Report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening

Project Coolpowra Alternative Construction Access Road

Prepared by: Moore Group – Environmental Services

25 November 2025

On behalf of Coolpowra Flexgen Ltd.

Project Proponent	Coolpowra Flexgen Ltd.
Project	Project Coolpowra Alternative Construction Access Road
Title	Report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment Screening Project Coolpowra Alternative Construction Access Road

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Abbreviations

AA	Appropriate Assessment
ACP	An Coimisiún Pleanála
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
EEC	European Economic Community
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FWPM	Freshwater Pearl Mussel
GIS	Geographical Information System
LAP	Local Area Plan
NHA	Natural Heritage Area
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
OSI	Ordnance Survey Ireland
pNHA	proposed Natural Heritage Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
UÉ	Uisce Éireann
WFD	Water Framework Directive

1. Introduction

1.1. General Introduction

This report for the purposes of Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening contains information required for the competent authority to make a determination on screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in respect of the construction and operation of a new temporary access road to the Proposed Reserve Gas-Fired Power Generator, GIS Electrical Substation and Energy Storage System at Coolpowra, Ballynaheskeragh, Cooldorragha, Gortlusky and Sheeaunrush, Co. Galway (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) to determine whether it is likely individually or in combination with other plans or projects to have a significant effect on any European sites, in light of best scientific knowledge.

Having regard to the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the "Planning Acts") (section 177U), the purpose of a screening exercise under section 177U of the PDA 2000 is to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

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 a European site then it is necessary to carry out a Stage 2 appropriate assessment under section 177V of the Planning Acts.

When screening the project, there are two possible outcomes:

- the project poses no potential for the possibility of a significant effect and as such requires no Stage 2 assessment; or
- the project has potential to have a significant effect (or this is uncertain and therefore cannot be excluded) and therefore a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment of the project is necessary.

This report has been prepared by Moore Group - Environmental Services to enable the competent authority to make a determination on AA screening in relation to the Proposed Development. The report was compiled by Ger O'Donohoe B.Sc. Applied Aquatic Sciences (ATU Galway, 1993) & M.Sc. Environmental Sciences (TCD, 1999) who has over 30 years' experience in environmental impact assessment and has completed numerous Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports and Natura Impact Statements on terrestrial and aquatic habitats for various development types.

1.2. Legislative Background - The Habitats and Birds Directives

Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive are transposed into Irish Law inter alia by the Part XAB of the Planning Acts (in particular section 177U and 177V) which governs the requirement to carry out appropriate assessment screening and appropriate assessment, where required, per Section 1.1 above.

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) is the main legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity in the European Union (EU). Under the Habitats Directive, Member States are obliged to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which contain habitats or species considered important for protection and conservation in a EU context.

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds), transposed into Irish law by the Bird and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 as amended, and the Wildlife Act 1976, as amended, is concerned with the long-term protection and management of all wild bird species and their habitats in the EU. Among other things, the Birds Directive requires that Special Protection Areas (SPAs) be established to protect migratory species and species which are rare, vulnerable, in danger of extinction, or otherwise require special attention.

SACs designated under the Habitats Directive and SPAs, designated under the Birds Directive, form a pan-European network of protected sites known as Natura 2000. The Habitats Directive sets out a unified system for the protection and management of SACs and SPAs. These sites are also referred to as European sites.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the requirement for an assessment of proposed plans and projects likely to have a significant effect on Natura 2000 sites.

Article 6(3) establishes the requirement to screen all plans and projects and to carry out an appropriate assessment if required (Appropriate Assessment (AA)).

> ***Article 6(3):*** *"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 subjected to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In 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."*

Article 6(4) establishes requirements in cases of imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

2. Methodology

The Commission's methodological guidance (EC, 2002, 2018, 2021 see Section 2.1 below) promotes a four-stage process to complete the AA and outlines the issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

Stages 1 and 2 deal with the main requirements for assessment under Article 6(3). Stage 3 may be part of Article 6(3) or may be a necessary precursor to Stage 4. Stage 4 is the main derogation step of Article 6(4).

Stage 1 Screening: This stage examines the likely effects of a project either alone or in combination with other plans and projects upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant. In order to screen out a project, it must 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 a European site.

Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment: This stage considers whether the plan or project, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site, and includes any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. The proponent of the plan or project will be required to submit a Natura Impact Statement, i.e. the report of a targeted professional scientific examination of the plan or project and the relevant Natura 2000 sites, to identify and characterise any possible implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives, taking account of in combination effects.

Stage 3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions: This stage examines alternative ways of implementing the project that, where possible, avoid any adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site.

Stage 4 Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain: Where imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist, an assessment to consider whether compensatory measures will or will not effectively offset the damage to the sites will be necessary.

To ensure that the Proposed Development complies fully with the requirements of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and all relevant Irish transposing legislation, Moore Group compiled this report to enable the competent authority to make a determination on AA screening in relation to the Proposed Development to determine whether it can 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 a European site(s).

2.1. Guidance

This report has been compiled in accordance with guidance contained in the following documents:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 rev.).
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPWS 1/10 & PSSP 2/10.
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2018).
- Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive (EC, 2021).
- Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2021).
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) Practice Note PN01 Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (OPR, 2021).
- Natura Impact Statement Sustainable Residential Development and Compact Settlement Guidelines for Planning Authorities (NPWS, 2024).

