FLYNN FURNEY
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS

# Appropriate Assessment Stage 1: Screening

**Proposed Park at Cornahilt, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan**

## Document Details

| | |
|---|---|
| **Client:** | **Park Hood** |
| **Project Title:** | **Proposed Park at Cornahilt, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan** |
| **Document Title:** | **Appropriate Assessment Screening** |
| **Prepared by:** | **Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants** |

| Rev | Status | Date | Author(s) | Approved by |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 01 | Draft | 24/03/2026 | LW | JMA |
| 02 | Final | 30/03/2026 | LW | JMA |
| 03 | Draft | 14/05/2026 | LW | |
| 02 | Final | 19/05/2026 | LW | JMA |

# Contents

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants have been appointed to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article 6(3) Screening for Appropriate Assessment for the proposed park at Cornahilt, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan. Screening for Appropriate Assessment is required under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive). This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared in accordance with the European Commission's 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) and Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018) as well as the Department of the Environment's Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2010).

## 1.2 Relevant Legislation and Overall Screening Methodology

The methodology for this screening statement is set out in a document prepared for the Environment DG of the European Commission entitled '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, 2019, amended 2021)*. This report and any contributory fieldwork were carried out in accordance with guidelines given by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government *(2009, amended 2010)*.

The process is given in Articles 6*(3)* and 6*(4)* of the Habitats Directive and is commonly referred to as 'Appropriate Assessments' *(which in fact refers to Stage 2 in the sequence under the Habitats Directive Article 6 assessment)*. Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Articles 6*(3)* and 6*(4)* of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites *(Annex 1.1)*. Article 6*(3)* establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the (Natura 2000) site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public."

Article 6*(4)* of the same directive states:

"If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

It is the responsibility of the proponent of the plan or project to provide the relevant information *(ecological surveys, research, analysis etc.)* for submission to the 'competent national authority'. Having satisfied itself that the information is complete and objective, the competent authority will use this information to screen the project, i.e. to determine if an AA is required and to carry out the AA, if one is deemed necessary. The competent authority shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. The appropriate assessment process has four stages. Each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. If, for example, the conclusions at the end of Stage One are that there will be no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 site, there is no requirement to proceed further. The four stages are:

1. Screening to determine if an appropriate assessment is required.
2. Appropriate assessment
3. Consideration of alternative solutions

4. Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest/Derogation

**Table 1. The stages of AA**

| **Stage 1: Screening for AA** |
|---|
| The aim of screening is to assess firstly if the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary to the management of Designated Site*(s)*; or in view of best scientific knowledge, if the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on a Designated Site. This is done by examining the proposed plan or project and the conservation objectives of any Designated Sites that might potentially be affected. If screening determines that there is potential for significant effects or there is uncertainty regarding the significance of effects then it will be recommended that the plan or project is brought forward to the next stage of the AA process. |
| **Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment** |
| The aim of stage 2 of the AA process is to identify any adverse impacts that the plan or project might have on the integrity of relevant Designated Sites. As part of the assessment, a key consideration is 'in combination' effects with other plans or projects. Where adverse impacts are identified, mitigation measures can be proposed that would avoid, reduce or remedy any such negative impacts and the plan or project should then be amended accordingly, thereby avoiding the need to progress to Stage 3. |
| **Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions** |
| If it is not possible during Stage 2 of the AA process to conclude that there will be no adverse effects on site integrity, Stage 3 of the process must be undertaken which is to objectively assess whether alternative solutions exist by which the objectives of the plan or project can be achieved. Explicitly, this means alternative solutions that do not have adverse impacts on the integrity of a Designated Site. It should also be noted that EU guidance on this stage of the process states that, 'other assessment criteria, such as economic criteria, cannot be seen as overruling ecological criteria' *(EC, 2002)*. In other words, if alternative solutions exist that do not have adverse impacts on Designated |

| |
|---|
| Sites; they should be adopted regardless of economic considerations. This stage of the AA process should result in the identification of the least damaging options for the plan or project. |
| **Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)/Derogation** |
| This stage of the AA process is undertaken when it has been determined that a plan or project will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Designated Site, but that no alternatives exist. At this stage of the AA process, it is the characteristics of the plan or project itself that will determine whether or not the competent authority can allow it to progress. This is the determination of 'overriding public interest'. It is important to note that in the case of Designated Sites that include in their qualifying features 'priority' habitats or species, as defined in Annex I and II of the Directive, the demonstration of 'overriding public interest' is not sufficient and it must be demonstrated that the plan or project is necessary for 'human health or safety considerations'. Where plans or projects meet these criteria, they can be allowed, provided adequate compensatory measures are proposed. Stage 4 of the process defines and describes these compensation measures. |

## 1.3 Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

This report provides stage one: screening for appropriate assessment. It aims to establish whether a plan or project is likely to have any significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites. The study is based on a preliminary impact assessment using both publicly available data and data collected during site visits and ecological surveys. This is followed by a determination of whether there is a risk that the effects identified could significantly impact any Natura 2000 sites, and if so, an AA is required. The need to apply the precautionary principle in making any key decisions in relation to the tests of AA has been confirmed by the European Court of Justice case law. Therefore, where significant effects are likely, possible or uncertain at the screening stage, AA will be required.

## 1.4 Reference Documents

The following relevant documents were considered in preparation of this report.

