January 2026

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report

Raheen,
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

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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 28 no. two-storey houses and all associated site development works and infrastructure provision at Raheen, Athenry, Co. Galway as shown in Figures 1 and 2. The proposed site layout is shown as Figure 3. The existing site comprises unmanaged grassland with mature boundary features.

Other reports consulted to compile this EIA Report were:

- Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report (AEE, January 2026)
- Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) Report (AEE, January 2026)
- Proposed Drainage Design Drawings (submitted with application)
- Confirmation of Feasibility Letter from Uisce Éireann (submitted with application)

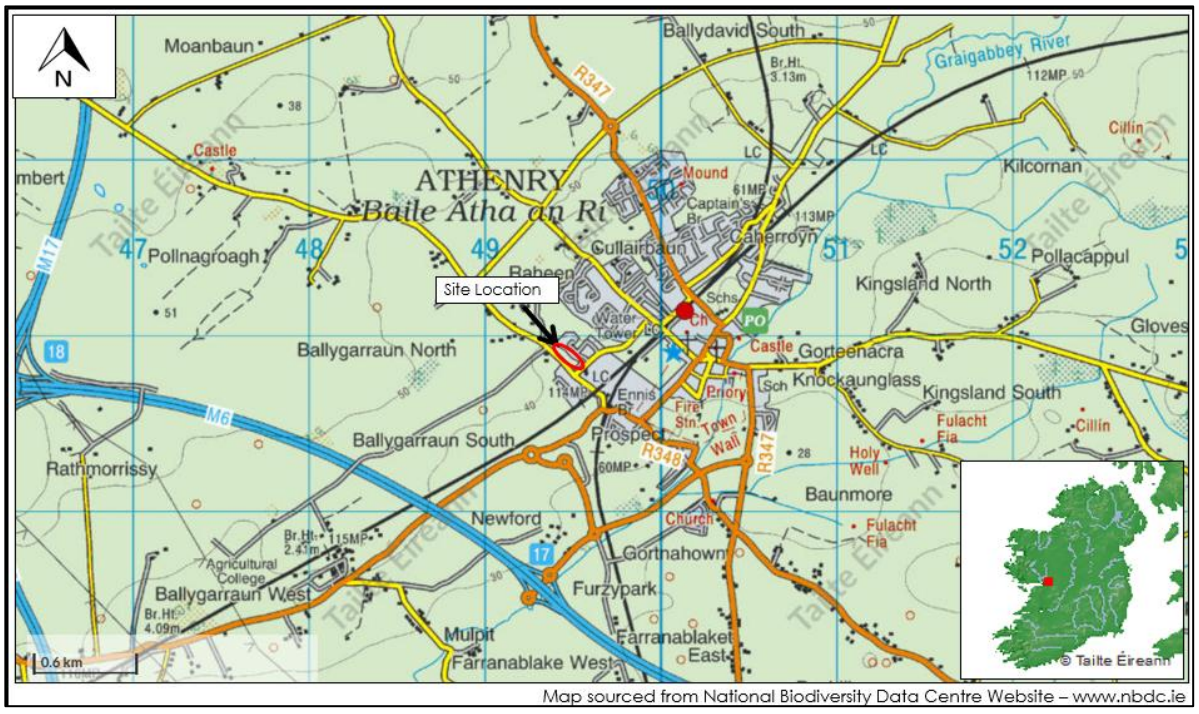


Figure 1 Site Location Map

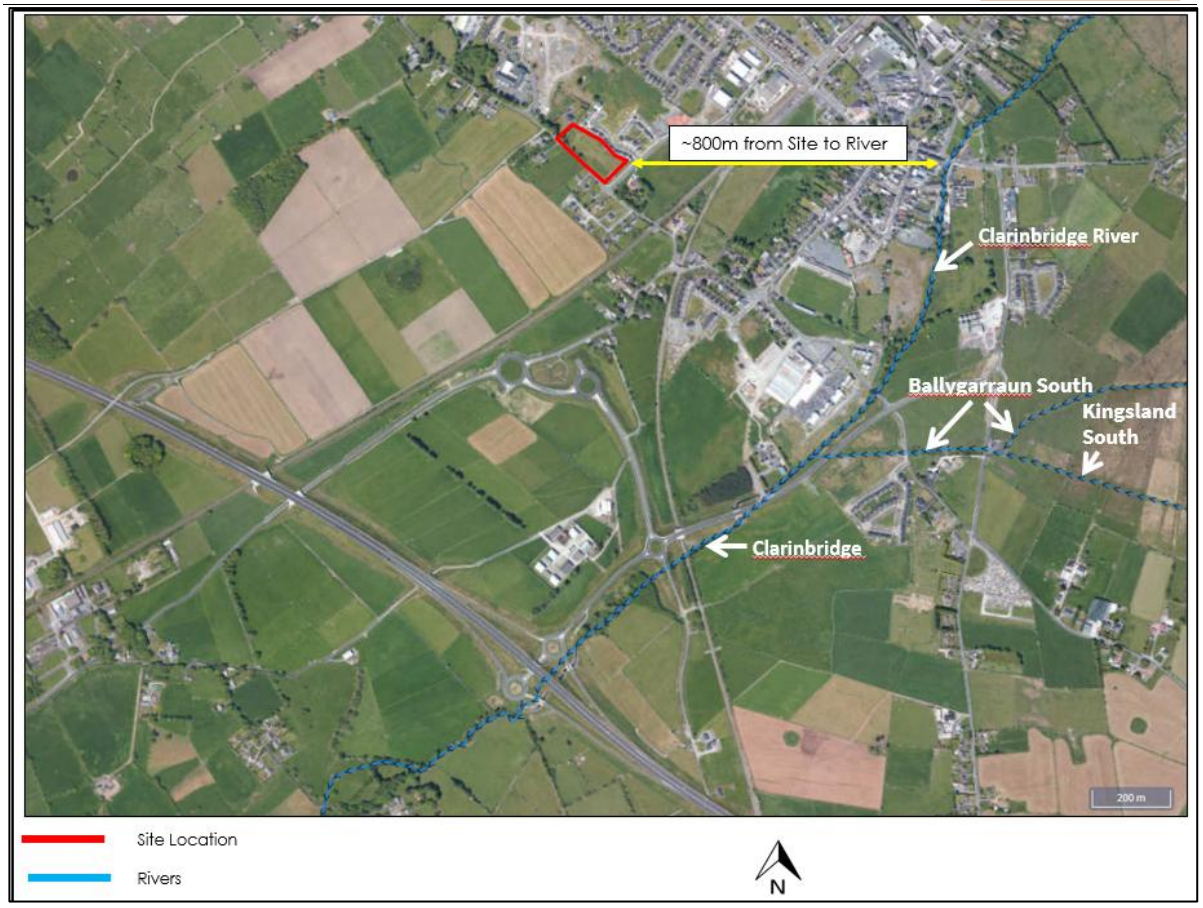


Figure 2 Aerial Photo of Existing Site

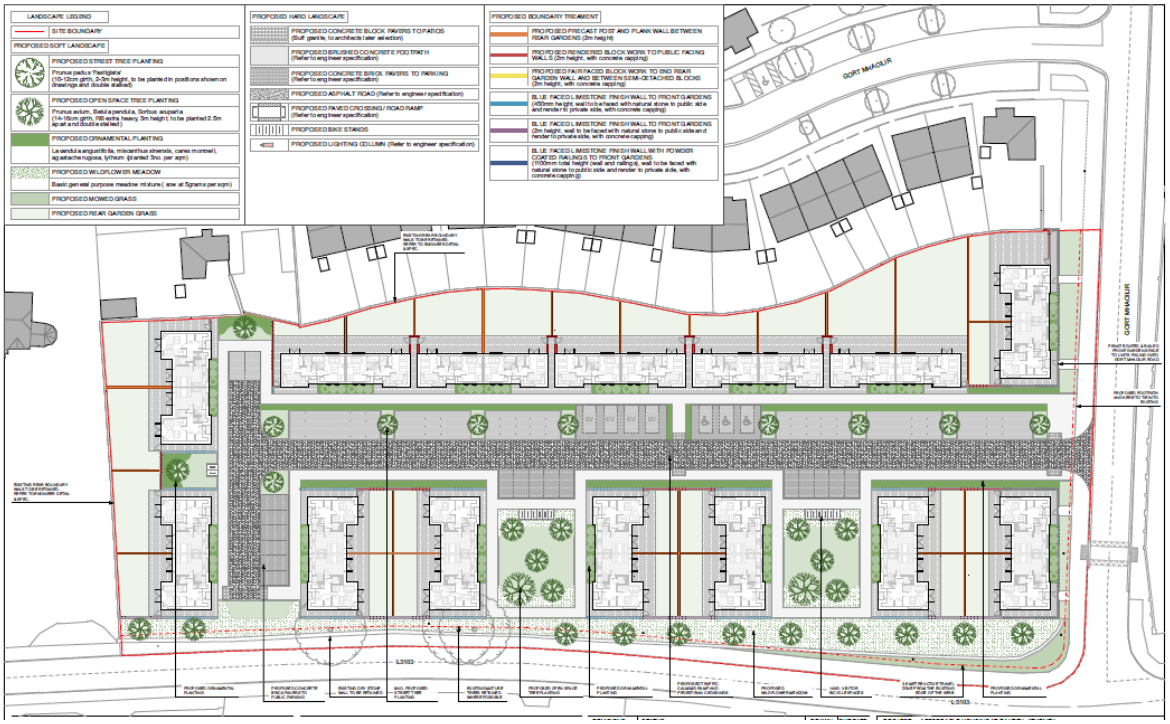


Figure 3 Proposed Site Layout

The purpose of the report is to determine if Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for the proposed development as set out in the mandatory and 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 2014/52EU and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2019 (Unofficial Consolidation) (annotated) 30th 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).

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 EIAR 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.

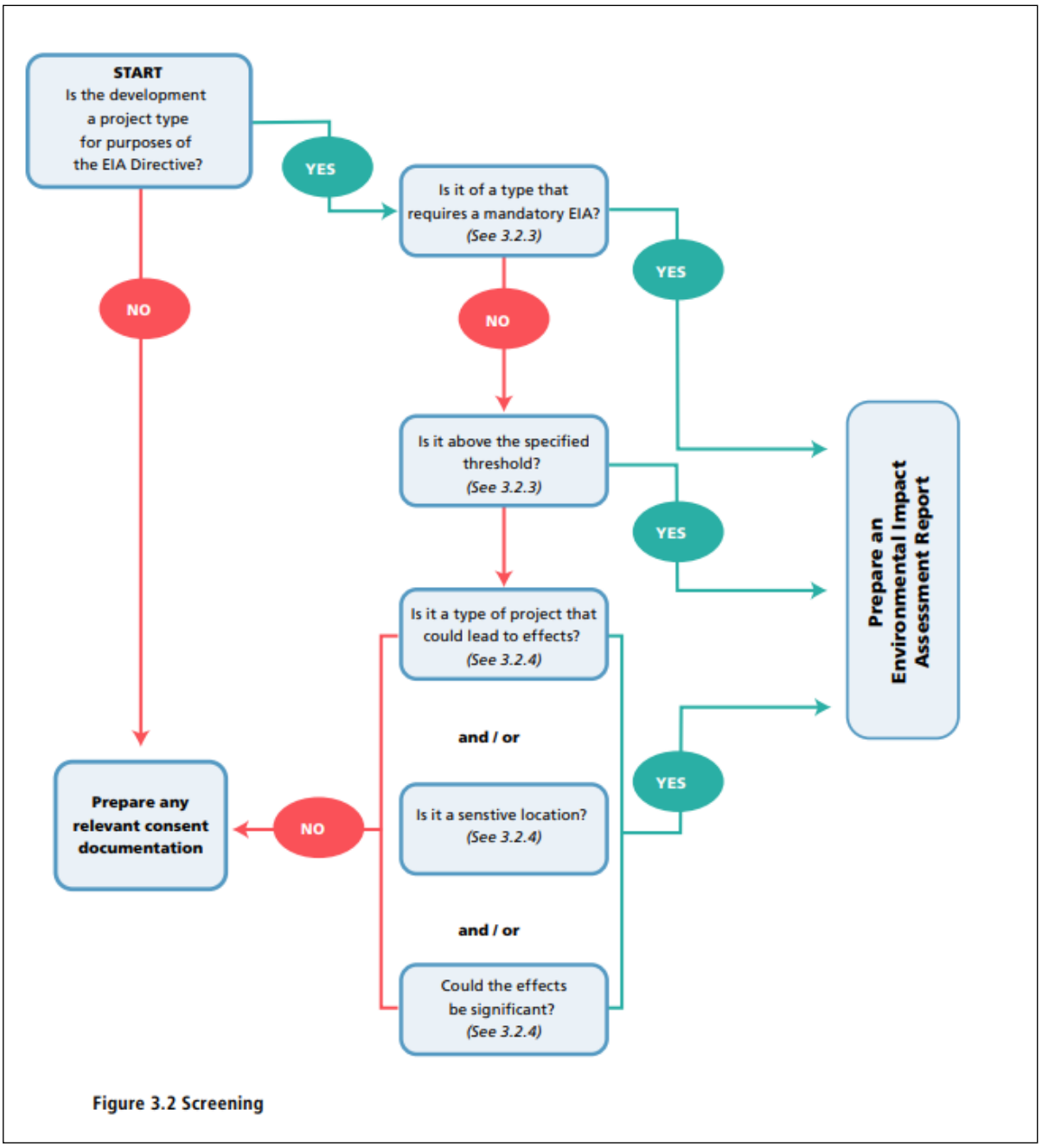


Figure 4 Flow Diagram of the Screening Process (Source: *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' (Environmental Protection Agency, May 2022)*

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 Raheen, Athenry, Co. Galway (see Figure 1). The existing site comprises unmanaged grassland (dry meadows and grassy verges) with mature boundary features including treelines, stone walls and scrub (see Figures 2 and 4). The project involves the construction of 28 no. two-storey houses (see Figure 3).

The development comprises:

- 28 no. two-storey dwelling houses
- Associated roads and footpaths
- Connection to existing foul and surface water drainage infrastructure
- Connection to existing utilities (electricity, water, telecommunications)
