

# Proposed Fuller's Folly Development, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick

## Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment



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Tait Business Centre, Dominic Street, Limerick City, Ireland.

t. +353 61 313519, f. +353 61 414315

e. [info@ecofact.ie](mailto:info@ecofact.ie)

w. [www.ecofact.ie](http://www.ecofact.ie)



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current document provides a Screening for Environmental Impact Report (EIAR) of a proposed tourist development at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, County Limerick. The proposed development is small in size, consisting of an area of c. 0.0477 ha. The development consists of the redevelopment of an existing building in Newcastle West town for the purposes of a tourist attraction, known as Fuller's Folly. The Arra river is immediately adjacent to the south of the proposed development. This report assesses whether the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the receiving environment.

The proposed development does not fall under any category within Schedule 5 (10) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) for Mandatory EIAR. The EIA Screening Assessment has determined that the requirement for a sub-threshold EIAR is unlikely but currently *inconclusive*. Currently, it could not be determined if particular characteristics and sensitivities of the site and receiving environment could be vulnerable to impacts from this project, namely roosting bats and nesting birds, which could be using Fuller's Folly or surrounding area. A Method Statement and archaeological report should also be prepared.

A Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has also been undertaken for the proposed development. This Screening found that there was no potential for the proposed development to significantly impact on any Natura 2000 site and therefore a Natura Impact Statement does not need to be carried out. Unlike screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), screening for EIA can have regard to mitigation measures. However, a screening report cannot design mitigation and can only consider mitigation that is in the actual project proposal. There are currently no mitigation measures in the project proposal - which is yet to be finalised.

The proposed development does not fall under any category within Schedule 5 (10) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) for Mandatory EIAR. The EIA Screening Assessment has determined that the requirement for a sub-threshold EIAR is unlikely but currently *inconclusive* since the development proposals are yet to be finalised.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ecofact Environmental Consultants Ltd. have been commissioned to carry out a Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) of a proposed tourist development at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick. The location of the proposed development is shown in Figure 1. This Screening determines whether an EIA is required for the project. A Screening for Appropriate Assessment report has also been prepared and concluded that an NIS is not required for the project (Ecofact, 2023a). An Ecology Report has also been prepared (Ecofact, 2023b).

### 1.1 Legislation

The EIA Directive, Council Directive 85/337/EEC 1985 on the '*Assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment*' is designated to ensure that projects likely to have a significant effect on the environment are subject to an assessment of environmental effects prior to consent being given. The most recent amendment of this Directive is by Directive 2014/52/EU of 2014. The 2014 EIA Directive was transposed into National law by the *European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018)* and the *European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (No. 2) Regulations 2018*.

The EIA Directive aims to ensure a high level of protection for the environment and human health. It requires that an assessment of the likely significant effects a project will have on the environment is carried out, where relevant, before development consent is given. The EIA Directive is transposed into Irish legislation by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Both the EIA Directive and Irish legislation set out in detail the entire EIA process.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Introduction

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive (2011/92/EU) as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU aims to determine the likely significant effects of a project on the environment. Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) outlines development thresholds, and where a development meets or exceeds these thresholds, EIA is required. Where a development is below these thresholds, the development shall be subject to a preliminary examination, and if required, a screening to determine if the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Screening is conducted according to a two-stage process. The first step of screening is to determine if the project is a class set out in Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and is therefore subject to mandatory EIA. The second stage considered significant effects of the project on the environment and EIAR requirement for a sub-threshold development.

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he current EIAR screening report follows this guidance as relevant:

- European Commission (2017a) *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Screening*.
- European Commission (2017b) *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report*.
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2018) *Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment*.
- EPA (2017) *Draft Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR)*.
- European Commission (2001) *Guidance on EIA Screening*.
- OPR (2021) *Environmental Impact Assessment Screening*; and
- EPA (2022) *Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR)*.

### 2.2 Mandatory EIA Thresholds

The proposed development at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick falls under the definition of a project in Article 1(2) of the EIA Directive. Therefore, the current project was compared to the development criteria and thresholds as outlined in Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Act 2001 (as amended). This was to determine if the proposed development for Fuller's Folly meets the development thresholds that require mandatory EIA, or if the development is sub-threshold to these criteria. The criteria for urban development (Schedule 5 Class(b)) are outlined in Table 1. The current project was compared to the criteria as outlined in item iv.



**Table 1** Part 2 of Schedule 5 Infrastructure projects (urban development, Class 10(b)) thresholds.

Item	Criteria
(i)	Construction of more than 500 dwelling units.
(ii)	Construction of a carpark providing more than 400 spaces, other than a carpark provided as part of, and incidental to the primary purpose of, a development.
(iii)	Construction of a shopping centre with a gross floor space exceeding 10,000 square metres.
(iv)	Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.  (In this paragraph, "business district" means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)

### 3. Screening

Healy Partners Architects provided documentation outlining the scheme, detailing the proposed development. These documents were reviewed and used to inform the screening process. The following documents were provided:

- Survey Scoping Information Document
- Development Floor Plan

The screening was carried out utilising an adaptation of the Screening Checklist in European Commission guidance (2017). These criteria are as follows:

- Characteristics of the Proposed Development
- Location of the Proposed Development and
- Characteristics of Potential Impacts.

#### 3.1 Guidelines

For EIA, likely significant effects are based on a 'likelihood' or 'possibility' of significant effects on the environment occurring. This is based on the precautionary principle. Whether the effect is significant will depend on factors such as the type, extent, duration, intensity, timing, probability, and cumulative effects of the potential impact, as well as the sensitivity of the environment. In this context, what may be significant in relation to one project may not be in relation to another. This underlines the importance of a case-by-case assessment.

