



Environmental Consultants

Ecological Impact Statement

Pitch Floodlights
at Renmore, Galway



DOCUMENT DETAILS

Client: Galway City Council

Project Title: Installation of 12 floodlights on 6 columns 15m high, for the Renmore Football pitch (Melody's Field).

Address: Renmore, Galway

Document Title: Ecological Impact Assessment Report

Prepared By: John Curtin

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1 Introduction

Eire Ecology was commissioned by Galway City Council to carry out an Ecological Impact Assessment with regard to the proposed development of pitches in Renmore Galway.

This report concentrates on ecological features within the development area of particular significance, primarily designated habitats and species, including habitats/species listed in Annex I, II and IV of the EU Habitats Directive, rare flora listed in the Flora Protection Order along with other semi-natural habitats of conservational value.

The report has been compiled in compliance with the European Communities Legal requirements and follows guidance outlined in the following documents:

- Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports May 2022.
- Guidelines for ecological impact assessment in the UK and Ireland CIEEM 2024

The European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (Article 6) indicates the need for plans and projects to be subject to Habitats Directive Assessment (also known as Appropriate Assessment) if the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site (which includes SACs and SPAs) but which has the potential to have implications on a site's conservation objectives. These implications can be significant effects either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

1.1 Proposed Project

Galway City Council seeks planning permission for the installation of 12 floodlights on 6 15m columns for the Renmore Football pitch (Melody's Field).



Figure 1-1: Site outline

2 LEGISLATION & PLANNING POLICY

2.1.1 EU Habitats Directive

The “Habitats Directive” (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna) is the main legislative instrument for the protection and conservation of biodiversity within the European Union and lists certain habitats and species that must be protected within wildlife conservation areas, considered to be important at a European as well as at a national level. A “Special Conservation Area” or SAC is a designation under the Habitats Directive.

The Habitats Directive sets out the protocol for the protection and management of SACs. The Directive sets out key elements of the system of protection including the requirement for “Appropriate Assessment” of plans and projects. The requirements for an Appropriate Assessment are set out in the EU Habitats Directive. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Directive.

2.1.2 EU Birds Directive

The “Birds Directive” (Council Directive 79/409/EEC as codified by 2009/147/EC) provides for a network of sites in all member states to protect birds at their breeding, feeding, roosting and wintering areas. This directive identifies species that are rare, in danger of extinction or vulnerable to changes in habitat and which need protection (Annex I species). Appendix I indicates Annex I bird species as listed on the Birds Directive. A “Special Protection Area” or SPA, is a designation under The Birds Directive. SACs and SPAs form a pan-European network of protected sites known as Natura 2000 sites and any plan or project that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site requires Appropriate Assessment (AA).

2.1.3 Wildlife Act 1976 – 2012

The primary pieces of national legislation for the protection of wildlife in Ireland are the Wildlife Act (1976) and the Wildlife [Amendment] Act (2000). The aims of the wildlife act according to the National Parks and Wildlife Service are “... to provide for the protection and conservation of wild fauna and flora, to conserve a representative sample of important ecosystems, to provide for the development and protection of game resources and to regulate their exploitation, and to provide the services necessary to accomplish such aims.” All bird species are protected under the act. The Wildlife (Amendment) Act of 2000 amended the original Act to improve the effectiveness of the Act to achieve its aims.

2.1.4 The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended):

This Act integrates biodiversity considerations into the planning process and requires ecological assessments, including for bats, as part of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs).

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Statement of Authority

The present report was compiled by John Curtin of Eire Ecology providing information on flora and fauna. John Curtin B.Sc. is the principal ecologist with Eire Ecology and has over 15 years of experience in ecological impact assessment. Surveys were conducted by John Curtin and Karolina Illien M.Sc. Karolina is an Ecologist working with Eire Ecology since 2021.

3.2 Desk Study

The assessment was carried out in three stages, firstly through desktop assessment to determine existing records in relation to habitats and species present in the study area. This included research on the NPWS metadata website, the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) database and a literature review of published information on flora and fauna occurring in the development areas.

3.3 Field Surveys

The second phase of the assessment involved site visits to establish the existing environment in the footprint of the proposed development. Areas which were highlighted during desktop assessment were investigated in closer detail according to the Heritage Council Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping (Smith et al., 2011). Habitats in the proposed development areas were classified according to the Heritage Council publication "A Guide to Habitats in Ireland" (Fossitt, 2000). This publication sets out a standard scheme for identifying, describing and classifying wildlife habitats in Ireland. This form of classification uses codes to classify different habitats based on the plant species present. Species recorded in this report are given in both their Latin and English names. Latin names for plant species follow the nomenclature of "An Irish Flora" (Parnell & Curtis, 2012).

Wintering bird surveys were conducted on three occasions in February and March 2025.

Habitats were surveyed on the 05th of May 2025 by conducting a site walkover covering the area under the footprint of the proposed development. The survey date is considered within the botanical survey period. Signs of mammals were searched while surveying the study area noting any sights, signs or any activity in the vicinity especially along adjacent boundaries. Evidence of bird nesting or potential for nesting was recorded. A photographic record was made of the main features of interest.

3.4 Ecological Impact Assessment

The final part of the assessment involves an evaluation of the proposed development area and determination of the potential impacts on the flora and fauna of the area. The EclA has been undertaken in accordance with guidelines produce by the CIEEM (CIEEM, 2018); experience of 'best practice' in ecological assessment; and criteria set out below in Table 3-1 and Table 3-2.