2.2. Data Sources

Sources of information that were used to collect data on the Natura 2000 network of sites, and the environment within which they are located, are listed below:

- The following mapping and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) data sources, as required:
    - National Parks & Wildlife (NPWS) protected site boundary data;
    - Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) mapping and aerial photography;
    - OSI/Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rivers and streams, and catchments;
    - Digital Elevation Model over Europe (EU-DEM);
    - Google Earth and Bing aerial photography 1995-2025;
- Online data available on Natura 2000 sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie including:
    - Natura 2000 - Standard Data Form;
    - Conservation Objectives;
    - Site Synopses;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre records;
    - Online database of rare, threatened and protected species;
    - Publicly accessible biodiversity datasets.
- Status of EU Protected Habitats in Ireland. (National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2019); and
- Relevant Development Plans;
    - Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

3. Description of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development involves the construction of a new alternative construction access road to allow for construction of the three Coolpowra Energy Projects – Reserve Gas Fired Generator, GIS and ESS. Please note that all three planning applications are with An Coimisiún Pleanála; Ref. 320095 (Reserve Gas Fired Generator), 320094 (GIS) and 320916 (ESS).

The proposed N65 Access Junction scheme has been designed in accordance with the documents below.

- TII Document Ref: DN-GEO-03031 - Rural Road Link Design - design speed of 100km/hr
- TII Document Ref: DN-GEO-03060 - Geometric Design of Junctions
- DOT Traffic Signs Manual

The main design components include:

- Provision of a new priority T-junction onto the N65 National Road for new access road serving the development
- Provision of junction radii appropriate for the vehicle types utilising the access junction
- Partial removal of existing boundary bushes and trees to provide junction visibility
- Provision of traffic signs and road markings for the new N65 junction
- Staggered junction design where the new roads meet and cross the local road (L8763).

The proposed development (an alternative construction access road) will route through lands under the control of the applicant. It is proposed to construct a temporary road from the N65 which will provide vehicular access to the main development site (south of the L8763). The road will be used for the construction stages of the projects. The proposed road will route from a new junction along the N65 and traverse three undulating grassed fields. The access route will cross the L8763 by staggered junction and extend from here into the main development lands, before connecting to the proposed access lane which will serve the site during operation (i.e. that which was originally applied for).

The proposed access junction at the N65 is located on a straight section of the National Road. Approximately 380m to the north of the proposed access junction the N65 bends slightly to the east and approximately 270m to the south of the proposed access junction the N65 bends slightly to the west. At the proposed access junction location, the N65 National Road has a relatively gentle downhill gradient to the south. Approximately 130m to the north of the proposed access junction the N65 has a slight crest and approximately 120m to the south of the proposed access junction the N65 has a slight sag. The existing cross section of the N65 National Road in the vicinity of the proposed access junction is a single carriageway road with no hard shoulders of 5.8-6.0m. There is a maintained verge bounding the road to the east and verge with a mix of bushes and trees bounding the road to the west.

At the N65, the proposal will involve minor widening (300-350mm) of the N65 National Road to the north to provide a 6m carriageway in the vicinity of the proposed access junction. No amendments are proposed to be carried out to the vertical alignment of the N65 National Road to accommodate the proposed access junction. The existing gradient on the N65 National Road in the vicinity of the proposed access junction is approximate 1.3%. The access road incorporates a 1 in 200 (0.5%) approach gradient for more than 15m on the approach to the new access junction with the N65 National Road. No widening of the N65 National Road is proposed as part of the access junction provision. The access road is proposed to be 7.0m wide. No change proposed to the existing cross fall on the N65 National Road. 2.5% cross fall is proposed to be provided on the access road complaint with the crossfall recommendations of Section 3.1 of TII Publication DN-GEO-03031 to assist with drainage. Visibility splays extents of 215m are provided in both directions as recommended in Section 5.6.2.2 & Table 5.5 of TII Publication DN-GEO-03060 for a 100 km/h design speed. Visibility splays are taken at a setback of 3.0m as recommended in Section 5.6.2.2 & Table 5.4 TII Publication DN-GEO-03060. The proposed access road pavement construction is detailed below:

- Surface/Wearing Course - 25mm compacted dense bitumen macadam wearing course (10mm nominal size aggregate) to BS4987 & Table 9/3 of the DOE Specification
- Binder Course - 40mm thickness (compacted) dense bitumen macadam basecourse (20mm nominal size aggregate) to BS4987 & Table 9/1 of the DOE Specification
- Road Base - single course 150 mm thickness (compacted) dense bitumen macadam basecourse
- Sub-Base – 150mm thickness (compacted) granular material type b
- Capping Layer – If Required

Figure 1 shows the Proposed Development location and Figure 2 shows a detailed view of the Proposed Development boundary on recent aerial photography. Figure 3 shows the layout of the Proposed Development.