- Public open space provision
- Boundary treatments and landscaping

The proposed development site measures approximately 1.0815 hectares.

The development will connect to existing foul water and surface water drainage systems. Foul water will connect to the Athenry Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP D0193), which as of January 2026 was reported to be at 'Amber' capacity. A Confirmation of Feasibility Letter from Uisce Éireann is submitted with the application documents confirming adequate capacity.

For surface water management, the development will implement Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage runoff from roofs, hardstandings, roads and footpaths. These measures will include permeable paving, swales and/or attenuation features to reduce and slow surface water discharge. A Surface and Foul Drainage Plan submitted with the application documents demonstrating compliance with best practice surface water management and Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) requirements.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be compiled prior to construction 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.

Existing mature trees along site boundaries will be retained, with appropriate Root Protection Zones (RPZ) implemented in accordance with BS 5837:2012 to ensure protection during construction.

The development requires decommissioning of an existing wastewater treatment system (WWTS) currently on site. The development will connect to the Athenry municipal sewer network, eliminating the need for on-site treatment. The existing wastewater treatment system will be decommissioned in accordance with best practice as follows: the treatment tank will be emptied by a licensed septic tank operator prior to removal works; the tank will then be cleaned and emptied again by the licensed operator to ensure complete removal of all waste materials; percolation area pipework will be cleaned prior to removal from site; the treatment tank and associated pipework will be evaluated for potential re-use or re-purposing where feasible; materials not suitable for re-use will be disposed of to a licensed waste facility, with the treatment tank broken down as necessary to facilitate removal and transport. All waste disposal will be carried out by appropriately licensed operators in accordance with applicable waste management regulations.

