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## **HABITATS DIRECTIVE SCREENING OF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT TAOBH TIRE, MANORHAMILTON, CO LEITRIM**

IN LINE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE  
EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE



**Leitrim County Council**  
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21 Church View  
Cavan*

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 BACKGROUND**

Article 6 of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) requires that all plans and projects be screened for potential impacts on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The aim of this screening process is to establish whether or not a full Appropriate Assessment of the proposed plan or project is necessary.

A comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts of a proposed development at Taobh Tire, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim on designated European sites was carried out in March 2020 by Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM of Whitehill Environmental. This assessment allowed areas of potential ecological value and potential ecological constraints associated with the proposed development to be identified and it also enabled potential ecological impacts associated with the proposed development to be assessed and mitigated for.

The location of the proposed development is within 15km of sites designated under European Law. As such and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) regarding Appropriate Assessment, this screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment was carried out in order to identify whether any significant impacts on designated sites are likely. This exercise will also determine the appropriateness of the proposed project, in the context of the conservation status of the designated sites.

## **1.2 REGULATORY CONTEXT**

### **RELEVANT LEGISLATION**

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC) implies that particular protection is given to sites (Special Protection Areas) which support certain bird species listed in Annex I of the Directive and that surveys of development sites should consider the status of such species.

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) gives protection to sites (Special Areas of Conservation) which support particular habitats and species listed in annexes to this directive. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive call for the undertaking of an Appropriate Assessment for plans and projects likely to have an effect on designated sites. This is explained in greater detail in the following section.

The Wildlife Act 1976 (and its amendment of 2000) provides protection to most wild birds and animals. Interference with such species can only occur under licence. Under the act it is an offence to "wilfully interfere with or destroy the breeding place or resting place of any protected wild animal". The basic designation for wildlife is the Natural Heritage Area

(NHA). This is an area considered important for the habitats present or which holds species of plants and animals whose habitat needs protection. Under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000) NHAs are legally protected from damage. NHAs are not part of the Natura 2000 network and so the Appropriate Assessment process does not apply to them.

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC), which came into force in December 2000, establishes a framework for community action in the field of water policy. The WFD was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 722 of 2003). The WFD rationalises and updates existing legislation and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBDs). RBDs are essentially administrative areas for coordinated water management and are comprised of multiple river basins (or catchments), with cross-border basins (i.e. those covering the territory of more than one Member State) assigned to an international RBD. The aim of the WFD is to ensure that waters achieve at least good status by 2021 and that status doesn't deteriorate in any waters.

#### **APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT AND THE HABITATS DIRECTIVE**

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora – the 'Habitats Directive' - provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of European Community interest, at a favourable conservation status. Articles 3 - 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as *Natura 2000*. *Natura 2000* sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision-making tests for plans or projects affecting *Natura 2000* sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"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.”

Article 6(4) deals with the steps that should be taken when it is determined, as a result of appropriate assessment, that a plan/project will adversely affect a European site. Issues dealing with alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures need to be addressed in this case.

Article 6(4) states:

“If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.”

### **THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

The aim of Appropriate Assessment is to assess the implications of a proposal in respect of a site’s conservation objectives.

Appropriate Assessment is an assessment of the potential effects of a proposed plan - ‘in combination’ with other plans and projects - on one or more European sites. The ‘Appropriate Assessment’ itself is a statement which must be made by the competent authority which says whether the plan affects the integrity of a European site. The actual process of determining whether or not the plan will affect the site is also commonly referred to as ‘Appropriate Assessment’.

If adverse impacts on the site cannot be avoided, then mitigation measures should be applied during the Appropriate Assessment process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site remain (European Commission, 2000, 2001).

The conclusions of the appropriate assessment report should enable the competent authority to ascertain whether the proposal would adversely affect the integrity of the site (European Commission, 2000, 2001).

Under the terms of the directive (European Commission, 2000, 2001), consent can only be granted for a project if, as a result of the appropriate assessment either (a) it is concluded that the integrity of the site will not be adversely affected, or (b) where an adverse effect is anticipated, there is shown to be an absence of alternative solutions, and there exists imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project should go ahead.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

This Statement of Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) has been prepared with reference to the following:

- European Commission (2000). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.
- 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.
- European Commission (2006). Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice.
- European Commission (2007). Clarification of the Concepts of: Alternative Solution, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.
- The Guidelines issued by Leitrim County Council (Part C – Appropriate Assessment under Articles 6(3) of the Habitat's Directive).

