

Lotamore Bus Terminal

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

National Transport Authority

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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 Lotamore Terminal and ancillary works (herein referred to as the 'Development') 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 the R615 road (also known as Old Youghal Road) in the intersection with Lotamore Close. The approximate Irish Central Grid Reference of the Site is W 70925 73977 (ITM coordinates: 570878, 574016). The Site extends over approximately 0.09 hectares (ha) to the north of Bawnleigh Court residential estate and comprises hard-standing surfaces, and amenity grasslands with six semi-mature/mature street trees also present within the Site boundary. The nearest waterbody to the Site is Glen River located approximately 130 m to the north of the Site. Glen River is a tributary of the River Kiln which joins the River Lee and outflows into Cork Harbour approximately 5.5 km downstream of the Site. The Glen River is separated from the Site by hard-standing surfaces including the R615 road as well as areas of grassland, scrub and woodland. The Site is surrounded by an urban environment comprising residential areas, recreational facilities, educational facilities, and commercial and industrial facilities at Mayfield Business Park. There are also small pockets of grassland, scrub and woodland habitat present in the surrounding area of 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 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 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) Raised table carriageway construction from Lotamore Drive to Old Youghal Road;
- 2) Hard-standing for bus boarding area to be constructed within the existing verge. Sides to ramp down and tie into the proposed footway;
- 3) Accessible kerbing to be provided along the length of the bus boarding area;
- 4) 2.0 m wide uncontrolled crossing with tactile paving at either end of the bus terminal;
- 5) Proposed signage for the bus terminal access and exit;
- 6) Proposed double yellow lines to be installed at the entrance of the bus terminal to prevent parked cars blocking the access for busses to the bus terminal;
- 7) Renewal/replacement of other road drainage, road signage and road markings as might be necessary;
- 8) Provision of a bus pole and flag which will be removed for the installation of a bus shelter (to be determined by the Applicant at a later stage);
- 9) Relocation of lighting column and existing sign;
- 10) Removal of six trees and planting of three trees to the southwest of the site;
- 11) Installation of six new gullies; and,
- 12) 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 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).

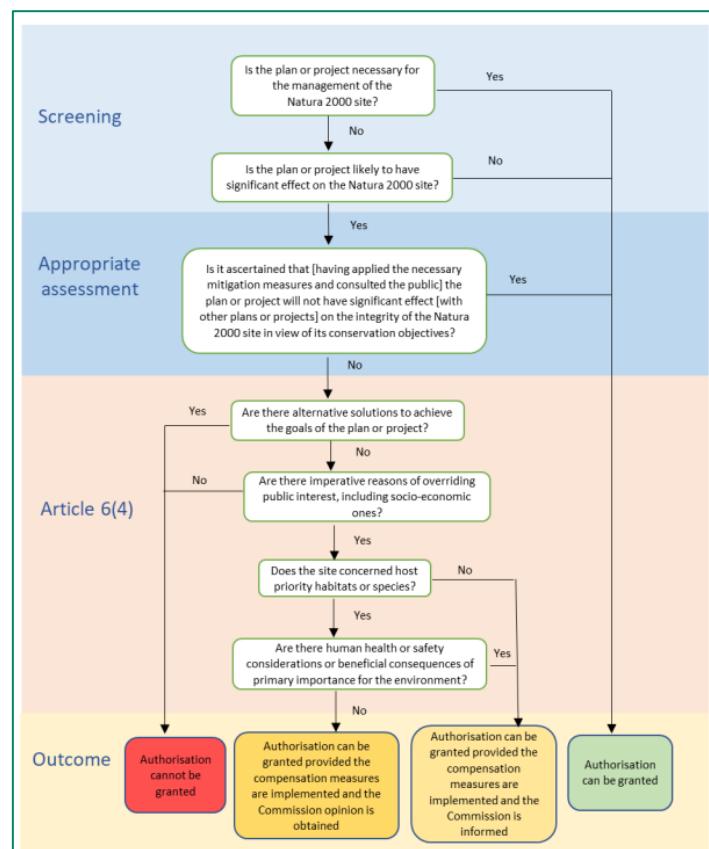
Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, any plan or project which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but would result in likely significant effects on such a site, either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, must be subject to an 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** 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.

Diagram 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 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 further AA.

2. Relevant European sites

A search of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) maps website was carried out to identify European sites within the Zone of Influence where these impacts could affect QI/SCIs to at least 15 km of the Development. This search focused on the surroundings of the Site for construction 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 two European sites which could potentially be connected to the Development: Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA. Details of each site are given in **Table 1**. Distances quoted are cited as the shortest boundary to boundary distance 'as the crow flies', unless otherwise specified. Hydrological downstream distances are given where appropriate.

