

# MEMO

<b>To:</b>	Therese O'Halloran, Executive Architect, Westmeath County Council
<b>From:</b>	Liam Currie, Senior Executive Planner
<b>Date:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> August 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Proposed social housing at Belvedere Orphanage, Tyrrellspass, Co Westmeath.

## Proposal

The proposed development is located at the Belvedere Orphanage Institution, Tyrrellspass, County Westmeath. The proposal comprises the construction of five social housing units, including the refurbishment of the former Matron's House to accommodate two of the units, together with all associated site development works.

## Details Received:

- Appropriate Assessment Screening report.
- 3D Sketch 3 D.
- Site Layout & Location Plans.
- Proposed Plans Elevations and Sections.
- Proposed Plans & Elevations Matrons House.
- Matron's House-Structural Survey.
- Belvedere Matrons House Site Model Proposal.
- Belvedere Orphanage Institution ACA.
- Land Registry Map.
- Matrons House Survey, Plans, Elevations & Sections.

## Overview

The proposed development is situated on the site of the former Belvedere Orphanage, located just off the Mullingar Road, to the north of Tyrrellspass village. The site extends to approximately 0.145 hectares, and comprises a combination of amenity grassland, mature trees, hard-surfaced pathways, scrubland, the former Matron's House & associated outbuildings.

The lands are in the ownership of Westmeath County Council. The wider Belvedere Orphanage complex, constructed in 1842, is a small-scale institutional grouping comprising six detached single and two-storey buildings arranged around a crescent to the south, with original gates and boundary wall located to the east. The site is located within the Tyrrellspass Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), which is recognised for its architectural character and historical significance.

## Recommendation

Having reviewed the preliminary documentation associated with the above-named proposed works on lands at Belvedere Orphanage in Tyrrellspass, County Westmeath, it is considered, based on a preliminary assessment, that a **Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) & Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** are **not** required at this time.

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It is recommended that the project proceed to detailed application design in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations (as amended), based on which the Planning Section will issue final determinations.

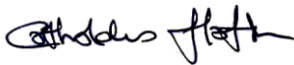
Considerations are set out as per the associate headings hereunder.).



**Liam Currie | Senior Executive Planner**

Westmeath County Council

29<sup>th</sup> August 2025



**Cathaldus Hartin | Senior Planner**

Westmeath County Council | Planning, Transportation and Economic Development

01/09/2025

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## Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening

### Stage 1 Preliminary Examination

#### 1.1 Legislative Context

The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 which transpose into Irish law both the European Union (EU) Directive 2009/147/EC (the Birds Directive) and the Habitats Directive and list habitats and species that are of international conservation importance and require protection. This protection is afforded in part through the designation of areas that represent significant examples of habitats that support populations of listed species within a European context, known as Natura 2000 sites. An area designated for bird species is classed as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and an area designated for other protected species and habitats is classed as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Together, SPAs and SACs form the Natura 2000 network of protected sites.

The Habitats Directive requires competent authorities to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects that, alone and/or in combination with other plans and projects, would be likely to have significant effects on one or more Natura 2000 sites. The assessment process is divided into a Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment and where required, a full Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

#### 1.2 Natura 2000 Sites

Note: European Natura 2000 sites include SACs, cSACs, SPAs and pSPAs, but not NHAs. This Stage 1 screening assessment covers Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the development boundary. Sites situated with 15km of the proposed works, are set out at **Table 1** below. The site synopsis' and details of the conservation objectives of these site are available at: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac> and <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa>

Site Code	Site Name	Designation Type	Distance From (km) approx.
004044	Lough Ennell	SPA	4.13
001831	Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC	SAC	3.69
000685	Lough Ennell SAC	SAC	5.04
000582	Raheenmore Bog SAC	SAC	5.48

