

**Habitats Directive
Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination
Phase 1B Carrigaline Transport & Public Realm Enhancement Plan
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Cork County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

Introduction

This document contains the Habitats Directive screening determination of Cork County Council in respect of Phase 1B of the Carrigaline Transport and Public Realm Enhancement Plan. The determination is based on the information provided in the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report which has been prepared by Arup for Cork County Council. This screening determination should be read in conjunction with that report.

In accordance with Regulation 250 of the Planning and Development Regulations, Local Authorities are required to carry out screening for appropriate assessment of Local Authority development, to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on one or more European¹ sites. The Local Authority is required to determine that appropriate assessment of the proposed development is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on one or more European sites¹.

These requirements derive from Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive which states that

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.

EU and National Guidance sets out two main stages to the assessment process which are as follows:

Stage One: Screening

The process which identifies what might be likely impacts arising from a plan or project on a European site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant. No further assessment is required where the risk of significant impacts on European sites can be objectively ruled out during the screening stage.

Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment

Where the possibility of significant impacts has not been discounted by the screening process, a more detailed assessment is required. This is called an Appropriate Assessment and requires the compilation of a **Natura Impact Statement** by the project proponent, which is a report of scientific evidence and data relating to European sites for which significant negative impacts have not been previously screened out. This is used to identify and classify any implications of the plan or project for these sites in view of their Conservation Objectives. The Appropriate Assessment must include a determination as to whether or not the project would adversely affect the integrity of any European site or sites. The plan or project may only be consented if adverse effects on the integrity of European sites can be objectively ruled out during the Appropriate Assessment process. The plan or project may not be consented on foot of an Appropriate Assessment, if it is found that it will give rise to adverse impacts on one or more European sites, or if uncertainty remains in relation to potential impacts on one or more European sites.

Description of the project and local site characteristics

Project Name: Phase 1B Carrigaline Traffic and Public Realm Enhancement Plan

Project Details:

The proposed project comprises works in six areas within the town of Carrigaline as follows:

- Area 1: Cork Road from Ballinrea Road Roundabout to Ballea Road Roundabout;
- Area 2: Rose Hill from Kilmoney Road Upper Junction to the Rose Hill Junction;
- Area 3: Ballea Road from the Mill Road Roundabout to the Cork Road Junction;
- Area 4: Church Road from the Cork Road/R612 Junction to junction east of the Estuary and from junction at Church Road and Rock Road in the south to the junction of Fernhill Road and Laurelmount Drive to the north;
- Area 5: Kilmoney Road Lower between the entrance to Dairygold Co Op Superstore and Abbey View and between Castle Heights and Upper Kilmoney Road; and
- Area 6: Strand Road from Dunnes Stores to the southern edge or Bothar Guidel Bridge and east to Owenabue Sail Garden.

The works will involve the provision of

- segregated shared spaces - Cork Road, pinch points on Church Road and Strand Road;
- segregated cycle tracks - Rose Hill, Ballea Road, Church Road, Kilmoney Road Lower and Strand Road;
- formalised car parking – Ballea Road (Carrigaline AFC), Church Road (Church & School) and Kilmoney Road Lower;
- continuous footpath – Ballea Road, Church Road, Rock Road and Kilmoney Road Lower;
- realignment of roads, roundabouts and junctions – Rose Hill, Kilmoney Road; and
- provision of new signalised junction at Oweabue Bridge/Strand Road junction.

The project will also involve the introduction of signage (quiet streets) and speed control measures including the introduction of raised ramps at various points around the scheme.

Most of the works will be undertaken within existing road or footpaths networks, however the works will require the removal of treelines, scattered trees, hedgerows and amenity grassland habitats in some locations including Ballea Road, Fernhill Road, Church Road, Kilmoney Road, Church Hill, Rose Hill and the R611. New tree and hedgerow planting is proposed as part of the landscaping scheme associated with this project and it is proposed to install SuDS features as part of the landscaping scheme.

The proposed physical works include:

- excavations of existing road and pathway surfaces and repaving of the street to include installation of new footpaths and cycle tracks;
- installation of new drainage into the existing drainage network;
- installation of street lighting; and
- new landscape planting (including SuDS features).

Surface water run off will enter the existing surface water drainage system or will be discharged via the stormwater network. No dewatering will be required. All works will be implemented in accordance with a Construction and Environmental Management Plan as standard. The works are planned to commence in Q3 of 2024 and are estimated to continue for six to eight months.

