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# APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

FOR  
PROPOSED  
TOWN RENEWAL MASTERPLAN  
FOR  
KILDARE  
Co. KILDARE

ON BEHALF OF  
Kildare County Council

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## DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

Enviroguide Consulting was commissioned by Kildare County Council (KCC) to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report in respect of a Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan (TRMP), hereafter referred to as 'Proposed Masterplan' or 'Site' (where referring to the area of the Proposed Masterplan), for Kildare Town, Co Kildare. This report contains information to enable the competent authority to undertake Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening in respect of the Proposed Masterplan.

## 1.2 Legislative Background

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) seeks to conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora by the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). It is the responsibility of each Member State to designate SPAs and SACs, both of which will form part of the Natura 2000 Network, a network of protected sites throughout the European Community. These designated sites are referred to as 'Natura 2000 sites' or 'European sites'. SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II species (other than birds). SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and other regularly occurring migratory birds and their habitats. The annexed habitats and species for which each site is selected correspond to the qualifying interests of the sites; from these the conservation objectives of the site are derived.

An AA is a required assessment to determine the likelihood of significant effects, based on best scientific knowledge, of any plans or projects on European sites. Screening for AA determines whether a plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site, in view of its conservation objectives.

This AA Screening has been undertaken to determine the potential for significant effects on relevant European sites. The purpose of this assessment is to determine, the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the Proposed Masterplan in the context of the conservation objectives of such sites.

### 1.2.1 Legislative Context

The obligations in relation to AA have been implemented in Ireland under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ("the 2000 Act"), and in particular Section 177U and Section 177V thereof. The relevant provisions of Section 177U in relation to AA screening have been set out below:

*"177U.— (1) A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.*

(2)...

(3)...

*(4) The competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or a proposed development, as the case may be, is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the draft Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.*

*(5) The competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or a proposed development, as the case may be, is not required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the draft Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.”*

An Appropriate Assessment is required under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive where a project or plan may give rise to significant effects upon a European site. Paragraph 3 states that:

*“6(3) 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 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 site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.”*

### **1.2.2 Stages of Appropriate Assessment**

This AA Screening Report (the 'Screening Report') has been prepared by Enviroguide Consulting. It considers whether the Proposed Masterplan is likely to have a significant effect on any European sites and whether a Stage 2 AA is required.

The AA process is a four-stage process (Figure 1). Each stage requires different considerations, assessments and tests to ultimately arrive at the relevant conclusion for 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.

## Overview of Screening and Appropriate Assessment

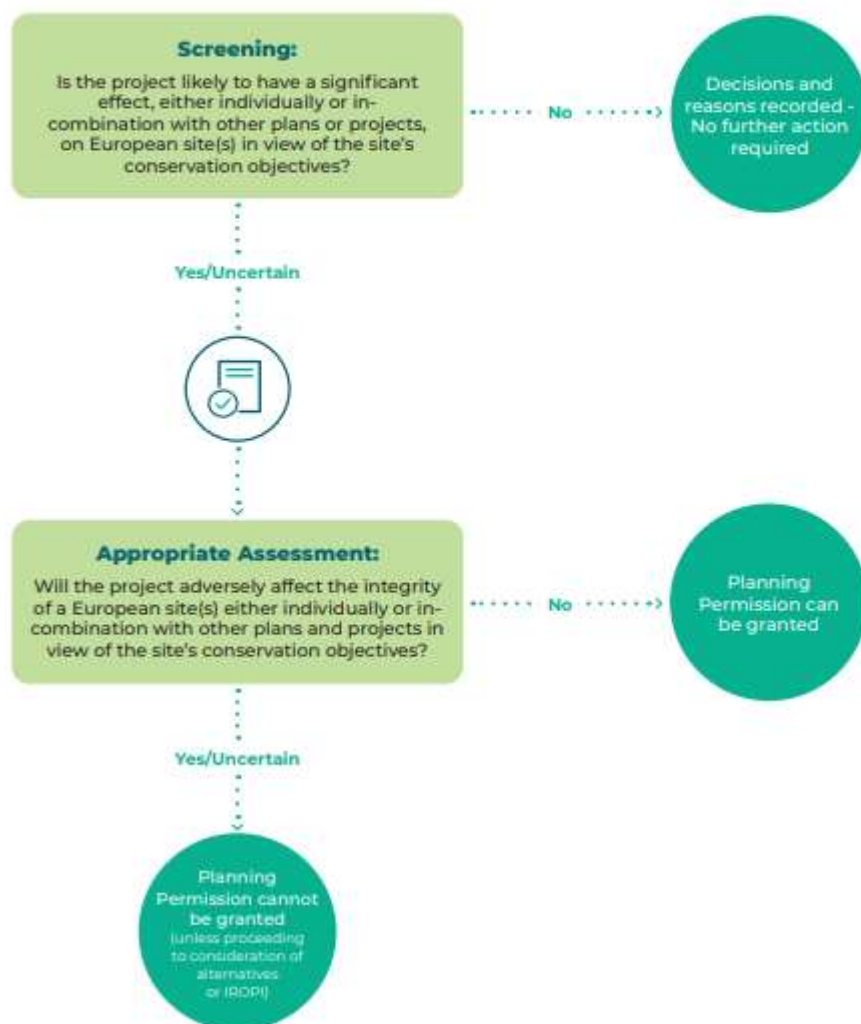


FIGURE 1. OVERVIEW OF SCREENING AND APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT (OPR, 2021).