EPA draft guidelines define a 'significant effect' as an effect, which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment. The same draft guidelines provide useful definitions in relation to quality of effects, significance of effects, context of effects, probability of effects and duration and frequency of effects.

Measures to avoid, prevent or reduce any significant adverse impacts on the environment of implementing a project are commonly referred to as 'mitigation measures. Unlike screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), screening for EIA can have regard to mitigation measures. However, an EIAR Screening is not a "mini" EIA. A screening report cannot design mitigation and can only consider mitigation that is in the actual project proposal.



Where risk is identified and where the most reliable information leaves doubt as to the absence of a significant effect(s), then the precautionary principle must be applied.

The source-pathway-target model provides a way of assessing whether significant effects are likely to arise. It considers the source of likely impacts, the environmental factors that could potentially be affected, and the pathway by which those impacts may occur.

### 3.2 Mandatory Threshold Screening

The project documentation provided by Healy Partners Architects demonstrates that the proposed development involves the renovation of an existing building as a tourist attraction. The proposed development will consist of a three-story building, with a café, toilet facilities, outdoor covered seating on the ground floor. The first floor will consist of a meeting room, gallery and interpretation space. The second floor will be a rooftop view deck. The development is proposed for a small area, covering a total area of 0.0477 ha, including for outdoor seating areas. This is below the threshold requiring mandatory EIA (Table 1), as outlined in Schedule 5. Therefore, the development is sub-threshold to mandatory EIA and mandatory EIA is not required (Table 2).

**Table 2** Screening for the Fuller's Folly development against mandatory EIA thresholds.

<b>Site Location</b>	Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.
<b>Proposed Development</b>	The development of Fuller's Folly as a tourist attraction, to consist of a café, toilet facilities, outdoor seating area, meeting room, gallery and rooftop view deck.
<b>Does the Proposed Development meet or exceed the thresholds for Mandatory EIA as set out in Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Regulations? (Yes/No)</b>	No
<b>If Yes – The development requires EIA No Sub-threshold Screening Required</b>	
<b>If No – The development is a 'sub-threshold' development which must be screened for potential significant effects on the environment</b>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	
<b>Is the class of development listed in Part 1 or Part 2, but does not have a threshold listed? (Yes/No)</b>	Yes
<b>If Yes – The development requires a <i>Sub-threshold Screening</i></b>	
<b>If No – The development is not listed in part 1 or Part 2 and no thresholds have been set. <i>Therefore, no screening is required unless requested by the CA.</i></b>	



**Figure 1** Location of the proposed development at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.





### 3.3 Desk study

To determine the likely effects of the project on the environment, information was collated via a desktop study. The National Monuments website (<https://www.archaeology.ie/>) and associated online maps were accessed to compile information on sites of archaeological importance and zones of notification within the study area. The EPA website (<https://www.epa.ie/>) was accessed to collate information on soil types and air quality concerns for Newcastle West, Co. Limerick. The Limerick Development Plan (2022-2028) was accessed to gain an understanding of the development goals of the county.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)) website and associated online maps were accessed to compile information on local designated sites for nature conservation. The National Biodiversity Data Centre Records (<https://biodiversityireland.ie/>) were accessed to identify the presence of Annex II and Annex IV listed species (under the EU Habitats Directive) in proximity to the study area. Google and Bing Orthophotography were accessed online in order to gain a better understanding of the study area surrounding the proposed development. All documents reviewed are included in the References section of this report.

### 3.1 Sub-threshold Screening

As the development does not meet or exceed thresholds for mandatory EIA, a sub-threshold screening will be carried out. To determine whether the project will require EIA, the following screening will be completed based on Criteria in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). According to the 'Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development', (DoEHLG, 2018) the assessment of the likelihood of significant environmental effects arising from a project requires professional judgement. The nature and size of the proposed development needs to be considered, in addition to the environmental sensitivity of the receiving area and the potential effects of the development.

#### 3.3.1 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Archaeological sites are included in the Sites and Monuments Record under the provisions of Section 12(1) of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994. Section 12 (3) of the 1994 Amendment Act states that written notice must be given to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht a minimum of two months prior to the commencement of works at, or in relation to, a recorded monument. Furthermore, 'zones of notification' exist around some historical areas or monuments which indicate areas where the possible impacts of a development on a site / monument need to be particularly considered (OPR, 2021b).

Sites and Monuments Record's online maps ([maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment](https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment)) indicate that there are no recorded monuments within the proposed site boundary, but that the development site is located within a Zone of Notification (Figure 2). There are several recorded sites adjacent to the proposed development site, including three houses from the 1800's to the east of the site and a bridge dating from the 1820's to the southeast. Most notably, there is an Anglo-Norman Masonry castle c. 20m northwest of the proposed development site boundary, known as Desmond Castle. This monument is subject to a preservation order made under the National Monuments Acts 1930 to 2014. Therefore, the development area is archaeologically sensitive. There is also a medieval church c. 60m to the north.

A report entitled 'Archaeological Impact Assessment at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick' has been prepared by Aegis Archelogy Ltd. (2023). This report states that Fuller's Folly dates from 1863, according to a date stone in the southern wall of the courtyard of the structure The wall between



the site known as Fuller's Folly and the grounds of the Desmond Castle is approximately 5.5m high, constructed of roughly coursed random rubble. It has been repointed with lime mortar on its northern face. On its southern face in the yard of Fuller's Folly, cementitious mortar is used on its eastern length, with lime mortar used elsewhere. A visual examination of the visible fabric suggests that the northern building of Fuller's Folly has utilised portion of an earlier wall in its construction. The wall which runs from the northern building in a westerly direction and forms the boundary between the yard of Fuller's Folly and the castle grounds to follows the line of an earlier wall depicted on the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> edition map (c. 1840). Local information records that the yard of Fuller's Folly was used as an abattoir in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The concrete floor in the courtyard relates to the use of the site as an abattoir. It is unclear what this concrete is laid on. It is possible that there is a cobbled surface beneath this. At this time also, a hole in the wall was opened to give access to the yard in the castle grounds to the north. Local information suggests that it was repaired within living memory. The repair is clearly visible on the southern face of the wall, and less so on the northern face. This wall is constructed along the suggested line of the bawn wall of 1298. Therefore, there is a likelihood is a possibility that wall contains medieval fabric. It is difficult to say how much of this wall is medieval-it may be entirely medieval in date.

