

Old Court Greenfield Stop/Stand (Terminal)

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

National Transport Authority

Project Reference: PTSDT-ACM-ENV_AC_0016_296-18-RP-YE-0001
Project number: 60729129

June 2025

Quality Information

Prepared by	Checked by	Verified by	Approved by
Jenny Hunter MCIEEM MRSB Principal Ecologist	Paul Lynas CEnv MCIEEM Associate Director, Ecology	Paul Lynas CEnv MCIEEM Associate Director, Ecology	Liam Nugent Principal Engineer

Revision History

Revision	Revision Date	Details	Authorised	Name	Position
P01	04/02/2025	Draft	LCN	Liam Nugent	Principal Engineer
P02	12/05/2025	Issue	LCN	Liam Nugent	Principal Engineer
P03	04/06/2025	Issue	LCN	Liam Nugent	Principal Engineer

Prepared for:

National Transport Authority

Prepared by:

AECOM Ireland Limited
4th Floor
Adelphi Plaza
Georges Street Upper
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin A96 T927
Ireland

T: +353 1 696 6220
aecom.com

© 2025 AECOM Ireland Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Ireland Limited ("AECOM") for sole use of our client (National Transport Authority) in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. No third party may rely upon this document without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

Table of contents

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Background and project description	1
1.2	Legislative context	1
1.3	Overview of the Appropriate Assessment process.....	2
1.4	Sources of Guidance	3
2.	Relevant European sites.....	4
3.	Assessment of likely significant effects	5
3.1	Considering the Development alone.....	5
3.2	In-combination effects.....	5
4.	AA Screening conclusion	7
5.	References	8
	Appendix A Figures	9

Figures

Figure 1. Site location and European sites potentially connected to the Development

Tables

Table 1: European sites which could potentially be connected to the Development.....	4
--	---

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and project description

AECOM Ireland Limited ('AECOM') was commissioned by National Transport Authority (NTA) to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening of the new bus stop known as Old Court Greenfield Stop/Stand (herein referred to as the 'Development'). The new bus stop is located on Greenfields, within the residential area of Coolroe Meadows in County Cork. The extent of the Development, as shown in Appendix A Figure 1, is herein referred to as the 'Site'.

The Site is located along Greenfields, within the residential area of Coolroe Meadows at the western edge of Cork City. The approximate Irish Central Grid Reference is W5757469857 (ITM: 557528, 569896). The Site extends over approximately 0.05 hectares (ha) and comprises hardstanding, i.e. the footpath and the existing road, with amenity grassland and scattered amenity trees beyond the footpath. The wider area beyond the Site comprises further residential housing with maintained grass areas and scattered trees. There are no waterbodies in proximity or connected to the Site.

As part of the BusConnects Cork programme, the bus network in Cork has been comprehensively redesigned to provide over 50% more services than the 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 2025 and 2026.

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 works are summarised as follows.

1. Construction of 53m lay-by bus stop/stand to be built in existing footway and grass verge.
2. Instillation of hardstanding to be installed in the grass verge.
3. Regrading of the existing grass verge to tie in with the new hardstanding/footway levels.
4. Provision of accessible kerbing along the length of the northbound bus boarding area.
5. Installation of new buff tactile paving to upgrade existing uncontrolled crossing.
6. Installation of a new bus shelter (to be determined by the Applicant at a later stage) and flagpole.
7. Renewal/replacement of other road drainage, road signage, lighting, and road markings as might be necessary.
8. All other associated ancillary site 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 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

