Cootehall Park

AA Screening

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Contract

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This report describes work commissioned by John Quigly, on behalf of Roscommon County Council, by an instruction dated 29/01/2024. The Client's representative for the contract was John Quigly of Roscommon County Council. Mia Heigh of JBA Consulting carried out this work.

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Abbreviations

AA…… Appropriate Assessment
CIEEM…….. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
DEHLG……. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government
EC……..European Commission
ERSI…….. Economic and Social Research Institute
EEC……European Economic Community
EPA……Environmental Protection Agency
EU…….. European Union
GSI…… Geological Survey Ireland
IAQM…… Institute of Air Quality Management
IROPI…… Imperative Reasons of Over-riding Public Interest
LSE…… Likely Significant Effect
NBDC…… National Biodiversity Data Centre
NPF……... National Planning Framework
NPO…….. National Policy Objectives
NPWS……National Parks and Wildlife Services
NSO…….. National Strategy Outcomes
OPR…….. Office of the Planning Regulator
QI……Qualifying Interest
SAC……Special Area of Conservation
SDG…….. Sustainability Development Goals
SPA……Special Protection Areas
SPR……Source-Pathway-Receptor
WFD……Water Framework Directive
WWTP ……..Waste Water Treatment Plant
ZoI……. Zone of Influence

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

JBA Consulting Engineers and Scientists Ltd. (hereafter JBA) has been commissioned by John Quigly of Roscommon County Council to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report of the proposed upgrade works to be carried out at Cootehall Park, Coothall, Co. Roscommon.

1.2 Legislative Context

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora, known as 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 sites. 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 set 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 requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive have been transposed into Irish legislation by means of inter alia the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015 (S.I. No. 477 / 2011) as amended.

1.3 Appropriate Assessment Process

Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process was produced by the European Commission in 2002, which was subsequently developed into guidance specifically for Ireland by the NPWS and Planning Divisions of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) (DEHLG, 2009). Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) produced a Practice Note in 2021, PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021). These guidance documents identify a staged approach to conducting an AA, as shown Figure 1-1.

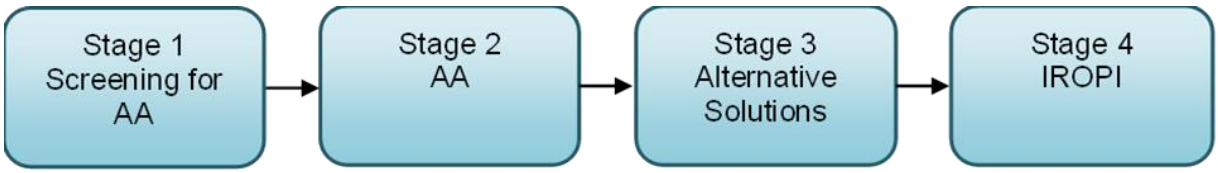

Figure 1-1 The Appropriate Assessment Process (from: Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities, DEHLG, 2009).

1.3.1 Stage 1 – Screening for AA

The initial screening stage of the Appropriate Assessment is to determine:

- Whether the proposed plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European designated site for nature conservation (Natura 2000 site)
- If it is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the European designated site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

For those sites where, potential adverse impacts are identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, further assessment is necessary to determine if the proposals will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European

designated site, in the view of the site's conservation objectives (i.e., the process proceeds to Stage 2).

1.3.2 Stage 2 – AA

This stage requires a more in-depth evaluation of the plan or project, and the potential direct and indirect impacts of them on the integrity and interest features of the European designated site(s), alone or in-combination with other plans and projects, taking into account the site's structure, function, and conservation objectives. Where required, mitigation or avoidance measures will be suggested.

The competent authority can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site(s) concerned. If this cannot be determined, and where mitigation can not be achieved, then alternative solutions will need to be considered (i.e., the process proceeds to Stage 3).

1.3.3 Stage 3 – Alternative Solutions

Where adverse impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites are identified, and mitigation cannot be satisfactorily implemented, alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project that avoid adverse impacts need to be considered. If none can be found, the process proceeds to Stage 4.

1.3.4 Stage 4 – IROPI

Where adverse impacts of a plan or project on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites are identified and no alternative solutions exist, the plan will only be allowed to progress if imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) can be demonstrated. In this case compensatory measures will be required.

The process only processed through each of the four stages for certain plans and projects. For example, a plan or project, not connected with management of a site, but where no likely significant impacts are identified, the process stops at stage 1. Throughout the process, the precautionary principle must be applied, so that any uncertainties do not result in adverse impacts on a site.

This report is in support of Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

1.3.5 Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) Rulings

The CJEU has been asked to issue rulings on development plans, which are used to inform this assessment.

The CJEU issued a ruling on the consideration of avoidance and reduction measures as a result of People over Wind, Peter Sweetman v Coillte Teoranta (C-323/17) [2018]. This judgement stated that measures intended to reduce or avoid effects on a Natura 2000 site should only be considered within the framework of an Appropriate

Assessment, and it is not permissible to take into account such measures at the screening stage. In practice, this means that any activities that are not integral to the project (i.e., the project could conceivably take place without them) and have the effect of avoiding or reducing an impact on a Natura 2000 site, cannot be considered at the screening stage.

The CJEU ruling in Grace & Sweetman (C-164/17) [2018] clarified the difference between avoidance and reduction (mitigation) measures and compensation. Measures intended to compensate for the negative effects of a project cannot be taken into account in the assessment of the implications of a project, and instead are considered under Article 6(4). This means that any project where an effect on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site remains and can only be offset by compensation, would need to proceed under Article 6(4), demonstrating “imperative reasons of overriding public interest”.

The judgements referred to as the Dutch Nitrogen cases (C -293/17 and C -294/17) [2018] have important implications for projects that could potentially impact on sites that are exceeding critical thresholds for input of damaging ammonia (but could also reasonably apply where other nutrients are impacting Natura 2000 sites). The judgements state that the use of thresholds to exclude project impacts is acceptable in principle, and that strategic plans can be used as mitigation but only with consideration of the certainty (or otherwise) of the outcomes of those strategic plans. It clarifies that where the status of a habitat type is already unfavourable the possibility of authorising activities which increase the problem is necessarily limited.

The CJEU ruling in the case of Holohan v An Bord Pleanála (C-461/17) [2018] also clarified the importance in Appropriate Assessment of taking into account habitat types and species outside the boundary of the Natura 2000 site where implications of the impacts on those habitat and species may impact the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 site. In this assessment functionally linked and supporting habitat for species outside of Natura 2000 sites are assessed where they could potentially impact the conservation objectives of any screened in Natura 2000 sites.

The CJEU ruling in response to questions referred by the Irish High Court in the Eco Advocacy CLG Case (C-721/21) [2023] indicated that an applicant for permission in its AA screening report/and a decision maker in undertaking its AA screening can take into account “standard features”, i.e. all the constituent elements of that project inherent in it/elements that are incorporated into a projects design not with the aim of reducing its negative effects (even where these have the effect of reducing harmful effects on a European site).

