

2 No. Proposed Dwellings, Colmcille Terrace, Granard, Co. Longford

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report – as required under Article
6(3) of the Habitats Directive. (Council Directive 92/42/EEC)

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On behalf of Longford County Council



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1 Introduction:

This report, which contains information required for the competent authority to undertake a screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment (AA), has been prepared by VHA on behalf of Longford County Council ('the applicant'). It provides information on and assesses the potential for the proposed development to impact on Natura 2000 sites.

This report comprises information in support of screening for an Appropriate Assessment, in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Planning and Development Act 2010; and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011).

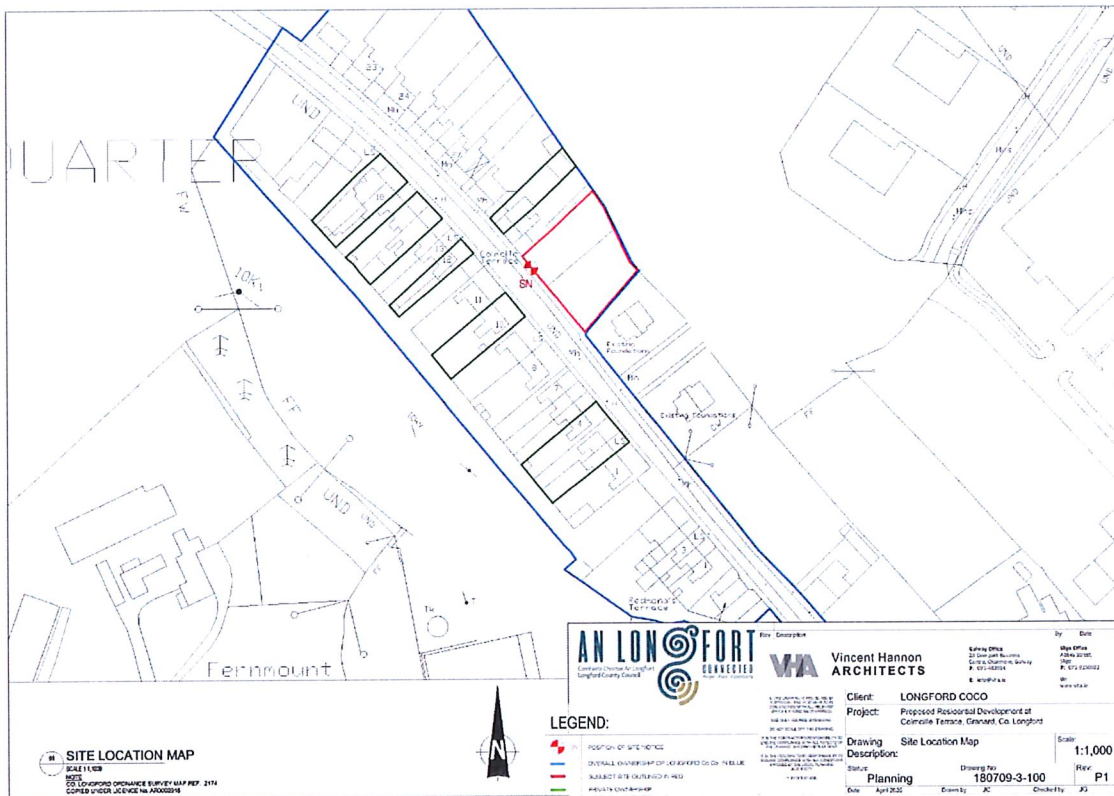


Fig 1.1 – Site Location Map

1.1 Existing Situation:

The proposed site is a brownfield which is located to the North West of Granard in Co. Longford. The site is accessed off Colmcille Terrace which connects Granard with villages to the Northwest. To the northeast of the site is agricultural land, to the northwest is a series of residential dwellings, to the southwest on the opposite side of the road are residential dwellings and to the southeast is located some undeveloped foundations of 2 no. houses.

The proposed site measures approximately 0.109 Ha (0.27 Acres) and will if approved, be accessed via the Colmcille Terrace road.

1.2 Legislative Context:

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as "The Habitats Directive", provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of European Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000. These are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under the Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/ECC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment of Natura 2000 Sites, (abbreviated AA):

Article 6(3) states:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] 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. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, 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 and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

Article 6(4) states:

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to: human health or public safety; beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment; or, further to an opinion from the Commission, other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

1.3 Stages of the Appropriate Assessment:

Both EU and national guidance exists in relation to Member States fulfilling their requirements under the EU Habitats Directive, with particular reference to Article 6(3) and 6(4) of that Directive. The methodology followed in relation to this screening for AA has had regard to the following guidance:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. <http://www.npws.ie>
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, referred to as MN2000, European Commission 2000; <http://ec.europa.eu>
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, referred to as the "EC Article 6 Guidance Document (EC2000); <http://ec.europa.eu>
- Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC – Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the commission. <http://ec.europa.eu>

