



Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

AAsr in relation to a proposal for a housing development in Derrybeg,
(Gweedore), Co. Donegal adjacent to the regional road R257.

Greentrack Environmental Consultants

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Requirement for Report

Greentrack Consultants have been instructed by Donegal County Council to undertake this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AAsr). The aim of this screening report is to assess whether significant effects on European Sites are likely to arise from the proposed development individually or in-combination with other plans/projects.

1.1.2 EU Habitats Directive

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna) formed a basis for the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's). Similarly, Special Protection Areas are legislated for under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds). Collectively, SACs and SPAs are referred to as Natura 2000 sites. In general terms, they are considered to be of exceptional importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species within the European Community. Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken for any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. An Appropriate Assessment is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan or project on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to preclude negatives effects. The main aim of the EU Habitats Directive is to “contribute towards ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora in the European territory of the Member States to which the treaty applies”. The Directive was originally transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Natural Habitat) Regulations, S1 94/1997. However, two judgments of the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) – notably cases C-418/04 and C-183/05 - found that Ireland had not adequately transposed the two Directives. Part 6 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015 is therefore relevant in dealing with the protection of flora and fauna since the revoke of the European habitats Regulations of 1997. This consolidates the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in CJEU judgments.

Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive states 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. In the 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”.

As such any project likely to have a significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, upon the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site must undergo an assessment of its implications on relevant Natura 2000 sites. In order to establish whether or not a likely significant effect will arise as a result of the implementation of a project a Screening Assessment should be undertaken. It is therefore deemed necessary to screen the project for the potential to result in significant negative effects to the published conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites. The applicant is therefore submitting this screening report to allow an Appropriate Assessment on the proposal to be carried out.

1.1.3 Stages of the Habitat Directive Assessment

Screening for Appropriate Assessment must be carried out to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the relevant European site(s), if the proposed operation/activity on its own or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European site(s) (Regulation 42(1) of the 2011 Regulations). The likely effects of all aspects of the operation must be considered and screened in combination with other operations and other management activities which are completed, commenced, permitted, or proposed and other developments that could act in combination. It must be determined that an Appropriate Assessment is required if it cannot be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information, following screening, that the project, alone or in combination with other plans or projects will have a significant effect on the European site(s) (Regulation 42(6)). The precautionary principle should be applied in reaching this determination, i.e. where there is uncertainty or a lack of data, it should not be assumed that significant effects will not result.

The Appropriate Assessment process consists of four stages as summarised below in sequential order. 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, which is the main derogation step to Article 6(4).

Figure 1.1: Stages of Screening (Relevant Stages Highlighted)

Appropriate Assessment Screening	Natura Impact Statement	Alternative Solutions	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
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Stage 1 – Appropriate Assessment Screening. Screening involves an initial assessment of the project or plan’s effect on a Natura 2000 site(s). If it cannot be concluded that there will be no significant effect upon a Natura 2000 site, an Appropriate Assessment is required. The process addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3):

- 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 in view of its conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening should be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation, unless potential impacts clearly can be avoided through the modification or redesign of the plan or project, in which case the screening process is repeated on the altered plan. The greatest level of evidence and justification will be needed in circumstances when the process ends at screening stage on grounds of no impact. This report provides the information necessary to enable the appropriate authority to screen the proposed development for the requirement to prepare an Appropriate Assessment.

Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Statement or NIS): The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site(s) from the project or plan, 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 adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts.

Stage 3 – Assessment of alternative solutions: The process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. The process must return to Stage 2, as alternatives will require appropriate assessment in order to proceed. Demonstrating that all reasonable alternatives have been considered and assessed, and that the least damaging option has been selected, is necessary to progress to Stage 4.

Stage 4 – Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain: Stage 4 is the main derogation process of Article 6(4), which examines whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project that will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site to proceed in cases where it has been established that no less damaging alternative solution exists. Compensatory measures must be proposed and assessed. The Commission must be informed of the compensatory measures. Compensatory measures must be practical, implementable, likely to succeed, proportionate and enforceable, and they must be approved by the Minister. Each listed stage determines whether a further stage in the process is necessary. If, for example, the conclusions at the end of Stage One are that there will be no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s), there is no requirement to proceed further.

Following on from Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive the objective of this Natura Impact Statement is to screen for “Likely Significant Effects” and to conclude whether or not the proposed activity is likely to result in significant adverse effects to the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence. The appraisal of adverse effects to the integrity of these sites will be established by assessing the potential impacts the proposal will have on the conservation objectives of said Natura 2000 sites. This report will also detail measures that will avoid, reduce, and mitigate any such adverse effects.

1.2 Guidance Documents

This AAsr was carried out in accordance with relevant National and European Guidance including but not limited to:

National Guidance:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2010)
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 (NPWS, 2010)
- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management: OPR Practice Note PN01 (OPR, 2021)

European Guidance:

- Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle (European Commission, 2000).
- European Commission, Nature and biodiversity cases – Ruling of the European Court of Justice, Publications Office, 2006,
- Article 6 of the Habitats Directive – Rulings of the European Court of Justice (European Commission Final Draft September 2014)

- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2019).
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 Sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC Brussels, 28.9.2021 C (European Commission, 2021)

1.3 Statement of Authority

This AAsr has been compiled by Daniel Faulkner (BSc Environmental Science, MSc Environmental Sustainability). Daniel has been involved in all aspects of Appropriate Assessments and Environmental Impact Assessments since 2020. He has experience conducting habitat surveys and invasive species surveys and is involved in all aspects of GIS application.

2 Approach and Methodology

2.1 Approach

The function of this AAsr is to identify whether the proposal will have a likely significant effect on the Natura 2000 sites as detailed. The nature of the likely interactions between the proposal and the integrity of the site will depend upon:

- sensitivity of the site's qualifying interests to potential impacts arising from the proposal
- current conservation status of the sites and
- the likely changes that will result from activities associated with the proposal, in combination with other plans and projects.

