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Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

PRESENTED TO

Galway City Council
Proposed Salmon
Pedestrian Crossing

Weir

Bridge

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Environmental Consultancy Services

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Enviroguide Consulting was commissioned by Galway City Council to prepare an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report for a Proposed Development, entitled “Salmon Weir Bridge - Pedestrian Crossing” (the Proposed Development) located on University Road (R863) between the Gaol Road and the Salmon Weir Bridge in Galway City (the Site), hereafter referred to as ‘Proposed Development’ or ‘Site’, when referring to the application Site area. This report contains information to enable the Competent Authority to undertake Stage 1 AA screening in respect of the Proposed Development.

1.2 Quality Assurance and Competence

Enviroguide Consulting is multi-disciplinary consultancy specialising in the areas of the Environment, Waste Management and Planning. All Enviroguide consultants carry scientific or engineering qualifications and have a wealth of experience working within the Environmental Consultancy sectors, having undergone extensive training and continued professional development.

Enviroguide Consulting as a company remains fully briefed in European and Irish environmental policy and legislation. Enviroguide staff members are highly qualified in their field. Professional memberships include the Chartered Institution of Waste Management (CIWM), the Irish Environmental Law Association and Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

All surveying and reporting have been carried out by qualified and experienced ecologists and environmental consultants. WMC, Ecologist with Enviroguide, undertook the desktop research and authored this report.

WMC has a B.Sc. in Applied Freshwater and Marine Biology from Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. WMC has five years of experience in ecological surveying and in this time, he has covered a wide range of ecological topics including ornithological surveying, bat surveying, badger surveying/exclusions, otter surveying, macroinvertebrate surveying and habitat surveying among others. WMC has also completed the field and report work of numerous planning surveys including Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEA), Appropriate Assessment Screenings and Natura Impact Statements (NIS) and Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW).

1.3 Description of Proposed Development

1.3.1 Site Location

The Proposed Development is located on University Road (R863) between the Gaol Road and the Salmon Weir Bridge in Galway City. The development sits adjacent to the River Corrib on its western bank and is situated at the western entrance of the Salmon Weir Bridge, which the R863 regional road runs across.

The Proposed Site sits adjacent to the Galway Cathedral with the city centre located circa 400 metres (m) to the southeast.

1.3.2 Proposed Development Description

The Salmon Weir Bridge Pedestrian Crossing Project requires the construction of a temporary pedestrian crossing across the R863 University Road at Galway Cathedral. It will facilitate safe movements for walkers, wheelers and cyclists, including vulnerable road users. The crossing will connect the footway on University Road near Fisheries Field to Droichead an Dóchais (formerly the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge).

The temporary pedestrian crossing will be a toucan crossing (i.e. signal controlled crossing for pedestrians and cyclists use) and will be located on the western side of the Salmon Weir Bridge.

The rationale for constructing a temporary controlled crossing is to facilitate a safe crossing point of the R863 until such time as the construction of the BusConnects Cross City Link project is complete. The Cross City Link Project has received consent on 27th September 2024 but is currently the subject of an ongoing Judicial Review.

Traffic and pedestrian surveys at this location indicate high demand for this crossing. Pedestrian counts at peak time (13:00hrs) indicate that approximately 360 pedestrians cross the R863 at this location (i.e. almost 6 pedestrians per minute). Throughout a typical day, approximately 2,000 people (i.e. one every 22 seconds) cross the road at this point. All of these pedestrians could potentially use the temporary crossing.

Of the total number of pedestrians crossing the River Corrib at this location, 76% use Droichead an Dóchais, 24% use the Salmon Weir Bridge which also carries thousands of vehicles each day. The proposed temporary pedestrian crossing will encourage more people to choose to cross the road at this point and avail of the new pedestrian and cycle bridge, Droichead an Dóchais.

1.3.3 Drainage and Water Supply

1.3.3.1 Surface water

A number of existing surface water drainage gullies will be relocated as a result of proposed works. All surface water drainage features in relation to the project drain to the local surface water drainage network. A significant change to the baseline of surface water volume as a result of the installation of the Proposed Development is not foreseen.

1.3.3.2 Foul Drainage

There is no foul drainage associated with the Proposed Development.

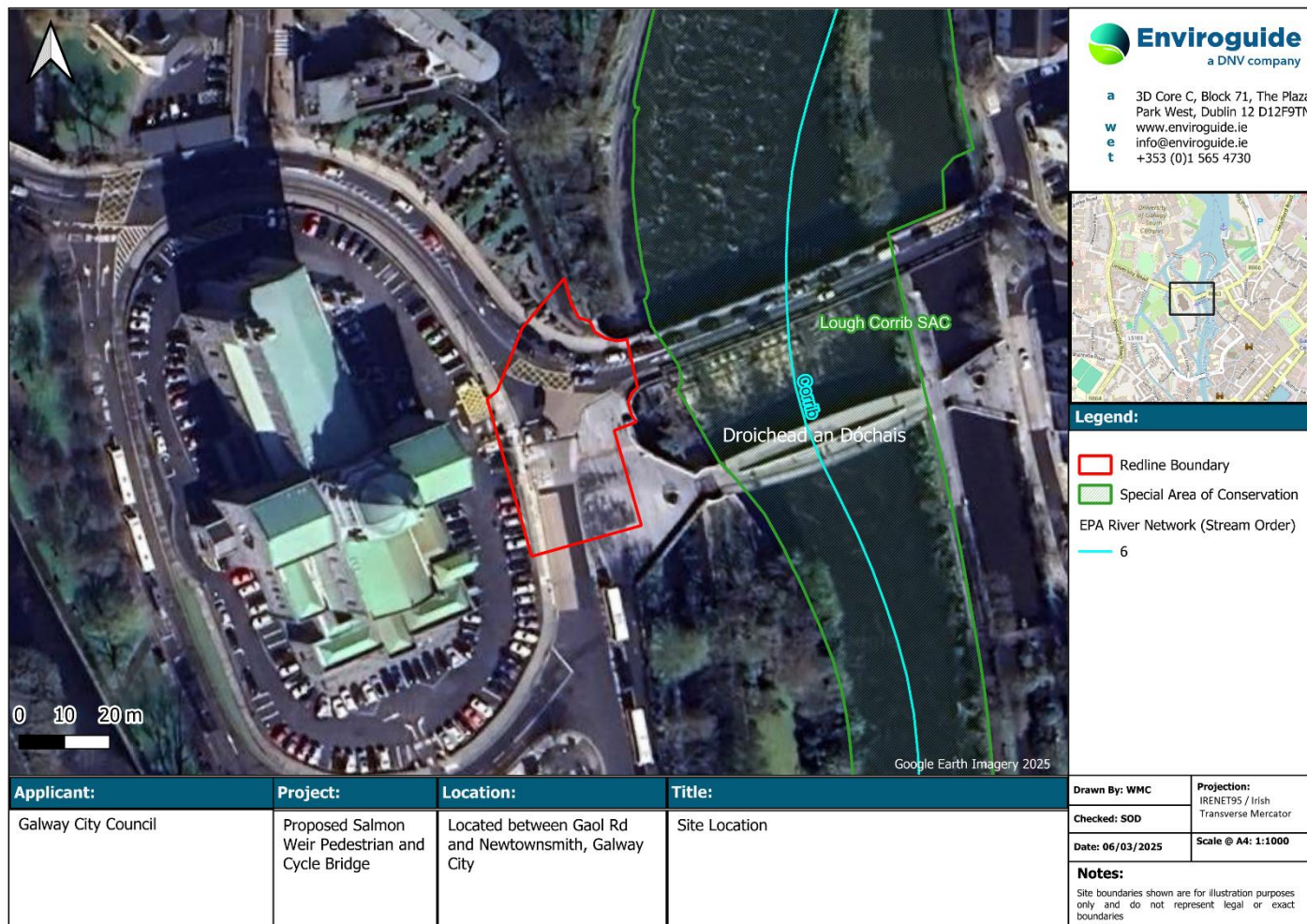


FIGURE 1. SITE LOCATION.

