

**Habitats Directive Appropriate Assessment  
Screening Determination**

**Carrigwohill to Midleton Inter-Urban Cycleway Phase 2  
Part 8**



**Cork County Council**  
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

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**Cork County Council.**

**Date: 13/12/2023**

This document contains the Habitats Directive screening determination of Cork County Council in respect of the proposed development of Phase 2 of the Carrigtwohill to Midleton Inter-Urban Cycle Route. The determination is based on the information provided in the AA Screening Report and Ecological Survey Reports prepared WS Atkins Ireland Ltd., 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 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

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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.

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

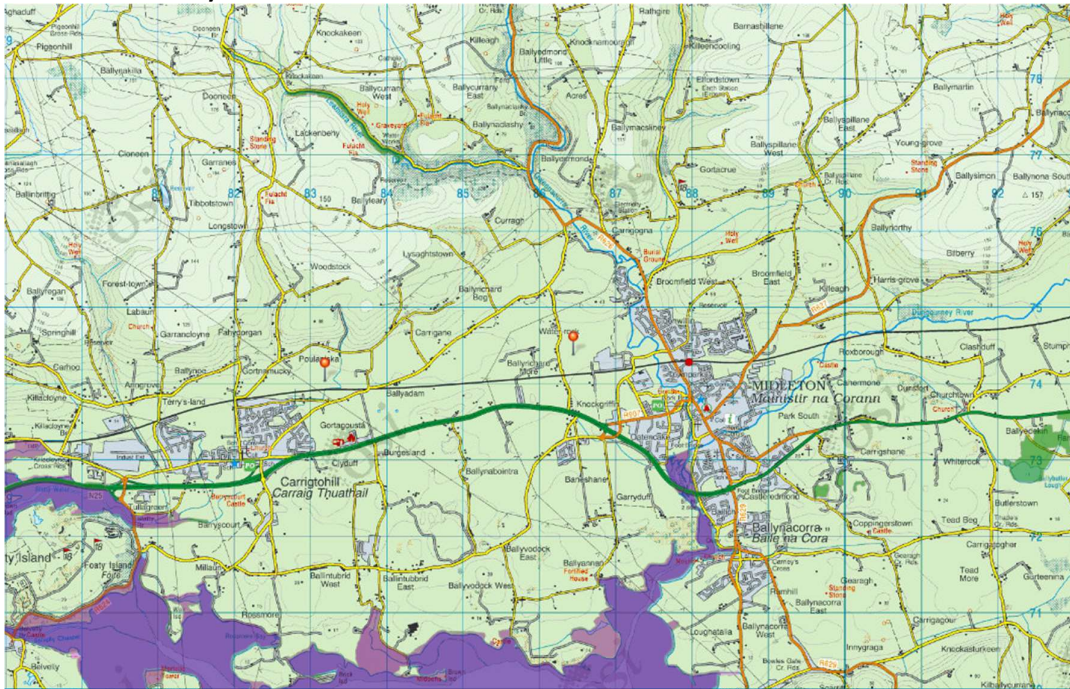
<b>Name of the project</b>
Carrigtwohill to Midleton Inter-Urban Cycleway Phase 2
<b>Description of the project</b>
<p>The proposed development comprises a section of inter-urban cycle route running to the north of Carrigtwohill and connecting the Inter-urban Cycleway Phase 1, to the north of Carrigtwohill, with the Water Rock Services Corridor Link Road Cycleway at Ballyrichard More Road. It forms part of the cycle route connecting Midleton to Dunkettle, which is proposed in the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040 (CMATS). This inter-urban route (IU-1) will connect major employment centres such as Little Island (10,000+ employees) and Carrigtwohill IDA Business Park (3,800 employees) with existing and proposed residential areas including in Carrigtwohill, Midleton, Glanmire and Glounthaune.</p> <p>The proposed development is a predominantly off-road cycling and walking facility that is c. 3.7km long, with c. 210m as a shared street (with a very low vehicular traffic) and the rest as a segregated path from vehicular traffic. In addition, the proposed development includes: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1 no. pedestrian/cyclist underpass (at existing overpass agricultural road),</li><li>• 4 no. at-grade road crossings,</li><li>• Traffic calming measures on existing roads,</li><li>• Potential for native planting corridor, and</li><li>• Public lighting.</li></ul> <p>The cycle route will be 4m across with a minimum planted verge of 3m on either side where this is achievable. The path will generally consist of an asphalt surface and will be constructed at-grade or slightly above existing ground levels. The total area of hard surface will be approximately 14,850m<sup>2</sup> with drainage comprising natural, over-the-edge drainage into a filter drain running parallel to the cycleway. The natural drainage system will be augmented by SuDS features where required.</p> <p>Where possible the route has been chosen to run parallel and offset from existing hedgerows and treelines so that they can be preserved. In total, it will be necessary to remove approximately 891m of hedgerows/ treelines to construct the route. This will be mitigated by the replacement of this with a minimum of 2,281m of new hedgerows/treelines (an increase of 1,390m) aligned to the route as well as new areas of planting in SuDS features throughout. Works will occur proximal to two streams, namely Poulaniska Stream and Water Rock Stream, with in stream works consisting of the installation of a culverted crossing at the Poulaniska Stream. It is recommended that the crossing of the Poulaniska stream be a 1500mm wide pre-cast concrete box culvert</p>
<b>Site Context</b>
<p>The cycleway commences just north of the Cork to Midleton Railway Line within lands zoned for the Carrigtwohill Urban Expansion Area (UEA). The route connects to Phase 1 via a short link of active travel infrastructure being developed as part of the Carrigtwohill URDF Initiative – UEA Infrastructure. The cycle route follows the railway line along an east-west axis keeping mainly to</p>

agricultural field boundaries. The proposed route terminates at the Water Rock Urban Expansion Area (UEA), where it joins planned road and cycle infrastructure.