**Table 2. Reference Documents**

| Name / Number | Description |
|---|---|
| Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities | National guidance on Appropriate Assessment for planning authorities. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, (2010 revision) |
| Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities | Circulars issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government with guidance relating to Appropriate Assessment. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10 (2010) |
| Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC | The guidance within this document provides a non-mandatory methodology for carrying out assessments required under Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive. European Commission Environment Directorate-General, (2001 and updates April 2015 and September 2021). |
| Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC | Publication to the Member States with an interpretation of certain concepts in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. EC Environment Directorate-General (2018) |
| Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle. | Publication relating to the use of the precautionary principle. European Commission (2000) |

## 1.5 Statement of Authority

Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants have more than 20 years of experience in ecological surveying and management. The company has detailed knowledge on the principles and implementation of both Irish and European environmental legislation. FFEC has worked closely with statutory bodies including the National Parks and Wildlife Service and Waterways Ireland on habitat management and protection projects. Other expertise includes Ecological Impact Assessment, Habitat and Floral Surveys, Bird Surveying, Bat Surveying, Fish and Waterways surveys.

Information provided and prepared for this report was compiled by ecologists from Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. An ecological assessment was carried out in March 2026 on the proposed park site by Lauren Woods. This report was written by Lauren Woods and reviewed by Jennifer Mc Aree. Lauren holds a Bsc (Hons) in Environmental and Geographical Sciences from the Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) and has worked with Flynn Furney since 2022 on a range of projects involving environmental screenings, including Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA) and Appropriate Assessments. Jennifer is a Senior Environmental Scientist and Associate Director with Flynn Furney and has worked for the company for five years. She has 12 years' experience in the environmental field and holds a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science from University of Galway and a MSc in Sustainable Development from TU Dublin.

# 2 Description of Proposed Work

The proposed project involves transforming the site into an accessible open space for local residents, with inviting entrances and a network of looping trails combined with the planting of native woodland. Selective clearing of existing conifer plantations to create meadow areas will support the development of a viewpoint, play area, picnic space, and an outdoor learning environment for local school children, while also creating opportunities to introduce additional recreational and adventure activities that build on the town's existing tourist attractions. The southern portion of the site will be retained as a quieter, more reflective woodland walk, and the establishment of native woodland planting alongside boundary vegetation will enhance habitat quality and ecological value on-site, while serving as a community woodland and educational resource for the residents of Ballyjamesduff.


**Figure 1. Site masterplan provided by Park Hood (2025)**

# 3 Methodology

## 3.1 Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out as part of this screening process. This included a review of available literature on the site and its immediate environs. Sources of information included the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) databases on protected sites and species data, and from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on watercourses.

## 3.2 Data Used to Carry Out the Assessment

The following sources of data were employed:

- EPA Appropriate Assessment Tool

- EPA Maps (to identify watercourses, hydrology and Natura 2000 site boundaries)
- NPWS protected species database and online mapping
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)
- An Coimisiún Pleanála's online database.

## 3.3 SPR Model

This assessment was carried out with regard to the source-pathway-receptor *(SPR)* approach, a standard tool in environmental assessment. The SPR concept in ecological impact assessment relates to the idea that for the risk of an impact to occur, a source is needed *(a development site)*; an environmental receptor is present *(a lake)*; and finally, there must be a pathway between the source and the receptor *(a watercourse linking the development site to the lake)*. Even though there might be a risk of an impact occurring, that does not necessarily mean that it will occur, and even if it does occur, it may not be significant. Identification of a risk means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor.

In this instance, the most relevant receptors are any relevant Natura 2000 sites with connectivity to the proposed works. These were considered during the desktop study stage of this screening assessment in order to assess the potential for significant effects upon their Qualifying Interests *(QIs)*, Sites of Community Importance *(SCIs)* and Conservation Objectives *(COs)*. This stage of the process is used to determine whether any of the Natura sites may be 'screened out'. That is, that they can be regarded as not being relevant to the process, having no potential to be significantly affected or impacted upon.

## 3.4 Field Survey

The field survey was carried out in March 2026. Baseline ecological conditions were assessed. Habitats were classified according to Fossitt *(2000)*. Where applicable, the habitat types and species usage were recorded *(Smith et al. 2011; Scannell and Synnott, 1987; Wyse Jackson et al. 2016)*. Habitats were classified and dominant plant species were noted according to the guidelines given by the JNCC *(2010)*

with reference to Smith et al. *(2011)* and Scannell and Synnott *(1987)*.

# 4 Results

## 4.1 Desk Study

### 4.1.1 Surface Water

The closest WFD waterbody to the proposed park is Mountnugent river, part of the Mountnugent_020 WFD river waterbody (European Code: IE_SH_26M020200) which is approximately 370 m to the north-west of the park site. This WFD river waterbody achieved an overall WFD status of 'Poor' between 2019 and 2024. This river eventually flows into Lough Sheelin (European Code: IE_SH_26_709) approximately 12 km downstream, which achieved an overall WFD status of 'Moderate' between 2019 and 2024.

The proposed park falls within the Upper Shannon WFD catchment (Catchment_ID: 26F), specifically in the Mountnugent_SC_010 WFD subcatchment (Subcatchment_ID: 26F_3). Although no WFD waterbodies are located within the footprint of the proposed park, a drainage ditch runs through the centre of the site. While connectivity appears limited, the potential for the drainage ditch feature to be hydrologically linked to the Mountnugent River cannot be ruled out, particularly as additional drainage ditches may exist in fields to the west and north-west of the site that could provide a pathway for surface water connectivity. A small flow of water is present outside the proposed works area along the boundary of the Woodlands housing estate, flowing downhill (north) into a small pool located south of the existing drainage ditch. No works will take place near this flow of water.

