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Engineering and Environmental Consultants

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Temporary Construction Compound & Access Ramp



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Screening for Appropriate Assessment

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Table of contents

1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	4
1.1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment	4
2. INTRODUCTION	5
2.1 Purpose of Assessment	5
2.2 Legislative Context	5
2.3 Stages of Appropriate Assessment.....	5
3. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY	6
3.1 Appropriate Assessment Guidance	6
3.2 Desk Study	6
3.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment	6
4. SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT	7
4.1 Management of Natura 2000 Sites.....	7
4.2 Description of Plan/Project	7
4.2.1 Brief Project Description	7
4.2.2 Purpose of the Project	8
4.2.3 Site Location.....	8
4.2.4 Description of the Site	8
4.2.5 Description of the Proposed Development.....	10
4.2.6 Characteristics of the Project	11
4.2.7 Identification of Other Projects or Plans or Activities.....	12
4.3 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites.....	13
4.3.1 Zone of Impact Influence	13
4.3.2 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites.....	14
4.3.3 Characteristics of Natura 2000 Sites.....	14
4.3.4 Conservation Objectives	16
4.4 Identification of Potential Impacts	17
4.5 Assessment of Significance of Potential Impacts.....	18
4.5.1 Habitat Loss and Alteration	20
4.5.2 Water Quality.....	20
4.5.3 Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species	21
4.5.4 Habitat or Species Fragmentation	21
4.5.5 Cumulative/In-combination Impacts	21
4.6 Conclusion of Screening Stage.....	22
5. REFERENCES	23

Table of tables

Table 1: Characteristics of the Proposed Development	11
Table 2: Designated Sites within 15km Radius of Proposal Site	14
Table 3. Designated Site with Qualifying Features of Conservation Interest	14
Table 4: Theoretical Ecological Impacts Associated with the Project	17
Table 5: Likelihood of Significant Impacts on Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 Sites.....	18

Table of figures

Figure 1: Proposed Development Location at Abbeylands and Rathculliheen, Co. Kilkenny	7
Figure 2: Proposed Development Location in Co. Kilkenny	8
Figure 3: Development Boundary and Ferrybank Stream to the east of the site.....	10
Figure 4: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the Proposed Development.....	14

List of appendices

Appendix 1	Stages of Appropriate Assessment
Appendix 2	Site Synopses



1. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1.1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Project Title	AA Screening for Temporary Construction Compound and Access Ramp associated with the South-East Greenway
Project Proponent	Kilkenny County Council
Project Location	Rathculiheen and Abbeylands, Co. Kilkenny
Screening for Appropriate Assessment	The Screening for Appropriate Assessment is undertaken to determine the potential for likely significant effects of the construction and operation of the temporary construction compound and access ramp individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the conservation objectives of the site on a Natura 2000 Site.
Conclusion	<p>It has been objectively concluded during the screening process that the four Natura 2000 sites listed below within 15km of the proposed development are not likely to be significantly impacted by the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development. The relevant Natura 2000 sites are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Lower River Suir SAC• The River Barrow and River Nore SAC• Tramore Backstrand SPA• Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Purpose of Assessment

This Screening for appropriate assessment has been undertaken to determine the potential for significant impacts on a proposal to construct and operate a temporary construction compound and access ramp associated with South East Greenway, in the town lands Rathculiheen and Abbeylands, Co. Kilkenny, on nearby sites with European conservation designations (i.e. Natura 2000 Sites).

The Screening for appropriate assessment has been undertaken by Malachy Walsh and Partners professional ecologists.

2.2 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) seeks to conserve natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora by the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protected Areas (SPAs). It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SPAs and SACs, both of which will form part of Natura 2000, a network of protected sites throughout the European Community. The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law and the relevant Regulations are the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. The requirement for Appropriate Assessment of the implications of plans and projects on the Natura 2000 network of sites comes from the Habitats Directive (Article 6(3)).

Under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, a public authority is required to carry out Screening for appropriate assessment of a proposed development prior to issuing consent to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the sites conservation objectives, if that project or plan, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. The information presented in this Screening for appropriate assessment report will be used by the competent authority to assist them to complete their screening exercise.

The Screening for appropriate assessment will determine whether an appropriate assessment of the proposed development is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plan or projects, will have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. If it is determined that an appropriate assessment is required in respect of the plan or proposed development, a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) must be prepared. In the case of a proposed development that requires an appropriate assessment, the application for consent must be accompanied by a NIS. The NIS will assist the competent authority to conduct the appropriate assessment.

2.3 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

The appropriate assessment process is a four-stage process with tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. The stages are set out in **Appendix 1**.

3. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

3.1 Appropriate Assessment Guidance

This Screening for appropriate assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the European Commission Methodological Guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001), the European Commission Guidance 'Managing Natura 2000 sites' (EC, 2000) and guidance prepared by the NPWS (DoEHLG, 2009).

3.2 Desk Study

In order to complete the Screening for appropriate assessment, certain information on the existing environment is required. A comprehensive desk study was carried out to collate available information on the site's natural environment. This comprised a review of the following publications, data and datasets:

- OSI Aerial photography and 1:50000 mapping, and other online mapping sources (online)
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) (online)
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) (online)
- BirdWatch Ireland
- Teagasc soil area maps (NBDC website)
- Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) area maps (online)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) water quality data (online)
- South Eastern River Basin District (SERBD) datasets (Water Framework Directive) (online)
- Invasive Alien Species Management Plan – South East Greenway – MWP (2019)
- Other information sources and reports footnoted in the course of the report

3.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

As set out in the NPWS guidance, the task of establishing whether a plan or project is likely to have an effect on a Natura 2000 site(s) is based on a preliminary impact assessment using available information and data, including that outlined above, and other available environmental information, supplemented as necessary by local site information and ecological surveys. This is followed by a determination of whether there is a risk that the effects identified could be significant. The precautionary principle approach is required.

Once the potential impacts that may arise from the proposal are identified, the significance of these is assessed through the use of key indicators:

- Habitat loss and alteration
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Water quality

4. SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Screening for appropriate assessment determines the need for a full appropriate assessment and consists of a number of steps, each of which is addressed in the following sections of this report:

- 4.1 Establish whether the project is necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 site
- 4.2 Description of the Project (*To construct and operate a temporary construction compound and access ramp*)
- 4.3 Identification of Natura 2000 sites potentially affected
- 4.4 Identification and description of individual and cumulative impacts of the project
- 4.5 Assessment of the significance of the impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites
- 4.6 Conclusion of screening stage

4.1 Management of Natura 2000 Sites

The proposal is not connected with or necessary to the conservation management of a Natura 2000 site.

4.2 Description of Plan/Project

4.2.1 Brief Project Description

Kilkenny County council proposes to construct and operate a temporary construction compound and access ramp to connect to the consented Southeast Greenway in the town lands of Rathculliheen and Abbeylands, in Co. Kilkenny. The proposed construction compound will have an area of 3527m² with an access road of 594m². The construction ramp has an area of 600m². The layout of the proposed works is shown in Figure 1 below. The construction compound is accessed through the existing Clover Meadows public road and links to the Greenway via a temporary access ramp running to the east.

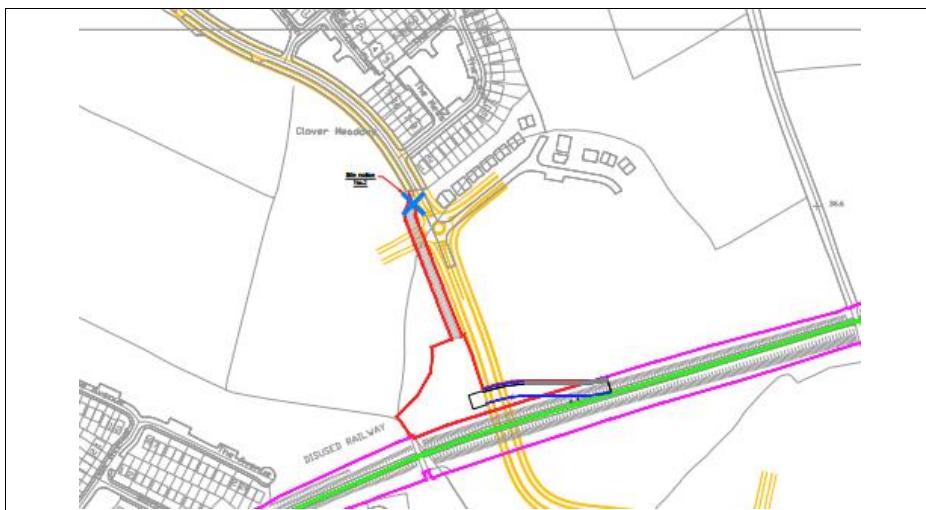


Figure 1: Proposed Development Location at Abbeylands and Rathculliheen, Co. Kilkenny

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4.2.2 Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the proposed development is to provide a temporary construction compound and site access for contractors undertaking the development work on the new Greenway.