1.4 Methodology

The Screening for Appropriate Assessment has been prepared with regards to the Birds and Habitats Directives, the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats)

Regulations 2011-15 as amended and relevant jurisprudence of the EU and Irish courts. The following documents have also been used to provide guidance for the assessment:

- DEHLG (2010) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (2021) OPR Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021).
- EC (2019). Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC. (European Commission. Directorate General for Environment, 2019).
- EC (2021) Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission (European Commission et al, 2021).
- Guidance document on Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites (European Commission. Directorate General for Environment., 2022).
- EC (2013) Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats Version EUR 28 (EC, 2013).
- CIEEM (2018). Guidelines and checklist for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine., Second Ed. (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental), updated 2022.
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) (2019). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 1: Summary Overview. Unpublished NPWS report (NPWS 2019a).
- NPWS (2019). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 2: Habitat Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report (NPWS 2019b).
- NPWS (2019). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Volume 3: Species Assessments. Unpublished NPWS report (NPWS 2019c).

1.4.1 Desktop Study

A desktop study was conducted of available published and unpublished information, along with a review of data available on the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) web-based databases, to identify key habitats and species, including legally protected and species of conservation concern, that may be present within ecologically relevant distances from the project as explained below. A baseline habitat assessment was performed using satellite imagery of the site. The data sources below were consulted for the desktop study:

- Aerial photography available from www.osi.ie and ESRI World Imagery.

- NPWS website (www.npws.ie) where Natura 2000 site synopses, data forms and conservation objectives were obtained along with Annex 1 habitat distribution data and status reports.
- River Basin Management Plans
- NBDC Biodiversity Maps (maps.biodiversityireland.ie)
- Catchments (www.catchments.ie)
- Environmental Protection Agency Maps (https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps)
- Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) (www.gsi.ie)
- GSI - Groundwater data viewer (https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com)
- Planning Applications (myplan.ie)

1.4.2 Walkover Survey

A walkover survey was conducted on 2nd of February 2024 by two ecologists, Dominic Tilley and Mia Heigh of JBA. During the survey, any areas of the site that may have ecological value were identified. The results of the survey can be found in Section 3.

1.4.3 Screening Methods

This screening assessment uses the source-pathway-receptor (S-P-R) model as outlines in guidance (OPR 2021). Using the source-pathway-receptor model allows for potential significant effects to be eliminated if no viable source, pathway, or receptor is present.

The S-P-R method uses an examination of the construction methods or project description to allow sources of impact to be determined. This also allows a zone of influence for the project to be generated based on the size, scale and nature of the works involved. The pathways for impact are also analysed to see if a functional pathway for impact is present. This report analyses three pathways: surface water, groundwater and land. Using information gathered from desk sources (e.g. mapped qualifying interests from the Conservation Objectives for the site) and from field surveys, receptors within the zone of influence are identified. In some cases, sensitive receptors may also play a role in determining the zone of influence. If any of the three parts to the model are not present (source-pathway-receptor) the potential for a likely significant effect from the project on the Natura 2000 network can be discounted.

1.4.4 Likely Significant Effect Test

The test for AA screening is whether the project could have a ‘Likely Significant Effect’ (LSE) on any Natura 2000 site. A likely significant effect is defined as any effect that could undermine the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. There must be a causal connection between the project and the qualifying interest of the site which could result in possible significant effects on the site. The LSE test is a lower threshold for the screening

assessment than ‘adverse effect on site integrity’ considered at Appropriate Assessment stage (Stage 2) as screening is intended to be a preliminary examination for potential effects.

The Zone of Influence was used to identify Natura 2000 sites that could be impacted by the project. For each of these sites, the Qualifying Interest features and their associated conservation objectives were identified, and the possibility of LSE was determined by a combination of location, ecological and hydrological connectivity, sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of the source of impact.

1.4.5 In-Combination Screening

The possibility of in-combination effects are considered only at a high level. Where there is no effect at all via a pathway, there is no possibility of in-combination effects. Where an LSE is identified, the in-combination assessment is carried forwards to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

1.5 Limitations and Constraints

The screening assessment necessarily relies on some assumptions, and it was inevitably subject to some limitations. These would not affect the conclusion, but the following points are recorded, to ensure the basis of the assessment is clear:

- Information on the works and conditions on site are based on current knowledge at the time of writing. Changes to the site since this report was drafted cannot be accounted for. However, significant changes to the site are not foreseen to happen prior to the start of the project.
- This assessment is based on the methodology for proposed works as described in this report. Where changes to methodology occur, an ecologist will need to be consulted to determine if the changes are likely to alter the ecological impacts and therefore need reassessment.
- Data from biological record centres or online databases in historical information, and datasets may be incomplete, inaccurate, or missing. The absence of records for an area may be due to the under recording in the area and does not necessarily imply the absence of species. These records are therefore to be treated as minimum information available for the area.

2 Project Description

2.1 The ‘Project’

The project, known as ‘Cootehall Park’, is not directly connected with, or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 site but may have potential adverse impacts upon the Natura 2000 sites identified in Section 4. Therefore, the proposed project is subject to the requirements of the AA process.

2.2 Site Location

The project will be undertaken in the centre of Cootehall village, located between Boyle and Carrick-on-Shannon. Cootehall is situated beside Oakport Lough. The proposed site sits on the bank of the Boyle River.

