

# Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

for Limerick Greenway Hub, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Legislative context	3
3. Brief Description of the Site and Proposed works	4
3.1. Site description and location	4
3.2. Proposed works	4
4. Potential impacts to be considered	8
5. Annex III screening selection criteria	22
5.1. Characteristics of projects	23
5.1.1. The size of the project	23
5.1.2. The cumulative impacts with other projects	24
5.1.3. The use of natural resources	25
5.1.4. The production of waste	25
5.1.5. Pollution and nuisances	25
5.1.6. The risk of accidents	26
5.2. Location of projects	27
5.2.1. The existing land use	27
5.2.2. The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area	27
5.2.3. The absorption capacity of the natural environment	27
5.3. Characteristics of the potential impacts	28
5.3.1. Human beings	29
5.3.2. Biodiversity and water	30
5.3.3. Land, soil, air and climate	32
5.3.4. Material assets, heritage and the landscape	33
6. Conclusion	34
7. Bibliography	35
8. Photos and maps	36

## 1. Introduction

Rory Dalton was appointed by Limerick City & County Council to undertake an Environment Impact Assessment Screening for the renovation, and change of use, of a derelict goods shed to a limerick greenway hub at 38 St. Mary's Park, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick.

The proposed development comprises of the renovation and the re-roofing of a protected structure, along with various other works, to provide public utilities and to enhance the public's experience whilst using the site. The aim is to develop a hub with a cafe, a bicycle rental, a car park and a public toilet facility. The site of the proposed works lies west of Rathkeale town adjacent to the Irish Palatine Museum. The proposed development would be of great benefit to the local community as well as an attractive facility to boost tourism to the area.

## 2. Legislative context

EIA is a procedure required under the terms of European Union Directives 85/337/ EEC and 97/11/EC on assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. Article 2 of the Directives requires that "*Member States shall adopt all measures necessary to ensure that, before consent is given, projects likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue, inter alia, of their nature, size or location are made subject to a requirement for development consent and an assessment with regard to their effects.*" Article 8 then requires that "*The results of consultations and information gathered pursuant to [the EIA procedure] must be taken into consideration in the development consent procedure*"

The requirements for screening are contained in Article 4 of Directive 97/11/EC. Article 4(1) requires that "*...projects listed in Annex I shall be made subject to an assessment...*". EIA is therefore mandatory for the categories of projects listed in Annex I and Member States' legislation must provide for this. The Annex I list defines about 21 categories of projects for

which EIA is mandatory. Screening of these projects must lead to a “yes” decision that EIA is required. Article 4(2) requires that for “...*projects listed in Annex II, the Member States shall determine through (a) a case-by-case examination, or (b) thresholds and criteria set by the Member State*” In this case, the project type is listed in Annex II and is being dealt with it in a case-by-case examination.

### 3. Brief description of the site and proposed works

#### 3.1 Site Description and Location

Rathkeale is a town in west County Limerick located 30 Kilometers to the south west of Limerick City. The site, which lies to the west of Rathkeale town, adjacent to the N21, is a derelict building next to the Irish Palatine Musume. The Irish Palatine Musume used to serve the community as the railway station when the railway was built between 1967. The track was lifted in 1987 making it the last major closure of the Irish railway system. The site of the proposed works functioned as a goods shed during this time and is now a protected structure and in a state of severe disrepair.

#### 3.2 Proposed Works

The existing structure which acted as a goods shed is a protected structure and it is proposed to change its use to a coffee dock, a bike hire and toilets to serve the public using the greenway.

- A new roof will be constructed with a roof overhang and new openings will be inserted into the north gable.
- It is proposed to construct an external bin store to the north east of the structure.

- The car park, which is currently a gravel surface, will be upgraded to a bound surface and provide the public with a new set down area, bike parking facilities and car parking.
- Additional public utilities will be provided such as charging ports for both electric bicycles and electric cars.
- The area will be enhanced with external lighting, a pedestrian crossing and public seating.
- To facilitate these improvements it is proposed to demolish the existing site boundary wall and boiler house.

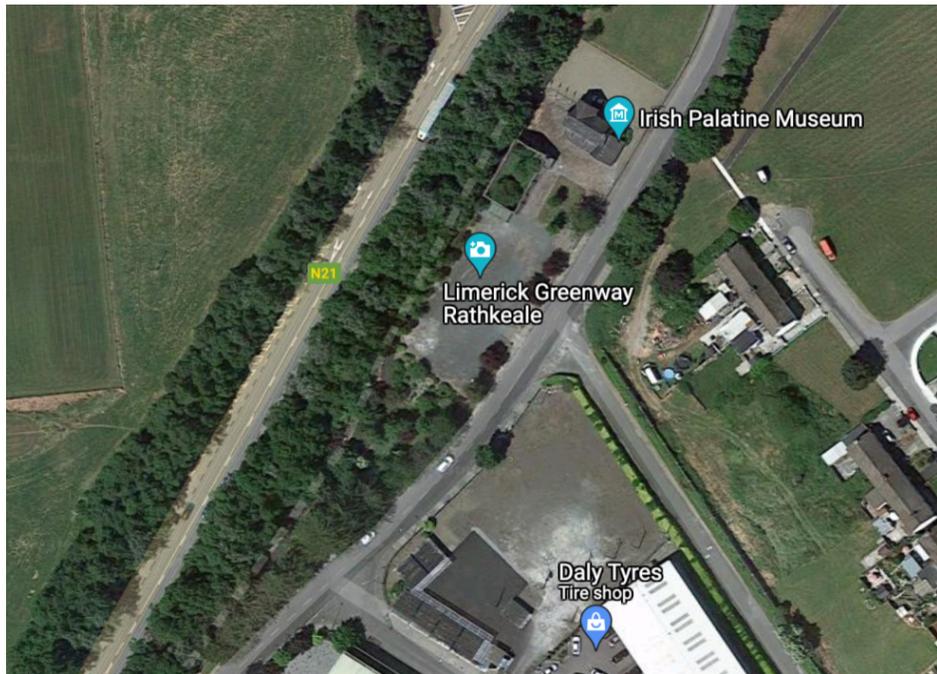


Figure 1: an aerial photograph of the site in its current state.

The ground floor of the structure will be occupied by the cafe servery and bike rental office and newly installed toilets which will be divided by timber stud walls. The first floor, which will be of steel construction, will house the bike storage space. The newly constructed roof will be of steel construction covered with a combination of sheet metal and translucent panels allowing natural light into the bike storage. Its profile will match that of the original structure.