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 1.4 km to the south-east of the Site. No direct hydrological connection to the Site.
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 5.5 km to the south-east of the Site. No direct hydrological connection to the Site.

3. Test of likely significant effects

3.1 Considering the Development alone

The Development involves minor works including the installation of hard-standing surfaces to facilitate the provision of a raised table carriageway, bus boarding area and future bus shelter. There will also be the addition of a footway, an uncontrolled crossing with tactile paving, accessible kerbing, signage installation, road marking, as well as renewal and replacement drainage works (discussed further below). The Development works will require the removal of six semi-mature/mature trees and planting of three trees southwest of the site, along with vegetation maintenance works to trim overhanging scrub vegetation that may obstruct works. However, the majority of the Development works will occur on existing hard-standing surfaces and amenity grassland and the design of the Development includes the addition of areas of grassy verges at the bus terminal location. 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 along an existing residential road within an urbanised area.

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 would be expected to be used by SCI species from the Cork Harbour SPA are the agricultural grasslands to the north and east of the Site. However, the agricultural fields to the north of the Site lie approximately 250 m distant and are separated from the Site by a woodland parcel. The agricultural fields to the east of the Site lie over 400 m from the Development and are far beyond the established disturbance distance quoted by Cutts *et al.* (2013). The only other greenfield lands within the disturbance distance of the Site comprise private gardens, green squares and sports pitches, are all within a highly urbanised setting and not considered to be suitable supporting habitats for SCI birds. Overall, there are no likely significant effects from the Development in relation to visual and noise disturbance.

The works associated with the construction of the Development are minor, and the potential for waterborne pollution to be generated is very low. While there will be some minor drainage works, with renewal/replacement of road drainage along the Development including the provision of six 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. There are no watercourses located within the Site and hence no direct hydrological connection from the Site to Great Island Channel SAC or Cork Harbour SPA. 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 Table 1, the closest European site to the Development, as the crow flies, is Cork Harbour SPA, approximately 1.4 km south-east. 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. 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 Development will lead to a minor increase in hard-standing surfaces near the existing residential road (R615), but it will not result in a significant increase in surface runoff from the impermeable surfaces or airborne emissions from road traffic. Thus, in terms of potential impact sources, there will be no increase in disturbance of QI/SCI, and there will be no increase in emissions of waterborne or airborne pollutants. The urban drainage system will remain unchanged, and there will be no increase in surface runoff 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:

- 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), An Bord Pleanála's (ABP) database and Cork City Council ePlan online inquiry website was carried out to identify any planning applications from the last five years within 1 km of the Development.

As discussed above, no effects are considered possible from the Development itself. Where there is no possibility of an effect from a scheme to occur (as opposed to a small but insignificant effect, or a significant effect), there cannot be any in-combination effect with other projects or plans. The vast majority of planning applications within 1 km of the Development are small-scale residential, community and industrial applications. For completeness, planning applications within 1 km which are somewhat larger in scale are discussed below. It should be noted that due to their similar location in relation to European sites (i.e. no direct hydrological connection, a general absence of suitable supporting habitats in their vicinity), it is also highly unlikely that any of the listed planning applications are associated with likely significant effects on European sites.

Planning Application Reference CCC. 2039508: Located at Mayfield Business Park, Mayfield, Cork City, approximately 400 m from the Site. Permission to erect a 24 m telecommunications support structure carrying antenna and dishes together with associated ground equipment, fencing, retaining wall, and associated site works.

Planning Application Reference CCC. 2341884: Located at Mayfield Community Association, Kerrigan Tyrell Hall, Tinkers Cross, Mayfield, Cork City, approximately 500 m from the Site. Permission to erect a 'Masterkabin' type single-storey modular steel building, consisting of a workshop, toilet, tearoom, and meeting area, including ancillary site works.

Planning Application Reference ABP. 313551/CCC. 2140456: Located at 11 to 15 Old Youghal Road, Mayfield, Cork City, approximately 690 m from the Site. Permission for the refurbishment and extension of two 1-bed existing cottages (nos. 14 and 15 Old Youghal Road) and the demolition and change of use of the existing public house (Former Cow Pub) and bookmakers (Boylesports) at nos. 11/12/13 Old Youghal Road, Mayfield, Cork City to residential. The development proposed involves the construction of 13 no. units comprising three 1-bed units, five 2-bed units and five 3-bed units. This development also includes the provision of 10 no. car parking spaces, bicycle parking spaces, drainage, landscaping, bin storage, and all other associated site development works.