2 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Legislative Background

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) seeks to conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora by the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law through the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011).

It is the responsibility of each Member State to designate SPAs and SACs, both of which will form part of the Natura 2000 Network, a network of protected sites throughout the European Community. These designated sites are referred to as “Natura 2000 sites” or “European sites”. SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II species (other than birds). SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and other regularly occurring migratory birds and their habitats. The annexed habitats and species for which each site is selected correspond to the Qualifying Interests (QIs) and Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) of the sites; from these the conservation objectives of the site are derived.

An AA is a required assessment to determine the likelihood of significant effects, based on best scientific knowledge, of any plans or projects on European sites. A screening for AA determines whether a plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site, in view of its conservation objectives.

This AA Screening has been undertaken to determine the potential for significant effects on relevant European sites. The purpose of this assessment is to determine, the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the Proposed Development in the context of the conservation objectives of such sites.

2.1.1 Legislative Context

An AA is required under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive where a project or plan may give rise to significant effects upon a European site. Paragraph 3 states that:

“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 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.”

The obligations in relation to AA have been implemented in Ireland under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), which will eventually be superseded by the new Planning and Development Act 2024 (the ‘New Act’), signed into law by President Higgins on 17th October 2024. The timeline for commencement of the New Act will be phased until the New Act is fully commenced in Q1 of 2026.

Chapter 3 of Part 6 of the New Act provides a detailed framework for the AA of '*Development and Proposed Development*' to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive¹.

The relevant sections in relation to screening for AA have been summarised below:

Section 212 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 mandates that the competent authority must conduct a screening for appropriate assessment of relevant development projects². This applies to developments that are not directly connected with, or necessary for, the management of a European site, but which have the potential to cause a significant impact.

1. **Subsection (1)** specifies that the screening is required for:
 - Applications for permission for relevant developments.
 - Determining if the Proposed Development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to significantly affect a European site, considering its conservation objectives.
2. **Subsection (2)** extends the screening requirement to:
 - Alterations or extensions of permissions for development.
 - Determining if such changes, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, are likely to significantly affect a European site, considering its conservation objectives.
3. **Subsection (3)** allows the competent authority to:
 - Request additional information or clarification from the applicant.
 - Consult with appropriate persons to facilitate the screening process.
4. **Subsection (4)** states that if the applicant fails to provide the requested information within the specified period, the competent authority may refuse to grant permission.

The AA screening under Section 212 can result in several determinations:

1. **No Likely Significant Effect:** If the screening concludes that the Proposed Development, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site, considering its conservation objectives, the project can proceed without further assessment.
2. **Likely Significant Effect:** If the screening determines that the Proposed Development is likely to have a significant effect on a European site, an AA must be carried out. This involves a more detailed examination of the potential impacts on the site's conservation objectives and the preparation of an NIS.

¹ A framework for Appropriate Assessment of Plans is given in Chapter 2 of Part 6 of the Planning and Development Act 2024.

² In the context of the Planning and Development Act 2024, a "relevant development" generally refers to any project or activity that requires planning permission and has the potential to impact the environment, particularly European sites. This includes new construction projects; material changes in use; alterations or extensions; and some exempted developments (certain developments that are typically exempt from requiring permission but may still need to be assessed if they impact European sites). Further details can be found in Part 2 of the Act.

3. **Insufficient Information:** If the competent authority finds that there is insufficient information to make a determination, it can request additional information from the applicant. The screening process will be paused until the necessary information is provided.
4. **Refusal Due to Non-Compliance:** If the applicant fails to provide the requested information within the specified timeframe, the competent authority may refuse to grant permission for the development.

These determinations ensure that any potential impacts on European sites are thoroughly considered and addressed, promoting sustainable development and environmental protection.

Where a NIS is required, the report may be prepared and submitted by the applicant as part of the application for permission.

For full details of the Planning and Development Act 2024 in relation to AA Screening (including details of AA for plans and local or state authority developments), please refer to the full Planning and Development Act 2024 documentation available on the Irish Statute Book website³.

2.1.2 Consideration of Embedded Mitigation in AA

With regard to the consideration of embedded mitigation in the Appropriate Assessment process the following is noted. According to the ruling delivered in open court in Luxembourg on 15th June 2023 regarding the interpretation of Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43, the Article must be interpreted as meaning that:

“In order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications of a plan or project for a site, account may be taken of the features of that plan or project which involve the removal of contaminants and which therefore may have the effect of reducing the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site, where those features have been incorporated into that plan or project as standard features, inherent in such a plan or project, irrespective of any effect on the site”.

As such, standardised embedded mitigation (such as the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), that are incorporated into the design of a proposal or project and which may result in a reduction of effects impacting European sites, but where the primary reason of the embedded mitigation is not to protect a European site, are permitted for consideration of Operational Phase impacts during the undertaking of AA.

2.2 Policy Context

2.2.1 Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

While the County Development Plan in its entirety is relevant to this Development and can be referred to separately, policies, principles and objectives of the Galway City Development Plan 2023 – 2029 that are of particular relevance to this Screening Report are outlined below:

Policy 5.1 Green Network and Biodiversity

³ <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2024/act/34/enacted/en/print>

- 1. Support sustainable use and management of areas of ecological importance, parks and recreation amenity areas and facilities through an integrated green network policy approach in line with the Galway Recreation and Amenity Needs Study and where superseded by the Green Space Strategy, where it can be demonstrated that there will be no adverse impacts on the integrity of European sites.
- 15. Co-operate with the NPWS, landowners and stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of management plans for designated European sites.

