ENVIROPLAN CONSULTING LIMITED

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Title

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

Development Description

"Partial demolition of 11 no. detached dwelling houses and complete refurbishment and extensions to provide 11 No. 2 Bedroom single-storey detached dwellings along with external site works and services."

Location

St. Bridget's Road, Portumna, County Galway

Applicants

Galway County Council

Prepared by:

Edel Hardiman (B. Sc) in consultation with James O' Donnell (BA, MRUP, Dip APM)

Enviroplan Consulting Limited
Suite 3,
Third Floor,
Ross House,
Victoria Place,
Eyre Square,
Galway
T- 091-423166
info@enviroplan.ie
www.enviroplan.ie

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APPENDICES

Note: The scope of this report is to provide the necessary information to the competent authority, to assess whether the proposed development alone and in combination with other projects, could have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites in the area in view of the sites conservation objectives, in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, and does not purport to be an ecological assessment of the subject sit

1. INTRODUCTION

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by Edel Hardiman (B. Sc) in consultation with James O'Donnell, Planning Consultant (MA, MRUP, Dip APM) on behalf of Galway County Council who are applying for planning permission for the *"partial demolition of 11 no. detached dwelling houses and complete refurbishment and extensions to provide 11 No. 2 Bedroom single-storey detached dwellings along with external site works and services"* at St. Bridget's Road, Portumna, Co. Galway.

Edel Hardiman is a qualified ecologist and has obtained a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science (BSc Hons) at the University of Galway. Edel has completed Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports, Natura Impact Statements, Ecological Impact Assessments, Bat Survey Reports and Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Reports for a wide range of public and private sector projects. She has conducted Bird Surveys and Bat Surveys in the Republic of Ireland. She is a registered member of CIEEM.

James O' Donnell is a qualified Town Planner and Project Manager with over 25 years planning experience in both the public and private sector in the west of Ireland, including 6 years-experience as a local authority planning officer. James has particular experience in the project management and delivery of a wide range of complex planning applications requiring environmental and ecological assessment, in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and EIA Directives.

The application site for proposed development lies 1.08 km to the northwest of the River Shannon Callows SAC and 1.1 km northwest of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. This site has been designated under the EU Habitats Directive & Birds Directive, and so it is necessary that the potential impacts of the proposed works be assessed by the competent authority, in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This report provides the information necessary for the competent authority to complete an Appropriate Assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed works on sites of European importance in the area. This report has also had regard to the provisions of the March 2021 publication entitled *"OPR Practice Note PN01- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management."*

Table 1.1: Step One: Description of the project/proposal and local site characteristics.

Brief description of the project plan	*"Partial demolition of 11 no. detached dwelling houses and complete refurbishment and extensions to provide 11 No. 2 Bedroom single-storey detached dwellings along with external site works and services."*
Brief description of site characteristics	The subject site is located within the settlement of Portumna, to the north-west of the town centre. The subject site includes 11 no. existing detached hipped roof single storey houses, at St. Bridget's Road. This includes a row of 5 no. houses fronting onto the L-4319 county road to

	the west and a row of 6 no. houses fronting onto the L-43191 county road to the east. These buildings require refurbishments to enhance this existing residential area in Portumna.

1.1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

1.1.1 EU Nature Conservation Legislation and Natura 2000 Sites.

There are three main types of designation for nature conservation in Ireland: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). NHAs are designated under the Irish Wildlife Act 1976 (amended 2000). SACs and SPAs are designated under European legislation, the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (transposed into Irish law in the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended in 1998 and 2005) and the EU Birds Directive 79/409/EEC, respectively. These European designated sites (SACs and SPAs) are also known as Natura 2000 sites. This means that they are part of the Natura 2000 Network, a network of important ecological sites across the European Union.

Sites are designated on the basis of the presence of certain 'Qualifying Features', i.e. the habitats listed under Annex I and the species listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

Once a site is designated as a SAC and publicly advertised it is legally protected and becomes a proposed candidate SAC (pcSAC). A three-month period follows during which landowners may lodge an objection to the designation. Details of each proposed SAC are then given to the EU Commission, and thereafter the site is called a "candidate SAC". Once the sites are approved by the commission, they are formally designated by the Minister.

1.1.2 Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites

Due to the proximity of the proposed development site to a candidate Special Area of Conservation, also known as a Natura 2000 site, an Appropriate Assessment may be required under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 6(3) and (4), Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites. Such assessments are required where it is identified that a proposed plan or project could have significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Directive, state the following;

6.3 'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives... the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned…..'

6.4 'If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest… the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected...'

2 METHODOLOGY

The screening exercise will be conducted in line with the recommendations and protocol set out in the Guidance from the Commission (EC, 2021). This protocol involves a four-stage process to complete an Appropriate Assessment. At each stage, the findings of certain issues and tests will determine whether the next stage in the process is required.

2.1.1 Appropriate Assessment Stages

The four stages in the Appropriate Assessment process are outlined below:

Stage 1: Screening

This step consists of examining the likely potential impacts of a project or plan, alone or in combination with other projects, upon a Natura 2000 site or sites, and considers whether these impacts may be considered significant. If no significant impacts are foreseen, then a 'finding of no significant effects' (FONSE) statement is issued to the appropriate authority, and the process is complete. If the effects are considered significant or their significance is unknown, then the process moves on to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

Where the screening process has identified potential impacts which are considered significant or unknown, this process examines these potential impacts in detail, in relation to the conservation interests of the Natura 2000 site or sites. Mitigation measures may be suggested to reduce the likelihood or severity of these impacts. If the impacts are still considered to be significant or unknown after this stage is complete, then alternative solutions must be considered (Stage 3).

Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions

If the potential impacts are still considered to be significant or unknown after the Appropriate Assessment stage, then alternative ways of implementing the project are considered at this stage. If no alternative solutions are possible, then it is considered whether the project or plan may go ahead regardless, if imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) are found.

Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)

If significant negative impacts on the Natura 2000 site are unavoidable, and no alternative solutions may be found, then this stage involves the consideration of whether the project or plan may go ahead despite these effects, for 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI).

The results of a Stage 1 (Screening) Exercise are detailed in **Section 3** of this report.

3 STAGE 1: SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN OR PROJECT

The proposed development will consist of the *"Partial demolition of 11 no. detached dwelling houses and complete refurbishment and extensions to provide 11 No. 2 Bedroom single-storey detached dwellings along with external site works and services"* at St. Bridget's Road, Portumna, Co. Galway.

A Site Layout Plan is included as **Appendix A** to this report.

3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

3.2.1 Site Location in Relation to Natura 2000 Sites

The proposed site lies within the settlement of Portumna, County Galway (Grid Ref: Easting: 585123.94, Northing: 705256.18) (see **Figure 3.1** below). The application site is 1.08 km to the northwest of the River Shannon Callows SAC and 1.1 km northwest of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA (see **Figure 3.2** below).

The site does not lie within a Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range (see **Figure 3.3** below). The closest Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range identified to the development site is approximately 30 kilometres southwest of the application site within the Newgrove House SAC.

All Natura 2000 sites within a 15km buffer of the proposed development are listed in **Table 3.1** and **Figure 3.4**.

Table 3.1:Step Two: Identification of relevant Natura 2000 sites using Source-Pathway-Receptor Model and Compilation of information on QI and Conservation Objectives

European Site (Code)	List of Qualifying Interest/Special Conservation Interest	Distance from the proposed development (km)	Receptor/Connection	Screen In – Yes/No
River Shannon Callows SAC Site code: 000216	QIs – 5 Habitats and 1 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000216	1.08 km	No direct or indirect impacts are predicted for this protected SAC during the construction or operational phase of the development. **Construction Phase:** **Direct Impacts:** The application site lies outside of the SAC; therefore, no direct impacts are predicted during the construction phase. **Indirect Impacts:** No indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of hydrological/ ecological connectors/ receptors between the application site and the SAC. Asbestos on site will be removed in accordance with the Safety, Health	No

			and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard. **Operational phase:** **Direct Impacts:** The application site lies outside of the SAC; therefore, no direct impacts are predicted during the operational phase. **Indirect Impacts:** No indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of hydrological/ ecological connectors/ receptors between the application site and this SAC. Foul water will connect to the existing main foul sewer. No upgrades or new connections are required. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard. Individual soakaways and bioretention planters/ rain gardens are proposed to improve the existing storm network on these sites. No impacts are predicted in this regard.	
Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC Site code: 002241	QIs – 6 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002241	1.4 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Barroughter Bog SAC Site code: 000231	QIs – 3 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000231	5.5 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Cloonmoylan Bog SAC Site code: 000248	QIs – 4 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000248	7.4 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Rosturra Wood SAC Site code: 001313	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001313	8.6 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Pollnaknockaun Wood Nature Reserve SAC Site code: 000319	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000319	10.5 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Derrycrag Wood Nature Reserve SAC Site code: 000261	QIs – 1 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000261	11.4 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Kilcarren-Firville Bog SAC Site code: 000647	QIs – 3 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000647	7.3 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No