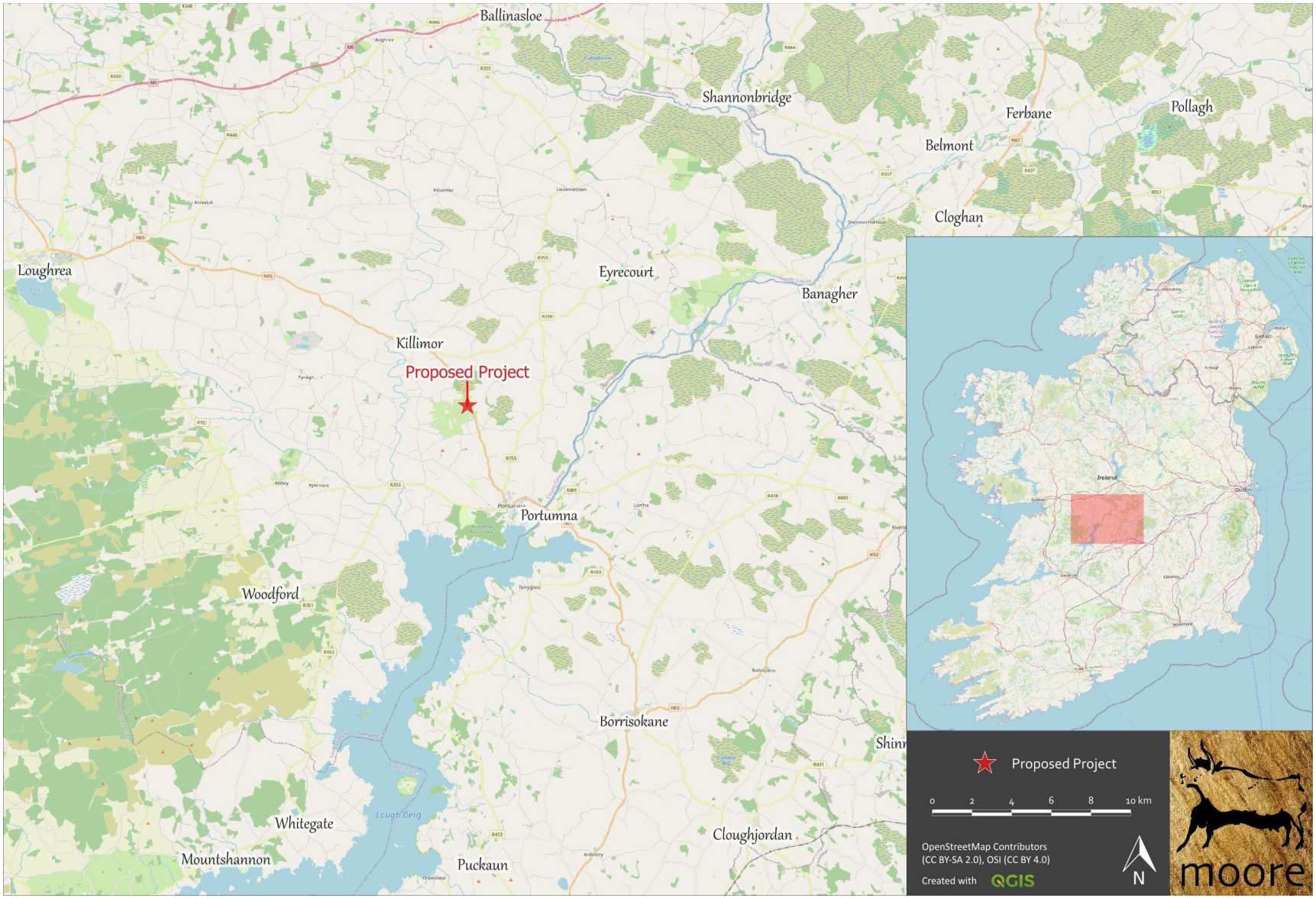

Figure 1. Showing the Proposed Development location between Killimor and Portumna, Co. Galway.

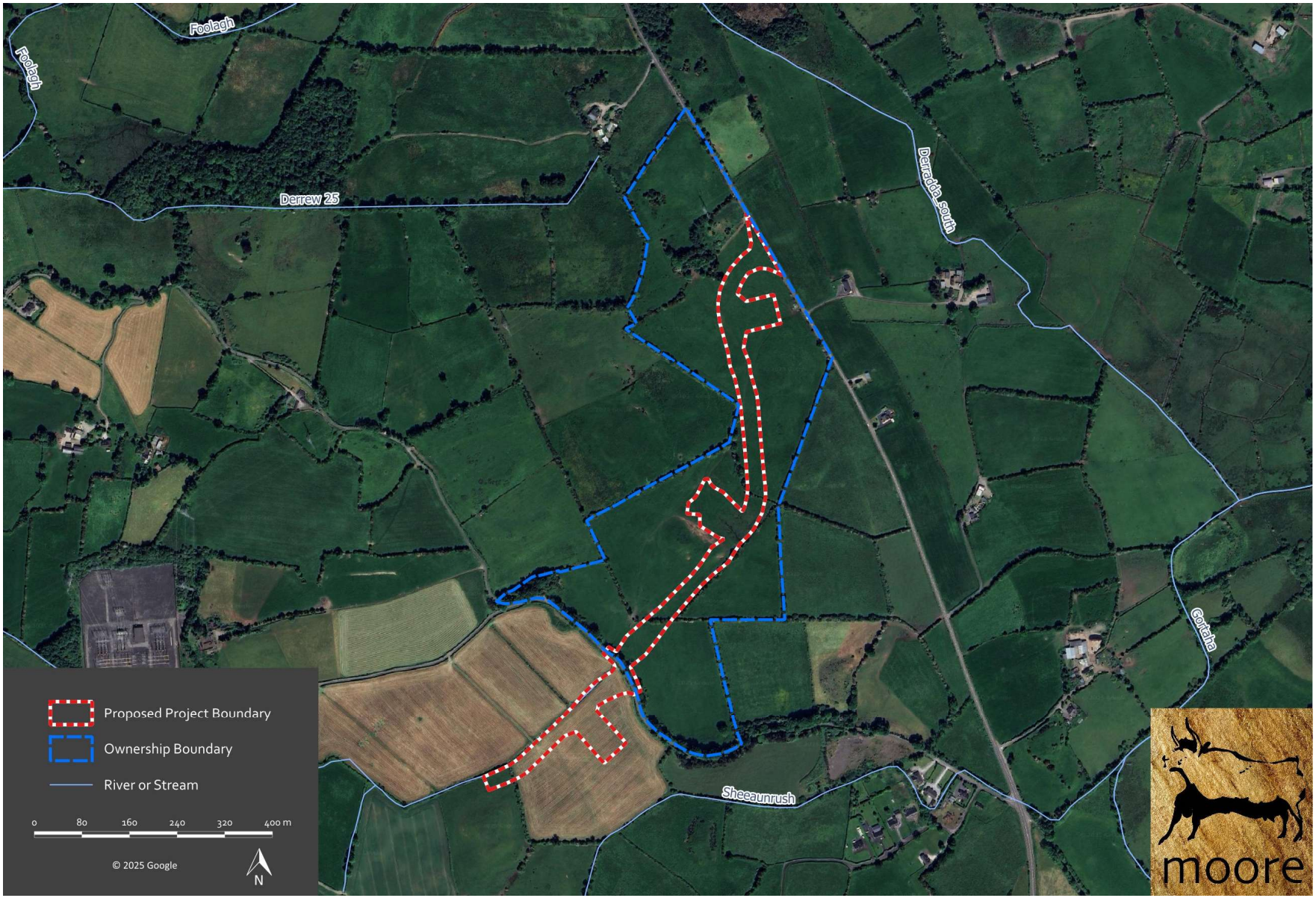

Figure 2. Showing the Proposed Development boundary on recent aerial photography.

