Rochestown College (Eastbound & Westbound)

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

National Transport Authority

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Quality Information

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

AECOM Ireland Limited (AECOM) was commissioned by the National Transport Authority (NTA) to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening of Rochestown College Eastbound and Westbound Bus Stops (herein referred to as the Development) in County Cork. The extent of the Development, as shown in Figure 1, is herein referred to as the Site.

The Site is located along (L2474) Monastery Road, to the southeast of St. Francis College, in Rochestown, County Cork. The Site is surrounded by agricultural fields with a number of farm and residential buildings in the vicinity of the Site. The approximate Irish Grid Reference of the Site is W7403868563 (ITM coordinates: 573990, 568603). The nearest waterbody to the Site is the River Hop Island, located approximately 0.6 km to the east of the Site. From the point at which River Hop Island is closest to the Site, it is approximately 0.9 km downstream to Cork Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA) as the River Hop Island enters Lough Mahon Estuary. However, River Hop Island is separated from the Site by extensive hardstanding surfaces (including roads), grasslands, woodlands, and scrub.

The Development comprises the installation of infrastructure to support the rollout of the new bus system in County Cork, as well as enhancements to the existing road and pedestrian infrastructure. For a detailed project description, see Section 3.2.

1.2 Legislative Context

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora, which is more commonly known as the Habitats Directive, requires Member States of the European Union (EU) to take measures to maintain or restore, at favourable conservation status, natural habitats and wild species of fauna and flora of Community interest. The provisions of the Habitats Directive require that Member States designate Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for habitats listed in Annex I and for species listed in Annex II.

Similarly, Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds, which is more commonly known as the Birds Directive, provides a framework for the conservation and management of wild birds. It also requires Member States to identify and classify SPA for rare or vulnerable species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, as well as for certain regularly occurring migratory species. Collectively, SAC and SPA are known as European sites.

In the Republic of Ireland, the habitats and/or species which are the reason(s) for designation of an SAC are referred to as Qualifying Interests (QI). The bird species (and, where present, the habitats) for which SPA are designated are referred to as Special Conservation Interests (SCI).

Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, any plan or project which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but would result in likely significant effects on such a site, either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the SAC/SPA in view of the relevant site Conservation Objectives.

Following the repeal of the Planning and Development Act 2000, the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive will be transposed into national law through Part 6, Chapter 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 in relation to local authority development, and by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 in relation to other relevant approvals, consents and matters. The legislative provisions for AA Screening of local authority development are set out in Section 213 of the Planning and Development Act 2024.

However, the PDA 2024 will be enacted on a phased basis, with the existing provisions of the PDA 2000 remaining in place until the relevant provisions of PDA 2024 are commenced. Therefore, during the transitionary period before the relevant provisions of the PDA 2024 commence, the requirements of Article 6(3) are transposed into the existing national law through Part XAB of the PDA 2000 for planning matters, and by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 in relation to other relevant approvals / consents. The legislative provisions for Appropriate Assessment Screening for planning applications are set out in Section 177U of the PDA 2000.

1.3 Purpose of this Report

This Report has been prepared to inform the competent authority in their determination of whether the Development will have significant effects on any European sites.

Whilst the various steps involved in the AA process must be carried out by a competent authority, project proponents or their consultants may provide the information required to inform this assessment. This document has therefore been prepared to provide Cork City Council with the information needed to undertake an AA Screening of the Development. It has been prepared with regard to best scientific knowledge and an examination of the potential impacts and effects of the Development on European sites.

The objective of this AA Screening Assessment is to identify any likely significant effects arising from the Development to any European site or their qualifying interest features, either in isolation or in-combination with other plans and projects and thus determine whether AA is required. The competent authority will, on the basis of information presented in this Report, and any other information they consider relevant, reach their own AA Determination for the Development.

1.4 Quality Assurance

This project has been completed in line with AECOM's Integrated Management System (IMS). The IMS places great emphasis on professionalism, technical excellence, and quality, as well as covering all aspects of environmental and Health and Safety management. All staff members are committed to establishing and maintaining our accreditation to those parts of BS EN ISO 9001:2015 and 14001:2026, as well as ISO 45001:2018 that are relevant to a consultancy service.

All staff involved in the preparation of this document, including the desk study and field survey described within it adhered to the strict Code of Professional Conduct (CIEEM, 2025).

