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A large, green, circular wireframe graphic on the left side of the page, depicting a complex architectural structure with various rooms and corridors.

**C1051: CARLOW ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEMES SAFE ROUTE TO  
SCHOOL - BAGENALSTOWN, LONG RANGE ROAD**

# AA SCREENING REPORT

**For  
Carlow County Council**

**20 May 2024**

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 PROJECT CONTRACTUAL BASIS & PARTIES INVOLVED

This report has been prepared by O'Connor Sutton Cronin & Associates Ltd. (OCSC) at the request of their Client, Carlow County Council (CCC), for the proposed Carlow Active Travel Scheme, Safe Route to Schools (SRTS) Scheme outside Queen of the Universe National School, Long Range Road, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow.

The works include traffic calming measures in front of the school gates. The scheme aims to improve safety at the school gate by providing 'front of school' treatments to alleviate congestion, improve access, create a safer, calmer, and more attractive end destination for school users and encourage alternative modes of transport to access the facilities. The local authority for the site is Carlow County Council.

## 1.2 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

The author, Sinéad Doran, has a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science, and over 2 years of experience in environmental consultancy. Ms. Doran has completed numerous AA Screening reports and is, therefore, suitably qualified and experienced to undertake this assessment. This report was reviewed by Luis Iemma, Associate Ecologist, who has over 15 years of experience in environmental assessment. Luis is a Chartered Ecologist (CEcol) of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and has a Ph. D in Ecology.

## 1.3 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The Natura 2000 network is a European network of important ecological sites, as defined under Article 3 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, which comprises both Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs).

SACs are natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive and are established under the Habitats Directive itself. SPAs are established under Article 4 of the Birds Directive 2009/147/EC for the protection of endangered species of wild birds. The aim of the network is to aid the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect such sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA. These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as

amended) and the Planning Development Act 2000 (as amended). The process of appropriate assessment involves several stages, as discussed below.

### **Stage One: Screening**

The process identifies the likely impacts upon a European site of a project, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts are likely to be significant.

Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3):

- i. Whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site and
- ii. Whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site in view of its conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). Screening should be undertaken without the inclusion of mitigation unless potential impacts clearly can be avoided through the modification or redesign of the plan or project, in which case the screening process is repeated on the altered plan. The greatest level of evidence and justification will be needed in circumstances when the process ends at the screening stage on grounds of no impact.

### **Stage Two: Appropriate Assessment**

This stage considers whether the plan or project, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site and includes any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce, or offset negative effects. The proponent of the plan or project will be required to submit a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), i.e. the report of a targeted professional scientific examination of the plan or project and the relevant Natura 2000 sites to identify and characterise any possible implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. This should provide information to enable the competent authority to carry out the appropriate assessment. If the assessment is negative, i.e. adverse effects on the integrity of a site cannot be excluded, then the process must proceed to Stage 4, or the plan or project should be abandoned. The AA is carried out by the competent authority and is supported by the NIS.

### **Stage Three: Assessment of Alternative Solutions**

This stage examines any alternative solutions or options that could enable the plan or project to proceed without adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site. The process must return to Stage 2 as alternatives will require appropriate assessment in order to proceed. Demonstrating that all reasonable alternatives have been considered and assessed and that the least damaging option has been selected is necessary to progress to Stage 4.

### **Stage Four: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.**

Stage 4 is the main derogation process of Article 6(4) which examines whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project that will have adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site to proceed in cases where it has been established that no less damaging alternative solution exists. The extra protection measures for Annex I priority habitats come into effect when making the IROPI case. Compensatory measures must be proposed and assessed. The Commission must be informed of the compensatory measures. Compensatory measures must be practical, implementable, likely to succeed, proportionate, and enforceable, and they must be approved by the Minister.

## 1.4 LIMITATIONS

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared for the sole use of Carlow County Council (“the Client”) as part of a part 8 planning application. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report or any other services provided by OCSC.

This assessment is based on a review of available historical information, environmental records, consultations, relevant guidance information, and reports from third parties. All information received has been taken in good faith as being true and representative.

This report has been prepared in line with the best industry standards. The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by OCSC in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The assessment undertaken by OCSC and described was undertaken in April 2024 and is based on the information available during that period. The scope of this report and the services are accordingly factually limited by these circumstances.

OCSC disclaim any undertaking or obligation to advise any person of any change in any matter affecting the Report which may come or be brought to OCSC’s attention after the date of the Report. The conclusions presented in this report represent OCSC’s best professional judgement based on a review of the relevant information available at the time of writing. The opinions and conclusions presented are valid only to the extent that the information provided was accurate and complete.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

To meet the project objectives, the following scope of works were completed:

- Present a discussion of the proposed development and its potential effects on its receiving environment;
- Present a discussion of the current site status and key environmental influences around the site;
- Undertake and present a review of European sites in the region of the proposed development;
- Conduct and present a discussion on the screening of the identified European sites in relation to the potential effects arising from the project; and
- Provide a conclusion as to whether or not the proposed development is likely to, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, have a significant effect on any European site.

This AA Screening has been taken with regard to the aforementioned and following legislation and guidance:

- Guidance for EIA and AA screening of active travel projects funded by the NTA, October 2023.
- OPR Guidance Note PN02 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening, June 2021.
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009; 11 February 2010 revision.
- Commission Notice: Managing Natura 2000 sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission, 2018.
- 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. European Commission Environment DG, 2002.
- Managing Natura 2000 sites: the Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. European Commission, 2000.
- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management. Office of the Planning Regulator, March 2021.

The desktop study also involved a review of the following primary sources to gain understanding of the site setting:

- A review of available extracts of historical Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSI) maps;
- A review of information held by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) EnVision online Mapping;
- Aerial images available of the site (OSI and Google); and
- The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) online map tool.



## 3 DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

### 3.1 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening report has been prepared for the proposed pedestrian/cycle SRTS Scheme at Long Range Road, Bagenalstown. The development will provide an integrated street design outside of Queen of the Universe National School, Long Range Road in accordance with SRTS Design Guide to improve safety at the school gate by providing 'front of school' treatments to alleviate congestion, improve access, and create a safer, calmer, and more attractive end destination for school users and to encourage alternative modes of transport to access the facilities.

Queen of the Universe NS is a mixed primary school from Junior Infants to First Class and an all-girls primary school from Second Class to Sixth Class. The school has approximately 263 students and 30 staff attending daily.

As part of this SRTS Scheme, the proposed traffic calming measures in front of the school gates include:

- Footpath build-outs
- Implementing a one-way system (from north to south, towards the main road R724) along the Long Range Rd. This is one of the main changes on the existing layout as it affects current traffic flows, etc.
- A new raised zebra crossing (controlled) in front of the school
- A raised courtesy crossing (uncontrolled) at the junction with the main road
- A signalised pedestrian crossing at the main road, in front of Lidl
- Coloured road markings, bollards, surface colours, etc.

See Figure 3.1.

This project forms part of the Carlow Active Scheme to provide, pedestrian, and cycle facilities from Presentation De La Salle along the R724 (Royal Oak Road) to the mini roundabout on Church Street/ Kilree Street; from Royal Oak Road to Queen of the Universe National School; and from Kilree Road junction along Station Road to service Bagenalstown Railway Station.

The overall scheme proposes footpath improvements from Fr. Cummins Park to Royal Oak Road along Conway Park; removal of the mini roundabout at Church Street/ Kilree Street/ Station Road and the introduction of a signalised junction incorporating pedestrian and cycle facilities; regularisation of parking facilities along the scheme. The following junctions will require a review for tightening/redesign:

- Maple Drive /Royal Oak Road West Entrance,
- Maple Drive /Royal Oak Road East Entrance,
- Beachwood Close/ Royal Oak Road,

- Eastwood/ Royal Oak Road,
- St. Brigid's Crescent/ Kilree Lane,
- Fairgreen/ Church Street,
- Church Road/ Church Street (R724),
- Railway Road/ R724 in the vicinity of Coláiste Aindriú Secondary School, and
- Pairc Muire/ R724 in the vicinity of Coláiste Aindriú Secondary School.

