Screening for Appropriate Assessment – Stage 1

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Planning Reference:	N/A
Date:	March 2022

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Document Control

Document	Information to inform a Screening for Appropriate Assessment for: The Diamond, Donegal Town
Client	Donegal County Council
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Date	March 2022

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1 Introduction

This Screening Report has been prepared by Ciara McMenamin of Feaver Planning Ltd to determine the potential impacts, if any, of the proposed development of The Diamond in Donegal Town.

This document is an Appropriate Assessment – Stage 1 Screening Report and is in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC). This report provides information that is required to determine whether the proposed development is expected to have a significant impact on the identified European Sites of importance in the context of their conservation objectives and specifically on the habitats and species for which they have been designated.

1.1 Requirements for Report

1.1.1 Requirement for Appropriate Assessment Screening

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report provides the information that is necessary to fulfil the requirements of Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive 1992 and Regulation 42 of the (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 in determining the potential impacts on European Sites of the proposal.

The European Union (EU) introduced the Birds Directive in 1979 and the Habitats Directive in 1992 to tackle the long-term deterioration of European biodiversity that were associated with habitat destruction and degradation, the mistreatment of species, and the unsustainable exploitation of resources. The primary aim of both Directives is to maintain and restore the favourable conservation status of natural habitats and species across Europe. In turn, encouraging the sustainable development and preservation of Europe's biodiversity.

The aim of the EU Habitats Directive (92/443/EEC) is to promote the maintenance of biodiversity, taking account of economic, social, cultural, and regional requirements. The Directive recognises that in the European territory of the Member States, natural habitats are continuing to deteriorate, and an increasing number of wild species are extremely vulnerable. To ensure the restoration or maintenance of natural habitats and species of community interest at a favourable conservation status, Member States must designate Special Areas of Conservation to create a coherent European ecological network.

Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive states that:

"*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives*".

1.1.1.1 Stages of the Habitat Directive Assessment

There are four stages are involved in an Appropriate Assessment, these include Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment, Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment, Stage 3: Alternative Solutions and Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI).

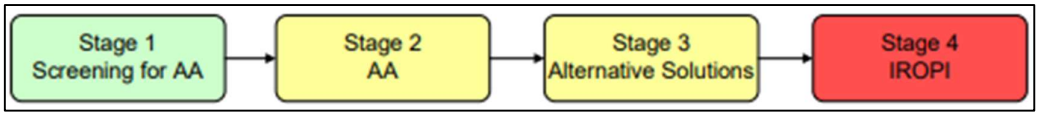

Figure 1: Stages of Appropriate Assessment

Screening is a process that is conducted to address and record whether a plan or project, either on its own 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 identified are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain then the process must proceed to Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.

1.2 Requirement for a Natura Impact Statement

An Appropriate Assessment assesses whether a project either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, may adversely affect the integrity of any European Sites, by using scientific knowledge, and by applying the precautionary principle. If, after the screening process is completed and a potential significant effect is predicted or cannot be ruled out, under Regulation 42(6) of the 2011 Habitats Regulations, subsequent stages of Appropriate Assessment should be undertaken. The subsequent process is a focused and detailed impact assessment with a Natura Impact Assessment of the implications of the plan or project.

This Screening Report provides an assessment of the proposal, considering potential impacts on Qualifying Interests within European Sites and the integrity of European Sites.

1.3 Guidance Documents

The following are the main sources of information used in this report:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, 2010
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10
- The European Communities (2002) 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
- Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), OPR Practice Note PN01, Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management (March 2021)
- European Community Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) – The Habitats Directive
- European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- Environmental Protections Agency (EPA) Maps

- EPA Catchments
- National Parks and Wildlife Services data (including GIS datafiles)
- National Biodiversity Data Centre

1.4 Statement of Authority

This report was prepared by Ciara McMenamin, an Environmental Scientist with Feaver Planning Ltd. Ciara has completed an honours B.Sc. in Environmental Science and also holds a degree in Environmental Protection from the Institute of Technology, Sligo. Ciara is currently working remotely as a Consultant Planner on various, significant environmental projects for Waikato District Council in New Zealand. She is also peer reviewing planning application reports for multiple operations including coastal, terrestrial, and freshwater environmental matters for a large District Council in New Zealand.

Lance Feaver has approved this report, Lance is the Director of Feaver Planning Ltd. He is an experienced planner, with over 15 years of experience in planning and engineering geology.

Ciara McMenamin – Qualifications
B. Sc. (Hons) Environmental Science, Institute of Technology, Sligo, 2020.
B. Sc. Environmental Protection, Institute of Technology, Sligo, 2019.

1.5 Project Description

1.5.1 Site Description

Donegal Town is a bustling urban town in the South of County Donegal and is located on the North-West coast of Ireland. It is situated at the mouth of the River Eske in Donegal Bay and is surrounded by the Blue Stack Mountains. The main focal point of the town is The Diamond. It is surrounded by a range of shops, bars, and restaurants, and acts as a natural meeting point and socialising area for people of all ages.

Up until 1999 there were three roads around The Diamond which were the primary traffic access roads for all traffic entering and leaving the town. In 1999, the Donegal Town bypass was constructed which created a new and greatly improved vehicle traffic route and therefore had a fundamental impact on the road traffic around The Diamond. This was a fundamental change and has altered how The Diamond can be viewed and used as a primarily cultural recreational and tourism facility.

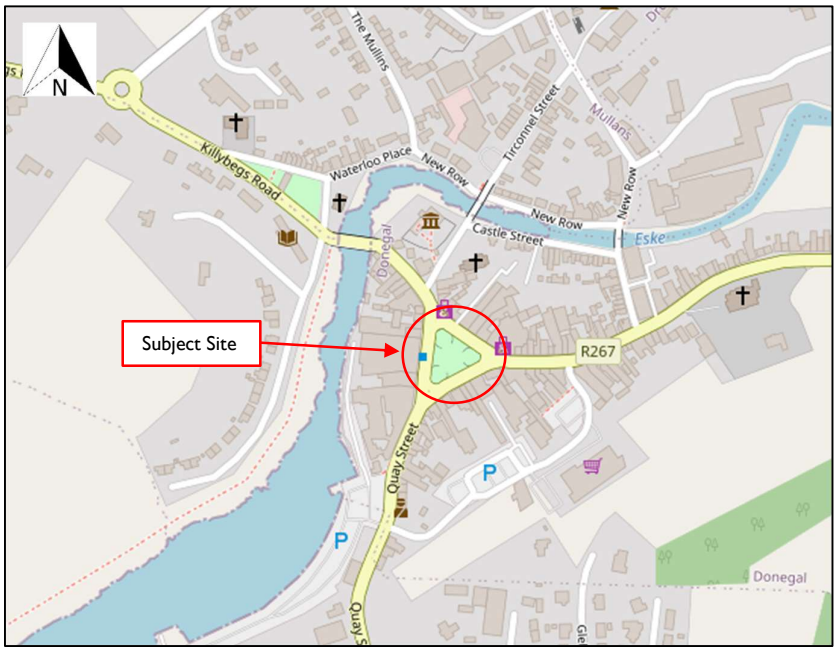

Figure 2: Subject Site

1.5.2 Proposal

The development of The Diamond is the initial stage of the Donegal Town Masterplan. The Masterplan was initially a study to determine the needs of both The Diamond and The Pier and how these areas might serve the people of Donegal and visitors to the Town in a more active and meaningful way.

