

**Habitats Directive  
Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination  
Phase 1A Carrigaline Transport & Public Realm Enhancement Plan  
Completed by Sharon Casey Ecologist  
Cork County Council.  
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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 1A 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 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<sup>1</sup>.

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 1A Carrigaline Traffic and Public Realm Enhancement Plan

### **Project Details:**

The proposed project comprises two main elements as follows:

#### ***Main Street Proposed Works***

The purpose of the works is to provide traffic management changes and to improve the quality of the public realm within the town centre extending from Ballea Road between New Western Inner Relief Road and Main Street; Main Street between Ballea Road and Lower Kilmoney Road; Crosshaven Road between Main Street and entrance to Dunnes Stores; and Lower Kilmoney Road between the entrance to Dairygold Co-op and Main Street. This will involve the widening of existing footpaths, relocation of existing kerbside parking and loading bays, the provision of enhanced facilities for public transport users and the creation of spill out areas for local traders. The proposed works will include:

- Creation of rain gardens;
- Excavation of the street surfacing and sub-base (maximum depth of excavation will be 1.0m below the existing surface level, with the majority of the excavations approximately 500mm below the existing surface level. This excludes excavation over the Owenboy Bridge where between 100mm and 200mm will be planed off to ensure not structural impacts on the existing bridge);
- Installation of barriers and hoardings during construction;
- Installation of new street furniture;
- Installation of new utilities with cables placed under ground;
- Installation of street lighting (The exact location of structural supports for e.g., street lighting will be determined as part of the detailed design process);
- Planting trees and other decorative plants;
- Removal of existing surface materials; and
- Repaving the street to include installation of new high-quality public realm.

Minor adjustments to the existing surface water drainage system, which comprises a series of gullies which discharge to the Owenboy River, will be made to accommodate changes in surface levels and the widening of footpaths. No demolition works are required to facilitate the proposed scheme, all works will be completed within the existing built environment (roads and paths).

#### ***Bridgemount Proposed Works***

The purpose of these works is to create a new pedestrian and cycle facility (450m) connecting suburban estates including Heron's Wood and Bridgemount. The key elements of this portion of the scheme involve:

- Excavation of grass, topsoil and some ground layers to provide a route through the neighbourhood park areas to the north and south of the rocky outcrop. The maximum depth of excavation will be between 200 – 300mm below the existing surface level through the residential park areas. Within the vicinity the northern section of the railway cutting (opposite the Pines residential estate), the rocky outcrop will be cut to a depth of approximately 1.5m to achieve a desirable gradient along the route:
- Clearance of debris, garden, domestic waste and vegetation on railway track through the rocky outcrop;
- Installation of a signalised crossing at Bridgemount Street to the south;
- Installation of anti-climb fences;

- Installation of associated landscaping enhancements, street lighting, close circuit television and enhanced boundary protection to neighbouring properties. Excavation of grass, topsoil and some ground layers to provide a route through the neighbourhood park areas;
- Installation of CCTV;
- Installation of linear drainage to prevent ponding;
- Installation of public lighting;
- Levelling of route e.g., building up to include a new sub-base, cut or filled to acquire the designed surface level;
- Planting new deciduous hedgerows and trees;
- Provision of a retaining structure at Firgrove Mews;
- Provision of a shared crossing over Heron's Wood Link Road to the north;
- Removal of an existing security fences;
- Removal of an old cattle crossing; and

This element of the works will require tree removal and the removal of scrub and grassland habitats and re-use of an abandoned railway line.

In accordance with normal standards, all works will be carried out in accordance with standard recognised best environmental practise.

#### **Site Characteristics:**

The main street element of the proposed works are located in the centre of Carrigaline town within an urban environment. This element of works is located in close proximity to and has a direct hydrological linkage to the Owenboy Estuary. These works do not involve or require the removal of natural or semi-natural habitats.

The proposed works at the Bridgemount Link will involve works within open green areas in residential estates. There is no direct hydrological linkage between this area and the estuary, however, it is proposed to link drainage for this portion of the site to the existing public drainage network which ultimately discharges to the estuary. The proposed works at this location will require the removal of mature trees as well as some scrub and grassland habitats.

#### **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 7km (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 likely 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:

<b>Special Conservation Interest Species</b>	<b>Qualifying Reason</b>
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)
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

Special Conservation Interest Species	Qualifying Reason
	(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)
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 boundary of the SPA is located 270m downstream from the proposed works location at its nearest point which is the bridge on Main Street.