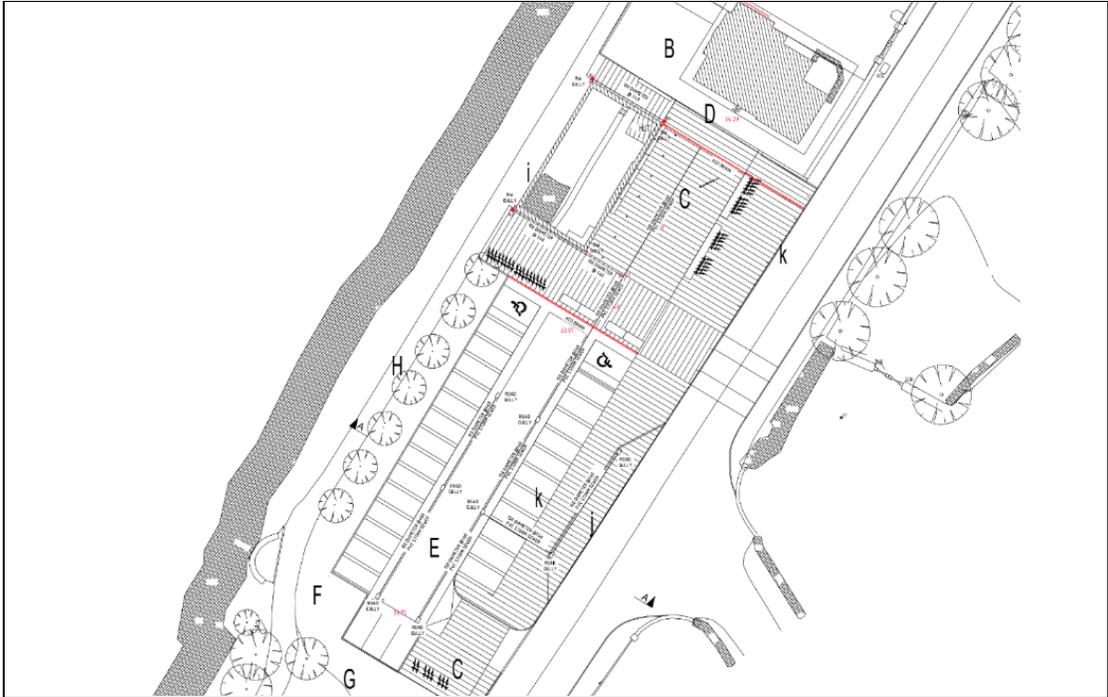


Figure 2: proposed site layout.

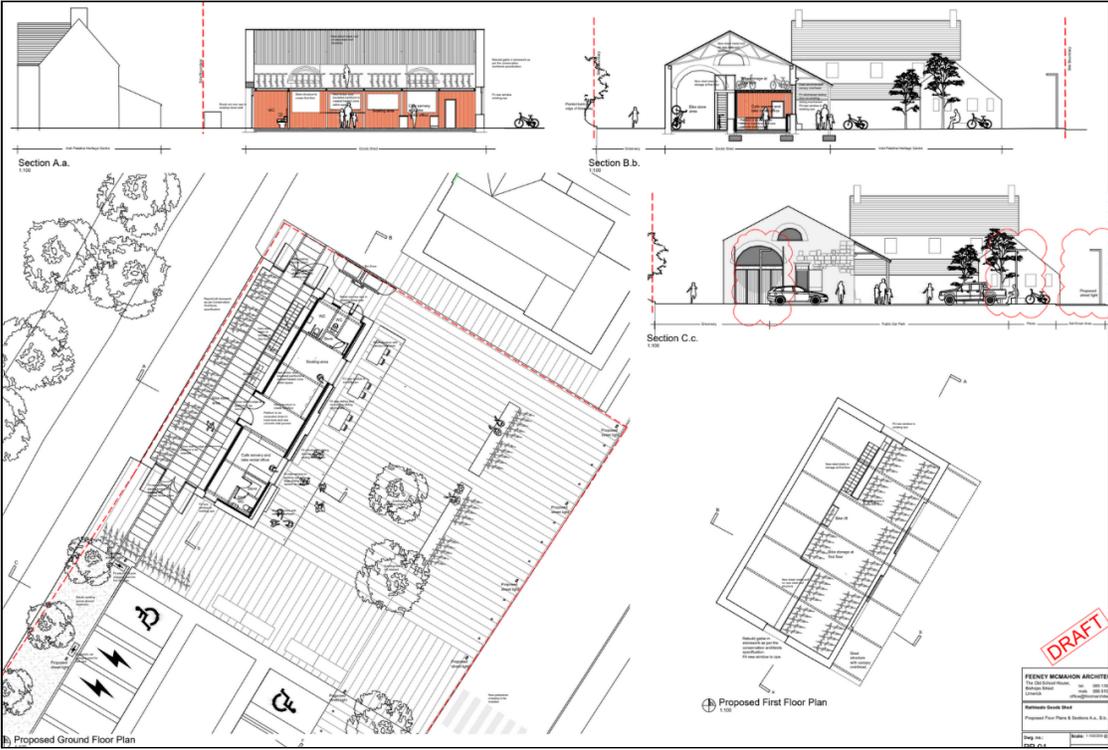


Figure 3: Proposed external profiles with first floor plan.

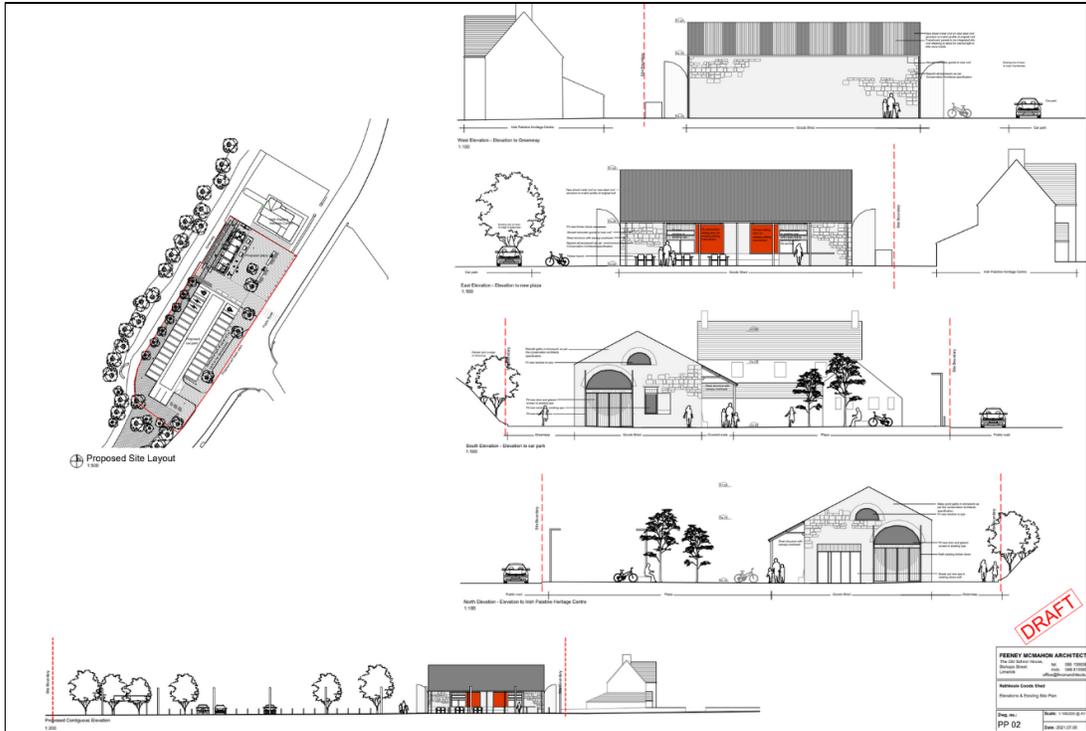


Figure 4: External profiles of proposed works.

## 4. Potential impacts to be considered

Questions to be considered	Yes/No Brief explanation	Is this likely to result in a significant effect? Yes/ No/? – Why?
1. Will construction, operation or decommissioning of the Project involve actions which will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in water-bodies, etc)?	No. Any changes to the locality will be minor and will not cause negative physical changes to the environment. The majority of the works take place within the confines of the current structure and remaining works such as car park, charging ports and pedestrian crossing are to be carried out on artificial surfaces.	No, the work is either internal or on pre-existing artificial surfaces.
2. Will construction or operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?	Yes Construction phase: Materials (cement, gravel, stone, steel, water) and energy (diesel and electricity) for Construction. Operational Phase: The usual use of resources such as electricity, water street lighting	No: these materials are not in short supply.