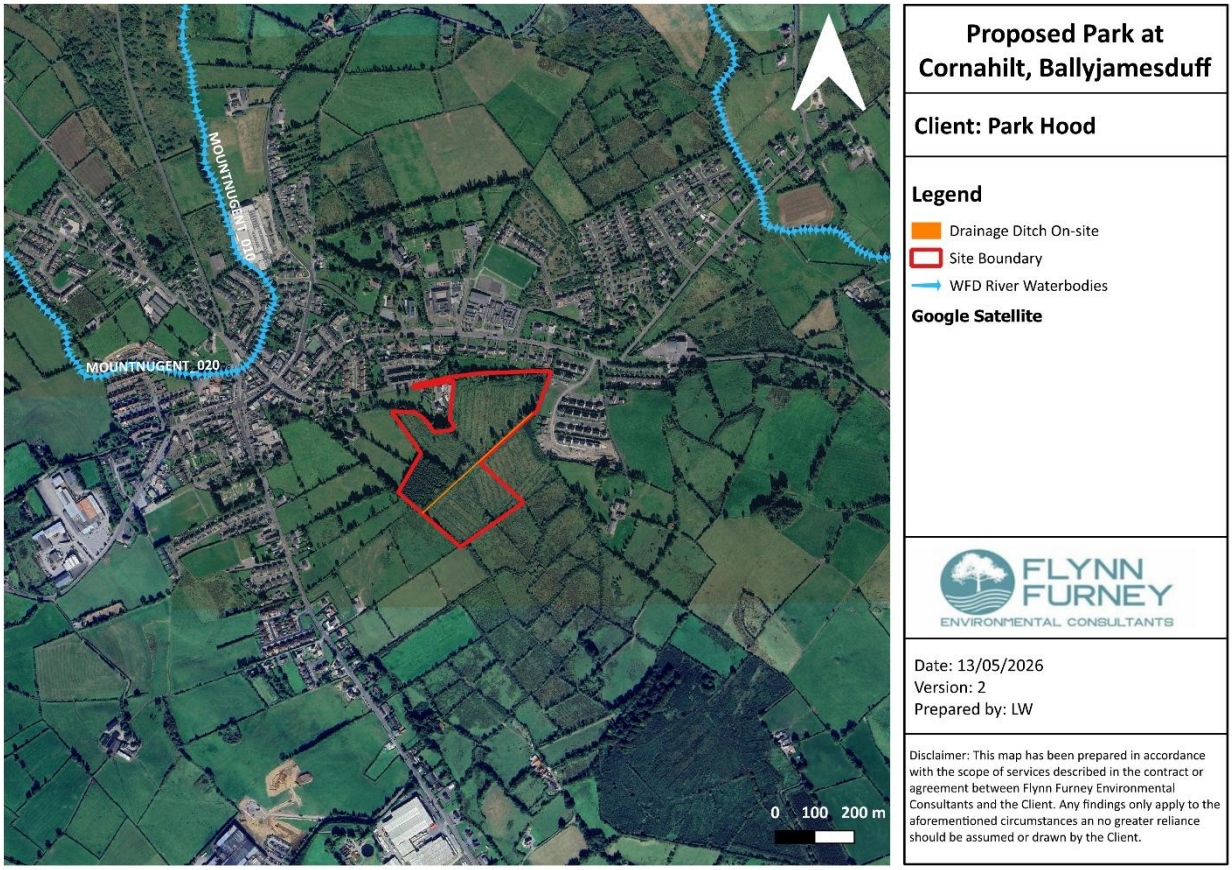


**Figure 2. Surface water features on and surrounding the site**

### 4.1.2 Groundwater

The site falls within the Inny WFD ground waterbody (European Code: IE_SH_G_110) which achieved an overall status of 'Poor' based on the 'Ground Waterbody WFD Status 2019-2024'. Groundwater vulnerability on-site is 'High'.

### 4.1.3 Invasive Species Records

Records from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) for the work areas were downloaded and reviewed for invasive species records within 1 km following the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM, 2017). Several First Schedule and non-First Schedule invasive species were recorded on the NBDC database within 1 km of the proposed works.

**Table 3. Invasive species within 1 km of the proposed works**

| Invasive Species | Level of Invasiveness | First Schedule Invasive | NBDC Records Occurred Within | Recorded During |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| | | Species Ireland | Footprint of Works | Field Survey |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Canadian Waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*) | High | Yes | No | No |
| Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) | High | No | No | Yes |
| Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) | High | Yes | No | No |
| *Rhododendron ponticum* | High | No | No | No |
| Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) | Medium | No | No | Yes |
| American Mink (*Neovison vison*) | High | Yes | No | No |
| Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) | High | Yes (Offshore islands only) | No | No |
| Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*) | High | Yes | No | No |
| Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) | High | Yes | Yes | No |
| House Mouse (*Mus musculus*) | High | No | No | No |
| Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) | Medium | No | No | No |

## 4.2 Field Study Results

### 4.2.1 Habitat Assessment

The following section describes the habitats found within the proposed project site. Photos of the habitats present are available in **Appendix A**.

Several habitats were recorded within the site, including Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3), Drainage Ditches (FW4), Mixed Broadleaved Woodland (WD1), Scrub (WS1), Conifer Plantation (WD4), and Treelines (WL2). The majority of the site consisted of a mosaic of scrub and young conifer plantation. The scrub habitat was dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), with Common rush (*Juncus effusus*) frequently occurring between stands of Gorse. Due to the dense growth of Gorse, some areas of scrub were not accessible for survey.

The conifer plantation consisted of immature Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) planted in rows. Common rush was also present within this habitat, although less frequent than in the Gorse-dominated scrub. Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) was recorded occasionally within the conifer plantation. Scattered individual broadleaved trees, including Birch (*Betula* spp.), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), were occasionally recorded in small clusters throughout this habitat.