In complying with the obligations under Article 6(3) and following the EC2000, MN2000 and DEHLG guidance, this screening document has been structured as a stage by stage approach as follows:

- 1) Screening Report

- Description of the project;
 - Identification of Natura 2000 sites potentially affected;
 - Identification and description of individual and cumulative impacts likely to result;
 - Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified on site integrity;
 - Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects;
- and
- Screening Conclusion

Stage 1 - Screening

The aim of Stage 1, 'Screening' is to determine whether or not the proposed plan or project is likely to adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 site and to determine whether or not Stage 2, the AA, is required. This is done by examining the proposed plan or project; and the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites that might potentially be affected.

Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

The aim of Stage 2 is to identify any adverse impacts that the plan or project might have upon the integrity of relevant Natura 2000 sites. As part of the assessment, a key consideration is 'in combination' with other plans or projects. Where adverse impacts are identified, the AA will propose changes to the plan or project that would avoid, reduce or remedy any such negative impacts and the plan or project should then be amended accordingly, thereby avoiding the need to progress to Stage 3.

Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions

If it is not possible during the Stage 2 assessment to reduce impacts to acceptable, non-significant levels by avoidance and/or mitigation, Stage 3 of the process must be undertaken, which is to objectively assess whether alternative solutions exist by which the objectives of the plan or project can be achieved. Explicitly, this means alternative solutions that do not have negative impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

The process must return to Stage 2 as alternatives will require assessment in order to proceed. Demonstrating that all reasonable alternatives have been considered and assessed, and that the least damaging option has been selected, it is necessary to progress to Stage 4.

It should also be noted that EU guidance on this stage of the process states that, 'other assessment criteria, such as economic criteria, cannot be seen as overruling ecological criteria' (EC, 2002). In other words, if alternative solutions

exist that do not have negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites; they should be adopted regardless of economic considerations.

Stage 4 - Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)/ Derogation

This stage of the AA process is undertaken when it has been determined that negative impacts on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site will result from a plan or project, but that no alternatives exist. At this stage of the AA process, it is the characteristics of the plan or project itself that will determine whether or not the competent authority can allow it to progress. This is the determination of 'overriding public interest'.

It is important to note that in the case of Natura 2000 sites that include in their qualifying features 'priority' habitats or species, as defined in Annex I and II of the Directive, the demonstration of 'overriding public interest' is not sufficient, and it must be demonstrated that the plan or project is necessary for 'human health or safety considerations'.

2 Screening:

2.1 Description of the Project

The proposed development will consist of the construction of 2 no. bungalow dwelling houses along with all of the necessary ancillary site development works.

2.2 Design and Construction Methodology

All works associated with this project would be considered standard within the construction industry. Some excavation will be required to accommodate the infrastructure and foundations associated with the new structures. In addition, there will be some excavations of the site to accommodate new services, drainage etc. All drainage will be managed through connection to the existing public drainage network which runs along along the main road.

2.3 Brief Description of the Natura 2000 Sites

This section of the screening process describes the Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the proposed development location. A 15km buffer zone was chosen as a precautionary measure and following best practice, to ensure that all potentially affected (both direct and indirect) Natura 2000 sites are included in the screening process. Tables 2.1 and 2.2 list the Natura 2000 sites that are within 15km of the project area and Figure 2.1 shows their location in relation to the proposed development. The qualifying features for each site have been obtained through a review of the SAC and SPA Site Objectives available from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Table 2.1 - SACs within 15km of the Proposal Development

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Habitats	Qualifying Species
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002340	Moneybeg and Castleisland SAC	[7110] Active raised bogs [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	
002341	Ardaguillion Bog SAC	[7110] Active raised bogs [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	
000679	Garriskil Bog SAC	[7110] Active raised bogs [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	
002201	Derragh Bog SAC	[7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [91D0] Bog woodland	