Planning Application Reference CCC. 2543795: Located at Our Lady Crowned Credit Union, 11C Silversprings Road, Mayfield, Cork, approximately 630 m from the Site. Permission for development at Our Lady Crowned Credit Union, 11C Silversprings Road, Mayfield, Cork. The development will consist of the alteration and extension of the existing credit union building comprising new ground floor extension on eastern elevation to provide lobby and ATM/Express Lodgment space; demolition of existing bay window on eastern elevation at first floor level and construction of replacement bay window; alterations to door and window opes on western, southern and northern elevations; internal alterations comprising reconfiguration of banking hall, office and other support spaces and provision of new lift and disabled toilet. The proposed development includes amendments and extension to the existing car parking layout to improve access and circulation, and all ancillary site development, including drainage and landscaping works.

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, 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.

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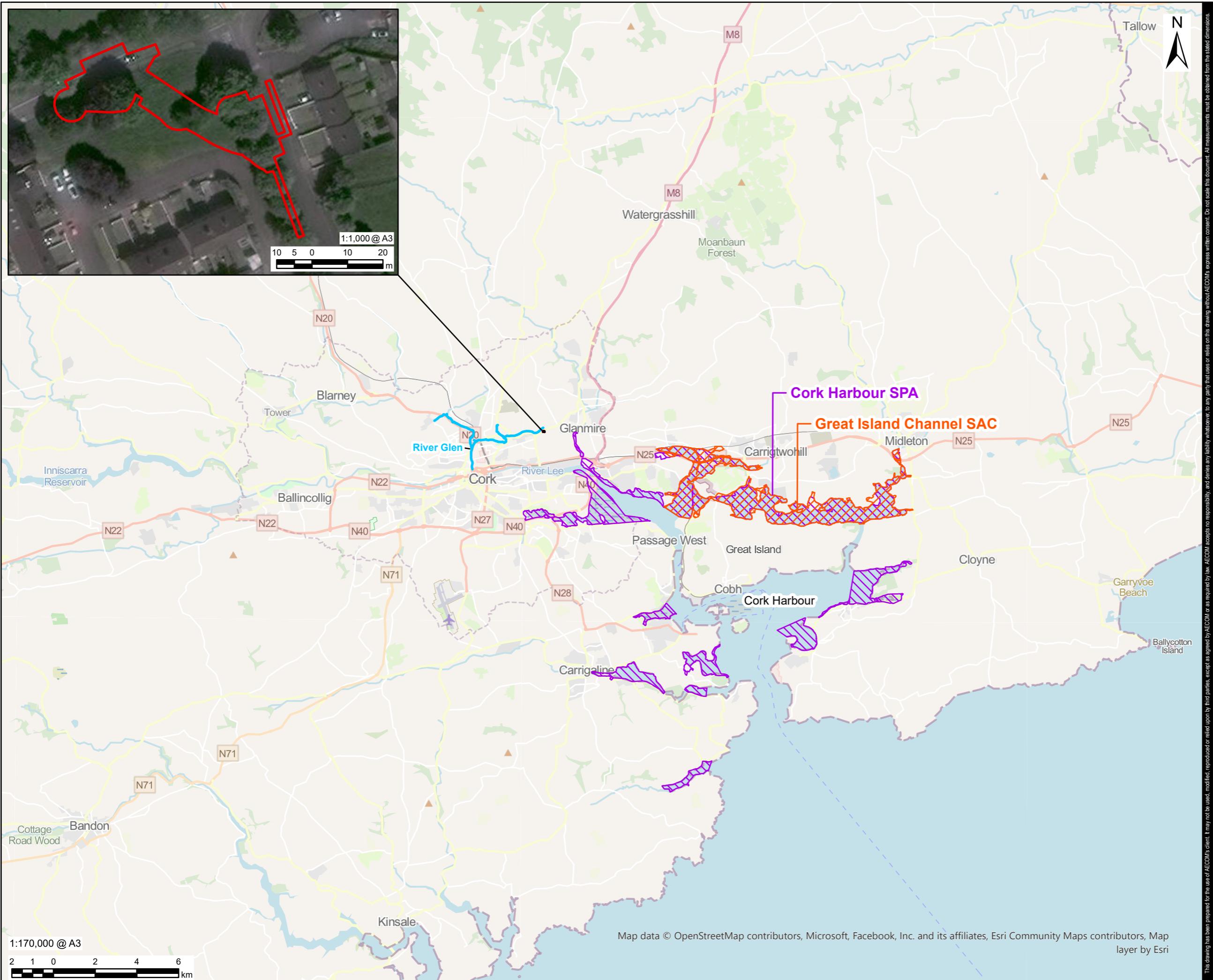
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Appendix A Figures

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



AECOM

PROJECT

PTSDT-ACM
ENV_AC_0016_282-18-RP-
YE-0001 - Lotamore Bus
Terminal

CLIENT

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LEGEND

- Development
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- watercourses

NOTES

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FIGURE TITLE

Site location and European sites within the potential Zol

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Figure 1

