



Mungret Link Streets Project

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

14 May 2019

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context

This Report for Screening for Appropriate Assessment has been prepared by Mott MacDonald Ireland Limited on behalf of Limerick City and County Council for the proposed Mungret Link Streets project. The Mungret Link Streets project will provide 1.7km of new public road within the Mungret/Loughmore Common area of County Limerick. Further details on the Project are provided in Section 2.

1.2 Requirement for Appropriate Assessment

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) requires that where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site, while not directly connected with or necessary to the nature conservation management of the site, it will be subject to 'Appropriate Assessment' to identify any implications for the European site in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. Specifically, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states:

The Project is not associated with the 'management' of a European Site having regard to Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. Therefore, the Project must undergo screening for Appropriate Assessment in accordance with Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

This report is to assist Limerick City and County Council in their Screening assessment under the Habitats Directive for the proposed Mungret Link Streets project.

This screening for Appropriate Assessment has been carried out in accordance with the following European Commission and national guidance:

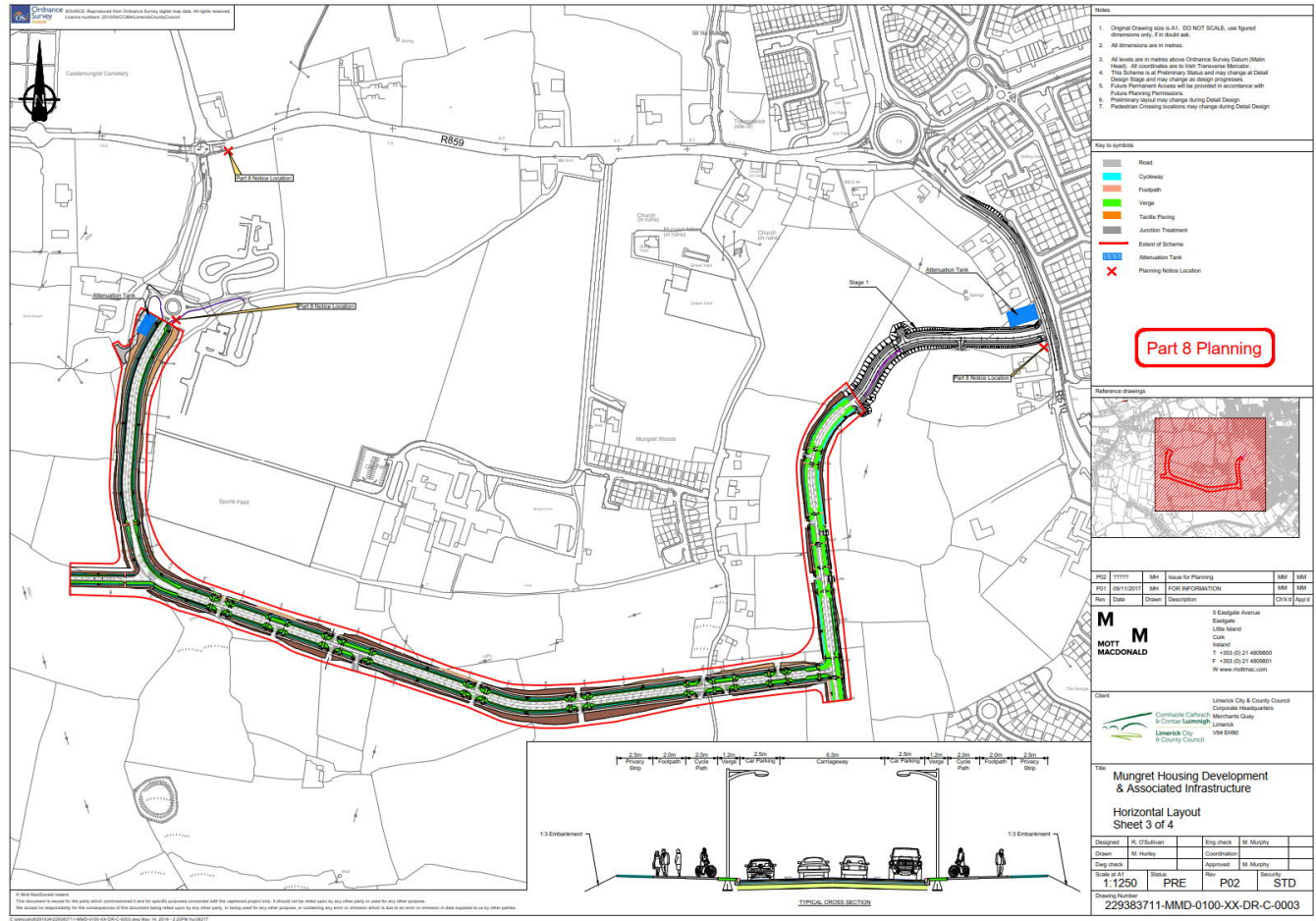
- EC (2001) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- DEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities (Revised 2010)
- EC (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC Commission Notice C(2018) 7621