Table 3-1: Geographic context for determining ecological resource value

Geographic context
INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE:
'European site' including special area of conservation (SAC), site of community importance (SCI), special protection area (SPA) or proposed special area of conservation.
Proposed Special Protection Area (pSPA).
Site that fulfills the criteria for designation as a 'European site' (see annex III of the habitats directive, as amended).
Features essential to maintaining the coherence of the Natura 2000 network.
Site containing 'best examples' of the habitat types listed in Annex I of the habitats directive.
Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the national level)5 of the following
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species of bird, listed in Annex I and/or referred to in article 4(2) of the birds directive; and/or</i> ▪ <i>Species of animal and plants listed in Annex II and/or IV of the habitats directive</i>
Ramsar site (convention on wetlands of international importance especially waterfowl habitat 1971).
World heritage site (convention for the protection of world cultural & natural heritage, 1972).
Biosphere reserve (UNESCO man & the biosphere programme).
Site hosting significant species populations under the Bonn convention (convention on the conservation of migratory species of wild animals, 1979).
Site hosting significant populations under the berne convention (convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats, 1979).
Biogenetic reserve under the council of Europe. European diploma site under the council of Europe.
Salmonid water designated pursuant to the European communities (quality of salmonid waters) regulations, 1988, [S.I. no 293 of 1988]
National importance
Site designated or proposed as a natural heritage area (NHA).
Statutory nature reserve.
Refuge for fauna and flora protected under the wildlife acts. National park.
Undesignated site fulfilling the criteria for designation as a natural heritage area (NHA); statutory nature reserve; refuge for fauna and flora protected under the wildlife act; and/or a national park.
Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the national level of the following:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species protected under the wildlife acts; and/or</i> ▪ <i>Species listed on the red data list</i>
Site containing 'viable areas' of the habitat types listed in Annex I of the habitats directive
County importance:
Area of special amenity.
Area subject to a tree preservation order.
Area of high amenity, or equivalent, designated under the county development plan.
Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the county level) of the following:

Geographic context	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species of bird, listed in Annex I and/or referred to in article 4(2) of the birds directive;</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species of animal and plants listed in Annex II and/or IV of the habitats directive;</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>species protected under the wildlife acts; and/or</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species listed on the relevant red data list</i>
	Site containing area or areas of the habitat types listed in annex i of the habitats directive that do not fulfil the criteria for valuation as of international or national importance.
	County important populations of species, or viable areas of semi-natural habitats or natural heritage features identified in the National or Local BAP, if this has been prepared.
	Sites containing semi-natural habitat types with high biodiversity in a county context and a high degree of naturalness, or populations of species that are uncommon within the county.
	Sites containing habitats and species that are rare or are undergoing a decline in quality or extent at a national level
Local importance (high value)	
	Locally important populations of priority species or habitats or natural heritage features identified in the local bap, if this has been prepared;
	Resident or regularly occurring populations (assessed to be important at the local level) of the following
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species of bird, listed in Annex I and/or referred to in article 4(2) of the birds directive;</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species of animal and plants listed in Annex II and/or IV of the habitats directive;</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species protected under the wildlife acts; and/or</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Species listed on the relevant red data list</i>
	Sites containing semi-natural habitat types with high biodiversity in a local context and a high degree of naturalness, or populations of species that are uncommon in the locality;
	Sites or features containing common or lower value habitats, including naturalised species that are nevertheless essential in maintaining links and ecological corridors between features of higher ecological value
Local importance (lower value)	
	Sites containing small areas of semi-natural habitat that are of some local importance for wildlife;
	Sites or features containing non-native species that are of some importance in maintaining habitat links

Table 3-2: Criteria for assessing impacts based on CIEEM (2024) and (EPA, 2018)

Parameter	Description
Quality	Positive effect: A change which improves the quality of the environment (for example, by increasing species diversity; or the improving reproductive capacity of an ecosystem, or by removing nuisances or improving amenities).
	Neutral effect: No effects or effects that are imperceptible, within normal bounds of variation or within the margin of forecasting error.
	Negative effect: A change which reduces the quality of the environment (for example, lessening species diversity or diminishing the reproductive capacity of an ecosystem; or damaging health or property or by causing nuisance).
Extent	The area over which an impact occurs
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentary – effects lasting from seconds to minutes • Brief – effects lasting less than a day • Temporary – effects lasting less than a year • Short-term – effects lasting 1 to 7 years • Medium term – effects lasting 7 to 15 years • Long term – effects lasting 15 to 60 years • Permanent – effects lasting over 60 years

Parameter	Description	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reversible 	
Reversibility	Irreversible impacts: permanent changes from which recovery is not possible within a reasonable time scale or for which there is no reasonable chance of action being taken to reverse it. Reversible impact: temporary changes in which spontaneous recovery is possible or for which effective mitigation (avoidance/cancellation/reduction of effect) or compensation (offset/recompense/offer benefit) is possible.	
Frequency and Timing	Frequency –How often the effect will occur. (once, rarely, occasionally, frequently, constantly – or hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, annually) Timing –the timing of an activity or change may result in an impact if it coincides with critical life-stages or seasons e.g. bird nesting season.	
Describing the significance of effects (EPA, 2022)	Imperceptible	An effect capable of measurement but without significant consequences.
	Not significant	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences.
	Slight	An effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment without affecting its sensitivities.
	Moderate	An effect that alters the character of the environment in a manner that is consistent with existing and emerging baseline trends.
	Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity alters a sensitive aspect of the environment.
	Very Significant	An effect which, by its character, magnitude, duration or intensity significantly alters most of a sensitive aspect of the environment.
	Profound	An effect which obliterates sensitive characteristics

3.5 Appropriate Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment Screening document has been prepared by Eire Ecology on behalf of Galway City Council to assist the competent authority in fulfilling its duties in accordance with Regulation 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening document submitted in support of the project concluded that no significant adverse effects upon European sites would arise as a result of the proposed project.

The Proposed Development is c. 1.02 hectares and is situated off the Ballyloughane Road. The site has been used as a playing pitch since at least 1995 by the group known as Renmore FC. .

4 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

4.1 DESIGNATED CONSERVATION AREAS

The site of the proposed project is not located within the boundary of statutory or non-statutory designated sites of international, national or local nature conservation importance. There are however a number of designated sites within the Zone of Influence (Zol) of the proposed project. Table 4-2 below provides descriptive details of designated sites and features of natural heritage importance located within immediate proximity to the site of the proposed project; or outside the site of the proposed project but connected it through an identifiable impact pathway. The boundary of each of these designated sites in relation the proposed project is illustrated in Figure 4-1.