Policy 5.2 Protected Spaces: Sites of European, National and Local Ecological Importance

- 1. Protect European sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network (including SPAs and SACs) in accordance with the requirements in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and associated national legislation.
- 2. Ensure that all plans or projects within the Plan area will only be authorised and / or supported after the competent authority has ascertained based on scientific evidence, screening for appropriate assessment and /or a Habitats Directive Assessment that:
 - i. The plan or project will not give rise to an adverse direct, indirect or secondary effect on the integrity of any European site (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects); or
 - ii. The plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that does not host a priority natural habitat type/and or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000; or
 - iii. The plan or project will have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site (that hosts a natural habitat type and/or a priority species) but there are no alternative solutions and the plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons for overriding public interest, restricted to reasons of human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest. In this case, it will be a requirement to follow procedures set out in legislation and agree and undertake all compensatory measures necessary to ensure the protection of the overall coherence of Natura 2000.
- 4. Protect, conserve and support the development of an ecological network throughout the city which will improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network in accordance with Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.
- 7. Encourage, in liaison with the NPWS, the sustainable management of features which are important for the ecological coherence of the network of European sites and essential, by their linear or continuous nature or as stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species.
- 9. Co-operate with the NPWS, landowners and stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of management plans for designated sites and support conservation

objectives of lands within Designated Sites for nature conservation Natura 2000 (SAC/SPA) and NHA sites.

- **11.** Ensure that plans and projects with the potential to have a significant impact on European sites (SAC or SPA) whether directly, indirectly or in combination with other plans or projects are subject to Appropriate Assessment, under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and associated legislation and guidelines, to inform decision making.

2.2.2 Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2024

The objectives of the Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan are:

- To develop and maintain the Galway City's Ecological Network and increase the resilience of the network by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation.
- To tackle key pressures on species and habitats.
- To ensure that (inter)national targets for species and habitats are translated into effective conservation action at local level in Galway City.
- To raise public awareness and encourage involvement in biodiversity action by the wider community.
- To increase our knowledge and understanding of biodiversity and monitor impacts of biodiversity actions through ecological research.

2.3 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

This AA Screening Report (the 'Screening Report') has been prepared by Enviroguide Consulting. It considers whether the Proposed Development is likely to have a significant effect on a European site and whether a Stage 2 AA is required.

The AA process is a four-stage process. Each stage requires different considerations, assessments and tests to ultimately arrive at the relevant conclusion for 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.

The four stages of an AA, can be summarised as follows:

- **Stage 1: Screening.** The Screening for AA considers whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of a European site, or whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.
- **Stage 2: NIS.** Where Stage 1 determines that significant effects are likely, uncertain or unknown, the preparation of a NIS is required. The NIS must include a scientific examination of evidence and data to classify potential impacts on any European site(s) in view of their conservation objectives in the absence of mitigation. The NIS will identify appropriate mitigation to remove the potential for likely significant adverse effects on any European site(s). If the competent authority determines that the plan or project would have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European site(s) despite mitigation, it can only grant consent after proceeding through stages 3 and 4.
- **Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions.** If the outcome of Stage 2 is negative i.e., adverse impacts to the sites cannot be scientifically ruled out, despite mitigation,

the plan or project should proceed to Stage 3 or be abandoned. This stage examines alternative solutions to the proposal.

- **Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.** The final stage is the main derogation process examining whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project to adversely affect a European site, where no less damaging solution exists.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation, and compensatory measures. First the project should aim to avoid any negative effects on European sites by identifying possible effects early in the planning stage and designing the project to avoid such effects. Second, mitigation measures should be applied, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If the project is still likely to result in adverse effects, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, a refusal for planning permission may be recommended. In this case, the project will generally only be considered where no alternative solutions are identified and the project is required for IROPI, or, in the case of priority habitats, considerations of health or safety, or beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or to other IROPI. Then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effects.

3 AA SCREENING METHODOLOGY

3.1 Guidance

This Screening Report has been undertaken in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities.* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision);
- *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities.* Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;
- *Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle* (European Commission, 2000);
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2019);
- *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, 28.9.2021 C (European Commission, 2021); and
- *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, OPR Practice Note PN01, Office of the Planning Regulator March 2021.*

3.2 Screening Steps

Screening for AA involves the following steps:

- Establish whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of a European site;
- Description of the baseline existing environment at the Site of the Proposed Development;
- Identification of relevant European site(s) potentially affected;
- Identification and description of potential effects on the relevant European site(s);
- Assessment of the likely significance of the effects identified on the relevant European site(s);
- Description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination with the Proposed Development have the potential for having significant effects on the European site; and
- Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

It should be noted that any targeted ecological mitigation measures and/or measures intended or included for the purposes of avoiding adverse effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development on any European site **have not been considered** as part of this Screening Report.

3.3 Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out in February 2025 to collate and review available information, datasets and documentation sources relevant for the completion of this Screening Report. The desktop study relied on the following sources:

- Information on the network of European Sites, boundaries, QIs and conservation objectives, obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at www.npws.ie;
- Text summaries of the relevant European sites taken from the respective Standard Data Forms (available at <https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/>) and Site Synopses (available at www.npws.ie);
- Information on waterbodies, catchment areas and hydrological connections obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at www.gis.epa.ie;
- Information on bedrock, groundwater, aquifers and their statuses, obtained from Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) at www.gsi.ie;
- Satellite imagery and mapping obtained from various sources and dates including Google, Digital Globe, Bing and Ordnance Survey Ireland; and
- Information on the existence of permitted developments, or developments awaiting decision, in the vicinity of the Proposed Development from the Galway City Council online planning database (galwaycity.ie) and the National Planning Database (DHLGH, 2025).

For a complete list of the documents consulted as part of this assessment, see *Section 6 References*.

3.4 Identification of Relevant European sites

The Zone of Influence (ZOI) for a project is the area over which ecological features may be affected by changes as a result of a development and associated activities. This is likely to extend beyond the development site, for example where there are ecological or hydrological links beyond the site boundaries (CIEEM, 2024). Furthermore, ZOI in relation to European sites is described as follows in the 'OPR Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management' (OPR, 2021):

"The zone of influence 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. This should be established on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework and not by arbitrary distances (such as 15 km)."

Thus, to identify the European sites that potentially lie within the ZOI of the Proposed Development, a Source-Path-Receptor (S-P-R) method was adopted, as described in OPR PN01 (OPR 2021). This note was published to provide guidance on screening for AA during the planning process, and although it focuses on the approach a planning authority should take in screening for AA, the methodology is also readily applied in the preparation of Screening Reports such as this.

The relevant European sites were identified based on the following:

- Identification of potential sources of effects based on the Proposed Development description and details, including changes to potentially suitable ex-situ habitats at the Site (i.e., habitats utilised by SCI bird species outside of their designated SPAs);
- Use of up-to-date GIS spatial datasets for European designated sites and water catchments – downloaded from the NPWS website (www.npws.ie) and the EPA website (www.epa.ie) to identify European sites which could potentially be affected by the Proposed Development; and
- Identification of potential pathways between the Site of the Proposed Development and any European sites within the ZOI of any of the identified sources of impacts.
 - The catchment data were used to establish or discount potential hydrological connectivity between the Proposed Development and any European sites.
 - Groundwater, soils, and bedrock information used to establish or discount potential hydrogeological connectivity between the Proposed Development and any European sites.
 - Air and land connectivity assessed based on Proposed Development details and proximity to European sites.
 - Consideration of potential indirect pathways, e.g., impacts to flight paths, ex-situ habitats, etc.
- Defining the likely ZOI based on the identified sources of effects and potential pathways between the Proposed Development and any European sites.

