

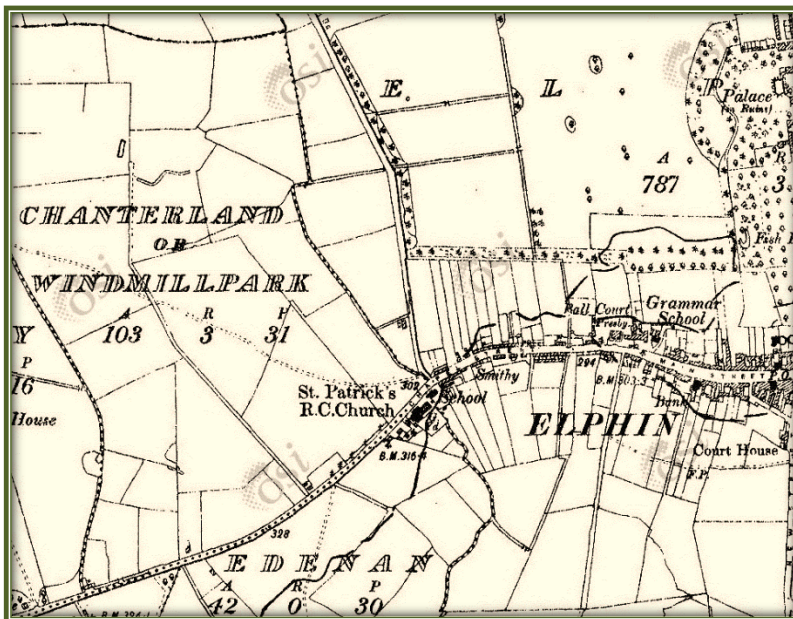
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PROVISION OF INFORMATION FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING FOR A PROPOSED PART 8 DEVELOPMENT IN ELPHIN, CO ROSCOMMON

IN LINE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE
EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE



Roscommon County Council
c/o Collins Boyd Engineering Ltd
Galway Road
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

A comprehensive assessment of the potential effects of a proposed residential development in Elphin, Co. Roscommon on designated Natura 2000 sites was carried out in September 2021 by Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM of Whitehill Environmental. This assessment allowed areas of potential ecological value and potential ecological constraints associated with this proposed development to be identified and it also enabled potential ecological effects associated with the proposed development on designated sites to be assessed.

The location of the proposed development is within the Zone of Influence of sites designated under European Law. As such and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) regarding Appropriate Assessment, this screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment was carried out in order to identify whether any significant impacts on designated sites are likely.

This report contains information required by the competent authority (in this instance the Roscommon County Council) to undertake a screening for Appropriate Assessment. It is the responsibility of the competent authority to make a decision as to whether or not the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on European Sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. In accordance with the Legislation and National Guidance, the competent authority should issue an AA Screening Determination, which should set out their decision regarding AA, including the main reasons and considerations on which the determination is based.

1.2 REGULATORY CONTEXT

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

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

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive also call for the undertaking of an Appropriate Assessment for plans and projects not directly connected with or necessary to the management of, but which are likely to have a significant effect on any European designated sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs). This is explained in greater detail in the following section (Section 1.2.2 and Section 1.2.3).

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC), which came into force in December 2000, establishes a framework for community action in the field of water policy. The WFD was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 722 of 2003). The WFD rationalises and updates existing legislation and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBDs). RBDs are essentially administrative areas for coordinated water management and are comprised of multiple river basins (or catchments), with cross-border basins (i.e. those covering the territory of more than one Member State) assigned to an international RBD. The aim of the WFD is to ensure that waters achieve at least good status by 2021 and that status does not deteriorate in any waters.

Appropriate Assessment and the Habitats Directive

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora – the ‘Habitats Directive’ - provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of European Community interest, at a favourable conservation status. Articles 3 - 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as *Natura 2000*. Natura 2000 sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

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

“Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the

competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.”

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

Article 6(4) states:

“If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.”

