

**Construction of industrial/commercial building
& ancillary common room building at
Knock, Lanesborough , County Longford.**

**This follows on from Part 8 Approval No.70 of
2019 and modifies the previously permitted
development.**

Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement

09th October 2023

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INTRODUCTION

This is an Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement for proposed works at Knock, Lanesborough, Co. Longford. The proposed development will consist of the Construction of industrial/commercial building & ancillary common room building at Knock, Lanesborough, County Longford.

This follows on from Part 8 Approval No.70 of 2019 and modifies the previously permitted development.

The proposed development will consist of:

Construction of single-storey industrial /commercial building of c. 1,100 sq.m to accommodate up to 8 individual or linked food production units.

□ Ancillary single-storey 'common room' building of c. 82 sq.m with canopy structure over outdoor seating area of c. 105 sq.m

□ Associated works including signage, delivery & loading area for commercial vehicles, footpaths & cycleways, car parking, cycle racks, EV charge points, drainage, hard & soft landscaping including community garden with water feature.

Site walkover 25/09/2023.

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1. Natura Sites within the potential impact zone

Two Natura 2000 sites lie within the potential impact zone of the proposed development, Lough Ree SPA and Lough Ree SAC. Both natura sites are C. 1 km from the proposed development site. There is no potential for direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the SAC/SPA. Potential direct impact are identified as water quality. Potential indirect impacts were comprised of water quality, and non-native invasive species impacts. No mitigation is required for the proposed works and therefore a Natura Impact Statement is not required. An Article 6 Appropriate Assessment is required under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), in instances where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon a Natura 2000 site. Natura 2000 sites are those identified as sites of European Community importance designated under the Habitats Directive (1992) and EC Birds Directive (2009/147/EC); transposed into Irish legislation as the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011). The Habitats Directive, in

combination with the Birds Directive (2009), establishes a network of internationally important sites designated for their ecological status; identified as Special Areas of Conservation (hereafter referred to as SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive for the protection of flora, fauna and habitats and as Special Protection Areas (hereafter referred to as SPAs) designated under the Birds Directive to protect rare, vulnerable and migratory birds. These sites together form a Europe-wide 'Natura 2000' network of designated sites, referred to in this report as Natura 2000 sites. The preparation of this NIS follows the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Article 6(3) and the guidance published by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS, 2010) 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities'. The current NIS report was prepared by G. Tobin Environmental Consultant and presented to inform the method statement for the proposed works.

1.1 Consultation

The following statutory bodies provided information via publically available sources for this report:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS);
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI);
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);

1.2 Legislative context

The current assessment takes account of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora - 'The Habitats Directive' which was transposed into Irish law by the 'European Community (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997' (S.I. No. 94/1997). The most recent transposition of this legislation in Ireland is the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011). The Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) which is now included in the former Regulations seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of SPAs whereas the Habitats Directive does the same for habitats and other species groups within SACs, which are designated or proposed as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs). 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 areas throughout the European Community. Article 6, paragraphs 3 and 4 of the EC 'Habitats' Directive (1992) state that: 6(3) 'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the 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.' 6(4) 'If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State 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, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.' In addition, the European Court of Justice in Case C-127/02 (the "Waddenzee Ruling") has made a relevant ruling in relation to Appropriate Assessment and this is reflected in the current assessment: 'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site is to be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on that site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects' and that the plan or project may only be authorised "where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.'

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desktop Review

A desktop study was undertaken to identify the extent and scope of the potentially affected designated Natura 2000 sites within the current study area, in relation to the proposed development at Knock, Lanesborough, Co. Longford.. The desktop study identified the conservation interests of the designated sites with respect to the qualifying interests (species and habitats) relevant to the designated sites within the area. A review of published literature was undertaken in order to collate data on the receiving environment, including aquatic species and habitats of conservation concern in the study area. A range of additional sources of information including scientific reports produced by, and information on the websites of the EPA, NPWS and other agencies were also reviewed. A full bibliography of information sources reviewed is given in the reference section.

