Screening for Appropriate Assessment

DEVELOPMENT OF A RESIDENTIAL DWELLING AT CORNEDDAN, BALLINALEE, CO. LONGFORD.

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Prepared for: TA Group

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1 Introduction

Beo Ecology has been commissioned by TA Group to carry out a Screening for Appropriate Assessment for the proposed construction of a residential dwelling located at Corneddan, Ballinalee, Co. Longford. TA Group are the providing the engineering led team for the design and construction of the dwelling, and associated siteworks, at this location on behalf of Longford County Council. The location of the proposed works is presented in **Figure 1-1**. See **Appendix A** for site layout drawings.

This Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been prepared to provide the competent authority, Longford County Council, the relevant scientific information to conduct the Appropriate Assessment (AA). This information will allow Longford County Council to determine, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed project, individually or in combination with other plans and projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European site and, where necessary, to ascertain whether or not the proposed project would adversely affect the integrity of a European site.

1.1 Statement of Authority

Sheila Murphy trading as Beo Ecology holds a B.Sc. (Hons) in Environmental Science, and M.Sc. in Biodiversity and Conservation, she has over 12 years' experience in her field. She has extensive experience in the area of Screening of Appropriate Assessments and report writing for a range of projects including road developments, wastewater treatment plants and one-off housing developments. She is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM).

1.2 Survey Limitations

The optimum survey season for invasive alien plant species (IAPS) is during the summer months when vegetation is in full growth. Given that this survey was undertaken in early March 2023, outside of the prime survey season, a seasonal constraint is present regards on-site findings. Therefore, it should be noted that some IAPS, particularly those in their immature stage of growth development and in a die-back state may not be identifiable during surveys undertaken outside the recommended survey months.

1.3 Legislative Context for Appropriate Assessment

The 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 Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000.

Natura 2000 sites are defined under the Habitats Directive (Article 3) as a coherent European ecological network of special areas of conservation, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. In Ireland, these sites are designated as European Sites and include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), established under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC, as codified by 2009/147/EC) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), established under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC for habitats and species.

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 - 2015 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477/2011) as amended.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to adversely affect the integrity of European Sites (Annex 1.1).

Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment (AA):

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 subjected 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(3) of the Habitats Directive, transposed into Irish Law relevant to this project includes Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000-2019 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

Natura 2000 sites in Ireland (herein referred to as European sites) that form part of the Natura 2000 network of protected sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated due to their significant ecological importance for species and habitats protected under Annexes I and II respectively of the Habitats Directive, and Special Protected Areas (SPAs), designated for the protection of populations and habitats of bird species protected under the EU Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/409/EEC). Features for which SACs and SPAs are designated are termed Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests respectively. Collectively, Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests are herein referred to as Qualifying Features. As the proposed project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Site, Longford County Council as the competent authority, is obliged to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on European Sites.

The staged assessment process undertaken to meet Article 6(3) obligations is described in **Section 2** below.

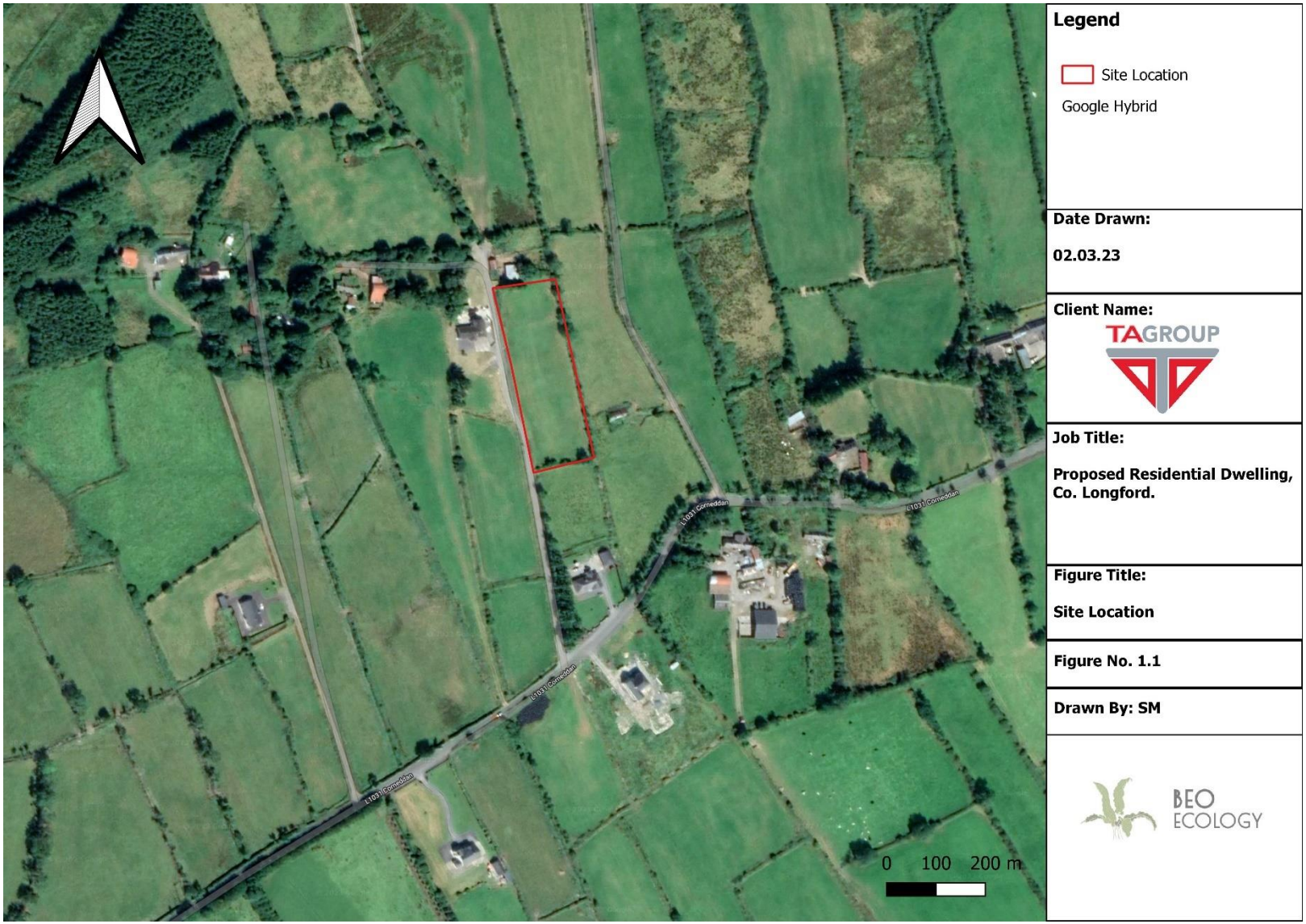

Figure 1-1: Site Location of the Proposed Works

2 Methodology

2.1 Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3):

Whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, and whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening should be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, unless potential impacts clearly can be avoided through the modification or redesign of the plan or project, in which case the screening process is repeated on the altered plan. The greatest level of evidence and justification will be needed in circumstances when the process ends at screening stage on grounds of no impact.

