ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

POBAL LE CHEILE REGENERATION PROJECT, MAIN STREET, BALLYMAHON, CO. LONGFORD

2025

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Declaration

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Date:	March 2025	March 2025
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BRIEF

Panther Environmental Solutions Ltd (PES Ltd) were commissioned by Kenny Lyons Associate Architects, acting on behalf of Longford County Council to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment screening report for a proposed development located at the Convent of Mercy, Main Street, Ballymahon, Co. Longford.

The proposed development will consist of the renovation of the existing Convent of Mercy building with new build extensions and the construction of a community hall and all associated site works at the Convent of Mercy, Main Street, Ballymahon, Co. Longford.

This EIA Screening assessment document has been prepared by PES Ltd on behalf of and for the exclusive use of the Longford County Council.

This EIA Screening has been prepared with reference to Schedules 5 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

1.2.1 Site Location

The development site is located in the town of Ballymahon, Co. Longford. The site is located at Irish Grid Reference (215485 E, 257448 N) or Irish Transverse Mercator (611497E, 724465N).

The development is located within the town centre of Ballymahon and would be considered urban in nature, with residential housing, community services, primary and secondary schools and local shops in the surrounding area.

Vehicular access to the to the site will be via the existing entrances off the Church View Road located on the western boundary of the site. The site has good connectivity to the national and regional road network via the N55 and R392. Pedestrian access to the site will also be via existing entrances to the west of the site with good connectivity to the town of Ballymahon.

The site is bordered by Church View Estate along its northern boundary, Mercy Secondary School along its eastern boundary, and St. Matthew's Catholic Church and LWETB College of Further Education and Training along its southern boundary.

The Convent of Mercy was built c. 1882 and further extended in 1895 and functioned as a nunnery/convent. In more recent years the convent functioned as a day care centre.

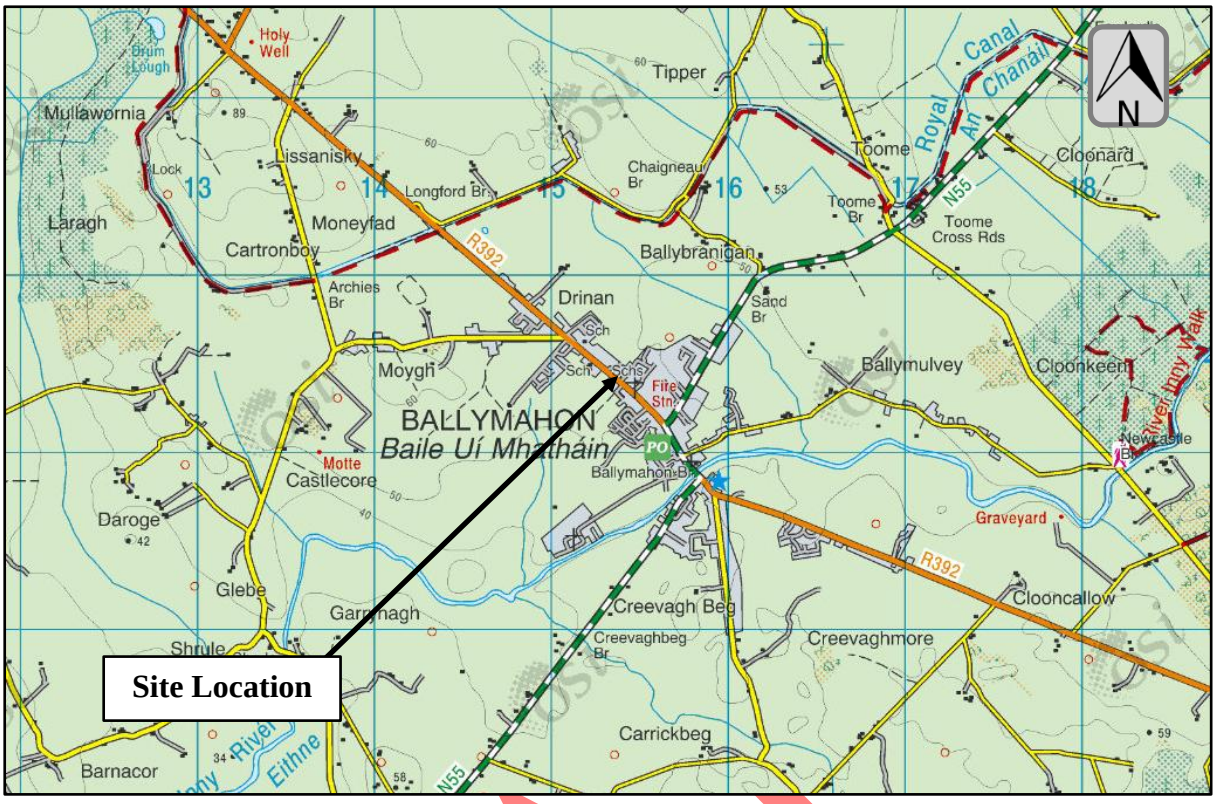

Figure 1.1: Site Location (Discovery Maps)

Figure 1.2: Aerial Image (Google Earth)

1.2.2 Description of the Development

The site currently consists of the existing Convent of Mercy which includes the original convent built c.1882, a late 20th century single-storey extension and the remains of a formal garden.

The proposed development is part of the "Ballymahon – Pobal le Cheile Regeneration Project" consisting of the regeneration of the existing convent, the demolition of the single storey extension, and the construction of new extensions and a stand-alone community hall and all associated site works at Main Street, Ballymahon, Co. Longford (ITM Coordinates: 615445,757470).

The estimated duration for the proposed development works is 15-18 months and covers a total site area of 0.48 Ha.

The proposed development will include:

- The refurbishment of the existing Convent of Mercy building including repairs/replacement of all existing external windows and doors, repair and replacement of existing roof and damp proofing of the basement.
- Demolition of the hexagonal extension to the southwest of the convent and the extension to the northwest at ground floor level. Minor external demolition works including exterior stairs and ramps.
- Minor internal demolition works including various internal walls to repurpose rooms and provide the rooms required for a day care centre.
- The construction of a single storey flat roof extension to the southwest of the convent and the construction of a three-storey tower on the northeastern side of the convent providing a new stairwell.
- Internal works including the dry lining of rooms insofar as possible, replacement of the existing lift, the addition of a stair core to northwestern side of the building and the addition of new openings to the existing extension being retained.
- The construction of a single storey pitched roof community hall along the Northeastern boundary of the site containing toilets, coffee dock, entrance hall, community hall and store.
- Construction of a new carpark providing 24 parking spaces, including one accessible space to the southeast of the building, and a staff carpark providing 8 parking spaces to the north of the site. A set down area and turning area will be constructed to the south of the site.

The proposed development of the convent building and community hall includes a total floor area of 1,758.7m^2, with the area of the convent to be refurbished at 1123.7m^2, the total area of the proposed extension to the convent at 401.6m^2 and the total area of the proposed community hall at 233.3m^2.

The site will be accessible via the Church View Road to the west of the site, which connects to the Main Street (R392) approximately 50m to the west. The R392 regional road connects with the N55 National Road approximately 350m to the southeast of the site.

The proposed heating system for the existing convent building, the proposed convent extensions and the proposed community hall is air to water heat pumps.

Water will be provided to the existing and proposed buildings via an existing connection to the public mains. A connection application will be made to Uisce Éireann.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities at the existing and proposed buildings would be directed via a new discharge public pipe along the Church View Road to the existing foul water drainage network located on the R392. A connection application will be made to Uisce Éireann. Foul water would be directed to Ballymahon WWTP (EPA Licence Number: D0096-01), which will discharge to the River Inny (215654E, 256731N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 2,818 which exceeds the WWTP p.e as constructed of 2,300. There are no Specified Improvement Programmes for Ballymahon WWTP.

A new stormwater drainage system is proposed as part of the development which will incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems measures to reduce the flow of surface water from the site. Surface water will enter and be collected by a new a pipe network and will be directed to an existing surface water pipe located along Church View Road to the west of the site. Stormwater will pass through a petrol interceptor before discharging into the existing surface water pipe. Permeable paving will be installed within the carparking areas of the site to slow surface water runoff, treat the surface water runoff and provide storage.

During excavation works, soils would be temporarily stored onsite, and any excess soils would be used for landscaping or exported offsite via a licence contractor.

All construction activities would take place during normal working hours between 7:00am and 19:00pm, Monday to Friday and 7:00am and 13:00pm Saturday.

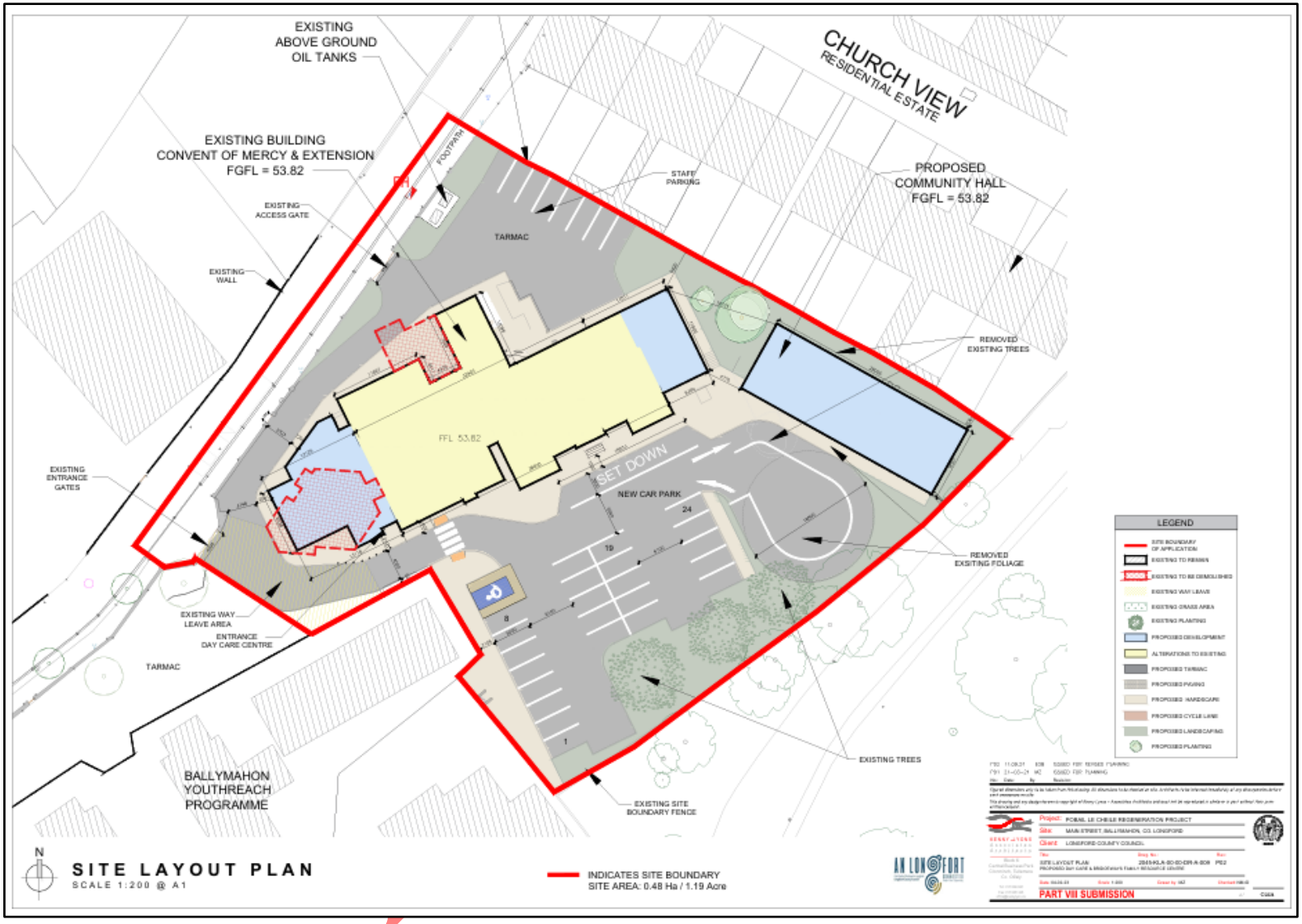

Figure 1.3: Site Layout Plan

2.0 PES LTD - COMPETENCY & EXPERIENCE

PES is a leading environmental consulting firm based in Carlow, Ireland. PES was formed in 2005 by environmental consultant Mr. Mike Fraher who has over two decades of experience working in the environmental consultancy industry, both in Ireland and in the United Kingdom.

The PES team are competent and experienced in preparing environmental planning documents. PES has completed environmental works in a wide range of industries including construction, waste management, industrial and intensive agriculture.

This Environmental Impact Assessment Report Screening has been prepared by experienced environmental consultants within PES Ltd.

Mr Mike Fraher has over 25 years of consultancy experience and has a B.Sc. Degree in Environmental Sciences from the University of Glamorgan, Cardiff in Wales and a Diploma in Food Sciences from Cork Institute of Technology.

Mr. Martin O'Looney has over ten years' consultancy experience and has a B.Sc. Degree in Environmental Science and Technology from Sligo Institute of Technology.

Mr. Nial Ryan has over eight years' consultancy experience and has a BSc. in Applied Physics from Dublin City University, an MSc. in Medical Device Regulatory Affairs, a Certificate in Introduction to AutoCAD, and a Certificate in Environmental, Health & Safety Management all from Institute of Technology Carlow.

Mr. Luis Soares has a BSc. in Aquatic Sciences and a MSc. In Environmental Sciences and Technology from University of Porto.

Ms. Isabel Carr has a BSc. in Environmental Science from University of Galway.

This screening report has been prepared having regard to the following documents:

- The Irish Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2018 as amended (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018).
- Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (2014) On the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Environmental Protection Agency's (2022) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports. Dublin 14, EPA Publications.
- European Commission (2001). Guidance on EIA Screening. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

3.0 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT & MANDATORY EIAR REVIEW

3.1 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are derived from Council Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC, and 2009/31/EC) and as codified and replaced by Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (amended in turn by Directive 2014/52/EU).

This EIAR Screening is drafted based on the requirements of EU Directive 2014/52/EU.Under the Directive, 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16th April 2014 "*The assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment*" Annex I and Annex II class activities are described.

EIA Directives were transposed into Irish law under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

This EIAR Screening has been prepared with reference to Schedule 5 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations.

The first step in screening is to determine whether a project is listed in either Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5, which describes the thresholds of Part 1 projects, which require a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), or Part 2 projects which may have the potential to pose a risk to the environment, and require screening to determine if an EIAR is required.

Schedule 7 is to be used in the case of screening determination (i.e. information to be provided by the developer on projects listed in Part 2). Schedule 7A details the criteria for determining whether a sub-threshold development would, or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

3.2 SCHEDULE 5 OF THE IRISH STATUTORY INSTRUMENT (S.I. NO. 296 OF 2018).

Schedule 5, of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 refers to development for the purposes of Part 10 (Environmental Impact Assessment Report) of the planning regulations.

An EIAR is required to accompany a planning application for development of a class set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 which exceeds a limit, quantity or threshold set for that class of development. An EIAR will also be required by the planning authority in respect of sub-threshold development where the authority considers that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment (article 103).

3.3 SCHEDULE 7 OF THE IRISH STATUTORY INSTRUMENT (S.I. NO. 296 OF 2018)

The Annex III EIA screening criteria of Directive 2014/52/EU are transposed into Irish law as Schedule 7, (parts 1 to 3) of the Irish Planning and Development Regulations 2001.

Schedule 7, sets out the Irish Member States criteria used for determining the likelihood of significant impacts from a development on the environment.

Part 1: Characteristics of the Proposed Development

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular;
(a) the size and design of the whole of the proposed development,
(b) cumulation with other existing development and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(*b*) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment,
(c) the nature of any associated demolition works,
(d) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity,
(e) the production of waste,
(f) pollution and nuisances,
(g) the risk of major accidents, and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge, and
(h) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).

Part 2: Location of the Proposed Development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to;
(a) the existing and approved land use,
(b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,
(c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:
  (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
  (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;
  (iii) mountain and forest areas;
  (iv) nature reserves and parks;
  (v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and;
  (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
  (vii) densely populated areas;
  (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

Part 3: Characteristics of the Potential Impacts

The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section 171A of the Act, taking into account;

a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
b) the nature of the impact;
c) the transboundary nature of the impact;
d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;
e) the probability of the impact;
f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and;
h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

The flow chart below describes the EIAR Screening process. This infographic is commonly referred to in EIAR Screening reports and is taken from the Environmental Protection Agency's 2017 "*Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*" (Figure 3.1).

Schedule 7A, sets out the Irish Member States criteria used for determining the likelihood of significant impacts from a sub-threshold development on the environment.

1. A description of the proposed development, including in particular;
   (a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works, and
   (b) a description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.

2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.

3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from;
   (a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and
   (b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.

4. The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7.

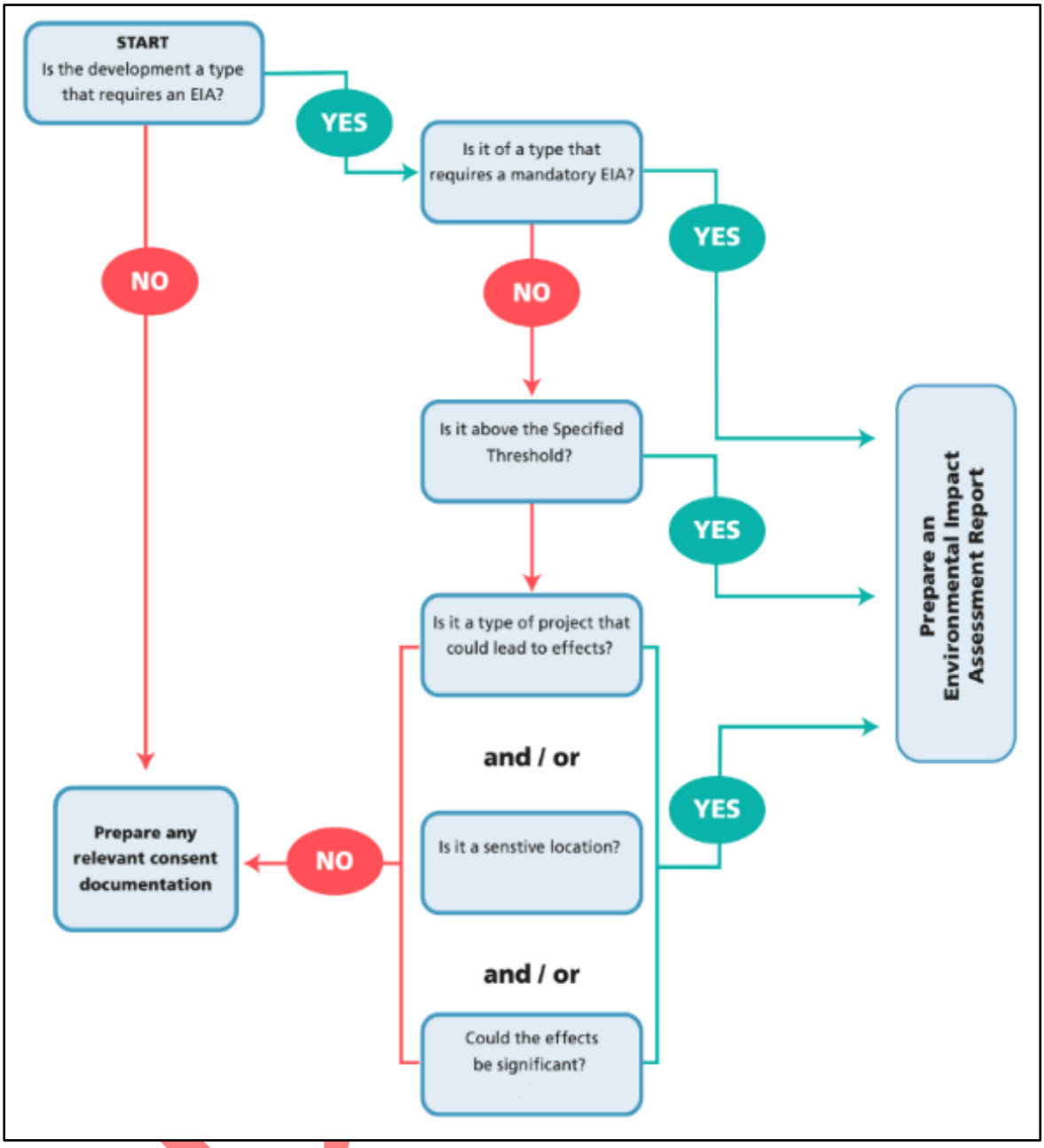

Figure 3.1: E.I.A Screening Process Flow Chart

The overall purpose of this Screening Report is to identify and detail the findings of desktop and available field studies using the precautionary principle undertaken to analyse the impacts, if any, of the proposed development on the receiving environment and, based on the results, decide whether or not an EIAR is required.

