

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report:
Sensory Garden at St Catherine's Park, Leixlip



For: Kildare County Council
Date: 20 May 2025

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Works, plans, methodologies, materials, and infrastructural requirements are based on the client's brief, draft plans, and drawings provided to Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants of May 2025.

Statement of Authority

This Appropriate Assessment Screening has been carried out by suitably qualified and experienced professionals of Flynn Furney Environmental Consultants. These were Ashley Maggy, BA, MSc and Billy Flynn BSc, MSc, MCIEEM, CEnv.

1. INTRODUCTION

Amenity improvements are proposed at St. Catherine's Park, Leixlip, Co. Kildare. The purpose of this project is to create a sensory garden for this park. This will see the creation of a number of features, including built areas, hard and soft landscaping.

Flynn, Furney Environmental Consultants Ltd has been engaged by Kildare County Council for the provision of an environmental impact assessment screening report for the proposed works. The principal requirement for these services is to assist the relevant authorities in forming an opinion as to whether or not the proposed works should be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and if so whether an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) should be prepared in respect of it.

Kildare County Council is the lead agency in the development of this project.

The screening process includes an assessment of the details of the proposal with reference to the relevant EIA legislation including the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended by Planning and Development Regulations 2015), the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU (as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU) and relevant EU Guidance including *Interpretation of definitions of project categories of annex I and II of the EIA Directive*, EU, 2015 and *Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects Guidance on Screening*, EU, 2017. The report provides a conclusion of the process and finally a recommendation.

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed works will see the creation of a sensory garden at St. Catherine's Park. A wide variety of features and interventions is proposed. These include new hedging, grassed amenity areas, seating areas, a sculpture, tree-planting and a recreation area. The list below summarises the proposed works:

Sensory Garden Features

- Planting of semi-mature trees such as *Amelanchier* sp.
- Planting of heavy standard trees such as *Acer freemanii*
- Planting of feathered trees such as *Crataegus* sp.
- Planting of various multi-stem/small trees such as *Prunus avium* and *Sorbus* spp.
- Planting of large shrub species such as *Hamamelis x intermedia*, *Viburnum* and *Sambuccus*
- Creation of a new hedge of *Fagus sylvatica*
- Creation of new planting beds
- Creation of a wildflower meadow of 500m²
- Creation of grassed areas with seed
- Creation of amenity (grassed) areas
- Installation of timber lawn edging
- Creation of new tarmac surfaced footpaths
- Installation of 8 no. benches (steel and wood)
- Installation of smoothed granite boulders
- Creation and seeding of earthen mounds
- Installation of paved areas



