

AA Screening

for

Proposed Works to
Kilbeggan Library,
The Square,
Kilbeggan,
County Westmeath

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Legislation and Background
3. Guidance
4. Methodology
 - Desk Study
 - Author's Qualifications
 - Appropriate Assessment Screening
 - Appropriate Assessment
5. Overview of the Proposed Project and the Receiving Environment
 - Description of the Proposed Project
6. European sites within a 15km Radius of Proposed Works to Kilbeggan Library
7. Assessment of significance of the proposed works on the identified European sites located within proximity to the subject development
8. Conclusion
9. Findings of No Significant Effects Report

1. Introduction

Westmeath County Council intend to carry out internal alterations and elevational changes to Kilbeggan Library. Latitude . 53.367896 Longitude -7.4976690.

The purpose of this report is to provide information and appraise the potential for this project to have significant effects, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on any relevant Natura 2000 sites (hereafter 'European sites').

2. Legislation and Background

Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (hereafter 'the Habitats Directive') and EC Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the "Birds Directive") requires that, any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site, but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The requirements of the EC Directives set out above are enforced in Ireland through the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2015.

The possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site will generate the need for an AA to be carried out by the competent authority for the purposes of Article 6(3). Accordingly, a screening for AA in respect of an application for consent for proposed development must be carried out by the competent authority (in this case, the Local Authority) in order to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed project, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European site.

A Stage Two AA is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that a proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site. The Screening (Stage One) operates merely to determine whether an AA (Stage Two) must be undertaken on the implications of the plan or project for the conservation objectives of relevant European sites.

In some situations, it will be absolutely clear that a proposed development could not have any conceivable effect on a European site. For example, where the nature, scale, timing, duration and location of a development is entirely unconnected to a European site. These instances will generally be very small developments, for example, signage or house extensions in serviced urban areas and small developments in urban areas/rural areas with no connections to ecological receptors linked to European sites. Nonetheless, this consideration still involves the competent person providing a reasoned determination to show that the matter has been considered. The project should only be considered to have no appropriate assessment issues if it is obvious that the entire project, through all of its stages, could not possibly have any effect on any European site, and that no measures intended to avoid or reduce potentially harmful effects on a European site are included.

This document comprises sufficient information to enable the competent person to determine that the proposed development will not impact on an any relevant Natura 2000 sites (hereafter 'European sites').

3. Guidance

This AA screening report has been prepared with reference to the following guidance documents where relevant:

- 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
- 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 Environment Directorate-General, 2001)
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive
- 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000 updated draft April 2015)
- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC
- Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive. Findings of an international workshop on Appropriate Assessment in Oxford, December 2009
- OPR Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management March 2021

4. Methodology

4.1 Desk Study and Site Visit

The information collected for this report, to assist the competent authority to screen the proposal for AA, was based on a desktop study carried out on 4th of July 2023. A site visit was carried out to inform this report.

Information relied upon included the following information sources, which included maps and ecological data:

- Online data available on European sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie
- Information on the location and operation of the potential development supplied by the client in the form of their own proposed works statements, maps and related materials
- Information on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland (National Parks & Wildlife Service)
- Site Specific Conservation Objectives for relevant European Sites

The following planning and policy documents relevant to this site were consulted with respect to considering cumulative effects / in combination effects with other plans and projects;

