

Cork University Hospital Terminus

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 the Cork University Hospital Terminus (hereafter referred to as the 'Development') in Cork City. The extent of the Development, as shown on **Figure 1**, is hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

The Site is located adjacent to Cork University Hospital on Bishopstown Road, Wilton on the outskirts of Cork city centre. The approximate Irish Central Grid Reference of the Site is W 65071 70154. There are no watercourses within the Site. The nearest watercourse to the Site is Glasheen Stream located approximately 590 m to the east.

As part of the BusConnects Cork programme, the bus network in Cork has been comprehensively redesigned to provide over 50% more service than the current existing one. The bus network 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 network. The Development will form part of the new bus network redesign and new orbital services will commence from this site (Routes 2, 5, 10, 14, 15 & 30). The Development includes a new terminal capacity to support this.

The proposed Development works are summarised as follows:

1. Widen the existing bus slip lane past Wilton Roundabout, and provide bus stop / stands, with capacity for three buses.
2. Removal of one tree to accommodate bus lane widening.
3. Renewal / replacement of other road drainage, road signage and road markings, as might be necessary.
4. 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).

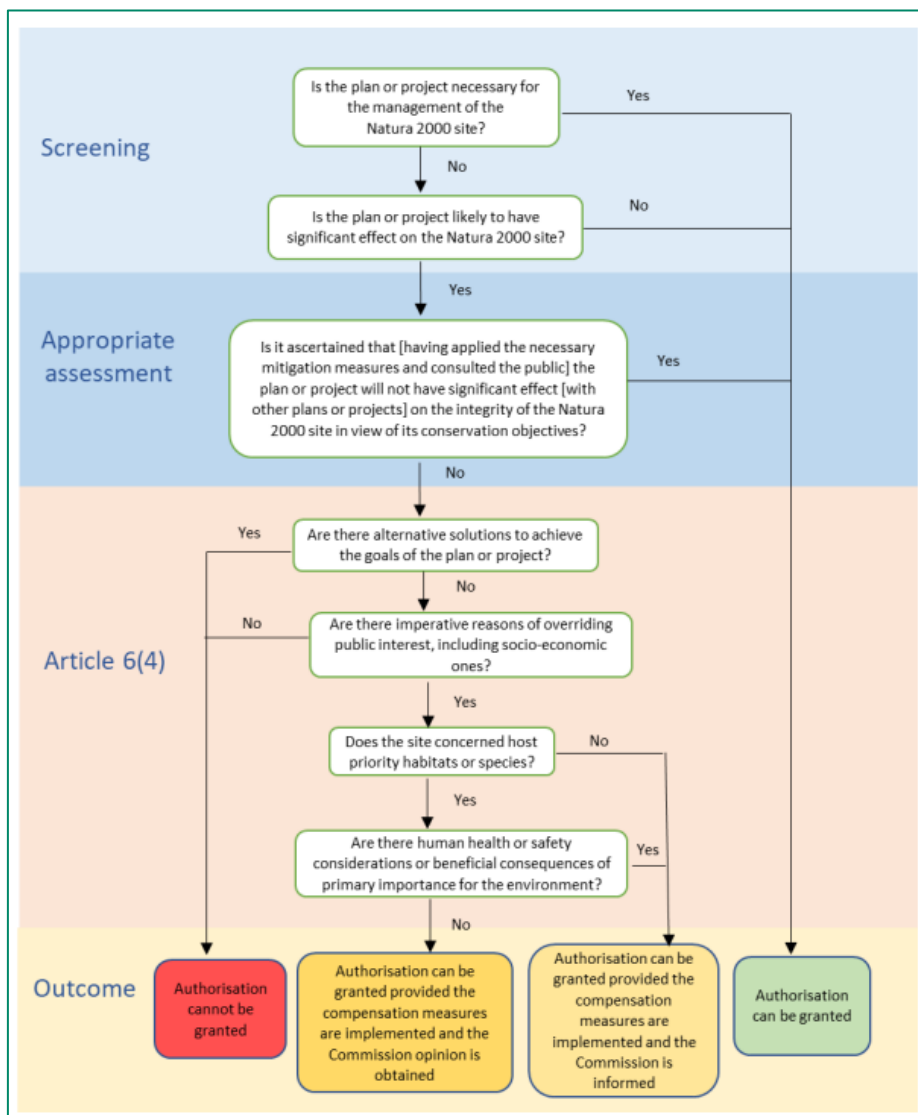
Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, any plan or project which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site, but would result in likely significant effects on such a site, either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, must be subject 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 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. This search identified two European sites which could potentially be connected to the Development: Cork Harbour SPA, and Great Island Channel SAC. Distances quoted are cited as the shortest boundary to boundary distance 'as the crow flies', unless otherwise specified. 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] 	<p>Approximately 4.9 km east of the Development, with a weak potential hydrological connection.</p> <p>The River Lee flows into Cork Harbour SPA approximately 8.5 km downstream of the Development. The River Lee does not flow through the Development but Glasheen Stream is located 590 m from the Site and it is a tributary of the River Lee (South Channel) located approximately 830 m downstream, along the river course.</p>
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] 	<p>Approximately 11.6 km east of the Development, with a weak potential hydrological connection.</p> <p>The River Lee flows into Great Island Channel SAC approximately 13.5 km downstream of the Development. The River Lee does not flow through the Development but Glasheen Stream is located 590 m from the Site and it is a tributary of the River Lee (South Channel) located approximately 830 m downstream, along the river course.</p>

