

## **Appropriate Assessment Screening**

May 2020.

Limerick City and County Council,  
Forward/Strategic Planning,  
Economic Development Directorate,  
Merchants Quay,  
Limerick



## **Contents:**

### **AA Screening:**

1.0 Introduction	p.3
1.2 Screening Matrix	p.6
1.3 Finding of No Significant Effects Matrix	p.15

## 1.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening: Introduction

This is an Appropriate Assessment Screening of the proposed extension to the Castletroy Playground, in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

The existing Castletroy Playground has been in use for over a decade now and has shown increasing usage over that time period. To ensure that the playground continues to play a role as a social amenity and to cater for increasing usage an extension is proposed.

The works will comprise the construction of a new Multi Use Games Area (Muga) and an increase in the size of the existing playground area including associated site works and provision of drainage and lighting. The works will include preparation of the site to receive the Multi Use Games Area and the installation of a protective perimeter fence to the play area, installation of a range of play and exercise equipment, site furniture and resin bound surfacing. The proposed extension will be approx. 130-150 sqm and the multi use games area will be 25mX13m (325m<sup>2</sup>). Total site area on site the location map (Figure 1) is 0.402ha.

This project needs to be screened for 'Appropriate Assessment'. Based on the *Methodological guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, a 'Screening Matrix' and a 'Finding of No Significant Effects Matrix' have been completed. The conclusion is that the project **does not require** an Appropriate Assessment.

This for the following reasons:

**1** The proposed development is approximately 2km south and 1km west of the nearest SAC site, the Lower River Shannon SAC site. The limited scale of works involved means that any effects will be in the immediate area of the project which is in a public park. In effect this means the loss of some amenity grassland, a habitat of limited ecological value (see Figure 4). This habitat is not part of the conservation interest of any of the nearby Natura 2000 sites - see below.

**2** The scale of works is limited so any airborne emissions from the works such as dust plumes would be limited in size. When coupled with the prevailing westerly winds this will have the effect of moving such dust emissions to the east and away from the main river channel.

**3** As can be seen from Figure 4, there is no hydrological connection to the River Shannon, Groody or local water courses, therefore no pathway through which contaminants could flow. While drainage works are included in the list of works, when completed they will serve to divert rainwater from the playground surface, an area which is not likely to generate contaminants.

**4** The limited and localised scale of the works in an already modified environment means that effects on Natura 2000 sites, the closest of which is at 1km distance is not likely.



Figure 1: site location map for the Castletroy Park, showing site boundary for works in red.

