

Screening Report for Appropriate
Assessment

Southill Play Area

Prepared for Limerick City and County Council

Screening Report in support of Appropriate Assessment

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1 Introduction

MEC Ltd have been commissioned by was engaged by Feeney McMahon Architects Ltd Ltd on behalf of Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) (the applicant), to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening exercise in relation to a proposed play area at Southill, Limerick City(*the project*). Figure 1.1. shows the project location and boundary.

This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment forms Stage 1 of the Habitats Directive Assessment process and is being undertaken to comply with the requirements of the Habitats Directive Article 6(3). The function of this Screening Report is to identify the potential for the project to result in likely significant effects to Natura 2000 sites and to provide information so that the competent authority can determine whether a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required for the project.

1.1 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment is being prepared to enable the competent authority to comply with Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive). It is prepared to assess whether the project alone or in combination with other plans and projects is likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites and specifically on the habitats and species for which the sites have been designated.

1.1.1 Requirement for an Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive

According to Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 – 2015, the competent authority has a duty to:

- Determine whether the proposed Project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of one of more Natura 2000 sites; and, if not,
- Determine if the Project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on the Natura 2000 site(s) in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of the site(s).

This report contains a Screening for Appropriate Assessment and is intended to assess and address all issues regarding the installation / construction and operation of the Project and to inform and allow the competent authority to comply with the Habitats Directive. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive defines the requirements for assessment of projects and plans for which likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites may arise. The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 – 2015 (the Habitats Regulations) transpose into Irish law Directive 2009/147/EC (the Birds Directive) and Council Directive 92/43/EEC (the Habitats Directive) lists habitats and species that are of international importance for conservation and require protection. The Habitats legislation requires competent authorities, to carry out a Screening for Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects that, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites in view of best scientific knowledge and the Site's conservation objectives. This requirement is transposed into Irish Law by Part 5 of the Habitats Regulations and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).

Figure 1-1 Site Location



Southill Playspace

Limerick

Appropriate Assessment

LOCATION



Limerick City &
County Council


Minogue & Associates
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY

APRIL 2023

2 SCREENING METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The function of the Screening Assessment is to identify whether the new actions for the Plan will have a likely significant effect on European Sites. In this context “likely” means a risk or possibility of effects occurring that **cannot** be ruled out based on objective information and “significant” means an effect that would undermine the conservation objectives of the European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans and projects (Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), 2021).

The nature of the likely interactions between the Plan and the Conservation Objectives of European Sites will depend upon the:

- the ecological characteristics of the species or habitat, including their structure, function, conservation status and sensitivity to change; *and/or*
- the character, magnitude, duration, consequences and probability of the impacts arising from land use activities associated with the plan, in combination with other plans and projects.

This Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken with reference to respective National and European guidance documents: Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities (DEHLG 2010) and *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*; Office of the Planning Regulator – *OPR Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*, and recent European and National case law. The following guidance documents were also of relevance during the preparation of this Screening Report:

- A guide for competent authorities. Environment and Heritage Service, Sept 2002. Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (2010). DEHLG.
- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites – Methodological Guidance of the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/42/EEC. European Commission (2021).
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European commission (2018).

The EC (2021) guidelines outline the stages involved in undertaking a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment for projects. The methodology adopted during the preparation of this Screening Report is informed by these guidelines and was undertaken in the following stages:

- Describe the project and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
- Identify European Sites that could be influenced by the project;

- Where European Sites are identified as occurring within the zone of influence of the project identify potential effects arising from the project and screen the potential for such effects to negatively affect European Sites identified under Point 2 above; and

Identify other plans or projects that, in combination with the project, have the potential to affect European Site.

There is absolutely no reliance placed in this AASR on

- (a) measures intended to avoid/reduce harmful effects on the European sites,
- (b) construction management/best practice measures, or
- (c) any other measures (such as SUDS) which are proposed with no relation to the intention of avoiding or reducing any potentially harmful effect of the development on any European site.