The four stages of an AA, can be summarised as follows:

- Stage 1: *Screening*. The first stage of the AA process is to determine the likelihood of significant effects of the proposal, this addresses:
  - whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the European site, or
  - whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.
- Stage 2: *Appropriate Assessment*. The second stage of the AA requires the competent authority to determine whether the project or plan (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) will have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European site, having regard to the conservation objectives of the site and its ecological structure



and function. The developer must provide a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) to the competent authority to inform the AA, which is a statement, for the purposes of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive of the potential impacts of a proposed development, on its own or in combination with other plans or projects, for one or more than one European site, in view of the conservation objectives of the site or sites. It must include a report of a scientific examination of evidence and data, carried out by competent persons to identify and classify any potential impacts for one or more than one European site in view of the conservation objectives of the site or sites. The competent authority must consult with the public in relation to any plan or project that requires AA. If the competent authority determines that the plan or project would have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site, it can only grant consent after proceeding through stages 3 and 4.

- **Stage 3: *Assessment of alternative solutions*.** If the outcome of Stage 2 is negative i.e., adverse impacts to the sites cannot be scientifically ruled out, despite mitigation, the plan or project should proceed to Stage 3 or be abandoned. This stage examines alternative solutions to the proposal.
- **Stage 4: *Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain*.** The final stage is the main derogation process examining whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project to adversely affect a European site, where no less damaging solution exists.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Guidance

This Screening Report has been undertaken in accordance with the following guidance:

- *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 NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- *Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle* (European Commission, 2000);
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2019);
- *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2021); and
- *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, OPR Practice Note PN01, Office of the Planning Regulator March 2021*.

## 2.2 Screening Steps

This Screening Report has been undertaken in accordance with the European Communities Methodological Guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2002) and the European Commission Guidance 'Managing Natura 2000 sites' (EC, 2000). Screening for AA involves the following steps:

- Establish whether the plan is directly connected with or necessary for the management of a European site;
- Description of the plan or project and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the European site;
- Identification of European sites potentially affected;
- Identification and description of potential effects on the European site;
- Assessment of the likely significance of the effects identified on the European site; and
- Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

## 2.3 Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out to collate and review available information, datasets and documentation sources relevant for the completion of this Screening Report. The desktop study relied on the following sources:

- Information on the network of European sites, boundaries, qualifying interests and conservation objectives, obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie);
- Text summaries of the relevant European sites taken from the respective Standard Data Forms and site synopses available at [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie);
- Information on waterbodies, catchment areas and hydrological connections obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at [www.gis.epa.ie](http://www.gis.epa.ie);
- Information on bedrock, groundwater, aquifers and their statuses, obtained from Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) at [www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie);
- Satellite imagery and mapping obtained from various sources and dates including Google, Digital Globe, Bing and Ordnance Survey Ireland; and
- Information on the existence of permitted developments, or developments awaiting decision, in the vicinity of the Proposed Masterplan from KCC.

For a complete list of the specific documents consulted as part of this assessment, see *Section 5 References*.

## 2.4 Field Surveys

No field surveys were deemed necessary for the preparation of this Screening Report.

## 2.5 Identification of European sites

In order to identify the European sites that potentially lie within the Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the Proposed Masterplan, a Source-Path-Receptor (S-P-R) method was adopted, as described in 'OPR Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management' (OPR, 2021), a practice note produced by the Office of the Planning Regulator, Dublin. This note was published to provide guidance on screening for AA during the planning process, and although it focuses on the approach a planning authority should take in screening for AA, the methodology is also readily applied in the preparation of Screening Reports such as this.

The methodology used to identify relevant European sites comprised the following:

- Identification of potential sources of effects based on the Proposed Masterplan description and details;
- Use of up-to-date GIS spatial datasets for European designated sites and water catchments – downloaded from the NPWS website ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)) and the EPA website ([www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)) to identify European sites which could potentially be affected by the Proposed Masterplan; and
- Identification of potential pathways between the Proposed Masterplan and any European sites within the ZOI of any of the identified sources of effects.
  - The catchment data were used to establish or discount potential hydrological connectivity between the Proposed Masterplan and any European sites.
  - Groundwater and bedrock information used to establish or discount potential hydrogeological connectivity between the Proposed Masterplan and any European sites.
  - Air and land connectivity assessed based on Proposed Masterplan details and proximity to European sites.

There is absolutely no reliance placed in this Screening Report on mitigation measures intended to avoid/reduce harmful effects on the European sites.

## 2.6 Assessment of Significant Effects

The potential for significant effects that may arise from the Proposed Masterplan is considered through the use of key indicators, namely:

- Habitat loss or alteration
- Habitat/species fragmentation
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species
- Changes in population density
- Changes in water quality and resource

In addition, information pertaining to the conservation objectives of the European sites, the ecology of the designated habitats and species and known or perceived sensitivities of the habitats and species were considered.

### **3 STAGE 1 SCREENING**

#### **3.1 Management of European Sites**

The Proposed Masterplan is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European sites.

#### **3.2 Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan**

##### **3.2.1 Kildare Town – Location & Description**

Kildare Town, situated in the centre of the county of Kildare in Ireland's eastern Midlands (Figure 2), was founded in the 5th Century. The Curragh plains are located to the east of the town with pastoral landscapes to the north, south and west and bogland further south. It is situated on a ridge higher than the surrounding lowlands.

Over the past 20 years Kildare Town has experienced limited expansion in comparison with other settlements in the county. The majority has been suburban to the North and East of the historic town centre reflecting the role of Kildare Town as dormitory settlement arising from improved rail and road links to Dublin city.

Today the town has a population of 9,874 (2016 census) and has a growth rate of 6% with an average age of 34.2 years old. Kildare Town is accessed by the M7 which is a direct national route to Dublin. Furthermore, it is located on mainline rail and has rapid access to all major seaports and airports.

The town is located nearby to other large urban centres in County Kildare, Newbridge is 9km distant and the county town, Naas, is 20km distant. Within its immediate context, the town is situated within easy reach of a variety of amenities.

