

# ATTIREESH GREENWAY LINK

## APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT



April 2024

Client:  
Mayo County Council  
Áras an Chontae  
The Mall  
Castlebar  
Co. Mayo  
F23 WF90

## Attireesh Greenway Link

### Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

Roughan & O'Donovan (ROD) has been commissioned by Mayo County Council to produce an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report in respect of the proposed Attireesh Greenway Link, in Westport, Co. Mayo ("the proposed development").

The AA Screening Report is intended to determine whether or not the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of best scientific knowledge, is likely to have a significant effect on areas designated as being of European importance for nature conservation ("European sites"), thereby enabling Mayo County Council, as the Competent Authority in this case, to fulfil its obligations under Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora ("the Habitats Directive").

This document comprises the AA Screening Report in respect of the proposed development and was prepared by ROD in accordance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive, as transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) ("the Planning and Development Act"). The aim of this AA Screening Report is to inform and assist the Competent Authority in determining whether or not the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, has the potential to significantly affect one or more European sites in view of their Conservation Objectives.

It is the considered opinion of ROD, as the author of this AA Screening Report, that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of best scientific knowledge, does not have the potential to significantly affect the Clew Bay Complex SAC or any other European site, in view of their Conservation Objectives. Therefore, that AA is not required in respect of the proposed development.

### **1.2 Competent Experts**

This AA Screening Report was prepared by Jane Stafford; and reviewed by Patrick O'Shea. Jane is a Graduate Ecologist with a BSc in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana. Jane is a Qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Patrick is a Principal Ecologist with over ten years' experience in ecological assessment. He holds a degree in Botany from Trinity College Dublin and an MSc in Ecological Management and Conservation Biology from Queen's University Belfast. Patrick is a Full member of CIEEM.

### **1.3 Legislative Context**

Council Directive 92/43/EEC of the 21<sup>st</sup> May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats of wild fauna and flora ("the Habitats Directive") and Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds ("the Birds Directive") list habitats and species which are, in a European context, important for conservation and in need of protection. This protection is afforded in part through the designation of sites which support significant examples of habitats or populations of species. ("European sites"). Sites designated for wild birds are termed "Special Protection Areas" (SPAs) and sites designated for natural habitat types or other species are termed "Special Areas of Conservation" (SACs). The complete network of European sites is referred to as "Natura 2000".

In order to ensure the protection of European sites in the context of land use planning and development, Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive provides for the assessment of the implications of plans and projects for European sites, as follows:

*“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<sup>1</sup> 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.”*

In Case C-323/17 [§34], *People Over Wind*, the Court of Justice of the European Union (‘the CJEU’) referred to the nature of the test to be applied in making a screening determination as follows:

*“[...] it is settled case-law that Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive makes the requirement for an appropriate assessment of the implications of a plan or project conditional on there being a probability or a risk that the plan or project in question will have a significant effect on the site concerned. In the light, in particular, of the precautionary principle, such a risk exists if it cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information that the plan or project will have a significant effect on the site concerned (judgment of 26 May 2011, Commission v Belgium, C-538/09, EU:C:2011:349, paragraph 39 and the case-law cited). The assessment of that risk must be made in the light inter alia of the characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the site concerned by such a plan or project (see, to that effect, judgment of 21 July 2016, Orleans and Others, C-387/15 and C-388/15, EU:C:2016:583, paragraph 45 and the case-law cited).”*

Further clarification on the use of mitigation measures was provided in *Eco Advocacy*<sup>2</sup>, where the CJEU ruled that where constituent elements are incorporated into the design of a project as standard features required for all projects of that nature and not with the aim of reducing negative effects of a project on European sites, those features cannot be regarded as indicative of likely significant effects on European sites concerned and should not be interpreted as mitigation measures intended to avoid or reduce harmful effects of a plan or project on those European sites. The judgment stated that:

*“In the light of the foregoing considerations, the answer to the fourth question is that Article 6(3) of the Directive 92/43 must be interpreted as meaning that, in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications of a plan or project for a site, account may be taken of the features of that plan or project which involve the removal of contaminants and which therefore may have the effect of reducing harmful effects of the plan or project on that site, where those features have been incorporated into that plan or project as standard features, inherent in such a plan or project, irrespective of any effect on the site.”*

Article 7 of the Habitats Directive provides that the provisions of, *inter alia*, Article 6(3) are to apply to SPAs under Directive 2009/147/EC (the “Birds Directive”).

As stated, the requirements arising out of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive are transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the 2000 Act and by the European

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<sup>1</sup> Including, where applicable, ‘sites’.

Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended<sup>2</sup> (S.I. No.477 of 2011) (the Habitats Regulations), including Part 5 thereof.

The determination of whether or not a plan or project requires AA is referred to as “Stage 1” or “AA Screening”. A “Stage 1” or “AA Screening” is completed to determine whether or not the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of best scientific knowledge, is likely to have a significant effect on areas designated as being of European importance for nature conservation (“European sites”), thereby enabling the Applicant, to fulfil its obligations under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive specifies that AA must be undertaken by the “competent national authorities”. In Ireland, the “Competent Authority” is the relevant planning authority for each plan or project, e.g. the local authority or An Bord Pleanála. Consequently, the responsibility for carrying out AA Screening lies solely with the Competent Authority. In that respect, the AA Screening Report is not in itself an AA Screening Assessment but provides the Competent Authority with the information it needs in order to carry out its AA Screening.

## 1.4 Screening Methodology

At this stage of the process, the AA Screening Report assesses the potential effects from the plan or project on the European sites within the Zone of Influence and evaluates them in view of the sites’ Conservation Objectives.

This AA Screening Report has had regard inter alia to the following matters<sup>3</sup>:

- The threshold test is that an appropriate assessment will be required if the proposed development is likely *to have a significant effect* on (a) European site(s) either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.
- It is not necessary, in order to trigger the requirement to proceed to stage 2 AA that the proposed development will ‘*definitely*’ have significant effects on the protected site, but such a requirement will arise if it is a ‘*mere probability*’ that such an effect exists. The requirement to carry out an AA will be satisfied if there is a ‘*probability or a risk*’ that the proposed development will have ‘*significant effects*’ on (a) European site(s).
- Consequent upon the application of the precautionary principle, such a ‘*risk*’ will be found to exist if ‘*it cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information*’ that the particular proposed development ‘*will have significant effects*’ on (a) European site(s).
- An AA will be required if, on the basis of objective information, a ‘*significant effect*’ on a European site ‘*cannot be excluded*’. An AA will not be required if, on the basis of objective information, a ‘*significant effect*’ on (a) European site(s) ‘*can be excluded*’.
- In the case of ‘*doubt as to the absence of significant effects*’ an AA must be carried out.
- The requirement to conduct an AA will arise where, at the screening stage, it is ascertained that the particular development is ‘*capable of having any effect*’ (albeit this must be any ‘*significant effect*’) on (a) European site(s).

<sup>2</sup> Including inter alia S.I. 290 of 2013; SI 499 of 2013; SI 355 of 2015; the Planning, Heritage and Broadcasting (Amendment) Act 2021, Chapter 4; SI 293 of 2021.

<sup>3</sup> See Eoin Kelly v. An Bord Pleanála [2019] IEHC 84; Kelly v. An Bord Pleanála [2014] IEHC 400; Connelly v. An Bord Pleanála [2018] IESC 31; [2018] ILRM 453.

- The '*possibility*' of there being a '*significant effect*' on (a) European site(s) will give rise to a requirement to carry out an AA for the purposes of Article 6(3). There is no need to '*establish*' such an effect and it is merely necessary to determine that there '*may be*' such an effect.
- In order to meet the threshold of likelihood of significant effect, the word '*likely*' in Article 6(3) means less than the balance of probabilities. The test does not require any '*hard and fast evidence*' that such a significant effect was likely. It merely has to be shown that there is a '*possibility*' that this significant effect is likely.
- The assessment of whether there is a risk of '*significant effect*' on the European site must be made in light, *inter alia*, of the '*characteristics and specific environmental conditions of the site concerned*' by the relevant plan or project.
- Plans or projects or applications for developments which have *no appreciable effect* on European sites are excluded from the requirement to proceed to AA. If all applications for permission for proposed developments capable of having *any effect whatsoever* on such sites were to be caught by Article 6(3) *activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill*.

While the threshold at the screening stage of Article 6(3) is very low nonetheless it is a threshold which must be met before it is necessary to proceed to the stage 2 AA.

Accordingly, best practice in undertaking AA Screening involves five steps as follows:

- (1) The first step involves gathering the information and data necessary to carry out a screening assessment. These include, but are not limited to, the details of all phases of the plan or project, environmental data pertaining to the area in which the plan or project is located, e.g. rare or protected habitats and species present or likely to be present, and the details of the European sites within the Zone of Influence.
- (2) The second step involves examining the information gathered in the first step and a scientific analysis of the potential impacts of the project on the receiving environment, particularly the European sites in the Zone of Influence.
- (3) The third step evaluates the impacts analysed in the second step against the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites, thereby determining whether or not those impacts constitute "likely significant effects", within the meaning of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.
- (4) The fourth step involves considering the potential for likely significant effects to arise from the combination of the impacts of the plan or project with those of other plans or projects. If it is determined in the third step that Stage 2 (AA) is required, consideration of potential cumulative impacts may be deferred to that stage.
- (5) The last step involves the issuing of a statement of the determination of the AA Screening. Notwithstanding the recommendation made in the AA Screening Report, the responsibility for completing this step lies solely with the Competent Authority.

The following guidance documents informed the assessment methodology:

- European Commission (EC) (2021) *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*. Environment Directorate-General of the European Commission.

- European Commission (EC) (2018) *Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. European Commission, Brussels.
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) (2010) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) (2010) *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Circular Letter NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10. National Parks & Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) (2021) *Practice Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management*. Office of the Planning Regulator.