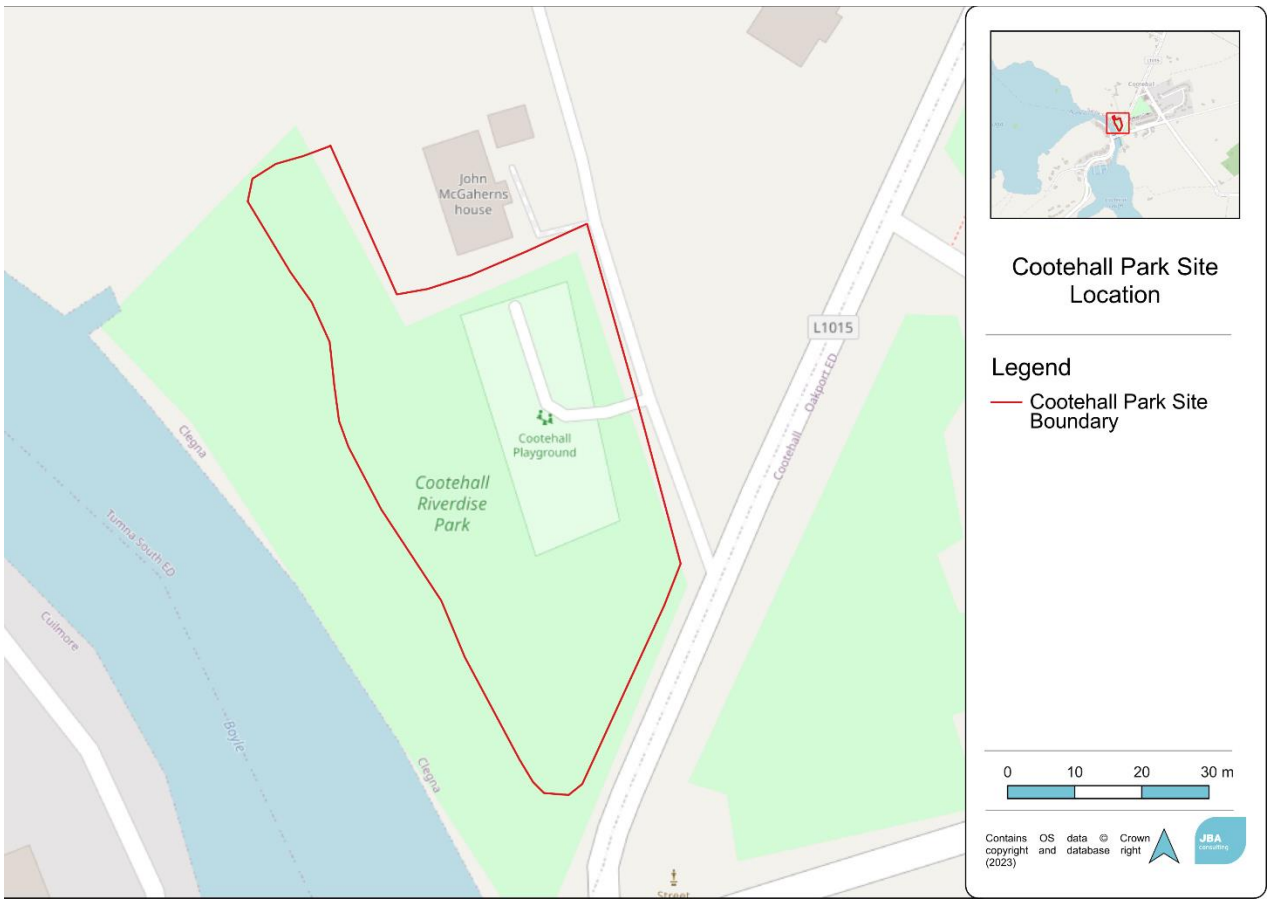

Figure 2-1 Cootehall Park site location.

2.3 Proposed Works

The proposed works for the site is to upgrade Cootehall Park. This includes the construction of a gazebo structure, extension to the playground and additional parking spaces in the carpark.

New drainage is not required in the scope of the works to be carried out, and any surface water will runoff to existing free-draining grassed sections of the park.

The project consists of:

- Provision of outdoor gazebo/canopy structure,
- Hard and soft landscaping,
- Upgrade works to existing macadam footpath,
- Additional parking spaces to existing carpark,
- Extension to existing playground,
- 1 v 1 basketball area,
- Associated site & ancillary works.

2.4 Zone of Influence

The Zone of Influence is considered using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model, therefore only designated sites that are connected to the project site are recorded and assessed. This zone of influence uses the precautionary principle, as the work is primarily anticipated to only impact on the footprint of the site.

Natura 2000 sites within a 5km range of the proposed scheme were examined in relation to surface water and groundwater / ground-to-surface water pathways (i.e., local surface water sub-catchments and groundwater bodies / aquifers), with an extended 15km range for those with a downstream hydrological connection and 10km for groundwater connections.

Connections are assessed for impacts relating to noise disturbance (300m), air pollution (emissions and dust) (500m), and any supporting habitat for SAC/SPA species beyond this distance that may have QI species that utilise the site. The ZoI for air pollution was considered as per the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) Guidance on the Assessment of Dust from Demolition and Construction (IAQM, 2024), including ex-situ habitats used by QI species associated with local Natura 2000 sites.

This means the final ‘Zone of Influence’ can be a complex shape not easily defined by a simple distance figure, but in this way the assessment includes all relevant sites whilst avoiding unnecessary inclusion of other sites.

3 Existing Environment

3.1 Baseline Conditions

Ecological surveys of the study area were conducted by JBA Ecologists on the 2nd of February 2024.

3.2 Habitats

Several habitats were noted during the site visit, see Table 3-1. These are described in the sections below and mapped in Figure 3-1. A full species list is provided in Appendix C.

Table 3-1 Habitats recorded on site classified by Fossitt (2000).

Habitat	Corresponding Habitat Code
Stone walls and other stonework	BL1
Buildings and artificial surfaces	BL3
Scattered trees and parkland	WD5
Hedgerows	WL1
Ornamental/non-native shrubs	WS3

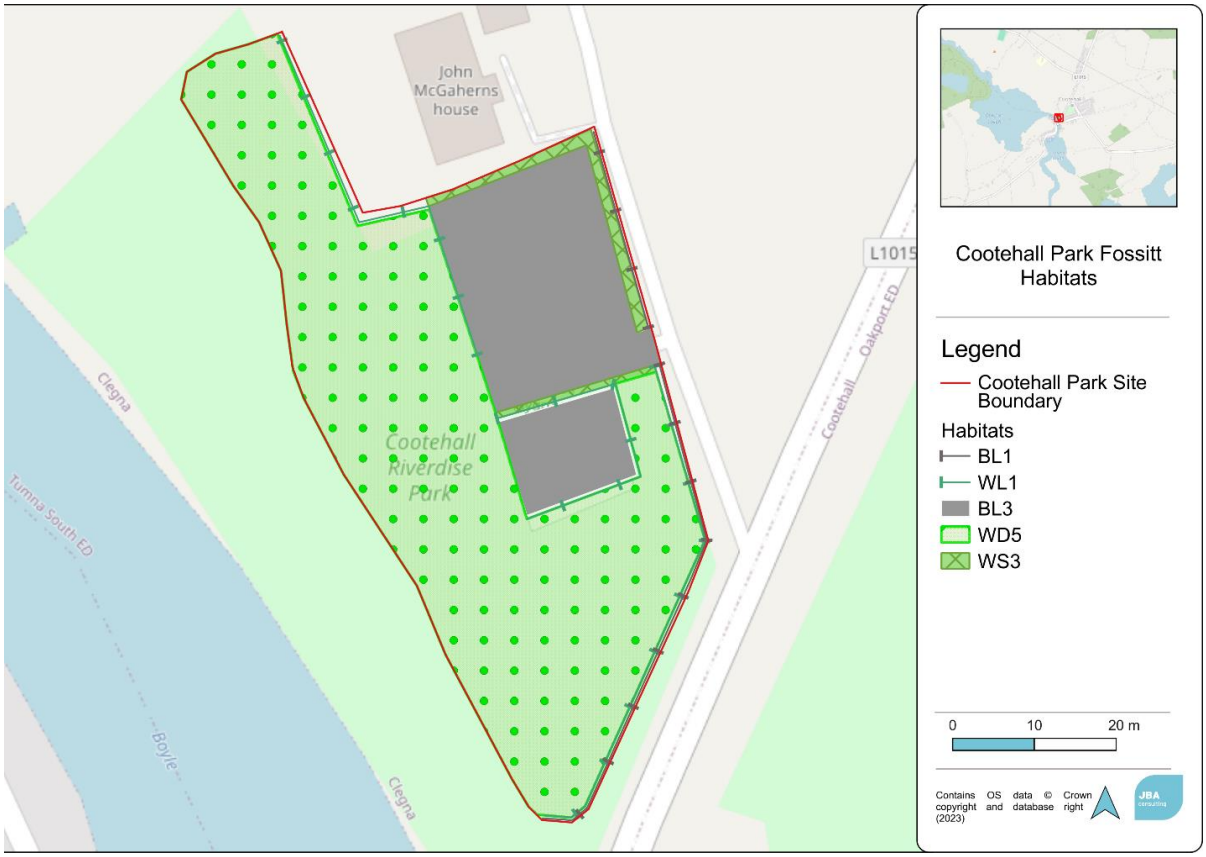

Figure 3-1: Habitats mapped to Fossitt (2000) classification.

3.2.1 BL1 Stone walls and other stonework

A low stone wall runs along (Figure 3-2) the eastern side of the site boundary. The wall has some moss coverage and other flora growing out of it.

Figure 3-2: Image taken during site visit of low stone wall on site.

3.2.2 BL3 Buildings and artificial surfaces

The artificial surfaces on site include the carpark and the playground area (Figure 3-3 and Figure 3-4). There is also a path that runs around the park, though it is heavily covered with moss.

Figure 3-3: Images of carpark and heavily moss-covered path around the park.