4.2.3 Site Location

The proposed development will be located in the town lands of Rathculiheen and Abbeylands in Co. Kilkenny. The site is currently a Greenfield adjacent to the existing Clover Meadows Residential area. The ITM coordinates for the centre point of the development are ITM: Easting 662360; Northing 613338. See **Figure 2** below.

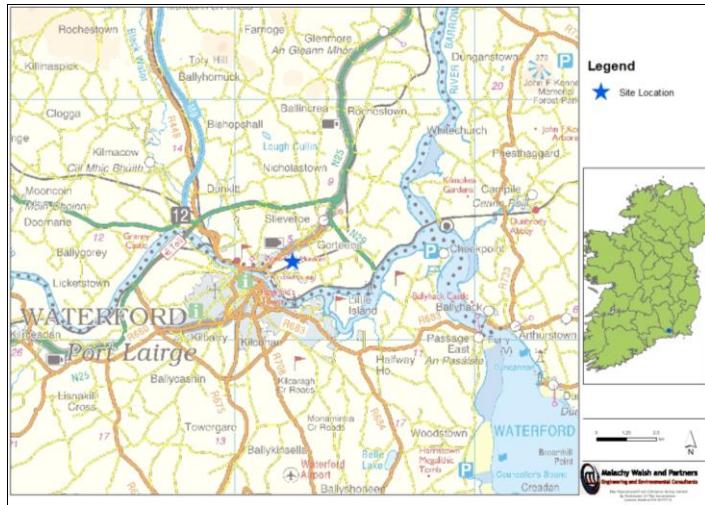


Figure 2: Proposed Development Location in Co. Kilkenny

4.2.4 Description of the Site

The circa 4.5ha proposal site is located approximately 2km east of Waterford City centre, 9km north west of Passage East, and 18km south west of New Ross, Co. Wexford. According to the central Statistics Office, the proposed development spans over two “small areas”¹. The eastern part and the majority of the proposed development are within Small Area of: 097058010 which has a population of 157 and the western part of the proposed development are within Small Area of: 097058013 which has a population of 248 according to the census in 2016¹.

The dominant habitat of the site is Improved Agricultural Grassland (GS1)² and prior to 2005 the site was managed. Between 2005 and 2012 residential housing and access roads (Buildings and Artificial Surfaces BL3) were built to the north and west. These residential dwellings bound the part of the site³. Adjacent lands to the east directly north of the site are managed agricultural lands. The site is

¹ <http://census.cso.ie/sapmap/>

² <http://map.geohive.ie/mapviewer.html>

³ <https://goo.gl/maps/9EUujnHGKt3BG518>



bounded to the south by the old disused railway which will form a section of the South East Greenway. South of the railway there are additional agricultural lands. Boundaries of the site are delineated by hedgerows to the east, west and south. To the north there is no clear boundary between the existing Clover Meadows housing estate and the site.

The Bedrock at the site is made up of “Dark grey slate with thin siltstone” from the Palaeozoic, Middle – Upper Ordovician. The soil type is deep well drained mineral soil. The 2018 Corine land cover category for the proposed site is “Agricultural” in the southern part and “Artificial surfaces/urban fabric” in the northern part⁴. The aquifer is described as “Regionally Important Aquifer - Fissured bedrock” in the footprint of the proposed development and approximately 300m north of the site along Clover Avenue road the aquifer is classed as “Poor Aquifer - Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones”⁴.

The proposed site is located within the South-eastern River Basin District and the Blackwater (Kilmacow) sub-catchment (waterbody code: IE_SE_16L680750). This is a sub-catchment of the Suir Catchment (Code 16) which is drained by the River Suir and all streams entering tidal water between Drumdowney and Cheekpoint, Co. Waterford⁴. The site itself is not drained by any river/stream. There is one small 1st order stream located approximately 550m to the east of the eastern boundary of the proposed development (Ferrybank 16 Stream, EPA Code: 16F42⁵). This stream discharges into the Lower River Suir SAC approximately 1.5km south of this point, see **Figure 3**, below. The stream itself does not form part of the SAC. There are no hydrological links between the development footprint of the development and any Natura 2000 site.

⁴ <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

⁵ <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>





Figure 3: Development Boundary and Ferrybank Stream to the east of the site

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4.2.5 Description of the Proposed Development

The development will be located south of the existing Clover Meadows housing estate on an existing green field. The following gives details for the works:

Access Road

- Area 594m²
- Imported Hardcore 280m³
- Temporary Perimeter Fencing

Compound

- Area 3527m²
- Imported Hardcore 1500m³
- Temporary Perimeter Fencing
- Temporary Contractor Cabins, self contained toilet facilities.
- Site Lighting

Access Ramp

- Area 600m²
- Imported Gabion Baskets
- Imported Hardcore 650m³



The proposed development will be constructed at ground level with the ramp providing a sloped connection to the Greenway itself. The finishes on all surfaces will be free draining in hardcore thus allowing the existing drainage regimen to be maintained.

