

**Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment  
Screening Determination**

**Carrigtwohill URDF Initiative – Public Realm Improvements  
at**

**Main Street, Station Road, Wisers Road Junction and Cobh  
Cross**

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**Cork County Council  
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí**

This document contains the Habitats Directive screening determination of Cork County Council in respect of proposed public realm improvements in Carrigtwohill to comprise widening of footpaths, installation of cycleways, removal of car parking spaces, installation of traffic calming measures, installation of public amenity spaces, upgrades to car parks, widening of junctions, installation of street lighting and improvements to the roundabout at Cobh Cross. The determination is based on the information provided in the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report which has been prepared by Atkins for Cork County Council and which is appended to this document. 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 proposed 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 European<sup>1</sup> 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 sites.

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

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<sup>1</sup>“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.

European sites, or if uncertainty remains in relation to potential impacts on one or more European sites.

<p><b>Part 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics</b></p>
<p><b>Project Name:</b> Public Realm Improvements – Carrigtwohill 2021 - Carrigtwohill URDF Initiative</p>
<p><b>Project Details:</b> The proposed project involves the following:</p> <p><b><i>Main Street and Station Road Upgrades</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upgrade of Main Street and Station Road junction including footpath widening, road re-alignment and widening, re-surfacing, signalisation, provision of pedestrian crossings and removal of existing structures/buildings.</li> <li>2. Provision of three new public spaces as follows:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. At junction of Station Road and Main Street;</li> <li>ii. At and north of the Community Centre on Main Street;</li> <li>iii. At and west of St. Mary’s Church on Station Road.</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Public realm upgrade of Station Road from the junction with Main Street to the junction at Carrigtwohill Train Station including:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Road widening with footpaths / off-road cycle tracks on both sides of the road, raising of existing roads levels where required, and re-location of the existing Grotto;</li> <li>ii. Removal of existing boundary walls, re-building of boundary walls, re-location of entrances and local realignment of the stream channel;</li> <li>iii. Two number ‘Biodiversity Areas’;</li> <li>iv. New street lighting, undergrounding of overhead lines, new underground services and drainage, and diversion of existing services where required;</li> <li>v. Traffic calming measures including re-surfacing, road narrowing, tree planting and raised tables, signalised and unsignalised raised pedestrian crossings;</li> <li>vi. Removal of on-street carparking and provision of a new car park (46 no. spaces);</li> <li>vii. Upgrade of existing car park at Patrick Pearse Place;</li> <li>viii. New shared use pedestrian and cyclist path between Station Road and recreation areas south of Main Street via Patrick Pearse Place and the existing Centra car park;</li> <li>ix. New footpaths connecting the following housing developments:                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cluain Cairn and An Fána;</li> <li>• Cluain Cairn and Castle Close/Castle Avenue.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Public realm upgrade of Main Street from the junction with Castl lake Avenue to the junction with Carrigane Road including:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Footpath widening on both sides of the road with varying surface treatments;</li> <li>ii. Shared cycle/pedestrian path on north side of the road from junction with Castl lake Avenue to Bán Na Gréine;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

- iii. Removal of existing boundary walls, re-building of boundary walls, and re-location of entrances;
- iv. Street lighting, undergrounding of overhead lines and diversion of existing services as required;
- v. Traffic calming measures including re-surfacing, road narrowing, tree planting, raised tables, signalised and unsignalised raised pedestrian crossings;
- vi. Re-location of on-street car parking to three new car parks (45 no. spaces);
- vii. New road running south from Main Street including underground services, and public lighting;
- viii. New school drop off area accessed from Carrigane Road and ambulant accessible parking.

***Wises Road Junction Upgrades***

1. Upgrade of junction of Wises Road and Main street including provision of traffic signals, pedestrian crossings, road re-alignment and footpath widening;
2. Upgrade of junction of Wises Road and Oakbrook Link road/IDA industrial Estate Access Road including provision of traffic signals, road re-alignment and footpath widening.

***N25 Junction 3 (Cobh Cross) Upgrades***

1. Increase the size of existing northern bound roundabout, widening and realignment of approach roads to the roundabout.

Full details of the proposed project can be consulted in project documents including the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report, Ecological Impact Assessment Report and the Planning Report as well as in the project drawings.

