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Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report



Hillview Park Halting Site, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick



ASH Ecology & Environmental

Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report – Hillview Park Halting Site, Rathkeale, Co. Limerick

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Report

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Assessment was undertaken by Ash Ecology & Environmental Ltd (AEE) on behalf of Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) for the proposed upgrade works at the Hillview Park Halting Site in Rathkeale, Co. Limerick. The works involve the demolition of existing structures, installation of new welfare units, and various construction activities. The site location is shown on Figures 1 and 2. The existing and proposed site layouts are shown as Figure 3.

It provides information on, and assesses the potential for, the proposed development to impact on the Natura 2000 network (hereafter referred to as European sites)¹

An AA is required if significant effects on European sites arising from a proposed development cannot be ruled out at the screening stage, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. It is the responsibility of the competent authority to make a decision as to whether or not the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on European sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

An Environmental Impact (EIA) Screening Report were also compiled as part of this application (AEE, May 2024) and should be read in conjunction with this report.

¹ The Natura 2000 network is a European network of important ecological sites, as defined under Article 3 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, which comprises both special areas of conservation and special protection areas. Special conservation areas are sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I, and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, of the Habitats Directive, and are established under the Habitats Directive itself. Special protection areas are established under Article 4 of the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC for the protection of endangered species of wild birds. The aim of the network is to aid the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

In Ireland these sites are designed as European sites - defined under the Planning Acts and/or the Birds and Habitats Regulations as (a) a candidate site of Community importance, (b) a site of Community importance, (c) a candidate special area of conservation, (d) a special area of conservation, (e) a candidate special protection area, or (f) a special protection area. They are commonly referred to in Ireland as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

1.2 Competency of Assessor

This report has been prepared by Aisling Walsh MCIEEM, AMILP, MSc. who is a Full Member of the CIEEM (the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management). Aisling is the Managing Director of Ash Ecology & Environmental Ltd (AEE) and has over 17 years of experience providing environmental consultancy and environmental assessment services. Ash Ecology a Registered Practice of the CIEEM (see Appendix A for evidence of same).

Her qualifications include a MSc in Biodiversity and Conservation (TCD), B.Sc. (Hons) Zoology (NUIG), B.Sc. Applied Aquatic Science (GMT). She also has a Certificate of Competence in Environmental Noise Measurement from the Institute of Acoustics and is an experienced Hydrologist. Aisling also has extensive experience in compiling Screening for Appropriate Assessment Stage I and Stage II Natura Impact Statements, Environmental Impact Assessments/Statements, Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment, Badger Surveys, Bat Surveys, Habitat Surveys. Aisling is a licensed Bat Ecologist. She has also provided input and reviewed Ecological and Environmental assessments for several EIS and EIAR and conducted numerous Flood Risk Assessments for planning applications. Aisling is a member of Bat Conservation Ireland and an associate member of the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP).

1.3 Project Description

The works consist of the demolition of existing welfare units and the installation of new welfare units. It also includes construction works which include the demolition of existing screen walls, rebuilding screen and boundary walls, extending concrete paving areas, upgrading and modifying foul and surface water networks, installing fencing on the northern boundary walls, installing new asphalt paving area and repairing asphalt paving area on entrance road.

The existing and proposed layout is shown as Figure 3, and the existing and proposed drainage layout for Storm Water and Waste Water are attached as Figure 4. Foul water from the proposed development will connect to the existing foul water network. The Rathkeale WWTP (D0112) is at 'Green' Capacity.² An enquiry lodged will be lodged with Irish Water in relation to the proposed development. It is assumed for the purposes of this report that Irish Water will also confirm that there is capacity to accept the proposed connection to the network (see planning application documents).

A Planning Stage Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be compiled for the main environmental management measures such as noise, dust, water pollution prevention, invasive species control etc.

² <https://www.water.ie/connections/developer-services/capacity-registers/wastewater-treatment-capacity-register/limerick/>

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Based Studies

A desk-based review of information sources was completed. Information contained on the websites of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)³ and the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)⁴ was reviewed. The desktop data sources used to inform the assessment presented in this report are as follows (accessed in May 2024):

- Online data available on European sites and protected habitats/species as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie including conservation objectives documents
- Online data available on protected species as held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) from www.biodiversityireland.ie
- Information on the surface water network and surface water quality in the area available from www.epa.ie
- Information on groundwater resources and groundwater quality in the area available from www.epa.ie and www.gsi.ie
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from www.osi.ie
- Information on the location, nature and design of the proposed development supplied by the applicant's design team
- Limerick County Development Plan 2022-2028

³ The National Parks and Wildlife Services map viewer <http://webgis.npws.ie/npwsviewer/>

⁴ The National Biodiversity Data Centre www.NBDC.ie

2.2 Field-based Studies

Habitats were identified and classified according to Fossitt (2000)⁵ and Smith *et al.* (2011)⁶. A habitat map is shown as Figure 5. Photos of the site are included in Appendix B. The main habitats onsite were:

- Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) – This habitat type applies to the existing halting site areas, including hardstanding surfaces, paths, roads, and structures such as welfare units and walls. These artificial habitats are considered to be of low ecological significance due to their man-made nature and lack of biodiversity.
- Amenity Grassland (GA2) – Within the halting site, there are areas of amenity grassland that were likely established when the site was first developed. These grassy areas are regularly maintained and may be used for recreational purposes or as open spaces between the hardstanding surfaces and structures. Due to the managed nature of amenity grassland and its low species diversity, this habitat is deemed to be of low ecological significance.

2.3 Appropriate Assessment Methodology

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared with regard to the following guidance documents, as relevant:

- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, September 2021)
- OPR Practice Note PN01. Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021)
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities.(Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision)
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10
- Assessment of Plans and Projects in Relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2021)
- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle (European Commission, 2000), and
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2019)

The above referenced guidance sets out a staged process for carrying out Appropriate Assessment. To determine if an Appropriate Assessment is required, documented screening is required. Screening identifies the potential for effects on the conservation objectives of European sites, if any, which would arise from a

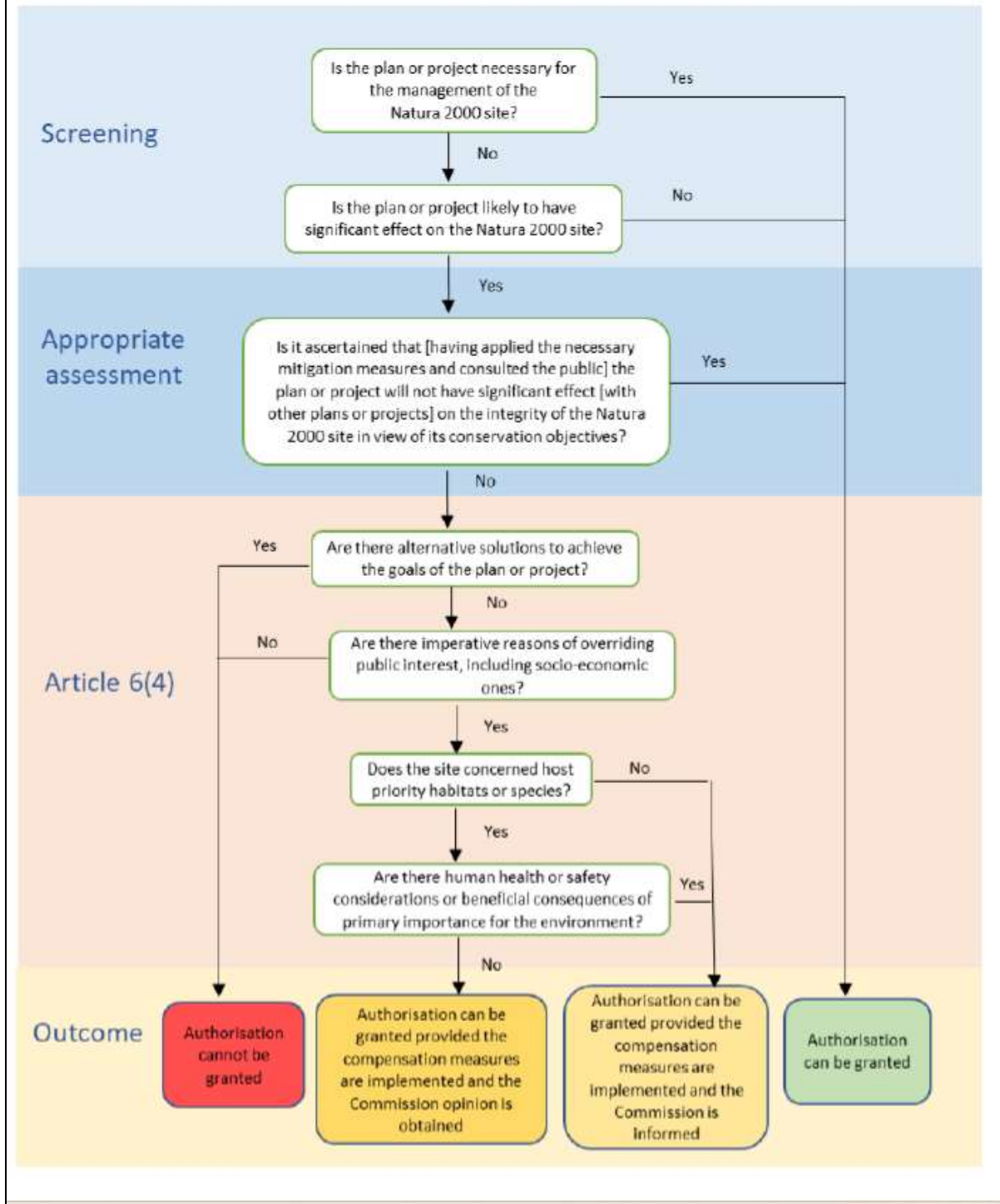
⁵ Fossitt, J. (2000). *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

⁶ Smith, G.F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hora, K. and Delaney, E. (2011) Best practice guidance for habitat survey and mapping. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

proposed plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects (i.e. likely significant effects). Significant effects on a European site are those that would undermine the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the Qualifying Interest (QI) habitats and/or the QI/Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species of a European site(s). Screening for Appropriate Assessment involves the following steps:⁷

⁷ Figure 1 of Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, September 2021)

Figure 1. Assessing plans and projects in relation to the Natura 2000 sites; three stages of the Article 6(3) and (4) procedure



If the conclusions at the end of screening are that there is no likelihood of significant effects occurring on any European sites as a result of the proposed plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, then there is no requirement to undertake an Appropriate Assessment.

