



Municipal- Multi-Sport Astro Pitch



**Belleek
Ballina
Co. Mayo**

Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report comprises of an Appropriate Assessment Screening for the proposed development of a Municipal- Multi-Sport Astro Pitch to include associated drainage, lighting, fencing and civil works at Belleek, Ballina, Co. Mayo in order determine whether or not this development, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 sites (EC Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC), in view of the site's conservation objectives.

The Natura network is made up of Special Protection Areas for Birds (SPA) and Special Conservation Areas (SAC) for habitats and species. The proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site. The findings of the assessment will determine whether the proposed development requires an Appropriate Assessment and a Natura Impact Statement under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

1.1 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

The ecological survey for this report was carried out on February 26th 2021 by Leo Brogan (B.Env., Sc. M.Sc and Dip. Field Ecol.) who has the relevant academic qualifications and experience to undertaking habitat surveys and appropriate assessments.

1.2 GUIDANCE

This report has been carried out using the following guidance:

- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10¹.
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010)².
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (EC 2000)³.
- 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, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (EC 2002)⁴.

¹ NPWS (2010). Legislation Unit, NPWS Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 7 Ely Place Dublin 2.

² National Parks and Wildlife Services (2010):
http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2009_AA_Guidance.pdf

³ European Commission (2000)
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/provision_of_art6_en.pdf

⁴ European Commission (2000)

- 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 commission. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (EC 2007)⁵.

2 SCREENING ASSESSMENT

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT LOCATION

The proposed site for the development is in Belleek townland, which lies 1km to the north west of Ballina town centre within the town boundary (see Figure 1). The site is positioned 170m west of the Moy Estuary in lands zoned for Recreation/Leisure in the Ballina Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-2015⁶.

The 0.5 hectares within the redline planning boundary (see Figure 2) are in the ownership of the Local Authority. Two dug outs are present on the south boundary of the site with a wooden perimeter fence. Two full size soccer pitches, a small astro pitch and soccer club house are located immediately to the north of the site. The land within the planning boundary has been used as a sports pitch up until recent years and could now be described as amenity grasslands. There are commercial/industrial premises to the southeast of the site separated by a strip of deciduous woodland/scrub.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/natura_2000_assess_en.pdf

⁵ European Commission (2007)

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/management/docs/art6/guidance_art6_4_en.pdf

⁶ Current Development Plan undergoing Public Consultation



Figure 1 Location for proposed Astro Pitch Development in Belleek Ballina



Figure 2 Redline boundary for astro sports pitch development

2.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.2.1 *Description of Project*

The construction of a Municipal Multi-Sport Astro Pitch to include associated drainage, lighting, fencing and civil works. The proposal includes hard and soft landscaping works, surface paving, planting, boundary treatments and all other associated site development works and services.

The facility will cater for wide range of local sports clubs. The proposed Astro pitch will be located on the footprint of an existing grass-based pitch.

In situ soils and subsoils are proposed to be excavated to a depth of approximately 300mm after which a geotextile membrane will be laid on the sub-base. A 150mm layer of clean broken 75mm diameter stone will be levelled and compacted followed by a 75 mm layer of 25mm diameter clean broken stone. A blinding layer of levelled and compacted 6mm clean broken stone to a depth of 50mm will be installed.

The all-weather surface will be monofilament synthetic surface underpinned with a 20mm Shock Pad throughout. Precast concrete kerbs will be laid around the perimeter of the pitch.

Drainage will consist of a main drain (perforated 150mm land drainage pipe) backed filled with 20mm washed pea gravel with lateral drains (80mm perforated land drainage pipe) at 7 m centres backfilled using 10mm washed pea gravel.

It is anticipated that there will be a 24 month construction period to commencing in the fourth quarter of 2021.

2.3 DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

2.3.1 Information Sources

The ecological desktop study to inform the Appropriate Assessment Screening completed for the proposed development comprised the following elements:

- Identification of European Sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the proposed development area through the identification of potential pathways/ links from the proposed development area and European sites and/ or supporting habitats;
- Review of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) site synopses (Natura 2000 data form) and conservation objectives for European Sites⁷ with identification of potential pathways from the proposed development; and
- Review of available literature and online data. This included a detailed review of the NPWS website including mapping and available reports⁸ for relevant sites and in particular Qualifying Interests described and their conservation objectives.

An outline of the key datasets and information sources reviewed as part of the study are provided below:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) database of areas designated (and proposed) for nature conservation
- National Biodiversity Data Centre database (NBDC)⁹;
- EDEN Application ¹⁰; and
- EPA Appropriate Assessment Geo Tool¹¹
- OSI and Bing Maps aerial photography and mapping were used to identify non-designated semi-natural habitats of local ecological importance.