2.2 Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Statement)

The aim of Stage 2 of the AA process is to identify any adverse impacts that the plan or project might have on the integrity of relevant European sites. As part of the assessment, a key consideration is 'in combination' effects with other plans or projects. Where adverse impacts are identified, mitigation measures can be proposed 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 Step 3.

This stage considers whether the plan or project, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a European site, and includes any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. The proponent of the plan or project will be required to submit a Natura Impact Statement, i.e. the report of a targeted professional scientific examination of the plan or project and the relevant European sites, to identify and characterise any possible implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives, taking account of in-combination effects. This should provide information to enable the public authority to carry out the AA.

The information required in a Natura Impact Statement, is outlined in Regulation 42(5) (a) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011) as amended, as follows: A Natura Impact Statement shall, in addition to addressing the issues referred to in the interpretation contained in Regulation 2(1), include such information or data as the public authority considers necessary, and specifies in a notice given under paragraph (3), to enable it to ascertain if the plan or project will affect the integrity of the site.

Where appropriate, a Natura Impact Statement shall include, in addition—

i. the alternative solutions that have been considered and the reasons why they have not been adopted,
ii. the imperative reasons of overriding public interest that are being relied upon to indicate that the plan or project should proceed notwithstanding that it may adversely affect the integrity of a European site,
iii. the compensatory measures that are being proposed.

If the assessment is negative, i.e. adverse effects on the integrity of a site cannot be excluded, then the process must proceed to Stage 3, or the plan or project should be abandoned. The competent authority must make a determination to that effect before proceeding to the next stage.

2.3 Guidance

This Screening for AA and NIS report has been prepared with regard to the relevant provisions of the EU Council Directive 92/43/EEC and Ireland's EU (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

The methodology followed for this assessment has had regard to the following guidance and legislation;

- EC (2000). Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg;
- EC (2018). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg;
- CIEEM (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management;
- DoEHLG (2009, rev. 2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government;
- European Commission (EC) (2018), Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission;
- EC (2002) 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, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission;
- EC (2007a) 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. European Commission;
- EC, (2007b), Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission;
- EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission;
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Version 1.1 (September 2019), Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland;
- The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended;
- European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats) Regulations 2011 S.I No 473/2011 as amended,
- NPWS (2013). Ireland's Summary Report for the period 2008 – 2012 under Article 12 of the Birds Directive. National Parks and Wildlife Services. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland;
- NPWS (2019), The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Habitat Assessments Volume 2. Version 1.0. Unpublished Report, National Parks and Wildlife Services. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland;
- NPWS (2019), The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Species Assessments Volume 3, Version 1.0. Unpublished Report, National Parks and Wildlife Services. Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland;
- Office of the Planning Regulator (March 2021), Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. OPR Practice Note PN01;
- The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended);
- The Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2022; and
- Recent Irish and European case law on the Habitats Directive.

2.4 Information Consulted for this Report

A desk study was undertaken as part of this assessment. This has been informed by the following sources of data;

- Information on the location, nature and design of the proposed project as provided by the client;
- Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG) online land-use mapping (www.myplan.ie/en/index.html);
- Office of Public Works (OPW) National Flood Hazard Mapping website (www.floodmaps.ie);
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) geoportal mapping tool (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/);
- EPA Catchments interactive online mapping and data (https://www.catchments.ie/);
- National Parks and Wildlife Service protected site and species information and data (https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites);
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (www.biodiversityireland.ie);
- Geohive online environmental sensitivity mapping tool (https://airomaps.geohive.ie/ESM/);
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography (www.osi.ie);
- Geological Survey Ireland online mapping and data (https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/Pages/default.aspx); and,
- Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027.

3 Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment

This section provides the information required for the competent authority (Longford County Council) to undertake a Screening for AA and determine in view of best scientific knowledge, whether the proposed works, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the European site. Specifically, it aims to:

- Provide information on, and assess the potential for the proposed works to significantly impact on European sites; and
- Determine whether the activities proposed, alone or in combination with other projects, are likely to have significant effects on European sites in view of their Conservation Objectives.

This screening assessment provides information to address the following elements:

1. Description of the plan or project, and local site or plan area characteristics. The description covers the full scope of the proposed plan or project (i.e. construction phase and operational phase).
2. Description of the receiving environment setting of the proposed plan or project and its surrounds.
3. Identification of relevant European sites within the projects the potential zone of influence. A preliminary assessment to determine connectivity between the proposed works and receptors (i.e. European sites and/ or features for which the sites are designated). Where connectivity exists, the receptors in question are brought forward in the screening assessment process.
4. For receptors that exhibit potential connectivity to the proposed work a screening assessment is undertaken to establish whether the plan or project is likely to have a direct, indirect or cumulative effect on receptors based on a consideration of likely impacts (i.e. an assessment of significance of effect).
5. Screening statement with conclusions on whether or not an AA is necessary for the relevant a Qualifying Feature.

3.1 Project Description

Longford County Council propose to construct a residential dwelling located at Corneddan, Oghil, Ballinalee, Co. Longford. TA Group are the providing the engineering led design team for the design and construction of the dwelling, and associated siteworks on behalf of Longford County Council. The works will consist of a new 2No. bedroom house with associated siteworks. The site located at Corneddan, which is approximately 1.18 acres. It is situated approximately 4.4km south of Drumlish and 9.9km from Longford Town. The site currently consists of a green field site within no development in place.

- The proposed dwelling will be located approximately 40m from the southern boundary of the site.
- The associated percolation system will be located approximately 10m from the southern boundary and drainage ditch.
- Excavated material will be partially used to level the site where required and remainder will be stockpiled to the north.
- The location of the proposed works is presented in **Figure 1-1**. See **Appendix A** for site layout drawings.

3.2 European Sites within the Project Zone of Influence

This stage of the screening for AA process describes European Sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the proposed project.

3.2.1 Zone of Influence

A Zone of Influence for a project is established on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors within vicinity of the proposed development. The ZoI takes into account the potential for connectivity to ecological receptors through the Source- Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) model.

