ENVIROPLAN CONSULTING
LIMITED

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Title

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT
SCREENING REPORT

Development Description

"The proposed renovation and extension of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the construction of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings, connection to existing site services and all ancillary site works."

Location

Ennis Road, Gort, County Galway

Applicants

Galway County Council

Prepared by:

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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 which will involve the *"proposed renovation and extension of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the construction of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings, connection to existing site services and all ancillary site works"* at Ennis Road, Gort, Co. Galway.

Edel Hardiman (BSc) 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 1.9 km to the southeast of the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC. 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	*"The proposed renovation and extension of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the construction of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings, connection to existing site services and all ancillary site works."*
Brief description of site characteristics	The application site is located in Gort, Co. Galway. Ennis Road is to the east of the site and there are several residential dwellings along this road. Gort Community School and Community Playground are to the northeast of the site. The application site currently features 2 no. existing semidetached houses to the east of the site with associated landscaping and hardstanding areas to the rear of the dwellings. There are 3 no. sheds in the centre of the site. The site is 0.1164 ha in size. The site can be described as an infill and part brownfield site (owing to the existing buildings and hard surfaces on site).

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/SPA and publicly advertised it is legally protected and becomes a proposed candidate SAC (pcSAC) or proposed candidate SPA (pcSPA). A three-month period follows during which landowners may lodge an objection to the designation. Details of each proposed SAC and proposed SPA are then given to the EU Commission, and thereafter the site is called a "candidate SAC" or "candidate SPA". 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

Permission is sought for the *"proposed renovation and extension of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the construction of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings, connection to existing site services and all ancillary site works."*

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 at Ennis Road, Gort, County Galway (Grid Ref: Easting: 545380.69, Northing: 701360.97) (see **Figure 3.1** below). The application site lies 1.9 km southeast of the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC (see **Figure 3.2** below).

The site does not lie within a Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range. The closest Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range identified to the development site is approximately 1.7 kilometres north of the application site within the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC and 1.6 kilometres south of the application site associated with the Lough Cutra SAC (see **Figure 3.3** below).

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
Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Site code: 000252	QIs – 7 Habitats and 1 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000252	1.9 km	No direct or indirect impacts are predicted for this protected SAC. **Construction Phase:** **Direct Impacts:** The application site lies outside of the SAC; therefore, no direct impacts are predicted during construction phase. **Indirect Impacts:** No indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ ecological connectors/ receptors between the application site and this SAC.	No

			Impacts on Lesser Horseshoe bat species are not predicted. This species is a Qualifying Interest of this SAC; however, the application site is not located within a known Lesser Horseshoe foraging range. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range associated with this SAC is approximately 1.7 kilometres north of the application site. There is a built-up environment existing within this intervening distance. In the interest of due diligence, a roost inspection was carried out on site. This survey concluded that there were no bats roosting on site during the time of this survey. Therefore, no impacts are predicted on this species during the construction phase. **Operational phase:** **Direct Impacts:** The application site lies outside of the SAC; therefore, no direct impacts are predicted during operational phase. **Indirect Impacts:** No indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable hydrological/ ecological connectors/ receptors between the application site and this SAC and the significant intervening distance. Surface water on site will be collected via gulleys and passed through a petrol interceptor to remove hydrocarbons, before being discharged to a soakpit. This will ensure that no impacts are predicted in regards to storm water runoff. To treat foul water on site, it is proposed to connect to the existing public mains. There is currently a 225mm diameter concrete main crossing through the site. A new manhole on the line will be constructed and will connect the new houses to the system. No impacts are predicted in this regard.	
Lough Cutra SAC Site code: 000299	QIs – 1 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000299	2.7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Termon Lough SAC Site code: 001321	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001321	3.5 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological	No

			connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	
East Burren Complex SAC Site code: 001926	QIs – 14 Habitats and 3 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001926	2.9 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Ballyogan Lough SAC Site code: 000019	QIs – 2 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000019	10.7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Moyree River System SAC Site code: 000057	QIs – 4 Habitats and 2 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000057	10.7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Glendree Bog SAC Site code: 001912	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001912	12.9 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Gortacarnaun Wood SAC Site code: 002180	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002180	5.6 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Drummin Wood SAC Site code: 002181	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002181	5.6 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Carrowbaun, Newhall and Ballylee Turloughs SAC Site code: 002293	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002293	4.8 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Lough Coy SAC Site code: 002117	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002117	5.4 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Peterswell Turlough SAC Site code: 000318	QIs – 2 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000318	7.5 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No

Sonnagh Bog SAC Site code: 001913	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001913	11.9 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Ballinduff Turlough SAC Site code: 002295	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002295	6.1 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Ardrahan Grassland SAC Site code: 002244	QIs – 4 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002244	11 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Castletaylor Complex SAC Site code: 000242	QIs – 5 Habitats https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000242	12.9 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Kiltiernan Turlough SAC Site code: 001285	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001285	12.7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Lough Fingall Complex SAC Site code: 000606	QIs – 6 Habitats and 1 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000606	12.5 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Galway Bay Complex SAC Site code: 000268	QIs – 15 Habitats and 2 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000268	11.6 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Cahermore Turlough SAC Site code: 002294	QIs – 1 Habitat https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002294	7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Caherglassaun Turlough SAC Site code: 000238	QIs – 2 Habitats and 1 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000238	5.9 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Coole-Garryland SPA Site code: 004107	QIs – 1 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004107	2 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological	No

			connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	
Lough Cutra SPA Site code: 004056	QIs – 1 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004056	2.7 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA Site code: 004168	QIs – 2 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004168	4 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No
Inner Galway Bay SPA Site code: 004031	QIs – 21 Species https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004031	11.6 km	No significant direct/ indirect impacts are predicted due to the lack of identifiable ecological and hydrological connector/receptor pathways between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.	No

The Coole-Garyland Complex SAC is not predicted to be impacted from the proposed development. This Natura 2000 sites lie completely outside of the application site, therefore no direct impacts are predicted during the construction phase and the operational phase of the proposed development.

