



SCREENING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Proposed Bus Stop and Roundabout Development at Ros Mór,
Old Cork Road (R512), Limerick

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) of a proposed Bus Stop and Roundabout development at Ros Mór, Old Cork Road (R512), Limerick. The proposed development comprises the removal of existing boundary wall and railings, removal of recently planted ornamental vegetation and four mature ash trees, construction of a roundabout, bus stop lay-bye and footpaths, replacement boundary wall and railing, upgrading existing lighting, replacement tree/scrub planting.

The report has assessed the potential impact of the proposed development on the environment. The proposed development does not fall under any category within Schedule 5 (10) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) for Mandatory EIAR. The EIA Screening Assessment has determined that a sub-threshold EIAR is not required for the proposed development. The proposed development is not considered significant due to the relatively small scale and nature of the development and its footprint in the context of its environment. There are no significant impacts envisaged to arise. The characteristics and sensitivities of the site and receiving environment are not considered vulnerable to significant impact from this project which is considered to be compatible with the surrounding and proposed infrastructure and approved land-use. Additionally, it is acknowledged that the potential impacts that may occur can be even further reduced with appropriate, best-practice mitigation measures being implemented in the construction and operational phases of the development.

The proposed site is an existing road which will be upgraded. The adjacent areas are residential estates, a service station, nursing home and low-quality improved grassland fields and there is a treeline present. There are no national monuments or features of special architectural interest at the proposed site. Four mature ash trees will be removed as part of the proposed development. These trees are potentially located over rabbit warrens. The trees have low bat potential but may be used by small numbers of bats on occasion – mitigation for this is provided in the Biodiversity Management Plan. During the site visit several bird species were recorded, all of which are protected under the Wildlife Act. Several Rabbits were recorded in the adjacent agricultural grassland fields. It is considered likely that there are rabbit dwellings present below the treeline. There will likely be some disturbance impacts during the construction phase of the proposed development and potentially habitat loss. Ornamental vegetation will be removed. Construction phase disturbance impacts will be localised and temporary. There are no watercourses or drains on the site or nearby and therefore there are no water quality impacts envisioned. During the operational phase there will be very minor habitat loss of amenity grassland and ornamental vegetation, neither of which are considered particularly important habitats. There will also be the loss of four Ash trees which is considered minor given the surrounding landscape of hedgerows and treelines.

A Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has also been undertaken for the proposed development. This Screening found that there was no potential for the proposed development to significantly impact on any Natura 2000 site. Mitigation is not required and therefore a Natura Impact Statement does not need to be carried out. A Biodiversity Management Plan has also been completed for the proposed development. This includes measures to protect and enhance biodiversity at the site.

The potential impacts can be minimised and / or reduced to an imperceptible level with some mitigation measures being implemented during the construction and operational phases. A detailed Method Statement should be prepared for the proposed development and include mitigation as outlined in the Biodiversity Management Plan. In addition, a Traffic Management Plan should be prepared.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 LEGISLATION.....	3
2. METHODOLOGY	3
3. SCREENING	4
3.1 MANDATORY THRESHOLDS.....	4
3.2 SUB-THRESHOLD DEVELOPMENT	6
4. CONCLUSION	11
4.1 RECOMMENDED SPECIALIST REPORTS.....	11
REFERENCES	12
PLATES	13

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecofact Environmental Consultants Ltd. have been commissioned to carry out a Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) of proposed Bus Stop and Roundabout Development at Ros Mór, old Cork Road (R512), Limerick. This Screening determines whether an EIA is required for the project. A Screening for Appropriate Assessment report has also been prepared and concluded that an NIS is not required for the project (Ecofact, 2022a). A Biodiversity Management Plan has also been prepared (Ecofact, 2022b).

1.1 Legislation

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

2. METHODOLOGY

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

The first step of screening is to determine if the project is a class set out in Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. If it is, then the project must be subject to a mandatory EIA. If not, the development may still have a significant effect on the environment and thus must be screened for a sub-threshold development, as per criteria set out in Annex III of the Directive.