The EC Guidance sets out a number of principles as to how to approach decision making during the process. The primary one is 'the precautionary principle' which requires that the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 should prevail where there is uncertainty.

When considering the precautionary principle, the emphasis for assessment should be on objectively demonstrating with supporting evidence that:

- There will be no significant effects on a Natura 2000 site;
- There will be no adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site;
- There is an absence of alternatives to the project or plan that is likely to have an adverse effect to the integrity of a Natura 2000 site; and
- There are compensation measures that maintain or enhance the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

This translates into a four stage process to assess the impacts, on a designated site or species, of a policy or proposal.

The EC Guidance states that "each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required". Consequently, the Council may not need to proceed through all four stages in undertaking the Appropriate Assessment.

The four stage process is:

**Stage 1: Screening** – The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether or not these impacts are likely to be significant;

**Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment** – The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts;

**Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions** – The process which examines alternative ways of achieving objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site;

**Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain** – An assessment of the compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

In complying with the obligations set out in Articles 6(3) and following the guidelines described above, this screening statement has been structured as a stage by stage approach as follows:

- Description of the proposed project;
- Identification of the Natura 2000 sites close to the proposed development;
- Identification and description of any individual and cumulative impacts on the Natura 2000 sites likely to result from the project;
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above on site integrity. Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects;
- Screening statement with conclusions.



## **2.2 STATEMENT OF COMPETENCY**

This report was carried out by Noreen McLoughlin. Noreen is the owner and main ecologist at Whitehill Environmental. Noreen holds a BA (Hons) in Natural Science (Mod) Zoology and an MSc in freshwater ecology (TCD, Dublin). She has been a full member of the CIEEM (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management) for over 14 years.

## **2.3 DESK STUDIES**

Information on the site and the area of the proposed development was studied prior to the completion of this statement. The following data sources were accessed in order to complete a thorough examination of potential impacts:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service - aerial photographs and maps of designated sites, information on habitats and species within these sites and information on protected plant or animal species; conservation objectives, site synopses and standard data forms for relevant designated sites.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- Information pertaining to water quality, geology and licensed facilities within the area;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) – Information pertaining to protected plant and animal species within the study area;
- WGG Architects – Information regarding the proposed development including site plans and specifications;
- Leitrim County Council – Information of other plans and projects in the area.

## **2.4 FIELD STUDIES**

A visit to the site of the proposed application at Manorhamilton was conducted on February 25<sup>th</sup>2020, when field notes, species lists and photographs were taken. Habitats within the application site were classified in accordance to Level 3 of *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland* (Fossit, 2000). Particular attention was paid to invasive plant species within the application site.

### 3 SCREENING

#### 3.1 DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Leitrim County Council have indicated their intention to shortly apply for planning permission for a proposed residential development in Taobh Tire, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim. Permission will be sought under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. The proposed development will consist of:

- *The construction of a residential housing estate (5 units) on a greenfield site to include provision of access roads and footpaths, along with connection to existing services;*
- *All associated site works.*

An extract from the planning drawings submitted is shown in Figure 1.

