



**CLIENT:** Mayo County Council

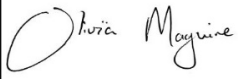
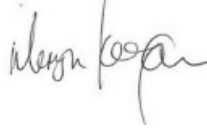
**PROJECT:** Provision of 4 No. Units at Lower Charles Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report.

**Prepared by:** AONA Environmental Consulting Ltd.

**Date:** November 2022

## REPORT CONTROL

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

AONA Environmental Consulting Ltd. was commissioned by Mayo County Council to complete a Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment report under Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive, for a proposed development of 4 residential units located at Lower Charles Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo. The Report is prepared in the context of an application under Part VIII of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

The purpose of this Screening Report is to inform the Appropriate Assessment process, which is carried out by the appropriate competent authority, in this case Mayo County Council. This report addresses the potential for construction works and the operational phase of the proposed development to impact on Natura 2000 sites within 15 Km of the proposed site. In particular, the report assesses any likely significant negative effects or impacts on the qualifying interests of the River Moy Special Area of Conservation (SAC 002298) due to the proposed works, both independently and in conjunction with other plans and projects.

The report was drafted by an experienced and qualified ecologist, with specific reference to the European Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed project; taking account the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of these designations. The assessment is determined based on the project details provided by Mayo County Council.

## 2 THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

### 2.1 *Legislative Context*

Appropriate Assessment (AA) is an assessment of whether a plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, has the potential for significant effects on a designated European Site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The assessment of impacts on designated European sites i.e. Special Protection Areas for birds (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), derives from the EU Directive on the Conservation of Habitats, Flora and Fauna (92/43/EEC), more commonly known as the '*The Habitats Directive*' which provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. SPAs and SACs are sites that form part of a network, known as Natura 2000 sites, designated across Europe in order to protect biodiversity within the European Union (EU).

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. 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 implications 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 concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.'*

Article 6(4) states: *'If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the [Natura 2000] 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 a social or economic nature, Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.'*

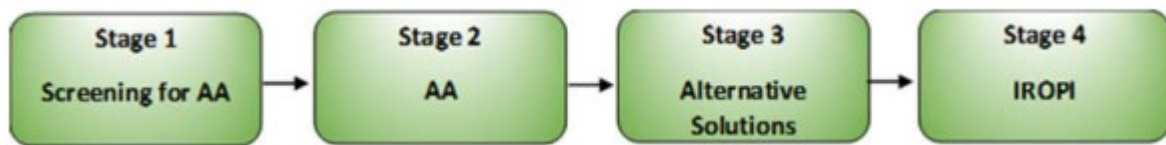
## 2.2 *Appropriate Assessment Methodology*

Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) defines the requirement for Appropriate Assessment of certain plans and projects. In order to inform the requirements of this Screening Report the following guidance documents have been referred to:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance 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.* Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- *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* (European Commission, 2001);
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2018);
- *Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice* (European Commission, 2006);
- *Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Clarification of the Concepts of Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence.* Opinion of the European Commission (European Commission, 2007);

The Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government Guidelines (DELHG, 2009), outlines the European Commission's methodological guidance (EC, 2002). This guidance promotes a four-stage process in completing an AA and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

*Appropriate Assessment Process (Source: DEHLG, 2009)*



Stage 1: Screening - Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3):

- whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, and
- whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

A project may be "screened-in" if there is a possibility or uncertainty of significant adverse effects upon the European site, thus the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). If there is no evidence to suggest significant effects due to the proposed plan or development the project is "screened-out", and AA is not required. This screening report provides the necessary information to enable the Competent Authority (Mayo Co Co) to screen the proposed project for the requirement to proceed to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment - This stage considers whether the plan or project, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, and includes any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) containing a professional scientific examination of the proposal is produced and includes any mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset negative impacts.

Stage 3: Alternative Solutions - Where adverse effects on a European Site are identified in the AA process (detailed in the NIS), despite the prescription of mitigation, this third stage examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the European Site.

Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)/Derogation - This stage is required where an alternative solution is not available. In this situation, the project can only proceed for Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI), despite the plan or project resulting in adverse effects on European Site(s). This stage provides for an assessment of compensation measures to maintain or enhance the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network. The Commission must be informed of the compensatory measures. Compensatory measures must be practical, implementable, likely to succeed, proportionate and enforceable, and they must be approved by the Minister.

The methodology adopted for this Screening exercise is informed by the EC (2001) guidelines and was undertaken in the following stages:

1. Describe the project and determine whether it is necessary for the conservation management of European Sites;
2. Identify European Sites that could be influenced by the project;
3. Where European Sites are identified as occurring within the sphere of influence of the project; identify potential effects arising from the project and screen the potential for such effects to negatively affect said European Sites; and
4. Identify other plans or projects that, in combination with the project, have the potential to affect European Sites.

*Desktop Review* - The following documents were referenced during the desk-top study to inform the Appropriate Assessment and the baseline ecology information:

- Online data available on European sites and habitats/species as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie), including conservation objectives documents
- Online data available on protected species as held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) from [www.biodiversityireland.ie](http://www.biodiversityireland.ie), specifically related to the records recorded within the 1 km grid square (ITM) – M1490 where the proposed works will occur<sup>1</sup>.
- Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Gilbert et al, 2021), available at <https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds-of-conservation-concern-in-ireland/>
- Information on the surface water network and surface water quality in the area available from [www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area available from the Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) online Spatial Resources service. Available from <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps/Pages/Groundwater.aspx>
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from [www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.biodiversity.ie](http://www.biodiversity.ie) accessed 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022

- GeoHive online mapping (<https://geohive.ie/index.html>)
- Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020
- Draft Mayo County Development Plan 2021-2027
- Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014
- Mayo County Council Planning Portal
- Information on the proposed project supplied by Mayo County Council

*Field Study* - A Site visit was carried out 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022. The initial survey involved walking all aspects of the site and identifying habitats within the site. Habitat classification followed Fossitt (2000). The locations where works will be carried out were also surveyed for the presence of invasive species (as listed in the Third Schedule of S.I. No. 477 of 2011, EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011).

### 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

#### *3.1 Description of Proposed Development*

Castlebar has a population of 12,068 (CSO 2016) and is the largest town in Mayo. Castlebar is the main administrative, public health, education and commercial centre in the county. The town provides over 9000 jobs, with a jobs/resident worker ratio of 1.920 (CSO 2016).

The proposed site, which consists of a net site area of c. 0.02745 hectares, currently consists of two semidetached two storey dwelling houses with associated rear gardens on Lower Charles Street, in Castlebar town centre, on lands zoned 'town centre' under the Castlebar Town and Environs Plan 2008-2014 (as extended). This area is identified for the purpose of renewal and regeneration.

The site is bordered to the east by an existing restaurant and to the west by a barber shop and the south by the public road (R373). The restaurant property to the immediate east is listed as a protected structure No1964:14:443 in the Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020.



**Figure 1:** Site Location

Proposed works include:

- the demolition of two semidetached two storey dwelling houses.
- the construction of 4 no. new dwellings comprising 4 No. 1 bed apartments in a semi-detached block.
- all associated site development works including site boundaries, drainage, utilities and services connections, diversions of existing services and all ancillary site works.
- all dwellings will be provided with private gardens or external terraces.

It is proposed to demolish the existing buildings except for the gable wall to the east of the properties, as it's shared with the restaurant which is a protected structure. At present the units have access to the rear via a laneway along the western site boundary. Proposed access to the rear for all apartments is through a gated laneway between the ground floor properties off Lower Charles Street.

The proposed masonry-built houses are to be connected to the existing water mains and the public sewer system for treatment of wastewater and disposal of surface water. At time of writing this report, it is understood Mayo County Council are to soon undertake groundworks on Lower Charles Street, which consists of new paving and car parking provision. Once these works

are being undertaken, new drainage infrastructure and connection to the proposed properties will be installed.