Donegal County Council has received funding as part of the Outdoor Public Space Scheme (OPSS). The scheme should encourage projects which are flexible, diverse in scale, innovative, facilitate year-
round use and are future proofed from a health and safety perspective. The Diamond in Donegal Town is the selected area for the OPSS of 2021.

This proposal is for alteration works within the inner areas of The Diamond, Donegal Town. These proposed works include:

- Retain existing paving's around the perimeter of the circles
- Replace the existing 11 trees on the Diamond with pleached trees around the inner circles.
- Repave the inner surface of The Diamond with sandstone paving and resin bound Balylusk gravel.
- Retain all existing streetlights
- Provide additional seating utilising elements of play and fun.
- Provide a tensile structure cover on the Eastern most ring to allow for informal and formal gathering regardless of the weather

The proposal also involves the relocate of the existing trees within The Diamond and replacing these with pleached trees. The base of Foliage will be at 3m and will be enclosing the inner rings. This will add extra protection and privacy to the inner rings of The Diamond.

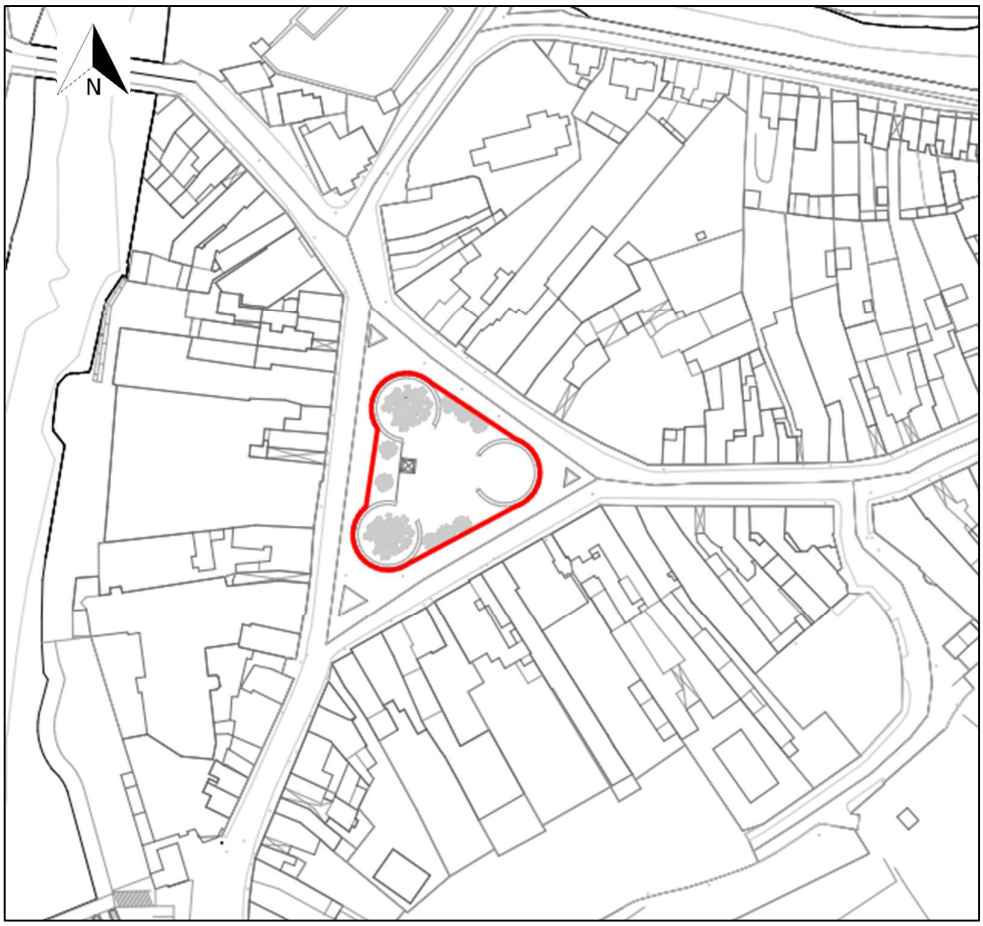

Figure 3: Subject Site

Figure 4: Foul and Stormwater Locations (left) and Mains Water Map (right)