3.5 Assessment of Significant Effects

The conservation objectives of the European sites identified to lie within the ZOI were reviewed and assessed in order to establish whether the construction and operation of the Proposed Development has the potential to have a negative impact on any of the QIs and/or conservation objectives listed for the site.

The assessment framework is taken from the best practice guidelines issued by the European Commission, i.e., “*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*”.

The potential for significant effects that may arise from the Proposed Development was considered through the use of key indicators:

- Habitat loss or alteration.
- Habitat/species fragmentation.
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species.
- Changes in population density.
- Changes in water quality and resource.

In addition, information pertaining to the conservation objectives of the European sites, the ecology of the designated habitats and species and known or perceived sensitivities of the habitats and species were considered.

3.6 Limitations

No limitations were encountered which would prevent robust conclusions from being drawn as to the potential impacts of the Proposed Development and therefore the likely significant effects on the European Site, in view of the Site's conservation objectives.

4 STAGE 1 SCREENING ASSESSMENT

4.1 Management of European Sites

The Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European sites.

4.2 Existing Environment

4.2.1 Desk Study Results

4.2.1.1 Hydrology, Geology and Hydrogeology

The Site is located in the Corrib Catchment (Catchment I.D 30) and in the Corrib_SC_010 Sub-catchment (Sub-catchment I.D.30_18) (EPA, 2025).

The Proposed Development is located adjacent to the Distillery River. Contrary to its name, this waterway is actually a man-made canal. The Distillery River drains into the River Corrib (EU Code: IE_WE_30C020600), which belongs to the CORRIB_020 waterbodies group, c. 210m downstream of its closest point to the Proposed Development. The River Corrib holds a *Good* WFD status for the 2016-2021 survey period and is *Not at Risk* of failing to achieve its WFD objectives. The River Corrib discharges to the Corrib Estuary (IE_WE_170_0700) c. 600m downstream of the Proposed Development. This transitional waterbody holds a *Moderate* WFD status for the 2016-2021 survey period and is *Under Review* in regards to the risk of failing to achieve its WFD objectives (EPA, 2025).

There is one relevant Q-value monitoring point at the Salmon Weir Bridge. This monitoring point is located c. 220m upstream of the outfall of the Distillery River (see Table 1 for technical details). There are no relevant Q-value monitoring points located downstream of the Proposed Development (EPA, 2025).

Surveys carried out on the River Corrib during the 2016-2021 survey period indicate an upwards trend of both Total Ammonia and Ortho-Phosphate parameters (EPA, 2025).

TABLE 1. EPA MONITORING STATIONS AND ASSIGNED Q VALUES

EPA Monitoring Station name	Station Code	Location from Site	Distance from Site	Assigned Q value
Salmon Weir Bridge-Galway	RS30C020600	East Upstream	Linear: 35m Hydrological: 430m	4 <i>Good</i>

The Site of the Proposed Development is situated on the Maam-Clonbur (IE_WE_G_0006) groundwater body. The bedrock aquifer identified beneath the Site is mapped as *Poor Aquifer – Bedrock which is Generally Unproductive except for Local Zones* (GSI, 2025).

The Groundwater Vulnerability Rating assigned to groundwater beneath the Site is mapped as *High* (GSI, 2025).

The soil beneath the Site is mapped as *Made Ground* (GSI, 2025). The quaternary sediments beneath the Site are mapped as *Urban* (GSI, 2025).

The Waterbody Status for river, groundwater, transitional and coastal water bodies relevant to the Site as recorded by the EPA (2025) in accordance with European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (SI no. 722/2003), Part IV of the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) Regulations 2009 and Part IV of the European Communities Environmental Objectives (Groundwater) Regulations 2010, are provided in Table 2.

TABLE 2. WFD RISK AND WATER BODY STATUS

Waterbody Name	Water body; EU code	Location from Site	Distance from Site (km)	WFD water body status (2016-2021)	WFD 3 rd cycle Risk Status	Hydraulic Connection to the Site
Surface Water Bodies						
Distillery River (Canal)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Adjacent to the Site
River Corrib	IE_WE_30C 020600	East	<0.01	Good	Not at risk	Downstream of the Site
Transitional Water Bodies						
Corrib Estuary	IE_WE_170_0700	South	0.59	Moderate	Under Review	Downstream of the River Corrib
Groundwater Bodies						
Maam-Clonbur Groundwater Body	IE_WE_G_0006	N/A	N/A	Good	Not at Risk	Underlying groundwater-body

4.3 Identification of Relevant European Sites

4.3.1 Potential Sources of Impacts

The Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European sites. However, the following elements of the Proposed Development were identified and assessed for their potential to cause likely significant effects on European sites.

Construction Phase (*Estimated duration: 6 weeks*)

- Surface water run-off containing silt, sediments and/or other pollutants into nearby waterbodies or surface water network;
- Surface water run-off containing silt, sediments and/or other pollutants into the local groundwater; and
- Increased lighting, noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity.

Operational Phase (*Estimated duration: Indefinite*)

- Surface water drainage from the Site of the Proposed Development;

4.3.2 Potential Pathways to European Sites

For the above listed potential sources of effects to have the potential to cause likely significant effects on any European site, a pathway between the source of potential effects (i.e., the Site of the Proposed Development) and the receptor is required. Potential impact pathways are

discussed in the following sections in the context of the identified impact sources as identified in section 4.3.1.

4.3.2.1 Direct Pathways

4.3.2.1.1 Hydrological pathways

During Construction Phase, works will be carried out to install the pedestrian crossing. During these works, there is potential for small amounts of sources of pollution to be produced as a result of the minor groundworks proposed to be carried out at the Site as well as spills of fuels and/or oil as a by-product of machinery being used on Site.

There is proposed to be a small compound installed in Galway Cathedral carpark c. 60m south of the Sites redline boundary. Items to be kept within the compound for the facilitation of the Proposed Development include machinery, a water tank, welfare facilities, materials (road surfacing, kerbs and paving slabs, gravel, plastic pipes, signs and poles) and small quantities of fuel for generators (not larger machinery). As a result of the inert materials within this small compound and the limited quantities of fuel proposed to be stored, a pathway between this compound and any European site is not foreseen and a hydrological pathway may be ruled out at this point.

During a rainfall event, surface water may carry sources of pollution from the within the Site's redline boundary (not the compound), to the nearby watercourse of Distillery River due to its proximity to the Site. The Distillery River is connected with the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** 210m downstream; therefore, a hydrological connection has the potential of becoming established.

Therefore, a hydrological pathway between the Proposed Development and the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** may become established. This has been discussed further in section 4.4 below. Due to the hydrological buffer of 550m and 1.25km between the Proposed Development and the **Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268)** and **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)**, respectively, and the minor works proposed, it has been determined that the Proposed Development has no significant hydrological pathway to the **Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268)** or **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)**, or to European sites further afield.

