



AVRIO



Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

R194 Pedestrian & Cycle Route, Granard, Co.
Longford

Project Details

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AVRIO Quality Information

Prepared by:	Jack Hamill (Ecological Consultant) AVRIO Environmental Management	Signed: 
Reviewed by:	Amy Gallagher (Ecological Consultant) AVRIO Environmental Management	Signed: 
Approved by:	Fergal Maguire (Principal Environmental and Ecological Consultant) AVRIO Environmental Management	Signed: 

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Where field investigations were carried out, these investigations have been restricted to a level of detail required to meet the stated objectives of the services. The results of any measurements taken may vary spatially or with time, and further confirmatory analyses should be made after any significant delay in issuing this report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

AVRIO Environmental Management Limited, hereafter "AVRIO", has been appointed by CST Group to undertake an Appropriate Assessment Screening and, if required, a Natura Impact Statement for a proposed development located on the R194 Pedestrian & Cycle Route, Granard, Co. Longford (Grid Reference: N 33055 81032). The proposed development detailed fully below in section 2.4.1 includes the road and footpath works at lands located on the R194 west of Granard, Co. Longford.

1.2 Requirement for an Appropriate Assessment

This Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Assessment was prepared for a proposed development at R194 Pedestrian & Cycle Route, Granard, Co. Longford. Having regard to the location of the proposed development site and its proximity to sites designated under the Natura 2000 network, an Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development was prepared in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This report will allow the Competent Authority, in this case, Longford County Council, to undertake an Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development, as required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive¹.

The purpose of the assessment is to determine the appropriateness of the proposed project in the context of the conservation status of a European protected site or sites. In Ireland, an Appropriate Assessment takes the form of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), which is a statement of the likely impacts of the plan or project on a Natura 2000 site. The NIS comprises a comprehensive assessment of the plan or project, and it examines the direct and indirect impacts that the plan or project might have on its own or in combination with other plans or projects on one or more Natura 2000 sites in view of the site's conservation objectives.

1.3 The Aim of the Report

This Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in accordance with the European Commission's Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018)² as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010)³, and it provides an assessment of the potential effects of a proposed development at R194 Pedestrian & Cycle Route, Granard, Co. Longford. A NIS should provide the information required in order to establish whether or not a proposed development is likely to have a significant impact on certain Natura 2000 sites in the context of their conservation objectives and specifically on the habitats and species for which the Natura 2000 conservation sites have been designated.

¹ EC (2000) 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

² EC (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;

³DoEHLG (2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Revision, February 2010. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government;

Accordingly, a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts of this application was carried out in October 2023 by AVRIO. This assessment allowed areas of potential ecological value and potential ecological constraints associated with this proposed development to be identified and it also enabled potential ecological impacts associated with the proposed development to be assessed and mitigated for.

1.4 Regulatory Context

1.4.1 Relevant Legislation

1.4.1.1 *The Birds Directive*

- The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) recognises that certain species of birds should be subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitats⁴. 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.

1.4.1.2 *The EU Habitats Directive*

- 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.⁵ 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).

1.4.1.3 *The Water Framework Directive*

- 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)⁶. 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 2021 and that status does not deteriorate in any waters.

⁴ European Communities (Conservation of Wild Birds) Regulations, 1985, SI 291/1985 & amendments – <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>;

⁵ European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, SI 94/1997, SI 233/1998 & SI 378/2005 – <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>;

⁶ Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy.

1.4.2 Appropriate Assessment & 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 status⁷. 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)⁸.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision-making tests for plans or projects affecting Natura 2000 sites⁹. 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 case¹⁰.

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.”

⁷ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

⁸ Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds

⁹ 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. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission

¹⁰ EC (2007b) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 27. European Commission, DG Environment;

1.4.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Screening is the process of determining whether an Appropriate Assessment is required for a plan or project. Under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, screening must be carried out by the Competent Authority. Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, states¹¹

‘A screening for appropriate assessment 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’.

The Competent Authority’s determination as to whether an Appropriate Assessment is required must be made on the basis of objective information and should be recorded. The Competent Authority may request information to be supplied to enable it to carry out a screening.

Consultants or project proponents may provide for the competent Authority with the information necessary for them to determine whether an Appropriate Assessment is required and provide advice to assist them in the Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening decision.

Where it cannot be excluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt at the Screening stage, that a proposed plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, would have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a European site, an Appropriate Assessment is required.

1.4.4 Natura Impact Statement

Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the Competent Authority may require the applicant to prepare a Natura Impact Statement. The term Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is defined in legislation¹². A NIS, where required, should present the data, information, and analysis necessary to reach a definitive determination as to 1) the implications of the plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, for a European site in view of its conservation objectives, and 2) whether there will be adverse effects on the integrity of a European site. The NIS should be underpinned by the best scientific knowledge, objective information and by the precautionary principle. This Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in compliance with the provision of section 177U of the Planning & Development Act 2010 as amended.

1.5 Statement of Authority

Jack Hamill BSc (Hons): Jack is an ecologist at AVRIO Environmental Management. Jack graduated with a bachelor’s degree of Science in Marine Science from the University of Ireland, Galway. Jack has experience overseeing environmental monitoring surveys in his previous roles both in Australia and Canada, he has been undertaking environmental

¹¹ DoEHLG (2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Revision, February 2010. Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government;

¹² As defined in Section 177T of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, an NIS means a statement, for the purposes of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, of the implications of a proposed development, on its own and in combination with other plans and projects, for a European site in view of its conservation objectives. It is required to include a report of a scientific examination of evidence and data, carried out by competent persons to identify, and classify any implications for the European site in view of its conservation objectives.

surveys in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland since 2023 including Invasive Species Surveys (ISS), Preliminary Roost Assessments (PRA), baseline ecological surveys and bat emergence/re-entry surveys on a variety of sites throughout Ireland. Jack has experience contributing to habitat assessments including JNCC Phase I Habitat Surveys and Fossitt Habitat Surveys as well as producing a range of ecological reports including Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Invasive Species Management Plans, Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA/AASR/NIS).

Amy Gallagher BSc (Hons), MSc, QCIEEM: This report has been reviewed by Amy Gallagher. Onsite surveys were carried out by Amy. Amy is an Ecologist at AVRIO Environmental Management. She holds a BSc (Hons) in Ecological Management and an MSc in Ecological Management and Conservation Biology from Queens University Belfast. Amy is an ecologist with over 4 years of experience within the environmental industry Amy is a qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), an organisation requiring peer review and a high standard of professional conduct. Amy has experience contributing to Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA) including assessments for priority species such as Bats, Badger, Otter, Marsh Fritillary, Dragonfly and Damselfly, and habitats assessments including Phase I and Fossitt Habitat Surveys. Amy has experience in Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA/AASR/NIS), Invasive Species Surveys and Management and production of site-specific mitigation proposals for a range of developments throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Fergal Maguire NDA, BSc (Hons), PIEMA: This report has been reviewed by Fergal Maguire. Fergal is the General Manager and Principal Ecologist at AVRIO Environmental Management and Principal Environmental and Ecological Consultant. He holds an NDA and BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science from the Institute of Technology, Sligo. Fergal is a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA), an organisation requiring peer review and a high standard of professional conduct. He has over 10 years of experience within the environmental industry. He has experience contributing to a number of Environmental Impact Assessments, environmental licence and surrender applications, including Industrial Emissions Licences (IEL), Integrated Pollution Control Licences (IPC) and Waste Licences for submission to the Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), United Kingdom Environment Agency (E.A.) and a number of Local Authorities throughout the U.K. and Ireland. Fergal has extensive experience in the sustainable development and management of a number of IED licenced facilities throughout Ireland, the U.K. and greater Europe, as well as general consultancy within the waste management, environmental compliance and ecological sectors. Fergal has extensive experience in Ecological Impact Assessments (EclA), including priority species such as Bats, Badger, Otter, Red Squirrel, Pine martin and breeding birds, and habitats assessments, including Phase I and Fossitt Habitat Surveys. Fergal has extensive experience in Habitat Regulation Assessments (HRA/AASR/NIS), Ecological Clerk of Works (ECOW), Invasive Species Surveys and Management and production of site-specific mitigation proposals for a range of developments throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

2. Methodology

2.1 Appropriate Assessment

In addition to the guidelines referenced above, the following relevant documents were also considered in the preparation of this report:

1. Council of the European Commission (1992) Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21st May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Official Journal of the European Communities. Series L 20, pp. 7-49.¹³
2. EC (2000) 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.¹⁴
3. European Commission (2001). 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.¹⁵
4. European Commission (2006). Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice.¹⁶
5. EC (2007) 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.¹⁷
6. EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission.¹⁸
7. European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC.¹⁹
8. Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.²⁰
9. National Parks and Wildlife Service (2019). Article 17: The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland.²¹
10. European Communities (Natural Habitats) (Amendment) Regulations 2005²²;

¹³ 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;

¹⁴ 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;

¹⁵ EC (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC;

¹⁶ EC (2006) Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission;

¹⁷ 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. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission;

¹⁸ EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ DoEHLG (2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Revision, February 2010. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

²¹ NPWS (2019). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 1: Summary Overview. Unpublished NPWS report.

