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Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment

Proposed Residential Development

at

Kill Hill and Earl's Court,

Kill,

Co. Kildare

Prepared on behalf of

McCourt Investments Limited

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1. Introduction

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), designated under the EU Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPA), designated under the EU Birds Directive are collectively referred to as Natura 2000 sites (or European sites). The conservation objectives for these sites are derived from a combination of qualifying interests including the presence of Annex I habitats and Annex II species listed in the Habitats Directive and Annex I birds listed in the Birds Directive.

Part of the statutory protection measures under Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive includes the consideration of potential impacts of a plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites through an Appropriate Assessment (AA) process.

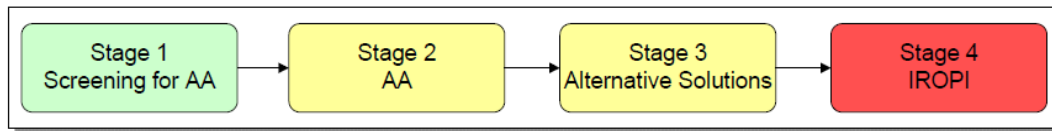
This report provides information on and assesses the potential for the proposed development to significantly affect Natura 2000 sites. The information can be used by the competent authority, Kildare County Council and An Bord Pleanála, in carrying out its statutory obligations under European and national legislation.

2. Methodology

This Screening Statement for Appropriate Assessment was prepared with regard to the following guidance documents:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*
- *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 92043/EEC*

The guidance promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA, and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.



Screening for AA involves the following:

- Description of the project and its relevance to the management of a Natura site;
- Identification of Natura 2000 sites potentially affected;
- Identification and description of individual and cumulative impacts likely to result;
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified on site integrity.

3 Stage 1 Screening

The first step is to establish whether, in relation to a particular plan or project, appropriate assessment is required. Its purpose is to determine, on the basis of a preliminary assessment and objective criteria, whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, could have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

3.1 Site Description

The site of c. 6.3ha is located to the east of an existing residential development and close to the junction of the N7 Dublin-Limerick Road.

In accordance with Fossett's *Guide to Habitats* the main habitats are:-

- GA1 Improved Agricultural Grassland
- WL1 Hedgerow

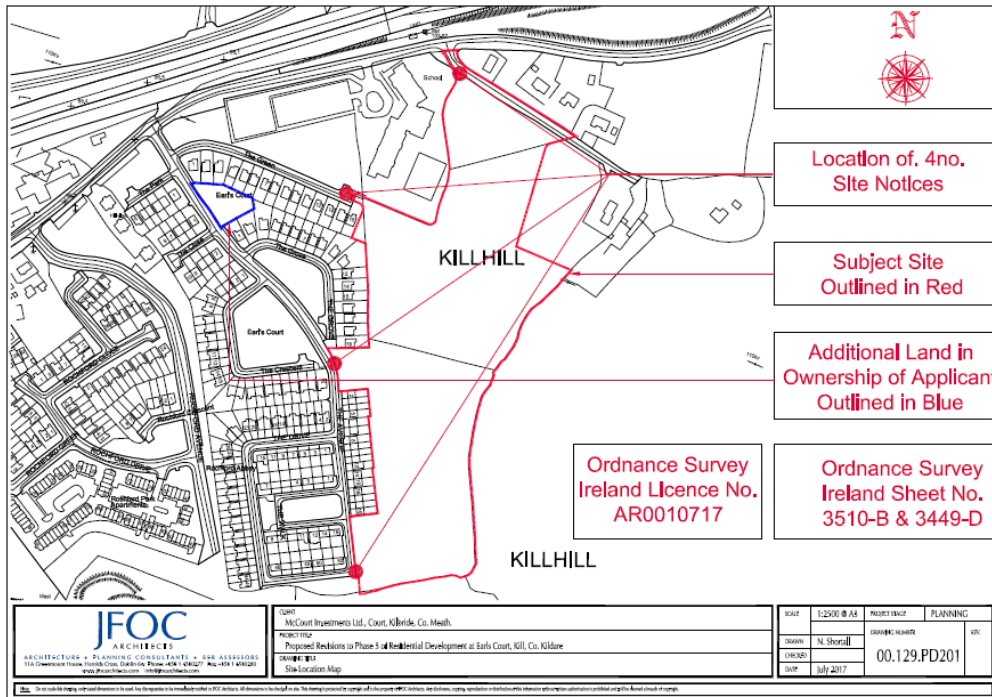


Figure 1: Site Location Map

3.2 Description of Proposed Development

The proposed development shall consist of a residential development of 130 no. dwellings, 2 no. vehicular connections to The Avenue, Earl's Court and a further pedestrian link at No. 16 The Green, Earl's Court and all associated and ancillary site development works.