Figure 3-4: Image of playground on site.

3.2.3 WD5 Scattered trees and parkland

The largest habitat on site is scattered trees and parkland. The trees on site are mostly immature and include the species Sycamore, Birch, Beech, and Elder. The trees had extensive lichen growth. A full species list for the site can be found in Appendix C.

3.2.4 WL1 Hedgerows

There are a few hedgerows on site as mapped in Figure 3-1. The hedgerows surrounding the playground and around the carpark are made up of Beech.

3.2.5 WS3 Ornamental/non-native shrubs

A number of ornamental/non-native shrubs (Figure 3-5) were recorded on site, these include Pigsqueak *Bergenia cordifolia,* Common Periwinkle *Vinca minor,* and Ornamental Maple trees *Acer spp*.

Figure 3-5: Some ornamental species photographed on site.

3.3 Protected Fauna on Site

Some birds were recorded during the survey; Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Mute Swans *Cygnus olor*, Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*, and Rook *Corvus frugilegus*.

None of these species are QI of the nearest Natura 2000 site and are not considered further in this report.

3.4 Protected Flora on Site

No habitats or flora of conservation interest (i.e. qualifying interests (QI)) related to nearby Natura 2000 sites, were found on site.

3.5 Protected Species from NBDC Database

This section outlines the records of protected flora and fauna collated from the NBDC database. A custom polygon covering the proposed site and a 5km buffer was queried for NBDC records since 01/01/2014, and are listed in appendix A. Several threatened species were also recorded within the 5km buffer (Appendix A).

3.6 Invasive Species

A full list of invasive species recorded in the last 10 years within a 5km perimeter of the site is listed in Appendix B.

3.7 Elevation and Slope

The site sits approximately 42m above sea level with a 25m gradient from northeast to southwest.

3.8 Surface Water

The proposed site sits within the Upper Shannon catchment and the Boyle_SC_020 Sub-catchment (Figure 3-6). The Boyle River lies 20m west of the site boundary, which has an Overall Surface Water Status of 'Moderate' and is At Risk (WFD, 2018).

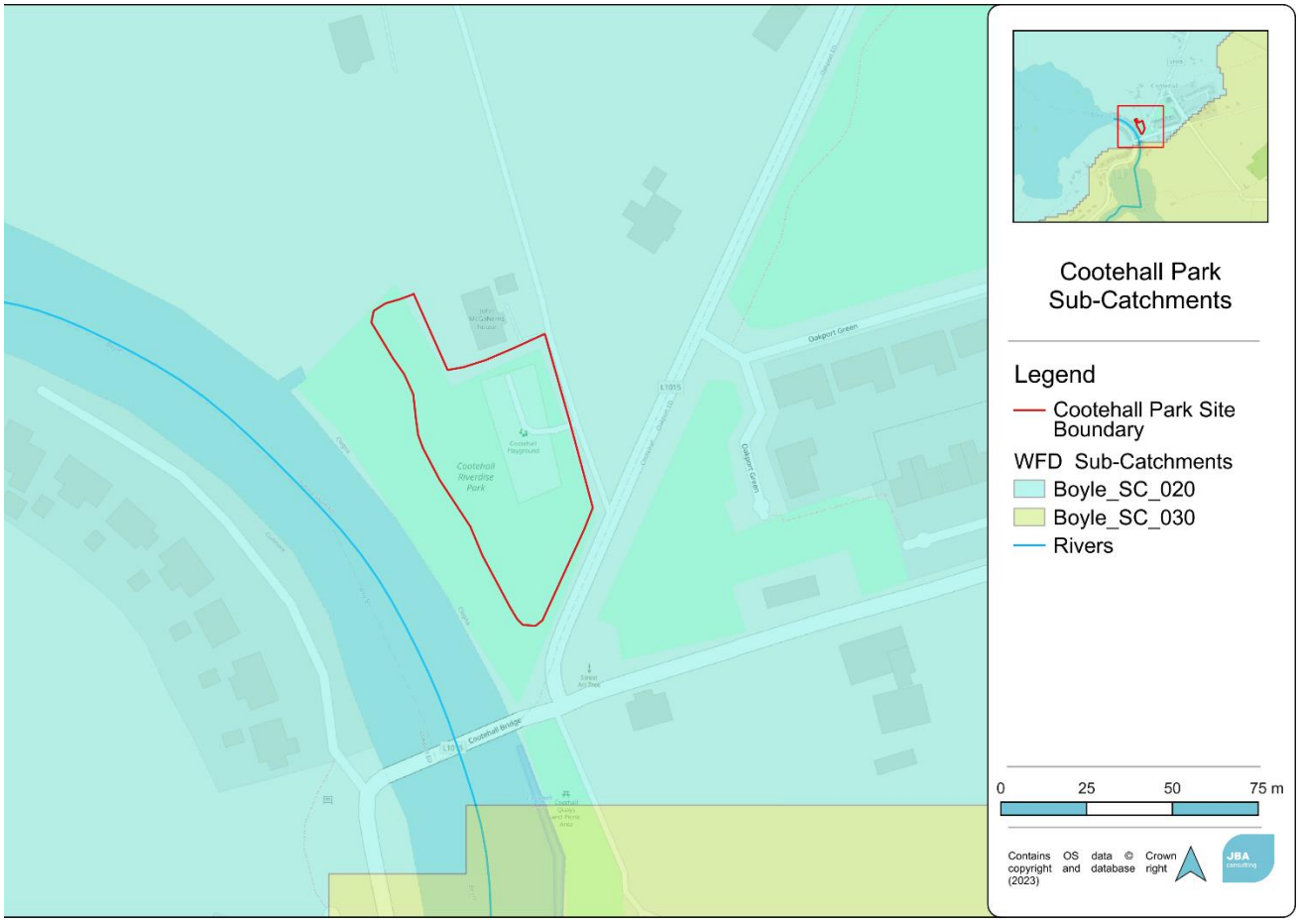

Figure 3-6: Sub-catchments and Boyle River close to the site.

3.9 Groundwater Bodies

The site sits on a bedrock outcropping within the Oakport Limestone Formation, with a Regionally Important Aquifer – Karstified. Subsoil permeability has not been mapped for this area.

The proposed site is located on the Carrick on Shannon IE_SH_G_048 (Figure 3-7), which has an Overall Groundwater Status of 'Good' and is classed as 'Not At Risk'. On site, the groundwater vulnerability is described as 'Rock at or near Surface or Karst' (Figure 3-8).

Figure 3-7: Groundwater bodies on site.