²² EC (1997) 2006. The European Communities (Natural Habitats)(Amendment) Regulations 2005.

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.’²³

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 on 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.²⁴

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.

²³ DEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. DEHLG, Dublin;

²⁴ DEHLG (2010). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Revision, February 2010. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government;

In complying with the obligations set out in Articles 6(3) and following the guidelines described above, this Natura Impact 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;
- Description of proven mitigation measures.

2.2 Desk Study

Information pertaining to the proposed site and the surrounding environment was studied and assessed prior to the completion of this assessment. The following data sources were accessed in order to complete a thorough examination of potential impacts:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) online map viewer²⁵;
- Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles website²⁶;
- Ordnance Survey Ireland Map Viewer: Geohive²⁷;
- Environmental Protection Agency Geographic Information System (EPAGIS)²⁸;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)²⁹;
- NPWS Article 17 Metadata and GIS Database³⁰;
- Geological Survey Ireland, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications Map Viewer³¹;
- CST Group³²

²⁵ National Parks and Wildlife Service: National Parks & Wildlife Service (npws.ie)

²⁶ Mammals, Amphibians and Reptiles: <http://www.habitas.org.uk/nimars/>

²⁷ Ordnance Survey Ireland Map Viewer - GeoHive: <https://webapps.geohive.ie/mapviewer/index.html>

²⁸ Environmental Protection Agency Geographic Information System: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

²⁹ National Biodiversity Data Centre: www.biodiversityireland.ie

³⁰ NPWS Article 17 Metadata and GIS Database: <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/habitat-and-species-data/article-17>

³¹ Geological Survey Ireland Map Viewer: <https://dcentr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index>

³² Site Plans provided by CST Group

2.3 Site Location & Current Use

The proposed development site is located along the R194 Pedestrian & Cycle Route, Granard, Co. Longford (Grid Reference: N 33055 81032).

The site is located approximately 20.8km northeast of Longford town centre, 25.3km southwest of Cavan town centre, and 43.3km southeast of Carrick-On-Shannon town centre. The surrounding area encompasses a variety of features, including roadways, residential dwellings, commercial and industrial complexes associated with the town of Granard, agricultural grassland, treelines, hedgerows, scrub, and the Longford Road runs through the length of the site. Lough Gill and Hazelwood Forest are located to the south of the development. The wider environs include interspersed areas of road, agricultural grassland, watercourses, residential dwellings, commercial properties, hedgerows, scrublands, treelines, and mixed woodlands. The Rathcronan River (IE_SH_26R630830) flows approximately 580m to the southeast of the development, which is a tributary to the Inny River which flows into the Shannon River.

There are no European or Nationally designated sites within 2km of the development. The closest European designated site is Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA which is 4.87km east of the development. The closest nationally designated site is Lough Kinale NHA situated 4.9km to the east.

The R194 road is a regional road in Ireland linking Longford in County Longford to Virginia in County Cavan to Moynalty in County Meath. The section of the R194 that will be affected by the development is in Granard, Co. Longford. The site consists of habitats such as Stone Wall and Other Stonework (BL1), Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3), Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3), Hedgerows (WL1), Treelines (WL2), Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1), Amenity Grassland (GA2). Pictures 1-7 below illustrate the proposed development area and the surrounding habitat.



Picture 1: Recolonising bare ground (ED3) to the northeast of the site



Picture 2: Treelines (WL2) to the south of the site



Picture 3: Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1) bounding the site



Picture 4: Stone walls and other stonework (BL1) on site



Picture 5: Amenity Grassland (GA2) bounding the site.



Picture 6: Cherry Laurel within Hedgerow (WL1) bounding the site.



Picture 7: Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) – Road on site.

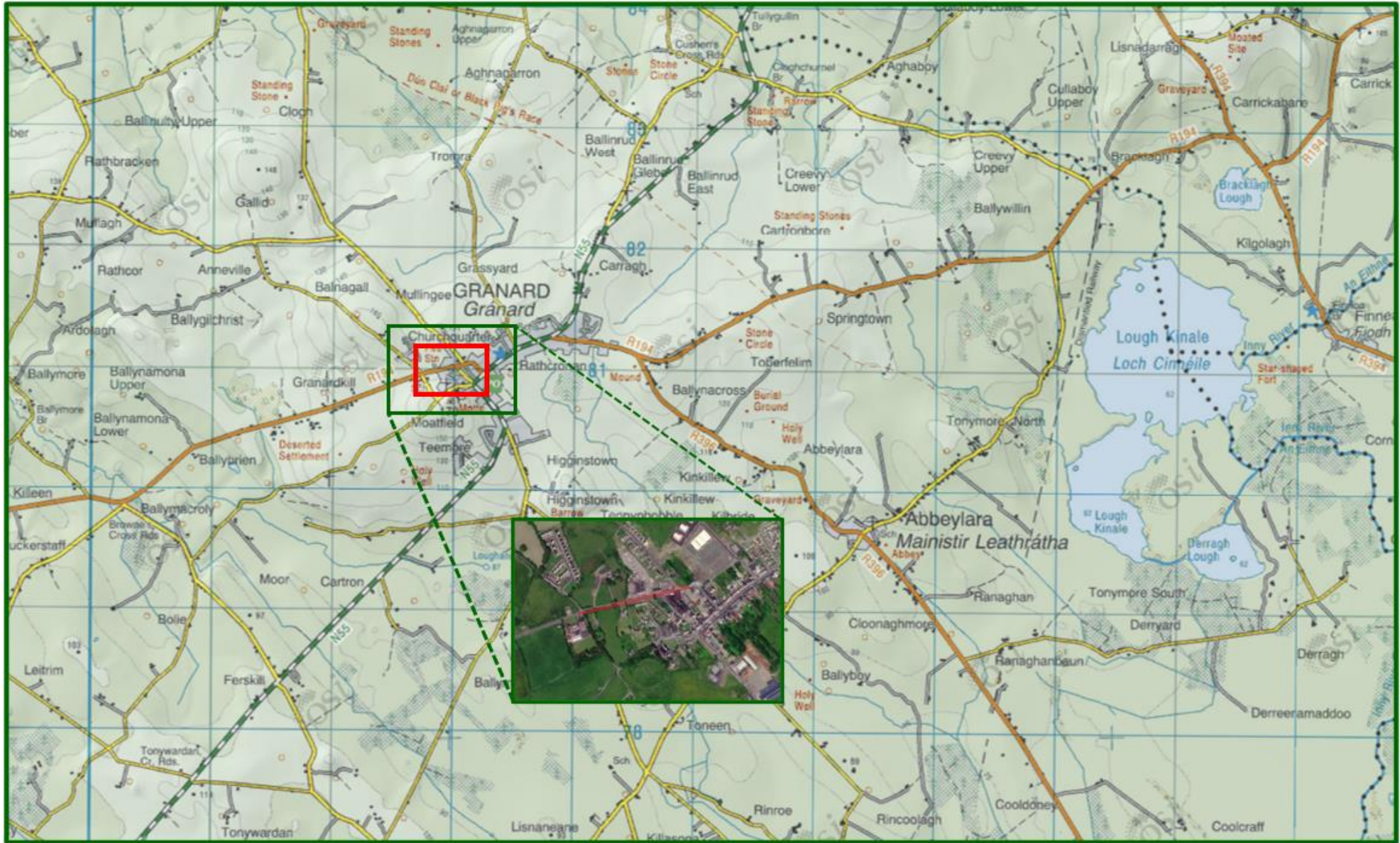


Figure 1: Site Location within the environs of Granard, Co. Longford and additionally details the site boundary location within the immediate environs.

