

1. EUROPEAN SITE DATA

Great Island Channel Candidate Special Area of Conservation (site code 001058)	
Conservation objective	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected.
Qualifying interests	Annex I listed habitats: mudflats, sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, estuaries, spartina swards, Atlantic salt meadows.
References and further information	<i>Conservation Objectives for Great Island Channel SAC [001058] (NPWS), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (NPWS), Site Synopsis Great Island Channel Site Code 001058 (NPWS) (see www.npws.ie for further details)</i>
Cork Harbour Special Protection Area (site code 004030)	
Conservation objective	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as special conservation interests for this SPA.
Qualifying interests	Annex I-listed bird species: bar-tailed godwit, common tern (breeding), golden plover, ruff, whooper swan. Other birds of special conservation interest include black-headed gull, black-tailed godwit, common gull, curlew, dunlin, great crested grebe, grey heron, grey plover, lapwing, lesser black-backed gull, little grebe, oystercatcher, pintail, red-breasted merganser, redshank, shelduck, shoveler, teal, and widgeon. This site is an internationally important wetland site supporting > 20,000 wintering waterfowl.
References and further information	<i>Conservation Objectives for Cork Harbour SPA [004030] (NPWS), Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (NPWS), Site Synopsis Cork Harbour SPA Site Code 004030 (NPWS) (see www.npws.ie for further details)</i>

2. DETAILS OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Reference no.	P8.HDR.24.04 - SCAIRT CROSS
Development consent type	Part 8
Development location	Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork
Description of development	<p>The Scairt Cross proposed development comprises of the construction of a residential development of 54 no. dwelling units. The development site area is approximately 0.8 hectares. The site is located at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Co. Cork. Access to the development will be via Scairt Hill.</p> <p>The proposed development will comprise of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of 54 No. dwelling units comprising of: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 no. 3 bed dwelling houses. - 3 no. 2 bed dwelling houses • 2 no. 3 storey apartment blocks comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 24 no. 2-bedroom apartments. - 22 no. 1-bedroom apartments. • Provision of 44 no. car parking spaces and 94 no. bicycle parking spaces. • Ancillary site works, and signage.
Distance from cSAC	7.24km
Distance from SPA	1.9km
Relevant strategies or policies	<p>European Nature Directives (Habitats and Birds – <i>EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011</i> <i>Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2015</i> <i>EIA Directives</i> <i>Cork City Development Plan 2022</i> <i>National biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021</i> <i>Cork City Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2021-2026</i></p>
EIS submitted?	No

3. ASSESSMENT OF LIKELY DIRECT, INDIRECT AND CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Yes / No

1. Is the proposed development directly connected to or necessary for the conservation management of the SPA and/or cSAC? <i>(If yes, no further assessment required. If no, screening required.)</i>	No
2. Is the proposed development located within or partly within the SPA?	No
3. Is the proposed development located within 100m of the SPA?	No
4. Does the proposed project involve the development, extension or upgrade of a cycleway or walkway within 200m of the SPA?	No
5. Does the proposed development involve development in the intertidal or coastal zone within the potential impact zone of the SPA?	No
6. Could the proposed project increase the level of recreational or other use of marine or intertidal areas within the potential impact zone of the SPA?	No
7. Does the proposed development involve the excavation of previously undeveloped land within an area that has been identified to be at risk of flooding within the potential impact zone of the SPA?	No
8. Does the proposed development involve the removal of significant amounts of topsoil within 100m of the SPA?	No
9. Does the existing wastewater treatment system have the capacity to treat any additional loading?	Yes
10. Would the proposed development result in direct surface water or other discharge to water bodies in or feeding into the SPA or cSAC? Would it result in additional storm flows into a combined sewer and subsequently into a combined sewer overflow (CSO), resulting in increased frequency, quantity and/or duration of overflow from the CSO to watercourses feeding into the European sites?	No
11. Would the proposed development involve dredging, or could it result in the mobilisation of marine sediments in the Harbour area?	No
12. Could the proposed development give rise to increased risk of oil or chemical spillage or leaks within the marine environment or watercourse within the potential impact zone for the SPA or cSAC?	No
13. Are there relevant plans or projects which, in combination with the proposed development, are likely to give rise to any cumulative effects?	No
Comments or notes	
-	

4. SCREENING CONCLUSION STATEMENT

In view of the above it is considered that (tick one box only):



Appropriate Assessment is not required.

The proposed development is directly connected / necessary to the conservation management of a site.



Appropriate Assessment is not required.

It can be excluded through screening that the proposed development will **not** have significant effects on the sites.



Further information is required.

