



## **Appropriate Assessment Screening Report**

Townhall  
at Loughrea, Co. Galway



## DOCUMENT DETAILS

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# 1 Introduction

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by John Curtin (B.Sc) on behalf of Galway County Council. The site for the proposed development lies 110m from the Lough Rea SPA and 120m to the Lough Rea SAC, sites which have been designated under the EU Habitats Directive and the EU 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.

## 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 Interests, 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...'*

To determine whether an Appropriate Assessment is required, an initial screening assessment must be conducted and issued to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) Development Applications Unit (DAU).

## **1.2 Methodology**

The screening exercise will be conducted in line with the recommendations and protocol set out in the Guidance from the Commission (EC, 2002) and in accordance with OPR Practice Note PN01 (March 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.

### **1.2.1 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 2** of this report.

## 2 Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment

### 2.1 Description of the Plan or Project

It is proposed to develop the former Townhall building. The proposal includes the change of use for the main building to, at ground floor level: a multi-functional performance and event space and supporting uses, at first floor level: a creative enterprise hub and co-working space with meeting rooms and open-plan areas. The existing annex building will be demolished and a new annex building will be constructed to house the service elements of the new facility including, at ground floor level: a new elevator and lobby, universal accessible, male and female sanitary conveniences and changing rooms, at mezzanine level a multi-function learning hub, training room and visual arts creation space, at first floor level a canteen and universal accessible and male and female sanitary conveniences, and at roof level mechanical plant and green planted roof. The works will also include demolition within the main building of the projector room and the wall below this, the raked concrete floor at entrance level, minor localised demolition of external walls to facilitate proposed new circulation and new fenestration. Minor external elements will also be demolished including the granite stone steps at the eastern-most entrance door on Barrack Street, the rear boundary wall, pillars and gates. New polished metal illuminated signage will be fixed to the Church Street elevation and the Barrack Street elevation. The subject works are located within Loughrea's Architectural Conservation Area and includes works to Recorded Protected Structure No. 315.

#### 2.1.1 Site Location in Relation to Natura 2000 Sites

The proposed site lies in the town of Loughrea (Grid Ref. 561790 / 716482). The site for the proposed development lies 110m from the Lough Rea SPA (Site Code: 004134) and 120m to the Lough Rea SAC (Site Code: 000304) (see **Figure 2.1** below).

Natura 2000 sites within a 15km buffer of the proposed development are listed in **Table 2-1** and **Figure 2-2**.