2.1.1 Sources of Information used

Information relied upon included the following information sources, which included maps, ecological and water quality data as preliminary insights:

- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from www.osi.ie ;
- Online data available on Natura 2000 sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie;
- Information on land-use zoning from the online mapping of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government <http://www.myplan.ie/en/index.html>;
- Information on water quality in the area available from www.epa.ie;
- Information on catchment management and water quality from <https://www.catchments.ie/>
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area available from www.gsi.ie ;
- Information on the status of EU protected habitats in Ireland (National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2019 Volumes 1-3);
- Natura Impact Report for the Limerick City and County Development Plan 2022-2028

2.1.2 Site Visit

The Screening Report has been informed by a site survey at the project site, which was completed on the 12th May 2023 by Ruth Minogue MCIEEM. The site visit involved identifying the habitats occurring on site to level 3 of Fossitt's Guide to Habitats in Ireland and searching the site for field signs indicating the presence of protected flora or fauna on site. In addition, the site was appraised for its potential to support qualifying species of Natura 2000 sites in the wider surrounding area in particular wetland and waterbirds. This was based on identifying the presence of habitats within the project site that are known to be relied upon by such species and observing bird activity during low tide.

3 Project Description

3.1 Overview

Summary of works is as follows:

- Remove topsoil across the site.
- Create low level earth mounds and prepare ground where equipment / natural features are to be introduced.
- Re-plant grass across 2 zones of the site (Surface area of 2 zones = 529 sqm).
- Plant hedging to the south-west edge of the site & along the boundary with the church fence (east edge of site).
- Prepare 1 zone of the site to be partially re-planted with grass while a compacted mulch is to be introduced around play equipment in this zone (Surface area of Play Equipment Zone: 295 sqm).
- Introduce path through the site (Surface area of Path = 154 sqm).
- Create a paved area in the north-east corner of the site by the church gates (Surface area of Paved Zone = 112 sqm).
- Transport all equipment / natural features and place them / fit them on site.

4 Description of the Project Site Location

4.1 Baseline Conditions

The project is located in the area of Southill, Limerick City and the project footprint is approximately 0.109ha. The project site is located within an area of amenity grassland and is surrounded on all sides by Built Land and Artificial Surfaces. There are no European sites within or directly adjacent to the boundaries of the proposed development site. The closest European site to the proposed development is Lower River Shannon SAC located at approximately 2.34km from the project site.

No evidence indicating the presence of protected ground dwelling mammals was identified on site during the site survey on the 12th May 2023. During the site visits no birds were observed feeding on the grassland habitats of the site. A search of Biodiversity Ireland's database of 1km grid (R55T) returned no records of fauna that are listed under Annex II or Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive or EU Birds Directive.

No species listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 were recorded during the site visit.

The study area lands are situated within the Lower Shannon catchment (code:25) and the sub catchment of Shannon Lower (SC090). Surface water status is classified under the WFD from 'high' to 'bad' status. In measuring this status both ecological and chemical parameters are measured, and the overall status is determined by the lower threshold achieved for both ecological and chemical parameters. The nearest surface water features are the Ballnaclough (010) river south of the site approximately 1.46 km in distance; this river is classified as being of moderate water quality.

4.2 Is the project Necessary for the conservation Management of Natura 2000 sites

The project has been described in Section 3 of the Screening Report and it is clear from the description provided that the project is not directly connected with or necessary for the future conservation management of any Natura 2000 sites.

5 Identification of Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence of the project

5.1 Introduction

Current guidance informing the approach to screening for Appropriate Assessment defines the zone of influence of a proposed development as the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of a Natura 2000 site. It is recommended that this is established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor (SPR) framework.

The result of this preliminary screening concluded that there is a total of three SACs and two SPAs located within the Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the Proposed Development Site. The distances to each site listed are taken from the nearest possible point of the Proposed Development Site boundary to nearest possible point of each Natura 2000 site (Table 5.1).

The site synopses and conservation objectives of these sites, as per the NPWS website (www.npws.ie), were consulted and reviewed at the time of preparing this report in May 2023. Where potential pathways for significant effects are identified, the site is included within the ZOI of the Proposed Development and further assessment is required. Appendix 1 presents the qualifying features of interests/ SCIs of the Natura 2000 sites.

As the nearest European Sites (Lower River Shannon SAC and River Shannon SPA) is located approximately 2.34km away respectively, the project will not have the potential to result in direct impacts to European Sites. Thus, this Screening exercise focuses on investigating whether it can or cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the project will have the potential to result in indirect effects to European Sites beyond the boundaries of their designated conservation areas. A source-pathway-receptor (SPR) model has been used to establish which Natura 2000 sites could occur within the zone of influence of potential indirect impacts.

Under such a model the project, as described above, represents the source of potential indirect impacts to European Sites.