4.2.6 Characteristics of the Project

The proposal is described below in **Table 1** and has been confirmed with the project design engineering team.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Proposed Development

<i>Size, scale, area, land-take</i>	There is no spatial overlap between the proposal site and any Natura 2000 site(s). There is no hydrological connection between the proposal site and any Natura 2000 site.
<i>Details of physical changes that will take place during the various stages of implementing the proposal</i>	<p>The construction of the development will involve the excavation of topsoil to circa 0.3m bGL to facilitate the installation of a geotextile and granular base for the compound surface. All excavated material will be from clean, natural Greenfield.</p> <p>It is proposed to retain clean excavated materials (topsoil/subsoil/rock) on-site for re-use as berms, raised planting areas, and general landscaping. The proposed compound and access road boundary will incorporate stock-proof temporary Herras fencing.</p> <p>The access ramp will be formed with gabion baskets retaining the hardcore filled ramp. Herras fencing will provide boundary definition.</p> <p>The compound will contain the temporary contractor cabins and facilities.</p>
<i>Description of resource requirements for the construction/operation and decommissioning of the proposal (water resources, construction material, human presence etc)</i>	<p>Construction materials and quantities to be used in the proposed development are as follows (approximate quantities):</p> <p>Access Road</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area 594m² • Imported Hardcore 280m³ • Temporary Perimeter Fencing <p>Compound</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area 3527m² • Imported Hardcore 1500m³ • Temporary Perimeter Fencing • Temporary Contractor Cabins, self contained toilet facilities. • Site Lighting



	<p>Access Ramp</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area 600m² • Imported Gabion Baskets • Imported Hardcore 650m³
<i>Description of timescale for the various activities that will take place as a result of implementation (including likely start and finish date)</i>	It is anticipated that the proposed works will take 1 month to complete.
<i>Description of wastes arising and other residues (including quantities) and their disposal</i>	<p>It is envisaged that excavated topsoil from the development will be reused onsite for the construction of, and planting to berms, traffic islands, and perimeter beds.</p> <p>All excavation materials/wastes arising from the proposed development works are to be minimised by strict control and where not reused are to be removed from site by authorised contractors and either reused under Article 27 notifications or disposed of at a suitably licensed facility off-site.</p> <p>Fuels/oils.</p> <p>Wastewater/effluent from temporary toilet facilities.</p>
<i>Identification of wastes arising and other residues (including quantities) that may be of particular concern in the context of the Natura 2000 network</i>	<p>No wastes arising are of particular concern in the context of Natura 2000 sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No hazardous waste material is envisaged from the proposal • Incidental waste materials such as pallets and packaging will be separated accordingly prior to disposal • Waste will be minimised by strict control and planning of materials received <p>All wastes generated during the construction phase will be managed as part of the Waste Management Plan included in the contractors CEMP.</p> <p>During construction waste from the portable toilet will be collected and disposed of off-site by a licensed contractor.</p> <p>Refuelling will take place within a dedicated, hard-surface area which will be lined and bunded with polythene and stone. Fuel will be stored in a secure, impermeable storage area, away from drains and open water. A fuel management plan will be put in place for the duration of the works.</p>
<i>Description of any additional services required to implement the project or plan, their location and means of construction</i>	No additional services are required to implement the project.

4.2.7 Identification of Other Projects or Plans or Activities

The proposal was considered in combination with other plans and projects in the area that could result in cumulative impacts on Natura 2000 sites. Other plans considered include:

- Ferrybank Belview Local Area Plan 2017;
- Kilkenny County Development Plan (2014 – 2020);

- South East River Basin District River Basin Management Plan (2009-2015)

Each of these plans has a range of environmental and natural heritage policy safeguards in place. These safeguards to protect the natural environment and Natura 2000 sites will also apply to the proposal described in this report. The primary land-use in the area extending away to the northeast (Clover Meadows) and west is residential, while land-use to the north, east, and south is primarily agricultural. The Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan has zoned the environs around the proposed development for residential development and as a 'strategic reserve' for future land-use.

As such, the level of agricultural activity is likely to be sustained at current levels, throughout the construction and operational phases of the proposal, constraints on the extent and type of developments that are, or will be, permitted are imposed by the Ferrybank-Belview Local Area Plan (2017) which indicates that the amount of development that will occur within the environs of the subject site are limited to lands zoned for residential development.