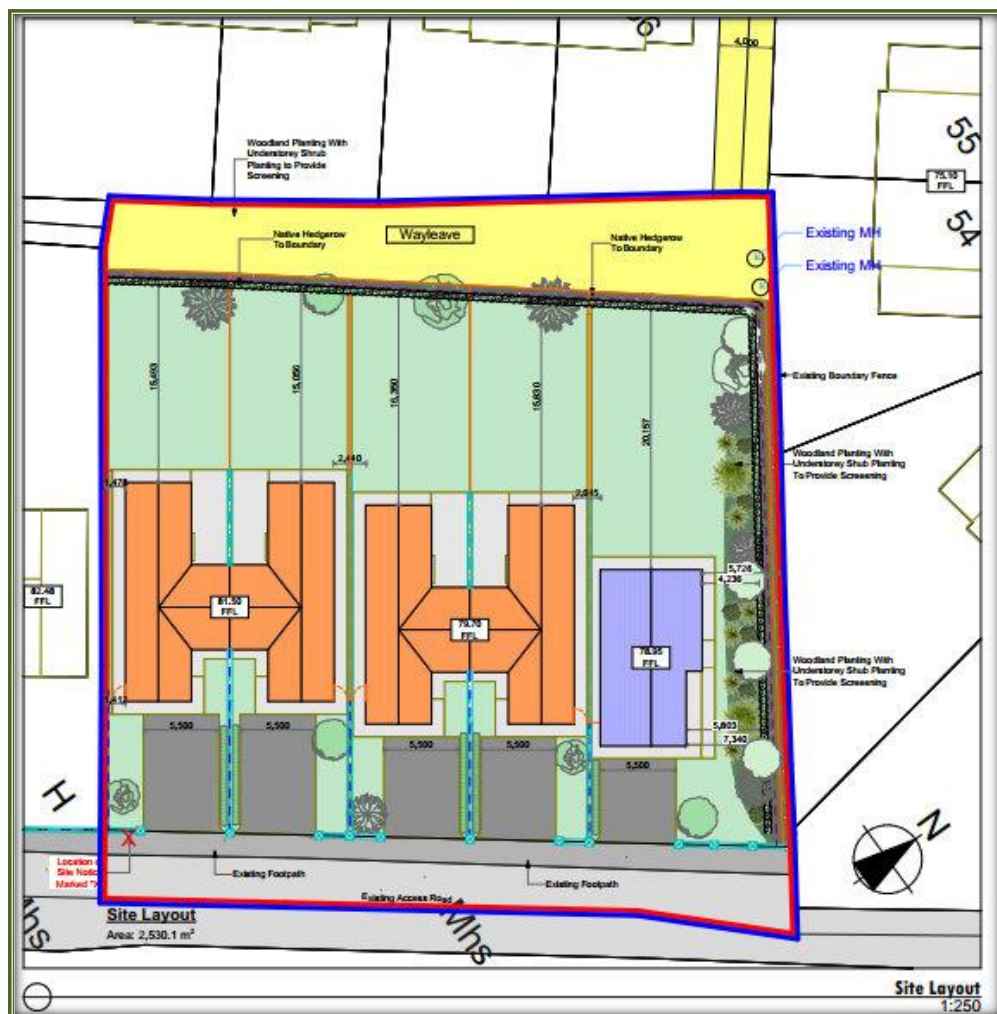


Figure 1 – Extract from Planning Drawings (as Prepared by WGG Architects)

### Wastewater Treatment

Waste water from the development will be directed to the Manorhamilton Waste Water Treatment works, which is fully licensed by the EPA (Reg No. D0150-01). The Licence Application for this WWTP was accompanied by an AA report (including mitigation).

### Surface Water Treatment

Surface water from the site will be directed into the local sewer network.

### 3.2 SITE LOCATION AND SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

The application site is 0.2 hectares in area and it is located on the eastern outskirts of Manorhamilton town, approximately 430m east of the town centre. Access to the site will be via the creation of an entrance off Hospital Road, which is a cul-de-sac which services the residential estate of Taobh Tire. The site is located in GZT Zone R3 under the Leitrim County Development Plan 2015 – 2021, i.e., residential, mixed residential and other uses.

The land-use surrounding the site is mixed. The site is surrounded to the north, west and east by the suburban residential estates of Manorhamilton. To the immediate south of the site, and further beyond the urban areas of Manorhamilton, agriculture is the dominant land use and improved agricultural grasslands and neutral / wet grasslands are the dominant habitats. Other habitats close to and surrounding the site include hedgerows, treelines, amenity grasslands and watercourses. Site location maps are shown in Figures 2 and 3, whilst an aerial photograph of the site and its surrounding habitats is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 2 – Site Location Map (Pinned)