Potential impact pathways are restricted to hydrological pathways. No other pathways such as noise disturbance, or emissions to atmosphere will arise due to the small-scale nature of the project works, which will not generate any significant noise, visual or atmospheric emissions that will result in a perceptible change in baseline conditions in the vicinity of any Natura 2000 sites in the wider surrounding area. This is considered to be particularly the case given the location of the project site in an suburban environment, that is subject to consistent high levels of human activity.

Mobile species pathways (i.e., where mobile species of SACs or SPA might rely on the project site for breeding, resting, or foraging) can also connect a project, development site to Natura 2000 sites. However given the habitats occurring within the site and its location within an suburban setting, there is no potential for mobile species associated with Natura 2000 sites in the surrounding area to rely on the project site.

The receptors represent Natura 2000 sites and their associated qualifying features of interest.

Table 5.1 provides a determination as to whether each Natura 2000 site within a 15km buffer distance of the project site occur within the zone of influence of the project. This determination has been undertaken in line with the following assessment questions:

- Is there a hydrological pathway link between the Project site and Natura 2000 sites?

- Does the hydrological pathway establish a connection between qualifying habitats of these Natura 2000 sites and the project site?
- Does the hydrological pathway establish a connection between qualifying species of these Natura 2000 sites or is there potential for mobile species of Natura 2000 sites to occur at or in the vicinity of the project site location?

Figure 5.1. presents SACs and SPAs within 5,10 and 15km buffer of the project site, and Table 5.1 provides a determination as to whether the European Sites in the wider area surrounding the project site occurs within its zone of influence.