The NBDC was examined for records of rare and designated species within the 2km square the site resides; M32H. Results can be found in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Designated species recorded within 2km square: M32H

Species name	Date of last record	Designation	Potential to breed within subject site
Amphibian			
Common Frog (<i>Rana temporaria</i>)	09/02/2017	EU Habitats Directive - Annex V Wildlife Acts	Low, requires water
Smooth Newt (<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>)	09/10/2016	Wildlife Acts	Low, requires water
Birds			
Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive Annex I Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List	None, no nesting habitat
Barn Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>)	15/05/2024	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)	30/12/2020	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive Annex I Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List	None, no nesting habitat
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)	16/02/2021	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)	10/11/2019	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla</i>)	23/03/2022	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
Common Greenshank (<i>Tringa nebularia</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, typically confined to shores in Galway city
Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>)	05/03/2024	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Not typical habitat
Common Linnet (<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Ground nesting bird but pitch has too much anthropogenic activity
Common Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)	23/03/2022	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List	None, typically confined to shores in Galway city

Species name	Date of last record	Designation	Potential to breed within subject site
Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II & III Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List	None, no nesting habitat
Common Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
Common Snipe (<i>Gallinago gallinago</i>)	08/04/2021	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II & III Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
Common Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	05/04/2023	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Common Swift (<i>Apus apus</i>)	28/05/2021	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive Annex I Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List	None, no nesting habitat
Common Wood Pigeon (<i>Columba palumbus</i>)	21/05/2016	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II & III	None, no nesting habitat
Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive Annex I Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber List	None, typically confined to shores in Galway city
Eurasian Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>)	26/12/2024	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II & III Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
Eurasian Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)	26/12/2024	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
Eurasian Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>)	23/03/2022	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II & III Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
European Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>)	13/10/2021	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Great Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus marinus</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
Great Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	30/12/2020	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>)	30/12/2020	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber Lit	None, no nesting habitat
Great Northern Diver (<i>Gavia immer</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex I	None, no nesting habitat
Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)	20/12/2017	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	14/12/2021	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.
House Martin (<i>Delichon urbicum</i>)	30/06/2021	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	23/03/2024	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Is known to use pitches for feeding. Not suitable for breeding.

Species name	Date of last record	Designation	Potential to breed within subject site
Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)	23/03/2022	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex I	None, no nesting habitat
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	20/12/2022	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II & III	None, no nesting habitat
Mew Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>)	21/12/2021	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Can be found on pitches but does not breed on them.
Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)	12/09/2012	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat. Is known to graze on pitches
Northern Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)	02/03/2018	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II & III Threatened Species: Birds of Conservation Concern >> Birds of Conservation Concern - Red List	Ground nesting bird but pitch has too much anthropogenic activity
Peregrine Falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	20/12/2022	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex I	Not typical habitat
Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II	None, no nesting habitat
Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)	23/03/2022	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Rock Pigeon (<i>Columba livia</i>)	20/12/2022	Wildlife Acts EU Birds Directive - Annex II	None, no nesting habitat
Sand Martin (<i>Riparia riparia</i>)	12/05/2021	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	None, no nesting habitat
Sky Lark (<i>Alauda arvensis</i>)	31/12/2011	Wildlife Acts Birds of Conservation Concern - Amber	Ground nesting bird but pitch has too much anthropogenic activity
Bony fish (Actinopterygii)			
European Eel (<i>Anguilla anguilla</i>)	16/08/2022	Critically Endangered	Not suitable habitat
Plants			
Irish Whitebeam (<i>Sorbus hibernica</i>)	31/12/1986	Vulnerable	Not suitable habitat
Insects			
Marsh Fritillary (<i>Euphydryas aurinia</i>)	05/06/2018	EU Habitats Directive - Annex II Vulnerable	None, habitats are too improved.
Mammals			
Eurasian Badger (<i>Meles meles</i>)	14/01/2017	Wildlife Acts	Low, high anthropogenic activity
Eurasian Red Squirrel (<i>Sciurus vulgaris</i>)	28/09/2022	Wildlife Acts	Low, no nesting habitat, high anthropogenic activity
West European Hedgehog (<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>)	21/10/2023	Wildlife Acts	Low, lacks scrubby layer.
Marine mammal			
Bottle-nosed Dolphin (<i>Tursiops truncatus</i>)	13/10/2021	EU Habitats Directive - Annex II & Annex IV Wildlife Acts	None
Common Porpoise (<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>)	29/03/2021	EU Habitats Directive - Annex II & IV Wildlife Acts OSPAR Convention	None
Common Dolphin (<i>Delphinus delphis</i>)	26/02/2022	EU Habitats Directive - Annex IV Wildlife Acts	None
Striped Dolphin (<i>Stenella coeruleoalba</i>)	09/04/2023	EU Habitats Directive - Annex IV Wildlife Acts	None

Table 4-2: Designated sites and features of natural heritage importance located within the vicinity of the site.