Arragh More (Derrybreen) Bog SAC Site code: 002207	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002207	11.5 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Ballyduff/ Clonfinane Bog SAC Site code: 000641	QIs – 4 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000641	13.4 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Liskeenan Fen SAC Site code: 001683	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001683	12.7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Redwood Bog SAC Site code: 002353	QIs – 3 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002353	9.7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Ardgraigue Bog SAC Site code: 002356	QIs – 3 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002356	7.6 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Middle Shannon Callows SPA Site code: 004096	QIs – 8 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004096	1.1 km	No direct or indirect impacts are predicted for this protected SPA during the construction or operational phase of the development. **Construction Phase:** **Direct Impacts:** The application site lies outside of the SPA; therefore, no direct impacts are predicted during the construction phase. **Indirect Impacts:** No indirect impacts are predicted due to the significant distance and the built-up intervening environment, and the absence of intervisibility between the application site and the SPA. Furthermore, the subject site is a habitat that would be unsuitable for wetland and waterbirds due to the established development on site and the lack of vegetation and water features. In addition, the subject site is bounded by residential and commercial developments within Portumna, where anthropogenic activity is well established. In these circumstances, it is considered that the proposed development is not expected to have a significant effect on any of the Bird species associated with this SPA. Asbestos on site will be removed in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010.	No

			Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard **Operational phase:** **Direct Impacts:** The application site lies outside of the SPA; therefore, no direct impacts are predicted during the operational phase. **Indirect Impacts:** No indirect impacts are predicted due to the significant distance and the built-up intervening environment, and the absence of intervisibility between the application site and the SPA. Furthermore, the subject site is a habitat that would be unsuitable for wetland and waterbirds due to the established development on site and the lack of vegetation and water features. In addition, the subject site is bounded by residential and commercial developments within Portumna, where anthropogenic activity is well established. In these circumstances, it is considered that the proposed development is not expected to have a significant effect on any of the Bird species associated with this SPA. Foul water will connect to the existing main foul sewer. No upgrades or new connections are required. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard. Individual soakaways and bioretention planters/ rain gardens are proposed to improve the existing storm network on these sites. No impacts are predicted in this regard.	
Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA Site code: 004058	QIs – 5 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004058	1.4 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA Site code: 004168	QIs – 2 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004168	8.2 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No
River Little Brosna Callows SPA Site code: 004086	QIs – 11 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004086	12.1 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of connectors/ receptors and significant distance from the proposed site.	No

The River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA have not been screened in. Given the lack of hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites, no indirect impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the development. Considering the intervening urban environment, indirect impacts from noise disturbance are not predicted on bird species. Therefore, no impacts are predicted on these Natura 2000 sites. As the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA are the closest Natura 2000 sites to the application site, they have been considered further below.

No other desinated Natura 2000 site has been highlighted for potential significant impacts from either construction or operational phases of the development. This is due to the significant distance between application site and the other designated Natura 2000 sites.

Figure 3.1: Indicative Site Location outlined in red

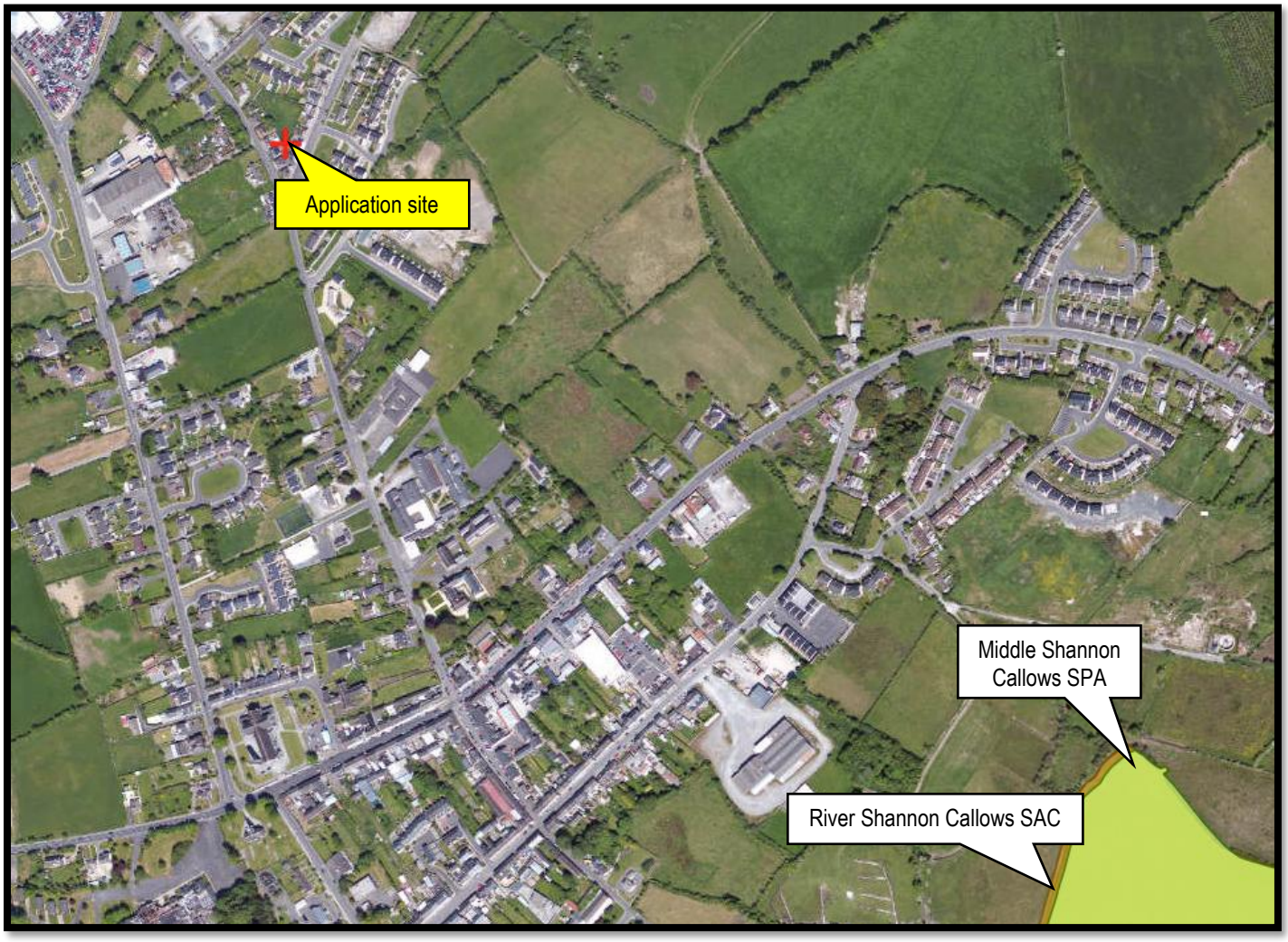


Figure 3.2: Site Location (red X) in Relation to the River Shannon Callows SAC and the Middle Shannon Callows SPA Natura 2000 sites.

