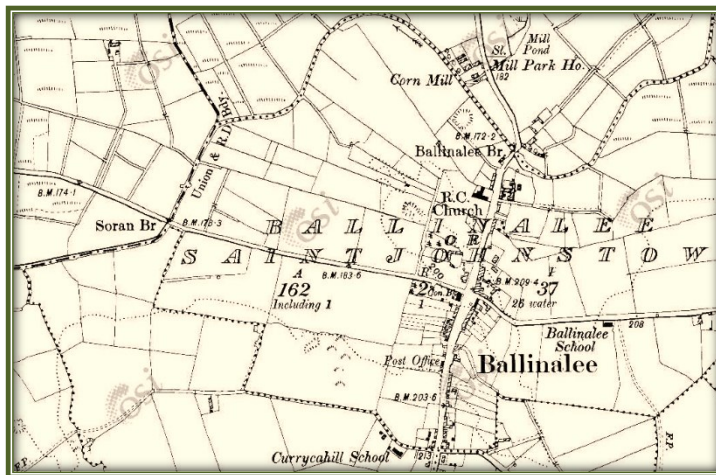


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HABITATS DIRECTIVE SCREENING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW COMMUNITY PARK AND CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND IN BALLINALEE, CO. LONGFORD



*Longford County Council
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Great Water Street
Longford*

November 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
1.1	Background.....	3
1.2	Regulatory Context.....	3
2	METHODOLOGY	7
2.1	Statement of Competency.....	9
2.2	Field Based Studies.....	9
2.3	Desk Studies & Consultation.....	9
2.4	Assessment Methodology.....	9
3	SCREENING	11
3.1	Development Description.....	11
3.2	Site Location and Surrounding Environment.....	12
3.3	Natura 2000 Sites Identified.....	15
4	IMPACT ASSESSMENT	18
4.1	Finding of No Significant Effects.....	21
5	APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION	22
APPENDIX I:	PHOTOGRAPHS	23

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Article 6 of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) requires that all plans and projects be screened for potential impacts upon Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The aim of this screening process is to establish whether or not a full Appropriate Assessment of the proposed plan or project is necessary.

A comprehensive assessment of the potential significant effects of a proposed development on European designated sites was carried out in November 2023 by Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM of Whitehill Environmental. This assessment will allow the Competent Authority, i.e., Longford County Council, to undertake an Appropriate Assessment determination, as required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

The location of the proposed works are within 15km of sites designated under European Law. As such and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) regarding Appropriate Assessment, this screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment was carried out in order to identify whether any significant impacts on designated sites are likely. This exercise will also determine the appropriateness of the proposed project, in the context of the conservation status of the designated sites.

1.2 REGULATORY CONTEXT

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) recognises that certain species of birds should be subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitats. The Directive requires that Member States take measures to classify the most suitable areas as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex 1 of the Directive. SPAs are selected for bird species (listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive), that are regularly occurring populations of migratory bird species and the SPA areas are of international importance for these migratory birds.

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires that Member States designate and ensure that particular protection is given to sites (Special Areas of Conservation) which are made up of or support particular habitats and species listed in annexes to this Directive.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive also call for the undertaking of an Appropriate Assessment for plans and projects not directly connected with or necessary to the

management of, but which are likely to have a significant effect on any European designated sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs).

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC), which came into force in December 2000, establishes a framework for community action in the field of water policy. The WFD was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 722 of 2003). The WFD rationalises and updates existing legislation and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBDs). RBDs are essentially administrative areas for coordinated water management and are comprised of multiple river basins (or catchments), with cross-border basins (i.e. those covering the territory of more than one Member State) assigned to an international RBD. The aim of the WFD is to ensure that waters achieve at least good status by 2027 and that status does not deteriorate in any waters.

Appropriate Assessment and the Habitats Directive

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora – the ‘Habitats Directive’ - provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of European Community interest, at a favourable conservation status. Articles 3 - 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 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision-making tests for plans or projects affecting *Natura 2000* sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

“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.”

Article 6(4) deals with the steps that should be taken when it is determined, as a result of appropriate assessment, that a plan/project will adversely affect a European site. Issues dealing with alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures need to be addressed in this case.

Article 6(4) states:

"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 States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, 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."

