

**Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment
Screening Determination**

**Development of Community Sports Ground
at Carkookeal, Mallow
Part 8**



Cork County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

**Completed by: Joy Barry,
Cork County Council.**

Date: 12th December 2022

This document contains the Habitats Directive screening determination of Cork County Council in respect of proposed public realm improvements including the provision of the Carhookeal Sports Grounds in Mallow. The determination is based on the information provided in the AA Screening Report and Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by Greenleaf Ecology, Part 8 Report and associated drawings prepared in respect of the proposed scheme and which will be placed on display with the Part 8 documentation. This screening determination should be read in conjunction with those reports and drawings.

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 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 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

¹“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.

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.

Name of the project

Carhookeal Sports Grounds, Mallow.

Description of the project

The purpose of this project is to develop publicly owned Community Sports Grounds on a 19.3 acre site at Carhookeal, Mallow. Facilities for the community and sporting clubs at this site are to include:

- Construction of a 400m eight lane athletic track, enclosing a grass pitch area suitable for track and field sports.
- Development of a grass soccer pitch
- Development of an AstroTurf pitch (3Nr 30m x 50m pitches)
- Development of a rugby union size pitch
- Construction of 2 Nr Tennis Courts
- Provision of car parks – total spaces for 157 car spaces and 4 bus park spaces
- Development of an outer perimeter walking pathway.
- Erection of new entrance gates
- Associated soft landscaping of the site including further native hedge planting, biodiversity planting and tree planting.
- Associated groundworks including drainage, stormwater connections, watermain connections and electrical ducting.

It is noted that a clubhouse/changing area is identified within the overall site layout plan, however this is not part of the current Part 8 application.

Surface water arising from the existing grass pitches percolates to grassland and drains towards a shallow drain/ditch at the east of the site. It is proposed that the new grass pitches and track will continue to percolate off to grassland and will drain to vegetated swales at the east of the site. The track level will direct water off to the inner grass area, while the astro pitch will have a drainage system under the pitch surface and be directed to grass areas within the site to naturally percolate.

The new roadside car park areas will be constructed at the existing car park and surface water will percolate to grassland as per the existing system. In the new proposed lower area car park the surface water will pass through a bypass interceptor before discharging to the storm water sewer.

Waste Water: There will be no foul water requirements as part of this planning application.

Site Context

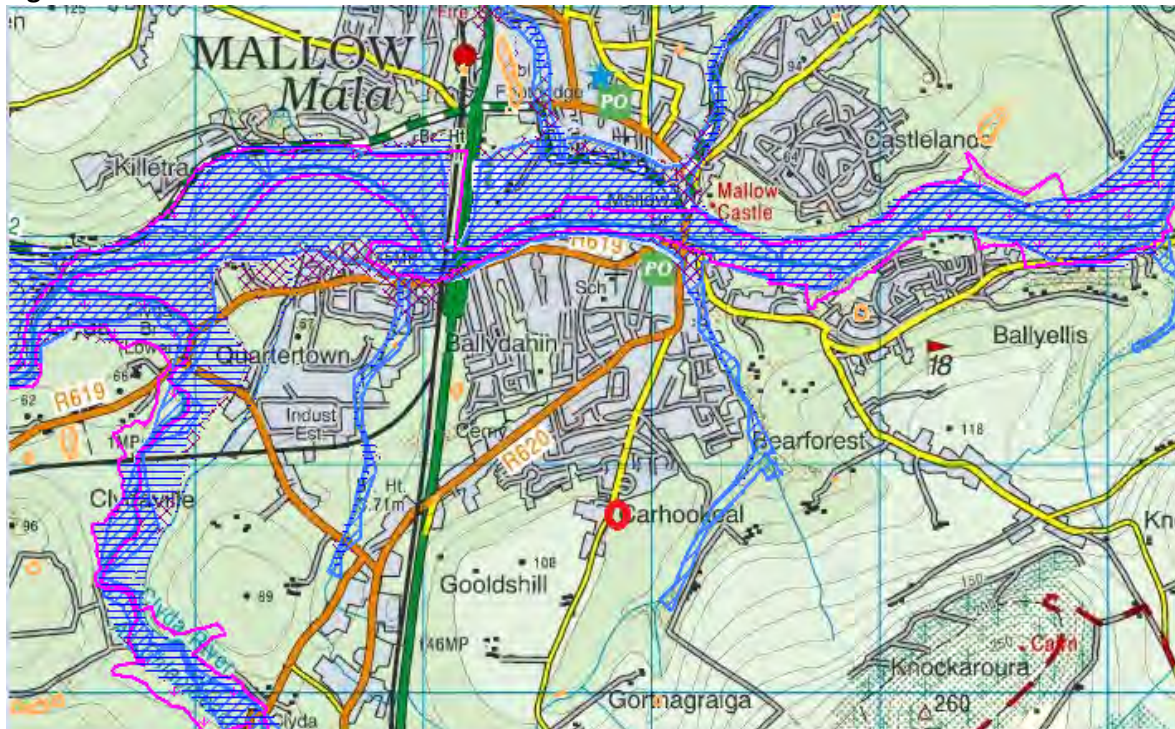
This site is located 1.5km south of Mallow town centre and comprises of a 19.3 acre green field site which was previously in use as Mallow GAA grounds. The site is accessed via the Old Cork Road to the west. The site is bounded to the north by residential development, to the west by Industrial uses (to west of Cork Road) and by agricultural lands to the south and east.

