

Gort Mhaoilir Residential Development

EIA Screening Report

April 2025

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Galway County Council

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This report describes work commissioned by Paul Keogh Architects, on behalf of Galway County Council. Laura Foster of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

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Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIAH	National Inventory of Architectural Heritage
NMS	National Monuments Service
OPR	Office of the Planning Regulator
pNHA	Proposed Natural Heritage Area
QI	Qualifying Interests
RPS	Record of Protected Structures
WFD	Water Framework Directive

1 Introduction

JBA Consulting Engineers and Scientists Ltd. (hereafter JBA) has been commissioned by Galway County Council to prepare an EIA Screening Report for a proposed residential development at Gort Mhaoilir, Galway (the 'proposed development'). The proposed development includes the construction of 43 no. new dwellings, including 31 no. houses and 12 no. apartments.

The proposed development will be submitted under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Act (2000) as amended.

1.1 Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to identify whether there is a need under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for an EIAR for the proposed development.

Schedule 5 (Parts 1 and 2) of the Act lists the groups of development projects which are subject to EIA screening under the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU. Part 1 lists those projects which are automatically subject to an EIAR due to the scale and nature of the project. Part 2 lists projects which are also likely to have significant environmental effects based on the nature and size of the development set out by threshold criteria.

An additional group of projects, which are considered sub-threshold developments under Part 2, may fall below the thresholds set but may, under further analysis, be deemed to have significant effects due to their location within a catchment, size, or proximity to sensitive areas.

This report documents the methodology employed to determine whether the proposed development falls under any of these groups, and therefore will have significant environmental impacts. Rationale has been given for the decision made in reference to the relevant legislation, and additional documents have been referenced where required.

This report is intended for the project as described below. Any significant changes to the project description or location would require preparation of a new EIA screening report.

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report and Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) have been prepared by JBA Consulting and have identified any potential impacts to Natura 2000 sites and other ecological receptors, respectively. This EIA Screening document, along with the AA Screening Report and EcIA, will be submitted under Part 8 of the planning process for the proposed development.

2 Description of Proposed Works

2.1 Site Location

The proposed development site is located to the north of the existing Gort Mhaoilir Estate and south of Gort Na Ri Estate, Athenry, Co. Galway. The proposed development connects to the existing Gort Mhaoilir access roads. The site is also bounded by The Surgery Medical Centre to the south.

The site is located an approximately 10-minute walk from Athenry Train Station and a 5-minute drive to join the M6 connecting Galway to Dublin and the M17/18 connecting Limerick City to Galway City and Tuam.