2 Project Description

2.1 Location

The proposed project will be located within the Mungret/ Loughmore Common area, approximately 4.5km south-west of Limerick City (Figure 1). A drawing of the proposed road is shown below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Mungret Links Scheme

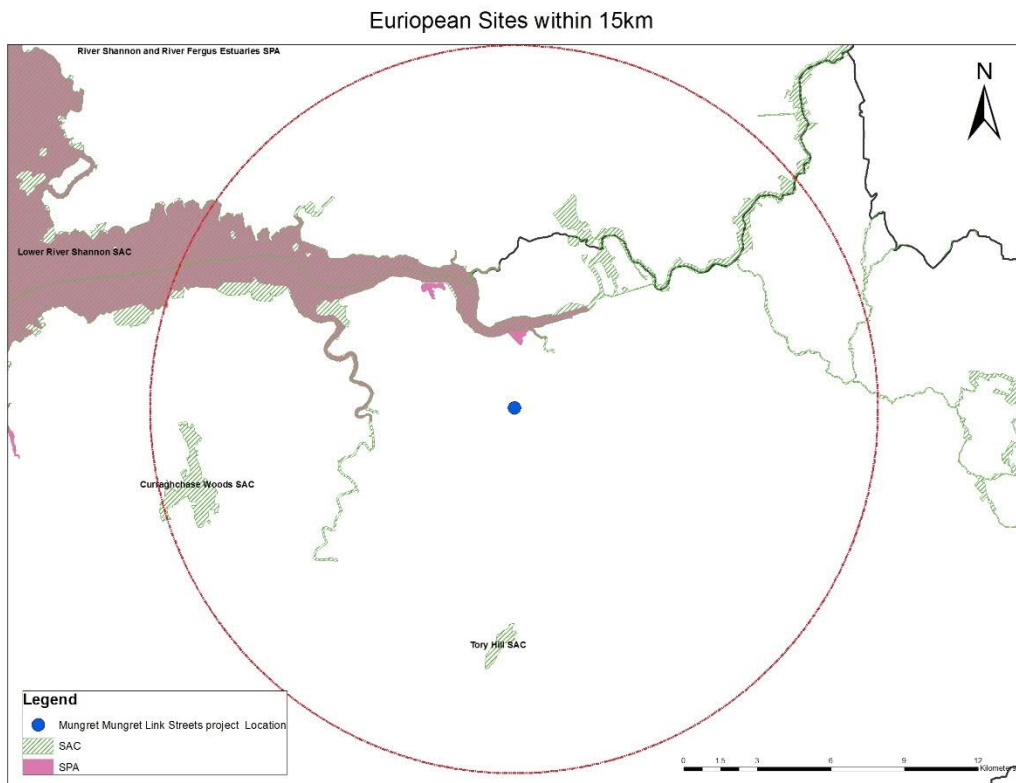


Source: Mott Macdonald 2019

The boundary of the Loughmore Common Turlough pNHA (site code 000438) is located ca. 180m to the south of the proposed new road. The proposed development lands are currently used for agricultural purposes and the fields are lightly grazed by cattle. These agricultural lands are bound to the east and south-west by urban lands. The R526 regional road is located to the south-east of the proposed new road and the R859 regional road to the north. Mungret House and Woods is located immediately north of the proposed new road. A school and sport fields are located immediately to the north-west of the road.

The Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165) is 1.7km north of the project. The River Shannon and River Fergus SPA (site code 004077) is ca. 1.7km north of the project. Curraghchase Woods SAC (site code 000174) is 12.4km west and Askeaton Fen Complex (002279) is 10.5km west of the project. Tory Hill SAC (000439) is ca. 8.8km south of the project.

Figure 2: European Sites within 15km



2.2 Project Overview

The Mungret Link Streets project consists of the provision of ca. 1.7km of new public road within the Mungret / Loughmore Common area of County Limerick. The project includes the following associated infrastructure:

- Driving Lanes,
- Cycleways,
- Footpaths,
- Roadside Parking,
- Surface water drainage / sustainable urban drainage, and
- Street lighting

The purpose of the project is to accommodate the future construction of new residential development in Mungret, Limerick (Limerick 2030 housing), within lands zoned for residential development under the Southern Environs Local Area Plan 2011 – 2017 (Extended until May 2021).

Ducting for the provision of services detailed below will also be installed to facilitate the future implementation of the area masterplan.

- Foul water drainage connection into Limerick Main Drainage Scheme
- Water mains
- Gas Mains
- Telecommunications

The Limerick 2030 housing project will, in itself, be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with Part 10 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended. The potential for combined environmental effects with the Mungret Link Streets project is considered in this assessment.

2.2.1 Construction Phase

The project will require the excavation of lands which are in agricultural use. A number of field boundaries will be removed to accommodate the road. These comprise hedgerows of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinose*), with intermittent ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*), and with an undergrowth of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*).

Several old farm sheds will be removed to accommodate the road. The works area will be accessed via the R859 and R510 roads.

Excavation works will generate sediment-laden surface water runoff from the works areas. This will be to the surrounding agricultural lands.

During the construction phase, there will be a temporary increase in noise within the vicinity of the works. The existing background noise levels within the study area is low and characteristic of rural-agricultural areas. The background noise levels increase slightly towards the outer site boundaries which are located in proximity to regional roads and residential areas.

During the construction phase there is potential for spills and leaks of oils, fuels and chemicals from storage areas, plant, and equipment used during construction to impact on the surrounding habitats. Accidental spills of fuels, oils and construction materials (e.g. concrete) can affect habitat quality.

It may be necessary to use artificial lighting during the construction works. Lands to the north of the proposed road have existing artificial lighting.

2.2.2 Operation Phase

There will be an increase in noise and dust due to the presence of the road. There is potential for leaks of fuel, oil, fluid etc. from vehicles using the road and/or be a source of heavy metals. Without adequate control, these could reach and contaminate the underlying soils.

Surface water run off could transport potential contaminants from the hard-standing areas to the adjacent soil impacting on soil quality. Without appropriate measures, this could potentially be a source of contamination.

Drainage from the road will be to two attenuation basins.; one servicing the eastern extent of the road and one servicing the western extent of the road. The road drainage has been designed to accommodate drainage from future residential development within lands zoned for development under the Southern Area Local Area Plan 2011-2017 (as extended). The attenuation basins will drain in to the existing drainage networks associated with the R859 and R510 roads.

- The construction activities required to deliver the proposed road will cause a short-term localised increase in existing noise levels.
- Site preparation works will expose topsoil to erosion by wind and rain. There is potential therefore for the generation of dust and sediment-laden surface water runoff from site. The Contractor will be obliged under contract to prepare a CEMP to ensure control of dust and site runoff.

