

Riverstown Terminus

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

National Transport Authority

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

AECOM Ireland Limited ('AECOM') was commissioned by National Transport Authority (NTA) to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening of the proposed new bus stops and stand in Riverstown, Cork (hereafter referred to as the 'Development'). The extent of the Development, as shown on **Figure 1**, is hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

The Site is located in a built-up residential and commercial area in Glanmire, on Hazelwood Road and extending into Hazelwood Centre. The approximate Irish Central Grid Reference of the Site is W 72896 75495.

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. 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.

Service 2a from Munster Technological University to Glanmire will be introduced to significantly enhance connections between Glanmire, Mayfield the city centre. It will be terminating at Riverstown and new terminal capacity is required.

The proposed Development works are summarised as follows:

1. Provide a westbound bus stand/stop in a layby on Hazlewood Road, with shared boarding zone and cycle track and footway to rear.
2. Widen Hazlewood Centre access road to accommodate bus left-turn in from Hazlewood Road, whilst maintaining the current two lane exit, realign eastern footway to suit.
3. Provide eastbound in-line bus stop on Hazlewood Road.
4. Modify the cycle lane proposed under Glanmire Roads Improvement Scheme to tie in with proposals.
5. Renewal/replacement of other road drainage, road signage and road markings as might be necessary.
6. All other associated ancillary site works. All other associated ancillary works.

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 (SACs) 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 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for rare or vulnerable species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive, as well as for certain regularly occurring migratory species. Collectively, SACs and SPAs 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 for which particular SPAs 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

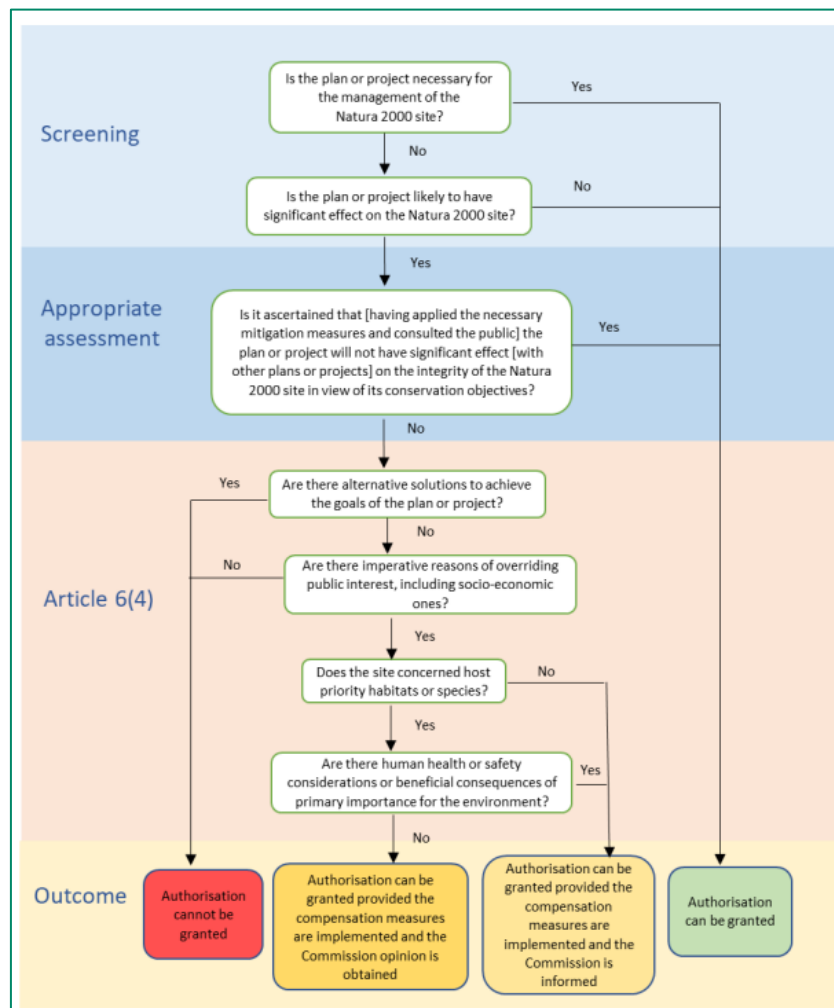
individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of its implications for the SAC / SPA in view of the relevant site Conservation Objectives.

The requirements of Article 6(3) are transposed into national law through Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) (hereafter abbreviated to the 'PDA') 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.

1.3 Overview of the Appropriate Assessment process

The process required by Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive is stepwise and must be followed in sequence. Image 1 below outlines the stages of AA according to current European Commission (EC) guidance (European Commission, 2021). The stages are essentially iterative, being revisited as necessary in response to more detailed information becoming available, recommendations incorporated, and any relevant changes to the plan or project being made until no significant adverse effects remain.