Site	Code	Distance	Details	Has the designated site connectivity to the subject site?
(Proposed) National Heritage Areas (pNHA's & NHA's)				
Kiltullagh turlough pNHA	000287	5.5km	Turlough in the catchment of the Clare River	No. EPA AA mapviewer shows the turlough is located within a different sub-catchment hydrologically upstream from the site.
Moycullen Bogs NHA	002364	5.6km	Blanket bog and other associated habitats & species.	No. Lacks connectivity. Located far side of Corrib river within different groundwater body
Killarainy Lodge, Moycullen pNHA	002083	12.9km	Nursery roost of the Natterer's Bat (<i>Myotis nattereri</i>).	No. (BCT, 2016) states Natterers bats have a CSZ of 4km. The subject site lies well outside this zone.
Drimcong Woods pNHA	001260	13.89km	Woodland	Lacks connectivity. Located far side of Corrib river within different groundwater body
Special Protected Areas (SPA's) / Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's)				
Galway Bay Complex SAC	000268	0.595km	Large coastal SAC with 17 conservation objectives (CO's). Juniperus scrub, Semi-natural dry grasslands and Limestone pavements are the most terrestrial of the CO's.	Proximity, hydrologically connected via groundwater however scale of works and lack of good hydrological connectivity means impacts are highly unlikely.
Inner Galway Bay SPA	004031	0.595km	Large coastal SPA supports an excellent diversity of wintering wetland birds, with divers, grebes, cormorants, dabbling duck, sea duck and waders all well represented	Species associated with the SPA including gulls can utilise playing pitches for feeding and resting purposes.
Lough Corrib SAC	00297	2.41km	Situated to the north of Galway city, the SAC contains a variety of freshwater and terrestrial protected habitats as well as 9 species.	No. EPA AA mapviewer shows the SAC is located within a different sub-catchment hydrologically upstream from the site.
Cregganna Marsh SPA	004142	5.89km	Situated about 3 km south of Oranmore, to the west of the Galway - Ennis road. The SPA is designated for Greenland White-fronted Goose.	No. The SPA is designated for Greenland White-fronted Goose. These geese can travel between the SPA and Rahaseen turlough however are not associated with urban habitats such as Renmore.
Lough Corrib SPA	004042	4.93km	Of special conservation interest for the following species: Greenland White-fronted Goose, Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter, Hen Harrier, Coot, Golden Plover, Black-Headed Gull, Common Gull, Common Tern and Arctic Tern. The site is also of special conservation interest for holding an assemblage of over 20,000 wintering waterbirds	No. Distance. SPA is hydrologically upstream of the site (in the case of wetlands).
Lough Fingall Complex SAC	000606	12.17km	Situated immediately south-east of Ballindeereen in Co. Galway, and within 2-3 km of Galway Bay. Site contains wetland and terrestrial protected habitats and Lesser horseshoe bats.	No. EPA AA mapviewer shows the turlough is located within a different sub-catchment from the site.

Renmore 15km Buffer - Natura 2000 Sites

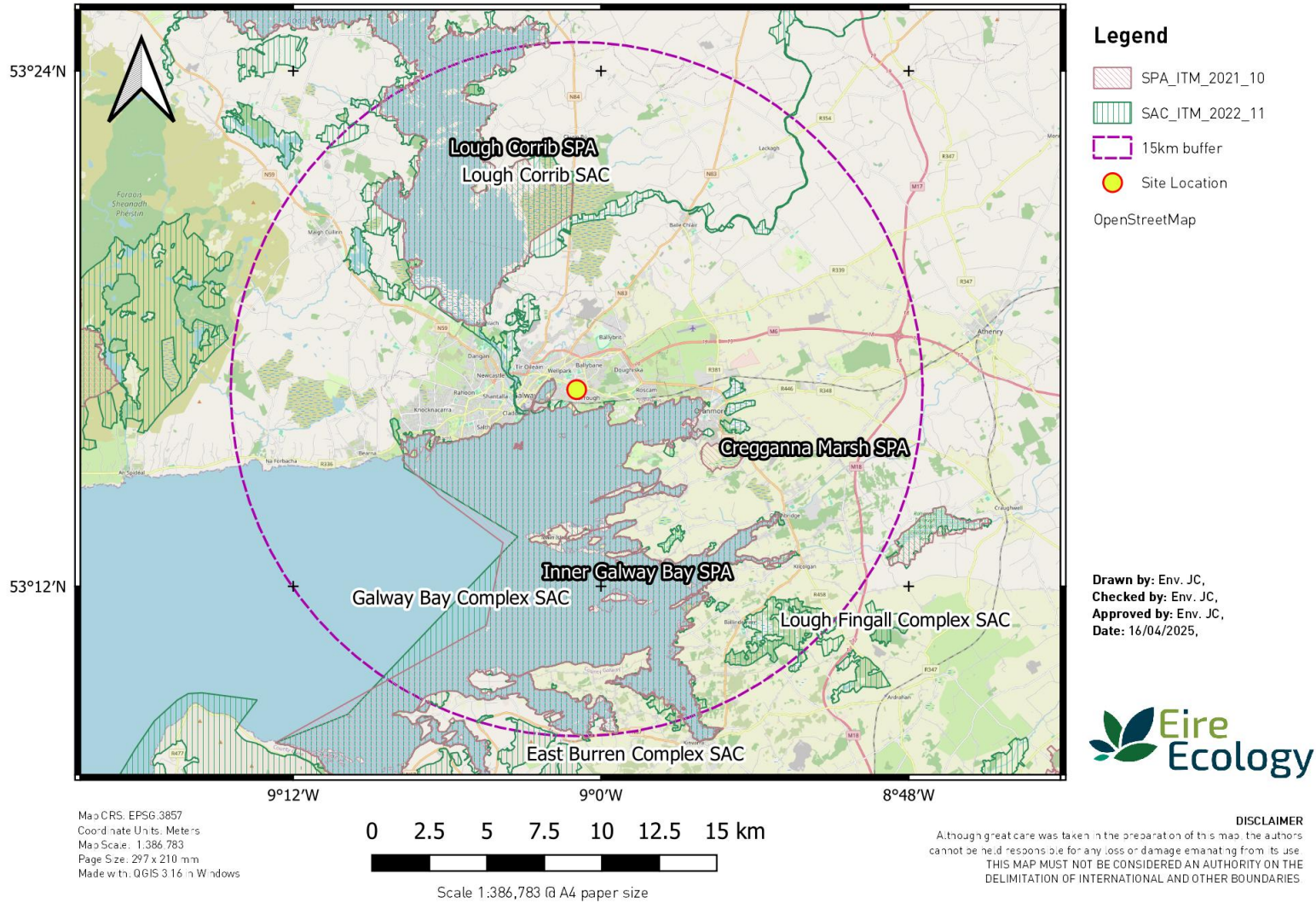


Figure 4-1: Designated sites surrounding proposed development

4.2 HABITAT DESCRIPTIONS

The main habitat recorded on site consists of amenity grassland (GA2). The pitch is surrounded by a gravel walkway with further more rank grass found outside. By the periphery of the site, buildings, carparks, roads can be found. A small section of scrubby treelines (WL2) can be found to the west and northwest (see figure 4-2 below).

Renmore Habitat Map



Figure 4-2: Habitat map of subject site

Table 4-3: Habitat types present according to Fossitt (2000).