2.4 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

2.4.1 Description of the Project

The Proposed development is part of an Active Travel scheme within Granard, Co. Longford. The scheme is aimed at improving pedestrian infrastructure and providing a safer route to the National School Ardscoil Phadraig. The proposed development starts along the R194 approximately 110m to the Northwest of the R194 junction with the N55 heading out of Granard and terminates at the Ardscoil Phadraig building. The proposal includes:

- Increasing the width of an existing narrow footpath to the north of the R194,
- A new ramped zebra crossing to allow pedestrians to cross to an existing footpath to the south of the R194 which has been upgraded in recent years,
- Junction tightening to reduce the width for pedestrians to cross; and
- Installation of raised junction crossings.

All works for the project will be carried out in accordance with relevant GPPS and PPGS as seen below:

- NIEA Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP's):
 - GPP 1: Understanding your environmental responsibilities – Good environmental practices;
 - GPP 2: Above ground oil storage tanks;
 - GPP 3: Use and design of oil separators in surface water drainage systems;
 - GPP 4: Treatment and disposal of wastewater where there is no connection to the public foul sewer;
 - GPP 5: Works and maintenance in or near water;
 - GPP 6: Working on construction and demolition sites;
 - GPP 8: Safe storage and disposal of used oils;
 - GPP 13 Vehicle washing and cleaning;
 - GPP 20: Dewatering underground ducts and chambers;

- GPP 21: Pollution incident response planning;
- GPP 22: Dealing with spills;
- GPP 26 Safe storage - drums and intermediate bulk containers;
- NIEA Pollution Prevention Guidance Notes (PPG's)
 - PPG 7: Safe Storage – The safe operation of refuelling facilities;
 - PPG 18: Managing fire water and major spillages;
- CIRIA Report C532 Control of Water Pollution from construction sites;
- CIRIA Report C741 Environmental Good Practice on Site guide (4th Edition);
- BS6031:2009 Code of Practice for Earthworks;
- BS 5930 2015: Code of Practice for Site Investigations.

Storage of fuels and lubricants to include the following:

- All fuels to be stored in a bunded area at least 10m from any drainage ditch or stream;
- Refuelling to be undertaken in a designated area over hardstanding at minimum 10m from any field drain or stream;
- Fuels to be stored in plastic containers and stored in a locked contained within the site compound area;
- Spill kits should be stored and readily available, close to the designated refuelling area;
- All construction activities will be restricted to daytime hours. Works associated with the proposal will not be undertaken during dusk/dawn and periods of darkness;
- Any materials excavated from the site (i.e., during construction) must either be removed from the site to limit stockpiling or should be located at a distance of >10m from any ditch, stream or watercourse; and,
- Construction activities that require the excavation of materials should avoid periods of heavy and/or prolonged rainfall to ensure that silt and sediment is not washed into ditches, streams or watercourses.

All areas of retained vegetation will be protected according to B.S. 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction. This guidance outlines the steps involved in protecting retained trees to ensure that accidental damage or asphyxiation of the roots does not occur.

Appendix A attached details the current Site Layout Plan.

2.4.2 Description of the Baseline Ecological Environment

Assessing the impacts of any project and associated activities requires an understanding of the ecological baseline conditions prior to and at the time of the project proceeding. Ecological baseline conditions are those existing in the absence of proposed activities³³.

A walkover of the site was undertaken on the 10th of October 2023 by a qualified ecologist, and habitats present were identified in accordance with the Heritage Council's 'Guide to Habitats in Ireland'³⁴. Plant nomenclature for vascular plants follows 'New Flora of the British Isles, while mosses and liverworts nomenclature follow 'Mosses and Liverworts of Britain and Ireland - a field guide'.

The walkover survey was designed to detect the presence, or likely presence, of a range of protected species and habitats. The walkover survey comprehensively covered the entire study area of the subject development and surrounding habitats.

2.4.2.1 Habitats

Habitats located within the site boundary include:

- Stone Wall and Other Stonework (BL1)
- Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1)
- Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3)
- Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3)
- Hedgerow (WL1)
- Treeline (WL2)
- Amenity Grassland (GA2)

2.4.2.3 Invasive Species (Flora) Survey

Throughout the habitat survey, the site was searched for invasive weed species, focusing on those species listed on the Third Schedule of Regulations 49 and 50 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011³⁵. Invasive species included in this list include Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum*

³³ CIEEM, 2018, Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland. Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine;

³⁴ Fossitt, J. A. (2000). A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. Dublin: The Heritage Council;

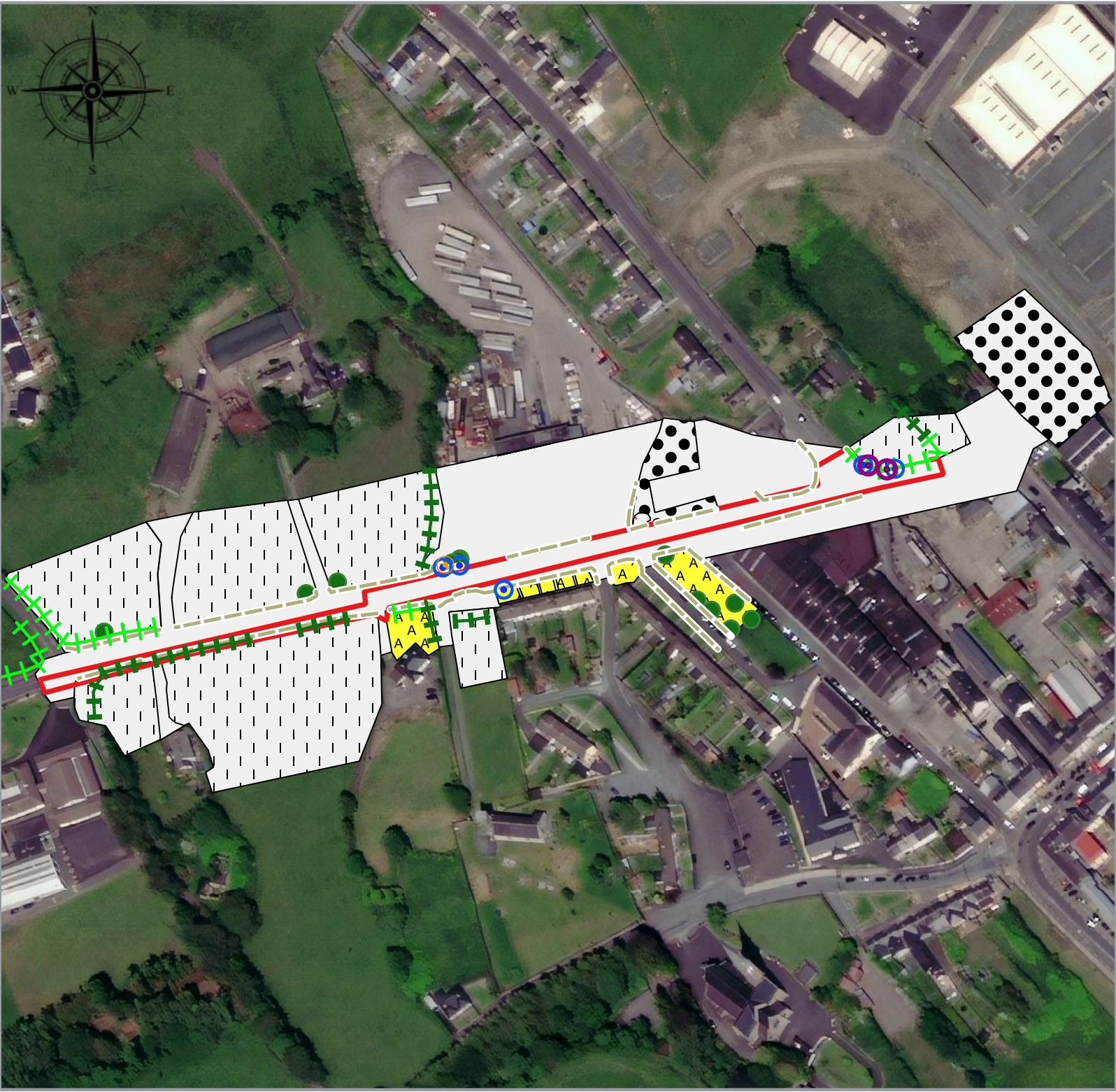
³⁵ Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora [Habitats Directive] and Directive 2009/147/EC [codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended] [Birds Directive] transposed into Irish law as European Communities [Birds and Natural Habitats] Regulations 2011 [SI 477/2011].