3.4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING THRESHOLDS

The proposed development would not fall under any of the classes of development listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations. Therefore, it is considered that a mandatory EIA is not applicable to this project.

The following threshold would be applicable to the development class type:

Planning And Development Regulations 2001 – 2022:
Schedule 5:
Part 2:

10. Infrastructure Projects

(b) (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.

The proposed development is located on a site area of 0.48 hectares within the business district of Ballymahon.

The proposed development includes a total floor area 1,758.7m^2, with 1123.7m^2 owed to the refurbishment of the existing convent, 401.6m^2 for the proposed extension to the convent and 233.3m^2 for the proposed community hall.

Therefore, the proposed development is sub-threshold with the regard to paragraph 10, *Infrastructure Projects*, of Schedule 5: Part 2.

In consideration of the sensitivities of the existing environment, a sub-threshold EIA screening assessment has been carried out in accordance with the criteria listed in Schedule 7 and Scheule 7A of the Planning Regulations.

4.0 PART I – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This section assesses the potential impacts of the development due to the scale and characteristics of the activities proposed to be carried out.

4.1 SIZE AND DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

The overall development consists of the refurbishment of Convent of Mercy, demolition of existing extensions and construction of new extensions and the construction of a new community hall.

The proposed development will consist of the refurbishment of the existing convent building, demolition of the existing extensions to the southwest and northwest of the convent building, construction of new extensions to the southwest and northeast of the convent building and the construction of a new community hall to the northeast of the site. The development will also include the construction of two new car parks to the southeast and north of the site providing a total of no. 24 parking spaces for visitors including no.1 accessible space and no. 8 staff parking spaces.

The development site comprises a total area of 0.48 hectares. The total floor area for the refurbishment of the convent building is 1123.7m^2, for the extension to the convent building is 401.6m^2 and for the new community hall is 233.3m^2.

The development falls within Social/Community/Education/Public Utility zoning in the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and meets the land-use zoning objective: Social / Community / Education / Public Utility - To primarily provide for educational, health, social, cultural, religious and community facilities.

The proposed development will be connected to public services.

The proposed development applies accepted building standards and design for community developments, as outlined in submitted planning drawings.

The proposed development falls below the threshold for urban development infrastructure projects outlined in Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations.

It is not considered an EIAR would be required to further assess the size or design of the project.

4.2 CUMULATION WITH OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The following figure and table provide information from the EIA portal of proposed developments requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) within 10 kilometres of the proposed development.

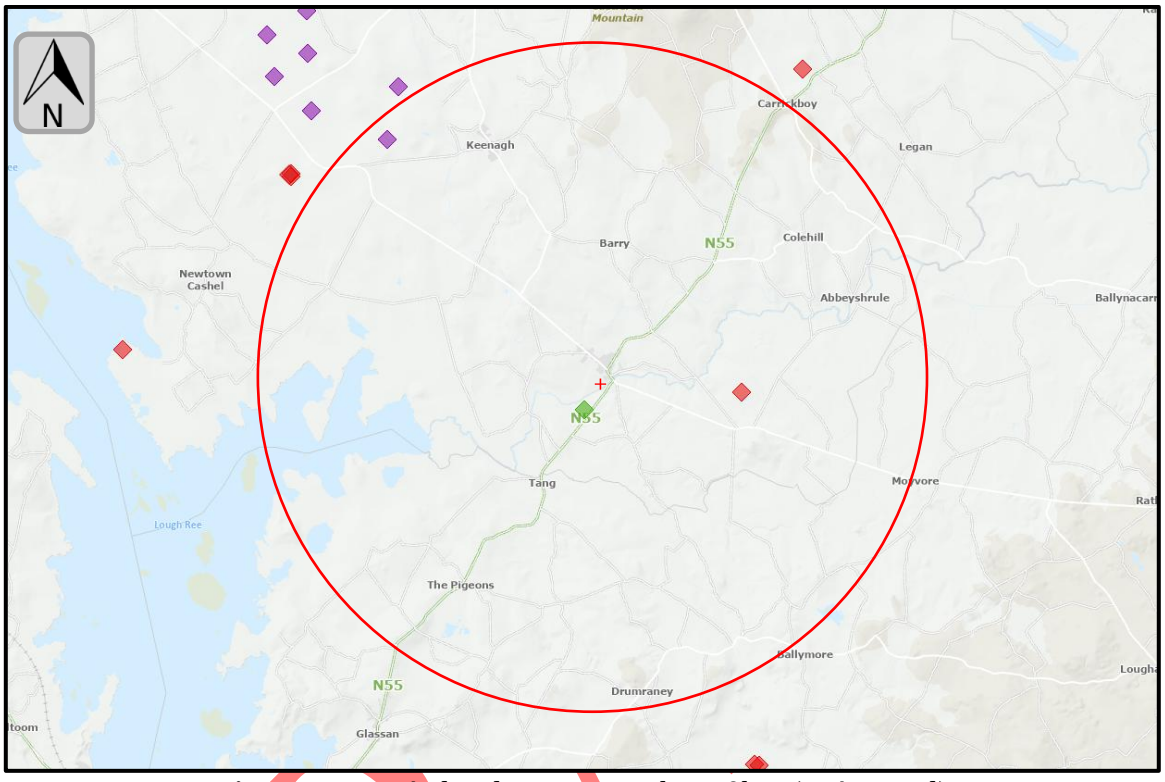

Figure 4.1: EIA developments within 10km (EIA Portal)

Table 4.1: EIA developments within 10km

Planning Ref No.	Description	Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
-	Kepak Longford have applied to the EPA for an Industrial Emission License for a beef processing plant under Class 7.8 (a) (i)	-	Rathmore, Ballymahon, County Longford N39 T3C3 c.1.51km SSW
Longford CC 22189	Extension to the existing development, within the existing Center Parcs Longford Forest Holiday Village, to provide 198 no. new lodges, Coffee Shop, Restaurant, Energy Centre, Housekeeping Stores and extensions to existing buildings within the site.	27/09/2022	Center Parcs Longford Forest Holiday Village, Newcastle Wood, Ballymahon, Co. Longford c. 4.09km ESE
ABP-303592-19	Construction of a 24 turbine wind farm, 110kV substation and battery storage, and all ancillary works as a Renewable Electricity Development. The turbines will have a maximum blade tip height of 185m.	12/06/2020	Listed townlands at Lanesborough, County Longford. c. 8.72km NW

Table 4.2: Other developments within 1 km.

Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
2460100	Development for a Discount Foodstore Supermarket with ancillary off-licence sales. The proposed development comprises: 1) The demolition of existing single storey former school building and site clearance; 2) Construction of new footpath to (West side) of existing Church View access road and associated and ancillary road realignment; 3) Construction of new access road from Church View access road, providing vehicular and pedestrian access to the proposed development (and facilitating the future development of adjoining lands); 4) The construction of a single storey Discount Foodstore (with ancillary off-licence use) with mono-pitch roof measuring 2,291 sqm gross floor space with a net retail sales area of 1,489 sqm; and, 5) Provision of car and cycle parking, boundary treatments, free standing and building mounted signage, covered trolley bay, refrigeration and air conditioning plant and equipment, hard and soft landscaping, public lighting, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, roof mounted solar panels, ESB substation, drainage, utility and services infrastructure and connections, and all other associated and ancillary development and works above and below ground level.	04/12/2024	Main Street / Church View Backlands, Ballymahon Co. Longford, (including rear of former St. Matthews National School Nally Tyres / Circle K and adjoining lands). Adjacent to northwest site boundary.
19312	Proposed demolition of existing fire damaged building formerly known as "St. Matthews Girls School" and all ancillary works.	24/02/2020	Ballymahon, Longford. Adjacent to northwest boundary.
19117	(a) demolition of existing single storey extension to the rear of existing Dental Surgery previously granted planning permission under 07/1096 and proposed two storey extension to rear of existing surgery, (b) change of use of adjoining single storey residential building to use as dental surgery with provision of new single storey extension to the rear, link corridor between buildings, new front access door, (c) to include changes to existing floor layouts to both buildings and changes to relevant elevations, (d) provision of parking area to rear upgrade to access and gate, connection to relevant drainage, provision of boundary wall/fences and retaining walls, signage and all associated site development works where it is now proposed to reduce in size the proposed extension to the rear of building away from lateral boundaries, retain ground excavation works and amendments boundary treatment including rear access and boundary location	27/03/2020	15 Main Street, Ballymahon, Co. Longford c. 125m southeast
247	Of 18/293 proposed demolition of an existing extension to the side of existing Industrial/Commercial/Warehousing Unit together with the proposed construction of a larger attached Industrial/Commercial/Warehousing Unit in it's place which can serve as an extension to the existing Industrial/Commercial/Warehousing building or as	19/03/2024	Edgeworthstown Road, Ballymahon, Co. Longford, c. 235m east

Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
	an individual Industrial/Commercial/Warehousing unit and all ancillary works		
21256	The construction of a new single storey extension to existing school building to accommodate new w/c facilities and all associated site development works.	13/10/2021	Ballymahon Vocational School, Ballymahon, Co Longford c. 245m northwest
2287	Of PL17/66 for the proposed change of use of existing 2 no. derelict agricultural buildings (which are listed as Protected Structures) into a cafe/restaurant/food outlet with associated kitchen area, customer sit down area, customer and staff toilet facilities, cheese making factory with shop together with seeking full planning permission for the proposed construction of a single storey extension linking the 2 no. buildings together, alterations to facades and all ancillary works	20/05/2022	Main St, Ballymahon, Co Longford, c. 250m southeast
22171	Of the following works to a recorded protected structure (no. 107); existing facades as currently constructed that service an existing building which was previously granted full planning permission under planning reference number PL17/66 and all ancillary works	11/05/2023	Main St, Ballymahon, Co Longford, c. 250m southeast
22282	Will consist of the upgrade of existing floodlighting, to include the erection of 8 number 18 metre lighting poles, LED sports floodlights and all associated site works	27/04/2023	Leo Casey Park, Mostrim Road, Ballymahon, c. 315m northeast
19245	To construct a proposed single storey kitchen area to rear, change of use of existing kitchen area to restaurant seating area. Front window on left hand side of front elevation to be replaced with glazed access restaurant door and all ancillary works.	10/01/2020	Main Street, Ballymahon, Co Longford, c.320m southeast
19298	To consist of the change of use on ground floor of existing residential dwelling to a new auctioneers hallway/reception area, existing ground floor extension to rear of existing dwelling to accommodate new office for auctioneer's duties and the proposed single storey construction of kitchenette area to the rear of the existing residential dwelling and existing extension to also accommodate auctioneers office as shown on accompanying drawings & all ancillary works.	06/02/2020	Main Street, Ballymahon, Co. Longford, c. 365m southeast
2074	Proposed construction of a residential development of 37 no. dwelling houses	15/07/2020	Dunaras & Marian Terrace/Marian Villas, Ballymahon, Co Longford c. 365m southeast
2314	Change of use of existing dwelling house to doctors surgery, alterations to window openings to the existing dwelling, construction of an entrance porch and all associated site works.	20/07/2023	Ballymahon, Co. Longford, c. 525m south southeast
19198	Of Planning Permission 14/74 - the demolition of existing one and a half storey building to the rear of the existing medical centre. The construction of a new community primary care network centre comprising of a three storey extension to the rear of	05/09/2019	Medical Centre, Main Street, Ballymahon, c. 550m southeast

Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
	the existing medical centre which is to be retained. The change of use of existing first floor of medical centre building from residential to office/clinic space, along with associated access road, car parking, boundary treatments, plant room, landscaping, external works, connection to public sewers and services and all other ancillary site works.		
2042	The installation of one district regulating installation (DRI) including a steel enclosure (measuring approximately 1.8 high x 1.4m wide x 0.5m deep) to be installed within the existing grass verge with a concrete base (measuring approximately 2m wide x 2m deep), galvanised steel vent stack (approximately 3.5m high) and associated ancillary facilities and works.	30/03/2020	Thomond Hall Road, Ballymahon, Co Longford, c. 605m south southeast
2061	Of an existing yard which stores vehicles for sale purposes. This yard is currently serviced with a car sales building & perimeter fencing both of which was previously granted full planning permission under planning reference PL15/225 and all ancillary works COVID 19.	17/08/2020	Athlone Road, Creevaghbeg, Ballymahon, c. 655m south southeast
21176	(1) alterations to previously granted planning permission reference 13/148 (extended under planning reference 18/67) to include the omission of the proposed storage building and car wash building, (2) installation of a car wash facility and, (3) construction of all ancillary site features including container compound, drainage, service bay, parking bays, line marking and e-charge points.	01/11/2021	Creevaghbeg, Ballymahon, Co Longford, C. 670m south southeast
21323	Proposed retention and completion of existing storage shed to the rear of existing dwelling house and all ancillary works.	06/01/2022	Drinan, Ballymahon, Co Longford, c. 820m northwest
2460230	Of existing single storey habitable accommodation as currently constructed that was previously granted full planning permission for use as stables under planning reference number PL16/201	-	Ballybranigan, Ballymahon, Co. Longford, c. 885m northeast
2096	The proposed construction of a single storey extension which will comprise a reception area together with relevant signage to service existing two storey building and all ancillary works.	24/04/2020	Milennium House, Athlone Road Industrial Estate, Ballymahon, c. 890m south
2360195	The proposed construction of an industrial/commercial/warehousing unit which was previously granted full planning permission under planning reference number PL04/1253 to the rear of existing car showroom & garage, connection to existing services and all ancillary site works	26/02/2023	Drinan, Ballymahon, Co. Longford c. 935m northwest
21155	The proposed material alteration to the front façade to demolish partial structure & install a single use industrial roller door similar in design and colour to that of the existing including all ancillary site works	12/07/2021	Unit 5, Ballymahon Business Park, Athlone Road, c. 960m south
2359	The construction of a 242.00m2 single storey lean-to shed structure including all ancillary site works	23/06/2023	Unit 5, Ballymahon Business Park, Athlone Road, c. 965m south

Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
2360234	To construct a dwelling house, domestic garage with connection to public services and associated site works	26/03/2024	Creevagh Beg, Ballymahon, Co. Longford. C.995 south

4.2.1 Cumulation with Construction Projects

As shown above, approved EIA scale developments are located a significant distance from the project site. Approved EIA scale developments in the area relate to wind farm infrastructure, EPA licenced facilities and recreation developments. The primary in-combination effect with these developments and the proposed project during the construction phase would be the increased HGV traffic on the national and regional road network.

Sub-EIA scale developments primarily involve residences or extensions to existing residences, residential developments as well as various commercial and community projects.

Due to the expected 15–18-month construction period for the proposed development, it is anticipated that there would be a likelihood for these and other future developments to commence construction during the project's construction phase. Therefore, there is potential for in combination construction effects.

Potential in combination construction phase impacts would include nuisance (noise, dust etc.), use of natural resources and construction traffic.

However, the construction phase of each project would be temporary. Appropriate construction management practices should be implemented to prevent significant environmental impacts or nuisance (as screened in further detail within this report).

Therefore, it is not considered that cumulative environmental effects from the construction phase of the project requires further investigation within an EIAR.

4.2.2 Operational Cumulative Effects

The site is located in an urban area, with residential housing estates, local shops, community services, primary and secondary level schools, sports clubs, healthcare and amenities in the surrounding area. Residential properties are located to the north and southwest of the site boundary, Mercy Secondary School is located to the northeast of the site boundary, Circle K service station runs adjacent to the northwest boundary of the site and St. Matthew's Catholic Church and LWETB College of Further Education and Training is located adjacent to the southeast boundary of the site. The majority of the other buildings in the locality consist of residential dwellings and commercial buildings.

These residences, services and surrounding economic activities, in combination with the development site facility have potential to have an impact on a number of environmental elements and municipal services.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities at the existing and proposed buildings would be directed via a new discharge public pipe along the Church View Road to the existing foul water drainage network located on the R392. A connection application will be made to Uisce Éireann. Foul water would be directed to Ballymahon WWTP (EPA Licence Number: D0096-01), which will discharge to the River Inny (215654E, 256731N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 2,818 which exceeds the WWTP p.e as constructed of 2,300. There are no Specified Improvement Programmes for Ballymahon WWTP.

Surface water will be directed to an existing surface water pipe to the west of the development site and permeable paving will be incorporated into the design to reduce the flow of surface water.

The development will source its water from an existing connection to the water mains supply. A connection application will be made to Uisce Éireann. The demand on the municipal water supply would increase once the operational phase of the development, however, there would be sufficient supply to accommodate the development.

Air emissions from the development during the operational phase are not anticipated to have significant adverse effect on the local air quality due to the nature of the development (community centre). Air emission would primarily be associated with emissions from traffic and electricity generation. Such combination emissions would be amenable to reductions through infrastructure and policy change over time. The existing and proposed buildings will be heated by air to water heat pumps. This method of heating emits significantly less emissions in comparison to fossil fuel (Gas or Kerosene) burners.

Once construction has been completed, site related traffic would consist of vehicles related to staff as well as visitors. Traffic volumes would be expected to increase on the local road network as a result of the developments operational phase. However, these increases are not likely to be significant and traffic impacts associated with the development would be minimal. The local road network is anticipated to be sufficient to accommodate site related traffic.

Therefore, it is not considered that cumulative environmental effects from the proposed development requires further investigation within an EIAR.

4.3 USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources are considered to be the physical resources in the environment, which may be either of human or natural origin. These include land, soil, water and biodiversity.

The construction process would include the use of various raw materials and should not require excessive levels of any one natural resource. Resources required for the proposed development include existing soils, concrete, stone and fill material which would be sourced from local suppliers and quarries. There would be expected to be no uncommon use of natural resources for construction.

The development is taking place within a small (0.48Ha) sized area. The area is currently comprised of built structure and a small area of grassland. Much of the surrounding area is already developed as residential, commercial and amenity. It is not anticipated that the consequential land take would have a significant environmental impact.

The operational phase of the proposed development would cause no significant increase in the use of natural resources due to the minor scale of the development and the nature of the activities which will be carried out at the site.

It is not considered that the use of natural resources by the proposed development would require further investigation within an EIAR.

4.4 GENERATION OF WASTES AND BY-PRODUCTS

The management of waste is regulated under the Waste Management Acts, 1996– 2003, and associated regulations.

The principal wastes which may be generated during the demolition and construction phase of the project would be excess soil and C&D waste. In so far as is possible, this material would be reused to reinstate excavated ground and for landscaping purposed once the developments have been completed. C&D waste would be disposed of to an appropriately licenced waste facility via a suitably permitted waste contractor.

There is potential for asbestos containing material to be present in the areas of the proposed development that are to be refurbished/demolished. This is particularly relevant for the later extensions such as the 1970's annex extension to the south west end of the site as the majority of buildings built between 1940 and 1985 contain asbestos in some form. Therefore, it is recommended that a Refurbishment/Demolition Asbestos Survey is completed at the site. Should the presence of asbestos be confirmed, any asbestos containing material would be removed, as far as reasonably practicable by specialist asbestos contractors.

Other potential construction wastes may include general waste from workers, waste concrete etc. These wastes are appropriately segregated on-site and recycled or disposed of as appropriate.

Wastes generated at the site during the operational phase would consist of small volumes of general and recyclable wastes which would be recycled or disposed of appropriately by the visitors and staff.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities at the development during the operational phase would be serviced by the municipal sewerage network.

As waste volumes generated on-site are anticipated to be routine and relatively small, it is not considered that this would require an EIAR for further investigation of potential impacts.