Facilities operating with IPPC licences within the local area consist of Anglo Beef Processors Ireland Unlimited Company t/a ABP Proteins Waterford located approximately 1.1km southwest of the proposed development and Glanbia Ireland (Belview) Kilkenny located approximately 2.3km southeast of the development⁵. Waterford City Urban Wastewater treatment plant (UWW) is the closest wastewater facility and is located approximately 2.3km southwest of the proposed development⁵.

Therefore, it is considered that agriculture and permitted/proposed development within the environs of the proposal site comprise the main activities with which the proposed development could potentially interact synergistically to create cumulative or in-combination impacts. While it is not foreseen that any of the projects or plans discussed above will result in significant cumulative impacts on any of the Natura 2000 sites in combination with the proposal the potential for significant cumulative or in-combination impacts is discussed in **Section 4.5.5** below.

4.3 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

4.3.1 Zone of Impact Influence

The screening stage of AA involves compiling a 'long list' of European sites within a zone of potential impact influence for later analysis which may or may ultimately not be significantly impacted upon by the proposal. All Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposal location will be characterised in the context of the rationale for designation and qualifying features, in accordance with NPWS guidance. In line with the precautionary principle, during the preparation of this report Natura 2000 sites that lie outside 15km that may be significantly impacted as a result of the proposed works were also considered. Following this, the potential impacts associated with the proposal will be identified before an assessment is made of the likely significance of these impacts.

As described above, the test for the screening for appropriate assessment is to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with other plan/project is likely to have a significant affect on a Nature 2000 site. If there are any significant, potentially significant, or uncertain effects, it will be necessary to proceed to appropriate assessment and submit an NIS.

4.3.2 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

Adopting the precautionary principle in identifying potentially affected European sites, it has been decided to include all SACs and SPAs, within a 15km radius of the proposal site. **Table 2** below lists designated SACs and SPA within 15km or the anticipated zone of influence of the proposal site including their proximity. **Figure 4** below shows all Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposal.

Table 2: Designated Sites within 15km Radius of Proposal Site

No.	Designated Site	Site Code	Proximity of site to nearest point of designated site
1	Lower River Suir SAC	002137	Approximately 1.2km south west
2	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	002162	Approximately 5.2km east
3	Tramore Backstrand SPA	004027	Approximately 10.5km south
4	Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC	000671	Approximately 10.5km south

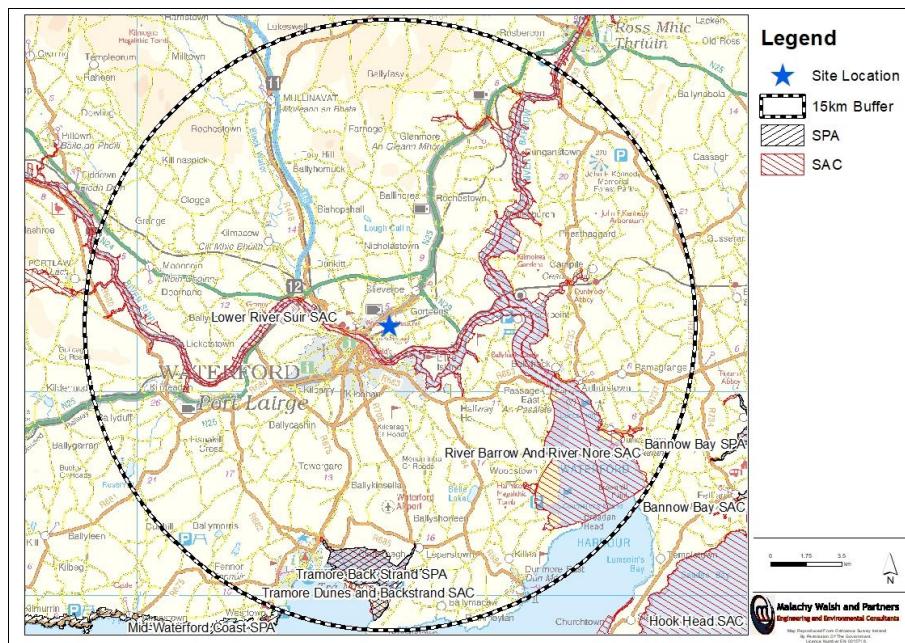


Figure 4: Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the Proposed Development

4.3.3 Characteristics of Natura 2000 Sites

Table 3 below lists the features of interest for the SACs and SPAs sites that lie within 15km of the proposal site, as identified in **Table 2**. Information pertaining to designated sites is from site synopses, conservation objectives and other information available on www.npws.ie.