2.3.2 Existing Environment

Habitats

Using Fossitt's Guide to Habitats of Ireland¹², the terrestrial habitat (See Figure 4) within the redline boundary can best be described as;

- Amenity Grasslands Improved (GA2)

⁷ National Parks and Wildlife Service: <http://www.npws.ie/protectedsites/> (accessed February 2021)

⁸ National Parks and Wildlife Service: <http://www.npws.ie/mapsanddata/> (accessed February 2021)

⁹ NBDC <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map> (accessed February 2021)

¹⁰ EPA <https://www.edenireland.ie/home/secure> (accessed February 2021)

¹¹ EPA AA Geotool (<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool>) (accessed February 2021)

¹² Fossitt 2000. A guide to habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council

The habitat mapping exercise indicates that area within the redline boundary is classified as GA2 (Amenity Grassland improved). The surface has not been mown for several years, has become rank and is species poor.

A 10m wide strip of (Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland is located 10m to the south east of the development. A mosaic of Wet Grassland /Scrub is located immediately to the south of the redline boundary. *Junus Effusus* has infilled the area and immature willows have recently established. A summary of the habitats located within and adjacent to the site is provided in Figure 3 and photographs in Figures 4 to 5.



Figure 3 Habitats Map of Study Area with red line planning boundary

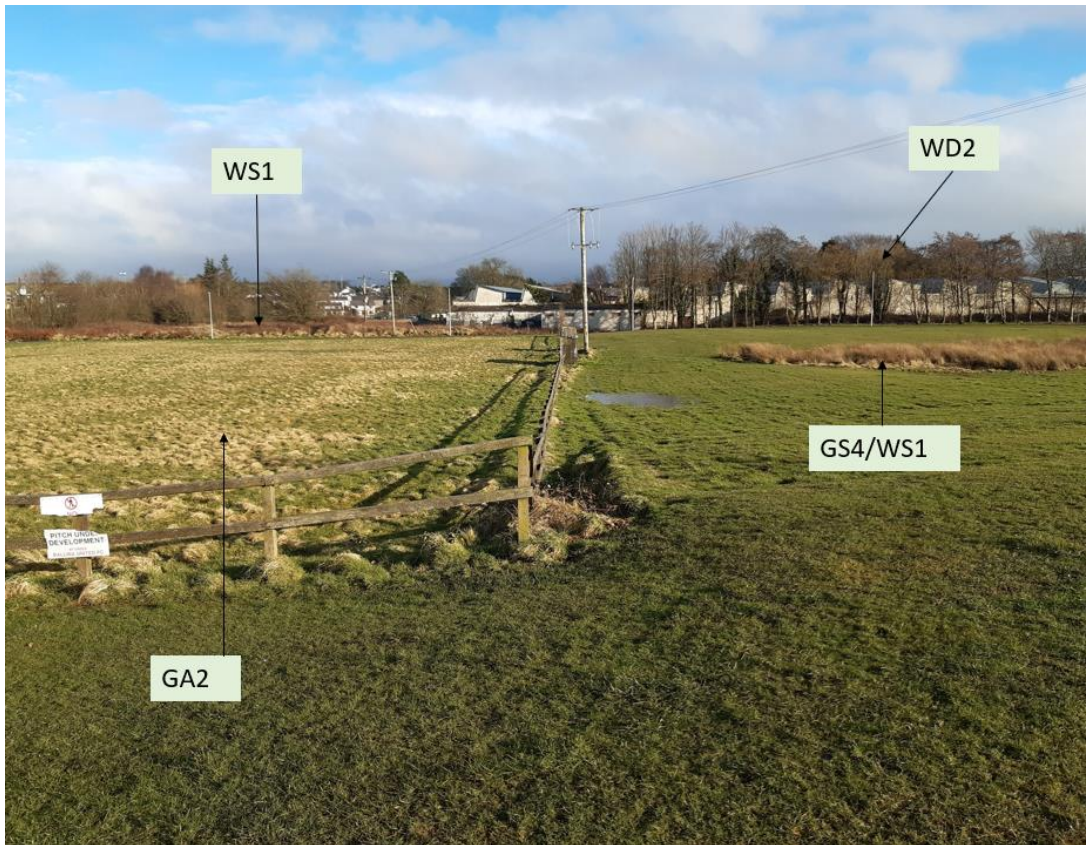


Figure 4 View east featuring all habitats in and adjacent to the site



Figure 5 View west showing Amenity Grassland within Redline boundary

2.3.3 Surface Water

A review of the EPA Eden website indicates that the site is located in the Rathroeen_010 sub catchment, the main channel of which runs approximately 500m to the west of the proposed development site (Figure 6). There are no surface water features (streams or ditches or drains) within or adjacent to red line boundary.

There are currently no EPA water monitoring stations located within the waterbody and consequently the Ecological Status is unassigned.