The most notable of these include the Curragh horse racing venue, which is the centre of horse racing in Ireland and is currently undergoing a large-scale redevelopment. Also nearby are the Japanese gardens and the Irish National Stud farm, an established successful tourist attraction.

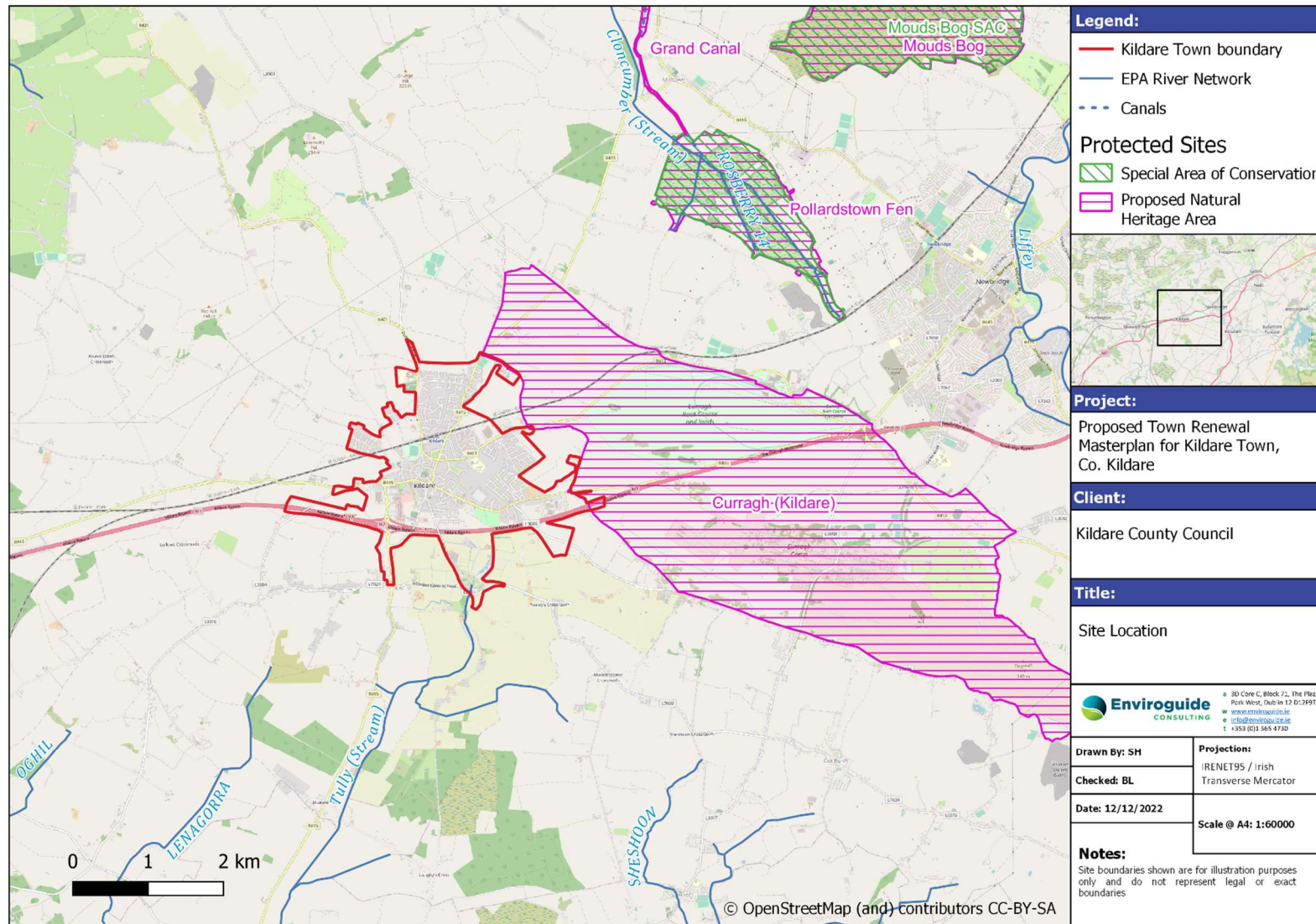


FIGURE 2. SITE LOCATION.



## 3.2.2 Kildare Town Renewal Masterplan

### 3.2.2.1 Background

Under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme launched in 2016, Kildare County Council's in-house team was successful in securing funding from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. As part of the implementation process of this project, KCC are required to complete the following steps:

- **Step 1:** Conduct a town 'Health Check' to assess the vitality and viability of the town centre;
- **Step 2:** Establish a Town Renewal Masterplan Committee with the involvement of the Local Authority, Local Business representatives, residents and the wider community;
- **Step 3:** Prepare a Town Renewal Masterplan on the basis of the results of the Health Check, setting out in detail the measures to be taken to support the renewal and revitalization of the town; and
- **Step 4:** Implement the Town Renewal Masterplan.

The TRMP includes a masterplan and an implementation strategy for the town with several projects designed and ready to be developed to Part 8 approval stage. Identification of key 'delivery projects' in the town were informed by the 'Health Check' and 'Urban Design Analysis' as well as an extensive consultation process ranging from public events through to discussions / workshops with the Town Committee and in-house KCC project team. These delivery projects are described in the Proposed Masterplan document

During the Urban Design Analysis and Public Consultation process the study area focused on the wider Kildare Town, not just the town centre itself. This study area has been continued into the development of delivery projects whereby sites and areas have been identified across the town for further consideration. The projects are aligned with the Council's vision, and work with Kildare's current planning policy. These also respond to public consultation held upon the completion of the Urban Design Analysis.

The Delivery Plan identifies discrete projects that are realistic and achievable that will change perceptions and create confidence. Some projects relate to major transformative sites that already have a clear trajectory but provide additional focus with the aim of accelerating delivery, while others suggest the development of supporting development briefs or strategy to enable investment and development.