Previous planning application (Ref: P18/191) for the construction of three two storey terraced dwelling houses on this site was granted planning permission in August 2018 subject to conditions outlined in Schedule 2 of the Planners Report. It was considered that having regard to the policies and objectives of the Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014, that the proposed development would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### *3.2 Description of Receiving Environment*

A site survey of the proposed site was undertaken on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022 in which habitats on site were assessed and the suitability of the site to support plants, animals or habitats of note was also considered. Findings of the ecological survey were augmented by desktop research and review of available information.

The local landscape is predominantly commercial and residential. The land-use surrounding the proposed project includes buildings and artificial surfaces along with some amenity grassland, scrub and treelines. At the end of Lower Charles Street ~100m east of the proposed site, the Castlebar River flows north into River Moy SAC ~7.6km (as the crow flies, much greater hydrological distance). No Annex I habitat occurs within the area of proposed works. No rare, threatened, or protected species of plants as per the Red Data Book (Curtis and McGough, 1988) were found. No species listed in the Flora Protection Order (2022) were found to be growing within the proposed site of works.

The dwellings and the surrounding area are characterised as **BL3: Artificial Surfaces** as shown in Plate 1. This habitat incorporates all hardcore areas where artificial surfaces exist including roads, carpark area and buildings. Buildings and artificial surfaces are a highly modified habitat type, comprised of manmade materials with no particular biodiversity potential and as such is of no particular biodiversity value.

**Plate 1: Proposed Site**

The laneway along the western boundary of the site and the paved areas to the rear of the houses are categorised as **ED2** - spoil and bare ground as shown in Plates 2 -4. This area includes areas of spoil and rubble, and other areas of bare ground that are slowly being colonised by plants, including bramble, grasses and ruderals, due to being left derelict with maintenance ceased. These areas are of low floral diversity and as such limited biodiversity value.

**Plate 2: Laneway along western boundary****Plate 3: Rear of house 1****Plate 4: Rear of house 2**

### **Invasive Species**

No invasive alien species as listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011) Part 1 or 2 were recorded within the site under survey on Lower Charles Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.

### **Mammals**

A walkover of the site was undertaken to investigate the presence of mammalian species. The site was also evaluated in terms of its potential to host other mammalian species. No mammalian species were directly observed on the site on the 13th of September. Limitations on the day of survey included poor visibility; the houses are boarded up and consequently in darkness, hence a flashlight was used to move around the dwellings. Consequently, evidence of mammal usage such as droppings or markings that would indicate that certain species are using the site was difficult to ascertain.

Bats and their roosts are protected by Irish and EU law because all species have declined, and some are threatened or endangered. The presence of bats in any building can never entirely be ruled out. A bat survey is needed when there is 'reasonable likelihood' of bat roosts being present and impacted by the proposals. A bat survey will be undertaken in the appropriate season (May 2023). If bats are present, mitigation measures will be proportionate to the impact and may require timing of operations.

### **Birds**

Records were taken of bird species seen or heard on the 13th of September. The bird species recorded were typical of the habitat types found on the site and adjacent lands. None of the bird species recorded on the field visit are protected under Annex I of the EU Birds Directive or listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI) Red or Amber Lists.

