

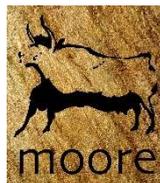
Report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening

as required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive
(Council Directive 92/43/EEC)

Proposed Residential Development,
Carraig Glas, Stradbally, Co. Laois

Prepared by: Moore Group – Environmental Services

17th January 2020



On behalf of
Laois County Council

Project Proponent	Laois County Council
Project	Proposed Residential Development, Carraig Glas, Stradbally, Co. Laois
Title	Report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening Proposed Residential Development, Carraig Glas, Stradbally, Co. Laois

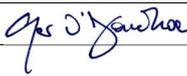
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Appendix A – Finding of No Significant Effects Report

Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
EEC	European Economic Community
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
GIS	Geographical Information System
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
pNHA	proposed Natural Heritage Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable Urban Drainage System
WWTP	Wastewater Treatment Plant

1. Introduction

1.1. General Introduction

This Appropriate Assessment screening report has been prepared to support an application for planning permission for the proposed Project. This report contains information required for the competent authority to undertake screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) on the potential for the construction and operation of a residential development at Carraig Glas, Stradbally, Co. Laois (hereafter referred to as the proposed Project) to significantly affect European sites.

Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (referred to as the Habitats Directive):

- I). whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, and
- II). whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site (also referred to as a “European Site”) in view of its conservation objectives.

Also, having regard to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (section 177U and 177V). The purpose of a screening exercise under section 177U of the PDA 2000 is to determine whether it is necessary to carry out an “appropriate assessment” of the implications for a European site of the proposed project. The trigger for the requirement for an “appropriate assessment” is that the project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is “likely to have a significant effect” on the European site.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening should be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation. If potential impacts clearly can be avoided through the modification or redesign of the plan or project, then the screening process is repeated on the altered plan or project.

When screening the project, there are two possible outcomes:

- the project poses no risk of a significant effect and as such requires no further assessment; and
- the project has potential to have a significant effect (or this is uncertain) and AA of the project is necessary.

This desktop report has been prepared by Moore Group - Environmental Services for Laois County Council and assesses the potential for the proposed Project to impact on sites of European-scale ecological importance in accordance with Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive. The report was compiled by Ger O’Donohoe

(B.Sc. Applied Aquatic Sciences (GMIT, 1993) & M.Sc. Environmental Sciences (TCD, 1999)) who has 25 years' experience in environmental impact assessment and has completed numerous Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports and Natura Impact Statements on terrestrial and aquatic habitats.

1.2. Legislative Background - The Habitats and Birds Directives

It is necessary that the proposed Project has regard to Article 6 of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (referred to as the Habitats Directive). This is transposed into Irish Law by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477) (referred to as the Habitats Regulations).

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) is the main legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the European Union (EU). Under the Directive, Member States are obliged to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which contain habitats or species considered important for protection and conservation in a EU context.

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by Council Directive 2009/147/EC), is concerned with the long-term protection and management of all wild bird species and their habitats in the EU. Among other things, the Directive requires that Special Protection Areas (SPAs) be established to protect migratory species and species which are rare, vulnerable, in danger of extinction, or otherwise require special attention.

SACs designated under the Habitats Directive and SPAs, designated under the Birds Directive, form a pan-European network of protected sites known as Natura 2000. The Habitats Directive sets out a unified system for the protection and management of SACs and SPAs. These sites are also referred to as European sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the requirement for an assessment of proposed plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6(3) addresses the requirement to screen all plans and projects and to carry out a further assessment if required (Appropriate Assessment (AA)). Article 6(4) establishes requirements in cases of imperative reasons of overriding public interest:

Article 6(3): *“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 subjected to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site’s conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.”*

Article 6(4): *“If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to the beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.”*

2. Methodology

The Commission’s methodological guidance (EC, 2002) promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

Stages 1 and 2 deal with the main requirements for assessment under Article 6(3). Stage 3 may be part of Article 6(3) or may be a necessary precursor to Stage 4. Stage 4 is the main derogation step of Article 6(4).

Stage 1 Screening: This stage examines the likely effects of a project either alone or in combination with other projects upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that there are not likely to be significant effects on a Natura 2000 site. Mitigation measures (i.e., measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the project on the site concerned) cannot be taken into account at this stage.

Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment: In this stage, there is a consideration of the impact of the project with a view to ascertain whether there will be any adverse effect on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site’s structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are predicted impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts is considered.

Stage 3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions: This stage examines alternative ways of implementing the project that, where possible, avoid any adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

Stage 4 Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain: Where imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist, an assessment to consider whether compensatory measures will or will not effectively offset the damage to the sites will be necessary.

To ensure that the proposed Project complies fully with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and all relevant Irish transposing legislation, Moore Group compiled this report to inform the screening for AA

of the proposed Project to be undertaken by the competent authority to determine if the next stage (Stage 2) of the AA process is required.

2.1. Guidance

This report has been compiled in accordance with guidance contained in the following documents:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 rev.).
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10.
- 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 (European Commission Environment Directorate-General, 2001); hereafter referred to as the EC Article Guidance Document.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000); hereafter referred to as MN2000.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018).