2. Methods

2.1 Sources of Guidance

This Report has been prepared with cognisance of the European Commission (EC) guidance document *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC, 2021). In addition, the following sources of guidance were also considered:

- *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: A Summary* (EC, 2022).
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC* (EC, 2018).
- *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management* (Office of the Planning Regulation (OPR), 2021).
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland* (Department of the Environmental Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG), 2010).
- *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular Letter National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) 1/10 & PSSP 2/10* (NPWS, 2010).

2.2 The Precautionary Principle

Under EC guidance, the Precautionary Principle, which is referenced in Article 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, is described as the "*absence of scientific evidence on the significant negative effect of an action cannot be used as justification for approval of this action. When applied to Article 6(3) procedure, the Precautionary Principle implies that the absence of a negative effect on European* [Natura 2000] *sites has to be demonstrated before a plan or project can be authorised. In other words, if there is a lack of certainty as to whether there will be any negative effects, then the plan or project cannot be approved*" (EC, 2021).

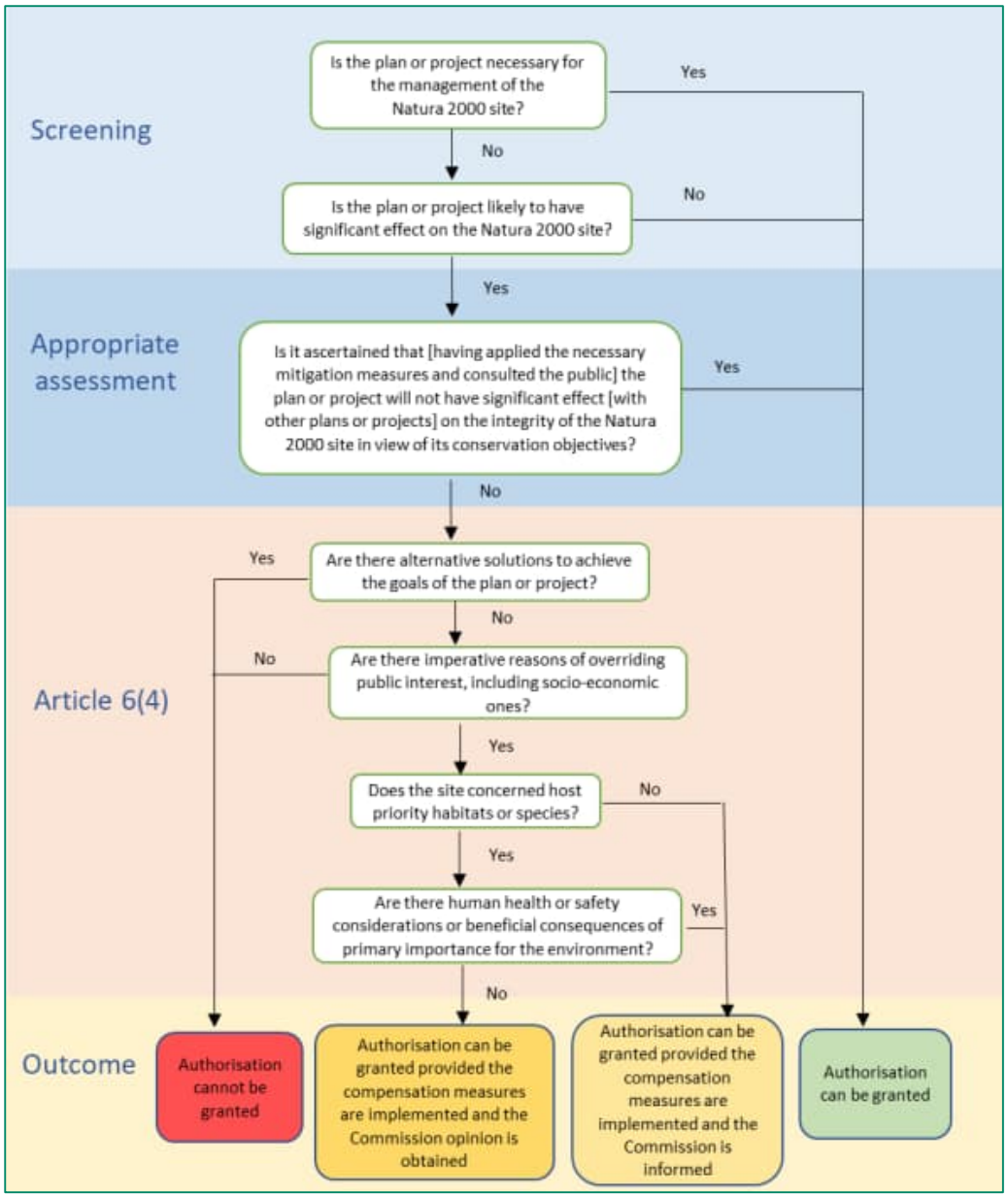
2.3 The Stages in Appropriate Assessment

