
GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

56 UNIT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AT COSMONA, LOUGHREA, CO. GALWAY

SCREENING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

OCTOBER 2024

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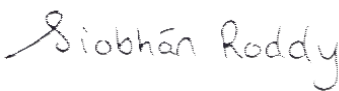
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**DOCUMENT APPROVAL**

PROJECT	56 Unit Residential Development at Cosmona, Loughrea, Co, Galway	
CLIENT / JOB NO	Galway County Council	6561
DOCUMENT TITLE	Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment	

Prepared by**Reviewed / Approved by**

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October 2024		

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1. INTRODUCTION

Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Limited have been commissioned by Galway County Council to carry out a Stage I Appropriate Assessment Screening under Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) for the Provision of Works of a 56 Unit Residential Development at Cosmona, Loughrea, Co, Galway. The works hereafter in this report will be identified as 'the Proposed Development'.

This report provides an Environmental Impact Assessment screening for a Part 179A housing development consisting of an area of land measuring 24,751m² located at Cosmona, Loughrea, Co. Galway. The 179A measure was implemented to allow for accelerated delivery of social, affordable and cost-rental housing by local authorities by way of exemption from the local authority own development 'Part 8' process in the section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act) in strictly defined circumstances.

The amendments to the Act and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (the regulations) are balanced with the need to provide for the accelerated delivery of social and affordable housing while also ensuring proper planning and sustainable development by means of the introduction of a temporary time-bound exemption from the 'Part 8' process for the approval of local authority own development housing projects on local authority or State owned lands. This planning amendment will assist local authorities to accelerate housing delivery and is being utilised for this screening process.

This Part 179A process is being pursued by Galway County Council Housing Section.

The EIA Screening Report has been prepared to assess the potential impacts on the environment of the Proposed Development at the subject site and to assess the requirement or otherwise from an EIA.

The proposal is for a residential development consisting of the construction of 56 No. new residential units. The development also includes public open space of 4,881m².

The above approach delivers a mixture of 1-, 2-, 3-, 4- & 5-bedroom units in accordance with Urban Housing Policy P-UHOU-3. The public open space is also in accordance with the Urban Housing Policy.

This report is prepared with input from Vincent Hannon Architects and Jennings O' Donovan & Partners Ltd (JOD) so that the possible effect on the environment has been examined through the process of an EIAR Screening process (detailed below) and the most appropriate form of development delivered at this site.

1.1 Purpose of this Statement

The purpose of this Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Statement is to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is required for the Proposed Development and to identify any environmental issues that might arise. It is worth noting that this Proposed Development is below

any threshold, and we do not consider a Schedule 7A screening process will be required as per Schedule 5 Parts 1 & 2 of the Planning Development Regulations 2001 (S.I. No. 600 of 2001), as amended.

This report is supported and informed by accompanying documentation including an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared by JOD.

1.2 Statement of Authority

This Stage I Appropriate Assessment Screening has been prepared by Siobhan Roddy and Sarah Moore and Reviewed by David Kiely.

Siobhan Roddy is a graduate Environmental Scientist with a BSc in Environmental Science and Technology from Dublin City University. She has experience through various projects since joining JOD with a current focus on the environmental sector. Siobhan's key capabilities are in report writing of EIAR Chapters, Appropriate Assessments, Natura Impact Statements, Feasibility Studies and using software such as ArcGIS Pro.

Sarah Moore is an Environmental Scientist in JOD with over 17 years of environmental consultancy experience. She has obtained a MSc in Environmental Engineering from Queens University, Belfast, and a BSc in Environmental Science from University of Limerick. Since joining JOD, Sarah has been involved as a Project Environmental Scientist on a range of renewable energy, wastewater, structures and commercial projects. She has experience in the preparation of Appropriate Assessments, Ecological Impact Assessments, Environmental Impact Assessments and Geographic Information Systems.

2. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVITIES

2.1 The Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will comprise an area of approximately 24,751m² to facilitate the development of 56 housing units. The units will consist of 3 different bungalow units: 3 bed/5 person (1), 2 bed/4 person (1), 2 bed/3 person (9), and 5 different two storey units: 5bed/8 person (1), 4bed/7 Person (2), 3 bed/6person (3), 3 bed/5person (21), 2 bed/4person (6), and also 3 blocks of apartment units: 2 bed/3 person (6) and 1bed/ 2person (6).

In addition to the housing units, the Proposed Development will consist of an open space area (4,881m² total), 2m wide footpath, 6m wide access road, garden fencing/walls, 106 parking spaces and 4 accessible parking spaces.