4.5 POLLUTION AND NUISANCE

4.5.1 Pollution

4.5.1.1 *Air Pollution*

Air quality in the region would be expected to be principally influenced by commercial activities, residential or commercial heating systems, agricultural activity and traffic.

The proposed development site is located in the Air Zone D (Rural Ireland) and the nearest currently active Air Monitoring Site is Roscommon Town (Zone D: Rural Ireland) located approximately 29.17km west-northwest of the site. Roscommon Town measure particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) and has a Current Index for Health of 1 – Good.

The main potential sources of air pollutants from the construction of the proposed development would be combustion by-products from the operation of machinery and dust generated from excavations. It is considered that there is potential for asbestos containing material to be present within areas of the proposed development that are to be refurbished/demolished. It is recommended that a Refurbishment/demolition asbestos survey be carried out. Should the presence of asbestos be confirmed, any asbestos containing material would be removed, as far as reasonably practicable by specialist asbestos contractors.

Air emissions from construction machinery would be expected to be minor in a regional context. The potential for construction dust emissions is discussed further under nuisances in this report.

There would be anticipated to be no significant emissions to air during the operational phase, due to the nature of the development (community centre). The proposed heating system will be air to water heat pump. There is no indication that the development could potentially be impacted by dusts arising from the surrounding areas. Potential impacts from dust are discussed in section **4.5.2**.

This would not be anticipated to require an EIAR for further assessment.

4.5.1.2 *Water Pollution*

There are no natural existing water features within the site boundary. The River Inny (EPA Code: 26I01 – Order 5) flows in a south-westerly direction, approximately 618m to the south southeast of the site boundary. The proposed development is located within the Inny (Shannon)_SC_080 (Sub catchment ID: 26F_10) sub-catchment which is part of the Upper Shannon (Catchment ID: 26F) catchment.

Other watercourses in the area include the Drinan Stream (EPA Code: 26D81 – Order 1) which is located 570 metres to the west of the site. This stream is a tributary of the River Inny. There is also an unnamed watercourse located approximately 500m to the north of the site (Order 1).

These watercourses are shown in **Figure 5.7** below.

The proposed development site lies within the Inny GWB [IE_SE_G_110], a locally important aquifer (LI). The site is located in an area where the groundwater vulnerability is classified as moderate (M).

The principal risks to water quality would be due to entrained soil suspended solids and uncured concrete entering surface and groundwaters during construction works. Construction works would be confined to the proposed development footprint and no works taking place within a watercourse or drainage ditch.

There would be no significant volumes of fuels, oils or other chemicals stored on-site during the construction phase of the development. Bunding should be provided for any stored liquid chemicals and be sized so as to provide a holding capacity of 110% of the largest tank within the bund or 25% of the total capacity of all the tanks within the bund, whichever is the greatest.

It is considered that there is no significant risk to water quality during construction works.

During the operational phase, it is not considered that the contamination of water would be likely due to the nature of the development (community centre).

Surface water will enter and be collected by a new a pipe network and will be directed to an existing surface water pipe located along Church View Road to the west of the site. The proposed drainage system also includes permeable paving to reduce the flow of surface water run-off and a petrol interceptor prior to discharge into the existing infrastructure.

Foul water generated by sanitary facilities on site would be directed via a new discharge public pipe along the Church View Road to the existing foul water drainage network located on the R392. Foul water would then be directed to Ballymahon WWTP (EPA Licence No: D0096-01), which will discharge to the River Inny (215654E, 256731N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 2,818 which exceeds the WWTP p.e as constructed of 2,300. There are no Specified Improvement Programmes for Ballymahon WWTP.

Heating systems are proposed to be air to water heat pumps, rather than heating oil.

Therefore, the risks of water pollution during construction or the operational phase would not be anticipated to require an EIAR for further assessment.

4.5.2 Nuisances

Nuisances can be defined as activities or emissions which are of a nature which can reasonably be expected to cause annoyance. As nuisances are defined on the basis of annoyance and infringement upon amenity, sensitive receptors are typically residences, service or amenity areas.

Typical nuisances which may occur during construction activities would include noise and dust. Nuisances which may occur during the operational phase would include noise.

Residential and commercial properties are located in close proximity of the site. The nearest currently occupied residential properties are located to the north, south-east and south-west of the site. See **Figure 4.3** below.

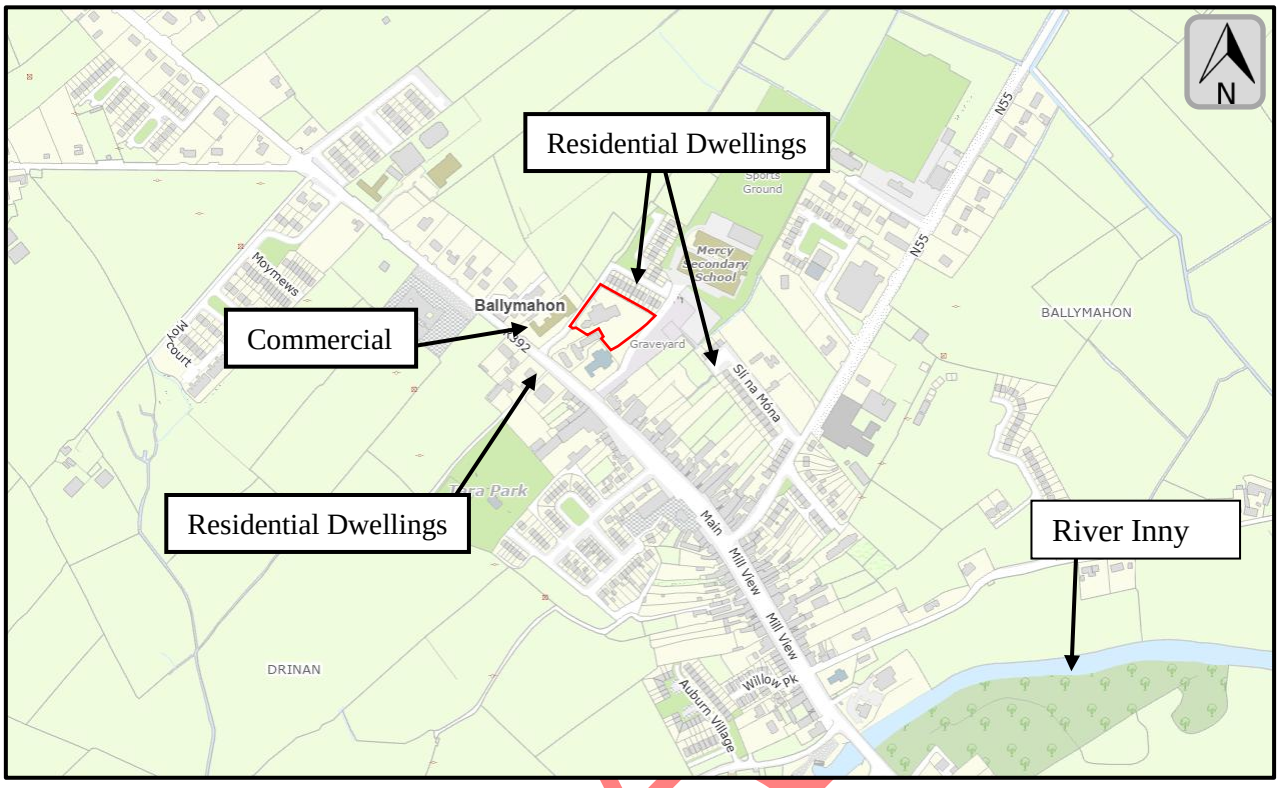

Figure 4.3: Nearest Sensitive Receptors

4.5.2.1 ***Noise***

Operational

The development is located in the centre of Ballymahon Town urban landscape and would be considered urban in nature with residential dwellings, commercial properties, primary and secondary schools.

Operational noise from the complete development would be primarily as a result of human activity and domestic machinery: vehicle operations, raised voices, grass/hedge trimming etc. This noise environment would be characteristic of the existing urban noise environment and noise nuisance would not be anticipated.

Construction

This assessment has analysed the potential impacts of the noise generated during the construction phase of the proposed development on local sensitive receptors.

Relevant Noise Legislation & Guidance

Planning and Development Act 2024 (Number 34 of 2024)
Local authorities are responsible for the planning and environmental regulation of any proposed developments. The current planning and environmental regulatory framework require these developments to comply with the Planning and Development Act (2024) and related regulations.

The local authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála (formerly known as An Bord Pleanála) attach conditions relating to environmental management of these developments to planning permissions granted. Local authorities consider the land use and planning issues associated with the proposed developments in their County Development Plans.

The EPA Act (Noise) Regulations 1994 (S.I. No. 179 of 1994)
The relevant part of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992 dealing with noise is Part VI, Sections 106 to 108. These Sections deal with the control of noise, the power of local authorities to prevent or limit noise and the issue of noise as a nuisance.

The 1994 Regulations came into effect in July 1994 and outline the procedures for dealing with noise nuisance. The Regulations allow affected individuals, local authorities or the EPA to take action against an activity causing a noise nuisance.

These Regulations replaced the procedures for noise complaints contained in the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 1963. Companies must show that reasonable care was taken to prevent or limit the noise from their activities. If the courts decide that a company is responsible for causing a noise nuisance, they can order the company to take measures to reduce, prevent or limit it.

BS 5228:2014 Methodology

There is currently no statutory guidance relating to the maximum permissible noise level for a project's construction phase. Current guidance on permissible noise levels is therefore considered somewhat limited. In the absence of any statutory guidance or other specific limits prescribed by local authorities, an appropriate best practice measure has been adopted as the standard for this project.

Best practice guidelines are taken from the British Standard BS 5228 – 1: 2009 (+A1 2014): *'Code of Practice For Noise And Vibration Control On Construction And Open Sites – Noise'*. BS 5228 sets out an approach for setting appropriate construction noise limits for residential dwellings, but it does not provide guidance for commercial or office buildings.

The BS 5228 *'ABC Method'* calls for the designation of a noise sensitive location into a specific category (A, B or C) based on existing ambient noise levels in the absence of construction noise. This then sets a threshold noise value that, if exceeded, indicates a significant noise impact is associated with the construction activities as summarised in **Table 4.3** below.

Table 4.3: Threshold of Potential Significant Effect at Dwellings (BS 5228)

Assessment category and threshold value period	Threshold value, in decibels (LAeq, T)		
	Category A[(a)]	Category B[(b)]	Category C[(c)]
Night-time (23.00−07.00)	45	50	55
Evenings and weekends[(d)]	55	60	65
Daytime (07.00−19.00) and Saturdays (07.00−13.00)	65	70	75

NOTE 1: A potential significant effect is indicated if the LAeq, T noise level arising from the site exceeds the threshold level for the category appropriate to the ambient noise level.
NOTE 2: If the ambient noise level exceeds the Category C threshold values given in the table (i.e. the ambient noise level is higher than the above values), then a potential significant effect is indicated if the total LAeq, T noise level for the period increases by more than 3 dB due to site noise.
NOTE 3: Applied to residential receptors only.

a) Category A: threshold values to use when ambient noise levels (when rounded to the nearest 5 dB) are less than these values.
b) Category B: threshold values to use when ambient noise levels (when rounded to the nearest 5 dB) are the same as category A values.
c) Category C: threshold values to use when ambient noise levels (when rounded to the nearest 5 dB) are higher than category A values.
d) 19.00–23.00 weekdays, 13.00–23.00 Saturdays and 07.00–23.00 Sundays.

Equipment Used

The equipment used for the noise monitoring was a Cirrus CR:831C Sound Level Meter and a CR:515 Acoustic Calibrator. The CR:831C was calibrated on the 1st of October 2024 and the CR:515 was calibrated externally on 4th of June 2024. The CR:831C confirms to IEC 61672-3:2016.

A calibration check of 94 dB(A) at 1kHz was carried out on the instrument before and after measurement. The calibrator is a Class 1 grade, which conforms to IEC 60942:2003.

The difference between the initial calibration value, any subsequent calibration check, and a final calibration check on completion of measurements did not exceed 0.5 dB, and the instrument calibration was found to be satisfactory.

Measurement periods were appropriate to establish a typical noise level reading at each location in order to establish a dB(A) LAeq reading.

Ambient Noise Monitoring Locations

Ambient noise monitoring was carried out in general accordance with the EPA, 2016 '*Guidance Note for Noise: Licence Applications, Surveys and Assessments in Relation to Scheduled Activities* (*NG4*)'.

The baseline environmental noise levels at NM1 – NM3 locations were determined by instrumented monitoring of existing noise levels. This was determined by taking broadband

noise measurements at these three noise monitoring locations. It is considered that noise levels measured at each of the NM locations would be representative of typical noise levels at the nearest residential property or noise sensitive receptors.

Table 4.4: Noise Monitoring Locations

Ref.	Grid Ref		Type	Location
	X	Y		
NM1	215557	257486	Noise Monitoring Location	Within Church View residential estate approx. 40m northeast.
NM2	215404	257375		Adjacent to residential property approx. 65m southwest.
NM3	215618	257378		Within Slí na Móna residential estate approx. 150m east

All measurements were taken at:

- 1.25 metres height above local ground level
- >3.5 metres away from reflective surfaces

These monitoring points are mapped in **Figure 4.4**.

Figure 4.4: Noise Monitoring Locations Map

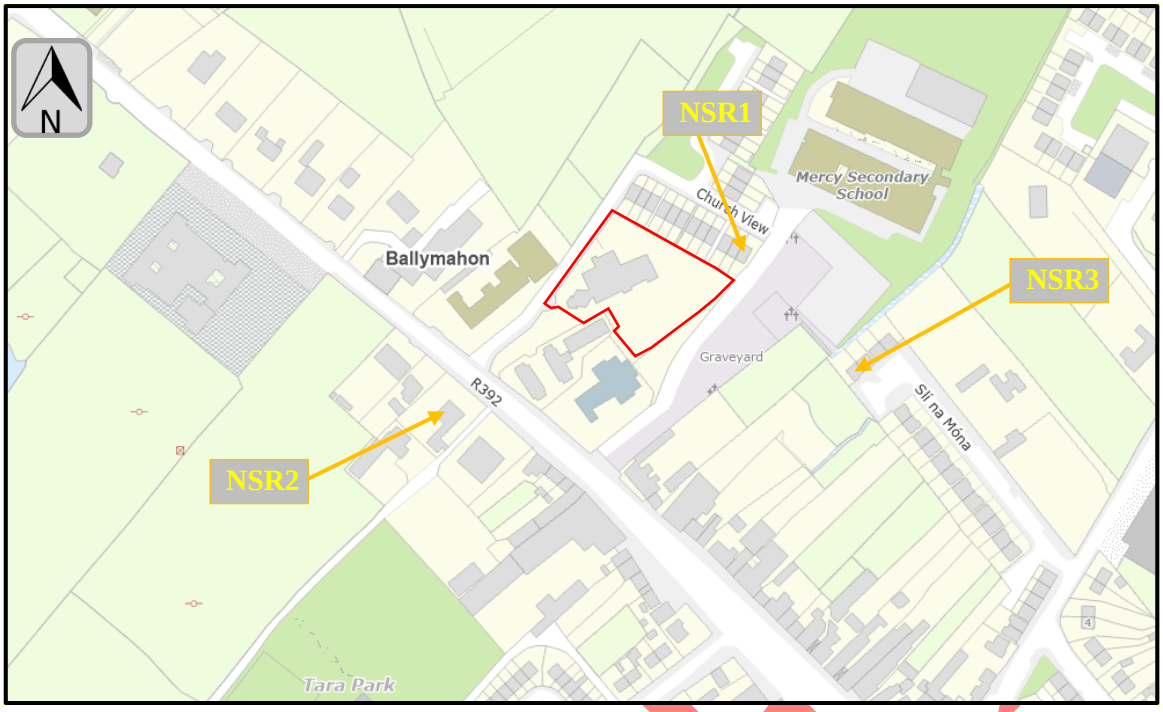

Figure 4.5: Noise Sensitive Receptors

Ambient Noise Monitoring Results

The table below show the ambient noise monitoring results taken at the three noise monitoring locations (NM's) outlined above.

For this assessment, the daytime monitoring was carried out between 11:40 pm and 13:30 pm on Thursday 30th January 2025.

Table 4.5: Ambient Noise Monitoring Results

Ref.	LAeq dB(A)	Rounded to nearest 5 dB
NM1	43.7	45
NM2	68.9	70
NM3	43.9	45
Average	**64.2**	**65**

Table 4.5 shows that, when rounded to the nearest 5 dB, the daytime ambient noise levels taken at NM locations in the vicinity of the existing site ranges between 45 – 70 dB, with an overall rounded average of 65 dB.

Therefore, the site would be designated as *Category B* as defined in **Table 4.3** and a daytime *threshold value* of 70 dB would apply to the site during the construction phase of the development. Recorded noise levels were impacted by traffic at noise monitoring location NM2. No construction works were carried out at the site or in its immediate surroundings during the assessment. Therefore, LAeq figures resulted not only from the existing environment.

Construction Source Noise

As part of these construction works, noise will likely be generated during phases when activities requiring heavy plant machine is required, such as site excavation and the laying of underground pipework.

Delivery of materials would likely occur during Phases 2 – 4, while on-site machinery movement is expected during Phases 1 – 3.

Depending upon the ground conditions encountered during construction and the contractor appointed, the methodology for the construction programme may vary. A review of standard noise values for various construction plant and equipment from the British Standard 5228-1:2009(+A1:2014) has therefore been undertaken.

The construction plant and machinery will change as the project develops, with plant and equipment only operating within any particular section of the site for a relatively short period of time.

Table 4.6 below contains a breakdown of the likely construction phases

Table 4.6: Construction Phases

Ref.	Title	Description of Works
Phase 1	• Demolition & Site Setup	• Demolition of existing structures • Stripping of topsoil for the structure footprint; • Stockpiling and removal of excavated topsoil; • Cut and fill activities.
Phase 2	• Foundation	• The pouring of reinforced concrete foundations; • The import and rolling of hardcore material; • The import, screeding and planning/finishing of internal concrete flooring.
Phase 3	• Walls, Roofing and Drying-In	• Block work. • Installation of roof woodwork/rafters. • Tiling/slating of roofs. • Installation of PVC windows and doors.
Phase 4	• Finishing	• Installation of internal lighting and electrical system. • Installation of internal pluming works. • Plastering/rendering of internal walls. • Fitting of kitchens and other carpentry works.
Phase 5	• Landscaping	• Minor landscaping works.

Table 4.7 contains typical noise levels from various construction plant that would be used during the construction phase. These standard noise emission data, recalculated from 10m to 1m, will be used for the purposes of the worst-case noise assessment of the proposed works.

Table 4.7: Noise Levels from Construction Phase (Ref: BS5228:2009)

Phase	Ref.	Plant/Equipment	Sound Pressure LAeq at 1m	Combined Sound Pressure LAeq at 1m
Phase 1	C2.1	Dozer (Clearing Site)	95	**100 dB**
	C1.5	Pulveriser Mounted On Excavator (29t) (Breaking Concrete)	92	
	C2.8	Wheeled Backhoe Loader (Clearing Site)	88	
	C2.28	Wheeled Loader (Loading)	96	
Phase 2	C2.8	Wheeled Backhoe Loader (Clearing Site)	88	**98 dB**
	C4.18	Cement Mixer Truck Discharging (Mixing Concrete)	95	
	C5.20	Vibratory Roller (Rolling And Compaction)	95	
Phases 3	C2.35	Telescopic Handler (Distribution Of Material)	91	**97 dB**
	C4.23	Small Cement Mixer (Mixing Concrete)	81	
	C4.94	Petrol Generator (Miscellaneous)	95	
Phase 4	C4.94	Petrol Generator (Miscellaneous)	95	**95 dB**
	C4.23	Small Cement Mixer (Mixing Concrete)	81	
Phase 5	C2.8	Wheeled Backhoe Loader (Clearing Site)	88	**97 dB**
	C4.3	Dumper (Distribution Of Material)	96	

$$\text{Combined} = 10.\text{Log}\sum_{i=1}^{n} 10^{Lp/10}$$

Noise Discussion

Table 4.5 shows that, when rounded to the nearest 5 dB, the daytime ambient noise levels taken at NM locations in the vicinity of the existing site ranges between 45 – 70 dB, with an overall rounded average of 65 dB.