The Appropriate Assessment Process

The aim of Appropriate Assessment is to assess the implications of a proposal in respect of a designated site's conservation objectives.

The 'Appropriate Assessment' itself is an assessment which must be carried out by the competent authority which confirms whether the plan or project in combination with other plans and projects will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European site.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment shall be carried out by the competent authority as set out in Section 177U(1) and (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as follows:

(1) A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.

(2) A competent authority shall carry out a screening for appropriate assessment under subsection (1) before—

(a) a Land use plan is made including, where appropriate, before a decision on appeal in relation to a draft strategic development zone is made, or

(b) consent for a proposed development is given.'

The competent authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment is not required if it can be excluded, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or project will have a significant effect on a European site.

Where the competent authority cannot exclude the potential for a significant effect on a European site, an Appropriate Assessment shall be deemed required.

Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Report (Natura Impact Statement (NIS)) should enable the competent authority to ascertain whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of the European site. If adverse impacts on the integrity of a European site cannot be avoided, then mitigation measures should be applied during the appropriate assessment process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site remain. Under the terms of the Habitats Directive consent can only be granted for a project if, as a result of the appropriate assessment either (a) it is concluded that the integrity of any European sites will not be adversely affected, or (b) after mitigation, where adverse impacts cannot be excluded, there is shown to be an absence of alternative solutions, and there exists imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project should go ahead.

Section 177(V) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) outlines that the competent authority shall carry out the Appropriate Assessment, taking into account the Natura Impact Statement (amongst any other additional or supplemental information). A determination shall then be made by the competent authority in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site, prior to consent being given.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

This Statement of Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) has been prepared with reference to the following:

- European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2021). 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.
- European Commission (2006). Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice.
- European Commission (2007). Clarification of the Concepts of: Alternative Solution, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.

The EC Guidance sets out a number of principles as to how to approach decision making during the process. The primary one is 'the precautionary principle' which requires that the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 should prevail where there is uncertainty.

When considering the precautionary principle, the emphasis for assessment should be on objectively demonstrating with supporting evidence that:

- There will be no significant effects on a Natura 2000 site;
- There will be no adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site;
- There is an absence of alternatives to the project or plan that is likely to have an adverse effect to the integrity of a Natura 2000 site; and
- There are compensation measures that maintain or enhance the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

This translates into a four stage process to assess the impacts, on a designated site or species, of a policy or proposal.

The EC Guidance states that "each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required". Consequently, the Council may not need to proceed through all four stages in undertaking the Appropriate Assessment.

The four-stage process is:

Stage 1: Screening – 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 or not these impacts are likely to be significant;

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment – The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, 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 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions – The process which examines alternative ways of achieving objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site;

Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain – An assessment of the 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.

In complying with the obligations set out in Articles 6(3) and following the guidelines described above, this screening statement has been structured as a stage by stage approach as follows:

- Description of the proposed project;
- Identification of the Natura 2000 sites close to the proposed development;
- Identification and description of any individual and cumulative impacts on the Natura 2000 sites likely to result from the project;
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above on site integrity. Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

2.1 STATEMENT OF COMPETENCY

This AA Screening report was carried out by Noreen McLoughlin, BA, MSc, MCIEEM. Noreen has an honours degree in Zoology and an MSc in Freshwater Ecology from Trinity College, Dublin and she has been a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management for over seventeen years. Noreen has over 19 years' experience as a professional ecologist in Ireland.

2.2 FIELD BASED STUDIES

A visit to the site of the proposed works was undertaken on November 1st 2023, when the habitats within the site were noted and recorded in accordance with Fossit (2000).

2.3 DESK STUDIES & CONSULTATION

Information on the site and the area of the proposed development was studied prior to the completion of this statement. The following data sources were accessed in order to complete a thorough examination of potential impacts:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service - Aerial photographs and maps of designated sites, information on habitats and species within these sites and information on protected plant or animal species, conservation objectives, site synopses and standard data forms for relevant designated sites.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- Information pertaining to water quality, geology and licensed facilities within the area;
- Myplan.ie – Mapped based information;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) – Information pertaining to protected plant and animal species within the study area;
- Bing maps & Google Street View – High quality aerials and street images;
- Longford County Council – Plans and Information Pertaining to the Development. Information on planning history in the area for the assessment of cumulative impacts.

