

Sallins Amenity Lands, Co. Kildare

**Sallins Amenity Lands
Sallins, Co. Kildare
Screening Report for Habitats
Appropriate Assessment**

On behalf of
Kildare Co. Council Parks Department

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1.0 Introduction

Kildare County Council is proposing to develop an open access Amenity Lands at, Sallins Co. Kildare. Pursuant to proper planning and development Kildare County Council in the Sallins Local Area Plan Policy NH 8 ensures all proposals/projects are screened to avoid significant impacts on Natura 2000 sites in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

The purpose of this assessment is to determine, the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the proposed project in the context of the conservation objectives of sites which are protected for their natural habitats and species under European legislation, termed Natura 2000 sites.

2.0 Process

Ireland became a signatory to the EU Birds Directive in 1979 and the Habitats Directive in 1992. Arising from this legislation was the obligation to establish the Natura 2000 network: nominated sites of highest biodiversity importance for rare and threatened habitats and species across the EU. In Ireland, the Natura 2000 network of European sites comprises Special Areas of Conservation (SACs, including candidate SACs), and Special Protection Areas (SPAs, including proposed SPAs).

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 protection 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.

The requirements for an Appropriate Assessments (AA) are fully set out in the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive state:

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.

6.4. 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 State 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 a site that is impacted upon by a proposed development 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 Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) issued guidance on Appropriate Assessment (*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities*) in December 2009 which provided advice on the information required in an Appropriate Assessment. Guidance from DoEHLG published in February 2010 stated that it is the responsibility of the competent authority (or consent authority) to undertake the Appropriate Assessment. The assessments may be based on information submitted by the proponent of the plan or project, in the form of a Natura Impact Statement. This Natura Impact Statement must be prepared by an ecological specialist with input from other relevant disciplines as required experts, e.g. engineers, planning specialists, hydrologists.

This screening assessment has been prepared in accordance with the current guidance (NPWS, 2009, Revised February 2010).

3.0 Stages of the Appropriate Assessment

This document has been prepared in accordance with the European Commission Environment DG document "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", referred to as the "EC Article 6 Guidance Document". The guidance document provides a non-mandatory methodology for carrying out assessments required under Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive, and is viewed as an interpretation of the EU Commission's document "Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC", referred to as "MN2000". In addition, "Appropriate Assessment Guidance for Planning Authorities" was published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in December 2009 (DEHLG, 2009) and amended in March 2010. Cognisance has been taken of this document in carrying out this screening assessment.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. In the first instance, the plan should aim to avoid any negative impacts on European sites by identifying possible impacts early in the plan-making, and writing the plan in order to avoid such impacts. Following that, mitigation measures should be applied, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If the plan is still likely to result in adverse effects, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, then it is rejected. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI test) under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effect.

Screening Phase

This section of the screening process describes the Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the proposed Sallins, Amenity Lands. A 15km buffer zone has been chosen as a precautionary measure, to ensure that all potentially affected Natura 2000 sites are included in the screening process. This is in line with "Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning

Authorities”, produced by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The integrity of a Natura 2000 site (referred to in Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive) is determined based on the conservation status of the qualifying features of the SAC. The qualifying features for each site have been obtained through a review of online documentation relating to each Natura 2000 site available from the NPWS.

There are no Natura 2000 sites located within the Sallins urban development area including the area of the proposed Amenity Lands site located at Canal View. Pollardstown Fen Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is the nearest European site at circa 5.5km from the proposed development site. Table 1 lists the Natura 2000 sites within *circa* 15km of the proposed Sallins Amenity Lands.

4.0 Description of the Project and whether is it required for proper management of an European Site

The project as outlined is not required for the proper management of a European Site i.e. an SAC or SPA site.

Introduction

Due to the recent Sallins By-pass construction the site's former farmland habitat has been greatly modified to accommodate the By-pass road and additional service infrastructure. A steep embankment housing the new road now divides the site creating a largely flat expanse of land to the South between the Bypass and the Canal and a sloping site to the North from the Bypass to the River Liffey. The acquisition of these lands has provided Sallins with a prime recreational site to meet the needs of the area's rapidly expanding population. Sallins GAA and Sallins Celtic Football Club were granted use of the site prior to construction works and continued use of the site during these works. The design of the park will see the GAA and Football Clubs formally accommodated within the site with provision of 2 full size GAA pitches, 2 full size soccer pitches and one multi use pitch. Changing rooms, club facilities and parking for the clubs will all be provided within the larger park facilities. An online community survey was carried out to ascertain the larger community requirements and public aspirations for the site. The findings of this survey were analysed with the top rated elements drawn into the park design including a Kids Playground, a Teen area with Skate park and basketball, Natural Play, Outdoor gym equipment, a loop path suitable for running and access to the River Liffey for water sports. Beyond play and sport other community facilities were desired such as a mixed use community building, allotments and outdoor space for occasional arts workshops, meetings and markets. In conjunction many comments relayed the desire for biodiversity and the creation of a park linked to nature with tree planting, wildflower and wetland creation.