2.3.1 Summary of Stages

Article 6(3) and (4) sets out a step-by-step procedure for assessing plans or projects that are likely to have impact on European sites. This involves three main stages, as outlined in the EC Guidance document (2021) and shown in Plate 1. Each stage of the procedure is influenced by the previous one. The order in which the stages are followed is therefore essential for applying Article 6(3) and (4) correctly. The following is a summary of these steps.

- **Stage 1 – Screening**: This stage consists of a pre-assessment stage (i.e. Screening) to ascertain whether the plan or project is directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of a European site, and if not, subsequently examines whether it is likely to have significant effects to the European site(s), either alone or in-combination with other projects, in view of the conservation objectives.
- **Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment**: If likely significant effects cannot be excluded at Stage 1, an assessment is made of the impact of the plan or project (either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects) on the integrity of the European site(s) (in view of conservation objectives) and ascertaining whether it will affect the integrity of the European site. If relevant, mitigation measures specifically designed to protect the European site can be considered.
- **Stage 3 – Derogation from Article 6(3) under certain conditions:** The third stage of the procedure governed by Article 6(4) and is relevant where, despite a negative assessment, the developer considers that the plan or project should still be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI). This is only possible if there are no alternative solutions, the IROPI are duly justified, and if suitable compensatory measures are adopted to ensure that the overall coherence of the European site is protected.