<p>3. Will the Project involve use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health or the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?</p>	<p>Construction phase - Yes: Cement, fuel, lubricants.</p> <p>Operational phase - Yes</p> <p>Sewage</p>	<p>No -This project is highly unlikely to have any significant negative effect on human health or the environment, no more than any small-scale construction project.</p> <p>During the operation stage it will operate as a typical cafe with public toilets and will operate in line with best practice guidelines for a typical facility. The effluent produced from the public toilets will be disposed of using the mains system. Rathkeale waste treatment plant, which is located only a few hundred meters west of the site, has a population equivalent capacity of 4000 PE which should be more than capable of treating the additional effluent produced by the toilets in the proposed works. The current population of Rathkeale is at 1441 persons.</p>
<p>4. Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation?</p>	<p>Construction phase - Yes - Some rubble will be produced when installing new openings in the gable, demolition of the boiler house and boundary wall and during excavations for the car park.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>It will be managed by a licenced contractor</p>
<p>5. Will the Project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?</p>	<p>Construction phase - Yes - Exhaust fumes from the machinery will be only slightly elevated from normal levels.</p> <p>Operational phase - No</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Exhaust fumes will be only slightly elevated above normal levels.</p>

<p>6. Will the Project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?</p>	<p>Construction phase -Yes: Machinery and tools will cause noise and vibration.</p> <p>Operational phase - yes</p> <p>There will be 22 external lights installed to illuminate the car park and seating areas. These will consist of 25W lights of 2367 LMs.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>As the area is an industrial area with many commercial premises and lies adjacent to the N21, noise and vibration will not be elevated significantly above current existing levels.</p> <p>There are currently street lights on the road adjacent to the site so the addition of the extra lights for the car park should not produce significant light pollution.</p>
<p>7. Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?</p>	<p>Construction phase - Yes: There is the risk of suspended solids (dust from rubble, mud, cement) or fuel/lubricant spills entering avenues of water run off during times of rain</p> <p>Operational phase - No</p>	<p>No</p> <p>There is a storm water drain adjacent to the site which could direct stormwater into the River Deel.</p> <p>As the site could only possibly be hydrologically connected to nearby water bodies during times of rain, when the stormwater drains direct water run-off away from the adjacent road, any pollutants that enters the River Deel water body would do so only in times of high volumes and dilution rates would easily disperse the small levels of pollution that the proposal is capable of generating.</p>

<p>8. Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project which could affect human health or the environment?</p>	<p>Construction phase -  Yes: As with any construction site there are risks involved for the workers and for the environment by way of accidents. In this project the primary risk of accident is posed by workers falling during the reroofing of the structure or by being struck by machinery during the construction of the car park.</p> <p>Operational phase - No</p> <p>The upstairs bike storage would be the most likely pathway to potential accidents occurring during the operational phase.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>All workers are aware of the dangers of working on a building site, they are used to working in these conditions and have completed their SafePass. Additionally the sections of the site which are being worked on will be fenced off to the public.</p> <p>No</p> <p>This threat is negated as there will be a bike lift installed which will remove the requirement to manually carry bicycles to the upstairs storage facility.</p>
<p>9. Will the Project result in social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?</p>	<p>Yes: All Positive.</p> <p>The proposed works will ensure the longevity of structures in the immediate area, provide enhanced facilities for the local community to enjoy and provide employment in the cafe/ bicycle rental office.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Only positive outcomes as previously explained</p>

<p>10. Are there any other factors which should be considered such as consequential development which could lead to environmental effects of the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>There are no consequential developments anticipated from this project. There are no anticipated cumulative impacts with planned activities in the locality. There are no cumulative impacts with existing activities in the locality.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>No significant impact in this regard</p>
<p>11. Are there any areas on or around the location which are protected under international or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes there are six special areas of conservation within fifteen kilometres of the proposed works.</p> <p>Lower river Shannon SAC (002165)</p> <p>River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077),</p> <p>Barrigone SAC (000432)</p> <p>Curraghchase Woods SAC (000174)</p> <p>Askeaton Fen Complex SAC 002279</p> <p>Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West</p>	<p>No</p> <p>An Appropriate Assessment Screening has been carried out which addresses this issue. In summary, the small and localised scale of the works, along with the fact that the works will be hydrologically and otherwise isolated from the estuary except during times of heavy rain ensures that no protected sites will be impacted.</p>

	<p>Limerick Hills and Mount eagle SPA (004161)</p> <p>These Natura 2000 sites are 10.4km, 9.1km, 9.8km, 7.4km, 3.7km and 9.5km respectively from the proposed site.</p>	
<p>12. Are there any other areas on or around the location which are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other waterbodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>There is a stormwater drain on the road adjacent to the proposed work site which, in times of heavy rain could possibly direct pollutants to the nearby river Deel and subsequently into the Shannon estuary. Some suspended construction waste could enter the Deel and subsequently, the estuary if heavy rain occurs during construction.</p> <p>The Shannon estuary is an important resource as an ecosystem</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The site of the proposed works is 370 meters from the River Deel at its closest point. The River Shannon estuary exists a further 19 km downstream. Prior to the asphalt and storm sewer installation, percolation should be good, so any precipitation incident on the site will percolate through the soil, filtering the water within it, before it enters the river Deel. Once the asphalt and stormwater drainage is installed, the gravel will be bound and secured from precipitation runoff. Any small amount of sediment or silt that could possibly enter the Deel will do so only during times of heavy rainfall. Due to the dilution rates of the Deel combined with the dilution rates and tidal characteristics of the River Shannon estuary any suspended solids that could make it to the SAC will be easily and safely dispersed. As such, The ecosystem will not be impacted as discussed in the AA screening</p>

<p>13. Are there any areas on or around the location which are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes the proposed works occur 10.4 km from the lower Shannon Estuary. The Shannon estuary is one of the most important wintering grounds for birds in the country, it also hosts a variety of mammals, fish and plants within diverse habitats and trophic structures.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>All important or sensitive habitats which could potentially be impacted by the project have been dealt with as part of the AA Screening</p>
<p>14. Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The lower Shannon Estuary. The River Deel could only be affected during times of heavy rain and especially, once the asphalt and storm water drains are installed.</p> <p>The site itself is composed of hard packed gravel which would filter any minor pollutant spills that the project is capable of generating before they would enter an underground waterbody. In the immediate area surrounding the work site, underground waters are sealed from effects by artificial surfaces.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The effects would be minor and of no negative consequence. As can be seen in the AA screening, the proposal does not have the capacity to cause significant impacts on the estuary</p>

<p>15. Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>No The proposed works occurs within the urban fabric of Rathkeale town in an industrial area adjacent to the N21.</p>	<p>No The proposed works will take place within the bounds of current artificial surfaces, and will have no effect on the scenic value of the location.</p>
<p>16. Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which Could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes The proposed work site lies at the beginning of the Rathkeale section of the Limerick greenway and the Irish Palatine Museum. During the construction phase there would be minor interruption to the public with increased levels of noise pollution and the inconvenience of the loss of car parking at the beginning of the route. A small section of the route would need to be fenced off with safety fencing during the construction phase.  The public's use of the Irish Palatine Museum will also be affected by increased noise levels during the construction phase.</p>	<p>No All inconveniences will be positive in the long term providing much needed facilities, such as toilets, refreshments and bike rental, to the public using the route. The carpark will also be enhanced and a pedestrian crossing installed providing safe access to the greenway.  The increased noise levels will be temporary and should not have significant negative effects on the visitors to the Irish Palatine museum. As the site lies between the N21 and a busy industrial park the noise levels should not be greatly elevated above normal levels.</p>

<p>17. Are there any transport routes on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Construction phase: Yes. The site lies just off a cul-de-sac which is the entrance to Rathkeale industrial park, providing access to a number of commercial properties. Some disruption is to be expected here during the construction phase such as additional machinery on the road. The new pedestrian crossing will also cause traffic disruption during its installation.</p> <p>Operational phase: No</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The impact on traffic will be small and of short duration. Adequate traffic management should be sufficient to minimise the impact of the construction phase on public access.</p>
<p>18. Is the project in a location where it is likely to be highly visible to many people?</p>	<p>Yes the proposed works will exist at the beginning of the Rathkeale to Ardagh section of the Limerick greenway and next to the Irish Palatine museum.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The proposal is designed and intended to positively impact the lives of locals and insure the longevity of a local property, the old railway goods shed.</p>