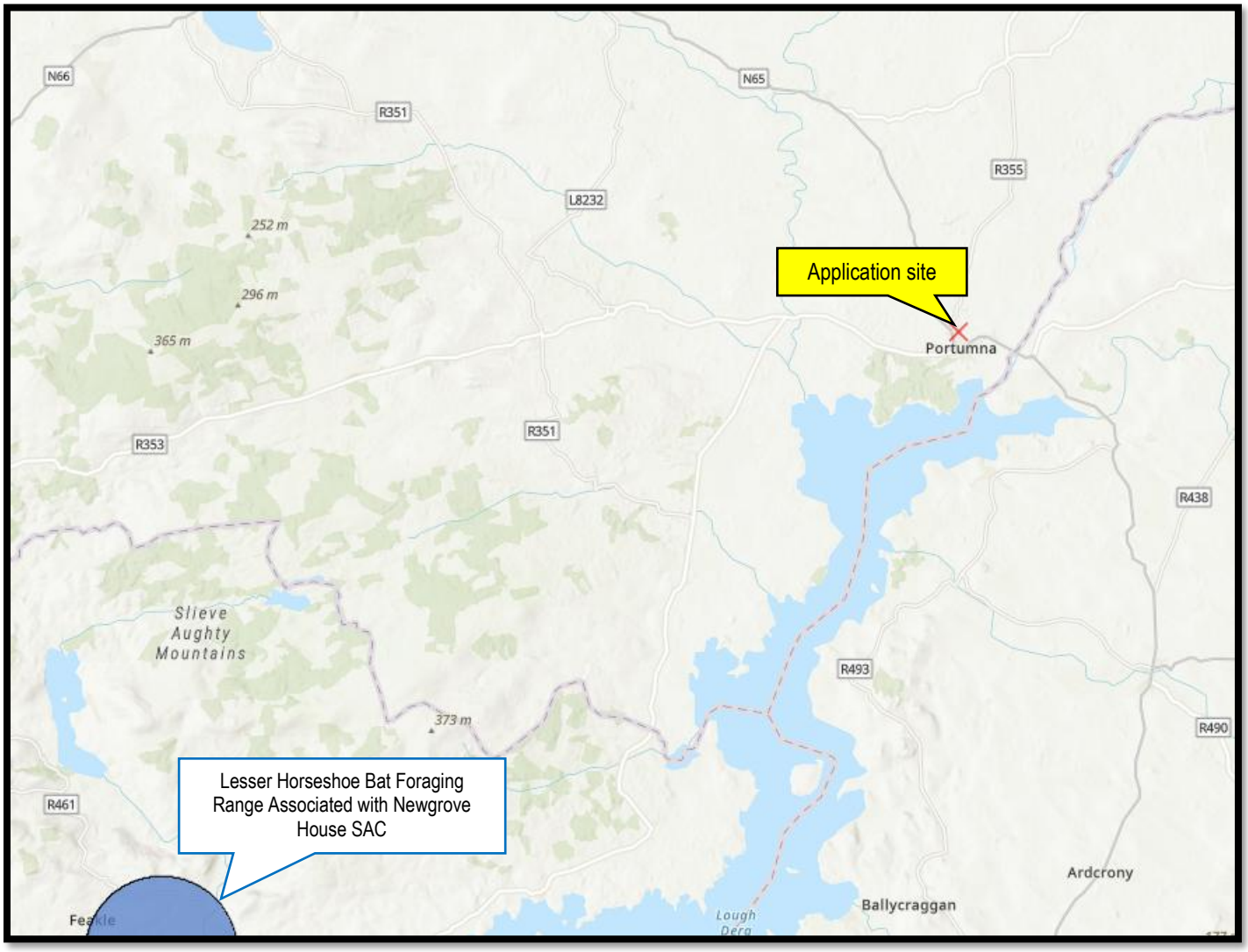


Figure 3.3: Site location in relation to Lesser Horseshoe Bats Foraging Range (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) (https://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=63b6a14f5b164b289ad87048f71532b8)
Note the closest Lesser Horseshoe Bats Foraging Range is approximately 30 km to the southwest of the application site

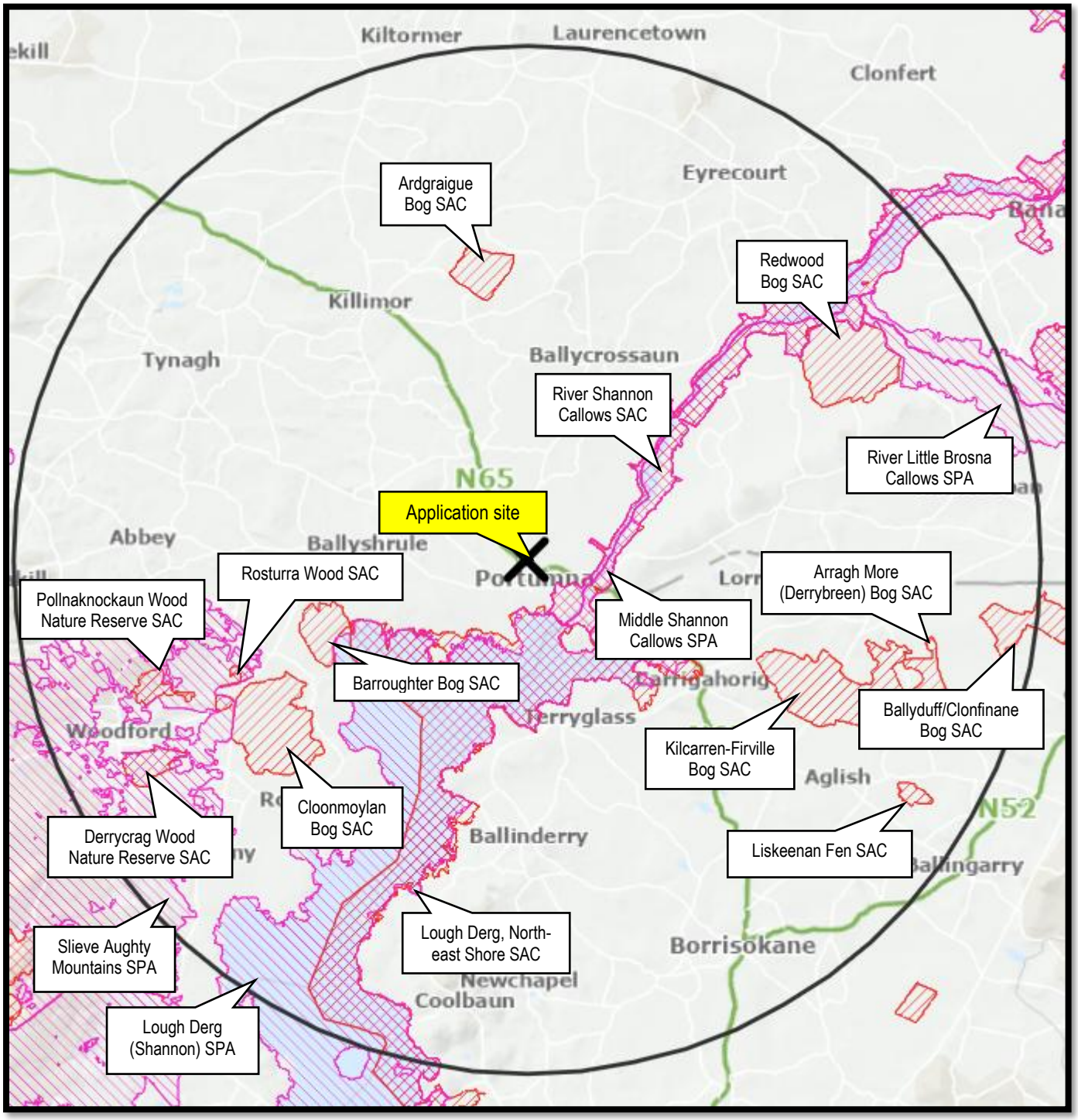


Figure 3.4: 15km Buffer Surrounding Site

4 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURA 2000 SITES WHICH MAY BE AFFECTED

Qualifying Features

Natura 2000 sites are designated on the presence of certain habitats and species which are afforded protection under the Birds and Habitats Directives. These habitats and species are regarded as 'qualifying features' of the Natura 2000 sites. The following section provides details on the qualifying features of the Natura 2000 site in question, the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA. The NPWS site synopses for the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA are given as Appendix B and Appendix C of this report, respectively.

Table 4.1 River Shannon Callows SAC Habitat Information

Habitat code	Habitat name	Cover (ha)	Representativity
6410	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)	117.13	A
6510	Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis*)	117.13	A
7230	Alkaline fens	15.03	B
8240	Limestone pavements	58.56	B
91E0	Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*)	58.56	B

For species, a value is given for 'Population Significance'. This value is based on the relative density or size of the population of that species within the Natura 2000 site with that of the national population. Population Significance is ranked on a scale from A to D where A - 100>=p>15%, B - 15>=p>2%, C - 2>=p>0% and D - Non-significant population. The qualifying species found in the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA Natura 2000 sites are outlined in Table 4.2 and Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.2 River Shannon Callows SAC Species Information

Species Code	English Name	Scientific Name	Representativity
1355	Otter	*Lutra lutra*	C

Table 4.3 Middle Shannon Callows SPA Species Information

Species Code	English Name	Scientific Name	Representativity
A038	Whooper Swan	*Cygnus cygnus*	B
A050	Wigeon	*Anas penelope*	B
A122	Corncrake	*Crex crex*	A
A140	Golden Plover	*Pluvialis apricaria*	B

A142	Lapwing	*Vanellus vanellus*	B
A156	Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	B
A179	Black-headed Gull	*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*	C

Potential Pressures and Threats to the Natura 2000 Sites

The European Nature Information System (EUNIS) website contains data on all Natura 2000 sites, including details of the main threats to and pressures on their qualifying features. Potential threats to and pressures on the qualifying features of the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA Natura 2000 sites are listed in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 below.