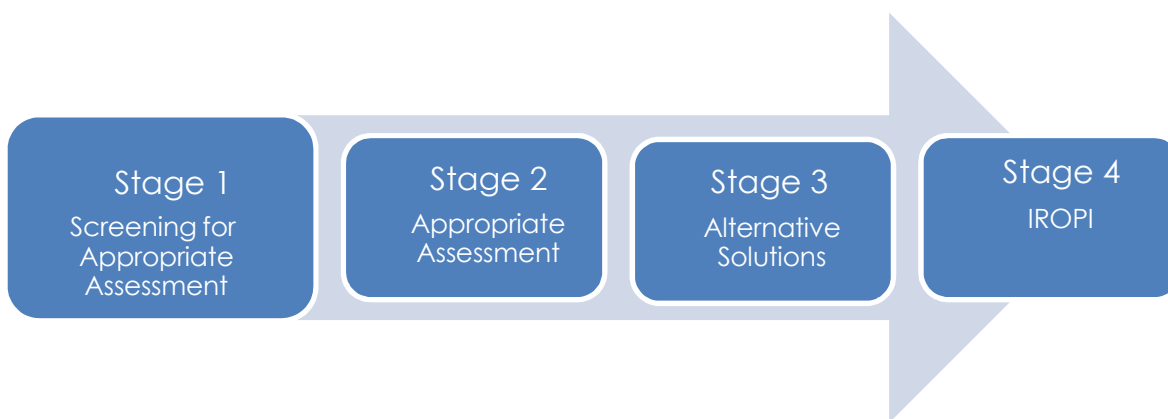
- Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027

4.2 Authors Qualifications

This report is prepared by Paul Hogan, Msc. Spatial Planning, H. Dip. Physical Planning, Deg. Architectural Science, Dip. In Architecture, M.R.I.A.I.

4.3 Stage 1 - Screening

The above referenced guidance (Section 3) documents set out a staged process for carrying out AA.



Stage 1 in the Appropriate Assessment process i.e. Screening for Appropriate Assessment seeks to establish whether, in relation to the proposed plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. In doing so, its purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether the proposed plan or project, alone and in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The determination reached at Stage 1 and following each successive stage (if required) informs whether a further stage in the Appropriate Assessment process is required.

Stage 2 is required in the event that potential significant effects on a Natura 2000 site cannot be ruled out and the precautionary approach is undertaken.

Stage 3 is carried out in the event that significant effects cannot be ruled out and therefore, alternative solutions are required.

Stage 4 (being the final stage in the process) is required in such circumstances that derogation is required, in accordance with Article 6(4) of the EU Habitats Directive.

In the case of the proposed Section 179 Local Authority Development – i.e. 'Works to Kilbeggan Library, this Stage 1 Screening Report provides the necessary information to enable the Planning Authority to screen the proposed development works for the requirement to undertake Appropriate Assessment and inform the entire process in an open and transparent manner.

Note; In accordance with OPR Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management March 2021, if it is absolutely clear that a proposed development could

not have any conceivable effect on a European site. No further screening is required.

4.4 Stage Two – Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate assessment will only proceed if there is assessed to be a “likelihood of significant effects” occurring on any European sites, as a result of the proposed project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and where there is no requirement to apply the ‘precautionary principle’.

5. Overview of Proposed Project & the Receiving Environment

5.1 Description of Proposed Project

The Proposed Development Consists;