Table 3. Designated Site with Qualifying Features of Conservation Interest

Designated Site	Qualifying features of conservation interest	
Lower River	- Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia)	To maintain or restore the favourable

Designated Site	Qualifying features of conservation interest	
Suir SAC (002137)	<p>maritimae) [1330]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] - Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] - Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] - Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91EO] - <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0] - <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] - <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] - <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] - <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] - <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] - <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] - <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] - <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] 	<p>conservation condition of the Annex I habitats listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC.</p> <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the species listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC.</p>
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Estuaries [1130] - Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] - Reefs [1170] - <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] - Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucio-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] - Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] - European dry heaths [4030] - Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] - Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220] - Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] - Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and 	<p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitats listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC.</p> <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the species listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC.</p>

Designated Site	Qualifying features of conservation interest	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91EO] - <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] - <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] - <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] - <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] - <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] - <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] - <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] - <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] - <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] - <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i> (Killarney Fern) [1421] - <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i> (Nore Pearl Mussel) [1990] 	
Tramore Backstrand SPA (004027)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] - Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] - Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] - Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] - Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] - Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] - Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] - Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] - Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] 	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA.
Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC (000671)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] - Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] - Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] - <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] - Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] - Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimii) [1410] - Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] - Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] - Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] 	<p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitats listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC.</p> <p>To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the species listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC.</p>

* indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive

4.3.4 Conservation Objectives

According to the Habitat's Directive, the *conservation status of a natural habitat* will be taken as 'favourable' within its biogeographic range when:



- its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which 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 as defined below.

According to the Habitats Directive, the conservation status of a species means the sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations. The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' within its biogeographic range when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is 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.

The specific conservation objectives for each site are available on www.npws.ie. These have been accessed for the sites listed in the tables above on the 25th July 2019.

Site specific and more detailed conservation objectives were available for the following sites:

- Lower River Suir SAC (002137). Produced March 2017, Version 1.
- River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162). Produced July 2011, Version 1.
- Tramore Backstrand SPA (004027). Produced October 2013, Version 1.
- Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC (000671). Produced September 2013, Version 1.

Management plans were not available for any sites. All conservation objectives together with other designated site information are available on <http://www.npws.ie/protectedsites/>.

4.4 Identification of Potential Impacts

In this section potential theoretical impacts associated with the proposed development will be identified before an assessment is made, in **Section 4.5**, as to whether these theoretical impacts are likely to cause significant impacts on the Natura 2000 sites listed in **Table 4** below, in view of those sites' conservation objectives.

Identification of a theoretical risk does not constitute a prediction either that it will occur, or that it will cause or create an adverse impact. However, identification of the risk does mean that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor.

Table 4: Theoretical Ecological Impacts Associated with the Project

<i>Description of elements of the project likely to give rise to potential ecological impacts sites.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Run-off from the site e.g. sediment - Excavation works - Use of construction equipment, vehicles, and plant - Construction works, use of fuels, oils, lubricants, concrete, etc
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<p><i>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary ecological impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) by virtue of:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Size and scale;</i> • <i>Land-take;</i> • <i>Distance from Natura 2000 Site or key features of the Site;</i> • <i>Resource requirements;</i> • <i>Emissions;</i> • <i>Excavation requirements;</i> • <i>Transportation requirements;</i> • <i>Duration of construction, operation etc.; and</i> • <i>Other.</i> 	<p>In general, construction works associated with the project have the potential to result in the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surface run-off of sediments/fines to watercourses - Ingress of uncured cementitious material/concrete wastewater, fuels or oils to watercourses - Species disturbance/displacement impacts <p>However, the risk of these impacts occurring is considered low by virtue of the intervening distance and lack of impact pathways between the proposal site and any Natura 2000 sites. The nearest Natura 2000 site (Lower River Suir SAC) is located approximately 1.2km to the south.</p> <p>The primary emissions expected from the proposed development are fugitive emissions of noise from use of plant/machinery and excavation works during the construction phase, as well the increase in human activity for the duration of the works.</p>
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4.5 Assessment of Significance of Potential Impacts

This section considers the list of Natura 2000 sites identified in **Section 4.3.2** above, together with the potential ecological impacts identified in the previous section, and determines whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives.

When assessing impact, qualifying features of conservation interest are only considered relevant where a credible or tangible source-pathway-receptor link exists between the proposed development and special conservation interest species or habitat. In order for an impact to occur there must be a risk initiated by having a 'source' (e.g. construction works), a 'receptor' (e.g. a protected species, associated aquatic or riparian habitats), and an impact pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a watercourse which connects the proposed development site to the site designated for the protection of a species).