2.2. Data Sources

Sources of information that were used to collect data on the Natura 2000 network of sites, and the environment within which they are located, are listed below:

- The following mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data sources, as required:
 - National Parks & Wildlife (NPWS) protected site boundary data;
 - Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) mapping and aerial photography;
 - OSI/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rivers and streams, and catchments;
 - Open Street Maps;
 - Digital Elevation Model over Europe (EU-DEM);
 - Google Earth and Bing aerial photography 1995-2020;
- Online data available on Natura 2000 sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie including:
 - Natura 2000 - Standard Data Form;
 - Conservation Objectives;
 - Site Synopses;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre records;
 - Online database of rare, threatened and protected species;
 - Publicly accessible biodiversity datasets.
- Status of EU Protected Habitats in Ireland. (National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2019); and

- Relevant Development Plans and Local Area Plans in neighbouring areas;
 - Laois County Development Plan 2017-2023

3. Description of the proposed Project

This report presents a screening assessment for a proposed Project consisting of the construction and operation of a residential development at Carraig Glas, Stradbally, Co. Laois.

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site of approximately 1.74 hectares, which is located within the suburban environment of the south of the town of Stradbally.

The proposed Project is to consist of several dwellings and all associated accesses and services. The proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for wastewater and surface water. It is noted that the Stradbally Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) was recently upgraded and that the new facility has sufficient capacity to facilitate the proposed Project.

The proposed Project will include new surface water drainage that, in line with Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) design principles, will include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception prior to discharge to the existing combined sewer.

Figure 1 shows the proposed Project location and Figure 2 shows a detailed view of the proposed Project boundary on recent aerial photography.

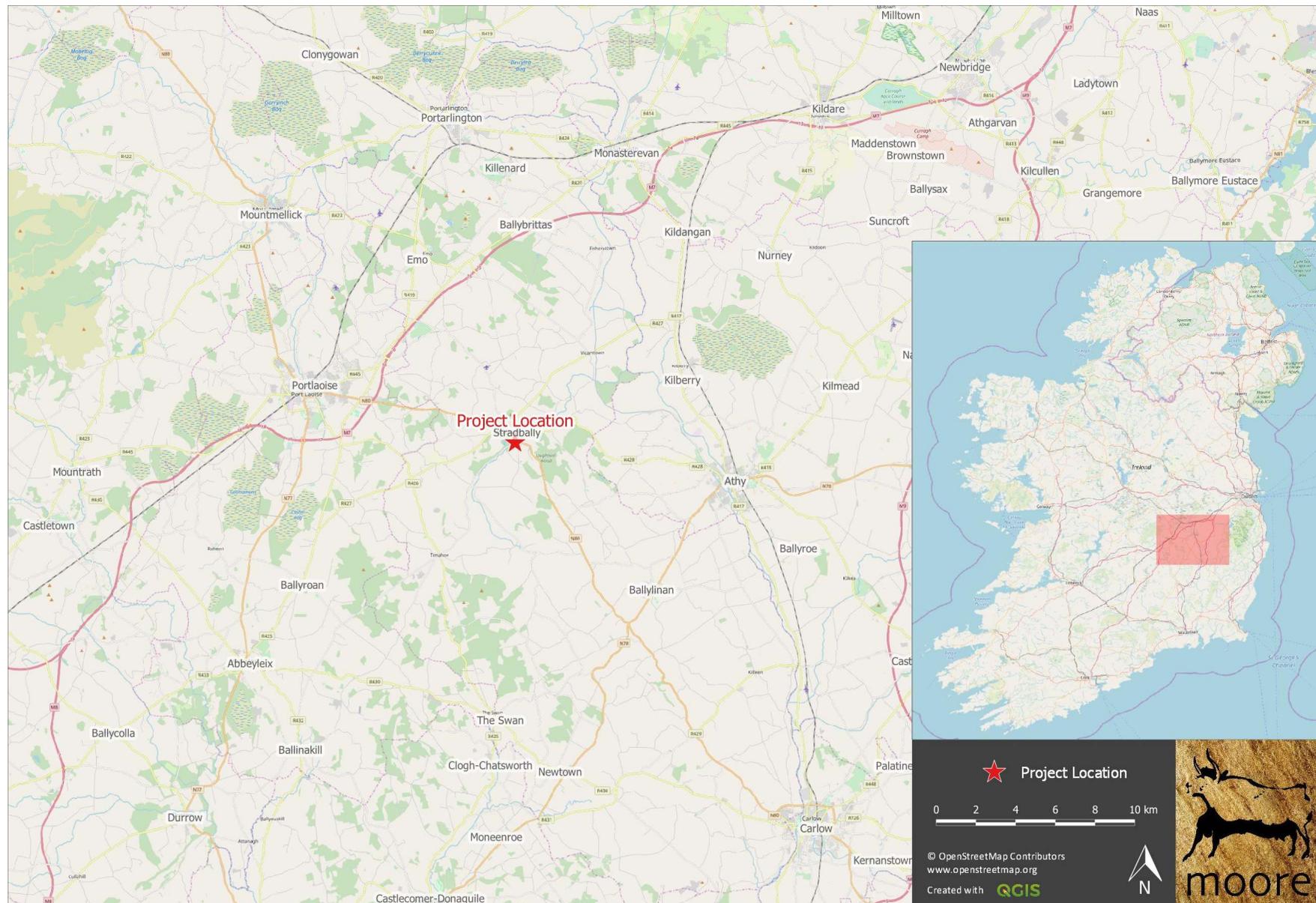


Figure 1. Showing the proposed Project location at Stradbally, County Laois.



Figure 2. Showing the proposed Project boundary on recent aerial photography.

4. Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

4.1. Description of Natura Sites Potentially Affected

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009) Guidance on Appropriate Assessment recommends an assessment of European sites within a zone of impact of 15 km. This distance is a guidance only and the zone of impact has been identified taking consideration of the nature and location of the proposed Project to ensure all European sites with connectivity to it are considered in terms of a catchment-based assessment.

The zone of impact may be determined by connectivity to the proposed Project in terms of:

- Nature, scale, timing and duration of works and possible impacts, nature and size of excavations, storage of materials, flat/sloping sites;
- Distance and nature of pathways (dilution and dispersion; intervening 'buffer' lands, roads etc.); and
- Sensitivity and location of ecological features.

The guidance provides that, at the screening stage, it is necessary to identify the relevant Natura 2000 sites and compile information on their qualifying interests and conservation objectives. In preparation for this, the potential for source pathway receptor connectivity is firstly identified and detailed information is then provided on sites with connectivity. European sites that are located within 15 km of the Project are listed in Table 1 and presented in Figure 3 and Figure 4 below. Spatial boundary data on the Natura 2000 network was extracted from the NPWS website (www.npws.ie) on the 16th of January 2020.

Table 1 European Sites located within 15km or the potential zone of impact¹ of the Project.

Site Code	Site name	Distance (km) ²
002137	Lower River Suir SAC	82.12
002141	Mountmellick SAC	14.91
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	0.35
002256	Ballyprior Grassland SAC	2.43
002357	Clonreher Bog NHA	13.34

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site located within the suburban environment of the south of the town. The nearest European site to the proposed Project is River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162) which is located approximately 350 m to the north, where it is associated with Stradbally River. There is no potential for connectivity to any of the other European sites located within 15 km of the proposed Project. The only other

¹ All European sites potentially connected irrespective of the nature or scale of the proposed Project.

² Distances indicated are the closest geographical distance between the proposed Project and the European site boundary, as made available by the NPWS. Connectivity along hydrological pathways may be significantly greater.

European site that is potentially hydrologically connected to the proposed Project site is the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 0002137). The waters of the River Suir and River Barrow mix at their mouths prior to discharge into the Atlantic, on the south coast, approximately 82 km to the south of the proposed Project.

A review of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping for rivers and streams, OSI mapping on Geohive.ie, and aerial photography indicates that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project site.

It has been noted that the proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for wastewater and surface water. It has also been noted that, in line with SuDS principles, the proposed Project's surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Significant effects on any European sites are unlikely given:

- The nature and scale of the proposed Project, a residential development on a 1.74 ha. greenfield site within the suburban environment of the south of the town of Stradbally;
- The distance between the proposed Project and the nearest European site, approximately 350 m;
- The lack of hydrological connectivity between the proposed Project and any watercourses or field drains. A review of several sources indicated that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project;
- The proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for the treatment and disposal of wastewater and surface water. It has been noted that the Stradbally Wastewater Treatment Plant was recently upgraded and that it has the capacity to facilitate the proposed Project; and
- In line with SuDS principles, new surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Having considered the above, significant effects on any European sites as a result of the proposed Project can be ruled out and potential significant effects on European sites can be excluded at a preliminary screening stage.

