



Environmental Impact Assessment Screening:

Proposed Amphitheatre at Commons North Lime Quarry

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For: Longford County Council

By: Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants

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REFERENCES

1. INTRODUCTION

A project is proposed in the townland of Commons North, Lanesborough. It is proposed that an amphitheatre is created in a part of the former lime quarry at Commons North, near Lanesborough, Co. Longford. Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd has been engaged by de Blacam & Meagher Architects for the provision of an environmental impact assessment screening report for the proposed works. The principal requirement for these services is to assist the relevant authorities in forming an opinion as to whether or not the proposed works should be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and if so whether an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) should be prepared in respect of it. Longford County Council is the lead agency in the development of this project. This present report examines the requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment to be carried out on the project. The location of the proposed project is shown in the figure below.

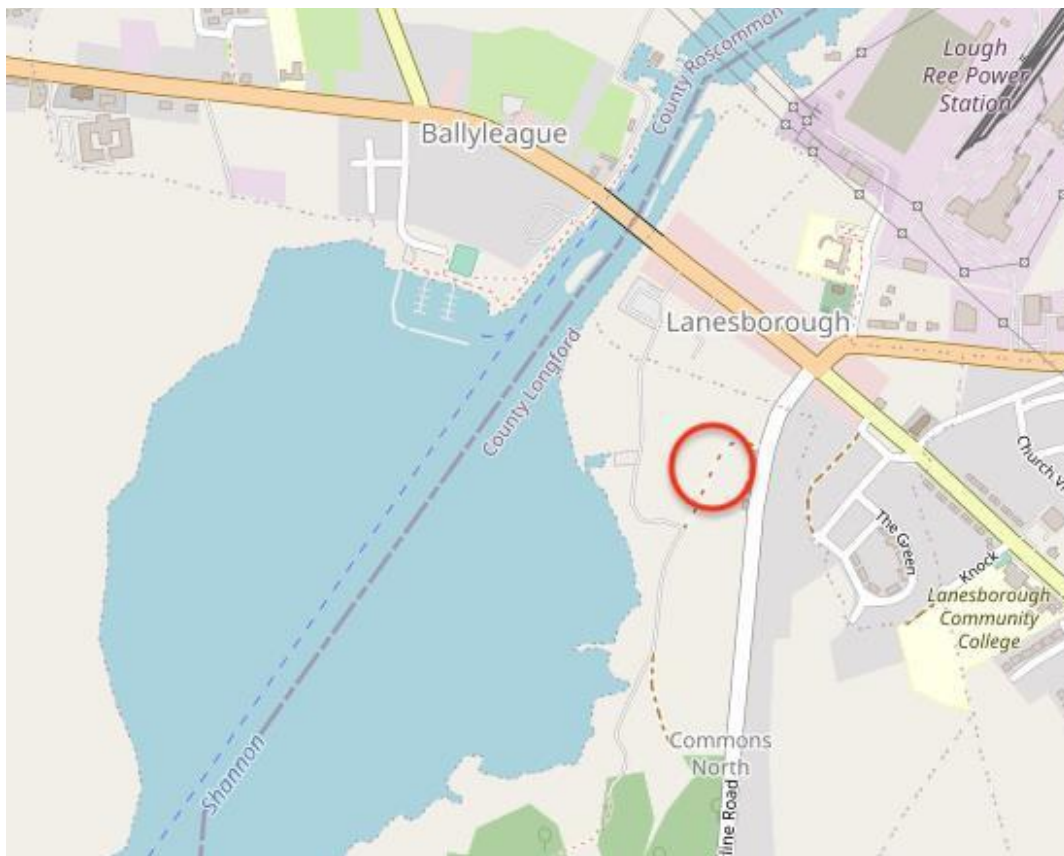


Fig. 1. Proposed Site Location – indicated by red circle.