mantegazzianum), Giant Knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*), Giant Rhubarb (*Gunnera manicata*), Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Himalayan Knotweed (*Polygonum polystachyum*), Bohemian Knotweed (*Fallopia bohemica*) and Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*).














The invasive species survey carried out by AVRIO did not identify any invasive species listed under the Third Schedule on site or within the survey area, however, several non-scheduled invasives were noted bounding the site. The invasive species survey carried out by AVRIO identified one high impact invasive species³⁶ within the immediate bounds of the site. Cherry Laurel is listed as a high impact invasive by Invasive Species Ireland. Cherry Laurel was identified sporadically in a hedgerow between IGR: N 33089 81047 and IGR: N 33112 81050. Additionally, whilst not listed under the Third Schedule in Ireland, two species noted on site are listed under the equivalent legislation in England and Wales (Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981). These species were Montbretia and Rockspray Cotoneaster. Montbretia was identified within the gardens of private property at IGR: N 32873 80965 and IGR: N 32893 81005. Furthermore, Rockspray Cotoneaster was also identified in gardens and hedgerows within private property at IGR: N 33115 81050, IGR: N 32926 80994 and IGR: N 32901 81004.

Whilst these species are not listed under on the Third Schedule of Regulations 49 and 50 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, they should be managed appropriately.

³⁶ Invasive Species Ireland: https://invasives.ie/app/uploads/2022/01/Invasives_taggedlist_HighImpact_2013RA-1.pdf



Legend:

-  Site Boundary
-  BL1- Stone walls and other stonework
-  GA1- Improved agricultural grassland
-  ED2- Spoil and bare ground
-  GA2- Amenity Grassland
-  ED3- Recolonising bare ground
-  BL3- Buildings and artificial surfaces
-  WL1- Hedgerows
-  WL2- Treelines
-  Target Note 1- Rock Cotoneaster
-  Target Note 2- Cherry Laurel
-  Target Note 3- Montbretia
-  WD5- Scattered Trees Parkland


Project Title:
 AEMP- 2000281
 R194 Pedestrian & Cycle Route
 Granard, Co. Longford

Drawing Title:
 Fossit Habitats Map

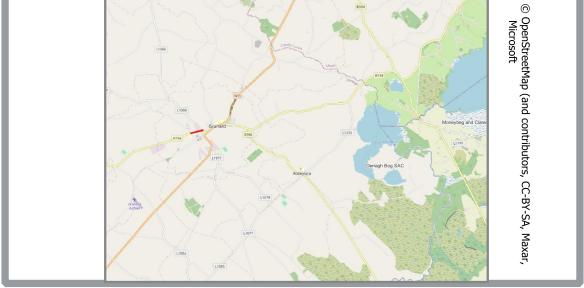
Drawn By: JH	Checked By: AG
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Project No: 2000281	Drawing No: Figure 2
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Scale: 1/2400	Date: 10th October 2023
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 **AVRIO**
 Head Office- Enniskillen
 Unit 5, Abbey House Business Centre,
 11 Head Street, Enniskillen,
 Co. Fermanagh. BT74 7JL
 Website: www.avrio-env.com
 Email: info@avrio-env.com
 Phone: [+44 28 6677 5608](tel:+442866775608)

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[2.4.2.4 Protected Species \(Fauna\) Survey](#)

[Bat Roost Assessment for Trees](#)

All trees on site have been assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats due to insufficient roosting features.

[Bat Roost Assessment for Walls](#)

All walls on site have been assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats due to insufficient roosting features.

[Bat Roost Assessment for Buildings](#)

No buildings were present within the site boundary. Buildings were found within the surveyed area; however, no buildings are to be removed or modified as part of the proposed development.

[Badger \(*Meles meles*\) Survey](#)

No badger setts, latrines or snuffle holes were identified within the site's boundary or within a 30m buffer of the site. The site itself is deemed as sub-optimal for the species. The surrounding environs were deemed suitable for badger, and badger may access the site for commuting and foraging from time to time.

[Otter \(*Lutra lutra*\) Survey](#)

No otter spraints, footprints, paths/slides, holts, or urination 'green spots' were identified within the immediate vicinity of the site. There were no watercourses identified on site and the site is in an urban location. The site was sub-optimal for otter.

[Breeding Birds Habitat Suitability Assessment](#)

No nests or breeding birds were identified on-site. Treelines and areas of scrub are considered optimal locations for breeding birds. Any removal or facing of tree lines will need to be undertaken outside of the breeding season (March-August inclusive).

[Smooth Newt \(*Lissotriton vulgaris*\) Habitat Suitability Assessment](#)

A survey of the site and the immediate environs was undertaken to assess the habitat suitability for smooth newt. There were no watercourses on site. Assessments conclude the habitat on-site and the immediate environs are suboptimal for smooth newt.

[Common Frog \(*Rana temporaria*\)](#)

A survey of the site and the immediate environs was undertaken to assess the habitat suitability for common frog. There were no watercourses on site. Assessments conclude the habitat on-site and the immediate environs are suboptimal for common frog.

Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)

A survey of the site and the immediate environs was undertaken to assess the habitat suitability for red squirrel. There were no watercourses on site. Assessments conclude the habitat on-site and the immediate environs are suboptimal for red squirrel.

Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)

A survey of the site and the immediate environs was undertaken to assess the habitat suitability for pine marten. Assessments conclude the habitat on-site and the immediate environs are suboptimal for pine marten.

2.4.3 Description of the Baseline Geological Environment

2.4.3.1 Bedrock Geology

There are four different bedrock types under the site, the majority of the site boundary is situated on is known as the ‘Moathill Formation’ consisting of Limestone, calcareous sandstone, and shale. The lower member is dominated by a thick sandstone, the Rockfield Sandstone Member. Argillaceous limestones, calcsilicates and mudstones form the upper part of the formation³⁷.

In the North Midlands Province, the Moathill Formation (Strogen et al. 1990) comprises a mixed unit of burrowed calcareous siltstone, bioclastic limestone rich in bryozoans, sandstone and, near the top, thick unfossiliferous shale with silty bands (Philcox 1984; McConnell et al. 2001). The formation thins westwards into counties Westmeath and Longford and shows lateral facies changes. The lower member is dominated by a thick sandstone in the North Midlands area (Rockfield Sandstone Member of Strogen et al. 1995) in the Kingscourt Outlier.

There is clear indication of repeated shallowing events marginal to the Leinster Dublin Basin 13/04/2012 Chapter 21 4 Massif, with minor influx of siliciclastic detritus from the massif (Strogen & Somerville 1984). However, this limestone-dominated interval lacks the thick sandstone units typical of the Moathill Formation in the North Midlands Province.³⁸

The remaining three bedrock formations that fall under the site are the ‘Meath Formation’ which consists of limestone and calcareous sandstone, the ‘Ballysteen Formation’ which consists of dark muddy limestone and shale and the ‘Slieve Glah Formation’ which consists of siltstone, mudstone and thin turbidite .