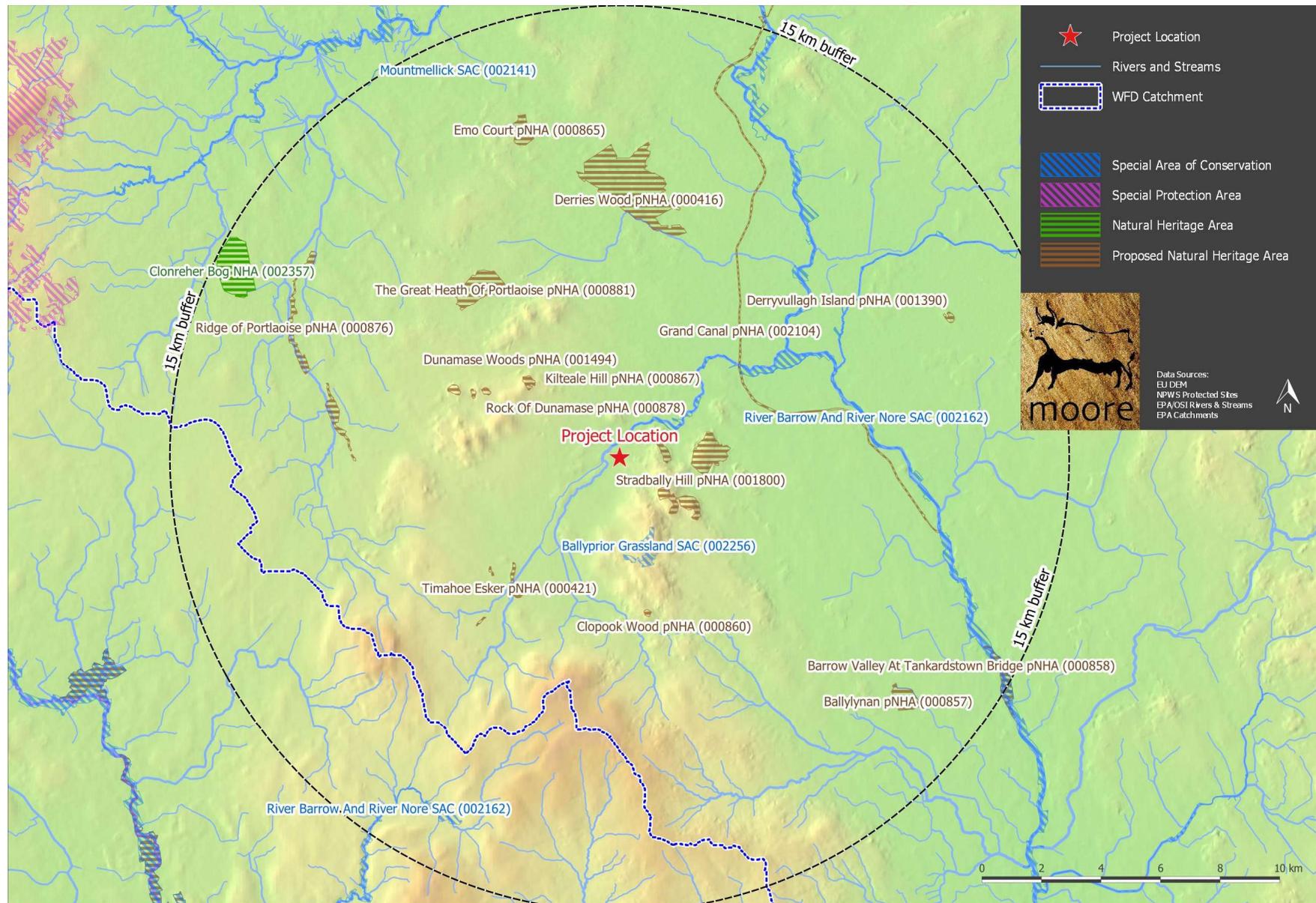


Figure 3. Showing European sites and NHAs/pNHAs within 15 km of the proposed Project.



Figure 4. Detailed view of European sites and NHAs/pNHAs in the vicinity of the proposed Project

4.2. Ecological Network Supporting Natura 2000 Sites

An analysis of the proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) and designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) in terms of their role in supporting the species using Natura 2000 sites was undertaken. It was assumed that these supporting roles mainly related to mobile fauna such as mammals and birds which may use pNHAs and NHAs as “stepping stones” between Natura 2000 sites.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations 2011 place a high degree of importance on such non-Natura 2000 areas as features that connect the Natura 2000 network. Features such as ponds, woodlands and important hedgerows were taken into account during the rest of the AA process.

There are no NHAs or pNHAs that will be affected by the proposed Project.

5. Identification of Potential Impacts & Assessment of Significance

The proposed Project is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the sites considered in the assessment and therefore potential impacts must be identified and considered.

5.1. Potential Impacts

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site located within the suburban environment of the south of the town. The nearest European site to the proposed Project is River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162) which is located approximately 350 m to the north, where it is associated with Stradbally River. There is no potential for connectivity to any of the other European sites located within 15 km of the proposed Project. The only other European site that is potentially hydrologically connected to the proposed Project site is the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 0002137). The waters of the River Suir and River Barrow mix at their mouths prior to discharge into the Atlantic, on the south coast, approximately 82 km to the south of the proposed Project.

A review of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping for rivers and streams, OSI mapping on Geohive.ie, and aerial photography indicates that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project site.

It has been noted that the proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for wastewater and surface water. It has also been noted that, in line with SuDS principles, the proposed Project’s surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Significant effects on any European sites are unlikely given:

- The nature and scale of the proposed Project, a residential development on a 1.74 ha. greenfield site within the suburban environment of the south of the town of Stradbally;
- The distance between the proposed Project and the nearest European site, approximately 350 m;
- The lack of hydrological connectivity between the proposed Project and any watercourses or field drains. A review of several sources indicated that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project;
- The proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for the treatment and disposal of wastewater and surface water. It has been noted that the Stradbally Wastewater Treatment Plant was recently upgraded and that it has the capacity to facilitate the proposed Project; and
- In line with SuDS principles, new surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Having considered the above, significant effects on any European sites as a result of the proposed Project have been ruled out and potential significant effects on European sites have been excluded at a preliminary screening stage.

5.2. Assessment of Potential In-Combination Effects

Cumulative impacts or effects are changes in the environment that result from numerous human-induced, small-scale alterations. Cumulative impacts can be thought of as occurring through two main pathways: first, through persistent additions or losses of the same materials or resource, and second, through the compounding effects as a result of the coming together of two or more effects.

As part of the Screening for an Appropriate Assessment, in addition to the proposed Project, other relevant plans and projects in the area must also be considered at this stage. This step aims to identify at this early stage any possible significant in-combination effects of the proposed development with other such plans and projects on European sites.

The National Planning Database (myplan.ie/national-planning-application-map-viewer/) was consulted and Table 2 presents a list of applications that were granted permission in the vicinity of the proposed Project within the past three years.