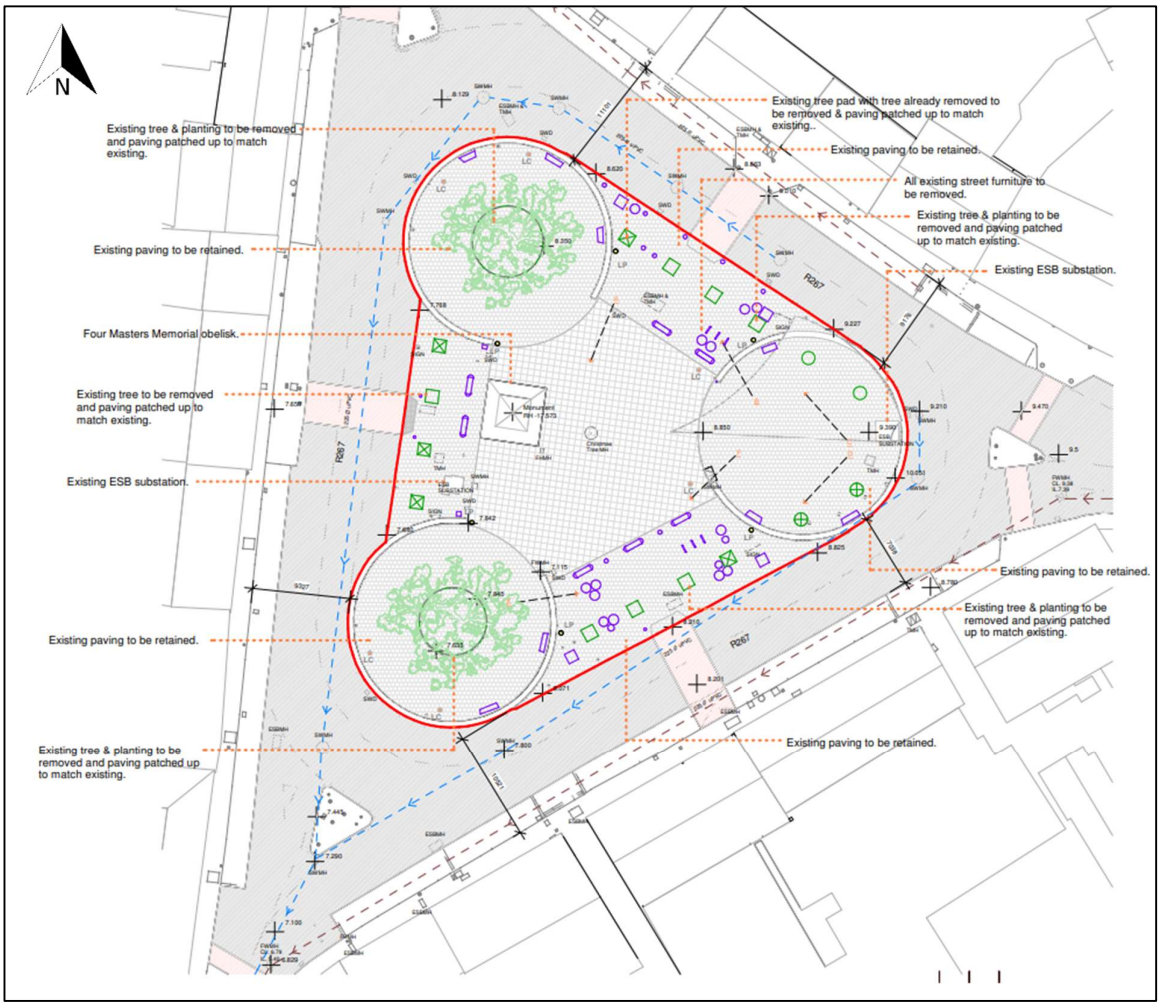

Figure 5: Existing Site Layout

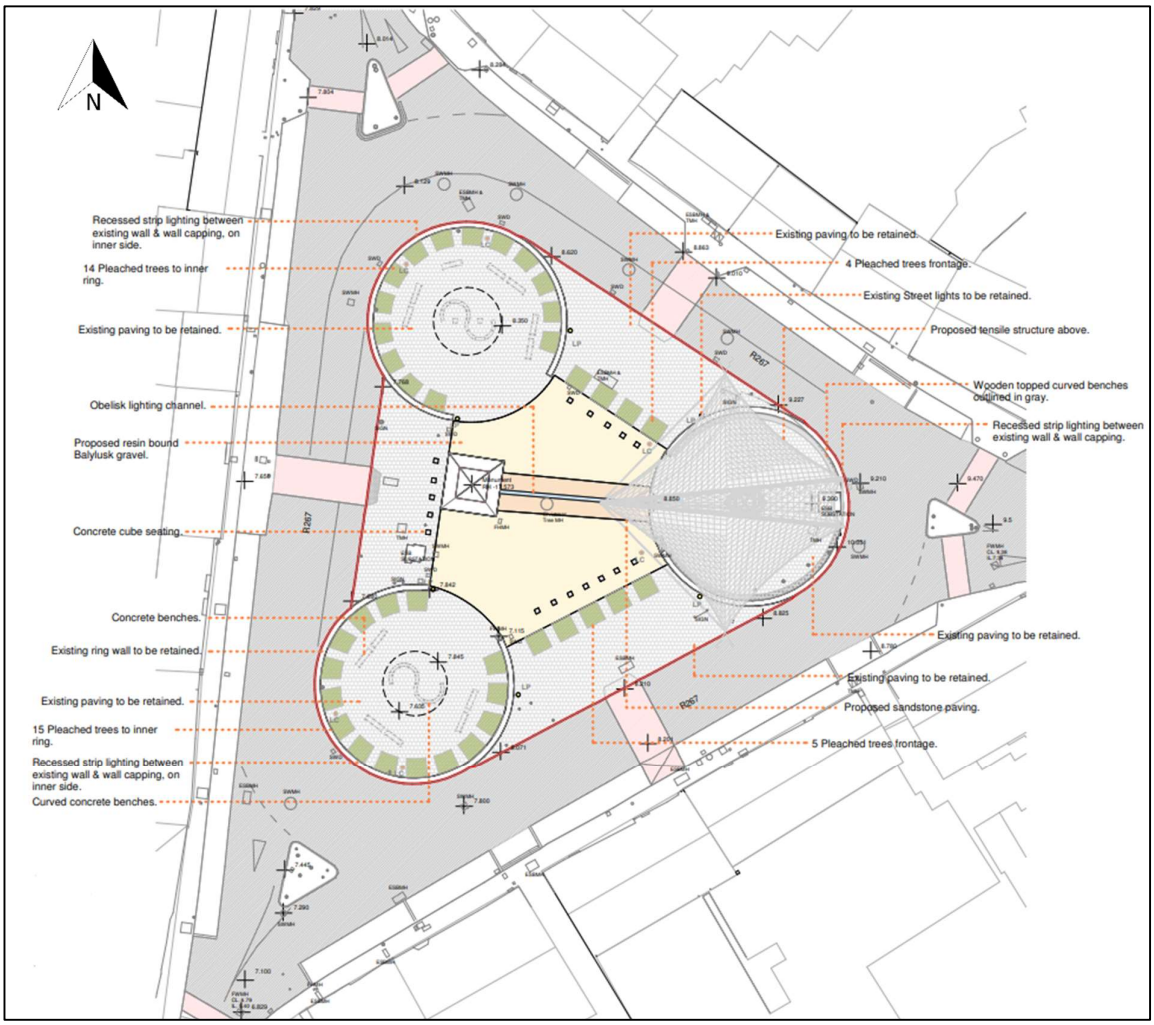

Figure 6: Proposed Site Layout

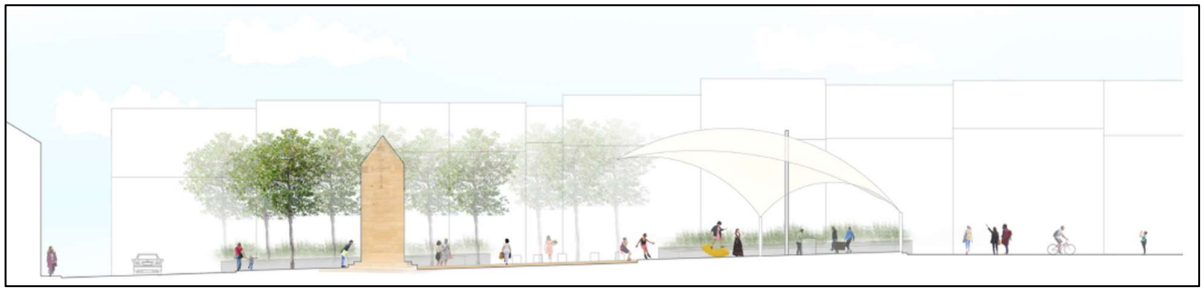
Figure 7: Elevation Plan

Figure 8: Conceptual Design for The Diamond

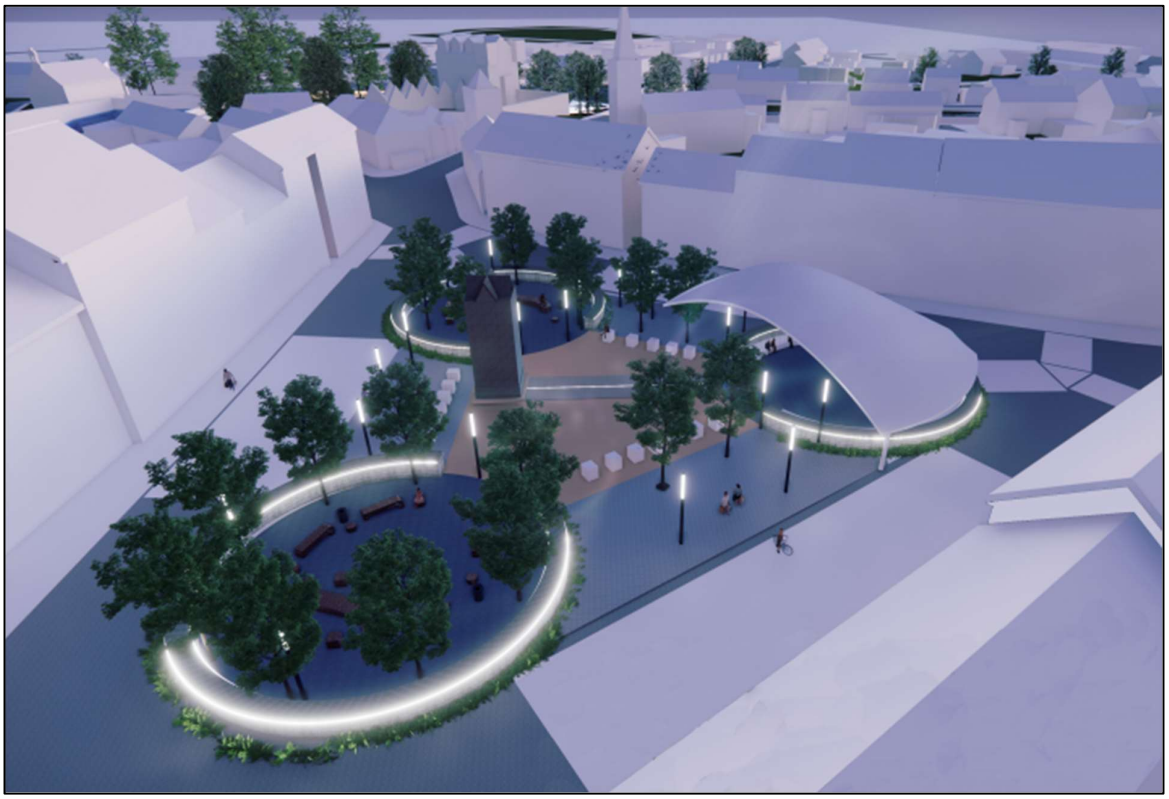

Figure 9: Conceptual Design for The Diamond

2 Approach and Methodology

2.1 Approach

The purpose of this Screening Report (Stage One) is to identify whether the proposed development for The Diamond, in Donegal Town will have a significant effect on the neighbouring Natura 2000 sites. The possible interactions between the proposed development and the integrity of the Natura 2000 sites will depend on:

a) The Qualifying Interests of the European Designated Sites and their sensitivity to this proposal.
b) The Conservation Status of the European Designated Sites that are located near the subject site.
c) The possible changes on the European Designated Sites as a result of the proposed development.

2.2 Methodology

The methodology used to complete this Natura Impact Statement was as follows:

a) Define the scope of the project
b) Determine the suitable conservation management of the Natura 2000 sites
c) Determine the Natura 2000 sites within Zone of Influence
d) Identify Natura 2000 sites that are expected to be impacted by the proposal
e) Determine whether the project will have any adverse impact on Natura 2000 sites
f) Determine the sensitivity of Natura 2000 sites and their current conservation status
g) Identify vulnerable Natura 2000 sites
h) Determine whether this proposal either on its own or in combination with other plans or projects will have the potential to affect Natura 2000 sites

3 The Project and Natura 2000 Base Line

The 'Zone of Influence' of a plan or project involves a 15km buffer area beyond the area covered by the plan or project. This is in line with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) Guidelines (2010) and ensures that all Natura 2000 sites that have the potential to be affected are included in the screening process.