Aegis Archelogy Ltd. (2023) then concludes that *"Based on the current reconstruction drawing and proposed development of the Desmond Castle, the subject site contains the bawn wall of the Desmond Castle. If the reconstructions and proposed development are accurate, Fuller's Folly is constructed in/on the defensive moat of the castle. Therefore, Fuller's Folly must be considered to be built on part of the castle"*. The report then states that *"any proposed works to Fuller's Folly should be carried out under Ministerial Consent (as per determination from National Monuments Service 12 July 2023). As the site is a Protected Structure a Section 57 Notification will also be required for any proposed works"*.

### 3.3.2 Landscape and Visual Impact

By design, the proposed project will be visible to users of the area and therefore has the potential to impact on the landscape character and visual amenity of Newcastle West and surrounding area. The project therefore needs to be considered according to the significance and longevity of these potential impacts and the relevant guidelines. This includes the EPA Draft *'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports'* (2017) and the UK Landscape Institute's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (3rd Edition).

The landscape surrounding the proposed development is within the town centre, which is predominantly urban and therefore is unlikely to impact on any natural landscapes. While the area surrounding Fuller's Folly is historic, Fuller's Folly was built in the mid-late 1800's and the proposed modifications are unlikely to impact the visual amenity and character of the building.

### 3.3.3 Land and Soils

The Irish Soil Information System map (EPA website) demonstrates that the proposed development area is located within an urban area. The proposed development is unlikely to have significant impacts on soil or land in the area.

### 3.3.4 Biodiversity

The proposed project could potentially impact on local wildlife and biodiversity. The proposed development is not located within any Natura 2000 designated sites, with the closest Natura 2000 site being the Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA, located c. 4.4km west of the proposed development (Figure 3). A Screening for Appropriate Assessment carried



out by Ecofact Environmental Consultants Ltd. (Ecofact, 2023a), concluded that the current proposed development would not negatively impact on any Natura 2000 sites.

Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) are areas considered to be important for the habitats present or for the presence of species whose habitat needs protecting. There are no NHA's or proposed NHA's (pNHA) within a 5km radius of the development area (Figure 4).

According to the NBDC records, several protected species have been recorded in close proximity to the proposed development site. As the proposed development is located immediately adjacent to the Arra River, there is the potential for works to cause disturbance impacts to aquatic wildlife. Common frog has also been reported c. 700m west of the proposed development site, with the most record in 2020. There is also the possibility for freshwater fish species, such as Brown trout, to be present adjacent to the study site, as well as downstream. Although there are embankments present, these are lower on the western side of the site boundary and therefore the possibility of some aquatic species, such as Otter, to occasionally be present within the area cannot be ruled out. European Otter (*Lutra lutra*) have been reported in the Arra River adjacent to the proposed development site with a sighting of spraint in 2015.

Pigeons are roosting in the building and a bird nest (not active) was recorded (Ecofact, 2023b). Dipper, Sand Martin (nesting), Heron and Mallard are also present in the River Arra nearby (Ecofact, 2023b). Several invasive species have been recorded within the 2km national grid square which contains the proposed development site, including Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), Evergreen Oak (*Quercus ilex*), Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*), Indian Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*). Invasive floral species rapidly colonise bare ground and invasive species management at the site should be implemented, to prevent introduction of these species to the site.

#### 3.3.4.1 Bats

There is also a recorded Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) roost within 5km of the proposed development. Bat species are Annex IV listed on the EU Habitats Directive. Aerial imagery confirms that there are mature trees in proximity to the proposed development, and these trees could be bat roosting sites. Likewise, the building itself proposed for renovation could be being utilised by bats. The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) maps landscape suitability for bats based on Lundy *et al.*, (2011). The maps are a visualisation of the results of the analyses based on a 'habitat suitability' index. The index ranges from 0 to 100, with 0 being least favourable and 100 most favourable for bats. The overall assessment of bat habitats for the current study area is given as 33.67, which is considered to be a moderate level.

A dedicated bat survey was carried out by Ecofact Environmental Consultants Ltd. on the 21<sup>st</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023, to inform the Ecology Report (Ecofact, 2023b) and this survey concluded that a small number of Soprano Pipistrelles are roosting on the proposed development site. Soprano Pipistrelles, along with Common Pipistrelles and Leisler's Bat were recorded using the site for foraging and commuting throughout the hours after dusk. There was also one potential Brown Long-eared bat recorded within or near the proposed development.

No Method Statements or Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been included in the proposal for the current EIAR Screening. It is noted in the Architectural Design Statement (Healy Partners Architects, 2023) that "A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Project Method Statement utilizing best practices and standard operating procedures are required



*prior to construction commencing*". However, these outline documents should be prepared prior to screening to ensure that the requirements for bats are taken into account.

It is noted in the Architectural Design Statement (Healy Partners Architects, 2023) that *"A detailed public lighting design shall be prepared for the projects as part of the detailed design phase. Public lighting shall be provided in accordance with the recommendations of BS5489 Part 1, Lighting of Roads and Public Amenity Areas and BS EN 13201:2003. All lighting designs shall be in accordance with the Limerick City and County Council Public Lighting Specification. Detailed plans and lighting report shall be submitted for approval in advance of construction"*. But there is currently no lighting design and recommendations in relation to lighting design put forward in the bat report have not been committed to in the design statement.