Table 4.4 Potential Pressures and Threats to the River Shannon Callows SAC Natura 2000 Site

Activity	Location	Intensity	Influence
Abandonment / lack of mowing	Inside	High	Negative
Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing	Inside	High	Negative
Use of biocides, hormones and chemicals	Inside	High	Negative
Flooding	Inside	High	Negative
Non intensive mixed animal grazing	Inside	Low	Negative
Removal of hedges and copses or scrub	Inside	Low	Negative
Grazing in forests/ woodland	Inside	Low	Negative
Mechanical removal of peat	Inside	Low	Negative
Paths, tracks, cycling tracks	Inside	Low	Negative
Hunting	Both	Low	Negative
Outdoor sports and leisure activities, recreational activities	Inside	Low	Negative
Trampling, overuse	Inside	Low	Negative
Landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general	Inside	Low	Negative
Modification of hydrographic functioning, general	Inside	Low	Negative
Intensive grazing	Inside	Medium	Negative
Fertilisation	Inside	Medium	Negative
Forestry clearance	Inside	Medium	Negative
Modifying structures of inland water courses	Inside	Medium	Negative
Siltation rate changes, dumping, depositing of dredged deposits	Inside	Medium	Negative
Predation	Both	Medium	Negative

Table 4.5 Potential Pressures and Threats to the Middle Shannon Callows SPA Natura 2000 Site

Activity	Location	Intensity	Influence
grazing	Inside	High	Negative
bridge, viaduct	Inside	High	Negative
Urbanised areas, human habitation	Outside	High	Negative
nautical sports	Inside	High	Negative
abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing	Inside	Low	Negative
Fertilisation	Inside	Low	Negative

paths, tracks, cycling tracks	Inside	Low	Negative
Hunting	Inside	Low	Negative
Fertilisation	Outside	Medium	Negative
Leisure fishing	Inside	Medium	Negative
Walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles	Inside	Medium	Negative

Conservation Objectives of the Natura 2000 Sites

Once a site has been designated as a Natura site, a management plan should be put together for the site which sets out the Conservation Objectives for the site. Every effort should then be made to ensure that these objectives are fulfilled, in order to prevent potential impacts to the qualifying features of the site and maintain as far as possible their favourable conservation status.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain at favourable conservation status sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when: its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when: population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Site-Specific Conservation River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA have been published**.** Qualifying interests and objectives (bulleted) are listed below.

River Shannon Callows SAC

[6410] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*)

- Habitat area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- At least 7 positive indicator species present in monitoring stop or, if 5–6 present in stop, additional species within 20m of stop; this includes at least one 'high quality' positive indicator species present in the stop or within 20m of stop.
- Negative indicator species collectively not more than 20% cover, with cover by an individual species not more than 10%.
- Cover of non-native species not more than 1%.

- Hair mosses (Polytrichum spp.) not more than 25% cover.
- Cover of woody species and bracken (Pteridium aquilinum) not more than 5% cover.
- Broadleaf herb component of vegetation between 40% and 90%.
- At least 30% of sward between 10cm and 80cm tall.
- Litter cover not more than 25%.
- Not more than 10% bare ground.
- Area of the habitat showing signs of serious grazing or disturbance less than 20m².

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[6510] Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis*)

- Habitat area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- At least 7 positive indicator species present in monitoring stop or, if 5–6 present in stop, additional species within 20m of stop; this includes at least one 'high quality' positive indicator species present in stop or within 20m of stop.
- Negative indicator species collectively not more than 20% cover, with cover by an individual species not more than 10%.
- Cover of non-native species not more than 1%.
- Cover of woody species and bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) not more than 5%.
- Broadleaf herb component of vegetation between 40% and 90%.
- At least 50% of sward between 10cm and 50cm tall.
- Litter cover not more than 25%.
- Not more than 5% bare soil.
- Area of the habitat showing signs of serious grazing or other disturbance less than 20m².

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[7230] Alkaline fens

- Habitat area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- Maintain soil pH and nutrient status within natural ranges.
- Maintain active peat formation, where appropriate.
- Maintain, or restore where necessary, appropriate natural hydrological regimes necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.
- Maintain, or restore where necessary, as close as possible to natural or seminatural drainage conditions.
- Maintain appropriate water quality, particularly pH and nutrient levels, to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.
- Maintain variety of vegetation communities, subject to natural processes.
- Maintain adequate cover of typical brown moss species.
- Maintain adequate cover of typical vascular plant species.
- Cover of native negative indicator species at insignificant levels.
- Cover of non-native species less than 1%.
- Cover of scattered native trees and shrubs less than 10%.
- Cover of algae less than 2%.

- At least 50% of the live leaves/flowering shoots are more than either 5cm or 15cm above ground surface depending on community type.
- Cover of disturbed bare ground not more than 10%.
- Disturbed proportion of vegetation cover where tufa is present is less than 1%.
- No decline in distribution or population sizes of rare, threatened or scarce species associated with the habitat; maintain features of local distinctiveness, subject to natural processes.
- Maintain adequate transitional areas to support/protect the alkaline fen habitat and the services it provides.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[8240] Limestone pavements*

- Habitat area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in distribution.
- At least seven positive indicator species present.
- Bryophyte cover at least 50% on wooded pavement.
- Collective cover of negative indicator species on exposed pavement not more than 1%.
- Cover of non-native species not more than 1% on exposed pavement; on wooded pavement not more than 10% with no regeneration.
- Scrub cover no more than 25% of exposed pavement.
- Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) cover no more than 10% on exposed pavement.
- Canopy cover on wooded pavement at least 30%.
- Sufficient quantity of dead wood on wooded pavement to provide habitat for saproxylic organisms.
- No evidence of grazing pressure on wooded pavement.
- No decline in distribution or population sizes of rare, threatened or scarce species associated with the habitat; maintain features of local distinctiveness, subject to natural processes.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[91E0] Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*)*

- Habitat area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- Area stable or increasing. Where topographically possible, "large" woods at least 25ha in size and "small" woods at least 3ha in size.
- Total canopy cover at least 30%; median canopy height at least 7m; native shrub layer cover 10-75%; native herb/dwarf shrub layer cover at least 20% and height at least 20cm; bryophyte cover at least 4%.
- Maintain diversity and extent of community types.
- Seedlings, saplings and pole age-classes of target species for 91E0* woodlands and other native tree species occur in adequate proportions to ensure survival of woodland canopy.
- Appropriate hydrological regime necessary for maintenance of alluvial vegetation.
- At least 19 stems/ha of dead wood at least 20cm diameter.
- No decline in woodland structure.
- No decline in distribution and, in the case of red listed and other rare or localised species, population size.
- All five indicators of overgrazing absent.
- No decline. Native tree cover at least 90% of canopy; target species cover at least 50% of canopy.
- At least 1 target species for 91E0* woodlands present; at least 6 positive indicator species for 91E0* woodlands present.

- Negative indicator species cover not greater than 10%; regeneration of negative indicator species absent.
- Cover of common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) less than 75%.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

- No significant decline in distribution.
- No significant decline in terrestrial habitat.
- No significant decline in freshwater (river) habitat.
- No significant decline in couching sites and holts.
- No significant decline in fish biomass available.
- No significant increase in barriers to connectivity.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

Middle Shannon Callows SPA

[A038] Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

- Long term winter population trend is stable or increasing.
- Sufficient number of locations, area, and availability (in terms of timing and intensity of use) of suitable habitat to support the population target.
- The intensity, frequency, timing and duration of disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact the achievement of targets for population trend and spatial distribution.
- The number, location, shape and area of barriers do not significantly impact the wintering population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.
- Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target.
- Sufficient number of locations, area and availability of suitable roosting habitat to support the population target.
- Sufficient area of utilisable habitat available in ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[A050] Wigeon (*Anas penelope*)

- Long term winter population trend is stable or increasing.
- Sufficient number of locations, area, and availability (in terms of timing and intensity of use) of suitable habitat to support the population target.
- The intensity, frequency, timing and duration of disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact the achievement of targets for population trend and spatial distribution.
- The number, location, shape and area of barriers do not significantly impact the wintering population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.
- Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target.
- Sufficient number of locations, area and availability of suitable roosting habitat to support the population target.
- Sufficient area of utilisable habitat available in ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[A122] Corncrake (*Crex crex*)

- The status of corncrake as a Species of Conservation Interest for the Middle Shannon Callows SPA is currently under review. The outcome of this review will determine whether a site-specific conservation objective is set for this species.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[A140] Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*)

- Long term winter population trend is stable or increasing.
- Sufficient number of locations, area, and availability (in terms of timing and intensity of use) of suitable habitat to support the population target.
- The intensity, frequency, timing and duration of disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact the achievement of targets for population trend and spatial distribution.
- The number, location, shape and area of barriers do not significantly impact the wintering population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.
- Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target.
- Sufficient number of locations, area and availability of suitable roosting habitat to support the population target.
- Sufficient area of utilisable habitat available in ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[A142] Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

- Long term winter population trend is stable or increasing.
- Sufficient number of locations, area, and availability (in terms of timing and intensity of use) of suitable habitat to support the population target.
- The intensity, frequency, timing and duration of disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact the achievement of targets for population trend and spatial distribution.
- The number, location, shape and area of barriers do not significantly impact the wintering population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.
- Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target.
- Sufficient number of locations, area and availability of suitable roosting habitat to support the population target.
- Sufficient area of utilisable habitat available in ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[A156] Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

- Long term winter population trend is stable or increasing.