Primary Design Decisions

With the criteria set the crux of the design layout was formed around fitting the required car parking and expansive pitches within the existing field layout in order to minimise hedge removal and habitat loss. This did mean the loss of one existing hedgerow and the rerouting of a central ditch. With these elements in

place links to and from the park as well as internal routes were examined, roads and paths instated and suitable sites for desired facilities located. The position of the main entrance road was determined by sight lines and levels from the by-pass allowing vehicular access to the car park, community building and allotments. Beyond this point the road narrows to allow controlled emergency access only through to the canal. This canal entrance is likely to be the main pedestrian/cyclist route allowing easy access from Sallins town along the canal towpath, indeed this route will soon be part of the Grand Canal greenway and as such will bring increased visitor numbers to the area. 3 more entrances allow access to different sections of the path along the towpath. At the furthest end of the park a route links up to the by-pass footpath and another into meet the parks loop path. At a midway point along the canal a path leads into the new wetlands area and then a wider entrance forms a small plaza to the front of the existing historic farm courtyard, in turn this path links through to the new community building and changing rooms. The existing farmyard with its large agricultural building and historic stone walls offer an ideal space for a mixed use community yard suitable for food stalls, markets, workshops or group meetings. This area may also be suitable for use by the adjoining allotments which have been placed between the courtyard and the canal. The historic stone walls will be repaired and stabilized with sections removed for access while the existing farm shed will be restored for use as an open sheltered space. These areas will largely be left open so future use can be determined by Kildare County Council. To the east the courtyard will be flanked by the new community building with integrated changing rooms. Although the building itself is not part of this project an architect was commissioned to prepare a room schedule allowing for the foreseen uses to determine the size of the building footprint and design entrance routes and civic space around the building.

Ecology/Biodiversity

The majority of existing hedgerows are to be retained with small gaps removed from the perimeter canal hedge in order to allow the above-mentioned entrances. To compensate for the loss of the central hedgerow the reformed central ditch will see water from the existing canal overflow exposed within a planted stream, flanked by marginal riverside plants and nodes of native trees. This stream will link the existing canal and perimeter hedge to the River Liffey via an engineered underpass through the new road embankment, thus forming a strong green corridor linking the two existing wet ecosystems. Further to this a large area of flat grassland close to the canal will be excavated forming two ponds, planted with aquatic and marginal species; the area will be developed as a wetlands park with raised paths and a viewing platform allowing controlled access to this sensitive habitat. Similarly an existing area of wetland on the Liffey side of the park will be encouraged with additional stream works, planting and access paths. The dry canal basin forms another ecologically sensitive area within the site housing mature dry woodlands to the east which evolves into wet woodlands to the west. All trees within the woodlands are to be accessed with all healthy trees retained and pruned where beneficial, in areas the understorey of bramble will be removed and a low impact decked path will meander through the trees with stepped access in and out of the basin. Additional tree planting will see extensive areas of native planting on the road embankment and within the sloped western half of the Liffey site, here pockets of forest are set within a native meadow to surround and soften a crescent shaped parking area. To the bottom of this slope lies an existing hard attenuation basin, this will also be softened with the addition of wetlands and riverside planting. A mix of native and non-native trees have been chosen for use around the site in order to

achieve maximum diversity. These will be used to line paths, create feature areas at entrances, form small orchards or shelter belts and break up hard areas such as the carpark. Ornamental grasses and perennial planting will be used in feature areas such as entrances and near buildings and again at the carpark to soften and divide the area, here planting beds will double as suds basins to hold water run-off from the hard surfacing. With the pitches occupying a large central portion of the site it was decided that they should have a mown over run for training which then grades into longer grass and uncut meadow. The longer meadow will in turn reach hedges, the planted embankment or marginal planting to the central stream. In addition several areas of native wildflower meadow will be accommodated around the site adding pops of colour and interest around the playground and exercise areas.