Buildings and artificial surfaces on-site are limited to the existing roadway along The Grove and a track extending from this road into the conifer plantation.

A drainage ditch with steep banks runs from east to west across the site. Water levels within the ditch could not be visually confirmed due to the height of the banks and dense surrounding vegetation however, the sound of flowing water was noted toward the eastern section.

Mixed broadleaved woodland is present to the west of the site and is dominated by Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), with Birch and occasional Scots pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) also recorded.

Mature treelines occur along the north, south, south-west, east, and north-east boundaries of the site. Species recorded within this habitat include Willow (*Salix* spp.), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Sycamore, Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), and occasional mature Scots pine. The understory included Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.). Cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) was also recorded within the northern section of the treeline habitat.

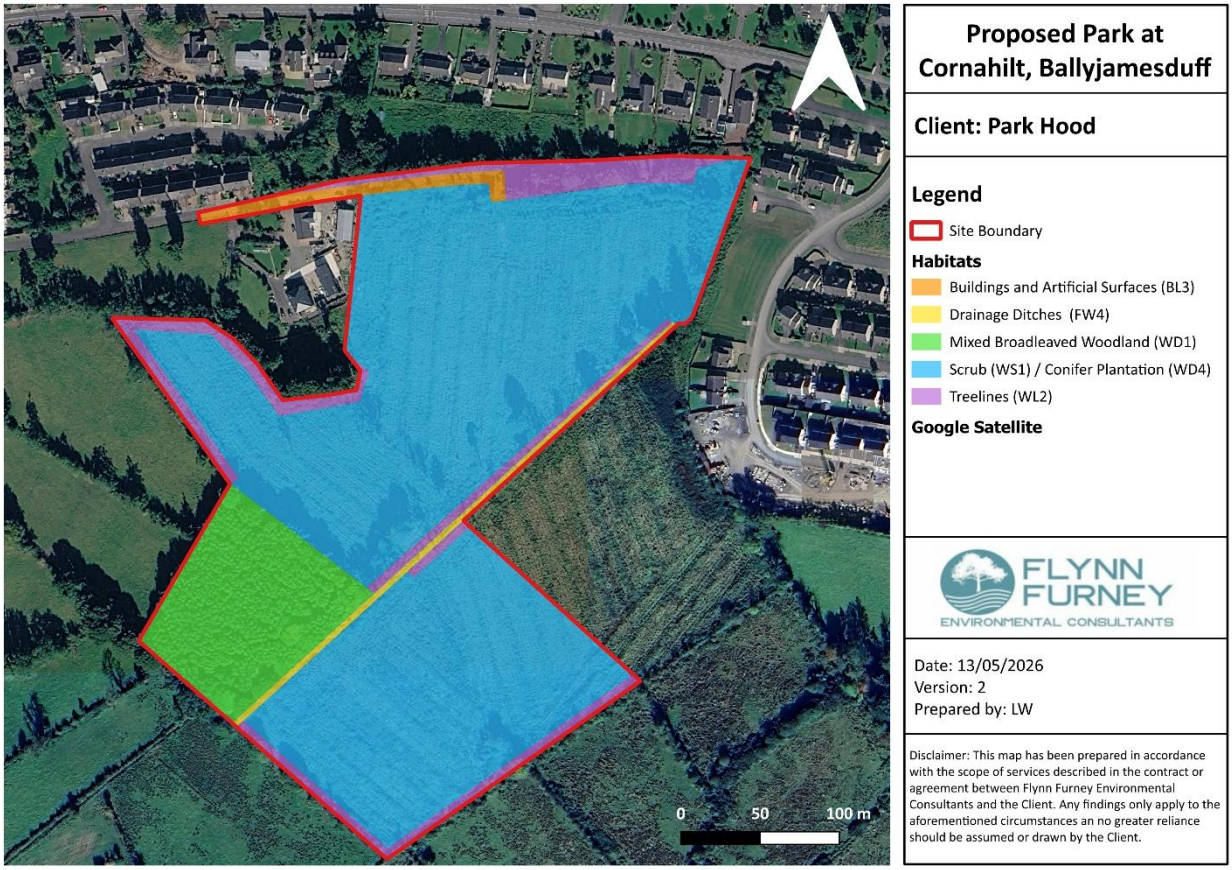


**Figure 3. Habitat map of proposed park area**

### 4.2.1 Annex I Habitats

Annex I habitats, identified as of utmost conservation importance under the Habitats Directive, receive legal protection within the Irish framework through the transposition of the Directive into national law, primarily under the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations (S.I. 94 of 1997), which mandates the designation and conservation of Special Areas of Conservation to safeguard these critical habitats. **Table 4** assesses whether any habitat found during ground surveys has links with any of these habitat types.

**Table 4. Summary of the habitats recorded on the proposed project site**

| Habitat Recorded | Fossitt Code | Links with Annex I Habitats |
|---|---|---|
| Buildings and Artificial Surfaces | BL3 | No |
| Drainage Ditches | FW4 | No |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Mixed Broadleaved Woodland | WD1 | No |
| Scrub | WS1 | No |
| Conifer Plantation | WD4 | No |
| Treelines | WL2 | No |

### 4.2.2 Significance of habitats

The majority of the habitat types found surrounding the site range from low to high local significance. No habitats protected under the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) were recorded within the footprint of the proposed works or in the immediate vicinity.