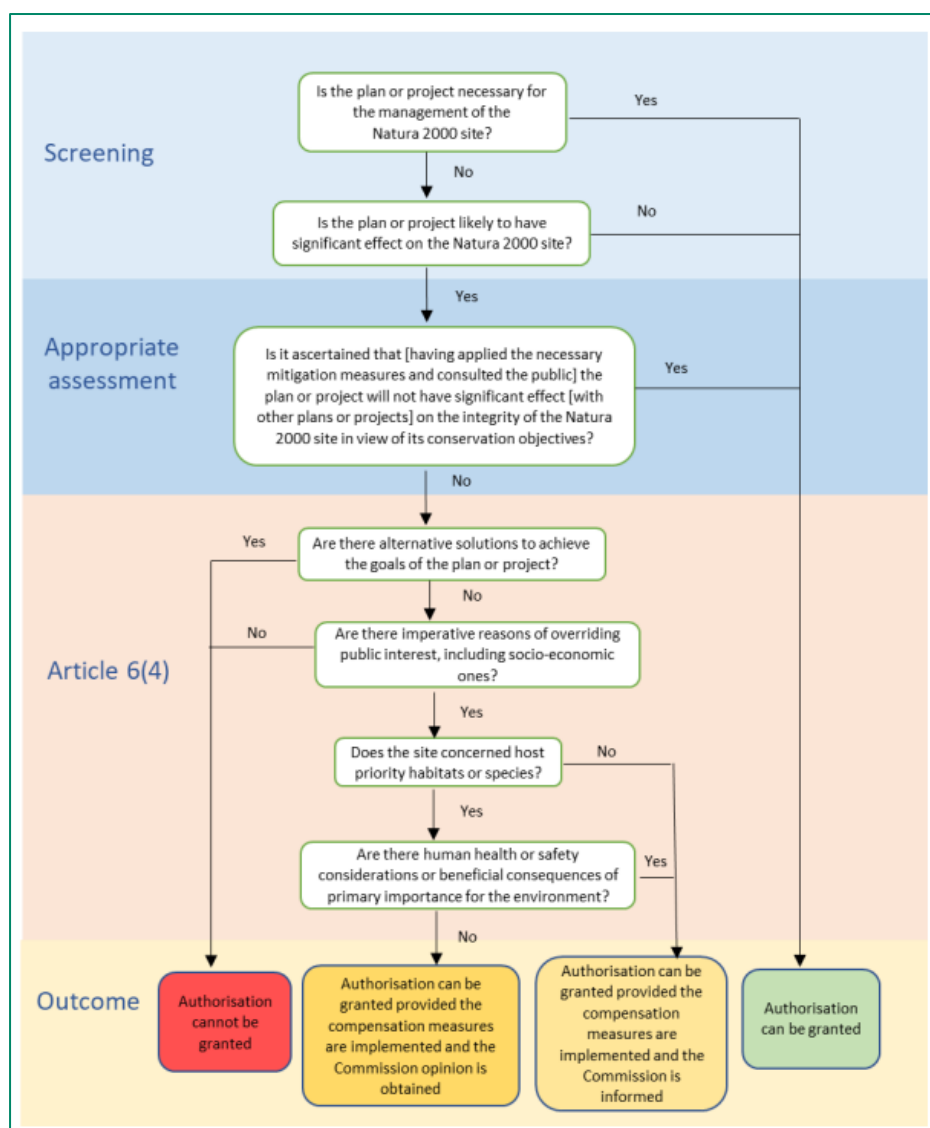
individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, must be subject to an AA of its implications for the SAC/SPA in view of the relevant site Conservation Objectives.

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. Diagram 1 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.

Diagram 1. The stages in assessment of plans and projects in relation to European sites.



Source: European Commission (2021).

The first step in the process is to ascertain whether a plan or project is directly connected with, or necessary to, the management of a European site, and if not, in view of best available scientific knowledge, whether the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European Site either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, and, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. This is often referred to as 'AA Screening'. The outcome of the AA Screening will determine if further AA of the plan or project is required.

Whilst the various steps involved in the AA process must be carried out by a Competent Authority, 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 Report 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 the next step in the AA process.

1.4 Sources of Guidance

This Report has been prepared in accordance with / with cognisance to, the following European Commission (EC) guidance documents:

- *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* (European Commission, 2021).
- *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: A Summary* (European Commission, 2022).
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2018).

In addition, the following sources of guidance were also considered when to during the preparation of this Report:

- *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. Relevant European sites

A search of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) online maps (EPA, 2025) was carried out to identify European sites within the potential zone of influence (Zoi) of the Development. The potential Zoi comprised an area up to at least 15 km of the Development, which is considered the maximum distance where potential impacts could affect QI/SCIs, based on its size and scale.

This search focused on the surroundings of the Site for construction and operational impacts but was extended to identify European sites further afield which may be hydrologically connected to the Development, or sites designated for QI/SCI species with extensive home ranges (and dependence on functionally linked habitats), such as migratory fish species, otter *Lutra lutra*, and certain non-breeding geese species.

This search identified one European site which could potentially be connected to the Development: Cork Harbour SPA. Details of the site are given in Table 1. The distance cited as the shortest boundary to boundary distance 'as the crow flies'.

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

Site name [site code]	Summary of site and relevant QI/SCI	Relationship to the Development
Cork Harbour SPA [004030]	<p>Cork Harbour is a large, sheltered bay system, with several river estuaries, principally those of the Rivers Lee, Douglas, Owenboy and Owennacurra. The SPA encompasses most of the main intertidal areas of Cork Harbour and comprises a number of discrete parcels. Cork Harbour is of major ornithological significance, with the following SCI.</p> <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] 	<p>Approximately 12.4 km east of the Site at its closest point.</p> <p>No hydrological connection to the Site.</p>

3. Assessment of likely significant effects

3.1 Considering the Development alone

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 including the installation of a 53m layby bus stop, new tactile paving to upgrade the existing uncontrolled crossing, regrading grass verge to tie in with footway construction, and associated, signage, markings, and other associated ancillary works. There may also be some minor vegetation maintenance works required to trim any overhanging vegetation from adjacent trees that may obstruct works. However, the majority of the Development works will occur on existing hardstanding surfaces and some amenity grassland. 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 within a suburban residential area.

Generic guidance for waterbird disturbance typically advises a precautionary approach distance of 300 m, and a low noise threshold figure of 55-70 dB for noise and visual disturbance (Cutts *et al.*, 2013). However, the only greenfield land within this distance of the Site comprise private gardens and well-maintained amenity grassland around houses, all within a very suburban setting and not considered to be suitable supporting habitats for SCI birds of Cork Harbour SPA. The closest habitat that could potentially be used by some of the SCI species from the Cork Harbour SPA are agricultural fields to the south and west of the Site, however these are all located over 300 m from the Site, are both delimited by houses and roads, and also beyond the guidance distances quoted by Cutts *et al.* (2013). On this basis, there is no potential for impacts to any SCI species of birds, and therefore no effects, significant or otherwise, are likely to arise due to the Development in relation to visual and noise disturbance.