A summary of the available EPA monitoring data for the Moy Estuary (IE_WE_420_0300) is presented in Figure 7. The Ecological Status assigned to this waterbody based on 2013 to 2018 data is Moderate. Characterisation indicates that Urban Wastewater (Ballina WWTP), Agriculture and Domestic Wastewater are the significant pressures.

The site is outside the low probability coastal flooding zone (1-in-a-1000 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year).



Figure 6 Proposed Astro Pitch in relation to relevant surface water features

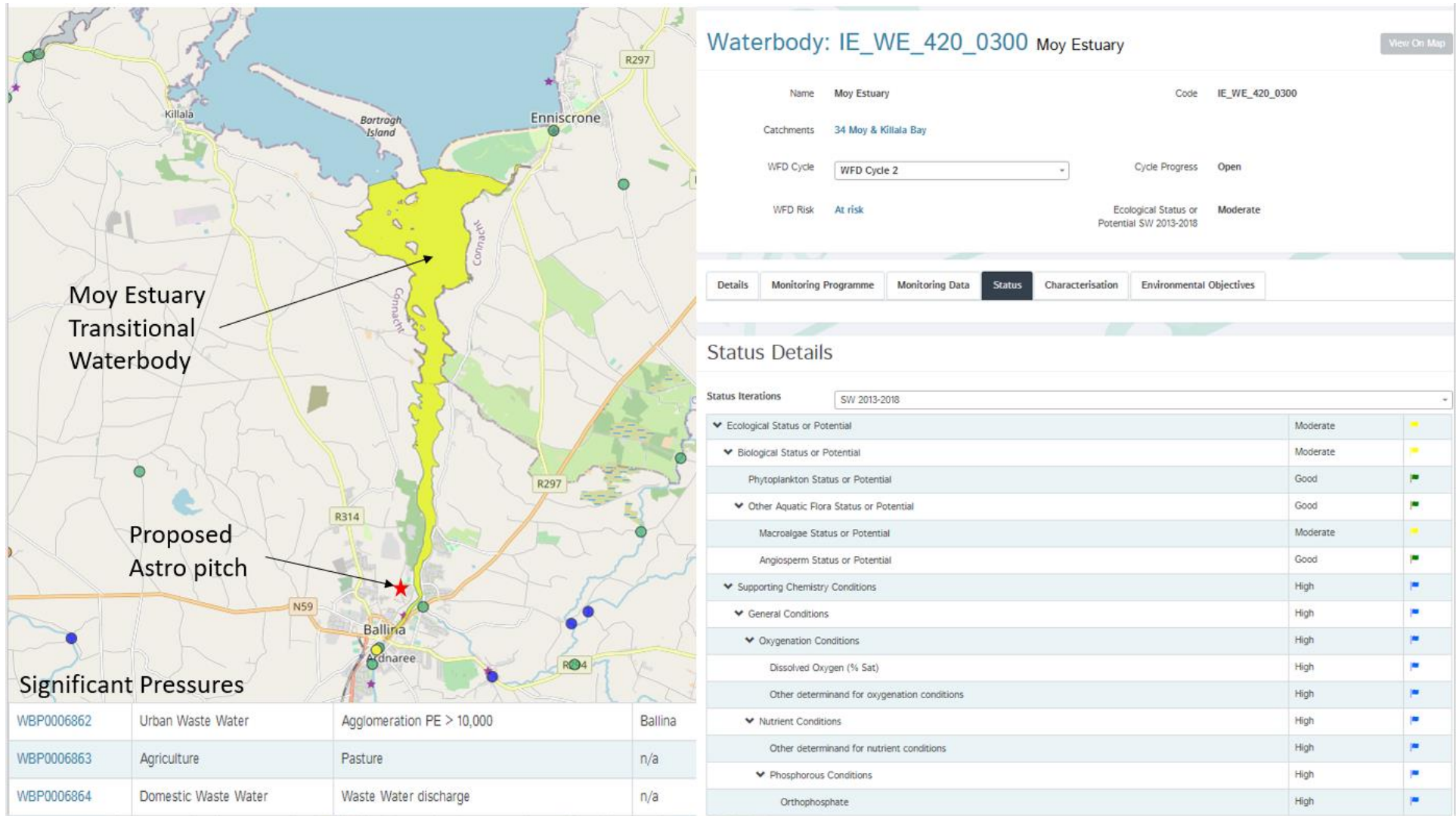


Figure 7 Moy Estuary - summary of Ecological Status

2.3.4 Groundwater Environment

Figure 8 below shows that the bedrock at the site is the Ballina Limestone Formation (Upper) which is dark grey fine grained Limestone and with interbedded calcareous Shale. There are no karst features located on or adjacent to the development site. Based on the local topography groundwater flow direction is anticipated to be to the east towards the Moy Estuary. The bedrock aquifer is described as Regionally important and Karstified Rk (Figure 9) and groundwater vulnerability (Figure 10) is classified as being high.¹³