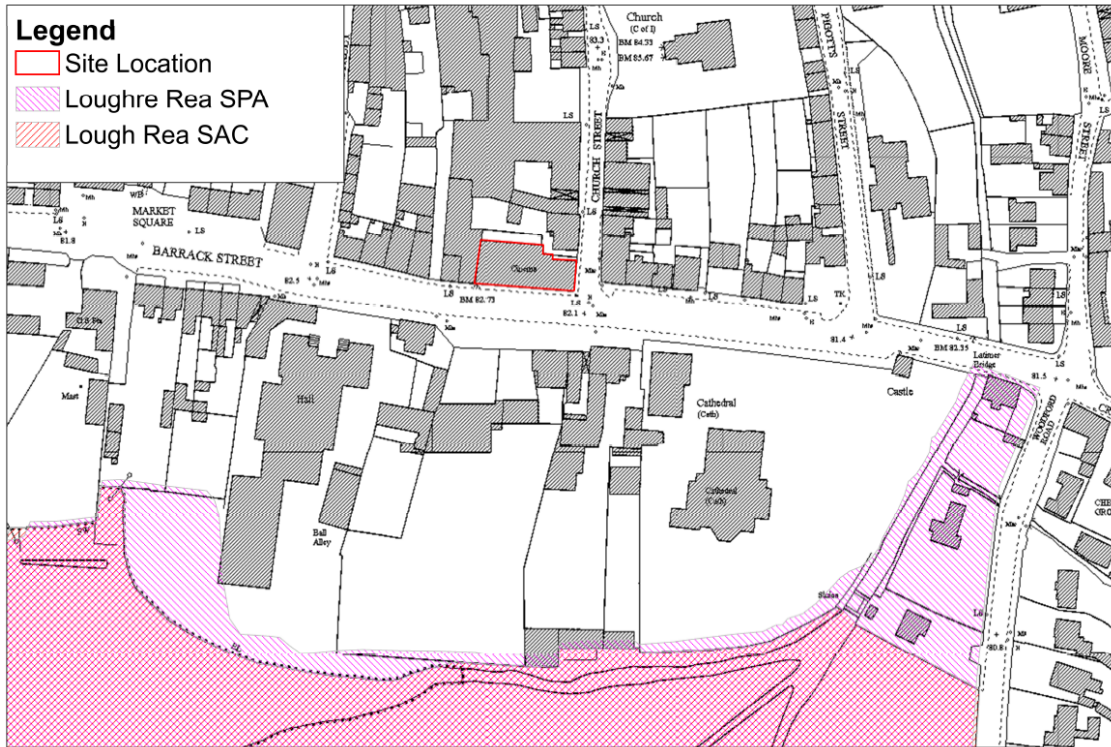


Figure 2-1 Proposed development outline in relation to Lough Rea SAC & SPA

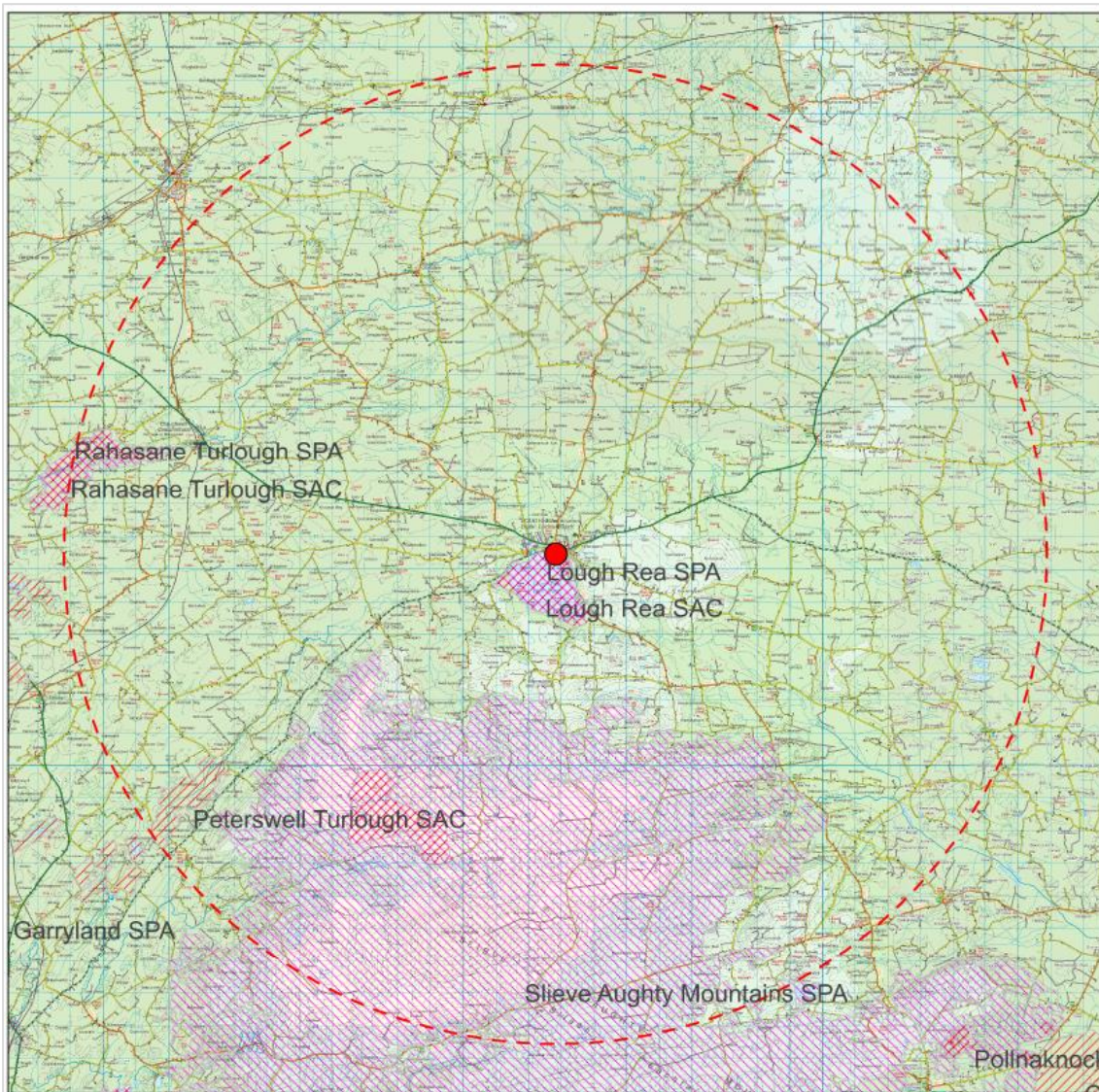


**Table 2-1 Protected habitats in the vicinity of the proposed development**

<b>Name of Site</b>	<b>Site Code</b>	<b>Distance to proposed development</b>	<b>Number of Conservation Objectives (CO)</b>	<b>List of CO Priority Habitats with codes</b>	<b>Connections (Source-Pathway-Receptor)</b>	<b>Screening Status for further consideration</b>
Lough Rea SPA	004134	0.11km	3	N/A	Proximity	In
Lough Rea SAC	000304	0.12km	1	0	Proximity	In
Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA	004168	3.91km	2	N/A	Proximity and lack of relevant connectivity.	Out
Sonnagh Bog SAC	001913	8.48km	1	1 Blanket bogs [7130]	Distance and lack of relevant connectivity.	Out
Peterswell Turlough SAC	000318	12.11km	2	1 Turloughs [3180]	Distance and lack of relevant connectivity.	Out
Rahasane Turlough SAC	000322	12.24km	1	1 Turloughs [3180]	Distance. Both storm and wastewater will be treated by the Loughrea WWTP before release to the Clarin's River. As such there is no likelihood of significant effects to the conservation objectives to this SAC.	Out
Rahasane Turlough SPA	004089	12.30km	6	N/A	Distance. Both storm and wastewater will be treated by the Loughrea WWTP before release to the Clarin's River. As such there is no likelihood of significant effects to the conservation objectives to this SPA.	Out