The potential impacts on designated sites are dependent on the location, topography and environment at the development site, the nature of impacts arising, the sensitivity of receptors and the causal links, rather than simply the distance. In many cases the potential zone of influence is considerably less than 15km (for example noise and airborne pollution) while the potential zone of influence could be greater than 15km, for example if there is a significant and direct hydrological pathway.

All Natura sites occurring in the Zone of Influence of the proposed development works at The Diamond, Donegal Town Subject Site are listed in Table 1 below. As seen in Figure 10 below, it shows the areas included in a 15km buffer zone from the Subject Site.

3.1 Identification of the Natura 2000 sites

There is a total of 29 Natura 2000 sites located within the Zone of Influence of the proposed development, these Natura 2000 sites include SPA's, SAC's, NHA's and pNHA's. The European Sites that are considered to lie within the zone of influence of this proposal are:

- Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC [000133]
- Donegal Bay SPA [004151]
- Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC [000163]

Figure 10 depicts the Natura 2000 sites located within a 15km radius of the project location. The proposed project location borders Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC [Site Code: 000133], and Donegal Bay SPA [Site Code: 004151] and is located downstream of Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC [Site Code: 000163]. Given the spatial separation between the project location and the feature of interests in the remaining Natura 2000 sites, no impact pathways are considered to exist. The remaining Natura 2000 sites are therefore screened out and do not require any further assessments. Figure 11 shows the project location in relation to Natura 2000 sites.