### 4.2.3 Avifauna

All birds seen and heard during field surveys were noted. These included: House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Wood Pigeon (*Columba livia*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelus*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Great Tit (*Parus major*), Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) Buzzard (*Buteo buteo)*. While no NBDC bird records occurred directly within the footprint of the proposed park, several bird species listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive were recorded within 1 km of the site. These were mainly historical (1970s to 1990s) and included Corncrake (*Crex crex*), Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), and Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*). Although records of these species are noted within 1 km of the site, they have a spatial precision of 10 km, meaning they do not necessarily occur within the site itself. The exact locations of records with 10 km precision are not known. No Annex I bird species protected under the EU Bird Directive were recorded during the field survey.

### 4.2.4 Mammals

Most terrestrial mammals enjoy some level of legal protection in Ireland, with 13 listed in the EU Habitats Directive, 22 in national legislation in the Republic of Ireland, and 18 in national legislation in Northern Ireland. It is an offence to intentionally kill or injure a protected species or to wilfully interfere with or destroy the breeding site or resting place of a protected wild animal. Trails were observed throughout the site; however, no other evidence of mammals was recorded on-site. Although no NBDC mammal records occurred within the footprint of the site, several species have

been recorded within 1 km, including American Mink (*Neovison vison*), Badger (*Meles meles*), Brown Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*), Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*), Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), House Mouse (*Mus musculus*), Pine Marten (*Martes martes*), Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), and Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*). No Annex II mammal species under the Habitats Directive were recorded within 1 km of the site on the NBDC database and no Annex II species were recorded during the field survey.

### 4.2.5 Chiroptera

In Ireland, nine species of bat are currently known to be resident. These are classified into two Families: the *Rhinolophidae* (Horseshoe bats) and the *Vespertilionidae* (Common bats). The Lesser Horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposider*os is the only representative of the former Family in Ireland. All the other Irish bat species are of the latter Family and these include three pipistrelle species: Common (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus), S*oprano *(P. pygmaeus) and* Nathusius' *(P. nathusii)*, four Myotids: Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri)*, Daubenton's (*M. daubentoniid)*, Whiskered (*M. mystacinus)*, Brandt's (*M. brandtii)*, the Brown Long-eared (*Plecotus auratus)* and Leisler's (*Nyctalus leisleri)* bats. Although no bats were recorded on the NBDC databases within the footprint of the site, several species have been recorded within 1 km, including Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus sensu stricto*), Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), Leisler's Bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*), Nathusius's Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), and Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

### 4.2.6 Lepidoptera

The Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) is listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC), which includes species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of SACs. No NBDC records occurred within 1 km of the proposed works.

### 4.2.7 Invasive Species

Ireland is a signatory of a number of international treaties and conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and most notably Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 on the prevention and management of the introduction and spread of invasive alien species (The IAS Regulation). Such legal instruments require the Irish Government to address issues of invasive alien species. This has been implemented through national legislation via the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000 (as amended) and

further regulated through the European Union (Invasive Alien Species) Regulations 2024. These regulations outline the legal implications associated with alien invasive species and the steps required for early eradication, management and containment. Article 17 sets out restrictions on species of national concern, which are listed in the First Schedule of the regulations.

Under Article 17 of the Regulations, it is an offence to:

- Plant, disperse, allow dispersal or cause the spread of invasive species.
- Keep the plants in possession for the purpose of sale, breeding, reproduction,
- propagation, distribution, introduction or release.
- Keep anything from which the plant can be reproduced, or propagated from, without a granted licence.

Invasive species can have significant and detrimental impacts on Natura 2000 sites, which are designated to protect habitats and species of European importance. The introduction and spread of invasive species can disrupt ecosystems, threaten native biodiversity, and compromise the achievement of conservation objectives.

No First Schedule invasive species were recorded within the site footprint. However, two non-First Schedule invasive species were observed and recorded. This included Cherry Laurel and Butterfly Bush. A separate Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) prepared by DNV (2025) also noted that Montbretia (*Crocosmia × crocosmiiflora*) and Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) also occur on-site.

# 5 Identification of the European Sites within the Likely Zone of Influence (ZoI)

The following methodology was used to establish which European Sites are within the Likely Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the proposed development:

- The most recent Geographic Information System (GIS) spatial datasets for designated European sites and water catchments were acquired from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website (www.npws.ie) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

website (www.epa.ie). These datasets were employed to discern European Sites susceptible to potential impacts from the Proposed Development.

- An investigation into the site characteristics and the risks to the environment with consideration for the potential zone of impact was carried out to determine all probable pathways and risks to site conservation.
- A source-pathway-receptor model was utilised to identify European Sites within the ZoI of the development site, providing contextual information on these sites based on site-specific conservation objectives. Hydrological catchment mapping facilitated the evaluation of potential hydrological connectivity between the Proposed Development site and European Sites.
- For SPAs lacking specific European or Irish guidance, the 'Assessing Connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPA)' guidance from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) (2016) was consulted.

All pertinent European Sites are considered, identifying those within the likely ZoI. This screening assessment evaluates direct and indirect impacts of the proposed development, considering size and scale, land-take, distance, resource requirements, emissions, excavation, transportation, and construction/operation duration. Site synopses and conservation objectives from the NPWS website were reviewed as of the report's preparation.

## 5.1 Works, Site Characteristics and Risks to the Environment

The risks posed from the proposed project are outlined below.