The model identifies the source of likely significant impacts, if any, the pathway (land, air, hydrological, hydrogeological pathways, etc.) along which those impacts may be transferred from the source to the receiving environmental receptors (i.e. European Sites and/ or features for which the sites are designated). Functional pathways can also include the use of an application site for foraging by a QI/SCI species of an SAC or SPA i.e. otter or migratory birds.

Given the size, scale and nature of this project and the proposed construction methodology it is considered for the purpose of this screening exercise that the ZoI is the zone immediately surrounding the proposed development works and any hydrologically or hydrogeologically connected European Sites downstream of the works, where distances would be dependent on the qualifying interests of the site. For the purposes of this Screening for Appropriate Assessment, the Zone of Influence includes European Sites supporting downstream hydrological connectivity and those located within the same Water Framework Directive (WFD) surface water sub-catchment (e.g. Camlin_SC_010) as the proposed works.

Following the above rationale, there are three European sites located within the ZoI (WFD sub-catchment Camlin_SC_010) of the proposed works and downstream of the site (See **Figure 3-1**). There is potential tenuous hydrological connectivity to European sites downstream. The identified sites are as follows:

- Lough Forbes Complex SAC (site code: 001818)
- Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA (site code: 004101)
- Ardagullion Bog SAC (site code: 002341)

Where it is evident that there is no connectivity between the proposed work and receptors (i.e. European Sites and/ or features for which the sites are designated), the receptors are excluded from the AA process. Similarly, where connectivity exists between the proposed work and receptors but is deemed not to result in likely significant effects to the receptor, the receptor can be screened out (i.e. likely significant effects to receptors excluded; receptor not considered further in AA process).

Figure 3-1 shows the European sites within the ZoI and downstream of the proposed works location. **Table 3-1** lists the Qualifying Interests (QIs) of the identified European sites within the ZoI of the proposed works.

3.3 Summary of Connectivity

There are three European sites located within the ZoI (WFD sub-catchment Camlin__SC_010) of the proposed works (see **Figure 3-1**). In addition, there is potential tenuous hydrological or hydrogeological connectivity to European sites downstream. Therefore, there is potential for the proposed works to have potential significant negative impacts on designated European sites and surrounding environment.

Table 3-1: European Sites identified within the ZoI of the Proposed Works

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Interests (Habitats/Species)/ Special Conservation Interest Species	Distance from Study Area	Connectivity
001818	Lough Forbes Complex SAC	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]	Located 9.2km south-west of the of the study area.	Indirect Connectivity. There is potential indirect connectivity to this SAC by

Site Code	Site Name	Qualifying Interests (Habitats/Species)/ Special Conservation Interest Species	Distance from Study Area	Connectivity
		Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]		hydrological links via on-site drainage ditches, Aghaboy Stream (IE_SH26C010600) and the Camlin_26 (IE_SH_26S021530) waterbodies which eventually flow into Lough Forbes.
004101	Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA	Greenland White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons flavirostris*) [A395]	Located 9.2km south-west of the of the study area.	Indirect Connectivity. There is potential indirect connectivity to this SAC by hydrological links via on-site drainage ditches, Aghaboy Stream (IE_SH26C010600) and the Camlin_26 (IE_SH_26S021530) waterbodies which eventually flow into Lough Forbes.
002341	Adragullion Bog SAC	Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Located 14.8km south-east of the study area	No Connectivity. Due to the lack of source-pathway-receptor vectors there is no potential for connectivity between the site location and the SAC.