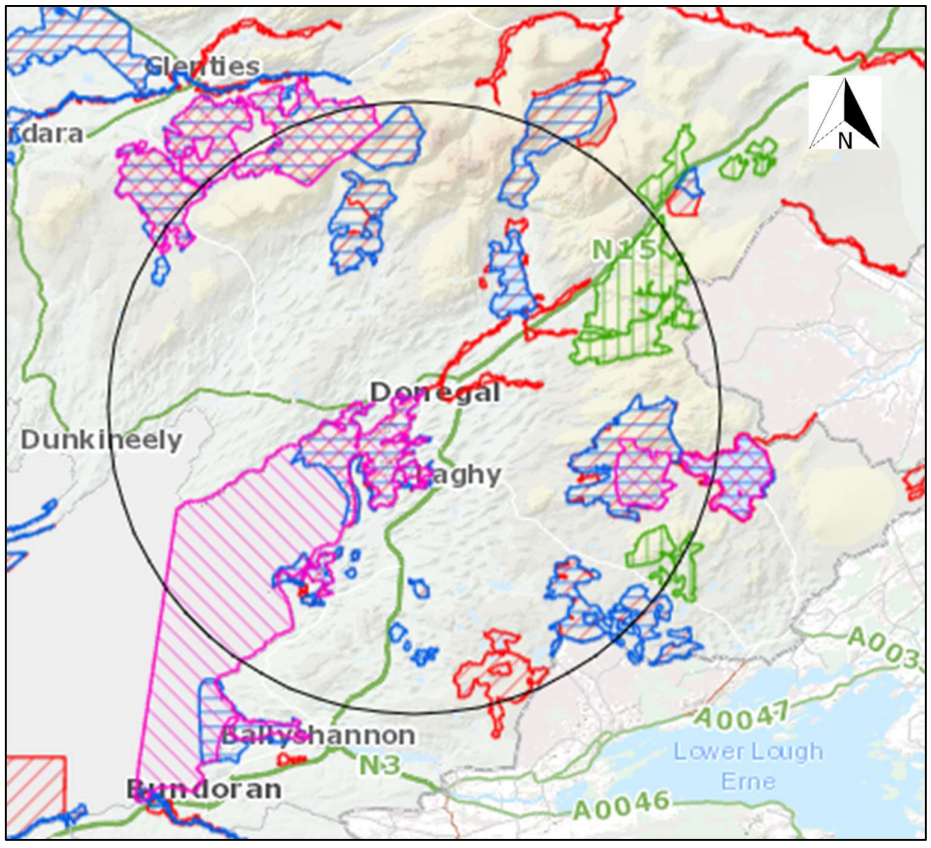

Figure 10: 15km Buffer Zone – Zone of Influence from the Subject Site

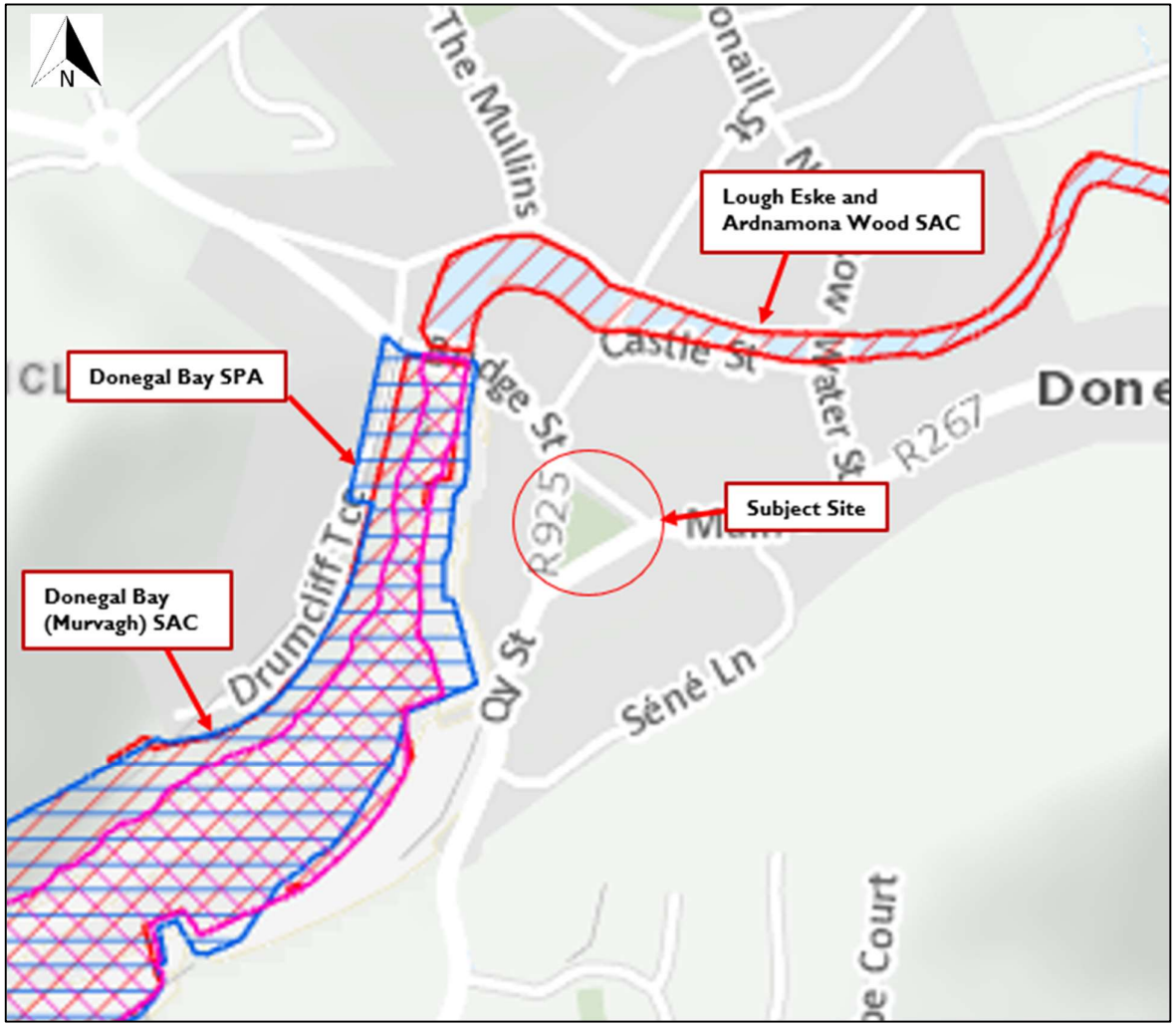

Figure 11: The Diamond and Natura 2000 Sites

Table 1: List of Natura 2000 Sites within a 15km buffer of the proposed development