2.4 Source-Pathway-Receptor Approach

In establishing which European sites are potentially at risk (in the absence of mitigation) from the proposed development, a source-pathway-receptor approach was applied. In order for an impact to occur, there must be a risk enabled by having a source (e.g. water abstraction or construction works), a receptor (e.g. a European site or its QI(s) or SCI(s)⁸), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. pathway by air for airborne pollution, or a pathway by a watercourse for mobilisation of pollution). For an impact to occur, all three elements must exist; the absence or removal of one of the elements means there is no possibility for the impact to occur. The identification of source-pathway-receptor connection(s) between the proposed development and European sites essentially is the process of identifying which European sites are within the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the proposed development, and therefore potentially at risk of significant effects. The Zoi is the area over which the proposed development could affect the receiving environment such that it could potentially have significant effects on the QI habitats or QI/SCI species of a European site, or on the achievement of their conservation objectives⁹.

The identification of a source-pathway-receptor link does not automatically mean that significant effects will arise. The likelihood for significant effects will depend upon the characteristics of the source (e.g. extent and duration of construction works), the characteristics of the pathway (e.g. direction and strength of prevailing winds for airborne pollution) and the characteristics of the receptor (e.g. the sensitivities of the European site and its QIs/SCIs). The 'likely significant effects' test is based on the precautionary principle¹⁰. The precautionary principle means that, based on the most reliable available information, where there is uncertainty or doubt as to the absence of significant effects, the project cannot be screened out and an appropriate assessment must be carried out.

⁸ The term qualifying interest is used when referring to the habitats or species for which an SAC is designated; the term special conservation interest is used when referring to the bird species (or wetland habitats) for which an SPA is designated.

⁹ As defined in the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018)

¹⁰ The precautionary principle is a guiding principle that derives from Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and has been developed in the case law of the European Court of Justice (e.g. ECJ case C-127/02 – Waddenzee, Netherlands). The guidance document Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle (European Commission, 2000) notes that the precautionary principle “covers those specific circumstances where scientific evidence is insufficient, inconclusive or uncertain and there are indications through preliminary objective scientific evaluation that there are reasonable grounds for concern that the potentially dangerous effects on the environment, human, animal or plant health may be inconsistent with the chosen level of protection”.

3.0 Provision of Information for Screening for Appropriate Assessment

The following sections provide information to facilitate the Appropriate Assessment screening of the proposed development to be undertaken by the competent authority. A description of the proposed development and the receiving environment is provided to identify the potential ecological impacts. The environmental baseline conditions are discussed, as relevant to the assessment of ecological impacts where they may highlight potential pathways for impacts associated with the proposed development to affect the receiving ecological environment (e.g. hydrogeological and hydrological data). The potential impacts are examined in order to define the potential zone of influence of the proposed development on the receiving environment. This then informs the assessment of whether the proposed development will result in significant effects on any European sites; i.e. affect the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the European site's QIs or SCIs.

3.1 Overview of the Receiving Environment

In accordance with the European Commission Methodological Guidance (EC2001), a list of Natura 2000 Sites that can be potentially affected by the proposed works has been compiled. Adopting the precautionary principle in identifying these sites, it has been decided to include all SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) and SPAs (Special Protection Areas) within a 15km radius of the site at Hillview Park Halting Site in Rathkeale, Co. Limerick.

There are four designations which may be applied to areas deemed to require specific ecological protection in Ireland:

1) *Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)*

These are sites that have been identified to be of conservation importance in a European context, based on the habitats and species; both plant and animal; that they support. The Directive has a number of Annexes. Habitats listed on Annex I are those habitat types of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation. Some of these are known as priority habitats for which there is a particular obligation for protection. Animal and plant species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation are listed on Annex II of the Directive.

All SACs are also proposed Natural Heritage Areas. There is a list of Notifiable Actions which apply to each annexed habitat and species. These are activities for which consent must be sought from the Minister of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht within SACs. SACs are protected under the Habitats Directive of 1992 (EU Directive 92/43/EEC) and the Natural Habitats Regulations of 1997 (S.I.94/97).

2) *Special Protection Areas (SPAs)*

These are sites of European importance that have been identified as being of conservation importance on account of the bird species and populations they

support. The Directive requires all member states to take measures to protect all wild birds and to preserve a sufficient diversity of habitats for all species naturally occurring within their territories, so as to maintain populations. Species whose status is a cause for concern are specifically identified for special conservation measures in Annex I of the Directive, and SPAs have been designated based on either the presence of these species or the presence of significant numbers of wintering waterfowl.

All SPAs are also proposed Natural Heritage Areas. SPAs are protected under the Birds Directive of 1979 (EU Directive 79/409/EEC) and the Natural Habitats Regulations of 1997 (S.I.94/97).

3) And 4) Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) & Proposed NHA (pNHA)

These were derived from the older Areas of Scientific Interest (ASIs) and include the best remaining areas of Ireland's natural and semi-natural habitats. Sites may have been selected by virtue of having special scientific significance for one or more species, communities, habitats, landforms, or geological or geomorphological features, or for a diversity of natural attributes.

Depending on their quality and importance, NHAs may carry other designations including SAC, SPA, Statutory Nature Reserve or National Park. Under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000), NHAs are legally protected from damage from the date they are formally proposed for designation. Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) were published on a non-statutory basis in 1995 and have not since been statutorily proposed or designated.

The proposed works do not occur within any European Site or NHA/pNHA. The protected sites within 15km of the proposed works are listed in Table 1. A map showing the 4 SAC and 2 SPA sites within a 15km radius of the site are shown as Figures 6 and 7. The 2 pNHA sites within 5km, and are shown as Figure 8. There are no full status NHA sites within 5km.

Table 1 Designated Natura 2000 Sites within 15km Radius of Site, also pNHA sites within 5km Radius of Site

Code	Site Name	Approx. Distance (as the crow flies)	Screening Conclusion	
SAC Sites (within 15km)				
1	002279	Askeaton Fen Complex SAC	3.5km N, NE	These 4 SAC sites are Screened out as they are outside the Zone of Influence. There are no hydrological impact to these sites and also the distance >3.5km is sufficient for there to be no disturbance impacts to the conservation interests of any SAC sites due to works.
2	000174	Curraghchase Woods SAC	7km NE	
3	000432	Barrigone SAC	9.9km NW	
4	002165	Lower River Shannon SAC	10.4km NW, N, NE	
SPA Sites (within 15km)				
1	004077	River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	9km N, NE, NW	Sites Screened out as disturbance and displacement for bird species as a result of construction related disturbance at the applicant site is deemed too far from the SPA. For birds, disturbance effects would not be expected to extend beyond a distance of c.300m ¹¹ , as noise levels associated with general construction activities would attenuate to close to background levels. The site of the proposed works is located >9km to the boundary SPA sites making it outside the Zone of Influence. There is no direct hydrological impact to these sites. The habitat type of the applicant site is not deemed suitable for bird species within these SPA sites.
2	004161	Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA	10.1km W, SW	
pNHA Sites (within 5km) – No NHA Sites				
1	001425	Ballymorrisheen Marsh pNHA	3.5km N	These 2 pNHA sites are Screened out as they are outside the Zone of Influence. There are no hydrological impact to these sites and also the distance >3.5km is sufficient for there to be no disturbance impacts to the conservation interests of any pNHA sites due to works.
2	001429	Cappagh Fen pNHA	3.8km NE	

¹¹ The disturbance zone of influence for waterbirds is based on the relationship between the noise levels generated by general construction traffic/works (BS 5228:2009 Code of Practice for Noise and Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites – Part 1 Noise) and the proximity of those noise levels to birds – as assessed in Cutts, N. Phelps, A. & Burdon, D. (2009) Construction and Waterfowl: Defining Sensitivity, Response, Impacts and Guidance, and Wright, M., Goodman, P & Cameron, T. (2010) Exploring Behavioural Responses of Shorebirds to Impulsive Noise. Wildfowl (2010) 60: 150–167. At 300m, noise levels are below 60dB or, in most cases, are approaching the 50dB threshold below which no disturbance or displacement effects would arise.

4.0 Screening Assessment of Likely Effects

Although the proposed development does not overlap with any European Site, and all European Sites are located more than 3.5km from the application site, potential impacts were still examined in detail to ensure a comprehensive assessment.

The potential for significant impacts resulting from the proposed works were determined based on a range of indicators, including:

- Habitat loss or alteration;
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species;
- Habitat/species fragmentation;
- Changes in population density;
- Changes in water quality;
- Climate Change impacts.

4.1 Habitat Loss/Alteration

The proposed works will not result in any direct habitat loss within the boundaries of the European sites, Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), or proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) listed in Table 1. The project site is located within an existing halting site and does not overlap with any of these protected areas.

