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## **PROVISION OF INFORMATION FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING OF A PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IN NOBBER, CO MEATH**

IN LINE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF ARTICLE 6(3) OF THE  
EU HABITATS DIRECTIVE



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*September 2020*

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 BACKGROUND**

A comprehensive assessment of the potential significant effects of a proposed Part 8 development in Nobber, Co. Meath on certain designated Natura 2000 sites was carried out in September 2020 by Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM of Whitehill Environmental. This assessment allowed areas of potential ecological value and potential ecological constraints associated with this proposed development to be identified and it also enabled potential ecological impacts associated with the proposed development on designated sites to be assessed.

The location of the proposed development is within the Zone of Influence of sites designated under European Law. As such and in accordance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitat's Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) regarding Appropriate Assessment, this screening exercise for Appropriate Assessment was carried out in order to identify whether any significant impacts on designated sites are likely.

This report contains information required by the competent authority (in this instance the Meath County Council) to undertake a screening for Appropriate Assessment. It is the responsibility of the competent authority to make a decision as to whether or not the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on European Sites, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. In accordance with the Legislation and National Guidance, the competent authority should issue an AA Screening Determination, which should set out their decision regarding AA, including the main reasons and considerations on which the determination is based.

## **1.2 REGULATORY CONTEXT**

The Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC) recognises that certain species of birds should be subject to special conservation measures concerning their habitats. The Directive requires that Member States take measures to classify the most suitable areas as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for the conservation of bird species listed in Annex 1 of the Directive. SPAs are selected for bird species (listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive), that are regularly occurring populations of migratory bird species and the SPA areas are of international importance for these migratory birds.

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) requires that Member States designate and ensure that particular protection is given to sites (Special Areas of Conservation) which are made up of or support particular habitats and species listed in annexes to this Directive.

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of this Directive also call for the undertaking of an Appropriate Assessment for plans and projects not directly connected with or necessary to the management of, but which are likely to have a significant effect on any European designated sites (i.e. SACs and SPAs). This is explained in greater detail in the following section (Section 1.2.2 and Section 1.2.3).

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC), which came into force in December 2000, establishes a framework for community action in the field of water policy. The WFD was transposed into Irish law by the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 722 of 2003). The WFD rationalises and updates existing legislation and provides for water management on the basis of River Basin Districts (RBDs). RBDs are essentially administrative areas for coordinated water management and are comprised of multiple river basins (or catchments), with cross-border basins (i.e. those covering the territory of more than one Member State) assigned to an international RBD. The aim of the WFD is to ensure that waters achieve at least good status by 2021 and that status does not deteriorate in any waters.

### **Appropriate Assessment and the Habitats Directive**

Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora – the ‘Habitats Directive’ - provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Article 2 of the Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of habitats and species of European Community interest, at a favourable conservation status. Articles 3 - 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as *Natura 2000*. Natura 2000 sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Conservation of Wild Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).

Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive sets out the decision-making tests for plans or projects affecting Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

“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."

Article 6(4) deals with the steps that should be taken when it is determined, as a result of appropriate assessment, that a plan/project will adversely affect a European site. Issues dealing with alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest and compensatory measures need to be addressed in this case.

Article 6(4) states:

"If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member States shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest."

#### The Appropriate Assessment Process

The aim of Appropriate Assessment is to assess the implications of a proposal in respect of a designated site's conservation objectives.

The 'Appropriate Assessment' itself is an assessment which must be carried out by the competent authority which confirms whether the plan or project in combination with other plans and projects will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European site.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment shall be carried out by the competent authority as set out in Section 177U(1) and (2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) as follows:

'(1) A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in

combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.

(2) A competent authority shall carry out a screening for appropriate assessment under subsection (1) before—

(a) a Land use plan is made including, where appropriate, before a decision on appeal in relation to a draft strategic development zone is made, or

(b) consent for a proposed development is given.’

The competent authority shall determine that an Appropriate Assessment is not required if it can be excluded, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or project will have a significant effect on a European site.

Where the competent authority cannot exclude the potential for a significant effect on a European site, an Appropriate Assessment shall be deemed required.