Therefore, the site would be designated as *Category B* as defined in **Table 4.3** and should operate to the following noise limits:

Table 4.8: Applicable Construction Noise Limits for Pobal le Cheile Development

Noise Limit and Period	Category B decibels (LAeq, T)
Night-time (23.00−07.00)	50
Evenings (19.00−23.00)	60
Daytime (07.00−19.00) and Saturdays (07.00−13.00)	70

Using the Phase 1 construction noise level of 100 dB (maximum noise within site area) outlined in **Table 4.7** and the reduction of noise as a result of distance, it is possible to calculate the potential noise impact at the closest NSL's during the construction phase.

Table 4.9 below shows that, when this calculated potential noise impact at the closest NSL's is compared to the BS5228 thresholds, levels at NSR2, and NSR3 are 6.8 dB, and 8.4 dB under the 70dB threshold, while levels at NSR1 are over by 10 dB.

Table 4.9: Predicted Construction Noise Impact – Site Works

Ref	Construction Source dB	Dist (m)	Adiv dB	LAeq at NSL	ABC Limit	Difference
NSR1	100	10	20	80	70	+10
NSR2	100	69	36.8	63.2	70	-6.8
NSR3	100	83	38.4	61.6	70	-8.4

Note: distances are from sensitive locations to closest potential area of construction.

$A_{div} = 20.\text{Log}\left(\frac{\text{dist}}{\text{do}}\right)$ when d_o = 1m

LAeq at NSL = Construction Source – A_{div}

Difference = Level at NSL – ABC Limit

It should be noted that these noise levels are considered a worst-case scenario, as it assumes that the construction activity of each phase are carried out simultaneously at a single point location (i.e. excavator, cement mixer operations and lifting of roof rafters). It is not anticipated that such an event would occur.

In practice, it is our experience that noise levels do not commonly exceed these levels. However, this screening assessment has determined that it is theoretically possible for noise levels to exceed these guidance limits.

In order to ensure that no noise nuisance occurs during the construction phase, it is recommended that the following measures be followed.

All construction activities should take place between 7:00am and 19:00pm, Monday to Friday and 7:00am and 13:00pm Saturday. Any works that, by necessity, are required to be carried out outside of these times should be notified to any potentially effected local residents in good time and prior to specified works commencing.

It is recommended that guidance on control of noise, as per The National Roads Authority's '*Guidelines for the Treatment of noise and vibration in National Road Schemes'* (2004) and British Standard 5228-1 *'Code of practice for Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites'* be followed during the construction phase. Where noise levels are anticipated to exceed the guidance limit, as indicated above, it is recommended that these guidance documents be followed for the provision of noise mitigation measures, such as temporary noise barriers. This is particularly the case for any high noise works within 50m of the façade of any existing residence.

Inform on-site workers, hauliers and contractors of noise considerations on-site and on public access roads.

Timely and adequate maintenance of all construction equipment, including preventative maintenance, to ensure efficient operation and minimisation of potential noise.

It is not considered that further assessment within an EIAR would be required for nuisance noise risk.

4.5.2.2 ***Dust Nuisance***

Operational

Dust generation as a result of the operational phase would be anticipated to be negligible once seeding has become established and due to the scale of the development.

There is no indication that the development could potentially be impacted by dusts arising from surrounding areas.

Construction

Dust may arise from loose excavated soils and imported aggregate material. The potential for dust emissions during the project would be expected to be minimised due to the minor scale of the proposed development. Therefore, the quantities of materials available to generate dust would be limited.

The development has the potential to generate dust during its construction phase. The majority of dust would be generated during site excavation works where topsoil would be cleared. The introduction of class 804 and other gravels, sands and silts on to the site for the creation of hardcore surfaces will also increase the potential for dust to become a nuisance issue. The potential for construction dust dispersion depends on the local meteorological conditions such as rainfall, wind speed and wind direction.

The impact that dust from the development site may have on the surrounding area was assessed with the use of **Table 4.9** below.

Closest residential dwellings within the vicinity of the sites were identified and these will be the most likely receptors of any impacts from dust dispersal as a result of construction activities at the proposed sites.

Table 4.3: Assessing the Criteria for the Impact of Dust from Construction with Standard Mitigation in place. (National Road Authority)

Source		Potential Distance for Significant Effects from the Source (meters)		
Scale	**Description**	**Soiling**	**PM_{10}***	**Vegetation**
Major	Large construction sites, with high use of haul roads	100m	25m	25m
Moderate	Moderate sized construction sites, with moderate use of haul roads	50m	15m	15m
Minor	Minor construction sites, with limited use of haul roads	25m	10m	10m

* Significance based on the 2005 standard, which allows 35 daily exceedances/year of 50 µg/m

The proposed development phase would be of minor scale, with limited use of haul roads. Therefore, only residences within 25m of the site boundaries would be at risk of effects due to soiling. The main potential for dust creation at this site will come from excavation works, handling of gravels/sands and the transportation of the above materials to and from the site.

There are no residences within 25m of the site to the south, east and west of its boundaries. There are several residential dwellings to the north of the site boundary. The distance of these houses from the northern site boundary is approximately 10m. These residential dwellings may be impacted by soiling from dust as a result of the construction works.

The likelihood of residences to the north of the site being impacted by PM_{10} particulates would be moderate as works will occur within 10m of the receptor locations.

The likelihood of these residences being impacted could be lessened further by the short duration that excavation works will take in the vicinity of the properties, storing any sand, silt or gravel stockpiles towards the eastern section of the site, use of a road sweeper and dust suppression techniques such as water misting during dry weather periods.

The vegetation found here is mainly in the form of cultivated grassland bounded by hedgerows. Vegetation occurs along the boundaries of the site and therefore would be within 15m of the works. Impacts on the vegetation in this area as a result of construction activities at the site are predicted to be low as a result of the short duration of excavation works. Dust dispersal from the site on to this area could be mitigated against further by implementing typical dust control methods such as using water bowsers, sprays or vapour mists in very dry weather and covering any stockpiles of sand, gravel or silt on site.

Once the hardcore surfaces have been installed and seeding has become established, the likelihood of dust impacting the nearby residential properties would be very low.

Construction dust control is a common part of construction management practices. The effect of construction activities on air quality, in particular construction dust, would not be significant due to the limited construction timeframes and following the implementation of standard working practices and the standard mitigation measures which are highlighted below.

The construction works contractor will implement the following dust control measures for the duration of the proposed development:

- Cognisance would be taken of the guidelines published by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM), "*Assessment of dust from demolition and construction 2014*";
- Material handling systems and site stockpiling of materials would be designed and laid out to minimise exposure to wind;
- Prolonged storage of materials onsite would be avoided;
- When transporting materials to and from the site, vehicles would be fitted with covers where possible to prevent material loss;
- Public roads outside the site would be regularly inspected for cleanliness and cleaned as necessary. A road sweeper would be used if required;
- While the natural recolonization of exposed areas of soil during reinstatement activities is preferred, re-seeding would be undertaken where required to promote the rapid stabilisation of soils;
- Regular visual inspections would be undertaken around the proposed site boundary to monitor the effectiveness of dust control measures.

Should additional dust control measures be required, for instance during particularly dry weather, dust suppression measures would be undertaken, including the following:

- Water misting plant, such as bowsers and sprays would be used as required and where necessary;
- Where practicable, stockpiles of excavated soils and exposed surfaces would be dampened down via misting plant.

If the above standard recommendation measures are followed during the construction period of this site, then it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse impact on local air quality as a result of dust dispersal.

Impacts associated with dust during construction would not be likely to be significant and would not be considered to require and EIAR.

4.6 RISKS OF MAJOR ACCIDENTS AND RISKS TO HUMAN HEALTH

As noted in the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU, precautionary actions need to be put in place for certain projects which, "*due to their vulnerability to major accidents and/or natural disasters (such as flooding, sea level rise or earthquakes) are likely to have significant adverse effects on the environment*".

It is not anticipated that there would be a significant risk of environmental impacts as a result of accidents during the operational phase due to the nature of activities that will be taking place and particulars of the development as outlined in Section 1.2.2. The scale of construction occurring at any one time would be minor, with limited quantities of materials present as the development of the site progresses. Typical construction methods and practices would be anticipated to adequately mitigate against accidents or risks to human health.

The site does not fall within the Seveso III Regulations or European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015, as no dangerous substances would be used at the site. There would not be anticipated to be significant volumes of chemicals or fuels stored at the site.

OPW National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) and National Indicative Fluvial flood mapping shows the site is not located within any fluvial, pluvial or groundwater flood zones.

The proposed site is not located in an area prone to landslides or earthquakes. The nearest recorded landslide event occurred in the townland of Ballymakeggan, Co. Longford, approximately 15km north of the development site.

Risks to human health would not be expected to be change significantly as a result of the construction or operational phase of the development. There are no recorded drinking water abstractions in close proximity to the site.

Therefore, risks associated with major accidents or human health would not be considered to require and EIAR for further assessment.

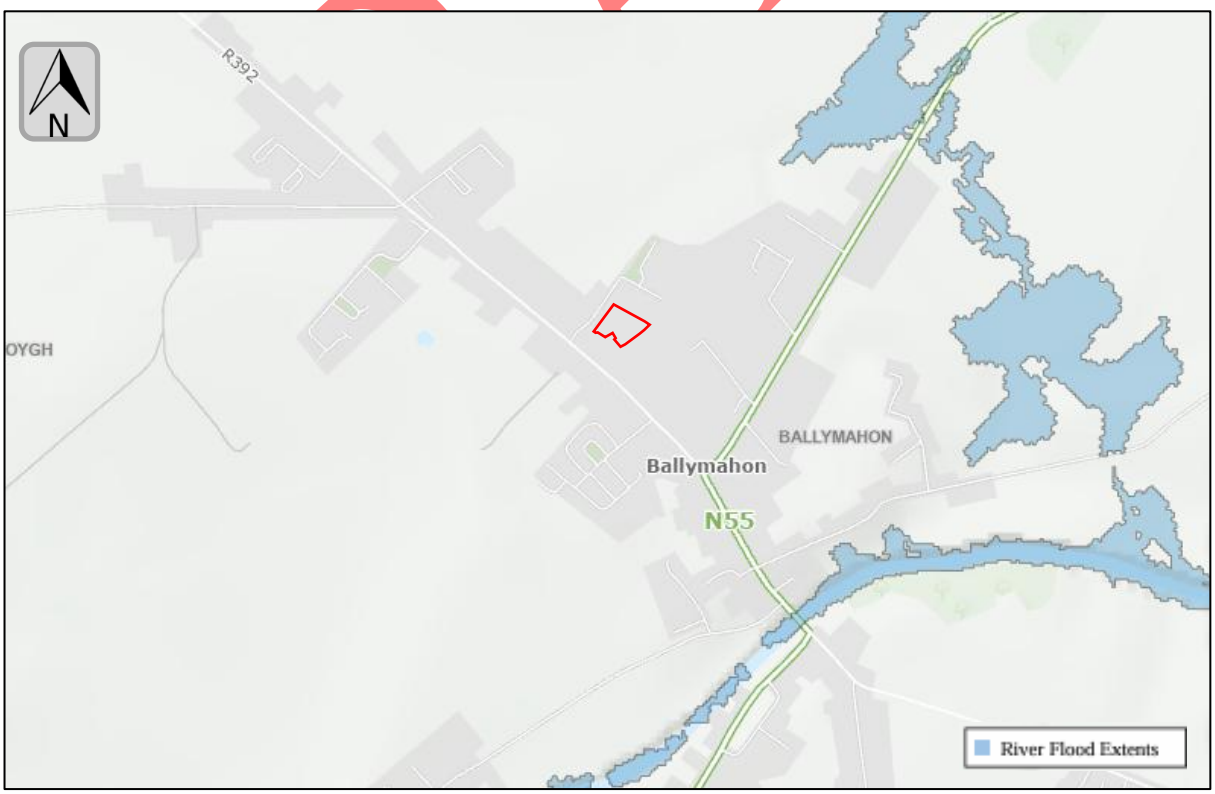

Figure 4.6: CFRAM River Flood Extents (Medium Probability)

5.0 PART II – LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This section assesses the potential impacts of the development due to the sensitivities of the proposed location.

5.1 EXISTING AND APPROVED LAND USE

The development is located in the centre of Ballymahon urban area. According to the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 Land Use Zoning Objectives, the proposed development falls under the land use objectives 'Social/Community/Education/Public Utility'.

Social/Community/Education/Public Utility:
To primarily provide for educational, health, social, cultural, religious and community facilities.

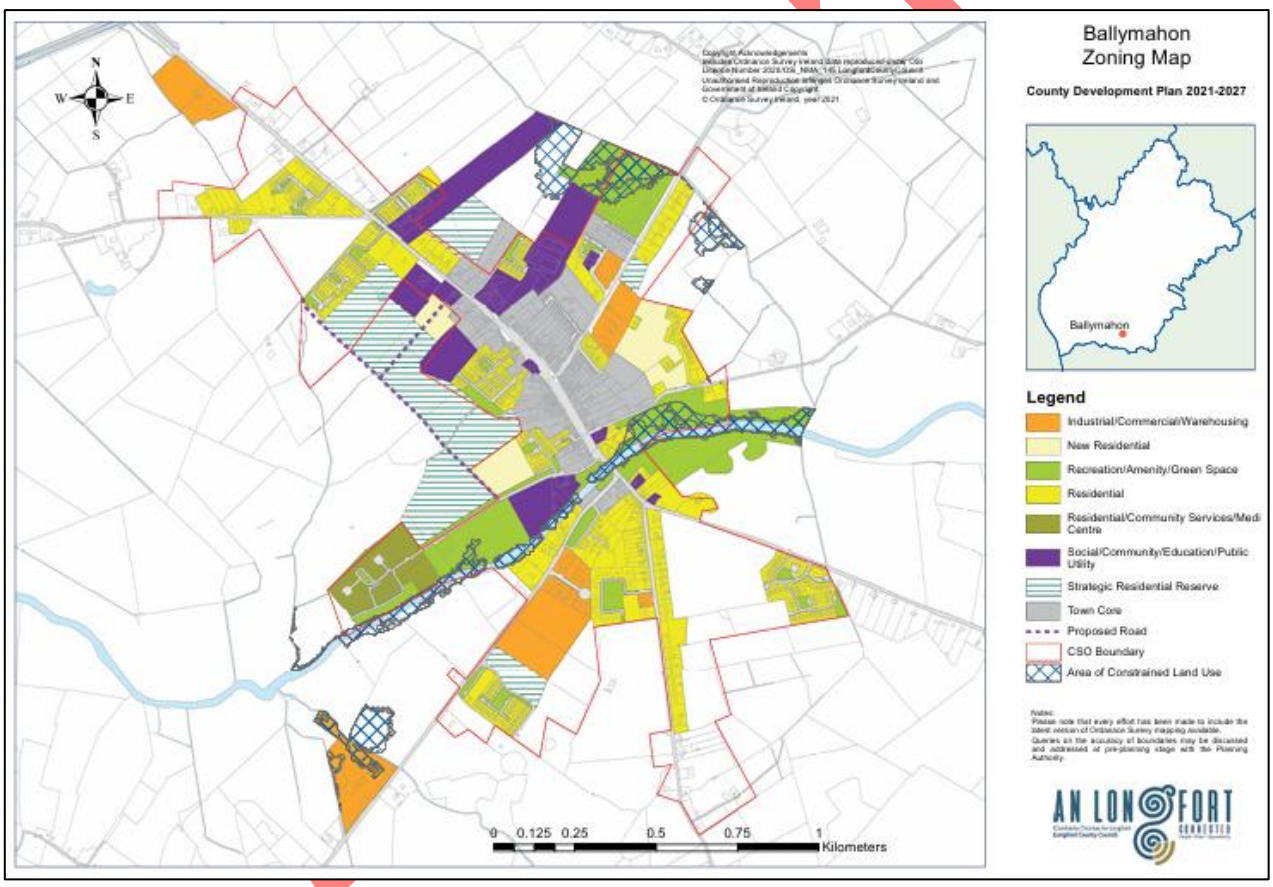

Figure 5.1: Land Use Zones

The CORINE 2018 data series shows that the land within the immediate vicinity of the proposed development is 112: Discontinuous Urban Fabric (Artificial Surface). Areas of Agricultural Land are located beyond areas of Urban Fabric.

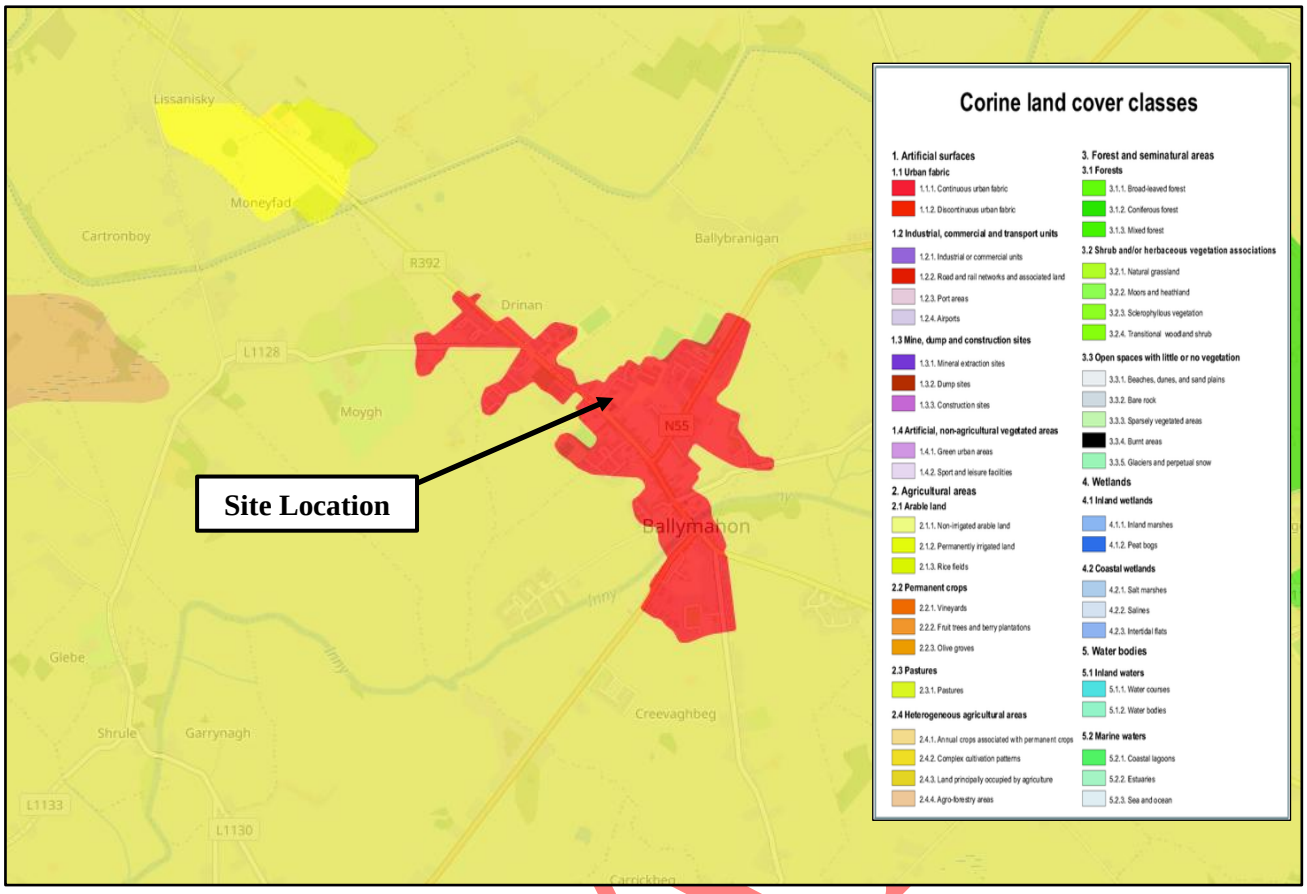

Figure 5.2: CORINE 2018, land use map of the region.

Convent of Mercy was built c. 1882 and had previously functioned as a convent/nunnery. More recently the convent had been functioning as a daycare centre. The proposed development would alter the function to community-based service provision which is not considered to be a significant change to the existing land use.