Others suggest direct intervention by the council, or by public/private partnership vehicles. There are also a range of 'early wins' and catalytic temporary projects to help ignite interest and change perceptions which could establish discussion for further enhancement as part of a longer term strategy.

This report is prepared as part of Step 3, prior to implementation of the Proposed Masterplan. The implementation step will involve bringing the identified delivery projects forward to design and planning stages for Part 8 applications. Each of these applications will be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments, including the AA process.

### **3.2.2.2 Delivery Projects**

It is recognised that the delivery of comprehensive projects such as those detailed within the Proposed Masterplan is reliant upon the availability of funding which is likely to be limited or spread over time. Nonetheless, the strategies contained within the Proposed Masterplan document could be used as the basis for further funding bids such as the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF).

The following sections describe the delivery projects included in the Proposed Masterplan (Figure 3). A Project Delivery Plan has also been provided in the Proposed Masterplan, showing phasing, comments about inter-relationships between the delivery projects, and importance to town growth (Figure 4).

#### **Market Square and Environs**

##### a) Market Square Public Realm Improvements

Improvements to the Market Square to create a pedestrian friendly experience, celebrating the heritage both in and around the square as part of a renewed more usable town square with a rebalancing of pedestrian and car movement. This will enhance the capacity for usage of the town square, improving its cultural offer and creating a significant improvement for town centre living. This acts as a trigger for further projects in and around the square which build on and are informed by this proposal.

##### b) Nugent Street Car Park Upgrade

Public realm improvements in Nugent Street car park aim to improve navigability to Market Square and increase perception of safety through improved lighting signage and landscaping. A minor lane connects the public car park to the north of the Market Square which also interconnects to Nugent Street. Activation of this route for more frequent usage form an important development as part of this area's renewal.

##### c) Old Burgage Plots Development

A proposal for the public realm that seeks to utilise the backlands site of the former burgage plots. The initial public realm proposal leverages the loss of parking from Market Square while creating a new landscaped pedestrian route from Bride Street to Market Square. In the longer term, the site could be developed for cultural/commercial uses which reinterpret the original burgage plots.

##### d) Streetscape Regeneration

A strategy that investigates the potentials for shopfronts to be reconsidered to meet and adapt to the regulations of an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) including Market Square, Nugent Street, Claregate Street and Shraud Street.

#### **Cycle & Pedestrian Network Study**

Despite the fact that Kildare Town is a walkable town it currently offers a poor pedestrian experience and little or no cycling infrastructure. There are no cycle lanes in place despite the vision of the Government's National Cycle Policy Framework 2009-2020, which formed part of their policy document '2009- 2020 Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future'.

In order to direct and prioritise investment in cycle infrastructure, it will be deemed necessary to develop a Cycle Network Study, to be undertaken by KCC. The Kildare Cycle Network Study will be prepared in accordance with Steps 1 – 5 of the National Cycle Manual's Seven Steps to Planning a Cycle Network, which are shown in bold below:

**Step 1: Inventory of Existing Cycling Regime**

**Step 2: Understanding Trip Demand and the Potential for Cycling Trips**

**Step 3: Trip Assignment to the Network**

**Step 4: Trip Forecast**

**Step 5: Urban and Transport Planning**

Step 6: Prioritising Improvements

Step 7: Programme, Consultation, Budgets

The provision of a bike hire scheme to connect Kildare Town Train station - Market Square - Cherry Avenue (when completed) and to historic sites should be investigated as part of this study.

**Public Realm Enhancements**

a) Kildare Town Gateways

A public realm proposal which seeks to signify and recognise the old town gateways through a series of signifiers and moments integrated within the streetscape which recognise an important piece of Kildare Towns history and development. Areas included cover Bride Street, Claregate Street, Fire Castle Lane, Nugent Street, Dublin Street and Silken Thomas Accommodation.

b) Kildare Town Laneways Strategy

A public realm proposal which seeks to signify and recognise the old town gateways through a series of signifiers and moments integrated within the streetscape which recognise an important piece of Kildare Towns history and development. Areas included cover Chapel Hill, Fire Castle Lane, Bang-up Lane, Market Square - Nugent St Passage, Market Square - Water Tower Lane, Malones Lane and Heffernans Lane.

A common design strategy in tandem with the overall enhancement of the ACA would create an overall coherence to the legibility of the ACA.

c) CMWS Hall Entry

A project seeking to signify the entry into Kildare through a public art commission on the face of the Catholic Men and Women's Society (CMWS) hall. This face is the current first sight for visitors from KVOC / National Stud/Japanese Gardens and St Brigids Well.

d) Kildare Town Wayfinding

A town wayfinding project to create a common strategy for branding and public art to identify routes and locations of significant town offerings while being integrated into public realm rather than creating town clutter.

**Kildare Town Train Station**

e) Iarnoid Eireann Vacant Site Development



A public realm strategy to investigate the potential to open up the site as parking and enable an access to the train station from the North of the tracks from the (West Dunmurray) Road and East (Rathbride Road). This could be of particular benefit with the proposed future development of the South Green Area.

The site also has future development opportunities being located at an important location in close proximity to the train station. Potential investment and tenancy could be sought after initial improvements.

f) **Train Station Forecourt & Fairgreen Road Improvements**

A public realm improvements strategy to enhance the train station forecourt with a formalised parking strategy and animation of the edge condition between the Fair Green Road and station grounds.

### **Kildare Village link and Schools Consolidation**

The area is currently occupied by a single storey dwelling and garages. The site is in close proximity to Kildare Village Outlet (KVO) to the West and is a 2-minute walk from Kildare Market Square. To the East the site benefits from frontage to what was historically the towns Fairgreen, an area with a lot of vehicular access and in which now stands the community centre but has the potential to be regenerated. On the opposite side of the old Fairgreen is St Brigids Parish Church and carpark occupying what is known as St Brigids Square.