Where an Appropriate Assessment is required, the conclusions of the Appropriate Assessment Report (Natura Impact Statement (NIS)) should enable the competent authority to ascertain whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of the European site. If adverse impacts on the integrity of a European site cannot be avoided, then mitigation measures should be applied during the appropriate assessment process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site remain. Under the terms of the Habitats Directive consent can only be granted for a project if, as a result of the appropriate assessment either (a) it is concluded that the integrity of any European sites will not be adversely affected, or (b) after mitigation, where adverse impacts cannot be excluded, there is shown to be an absence of alternative solutions, and there exists imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the project should go ahead.

Section 177(V) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) outlines that the competent authority shall carry out the Appropriate Assessment, taking into account the Natura Impact Statement (amongst any other additional or supplemental information). A determination shall then be made by the competent authority in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive as to whether the plan or proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site, prior to consent being given.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**

This Statement of Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) has been prepared with reference to the following:

- European Commission (2000). Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission (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.
- European Commission (2006). Nature and Biodiversity Cases: Ruling of the European Court of Justice.
- European Commission (2007). Clarification of the Concepts of: Alternative Solution, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence, Opinion of the Commission.
- Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.

The EC Guidance sets out a number of principles as to how to approach decision making during the process. The primary one is 'the precautionary principle' which requires that the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 should prevail where there is uncertainty.

When considering the precautionary principle, the emphasis for assessment should be on objectively demonstrating with supporting evidence that:

- There will be no significant effects on a Natura 2000 site;
- There will be no adverse effects on the integrity of a Natura 2000 site;
- There is an absence of alternatives to the project or plan that is likely to have an adverse effect to the integrity of a Natura 2000 site; and
- There are compensation measures that maintain or enhance the overall coherence of Natura 2000.

This translates into a four stage process to assess the impacts, on a designated site or species, of a policy or proposal.

The EC Guidance states that "each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required". Consequently, the Council may not need to proceed through all four stages in undertaking the Appropriate Assessment.

The four-stage process is:

**Stage 1: Screening** – The process which identifies the likely impacts upon a Natura 2000 site of a project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether or not these impacts are likely to be significant;

**Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment** – The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Additionally, where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of the potential mitigation of those impacts;

**Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions** – The process which examines alternative ways of achieving objectives of the project or plan that avoid adverse impacts on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site;

**Stage 4: Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain** – An assessment of the compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed.

In complying with the obligations set out in Articles 6(3) and following the guidelines described above, this screening statement has been structured as a stage by stage approach as follows:

- Description of the proposed project;
- Identification of the Natura 2000 sites close to the proposed development;
- Identification and description of any individual and cumulative impacts on the Natura 2000 sites likely to result from the project;
- Assessment of the significance of the impacts identified above on site integrity. Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects;
- Description of proven mitigation measures.



## **2.2 STATEMENT OF COMPETENCY**

This AA Screening report was carried out by Noreen McLoughlin, BA, MSc, MCIEEM. Noreen has an honours degree in Zoology and an MSc in Freshwater Ecology from Trinity College, Dublin and she has been a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management for over thirteen years. Noreen has over 15 years' experience as a professional ecologist in Ireland.

## **2.3 DESK STUDIES & CONSULTATION**

Information on the site and the area of the proposed development was studied prior to the completion of this statement. The following data sources were accessed in order to complete a thorough examination of potential impacts:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service - Aerial photographs and maps of designated sites, information on habitats and species within these sites and information on protected plant or animal species, conservation objectives, site synopses and standard data forms for relevant designated sites.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- Information pertaining to water quality, geology and licensed facilities within the area;
- Myplan.ie – Mapped based information;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) – Information pertaining to protected plant and animal species within the study area;
- Bing maps & Google Street View – High quality aerals and street images;
- Node Architects – Plans and Information Pertaining to the Development
- Meath County Council – Information on planning history in the area for the assessment of cumulative impacts.

## **2.4 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY**

The proposed development was assessed to identify its potential ecological impacts and from this, the Zone of Influence (Zol) of the proposed development was defined. Based on the potential impacts and their Zol, the Natura 2000 sites potentially at risk from direct, indirect or in-combination impacts were identified. The assessment considered all potential impact sources and pathways connecting the proposed development to Natura 2000 sites, in view of the conservation objectives supporting the favourable conservation condition of the site's Qualifying Interests (QIs) or Special Conservation Interests (SCIs).