Moreover, the distance of 3.5km between the project site and the nearest European or pNHA site is considered sufficient to avoid any indirect impacts on the habitats within these protected areas. This distance ensures that the proposed works will not alter the drainage regime or cause any other significant changes to the habitat conditions of the European or pNHA sites.

To further enhance the ecological value of the project site, it is recommended that a landscape plan be devised as part of the final proposed layout. This landscape plan should aim to promote a net gain for biodiversity by incorporating native plant species, creating wildlife-friendly features, and ensuring that the final design complements the surrounding natural environment.

In conclusion, given the absence of direct habitat loss, the sufficient distance from protected areas, and the recommendation to implement a biodiversity-focused landscape plan, the impacts of habitat loss/alteration on any European or pNHA sites can be screened out as a potential consequence of the proposed development.

4.2 Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species

Disturbance and displacement of fauna species can potentially occur within the vicinity of the proposed works due to construction-related activities. However, the extent of such disturbance is limited and depends on the species in question.

For mammal species such as otter and badger, disturbance effects are not expected to extend beyond 150m¹². This distance is consistent with the precautionary approach outlined in the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) guidance documents, "Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes" and "Guidelines for the Treatment of Badgers prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes." It is important to note that this is a conservative estimate, and the actual Zone of Influence (Zoi) of construction-related disturbance is likely to be much smaller in reality due to the screening effect provided by surrounding vegetation and buildings.

In the case of birds, disturbance effects are not expected to extend beyond a distance of approximately 300m, as noise levels associated with general construction activities tend to attenuate to close to background levels at this distance.

Given that the proposed works are located over 3.5km from the closest European Site, any mammal and bird species associated with these protected areas will not be affected by disturbance or displacement due to the construction activities.

Therefore, considering the distance between the project site and the nearest European Sites, as well as the limited extent of disturbance effects for mammals and birds, it can be concluded that disturbance and/or displacement of species of European or pNHA sites can be screened out as a potential impact of the proposed development.

4.3 Habitat /Species Fragmentation

"Habitat fragmentation is defined as the 'reduction and isolation of patches of natural environment'¹³ typically caused by external disturbances that alter the spatial composition of a habitat. This process creates isolated or tenuously connected patches of the original habitat, resulting in spatial separation of habitat units that were previously in a state of greater continuity.

In the context of the proposed development, it is highly unlikely that the project will cause habitat or species fragmentation in any European or pNHA sites. This conclusion is based on the following reasons:

- Distance: The nearest European Site is located 3.5km away from the project site. This considerable distance reduces the likelihood of any direct or indirect impacts on the habitats or species within the protected areas.
- Nature of the works: The proposed works are limited to the existing halting site and do not involve the expansion of the site into surrounding natural habitats. The works primarily involve demolition, installation of new welfare units, and construction activities within the existing site boundaries.

¹² This is consistent with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) guidance (Guidelines for the Treatment of Otters prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes and Guidelines for the Treatment of Badgers prior to the Construction of National Road Schemes) documents. This is a precautionary distance, and likely to be moderated by the screening effect provided by surrounding vegetation and buildings, with the actual Zoi of construction related disturbance likely to be much less in reality.

¹³ Franklin, A. N. (2002). What is Habitat Fragmentation? *Studies in Avian Biology*, 20-29.

- Absence of ecological corridors: There are no identified ecological corridors or linkages between the project site and the nearby European or pNHA sites that could be disrupted by the proposed works.

Therefore, based on the distance, nature of the works, and absence of ecological corridors, it is considered that habitat or species fragmentation of European or pNHA sites can be screened out as a potential impact of the proposed development.

4.4 Changes in Population Density

The proposed works are not expected to cause any significant changes in the population density of the qualifying species of any European or proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) sites. This conclusion is based on the following factors:

- Distance: The nearest European Site is located 3.5km away from the project site, which significantly reduces the potential for direct or indirect impacts on the population density of qualifying species within the protected areas.
- Limited scope of works: The proposed works are confined to the existing halting site and do not involve any expansion into the surrounding natural habitats. The works primarily consist of demolition, installation of new welfare units, and construction activities within the existing site boundaries. These activities are unlikely to have any significant impact on the population density of species in distant protected sites.
- No direct impacts on habitats or species: The project site does not contain any habitats or species that are listed as qualifying interests for the nearby European or pNHA sites. Therefore, the proposed works will not directly impact the population density of any qualifying species.
- Absence of ecological connectivity: There are no identified ecological corridors or linkages between the project site and the nearby European or pNHA sites that could facilitate the transfer of impacts on population density.

In light of these factors, it is concluded that the proposed works at the Hillview Park Halting Site will not cause any reduction in the baseline population of any qualifying species of any European or pNHA site. Therefore, changes in population density can be screened out as a potential impact of the proposed development.

4.5 Changes in Water Quality

The hydrology of the area surrounding the Hillview Park Halting Site in Rathkeale is shown on Figure 9. The site is located within Hydrometric Area '24 – 'Shannon Estuary South' and spans two distinct catchments:

- The site lies between two WFD Sub-Catchments - 'Deel[Newcastlewest]_SC_050' & 'Deel[Newcastlewest]_SC_030'
- It is situated between two WFD River Sub-Basins - 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_120' & 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_140'
- The 2016-2021 WFD River Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_120' is 'Moderate'
- The 2016-2021 WFD River Risk Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_120' is 'At Risk'
- The 2016-2021 WFD River Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_140' is 'Poor'

- The 2016-2021 WFD River Risk Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_140' is 'At Risk'
- The 2016-2021 WFD Groundwater Body Status of 'Newcastle West' is 'Good'
- The 2016-2021 WFD Groundwater Body Risk Status of 'Newcastle West' is 'Not at Risk'

During the construction phase of the proposed works, there is a potential risk to water quality due to silt and harmful substances becoming entrained in surface water run-off. However, this risk is ruled out for the Hillview Park Halting Site, as there are no watercourses or drains present on the site itself. Furthermore, there are no direct pathways from the site to the nearby Rathkeale, Deel, or Knockaunavad Rivers that could lead to water pollution during the construction phase.

To further mitigate any potential risks, best practice guidelines will be implemented through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This plan will outline measures to prevent water pollution and ensure that the construction activities do not adversely impact the surrounding water bodies.

During the operational phase, foul water from the site will be directed to the public mains and not discharged into any watercourses. The current capacity status of the Rathkeale Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is 'Green,' indicating that there is sufficient capacity to handle the additional wastewater from the proposed development without causing any impacts.

Considering the absence of direct pathways to watercourses, the implementation of best practice guidelines through the CEMP, and the sufficient capacity of the Rathkeale WWTP, the overall negative impacts on ground and surface water quality resulting from the proposed works at the Hillview Park Halting Site can be screened out for all European Sites and pNHA sites.

4.6 Climate Change Impacts

The proposed works at the Hillview Park Halting Site in Rathkeale are not expected to contribute significantly to climate change or result in any substantial greenhouse gas emissions during the operational phase. The nature of the development, which primarily involves the demolition of existing welfare units, installation of new welfare units, and associated construction works, does not entail any ongoing activities that would generate significant greenhouse gas emissions once the project is completed.

During the construction phase, there will be a temporary increase in greenhouse gas emissions due to the use of construction machinery, vehicles, and equipment. However, these emissions will be localised and short-lived, occurring only for the duration of the construction activities. Given the small scale of the proposed works, the temporary increase in emissions is determined to be negligible in the context of global climate change.

Furthermore, the proposed works do not involve any large-scale land-use changes, such as deforestation or significant alteration of carbon sinks, which could contribute to climate change impacts on a wider scale.

Considering the negligible greenhouse gas emissions during the operational phase, the small scale and temporary nature of the construction works, and the absence of significant land-use changes, the overall negative climate change impacts resulting from the proposed works can be screened out for all European Sites and pNHA sites.

5.0 In Combination Effects of Plans & Projects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires an assessment of a plan or project to consider other plans or programmes that might, in combination with the plan or project, have the potential to adversely impact European sites.

In the case of the proposed works at the Hillview Park Halting Site in Rathkeale, it is important to consider the potential for in-combination effects with other projects or plans in the surrounding area.

Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) subjects other projects requiring planning permission to their own Screening for Appropriate Assessment. The results of these assessments must satisfy the competent authority in each case, ensuring that potential impacts on European sites are adequately addressed. Furthermore, LCCC assesses smaller planning applications that require Screening for Appropriate Assessment on an individual basis and requests further information as necessary, depending on the scale and location of the development.

The impacts of the proposed works at the Hillview Park Halting Site on the European sites and pNHA sites listed in Table 1 have been determined to fall beyond the Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the project. This means that the potential effects of the proposed works are not expected to extend far enough to interact with or contribute to the impacts of other plans or projects on these protected areas.

Furthermore, given the confined area of the works and the lack of direct connections to any Natura 2000 sites, there is no potential for any other plans or projects to act in combination with the proposed works in a way that would adversely affect the integrity of any other European sites.

In conclusion, based on the limited scale and scope of the proposed works, the absence of direct connections to Natura 2000 sites, and the individual assessment of other plans and projects by LCCC, it can be determined that there are no significant in-combination effects likely to arise from the proposed development at the Hillview Park Halting Site that would adversely impact the integrity of any European sites or pNHA sites.

6.0 Screening Statement Conclusions

According to NPWS (2009), the Appropriate Assessment Screening exercise can either identify that an Appropriate Assessment is not required; or that there is no potential for significant effects (i.e. Appropriate Assessment is not required); or that significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain (i.e. the project must either proceed to Stage 2 (AA) or be rejected). European Sites within a 15km radius (and

NHA/pNHA Sites within 5km) were assessed for impacts from the proposed works and all impacts were screened out.