There are no indirect impacts predicted due to the lack of identifable hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between this Natura 2000 site and the application site. Impacts on Lesser Horseshoe bat species are not predicted. This species is a qualifying interest of the Coole-Garyland Complex SAC; however, the application site is not located within a known Lesser Horseshoe foraging range. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range associated with this SAC is approximately 1.7 kilometres north of the application site. There is a built-up environment existing within this intervening distance. In the interest of due diligence, a roost inspection was carried out on site. This survey concluded that there were no bats roosting on site during the time of this survey. Therefore, no impacts are predicted on this species during the construction or operational phase of the proposed development.

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 and the lack of identifable hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways.

Figure 3.1: Site Location of the application site (outlined in red)

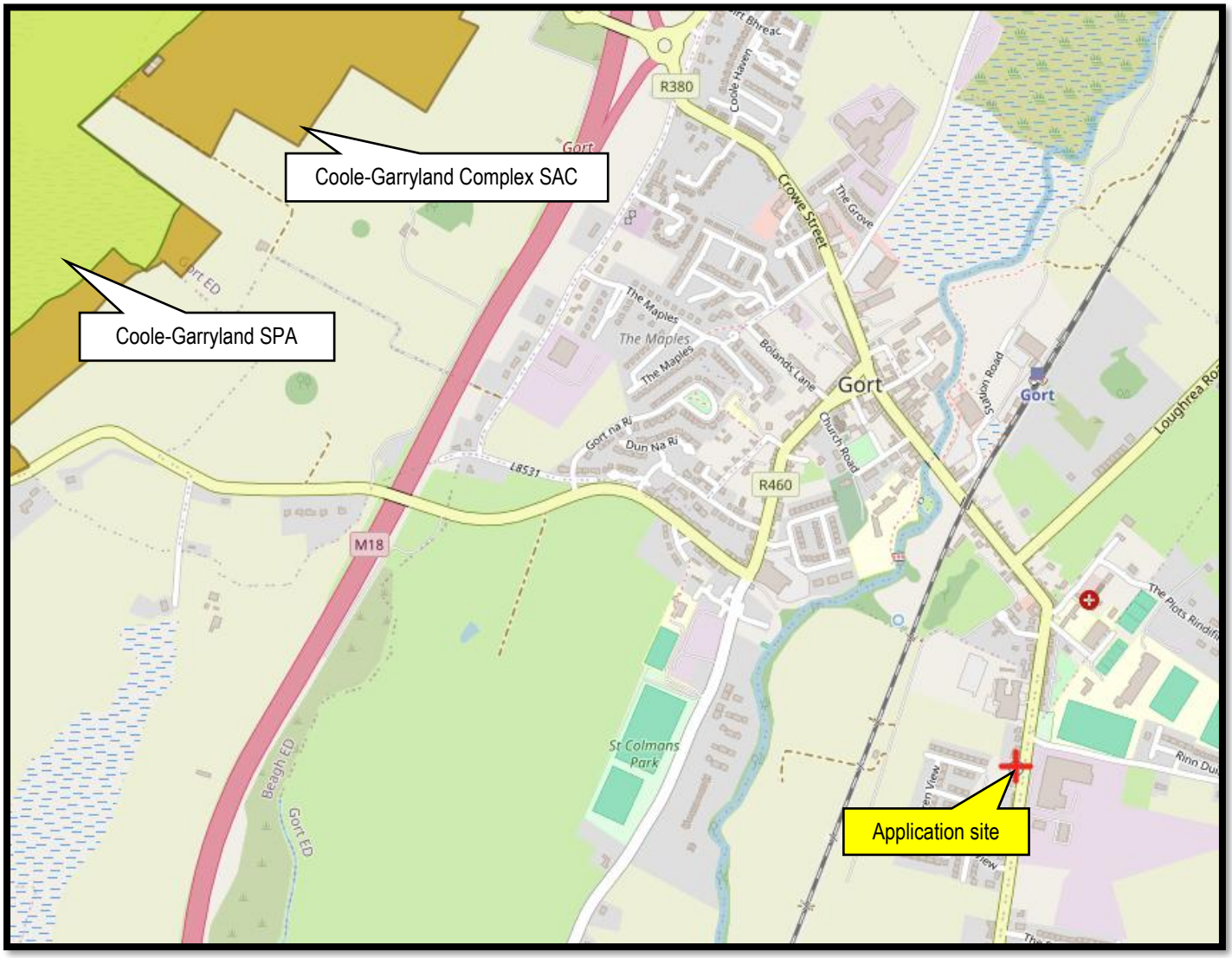


Figure 3.2: Site Location in Relation to the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC and Coole-Garryland SPA Natura 2000 sites.