Habitat	Habitat Category	Habitat Type
(G) Grassland	(GA) Improved Grassland	(GA2) Amenity grassland
(B) Cultivated and built land	(BL) Built land	(BL3) Buildings and artificial surfaces



Plate 4-1: Renmore pitch facing S.



Plate 4-2: From northern boundary looking E

The pitch and surrounding grassland correspond to amenity grassland (GA2). While the periphery is less regularly mown it was not found to contain a high species diversity. This grassland is of a low ecological value dominated by grass; rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) alongside regular dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale agg*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), and occasional broad leaf and lanceolate plantanes (*Plantago major* & *P. lanceolata*).

The side margins also contained occasional Spear Thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), broad leafed dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosse agg*).

Several fairly young trees have been planted along the periphery of the site. Species found included cherry cultivars as well as sycamore (*Acer sp*) and birches (*Betula sp*). An area adjacent to the site (outside site boundary) towards the NW is less managed with bramble succeeding the grass,

4.3 FAUNA

4.3.1 Mammals

Bats

Bats are protected by law (Wildlife Act (1976), Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Habitats Directive (Council Directive No. 97/62/EC of 27 October 1997 (amending Council Directive No.92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992)). In order to comply with legislation that bats are not killed or injured, it is essential to ensure that measures to reduce risk to bats are undertaken or that the presence of bats can be ruled out.

The preliminary ecological assessment conducted on the site, included an assessment of trees for their roosting potential. No potential roost features were found. Given the lack of good landscape features suitable for bats, be that roosting, foraging or commuting the surveyor felt no further assessment was required as the proposed site has a low value for these species.

4.3.2 Birds

All species of birds are protected under the Wildlife Act 1976/Wildlife Amendment Act 2000. As previously mentioned, the Inner Galway Bay SPA is designated for the presence of 21 bird species. In order to identify links between the subject site and the SPA in question, three wintering bird surveys were conducted at Renmore. Due to the late appointment of Eire Ecology, surveys were confined to February and March. Given the site lies c590m away from the SPA with a variety of habitats such as urban and pasture lying in-between we feel the surveys are sufficient for the minor works proposed. Surveys consisted of vantage point (VP) watches using binoculars and spotting scope. In addition, hinterland surveys were conducted of good bird habitat within 500m of the site. Table 4-4 provides details of species of note within the site. Of the fifteen observations recorded, 10 showed an interaction with the site, most regularly Oystercatchers landing and perched on the pitches. Twice mew gull and a single interaction occurred where black headed gulls perched on the pitch. Of the species recorded, mew gull and black headed gull are Conservation objectives of the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

Table 4-4: Species of note observed in site.

Survey Number	Date	Obs No.	Species Name	No. of Birds	Time	Details	BoCCI4
1	13/02/2025	1	Oystercatcher	3	10:10	Perched on field	Red
1	13/02/2025	2	Mew Gull	4	10:20	Overflying the site without really interacting with pitch	Amber
1	13/02/2025	3	Oystercatcher	10	10:38	Flew over carpark flying to the NW - not interacting with site	Red
2	04/03/2025	1	Oystercatcher	2	08:00	Perched on pitch prior to survey	Red
2	04/03/2025	2	Black-headed Gull	3	08:00	Perched on pitch prior to survey	Amber
2	04/03/2025	3	Mew Gull	8	08:00	Perched on pitch prior to survey	Amber
2	04/03/2025	4	Mew Gull	1	08:16	Took off and left site	Amber
2	04/03/2025	5	Herring Gull	1	08:20	Flew over site	0
2	04/03/2025	6	Oystercatcher	1	08:24	Took off and left site	Red
2	04/03/2025	7	Oystercatcher	1	08:27	Landed on pitch	Red
2	04/03/2025	8	Oystercatcher	4	08:33	Landed on pitch	Red
2	04/03/2025	9	Oystercatcher	9	08:38	Landed on pitch	Red
3	12/03/2025	1	Oystercatcher	6	09:04	Flew onto pitch	Red
3	12/03/2025	2	Herring Gull	3	09:21	Overflying	Amber
3	12/03/2025	3	Black-headed Gull	2	09:55	Overflying	Amber

In addition, the following species were recorded at Renmore; Blackbird, Dunnock, Jackdaw, Magpie, Pied Wagtail, Robin, Rook, Starling, Winter Wren and Wood Pigeon. All are common to the area and not at threat from the current proposal.

4.3.2.1 Hinterland

In addition to surveying the site, hinterland surveys were conducted of good potential habitat within 500m of the site. Although lying outside this zone, surveys also included Ballyloughane beach. Full details can be found in Appendix B. 6 sites were examined (see table 4-5), with species of interest showing a clear preference for pitches and beech compared to agricultural fields. Most species of interest and species associated with the Inner Galway Bay SPA were noted from Ballyloughane beach, outside the 500m buffer from the site. Within the hinterland, the only species designated as a CO of the Inner Galway Bay SPA were black-headed and mew (common) gulls. Oystercatcher had highest numbers noted, this species is a common sight on short grassed pitches at coastal sites. They showed a clear preference for pitches compared to the agricultural fields surveyed.

Surprisingly, proximity to SPA or size of site did not appear to influence numbers, with highest activity recorded at the Gaelscoil pitch which is smaller and further away from the SPA than the Renmore playing fields.