The project is not connected to or necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 site.

3.3 Description of Natura 2000 Sites

Screening requires that European sites within the likely zone of impact are identified. A distance of 15km is currently recommended in the case of plans, and derives from UK guidance.

Figure 2 shows the location of Natura sites within 15km of the site. These are:-

- Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA (9.54km South-East)
- Glensamole Valley SAC (13.6km East)
- Wicklow Mountains SAC (12 and 13km South-East)
- Mouds Bog SAC (14.53km South-West)
- Ballynafagh Bog SAC (13.37km North-West)
- Ballynafagh Lake SAC (14.8km North-West)
- Red Bog, Kildare SAC (13.9km North)

- Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (13.85km North)
- Wicklow Mountains SPA (15km South-East)

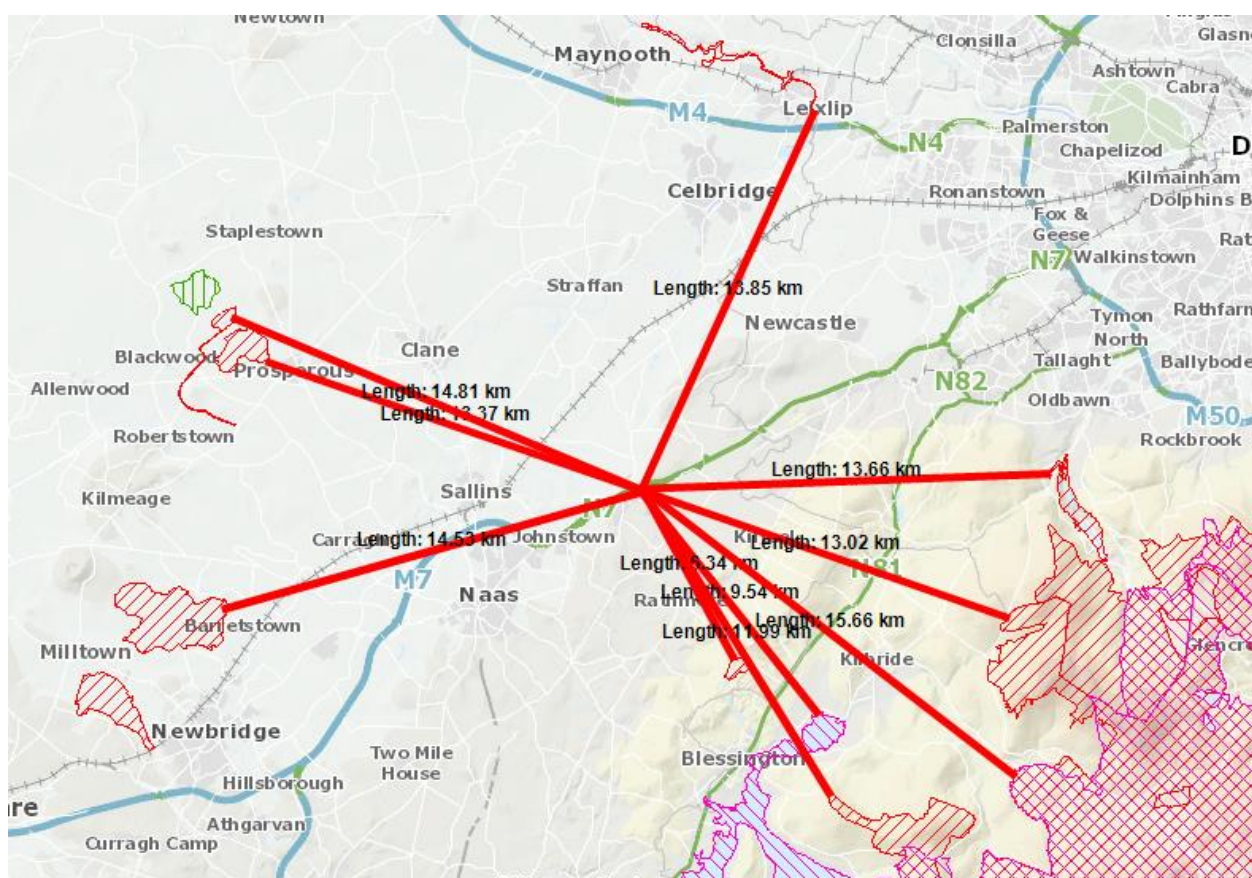


Figure 2: NPWS Context Map

Table 1 outlines the qualifying interests of the sites and the key threats to the species or habitats as set out in the Article 12 and Article 17 reports on the status of protected habitats and species in Ireland.

Table 1: Natura 2000 Sites, Qualifying Interests and Threats

Site Name and Code	Qualifying interests	Population Trend	Threats to Species
Poulaphouca Reservoir SPA 004063	Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043]	Amber-listed in Ireland as the majority of the population winters at less than ten sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modification of cultivation practices - Renewable abiotic energy use - Hunting and collection of wild animals - Utility and service lines
	Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]	Amber listed in Ireland due to localised breeding population	

Glenasmole Valley SAC 001209	Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Species composition change (succession) - Problematic native species - Fertilisation - Intensive cattle grazing - Intensive horse grazing - Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing - Agricultural intensification
	Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abandonment / lack of mowing - Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing - Water abstractions from groundwater - Species composition change (succession) - Problematic native species - Intensive cattle grazing - Intensive horse grazing - Accumulation of organic material - Landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general - Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing
	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to agricultural and N/A forestry activities - Trampling, overuse - Roads, motorways

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intensive grazing - Water abstractions from groundwater
Wicklow Mountains SAC 002122	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to agricultural and N/A forestry activities - Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to other sources not N/A listed - Water abstractions from groundwater - Mechanical removal of peat - Mixed pollutants diffuse pollution to surface waters due to household sewage and waste water - Pollution to surface waters by industrial plants - Pollution to surface waters by storm overflows - Changes in abiotic conditions
	Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to agricultural and N/A forestry activities - Mechanical removal of peat - Mixed pollutants (X) Water abstractions from groundwater - Modification of hydrographic functioning, general