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 northwestern edge of Athenry town, Co. Galway, at the transition between the existing urban area and agricultural countryside. The site is bounded by:

- L3103 road to the southwest
- Gort Mhaoilir Road to the southeast
- Existing Gort Mhaoilir residential estate to the northeast
- Agricultural land to the northwest

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 (2024-2030).

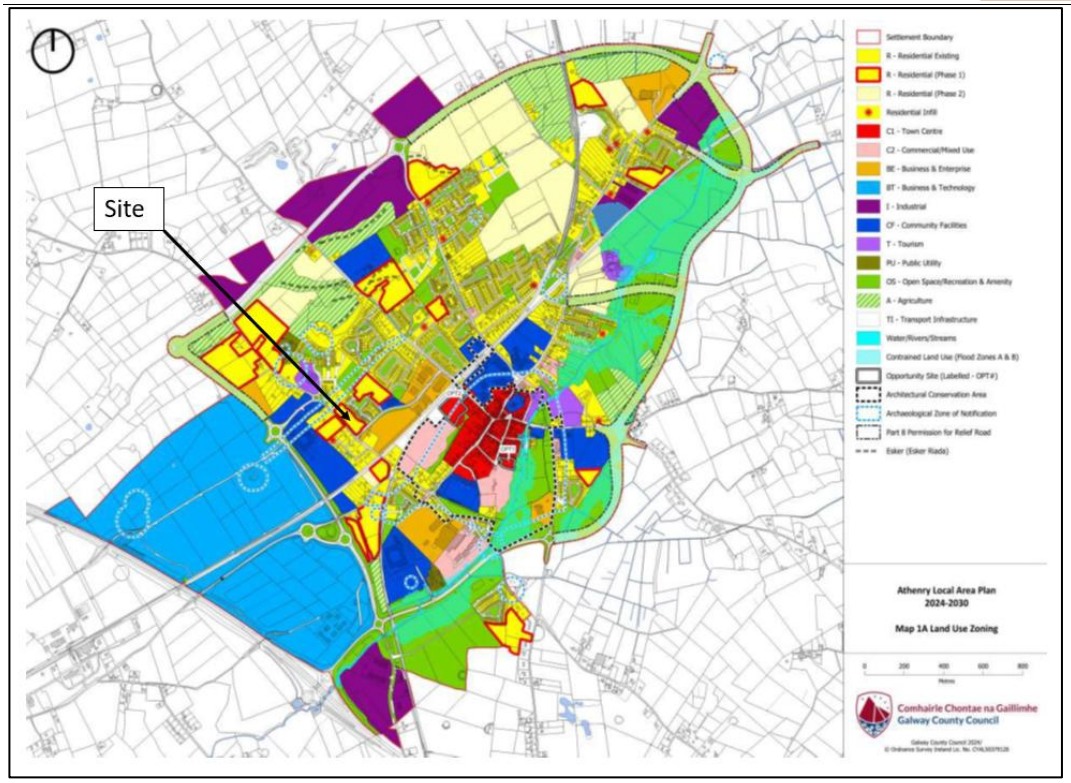
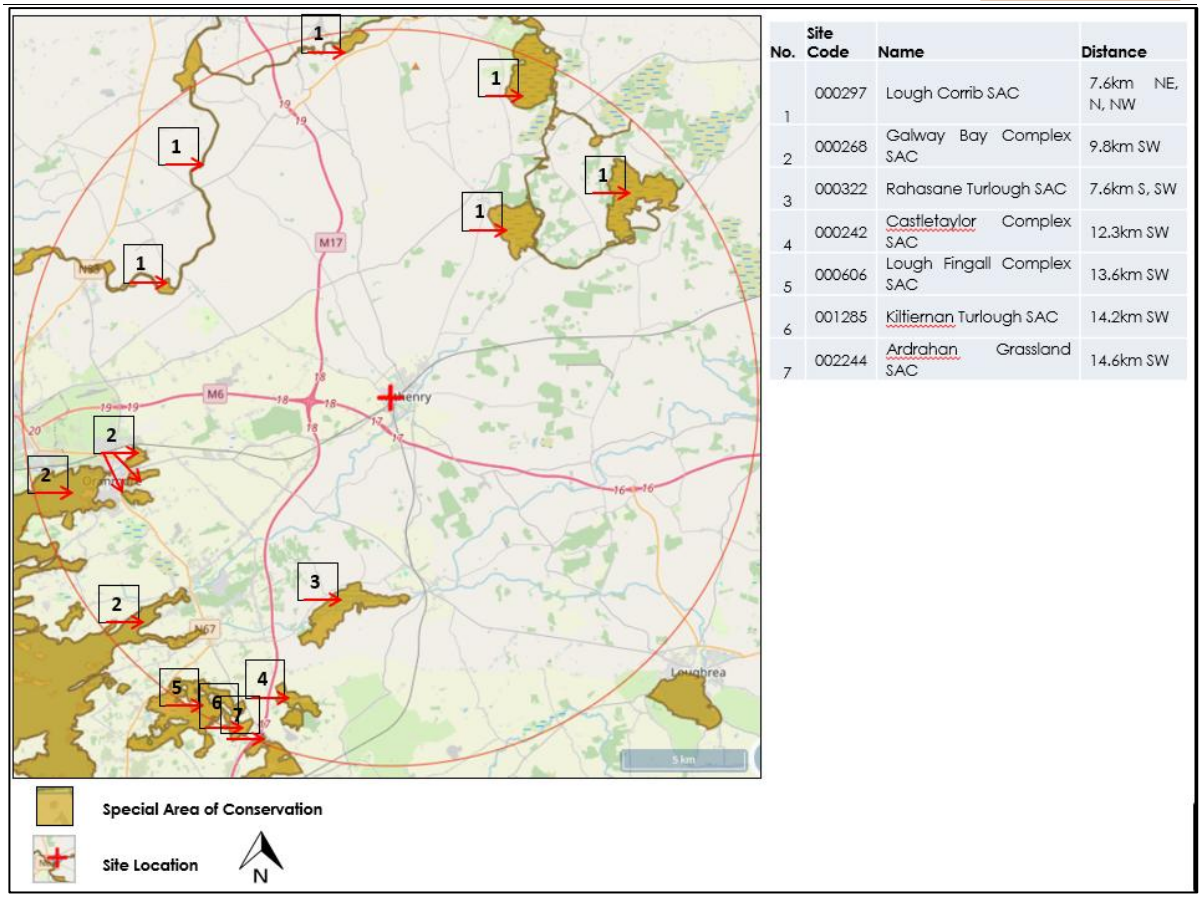


Figure 5 Zoning Map - Residential (Phase 1)" under the Athenry Local Area (2024-2030)

Ecological Sensitivities: The nearest European sites are located 7.6km from the development:

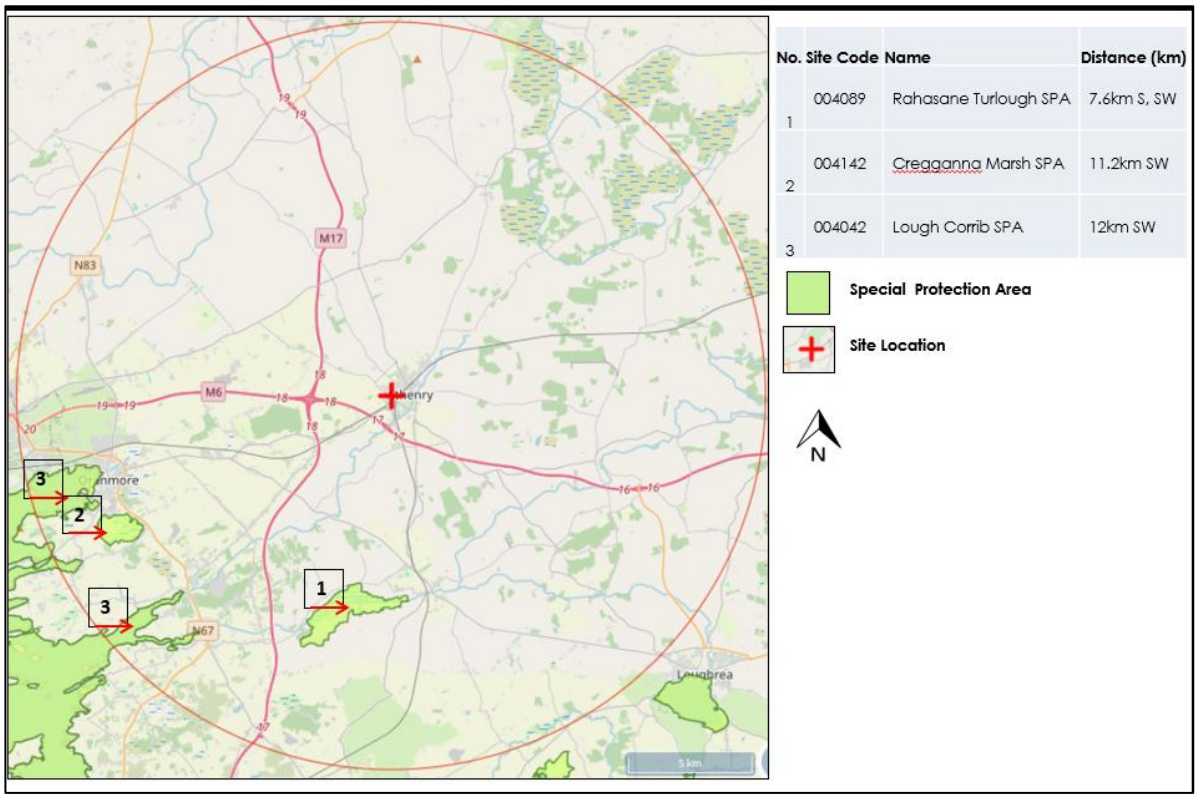
- Lough Corrib SAC (000297) - 7.6km NE, N, NW
- Rahasane Turlough SAC (000322) - 7.6km S, SW
- Rahasane Turlough SPA (004089) - 7.6km S, SW

The AA Screening Report (AEE, January 2026) 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.



No.	Site Code	Name	Distance
1	000297	Lough Corrib SAC	7.6km NE, N, NW
2	000268	Galway Bay Complex SAC	9.8km SW
3	000322	Rahasane Turlough SAC	7.6km S, SW
4	000242	Castletaylor Complex SAC	12.3km SW
5	000606	Lough Fingall Complex SAC	13.6km SW
6	001285	Kiltiernan Turlough SAC	14.2km SW
7	002244	Ardrahan Grassland SAC	14.6km SW

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



No.	Site Code	Name	Distance (km)
1	004089	Rahasane Turlough SPA	7.6km S, SW
2	004142	Cregganna Marsh SPA	11.2km SW
3	004042	Lough Corrib SPA	12km SW

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

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

- Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2) - 1.4ha of rank grassland
- Treeline (WL2) - Mature sycamores with bat roost potential
- Stone walls (BL1) - Traditional boundaries providing invertebrate habitat
- Scrub (WS1) - Bramble-dominated areas (0.15ha)

Figure 8 Habitat Map

Field surveys (30th August 2025) confirmed:

- Three bat species active in the area (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Leisler's Bat obtained from nearby study during November 2024 by JBA)[1]
- Eight common bird species using the site
- Evidence of mammal activity (fox, hedgehog, rabbit)
- 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'

[1] JBA Consulting (2025). *Gort Mhaoilir Estate: Ecological Impact Assessment*. Final Report prepared for Paul Keogh Architects/Galway County Council, April 2025.

- WFD Subcatchment 'Clarinbridge_SC_010'
- WFD River Sub-Basin 'CLARINBRIDGE_030'

Current WFD Status (2016-2021):

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

The Clarinbridge River is located approximately 800m from the site. Surface water will drain via SuDS to the local surface water network and ultimately to Galway Bay via the Clarinbridge River.

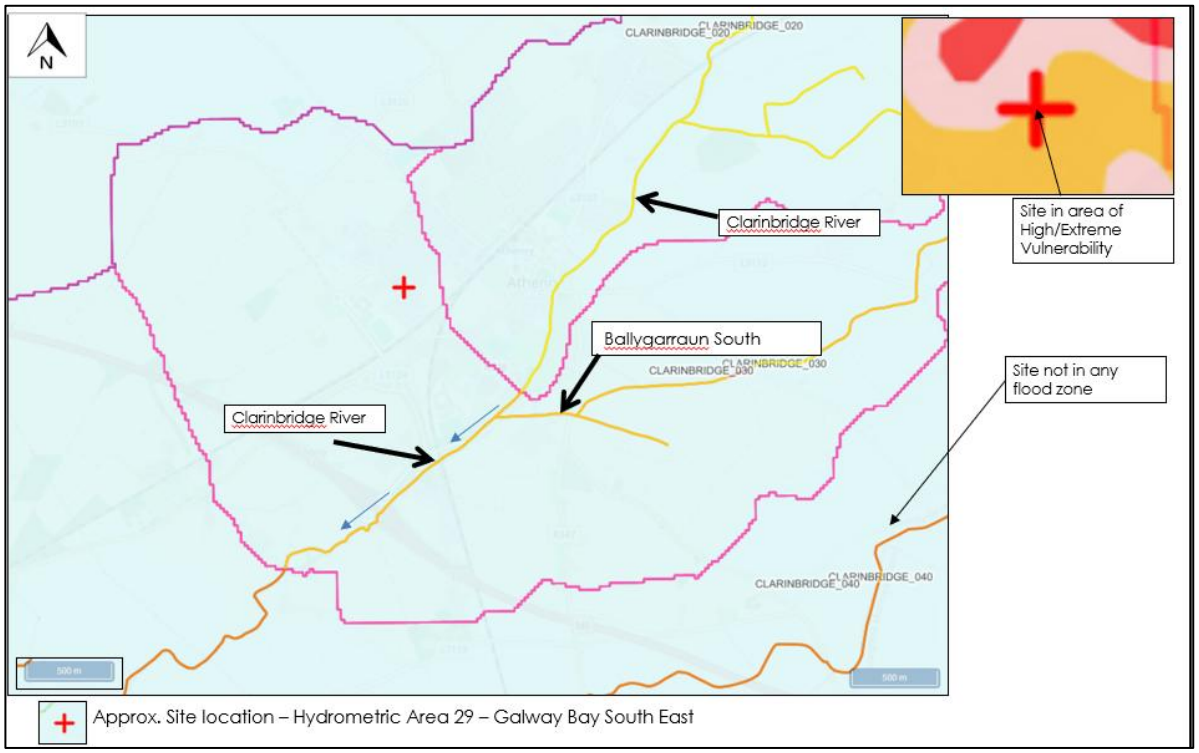


Figure 9 Water Quality Data

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.