- Sufficient number of locations, area, and availability (in terms of timing and intensity of use) of suitable habitat to support the population target.
- The intensity, frequency, timing and duration of disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact the achievement of targets for population trend and spatial distribution.
- The number, location, shape and area of barriers do not significantly impact the wintering population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.
- Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target.
- Sufficient number of locations, area and availability of suitable roosting habitat to support the population target.
- Sufficient area of utilisable habitat available in ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[A179] Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)

- Long term winter population trend is stable or increasing.
- Sufficient number of locations, area, and availability (in terms of timing and intensity of use) of suitable habitat to support the population target.
- The intensity, frequency, timing and duration of disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact the achievement of targets for population trend and spatial distribution.
- The number, location, shape and area of barriers do not significantly impact the wintering population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA.
- Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target.
- Sufficient number of locations, area and availability of suitable roosting habitat to support the population target.
- Sufficient area of utilisable habitat available in ecologically important sites outside the SPA.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

[A999] Wetlands

- No significant loss to wetland habitat within the SPA, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation.
- No significant impact on the quality or functioning of the wetland habitat within the SPA, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation.

Predicted Impacts - No impacts are predicted on this qualifying interest. This is due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ecological receptor/connector pathways, the intervening urban environment and the distance between this application site and the Natura 2000 site.

5 SOILS, GEOLOGY & HYDROGEOLOGY

5.1 GEOLOGY

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) website was consulted for available geological / hydrological information. Considering the existing development on site, soils on site are classes as Urban and subsoils are categorized as man-made. The groundwater vulnerability within the site is rated as High throughout the site. Vulnerability is a term used to represent the intrinsic geological and hydrogeological characteristics that determine the ease at which groundwater may be contaminated by human activities.

Table 5.1- Details information gleaned from catchments.ie on the water status of the groundwater waterbody. This concludes that the groundwater is rated as good overall status.

Tynagh Groundwater Waterbody Information	
Name	Tynagh
Code	IE_SH_G_236
WFD Catchments	25B Lower Shannon 25C Lower Shannon 26D Upper Shannon 26G Upper Shannon 29 Galway Bay South East
Longitude	53.115663
Latitude	-8.3343064
Cycle 1 RBD	Western
Local Authority	Galway County Council
Waterbody Category	Groundwater
WFD Risk	At risk
Protected Area	N/A
High Status Objective	No
Heavily Modified	N/A
Artificial	N/A
Area (km^2)	N/A
Length (km)	N/A
Transboundary	No
Canal	No
GW 2016-2021 Overall Groundwater Status	Good

6 OTHER PLANS AND PROJECTS IN THE AREA

It is a requirement of the Appropriate Assessment process to consider the 'in combination' effects of the proposed development with other plans and projects in the area. **Table 6.1** below gives details of the other plans and projects in the area which may be affecting the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA Natura 2000 sites.

Table 6.1: Other Plans and Projects Affecting the Natura 2000 Sites

Name of Plan or Project	Key policies/issues/objectives directly related to the relevant Natura 2000 sites	Potential cumulative or in-combination effects on the relevant Natura 2000 sites
Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028	Designated Sites, Habitats and Species Policies and Objectives, Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Policies and Objectives, Natural Water Systems Polices Improve water quality, nature conservation/ biodiversity. The integration of Green/Blue Infrastructure and ecosystems services	Positive Impact
All Ireland Pollinator Plan	Reverse declines in pollinating insects. Pollinators are impacted by the actions of everyone ranging from the local authorities to community groups, farmers, schools, gardeners and businesses	Positive Impact
River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027	The River Basin Management Plan for Ireland, sets out a number of objectives and measures for all national water bodies which aim: (1) to prevent the deterioration of water bodies and to protect, enhance and restore them with the aim of achieving at least good status and (2) to achieve compliance with the requirements for designated protected areas.	Positive impact
NPWS Conservation Management Plans	Site-Specific Conservation objectives have been published for the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA sites and its aims and objectives are outlined from page 16 - 21 above.	Positive impacts
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) Corporate Plan 2021-2025	Goals: To protect, manage and conserve Ireland's inland fisheries and sea angling resources and to maximize their sustainability and natural biodiversity. To play a leadership role in achieving our climate action and biodiversity goals	Positive impact
Planning Applications in the area	A search was carried out on Galway County Council's online planning query system on the 07th of May 2025. It was ascertained that the following local planning applications were granted within a 300m radius of the site in the past 5 years. **PI ref:** 2323 **Development Description:** *to; (a) demolish existing ground floor office space, (b) construct new two storey office and administration building with elevational changes and new signage to the existing building, (c) to construct a new warehouse building and all associated works at their existing premises. Gross floor space of proposed works: 1440.10sqm. Gross floor space of any demolition: 176sqm* **Grant Date:** 09/06/2023	Neutral Impact

	Pl ref: 21364 **Development Description:** *for development consisting of an existing telecommunications support structure (previously granted retention permission under Pl. Ref. 12/752) together with antennas, dishes, equipment cabinets, fencing, access track and all associated site development works. The development will continue to provide high speed wireless broadband and data services* **Grant Date:** 21/06/2021 **Pl ref:** 201677 **Development Description:** *to: (1) demolish existing single storey structures forming part of existing petrol filling station, existing ancillary steel shed, dispensing pumps, forecourt canopy, existing car wash and associated areas, (2) alter ground floor layout of existing filling station and construct new single storey extension to same, to include a convenience shop and ancillary areas, off licence area, deli, seated café area, food stores, staff amenities, public amenities, manager office, staff accommodation, service rooms, plant rooms, ATM; (3) construct new two storey extension to the rear of the existing building to accommodate new access staircase to existing first floor area, comprising of 2 no. two bedroom apartments; (5) minor elevational alterations to existing elevations; (6) construct new ancillary solid fuel store & bin storage building, general signage, new forecourt canopy and fuel dispensing pumps, installation of new underground fuel storage tanks and vents, alteration of existing open site frontage to provide two new entrances, including new road boundary treatments, new car parking areas, and all associated site works. Gross floor space of proposed works: 239 sqm. Gross floor space of any demolition: 193.13 sqm* **Grant Date:** 13/09/2021 **Pl ref:** 2460034 **Development Description:** *for: (a) the construction of a dressing room building and a temporary waste/effluent holding facility and all associated site services, (b) Retention Permission for a prefabricated building and a storage container and all associated site services. Gross floor space of proposed works: 97.8 sqm* **Grant Date:** 02/09/2024 **Pl ref:** 21590 **Development Description:** *for [a] separate internal access roadways [off existing access from Clonfert Avenue] to serve existing agricultural lands and amenity area and rugby pitch development already completed b] to construct new changing rooms and toilet block in single storey structures to serve the existing Rugby pitches / training area c] car parking, footpaths, street lighting, walkway and bridge crossing existing drain / stream on the site of previously approved permission reference 14/114 [PL. 243892]* **Grant Date:** 21/02/2022	

7 SCREENING MATRIX FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT IN LINE WITH EU COMMISSION GUIDANCE

Having established the extent of the proposed project and the details of the Natura 2000 sites, a screening assessment for possible impacts can be generated. This section follows the format of the Screening Matrix provided in Annex 2 of the following document.