Plate 1: The Steps in AA



Source: European Commission, 2021

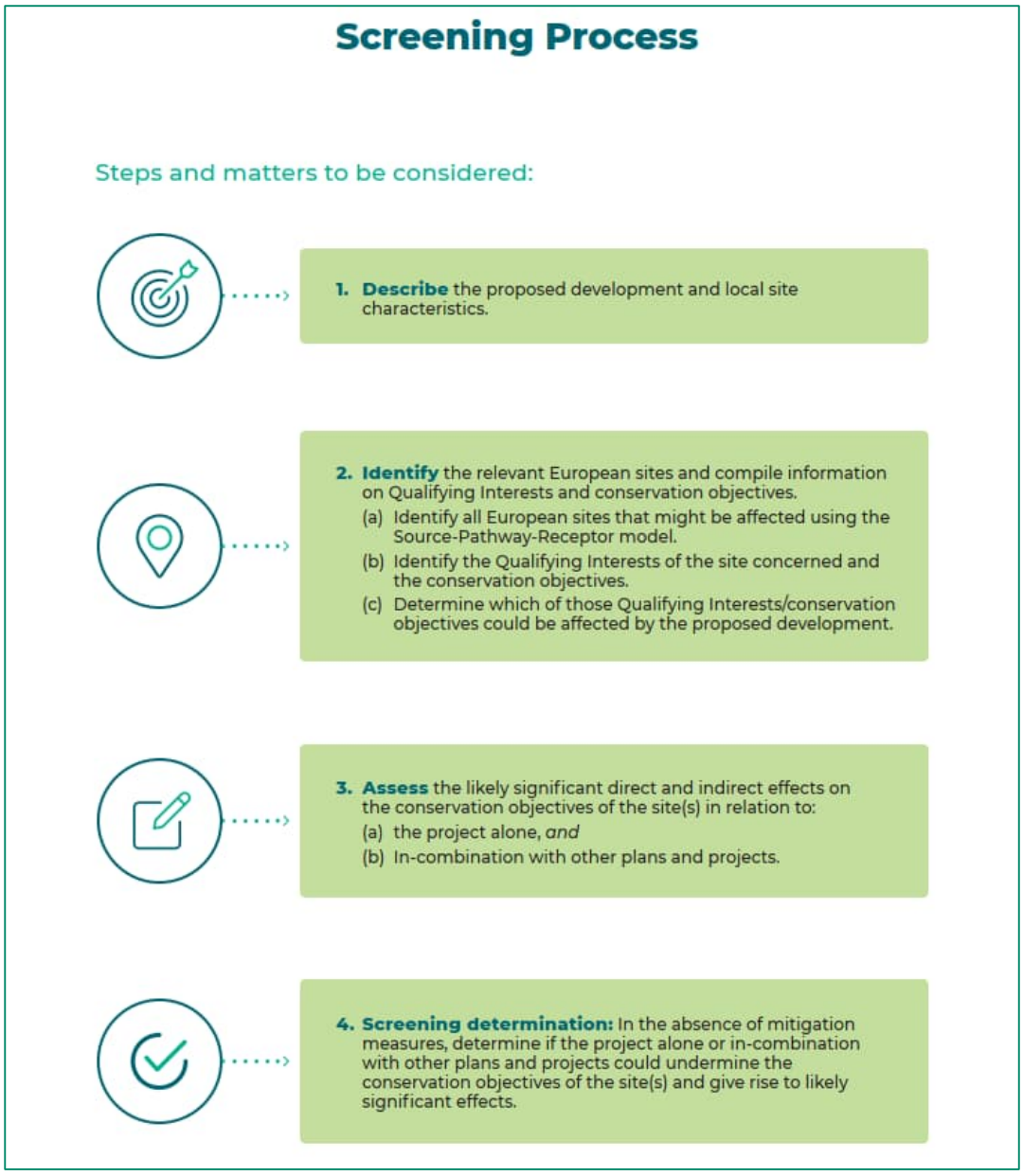
2.3.2 Screening

The first stage of AA examines the likelihood of a plan or project having significant effects upon a European site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects. The EC states that it supports a broad interpretation of the terms project and plan (EC, 2021), and these are defined as follows (with reference to EC (2022) guidance):

- A project can involve construction works, installations and other interventions in the environment, including regular activities aimed at utilising natural resources.
- The term plan has also, for the purposes of Article 6(3), a potentially broad meaning, including land-use or spatial plans and sectoral plans (e.g. for transport, energy, waste management, water management, forest management, etc.).

In the context of this Report, the Development constitutes a project. The result of the AA Screening will identify whether the subsequent stage (i.e. AA) is required. Plate 2 outlines the steps of the AA Screening according to OPR (2021).

Plate 2: Screening Process



Source: OPR, 2021

The essential question is: "*Is the project, either alone or in-combination with other relevant projects and plans, likely to result in a significant effect upon any European site?*".

For this purpose and as a result of case law, likely in practice means possible and significant means not trivial or inconsequential but an effect that has the potential to undermine the site's Conservation Objectives (CJEU case C-127/02 – *Waddenzee*). In other words, any effect that compromises the functioning and viability of a site and interferes with achieving the Conservation Objectives for the European site would constitute a significant effect.

The significance of effects should be determined in relation to the specific features and environmental conditions of the European site concerned by the plan or project, taking particular account of the site's conservation objectives and ecological characteristics (EC, 2018). The nature of the likely interactions between the plan or project and the integrity of a European site will depend upon:

- The sensitivity of the European site's QI / SCI to potential impacts arising from the project.
- The current conservation status of the European site and its QI / SCI.
- Any likely changes to key environmental indicators (e.g. water quality) that underpin the conservation status of European sites and their qualifying features, in-combination with other plans and projects.

The EC guidelines (2021) outline the stages involved in carrying out an AA Screening of a project that has the potential to have likely significant effects on European sites. The method adopted for this AA Screening was informed by these guidelines and was conducted in the following stages:

- Determine whether the Development is connected with, or necessary for, the conservation management of European sites.
- With reference to the baseline environment, define and identify the relevant elements of the Development and their likely impacts (specifying the stage, e.g. construction, operation, and decommissioning phases).
- Identify and define any generic design components (i.e. inherent project mitigation), such as good practice or legal requirements, to minimise potential impacts of the Development.
- Identify the ZoI of the Development and the European sites likely to be impacted (i.e. those which are potentially connected to the proposal by source-pathway-receptor links or lie in the ZoI of potential impacts).
- Identify other plans or projects that, in-combination with the project, have the potential to affect European sites.
- Assess whether the project has the potential to affect European sites and determine whether the Development could give rise to likely significant effects.

If it can be demonstrated that significant effects are unlikely, no further assessment is required.

2.3.2.1 Establishing the Zone of Influence

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government guidance (DoEHLG, 2010) states that European sites with the potential to be affected by a project should be identified taking into consideration the potential for direct, indirect and / or cumulative (in-combination) effects. However, it advises that the following sites should generally be included:

- European sites within or immediately adjacent to the plan or project area.
- European sites within the likely zone of influence (ZoI) of the plan or project.
- European sites for which there is doubt as to whether or not such sites might be significantly affected (adopting the Precautionary Principle, see Section 2.2).