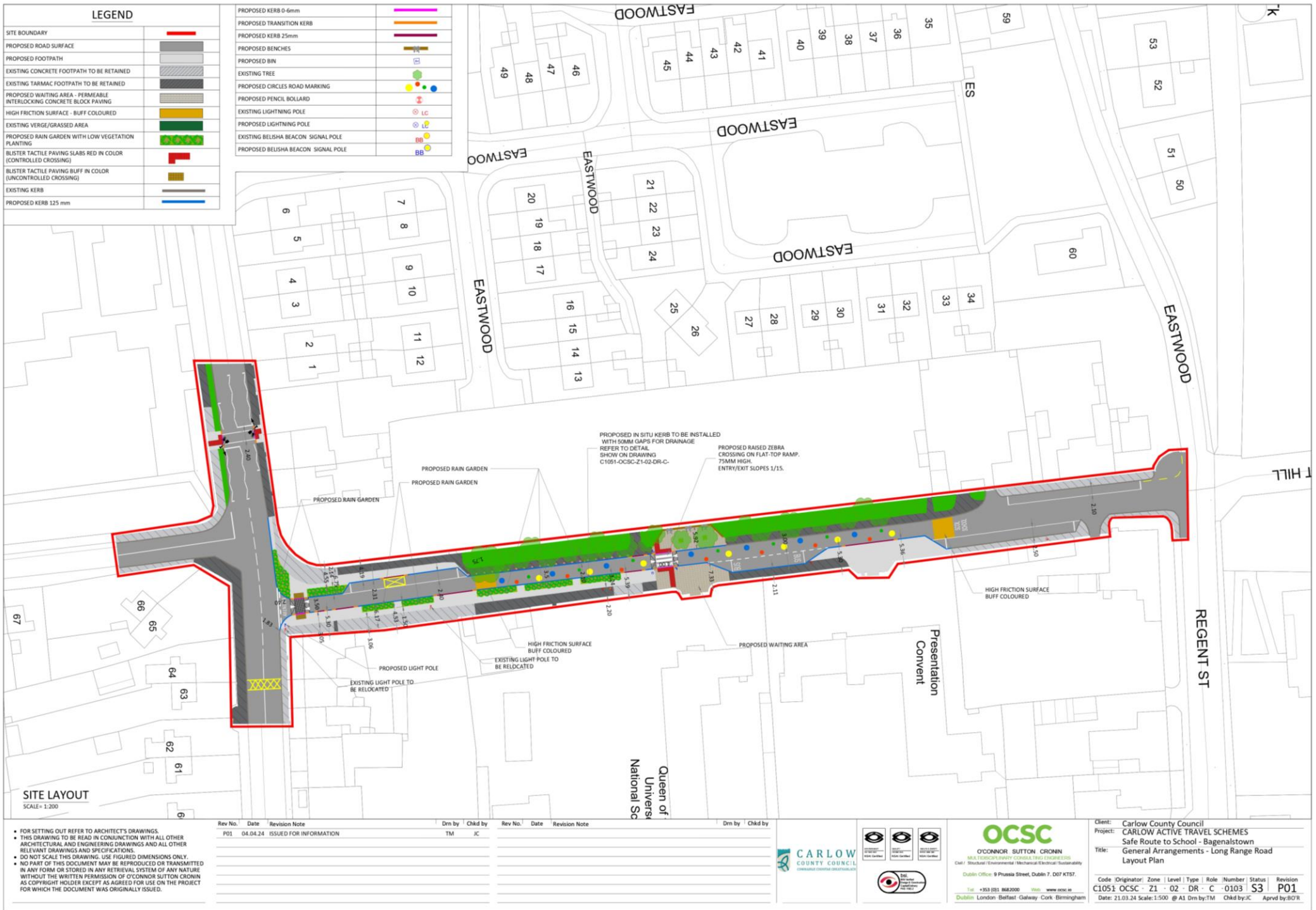


Figure 3.1: Layout Plan (Source: OSCS,2024)

### 3.2 SITE SIZE AND LOCATION

The study area is located in Bagenalstown (Muine Bheag), Co. Carlow, a small town situated along the River Barrow. The proposed site consists of Long Range Road, a road that is located perpendicular to the River Barrow. The road bounds the west side of Queen of the Universe National School. The site location and aerial photograph of the study area are shown in Figure 3.2 and Figure 3.3, respectively.

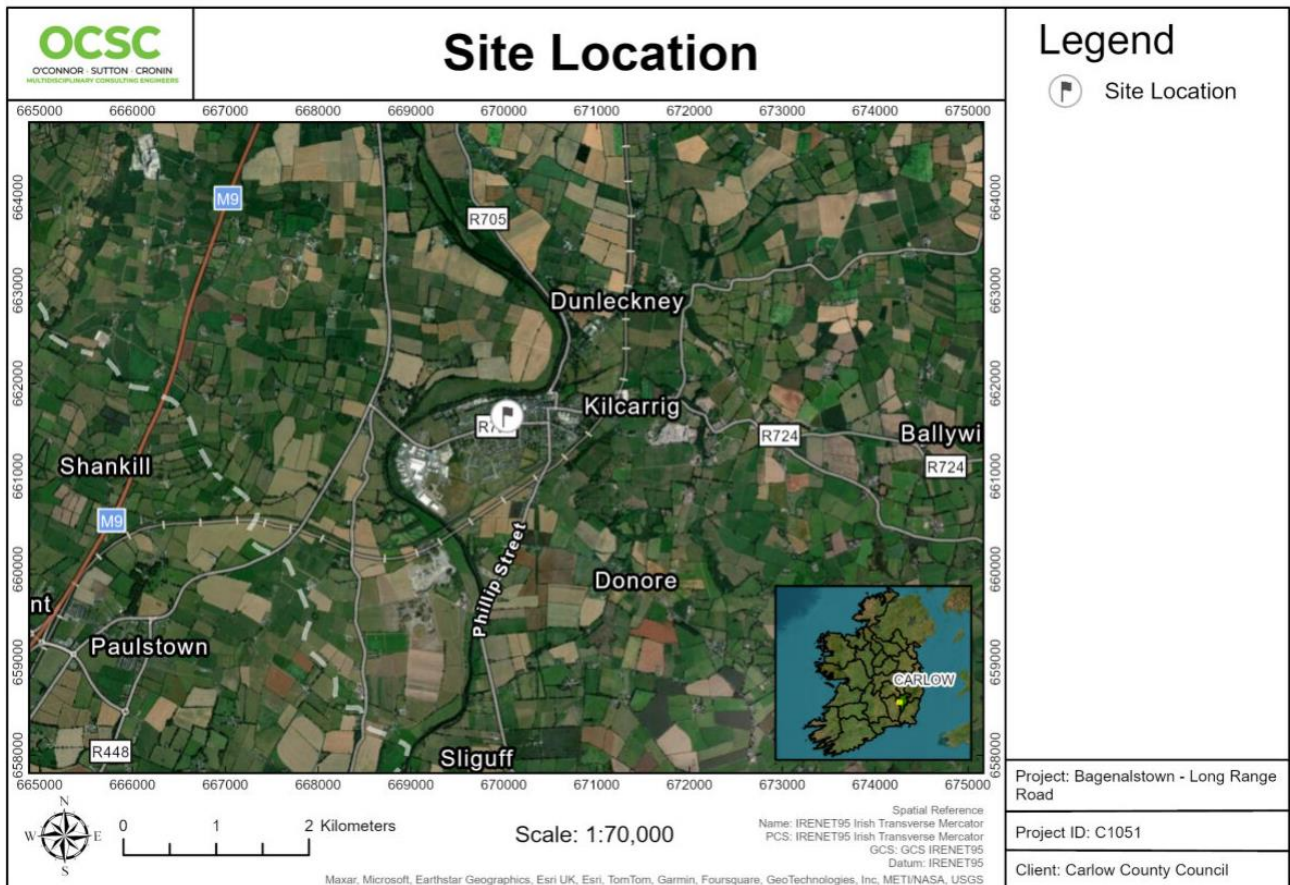


Figure 3.2: Regional Site Location (Source: OCSC, 2024)