"*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites- Methodology guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission, 2001".*

Table 7.1: Step Three: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

Identify all potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objective of a European site taking into account the size/scale of the project under the following headings:	
Impacts:	Possible significance of Impacts (Duration/Magnitude)
Construction Phase (Examples) • Vegetation Clearance • Demolition • Surface water runoff from excavation/infill • Dust, noise, vibration • Lighting disturbance • Impact on groundwater • Storage of excavation/construction materials • Access to site • Pests	The application site is located entirely outside of any Natura 2000 sites and therefore, no direct impacts/effects are predicted during the construction phase of development. Given the lack of hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites, no indirect impacts are predicted during the construction phase of the development. Considering the intervening urban environment, indirect impacts from noise disturbance are not predicted on bird species. Asbestos on site will be removed in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard
Operation Phase (Examples) • Direct emissions to air and water • Surface water runoff containing contaminant/sediment • Lighting Disturbance • Noise/vibration • Changes to water/groundwater due to drainage/abstraction • Presence of people, vehicles and activities • Physical presence of structures (collision risks) • Potential for accidents/incidents	The application site is located entirely outside of any Natura 2000 sites and therefore, no direct impacts/effects are predicted during the operational phase of development. Given the lack of hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites, no indirect impacts are predicted during the operational phase of the development. Considering the intervening urban environment, indirect impacts from noise disturbance are not predicted on bird species. Foul water will connect to the existing main foul sewer. No upgrades or new connections are required. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard. Individual soakaways and bioretention planters/ rain gardens are proposed to improve the existing storm network on these sites. No impacts are predicted in this regard.
In combination/ other:	No likely significant in-combination effects are identified.
(a) Describe any likely changes to the European site:	
Examples of the type of changes to give consideration to include: • Reduction/fragmentation of habitat • Disturbance to QI species	The application site is located entirely outside of any Natura 2000 sites and therefore, no direct impacts/effects are predicted during the construction or operational phase of development.

• Habitat/species fragmentation • Reduction/fragmentation in species density • Changes in key indicators of conservation status value • Changes to areas of sensitivity/threats to QI • Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or ecological function of the site	Given the lack of hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites, no indirect impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the development. Considering the intervening urban environment, indirect impacts from noise disturbance are not predicted on bird species.
(b) Are 'mitigation' measures necessary to reach a conclusion that likely significant effects can be ruled out at screening?	
☐ Yes ☒ No	

The findings of the screening matrix are summarized in **Table 7.2** below.

Table 7.2 Stage 1 - Screening Matrix for the Proposed Development

Brief Description of the Project or Plan
Location: The proposed site lies within the settlement of Portumna, County Galway (Grid Ref: Easting: 585123.94, Northing: 705256.18). **Distance from Designated Site**: The site for the proposed development lies 1.08 km to the northwest of the River Shannon Callows SAC and 1.1 km northwest of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. **Brief Description of the Project:** Planning permission is being sought for the *"Partial demolition of 11 no. detached dwelling houses and complete refurbishment and extensions to provide 11 No. 2 Bedroom single-storey detached dwellings along with external site works and services."* A Site Layout Plan for the proposed development is included as **Appendix A** to this report.
Brief Description of the Natura 2000 Site
Site Designation Status: The River Shannon Callows SAC is designated under EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is designated under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). **Qualifying Features** The River Shannon Callows SAC is of conservation significance due to the presence 5 habitats and 1 species which are listed under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is designated for the presence of 8 bird species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive (see below). **<u>Qualifying Habitats</u>** **River Shannon Callows SAC** • Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (*Molinion caeruleae*) [6410] • Lowland hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis*) [6510] • Alkaline fens [7230] • Limestone pavements [8240] • Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (*Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae*) [91E0] **<u>Qualifying Species</u>** **River Shannon Callows SAC** • *Lutra lutra* (Otter) [1355]

Middle Shannon Callows SPA

- Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038]
- Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050]
- Corncrake (*Crex crex*) [A122]
- Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]
- Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142]
- Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156]
- Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179]
- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

(EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC / EU Birds Directive 79/409/EEC).

Habitats and Species of Interest

Full details of the sites are found in the River Shannon Callows SAC Site Synopses included as Appendix B to this report. Full details of the sites are found in the Middle Shannon Callows SPA Site Synopses included as Appendix C to this report.

Unit Size:

River Shannon Callows SAC; Area [ha]: 5820.6, Marine area [%]: 0.61
Middle Shannon Callows SPA; Area [ha]: 5814.85, Marine area [%]: 0.64

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Describe the individual elements of the project likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

Given the lack of hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites, no indirect impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the development. Considering the intervening urban environment, indirect impacts from noise disturbance are not predicted on bird species.

Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of the following;

- **Size and Scale**
  The application site comprises an overall site area of 0.35 hectares. Due to the fact that the works will be located within a built-up area, entirely outside the designated area, it is not expected that the development will have any significant impact (direct, indirect or secondary in nature) on the Natura 2000 site in this regard.

- **Land-Take**
  The proposed works will be entirely located outside the designated site and so there will be no impacts in this regard.

- **Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site**
  The application site is located 1.08 km to the northwest of the River Shannon Callows SAC and 1.1 km northwest of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. There are no identifiable ecological corridors or hydrological pathway, receptors or connectors between the application site and the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA.

- **Resource Requirements**
  It is not expected that the proposed development will have any significant impact (direct, indirect, or secondary in nature) on the designated sites in this regard.

- **Emissions**
  Foul water will connect to the existing main foul sewer. No upgrades or new connections are required. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard.

  Individual soakaways and bioretention planters/ rain gardens are proposed to improve the existing storm network on these sites. No impacts are predicted in this regard.

Asbestos on site will be removed in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard.

- **Excavation Requirements**
  No impacts are expected on the Natura 2000 site in this regard.

- **Transportation Requirements**
  During the construction phase of the proposed development, there will be a slight increase in the volume of traffic in the area for a short time. It is not expected that this slight increase will result in direct, indirect, or secondary impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

- **Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning**
  The construction phase of the proposed development will last approximately 1-5 years. It is expected that this development will remain in use for at least 100 years. Neither the operation nor the eventual decommissioning of the proposed development is likely to result in direct, indirect, or secondary impacts on the Natura 2000 sites.

Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of the following;

- **Reduction of Habitat**
  There will be no changes in this respect.

Disturbance to Key Species

- There will be no changes in this respect.

- **Habitat or Species Fragmentation**
  There will be no changes in this respect.

- **Reduction in species density**
  There will be no changes in this respect.

- **Changes in key indicators of conservation value**
  There will be no changes in this respect.

- **Climate change**
  There will be no changes in this respect.

Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of the following;

- **Interference with key relationships that define the structure and function of the site**
  No potential impacts which are likely to interfere with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site are expected.

Provide Indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of the following;

- **Loss**
  No loss is expected.

- **Fragmentation**
  No fragmentation is expected.

- **Disruption**
  No disruption is expected.

- **Disturbance**
  No disturbance is expected.

- **Change to key elements of the site**
  No change is expected.

Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.
The site for the proposed development lies 1.08 km to the northwest of the River Shannon Callows SAC and 1.1 km northwest of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. Given the lack of hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites, no indirect impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the development. Considering the intervening urban environment, indirect impacts from noise disturbance are not predicted on bird species.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Planning is being sought for the *"partial demolition of 11 no. detached dwelling houses and complete refurbishment and extensions to provide 11 No. 2 Bedroom single-storey detached dwellings along with external site works and services"* at St. Bridget's Road, Portumna, Co. Galway. A Site Layout Plan for the proposed development is included as **Appendix A** to this report. The screening exercise examined impacts on the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA Natura 2000 sites.

The site for the proposed development lies 1.08 km to the northwest of the River Shannon Callows SAC and 1.1 km northwest of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. Given the lack of hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites, no indirect impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the development. Considering the intervening urban environment, indirect impacts from noise disturbance are not predicted on bird species.

Asbestos on site will be removed in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard.