**Table 5. Potential impacts, effects and their zone of influence**

| Potential Impact and Effect | Description | Zone of Influence |
|---|---|---|
| Construction/installation of infrastructure | The permanent loss of the habitats present in the footprint of the proposed works. | Lands within the proposed footprint of works and access routes. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Changes in water quality and quantity/distribution resulting in habitat loss or degradation. | Reduction in the quality of retained habitat or loss of habitat from surrounding areas as a result of surface water pollution. | Changes in surface water quality within the local water courses or surface water bodies including the rivers in close proximity associated with the proposed development. |
| Noise, dust, vibration and or human presence resulting in disturbance. | Direct impact on species reducing their ability to forage or breed. | Within or adjacent to the works area for birds. |
| Invasive Species | The spread of invasive species within the site. | Assessed based on the presence of invasive species stands within or surrounding the works area. |

## 5.2 Designated Sites within the Zone of Influence

Designated Sites within the zone of influence are outlined below.

**Table 6. Designated Sites within the ZoI**

| Site Name and Code | Qualifying Interests | Distance from Works | Conservation Objectives | Likely Impact Determination |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Lough Sheelin SPA [004065]** | • Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) [A005]<br>• Pochard (*Aythya ferina*) [A059]<br>• Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [A061]<br>• Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*) [A067]<br>• Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | The straight-line distance to the proposed park site is 6.9 km. The Mountnugent River lies roughly 370 m to the north-west of the site. From the nearest point of the river to the site, the SPA is located 12.2 km downstream. | Detailed conservation objectives for this site were reviewed as part of the assessment and are available at www.npws.ie | There is no direct overlap between the proposed park site and this SPA. No SCI bird species were observed during the field survey.<br><br>A source-pathway-receptor assessment was undertaken to evaluate the potential for impacts on Lough Sheelin SPA. The only potential source of impact arises during the construction phase and relates to minor and temporary sediment release |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | associated with the installation of walking paths over a drainage ditch which is present in the centre of the site. These works are limited in scale and duration, and do not involve significant excavation or extensive in-ditch activity, thereby restricting the volume and mobility of any suspended solids. A potential pathway may exist via the drainage ditch to the Mountnugent river located approximately 350 m from the site, which eventually drains to Lough Sheelin SPA at a distance of approximately 12 km downstream however, hydrological connectivity has not been confirmed. Even if such a connection is present, the pathway is indirect and there is a substantial |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | buffer between the site and the SPA via this pathway, and would result in substantial dilution, dispersion, and natural attenuation of any sediment, with suspended solids expected to settle out or be retained within the drainage network well upstream of the SPA.<br><br>During the operational phase, no works will occur within or adjacent to the drainage ditch. The proposed car park is located to the north of the site at a lower elevation to the ditch, and the majority of the development will remain permeable (some pathways surrounded by grassland, woodland planting and trees situated at a higher and lower elevation than the ditch). As such, there is very limited source for |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | ongoing sediment input or pollutant discharge to surface water during operation. Therefore, any potential effects are limited to the short-term construction phase, are localised and temporary in nature, and would not persist at a scale or concentration capable of significantly affecting water quality and habitat availability for SCI species of Lough Sheelin SPA.<br><br>This site will not be considered further. |
| **Lough Kinale and Derravaragh SPA [004061]** | • Pochard (*Aythya ferina*) [A059]<br>• Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*) [A061]<br>• Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | The straight-line distance to the proposed park site is 6.9 km. The Mountnugent River lies roughly 370 m to the north-west of the site. From the nearest point | Detailed conservation objectives for this site were reviewed as part of the assessment | There is no direct overlap between the proposed park site and this SPA. No SCI bird species were observed during the field survey.<br><br>A source-pathway-receptor assessment was undertaken to |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | of the river to the site, the SPA is located 22.6 km downstream. | and are available at www.npws.ie | evaluate the potential for impacts on Lough Kinale and Derravaragh SPA. The only potential source of impact arises during the construction phase and relates to minor and temporary sediment release associated with the installation of walking paths over a drainage ditch which is present in the centre of the site. These works are limited in scale and duration, and do not involve significant excavation or extensive in-ditch activity, thereby restricting the volume and mobility of any suspended solids. A potential pathway may exist via the drainage ditch to the Mountnugent river located approximately 350 m from the site, which eventually drains to Lough Kinale and Derravaragh SPA at a |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | distance of approximately 22 km downstream however, hydrological connectivity has not been confirmed. Even if such a connection is present, the pathway is indirect and there is a substantial buffer between the site and the SPA via this pathway, and would result in substantial dilution, dispersion, and natural attenuation of any sediment, with suspended solids expected to settle out or be retained within the drainage network well upstream of the SPA.<br><br>During the operational phase, no works will occur within or adjacent to the drainage ditch. The proposed car park is located to the north of the site at a lower elevation to the ditch, and the majority of the development will |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | remain permeable (some pathways surrounded by grassland, woodland planting and trees situated at a higher and lower elevation than the ditch). As such, there is very limited source for ongoing sediment input or pollutant discharge to surface water during operation. Therefore, any potential effects are limited to the short-term construction phase, are localised and temporary in nature, and would not persist at a scale or concentration capable of significantly affecting water quality and habitat availability for SCI species of Lough Kinale and Derravaragh SPA.<br><br>This site will not be considered further. |