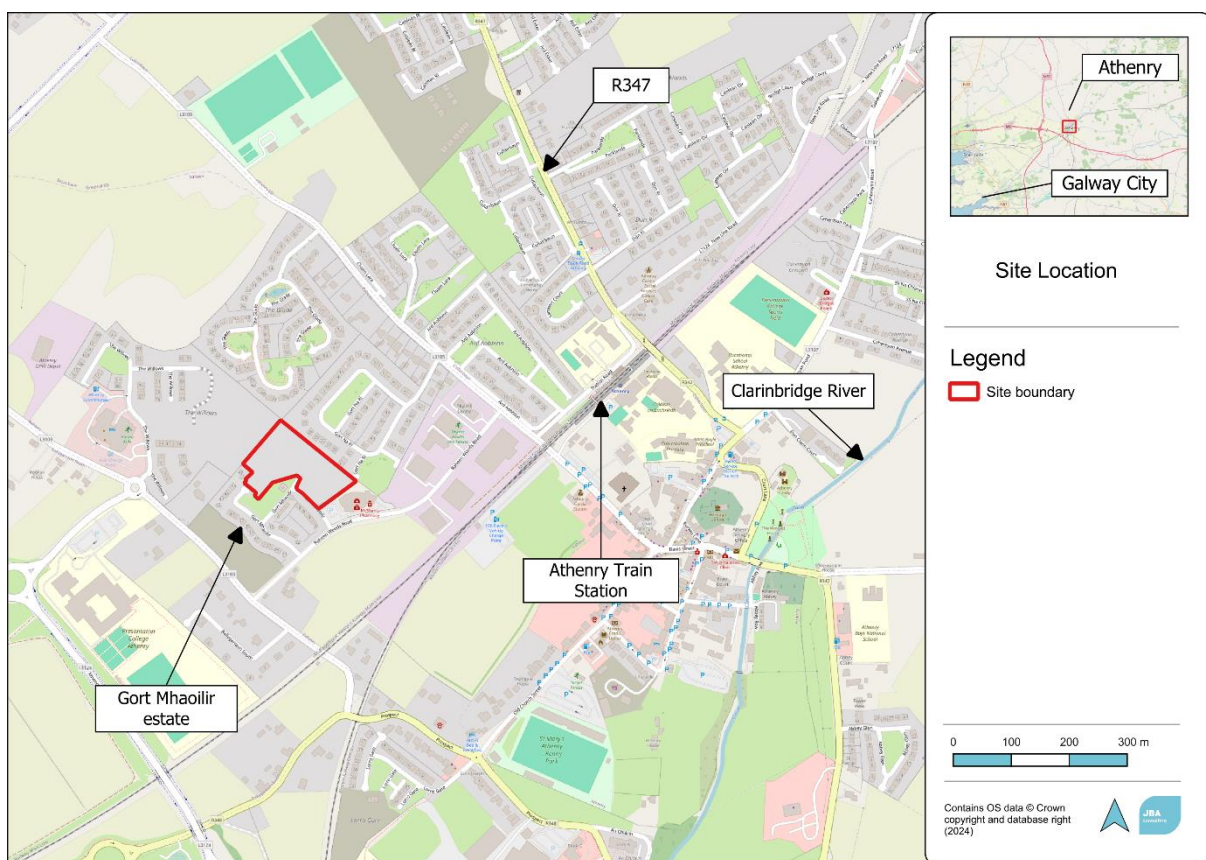


Figure 2-1: Site Location

2.2 Proposed Development

The proposed works for the development include: the construction of 43 no. new dwellings, including 31 no. houses and 12 no. apartments with all site development works, services etc. within the curtilage of the site and the construction of new footpaths to tie into the old footpaths. The proposed works include:

- 14 no. 2-bedroom housing units
- 16 no. 3-bedroom housing units
- 1 no. 4-bedroom housing unit

- 6 no. 2-bedroom duplex units; and
- 6 no. 1-bedroom duplex units.

New foul drainage, surface water drainage, water, gas, electrical, telecom services and diversion of existing services is also to be included as required.

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3 Purpose of Screening

3.1 Legislative Context for EIAR in Ireland

The EU has set out mandatory requirements for Environmental Impact Assessments under the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU). The Directive identifies certain project types, described under Annex I, that will always have significant environmental effects due to their nature and size. These projects are required to undergo an EIAR in every Member State.

For projects listed under Annex II, the EIA Directive gives Member States discretion to decide the limits of projects requiring an EIAR. In Ireland, mandatory thresholds have been set for projects that would otherwise fall under Annex II, which are described in Schedule 5 of The Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended. These thresholds are based on project characteristics including size and location. Projects within these thresholds are always subject to an EIAR. In some circumstances, projects considered below the thresholds set under Schedule 5 Part 2 may still be considered by the Planning Authority to have significant effects on the environment, such as in cases where the projects are in a location of particular environmental sensitivity and may also be subject to an EIAR. These sub-threshold projects are reviewed by the Planning Authority on a case-by-case basis.

The principal piece of legislation under which an EIAR may be undertaken for various developments is The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Further regulations are explained in The Planning and Development (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2001-2018.

Legislation is examined below as to whether an EIAR will be required for this project.

3.2 The Planning and Development Act 2000 - Mandatory EIAR

The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, Section 172 sets out the types of projects that require an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR):

An environmental impact assessment shall be carried out by the planning authority or the Board, as the case may be, in respect of an application for consent for proposed development where either:

- a. the proposed development would be of a class specified in
 - i. Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, and either -
 - I. such development would exceed any relevant quantity, area or other limit specified in that Part, or
 - II. no quantity, area or other limit is specified in that Part in respect of the development concerned, or
 - ii. Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and either -

- I. such development would exceed any relevant quantity, area or other limit specified in that Part, or
- II. no quantity, area or other limit is specified in that Part in respect of the development concerned, or

b.

- i. the proposed development would be a class specified in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 but does not exceed the relevant quantity, area or other limit specified in that Part, and
- ii. the planning authority or the Board, as the case may be, determines that the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

3.2.1 Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended

Projects which fall under Schedule 5, Part 1 are typically large infrastructure and energy projects and by their nature will always have significant environmental effects. The proposed development does not fall under Schedule 5, Part 1.

3.2.2 Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended

With regards to Part 2 projects, the categories and thresholds were examined for the following category:

10. Infrastructure projects

(b) (i) Construction of more than 500 dwelling units.

(iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.

(In this paragraph, “business district” means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)

The proposed development does not fall under any of the categories above. Therefore, an EIAR has not been automatically triggered for this proposed development.

However, it is necessary to consider if this development could result in significant environmental effects under the category of sub-threshold developments.