Image 1: The stages in assessment of plans and projects in relation to European sites (taken from European Commission (2021))



The first step in the sequence of tests is to establish whether an AA is required. This is often referred to as 'AA Screening'. The purpose of AA Screening is to determine, in view of best available scientific knowledge, whether a plan or project, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, could have likely significant effects on a European site, in view of that site's Conservation Objectives.

Whilst the various steps involved in the AA process must be carried out by a Competent Authority, under Section 177U(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), project proponents or their consultants may undertake a form of screening to establish if an AA is required and provide advice, or may submit the information necessary to allow the Competent Authority to conduct a screening of an application for consent. Specifically, Section 177U(3) states that "*in carrying out a screening for appropriate assessment of a proposed development a competent authority may request such information from the applicant as it may consider necessary to enable it to carry out that screening, and may consult with such persons as it considers appropriate...*".

This document therefore considers the potential for likely significant effects from the Development on European sites, both alone and in-combination with other plans or projects, and provides the information needed for Cork City Council to undertake an AA Screening of the Development, as well as giving AECOM's own opinion on the requirement for further AA.

2. Relevant European sites

A search was carried out of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maps website was carried out to identify European sites within at least 15 km of the Development. This was extended to search for sites further afield which may be hydrologically connected to the Development, or for sites designated for wide-ranging QI / SCI such as migratory fish species, otter *Lutra lutra*, and certain non-breeding geese species. The Glashaboy River is approximately 117 m west of the Development and it is hydrologically linked 2.5 km downstream to the River Lee. Given the intervening distance and urban environment, there is no potential for an impact to the waterbody as a result of the Development. The search identified three European sites which could potentially be connected to the Development: Cork Harbour SPA, Great Island Channel SAC, and Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC. Details of each site are given in **Table 1**.

Table 1. European sites which could potentially be connected to the Development

Site name [site code]	Summary of Qualifying Interests / Special Conservation Interests	Relationship to the Development
Cork Harbour SPA [004030]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> [A004] • Great crested grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> [A005] • Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> [A017] • Grey heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i> [A028] • Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> [A048] • Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i> [A050] • Teal <i>Anas crecca</i> [A052] • Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i> [A054] • Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i> [A056] • Red-breasted merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i> [A069] • Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> [A130] • Golden plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> [A140] • Grey plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> [A141] • Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> [A142] • Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i> [A149] • Black-tailed godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> [A156] • Bar-tailed godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i> [A157] • Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> [A160] • Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> [A162] • Black-headed gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> [A179] • Common gull <i>Larus canus</i> [A182] • Lesser black-backed gull <i>Larus fuscus</i> [A183] • Common tern <i>Sterna hirundo</i> [A193] • Wetland and waterbirds [A999] 	Approximately 1.5 km to the south of the Development. Not hydrologically connected to the Development.
Great Island Channel SAC [001058]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i> [1330] 	Approximately 4.1 km to the south-east of the Development. Not hydrologically connected to the Development.
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estuaries [1130] • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] • Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] • Atlantic salt meadows <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i> [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> [1410] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] • Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> <i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i> [91E0] 	Approximately 11.3 km to the north of the Development. Not hydrologically connected to the Development.

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- *Margaritifera margaritifera* Freshwater Pearl Mussel [1029]
 - White-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* [1092]
 - Sea lamprey *Petromyzon marinus* [1095]
 - Brook lamprey *Lampetra planeri* [1096]
 - River lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis* [1099]
 - Twait shad *Alosa fallax fallax* [1103]
 - Salmon *Salmo salar* [1106]
 - Otter [1355]
 - Killarney fern *Trichomanes speciosum* [1421]
-

3. Test of likely significant effects

3.1 Considering the Development alone

The Development involves minor road works occurring entirely on areas of built-up land in Cork city. There are no habitats present which could be used by the SCI species of Cork Harbour SPA or the QI / SCI of any other European sites. According to Cutts *et al* (2013) disturbance of waterbirds can occur at distances of up to 300 m from construction works. Cork Harbour SPA, and any habitats outside of the boundary of this site which could be used by its SCI, are located at greater distance than 300 m. Moreover, the Development will likely not change the baseline conditions within the area because the Development lies in a busy urban location with substantial existing disturbance sources.

The works associated with the construction of the Development are very minor, and the potential for waterborne pollution to be generated is very low. The Glashaboy River is 117 m west of the Development and it is hydrologically linked 2.5 km downstream to the River Lee. While the River is in close proximity to the Development, there will be no change in the impermeable area of the Site and there will only be minor local amendments to drainage including the relocation of existing gullies that aim to connect into the existing drainage network. Run-off from the works will therefore enter the existing urban drainage system and would be subject to the same level of treatment as existing surface water flows. Given the intervening distance and urban environment, there is no potential for an impact to the waterbody as a result of the Development.