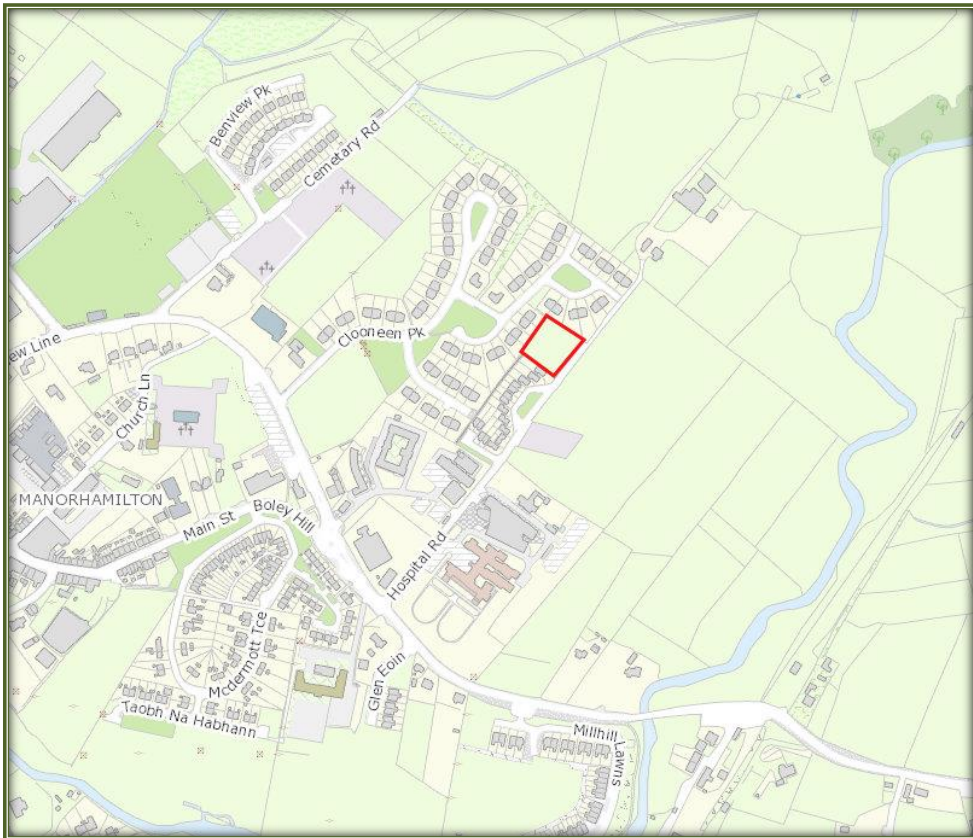


Figure 3 – Site Location Map (Site Outlined in Red)

### HABITATS AND SPECIES

The site is relatively square in shape, and it is characterised by steep embankments along the northern and eastern perimeters which slope down to the sites adjacent to it.

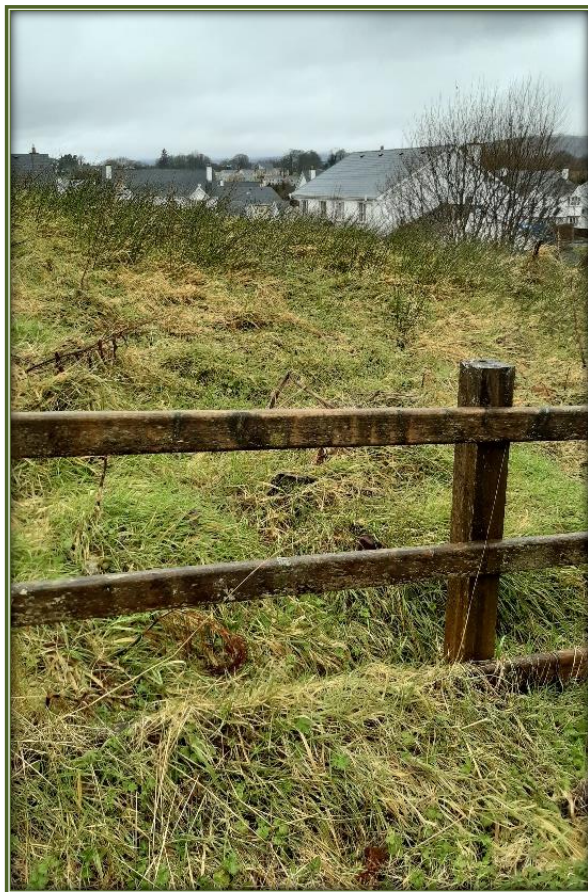
There are a limited range of habitats within the application site. The dominant habitat is an unmanaged grassland habitat, which is not managed by cutting, fertilization or grazing. It is akin to a Dry Meadows and Grassy Verge Habitat (GS2). The main species recorded included a variety of grassland species including meadow grasses *Poa* sp., timothy grass *Phleum pratense* and cock's-foot grass *Dactylis glomerata* are common. Broad-leaved herbs were also common and they included broadleaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, creeping buttercup *Rumex obtusifolius* and horsetails *Equisetum* sp.

Photos depicting the habitats on the site are seen in the Plates below.





**Plate 1 – Grassland Habitats**



**Plate 2- Photo of the Site from the Road**

An examination of the website of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, revealed that there are records for the presence of three protected mammal species from within the relevant 1km square (G8939) of this proposed development. These species include:

- Red squirrel *Sciurus vulgaris*;
- Pine martin *Martes martes*
- Otter *Lutra lutra*

All these species are protected under the Irish Wildlife Acts, whilst in addition, the otter is a listed species in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. A custom polygon for the site revealed that these records do not pertain to from within the application itself and no evidence of the use of the site by these mammals was observed on the day of the field survey. There are no habitats within the site suitable for use by any of these species.