Name of Site	Site Code	Distance to proposed development	Number of Conservation Objectives (CO)	List of CO Priority Habitats with codes	Connections (Source-Pathway-Receptor)	Screening Status for further consideration
Galway Bay Complex SAC	000268	19.91km	17	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coastal Lagoons [1150]</li> <li>▪ Turloughs [3180]</li> <li>▪ Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland [6210]</li> <li>▪ Cladium Fens [7210]</li> <li>▪ Limestone Pavement [8240]</li> </ul>	Distance. Both storm and wastewater will be treated by the Loughrea WWTP before release to the Clarin's River. As such there is no likelihood of significant effects to the conservation objectives to this SAC.	Out
Inner Galway Bay SPA	004031	20.23km	21	N/A	Distance. Both storm and wastewater will be treated by the Loughrea WWTP before release to the Clarin's River. As such there is no likelihood of significant effects to the conservation objectives to this SAC.	Out

From the above table it can be seen that two Natura 2000 sites are screened in at this stage; the Lough Rea SPA (Site Code: 004134) and the Lough Rea SAC (Site Code: 000304).



**Figure 2-2 15km Buffer Surrounding Proposed Site.**

Table 2-2 below examines the screening status of those Nationally Designated sites (National Heritage Areas and proposed National Heritage Areas) within the likely zone of influence and categorises them into screened out and screened in.