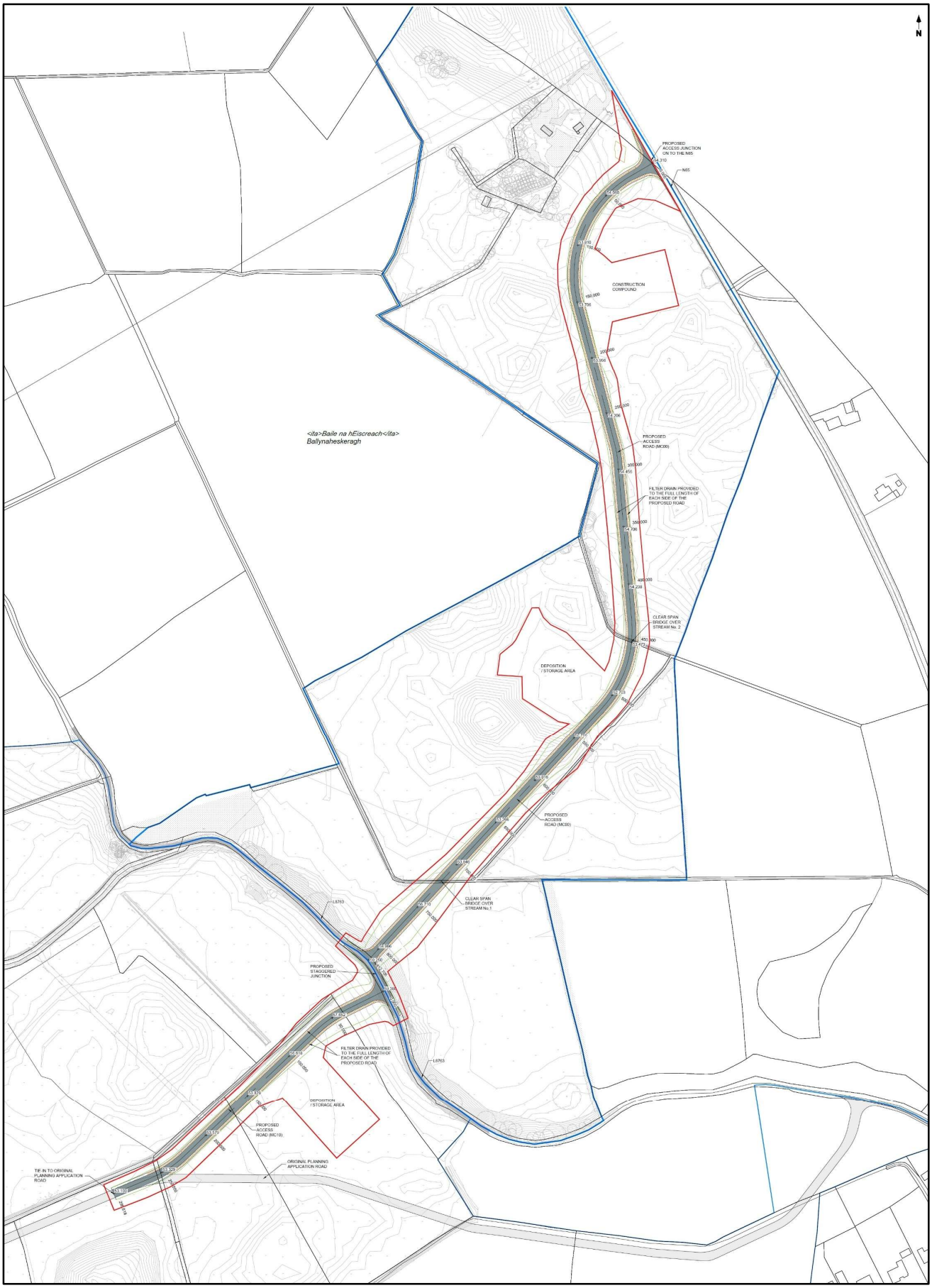

Figure 3. Plan of the Proposed Development.

4. Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

4.1. Description of Natura Sites Potentially Significantly Affected

A Zone of Influence (ZoI) of a proposed development is the geographical area over which it could affect the receiving environment in a way that could have significant effects on the Qualifying Interests of a European site. In accordance with the OPR Practice Note (2021), PN01, the ZoI should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source- Pathway-Receptor framework.

The European Commission's "*Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Methodological Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*" published 28 September 2021 states at section 3.1.3, that:

"Identifying the Natura 2000 sites that may be affected should be done by taking into consideration all aspects of the plan or project that could have potential effects on any Natura 2000 sites located within the zone of influence of the plan or project. This should take into account all of the designating features (species, habitat types) that are significantly present on the sites and their conservation objectives. In particular, it should identify:

- *any Natura 2000 sites geographically overlapping with any of the actions or aspects of the plan or project in any of its phases, or adjacent to them;*
- *any Natura 2000 sites within the likely zone of influence of the plan or project Natura 2000 sites located in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) that could still be indirectly affected by aspects of the project, including as regards the use of natural resources (e.g. water) and various types of waste, discharge or emissions of substances or energy;*
- *Natura 2000 sites in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) which host fauna that can move to the project area and then suffer mortality or other impacts (e.g. loss of feeding areas, reduction of home range);*
- *Natura 2000 sites whose connectivity or ecological continuity can be affected by the plan or project".*

