

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

1. Introduction

The EIA Directive 85/337/EEC, as amended aims to determine the likely significant effects of a project on the environment. EIA Screening determines whether an EIA is required for a specified project. Projects requiring mandatory EIA are listed in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. In the case of development, which is under these thresholds, planning authorities are required under Article 103 of the 2001 Regulations, (as amended) to request an EIS where it considers that the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Screening involves appraisal of impacts from the proposed development according to three main criteria: -

- Characteristics of the project
- Location of proposed project
- Characteristics of potential impacts.

Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), outlines the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by a proposed development. These are: human beings, flora and fauna, soil and geology, water, air & climate, landscape, material assets, cultural heritage and the inter-relationships between the range of environmental criteria.

The proposed project comprises is to consist of the construction of 50 no. Dwelling Units comprising 38 no. 3 bed (5 person) houses and 12 no. 2 bed (4 person) houses all constructed as terraced or semi-detached blocks. Houses will have identified open frontages, secure rear garden areas & screen / boundary walls. Works will also include provision of new public pathways, parking spaces & access roads together with all new public utility connections to each unit and all associated site development works.

Is the size and design of the proposed development works significant?	No. The proposed local authority residential project is confined to a 2.4-hectare greenfield site where access to existing infrastructure and utilities is already in place. The Scheme is compact in nature comprising of terraced or semidetached unit only.
Is there potential for impacts from project in cumulation with other existing and/or approved project?	No. While there are a number of projects (small housing scheme directly opposite site, New GAA pitch 1 km to the west , Extension to Hotel and tourist project at Westport House) currently awaiting planning approval in the vicinity, it is not expected that there are to be any in accumulative effects.
Use of natural resources in particular land, soil water and biodiversity?	Significant excavations will be required with all soils being retained onsite for landscaping. Building materials will all be sourced from local contractors. Water resources are minimal during construction while drinking water for housing will be sourced from public water supply.
Will wastes be produced during construction and operation?	Yes. Construction waste will be generated as part of the works. All waste materials will be minimised and disposed of via licensed or permitted waste sites. The adjacent Westport Wastewater Treatment Plant has the capacity to service the proposed development.
Will the works and operation create and significant amount of pollution or nuisance?	No. It is considered that the construction phase of the development will result in a temporary increase in pollution and noise due to increased vehicle movements associated with delivery of materials, excavations and construction activity. Given the sub-urban setting, the disturbance effects will not be significantly above background levels, confined to day time and temporary in nature. Operational effects are not considered to be significant given the concentration of housing and commercial activity currently present in the vicinity.
Risk of major accidents and or disasters relevant to the project including those caused by climate change in accordance with scientific knowledge?	None
Risks to human health (Water contamination, air pollution)	No risk to human health. Surface water or groundwater contamination is unlikely as a result of the development. The open nature of the site will ensure that any emissions to air will be rapidly assimilated.

Table 1 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

Environmental Sensitivity of project in relation to existing and approved land use?	The area in question is zoned for residential development according to the Westport Area Development Plan. Current land use is mixed in nature (agricultural, amenity, residential and commercial) so the site is not considered to be highly sensitive from an environmental perspective.
Relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, air, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground?	<p>The footprint of the housing development is on lands have historically been used for agricultural purposes associated with Westport Demesne. The project will result in the disturbance to the current geological resources (soil, subsoil and bedrock (to a lesser extent). Most of the excavated geological materials will be reworked on site (cut and fill methodology to be employed due to undulating topography of the site).</p> <p>It is proposed that there shall be no net change in flood storage volume in the proposed development. Where necessary, surface water run-off from the proposed development shall be attenuated on-site if required. All site drainage shall be designed in accordance with Sustainable Drainage. See attached Flood Risk Assessment.</p> <p>Losses of agricultural grassland areas will reduce biodiversity but the ecological quality of same is considered to be of local importance.</p>
Absorption capacity of the natural environment including wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths, coastal zones and the marine environment, mountain and forest areas	The project will not be out of character with the surrounding natural environment which has the capacity to absorb the impact of the development. The adjacent Westport Wastewater Treatment Plant has the capacity to service the proposed development.
Potential for impacts directly and indirectly on Habitats and species listed in Annex I and II and IV of the Habitats Directive	The AA Screening Report concluded that there will be no significant effect, either direct or indirect on the conservation objectives of the Habitats listed for Clew Bay Complex SAC which is found 600m to the south west.
Potential for impacts on breeding places for species protected under the Wildlife Act	There was no evidence found during the ecological field visit of breeding places of species protected under the Wildlife Act. The lands in question appeared to be popular locally for walking dogs so any wildlife present within the site would have subject to ongoing disturbance. There will be loss of commuting corridors for fauna but the lands to the west under ownership of the local authority remain