## 1.5 Ecological Assessment

In order to fully inform this AA Screening Report in respect of the proposed development, it was necessary to establish the baseline ecological conditions in the receiving environment, particularly with regard to European sites.

### 1.5.1 Desk Study

During the desk study, the statutory consultee, the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS), provided data on designations of sites, habitats and species of conservation interest. This included reporting pursuant to Article 17 of the Habitats Directive<sup>4</sup> (NPWS, 2019a, b, c) and Article 12 of the Birds Directive<sup>5</sup> (Eionet, 2018), as well as the Site Synopses and Conservation Objectives for the relevant European sites.

The desk study involved a thorough review of existing information relating to ecology in the vicinity of the proposed development and in the surrounding area. A number of web-based geographic information systems (GISs) were used to obtain information relating to the natural environment surrounding the proposed development. These included the NPWS *Map Viewer* (NPWS, 2023), which provided information on the locations of protected sites, the National Biodiversity Data Centre's *Biodiversity Maps* (NBDC, 2023), which provided recent and historic records of rare and protected species in the area as well as the Environmental Protection Agency's *Unified GIS Application* (EPA, 2023) which provided additional information on the wider environment.

In 2013, a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was prepared by ROD and Faber Maunsell for the N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project, which was reviewed for relevant ecological information in the area of the proposed development.

As with all desk studies, the data considered were only as good as the data supplied by the recorders and recording schemes. The recording schemes provide disclaimers in relation to the quality and quantity of the data they provide, and these were considered when examining outputs of the desk study.

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<sup>4</sup> Under Article 17, to report to the European Commission every six years on their status and on the implementation of the measures taken under the Directive.

<sup>5</sup> Every three years, Member States of the European Union are required by Article 12 of the Birds Directive to report on implementation of the Directive. The most recent reporting available is for the period 2008-2012.

### **1.5.2 Field Survey**

An ecological walkover survey was undertaken within the site boundary by ROD ecologists on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2023 to inform this assessment.

The surveys adhered to the following guidelines:

- *Ecological Survey Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes* (NRA, 2008).
- *Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes* (NRA, 2009).
- *Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping* (Smith et al., 2011).

### **1.5.3 Assessment**

The ecological baseline which was established by the desk study described above and an ecological field survey on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2023. These informed the assessment of the potential ecological effects likely to arise from the proposed development, particularly with regard to European sites. Any assumptions that were made in view of gaps in the ecological data were made in accordance with the Precautionary Principle.



## **2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 Overview of the Proposed Development**

The proposed development consists of the construction of an active travel link between existing greenway infrastructure. It will provide a connection between existing active travel infrastructure included along the recently constructed N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project (the N5) and with the Great Western Greenway. It aims to connect the two via an existing underpass of the N5 and to the north of Attireesh Road, providing off-road connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists. The proposed development intends to divert pedestrians and cyclists from the current crossing of the N5 Attireesh Roundabout, which leads users through a residential area of the L6183 Attireesh Road. The proposed link will be approximately 300m long, 3m wide, and have 1m wide verges. This includes a boardwalk (70m in length and 4m in width) for cyclists and pedestrians over a wet grassland area, and a bridge (5m in length and 3m in width) over the Coolbarreen Stream.

The proposed development will utilise an area of land acquired for the N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project which was utilised and disturbed during construction of the N5. There is a recently constructed attenuation pond on this land and habitats present are predominantly recolonising bare ground and wet grassland.

### **2.2 Location**

The proposed development is located north of the N5 Road, in the townlands of Deerpark East and Attireesh, north of Westport town, Co. Mayo. The proposed development is comprised of two sections, as detailed below.

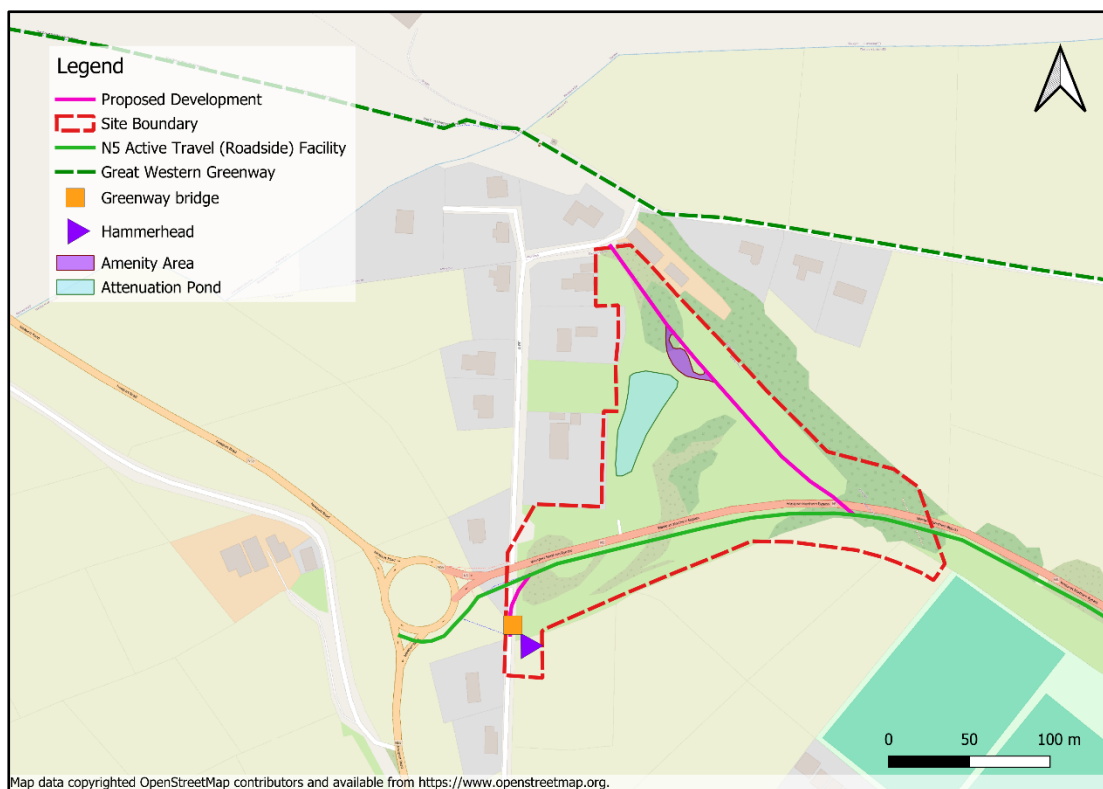
#### **Main Section**

The main section of the proposed development will start at the north exit of the greenway underpass of the N5 Road at Deerpark East and will head in north-westerly direction, including a proposed amenity area to intersect with the L6183 Attireesh Road and the Great Western Greenway route at the Attireesh/Deerpark East townlands. This section will comprise a paved route section over recolonising bare ground and wooden boardwalk over wet grassland.

#### **Link from old Attireesh Road**

There is a further small section of the proposed development which provides a short link adjacent to the N5 roundabout to the existing N5 active travel route. A greenway bridge will be constructed over the Coolbarreen Stream (described in Sections 2.3 and 2.4 below).

The location of the proposed development is as shown in Figure 2.1.



**Figure 2.1 Proposed Development Site Location Map.**

## 2.3 Construction Methodology

The construction of the proposed development is anticipated to take two months to complete. There will be no land take required for the proposed development as the lands are in the ownership of Mayo County Council. Appendix A shows the proposed development plan and profile drawings.

An overview of the construction methodology is presented below:

- Vegetation clearance;
- Drainage;
- Active travel link;
- Hammerhead turnaround.
- Landscaping and rest area; and

### 2.3.1 Vegetation Clearance

A small area of scrub and vegetation will be cleared to accommodate the proposed boardwalk. Where the proposed development joins the Great Western Greenway route, a hedgerow will be removed. There will also be some vegetation clearance for the proposed greenway bridge and hammerhead relocation (detailed in Section 2.3.3 below).

### 2.3.2 Drainage

An attenuation pond is present on the site of the proposed development, and will be retained as part of the landscaping plan (which is detailed in section 2.3.4). Surface waters north of the N5 are directed to this pond. It is not anticipated that there will be any changes to the existing flood regime in this area as a result of the proposed development.

### **2.3.3 Active Travel Link**

#### **Paved Sections**

The paved section of proposed route will be 3m wide and have 1m wide verges. The formation of the paved section will utilise the stockpiled material to the north of the site. The paved section of the proposed development will be fenced using timber fencing.

#### **Boardwalk Section**

The proposed boardwalk will be 70m in length and 4 metres in width, and will be constructed over a wet grassland. The average height of the deck above ground will be 500mm, which may vary by +/- 100mm to suit various ground levels. 180 no. recycled circular plastic piles will be utilised to construct the boardwalk, which will be 80mm in diameter and 1.5m in length. The piles will be driven into place with an excavator working within the footprint of the boardwalk.

#### **Greenway Bridge Section**

The proposed greenway bridge will be 5m in length and 3m in width. Instream works will be required for the construction of the bridge, as the existing 900mm diameter culvert in the Coolbarreen stream and overburden will be removed, and the bank shaped. Excavation will be required to construct the bridge foundation (5m long x 1.25m wide x 0.55m deep (3.5m<sup>3</sup> of material)). The greenway bridge will be built on reinforced concrete strip foundations (4m long x 0.75m wide x 0.4m deep (2.4m<sup>3</sup> of concrete)), and built 1.5m from the edge of the stream bank on each side. There will be a distance of 4.5m between the internal edges of the foundations. These works are expected to take one day to complete.