**Table 1:** Natura 2000 Sites within 15km

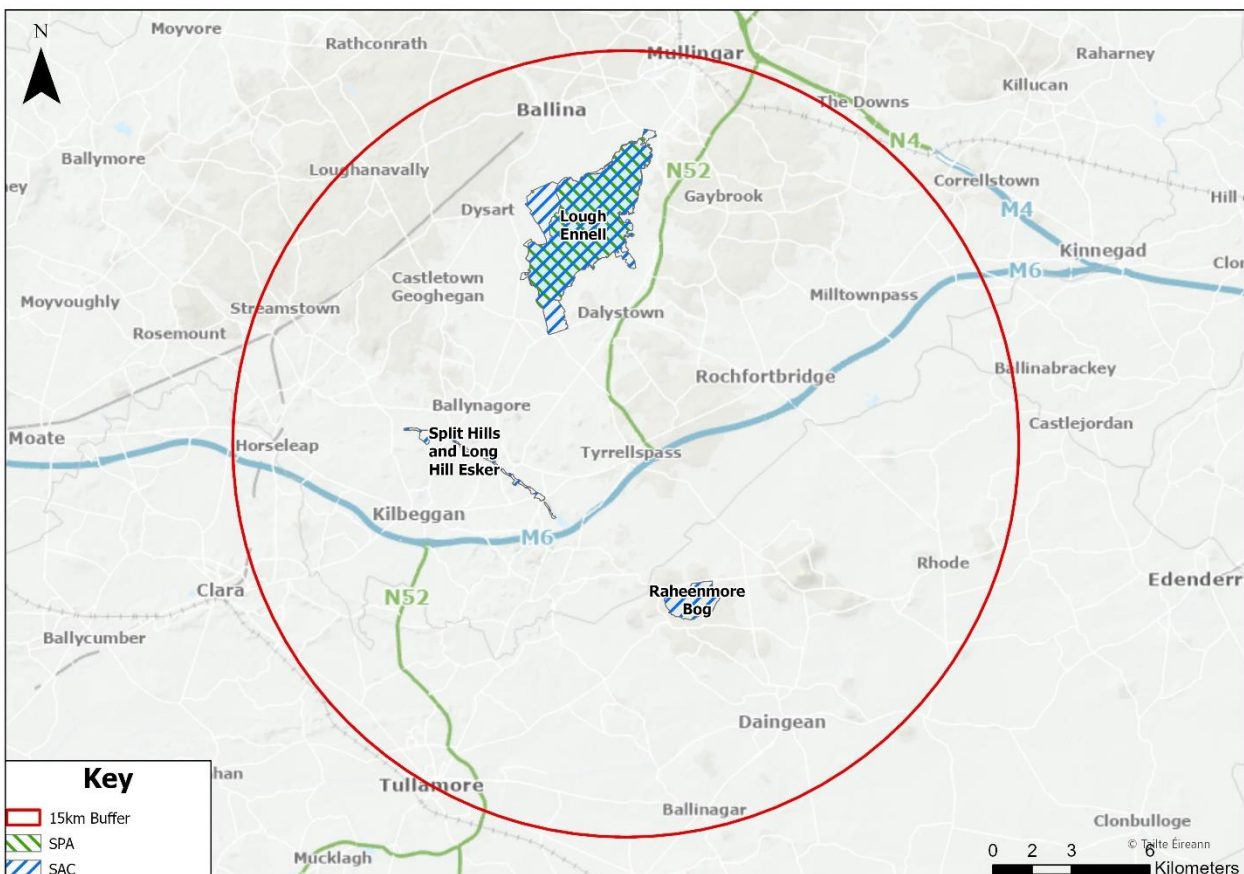
An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was submitted with the proposal and concluded that the proposed development is not foreseen to have any likelihood of significant effects on any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects – and therefore any potential for significant effects on any European site because of the proposed development can be ruled out. This conclusion is made in view of the Conservation Objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated.

There are 4 (no.) designated Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius (refer Table 1 above). The works proposed are not required for the nature conservation management of these sites. It is noted that the conservation objectives for the SACs and SPA in the vicinity are to maintain or restore favourable conservation condition of habitats and species listed as Special Conservation Interests for which the SPA/SAC has been selected.

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Disturbance to key habitats and species may arise from increased noise, drainage, and dust during the construction phase; however, such impacts are considered negligible in terms of potential significant effects due to the small scale and temporary nature of the construction works, as well as the distance to European sites (the nearest being 3.69 km). Having regard to the limited site area (0.145 ha), the short duration of the construction phase, the absence of any direct hydrological connectivity, and the lack of a shared groundwater body with any European site, there is no potential for source–pathway–receptor links to any Natura 2000 site arising from the proposed development.

