

**Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment
Screening Determination**

**Proposed conversion to part of the ground floor plan in the Cobh library into
an E-Centre (Digital Hub).**



Cork County Council
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

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This document contains the Habitats Directive screening determination of Cork County Council in respect of a proposed conversion to part of the ground floor plan in the Cobh library into an E-Centre (Digital Hub).

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 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.

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.

<p>Name of the project</p> <p>Conversion of part of the ground floor plan of Cobh library into an E-Centre (Digital Hub).</p>
<p>Description of the project</p> <p>The proposed project is for the conversion of part of the ground floor into an E-Centre (Digital Hub).</p>
<p>Site Context</p> <p>The development is located within the existing library building, located on Casement Square, Cobh. The site is located within the development boundary of Cobh and is zoned Town Centre according to the Cork County Development Plan 2022. The building is a protected structure (RPS no. 1896) and is a detached thirteen bay two storey building. It was constructed in 1855 and was the former town hall in Cobh.</p> <p>The site is located within the Lee, Cork Harbour and Youghal Bay WFD catchment. There are no watercourses on site. The site is located approximately 100m north of the pier in Cobh.</p> <p>The site is not identified to be located within an area susceptible to flooding according to the Cork County Development Plan 2022 or the draft PFRA Flood Maps available for the site. Therefore, there are no issues in relation to flood-risk associated with the proposed development.</p>

<p>Name and location of EU sites subject to screening</p> <p>The subject site does not overlap with any European site. However, there are two Natura 2000 (European) sites located within a 15km radius of the site;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) - approx. 2.9kms west of the site. 2. Great Island channel SAC (Site Code: 0001058) - approx. 3.4kms north of the site.
<p>Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites listed above?</p> <p>No.</p>
<p>Describe how the project (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 Site</p> <p>Proposed works comprise minor internal alterations to an existing building. There are no physical or hydrological linkages connecting the building to any EU site. No pathways for impact to any EU site have been identified. There is no potential for this project to impact any EU site.</p>
<p>Are there other projects or plans that together with the project being assessed that could affect these sites (provide details)?</p> <p>No potential for impact on any EU site identified. Therefore, there is no potential for the project to contribute to negative impacts which could be significant when considered in combination with impacts on such sites arising from other sources.</p>

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

In accordance with Section 177S of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the objective information provided in this report, it is concluded that the proposed project does not pose a risk of causing significant negative any EU site for the following reasons:

- No works are proposed within any of the listed European sites.
- No direct loss, alteration or fragmentation of habitats will occur within any EU sites;
- The proposed site for development has no hydrological linkage to any EU site;
- The site is located sufficiently distant from any EU site to be satisfied that there is no risk of activities associated with the project causing disturbance to qualifying habitats or species.

It is therefore determined that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 is not required.