3.3 Sub-threshold EIAR

In accordance with the requirement to submit an EIAR with sub-threshold planning application (Article 103 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018), where a planning application for sub-threshold development is not accompanied by an EIAR, and the Planning Authority considers that the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment it shall, by notice in writing, require the applicant to submit an EIAR. This

process therefore occurs after submission of an application, if that application is not accompanied by an EIAR.

The decision as to whether a development is likely to have 'significant effects' on the environment must be taken with reference to the criteria set out in Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018. Schedule 7A requires that the following information be provided for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for EIAR:

1. A description of the proposed development, including in particular -
 - a. A description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works, and
 - b. A description of the location of the proposed development, with regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.
2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.
3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from -
 - a. The expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and
 - b. The use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.
 - c. The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018 (DHPLG, 2018).

In order to assist planning and other consenting authorities in deciding if significant effects on the environment are likely to arise in the case of development below the national mandatory EIAR thresholds, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government published a Guidance document in August 2003, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development and the Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (DHPLG, 2018b).

The criteria, as transposed in Irish legislation, are grouped under three headings:

- i. Characteristics of Proposed Development
- ii. Location of Proposed Development
- iii. Characteristics of Potential Impacts

For the purposes of assessing if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment in reference to these three parameters, the project is examined below in further detail.

4 Overview of Environmental Impacts

An overview of the potential environmental impacts of the development, according to themes presented in an EIAR, is provided below.

4.1 Population and Human Health

During construction, there is a risk to the health and safety of workers on the development, as with any construction project. This will be mitigated against by the operational plans devised by the contractor and will not be significant.

Residences in the vicinity of the proposed development will experience some negative impacts during the construction phase of the development. These will be temporary and will be mitigated against by the operational plans devised by the contractor and adherence to standard best practice regarding control of noise and vibration, dust, and limitations on working hours. No significant impacts on population and human health during construction are likely.

The proposed development will introduce new growth and housing opportunities to one of the main towns located on the Atlantic Gateway Initiative connecting Galway City and Limerick City. Athenry is identified as a town of Strategic Potential in the Galway County development Plan 2022-2028. Once operational, the development will provide a positive impact to population and human health.

4.2 Biodiversity

Ecological receptors that must be examined include protected Natura 2000 sites under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), as well as species protected under the Wildlife Act (1976), and any ecological receptors which may be negatively impacted by the proposed development, both directly and indirectly.

4.2.1 Proximity to Protected Sites

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening has been completed by JBA Consulting for this project to determine whether there is a potential for impacts on nearby Natura 2000 sites.

Those sites within 5km, plus hydrological connectivity extension, of the proposed development are shown in Table 3.1.

The AA Screening has not yet determined whether there are any likely significant impacts on any Natura 2000 sites as a result of the proposed development.

Table 4-1: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development

Natura 2000 site	Site Code	Approximate direct distance from site	Approximate hydrological distance from site
Monivea Bog SAC	002352	7.4km	7.4km via Groundwater
Lough Corrib SAC	000297	8.3km	10km via Groundwater
Rahasane Turlough SAC	000322	7.7km	No connection present
Rahasane Turlough SPA	004089	7.7km	No connection present
Galway Bay Complex SAC	000268	9.9km	14.5km via Surface water
Cregganna Marsh SPA	004142	11.3km	11.9km via Groundwater
Inner Galway Bay SPA	004031	11.6km	14.5km via Surface water
Castletaylor Complex SAC	000242	12.5km	12.9km via Groundwater
Lough Finall Complex SAC	000606	13.9km	13.9km via Groundwater
Kiltiernan Turlough SAC	001285	14.4km	18km via Groundwater
Ardrahan Grassland SAC	002244	14.8km	18.3km via Groundwater

4.2.2 Other Ecological Receptors

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) was carried out for the proposed development to assess potential impacts on ecological receptors. The EcIA concluded that based upon the information supplied and provided the works are carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures outlined above, there will be no significant impact, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, as a result of the works on mammals, bats, birds, or the ecology of protected areas in the surrounding environs.

The proposed development site is small scale, fenced off and located in a residential area. Significant impacts to ecological receptors are not expected during construction or operation, due to the nature of the proposed works and the lack of sensitive receptors on site.

The EcIA includes mitigation measures which should be read in full in that report. The mitigation measures include the following:

- Retaining commuting and foraging features for Bats
- Groundwater treatment during construction
- Reduce volumes of operational stormwater discharge

4.3 Soils and Geology

The underlying soil type is fine loamy drift with limestones; subsoil type is limestone till, with a small portion of the southeastern boundary of the underlain by karstified limestone bedrock at the surface. Subsoil permeability is classified as 'Moderate'. Underlying bedrock is pale grey clean skeletal limestone (Burren Formation).