The screening process includes an assessment of the details of the proposal with reference to the relevant EIA legislation including the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended by Planning and Development Regulations 2015), the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) and relevant EU Guidance including *Interpretation of definitions of project categories of annex I and II of the EIA Directive*, EU, 2015 and *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening*, EU, 2017. The report provides a conclusion of the process and finally a recommendation which will enable Longford County Council to undertake the screening assessment in accordance with EPA guidelines and the European Union (Planning & Development, Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018.

This EIA Screening Report was prepared having regard to the following documents:

- *Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (Environmental Protection Agency, Draft August 2017); *Interpretation of definitions of project categories of annex I and II of the EIA Directive* (European Commission 2015);
- *Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (2013), Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment*;
- *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development* (Environmental Protection Agency, 2003);
- *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements*, (Environmental Protection Agency, 2002); and
- *Guidelines on EIA Screening* (The European Commission, June 2017).

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project involves the construction of an amphitheatre in a disused limestone quarry at Commons North, Lanesborough.

2.1 More Detail



Fig. 2. Site extent indicated within red line.

Works are proposed at a former lime quarry in the townland of Commons North, approximately 300m to the south of the town of Lanesborough, Co. Longford. The site of the proposed project is at 600631 768907 (ITM). The extent of site works is shown in the drawing above.

It is proposed to construct an outdoor amphitheatre in an old quarry site on the east shore of Lough Ree just outside Lanesborough. The works, with a total footprint of 0.62ha, are expected to include:

- Outdoor amphitheatre comprising 475 seats in 12 tiered rows.
- Stage with tensile fabric roof covering.
- Sloped landscaping to rear of tiered seating.
- Sound booth.

Ancillary accommodation

- 1 no. 40 foot container for bar and first aid room.
- 1 no. 20 foot container for 'back-stage' accommodation for acts.
- Provision for 8 no. portable toilet cabins.

Site services

- Site lighting.
- Stage lighting and sound system.
- New power supply to the site serving all containers, stage and site lighting.
- Toilets will be portable type with own drainage to be removed off site after events.

Site landscaping

- Gravel finish to paths and new access areas.
- 3m high wire mesh fencing to perimeter.
- New soft landscaping to sloped areas around amphitheatre.
- All associated site development works.