**Table 2-2: Nationally designated sites surrounding the proposed development**

Name of Site	Site Code	Distance to proposed development	Screening Status	Reason
Lough Rea pNHA	00304	partially within	In	The subject site lies partially within the pNHA
Sonnagh Bog pNHA	01913	8.30	Out	Distance and lack of relevant connectivity.
Slieve Aughty Bog NHA	01229	9.49	Out	Distance and lack of relevant connectivity.
Raford River Bog NHA	00321	11.10	Out	Distance and lack of relevant connectivity.
Peterswell Turlough pNHA	00318	11.87	Out	Distance and lack of relevant connectivity.
Rahasane Turlough pNHA	00322	11.98	Out	Distance and lack of relevant connectivity.

## 2.1.2 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 protected 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 – Lough Rea SAC & SPA. The NPWS site synopsis for the designated site is given as **Appendix B** to this report.

**Table 2-3 Lough Rea SAC Habitat Information**

Habitat code	Habitat name (cSAC Qualifying Feature)	% Cover (approx.)	Representivity
3140	Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp	100	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 -  $100 \geq p > 15\%$ , B -  $15 \geq p > 2\%$ , C -  $2 \geq p > 0\%$  and D - Non-significant population. The qualifying species found in the Lough Rea SPA are outlined in **Table 2-4**.

**Table 2-4 Lough Rea SPA Species Information**

Species Code	Latin Name	Common Name	Population Significance
A056	<i>Anas clypeata</i>	Shoveler	B
A125	<i>Fulica atra</i>	Coot	B

## 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 Lough Rea Natura 2000 Site are listed in Table 2-5 and 2-6 below.

**Table 2-5 Potential Pressures and Threats to the Lough Rea SPA**

Activity	Location	Intensity	Influence
Sylviculture, forestry	Outside	Medium	Negative
Fertilisation	Outside	Medium	Negative
Hunting	Inside	Low	Negative
Urbanised areas, human habitation	Outside	High	Negative
Nautical sports	Inside	Low	Negative
Leisure fishing	Inside	Medium	Negative
Nautical sports	Inside	Low	Positive
Hunting	Inside	Low	Positive
Leisure fishing	Inside	Medium	Positive

**Table 2-6 Potential Pressures and Threats to the Lough Rea SAC**

Activity	Location	Intensity	Influence
Cultivation	Outside	Low	Negative
Leisure fishing	Inside	Medium	Negative
Dispersed habitation	Outside	Low	Negative
Fertilisation	Outside	Medium	Negative
Hunting	Inside	Low	Negative
Urbanised areas, human habitation	Outside	Medium	Negative
Grazing	Outside	High	Negative
Sylviculture, forestry	Inside	Low	Negative
Dispersed habitation	Outside	Low	Positive
Leisure fishing	Inside	Medium	Positive
Cultivation	Outside	Low	Positive
Hunting	Inside	Low	Positive



## Conservation Objectives of the Natura 2000 Sites

Once a site has been designated as an SAC, 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.

Conservation Management Plans for the Lough Rea SPA have not yet been published by the NPWS. However, general conservation objectives have been established for the site. The conservation objectives for the **Lough Rea SPA** are as follows:

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA:

A056 Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

A125 Coot (*Fulica atra*)

Wetlands

Conservation Management Plan for **Lough Rea SAC** has been published and conservation objectives are listed below:

### **3140 Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp.**

- Habitat area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes.
- Habitat distribution no decline, subject to natural processes.
- Typical species present, in good condition, and demonstrating typical abundances and distribution
- Vegetation composition: characteristic zonation, 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 lake substratum quality
- Water quality: Maintain appropriate transparency, nutrients, phytoplankton biomass, phytoplankton composition, attached algal biomass, macrophyte status, acidification status, water colour, dissolved organic carbon and turbidity.
- Maintain the area and condition of fringing habitats necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of lake habitat 3140

## **2.2 Soils, Geology & Hydrogeology**

Information on the soils and geology of the site in question were gleaned from the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI)'s website, [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie). The site consists of a mixture of built land and deep well drained mineral soil derived from Limestone till.

The groundwater public viewer run by the GSI classifies the groundwater as having High (H) vulnerability. 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. The site lies within a locally important aquifer (LI).

The subject site lies adjacent to Lough Rea, within the Galway Bay South East Catchment and the Kilcogan\_SC\_010 sub-catchment. Lough Rea Lakes drains northwards to the St. Clarens River to Galway Bay via Craughwell and Rahasane Turlough.