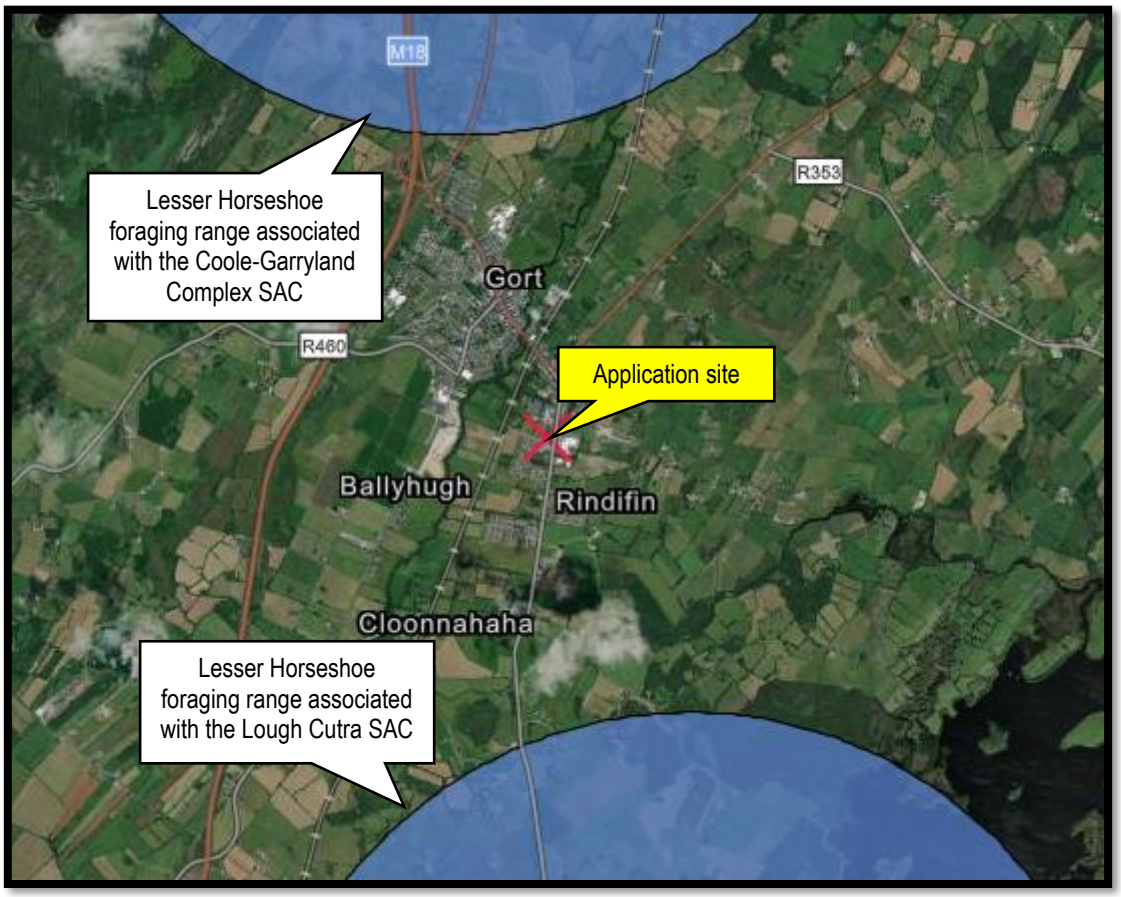


Figure 3.3: Site location in relation to Lesser Horseshoe Bats Foraging Range (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

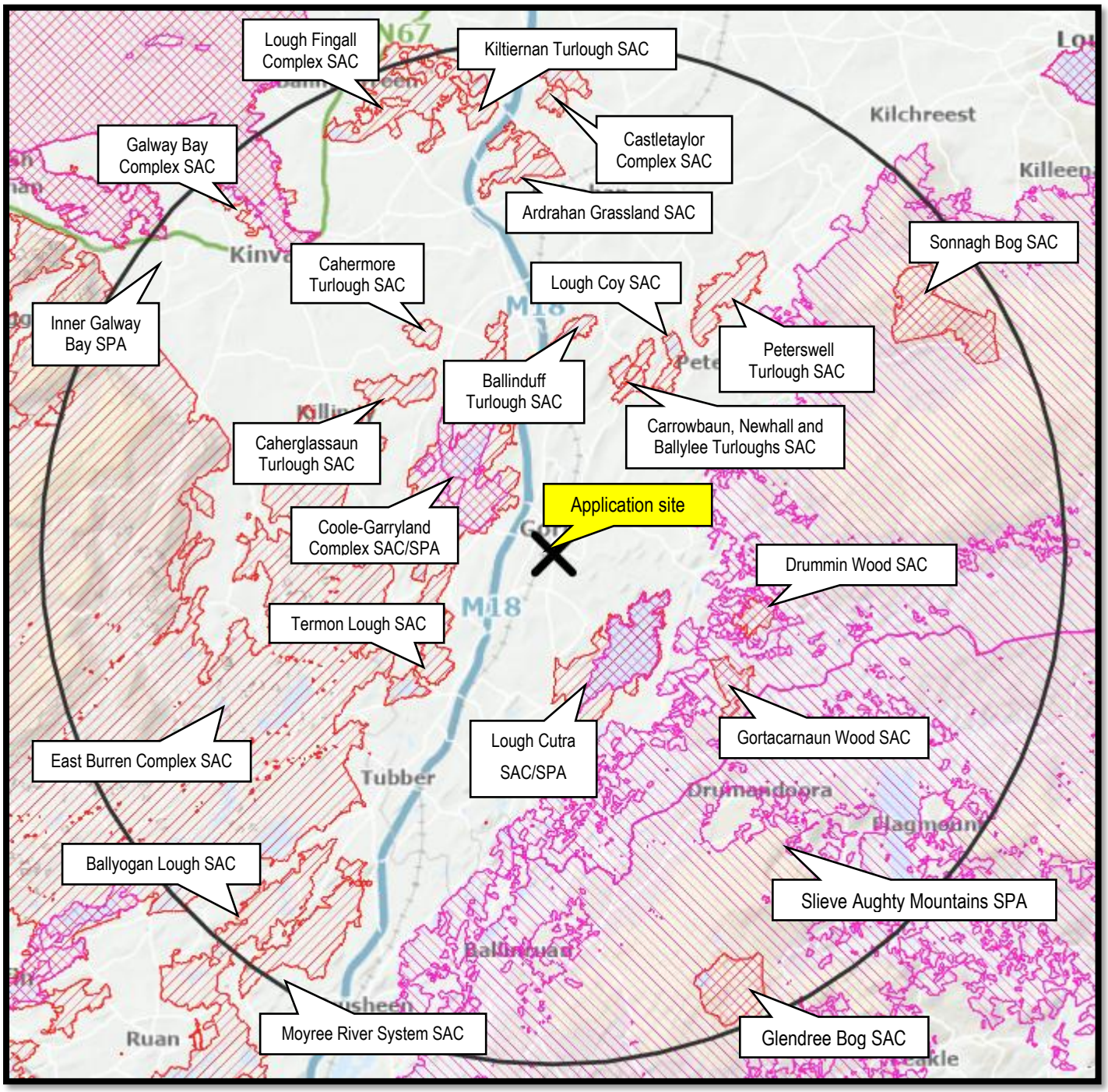


Figure 3.4: 15km Buffer Surrounding Site

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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC. The NPWS site synopses for the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC is given as Appendix B of this report.