The Proposed Development site is relatively flat with ground levels consistently between approximately 82m and 78.5m OD. The ground level drops from c.82m OD at the western boundary to c.78.5m OD at the eastern boundary of the site, a drop of c.3.5m.. The existing Site Plan is shown in **Figure 2.1**.



Figure 2.1: Existing Site Plan

2.2 Location

The Proposed Development is located approximately 1km to the north of Loughrea, County Galway (**Figure 2.2**). Galway City Centre is located approximately 54km to the west. The proposed development is located approximately 990m north of Lough Rea and approximately 450m west of the Kilcogan River. The land in ownership of the applicant covers an area of approximately 32,968m² (8.14 acres) while the land to which the application relates covers an area of approximately 24,751m² (6.11 acres). The site is bounded by a housing estate to the northern boundary. The R530 extends the full length of the site boundary to the east. The southern and western boundaries are bordered by an existing natural stone wall, however, sections of this natural stone wall are to be demolished as part of the Proposed Development. There is a graveyard to the southwest of the proposed development. The Site is located on improved agricultural grassland (GA1) which has been modified and used for grazing. There are treeline (WL2)/ hedgerow (WL1) habitats along the north, west, south and central site boundaries. There are mature trees reaching 10-15m tall in the centre of the site. WL1/WL2 habitats are sometimes discontinuous, especially along the southern site boundary. Treeline/hedgerow habitats are more dense and support semi-mature trees along the northern Proposed Development boundary.

Onsite WL1/WL2 habitats have associated stone walls (BL1) along much of their length, reaching generally approx. 1m tall. Sections of the walls are in disrepair.



Figure 2.2: Location of the Proposed Development Site

A review of the online planning file for the site confirms that there are no current planning permissions active on the subject site. There was planning permission submitted by Lidl Ireland in May 2024 for the construction of a single storey store with a car park located approximately 10m to the south of the proposed development.

Designated Sites - Special Protection Area 'Lough Rea SPA' and a Special Area of Conservation 'Lough Rea SAC' are located 990m to the south of the Proposed Development.

risk or flooding regime. As such, no further stages of flood risk assessment are required for the site (Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4: Flood map in the vicinity of the proposed development (Source: www.floodinfo.ie, 2024)

Hydrology and Hydrogeology

The Proposed Development is located within the Water Framework Directive (WFD) wider catchment area of Galway Bay South East covering an area of 1,267.9km² and is located within the Kilcogan_SC_010 WFD sub catchment (149.86km²).

The site overlies bedrock which is classified as a '*Locally Important Aquifer - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones*'. The groundwater vulnerability of the site is classified as both moderate 'M' and high 'H'. The Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems (GWDTE) Rahasane Turlough Ground waterbody which underlies the Proposed Development site currently has a water classification of 'Good'. There was a well (borehole) drilled in the vicinity of the Proposed Development in December 1999, however, the yield was recorded as poor. There are no springs or wells recently recorded within the vicinity of the site.

The nearest watercourse is the order 2 Kilcogan River (Segment Code: 29_513) which lies approximately 450m east of the Proposed Development (Figure 2.5). The Kilcogan River flows in a westerly direction for approximately 35km before entering Galway Bay, part of Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA. The River subsequently discharges into the Atlantic Ocean.



Figure 2.5: Rivers within the vicinity of the Proposed Development

Currently, the groundwater in the area has significant underlying pressures from agriculture and domestic wastewater (EPA Water Maps, accessed July, 2024). The project is within the Rahasane Turlough groundwater body for the abstraction of drinking water (Article 7- EPA Code IEPA1_WE_G_0100). The Water Framework Directive (WFD) latest status for the Rahasane Turlough GWB (2016-2021) is 'Good', indicating no change from the previous 2013-2018 and 2010-2015 records held. The site is not within a GSI public or group water scheme source protection area. The Proposed Development is within the Rahasane Turlough groundwater body for the abstraction of drinking water (Article 7- EPA code IEPA1_WE_G_0100).

The EPA Maps (Water) website was also accessed (July 2024) to examine the Proposed Development area and its environs for nitrate and phosphorus loading and Pollutant Impact Potential (PIP). PIP maps for Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorus (P) have been generated by the EPA to show the highest risk areas in the landscape for losses of N and P to waters. The PIP model estimates the annual nutrient losses from agricultural land at specific locations, using spatial data from farm management, soils and hydrogeology. This model estimates loads at an annual temporal resolution.