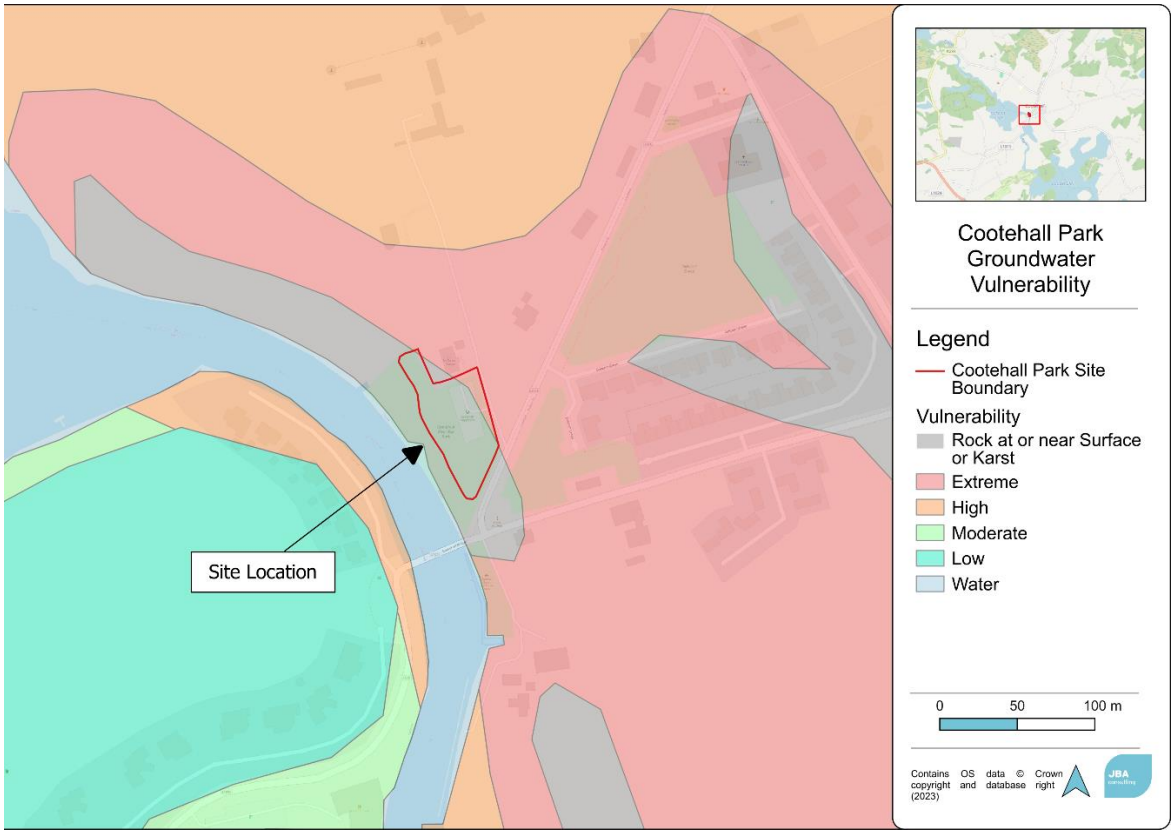

Figure 3-8: Groundwater vulnerability on site and in the local area.

4 Natura 2000 Sites

The DEHLG (2009) guidance identifies that Screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project should consider the following Natura 2000 sites:

- Any Natura 2000 sites within or adjacent to the plan or project area.
- Any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of impact of the plan or project. This is dependent on the nature and scale of the plan, with 15km generally recommended for plans, but potentially much less for projects.
- Any Natura 2000 sites that are more than 15km from the plan or project area, but may potentially be impacted upon, for example, through a hydrological connection.

Furthermore, the OPR guidance is to use a Source-Pathway-Receptor model, therefore only directly connected sites will be retained (OPR, 2021).

Within the ZoI, there are no Natura 2000 sites with potential pathways from the project site.

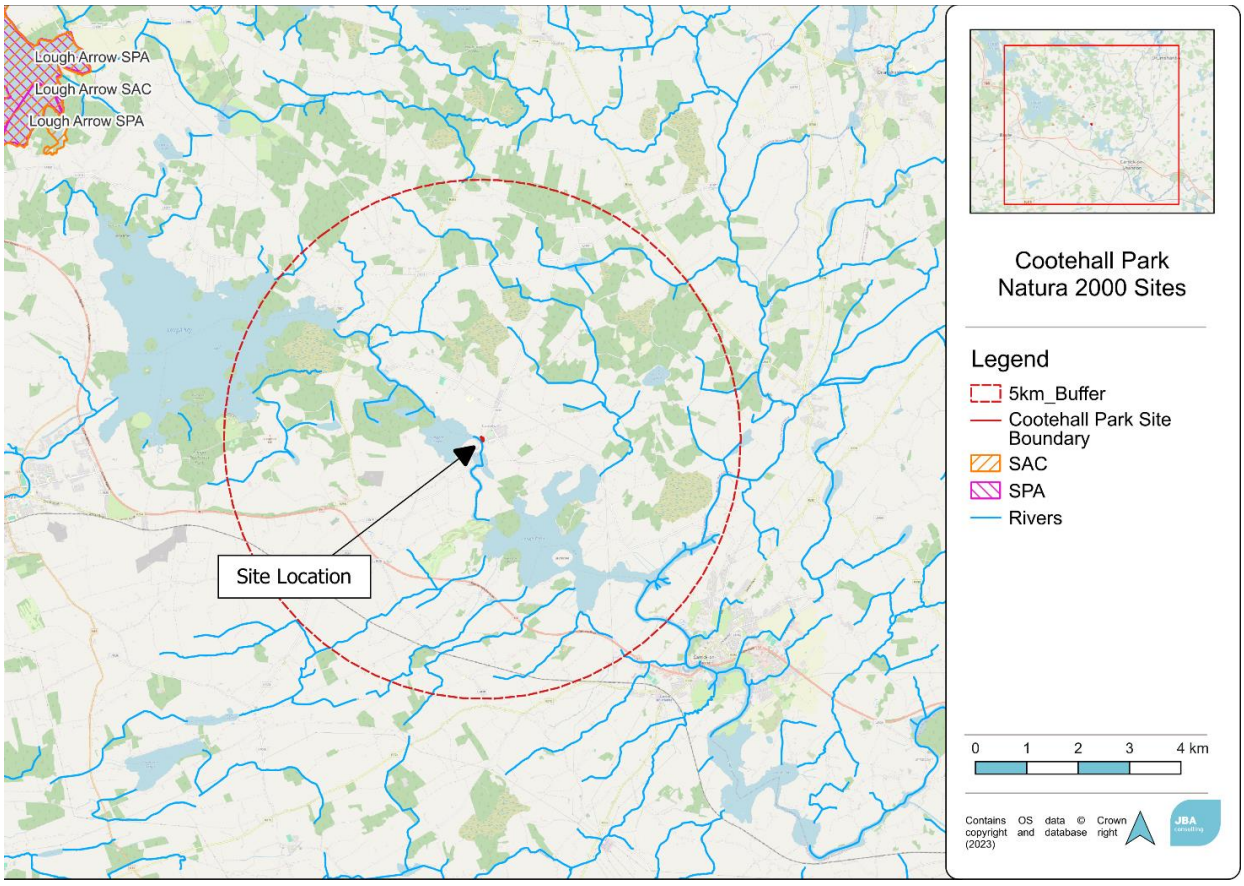

Figure 4-1: Map showing no Natura 2000 sites present within the 5km ZoI.