Play and Sport

The GAA and football pitches are full size pitches measured for each sport and spaced to allow the required run-over zones. Consultations with the local sports clubs showed that they are happy to share training areas and one all-weather pitch. All pitches will have the relevant markings, goal posts and netting with one pitch flood lit for evening use with the lighting engineered to reduce spill over and impact on wildlife. All drainage from the pitches will be designed to run to the central stream. Tennis and basketball courts have been provided for other sporting options. Play within the park is split into 3 recognisable sites. A fenced kids playground will cater for toddlers and younger children with safety surfacing below swings, slides, roundabouts and other selected equipment, a skate park and basketball court will cater for older kids and teenagers allowing a mix of skating and scooters on robust ramps and runs with options for free running, climbing and cross over play. Both areas will be enlivened by the addition of semi-mature trees and feature planting to add colour and texture. A woodland trail within the existing dry canal trees will also allow light touch, sensory play and provide a natural explorative space with timber sculptures and play nodes. A 3m wide exterior looped path has been designed to allow runners to complete a 1.5KM (approximately) route. Along the northern extent of the route outdoor gym equipment has been located in groups allowing users to stop mid run or use equipment as a warm up or cool down session, being close to the teen play area it may also be used by older children and teenagers. The Liffey side of the park has largely been developed with watersports in mind, here a decked landing on the Liffey bank has been designed to link via steps to a lower platform just above high water level, allowing easier access to the river. A path from the carpark to the platform will allow users to wheel kayaks and equipment to this node. Features and Furniture A co-ordinated suite of high quality steel and timber furniture will be used throughout the site with the same materials and colours applied to bespoke features such as entrance gates, signage, bridges and the feature wetlands observation tower. Park benches will be located at entrance points, within the play spaces and along paths with matching picnic tables in clusters forming relaxed places to gather. Steel gates with feature stone walls have been designed to frame the site entrances. The steel of these gates will be finished using the hallmark colour 'Mint Turquoise' (RAL 6003) with the park name in laser cut white steel letters. The stone walls will be formed using large cut stone blocks referencing the stone used in the historic canal locks. A laser cut plate with a designed willow logo connects Sallins to its Irish name, Na Solláin which means "the willows". This logo will be used throughout the site on other signage and feature elements. Bespoke bridges have been designed for the wetlands and central stream; these will be constructed in galvanised steel with hardwood side panels and timber decking to the path, an element of colour will

be added to the handrail and on small signage elements. Similarly the wetlands observation tower and refurbished farm shed will use the same materials. The observation tower will be topped by a painted steel safety rail appearing as a strong band of colour and the structural steel of the shed and signage will be painted to match.

The project involves the proposed development of a community Amenity Lands within the grounds Canal, Sallins. Site location map is included as Appendix 1.

The design of the proposed development takes into account best environmental engineering design to ensure least impact to the environment.

General Works

The proposed works are to include construction of sports pitches, car parking, pedestrian paths, building works new building and refurbishment of existing structures along with landscaping and tree planting works.

Artificial Surfaces which may be used are permeable and will allow drainage to occur to ground on site.

All drainage from the pitches will be designed to run to the central stream. The central stream will have small dams along its length to slow down flow and encourage filtration.

Surface Water Drainage systems will be constructed on site. Soakaways and are proposed to drain any hard standing areas will be constructed within the proposed development. The majority of the site drainage will take the form of linear filter drains with attenuation capacity. These will be used under soft landscaped areas (lawn and suds planting) and under the car parking areas where permeable surfacing is used. Within the main site the roads will also have standard storm water drains but these will be fed into the filtration drains and then into an attenuation tank. The River Liffey side of the site is set up in a similar manner but with no attenuation, here an overflow from the infiltration drains will take water to the local small tributary stream running into the main channel of the River Liffey.

The pitches will be drained by infiltration trenches into storm water drains running into the central stream. The stream will feature a series of small dams to slow down the flow and encourage filtration.

The design may also contain landscape features such as mounding, tree planting and shrub planting.

The construction of amenity buildings for a Blueway Hub, a Sports facility building and the proposed market hub area will require the construction of toilet facilities on site which will be linked to the existing main foul water sewer which already passes through the site. It is expected that any additional linkage to the foul water system will be within the capacity of the local waste water treatment system and therefore will not be a risk to local water quality.

Any surface water drainage during construction which may be necessary will be attenuated on site as per best environmental practice as outline and will ensure only clean water will leave the works areas.

The construction phase will involve the import of construction materials, concrete, tarmac and vehicle and machinery operation onsite.

Construction of foundations of pathways, and fencing structures will not exceed 500mm in depth.

Landscaping will only use clean uncontaminated topsoils or topsoils excavated from within the site, where possible but site soil quality may be an issue and BS certified topsoil from an exterior source maybe required.

Minor scrub and hedgerow clearance, will be required, this will not occur within the bird breeding season of 1st of March to 1st of September.

Planting schemes will not include any known invasive alien species as defined by Invasive Species Ireland.

It is likely the construction of the Park will take the park will be built in stages therefore we see construction taking approximately 3 years from starting on site to completion and opening. This timeframe is dependent on weather and ground conditions.

General Site Construction Environmental Measures Consistent with Best Practice, Standards, Design and Controls

ALL WILL BE OUTLINED IN SPECIFICATION AND PRELIMS AT TENDER STAGE.

General Measures

Raw or uncured waste concrete should be disposed of by removal from the site.

The amount of *in-situ* concreting required should be minimised by maximising the use of pre-cast or permanent formwork.

Ready-mix suppliers should be used in preference to on-site batching.

Washout of concrete trucks should occur off site at a designated, contained impermeable areas, however, if it is necessary to wash down the truck chutes it must be conducted in a dedicated bunded impermeable and signposted wash out area;

Prior to any work it should be ensured that all construction equipment is mechanically sound to avoid leaks of oil, fuel, hydraulic fluids and grease.