2.4 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The proposed development was assessed to identify its potential ecological impacts and from this, the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the proposed development was defined. Based on the potential impacts and their Zoi, the Natura 2000 sites potentially at risk from direct, indirect or in-combination impacts were identified. The assessment considered all potential impact sources and pathways connecting the proposed development to Natura 2000 sites, in view of the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the site's Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special Conservation Interests (SCIs).

The conservation objectives relating to each Natura 2000 site and its QIs/SCIs are cited generally for SACs as “to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected”, and for SPAs “to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA”.

As defined in the Habitat’s Directive, the favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range and area it covers within that range is stable or increasing;
- 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;

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- The 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;
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Where site-specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) have been prepared for a European site, these include a series of specific attributes and targets against which effects on conservation condition, or integrity, can be measured. Where potential significant effects are identified, then these SSCO should be considered in detail.

3 SCREENING

3.1 DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Longford County Council have indicated their intention to undertake a new community development in Ballinalee, Co. Longford. The proposed works will consist of the construction of a new Community Park and Children’s Playground Facility to include a 2.0m wide path approximately 250m long within the site space along with the upgrading of existing pathways. Works will also include new biodiversity planting and all ancillary site services and works in the townland of Ballinalee or Saint Johnstown. These works are adjacent to the existing Ballinalee playground and sensory garden and they will be funded under the Outdoor Recreation Scheme. An outline of the proposed works is shown below in Figure 1.

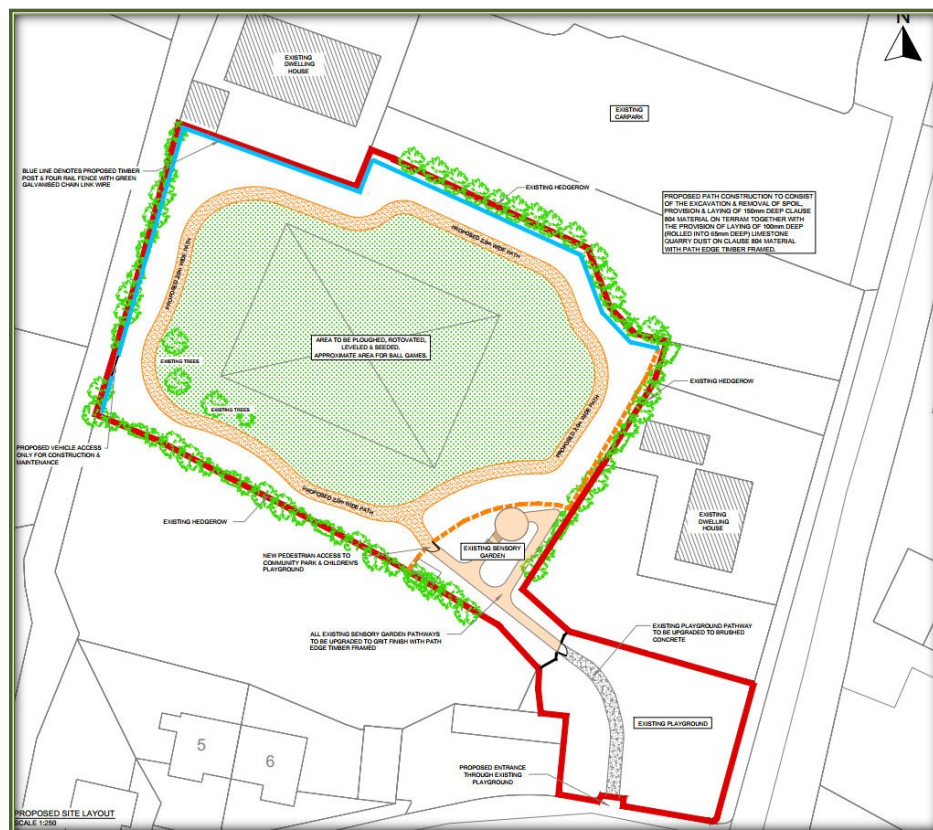


Figure 1 – Proposed Site Plan prepared by Longford County Councils

3.2 SITE LOCATION AND SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

The application site is 0.5ha in area, and it is situated in Ballinalee village, just to the north of the R194 and L1056 village intersection. The site will be accessed via an existing pedestrian pathway and this is located just off a local, third-class road (L1056). The site is bounded to the east by the L1056 and a residential site, to the north by the Holy Trinity Church and carpark, to the west by a small woodland and to the south by the Camlin View residential area.

