

# AA SCREENING REPORT

**Rathdrum Community Centre**

**Wicklow County Council**

**PROJECT NO. W323**

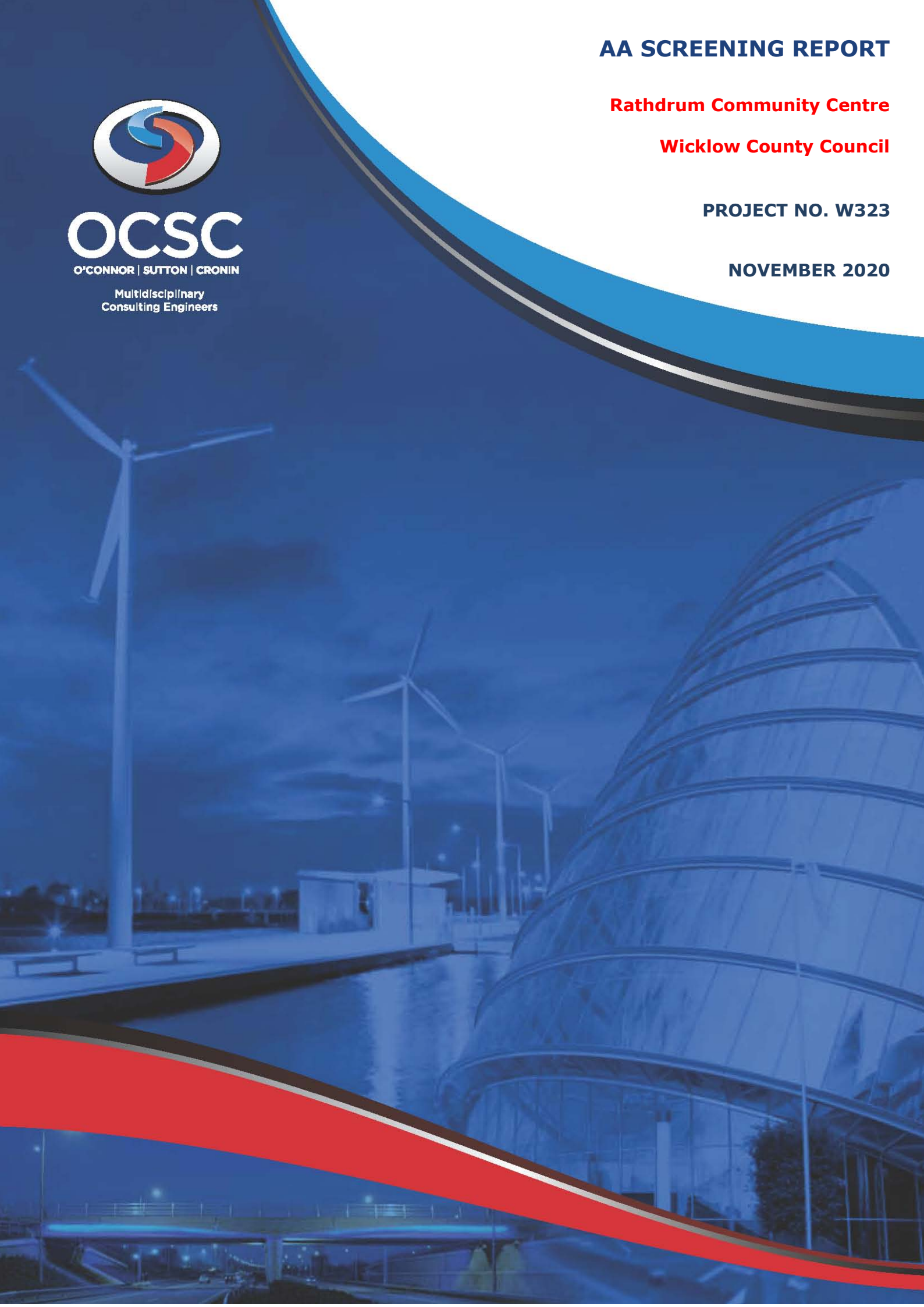
**NOVEMBER 2020**



# OCSC

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Multidisciplinary  
Consulting Engineers



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# **APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT**

**Rathdrum Community Centre**

**for**

**Wicklow County Council**



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## DOCUMENT CONTROL & HISTORY

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Contractual Basis & Parties Involved

This report has been prepared by O'Connor Sutton Cronin & Associates Ltd. (OCSC) at the request of their Client, Wicklow County Council. The site for assessment is an area to the east of Main Street, Rathdrum, County Wicklow where it is proposed that a Community Centre will be constructed under a Part 8 Application. The Regulating Authority for the site is Wicklow County Council.