Site Type	Site Name	Located within the proposed development boundary	Located within a 15km buffer radius	Distance to Natura 2000 site
pNHA	Donegal Bay (Murvagh)	No	Yes	c. 0.01km
SPA	Donegal Bay SPA	No	Yes	c. 0.01km
SAC	Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC	No	Yes	c. 0.01km
SAC	Lougheske and Ardnamona Wood SAC	No	Yes	c. 0.01km
pNHA	Lougheske and Ardnamona Wood	No	Yes	c. 0.01km
SAC	Meenaguse/Ardbane Bog SAC	No	Yes	c. 7.00km
pNHA	Meenaguse/Ardbane Bog	No	Yes	c. 7.00km
pNHA	Meenaguse Scragh	No	Yes	c. 9.00km
SAC	Meenaguse Scragh SAC	No	Yes	c. 9.00km
pNHA	Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve)	No	Yes	c. 11.00km
SAC	Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve) SAC	No	Yes	c. 11.00km
SPA	Lough Nillan Bog SPA	No	Yes	c. 11.00km
pNHA	Meenybraddan Bog	No	Yes	c. 14.00km
SAC	River Finn SAC	No	Yes	c. 10.00km
NHA	Cashelnavean Bog NHA	No	Yes	c. 15.00km
pNHA	Croaghonagh Bog	No	Yes	c. 16.50km
SAC	Croaghonagh Bog SAC	No	Yes	c. 16.50km
NHA	Barnesmore Bog NHA	No	Yes	c. 11.00km
	Dunragh Loughs /Pettigo Plateau SAC	No	Yes	c. 10.00km
pNHA	Dunragh Loughs /Pettigo Plateau	No	Yes	c. 10.00km
	Lough Fad Bog NHA	No	Yes	c. 14.00km
pNHA	Tamur Bog	No	Yes	c. 13.00km
	Tamur Bog SAC	No	Yes	c. 13.00km
	Lough Golagh And Breesy Hill SAC	No	Yes	c. 13.50km
pNHA	Carricknahorna Lough And Lough Gorman	No	Yes	c. 12.00km
pNHA	Ballintra	No	Yes	c. 9.50km
	Ballintra SAC	No	Yes	c. 9.50km
pNHA	Durnesh Lough	No	Yes	c. 10.00km
	Durnesh Lough SAC	No	Yes	c. 10.00km

Table 2: Natura 2000 Sites

Site Name	Features of Interest	Potential Site – Pathway – Receptor Linkage	Approximate Distance from Proposal
Donegal Bay SPA	• Great Northern Diver • Light-Bellied Brent Goose • Sanderling • Common Scoter • Wetlands	Yes. Due to the location of the proposed works, potential connectivity exists between the SPA and the proposed works.	c. 0.01km
Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC	• Mudflats and Sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide • Harbour Seal • Grey Dunes • Humid Dune Slacks	Yes. Due to the location of the proposed works, potential connectivity exists between the SAC and the proposed works.	c. 0.01km
Lougheske and Ardnamona Wood SAC	• Oligotrophic Waters • Petrifying Springs • Old Oak Woodlands • Freshwater Pearl Mussel • Atlantic Salmon • Killarney Fern	Yes. Due to the location of the proposed works, potential connectivity exists between the SAC and the proposed works.	c. 0.01km
Meenaguse/Ardbane Bog SAC	N/A	No, there is no known source-pathway-receptor linkage to this site. The proposed works are in a different river sub catchment to this area.	c. 7.00km
Meenaguse/Ardbane Bog	N/A		c. 7.00km
Meenaguse Scragh	N/A		c. 9.00km
Meenaguse Scragh SAC	N/A		c. 9.00km
Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve)	N/A		c. 11.00km

Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve) SAC	N/A		c. 11.00km
Lough Nillan Bog SPA	N/A		c. 11.00km
Meenybraddan Bog	N/A		c. 14.00km
River Finn SAC	N/A		c. 10.00km
Cashelnavean Bog NHA	N/A		c. 15.00km
Croaghonagh Bog	N/A		c. 16.50km
Croaghonagh Bog SAC	N/A		c. 16.50km
Barnesmore Bog NHA	N/A		c. 11.00km
Dunragh Loughs /Pettigo Plateau SAC	N/A		c. 10.00km
Dunragh Loughs /Pettigo Plateau	N/A		c. 10.00km
Lough Fad Bog NHA	N/A		c. 14.00km
Tamur Bog	N/A		c. 13.00km
Tamur Bog SAC	N/A		c. 13.00km
Lough Golagh And Breesy Hill SAC	N/A		c. 13.50km
Carricknahorna Lough And Lough Gorman	N/A		c. 12.00km
Ballintra	N/A		c. 9.50km
Ballintra SAC	N/A		c. 9.50km
Durnesh Lough	N/A		c. 10.00km
Durnesh Lough SAC	N/A		c. 10.00km

Table 3: Screening of Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence

Site Name	Site Code	Located within proposed development boundary	Distance of the Natura site from the proposed development	Significant Threat Possible (Yes or No)
Donegal Bay (Murvagh) pNHA	000133	No	c. 0.01km	Yes – Due to the location of the subject site and proximity
Donegal Bay SPA	004151	No	c. 0.01km	Yes – Due to the location of the subject site and proximity
Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC	000133	No	c. 0.01km	Yes – Due to the location of the subject site and proximity
Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC	000163	No	c. 0.01km	Yes – Due to the location of the subject site and proximity
Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood pNHA	000163	No	c. 0.01km	Yes – Due to the location of the subject site and proximity

Due to the nature and small scale of the proposed development and taking into consideration the Zone of Influence from the proposed development site, the European Designated sites, relative to the project location are Donegal Bay SPA [004151], Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC [000133] and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood [000163].

3.2 Characteristics of the Natura 2000 sites

The Site Synopsis and Conservation Objectives of the identified Natura 2000 Sites, specifically Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC [000133], Donegal Bay SPA [004151] and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood [000163] have been assessed (supporting documents of the SAC and SPA are available at www.npws.ie).

3.2.1 Donegal Bay SPA [Site Code: 004151]

Donegal Bay SPA [004151] is located from Doorin Point in Co. Donegal to Tullaghan Point in Co. Leitrim. The 104.5 km^2 Special Protection Area is a marine dominated site with a total marine area of 99%. It varies in width from c. 3km to over 8km. The site includes the estuary of the River Eske, which flows through Donegal Town, and the estuary of the River Erne, which flows through Ballyshannon.

Much of the shoreline is rocky and stony, with well-developed littoral reefs in places. There are also extensive stretches of sandy beaches, especially from the Murvagh peninsula southwards to Rossnowlagh and at the outer part of the estuary of the River Erne. Shingle or cobble beaches are also represented. There are extensive areas of intertidal flats associated with the estuary of the River Eske, reflecting the very sheltered conditions in this part of the bay.