The Appropriate Assessment Process

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

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

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

‘(1) A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development,

individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

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

- European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2002). Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (2006). Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice.
- European Commission (2007). Clarification of the Concepts of: Alternative Solution, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.

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

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

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

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

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

The four-stage process is:

Stage 1: Screening – The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether or not these impacts are likely to be significant;

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment – The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site’s structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts;

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

Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain – An assessment of the compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

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

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

2.2 STATEMENT OF COMPETENCY

This AA Screening report was carried out by Noreen McLoughlin, BA, MSc, MCIEEM. Noreen has an honours degree in Zoology and an MSc in Freshwater Ecology from Trinity College, Dublin and she has been a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management for over 15 years. Noreen has over 16 years' experience as a professional ecologist in Ireland.

2.3 DESK STUDIES & CONSULTATION

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

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

2.4 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

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

The conservation objectives relating to each Natura 2000 site and its QIs/SCIs are cited generally for SACs as "to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the

Annex I habitat(s) and/or Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected”, and for SPAs “to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA”.

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

- Its natural range and area it covers within that range is stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future;

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- The population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future;
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

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

2.5 FIELD STUDIES

A visit to the site of the proposed application at Elphin was conducted on March 10th 2021, when field notes, species lists and photographs were taken. Habitats within the application site were classified in accordance to Level 3 of *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossit, 2000). Particular attention was paid to invasive plant species within the application site.

3 SCREENING

3.1 DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Roscommon County Council are seeking permission for a proposed social housing development at Windmill Road, Elphin, Co. Roscommon. Permission for the works will be sought under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. The proposed development will consist of:

- *Construction of ten Dwellings, along with all associated site services and works, including connection to water mains and foul sewer.*

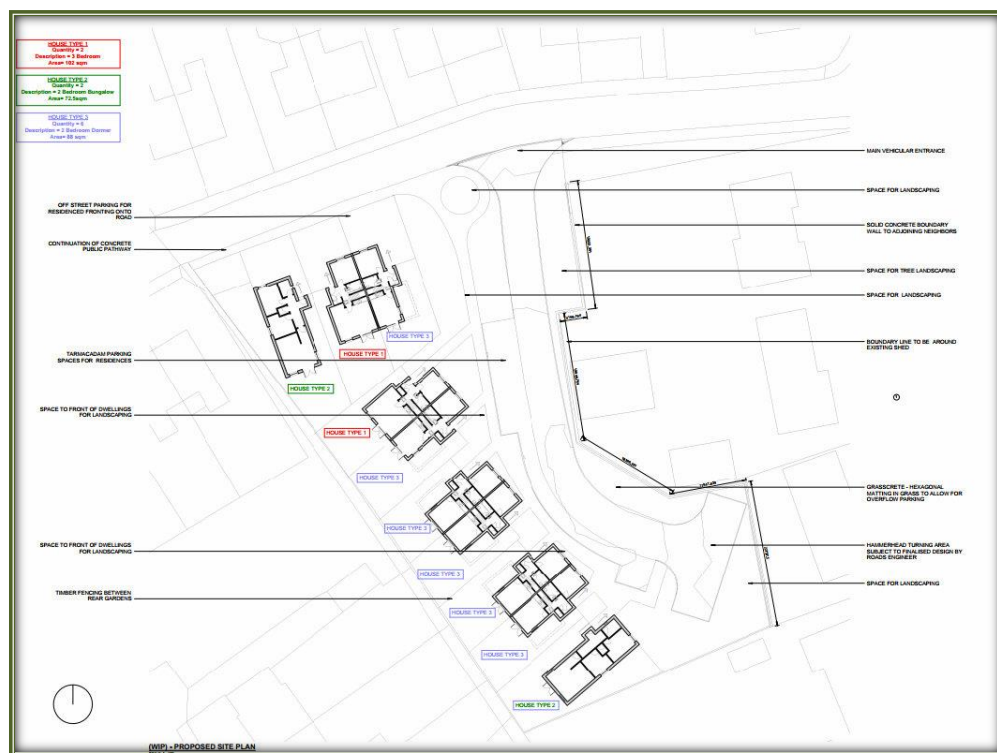


Figure 1 – Extract from Planning Drawing (as Prepared by Collins Boyd Engineering)

Wastewater and Surface Water Treatment

Wastewater from the proposed development will be directed to the existing foul sewer line along Windmill Road for treatment in the Elphin Wastewater Treatment plant. This plant is fully licensed by the EPA (Reg No Do230-01).