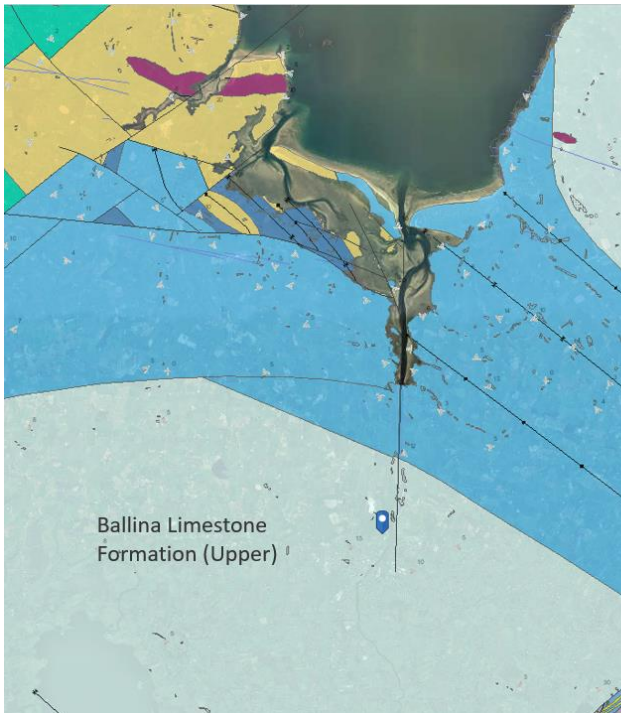


Figure 8 Bedrock Geology at the development site

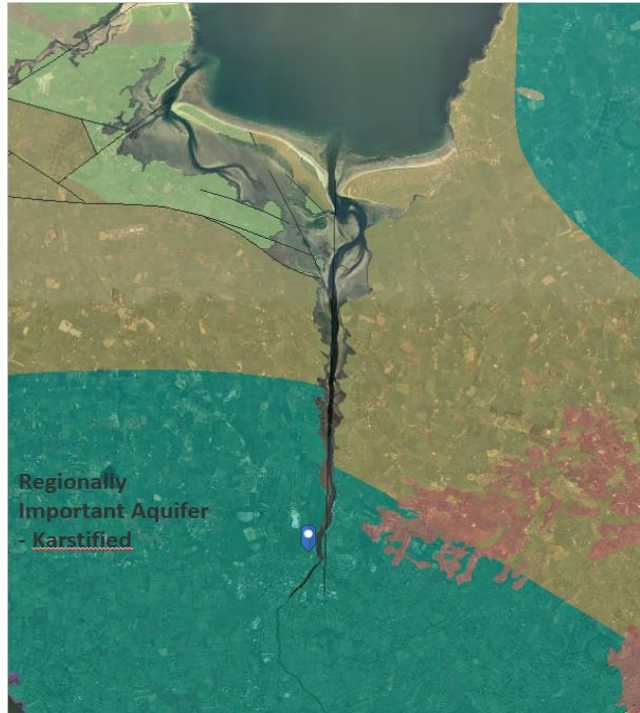


Figure 9 Aquifer Classification at the proposed development

¹³ Geological Survey of Ireland (2021) Groundwater Data Viewer Application <https://dcenr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/> (Access March 2021)

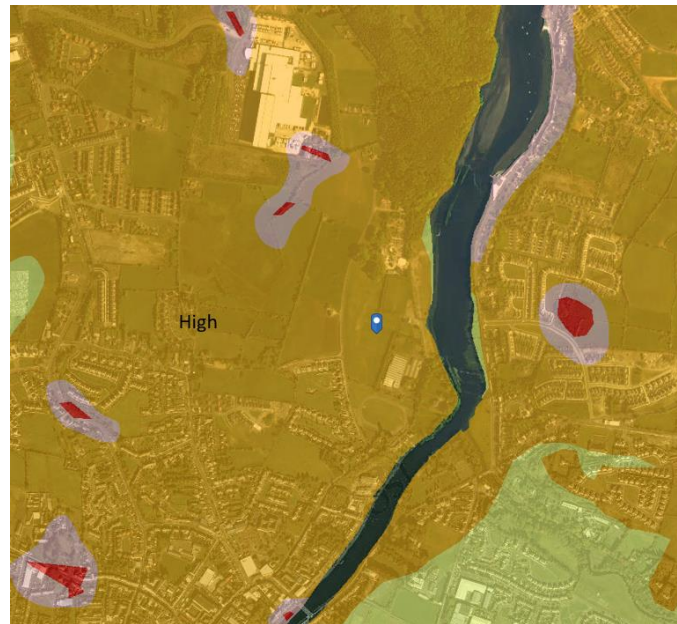


Figure 10 Groundwater Vulnerability

2.4 IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT NATURA 2000 SITES

A standard source-receptor-pathway conceptual model was used to identify a preliminary list of ‘relevant’ European sites (i.e. those which could be potentially affected). This conceptual model is a standard tool in environmental assessment. In order for an effect to occur, all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism means there is no likelihood for the effect to occur. In the context of the proposed development, the model comprises:

- Source (s) – e.g. sediment run-off from the proposed development
- Pathway (s) – e.g. drains and streams connecting to a European site
- Receptor (s) – Qualifying habitats and species of European sites

There are 8 European sites located within 15km of the proposed development site (Table 2.4). In addition, this screening assessment includes an evaluation of whether there are any pathways for effects on European Sites located outside of the 15km buffer potentially arising from the proposed development. The pathways for effects, potential impacts and an evaluation of significance with reference to the European sites listed below are also presented in Table 2.3 below, where the potential for a source-receptor-pathway relationship has been identified.

Killala Bay/ Moy Estuary SAC and Killala Bay/ Moy Estuary SPA (See Figure 11) are the only Natura 2000 sites considered to be in the Zone of Influence of the proposed development by nature of its proximity (160m and 1.4km respectively).

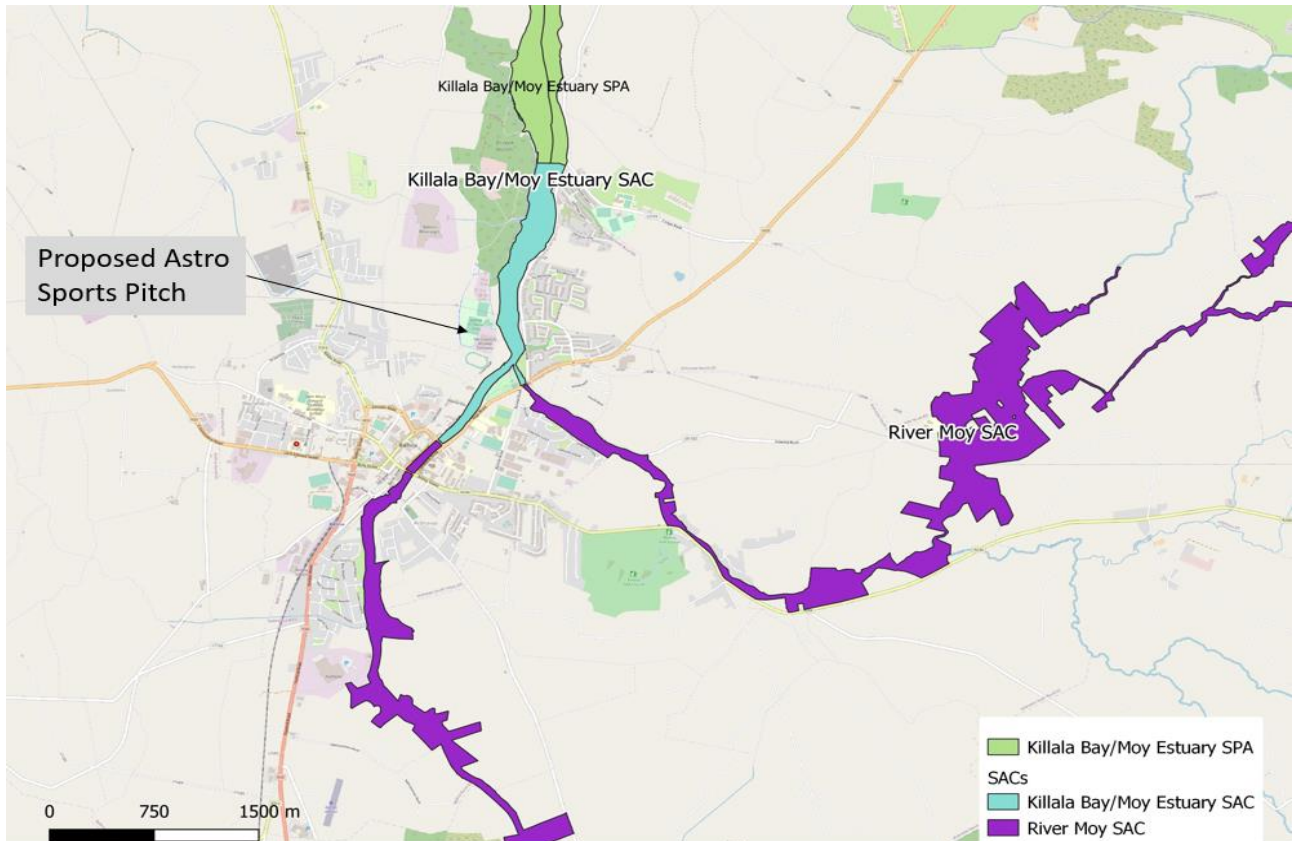


Figure 11 Natura 2000 Sites within zone of influence of the Astro pitch development