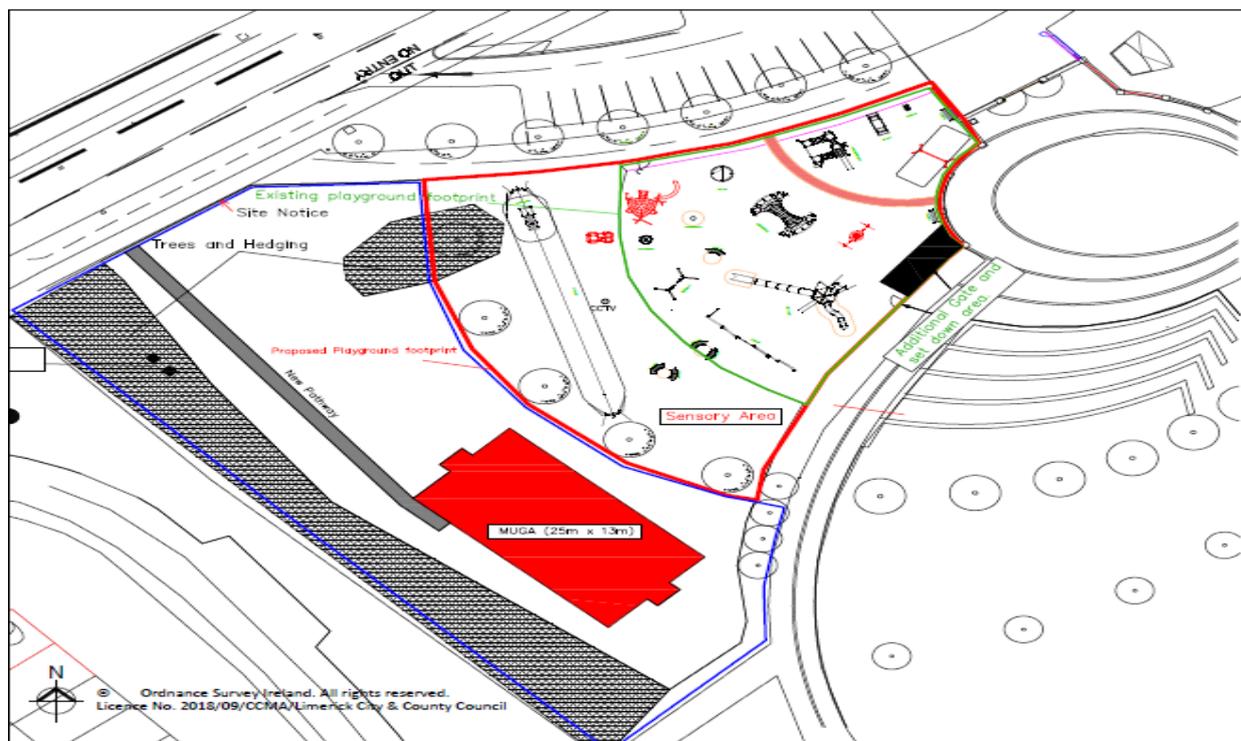


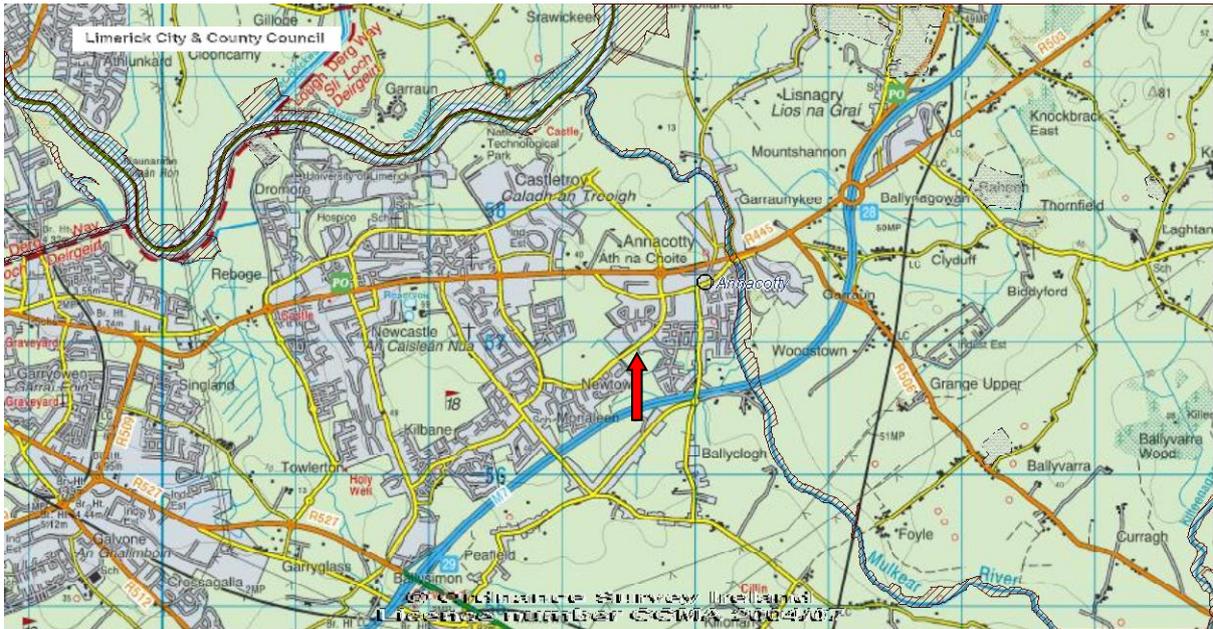
Figure 2: showing park layout.



Figure 3: aerial photograph of the playground.



Figure 4: showing the location of the play ground extension.