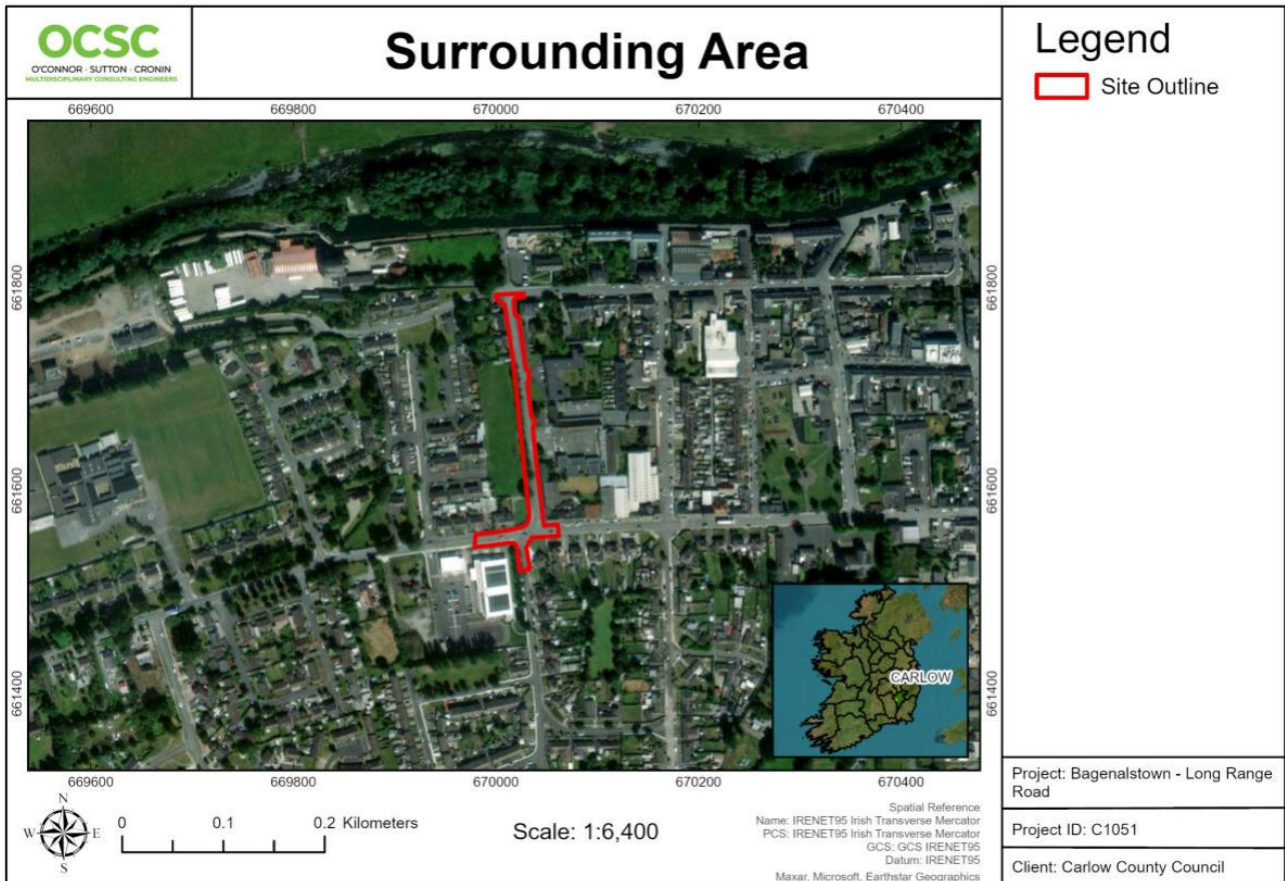


Figure 3.3: Aerial Photo of Site and Surrounding Area (Source: OCSC, 2024)

### 3.3 SURROUNDING LAND USE

The land surrounding the site is used for educational, transport, residential, agricultural, and commercial/retail purposes as shown in Figure 2.3. Directly north of the site are East Wood Road/Regent Street and Convent Hill Road which leads to the River Barrow as well as commercial premises. Further north of the site and the River Barrow are agricultural lands. East of the site is Queen of the Universe National School, residences, and retail/commercial properties. Further east are additional retail/commercial properties and residential dwellings. Southeast of the site are residences and open space. South of the site are Lidl and residences. West of the site are residential dwellings. Further west are Presentation De La Salle College, residences, and Bagenalstown Wastewater Treatment Plant. Northwest of the site are residences and the old Corn Mill premises which is now occupied by the International Trailer Co. Further northwest are the River Barrow and agricultural lands. See Table 3.1 for adjacent land uses.

Table 3.1: Adjacent Land Uses

Boundary	Land Use
North	Commercial premises, the River Barrow, and agricultural land

Boundary	Land Use
South	Lidl, residences, and retail/ commercial properties
East	Queen of the Universe National School and residences
West	Residences, a trailer company, green space, Presentation De La Sale College, and Bagenalstown Wastewater Treatment Plant

### 3.4 HYDROLOGY

There are no EPA-designated surface water features within the site boundary. The nearest surface water feature is the River Barrow (BARROW\_200 - IE\_SE\_14B012920), which is located approximately 67m north of the site. The River Barrow flows in a southerly direction and eventually discharges into the Upper Barrow Estuary River Suir (IE\_SE\_100\_0300) approximately 30.2km downstream of the site. The next nearest surface water feature is the Lower Clorusk Stream, which is located approximately 510m northeast of the site. This stream is upstream of the nearest surface water feature, and both are a part of the BARROW\_200 (IE\_SE\_14B012920). See Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 for waterbody locations.

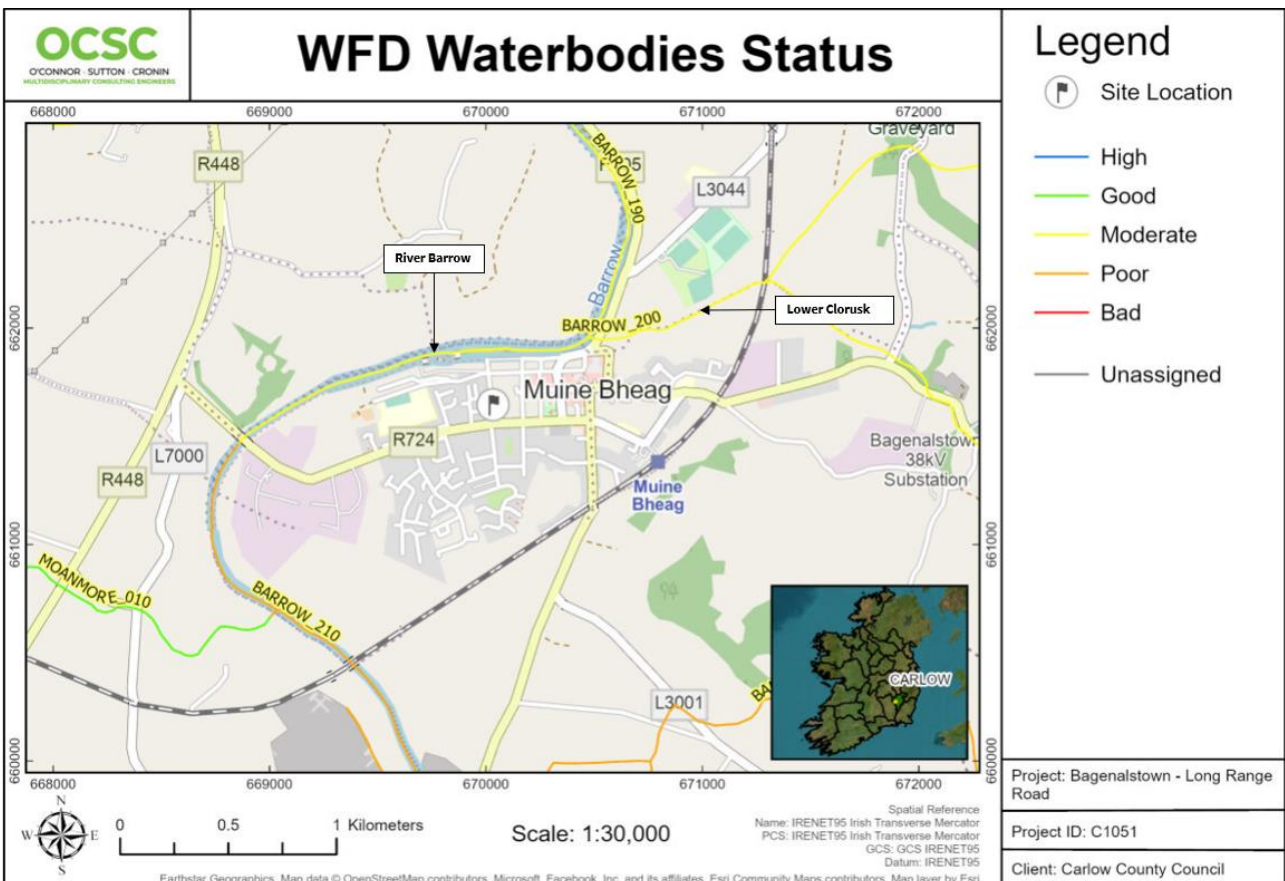


Figure 3.4: River Waterbodies WFD Status (Source: OCSC, 2024)