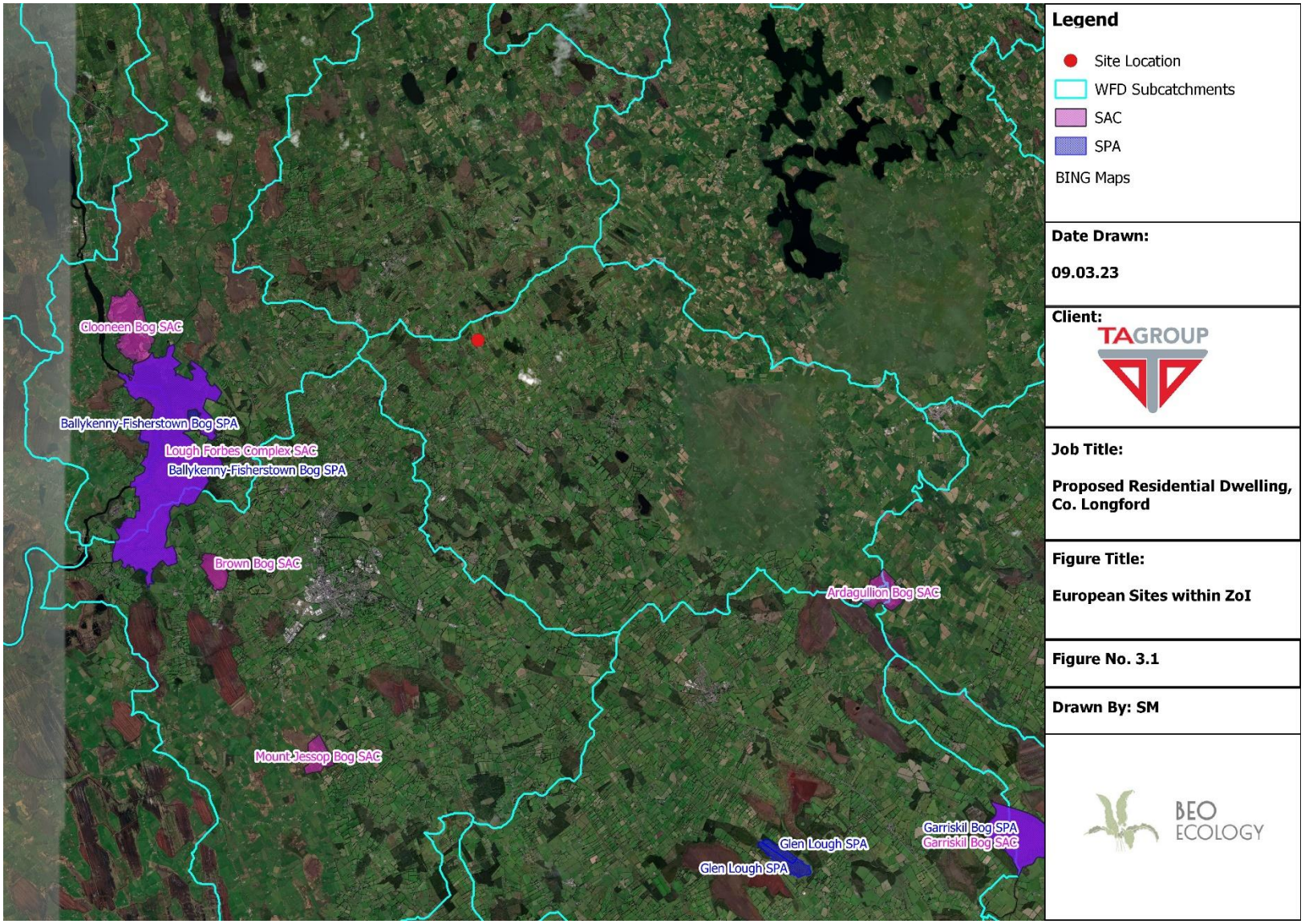

Figure 3-1: European Sites within the ZoI of the Proposed Works

3.4 European Site Descriptions

There are three European sites within the project ZoI of the proposed development works, two of which support tenuous indirect connectivity to the proposed works.; Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA. Their site description as per NWPS is outlined below. The third site, Adragullion Bog SAC does not support connectivity via the S-P-R model and therefore no longer considered in this assessment.

3.4.1 Lough Forbes Complex SAC[1]

This site consists of a number of different habitats, and is centred around Lough Forbes, a lake formed by a broadening of the River Shannon. As well as the lake itself, there is also a series of raised bogs, callow grasslands and a variety of other aquatic and terrestrial habitats to the west of Newtown Forbes on the Longford/Roscommon boundary. The importance of the Lough Forbes site lies in its excellent diversity of habitats, some of which, for example the raised bogs, are rare and threatened. The site is also of ornithological importance for its wintering waterfowl, breeding Merlin and Red Grouse. The presence of Whooper Swan and Merlin is of particular note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive (NPWS, 2013).

3.4.2 Ballykenny- Fisherstown Bog SPA[2]

Ballykenny-Fisherstown Bog SPA is located on the border between Counties Longford and Roscommon in the north-central midlands and is underlain by Carboniferous limestone. It is centered around Lough Forbes, a naturally eutrophic lake on the River Shannon system which is fed also from the north by the River Rinn. The lake has well-developed swamp vegetation and displays natural transitions to seasonally flooded grassland, marsh and raised bog. The raised bogs, known as the Ballykenny-Fishertown complex, are separated by the Camlin River, which has further areas of callow grassland. The central core areas of the bogs are quite wet with a good complement of bog mosses (Sphagnum spp.) and well-developed hummocks. Ballykenny Bog is unusual in that some of its margins are intact, a rare feature in the Irish midlands. Between the Camlin River and this bog, a complete transition from raised bog to callow grasslands can be seen, while the interface between the bog and lake is colonised by a narrow band of deciduous woodland. At the time this site was designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) it was being used by part of the Loughs Kilglass and Forbes Greenland White-fronted Goose population. The geese appear to have since abandoned the peatland sites in favour of grassland sites elsewhere. The site was regularly utilised during the 1980s and Greenland White-fronted Goose is regarded as a special conservation interest for this SPA. The last record of Greenland White-fronted Goose at this site was in 1990/91 (111 individuals) (NPWS, 2012).

3.5 Conservation Objectives of European Sites

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain at favourable conservation status areas designated as SAC and SPA. 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, are stable or increasing; and

[1] SITE SYNOPSIS (npws.ie) Lough Forbes Complex SAC
[2] SITE SYNOPSIS (npws.ie) Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA

- 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.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved 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;
- 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 integrity of a European site (referred to in Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive) is determined based on the conservation objectives and of the site. The Qualifying Interests (QI) and Special Conservation Interests (SCI) are obtained through a review of the most recently published (web published or otherwise) Conservation Objective supporting documents and Site-Specific Conservation Objectives documents (where available) for the European site.

Table 3-2 below provides details on the Conservation Objectives of the Europeans site identified within close proximity and downstream of the proposed works, which support potential hydrological connectivity.

Table 3-2: Conservation Objectives of Proximal European Sites

European Site	Conservation Objectives
Lough Forbes Complex SAC	The detailed conservation objectives for the Lough Forbes Complex SAC are provided in the Conservation Objectives document available on the NPWS website, as follows; ConservationObjectives.rdl (npws.ie)
Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA	The generic conservation objectives for the Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA are provided in the Conservation Objectives document available on the NPWS website, as follows; CO004101.pdf (npws.ie)

4 Existing Environment

4.1 Site Description

An ecological site walkover was conducted on the 7th March 2023 by Ecologist Sheila Murphy BSc. MSc. MCIEEM. The habitats identified on site were classified in accordance with "*A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*" (Fossitt, 2000).[3] See **Image 4-2** to **Image 4-4** below of the site location.

Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1)

The site consists of an improved agricultural grassland which has not undergone any recent grazing. The field gently slopes southwards. The species composition of the field is dominated primarily by grasses and limited herb species, species noted include cock's foot (*Dactylis glomeratus*), creeping bent grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*), docks (*Rumex sp*.), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and occasional rush species (*Juncus sp*.) scattered throughout the field.

Hedgerows (WL1)/Treelines (WL2)

Earth-banks (BL2) are a feature on all field boundaries. There is a short but steep, approximately 2m in height, bank located on the northern boundary. This supports a broken hedgerow (WL1) and scrub (WS1) development. The hedgerow consists of scattered hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), occasional brambles (*Rubus fruticosus*) and a small stand of broom (*Cytisus scoparius*). Species in the understory comprise of herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), ivy (*Hedera helix*) and fescue (*Festuca rubra*). A small mammal burrow is located in the earthbank at ITM 618162 -7.7243, it appears to be a rabbit burrow and not recently active. In addition, there is a short mature conifer spruce treeline running along the northern boundary at the entrance track.

The eastern boundary of the site is bound by an earth-bank and an unmanaged hedgerow (WL1). The earth-bank is low on the field side, however, has a steep drop of 1.5-2m to the east, where a stagnant and partially dry drainage ditch (FW4) runs along its base.

The hedgerow runs north-south for approximately 50m and is dominated by semi-mature hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), occasional ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and scattered gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) bushes. This further develops into a low gorse dominated hedgerow for approximately 80m to the southern end of the field. The earth-bank and associated drainage ditch are crossed at numerous locations by mammal trails heading eastwards.