Potential impacts have been identified through initial screening and/or there is insufficient information to enable the planning authority to screen out impacts, but on balance it is determined that the issues could be resolved through minor modifications to the proposed development or by appropriate conditions. The information required is specified below.



Appropriate Assessment is required.

Significant issues have been identified and/or significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain, and the submission of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is required, or the proposed development must be rejected.

Further information required / Comments or Notes

In accordance with the Habitats Directive, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening has been carried out on the project, in relation to any potential impacts upon the Cork Harbour Special Protection Area [Site No. 004030] and the Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation [Site No. 001058]. The findings of the AA screening noted that no significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites are likely, and it was not necessary to undertake any further stage of the Appropriate Assessment process.

Refer to Appendix A for the 'Appropriate Assessment Screening Report' prepared by McCutcheon Halley Chartered Planning Consultants.

Name:	<i>Alison Rankle</i>
Position:	Director of Services – Housing Delivery & Regeneration Directorate
Date:	<i>04/06/2024</i>

Appendix A

AA Screening Report

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

For Development at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork
on behalf of Cetti Limited

April 2024



McCutcheon Halley
CHARTERED PLANNING CONSULTANTS

Document Control Sheet

Client	Cetti Limited	
Project Title	Scairt Cross Part 8	
Document Title	Appropriate Assessment Screening Report	
Document Comprises	Volumes	1
	Pages (Including Cover)	24
	Appendices	0
Prepared by	Andrea McAuliffe	
Checked by	Tom Halley	
Office of Issue	Cork	
Document Information	Revision	A
	Status	Submitted
	Issue Date	April 2024

CORK	DUBLIN
6 Joyce House	Kreston House
Barrack Square	Arran Court
Ballincollig	Arran Quay
Cork	Dublin 7
P31 YX97	D07 K271
www.mhplanning.ie	T. +353 (0)1 804 4477
T. +353 (0)21 420 8710	

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 General Site Description	3
1.2 Brief Description of Project	4
2. Regulatory Context	6
2.1 European Nature Directives (Habitats and Birds)	6
2.2 EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011	6
2.3 Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2015	6
2.4 Objectives of Appropriate Assessment.....	7
2.5 The Stages in an Appropriate Assessment.....	7
3. Methodology.....	9
3.1 Approach.....	9
3.2 Desk Study	9
3.3 Evidence of Technical Competence and Experience.....	10
4. Appropriate Assessment Screening	11
4.1 Detailed Description of Project.....	11
4.1.2 Infrastructure	12
4.2 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites	13
4.2.3 Other Natura 2000 Sites	14
4.3 Description of Natura 2000 Sites	15
4.3.4 Cork Harbour SPA (004030).....	15
4.3.5 Great Island Channel SAC (001058).....	15
4.3.6 Water Quality	16
4.4 Features of conservation interest and potential threats to the Natura 2000 sites	17
4.5 Likelihood of potential impacts and their significance on Natura 2000 Sites	19
4.6 Identification of potential significant effects on Natura 2000 Sites	
19	
Potential Impacts	20
4.6.7 Cumulative Effects	20
4.6.8 Significant Effects.....	22
5. Consideration of Findings.....	23

1. Introduction

This Stage I Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by McCutcheon Halley Chartered Planning Consultants on behalf of the applicant Cetti Limited who intends to develop lands for residential development Scart Cross, Douglas, Cork.

The aim of this Screening Report is to provide supporting information to assist the competent authority, in this Cork City Council, to carry out an Appropriate Assessment Screening in respect of the proposed development at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork.

The AA Screening report is set out under the following headings:

1. Introduction
2. Regulatory Context and Legislation
3. Methodology
4. Description of Development
5. AA Screening
6. Consideration of Findings

1.1 General Site Description

The proposed site ("the Site"), which has an area of 0.8 hectares is located approximately 1 km southeast of Grange Village Centre and 2km southwest of Douglas Village. The proposed development is within walking distance of both Grange and Douglas which have a wide range of convenience retail with two shopping centres and other local services.

The area surrounding the site is primarily residential in character, with the lands immediately adjoining the site to the north, south, east and west generally comprising detached and semi-detached dwellings.