A pedestrian link from the Church to the KVO would improve the flow of pedestrian footfall to the area together with the old Fairgreen site these areas could greatly benefit from being regenerated as part of the improved link between KVO and the town centre.

The North perimeter of the site is bound by St Brigids Primary school and playing yards which currently run along the west boundary of the site to which the pedestrian link is proposed. The southern boundary is shared with another single dormer dwelling with garage.

### **Old Town Courthouse & Water Tower Site Improvements**

a) Old Town Courthouse Renovation

Renovation and restoration of the old courthouse as a community building to enhance a building of significant identity and heritage value. This study will propose potential uses and tenants for the building while also proposing improvement to its surrounding lands increasing the prominence of a significant town block.

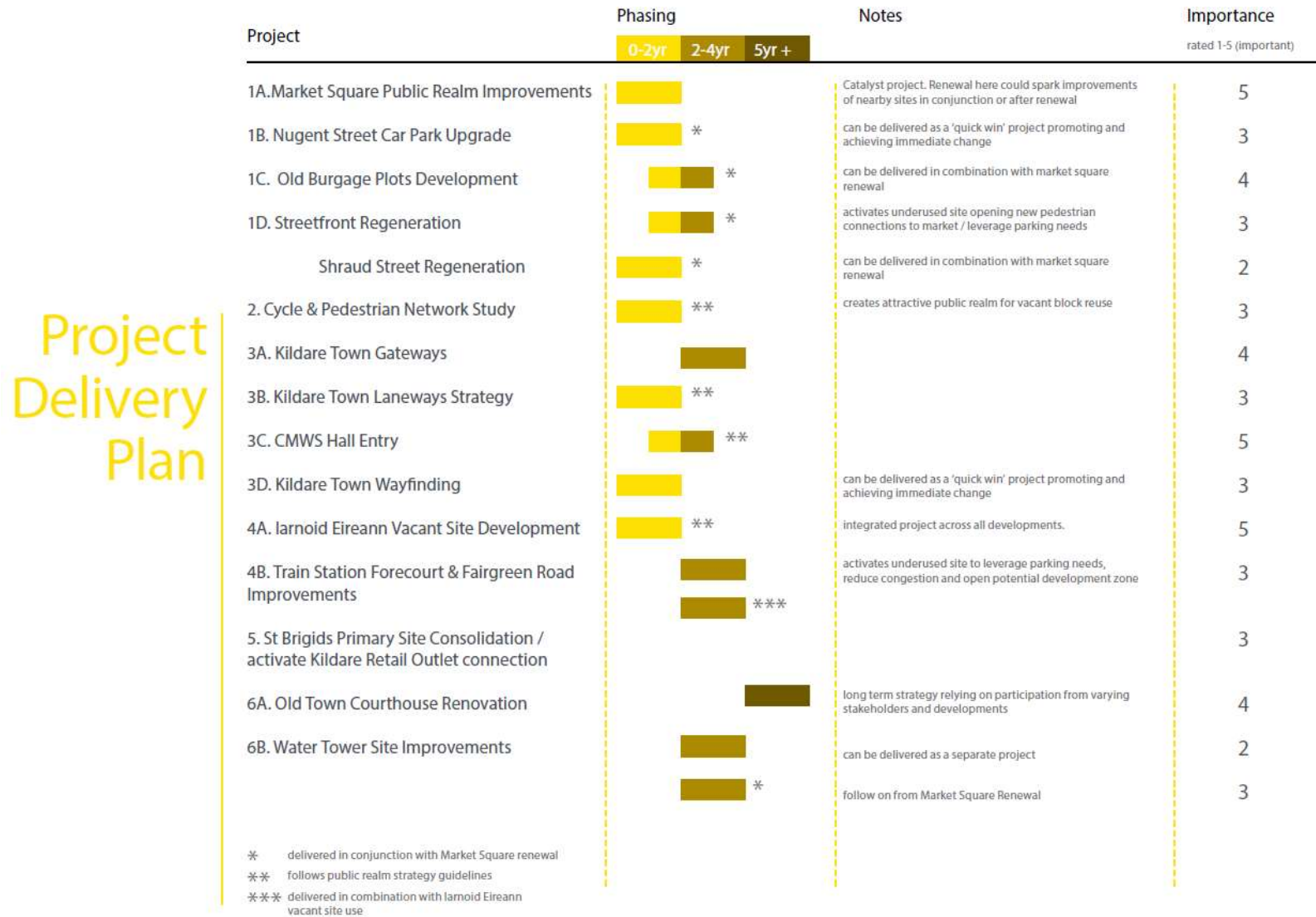
b) Water Tower Site Improvements

The free-standing cast-concrete water tower was constructed in the latter half of the 20th Century within the bawn of Kildare Castle. The tower has a polygonal plan and reflects the challenges which have historically faced Kildare Town in terms of providing a water supply. It is of technical and engineering interest and adds to the streetscape of Nugent Street.

The site can offer a point of interest, at height, along the laneways linking Market Square to St. Brigids Cathedral. The water tower could be up-lit as a memory of Kildare's industrial heritage. There is potential for the base to be converted for interpretive use to support the tourist office and overlook a new public space and cathedral beyond.



FIGURE 3. PROPOSED DELIVERY PROJECTS FOR KILDARE TOWN (SOURCE: KILDARE TRMP (METROPOLITAN WORKSHOP, 2022))



**FIGURE 4. PROJECT DELIVERY PLAN FOR DELIVERY PROJECTS INCLUDED IN THE PROPOSED MASTERPLAN (SOURCE: KILDARE TRMP (METROPOLITAN WORKSHOP, 2022))**



### 3.3 Existing Environment

#### 3.3.1 Hydrology

The Site has been mapped by the EPA to be within the Barrow Water Framework Directive (WFD) Catchment (ID: 14), the Barrow\_SC\_060 Sub-Catchment (Sub-catchment ID: 14\_18) and the TULLY STREAM\_010 WFD River Sub Basin (European Code: IE\_SE\_14T020200) (EPA 2022).