## 2.3 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 2-7 below gives details of the other plans and projects in the area which may be affecting Lough Rea Natura 2000 Site.

**Table 2-7 Other Plans and Projects Affecting the Natura 2000 Sites in question**

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 Policies	Positive Impact
Western River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021	The Western International RBD Management Plan, issued on 17th April 2018, sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve 'good' ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters) by 2027. <b>Measures:</b> Structures for long term improvements to water quality. New governance structure. Links to help people to get involved in improving water quality and raise awareness of water issues.	Positive impact
NPWS Conservation Management Plans	Conservation Management Plans for the Lough Rea SPA have not yet been published by the NPWS. However, general conservation objectives have been established for the sites. Conservation Management Plans for the Lough Rea SAC have been published and are listed above.	Positive impacts
Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) Corporate Plan 2016-2020	Goals: To improve the protection and conservation of the resource. To develop and improve wild fish populations. To increase the number of anglers. To generate a better return for Ireland from the resource	Positive impact
Planning Applications in the area	A search was carried out on Galway County Council's online planning query system.  The online planning system for Galway County Council, was consulted on the 20/10/2021. 22 other approved projects were found for the town of Loughrea within the last three years. Much of these are minor in extent	Neutral Impact



involving alterations and extensions to existing commercial units and residencies. In addition, several small-scale housing developments were granted including the construction of 4 x 2 bedroom houses.

211797: construction of a two storey and single storey office building

211562: to construct an entrance lobby including stairs/lift to first floor of existing factory

211525: two storey extension to the rear of the existing school

211508: construction of a new Leisure Centre building

211476: demolition of an existing substandard dwelling house, the construction of a replacement dwelling

211369: to carry out alterations and extension to an existing dwelling house

211210: retention of planning to include part-time childcare and afterschool use of part of Gaelscoil Riabhach National School

21873: construction of dwelling house

211105: construction of dwelling house

21857: for change of use of existing retail unit

21645: for a single storey extension to the existing Museum building

21461: alterations, extension and elevational changes to an existing dwelling house

21430: (a) the demolition of the remains of an existing building, (b) the construction of a two storey development

202047: for 4 no. two bedroom houses in a single block over two floors

201409: to construct a new industrial shed on their existing brownfield site

20967: for the construction of a two storey extension to the rear of existing Salon.

20928: provision of a new exit / access door to the side of existing supermarket at Supervalu

20174: demolition of house and construction of a new dwelling house

2047: demolition of FCA barracks and construction of residential units

20311: change of use from industrial to commercial to ground floor area

191864: demolition of existing house and construction of 2no 2-storey townhouse

191919: Change of use of existing retail unit to takeaway

## 2.4 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 site, 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”.*

The findings of the screening matrix are summarised in **Table 2-8** below.

**Table 2-8 Stage 1 - Screening Matrix for the Proposed Development**

Brief Description of the Project or Plan
<p><b>Location:</b> The proposed site lies in the town of Loughrea (Grid Ref. 561790 / 716482).</p> <p><b>Distance from Designated Site:</b> The site for the proposed development lies 110m from the Lough Rea SPA (Site Code: 004134) and 120m to the Lough Rea SAC (Site Code: 000304).</p> <p><b>Brief Description of the Project:</b> It is proposed to develop the former Townhall building. The proposal includes the change of use for the main building to, at ground floor level: a multi-functional performance and event space and supporting uses, at first floor level: a creative enterprise hub and co-working space with meeting rooms and open-plan areas. The existing annex building will be demolished and a new annex building will be constructed to house the service elements of the new facility including, at ground floor level: a new elevator and lobby, universal accessible, male and female sanitary conveniences and changing rooms, at mezzanine level a multi-function learning hub, training room and visual arts creation space, at first floor level a canteen and universal accessible and male and female sanitary conveniences, and at roof level mechanical plant and green planted roof. The works will also include demolition within the main building of the projector room and the wall below this, the raked concrete floor at entrance level, minor localised demolition of external walls to facilitate proposed new circulation and new fenestration. Minor external elements will also be demolished including the granite stone steps at the eastern-most entrance door on Barrack Street, the rear boundary wall, pillars and gates. New polished metal illuminated signage will be fixed to the Church Street elevation and the Barrack Street elevation. The subject works are located within Loughrea’s Architectural Conservation Area and includes works to Recorded Protected Structure No. 315.</p>
Brief Description of the Natura 2000 Site
<p><b>Site Designation Status:</b> The Lough Rea candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC Site Code 00304) is designated under EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Lough Rea Special Protection Area (SPA Site Code: 004134) is designated under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).</p> <p><b>Qualifying Features</b></p> <p>The Lough Rea SAC is of conservation significance due to the presence of 1 habitats listed under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. Lough Rea SPA is designated for the presence of several bird species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive (see below).</p> <p><b>Qualifying Habitats</b></p> <p>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]</p>

(EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC).

**Qualifying Species**

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056]

Coot (*Fulica atra*) [A125]

Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

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

**Habitats and Species of Interest**

Several other habitats and species of conservation interest have been recorded from the Lough Rea Natura 2000 sites. Full details of the sites are found in the Site Synopses included as **Appendix B** to this report.

**Unit Size:**

Lough Rea SAC:365.57ha

Lough Rea SPA:365.57ha

**ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

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

No impacts are expected on the Natura 2000 sites in question.

(a) Identify all potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the project under the following headings:

<b>Impacts:</b>	<b>Impacts: Possible Significance of Impacts:</b>
<p><b>Construction phase e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vegetation clearance</b></li> <li>• <b>Demolition</b></li> <li>• <b>Surface water runoff from soil excavation/infill/ landscaping (including borrow pits)</b></li> <li>• <b>Dust, noise, vibration</b></li> <li>• <b>Lighting disturbance</b></li> <li>• <b>Impact on groundwater/dewatering</b></li> <li>• <b>Storage of excavated/construction materials</b></li> <li>• <b>Access to site</b></li> <li>• <b>Pests</b></li> </ul>	<p>The statement to accompany Part 8 Application for the proposed development was examined. The local authorities engineer and architect demonstrates 'the geography of the site, and the typical construction procedures expected for this type of development, will mean that during construction no surface water will reach the existing drainage system' located to the south of the building.</p> <p>As a result, construction phase degradation of water quality can be ruled out as part of the proposed development. Given the location of the site, set within the town and not in visual contact with the lake no direct impacts on the conservation objectives of the Lough Rea SAC or SPA are expected.</p>

<p><b>Operational phase e.g.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Direct emission to air and water</b></li> <li>• <b>Surface water runoff containing contaminant or sediment</b></li> <li>• <b>Lighting disturbance</b></li> <li>• <b>Noise/vibration</b></li> <li>• <b>Changes to water/groundwater due to drainage or abstraction</b></li> <li>• <b>Presence of people, vehicles and activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Physical presence of structures (e.g. collision risks)</b></li> <li>• <b>Potential for accidents or incidents</b></li> </ul>	<p>Direct impacts during the operational phase are not anticipated. The subject site is not located within a Natura 2000 site and there is no direct visual link to the Lough Rea Lake. As such disturbance of Coot and Shoveler; the CO's of the Lough Rea SPA will be unaffected.</p> <p>Operational phase, secondary impacts, particularly surface water runoff have been examined in the statement to accompany Part 8 Application for the proposed development. As part of this statement, a report compiled by John Britton Consulting Engineers, which accompanied Part 8 LA06/13 is referred to. Drainage in this area consists of a combined wastewater and storm water sewer network which is treated by the Loughrea WWTP located to the north of the town. As such no surface water runoff enters Loughrea Lake thus impacts in this respect can be screened out.</p> <p>In addition, as the wastewater will be treated by the municipal WWTP effects on the lake in this respect is not anticipated.</p>
<p><b>In-combination/Other</b></p>	<p>Given the small scale nature of the site, located within the town boundary it is not anticipated in-combination effects will result in a deterioration of the surrounding Natura 2000 sites.</p>