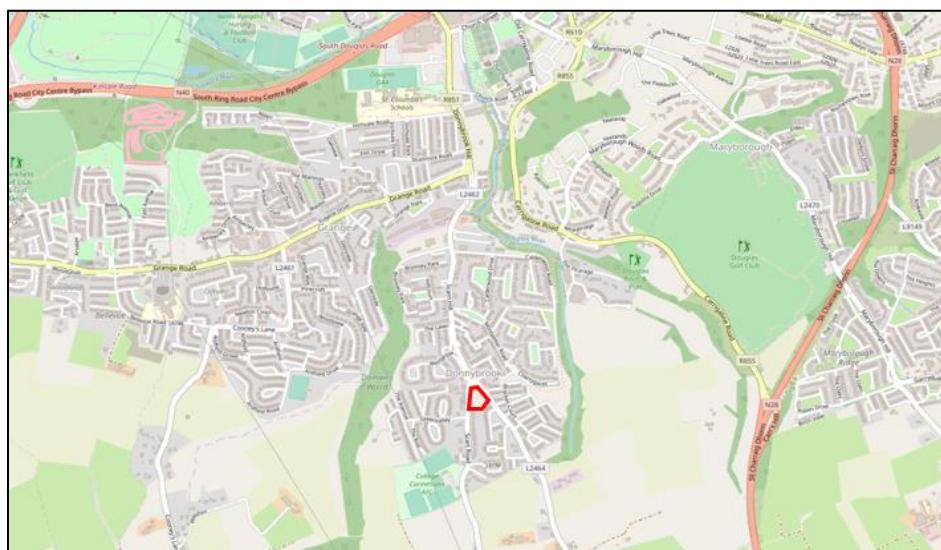


Figure 1 Indicative location and boundary of subject site outlined in red.



Figure 2 Subject Site outlined in red.

1.2 Brief Description of Project

The Scairt Cross proposed development comprises of the construction of a residential development of 54 no. dwelling units. The development site area is approximately 0.8 hectares. The site is located at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork. Access to the development will be via Scairt Hill.

The proposed development will comprise of:

The construction of:

- 5 no. 3 bed dwelling houses;
- 3 no. 2 bed dwelling houses
- 2 no. 3 storey apartment blocks comprising:
 - 24 no. 2-bedroom apartments;
 - 22 no. 1-bedroom apartments;
- Provision of 44 no. car parking spaces and 94 no. bicycle parking spaces.
- All ancillary site works, and signage as outlined in the plans and particulars.



Figure 3 Proposed Site Plan

2. Regulatory Context

2.1 European Nature Directives (Habitats and Birds)

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) are designated under the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) which is transposed into Irish law by the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011). Special Protection Areas are legislated for under the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds). Collectively, SACs and SPAs are referred to as Natura 2000 sites. In general terms, they are considered to be of exceptional importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species within the European Community. Under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken for any plan or project that is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. An Appropriate Assessment is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan or project on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. Where necessary, mitigation or avoidance measures should be proposed to preclude negative effects.

Article 6, paragraphs 3 of the Habitats Directive state 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. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public".*

2.2 EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011

Part 5 of the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 sets out the circumstances under which an 'appropriate assessment' is required. Section 42(1) requires that 'a screening for Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project for which an application for consent is received, or which a public authority wishes to undertake or adopt, and which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European Site, shall be carried out by the public authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and in view of the conservation objectives of the site, if that plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.'

2.3 Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2015

Section 250 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2015 sets out the circumstances under which an 'appropriate assessment' is required. Section 250 (1) requires that 'In order to ascertain whether an appropriate assessment is required in respect of a development which it proposes to

carry out a local authority shall carry out a screening of the proposed development to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would be likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

2.4 Objectives of Appropriate Assessment

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures to be addressed in the AA process (Scott Wilson and Levitt-Therevil, 2006).

1. Firstly, a plan/project should aim to avoid any negative impacts on Natura 2000 sites by identifying possible impacts early and designing the project/plan to avoid such impacts.
2. Secondly, mitigation measures should be applied during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain.
3. Under a worst-case scenario, a plan/project may have to undergo an assessment of alternative solutions. Under this stage of the assessment, compensatory measures are required for any remaining adverse effects, but they are permitted only if (a) there are no alternative solutions and (b) the plan/project is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (the 'IROPI test'). European case law highlights that consideration must be given to alternatives outside the plan/project boundary area in carrying out the IROPI test.

2.5 The Stages in an Appropriate Assessment

There are 4 stages in an Appropriate Assessment as outlined in the European Commission Guidance document (EC, 2001). The following is a brief summary of these steps. This report addresses Stage 1 – Screening.

Stage 1 - Screening: This stage examines the likely effects of a project either alone or in combination with other projects upon a Natura 2000 Site and considers whether it can be objectively concluded that these effects will not be significant.

Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment: In this stage, the impact of the project on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site is considered with respect to the conservation objectives of the site and to its structure and function.

Stage 3 - Assessment of Alternative Solutions: Should the Appropriate Assessment determine that adverse impacts are likely upon a Natura 2000 site, this stage examines alternative ways of implementing the project that, where possible, avoid these adverse impacts.