**Figure 5:** showing location of proposed development (red arrow) and that of the Lower River Shannon SAC site.

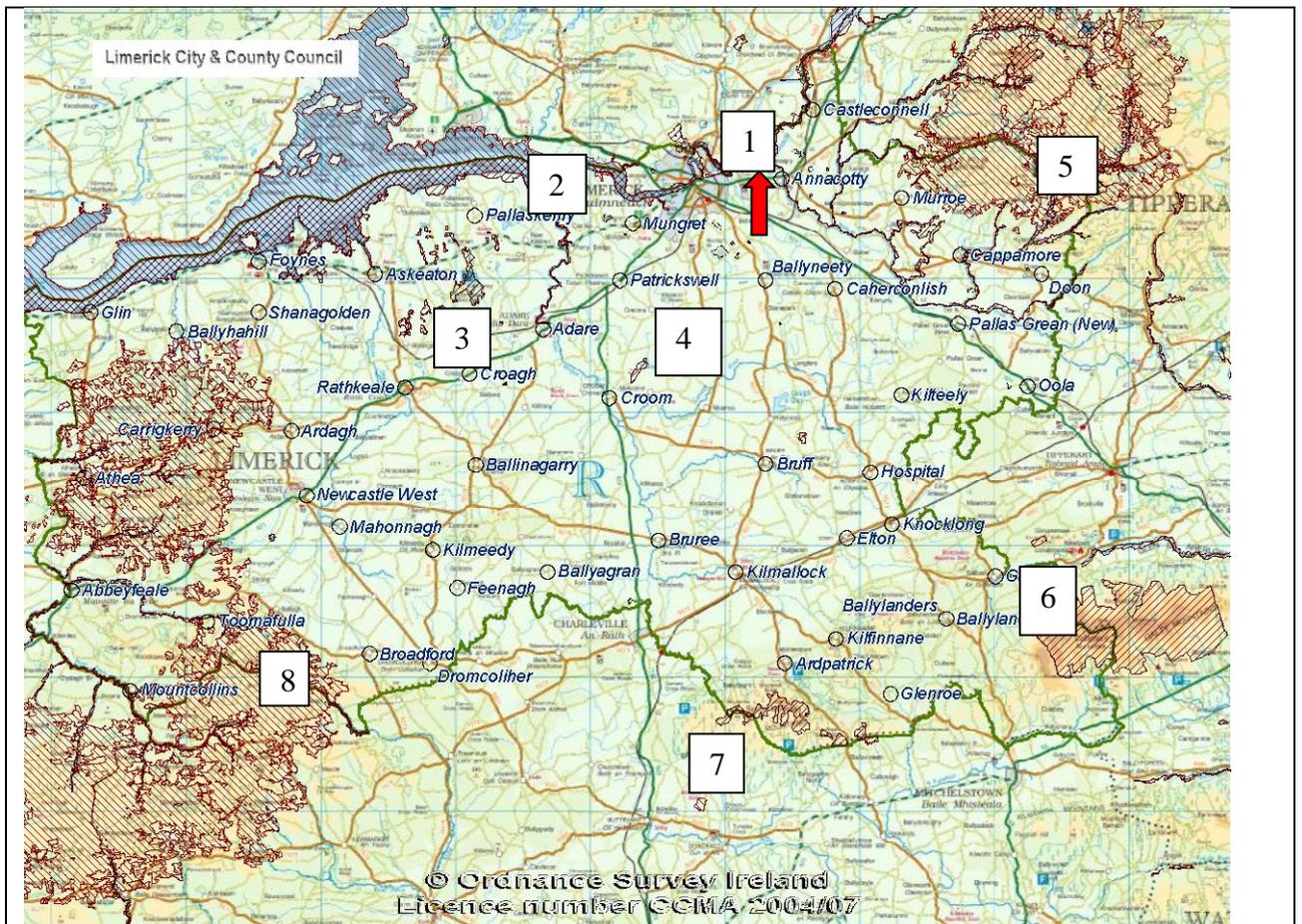
## 1.2 Screening Matrix

**Brief description of the project or plan:** The works are an extension to the existing Castletroy Playground. The works will comprise the construction of a new Multi Use Games Area (Muga) and increasing the size of the existing playground area including associated site works and provision of drainage and lighting. The works will include preparation of the site to receive the MUGA and the installation of a protective perimeter fence to the play area, installation of a range of play and exercise equipment, site furniture and resin bound surfacing. The proposed extension will be approx. 130-150 sqm and the multi use games area will be 25mX13m (325m<sup>2</sup>). Total site area on site the location map (Figure 1) is 0.402ha.

### **Brief description of the Natura 2000 sites:**

**1** The Lower River Shannon SAC (002165) site is within 1km. The SAC site has been selected, because of a range of riparian habitats and species such as wet woodlands, tidal mudflats, estuaries and for species such as otter, salmon and lamprey. Maintenance of high water quality is an important factor in ensuring the preservation of these habitats.