FIGURE 5-1 SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION AND SPECIAL PROTECTION AREAS WITHIN 15KM BUFFER

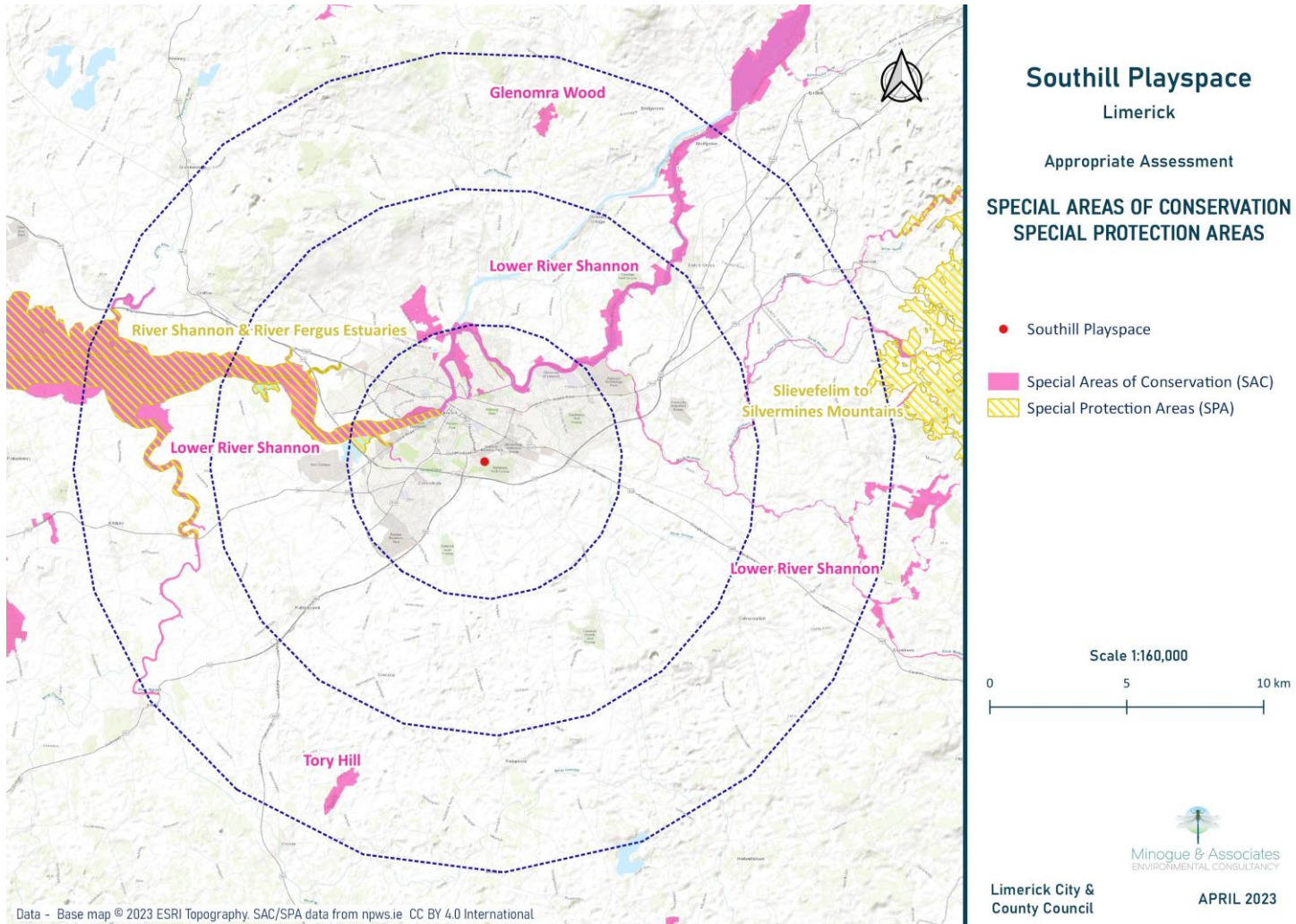


TABLE 5-1: NATURA 2000 SITES WITHIN THE PROJECT AREA

European Sites	Qualifying features of interest	Distance from the project site km	Is there a hydrological pathway connecting the project site to the European Site	Does the European Sites occur within the zone of influence of the project
1. Lower River Shannon SAC	<p>Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110] Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]</p>	2.54	Yes, the project site and the SAC are located within the same WFD catchment.	<p>The project is located 2.34km outside the boundary of this SAC. Given the distance from the SAC, no pathways for indirect effects on the SAC were identified.</p> <p>No pathway for effect was identified and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact. The potential for significant effects on these habitats or species is therefore not considered further in this document.</p>

European Sites	Qualifying features of interest	Distance from the project site km	Is there a hydrological pathway connecting the project site to the European Site	Does the European Sites occur within the zone of influence of the project	
	<p>Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p>Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p> <p>Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p>Tursiops truncatus (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]</p> <p>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]</p>				
2.	Tory Hill	<p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p> <p>Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p>	11.99	<p>No, this SAC is located within a different WFD catchment (Shannon Estuary South), there are no hydrological pathways connecting this SAC to the project site.</p>	<p>No. There is no hydrological pathway connecting the project site to this SAC which is located over 11 km from the project site, this SAC does not occur within the project's zone of influence.</p> <p>No pathway for effect was identified and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact. The potential for significant effects on these habitats is therefore not considered further in this document.</p>
3.	Glenomra Wood	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]	12.02	<p>The project site is situated in the same WFD catchment as the project site, but different sub catchments Shannon[Lower]_SC_100 Shannon[Lower]_SC_080</p>	<p>No. There is no hydrological pathway connecting the project site to this SAC and this SAC does not occur within the project's zone of influence.</p> <p>No pathway for effect was identified and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact. The potential for</p>

European Sites	Qualifying features of interest	Distance from the project site km	Is there a hydrological pathway connecting the project site to the European Site	Does the European Sites occur within the zone of influence of the project
				significant effects on these habitats is therefore not considered further in this document.
4.	River Shannon and Fergus SPA	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>)	2.34	No. The project site is situated in a different WFD (Lower Shannon) catchment to this SPA (Shannon Estuary North) No pathway for effect was identified and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact. The potential for significant effects on these SCI is therefore not considered further in this document.

	European Sites	Qualifying features of interest	Distance from the project site km	Is there a hydrological pathway connecting the project site to the European Site	Does the European Sites occur within the zone of influence of the project
		[A164] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			
5.	Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA	Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) [A082]	14.17	The project site is situated in the same WFD (Lower Shannon) catchment as this SPA but no hydrological connections exist and no habitat is present in the project site for the Species of Conservation Interest.	No. There is no hydrological pathway connecting the project site to this SPA and this SPA does not occur within the project's zone of influence. No pathway for effect was identified and the site is not within the Likely Zone of Impact. The potential for significant effects on these SCIs is therefore not considered further in this document.