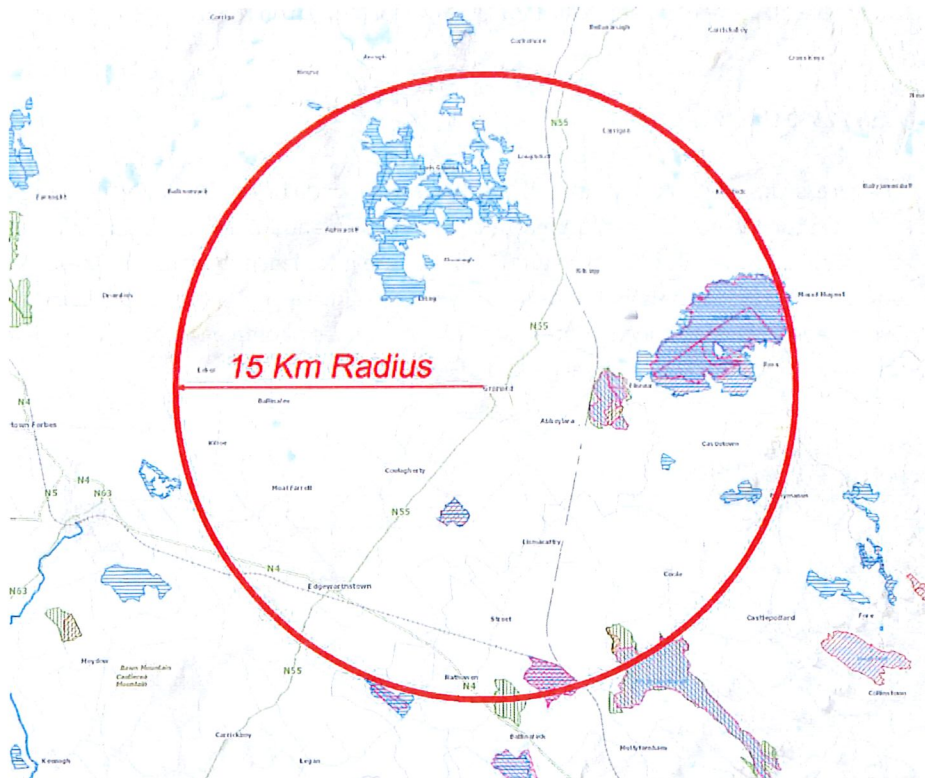


Figure 2.1 – SPAs & SACs within 15km of the Proposal Development

Table 2.2 - SPAs within 15km of the Proposal Development

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Feature Annex 1 Species
004043	Lough Derravaragh SPA	Lough Derravaragh is of major ornithological importance as it regularly supports nationally important populations of four species, and at times is used by the internationally important population of Greenland White-fronted Goose which is based in the region. Also of note is that three of the species which occur at the site, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Whooper Swan and Golden Plover, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Lough Derravaragh is a Ramsar Convention site.
004045	Glen Lough SPA	Whilst this site attracts a range of wintering waterfowl, the principal ornithological interest lies in the internationally important Whooper Swan population that is based in the area. Whooper Swan is of particular note as it is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Greenland White-fronted Goose, nowadays an occasional visitor to the site, is also listed on Annex I of this Directive. The site provides useful habitat for Shoveler, which in Ireland is a fairly localised species. Glen Lough is a Ramsar Convention site
004061	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough is an important site for wintering waterfowl, especially diving duck. It supports nationally important populations of two species, i.e. Pochard (951) and Tufted Duck (449) – all figures are average peaks for the 5 seasons 1995/96-1999/2000. A large population of Mute Swan (120) also uses the site. Coot (199), whilst still occurring in substantial numbers, formerly had a population of national importance. A number of other species are found, in relatively low numbers, including Great Crested Grebe (25), Mallard (130) and Goldeneye (22). Marginal grassland areas outside of the site attract feeding wildfowl and waders such as Lapwing and Golden Plover. Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, whilst relatively small in area, is of conservation significance for holding nationally important populations of two species, Pochard and Tufted Duck.
004187	Lough Sheelin SPA	Despite variable water quality in recent decades, Lough Sheelin remains a very important site for wintering waterfowl, especially diving duck. It supports nationally important populations of four species, i.e. Great Crested Grebe (140), Pochard (546), Tufted Duck (762) and Goldeneye (224) - all figures are mean peaks for the 5 winters 1995/96-1999/2000. A number of other species occur in relatively low numbers, including Mute Swan (28), Mallard (76), Coot (24), Little Grebe (19), Cormorant (42) and Black-headed Gull (202). Lough Sheelin is a nationally important site for four species of wintering wildfowl and is one of the main Midlands lakes sites for wintering birds.
004102	Garriskil Bog SPA	The site is within the range of the midland lakes Greenland White-fronted Goose flock, which is centred on four major lakes (Derravaragh, Iron, Owel and Ennell). The last record of Greenland White-fronted Goose at this site was in 1986/87 (43 individuals). The site is within the breeding territory of a pair of Merlin. Nesting probably occurs outside of the site boundary, with the bog being used primarily as a foraging area. Several wader species breed within the

		site – Snipe (an estimated 5 pairs), Curlew (2- 3 pairs) and Redshank (2 pairs). Barn Owl has been recorded hunting along the margins of the bog, while Red Grouse is considered to occur occasionally.
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2.4 Assessment Criteria

Table 2.1 and 2.2 list the Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development area. As noted there are 4 SAC's and 5 SPA's within this boundary. Given the distances between the subject site and the nearest Natura areas and the nature of the proposed works no direct impacts will occur through land take or fragmentation of habitat.