The land in the immediate vicinity of the site and surrounding area is mainly used as recreational grassland, amenity areas and built-up areas which included residential and commercial properties.

There would be no significant impact to the continued use of these lands as a result of the proposed development.

Therefore, it is not considered that an EIAR would be required in order to further assess potential impacts on land use.

5.2 NATURAL RESOURCES

This section assesses the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground.

The proposed development would result in a continuation of existing uses of natural resources for the completion of the construction project.

5.2.1 Soil & Bedrock

Topsoil and overburden excavated from the site would be stored within the site boundary during the construction phase. This topsoil would be used in landscaping around the site once the proposed construction works were completed. Excess soil would be removed offsite using an appropriately permitted contractor.

The site contains a soil type described as Made – Made Ground. Other soil types in the vicinity of the development include, AminPDPT – Derived from mainly non-calcareous parent materials, which has a parent material described as Sandstone till (Devonian/Carboniferous). See **Figure 5.3**.

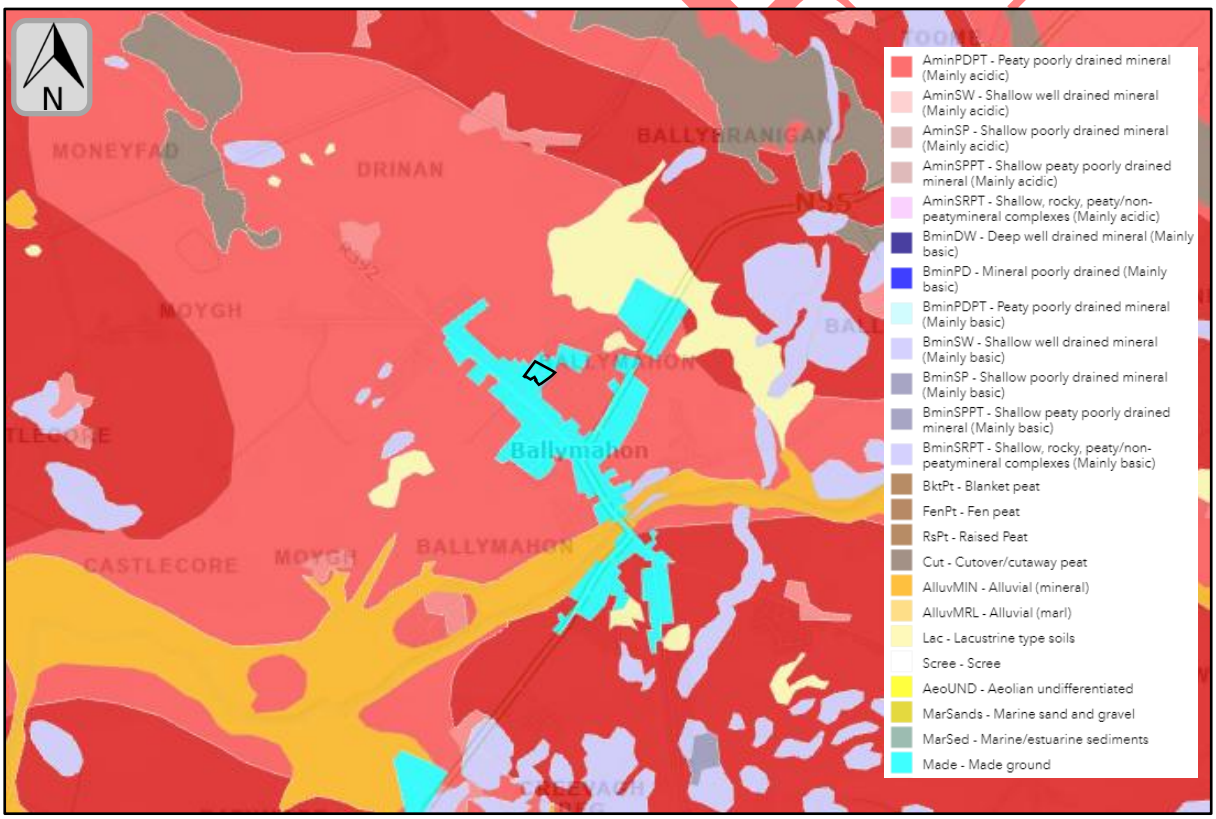

Figure 5.3: Teagasc Soils (GSI Maps)

As per the description above the soil has a permeability designation of Moderate, as per **Figure 5.4.**

The bedrock geology (100k) within the Waulsortian Limestones (CDWAUL) on which the site is located is described as '*massive unbedded lime-mudstone'*. The groundwater rock or hydro stratigraphic rock is described as *Dinantian Pure Unbedded Limestones* (DPUL).

Figure 5.4: Soil Permeability (GSI Maps)

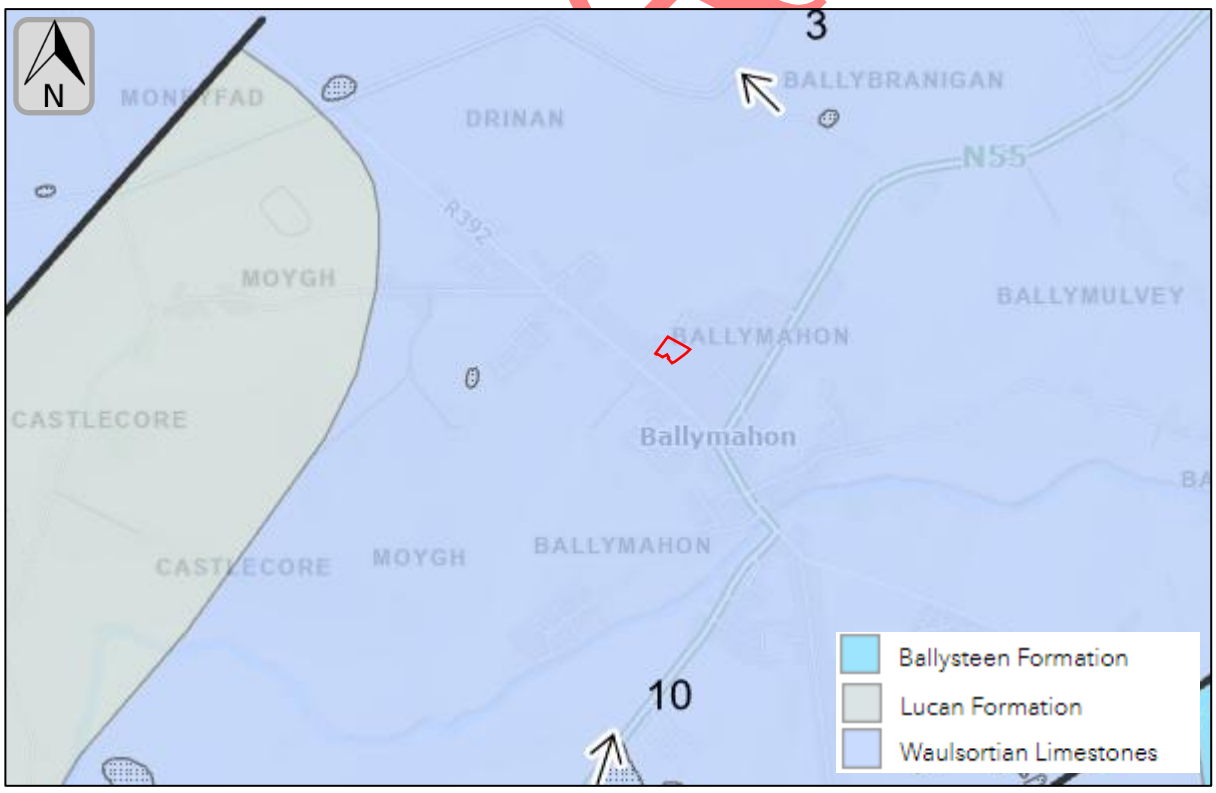

Figure 5.5: Bedrock Geology 100k (GSI Maps)

There would be expected to be no significant impact to bedrock. Any excavations that will take place would be shallow in nature and will not impact on the bedrock in the vicinity of the site. Aggregate fill material and precast concrete structures would be sourced from local quarries in the area. Where excess soil or stone is generated, this would be disposed of to an appropriately licenced waste facility.

Therefore, it is considered that there is no significant risk to soils and bedrock as a result of the proposed project and further assessment in an EIAR would not be required.

5.2.2 Water

Small quantities of water may be used during the construction phase of the proposed development, supplied by the existing connection to the mains water supply.

A Locally Important Aquifer (Ll) underlies the site, being described as a bedrock which is moderately productive only in local zones.

No groundwater abstractions are recorded in the vicinity of the site by GSI.

During the operational phase, the development would source water from municipal supplies. There would be an expected increase in water usage as a result of the operational phase of the development.

It is considered that there is no significant risk to water resources as a result of the proposed project and further assessment in an EIAR would not be required.

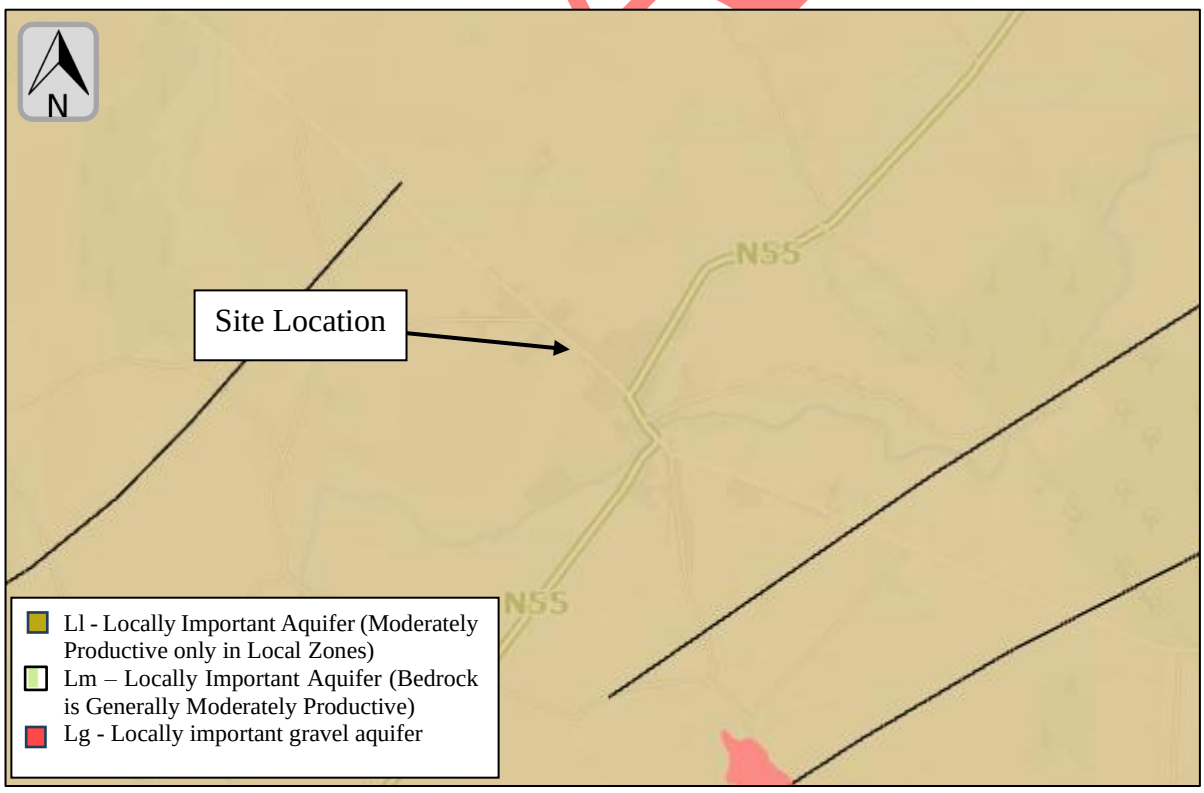

Figure 5.6: Aquifer Type Map (GIS Maps)

5.3 ABSORPTION CAPACITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

5.3.1 Surface Water Environment

The proposed development is located within the Inny [Shannon]_SC_080 sub-catchment (Sub-catchment ID: 26F_10), and the Upper Shannon catchment (26F). The closest named water course to the development, according to the EPA mapping site is the Drinan Stream (EPA Code: 26D81-Order 1) located approximately 570m to the west of the development site, flowing in a southerly direction. The Drinan Stream flows into the River Inny (EPA Code: 26I01 – Order 5) approximately 1.14km from its closest point to the development site. The River Inny flows in a westerly direction for approximately 7.84km from its confluence with the Dinan Stream before it flows in Lough Ree.

Additionally, there is an unnamed watercourse (Order 2) located approximately 495m to the east of the development site, flowing in a southerly direction. This watercourse flows for approximately 1.21km before entering into the River Inny.

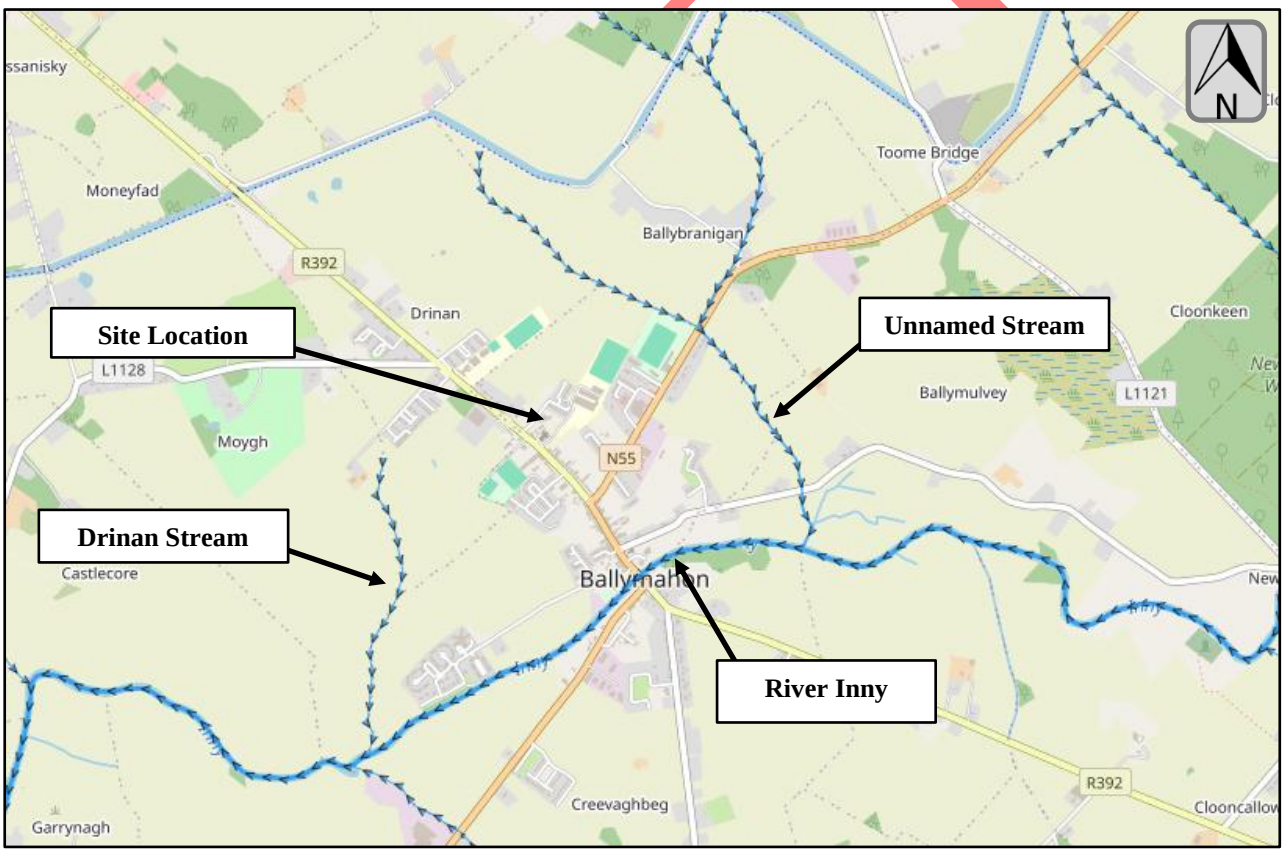

Figure 5.7: Surface Water Features

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Inny river waterbody has a status of 'Moderate' and is currently 'at risk' of failing to meet its WFD objectives by 2027.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) undertake surface water monitoring along the Inny.

The results for the nearest monitoring stations (as per Table 5.1) with available monitoring results for the period 2005 – 2020 are summarised in Figure 5.3 below for indicative purposes.

Table 5.1: Active Monitoring Stations of the Inny River

STATION NO.	STATION LOCATION	EASTING	NORTHING	APPROX. LOCATION FROM CONFLUENCE WITH DRINAN STREAM
RS26l0011150	Clynan or New bridge	221439	258604	9.37km Upstream
RS26I011350	Shrule Br	213497	255849	2.12km Downstream

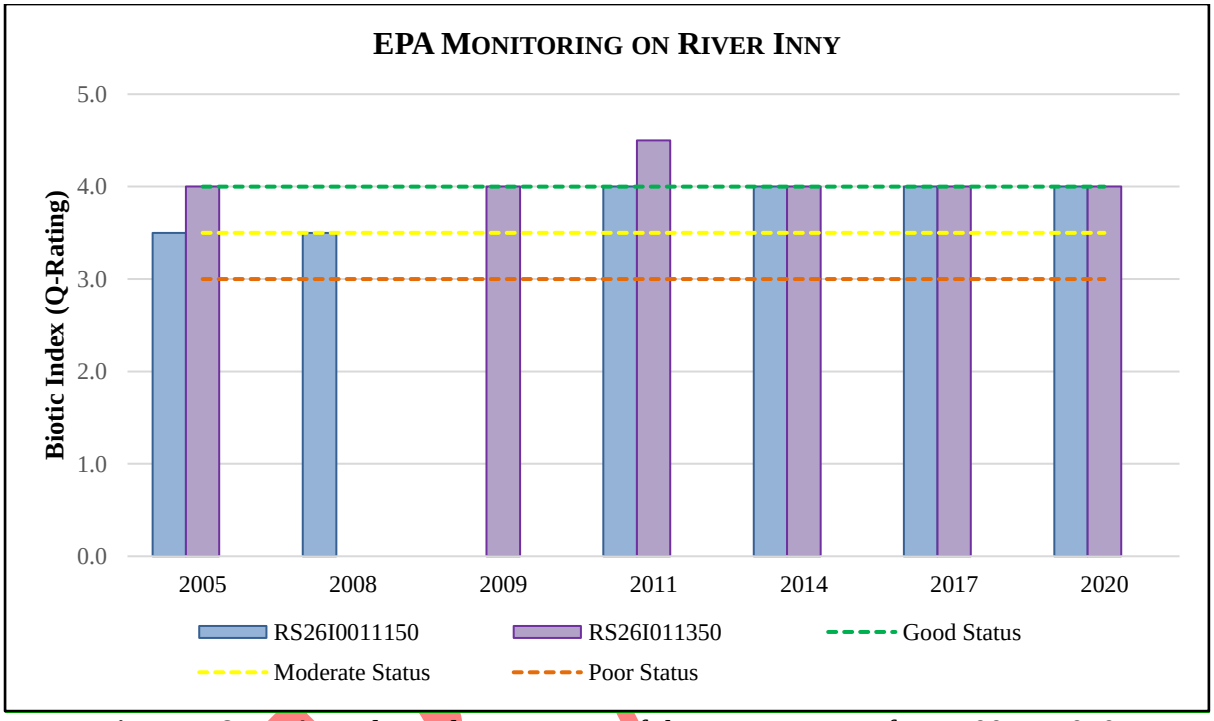

Figure 5.8: EPA Ecological Monitoring of the Barrow River from 2005 – 2020

As can be seen in Figure 5.3 above, the Inny River is mainly achieving a water quality status of between Q4 (good) and Q3-4 (moderate) at the monitoring locations (Table 5.1).

EPA comments on the most recent monitoring results for the River Inny are as follows: *"There was a slight decline in water quality in the upper reaches of the Inny at 0100 with a decline from good to moderate ecological condition. Further downstream, the River Inny was sampled at Shrule Bridge (1350) upstream of its confluence with Lough Ree in August 2023. Satisfactory conditions remained with a high diversity of 28 different macroinvertebrate taxa recorded."*

As described in **section 4.5.1.2**, standard construction control measures would be adopted to ensure no significant impact from works to the water environment.