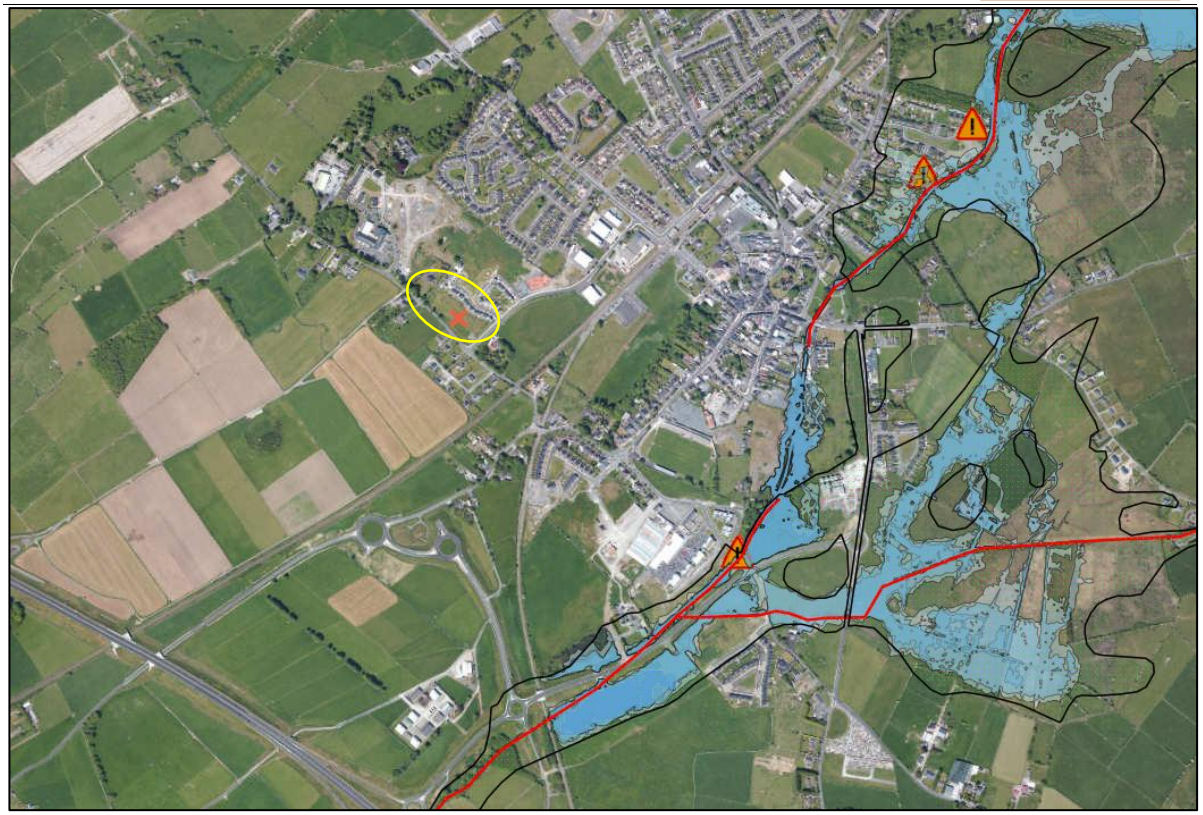


Figure 10 CFRAM Flood Map – Not in Flood Zone, see yellow circle

Archaeological and Cultural Heritage: The site contains no recorded monuments. The nearest Recorded Monument (Site and Monuments Record (SMR) (GA084-118, Road/Trackway)) is located approximately 50m to the northwest and won't be affected by the development, see Figure 11. The development area comprises a greenfield site with no structures of architectural heritage value.

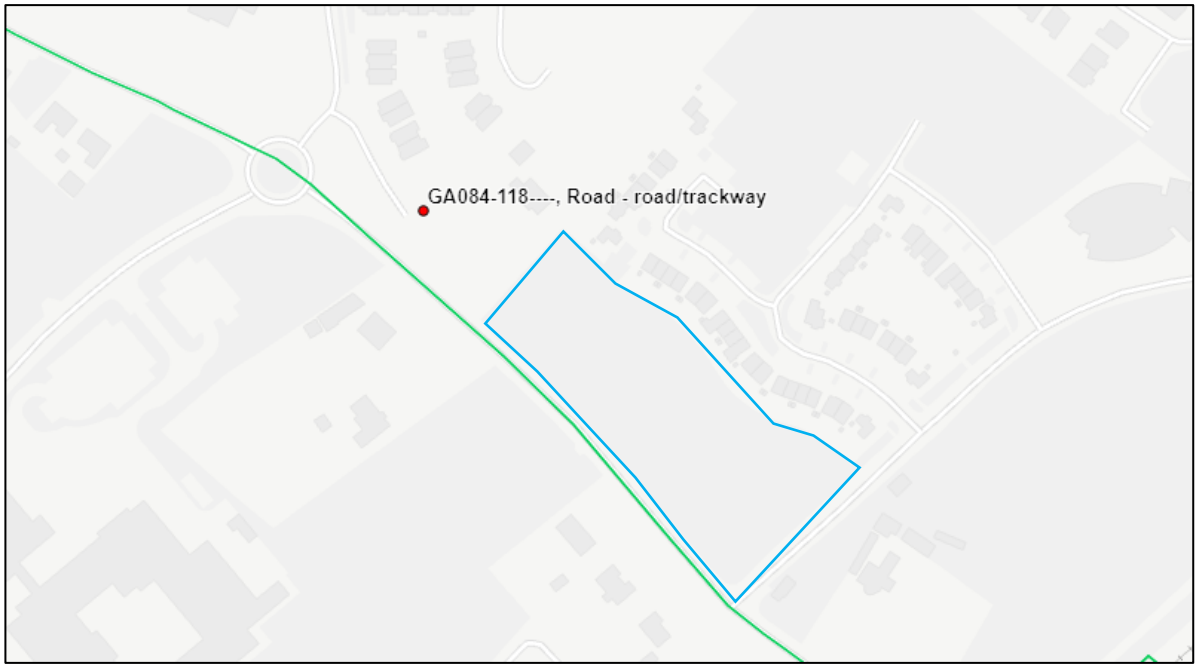


Figure 11 Site and Monuments Record (SMR) (GA084-118, Road/Trackway)) is located approximately 50m to the northwest from site outlined in Blue

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

- Field patterns with mature hedgerow boundaries
- Scattered one-off housing and ribbon development along roads
- Transition from urban to rural character
- Generally flat topography with gentle undulations

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

- Residential development immediately northeast and east
- Agricultural fields to the north and west
- Scattered residential properties along the L3103 road
- Athenry town centre approximately 1.5km east, northeast, southeast

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 1.0815ha of grassland habitat and potential impacts on boundary features including mature trees with bat roost potential. This represents the primary environmental change.

Land and Soils: Conversion from greenfield to residential use represents irreversible change to land use. Earthworks for foundations and infrastructure will permanently alter soil profiles.

Water: Construction phase presents risks of sedimentation and contamination requiring management through CEMP measures. Operational phase introduces additional surface water runoff requiring SuDS management.

Landscape: The development extends the urban envelope into agricultural land, contributing to the ongoing urbanisation of Athenry's periphery.

Population and Human Health: Positive impact through provision of 28 homes addressing housing need. Temporary construction phase impacts (noise, dust, traffic) on adjacent residents.

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 24-month construction period for the 28 houses, temporary environmental emissions are anticipated. Construction activities will generate noise and vibration from machinery, piling operations and vehicle movements. Dust may arise from earthworks and vehicle movements, particularly during dry weather. 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 a risk of sediment release and potential contamination from construction materials and machinery. The extensive earthworks required for foundations, roads and services across the 1.0815 hectare site will require careful management throughout all construction phases.

Operational Phase

Once operational, the development will generate domestic emissions typical of 28 households (approximately 58-87 residents). Foul wastewater will discharge to the Athenry Wastewater Treatment Plant (D0193) via the existing sewer network. Surface water from roofs, roads and paved areas will require management 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 36-73 tonnes per year. Traffic generation is estimated at 174-290 daily vehicle movements based on standard residential trip rates of 6-10 trips per dwelling per day (TII Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines, May 2014), representing additional emissions on the local road network.

The introduction of street lighting and domestic lighting will alter the currently unlit rural edge character of the site. This is of particular relevance given the confirmed presence of three bat species in the immediate area (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Leisler's Bat).

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

Soil and Land Resources

The development requires conversion of 1.0815 hectares of agricultural grassland to residential use, representing an irreversible change in land use. The site comprises typical agricultural soils without special geological or pedological significance. Topsoil will be stripped during construction, with subsoils excavated for foundations and services.

Water Resources

The development will connect to the existing public water supply network, increasing demand on water resources. Surface water patterns will be altered through the introduction of impermeable surfaces including roofs, roads and driveways across the site. The natural infiltration capacity of the grassland will be replaced with engineered drainage systems.

Biodiversity Resources

The Ecological Impact Assessment (AEE, January 2026) identifies that development will result in the complete loss of grassland and scrub habitats within the site. These habitats currently support:

- Eight+ common bird species observed during surveys
- Foraging habitat for three confirmed bat species
- Movement corridors for mammals including fox, hedgehog and rabbit evidenced by tracks through the grassland

The mature trees along a section of the site boundaries, particularly the sycamores along the northwest boundary, display features suitable for roosting bats including crevices, ivy cover and deadwood. These represent the most significant ecological features on site.