Table 2.3 Identifies the potential direct, indirect and secondary impacts of the proposed development on Natura 2000 sites within a 15 km radius of the proposed development.

Site Name	Direct Impacts	Indirect/ Secondary	Resource Requirements (Drinking Water Abstraction Etc.)	Emissions (Disposal to Land, Water or Air)	Excavation Requirements	Transportation Requirements	Duration of Construction, Operation, Decommissioning
Moneybeg and Castleisland SAC	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species
Ardaguillion Bog SAC	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species
Garriskil Bog SAC	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species
Derragh Bog SAC	No impact on qualifying habitat	No impact on qualifying habitat	No impact on qualifying habitat	No impact on qualifying habitat	No impact on qualifying habitat	No impact on qualifying habitat	No impact on qualifying habitat
Lough Derravarragh SPA	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species
Glen Lough SPA	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species

Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species
Lough Sheelin SPA	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species
Garriskil Bog SPA	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species	No impact on qualifying habitat or species

2.4.2 Likely Changes to the Site

The likely changes that will arise from the proposed development have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could potentially affect the integrity of the identified Natura 2000 Sites. Overall, it has been found that the implementation of the proposed development will not affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 Sites (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Likely Effects on Natura 2000 Sites

Site Name:	Reduction of Habitat Area	Disturbance to Key Species	Habitat or Species Fragmentation	Reduction in Species Density	Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value (Water Quality Etc.)	Climate Change
Moneybeg and Castleisland SAC	None	None	None	None	None	None
Ardaguillion Bog SAC	None	None	None	None	None	None
Garriskil Bog SAC	None	None	None	None	None	None
Derragh Bog SAC	None	None	None	None	None	None
Lough Derravarragh SPA	None	None	None	None	None	None
Glen Lough SPA	None	None	None	None	None	None
Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA	None	None	None	None	None	None
Lough Sheelin SPA	None	None	None	None	None	None
Garriskil Bog SPA	None	None	None	None	None	None

2.4.4 Elements of the Project where the Impacts are Likely to be Significant

No elements of the proposed development within the subject lands are likely to cause significant impacts.

2.5 CUMULATIVE AND IN-COMBINATION IMPACTS

It is a requirement of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, 2011 that when considering whether a plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of a European site the assessment must take into account in-combination effects with other current or reasonably foreseeable plans and projects.

- If it can be clearly demonstrated that the plan or project will not result in any effects at all that are relevant to the integrity of a European site then the plan or project should proceed without considering the in-combination test, further;
- If there are identified effects arising from the plan or project even if they are perceived as minor and not likely to have a significant effect on the integrity of a European site alone, then these effects must be considered 'in-combination' with the effects arising from other plans and projects.

It is not considered likely that the proposed project will have any significant effects on any European sites given the scale, nature and distance from designated sites from the proposed development. The proposed development does not involve significant resource requirements. Service connections will be made to existing public services in the area. There will be no land take or fragmentation of protected sites.

As such it can be concluded that the development either on its own or in-combination with other developments will have no impact on European sites.

Any new applications in the area should be assessed on their individual merits by Longford Co.Co. and determine the requirements for AA screening as necessary under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

3 Screening Conclusions and Statement

The likely impacts that will arise from the proposed development have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could potentially affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network. The screening exercise concludes that there is no potential for significant impacts on the Natura 2000 sites within a 15km range of the proposed site due to:

- The nature of the proposed works allied with the distance to the nearest designated habitats.
- There is no land take from protected Natura 200 sites as part of the proposed development.
- The infrastructure design is such that any potential reduction in water quality is not likely.

Therefore, the structure and functioning of the biological communities and habitats for which they are designated will remain intact. A finding of No Significant Effects Matrix has been completed and is presented in Section 4 of this Screening Statement, therefore a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not deemed to be required.

4 Finding of No Significant Effects Report Matrix

Name of Project	Proposed Development at Colmcille Terrace, Granard, Co. Longford
Name and Location of Natura 2000 Site	None
Description of the project or plan:	Proposed 2 No. Residential Dwellings
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site?	No
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.	The proposed development is not likely to affect any site that makes up the Natura 2000 network.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nature of the proposed works allied with the distance to the nearest designated habitats. There is no land take from protected Natura 200 sites as part of the proposed development. The infrastructure design is such that any potential reduction in water quality is not likely.
List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address.	-
Response to consultation.	-
Data Collected to Carry Out the Assessment	
Who carried out the assessment?	VHA
Sources of data	NPWS database
Level of assessment completed	Desktop
Overall Conclusion	Stage 1 Screening indicates that the proposed development will not have a significant negative impact on the Natura 2000 network. Therefore, a Stage 2 'Appropriate Assessment' under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC is not required.