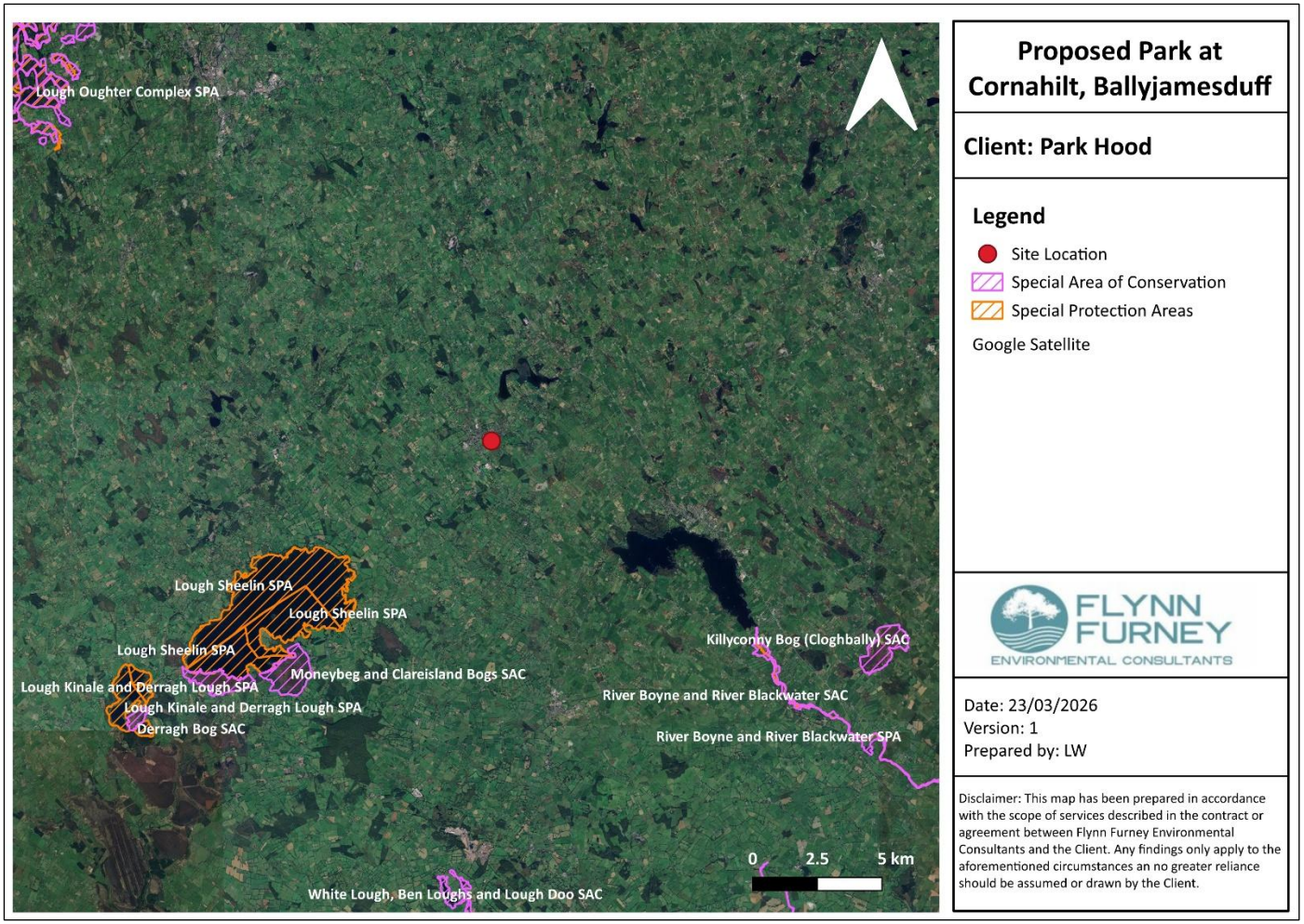


**Figure 4. Location of Designated sites in relation to the location of the proposed park**

## 5.3 European Sites with the Potential to be Significantly Affected by the Proposed Development

Initial screening has identified no European site requiring further consideration in this assessment. While there is a hydrological link between the proposed works and two downstream European sites, there is a substantial buffer distance between the works and the European sites and significant effects are very unlikely. All remaining Natura 2000 sites are at a great remove and have no identifiable connectivity with the proposed works. Given the nature and scale of the works, there is no known vector, pathway or conduit for impacts between the proposed works and the remaining Natura 2000 sites. Therefore, the proposed works are considered extremely unlikely (NRA, 2009) to have any significant direct or indirect impacts on all Natura 2000 sites and they are not considered further in this screening assessment.

# 6 Assessment Criteria

## 6.1 Is the Project Necessary to the Management of the Designated Site(s)?

The proposed project is not necessary to or connected with the management of any Designated Sites.

## 6.2 Possible Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts

All impacts (both direct and indirect) have been assessed within this report. A conclusion has been drawn by the author that no significant impacts are predicted as a result of the proposed development.

## 6.3 Cumulative and In-Combination Impacts

A search of the Cavan County Council planning register was conducted in March 2026 to assess nearby projects for any potential in-combination or cumulative impacts. Several large-scale development applications exist in the vicinity of the proposed development site.

To the north, a number of applications relate to extensions and upgrades at St. Clare's National School (Refs. 2460591, 17290, 18199 and 19164). These works include new classrooms, SET rooms, offices, accessibility facilities, and an Autism/ASD unit, along with new entrances, parking reconfiguration, playground provision, and associated landscaping.

To the east, development is primarily associated with the 'Woodlands' housing scheme (Refs. 18238, 18279, 19450, 19356 and 2560113). These applications involve the construction and completion of up to 32 two-storey dwellings, changes to house types, and associated infrastructure. Ref. 21443 relates to a temporary wastewater treatment unit serving the area.

To the north-west, Refs. 17542 and 18447 relate to the retention and completion of an ESB substation and associated infrastructure, along with extensions and alterations to an existing factory, including increased building height and expanded floor area.

To the south-west, several industrial developments have been permitted under Refs. 2176, 2414, 18501, 2360155 and 17477. These include large-scale extensions, new processing and storage facilities, demolition works, and additional car parking, associated with a site holding an EPA Industrial Emissions Directive licence.