### **2.3.4 Hammerhead Turnaround**

The existing hammerhead turnaround which is currently directly north of the Coolbarreen Stream will be relocated directly south of the Coolbarreen Stream capping the severed Attireesh road on the southern side of the N5 Road. The existing hammerhead turnaround will be excavated as far as the existing subgrade to the extents required and topsoil shall be placed to a depth of 150mm, and grass seeded. At the new proposed site for the hammerhead turnaround directly south of the Coolbarreen Stream topsoil will be excavated over the extents of the relocated hammerhead and excavated to firm subsoil. Crushed stone (Clause 804) material shall be placed to bring up to the appropriate level and the surface shall be double surfaced dressed.

### **2.3.5 Landscaping and Rest Area**

A landscape plan is included with the proposed development, as is presented in Appendix B. This will include an amenity area, the planting of native vegetation, and the construction of timber fencing.

Any excavated material for the proposed development will be used as fill material where needed or moved to a more suitable area within the site to limit the amount of imported/exported material required for the project.

## **2.4 Receiving Natural Environment**

The primary land use in the area is residential and agricultural. As outlined in Section 2.1, the proposed development will be constructed on land recently disturbed by construction of the N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project, therefore the dominant habitat type on site is recolonising bare ground (ED3). The ecological field surveys described in section 1.5.2 also identified the following habitats (classified according to Fossitt, 2000) within the site of the proposed development: recolonising bare ground

(ED3), wet grassland (GS4), tall-herb swamps (FS2), hedgerows (WL1), treelines (WL2), immature woodland (WS2), buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3).

### Otter

There are no NBDC records of otter from the past ten years in the vicinity of the proposed development (NBDC, 2023). The Natura Impact Statement (NIS) for the N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project reported that no evidence of Otter was found in the vicinity of the proposed development, or in any of the watercourses along the new N5 road from Westport to Turlough (ROD, 2013). The ecological surveys conducted by ROD in 2023 found no evidence of otter at the site of the proposed development. Given that Otter are a highly mobile species, they may utilize the watercourses in the surrounding environment for foraging and commuting.

### Watercourses

Two watercourses run in a westerly direction parallel to one another to the north and south of the proposed development. The EPA has titled these as the 'Slaugar' (the watercourse to the north) and the 'Coolbarreen' (the watercourse to the south). The Slaugar is approximately 85m north of the proposed development and is not hydrologically connected to it. The Coolbarreen runs through the southwestern corner of the site boundary, approximately 13m south of the link from old Attireesh Road to the N5 Active Travel Route. The two watercourses merge approximately 230m east of the proposed development, and flow into Clew Bay approximately 1.8km downstream of the study area.

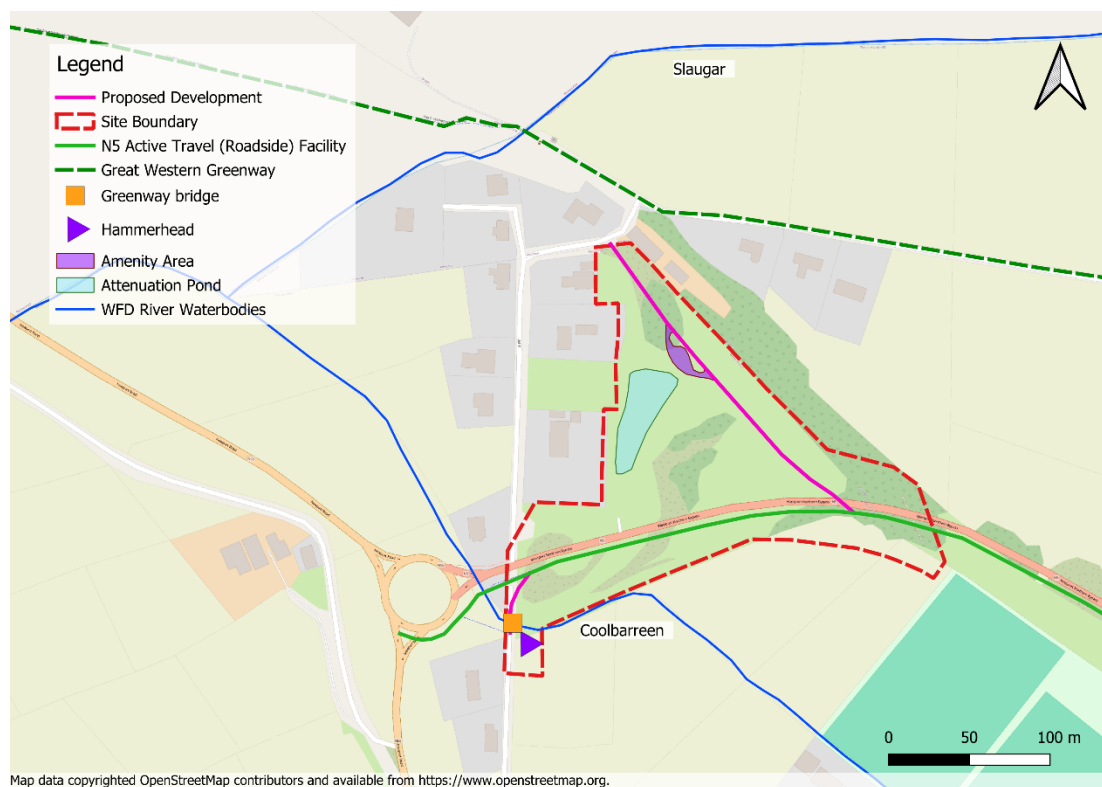
The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is responsible for monitoring the quality of all waterbodies in Ireland and these results are available online. The Water Frameworks Directive (WFD) provides information regarding waterbody statuses recorded in accordance with European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (SI no. 722/2003), and the level of risk for each waterbody of failing to meet their WFD objectives by 2027. For the ground waterbody at the proposed development (titled Newport), WFD has ranked it as having a 'good' status, and as not being at risk of failing to meet its WFD objectives by 2027.

The current WFD status for the transitional and river waterbodies in proximity to the proposed development are presented in Table 2.1. Mapping for watercourses is presented in Figure 2.2. The Slaugar and the Coolbarreen watercourses are monitored together under the WFD and are presented under the label 'Cloonkeen\_010.'

**Table 2.1 WFD Water Monitoring Results**

Waterbody	Waterbody WFD Status 2016 – 2021	Waterbody Risk
Cloonkeen 010	Good	Review
Clew Bay Transitional Waterbody	Good	Review

There is a drainage ditch to the south of the proposed development which drains into the attenuation pond within the site boundary. This ditch was constructed as part of the N5 and is at the base of the N5 embankment. The land within the site boundary is gently sloping towards this ditch and all surface water run-off from the main section of the proposed development (north of the N5) will collect here. The section of the proposed development to the south of the N5 is not directed to the attenuation pond.



**Figure 2.2 Watercourses waterbodies in proximity to the proposed development.**

## 2.5 Likely Effects on the Natural Environment

### Disturbance

The construction phase of the proposed development will give rise to temporary noise, vibration, and visual disturbance. This area has been subject to disturbance due to construction in the recent past from the N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project. However, there is currently very little human activity at the site of the proposed development and construction may cause wildlife to move out of the area.

During the operational phase of the proposed development, there will be an increase noise and visual disturbance due to users of the active travel link.

### Habitat Loss

The construction phase of the proposed development will lead to some habitat loss. As outlined in section 2.3, approximately 0.1 hectare of vegetation will be lost. At the southern end of the proposed route where it joins the N5 greenway underpass, a boardwalk will be constructed over wet grassland habitat (GS4). Some of this habitat will be lost as a result of the construction of the boardwalk. A hedgerow (WL1) to the north of the site where the proposed development joins the Great Western Greenway route consisting of the invasive species Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), will be removed. The majority of the proposed development is located on recolonising bare ground which is of low ecological value.

### Water Quality

The greenway bridge element is situated over the 'Coolbarreen' watercourse. The works at this location have the potential to lead to negative water quality impacts via pollution and sedimentation.

Furthermore, an attenuation pond is located on the site of the proposed development, into which surface water run-off from the site north of the N5 is directed for settlement via a drainage channel. This pond discharges into the Coolbarreen watercourse. There is negligible potential for the construction of the main section of the proposed development to lead to pollution as all surface water runoff will be attenuated in the attenuation pond.

## 3.0 IDENTIFICATION OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

### 3.1 Establishing the Zone of Influence

Section 3.2.3 of DEHLG (2010) outlines the procedure for selecting the European sites to be considered in AA. It states that European sites potentially affected should be identified and listed, bearing in mind the potential for direct, indirect and in-combination effects. It also states that the specific approach in each case is likely to differ depending on the scale and likely effects of the plan or project. However, it advises that the following sites should generally be included:

- All European sites within or immediately adjacent to the plan or project area;
- All European sites within the Zone of Influence of the plan or project; and,
- In accordance with the Precautionary Principle, all European sites for which there is doubt as to whether or not they might be significantly affected.

The “Zone of Influence” of a project is the geographic extent over which significant ecological effects are likely to occur. In the case of projects, the guidance recognises that the Zone of Influence must be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor Model (OPR, 2021). A project may only lead to significant effects on the integrity of the European site where all three elements of Source-Pathway-Receptor are linked. In the absence of one element of this model, likely significant effects can be screened out with confidence. The assessment should make reference to the following key variables:

- The nature, size and location of the project;
- The nature of the impacts which may arise from the project;
- The sensitivities of the ecological receptors; and,
- The potential for in-combination effects.

For example, in the case of a project that could affect a watercourse, it may be necessary to include the entire upstream and/or downstream catchment in order to capture all European sites with water-dependent features of interest.