Construction works would be confined to the proposed development footprint, with no works taking place within a watercourse. Risk materials would be bunded where necessary, spill kits are available onsite, and workers are required to inform management and address spills as soon as they occur. Surface water runoff will be directed via a new pipe network to an existing surface water pipe to the west of the development site. The storm water system will also incorporate permeable paving to reduce the rate of surface water run-off and a petrol interceptor prior to discharge into the existing infrastructure.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities on site would be directed via a new foul water pipe along the Church View Road to an existing foul water pipe on the R392. A connection application will be made to Uisce Éireann. Foul water would be directed to Ballymahon WWTP (EPA Licence No: D0096-01), which will discharge to the River Inny (215654E, 256731N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 2,818 which exceeds the WWTP p.e as constructed of 2,300. There are no Specified Improvement Programmes for Ballymahon WWTP.

During the operational phase, it is not considered that contamination of waters would be likely due to the nature of the development (community centre).

It is considered that there is no significant risk to the absorption capacity of the surface water environment as a result of the proposed project and further assessment in an EIAR would not be required.

5.3.2 Groundwater Vulnerability and Protection Areas

Groundwater vulnerability is classified as follows: Rock near surface or karst (X) or Extreme (E) High (H) Moderate (M) Low (L). Assessing the risk of contamination to groundwater is complex. It is assessed by the aquifer category, the proximity to down-gradient targets such as a well or ecosystem and the preventive measures taken. These measures will be dependent on the land-use practices and potential for pollution. The area of the site has a groundwater vulnerability classification of Moderate (M), see **Figure 5.9**.

The proposed development is located within the Inny groundwater body, which is classified as a Locally Important Aquifer (Ll). This GWB is designated to have '*good*' overall WFD water quality status 2016-2021 and is considered to be '*not at risk*' of failing to meet its WFD objectives by 2027.

Groundwater in the area is expected to move according to the topography. The topography of the area is defined by a gradient that is inclined away from the R392 northeast and southwest, with the greater overall gradient towards the River Inny to the south of the development. This suggests that groundwater could also potentially adhere to a similar flow pattern, according to the terrain's slope.

The nearest groundwater source protection zone is the Newtown Cashel PWS, which is located approximately 10.7km to the west of the development site, see **Figure 5.10**. There is no direct hydraulic connectivity to this groundwater source protection zone from the site. A number of groundwater abstractions have been recorded in the wider area of the site, mainly comprising of boreholes. See **Figure 5.11**.

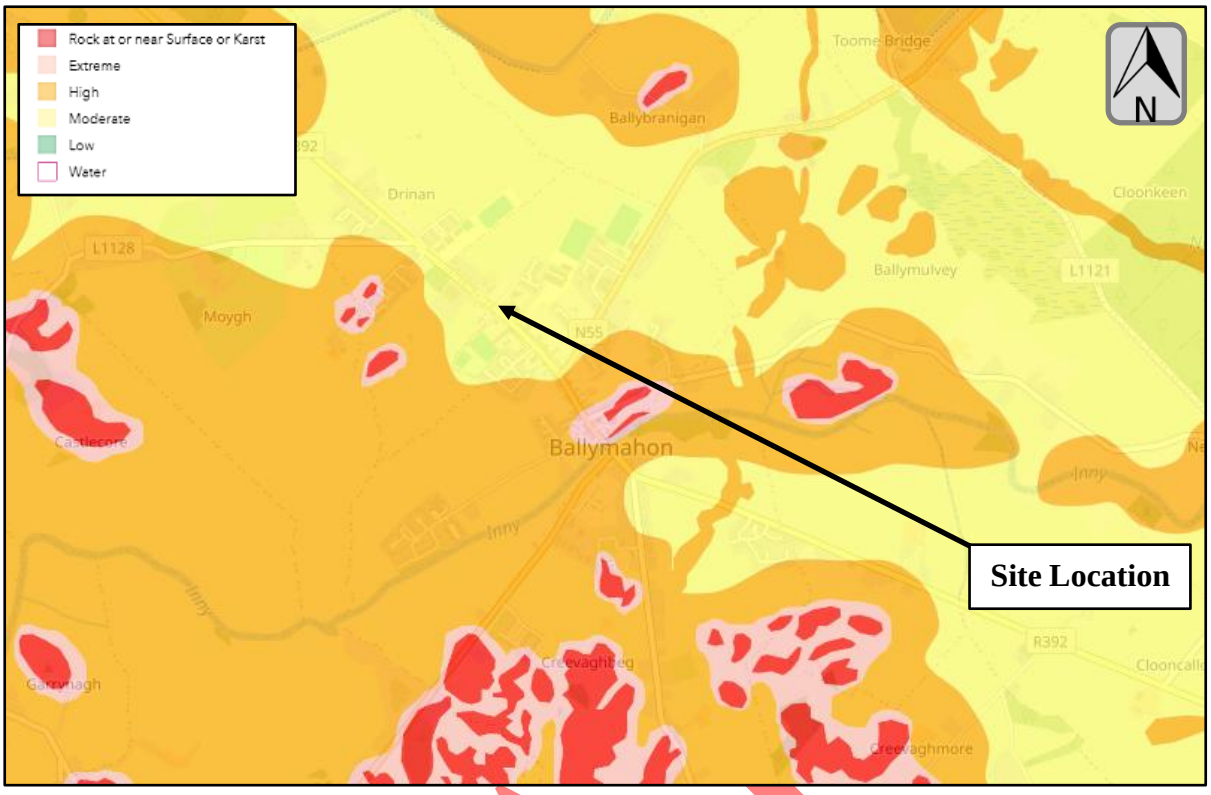

Figure 5.9: Groundwater Vulnerability

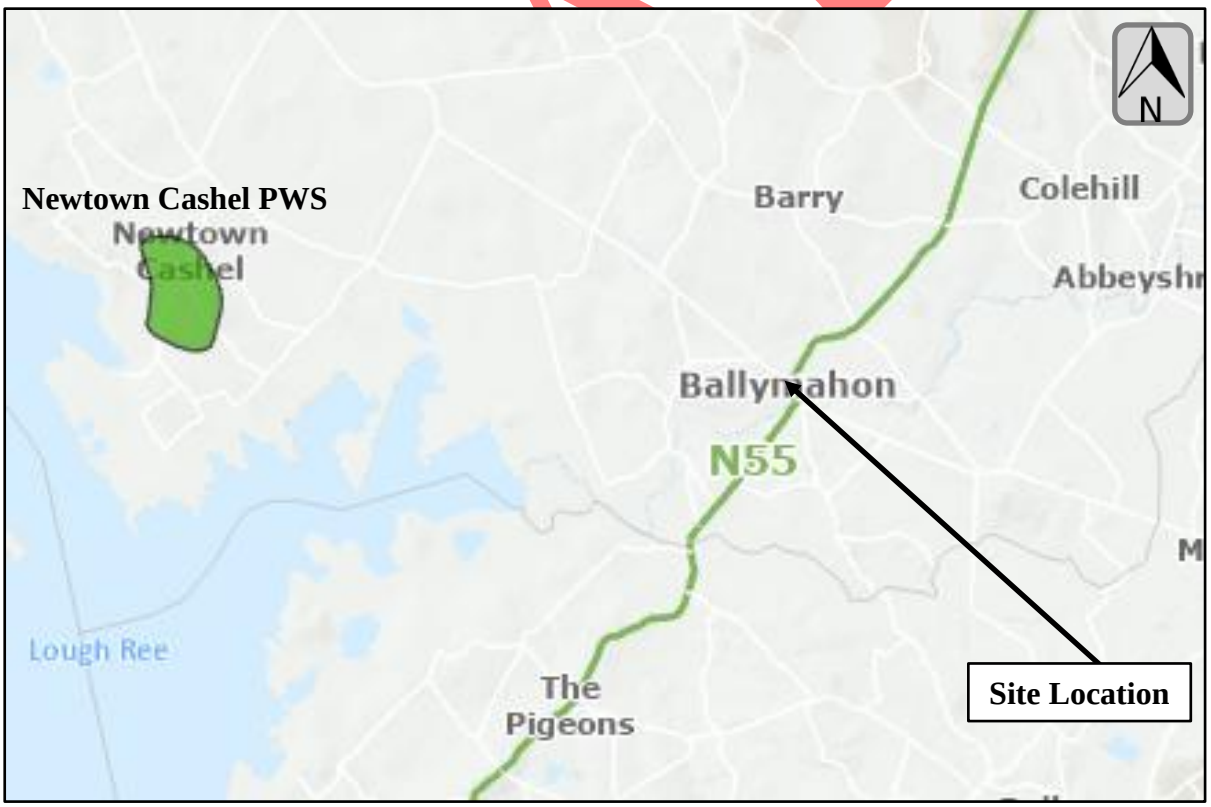

Figure 5.10: Groundwater Source Protection Areas (GSI Maps)

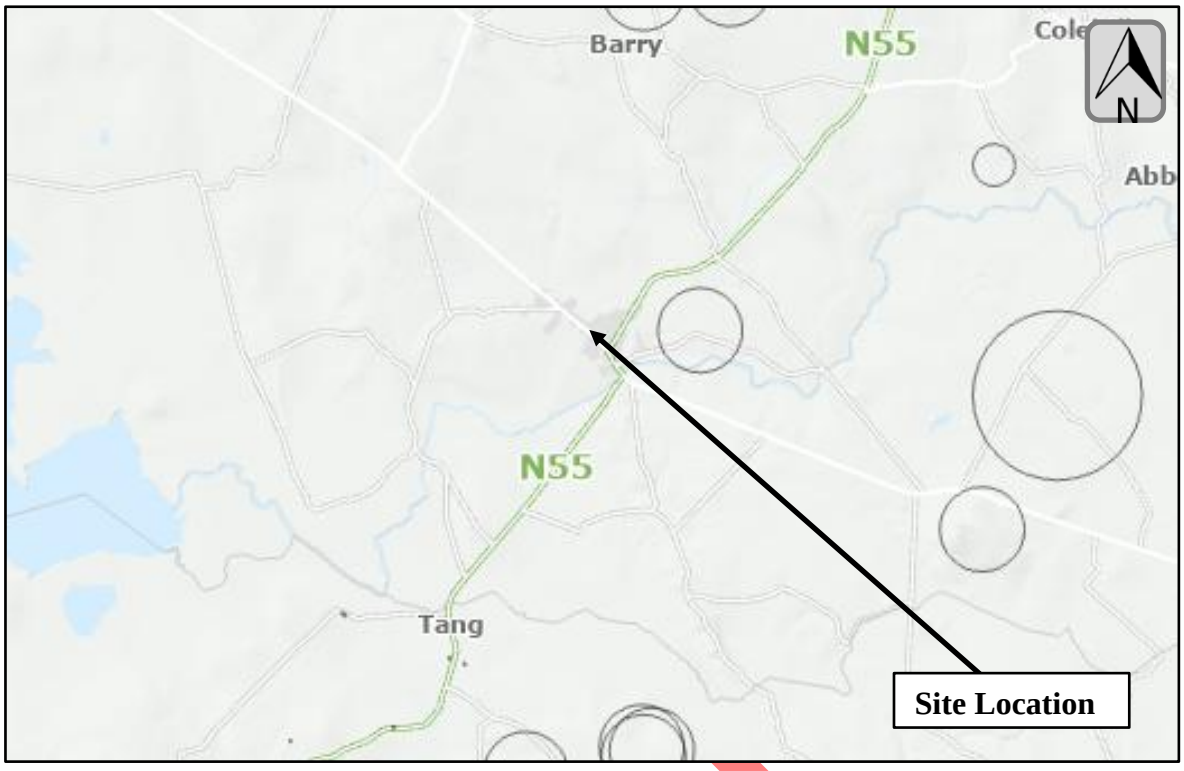

Figure 5.11: Groundwater Wells and Springs (GSI Maps)

There would be no significant volumes of fuels, oils or other chemicals stored for construction. It is not anticipated that there would be a significant risk to groundwater during the construction phase. It is not anticipated that there would be significant volumes of chemicals or potentially hazardous liquids present at the site during the operational phase, due to the nature of the development (community centre).

Foul water generated by sanitary facilities at the development during the operational phase will be directed by a new foul water pipe along the Church View Road to an existing foul pipe on the R392.

During the operational phase, surface water runoff will be directed via a new pipe network to an existing surface water pipe to the west of the development site. The storm water system will also incorporate permeable paving to reduce the rate of surface water run-off and a petrol interceptor prior to discharge into the existing infrastructure.

It is not considered that the proposed development would require further assessment within an EIAR in terms of groundwater resource vulnerability.

5.3.3 Bio-Diversity and Designated Sites

The location of the site in relation to Natura 2000 sites is shown in the map in **Figure 5.12** below. The closest Natura 2000 site is the Lough Ree SAC (Site Code: 000440) located approximately 4.9km to the west of the proposed development and the Lough Ree SPA (Site Code: 000781), located 5.4km west of the development site (see Figure 5.2 below). The closest pNHA sites are the Royal Canal pNHA (Site Code: 002103) and the Lough Ree pNHA (Site Code: 000440).

An Appropriate Assessment Screening report has been prepared by Panther Ecology Ltd. (Doc. Ref: PE_AA_10280) to accompany this application.

Table 5.2: Special Areas of Conservation**,** Special Protection Areas, National Heritage Areas, and Proposed National Heritage Areas potentially within the zone of influence of the proposed development

SITE NAME	DESIGNATION	SITE CODE	DISTANCE
Royal Canal	pNHA	002103	820m N
Lough Ree	SAC	000440	4.9km W
Lough Ree	pNHA	000440	4.9km W
Lough Ree	SPA	000781	5.4km W
Derry Lough	pNHA	001444	6km W
Lough Bawn	pNHA	000689	7.4km NW
Forthill Bog	NHA	001448	8.7km W
Lough Sewdy	pNHA	000689	9km NE
Ballymore Fen	SAC	002313	10.8km SE
Mount Jessop	pNHA	001450	12km N
Mount Jessop Bog	SAC	002202	12.5km N
Waterstown Lake	pNHA	001732	12.5km SW
Cordara Turlough	pNHA	001821	13.9km NW
Lough Bannow	pNHA	000449	14.4km NW
Fortwilliam Turlough	pNHA	000448	14.6km NW
Carn Park Bog	SAC	002336	14.9km SW
Glen Lough	pNHA	001687	15km NE
Glen Lough	SPA	004045	15.2km NE
Ballynagrenia & Ballinderry Bog	NHA	000674	15.3km S
Carn Park Bog	pNHA	000676	15.4km S
Lough Iron	SPA	004046	18.6km E
Lough Iron	pNHA	000687	18.8km E
Lough Owel	SAC	000688	23.7km E
Lough Owel	pNHA	000688	23.7km E
Nure Bog	NHA	001725	23.7km SE
Lough Ennell	SPA	004044	24km SE
Lough Ennell	SAC	000685	25.8km SE

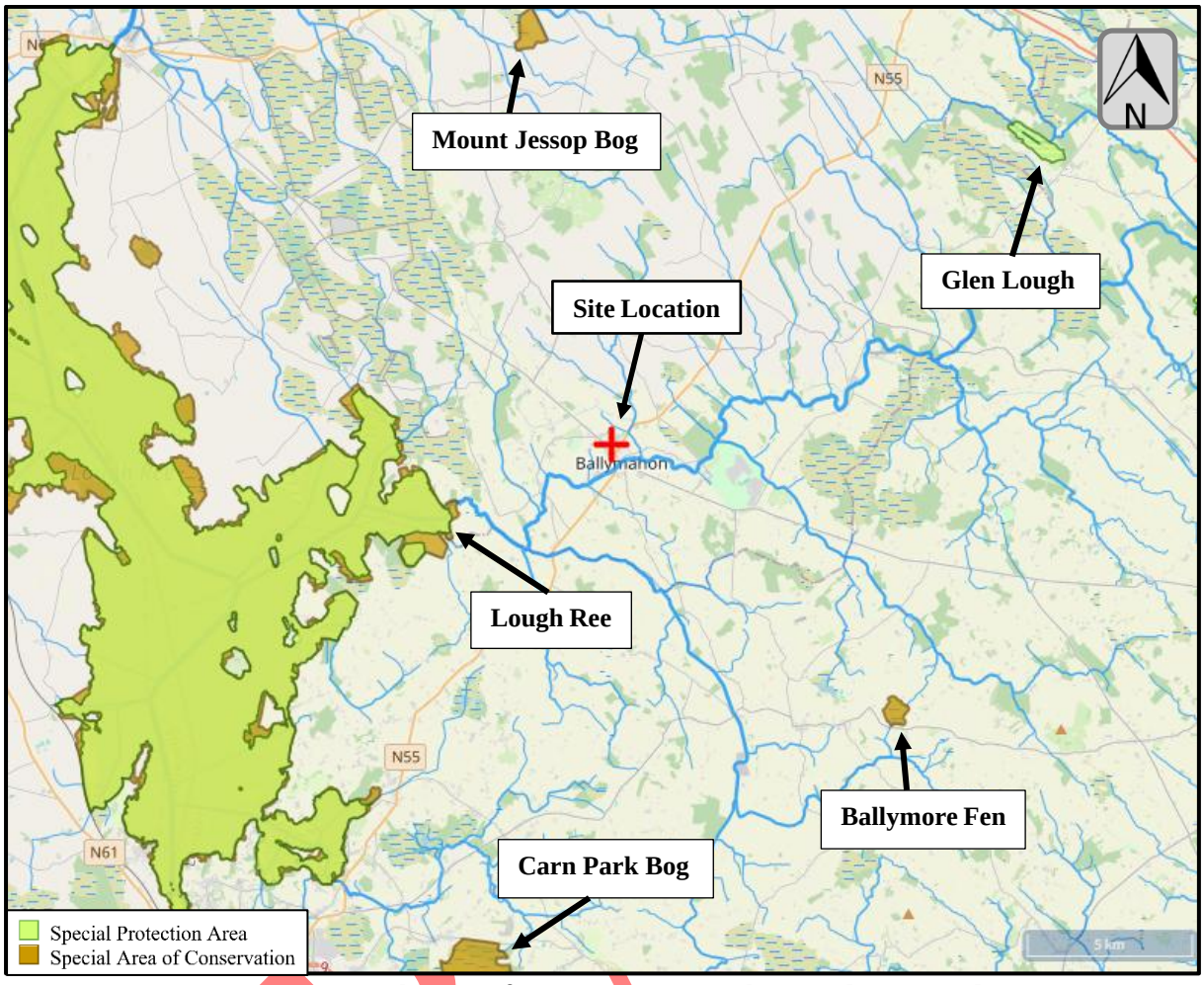

Figure 5.12: Special Area of Conservations and Special Protected Area

A site visit was undertaken on the 5th February 2025 to examine the ecological context of the proposed development. The existing site is mostly comprised of built structures and a small area of grassland, with a treeline and hedgerow to the east.

The **Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)** habitat includes the main building to the centre north of the development site as well as the surrounding pavements and tarmacked areas which occur in every area besides the east of the site. This habitat included species such as Mosses (Bryophyta), Willowherb (*Epilobium spp.)*, Dandelion (*Taraxacum agg.*), Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*), Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), Cat's Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Sowthistle (*Sonchus spp.*), Thistle (*Cirsium spp.*), and Dock Sorrel (*Rumex spp.*).

The **Dry meadows and grassy verges habitat (GS2)**, covers the east and south within the development site. This habitat appears mostly unmanaged. The species present within this habitat include Cock's Foot Grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), False Oat Grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*), Common Bent Grass (*Agrostis spp.*), Fescue (*Festuca spp.*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Self Heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), Cat Ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), Speedwell (*Veronica spp.*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum agg.*), Sedge (Carex spp.), Willowherb (*Epilobium spp.*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*), Thistle (*Cirsium spp.*), Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Tutsan (*Hypericum spp.)*, Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*),

Bedstraw (*Galium spp*.) Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*), Barren Strawberry (*Potentilla sterilis*), and Snowdrop (*Galanthus spp*.).

The **Hedgerows (WL1)** habitat is situated to the east of the development site. This habitat consists of a short line of overgrown shrubs. Species recorded include Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), Arrow Bamboo (*Pseudosasa japonica*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and Ivy (*Hedera spp.*).