The current EIAR screening report follows this guidance as relevant:

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



3. SCREENING

3.1 Mandatory Thresholds

Site Location	Located in Ros Mór, Old Cork road (R512), Limerick.
Proposed Development	The proposed development comprises the removal of existing boundary wall and railings, removal of recently planted ornamental vegetation and four mature ash trees, construction of a roundabout, bus stop lay-bye and footpaths, replacement boundary wall and railing, upgrading existing lighting, replacement tree/scrub planting. The location is shown in Figure 1.
Does the Proposed Development meet or exceed the thresholds for Mandatory EIA as set out in Schedule 5 (Part 1 and 2) of the Regulations? (Yes/No)	No
If Yes – The development requires EIA No Sub-threshold Screening Required	
If No – The development is a ‘sub-threshold’ development which must be screened for potential significant effects on the environment	
Conclusion	
Is the class of development listed in Part 1 or Part 2, but does not have a threshold listed? (Yes/No)	Yes
If Yes – The development requires a Sub-threshold Screening	
If No – The development is not listed in part 1 or Part 2 and no thresholds have been set. Therefore, no screening is required unless requested by the CA.	



Figure 1 Location of Proposed Bus Stop and Roundabout Development at Ros Mór, Old Cork Road (R512), Limerick



3.2 Sub-threshold Development

As the development does not meet or exceed thresholds for mandatory EIA, a sub-threshold screening will be carried out. To determine whether the project will be subject to EIA, the following screening will be completed based on Criteria in Schedule 7 of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001*. The development will be screened for potential significant effects on the environment. According to the Directive "The screening procedure should ensure that an environmental impact assessment is only required for projects likely to have significant effects on the environment". A significant effect is "an effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment" (EPA, 2017). This will be carried out utilising an adaptation of the Screening Checklist in European Commission guidance (2017). These criteria are as follows:

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

Table 1 Screening for sub-threshold EIAR for the proposed bus stop and round about development at Ros Mór, Old Cork Road, Limerick.

Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Residual Issues
Characteristics of Proposed Development			
Is the scale of the project considered to be significant?	No	The proposed bus stop and roundabout development is small in scale and in a residential area. The footprint of the works is along an existing road and is c. 370m in length. This scale is not considered significant.	None
Is the scale of the project considered to be significant when considered cumulatively with other existing and / or proposed developments?	No	The proposed bus stop and roundabout development is still not major when compared with existing and or planned developments. These works would not be considered a significant project in consideration with others.	None
Will the project utilise a significant quantity of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water or biodiversity?	No	No out of the ordinary use of natural resources is considered likely for the small-scale development. Mineral aggregates may be required as well as planting material but are not considered to be a significant quantity.	None
Will the project produce a significant quantity of waste?	No	Some waste will be generated but this amount is unlikely to be significant due to the small size of the works. Waste for may comprise debris from vegetation removal and some spoil.	None
Will the project produce a significant amount of pollution or nuisance?	No	No significant pollution or nuisance impacts are expected to arise. Some nuisance is likely during construction and the project will need a Traffic Management Plan. Minor pollution	None



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Residual Issues
		impacts may arise. The works are small scale and therefore unlikely to give rise to any significant pollution or nuisance	
Does the project have a risk of major accidents, or natural disasters, including those caused by climate change?	No	Strict compliance with building regulations and environmental controls is expected to be exercised as standard. No major accidents are foreseen.	None
Will the project present a risk to human health?	No	No significant risks to human health are expected. Some noise, dust or pollution may arise during construction, but this is likely to be minor.	None
Is any combination of the above factors likely to have a significant effect on the environment?	No	Given the small scale of the proposed works no combination of the above factors is expected to give rise to any significant effects on the environment. Best practise will also be followed as standard.	None
Location of Proposed Development			
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any designated site (SAC, SPA, pNHA, NHA)?	No	There are no pathways for potential significant effects to arise on any designated site. The works locations are not located within the boundary of any designated site and there are no sites within close proximity or with downstream hydrological connections. There are also no watercourses on the footprint of the proposed works (Ecofact, 2022).	None
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive?	No	There are no known records of protected habitats at the sites of the proposed works. There are no pathways for potential significant effects on protected habitats.	None
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive?	No	There are records of species listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive in the 2km grid squares R65C which is Freshwater White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>). There is no potential for these species to occur within the footprint of the proposed development and there is no hydrological connection present. Taking this into account and the nature of the works, no significant impacts are likely to arise.	None
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species	No	There are no records of species listed on Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive within the 2km grid squares	Potential minor