### 3.3.5 Water

The Arra River flows adjacent to the southern boundary of the proposed development. Water quality of the Arra River upstream of the proposed development site was last monitored in 1993 and was assigned a status of Q4, of 'Good' (Station: RS24A040400). Downstream of the proposed development site, Station RS24A040500 was last monitored in 2020 and water quality was assigned a value of Q3 or 'Poor'. The Arra River is considered to be an 'at risk' waterbody for meeting Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives by 2027 and was assessed as having 'poor ecological conditions' when last assessed in 2020 (EPA Website).

No Method Statements or Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been included in the proposal for the current EIAR Screening. It is noted in the Architectural Design Statement (Healy Partners Architects, 2023) that *"A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Project Method Statement utilizing best practices and standard operating procedures are required prior to construction commencing"*. However, commitments to designing mitigation at a future date cannot be taken into account in a screening report.

No details of wastewater treatment for the proposed toilet facilities have been provided. It is noted in the Architectural Design Statement (Healy Partners Architects, 2023) that *"The drainage system shall be designed to manage surface water runoff from the site in a way that mimics the existing hydrology in so far as is practical. Based on the results of a site investigation the surface water drainage system shall be designed in accordance with the GSDSDS Report, Greater Dublin Code of Practice for Drainage Works and the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) manual CIRIA C753. SUDS measures will be explored and implemented further, in agreement with the Roads department in Limerick City and County Council at detail design stage and prior to the commencement of construction works."* However, development details that are yet to be finalised cannot be taken into account in a screening report. Moreover, no details of wastewater treatment have been provided.

### 3.3.6 Air Quality and Climate

The proposed development is unlikely to directly impact on air quality and climate. Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) is identified by the EPA as one of the most significant pollutants to air quality in Ireland (EPA website) and is released via diesel/ petrol engines. The proposed development may increase traffic to the area during the operational phase by attracting tourists, but this is unlikely to be significant when considered within the context of Newcastle West town.