6 Identification and assessment of Potential Effects to Natura 2000 Sites

6.1 Introduction

The conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence were reviewed and assessed to establish whether the construction and operation of the project has the potential to have a negative impact on any of the qualifying interests and/or conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence of the project. The assessment considers any potential indirect impacts of the proposal, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on Natura 2000 sites by virtue of the following criteria:

- size and scale,
- land-take,
- distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site,
- Resource requirements,
- emissions,
- duration of installation,
- operation and decommissioning

As noted in Table 5.1 the project site is buffered from the nearest Natura 2000 site, the River Shannon SAC, by 2.34km, and River Shannon and River Fergus SPA by 2.34km and as such there will be no potential for direct impacts to this SAC, as a result of land-take and direct habitat loss.

The assessment framework is taken from the best practice guidelines issued by the European Commission, i.e., *“Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance”*.

6.2 Assessment of potential impacts

6.2.1 Cumulative effects

The proposed development was considered in combination with other projects in the area that could result in cumulative effects on the environment. The assessment outlined in Table 6.1 has found that the project will not have the potential to combine with any other existing and/or approved projects to result in likely significant impacts on the environment. The Limerick City and County Council on line planning system was consulted on 15th May 2023 for the subject lands and immediate surrounds in particular development applications adjacent to the site.

In the past three years (2019 -2022) no planning applications have been made within or adjacent to the project site. Therefore the assessment has found that the project will not have the potential to combine with any other existing and/or approved projects to result in likely significant impacts on the environment. There and there will be, similarly, no predicted cumulative impacts in relation to environmental resources, for example in terms of habitat loss or disturbance to, protected species as a result of the proposed development or emissions to water or air arising from same.

Based on the above, there will be no potential for the project to combine with other discharges to result in negative impacts to the water quality.

6.3 Impact Assessment

The absence of any potential impact pathways will ensure that this project does not have the potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites or the local environment surrounding

the project site. A Screening Matrix, in line with European Commission (2001) guidelines is provided below in **Table 6.2**.

TABLE 6-1 SCREENING MATRIX FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Brief description of the project or plan	The project and associated activities are described in Section 2 above.
Brief description of the European Sites	The European Sites occurring in the wider surrounding area are identified and briefly described in Figure 5.1 and Table 5.1 above, while Appendix 1 provide a summary overview of each of these European Sites.
Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the European Sites.	The elements of the project that could (conceivably) give rise to potential environmental effects relate to emissions from the project in the form of hydrological emissions and the potential for interactions with mobile qualifying species of European Sites. These have been examined in Table 5.1 above and there is no potential for emissions from the project site to establish pathways between the project site and surrounding European Sites to result in negative impacts to their conservation status. Furthermore, there is no potential for the project to interact with qualifying species of European Sites and the habitats upon which they rely.
<p>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the European Sites site by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • size and scale; • land-take; • distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site; • resource requirements (water abstraction etc.); • emissions (disposal to land, water or air); • excavation requirements; • transportation requirements; • duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.; 	<p>The project will not have the potential to result in direct, indirect or secondary impacts to Natura 2000 sites. The footprint of the project is a total area of 0.0109ha.in an established urban habitat over 2.34km from the River Shannon.</p> <p>It is small in size, scale and development and does not overlap with any Natura 2000 site boundary. The nearest Natura 2000 site is Lower River Shannon SAC approximately 2.34km from the project site, and the River Shannon and River Fergus SPA approximately 2.34km from the project site.</p> <p>The only pathway with any potential to connect the project site to the Lower River Shannon will be surface and groundwater water baseflows within the sub-catchment. The approach to construction as outlined in Section 3 and the miniscule size of the project which represents 0.000001% of the land area within the Lower Shannon subcatchment. The runoff generated at the project site will therefore represent a miniscule extent of the runoff draining from lands within this sub-catchment. Thus even in the very unlikely, worst-case scenario event that contaminated waters enter the River Shannon it is considered that, based on the above, any associated pollutants associated with surface water runoff from the project site will be adequately diluted and dispersed within the receiving waters such that they do not have a perceptible effect on the water quality of the River Shannon.</p> <p>During the construction phase cement-based products, hydrocarbons and other aqueous solutions will be required on site. All materials will be stored in a site compound and</p>