### **Water Features and Quality**

The application site is located within the Moy and Killala Bay Hydrometric Area and Catchment and the Castlebar Sub-Catchment and Sub-Basin. A review of Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) Geographical Information System (GIS) data, OSI mapping on GeoHive.ie, and recent aerial photography indicates that there are no watercourses or field drains within the immediate area of the proposed project site. The nearest watercourse is the Castlebar River, which is ~100m east of the application site. This river flows north, before its confluence with the Manulla river before the combined flow enters Lough Cullen. There is no hydrological connection to this stream

Directive 2000/60/EC (the Water Framework Directive) was adopted by the European Parliament and Council in 2000. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) establishes a legal

framework for the protection, improvement and sustainable management of inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater. The aim of the WFD is to prevent the deterioration in the existing status of waters (including the maintenance of "High Status" where it exists) and to ensure that all waters, with some limited exceptions, achieve at least "Good Status". The EPA have classed the ecological status of the Castlebar River at a location c.260m from the application site as '3' meaning it is of 'poor' ecological status. Under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive this is unsatisfactory as it is required that at least 'good' status (Q4) is achieved in this waterbody.

The Swinford Waterbody (IE\_WE\_G\_0033) which underlies the Proposed Housing Development currently has a water quality classification of 'Good' and a status of 'Not at Risk' (September 2022). There are no springs or wells within the vicinity of the site.

An Annual Environmental Report (2020) prepared for Castlebar Wastewater Treatment Plant (D0047-01) in accordance with the requirements of the wastewater discharge licence for the agglomeration shows that the WWTP is compliant with the ELV's set in the Wastewater Discharge Licence.

Following examination of the relevant GIS information in relation to flood risk assessment, the site of the proposed development is not within a flood risk area. Geographical Survey Ireland (GSI) mapping indicates the application site lies in an area of high vulnerability and in an area of Rk- Regionally Important Aquifer - Regionally important aquifers are capable of supplying regionally important abstractions (e.g. large public water supplies).

### *3.3 Construction Methodology*

A Construction Stage Method Statement will be requested from the Works Contractor's as part of their Works Proposals, which will be in compliance to the EPA's Best Practice Guidelines for the preparation of resource and waste management plans for construction & demolition projects. Construction will concur with Mayo County Council appropriate Health and Safety standards and Safety Management Systems.

The design of the project provided by Mayo County Council demonstrates that the design of the project has considered that all necessary measures and best practice will be put in place to avoid any impacts to the Natura 2000 sites occurring.

Adherence to best practice Construction and Environmental Management during the construction phase will ensure that development would not result in pollution of groundwater or any surface water. It is noted that all water and wastewater infrastructure will be designed and constructed in accordance with the relevant Irish Water code of practice for connections and developer

services, design and construction requirements for self-lay developments July 2020 (revision 2), IW-CDS5030-03 and IW-CDS-5020- 03 and Water and Wastewater infrastructure standard details, connections and developer services, construction requirements for self-lay developments; July 2020 (revision 4), IW-CDS-5030-01 and IW-CDA-5020-01

## 4 SCREENING ASSESSMENT

This stage of the process identifies any likely significant effects upon European Sites from the proposed project, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans.

### 4.1 Identification of Relevant Natura 2000 Sites

In accordance with guidance from the *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland, Guidance for Planning Authorities* (2010), all designated sites within a distance of 15km from the proposed project site were identified to assess for potential impacts. A standard source-receptor-pathway conceptual model was used to identify 'relevant' European sites (i.e. those which could be potentially affected). For significant effects to arise, there must be a risk enabled by having a:

Source(s) – e.g. sediment run-off from construction works at proposed project site

Receptor(s) – e.g. qualifying habitats and/or species of European Sites

Pathway(s) – e.g. a watercourse connecting proposed project site to a European site

The identification of a pathway does not automatically mean that significant effects will arise. The likelihood for significant effects will depend upon the characteristics of the source (e.g. duration of construction works), the characteristics of the pathway (e.g. water quality status of watercourse receiving run-off from construction) and the characteristics of the receptor (e.g. the sensitivities of the European site and its qualifying interests).

It is common practise to use a 15 km buffer around the proposed project to screen potential off-site impacts on other Natura 2000 sites (see DEHLG, 2009). However, this is an arbitrary limit and, if there is potential for secondary impacts to occur at greater distances, then such impacts must be assessed. In this instance, given the size and scale of the Proposed Housing Development, the location of the works within an urban setting, a distance of 10km from the Proposed Housing Development has been identified as the ZoI for any European Site. Other European Sites outside of this distance, but with a hydrological link either upstream or downstream are also considered to be within the ZoI for this project.