The potential for impacts on the soil and geology environment is not likely to be significant due to the scale of project, maximum excavation is limited to 3.18m and weak land pathways outlined in the AA Screening.

4.4 Hydrology and Hydrogeology

4.4.1 Surface Water

The proposed site lies within the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Galway Bay South East catchment, Clarinbridge_SC_010 sub-catchment (EPA, 2020), and Clarinbridge_030 river sub-basin (WFD waterbody). The WFD waterbody is classed as Moderate status and At Risk. There are no surface waterbodies within the site boundary or the immediate vicinity. Surface water from the proposed development will be conveyed to the existing surface water network in the area.

There is no clear connection from the site to local waterbodies however many of the local drains have been culverted and an outfall to the Clarinbridge river southeast of the proposed development is assumed. As the development proposes to connect into the existing surface water drainage network, this provides a potential hydrological connection between the proposed project and the greater Galway Bay. The river is classed as “At Risk” and has an overall status of “Poor”. Approximately 1.1km downstream of the proposed development lies the Athenry Wastewater Treatment Plant.

There is not likely or significant impacts to surface water. The AA Screening determined that any accidental spills at the site will likely fall within the confines of the site boundary and any discharge to storm drains will be subject to standard environmental measures for the construction phase.

4.4.2 Groundwater

The groundwater body the site is located in is the Clarinbridge IE_WE_G_0008 WFD groundwater body, which has overall status of ‘Good’ and is classed as ‘Not at risk’. Groundwater vulnerability on-site is ‘Extreme’ with a small area of karst/rock at or near the surface along the southeastern boundary. (EPA, 2024).

The site occurs within a Regionally Important Aquifer – karstified (conduit); an aquifer in which there is an uneven distribution of permeability throughout the rock. Drainage is largely underground, with most flow occurring through the more permeable, solutionally enlarged, interconnected conduit zones, which may be several kilometres long. Karst landforms at the surface such as swallow holes, caves or dry valleys can provide direct access for recharge/surface water to enter the aquifer. Aquifer storage is frequently low, and groundwater flow is mainly via conduit; velocity through conduits is high. There is a strong interconnection between surface water and groundwater in this aquifer type.

The risk of groundwater contamination will only be present during the construction phase of the development, and with limited shallow excavations as outlined in Section 4.3, the potential impact is not significant. During construction, mitigation measures for the

protection of groundwater, as described in the EclA, will be put in place which will further reduce this risk.

Once operational, the development is unlikely to result in groundwater impacts.

4.4.3 Flood Risk

No Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out for the proposed development. The subject site is located within Flood Zone C. The risk of flooding to the site is therefore low and not significant.

4.5 Cultural Heritage

There are no archaeological features or protected structures within or directly bordering the proposed site. The most immediate archaeological feature is a road (GA084-118), in Ballygarraun South, Raheen, located 150m west of the proposed development. Due to the nature of the feature and distance from the site, no impacts are expected to occur.

There is the potential for undiscovered archaeological features to be uncovered. However, due to the lack of deep excavations and the development history of the surrounding area, this is unlikely. Any discoveries will be preserved in-situ and notified to the National Monuments Service (NMS), who may impose mitigation measures.

4.6 Air and Climate

There is the potential for impacts to air quality through emissions during the construction phase of the development, due to the operation of machinery on site and transport of materials to and from the site. These impacts will be mitigated against with measures outlined in the contractor's operating plans and are not likely to be significant given the size and nature of the proposed development.

The proposed development will not lead to significant air or climate impacts during operation.

4.7 Noise and Vibration

There is potential for localised noise and vibration impacts in the vicinity of the proposed development during the construction phase due to the operation of machinery on site. These impacts would be temporary and only during the construction phase. Mitigation measures against such impacts will be outlined in the operating plans to be devised by the contractor.

The proposed development will not lead to any significant noise or vibration impacts during the operational period.

4.8 Landscape and Visual

The proposed development will give rise to temporary landscape or visual impacts to residents living in proximity to the development or people using nearby cul de sacs during the construction period. Impacts during construction will be temporary and not significant.

There are no protected landscapes or views in proximity to the site.

When constructed, the proposed development will be low in landscape and visual impact for surrounding landowners and will be in character with the surrounding residential area.

4.9 Material Assets including Traffic, Utilities, and Waste

4.9.1 Traffic

During construction, there will be temporary disruptions on local roads during deliveries or due to machinery operating. Alternative routes are available in the area, and it is expected that such disruptions will be temporary and limited, and not significant.

Once operational, the proposed development will result in a slight increase in car trips by residence Gort Mhaolir Estate. The additional traffic will not be significant given the size of the proposed development.