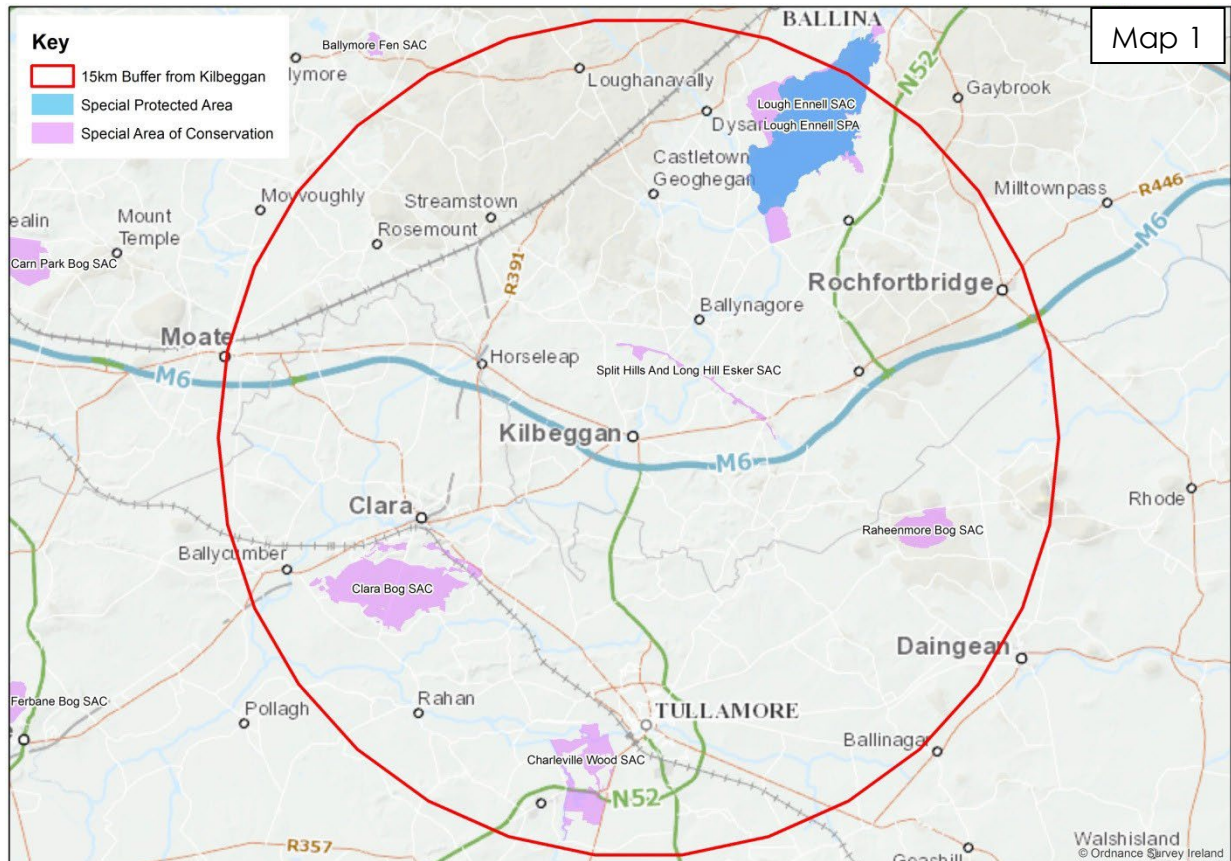
Works to Kilbeggan Library, The Square, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath, N91PY74 to accommodate ‘My Open Library’ including works to doctor’s surgery at ground floor. The development includes, alterations to external façade, internal alterations to ground and first floor, signage and associated works. Works include the refurbishment of a protected structure (Kilbeggan Court House and Market Building (Reg No15321052).

Enabling works to separate the entrances of the first floor Library and ground floor doctor’s Surgery. Repair and modification works to windows, walls and floors to the protected structure (Kilbeggan Court House and Market Building (Reg No15321052).

Renovation works entailing the provision of MYOL (my Open Library) services. demolition of internal partitions and external walls, blocking up of one window at first floor level, Incorporating two window openings into one new larger opening. provision of new aluminium windows, one AOV window and new aluminium external doors. New façade treatment to the 2010 extension along with new aluminium canopies/ window surrounds tied back to the internal leaf.

Foul water from the site is connected to an existing foul water system. There are no alterations to the foul and surface water networks and the proposed development will not generate any additional discharge.

6. European sites within a 15km Radius of Proposed Works to Kilbeggan Library



Map 1 above delineates all European sites within a 15km radius of the proposed works at Kilbeggan Library. In total, there are 6 European sites contained within this 15km radius and it is noted that this area encompasses 2 no. European sites within County Offaly. Table 3 below outlines these sites and provides detail on their respective qualifying interests, separation distances from the proposed development works and a reasoned assessment on connectivity between the works proposed and these Natura 2000 sites. The outcome of this assessment has informed the overall determination in this screening process.

7. Assessment of significance of the proposed works on the identified European sites located within proximity to the subject development.