Stage 4 - Assessment of where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain: Where imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) exist, an assessment to consider whether compensatory

measures will or will not effectively offset the damage to the Natura site will be necessary.

3. Methodology

3.1 Approach

The approach taken in preparing this document is set out below and is broadly based on standard methods and best practice guidance, as listed in the References in Section 5.

- Identify Natura 2000 sites, within the potential zone of influence of the proposed development.
- Identify the features of interest of the Natura 2000 sites and review their conservation objectives.
- Review whether there is potential for the features of interest to be affected by the proposed development based on information such as the vulnerabilities of the Natura 2000 site, proximity to the Site and the nature and scale of the works associated with the proposed development.
- Consider the likelihood of potential impacts occurring based on the information collated and professional judgement.
- Consider the likelihood of cumulative impacts arising from the proposed development in-combination with other plans and projects.
- Identify the likelihood of significant effects on Natura 2000 sites occurring because of the proposed development.

3.2 Desk Study

A desk study was carried out to collate the available information on the ecological environment with respect to Natura 2000 sites identified within the potential zone of influence of the proposed development.

The location of the Site at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork, and the surrounding area was viewed using google maps www.google.com/maps (last accessed 23rd November 2023). The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website (www.npws.ie) and National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) online database (<http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/>) were accessed for information on Natura 2000 sites in the vicinity of the proposed development (last accessed 23rd November 2023). The planning authority websites www.corkcity.ie and www.corkcoco.ie (last accessed 23rd November 2023) were accessed for information on plans or projects in the area that may result in cumulative impacts when considered with the application for the proposed development.

3.3 Evidence of Technical Competence and Experience

Andrea McAuliffe BA (Hons), MPlan

Andrea holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Geography and Sociology from University College Cork and a Masters in Planning and Sustainable Development also from University College Cork. She is a Corporate member of the Irish Planning Institute.

Andrea has prepared AA screening reports and Ecological reports for a range of development projects. Relevant project experience includes large housing developments, single 'one – off' developments, submissions to local area plans and county development plans.

Andrea prepared this AA screening report.

Tom Halley BA (Hons), MRUP

Tom Halley holds a Bachelor in Science and Geography from Trinity College Dublin, a Masters in Regional and Urban Planning from University College Dublin, a Certificate in Civil Engineering from Cork Institute of Technology, and a Bachelor of Architecture from Waterford Institute of Technology. He is a member of the Irish Planning Institute and has over twenty years' experience in the planning sector.

Tom has prepared AA screening reports, EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Screening reports, undertaken and co-ordinated Environmental Impact Assessments. Relevant project experience includes large housing developments, single 'one – off' developments, submissions to local area plans various Large-Scale Infrastructure and Mixed-use Developments.

Tom reviewed this AA Screening Report.

4. Appropriate Assessment Screening

4.1 Detailed Description of Project

The Scairt Cross proposed development comprises of the construction of a residential development of 54 no. dwelling units. The development site area is approximately 0.8 hectares. The site is located at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork. Access to the development will be via Scairt Hill.

The proposed development will comprise of:

The construction of:

- 5 no. 3 bed dwelling houses;
- 3 no. 2 bed dwelling houses
- 2 no. 3 storey apartment blocks comprising:
 - 24 no. 2-bedroom apartments;
 - 22 no. 1-bedroom apartments;
- Provision of 44 no. car parking spaces and 94 no. bicycle parking spaces.
- All ancillary site works, and signage as outlined in the plans and particulars



Figure 4 Proposed Site Layout

4.1.2 Infrastructure

Full details of the infrastructure to service the proposed development are provided in the accompanying reports prepared by DOSA Consulting Engineers.

It is proposed to connect to the existing foul sewer and water supply. The 2022 Annual Report for the Carrigrennan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) which serves the Cork City agglomeration. The AER states that the WWTP has a plant capacity PE of 413,200, the treatment type is 3P - Tertiary P removal and that the capacity of the WWTP will not be exceeded in 3 years.¹ The discharge from the proposed development is less than 0.2% of the Carrigrennan WWTP PE.

It is proposed to connect the storm water system for the development with sewer on Donnybrook Hill via an attenuation system, which will be fitted with flow control devices to ensure no increase in peak flows and an oil interceptor to remove any traces of oil washed off road surfaces.

¹ 2022 Annual Environmental Report Cork City D0033-01 <https://leap.epa.ie/docs/53aec0b-224d-42d4-b0a6-a4d69bc4f6a8.pdf>

The existing foul sewer network will be upgraded to accommodate the proposed development following a detailed design survey and investigations as requested by Uisce Eireann. An attenuation system will be provided on site to limit the outflow from the development. Full details of the system are provided in the accompanying reports prepared by DOSA Consulting Engineers.