The Proposed Development and immediate surrounding lands have a Phosphorus ranking of between 4 and 7 (7 is the lowest impact ranking). Pollution Impact Potential Nitrate (PIP N) for the lands within

and surrounding the Project have a ranking of 7. The nature of the Proposed Development will generate a demand for water, but this is for residential use and is not considered significant. Adherence to best practice Construction and Environmental Management during the construction phase will ensure that the Proposed Development would not result in pollution of groundwater or any surface water. The lack of an overall ranking for these parameters likely reflects little fertiliser use on The Proposed Development land in the past, with low level or no stock. Overall, the Critical Source Areas Maps for The Proposed Development and adjacent lands do not indicate a Site where either phosphorus or nitrates are a significant issue.

A Flood Risk Assessment Report (FRA) has been prepared by Jennings O'Donovan & Partners Limited for Galway County Council to assess the flood risk associated with the Proposed Development. The report was prepared in accordance with the report 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities' issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in November 2009.

Management of surface water for the Proposed Development has been designed to comply with the policies and guidelines outlined in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GDSDS) and with the requirements of the Galway City Council.

It is also noted that all wastewater will be pumped to an existing public sewer and will discharge into the public network at the south of the site. All sewer works will be designed and constructed in accordance with the following:

- Irish Water Code of practice for wastewater infrastructure, connections and developer services, design and construction requirements for self-lay developments July 2020 (revision 2), IW-CDS-5030-03.
- Irish Water Wastewater infrastructure standard details, connections and developer services, construction requirements for self-lay developments; July 2020 (revision 04), IW-CDS-5030-01.

In line with Codes of Practices as outlined above, it is considered that the Proposed Development provides treatment of collected run-off, provides a SuDS treatment train approach and is low risk of pollutants. The SuDS principles that influence the planning and design process, enabling SuDS to mimic natural drainage are:

- Storing runoff and releasing it slowly (attenuation)
- Harvesting and using the rain close to where it falls.
- Allowing water to soak into the ground (infiltration).
- Slowly transporting (conveying) water on the surface.
- Filtering out pollutants.
- Allowing sediments to settle out by controlling the flow of the water.

The proposed drainage scheme takes into account a number of the above listed principles through the following measures:

- The proposed attenuation tank stores runoff and releases it slowly into the public network.
- Providing public open space green areas allowing rainfall to naturally percolate into the ground.
- Strategic placing of gullies to keep road surface gradients as gentle as possible to cater for the slow transporting of water on the surface.
- Proposing a class 1 petrol/oil interceptor to remove pollutants from the system.

2.4 Habitats

When examining the project site on the EPA maps using Corine 2018, the habitats surrounding the project site are all classed as artificial surfaces and urban fabric or otherwise classified as artificial surface BL3, according to Fossitt (2000). The site itself is bordered by a road on the east side, a housing estate to the north and north west while the south of the project site is bordered by managed grassland and agriculture (GA1, improved agricultural grassland, Fossitt, 2000).

The Proposed Development is located on improved agricultural grassland (GA1) which has been modified and used for grazing. There are treeline (WL2)/ hedgerow (WL1) habitats along the north, west, south and central site boundaries. There are mature trees reaching 10-15m tall in the centre of the site. WL1/WL2 habitats are sometimes discontinuous, especially along the southern site boundary. Treeline/hedgerow habitats are more dense and support semi-mature trees along the northern Proposed Development boundary. Onsite WL1/WL2 habitats have associated stone walls (BL1) along much of their length, reaching generally approx. 1m tall. Sections of the walls are in disrepair.

2.5 Air and Climate

The EPA designate the area as Air Zone D: Rural Ireland. County Galway has one air quality monitoring station located in Galway City (53.2740 °N, -9.0485 °E). Particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and nitrogen oxide are measured at the Galway city station. The monitoring station is located at Eyre Square, Galway.

In relation to the Proposed Development, the monitoring station is located approx. 45km west.

The EPA Air Quality site was accessed on 02 July 2024 and the following ratings noted:

1. The latest recording at Galway City air monitoring station 105. Eyre Square, Galway had an Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH) of 1 (Good) with latest PM_{2.5} average of 8.49 µg/m³, PM₁₀ of 16.2 µg/m³ and NO₂ of 15.9 µg/m³.

There is no significant impact on air pollution expected from the Proposed Development outside of potential temporary dust impact. Air and Climate are not likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development.