<p>19. Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The Palatine museum and the site of the proposed works, the goods shed, are both protected structures.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The proposed works will insure the longevity of the heritage building, which acted as a goods shed when the railway was in use. It is currently in a state of severe disrepair and the works would ensure that it does not further degrade. The Irish palatine museum itself will not be affected or altered during the works.</p>
<p>20. Is the project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield land?</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The area where the proposed works occur is currently developed.</p>	<p>No significant Impact.</p>
<p>21. Are there existing land uses on or around the location e.g. homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>There are a number of land uses around the location. These include the Irish Palatine museum, the limerick greenway, a residential estate as well as Rathkeale industrial estate containing a number of commercial buildings such as a tire shop, a food distribution building and an automation design business. Rathkeale wastewater treatment facility is also nearby. Rathkeale itself has the features of a typical town.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The greenway car park will be out of use for the public during the excavation works. The public will still have access to the greenway a little further down the route during the construction phase. Nearby residential areas and industrial estate will not be negatively affected. Any effects that the proposed works will have will be temporary and in the long term beneficial to the local community.</p>

<p>22. Are there any plans for future land uses on or around the location which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>There are a Number of planning applications in the area of the proposal. Three applications for the laying of surface water pipes are in various stages of completion and commercial applications such as warehouse extensions, an extension to ESB substation/compressor room, and change of use from one type of commercial premises to another.</p> <p>There are also works in progress to extend the greenway from Rathkeale to Limerick via Adare and Patrickswell. Funding has been received for feasibility works and it is hoped that the works will occur in tandem with the limerick development plan 2022 - 2028.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>There are no applications within the locality that will cause a cumulative impact with the current proposal. The Rathkeale greenway hub is isolated from the other planning applications in the nearby area.</p> <p>It is not envisaged that the current proposal will negatively affect the plan to develop the greenway from Rathkeale to Limerick. Rather it will enhance the project by providing facilities and accessibility to the public using the greenway.</p>
<p>23. Are there any areas on or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes, by far the most significant generator of traffic on the cul-de-sac is the Rathkeale industrial estate. There is the potential for minor disruption of traffic during construction with additional machinery on the road and the installation of the pedestrian crossing will also cause temporary</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The impact on traffic will be small and of short duration. Adequate traffic management should be sufficient to minimise the impact of the construction phase on local access. it is not envisaged that it will affect any of the surrounding populated or built- up areas excessively</p>

	traffic disruption.	
24. Are there any areas on or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities, which could be affected by the project?	<p>Yes</p> <p>The Irish Palatine museum, St Marys Park playground, Rathkeale AFC football grounds, Rathkeale medical practice, St, Joseph's National School, Cloáiste na Trócaire secondary school, Rathkeale post office, St, Marys Church, Holy Trinity Church and Rathkeale Garda Station, are located within 1Km of the proposal. There are also a range of establishments and facilities within the town.</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The proposal is designed and intended to enhance the local land use and to positively impact the lives of locals</p>
25. Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, which could be affected by the project?	<p>Yes</p> <p>The River Deel. During two separate fish monitoring surveys carried out by inland fisheries in 2008 and 2012 six fish species were recorded in the River Deel. These included Roach (<i>Rutilus rutilus</i>), Perch (<i>Perca fluviatilis</i>), Eel (<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>), Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), Pike (<i>Esox lucius</i>) and Lamprey (<i>Lampetra</i> sp.) and Brown Trout (<i>Salmo trutta</i>).</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The River Deel or Shannon estuary ecosystem will not be impacted as discussed in detail in the AA screening.</p> <p>The proposal will not affect nearby agricultural land.</p>

	<p>Freshwater pearl mussels have also been recorded. These, however, occur further upstream in the River Deel.</p> <p>The site of the proposed works is 370 meters from the Deel. From here, It is roughly 19 Km downstream to the River Shannon Estuary SAC. The Shannon estuary is an important resource as an ecosystem, in terms of tourism, as a shipping route and as a potential source of renewable energy by way of harnessing tidal currents.</p> <p>Much of the area to the west and North of the site is agricultural lands.</p>	
<p>26. Are there any areas on or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, which could be affected by the project?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The River Deel</p>	<p>No</p> <p>The River Deel has suffered from pollution due to inadequate wastewater treatment in some plants.</p> <p>However, according to the annual environmental report 2020 from Irish water, regarding the Rathkeale wastewater treatment plant, the plant was compliant with the emission limit values set in the waste water discharge licence. The report states the WWTP does not expect to exceed its load capacity within the next three years. This</p>

		<p>discharges roughly 512 meters from the proposed works into the River Deel.</p> <p>The current proposal is not a major additional commercial/ residential development” and does not, in itself add significant additional sewage to the network.</p>
<p>27. Is the project location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>No</p> <p>Flooding would be the most likely threat due to its close proximity to the river Deel. However since the construction of a flood defence scheme in 1968 no flooding has been recorded in Rathkeale.</p>

## 5. Annex III Screening Selection Criteria

Article 4(3) of Directive 97/11/EC requires that Competent Authorities must take into account the selection criteria set out in Annex III of the Directive when making screening decisions on a case-by-case basis and when setting thresholds and criteria for projects requiring EIA. The criteria are set out under three headings as follows:

### **Characteristics of projects**

The characteristics of projects must be considered having regard, in particular, to:

- The size of the project,
- The cumulation with other projects,
- The use of natural resources,
- The production of waste,
- Pollution and nuisances,
- The risk of accidents, having regards in particular to substances or technologies used.

### **Location of projects**

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by projects must be considered, having regard, in particular, to:

- Wetlands,
- Coastal zones,
- Mountain and forest areas,
- Nature reserves and parks,
- Areas classified or protected under member states legislation,

- Special protected areas designated by member states pursuant to directive 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC,
- Areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in community legislation have already been exceeded,
- Densely populated areas,
- Landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

### **Characteristics of the potential impact.**

The potential significant effects of projects must be considered in relation to criteria set out under 1 and 2 above, and having regard in particular to:

- The extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population). • The transfrontier nature of the impact,
- The magnitude and complexity of the impact,
- The probability of the impact.
- The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.

## **5.1 Characteristics of projects**

### **5.1.1 The size of the Project**

The proposed development is over a relatively small area and is centred at approximate coordinates of 52°31'30.7"N 8°56'39.8".

The site of the proposed works lies west of Rathkeale town adjacent to the Irish Palatine Museum, at 38 St. Mary's Park, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick. Originally Set just off the railway line it now lies adjacent to the limerick greenway.

The existing structure which acted as a goods shed is a protected structure and it is proposed to change its use to a coffee dock, a bike hire and toilets to serve the public using the greenway. The ground floor of the structure will be occupied by the cafe servery and bike rental office and

newly installed toilets will be divided by timber stud walls. The first floor, which will be of steel construction, will house the bike storage space. The newly constructed roof will be of steel construction covered with a combination of sheet metal and translucent panels allowing natural light into the bike storage. Its profile will match that of the original structure.

- A new roof will be constructed with a roof overhang and new openings will be inserted into the north gable.
- It is proposed to construct an external bin store to the north east of the structure.
- The car park, which is currently a gravel surface, will be upgraded to a bound surface and provide the public with a new set down area, bike parking facilities and car parking.
- Additional public utilities will be provided such as charging ports for both electric bicycles and electric cars.
- The area will be enhanced with external lighting, a pedestrian crossing and public seating.
- To facilitate these improvements it is proposed to demolish the existing site boundary wall and boiler house.