The likely ZoI of a project is the geographic extent over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could result in significant effects on the QI or SCI of a European site (OPR, 2021). In the case of projects, the DoEHLG guidance acknowledges that the ZoI must be devised on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size / scale and location of the project, the sensitivity of ecological features under consideration, and potential for cumulative effects.

When seeking to identify the relevant European sites, consideration was given to identified impact pathways and the source-pathway-receptor approach (OPR, 2021), rather than adopting a purely zones-based approach whereby European sites within, potentially arbitrary, set distances of the Development would be assessed.

The source-pathway-receptor approach is a standard tool in environmental assessment. For an effect to occur, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism means there is no possibility of an effect occurring. If, for example, there is a sensitive European site in the vicinity of the Development but no mechanism by which the Development could affect that site then there is no potential for a likely significant effect. Furthermore, even where an impact is predicted to occur, it may not result in significant effects.

A plan or project may have the potential to result in numerous impacts, which could potentially affect the qualifying features of European sites. The analysis of these effects, using scientific knowledge and professional judgement, leads to the identification of a ZoI for each impact and effect (i.e. the geographic extent at which the impact of the Development could have potential effects, using professional judgement and published guidance).

2.3.2.2 Assessment In-Combination

It is necessary to consider the impacts and effects of any plan or project not only in isolation but also in-combination with those which may arise from other plans and projects that may also affect the European site(s) in question. Cumulative or in-combination effects can result from individually insignificant but collectively significant development proposals being undertaken over the same period of time or concentrated in a location.

In accordance with OPR (2021), the assessment of in-combination effects must examine:

- Completed projects.
- Projects which are approved but not completed.
- Proposed projects (i.e. for which an application for approval or consent has been made, including refusals subject to appeal and not yet determined).
- Proposals in adopted plans.
- Proposals in finalised draft plans formally published or submitted for consultation or adoption.

A search was made of the An Coimisiún Pleanála database and the National Planning Application Database to identify potential in-combination effects.

2.4 Identifying the Ecological Baseline

This Screening Assessment was informed by a desk study, carried out by AECOM Ecologists. Information relevant to the ecological evaluation of the Sites was obtained from ordnance survey maps, historical and recent aerial photography, internet searches, and database searches for European sites and species data. The following online resources were used to inform the baseline ecology of the Sites:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Maps (EPA, 2026).
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) Maps (NBDC, 2026).
- NPWS Designations Viewer (NPWS, 2026a).
- The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland (NPWS, 2026b).
- NPWS website for published documents regarding European site citations and conservation objectives.

2.5 Statement of Authority

This Report was prepared by Fred Mosley, reviewed by Laura Cappelli, and verified by Dr Brian Cuthbert.

This AA Screening Report was prepared by Fred Mosley, AECOM Graduate Ecologist. Fred holds an Honours degree in Biological and Biomedical Science (Zoology) from Trinity College, Dublin, and an MSc in Marine Biology from University College Cork. He has two years of experience in professional consultancy and has prepared AA Screening Reports for plans and projects across Ireland.

This AA Screening Report was reviewed by Laura Cappelli BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM. She is a Senior Ecologist at AECOM and has over seven years of professional ecological consultancy experience. Laura has extensive experience in delivering ecological assessments including AA Screening Reports for a wide range of projects, including infrastructure, residential, and energy developments across Ireland.

This report has been verified by Dr Brian Cuthbert MCIEEM PISEP. He is a full member of CIEEM and is a Practitioner of the Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals (ISEP). He has gained a BSc (Hons) in Zoology from the University of Glasgow, an MSc in Environmental Technology from Edinburgh Napier University and earned a PhD in Zoology from the University of Cambridge. He has 30 years of environmental consultancy experience in ecology and environmental impact assessment in Ireland and the UK, as well as in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

3. Ecological Baseline

3.1 Site Description

The Site is located within the Rochestown area of County Cork. The Site comprises exclusively hardstanding of the existing road and pavement. The surrounding areas comprise hardstanding of the roads and buildings, agricultural grassland, hedgerows and parcels of woodland.