Surface water from the site will be directed into the local surface water network.

3.2 SITE LOCATION AND SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

The application site is 0.5 hectares in area and it is located in the western outskirts of Elphin town, approximately 700m west of the town centre. The site will be accessed via an existing entrance that occurs between two houses and this entrance is just off Windmill Road

The land-use in the area surrounding the site is mixed. The site is immediately surrounded by the residential areas of Windmill Road and Park. The urban / suburban areas of Elphin lie largely to the east of the site. This includes the commercial, residential and industrial areas of Elphin and the habitats associated with these areas include buildings and artificial surfaces and amenity grasslands and gardens. Beyond these habitats, agriculture is the dominant land use and the main habitat associated with this use is improved agricultural grassland. Other natural habitats represented in the wider area include semi-improved and wet grasslands, hedgerows, treelines and watercourses.

Site location maps are shown in Figures 2 and 3, whilst an aerial photograph of the site and its surrounding habitats is shown in Figure 4.

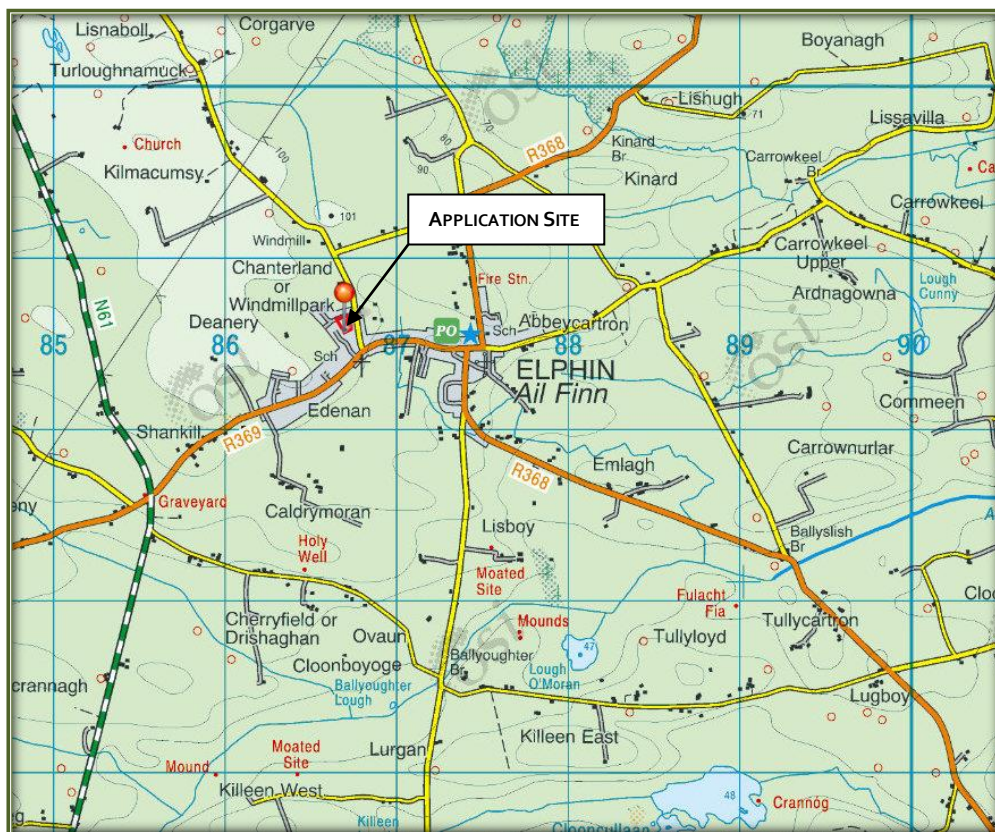


Figure 2 – Site Location Map (Pinned)