2.2 Site Survey

The proposed development site was visited to conduct field surveys. These surveys included habitat surveys, mammal survey (including Otters), aquatic ecology surveys and bird surveys. General protected species surveys were also undertaken to identify any species of ecological importance within the study area. Any evidence of mammal usage was recorded.. Habitat in the area was assessed for the potential to have reptile, amphibian or protected terrestrial invertebrate habitat. The flora and fauna at the site were identified and evaluated for ecological importance.

2.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment Methodology

The preparation of this Screening for Appropriate Assessment follows the guidance published by DoEHLG (2010) 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities'. According to these guidelines, assessing the impacts of a project or plan on a Natura 2000 site is a four staged approach, as described below:

- **Stage One: Screening / Test of Significance** - The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant;
- **Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment** - The consideration of the impact of the project or plan on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts;
- **Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions** - The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site; and
- **Stage Four: Assessment Where Adverse Impacts Remain** - An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed. The safeguards set out in Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive are triggered not by certainty but by the possibility of significant effects. Thus, in line with the precautionary principle, it is unacceptable to fail to undertake an appropriate assessment on the basis that it is not certain that there are significant effects.

2.3.1 Screening for Natura Impact Assessment

A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) considers whether the plan or project, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, and includes any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. The current report is set out in the format of a Screening for Appropriate Assessment and comprises a scientific examination of the plan / project and the relevant Natura 2000 sites; to identify and characterize any possible implications for the site in view of the

site's conservation objectives, structure and function, taking account of in combination effects. The requirements for Appropriate Assessment derive directly from Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (1992). Direct and indirect impacts in isolation or in combination with other plans and projects on the identified Natura 2000 sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives have been examined. Case law of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has established that Appropriate Assessment must be based on best scientific knowledge in the field. These are the qualifying interests i.e. Annex I habitats, Annex I bird species (EU Birds Directive, incorporated into the EU Habitats Directive) and Annex II species hosted by a site and for which that site has been selected. The conservation objectives for Natura sites (SACs and SPAs) are determined under Article 4 of the Habitats Directive and are intended to ensure that the relevant qualifying interests i.e. Annex I habitats, Annex I bird species and Annex II species present within the designated sites are maintained in a favourable condition. The current assessment of the proposal for this commercial/industrial buildings provides a description of the project and the receiving environment. The conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites potentially affected by the proposal are listed and potential impacts outlined with respect to the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. Mitigation measures have been proposed for the protection of the conservation interests and the avoidance of impacts to Natura 2000 sites occurring within the study area.

2.4 Consultation

The following statutory bodies provided information via publically available sources for this report:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS);
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI);
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- National Biodiversity Data Centre online database

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This is a Natura Impact Screening Statement for proposed works at Knock, Lanesborough, Co. Longford. The proposal is for the construction of two no. industrial/commercial units on a greenfield site on the outskirts of the town.

4. RECEIVING ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Habitats on site:

Wet Grassland: Thistle (*Cirsium* spp.), Dock (*Rumex* spp), Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), Clover (*Trifolium* spp) Ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*) Hedge Mustard (*Sisymbrium officinale*), Purple Toadflax (*Linaria purpurea*), Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*) Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Meadow Sweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Rush (*Juncus* spp.), Sedge, (*Carex* spp.) Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Purple Moor Grass (*Molinia* Spp), Scabious (*Succisa* spp), Ladies Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*).

This is a heavily modified habitat and currently is grazed by horses.

Hedgerows (WL1) Willow (*Salix* spp), Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Briar (*Rubus* spp), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Gorse (*Ulex* spp), Alder (*Alnus* spp), Beech Hedge along road boundary (*Fagus sylvatica*)

4.2 Fauna:

Birds: Birds which were all seen, heard (or can be expected to occur);, Pied wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Blue Tit (*Parus caeruleus*), Great Tit (*Parus major*), Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), Greenfinch (*Carduelis chloris*), Magpie (*Pica pica*), Jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*), Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), Woodpigeon

(Columba palumbus), Goldcrest (Regulus regulus), Bullfinch (Pyrrhula pyrrhula), Greenfinch (Carduelis chloris) House Sparrow (Passer domesticus).