Table 4: Donegal Bay SPA Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives

Qualifying Interest	Conservation Objective
Great Northern Diver (*Gavia immer)*	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Great Northern Diver*
Light-Bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota)*	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Light-Bellied Brent Goose*
Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Sanderling*
Common Scoter (*Melanitta nigra*	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Common Scoter*
Wetlands	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the *Wetland Habitats*

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Great Northern Diver, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Common Scoter and Sanderling. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

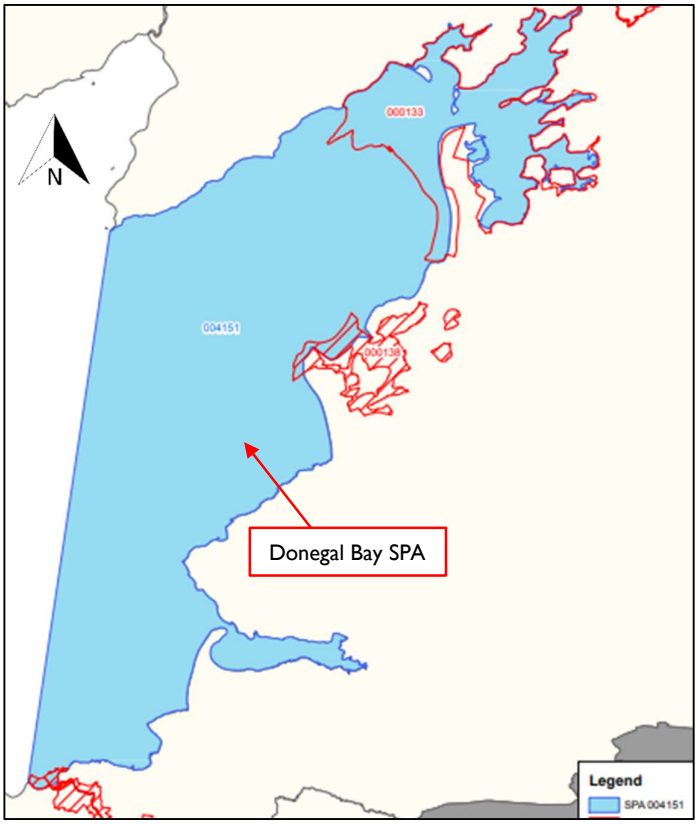

Figure 12: Donegal Bay SPA [Site Code: 004151]

3.2.2 Donegal Bay SAC [Site Code: 000133]

This site occupies the inner part of Donegal Bay, immediately to the South-West of Donegal Town, with a total area of 18km^2. It contains the estuary of the River Eske and

several other significant rivers. The area is underlain by Carboniferous limestone and shale, while blown sand and other recent deposits obscure much of the solid geology.

This area is protected under the EU Habitats Directive for the presence of the following: *Mudflats and Sandflats, Harbour Seal, Grey Dunes,* and *Humid Dune Slacks*.

Table 5: Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives

Qualifying Interest	Conservation Objective
Mudflats and Sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Mudflats and Sandflats* not covered by seawater at low tide
Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Harbour Seal*
Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (Grey Dunes)	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Fixed Coastal Dunes with Herbaceous Vegetation ('Grey Dunes')*
Humid Dune Slacks	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of *Humid Dune Slacks*

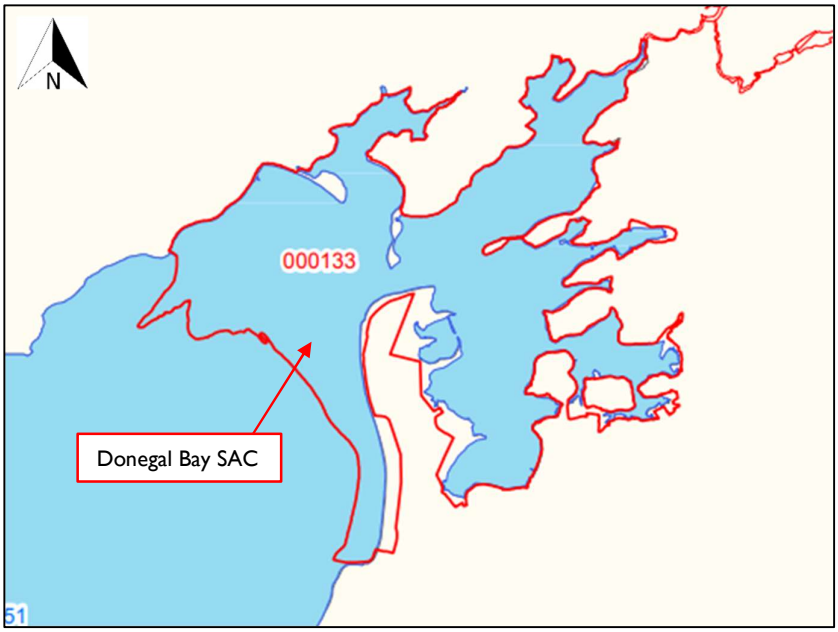

Figure 13: Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC [Site Code: 000133]

3.2.3 Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC [000163]

Lough Eske is a large lowland oligotrophic lake. It lies approximately 5 km northeast of Donegal town at the junction of Carboniferous rocks with more resistant Dalradian gneiss and granite. The site also includes the River Eske and short stretches of the Lowerymore, Clogher and Drummenny Rivers, as well as a number of smaller tributaries.

The shore of Lough Eske has a diverse and interesting flora which reflects the contrasting geology within the site. It includes heath-covered peninsulas, rocky shores, small flushes, wet and dry woodland fringes, occasional reedbeds of Phragmites australis, small freshwater marshes and some interesting species-poor fen communities (particularly on

the northern shore of the lake) which are typified by Star Sedge (*Carex echinata*). In addition, there are also small, but relatively intact, very wet areas of blanket bog.

Ardnamona Wood, on the North-Western side of the lake, is an old oak woodland. It is of great scientific interest for its size, naturalness, and flora. It displays a habitat range from dry areas dominated by Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) to wet woodland with Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) also occur in the high canopy with Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Willow (*Salix spp.*) in the understorey. The north side of this valley also has some petrifying springs, a priority Annex I habitat under the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Table 6: Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives

Qualifying Interest	Conservation Objective
Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals	*To restore the favourable conservation condition of Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains*
Petrifying Springs	*To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Petrifying springs with tufa formation*
Old Oak Woodlands	*To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles*
Freshwater Pearl Mussel	*To restore the favourable conservation condition of Freshwater Pearl Mussel*
Atlantic Salmon	*To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon*
Killarney Fern	*To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Killarney Fern*

Figure 14: Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC [000163]

3.3 Conservation status

The maintenance of habitats and species within the identified Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation conditions will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of habitats is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing,
- the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the near future,
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable

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

4 Assessment of Potential Impacts on Natura 2000 Sites

Taking into consideration the ecological characteristics of the European sites, together with the proposed development and associated activities within the subject site, the direct and indirect potential impacts have been identified as part of the Screening Stage. Ecological receptors that are sensitive to potential impacts from the proposed development include the species and habitats listed above.

In assessing the potential for significant effects on the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC [000133], Donegal Bay SPA [004151], and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC [000163] the following key aspects to the proposal are considered:

- The distance of the proposed works from Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC.
- The distance of the proposed works from Donegal Bay SPA.
- The distance of the proposed works from Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC.
- The separation distance of the proposed works from Donegal Bay and River Eske by physical boundaries such as walls and also the topography of the site in which drainage flows.
- The nature of the works and potential to result in mobilisation of sediments or hydrocarbons.

4.1 Consideration of Indirect Impacts

4.1.1 Indirect Impacts

Potential indirect impacts related to the proposed works include:

- Contamination from surface water from sediment generated through excavation and building works undertaken within the proposed works site.
- Contamination of surface water from chemical (including hydrocarbons) used and/or stored at the proposed works site.