Table 4-5: Hinterland sites

Hinterland Site	Site No	Numbers observed
Gaelscoil Dara pitch	1	42
Ballyloughane beach	6	41
Galwegians rugby pitch	2	33
Renmore playing fields	3	20
Fields near Glen Rua	4	1
Field off Ballyloughan Road	5	1

Table 4-6: Summary of hinterland results

Species	Site	Sum of Numbers	CO of SPA?	BoCCI4	Nationally Important No's?
Black-headed Gull	Ballyloughane beach	4	Yes	Amber	Unknown
	Gaelscoil Dara pitch	3			
	Galwegians rugby pitch	2			
Curlew	Ballyloughane beach	12	Yes	Red	No. (350)
Great Black-backed Gull	Galwegians rugby pitch	1	No	Green	Unknown
Herring Gull	Fields near Glen Rua	1	No	Green	Unknown
	Gaelscoil Dara pitch	1			
	Renmore playing fields	3			
Mew (common) Gull	Ballyloughane beach	13	Yes	Amber	Unknown
	Field off Ballyloughan Road	1			
	Gaelscoil Dara pitch	3			
	Renmore playing fields	2			
Oystercatcher	Gaelscoil Dara pitch	35	No	Red	No. (610)

Species	Site	Sum of Numbers	CO of SPA?	BoCCl4	Nationally Important No's?
	Galwegians rugby pitch	30			
	Renmore playing fields	15			
Redshank	Ballyloughane beach	1	Yes	Red	No. (240)
Ringed Plover	Ballyloughane beach	6	Yes	Amber	No. (120)
Shag	Ballyloughane beach	5	No	Amber	Unknown

Renmore 500m Hinterland Survey Heat Map

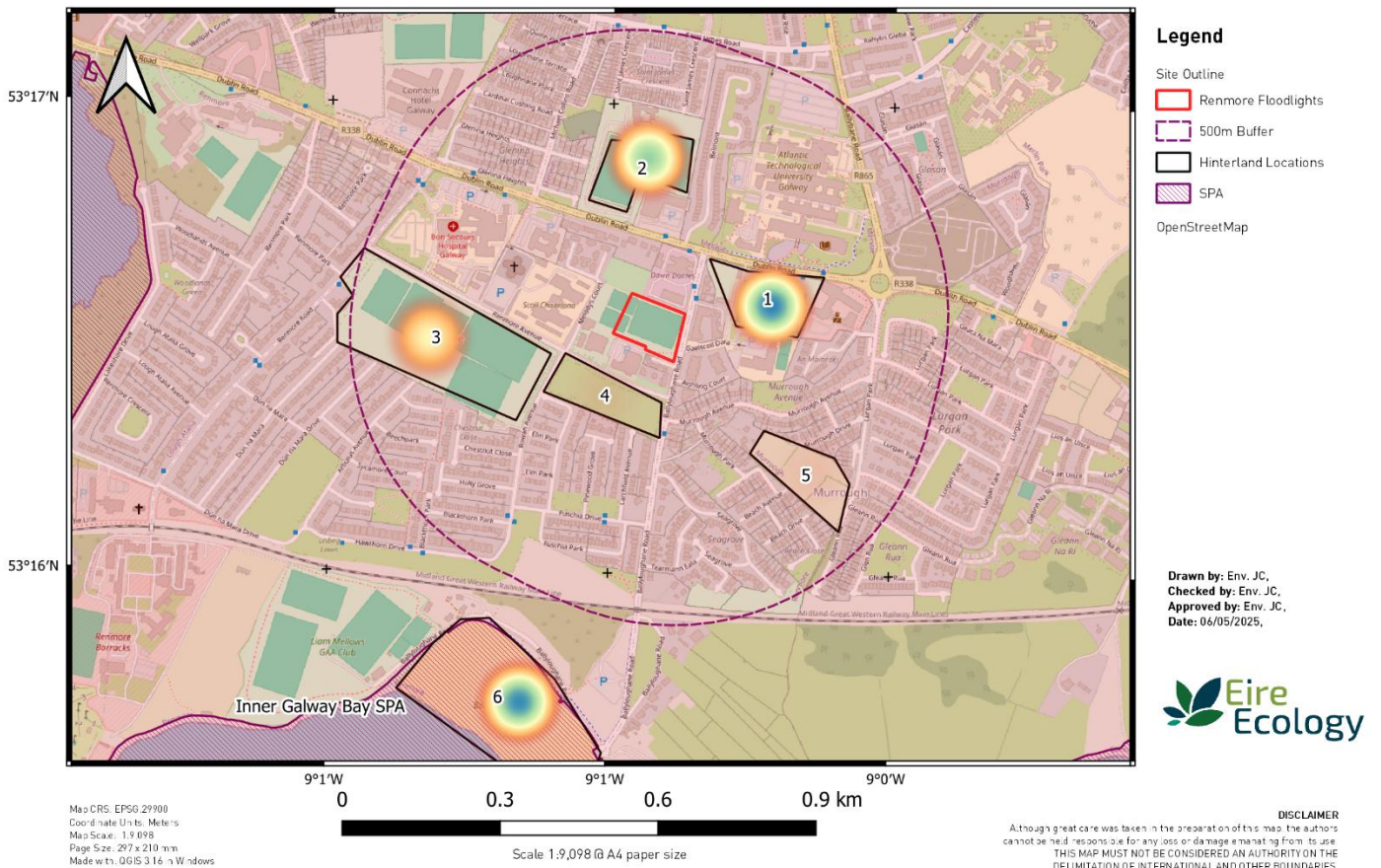


Figure 4-3: Heat map showing hinterland results (based on number of birds of interest)

4.4 HABITAT and FAUNAL EVALUATION

The ecological value of the site was assessed following the guidelines set out in the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (2006) and according to the Natura Scheme for evaluating ecological sites (after Nairn & Fossitt, 2004). Judgements on the evaluation were made using geographic frames of reference, e.g. European, National, Regional or Local.

The general footprint habitats in the site are of low local ecological value consisting primarily of amenity grassland. The site has a low local value for bat species and high local value for birds (based on the occasional usage by Oystercatchers, Mew and Black headed gulls).

5 ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1.1 Designated Sites

The proposed development at the construction stage will involve no works within any site designated on account of its natural heritage interest. It is not anticipated that the proposed development would have potential to give rise to any loss of habitat or other direct effects upon any designated sites of natural heritage importance.

The site walkover did not reveal any hydrological connectivity (baring groundwater). The proposed works are minor in extent. **No significant ecological impacts are predicted in respect of designated sites.**

5.1.2 5.2 Habitats

The site was not recorded to support any habitats considered to be of significant ecological value, with the entirety of the site being comprised of amenity grassland. Periphery treelines will not be impacted. **No significant ecological impacts are predicted in respect of habitats.**

5.1.3 Species

5.1.3.1 Bat

The subject site already has multiple lights within and surrounding the site. Three large lights can be found adjacent to the site along the Ballyloughane Road. Further lights can be found by the kingfisher carpark to the south of the site and by the Melody Court Road.