Table 2. Planning applications granted permission in the vicinity of the proposed Project.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
17310	renovate and extend existing dwelling house consisting of a single storey extension to the side and front and all necessary and associated site works	Planner's Report - The subject site is located 0.9km from Stradbally Hill NHA and 1.1km from River Barrow & River Nore SAC. Having regard to the existing residential nature of site, the proposal for extension of an existing dwelling which is connected to public services, it is considered that the proposed development would not give rise to any adverse impacts on the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the designated sites.
17403	demolish an existing habitable house and all outbuildings; (ii) the provision of 16 no. single storey older person dwellings, comprising of 2 no. two-bedroom detached units (Type A) and 14 no. two-bedroom semi-detached units (Type B); (iii) 30 no. on-site car parking spaces; (iv) provision of private amenity space and landscaped public open space; (v) improved site entrance, minor relocation of existing public road kerb and footpath, minor relocation of 7 no. existing public parking spaces and new front boundary wall; (vi) associated boundary treatments and street lighting; (vii) foul and SuDS drainage; and (viii) all associated site development works necessary to facilitate the development	Planner's Report - There are no Natura 2000 sites at or in close proximity to the development site. The nearest such site, River Barrow and River Nore SAC [site code 21621 is c. 200 metres distant to north-west. Having regard to the distance factor, intervening buildings and topography, the availability of a public foul sewer network and the absence of a directly connecting water course no materially negative impacts on the SAC arising from the proposed development are anticipated.
17458	construct a dwelling house, connection to public foul sewer, connection to public water mains, new splayed entrance and associated site work	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site.
17457	construct a dwelling house, connection to public foul sewer, connection to public water mains, new splayed entrance and associated site work	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site.
17641	construct a single-storey extension to the side and a two-storey extension to the rear of existing dwelling and all associated siteworks	There are no predicted in-combination effects given the nature and extent of the proposed development
1842	construct a 292m2 extension to existing 1627m2 school building to accommodate a 2 classroom special needs unit, alterations to existing staff car park, associated site works	Planner's Report - The closest European site is the Stradbally River, part of The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 100m northwest of the subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
1880	construct a 38m high cellular tree telecommunications support structure carrying antennas and link dishes together with associated equipment units and security fencing and ground based equipment cabin and cabinets. This development will be carried out within the curtilage of a Protected Structure	Planner's Report - The closest European site is The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 0.2km west of the subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
18176	construct a proposed two storey dwelling house, garage, connection to existing wastewater & surface water services including mains water and to include all associated site works	Planner's Report - There are no Natura 2000 sites at or in the general vicinity of the development site.
18245	construct 2 no. 80sq. m class rooms with ensuite toilets, universal access wc, office, resource room and staff room with a combined area of c 228	Planner's Report - The closest European site is The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 200m northwest of the

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
	sq.m, and external bin store/enclosure and all other associated site works at Cosby NS. This is a Protected Structure (RPS ref. no. 239)	subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
18301	construct 72 no. residential dwellings (7,858 sq. m, gross floor area) comprising 8 no. 2 storey two-bedroom terrace houses, 30 no. 2 storey three bedroom terrace houses, 14 no. 2 storey three bedroom semi-detached houses, 16 no. 2 storey semi-detached four bedroom houses and 4 no. 2 storey detached four-bedroom houses; public open space areas; a total of 159 no. car parking spaces (71 no. private spaces, 83 no. communal spaces and 5 no. visitor spaces); and new vehicular access and egress and pedestrian and cyclist gate at the northern boundary of the site to Church Lane	Planner's Report - The applicant has carried out its own screening assessment. The closest European site is the Stradbally River, part of The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 100m northwest of the subject site. It is considered that the proposed development is not likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
18395	install a new septic tank and percolation area and all ancillary works for a cottage within the existing farmyard which is located within the curtilage of Stradbally Hall A Protected Structure RPS 414 and NIAH 129004321	There are no predicted in-combination effects given that the new septic tank and percolation area will improve the treatment of waste water.
18437	change house type and garage, from that previously granted on planning ref. no. 15/185. Permission is also sought for a storage shed and all associated site works	Planner's Report - The development site is not in, adjacent or functionally connected to any Natura 2000 site.
18751	construct 2 NO. detached, two storey houses with attic accommodation, connection to public foul sewer and water main, vehicle entrance with communal parking and open space and all associated site works	Planner's Report - The closest European site is The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 500m northwest of the subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
195	retain a single storey extension to side of existing house, incorporation of existing storage shed into main playschool area, existing car parking area and existing outdoor play area to rear of existing playschool and house. Planning permission for signage for existing playschool as located on the drawings. Previous planning reference 09/789 and to include all associated site works	Planner's Report - The closest European site is the Stradbally River, part of The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 1km north of the subject site. It is considered that the proposed development is not likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
19225	change use from a bookmakers to an estate agent/auctioneers office	There are no predicted in-combination effects given the nature of the proposed development
19437	retain the change of use to include amending Unit no.1 from the originally granted use of retail unit under reg references 05/443 and amended under 06/165,07/18 & 09/73 to its current use as a hair salon (58.5 m2), retain the use at Unit No.3 from retail unit (granted under reg ref 05/443 & 06/165) to barber shop (19.6 m2), retain the use at Unit no.4 from bookmakers office (granted under reg ref 07/2293) to coffee shop along with alterations to the internal floor plans (39.8 m2), retain the use at Unit no.7 from medical centre (granted under reg ref 05/443 & 06/165) to retail unit (105.9 m2). Retention of use at Unit No.8 on first floor level from medical centre (granted under reg ref 05/443 & 06/165) to beauty salon. (105.9 m2). The application will also include for the retention of	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is not likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
	the subdivision of Unit no.2 creating a new unit, Unit no.9 and the retention of use at Unit no.9 as a Post Office (50.4 m ²). A retention application in respect of an apartment (Apartment no.3) (88 m ²) on the second floor, along with the omission of 2 no. dormer windows on the Southern/Front elevation.	
19477	retain dwelling house as built, previously granted under planning application reference 07/583, complete and alter same house and completion of entrance as granted under planning application 08/434, extend the rear of same house and associated site works	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site.
19617	construct an extension to dwelling house, necessary renovations to same house and associated site work	There are no predicted in-combination effects given the nature and extent of the proposed development

There are no predicted in-combination effects with developments in Table 2 for the reasons discussed in the comments column of the Table and given that the proposed Project is unlikely to have any adverse effects on European sites.