**2** The River Shannon and Fergus SPA (004077) is located 3km away from the Castletroy Playground. The SPA site has been selected, because of its importance for wintering and migratory wildfowl. The site comprises of all the estuarine habitat west from Limerick City and it is the mud flats with its invertebrate community, which is of particular importance as a feeding area for migratory wildfowl. See Figure 6 below.



**Figure 6:** showing the location of nearby Natura 2000 sites. The development site is indicated with a red arrow.

**3** Askeaton Fen Complex (002279) which is selected for a range of wetland habitats. This is 15km to the south west. In the Askeaton Fen Complex SAC a diversity of fen types are represented in a gradation from open water to drier seepage areas. One of the more important fen types, *Cladium* fen, which contains Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*), occurs in various forms and is the most common fen type within the SAC. It is associated with wet conditions generally not >25 cm deep and can be found in mono-dominant stands growing on a marl base, such as at Feereagh and Mornane Loughs, and in the fen in the townland of Mornane. It can also be co-dominant with Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) in slightly drier conditions, such as in Deegerty, Blind Lough and Dromlohan.

**4** Tory Hill SAC (000439) site is an isolated, wooded limestone hill situated about 2 km north-east of Croom, Co. Limerick. It is 16km south west of Castletroy. It represents an important feature of the surrounding countryside and is a prime example of a limestone hill set amongst a region of volcanic intrusions of differing shape and geology. The hill is of geomorphological interest for the end-moraine, left by retreating ice, on its northern flanks and for ice-marks that are clearly visible on the solid rock. The site includes Lough Nagirra and its associated wetland vegetation, located to the north and north-east of Tory Hill.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland\*

[7210] *Cladium*Fens\*

[7230] Alkaline Fens

**5** The Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA (004165) is an extensive upland site located in Counties Tipperary and Limerick. Much of the site is over 200 m in altitude and rises to 694 m at Keeper Hill. Other peaks included in the site are Slieve Felim, Knockstanna, Knockappul, Mother Mountain, Knockteige, Cooneen Hill and Silvermine Mountain. The site is underlain mainly by sandstones of Silurian age. Several important rivers rise within the site, including the Mulkear, Bilboa and Clare. The site consists of a variety of upland habitats, though approximately half is afforested. The coniferous forests include first and second rotation plantations, with both pre-thicket and post-thicket stands present. Substantial areas of clear-fell are also present at any one time. The principal tree species present are Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*). Roughly one-quarter of the site is unplanted blanket bog and heath, with both wet and dry heath present. The bog and heath vegetation includes such typical species as Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Deergrass (*Scirpus spitosus*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). The remainder of the site is mostly rough grassland that is used for hill farming. This varies in composition and includes some wet areas with rushes (*Juncus* spp.) and some areas subject to scrub encroachment. Some stands of deciduous woodland also occur, especially within the river valleys. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier.

**6** Galtee Mountains SAC site (000646) is 42km to the southeast. Situated in southeast Limerick and south Tipperary, the Galtee Mountains are Ireland's highest range of inland mountains. Galtymore has an elevation of 920 m and the main ridge, mostly above 700 m, extends approximately 10 km from east to west. The mountains are derived from folding of Old Red Sandstone and Silurian rocks. Heath is the main vegetation type within the site, with significant amounts of humid grassland and blanket bog occurring also. There is a series of small corrie lakes on the northern side of the mountain range, and the site encompasses the headstreams of numerous tributaries of the River Suir. The cliffs above the corries support arctic-alpine vegetation and the site as a whole supports several notable Irish rarities.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[4010] Wet Heath

[4030] Dry Heath

[4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths

[6230] Species-rich *Nardus* Grassland\*

[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)\*

[8110] Siliceous Scree

[8210] Calcareous Rocky Slopes

[8220] Siliceous Rocky Slopes

**7** Ballyhoura Mountains SAC site (002036) is 39km to the south of Castletroy. The Ballyhoura Mountains straddle the border between counties Limerick and Cork, and are situated about 10 km south of Kilmallock. The portion of the site within Co. Cork side is largely afforested with commercial conifer plantations, while there are still extensive areas in Co. Limerick that remain as open heathland and blanket bog. The site includes the summits of Seefin (528 m) and Carron Mountains (approx. 440 m), and descends to lower altitudes (270 m) at Glenosheen. Of geological interest are the Conglomerate tors, notably on Coolfree Mountain to the south-east, Long Mountain to south and Black Rock to the north centre.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[4010] Wet Heath

[4030] Dry Heath

[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)