Table 4.1 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Habitat Information

Habitat code	Habitat name	Cover (ha)	Representativity
3150	Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* - type vegetation	56.02	B
3180	Turloughs	425.76	A
3270	Rivers with muddy banks with *Chenopodion rubri* p.p. and *Bidention* p.p. vegetation	22.41	A
5130	Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands	11.2	A
6210	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*) (* important orchid sites)	11.2	B
8240	Limestone pavements	56.02	A
91J0	Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles	0.73	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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Natura 2000 site are outlined in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Species Information

Species code	Latin name	English name	Population significance
1303	*Rhinolophus hipposideros*	Lesser horseshoe bat	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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Natura 2000 site are listed in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 Potential Pressures and Threats to the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Natura 2000 Site

Activity	Location	Intensity	Influence
Fertilisation	Inside	High	Negative
Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to household sewage and waste waters	Both	Low	Negative
Disposal of household / recreational facility waste	Both	Medium	Negative
Disposal of inert materials	Both	Low	Negative
Roads, motorways	Outside	Medium	Negative
Diffuse groundwater pollution due to agricultural and forestry activities	Both	Low	Negative
Invasive non-native species	Inside	Medium	Negative
Landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general	Inside	Low	Negative
Burning down	Inside	Low	Negative
Infilling of ditches, dykes, ponds, pools, marshes or pits	Both	Medium	Negative
Modification of hydrographic functioning, general	Both	High	Negative
Flooding	Both	Low	Negative
Removal of hedges and copses or scrub	Inside	Low	Negative
Intensive cattle grazing	Inside	Medium	Negative
Wind energy production	Both	Low	Negative
Sand and gravel extraction	Inside	Low	Negative
Intensive sheep grazing	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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC have been published**.** Qualifying interests and objectives (bulleted) are listed below.

Coole-Garryland Complex SAC

[3150] Natural eutrophic lakes with *Magnopotamion* or *Hydrocharition* - type vegetation

- Habitat areas are stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- Typical species present, in good condition, and demonstrating typical abundances and distribution.
- All characteristic zones should be present, correctly distributed and in good condition.
- Maintain maximum depth of vegetation, subject to natural processes.
- Maintain appropriate hydrological regime necessary to support the habitat.
- Maintain appropriate substratum type, extent and chemistry to support the vegetation.
- Maintain appropriate Secchi transparency. There should be no decline in Secchi depth/transparency.
- Maintain/restore the concentration of nutrients in the water column to sufficiently low levels to support the habitat and its typical species.
- Maintain/restore appropriate water quality to support the habitat, including high chlorophyll a status.
- Maintain/restore trace/absent attached algal biomass (<5% cover).
- Maintain appropriate water and sediment pH, alkalinity and cation concentrations to support the habitat, subject to natural processes.
- Maintain/restore appropriate water colour to support the habitat.
- Maintain/restore appropriate organic carbon levels to support the habitat.
- Maintain appropriate turbidity to support the habitat.
- Maintain the area and condition of fringing habitats necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.

Predicted Impacts- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

[3180] Turloughs*

- Habitat area of c.365.1ha stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- Maintain appropriate natural hydrological regime necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.
- Maintain variety, area and extent of soil types necessary to support turlough vegetation and other biota.
- Maintain nutrient status appropriate to soil types and vegetation communities.
- Maintain sufficient wet bare ground, as appropriate.
- Maintain appropriate calcium carbonate deposition rate and concentration in soil.
- Maintain active peat formation.

- Restore appropriate water quality to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.
- Maintain area of sensitive and high conservation value vegetation communities/units.
- Maintain vegetation zonation/mosaic characteristic of the turlough.
- Maintain sward heights appropriate to the vegetation unit, and a variety of sward heights across the turlough.
- Maintain typical species within the turlough.
- Maintain marginal fringing habitats that support turlough vegetation, invertebrate, mammal and/or bird populations.
- Maintain appropriate turlough woodland diversity and structure.

Predicted Impacts- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

[3270] Rivers with muddy banks with *Chenopodion rubri p.p.* and *Bidention p.p.* vegetation

- Habitat area is stable, subject to natural fluctuations.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- Maintain appropriate natural hydrological regime necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.
- Maintain area and extent of soil types necessary to support the habitat.
- Maintain nutrient status appropriate to soil types and vegetation communities/units.
- Maintain sufficient wet bare ground, as appropriate.
- Maintain appropriate calcium carbonate deposition rate and concentration in soil.
- Restore appropriate water quality to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.
- Maintain area of sensitive and high conservation value vegetation communities/units.
- Maintain vegetation zonation/mosaic characteristic of the site.
- Maintain typical species.
- Maintain the area and condition of fringing habitats necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat.

Predicted Impacts- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

[5130] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands

- Habitat areas are stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- At least 50 juniper plants present with each plant separated by no more than 20m.