Fig. 1. Location of St. Catherine's Park



Fig. 2. Proposed Location of Sensory Garden in St. Catherine's Park

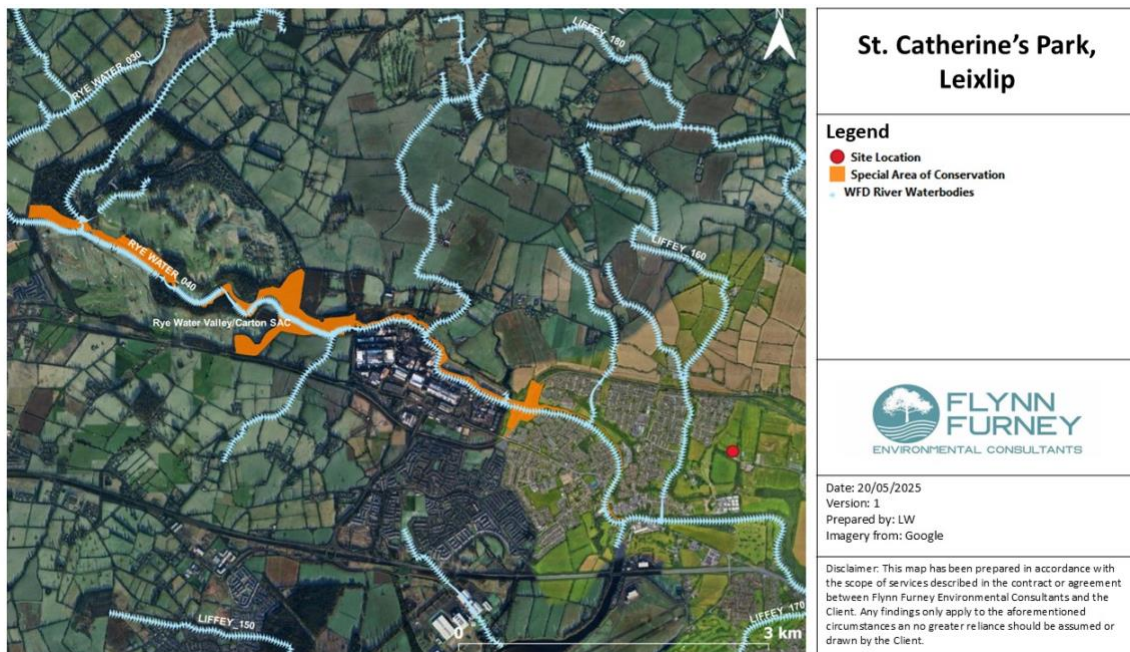


Fig. 3. Location of St. Catherine's Park in relation to nearest Natura 2000 site and Water Framework Directive River Waterbodies.

3. RELEVANT LEGISLATION & SCREENING METHODOLOGY

Screening is the first stage in the EIA process, whereby a decision is made on whether or not EIA is required. This Screening Assessment was undertaken with regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- Roads Act 1993, the Roads Regulations 1994 and the EIA (Amendment) Regulations 1999;
- The Planning & Development Act 2000, the Planning & Development (Strategic infrastructure) Act 2006 and the Roads Act 2007;
- Guidance on EIA, Screening, European Commission, 2001
- EIA, Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development, DoEHLG, 2003
- Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide (NRA, 2008).
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009.
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Draft) - EPA 2017
- European Directive EIA 2014/52/EU¹
- Transposition of 2014 EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) in the Land Use Planning and EPA Licencing Systems. Key Issues Consultation Paper by Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DOHPCLG, 2017).

EIA requirements derive from the EIA Directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU). The amended Directive came into force on 16th May 2017 and regulations transposing it into national legislation have been enacted. No changes to the prescribed project

¹ [Directive 2014/52/EU](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 amending Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (OJ L 124, 25.4.2015, p. 1).

types or thresholds are required under the amended Directive so the types and thresholds set out in the 2001-2010 Regulations remain in effect.

EIA legislation as it relates to the planning process has been largely brought together in Part X of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2018 and Part 10 and Schedules 5, 6 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018. Part 1 of Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations lists project types included in Annex I of the Directive which automatically require EIA. Part 2 of the same Schedule, lists project types included in Annex II. Corresponding developments automatically require EIA if no threshold is given or if they exceed a given threshold. Developments which correspond to Part 2 project types by are below the given threshold must be screening to determine whether they require EIA or not. This is done by consideration of criteria set out in Schedule 7.

EIA legislation sets down the types of projects that may require an EIAR. Annex I defines mandatory projects that require an EIAR and Annex II defines projects that are assessed on the basis of set mandatory thresholds for each of the project classes.

The EIA screening exercise initially assesses the development for Mandatory EIA using classifications defined in the appropriate legislation. Where no mandatory requirement is concluded, screening advances to sub-threshold development assessment, where the competent authority evaluates whether the project is likely to have a *significant* effect on the environment, with reference to its scale, nature, location and context.

4. SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

4.1 Project Class

EIA legislation defines the types of projects that may require an EIAR. *Annex I* defines mandatory projects that require an EIAR and *Annex II* defines projects that are assessed on the basis of set mandatory thresholds for each of the project classes.