The conservation objectives relating to each Natura 2000 site and its QIs/SCIs are cited generally for SACs as "to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected", and for SPAs

“to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA”.

As defined in the Habitat’s Directive, the favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range and area it covers within that range is 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;

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- The 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.

Where site-specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) have been prepared for a European site, these include a series of specific attributes and targets against which effects on conservation condition, or integrity, can be measured. Where potential significant effects are identified, then these SSCO should be considered in detail.

### 3 SCREENING

#### 3.1 DEVELOPMENT DESCRIPTION

Meath County Council have indicated their intention to shortly apply for planning permission for a proposed development at the Nobber Fire Station, in Nobber, Co. Meath. Permission will be sought under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. Planning permission pertains to the following:

- The extension and refurbishment of the fire station;
- Connection to existing services and all ancillary site works.

An extract from the planning drawings as submitted is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 – Extract from Planning Drawings (as prepared by Node Architecture)

Wastewater Treatment

Foul water from the fire station will continue to be directed into the public sewer.

Surface water Treatment

Surface water run-off from the site will be continue to be directed into the public surface water network.

### 3.2 SITE LOCATION AND SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT

The application site is 0.2ha and it is located in the southern side of the village of Nobber. Access to the site is via an existing entrance that is just off the Regional Road, the R162, which is the main road through Nobber village. The fire station is adjacent to the Nobber Garda Station. The site is bounded to the north-east by the R162, to the north-west by the site of the Garda station, to the south-west by a GAA playing field and to the south-east by a domestic house and garden site.

Beyond the village of Nobber, agriculture is the dominant land use and improved agricultural grasslands is the dominant habitat. Other habitats represented locally include amenity grasslands and gardens, hedgerows, treelines and watercourses.

Site location maps are shown in Figures 2 and 3, whilst an aerial photograph of the site and its surrounding habitats is shown in Figure 4.

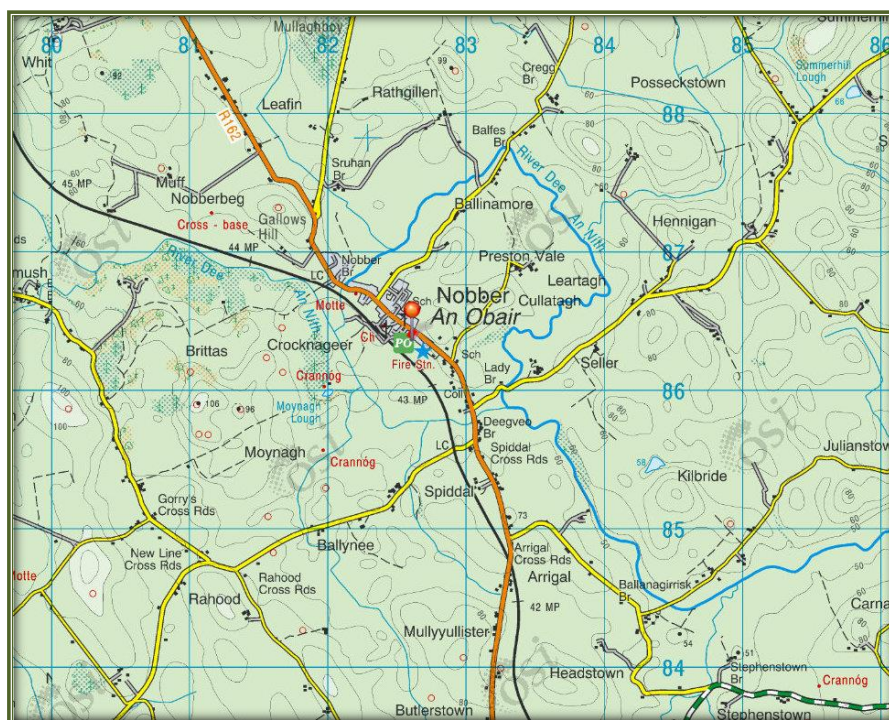


Figure 2 – Site Location Map (Site Pinned)



Figure 3 – Site Location Map. Application Site Outlined in Red

### HABITATS AND SPECIES

The dominant habitats within the application site include buildings and artificial surfaces (i.e., the existing fire station, hard surfaces and car parks). There is also an area of amenity grassland in front of the site, around the Carolan memorial. The site boundaries largely consist of walls and fences. There are no habitats of biodiversity value within the application site.