³⁷ Geological Survey Ireland: <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=a30af518e87a4c0ab2fbde2aac3c228>

³⁸ Somerville, I.D. & Waters, Colin. (2011). Chapter 21 Dublin Basin. A Revised Correlation of Carboniferous Rocks in the British Isles. 138-143.

2.4.3.2 Aquifer Classification

The aquifer classification at the site is classed as a ‘Locally Important Aquifer - - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones’. A description of this aquifer is detailed below:

‘Locally Important Aquifers: Locally important aquifers are capable of supplying locally important abstractions (e.g. smaller public water supplies, group schemes), or good yields (100-400 m³/d). In the bedrock aquifers, groundwater predominantly flows through fractures, fissures, joints or conduits. Locally important sand/gravel aquifers are typically >1 km², and groundwater flows between the sand and gravel grains. This group is subdivided into the following types: Lm Locally Important Bedrock Aquifer, Generally Moderately Productive Ll Locally Important Bedrock Aquifer, Moderately Productive only in Local Zones Lk Locally Important Karstified Bedrock Aquifer Lg Locally Important Sand/Gravel Aquifer³⁸.

2.4.3.3 Groundwater Vulnerability

Groundwater Vulnerability is a term used to represent the natural ground characteristics that determine the ease with which groundwater may be contaminated by human activities. More scientifically, groundwater vulnerability embodies the characteristics of the intrinsic geological and hydrogeological features at a site that determine the ease of contamination of groundwater. The vulnerability category assigned to a site, or an area is thus based on the relative ease with which infiltrating water and potential contaminants may reach groundwater in a vertical or sub-vertical direction. As all groundwater is hydrologically connected to the land surface, it is the effectiveness of this connection that determines the relative vulnerability to contamination. Groundwater that readily and quickly receives water (and contaminants) from the land surface is considered to be more vulnerable than groundwater that receives water (and contaminants) more slowly, and consequently in lower quantities. Additionally, the slower the movement and the longer the pathway, the greater is the potential for attenuation of many contaminants³⁹.

The Geological Survey Ireland classifies the groundwater vulnerability at the site to be in a vulnerability category of Extreme⁴⁰.

2.4.3.4 Groundwater Flow Direction

Exact directions of groundwater flow have not been established for the site in question, however, for the purposes of this assessment the precautionary principle is implemented, and a worst-case scenario is used.

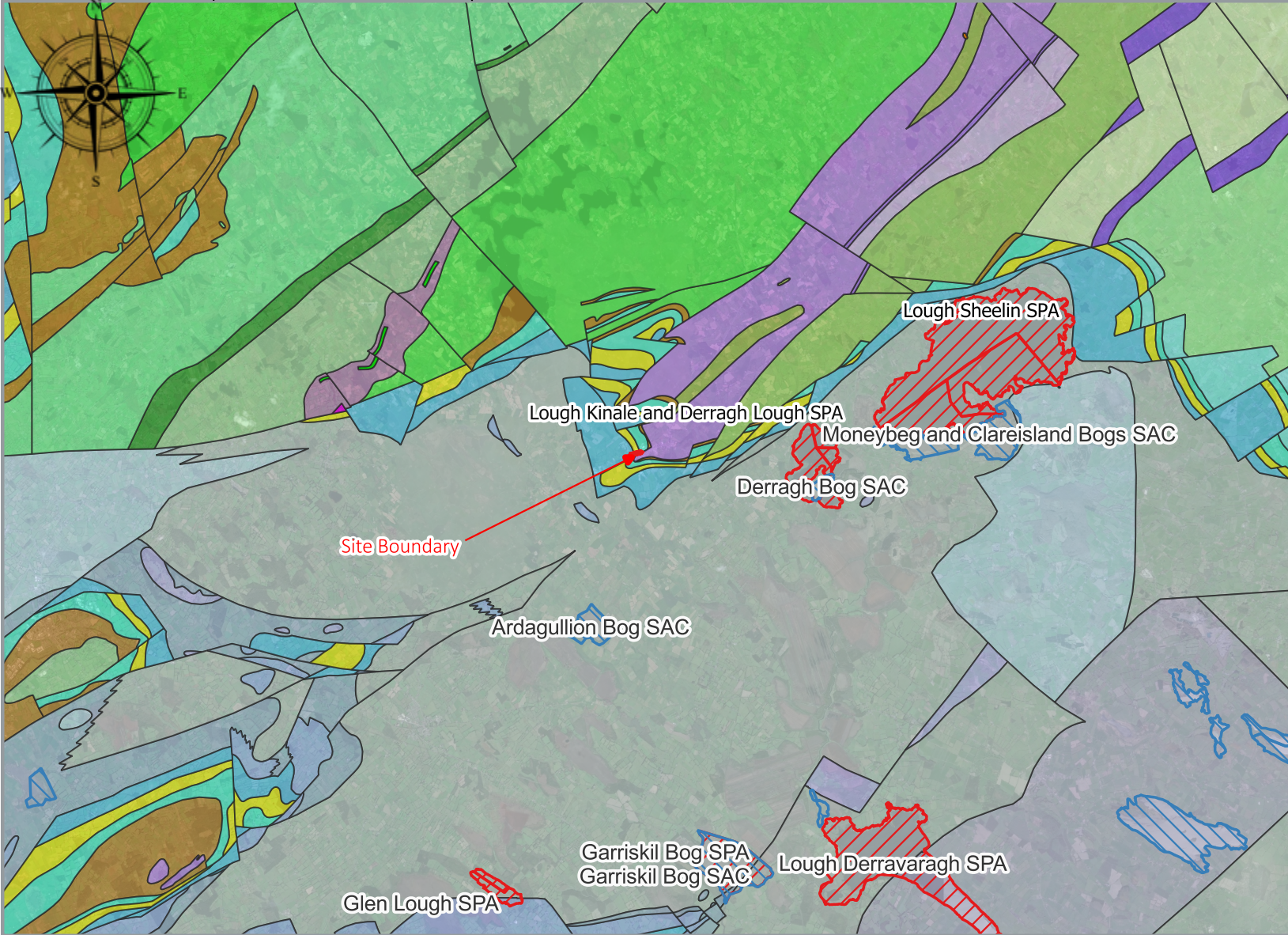
The direction of groundwater flow follows a path through an aquifer from areas of high-water levels to areas where water levels are low. Water flows through aquifers to discharge points some distance down-gradient at a spring or offshore into the sea⁴¹.

³⁹ GSI Groundwater Resources Bedrock Aquifers - <https://data.gov.ie/dataset/gsi-groundwater-resources-bedrock-aquifers>

⁴⁰ Geological Survey Ireland - Groundwater Vulnerability: <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/programmes-and-projects/groundwater/activities/understanding-ireland-groundwater/groundwater-vulnerability/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴¹ Geological Survey Ireland Map Viewer: <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index>

Bedrock Aquifer: Locally Important Aquifer - Karstified		Bedrock polygons 100k ITM 2018: Darty Limestone Formation					National Groundwater Vulnerability		
Aquifer Category:	Category Description:	New Code:	Unit Name:	Description:	Formation:	Lithological Description:	Soil Permeability code:	Depth to Bedrocks (m):	Vulnerability Category:
Locally Important Aquifer	LI	C*MTHL	Moathill Formation	Limestone, calcareous sandstone and shale	Moathill Formation	The lower member is dominated by a thick sandstone, the Rockfield Sandstone Member. Argillaceous limestones, calcsilicates and mudstones form the upper part of the	IE_GSI_ssPm_40 K_196086	N/a	Extreme



Legend:

- Site Boundary
- SAC
- SPA

Project Title:
 AEMP 2000281
 R194 Cycle Route
 Granard, Co. Longford

Drawing Title:
 Hydrogeology Map

Drawn By: JH	Checked By: JH
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Project No: 2000281	Drawing No: Figure 3
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Scale: 1/200000	Date: 17th October 2023
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 **AVRIO**
 Head Office- Enniskillen

Unit 5, Abbey House Business Centre,
 11 Head Street, Enniskillen,
 Co. Fermanagh. BT74 7JL

Website: www.avrio-env.com
 Email: info@avrio-env.com
 Phone: [+44 28 6677 5608](tel:+442866775608)