Figure 3 – Site Location Map (Sites Outlined in Red)

HABITATS AND SPECIES

The application site does not lie within or adjacent to any area that has been designated for nature conservation purposes. The habitats in the site were assessed during the site walkover. The dominant habitat within the application site is an unmanaged and un-grazed grassland habitat that has become rank and overgrown. Grasses such as couch grass *Elymus repens* and meadow and rye grasses are dominant, whilst the broadleaved component consists of creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and nettles *Urtica dioica*. The southern portion of the site is poorly drained and this is indicated by a larger proportion of compact rush *Juncus conglomeratus*. Flag iris *Iris pseudacorus* was noted here also. There is a row of Leylandii trees running west to east and to the north of this treeline there is an area of amenity grassland which extends to the access road of Windmill Park. This area is landscaped and maintained.

The western and southern site boundaries consist of hedgerows, and bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg* scrub is also common along these features. There are some immature scattered willow (*Salix*) trees growing throughout the site. Photographs of the site are shown in Appendix II.

An examination of the website of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, revealed that there are no records for the presence of any notable species from within the relevant 1km square (M8688) of this proposed development site. Given the fact that the site is surrounded by residential areas, its value to protected mammals would be limited.

WATER FEATURES AND QUALITY

The application site is located within the Upper Shannon Hydrometric Area (26) and Catchment (26B), the Owenur Sub-Catchment (010) and the Owenur Sub-Basin (010). There is a drain along the western site boundary. This drains eventually leads to the Elphin Stream, which is 262m east of the site. This stream flows in a south-easterly direction to join the Owenur River, 2.2km south-east of Elphin. The Owenur River flows east, to eventually join the Shannon at Lough Boderg.

The EPA have classed the ecological status of the Elphin Stream and the Owenur River as being of moderate to poor status. Under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, this is unsatisfactory and all waterbodies must achieve good ecological status within a specified time frame.



Figure 4 – Aerial Photograph of the Sites (Outlined in Red) and its Surrounding Habitats.

3.3 NATURA 2000 SITES IDENTIFIED

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

There are five Natura 2000 designated sites within 15km of the application site. These designated areas and their closest points to the proposed development site are summarised in Table 1 and a map showing their locations relative to the application sites are shown in Figure 5. The nearest Natura 2000 sites with hydrological connectivity have also been considered here. A full description of these sites can be read on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (npws.ie).

Site Name & Code	Distance	Qualifying Interests	Potential Effects?
Annaghmore Lough SAC 001626	5.4km south-east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion 	<i>There is no hydrological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore potential significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
Bellanagare Bog SAC 000592	9.8km north-east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion 	<i>There is no hydrological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore potential significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
Bellanagare Bog SPA 004105	9.9km north-east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) 	<i>There is no hydrological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore potential significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
Cloonshanville Bog SAC 000614	10.9km north-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion Bog woodland 	<i>There is no hydrological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, therefore potential significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
Mullygollan Turlough Sac	11km south-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turloughs 	<i>There is no hydrological connectivity between</i>

000612			<i>the application site and this SPA, therefore potential significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
Lough Forbes SAC 001818	21km south-east / 40km downstream of Elphin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural eutrophic lakes with <i>Magnopotamion</i> or <i>Hydrocharition</i>-type vegetation Active raised bogs Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> 	<i>Potential significant effects are unlikely given the hydrological distance of 40km.</i>
Ballykenny – Ballykenny Bog SPA 004101	21km south-east / 40km downstream of Elphin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) 	<i>Potential significant effects are unlikely given the hydrological distance of 40km.</i>