	undeveloped. No badger setts were found during the ecological site visit.
Potential for impacts directly and indirectly on protected structures or recorded monuments and places of Archaeological Interest	The site associated with this proposed development is located approximately 195 meters from a Protected Structure. Ref: 080 Courtyard Buildings (Farmyard Buildings) in the Westport Town & Environs Development Plan 2010 – 2016 incorporating variations No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4.
Potential for impacts directly and indirectly on listed or scenic views or protected landscape in the County Development Plan	N/A
Potential to impact on areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards and relevant to the project or in which it is considered that there is such a failure.	None arising. The Carrowbeg_030 river which flows through Westport town, 600m to the south, is currently at Moderate Ecological Status. However, there is no hydrological connection from the proposed development to this waterbody, so the development is highly unlikely to cause any further pressure on the status of the waterbody in question.
Potential to impact on densely populated areas	The project location consists of a medium density urban settlement pattern and this impact does not arise.

Table 2 Characteristics of Potential Impacts

Human Beings	The proposed housing project will confer positive benefits by providing much needed social and affordable housing for locals. Benefits will accrue to the local economy by providing employment during the construction and fitting out of the residential units. Loss of the greenfield site will have a slight negative impact but there are significant areas of similar lands under local authority ownership to the north of the development
Flora and Fauna	Localised impacts on flora and fauna are expected to occur due to the loss of agricultural grasslands within the footprint of the development. Two mature tree species within the footprint will be felled along with some immature trees along the northern strip of mixed woodland to create an access route. Wet Grasslands to the east of the site which flood in winter will also be redeveloped for greenspace use. All habitats and species within the site are considered to be of local ecological importance and overall ecological impact is considered to be low.

Soils and Geology	The project will result in the disturbance to the current geological resources (soil, subsoil and bedrock (to a lesser extent). Most of the excavated geological materials will be reworked on site (cut and fill methodology to be employed due to undulating topography of the site).
Water	It is proposed that there shall be no net change in flood storage volume in the proposed development. Where necessary, surface water run-off from the proposed development shall be attenuated on-site if required. All site drainage shall be designed in accordance with Sustainable Drainage. See attached Flood Risk Assessment.
Air and Climate	As stated, the above residential development is in a sub urban setting with slight temporary negative effects during construction activity. There are no anticipated long-term impacts on air and climate. The proposed heating systems to the dwellings will be ASHP (Air Source heat Pumps) Air to water.
Noise and Vibration	Temporary increase in noise levels expected during daytime hours due to construction of housing units. No impact anticipated during operational phase of the development due to medium density of housing in the area. Noise barriers in the form of mixed woodland will be retained along the northern margin of the site where noise sensitive receptors are located.
Landscape	Due to the nature and scale of the housing development is not predicted to impact any scenic areas designated by Mayo County Council
Material Assets	The Housing development will provide a positive impact on County Mayo's' social and affordable housing stock. The terraced and semidetached units ensure that the site is maximised in terms the development footprint
Cultural Heritage	See Associated Predevelopment Archaeological Testing Report: 19EO617. The Part 8 application including this testing report will be notified to the relevant statutory body/department.
Interaction of the Foregoing	The proposed project will confer a positive impact on human beings and a slight negative impact on flora and fauna, soils and geology, water, air & climate, noise and vibration, Landscape, Material Assets, Cultural Heritage.

Table 3 Discussion of Potential Impacts

Will a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the proposed works	No. Works will be restricted to a 2.4-hectare site
Will a large population be impacted as a result of the proposed works	No. Any disturbance experienced during the construction works will be short in duration and limited to residents to the north boundary of the site.
Are there any trans frontier impacts likely to arise from the proposed works	None expected
Is the intensity and the complexity of the impacts associate with the proposed works considered to be significant	No
Is there a high probability that the impact will occur?	No significant impacts expected to occur
What is the expected onset, duration frequency and reversibility of the impact	Construction work will be completed in 2 years during normal working hours. The completed housing units will be present for the foreseeable future.
Cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects	Not expected to be any other major projects in the general area likely to give rise to cumulative impacts.
Will it be difficult to avoid or reduce or repair or compensate for the effects	No significant impacts expected to occur



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