Screening for Appropriate Assessment

KARE Facility at Craddockstown,
Naas, Co. Kildare

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Executive Summary

This *Screening for Appropriate Assessment* report has been prepared by NM Ecology Ltd on behalf of KARE, as part of a planning application for three dwellings at Craddockstown, Naas, Co. Kildare. In accordance with their obligations under the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011* (SI 477/2011), Kildare County Council must assess whether the proposed development could have 'likely significant effects' on any Natura 2000 sites. This document provides supporting information to assist the local authority with an Appropriate Assessment screening exercise, including: a description of the proposed development, details of its environmental setting, a map of Natura 2000 sites in the surrounding area, and an appraisal of potential pathways for indirect impacts.

Following a review of this information, no Natura 2000 sites were identified within 2 km of the proposed development site, and no potential hydrological (or other) pathways were identified to any Natura 2000 sites. On this basis, it is concluded that the proposed development will not cause direct or indirect impacts on any Natura 2000 sites, and that Appropriate Assessment is not required.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to Appropriate Assessment

Approximately 10% of the land area of Ireland is included in the European Network of Natura 2000 sites, which includes Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to protect important areas for birds, and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) to protect a range of habitats and species. Legislative protection for these sites is provided by the *European Council Birds Directive* (79/409/EEC) and *E.C. Habitats Directive* (92/43/EEC, as amended), which are jointly transposed into Irish law by the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011* (SI 477/2011, as amended).

Regulation 42 (1) states that: "*Screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project for which an application for consent is received* […] *shall be carried out by the public authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on* [any Natura 2000 sites]." To ensure compliance with this regulation, planning authorities must screen all planning applications for potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites. Supporting information may be requested from the applicant to assist with this process.

This document provides background information to assist the local authority with a *Screening for Appropriate Assessment* exercise for the proposed development. It includes an outline of the proposed works, details of the environmental setting of the site, an appraisal of future development proposals in the area (potential for 'in-combination effects'), a map and list of Natura 2000 sites within the potential zone of impact, and an assessment of potential impacts.

1.2 Statement of authority

All surveying and reporting was carried out by Nick Marchant, the principal ecologist of NM Ecology Ltd. He has an MSc in Ecosystem Conservation and Landscape Management from NUI Galway and a BSc in Environmental Science from Queens University Belfast. He is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, and operates in accordance with their code of professional conduct.

He has eleven years of professional experience, including eight years as an ecological consultant, one year as a local authority biodiversity officer, and two years managing an NGO in Indonesia. He has provided ecological assessments for over two hundred developments throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland, including wind farms, infrastructural projects (roads, water pipelines, greenways, etc.), and a range of residential and commercial developments.

1.3 Methods

This report has been prepared with reference to the following guidelines:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009)
- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4)*, E.C., 2002.
- *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal* (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2016)

In accordance with Section 3.2 of *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland*, the screening exercise was conducted using the following steps:

1. Description of the project and local site characteristics
2. Identification of relevant Natura 2000 sites, and compilation of information on their qualifying interests and conservation objectives
3. Assessment of potential impacts upon Natura 2000 sites, including:
    - Direct impacts (e.g. loss of habitat area, fragmentation)
    - Indirect impacts (e.g. disturbance of fauna, pollution of surface water)
    - Cumulative / 'in-combination' effects associated with other concurrent projects
4. Screening Statement with conclusions

A desk-based study was carried out using data from the following sources:

- Plans and specifications for the proposed development
- Qualifying interests / conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites from www.npws.ie
- Bedrock, soil, subsoil, surface water and ground water maps from the Geological Survey of Ireland webmapping service (www.gsi.ie/mapping.htm), the National Biodiversity Data Centre (http://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/), and the Environmental Protection Agency web viewer (http://gis.epa.ie/Envision/)
- The Kildare County Development Plan 2018-2023, the Naas Town Development Plan 2011-2017 (an updated plan has not yet been published) and details of permitted or proposed developments from the local authority's online planning records

All web-based resources were accessed in September and October 2018.

2 Description of the Project

2.1 Environmental setting

The landholding is located on the southern outskirts of Naas town. It is part of a former grazing pasture, and is bordered by hedgerows / treelines on the northern, southern and western sides. There are one-off houses to the north and south of the site, the Craddockstown road to the west, and open farmland to the east.

It is noted that a residential development is scheduled to commence on much of the farmland to the east of the site in the next year, so this will be converted to a low-density suburban housing estate. This is part of a larger zone of expansion to the south of Naas, including a school that was recently constructed to the north of the site, and extensive residential development to the north and north-east of the site.