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3. Identification of Relevant European Sites

3.1 Identification of the European Sites within the Likely Zone of Impact

The following methodology was used to establish which European Sites are within the Likely Zone of Impact of the proposed development:

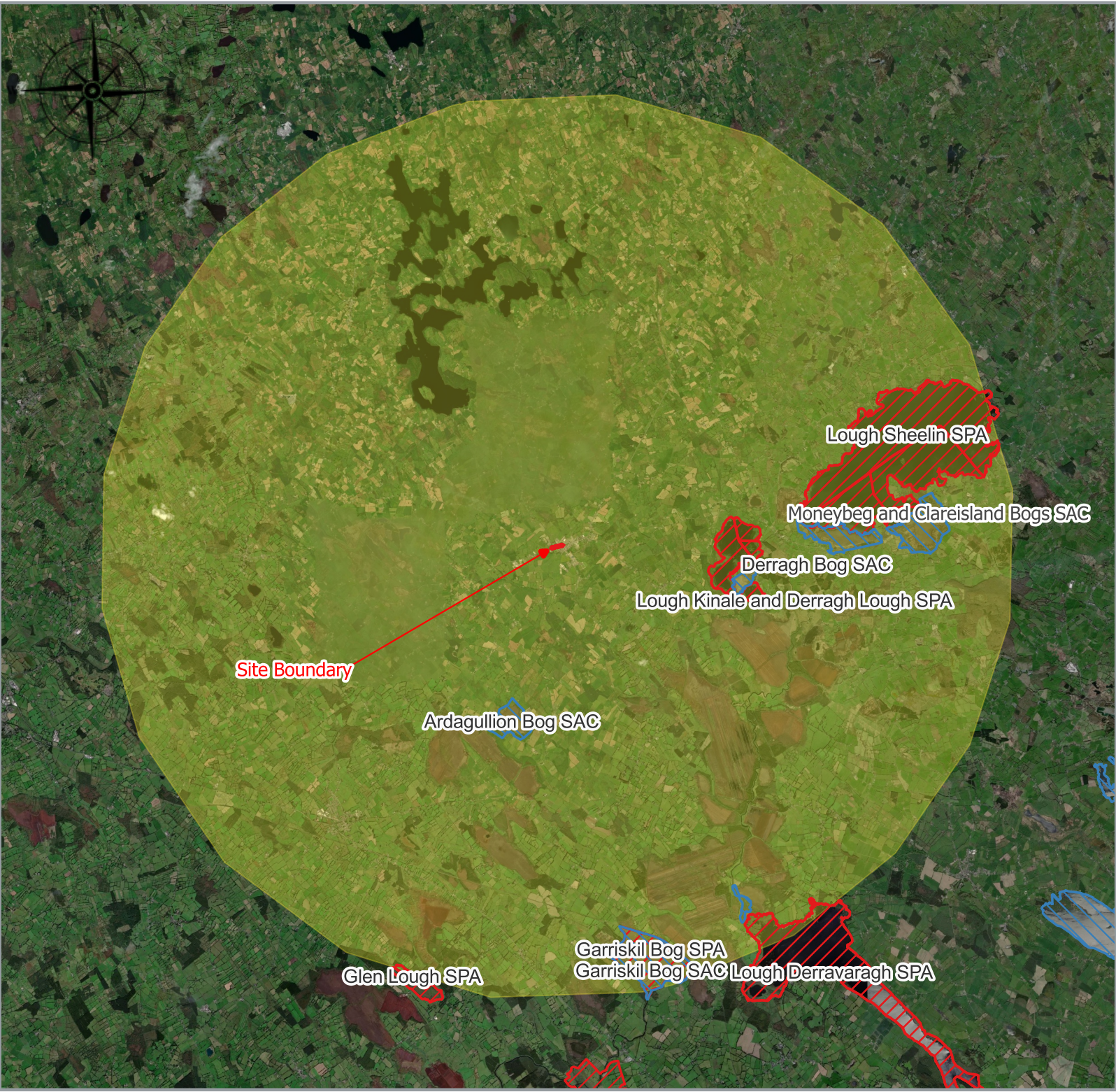
- The most up-to-date GIS spatial datasets for European designated sites and water catchments were downloaded from the NPWS website⁴² and the EPA website⁴³ on 20th of September 2023. These datasets were utilised to identify European Sites that could feasibly be affected by the proposed development;
- All European Sites within a distance of 15km surrounding the development site were identified and are detailed in Figure 4 below. In addition, the potential for connectivity with European Sites at distances greater than 15km from the proposed development was also considered. In this case, the proposed project does not give rise to the potential for likely significant effects on European Sites located beyond the 15km zone;
- In relation to Special Protection Areas, in the absence of any specific European or Irish guidance in relation to such sites, the Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Guidance, 'Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPA)' (2016) was consulted⁴⁴. This document provides guidance in relation to the identification of connectivity between proposed developments and Special Protection Areas. The guidance considers the distances species may travel beyond the boundary of their SPAs and provides information on dispersal and foraging ranges of bird species that are frequently encountered when considering plans and projects;
- Table 3-1 provides details of all relevant European Sites identified in the preceding steps and assesses which are within the likely Zone of Impact. The assessment considers any likely direct or indirect impacts of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on European Sites by virtue of the following criteria: size and scale, land-take, distance from the European Site or key features of the site, resource requirements, emissions, excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction, operation and decommissioning were considered in this screening assessment;
- The site synopses and conservation objectives, as per the appropriate datasets, were consulted and reviewed when preparing this report (20th September 2023). Figure 4 details the location of the proposed development in relation to all European sites within 15km in the Republic of Ireland;

Where potential pathways for Significant Effect are identified, the site is included within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.





⁴²NPWS Protected Site Synopses and maps available on <http://www.npws.ie/en/ProtectedSites/>;

⁴³ EPA maps available on [EPA Maps](#)

⁴⁴ Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (July 2013) Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPA);



Legend:

-  Site Boundary
-  SAC
-  SPA
-  15km Buffer


Project Title:
 AEMP- 2000281
 R194 Pedestrian & Cycle Route
 Granard, Co. Longford

Drawing Title:
 Map of Designated Sites

Drawn By: JH	Checked By: AG
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Project No: 2000281	Drawing No: Figure 4
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Scale: 1/175000	Date: 17th October 2023
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 **AVRIO**

Head Office- Enniskillen
 Unit 5, Abbey House Business Centre,
 11 Head Street, Enniskillen,
 Co. Fermanagh. BT74 7JL
 Website: www.avrio-env.com
 Email: info@avrio-env.com
 Phone: [+44 28 6677 5608](tel:+442866775608)

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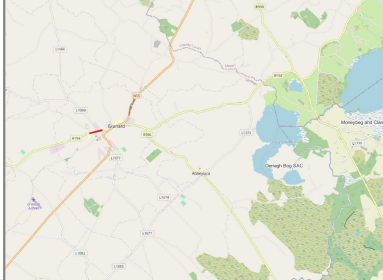
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Table 3-1: Identification of designated sites within 15km Buffer

European Sites and distance from subject development	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the European site has been designated (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, www.npws.ie on the 20/09/2023	Conservation Objectives	Likely Zone of Impact Determination
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)			
Ardagullion Bog SAC [002341] Distance: 5.34km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [7110] Active raised bogs ➤ [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ➤ [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> 	Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie	This development is located 5.34km to the northeast of this SAC. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SAC. No direct impacts are anticipated. No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC. No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC. This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.
Derragh Bog SAC [002201] Distance 5.7km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [7110] Active raised bogs ➤ [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 	Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie	This development site is located 5.7km to the northwest of this SAC. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SAC. No direct impacts are anticipated. No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC. No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC. This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.
Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC [002340] Distance: 7.8km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [7110] Active raised bogs ➤ [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ➤ [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> 	Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie	This development is located 7.8km to the west of this SAC. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SAC. No direct impacts are anticipated. No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC. No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC. This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.