The closest European site to the Development is Cork Harbour SPA, located approximately 0.9 km north of the Site, as-the-crow-flies. The nearest waterbody to the Site is the River Hop Island, located approximately 0.6 km to the east. From the point at which River Hop Island is closest to the Site, it is approximately 0.9 km downstream to Cork Harbour SPA. However, there is no hydrological connection from the Site to River Hop Island given the distance from the Site and the intervening hardstanding, grassland, and woodland habitats.

3.2 The Development

As part of the BusConnects Cork programme, the bus network in Cork has been comprehensively redesigned to provide over 50% more services than the current existing ones. The bus programme aims to serve additional areas, provide more 24-hour operations and make services more accessible with a greater number of people within walking distance of a high frequency bus. It is planned to deliver these benefits during 2027 and 2028.

A detailed operational review of the new bus network has identified the shorter-term stop and terminus alterations needed to support the introduction of the new bus system. The Development will form part of the new bus network redesign and enhance the network in County Cork.

The Development extends over an area of approximately 0.15 ha, and works required for the Development encompass the following:

- Proposed eastbound and westbound bus stops along L2474. Eastbound bus stop to be installed in the existing footway and westbound stop to be installed in the proposed hardstanding area with a bench and proposed lighting column.
- Accessible kerbing to be provided along the length of both bus boarding areas.
- Signalised crossing with tactile paving and footway widening to be installed to connect St Francis College to the westbound bus stop.
- Proposed signage to be installed and an existing sign to be relocated.
- Existing hard shoulder width to be reduced to allow for appropriate width running lanes.
- Renewal/replacement of other road drainage including addition of two gullies to connect to existing system, road signage and road markings as required.
- All other associated ancillary site works.

The Development has been designed in accordance with the *Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets* (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DoTTS) and Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) 2019) and, where relevant, the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges* (2016). All layouts and details are indicative for consultation purposes and may be subject to change. The Development is to be implemented in conjunction with the St Francis College development (or after).

4. AA Screening

4.1 Identification of Relevant European Sites

European sites are relevant where there may be a source-pathway-receptor relationship which may give rise to likely significant effects on the QI / SCI of the site. The European sites identified as potentially relevant are based on the nature, size and scale of the works, proximity to the Site, and/or factors such as the hydrological connectivity and the potential connection to the Site due to mobile QI / SCI that may be associated with the habitats within the ZoI of the Development.

The search identified one European site within the potential ZoI of the Development, based on proximity and the potential link for mobile species. The Site is listed and detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. European sites within the Potential ZoI of the Development

Site name [site code]	Qualifying Interests / Special Conservation Interests	Relationship to the Development
Cork Harbour SPA [004030]	• Little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* [A004] • Great crested grebe *Podiceps cristatus* [A005] • Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* [A017] • Grey heron *Ardea cinerea* [A028] • Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* [A048] • Teal *Anas crecca* [A052] • Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* [A053] • Pintail *Anas acuta* [A054] • Red-breasted merganser *Mergus serrator* [A069] • Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* [A130] • Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria* [A140] • Grey plover *Pluvialis squatarola* [A141] • Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* [A142] • Dunlin *Calidris alpina* [A149] • Black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa* [A156] • Bar-tailed godwit *Limosa lapponica* [A157] • Curlew *Numenius arquata* [A160] • Redshank *Tringa totanus* [A162] • Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* [A164] • Black-headed gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* [A179] • Common gull *Larus canus* [A182] • Lesser black-backed gull *Larus fuscus* [A183] • Common tern *Sterna hirundo* [A193] • Wigeon *Mareca penelope* [A855] • Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* [A857] • Wetland and waterbirds [A999]	0.9 km to the north of the Site. No hydrological connection.

The Site is not located within any European site, and the Development is not connected with or necessary to the management of any European site.

The Development involves minor works relating to the provision of two bus stops along the L2474 and associated works. The Development works will require vegetation maintenance works to trim overhanging trees/scrub vegetation that may obstruct works. However, the remainder of the works will occur on existing hardstanding surfaces along the Monastery Road (L2474). There are no habitats present within the Site which could be used by the SCI species of Cork Harbour SPA or the QI/SCI of any other European sites, as the Site is located on an existing road in a rural residential area, approximately 3 km from Cork City Centre.