3. EIA SCREENING

Establishing if the proposal is a '56 Unit Residential Development at Cosmona, Loughrea, CO. Galway:	
Development Summary:	The Proposed Development will comprise an area of approximately 24,751m² to facilitate the development of 56 housing units. The units will consist of 3 different bungalow units: 3 bed/5 person (1), 2 bed/4 person (1), 2 bed/3 person (9), and 5 different two storey units: 5bed/8 person (1), 4bed/7 Person (2), 3 bed/6person (3), 3 bed/5person (21), 2 bed/4person (6), and also 3 blocks of apartment units: 2 bed/3 person (6) and 1bed/2person (6). In addition to the housing units, the Proposed Development will consist of an open space area (4,881m² total), 2m wide footpath, 6m wide access road, garden fencing/walls, 106 parking spaces and 4 accessible parking spaces.
Was Screening Determination carried out under Section 176A-C?	☐ Yes, no further action required. ☒ No, Proceed to Part A
A. Schedule 5 Part 1 - Does the development comprise a project listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 , of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)? (Tick as appropriate)	
☐ Yes, specify class _____	EIA is mandatory. No Screening required
☒ No	Proceed to Part B
B. Schedule 5 Part 2 - Does the development comprise a project listed in Schedule 5, Part 2 , of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it meet/exceed the thresholds? (Tick as appropriate)	
☐ No, the development is not a project listed in Schedule 5, Part 2	No Screening required
☐ Yes, The Proposed Development is listed in Schedule 5, Part 2 and meets/exceeds the threshold, specify class (including threshold): [specify class & threshold here]	EIA is Mandatory No Screening required
☒ Yes, The Proposed Development is of a type listed but is <i>sub-threshold</i> :	Proceed to Part C

	Preliminary Examination:	The planning authority shall carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development.
	Yes/No/ Uncertain:	Comment:
Nature of the development: <i>Is the nature of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</i> <i>Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, or result in significant emissions or pollutants?</i>	No	The existing environment is located on improved agricultural grassland which has been modified and used for grazing Waste: • General household waste. • Constructional waste and materials which may be excavated from site during development. Emissions: none Pollutants: low risk of pollutants
Size of the development: <i>Is the size of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</i> <i>Are there cumulative considerations having regard to other existing and/or permitted projects?</i>	No	There are other housing estates within the vicinity of the site (Hazelwood housing estate is within 100m). There are many mixed-use buildings (residential and commercial) around the site. Having regard to the scale of the permitted developments in the vicinity, the AA Screening Assessment noted that there will be no in-combination effects with local planning applications.
Location: <i>Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or does it have the potential to impact on an ecologically sensitive site or location?¹</i> <i>Does the proposed development have the potential to affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area?</i>	No	An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AASR) has been prepared. The AASR found that: "It can be objectively concluded that there are not likely to be any significant effects on any European Site as a result of the construction or operation of The Proposed Development at Cosmona, Loughrea, Co. Galway." The proposed development will be constructed in accordance with the design and best practice that is described within this report, therefore significant effects on biodiversity are not anticipated at any geographic scale.

¹ Sensitive locations or features includes European sites, NHA/pNHA, Designated Nature Reserves, land designated as a refuge for flora and fauna, and any other ecological site which is the objective of a CDP/LAP (including draft plans).

Conclusions		
Based on a preliminary examination of the nature, size or location of the development, is there a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment?		
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA is not required	X
There is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	Screening Determination Required	N/A
	Schedule 7A information required	N/A
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA not required	N/A
The preliminary examination as required by Article 120 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) has determined that formal EIA Screening is not required therefore it is not necessary to proceed to Step 3. It is considered that a sub-threshold EIAR is not required for the Proposed Development as the proposal is below the thresholds of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations.		

4. CONCLUSION

This EIA screening report has been prepared in relation to a part 179a residential development on land situated at Cosmona, Loughrea, Co. Galway in accordance with Article 120 (1) (b) of the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 as amended, having regard to the following:

- The location, size and nature of this serviced site located in an urban setting and distanced from protected and/or environmentally sensitive sites.
- The proposed development is below the threshold of a mandatory EIA which would require an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)
- The modest scale and quantum of the residential development proposed and integration with the adjoining community of Galway city.
- The description of possible effects on the environment are not considered significant and therefore further assessment pursuant to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended are not considered necessary.
- An Appropriate Assessment Screening has been carried out. It concluded that the proposed development will not cause significant impacts on any Natura 2000 sites, and that an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

All standard practices will be employed throughout the construction and operation phase of the development to ensure that the Proposed Development will not create any significant impacts on the quality of the surrounding environment. Is the proposed development