Table 2-1 Designated Natura 2000 Sites within a 15km radius of the proposed development

Site code	European Site Name	Qualifying interests (qualifying interest / special conservation interest code in square brackets [], * denotes priority habitat)	Potential Pathways	Potential for effects
000458	Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SAC (160m from site)	<p>[1014] <i>Vertigo angustior</i></p> <p>[1095] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i></p> <p>[1130] Estuaries</p> <p>[1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines</p> <p>[1310] <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonizing mud and sand</p> <p>[1330] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucis - Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)</p> <p>[1365] <i>Phoca vitulina</i></p> <p>[2110] Embryonic shifting dunes</p> <p>[2120] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> ("white dunes")</p> <p>[2130] * Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation ("grey dunes")</p> <p>[2190] Humid dune slacks</p>	Yes. Works being carried out 160m away with indirect hydrological connection	Yes. The works, as described in Section 2.2.1 have potential for slight effects on the aquatic habitats/species listed in Bold . However effects are not considered to be significant and will not affect their Conservation Objectives (See Table 2.6 for assessment).

Site code	European Site Name	Qualifying interests (qualifying interest / special conservation interest code in square brackets [], * denotes priority habitat)	Potential Pathways	Potential for effects
004036	Killala Bay / Moy Estuary SPA (1.4km from site)	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i> (common ringed plover) <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> (European golden plover) <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> (grey plover / black-bellied plover) <i>Calidris alba</i> (sanderling) <i>Calidris alpina</i> (dunlin) <i>Limosa lapponica</i> (bar-tailed godwit) <i>Numenius arquata</i> (Eurasian curlew) <i>Tringa totanus</i> (common redshank) Wetlands	Yes. Works being carried out 1.4km upstream with indirect hydrological connection	Yes. The development , as described in Section 2.2.1 have potential for slight effects However effects are not considered to be significant and will not affect their Conservation Objectives (See Table 2.6 for assessment).
002298	River Moy Complex SAC (560 m upstream)	[1092] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> [1095] <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> [1096] <i>Lampetra planeri</i> [1106] <i>Salmo salar</i> (only in fresh water) [1355] <i>Lutra lutra</i> [7110] * Active raised bogs [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	No pathway for effects. Works are taking place downstream of this SAC	No potential for significant effects likely due absence of potential pathways.

Site code	European Site Name	Qualifying interests (qualifying interest / special conservation interest code in square brackets [], * denotes priority habitat)	Potential Pathways	Potential for effects
		<p>[7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i></p> <p>[7230] Alkaline fens</p> <p>[91A0] Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</p> <p>[91E0] * Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno - Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)</p>		
004228	Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA (6km from site)	<p><i>Aythya fuligula</i> (tufted duck)</p> <p><i>Melanitta nigra</i> (common scoter)</p> <p><i>Larus canus</i> (common gull)</p> <p><i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> (Greenland white-fronted goose)</p> <p>Wetlands</p>	No pathway for effects. Works are taking place downstream of this SPA .	No potential for significant effects likely due to separation distance involved and absence of potential pathways.
000633	Lough Hoe Bog SAC (9.6km from site)	<p>[1013] <i>Vertigo geyeri</i></p> <p>[1092] <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i></p> <p>[3110] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>)</p> <p>[7130] Blanket bogs (* if active only)</p>	No pathway for effects	No potential for significant effects likely due to separation distance involved and absence of potential pathways.

Site code	European Site Name	Qualifying interests (qualifying interest / special conservation interest code in square brackets [], * denotes priority habitat)	Potential Pathways	Potential for effects
002006	Ox Mountain Bogs SAC (11.3km from site)	[1013] <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> [3110] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3160] Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [4010] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [7130] Blanket bogs (* if active only) [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i>	No pathway for effects	No potential for significant effects likely due to separation distance involved and absence of potential pathways.

2.4.1 Potential for in-combination or cumulative effects

A search of the Mayo County Council on line planning portal¹⁴ was completed on the 4th of March 2021 to identify any other projects in the vicinity of the proposed project (See Figure 14). Applications for Ballina Beverages, Belleek Castle Hotel, The Ice House Hotel and Connaught Whiskey Company highlighted in Figure 12 are relevant, but given the size, scale and nature of the proposed development it is considered that in-combination effects are highly unlikely to occur.