Mammals: Fox (Vulpes vulpes), Rabbit (Oryctolagus cuniculus), Field Mouse (Apodemus sylvaticus), Hedgehog (Erinaceus europaeus), Stoat (Mustela erminea), Rat (Rattus norvegicus), Pygmy Shrew (Sorex minutus).

There is no evidence of bat (Chiroptera) roosts or badger (Meles meles) setts.

4.3 Identification of potential negative impacts

During the construction process on site there is no likelihood of particulate loading of local watercourses eventually draining into the SAC/SPA. There is no potential for a decrease in water quality due to pollutants originating at the site.

4.4 Identification of Natura 2000 sites

4.4.1 Special Conservation Area and Special Protection Area

SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Lough Ree SAC Site Code: 000440

Lough Ree is the third largest lake in Ireland and is situated in an ice-deepened depression in Carboniferous limestone on the River Shannon system between Lanesborough and Athlone. The site spans Counties Longford, Roscommon and Westmeath. Some of its features (including the islands) are based on glacial drift. It has a very long, indented shoreline and hence has many sheltered bays. Although the main habitat, by area, is the lake itself, interesting shoreline, terrestrial and semi-aquatic habitats also occur. The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes): [3150] Natural Eutrophic Lakes [6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland* [7110] Active Raised Bog* [7120]

Degraded Raised Bog [7230] Alkaline Fens [8240] Limestone Pavement* [91D0] Bog Woodland* [91E0] Alluvial Forests* [1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*) The greater part of Lough Ree is less than 10 m in depth, but there are six deep troughs running from north to south, reaching a maximum depth of about 36 m just west of Inchmore. The lake has been classified as mesotrophic in quality, but the size of the system means that a range of conditions prevail depending upon, for example, rock type. This gives rise to local variations in nutrient status and pH, which in turn results in variations in the phytoplankton and macrophyte flora. Therefore species indicative of oligotrophic, mesotrophic, eutrophic and base-rich situations occur. The water of Lough Ree tends to be strongly peat-stained, restricting macrophytes to depths of less than 2 m, and as a consequence, macrophytes are restricted to sheltered bays, where a typical Shannon flora occurs. Species present include Intermediate Bladderwort (*Utricularia intermedia*), pondweeds (*Potamogeton* spp.), Quillwort (*Isoetes lacustris*), Greater Duckweed (*Spirodela polyrhiza*), stoneworts (*Chara* spp., including *C. pedunculata*) and Arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*). The latter is a scarce species which is almost confined in its occurrence to the Shannon Basin. Version date: 23.08.2019 2 of 5

000440_rev19.docx Reedbeds of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) are an extensive habitat in a number of more sheltered places around the lake, but single-species 'swamps' consisting of such species as Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), Slender Sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*), Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) and two scarce species of sedge (*Carex appropinquata* and *C. elata*) also occur in suitable places. Some of these grade up into species-rich alkaline fen with Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) and Whorlgrass (*Catabrosa aquatica*), or freshwater marsh with abundant Water Dock (*Rumex hydrolapathum*) and Hemp-agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*).

Lowland wet grassland is found in abundance around the shore and occurs in two types. One is 'callowland', grassland which floods in winter. This provides feeding for winter waterfowl and breeding waders. The other is an unusual community on stony wet lake shore which is found in many places around the lake, and is characterized by Water Germander (*Teucrium scordium*), a scarce plant species almost confined to this lake and Lough Derg. Dry