In conclusion, upon the examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information including, in particular, the nature of the proposed works and the likelihood of significant effects on any Natura 2000 site, in addition to considering possible in-combination effects, and applying the precautionary principles, it is concluded by the author of this report that, on the basis of objective information, the possibility may be excluded that the proposed works will have a significant effect on any of the European sites below:

- Askeaton Fen Complex SAC
- Curraghchase Woods SAC
- Barrigone SAC
- Lower River Shannon SAC
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA
- Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA

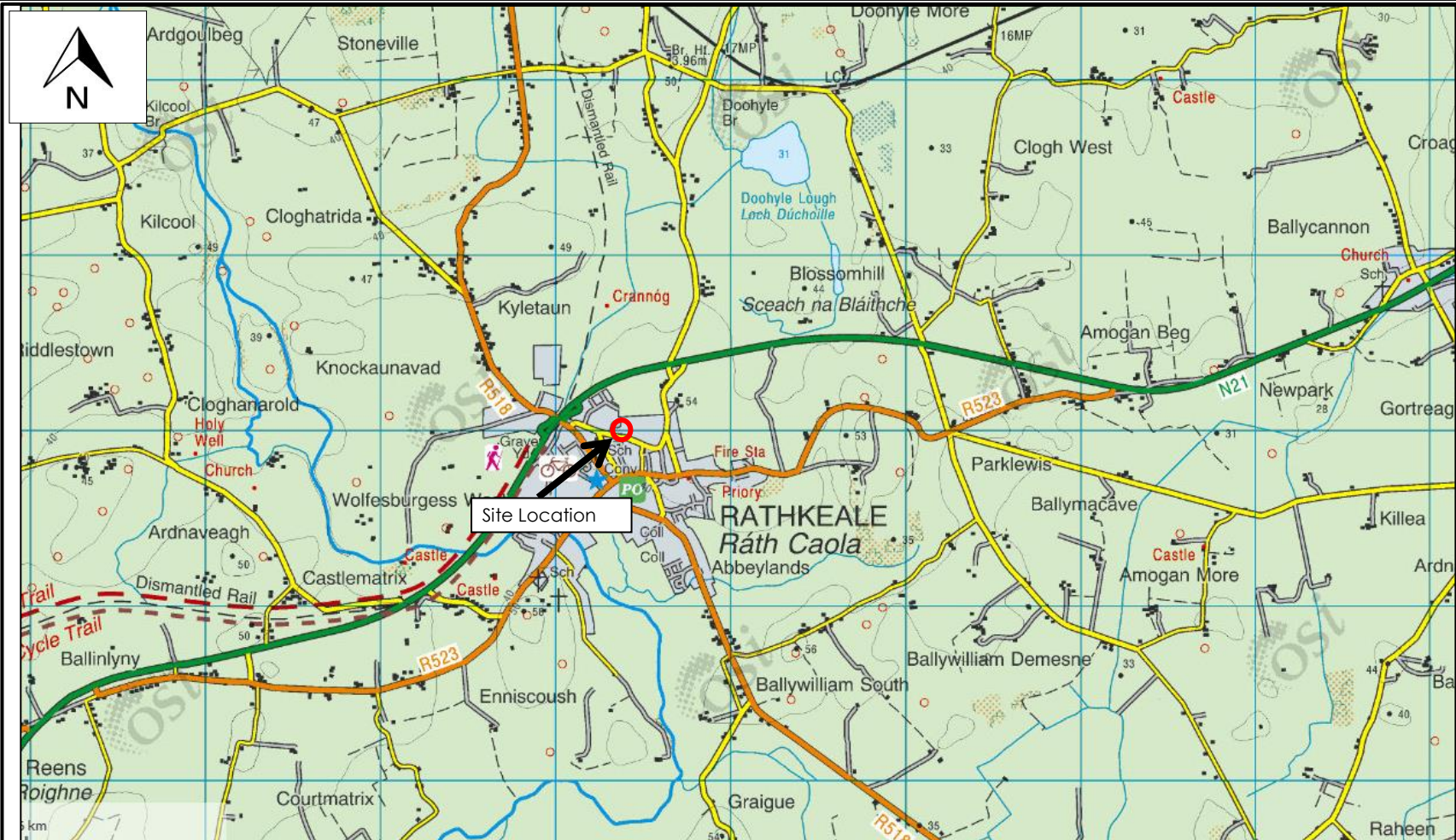
It is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will not have a significant effect on any European Site as a result of the proposed works. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is not required.

7.0 Biodiversity Enhancement

There is scope for a long-term, positive impact if more trees and scrubs are planted using native Irish tree and shrub species - see Appendix C for a list that LCCC should choose from to increase biodiversity. A wild flower meadow as a section of the site would also benefit wildlife. There is a list of suggested species for pollinator friendly planting and wildflower meadows in Appendix C.

Bat and bird boxes would enhance the site for roosting bats and nesting birds during the operational phase, advice is attached as Appendix C. Bat and bird boxes should be placed initially on suitable poles as there is a lack of on existing mature trees onsite, at heights over 3.5m, and not illuminated.

FIGURES

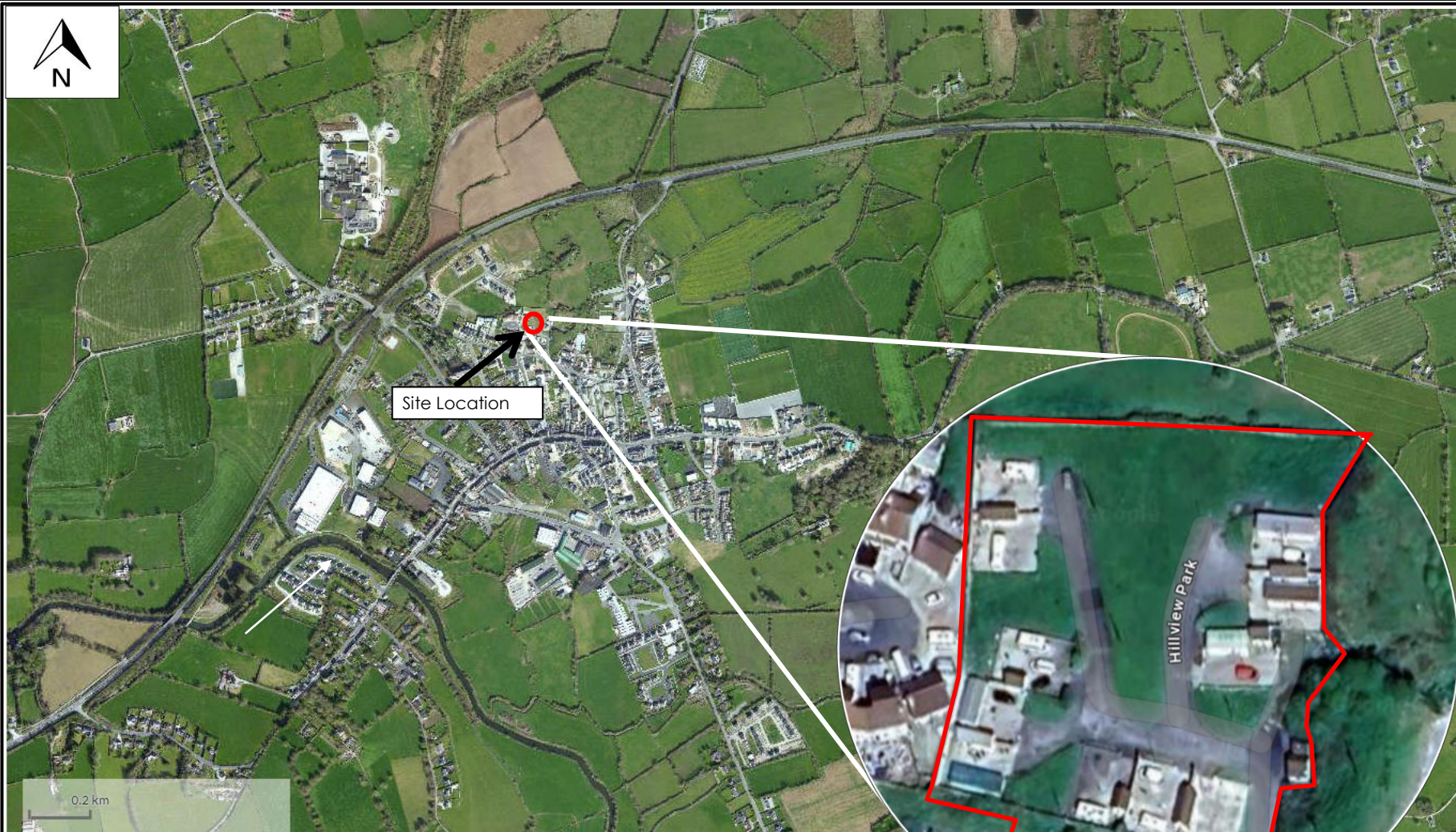


Map sourced from National Biodiversity Data Centre Website – www.nbdc.ie



© Ordnance Survey Ireland 10km2 R34

Client LCCC		Drawing Site location map				
Job AA Screening Report						
Drawing Number Figure 1	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date May 24	Drawn AW	