4.9.2 Utilities

The proposed development will be serviced by new foul drainage, surface water drainage, water, gas, electrical, telecom services and diversion of existing services will be included as required.

4.9.3 Waste

Waste generated from site clearance will be inert and/or organic material and is expected to be redistributed or re-used within the site extents. Significant amounts of construction waste are not anticipated.

Once operational, the proposed development will generate small amounts of domestic waste that will be collected and disposed of at appropriate licensed facilities.

4.10 Cumulative Impacts

4.10.1 Plans

4.10.1.1 Galway County Development Plan 2022~2028

SS3 Strategic Potential (Level 3) Support the development of Athenry as a town of Strategic Potential as outlined in the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy in order to sustain a strong, vibrant urban centre which will act as an important driver for the local economy, reduce travel demand and support a large rural hinterland, while providing a complementary role to the Key Towns and MASP and the smaller towns and villages in the County.

4.10.1.2 Athenry Local Area Plan (LAP) 2023-2029

Chapter 1.1.1 Strategic Aims: Provide future residential and employment development in Athenry with supporting services and infrastructure as appropriate, including retail, community and amenity areas.

The proposed development site is also identified as an opportunity for residential development as part of Phase 1 of the LAP.

4.10.2 Projects

Recent developments or planning applications in the vicinity can have a cumulative impact with the proposed development. Larger development planning applications in the near vicinity from the last three years that have been granted permission were searched for. Applications for home extensions, internal alterations and retention are not listed as they are unlikely to contribute to a significant cumulative impact with the proposed development.

The following developments are located in the vicinity of the proposed development:

Planning Reference	Summary of Development	Address	Date Permission Granted
2360393	The sub-division of an existing site into two lots hereinafter referred to as 'Site A', which has an area of 3,276 sqm and 'Site B', has an area of 3,243 sqm. Planning permission also for the construction of a new storage warehouse on 'Site B' to include new vehicle access, parking, lighting, and all ancillary services to include all associated site works. Retention permission also for the existing entrance on 'Site A' as constructed on site previously granted under 99/901 & 22224 (Eircode N65 NW84) to include all ancillary services, and all associated site works with site layout as constructed	Raheen Industrial Estate, Athenry, Co. Galway	23/10/2023
2460627	The construction of a dwelling house with all associated services. Gross floor space of proposed works: 123.30 sqm	Ballygarraun South, Athenry, Co. Galway	26/8/2024
2460434	The demolition of existing 99sq.m. single storey 1960's habitable dwelling and construction of new 227sq.m. two storey, three-bedroom, dwelling, including relocated site entrance, new boundary wall, external store and carport and associated landscape works. Gross floor space of proposed works: (House) 227 sqm & (Carport) 23.4 sqm. Gross floor space of any demolition: 99 sqm	Caherroyn, Athenry, Co Galway	15/7/2024
2261321	The development will consist of: • the provision of a 2no. storey industrial warehousing unit & ancillary office space (8826.3sqm.). • the provision of a service yard plant & refuse area, distribution & circulation yard with 5no. level access loading bays. • the provision of solar PV panels; • the provision of 163no. car parking spaces & 163no. bicycle parking spaces. • the provision of internal roadways, pedestrian footpaths & associated landscaping. • the provision of a new vehicular & pedestrian access from Ballydavid South Road. • the provision of signage & all other associated site development works intended to facilitate the proposed development	Moanbaun Raheen & CULLAIRBAUN, Athenry, County Galway	2/10/2023

2460020	The demolition of an existing sub-standard, detached, dormer type, 4 - bedroom dwelling house, construction of a new replacement detached, 2 - storey, 4 - bedroom dwellinghouse and garden shed, including all ancillary siteworks and utilising existing service connections. Gross floor space of proposed works: 169.10 sqm (house) & 11.20 sqm (garage). Gross floor space of any demolition:147.60 sqm	Cullairbaun, Athenry, Galway	15/4/2024
2360106	The construction of a dwelling house and all associated services on revised site boundaries from that previously granted under Planning Reference No. 96/529. Gross floor space of works to be retained 128sqm.	Athenry, Athenry, Co. Galway	15/5/2023
221098	A development consisting of the demolition of the existing, vacated, two storey, former Clarin College school buildings, including all permanent and ancillary structures, existing footings and hardstanding within the site; as well as the removal of all disused on site drainage system and utility services, including any existing underground attenuation tanks. Gross floor space of any demolition: 4,450 sqm	Caheroyn, Caheroyn Road, Co Galway	6/3/2023
23196	The construction of a new educational campus that will comprise of two school buildings. Gaelscoil Riada a part one & two-storey, 16 classroom primary school with single class base SEN & ancillary spaces with total floor area of circa 2890sqm. Colaiste an Eachraidh a part one, two & three-storey post primary school with 17 general classrooms, 12 specialist classrooms, sports hall, single class base SEN & ancillary spaces with a total floor area of circa 6985sqm. Proposed site works to include the construction of standalone ESB substation & bin store, 2no. plant enclosures, all new hard play areas, shared central grass play area, general purpose external amenity spaces, access road with lay-by set down, 84no. carparking spaces, 48no. covered bicycle stands, ancillary infrastructure works, including new vehicular access points & new pedestrian access, together with new boundary treatments & landscaping works	Caheroyn Road, Athenry, Co. Galway	25/9/2023