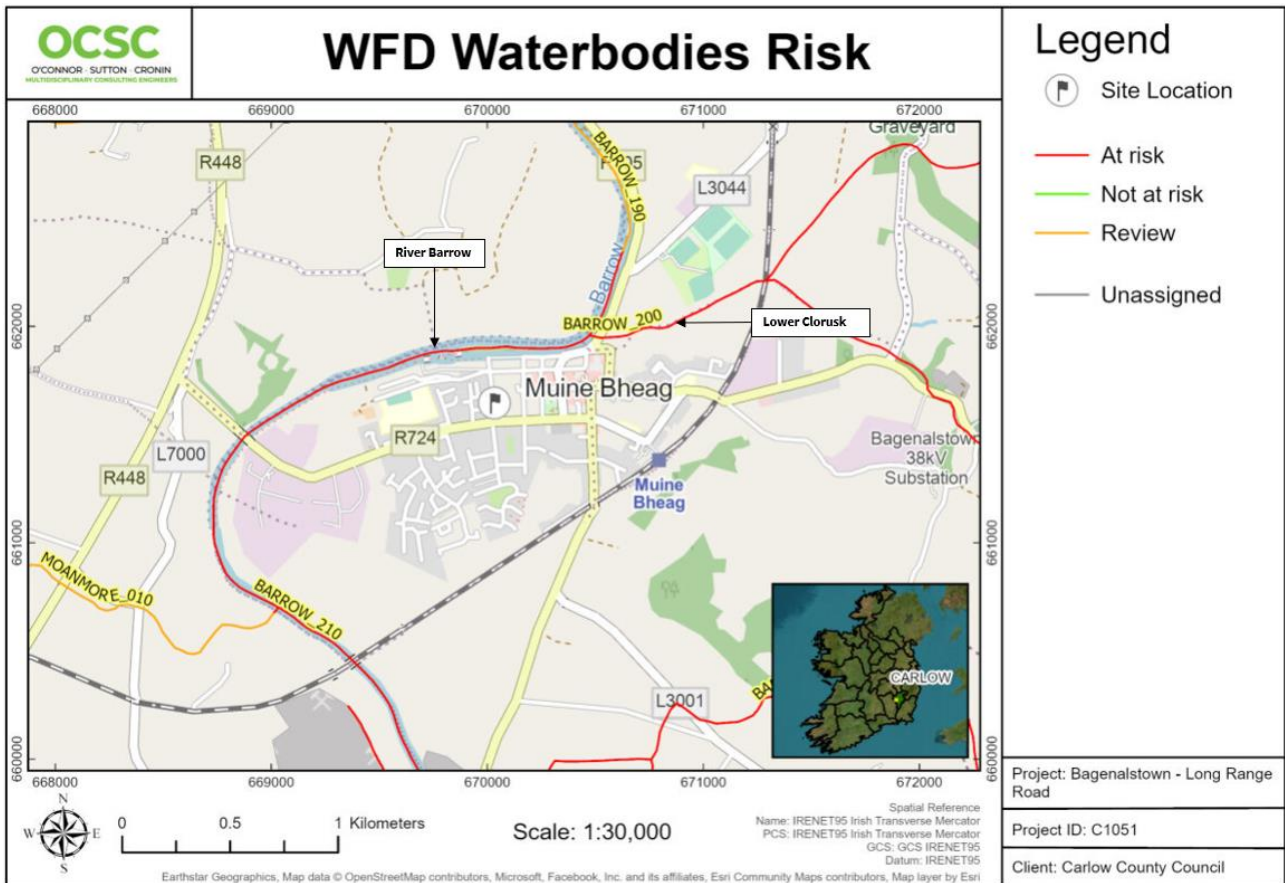


Figure 3.5: River Waterbodies Risk WFD (Source: OCSC, 2024)

Based on the most recent water quality information (2016-2021), the River Barrow has an overall Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of 'Moderate' as shown in Figure 3.4: River Waterbodies WFD Status (Source: OCSC, 2024)Figure 3.4.

The EPA spatial dataset indicates that the River Barrow is at risk of not meeting its WFD objectives by 2027 (EPA, 2024) as shown in Figure 3.5. WFD information for these waterbodies is summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: WFD Summary Information

WFD Summary Information	
Name	River Barrow
Waterbody Code	IE_SE_14B012920
Waterbody Name	BARROW_200
Waterbody Type	River
Iteration	SW 2016-2021
Status	Moderate
Risk	At Risk

### **3.5 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS**

The key parameters of the proposed development have been assessed to identify all aspects that have the potential to affect the Natura 2000 network, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. All phases of the project have been taken into account including construction, operation, and decommissioning, where applicable.

#### **3.5.1 AREA AFFECTED BY IMPACTS**

The work has been limited to the area required to provide an Active Travel Scheme SRTS at Long Range Road, Bagenalstown. Properties along the site boundary will be indirectly impacted by the development by noise, traffic, and vibrations.

#### **3.5.2 PHYSICAL CHANGES IN THE ENVIRONMENT**

As the development will occur within the footprint of existing roads, the area can absorb the development. Minor physical changes will occur to the environment as a result of the development.

#### **3.5.3 CHANGES IN THE INTENSITY OF EXISTING PRESSURES**

This project will reduce the intensity of existing pressures as it will reduce car dependency in the area and therefore reduce traffic, greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and air and noise pollution.

#### **3.5.4 RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

There are no resource requirements (i.e., mineral/drinking water abstractions, etc.) for the active travel scheme works which will be additional to existing requirements.

#### **3.5.5 EMISSIONS AND WASTE**

The development has the potential to produce emissions and waste as a result of the construction phase. During the operational phase, the production of emissions or waste will be similar to or less than that occurring on the existing road network.



### **3.5.6 TRANSPORTATION REQUIREMENTS**

There will be a temporary increase in transportation requirements associated with the movement of materials and workers to and from the site during the construction phase of the development.

### **3.5.7 DURATION OF CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, AND DECOMMISSIONING**

The proposed works are predicted to be of a short duration and will result in a permanent feature with no decommissioning phase.

### **3.5.8 DISTANCE FROM NATURA 2000 SITES**

The nearest Natura 2000 Sites are the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (0.062km north) and the Blackstairs Mountains SAC (11.9km southeast). These are discussed further in Section 4.

### **3.5.9 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS WITH OTHER PROJECTS AND PLANS**

Due to the scale, nature, and duration of the proposed project, predicted cumulative impacts from the proposed works in conjunction with committed or existing developments based on a review of planning grants and existing surrounding land usage would be unlikely, neutral, not significant, and localised. See Section 6 Potential In-Combination Effects for further discussion on other nearby projects.

## 4 IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES

### 4.1 SCREENING PROCESS

This stage of the process identifies any likely significant effects on European sites from a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans. The screening phase was progressed in stages during which a series of questions were asked to determine:

- Whether a plan or project can be excluded from AA requirements because it is directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site.
- Whether the project will have a potentially significant effect on a European Site, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, in view of the site's conservation objectives or if residual uncertainty exists regarding potential impacts.

An important element of the AA process is the identification of the “conservation objectives”, “Qualifying Interests” (QIs), and/ or “Special Conservation Interests” (SCIs) of European sites requiring assessment. QIs are the habitat features and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive for which each European Site has been designated and afforded protection. SCIs are wetland habitats and bird species listed within Annexes I and II of the Birds Directive. It is also vital that the threats to the ecological/environmental conditions that are required to support QIs and SCIs are considered as part of the assessment.

Site-Specific Conservation Objectives (SSCOs) have been designed to define favourable conservation status for a particular habitat or species at that site. Paragraph 4.6(3) of the European Commission interpretation document ‘Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC’ states:

*“The significant effects on any European Site, in view of the site’s conservation objectives, involves its ecological functions. The decision as to whether it is adversely affected should focus on and be limited to the site’s conservation objectives.”*

The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing;
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future; and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and

- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

This AA screening is based on the best scientific knowledge and has utilised ecological and hydrological expertise. In addition, a detailed online review of published scientific literature and 'grey' literature was conducted. This included a detailed review of the NPWS website, including mapping and available reports for relevant sites, and, in particular, QIs/ SCIs described and their conservation objectives. The EPA EnVision map viewer (EPA, 2024) and available reports were also reviewed, as was the NPWS (2019) publication "The Status of Protected EU Habitats and Species in Ireland".

## 4.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT EUROPEAN SITES

Appropriate Assessment screening of potential effects on European sites is conducted following a standard source-pathway-receptor model where all three elements of this mechanism must be in place for an effect to be established. The 'Zone Of Influence' (Zoi) for a project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the proposed project and associated activities. This is likely to extend beyond the project site, where there are ecological or hydrological links beyond the site boundaries. The Zoi will vary for different ecological features depending on their sensitivity to an environmental change (CIEEM, 2018).

A distance of 15km is recommended in the case of plans, as a potential zone of influence and this distance is derived from UK guidance (Scott Wilson et al., 2006). However, for projects, the distance could be much less, and in some cases less than 100m. NPWS and Office of the Planning Regulator guidance advises that this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in-combination effects. Thus, given the nature, scale and extent of the proposed project, the potential Zoi will consider European sites with regard to the location of a European site, the QIs of the site and their potential mobility outside that European site, the Source-Pathway-Receptor model and potential environment effects of the proposed project.