The land use surrounding the site is mixed. The low density urban lands of Ballinalee village largely surround the site. The dominant habitats associated with these areas include buildings and artificial surfaces and amenity grasslands and gardens. Beyond these areas and in the rural lands outside of the village, agriculture is the dominant land use. The main habitats associated with this use is improved / semi-improved agricultural grasslands. Other habitats represented locally include wet grasslands, coniferous forestry, mixed woodlands and scrub, along with hedgerows, treelines and watercourses, including the River Camlin main channel which is 154m north of the application site. The location of the site is shown in Figures 2 and 3, whilst an aerial photo of the site and its surrounding habitats is shown in Figure 4.

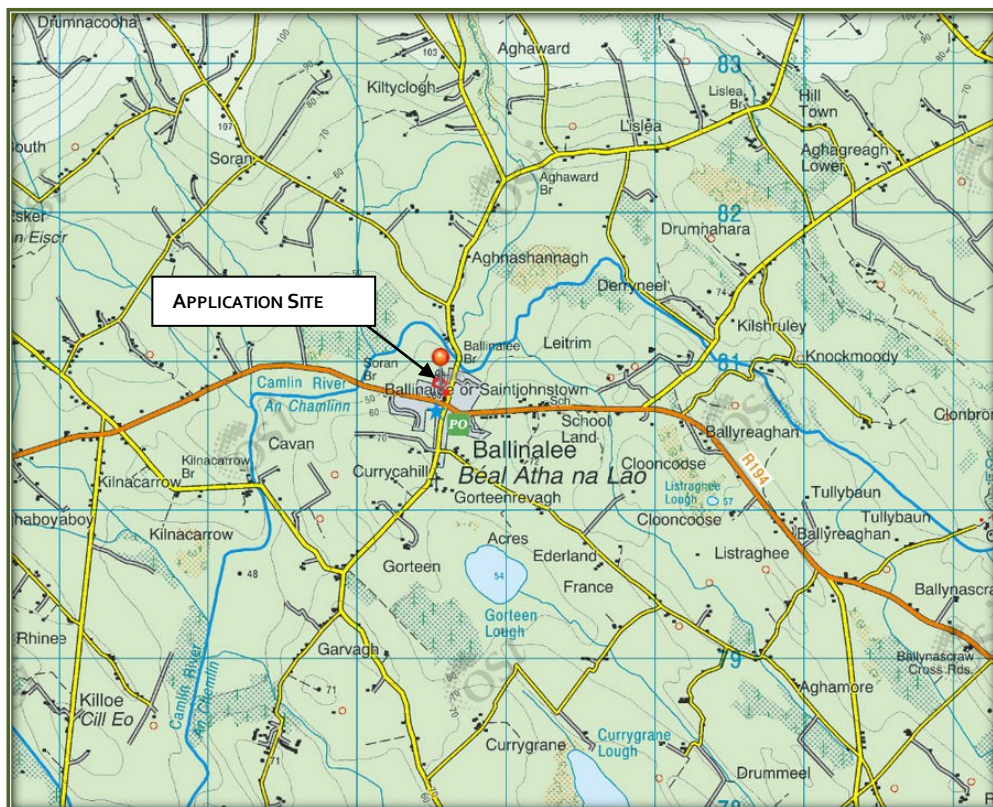


Figure 2 – Site Location Map (Sites Pinned)