An earth-bank is located along the southern boundary, this supports broken hedgerow/treeline (WL2) comprised of frequent hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), brambles (*Rubus fruticosus*) and ivy (*Hedera helix*). The bank is approximately 1.5-3m in height.

Drainage Ditches (FW4)

The southern field boundary is bound by a heavily vegetated drainage ditch and earth-bank. The drain is located on the field side edged by grassy vegetation. There is limited water flow, with the ditch primarily stagnant. The instream vegetation is mainly comprised of rushes and die-back vegetation in the form of ferns (*Dryopteris sp*.).

A drainage ditch and an earth-bank runs along a section of the western boundary, bordering the roadside. The ditch has a steady flow southward and appears to be culverted, crossing the road to the west. The field

[3] A Guide to Habitats in Ireland (Fossitt, 2000). Alphanumeric codes for habitat classification are provided in accordance with '*A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*' (Fossitt, 2000)

on the roadside is bound by an earth-bank, its steep on the roadside but low internally, nearly level within the field. It supports primarily grassy species including herbs such as trailing St. John's wort (*Hypericum humifusum*), primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), vetchlings and the basal leaves of nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*). Further north this drainage ditch is slightly overgrown with some scrub development instream of brambles and rushes. The depth of the ditch banks ranges from 1-2m. A scrub thicket is present to the north-west of the site corner along the ditch banks and adjoining the site entrance track.

Mammals

There is numerous evidence of mammal trails crossing the site at earth banks and drainage ditches. See **Figure 4-1** for locations. The follow grid reference are locations in which mammal trails were noted and recorded in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1: Mammal Activity Grid References

Mammal Activity	ITM (X)	ITM (Y)
Mammal Trails crossing earth banks throughout the study area.	618169	783377
	618178	783333
	618186	783283
	618150	783276
	618136	783330
	618127	783367

Image 4-1: Drainage ditch and earthbank on western boundary (northern-end) at roadside

Image 4-2: Improved agricultural grassland viewed from the north-eas

Image 4-3: Hedgerow and earthbank along the eastern boundary.

Image 4-4: Field margin at drainage ditch and earthbank on southern boundary.

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Image 4-5: Earthbank and scrub development on western boundary (roadside)

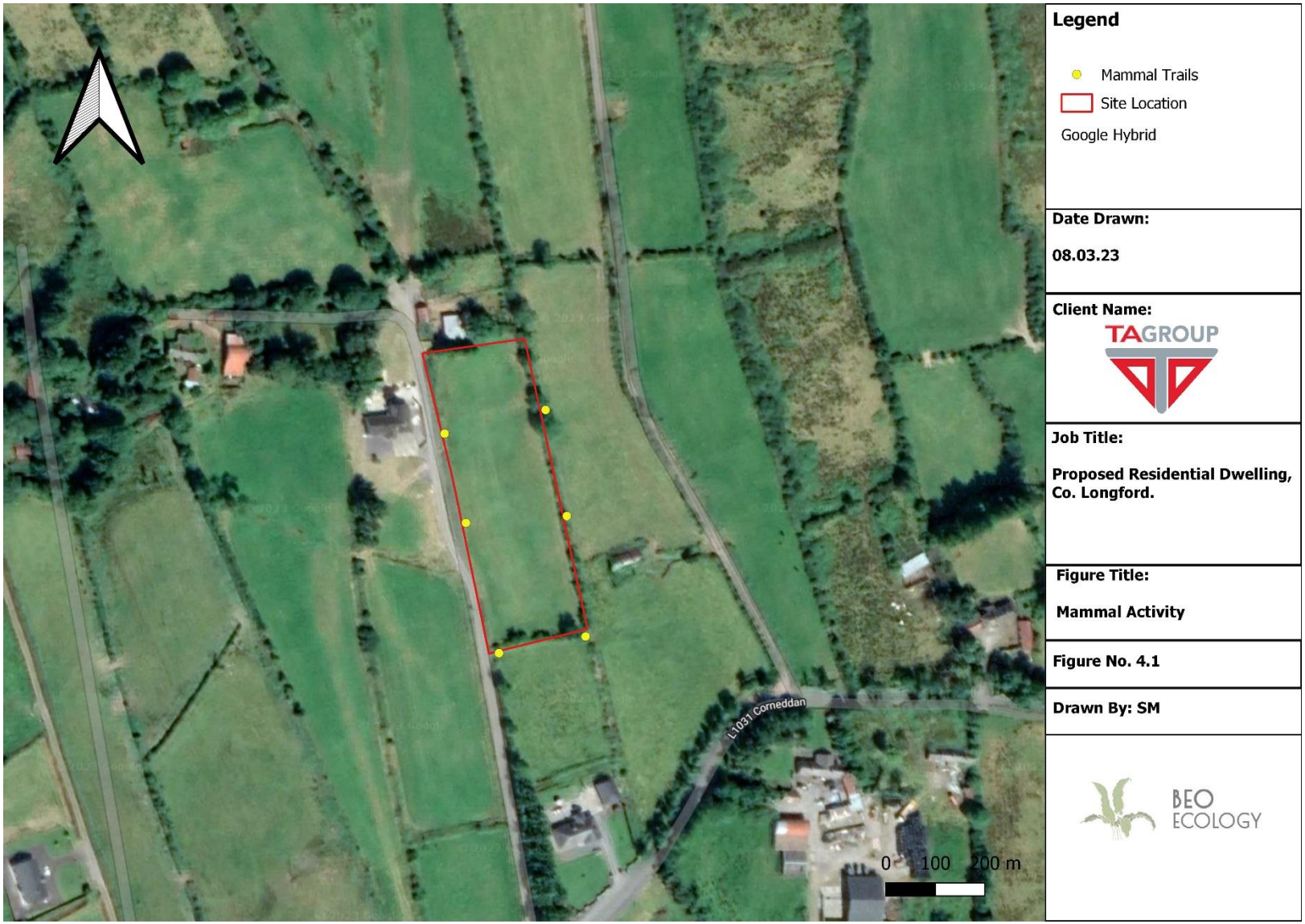


Figure 4-1: Mammal trail activity noted on site

4.2 Surface Water

The EPA online mapping data (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/) was consulted for the water quality status of waterbodies identified within the study area. The Aghaboy Stream (IE_SH26C010600) also referred to as Camlin_030 is located approximately 320m west of the proposed development site and project. Details of the waterbody's status are as follows:

- WFD River Waterbody Risk Status - Not at Risk
- River Waterbody WFD Status 2013-2018 – Good
- EPA Latest River Q Values - The monitoring station within closest proximity to the site location is approximately 4.3km south-east. It is located at the Camlin-Kilnacarrow Bridge and has Q4 Good water quality status.