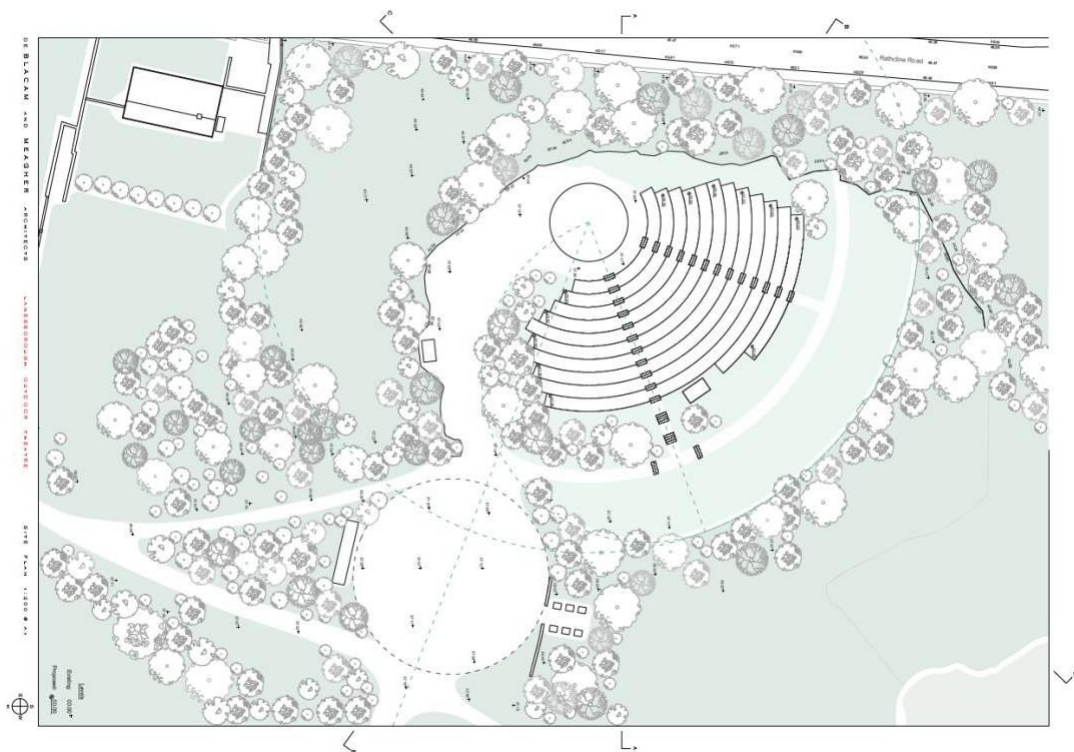


Fig. 3. Proposed Amphitheatre Layout

3. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Screening is the first stage in the EIA process, whereby a decision is made on whether or not EIA is required. EIA requirements derive from the EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU). The amended Directive came into force on 16th May 2017 and regulations transposing it into national legislation have been enacted. No changes to the prescribed project types or thresholds are required under the amended Directive so the types and thresholds set out in the 2001-2010 Regulations remain in effect.

EIA legislation as it relates to the planning process has been largely brought together in Part X of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2018 and Part 10 and Schedules 5, 6 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018. Part 1 of Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations lists project types included in Annex I of the Directive which automatically require EIA. Part 2 of the same Schedule, lists project types included in Annex II. Corresponding developments automatically require EIA if no threshold is given or if they exceed a given threshold. Developments which correspond to Part 2 project types but are below the given threshold must be screened to determine whether they require EIA or not. This is done by consideration of criteria set out in Schedule 7.

EIA legislation sets down the types of projects that may require an EIAR. Annex I defines mandatory projects that require an EIAR and Annex II defines projects that are assessed on the basis of set mandatory thresholds for each of the project classes.

The EIA screening exercise initially assesses the development for Mandatory EIA using classifications defined in the appropriate legislation. Where no mandatory requirement is concluded, screening advances to sub-threshold development assessment, where the competent authority evaluates whether the project is likely to have a *significant* effect on the environment, with reference to its scale, nature, location and context.

4. SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

4.1 Project Type and Class

EIA legislation defines the types of projects that may require an EIAR. *Annex I* of the EIA directive and transposed through Part I of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended defines mandatory projects that require an EIAR and *Annex II* defines projects that are assessed on the basis of set mandatory thresholds for each of the project classes.

4.2 Infrastructure Projects

Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 includes this project type:

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. (In this paragraph, “business district” means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)

The EU Guidance on ‘*Interpretation of definitions of project categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive*’ (2015) interprets ‘urban development’ as including the following:

- i. Projects with similar characteristics to car parks and shopping centres could be considered to fall under Annex II (10)(b). This could be the case, for example, of bus garages or train depots, which are not explicitly mentioned in the EIA Directive, but have similar characteristics to car parks.*
- ii. Construction projects such as housing developments, hospitals, universities, sports stadiums, cinemas, **theatres**, concert halls **and other cultural centres** could also be assumed to fall within this category. The underlying principle is that all these project categories are of an urban nature and that they may cause similar types of environmental impact.*
- iii. Projects to which the terms ‘urban’ and ‘infrastructure’ can relate, such as the construction of sewerage and water supply networks, could also be included in this category.*

The overall area of the footprint of the proposed development is c. 0.62 hectares. The site would not be considered to be located within the a ‘built-up area’ nor a ‘business district.’ Therefore, the proposal would be considered to constitute a prescribed project type but is considered significantly below both the given thresholds of 10 hectares and 2 hectares.

Conclusion: The proposed scheme does not fall within the mandatory requirement for an EIA as addressed in EU Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directive 97/11/EC). These proposed works are thus to be assessed as a sub-threshold development.

