

Housing Development at
Liffey Sq (Castlefen), Sallins, Co Kildare

Appropriate assessment (Screening)

Report prepared for van Dijk Architects

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to examine possible ecological impacts of the proposed development on the Natura 2000 site network and it is submitted to fulfil the mandatory requirement under Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

The report is written after a site visit in February 2017 and is part of the appropriate assessment procedure following the outline of the NPWS Guidance document (DoEHLG 2009) with a site description at the outset.

The author is Roger Goodwillie, a Member of the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management.

2. DESCRIPTION OF AREA

The site is central in the Castlefin estate, occupying the northern part of a previously undeveloped strip. It is surrounded by residential dwellings but is not open to the public. It consists of rough grassland which is mown annually. The southern part has a richer soil and supports a uniform sward of such grasses as scutch *Elytrigia repens*, false oat *Arrhenatherum elatius* and cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata* along with a few broad-leaved species – goosegrass *Galium aparine*, nettle *Urtica dioica*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius* and dandelion *Taraxacum* agg. It terminates in a low hawthorn hedge *Crataegus monogyna* at the southern end, with much bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

North of the road the land shows signs of building disturbance and the vegetation is more varied. The grasses are augmented by meadow foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis* and creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* whereas the other species now include

<i>Juncus inflexus</i>	hard rush
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover
<i>Rumex crispus</i>	curled dock
<i>Carex hirta</i>	hairy sedge
<i>Scorzonerooides autumnalis</i>	autumn hawkbit
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i> (at edge)	great willowherb

A few standard trees have been planted in this part – maples and birch – and its boundary is a line of old beech trees of quite small stature with a hedge of hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and ivy *Hedera helix* with much cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* and wood avens *Geum urbanum*.

Evaluation

The lands in question do not have any ecological interest; they contain common and expected species.

There is no watercourse on site though a seasonal drain at the northern end sometimes discharges to the Liffey, about 100m to the west.

3. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING

3.1 Introduction

Appropriate assessment was introduced by the EU Habitats Directive as a way of determining during the planning process whether a project is likely to have a significant effect on one of the Natura 2000 sites so far designated (i.e. the candidate SAC's and SPA's), or their conservation objectives. In this case a number of sites are within 10-15km (see map at end). They are

<i>Site Name</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Site Code</i>
Red Bog	candidate SAC	0397
Mouds Bog	candidate SAC	2331
Pollardstown Fen	candidate SAC	0396
Ballynafagh Lake	candidate SAC	1387
Ballynafagh Bog	candidate SAC	0391

Article 6(3) states

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives....

In the Irish context this has been interpreted as a four stage process. Firstly a screening exercise (Stage 1, this document) determines if a project could have significant effects on a Natura site. The project should be screened without the inclusion of special mitigation measures unless potential impacts can clearly be avoided through design (or re-design). If impacts are identified or the situation is unclear a Natura Impact Statement (Stage 2) is provided to the planning or regulatory authority which then conducts an Assessment of the information supplied. Examples of significant effects are loss of habitat area, fragmentation of the habitat, disturbance to species using the site and changes in water resources or quality. If such negative effects come to light in the assessment, alternative solutions are investigated by the proponent (Stage 3) and modifications made unless the project is deemed to be driven by 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' in its current form. If this is the case, Stage 4 then deals with compensatory action.

2.2 Project description

The development will consist of 29 dwellings in seven short terraces. They will be connected to the public systems of water supply and sewerage. 42% of the site is suitable for infiltration; from the rest the surface (stormwater) drainage will be collected in two attenuation tanks which will release water through a hydrobrake to the Liffey at green field rates. Oil interceptors will also be installed.

To prevent sediment loss during construction, all nearby road drains at risk will be surrounded by sediment blankets so that only clean water will be released. In addition, any water that has to be pumped into the drain at the northern end will be clarified before discharge. This condition will be written into the works contract.

2.3 Natura 2000 sites

As mentioned above there are five Natura 2000 sites located within 15km of the site. All are wetlands with their own water supply, rainwater in the case of Mouds Bog, Ballynafagh Bog and the Red Bog and groundwater for Pollardstown Fen and Ballynafagh Lake.

There are four downstream sites in Dublin Bay about 38km by river – North Dublin Bay (0206) and South Dublin Bay (0210) are cSAC's while North Bull Island (4006) and South Dublin Bay (4024) are SPA's.

The site synopses for these sites are available on the NPWS website and do not need to be included here.

2.4 Conservation Objectives

Most of these sites have specific conservation objectives for their habitats or species and these take the form of

Candidate SAC's

To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I Habitat(s) and the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected

SPA's

To maintain the favourable conservation status of the Special Conservation Interests of the SPA.

The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

2.5 Potential effects

The site does not have a direct ecological connection with any of the five Natura 2000 areas within 15km or with the Dublin Bay sites. It does not support any of the habitats or species for which the Natura 2000 sites are listed.