According to Cutts *et al.,* (2013), disturbance of waterbirds due to visual and noise disturbance can occur at distances of up to 300 m from construction works. The closest habitat that could be used by SCI species from the Cork Harbour SPA (0.9 km distant from the Site) are the agricultural grasslands in the surrounding wider area of the Site. While some SCIs from Cork Harbour SPA such as gull species and oystercatcher may potentially be foraging within this distance during construction, this SPA encompasses an area of approximately 2,676 ha and there is an extensive resource of more optimal habitats in closer proximity to the SPA, all of which are more likely to be used, as the fields closest to the Site are quite small in size and adjacent to existing roads with extensive boundary vegetation present in some fields.

In addition, in terms of potential habituation of birds to noise, it is worth noting that as an existing local road, the Monastery Road (L2474) is likely to result in relatively continuous traffic noise. Therefore, any SCI species using habitats outside of the SPA are likely habituated to noise and visual disturbance associated with current traffic. Furthermore, if disturbance were to occur, SCI birds could readily make use of the extensive alternative suitable habitat available in the surrounding area and the works will be minor in scale, as well as temporary. Overall, whilst there will be a source of potential impact during construction which may result in low levels of disturbance to birds in proximity to the Site, this will not result in significant effects in relation to visual and noise disturbance given the nature of the works, location of works adjacent to existing roads, and extensive alternative habitat available, particularly in view of the conservation objectives of Cork Harbour SPA (NPWS, 2014a).

The majority of birds from Cork Harbour SPA are dependent on coastal/marine habitats and are unlikely to occur inland and are therefore considered not present. In relation to species which may be foraging inland, SCI gull species are generally ubiquitous and widespread and only a small number of SCIs individuals, such as oystercatcher and golden plover, would be supported by habitats within the disturbance distance given the small size of fields and dense vegetation cover.

The works associated with the construction of the Development are minor, and the potential for waterborne pollution to be generated is very low. There are no watercourses located within the Site and hence no direct hydrological connection from the Site to Cork Harbour SPA, or any other European site. While there will be some minor drainage works, with renewal of road drainage along the Development including the provision of two new gullies, run-off from the works will enter the surrounding surface water drainage system and will be subject to the same level of treatment as existing surface water flows. On this basis, no impacts or significant effects from the construction of the Development in relation to waterborne pollution are considered not likely to occur.

The operation of the Development will not differ in any material way to the current baseline environment. The Development will not result in a significant increase in surface runoff from the impermeable surfaces as the majority of the works will occur on the existing local road (L2474). As such, the urban drainage system will remain unchanged, and there will be no increase in surface runoff or possible inputs of pollutants. No impacts are predicted, and likely significant effects from the Development in relation to waterborne pollution are, therefore, excluded.

Guidance published by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) advises that air quality impacts can arise up to a distance of around 50 m of works (IAQM, 2024). As discussed in European sites are relevant where there may be a source-pathway-receptor relationship which may give rise to likely significant effects on the QI / SCI of the site. The European sites identified as potentially relevant are based on the nature, size and scale of the works, proximity to the Site, and/or factors such as the hydrological connectivity and the potential connection to the Site due to mobile QI / SCI that may be associated with the habitats within the ZoI of the Development.

The search identified one European site within the potential ZoI of the Development, based on proximity and the potential link for mobile species. The Site is listed and detailed in Table 1.

Table 1, the closest European site to the Development, as the crow flies, is Cork Harbour SPA located approximately 0.9 km to the north of the Site. Therefore, direct atmospheric pollution to any European site can be excluded. Furthermore, there are no QI/SCIs from nearby European sites sensitive to atmospheric pollution that rely on supporting habitats within 50 m of the Site.

It should also be noted that construction-generated dust and vehicular emissions would be minimal for the minor and temporary works required. The operation of the Development will not differ in any material way to the current baseline environment. The Development is located on the existing local road (L2474), and as such will not result in a significant increase in airborne emissions from road traffic. Overall, it is concluded that likely significant effects from the Development in relation to atmospheric pollution can be excluded.

Based on the information presented above, no impacts or effects related to either waterborne or air pollution are likely to occur to Cork Harbour SPA or any other European site as a result of the Development, either during construction or operation. Minor effects related to noise and visual disturbance to SCI bird species may arise during the construction, however, these are not assessed to likely significantly affect Cork Harbour SPA, nor prevent the SPA from meeting its conservation objectives.

4.2 In-combination effects

A review of the National Planning Application Database (DoHLGH, 2026), An Coimisiún Pleanála's (An Coimisiún Pleanála, 2026) database, and Cork City Council's online planning application register (Cork City Council, 2026)

was carried out to identify any planning applications from the last five years within 1 km of the Development. Most recent planning applications identified are small-scale residential and community applications.