Guidance published by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) advises that consideration should be given to construction-related air quality impacts on nature conservation sites within 50 m of works, including any access routes, extending to 500 m from the entrance to the construction site (Holman *et al*, 2014). As discussed in Error! Reference source not found., the closest European site to the Site, as the crow flies, is Cork Harbour SPA. The European site is 1.5 km to the south of the Development with an intervening highly urban area. Construction-generated dust and vehicular emissions would be minimal for the minor works required and given the distance to the closest European site (over 1.5 km) no impact is possible.

The operation of the Development will not differ in any material way to currently in terms of potential impact sources (e.g., there will be no increase in disturbance of QI / SCI, and there will be no increase in emissions of airborne pollutants). The urban drainage system will remain unchanged, and there will be no increase in run-off of water or possible inputs of pollutants.

3.2 In-combination effects

Cumulative effects can result from individually insignificant but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time or concentrated in a location. Effects which arise in-combination with other projects or plans must be considered as part of AA Screening. In accordance with Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) guidance, the assessment of in-combination effects must examine (OPR, 2021):

- 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; and,
- proposals in finalised draft plans formally published or submitted for consultation or adoption.

A review of the National Planning Application Database (NPAD) was carried out to identify any planning applications from the last five years within close proximity (i.e., 1 km) of the Development. Most recent planning applications are small scale domestic, industrial and commercial applications.

As discussed above, no effects are considered possible from the Development itself. Where there is no possibility of any effect (as opposed to a small but insignificant effect, or a significant effect), there cannot be any in-combination effect with other projects or plans as there will be no addition from the Development. While some of the identified applications have the potential to cause impacts on European sites (e.g., through waterborne pollution), such effects will not arise from the Development and there is no potential for in-combination effects.

For completeness, planning applications within 1 km which were not small scale domestic, industrial, or commercial applications are discussed below.

Planning Application Reference 2241341: Permission for the construction of 8 no. duplex units in 2 no. 2-storey blocks and all associated ancillary development works including pedestrian access, parking, footpaths, drainage and landscaping.

Planning Application Reference 2039403: Permission for the construction of 66 no. dwelling houses and all associated ancillary development works including pedestrian access, parking, footpaths, drainage and landscaping at 'Glashaboy View', Sallybrook, Riverstown, Glanmire, Cork. The proposed dwelling units will replace 57 no. units previously permitted under Cork County Council Ref. 18/4551 (An Bord Pleanála Ref. ABP-302209-18).

Planning Application Reference 2241368: Permission to develop existing grass playing pitch (No.2) to form senior artificial all weather playing pitch together with (I) Drainage, (II) 6 no. 18.3m high floodlights, (III) Perimeter protective fencing, (IV) Ballstop netting, (V) Equipment storage area and all site development works.

Planning Application Reference 194946: Construction of a hurling wall at the western end of existing astroturf pitch at sports facility.

Glanmire Roads Improvement Scheme: This scheme involves a suite of projects to improve the accessibility, sustainability, capacity and safety of the transport network in the Glanmire, Riverstown and Sallybrook areas. The following projects have been obtained Part 9 Planning Approval; Church Hill Junction, Glanmire Bridge/Village, Riverstown Junction, Signalised Junction Glanmire Road/Hazelwood Road, Signalised Junction Riverstown Road/East Cliff Road, New Link Road (L3010 to Hazelwood Road), L2998 Upgrade of Dunkettle Road North (Glanmire bridge to Woodville), L2998 Upgrade of Dunkettle Road South (Woodville to Dunkettle), Footway Improvements Fernwood to Riverstown, and Glanmire & Riverstown Greenway. Construction works commenced in February 2022.

Glashaboy River (Glanmire/Sallybrook) Drainage Scheme: The scheme extends over approximately 4 km of the Glashaboy River three associated millraces, and lengths of various tributaries including: approximately 0.5 km of the Butlerstown Stream; approximately 1.8 km of Glenmore Stream (a tributary of Butlerstown Stream) and short lower reaches of various other tributaries. The key elements of the proposed works involve: Replacement of several existing culverts with either new culverts or bridges and culvert extensions; Replacement of Hazelwood Shopping Centre bridge; New flood relief channel and culvert at Hazelwood Avenue; Replacement of existing flood defence walls and construction of new flood defence walls; Construction of a new earthen flood defence embankment at Sallybrook; New surface water pumping station and one foul pumping station; Localised in-channel conveyance improvements at culvert/bridge structures; Local channel widening, deepening, realignment and re-grading of river channel; Provision of civil works such as road/footpath re-grading at several locations; Protecting drainage outlets along the line of flood defence works with non-return flap valves; Retaining walls; Flow control structure on a millrace; Removal of vegetation and trees; Removal and reinstatement of boundary walls and fences; Landscaping and replanting of trees on completion; and Ongoing maintenance of the modified river channel. Construction commenced in July 2023.

4. AA Screening statement

In view of best available scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, likely significant effects from the Development on European sites, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, can be excluded.

Based on the information provided in this Report, there is no requirement to proceed to the next stage of AA or for a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) to be produced.

5. References

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