The Tully Stream (WFD ID: TULLY STREAM\_010) flows from the southeast corner of Kildare Town in a southerly direction to ultimately join the Finnelly River approx. 12 river km downstream, where it also becomes part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. The Tully Stream course from Kildare Town to Nurney (approx. 7 river km downstream) has been assigned a *Poor* ecological status based on monitoring, and it is projected to be *At risk* of not achieving its WFD objectives (EPA, 2022).

No other open watercourses have been mapped within 1km of the Proposed Masterplan.

#### 3.3.2 Geology and Hydrogeology

The Site is situated on the Curragh Gravels West (IE\_SE\_G\_133) groundwater body. The WFD status of this GWB is *Good* and is projected to be *Not At Risk* of not achieving its WFD objectives (EPA 2022). Two bedrock aquifer types split the town: the northwest half is underlain by '*Locally Important Aquifer - Bedrock which is Moderately Productive only in Local Zones*', while the southeast half is underlain by '*Regionally Important Aquifer - Karstified (diffuse)*'. The groundwater rock units underlying the aquifer types and following the same split are classified as *Dinantian Lower Impure Limestones* and *Dinantian Lower Impure Limestones* respectively. The level of vulnerability to groundwater contamination from human activities is *High* across the town (GSI, 2022).

The majority of the town is underlain by *Made* ground, while the east, south and west margins are of '*Limestone sands and gravels (Carboniferous)*' (EPA 2022). The northern areas are of '*Limestone till (Carboniferous)*' subsoils, and this type is also found at the southern ends of the town along Tully Road. The southwest corner contains an area underlain by '*Undifferentiated Lake sediments*', and a small area of '*Undifferentiated Alluvium*' occurs at the just north of the Kildare Bypass (M7). In the northwest corner a small area of '*Sandstone till (Lower Paleozoic/Devonian)*' occurs.

### 3.4 Identification of Relevant European Sites

The following sections detail the results of the S-P-R method applied as outlined in section 2.5.

#### 3.4.1 Potential Sources of Effects

The Proposed Masterplan will act as a non-statutory framework for the enhancement and rejuvenation of Kildare Town and includes a variety of delivery projects envisioned to be put forward as Part 8 applications and delivered within the next 1-4 years. The Proposed Masterplan itself does not propose any direct works, and where delivery projects have identified a need for works (e.g., road improvements), these will be subject to the appropriate environmental assessments as part of the planning applications process, following the policies

set out in the Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) 2017-2023 and the new KCDP 2023-2029 for Development Standards.

The main focus of the delivery projects is on enhancing the public spaces for pedestrians and cyclists, including both locals and visitors alike. Thus, the following elements of the Proposed Masterplan were considered for their potential to cause likely significant effects on European sites:

- Increased human presence due to promoting visitors;
- Increased traffic due to improved permeability for both cars and cyclists;
- Increased lighting / noise due to improved public realm safety; and
- Changes to land-use within the Proposed Masterplan Site.

Note that there are no works proposed as part of the Proposed Masterplan which would lead to impacts either on groundwater or surface water quality through emissions or the loss of fine sediments or silts.

### **3.4.2 Potential Pathways to European Sites**

For the above listed potential sources of effects to have the potential to cause likely significant effects on any European site, a pathway between the source of potential effects (i.e., the Site of the Proposed Masterplan) and the receptor is required. The potential for pathways between European sites and the Proposed Masterplan Site was assessed on a case-by-case basis using the S-P-R framework (OPR, 2021). Pathways considered included:

- a. Direct pathways e.g., proximity/location within a European site, water bodies, air (for both air emissions and noise impacts).
- b. Indirect pathways e.g., disruption to migratory paths, 'Sightlines' where noisy or intrusive activities may result in disturbance to shy species.

Potential impact pathways are discussed in the following sections in the context of the potential impact sources as identified in section 3.4.1.

#### **3.4.2.1 Direct Pathways**

##### **Hydrological pathways**

The Tully Stream flows from the southeast corner of Kildare Town in a southerly direction to ultimately join the Finney River approx. 12 river km downstream, where it also becomes part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162).

Any potential pollutants that may enter the Tully Stream at the Proposed Masterplan Site would become diluted to indiscernible levels within the receiving freshwater environment of the river, prior to reaching the European sites. Equally, the Proposed Masterplan does not put forward any planning applications which could lead to emissions into any surface water systems, either directly or via the surface water sewer network.

No other European sites are linked to the Site via hydrological means.

##### **Hydrogeological pathways**

During groundworks and other construction activities that may result from developments made under the Proposed Masterplan, the ground will be exposed and any potential accidental

discharges to ground could potentially migrate vertically downward to the underlying bedrock aquifer and laterally within the aquifer to downgradient European sites or watercourses, such as the Tully Stream. The nearest European site that could potentially be linked to the Proposed Masterplan via groundwater flows is the Pollardstown Fen SAC (000396), located approx. 2.9 km northeast of the Site. However, this pathway is considered to be insignificant due to the intervening distance and the nature of the Proposed Masterplan. Similarly, the combined distance via groundwater and the Tully Stream to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC deems that pathway insignificant. Furthermore, the Proposed Masterplan does not put forward any planning applications which could lead to emissions into the ground.

### Air and land pathways

No air and land pathways from the Proposed Masterplan to any European sites were identified, as the distance between the Site and the nearest European site (i.e., Pollardstown Fen SAC, approx. 2.9 km linear distance) is deemed sufficient to exclude any potential for impacts from increases in noise, lighting and/or dust or other airborne pollutants that could result from increases in traffic.