Foul drainage from site etc. should be removed to a suitable treatment facility or discharged to a septic tank system constructed in accordance with EPA guidelines.

All vegetation clearance shall be carried out in one period outside the breeding bird's period which runs from 1st March to the 31st of August.

Runoff and sediment control

Pollution control measures shall be implemented to ensure that pollutants and sediment are not deposited within any local drains

Fuel Management

Fuel management measures will be implemented which will incorporate the following elements: fuels, lubricants and hydraulic fluids for equipment used on the construction site should be carefully handled to avoid spillage, properly secured against unauthorised access or vandalism, and provided with spill containment according to current best practice (Enterprise Ireland BPGCS005)2.

Fuelling and lubrication of equipment should be carried out off site in appropriately contained sites.

Emergency fuel spill kits with oil boom, absorbers etc. will be kept on site in the event of an accidental spill should be available on site, any spillage of fuels, lubricants or hydraulic oils should be immediately contained and the contaminated soil removed from the site and properly disposed of.

Waste oils and hydraulic fluids should be collected in leak-proof containers and removed from the site for disposal or re-cycling.

Procedures and contingency plans will be set up to deal with an emergency

Waste Management

Waste management measures shall be implemented to ensure that waste generated on site is managed appropriately:

During the construction phase of the project waste will be controlled and segregated appropriately on site by means of dedicated skips which will be disposed of off-site by a licensed waste operator.

Biosecurity Measures

It is also important to note that as all trucks transporting materials to and from the site to the site have no potential to transport alien invasive species to the nearby SAC habitats as part of the works. No invasive alien species have been recorded from the area of works so it is highly unlikely that any spread of invasive aliens will occur as a result of site works.

Construction Environmental Management Plan

All environmental measures must be described in a site Construction Environmental Management Plan and agreed prior to works.

5.0 Sources for Information on Natura 2000 sites to Inform Screening Process

5.1 Nature Conservation Sites and Available Information

Data and information about European sites, and other nature conservation sites, were acquired from www.npws.ie. This includes site boundaries, site synopses, lists of qualifying interests (SACs) and special conservation interests (SPAs), and conservation objectives (European sites).

European sites have site specific conservation objectives, and the associated supporting documents were sourced from the NPWS website.

- National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- EISs, NISs and other reports for projects in the general area, including previous Natura 2000 Screening Reports in Sallins area and Sallins Green Infrastructure Report held by Kildare County Council.

- Kildare County Development Plan.
- Geological Survey of Ireland Website
- **REFERENCES**
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009.
- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission Environment DG, 2000.
- Fossitt, J. A. (2000) A Guide to the Habitats of Ireland. The Heritage Council, Ireland.
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC: European Commission, 2000
- Ecological Report and Landscaping Report for Sallins Community Park carried out for Kildare County Council in 2021

6.0 Features of the Development that Could Impact on Natura 2000 Sites

6.1 Brief Description of the Natura 2000 Sites

This section of the screening process describes the Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the proposed development area. A 15km buffer zone was chosen as a precautionary measure, to ensure that all potentially affected Natura 2000 sites are included in the screening process (Table 1).

All potentially affected Natura 200 sites, numbering 6, within a 15m radius of the proposed site are included as Appendix 2.

Table 1. Natura 2000 sites within 15km of Proposed Sallins Amenity Lands.

Site Name (code)	Qualifying Interests Habitats and Species	Minimum Distance from Amenity Lands (km)
Red Bog SAC Site Code 000397	Annex I-habitats 7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs	10.4km
Pollardstown Fen SAC Site Code 000396	Annex I - priority habitat - Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] - Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] - Alkaline fens [7230] Annex II- species - <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> [1013] - <i>Vertigo angustior</i> [1014] - <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> [1016] - Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] - Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] - Alkaline fens [7230]	13.5km
Mouds Bog SAC Site Code 002331	Annex I - priority habitat - Active raised bogs [7110]; Annex I -habitats - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]; and - Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150].	9.5km
Ballynafagh Lake SAC Site Code 001387	Annex I - priority habitat - Alkaline fens [7230] Annex II- species - <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> [1016] - <i>Euphydryas (Eurodryas, Hypodryas) aurinia</i> [1065]	10.0km
Ballynafagh Bog SAC Site Code 000391	Annex I - priority habitat - Active raised bogs [7110]; Annex I -habitats - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]; and	8.5km

Poulphouca Reservoir SPA Site Code 004063	- Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]. Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043] Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]	13.2km
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6.2 Conservation Objectives

A Natura 2000 site's conservation objectives are defined by DAHG and are, "intended to ensure that the relevant Annex I habitats and Annex II species present on a site are maintained in a favourable condition" (DEHLG, 2010). The DEHLG guidelines state that, "The Conservation Objectives derive from the qualifying interests, the Natura 2000 standard data form, and the management plan for the site, with summary information also available in the site synopsis." Whilst the Natura 2000 standard data forms and site synopses do present details of the qualifying features of Natura 2000 sites, and list the generic threats to those features, they do not define the conservation objectives of the site.