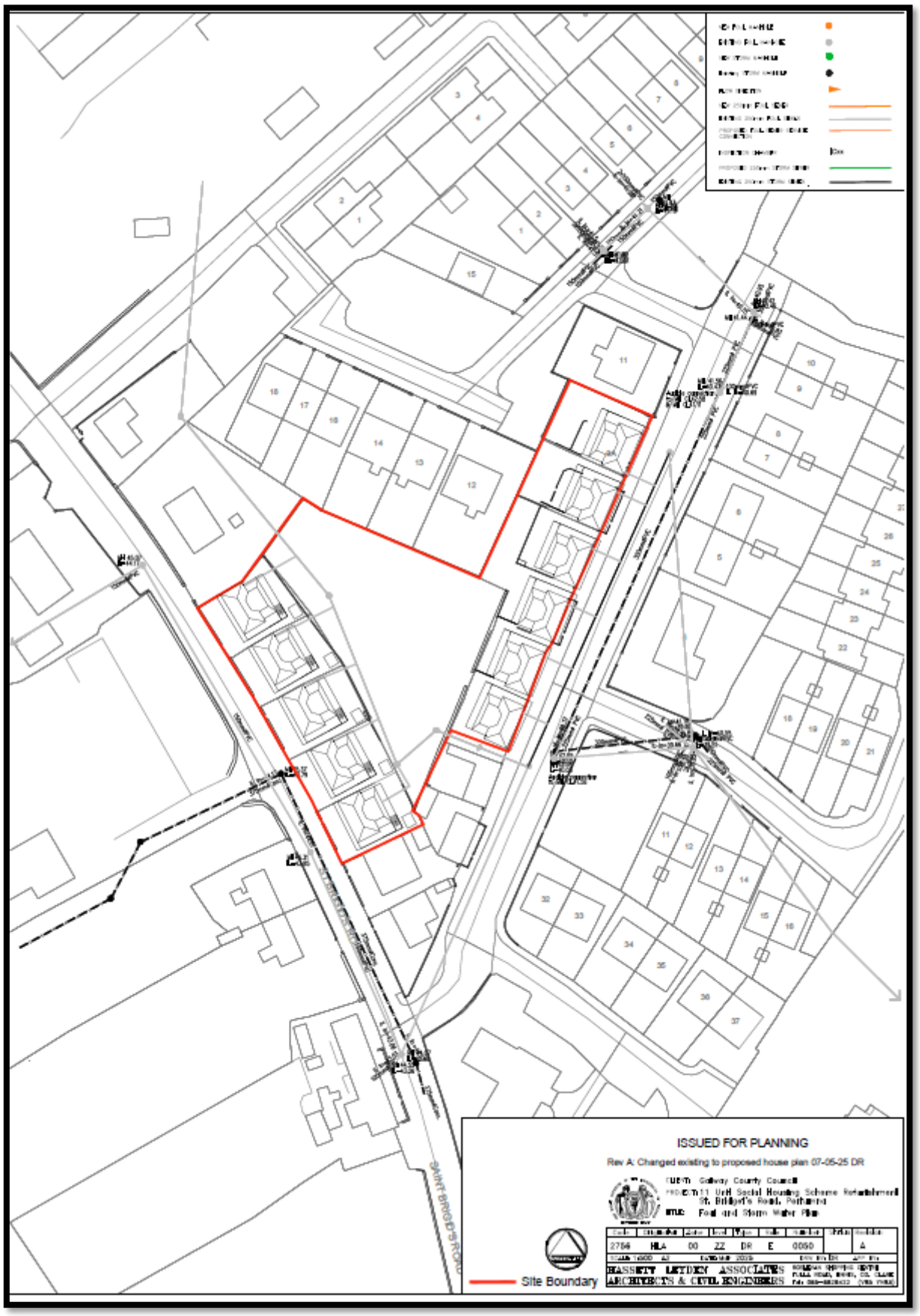
Foul water will connect to the existing main foul sewer. No upgrades or new connections are required. Therefore, no impacts are predicted in this regard.

Individual soakaways and bioretention planters/ rain gardens are proposed to improve the existing storm network on these sites. No impacts are predicted in this regard.

Therefore, the conclusion of this screening exercise is that no significant effects are expected on the qualifying interests or conservation objectives of the surrounding Natura 2000 sites, as a result of the proposed development in question, alone or in combination with the other plans and projects in the area, and therefore, a Natura Impact Statement is **not** required in this case.

This report is therefore issued as a '**Finding of No Significant Effects' (FONSE)** statement, in accordance with the EU Commission's methodological guidance (EC, 2001).

APPENDIX A-Site Layout Plan



APPENDIX B

NPWS Site Synopses for River Shannon Callows SAC

Site Name: River Shannon Callows SAC

Site Code: 000216

The River Shannon Callows is a long and diverse site which consists of seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, along and beside the river between the towns of Athlone and Portumna. It is approximately 50 km long and averages about 0.75 km wide (reaching 1.5 km wide in places). Along much of its length the site is bordered by raised bogs (many, but not all, of which are subject to large-scale harvesting), esker ridges and limestone-bedrock hills. The soils grade from siltyalluvial to peat. This site has a common boundary, and is closely associated, with two other sites with similar habitats, River Suck Callows and Little Brosna Callows.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes): [6410] Molinia Meadows [6510] Lowland Hay Meadows [7230] Alkaline Fens [8240] Limestone Pavement* [91E0] Alluvial Forests* [1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*).

The River Shannon Callows is mainly composed of lowland wet grassland. Different plant communities occur, depending on elevation, and therefore flooding patterns. Two habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive are well-represented within the site – Molinia meadows and lowland hay meadows. The former is characterised by the presence of the Meadow Thistle (*Cirsium dissectum*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), while typical species in the latter include Meadow Fescue (*Festuca pratensis*), Rough Meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), Downy Oat-grass (*Avenula pubescens*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and Common Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*). In places these two habitats grade into one another.

Low-lying areas of the callows with more prolonged flooding are characterised by Floating Sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), Marsh Foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and wetland herbs such as Yellow-cress (*Rorippa spp*.), Water Forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) and Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*). Most of the callows consist of a plant community characterised by Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Brown Sedge (*Carex disticha*), Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*), and herbs such as Marshmarigold (*Caltha palustris*) and Marsh Bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), while the more elevated and peaty areas are characterised by low-growing sedges, particularly Yellow Sedge (*Carex flava agg*.) and Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*). All these communities are very diverse in their total number of plant species, and include the scarce species Meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), Summer Snowflake (*Leucojum aestivum*) and Marsh Stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*).

A further two Annex I habitats, both listed with priority status, have a minor though important presence within the site. Alluvial forest occurs on a series of alluvial islands just below the ESB weir near Meelick. Several of the islands are dominated by well-grown woodland consisting mainly of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and Willows (*Salix spp*.). The islands are prone to regular flooding from the river.

At Clorhane, an area of limestone pavement represents the only known example in Co. Offaly. It is predominantly colonised by mature Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) woodland, with areas of open limestone and calcareous grassland interspersed. The open limestone pavement comprises bare or moss -covered rock, or rock with a very thin calcareous soil cover supporting a short grassy turf. The most notable plant in the grassy area is a substantial population of Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*), which occurs with such species as Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Quaking-grass (*Briza media*), sedges (*Carex caryophyllea, C. flacca*), Common Bird'sfoot-trefoil (Lotus corniculatus), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), and Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*). Ferns associated with the cracks in the pavement include *Asplenium trichomanes, A. ruta-muraria, A. adiantum-nigrum* and *Polypodium australe*. Bryophytes include *Grimmia apocarpa* and *Orthotrichum cf. anomalum*. Anthills are common within the open grassland. The Hazel wood is well-developed and has herbaceous species such as Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Common Dog-violet (*Viola riviniana*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) and Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*). The wood is noted for its luxuriant growth of epiphytic mosses and liverworts, with such species as *Neckera crispa* and *Hylocomium brevirost*re. Yew (*Taxus baccata*) occurs in one area.

Other habitats of smaller area but also of importance within the site are lowland dry grassland, drainage ditches, freshwater marshes and reedbeds. The dry grassland areas, especially where they exist within hay meadows, are species-rich, and of two main types: calcareous grassland on glacial material, and dry grassland on levees of river alluvium. The former can contain many orchid species, Cowslip (*Primula veris*), abundant Adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) and Spring-sedge (*Carex caryophyllea*), and both contain an unusually wide variety of grasses, including False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Yellow Oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*), Meadow Foxtail (*Alopecurus pratense*), and Meadow Brome (*Bromus commutatus*). In places Summer Snowflake also occurs.

Good quality habitats on the edge of the callows included in the site are wet broadleaved semi-natural woodland dominated by both Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), and dry broadleaved woodland dominated by Hazel. There are also areas of raised bog, fen on old cut-away bog with Black Bogrush (*Schoenus nigricans*), and a 'petrifying stream' with associated species-rich calcareous flush which supports Yellow Sedge (*Carex lepidocarpa*), Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*) and Stoneworts (*Chara* spp.).