The loss of 1.0815 hectares of semi-natural habitat will contribute to the ongoing fragmentation of ecological networks at Athenry's urban-rural interface. This represents permanent habitat loss for local wildlife populations, though the habitats present are common and widespread in the wider landscape.

The development will introduce new pressures including artificial lighting affecting nocturnal species, human disturbance from 28 households, domestic cats impacting local bird populations, and potential for introduction of non-native species through garden planting.

Without mitigation, these impacts would result in:

- Permanent loss of foraging resources for local fauna
- Disruption of bat commuting routes through light pollution
- Risk of killing or injury to nesting birds if clearance occurs during breeding season
- Potential loss of bat roosts if trees are removed without assessment
- Reduction in ecological connectivity through the landscape

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 28 no. two-storey houses and all associated site development works and infrastructure provision at Raheen, Athenry, Co. Galway. The site measures 1.0815 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 28 units. The site area of 1.0815 hectares is 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).

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

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,	Assessment
a) the size and design of the whole of the proposed development,	The proposed development comprises 28 no. two-storey houses on a site of 1.0815 hectares at Raheen, Athenry, Co. Galway. This represents a medium-density residential development of approximately 26 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 and associated infrastructure. The scale is substantially below mandatory EIA thresholds (500 units or 10 hectares) and represents typical urban expansion at the settlement edge. Construction is programmed for 18-24 months, representing a standard timeline for this scale of development.
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,	Athenry has experienced steady residential growth as designated in the County Development Plan 2022-2028. Recent developments in the vicinity include the adjacent Gort Mhaoilir estate and other permitted housing schemes within the town. Most significantly, a proposed development of 43 dwellings (31 houses and 12 apartments) immediately adjacent to the site has been assessed by JBA Consulting (April 2025),[2] which confirmed similar ecological conditions including the presence of the same three bat species. The cumulative effect of these two developments (71 units combined) along with other recent permissions represents planned urban expansion in accordance with the Local Area Plan rather than uncontrolled sprawl. Infrastructure capacity has been assessed with water supply confirmed as adequate and Athenry WWTP (D0193) currently at 'Amber' status with sufficient headroom for these developments. Both developments will connect to the same wastewater treatment plant and surface water network. While multiple residential schemes are progressing in the Athenry area, the incremental nature of development and phased construction timelines allow for managed growth in line with proper planning and sustainable development.
c) the nature of any associated demolition works,	The existing wastewater treatment system will be decommissioned in accordance with best practice as follows: the treatment tank will be emptied by a licensed septic tank operator prior to removal works; the tank will then be cleaned and emptied again by the licensed

[2] JBA Consulting (2025). Gort Mhaoilir EIA Screening Report, April 2025.

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,	Assessment
	operator to ensure complete removal of all waste materials; percolation area pipework will be cleaned prior to removal from site; the treatment tank and associated pipework will be evaluated for potential re-use or re-purposing where feasible; materials not suitable for re-use will be disposed of to a licensed waste facility, with the treatment tank broken down as necessary to facilitate removal and transport. All waste disposal will be carried out by appropriately licensed operators in accordance with applicable waste management regulations. No buildings require demolition. The scale of decommissioning works is minor and not likely to have significant environmental effects when managed with appropriate procedures including proper disposal of any residual sludge to licensed facilities.
d) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity,	The development requires conversion of 1.0815 hectares of agricultural grassland, representing permanent but planned land use change on residentially zoned lands. 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 has been confirmed with adequate capacity, with water conservation through low-flow fittings per Part G of Building Regulations. The loss of grassland and scrub habitats will be partially compensated through native landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. Standard construction materials from established suppliers will be used with no on-site extraction. The use of natural resources is typical for residential development and does not involve scarce or non-renewable resources.
e) the production of waste,	Construction waste over the 18-24-month build period will be managed through a Construction Waste Management Plan. Excavated soil and stone will be reused on site where suitable, with excess material tested and removed to licensed facilities. Construction and demolition waste will be segregated according to European Waste Catalogue codes

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,	Assessment
	targeting 80% diversion from landfill through reuse and recycling. Operational phase domestic waste from 28 households (approximately 36-73 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.
f) pollution and nuisances,	Construction phase environmental emissions will be controlled through comprehensive CEMP implementation. 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. Dust suppression will include dampening during dry weather, wheel washing facilities at site exits, covering of stockpiles, and speed restrictions on unpaved surfaces. Water pollution prevention measures include silt fencing, settlement ponds, designated concrete washout areas, and refuelling restrictions (minimum 50m from drains) with spill kits available. Operational phase lighting impacts on bat populations will be controlled through specific design measures achieving maximum 1 lux at ecological boundaries using warm-white LEDs (≤2700K) and full cut-off luminaires. Foul water will connect to Athenry WWTP with confirmed capacity while surface water will be managed through SuDS maintaining greenfield runoff rates. All pollution risks can be effectively controlled through these measures.
g) the risk of major accidents, and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in	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 per CFRAM mapping with surface water managed through SuDS design. Standard fire safety

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular,	Assessment
accordance with scientific knowledge, and,	measures per Building Regulations Part B will be incorporated including appropriate access for emergency vehicles. The site geology presents no risk of landslides, subsidence or unusual ground conditions. 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. No pathway for major accidents or disasters has been identified.
h) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).	Construction phase risks to human health will be minimised through full CEMP implementation including site hoarding, traffic management, and enforcement of health and safety protocols. Dust and noise controls will protect adjacent residents during the 24-month construction period. The operational development provides positive health benefits through quality housing provision including public open space for recreation and footpath connections promoting active travel. Connection to municipal water supply and wastewater treatment ensures protection of public health. Traffic calming within the development and footpath provision 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.

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,	

Location of the Proposed Development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—	Assessment
	The site comprises agricultural grassland (dry meadows and grassy verges) at the northwestern 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. Surrounding land uses include existing residential development (Gort Mhaoilir estate) to the northeast, agricultural fields to the northwest, and scattered housing along the L3103 road. The development represents logical urban expansion consistent with the sequential approach to development, extending from the existing built envelope rather than creating isolated development. The residential use is compatible with adjoining uses and fulfils strategic housing objectives.
b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,	The site soils are typical agricultural soils without exceptional quality or production value. Soils will be permanently altered through development but are not of special pedological interest. 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 confirmed with adequate capacity. Rank grassland (GS2) and scrub (WS1) habitats are common and widespread in County Galway with high regenerative capacity in the wider landscape. Mature trees of higher local value will be retained. No rare or protected flora present. No mineral extraction or geological heritage sites present. 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.

Location of the Proposed Development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—	Assessment
c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas: (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths; (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment; (iii) mountain and forest areas; (iv) nature reserves and parks; (v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and; (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; (vii) densely populated areas; (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.	(i) No wetlands present on site. The Clarinbridge River is 800m distant with no direct hydrological connection. Surface water will be managed through SuDS before discharge to the municipal network. No impact on wetland or riparian absorption capacity. (ii) The site is approximately 14km inland from Galway Bay. No direct or indirect impacts on coastal or marine environments. (iii) Not applicable. The site is on relatively flat agricultural land at the edge of Athenry town. No forests present. (iv) No nature reserves or parks affected. Nearest designated sites are European sites 7.6km away (Lough Corrib SAC, Rahasane Turlough SAC/SPA). AA Screening concluded no likely significant effects. (v) Natura 2000 Sites: The nearest European sites are: • Lough Corrib SAC (000297) - 7.6km NE, N, NW • Rahasane Turlough SAC (000322) - 7.6km S, SW • Rahasane Turlough SPA (004089) - 7.6km S, SW The AA Screening Report (AEE, January 2026) concluded no likely significant effects on any European sites due to distance, lack of ecological connectivity, and absence of impact pathways. (vi) The Clarinbridge River (800m away) has 'Moderate' WFD status and is 'At Risk'. However, the development includes SuDS for surface water treatment and

Location of the Proposed Development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to—	Assessment
	connection to Athenry WWTP for foul water, ensuring no deterioration in water quality. Implementation of CEMP measures during construction will prevent any temporary impacts. (vii) The site is at the edge of Athenry (population c. 4603),[3] transitioning from urban to rural. The development density of 16 units/hectare is appropriate for this edge-of-settlement location. Infrastructure capacity has been confirmed as adequate. Other residential developments are planned in the wider Athenry area, contributing to managed growth of the Self-Sustaining Growth Town. The scale of development is proportionate to the receiving environment. (viii) No recorded monuments on site. Nearest monument (Site and Monuments Record (SMR) (GA084-118, Road/Trackway)) is located approximately 50m to the northwest from site. The site has been in previous 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.