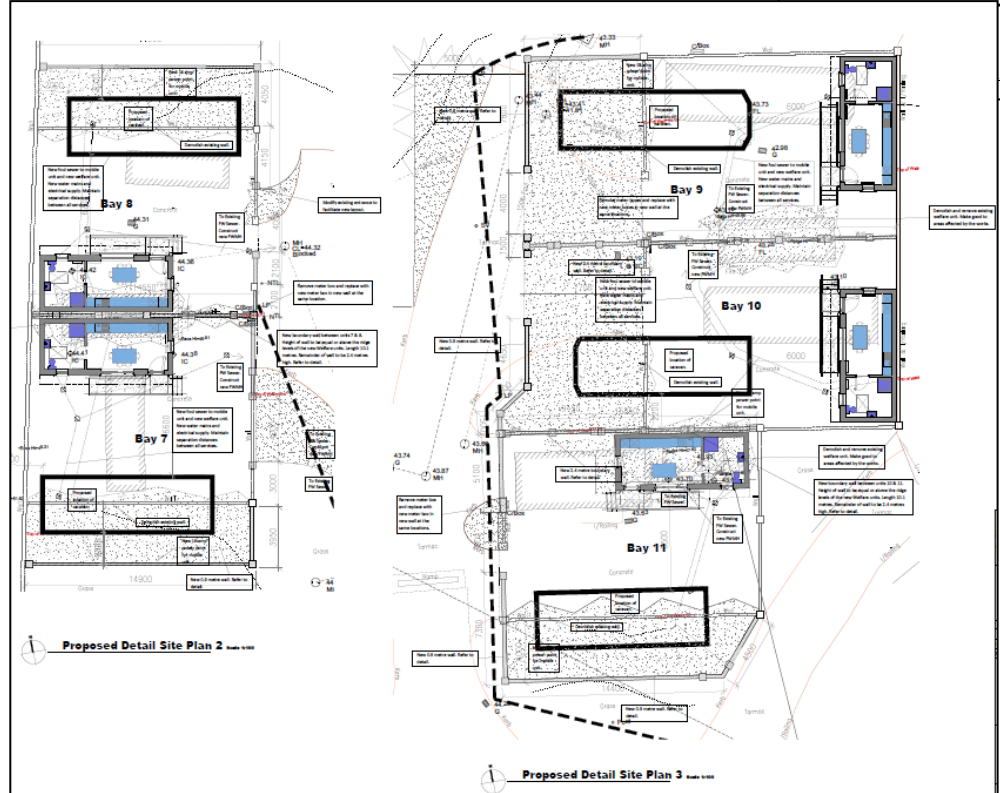
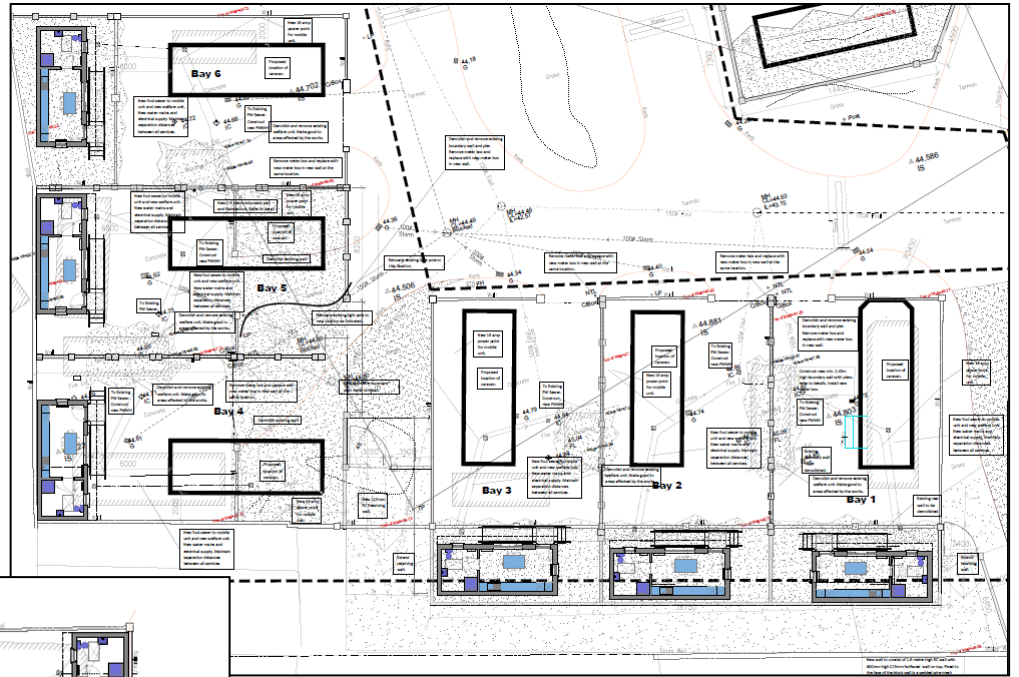
Site Location

Hillview Park

0.2 km

— Approx. Site Location

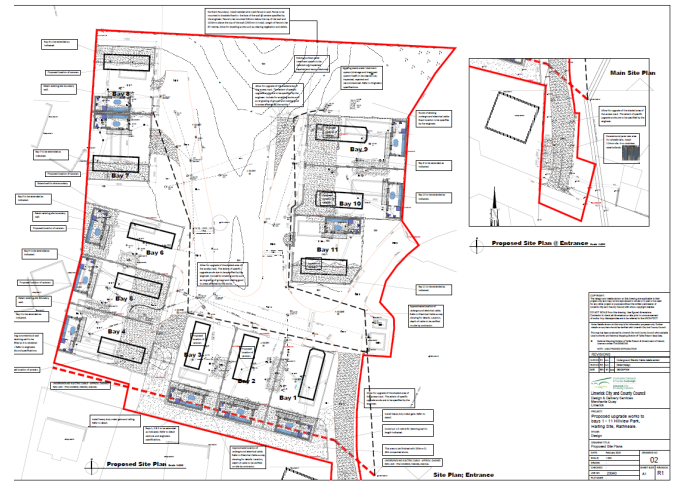
Client		LCCC		Drawing			
Job		AA Screening Report		Aerial Imagery and Surrounding Habitats			
Drawing Number	Status	Sht. Size	Scale	Date	Drawn		
Figure 2	Final	A4	As Shown	May 24	AW		



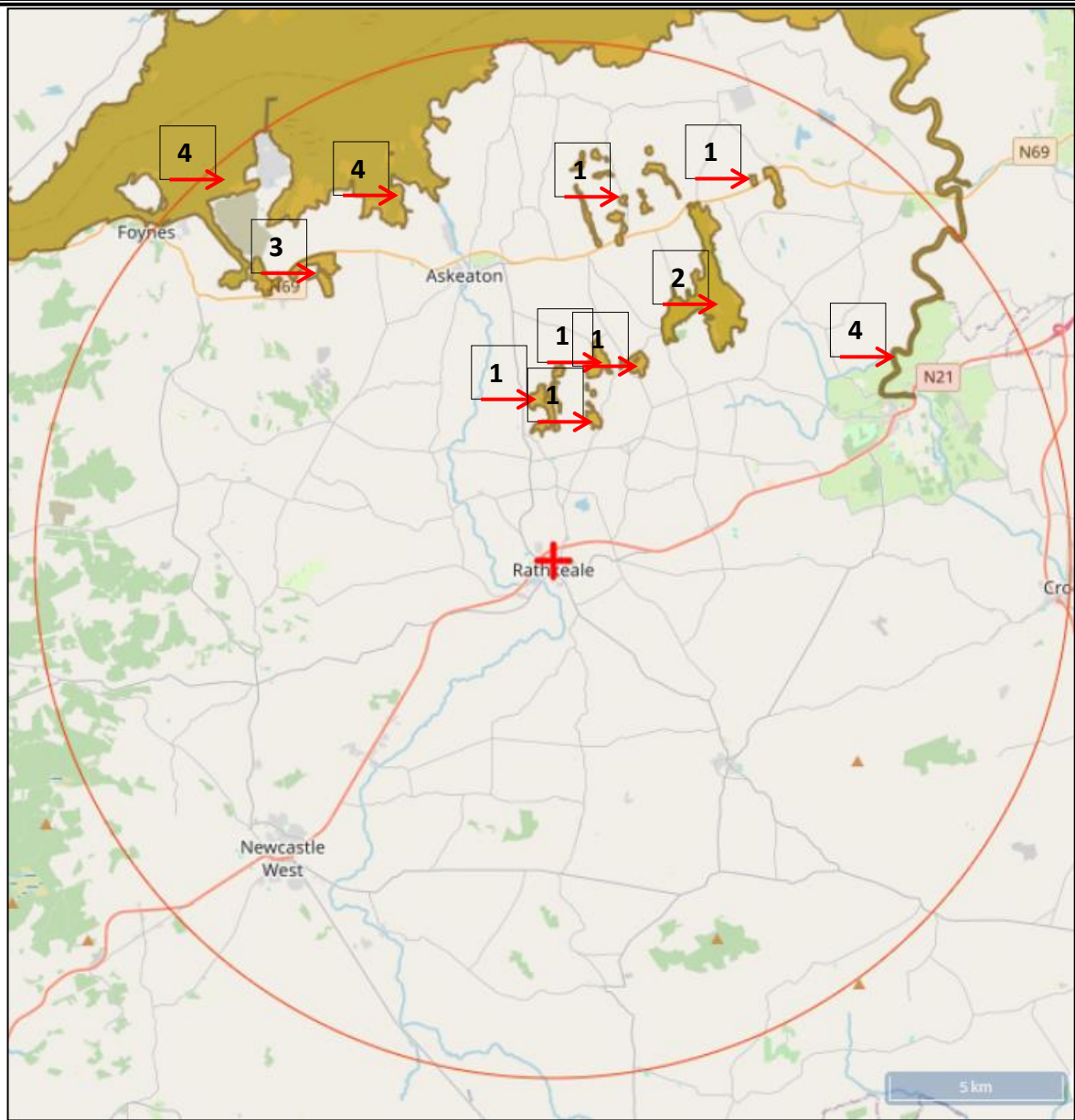
Client LCCC		Drawing Existing and Proposed Drainage Layouts				
Job AA Screening Report						
Drawing Number Figure 4	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date May 24	Drawn AW	