Three Natura 2000 sites have been considered for potential impacts. These sites, their conservation interests and the potential for interactions leading to significant adverse effects arising from the proposed project are identified for each site and are exhibited in Table 1. It has

been evaluated that a wider radius was not required in the absence of pathways identified by which sites outside of this radius could potentially be affected.

**Table 1:** Designated Natura 2000 sites which are located within a 15km radius of the proposed site. The potential for impacts affecting the qualifying interests is identified.

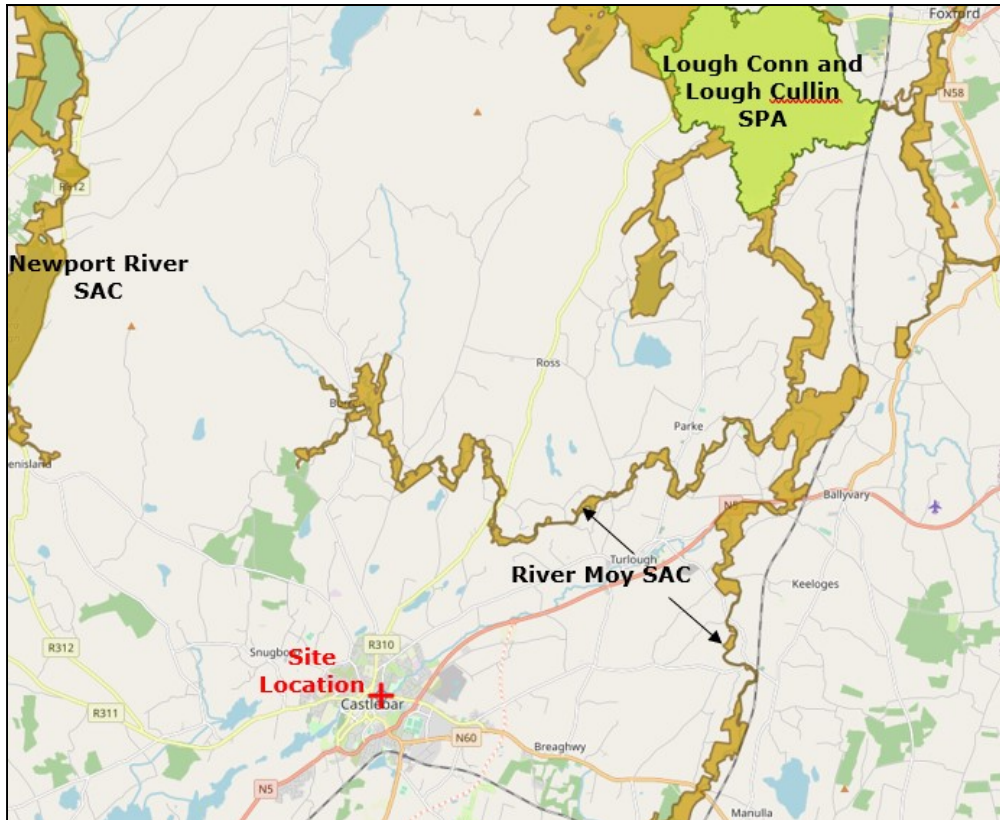
NATURA 2000 SITE [SITE CODE]	DISTANCE FROM PROPOSED PROJECT (KM) <sup>2</sup>	FEATURES OF INTEREST	POTENTIAL FOR IMPACTS IDENTIFIED
River Moy SAC [002298]	3.833 KM	Lowland hay meadows ( <i>Alopecurus pratensis</i> , <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> ) [6510] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Alkaline fens [7230] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ( <i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i> ) [91E0] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]	Potential for disturbance related impacts relating to construction and operational use of project.
Newport River SAC 002144	8.26 KM	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]	There is no potential for significant effects upon this site to arise.
Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA [004228]	12.326 KM	Tufted Duck ( <i>Aythya fuligula</i> ) [A061] Common Scoter ( <i>Melanitta nigra</i> ) [A065] Common Gull ( <i>Larus canus</i> ) [A182] Greenland White-fronted Goose ( <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> ) [A395] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Having regard to the hydrological connectivity of the River Moy SAC to this SPA, there is potential for impacts upon the QI's of this site arising from deteriorations in water quality.