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

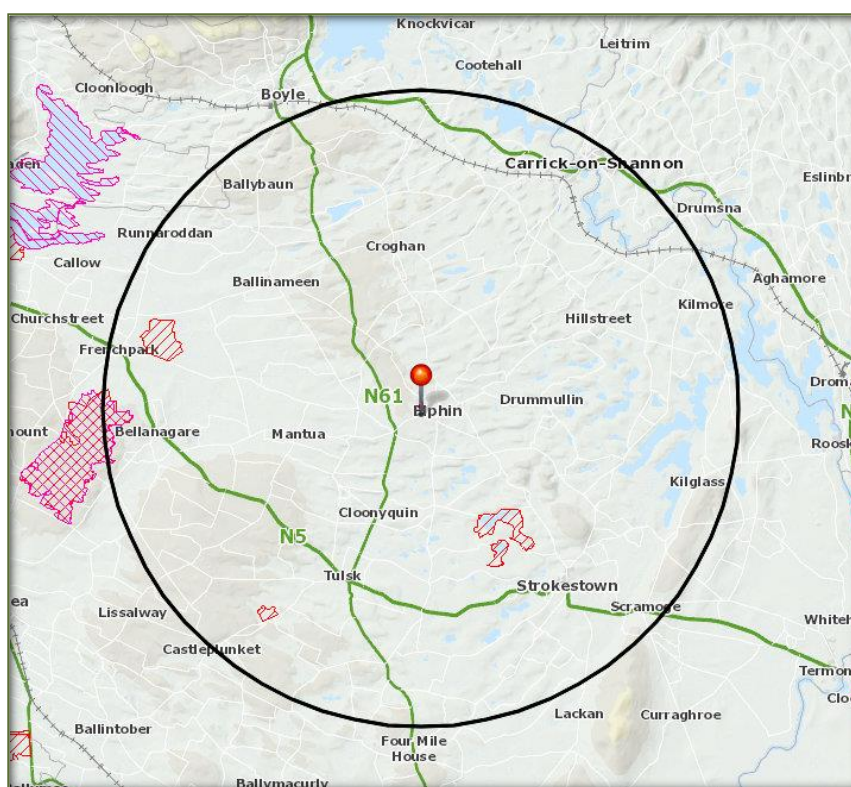


Figure 5 – The Application Site (Pinned) in relation to the Natura 2000 Sites within 15km. SACs – Red Hatching; SPAs – Pink Hatching

3.4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The potential effects of the proposed development on the Natura 2000 sites identified above are described below.

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

The construction and operation of the proposed development will have no significant effects upon the integrity or the site structure of the designated sites identified. There are no individual elements of the proposed project that are likely to give rise to significant negative effects on any of these aforementioned sites. There will be no direct, indirect or cumulative effects upon any designated site arising from the construction or operation of the proposed development.

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

Size and scale: Given the small size and scale of the development in relation to the overall size of the designated sites identified, the likelihood of any direct, indirect or cumulative effects on these designated sites arising from the construction and operation of the proposed development is low.

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

Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site: There are five Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the application sites. The closest of these is Annaghmore Lough SAC and this is 5.4km south-east of the application site. There is no connectivity between the application site and this SAC and therefore significant effects upon this SAC can be ruled out. The site is also 40km upstream of Lough Forbes SAC and Ballykenny-Fisherstown SPA. This extensive hydrological distance is sufficient to ensure that significant effects will not arise on either of these sites.

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

Emissions: Neither the construction nor the operation of the proposed development will result in any direct emissions to any SAC or SPA. There will be no run-off from the site directly to any SAC or SPA. There is a drain adjacent to the application site, but the downstream distance (40km) to Lough Forbes SAC and Ballykenny Fisherstown SPA is sufficient to ensure that no impacts will arise on these areas by virtue of emissions. Best practice measures will be undertaken during the development of the site to prevent run-off from the site from entering any local watercourse.

During operation, wastewater will be directed to the existing foul sewer for treatment in the Elphin Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Excavation requirements: There will be no excavation works in any designated area.

Transportation requirements: There will be no additional transportation requirements resulting from the proposed development and associated works that will have any impact upon the Natura 2000 sites identified.