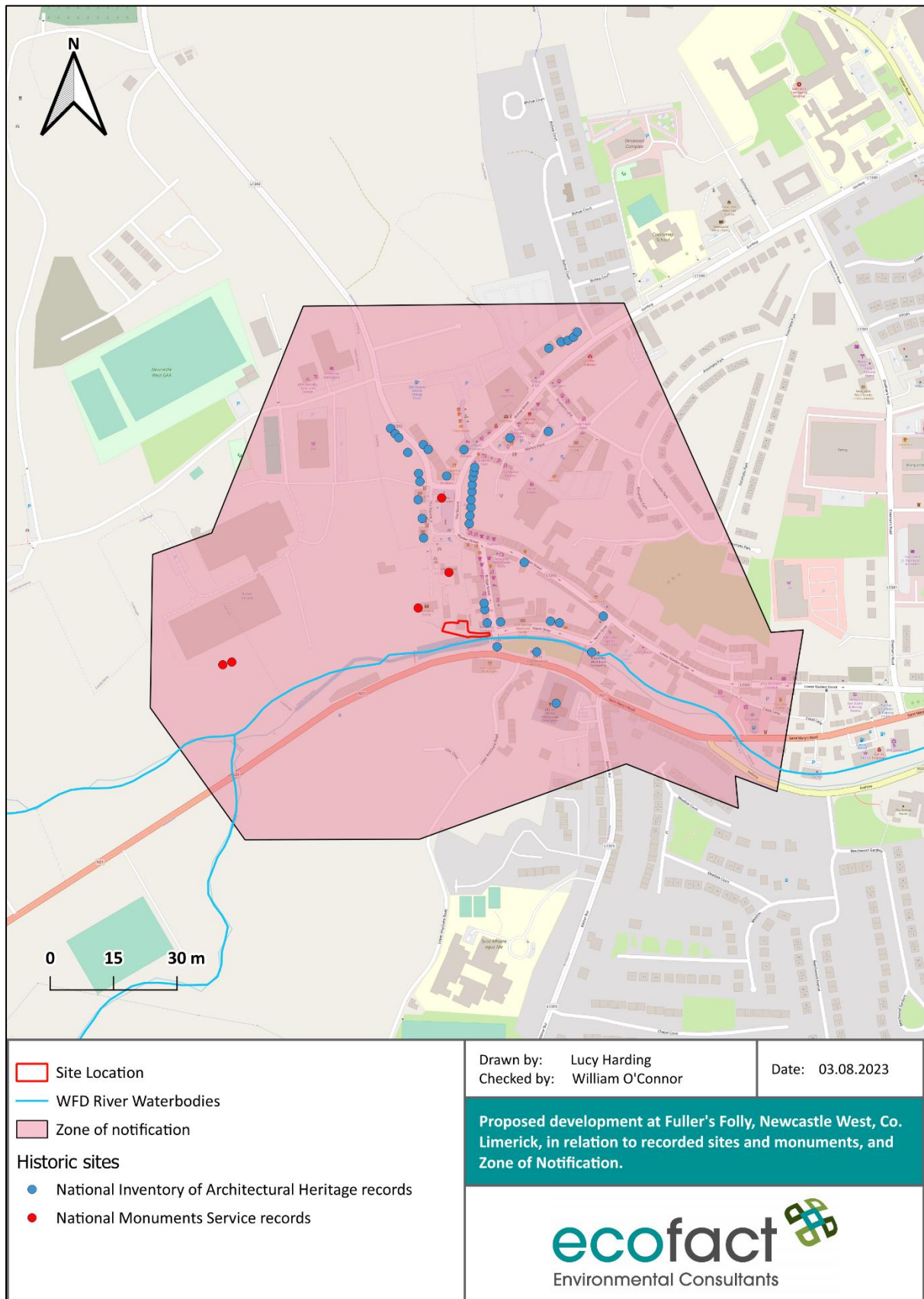


### 3.3.7 Noise and Vibration

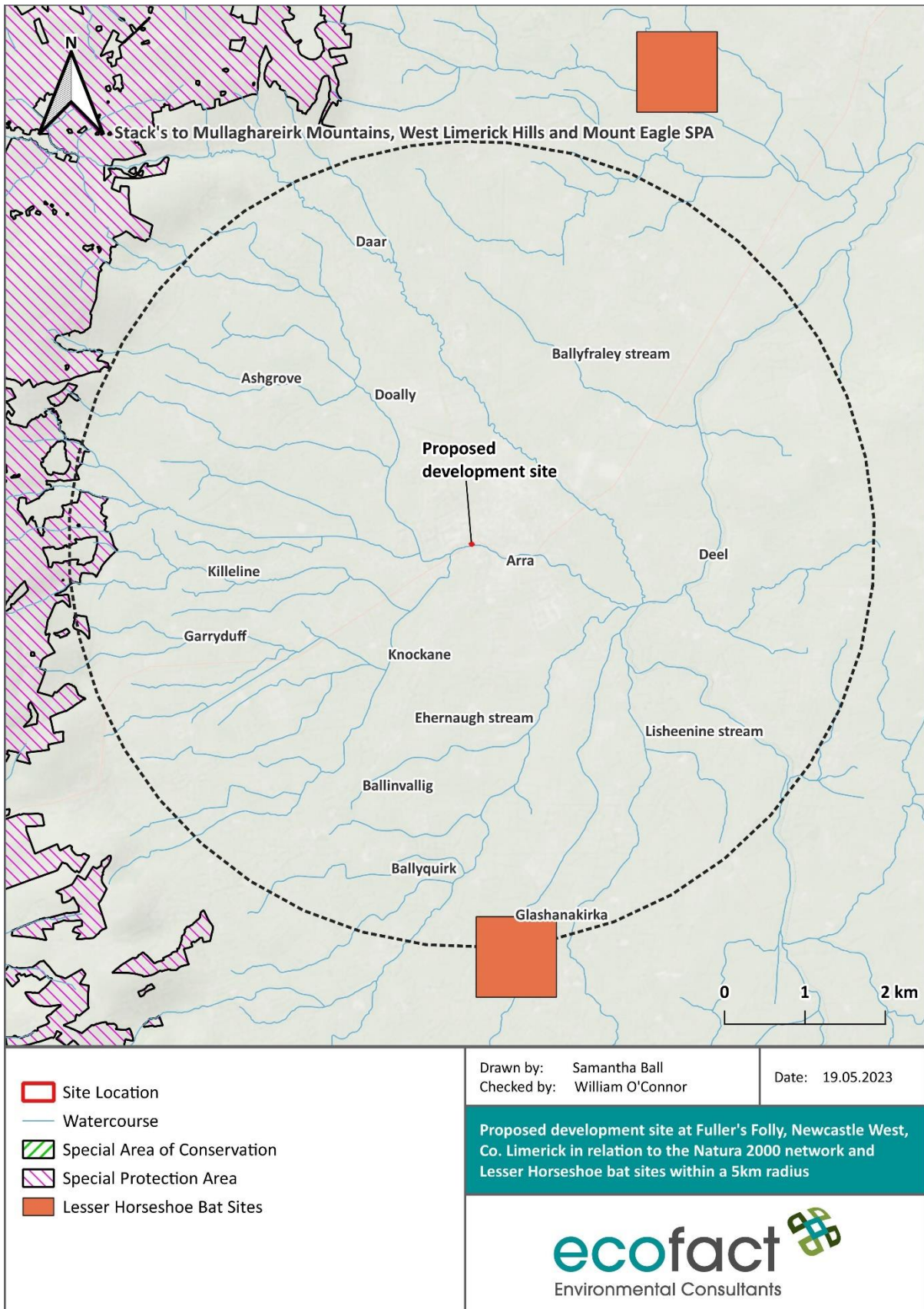
The proposed development is located in proximity to residential and business areas. The proposed development is unlikely to produce noise or vibrations whilst operational but is likely to produce emissions of both during the construction phase. According to the Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, '*an estimate, by type and quantity, of the expected residues and emissions*' for noise and vibration is appropriate for inclusion in an EIAR. No significant noise or vibration impacts are anticipated, but a Methods Statement should be provided to ensure this.