The general approach applied in appropriate assessment is as follows:

Stage 1 Screening:

- Define the project and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of Natura 2000 sites.
- Establish a Zone of Influence (ZOI) and identify Natura 2000 sites likely to be influenced by this development.
- Review the project to determine if it has the potential to affect the Natura 2000 sites and determine whether the Natura 2000 sites are vulnerable to the effect.
- Identify other plans or project that, in combination with this project, have the potential to affect Natura 2000 sites.
- If potential significant effects on Natura 2000 sites cannot be excluded at this stage, Stage 2 appropriate assessment is required.
- If potential significant effects on Natura 2000 sites can be excluded at this stage, Stage 2 appropriate assessment is not required.

Stage 2 Natura Impact Statement:

- Review the project to determine if it has the potential to affect the Natura 2000 sites identified in AA screening.

- Identify other plans or project that, in combination with this project, have the potential to affect Natura 2000 sites.
- Where adverse impacts are identified mitigation/compensatory measures will be proposed to offset/reduce/avoid the magnitude of the impact.
- Residual Impacts on the identified Natura 2000 sites will be assessed.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology used for this AAsr is as follows:

- The plan/project and the receiving environment were reviewed and described.
- A ZOI of the plan/project was defined based on the characteristics of the proposed plan/project and the receiving environment. This refers to the area over which the proposed plan/project can exert effect on designated sites. Sites were identified by using a source-pathway receptor approach. Here the European Site represents the receptor, with the source being an aspect of the proposed plan/project such as emissions, water discharge etc. and the pathway is a vector for transporting the source to the receptor such as air or a watercourse. A number of additional factors must be considered when defining the ZOI ¹, including:
 - Any Natura 2000 sites within/adjacent the plan/project area
 - The distance over which effects can be received: A distance of 15km is commonly used and derives from UK guidance ². This must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects. Natura 2000 sites that are more than 15km from the plan or project area may be at risk of impact depending on the likely impacts of the plan or project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, bearing in mind the precautionary principle. In the case of sites with water dependent habitats or species, and a plan or project that could affect water quality or quantity, for example, it may be necessary to consider the full extent of the upstream and/or downstream catchment. In the case of certain plans/projects relating to SPA's, the ZOI may be influenced by the core range of SCI's. Scottish Natural Heritage provides guidance on the core range of several SCI's and assessing the zone of influence ³. Additional scientific literature can be used to established ranges of species that European Sites support.
- Sites within the ZOI and connected to the proposed plan/project area by a source – pathway – receptor chain were assessed within the context of the proposal to ascertain whether there is a likelihood of significant adverse effects in the absence of mitigation measures. Where any uncertainty exists, the precautionary principle was followed and it is assumed that uncertainty implies that adverse effects cannot be excluded.
- Cumulative impact assessment was conducted to assess the impact of the proposed plan/project in combination with other plans/projects.

¹ Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management: OPR Practice Note PN01 (OPR, 2021)

² Treweek Environmental Consultants, Appropriate Assessment of plans, 2006

³ Scottish Natural Heritage Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) Guidance, 2016

- Considering all characteristics of the plan/project, the receiving environment, and potential in- combination a final screening determination was made to determine whether potential adverse effects on European sites could be excluded.
- Where there was no likelihood of adverse effects the Natura 2000 site was excluded from assessment, where there was a finding of potential adverse effects in the absence of mitigation the Natura 2000 site was screened in for stage 2 appropriate assessment.

The methodology employed desk study and field survey work. These stages are not sequential and occur in tandem as the assessment requires.

2.2.1 Desk Study

A desk-based analysis was conducted to obtain information on Natura 2000 sites and establish the zone of influence of the proposed development and to identify potential source-pathway-receptor chains to the European Sites from the area proposed for development. Furthermore, available records of plans / projects were accessed to obtain information on potential cumulative impacts. The following data sources were used during desk-based analysis:

- Latest boundary data for Natura 2000 sites. (Last updated 2024 for both SAC & SPA datasets) Available from www.npws.ie/maps-and-data/designated-site-data/download-boundary-data
- Article 17 Data. Available from www.npws.ie/maps-and-data
- NPWS Site Synopsis and Conservation Objectives, available at www.npws.ie
- Hydrological data from the EPA available from www.gis.epa.ie/GetData/Download.
- The EIA portal at www.Housinggov.ie.maps.arcgis.com,
- Donegal County Council Planning Portal, available at www.donegal.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer, and www.eplanning.ie/DonegalCC/SearchTypes

QGIS 3.28 was used to facilitate the analysis of spatial data from online sources and gathered during baseline surveys. Furthermore, this data was used to generate several figures contained within this report.

2.2.3 Baseline Surveys

Site visits took place on 9th and 19th April 2024. Walkovers were conducted noting general characteristics of the site.

Site drainage characteristics were investigated. This included noting areas of flowing water, standing water, surface water drains and direction of flow.

Habitats were classified according to 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland'⁴. Guidance produced for phase 1 habitat surveys in the UK informed the habitat survey⁵. Habitats were classified to Fossitt's Level Three.

During the site walkover a search for Invasive Alien Species (IAS) listed under the Third Schedule of the European Communities Regulations 2011 (as amended) was conducted.

⁴ J. Fossitt. (2000) A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Dublin

⁵ JNCC. (2010) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a Technique for Environmental Audit. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.

3 The Project

The project is not necessary for the conservation of any Natura 2000 site. The proposal is for the construction of social housing units.

Projects can typically be divided into stages, including:

- Construction Stage
- Operational Stage

Figure 3.1 provides the site layout:

Figure 3.1: Site Layout



(Layout drawing supplied by Donegal County Council – not to scale)

3.1 Construction Stage

Site clearance will be required. After this, foundations for construction will be laid. Construction of the 16 no. units will be undertaken using standard construction practices. Connection to ancillary services including foul water and surface water drainage apparatus will occur. The applicant has outlined their intention to follow guidelines produced by (2016) Inland Fisheries Ireland, *Guidelines On Protection Of Fisheries During Construction Works In And Adjacent To Waters Inland Fisheries Ireland*, and to incorporate SUDs principles into the design as best practice in relation to surface water management.