See Table 4.4 for the list of European Sites Within ZOI of the proposed works. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism is sufficient to conclude that a potential effect is not of any relevance or significance. The elements of this model consist of the following:

**Table 4.1: Source(s)**

Source(s)	
Identify the characteristics of the proposed development such as the nature, size, location, and the type of impacts	
<b>Examples:</b>	
Direct Impacts:	Indirect Impacts:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct emissions (water, air, noise, or light).</li> <li>• Loss of habitat (including breeding or foraging habitats).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of breeding or foraging habitat outside the European site.</li> <li>• Impact on a non-QI habitat or species within the European site that is ecologically linked to the conservation objectives/QI.</li> <li>• Barriers to movement e.g. aquatic species, otter, bats, bird species.</li> <li>• Collision risk.</li> <li>• Loss of breeding or foraging for a prey species.</li> </ul>

**Table 4.2: Pathway(s)**

Pathway(s)	
Identify the existence and characteristics of the pathways that could link European sites and their Qis/ SCIs to the proposed development.	
<b>Examples:</b>	
Direct Pathways:	Indirect Pathways:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity (i.e. location within the European site).</li> <li>• Water bodies (rivers/streams, marine, lakes, groundwater).</li> <li>• Air (for both air emissions and noise impacts).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption to migratory paths, e.g. bird species, aquatic species, bats.</li> <li>• ‘Sightlines’ where noisy or intrusive activities may result in disturbance to shy species.</li> </ul>

**Table 4.3: Receptor(s)**

Receptor(s)
Qualifying species and habitats which may be linked to sources of impact via identified pathways. The location, nature, and sensitivities of these potential receptors must be established along with the ecological conditions underpinning their survival and the conservation objectives specified to maintain or restore favourable conservation status.
<b>Examples:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Freshwater Pearl Mussels’ extreme sensitivity to siltation in water.</li> <li>• Lesser Horseshoe Bats’ sensitivity to noise and light.</li> <li>• Turloughs’ sensitivity to changes in groundwater levels.</li> </ul>

Screening for Appropriate Assessment is comprised of the following steps:

- a. Describe the details of the proposed development and the characteristics of the receiving environment
- b. Identify all the potential impacts of the proposed development.

- c. Define the zone of influence (Zol) using the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.
- d. Identify the European site(s) within the zone of influence of the proposed development along with their Qualifying Interests and conservation objectives.
- e. Determine whether the proposed development is directly connected with, or necessary to the conservation management of, any European site(s).
- f. Assess the potential effects on European sites.
- g. Assess the likely significant direct and indirect effects on the conservation objectives of the site(s) in relation to the project alone, and in combination with other plans and projects.
- h. Conclusions of the screening assessment process - determine if the project, in the absence of mitigation measures, will undermine the conservation objectives of the site(s) and give rise to likely significant effects.

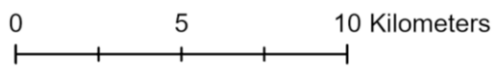
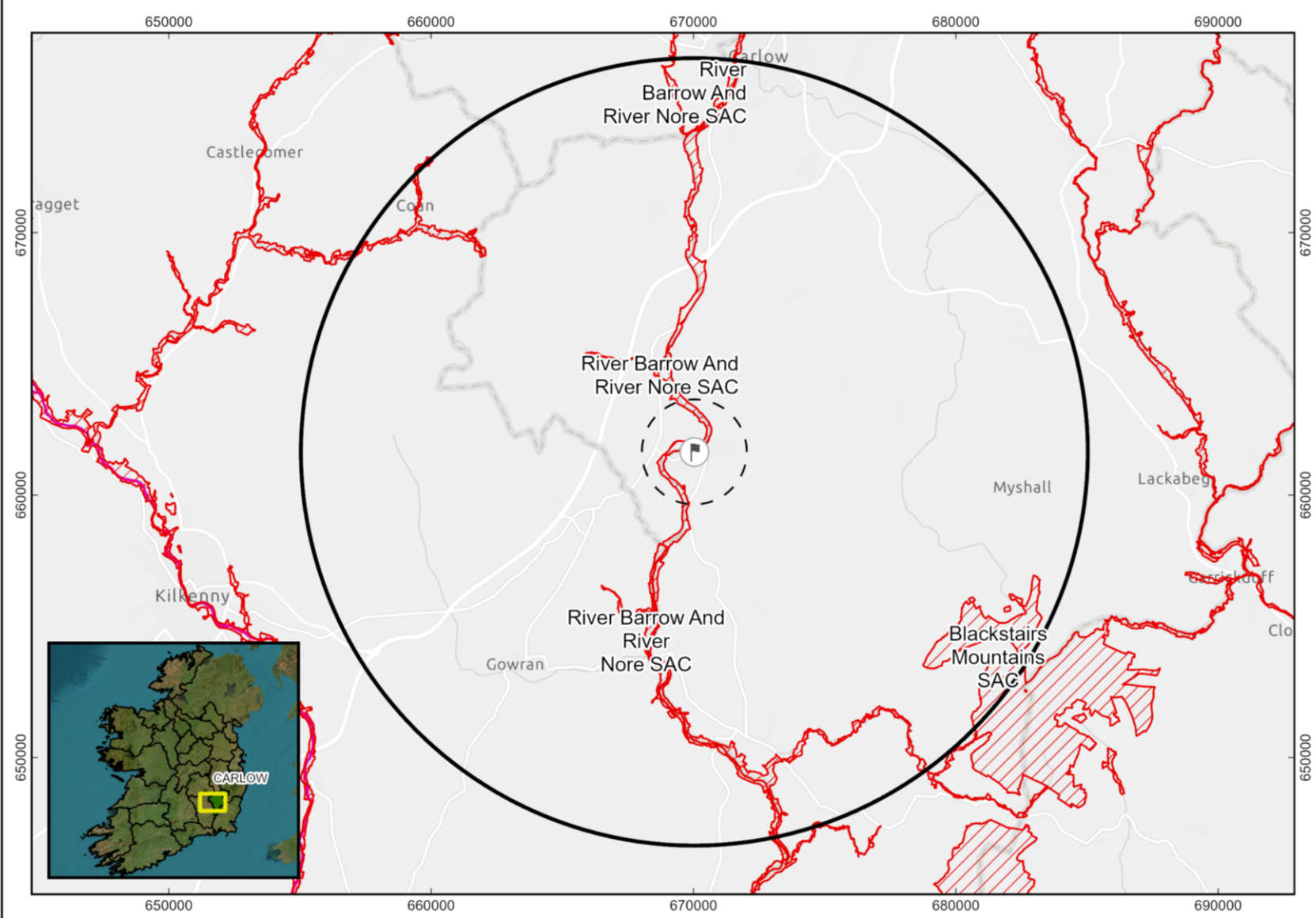
Conservation objectives that have been considered by this assessment are included in the following NPWS documents:

- NPWS (2011) Conservation Objectives: River Barrow and River Nore SAC 002162. Version 1.0. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- NPWS (2019) Conservation Objectives: Blackstairs Mountains SAC 000770. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

# NPWS Designated Sites

## Legend

-  Site Location
-  2km Buffer
-  15km Buffer
-  SAC
-  SPA



Scale: 1:220,000

Spatial Reference  
Name: IRENET95 Irish Transverse Mercator  
PCS: IRENET95 Irish Transverse Mercator  
GCS: GCS IRENET95  
Datum: IRENET95  
Projection: Transverse Mercator

Earthstar Geographics, Esri UK, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, Foursquare, METI/NASA, USGS

Project: Bagenalstown - Long Range Road
Project ID: C1051
Client: Carlow County Council

Figure 4.1: European Sites (Source: OCSC, 2024)

# Flow Network and NPWS Designated Sites

## Legend

-  Site Location
-  2km Buffer
-  15km Buffer
-  SAC
-  SPA
-  Flow Network
-  Flow Direction



0 0.5 1 Kilometers

Scale: 1:20,000

Spatial Reference  
Name: IREN95 Irish Transverse Mercator  
PCS: IREN95 Irish Transverse Mercator  
GCS: GCS IREN95  
Datum: IREN95  
Projection: Transverse Mercator

Project: Bagenalstown - Long Range Road

Project ID: C1051

Client: Carlow County Council

Figure 4.2: European Sites and EPA Rivers near the Study Area (Source: OCSC, 2024)