Operation Phase

- Surface water runoff from the development lands will be captured in attenuation basins, infiltration basins and swales. Petrol interceptors will be operated and maintained. The potential for water pollution is therefore low.
- The drainage will be designed to attenuate runoff rates so as not to affect the local hydrology. The potential for pollution from these urban drainage systems is low given that they are designed to capture sediment / hydrocarbons in advance of discharge to the environment.

3 European Sites with Connectivity to the Project

3.1 Summary of European Sites with Source Pathway Receptors

Site Name and Code	Distance to European Site	Qualifying Interest/ Special Conservation Interest	Source-Pathway-Receptor	
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)				
Lower River Shannon SAC (002165)	Located ca. 1.7km north of the Project	<u>Annex I Habitats</u> [1110] Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1130] Estuaries [1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1150] Coastal lagoons [1160] Large shallow inlets and bays [1170] Reefs [1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1310] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1330] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1410] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [3260] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [6410] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [91E0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-	<u>Annex II Species</u> [1029] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1095] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1096] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1099] <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1106] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1349] <i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter)	No potential for disturbance to protected species or habitat damage within the SAC due to distance between the proposed project and the European Site. Drainage from the attenuation basin will be to the existing drainage of the R859 and R510. No records of otter were recorded during a field survey carried out by Mott MacDonald ecologists in 2018, however records by the NBDC show recordings of otter in the area in 2009. There is no hydrological connection between the project and the SAC.

Site Name and Code	Distance to European Site	Qualifying Interest/ Special Conservation Interest	Source-Pathway-Receptor
		<i>Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)</i>	
Curraghchase Woods SAC (000174)	12.6km east of the project	[91E0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91J0] <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles	[1303] <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) There is no potential for direct habitat damage due to distance between the sites. Bat Conservation Ireland ¹ recommend that where a lesser horseshoe bat roost is located within 6km of a project, the effects on lesser horseshoe bat must be assessed further. The SAC is 12.6km from the proposed works and as such is determined not to have potential to affect lesser horseshoe bat having regard to Bat Conservation Ireland guidelines. There is no hydrological connectivity between the project and the SAC.
Tory Hill SAC (000439)	8.8km south of the project	[6210] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [7210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davalliana</i> [7230] Alkaline fens	There is no potential for direct habitat damage due to distance between the sites. There is no hydrological connectivity between the project and the SAC.
Special Protection Areas (SPA)			
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077)	Ca. 1.7km north of the Project	[A017] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A038] Whooper Swan (<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>) [A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A048] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A050] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A052] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A054] Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	No potential for disturbance to protected birds or habitat damage within the SPA due to distance between the proposed project and the European Site. The Loughmore Common Turlough is located adjacent to the proposed project. The turlough is noted to be desiccated (ref pNHA site synopsis 000438) which is thought to be due to drainage of the surrounding land. The turlough therefore has low potential to support the wetland birds of the SPA. A bird survey was carried out by competent ecologists in 2018. It was noted that Loughmore Common Turlough provides suitable winter habitat for Lapwing

¹ Bat Conservation Ireland (2012) Bats and Appropriate Assessment Guidelines, Version 1, December 2012. Bat Conservation Ireland, www.batconservationireland.org.

Site Name and Code	Distance to European Site	Qualifying Interest/ Special Conservation Interest	Source-Pathway-Receptor
			<p>and Golden Plover. Breeding pairs of Snipe were present. Due to the distance of the project from the pNHA (ca. 100m) and the screening provided by hedgerows there is no visual or audible effect anticipated on the birds using the pNHA.</p> <p>There is no hydrological connectivity between the project and the SAC.</p>

3.2 Assessment of Likely Effects

There are no European Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed Mungret Link Streets project.

4 In Combination Effects

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

It is therefore required that the potential impacts of the proposed Mungret Link Streets project considered in combination with any other relevant plans or projects.