There are only several recent planning applications within 1 km of the Site, and these related to minor works for alteration and amendments to existing buildings and active travel scheme applications, such as the following:

Planning Application Reference 2240789: Located at St. Francis College, Rochestown, Cork County, adjacent to Site.

Permission for:

- The demolition of the existing sports hall building.
- The reconfiguration of and alterations to the existing school building with link building and a new entrance canopy.
- The construction of a partly 3-storey and partly 4-storey extension comprising classrooms, science laboratories, specialist teaching rooms, offices, PE Hall, changing rooms, fitness suite, general purpose room, special education needs base, stores, toilets, ancillary spaces, ESB substation, plant rooms, external stores, covered yard and photovoltaic panels.
- Site works, including widening of two existing vehicular entrances to L2474 public road, ballcourts and all-weather playing pitch, roadworks, bus set-down areas, surface car parking, bicycle parking, alterations to existing boundary walls, new vehicular entrance for delivery maintenance, new gates, fencing, drainage and surface water attenuation works, landscaping, signage, and all associated site works.

In addition, **Planning Application Reference 2443339** is also associated with St Francis College, located approximately 130 m from the Site. Permission was sought for the installation of air source heat pumps at ground level with perimeter fence gates and all associated site works to the permitted development Planning Reference 2240789 (above).

It should be noted that due to their similar location in relation to European sites (i.e. no direct hydrological connection), it is also highly unlikely that either of the listed planning applications are associated with likely significant effects on European sites. The only potential impacts and effects of the Development identified related to disturbance of SCI bird species within the SPA. No planning applications were identified that are considered likely to result in effects to the SPA that could act in-combination with the Development.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the information presented, the Development, either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, is not considered likely to have a significant effect on any European site. The Site is not located within a European site and the Development is not connected with or necessary to the management of any European site. While the Development is located approximately 0.9 km from Cork Harbour SPA, the works are minor in scale and will predominantly take place on existing hardstanding associated with the L2474, with only limited vegetation maintenance required. No suitable habitat for the SCI species of Cork Harbour SPA or the qualifying or special conservation interests of other European sites occurs within the Site.

Minor and temporary noise and visual disturbance to individual SCI birds potentially using agricultural grasslands in the surrounding area may occur during construction. However, the relatively small extent and suboptimal nature of these habitats, the extensive availability of alternative suitable habitat, existing background traffic disturbance and the temporary nature of the works mean that such disturbance is not considered likely to result in significant effects on Cork Harbour SPA or prevent it from meeting its conservation objectives. No likely significant effects associated with waterborne or atmospheric pollution have been identified, given the absence of a direct hydrological connection, the minor nature of the drainage works, the existing drainage arrangements and the considerable distance between the Site and European sites.

The review of projects in the surrounding area also identified no developments that are considered likely to result in effects on Cork Harbour SPA that could act in-combination with the potential disturbance associated with the Development.

Accordingly, **it is concluded that the Development will not give rise to likely significant effects on any European site, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects** and therefore based on the information provided in this Report, it is AECOM's opinion that there is no requirement to proceed to a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), the next stage of the AA process.

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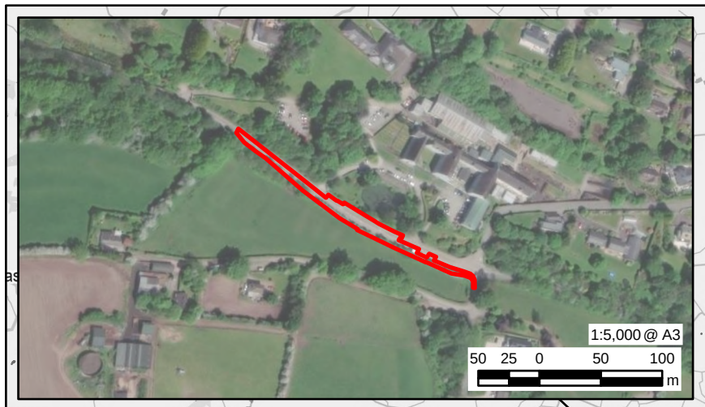
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7. Figures

Figure 1: Site location and European Sites Within the Potential ZoI of the Development

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LEGEND

- Development
- Watercourses

European Designated Sites

- Special Protection Area (SPA)

NOTES

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Site location and European sites within the potential ZoI of the Development

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Figure 1

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