 20-30 households within existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate) will be temporary and managed through CEMP measures including working hours restrictions (08:00-18:00 weekdays, 08:00-13:00 Saturdays), dust suppression, and traffic management through the estate.</p> <p>Operational phase introduces 36-44 new residents (8no. 3-bed semi-detached houses and 8no. 2-bed terraced houses) to an area with established community infrastructure within the existing estate. Health and safety measures during construction will comply with Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013, with enhanced measures for steep topography. The development includes public open space (minimum 15%) and footpaths promoting physical activity.</p> <p>Connection to municipal water supply and wastewater services (via 30m network extension to Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer, with sufficient treatment capacity confirmed by Uisce Éireann Ref: CDS25006844, 17 October 2025) ensures public health protection.</p> <p>Overall positive impact through quality housing provision in planned infill location. No significant negative impacts on population or human health.</p>
Biodiversity / Species and Habitats	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: Detailed ecological assessment completed (EclA Report, November 2025) identifying impacts and mitigation. Loss of improved agricultural grassland (GA1) and grassy verges (GS2) within the 0.651ha site represents low-value habitat types with no Annex I habitats present. No mature trees present on site. Stone walls (BL1) along eastern and southern boundaries to be retained where possible. Potential bat commuting</p>

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	<p>routes along boundaries with Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, and Leisler's Bat expected based on habitat suitability. Bat-sensitive lighting design using the recommendations in the EclA Report (AEE, November 2025). Seven common bird species recorded will be protected through timing restrictions (no clearance March-August). No protected flora or rare species present. AA Screening confirmed no impacts on European sites (nearest 6.8km away). Comprehensive mitigation includes ecological supervision, biodiversity enhancements (native planting, bird boxes, bat boxes on buildings, wildflower areas), and biosecurity measures preventing invasive species introduction. With mitigation, residual impacts are minor given low baseline value and not significant in ecological terms.</p>
Lands and Soils	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: Permanent change of 0.651ha from improved agricultural grassland to residential use on lands zoned for development. Soils are typical agricultural soils without special geological or pedological interest. The steep topography requires substantial cut and fill operations. No prime agricultural land affected. Topsoil will be stripped, stored according to best practice (stockpiles &lt;2m height), and reused in landscaping and gardens. No contaminated land issues identified. No peat soils or carbon-rich substrates present. Earthworks required for foundations and infrastructure are complicated by steep slopes but manageable with appropriate engineering. Geotechnical assessment will confirm slope stability prior to construction. Soil compaction and erosion during construction managed through enhanced CEMP measures for slopes. Post-development soil functions partially maintained in gardens and open spaces. Land use change is consistent with county and local area plan objectives for infill development. No significant impact on land or soil resources.</p>
Water	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: No watercourses on or adjacent to site. Clarinbridge River 270m distant with no direct hydrological connection. Current WFD status shows river as 'Moderate' and 'At Risk', but groundwater 'Good' and 'Not at Risk'. Construction phase risks elevated by steep topography requiring enhanced sediment control through terraced silt traps, reinforced silt fencing, and immediate slope stabilisation. No works in or near watercourses.</p>

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	<p>Operational foul water connects to Athenry WWTP via 30m network extension to the nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer, with sufficient wastewater treatment capacity confirmed (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025).</p> <p>Surface water management through SuDS specifically designed for steep slopes including silt trap, Class 1 petrol interceptor, Graf Eco Bloc underground attenuation system with Hydrobrake flow control, maintaining greenfield runoff rates with appropriate treatment (see Drainage Plan, Figure 3c).</p> <p>No private wells or water abstraction affected. Flood risk assessment confirms site outside flood zones though steep topography requires careful drainage design. With enhanced water protection measures for slopes, no significant impacts on water environment.</p>
Air & Climate	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: Construction phase dust managed through standard suppression measures (dampening, wheel washing, covering stockpiles). Construction vehicle emissions temporary and limited in scale, all routing through existing estate. Operational emissions from 16 households (space heating, water heating, transport) represent minor addition to local emissions. Houses built to current Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy) ensuring energy efficiency. Renewable energy technologies encouraged through development design with ducting for future EV charge points. Location within existing estate promotes reduced transport needs. Embodied carbon in construction materials represents primary climate impact but scale is below significance threshold. No industrial emissions or significant point sources. Development consistent with compact growth principles in Climate Action Plan. No significant air quality or climate impacts.</p>
Noise and Vibration	<p>Rationale: Baseline environment is quiet suburban edge within existing estate. Construction noise will comply with BS 5228 limits (70 dB LAeq at 1m from facade during standard hours). Working hours restricted to 08:00-18:00 Monday-Friday, 08:00-13:00 Saturday, no Sundays/Bank Holidays. Noisiest activities (excavation on slopes, rock breaking if required) limited to periods of lowest sensitivity. Construction traffic routed through existing estate requiring careful management. Vibration from construction equipment within limits to prevent</p>