4.2 Infrastructure Projects

Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 includes this project type:

10. Infrastructure projects (b) (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.

(In this paragraph, "business district" means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)

The EU Guidance on 'Interpretation of definitions of project categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive' (2015) interprets 'urban development' as taking 'account of, inter alia, the following:

- i. Projects with similar characteristics to car parks and shopping centres could be considered to fall under Annex II (10)(b). This could be the case, for example, of bus garages or train depots, which are not explicitly mentioned in the EIA Directive, but have similar characteristics to car parks.*
- ii. Construction projects such as housing developments, hospitals, universities, sports stadiums, cinemas, theatres, concert halls and other cultural centres could also be assumed to fall within this category. The underlying principle is that all these project categories are of an urban nature and that they may cause similar types of environmental impact.*
- iii. Projects to which the terms 'urban' and 'infrastructure' can relate, such as the construction of sewerage and water supply networks, could also be included in this category.*

Of the above, the project under assessment here would relate closest to 'cultural centre.' However, the proposed development is extremely limited in nature and does not include any of the characteristics of these types of developments such as buildings, seating areas, arenas or indoor facilities. It can therefore be considered as not corresponding to or having similar characteristics to or of any of the project types as listed in the above interpretation (EC, 2015).

Recent case law (Carvill & Anor v Dublin City Council & Ors [2021 No.111 JR]) it may be argued that 'urban development' project type can be considered to apply to developments in an urban area that are not listed in the Commission guidance. However, the setting at St. Catherine's Park is not urban in nature and is distinct from the nearest urban area. Nor is any of the proposed development related to urban infrastructure or activities. Rather, what is proposed here is in keeping with the provision of facilities in a relatively rural parkland setting.

Therefore the proposal would not be considered to constitute a prescribed project type (urban development – type 10(b)(iv)).

Article 120(a)(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, requires that prior to screening a project for EIA: -

Where a local authority proposes to carry out a sub-threshold development, the authority shall carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development.

This preliminary examination is given in the following section.

4.3 Preliminary Examination

The 'preliminary examination' is required to find out if: (i) there is any likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development; (ii) there is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment; or (iii) there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. In instance (i) no EIA is required. In (ii) the project needs to be screened for EIA using prescribed screening criteria. In (iii) an EIA is required and no further screening is necessary.

In the case of the subject development, it can be seen on preliminary examination that the development is small in scale and will not give rise to any significant emissions. It could be concluded on this basis that there is 'no real likelihood of it causing significant effects on the environment' and that an EIA is not required.

It should be noted however, that the development involves construction of facilities in a public park which is of significant amenity value. Given this context it would therefore be appropriate to adopt a cautious approach and to take the view that there is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development.

In accordance with the Regulations, it is considered appropriate to proceed further and to screen the proposal in order to form an opinion as to whether or not the proposed development should be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Conclusion: The proposed scheme does not fall within the mandatory requirement for an EIA as addressed in EU Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directive 97/11/EC). The proposed scheme does not readily conform to any prescribed urban development project and is not in an urban setting. Neither does the project contain any characteristics of an urban development. However, given the valuable amenity area in which works are proposed and in order to adopt a cautious approach with regard to possible environmental impacts, the proposed works should be screened for EIA. These proposed works are thus assessed as a sub-threshold development.

1. SUB-THRESHOLD DEVELOPMENT - EIA SCREENING

A key determinant of the necessity for Environmental Impact Assessment of sub-threshold projects is whether or not such works are likely to have *significant* effects on the environment. The 1997 amending Directive (97/11/EC) introduced guidance for Member States in terms of deciding whether or not a development is likely to have a “significant effect on the environment.”

These criteria have been transposed fully into Irish legislation in the third schedule of the European Communities Environmental Impact Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 1999, (SI No.93 of 1999) and in Schedule 7 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (SI No 600 of 2001) as amended by Planning & Development Regulations 2008. This has been updated by transposition of the 2014 EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) which amends Directive 2011/92/EU²). Guidance is provided by use of criteria set out in Annex III of the new Directive. These criteria as transposed in Irish legislation are grouped under three headings and are used to assist the screening process in determining whether a development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The three headings and criteria details as given in Annex III are given below:

Heading	Criteria
1. Characteristics of proposed development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the size and design of the entire proposed development• the cumulation with other existing and/or approved development• the use of natural resources• the production of waste• pollution and nuisances• the risk of major accidents (with regard to substances or technologies used)• the risks to human health

² Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (codification) (OJ L 26, 28.1.2012, p. 1).