The site is bound to the south and west by drainage ditches. The drainage ditch on the west flows from the north and is culverted across the road to the west. This potentially connects to the Aghaboy Stream to the west. This stream flows into the Camlin_026 (IE_SH_26S021530) located approximately 6km south as per the river course. This in turn flows approximately 22Km westward, as per the river course, prior to converging with Lough Forbes.

4.3 Flooding

A search of the Office of Public Works (OPW) National Flood Hazard Mapping website (www.floodmaps.ie) was performed to obtain information on the flood history in the vicinity of the study area. No flood events were identified within the locality of the proposed works. The Flood Info database (www.floodinfo.ie) was also consulted to identify Predictive Flood Risk Areas (PFRA) mapped as part of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) programme for the study area. No PFRA are located within the proposed works area.

4.4 Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) online[4] database was consulted for available edaphic, geological and hydrological information of the site and its environs.

- The underlying bedrock of the proposed works is a narrow band of Corn Hill Formation which is comprising of shale, greywacke and volcaniclastics.
- The groundwater vulnerability of the site is of moderate groundwater vulnerability. No karst features are located in the vicinity of the proposed works.
- The EPA online database was searched for available information of the groundwater bodies and vulnerability.[5] The study site is located within the Longford Ballinalee Groundwater Body (IE_SH_G_149).
- The WFD ground waterbody risk classifies this groundwater body as not at risk.
- The WFD ground waterbody status 2013-2018 states the water body has a "*Good*" status.
- The site overlays a Poor Aquifer - Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones.

[4] https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aaac3c228
[5] https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/ Accessed: March 2023
https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/Water Accessed: March 2023

5 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Table 5-1 presents Screening Assessment Criteria considering the proposed development.

Table 5-1: Screening Assessment Criteria

Screening Assessment Criteria Screening Questions	Impacts
Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the European Sites.	Two European sites within the proposed works ZoI; Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, have been identified as supporting potential indirect connectivity to the proposed works. However, due to the distance of the sites from the proposed works via a network of watercourses comprising of approximately 30km, this connectivity is tenuous. In addition, the onsite drainage ditches are heavily vegetated and stagnant in flow therefore limiting transfer of pollutants downstream. Therefore, due to the distance and the existing barriers on site in the form of vegetated areas acting as buffers and dense instream vegetation of associated drainage ditches, it is not anticipated for the proposed works to give rise to impacts to European sites. Surface water run-off from the building's hard surfaces will be directed to a storm water soakaway area within the proposed residential site. The wastewater generated during the project operational phase will be treated appropriately, the site will be served by an onsite private wastewater treatment unit and percolation area.
Likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project on the European Sites:	
Size and Scale	The size and scale of the proposed works are small when compared with the surrounding environment. The proposed works area is a total of 1.18 acres.
Land Take	The proposed development will not result in land take of Annex I habitats within a SAC and or SPA. It will not result in land take from a European Site.
Distance from European Sites or Key Features of the Site	There are two European sites within the proposed works ZoI identified as supporting potential indirect connectivity to the proposed works; Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, both located approximately 9.2km south-west of the site. Given the location, distance and tenuous indirect connectivity of the proposed works to the European sites, it is not anticipated that there will be any direct or indirect impacts arising to European sites as a result of the works.
Resource Requirements	The proposed works will require the use of standard construction methods and materials. The use of these materials will not contribute to significant negative effects to European sites due to the location, distance and tenuous indirect connectivity of the proposed works to the European sites. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any direct or indirect impacts arising to European sites within the ZoI as a result of the works.

Screening Assessment Criteria Screening Questions	Impacts
Emissions	Aqueous emissions are the key item to be considered in this assessment and are considered below under construction and operational phases of the proposed development. **Construction phase:** Two European sites within the proposed works ZoI; Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, have been identified as supporting potential indirect connectivity to the proposed works. However, due to the distance of the sites from the proposed works via a network of watercourses comprising of approximately 30km, this connectivity is tenuous. Material excavated onsite will be used to level the site where necessary and the remainder stockpiled towards the north of the site. In addition, the on-site drainage ditch to the south is heavily vegetated and stagnant in flow therefore limiting transfer of pollutants downstream, in conjunction to barriers to flow via grassy areas. **Operational Phase:** Surface water run-off from the building's hard surfaces will be directed to a storm water soakaway area within the proposed residential site. The wastewater generated during the project operational phase will be treated appropriately, the site will be served by an onsite private wastewater treatment unit and percolation area. Given the location, distance and tenuous indirect connectivity of the proposed works to the European sites, it is not anticipated that there will be any direct or indirect impacts arising to European sites as a result of the works.
Excavation Requirements	It is envisioned minimal localised excavations within the proposed footprint will be required during the project's construction phase. Any that may occur will be readily confined to the project footprint; where removal is required from site, materials will be exported to a suitably licensed waste facility. Material excavated onsite will be used to level the site where necessary and the remainder stockpiled towards the north of the site. There will be no significant effects to European Sites as a result of excavations.
Transport Requirements	Transport requirements as part of the proposed development construction will utilise the existing road network. Transport of construction materials will be ad-hoc, intermittent and restricted to working hours during the project's construction phase. Such requirements will be small scale and localised and will not impact European Sites within the project ZoI.
Duration of construction, operation and decommissioning	Duration of construction will be approximately 12months. The project's operational phase will be medium to long term; i.e. > 50 years.
Cumulative impact with other plans and projects in the area	As part of the Appropriate Assessment, in addition to the proposed development, other relevant projects and plans in the area must

Screening Assessment Criteria Screening Questions	Impacts
	also be considered at this stage. These plans and projects are considered further in this respect in **Table 5-2** below.