5 Screening Assessment

5.1 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

To determine whether the characteristics of the proposed development are likely to have significant impacts on the environment, the following questions are answered in Table 5.1, following guidelines set out in the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) Practice Note PN02, Environmental Impact Assessment Screening (OPR, June 2021).

Table 5-1: Characteristics of the proposed development

Characteristics of the Proposed Development - Screening Questions	Comment
Could the scale (size or design) of the proposed development be considered significant (including any demolition works)?	No. The proposed development is small in scale compared to the surrounding area, consisting of 43 dwellings in Gort Mhaolir, Athenry, Co. Galway. The proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the surrounding residential area in terms of design and size and is therefore not considered significant. The proposed development can be accessed via existing access roads in the Gort Mhaolir estate. No demolition is required.
Considered cumulatively with other adjacent existing or permitted projects, could the effects of the proposed development be considered significant?	When considered cumulatively with other permitted projects, temporary disruptions in the Gort Mhaolir area may occur due to increased traffic and truck activity if construction takes place simultaneously. Due to the size of the proposed and permitted developments, significant impacts are not likely. Once the proposed development and all permitted projects are operational, the effects will not be significant, permitted that relevant utilities and facilities are able to function optimally under increased capacity.
Will the proposed development utilise a significant quantity of natural resources such as land, soil, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which	In terms of land area, the proposed development is small, 1.42ha, located in an established residential area. Excavated material will be reused as fill where

Characteristics of the Proposed Development - Screening Questions	Comment
are non-renewable or are in short supply?	appropriate, and the overall amount to be excavated is small. No water is required for the development, and a small amount of vegetation is to be removed. Therefore, there will not be a significant quantity of natural resources used.
Will the proposed development produce a significant quantity of waste?	No. Significant excavations are not required. Debris or rubbish generated during construction will be collected by a suitably licenced contractor and disposed of at appropriately licenced agents. Once operational, the proposed development will generate small amounts of domestic waste that will be collected and disposed of at appropriate licensed facilities.
Will the proposed development create a significant amount or type of pollution?	No. Temporary air and noise pollution may occur during the construction phase, but the amount will not be significant and will be mitigated against by the operational plans devised by the contractor.
Will the proposed development create a significant amount of nuisance?	No. During construction, some noise and vibration will be created, however this will be temporary and short-term. Construction works will be limited to certain times of day. Once operational, the proposed development will not create a significant amount of nuisance.
Will there be a risk of major accidents having regard to substances or technologies used?	No. The risks of this development will be those typically associated with normal construction practices. Construction machinery will be used during the construction phase and will be operated by licensed contractors and following best practice guidance.

Characteristics of the Proposed Development - Screening Questions	Comment
Will there be a risk of natural disasters which are relevant to the project, including those caused by climate change?	No. The subject site is within Flood Zone C and is therefore at low risk of flooding.
Will there be a risk to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution)?	No. Any potential risk to human health will be as a result of the construction phase of this project. All contractors will be subject to best practice methodologies and risk assessments in order to minimise any risk to human health.
Would any combination of the above factors be considered likely to have significant effects on the environment?	No. The development is relatively small scale. The environmental impacts are predictable and easily mitigated through the use of best practice guidelines during the construction phase. As such, significant impacts on the environment are not expected as a result of the proposed development.

Conclusion: The characteristics of the proposed development are not considered likely to result in a significant impact on the environment by virtue of its size, nature or operational activities.

Reasoning: The proposed development is relatively small in extent (1.42 ha) given as it is comprised of 43 dwellings. Any environmental or noise impacts will be during the construction phase and not during operation of the development. Construction will not require significant use of natural resources, nor will it generate significant amounts of waste.

5.2 Location of the Proposed Development

The following questions are answered below in Table 5.2 to determine whether the geographical location of the proposed development can be considered ecologically or environmentally sensitive, following guidelines set out in the OPR Practice Note PN02, Environmental Impact Assessment Screening (OPR, June 2021).