**Site Characteristics:**

The proposed works areas associated with this project are located within and close to the town of Carrigtwohill. Carrigtwohill is located within the Lee, Cork Harbour and Youghal Catchment. Carrigtwohill is situated to the north of Cork Harbour and the N25 Cork – Waterford dual carriageway.

The proposed works area has direct hydrological linkages to Cork Harbour via Anns Grove Stream and the Woodstock Stream.

**Part 2: Identification of relevant Natura 2000 sites using Source-Pathway-Receptor model and compilation of associated information.**

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 SAC and SPA designations encompass the north channel of Cork Harbour including the Slatty Waters. The Slatty Waters area at Tullagreen has a direct hydrological linkage to Carrigtwohill and the proposed works area via the Anngrove Stream. The town centre of Carrigtwohill is located approximately 2km from this area. Cobh Cross where upgrade works are proposed to a roundabout, is located approximately 20m from the north channel of the harbour at Tullagreen.

The **Great Island Channel SAC** is designated for the protection of two Annex I habitat types, being

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

Both of these habitats are recorded as occurring with the Slatty Waters area of Cork Harbour.

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 *Galuco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*.

Targets associated with these habitats are included in the [Great Island Channel Conservation Objectives document \(ver 1 June 2014\)](#).

The **Cork Harbour SPA** 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. The qualifying interests for this SPA are:

- Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) [A004]
- Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) [A005]
- Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) [A017]
- Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) [A028]
- Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) [A048]
- Wigeon (*Anas penelope*) [A050]
- Teal (*Anas crecca*) [A052]
- Pintail (*Anas acuta*) [A054]
- Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) [A056]
- Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*) [A069]
- Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130]
- Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) [A140]
- Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141]
- Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) [A142]
- Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149]
- Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) [A156]
- Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157]
- Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) [A160]

**Part 2: Identification of relevant Natura 2000 sites using Source-Pathway-Receptor model and compilation of associated information.**

- Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162]
- Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179]
- Common Gull (*Larus canus*) [A182]
- Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*) [A183]
- Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193]
- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

The Slattery Waters portion of Cork Harbour supports wetland habitats and high numbers of many of the waterbird species which are qualifying interest features of the Cork Harbour SPA including: Wigeon, Shoveler, Oystercatcher, Lapwing and Curlew.

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.

Targets associated with these features are included in the [Cork Harbour Special Protection Area Conservation objectives document \(ver1 Dec 2014\)](#).

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

### Part 3: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

#### Activities which

- require direct intervention within the SAC or SPA;
- could cause release of toxic contaminants or other pollutants to watercourses;
- interfere with natural hydrological conditions in estuarine portions of the SAC or SPA;
- generate noise or visual disturbance stimuli at locations which could cause disturbance to qualifying interest bird species; or
- increase the risk of spread of invasive alien species

within the SAC or the SPA, could have the potential to have significant negative effects on these sites.

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

#### **Direct effects:**

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

#### **Indirect effects:**

*Disturbance related impacts to birds:* Works to upgrade the roundabout at Cobh Cross will be undertaken within 20m of the Cork Harbour SPA. This is a busy junction on a national dual carriageway route adjoining the Slatty Waters. The potential for these works to give rise to noise related impacts to waterbirds using the Slatty Waters area is ruled out taking account of the presence of the existing ambient noise associated with high volumes of road traffic in the area. The physical works required to complete the upgrade to the roundabout at Cobh Cross are separated from the estuary by the dual carriageway, an area of screen planting and grassy verges. It is predicted that the works will not increase noise levels within the Slatty Waters portion of the SPA above levels at which disturbance related impacts to waterbirds are known to occur. No visual disturbance related impacts to birds are predicted taking account of the physical separation and screening of the works area from the estuary by the dual carriageway. There are no wetland habitats within the Cobh Cross site itself and there is no significant usage of habitats within this site by waterbird species.

There is no risk that works at other locations (Main Street, Station Road, Wisers Road) could cause disturbance to waterbirds which are qualifying interest species for which the Cork Harbour SPA is designated, as these areas are sufficiently distant from the SPA to ensure that they will not cause either noise related or visual disturbance related to birds using the estuary. Furthermore, these areas do not support habitats which are likely to be used by waterbirds, and such species do not, therefore, occur at these locations.