4.1.1.1 Water Pollution

The release of suspended solids and pollution into the River Eske river and Donegal Bay has the potential to impact on a number of sensitive features of interest for which the Donegal Bay and the River Eske are designated. This proposal requires the removal of the existing 11 trees on The Diamond and replacing them with pleached trees. The overall depth of excavation that is required for the new trees will be 1.2m, however, a geotextile fabric will be located on top of the soil to prevent the migration of fine particles.

Suspended solids often hold nutrients such as phosphorus that can result in eutrophication and reduced oxygen levels where high oxygen levels are important for all life stages of Atlantic salmon for example. High suspended solid concentrations in rivers can affect the feeding and health of individual species through increased turbidity, inhibiting respiration through gills, increased siltation affecting composition of riverbed substrate and affecting spawning beds.

As detailed in the description of works, excavation works will be limited to the inner bounds of The Diamond itself. An essential part of the project as stated within the description of works method statement is the application of industry-standard pollution prevention measures. This includes the erection of silt traps around the extent of The Diamond, which is also in compliance with standard best practice methods while working near waters as specified within Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters (2016).

Within the Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters (2016) which states that: *''Silt traps/settlement ponds or other forms of containment and treatment shall be constructed at locations that will intercept run off to stream. Traps shall not be constructed immediately adjacent to natural watercourses. A buffer zone should remain between the silt trap and the watercourse with natural vegetation left intact*''. It is also in compliance with the Loughs Agency (2011) Guidelines for Fisheries Protection During Development Works which confirms that: ''*There must be no discharge of suspended solids or any other deleterious matter to watercourses*''.

Along with the statements already mentioned above, a boundary wall which exists around the entirety of the proposed works area and the sufficient distance from Donegal Bay and the River Eske means there is no potential pathway for run off into the river from this area of proposed works.

Therefore, there is not considered to be any potential for the introduction of suspended solids to the adjacent river and Donegal Bay (or therefore the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Donegal Bay SPA, and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC).

The use of machinery during the construction stage of the proposal has the potential to result in fuel spills and potential hydrocarbon pollution of adjacent areas. Release of hydrocarbons as a result of such events as fuel spills have the potential to impact on water quality as a result of reduced oxygen, thereby, for example, affecting the salmon populations that required good oxygen supplies. The release of even small amounts of hydrocarbons into the watercourses adjacent to the site, has the potential to result in significant impact on populations of Atlantic salmon within the SAC. Hydrocarbon pollution would result in significant impacts on all other aquatic species for which the site is designated for also.

As detailed in the description of works, the machinery used throughout the construction stage of the proposal will not be working instream of the River Eske and Donegal Bay and will be working solely within the inner bounds of The Diamond.

Considering the above, there is not considered to be any reasonable potential for any pollutants, including hydrocarbons or suspended solids to enter the River Eske and Donegal Bay and in turn the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Donegal Bay SPA, and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC.

4.1.1.2 Disturbance

Disturbance from construction works can potentially impact aquatic species within river corridors due to noise pollution, however due to the small scale and temporary nature of the works along with the fact that the works are taking place within an urban area and no actual instream works are planned as part of these works, means that there is not considered to be any reasonable potential for disturbance of species of interest within the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Donegal Bay SPA, and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC. There are surface water drains and stormwater drains situated in various locations on The Diamond, as previously mentioned silt traps will be utilised throughout the works taking place on The Diamond.

4.2 Consideration of 'in-combination' impacts

Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive and Regulation 15 of the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations state that any plan or project that may, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, significantly affect a Natura 2000 site should be the subject of an Appropriate Assessment. The assessment of in-combination impacts is therefore an important part of the screening process.

There are a number of developments within the locality, however the project location is not in the immediate vicinity of the Donegal Bay area. It has been demonstrated that the proposal and its impact on the Natura 2000 sites is expected to be imperceptible. The proposal is small scale, with no significant increase on surface water generation. The services and drainage systems that are in situ will be utilised to manage all surface and stormwater. Therefore, once the proposed development is complete, any cumulative impacts are not considered to be significant.

5 Assessment of Significance

Having regard to the site features above for European Sites within the zone of influence that could be impacted by the proposal. This report analyses the potential significant adverse effects caused by the proposal on each European Site, at this stage a potential significant effect can only be ruled out if there is considered to be no risk; any uncertainty must result in a potential significant effect being assumed.

Table 7: Screening Assessment

Site Name	Feature of Interest	Potential Impact	Potential Significance
Donegal Bay SPA	• Great Northern Diver • Light-Bellied Brent Goose • Sanderling • Common Scoter • Wetlands	There are no proposed works that will be taking place within the embankments of the River Eske or along the perimeter of Donegal Bay. The works will be isolated to the inner areas of The Diamond. The proposed works will be compliant and in line with those set out in the guidance from Inland Fisheries Ireland and the Loughs Agency which suggests the use of silt traps for working near waters and the fact that no discharge of deleterious matter to waters is permitted during construction.	No potential significant effects as the proposed project are short term in duration with no removal of habitats. The boundaries and extent of the SPA's and SAC will not be affected by the proposed construction.
Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC	• Mudflats and Sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide • Harbour Seal • Grey Dunes • Humid Dune Slacks		
Lougheske and Ardnamona Wood SAC	• Oligotrophic Waters • Petrifying Springs • Old Oak Woodlands • Freshwater Pearl Mussel • Atlantic Salmon • Killarney Fern		

6 Conclusions of Screening

According to Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, 2010, the Appropriate Assessment Stage 1: Screening exercise can result in one of three conditions:

- An Appropriate Assessment is not required i.e., where the plan/proposal is associated with the management of the site.
- There is no potential for significant effects i.e., Appropriate Assessment is not required.
- Significant effects are certain, likely, or uncertain i.e., the project must either proceed to Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment or be rejected.

As assessed above, it can be concluded that there is 'no potential for significant effects' to occur in relation to the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Donegal Bay SPA, and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC as a result of the proposed works on The Diamond.

Due to the scale and nature of the proposed works and also the fact there are no proposed works taking place within the perimeter of Donegal Bay or the banks of the River Eske, there is not considered to be any potential for impacts on any of the Qualifying Interests of the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Donegal Bay SPA, and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC.

The distance between the proposed works location and the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Donegal Bay SPA, and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC means that there is no potential for impacts on any species within these designated areas.

This Stage One Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has identified that, on the basis of best scientific knowledge, that there is no potential for significant effects to be caused as a result of the proposed works on any European sites as a result of this proposal with particular reference to the Donegal Bay (Murvagh) SAC, Donegal Bay SPA, and Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood SAC, taking account of the sites' conservation objectives, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there are no requirements to progress to a Stage Two Appropriate Assessment.

7 References

- Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government. (2010). Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: guidance for Planning Authorities. Available: https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/guidance-appropriate-assessment-planning-authorities
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