Site investigation works will be carried out prior to commencing construction. Waste material generated during site clearance will be recycled or reused on-site if appropriate or disposed of through the appropriately licenced facilities.

4.2 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

The “zone of influence” 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 (CIEEM, 2018). This is likely to extend beyond the Site where there are ecological or hydrological links beyond the site boundaries.

A distance of 15 km is currently 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). For projects, the distance could be much less than 15 km, and in some cases less than 100 m, but National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) 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.

Given the location and scale of the development, the zone of influence is considered likely to be limited to the immediate vicinity of the project. The boundary of Cork Harbour SPA is approximately 1.9km to the northeast when measured in a straight line to the nearest point. The Donnybrook Stream, which discharges to the Douglas River Estuary which forms part of Cork Harbour SPA, flows c. 420m to the west of the site. While direct impacts on Cork Harbour SPA are unlikely as a result of the proposed development, the site is considered due to its proximity to the proposed development and the potential hydrological link provided via the Donnybrook Stream.

The boundary of Great Island Channel SAC is located approximately 7.24 km to the north-east of the development when measured in a straight line to the nearest point. Given the distance between the site and the SAC, there will be no direct impacts on Great Island Channel SAC as a result of the proposed development.

The proposed development will connect to the foul sewer network which ultimately discharges to Carrigrennan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The Primary Discharge from the WWTP is into Lough Mahon, to the south of Carrigrennan (Figure 5). As a result, Great Island Channel SAC is considered to be within the potential zone of influence of the proposed development.

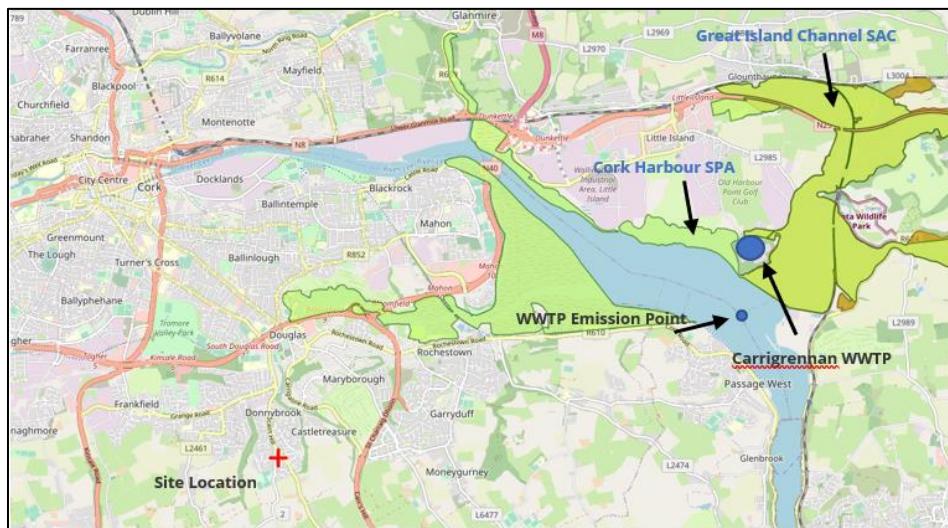


Figure 5 Location of proposed development relative to Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island SAC and Carrigrennan WWTP

4.2.3 Other Natura 2000 Sites

All other Natura 2000 sites excluded based on the nature of the existing and proposed development, distance from the subject site, lack of surface water features within and in the vicinity of the proposed development site and no ecological connectivity to the Site.