Site Characteristics:

The proposed works are all located within the urban environment of Carrigaline. Much of the works will take place within the footprint of existing roads, however roadside boundaries including hedgerows, mature trees and treelines are proposed to be removed at a number of locations including Ballea Road, Fernhill Road, Church Road, Kilmoney Road, Church Hill, Rose Hill and the R611. The proposed works in Area 6 (Strand Road) are located alongside the Owenabue River adjoining a portion of the river which forms part of the Cork Harbour Special Protection Area and the Owenboy proposed Natural Heritage Area. This portion of the river comprises a relatively narrow tidal channel with little exposed mudflat.

Identification of relevant Natura 2000 sites using Source-Pathway-receptor model

There are two EU sites within Cork Harbour and these have been identified as occurring within the potential zone of influence of the proposed project. These are the Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation and the Cork Harbour Special Protection Area.

The **Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 1058)** is located in the north channel of Cork Harbour. The site is designated for the protection of two Annex I habitat types:

- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; and
- Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*).

The conservation objectives for these habitats are to:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; and
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows *Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*).

This site is located over 8km (overland) from the proposed works area and has negligible hydrological linkages to the works area (works area is located 16 km downstream from SAC). **Given the physical distance and the indirect hydrological linkage between the proposed works area and the SAC, it is considered that there is no pathway for impact on the SAC. Accordingly, it is determined that there is no potential for significant effects and no requirement for the proposed project to be subject to Appropriate Assessment with reference to the Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation.**

The **Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code 4030)** is an estuarine complex which is primarily comprised of intertidal habitats, mainly mudflats, as well as some other coastal and marine habitats. These habitats support very high numbers of wintering waterfowl. The harbour regularly supports in excess of 20,000 wintering birds, making it an internationally important site and the fifth most important wintering waterfowl site in the country, however, populations for most of these species are declining in the harbour area and conservation condition is assessed to be unfavourable for these. Carrigaline adjoins the Owenboy Estuary which forms part of the Cork Harbour SPA. The identified species of conservation interest for which this site is designated are:

Special Conservation Interest Species	Qualifying Reason
Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)

Special Conservation Interest Species	Qualifying Reason
Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054]	Nationally important population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]	Nationally important population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]	Internationally important wintering population (1% or more of the biogeographical population)
Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of all-Ireland population)
Redshank (<i>Tringa tetanus</i>) [A162]	Internationally important wintering population (1% or more of the biogeographical population)

Special Conservation Interest Species	Qualifying Reason
Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of the biogeographical population)
Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of the biogeographical population)
Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]	Nationally important wintering population (1% or more of the biogeographical population)
Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]	Nationally important breeding colony (1% of breeding population)
Wetlands and Waterbirds [A999]	n/a

Significant numbers of the following species have been recorded using the Owenboy Estuary: Cormorant, Heron, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Common Gull.

The Conservation Objectives for the Cork Harbour SPA are as follows:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the non-breeding waterbird Special Conservation Interest species listed for Cork Harbour SPA;
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Common Tern in Cork Harbour SPA; and
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat at Cork Harbour SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.

The SPA designation encompasses estuarine systems within Cork Harbour including the Owenboy Estuary. The proposed works at Strand Road will be located immediately adjacent to the Special Protection Area.

No other EU sites occur within the potential zone of influence of this project.

Assessment of Likely Significant Effects-Cork Harbour Special Protection Area

Activities which would

- require direct intervention within the SPA;
- generate noise or visual disturbance stimuli at locations which could cause disturbance to qualifying interest bird species;
- pose a risk of release of toxic contaminants or other pollutants to watercourses; or
- increase the risk of spread of invasive alien species

within the SPA, could have the potential to have significant negative effects on this site.

The AA screening report considers these potential risks of impact to the SPA and rules out risk of significant impacts arising for the following reasons:

Direct effects:

No direct interventions are proposed within the Cork Harbour SPA – therefore there is no associated risk of direct damage to qualifying interest habitats or other habitats of biodiversity value within this site.

Construction Stage*Potential disturbance related impacts to birds – visual and light*

The risk of construction related activities causing visual or light related disturbance to birds is ruled out for the following reasons:

- works adjoining the SPA (Strand Road) will be of limited duration (one month) and there will not require working by night – no additional lighting will be required;
- the works area at Strand Road is already exposed to high levels of human activity;
- there is very little exposed mud within tidal river immediately adjoining the works area – ie limited availability of suitable habitat for foraging or roosting wetland birds immediately adjoining the works site;
- the works within the vicinity of Strand Road are sufficiently distant from areas of high value for birds within the estuary to be satisfied that they will not cause visual disturbance risk at these locations.

Potential disturbance related impacts to birds – noise and vibration:

The risk of construction related activities causing noise or vibration related disturbance to birds is ruled out for the following reasons:

- construction associated noise levels predicted to be not significantly elevated beyond existing noise levels associated with traffic – no significant demolition work or piling is required;
- relevant qualifying interest bird species are likely to be habituated to noise disturbance;
- most works to be undertaken during standard week-day hours.