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	<p>structural damage (BS 7385). Operational noise from 16 households consistent with existing residential character. Traffic increase (80-128 daily movements) represents minor addition to estate traffic.</p> <p>No industrial or commercial noise sources. Development design includes traffic calming reducing vehicle speeds and associated noise. Standard construction noise management with estate-specific routing makes impacts acceptable. No significant noise or vibration impacts.</p>
Landscape and Visual	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: Site within existing estate boundary representing infill rather than landscape intrusion. No designated scenic routes or protected views affected. Existing visual context includes surrounding Páirc na hAbhainn estate and cemetery to east. Change from sloping grassland to housing represents local visual impact primarily affecting immediately adjacent properties within estate. Steep topography makes development visible from surrounding areas but within established residential context. Two-storey house design consistent with existing estate pattern and heights. Retention of stone wall boundaries maintains landscape structure. Native hedgerow planting and tree planting in open spaces provides visual softening over time. Gardens and open space (minimum 15% of site) maintain green character. Development completes existing estate rather than extending into open countryside. Visual change is inevitable but acceptable in context of infill development. No significant landscape impacts.</p>
Material Assets (Traffic and Transport)	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: Site accessed only through existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate with single access point.</p> <p>Traffic increase (80-128 daily movements) represents minor addition to estate traffic.</p> <p>Construction traffic managed through Traffic Management Plan within CEMP including resident notifications, delivery scheduling, and traffic marshalling through estate. Footpaths provided throughout development connecting to existing estate network. Adequate parking provided per Development Plan standards</p>

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	<p>preventing on-street parking issues within estate. Emergency vehicle access provided through existing estate roads. Traffic calming ensures safety within development. The landlocked nature eliminates alternative access options but scale of development acceptable for single access. Cumulative traffic with other developments affects wider road network but estate access adequate for additional 16 units. No significant traffic or transport impacts.</p>
Waste Management	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: Construction waste over 18-24 month period managed through Construction Waste Management Plan within CEMP. Excavated soil from steep site balanced through cut and fill where possible, excess material tested and removed to licensed facilities. Construction and demolition waste segregated per European Waste Catalogue codes targeting 80% diversion from landfill. No existing structures to demolish. Operational domestic waste from 16 households (20-40 tonnes annually based on EPA statistics) managed through Galway County Council three-bin system with collection through existing estate. All waste streams within capacity of existing licensed infrastructure. No significant waste impacts.</p>
Cultural (Archaeological Architectural)	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: No recorded monuments within the site boundary. Nearest Recorded Monuments include GA084-021 (Church) and memorial stone approximately 160m northeast, GA084-027 (Large enclosure) and GA084-027001 (Burial ground) 160m east within cemetery, GA084-032 (Ringfort) 140m south. No intervisibility or setting impacts. No protected structures or architectural conservation areas affected. Site has been in agricultural use with no structures of heritage value. Standard archaeological monitoring condition will address potential for subsurface remains. If archaeological features discovered, preservation by record ensures appropriate mitigation. No impact on known cultural heritage. Potential for unknown archaeology is low given agricultural land use history. Development does not affect setting or context of any heritage assets including adjacent cemetery. No significant cultural heritage impacts anticipated.</p>
Interactions	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p>

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	<p>Rationale: Primary interaction between steep topography and construction impacts requiring integrated management through enhanced CEMP. Biodiversity and land use interactions through habitat loss of low ecological value, addressed through retention of boundaries and enhancement measures. Construction phase interactions between noise/dust/traffic impacts on estate residents, managed through comprehensive controls. Water and slope stability interactions requiring integrated drainage and geotechnical design. Access constraints interact with all construction activities requiring coordinated management. No synergistic or antagonistic interactions identified that would create significant effects beyond individual topic assessments. Interactions are intensified by site constraints but well-understood. Mitigation measures address both individual and interactive impacts. No significant interactive effects identified.</p>
Cumulative Impacts	<p><i>Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No</i></p> <p>Rationale: Athenry designated for growth with infrastructure capacity assessed and confirmed. Development represents completion of existing estate rather than new expansion. Other developments include Raheen (29 houses) and other permitted schemes representing managed growth. Combined habitat loss minimal given low baseline value of this site. Cumulative traffic primarily affects existing estate with wider network capacity adequate.</p> <p>Athenry WWTP confirmed with sufficient capacity for projected growth including this development (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025).</p> <p>Cumulative construction impacts avoided through temporal separation of projects. Combined landscape change consistent with Local Area Plan vision for consolidation of existing residential areas. Infrastructure connections through existing estate minimise cumulative infrastructure demands. The landlocked, infill nature limits contribution to urban sprawl. Cumulative growth managed through development plan process. No unacceptable cumulative impacts identified.</p>

## 5.0 EIA Screening Result

The proposed development has been evaluated to determine potential EIA requirements based on the characteristics of the development, site location sensitivity, and potential environmental impacts.