**Table 4.4: European Sites Within ZOI of the Proposed Works**

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors	Site Code
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	0.062 N	<p>1130 Estuaries</p> <p>1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</p> <p>1170 Reefs</p> <p>1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand</p> <p>1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>)</p> <p>1410 Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</p> <p>3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculon fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation</p> <p>4030 European dry heaths</p> <p>6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and the montane to alpine levels</p> <p>7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>)*</p> <p>91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles</p> <p>91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)*</p> <p>1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (<i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i>)</p> <p>1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>)</p> <p>1092 White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>)</p> <p>1095 Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)</p> <p>1096 Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>)</p> <p>1099 River Lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)</p> <p>1103 Twait Shad (<i>Alosa fallax fallax</i>)</p> <p>1106 Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)</p> <p>1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</p>	<p>This site consists of the freshwater stretches of the Barrow and Nore River catchments as far upstream as the Slieve Bloom Mountains, and it also includes the tidal elements and estuary as far downstream as Creadun Head in Waterford. The site passes through eight counties – Offaly, Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Wexford and Waterford. Major towns along the edge of the site include Mountmellick, Portarlinton, Monasterevin, Stradbally, Athy, Carlow, Leighlinbridge, Graiguenamanagh, New Ross, Inistioge, Thomastown, Callan, Bennettsbridge, Kilkenny, and Durrow. The larger of the many tributaries include the Lerr, Fushoge, Mountain, Aughavaud, Owenass, Boherbaun, and Stradbally Rivers of the Barrow and the Delour, Dinin, Erkina, Owveg, Munster, Arrigle, and King's Rivers on the Nore.</p> <p>Both rivers rise in the Old Red Sandstone of the Slieve Bloom Mountains before passing through a band of Carboniferous shales and sandstones. The Nore, for a large part of its course, traverses limestone plains and then Old Red Sandstone for a short stretch below Thomastown. Before joining the Barrow it runs over intrusive rocks poor in silica. The upper reaches of the Barrow also run through limestone. The middle reaches and many of the eastern tributaries, sourced in the Blackstairs Mountains, run through Leinster Granite. The southern end, like the Nore runs over intrusive rocks poor in silica. Waterford Harbour is a deep valley excavated by glacial floodwaters when the sea level was lower than today. The coast shelves quite rapidly along much of the shore.</p> <p>Overall, the site is of considerable conservation significance for the occurrence of good examples of habitats and of populations of plant and animal species that are listed on Annexes I and II of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Furthermore, it is of high conservation value for the populations of bird species that use it. The occurrence of several Red Data Book plant species including three rare plants in the salt meadows and the population of the hard water form of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, which is limited to a 10 km stretch of the Nore, add further interest to this site.</p>



Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors	Site Code
			1421 Killarney Fern ( <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i> ) 1990 Nore Pearl Mussel ( <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i> )	
000770	Blackstairs Mountains SAC	11.9 SE	4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> 4030 European dry heaths	<p>The Blackstairs Mountains are located along the border of the Counties Wexford and Carlow, forming a mountain chain that runs in a north-east/south-west direction for approximately 22 km, and includes six peaks over 520 m. The range has a core of granite, and on the Carlow side, erosion has cut deeply into the dome exposing successive layers of granite, giving a steeply stepped slope.</p> <p>The site is important for extensive areas of dry heath. The higher, steeper slopes are covered with a dense, tall carpet dominated by Heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>) and Bilberry (<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>), with small amounts of Crowberry (<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>), Bell Heather (<i>Erica cinerea</i>) and Cross-leaved Heath (<i>E. tetralix</i>). Occasionally Common Bent (<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>) and Mat-grass (<i>Nardus stricta</i>) are also found. Abundant moss cover is present, particularly in those areas which have escaped burning – species include <i>Racomitrium lanuginosum</i>, <i>Hypnum cupressiforme</i>, <i>Polytrichum commune</i>, <i>Hylocomnium splendens</i> and <i>Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus</i>. Stiff Sedge (<i>Carex bigelowii</i>) occurs on the stony ground on the west side of the range</p> <p>The Blackstairs Mountains SAC is the only example of moorland above 300 m in Counties Wexford and Carlow. It includes good examples of dry heath, a habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. The plant and animal communities are typical of upland habitats, and the growth of Heather is particularly profuse, rivalling some of the larger areas of Heather cover in Co. Wicklow. The presence of rare and scarce species adds significantly to the conservation value of the site.</p>

## 5 ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

### 5.1 EXCLUSION FROM APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

As set out in the provisions of the Habitats Directive, plans or projects that are directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site do not require AA. For this exception to apply, management is required to be interpreted narrowly as nature conservation management in the sense of Article 6(1) of the Habitats Directive. This refers to specific measures to address the ecological requirements of annexed habitats and species (and their habitats) present on a site(s). The relationship should be shown to be direct and not a by-product of the plan, even if this might result in positive or beneficial effects for a site(s).

In this case, however, the proposed Carlow Active Travel Scheme SRTS is neither necessary for, nor directly connected with the management of a European Site. As such, the development cannot be excluded from AA.

### 5.2 ELEMENTS OF WORK WITH POTENTIAL TO GIVE RISE TO EFFECTS

The construction phase of the proposed works has the potential to introduce effects such as disturbance due to noise and vibrations, surface water run-off, and sedimentation. These effects are examined in detail in relation to the sensitive receptors of each of the European sites identified with regard to the conservation objectives and the potential pathways for effects.

### 5.3 IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS AND SCREENING OF SITES

This section documents the final stage of the screening process. It uses the information collected on the sensitivity of each European Site and describes any impact likely to have significant effects on any European Site, in view of the site's conservation objectives, resulting from the proposed works. This assessment assumes the absence of any controls, conditions, or mitigation measures. In determining the potential for effects, a number of factors have been considered including the sensitivity and reported threats to the European Site and the individual elements of the proposed works and the potential effect they may cause to the site.

Sites are screened out based on one or a combination of the following criteria:

- Where it can be shown that there are no significant pathways such as hydrological links between activities of the proposed works and the site to be screened;
- Where the site is located at such a distance from proposed works that effects are not foreseen; and/ or
- Where it is that known threats or vulnerabilities at a site cannot be linked to potential impacts that may arise from the proposed works.

## 5.4 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS

Assessment is the process of evaluating the importance or significance of project/plan effects (whether negative or positive). The following parameters are described when characterising impacts (following guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), the EPA, and Transport Infrastructure Ireland/ National Roads Authority):

- **Direct and Indirect Impacts** – An impact can be caused either as a direct or as an indirect consequence of proposed development.
- **Magnitude** - Magnitude refers to size, amount, intensity, and volume. It should be quantified if possible and expressed in absolute or relative terms (e.g., the amount of habitat lost, percentage change to habitat area, percentage decline in a species population). Magnitude measures the size of an impact which is described as high, medium, low, very low, or negligible.
- **Extent** - The extent is the spatial or geographical area over which the impact/effect may occur under a suitably representative range of conditions (e.g. noise transmission underwater).
- **Duration** - The time for which the effect is expected to last prior to recovery or replacement of the resource or feature:
  - Temporary: the effects would take up to 1 year to be mitigated;
  - Short Term: the effects would take 1-7 years to be mitigated;
  - Medium Term: the effects would take 7-15 years to be mitigated;
  - Long Term: the effects would take 15-60 years to be mitigated; and
  - Permanent: the effects would take 60+ years to be mitigated.
- **Likelihood** – The probability of an impact/effect occurring taking into account all available information:
  - Certain/Near Certain: >95% chance of occurring as predicted;
  - Probable: 50-95% chance as occurring as predicted;
  - Unlikely: 5-50% chance as occurring as predicted; and
  - Extremely Unlikely: <5% chance as occurring as predicted.

The document '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, European Commission Environment DG, 2001' outlines the types of effects that may impact European sites. These include effects from the following activities:

- Land take
- Resource requirements (drinking water abstraction, etc.)
- Emissions (disposal to land, water, or air)
- Excavation requirements
- Transportation requirements
- Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning

In addition, the guidance outlines the following likely changes that may occur at a designated site which may result in significant effects on any European Site and its function, in view of its conservation objectives:

- Reduction of habitat area
- Disturbance to key species
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Reduction in species density
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality, etc.)
- Climate change

The elements detailed above were considered with reference to each of the European sites identified within the Zol of the site (Table 4.4).

#### **5.4.1 LAND TAKE/HABITAT LOSS**

The nearest European site, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC is located 0.62km north. As there is no spatial overlap between the site and any European site, there is no anticipated impact on land take or habitat loss posed to European sites from the proposed works.

#### **5.4.2 RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS**

There are no resource requirements (i.e. mineral/drinking water abstractions, etc.) for the proposed Carlow Active Travel Scheme SRTS. Therefore, there will be no interactions with resources necessary for the maintenance of the ecological integrity of any European sites.

#### **5.4.3 DURATION OF WORKS**

The construction phase of the proposed works is anticipated to be short-term. Given the relatively small scale of the works, the duration of the works is extremely unlikely to impact nearby European sites.