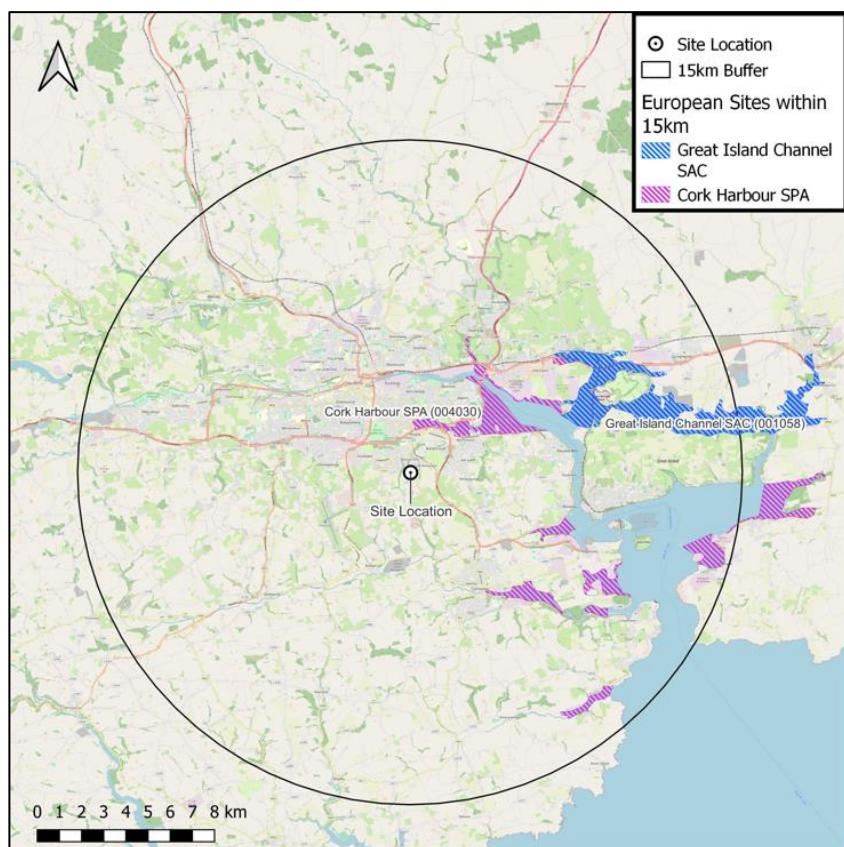


Figure 6 Location of Natura 2000 sites relative to Site at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork

4.3 Description of Natura 2000 Sites

A description of Cork Harbour SPA is provided below. The description is collated using the site synopsis and other documents available on the NPWS² and EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) websites.

4.3.4 Cork Harbour SPA (004030)

Cork Harbour is a large, sheltered bay system, with several river estuaries - principally those of the Rivers Lee, Douglas, Owenboy and Owenacurra. The SPA site comprises most of the main intertidal areas of Cork Harbour, including all of the North Channel, the Douglas River Estuary, inner Lough Mahon, Monkstown Creek, Lough Beg, the Owenboy River Estuary, Whitegate Bay and the Rostellan and Poulnabibe inlets. Owing to the sheltered conditions, the intertidal flats are often muddy in character. These muds support a range of macro- invertebrates, notably *Macoma balthica*, *Scrobicularia plana*, *Hydrobia ulvae*, *Nepthys hombergi*, *Nereis diversicolor* and *Corophium volutator*.

Rostellan Lake is a small brackish lake that is used by swans throughout the winter. The site also includes some marginal wet grassland areas used by feeding and roosting birds. The site is a Special Protection Area under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Little Grebe, Great Crested Grebe, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Shelduck, Wigeon, Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, Red-breasted Merganser, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Blacktailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Common Tern.

Cork Harbour is of major ornithological significance, being of international importance both for the total numbers of wintering birds (i.e. > 20,000) and also for its populations of Black-tailed Godwit and Redshank. In addition, it supports nationally important wintering populations of 22 species, as well as a nationally important breeding colony of Common Tern. Several of the species which occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Whooper Swan, Little Egret, Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit, Ruff, Mediterranean Gull and Common Tern. The site provides both feeding and roosting sites for the various bird species that use it. Cork Harbour is also a Ramsar Convention site and part of Cork Harbour SPA is a Wildfowl Sanctuary.

4.3.5 Great Island Channel SAC (001058)

The Great Island Channel stretches from Little Island to Midleton, with its southern boundary being formed by Great Island. It is an integral part of Cork Harbour which contains several other sites of conservation interest. Within the site is the estuary of the Owennacurra and Dungourney Rivers. These rivers, which flow through Midleton, provide the main source of freshwater

² National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004030>

to the North. The water quality status of Lough Mahon was determined using the EPA interactive mapviewer⁴ and was identified as "Eutrophic".

Great Island Channel is extremely important for wintering waterfowl and is considered to contain three of the top five areas within Cork Harbour, namely North Channel, Harper's Island and Belvelly-Marino Point. The main habitats of conservation interest in Great Island Channel SAC are the sheltered tidal sand and mudflats and the Atlantic salt meadows. Owing to the sheltered conditions, the intertidal flats are composed mainly of soft muds. These muds support a range of macro- invertebrates, notably *Macoma balthica*, *Scrobicularia plana*, *Hydrobia ulvae*, *Nephtys hombergi*, *Nereis diversicolor* and *Corophium volutator*. The saltmarshes are scattered through the site and are all of the estuarine type on mud substrate. Species present include Sea Purslane, (*Halimione portulacoides*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*) and Greater Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia media*).

The site is an integral part of Cork Harbour which is a wetland of international importance for the birds it supports. Overall, Cork Harbour regularly holds over 20,000 waterfowl and contains internationally important numbers of Black-tailed Godwit (1,181) and Redshank (1,896), along with nationally important numbers of nineteen other species. Furthermore, it contains large Dunlin (12,019) and Lapwing (12,528) flocks.