The range of Natura 2000 sites to be assessed, i.e. the zone in which impacts from the plan or project may arise, will depend on the nature of the plan or project and the distance at which effects may occur. For Natura 2000 sites located downstream along rivers or wetlands fed by aquifers, it may be that a plan or project can affect water flows, fish migration and so forth, even at a great distance. Emissions of pollutants may also have effects over a long distance. Some projects or plans that do not directly affect Natura 2000 sites may still have a significant impact on them if they cause a barrier effect or prevent ecological linkages. This may happen, for example, when plans affect features of the landscape that connect Natura 2000 sites or that may obstruct the

movements of species or disrupt the continuity of a fluvial or woodland ecosystem. To determine the possible effects of the plan or project on Natura 2000 sites, it is necessary to identify not only the relevant sites but also the habitats and species that are significantly present within them, as well as the site objectives.

The Zone of Influence may be determined by considering the Proposed Development's potential connectivity with European sites, in terms of:

- Nature, scale, timing and duration of all aspects of the proposed works and possible impacts, including the nature and size of excavations, storage of materials, flat/sloping sites;
- Distance and nature of potential pathways (dilution and dispersion; intervening 'buffer' lands, roads etc.); and
- Location of ecological features and their sensitivity to the possible impacts.

The potential for source pathway receptor connectivity is firstly identified through GIS interrogation and detailed information is then provided on sites with connectivity. European sites that are located within a potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development are listed in Table 1 and presented in Figures 4 and 5, below. Spatial boundary data on the Natura 2000 network was extracted from the NPWS website (www.npws.ie) on 25 November 2025. This data was interrogated using GIS analysis to provide mapping, distances, locations and pathways to all sites of conservation concern including pNHAs, NHA and European sites.

Table 1 European Sites located within the potential Zone of Influence[1] of the Proposed Development.

Site Code	Site name	Distance (km)[2]
000231	Barroughter Bog SAC	6.12
002241	Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC	5.63
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	5.14
004058	Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA	5.63
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	5.16
004168	Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA	8.33

The Proposed Development is located predominantly in the townland of Ballynaheskeragh, between Killimor and Portumna, in southeast Co. Galway. It is drained by field boundary ditches which lead to a conjoined water course identified by the EPA and the Ballynaheskeragh Stream and the Sheeaunrush Stream. However, the topography of this area has been altered over the last 20 years and the Ballynaheskeragh Stream does not exist at the base of the esker road leading to the Coolpowra site. The Sheeaunrush Stream was observed to be a dry ditch originating from the south in the vicinity of recently developed dwelling in that area. After rainfall, it flows east toward the N65 and joins the Gortaha River which lows south to the River Shannon 6.5 river km downstream and thus has connectivity with the River Shannon Callows SAC (Site Code 000216), the Middle Shannon Callows

[1] All European sites potentially connected irrespective of the nature or scale of the Proposed Development.
[2] Distances indicated are the closest geographical distance between the Proposed Development and the European site boundary, as made available by the NPWS.

SPA (Site Code 004096) along with the Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC (Site Code 002241) and the Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code 004058) both over 10 river km downstream in Lough Derg.

The western portion of the lands within the redline boundary is drained by large deep cut drainage ditches which convey water to the Treananearla Stream, which runs northwest from the site, and enters the Kilcrow River. The Kilcrow flows generally south, discharging into Lough Derg at Stonyisland Bay. The Treananearla Stream has connectivity to two European sites at Lough Derg, the Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC (Site Code 002241), and the Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code 004058).

Barroughter Bog SAC (Site Code 000231) also lies close to the Kilcrow River, 6.1km to the southwest. The Kilcrow River runs along the eastern edge of the SAC boundary before it outfalls into Lough Derg.

However, given the location of the SAC in relation to the Proposed Development and the nature of the qualifying interests for which it is designated (terrestrial habitats) no viable source pathway receptor links are identified and therefore no potential for significant effects to this European site, and it is screened out.

The Slieve Aughty Mountains SPA (Site Code 004168) lies 7.4km to the southwest. The footprint of the Proposed Development has not been identified as an *ex-situ* foraging, roosting or breeding area for any SCI species, and it is screened out.

The Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of the European sites in the Zone of influence of the Proposed Development are provided in Table 2 below.