The **Treeline (WL2)** habitat resides to the east and south the development site. Species present in this habitat include Cypress (*Chamaecyparis spp*.), Apple (*Malus spp*.), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Spotted Laurel (*Aucuba japonica*), Ivy (*Hedera spp.*), and
Larch (*Larix spp*.).

The **Flowerbeds and borders (BC4)** habitat is primarily located towards the west of the site. This habitat includes Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Euonymus (*Euonymus spp*.), Rose (*Rosa spp.),* Honeysuckle (*Lonicera spp*.), Ornamental Holly (*Ilex spp*.), Butterfly Bush (*Buddleja davidii*), Cleaver (*Galium aparine*), Willowherb (*Epilobium spp*.). Oxeye Daisy (*Leucanthemum spp*.) Nettle (*Urtica dioca*), and Sowthistle (*Sonchus spp.).*

The **Scattered trees and parkland (WD5)** habitat is also located to the west of the site within the grassy verges and borders. Species in this habitat include Yew (*Taxus baccata*), False Cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*), and Ivy (*Hedera spp.*).

No Third Schedule invasive or protected flora were noted during the site assessment. See Table 4.1 for summary for habitats located at and adjacent the proposed development. See Appendix D for photo log of the site.

Bird species noted during the site walkover included Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*), Pied wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), Robin (*Erythacus rubecula*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) Jackdaw (*Coloeus monedula*), Hooded Crow (*Pica pica*), Magpie (*Pica pica*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Great Tit (*Parus major*), Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), Collared Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*), and Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).

None of these species are on the red list. Goldcrest is amber listed. None of the bird species recorded are listed under Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site would not offer suitable nesting or foraging habitat for Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) due to the lack of riverine habitats onsite and in the vicinity.

A few animal tracks were observed within the dry meadows habitat but no evidence of usage by wild fauna has been found. Most likely the tracks were made by domesticated animals. The site would be of limited value to foraging protected mammals such as Badger and Otter since it is mostly comprised of modified habitats. The Fauna typical of that found throughout the rest of Ireland, which would be expected to be found in the area include Bat species, Badger (*Meles meles*), Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), Pine Marten (*Martes martes*), Stoat (*Mustela erminea hibernica*), American Mink (*Mustela vison*), Deer, Irish Hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*), Hedgehog (*Erinus europaeus*), Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

No signs of water birds feeding, such as droppings, were found on site. The site would be of limited value to water birds as the grassland area is quite small and very close to anthropogenic activity.

In addition to the site walkover, flora and fauna records were reviewed on the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) website for the proposed development site and vicinity. No protected plant species under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2022 (S.I. No. 235 of 2022) were recorded within the 10km square (Tetrad – N15) in which the proposed development site is located.

Near threatened flora recorded within the tetrad are: Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*) and Tubular Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*).

One invasive plant species listed in the Third Schedule of the European Communities Birds and Natural Habitats) Amendment (S.I. No. 355 of 2015) of Regulations 2011-2015 was recorded within the 10km square (Tetrad – N15): Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*).

Protected fauna species of note recorded within the NBDC 10km square ((Tetrad – S77) include the protected species, Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), Freshwater White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*), Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*) Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) Eurasian Badger (*Meles meles*) Pygmy Shrew (*Sorex minutus*), Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), European Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Lesser Noctule (*Nyctalus leisleri*), Pine Marten (*Martes martes*), Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu lato*), Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and Whiskered Bat (*Myotis mystacinus*).

High impact invasive species listed in the Third Schedule of the European Communities Birds and Natural Habitats) Amendment (S.I. No. 355 of 2015) of Regulations 2011-2015 include Harlequin Ladybird (*Harmonia axyridis*), American Mink (*Mustela vison*), Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), and Sika Deer (*Cervus nippon*).

Bird species of note include Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Coot (*Fulica atra*), Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Common Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*), Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*), Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*), Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Swift (*Apus apus*), Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Eurasian Teal (*Anas crecca*), Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*), Corn Crake (*Crex crex*), Eurasian Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*), Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*), Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*), Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*), Sky Lark (*Alauda arvensis*), Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa*

striata), Pigeon (*Columba oenas*), Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*), Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and the Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*).

Gannon & Associates was commissioned by Longford County Council to carry out a roost inspection bat survey in relation to the proposed development. Upon inspection, evidence of roosting opportunities was identified in the form of broken windows, attic voids, gaps in the brickwork and the remains of prey animals such as moth and butterfly wings. The structural condition and surrounding habitat indicate potential for bat use. No other evidence such as droppings or urine stains on wood was found. Some of the trees within the treeline, to the east of the site, could have the necessary low ivy for a suitable bat roost. However, no other evidence of bats was found in these areas. The field outside the boundary of the site to the west could be a potential foraging habitat for nearby roosting bats.

On the basis of information provided in this report, and the information taken from the accompanying AA Screening report, it is considered that there would be no significant impact on any European sites.

It is considered that further assessment would not be required in an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

5.3.4 Landscapes & Visual Impact

The National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 was published in line with Irelands Obligations under the European Landscape Convention. The key objectives of this Strategy are the recognition of landscape in law and the provision of a policy framework to put measures in place for the management and protection of landscape and the production of a national Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).

The Landscape Character Assessment for Longford identified 7 broad landscape character types within the county as follows:

- Northern Drumlin Lakeland
- Northern Upland
- Shannon Basin/ Lough Ree
- Central Corridor
- Inny Basin
- Peatlands
- Open Agriculture

The proposed development would be located within the landscape type designated as Open Agriculture, see **Figure 5.13** below. This landscape character is described as having a generally Low landscape sensitivity with exceptions including the Royal Canal, the River Inny, Upland Areas with designated scenic views and in proximity to the heritage village of Ardagh.

The Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 includes the following objectives for the landscape character type – Open Agriculture:

- CPO 14.35 – Fast track the formulation of Local Area Plans/ village policy statements throughout the country to create, preserve and enhance village character.

- CPO 14.36 – Promote the development of adequate community and social facilities in smaller villages to maintain character, identity and pedestrian scale.

The development is located within the urban area of Ballymahon town and would be considered urban in nature, with residential properties, commercial properties, primary and secondary schools, religious institutions and community services. Much of the surrounding area around the development site is dominated by urban features and the proposed development would adhere to the overall development pattern of the area. The proposed development does not hinder on any full or intermittent scenic views as per **Figure 5.14** below.

Figure 5.13: Landscape Character Types in County Longford

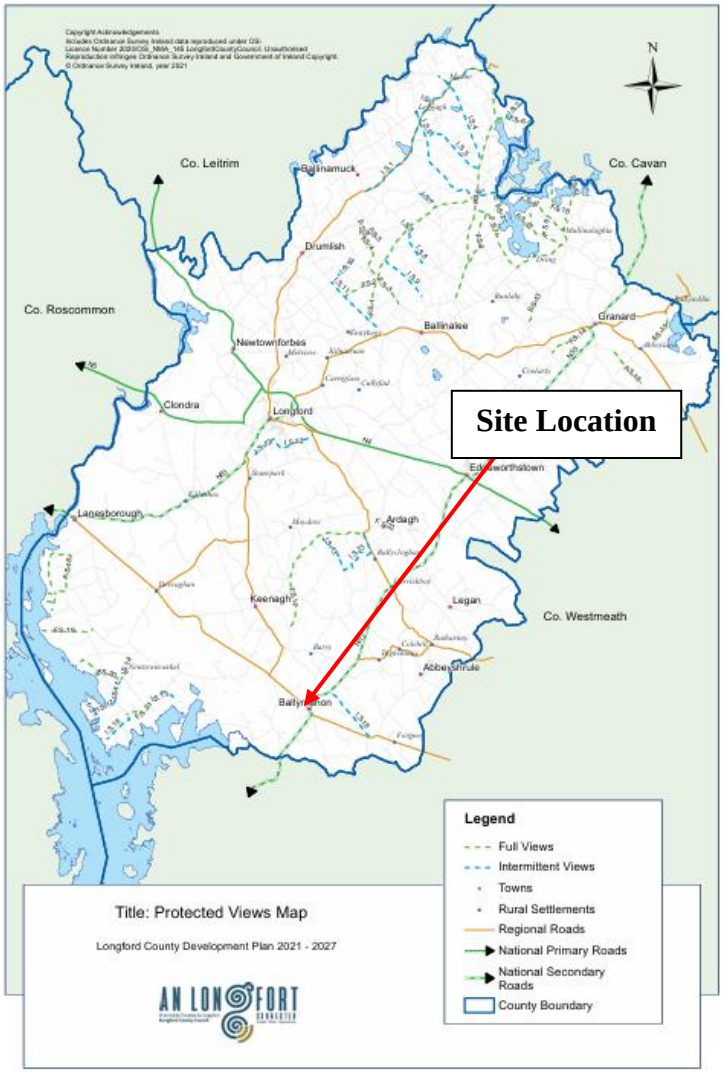

Figure 5.14: Protected Views Map

In January 2025, a visual assessment was carried out of the existing site. For this assessment, a total of five viewpoints were utilised, which are outlined in **Figure 5.15**.

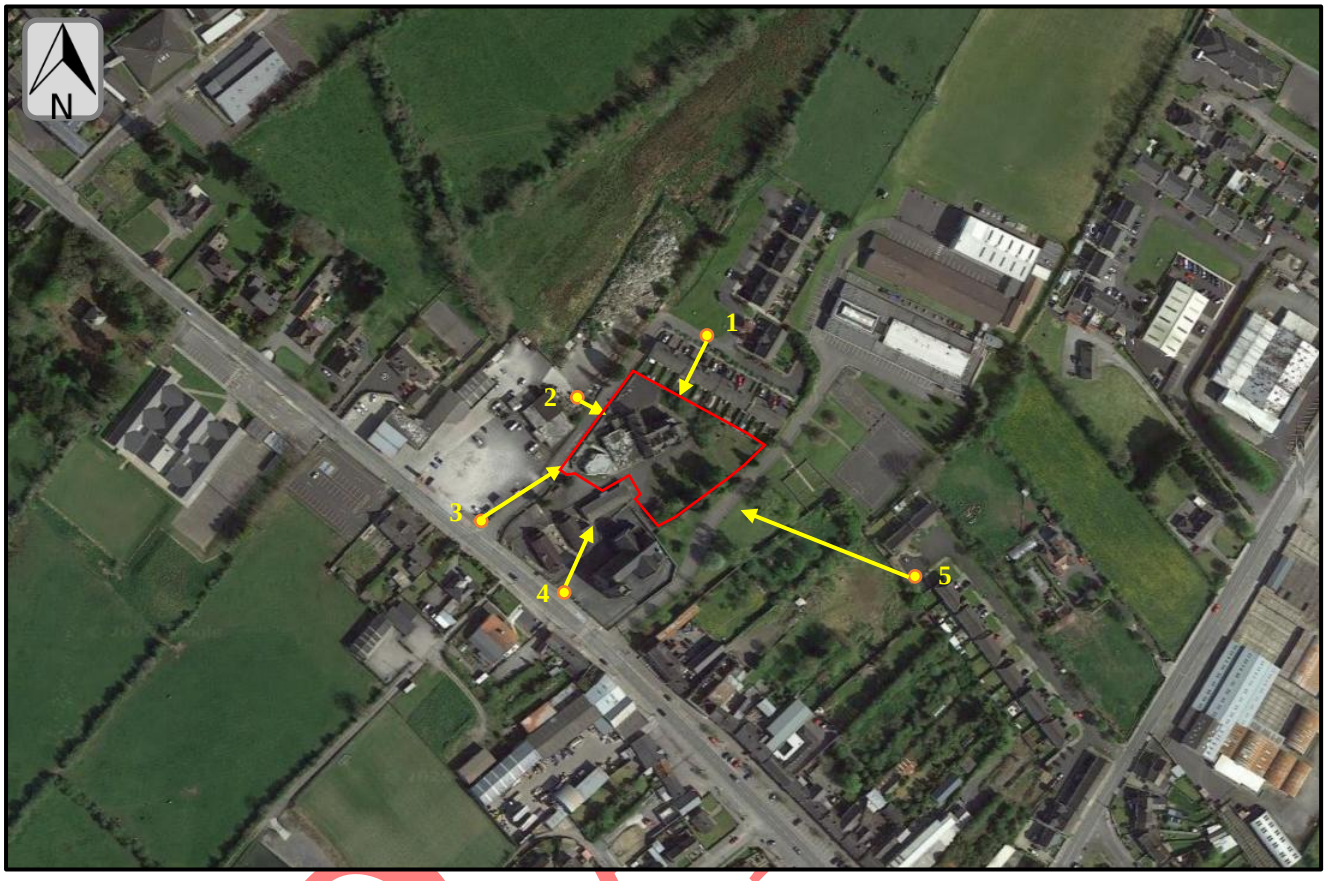

Figure 5.15: Viewpoint Location Map

Views from the viewpoints selected for this assessment are represented in **Plate 5.1** to **Plate 5.5** below.

Viewpoint No.1 represents the viewpoint from the Church View residential estate to the north of the site boundary. Renovation works to the convent and the construction of the new extension to the north and community hall will be visible from the viewpoint. The proposed extension and community hall will be in keeping with the urban landscape of the area. And renovation works to the existing convent will be in line with the principle of conservation. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location.

Viewpoint No.2 represents the viewpoint from the Church View Road to the west of the site boundary. This point would afford the highest degree of visibility to the proposed development. The design of the proposed extensions to the convent building will focus on modern architecture and will make clear that it is a later intervention in line with the principles of conservation. Renovation works to the existing convent building will be carried out in accordance with conservation best practice. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location.

Viewpoint No.3 represents the view from the R392 Main Street, to the southwest of the site boundary. This point will afford views of the proposed extension to the southwest of the

convent building and to the existing convent building to be refurbished. The proposed extension will focus on modern architecture making clear it is a later intervention in line with the principles of conservation and renovation works to the existing convent will be carried out in accordance with conservation best practice. The proposed development will be in keeping with the urban landscape of the area. It is not anticipated that there would be any significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location.

Viewpoint No.4 represents the view from the R392 Main Street to the southeast of the site boundary. This viewpoint affords views of the south side of the existing convent. Renovation works to the existing convent visible from this viewpoint will be conducted in accordance with conservation best practice. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be any significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location

Viewpoint No.5 represents the view from the Slí na Móna residential estate to the northeast boundary of the site. The proposed development will be screened from view by existing hedgerows and treelines. It is not anticipated that there would be any significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location.

The topography of the area is defined by a gradient that inclines gently from southwest to northeast. The site is publicly visible mostly in areas along Church View Road, Church View residential estate and the R392 Main Street as it is screened from view by hedgerows/treelines from the northeast.

The proposed development is a community project and would conform to the existing primarily urban character of the area. Once completed, the development will have a similar visual impact as other developments in the direct vicinity of the site, albeit of a more modern design.

It is considered that additional investigation within an EIAR for visual and landscape impacts from the development would not be required.

Plate 5.1: Viewpoint 1 – Church View residential estate looking SW

Plate 5.2: Viewpoint 2 – Church View Road looking ESE

Plate 5.3: Viewpoint 3 – R392 Main Street looking NE

Plate 5.4: Viewpoint 4 –R392 Main Street looking N

Plate 5.5: Viewpoint 5 – R436 (Ballycumber Road) looking S

5.3.5 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage

The Built and Cultural Heritage chapter of the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 indicates that Ballymahon town is not designated as an Architectural Conservation Area.

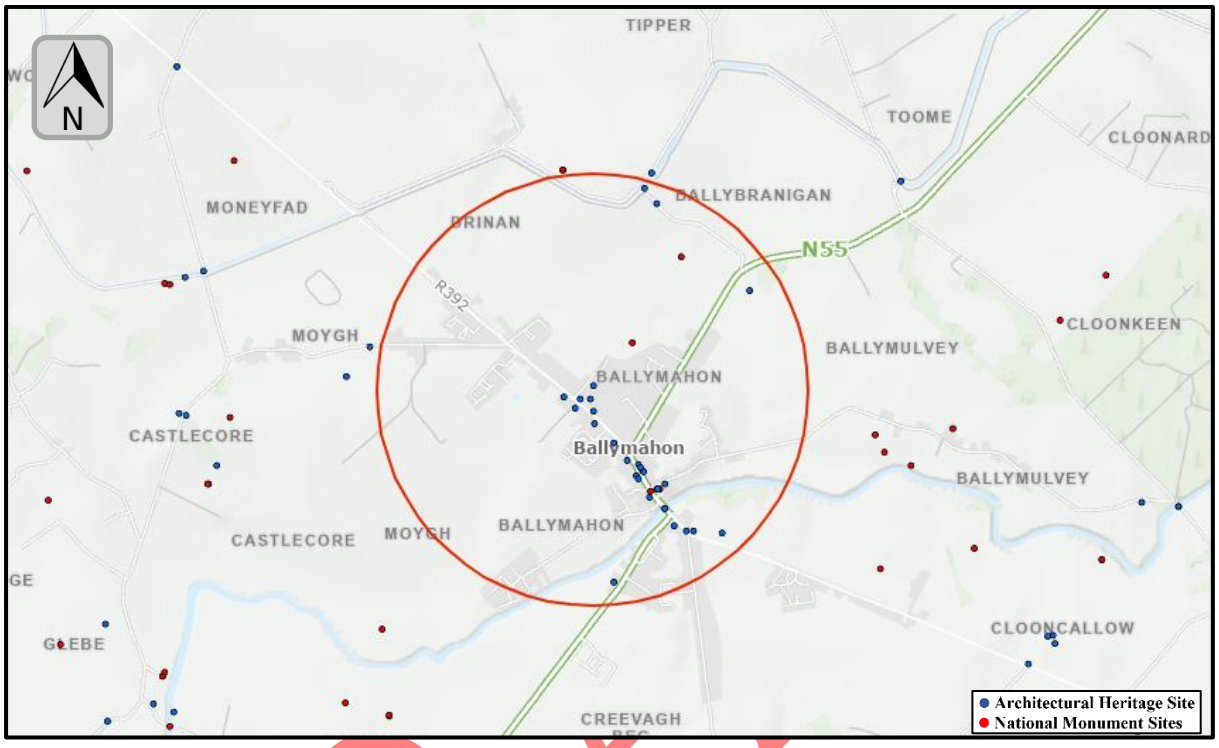

Figure 5.16: National Monument and Architectural Heritage Sites

The following tables summarise the recorded archaeological heritage sites and protected buildings as per the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage database within 1km of the site:

Table 5.3: Archaeological Heritage Sites within 1km of the Site

Record No.	Classification	Townland	Distance
LF027-002	Ringfort - rath	Ballymahon	236m NNE
LF027-003006	Historic town	Ballymahon	520m SE
LF027-003001	Church	Ballymahon	531m SE
LF027-003002	Graveyard	Ballymahon	533m SE
LF027-001	Ringfort - rath	Ballybranigan	703m NNE
LF023-109002	House – indeterminate date	Ballybranigan	986m NNW
LF023 - 109001	Ringfort - rath	Ballybranigan	986 NNW

Table 5.4: National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Sites within 1km of the Site

Registration No.	Site Name	Townland	Distance
13316007	Saint Matthew's Catholic Church	Ballymahon	22m S
13316006	Convent of Mercy	Ballymahon	40m S
13316008	House	Ballymahon	74m S

Registration No.	Site Name	Townland	Distance
13316028	Dean Egan Library	Ballymahon	87m S
13316003	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Colmcille	Drinan	91m SW
13316009	House	Ballymahon	131m S
13316019	Ballymahon Courthouse and Market House	Ballymahon	245m SE
13316029	Claffey	Ballymahon	347m SE
13316012	House	Ballymahon	387m SE
13316013	House	Ballymahon	403m SE
13316017	Skelly's	Ballymahon	419m SE
13316018	House	Ballymahon	427m SE
13316014	House	Ballymahon	428m SE
13316015	Bank of Ireland	Ballymahon	447m SE
13316019	Saint Catherine's Church	Ballymahon	528m SE
13316025	Ballymahon Masonic Hall	Ballymahon	529m SE
13316016	RIC Barracks	Ballymahon	547m SSE
13316030	Ballymahon Bridge	Ballymahon / Creevagh Beg	628m SSE
13316020	Innyview House	Creevagh Beg	722m SSE
13316021	Water pump	Creevagh Beg	767m SSE
13316022	Water tower	Creevagh Beg	784m SSE
13402704	Antely House	Ballymulvey	808m NE
13316026	Creevaghbeg House	Creevagh Beg	873m SE
13402702	Gates / railings / walls	Ballybranigan	874m N
13316023	Inny Lodge	Creevagh Beg	877m S
13402701	Office, store/warehouse	Ballybranigan	924m N

The nearest national monument to the site is a ringfort or rath, located in the Ballymahon townland, approximately 236m north northeast. No other monuments were recorded within 500m of the proposed site.