The works associated with the construction of the Development are very minor, and the potential for waterborne pollution to be generated is very low. Any run-off from the works will enter the existing drainage system and will be subject to the same level of treatment as existing surface water flows. There are no watercourses located within the Site, nor within proximity to the Site, and hence no direct hydrological connection from the Site to Great Cork Harbour SPA. On this basis, there is no potential for impacts to Cork Harbour SPA, and therefore no effects, significant or otherwise, are likely to arise due to the Development in relation to waterborne pollution or sedimentation.

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). The Site is located >12 km from Cork Harbour SPA, therefore, atmospheric pollution to the SPA 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. Overall, it is concluded that likely significant effects from the Development in relation to atmospheric pollution can be excluded.

The operation of the Development will not differ in any material way to the current baseline environment. The Site is located on Greenfields, an existing road serving the suburban area of Coolroe Meadows, that results in surface runoff from impermeable surfaces and airborne emissions from road traffic. The urban drainage system will remain unchanged, and there will be no increase in surface runoff or possible inputs of pollutants. Thus, in terms of potential impact sources, there will be no increase in emissions of waterborne or airborne pollutants. Similarly, based on the information above, there are no operational impacts that could affect the SCI of Cork Harbour SPA in relation to species disturbance.

Based on the information presented above, no impacts or effects (significant or otherwise) related to SCI species disturbance, or waterborne or air pollution are likely to occur to Cork Harbour SPA as a result of the Development, either during construction or operation.

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 OPR (2021) guidance, 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 review of the National Planning Application Database (DoHLGH, 2025), An Bord Pleanála's (An Bord Pleanála, 2025) database, and Cork City Council's online planning application register (Cork City Council, 2025) 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, with some larger applications such as a solar farm also included.

However, as discussed above, no impacts or effects are considered possible from the Development itself to Cork Harbour SPA, or any other European site. Where there is no possibility of an effect from a development to occur (as opposed to a small but insignificant effect, or a significant effect), there cannot be any in-combination effects with other projects or plans. On this basis, it is assessed that there will be no in-combination effects of the Development with any European sites.

4. AA Screening conclusion

The need for the next stage of AA can only be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information, and in light of the conservation objectives of relevant European sites, that the Development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, could not have likely significant effects on any European site.

Following the assessment of the impacts and subsequent likelihood for significant effects of the Development on Cork Harbour SPA, no impacts or pathways for impacts were identified between the Site and any European site, and therefore there is no likelihood of effects, significant or otherwise, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

Based on the information provided in this Report, it is AECOM's opinion that there is no requirement to proceed to the next stage of AA or for a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) to be prepared for the Development.

5. References

An Bord Pleanála (2025). An Bord Pleanála Map Search (online). Available at: <https://www.pleanala.ie/> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

CIEEM (2024). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Version 1.3 – September 2024. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Cork City Council (2025). Cork City Planning Applications & Enforcement Register (online). Available at: <https://corkcityco.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=041f0ee1d0644bd191a897e67da5334b> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

Cutts, N., Hemingway, K and Spencer, J. (2013). *Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit: Informing Estuarine Planning & Construction Projects*. Produced by the Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies (IECS) University of Hull. Available from: https://www.tide-toolbox.eu/tidetools/waterbird_disturbance_mitigation_toolkit/.

DoHLGH (2025). National Planning Application Database (online). Available at: <https://housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=9cf2a09799d74d8e9316a3d3a4d3a8de> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

DoEHLG (2010). *Appropriate Assessment of plans and projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government: Ireland.

EPA (2025). EPA Maps (online). Available at: <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> (Accessed 16 January 2025).

European Commission (2018). Managing Natura 2000 sites. The Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (online). Available at https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/Provisions_Art_6_nov_2_018_en.pdf (Accessed 16 January 2025).

European Commission (2021). Commission Notice Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting European sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (online). Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/pdf/methodological-guidance_2021-10/EN.pdf (Accessed 16 January 2025).

European Commission (2022). Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: A Summary (online). Available at <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a3a639e3-b943-11ec-b6f4-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-256755860> (Accessed 16 January 2025).

European Communities (2011). *Birds and Natural Habitats (Amendment) Regulations*. Available at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/477/made/en/pdf>. (Accessed 16 January 2025).

IAQM (2024). Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction. Version 2.2 – January 2024. Available from: <https://iaqm.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Construction-Dust-Guidance-Jan-2024.pdf>. (Accessed 24 January 2025).

NPWS (2010). *Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. March 2010.

OPR (2021). OPR Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (online). Available at: <https://www.opr.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/9729-Office-of-the-Planning-Regulator-Appropriate-Assessment-Screening-booklet-15.pdf> (Accessed 16 January 2025).

Appendix A Figures

Figure 1. Site location and European sites potentially connected to the Development