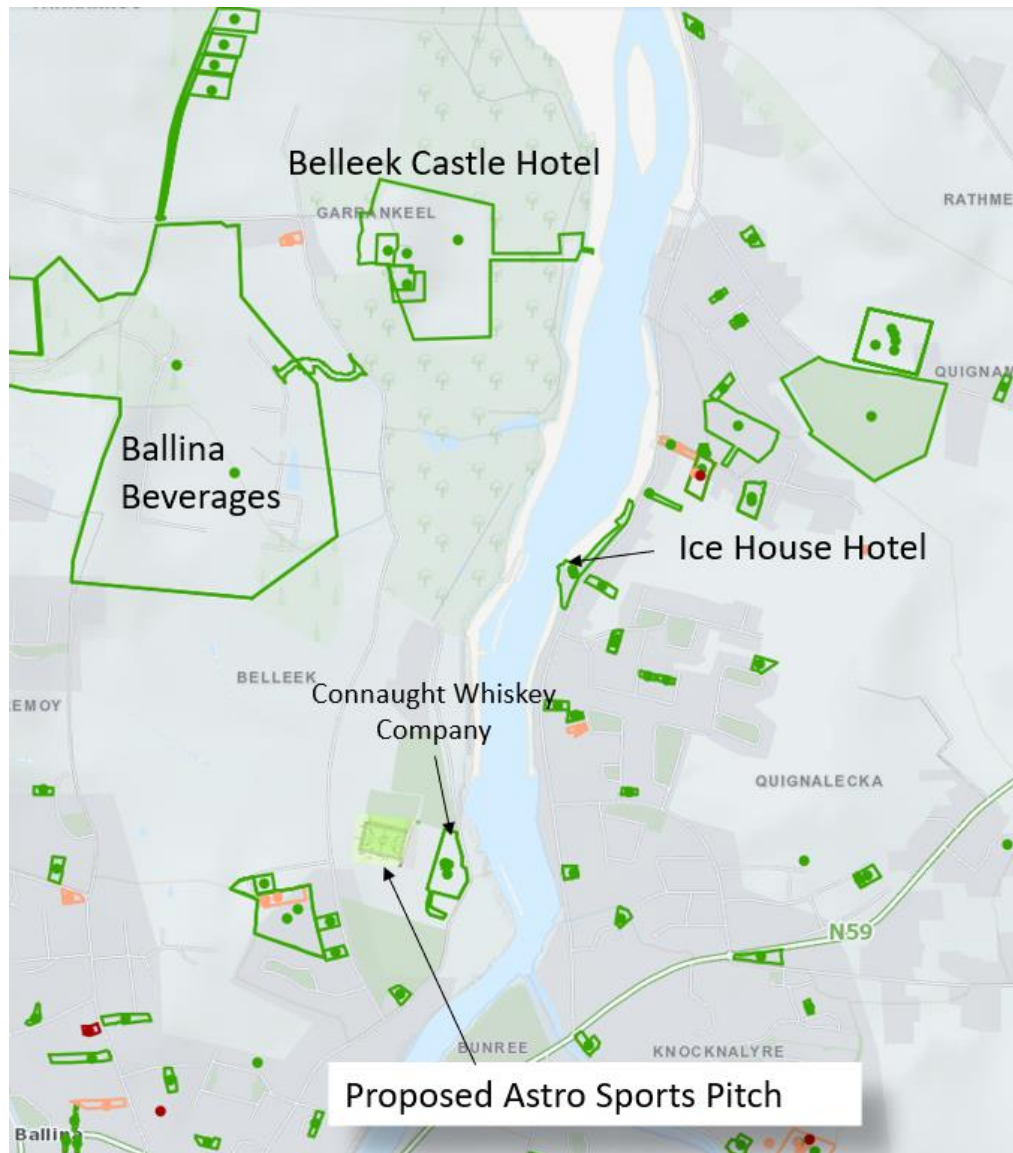


Figure 12 Significant planning applications since 2010 considered for in-combination effects (green = granted)

¹⁴ <https://mayococo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=602775443c8e47a0aa5a0f3b059aedad>

2.5 ASSESSMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS ON THE SITES WITHIN THE ZONE OF INFLUENCE

Table 2-2 Screening Matrix for Assessment of Significance of Potential Impacts

Screening Matrix for Assessment of Significance of Potential Impacts on Conservation Objectives	
Name and Location of Natura 2000 Sites	Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC (Site Code 000458) and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA (Site Code 004036) are within the Zone of Influence of the project (160m to the east and 1.4 km northeast respectively)
Project Description	The construction of a Municipal Multi-Sport Astro Pitch to include associated drainage, lighting, fencing and civil works. The proposal includes hard and soft landscaping works, surface paving, planting, boundary treatments and all other associated site development works and services. The proposed Astro pitch will be located on the footprint of an existing grass-based pitch.
Is this plan or project directly with or necessary to the management of the site (provide details)	No. The proposed development is not connected with the conservation management of Natura 2000 sites in the zone of influence.
Are there other plans or projects that together with the project being assessed, could affect the site.	No. Due to the small scale and nature of the project It was concluded that no in-combination effects are likely to occur.
Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 sites	<p>The following are the potential sources for effects on Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA/SAC;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disturbance to listed species due to machinery movement • Loss of hydraulic fluids from machinery to the groundwater environment. • Effects on water quality due to runoff during construction phase <p>Using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model the above listed sources are extremely unlikely to give rise to impacts on these Natura 2000 sites given the separation distance (1.4 km) for the Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA) and the absence of the hydrological pathway for effects in the case of Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC.</p>
Assessment of the likelihood of direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans	<p>Size and Scale</p> <p>The footprint of the development is relatively compact in nature (0.5 Ha)</p> <p>Land-take</p> <p>There will be no land take from the Natura 2000 sites or from adjacent connecting habitats.</p>