The proposed development comprises construction of 16 no. two-storey houses (8no. 3-bed semi-detached houses and 8no. 2-bed terraced houses) with associated internal roads, footpaths, parking, public open space and all necessary infrastructure on a 0.651ha site at Páirc na hAbhainn, Athenry, Co. Galway. The site is landlocked within the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate with access only through the existing development. The steep topography requires particular consideration in design and drainage implementation.

A mandatory EIA threshold of 500 dwelling units exists in legislation. The proposed development of 16 units falls substantially below this threshold. When considered cumulatively with other developments in Athenry including the Raheen development (29 units), the combined developments remain significantly below mandatory thresholds.

The Sub-Threshold EIA Screening Assessment examined the proposed development against Schedule 7 criteria. The characteristics of the proposed residential development are not of a nature and scale that will give rise to significant environmental effects. The site is zoned for residential development with no special environmental sensitivities. The nearest European sites are 6.8km distant (Rahasane Turlough SAC/SPA) with no ecological pathways identified. While the development will result in loss of improved agricultural grassland, this comprises species-poor habitat of low ecological value with no Annex I habitats present.

No mature trees are present on site and no features with bat roost potential were identified. Stone walls along the eastern and southern boundaries provide limited ecological value and will be retained where possible. Seven common bird species were recorded using the site. Comprehensive mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project design including timing restrictions for vegetation clearance outside bird nesting season (March-August), and bat-sensitive lighting design to preserve potential commuting routes adhering to mitigation measures set out in the EclA Report (AEE, November 2025).

The steep topography presents construction challenges requiring enhanced erosion and sediment control measures, but these are addressed through comprehensive CEMP implementation with proven engineering solutions. The characteristics of potential impacts are not considered likely to have significant effects on the environment during construction or operational phases. All identified impacts can be effectively mitigated through standard best practice construction methods with enhancements for topographical constraints.

## 6.0 Conclusion

The proposed project is not a development for which an EIA is mandatory. The proposed housing development of 16 units falls well below the threshold set out in Class 10(b)(i) in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Regulations (500 dwelling units) and the site area of 0.651ha is below the 10ha threshold.

An EIA Screening exercise was carried out to determine the potential for the proposed development to have significant environmental effects. This exercise has been informed by desktop studies and site surveys for the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report (AEE, November 2025) and the Ecological Impact Assessment (AEE, November 2025). The AA Screening concluded that there will be no likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites as a result of the proposed development, alone or in combination with other projects. The nearest European sites at 6.8km are sufficiently distant with no hydrological connectivity or other impact pathways identified.

The development incorporates comprehensive environmental protection through design including pre-construction ecological surveys where required, seasonal timing restrictions, ecological supervision, bat-sensitive lighting specifications, retention of stone walls where feasible, and installation of biodiversity enhancement features. Working hours will be restricted to 08:00-18:00 weekdays and 08:00-13:00 Saturdays with noise limits per BS 5228. Access through the existing estate requires careful traffic management to minimise disruption to residents. Enhanced biosecurity measures will prevent introduction of invasive species.

Infrastructure capacity has been confirmed as adequate with Uisce Éireann confirming sufficient wastewater treatment capacity (Confirmation of Feasibility Ref: CDS25006844, 17<sup>th</sup> October 2025) via a 30m network extension to the nearest Uisce Éireann owned foul sewer, and public water supply confirmed as feasible without infrastructure upgrade.

Surface water will be managed through SuDS specifically designed for the steep topography including silt trap, Class 1 petrol interceptor, Graf Eco Bloc attenuation system with Hydrobrake flow control, maintaining greenfield runoff rates.

The development represents infill within an existing estate consistent with the planned consolidation of Athenry as a Self-Sustaining Growth Town under the County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Temporary construction impacts including noise, dust and traffic will be typical of residential development but limited to the 18-24 month construction period. The steep topography requires enhanced management measures but these are well-understood engineering solutions. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be prepared prior to commencement of development, incorporating all mitigation measures identified in this EIA Screening Report, the Ecological Impact Assessment (AEE, November 2025), the AA Screening Report (AEE, November 2025), and any other relevant environmental assessments. The CEMP shall address noise and dust control, surface water and sediment management for the steep

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topography, biosecurity protocols, ecological protection measures including timing restrictions for vegetation clearance and bat-sensitive lighting, and traffic management through the existing Páirc na hAbhainn estate. Operational impacts are consistent with suburban residential development and acceptable in this zoned infill location.

No significant negative effects on the environment have been identified during construction or operational phases that would warrant the requirement to complete a sub-threshold EIAR. The low ecological baseline value of the improved agricultural grassland, combined with the modest scale of development and comprehensive mitigation measures, ensures environmental impacts remain below significance thresholds. It may be concluded that the proposed development site at Páirc na hAbhainn can accommodate the development without significant environmental impact and a detailed EIAR is not required.