### 3.3.8 Material Assets

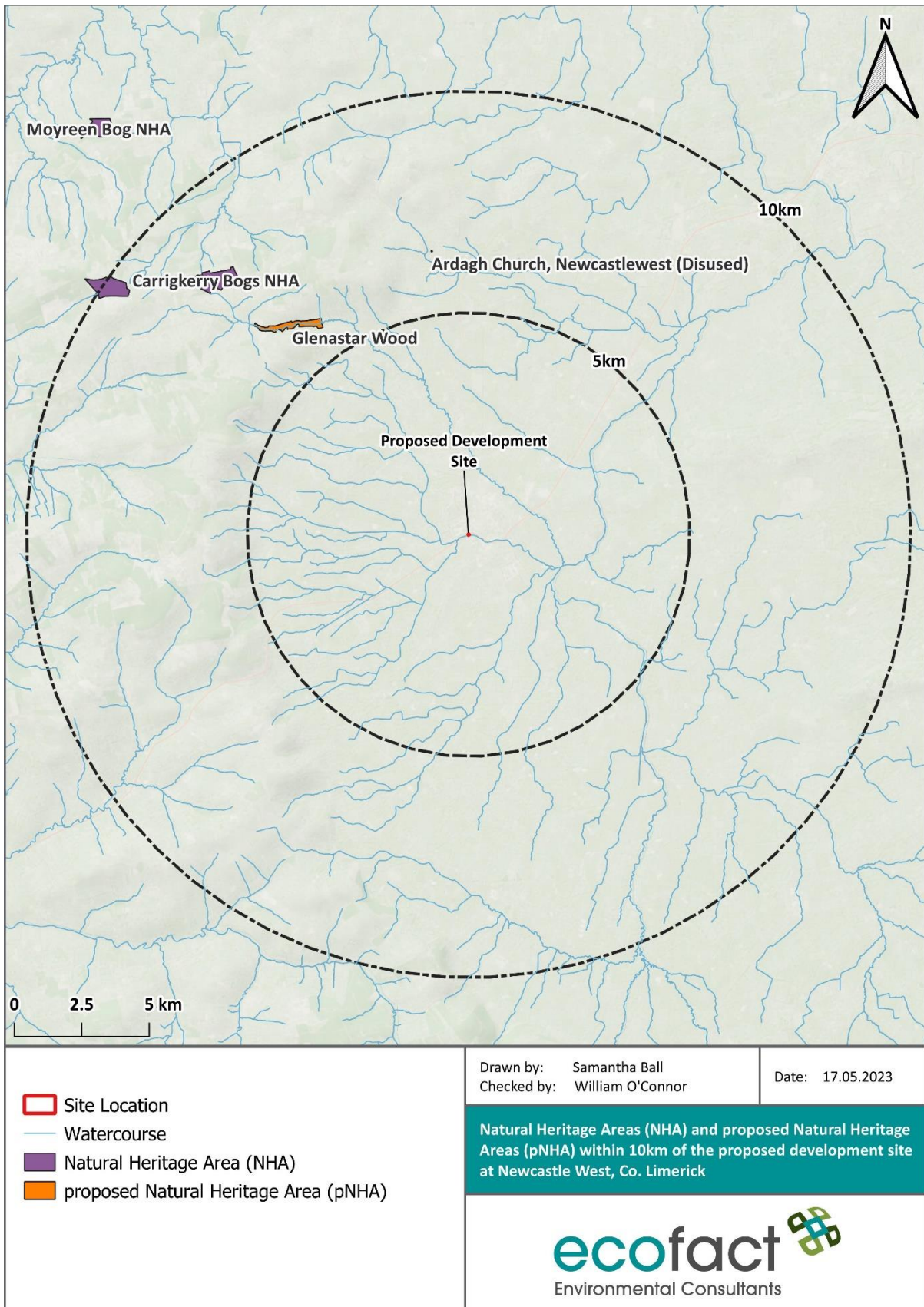
Material assets refers to built services and infrastructure. Given the nature of this project, the construction phase is likely to be the only phase impacting material assets. Existing transportation infrastructure (e.g., roads) and the flow of traffic is likely to be impacted during the construction phase. The project is also likely to produce waste during the construction phase for any required ground excavations, in addition to general construction waste. Waste management legislation should be adhered to and no significant impacts arising from waste are anticipated.



**Figure 2** Recorded historical sites and associated Zone of Notification (indicative) in relation to the proposed development site at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.



**Figure 3** Proposed development at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick in relation to the Natura 2000 network and Lesser horseshoe bat sites within a 5km radius.



**Figure 4** Locations of Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) within 5 and 10km of the proposed development and within the development site





### 3.3.9 Sub-threshold screening summary

**Table 3** Sub-threshold screening for EIA requirement for the proposed development at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.

Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
<b>Characteristics of Proposed Development</b>			
Is the scale of the project considered to be significant?	No	The proposed development is small in size, consisting of an area c. 0.0477ha in size and consists of the redevelopment of an existing building in Newcastle West town for the purposes of a tourist attraction. Development will be localised and no significant effects are anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Is the scale of the project considered to be significant when considered cumulatively with other existing and / or proposed developments?	No	When considered cumulatively with other developments, the project is not considered significant.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the project utilise a significant quantity of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water or biodiversity?	No	The size of the development is considered small, with a footprint of 0.0477ha. The project proposal does not detail the planned removal of any natural resources such as vegetation. Energy, including electricity and fuels, will be required during the construction phase and operational phases. The construction process will include the use of various raw materials. No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is likely during the construction process. During the operational phase, no significant use of natural resources are anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the project produce a significant quantity of waste?	No	Waste will be generated during the construction phase. Construction waste will be related to ground excavation. Given the scale of the project, the volume of waste produced is unlikely to be significant.  Waste containment should be outlined in a CEMP	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the project produce a significant amount of pollution or nuisance?	No	Typical nuisance impacts can be expected from the construction phase, relating to the production of dust, noise and vibrations and potential increase in construction traffic in the locality of the proposed development. Given the scale of the project, nuisances are unlikely to be significant.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
		Nuisance containment should be outlined in a CEMP	
Does the project have a risk of major accidents, or natural disasters, including those caused by climate change?	No	Strict compliance with building regulations and environmental controls is expected to be exercised as standard. No major accidents are foreseen.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the project present a risk to human health?	No	No significant risks to human health are expected. Some noise, dust or pollution may arise during construction, but this is not likely to be major. This is because while some residential/ business areas are adjacent to the site, the development is localised and small in scale, likely only spanning a short duration of time.  Nuisance containment should be outlined in a CEMP	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Is any combination of the above factors likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	No	The proposed development is small in scale and within an already urbanised area. It is not anticipated that any combination of the above factors will have a significant effect on the environment. The preparation of a methods statement is recommended,	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
<b>Location of Proposed Development</b>			
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any designated site (SAC, SPA, pNHA, NHA)?	No	The closest Natura 2000 designated site to the proposed development is Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (004161), located 4.4km to the west (Figure 2). The qualifying interest for this site is the Hen Harrier. As there is no suitable habitat for this species in proximity to the proposed development site, impacts are not expected.  Appropriate Assessment screening (Ecofact, 2023) on the area has determined that significant impacts on any Natura 2000 designated areas are unlikely due to geographical separation.  There are no NHA or pNHA within 5km of the proposed development site (Figure 3). The closest pNHA is Glenastar woods, but there is no pathway between the two sites.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive?	No	There are no Annex I listed habitats within the boundary of the proposed development site. Additionally, the development is proposed for an existing urban area and the presence of any Annex I listed habitats within the immediate area is unlikely. The proposed development is considered to be sufficiently far removed from the Natura 2000 network that significant impacts on any Natura	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
		2000 designated areas and the qualifying interests of these sites are unlikely, as determined by an Appropriate Assessment Screening (Ecofact, 2023).	
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive?	Uncertain	<p>Appropriate Assessment screening (Ecofact, 2023) for the development has determined that significant impacts on any Natura 2000 designated areas are unlikely due to geographical separation.</p> <p>However, Annex II species could be utilising the river adjacent to the proposed development site. There is a single record of Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) immediately adjacent to the proposed development site. Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>), River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>) and Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) are also likely present.</p> <p>The proposed development is small in scale and the Arra river is not within the boundary site. Significant negative impacts on Annex II species is unlikely. However, it is recommended that a Method Statement and CEMP is prepared to ensure no negative impacts on Annex II listed species are likely.</p>	Significant effects unlikely as long as mitigation in the ecology report are followed. However, no CEMP has been prepared. No details on wastewater treatment are available. No drainage designs are available.
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive?	Uncertain	<p>All bat species in Ireland are Annex IV listed species. There is a Lesser horseshoe bat roost within 5km of the proposed development site (NPWS), but this is sufficiently geographically removed from the site that impacts are not likely. There are several mature trees adjacent to the development site which may provide roosting sites for bats. Likewise, the walls as part of the folly appear to be covered in Ivy, which can also provide suitable roosting sites. The folly itself may also be a suitable roosting site for bats.</p> <p>A bat survey to inform the Ecology Report has been undertaken. This concluded that soprano Pipistrelles are roosting, foraging and commuting on site. Therefore, this species will be significantly affected by the proposed development. However, this is a small number of bats and this impact can be effectively mitigated with working in the correct season, a derogation licence and bat boxes. This mitigation will need to be formally provided to reduce impacts.</p> <p>Otters are likely to be present in the adjoining River Ara and they depend on good water quality.</p>	<p>Significant effects unlikely as long as mitigation in the ecology report are followed. However, no CEMP has been prepared. No details on wastewater treatment are available.</p> <p>It is noted in the Architectural Design Statement (Healy Partners Architects, 2023) that “A detailed public lighting design shall be prepared for the projects as part of the detailed design phase. Public lighting shall be provided in accordance with</p>



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
			<p>the recommendations of BS5489 Part 1, Lighting of Roads and Public Amenity Areas and BS EN 13201:2003. All lighting designs shall be in accordance with the Limerick City and County Council Public Lighting Specification. Detailed plans and lighting report shall be submitted for approval in advance of construction". This does not contain any reference to the finding of the ecology report and the recommendations made in relation to lighting design.</p>
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive?	No	Merlin ( <i>Falco columbarius</i> ) have been recorded within the town, with the last report from 2020. Disturbance caused by the proposed development will be negligible compared to other disturbances in the town and will cause no significant effects.	Significant effects unlikely as long as mitigation in the ecology report are followed. However, no CEMP has been prepared.
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species protected under the Wildlife Act?	Uncertain	<p>The proposed development site includes the town centre. Many species protected by the Wildlife Act have historically been recorded in the area (e.g., Otter, bats, Sand Martin, Barn Swallow, House Sparrow, NBDC records; 2023). Bats roost at the proposed development site (Ecofact, 2023b).</p> <p>Birds have nested in the building and are protected under the Wildlife Act. Sand Martens are also nesting near the site. However, any potential impacts would be localised and unlikely to be significant.</p>	Significant effects unlikely as long as mitigation in the ecology report are followed. However, no CEMP has been prepared.