<sup>2</sup> Distances indicated are the closest geographical distance between the proposed Project and the European site boundary, as made available by the NPWS. Connectivity along hydrological pathways may be significantly greater



The proposed site at its closest is ~ 3.8 KM northeast of the River Moy SAC designation which is hydrologically connected to Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA 12.3km to the north, as shown in Figure 2. No works are to take place within these designated sites.

**Figure 2:** Proposed works in relation to Natura 2000 sites



The site synopsis and information on the conservation objectives for each of these sites is available on [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie). Other Natura 2000 sites were identified within a 15 km radius of the proposed project, as shown in Table 1 above but owing to distance and lack of connectivity with the proposed project they are consequently screened out from further consideration.

#### 4.2 Ecological Network Supporting Natura 2000 Sites

An analysis of the proposed Natural Heritage Areas and designated Natural Heritage Areas in terms of their role in supporting the species using Natura 2000 sites was undertaken. It was assumed that these supporting roles mainly related to mobile fauna such as mammals and birds which may use pNHAs and NHAs as “stepping stones” between Natura 2000 sites. Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations 2011 place a high degree of importance on such non-Natura 2000 areas as features that connect the Natura 2000 network. Features such as ponds, woodlands and important hedgerows were taken into account during the rest of the AA process. There are no Natural Heritage Areas or proposed Natural Heritage Areas that will be affected by the proposed Project.

## 5 IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed Project is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of the sites considered in the assessment and therefore potential impacts must be identified and considered.

### 5.1 *Assessment of Potential Impacts*

In the event of the generation of silt laden waters and construction phase pollutants; e.g. silted waters, hydrocarbons, aggregates etc. carrying such potential pollutants to the site's drainage channels, could result in impacts to the Castlebar River and in turn the River Moy SAC and Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA. These potential pollution events could contribute to nutrient enrichment, causing a decline in water quality and habitat quality which would impact negatively on the Qualifying Interests (QI's) of these Natura 2000 sites.

During the construction and operation phases, increased noise levels and the presence of machinery and humans could potentially impact negatively on the Annex II species and other important species for which the Natura 2000 sites are designated.

Adverse effects as a result of the proposed Project are unlikely given:

- The nature, scale and location of the proposed development: The proposed Project consists of 4 No. residential units within the suburban environment in the town of Castlebar, within an existing area of residential and commercial units. The proposed development will be contained within the project site;
- The distance between the proposed development and any European sites: The proposed site at its closet point is ~ 3.8 KM (a greater hydrological distance) west of the River Moy SAC designation which is hydrologically connected to Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA, 12.3km to the north as shown in Figure 3. No works are to take place within these designated sites;
- The proposed development is to be connected to the existing public system for the treatment of wastewater, disposal of surface water and connection to public watermains for domestic water supply. This drainage connection will be insitu before construction, as Mayo County Council are expected to be undertaking groundworks on Lower Charles Street, which consists of new paving and car parking provision in the near future. Whilst these works are being undertaken, new drainage infrastructure and connection to the proposed properties will be installed.
- The lack of surface hydrological pathways linking the proposed development to any European sites; there are no water courses in the immediate vicinity of the proposed

Project. The only potential for release of pollutants is through the sewer network. Any silt runoff or hydrocarbons would undergo mixing within the drainage network prior to reaching Castlebar WWTP, like what is currently the case, where it is treated before release into the Castlebar River. Best practice environmental controls will be required of the contractor as a standard requirement by Mayo County Council. This includes appropriate waste measures, requirement for spill kits to be available on site and also appropriate storage of chemicals and materials to be used during construction e.g. cement, sand and spoil etc. There will be no additional hardcore areas post construction and therefore surface water run-off will remain the same.