**8** The Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA is a very large site centred on the borders between the counties of Cork, Kerry and Limerick. The site is skirted by the towns of Newcastle West, Ballydesmond, Castleisland, Tralee and Abbeyfeale. The mountain peaks included in the site are not notably high or indeed pronounced, the highest being at Knockfeha (451 m). Other mountains included are Mount Eagle, Knockanefune, Garraunbaun, Taur, Rock Hill, Knockacummer, Mullaghmuish, Knight's Mt, Ballincollig Hill, Beennageeha Mt, Sugar Hill, Knockanimpuba and Knockathea, amongst others. Many rivers rise within the site, notably the Blackwater, Owentaraglin, Owenkeal, Glenlara, Feale, Clydagh, Allaghaun, Allow, Oolagh, Galey and Smerlagh. The site consists of a variety of upland habitats, though almost half is afforested. The coniferous forests include first and second rotation plantations, with both pre-thicket and post-thicket stands present. Substantial areas of clear-fell are also present at any one time. The principal tree species present are Sitka Spruce (*Piceasitchensis*) and Lodgepole Pine (*Pinus contorta*). A substantial part (28%) of the site is unplanted blanket bog and heath, with both wet and dry heath present. The vegetation of these habitats is characterised by such species as Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Bilberry (*Vacciniummyrtillus*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Purple Moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). The remainder of the site is mostly rough grassland that is used for hill farming. This varies in composition and includes some wet areas with rushes (*Juncus* spp.) and some areas subject to scrub encroachment. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier. This SPA is a stronghold for Hen Harrier and supports the largest concentration of the species in the country. A survey in 2005 recorded 45 pairs, which represents over 20% of the all-Ireland total.

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

The main way in which ex-situ impacts could be created is through pollution that would affect water quality in the Lower River Shannon SAC site. Since the site is 1km distant from the Mulkear

River, the nearest part of the SAC site, with no hydrological connections, there is no risk of this happening.

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

- **Size and scale**

There are no impacts of the proposed development that will have a direct effect on the Natura 2000 site. The works as outlined above are limited in scale (0.4ha) total site area and will have only localised effects on a heavily modified environment which is an existing playground and open space area. The development site is located 1km from the SAC site and the onsite habitat is intensively managed amenity grassland, a habitat type with limited ecological value because it is intensively managed and is artificially created.

**Land-take**

None no SAC /SPA site lies within the plan boundaries. The vegetation on site is amenity grassland which is subject to intensive management.

- **Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site**

It is 1km from the SAC site- see figure 5 above.

- **Resource requirements (water abstraction etc)**

Nothing in the work programme indicates the need for abstraction of water or any materials from any designated site.

- **Emission (disposal to land, water or air);**

The scale of works is limited so any airborne emissions from the works such as dust plumes would be limited in size. In any event the excavation required for the installation of playground equipment and fencing is more limited than that for conventional developments which would require far more trenching and excavation both for foundations, sub-ground facilities and infrastructure. There is no hydrological links between the proposed development site and the SAC site. Percolation to ground water is unlikely due to the depth of soil on site, while overland flow is not possible due the distance the SAC site.

- **Excavation requirements**

Any excavation which may be permitted under the scope of the works, will take place within the site boundaries which are indicated in Figure 1 above. As indicated above the works will be more limited than that associated with more conventional developments and is 1km from the SAC site with an intervening built up area between. It is considered that the development of the additional play area will not have an effect on the SAC site.

- **Transportation requirements**

It is not considered that any of the transport of materials required for the works will have any effect in terms of encroachment on any designated site as they will be brought to the development site along the established roadways.

- **Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning, etc.**

It is anticipated that the construction phase will take two months and will take place in the summer of 2020, Covid 19 permitting. Operation is likely to be indefinite as the site is zoned for amenity and recreational use in the Castletroy Local Area Plan.

- **Other**

None

**Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of:**

- **Reduction of habitat area**

There will be no loss of designated habitats.

- **Disturbance to key species**

None, due to the 1km distance from the SAC site and the limited nature of the works.

- **Habitat or species fragmentation**

None, due to the 1km distance from the SAC site and the limited nature of the works.

- **Reduction in species density**

It is not considered that any reductions in species density will take place, due to the limited size (0.4ha) size of the proposed works and that it is at a 1km distance from any Natura 2000 site.

- **Changes in key indicators of conservation value**

None, due to the 1km distance from the SAC site and the limited nature of the works.

- **Climate change**

The addition of further play facilities within the boundaries of the Castletroy LAP may reduce the need for parents and children to travel for such facilities as a greater of range of them will now be available locally.

**Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:**

- **Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site**

None, due to the 1km distance from the site and the limited nature of the works.

- **Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site;**

None, due to the 1km distance from the SAC site and the limited nature of the works, which removes the risk of offsite effects. There are no hydrological linkages with the SAC site.

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

- **Loss**

None, due to the 1km distance from the site

- **Fragmentation**

None , due to the 1km distance from the site

- **Disruption**

None , due to the 1km distance from the site

- **Disturbance**

None , due to the 1km distance from the site

- **Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc)**

None , due to the 1km distance from the site

**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 are not known.**

Not applicable, it is not considered that any effects would be significant due to the limited scale of the works and that they are 1km from the site. In terms of nearby current planning permissions three are particularly relevant. The first 19/1236 (87 residential units) is currently on FI part of which requested an NIS. This is requested on the grounds of scale as another application 20/256 (67 residential units) furnished one, which introduced mitigation measures to prevent run off to a boundary stream which links with the SAC site. The third is 19/8001 which is an urban greenway. Unlike the playground project this does run through unimproved grassland. The effects of the other applications are specific to them, both in terms of size and location. The extension to the playground, with its limited size and setting within an existing playground is not likely to contribute to any effects on the Lower River Shannon SAC site.

### 1.3 Finding of No Significant Effects Matrix

<p><b>Name of Project or Plan:</b></p>	<p>The works are an extension to the existing CastletroyPlay ground.The works will comprise the construction of a new Multi Use Games Area (Muga) and increasing the size of the existing playground area including associated site works and provision of drainage and lighting. The works will include preparation of the site to receive the Muga and the installation of a protective perimeter fence to the play area, installation of a range of play and exercise equipment, site furniture and resin bound surfacing. The proposed extension will be approx. 130-150 sqm and the multi use games area will be 25mX13m (325m<sup>2</sup>). Total site area on site the location map (Figure 1) is 0.402ha.</p>
<p><b>Name and location of Natura 2000 sites:</b></p>	<p>1 The Lower River Shannon SAC (002165) site is within 1km. The SAC site has been selected, because of a range of riparian habitats and species such as wet woodlands, tidal mudflats, estuaries and for species such as otter, salmon and lamprey. Maintenance of high water quality is an important factor in ensuring the preservation of these habitats.</p> <p>2 The River Shannon and Fergus SPA (004077) is located 3km away from the Castletroy Playground. The SPA site has been selected, because of its importance for wintering and migratory wild fowl.</p>

	<p>The site comprises of all the estuarine habitat west from Limerick City and it is the mud flats with its invertebrate community, which is of particular importance as a feeding area for migratory wildfowl.</p> <p>3 Askeaton Fen Complex (002279) which is selected for a range of wetland habitats. This is 15km to the south west. In Askeaton Fen Complex SAC a diversity of fen types are represented in a gradation from open water to drier seepage areas. One of the more important fen types, <i>Cladium</i> fen, which contains Great Fen-sedge (<i>Cladium mariscus</i>), occurs in various forms and is the most common fen type within the SAC. It is associated with wet conditions generally not &gt;25 cm deep and can be found in mono-dominant stands growing on a marl base, such as at Feereagh and Mornane Loughs, and in the fen in the townland of Mornane. It can also be co-dominant with Common Reed (<i>Phragmites australis</i>) in slightly drier conditions, such as in Deegerty, Blind Lough and Dromlohan.</p> <p>4 Tory Hill SAC (000439) site is an isolated, wooded limestone hill situated about 2 km north-east of Croom, Co. Limerick. It is 16km south west of Castletroy. It represents an important feature of the surrounding countryside and is a prime example of a limestone hill set amongst a region of volcanic intrusions of differing shape and geology. The hill is of geomorphological interest for the end-moraine, left by retreating ice, on its northern flanks and for ice-marks that are clearly visible on the solid rock. The site includes Lough Nagirra and its associated wetland vegetation, located to the north and north-east of Tory Hill.</p> <p>The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):</p> <p>[6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland*</p> <p>[7210] <i>Cladium</i>Fens*</p> <p>[7230] Alkaline Fens</p>
--	--