[3] https://visual.cso.ie/?body=entity/censusurbanprofiles

Table 3 Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts

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**
a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),	**Geographic Area:** Direct impacts confined to the 1.0815ha site at Raheen, Athenry. Indirect impacts extend to immediately adjacent properties during construction (noise, dust, visual) and the local road network (traffic). The zone of influence for ecological impacts extends approximately 100m for noise/disturbance effects on fauna. **Population Affected:** Construction phase impacts on approximately 30-40 adjacent households in Gort Mhaoilir estate and along the L3103 road. Operational phase provides housing for approximately 58-87 residents (based on 2-3 persons per household). **Ecological Extent:** Loss of grassland and scrub habitats affects local populations of common birds (8 species recorded), bats (3 species confirmed in area), and mammals (fox, hedgehog, rabbit). This represents a small fraction of similar habitat available in the wider Athenry rural hinterland. The spatial extent is localised with no impacts of county, regional or national magnitude.
b) the nature of the impact,	**Construction Phase:** Temporary negative impacts including noise, dust, traffic disruption, and risk of sediment release. These are typical construction impacts, well-understood and manageable through CEMP implementation. **Operational Phase:** Mixed impacts - negative through permanent habitat loss and introduction of lighting to a dark site; positive through provision of 28 homes

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
	addressing documented housing need. Introduction of domestic activities, traffic (174-290 daily movements), and artificial lighting represents typical suburban development impacts. **Ecological Nature:** Direct habitat loss is permanent but affects common habitat types. Indirect impacts on bat commuting routes and foraging can be mitigated through lighting design. No impacts on designated sites or protected species breeding sites.
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 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,	**Intensity:** Low to moderate intensity impacts. Habitat loss is complete within the footprint but involves common habitat types. Construction noise will reach 70 dB LAeq at nearest receptors but within acceptable limits. Traffic increase of 174-290 movements readily absorbed by road network. Lighting impacts reduced to <1 lux at boundaries through design. **Complexity:** Impacts are straightforward and well-understood, typical for residential development. No complex ecological interactions, no cumulative pollution pathways, no technical uncertainty in impact prediction. Standard mitigation hierarchy applies effectively.

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
e) the probability of the impact,	**Certain Impacts:** Habitat loss within footprint (100%), land use change (100%), construction noise and dust (100%), increased traffic (100%), introduction of lighting (100%). **Likely Impacts:** Displacement of fauna currently using site (high probability but species will relocate to similar habitats nearby). **Unlikely Impacts:** Water pollution (low probability with CEMP controls), introduction of invasive species (low probability with biosecurity measures), loss of bat roosts (low probability with pre-construction surveys and retention of mature trees). Most impacts are certain but of limited significance. Potentially significant impacts have low probability due to mitigation measures.
f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact,	**Onset:** Construction impacts immediate upon commencement (anticipated 2026). Habitat loss immediate upon site clearance. Operational impacts gradual as houses are occupied (2027-2028). **Duration:** Construction impacts temporary (24 months). Habitat loss and land use change permanent. Operational impacts (traffic, lighting, domestic activities) permanent. **Frequency:** Construction impacts daily during working hours (08:00-18:00 weekdays, 08:00-13:00 Saturdays). Operational impacts continuous. **Reversibility:** Construction impacts fully reversible upon completion. Land use change and habitat loss irreversible in practical terms. Some ecological functionality can be restored through landscaping and enhancement measures over 5-10 years.

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
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	Recent and planned developments in Athenry include the adjacent Gort Mhaoilir estate and a proposed 43-unit development approximately 62m from the site (JBA Consulting, April 2025). Combined with this development, approximately 71 new units are planned in the immediate area. **Cumulative Assessment:** • **Habitat Loss:** Incremental loss of agricultural/semi-natural habitats at urban edge continuing established pattern • **Traffic:** Combined additional traffic remains within road network capacity • **Infrastructure:** Athenry WWTP confirmed adequate capacity for planned growth ('Amber' status) • **Ecology:** Both developments support same bat species and similar habitats - cumulative loss of foraging area but dark corridors maintained • **Construction:** Phased construction timelines reduce intensity of temporary impacts Cumulative impacts are consistent with planned growth for Self-Sustaining Growth Town. No unacceptable cumulative effects identified.
h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.	**High Effectiveness Mitigation Available:** • Construction impacts: CEMP implementation proven 90-95% effective for noise, dust, water protection

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
	• Bat impacts: Lighting design achieving <1 lux / or no increase in existing baseline levels. • Bird impacts: Timing restrictions completely avoid nesting season impacts • Water quality: SuDS and treatment systems prevent deterioration **Moderate Effectiveness:** • Habitat compensation: Native planting provides partial ecological replacement over time (40-50% functionality restored within 10 years) • Visual impacts: Landscaping softens but cannot fully mitigate rural to suburban transition **Inherent Impacts:** • Land use change and direct habitat loss cannot be avoided • Some lighting and traffic impacts unavoidable though minimised With comprehensive mitigation, residual impacts are reduced to minor significance levels acceptable for planned development in this location.

Table 4 Potential Impacts by EIA Topic

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
Population and Human Health	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: The development provides 28 residential units addressing documented housing need in Athenry, a designated Self-Sustaining Growth Town. Construction phase impacts on adjacent residents (approximately 30-40 households) 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. Operational phase introduces 58-87 new residents to an area with established community infrastructure and services. Health and safety measures during construction will comply with Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013. The development includes public open space and footpaths promoting physical activity and community interaction. Connection to municipal water and wastewater services ensures public health protection. Traffic calming measures and footpath provision ensure pedestrian safety. Overall positive impact through quality housing provision in planned location with necessary infrastructure. No significant negative impacts on population or human health.
Biodiversity / Species and Habitats	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: Detailed ecological assessment completed (EcIA Report, AEE, January 2026) identifying impacts and mitigation. Loss of rank grassland (GS2) and scrub (WS1) within the 1.0815 site represents common habitat types with no Annex I habitats present. Three bat species confirmed in area (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Leisler's Bat) with mature trees showing roost potential to be retained with appropriate Root Protection Zones implemented. Pre-construction surveys will confirm absence of roosts before any tree removal. Bat-sensitive lighting design maintaining <1 lux at boundaries ensures continued functionality of commuting routes. Eight 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 7.6km away). Comprehensive mitigation includes ecological supervision, biodiversity enhancements (native planting, 6-8 bird boxes, 4-5 bat boxes, swift bricks on 20% of dwellings, hedgehog gaps 13cm x 13cm), and biosecurity

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	measures preventing invasive species introduction. With mitigation, residual impacts are minor and not significant in ecological terms.
Lands and Soils	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: Permanent change of 1.0815 from agricultural grassland to residential use on lands zoned for development. Soils are typical agricultural soils without special geological or pedological interest. No prime agricultural land affected. Topsoil will be stripped, stored according to best practice (stockpiles <2m height), and reused in landscaping and gardens. Decommissioning of existing WWTS requires appropriate disposal of residual materials to licensed facilities. No contaminated land issues identified. No peat soils or carbon-rich substrates present. Earthworks required for foundations and infrastructure are standard for residential development. No deep excavations or slope stability issues. Site investigations will confirm ground conditions prior to construction. Soil compaction and erosion during construction managed through CEMP measures. Post-development soil functions partially maintained in gardens and open spaces (approximately 40% of site retained as permeable surfaces). Land use change is consistent with county and local area plan objectives. No significant impact on land or soil resources.
Water	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: No watercourses on or adjacent to site. Clarinbridge River 800m 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 (sediment, hydrocarbons) managed through comprehensive CEMP measures including silt fencing, settlement ponds, oil interceptors, and designated refuelling areas >50m from any drains. No works in or near watercourses. Operational foul water connects to Athenry WWTP (D0193) with confirmed capacity ('Amber' status with headroom for development). Surface water management through SuDS (permeable paving, swales, attenuation) maintaining greenfield runoff rates with appropriate treatment. Detailed drainage design (SDS, December 2025) demonstrates compliance with GDSDS