<p>or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites</p>	<p>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key feature of the site</p> <p>The development site is 160 m west of Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC and 1.4 km upstream from Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA /SAC</p> <p>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.)</p> <p>No resources associated with any of the Natura 2000 sites considered will be required for or utilised by the development.</p> <p>Emissions (disposal to land, water, air etc.)</p> <p>The potential for indirect effects on the water quality in the Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA/SAC via contaminated surface water runoff or groundwater pollution from within the site during construction has been assessed to be extremely remote. There is an absence of pathway for effects in the case of surface water and the likelihood of adequate attenuation provide by subsoils in the case of groundwater (excavation depths required are minimal as no weigh bearing structures are proposed.</p> <p>Excavation requirements</p> <p>There will be a requirement for excavation works to remove topsoil and subsoil to achieve formation level for the pitch. Any material considered surplus to requirements will be reused for landscaping purposes on other municipal recreation areas.</p> <p>Transportation requirements</p> <p>There will be increased vehicular movements in the vicinity of the site during construction but no impact on the SPA/SAC is predicted to occur. Existing car parking facility can cater for any potential increase in traffic during the operational phase of the project</p> <p>Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning</p> <p>It is anticipated that construction activity will last for approximately 2 years. Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA/SAC are not predicted to be negatively impacted during operational phase.</p> <p>Noise and light Pollution</p> <p>The Astro pitch will be fitted with lighting to allow the facility to be used during winter months. Lighting will be designed to reduce light spillage thereby mitigating effects on insect activity and other wildlife. Noise during construction will be limited to day time hours and will not impact</p>
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	<p>on any of the bird species listed among the qualifying interests of the SPA. The existing grasslands are not used by the species of Special Conservation Interest listed in the SPA for feeding or roosting purposes. The count subsites (0D448, 0D449 and 0D450 at the southern boundary of the SPA have the lowest species richness and abundance (only two of the 8 species of SCI were recorded -Dunlin and Redshank). All of the species listed as SCI are heavily reliant on the intertidal area for foraging and roost in the terrestrial habitats close to the shoreline.¹⁵</p> <p>Potential in -combination impacts</p> <p>It is considered in Section 2.4.1 that due to the nature and scale of the proposed project, there is no potential for in combination effects with other projects.</p>
<p>Likely changes to the Natura 2000 sites arising from the development as a result of ;</p>	<p>Reduction of habitat area</p> <p>The project will not result in the loss of any qualifying habitats.</p> <p>Disturbance to key species</p> <p>None expected.</p> <p>Habitat or species fragmentation</p> <p>The project will not result in any fragmentation of habitat or species listed in the Conservation Objectives of Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC /SPA.</p> <p>Reduction in species density</p> <p>Densities of species associated with either Natura 2000 site will not be affected.</p> <p>Changes in key indicators or conversation value (water quality etc.)</p> <p>Although the development is considered to be inside the Zone of Influence, due to the separation distance involved and the absence of hydrological connection, water quality in SPA/SAC will not be affected.</p> <p>Climate change.</p> <p>Imperceptible</p>
<p>Describe the likely impacts on the Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of interference with key</p>	<p>No impacts predicted to occur.</p>

¹⁵ NPWS 2013 Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA (Code 4036) Conservation Objectives Supporting Document (Version1)

relationships that define the structure and function of the site	
Describe from the above the elements of the project or plan or combination of elements where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale of the magnitude of the impact is not known	None. There are no such elements of the project likely to be significant.

3 SCREENING CONCLUSION

The Appropriate Assessment screening process considered potential impacts which may arise during the construction and operational phase of the proposed Municipal Astro Sports Pitch at Belleek, Ballina Co. Mayo.

Due to the absence of pathways for effects it has been concluded that there are no likely significant adverse effects on the qualifying interests or the conservation objectives of any designated European Site, of which Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA/SAC was identified as being in the Zone of Influence.

It is concluded that there are no likely potential impacts, whether direct, indirect or cumulative/ in-combination, which could give rise to significant effects on the conservation objectives of any designated Natura 2000 sites, with particular reference to Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA and Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC.

This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated.

Consequently, this proposed development does not need to proceed to Stage 2 -Natura Impact Statement.



Leo Brogan

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Appendix A

Summary Statistics from NPWS (2013)

Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA

Supporting Document