4.3.6 Water Quality

The Donnybrook Stream is located c. 420 m to the west of the site and flows in a northerly direction before discharging to the Douglas River (also identified as the Moneygurney Stream). The Douglas River discharges to the Douglas River Estuary, which forms part of Lough Mahon and Cork Harbour SPA, c. 2 km downstream and to the north of the site. No information on the water quality or on the Water Framework Directive status of the Douglas River is currently available.

The water quality of Lough Mahon, a transitional water body which forms part of Cork Harbour SPA, was determined from the EPA Interactive Mapviewer³. The Water Quality status for 2018 – 2020 was determined to be "eutrophic", while the Water Framework Directive (WFD) status for the period 2013 - 2018 is identified as "Moderate", and "At Risk" of not achieving good status.

³ <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>



Figure 7 Site location and WFD status of watercourses in proximity

4.4 Features of conservation interest and potential threats to the Natura 2000 sites

The features of conservation interest and potential threats for Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel SAC are presented in Table 1. The potential threats and pressures are taken from the Natura 2000 Standard Data form for the Natura 2000 site (NPWS, 2017) and the meaning of the potential threat codes was obtained from the EIONET Reference portal⁴ for Natura 2000 sites. The most significant threat to Cork Harbour SPA is the operation of marine and freshwater aquaculture within the Natura 2000 Site boundary, while urbanisation, and industrial and commercial areas are identified as threats outside the site boundary.

⁴ https://bd.eionet.europa.eu/activities/Natura_2000/reference_portal

Features of Conservation Interest	NPWS Identified Threats/Pressures	Rank	Location
NPWS Identified Threats/Pressures H = high M = medium L = low i = inside Natura 2000 site boundary o = outside Natura 2000 site boundary b = both inside and outside Natura 2000 site			
Cork Harbour SPA 004030			
A004 Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	G01.02 Walking, horse riding, non-motorised vehicles	M	i
A005 Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i>	G01.01 Nautical ports	M	i
A017 Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	D03.02 Shipping lanes	M	i
A028 Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	D03.01 Port areas	H	o
A048 Shelduck <i>Tadorna tadorna</i>	D01.02 Roads, motorways	H	o
A050 Wigeon <i>Anas penelope</i>	A08 Fertilisation	M	o
A052 Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	E01.03 Dispersed habitation	L	o
A054 Pintail <i>Anas acuta</i>	E01 Urbanised areas, human habitation	H	o
A056 Shoveler <i>Anas clypeata</i>	E02 Industrial or commercial areas	M	i
A069 Red-breasted Merganser <i>Mergus serrator</i>	F02.03 Leisure fishing	H	i
A130 Oystercatcher <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	F01 Marine and freshwater aquaculture		
A140 Golden Plover <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>			
A141 Grey Plover <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>			
A142 Lapwing <i>Vanellus vanellus</i>			
A149 Dunlin <i>Calidris alpina</i>			
A156 Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i>			
A157 Bar-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa lapponica</i>			
A160 Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i>			
A162 Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i>			
A179 Black-headed Gull <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>			
A182 Common Gull <i>Larus canus</i>			
Great Island Channel SAC 001058			
1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide.	A04 Grazing	M	i
1330 Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>)	A08 Fertilisation	M	o
	E01 Urbanised areas, human habitation	H	o
	D01.02 Roads, Motorways	H	i
	F01 Marine and freshwater aquaculture	H	i
	J02.01.02 Reclamation of land from sea, estuary or marsh	M	i
		M	i

Table 1 Features of conservation interest, conservation objectives and NPWS identified threats/pressures to Cork Harbour SPA 004030

4.5 Likelihood of potential impacts and their significance on Natura 2000 Sites

The available information on Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel SAC was reviewed to establish whether the proposed development of the Site at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork is likely to have a significant effect. The potential for impacts on the features of interest is identified using information collated from the desk study.

The likelihood of impacts occurring are established in light of the type and scale of the project, the location of the project with respect to the Natura 2000 sites and the features of interest and conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 sites. The assessment is carried out following the Cause – Pathway – Effect model. The potential impacts are summarised into the following categories for screening process.