Loss of Roosting Habitat - The development will not have an impact on roosting habitats.

Loss of foraging and commuting habitat - the proposed works are confined to amenity grassland and hardstand. These are not habitats typically associated with foraging and commuting bats. The upgrades to these elements will not impact foraging or commuting features for bats.

Disturbance – the construction phase activities are minor and will be limited to daylight hours thus will have no disturbance impacts on bats. While lighting is known to impact bat activity, the subject site is assessed to be of low value for bat species and in addition, the surrounds are similarly of relatively low potential, lacking connectivity to good bat habitats. Given the concerns regarding attractiveness of invertebrates to blue light components (>4000K), the proposed bulbs have been changed from 5700K to 4000K to mitigate against the most severe effects. A lux diagram produced by Signify shows the extent of light spill (to 1 lux; see figure 5-1 and figure 5-2 below). No good bat habitat is affected by the lights. As such **no significant ecological impacts are predicted in respect of bats.**

Surveys reveal Oystercatcher, mew, herring gull and black-headed gulls were found to interact with the site. This interaction involved birds perched on the ground. The pitch is not a suitable habitat for any of these species to breed.

Oystercatcher

It is estimated, Ireland's wintering population of Oystercatcher is 20,666 (Lewis, 2019). The max observed on the pitch was 7. *Oystercatcher are not designated as a Conservation Objective of the Inner Galway Bay SPA or the Lough Corrib SPA.* The subject site is not suitable for breeding Oystercatcher, with the construction phase proposed for the summer months, no impacts are expected on the species due to disturbance. The operational phase impacts will be negligible given the small footprint of the lights.

Herring gull

It is estimated, Ireland's breeding population of Herring gull is 60,540 (Cummins, 2019). While long term trends (1988-2018) suggest a reduction of 33% the short term trend (1998-2018) for this species is more favourable with an increase of 87% and an expansion of range. The National Urban Gull Survey 2021 (Keogh, 2021) shows that gulls, in particular Herring and Lesser black backed gulls have learnt to breed in urban areas. The report states 42 apparently occupied nests were recorded from herring gull in Galway during the survey period.

Herring gull were observed overflying the pitch on two occasions with max observed numbers of 3. *Herring gull are not designated as a Conservation Objective of the Inner Galway Bay SPA or the Lough Corrib SPA.* The subject site is not suitable for breeding Herring gull, with the construction phase proposed for the summer months, no impacts are expected on the species due to disturbance. The operational phase impacts will be negligible given the small footprint of the lights.

Mew gull

It is estimated, Ireland's breeding population of Common gull is 3896 (Cummins, 2019) with wintering numbers boosted by arrivals from Scotland and continental Europe. While long term trends (1988-2018) suggest a reduction of 25% the short term trend (1998-2018) for this species is more favourable with an increase of 82% and an expansion of range. Much of the breeding habitat for this species can be found on islands in lakes within Counties Galway and Mayo.

Mew gull were observed landing on the site twice and overflying the pitch once with max observed numbers of 8. *Common gull is designated as a Conservation Objective of both the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Lough Corrib SPA.* The Inner Galway Bay SPA supporting document states that the numbers of Common gull observed across the whole site ranged from 614 to 1049 in 09/10 surveys. The CO doc for the Lough Corrib SPA states 137 pairs breed on the lake across 14 sites.

While the presence of a species designated as a CO of SPAs is of note, we feel the subject site is not a habitat of high significance for this species. While gulls can feed on invertebrates on pitches, the main feeding areas for this species are intertidal during low tide and subtidally during high tide. This is stated in the Inner Galway Bay SPA supporting document. Given the low level of activity, minimal proposed site works and the high anthropogenic levels found within the site, impacts on this species can be screened out with no mitigation measures required.

Black headed gull

It is estimated, Ireland's breeding population of black-headed gull is 15,620 (Cummins, 2019) with this number augmented by wintering birds from northern and eastern Europe. Wintering numbers are unknown. While long term trends (1988-2018) suggest a reduction of 11% the short term trend (1998-2018) for this species is more favourable with an increase of 102% and an expansion of range.

Black headed gull were observed landing on the site once and overflying the pitch once with max observed numbers of 3. *Black gull is designated as a Conservation Objective of both the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Lough Corrib SPA.* The Inner Galway Bay SPA supporting document states that the numbers of black-headed gull observed across the whole site ranged from 837 to 2302 in 09/10 surveys. The CO doc for the Lough Corrib SPA states 400 pairs breed on the lake (2017). Given the distance involved no impacts on these breeding sites are expected.

While the presence of a species designated as a CO of SPAs is of note, we feel the subject site is not a habitat of high significance for this species. While gulls can feed on invertebrates on pitches, the main feeding areas for this species are intertidal during low tide and subtidally during high tide. This is stated in the Inner Galway Bay SPA supporting document. Given the low level of activity, minimal proposed site works and the high anthropogenic levels found within the site, impacts on this species can be screened out with no mitigation measures required.

Given the low numbers observed, lack of associated designated sites and minor footprint, **no significant negative ecological impacts are predicted in respect of birds.**

5.2 Cumulative Impacts & Effects

The assessment of cumulative impacts estimates the impact of existing, permitted and proposed developments that could act in combination with the project to result in cumulative effects on the

ecological environment. Active planning applications within the development site have been considered during the assessment of cumulative impacts.

The implementation of the mitigation measures as set out below will ensure that the project does not contribute to any significant cumulative impacts.

6 Monitoring

While surveys did not reveal the presence of curlew on the site, the biodiversity officer Paula Kearney raised the concern that low numbers could theoretically utilise pitches for feeding purposes at night. In order to investigate the potential for this to happen and to help guide future development, it is proposed to conduct a number of thermal nighttime surveys of the site to contrast differences in bird behavior between evenings when lights are on and off.