During Operational Phase, no S-P-R connection is foreseen between the Proposed site and the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** as a result of the lack of sources of pollution present during this phase. Also applicable to the Operational Phase of the development and as mentioned in the above paragraph, European sites located at a greater hydrological distance than the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** may be ruled out by proxy.

In conclusion to the above, a hydrological pathway between the Proposed Development and the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** may become established during Construction Phase only.

4.3.2.1.2 Hydrogeological pathways

As outlined above in section 4.3.2.1.1, limited sources of pollution have the potential to be produced as a result of the Construction Phase of the Proposed Development. This pollution would typically have the potential to migrate downwards to the underlying aquifer and then horizontally towards the nearest European site of **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**.

However, as outlined above in section 4.2.1.1, the ground beneath the Site is categorised as *Made Ground*, with groundwater flows likely to be much more restricted compared to the area prior to urbanisation.

Although the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** is at a remove of <10m from the Site, it is likely that the Distillery River would intercept any potential groundwater derived from the Proposed Development, however, this connection is unlikely to occur due to the limited pollution produced on Site and the probable poor groundwater flow rate of the underlying *Made Ground*.

Should pollution arising from the Site find its way to the Distillery River, it will likely be in a very limited quantity and the 210m stretch of water between the Site and the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** via the Distillery River will nullify any potential pollution which manifests via hydrogeological means.

Due to the minor groundworks and works proposed to be carried out, as listed in section 4.3.2.1.1, the *Made Ground* on which the works will be carried out, the extremely limited, if any, pollution transmitted hydrogeologically and the intercepting and buffering capabilities of the Distillery River, it has been determined that a significant hydrogeological pathway cannot be established between the Proposed Development and the nearest European site of **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** or any European sites located further afield during Construction or Operational Phases.

4.3.2.1.3 Air and land pathways

A QI listed for **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**, which has the potential to be found in the locality, and which may be affected by the Construction Phase and/or Operational Phase of the Proposed Development includes the otter (*Lutra lutra*). The otter is primarily a nocturnal species and is most often commuting and foraging during nightfall.

The Salmon Weir Bridge in Galway is situated in a highly urbanised area and conveys a large amount of traffic daily, as well as being subject to a high footfall of pedestrians due to the nearby university, theatre, city centre, cathedral, university hospital and numerous bars and restaurants. Due to this, its baseline levels of average disturbance are consistently at a high level.

Due to the limited and small-scale works proposed to be carried out at the Site, it has been foreseen that disturbances as a result of Site works will not be elevated above baseline levels of the locality. Additionally, much of the works will be carried out during hours of daylight, which are typically used by otters as resting time.

Due to the small scale and limited works involved in the Proposed Development, dust is not foreseen as providing a significant source of air pollution. As a result, a significant air pathway involving dust may be ruled out at this stage.

As a result of the above, significant air and land pathways during Construction and Operational Phases between the Proposed Development and the nearest European site, the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**, and any European site located further afield, may be ruled out.

4.3.2.2 Indirect Pathways

The nearest SPA to the Proposed Development site, namely **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)**, is located c. 0.9km away. The Proposed Site provides no ex-situ habitat or collision risk to SCI species of **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)**, or SPAs further afield, as the Site

provides nothing in the way of features or habitats suitable for use by SCI species of the **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)** and is already situated in a highly urbanised area with a high amount of buildings and structures in the vicinity of the River Corrib, such as the Fishery Watchtower situated off of Wolfe Tone Bridge, of which SCI species such as Black-throated Diver (*Gavia arctica*), Great Northern Diver (*Gavia immer*), Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) and Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), which may use the River Corrib for commuting upstream, will already be accustomed to.

As a result of the above, it has been determined that the Proposed Development will have no significant indirect impact pathways to **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)**.

Surface water draining within the Proposed Site and the compound will do so via gullies, which are linked to the Mutton Island WwTP by way of the existing combined sewer system. However, due to the small scale of the Proposed Development and compound, the small proportion of surface water the Proposed Site and compound will contribute to the overall surface water drainage entering the Mutton Island WwTP for treatment and the treatment process which this surface water will undergo within the WwTP, it has been determined that a significant indirect pathway cannot be established between the Proposed Development or the compound, and the **Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268)** and **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)** which overlaps the Mutton Island WwTP. All European Sites located beyond the aforementioned European sites may be ruled out by proxy.

As a result of the points outlined above, indirect pathways between the Proposed Site and **Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268)** and **Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)** may be ruled out. There are no indirect pathways linking the Proposed Development and **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**. All European sites located further afield than the three aforementioned may be ruled out by proxy.

4.3.3 Relevant European sites

A European site will only be at risk from likely significant effects where a S-P-R link exists between the Proposed Development Site and the European site. One European site was found to have a pathway of note from the Proposed Development, namely, **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**. Relevant European sites assessed within this report are highlighted in Table 3 and Figure 3 for information purposes.

TABLE 3. EUROPEAN SITES CONSIDERED WITH THE SOURCE-PATHWAY-RECEPTOR (S-P-R) METHOD TO ESTABLISH NOTABLE LINKS BETWEEN THE SOURCES OF EFFECTS ARISING FROM THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT, AND ANY RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES. THOSE SITES WITH NOTABLE S-P-R LINKS ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN GREEN (IF ANY). QUALIFYING INTERESTS (QIs) TAKEN FROM THE RELEVANT CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES DOCUMENTS (AS REFERENCED) AND/OR THE STANDARD DATA FORMS (EEA, 2025)⁴.

Site Name & Site Code	Qualifying Interests (*= priority habitats)	Potential Pathways
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)		

⁴ Where applicable, the full species list included in this table is as per the latest updated information as indicated, so either the Conservation Objectives (CO) document for the site, or the latest Standard Data Form (SDF) (EEA, 2023). For SDF updates, CO are not yet available for the newly added species but are assumed, for the purposes of assessment, to follow the same format as for other feature species.

Site Name & Site Code	Qualifying Interests (*= priority habitats)	Potential Pathways
<p>Lough Corrib SAC (000297)</p> <p>Linear Distance from Proposed Development: C. <10m East</p>	<p>Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2017)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) [3110] • Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130] • Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of <i>Chara spp.</i> [3140] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculon fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] • Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] • Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410] • Active raised bogs [7110] • Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] • Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> [7150] • Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210] • Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] • Alkaline fens [7230] • Limestone pavements [8240] • Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] • Bog woodland [91D0] • <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] • <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] • <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] • <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] • <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] • <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303] • <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] • <i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833] • <i>Hamatocaulis vernicosus</i> (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216] 	<p>Hydrological</p>
<p>Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268)</p> <p>Linear Distance from Proposed Development: C. 550m South</p>	<p>Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2013a)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Coastal lagoons [1150] • Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] • Reefs [1170] • Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] • Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] • <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] • Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] 	<p>All pathways ruled out above in section 4.3.2.</p>