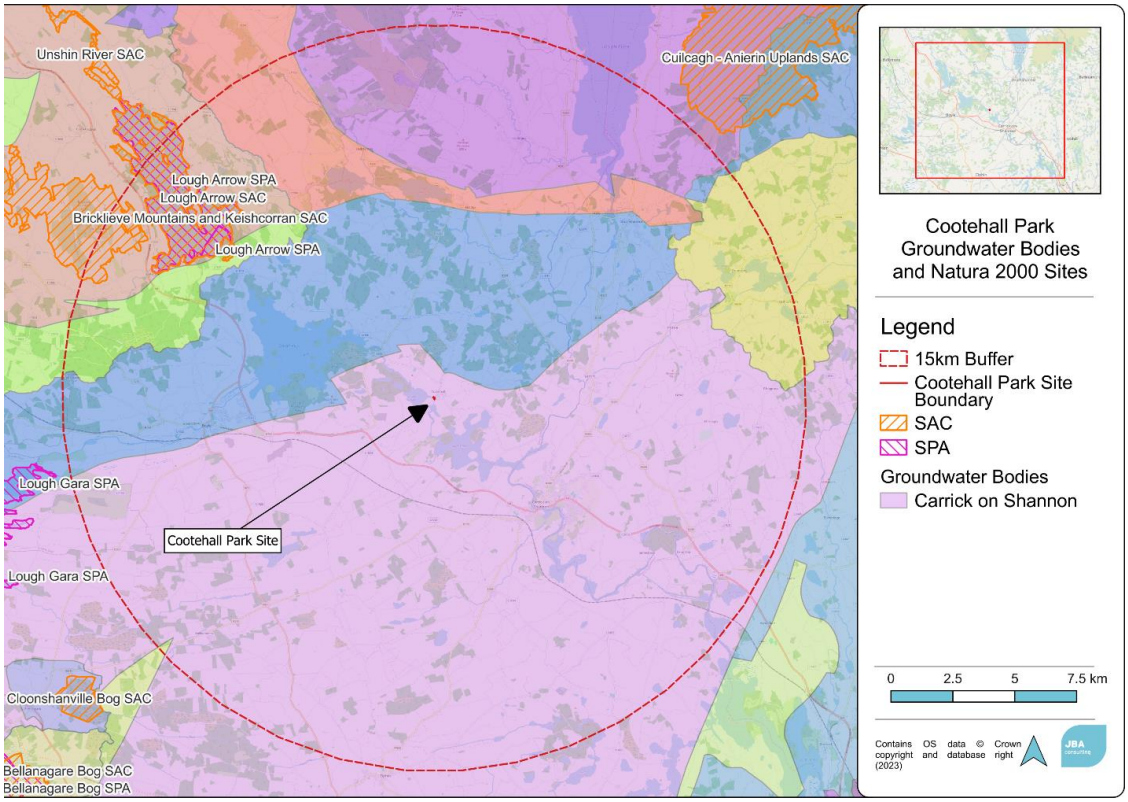

Figure 4-2: Map showing no Natura 2000 sites connected with the groundwater body on site within 15km.

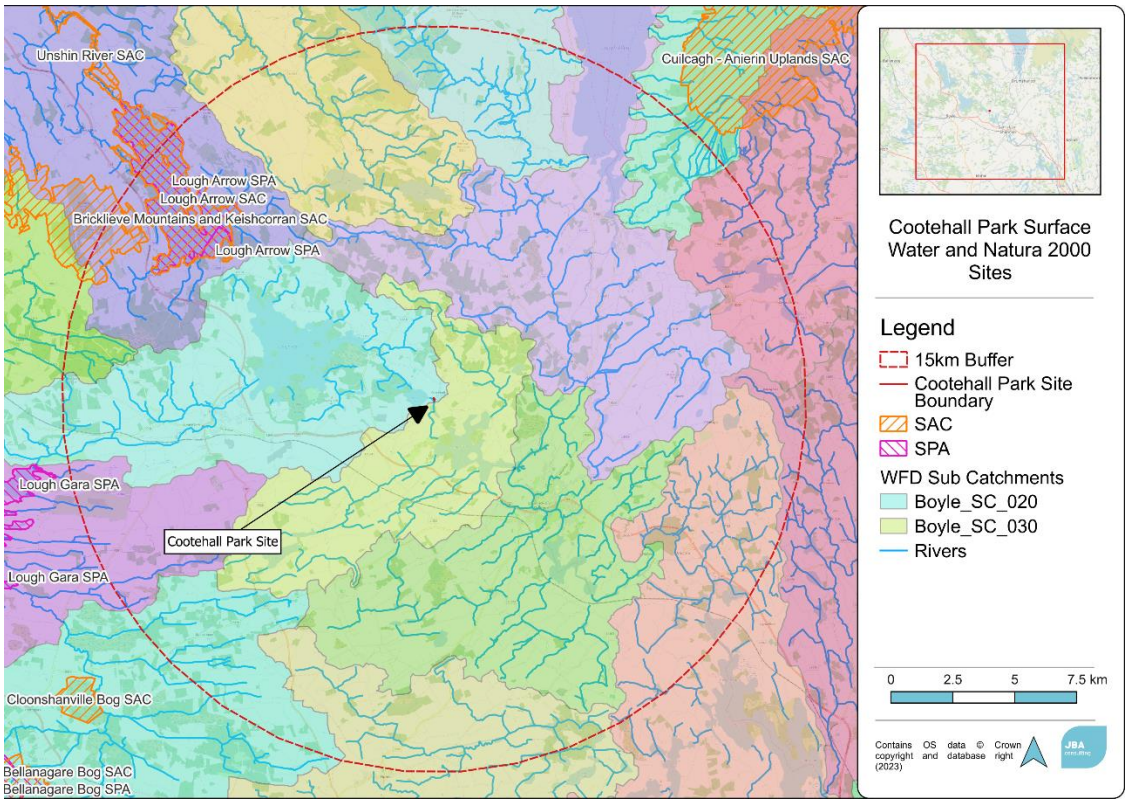

Figure 4-3: Map showing no Natura 2000 sites connected with the sub-catchment or rivers on site within 15km.

5 Other Relevant Plans and Projects

5.1 Cumulative Effects

As part of the Screening for an Appropriate Assessment, in addition to the proposed works. Other relevant projects and plans in the region that may induce cumulative impacts must be considered at this stage.

5.2 Plans

5.2.1 Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 was adopted in March 2022 and came into effect in April 2022. At county level, the County Development Plan will provide an overall strategy for development for the county. The National Planning Framework (NPF) was adopted in 2018, replacing the previous National Spatial Strategy (2002) as the national strategy, providing a sustainable framework to guide where development and investment occurs in Ireland in the period to 2040. The NPF identifies ten national policy objectives – National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs). The NFP includes a 75 strong suite of National Policy Objectives (NPOs) which support the Strategic Outcomes, and collectively set the framework under which all lower order plans, i.e. regional, county (and local area) plans are required to be prepared. Sustainability is at the heart of the National Planning Framework, in accordance with the UN Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs), to which Ireland has been a signatory since 2015. Key areas of alignment between the SDGs and the NPF include climate action, clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, economic growth, reduced inequalities, innovation, infrastructure, education, and health. All of the foregoing has subsequently been reflected in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028.

5.2.2 River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027

The Water Framework Directive requires that all waters, including surface and groundwater sources, are protected and that measures are put in place to ensure quality of these waters is restored to at least ‘good’ status or good potential by 2027 at the latest. The directive requires reporting of river basin management plans to assess the waterbodies, their pressures, and relevant plans towards achieving good status. In implementing the river basin management plan, the objective is to ensure that natural waters are sustainably managed and that freshwater resources are protected so as to maintain and improve Irelan’s water environment.

Cumulative impacts from other projects are examined at Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (NIS) when residual impacts from the project on Natura sites are

considered. This project is not anticipated to have any likely significant effect on the Natura Network.

5.2.3 Other Planning Applications

A search of planning applications that have been made in the last three years and within a 2km radius of the proposed project was carried out.