Immediately south of Portumna Bridge and south east of the town of Portumna the area of low-lying terrestrial land west of the river comprises are large area of the Annex I habitat alkaline fen. The fen comprises a complex of rich-fen plant

communities. Sedges (*Carex lasiocarpa, Carex acutiformis*) and Bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) dominate parts of the fens while other small sedges are common throughout. The orchids Early Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*), Western Marsh Orchid (*D. majalis*) and Marsh Helloborine (*Epipactis palustris*) and the red-listed plant species Marsh Pea (*Lathyrus palustris*) have been recorded within the fen

Two species which are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, occur in the site - Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*) in drainage ditches, and Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) on dry alluvial grassland. This is one of only two known inland sites for Meadow Barley in Ireland. The Red Data Book plant Green-winged Orchid is known from dry calcareous grasslands within the site.

The site is of international importance for wintering waterfowl as numbers regularly exceed the 20,000 threshold (mean of 34,985 for five winters 1994/94-1998/99). Of particular note is an internationally important population of Whooper Swans (287). A further five species have populations of national importance (all figures are means for five winters 1995/96-1999/00): Mute Swan (349), Wigeon (2972), Golden Plover (4254), Lapwing (11578) and Black-tailed Godwit (388). Species which occur in numbers of regional or local importance include Bewick's Swan, Tufted Duck, Dunlin, Curlew and Redshank. The population of Dunlin is notable as it is one of the few regular inland flocks in Ireland. Small flocks of Greenland White-fronted Goose use the Shannon Callows; these are generally associated with larger flocks which occur on the adjacent Little Brosna Callows and River Suck Callows.

Shoveler (an estimated 12 pairs in 1987) and Black-tailed Godwit (Icelandic race) (one or two pairs in 1987) breed within this site. These species are listed in the Red Data Book as being threatened in Ireland. The scarce bird Quail is also known to breed within the area. The callows has at times held over 40% of the Irish population of the globally endangered Corncrake, although numbers have declined in recent years. A total of 66 calling birds were recorded in 1999, but numbers have dropped significantly since then. The total population of breeding waders (Lapwing, Redshank, Snipe and Curlew) in 1987 was one of three major concentrations in Ireland and Britain. The population of breeding Redshank in the site was estimated to be 10% of the Irish population, making it nationally significant. Also, the Annex I species Merlin and Hen Harrier are regularly reported hunting over the callows during the breeding season and in autumn and winter.

This site holds a population of Otter, a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, while the Irish Hare, which is listed in the Irish Red Data Book, is a common sight on the callows.

The Shannon Callows are used for summer dry-stock grazing (mostly cattle, with some sheep and a few horses), and permanent hay meadow. About 30 ha is a nature reserve owned by voluntary conservation bodies. The River Shannon is used increasingly for recreational purposes with coarse angling and boating accounting for much of the visitor numbers. Intermittent and scattered damage to the habitats has occurred due to over-deepening of drains and peat silt deposition,

water-skiing, ploughing and neglect of hay meadow (or reversion to pasture). However, none of these damaging activities can yet be said to be having a serious impact. Threats to the quality of the site may come from the siting of boating marinas in areas away from centres of population, fertilising of botanically-rich fields, the use of herbicides, reversion of hay meadow to pasture, neglect of pasture and hay meadow, disturbance of birds by boaters, anglers, birdwatchers and the general tourist. The maintenance of generally high water levels in winter and spring benefits all aspects of the flora and fauna, but in this regard, summer flooding is a threat to breeding birds, and may cause neglect of farming.

The Shannon Callows has by far the largest area of lowland semi-natural grassland and associated aquatic habitats in Ireland, and one in which there is least disturbance of natural wetland processes. Botanically, it is extremely diverse with two legally protected species of plants and many scarce species. Excellent examples of two habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive occur within the site – Molinia meadows and lowland hay meadows with good examples of a further three Annex habitats (two with priority status). In winter the site is internationally important for numbers and species of waterfowl. In spring it feeds large numbers of birds on migration, and in summer it holds very large numbers of breeding waders, rare breeding birds and the endangered Corncrake, as well as a very wide variety of more common grassland and wetland birds. The presence of Otter, an Annex II species, adds further importance to the site.

APPENDIX C

NPWS Site Synopses for Middle Shannon Callows SPA

Site Name: Middle Shannon Callows SPA

Site Code: **004096**

The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is a long and diverse site which extends for approximately 50 km from the town of Athlone to the town of Portumna; it lies within Counties Galway, Roscommon, Westmeath, Offaly and Tipperary. The site averages about 0.75 km in width though in places is up to 1.5 km wide. Water levels on the site are greatly influenced by the very small fall between Athlone and Portumna and by the weir at Meelick. The site has extensive areas of callow, or seasonally flooded, semi-natural, lowland wet grassland, along both sides of the river. The callows are mainly too soft for intensive farming but are used for hay or silage or for summer grazing. Other habitats of smaller area which occur alongside the river include lowland dry grassland, freshwater marshes, reedbeds and wet woodland. The diversity of semi-natural habitats present and the sheer size of the site attract an excellent diversity of bird species, including significant populations of several.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Corncrake, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Black-tailed Godwit and Black-Headed Gull. It is also of special conservation interest for holding an assemblage of over 20,000 wintering waterbirds. The E.U. Birds

Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

The Middle Shannon Callows qualifies as a site of international importance as it regularly supports in excess of 20,000 wintering waterbirds (23,656 – four year mean peak for four of the winters between 1995/96 and 1999/2000). The site also supports internationally important populations of Whooper Swan (305 – five year mean peak for the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000) and Black-tailed Godwit (485 – four year mean peak for four of the winters between 1995/96 and 1999/2000). Four further species of wintering waterbird occur in numbers of national importance, i.e. Wigeon (3,059), Golden Plover (4,133) , Lapwing (13,240) and Black-headed Gull (1,209) – all figures are four year mean peaks for four of the winters between 1995/96 and 1999/2000.

The Shannon Callows is the largest site monitored as part of I-WeBS and many parts of it are inaccessible on the ground. Annual monitoring of the wintering waterbirds of the Shannon Callows is undertaken by aerial surveys in January/February with some areas also covered by ground counts. The importance of the site for some species may have been underestimated if count coverage missed the brief spring peaks for these species, e.g. peak counts of Lapwing (23,409) and Black-tailed Godwit (1,096) recorded in the baseline period (1995/96 to 1999/2000) have been considerably higher than the four year means. . A wide range of other species occurs within the site, including Mute Swan (407), Teal (88), Tufted Duck (41), Dunlin (335), Curlew (162) and Redshank (39). Small numbers of Greenland White-fronted Goose use the Shannon Callows (peak 55 in 1998/99) and these are generally associated with larger flocks which occur on the adjacent Little Brosna Callows and River Suck Callows. The callow grasslands provide optimum feeding grounds for these various species of waterfowl, while many of the birds also roost or rest within the site.

The Shannon Callows is also an important site for breeding waders with the total population on the Shannon and Little Brosna Callows being one of three major concentrations in Ireland and Britain in 1987. Numbers of some species have declined since then but a survey of the Shannon Callows in 2002 recorded the following breeding waders - Lapwing (63 pairs), Redshank (116 pairs), Snipe (139 drumming birds) and Curlew (8 pairs). Black-tailed Godwit, a very rare breeding species in Ireland, nests or attempts to nest in small numbers each year within the site. A further scarce breeding species, Shoveler, also nests in small numbers each year (an estimated 12 pairs in 1987).

The Middle Shannon Callows SPA supports a breeding population of Corncrake (19 pairs - five year mean peak between 2003 and 2007, based on records of calling males).

Corncrake winter in southern and eastern Africa, migrating northwards to arrive on their breeding grounds from early April onwards, departing again in August and September. They require the cover of tall vegetation throughout their breeding cycle and are strongly associated with meadows which are harvested annually, where they nest and feed. Annual cutting

of these meadows creates a sward which is easy for the birds to move through. Other habitats, which can provide cover for Corncrake in the early and late stages of the breeding season, are also important for this species.

Corncrake is listed on the 2010 International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. This is due to population and range declines of more than 50% in the last 25 years across significant parts of its range.

Quail, a related, scarce species, is also known to breed within the callow grasslands.

A good variety of other bird species are attracted to the site. Birds of prey, including scarce species such as Merlin and wintering Hen Harrier have been recorded hunting over the callows. A range of passerine species associated with grassland and swamp vegetation breed, including Sedge Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, Skylark and Reed Bunting. Kingfisher is also known to occur within the site. Whinchat, an uncommon breeding species, occurs in small numbers.

The Middle Shannon Callows SPA is an internationally important site that supports an assemblage of over 20,000 wintering waterbirds. It holds internationally important populations of two species - Whooper Swan and Black-tailed Godwit. In addition, there are four species that have wintering populations of national importance. The site also supports a nationally important breeding population of Corncrake. Of particular note is that several of the species which occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Whooper Swan, Corncrake and Golden Plover.