<p>Garriskil Bog SAC [000679] Distance: 12.59km</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [7110] Active raised bogs ➤ [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration ➤ [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> 	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie</p>	<p>This development is located 12.59km to the northwest of this SAC. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SAC. No direct impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.</p>
<p>Special Protected Areas (SPA)</p>			
<p>Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA [000985] Distance: 4.87km</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [4] Peatlands ➤ [12] Birds 	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie</p>	<p>This development site is located 4.87km to the west of this SPA. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SPA. No direct impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.</p>
<p>Lough Sheelin SPA [004065] Distance: 7.84km</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [A005] Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) ➤ [A059] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) ➤ [A061] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) ➤ [A067] Goldeneye (<i>Bucephala clangula</i>) 	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie</p>	<p>This development site is located 7.84km to the southwest of this SPA. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SPA. No direct impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.</p>
<p>Garriskil Bog SPA [004102] Distance: 12.8km</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [A395] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) 	<p>Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at</p>	<p>This development site is located 12.8km to the north of this SPA. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SPA. No direct impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SPA.</p>

		https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk	This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.
Lough Derravarragh SPA [004043] Distance: 13.69km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [A038] Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) ➤ [A059] Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) ➤ [A061] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) ➤ [A125] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) 	Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie	<p>This development site is located 13.69km to the northwest of this SPA. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SPA. No direct impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.</p>
Glenlough SPA [004045] Distance 14.39km	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ [A045] Barnacle Goose (<i>Branta leucopsis</i>) 	Detailed conservation objectives for this site (Version 1, October 2016) were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie	<p>This development site is located 14.39km to the south of this SPA. There is no spatial overlap or no direct land take from this SPA. No direct impacts are anticipated.</p> <p>No hydrological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>No hydrogeological connection exists between the site of the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact, and further assessment is required.</p>

3.2 Natura 2000 Impact Assessment

The potential impacts of the proposed development on the Natura 2000 sites identified above are described in table 3-2 below.

Table 3-2: Natura 2000 Impact Assessment

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:
<p>The proposed works will have no impact upon the integrity of the site structure of the designated sites identified, i.e., Ardagullion Bog SAC, Derragh Bog SAC, Moneybeg and Clareisland Bogs SAC, Garriskil Bog SAC, Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, Lough Sheelin SPA, Garriskil Bog SPA, Lough Derravarragh SPA, and Glenlough SPA.</p> <p>There are no individual elements of the proposed project that are likely to give rise to negative impacts on these sites if designed in mitigation in section 2.4 above is implemented.</p> <p>The application site is, at its closest to Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA, a distance of 4.87km; however, there is no direct source – pathway – receptor linkage between the works site and the designated sites identified, therefore, no impacts will occur.</p>
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 & Scale: Given the size and scale of the works and no direct source – pathway – receptor linkage between the works site and any designated site, no impacts will occur.

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): At its closest point, the proposed works site is situated at a distance of 4.87km from Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA which is the closest designated site. This distance is adequate to predict that there will be no impacts upon these designated sites, as no pollution pathway exists between the development site and the designated sites.

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

Emissions: Neither the construction nor the operation of the proposed works will result in any emissions to the identified SACs or SPAs. There will be no run-off (untreated or other) from the works site directly to any SAC, SPA, pSPA or RAMSAR site. There are no direct source-pathway-receptor linkages between designated sites and the development site.

Excavation Requirements: Excavated material from the construction will be used on-site. Any remaining material will be disposed of in a responsible manner at a licensed facility away from any designated sites or areas of conservation 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 area, and potential cumulative impacts were considered. A number of planning applications associated with the development of Granard, have been granted planning permission or are under review in the preceding five years, and where necessary, these applications were accompanied by Appropriate Assessment reports (Stage I / Stage II). Any future individual application that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site will be subject to Appropriate Assessment (AA) as required under Articles 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The proposed development will not lead to any cumulative impacts upon any designated site when considered in combination with other developments that have been adequately screened for AA or where mitigation measures have been included as part of a Stage 2 AA for these developments.

Duration of Construction, Operation & Decommissioning: Once construction begins, the development should be complete within 18 months.

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

Reduction of habitat area: The proposed development lies outside the boundaries of any Natura 2000 site identified above. There will be no reduction of designated habitat area within any SAC, SPA, pSPA or RAMSAR site. There will be no impacts upon the habitat qualifying interests of the designated sites within 15km of the development. All of the site features are outside of the zone of influence of the development. No direct source-pathway-receptor linkages between designated sites and the development site exist. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any SAC, SPA, pSPA or RAMSAR site.

Disturbance to Key Species: All designated sites identified lay outside of the zone of influence of the development; therefore, there will be no disturbance to key species associated with any designated site.

Habitat or species fragmentation: There will be no habitat or species fragmentation within any SAC, SPA, pSPA or RAMSAR site. No ecological corridors between the proposed site and any designated site exist, which could cause habitat, or species fragmentation, therefore, no habitat or species fragmentation will occur.

Reduction in species density: There will be no reduction in species density within any SAC, SPA, pSPA or RAMSAR site.

Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.): There will be no negative impacts upon surface or groundwater quality within any SAC, SPA, pSPA or RAMSAR site. No direct source-pathway-receptor linkages between designated sites and the development site exist. 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 any 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. Article 6(3) Appropriate Assessment Screening Statement & Conclusions

The findings of this Screening Assessment are presented following the European Commission’s Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the ‘Habitats’ Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment’s Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

In order to assess the impact on the Natura 2000 sites, a standard source-pathway-receptor model is utilised. Therefore, in order for an impact to be established, all three of these elements must be present.

Nine Natura 2000 sites are present within 15km of the site, including:

- Ardagullion SAC
- Derragh bog SAC
- Moneybeg and Claireisland Bogs SAC
- Garraskil Bog SAC
- Lough Kinale and Derragh Lough SPA
- Lough Sheelin SPA
- Garraskil Bog SPA
- Lough Derravaragh SPA
- Glenlough SPA

The test of likely significance (TOLS) has concluded that the source-pathway-receptor mechanism, cannot be established for these sites. No pathway from the development site to these designated sites is present, so no impact to designated sites is anticipated. Due to the benign nature of the development and the lack of pollution pathways from the site, all of these designations highlighted above can be screened out.

No designated sites have been identified as within the likely zone of impact, and as such, no further appropriate assessment is required⁴⁵:

⁴⁵ NPWS Protected Site Synopses and maps available on <http://www.npws.ie/en/ProtectedSites/>;