2. Location of proposed development	<p>The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard in particular to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the existing and approved land use • the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area and its underground • the absorption capacity of the natural environment in particular, wetlands, coastal zones, mountain and forest areas, nature reserves and natural parks, areas protected under the Habitats Directive / Birds Directives, other protected areas, densely populated areas, protected landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.
3. Type and characteristics of potential impacts	<p>The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in particular to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population) • the nature of the impact • the transboundary nature of the impact • the intensity and complexity of the impact • the probability of the impact • the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of impact • the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects • the possibility of effectively reducing the impact

The project at St. Catherine's Park is considered under the above criteria (as set out in Schedule 7) in the tables below.

CRITERIA (Schedule 7)		RELEVANCE	RATIONALE
1. Characteristics of Proposed Development: The characteristics of the proposed development, in particular:	The size of the proposed development	No	The extent of the site to be developed is small. The majority of the scheme footprint will be on lands previously cleared for access and recreational activities.
	The cumulation with the proposed development	No	No projects have been identified as having cumulative impacts with this present project. Rather, positive long-term impacts may be expected.
	The use of natural resources	No	No significant natural resources will be required to complete the project. Resources required will be limited and will not be extracted from the Park.
	The production of waste	No	Waste produced during the construction process is anticipated to be minimal and insufficient to cause significant effects. Any such materials (as suitable) may be used within the site (e.g. chipped wood for mulching). Otherwise any non-usable waste will be brought to a construction and demolition recycling centre for reuse.
	Pollution and nuisance	No	Impacts such as noise and dust will be kept within acceptable standards. No polluting activities are predicted as being necessary for this project. The Park will remain open and accessible to users throughout the duration of construction. As such pollution and nuisance impacts are anticipated to be negligible.
	The risk of accidents having regard to substances or technologies used.	No	Any potential risks are anticipated as being negligible given the nature and very limited scale of the proposed development. No novel technology, techniques or materials will be used.

CRITERIA (Schedule 7)		RELEVANCE	RATIONALE
2. Location of the Proposed Development: The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, having regard in particular to:	The existing land-use	No	The proposed works will enhance and expand the existing facilities here. That is, play and recreation space for casual visitors. There will therefore be no material change in use.
	The relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area and its underground	No	No significant impacts are anticipated given the low sensitivity of the areas proposed for development. These generally are species-poor habitats which have been modified by previous activities (e.g. grasslands used and managed for amenity). No natural areas of higher value are proposed to be impacted upon.
	The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:		
	Wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;	No	Ecological surveys of the site were carried out in March 2025. There are no wetland or riparian areas to be impacted upon by the proposed development. There are no in-stream works or riverbank works proposed. Works in this area proposed carried out as per best practice will ensure no indirect impacts on this watercourse. Therefore, no significant impacts on this watercourse are predicted.
	Coastal zones	No	None of these habitat types occur within area of proposed development.
	Mountain and forest areas	No	There is no montane, alpine or forest habitat within the area proposed for development.
	Nature Reserves and National Parks	No	None of these occur within area of proposed development.

	Areas classified or protected under legislation, including special protection areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC	No	None of these areas occur within the area proposed for development. An Appropriate Assessment Screening exercise was carried out on the proposed project (May 2025) and this concluded that there will no likely significant effects on any Natura 2000 site.
	Areas in which the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the EU have already been exceeded.	No	N/A
	Densely populated areas	No	N/A
	Landscapes of historical, cultural archaeological significance	Yes	A 2-storey gate lodge (Reg No. 11360005) exists on the boundary of the park. This dates from c. 1800. Leixlip Manor (Reg No. 11804073) is a 2-storey country mansion (now a hotel) that dates from the mid-1700s. A Holy Well (St Catherine's Holy Well, Reg No. 11360003) is found to the north west of the proposed sensory garden site. A priory once existed within the site that is now St Catherine's Park. This was converted into a substantial dwelling but was destroyed by fire sometime in the mid-1700s. There is no longer any visible trace of this at ground level. None of the above buildings or monuments will be altered or in any way affected by the proposed sensory garden project.