Site Name & Site Code	Qualifying Interests (*= priority habitats)	Potential Pathways
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] • Turloughs [3180] • <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] • Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] • Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210] • Alkaline fens [7230] • Limestone pavements [8240] • <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] • <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365] 	
Special Protection Areas (SPAs)		
<p>Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)</p> <p>Linear Distance from Proposed Development: C. 0.9km Southeast</p>	<p>Conservation Objectives (NPWS, 2013b)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black-throated Diver (<i>Gavia arctica</i>) [A002] • Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>) [A003] • Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] • Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028] • Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] • Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] • Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052] • Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] • Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] • Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] • Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] • Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] • Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] • Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] • Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] • Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] • Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] • Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] • Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) [A191] • Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] • Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] 	<p>All pathways ruled out above in section 4.3.2.</p>

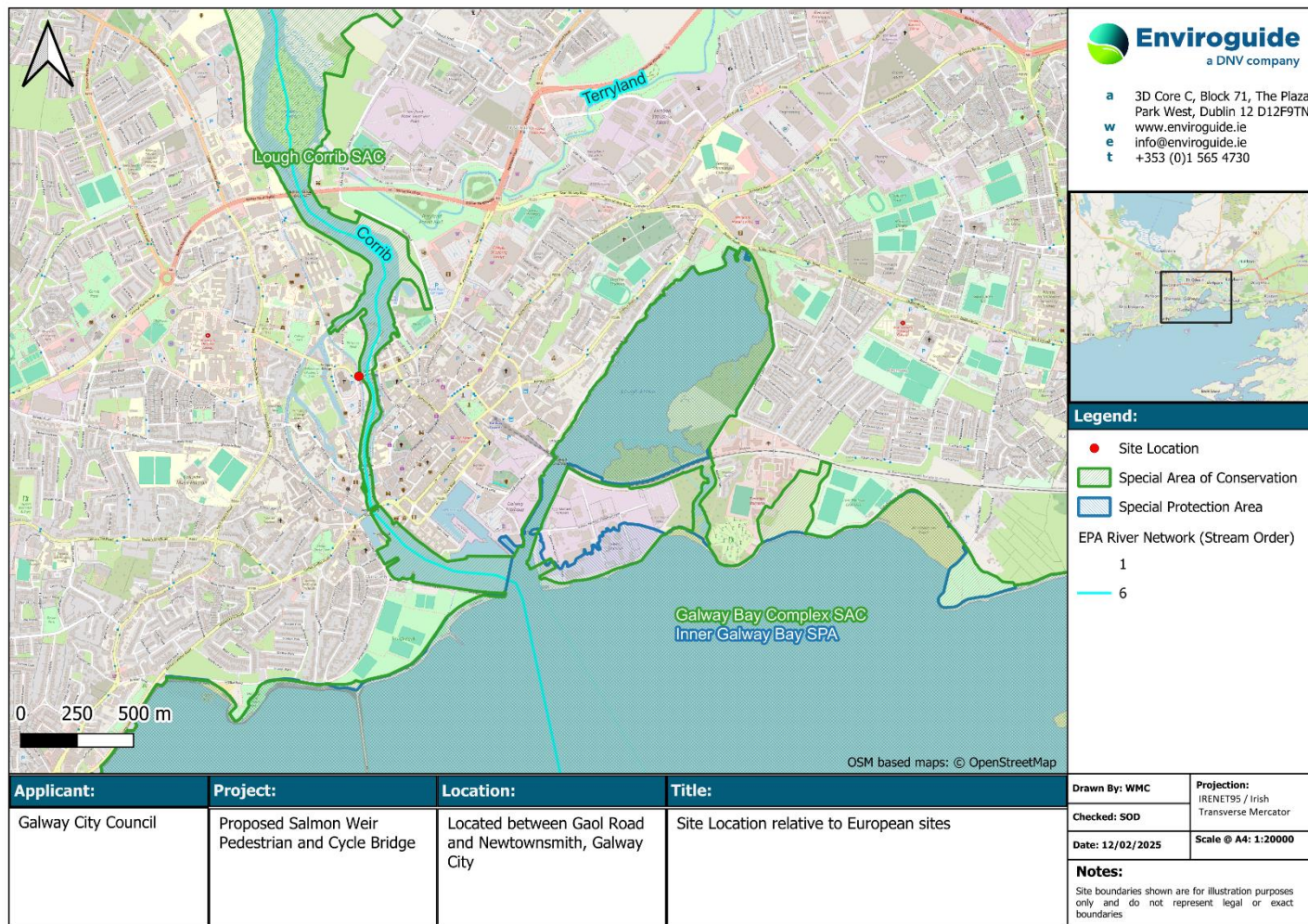


FIGURE 3. LOCATION OF EUROPEAN SITES RELATIVE TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

4.3.3.1 Lough Corrib SAC (000297)

The following description of the Site is extracted from the Site Synopsis (NPWS, 2022) for the site:

“Lough Corrib is situated to the north of Galway city and is the second largest lake in Ireland, with an area of approximately 18,240 ha (the entire site is 20,556 ha). The lake can be divided into two parts: a relatively shallow basin, underlain by Carboniferous limestone, in the south, and a larger, deeper basin, underlain by more acidic granite, schists, shales and sandstones to the north. The surrounding lands to the south and east are mostly pastoral farmland, while bog and heath predominate to the west and north. A number of rivers are included within the SAC as they are important for Atlantic Salmon. These rivers include the Clare, Grange, Abbert, Sinking, Dalgan and Black to the east, as well as the Cong, Bealanabrack, Failmore, Cornamona, Drimneen and Owenriff to the west. In addition to the rivers and lake basin, adjoining areas of conservation interest, including raised bog, woodland, grassland and limestone pavement, have been incorporated into the site.

The shallow, lime-rich waters of the southern basin of Lough Corrib support one of the most extensive beds of stoneworts (Charophytes) in Ireland, with species such as Chara aspera, C. hispida, C. delicatula, C. contraria and C. desmacantha mixed with submerged pondweeds (Potamogeton perfoliatus, P. gramineus and P. lucens), Shoreweed (Littorella uniflora) and Water Lobelia (Lobelia dortmanna). These Chara beds are an important source of food for waterfowl. In contrast, the northern basin contains more oligotrophic and acidic waters, without Chara species, but with Shoreweed, Water Lobelia, Pipewort (Eriocaulon aquaticum), Quillwort (Isoetes lacustris), Alternate Water-milfoil (Myriophyllum alternifolium) and Slender Naiad (Najas flexilis). The last-named is listed under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015, and is an Annex II species under the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Large areas of reedswamp vegetation, dominated by varying mixtures of Common Reed (Phragmites australis) and Common Club-rush (Scirpus lacustris), occur around the margins of the lake. Reedswamp usually grades into species-rich marsh vegetation characterised by Slender Sedge (Carex lasiocarpa), Water Mint (Mentha aquatica), Water Horsetail (Equisetum fluviatile) and Bogbean (Menyanthes trifoliata). Of particular note are the extensive beds of Great Fen-sedge (Cladium mariscus) that have developed over the marly peat deposits in sheltered bays, particularly in the southeast corner of the lake. Alkaline fen vegetation is more widespread around the lake margins and includes, amongst the typically diverse range of plants, the Slender Cottongrass (Eriophorum gracile), a species protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015. Wet meadows dominated by Purple Moor-grass (Molinia caerulea) occur in seasonally flooded areas close to the lake shore. These support species such as Sharp-flowered Rush (Juncus acutiflorus), Jointed Rush (J. articulatus), Carnation Sedge (Carex panicea), Devil's-bit Scabious (Succisa pratensis), Creeping Bent (Agrostis stolonifera) and Tormetil (Potentilla erecta), amongst others.