#### **WATER FEATURES AND QUALITY**

The application site is located within the Sligo Bay and Drowse Hydrometric Area and Catchment, the Bonet Sub-Catchment and the Owenmore (Manorhamilton) Sub-Basin. There are no drains or streams within or adjacent to the application site. The closest watercourse to the application site is the Owenmore River and this is 315m east of the application site. This river flows south, then west until it joins to River Bonet at a point west of Manorhamilton. The River Bonet is a tributary of the River Gill and it flows into Lough Gill from the south.

The EPA have classed the ecological status of the Owenmore River at points upstream and downstream of Manorhamilton as good. The River Bonet is also of good ecological status. Under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive this is unsatisfactory and this status must be retained and it must not deteriorate.



Figure 4 – Aerial Photograph of the Site (Outlined in Red) and its Surrounding Habitats (©Google Maps)



### 3.3 NATURA 2000 SITES IDENTIFIED

In accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, a list of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development have been identified and described according to their site synopses, qualifying interests and conservation objectives. In addition, any other sites further than this, but potentially within its zone of interest were also considered. The zone of impact may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas by virtue of hydrological connectivity, atmospheric emissions, flight paths, ecological corridors etc.

There are seven Natura 2000 designated sites within 15km of the application site. These designated areas and their closest points to the proposed development site are summarised in Table 1 and a map and aerial photograph showing their locations relative to the application site are shown in Figures 5 and 6. A full description of these sites can be read on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (npws.ie).

Site Name & Code	Distance	Special Conservation Interests	Potential Impacts?
Lough Gill SAC 001976	194m east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation</li> <li>• Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i></li> <li>• <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish)</li> <li>• <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey)</li> <li>• <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey)</li> <li>• <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey)</li> <li>• <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon)</li> <li>• <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter)</li> </ul>	<i>There is no hydrological connectivity between the application site and this SAC, however due to its proximity, potential impacts will be considered further.</i>
Arroo Mountain SAC 001403	4.6km north	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></li> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Alpine and Boreal heaths</li> <li>• Blanket bogs (* if active bog)</li> <li>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</li> <li>• Calcareous and calcshist</li> </ul>	<i>Potential impacts and effects are unlikely. No pollution pathways exist and there will be no loss or disturbance of any habitats or species within this SAC.</i>

		<p>screes of the montane to alpine levels (<i>Thlaspietea rotundifolii</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</li> </ul>	
Boleybrack Mountain SAC 002032	5.3km south-east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds</li> <li>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i></li> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae)</li> <li>• Blanket bogs (* if active bog)</li> </ul>	<i>Potential impacts and effects are unlikely. No pollution pathways exist and there will be no loss or disturbance of any habitats or species within this SAC.</i>
Ben Bulbin, Gleniff And Glenade Complex SAC 000623	8.7km north-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European dry heaths</li> <li>• Alpine and Boreal heaths</li> <li>• Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation</li> <li>• Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (<i>Thlaspietea rotundifolii</i>)</li> <li>• <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands</li> <li>• Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion)</li> <li>• Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation</li> </ul>	<i>Potential impacts and effects are unlikely. No pollution pathways exist and there will be no loss or disturbance of any habitats or species within this SAC.</i>
Glenade Lough SAC 001919	8.4km north-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition – type vegetation</li> <li>• <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish)</li> <li>• <i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad)</li> </ul>	<i>Potential impacts and effects are unlikely. No pollution pathways exist and there will be no loss or disturbance of any habitats or species within this SAC.</i>
Lough Melvin SAC 000428	7.5km north	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</li> <li>• Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae)</li> <li>• <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon)</li> <li>• <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter)</li> </ul>	<i>Potential impacts and effects are unlikely. No pollution pathways exist and there will be no loss or disturbance of any habitats or species within this SAC.</i>

Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA 004187	9.8km north-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peregrine (<i>Falco peregrines</i>)</li> <li>• Chough (<i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i>)</li> </ul>	<i>Potential impacts and effects are unlikely. No pollution pathways exist and there will be no loss or disturbance of any habitats or species within this SPA.</i>
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**Table 1 – Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km of the Proposed Site**

### **LOUGH GILL SAC**

Lough Gill is a large lake, with steep limestone shores and underwater cliffs. It is fed by the River Bonet and drains into the sea via the Garvogue River, a short, wide and slow flowing river which passes through Manorhamilton town. The lake lies along the junction between old metamorphic rocks to the south and limestone to the north. The water of the lake is thus influenced by both acidic and alkaline inputs, although nearly all the basin lies over limestone. The lake is 8 km by 2-3 km and has an area of 1,400 ha. It is a deep lake, with maximum depth at 31 m. Islands are a feature of the lake. Much of the shoreline is wooded and there is also some swamp vegetation, wet grassland and scrub along the shoreline. The lake is an important salmonid and coarse fishery and is used for a range of recreational activities. The site also includes the Shanvans and Owenmore rivers.