- Fruiting females comprise at least 10% of juniper plants rooted in plot in at least 50% of stops or in an ad hoc count of 50 plants.
- At least one seedling recorded in at least one monitoring stop.
- At least 90% of juniper plants rooted in plot alive in at least 75% of stops or across the site as a whole.
- Total cover of negative indicator species to be less than 10% in at least 50% of stops.
- At least 5% bare soil and/or at least 5% bare rock in at least 25% of stops.
- Browning or dead juniper branches (excluding fully dead plants) comprise no more than 20% of total juniper cover in plot in at least 75% of stops.
- No browsing of juniper shoot tips, and trunk bark stripping evident in no more than 10% of juniper shrubs in at least 75% of stops.
- No decline in distribution or population sizes of rare, threatened or scarce species associated with the habitat.

Predicted Impacts- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

[6120] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates *(Festuco-Brometalia)* (* important orchid sites)

- Habitat areas are 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 two 'high quality' positive indicator species present in stop or within 20m of stop.
- Negative indicator species collectively not more than 20% cover, with cover of an individual species not more than 10%.
- Cover of non-native species not more than 1%.
- Cover of woody species (except certain listed species) and bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) not more than 5%.
- Broadleaf herb component of vegetation between 40% and 90%.
- At least 30% of sward between 5cm and 40cm tall.
- Litter cover not more than 25%.
- Not more than 10% bare soil.
- Area of the habitat showing signs of serious grazing or disturbance less than 20m².

Predicted Impacts- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

[8240] Limestone pavements*

- Habitat areas are stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline in habitat distribution, subject to natural processes.
- 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- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

[9130] Taxus baccata woods of the British Isles*

- Habitat areas are stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- No decline. The surveyed yew woodland at Garryland is shown on map 7.
- 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 10m; 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 yew (*Taxus baccata*) and other native tree species occur in adequate proportions to ensure survival of woodland canopy.
- At least 19 stems/ha of dead wood at least 20cm diameter.
- No decline in woodland structure: veteran trees.
- No decline in distribution and, in the case of red listed and other rare or localised species, population size.
- All four indicators of overgrazing absent.
- No decline. Native tree cover at least 90% of canopy; yew (*Taxus baccata*) cover at least 50% of canopy.
- Yew (*Taxus baccata*) present; at least 6 positive indicator species for 91J0* woodlands present.
- Negative indicator species cover not greater than 10%; regeneration of negative indicator species absent.

Predicted Impacts- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

[1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat *(Rhinolophus hipposideros)*

- Minimum number of 218 bats for the summer roost with roost id. 226 (in NPWS database).
- No decline in summer roosts.

- No decline in auxiliary roosts.
- No significant decline of potential foraging habitat within 2.5km of qualifying roosts.
- No significant loss of linear features within 2.5km of qualifying roosts.
- No significant increase in artificial light intensity adjacent to named roosts or along commuting routes within 2.5km of those roosts.

Predicted Impacts- Due to the significant distance, the intervening built up environmental and the lack of identifiable hydrological and ecological connector/receptor pathways, impacts on this qualifying interest are not predicted.

5 SOILS, GEOLOGY & HYDROGEOLOGY

5.1 GEOLOGY

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) website was consulted for available geological / hydrological information. Soil on site is classified as Urban - soil concreted over. 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 poor overall status.

GWDTE-Caherglassaun Turlough (SAC000238) Waterbody Information	
Name	GWDTE-Caherglassaun Turlough (SAC000238)
Code	IE_WE_G_0091
WFD Catchments	25C Lower Shannon 27 Shannon Estuary North 29 Galway Bay South East
Longitude	53.0746289
Latitude	-8.7107449
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	Poor

5.2 FLOOD RISK

There is no identifiable flood risk on site.

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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Natura 2000 site.

Table 6.1: Other Plans and Projects Affecting the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Natura 2000 Site

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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC site and its aims and objectives are outlined from page 17 - 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 09th of July 2025. It was ascertained that the following local planning applications were granted within a 300m radius of the site in the past 5 years. **Pl ref –** 23446 **Development Description –** *"for 1) retention of extensions to dwelling house previously granted under 41358 and 17/782 on revised site boundaries, 2) construction of 13 serviced dwelling houses & associated works and 3) provision of rear access to two existing dwelling houses is being sought"* **Grant date –** 19/12/2023 **Pl ref –** 2360494 **Development Description –** *"of a dwelling house on a site with revised site boundaries and all associated site works to those originally approved under pl. ref. no. 99/3880"* **Grant date –** 14/08/2023	Neutral Impact

	Pl ref – 2361429 **Development Description –** *"to: (1) construct 2 No. Warehouse Units with Entrance via existing site entrance onto the Ennis Road R458. (2) Provision for pedestrian connection to existing footpath along the Ennis Road (R458). Connection to public mains water infrastructure, including connection to existing surface water, foul drainage networks to serve the development. Provision of communal open space areas, bicycle parking, footpaths, public lighting, revised boundary treatments, together with all associated site works"* **Grant date –** 24/06/2024 **Pl ref –** 2361138 **Development Description –** *"for the construction of a housing development comprising 16no. units at Rindifin, Ennis Road (R458), Gort, Co. Galway. The development will consist of (1) 4no. type A units – 3 bed terrace (2 storey), (2) 6no. type B units – 3 bed semi-detached (2 storey), (3) 5no. type C units – 2 bed terrace units (2 storey) (4) 1no. type C unit – 1 bed apartment (single storey). The proposed development includes: (1) new proposed entrance onto the Ennis Road (R458), (2) provision for pedestrian connections "* **Grant date –** 08/04/2024 **Pl ref –** 201501 **Development Description –** "*of alterations made to an existing dwelling house consisting of the demolishing of a side garage, alterations to the façade of the building, permission to revise the access to the site and all associated site services and site development works on revised site Boundarys. Gross floor space of work to be retained ; 91.2sqm, Gross floor space of any demolition; 16.7sqm"* **Grant date –** 25/01/2021 **Pl ref –** 22318 **Development Description –** *"of an existing dwelling house on revised site boundaries previously permitted under 20/1501 including all associated site works and boundary treatments. Gross floor space of work to be retained: 85.53 sqm"* **Grant date –** 13/06/2022 **Pl ref –** 212312 **Development Description –** "*for the retention and completion of 8 no. dwelling houses and construction of 24 no. dwelling houses, all previously granted under Planning Reference No. 04/4293 (An Bord Pleanala Ref. Pl. 07.212144) on revised site with amended boundaries, previous planning reference no. 08/5 & 12/1153 15/1159(Gross floor area 2676sqm)"* **Grant date –** 10/02/2022 **Pl ref –** 2460005 **Development Description –** "*for the Refurbishment and Extension. The proposed development includes the following - i) Construction of a three-storey school extension c.5,878m2 to provide teaching spaces and school support facilities including a three classroom Special Education Unit, ii) Construction of link building connecting the existing school building with three-storey school extension at first floor level, iii) Refurbishment and extension of existing single and two storey school building"* **Grant date –** 07/10/2024 **Pl ref –** 212092 **Development Description –** "*for: i. The demolition of a 29 sqm. storage shed. ii. the construction of a new carpark with new entrance onto public road, public lighting and all ancillary and associated site works"* **Grant date –** 21/02/2022	