			Therefore no historical, cultural or archaeological interests of the park will be impacted upon by the proposed works. The rationale for this is based on the fact that there are no registered items of historical, cultural or archaeological interest within the area proposed for works or within close proximity to same. No construction impacts may be predicted on any such interest, given the contained nature of the works. No construction impacts may therefore be reasonably predicted on any of these items. While the development will likely attract more visitors and therefore increase footfall within the park, this will not impact on any of these interests.
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CRITERIA (Schedule 7)		RELEVANCE	RATIONALE
3. Type and characteristics of potential impacts:	the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population)	No	Any potential impacts arising from construction are considered to be insignificant, given the very small scale of the proposed development and the short duration of works that would be required. No negative impacts on populations are expected given the absence of any residences within or close to the area. The completed development will allow an improvement in visitor facilities. Positive impacts on the local population may therefore be expected in the long-term.
	The nature of the impact	No	Short-term visual impacts may be anticipated during the construction phase. There may also be some nuisance from restrictions on access during the construction. However, long-term positive impacts arising from the improvement of the visitor amenities made available may be expected.
	the transboundary nature of the impact	No	N/A
	the intensity and complexity of the impact	No	Any impacts are considered insignificant given size and scale of development (as above). No significant negative impacts are predicted. Short-term visual and nuisance impacts may occur. However, long-term positive impacts may be predicted.
	the probability of the impact	No	No significant negative impacts are predicted. Short-term visual and nuisance impacts may occur. However, long-term positive impacts may be predicted.
	the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of impact	No	No significant negative impacts are predicted. Short-term visual and nuisance impacts may occur. However, these would be easily reversed after the short term of the construction phase is completed. However, long-term positive impacts may be predicted.

	the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects	No	A number of other proposed and ongoing developments were reviewed. These included a number of alteration to or construction of residential buildings. None of these might be expected to have cumulative impacts. There are no upcoming projects known at time of writing that would give rise to any cumulative impacts.
	the possibility of effectively reducing the impact	No	No significant negative impacts are predicted. It is not considered that any mitigation measures are required to be prescribed in order to reduce any impacts given the nature and scale of the proposed works.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that the **characteristics of the proposed development** would not be considered likely to have significant effects on the environment. This is based primarily on the limited size and scale of the proposed works and low potential to have significant impacts. No other projects emerged from the screening process with which the proposed works may have significant cumulative impacts.

It is concluded that there will be no significant direct or indirect impacts by virtue of the **location of the proposed development** on the receiving environment. This is based primarily upon the absence of any impacts predicted upon any protected sites such as Nature Reserves, parks or Natura 2000 Sites. The site is within a park. However, the works do not have potential for any significant impacts on this site given the proposed works are mainly planned to be within or on the periphery of previously developed areas. This area has previously been cleared for access for recreation.

It is concluded that the **type and characteristics of the potential impacts** would not be considered significant. This is based primarily upon the limited size and scale of the proposed works. Impacts on landscape, soils and geology are not considered significant, given the previously developed location, as well as the very limited nature and scale of works.

Given the size and scale of the proposed development and the absence of any other projects or plans known at time of writing, no significant **cumulative impacts** are considered likely.

The assessment has been carried out on the proposed works as a **sub threshold development**. The overall conclusion of this screening exercise is that there should be no specific requirement for a full Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development.

REFERENCES

DoEHLG. (2003) *'Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development'*. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

DOECLG (2015) *Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2013* (Unofficial Consolidation). Unpublished Report by Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

European Commission (2015) Interpretation of Definitions of Project Categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive. European Union, Brussels.

NRA (2008) *Environmental Impact Assessment of National Roads Schemes – a practical guide*. National Roads Authority (Now Transport Infrastructure Ireland), Dublin.



Fig. 1. Overall Sensory Garden Layout. From Drawing by Realise Landscape Architects for Kildare County Council