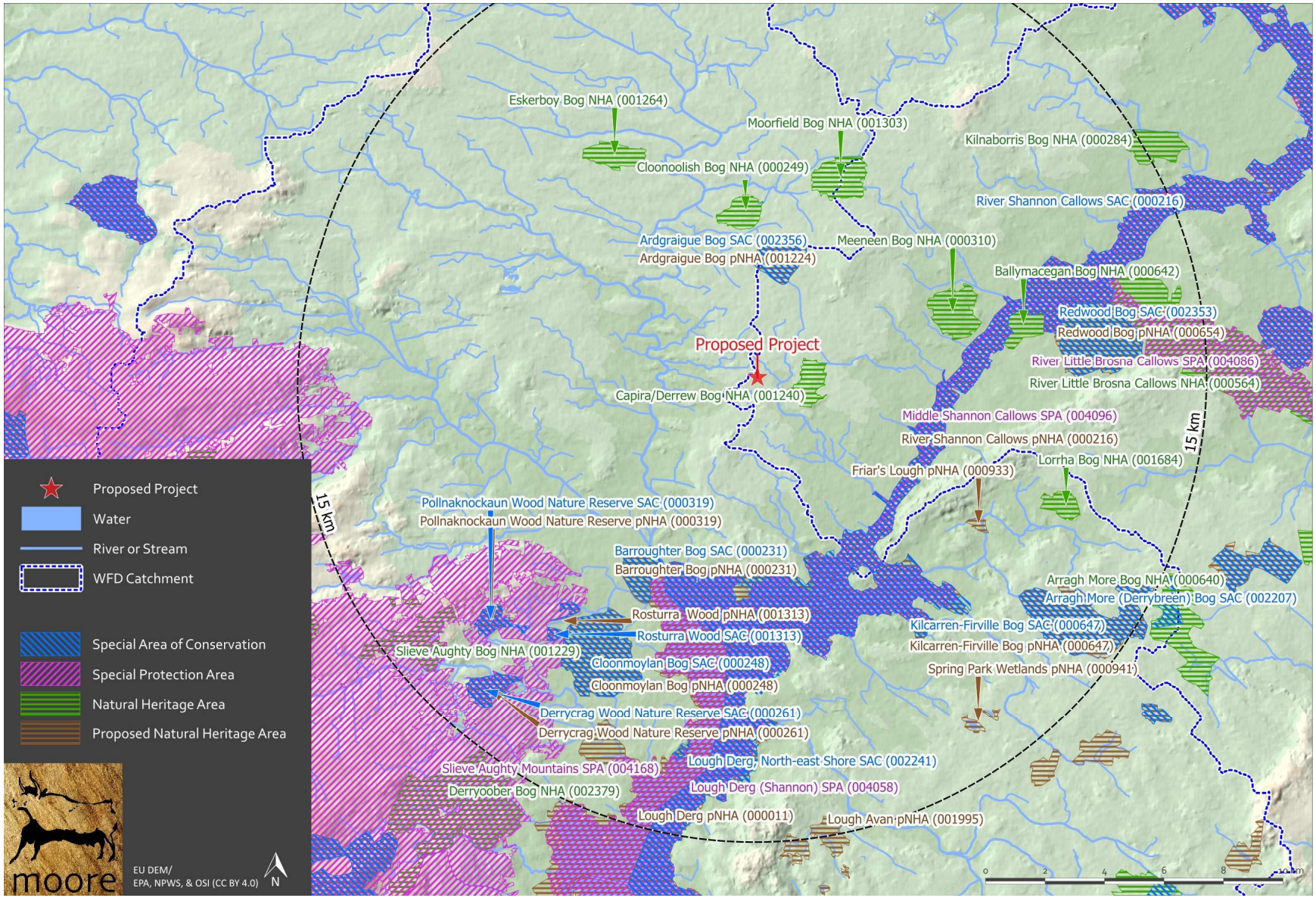

Figure 4. Showing European sites and NHAs/pNHAs within the wider Potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development.

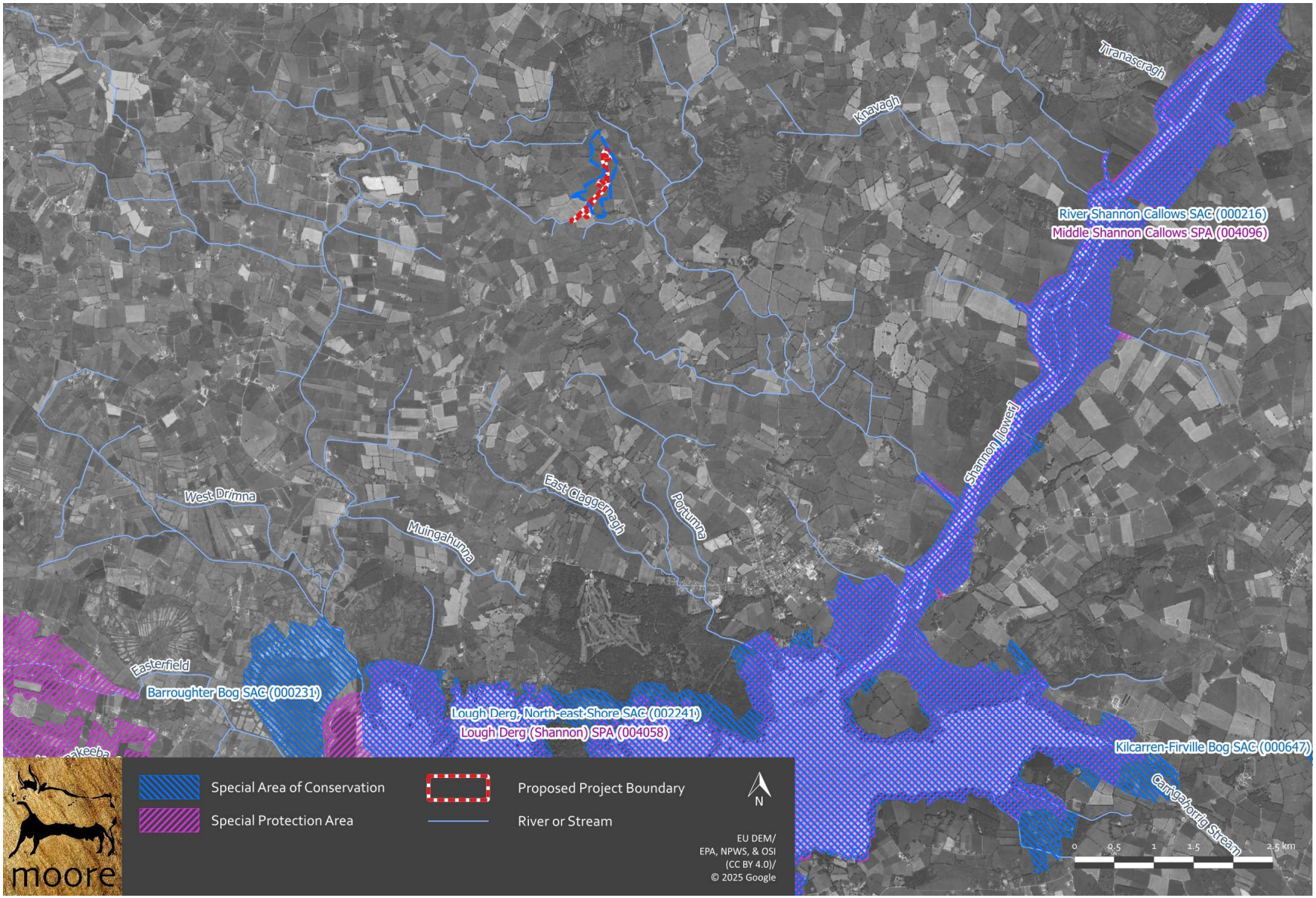

Figure 5. Detailed view of European sites in the nearer Potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development.