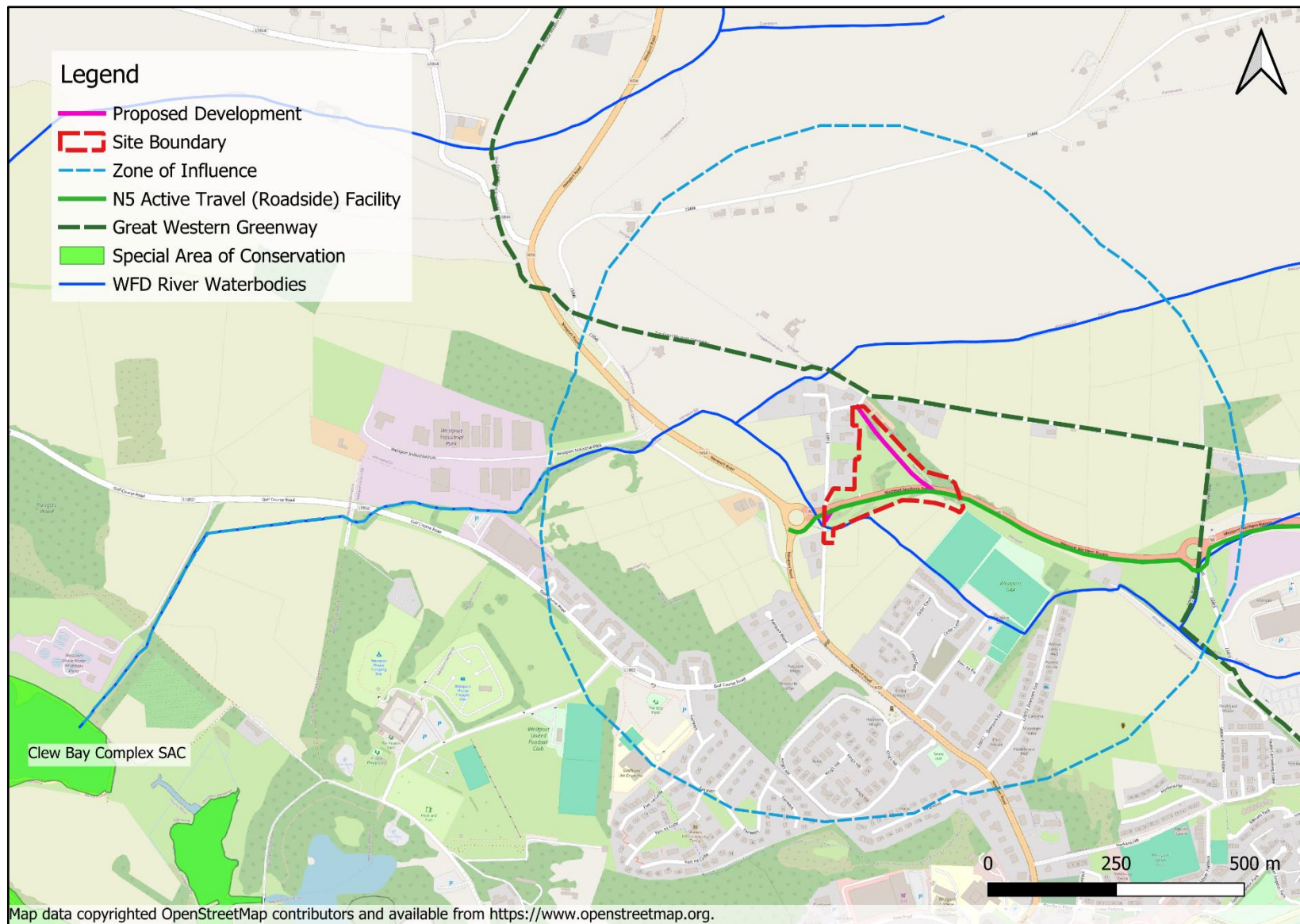
Having regard to the above key variables, the Zone of Influence was defined as:

- The proposed development site plus a 550m buffer.
- The downstream extent of surface water pathways from the proposed development as far as Clew Bay.

This area was defined as the Zone of Influence and it extends to the maximum distance at which potential likely significant effects could occur including via hydrological connections. Additionally, beyond 550m around the proposed development site, there will be no discernible increase in noise, vibration or visual disturbance.

A geographical representation of the Zone of Influence was produced in QGIS 3.26.1 using the proposed development boundary and publicly available OpenStreetMaps. This was used in combination with NPWS shapefiles to identify the boundaries of European sites in relation to the Zone of Influence (Figure 3.1).

It was determined that one European Site occurs within the Zone of Influence for the proposed development. The Zone of Influence is illustrated in Figure 3.1. Table 3.1 lists and describes how this site is connected to the proposed development. A detailed description of this site is provided in Section 3.2.



**Figure 3.1** Location of European sites in relation to the Zone of Influence of the proposed development.



**Table 3.1 European sites located within the Zone of Influence.**

European site [site code]	Are there potential pathways for effects from the proposed development to this site?
<b>Clew Bay Complex SAC [001482]</b>	<b>Yes.</b> This site is approximately 1.3 km southwest and approximately 1.8 km downstream of the proposed development study area. There are potential pathways for impacts on water quality downstream of the proposed development during the construction phase via the Coolbarreen watercourse.

### 3.2 Site Description

The description of the Clew Bay Complex SAC provided here is based on the Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2011) and Site Synopsis (NPWS, 2021b) for the site.

#### Qualifying Interests of the Site

- [1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- [1150] Coastal lagoons
- [1160] Large shallow inlets and bays
- [1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines
- [1220] Perennial vegetation of stony banks
- [1330] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*)
- [2110] Embryonic shifting dunes
- [2120] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes)
- [21A0] Machairs (\* in Ireland)
- [91A0] Old sessile oak woods with *Ilex* and *Blechnum* in the British Isles
- [1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*)
- [1365] Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)

#### Site Overview

Clew Bay is a wide, west-facing bay on the west coast of Co. Mayo. It is open to the westerly swells and winds from the Atlantic, with Clare Island giving only a small amount of protection. This drumlin landscape was formed during the last glacial period when sediments were laid down and smoothed over by advancing ice. The sea has subsequently inundated the area, creating a multitude of islands. The geomorphology of the bay has resulted in a complex series of interlocking bays creating a wide variety of marine and terrestrial habitats.

Within the shallow bay, subtidal sediments are characterised by typical bivalve communities in fine sand (*Chamelea striatula* and *Ensis* sp.), and by the polychaete worm *Euclymene* sp. and the bivalve *Thyasira flexuosa* in muddy sand. The intertidal sediment communities are characterised by polychaetes and bivalves in the mid shore and by the sand mason worm *Lanice conchilega* in the low shore. In areas where there is maerl debris with small amounts of live maerl, the infaunal community has a mixture of species characteristic of coarse sand (e.g. the bivalves *Timoclea ovata*, *Spisula* sp., and the polychaetes *Nephtys cirrosa* and *Glycera lapidum*) and medium sand (e.g., the bivalve *Ensis* sp. and the polychaetes *Lanice conchilega*, *Scoloplos armiger* and *Sthenelais boa*). The bivalves *Timoclea ovata*, *Tapes rhomboides* and the polychaetes *Branchiommoma bombyx* and *Glycera lapidum* are typical of gravels and medium sands, whereas the bivalves *Abra alba*, *Corbula gibba*, *Thyasira flexuosa* and

*Mysella bidentata* and the polychaete *Euclymene* are characteristic of muddy sands. Beds of live maerl of *Lithothamnion corallioides* are also present in a number of areas.

Around the edges of the inner part of the bay are shores of mixed boulders, cobbles, gravel with some sand and mud. They have a typical zonation of intertidal communities found on sheltered shores of mixed substratum. The shore at Murisk is unusual as a distinct zone characterised by archiannelids occurs above the sandhopper zone in the upper shore under the boulders and cobbles. This is an unusual habitat. In sheltered areas of shallow water with little sand scour a well-developed community of hydroids, sponges and solitary sea squirts is present. Where the sediments include gravel and mud the species richness in the area can be exceptionally high (180 species). A number of marine species that are rarely recorded are found in Clew Bay: the stalked jellyfish *Lucernariopsis cruxmelitensis*; the polychaetes *Anitides rosea*, *Clymenura clypeata*, *Pterosyllis formosa* and *Pionosyllis sp.* and the snail *Clypterea chinensis*.

Clew Bay is considered to have the most significant shingle reserves in the country, and has (on the islands) the only examples of incipient gravel barriers in Ireland. Associated with the shingle (and dunes) are good examples of annual vegetation of drift lines. Characteristic species found in these habitats include: Spear-leaved Orache (*Atriplex prostrata*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Sea Sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*), Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Common Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), Sea Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*) and Sea Campion (*Silene vulgaris subsp. Maritima*).

Lough Furnace is located at the north-eastern corner of Clew Bay. The lough is a good example of a deep, stratified, saline lake lagoon in a very natural state. Salinity levels can vary considerably here depending on rainfall and tides. The lake is one of the very few permanently stratified lakes known in Ireland and Britain. The lake is ringed by Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and Common Club-rush (*Scirpus lacustris*), with small patches of Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) and Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*). Lough Furnace supports a relatively high faunal diversity (41 taxa recorded in a 1996 survey), including a number of important invertebrate species. The relict mysid species *Neomysis integer*, the isopods *Jaera albifrons*, *J. ischiosetosa* and *J. nordmanni*, and two rare amphipods (*Lembos longipes* and *Leptocheirus pilosus*) have all been recorded from the lake. Both Irish species of tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima* and *R. cirrhosa*) occur in the lagoon. Eel, Flounder and Mullet also occur in the lake waters. Mallard nest around the lough, while Saint's Island contains nesting Black-headed Gull.

At the north-western end of Lough Furnace lie two associated lakes, Lough Napransky and Lough Navroony. A stream drains from the latter into the main lake. The area contains flush and quaking-mire vegetation, which is of interest as Irish Heath (*Erica erigena*) is found there, with bog mosses (*Sphagnum spp.*), Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*), Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) and Round-leaved Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*). Bog Orchid (*Hammarbya paludosa*), a species listed in the Irish Red Book and the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, is also found in this area. Beyond the wet area there is a Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) dominated woodland growing over abandoned fields. Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) are common, with occasional Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*). The ground flora contains such species as Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*) and Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*).