#### 3.4.2.2 Indirect Pathways

No indirect pathways (e.g., disruptions to migratory paths) were identified.

#### 3.4.3 Relevant European Sites

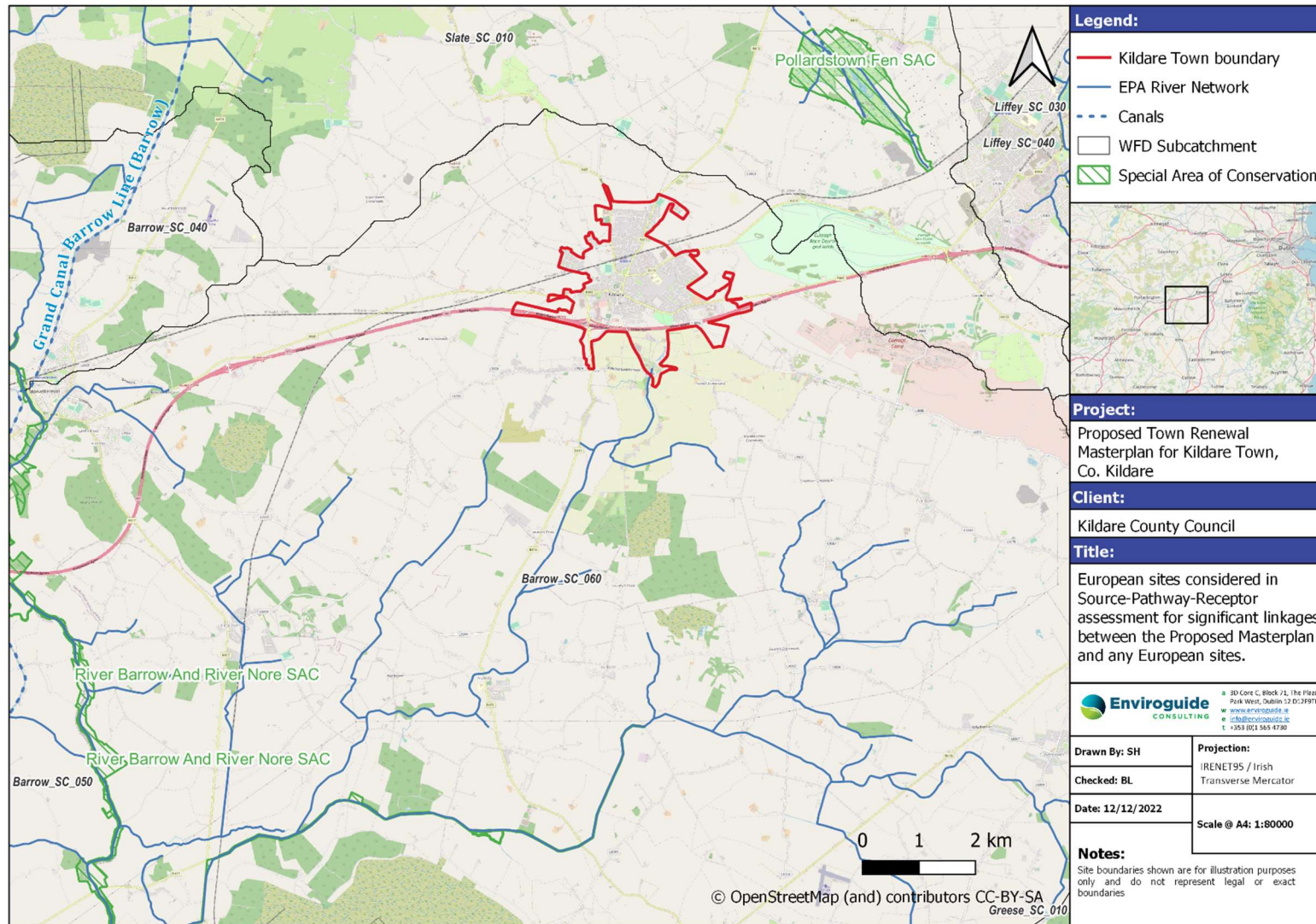
A European site will only be at risk from likely significant effects where a notable S-P-R link exists between the Proposed Masterplan Site and the European site. The preceding steps identified a potential S-P-R link to two European sites, however, these were not considered significant and therefore no further assessment is required. The European sites considered under the various potential pathways are listed in Table 1 and shown in Figure 5.

**TABLE 1. EUROPEAN SITES CONSIDERED WITH THE SOURCE-PATHWAY-RECEPTOR (S-P-R) METHOD TO ESTABLISH NOTABLE LINKS BETWEEN THE SOURCES OF AFFECTS ARISING FROM THE PROPOSED MASTERPLAN, AND ANY RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES. THOSE SITES WITH NOTABLE S-P-R LINKS ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN GREEN (IF ANY).**

European site	QIs / SCIs	Potential Pathways
River Barrow And River Nore SAC (002162)	<b>Habitats</b> 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1170 Reefs 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> ) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows ( <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> ) 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculum fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachion</i> vegetation 4030 European dry heaths 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels	Hydrological (insignificant) via the Figile River
Linear Distance to Proposed Masterplan: approx. 22 km		

European site	QIs / SCIs	Potential Pathways
	<p>7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)*            91A0 Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles            91E0 Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)*</p> <p><b>Species</b>            1096 Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)            1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)            1103 Twaite Shad (<i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>)            1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)            1095 Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)            1106 Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)            1092 White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)            1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>)            1990 Nore Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i>)            1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)            1421 Killarney Fern (<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>)</p>	
<p>Pollardstown Fen SAC (000396)</p> <p>Linear Distance to Proposed Masterplan: approx. 2.9 km</p>	<p><b>Habitats</b>            7210 Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i>*            7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)*            7230 Alkaline fens</p> <p><b>Species</b>            1013 Geyer's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo geyeri</i>)            1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)            1014 Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo angustior</i>)</p>	<p>Air and land (insignificant) due to distance.</p>





**FIGURE 5. EUROPEAN SITES CONSIDERED IN S-P-R ASSESSMENT TO IDENTIFY RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES WITH NOTABLE LINKAGES TO PROPOSED MASTERPLAN.**



### 3.5 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

As the preceding sections show, no S-P-R links of note were identified. As such there will be no risk of significant effects on any European sites or on their qualifying interests as a result of the Proposed Masterplan alone. Therefore, no further assessment to that effect is required.