In-Combination / Cumulative Impacts: The proposed application was considered in combination with other developments or proposed developments in the Elphin area. A number of other developments (domestic / commercial) have been granted planning permission in this area in the preceding five years. Any future individual application that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site will be subject to Appropriate Assessment as required under Articles 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. The proposed development will have no impacts upon any designated site when it is considered in-combination with other developments that have been properly screened for AA or where mitigation has been carried out as part of an NIS.

Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc: Once construction begins, it should be complete within one to two years. Operation of the site will be ongoing.

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

Reduction of habitat area: The proposed development lies outside the boundaries of the Natura 2000 sites identified in Section 3.3. There will be no reduction of designated habitat area within any SAC or SPA. There will be no effects upon the habitat qualifying interests of any designated site.

Disturbance to key species: There will be no direct disturbance to any species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive or Annex II of the Habitats Directive. There will be no impacts upon any protected species arising from the construction or operation of the application site.

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

Reduction in species density: There will be no reduction in species density within the SAC and SPA.

Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.): There will be no negative impacts upon surface or ground water quality within any SAC or SPA. There will be no negative impacts upon the water quality in any designated site, specifically in the Elphin Stream or the Owenur River.

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

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

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

Loss - Estimated percentage of lost area of habitat: None

Fragmentation: None

Disruption & disturbance: None

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

3.5 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Finding of No Significant Effects Report Matrix	
Name of project	A Proposed Part 8 Development at Windmill Road, Elphin, Co. Roscommon
Name and location of Natura 2000 site	There are five Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the application sites. The closest of these is Annaghmore Lough SAC and this is 5.4km south-east of the application site. There is no connectivity between the application site and this SAC and therefore significant effects upon this SAC can be ruled out.
Description of project	A Proposed Part 8 Residential Development
Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?	No
Are there other projects or plans that together with project being assessed could affect the site?	No
The Assessment of Significance of Effects	
Describe how the project is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site	Having regard to the location, nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that there is no potential for significant effects either from the proposed development on its own or in combination with other plans and projects.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	Not applicable as there is no potential for negative impacts
Describe how the project is likely to affect species designated under Annex II of the Habitats Directive.	No impacts likely
Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment	
Who carried out the assessment	Noreen McLoughlin, MSC, MCIEEM. Consultant Ecologist
Sources of data	NPWS, EPA, National Biodiversity Data Centre, Roscommon County Council
Level of assessment completed	Stage1 Appropriate Assessment Screening
Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed	Full results included

4 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION

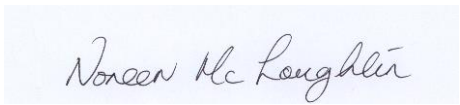
In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the relevant case law, established best practice and the precautionary principle, this AA Screening Report has examined the details of the project in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the application site.

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

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

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

It is of the opinion of the author that an AA of the proposed development is not required as significant effects upon all designated sites identified within 15km can be ruled out.



Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM.
Ecologist.

(PI Insurance details available on request)

Appendix I: FURTHER ECOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Whilst the proposed development will have no impacts upon the integrity of any area that has been designated as a Natura 2000 site, it is usually best practice to undertake certain mitigation measures during the construction and operation of any development. These measures will help to protect the local biodiversity of the surrounding area and ensure the protection of local wildlife and water quality. Therefore it is recommended that the following measures are implemented: *(It should be noted that these recommended measures are **not** designed for the protection of any Natura 2000 site. Their presence does not indicate that a Stage II Appropriate Assessment is needed and they are fully outside of the Appropriate Assessment process).*

- It is recommended that native trees and shrubs are used as part of the landscaping scheme.
- Additional consideration should be given for the creation of habitats for pollinators.
- Vegetation should be removed outside of the bird nesting season.

Appendix II: PHOTOGRAPHS



Overgrown Grassland Habitats within the Site



Bramble Scrub / Leylandii Treeline



Looking East to the Back of the Houses along Windmill Road



Amenity Grassland Area in Windmill Park