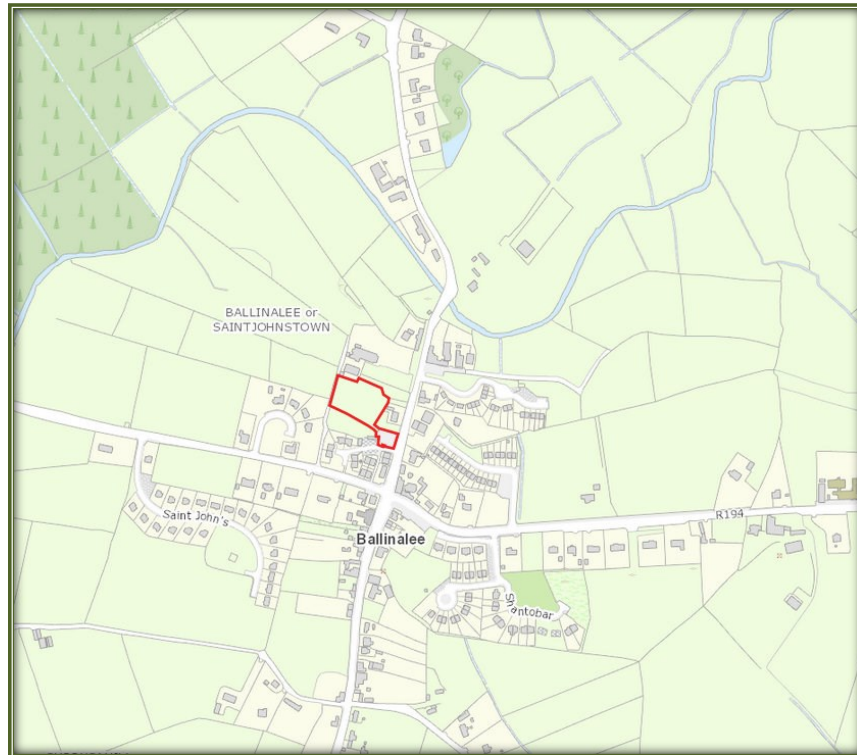


Figure 3 – Site Location Map. Work Site Outlined in Red.

HABITATS WITHIN THE SITE

The habitats within the application site were noted during the site visit on November 1st. No part of the proposed work site lies within or immediately adjacent to any area that has been designated for nature conservation purposes. The proposed works will be undertaken in an area that currently encompasses an existing playground and a sensory garden. The additional works will be undertaken on an adjacent small field where the dominant habitat is unmanaged grassland that is akin to the Fossit habitat Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2).. The site is largely surrounded by mature trees and hedgerows.

An aerial photograph of the location of the proposed works is shown in Figure 4 whilst photos of the application site area included in Appendix I. .



Figure 4 – Aerial Photograph of the Work Locations (Outlined in Red) and its Surrounding Habitats © Google

WATER FEATURES AND QUALITY

The application site is within the Upper Shannon Hydrometric Area (26) and Catchment (26c), the Camlin Sub-Catchment (010) and the Camlin Sub-Basin (030). There are no watercourses within the application site itself. The River Camlin is 154m north of the site boundary.

The River Camlin rises in lands to the south of Granard. It flows in a south-westerly direction, through Ballinalee and Longford town and on towards its confluence with the River Shannon near Clondra, approximately 23km downstream of Ballinalee.

The EPA have classified the ecological status of the River Camlin and its tributaries as good ecological status at points upstream and downstream of Ballinalee. Under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, this is satisfactory and good status must be maintained here within the current WFD cycle (by 2027).

3.3 NATURA 2000 SITES IDENTIFIED

In accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, a list of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development have been identified and described according to their site synopsis, qualifying interests and conservation objectives. In addition, any other sites further than this, but potentially within its zone of interest were also considered. The zone of impact may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas by virtue of hydrological connectivity, atmospheric emissions, flight paths, ecological corridors etc.

For significant effects to arise, there must be a potential impact facilitated by having a source, i.e., the proposed development and activities arising out of its construction or operation, a receptor, i.e., the European site and its qualifying interests and a subsequent pathway or connectivity between the source and receptor, e.g., a water course. The likelihood for significant effects on the European site will largely depend on the characteristics of the source (e.g., nature and scale of the construction works), the characteristics of the existing pathway and the characteristics of the receptor, e.g., the sensitivities of the Qualifying Interests (habitats or species) to changes in water quality.

There are seven Natura 2000 designated sites within 15km of the application site. These designated areas and their closest points to the proposed development site are summarised in Table 1 and a map and aerial photograph showing their locations relative to the application site are shown in Figures 5 and 6. A full description of these sites can be read on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (npws.ie).