In view of the proximity of the Liffey, development might be thought to be a potential risk to the Dublin Bay sites. However, there is no natural link to the river and material would have to be transported through the existing road drainage system (which can be prevented). Even if this was to occur, there is such dilution in the Bay that development on this proposed scale could have no real effect on inshore ecology.

2.6 Actual effects

There are no likely effects on the Natura 2000 site network. Straightforward pollution control measures will prevent significant quantities of sediment or oil reaching the Liffey during construction and operation.

The development will therefore not create outflows that could be deleterious to the downstream Natura sites in Dublin Bay or affect the other Natura sites in any way.

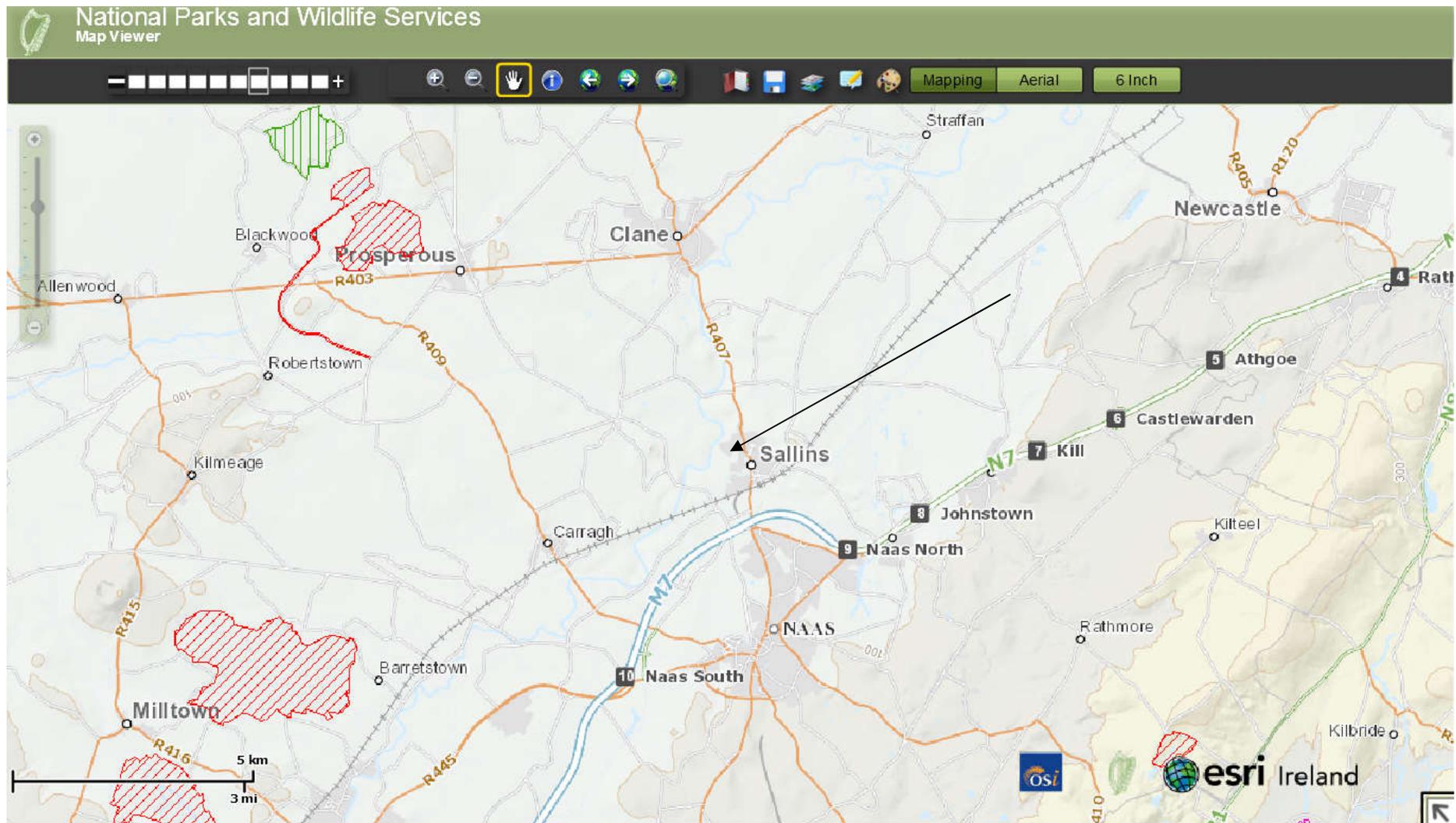
3. CONCLUSION

On the basis of the findings of this screening, it is concluded that the proposed development will not have a significant effect on any of the Natura 2000 sites or on the conservation objectives for their constituent habitats or animals.

Since this is the case there can be no cumulative effects and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

References

Dept of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009). Appropriate assessment of plans and projects in Ireland: guidance for planning authorities. Dublin.



Position of site in relation to nearby Natura 2000 sites (red hatching)