Table 3

European Site	Site Code	Qualifying Interests	Separation Distance	Connectivity
Split Hills & Long Esker SAC	001831	[6201] Orchid rich calcareous grassland	c.3km north of Kilbeggan	None. This SAC is located north of the proposed works and is upstream of the River Brosna. Therefore, this European site will not be considered any further as part of the Screening for AA process.
Lough Ennell SAC	000685	[7230] Alkaline Fens	c.7km northeast of Kilbeggan	The River Brosna which is a direct conduit of Lough Ennell traverses Kilbeggan town and the proposed works will be undertaken within close proximity to the River. Having regard to the fact that the works to be undertaken are downstream of Lough Ennell, coupled with the separation distance and proposals to upgrade existing surface water drainage system serving the town, it is considered that there will be no significant impacts arising from this development on Lough Ennell. Therefore, this European site will not be considered any further as part of the Screening for AA process.
Lough Ennell SPA	004044	A059 Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) A061 Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) A125 Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)	c.7km northeast of Kilbeggan	None. This SPA is located at a distance of in excess of 7km. Having regard to the separation distance and given the nature and scale of the works proposed within an established urban area, it is considered that there will be no significant impacts arising from this development on this SPA.

				Therefore, this European site will not be considered any further as part of the Screening for AA process.
Raheenmore Bog SAC	000582	[7110] Active raised bogs [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7150] Depression on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion		None. This SAC is located a distance of c.10km southeast from the proposed works. Having regard to the separation distance and given the nature and scale of the works proposed within an established urban area with no direct conduits to Raheenmore Bog SAC, it is considered that there will be no significant impacts arising from this development on this SAC. Therefore, this European site will not be considered any further as part of the Screening for AA process.
Clara Bog SAC	000572	[6210] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [7110] Active raised bogs [7120] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7150] Depressions on peat substrates of Rhynchosporion [91D0] Bog woodland	c. southwest of Kilbeggan	None. This SAC is located a distance of c.9.5km southwest from the proposed works. Having regard to the separation distance and given the nature and scale of the works proposed within an established urban area with no direct conduits to Clara Bog SAC, it is considered that there will be no significant impacts arising from this development on this SAC. Therefore, this European site will not be considered any further as part of the Screening for AA process.
Charleville Wood SAC	000571	[91A0] Old Oak Woodland [1016] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)	c. 12km south of Kilbeggan	None. This SAC is located a distance of c.12km from the proposed works. Having regard to the separation distance and given the nature and scale of the works proposed within an established urban area, it is considered that there will be no significant impacts arising from this development on

				<p>this SAC. Therefore, this European site will not be considered any further as part of the Screening for AA process.</p>
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The Proposed Development Consists;

Works to Kilbeggan Library, The Square, Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath, N91PY74. The Works involve internal alterations and elevational changes with minor localised works to the footpath immediately adjacent.

Foul water from the site is connected to an existing foul water system. There are no alterations to the foul and surface water networks and the proposed development will not generate any additional volume.

The River Brosna flows through Kilbeggan town in a north –south direction. This River is a direct conduit of Lough Ennell (located c.7km northeast of Kilbeggan) and is a tributary of the River Shannon, where it connects with this Special Area of Conservation (SAC) a distance of c.34km southwest of Kilbeggan. Having regard to the siting and nature of the proposed works, within the core/built area of the town, given the location and separation distance of these works (i.e. south of Lough Ennell), it is considered that there will be no significant impacts arising from this development on any European sites, if undertaken.

8. Conclusion

it is considered that the development works proposed to Kilbeggan Library within Kilbeggan town will not have any significant effects on any European sites.

9. Findings of No Significant Effects Report

The Kilbeggan Library works proposed are contained within the urban core area of the town and there are no European sites within the defined boundaries of the town. In this regard, it has been determined that these proposed works, if undertaken, will not result in adverse negative impacts to any European sites or on their qualifying interests. It can be concluded that there will be no significant effects arising from this development to any European site and the Natura 2000 network in its entirety.

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