The site comprises of an old sports grounds which has recolonised with meadows and grassy verges (species poor) and scrub over the years. There are treelines present along the southern and western boundaries of the site and there is a small wooded area located within the northern part of the site. Hawthorn has been planted along the eastern and northern site boundaries.

The ForestBear Stream (EPA name) is located c.140m to the east of the site which is a tributary of the Blackwater (Munster) River, which is located c.1.1km to the north of the site (straight line distance). The Blackwater River is also designated as part of the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 2170) (see pink hatching in Figure 1).

The site is not identified to be located within Flood Zones A or B according to flood mapping available for the site in the Cork County Development Plan 2022 or the draft PFRA Flood Maps (see blue hatching in Figure 1).

Figure 1: Site Context

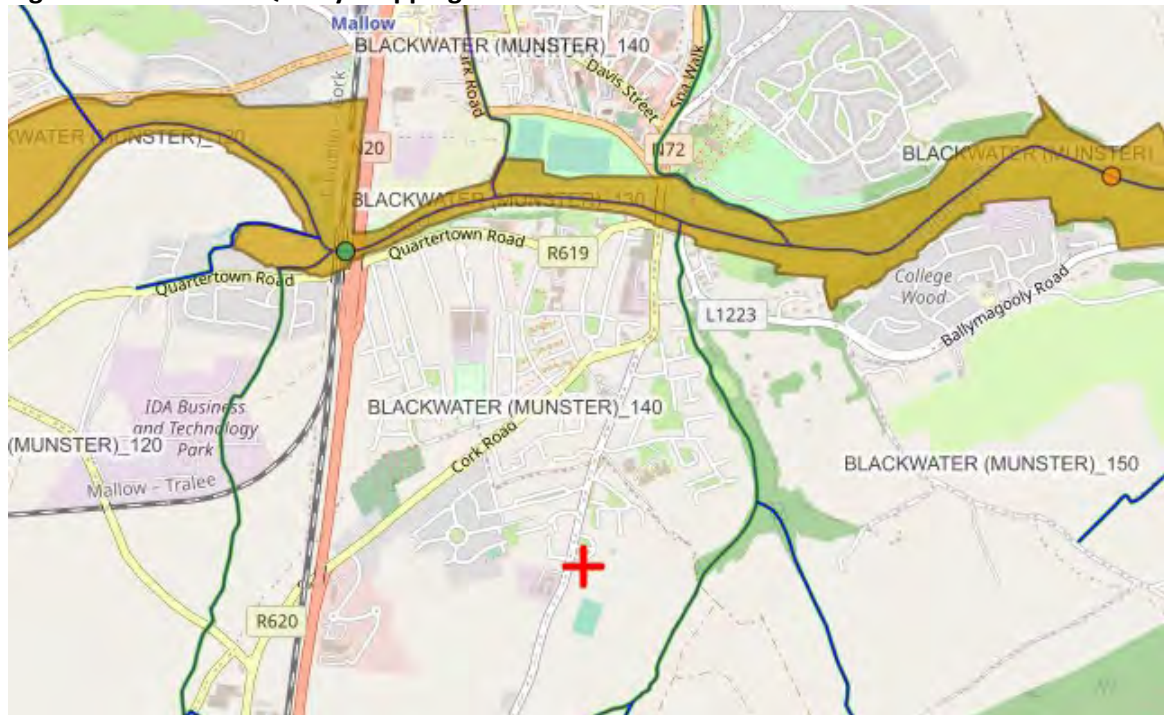


Flooding and Drainage

Both the ForestBear Stream and the Blackwater (Munster)_140 River Waterbodies Risk Status is 'not at risk' and is classified as being of Good status under the 2013-2018 Water Framework Directive monitoring round. Macroinvertebrate sampling for Q-value determination was conducted within the Blackwater River as part of EPA's Water Framework Directive monitoring.