This large site contains four discrete raised bog areas and is selected for active raised bog, degraded raised bog, Rhynchosporion and bog woodland. Active raised bog comprises areas of high bog that are wet and actively peat-forming, where the percentage cover of bog mosses (Sphagnum spp.) is high, and where some or all of

the following features occur: hummocks, pools, wet flats, *Sphagnum* lawns, flushes and soaks. Degraded raised bog corresponds to those areas of high bog whose hydrology has been adversely affected by peat cutting, drainage and other land use activities, but which are capable of regeneration. The *Rhynchosporion* habitat occurs in wet depressions, pool edges and erosion channels where the vegetation includes White Beak-sedge (*Rhynchospora alba*) and/or Brown Beak-sedge (*R. fusca*), and at least some of the following associated species, Bog Asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*), sundews (*Drosera* spp.), Deergrass (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and Carnation Sedge.

At Addergoole, on the eastern shores of Lough Corrib, there is an important area of western raised bog. This bog area is one of the most westerly, relatively intact raised bogs in the country. There are also other substantial areas of raised bog along various tributaries of the Corrib in east Co. Galway, namely Slieve Bog, Lough Tee Bog and Killaclogher bog. The active parts of these bogs mostly correspond to the wettest areas, where there are well-developed surface features with hummocks, lawns and pools. It is in such areas that *Rhynchosporion* vegetation is best represented. The dominant species is the aquatic bog moss *Sphagnum cuspidatum*, which is usually accompanied by Bogbean, White Beak-sedge, Bog Asphodel, Common Cottongrass (*Eriophorum angustifolium*), Bog Sedge (*Carex limosa*) and Great Sundew (*Drosera anglica*). Brown Beak-sedge, a locally rare plant of wet bog pools, has been recorded from a number of the bog areas within the site. At Addergoole a substantial bog lake or soak occurs and this is infilling with large rafts of *Rhynchosporion* vegetation at present. This area is associated with an important area of wet bog woodland dominated by Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*).

The largest part of the uncut high bog comprises degraded raised bog. Degraded bog is dominated by a raised bog flora which tends to be rather species-poor because of disturbance and/or drying-out. The most conspicuous vascular plant species are usually Carnation Sedge, Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cottongrasses, Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Bog Asphodel and Deergrass. Bog-rosemary (*Andromeda polifolia*) and Cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*), two species indicative of raised bog habitat, are frequent on both degraded and active areas of raised bog. *Sphagnum* cover is generally low within degraded areas due to a combination of drying-out and frequent burning.

Limestone pavement occurs along much of the shoreline in the lower Corrib basin, and supports a rich and diverse flora, including Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Bloody Crane's-bill (*G. sanguineum*), Carlina Thistle (*Carlina vulgaris*), Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), Rustyback (*Ceterach officinarum*), Wood Sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), Slender St. John's-wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*), Quaking-grass (*Briza media*) and Blue Moor-grass (*Sesleria albicans*). Areas of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) scrub occur in association with exposed limestone pavement and these include species such as Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), with occasional Juniper (*Juniperus communis*). Three Red Data Book species are also found in association with limestone scrub - Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), Shrubby Cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*) and Wood Bitter-vetch (*Vicia orobus*), the latter is also protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015.

Open areas of orchid-rich calcareous grassland are also found in association with the limestone exposures. These can support a typically rich vegetation, including many orchids such as Pyramidal Orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*), Common Spotted-orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*), Frog Orchid (*Coeloglossum viride*), Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*), Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), Greater Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*) and Irish Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes romanzoffiana*). The latter is protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015.

The Hill of Doon, located in the north-western corner of the lake, is a fine example of a Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) woodland. The understorey is dominated by Sessile Oak, Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and occasional Juniper. There are occasional Yew (*Taxus baccata*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), and a well-developed ground layer dominated by Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and Wood Rush (*Luzula sylvatica*). Woodland also occurs on some of the islands in the lake.

A number of the rivers in the site support submerged and floating vegetation of the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion*, including mosses. For example, in the River Corrib species such as Shining Pondweed (*Potamogeton lucens*), Perfoliate Pondweed (*Potamogeton perfoliatus*), Small Pondweed (*P. berchtoldii*), Yellow Waterlily (*Nuphar lutea*), White Water-lily (*Nymphaea alba*) and stoneworts (*Chara* spp.) occur.

The rare and Annex II-listed Slender Green Feather-moss (*Hamatocaulis vernicosus*, formerly known as *Drepanocladus vernicosus*) is found at the fen at Gortachalla, northeast of Moycullen. Here it is widespread around the margins, and this constitutes a large and significant population in the national context. A very large population of another rare moss, *Pseudocalliergon trifarium*, is also found in this area.

Otter and Irish Hare have been recorded regularly within this site. Both of these species are listed in the Red Data Book and are legally protected by the Wildlife Act, 1976. Otter is also listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Lough Corrib is considered one of the best sites in the country for Otter, due to the sheer size of the lake and associated rivers and streams, and also the generally high quality of the habitats. Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) use the lake and rivers as spawning grounds. Although this species is still fished commercially in Ireland, it is considered to be endangered or locally threatened elsewhere in Europe and is listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Lough Corrib is also a well-known fishing lake with a very good Trout (*Salmo trutta*) fishery. The lake has a population of Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*), a scarce, though probably under-recorded species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*), also listed on Annex II, are also known from a number of areas within the site.

A population of Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*), a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive, occurs within the site. White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), also listed on Annex II, is well distributed throughout Lough Corrib and its in-flowing rivers over limestone. A summer roost of Lesser Horseshoe Bat, another Annex II species, occurs within the site - approximately 100 animals were recorded here in 1999.

Lough Corrib is one the best examples of a large lacustrine catchment system in Ireland, with a range of habitats and species still well represented. These include 15 habitats which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, six of which are priority habitats, and nine species which are listed on Annex II.”

4.4 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

The following sections discuss the potential for likely significant effects on the relevant European site(s), taking into consideration the QIs, SCIs and SSCOs (where available), and assesses whether the Proposed Development has the capacity to adversely affect the integrity of this European site. Furthermore, due consideration shall be given to species not formally identified but which may be present within the relevant European site(s) and adversely effected by the Proposed Development, provided that those potential impacts are likely to affect the conservation objectives of the designated site. The potential for significant effects that may arise from the Proposed Development was considered through the use of key indicators as detailed in section 3.5.

4.4.1 Habitat Loss and Alteration

No habitat loss or alteration is foreseen as the Proposed Development is located wholly outside of the nearest European site; **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**. The closest mapped QI habitat to the Site of semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates is located c. 900m north of the Site and is upstream of the Proposed Development, which rules out a hydrological pathway to this QI habitat, and all other QI habitats by proxy.