### **5.1.2 The cumulative impacts with other projects**

There are a number of planning applications in the area of the site of the proposed work. There is a residential application nearby for the demolition of a derelict house and the construction of a new dwelling. Three applications for the laying of surface water pipes are in various stages of completion. These will serve castle park housing estate. Commercial applications such as warehouse extensions, extension to ESB substation/compressor room, and change of use from one type of commercial premises to another.

There are also works in progress to extend the greenway from Rathkeale to Limerick via Adare and Patrickswell. Funding has been received for feasibility works and it is hoped that, due to the scale of the works, it will occur in tandem with the limerick development plan 2022 - 2028.

However it is not envisaged that the proposal will have a cumulative impact with these plans.

### **5.1.3 The use of natural resources**

The major use of natural resources associated with the proposal is in the form of construction materials. Stone/brick, gravel, asphalt, cement, concrete, steel and water will constitute the main components of what will be used for the build. Timber is also to be used for elements such as internal framing and stud walls, etc. Fuel and lubricants will be used in the machinery. During the operational phase, the greenway hub will use water for the operation of the toilets and cafe and energy to run the charging ports, cafe and external lighting. None of these natural resources for the construction phase are in short supply and the water and energy required to operate the facility will be relatively small, so in that respect, the use of natural resources within the project can be screened out without an EIA.

### **5.1.4 The production of waste**

Waste production from the construction phase will consist mainly of rubble from demolition of the boiler house and boundary wall, excavation and protective wrapping and packaging from elements such as fixings, fittings, other deliveries, workers lunches etc. Waste from the construction phase will be taken care of by a licensed contractor. Waste produced from the operational phase of the cafe and bike rental will be similar to that of any small commercial business and will be disposed of in line with current best practice guidelines. With this in mind, the production of waste is not likely to cause significant impacts and therefore does not warrant an EIA.

### **5.1.5 Pollution and nuisances**

In a project such as this there is the capacity for pollution, mainly through fuel or other on-site chemicals being spilled either in situ or becoming incident on a water body. There is also the capacity for suspended solids to become incident on a water body. Good Planning and adhering to best practice guidelines will negate such issues.

The work on the Greenway hub and car park will be carried out in a manner that ensures as little disruption as possible. Cementitious material during the construction phase could be contained within the water run off through the storm drain in times of rain. This would only be an issue after the asphalt and storm water drains are installed. Prior to this any suspended solids

produced during the construction stage should easily percolate into the grounds of the site, which is already composed of hard packed gravel. Coupled with the fact that the site is only hydrologically connected to nearby water bodies, via the storm water drain, during times of rain, any pollutants that enter the water body would do so only in times of high volumes and dilution rates would easily disperse the small levels of pollution that the proposal is capable of generating. The ecosystem will not be impacted as discussed in the AA screening.

There is a certain nuisance to business and daily life while works are on-going, however the nuisance is short lived and will ensure the longevity of a valuable community structure, enhance the public's use of the site and insure safe road conditions, therefore nuisance is not a significant issue. There will be no additional pollution or nuisance generated during the operational phase.

In all, the potential for significant impacts arising from pollution and nuisance is low, and therefore does not require an EIA.

### **5.1.6 The risk of accidents**

Risks of accidents from the operational phase of the works will be similar to any other construction site. The main risk of accidents during the construction phase is injury during the construction of the new roof and the installation of the steel for the first floor and the roof. Additionally, there is a risk of workers being struck by machinery during the works on the car park.

All workers are aware of the dangers of working on a building site, they are used to working in such conditions and have completed their SafePass ticket. Additionally the sections of the site which are being worked on will be fenced off to the public.

Increased risk of accidents from the operational phase are not envisaged; The addition of external lighting, a safe drop off zone and the addition of a pedestrian crossing will make the site safer for the public to use.

The risk of accidents is not significant or in a manner that would warrant an EIA.

## **5.2 Location of projects**

### **5.2.1 The existing land use**

The site in its current state consists of a hard pack gravel car park bordered on the west and north west by the Limerick Greenway. This car park serves the public using the greenway. To the south and east of the site a wall and footpath separates it from the public road. The building, the old good shed, is currently derelict and in a state of severe disrepair, with only the walls left standing. A small, kerb bound, grassy area exists in front of this building, to the south of the Irish palatine Musume.

The works will be undertaken on artificial surfaces primarily a carpark, amenity grassy area, gravel surfaces and bounds of a derelict building.

There are no indications that the current proposal will cause significant impacts to the existing land use and therefore an EIA is not required in this regard.

### **5.2.2 The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area**

The footprint of the proposed works are typical of a small commercial building and grounds. The internal works are to take place within the confines of the current structure and the majority of surfaces within the external footprint are pre-existing artificial surfaces (gravel car park, amenity grass, footpath, etc). As a result the proposed development will have very minimal impact, if any, on the quality and regenerative capacity of the natural resources in the area.

### **5.2.3 The absorption capacity of the natural environment**

The work on the Greenway hub and car park will be carried out in a manner that ensures as little requirement for absorption as possible. Cementitious material during the construction phase could be contained within the water run off through the storm drain in times of rain. This would only be an issue after the asphalt and storm water drains are installed. Prior to this any precipitation incident on the site during the construction stage should easily percolate into the grounds of the site, which is already composed of hard packed gravel. Coupled with the fact that the site is only hydrologically connected to nearby water bodies, via the storm water drain, during times of rain, any pollutants that enter the River Deel would do so only in times of high volumes and dilution rates would easily disperse the small levels of pollution that the proposal is capable of generating. The River Shannon estuary SAC , which the feels drains into, is an area

over 500km<sup>2</sup> and strong tidal currents along with freshwater from the catchment ensure cycling of the water within the estuary; as such the absorption capacity of this natural environment is huge. Given the scale difference between the proposal and the absorption capacity of the environment into which it is draining, it is not envisaged that the project will have an impact on the absorption capacities of the receiving environment in a manner that will require an EIA.

### **5.3 Characteristics of the Potential Impact.**

In general, most potential impacts relate to the construction stage. Due to the isolated nature of the site and the minor scale of the project any such potential impacts are easily preventable.

Potential impacts relating to the operational stage will be the production of sewage. The Rathkeale wastewater treatment plant, which was compliant with the emission limit values set in the waste water discharge licence in 2020, has a population equivalent capacity of 4000 PE which should be more than capable of treating the additional effluent produced by the toilets in the proposed works. The current population of Rathkeale is at 1441 persons. This plant discharges roughly 512 meters from the proposed works into the River Deel. The current proposal is not a significant additional commercial/ residential development and is not, in itself, a significant addition to the network.