The Laois County Development Plan in complying with the requirements of the Habitats Directive requires that all Projects and Plans that could affect the Natura 2000 sites in the same zone of impact of the Project site would be initially screened for Appropriate Assessment and if requiring Stage 2 AA, that appropriate employable mitigation measures would be put in place to avoid, reduce or ameliorate negative impacts. In this way any, in-combination impacts with Plans or Projects for the development area and surrounding townlands in which the development site is located, would be avoided.

Any new applications for the Project area will be initially assessed on a case by case basis by Laois County Council which will determine the requirement for AA Screening as per the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

6. Conclusion

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site located within the suburban environment of the south of the town. The nearest European site to the proposed Project is River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162) which is located approximately 350 m to the north, where it is associated with Stradbally River. There is no potential for connectivity to any of the other European sites located within 15 km of the proposed Project. The only other European site that is potentially hydrologically connected to the proposed Project site is the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 0002137). The waters of the River Suir and River Barrow mix at their mouths prior to discharge into the Atlantic, on the south coast, approximately 82 km to the south of the proposed Project.

A review of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping for rivers and streams, OSI mapping on Geohive.ie, and aerial photography indicates that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project site.

It has been noted that the proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for wastewater and surface water. It has also been noted that, in line with SuDS principles, the proposed Project's surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Significant effects on any European sites are unlikely given:

- The nature and scale of the proposed Project, a residential development on a 1.74 ha. greenfield site within the suburban environment of the south of the town of Stradbally;
- The distance between the proposed Project and the nearest European site, approximately 350 m;
- The lack of hydrological connectivity between the proposed Project and any watercourses or field drains. A review of several sources indicated that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project;
- The proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for the treatment and disposal of wastewater and surface water. It has been noted that the Stradbally Wastewater Treatment Plant was recently upgraded and that it has the capacity to facilitate the proposed Project; and
- In line with SuDS principles, new surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Having considered the above, significant effects on any European sites as a result of the proposed Project have been ruled out and potential significant effects on European sites have been excluded at a preliminary screening stage.

It has been objectively concluded by Moore Group Environmental Services that:

1. The proposed Project is not directly connected with, or necessary to the conservation management of the European sites considered in this assessment.
2. The proposed Project is unlikely to indirectly significantly affect the Qualifying interests or Conservation Objectives of the European sites considered in this assessment.
3. The proposed Project, alone or in combination with other projects, is not likely to have significant effects on the European sites considered in this assessment in view of their conservation objectives.
4. It is possible to conclude that there would be no significant effects, no potentially significant effects and no uncertain effects if the proposed Project were to proceed.

It can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

It is the view of Moore Group Environmental Services that it is not necessary to undertake any further stage of the Appropriate Assessment process.

A finding of no significant effects report is presented in Appendix A in accordance with the EU Commission's methodological guidance (European Commission, 2002).

7. References

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2010) Guidance on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (as amended February 2010).

European Commission (2000) Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.

European Commission Environment DG (2002) 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. European Commission, Brussels.

European Commission (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC: Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interests, compensatory measures, overall coherence and opinion of the Commission. European Commission, Brussels.

European Commission (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.

NPWS (2019) The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

NPWS (2020) National Parks and Wildlife Service Metadata available online at <https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data>

Appendix A

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT

Finding no significant effects report matrix

Name of project or plan

Proposed Residential Development, Carraig Glas, Stradbally, Co. Laois

Name and location of the Natura 2000 site(s)

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site located within the suburban environment of the south of the town. The nearest European site to the proposed Project is River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162) which is located approximately 350 m to the north, where it is associated with Stradbally River. There is no potential for connectivity to any of the other European sites located within 15 km of the proposed Project. The only other European site that is potentially hydrologically connected to the proposed Project site is the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 0002137). The waters of the River Suir and River Barrow mix at their mouths prior to discharge into the Atlantic, on the south coast, approximately 82 km to the south of the proposed Project.

Description of the project or plan

This report presents a screening assessment for a proposed Project consisting of the construction and operation of a residential development at Carraig Glas, Stradbally, Co. Laois.

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site of approximately 1.74 hectares, which is located within the suburban environment of the south of the town of Stradbally.

The proposed Project is to consist of several dwellings and all associated accesses and services. The proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for wastewater and surface water. It is noted that the Stradbally Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) was recently upgraded and that the new facility has sufficient capacity to facilitate the proposed Project.

The proposed Project will include new surface water drainage that, in line with Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) design principles, will include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception prior to discharge to the existing combined sewer.

Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site(s)

No

Are there other projects or plans that together with the projects or plan being assessed could affect the site

The National Planning Database (myplan.ie/national-planning-application-map-viewer/) was consulted and the Table 2 below presents a list of applications that were granted permission in the vicinity of the proposed Project within the past three years.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
17310	renovate and extend existing dwelling house consisting of a single storey extension to the side and front and all necessary and associated site works	Planner's Report - The subject site is located 0.9km from Stradbally Hill NHA and 1.1km from River Barrow & River Nore SAC. Having regard to the existing residential nature of site, the proposal for extension of an existing dwelling which is connected to public services, it is considered that the proposed development would not give rise to any adverse impacts on the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the designated sites.
17403	demolish an existing habitable house and all outbuildings; (ii) the provision of 16 no. single storey older person dwellings, comprising of 2 no.	Planner's Report - There are no Natura 2000 sites at or in close proximity to the development site.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
	two-bedroom detached units (Type A) and 14 no. two-bedroom semi-detached units (Type B); (iii) 30 no. on-site car parking spaces; (iv) provision of private amenity space and landscaped public open space; (v) improved site entrance, minor relocation of existing public road kerb and footpath, minor relocation of 7 no. existing public parking spaces and new front boundary wall; (vi) associated boundary treatments and street lighting; (vii) foul and SuDS drainage; and (viii) all associated site development works necessary to facilitate the development	The nearest such site, River Barrow and River Nore SAC [site code 21621 is c. 200 metres distant to north-west. Having regard to the distance factor, intervening buildings and topography, the availability of a public foul sewer network and the absence of a directly connecting water course no materially negative impacts on the SAC arising from the proposed development are anticipated.
17458	construct a dwelling house, connection to public foul sewer, connection to public water mains, new splayed entrance and associated site work	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site.
17457	construct a dwelling house, connection to public foul sewer, connection to public water mains, new splayed entrance and associated site work	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site.
17641	construct a single-storey extension to the side and a two-storey extension to the rear of existing dwelling and all associated siteworks	There are no predicted in-combination effects given the nature and extent of the proposed development
1842	construct a 292m ² extension to existing 1627m ² school building to accommodate a 2 classroom special needs unit, alterations to existing staff car park, associated site works	Planner's Report - The closest European site is the Stradbally River, part of The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 100m northwest of the subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
1880	construct a 38m high cellular tree telecommunications support structure carrying antennas and link dishes together with associated equipment units and security fencing and ground based equipment cabin and cabinets. This development will be carried out within the curtilage of a Protected Structure	Planner's Report - The closest European site is The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 0.2km west of the subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
18176	construct a proposed two storey dwelling house, garage, connection to existing wastewater & surface water services including mains water and to include all associated site works	Planner's Report - There are no Natura 2000 sites at or in the general vicinity of the development site.
18245	construct 2 no. 80sq. m class rooms with ensuite toilets, universal access wc, office, resource room and staff room with a combined area of c 228 sq.m, and external bin store/enclosure and all other associated site works at Cosby NS. This is a Protected Structure (RPS ref. no. 239)	Planner's Report - The closest European site is The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 200m northwest of the subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
18301	construct 72 no. residential dwellings (7,858 sq. m, gross floor area) comprising 8 no. 2 storey two-bedroom terrace houses, 30 no. 2 storey three bedroom terrace houses, 14 no. 2 storey three bedroom semi-detached houses, 16 no. 2 storey semi-detached four bedroom houses and 4 no. 2 storey detached four-bedroom houses; public open space areas; a total of 159 no. car parking spaces (71 no. private spaces, 83 no. communal spaces and 5 no. visitor spaces); and new vehicular access and egress and pedestrian and cyclist gate	Planner's Report - The applicant has carried out its own screening assessment. The closest European site is the Stradbally River, part of The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 100m northwest of the subject site. It is considered that the proposed development is not likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
	at the northern boundary of the site to Church Lane	
18395	install a new septic tank and percolation area and all ancillary works for a cottage within the existing farmyard which is located within the curtilage of Stradbally Hall A Protected Structure RPS 414 and NIAH 129004321	There are no predicted in-combination effects given that the new septic tank and percolation area will improve the treatment of waste water.
18437	change house type and garage, from that previously granted on planning ref. no. 15/185. Permission is also sought for a storage shed and all associated site works	Planner's Report - The development site is not in, adjacent or functionally connected to any Natura 2000 site.
18751	construct 2 NO. detached, two storey houses with attic accommodation, connection to public foul sewer and water main, vehicle entrance with communal parking and open space and all associated site works	Planner's Report - The closest European site is The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 500m northwest of the subject site. It is not considered that the proposed development is likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
195	retain a single storey extension to side of existing house, incorporation of existing storage shed into main playschool area, existing car parking area and existing outdoor play area to rear of existing playschool and house. Planning permission for signage for existing playschool as located on the drawings. Previous planning reference 09/789 and to include all associated site works	Planner's Report - The closest European site is the Stradbally River, part of The River Barrow and River Nore SAC Site Code: 002162, located approximately 1km north of the subject site. It is considered that the proposed development is not likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
19225	change use from a bookmakers to an estate agent/auctioneers office	There are no predicted in-combination effects given the nature of the proposed development
19437	retain the change of use to include amending Unit no.1 from the originally granted use of retail unit under reg references 05/443 and amended under 06/165,07/18 & 09/73 to its current use as a hair salon (58.5 m2), retain the use at Unit No.3 from retail unit (granted under reg ref 05/443 & 06/165) to barber shop (19.6 m2), retain the use at Unit no.4 from bookmakers office (granted under reg ref 07/2293) to coffee shop along with alterations to the internal floor plans (39.8 m2), retain the use at Unit no.7 from medical centre (granted under reg ref 05/443 & 06/165) to retail unit (105.9 m2). Retention of use at Unit No.8 on first floor level from medical centre (granted under reg ref 05/443 & 06/165) to beauty salon. (105.9 m2). The application will also include for the retention of the subdivision of Unit no.2 creating a new unit, Unit no.9 and the retention of use at Unit no.9 as a Post Office (50.4 m2). A retention application in respect of an apartment (Apartment no.3) (88 m2) on the second floor, along with the omission of 2 no. dormer windows on the Southern/Front elevation.	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is not likely to have any negative impact on the conservation objectives of any European Site.
19477	retain dwelling house as built, previously granted under planning application reference 07/583, complete and alter same house and completion of entrance as granted under planning application 08/434, extend the rear of same house and associated site works	Planner's Report - The site is not located within or adjacent to a European designated site.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
19617	construct an extension to dwelling house, necessary renovations to same house and associated site work	There are no predicted in-combination effects given the nature and extent of the proposed development

There are no predicted in-combination effects with developments in the Table 2 above for the reasons discussed in the comments column of the Table and given that the proposed Project is unlikely to have any adverse effects on European sites.