Planning Reference	Address	Application Status	Decision Date	Summary of Development
2360070	Knockaduff Knockvicar, Boyle , Co Roscommon	Granted	22/8/2023	Planning permission for the erection of 8 No floodlights 12 m high, around the training pitch together with all ancillary site works and services.
23120	Cootehall, Boyle, Co. Roscommon	Granted	6/4/2023	Permission for development consisting of the construction of two number two storey four bedroom dwelling houses with connections to public utilities, provision of new vehicle access into each site from the public road and ancillary site works
23205	Cootehall Townland, Cootehall, Boyle	Granted	19/5/2023	Permission for installation of replacement onsite wastewater treatment system and decommissioning of existing septic tank and percolation area with all associated site development works
21530	Foxhill Townland, Cootehall, Boyle	Granted	22/9/2021	Permission for the proposed construction of a two storey type dwelling house, entrance, boundary fence/wall, septic tank with percolation area and all ancillary works
21247	Clooncoose Townland, Cootehall, Co Roscommon	Granted	14/5/2021	Permission for construction of a dwelling house, domestic garage, on site wastewater treatment system, access onto the public road and associated site development works

6 Screening Assessment

6.1 Introduction

The screening exercise will focus on assessing the likely adverse effects of the project on the Natura 2000 sites identified in Section 4.

No designated sites were recorded within the Zone of Influence of the development, further assessment is not required for any designated sites using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

This section identifies the potential impacts which may arise as a result of the proposed project on Natura 2000 sites. It then goes on to identify how these impacts could potentially affect the Natura 2000 sites. The significance of potential impacts is also assessed, with any potential in-combination effects also identified.

6.2 Assessment Criteria

6.2.1 Description of the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites.

Potential adverse impacts that could cause a likely significant effect on the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites, or the sites as a whole during the construction and operational phases of the project, are considered using three main pathways: surface water, groundwater, and land and air pathways.

Surface water pathways can result in impacts where materials entering the surface water drainage are carried in this water to sites that are connected downstream and therefore impact surface waterbodies themselves, and surface water dependent species and habitats that rely on them.

Groundwater pathways can transmit impacts where there is contamination of water entering the groundwater body which is then discharged (sometimes over periods of several decades) and impacts groundwater dependent habitats and species that rely on them.

Land pathways are related to physical disturbance of habitats or species and generally occur over short physical distances. Air pathways relate to the transport of the transport of material, generally dust and atmospheric pollution, via air movements that are subsequently deposited on habitats and species in or connected to the Natura 2000 sites.

The proposed project is not anticipated to impact on the qualifying interests of any Natura 2000 site. The rationale for excluding impacts via the main pathways is given in more detail in the following sections.

6.2.2 Surface Water Pathways

No surface water connections are present between the site and any Natura 2000 sites.

Site runoff is expected to be minimal; the grassed element of the site is expected to filter and absorb any runoff.

Due to the nature and small scale of the proposed works, the lack of surface water pathways, and the existing connections to the public wastewater system, no likely significant effects are expected via surface water pathways to any Natura 2000 sites.

6.2.3 Groundwater Pathways

No groundwater connections are present between the site and any Natura 2000 sites. The site is located further than 15km from any Natura 2000 site that it shares a groundwater body with.

Construction Phase

Any construction works and demolition that requires digging beneath the surface has potential to impact on the groundwater flow. However, it is understood that excavation works will be limited to a depth of approximately 350mm. These excavations are very shallow, unlikely to achieve groundwater strike and unlikely to disrupt groundwater flows.

Due to the nature and scale of the works being carried out, they are unlikely to introduce pollutants into or have likely significant effects on groundwater and groundwater dependent QIs of the designated sites sharing groundwater bodies. No groundwater dependent QIs are present in proximity to the site.

Operation Phase

The development of the site is not expected to fundamentally change the nature of the area. Considering that the site is already urbanised, highly landscaped, and permeable surfacing will be used in parts, there is unlikely to be any significant change to aquifer recharge ability or the amount of water run-off from the site.

Due to the shallow excavations and the distance from groundwater dependent habitats of designated Natura 2000 sites, as well as the small scale of the proposed works, no likely significant effects are expected via groundwater pathways to any Natura 2000 sites.

6.2.4 Land and Air Pathways

There are no Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence of the project for noise (300m) and air (500m) pathways.

Therefore, no likely significant effects are anticipated via land and air pathways to any Natura 2000 sites.

6.2.5 In-Combination Effects

As the proposed project is not anticipated to have any significant impact on QIs or conservation objectives on any Natura 2000 site and based on the screening statements of the above plans, there is no potential for other plans or projects to act in combination with it to result in likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites.

6.3 Summary

Due to the location of the proposed site, the scale of the works, the distance to the Natura 2000 sites, the proposed project is not anticipated to have any likely significant effects via surface water, land, or air pathways to any Natura 2000 site.

6.3.1 Description of likely direct, indirect, or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans and projects) on the Natura 2000 sites.

Project Elements	Comment		
Size and scale	The footprint of the proposed development is c. 3,000m^2. The development will consist of the extension of • Provision of outdoor gazebo/canopy structure, • Hard and soft landscaping, • Upgrade works to existing macadam footpath, • Additional parking spaces to existing carpark, • Extension to existing playground, • 1 v 1 basketball area, • Associated site & ancillary works.		
Land-take	There will be no direct land take from any Natura 2000 sites.		
Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site	**Natura 2000 site**	**Approximate direct distance**	**Approximate hydrological distance**
	N/A	**N/A**	**N/A**
Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.)	There will be no water abstraction requirements.		

Project Elements	Comment
Emissions (disposal to land, water or air)	Construction Phase: **Air** During construction, particularly during excavations, there will be very minor release of dusts and pollutants, however, this is expected to mostly fall out within the site boundary and will not have an effect on any Natura 2000 sites. The level of increase in air emissions during construction is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites in terms of air quality. **Water** **Construction Phase:** During construction, surface water and stormwater will be contained within on-site drainage. Site runoff is expected to be minimal; the grassed area around the site is expected to filter and absorb any runoff. No discharge is anticipated during construction. **Operation Phase:** During operation, the proposed operations of the project (and its related emissions) are not expected to directly impact any Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, there will be no permanent impacts on any Natura 2000 site.
Excavation requirements	Maximum excavation depth of 350mm.
Transportation requirements	The proposed development will not generate a significant volume of additional vehicular traffic. The level of increase is not likely to have any adverse transport-related environmental impacts.
Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc.	Construction phase will last approximately 3 months.

6.3.2 Description of likely changes to the Natura 2000 sites.

Potential Impact	Comments
Reduction of habitat area	There will be no temporary or permanent reduction in habitat area for any Natura 2000 sites
Disturbance to key species	There will be no disturbance to any QIs within any Natura 2000 sites

Potential Impact	Comments
Habitat or species fragmentation	There will be no temporary or permanent habitat or species fragmentation within any Natura 2000 sites
Reduction in species density	There will be no temporary or permanent reduction in species density of any QIs of Natura 2000 sites or within any Natura 2000 sites
Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.)	There will be no changes in key indicators of conservation value
Climate change	The urban nature of the site, with an established road connection means no significant increase to traffic is anticipated and therefore no climate change impact is anticipated.