### 5.3.1 Human Beings

<p>The extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population)</p>	<p>Rathkeale has a population of about 1441 people and although the site location is in an urban setting, it should not have any major impact on the town or its population. The site is located at the beginning of a cul-de-sac leading to Rathkeale industrial estate and Rathkeale wastewater treatment plant. By far the most significant generator of traffic on the cul-de-sac is the industrial estate which contains a number of commercial premises. The construction works will mostly be undertaken without affecting current road surfaces except installation of the pedestrian crossing and the connection of the storm water drains. Therefore should not cause major traffic disruptions. There will be minimal interruption to business and daily life while works are on-going, and these will be short lived. The works will ensure the longevity of a valuable community structure and ensure safe road conditions. In all it will be a positive development for people in the area.</p>
<p>The magnitude and complexity of the impact</p>	<p>The impact will consist of potentially airborne dust from the building site and some increase in noise levels. However the impact is small and with the outcome of the works providing improved conditions in the area.</p>
<p>The probability of the impact</p>	<p>Almost certain</p>
<p>The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact</p>	<p>As long as the works will go on</p>

Requirement for EIA	No
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**5.3.2 Biodiversity and Water**

<p>The extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population)</p>	<p>The work area is small in size and is typical of a commercial property and urban areas. The footprint is pre- existing artificial surfaces (footpaths, gravel yard, road surface, etc).</p> <p>The River Deel is 370 from the site at its closest point. This river drains into the Shannon Estuary, 19 km downstream, which is one of the most important wintering grounds for birds in the country, it also hosts a variety of mammals, fish and plants within diverse habitats and trophic structures. The area of the estuary is 500km<sup>2</sup>, and it constitutes two major Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>A small amount of sewage, typical of a small commercial business, will also be produced from the public toilets during the operational phase.</p>
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<p>The magnitude and complexity of the impact</p>	<p>The Shannon Estuary is noted as it is the receptor for water draining from the River Deel. During the construction phase there may be incidence of pollution (suspended solids, fuel, other site chemicals) into the River Deel. However the potential for the site to generate pollutants that enter the Deel is minimal and the footprint of the site is small in comparison to 500km<sup>2</sup> of estuary containing strong currents to help dilute any incidence of pollution. Further details in the AA Screening.</p> <p>According to the annual environmental report 2020 from Irish water regarding the Rathkeale wastewater treatment plant, the plant was compliant with the emission limit values set in the wastewater discharge licence. The report states the WWTP does not expect to exceed its load capacity within the next three years. This discharges roughly 512 meters from the proposed works into the River Deel.</p>
<p>The probability of the impact</p>	<p>It is highly unlikely that there will be any significant impact to biodiversity and water. The footprint and proposed works are small and on existing artificial surfaces. As the site is only hydrologically connected to the estuary, via the River Deel, during times of rain any pollutants that enter the water body would do so only in times of high volumes and dilution rates would easily disperse the minute levels of pollution that the proposal is capable of generating.</p> <p>The current proposal is not a major additional commercial/ residential development and does not, in itself add significant, additional sewage to the network.</p>

The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	For the duration of the works, and throughout operational stages.
Requirement for EIA	No

**5.3.3 Land, Soil, Air and Climate**

The extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population)	<p>The development of the structure will change a derelict building to one of use to the community and also conserve the structure itself from further degradation. The external land use is remaining mostly as is, as it currently operates as a car park for the Limerick Greenway. There may be a minor impact on air during the construction phase.</p> <p>Climate - no</p>
The magnitude and complexity of the impact	In terms of air quality, there may be some masonry-type dust generated during the course of the construction phase. The magnitude of these impacts is very small.

The probability of the impact	Dependent on parameters such as precipitation (dust).
The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	For the duration of the works
Requirement for EIA	No

**5.3.4 Material Assets, Heritage and the Landscape**

The extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population)	There are no significant negative impacts to material assets or heritage. The structure, along with the nearby Irish Palatine museum, is a protected structure. However the proposed works will ensure the longevity of the structure and slow its degradation. There may be a minimal impact to the landscape during the construction phase and operational phase.
The magnitude and complexity of the impact	The area may, to some, look unsightly during the construction phase. During the operational phase the building itself will be enhanced visually, with much of the original characteristics of the building retained and on display. The carpark will have its surface changed from gravel to asphalt and the external lighting and seating will be an adjustment to the current visual aspect of the

	site however in the long term it should stand to benefit the community.
The probability of the impact	Certain
The duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	May look unsightly for the duration of the work. Visual aspect of site will be altered for duration of the sites and the structures operation
Requirement for EIA	no

## 6. Conclusion

Having considered the proposal in line with the guidance referenced in the bibliography, there is no requirement for EIA. Having regard to the characteristics of the proposal, the location within the setting of Rathkeale, and the scale of the proposed development, significant impacts on the environment are not anticipated. In general, all potential impacts relate to the construction stage and potential impacts relating to the operational stage are primarily positive.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening report prepared in line with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive concluded there would be no significant impacts on any Natura 2000 sites.

## 7. Bibliography

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Buildings of Ireland (2021) Department of housing, local government and heritage. 4/10/21. <<https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/>>

National Parks and Wildlife Services Protected Sites (2021) Department of housing, local government and heritage. 4/10/21. <<https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>>

## 8. Photos and Maps

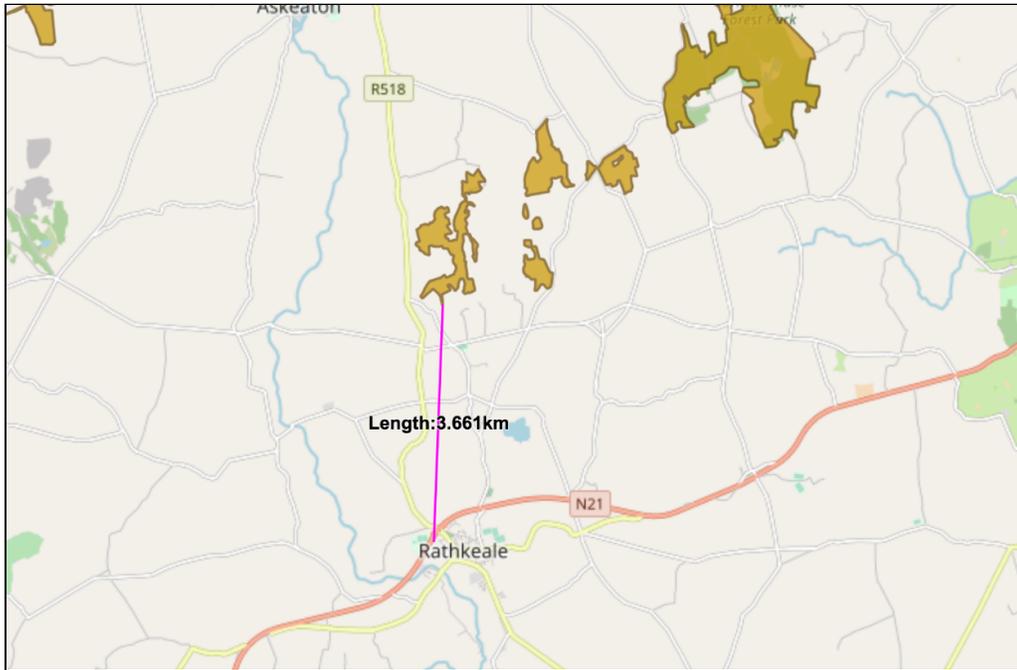


Figure 5: distance of site to Askeaton Fen Complex SAC.