Potential pollution risk associated with risk of release of contaminants to the river estuary:

The risk of activities associated with the construction causing a significant pollution event are assessed to be low having regard to the limited nature of the works. Further to this, it is predicted that, even in the absence of the implementation of standard environmental controls, any contaminants generated by construction activities, which would reach the estuary through the existing surface water network or via emissions to air, will be diluted and dispersed to such an extent so as to not impact negatively on tidal mudflats or other estuarine habitats.

Risk of introduction of invasive alien species into SPA

Surveys indicate that there are no invasive alien species within the footprint of proposed works within the Strand Road area. No risk of activities associated with this project causing the introduction of invasive alien species to the SPA has been identified.

Post Construction Stage*Potential disturbance related impacts to birds – visual and light*

There is no risk that the development could cause visual or light related disturbance to birds for the following reasons:

- no alterations in lighting proposed for the operational phase;

- the area along Strand Road is already exposed to high levels of human activity and birds using this area are already habituated to this activity and are not predicted to be likely to be impacted by increased numbers of pedestrians or cyclists passing;
- there is very little exposed mud within tidal river immediately adjoining the works area – ie limited availability of suitable habitat for foraging or roosting wetland birds;

Potential disturbance related impacts to birds – noise and vibration:

- there is no predicted increase in noise levels associated with the operational phase.

Potential pollution risk associated with risk of release of contaminants to the river estuary:

It is predicted that the project will result in lowered emissions to air and to water in the post construction phase as SuDS features are to be integrated into the landscaping scheme and the intended aim of the project is to reduce automobile traffic within the urban environment, which in turn should result in a reduction in gaseous emissions.

In Combination Effects

The AA Screening Report lists other plans and projects which approved or underway within the general area. These include other public realm and transport projects forming part of the Carrigaline TPREP involving the development of a pedestrian crossing over the Owenboy River, which involves significant interventions in the estuary area and is at construction stage. Mitigation measures have been incorporated into this proposal to manage risks of impact to the SPA. These include measures to control risk of impact on water quality and measures to prevent disturbance related impacts to birds. Consideration is also given to the Part 8 public realm improvements project proposed for the northern bank of the Owneabue River. The potential for these projects to give rise to significant negative effects on the SPA when considered in combination is ruled out for the following reasons:

- the limited time frame for works at Strand Road;
- the confinement of the works associated with this project to the existing road network behind an existing wall; and
- the limited nature of the proposed works.

The conclusion of the in-combination assessment is that it is not anticipated that this project will act in combination with the identified plans or projects to give rise to cumulative impacts on the Cork Harbour SPA.

Screening Determination Statement

On the basis of the information contained in the AA Screening Report and other project documents which is considered adequate to undertake a screening assessment and to make a screening determination, Cork County Council is satisfied that the proposed project poses no likelihood of causing significant effects on any EU site for the following reasons:

1. No direct interventions are proposed within any EU site – therefore, there is no associated risk of direct damage to qualifying interest habitats or other habitats of biodiversity value within any such site.
2. There is no risk that activities will cause disturbance impacts to birds as
 - no elements of the project will generate noise to levels significantly above ambient levels in any part of the Cork Harbour SPA; and
 - the project is not predicted to cause significant visual disturbance risks to birds given

- the relatively limited nature of works proposed in the Strand Road area - no off-road interventions are proposed within the Strand Road area and all works are to be confined within the existing road/footpath network behind existing walls;
 - the distance of proposed works from areas supporting high value feeding and roosting habitats;
 - the observed habituation of birds using the tidal estuarine area to human activity; and
 - no new or increased levels of lighting are proposed in the Strand Road area.
3. The construction works do not pose a risk of causing significant pollution risk to water quality for the following reasons:
- proposed excavations in the Strand Road Area are limited in scale;
 - while the project could result in the release of silt or hydrocarbons to the surface water drainage system, any such releases will not be significant taking account of the limited scale of the works and the predicted dispersal and dilution of soiled surface water entering the river.
4. The project is intended to reduce car usage in Carrigaline and has therefore the potential to reduce threats and pressures to water quality in the receiving catchment over the long term.
5. No increase in surface water discharges is proposed. SuDS measures are proposed to be integrated into the scheme which may have the effect of reducing
6. No invasive alien plant species were recorded at any of the proposed works locations.

While works on site will be implemented in accordance with environmental best practise to prevent water pollution as standard, this has not been taken account of in the completion of this screening assessment. These measures, while welcome to prevent localised water pollution, are not deemed to be essential to prevent significant negative effects on any EU sites.

ⁱ "European Site" means— (a) a candidate site of Community importance; (b) a site of Community importance; (c) a candidate special area of conservation; (d) a special area of conservation; (e) a candidate special protection area, or (f) a special protection area.