6.3.3 Description of likely impacts to the Natura 2000 sites as a whole.

Potential Impact	Comments
Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site	There is no anticipated interference with the key relationships that define the structure of any Natura 2000 sites
Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site	There is no anticipated interference with the key relationships that define the function of any Natura 2000 sites

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

Potential Impact	Indicators
Loss (Estimated percentage of lost area of habitat)	No Natura 2000 sites will experience a direct loss in habitat area
Fragmentation	Fragmentation of habitat and/or species of any QIs or within Natura 2000 sites is not anticipated
Disruption & disturbance	No disruption or disturbance to Natura 2000 sites or their QIs is anticipated
Change to key elements of the site (e.g., water quality etc.)	No change to key elements of the site is anticipated

6.3.4 Describe from the above elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is known.

Based upon best scientific judgement, no significant effects are expected from the elements mentioned above; and there are no elements where the scale or magnitude of impacts is unknow.

6.4 Conclusion

In carrying out this AA screening, mitigation measures have not been taken into account.

On the basis of the screening exercise carried out above it can be concluded that the possibility of any significant effect on any European sites, whether arising from the project itself or in combination with other plans and projects, can be excluded beyond a reasonable scientific doubt on the basis of the best scientific knowledge available.

If any changes occur in the design of these works, a new Screening for Appropriate Assessment is required.

A Protected species recorded within 5km of the site since 01/01/2014

These records correspond with the species covered by national legislation that are publicly available on the NBDC database with an online query (NBDC, 2024).

Species	Date of last record	Dataset	Designation
Amphibians			
Common Frog *Rana temporaria*	30/06/2020	Amphibians and reptiles of Ireland	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex V || Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Birds			
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*	08/06/2022	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Common Coot *Fulica atra*	18/03/2019	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section II Bird Species || Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*	19/04/2015	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section I Bird Species
Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*	09/06/2022	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section III Bird Species || Threatened Species >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Common Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*	09/06/2022	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section I Bird Species
Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*	20/04/2020	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section II Bird Species || Threatened Species >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List
Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*	22/02/2023	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section II Bird Species || Threatened Species >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*	22/02/2023	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section II Bird Species || Threatened Species >> Birds of

Species	Date of last record	Dataset	Designation
			Conservation Concern - Amber List
Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*	15/04/2019	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex I Bird Species || Threatened Species >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*	08/06/2022	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Threatened Species >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*	09/06/2022	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Protected Species: EU Birds Directive >> Annex II, Section I Bird Species >> Annex III, Section I Bird Species
Mute Swan *Cygnus olor*	08/06/2022	Birds of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts || Threatened Species >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List
Insects			
Marsh Fritillary *Euphydryas aurinia*	10/06/2019	Butterflies of Ireland pre-2022	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex II || Threatened Species: Vulnerable
Reptile			
Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*	01/08/2015	Amphibians and reptiles of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Mammals			
Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*	18/08/2014	National Bat Database of Ireland	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex IV || Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Eurasian Badger *Meles meles*	31/12/2016	Badger Setts of Ireland Database	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Eurasian Red Squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*	14/04/2023	Mammals of Ireland 2016-2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Irish Stoat *Mustela erminea subsp. hibernica*	01/12/2018	Mammals of Ireland 2016-2025	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Natterer's Bat *Myotis nattereri*	21/06/2014	National Bat Database of Ireland	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex IV || Protected Species: Wildlife Acts
Pine Marten *Martes martes*	30/08/2021	Mammals of Ireland 2016-2025	Protected Species: EU Habitats Directive >> Annex V || Protected Species: Wildlife Acts

Species	Date of last record	Dataset	Designation
West European Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*	06/09/2021	Hedgehogs of Ireland	Protected Species: Wildlife Acts

B Invasive species recorded within 5km of the site since 01/01/2014.

These records correspond with the species covered by national legislation that are publicly available on the NBDC database with an online query (NBDC, 2024).

Species	Date of last record	Dataset	Designation
Gammarus tigrinus	27/06/2017	A national macroinvertebrate dataset collected for the biomonitoring of Ireland's river network, 2007–2018 (EPA)	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> Medium Impact Invasive Species
Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*	01/08/2017	Water Framework Directive Lake Macrophyte Status Survey Data 2007 to 2019	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> High Impact Invasive Species >> Regulation S.I. 477 (Ireland)
Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*	18/03/2019	Vascular plants: Online Atlas of Vascular Plants 2012 Onwards	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> High Impact Invasive Species
Japanese Knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*	11/08/2019	Vascular plants: Online Atlas of Vascular Plants 2012 Onwards	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> High Impact Invasive Species >> Regulation S.I. 477 (Ireland)
Nuttall's Waterweed *Elodea nuttallii*	09/06/2018	Irish Vascular Plant Data - Robert Northridge	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> High Impact Invasive Species >> Regulation S.I. 477 (Ireland)
Rhododendron ponticum	18/03/2019	Vascular plants: Online Atlas of Vascular Plants 2012 Onwards	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> High Impact Invasive Species >> Regulation S.I. 477 (Ireland)
Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*	09/06/2018	Irish Vascular Plant Data - Robert Northridge	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> Medium Impact Invasive Species
Three-cornered Garlic *Allium triquetrum*	02/05/2022	Vascular plants: Online Atlas of Vascular Plants 2012 Onwards	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> Medium Impact Invasive Species >> Regulation S.I. 477 (Ireland)
Jenkins' Spire Snail *Potamopyrgus antipodarum*	03/08/2017	A national macroinvertebrate dataset collected for the biomonitoring of Ireland's river network, 2007–2018 (EPA)	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> Medium Impact Invasive Species

Species	Date of last record	Dataset	Designation
Zebra Mussel *Dreissena (Dreissena) polymorpha*	27/06/2017	A national macroinvertebrate dataset collected for the biomonitoring of Ireland's river network, 2007–2018 (EPA)	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> High Impact Invasive Species >> Regulation S.I. 477 (Ireland)
American Mink *Mustela vison*	24/10/2014	Atlas of Mammals in Ireland 2010-2015	Invasive Species: Invasive Species >> High Impact Invasive Species >> Regulation S.I. 477 (Ireland)

C Species List of Flora on Site

Common Name	Latin Name
Alder	*Alnus glutinosa*
Ash	*Fraxinus excelsior*
Beech	*Fagus sylvatica*
Birch	*Betula pendula*
Box Hedge	*Buxus sempervirens*
Brambles	*Rubus fruticosus*
Cat's Ear	*Hypochaeris radicata*
Cherry	*Prunus avium*
Cherry Laurel	*Prunus laurocerasus*
Common Periwinkle	*Vinca minor*
Creeping Buttercup	*Ranunculus repens*
Creeping Thistle	*Cirsium arvense*
Curled Dock	*Rumex crispus*
Daffodil	*Narcissi sp.*
Daisy	*Bellis perennis*
Dogwood	*Cornus sanguinea*
Elder	*Sambucus nigra*
Fern Sp.	
Forsythia Sp.	*Forsythia sp.*
Guelder Rose	*Viburnum opulus*
Hazel	*Corylus avellana*
Ivy	*Hedera hibernica*
Meadow Buttercup	*Ranunculus acris*
White Clover	*Trifolium repens*
Ribwort Plantain	*Plantago lanceolata*
Oxeye Daisy	*Leucanthemum vulgare*
Sycamore	*Acer pseudoplatanus*
Mahonia	*Mahonia sp.*
Nettle	*Urtica dioica*
Maple	*Acer sp.*
Rosebay Willowherb	*Chamerion angustifolium*
Marsh Pennywort	*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*
Bush Vetch	*Vicia sepium*
Soft Rush	*Juncus effusus*
Common Field-Speedwell	*Veronica persica*
Pigsqueak	*Bergenia cordifolia*
Willow	*Salix sp.*

Common Name	Latin Name
New Zealand Flax Sp.	*Phormium sp.*
Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*

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