Site Name & Code	Distance	Qualifying Interests	Significant Effects
Ardagullion Bog SAC 002341	10km south-east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion 	<i>There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore significant effects upon this site are not likely to arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.</i>
Lough Forbes Complex SAC 001818	12.7km west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of 	<i>There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore significant effects upon this site are not likely to arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.</i>

		<p>natural regeneration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> 	
Ballykenny – Fisherstown Bog SPA 004101	12.7km west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) 	<i>There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and this SPA, therefore significant effects upon this site are not likely to arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.</i>
Brown Bog SAC 002346	13.4 south-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active raised bogs • Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration • Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion 	<i>There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore significant effects upon this site are not likely to arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.</i>
Mount Jessop Bos SAC 002202	14km south-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration • Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion • Bog woodland 	<i>There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore significant effects upon this site are not likely to arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.</i>
Clooneen Bog SAC 002348	15km west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration • Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion • Bog woodland 	<i>There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore significant effects upon this site are not likely to arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.</i>
Glen Lough SPA 004045	14.5km south	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whooper Swan <i>Cygnus cygnus</i> 	<i>There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and this SPA, therefore significant effects upon this site are not likely to arise from the construction and operation of the proposed development.</i>

Table 1 – Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km of the Proposed Site

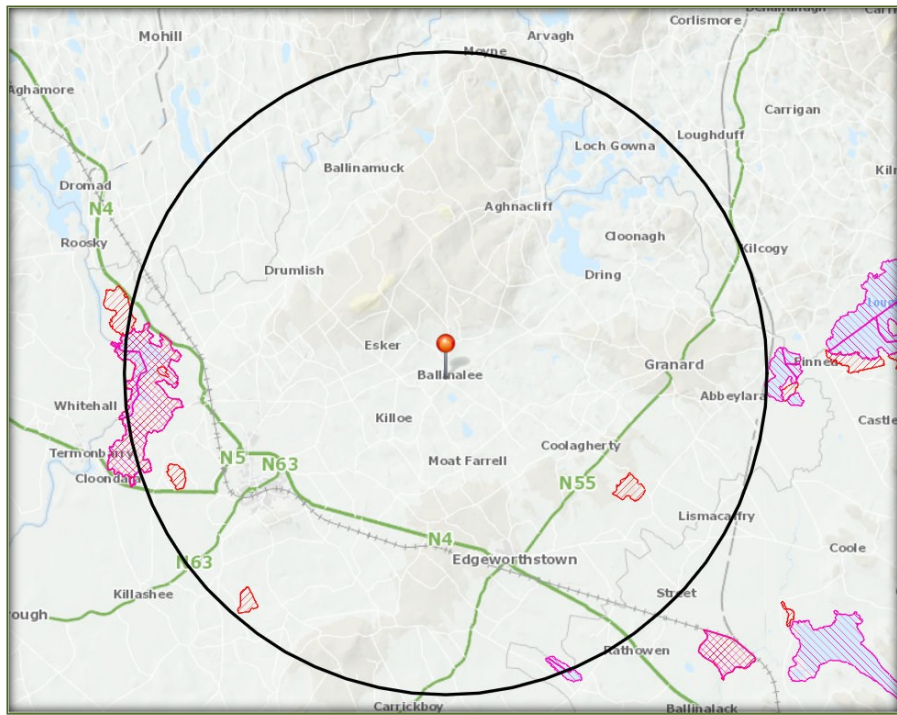


Figure 5 – The Application Site (Pinned) in relation to the Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km (SACs – Red Hatching, SPAs – Pink Hatching).

4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The potential significant effects of the proposed works upon the Natura 2000 sites identified in Table 1 are described below.

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on nearby Natura 2000 site:

The proposed development of the Community Park and Playground in Ballinalee will have no significant effects upon the designated sites identified as being within 15km or the Zone of Influence of the proposed works. There are no individual elements of the proposed works that are likely to give rise to significant negative effects on these aforementioned sites. There will be no significant effects upon the conservation condition of any QI in the designated sites identified. There will be no potential direct, indirect or cumulative impacts upon any designated sites arising from the proposed works when considered in-combination with other developments. In this instance, mitigation measures are not required to specifically address potential impacts upon any Natura 2000 site.

Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the nearby Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:

Size and scale: Having regards to the small size and scale of the works in relation to the overall size of the Natura 2000 sites identified, the likelihood of any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on these designated sites arising from the construction and operation of the proposed works are low.