Lough Gill is important example of a lake which appears to be naturally eutrophic. Quality is generally good although blooms of blue-green algae in recent years indicate some artificial enrichment. Significant areas of alluvial forest occur along the Garavogue River and at the mouth of the River Bonet. Old oak woodland of varying quality is well scattered along the shoreline and on some of the islands and it is an important example of this habitat for western Ireland. At least six Red Data Book plant species have been recorded from site. The site has three species of lamprey as well as crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*. The lake and its associated rivers support an important population of salmon *Salmo salar*. The otter *Lutra lutra* has a good population within the site. It is of minor importance for birds though the site has a small breeding colony of common tern *Sterna hirundo*. A wide range of rare or scarce invertebrates are known from the site, as well as several Red Data Book mammal species, including the badger *Martes martes*.

The habitats within the SAC that are adjacent to the application site include the River Bonet itself, wet grasslands and mixed broadleaved woodlands. In addition, the drains leading from the application site are also included in the SAC, at a point 20m west from the application site. An aerial photograph of the SAC habitats that are adjacent to the application site can be seen in Figure 7.

The NPWS has not yet prepared any site specific conservation objectives for Lough Gill SAC. However, in the preparation of this assessment, site specific conservation objectives of sites with similar qualifying interests were referred to. The Natura 2000 data form for the site was consulted along with the relevant sections in the latest NPWS Article 17 Report (2013).

The generic conservation objective of this site is:

*To maintain / restore the favourable conservation status of the conservation interests of this SAC/SPA*

The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range and area it covers within that range is stable or increasing and 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:

- The 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.

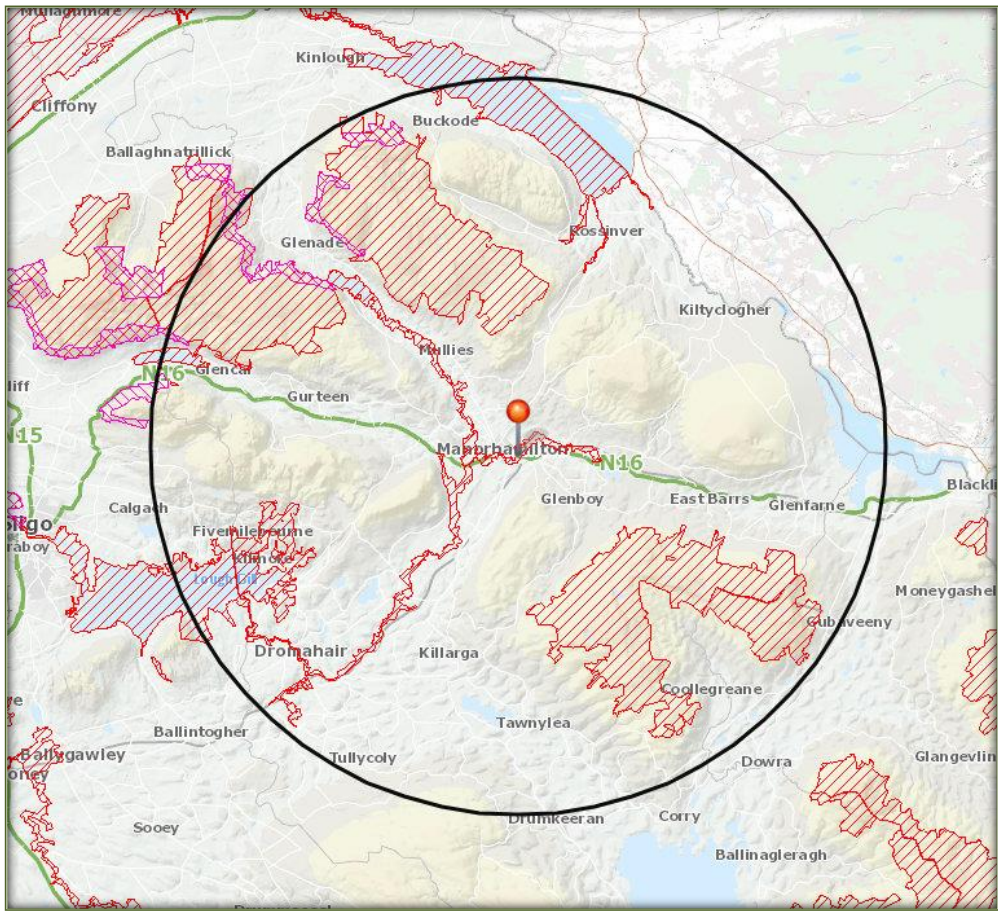


Figure 5 – The Application Site (Pinned) in relation to the Natura 2000 Sites within 15km