This nearest sampling point is located within the Blackwater River at Rly Bridge, Mallow. In 2021 (the latest available data on EPA Maps), the Q-value was 4 'Good'.

Figure 2: EPA Water Quality Mapping



Name and location of EU sites subject to screening

The submitted AA Screening report identifies the following Natura 2000 sites to be located within 15km of the proposed development site;

1. Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 2170) – 250m to the north; and
2. Kilcolman Bog Special Protection Area (Site Code: 4096) – located 12km to the north.

A source-pathway-receptor link has been identified between the source (proposed development) and the Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC as the site slopes towards a tributary of the Blackwater River (the ForestBear Stream), which is located c.140m to the east of the site. Therefore, the Blackwater River SAC is considered further as part of this assessment.

Given the distance between the development site and Kilcolman Bog SPA and lack of a hydrological connection, potential for significant impacts on this site are ruled out in relation to this site.

No other designated sites have been identified within the submitted AA Screening.

Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites listed above?

No.

Describe how the project (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 Site

An assessment of potential significant effects of the development on the Blackwater River SAC has been carried out within the submitted screening report. This assessment rules out potential for significant negative effects on this designated site for the following reasons:

1. The proposal is not located within any European site and therefore direct impacts will not occur through land take or fragmentation.
2. Given the lack of waterbodies on site, habitats on site do not support QI of the Blackwater River SAC and therefore potential for disturbance / displacement or ex-situ impacts to QI of the SAC is considered unlikely.
3. Given the nature of the proposed development, lack of any active drains linking the site to the ForestBear Stream and buffer of Hawthorn scrub and c.140 of agricultural grassland no significant risk of severe silt levels being generated or major spills of hydrocarbons within Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC is predicted to occur during the construction phase. Therefore, no impact on water quality within European sites during construction is predicted to occur.
4. Surface water during operational phases will percolate to adjacent grassland areas and swales on site. Surface water from the car park will pass through a bypass inceptor before discharge to the local surface water network. Therefore, risk of surface waters with deleterious substances reaching the ForestBear stream is extremely low with no potential for significant effects as a result.
5. No high-risk invasive species were recorded within the proposed development. Therefore, there is no risk of spreading these species into the SAC.
6. The Screening report considers plans, projects and local developments in the area with potential for cumulative or in-combination effects on the Blackwater River SAC. However, in the absence of any predicted impacts from the proposed development, no in-combination impacts have been identified.

Are there other projects or plans that together with the project being assessed that could affect these sites (provide details)?

Per point 6 in the above section, the AA Screening report notes that threats to the Blackwater SAC include agricultural impacts on water quality and increased disturbance. However, in the absence of any predicted impacts from the proposed development, no in-combination impacts have been identified.

Screening Report Conclusion

The report as submitted states in conclusion that the proposed Carhookeal Sports Ground, Mallow, Co. Cork, either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects, does not have the potential to significantly affect any European site, in light of their conservation objectives. Therefore, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is deemed not to be required.

Cork County Council evaluation and overall conclusion that there are no significant effects on European Sites foreseen as a result of the proposal.

The primary issues of ecological concern to designated European sites as a result of the proposal are activities have the potential to give rise to significant negative impacts on the qualifying interests associated with these sites e.g. disturbance / displacement of qualifying species, impact to water quality by introducing and toxic pollutants such as hydrocarbons, or increasing turbidity, silt or nutrients into aquatic systems.

In accordance with Part 5 of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations and on the basis of the objective information provided in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report produced by Greenleaf Ecology it is concluded that the proposed project does not pose a risk of significant impacts to any Natura 2000 site for the following reasons:

- There is no spatial overlap between the proposed development site and any Natura 2000 site;
- No direct loss, alteration or fragmentation of habitats will occur within any Natura 2000 site;
- The site is located sufficiently distant from any Natura 2000 site to be satisfied that there is no risk of activities associated with the project causing disturbance to qualifying species;
- The risk of surface water emissions associated with the proposed development is considered low during the construction phase given the distance between the site and Natura 2000 sites. It is noted that the due to the scale of the works, the presence of buffers between the work areas and nearby Natura 2000 sites, and the lack of a direct hydrological connection, the risk of significant water quality impacts as a result of the proposed development are not likely.
- Surface water discharge during the operational phase will discharge to on-site swales and will percolate to ground and any potential toxic substances from car parking areas will pass through a by-pass inceptor before discharging to the local surface water network. Therefore, the proposal does not pose a risk of cause water quality risk or increased hydrological flows to the Blackwater River SAC.
- No high-risk invasive species were recorded within the proposed development.
- No potential for in-combination effects have been identified.

It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment is not required.