Having considered the potential sources and potential pathways for significant effects and evaluated the project characteristics taking account of the processes involved and the distance of separation from European sites, it is considered that there is no likelihood of potential significant effects occurring to the Qualifying Interests, Special Conservation Interests or the Conservation Objectives of any designated European Site as a result of the implementation of the proposed development.



**Map 1:** Natura 2000 Sites in proximity to proposal.

### 1.3 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

Notwithstanding the minor nature and scale of this development, construction of a new entrance, it should be noted that any project/plan with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another. The site of the proposed development is located in an area for which planning policy is set out under the current Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

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An Appropriate Assessment for this Plan was carried out and concluded that, mitigation measures identified are adequate to ensure that the integrity of site in the Natura 2000 network will not be adversely affected as a result of potential impacts of the policies contained within the Plan and with the inclusion of relevant mitigating policies in the Plan, there is no potential for significant effects either alone or in combination with other plans. However, all individual plans/projects must also be considered for their compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive on a case-by-case basis.

It is considered that having regard to the siting of the proposed development from the SPA and SACs (illustrated at **Map 1** above), that the proposal would not give rise to any significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any nearby Natura 2000 sites having regard to the nature of the proposed development and separation distances involved to adjoining Natura 2000 sites.

## **1.4 AA Preliminary Screening Conclusions**

It is considered that the proposed development is not foreseen to have any likelihood of significant effects on any European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, and therefore any potential for significant effects on any European site as a result of the proposed development can be ruled out.

It is considered that the proposed development does not require Stage Two Appropriate Assessment, and a Natura Impact Statement is not required, in this instance.

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## Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening

### 2.1 EIA Preliminary Screening Examination

EIA Preliminary Screening		
Planning Reference:	LAA 11-2025	
Development Description	The proposal comprises the construction of five social housing units, including the refurbishment of the former Matron's House to accommodate two of the units, together with all associated site development works at Belvedere Orphanage Institution, Tyrrellspass, County Westmeath.	
<b>A. Schedule 5 Part 1 - Does the development comprise a project listed in Schedule 5, Part 1, of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?</b> (X as appropriate)		
<input type="checkbox"/> YES	EIA is mandatory No Screening required	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	Proceed to <b>Part B</b>	
<b>B. Schedule 5 Part 2 - Does the development comprise a project listed in Schedule 5, Part 2, of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it meet/exceed the thresholds?</b> (X as appropriate)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes the proposal is a development for the purpose of Schedule 5, Part 2 and it meets/exceeds the threshold:	EIA is mandatory	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The proposal is a development that does not meet the threshold & is therefore considered sub-threshold:	Preliminary Examination required <b>Proceed to Part C</b>	
<b>C. Has Schedule 7A information/screening report been submitted?</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, Schedule 7A information/screening report has been submitted by the applicant:	Carry out Screening Determination	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, Schedule 7A information/screening report has not been submitted by the applicant:	<b>Proceed to Part D</b>	
<b>D Preliminary Examination</b>		
	Yes / No / Uncertain	Comment
Is the size of development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?	No	0.145ha site and re-use of existing building.

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Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on a sensitive site or location*?	No	Cloncrow Bog (New Forest) NHA is located 256.8m from the site. Split Hills and Long Hill Esker SAC is located 3.69km distance.
Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, or result in emissions or pollutants?	No	
<b>Conclusion</b>		
<b>Based on a preliminary examination of the nature, size or location of the development, is there a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment? **</b>		
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	<b>EIAR not required.</b>	√
There is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	Stage 2 Screening Determination required.	
	Schedule 7A information required?	
There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIAR required.	

\*Sensitive locations or features include SAC/SPA, NHA/pNHA, Designated Nature Reserves, and any other ecological site which is the objective of a CDP/LAP (including draft plans) to protect.

\*\* Having regard to likely direct and cumulative effects, and the criteria set out in Schedule 7 Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

## 2.2 EIA Preliminary Screening Conclusion

On the basis of the preliminary information received, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, it is reasonable to conclude that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, similarly an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.

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