	PI ref – 2461019 **Development Description –** *"for the demolition of existing rear extension and the construction of a new rear two storey extension and associated works. Gross floor space of proposed works: 54.42 sqm. Gross floor space of any demolition: 22.44 sqm"* **Grant date –** 24/03/2025	

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	There are no predicted impacts/effects on the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC, due to the significant distance between the application site and the Natura 2000 site. With a lack of identifiable ecological/hydrological connectors and receptors, no impacts are predicted during the construction phase. Impacts on Lesser Horseshoe bat species are not predicted. This species is a Qualifying Interest of this SAC; however, the application site is not located within a known Lesser Horseshoe foraging range. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range associated with this SAC is approximately 1.7 kilometres north of the application site. There is a built-up environment existing within this intervening distance. In the interest of due diligence, a roost inspection was carried out on site. This survey concluded that there were no bats roosting on site during the time of this survey. Therefore, no impacts are predicted on this species during the construction phase.
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	There are no predicted impacts/effects on the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC, due to the significant distance between the application site and the Natura 2000 site. With a lack of identifiable /hydrological connectors and receptors, no impacts are predicted during the operational phase. Surface water on site will be collected via gulleys and passed through a petrol interceptor to remove hydrocarbons, before being discharged to a soakpit. This will ensure that no impacts are predicted in regards to storm water runoff. To treat foul water on site, it is proposed to connect to the existing public mains. There is currently a 225mm diameter concrete main crossing through the site. A new manhole on the line will be constructed and will connect the new houses to the system. No impacts are predicted in this regard. There are no direct or indirect impacts/effects predicted on the QI bird species associated with the Coole-Garryland SPA. This is due to the existing

	anthropogenic activity between the intervening environment between this SPA and the application site.
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 • 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	There are no predicted likely changes to occur to the Natura 2000 site due to the proposed development. The significant distance between the proposed development and any European sites is such that the proposal will not result in any likely changes to the European sites that comprise part of the Natura 2000 network during the operational phase. There are no impacts predicted during the construction or operational phase of the proposed development due to the existing level of development in the area and the distance between the application site and any Natura 2000 site.
(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 at Ennis Road, Gort, County Galway (Grid Ref: Easting: 545380.69, Northing: 701360.97). **Distance from Designated Site**: The site for the proposed development 1.9 km southeast of the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC. **Brief Description of the Project:** Planning permission is being sought for the *"proposed renovation and extension of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the construction of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings, connection to existing site services and all ancillary site works."* 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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC is designated under EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). **Qualifying Features** The Coole-Garryland Complex SAC is of conservation significance due to the presence of 7 habitats and 1 species listed under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (see below). **Coole-Garryland Complex SAC** **<u>Qualifying Habitats</u>** [3150] Natural Eutrophic Lakes [3180] Turloughs* [3270] *Chenopodion rubri* p.p. and *Bidention p.p.* Vegetation

[5130] Juniper Scrub [6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland*
[8240] Limestone Pavement*
[91J0] Yew Woodlands*

Qualifying Species

[1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

(EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC)

Habitats and Species of Interest

Full details of the sites are found in the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Site Synopses included as Appendix B to this report.

Unit Size:

Coole-Garryland Complex SAC: 1119.9300 ha

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

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

The site for the proposed development lies 1.9 km southeast of the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC. Due to the significant intervening built up distance and as there is a lack of identifiable hydrological/ ecological connector/ receptor pathways between the application site and the Natura 2000 site, no impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the proposed development.

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 0.1164 ha, the overall proposed development floor space is 413 m2. At this size and scale, and 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 1.9 km southeast of the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC. There are no identifiable ecological corridors or hydrological pathway, receptors or connectors between the application site and this Natura 2000 site.

- **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**
  Surface water on site will be collected via gulleys and passed through a petrol interceptor to remove hydrocarbons, before being discharged to a soakpit. This will ensure that no impacts are predicted in regards to storm water runoff.

  To treat foul water on site, it is proposed to connect to the existing public mains. There is currently a 225mm diameter concrete main crossing through the site. A new manhole on the line will be constructed and will connect the new houses to the system. 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 application site is located 1.9 km southeast of the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC. There are no identifiable ecological corridors or hydrological pathway, receptors or connectors between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, no impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the proposed development.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Planning is being sought for the *"proposed renovation and extension of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings and the construction of 2 No. 3 bed semi-detached dwellings, connection to existing site services and all ancillary site works"* at Ennis Road, Gort, Co. Galway (Grid Ref: Easting: 545380.69, Northing: 701360.97). A Site Layout Plan for the proposed development is included as **Appendix A** to this report. The screening exercise examined impacts on the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC Natura 2000 site.