calcareous grassland occurs scattered around the lake shore. This supports typical species such as Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*), Carline Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*) and Quaking-grass (*Briza media*). Orchids also feature in this habitat e.g. Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). Limestone pavement occurs occasionally around the lake shore. The most substantial area is at Rathcline in the extreme north-east. While this has been planted with commercial forestry since the 1950s, it still displays a diverse representation of pavement types, from the typical clint-gryke system to large blocky pavements and scattered boulders. In all cases the pavement is covered by a bryophyte-rich flora, with abundant Ivy (*Hedera helix*), and a scrub layer dominated by Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and some Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*). The ground flora is variable, though in places it is species-rich. Dry broadleaved semi-natural woodland occurs in several places around the lake, most notably at St John's Wood and on Hare Island. St John's Wood is recognised as the largest and most natural woodland in the Midlands. Its canopy is dominated by Hazel, Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Ash, but a range of other trees and shrubs occur, including Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*), Yew (*Taxus baccata*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) and Irish Whitebeam (*Sorbus hibernica*). The ground flora of St John's Wood is species-rich, and is remarkable for the presence of two species, Toothwort (*Lathraea squamaria*) and Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*), which tend to occur in sites with a long history of uninterrupted woodland cover. The tree species composition on Hare Island is similar to that in St John's Wood, with additional non-native species such as Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). This wood also has an exceptionally rich ground flora. Some of the smaller areas of woodland around Lough Ree are mixed woodland with a high percentage of exotics such as Beech. Some areas of well-developed Hazel scrub also occur. Version date: 23.08.2019 3 of 5 000440_rev19.docx At St John's Wood, patches of wet alluvial woodland are present along the lakeshore. They are dominated by Ash, Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and, in places, Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*). The ground flora includes Creeping Bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica*

sylvestris), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Common Marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and Wood Dock (*Rumex sanguineus*). Pockets of wet woodland occur elsewhere around the lake. Most of these are dominated by willows (*Salix* spp.), Alder and Downy Birch. In one such wood, at Ross Lough, the terrestrial alga, *Trentopohlia* sp., has a specialised niche on the willow trunks. The ground layer has a rich bryophyte flora (*Calliergon* spp. and *Sphagnum* spp.), scattered clumps of Greater Tussock-sedge (*Carex paniculata*) and a good diversity of herb species, including Water Dock and Fen Bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*). Small examples of raised bog occur, which are of interest in that they show a natural transition through wet woodland and/or swamp to lakeshore habitats. Active Raised Bog (ARB) habitat comprises areas of high bog that are wet and actively peat-forming, where the percentage cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) is high, and where some or all of the following features occur: hummocks, pools, wet flats, *Sphagnum* lawns, flushes and soaks. Results from surveys of the raised bog habitat in 2003 indicate the presence of 5.9 ha of Active Raised Bog (ARB). Also present are examples of Degraded Raised Bog (DRB) capable of regeneration. In general the vegetation of these degraded areas is dominated by typical raised bog species such as Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*). Typically the degraded bog areas have a low cover of peat-forming bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.). The current extent of DRB as estimated using a recently developed hydrological modelling technique, based largely on Light Detection And Ranging (LiDAR) data, is 44.7 ha. Associated with the extensive raised bog system at Clooncraft/Clonlarge are areas of bog woodland. At least two small areas of woodland occur on the raised bog domes. However it would appear that this habitat is in the early stages of development. The largest area is dominated by low trees of Downy Birch and Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*). Occasional trees of Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) also occur. The ground layer is wet and

quaking with a lush carpet of mosses present, including various species of Sphagnum, Pleurozium schreberi and Aulacomium palustre. The main vascular plant species in the ground flora are Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*), Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), Bog-myrtle (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass and Deergrass. Bog Woodland is of particular conservation importance and is listed with priority status on the E.U. Habitats Directive. At St John's Wood, there is an interesting area of woodland that grows on cut-away peat. This is dominated by Downy Birch and Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*). The occurrence of the latter species in such abundance is unusual in Ireland. Version date: 23.08.2019 4 of 5

000440_rev19.docx Smaller lakes occur around the lake shore, especially on the east side, and these often have the full range of wetland habitats contained within and around them. A number of small rivers also pass through the site. The site supports a number of rare plant species which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book. Alder Buckthorn and Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) are woodland components at St John's Wood and elsewhere. Narrow-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) and Betony (*Stachys officinalis*), both of which are also legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, occur among the ground flora of Hare Island (where the former occurs in notable abundance). They also occur in a number of other woods. The stonewort *Chara tomentosa* is present in shallow water around the lake. The rare, though not legally protected, Marsh Pea (*Lathyrus palustris*) occurs on some of the callowland and in alluvial woodland at St John's Wood. The rare Myxomycete fungus, *Echinostelium colliculosum*, has been recorded from St John's Wood. The lake itself contains one of only two populations in Ireland of the endangered fish species, Pollan (*Coregonus autumnalis*), which is genetically different from Continental European stock. The shrimp *Mysis relicta* (Class Crustacea) occurs in this lake and is a relict of the glacial period in Ireland. Small flocks of Greenland White-fronted Goose, an Annex I species on the E.U. Birds Directive, use several areas of callowland around the lake in winter. An average spring count of 92 individuals was obtained for this species over the six seasons 1988/89 to 1993/94, indicating that Lough Ree is a nationally important site for the species. The following bird counts are derived