Geology and soils

The underlying bedrock is calcareous greywacke, siltstone and shale of the Carrighill formation, which is a poor aquifer. Subsoils are limestone sands and gravels, and soils are rendzinas / lithosols, which are shallow, well-drained soils derived from basic materials. The author has previously supervised some excavation on the adjacent site, and noted that the soils were sandy and well-drained. Therefore, it is expected that most rain falling on the site would percolate to ground rather than flowing into surface water drainage features.

Hydrology

The are no watercourses on or adjacent to the proposed development site. The closest major watercourse is the Castlesize river, which is approx. 720m north-east of the proposed development site. It is a tributary of the River Liffey, joining it approx. 5km from the closest point to the proposed development site. The Castlesize River and the River Liffey are both of moderate status in the vicinity of Naas town (Water Framework Directive assessments 2010-2015).

2.2 Description of the proposed development

The proposed development will involve the construction of three dwelling houses: two with a floor area of 147m^2, and a third with a floor area of 201m^2. Access will be from the Craddockstown Road to the west of the site, which will lead to a short section of internal road.

Surface water runoff from roofs and roads will be channelled to a soakaway in the north of the site. Foul water will be discharged to a local authority foul sewer in the adjacent local-authority housing development, and will ultimately be treated in the waste water treatment works (WWTW) in Naas. The WWTW is within capacity and providing a high level of treatment.

2.3 Other nearby developments (potential in-combination effects)

The proposed development site is located in a rural setting on the edge of Naas town. It is included in Zone C 'New Residential' of the Naas Town Development Plan 2011-2017, for which the planning objective is "*To provide for new residential development and associated ancillary services".* The land to the north and north-east of the site is also zoned for new residential, and a planning application has been granted for the development of these lands (see below). With this exception, all other land surrounding the site is likely to remain in its current state; the farmland to the south and west is zoned for agricultural uses.

The online planning records of Kildare County Council were searched for any live or recently-approved planning applications in the vicinity of the proposed development site. Planning approval was granted in 2015 for a 284-unit residential development, and construction is understood to have commenced in late 2017. A Part VIII application for a social housing project of 74 residential units was approved for the lands to the east of the proposed development site in 2017, and is due to commence construction in early 2019. If constructed at the same time as the proposed development, it is possible that the two developments could act in-combination to increase the scale of potential ecological impacts (if applicable). This will be discussed at a later stage in this document. No other approved or pending planning applications were identified in the vicinity of the site.

3 Description of Natura 2000 sites

3.1 Identification of Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence

The proposed development site is not located within or adjacent to any Natura 2000 sites, and there are no Natura 2000 sites within a potential zone of influence of 2 km. A map of Natura 2000 sites in the surrounding area is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1	Natura 2000 sites
Location	Craddockstown, Naas
Applicant	KARE
Date	04-10-2018