3.2 Operational Stage

The operational stage involves standard use of the housing development. The operation of the development will be facilitated by the following.

- **Surface Water Drainage**

This development contains storm water drainage apparatus comprising a network of storm drains incorporating SUDs principles and a class 1 hydrocarbon interceptor. The proposed drainage regime diverts surface water via drains to the hydrocarbon interceptor prior to discharge to an open land drain running along the northwestern boundary of the site. The installation of the hydrocarbon interceptor and the incorporation of SUDs principles are best practice for all Donegal County Council developments.

- **Foul Water Management**

A wastewater treatment plant is to be constructed in the western part of the site. All foul water is directed for treatment within the plant and treated effluent percolates to ground.

4 The Receiving Environment

4.1 General Location

The proposed development is located in Derrybeg, Co. Donegal. (Figure 4.1). The site is located directly off the regional R257 road. The ITM coordinates are E=581300 and N=925478 for the centre of the site.

Figure 4.1: Site Location



4.2 Site Description

The site bounds the regional R257. The majority of the site is made ground with areas of hardstanding near the entrance. To the south of the site there are areas of one-off housing, and

the northern boundary of site leads on to commercial premises. The site is bounded to the east by the R257 and domestic housing and by unimproved agricultural land to the west.

4.3 Hydrology

River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) exist for each River Basin Districts in Ireland in accordance with the Water Framework Directive. The EPA map viewer provides access to water quality information at individual waterbody status for all the River Basin Districts in Ireland. The EPA map viewer was searched on 17/04/2024 for information on the water quality surrounding the subject site.

The site lies within the 38-Gweebarra - Sheephaven Water Framework Directive (WFD) catchment, the Gweedore WFD sub catchment and the Catheen river sub basin (EPA code: IE_NW_38C030200).

The site is low lying and relatively flat with a very gentle slope from southeast to northwest. The majority of the site is made ground. There are no natural watercourses or drainage features present on site. Most of the incident rainfall percolates to ground.

There is an open drainage ditch running along the western and northern boundaries of the site. This watercourse is listed as a tributary of the Catheen River system. Flow from this watercourse is northwest towards Maghera Strand and Gweedore Bay.

The approximate hydrological distance from the site to the nearest SAC (Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC) is 570m.

The WFD status of the Catheen river is assessed as poor by the EPA for the period 2016 - 2021. The WFD status of the underlying groundwater body is assessed by the EPA as good for the period 2016 – 2021.

The Catheen river is not designated as a Salmonid water under SI No 293 of 1988 – EC (Quality of Salmonid waters) Regulations, 1988, and does not contain the annex 1 species, the freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera*).

The site does not form part of any *Margaritifera* catchment area.

The proposed development will discharge treated surface water to the open drain running along the northern boundary of the site of the site. Treatment is by means of hydrocarbon interceptor installed as part of Donegal County Council best practice policy in accordance with recommendations laid out in the Inland Fisheries guidance document 'Works in and near waterways'. Photograph 4.1 shows a portion of the open drain before flowing into the tributary of the Catheen River.

Photograph 4.1: Open drain along northwest boundary of site showing impeded pathway.



4.4 Baseline Surveys

4.4.1 Habitats

The site is a mosaic of several habitats. Most of the site has been formed from made ground and there is evidence of several exotic and invasive species present on site. Most of the site is classified as Dry calcareous and neutral grassland (GS1). The site grades to scrub on progress towards the western corner. Scrub is dominated by briars (*Rubus spp.*) with occasional Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Willow (*Salix spp.*) and Exotics.

There is a small area of hardstanding (BL3) near the R257. A mixed hedgerow (WL1) is present along the southern boundary of the site. Photograph 4.2 shows the hardstanding area with the mixed hedgerow in the background. There are many exotic species contained within the hedgerow such as Griselinia (*Griselinia littoralis*), Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster spp.*), Hebe (*Hebe spp.*), Pampas grass (*Cortadeira selloana*), Cabbage tree palm (*Livistona australis*) that are mixed with more common species such as Gorse Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Sitka Spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) and Willow. There are also partial hedgerows along the northeastern and northwestern boundaries of the site. Similar species are present along the northeastern boundary whereas the northwestern boundary partial hedgerow is dominated by small trees of Lodgepole pine (*Pinus contorta*), Willow and Sycamore.

Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) is predominantly found along and in proximity to the southern boundary. Salmonberry is only found in one place near the northern boundary of the site. The Invasive Alien Species Survey and Management Plan produced for the site provides more detail on the extent of Rhododendron and Salmonberry on site and control measures proposed. A habitat map is shown below in Figure 4.2.

4.4.2 Invasives

A walkover terrestrial invasive species survey of the subject site was carried out on 19th April 2024. The survey was carried out for species listed on part 1 (plants) of the third schedule of the European Communities (Bird and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI No. 477 of 2011). The regulations prohibit the introduction and/or dispersal of these species, and if this is caused to occur, the party involved shall be guilty of committing an offence. Rhododendron and Salmonberry was encountered on site and the extent of infestation on the site, and control measures for same are reported in the Invasive Alien Species Survey and Management Plan report for the site.