Table 5-2: Location of the proposed development

Location of the Proposed Development - Screening Questions	Comments
Is the proposed development located within, close to, or has it the potential to impact on any site specified in Article 103(3)(a)(v) of the Regulations: • European Site (SAC or SPA) • NHA/pNHA • Designated Nature Reserve • Designated refuge for flora or fauna • Place, site or feature of ecological interest, the preservation, conservation, protection of which is an objective of a development plan or local area plan	The EcIA concluded that the proposed development does not appear to be located within or directly impact any designated ecological sites. Additionally, a range of mitigation and avoidance measures will be implemented to protect important ecological features within the footprint of the site itself which are outlined in full in the EcIA.
Are there any other areas on or around the location that are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g., wetlands, watercourses or other waterbodies (including riparian areas and river mouths), the coastal zone and the marine environment, mountains, forests or woodlands, that could be affected by the project?	The EcIA concluded that the site is not in proximity to any Natura 2000 sites or designated/proposed sites. The nearest sites are outlined in Table 4.1, due to the small scale of the project there is not expected to be likely or significant impacts to these areas. Any risk will be further mitigated by measures outlined in the EcIA.
Is the proposal likely to be highly visible to many people? Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location, or are there any routes or facilities that are used by the public for recreation or other facilities which could be affected by the proposal?	The proposed development will be visible from the Gort Na Ri and Gort Mhaoilir. The design of the proposed development will be consistent with existing buildings in the surrounding residential area and therefore not significant. There are no landscapes of high scenic value on or in the vicinity of the location.

Location of the Proposed Development - Screening Questions	Comments
Has the proposed development the potential to significantly impact any locations which contain important, high quality, or scarce resources, e.g., groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, or minerals?	No. The proposed development will not impact the relative abundance, availability, or regenerative capacity of natural resources.
Has the proposed development the potential to impact directly or indirectly on any features of historic or cultural importance, including protected structures or Recorded Monuments and Places of Archaeological Interest?	No. There are no recorded archaeological or architectural features on site or in the near vicinity of the proposed development. The site has not previously been developed so further archaeological discoveries are possible but unlikely due to shallow excavation. In the event of any discoveries during construction, the National Monuments Service will be notified.
Is the site located in an area susceptible to subsidence, landslides, erosion, or flooding which could cause the proposal to present environmental problems?	No. The proposed development is not located in a flood zone or an area susceptible to subsidence, landslides, or erosion.
Are there any areas within or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage, and where there has already been a failure in environmental standards that could be affected by the proposal e.g., the status of water bodies under the Water Framework Directive?	The nearest WFD waterbody is of At Risk status. However, the proposed development is not likely to have a significant impact on this waterbody, due to the nature of the proposed development and distance between the site and the waterbody.
Are there areas within or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, or occupied by sensitive land uses e.g., hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities that could be affected by the proposal?	A Medical Centre is located directly adjacent to the proposed development site. The proposed development is not likely to have a significant impact on this receptor. During construction, slight negative impacts typical of construction projects are likely to occur, however these will be temporary and will be actively managed by the appointed contractor.

Location of the Proposed Development - Screening Questions	Comments
Are there any additional considerations that are specific to this location?	No.

Conclusion: The location of the proposed development is not likely to result in a significant impact on the environment.

Reasoning: The AA Screening and EclA concluded that there are no likely or significant impacts caused by the location of the proposed development due to its relatively small size and lack of proximity to Natura 2000 sites. There are no landscapes of high scenic value on or in the vicinity of the location. There is no risk of flooding within or close to the proposed development.

5.3 Characteristics of Potential Impacts

The following questions were answered in Table 5.3, following guidelines set out in the OPR Practice Note PN02, Environmental Impact Assessment Screening (OPR, June 2021), to determine whether the environmental impacts of the development can be considered significant.

Table 5-3: Characteristics of potential impacts

Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts - Screening Questions	
If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics and magnitude of the potential impacts under the headings below.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment, with mitigation measures in place if applicable?
Population and Human Health:	
During construction, impacts to public access are not expected on the roads adjacent to the site. In case of disruption, impacts would be slight and temporary, and alternative routes are available in the area. Slight negative impacts are possible on the surrounding residential areas due to construction activities, however these will be typical of construction projects and temporary. Once operational, the proposed development will provide additional housing, representing a positive impact.	No. Construction stage impacts to population and human health are typical of such developments, and easily mitigated against by operational plans put in place by the appointed contractor.
Biodiversity:	
During construction, temporary impacts to biodiversity include disturbance from machinery, vegetation clearance, and potential runoff affecting nearby watercourses. Measures such as groundwater protection, minimizing stormwater discharge, and retaining key foraging and commuting routes for wildlife will help reduce ecological impacts.	The site is small, fenced, and located in a developed area, so direct habitat loss is minimal. Any potential impacts on bat foraging and commuting routes will be mitigated as outlined in the EcIA. Temporary disturbances from noise, vibration, and human activity may occur during construction, but these are not expected to be significant and will be managed through mitigation measures in the EcIA.

Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts - Screening Questions	
Overall, with appropriate mitigation, significant biodiversity impacts are unlikely. The AA Screening has determined that there are no likely significant effects on nearby Natura 2000 sites (SACs and SPAs) via hydrological connections..	
Land and Soil:	
The area of land used for the proposed development is not significant. Construction will be at or near the surface, with excavation only needed for laying of utility services.	No. Where possible, excavated material will be used as fill elsewhere in the project. Material not required on site will be exported as a waste to an appropriate facility. The amount is not expected to be significant.
Water:	
There are no waterbodies on site or in the immediate vicinity. Due to the shallow excavations, interactions with groundwater are not expected to be significant.	No. There are no significant hydrological connections to designated Natura 2000 sites, and the AA Screening has determined no likely significant effects. Overall, with appropriate mitigation, significant impacts on water quality and hydrology are unlikely.
Air and Climate:	
There will be slight temporary impacts to air and climate during construction due to the operation of machinery and transport of materials. Mitigation measures and best practice methodologies will minimise emissions.	No. Impacts to air and climate during construction and operation will not be significant.
Material Assets:	
During construction, temporary disruptions on adjacent roads may occur. Significant impacts are not expected due to the scale of the proposed development. Appropriate signage and traffic management will	During construction, the contractors will need to be aware of any services crossing the site. This will require consultation with the relevant service providers in the area. No significant negative impacts on services are likely.

Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts - Screening Questions	
be in place to ensure the safety of other road users. Impacts on utilities and waste are not expected provided appropriate mitigation measures are followed by the appointed contractor.	Once operational, no significant impacts are expected on material assets.
Cultural Heritage:	
There is no archaeological feature whose Zone of Notification is within the site boundary, nor any designated architectural sites. The site is previously developed meaning encounters with undiscovered archaeology are unlikely to occur.	No. Impacts to cultural heritage are not expected.
Landscape and Visual Amenity:	
Typical construction stage impacts to visual amenity will occur but will be temporary. No protected landscapes or protected views are near the development. The site is located within an existing residential area and will not create any significant landscape or visual impacts.	No. Impacts to landscape and visual amenity during construction will be temporary and partially mitigated by the contractor's operating plans and will not be significant. Once operational, no impacts to landscape or visual amenity are expected.
Cumulative Effects:	
The Galway CDP 2022~2028 contains objectives to Support the social, economic and physical growth and sustainability of the area. Nearby proposed and in-progress developments are not large, and considered cumulatively they will not have a significant cumulative impact with the proposed development.	No. The proposed development contributes to the objectives of the Galway CDP 2022~2028.
Transboundary Effects:	

Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts - Screening Questions	
Transboundary effects are not expected.	No.

Conclusion: The characteristics of the potential impacts as a result of the proposed development are unlikely to be significant and are easily mitigated.

Reasoning: The potential impacts from this development would be primarily during the construction phase. It is easy to predict these impacts and mitigate them through the use of standard environmental procedures.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this report was to identify whether there is a need under The Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for an EIAR for the proposed housing development at Gort Mhaoilir, Athenry, Co. Galway.

It was determined that the proposed development does not fall under Schedule 5 (Parts 1 and 2) of the Act. As such, an EIAR has not been automatically triggered. To determine whether the development may fall under the category of Sub-threshold development, with the potential to give rise to significant environmental effects, a screening exercise was undertaken.

During construction, typical impacts such as noise, dust, traffic disruption, and the generation of small amounts of waste are to be expected. These are typical construction phase impacts, and will be mitigated against by environmental operating plans devised by the on-site contractor, following best practice guidance.

An AA Screening Report and EcIA have been prepared by JBA for the proposed development. The AA Screening concluded there are no likely significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites as a result of the proposed development. The EcIA concluded that the site is not in proximity to any Natura 2000 sites or designated/proposed sites and identified a range of mitigation and avoidance measures to be implemented.

Once operational, the proposed development will be low in environmental impact. The proposed development will create additional housing in an area of regeneration, introducing growth and opportunities.

It has been concluded that the proposed development does not fall under the category of sub-threshold development, and thus an EIAR is not required.

The overall conclusion is based on the details of the scheme available at the time of preparation of this report. If the extent of the scheme or the construction methods for the scheme are changed then the EIA Screening assessment should be reviewed.

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