3. Test of likely significant effects

3.1 Considering the Development alone

The Development involves some minor road works including the widening of an existing bus slip, the removal of one tree and the provision of three bus stops / stands. A small minority of the works will occur on the grass verge of a traffic island and will result in the loss of one mature tree and minor losses of grassy verges to enable the widening of the bus slip. However, the majority of the Development works will occur on existing hard-standing surfaces, just in the vicinity of grassy verges.

The habitats present are small in extent and highly disturbed and there is no potential for them to 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. There is consequently no potential for disturbance of SCI species of Cork Harbour SPA when occurring within the designated site boundary, or outside of it (due to lack of suitable habitat to support such species). Disturbance of QI / SCI species will likely not occur and therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects as a result of the Development.

The works associated with the construction of the Development are very minor, and the potential for waterborne pollution to be generated is very low. While there are some local drainage amendments including the relocation of current gullies, and the provision of a small number of additional gullies, they are proposed to connect into the existing drainage network, thus any run-off from the works will enter the existing urban drainage system and will be subject to the same level of treatment as existing surface water flows. There are no watercourses within the Site and, as stated above, there is no direct hydrological pathway between the Site and Glasheen Stream, given the intervening habitats, hence there is no direct hydrological connection to any European sites. Glasheen Stream is located 590 m from the Site, between which lies multiple roads, housing estates and two amenity grasslands. Glasheen Stream is a tributary of the River Lee (South Channel) located approximately 830 m downstream, along the river course. In the extremely unlikely scenario of a pollution event, the minor nature of the works combined with the distances downstream to Cork Harbour SPA and Great Channel SAC (4.9 km and 11.6 km, respectively), as well as the subsequent dilution effect from the River Lee and Cork Harbour mean that there will be no effect on the QI / SCI features of the European sites identified in **Table 1** from waterborne pollution.

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 over 4.9 km easterly 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 4.9 km) no impact is possible.

The operation of the Development will not differ in any material way to current 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 waterborne or airborne pollutants). To facilitate the proposed road widening, there will be a small increase in impermeable surfaces within the Site. However, the urban drainage system will remain largely unchanged and there is no significant 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 (CIEEM, 2022). 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, 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, or commercial applications are discussed below.

Planning Application Reference 2140747: Located at Cork University Hospital, Bishopstown Road, Wilton

Permission for development at Cork university Hospital, Bishopstown Road, Wilton, Cork. The development consists of: A 5 no. storey extension to the existing paediatric unit at Cork University Hospital. The proposed development will provide 83 no. paediatric in-patient bedrooms, high dependency units, palliative care suites, haematology bed spaces, procedure rooms, operating theatres and diagnostic facilities. The development will contain ancillary healthcare staff facilities, plant and storage for the operation of the unit. The development will also provide for the refurbishment of level 1 of the existing paediatric unit to accommodate allied health professional services and a paediatric assessment unit. Ancillary site development works will include the realignment of the existing campus ring road, diversion of services and utilities to existing building on site, signage, hard and soft landscaping, lighting, signage, green roofs, plant, and all other site development works.

Planning Application Reference: 2039645: Located at Cork University Hospital, Bishopstown Road, Wilton.

Permission is sought for the construction of a three-storey clinical medical school plus two additional floors of rooftop plantrooms; the extension of existing surface car park; revised layout to existing surface car park; ancillary site works and all associated external works within the grounds of existing Cork university Hospital Campus

Planning Application Reference 1838122: Located at Cork University Hospital, Bishopstown Road, Wilton.

Permission for the development of a new helipad facility and elevated connection to the existing Emergency Department, on the northeast staff car park within the Cork University Hospital campus, the demolition of the existing boiler house chimney and construction of a new two storey staff car park on the west side of the Hospital campus.

Planning Application Reference 2341901: Located at Cork University Hospital, Bishopstown Road, Wilton.

Permission for development at Cork University Hospital, Bishopstown Road, Wilton, Cork. The development will consist of: The construction of a two-storey extension to the existing Accident and Emergency Department and the provision of a new plant room on the roof of the proposed extension. The development will also consist of alterations to the set down car parking area serving the Glandore Centre, installation of a dedicated underground decontamination waste holding tank and all ancillary works necessary to facilitate the development.

Planning Application Reference 2140160: Located on Bishopstown Shopping Centre, Curraheen Road, Bishopstown, approximately 710 m east of the Site.