- Surveys will be conducted in November, December and February for two concurrent nights, one with lights on and the next with lights off.
- Surveys will commence from sunset and run for three hours.
- A report will provide information on results and findings. This can help influence timings of lights

7 RESIDUAL IMPACTS

Residual impacts are those that occur after the mitigation measures have taken effect. Based on the results of surveys, no mitigation measures are required as the proposed installation of lights will have a negligible impact on the local features of biodiversity found within and surrounding the site.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development site consists of an existing pitch. It is proposed to install 6 x 15m columns to provide lighting. Habitats within the site are of extremely limited ecological value comprised of amenity grassland.

A number of designated sites of natural heritage importance are present within relative proximity to the site, including the Inner Galway Bay SPA. Impacts on both designated sites, species and local biodiversity have been assessed with no significant impacts expected.

Given the low habitat suitability and the use of warmer bulbs, it is considered that the proposed development will have no significant residual impacts to local biodiversity.

9 References

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- BCT. (2018). *Bats and artificial lighting in the UK Guidance Note 08/18.* ILP.
- CIEEM. (2018). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine Version 1.1.* Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.
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1 Appendix A - Data.

Table 1-1: Start, finish and weather data

Visit No	Site	Date	Survey type	Start Time	End Time	Wind speed (F)	Visibility	Rain
1	Renmore	13/02/2025	VP/ Point count	09:50	11:20	3	Good	Dry
1	Hinterland	13/02/2025	Point count	14:20	16:20	3	Good	Dry
2	Renmore	04/03/2025	VP/ Point count	08:00	09:30	2	Good	Showers
2	Hinterland	04/03/2025	Point count	13:00	15:00	2	Good	Dry
3	Renmore	12/03/2025	VP/ Point count	08:30	10:00	2	Good	Dry
3	Hinterland	12/03/2025	Point count	13:45	15:45	2	Good	Dry

Table 1-2: Species of note recorded during VP surveys

Survey Number	Date	Season	Obs No.	Species Name	No. of Birds	Time	Details
1	13/02/2025	Wintering	1	Oystercatcher	3	10:10	perched on field
1	13/02/2025	Wintering	2	Mew Gull	4	10:20	Overflying the site without really interacting with pitch
1	13/02/2025	Wintering	3	Oystercatcher	10	10:38	Flew over carpark flying to the NW - not interacting with site
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	1	Oystercatcher	2	08:00	Perched on pitch prior to survey
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	2	Black-headed Gull	3	08:00	Perched on pitch prior to survey

Survey Number	Date	Season	Obs No.	Species Name	No. of Birds	Time	Details
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	3	Mew Gull	8	08:00	Perched on pitch prior to survey
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	4	Mew Gull	1	08:16	Took off and left site
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	5	Herring Gull	1	08:20	Flew over site
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	6	Oystercatcher	1	08:24	Took off and left site
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	7	Oystercatcher	1	08:27	Landed on pitch
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	8	Oystercatcher	4	08:33	Landed on pitch
2	04/03/2025	Wintering	9	Oystercatcher	9	08:38	Landed on pitch
3	12/03/2025	Wintering	1	Oystercatcher	6	09:04	Flew onto pitch
3	12/03/2025	Wintering	2	Herring Gull	3	09:21	Overflying
3	12/03/2025	Wintering	3	Black-headed Gull	2	09:55	Overflying

Table 1-3: Hinterland Results

Visit	Date	Species	Numbers	Details	Location	Long	Late
1	13/02/2025	Oystercatcher	30	Sitting in field	Gaelscoil Dara pitch	53.27658	-9.01142
2	13/02/2025	Nothing of note			Galwegiansrugby pitch	53.27908	-9.01501
3	13/02/2025	Oystercatcher	7	On pitch	Renmore playing fields	53.27597	-9.02115
3	13/02/2025	Herring Gull	2	On pitch	Renmore playing fields	53.27597	-9.02115
4	13/02/2025	Nothing of note			Field off Ballyloughan Road	53.27504	-9.01612
5	13/02/2025	Nothing of note			Fields near Glen Rua	53.27374	-9.01026
6	13/02/2025	Mew Gull	4	On beach	Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
6	13/02/2025	Ringed Plover	3	On beach	Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
1	04/03/2025	Oystercatcher	3		Gaelscoil Dara pitch	53.27658	-9.01142
1	04/03/2025	Herring Gull	1		Gaelscoil Dara pitch	53.27658	-9.01142
1	04/03/2025	Mew Gull	3		Gaelscoil Dara pitch	53.27658	-9.01142
2	04/03/2025	Black-headed Gull	2		Galwegiansrugby pitch	53.27908	-9.01501
2	04/03/2025	Oystercatcher	30		Galwegiansrugby pitch	53.27908	-9.01501

Visit	Date	Species	Numbers	Details	Location	Long	Late
3	04/03/2025	Nothing of note			Renmore playing fields	53.27597	-9.02115
4	04/03/2025	Mew Gull	1		Field off Ballyloughan Road	53.27504	-9.01612
5	04/03/2025	Nothing of note			Fields near Glen Rua	53.27374	-9.01026
6	04/03/2025	Curlew	11		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
6	04/03/2025	Mew Gull	2		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
1	12/03/2025	Oystercatcher	2	On pitch	Gaelscoil Dara pitch	53.27658	-9.01142
1	12/03/2025	Black-headed Gull	3	Overflying	Gaelscoil Dara pitch	53.27658	-9.01142
2	12/03/2025	Great Black-backed Gull	1	Overflying	Galwegiansrugby pitch	53.27908	-9.01501
3	12/03/2025	Oystercatcher	8	On pitch	Renmore playing fields	53.27597	-9.02115
3	12/03/2025	Herring Gull	1	Landed on pitch			
3	12/03/2025	Mew Gull	2	Landed on pitch			
4	12/03/2025	Nothing of note			Field off Ballyloughan Road	53.27504	-9.01612
5	12/03/2025	Herring Gull	1		Fields near Glen Rua	53.27374	-9.01026
6	12/03/2025	Black-headed Gull	4		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
6	12/03/2025	Redshank	1		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
6	12/03/2025	Curlew	1		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
6	12/03/2025	Ringed Plover	3		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
6	12/03/2025	Shag	5		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843
6	12/03/2025	Mew Gull	7		Ballyloughane beach	53.26977	-9.01843