To the west, Refs. 21565, 2460043 and 2460008 relate to the extension of an existing residential development (Elm Drive) and the provision of a new GAA pitch with associated infrastructure such as parking, lighting, drainage, and a biodiversity trail.

Most of the remaining applications in the surrounding area are smaller in scale, mainly residential developments, alterations, and extensions.

### 6.3.1 Cumulative Impact Conclusion

A conclusion has been made by the author that no cumulative or in-combination impacts on any Natura site are anticipated, as the proposed project itself is unlikely to cause significant effects to any Natura 2000 sites and, consequently, is not expected to contribute to cumulative or in-combination impacts with

other plans or projects.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This report presents the information for the relevant authority, Cavan County Council, to carry out a screening for AA. A recommendation that a Stage 2 is not required is made, based on the findings of this assessment. It is for the relevant authority to reach one of the following conclusions:

I. A Stage 2 AA of the proposed development is required if it *cannot* be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European Designated Sites.
II. A Stage 2 AA of the proposed development is not required if it *can* be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European Designated Sites.

It is the conclusion of this report that the proposed works at Cornahilt, Ballyjamesduff would not have a significant effect on European Designated Sites and progression to a Stage 2 appropriate assessment is not required. Accordingly, having carried out the Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening, the competent authority may determine that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the proposed site investigation works is not required as it can be excluded, on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under Regulation 42 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended, that the proposed works, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European site.

## References

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal 2nd Edition. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Second Edition

Collins, J. ed. (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust. London.

Curtis, T.G.F. and MacGough, H.N., 1988. *The Irish red data book.* Wildlife Service Ireland.

Cutts, N., Phelps, A. and Burdon, D. (2009). Construction and Waterfowl: Defining Sensitivity, Response, Impacts and Guidance. Report to Huber INCA. Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, University of Hull.

DNV (2025) Cornahilt, Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA).

Environmental Protection Agency (2026). EPA Appropriate Assessment Geo Tool.

Environmental Protection Agency (2015a). The EPA's Advice Notes on Preparing Environmental Impact Statements Draft.

Environmental Protection Agency (2015b). The EPA's Draft Revised Guidelines on Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements.

European Commission (2007) Interpretation manual of European Union habitats – EUR27.

Fossitt, J.A. (2000) *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

Gilbert, G, Stanbury, A and Lewis L (2021) Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2020-*2026*. *Irish Birds*,

**9:** 523—544.

Hemingway, C. & Spencer, J. (2013) The Waterbird Disturbance Mitigation Toolkit. Produced by the Institute of Estuarine & Coastal Studies (IECS) University of Hull.

Inland Fisheries Ireland (2016). Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters. Available online at https://www.fisheriesireland.ie/documents/624-guidelines-on

Invasive Species Ireland (2012). Horticulture Code of Good Practice To Prevent the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Non-native Species. Written by John Kelly March 2012. Available online at EnviroCentre Report (invasivespeciesireland.com) [Accessed 21/03/2022].

Invasive Species Ireland (2008). Best Practice Management Guidelines: Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum.*

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough (UK).

Kelleher, C. & Marnell, F. (2006) Bat Mitigation Guidelines for Ireland. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 25. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland.

Kelly, J., O'Flynn, C., and Maguire, C. (2013) Risk analysis and prioritisation for invasive and nonnative species in Ireland and Northern Ireland. A report prepared for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and National Parks and Wildlife Service as part of Invasive Species Ireland

King, J.L., Marnell, F., Kingston, N., Rosell, R., Boylan, P., Caffrey, J.M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Gargan, P.G., Kelly, F.L., O'Grady, M.F., Poole, R., Roche, W.K. & Cassidy, D. (2011) Ireland Red List No. 5: Amphibians, Reptiles & Freshwater Fish. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.

Lewis, L. J., Coombes, D., Burke, B., O'Halloran, J., Walsh, A., Tierney, T. D. & Cummins, S. (2019) Countryside Bird Survey: Status and trends of common and widespread breeding birds 1998- 2016. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 115. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland.

Lysaght, L. and Marnell, F. (Eds) (2016) *Atlas of Mammals in Ireland 2010 – 2015*, National Biodiversity Data Centre, Waterford.

National Biodiversity Data Centre (2026). Biodiversity Maps.

National Roads Authority (2009). Guidelines For The Assessment Of Ecological Impacts Of National Road Schemes. NRA, Dublin.

National Roads Authority (2006). Guidelines for the Treatment of Badgers Prior to the Construction of National Roads Schemes. NRA, Dublin.

National Roads Authority (2005). Guidelines for the Treatment of Bats Prior to the Construction of National Roads Schemes. NRA, Dublin

NRA (2009) Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes. National Roads Authority (now Transport Infrastructure Ireland) Dublin.

O'Neill, F.H., Marten, J.R., Devaney, F.M. & Perrin, P.M. (2013). The Irish semi-natural grasslands survey 2007-2012. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 78. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland

OPW (2024) Flood Maps

Smith, G. F., O'Donoghue, P., O'Hora, K., & Delaney, E. (2011) *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping*. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

Wyse Jackson, M., FitzPatrick, Ú., Cole, E., Jebb, M., McFerran, D., Sheehy Skeffington, M. & Wright, M.

(2016). Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Dublin, Ireland.

## Appendix A: Photos of the Site

Fig 1. View of scrub/conifer plantation from the Woodlands housing estate.

Fig 2. Scrub habitat.

Fig 3. Dense, Gorse-dominated scrub.

Fig 4. Young conifer plantation.