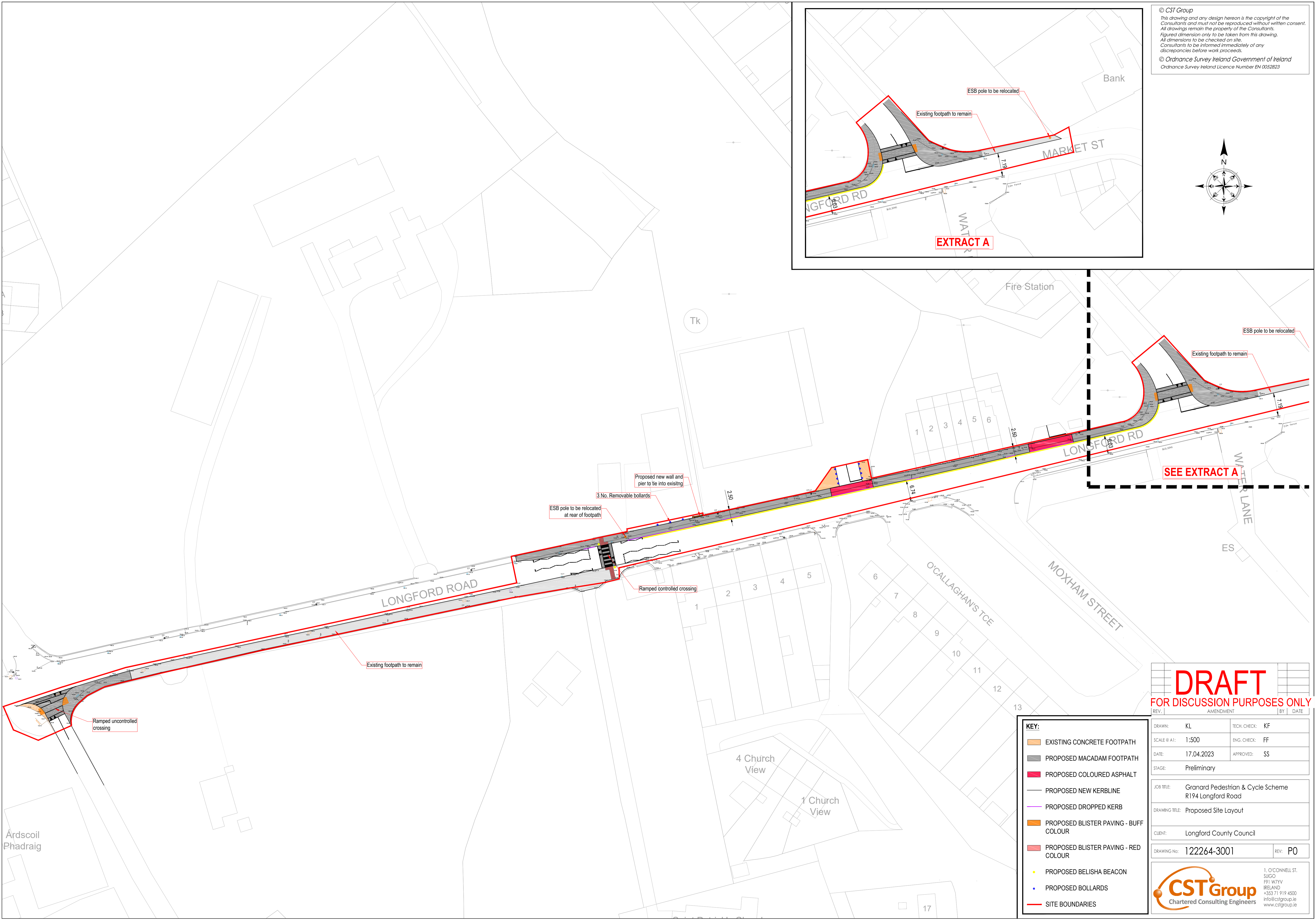
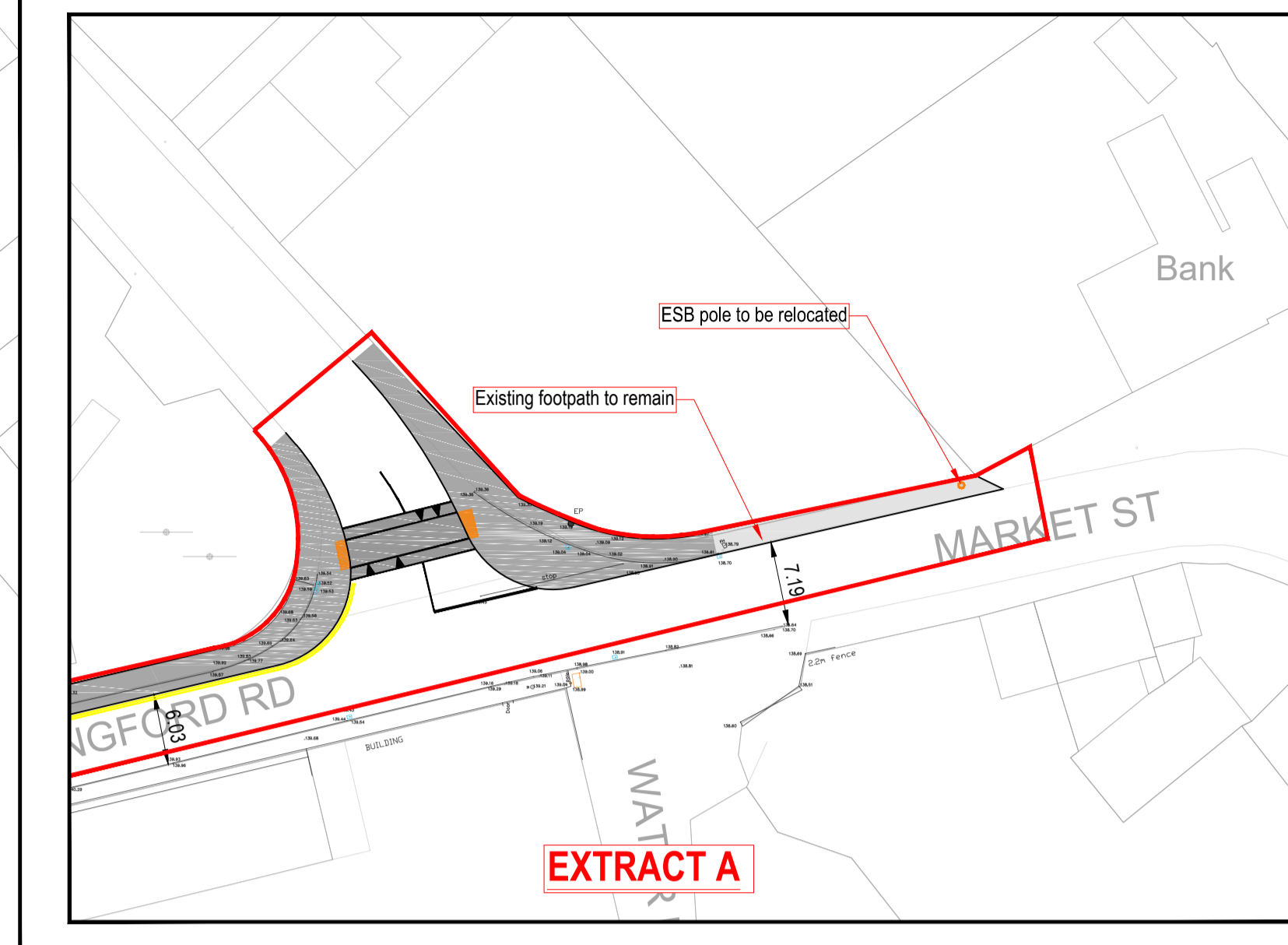
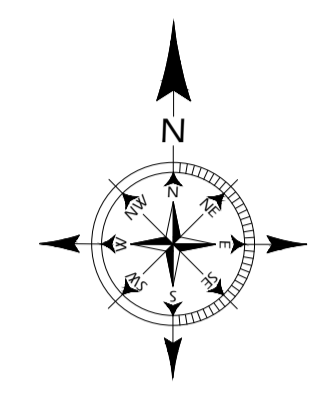
5. Appropriate Assessment Conclusions

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the relevant case law established best practices and the precautionary principle, this NIS Stage 1 Screening Report has examined the details of the project in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the works site.

In view of the best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, it can be concluded that this application, whether individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will have no impact upon any Natura 2000 sites. The integrity of these sites will be maintained, and the habitats and species associated with these sites will not be adversely affected. It is of the opinion of this author that this application does not need to proceed to Stage II of the Appropriate Assessment process.

Appendix A – Current Site Plan

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DRAFT
 FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

REV.	AMENDMENT	BY	DATE

DRAWN: KL	TECH. CHECK: KF
SCALE @ A1: 1:500	ENG. CHECK: FF
DATE: 17.04.2023	APPROVED: SS
STAGE: Preliminary	
JOB TITLE: Granard Pedestrian & Cycle Scheme R194 Longford Road	
DRAWING TITLE: Proposed Site Layout	
CLIENT: Longford County Council	
DRAWING NO: 122264-3001	REV: P0

KEY:
EXISTING CONCRETE FOOTPATH
PROPOSED MACADAM FOOTPATH
PROPOSED COLOURED ASPHALT
PROPOSED NEW KERBLINE
PROPOSED DROPPED KERB
PROPOSED BLISTER PAVING - BUFF COLOUR
PROPOSED BLISTER PAVING - RED COLOUR
PROPOSED BELISHA BEACON
PROPOSED BOLLARDS
SITE BOUNDARIES

CST Group
 Chartered Consulting Engineers

1, O'CONNELL ST.
 SUGO
 F91 W7TV
 IRELAND
 +353 71 919 4500
 info@cstgroup.ie
 www.cstgroup.ie