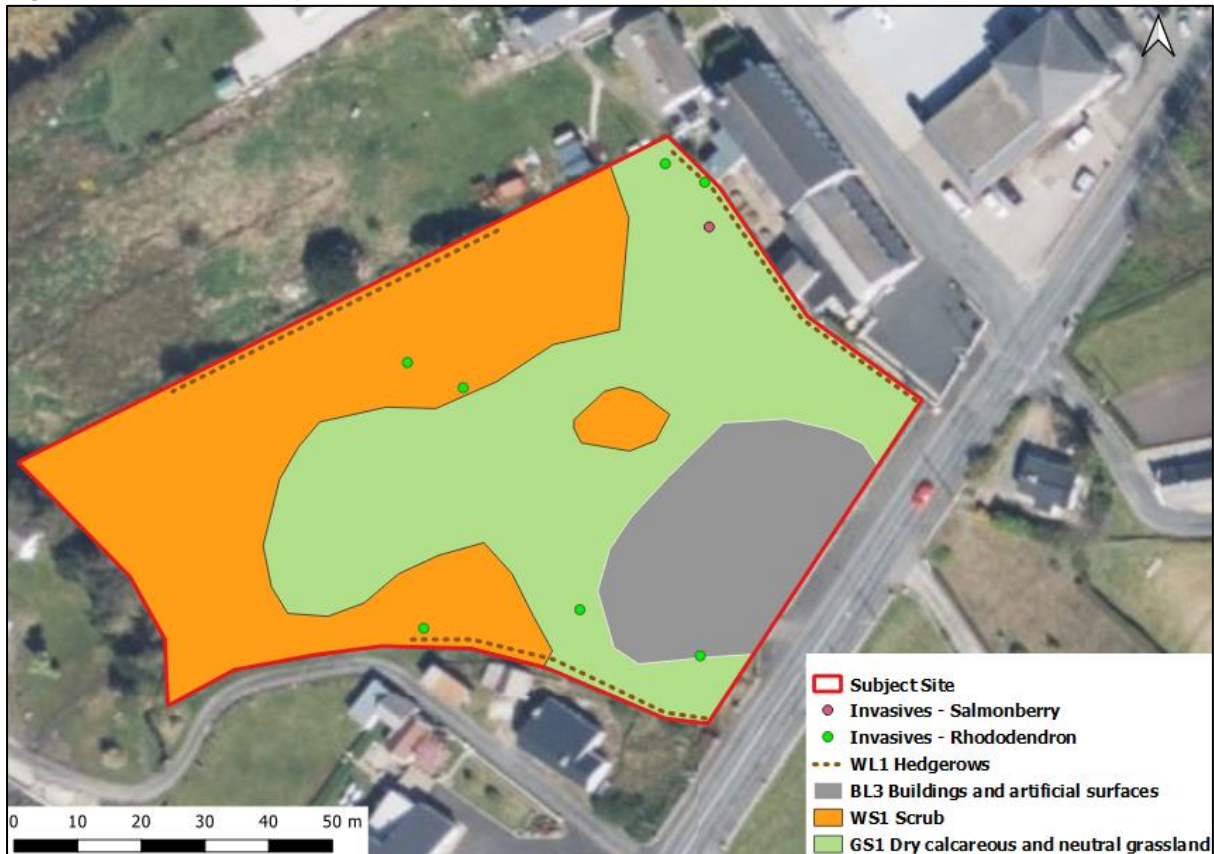
Photo 4.2: Artificial surfaces and hedgerow along southern boundary



Photo 4.3: Grassland grading to scrub in the west of the site



Figure 4.2: Habitat Map



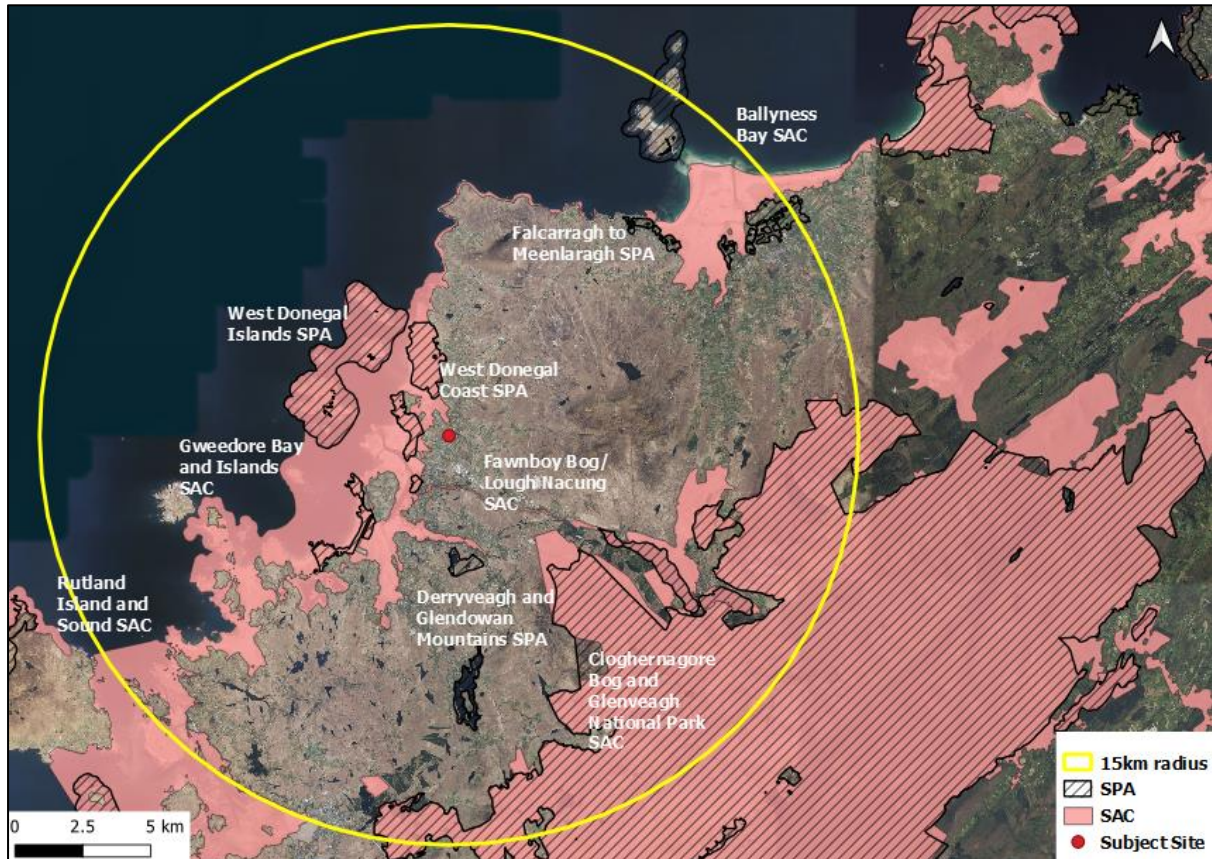
(Created using QGIS and Bing satellite imagery)

5 Natura 2000 Sites

5.1 Appropriate Assessment Screening

Figure 5.1 indicates the relative locations of Natura 2000 sites in relation to the subject site.