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Residual Issues
listed on Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive?		R65C which encompass the proposed works. There are likely to be local bat species in the area and there is a Treeline here which provided a linear feature along which bats may commute or forage. There is also a scrub area nearby which may provide suitable roosting habitat. There are some mature trees in the treeline – these are predominantly of low roosting potential for bats. Some of these trees will be removed and may result in minor habitat loss. Due to the nature of the works and their locations, no significant impacts are likely to arise.	habitat loss impacts
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive?	No	There is a record of one Annex I bird species in the 2km grid square Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>). This record is from winter 2007-2011. This species would not be present on the proposed development site which is already a busy road. There is no potential for impacts on this species. Habitats at the proposed works along existing roads is considered to be suboptimal for any Annex I bird species. No significant impacts are envisaged.	None
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any species protected under the Wildlife Act?	No	Records of species protected under the Wildlife Act include Black-headed Gull, Little Egret, Northern Lapwing, Freshwater White-clawed Crayfish and Badger. During the site visit several birds were recorded, all of which are protected under the wildlife Act including Starling, Magpie, Long-tailed tit, House martin, Rook and Blackbird. Due to the small scale of the works and their locations, impacts are unlikely to be significant. Minor impacts such as disturbance may arise locally, however.	Potential minor disturbance impacts
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on the existing or approved land use?	No	Existing land use comprises existing roads and footpaths. The additional works will be a minor change in the context of this landscape and no significant impacts are envisaged.	None
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on the relative abundance, availability, quality or regenerative capacity of natural	No	The site is located on an existing busy road in Limerick along with residential housing estates, a service station and treelines. There are fields and scrub in	Minor impacts on biodiversity, relating to



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Residual Issues
resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground?		the wider area. There are no habitats on the site that would be considered to be of any significant importance. The treeline onsite however likely provides foraging and commuting habitat. Rabbit dwellings are also likely present. The scrub adjacent to the site may provide habitat for small mammals and birds. The site is an existing roadway with a treeline and ornamental planting. There are no watercourses on the site. Some minor impacts may arise in relation to disturbance and invasive species, but these are not considered to have the potential to be significant. There is also the potential for invasive species to be introduced. Given the context of the habitat these impacts are considered minor.	disturbance and invasive species
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on any protected structures or recorded monuments or places or archaeological interest?	No	On the historic map viewer, there are no historic structures within the footprint of the works. In the wider area there is a site of architectural heritage in the form of a house. There is also a holy well to the north of the site behind a housing estate, railway line and row of houses. No significant impacts are envisaged due to distance.	None
Does the project have the potential to significantly impact on listed or scenic views or protected landscapes as outlined in the County Development Plan?	No	The proposed development site is not located within any scenic views or protected landscapes as outlined in the Limerick County Development Plan 2022-2028.	None
Type and Characteristics of Potential Impacts			
Could a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the project?	No	The works are all small in scale. No impacts to a large geographical area are expected.	None
Could a large population of people be affected as a result of the project?	No	The works are small in size and are unlikely to affect any large population of people. A Traffic Management Plan will be prepared for the proposed works.	None
Are any transboundary impacts likely to arise as a result of the project?	No	No potential pathways for transboundary effects	None
Would the magnitude of impacts associated with the project be considered significant?	No	No significant impacts are envisaged	None
Would potential impacts on the environment be considered complex?	No	No complex impacts are envisaged	Minor potential impacts