4.3 Sub-Threshold Development - EIA Screening

A key determinant of the necessity for Environmental Impact Assessment of sub-threshold projects is whether or not such works are likely to have *significant* effects on the environment. The 1997 amending Directive (97/11/EC) introduced guidance for Member States in terms of deciding whether or not a development is likely to have a “significant effect on the environment.”

These criteria have been transposed fully into Irish legislation in the third schedule of the European Communities Environmental Impact Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 1999, (SI No.93 of 1999) and in Schedule 7 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (SI No 600 of 2001) as amended by Planning & Development Regulations 2008. This has recently been updated by transposition of the 2014 EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) which amends Directive 2011/92/EU¹). Guidance is provided by use of criteria set out in Annex III of the new Directive. These criteria as transposed in Irish legislation are grouped under three headings and are used to assist the screening process in determining whether a development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The three headings and criteria details as given in Annex III are given below:

Heading	Criteria
1. Characteristics of proposed development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the size and design of the entire proposed development• the cumulation with other existing and/or approved development• the nature of any associated demolition works• the use of natural resources• the production of waste• pollution and nuisances• the risk of major accidents (with regard to substances or

¹ Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (codification) (OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1).

	<p>technologies used)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the risks to human health
2. Location of proposed development	<p>The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard in particular to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the existing and approved land use the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area and its underground the absorption capacity of the natural environment in particular, wetlands, coastal zones, mountain and forest areas, nature reserves and natural parks, areas protected under the Habitats Directive / Birds Directives, other protected areas, densely populated areas, protected landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.
3. Type and characteristics of potential impacts	<p>The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in particular to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population) the nature of the impact the transboundary nature of the impact the intensity and complexity of the impact the probability of the impact the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of impact the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects the possibility of effectively reducing the impact

The project at Lanesborough is considered under the above criteria (as set out in Schedule 7) in the tables below.

CRITERIA (Schedule 7)		RELEVANCE	RATIONALE
1. Characteristics of Proposed Development: The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:	The size of the proposed development	No	The site to be developed is very small (c. 0.62ha). The area proposed for development has previously been developed/exploited as a quarry. No significant impacts or effects may be expected arising from the size or scale of the proposed development.

	The cumulation of other developments with the proposed development	No	<p>An examination of planning permissions for this townland, adjacent townlands and Lanesborough was carried out. A number of developments were reviewed. One other leisure development (Ref 20311) was noted. This proposed 'glamping' facility will be c. 3.5km from Common North. A residential development (Ref 21338) at Aghamore is at the further information stage of planning. This is c. 1km from Commons North. This development will be within the urban area of Lanesborough. No other developments with potential for significant effects were found. Neither of these projects, singly or cumulatively, are deemed to have potential for cumulative or in combination negative impacts with the proposed works under assessment here.</p> <p>Given the size and nature of the present development, no negative cumulative impacts are predicted.</p>
	The use of natural resources	No	Given the small size of the project and the nature of the site (an exploited quarry) it may be accepted that no significant natural resources will be required to complete the project.
	The production of waste	No	Given the nature of the development, waste produced during the construction process is anticipated to be negligible and therefore insufficient to cause significant effects. Insofar as possible, any waste materials arising from the project will be recycled at a suitable facility.
	Pollution and nuisance	No	Impacts such as noise and dust will be kept within acceptable standards and as such are anticipated to be negligible. In addition, a

			Construction Environmental Management Plan will require to be drawn up at contract stage.
	The risk of accidents having regard to substances or technologies used.	No	Any potential impacts are anticipated as being negligible given the nature and scale of the proposed development. No novel technologies or methodologies will be employed. Contractor will be well-experienced in developments of this nature.