	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non intensive sheep grazing - Artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees) - Wind energy production

	European dry heaths [4030]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Burning down - Erosion - Non intensive sheep grazing - Artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees) - Wind energy production - Burning down
	Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]	Improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non intensive sheep grazing - Walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles
	Calaminarian grasslands of the Violetalia calaminariae [6130]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disposal of household / recreational facility waste - Competition (flora) - Trampling, overuse - Motorised vehicles - Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing - Erosion - Disposal of inert materials - Interspecific floral relations - problematic native species - species composition change (succession)
	Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non intensive sheep grazing - Artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees)
	Blanket bogs (* if		

	active bog) [7130]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hand cutting of peat - Mechanical removal of peat - Wind energy production - Burning down - Water abstractions from groundwater - Erosion - Changes in abiotic conditions
	Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) [8110]	Improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non intensive sheep grazing - Species composition change (succession)
	Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non intensive sheep grazing - Invasive non-native species - Invasive non-native species
	Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invasive non-native species - Grazing in forests/ woodland - Problematic native species
	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]	Improving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Roads, motorway
	Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	Favourable	
Mouds Bog SAC 002331	Active raised bogs [7110]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water abstractions from groundwater - Peat extraction - Artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees) - Fire and fire suppression

	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mining and quarrying - Water abstractions from groundwater - Peat extraction - Artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees) - Fire and fire suppression - Mining and quarrying
	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non intensive sheep grazing - Artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees) - Hand cutting of peat - Mechanical removal of peat - Burning down - Water abstractions from groundwater
Ballynafagh Bog SAC 000391	Active raised bogs	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water abstractions from groundwater - Peat extraction - artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees) - fire and fire suppression - Mining and quarrying
	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water abstractions from groundwater - Peat extraction - artificial planting on open ground - fire and fire suppression - Mining and quarrying

	Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion	Declining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non intensive sheep grazing - artificial planting on open ground - hand cutting of peat - mechanical removal of peat
Ballynafagh Lake SAC 001387	Alkaline fens [7230]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water abstractions from groundwater - reclamation of land from sea, estuary or marsh - diffuse groundwater pollution due to agricultural and forestry activities - abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing - Changes in abiotic conditions - Water abstractions from surface waters - infilling of ditches, dykes, ponds, pools, marshes or pits - invasive non-native species - diffuse pollution to surface waters due to agricultural and forestry activities - Peat extraction - artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees) - agricultural intensification
	Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016]	Declining	
	Euphydryas aurinia (Marsh Fritillary) [1065]	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - agricultural intensification - species composition change - anthropogenic reduction of habitat connectivity

			- peat extraction
Red Bog, Kildare SAC 000397	Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Water abstractions from groundwater - reclamation of land from sea, estuary or marsh - diffuse groundwater pollution due to agricultural and forestry activities - missing or wrongly directed conservation measures - Changes in abiotic conditions Water abstractions from surface waters - infilling of ditches, dykes, ponds, pools, marshes or pits - invasive non-native species
Rye Water Valley/Cartron SAC 001398	Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]	Stable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landfill, land reclamation and drying out, general - abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing - diffuse pollution to surface waters due to agricultural and forestry activities - Trampling, overuse - roads, motorways - intensive grazing - Water abstractions from groundwater
	Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014]	Decreasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intensive grazing - abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing - camping and caravans - Modification of hydrographic functioning, general
	Vertigo moulinsiana (Desmoulin's Whorl)	Declining	

	Snail) [1016]		
Wicklow Mountains SPA 004040	Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098] Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]	Unknown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - forest planting on open ground - modification of cultivation practices - Changes in biotic conditions - Renewable abiotic energy use - Forest and Plantation management & use

3.5 Assessment of Likely Effects

Table 1 identifies the most significant threats to the conservation status of the qualifying interests of the sites. The next step is to consider whether the proposed development is likely to give rise to such threats (Table 2). In making these judgements, each Natura 2000 site is examined for a potential source-pathway-receptor link. In ecological and environmental impact assessment, for an impact to occur there must be a risk enabled by having a 'source' (e.g. works during the construction of individual aspects of the Scheme), a 'receptor' (e.g. a Natura 2000 site), and a pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a watercourse which connects the sites to a Natura 2000 site).

Table 2: Relationship between proposed development and key threats to Natura 2000 sites

Threat	Risk of threat arising from development of Project
Modification of cultivation practices	No impact
Renewable abiotic energy use	No impact
Hunting and collection of wild animals	No impact
Utility and service lines	No impact
Species composition change	No impact
Problematic native species	No impact
Fertilisation	No impact
Intensive grazing	No impact
Mechanical removal of peat	No impact
Abandonment of pastoral systems, lack of grazing	No impact
Agricultural intensification	No impact
Abandonment/lack of mowing	No impact
Water abstractions from groundwater	No impact

Species composition change	No impact
Problematic native species	No impact
Accumulation of organic material	No impact
Landfill, land reclamation and drying out	No impact
Diffuse pollution to surface waters due to agricultural/forestry activities, household sewage and waste waters	No impact
Trampling, overuse	No impact
Roads, motorways	No impact
Pollution to surface waters by industrial plants, storm overflows	No impact
Changes in abiotic conditions	No impact
Modification of hydrographic functioning	No impact
Non-intensive sheep grazing	No impact
Artificial planting on open ground (non-native trees)	No impact
Wind energy production	No impact
Burning down	No impact
Erosion	No impact
Walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles	No impact
Disposal of household/recreational facility waste	No impact
Competition (flora)	No impact
Disposal of inert materials	No impact
Interspecific floral relations	No impact
Problematic native species	No impact
Hand cutting of peat	No impact
Invasive non-native species	No impact
Grazing in forests/woodland	No impact
Fire and fire suppression	No impact
Mining and quarrying	No impact
Infilling of ditches, dykes, ponds, pools, marshes or pits	No impact
Species composition change	No impact
Camping and caravans	No impact

It is concluded that there are no elements of the proposal that could, on their own, lead to a risk of significant impacts on a Natura 2000 site.

3.4 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

The site adjoins an existing residential development on the outskirts of a village. Future developments in the area are likely to be residential in nature and are unlikely to give rise to cumulative impacts on any Natura site.

4 Screening Conclusion

It is concluded that there is no likelihood of any significant effects on Natura 2000 sites arising from the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. It is considered that Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

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