The application site is located 1.9 km southeast of the Coole-Garryland Complex SAC. There are no identifiable ecological corridors or hydrological pathway, receptors or connectors between the application site and these Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, no impacts are predicted during the construction or operational phase of the proposed development.

Impacts on Lesser Horseshoe bat species are not predicted. This species is a Qualifying Interest of this SAC; however, the application site is not located within a known Lesser Horseshoe foraging range. The Lesser Horseshoe Bat Foraging Range associated with this SAC is approximately 1.7 kilometres north of the application site. There is a built-up environment existing within this intervening distance. In the interest of due diligence, a roost inspection was carried out on site. This survey concluded that there were no bats roosting on site during the time of this survey. Therefore, no impacts are predicted on this species during the construction phase.

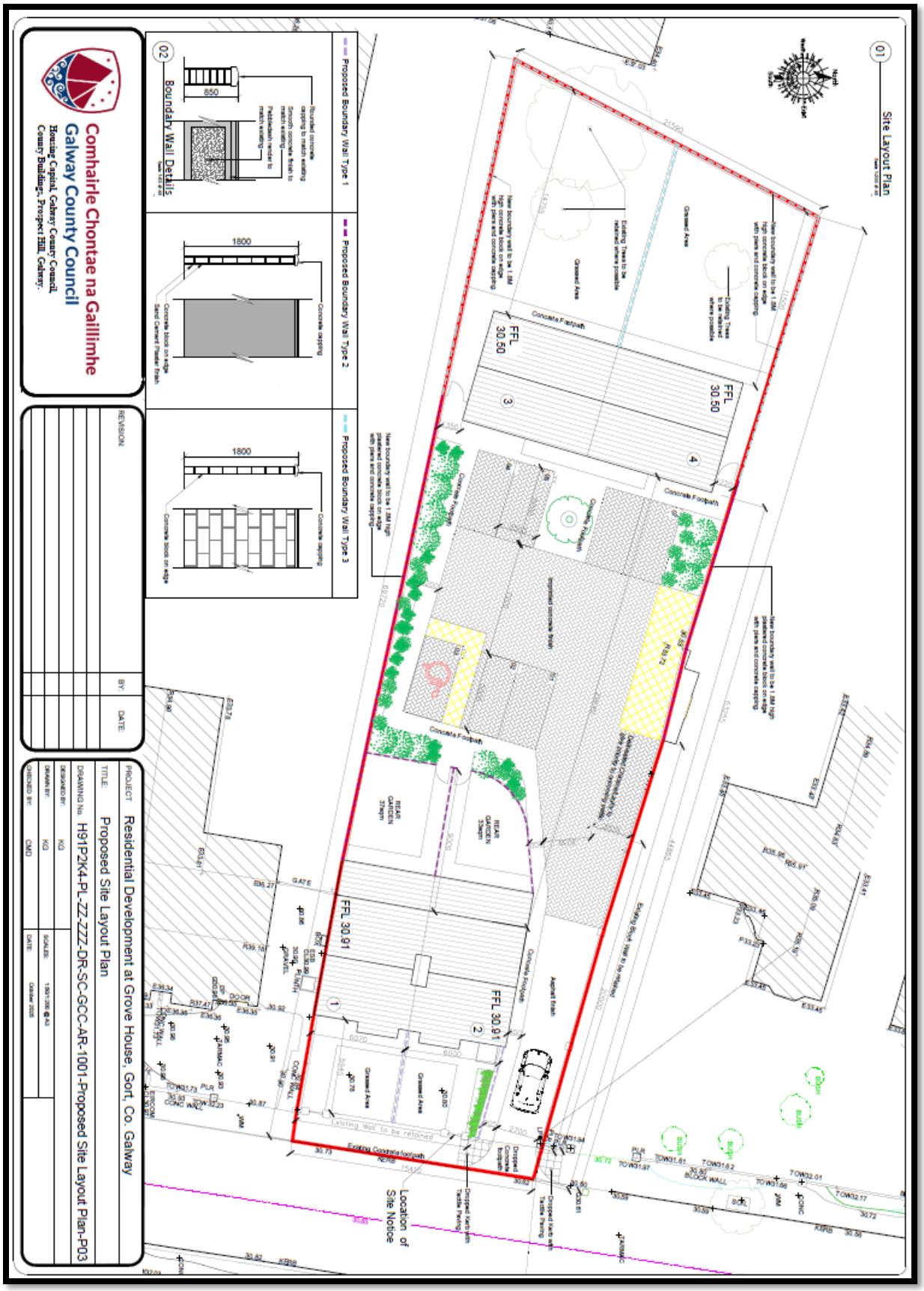
Surface water on site will be collected via gulleys and passed through a petrol interceptor to remove hydrocarbons, before being discharged to a soakpit. This will ensure that no impacts are predicted in regards to storm water runoff.

To treat foul water on site, it is proposed to connect to the existing public mains. There is currently a 225mm diameter concrete main crossing through the site. A new manhole on the line will be constructed and will connect the new houses to the system. 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 Coole-Garryland Complex SAC

Site Name: Coole-Garryland Complex SAC
Site Code: 000252

The Coole-Garryland Complex is situated in a low-lying karstic limestone area west of Gort, in Co. Galway. It contains a series of seasonal lakes (turloughs), which are fed by springs and a partly submerged river, surrounded by woodland, pasture and limestone heath. The more well-known turloughs present in the site include Lydacan, Crannagh North, Raheen, Crannagh South, Coole, Garryland, Newtown and Hawkhill.