Keeloges Wood is a medium-sized woodland on the north-east corner of Clew Bay. The woodland lies in a sheltered location between several drumlins and occurs on a

shallow, moist, brown-earth soil with an organic-rich A horizon which is occasionally peaty. The soil is gleyed near streams and flushes. The woodland is dominated by Sessile Oak, with Downy Birch and occasional Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). Hazel, Holly and Hawthorn are the principal components of the shrub layer. In moister sites Rusty Willow (*Salix cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*) and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) occur. The woodland is at the more fertile end of the spectrum of oak woodlands and is transitional to Ash woodland. Consequently, the field layer is species-rich. Elements of oak woodland, e.g. Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*), Greater Stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) and Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), are mixed with elements of Ash woodland, e.g. False Brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*), Enchanter's-nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*) and Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*), as well as indicators of poorly-drained soil, e.g. Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Marsh Hawk's-beard (*Crepis paludosa*). The epiphyte *Lobaria pulmonaria* is also present, together with numerous other lichen and bryophyte species (including *Usnea* spp).

The wood was cut during the second World War so most of the trees are approximately 60 years old, but a few very much larger oaks occur, principally on the shoreline. There is a low but well-developed canopy with a well-developed shrub layer and often luxuriant field layer. There is good regeneration of trees. A most unusual feature is the juxtaposition of oak woodland with saltmarsh where the woodland borders the shoreline. The wood has been well-managed in recent times with occasional filling in of wind-blown coupes with trees derived from seed collected on-site. A stock-proof fence has been maintained along the land boundary. No invasive exotics were encountered during recent survey. The woodland appears on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map indicating that it is long-established and possibly ancient. The species-list also supports this contention with at least 14 species present here which have been found to be significantly more frequent in potentially ancient woodlands. This woodland is of particular significance in view of its location in the extreme north-west of the country where there is very little woodland, its position on the coast, its species-richness, excellent structure and its possible ancient status.

The Rosmurrevagh area in the north of Clew Bay displays a high diversity of habitats, from seashore to dunes, machair and coastal grassland, as well as saltmarsh, bog and fen. The sandy beach on the seaward side grades into dunes of Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*). Adjacent to this, the saltmarsh vegetation, which is approximately 5 m wide, comprises Thrift, Common Scurvygrass, Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*) and 'turf fucoids' (diminutive forms of brown algae). These plant species are typical of Atlantic salt meadows. Similar saltmarshes occur scattered around the entire shoreline of the bay.

Next to the saltmarsh at Rosmurrevagh is an area of coastal grassland and machair. The majority of the machair grassland is relatively level and occurs on a fine sand substrate that is free draining. Small patches of damp machair are often found in conjunction with the saltmarsh or low-lying depressions where water from incoming high tides occasionally reaches. Many typical grassland species such as *Festuca rubra* (Red fescue), *Bellis perennis* (Daisy), and *Plantago lanceolata* (Ribwort plantain) are found on the machair. Autumn lady's-tress (*Spiranthes spiralis*) and Field Gentian (*Gentianella campestris*) are occasional in the grassland sward. Flushes introduce a species-rich bog/fen type vegetation. Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Soft Rush (*Juncus effusus*), Irish Heath, bog mosses, sedges, Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*), Bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*), Bog Asphodel and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) are also found.

A further dune system occurs at Bartraw in the south-west of the site. Here Marram and embryonic dunes occur along a shingle ridge which links a small island where

dunes also occur. Embryonic dunes, characterised by the presence of Sand Couch (*Elymus farctus*), also occur on some of the islands in the bay.

Important populations of Otter and Common (Harbour) Seal are found in Clew Bay. A total of 95 Common Seals were recorded ashore within Clew Bay Complex SAC in August 2003 during a national aerial survey for the species. Continued land-based monitoring within the site recorded 121 seals of all ages ashore in August 2009 and 118 in August 2010. The snail species *Vertigo geyeri*, which is also listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has been recorded from this site based on a finding of the species at the edge of a lagoon at Rosmoney, as reported in 2005. The *Vertigo* monitoring survey of 2008-2010 assessed the site as having very little suitable habitat and that this was a natural situation rather than due to loss of habitat. This was the only site for *Vertigo geyeri* in this SAC and no others have been found.

The Clew Bay Complex supports a good diversity of wintering waterfowl, with nationally important numbers of Red-breasted Merganser (average maximum of 70 in the winters 1995/96-1999/00) and Ringed Plover (average maximum of 142 in the winters 1995/96-1999/00). A population of Barnacle Goose (100-200 birds) frequents the islands during winter. Other species which occur in significant numbers include Great Northern Diver (14), Brent Goose (118), Shelduck (74), Wigeon (112), Teal (127), Mallard (64), Oystercatcher (250), Dunlin (450), Bar-tailed Godwit (73), Curlew (373), Redshank (172), Greenshank (10) and Turnstone (27) (all figures are average maxima for the winters 1995/95-1999/00). Species which breed in important numbers include Cormorant (115 pairs in 1985), Common Tern (20+ pairs in 2000/01), Arctic Tern (100+ pairs in 2000/01) and Little Tern (9 pairs in 2000). The various tern species, as well as Barnacle Goose, Great Northern Diver and Bar-tailed Godwit, are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The juxtaposition within Clew Bay of a wide variety of habitats, including 10 listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and the combination of important flora and fauna, including one Red Data Book plant and two animals listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, make this a site of considerable national and international importance.

### **3.3 Evaluation against Conservation Objectives**

Table 3.2 below details the evaluation of the likely effects of the proposed development in view of the Conservation Objectives of the site identified in Section 3.1 and described in Section 3.2. As explained in Sections 1.2 and 1.3, AA Screening is carried out in view of the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European site(s), which are in turn defined by detailed Attributes and corresponding Targets. Therefore, the evaluation of whether or not a likely effect is significant (in view of the Conservation Objective in question) is made with regard to these Attributes and Targets.

**Table 3.2 Evaluation of the likely effects of the proposed development in view of the Conservation Objectives of Clew Bay Complex SAC [001482].**

Qualifying Interest <i>*indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive</i>	Conservation Objective as per NPWS (2011)	Does the proposed development provide for any potential delay or interruption in the achievement of this Conservation Objective, as defined by its Attributes and Targets?	Likely Significant Effect
<b>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</b>	<i>“To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>	<p>The Attributes of the Conservation Objectives of these Qualifying Interests focus on <i>“Habitat area”</i> and <i>“Community distribution”</i>.</p> <p>Mapping provided in the conservation objectives document for the Clew Bay Complex SAC indicates that these habitats are located at the shortest hydrological distance 1.8km downstream of the proposed development. Culvert removal and bridge construction at the Coolbarreen stream has the potential to cause water quality impacts to this stream, such as sedimentation or pollution which may be carried downstream towards Clew Bay. Given the small scale and duration of construction works at the Coolbarreen Stream, the hydrological distance of 1.8km and the assimilative capacity of Clew Bay, any changes to water quality would be minor and would have settled/dissipated to negligible levels before reaching Clew Bay.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects to occur on the Conservation Objectives of these Qualifying Interests within this SAC in any form as a result of the proposed development.</p>	No
<b>Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]</b>	<i>“To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Large shallow inlets and bays in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>		No
<b>Coastal lagoons [1150]*</b>	<i>“To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lagoons in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>	<p>Mapping provided in the conservation objectives document for the Clew Bay Complex SAC indicates that there is no connectivity between the proposed development and the location of these Qualifying Interests, therefore there are no pathways for impacts to occur to these Qualifying Interests.</p>	No
<b>Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210]</b>	<i>“To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Annual vegetation of driftlines in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>	<p>Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects to occur on the Conservation Objectives of these Qualifying Interests within this SAC in any form as a result of the proposed development.</p>	No
<b>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]</b>	<i>“To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>		No

<b>Qualifying Interest</b> *indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive	<b>Conservation Objective as per NPWS (2011)</b>	<b>Does the proposed development provide for any potential delay or interruption in the achievement of this Conservation Objective, as defined by its Attributes and Targets?</b>	<b>Likely Significant Effect</b>
<b>Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]</b>	<i>“To restore the favourable conservation condition of Embryonic shifting dunes in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>	Mapping provided in the conservation objectives document for the Clew Bay Complex SAC indicates that there is no connectivity between the proposed development and the location of these Qualifying Interests, therefore there are no pathways for impacts to occur to these Qualifying Interests.  Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects to occur on the Conservation Objectives of these Qualifying Interests within this SAC in any form as a result of the proposed development.	No
<b>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120]</b>	<i>“To restore the favourable conservation condition of Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>		No
<b>Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0]</b>	<i>NPWS (2011) does not contain a site-specific Conservation Objective for Machairs. The Conservation Objective and associated Attributes and Targets for Machairs in the Keel Machair/Menaun Cliffs SAC [001513], was used: “To restore the favourable conservation condition of Machairs*” (NPWS, 2018).</i>		No
<b>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</b>	<i>“To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows in Clew Bay Complex SAC”</i>	The Attributes of the Conservation Objectives of these Qualifying Interests focus on “Habitat area”, “Physical Structure” and “Vegetation Structure”.  Mapping shows that the point at which the Coolbarreen stream discharges into Clew Bay is a potential location for this Qualifying Interest. Culvert removal and bridge construction at the Coolbarreen stream has the potential to cause water quality impacts to this stream, such as sedimentation or pollution which may be carried downstream towards Clew Bay. Given the small scale and duration of construction works at the Coolbareen Stream, the hydrological distance of 1.8km and the assimilative capacity of Clew Bay, any changes to water quality would be minor and would have settled/dissipated to negligible levels before reaching Clew Bay.	No