There is one record of archaeological testing within 1km of the proposed development site. The archaeological testing took place in August 1999 on a site located on the northern bank of the River Inny, on which two mill buildings were located. Three test trenches were mechanically excavated and no features, structures or finds of archaeological interest were uncovered.

The historical maps provided in **Figure 5.17, Figure 5.18** & **Figure 5.19,** ranging from 1829 -2021 indicate that the site upon which the development is located, was, prior to the construction of the convent, partly agricultural land and partly townland.

Figure 5.17: Aerial Image – 2021 (Google Earth)

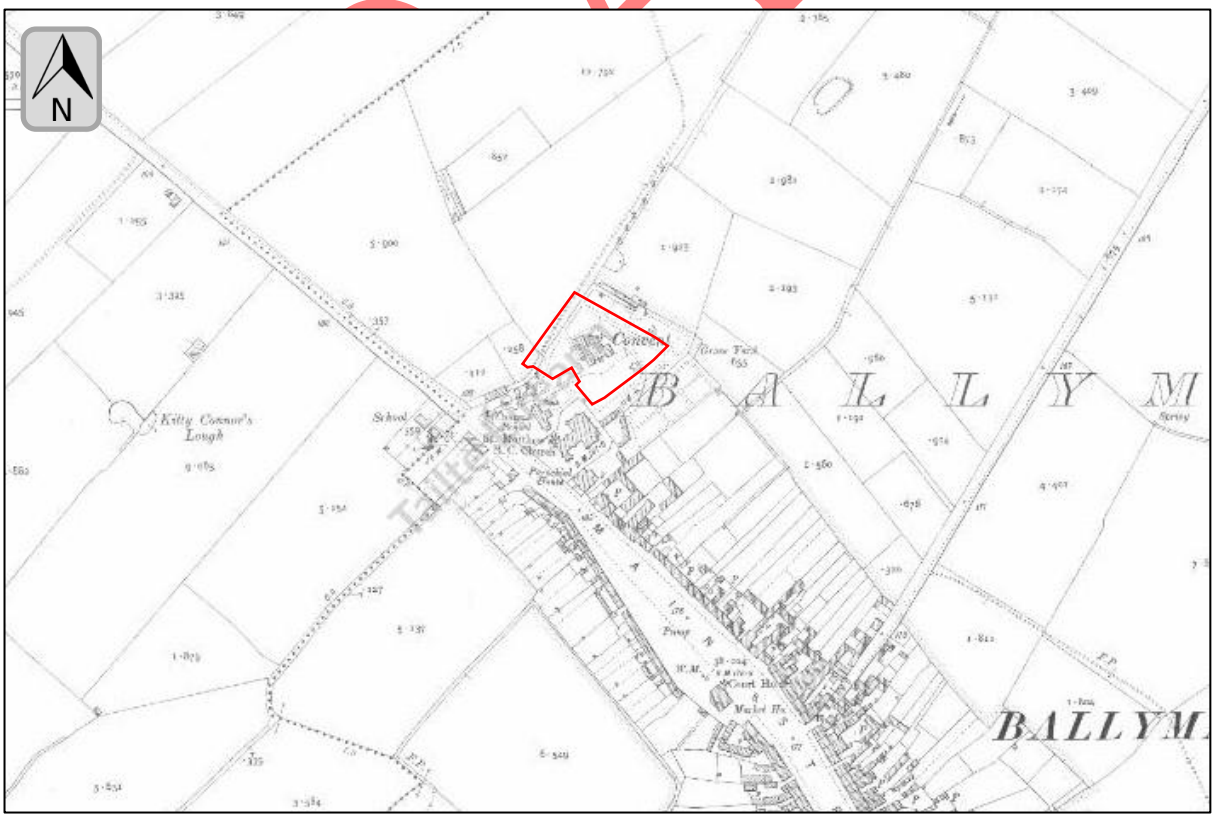

Figure 5.18: 25 Inch Historical Map (1897 – 1913)

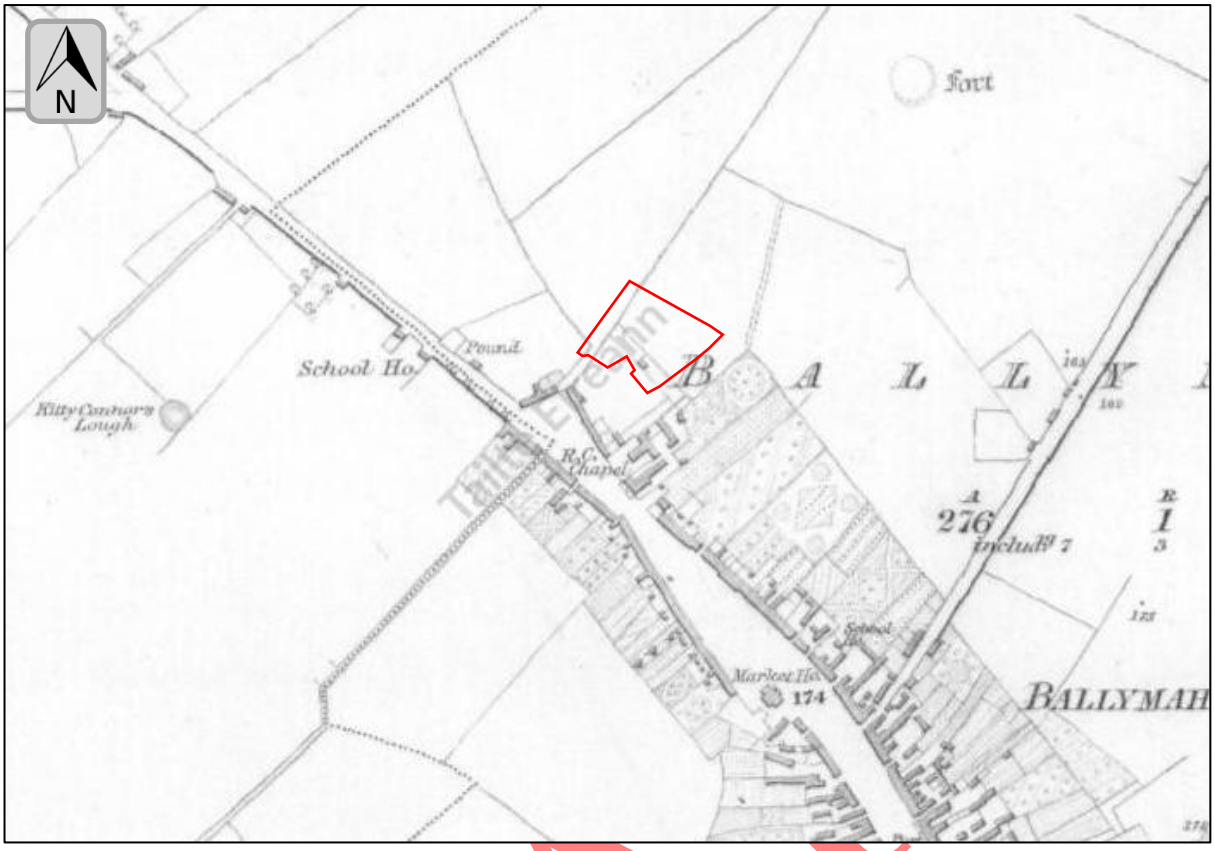

Figure 5.19: 6 Inch B&W (1829-41)

The Convent of Mercy is included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH Reg. No. 13316005); however, it is not a protected structure and is not listed on the Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 Record of Protected Structures.

An Archaeological Impact Assessment & Building Appraisal has been carried out for the development by Shanarc Archaeology Ltd

The assessment was based on a desktop study and on-site inspection. The desktop study reviewed RMP data, topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland, excavations bulletin and excavations database, the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027, NIAH data, cartographic sources, toponomy sources and documentary sources. The on-site inspections were carried out on the 5th and 18th of February 2025.

In relation to the archaeological impact of the proposed development the assessment concludes that it is not anticipated that material culture pre-dating the convent building would be impacted as a result of the proposed development. However, potential sub-surface remains are more likely to relate to the convent and developments at the site over its lifetime. Therefore, it is recommended for an archaeologist to monitor the groundworks at the proposed development site to address the potential for uncovering sub-surface remains relating to the convent and previous developments on site

Regarding the impact on the built heritage, the assessment determines that there will be a direct impact on the convent as a result of the proposed development. Impacts as a result of the proposed development will include internal and external direct negative effects on the Sisters

of Mercy Convent building as well as the remaining gardens. Therefore, the assessment makes the following recommendations:

- Original fabric should be retained and repaired with replacement only as a last resort;
- Existing opes should be considered to minimise new opes through the original fabric;
- Works should be carried out in consultation with a conservation architect;
- All works should be recorded and reported by appropriately qualified built heritage professional or buildings archaeologist;
- Any reporting produced should be lodged with the Irish Architectural Archive;
- A visual link between the convent and former graveyard to the NE of the site should be considered;
- A remaining chattel and food mixer internally and a present catholic statue externally, should be retained
- Steps and access gate to Saint Matthew's Catholic Church in the rear boundary wall to remain unaltered.

Considering the proposed recommendations, it is considered that additional investigation within an EIAR for archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage impacts from the development would not be required.

5.3.6 Traffic & Transportation

This section will address the aspects of the project having regard to traffic and transportation, including the potential for traffic generation. The likelihood of impact would be discussed in the context of the existing urban traffic environment.

Construction

Construction sites invariably involve a certain amount of HGV movements. These movements are primarily associated with the importation of supply materials, machinery and other plant equipment on to the site.

Traffic impacts may arise via the following:

- Delivery of construction plant and equipment to the site;
- Delivery of raw materials to the site;
- Vehicle movements from staff, sub-contractors and site visitors travelling to and from the site;
- Vehicle movements associated with waste removal at the site.

The site will be accessed via a local access road located off of the R392 regional road which is adjacent to the site's western boundary. This road connects with the Main Street (N55) approximately 400m southeast of the proposed site entrance. The site is located in the centre of Ballymahon Town. The M6 motorway is at its closest to the development site approximately 24.5km to the south accessible via the N55.

Construction works have the potential to impact upon traffic volumes in the area, which may subsequently impact upon the generation of noise and dust emissions.

The majority of the HGV movements would take place during the initial demolition and construction phases as machinery would have to be brought to the site along with other supplies and site infrastructure. In-fill such as gravel, sands and cement will also be brought on to the site.

This is a minor sized development. The surrounding road network is well laid out and capable of carrying increased construction traffic.

The construction works contractor should ensure the following:

- Deliveries to the site would be via suitably contained vehicles, with sheeting and covers where required
- Deliveries to the site would be scheduled during the construction hours of 8:00am to 7:00pm Monday to Friday, and 7:00am to 1:00pm on Saturdays;
- Where possible, large volumes of traffic or traffic movements associated with the site would be timed to occur outside peak hours on the local road network to reduce the potential for traffic congestion;
- The contractor shall provide for the safe passage of pedestrian and vehicular traffic and measures to keep the impact of the works on local roads, and local communities to a minimum;
- Local roads would be inspected and cleaned as necessary to ensure that access roads are kept clear of mud and debris;
- Advise haulage contractors on the appropriate routes to and from the site and to adhere to good traffic management principles;
- Delivery of materials to the site would be timed to ensure efficiency and to reduce traffic on the local road network.

Cognisance should also be taken of recommended traffic mitigation measures within the following guidance documents:

NRA (2008) Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes
The guidelines provide advise with regard to EIAR on road schemes. The guidance also provides consolidated legislation, general guidance on mitigation and sources of further relevant information.

EPA (2006) Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry
Open sites (construction sites, quarrying and in-fill activities) by their nature, generate similar traffic impacts. Construction materials transported from quarries to construction sites have the potential to cause environmental impacts due to traffic at the source and destination. This guidance document provides general recommendations for the management of traffic and transport of materials.

Operation

Once construction has been completed, site related traffic would consist of vehicles related to staff and visitors at the community centre. Traffic volumes are expected to increase on the local road network as a result of the developments operational phase. However, these increases are

not likely to be significant and traffic impacts associated with the development would be minimal. The local road network is anticipated to be sufficient to accommodate site related traffic.

A total of 24 spaces will be provided for visitors including one accessible parking space and 8 parking will be provided for staff. The proposed development also has appropriate pedestrian access being located within the town centre of Ballymahon. Additionally, public transport services such as the TFI Local Link Longford Westmeath Roscommon (Route LR24) and Bus Éireann (Route 466) service Ballymahon Town.

It is not considered that further assessment within an EIAR is required for potential traffic impacts.

6.0 PART III – CHARACTERISATION OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS

6.1.1 Magnitude and Spatial Extent of the Impact (For example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)

The site is positioned within an urban area, located in the town of Ballymahon, Co. Longford. Environmental effects from the proposed development would generally be localised to the area of activities within the urban landscape. In the absence of appropriate controls or mitigation, potentially impacted numbers would be moderate.

The total site area is 0.48 Ha, with the total floor area of the convent to be refurbished at 1123.7m^2, the total area of the proposed extension to the convent at 401.6m^2 and the total area of the proposed community hall at 233.3m^2.

Environmental effects from the proposed development would generally be localised, related to potential construction nuisance emissions. Potential impacts to air quality from the use of fuels would apply to a regional extent, however these impacts would be insignificant in terms of intensity. It should be noted that no fossil fuels will be burned at the development site to heat the existing and proposed buildings. Buildings will be heated by air to water heat pumps. These devices release significantly less emissions in comparison to traditional fossil fuel (gas or kerosene) burners. There would be expected to be no significant effects on water quality during construction or operation, considering proposed mitigation and controls.

6.1.2 Nature of the Impact

During the construction phase, potential environmental impacts would be common for construction projects and include:

- Potential noise impacts to sensitive receptors,
- Potential nuisance airborne dust,
- Potential contamination of surface waters with soil, concrete etc.
- Potential increased traffic congestion.

While such environmental risk can occur from all construction activities, it is considered that these risks would be minimal due to the minor to moderate scale of the development, construction practices and the location of the proposed site, as discussed within this report.

An Archaeological Impact Assessment & Building Appraisal has been carried out for the development by Shanarc Archaeology Ltd which has identified that the proposed development has the potential to have negative effects on unrecorded sub surface remains and on the built heritage of the Sisters of Mercy Convent. In relation to potential impacts on archaeological features it has been recommended that ground works are monitored by a qualified archaeologist.

Relating to the built heritage of the Sisters of Mercy Convent a number of recommendations have been made to minimise the impact of the proposed development including but not limited to; the retention of the original fabric and existing opes, carrying out works in consultation with a conservation architect, recording and reporting of all works and giving consideration to the visual link between the former graveyard and convent building.

Potential environmental impacts would also exist as a result of the operational phase. Typical potential environmental impacts associated with such facilities include:

- Potential visual & amenity impacts,
- Noise nuisance,
- Air quality (space heating),
- Surface water quality & ecology (uncontrolled rain-water discharges),
- Traffic.

While such environmental risk occurs from various types of facilities, it is considered that these risks would be appropriately mitigated by the small scale of the project, proposed project design and mitigation /controls and the proposed activities that will be carried out at the site.

6.1.3 Transboundary Nature of the Impact

The proposed development is located a significant distance from international boundaries, and it is unlikely that emissions would have any significant transboundary impacts.

6.1.4 Intensity and Complexity of the Impact

The sites as a whole would be considered minor in terms of area constructed / being constructed. Due to the scale and type of development, the potential intensity of impacts would be minor.

Potential impacts from the proposed development would not be complex and would be amenable to mitigation. Design principals with regards to wastewater treatment and site drainage for urban developments are well established and appropriate mitigation during construction and operation have been proposed.

Due to the nature of the development (community centre), it is not anticipated that such activities related to this site during the operational phase, would have significant potential to cause complex interactions with the environment which would not be managed by standard design and control measures.

6.1.5 Probability of the Impact

During the construction phase, assuming typical construction controls, impacts in relation to airborne dust are considered to be unlikely. Construction noise has the potential to cause likely short-term nuisance impacts in the absence of mitigation. However, the potential severity of the noise impacts would be reduced by the transient short-term nature of the construction noise, appropriate timing of works and using temporary mitigation measures, if necessary. Impact to water quality would be unlikely following the implementation of standard construction controls.

Good management practice would be expected to mitigate the risk of significant environmental impacts during the construction phase.

The operational phase of the development would result in a community centre for the population of Ballymahon and surrounding areas and any operational phase impacts, as controlled or mitigated, would be certain.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities would be directed to the municipal wastewater treatment plant. Surface water will enter and be collected by a new a pipe network and will be directed to an existing surface water pipe located along Church View Road to the west of the site. The proposed drainage system also includes permeable paving to reduce the flow of surface water run-off and a petrol interceptor prior to discharge into the existing infrastructure. The proposed heating system for the houses are air to water heat pumps, rather than from burning stored heating oil.

Therefore, there is no significant risk that this development would adversely impact surface water.

6.1.6 Expected Onset, Duration, Frequency and Reversibility of the Impact

Impacts during the construction phase of the development are likely to be short-term and reversible.

Impacts during the operational phase of the development are expected to be permanent but minimal.

The completed development would result in the construction of a community centre in Ballymahon, Co. Longford

6.1.7 Cumulation of the Impact with the Impact of other Existing and / or Approved Projects

As detailed in section 4.2, there are several proposed developments and activities within the area which may have the potential to have in-combination effect with the development.

While it is not known at this time if the identified approved developments within the area will commence construction during the project construction phase, there is a potential for in combination construction effects.

Potential in-combination construction phase impacts would include nuisance (noise, dust, vibration etc.), use of resources and construction traffic. However, the construction phase of each project would be temporary.

The adoption of standard construction management practices would prevent significant environmental impacts or nuisance from the proposed development and reduce the potential for in-combination effects. Individual potential construction phase impacts are discussed in more detail within this report.

The completed community centre development would be anticipated to have cumulative effects with existing housing and business developments in the area. The proposed design and control infrastructure is expected to have no significant in-combination effect on the quality and

capacity of the receiving environment. It is considered that there would be a low likelihood of significant cumulative environmental impacts.

The development would be expected to have a positive in-combination impact on the local economy and community by providing employment during the construction phase, with the creation of a modern community centre for the people of Ballymahon and beyond, during the operational phase.

6.1.8 Possibility of Effectively Reducing the Impact

There is a high likelihood of reducing potential impacts from site activities through the implementation of standard construction practices for the protection of surface waters and the minimisation of potential impacts from traffic, dust and noise.

Potential impacts which may occur as part of the operational phase of the development are generally not anticipated to require ongoing mitigation, beyond proposed built infrastructural controls. This is due to the type of development (community centre), the nature of activities taking place, the location and the minor scale of the development.

7.0 CONCLUSION

An EIA Screening exercise was carried out to assess the proposed development in terms of environmental risks and location sensitivity. This exercise has been informed by onsite assessment and a desk study of the site based on the best available information.

The project, if successful, would result in the development of a community centre in Ballymahon, Co. Longford.

The proposed development is sub-threshold with regard to paragraph 10, *Infrastructure Projects*, of Schedule 5: Part 2.

The proposed development is well situated and appropriate to the area.

It is recommended that a Refurbishment/demolition asbestos survey is carried out on site prior to any works commencing.

The potential for the proposed development to cause significant adverse environmental impacts by itself, or in combination with other developments, in consideration of the project management and design during the construction and operational phases of the project are not anticipated to be significant. Where potential significant effects have been identified, these have been addressed through appropriate design or proposed mitigation measures.

The proposed design of the development is considered to be in line with applicable standards and would pose no significant risk to the environment. It is considered that the development, as proposed, would not significantly impact upon the sensitivities of the existing environment.

Therefore, it is considered that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report would not be required to be completed for this project.