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): [3150] Natural Eutrophic Lakes [3180] Turloughs* [3270] *Chenopodion rubri* p.p. and *Bidention* p.p. Vegetation [5130] Juniper Scrub [6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland* [8240] Limestone Pavement* [91J0] Yew Woodlands* [1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

The turloughs at Coole-Garryland are particularly good examples of this habitat type. Their vegetation includes such species as Shoreweed (*Littorella uniflora*), Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), Water-purslane (*Lythrum portula*) and Fen Violet (*Viola persicifolia*). A species of Water-starwort, Callitriche palustris, was recently recorded from the site, its first known station in Ireland – it has since been noted in several other turlough sites. The Coole River itself is of particular interest for the occurrence of a rare riverine habitat characterised by Trifid Bur-marigold (*Bidens tripartita*), Red Goosefoot (*Chenopodium rubrum*) and species of Knotgrass (*Polygonum spp*.). In the habitat 'natural eutrophic lake' at the site, species such as Pondweeds (*Potamogeton perfoliatus and P. berchtoldii*), Water-starworts and Rigid Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*) are to be found.

The turloughs are fringed by a range of habitats, including the nationally rare scrub communities containing Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) with occasional Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and with a herb layer dominated by meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*). This woodland falls into the alder-meadowsweet (*Alnus glutinosa-Filipendula ulmaria*) type, hawthorn-herb-Robert (*Crataegus monogyna- Geranium robertianum*) subtype.

A remarkable feature of Coole-Garryland is that several of the turloughs are surrounded by woodland. The main body of the woodland is dominated by Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) mixed with Pedunculate oak, occasional Elm (*Ulmus glabra*), Wild

Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*). Exotic species are widespread, especially Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) but also with some Hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and conifers, including Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*). Many of these species are freely regenerating. The understorey is heterogeneous and is mainly made up of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Hawthorn, Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) (possibly introduced), Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*), Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and abundant Ash saplings. The field layer is typical of native woodlands on limestone and includes: Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), Dog Violet (*Viola riviniana*), False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*), Maidenhair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*) and Bitter Vetch (*Lathyrus montanus*). The woodlands are notable for the presence of rare species of Myxomycete fungi, including Licea idris, Licea marginata and Macbrideola decapillata, the first-named in one of only three known sites for the species. Much of this woodland falls into the ash-ivy (*Fraxinus excelsiorHedera helix*) type, hazel-wood-sorrel (*Corylus avellana- Oxalis acetosella*) sub-type.

To the east of Coole Lough, the woodland is highly modified with stands of conifers and Beech. This area is most subject to visitor pressure as it is adjacent to the visitor centre and car park.

Between Doo Lough and Coole Lough is an area of low Hazel woodland around limestone pavement and scrub. Ash is abundant here and Hawthorn, Spindle, Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Yew (*Taxus baccata*) also occur. The field layer is similar to that of the main woodland with the addition of such pavement species as Broad-leaved Helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), Wall Lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*) and the Southern Polypody fern (*Polypodium australe*).

Between Doo Lough and Garryland Turlough are several small stands of Yew dominated woodland on limestone knolls. Pedunculate oak, Ash and Beech occur within these stands. Both the shrub layer and the herb layer are very poorly developed or almost absent but the bryophyte layer, dominated by *Thamnobryum alopecurum* with *Neckera crispa* is well developed. There is a small amount of Yew regeneration at this site and Yew is widely scattered through the surrounding woodland.

In places, heath communities have developed over the limestone pavement, consisting of Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Juniper (*Juniperus communis*), Blue Moor-grass (*Sesleria albicans*) and occasional Yew. In addition, the site contains good examples of smooth pavement and associated species-rich grasslands. Small areas of orchid-rich grassland also occur with the following species recorded; Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza spp*.), Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*) and Greater Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*).

The nationally rare Mudwort (*Limosella aquatica*) and Dropwort (*Filipendula vulgaris*) also occur at the site. These two plant species are listed in the Irish Red Data Book, and Mudwort is included in the Flora (Protection) Order, 2022.

The complex of habitats at Coole-Garryland provides habitat for a variety of mammal species, including Otter, Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Pine Marten. Otter and Lesser Horseshoe Bat are listed in Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. This SAC contains a building (Garryland Lodge) which has been renovated specifically to make it suitable for use by bats. Lesser Horseshoe numbers have exceeded 150 in summer time since 2017 and reached 219 in 2021. The building is also used as a hibernation roost with numbers varying depending on the weather, but averaging 40 bats over the last 5 winters (2017–2021). The Coole-Garryland complex is also home to one of the most important and unique assemblages of insects in the country, including several notable species of beetles and flies.

The area is of importance for wintering waterfowl, especially Whooper Swan (mean peak of 324 in 1995/96 - 98/99), Bewick's Swan (79 in winter 96/97), Wigeon (mean peak of 1044 in 1995/96 - 98/99), Mallard (mean peak of 330 in 1995/96 - 98/99), Pochard (mean peak of 176 in winter 1995/96 - 98/99), along with smaller numbers of Teal, Tufted Duck, Lapwing, Curlew and Dunlin. In 1996 seven pairs of Lapwing bred at Newtown Turlough and two pairs of Common Sandpiper bred at Coole Lough.

A substantial portion of this site is in the ownership of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and is designated as a nature reserve. Long-term management aims to gradually remove the non-native species. It is a popular amenity area with welldeveloped pathways. Uncontrolled visitor access may pose a threat to sensitive animals although the nature of the terrain is such that areas away from the paths are seldom visited. Other threats to the site may result from the intensification of agriculture (e.g. fertiliser application or pollution of watercourses) and/or drainage outside the SAC.

The turlough system at Coole-Garryland is considered to be the most diverse in the country, for both its physiography and vegetation; it is unique in that it is so closely associated with woodland. The woodland is extremely diverse in terms of both habitat and species and was assessed as having the highest conservation rating in the country among the sites surveyed for the National Survey of Native Woodlands. The juxtaposition of these two distinct habitats has led to the development of interesting plant and animal communities that include a suite of rare insect, plant and fungal species. The site includes good quality examples of seven habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Overall, the range of good quality habitats present at Coole-Garryland which support a high diversity of species render the site of high conservation value.