Figure 6 – The Application Site (Outlined in Red) in relation to Lough Gill SAC



### 3.4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The potential impacts of the proposed development on the Natura 2000 sites identified above are described below.

**Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on nearby Natura 2000 site:**

The construction and operation of the proposed development will have **no impacts** upon the integrity or the site structure of the designated sites identified. There are no individual elements of the proposed project that are likely to give rise to negative impacts on these aforementioned sites. There will be no direct, indirect or cumulative impacts upon any designated site arising from the construction or operation of the proposed development. There is a sufficient distance between the development site and all designated areas to ensure that no impacts will arise.

**Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the nearby Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:**

**Size and scale:** Given the small size and scale of the development in relation to the overall size of the designated sites identified, the likelihood of any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on these designated sites arising from the construction and operation of the proposed development is low.

**Land-take:** There will be no land-take from any designated site. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any designated site.

**Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site:** The closest designated site to the proposed development is the Lough Gill SAC and this is 194m north-east of the application site. As there is no hydrological connectivity between these two areas, this distance is sufficient to ensure that no impacts will arise.

**Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.):** No resources will be taken from any Natura 2000 site and there are no resource requirements that will impact upon any designated site.

**Emissions:** There are no drains or streams within or adjacent to the application site. Neither the construction nor the operation of the proposed development will result in any direct emissions to the Lough Gill SAC. Best practice measures will be undertaken during the development of the site to prevent run-off from the site from entering the stream.

**Excavation requirements:** Excavated material from the construction will be used on site. Any remaining will be disposed of in a responsible manner in a licensed facility away from any designated sites.

**Transportation requirements:** There will be no additional transportation requirements resulting from the proposed development and associated works that will have any impact upon the Natura 2000 sites identified.

**In-Combination / Cumulative Impacts:** The proposed application was considered in combination with other developments or proposed developments in the Manorhamilton area. A number of other developments (domestic / commercial) have been granted planning permission in the preceding five years. Any future individual application that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site will be subject to Appropriate Assessment as required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. All planning applications in Co. Leitrim that are within 15km of any designated site must be screened by the applicant for Appropriate Assessment. The proposed development will have no impacts upon any designated site when it is considered in-combination with other developments that have been properly screened for AA or where mitigation has been carried out as part of an NIS.

**Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc:** Once construction begins, it should be complete within one to two years. Operation of the site will be ongoing.

#### Describe any likely changes to the nearby Natura 2000 sites arising as a result of:

**Reduction of habitat area:** The proposed development lies outside the boundaries of the Natura 2000 sites identified in Section 3.3. There will be no reduction of designated habitat area within any SAC or SPA. There will be no impacts upon the habitat qualifying interests of the Lough Gill SAC, i.e.:

- Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation
- Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles
- Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior*

All these features are outside of the zone of influence of the development and there are no source-pathway-receptor linkages between the application site and these designated features, therefore there are no potential pollution pathways. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any SAC or SPC.

**Disturbance to key species:** There are six species listed as qualifying interests of the Lough Gill SAC, i.e., the crayfish, otter, salmon and three lamprey species. The ecological requirements of these species are described below.

- White-clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* – the crayfish occurs throughout the Gill catchment. It requires a certain level of habitat heterogeneity as well as waters with good ecological status.
- Otter *Lutra lutra* - The otter occurs throughout the Gill catchment. The presence of this species is positively correlated with good water quality and deterioration of same will lead to impacts upon this species.
- Salmon *Salmo salar* - Salmon occur throughout the Lough Gill system. The requirements of salmon depend on their life stage but clean, unpolluted water is a requirement throughout the life cycle. They are very sensitive to changes in water quality
- All lamprey species - Lampreys require clean gravels, fine sediments and free upstream migration to complete their life cycle. The main threat to these species include dredging,

sedimentation of spawning gravels and the introduction of weirs or other impediments to their migration. They are also sensitive to changes in water quality arising from diffuse or point source pollution, including eutrophication from land-spreading.