Table 5-2: In-combination Effects associated with the Proposed Development

Programmes, Plans and Projects	Potential for In-combination Effects
Longford County Development Plan 2021 - 2027	A number of strategies, policies and objectives are set out in the ***Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027*** with the aim of protection of the counties natural heritage and biodiversity. A number of policies and objectives provide for the protection of the integrity of sites designated under European and National legislation and ecological works. Such policies highlight the council's policy to support the protection, conservation and enhancement of natural heritage and biodiversity, including the protection of the integrity of European sites. The adherence and implementation of this plan within the Development Plan area will ensure that European sites are protected, and that Appropriate Assessment is undertaken for all plans, projects or programmes that have the potential for significant effects to European sites.
River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027	The implementation of the RBMP seeks compliance with the environmental objectives set under the plan, which will be documented for each water body. This includes compliance with the European Communities (Surface Waters) Regulations S.I. No. 272 of 2009 (as amended). The implementation of the RBMP and achievement or maintenance of environmental objectives which will be set for the receiving water bodies will have a positive impact on water dependent habitats and species within European sites.
Inland Fisheries Ireland Corporate Plan 2021 - 2025 **The Inland Fisheries Act 2010**	The implementation and compliance with key environmental issues and objectives of this corporate plan will result in positive in-combination effects to European sites. The implementation of this corporate plan will have a positive impact for biodiversity of inland fisheries and ecosystems. It will not contribute to in-combination or cumulative impacts with the proposed development.
Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023–2028	The Heritage Council Strategic Plan 2023–2028 aims to develop and expand the heritage sector in Ireland during the next five years 2023-2028. The mission is too: ▪ Propose local, national and international heritage policy; ▪ Create and develop a research role with national and European reach in order to inform future policy, making the Heritage Council an effective advocate for tangible and intangible heritage; ▪ Promote excellence in relation to the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of our national heritage; ▪ Collaborate effectively and proactively with all partners including in Northern Ireland, the European Union and with the international Irish diaspora; ▪ Support the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage on the implementation of Heritage Ireland 2030; Embed heritage in local and national identity, extending the heritage experience to every citizen, including new citizens and ethnic minorities, and welcoming immigrants and asylum seekers into their new communities.

Programmes, Plans and Projects	Potential for In-combination Effects
Local Planning Applications	Adherence to the policies and objectives of ***Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027*** ensure that local planning applications and subsequent grant of planning comply with the core strategy of proper planning and sustainability and with the requirements of relevant EU Directives and environmental considerations, there is no potential for adverse in-combination effects on European Sites.

5.1 Conclusion of Cumulative Impact Assessment

Provided adherence to the overarching policies and objectives of the plans and programmes and best practice and mitigation measures* are implemented for individual projects, there is no potential for the mentioned plans and projects to have a cumulative impact to European sites, in combination with the proposed development (*this refers to projects which were permitted via full Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment).

Screening Assessment Criteria is further assessed in **Table 5-3** below.

Table 5-3: Screening Assessment Criteria

Screening Assessment Criteria Screening Questions	
Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of the following;	
Reduction of Habitat	The works will not result in a reduction of habitat associated with European Sites within the project Zone of Influence i.e. Annex I habitats designated as qualifying interests.
Disturbance to Key Species	The proposed development will not result in the disturbance of key species associated with European Sites within the project Zone of Influence.
Habitat or Species Fragmentation	The proposed works will not result in habitat or species fragmentation to European Sites within the project Zone of Influence. The works will not result in habitat or species fragmentation with European Sites within the project Zone of Influence i.e. Annex I habitats or Annex II species designated as qualifying interests.
Reduction in Species Diversity	The proposed works will not result in the reduction in species diversity to European Sites within the project Zone of Influence.
Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value	The proposed development works will not contribute to changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value to European sites within the project Zone of Influence as it has been concluded that substantive pathways for transmission of hydrological impacts into do not exist. Therefore, there will no impact to European sites that could influence the key indicators of conservation value of the site.
Climate Change	The proposed works will not result in significant negative effects contributing to climate change that could in turn affect the conservation objectives of those European Sites within the project ZoI.

Screening Assessment Criteria Screening Questions	
Describe any likely impacts on the European sites as a while in terms of Interference with key relationships that define the structure and function of the site;	There will no impact to European sites that could influence the structure and function of the site. Pollution events would need to be large scale and sustained to contribute towards negative effects to downstream European sites during the project's construction phase.
Provide Indicators of Significance as a result of the identification effects set out above in terms of;	
Loss	There will be no direct or indirect loss of habitats or species of European Sites within the project footprint of its ZoI.
Fragmentation	The proposed works do not support qualifying habitats or species of European Sites within the potential project ZoI. Therefore, the proposed development site will not result in fragmentation to European Sites or their associated species and habitats of Qualifying Interest.
Disruption	There will be no direct or indirect disruption of habitats or species of European Sites within the project ZoI. The site does not support habitats or species of European Sites within the potential project ZoI. Therefore, the proposed works will not result in disturbance of disruption to European Sites or their associated species and habitats of Qualifying Interest.
Disturbance	There will be no direct or indirect disturbance of habitats or species of European Sites within the project ZoI. The site does not support habitats or species of European Sites within the potential project ZoI. Therefore, the proposed works will not result in disturbance of disruption to European Sites or their associated species and habitats of Qualifying Interest.
Changes to Key elements of the site	It has been concluded that substantive pathways for transmission of impacts European sites do not exist. Therefore, the proposed development works will not contribute to Changes to Key Elements of European sites within the project's ZoI.
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 are not known.	It has been concluded that substantive pathways for transmission to European sites do not exist. Therefore, there will be no changes to key elements of European Sites and no potential for in-combination effects to arise.

5.2 Screening for AA Conclusion

This screening for AA identifies and assesses potential significant effects which are likely to occur as a result of the proposed construction of a residential dwelling and associated works located at Corneddan, Ballinalee Co. Longford.

The screening identified two European site; Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Ballkenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, located within the zone of influence of the proposed works. Through an assessment of the Source-Pathway-Receptor model, which considered the ZoI of effects from the proposed works and the potential in-combination effects with other plans or projects, the following findings have been reached:

- The application site is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of any European site;
- The proposed development works do not support direct or indirect connectivity with any European site via ecological or environmental vectors;
- Substantive pathways for transmission of impacts into European sites do not exist; and
- The proposed project will not give rise to likely significant effects on the qualifying interests of any European Site, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the European sites concerned.