#### **5.4.4 EMISSIONS (DISPOSAL TO LAND, WATER OR AIR)**

##### Construction Phase:

Potential water quality impacts during the construction phase include increased siltation and turbidity to surface runoff during the construction of the Carlow Active Travel Scheme SRTS as well as pollution from surface runoff due to accidental spillages of oils or fuels from machinery, concrete/cement, paint, etc. which may create

a potential risk to water quality in the River Barrow (located 67m north of the site), which is a part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. There exists an indirect hydrological connection between the site and the River Barrow and, therefore, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. Currently, the stormwater at Long Range Road runs through a combined system to the Bagenalstown Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) (780m downstream of the site along the drainage network). Following treatment, the water is discharged into the River Barrow (i.e. the River Barrow and Nore SAC). Despite the proximity of the nearest waterway and the SAC, due to the small scale and short duration of the proposed project and the fact that surface water from the site is treated prior to entering the SAC, impacts to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC are predicted to be short-term, non-significant, and negligible.

Construction phase elements of the plan may give rise to increased temporary side effects such as noise or dust. There are no Natura 2000 sites within 50m of the site boundary, which is the threshold distance for ecological sensitivity, therefore, there are no significant construction phase air quality impacts predicted for ecological sites from the construction works. Despite the distance to the nearest designated site, these noise or dust impacts are predicted to be unlikely and imperceptible due to the small scale and short duration of the project.

#### Operational Phase:

Drainage upgrades associated with the proposed works will be designed in accordance with all best practice requirements and the Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS). There exists an indirect hydrological connection between the site and the River Barrow and, therefore, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, as discussed above. During the operational phase, existing connections will be retained, existing gullies will be repositioned, and new gullies will be added. Rain gardens with overflow gullies will be installed, which will connect to the existing drainage. The magnitude of discharge is not likely to contribute to additional surface water discharge above existing volumes, given that the road is already an existing feature and the stormwater will enter the Bagenalstown WWTP before entering the SAC. Therefore, it is considered that impacts on the River Barrow and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC during the operational phase from the site will be extremely unlikely and negligible, despite the indirect hydrological connection (due to the surface water being treated in the WWTP prior to entering the SAC).

### **5.4.5 EXCAVATION REQUIREMENTS/EROSION/SEDIMENTATION**

The proposed development does not require significant excavation works. Therefore, given the scale of the development and distance to European sites, the impacts arising from these works are considered to be temporary, extremely unlikely, and not significant.

#### 5.4.6 TRANSPORTATION REQUIREMENTS

There will be a small, short-term increase in construction traffic during the construction phase. However, the effects of this traffic increase are predicted to be imperceptible with regard to European sites due to the small scale and short duration of the construction works.

#### 5.4.7 DURATION OF CONSTRUCTION, OPERATION, DECOMMISSIONING

The construction phase of the proposed project is short-term and will have no significant effects on European sites given the small scale of the works. The Carlow Active Travel Scheme SRTS will be a permanent feature with no decommissioning phase and is predicted to have no significant effects on European sites due to the nature of its use.

#### 5.4.8 HABITAT REDUCTION

The nearest European site or qualifying habitat feature is located 0.062km directly north of the site. As such, there will be no reduction of the habitat of European sites resulting from the proposed development.

#### 5.4.9 SPECIES DISTURBANCE

The nearest European site is the River Barrow and River Nore SAC which is located 0.062km north of the proposed development. The nearest mapped QI within the SAC is the White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) [1092] located approximately 1.5km downstream of the site along the drainage network and the River Barrow and approximately 1.4km direct west-southwest of the site. However, species disturbance due to noise, vibrations, and lighting are predicted to be unlikely and not significant in the absence of mitigation measures. Disturbance due to water quality is predicted to be negligible and not significant due to the treatment of stormwater from the site at the Bagenalstown WWTP before discharge to the SAC where the QI, the White-clawed Crayfish, are located approximately 670m downstream.

#### 5.4.10 HABITAT OR SPECIES FRAGMENTATION

Despite the proximity of the nearest European site (River Barrow and River Nore SAC 0.062km north), due to the scale and duration of the construction phase, the construction and operation phases of the proposed project are considered to have no potential significant effects on any European site with regard to habitat or species fragmentation.

#### 5.4.11 CHANGES IN KEY INDICATORS OF CONSERVATION VALUE

Although an indirect hydrological connection exists between the site River Barrow and River Nore SAC, changes in key indicators of conservation value for White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) on this European site resulting from the proposed site works are predicted to be unlikely and imperceptible due to the distance from the site approximately 1.5km downstream (along the drainage network and the River Barrow) of the site and approximately 1.4km direct west-southwest of the site. Given the scale and duration of the proposed works, the long-term use of the proposed project, impacts to this and other key indicators of conservation value at this and other European sites arising from the proposed project is expected to be extremely unlikely and not significant.

#### 5.4.12 CLIMATE CHANGE

Due to the nature and scale of the proposed work, the effects of the proposed development on climate and Ireland's obligations under the Kyoto Protocol are predicted to be not significant.

## 6 POTENTIAL IN-COMBINATION EFFECTS

Grants of planning in the vicinity of the site were reviewed to identify works of a significant scale which may produce in-combination effects with the proposed works. The following planning grants were identified:

- **1936** – Permission for the construction of a single storey supermarket including an off-licence sales area (Gross Floor Area (GFA) of 2,268sqms; a coffee shop (GFA 210sqms); plaza and enhanced public realm and landscaping; and single point of vehicular access and egress, off and to the Royal Oak Road; an ESB sub-station building (GFA 23sqms); bin storage unit of (circa GFA 6sqms); the provision of car and cycle parking and two electric vehicle charging spaces; trolley bay (GFA 38sqms); boundary treatments, hard and soft landscaping, drainage and underground services and associated site development works as required. The development includes all signage. Royal Oak Road, Moneybeg, Bagenalstown. Decision date: 23/01/2020.
- **1975** – Permission for the demolition of an existing house and out-buildings. The construction of 7 houses consisting of 6 number semi-detached units with 4 beds (130sqms each) and one detached unit with 4 beds (157sqms). The development would take vehicular access from Hurley's Lane. The development includes all car parking, boundary treatments, hard and soft landscaping, drainage and underground services and associated site development works as required. West House, Royal Oak Road & Hurley's Lane, Moneybeg Bagenalstown. Decision date: 24/01/2020.
- **18342** – Permission to the demolition of existing habitable dwelling & outbuildings and the construction of 10 number one and a half storey dwellings, comprising of 2 blocks of 3 number terraced dwellings and one block of 4 number terraced dwellings, the connection to local watermain, public foul and stormwater sewers, new splayed entrance and all associated site works. Royal Oak Road , Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow. Decision date: 04/06/2019.
- **22313** – Permission to the construction of a two-storey dwelling, connections to mains sewerage & water services, new splayed entrance and all associated development works. Royal Oak Road , Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow. Grant Date: 19/12/2022
- **21203** – Permission for development which will consist of an upgrade to the existing Bagenalstown Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP) to facilitate an increased treatment capacity. The proposed development will include (1) minor works to the existing inlet works, sludge dewatering building, Picket Fence Thickener, and administration building & control room; (2) change of use to 1 no. clarifier tank to a storm holding tank and minor works to same, as well as minor works to the existing storm holding tank and minor works to same, as well as minor works to the existing storm holding tank; (3) 1 no. aerobic reactor and 4 no. air blowers; (4) 1 no. flow diversion chamber and minor works to an existing flow diversion chamber; (5) 1 no. ferric sulphate storage tank with integrated bund and 2 no. chemical dosing pumps; (6) 1 no. MLSS distribution chamber (7) 1 no. RAS/WAS Pumping Station and 2 No. (each) RAS/WAS Pumping Station and 2 No. (each) RAS/WAS pumps (8) 2 no. final clarifier tanks; (9) 1 no. final effluent chamber (10) treated effluent flow meter & bypass (11) standby generator and (12) all ancillary works including pipework, pumps, landscaping and all associated site development and site



excavation works above and below ground. A Natura Impact Statement will be submitted to the Planning Authority with the application. Grant Date:10/12/2021