Permission for the redevelopment of the Bishopstown Shopping Centre, Curraheen Road, Bishopstown, Cork. The proposed development includes the demolition of the existing supermarket and adjoining retail units and the construction of a supermarket of 2,723 sq.m (1,469 sq.m net retail floor area) including a café with outdoor seating. The supermarket will provide for the sale of alcohol. The proposal also includes for a temporary construction car park on site, plant areas, goods delivery area, meter room extension and substation access. The proposed development includes for car parking, bicycle parking, the provision of footpaths and upgrades to existing footpaths and accesses, landscaping, lighting, the provision of signage on the building, totem signage, solar panels and all associated and ancillary site development works.

Planning Application Reference 1838089: Located on Bishopstown GAA Club, Ballinaspig Lawn, Bishopstown, approximately 645 m to the northwest of the Site.

Permission to upgrade their existing facility at Ballinaspig Lawn, Bishopstown, Cork. This work will comprise of the installation of a synthetic all weather playing pitch, the installation of 5m high perimeter pitch fencing, the installation of 8 no. 20m high floodlighting

masts to serve the new pitch with a floodlighting average spread of 400lux at pitch level, the installation of a generator to serve the new floodlights, the installation of 15m high behind goal netting and associated site drainage works.

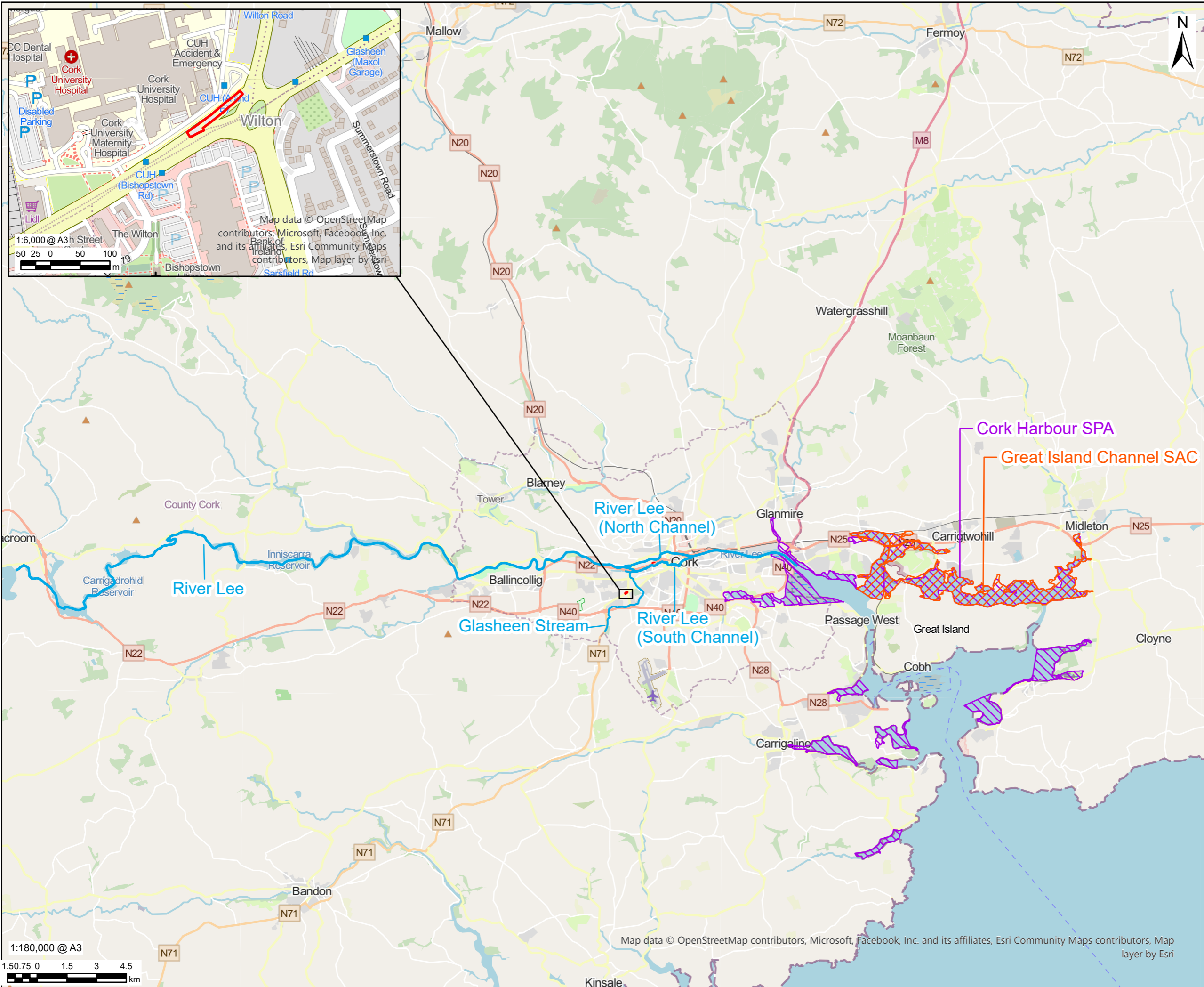
4. AA Screening statement

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, 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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 Hospital Terminus

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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 ZoI

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Figure 1

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