- Approx. Site Boundary
- Amenity Grassland (GA2)
- Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) – Paths, roads and houses



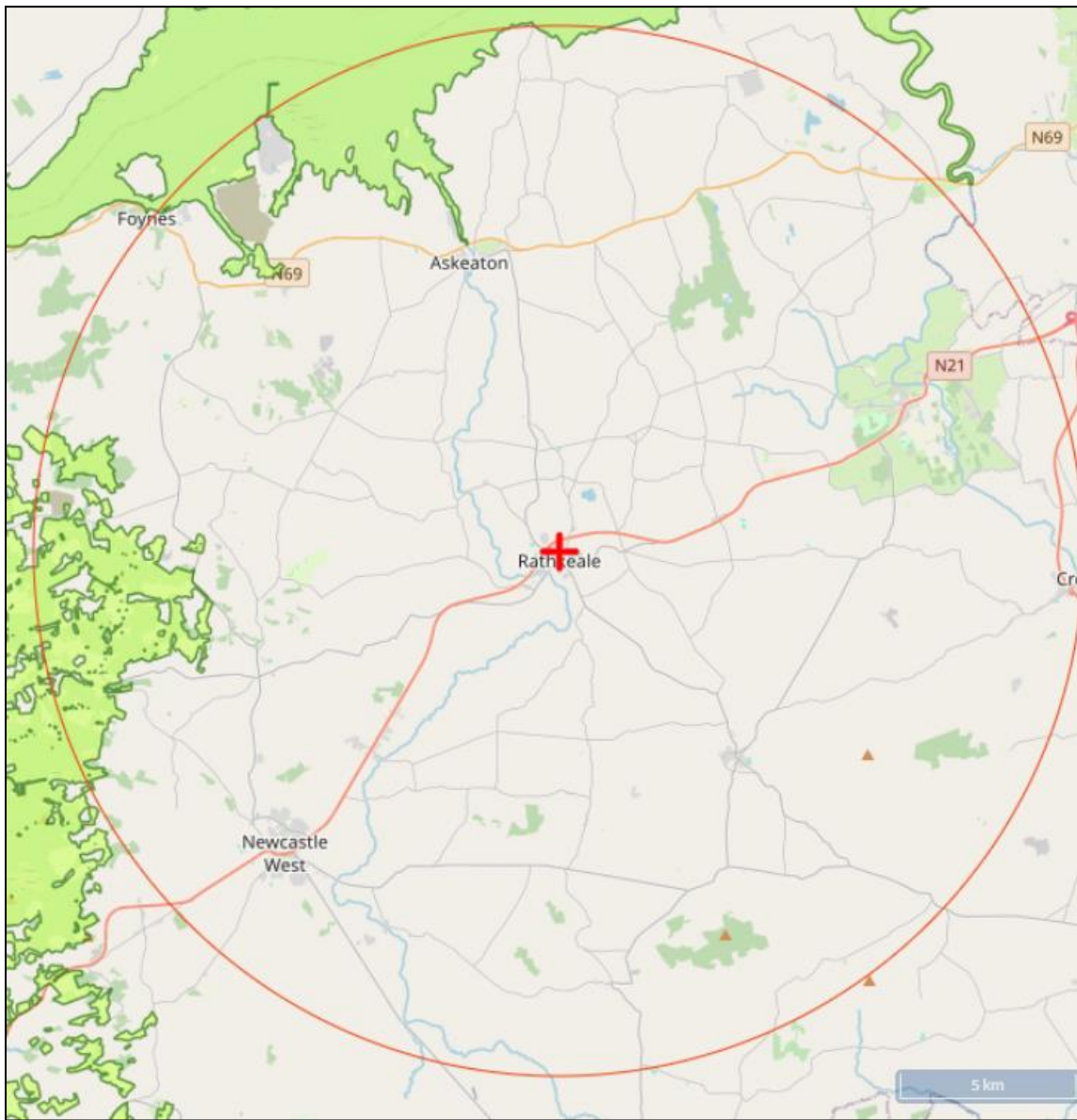
Client LCCC		Drawing Habitat Map			
Job AA Screening Report					
Drawing Number Figure 5	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date May 24	Drawn AW



No.	Site Code	Name	Distance
1	002279	Askeaton Complex SAC	Fen 3.5km N, NE
2	000174	Curraghchase Woods SAC	7km NE
3	000432	Barrigone SAC	9.9km NW
4	002165	Lower Shannon SAC	River 10.4km NW, N, NE

 **Special Area of Conservation**
 **Site Location**
 **N**

Client LCCC		Drawing			
Job AA Screening Report		Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) within 15km of Site			
Drawing Number Figure 6	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date May 24	Drawn AW



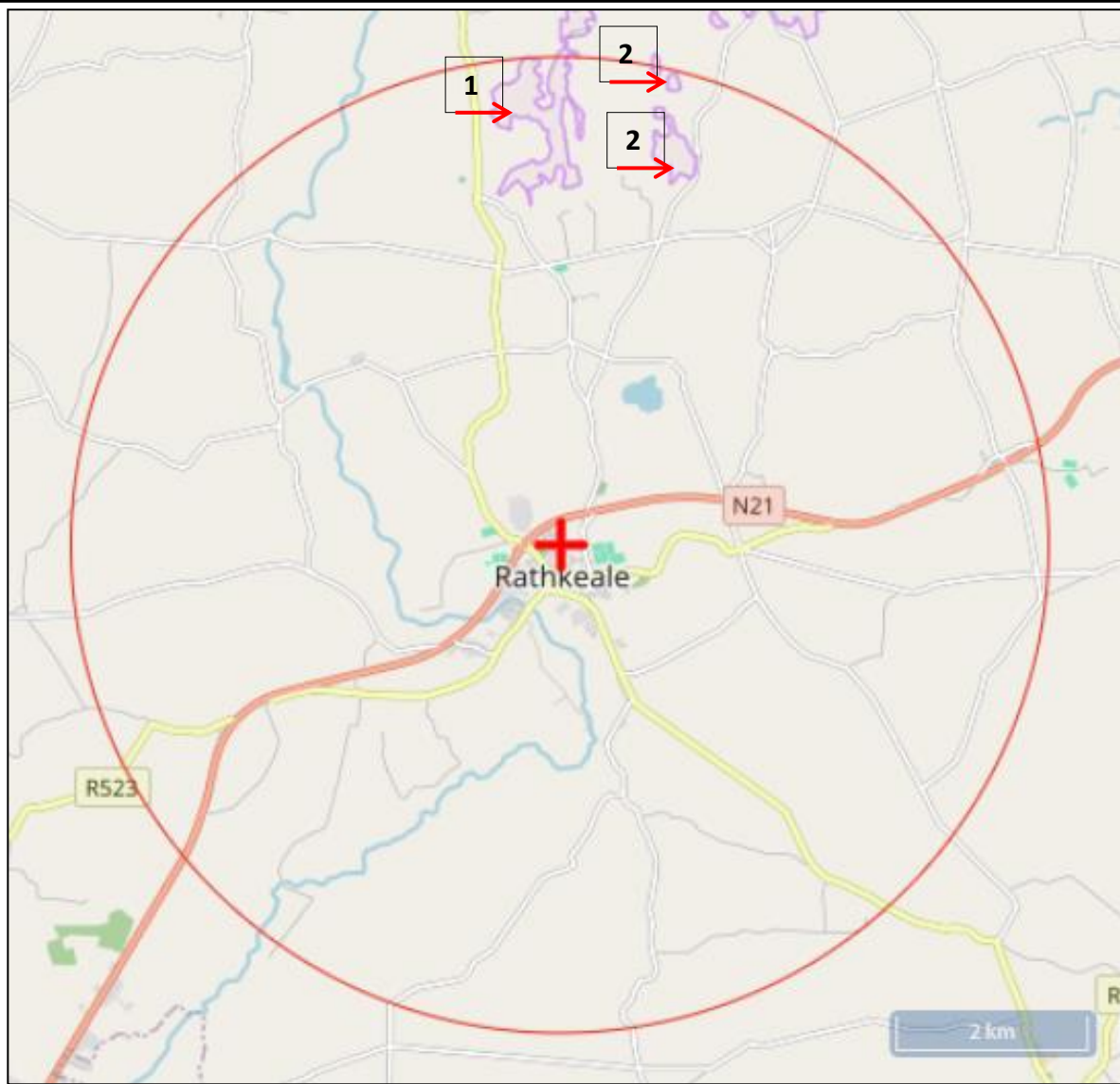
No.	Site Code	Name	Distance (km)
1	004077	River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA	9km N, NE, NW
2	004161	Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA	10.1km W, SW

 **Special Protection Area**

 **Site Location**



Client LCCC		Drawing				
Job AA Screening Report		Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within 15km of Site				
Drawing Number Figure 7	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date May 24	Drawn AW	



No.	Site Code	Name	Distance (km)
1	001425	Ballymorrisheen Marsh pNHA	3.5km N
2	001429	Cappagh Fen pNHA	3.8km NE



Proposed National Heritage Area (pNHA)