- **22282** – Permission to (1) the phased demolition of existing school buildings, including the phased decommissioning and removal of existing temporary school accommodation units, (2) the phased construction of a new 1- and 2-storey school building, to cater for a total of 750 no. pupils, with a total gross internal floor area of 7,752m<sup>2</sup>, incorporating 27no. general classrooms and associated support teaching and tech spaces, a special needs unit, a general purpose/dining hall, a library, offices and meeting rooms, and other ancillary accommodation, and to include photovoltaic panels at roof level, (3) the construction of a new, separate sports hall building with a total gross internal floor area of 1097.9m<sup>2</sup>, incorporating a multi-use hall and associated changing and equipment storage spaces, a fitness suite, a meditation space, general storage spaces, and other ancillary accommodation, (4) the provision of a new grassed sports playing pitch in the western part of the site, 5no. hard surface ball courts to the north of the new school and sports hall buildings, outdoor seating and breakout areas, a special needs unit garden, a tech yard, an external material and bin store (133m<sup>2</sup>), a new substation and switch room (24.5m<sup>2</sup>), Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) and Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) compounds, hard and soft landscaping with footpaths, public lighting, and all associated boundary treatments, (5) modifications to the existing site entrance arrangements to include a minor realignment of the existing vehicular and pedestrian entrance from the south, and the provision of a new, gated pedestrian access from Eastwood to the north, (6) parking and access arrangements to include modifications to the bus set down areas and to the internal road layout, and parking provision for 87no. cars, inclusive of 5no. disabled spaces and 5no. electric vehicle charge points, 125no. sheltered bicycle stands providing 250no. sheltered bike parking spaces, and 10no. uncovered bicycle stands providing 20no. short stay visitor bike parking spaces, (7) new foul and surface water drainage system works incorporating SUDS measures, attenuation, rainwater harvesting, and all other associated site and development works. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of the proposed development. Royal Oak Road, Muine Bheag, Co. Carlow. Decision date: 25/05/2023.

Other granted planning permissions in the vicinity of the site pertain primarily to small-scale constructions, change of use, or retention of works. There were no smaller scale planning grants adjacent to the proposed area. Therefore, the smaller scale grants of planning and existing businesses and amenities in the vicinity of the site are unlikely to produce significant in-combination effects with the proposed development.

Larger planning grants in the vicinity of the site and listed above have been assessed to determine the potential for cumulative effects with the proposed project. In relation to Planning Ref. 21203, a NIS that was carried out by WS Atkins Ireland Limited, concluded that 'Following a comprehensive evaluation of the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts on the qualifying interests and conservation objectives for the SAC and the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, it has been concluded by the authors of this report that there will be no residual impacts and the proposed project will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other European site'.

In relation to planning Ref 22282, a NIS was carried out by Maurice O'Connor Enviroco Ltd, this report concluded that: 'Arising from this assessment mitigation has been proposed. It is therefore considered that due to the proposed design and proposed mitigation measures, there will be no significant risk to water quality and the protected habitats and species of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC during the construction phase of their proposed development. With the implementation of these measures, no adverse effects to the integrity of the SAC will occur.'

Based on a review of the existing land uses and the granted plans or projects near the site, it is considered that in-combination effects with other existing and proposed developments in proximity to the application area would be unlikely, neutral, not significant, and localised. Although two larger planning grants were identified within and in the vicinity of the site, due to the small scale of the proposed development and the distance to the nearest SAC, in-combination effects with these are considered to be unlikely and not significant.

Threat pressures for Natura sites within the ZOI and the likelihood of potential significant effect on these sites from the proposed project, alone or in combination with other projects, are detailed in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: Screening assessment of the potential effects arising from the proposed works**

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors	Threat Pressures	Potential Significant Effects	Potential In-Combination Effects
002162	River Barrow and River Nore SAC	0.062 N	1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1170 Reefs 1310 <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i> ) 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows ( <i>Juncetalia maritimi</i> ) 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculon fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation 4030 European dry heaths 6430 Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels 7220 Petrifying springs with tufa formation ( <i>Cratoneurion</i> )* 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> ( <i>Alno-Padion</i> , <i>Alnion incanae</i> , <i>Salicion albae</i> )* 1016 Desmoulin's Whorl Snail ( <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> ) 1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel ( <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> ) 1092 White-clawed Crayfish ( <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> ) 1095 Sea Lamprey ( <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> ) 1096 Brook Lamprey ( <i>Lampetra planeri</i> ) 1099 River Lamprey ( <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> ) 1103 Twaite Shad ( <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> ) 1106 Salmon ( <i>Salmo salar</i> ) 1355 Otter ( <i>Lutra lutra</i> ) 1421 Killarney Fern ( <i>Trichomanes speciosum</i> ) 1990 Nore Pearl Mussel ( <i>Margaritifera durrovensis</i> )	Threats to the site include: (A02.01) Agricultural intensification (J02.12.02) Dykes and flooding defense in inland water systems (K01.01) Erosion (J02.05.02) Modifying structures of inland water courses (H01) Pollution to surface waters (limnic, terrestrial, marine & brackish) (K01) Changes in abiotic conditions (J02.02.01) Dredging/ removal of limnic sediments (F02) Fishing and harvesting aquatic resources (B02) Forest and Plantation management & use (B07) Forestry activities not referred to above (J02) Human induced changes in hydraulic conditions (A04.01.01) Intensive cattle grazing (I01) Invasive non-native species (C01.03) Peat extraction (J03.02.01) Reduction in migration/ migration barriers (B05) Use of fertilizers (forestry) (J02.06) Water abstractions from surface waters (E02) Industrial or commercial areas (F01.01) Intensive fish farming, intensification (F02.03) Leisure fishing (F02.01.02) Netting (D03.01) Port areas (A10.01) Removal of hedges and copses or scrub (C01.01.01) Sand and gravel quarries  There is no spatial overlap between the site and the protected area. A hydrological link exists via the local storm sewer network and the outfall of the wastewater treatment plant. Due to the downstream distance from the site, the nature of the proposed works, and the treatment of runoff in the treatment plant, this hydrological link is unlikely to pose a significant risk to the SAC.	Unlikely	Likely

				Based on the scale and nature of the works, construction phase effects such as dust will be localised and unlikely to cause an impact on the SAC.		
000770	Blackstairs Mountains SAC	11.9 SE	4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> 4030 European dry heaths	<p>Threats to the site include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(J01.01) Burning down</li> <li>(B02) Forest and Plantation management &amp; use</li> <li>(A04.02.02) Intensive sheep grazing</li> <li>(G01.03.02) Off-road motorized driving</li> <li>(E03) Discharges</li> <li>(K01.01) Erosion</li> <li>(K02.01) Species composition change (succession)</li> <li>(G01.02) Walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles</li> </ul> <p>There is no spatial overlap and no hydrological connection to this SAC. Due to the distance from the site, direct and indirect impacts do not pose a significant risk to the SAC.</p> <p>Based on the scale and nature of the works, construction phase effects such as dust will be localised and unlikely to cause an impact on the SAC.</p>	Unlikely	Unlikely

## 7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 SUMMARY

The Habitats Directive provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance and establishes the requirement for an AA. This AA screening is based on best scientific knowledge and has utilised ecological and hydrological expertise. In addition, a detailed online review of published scientific literature and 'grey' literature was conducted.

This AA has been prepared for the proposed Carlow Active Travel Scheme SRTS Scheme outside Queen of the Universe National School, Long Range Road, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow. There is no spatial overlap between the site and the closest Natura 2000 Sites. The nearest European designated site is the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which is located 0.062km north. The only impact pathway identified within the ZOI for the proposed project is an indirect hydrological link between the site and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC located approximately 780m downstream of the site via the drainage network and the waste water treatment plant. Due to the small scale and short duration of the proposed construction works, the nature of the site operations, and the treatment of stormwater runoff at the treatment plant prior to discharge to the SAC, the impact on European sites within the ZOI is predicted to be unlikely and not significant.

No changes are predicted to occur at any designated sites which may result in effects on the conservation objectives of those sites with regard to the following:

- Reduction in habitat area
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Climate change
- Disturbance to key species
- Reduction in species density
- Changes in key indicators of conservation value

### 7.2 CONCLUSION

This stage 1 screening for AA of the proposed Active Travel Scheme SRTS at Long Range Road, Bagenalstown as part of the Carlow Active Travel Scheme has considered potential effects which may arise during the construction and operational phases as a result of the implementation of the project.

There are no Natura 2000 sites located either within or directly adjacent to the site. The study area has an indirect hydrological link to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC via the existing drainage network and the wastewater treatment plant (780m downstream). Despite the proximity to the nearest designated site (the River

Barrow and River Nore SAC 0.062km north), due to the nature of the development, its scale, the treatment of surface water runoff from the site at the wastewater treatment plant, and the localised and temporary nature of the construction effects identified as potential sources, it is concluded that the proposed project is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects on any designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated. Consequently, a Stage Two Appropriate Assessment is not required for the project.

## 8 VERIFICATION

This report was compiled by Sinéad Doran, BSc, AMIEnvSc, Environment Consultant; reviewed by Luis lemma, BSc, MSc, Ph. D, CEcol, MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist; and approved by Eleanor Burke, BSc, MSc, DAS, MIEnvSc, CSci, and OCSC Director (Environmental).



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