Land-take: There will be no land-take from any designated site. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any designated site.

Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site: There are seven Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed works. The closest site is Ardgullion Bog SAC which is 10km south-east of the application site. In this instance, having regards to the small size and scale of works significant effects upon the QIs of these sites will not arise.

Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.): No resources will be taken from any Natura 2000 site and there are no resource requirements that will impact upon any designated site.

Emissions: The construction and operation of the proposed Part 8 development will not give rise to any emissions that could lead to significant effects upon the designated sites within the Zone of Influence.

Excavation requirements: All vegetation and soil that will be generated during works will be transported off site by a registered contractor and disposed of or used at a location to be agreed with Longford County Council prior to removal. It will not be disposed of within any area of biodiversity value.

Transportation requirements: There will be no additional transportation requirements resulting

from the proposed development and associated works that will have any impact upon the Natura 2000 sites identified.

In-Combination / Cumulative Impacts: The proposed application was considered in combination with other developments or proposed developments in the Longford area and potential cumulative impacts were considered. Any individual application that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site will be subject to Appropriate Assessment as required under Articles 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The application will have no cumulative impacts upon any designated site when considered in combination with other developments that have been properly screened for AA, or where an NIS has been completed and mitigation measures are included as part of that development.

Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc: Once the works begin, they will be complete within months.

Describe any likely changes to the nearby Natura 2000 sites arising as a result of:

Reduction of habitat area: The proposed works lie outside the boundaries of the Natura 2000 sites identified in Section 3.3. There will be no reduction of designated habitat area. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any designated site. There will be no reduction of designated habitat area within any SAC/SPA.

Disturbance to key species: There will be no disturbance to any species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive or Annex II of the Habitats Directive.

Habitat or species fragmentation: There will be no habitat or species fragmentation within any SAC or SPA. No ecological corridors between the application site and any Natura 2000 site will be damaged or destroyed.

Reduction in species density: There will be no reduction in species density within the European sites.

Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.): There will be no negative impacts upon surface or ground water quality within any water courses that are close to the application site. There will be no negative impacts upon the water quality in any designated site.

Describe any likely impacts on the nearby Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:

Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site: It is not considered likely that there will be any impacts on the key relationships that define the structure or function of the Natura 2000 sites identified.

Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:

Loss - Estimated percentage of lost area of habitat: None

Fragmentation: None

Disruption & disturbance: None

Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.): None

4.1 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Finding of No Significant Effects Report Matrix	
Name of project	Development of a New Community Garden and Playground in Ballinalee, Co. Longford.
Name and location of Natura 2000 site	There are seven Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed works. The closest site is Ardgullion Bog SAC which is 10km south-east of the application site. In this instance, having regards to the small size and scale of works significant effects upon the QIs of these sites will not arise.
Description of project	A Small Scale Amenity Development, Funded under the Outdoor Recreation Scheme.
Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with project being assessed could affect the site?	No
The Assessment of Significance of Effects	
Describe how the project is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site	Having regard to the location, nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that there is no potential for significant effects either from the proposed development on its own or in combination with other plans and projects.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	Not applicable as there is no potential for negative impacts
Describe how the project is likely to affect species designated under Annex II of the Habitats Directive.	No impacts likely
Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment	
Who carried out the assessment	Noreen McLoughlin, MSC, MCIEEM. Consultant Ecologist
Sources of data	NPWS, EPA, National Biodiversity Data Centre, Longford County Council
Level of assessment completed	Stage1 Appropriate Assessment Screening
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed	Full results included

5 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION

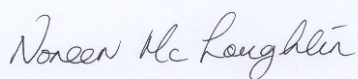
In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the relevant case law, established best practice and the precautionary principle, this AA Screening Report has examined the details of the project in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the application site.

At this stage of the AA process, it is for the competent authority, i.e., Longford County Council, to carry out the screening for AA and to reach one of the following determinations:

a) AA of the proposed development is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites;

b) AA of the proposed development is *not* required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites.

It is of the opinion of the author that an AA of the proposed development is not required as it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information provided in this report, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites.



Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM.
Ecologist.

(PI Insurance details available on request)

Appendix I: PHOTOGRAPHS



Field Where Additional Works will be Undertaken



Existing Playground



Existing Pathway