An examination of the website of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, revealed that there are records for the presence of one protected mammal species from the relevant 1km square (N8286) of this proposed development. This species is the badger *Meles meles* and it is fully protected under the Irish Wildlife Acts. A custom polygon generated for the site revealed that this record does not pertain to the application site itself and there are no habitats within the site suitable for badgers.



## WATER FEATURES AND QUALITY

The application site is located within the Newry, Fane, Glyde and Dee Hydrometric Area and Catchment, the Dee Sub-Catchment and the Moynagh Sub-Basin. There are no drains or streams within or adjacent to the application site. The closest mapped water feature to the application site is a small stream / drain which is 145m south of the site, on the opposite side of the railway line. This stream flows into the River Dee, which is 487m south of the application site. The River Dee flows into the Irish Sea at Annagassan, Co. Louth.

The EPA have defined the ecological status of the River Dee and its tributaries at points closest to the application site as poor. Under the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, this is unsatisfactory and good status must be achieved here by 2021. Further downstream of Nobber village, the ecological status improves to good and this is satisfactory.



Figure 4 – Aerial Photograph of the Site (Outlined in Red) and its Surrounding Habitats.

### 3.3 NATURA 2000 SITES IDENTIFIED

In accordance with the guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, a list of Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development have been identified and described according to their site synopsis, qualifying interests and conservation objectives. In addition, any other sites further than this, but potentially within its zone of interest were also considered. The zone of impact may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas by virtue of hydrological connectivity, atmospheric emissions, flight paths, ecological corridors etc.

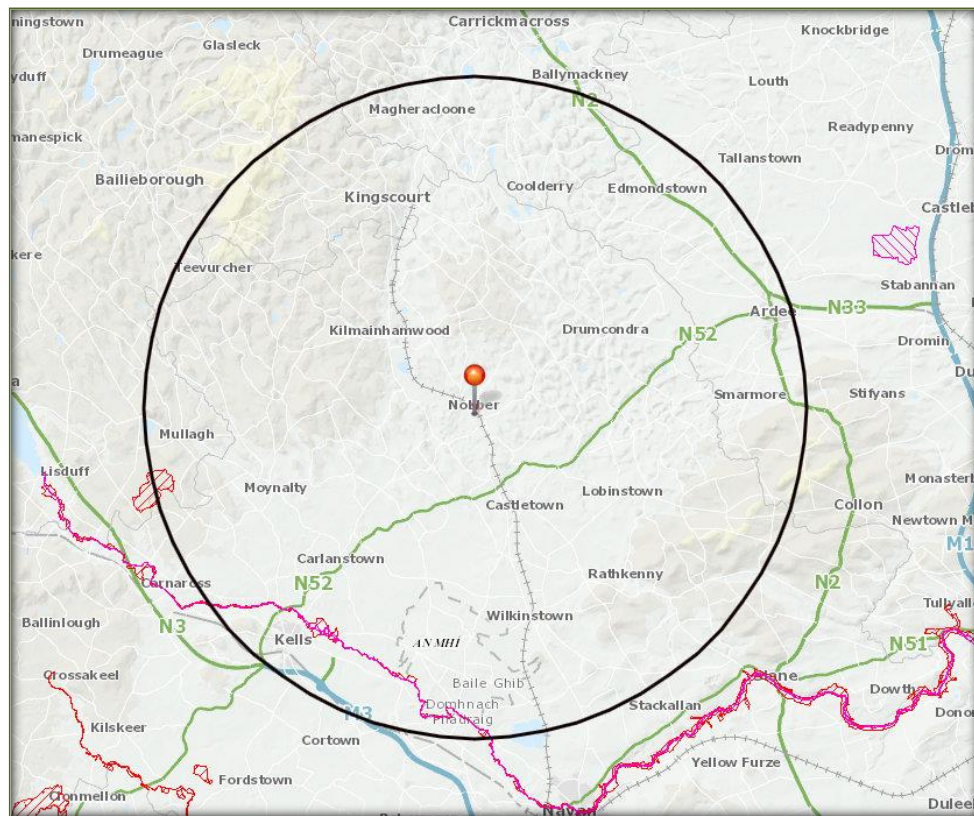
There are three Natura 2000 sites within 15km of this proposed development. These sites are summarised in Table 1. Other Natura 2000 sites in the same hydrometric area have also been considered. The location of the application site in relation to these designated areas is shown in Figure 5, and a full synopsis of these sites can be read online on the website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service ([www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie)).