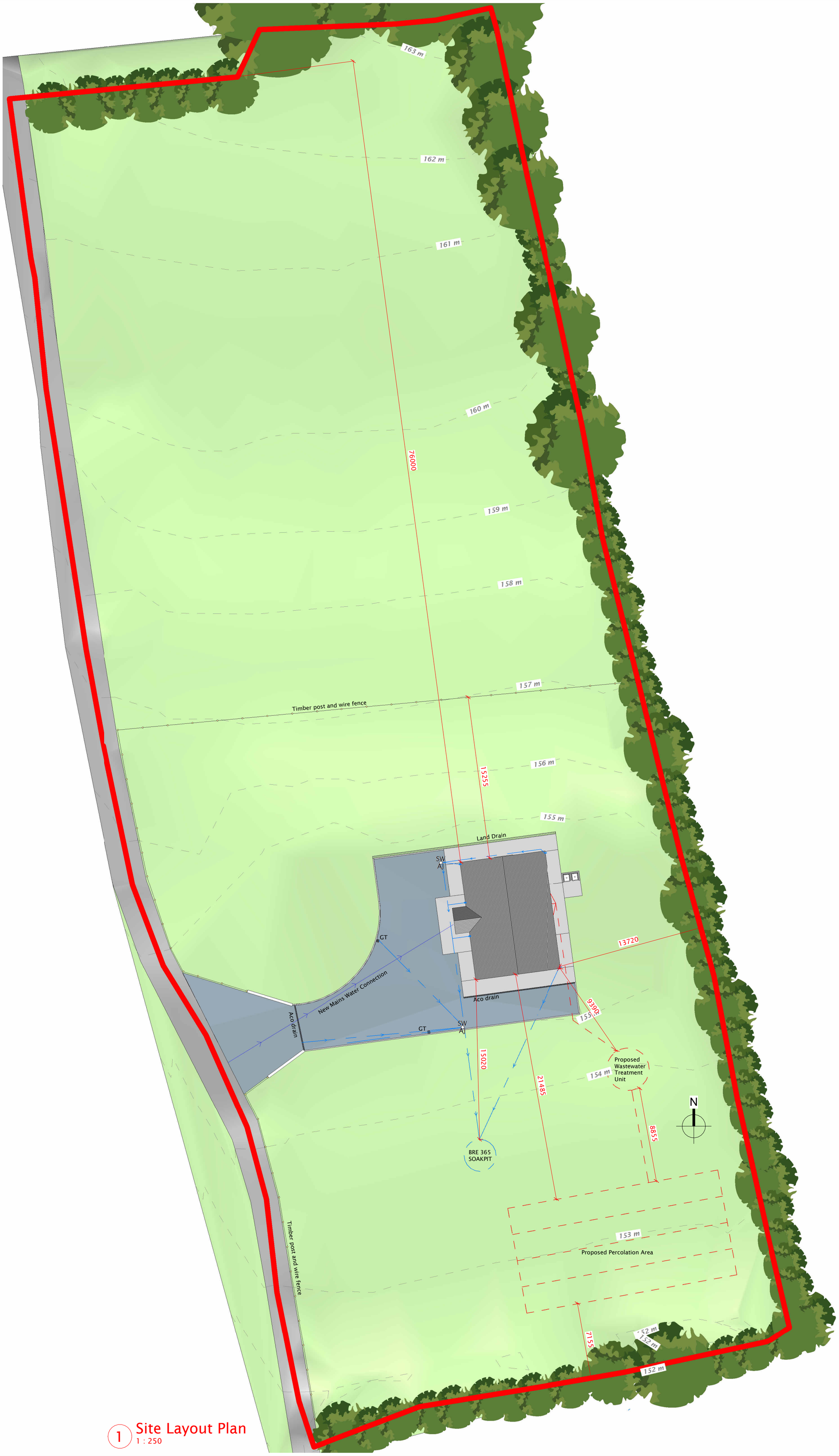
On the basis of objective scientific information, this Screening for Appropriate Assessment finds that the proposed development works, either individually or in combination with other projects and plans, is not likely to have a significant effect on any European site.

Findings of No Significant Effects Matrix			
Name of Plan or Project	The proposed construction of a residential dwelling and associated works located at Corneddan, Ballinalee, Co. Longford.		
Names and locations of relevant Natura 2000 sites	There are two European sites which have been identified within the project's ZoI with potential to support indirect connectivity to the proposed works. Further assessment via the S-P-R model indicated that the connectivity is tenuous due to the nature of the works, distance and barriers to connectivity. As a result, the European sites identified does not support indirect or direct connectivity via hydrological/hydrogeological pathways or other means to the proposed works.		
Description of Plan or Project	The proposed construction of a residential dwelling and associated works located at Corneddan, Ballinalee, Co. Longford.		
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?	No		
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)	No		
The Assessment of Significance of Effects:			
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.	Two European sites within the proposed works ZoI; Lough Forbes Complex SAC and Ballykenny-Fishertown Bog SPA, were identified as supporting potential indirect connectivity to the proposed works. However, due to the distance of the sites from the proposed works via a network of watercourses comprising of approximately 30km, this connectivity is tenuous. In addition, the onsite drainage ditches are heavily vegetated and stagnant in flow therefore limiting transfer of pollutants downstream. Therefore, due to the distance and the existing barriers on site in the form of vegetated areas, there is no connectivity between the proposed works and watercourses. It is not anticipated for the proposed works to give rise to impacts to European sites downstream during the construction phase or operational phase.		
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	There are two European sites which have been identified within the project's ZoI with potential to support indirect connectivity to the proposed works. Further assessment via the S-P-R model indicated that the connectivity is tenuous due to the nature of the works, distance and barriers to connectivity. As a result, the European sites identified does not support indirect or direct connectivity via hydrological/hydrogeological pathways or other means to the proposed works.		
List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address	N/A		
Response to consultation.	N/A		
Data Collected to Carry Out the Assessment:			
Who carried out the assessment?	**Sources of Data**	**Level of Assessment**	**Where can the full results of the completed assessment be accessed and viewed?**

Findings of No Significant Effects Matrix			
Sheila Murphy B.Sc. M.Sc. MCIEEM	1. Site visit conducted on the 7th March 2023. 2. NPWS Site Synopses, Conservation Objectives and backing documents and NATURA 2000 Forms for the relevant Natura 2000 sites 3. Remote sensing images and aerial photographs. 4. Drawings and information of the proposed works as supplied by the client.	Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment	The full results of the completed assessment should be available to be viewed through Longford County Council.

Appendix A – Proposed Works Layout

A2



1 Site Layout Plan
1 : 250

Note:
Use figured dimensions only: do not scale drawings -Read in conjunction with specification and consultant's drawings -Report any discrepancies in drawings to architect and obtain instructions before putting work in hands -Check all dimensions on site.
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No	Date	Description	Issued by	Issued to
00	10.03.2023	Issued for review	RW	LCC
01	19.04.2023	Floor plan flipped and moved on site	RW	LCC

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Longford County Council

AN LONGFORT CONNECTED
Comhairle Chontae An Longfoirt Longford County Council
People. Place. Opportunity

Project: New Dwellin, Longford		Drawn by: RW	Checked by: TC	
Client: Longford County Council	Date: 19.04.2023	Project number: 22,044-07	Scale: 1 : 250	Rev: 01
Sheet: Site Layout	Dwg No: P-00-01			

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