	<p>5 The Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA (004165) is an extensive upland site located in Counties Tipperary and Limerick. Much of the site is over 200 m in altitude and rises to 694 m at Keeper Hill. Other peaks included in the site are SlieveFelim, Knockstanna, Knockappul, Mother Mountain, Knockteige, Cooneen Hill and Silvermine Mountain. The site is underlain mainly by sandstones of Silurian age. Several important rivers rise within the site, including the Mulkear, Bilboa and Clare. The site consists of a variety of upland habitats, though approximately half is afforested. The coniferous forests include first and second rotation plantations, with both pre-thicket and post-thicket stands present. Substantial areas of clear-fell are also present at any one time. The principal tree species present are Sitka Spruce (<i>Picea sitchensis</i>) and Lodgepole Pine (<i>Pinus contorta</i>). Roughly one-quarter of the site is unplanted blanket bog and heath, with both wet and dry heath present. The bog and heath vegetation includes such typical species as Ling Heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>), Bilberry (<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>), Bell Heather (<i>Erica cinerea</i>), Common Cottongrass (<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>), Deergrass (<i>Scirpus cespitosus</i>) and Purple Moor-grass (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>). The remainder of the site is mostly rough grassland that is used for hill farming. This varies in composition and includes some wet areas with rushes (<i>Juncus</i> spp.) and some areas subject to scrub encroachment. Some stands of deciduous woodland also occur, especially within the river valleys. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier.</p> <p>6 Galtee Mountains SAC site (000646) is 42km to the southeast. Situated in southeast Limerick and south Tipperary, the Galtee Mountains are Ireland's highest range of inland mountains. Galtymore has an elevation of 920 m and the main ridge, mostly above 700 m, extends approximately 10 km from east to west. The mountains are derived from folding of Old Red Sandstone and Silurian rocks. Heath is the main vegetation type</p>
--	---

	<p>within the site, with significant amounts of humid grassland and blanket bog occurring also. There is a series of small corrie lakes on the northern side of the mountain range, and the site encompasses the headstreams of numerous tributaries of the River Suir. The cliffs above the corries support arctic-alpine vegetation and the site as a whole supports several notable Irish rarities.</p> <p>The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[4010] Wet Heath</li> <li>[4030] Dry Heath</li> <li>[4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths</li> <li>[6230] Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> Grassland*</li> <li>[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)*</li> <li>[8110] Siliceous Scree</li> <li>[8210] Calcareous Rocky Slopes</li> <li>[8220] Siliceous Rocky Slopes</li> </ul> <p>7 Ballyhoura Mountains SAC site (002036) is 39km to the south of Castletroy. The Ballyhoura Mountains straddle the border between counties Limerick and Cork, and are situated about 10 km south of Kilmallock. The portion of the site within Co. Cork side is largely afforested with commercial conifer plantations, while there are still extensive areas in Co. Limerick that remain as open heathland and blanket bog. The site includes the summits of Seefin (528 m) and Carron Mountains (approx. 440 m), and descends to lower altitudes (270 m) at Glenosheen. Of geological interest are the Conglomerate tors, notably on Coolfree Mountain to the south-east, Long Mountain to south and Black Rock to the north centre.</p> <p>The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[4010] Wet Heath</li> <li>[4030] Dry Heath</li> <li>[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)</li> </ul>
--	--

	<p>8 The Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA is a very large site centred on the borders between the counties of Cork, Kerry and Limerick. The site is skirted by the towns of Newcastle West, Ballydesmond, Castleisland, Tralee and Abbeyfeale. The mountain peaks included in the site are not notably high or indeed pronounced, the highest being at Knockfeha (451 m). Other mountains included are Mount Eagle, Knockanefune, Garraunbaun, Taur, Rock Hill, Knockacummer, Mullaghmuish, Knight's Mt, Ballincollig Hill, Beennageeha Mt, Sugar Hill, Knockanimpuba and Knockathea, amongst others. Many rivers rise within the site, notably the Blackwater, Owentaraglin, Owenkeal, Glenlara, Feale, Clydagh, Allaghaun, Allow, Oolagh, Galey and Smerlagh. The site consists of a variety of upland habitats, though almost half is afforested. The coniferous forests include first and second rotation plantations, with both pre-thicket and post-thicket stands present. Substantial areas of clear-fell are also present at any one time. The principal tree species present are Sitka Spruce (<i>Picea sitchensis</i>) and Lodgepole Pine (<i>Pinus contorta</i>). A substantial part (28%) of the site is unplanted blanket bog and heath, with both wet and dry heath present. The vegetation of these habitats is characterised by such species as Ling Heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>), Bilberry (<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>), Common Cottongrass (<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>), Deergrass (<i>Scirpus cespitosus</i>) and Purple Moor-grass (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>). The remainder of the site is mostly rough grassland that is used for hill farming. This varies in composition and includes some wet areas with rushes (<i>Juncus</i> spp.) and some areas subject to scrub encroachment. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier. This SPA is a stronghold for Hen Harrier and supports the largest concentration of the species in the country. A survey in 2005 recorded 45 pairs, which represents over 20% of the all-Ireland total.</p> <p>3 Askeaton Fen Complex (002279) which is selected for a range of wetland habitats. This is</p>
--	--