Criteria for assessment of EIA sub-threshold development – Screening Questions	Yes / No	Screening	Residual Issues
			identified – disturbance, invasive species
Is there a high probability that the effects will occur?	No	No significant impacts are envisaged	None
Will the effects last for a long time?	Yes	Any minor impacts during construction will be short-term due to the size of the project. Habitat loss will be permanent in some discrete areas but most will be replanted and no significant impacts are envisaged.	None
Will the effects be permanent?	Yes	Some minor impacts will be permanent. For example, habitat loss in the direct footprint new road footprint. However, the works are almost entirely on an existing road.	None
Will the impacts be reversible?	Yes	Given the small scale of the works, it is expected that these could be removed into the future and the roadway restored to its current state. Regarding habitats loss will be minor and there is nothing of high importance however, these habitats could be restored to baseline conditions. It is again noted that the works are located almost entirely on an existing road.	None
Will there be significant cumulative impacts with other existing and approved projects?	No	No significant cumulative impacts are expected	None
Will it be difficult to reduce the impacts?	No	No – standard best practise mitigation including a Traffic Management Plan will reduce any minor impacts to imperceptible.	None



4. CONCLUSION

This report has been prepared to allow the Competent Authority (CA) to prepare an EIAR Screening Conclusion Statement. The report has assessed the potential impact of the proposed development on the environment. The proposed development does not meet or exceed any of the thresholds set out in Schedule 5 (10) (Part 1 and 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001) for Mandatory EIAR. Therefore, a sub-threshold screening was carried out for the proposed development to determine if any significant impacts on the environment are likely, and if so, whether an EIA is required.

The Screening for EIAR has determined that a sub-threshold EIAR is not required for the proposed bus stop and roundabout development at Ros Mór, Limerick. The sites are not located within any designated area. There are no protected habitats within the footprint of the sites. There are no potential pathways for significant effects to arise. Potential minor impacts have been identified in the form of disturbance and invasive species. Due to this, some recommended specialist reports should be prepared in advance.

4.1 Recommended Specialist Reports

A biodiversity report should be prepared for the proposed development. This biodiversity report should comprise a baseline survey of the affected site and outline recommendations regarding landscape treatments. This should also include surveys for mammals and trails in the existing treeline as well as bird nesting potential and bat suitability.

Due to the potential for minor invasive species and disturbance impacts on the surrounding environment, a detailed Method Statement should be prepared. This should outline environmental mitigation measures in order to reduce impacts. This should be carried out after the biodiversity report and should include any specific measures outlined in that report.

As the proposed development will be carried out on an existing busy road into Limerick City there will likely be some impacts regarding traffic and delays. A Traffic Management Plan should be prepared.

In summary, the following specialist reports are recommended:

- Biodiversity Management Report,
- Method Statement (MS)
- Traffic Management Plan.



REFERENCES

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2018) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment. https://www.housing.gov.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/guidelines_for_planning_authorities_and_an_bord_pleanala_on_carrying_out_eia_-_august_2018.pdf

Ecofact, (2022a). Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report: Proposed Bus Stop and Roundabout Development at Ros Mór, Old Cork Road, Limerick. Ecofact Environmental Consultants Ltd., Tait Business Centre, Dominic Street, Limerick.

Ecofact, (2022b). Biodiversity Management Plan: Proposed Bus Stop and Roundabout Development at Ros Mór, Old Cork Road, Limerick. Ecofact Environmental Consultants Ltd., Tait Business Centre, Dominic Street, Limerick.

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European Commission (2017a) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on Screening. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/EIA_guidance_Screening_final.pdf

European Commission (2017b) Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/EIA_guidance_EIA_report_final.pdf

European Commission (2001) Guidance on EIA Screening. <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/eia-guidelines/g-screening-full-text.pdf>

Planning and Development Regulations (2001) S.I. No. 600 of 2001.



PLATES



Plate 1 Western extent of the proposed works area. This will be a two-way shared use facility for pedestrians and cyclists.



Plate 2 Scrub area to the south of the proposed development.



Plate 3 Existing road at the proposed development site. There is a treeline here which may provide suitable commuting and / or foraging habitat for bats.



Plate 4 Recently planted ornamental vegetation and retaining wall which will be removed as part of the proposed development. This vegetation will be replanted.



Plate 5 Proposed location of new roundabout at the entrance to Ros Mór housing estate.



Plate 6 European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) recorded north south of the proposed development site.