As a result of the points outlined above, it has been determined that the Site will have no impacts on habitat loss or alteration of the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** or any European sites further afield.

4.4.2 Habitat / Species Fragmentation

As outlined above in section 4.4.1, the Proposed Development will have no impact on habitat loss due to distance and its downstream location from QI habitats, and as a result, habitat fragmentation may also be ruled out.

Significant air, land and indirect pathways with potential to affect species of the nearby European sites have been ruled out above in section 4.3.2.

As a result of the above points, it has been determined that the Site will have no impacts on habitat or species fragmentation of the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)** or any European sites further afield.

4.4.3 Changes in Water Quality and Resource

Is has been assessed as to whether the Proposed Development will cause a significant impact on the water quality of the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**.

Due to the small scale of the Site and the buffering capacity of the Distillery River, it has been determined that should any surface water pollution enter the Distillery River, it will become diluted by the intervening waters by the time it is discharged into the

River Corrib and subsequently, the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**. It should also be noted that there are no QI habitats located downstream of the Site in the **Lough Corrib SAC (000297)**.

4.4.4 Disturbance and / or Displacement of Species

There is no disturbance or displacement of species foreseen as air, land and indirect pathways have been ruled out above in section 4.3.2.

4.4.5 Changes in Population Density

There are no changes in population density foreseen as the Proposed Development is located outside of any European site and air, land and indirect pathways have been ruled out above in section 4.3.2.

4.4.6 Potential for In-combination Effects

Although the Proposed Development is not considered to have the capacity to cause significant effects on any European sites alone, it is important to consider the potential for cumulative effects with other plans and/or projects. The following sections outline existing granted or pending planning permissions in the vicinity of the Proposed Development and assess the potential for adverse in-combination effects on any European sites.

4.4.6.1 Existing Planning Permissions

A search of planning applications located within a 200m radius of the Site of the Proposed Development was conducted using online planning resources such as the National Planning Application Database (NPAD) (MyPlan.ie) and Galway City Council Planning Applications online map. Any planning applications listed as granted or decision pending from within the last five years were assessed for their potential to act in-combination with the Proposed Development and cause likely significant effects on the relevant European sites. Long-term developments granted outside of this time period were also considered where applicable.

The larger developments in the vicinity of the Proposed Development are outlined in Table 4:

TABLE 4. GRANTED AND PENDING DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS WITHIN 200M OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.
LOCATION AND DISTANCE GIVEN IS RELATIVE TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

Planning Reference	Planning Authority	Status	Location
2360163	Galway City Council	Granted	The Gateway, 7a Saint Francis Street, Galway City
Development Description Permission for development which consist of (1) Change of use of former educational use to student accommodation (2) Construction of a new second floor extension over existing first floor as part of the student accommodation proposal (3) Minor alterations to front elevation and (4) All associated site works and services. The Convent of Mercy grounds and graveyard is located to the west of the building, and are listed as a Protected Structure (RPS No. 9603)			
Potential for In-combination effects			

No AA screening report required indicating the lack of significant effects on European sites the development will have alone or in-combination.

2460382	Galway City Council	Granted	Fisheries Field located at Earl's Island , University Road (R863) , University of Galway Co. Galway
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Development Description

Permission for development which consists of; the University of Galway are applying for planning permission to Galway City Council for public realm enhancement works on a site known as Fisheries Field located at Earl's Island, University Road (R863), University of Galway, Co. Galway. There is a protected structure, RPS No. 3609 (a lime kiln) located in the northern portion of the development site. There are 2 no. additional protected structures located in the vicinity of the site, including RPS No. 8501 (rivers & waterways, including embankments and walling) located immediately to the east of the application site; and RPS No. 3608 (known as Weir Lodge) located to the north-east of the application site. The proposed site extends to 1.01 hectares. The development consists of the following: 1. Adjustments to the landform to create a seating terrace, comprising limestone flag paving, to provide a flexible events space. 2. The provision of 2 no. landmark sculptural signs which consist of (i) a 'GALWAY' sign and (ii) a 'GAILLIMH' sign supported by a plinth. 3. An enhancement to the setting of the existing lime kiln, a protected structure, RPS No. 3609, to provide for greater engagement with the addition of a new seating area using limestone boulders and logs. 4. Definition of the central event and informal play space with peripheral meadow grass management and a backdrop of trees and woodland. 5. The removal of the existing footpath and the provision of a new shared surface for pedestrians and cyclists, to connect to the existing bridge located in the south-eastern portion of the site. 6. The addition of railing to the existing stone wall (overall height 1.2m) located in the southern portion of the site. 7. Provision of enhanced public lighting including sculptural lighting. 8. Provision of nature-based drainage measures and site services. 9. The relocation of existing overhead wires to underground. 10. All ancillary services and associated site development works. This application is supported by NIS.

Potential for In-combination effects

Accompanying NIS states that should all mitigation measures be adhered to, no significant impact will occur on any European site alone or in-combination as a result of the development. Given the small scale of the Proposed Development and lack of potential significant impacts from either this or the Proposed Development, no significant in-combination effects are anticipated.

4.4.6.2 Relevant Policies and Plans

The local policies and plans detailed in section 2.2 above were reviewed and considered for possible in-combination effects with the Proposed Development. Each of these plans has undergone AA, and where potential for likely significant effects has been identified (e.g., in the case of the Galway City Council Development Plan), an NIS has been prepared which identifies appropriate mitigation. As such, it is considered that the plans and policies listed will not result in in-combination effects with the Proposed Development. The Galway City Council Development Plan 2023-2029 has directly addressed the protection of European sites and biodiversity through specific objectives. The above listed plans are not being relied upon to rule out potential significant effects on European sites.

TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON EUROPEAN SITES AS A RESULT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

Site	Habitat Loss / Alteration	Habitat or Species Fragmentation	Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species	Changes in Population Density	Changes in Water Quality and/or Resource	In-combination effects	Stage 2 AA Required
SAC							
Lough Corrib SAC (000297)	No	No	No	None	None	None	No

5 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING CONCLUSION

The Proposed Development located on University Road (R863) between Gaol Road and the Salmon Weir Bridge, Galway City, has been assessed taking into account:

- The nature, size and location of the proposed works and possible impacts arising from the construction works.
- The QIs and conservation objectives of the European sites
- The potential for in-combination effects arising from other plans and projects.

In conclusion, upon the examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information and applying the precautionary principle, it is concluded by the authors of this report that the possibility **may be excluded** that the Proposed Development will have a significant effect on any of the European sites listed below:

- Lough Corrib SAC (000297)

In carrying out this AA screening, any targeted ecological mitigation measures and/or measures intended or included for the purposes of avoiding adverse effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development on any European site have not been taken into account.

On the basis of the screening exercise carried out above, it can be concluded, on the basis of the best scientific knowledge available and objective information, that the possibility of any significant effects on the above listed European sites, whether arising from the project itself or in combination with other plans and projects, can be excluded in light of the above listed European sites' conservation objectives. Thus, there is no requirement to proceed to Stage 2 of the AA process; and the preparation of a NIS is not required.

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