*Potential release of toxic contaminants or other pollutants to watercourses:* Activities associated with the construction of new paths, cycleways and carparks within the town of Carrigtwohill and the upgrading of the roundabout at Cobh Cross will involve excavations, alterations to the surface water drainage system, re-alignment of a stream and the use of tarmac, concrete and other potentially toxic contaminants. The risk that activities associated with these works could result in

### Part 3: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

the release of toxic contaminants or silt to Cork Harbour within the SAC and SPA is considered in the AA screening report and ruled out for the following reasons:

1. the existing surface water drainage system at Cobh Cross and along main street Carrigtwohill has pollution controls (petrol interceptors and catch pits) integrated into it;
2. there are no open watercourses or surface drains located along Main Street or Cobh Cross. While works are proposed proximal to the Anngrove Stream where it crosses Main Street, the stream is culverted at this location and no pollution risk to the stream has been identified;
3. a new surface water drainage system is to be constructed along the Station Road as part of the proposed works. This will incorporate pollution controls (catch pits and petrol interceptors), and provision is being made in design for attenuation of surface water allowing for discharge at Greenfield rates.
4. works associated with the realignment of the Woodstock Stream could cause a localised release of sediment, but it is predicted that that any such release would settle out within the stream and it is considered that the stream is located sufficiently distant from the estuary to be satisfied that such a release will not pose a risk of causing a pollution event in Cork Harbour (Slatty Waters);
5. no excavations below groundwater are planned and it is not expected that groundwater will be encountered during any of the proposed works.

*Risk of spread of invasive species within EU sites.* Both Winter Heliotrope and Japanese Knotweed have been identified in areas proximal to proposed work sites. However, no significant risk of spread of these species to either the Cork Harbour SPA or the Great Island Channel SAC is predicted, taking account of the recorded locations of these species and the distance of same from the SAC and SPA, and taking account of the fact that no works which could pose a risk of causing the spread of same are proposed. Furthermore, neither of these species poses a direct threat of impact to the qualifying interests of either the Cork Harbour SPA or the Great Island Channel SAC.

#### In Combination Effects:

The AA screening report lists other plans and projects which approved or underway within the general area. These include the development of the new school campus and the new housing development (277 residential units), both of which are located off the Station Road. 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 Great Island Channel SAC or the Cork Harbour SPA.

### Part 4: 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 the SAC or SPA – therefore no associated risk of direct damage to qualifying interest habitats or other habitats of biodiversity value within either EU 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 above ambient levels in any part of the Cork Harbour SPA;
  - no elements of the project have the potential to cause visual disturbance to birds within any part of the Cork Harbour SPA; and
  - no elements of the project have the potential to cause ex-situ disturbance related impacts to qualifying interest bird species;
3. it is considered that the works do not pose a risk of causing pollution of water in either the Cork Harbour SPA or the Great Island Channel SAC for the following reasons:
  - the existing surface water drainage system at Cobh Cross and along main street Carrigtwohill has pollution controls (petrol interceptors and catch pits) integrated into it;
  - there are no open watercourses or surface drains located along Main Street or Cobh Cross. While works are proposed proximal to the Anngrove Stream where it crosses Main Street, the stream is culverted at this location and no pollution risk to the stream has been identified;
  - a new surface water drainage system is to be constructed along the Station Road as part of the proposed works. This will incorporate pollution controls (catch pits and petrol interceptors), and provision is being made as part of the design of this system for attenuation of surface water allowing for discharge at Greenfield rates;
  - works associated with the realignment of the Woodstock Stream could cause a localised release of sediment, but it is predicted that that any such release would settle out within the stream and it is considered that the stream is located sufficiently distant from the estuary to be satisfied that such a release will not pose a risk of causing a significant pollution event in Cork Harbour (Slatty Waters);
  - no excavations below groundwater are planned and it not expected that groundwater will be encountered during any of the proposed works.
4. The proposed project does not pose a risk of causing the spread of invasive alien species to either the Cork Harbour SPA or the Great Island Channel SAC, which species could negatively impact qualifying interest habitats or species of either of these two sites.