	<p>15km to the south west. In Askeaton Fen Complex SAC a diversity of fen types are represented in a gradation from open water to drier seepage areas.</p> <p>4 Tory Hill SAC (000439) site is an isolated, wooded limestone hill situated about 2 km north-east of Croom, Co. Limerick. It is 16km south west of Castletroy. It represents an important feature of the surrounding countryside and is a prime example of a limestone hill set amongst a region of volcanic intrusions of differing shape and geology.</p> <p>5 The Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA (004165) is an extensive upland site located in Counties Tipperary and Limerick. Much of the site is over 200 m in altitude and rises to 694 m at Keeper Hill. The site consists of a variety of upland habitats, though approximately half is afforested. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier.</p> <p>6 Galtee Mountains SAC site (000646) is 42km to the southeast. Situated in southeast Limerick and south Tipperary, the Galtee Mountains are Ireland's highest range of inland mountains. Galtymore has an elevation of 920 m and the main ridge, mostly above 700 m, extends approximately 10 km from east to west. The mountains are derived from folding of Old Red Sandstone and Silurian rocks. Heath is the main vegetation type within the site, with significant amounts of humid grassland and blanket bog occurring also. There is a series of small corrie lakes on the northern side of the mountain range, and the site encompasses the headstreams of numerous tributaries of the River Suir. The cliffs above the corries support arctic-alpine vegetation and the site as a whole supports several notable Irish rarities. The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).</p> <p>7 Ballyhoura Mountains SAC site (002036) is 39km to the south of Castletroy. The Ballyhoura Mountains straddle the border between counties Limerick and Cork, and are situated about 10 km south of Kilmallock. The portion of the site within</p>
--	--

	<p>Co. Cork side is largely afforested with commercial conifer plantations, while there are still extensive areas in Co. Limerick that remain as open heathland and blanket bog. The site includes the summits of Seefin (528 m) and Carron Mountains (approx. 440 m), and descends to lower altitudes (270 m) at Glenosheen. Of geological interest are the Conglomerate tors, notably on Coolfree Mountain to the south-east, Long Mountain to south and Black Rock to the north centre. The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC).</p> <p>8 The Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA is a very large site centred on the borders between the counties of Cork, Kerry and Limerick. The site is skirted by the towns of Newcastle West, Ballydesmond, Castleisland, Tralee and Abbeyfeale. The mountain peaks included in the site are not notably high or indeed pronounced, the highest being at Knockfeha (451 m). The site consists of a variety of upland habitats, though almost half is afforested. A substantial part (28%) of the site is unplanted blanket bog and heath, with both wet and dry heath present. The remainder of the site is mostly rough grassland that is used for hill farming. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for Hen Harrier.</p>
<b>Description of the Project or Plan</b>	As given in Screening Matrix above.
<b>Is the Project or Plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)?</b>	No.
<b>Are there other projects or plans that together with the project of plan being assessed could affect the site (provide details)?</b>	No
<b>The Assessment of Significance of Effects</b>	
<b>Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 sites:</b>	Effects are likely to be limited to the works area alone which is 1km away from the Lower River

	Shannon SAC site. The works are an extension to the existing playground.		
<b>Explain why these effects are not considered significant:</b>	The works are 1km from the Lower River Shannon SAC site. The area that is the subject of the works has previously been zoned for amenity purposes and has a history of amenity and playground use.		
<b>List of Agencies Consulted: Provide contact name and telephone or email address:</b>	AA Screening Reports were sent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Placed on Public Display during the part 8 process.</li> </ul>		
<b>Summary of Responses received to date</b>	None received yet		
<b>Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment</b>			
<b>Who carried out the Assessment?</b>	<b>Sources of Data</b>	<b>Level of assessment Completed</b>	<b>Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed</b>
Heritage Officer, Forward Planning Section, Limerick City and County Council.	Existing NPWS. Site Synopses. Site visits during works plan preparation process.	Desktop study, site visits	With works documentation on request.