An initial assessment is made below to determine what sites within the potential zone of impact influence, as identified in **Table 1**, above, can be considered to be outside the functional zone of impact influence, based on the potential ecological impacts identified in **Section 4.4** above. This initial assessment takes cognisance of the scope, scale and nature of the project, its location relative to the Natura 2000 sites, the sensitivity of the ecological receptors, and the degree of connectedness that exists between the project and each Natura 2000 site's qualifying features.

Table 5: Likelihood of Significant Impacts on Conservation Objectives of Natura 2000 Sites

Natura 2000 Site	Proximity of Natura 2000 site to subject site	Likelihood of Significant Impact	Rationale
River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)	Approximately 5.2km east of the subject site	No	– Distance intervening provides a buffer between impact sources and this Natura 2000 site.



Natura 2000 Site	Proximity of Natura 2000 site to subject site	Likelihood of Significant Impact	Rationale
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No direct ecological or hydrological pathways linking the Natura site with the subject site. – The ecology of the Annexed habitats and QI species in question are neither structurally, nor, functionally linked to the subject site. – Significant impacts are not reasonably foreseeable.
Tramore Backstrand SPA (004027)	Approximately 10.5km south of the subject site	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Distance intervening provides a buffer between impact sources and this Natura 2000 site – Due to the ecological characteristics, requirements & specialities of the SCI species they are restricted in their distribution to habitats not present at, or adjacent to, the subject site and all of the SCI species are either intertidal, or sheltered & shallow subtidal mud and sand flat feeders (NPWS, 2013). The resident populations of the SCI species for which this site is designated are expected to preferentially select the high-quality habitats that are abundantly available within the SPA designated for their protection. – No hydrological link between the subject site and the SPA. – No direct ecological pathways linking the Natura site with the subject site. – The ecology of the habitat complex in question are neither structurally, nor, functionally linked to the subject site. – Significant impacts are not reasonably foreseeable.
Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC (00071)	Approximately 10.5km south of the subject site	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – No hydrological link between the subject site and the SAC. – Distance intervening provides a buffer between impact sources and this Natura 2000 site. – No direct ecological pathways linking the Natura site with the subject site. – The ecology of the Annexed habitats in question are neither structurally, nor, functionally linked to the subject site. – Significant impacts are not reasonably foreseeable.

Due to the absence of a plausible impact pathway connecting certain designated sites to the location of the proposed works, and/or in the absence of potential ecological receptors, such sites are considered to be outside the functional zone of impact influence of the proposal. Therefore, it is objectively concluded that the proposal does not include any element likely to result in significant effects on the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites outlined in the table above.

It is considered that the proposed development has some, albeit limited, potential to affect some of the qualifying features of the remaining Natura 2000 site identified as being within the functional zone of impact influence, namely the Lower River Suir SAC (002137). Therefore, the assessment of significance of potential effects focuses on this designated site.

The likelihood of significant effects from the project was determined based on a number of indicators including:

- Habitat loss
- Habitat alteration
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species
- Water quality and resource

The likelihood of significant cumulative/in-combination effects is assessed in **Section 4.5.5**.

4.5.1 Habitat Loss and Alteration

There is no physical overlap between the subject site and the Lower River Suir SAC, nor is there any hydrological connection between the proposed area of works and the SAC. Therefore, it can be objectively concluded that there will be no direct/indirect loss or alteration of habitats within the Lower River Suir SAC, as a result of the proposal considered in this report.

4.5.2 Water Quality

There are no watercourses draining the subject area. The closest watercourse to the proposal site, which eventually drains to the Lower River Suir SAC, is a small 1st order stream (Ferrybank Stream) located approximately 550m to the east of the eastern boundary of the proposed development. This stream discharges into the Lower River Suir SAC approximately 1.5km south of this point. The intervening stretch of ground between the proposal site boundary and this stream comprises vegetated land which further acts as a buffer between the proposal area of works and the watercourse.

In summary, there is no hydrological connection between the proposal site and the Lower River Suir SAC. Therefore, significant water quality impacts are not likely within the Lower River Suir SAC or the Ferrybank Stream, as a result of the proposal considered in this report.



4.5.3 Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species

The Lower River Suir SAC is designated for a range of aquatic species including freshwater pearl mussel, white-clawed crayfish, the three species of lamprey, twaite shad and Atlantic salmon. With regards to the potential for indirect disturbance/displacement impacts to these qualifying features it has been determined in the previous section that significant water quality impacts as a result of the proposal are not envisaged.

The Lower River Suir SAC is also designated for otter. Otters are found in a variety of aquatic habitats in Ireland such as lakes, rivers, streams, estuaries, marshland, and canals and along the coast. Otters have a widespread distribution in Ireland and could potentially use the Ferrybank Stream which is located to the east of the site and which drains to the SAC.