For the purposes of this assessment, information on the conservation objectives for the sites has been gained from consultation with NPWS relating to the Border Regional Planning Guidelines and NPWS generic Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites where no Management Plan is yet available.

Generic conservation objectives for SPAs are as follows:

- To maintain the bird species of special conservation interest for which the SPA has been listed, at favourable conservation status.

Generic conservation objectives for SACs are as follows:

- To maintain Annex I habitats and Annex II species for which the cSAC has been selected at favourable conservation status;
- To maintain the extent species richness and biodiversity of the entire site; and
- To establish effective liaison and co-operation with landowners, legal users and relevant authorities.

The favourable conservation status of a species can be described as being achieved when: population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat can be described as being achieved when: its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable as defined below.

6.3 Relevant SACs Descriptions and Potential Impact

Pollardstown Fen SAC

Pollardstown Fen SAC is located *circa* 13.5km from the proposed Amenity Lands development in Sallins. Pollardstown Fen SAC is a ground water dependent ecosystem and disruption to site hydrology is understood to be the most significant threat to this site. However, there is no direct groundwater hydrological link between the site of the proposed Amenity Lands Development lands and this SAC due to the significant distance, sub-surface topography and surface geomorphology isolating the sites from one another. Sallins is in the

Liffey Catchment and Pollardstown Fen is in the Barrow River Catchment as such there is no catchment linkage between the sites. Therefore it is envisaged there will be no hydrological disruption to the integrity of the SACs or the habitats or species for which they are designated and no significant impacts to habitats or species likely to occur as a result of the proposed development. There will be no direct loss of habitat or species due to site works located at such a significant distance from this site.

Mouds Bog SAC

Mouds Bog SAC is located approximately 9.5km to the northeast of the proposed development site. Sallins is located in the Liffey River Catchment. The majority of Mouds Bog SAC is also in the Liffey River Catchment but is significantly upstream of Sallins and therefore there is no direct catchment connectivity from this site to the proposed development site. Mouds Bog SAC is a ground water dependent ecosystem but due to the significant distance sub-surface topography and surface geomorphology isolating the sites from one another any potential development in Sallins is highly unlikely to impact on the groundwater regime of Mouds Bog SAC and therefore will not impact on the integrity of the SACs or the habitats for which they are designated. There will be no direct loss of habitat or species due to site works located at such a significant distance from this site

Ballynafagh Lake SAC

Ballynafagh Lake is located about 2 km north-west of Prosperous in Co. Kildare, *circa* 10km from the proposed development site. It is a shallow alkaline lake with some emergent vegetation. The Blackwood Feeder, which connects Ballynafagh Lake to the Grand Canal, is also included in the site. Ballynafagh Bog SAC and Ballynafagh Lake SAC are all located in the Barrow River Catchment, and so have no direct catchment connectivity to the Sallins area. Any potential development in Sallins is highly unlikely to impact on the surface water or groundwater regime of these SACs and therefore will not impact on the integrity of the SACs or the habitats and species for which they are designated. There will be no direct loss of habitat or species due to site works located at such a significant distance from this site.

Ballynafagh Bog SAC

This site is a raised bog situated about 1 km west of Prosperous in Co. Kildare *circa* 8.5km from the proposed development site. The area is directly underlain by muddy, fossiliferous limestones, interbedded with calcareous shales. The subsoils are predominantly clay-rich tills. All are of low permeability. The site comprises a relatively small core of uncut high bog (approx. 70 ha), which is surrounded by a more extensive area of cutover bog (approx. 90 ha). The high bog area can be divided into a wet core of active bog which covers an area of 23 ha, surrounded by approximately 44 ha of degraded raised bog which is experiencing drying-out at present.

The proposed development site. Sallins is located in the Liffey River Catchment. The majority of Ballynafagh Bog SAC is in the Barrow River Catchment but is and therefore there is no direct catchment connectivity from this site to the proposed development site. Ballynafagh Bog SAC is a ground water dependent ecosystem but due to the significant distance sub-surface topography and surface geomorphology isolating the sites from one another any potential development in Sallins is highly unlikely to impact on the groundwater regime of Ballynafagh Bog SAC and therefore will not impact on the integrity of the SACs or the habitats for

which they are designated. There will be no direct loss of habitat or species due to site works located at such a significant distance from this site.