*Table 2 Identification of relevant European sites using Source-Pathway-Receptor model and compilation of information on QIs and conservation objectives. *Priority Habitats*

European Site name, Site code and Conservation Objectives	Location Relative to the Proposed Development Site	Connectivity – Source-Pathway-Receptor	Considered further in Screening – Y/N
Lough Derg Northeast Shore SAC (002241) The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest: 5130 *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands 7210 Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the Caricion davallianae 7230 Alkaline fens 8240 Limestone pavements 91E0 Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) 91J0 *Taxus baccata* woods of the British Isles NPWS (2019) Conservation Objectives: Lough Derg, North-east Shore SAC 002241. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.	10km downstream of the Proposed Development	There is a pathway via drainage ditches to the Gortaha River and the River Shannon albeit at over 10 river km and with a high degree of dilution in the River Shannon and Lough Derg.	Yes, see Table 3 below.
River Shannon Callows SAC (000216) The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest: 1355 Otter *Lutra lutra* 6410 *Molinia* meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) 6510 Lowland hay meadows (Alopecurus pratensis, Sanguisorba officinalis) 7230 Alkaline fens 8240 Limestone pavements* 91E0 Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: River Shannon Callows SAC 000216. Version 1. National	6.5km downstream of the Proposed Development	There is a pathway via drainage ditches to the Gortaha River and the River Shannon albeit at 6.5 river km and with a high degree of dilution in the River Shannon.	Yes, see Table 3 below.

European Site name, Site code and Conservation Objectives	Location Relative to the Proposed Development Site	Connectivity – Source-Pathway-Receptor	Considered further in Screening – Y/N
Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.			
Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (004058) The overall aim of the Birds Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest: A017 Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* A061 Tufted Duck *Aythya fuligula* A067 Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* A193 Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* A999 Wetlands NPWS (2022) Conservation objectives for Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA [004058]. First Order Site-specific Conservation Objectives Version 1.0. Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.	>10km downstream of the Proposed Development	There is a pathway via drainage ditches to the Gortaha River and the River Shannon albeit at over 10 river km and with a high degree of dilution in the River Shannon and Lough Derg.	Yes, see Table 3 below.
Middle Shannon Callows SPA (004096) The overall aim of the Birds Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest: A038 Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* A050 Wigeon *Anas penelope* A122 Corncrake *Crex crex* A140 Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* A142 Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus* A156 Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* A179 Black-headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* A999 Wetlands NPWS (2022) Conservation Objectives: Middle Shannon Callows SPA 004096. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.	6.5km downstream of the Proposed Development	There is a pathway via drainage ditches to the Gortaha River and the River Shannon albeit at 6.5 river km and with a high degree of dilution in the River Shannon.	Yes, see Table 3 below.

4.2. Ecological Network Supporting Natura 2000 Sites

A concurrent GIS analysis of the proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) and designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHA) in terms of their role in supporting the species using Natura 2000 sites was undertaken along with GIS investigation of European sites. These supporting roles mainly relate to mobile fauna such as mammals and birds which may use pNHAs and NHAs as ecological corridors or "stepping stones" between Natura 2000 sites.

Article 10 of the Habitats Directive and the Habitats Regulations 2011 place a high degree of importance on such non-Natura 2000 areas as features that connect the Natura 2000 network. Features such as ponds, woodlands and important hedgerows were taken into account in the decision process and during the preparation of this AA Screening report.

There are two NHAs located within 5km of the Proposed Development; Cloonoolish Bog NHA and Capira/Derrew Bog NHA, however, there are no pathways or connectivity to these NHAs. The pNHAs identified in Figure 4 associated with Lough Derg and the River Shannon; Lough Derg pNHA [000011] and River Shannon Callows pNHA [000216] are considered under the higher status as European sites. There is no connectivity to any other pNHAs including Barroughter Bog pNHA [000231].

There are no areas of supporting habitat that will be impacted by the Proposed Development.

5. Identification of Potential Impacts & Assessment of Significance

The Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the sites considered in the assessment and therefore potential impacts must be identified and considered.

5.1. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

The consideration of all potential direct and indirect impacts that may result in significant effects on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the Proposed Development are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects.

Identification of all potential direct and indirect impacts that may result in significant effects on the conservation objectives of a European site, taking into account the size and scale of the project.	
Impacts:	**Significance of Impacts:**
Construction phase e.g. Vegetation clearance Demolition Surface water runoff from soil excavation/infill/landscaping (including borrow pits) Dust, noise, vibration Lighting disturbance Impact on groundwater/dewatering Storage of excavated/construction materials Access to site Pests	In the absence of mitigation measures during construction to control potential pollution of surface water, the potential effects water quality in the Gortaha River leading to Lough Derg and on the River Shannon Callows SAC (Site Code 000216), the Middle Shannon Callows SPA (Site Code 004096), the Lough Derg North-east Shore SAC (Site Code 002241), and the Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code 004058) is uncertain. 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 a European site.
Operational phase e.g. Direct emission to air and water Surface water runoff containing contaminant or sediment Lighting disturbance Noise/vibration Changes to water/groundwater due to drainage or abstraction Presence of people, vehicles and activities Physical presence of structures (e.g. collision risks)	All surface water runoff, once the facility is operational, will be discharged to sustainable urban drainage systems. There is no real likelihood of any significant effects on European Sites in the wider catchment area.
Describe any likely changes to the European site:	
Examples of the type of changes to give consideration to include:	The Proposed Development site is not located adjacent or within a European site, therefore there is no risk of