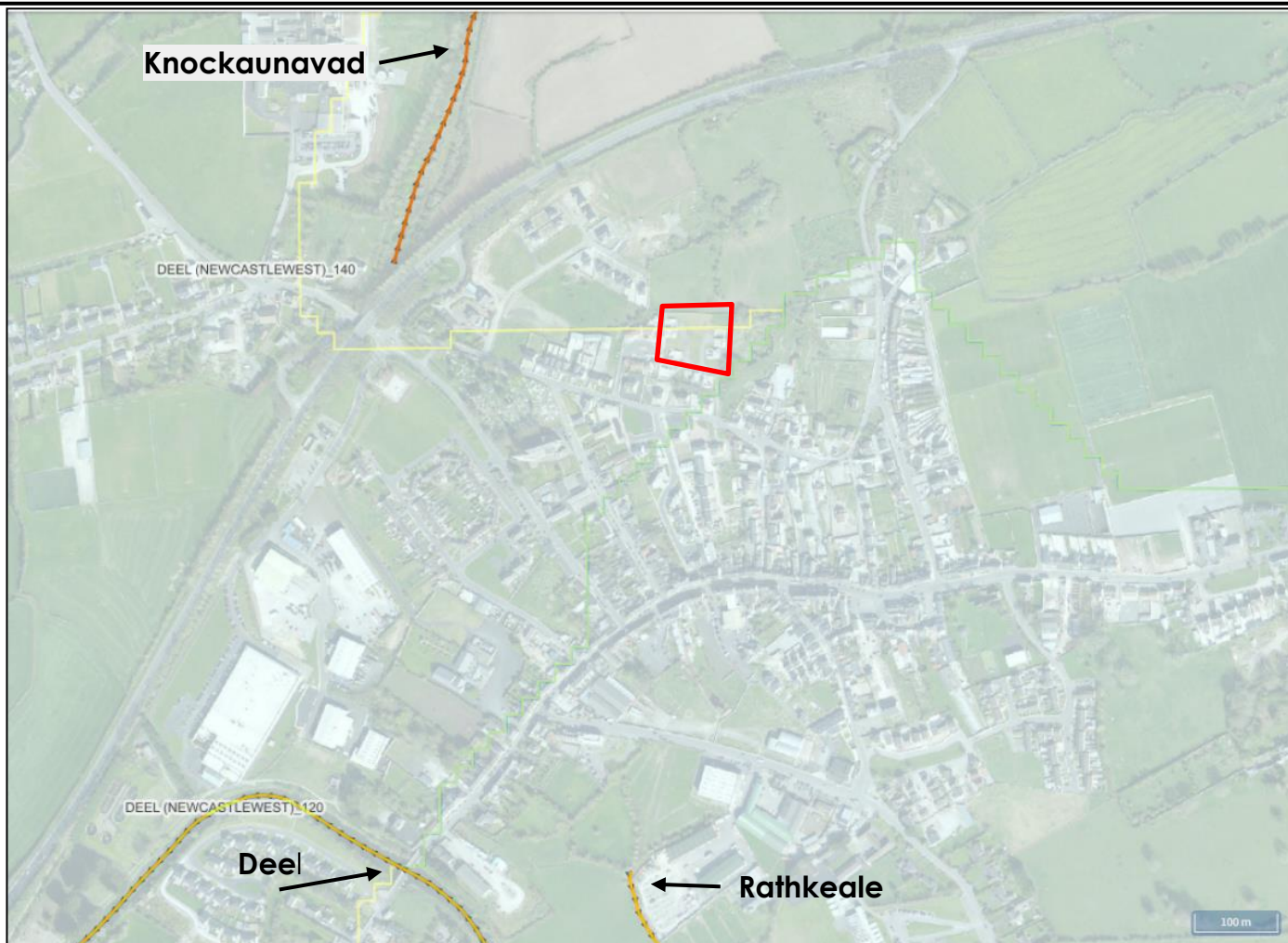


Site Location



N

Client LCCC		Drawing Proposed National Heritage Areas (pNHAs) within 5km of Site				
Job AA Screening Report						
Drawing Number Figure 8	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date May 24	Drawn AW	



Site Location █

Hydrometric Area '24 – 'Shannon Estuary South'

Between two WFD Sub-Catchments - 'Deel[Newcastlewest]_SC_050' & 'Deel[Newcastlewest]_SC_030'

Between two WFD River Sub-Basins - 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_120' & 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_140'

2016-2021 WFD River Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_120' is 'Moderate'

2016-2021 WFD River Risk Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_120' is 'At Risk'

2016-2021 WFD River Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_140' is 'Poor'

2016-2021 WFD River Risk Status of 'DEEL (NEWCASTLEWEST)_140' is 'At Risk'

2016-2021 WFD Groundwater Body Status of 'Newcastle West' is 'Good'

2016-2021 WFD Groundwater Body Risk Status of 'Newcastle West' is 'Not at Risk'

Client LCCC		Drawing Catchment Drainage Information				
Job Screening Report		Information				
Drawing Number Figure 9	Status Final	Sht. Size A4	Scale As Shown	Date May 24	Drawn AW	

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



Registered Practices Certificate

April 2024 – March 2025

ASH Ecology and Environmental Ltd

has been admitted as a Registered Practice

of the

Chartered Institute of Ecology
and Environmental Management

on the 1st day of April 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'R Handley', is placed below the date.

Richard Handley CEcol MCIEEM

President

1st April 2024

This certificate remains the property of CIEEM. Membership is subject to annual renewal and may be authenticated by contacting CIEEM at the registered address. Company no. RC000861.

Registered Charity Number (England and Wales): 1189915.

Registered address: Grosvenor Court, Ampfield Hill, Ampfield, Romsey, SO51 9BD United Kingdom.

APPENDIX B



Plate 1 Site a mixture of Amenity Grassland (GA2) and Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3).



Plate 2 Site a mixture of Amenity Grassland (GA2) and Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3).



Plate 3 Site a mixture of Amenity Grassland (GA2) and Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3).



Plate 4 Site a mixture of Amenity Grassland (GA2) and Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3).



Plate 5 Site a mixture of Amenity Grassland (GA2) and Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3).



Plate 6 Site a mixture of Amenity Grassland (GA2) and Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3).

APPENDIX C

Choosing the right species of native tree and shrub

As mentioned, choosing the right species of tree and shrub is very important in urban areas where there are restrictions on space. Where possible, always use native species. Below is a list of the trees and shrubs native to Ireland, and advice on the locations to which they are suited.

Common name	Latin name	Height (max)	Suitable for public open spaces	Suitable for streets and confined spaces	Suitable for tubs, containers, raised beds etc.	Guide to planting: see key below
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	22m	Yes	No	Yes	ADPS
Alder buckthorn	<i>Frangula alnus</i>	6m	Yes	No	Yes	D
Arbutus (strawberry tree)	<i>Arbutus unedo</i>		Yes	No	Yes	
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	28m	Yes	Yes	No	ADIPS
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	24m	Yes	No	No	DPSV
Bird cherry	<i>Prunus padus</i>	14m	Yes	Yes	Yes	P
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>					C/H
Broom	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	2m				
Burnet rose	<i>Rosa pimpinellifolia</i>					C/H
Common (or European) gorse	<i>Ulex europeus</i>	2.5m				HV
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	6m	Yes	No	No	AHIP
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>					C/H
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	18m	Yes	Yes	Yes	ADIP
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	6m				V
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	4.5m				DH

Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	9m				AHIPS
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	6m				AHS
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	15m	Yes	No	Yes	AHPS
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>					C
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>					C
Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>	6m	Yes	No	No	
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	30m	Yes	No	No	AI
Privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	3m				No
Purging buckthorn	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>	4.5m				AHPV
Rowan or mountain ash	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	9m	Yes	Yes	Yes	ADHIP
Scots pine	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	24m	Yes	No	No	AI
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>	30m	Yes	No	No	AI
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	18m	Yes	Yes	Yes	ADIP
Sloe, blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	3m				AHPV
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaeus</i>	7.5m				H
Western (or mountain) gorse	<i>Ulex gallii</i>					
Whitebeam spp.	<i>Sorbus aria/S. anglica/S. devoniensis/S. hibernica/S. latifolia/S. rupicola</i>	12m	Yes	Yes	Yes	IPS
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	15m	Yes	Yes	Yes	AHI

Willow spp.	<i>Salix spp.</i>	6m				V
Wych elm	<i>Ulmus glabr</i>	30m	Yes		No	PS
Yew	<i>Taxus baccata</i>	14m	Yes	No	Yes	AIPS

- A – Grows in a wide variety of soils
- C – Climber
- H – Suitable for hedging
- I – Suitable as an individual tree
- D – Tolerates or prefers damp conditions
- P – Tolerates smoke or pollution
- S – Tolerates shade
- V – Invasive

PLANTING TREES FOR POLLINATORS



Pollinators like wild bees need nectar and pollen for energy and protein. Tree flowers can provide both, often when other food is scarce in spring and early summer.

Planting trees is a great way to create 'wildlife corridors.' Bumblebees tend to forage up to 1km from their nest, and solitary bees only forage within a few hundred metres. The more connected their habitats are, the easier it is for them to find the resources they need. Plant trees to create wildlife corridors between existing valuable habitats such as species-rich grassland and native flowering hedgerows.

✓ Right Tree

Trees are crucial to a healthy ecosystem and can support a huge variety of species. Local provenance native trees are best for our native wildlife as they have evolved alongside each other. If grown locally there will be a lower risk of importing pests and diseases.

On the back of this flyer is a selection of native trees that are particularly good for pollinators.

✓ Right Space

When selecting a tree, think about what will happen to it in the future: How tall will it grow? What will the canopy cover be like? Will it produce fruit that will fall in the autumn?

Hopefully your tree will last a long time in its environment, and all of these factors might impact its future, particularly in places where it may be in conflict with human interests.

✓ Right Place

A variety of habitats is needed for a healthy ecosystem. Some habitats are already valuable to biodiversity, so it is best to avoid planting trees in these areas.

They include species-rich grassland, wetlands or areas adjacent to streams, coastal habitats, bogs, heathland, or sites with rare or protected species.