	<p>in banded containers. Given the small scale of the project, the quantities of these materials required on site at any one time will be small and the risk of contamination to surface water generated within the footprint of the project site will be low and will not have the potential to undermine the water quality of the River Shannon.</p> <p>Furthermore, it is considered that even in the event that minor traces of such materials were to discharge to groundwater baseflows, their concentrations would be diluted to miniscule levels such that they would be entirely attenuated and diluted in baseflows prior to discharge to the River Shannon.</p> <p>The operation phase will not involve any activities that will present a risk of generating contaminated surface water given the scale and design of the project.</p> <p>Please see Section 6.2.1 above for examination of cumulative effects. The project will not have the potential to result in direct, indirect or secondary impacts to European Sites. As there are no pathways connecting the project site to surrounding European Sites and as the project will not result in significant negative impacts to the surrounding local environment it will not have the potential to combine with other projects in the surrounding area to result in cumulative significant effects to the local environment or European Sites occurring in the wider surrounding area.</p>
<p>Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction of habitat area; • disturbance to key species; • habitat or species fragmentation; • reduction in species density; • changes in key indicators of conservation value • (water quality etc.); • climate change. 	<p>The project is not located within any Natura 2000 site and therefore there will be no loss or alteration of habitat as a result of the project.</p> <p>There will be no direct habitat loss within any Natura 2000 sites. As there will be no direct habitat loss within any Natura 2000 sites, it is not considered that habitat fragmentation will arise as a result of the proposal.</p> <p>As there is no construction or operational activities that could give rise to surface or ground water alterations, and no hydrological connection as a result, it is not considered that changes in water quality and resources will raise as a result of the proposal.</p> <p>There is no potential for the project to interact with qualifying species of Natura 2000 sites and the habitats upon which they rely.</p> <p>As there are no pathways between the project site and surrounding European Sites and as the project is not predicted to result in the emission of potentially polluting substances to the surrounding environment it will not have the potential to result in changes to qualifying habitats or qualifying species of European Sites occurring in the wider surrounding area.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the European Sites site as a whole in terms of interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;</p>	<p>For reasons set out above the project will not have the potential to interfere with key relationships that define the structure and function of European Sites.</p>

interference with key relationships that define the function of the site	Given the absence of any connections between the project site and the three European Sites in the wider surrounding area, the conservation objectives for these sites, which have been published by the NPWS, will not be undermined by the project.
<p>Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss; • fragmentation; • disruption; • disturbance; • change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc.). 	For reasons set out above the project will not have the potential to result in such effects to European Sites.
Describe from the above those 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 not known.	The project will not have the potential to result in likely significant effects to European Sites.

7 Screening Conclusion

During the preparation of this Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development at Southill, Limerick City, it was found that five European Sites occur within the surrounding area of the project area. Following an examination, all the European Sites are connected to the project site via potential impact pathways and were therefore screened out at an early stage.

The absence of a functional surface water hydrological impact pathway between the project site and the two closest European Sites the Lower River Shannon SAC, and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuary SPA at over 2.3km from the project site will ensure that the project will not have the potential to result in likely significant effects to the future conservation status of qualifying features of interest and special conservation interests for which these European Sites are designated and will not undermine the achievement of their site-specific conservation objectives.

In conclusion, given the absence of impact pathways and the potential for interactions between the project and these European Sites there will be no potential for the project to result in likely significant effects to these European Sites.

In light of the findings of this report, it is the considered view of the authors of this Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment that it can be concluded by Limerick City and County Council that the project is not likely, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on any European Sites in view of their Conservation Objectives and on the basis of best scientific evidence and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to that conclusion.

It is further noted, that no avoidance or preventative/mitigation measures have been taken into account in this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and its conclusions. Accordingly, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required to be carried out in relation to the proposed development.

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Appendix 1: SACs and SPAs Qualifying Interests

European Site	Qualifying Features of Interest
Lower River Shannon SAC	Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110]
	Estuaries [1130]
	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]
	Coastal lagoons [1150]
	Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]
	Reefs [1170]
	Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]
	Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]
	Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]
	Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]
	Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]
	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260]
	<i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410]
	Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]
	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]
	<i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]
	<i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]
	<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]
	<i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]
	<i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]
<i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	
European dry heaths [4030]	
Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]	
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]
	Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A038]
	Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046]
	Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]
	Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]
	Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]
	Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054]
	Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]
	Scaup (<i>Aythya marila</i>) [A062]
	Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137]
	Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]
	Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]
	Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]
	Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143]
	Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]
Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]	

	Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]
	Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]
	Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]
	Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>) [A164]
	Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]
	Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
Tory Hill SAC	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]
	Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion <i>davallianae</i> [7210]
	Alkaline fens [7230]
Glenomra Wood SAC	Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]