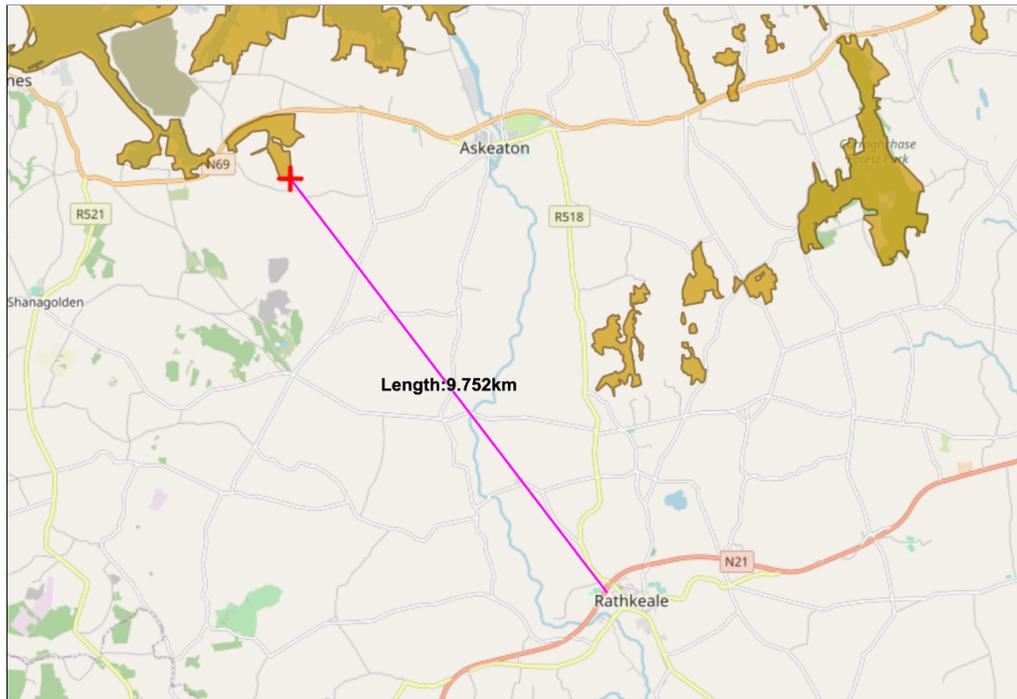


Figure 6: distance of site to Barrigone sac.

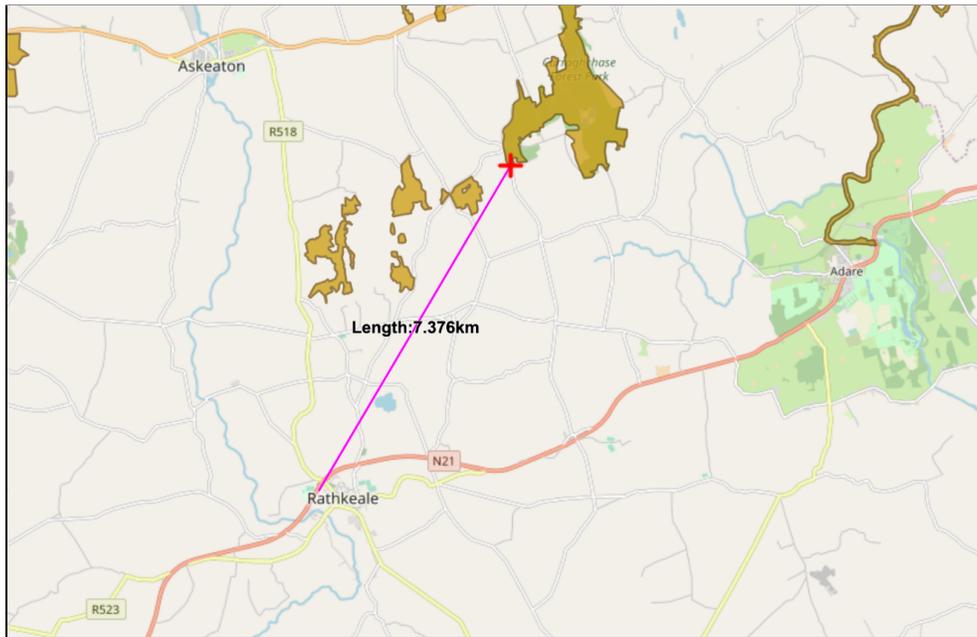


Figure 7: Distance of site to Curraghchase Woods SAC

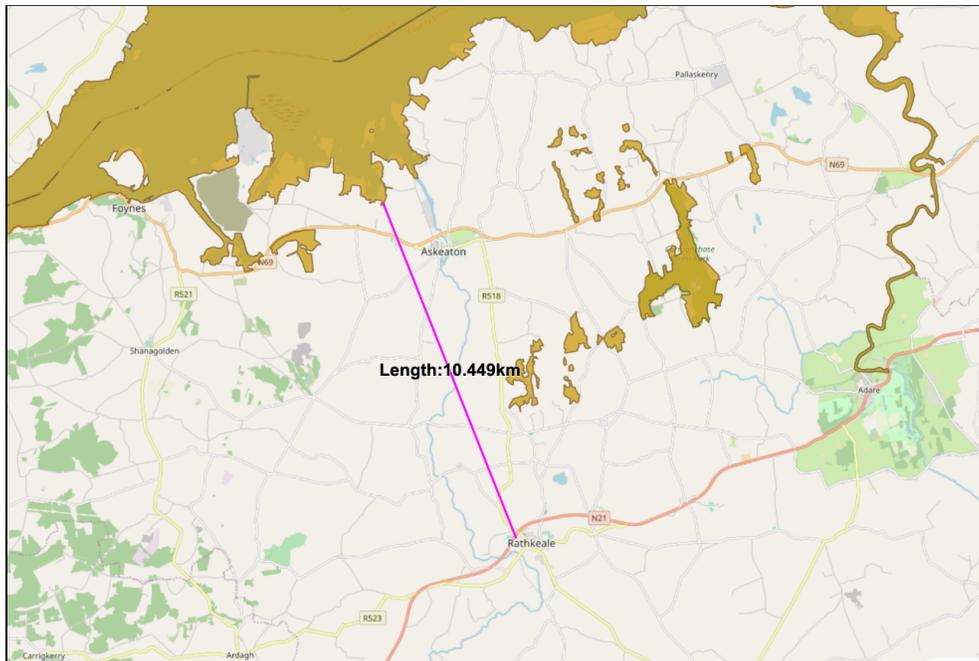


Figure 8: Distance of site to Lower River Shannon SAC.



Figure 9: Distance of site to Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount eagle SPA.

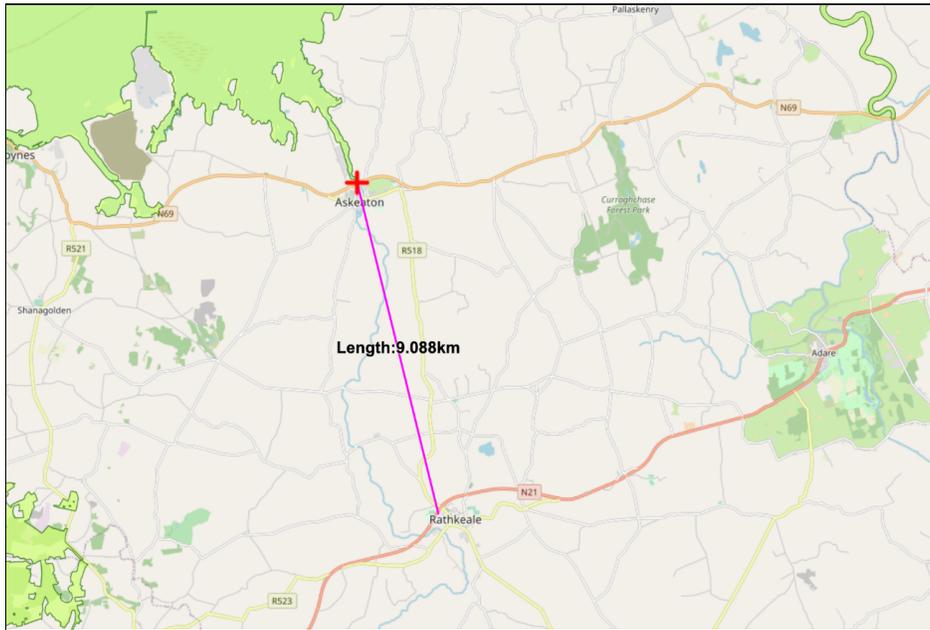


Figure 8: Distance of site to River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