Red Bog SAC

This lake lies between morainic ridges north of Blessington *circa* 10.4km from the proposed development site. It is characterized by a dense growth of *Menyanthes trifoliata* (bogbean) which gives rise to extensive areas of floating vegetation or quaking bog as defined by the annexed habitat, 7140 Transition mires and quaking bogs. The majority of Red Bog SAC is also in the Liffey River Catchment but is significantly upstream of Sallins and therefore there is no direct catchment connectivity from this site to the proposed development site. Red Bog SAC is a ground water dependent ecosystem but due to the significant distance sub-surface topography and surface geomorphology isolating the sites from one another any potential development in Sallins is highly unlikely to impact on the groundwater regime of Mouds Bog SAC and therefore will not impact on the integrity of the SACs or the habitats for which they are designated. There will be no direct loss of habitat or species due to site works located at such a significant distance from this site.

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA

Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA is located approximately 38km upstream along the Liffey channel of the proposed Sallins Amenity Lands development site and *circa* 13.2km as the crow flies. Due to the distance of the proposed development site to the reservoir, no impacts through direct or indirect disturbance of species and habitats will occur from development occurring through the proposed works. Also, due to the fact that the SPA is located upstream of the LAP lands, no potential impacts to water quality would be expected. There is no known usage of the Sallins proposed development site by birds for which the site is designated an SPA i.e. lesser black backed gulls and greylag geese. There will be no direct loss of habitat or species due to site works located at such a significant distance from this site.

Receiving Environment-Terrestrial Habitats

The proposed Amenity Lands is located adjacent to the Grand Canal, Greenway Co. Kildare. The site is underlain by a good depth of mineral topsoil. The site is covered principally in a silty river alluvium a type of Alluvial Gley soil-type over carboniferous limestone bedrock geology.

The site at present predominantly supports a managed grassland habitat, dominated by, amenity grassland areas, meadow, pasture and recolonizing bare ground in light of the recent road development works. The field pattern is delineated by an array of Hedgerow/Treelines and small number of associated watercourses/drainage channels. The landscape has been disrupted by the construction of the new bypass and link roads. The remaining landscape pattern is typical of a cultural landscape which supports only limited remnant natural/semi-natural habitat patches (i.e. scrub, hedgerows/treelines, watercourses etc.), which are scattered through a matrix of more intensively managed agricultural fields.

The overwhelming predominance of grassland habitats at the site does not support a high degree of ecological interest. The principal habitat interest of the site is moderate and is focused particularly on the areas where there is water

movement (drainage ditches, old canal spillways), linear hedgerow and treeline features and a small woodland copse. There is potential to greatly improve the quality of the grassland habitat in particular to restore areas of natural meadows.

The Park area is not part of any designated conservation area. No habitats at the study area conform to those listed under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, and no species of flora which is rare or protected in Ireland (i.e. listed in the Flora Protection Order 2015 or the Irish Red data list) was noted or has been previously recorded in this area.

An invasive plant species Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*), that is currently on Ireland's Red List for Invasive species was noted occurring in the River Liffey bordering the study site to the north-west. Plants which represent a lesser invasive threat i.e. Amber listed invasive species were also recorded on site these included Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) were also recorded on site, these plants usually do not represent a serious risk to native habitats or species.

The ecological value of the site was assessed for the most part as low and moderate local value, i.e. comprised principally of modified habitats with low species diversity and low wildlife value with some areas of the Park containing some semi-natural habitat or habitat of higher local importance for wildlife.

The Liffey River is considered to be a river of regional ecological importance, and the Liffey Corridor is given a nationally important value as a natural river of regional ecological value.

Two sites with a national conservation designation as a proposed NHA have a direct hydrological linkage to the proposed Sallins Community Park these are:

- The Grand Canal, is an artificial waterway comprising the central channel and the banks either side of it. It serves as a wildlife corridor and is designated as a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA).
- The River Liffey, The River Liffey at Oberstown is also a pNHA representing a good example of riverside vegetation. The proposed NHA was first surveyed in 1976 and designated an Area of Scientific Interest, mainly due to the presence of the dark-leaved willow (*Salix myrsinifolia* stn. *Salix nigricans*), a nationally rare plant that had not been recorded in this century. A subsequent site survey in 1993 found the site cleared of woody vegetation, and therefore was proposed as a NHA allowing for natural regeneration of willow species regeneration. This site is circa 2Km from upstream from the Park.

The NHA sites are listed in the Kildare County Development Plan and must be considered in the planning process but are outside the scope of the Appropriate Assessment process which is focused on European Sites, SACs and SPAs.

HABITATS OF SALLINS PARK

The following habitats were recorded, all of which occur within the footprint (of the park). Nomenclature for habitats follows Fossitt (2000):

- Drainage Ditches (FW4)
 - Improved Agricultural Grassland (GA1)
 - Meadow & Grassy Verges (GS2) including relict meadow habitat
-

- Wet grassland (GS4)
- Hedgerows (WL1) and Treelines (WL2) in most areas of the site associated with earth banks (BL2)
- Scrub (WS1)
- Recolonising Bare Ground (ED3)
- Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3)
- (Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland (WD1)

The habitats of the proposed development site principally comprise an area of meadow grassland and the playing fields sward comprises a variety of grasses, broadleaved herbs such as Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum* spp.), clovers (*Trifolium* spp.) and plantains (*Plantago* spp.) are common. Dry meadows GS2 which is dominated by coarse and tussocky grasses such as False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*). Other grasses include Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and Smooth Meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*). The forb species associated with this rough grassland include Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), and Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*) the grassland is becoming invaded by scrub mostly willows.