Figure 5.1: Proximal Natura 2000 sites



Considering the criteria outlined in Section 2, the following European Sites were assessed to ascertain whether:

- i. there is a source – pathway -receptor chain to the designated site, and they are within the likely zone of influence of the proposed plan/project,
- ii. there is potential for significant adverse effects in the absence of mitigation arising from the proposed plan/project and that further screening is required.

Relevant Natura 2000 sites occurring within the receiving environment of the proposed project are assessed in screening Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Screening of Natura 2000 Sites and Zone of Influence of Project

Site Name / Code/ Distance	QIs /SCIs	Source-Pathway-Receptor Chain	Considered in Further Screening (Y/N)
Special Areas of Conservation			
Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC 001141 c.255 m north	Coastal lagoons [1150] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Decalcified fixed dunes with <i>Empetrum nigrum</i> [2140] Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Callunolucicetea</i>) [2150] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395] <i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833]	S-P-R chain through surface water discharge from site leading directly to SAC. Hydrological distance from site to SAC is 570 m.	Y
Cloghernagore Bog and Glenveagh National Park SAC 002047 c.11.44 km north	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i>) [3110] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010]	No S-P-R chain	N

Site Name / Code/ Distance	QIs /SCIs	Source-Pathway-Receptor Chain	Considered in Further Screening (Y/N)
	European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Trichomanes speciosum (Killarney Fern) [1421]		
Rutland Island and Sound SAC 002283 C. 12.75 km southwest	Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]	No S-P-R chain	N
Fawnboy Bog/Lough Nacung SAC 000140 c. 1.80 km south	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]	No S-P-R chain	N
Ballyness Bay SAC 001090 c. 10.01 km northeast	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013]	No S-P-R chain	N

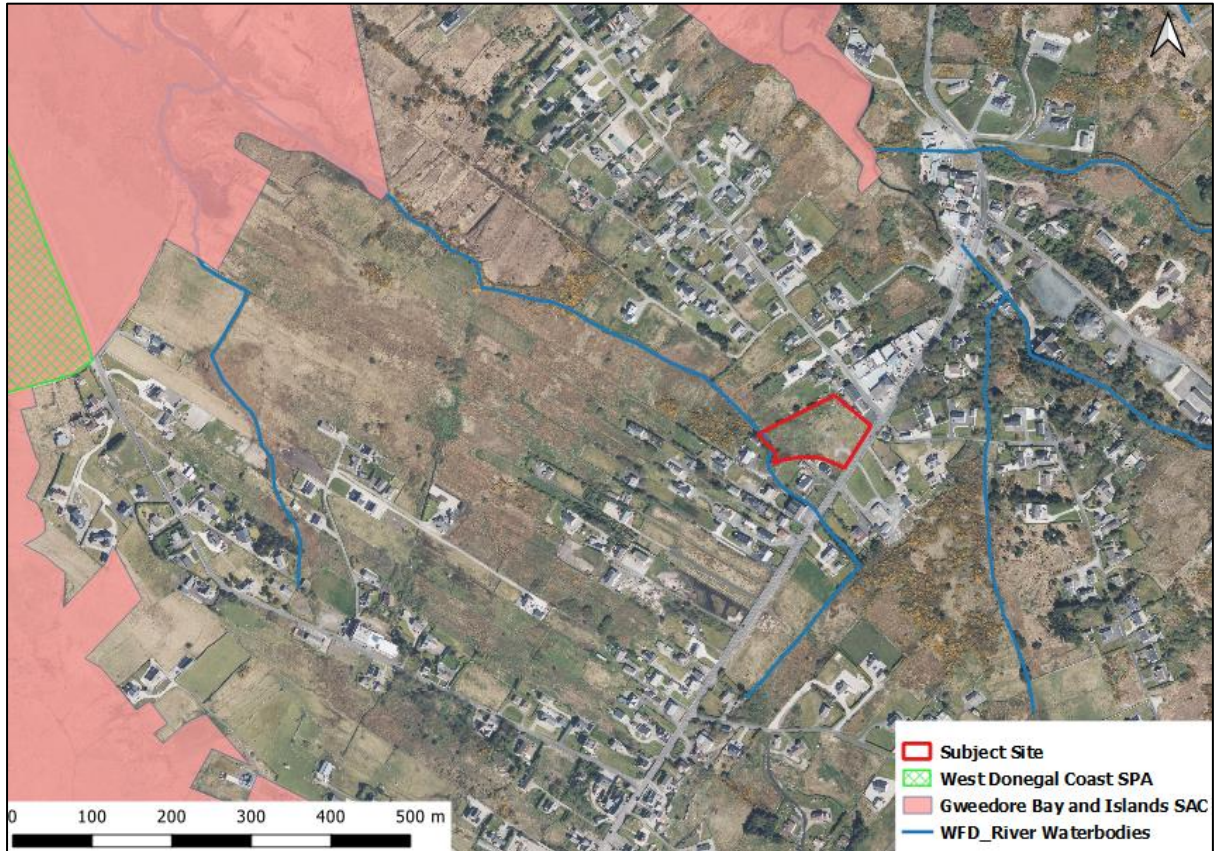
Site Name / Code/ Distance	QIs /SCIs	Source-Pathway-Receptor Chain	Considered in Further Screening (Y/N)
Special Protection Areas			
West Donegal Islands SPA 004230 c. 3.40 km west	Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018] Barnacle Goose (Branta leucopsis) [A045] Corncrake (Crex crex) [A122] Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182] Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]	No S-P-R chain	N
Derryveagh and Glendowan Mountains SPA 004039 c. 4.14 km south	Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001] Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098] Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Dunlin (Calidris alpina schinzii) [A466]	No S-P-R chain	N
West Donegal Coast SPA 004150 c.875 m west	Fulmar (Fulmarus glacialis) [A009] Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Shag (Phalacrocorax aristotelis) [A018] Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103] Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184] Kittiwake (Rissa tridactyla) [A188] Razorbill (Alca torda) [A200] Chough (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax) [A346]	No S-P-R chain	N
Falcarragh to Meenlaragh SPA	Corncrake (Crex crex) [A122]	No S-P-R chain	N