These six qualifying interests are all dependent on high water quality and pollution with hydrocarbons, eutrophication and siltation all have the potential to impact upon these water dependent species. There is no direct pollution pathways between the area of construction works and the designated sites, therefore potential impacts upon these listed species will be avoided.

**Habitat or species fragmentation:** There will be no habitat or species fragmentation within any SAC or SPA. No ecological corridors between the proposed site and the Natura 2000 sites identified will be damaged or destroyed.

**Reduction in species density:** There will be no reduction in species density within the SAC and SPA.

**Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.):** There will be no negative impacts upon surface or ground water quality within the SAC or SPA. There will be no negative impacts upon the water quality in any designated site or any watercourse leading to any designated site.

**Describe any likely impacts on the nearby Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:**

**Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site:** It is not considered likely that there will be any impacts on the key relationships that define the structure or function of the Natura 2000 sites identified.

**Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:**

**Loss** - Estimated percentage of lost area of habitat: None

**Fragmentation:** None

**Disruption & disturbance:** None

**Change to key elements of the site** (e.g. water quality etc.): None



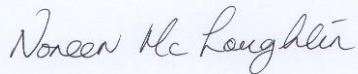
### 3.5 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Finding of No Significant Effects Report Matrix	
<b>Name of project</b>	A Proposed Part 8 Development in Taobh Tire, Manorhamilton, Co. Leitrim
<b>Name and location of Natura 2000 site</b>	The closest designated sites to the proposed development is the Lough Gill SAC and this is 194m north-east of the application site.
<b>Description of project</b>	A Proposed Part 8 Residential Development (10 Dwellings)
<b>Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?</b>	No
<b>Are there other projects or plans that together with project being assessed could affect the site?</b>	No
The Assessment of Significance of Effects	
<b>Describe how the project is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site</b>	Having regard to the location, nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that there is no potential for significant effects either from the proposed development on its own or in combination with other plans and projects.
<b>Explain why these effects are not considered significant</b>	Not applicable as there is no potential for negative impacts
<b>Describe how the project is likely to affect species designated under Annex II of the Habitats Directive.</b>	No impacts likely
Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment	
<b>Who carried out the assessment</b>	Noreen McLoughlin, MSC, MCIEEM. Consultant Ecologist
<b>Sources of data</b>	NPWS, EPA, National Biodiversity Data Centre, Leitrim County Council
<b>Level of assessment completed</b>	Stage1 Appropriate Assessment Screening
<b>Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed</b>	Full results included

#### **4 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION**

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the relevant case law, established best practice and the precautionary principle, this AA Screening Report has examined the details of the project in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites.

In view of best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, it can be concluded that this proposed development, whether individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will have no impacts upon any designated site. The integrity of these sites will be maintained and the habitats and species associated with these sites will not be adversely affected. It is of the opinion of this author that this development does not need to proceed to Stage II of the Appropriate Assessment process.



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Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM.  
Ecologist.

(PI Insurance details available on request)

## **Appendix I: FURTHER ECOLOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Whilst the proposed development will have no impacts upon the integrity of any area that has been designated as a Natura 2000 site, it is usually best practice to undertake certain mitigation measures during the construction and operation of any development. These measures will help to protect the local biodiversity of the surrounding area and ensure the protection of local wildlife and water quality. Therefore it is recommended that the following measures are implemented: *(It should be noted that these recommended measures are **not** designed for the protection of any Natura 2000 site. Their presence does not indicate that a Stage II Appropriate Assessment is needed and they are fully outside of the Appropriate Assessment process).*

- Post construction surface water run-off from hardcore / concreted / tarmac areas should be directed into a soak-pit. If soak-pit disposal is not viable or practical, then surface water run-off from these areas should be treated via serviced sediment and oil interceptor traps, prior to discharge into any local watercourse.
- The applicant must ensure that any excavated soil is used / disposed of responsibly. Its disposal should not lead to the loss or damage of any natural or semi-natural habitats elsewhere. It should not be spread close to any local watercourse as it may result in an increase in the sediment load of that watercourse.
- Fuels, oils, greases and hydraulic fluids must be stored in bunded compounds well away from watercourses. Refuelling of machinery, etc., should be carried out in bunded areas. Stockpile areas for sands and gravel should be kept to a minimum size, well away from any drain or watercourse.
- Landscaping should only involve the use of native species that are indigenous to the area.
- Only low level lighting at night should be used. This will minimise disturbances to bats and other nocturnal mammals.