A small woodland (Mixed) Broadleaved Woodland (WD1) dominated by Ash and Beech occurs along the site boundary, old dry canal, and is proposed to be retained.

The Liffey River, a depositing lowland river (FW2) forms the north western boundary of the site.

Relict Garden areas associated with old dwellings and farmyards support a mosaic of Ornamental/non-native shrubs (WS3)

Ecological Value

No EU annexed habitats occur within the footprint of the development.

The proposed Amenity Lands is located at least 8.5 kilometres from nearest SAC

A site visit was carried out in September/October 2020 and May 2021 and November 2021.

The habitats of the site have been recorded as part of the overall assessment of the site habitat follows (Fossitt 2000).

The site is highly modified and managed and is of general low habitat and species value with the relict woodland/scrub, treelines, meadow and River Liffey comprising the main ecological interest of the site.

Annexed Habitats

Annexed habitats do not occur in the area of proposed works.

7.0 Likely Impact to the Natura 2000 Sites

The possible impacts that might arise from the proposed development have been examined in the context of the factors that could potentially affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites. As part of the screening stage process the proximity and qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites in the wider hinterland of the proposed Amenity Lands, Sallins were considered. In assessing the sites that could potentially be impacted by the proposed development a source-pathway-receptor model was used. All sites potentially impacted were considered in relation to the size and nature of the proposed development and the sensitivity of the receptors in the wider locality. If a Natura 2000 site of particular significance/relevance exists beyond a nominal screening area this was also included in the screening appraisal. Accordingly, all potential pathways for impact on designated sites were included in this screening exercise both within and outside a nominal 15km zone which was chosen to display the location and discuss sites most proximate to the proposed development. Table 2 summarises the location and qualifying interests of designated sites in the area.

7.1 SAC Sites

The nearest SAC within the 15km distance from the proposed development site lies at a distance of 8.5km from the proposed site and are not hydrologically or directly linked by habitat connectivity to the area of the proposed development site at Canal View. It is therefore highly improbable that a project of this nature and scale will have any measurable impact on the qualifying interests of these SACs i.e. Red Bog SAC, Ballynafagh Lake SAC and Ballynafagh Bog SAC, Mouds Bog SAC, Pollardstown Fen SAC or Polaphouca Reservoir SPA. For these European sites there will be no reduction in habitat area of qualifying interest, no disturbance to key species or habitats, no reduction in species density or no changes in key indicators of conservation value.

Table 1 summarises the location and qualifying interests of designated sites in the within a 15km radius of the proposed development site.

Table 2 outlines a screening matrix for potential impacts to the SAC sites.

All surface water and foul water on site are adequately treated and therefore no impact is envisaged for surface or ground water quality as a result of the proposed development.

Table 2.

Site Name	Reduction in Habitat Area of Habitat of Qualifying Interest	Disturbance to Key Habitats or Species	Habitat or Species Fragmentation	Reduction in Species Density	Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value
	Possible Potential Impacts	Possible Potential Impacts	Possible Potential Impacts	Possible Potential Impacts	Possible Potential Impacts
Red Bog SAC	No	No	No	No	No
Ballynafagh Bog SAC	No	No	No	No	No
Ballynafagh Lake SAC	No	No	No	No	No
Mouds Bog SAC	No	No	No	No	No
Pollardstown Fen	No	No	No	No	No
Poulaphouca SPA	No	No	No	No	No

Cumulative Impact

A requirement of the AA process is to take into consideration any cumulative impacts as a result of other plans in the area. It is considered that because of the small scope and scale of the proposed development and the fact that it is highly unlikely to lead to any adverse impact to any Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the site, no cumulative impact will result from the proposed development in combination with any other proposals in the Sallins area.

8.0 Screening Conclusions

The likely impacts that will arise from the proposed development of works have been examined in the context of the key environmental factors that could potentially affect the integrity of the Natura 2000 network, e.g. disturbance, habitat loss, etc. and the results of the Screening Assessment, as presented in Tables 2. The tables indicate “no” for sites where no negative impact is anticipated on the conservation objectives or on the overall integrity of the site.

Conclusion of screening stage

In conclusion, to determine the potential impacts, if any, of the proposed Sallins Town Amenity Lands on nearby Natura 2000 sites, a screening process for AA was undertaken. The proposed development is within 15km of 6 Natura 2000 sites.