from 6 counts during the period 1984/85 to 1986/87: nationally important populations of Golden Plover (1,350), an Annex I species; Wigeon (1,306); Teal (584); Tufted Duck (1,317) and Coot (798). Other winter visitors are Whooper Swan (32), an Annex I species, Mute Swan (91), Little Grebe (48), Cormorant (91), Mallard (362), Shoveler (40), Pochard (179), Goldeneye (97), Curlew (178), Lapwing (1,751) and Dunlin (48). The callowland is also used by Black-tailed Godwit and other species on migration. Some of the lake islands provide nesting sites for Common Tern, a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The Lough Ree colony, 86 pairs in 1995, is estimated as one of the largest of this species on midland lakes. The lake also provides excellent breeding habitat for wildfowl, including Common Scoter (30-40 pairs), a rare breeding species listed as "Endangered" in the Red Data Book, and Tufted Duck (>200 pairs). The woodlands and scrub around the lake and on the islands are a stronghold of the Garden Warbler (74 territories in 1997), a bird species mainly confined to the Shannon lakes in Ireland. There is a population of Otter around the lake. This species is listed in the Red Data Book as being threatened in Europe and is protected under Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Version date: 23.08.2019 5 of 5 000440_rev19.docx

Land uses within the site include recreation in the form of cruiser hire, angling, camping, picnicking and shooting. Chalet accommodation occurs at a few locations around the lake. Low-intensity grazing occurs on dry and wet grassland around the shore, and some hay is made within the site. Some of these activities are damaging, but in a very localised way, and require careful planning. The main threat to the aquatic life in the lake comes from artificial enrichment of the waters by agricultural and domestic waste, and also by peat silt in suspension which is increasingly limiting the light penetration, and thus restricting aquatic flora to shallower waters. At present Lough Ree is less affected by eutrophication than Lough Derg. Lough Ree and its adjacent habitats are of major ecological significance. Some of the woodlands around the lake are of excellent. St John's Wood is particularly important; it is one of the very few remaining ancient woodlands in Ireland. The lake itself is an excellent example of a mesotrophic to moderate-eutrophic system, supporting a rare fish species and a good diversity of breeding and wintering birds.

SITE NAME: LOUGH REE SPA SITE CODE: 004064

Situated on the River Shannon between Lanesborough and Athlone, Lough Ree is the third largest lake in the Republic of Ireland. It lies in an ice-deepened depression in Carboniferous Limestone. Some of its features (including the islands) are based on glacial drift. The main inflowing rivers are the Shannon, Inny and Hind, and the main outflowing river is the Shannon. The greater part of Lough Ree is less than 10 m in depth, but there are six deep troughs running from north to south, reaching a maximum depth of about 36 m just west of Inchmore. The lake has a very long, indented shoreline and hence has many sheltered bays. It also has a good scattering of islands, most of which are included in the site. Beds of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) are an extensive habitat in a number of the more sheltered places around the lake; monodominant stands of Common Clubrush (*Scirpus lacustris*), Slender Sedge (*Carex lasiocarpa*) and Saw Sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) also occur as swamps in suitable places. Some of these grade into speciesrich calcareous fen or freshwater marsh. Lowland wet grassland, some of which floods in winter, occurs frequently around the shore. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Whooper Swan, Wigeon, Teal, Mallard, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, Goldeneye, Little Grebe, Coot, Golden Plover, Lapwing and Common Tern. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds. Lough Ree is one of the most important Midland sites for wintering waterfowl, with nationally important populations of Little Grebe (52), Whooper Swan (139), Wigeon (2,070), Teal (1,474), Mallard (1,087), Shoveler (54), Tufted Duck (1,012), Goldeneye (205), Coot (338), Golden Plover (3,058) and Lapwing (5,793) – all figures are three year mean peaks for the period 1997/98 to 1999/2000. Other species which occur in winter include Great Crested Grebe (29), Cormorant (99), Curlew (254) and Black-headed Gull (307) as well as the resident Mute Swan (85). Greenland White-fronted Goose has been recorded on occasion on the flooded margins of the