Table 5.1 has identified a potential source-pathway-receptor links to the following Natura 2000 sites:

- Gweedore bay and islands SAC

The hydrological pathway from the site to Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC is shown in Figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2: Hydrological link from the site to Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC (c. 570m)



(Created using QGIS, Bing satellite imagery and datasets from NPWS)

Considering the identified source pathway receptor chains to European Sites, the proposal will now be considered with regard to the likelihood generating adverse impacts in the absence of mitigation on European Sites. Table 5.2 details a screening determination matrix of identified European Sites. Each site is examined in the context of the proposal and a screening determination is provided.

Table 5.2: Stage 1 Screening Determination

Natura 2000 Site	Qualifying Interests for which the site was selected	Conservation Objectives	Stage 1 Screening Determination (Can Significant Effects be excluded in the absence of mitigation?)
Special Areas of Conservation			
Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC 001141 c.255m north	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal lagoons [1150] • Reefs [1170] • Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] • Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] • Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] • Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] • Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] • Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] • Decalcified fixed dunes with <i>Empetrum nigrum</i> [2140] • Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (<i>Calluno-Ulicetalia</i>) [2150] • Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (<i>Salicion arenariae</i>) [2170] 	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the qualifying interests of the SAC ⁶	<p>There is a direct hydrological link to the SAC in the form of the open drain to the northern boundary leading to the tributary of the Catheen River. The link is approximately 570 m and is heavily impeded (Photograph 4.1) Potential effects on the SAC could arise from construction/operation stage water discharge entering Lough Finn.</p> <p>For the construction stage, earth works may cause a temporary disturbance of silt which could become suspended in waters which follow identified pathways to the SAC. The pathway by its nature is vegetated and represents a heavily impeded pathway. The drainage pathway is comprised of freshwater and emergent vegetation which provided natural filtration and flow control for any runoff emitted from the site. Considering the short-term nature of the construction and the nature of the pathway, it is not likely that construction stage water emissions will give rise to significant negative effects on the European Site.</p> <p>Foul water treatment will be provided by a bespoke wastewater treatment system. Treated effluent will percolate to ground.</p>

⁶ NPWS Conservation Objectives: Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC 001141. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Natura 2000 Site	Qualifying Interests for which the site was selected	Conservation Objectives	Stage 1 Screening Determination (Can Significant Effects be excluded in the absence of mitigation?)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humid dune slacks [2190] • Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] • Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130] • European dry heaths [4030] • Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] • Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] • Euphydryas aurinia (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] • Phocoena phocoena (Harbour Porpoise) [1351] • Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] • Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395] • Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833] 		<p>Therefore, all operational water will be captured.</p> <p>Surface water is managed by SUDs principles and discharged through a hydrocarbon interceptor to an open drain as a matter of best practice. The receiving drain is considered to be a highly impeded pathway with various grasses growing in the channel and providing attenuation. The hydrological distance to the SAC of 570m is also significant. All these factors will ensure that surface water emission contains low suspended silt, and hydrocarbons are removed. Considering this, operational surface water is not likely to give rise to significant negative effects on the European Site.</p> <p>Considering the nature of the SPR chain to this European site, and the nature scale and location of the development, it is not envisaged that any water quality impacts will be received by the European Site arising from the proposed development.</p> <p>This finding is made without the reliance on mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce potential impacts.</p>

5.2 Cumulative Impact Assessment

5.2.1 Review of Plans

The Donegal County Development Plan 2018 - 2024 & Draft Donegal County Development Plan 2024 – 2030 were reviewed to cumulatively assess any impact on European Sites in combination with the proposed development. Table 5.3 contains this assessment.

Table 5.3: Review of Plans

Key Policy/Objective	Assessment for Cumulative Effect on Natura 2000 sites
Draft County Donegal Development Plan 2024 - 2030	
BIO-O-1: To preserve and enhance the biodiversity of the County in accordance with the relevant EU policies and national legislation.	The draft Development plan was comprehensively reviewed, with particular reference to Policies and Objectives that relate to the Natura 2000 network and other natural heritage interests. No potential for cumulative impacts on EU designated sites or Annex listed protected species were identified when considered in conjunction with the current proposal. The proposed project will not adversely affect any nationally designated site or protected species. No adverse water quality impacts are predicted to occur as a result of the proposed development. No policies or objectives of the county development plan were identified that could potentially combine with the proposed development to culminate in significant effect on European Sites.
BIO-P-1: To require all developments to comply with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and EU Bird Directive, including ensuring that development proposals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Do not adversely affect the integrity of any European/Natura 2000 site (i.e. Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas) including effects on ex-situ but functionally linked habitats, and species (e.g. Pearl Mussel) save where a plan must be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) b) Provide for the protection of animal and plant species listed in Annex IV of the EU Habitats Directive. c) Manage features of the landscape (such as rivers, riverbanks, field boundaries, ponds and small woods) which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora and the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network. 	
BIO-P-2: Ensure that all developments seek to conserve/protect the qualifying interests of Ramsar Sites, Nature Reserves, Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), and any species protected under the Wildlife Act save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal.	
BIO-P-3: Save to the extent necessary to provide for strategic infrastructure projects including the TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal, it is the policy of the Council to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect, where justified, features of local biodiversity value (e.g. hedgerows/field boundaries, trees, woodlands, wetlands, water bodies, riverbanks and peatlands) which make a significant contribution to the biodiversity, ecological connectivity, and associated visual amenity and/or rural character of the area. b) Require, where justified, that developments otherwise maximise the retention of and suitably integrate such features. In this regard proposals for the removal of existing roadside hedgerows/field boundaries for new developments in rural areas will only be permitted in so far as is necessary to safeguard public safety and any remaining portion of those features identified above not so required shall be retained. c) Require that development proposals provide biodiversity enhancement measures (e.g. native tree and hedgerow planting, and nature-based water management solutions). 	