<b>Qualifying Interest</b> *indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive	<b>Conservation Objective as per NPWS (2011)</b>	<b>Does the proposed development provide for any potential delay or interruption in the achievement of this Conservation Objective, as defined by its Attributes and Targets?</b>	<b>Likely Significant Effect</b>
		Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects to occur on the Conservation Objectives of these Qualifying Interests within this SAC in any form as a result of the proposed development.	
<b>Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]</b>	<i>NPWS (2011) does not contain a site-specific Conservation Objective for Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles. The Conservation Objective and associated Attributes and Targets for Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles in Ballyarr Wood SAC [000116], was used: "To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles" (NPWS, 2021a).</i>	The Attributes of the Conservation Objectives of this Qualifying Interest focuses on " <i>Habitat area</i> ", " <i>Habitat distribution</i> ", " <i>Woodland size</i> ", " <i>Woodland structure</i> ", " <i>Vegetation structure</i> " and " <i>Vegetation composition</i> ". This is a terrestrial habitat, and there are no pathways for impacts from the proposed development to occur to this qualifying interest. Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects to occur on the Conservation Objectives of this qualifying interest within this SAC in any form as a result of the proposed development.	No
<b><i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</b>	<i>"To restore the favourable conservation condition of Otter in Clew Bay Complex SAC"</i>	The Attributes of the Conservation Objectives of this Qualifying Interest focuses on " <i>Distribution</i> ", " <i>Extent of terrestrial habitat</i> ", " <i>Extent of marine habitat</i> ", " <i>Extent of freshwater (river) habitat</i> ", " <i>Extent of freshwater (lake/lagoon) habitat</i> ", " <i>Couching and holt sites</i> ", " <i>Fish biomass available</i> " and " <i>Barriers to connectivity</i> ". The ecological field surveys found no evidence of Otter and no suitable holting habitat at the site of the proposed development, Furthermore, the 'Slaugar' and the 'Coolbarreen' watercourses are narrow, and likely do not provide suitable foraging and commuting habitat for Otter. The proposed development is situated in a rural area with residential dwellings. This SAC is approximately 1.8km downstream of the proposed development. Culvert removal and bridge construction at the Coolbarreen stream has the potential to cause water quality impacts to this stream, such as sedimentation or pollution which may be carried	No

<b>Qualifying Interest</b> *indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive	<b>Conservation Objective as per NPWS (2011)</b>	<b>Does the proposed development provide for any potential delay or interruption in the achievement of this Conservation Objective, as defined by its Attributes and Targets?</b>	<b>Likely Significant Effect</b>
		<p>downstream towards Clew Bay. Given the small scale and duration of construction works at the Coolbareen Stream, the hydrological distance of 1.8km and the assimilative capacity of Clew Bay, any changes to water quality would be minor and would have settled/dissipated to negligible levels before reaching Clew Bay.</p> <p>Otter are highly mobile and primarily nocturnal. Construction will be carried out only during daylight hours and there will be no increase in noise or vibration at night. Furthermore, disturbance arising during the operational phase of the proposed development will consist of a small number of pedestrians and cyclists primarily during the day. As such, due to the nature of the proposed development, there will be no negative impacts on otter as a result of disturbance from the proposed development.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects to occur on the Conservation Objectives of this qualifying interest within this SAC in any form as a result of the proposed development.</p>	
<b><i>Phoca vitulina</i></b> <b>(Harbour Seal)</b> <b>[1365]</b>	<i>"To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour seal in Clew Bay Complex SAC"</i>	<p>The Attributes of the Conservation Objectives of these Qualifying Interests focus on "Access to suitable habitat", "Breeding behaviour", "Moulting behaviour", "Resting behaviour" and "Disturbance".</p> <p>The proposed development does not provide suitable habitat for harbour seal. Given that suitable habitat for this species at its closest point is beyond the Zone of Influence, disturbance to Harbour Seal as a result of the proposed development will not occur. Furthermore, this SAC is approximately 1.8km downstream of the proposed development. Culvert removal and bridge construction at the Coolbarreen stream has the potential to cause water quality impacts to this stream, such as sedimentation or pollution which may be carried downstream towards Clew Bay. Given the small scale and duration of construction works at the Coolbareen Stream, the hydrological distance of 1.8km and the assimilative capacity of Clew Bay, any changes to water quality would be minor and would have settled/dissipated to negligible levels before reaching Clew Bay.</p> <p>Therefore, there is no potential for likely significant effects to occur on the Conservation Objectives of this qualifying interest within this SAC in any form as a result of the proposed development.</p>	No



### **3.4 Summary of Likely Significant Effects**

In Section 3.1, it was established that one European site, namely the Clew Bay Complex SAC occurs within the Zone of Influence of the proposed development. It was determined that no potential pathways for effects exist between the proposed development and any other European site.

In Section 3.3, it was established, in light of best scientific knowledge, that the proposed development will not give rise to ecological impacts which would constitute significant effects on Clew Bay Complex SAC, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives. This finding had regard to the nature, size and location of the proposed development as well as the sensitivities of the Qualifying Interests of the site concerned.

## **4.0 IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires that AA be carried out in respect of plans and projects that are likely to have significant effects on European sites, “*either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*”. Therefore, regardless of whether or not the likely effects of a plan or project are significant when considered on their own, the significance of the combination of the effects of the plan or project under assessment with the effects of other past, present or foreseeable future plans or projects must also be evaluated.

### **4.2 Methodology**

Plans and projects from the past ten years with potential for interactions with the proposed development were selected for assessment. For the purposes of the assessment, small scale and domestic developments were not considered given the nature of the Project and the fact that these projects would be subject to stringent planning controls.

The ePlanning website for Mayo County Council and the EIA Portal was used to search for planning applications.

### **4.3 Outcome**

Table 4.1 below details the assessment of the likelihood of significant effects arising from the proposed development in combination with other plans or projects. This assessment was undertaken in view of the Conservation Objectives of the relevant European sites and found that the proposed development does not have the potential to significantly affect any European site in combination with other plans or projects.

**Table 4.1 Assessment of the potential of likely significant effects in combination with other plans and projects**

Plan or Project	Description of Plan or Project	In-Combination Effect(s)
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 20954 <b>Applicant:</b> Allergan Pharmaceuticals Ireland <b>Address:</b> Carrowbeg, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 <b>Decision Date:</b> 9<sup>th</sup> February 2021</p> <p>1. Construction of a site security fencing around the perimeter of the Allergan Carrowbeg facility site boundaries. The new security fence will include vehicular access gates, pedestrian turn stiles, pedestrian swing gates, changes to stone walls and railings, CCTV camera &amp; lighting poles &amp; associated landscaping. 2. Construction of a car park extension, new visitor exit gate onto the Carrowbeg estate road, with traffic barrier, new mesh fence area &amp; associated landscaping. 3. Construction of new commercial vehicle entrance and single storey building (no. 2) at gate no. 7 with road layout, gates, fencing &amp; associated landscaping. Removal of 31 existing car spaces in the area. The site activity is subject to an Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control licence.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 510m southeast of the proposed development, and approximately 890m upstream.</p> <p>Given that this project is located in an existing commercial/industrial area, potential impacts on water quality and the surrounding environment are not expected to be minimal. Therefore, this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 23545 <b>Applicant:</b> Allergan Pharmaceuticals Ltd. <b>Address:</b> Abbvie Facility, Carrowbeg, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 25<sup>th</sup> September 2023 <b>Decision Date:</b> 19<sup>th</sup> November 2023</p> <p>Retention permission of B1 building - existing one storey modular office to the east of the B1 building. Existing one storey modular ERT building to the east of the waste building. Existing Abbvie road sign on stone/blockwork structure 2.9m high in front of the B2 building 7sqm area with associated landscaping. Permission for API/Pharma Building - plantroom extension to roof level 2, 1,270 sqm, area one storey high 12.5m high. Ocular implants building backlit signage to the east elevation proposed size 13.76sqm area to a two storey 11.2m high building. Gate 1 - main entrance on the Carrowbeg road - alterations to roads, kerbs, footpaths, fences and boundary walls and associated landscaping. Two Abbvie signs 4.4x0.5 high x two number signs - 4.4 sqm area to boundary walls/ fences. Gate 2 - Building B1 on the Carrowbeg road, pedestrian entrance turnstile with alterations to roads, kerbs, footpaths, fences and boundary walls and associated landscaping at Abbvie Gate 2 on the Carrowbeg Road. B2 building backlit signage to the east elevation proposed size 13.76sqm area to a two storey 13.7m high building. The development will involve ancillary works including change of colour scheme to existing facades. The site activity is subject of an integrated pollution prevention and control licence.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 510m southeast of the proposed development, and approximately 890m upstream.</p> <p>Given that this project is located in an existing commercial/industrial area, potential impacts on water quality and the surrounding environment are not expected to be minimal. Appropriate Assessment was not required for this project. Therefore, this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 2360534</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023</p> <p>Permission for development at Westport House &amp; Estate, Westport Demesne, Westport, Co. Mayo for the 'Restoration and Interpretation of Westport Estate', within</p>	<p>This project is approximately 657m southwest of the proposed development, and approximately 1.6km downstream.</p>