Native Pollinator-friendly Trees

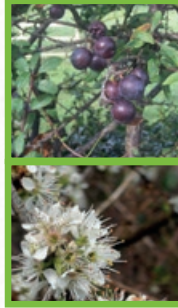
Hawthorn/ Whitethorn



Hawthorn/Whitethorn is a common hedgerow species but can also be grown as a standalone tree producing lots of flowers for pollinators and red haws in autumn for birds to enjoy. Hawthorn supports c.149 insect species.

Height: 15m

Blackthorn



Blackthorn provides a home for 109 insect species. Related to cherries and plums, the fruit of the blackthorn resemble small plums and are enjoyed by lots of animals, including wood mice, finches and foxes.

Height: 6-7m

Willow



Willow supports 266 insect species and 160 lichens. Goat or Grey willows are wonderful plants for pollinators as they provide lots of pollen and nectar in their tiny flowers in early spring when there is little else in flower. Willows can be grown easily from cuttings.

Height: 10m

Rowan



Rowan is also known as 'Mountain Ash' as it has similar leaves to the ash tree. Rowan supports 28 insects and 125 lichens. It is a very attractive tree, with white flower clusters in spring for pollinators, and red berries in autumn.

Height: 8-10m

Wild Cherry



Wild Cherry is a pretty native tree that will provide food for pollinators as well as fruit for birds. Its beautiful blossom makes it a popular choice for towns and parks.

Height: 18-25m

Crab Apple



Crab Apple can be found in many of our old native hedgerows. It supports 93 insect species, including pollinators, and crab apples provide food for birds and mammals in autumn.

Height: 10m

*Insect & lichen diversity based on UK Research and refers to Britain: Southwood, T.R.E (1961) The number of species of insect associated with various trees. *J. Animal Ecology* 30:1-8; Rose F. & Harding, P.T. (1978) Pasture and woodlands in Lowland Britain and their importance for the conservation of the epiphytes and invertebrates associated with old trees. Nature Conservancy Council & The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology

How to plant a Hedgerow for biodiversity

Protecting
Farmland
Pollinators



National
Biodiversity
Data Centre
Documenting Ireland's Wildlife

Good quality hedgerows provide the four essential needs of biodiversity:

- 1 Sources of food: pollen, nectar, fruits
- 2 Places to breed
- 3 Places to nest and overwinter
- 4 Corridors to travel across the landscape

What should you plant?

- ✓ Plant a diverse range of species, with no more than 70% of one species. Allow one tree to grow for every ten hedgerow plants.
- ✓ Use native plants of Irish provenance. These are best for biodiversity, and will help stop the import and spread of pests and disease.

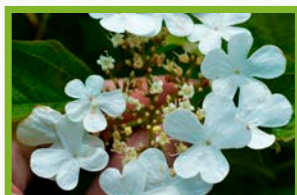
Native hedgerow species



Blackthorn



Dog Rose



Guelder Rose



Hawthorn/Whitethorn



Hazel



Holly



Honeysuckle



Spindle

The species listed above can all be regularly cut or managed in a hedgerow.

Don't use cultivated varieties

Trees in a hedgerow: the following native species can be planted to grow into a tree - Blackthorn, Hawthorn/Whitethorn, Holly, Crab Apple, Goat Willow, Grey Willow, Pendunculate Oak, Rowan, Sessile Oak and Wild Cherry.

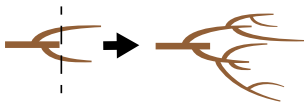
Where to plant your hedgerow

Connecting the new hedgerow with existing habitats will make it easier for pollinators and other wildlife to get to and from your new hedge safely.

How to plant your hedgerow

- 1 Cultivate the ground for ease of planting.
- 2 Plant a double row of two-year old bare-rooted whips in a zig zag pattern (see diagram).
- 3 Protect roots from drying out during planting.
- 4 Plant to the root collar, ensuring roots are not exposed and gently firm into the soil.
- 5 Protect from grazing animals.
- 6 Put a guard on plants that will become trees.
- 7 Prune all other plants (except Holly) to 10cm immediately after planting. Pruning will result in multiple new stems and a dense hedgerow.

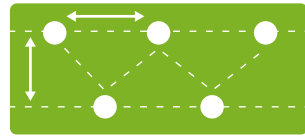
Prune after planting



- 8 Weed management - necessary for 2-3 years:
 - Use a natural mulch e.g., sheep's wool, wet newspaper, plant-based compostable film, well-rotted leaf mould or bark chips.
 - Alternatively, weed by hand.
 - Avoid herbicides.

40cm between plants

40cm
between
plants



Farmer tips:

- ✓ Plant from November to February. If concerned about rabbit damage, plant in February.
- ✓ Many of our unmanaged relict hedgerows have disappeared. If you want to plant a new treeline, select a mix of hedgerow and tree species. In this case, don't prune, and weeds can be kept under control by trampling.



An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture
Food and the Marine



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Protecting Farmland Pollinators is a European Innovation Partnership (EIP) project funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine (DAFM) under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Pollinator friendly garden plants

Aim to have 3-5 different types of these plants flowering in your garden each season. These suggestions are **not** exhaustive; many other flowers are also good for pollinators. For more planting suggestions visit

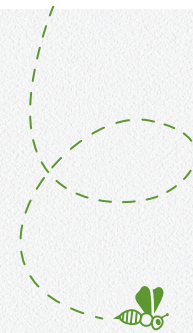
www.rhs.org.uk/perfectforpollinators.

		SPRING	SUMMER	AUTUMN
		March-May	June-Aug	Sept-Oct
	<p>Wildflowers in long grass</p> <p>These are examples of plants that will grow naturally in long grass; you do not need to buy seed or plants!</p>	<p>Dandelion Dead-nettle Vetch</p>	<p>Bird's foot trefoil Brassicas Clovers Geranium Knapweed Oxeye daisy Self-heal Speedwell Thistle Vetch Yarrow</p>	<p>Autumn Hawkbit Clovers Hawksbeard Vetch</p>
	<p>Ornamental plants and herbs</p>	<p>Comfrey Hellebores Lungwort Spring/winter Heather</p>	<p>Borage Calamint Catmint Columbine Delphinium Globe thistle Lavender Oregano Penstemon Poppy Scabious Stachys Sneezeweed Thyme Viper's bugloss</p>	<p>Aster Button Snakewort Coneflower Eupatorium Heathers Single Sunflowers^(Annual) Stonecrop</p>
	<p>Flowering trees/shrubs</p>	<p>Barberry (Berberis) Broom Crab apple Forsythia Hawthorn Mahonia Rowan Viburnum Wild cherry Willow</p>	<p>Bramble Cotoneaster Deutzia Firethorn Laburnum Rock Rose Viburnum</p>	<p>Hebe Ivy Russian Sage (sub-shrub)</p>
	<p>Fruit and Veg</p> <p>Many of the fruits and vegetables you grow in your garden need pollinators to produce seeds and fruit!</p>	<p>Apples Blueberries Cherry plum Currants</p>	<p>Blackberries Courgettes Field/runner beans Pumpkins Raspberries Strawberries Tomatoes</p>	

Info Box:
Letting a small portion of Brassica plants (e.g. Cabbage, Kale, Brussel sprouts) flower can help provide food for pollinators in your garden

Pollinator-friendly grass cutting

Reducing your grass cutting regime is the most cost-effective way to help bees – these actions do not involve purchasing wildflower seed



Short-flowering meadow:

Cut parts or all of your grass less frequently to allow wildflowers to grow and provide food.

Long-flowering meadow: provides food and shelter for pollinators

Kept short for humans

Short-flowering meadow: provides food for pollinators

These flowers will naturally grow in slightly longer grass. The more of these flowers the better!



This image shows a mosaic of three different grass cutting regimes.

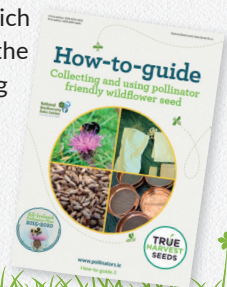


In a long-flowering meadow additional plants like these will grow naturally and provide food

Adding Yellow rattle seed after a meadow has established will help keep down grasses and encourage other wildflowers



To naturally improve your meadow collect wildflower seed locally. Sow in trays and grow-on as small plants (plugs) which can be added to the meadow in spring or autumn.



Long-flowering meadow: Cut once a year to provide food and shelter for pollinators.

Cut once a year in September. Let the cuttings lie for a few days to allow any seed to drop and then remove. Meadows managed in this way will allow wildflowers to bloom throughout the pollinator season and also provide undisturbed areas for nesting.

These can be large areas or strips/patches within a more traditional grass cutting regime. Small areas can be cut with a scythe or strimmer. Larger areas may require specialised equipment or an arrangement with a local farmer. In large areas it is helpful to leave some small sections entirely uncut each year for other overwintering insects to nest.



Years 1-2

Remove the cuttings each year and be patient!

Most meadows will look very grassy for the first few years. If you remove the cuttings each autumn the soil fertility will drop and it will gradually become more flower rich on its own. The poorer the soil - the more flower-rich your meadow will be!



Year 4



**Generic 1B Schwegler
Box Nest Box**



Owl Nest Box



Starling Nest Box



Swift Nest Box



Sparrow Terrace



House Martin Nest box

Available on link below with fitting instructions on website

<https://www.nhbs.com/4/bird-boxes>



**2F Schwegler Bat Box
(General Purpose)**



**PRO UK Build-in
WoodStone Bat Box**



Maternity Bat Box



**4m Pole Mounted Large
Colony Bat Box**

Available on link below with fitting instructions on website

<https://www.nhbs.com/search?q=bat+boxes>