**The proposed works on the bridge on Main Street have both close physical proximity and a direct hydrological connection to the Owenboy Estuary via the road surface water drainage system. There are potential pathways for impact on the Cork Harbour SPA having regard to the proximity of the proposed works area and direct hydrological linkage of same to this site. Accordingly, further consideration of potential for effects on this site is required.**

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

- 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;
- interfere with natural hydrological conditions; 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**

##### **Indirect effects:**

##### *Disturbance related impacts to birds:*

Works at the main street: These works will be undertaken within 270m of the Cork Harbour SPA. Bird usage information provided in the AA screening report indicates that waterbirds associated with this estuary primarily occur and are associated with mudflats and the river channel to the east of the Bothar Guidel bridge, which is located 270m east of the works areas. The area of the river channel between the bridge on Main Street (where works are proposed) and the Bothar Guidel bridge, does not support mudflat habitat and is not used by significant numbers of wetland bird species. This area does not form part of the Special Protection Area.

The potential for these works to give rise to noise disturbance related impacts to waterbirds is ruled out taking account of the limited additional noise which will be generated by the works, the presence of the existing ambient noise associated with high volumes of road traffic in the area and the relatively limited levels of bird usage in and around the bridge on main street. The distance of the works area from the SPA (270m) means that no visual disturbance impacts within the SPA are possible. The relatively low levels of recorded occurrence of waterbirds and the lack of suitable supporting habitat for waterbirds in the river channel immediately adjoining the works area rules out risk of significant ex-situ visual disturbance impacts.

Works at Bridgemount: The proposed works at Bridgemount are sufficiently distant from the SPA and wetland habitats which could be used by waterbirds, to be satisfied that there is no potential for works at this location to cause noise and/or visual disturbance related impacts to waterbirds.

*Potential release of toxic contaminants or other pollutants to watercourses:* Physical works in the town centre will involve the installation of new street furniture, installation of traffic calming infrastructure, installation of tree pits, relocation of traffic lights and street-lights and the rearrangements of parking spaces. While much of these works pose no risk of impact to the environment, some small-scale excavations are required to facilitate surfacing and these works have the potential to cause the inadvertent release of silt and/or toxic contaminants to the public sewer. The risk that these works could result in the release of toxic contaminants or silt to the estuary causing significant negative effects on the Cork Harbour SPA, is ruled out on the basis of the scale and nature of the works which are proposed. This takes account of the fact that only minor excavations are proposed, and it also acknowledges that while the project could result in the release of silt to the surface water drainage system, that any such releases would 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. No significant dust emissions are predicted and accordingly, the risk of impact to estuarine habitats associated with same is ruled out.

Physical works at Bridgemount are described above and will involve excavations, installation of new cycling surface, installation of a new surface water drainage system and lighting. These works do not pose a risk of causing a water pollution event in the estuary during the construction phase as there is no hydrological linkage between this area and the estuary and surface water at this location will percolate to ground during the construction phase. The new drainage system for this element of the proposal will direct surface water to ground.

*Risk of spread of invasive species:* There have been no invasive alien species recorded within the proposed works area. The project does not pose a risk of causing the spread of invasive alien species.

### **Post Construction Stage**

*Risk of impact on natural hydrological conditions:*

Works on Main Street: The proposed works will not increase the volume of surface water discharging to the Owenboy Estuary. No alterations in natural hydrological processes are predicted.

Bridgemount works: It is proposed to install a new surface water drainage system with this element of the project which will direct surface water to ground. There is no risk of impact to the estuary associated with this element of the project.

*Disturbance related impacts to birds:* The alterations in public realm layout and construction of a new pedestrian cycleway are not predicted to increase disturbance related impacts to birds using the Cork Harbour SPA.

*Potential release of toxic contaminants or other pollutants to watercourses:* The project is intended to reduce car usage in Carrigaline and has therefore the potential to reduce threats and pressures to water quality associated with both emissions to air and water in the receiving catchment.

*Risk of spread of invasive species:* There have been no invasive alien species recorded within the proposed works area. The project does not pose a risk of causing the spread of invasive alien species.

### **In Combination Effects**

The AA screening report lists other plans and projects which approved or underway within the general area. These includes other public realm and transport projects forming part of the Carrigaline TPREP involving the development of a pedestrian crossing over the Owenboy River. This project, which



involves significant interventions in the estuary, has been subject to Appropriate assessment is currently being considered by an Bord Pleanála. 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.

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. This takes account of the minor nature of the Phase 1A of this project and the environmental controls which are required to be put in place for other projects with a more direct interaction with sensitive portions of the estuary.

### 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 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. The construction works do not pose a risk of causing significant pollution risk to water quality for the following reasons:
  - there is no hydrological linkage of the Bridgemount works area to the estuary;
  - proposed excavations in the Main Street 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. There will therefore be no change in natural hydrological conditions in the estuary.
6. The proposed project does not pose a risk of causing the spread of invasive alien species to either the Cork Harbour SPA as surveys have indicated that there are invasive alien species within the works area.

**Note:** 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.

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<sup>i</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.