With regards to the potential for disturbance/displacement impacts to otter, it is considered that any increase in noise emissions associated with the works will be temporary, intermittent and will be restricted to normal working hours. The proposed site is situated in an urban area, and as such any otters that may occur in the greater area are likely to be accustomed to some level of anthropogenic disturbance. The intervening distance between the proposed area of works and the Ferrybank Stream (approx. 500m) is considered sufficient to negate any potential for significant disturbance/displacement impacts during either construction or operational phase.

It is objectively concluded that significant disturbance/displacement impacts to any of the qualifying interest species for the Lower River Suir SAC are not likely to occur, as a result of the proposal considered in this report.

4.5.4 Habitat or Species Fragmentation

Habitat fragmentation has been defined as ‘reduction and isolation of patches of natural environment’ (Hall *et al.*, 1997 cited in Franklin *et al.*, 2002) which results in spatial separation of habitat areas which had previously been in a state of greater continuity. Adverse effects of habitat fragmentation on species include the increased isolation of populations which can detrimentally impact on the resilience or robustness of the populations.

The preceding sections have concluded that significant habitat loss/alteration within the Lower River Suir SAC is not predicted and significant disturbance or displacement of any of the qualifying interest species is not expected to ensue. Having regard to the scale of the project, and its localised nature, being restricted to modified habitat, situated on the urban fringe of Waterford, and the conclusions of the preceding sections, it is considered that significant habitat or species fragmentation impacts are not reasonably foreseeable as a result of the proposal considered in this report.

4.5.5 Cumulative/In-combination Impacts

As well as singular effects, the potential for in-combination or cumulative impacts also need to be considered. A cumulative impact arises from incremental changes caused by past, present and proposed projects together with the proposed development considered in this document. Relevant plans and projects have been identified in **Section 4.2.7** above.

The preceding sections, **Sections 4.5.1 to 4.5.4** above, have concluded that significant habitat loss or alteration impacts within the Lower River Suir SAC are not foreseen, no significant water quality

impacts are predicted, and significant disturbance/displacement or habitat/species fragmentation impacts on any of the qualifying interest features for the SAC are not expected to arise.

Having regard to these conclusions it is considered that significant synergistic interaction between the proposal, as described in **Section 4.2.6** above, and any of the activities outlined in **Section 4.2.7** above, that could create adverse cumulative or in-combination impacts on the conservation objectives of the SAC, is not reasonably foreseeable. Therefore, it is objectively concluded that significant cumulative or in-combination impacts on the Lower River Suir SAC (002137) are not likely, as a result of the proposal considered in this report.

4.6 Conclusion of Screening Stage

The Screening for appropriate assessment is undertaken to determine the potential for likely significant effects of a proposed temporary compound, access road and Greenway access ramp associated with the Southeast Greenway, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the conservation objectives of the site on Natura 2000 Sites.

The proposed development is within 15km of four Natura 2000 sites. It has been objectively concluded that the following sites are not likely to be significantly affected by the proposal and can therefore be screened out for appropriate assessment:

- The Lower River Suir SAC (002137)
- The River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162)
- Tramore Backstrand SPA (004027)
- Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC (000671)

5. REFERENCES

DoEHLG, 2009. *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

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Appendix 1

Stages of Appropriate Assessment



Stage 1 - Screening

This is the first stage of the Appropriate Assessment process and that undertaken to determine the likelihood of significant impacts as a result of a proposed project or plan. It determines need for a full Appropriate Assessment.

If it can be concluded that no significant impacts to Natura 2000 sites are likely then the assessment can stop here. If not, it must proceed to Stage 2 for further more detailed assessment.

Stage 2 - Natura Impact Statement (NIS)

The second stage of the Appropriate Assessment process assesses the impact of the proposal (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site with respect to the conservation objectives of the site and its ecological structure and function. This is a much more detailed assessment than Stage 1. A Natura Impact Statement containing a professional scientific examination of the proposal is required and includes any mitigation measure to avoid, reduce or offset negative impacts.

If the outcome of Stage 2 is negative i.e. adverse impacts to the sites cannot be scientifically ruled out, despite mitigation, the plan or project should proceed to Stage 3 or be abandoned.

Stage 3 - Assessment of alternative solutions

A detailed assessment must be undertaken to determine whether alternative ways of achieving the objective of the project/plan exists.

Where no alternatives exist the project/plan must proceed to Stage 4.

Stage 4 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain

The final stage is the main derogation process examining whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project to adversely affect a Natura 2000 site where no less damaging solution exists.

Appendix 2

Site Synopses