The Laois County Development Plan in complying with the requirements of the Habitats Directive requires that all Projects and Plans that could affect the Natura 2000 sites in the same zone of impact of the Project site would be initially screened for Appropriate Assessment and if requiring Stage 2 AA, that appropriate employable mitigation measures would be put in place to avoid, reduce or ameliorate negative impacts. In this way any, in-combination impacts with Plans or Projects for the development area and surrounding townlands in which the development site is located, would be avoided.

Any new applications for the Project area will be initially assessed on a case by case basis by Laois County Council which will determine the requirement for AA Screening as per the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

THE ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site.

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site located within the suburban environment of the south of the town. The nearest European site to the proposed Project is River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162) which is located approximately 350 m to the north, where it is associated with Stradbally River. There is no potential for connectivity to any of the other European sites located within 15 km of the proposed Project. The only other European site that is potentially hydrologically connected to the proposed Project site is the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 0002137). The waters of the River Suir and River Barrow mix at their mouths prior to discharge into the Atlantic, on the south coast, approximately 82 km to the south of the proposed Project.

A review of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping for rivers and streams, OSI mapping on Geohive.ie, and aerial photography indicates that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project site.

It has been noted that the proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for wastewater and surface water. It has also been noted that, in line with SuDS principles, the proposed Project's surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Significant effects on any European sites are unlikely given:

- The nature and scale of the proposed Project, a residential development on a 1.74 ha. greenfield site within the suburban environment of the south of the town of Stradbally;
- The distance between the proposed Project and the nearest European site, approximately 350 m;
- The lack of hydrological connectivity between the proposed Project and any watercourses or field drains. A review of several sources indicated that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project;
- The proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for the treatment and disposal of wastewater and surface water. It has been noted that the Stradbally Wastewater Treatment Plant was recently upgraded and that it has the capacity to facilitate the proposed Project; and
- In line with SuDS principles, new surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Having considered the above, significant effects on any European sites as a result of the proposed Project have been ruled out and potential significant effects on European sites have been excluded at a preliminary screening stage.

Explain why these effects are not considered significant.

See above.

List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e-mail address

The requirement for Appropriate Assessment Screening was determined by Laois County Council.

Response to consultation

N/A.

DATA COLLECTED TO CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT

Who carried out the assessment

Moore Group Environmental Services.

Sources of data

NPWS database of designated sites at www.npws.ie

National Biodiversity Data Centre database <http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie>

Level of assessment completed

Desktop Assessment.

Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed

Laois County Council Planning Section.

OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

The proposed Project site is a greenfield site located within the suburban environment of the south of the town. The nearest European site to the proposed Project is River Barrow And River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162) which is located approximately 350 m to the north, where it is associated with Stradbally River. There is no potential for connectivity to any of the other European sites located within 15 km of the proposed Project. The only other European site that is potentially hydrologically connected to the proposed Project site is the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 0002137). The waters of the River Suir and River Barrow mix at their mouths prior to discharge into the Atlantic, on the south coast, approximately 82 km to the south of the proposed Project.

A review of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping for rivers and streams, OSI mapping on Geohive.ie, and aerial photography indicates that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project site.

It has been noted that the proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for wastewater and surface water. It has also been noted that, in line with SuDS principles, the proposed Project's surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Significant effects on any European sites are unlikely given:

- The nature and scale of the proposed Project, a residential development on a 1.74 ha. greenfield site within the suburban environment of the south of the town of Stradbally;
- The distance between the proposed Project and the nearest European site, approximately 350 m;
- The lack of hydrological connectivity between the proposed Project and any watercourses or field drains. A review of several sources indicated that there are no watercourses or field drains in the vicinity of the proposed Project;
- The proposed Project is to be connected to the existing combined sewer for the treatment and disposal of wastewater and surface water. It has been noted that the Stradbally Wastewater Treatment Plant was recently upgraded and that it has the capacity to facilitate the proposed Project; and
- In line with SuDS principles, new surface water drainage is to include attenuation and hydrocarbon interception.

Having considered the above, significant effects on any European sites as a result of the proposed Project have been ruled out and potential significant effects on European sites have been excluded at a preliminary screening stage.

It has been objectively concluded by Moore Group Environmental Services that:

1. The proposed Project is not directly connected with, or necessary to the conservation management of the European sites considered in this assessment.
2. The proposed Project is unlikely to indirectly significantly affect the Qualifying interests or Conservation Objectives of the European sites considered in this assessment.
3. The proposed Project, alone or in combination with other projects, is not likely to have significant effects on the European sites considered in this assessment in view of their conservation objectives.
4. It is possible to conclude that there would be no significant effects, no potentially significant effects and no uncertain effects if the proposed Project were to proceed.

It can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

It is the view of Moore Group Environmental Services that it is not necessary to undertake any further stage of the Appropriate Assessment process.