Key Policy/Objective	Assessment for Cumulative Effect on Natura 2000 sites
<p>d) Require that large-scale developments result in no net biodiversity loss.</p>	
<p>BIO-P-4: Ensure that any development proposals do not lead to the introduction or spread of invasive species. Where invasive species are present, development proposals may be required to be submit an appropriate control and management programme.</p>	
<p>BIO-P-5:</p> <p>a) Ensure that new developments do not have a significant adverse impact on pollinator habitat and species, including protecting rare pollinators listed under the Wildlife Act and maximizing the retention of pollinator friendly habitats within development proposal where feasible.</p> <p>b) Require pollinator friendly planting and management regimes as part of planting/landscaping schemes for new public development including green infrastructure, large scale residential and transport development.</p>	
County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024	
<p>NH-O-1: To protect, sustainably manage and enhance the rich biodiversity of County Donegal for present and future generations.</p>	<p>The Development plan was comprehensively reviewed, with particular reference to Policies and Objectives that relate to the Natura 2000 network and other natural heritage interests.</p> <p>No potential for cumulative impacts on EU designated sites or Annex listed protected species were identified when considered in conjunction with the current proposal.</p> <p>The proposed project will not adversely affect any nationally designated site or protected species. No adverse water quality impacts are predicted to occur as a result of the proposed development.</p> <p>No policies or objectives of the county development plan were identified that could potentially combine with the proposed development to culminate in significant effect on European Sites.</p>
<p>NH-O-2: To comply with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and have regard to the relevant conservation objectives, management plans, qualifying interests and threats to the integrity of Natura 2000 sites.</p>	
<p>NH-O-3: To maintain the conservation value of all existing and/or proposed SACs, SPAs, NHAs and RAMSAR sites including those plant and animal species that have been identified for protection under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC), the Wildlife Acts (1976-2014) and the Flora Protection Order (2015).</p>	
<p>NH-O-4: To ensure the protection and management of the landscape in accordance with current legislation, ministerial and regional guidelines and having regard to the European Landscape Convention 2000.</p>	
<p>NH-O-5: To protect, manage and conserve the character, quality and value of the landscape having regard to the proper planning and development of the area, including consideration of the scenic amenity designations of this plan, the preservation of views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural, cultural, social or historic interest.</p>	
<p>NH-O-6: To protect and improve the integrity and quality of Designated Shellfish Waters, and Freshwater Pearl Mussel Basins and to take account of any relevant Shellfish Reduction Program or Fresh Water Pearl Mussel Sub-basin Plan.</p>	
<p>NH-O-7: To protect the areas of Especially High Scenic Amenity from intrusive and/or unsympathetic developments.</p>	
<p>NH-O-8: To ensure where appropriate the protection and conservation of hedgerows, stone walls and traditional field boundaries as natural heritage corridors and migration routes for wildlife where they are shown to play a significant heritage role.</p>	
<p>NH-O-10: To maintain and restore ecosystems and to conserve valuable or threatened habitats and species in order to prevent further loss of biodiversity and to meet the EU's target to halt</p>	

Key Policy/Objective	Assessment for Cumulative Effect on Natura 2000 sites
biodiversity loss by 2020 through the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy (2011) or as updated	
NH-P-1: It is a policy of the Council to ensure that development proposals do not damage or destroy any sites of international or national importance, designated for their wildlife/habitat significance in accordance with European and National legislation including: SACs, Special SPAs, NHAs, Ramsar Sites and Statutory Nature Reserves.	
NH-P-2: It is the policy of the Council to protect the habitats of species listed for protection through the prevention and management of the spread of invasive plant and animal species in the County in accordance with European and National legislation.	
NH-P-3: It is a policy of the Council to require the consideration of Designated Shellfish Waters and their Shellfish Pollution Reduction Programmes in all development proposals that fall within their catchment.	
NH-P-4: It is a policy of the Council to require the consideration of Freshwater Pearl Mussel and any relevant Freshwater Pearl Mussel Sub-basin Plans in all development proposals that fall within their basin of catchment.	
NH-P-5: It is a policy of the Council to require consideration of the impact of potential development on habitats of natural value that are key features of the County's ecological network and to incorporate appropriate mitigating biodiversity measures into development proposals.	
NH-P-6: It is a policy of the Council to protect areas identified as Especially High Scenic Amenity on Map 7.1.1: 'Scenic Amenity'. Within these areas, only developments assessed to be of strategic importance or developments that are provided for by policy elsewhere in this Plan shall be considered.	
NH-P-7: Within areas of 'High Scenic Amenity' (HSC) and 'Moderate Scenic Amenity' (MSC) as identified on Map 7.1.1: 'Scenic Amenity', and subject to the other objectives and policies of this Plan, it is the policy of the Council to facilitate development of a nature, location and scale that allows the development to integrate within and reflect the character and amenity designation of the landscape.	
NH-P-8: It is the policy of the Council to safeguard the scenic context, cultural landscape significance, and recreational and environmental amenities of the County's coastline from inappropriate development.	
NH-P-9: It is the policy of the Council to manage the local landscape and natural environment, including the seascape, by ensuring any new developments do not detrimentally impact on the character, integrity, distinctiveness or scenic value of the area.	
NH-P-10: It is a policy of the Council to retain and protect significant stands of existing trees/hedgerows/woodlands and seek increased planting of native trees where appropriate in new developments.	
NH-P-11: It is a policy of the Council to seek the protection of stone wall boundaries where they are shown to play a significant heritage role. Where the demolition of such stone walls is unavoidable, the reinstatement of stone walls at revised location/set back within the site using agreed local materials and techniques, will be required.	