#### 3.5.1 Potential for In-combination Effects

Although the Proposed Masterplan is not considered to have the capacity to cause significant effects on any European sites alone, it is important to consider the potential for cumulative effects with other plans and/or projects. The following sections outline existing granted or pending planning permissions in the vicinity of the Proposed Masterplan and assess the potential for adverse in-combination effects on any European sites.

##### 3.5.1.1 Existing Granted or Pending Planning Permissions

A search of planning applications located within the Proposed Masterplan area and within a 1 km radius of the Site was undertaken using online planning resources such as the National Planning Application Database (NPAD) (MyPlan.ie), KCCs Planning Applications Map Viewer (<http://webgeo.kildarecoco.ie/planningenquiry>), and the An Bord Pleanála database (pleanala.ie).

Any planning applications listed as granted or decision pending from within the last five years were assessed for their potential to act in-combination with the Proposed Masterplan and cause likely significant effects on the relevant European sites. Long-term developments granted outside of this time period were also considered where applicable.

The larger key projects within the Kildare Town area are listed below.

- **Kildare Village Outlet Centre:** Planning permission was recently granted for an extension to KVOC of c6,000 sqm. Key conditions was that the development should facilitate a future link to Academy Street via the adjoining lands.
- **Cherry Avenue Park, Dublin Road:** Following a feasibility study and design process, a Part 8 was sanctioned for a town park, known at Cherry Avenue Town Park covering over 5ha. On the Dublin Road. A number of key elements have been proposed and which formed part of the Part 8 approval. They are as follows:
  - Field Day Space – predominantly green open space for pop-up community events;
  - Adventure & Youth Space – active play, experimental and user-generated activities;
  - Grassroots / DIY Space – community gardens, local enterprise, eco-food, learning & entrepreneurship;
  - Ecological & Horticulture Space – integrated destination with environmental learning, horticulture, forestry and native plants; and
  - Sculpture Parkland – drawing on heritage / environment themes, open green space with walking infrastructure.
- **Magee Barracks Site:** The regeneration of Magee Barracks (20.1 ha) for residential purposes is a key objective of the LAP. Although planning permission was recently refused for a strategic housing development consisting of 264 units as part of Phase 1 (ABP Ref: PL09 .301371) on grounds of inadequate density, it is an objective of the

LAP to facilitate development on the lands which over all of the lands could accommodate approx. 500 units.

- **South Green Framework:** KCC and a range of stakeholders (Landowners in South Green, Residents in South Green, CIE) in the area prepared a Framework Plan for the South Green area. The purpose of this non-statutory Framework Plan is to supplement planning guidance established within the Kildare County Development Plan (KCDP) 2017-2023 and the Kildare Local Area Plan 2012-2018, with regard to the South Green area of Kildare Town. The central aim of this Plan is to achieve an integrated and holistic approach to the development of the South Green lands in tandem with the developer of the necessary physical and social infrastructure. The lands South Green is expected to deliver sustainable expansion and growth for Kildare Town over the next 15 - 20 years.
- **Medieval Park:** A proposal is being developed by the parks department in KCC with Mary O Connor and it will be developed to detail stage in the coming months. Map evidence indicates that the site, while clear during the eighteenth Century, was the site of a terrace of houses in the nineteenth Century. Should archaeological remains of a previous structure be identified, consideration could be given to resolving part of the site and presenting it to the public. This would make an excellent new amenity in the town, in a location that is currently overgrown.

The above projects are not anticipated to result in significant in-combination effects with the Proposed Masterplan on any European sites. Furthermore, any individual planning applications arising as a result of the Proposed Masterplan will be subject to the appropriate consideration of in-combination effects with any current or future plans / projects as per the Development Standards set out in the KCDP 2017-2023 and the new KCDP 2023-2029.

### 3.5.1.2 *Relevant Policies and Plans*

The following policies and plans were reviewed and considered for possible in-combination effects with the Proposed Masterplan:

- KCDP 2017-2023.
- KCDP 2023-2029.

Both County Development Plans have directly addressed the protection of European sites through specific policies and objectives. Additionally, the Natura Impact Report for the Kildare CDP Draft 2023-2029 concludes that *“the Plan itself, subject to it securing the mitigation detailed in this report, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.”* Therefore, **no in-combination effects are expected** with the relevant policies and plans.

## 4 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING CONCLUSION

The Proposed Town Renewal Masterplan for Kildare Town, Co. Kildare, has been assessed taking into account:

- The nature, size and location of the proposed works and possible impacts arising from the construction works.
- The QIs and conservation objectives of the European sites.
- The potential for in-combination effects arising from other plans and projects.

In conclusion, upon the examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information and applying the precautionary principle, it is concluded by the authors of this report that, on the basis of objective information; the possibility **may be excluded** that the Proposed Masterplan will have a significant effect on any European sites.

As such, no further assessment is required. In carrying out this AA screening, mitigation measures have not been taken into account. Standard best practice construction measures which could have the effect of mitigating any effects on any European sites have similarly not been taken into account.

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