- Flood mapping confirmed that the site is not at risk from groundwater flooding. In addition, there is no risk of tidal or pluvial flooding at this site.
- Considering scale of development and significant distance from European sites the proposed development will not result in perceptible emissions to air that will impact on European sites and their qualifying interests.
- Mobile Species Pathway: Project works that are located outside of European Sites can impact mobile qualifying species of European Sites if species rely on habitats occurring within the project site. No Annex 2 or bird species listed as qualifying features of surrounding European Sites rely on the project site. As such there is no mobile species pathway connecting the project to European Sites.
- Lighting can impact on bats' roosting sites, commuting routes and foraging areas. The project site is located in Castlebar town, an urban environment. Works will only take place during daylight hours. Bat species are not a qualifying feature of European sites within 10km of the development and will therefore have no impact from the proposed development. A bat survey will be undertaken prior to construction and design measures will ensure that lighting installed meets the lowest light levels permitted under health and safety.

Given the above analysis, it is considered that there will be no potential for significant effects on any of the European sites considered and therefore potential effects on European sites can be excluded at a preliminary screening stage.

## *5.2 Assessment of Potential In-Combination Effects*

In accordance with the EU guidance document on Appropriate Assessment, "Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites", other plans and projects in the area must be considered at the screening stage. This is required in order to identify any possible cumulative or in combination impacts of the proposed project with other plans or developments on the relevant Natura 2000 sites. Existing plans and projects which have been examined include:

- Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020

- Castlebar and Environs Development Plan 2008-2014
- Mayo County Council Planning Tool

It is a policy of Castlebar Municipal District and Mayo County Council to ensure that all plans and projects which would, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, have a significant impact on a Natura 2000 site, will be subject to Habitats Directive Screening, and if required, Appropriate Assessment, to determine if the proposed development is environmentally sustainable and to ensure it will not affect the integrity of the site or its habitats or the conservation objectives of the site

The Mayo County Council planning map tool was used to identify any current or future or projects which may potentially impact on Natura 2000 sites when considered in combination with the proposed development. In the preceding five years, many planning applications have been granted planning permission in Castlebar. Where necessary, these applications were screened for AA, or else full AA was deemed necessary, and an NIS was subsequently submitted. The proposed development will have no significant effects upon any designated site when considered in combination with other developments that have been properly screened or where mitigation is required following AA or included as part of planning conditions.

Any future application in the area that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site will be subjected to Appropriate Assessment as required under Articles 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. This current development will have no cumulative impacts upon the SACs / SPAs identified when considered in combination with any other development that has been screened for no impacts themselves (Stage 1) or where potential impacts have been mitigated against (Stage 2 AA / NIS).

## 6 SCREENING ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION

It is considered that the proposed project does not include any element that has the potential to significantly alter the favourable conservation objectives associated with the species and habitats or interfere with the key relationships that define the structure or function, either alone or in combination with other impacts, of the Natura 2000 sites considered in this document. This is provided that strict adherence to design measures, appropriate construction methods, standard operating procedures and Mayo County Council safety management system is undertaken.

In conclusion, it is concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt, in view of best scientific knowledge, on the basis of objective information and in light of the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites, that the Proposed Development at Lower Charles Street, Castlebar,

Co. Mayo , individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will not have a significant effect on any European Site. Consequently, this proposed project does not require a NIS or need to advance in the Appropriate Assessment process. However, a determination of the need for a Stage 2 'Appropriate Assessment and the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement will be decided upon by the Competent Authority (Mayo County Council).

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