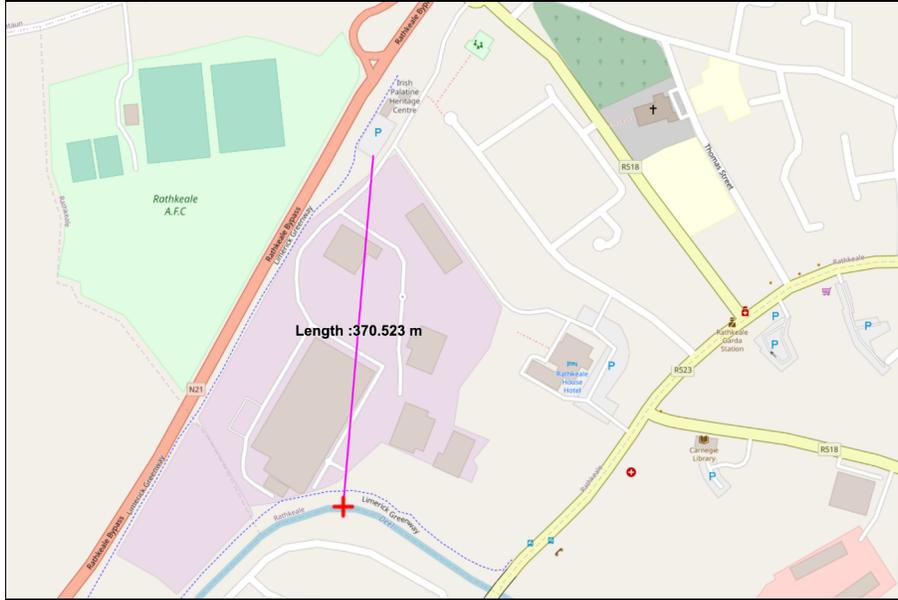


Figure 9: Distance of site to River Deel at closest point.



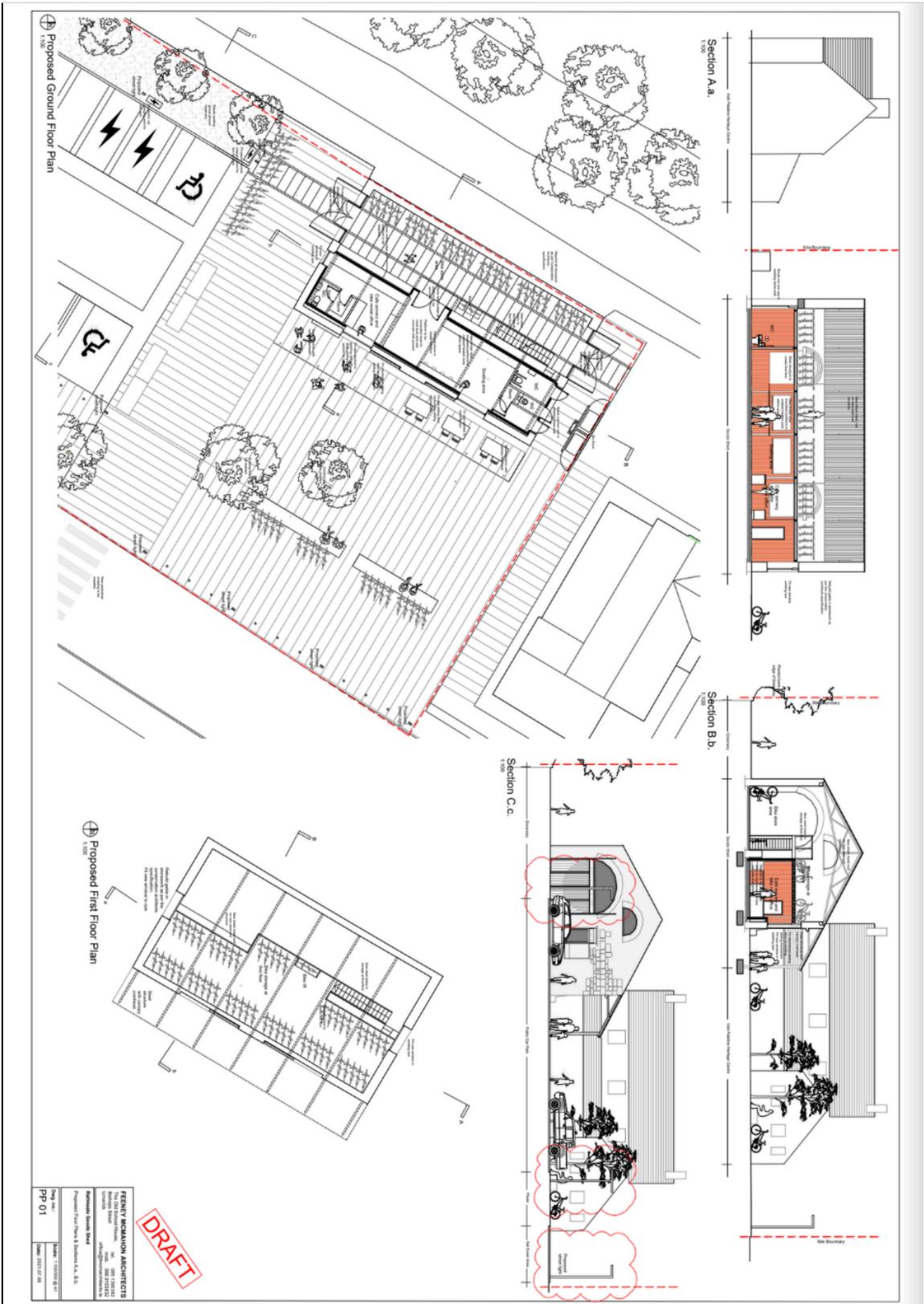


Figure 10: Car Park layout and front elevation of proposed works



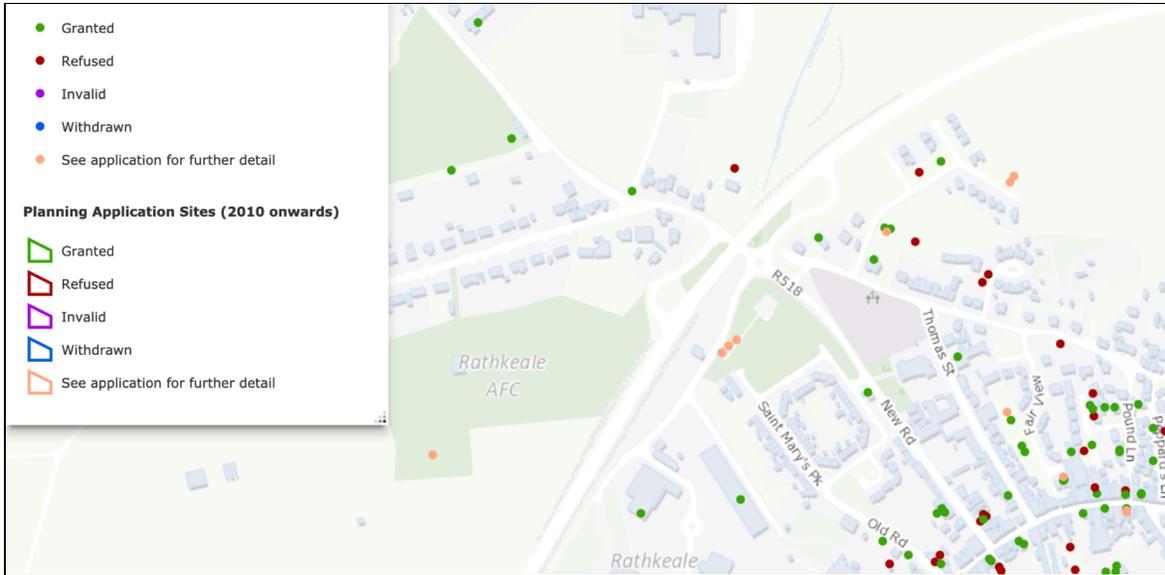


Figure 12: Planning applications in vicinity of proposed works.