site. The site supports a nationally important population of Common Tern (90 pairs in 1995). It is a traditional breeding site for Black-headed Gull and whilst a full survey has not been carried out in recent years, substantial numbers of nesting birds were present on at least one island in 2003. Lesser Black-backed Gull and Common Gull have bred in the past and may still breed. Lough Ree is a noted site for breeding duck and grebes: Tufted Duck (202 pairs) and Great Crested Grebe (32 pairs) – records from 1995. Of particular note is that Lough Ree is one of the two main sites in the country for breeding Common Scoter, a Red Data Book species. Surveys have recorded 39 pairs and 32 pairs in 1995 and 1999 respectively. Cormorant also breeds on some of the islands within the site – 86 nests were recorded in 2010. The woodland around the lake is a stronghold for Garden Warbler and this scarce species probably occurs on some of the islands within the site. Lough Ree SPA is of high ornithological importance for both wintering and breeding birds. It supports nationally important populations of eleven wintering waterfowl species. The site has a range of breeding waterfowl species, notably nationally important populations of Common Scoter and Common Tern. Of particular note is the regular presence of three species, Whooper Swan, Golden Plover and Common Tern, which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Parts of Lough Ree SPA are Wildfowl Sanctuaries

4.4.2 Conservation objectives

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area 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.

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, 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 it's population on a long-term basis.

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

The targets given in these conservation objectives are based on best available information at the time of writing. As more information becomes available, targets for attributes may change. These will be updated periodically, as necessary. An appropriate assessment based on these conservation objectives will remain valid even if the targets are subsequently updated, providing they were the most recent objectives available when the assessment was carried out. It is essential that the date and version are included when objectives are cited. Assessments cannot consider an attribute in isolation from the others listed for that habitat or species, or for other habitats and species listed for that site. A plan or project with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another. This should be borne in mind when appropriate assessments are being carried out. When using these objectives, it is essential that the relevant backing/supporting documents are consulted, particularly where instructed in the targets or notes for a particular attribute:

Qualifying Interests * indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive

The Natura 2000 Site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[3150] Natural Eutrophic Lakes Not present on site or in the vicinity

[6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland* Not present on site or in the vicinity

[7110] Active Raised Bog* Not present on site or in the vicinity

[7120] Degraded Raised Bog Not present on site or in the vicinity

[7230] Alkaline Fens Not present on site or in the vicinity

[8240] Limestone Pavement* Not present on site or in the vicinity

[91D0] Bog Woodland* Not present on site or in the vicinity

[91E0] Alluvial Forests* Not present on site or in the vicinity

[1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*) Not present on site or in the vicinity

Source NPWS accessed 11/10/20

The Natura 2000 Site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

Qualifying Interests

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) [A004] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) [A038] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) [A053] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [A061] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*) [A065] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) [A067] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Coot (*Fulica atra*) [A125] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193] Not present on site or in the vicinity

Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] Not present on site or in the vicinity.

5. Actions during construction phase:

Adherence to best practice guidelines will obviate the need for mitigation measures. Runoff will be separated and managed to remove any potential negative impacts on watercourses. Surface water runoff will be collected and treated under SUDS measures such as infiltration drainage.

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Any drains or culverts will operate in such a way that water flow will be attenuated into the adjoining soils.

Construction work will not take place during periods of heavy rain.

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All foul water will be treated on site and away from the riparian area.

With the implementation of these measures at the design stage of the proposed construction of industrial/commercial units at Knock, Lanesborough, Co. Longford all potential negative impacts on nearby SAC`s and SPA`s can be prevented.