Site Name & Code	Distance from Site	Qualifying Interests	Connectivity
The River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC 002299	12.4km south	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River lamprey (<i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i>)</li> <li>• Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>)</li> <li>• Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>)</li> <li>• Alkaline fens</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i></li> </ul>	<i>The application site is in a separate hydrological catchment to this SAC and as there is no connectivity significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
The River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA 004232	12.4km south	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i></li> </ul>	<i>The application site is in a separate hydrological catchment to this SPA and as there is no connectivity significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
Killyconny Bog SAC 000006	14km south-west	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active Raised Bogs.</li> <li>• Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration.</li> </ul>	<i>No direct hydrological connectivity between the application site and this SAC and significant effects can be ruled out.</i>
Dundalk Bay SAC 000455	26km east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estuaries</li> <li>• Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide</li> <li>• Perennial vegetation of stony banks</li> <li>• Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand</li> </ul>	<i>There are no watercourses on the site and therefore there is no connection to the River Dee, therefore significant effects upon this SAC can be ruled out.</i>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima)</li> <li>• Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>)</li> </ul>	
Dundalk Bay SPA 004026	26km east	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>)</li> <li>• Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>)</li> <li>• Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>)</li> <li>• Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)</li> <li>• Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>)</li> <li>• Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)</li> <li>• Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>)</li> <li>• Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>)</li> <li>• Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>)</li> <li>• Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>)</li> <li>• Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)</li> <li>• Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>)</li> <li>• Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>)</li> <li>• Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>)</li> <li>• Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>)</li> <li>• Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>)</li> <li>• Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)</li> <li>• Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>)</li> <li>• Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>)</li> <li>• Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>)</li> <li>• Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)</li> <li>• Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>)</li> <li>• Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)</li> <li>• Wetland and Waterbirds</li> </ul>	There are no watercourses on the site and therefore there is no connection to the River Dee, therefore significant effects upon this SPA can be ruled out.

Table 1 – Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km of the Proposed Site



**Figure 5 – The Application Site (Pinned) in relation to the Natura 2000 Sites Within 15km (SACs – Red Hatching, SPAs – Pink Hatching)**

### 3.4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The potential impacts of the proposed development on the Natura 2000 sites are described below.

**Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on nearby Natura 2000 site:**

The proposed development consists of the refurbishment and extension of the Nobber Fire Station, along with all associated site works. The construction and operation works involved will have no significant effects upon any of the Natura 2000 sites identified in Table 1. There are no individual elements of the proposed project that are likely to give rise to negative effects on these aforementioned sites. There is no hydrological or ecological connectivity between the application site and any designated area, therefore significant effects can be ruled out.

**Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the nearby Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:**

**Size and scale:** Given the small size and scale of the development in relation to the overall size of the Natura 2000 sites identified, the likelihood of any direct, indirect or cumulative impacts on this designated site arising from the construction and operation of the proposed development are low.

**Land-take:** There will be no land-take from any designated site. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any designated site.

**Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site:** There are three Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the application site. The closest of these are the River Boyne and Blackwater SAC / SPA. These sites are 12.4km south of the application site. They are also in a separate catchment to the application site, and therefore significant effects upon these Natura 2000 sites can be ruled out. The Dundalk Bay SAC / SPA is the receiving water for the River Dee and this SAC / SPA is 41km downstream of Nobber. However, no connectivity exists between the application site and the River Dee, therefore significant effects can be ruled out.

**Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.):** No resources will be taken from any Natura 2000 site and there are no resource requirements that will impact upon any designated site.

**Emissions:** Neither the construction nor the operation of the proposed development will result in any emissions to any Natura 2000 site. There will be no run-off from the site directly into any watercourse. Surface water from the site will be directed into the local surface water network.

Foul water from the site will be directed into the Irish Water foul water sewer.

**Excavation requirements:** Excavated material from the construction will be used on site. Any remaining will be disposed of in a responsible manner in a licensed facility away from any designated sites.