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on the existing or approved land use?	No	Existing land use predominately comprises of urban landscape.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on the relative abundance, availability, quality or regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground?	No	The proposed development is located in an urban environment and the relative abundance, availability, quality or regenerative capacity of natural resources is unlikely to be impacted.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required. No details on wastewater treatment are available.
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any protected structures or recorded monuments or places or archaeological interest?	Uncertain	<p>The proposed development is located within a zone of notification but is not a listed protected structure or monument. However, Desmond castle is located c. 21m from the proposed development site, which is an Anglo-Norman masonry castle. A medieval castle is also located c. 60m to the north. If excavations are necessary as part of the development, there is the possibility of discovering/damaging unknown sites or objects of archaeological interest.</p> <p>It is noted that a report entitled 'Archaeological Impact Assessment at Fuller's Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick' has been prepared by Aegis Archelogy Ltd. (2023). However, this report does not actually include an impact assessment as "development proposals are yet to be finalized". The report also only includes suggested mitigation and states that "It is the remit of the National Monuments Service, however, to legally recommend any one or a combination of these mitigation measures and perhaps to make recommendations that have not been suggested above".</p> <p>The Aegis Archelogy Ltd. (2023). report states that "Any proposed works to Fuller's Folly should be carried out under Ministerial Consent (as per determination from National Monuments Service 12 July 2023). As the site is a Protected Structure a Section 57 Notification will also be required for any proposed works. The LCC&amp;C Conservation Officer should be consulted in this regard".</p>	Inconclusive – an archaeology report has been prepared. However, this report does not actually include an impact assessment as "development proposals are yet to be finalized".
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on listed or scenic views or	No	The Fuller's Folly development is included in the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 (Limerick City & Co. Council 2022), as part of the West Limerick	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
protected landscapes as outlined in the County Development Plan?		Tourism Gateway campaign. According to the development plan, there are no recorded protected views within Newcastle West.	
<b>Type and Characteristics of Potential Impacts</b>			
Could a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the project?	No	The proposed development site is small in scale, covering an area 0.0477 ha in size. It is not expected that the proposed development will have significant impacts on the wider geographical area.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Could a large population of people be affected as a result of the project?	No	There is the potential for some traffic and nuisance impacts to the local population during the construction phase. These impacts will likely be short term and confined to the construction phase.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Are any transboundary impacts likely to arise as a result of the project?	No	Construction and operational phase impacts are considered to be localised. There are no construction phase transboundary impacts anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Would the magnitude of impacts associated with the project be considered significant?	No	The magnitude of the project is considered typical of projects of this scale and unlikely to be significant.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Would potential impacts on the environment be considered complex?	No	The proposed development is not considered overly complex and will be typical of project of this scale and character. Regarding complexity it is not considered that there is the potential for significant impacts.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Is there a high probability that the effects will occur?	Yes	As the development is located within a town centre, it is likely that some level of construction impacts will occur in relation to nuisance impacts. These are not anticipated to be significant or long term.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the effects last for a long time?	No	The proposed works are expected to be relatively short term and restricted to the construction phase. No effects are anticipated during the operational phase.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the effects be permanent?	Yes	While the development is intended to be permanent, the impacts associated with the construction phase (e.g., nuisances, dust, etc.) are likely only to be temporary during the construction phase.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will the impacts be reversible?	No	The development would likely require demolition to be reversed. However, the development is located in urban areas and removal will not change land use in the area.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Is this likely to result in a significant effect?
Will there be significant cumulative impacts with other existing and approved projects?	No	No significant cumulative impacts are expected. As Newcastle West is a busy, urban centre, other developments (e.g., housing developments), can be reasonably expected. However, these are not expected to result in significant impacts. No significant cumulative impacts are anticipated.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required
Will it be difficult to reduce the impacts?	No	It is likely that it will not be difficult to reduce the impacts from the proposed development. Specialist reports are required to firstly determine the potential project impacts regarding the areas of construction management, archaeology and biodiversity.	Significant effects unlikely, sub-threshold EIAR not required



## 4. CONCLUSION

This report has been prepared to allow the Competent Authority (CA) to prepare an EIAR Screening Conclusion Statement. The report has screened for the potential impacts of the proposed development on the environment and the requirement of an EIAR.

The proposed development does not meet or exceed any of the thresholds set out in Schedule 5 (10) (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) for Mandatory EIAR. Therefore, a sub-threshold screening was carried out for the proposed development to determine if any significant impacts on the environment are likely, and if so, whether an EIA is required.

The Screening for EIAR has determined that the requirement for a sub-threshold EIAR is unlikely but it is not possible to screen a project out development proposals are yet to be finalised. The conclusion of the screening therefore has to be uncertain / inconclusive.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a project Method Statement are required. Details on wastewater treatment will also be required. It is noted in the Architectural Design Statement (Healy Partners Architects, 2023) that “*A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Project Method Statement utilizing best practices and standard operating procedures are required prior to construction commencing.*” However, there is currently no mitigation in the project proposal. It is noted in the Architectural Design Statement (Healy Partners Architects, 2023) that commitments are made in relation to providing a drainage design and lighting plan. However, the development proposal is currently incomplete in the absence of these details. A report entitled ‘Archaeological Impact Assessment at Fuller’s Folly, Newcastle West, Co. Limerick’ has been prepared by Aegis Archelogy Ltd. (2023). However, this report does not actually include an impact assessment and states that this is because the “*development proposals are yet to be finalized*”.





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## PLATES



**Plate 1** Proposed development site showing Arra Stream (not included in site).



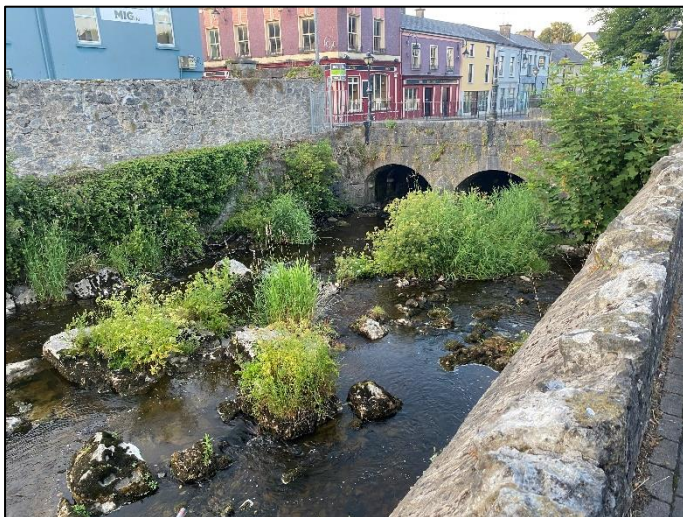
**Plate 2** Eastern side of the proposed development building. The structure to the rear is where the roof has collapsed.



**Plate 3** Southern façade of the building. The stonework here was in good condition and well sealed.



**Plate 4** Inner courtyard showing ivy which provides suitable bat roosting habitat.



**Plate 5** Arra Stream at the proposed development. A Dipper was recorded here, and Sand Martins were nesting.



**Plate 6** Trees nearby. There was a rookery in this area.