- **Size and Scale**  
The development site comprises an overall area of 0.052Ha. At this size, and due to the fact that the works will be located 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 Lough Rea SAC and SPA thus no impacts are expected in this respect.
- **Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site**  
The site for the proposed development lies 110m from the Lough Rea SPA (Site Code: 004134) and 120m to the Lough Rea SAC (Site Code: 000304). At this distance, impacts are not expected on the Lough Rea Natura sites.
- **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.
- **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 9 months. It is expected that the apartments will remain in use for at least 50 years. Neither the construction, operation nor the eventual decommissioning of the proposed development is likely to result in direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

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

- **Reduction or fragmentation of habitat area**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Disturbance to QI Species**  
There is the potential for operational phase disturbance to Shoveler and Coot due to an increase of lighting
- **Habitat or Species Fragmentation**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Reduction or fragmentation in species density**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Changes in key indicators of conservation status value (water or air quality etc.)**  
There is the potential for a deterioration of water quality during the construction and operational phase potentially effecting Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] and Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
- **Changes to areas of sensitivity or threats to QI**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or ecological function of the site**  
There will be no changes in this respect.

**Are 'mitigation' measures necessary to reach a conclusion that likely significant effects can be ruled out at screening?**

**Yes**       **No**

**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.**

It is considered that the proposed development will **not** have any significant impacts on the Lough Rea SAC and SPA, alone or in combination with the other plans or projects in the area (outlined in Section 2.3 of this report).

### 3 Conclusions

This report details the results of a screening exercise carried out for a proposed development on Barracks Street, Loughrea, Co. Galway. It is proposed to develop the former Townhall building. The proposal includes the change of use for the main building to, at ground floor level: a multi-functional performance and event space and supporting uses, at first floor level: a creative enterprise hub and co-working space with meeting rooms and open-plan areas. The existing annex building will be demolished and a new annex building will be constructed to house the service elements of the new facility including, at ground floor level: a new elevator and lobby, universal accessible, male and female sanitary conveniences and changing rooms, at mezzanine level a multi-function learning hub, training room and visual arts creation space, at first floor level a canteen and universal accessible and male and female sanitary conveniences, and at roof level mechanical plant and green planted roof. The works will also include demolition within the main building of the projector room and the wall below this, the raked concrete floor at entrance level, minor localised demolition of external walls to facilitate proposed new circulation and new fenestration. Minor external elements will also be demolished including the granite stone steps at the eastern-most entrance door on Barrack Street, the rear boundary wall, pillars and gates. New polished metal illuminated signage will be fixed to the Church Street elevation and the Barrack Street elevation. The subject works are located within Loughrea's Architectural Conservation Area and includes works to Recorded Protected Structure No. 315. The screening exercise examined impacts on the Lough Rea SAC Natura 2000 sites.

The site for the proposed development lies 110m from the Lough Rea SPA (Site Code: 004134) and 120m to the Lough Rea SAC (Site Code: 000304). At this distance, it is not expected that the proposed development will give rise to any direct impacts on the Natura 2000 sites in question.

The Statement to accompany Part 8 Application for the proposed development was examined as part of the screening exercise. This examines emissions arising from the development including wastewater and surface water. Regarding surface water it proposes minimising surface water by 'incorporate[ing] an attenuating, planted green roof system which will encompass part of the flat roof. In addition to this, the portion of the site which will not be covered by the proposed annex, will incorporate permeable paving'. As a result there will be no increased load on the existing surface water drainage system from the proposed development.

As part of this statement, a report compiled by John Britton Consulting Engineers, which accompanied Part 8 LA06/13 is referred to. Drainage in this area consists of a combined wastewater and storm water sewer network which is treated by the Loughrea WWTP located to the north of the town. As such no surface water runoff enters Loughrea Lake thus impacts in this respect can be screened out.

In addition, as the wastewater will be treated by the municipal WWTP effects on the lake in this respect is not anticipated.

Therefore, the conclusion of this screening exercise is that no significant effects are expected on the qualifying interests or conservation objectives of the Lough Rea Natura 2000 site, as a result of the proposed development in question, alone or in combination with the other plans and projects in the area, and therefore that 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).