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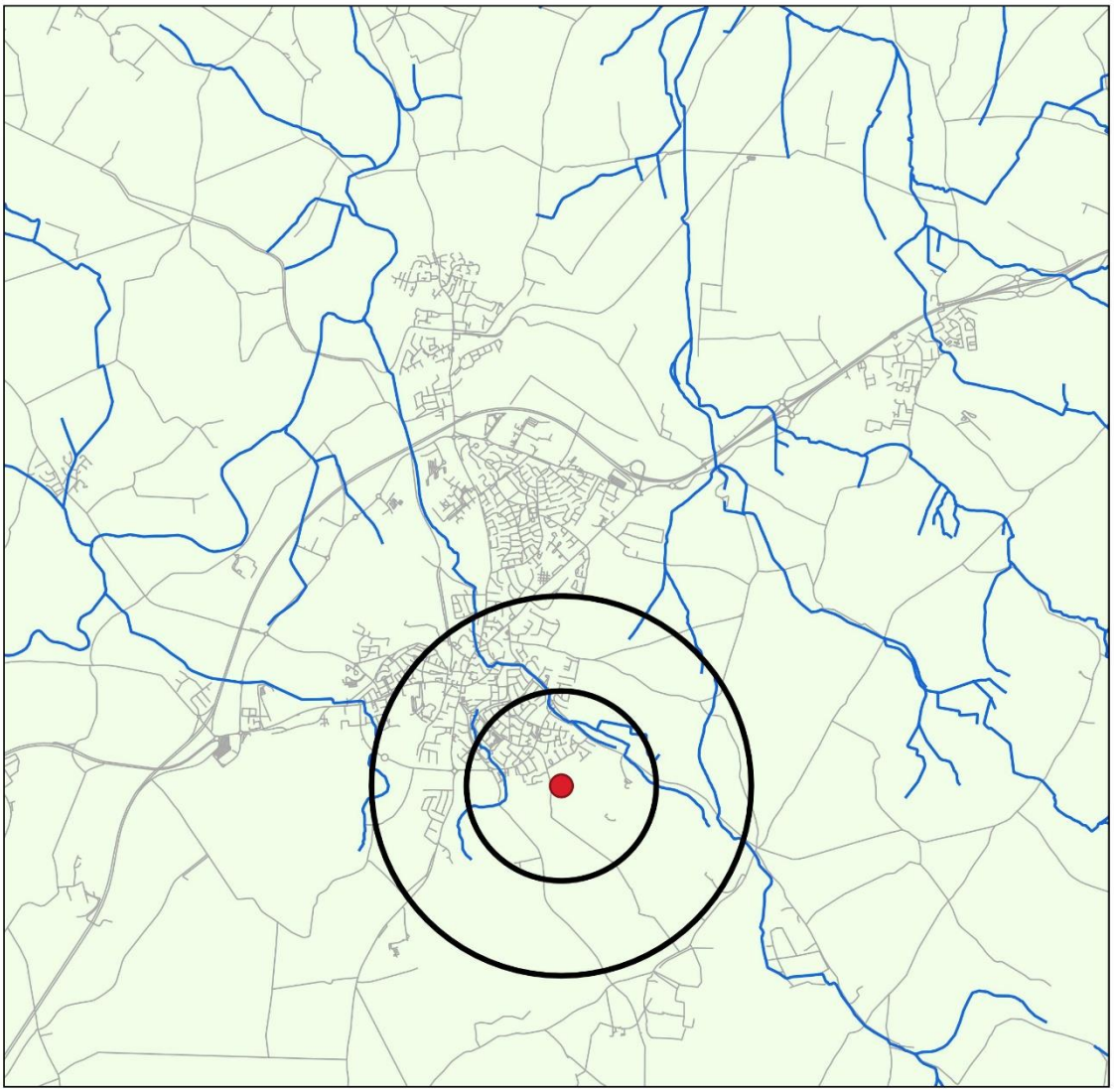
Site location
- Proposed Development Site
- Buffer zones (1km, 2km)
- Roads
- Watercourses

Natura 2000 sites
- Special Areas of Conservation
- Special Protection Areas



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0 1 2 3 4 5 km

3.2 Identification of potential pathways for indirect impacts on distant sites

Indirect impacts on designated sites can occur if there is a viable pathway between the source (the proposed development site) and the receptor (the habitats and species for which a site has been designated). The most common pathway for impacts is surface water, for example if a pollutant is washed into a river and carried downstream into a designated site. Other potential pathways are groundwater, air (e.g. sound waves or airborne dust), or land (e.g. flow of liquids, vibration). The zone of effect for hydrological impacts can be several kilometres, but for air and land it is rarely more than one hundred metres. The magnitude of impacts (e.g. the concentration of pollutants) usually decreases as the distance between source and receptor increases. An appraisal of potential pathways between the proposed development and any Natura 2000 sites is provided below.

There are no Natura 2000 sites within 2km of the proposed development site. The closest is the Red Bog (Kildare) SAC, which is located 7.3 km east of the site. It is located at a higher altitude than the proposed development site, and is upstream in the Liffey catchment, so all potential hydrological or hydrogeological pathways can be ruled out. The distances involved are also too great for air or land pathways. On this basis, all pathways to the SAC can be screened out.

There are no watercourses or drainage ditches within the proposed development site, and the nearest watercourse is the River Liffey, which is located approx. 0.7 km north-east of the site (see Figure 1). On this basis, there are not considered to be any viable hydrological pathways to major watercourses in the surrounding area, nor to any Natura 2000 sites downstream on these watercourses. On this basis, we conclude that there are no viable pathways to any Natura 2000 sites in the surrounding area.

4 Screening Statement

Article 42 (7) of the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011* states that: "*The public authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required* […] *if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site."*

To assist the planning authorities with the screening exercise, we have mapped the Natura 2000 sites in the surrounding area, and have considered potential pathways for indirect impacts on distant sites. There are no Natura 2000 sites within 2 km of the site, and there are no hydrological connections to any nearby watercourses. Based on this information, we have demonstrated that there will be no risk of direct or indirect impacts on any Natura 2000 sites, so we conclude that Appropriate Assessment is not required.

References

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2016. *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the U.K and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal* (2nd Edition). C.I.E.E.M., Hampshire, England.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009. *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, DAHG, Dublin, Ireland.

European Commission. 2002. *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.