Reduction or fragmentation of habitat area Disturbance to QI species Habitat or species fragmentation Reduction or fragmentation in species density Changes in key indicators of conservation status value (water quality etc.) Changes to areas of sensitivity or threats to QI Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or ecological function of the site	habitat loss or fragmentation or any effects on QI habitats or species directly or ex-situ. It can be noted that the improved grassland habitats recorded during fieldwork in August 2025 and distance from the Lough Derg SPA do not present opportunities to support the bird species for which the Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code 004058), 5.2km is designated. In the absence of mitigation measures during construction to control potential pollution of surface water, the potential effects water quality in the Gortaha River leading to Lough Derg and on the River Shannon Callows SAC (Site Code 000216), the Middle Shannon Callows SPA (Site Code 004096), the Lough Derg North-east Shore SAC (Site Code 002241), and the Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code 004058) is uncertain.

5.2. Assessment of Potential In-Combination Effects

Cumulative effects are described by the EPA as *the addition of many minor or insignificant effects, including effects of other projects, to create larger, more significant effects*. In combination effects are considered in the appropriate assessment process as an assessment of the potential adverse effects of a plan or project in combination with other plans or projects. The underlying intention of the in-combination provision is to take account of cumulative effects.

As part of the Screening for an Appropriate Assessment, in addition to the Proposed Development, other relevant plans and projects in the area must also be considered at this stage. This step aims to identify at this early stage any possible significant in-combination effects of the Proposed Development with other such plans and projects on European sites.

A review of the National Planning Application Database was undertaken. The database was then queried for developments granted planning permission within 1km of the Proposed Development within the last three years, these are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4.Planning applications granted permission in the vicinity of the Proposed Development.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
23438	for the following development: installation of a new wastewater treatment system & percolation area to serve an existing dwelling & all associated site works	The potential for in-combination effects will be assessed at Stage 2 AA.
2360849 Parent application	for the demolition of an existing vacant farmhouse & all associated farm outbuildings (total gross floorspace of demolition works is approximately 609m2); three 400 kV single circuit angle masts (approximately 36.5m high) to facilitate the diversion of the existing Oldstreet-Woodland 400 kV overhead line into the proposed compound; three 400 kV gantry structures to allow connection of the existing 400 kV circuit to the proposed series	The potential for in-combination effects will be assessed at Stage 2 AA.

Planning Ref.	Description of development	Comments
	compensation equipment (approximately 29m high measured to top of lightning rod); three series compensation platforms comprising capacitor bank, metal oxide varistor, triggered air gap & discharge damping circuit (approximately 12m high to top of equipment on platform); a communication & protection equipment single storey control building (gross floorspace approximately 125.8m2 & 5.5m high) with 8no. parking spaces; 400 kV associated electrical equipment, including, insulators, instrument transformers, overhead conductors, lightning masts, disconnectors, circuit breakers & filter reactors; removal of two existing 400 kV overhead line towers & associated overhead cables, conductors & surge arrestors; bat roost compensatory structure (gross floorspace approximately 16m2 & height of 4.5m); & all ancillary site development works including, site preparation works, site clearance & levelling; hardstanding & internal access tracks; underground cabling & earthgrid, surface water drainage network including a soakaway & attenuation tank; palisade internal fencing & gates (approximately 2.6m high) & landscaping as required to facilitate the development	
24360	to construct a single storey extension to the rear of an existing single storey dwelling and all associated site works. Gross floor space of proposed works: 131.20 sqm(extension)	The potential for in-combination effects will be assessed at Stage 2 AA.

The Galway County Development Plan in complying with the requirements of the Habitats Directive requires that all Projects and Plans that could affect the Natura 2000 sites in the same potential Zone of Influence of the Proposed Development site would be initially screened for Appropriate Assessment and if requiring Stage 2 AA, that appropriate employable mitigation measures would be put in place to avoid, reduce or ameliorate negative impacts. In this way any, in-combination impacts with Plans or Projects for the proposed development area and surrounding townlands in which the proposed development site is located, would be avoided.

The listed developments have been granted permission in most cases with conditions relating to sustainable development by the consenting authority in compliance with the relevant Local Authority Development Plan and in compliance with the Local Authority requirement with regard to the Habitats Directive. The development cannot have received planning permission without having met the consenting authority requirement in this regard.

Any new applications for the Proposed Development area will be assessed on a case by case basis *initially* by Galway County Council which will determine the requirement for AA Screening as per the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

The potential for in-combination effects will be assessed at Stage 2 AA.

6. Conclusion

In the absence of mitigation measures during construction to control potential pollution of surface water, the potential effects water quality in the Gortaha River leading to Lough Derg and on the River Shannon Callows SAC (Site Code 000216), the Middle Shannon Callows SPA (Site Code 004096), the Lough Derg North-east Shore SAC (Site Code 002241), and the Lough Derg (Shannon) SPA (Site Code 004058) is uncertain.

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 a European site.

Thus, in line with Departmental Guidance and having regard to ECJ and Irish case law and the 'Precautionary Principle', Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

A final determination will be made by the competent authority in this regard.

7. References

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2010) Guidance on Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (as amended February 2010).

European Commission (2007) Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive '92/43/EEC: Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interests, compensatory measures, overall coherence and opinion of the Commission. European Commission, Brussels.

European Commission (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.

European Commission (2021) Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites - Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Brussels 28.9.21.

European Commission (2021) Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive, Brussels 12.10.21.

NPWS (2019) The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin.

NPWS (2025) National Parks and Wildlife Service Metadata available online at https://www.npws.ie/maps-and-data

Office-of-the-Planning-Regulator (2021) Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management OPR Practice Note PN01. March 2021