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	standards. No private wells or water abstraction affected. Flood risk assessment confirms site outside flood zones. With standard water protection measures, no significant impacts on water environment.
Air & Climate	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: Construction phase dust managed through standard suppression measures (dampening, wheel washing, covering stockpiles). No significant dust-generating industrial processes. Construction vehicle emissions temporary and limited in scale. Operational emissions from 28 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 (solar panels, heat pumps) encouraged through development design. Location at edge of existing settlement with footpath connections promotes sustainable transport options. 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.
Noise and Vibration	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: Baseline environment is quiet rural/suburban edge with existing traffic noise from L3103 road. 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 except emergencies. Noisiest activities (excavation, piling if required) limited to periods of lowest sensitivity. Construction traffic routed to minimise residential disturbance. Vibration from construction equipment within limits to prevent structural damage (BS 7385). Operational noise from 28 households consistent with existing residential character. Traffic increase (174-290 daily movements) represents minor addition to existing flows. No industrial or commercial noise sources. Development design includes traffic calming reducing vehicle speeds and associated noise. Standard construction noise management makes impacts acceptable. No significant noise or vibration impacts.
Landscape and Visual	

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No Rationale: Site at urban-rural interface where landscape already transitioning from agricultural to suburban. No designated scenic routes or protected views affected. Existing visual context includes adjacent Gort Mhaoilir estate and ribbon development along roads. Change from open field to housing represents local visual impact primarily affecting immediately adjacent properties. Two-storey house design consistent with prevailing settlement pattern and heights. Retention of mature boundary trees where feasible maintains some landscape structure. Native hedgerow planting and tree planting in open spaces provides visual softening over time. Gardens and open space (approximately 40% of site) maintain green character. Development extends existing built edge rather than creating isolated intrusion. Visual change is inevitable but acceptable in context of planned urban expansion. No significant landscape impacts.
Material Assets (Traffic and Transport)	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: Site accessed from existing road network (L3103 and Gort Mhaoilir Road) with adequate capacity. Traffic generation estimated at 174-290 daily trips (6-10 per household) with peak hour flows of 23-29 vehicles. Traffic Impact Assessment not required given scale below 100 peak hour trips threshold. Construction traffic managed through Traffic Management Plan within CEMP including designated routes, delivery scheduling, and wheel washing. Footpaths provided throughout development connecting to existing network promoting walking and cycling. Public transport accessible with bus services on R347 (approximately 500m). Adequate parking provided per Development Plan standards preventing on-street parking issues. No significant junctions operating above capacity. Emergency vehicle access provided to all units. Traffic calming ensures safety within development. Cumulative traffic with other developments remains within road network capacity. No significant traffic or transport impacts.
Waste Management	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: Construction waste over 24-month period managed through Construction Waste Management Plan within CEMP. Excavated soil reused on-site where suitable, excess material tested and removed to licensed facilities. Construction and demolition waste segregated per European Waste Catalogue codes

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	targeting 80% diversion from landfill. Decommissioning of existing WWTS requires appropriate disposal of residual sludge to licensed facilities. Operational domestic waste from 28 households (36-73 tonnes annually based on EPA statistics) managed through Galway County Council three-bin system. All waste streams within capacity of existing licensed infrastructure. No significant waste impacts.
Cultural Heritage (Archaeological and Architectural)	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: No recorded monuments within the site boundary. Nearest Recorded Monument is GA084-118 (Road) located approximately 150m west of the site in Ballygarraun South, Raheen. GA050-116 (Ringfort) is located approximately 400m to the southeast. 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. Review of historical mapping shows no former structures or features of interest. 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. No significant cultural heritage impacts anticipated.
Interactions	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No* Rationale: Primary interaction between biodiversity and land use through habitat loss, addressed through mitigation hierarchy and enhancement measures. Construction phase interactions between noise/dust/traffic impacts on human health, managed through CEMP ensuring no significant combined effects. Water and biodiversity interactions through potential pollution pathways prevented by SuDS and construction controls. Landscape and biodiversity interactions through retention of mature trees serving dual visual and ecological functions. Climate and traffic interactions through sustainable transport infrastructure reducing emissions. No synergistic or antagonistic interactions identified that would create significant effects beyond individual topic assessments. Interactions are typical for residential development and well-understood. Mitigation measures address both individual and interactive impacts. No significant interactive effects identified.
Cumulative Impacts	*Is this likely to result in a significant impact? No*

Topic	Comment on Potential Impacts
	Rationale: Athenry designated for growth with infrastructure capacity assessed and confirmed. Other recent/approved developments include adjacent Gort Mhaoilir estate and proposed 43-unit development 62m away (JBA Consulting, 2025). Combined habitat loss estimated at 15-20ha over past decade, representing planned transition at urban edge rather than uncontrolled sprawl. Cumulative traffic (additional 71 units in immediate area) within road capacity with no congestion issues. Athenry WWTP confirmed adequate capacity for projected growth. Cumulative construction impacts avoided through temporal separation of projects. Combined landscape change consistent with Local Area Plan vision for Athenry expansion. Infrastructure upgrades (footpaths, services) accommodate cumulative development. Ecological networks maintained through retention of boundary features and enhancement measures across developments. Cumulative growth managed through development plan process. No unacceptable cumulative impacts identified.

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 28 no. two-storey houses with associated internal roads, footpaths, parking, public open space and all necessary infrastructure on a 1.0815ha site at Raheen, Athenry, Co. Galway. The existing wastewater treatment system on site will be decommissioned as the development will connect to the Athenry municipal sewer network.

A mandatory EIA threshold of 500 dwelling units exists in legislation. The proposed development of 28 units falls substantially below this threshold. When considered cumulatively with the adjacent proposed development of 43 units located approximately 62m from the site, the combined 71 units remains 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 7.6km distant with no ecological pathways identified. While the development will result in loss of grassland habitat, this comprises common species with no Annex I habitats present.

Three bat species have been confirmed in the area (Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, and Leisler's Bat) with mature trees on site showing roost potential. Comprehensive mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project design including pre-construction surveys, timing restrictions for vegetation clearance outside bird nesting season, and bat-sensitive lighting design maintaining less than 1 lux at ecological boundaries.

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 and specific ecological measures detailed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan.

6.0 Conclusion

The proposed project is not a development for which an EIA is mandatory. The proposed housing development of 28 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 1.0815ha 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, site surveys conducted on 30th August 2025, the Appropriate Assessment Screening report and Ecological Impact Assessment. The AA Screening (AEE, January 2026) concluded that there will be no significant effects to Natura 2000 sites as a result of the proposed development, alone or in

combination with other projects. The nearest European sites at 7.6km 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, seasonal timing restrictions, ecological supervision, bat-sensitive lighting specifications, retention of mature trees, 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. Enhanced biosecurity measures will prevent introduction of invasive species given the presence of Japanese Knotweed in the wider area.

Infrastructure capacity has been confirmed as adequate with Athenry WWTP at 'Amber' status with sufficient headroom for this development and public water supply confirmed. Surface water will be managed through SuDS maintaining greenfield runoff rates. The development forms part of the planned expansion 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 24-month construction period. These will be effectively managed through CEMP implementation. Operational impacts are consistent with suburban residential development and acceptable in this zoned 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. It may be concluded that the proposed development site at Raheen can accommodate the development without significant environmental impact and a detailed EIAR is not required.