Plan or Project	Description of Plan or Project	In-Combination Effect(s)
<p><b>Applicant:</b> Inishoo Management Ltd. <b>Address:</b> Westport House &amp; Estate, Westport Demesne, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p>and around the curtilage of a number of Protected Structures throughout the Estate. The proposed development comprises: 1. The restoration of Westport House (a Protected Structure) including to repair and upgrade the fabric and accessibility of the house alongside providing a new visitor and interpretive experience within; 2. The restoration and repurposing of the Coach House (a Protected Structure) at ground and first floor to repair and upgrade the fabric of original structures, demolition of non-historic additions and adjacent structures, and provision of new build extensions (principally single storey with varying height up to maximum of c. 5.8 metres, with first floor link element to maximum of up to c. 7 metres height) to accommodate a visitor facility including café, retail and administrative / ancillary functions and the 'Grace O'Malley Experience' interpretive space; 3. The 'Wild Realms' to deliver an outdoor landscape and gardens based visitor experience, including: a) the partial restoration of formal Italianate gardens to west of Westport House; b) the 'Lower Realm' at and adjoining 'Ladies Island' (including construction of single storey 'Eartharium' entrance passageway structure (c. 5.2m high) and elevated walkway (with varying height up to maximum of c. 4 metres above ground) with associated gathering areas and an elevated story telling structure (c. 11.5 metres high or c. 14 metres overall height above ground level)), including demolition / removal of remaining features of Pirate Adventure Park complex; c) the 'Middle Realm' at and adjoining the Walled Garden (a Protected Structure), including conservation and partial repurposing of surviving original structures and construction / installation of new structures / features; d) the 'Upper Realm' at and adjoining Garvillan; and, e) provision of pedestrian / visitor routes including repair / consolidation and bridging of existing Causeway to Garvillan (partially within the maritime area and subject to a Maritime Area Consent) and the creation of a Pontoon across Westport Lough. 4. Supporting amenity, infrastructure and ancillary development throughout the Estate.</p>	<p>This project is located in the existing grounds of the Westport House &amp; Estate. The NIS has identified deterioration of water quality, disturbance to otter and harbour seal, and the spread of invasive species as potential impacts from this project. Provided the mitigation measures in relation to these potential impacts outlined in the NIS for the project are adhered to, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council Planning Ref.:</b> 19375 <b>Applicant:</b> Allergan Pharmaceuticals Ireland <b>Address:</b> Carrowbeg, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 <b>Decision Date:</b> 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020</p> <p>Expansion to existing car parking facilities, totalling 4,396sqm, and all associated site and services works including the provision of a culvert, along with reconfiguring 7 no. Existing car parking spaces in order to facilitate the provision of 130 no. New car parking spaces within the grounds of the existing pharmaceutical campus. Additional works to include landscaping and ground works associated with same.</p> <p>A Natura Impact Screening (NIS) was submitted in relation to this application.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 750m southeast of the proposed development, and approximately 890m upstream.</p> <p>Given the conclusions of the NIS, negative impacts to water quality are not expected. Therefore, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>

Plan or Project	Description of Plan or Project	In-Combination Effect(s)
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 20295 <b>Applicant:</b> Inishoo Management Ltd. <b>Address:</b> Westport House, Westport Demesne, Co. Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 <b>Decision Date:</b> 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021</p> <p>Provision of an adventure park within the Westport Demesne, located at the disused quarry within part of the adjoining woodlands. The proposed adventure park (overall plan area of 1.7 hectares) will consist of a visitors entrance building, (158sqm)-providing entrance turnstiles, public toilets, ancillary retail, staff facilities, stores and ancillary services and park attractions to include a net park, large swing, junior swing, zip line, climbing ropes, slide, climbing/abseiling tower and activity garden all with associated landscaping, seating area, site services, lighting, walkways, boundary treatment and all associated site works.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 870m southwest of the proposed development. Given the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (AA) and the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report (EIA), it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 211375 <b>Applicant:</b> Inishoo Management Ltd <b>Address:</b> Westport Demesne, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p>Upgrade works to an existing road, consisting of proposed upgrade works which extend from the access to the established car park at the coach house, linking to the walled garden, and on to Hotel Westport. The upgrade will facilitate one-way vehicular access from golf course road to Hotel Westport to connect with the existing two-way system between Hotel Westport and Newport Street. The proposed upgrade consists of the resurfacing of approx. 662 linear metres of the existing road within the demesne on an overall site of 0.36 ha. The existing road will be upgraded and in some areas widened locally to a uniform width of 3.7m and includes ancillary lighting and roadside drainage. The proposed works also include the relocation of the 2 no. Existing stone pier and gates on the boundary of Hotel Westport with the Westport Demesne to a location 8.5m further west along the existing road. Permission is also sought to amend the permission granted under p20/1028 to relocate the roundabout permitted c. 1.5m to the west to facilitate linking the upgraded road to that roundabout. This application is accompanied by a NIS.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 890m southwest and approximately 380m east of the proposed development. The NIS has identified impacts such as water quality deterioration from surface water pathways and disturbance to otter. Provided the mitigation measures in relation to surface water quality and disturbance to otter outlined in the NIS for the project are adhered to, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 2360044 <b>Applicant:</b> Inishoo Management Ltd. <b>Address:</b> Westport Estate, Westport Demesne, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 9<sup>th</sup> March 2023 <b>Decision Date:</b> 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022</p> <p>Permission for development at Westport Estate (which contains a number of Protected Structures), Westport Demesne, Westport, Co. Mayo, to facilitate the provision of an Estate Maintenance Depot (West of existing Campsite area). The proposed development comprises: 1) The construction of a single storey building measuring c. 356 sqm for vehicle storage and maintenance, workshop area, goods storage, staff facilities and Estate related management activities; 2) The provision of an associated hardstanding yard / compound area, with boundary treatment / enclosure and gate access to existing internal Estate road network; 3) The provision</p>	<p>This project is approximately 960m southwest of the proposed development. Given the conclusions of the AA, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>

Plan or Project	Description of Plan or Project	In-Combination Effect(s)
	of associated waste, fuel and Estate related storage, along with Estate vehicle and visitor parking; and, 4) Water supply, foul drainage and electrical / utilities connections to existing networks within the Estate, surface water management including soakpits, and all associated and ancillary works.	
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 19960 <b>Applicant:</b> Beckett Developments Limited <b>Address:</b> Monamore, Lodge Road, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019 <b>Decision Date:</b> 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 Construction of 17 no. Houses consisting of 11 no. Detached houses and 6 no. Semi detached houses on site previously granted permission under planning ref. No. P09/209 including all associated connections to services and site works.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 1.4km east of the proposed development. Given that this project is located in an existing residential area, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 21997 <b>Applicant:</b> Irish Water <b>Address:</b> Westport Waste Water, Treatment Plant, The Demesne, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 <b>Decision Date:</b> 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 Ground-mounted photovoltaic solar panels with a maximum square meterage of 750m<sup>2</sup> distributed over a grass area on-site with associated ancillary works.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 1.4km west and 1.7km downstream of the proposed development, and approximately 100m north of the Clew Bay Complex SAC. The NIS has identified impacts such as water quality deterioration due to cable installation. Provided the mitigation measures in relation to water quality outlined in the NIS for the project are adhered to, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 22819 <b>Applicant:</b> The Soft Bedding Company Ltd <b>Address:</b> The Lodge Road, Westport, Co Mayo</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 19<sup>th</sup> September 2022 <b>Decision Date:</b> 13<sup>th</sup> November 2022 Revise previous planning permission p20/858, the revised design includes amalgamating the previously proposed 4 no. Warehouse/commercial units into 1 no. Unit comprising of an additional 1180m<sup>2</sup> of floor area, ancillary office spaces, loading bays, car parking, access roadway, public footpaths landscaping and connection to public services including all ancillary site works.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 1.5km east of the proposed development. This project is located in an existing industrial area adjacent to the N5. A stream is located approximately 125m west from this project. The proposed development is approximately 1.6 km downstream of this. Some industrial buildings lie between the project and the stream. The planner's report states that</p>

Plan or Project	Description of Plan or Project	In-Combination Effect(s)
		<p>that this project was not likely to have a significant effect on European sites.</p> <p>Given that industrial buildings lie between this project and the stream, negative impacts on water quality arising from the project are expected to be insignificant in comparison with the baseline for this area. Given this, and the conclusions of the planners report, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 2360016 <b>Applicant:</b> Murrisk CWC <b>Address:</b> Between the towns of Westport and Louisburgh in County Mayo.</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 <b>Decision Date:</b> 19<sup>th</sup> March 2023</p> <p>The installation of approximately 15Km of 250mm OD water Trunk Main, which will extend from a position approximately 1Km from Westport at the junction of Pound Road and the R355 in the townland of Carrownalurgan to Kilsallagh Lower at the road junction between the R355 and the L1826 road to Drummin and the installation of approximately 29.3Km of a mains distribution network to supply water to 473 No Consumers along the route of the Trunk Main and in the area to the Townlands to the West of Croagh Patrick. All associated temporary site development works to gain access including clearance of vegetation, disassembly and reassembly of gate posts/piers and removal and reinstatement of existing fencing, walls, and hedging; and any other temporary associated and ancillary development works required for the purposes of the proposed watermain, including the installation of stone tracks and temporary watercourse crossings. The watermain pipeline is located within the townlands of Cloghan, Clooneen, Knockfin, Ardoley, Churchfield, Knockaraha East, Knockaraha West, Streamstown, Belclare, Killadangan, Deerpark West, Murrisknaboll, Carrowkeeran, Bellataleen, Carrowkeel, Murrisk Demesne, Meermihil, Glaspatrik, Thornhill, Carrowmacloughlin, Leckanvy, Kilsallagh Lower, Kilsallagh Upper, Kinknock, Kilgeever, Cuilleen, Mullagh, Cartoor, Glenbaun, Glencally, Furgill, Cregganroe and Boheh in County Mayo.</p>	<p>This project is approximately 1.8km southwest of the proposed development. The NIS has identified impacts such as water quality deterioration from surface water pathways.</p> <p>Provided the mitigation measures in relation to surface water quality protection outlined in the NIS for the project are adhered to, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>
<p><b>Mayo County Council</b> <b>Planning Ref.:</b> 17864</p>	<p><b>Planning Application Lodged:</b> 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017 <b>Decision Date:</b> 26<sup>th</sup> September 2018</p>	<p>This project is approximately 2 km southwest of the proposed development</p>