CRITERIA (Schedule 7)		RELEVANCE	RATIONALE
2. Location of the Proposed Development: The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard in particular to:	The existing land use	No	This is not a sensitive area in terms of land use. The former quarry is currently used to hold quantities of gravel, spoil and compost.
	The relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area and its underground	No	Negligible impacts are anticipated given the nature of the existing site and the nature of the proposed development. No significant excavations will be carried out in order to complete the works.
	The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:		
	Wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;	Yes	None of these habitat types occur within the area proposed for development. However, part of the site is within 100m of the River Shannon/Lough Ree.
	Coastal zones	No	None of these habitat types occur within area of proposed development.
	Mountain and forest areas	No	None of these habitat types occur within area of proposed development.
	Nature Reserves and National Parks	No	None of these occur within area of proposed development.

	Areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC	Yes	The site is within the northern extent of the Lough Ree Special Area of Conservation (Site Code 000400). The site is also within c.120m of the Lough Ree Special Protection Area (Site Code 004064). An Appropriate Assessment Screening of the proposed works recommended that a Natura Impact Statement be drawn up to address potential impacts on these designated sites.
	Areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded.	No	No such area is involved in this project.
	Densely populated areas	No	This is not a densely populated area.
	Landscapes of historical, cultural archaeological significance	No	<p>No sites or articles of historical, cultural archaeological significance are known to occur here.</p> <p>An Anglo-Norman masonry castle was previously located close to the bridge crossing the River Shannon c.450m from the site. However, no remains of this exist. A number of listed 19th century buildings are also located within 500m of the proposed development (e.g. church and parochial house). However, the proposed development will not impact on any building of historical or cultural significance.</p>

CRITERIA (Schedule 7)		RELEVANCE	RATIONALE
3. Type and characteristics of potential impacts:	the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population)	No	Any potential negative impacts are expected to be insignificant, given the very limited scale of the proposed development. Rather long-term positive impacts may be expected on completion of the facility.
	The nature of the impact	No	Short-term visual impacts can be anticipated during construction phase but positive impacts from the new facility may be anticipated in the long-term.
	the transboundary nature of the impact	No	There will be no transboundary impacts arising from the proposed development.
	the intensity and complexity of the impact	No	Any impacts are considered insignificant given size and scale of development.
	the probability of the impact	No	No significant negative impacts are predicted as being likely.
	the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of impact	No	No significant negative impacts are predicted. Short-term visual impacts from the construction phase of the project may be anticipated but will not be significant.
	the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects	No	There are no other existing or proposed projects known at time of writing that may give rise to cumulative impacts. No significant negative impacts are predicted.
	the possibility of effectively reducing the impact	No	There will be no requirement to reduce impacts as no significant negative impacts are predicted.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that the **characteristics of the proposed development** would not be considered likely to have significant effects on the environment. This is based primarily on the very limited size and scale of the proposed works and low potential to have significant impacts. No other projects emerged from the screening process with which the proposed works may have significant cumulative impacts.

It is concluded that there will be no significant direct or indirect impacts by virtue of the **location of the proposed development** on the receiving environment. This is based primarily upon the nature of the area proposed for development. This disused quarry is currently used for the storage of materials. This previously exploited site has been highly modified by extraction of stone and later uses. The sensitivity of the habitats here is therefore low. While the site is within a Special Area of Conservation, none of the qualifying interests of the site occur within the area proposed for development.

It is concluded that the **type and characteristics of the potential impacts** would not be considered significant. This is based primarily upon the very limited size and scale of the proposed works. The lack of sensitive receptors is also a significant factor in this assessment. Impacts on landscape, soils and geology are not considered significant, given the small scale of works.

Given the limited size and scale of the proposed development and the absence of negative impacts from any other projects or plans known at time of writing, no significant **cumulative impacts** are considered likely.

The assessment has been carried out on the proposed works as a **sub threshold development**. The overall conclusion of this screening exercise is the recommendation to Longford County Council that there should be no specific requirement for a full Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development.

REFERENCES

DOECLG (2013), Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment;

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DoEHLG. (2003) '*Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development*'. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

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