**Transportation requirements:** There will be no additional transportation requirements resulting from the proposed development and associated works that will have any impact upon the Natura 2000 sites identified.

**In-Combination / Cumulative Impacts:** The proposed application was considered in combination with other developments or proposed developments in the Nobber area and potential cumulative impacts were considered. A number of other developments have been granted planning permission in the general Nobber area in the last five years. The proposed development will have no cumulative impacts upon any designated sites when considered in combination with other developments that have been screened properly for AA (Stage I) or where AA has taken place (Stage II). Any future individual application that has the potential to impact upon a Natura 2000 site will be subject to Appropriate Assessment as required under Articles 6(3) of the Habitats Directive.

**Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc:** Once construction begins, it should be complete within one year.

#### Describe any likely changes to the nearby Natura 2000 sites arising as a result of:

**Reduction of habitat area:** The proposed development lies outside the boundaries of the Natura 2000 sites identified in Section 3.3. There will be no reduction of designated habitat area within any SAC or SPA. There will be no impacts upon the habitat qualifying interests of the designated sites. There will be no interference with the boundaries of any designated site.

**Disturbance to key species:** There will be no direct or indirect disturbance or effects to any species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive or Annex II of the Habitats Directive.

**Habitat or species fragmentation:** There will be no habitat or species fragmentation within any SAC or SPA. No ecological corridors between the proposed site and the Natura 2000 sites identified will be damaged or destroyed.

**Reduction in species density:** There will be no reduction in species density within the SAC and SPA.

**Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc.):** There will be no negative impacts upon surface or ground water quality within any SAC or SPA. There will be no negative impacts upon the water quality in any designated site. There will be no emissions from the site into any watercourse.

**Describe any likely impacts on the nearby Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:**

**Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site:** It is not considered likely that there will be any impacts on the key relationships that define the structure or function of the Natura 2000 sites identified.

**Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:**

**Loss** - Estimated percentage of lost area of habitat: None

**Fragmentation:** None

**Disruption & disturbance:** None

**Change to key elements of the site** (e.g. water quality etc.): None

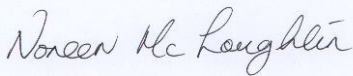
### 3.5 FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Finding of No Significant Effects Report Matrix	
<b>Name of project</b>	Refurbishment and Extension of the Nobber Fire Station.
<b>Name and location of Natura 2000 site</b>	There are three Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the application site. The closest of these are the River Boyne and Blackwater SAC / SPA. These sites are 12.4km south of the application site.
<b>Description of project</b>	A Local Authority Part 8 Development
<b>Is the project directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?</b>	No
<b>Are there other projects or plans that together with project being assessed could affect the site?</b>	No
The Assessment of Significance of Effects	
<b>Describe how the project is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site</b>	Having regard to the location, nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that there is no potential for significant effects either from the proposed development on its own or in combination with other plans and projects.
<b>Explain why these effects are not considered significant</b>	Not applicable as there is no potential for negative impacts
<b>Describe how the project is likely to affect species designated under Annex II of the Habitats Directive.</b>	No impacts likely
Data Collected to Carry out the Assessment	
<b>Who carried out the assessment</b>	Noreen McLoughlin, MSC, MCIEEM. Consultant Ecologist
<b>Sources of data</b>	NPWS, EPA, National Biodiversity Data Centre, Meath County Council
<b>Level of assessment completed</b>	Stage1 Appropriate Assessment Screening
<b>Where can the full results of the assessment be accessed and viewed</b>	Full results included

## **4 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT CONCLUSION**

In accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, the relevant case law, established best practice and the precautionary principle, this AA Screening Report has examined the details of the project in relation to the relevant Natura 2000 sites within 10km of the application site. This report has analysed the potential impacts and effects of the proposed project on the Special Conservation Interests of these designated sites. It has evaluated the significance of these potential impacts and effects in view of these sites' conservation objectives.

In view of best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, it can be concluded that this application, whether individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will have no impacts upon the Natura 2000 sites. It is of the opinion of this author that this application does not need to proceed to Stage II of the Appropriate Assessment process.



Noreen McLoughlin, MSc, MCIEEM.  
Ecologist.

(PI Insurance details available on request)