Plan or Project	Description of Plan or Project	In-Combination Effect(s)
<p><b>Applicant:</b> Portwest Ltd. <b>Address:</b> Roman Island, The Quay, Westport, Co. Mayo</p>	<p>Construct an office building and cafe of approx 2,705sqm gross floor area. The proposed building is predominantly 4 storeys in height, incorporating a single storey element to the west and a 5 storey stair and lift core in the south-east corner, providing access to a screened plant area at roof level. The proposed building provides approx 2,593sqm of office space of the portwest global head office incorporating associated and ancillary reception/lobby area, 2 no. Lifts, a gym, showering and changing facilities, a canteen and an ICT room at ground floor level and all associated circulation space, storage space, plant and w.c. facilities an ESB substation and electrical switch room is provided at ground floor level rear (south) elevation. A proposed cafe of approx 112sqm (incorporating associated kitchen storage and w.c facilities) is provided at ground floor level, with frontage and access onto the quay road to the north. The proposed development also includes 91 no. Car parking spaces including 4 no. Disabled car parking spaces and 30 no. Covered bicycle spaces within the curtilage of the proposed building, signage, hard and soft landscaping and all associated infrastructure and site development works on a site area of 0.615ha.</p>	<p>and is within 10m of Clew Bay Complex SAC. Given that the AA concluded that this project won't have significant effects on any European sites, it can be concluded that this project and the proposed development will not lead to significant in-combination effects.</p>



## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive and Part XAB of the Planning and Development Acts, the relevant case law, established best practice and the Precautionary Principle; this AA Screening Report has examined the details of the proposed development and the relevant European Site and has concluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to give rise to impacts that would constitute likely significant effects in view of the Conservation Objectives of this site.

In light of this conclusion, it is the considered opinion of ROD, as the author of this AA Screening Report, that the Competent Authority, Mayo County Council, may find in completing its AA Screening in respect of the Attireesh Greenway Link, that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on any European site, in view of best scientific knowledge and the Conservation Objectives of the sites concerned. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the author of this AA Screening Report that the Competent Authority may determine that AA is not required in respect of the proposed development.

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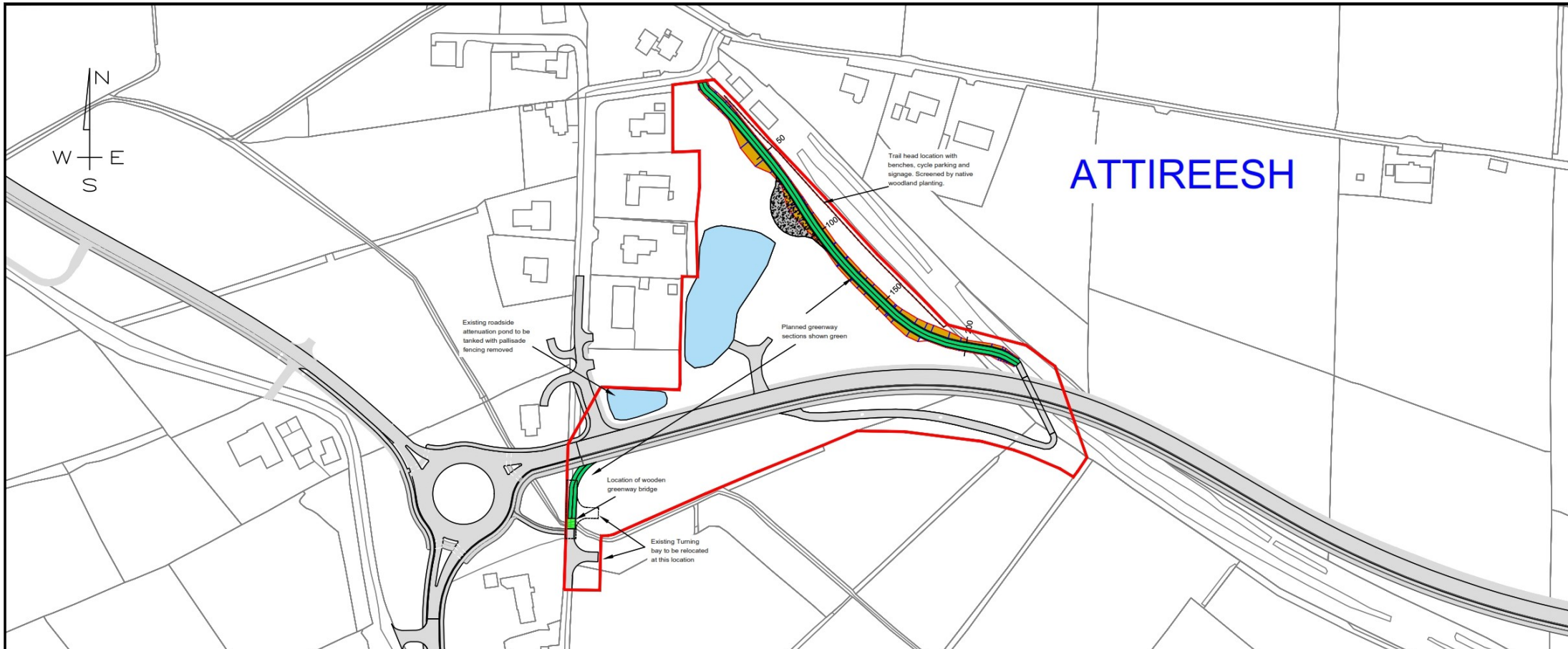
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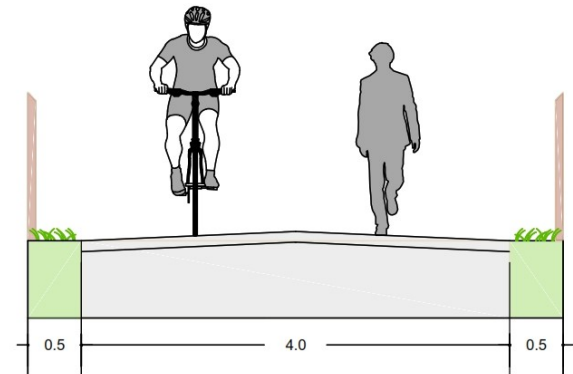
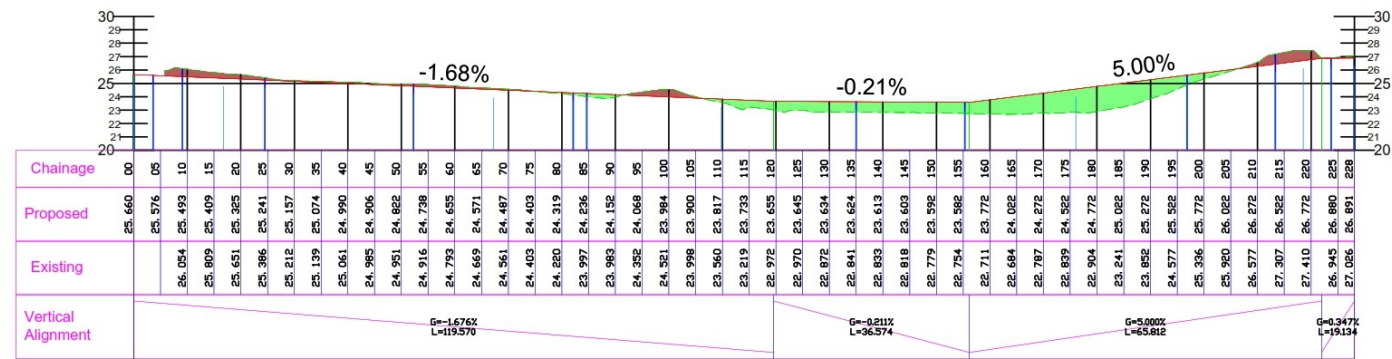
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**APPENDIX A**

**ATTIREESH GREENWAY LINK PLAN AND PROFILE**



# ATTIREESH



Typical Section - 1:50

Riailtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040

An Roinn Iompair  
Department of Transport

Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo  
Mayo County Council

TII  
Bonnairíocht Iompair Éireann  
Transport Infrastructure Ireland

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Notes:  
1. This drawing is the property of the Mayo National Roads Office. It is a confidential document and must not be copied, used, or its contents divulged without prior written consent.  
2. The contractor shall be responsible for any errors arising from the use of these files, which for historic reasons by the contractor, taking of measurements, compatibility issues with the hardware software, and any errors arising from these files are used in the respective drawing production, or setting out on site.  
3. Datum: Ordnance Survey Datum, Mean Sea Level.  
4. Name of Drawings: Road copies, detail and off-site items.

SCALE BAR

KEY MAP

No	Amendment / Issue	Date	By	Checked

Mayo National Roads Office  
Oifig Bhóthaire Náisiúnta Mhaigh Eo  
Glenpark House, The Mall, Castlebar, County Mayo

Head of Roads:  
P. Dolan, B.E.  
Senior Engineer:  
P. Hyland, B.E., C.Eng.

Tel: 094 903 8130  
Fax: 094 903 4525  
Web: www.regdesign.com

Design: MAYONRO | Drawn: CG | Checked: MMCh | Date: Mar 2024

Project: Attireesh Greenway Link

Title: Part 8 - Plan, Profile & Typical Section

Scale: Plan 1:1,000 @ A1 | Profile 1:500 @ A1  
1:2,000 @ A3 | 1:1,000 @ A3

Drawing No: NRD/ MOI/08/3342/ AGL/ Part 8/ 02  
Revision No: 0

## **APPENDIX B**

### **PROPOSED LANDSCAPING SCHEME**