The current proposal will have no impact in combination with other plans or projects as it is of such a scale and close to an already serviced area.

6. Best Practice Guidelines

Best practice procedure and guidelines and mitigation measures for the protection of the riparian and aquatic environment have been prepared for the protection of the conservation interests of the identified Natura 2000 sites. The proposed development works have been identified as having no potential to cause direct water quality impacts and indirect water quality impacts. The best practice methods included should have due regard to the relevant sections of the following guidelines:

- IFI, (2010) 'Biosecurity Protocol for Field Survey Work'
- IFI, (2016) 'Guidelines of protection of Fisheries during construction works in and adjacent to waters'
- NRA, (2010) 'The Management of Noxious Weeds and Non-Native Invasive Plant Species on National Roads'
- NRA, (2008) 'Guidelines for the Crossing of Watercourses during the Construction of National Road Schemes'
- CIRIA (2006) 'Control of Water Pollution from Linear Construction Projects- Site Guide (C649)'
- CIRIA (2005) 'Environmental Good Practice – Site Guide (C650)'

6.1 Avoidance

. Works will not be undertaken during dark hours to avoid potential disturbance on mammals foraging in the area, with works permitted from 8am to 5pm. The footprint of the works will be limited and works areas will be surrounded by silt fences and sand bags.. Any required tree/hedgerow removal will not be undertaken during the bird nesting season, which runs from 1st of March to the 31st of August.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Favourable conservation status is defined for Annex I habitats and Annex II species in the Habitat Directive (1992): Article 1 (e) Conservation status of a natural habitat means the sum of the influences acting on a natural habitat and its typical species that may affect its long-term natural distribution, structure and functions as well as the long-term survival of its typical species within the territory referred to in Article 2. The conservative status of a natural habitat will be taken as 'favourable' 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. Article 1 (i) 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 within the territory referred to in Article 2; The conservation status will be taken as 'favourable' 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 Conservation Objectives for the Natura 2000 sites have been prepared by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (NPWS,). The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and SACs and SPAs are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network. European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites. Site-specific conservation objectives aim to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site. The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable

conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level. Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when: • its natural range, and area 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: 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, 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 population on a long-term basis.

In the document outlining the conservation objectives for the natura 2000 sites identified (NPWS,), each conservation interest is discussed separately as a conservation objective. Attributes and targets given in these conservation objectives were based on best available information at the time of writing. The proposed development works at Lanesborough have been identified as having no potential for water quality impacts due to the works on the proposed site.

The proposed works will not affect the conservation objectives of these sites or have an adverse effect on the requirements to meet the conservation objectives with regard to the restoration of Annex I habitats and Annex II species to favourable conservation status. Water quality is identified as a key sensitivity of the water-dependent qualifying interests of the SAC/SPA sites.

. The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EC (2000) defines 'integrity' as the: 'coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, or the habitats, complex of habitats and/or population of species for which the site is or will be classified'. The proposed works are limited in scale and will comply with the required best practice guidelines to ensure that there will be no further impacts arising which would affect the coherence of the SAC/SPA`s

ecological structure and function; particularly with regard to the Annex II populations recorded from within the study area. The proposed works are not identified as having the potential to adversely affect the conservation objectives of the identified Natura 2000 sites or with the integrity of the site affected.

8. CONCLUSION STATEMENT

The current AA Screening has been undertaken to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed development with regard to the effects upon the conservation objectives and qualifying interests (including habitats and species) of the identified Natura 2000 sites. The proposed development is at Knock, Lanesborough, Co. Longford.. This statement details how the procedures will adhere to best practice guidelines (timing of works, biosecurity protocols and water quality protection measures). The statement includes details of the, site layout and other pollution prevention precautions.

Works will also not take place after dark when there is potential to disturb mammals foraging activity.

Annex II species in the affected area, including the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EC (2000) defines 'integrity' as the 'coherence of the site's ecological structure and function, across its whole area, or the habitats, complex of habitats and / or population of species for which the site is or will be classified'

. From the evidence presented in the current assessment, it is concluded that the proposed development will not give rise to significant adverse impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

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