Key Policy/Objective	Assessment for Cumulative Effect on Natura 2000 sites
<p>NH-P-13: It is a policy of the Council to protect, conserve and manage landscapes having regard to the nature of the proposed development and the degree to which it can be accommodated into the receiving landscape. In this regard the proposal must be considered in the context of the landscape classifications, and views and prospects contained within this Plan and as illustrated on Map 7.1.1: 'Scenic Amenity'.</p>	
<p>NH-P-15: It is a policy of the Council to safeguard prominent skylines and ridgelines from inappropriate development.</p>	
<p>NH-P-17: It is a policy of the Council to seek to preserve the views and prospects of special amenity value and interest, in particular, views between public roads and the sea, lakes and rivers. In this regard, development proposals situated on lands between the road and the sea, lakes or rivers shall be considered on the basis of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Importance value of the view in question. ● Whether the integrity of the view has been affected to date by existing development. ● Whether the development would intrude significantly on the view. ● Whether the development would materially alter the view. ● In operating the policy, a reasonable and balanced approach shall be implemented so as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to ensure that the policy does not act as a blanket ban on developments between the road and the sea, lakes and rivers. 	
<p>NH-P-18: It is the policy of the Council to ensure that an ecological assessment (including where necessary EIA) is carried out at the appropriate level in relation to proposals for drainage or reclamation of wetlands.</p>	
<p>WES-O-4: To implement the EU Water Framework Directive through the implementation of the appropriate River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures as it affects Donegal.</p>	
<p>WES-O-5: To maintain, protect, improve and enhance the quality of surface waters and ground waters in accordance with the Programme of Measures contained within the relevant River Basin Management Plan.</p>	
<p>WES-O-6: To provide for environmental protection, through: The protection of surface water and ground water from pollution in accordance with the relevant River Basin Management Plan, Groundwater Protection Scheme and Source Protection Plans for public water supplies;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The protection against soil contamination; ● Minimising air and noise pollution; ● Supporting remediation of all existing pollution; and ● Ensuring full compliance with relevant EU Directives, and National and European Policies and Regulations and through monitoring and control of relevant activities. 	

Key Policy/Objective	Assessment for Cumulative Effect on Natura 2000 sites
WES-P-4: It is a policy of the Council to protect the environment from adverse impact through directing and controlling development, enforcement, licensing and direct intervention.	
WES-P-8: It is the policy of the Council to protect all waters, including any sites on the Water Framework Directive Register of Protected Areas, through supporting and facilitating Irish Water with its environmental protection programme (including the Programme of Measures contained within the relevant River Basin Management Plan; and through the land use planning system.	

5.2.2 Review of Other Projects

A search for projects that have been already completed, approved but uncompleted, or proposed (i.e., for which an application for approval or consent has been submitted) has been conducted. A time period of 5 years was chosen. Projects in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development were considered.

The EIA Portal was searched for any projects/plans that could combine with the proposed development and cumulatively affect Natura 2000 sites. Local authority planning databases were examined to cumulatively assess any impact on European Sites in combination with the proposal.

Table 5.4 contains cumulative impact assessment of relevant Plans/projects found through searches of the EIA portal / Local Authority Databases.

Table 5.4: Cumulative impact with other projects

Planning Reference	Description	Status	Assessment	Potential for Cumulative Effects
1850050 c.35m northeast	(1) Retention of existing structure containing ground floor and first floor lobbies, public lift and staff facilities and existing signage and (2) construction of new entrance lobby	Granted March 2018	The Planning Authority having regard to the location of the proposed development removed from any sensitive locations or features, concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and that a screening determination was not necessary.	N
2350628 c.170m southwest	Retention permission for entrance porch and rear conservatory to dwelling house	Granted June 2023	Having regard to the scale and nature of the proposed development on an existing brownfield site, alongside the physical distances from the nearest Natura 2000 sites (approx. 570m of Gweedore Bay & Island SAC and approx. 650m of West Donegal Coast SPA), and no known direct hydrological links, it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have any significant effect, individually or in combination with any other plan or project, and it is not considered that Screening for Appropriate Assessment is required in this instance.	N
2251815 c. 220m east	(1) Construction of a northwest facing extension to provide kitchen, dining and utility room accommodation and (2) refurbishment of the external facade of existing dwelling to include replacement glazing and replacement of felt roof with blue black slate.	Granted December 2022	The Planning Authority has determined that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of natura 2000 Sites specifically the Gweedore Bay and Islands SAC.	N

5.2.3 Cumulative Impact Conclusion

The cumulative impact assessment found that project considered in combination with other plans/projects will not culminate in effect on European Sites.

5.3 Screening Statement

Considering the location, nature and extent of the proposal, source pathway receptor chains and the likely zone of influence for adverse effect, and in the absence of mitigation, significant effects can be excluded on identified European Sites. Therefore, Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

6 Conclusion

The proposed project as detailed, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have no significant adverse effects on the integrity of any European. The proposed development as described will not alter the structure or function of any Natura 2000 site or negatively impact the conservation of any qualifying interest/ special conservation interest therein.

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by Greentrack Consultants with all reasonable care, due diligence, and professional application. Greentrack have also sought to implement the best current scientific knowledge on the potential effects this proposal will have on the Natura 2000 network.

This report has been prepared for the exclusive use of our client and unless otherwise agreed in writing by Greentrack Consultants no other party may use, make use of or rely on the contents of this report. The report has been compiled using the resources agreed with the client and in accordance with the scope of work agreed with the client. No liability is accepted by Greentrack Consultants for any use of this report, other than the purpose for which it was prepared. Greentrack Consultants accepts no responsibility for any documents or information supplied to Greentrack Consultants by others and no legal liability arising from the use by others of opinions or data contained in this report. It is expressly stated that no independent verification of any documents or information supplied by others has been made. Greentrack Consultants has used reasonable skill, care and diligence in compiling this report and no warranty is provided as to the report's accuracy. No part of this report may be copied or reproduced, by any means, without the written permission of Greentrack Consultants.

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