- Direct impacts refer to habitat loss or fragmentation arising from land-take requirements for development or agricultural purposes. Direct impacts can be as a result of a change in land use or management, such as the removal of agricultural practices that prevent scrub encroachment.
- Indirect and secondary impacts do not have a straight-line route between cause and effect, and it is potentially more challenging to ensure that all the possible indirect impacts of the plan – in combination with other plans and projects - have been established. These can arise when a development alters the hydrology of a catchment area, which in turn affects the movement of groundwater to a site and the qualifying interests that rely on the maintenance of water levels. Deterioration in water quality can occur as an indirect consequence of development, which in turn changes the aquatic environment and reduces its capacity to support certain plants and animals.
- Disturbance to fauna can arise directly through the loss of habitat (e.g. bat roosts) or indirectly through noise, vibration and increased activity associated with construction and operation.

4.6 Identification of potential significant effects on Natura 2000 Sites

The features of special conservation interests for Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel SAC are presented in Table 1. Potential impacts, both direct and indirect, as a result of the proposed development are identified in the following section. The potential for cumulative impacts to occur and likelihood of effects being significant is also discussed.

Potential Impacts

Direct Impacts

The construction and operation of proposed development will not result in any direct impacts to Cork Harbour SPA or to Great Island Channel SAC as the Site is too distant from the SPA (approximately 1.9 km when measured in a direct line from the Site to the boundary of the SPA).

Indirect Impacts

The Donnybrook stream flows approximately 420m to the west of the proposed development, however there are no watercourses or drains present on-site through which pollutants can be transmitted to the watercourse and subsequently discharged to Cork Harbour during construction or operation. The Site is too distant from the SPA for construction works to cause disturbance or displacement of birds which are the species of conservation interest for Cork Harbour SPA (Table 1). The Site is approximately 0.8 ha of low value greenfield development and does not offer habitats suitable for birds which may forage terrestrially, for example on grasslands outside the SPA boundary, such as curlew or lapwing.

Given the distance between the Site and the Cork Harbour SPA, it is not likely that birds will be negatively impacted by noise or activity during construction or operation of the proposed development.

The proposed development will connect to existing services, including the existing foul water networks. The storm water system for the development will involve a network of underground pipelines and manholes discharging to the storm sewer on Donnybrook Hill via an attenuation system, which will be fitted with flow control devices to ensure no increase in peak flows and an oil interceptor to remove any traces of oil washed off road surfaces. The existing foul sewer network will be upgraded to accommodate the proposed development subject following detailed design survey and investigations as requested by Uisce Eireann.

The proposed development is not considered likely to result in any indirect impacts to Cork Harbour SPA or Great Island Channel SAC.

4.6.7 Cumulative Effects

Cumulative effects can result from individually insignificant but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time or concentrated in a location. Cumulative effects can occur where a proposed development results in impacts that when considered in combination with impacts of other proposed or permitted plans and projects may result in a cumulative effect.

The site is located in a built-up suburban area. There are a number of permitted or proposed projects in proximity to the site and in the wider area. However, developments will have to be carried out according to the land-use zonings and development and environmental standards set out in the 2022 Cork City Development Plan which was subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Any developments that may have potential to cause

environmental impacts or a potential impact on a natura site(s) will be subject to the appropriate screening and assessments by the competent authority.



Figure 8 Site location in context of permissions adjoining the site

Wastewater from the proposed development will connect to existing services, and discharge to Carrigrennan Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). The most recent Annual Environmental Report (AER) available for the WWTP covers the period and found that while the WWTP discharge was not compliant with the ELV's set in the wastewater discharge licence, the discharge from the wastewater treatment plant did not have an observable impact on the water quality or on the Water Framework Directive status of the receiving waters (Section 2.1.3 of the AER).

The additional load to the WWTP is not likely to be significant when the capacity of the plant is considered. The AER also identified that the WWTP will not exceed organic capacity within the next 3 years.

Given the distance between the Subject Site and the Natura 2000 sites, and the scale of the development which will result in a minor increase in loading to the WWTP, it is not considered likely that the additional load to the WWTP will result in either alone or in combination with other plans and projects to the Great Island Channel SAC and Cork Harbour SPA.

It is considered that the proposed development will not impact, directly or indirectly, any of the habitats or species listed as features of interest for Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island SAC. In the absence of any potential impacts due to the proposed development there is no pathway for other plans and projects to act in-combination giving rise to cumulative impacts.

4.6.8 Significant Effects

Potential impacts, direct and indirect, on the conservation objectives of Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel SAC are not considered likely to occur as a result of the proposed development at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork.

Therefore, the proposed development is not likely to result in a significant effect on Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island SAC alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. It is therefore considered that there is no requirement to progress to Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment.

5. Consideration of Findings

This AA Screening report for Appropriate Assessment is based on the best available scientific information and shows that the proposed development at Scairt Cross, Douglas, Cork poses no risk of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and therefore does not require progression to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. Based on this conclusion it is submitted that the competent authority can determine, based on objective scientific information, that an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

This Appropriate Assessment Screening therefore concludes that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site.