It is of note that as part of the Limerick Southern Environs Local Area Plan there is further development being tabled for this area. While this report deals only with the proposed road it will be necessary to further investigate any effects should the housing plan commence. The development will be subject to planning and environmental legislation.

The project will result in permanent habitat loss in the immediate area of the project. The habitat is agricultural grassland adjacent to the Loughmore Common Turlough pNHA, which as mentioned previously, has the potential to support wetland birds which are qualifying features of interest of the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077). While the project does not have the potential to affect the birds using the area due to natural screening by hedgerows and treelines, any future developments will be investigated in this respect and in compliance with planning and environmental legislation.

A site walk over carried out by Mott MacDonald ecologists in 2018 did not note any evidence of otter prints, scat or holts within the project site. Guidelines written by the National Roads Authority recommend a distance of 150m between a work site and an active otter holt. The canal which has the potential to support an otter holt is >360m South of the project (National Roads Authority, no date).

5 Assessment of Significance

5.1 Summary

The current assessment investigates the potential for significant effects European Sites arising from the proposed link road at Mungret.

The assessment considers the potential for the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, to have significant adverse effects on the qualifying interests and special conservation interests of European Sites in view of their conservation objectives.

It is concluded that there is no potential for significant effects on European Sites from the proposed works, either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects due to the absence of source-pathway-receptor connectivity between the Mungret Link Streets project and European Sites.

The findings of this report for Screening for Appropriate Assessment are summarised in the Findings of no Significant Effects Matrix hereunder.

Table 5: Findings of No Significant Effects Matrix

Name of project or plan	Mungret Links Street Project
Name and location of European sites	The Lower River Shannon SAC is located ca. 1.7km North of the proposed work site. The River Shannon and River Fergus SPA (004077) is located 1.7km North of the site.
Description of the project or plan	The Mungret Link Streets project consists of the provision of ca. 1.7km of new public road within the Mungret / Loughmore Common area of County Limerick. The project includes the following associated infrastructure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving Lanes, • Cycleways, • Footpaths, • Roadside Parking, • Surface water drainage / sustainable urban drainage, and • Street lighting The purpose of the project is to accommodate the future construction of new residential development in Mungret, Limerick (Limerick 2030 housing), within lands zoned for residential development under the Southern Environs Local Area Plan 2011 – 2017 (Extended until May 2021). Ducting for the provision of services detailed below will also be installed to facilitate the future implementation of the area masterplan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foul water drainage connection into Limerick Main Drainage Scheme • Water mains • Gas Mains • Telecommunications
Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?	No.
Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site?	The project will be put in place in advance of the housing development which will be progressed under separate planning application. The Mungret Street Links Project includes the infrastructure necessary to support the residential development within the zoned lands and has been sized and designed accordingly.

This assessment has determined no effects on European sites from the Mungret Street Links Project. Therefore, there is no potential for in combination effects.

The assessment of significance of effects	
Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.	No likely effects were determined from the proposed works.
Explain why these effects are not considered significant	No likely effects were determined therefore there can be no alteration of the conservation condition or objectives of the European Site due to the proposed works.
List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address	None
Response to consultation.	N/A
Data collected to carry out the assessment	
Who carried out the assessment?	Noreen Lynch Ecologist with Mott MacDonald
Sources of data?	Refer to references section
Level of assessment?	Desktop study and site survey

6 References

DEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities

DEHLG (2010) Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Second Draft* Munster Blackwater Sub-Basin Management Plan.

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NPWS (2012) Conservation Objectives: Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC 002170. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

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National Roads Authority (no date) *THE TREATMENT OF OTTERS PRIOR TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL ROAD SCHEMES*. Available at: <https://www.tii.ie/tii-library/environment/construction-guidelines/Guidelines-for-the-Treatment-of-Otters-prior-to-the-Construction-of-National-Road-Schemes.pdf> (Accessed: 28 March 2019).