Per information provided in the submitted AA Screening Report the new route will pass through agricultural grassland and arable crops in large fields separated by hedgerows and treelines, with some areas of more species-rich grasslands. There are two small streams, not included in EPA's WFD monitoring database, namely Poulaniska and the Water Rock streams, at each end of the route. The route will cross the Water Rock Stream over an existing culvert and a culvert will be installed on the Poulaniska as part of a river crossing.

The proposed route will intersect the following townlands: Carrigtwohill, Ballyadam, Carrigane, Ballyrichard More, and Water Rock.

**Figure 1: Site Context - Red pin drops indicate start and end of route. (Purple indicates Cork Harbour SPA, pink indicates Great Island Channel SAC, and green indicates pNHAs (Carrigshane Hill, and Loughs Aderry And Ballybutler to the east, with Leamlara Wood to the north). The route generally runs along the Cork=Midelton railway.**







**Name and location of EU sites subject to screening:**

The submitted AA Screening report identifies two EU designated site with potential linkage to the proposed works area, namely Cork Harbour Special Protection Area (site code: 4030) and Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation (site code 1058). Both European sites are located c. 1.8km southeast (over land) from the proposed development at their closest point.

**Cork Harbour SPA** is designated for a number of ducks, wader, gulls and Common Tern. The Conservation Objectives for the SCIs are listed below:

Special Conservation Interest	Conservation Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004]</li> <li>• Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005]</li> <li>• Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]</li> <li>• Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028]</li> <li>• Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]</li> <li>• Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]</li> <li>• Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]</li> <li>• Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054]</li> <li>• Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]</li> <li>• Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069]</li> <li>• Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]</li> <li>• Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]</li> <li>• Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]</li> <li>• Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]</li> <li>• Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]</li> <li>• Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]</li> <li>• Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]</li> <li>• Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]</li> <li>• Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]</li> <li>• Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>) [A164]</li> <li>• Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]</li> <li>• Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]</li> <li>• Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]</li> <li>• Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]</li> <li>• Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</li> </ul>	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the following bird species in Cork Harbour SPA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004]</li> <li>• Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005]</li> <li>• Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017]</li> <li>• Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028]</li> <li>• Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]</li> <li>• Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050]</li> <li>• Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]</li> <li>• Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) [A054]</li> <li>• Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]</li> <li>• Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069]</li> <li>• Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]</li> <li>• Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]</li> <li>• Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]</li> <li>• Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]</li> <li>• Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]</li> <li>• Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]</li> <li>• Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]</li> <li>• Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]</li> <li>• Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]</li> <li>• Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>) [A164]</li> <li>• Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]</li> <li>• Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]</li> <li>• Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) [A183]</li> <li>• Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]</li> </ul> <p>and to maintain the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat in Cork Harbour SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory birds that utilise it</p> <p>European Union Conservation of Wild Birds (Cork Harbour Special Protection Area 004030) Regulations 2021</p>

The qualifying interests (QIs) and conservation objections for the **Great Island Channel SAC** are listed below:

Qualifying Interests	Conservation Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</li> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]</li> </ul>	<p>To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the following habitat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</li> </ul> <p>and to restore the favourable conservation condition of the following habitat:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330]</li> </ul> <p>NPWS Conservation Objectives Version 1 June 2014</p>

**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 Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel 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. Scale and duration of the proposed works
2. Length and complexity of the hydrological pathways to designated sites (water courses enter karst systems)
3. The habitats within and adjacent to the footprint of the proposed development are not considered to be of importance to any of the bird species of special conservation interest in the SPA.

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

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.

**Screening Report Conclusion**

The report as submitted states in conclusion that the proposed walk 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 intertidal and estuarine habitats by introducing and nutrients or toxic pollutants such as

hydrocarbons.

Regarding the proposed crossing at the Poulaniska Stream Cork County Council is satisfied that given the relatively short period during which it will be installed, the relatively weak and remote hydrological connection, and assimilative nature of the receiving waterbody, and the installation of a box culvert will not impact on the tidal and estuarine habitats in the Slatty Water.

Cork County Council is satisfied on the basis of the objective information provided in the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, and other ecological information provided by Atkins, 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 EU sites.
- No direct loss, alteration or fragmentation of habitats will occur within any EU sites.
- 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 species.
- There is no risk of indirect impact to estuarine or intertidal habitats within any EU sites. This evaluation is made taking account of the weak and relatively remote (over 4km) hydrological connections between the works site and any EU site. Any sediment that might be released as a result of the works would settle before reaching any Natura 2000 site.
- No potential for in-combination effects have been identified.

It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment is not required.