It is considered that the proposed development does not include any element that has the potential to significantly alter the favourable conservation objectives associated with the species and habitats, or, interfere with the key relationships that define the structure or function, either alone or in combination with other

impacts, of the Natura 2000 sites considered in this document provided that the following is carried out:

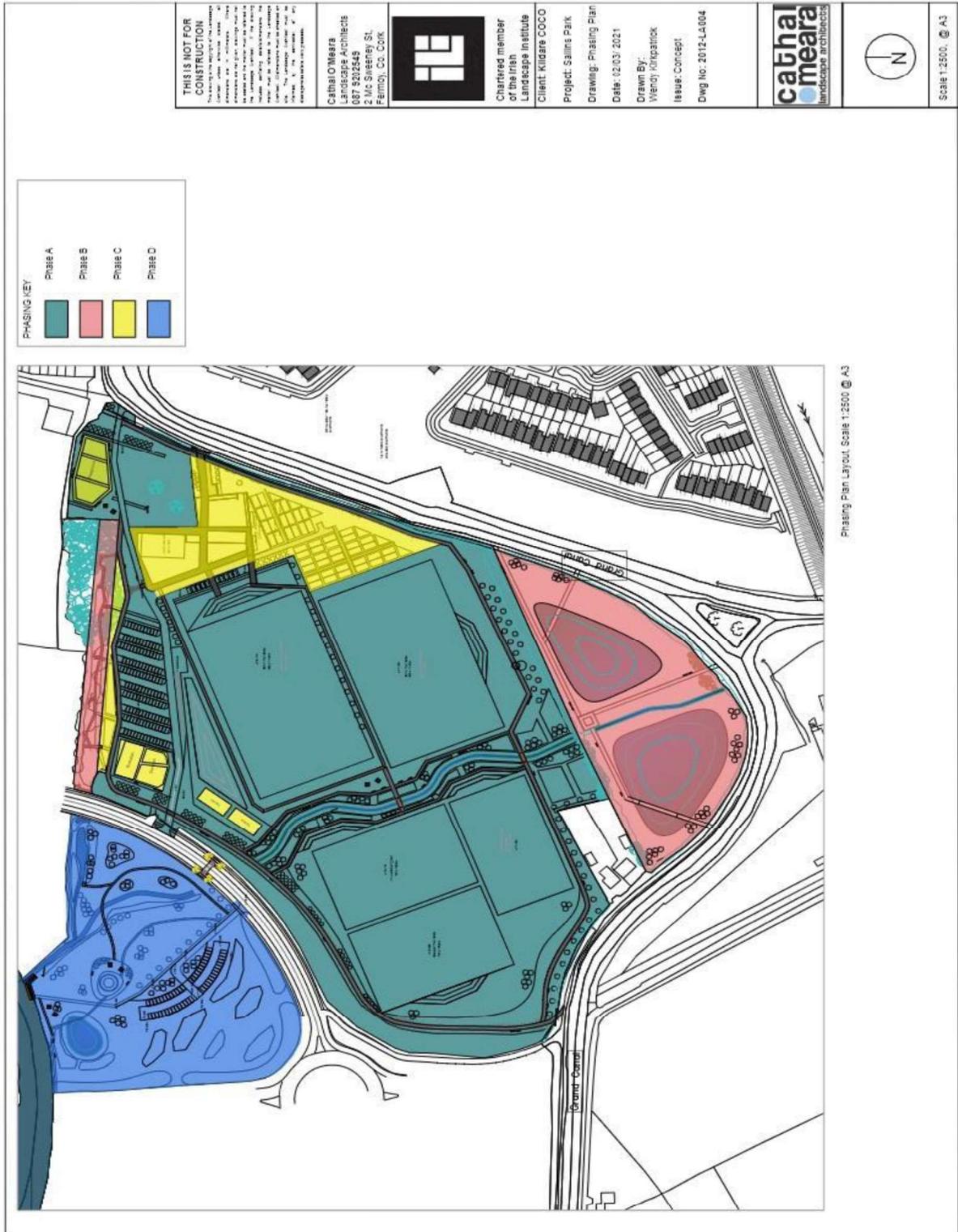
The proposed development is completed as described in section 4.

The programme of measures consistent with best practice, standards, design and controls as outlined in section 4 are implemented

It has been objectively concluded during the screening process that none of these sites are likely to be significantly impacted by the proposed Sallins Town Amenity Lands and these are:

- Pollardstown Fen SAC Site Code 000396
- Mouds Bog SAC Site Code 002331
- Ballynafagh Lake SAC Site Code 001387
- Ballynafagh Bog SAC Site Code 000391
- Red Bog SAC Site Code 000397
- Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA Site Code 004063

8.0 Appendix 1. Location and Layout of Proposed Sallins Amenity Lands



10.0 Appendix 3 Photographic Record of Proposed Amenity Lands Site Sallins

View 1 of area of proposed Amenity Lands development site



View 2 of area of proposed Amenity Lands development site



View 3 and 4 of area of proposed Amenity Lands development site

S SIAC / Colas JV - Sallins By-pass