The report was completed by Eleanor Burke BSc, MSc, DAS, MIEEnvSc, CSci, Technical Principal and the OCSC Environmental Division Manager.

### 1.2 Legislative Context

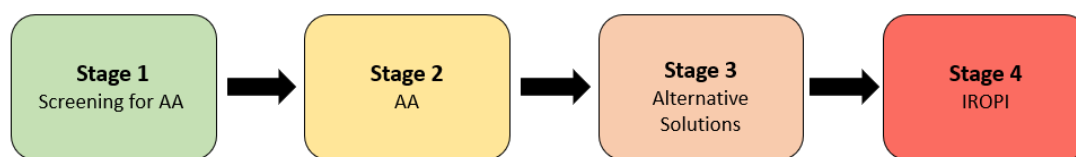
The Habitats Directive provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the "favourable conservation status" of habitats and species of European Community Interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives (Habitats Directive as above and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds) with Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as European Sites. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect such sites. Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA. These requirements are implemented in the Republic of Ireland by the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) and the Planning Development Act 2000 (as amended).

This AA screening is based on best scientific knowledge and has utilised ecological and hydrological expertise. In addition, a detailed online review of published scientific literature and 'grey' literature was conducted. This included a detailed review of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) website, including mapping and available reports for relevant sites and in particular sensitive qualifying interests/ special conservation interests described and their conservation objectives. The EPA EnVision map viewer (EPA 2019) and available reports were also reviewed, as was the NPWS (2013) publication "*The Status of Protected EU Habitats and Species in Ireland*".

The ecological desktop study completed for the AA screening of the proposed development comprised of the following elements:

- Identification of European sites with 15 km of the proposed project boundary with identification of potential pathway links for specific sites (if relevant) greater than 15 km from the proposed project boundary;
- Review of the NPWS site synopses and conservation objectives for European sites within 15 km and for which potential pathways from the proposed site have been identified; and
- Examination of available information on protected species.

There are four main stages in the AA process as follows:



IROPI: imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI),

### **Stage One: Screening**

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

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

The consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project of 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. If adequate mitigation is proposed to ensure no significant adverse impacts on European sites, then the process may end at this stage, however, if the likelihood of significant impacts remains, then the process must proceed to Stage Three.

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

The process that examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that avoids adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site.

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

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project of plan should proceed.

The Habitats Directive promotes a hierarchy of avoidance, mitigation and compensatory measures. This approach aims to avoid any impacts on European sites by identifying possible impacts early in the plan or project making process and avoiding such impacts. Secondly, the approach involves the application of mitigation measures, if necessary, during the AA process to the point where no adverse impacts on the site(s) remain. If potential impacts on European sites remain, and no further practicable mitigation is possible, the approach requires the consideration of alternative solutions. If no alternative solutions are identified and the plan or project is required for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, then compensation measures are required for any remaining adverse effects.

Ecological impact assessment of potential effects on European sites is conducted following a standard source-pathway-receptor model, where, in order for an effect to be established all three elements of this mechanism must be in place. The absence or removal of one of the elements of the mechanism is sufficient to conclude that a potential effect is of of any relevance or significance.



- Source(s) – e.g. pollutant run-off from proposed works;
- Pathway(s) – e.g. groundwater connecting to nearby qualifying wetland habitats; and
- Receptor(s) – qualifying aquatic habitats and species of European sites.

In relation to this report, receptors are the ecological features that are known to be utilised by the qualifying interests or special conservation interests of a European site. A source is any identifiable element of the proposed development that is known to interact with ecological processes. The pathways are any connections or links between the source and the receptor. This report provides information on whether direct, indirect and cumulative adverse effects could arise from the proposed development.

### 1.3 Methodology and Approach

The AA Screening has been prepared taking into account legislation including the aforementioned legislation and guidance including the following:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities*, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2009; 11 February 2010 revision.
- *Commission Notice: Managing Natura 2000 sites – The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' directive 92/43/EEC*, European Commission, 2018.
- *Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 200 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, European Commission Environment DG, 2002.
- *Managing Natura 2000 sites: the Provisions of Article 6 of the habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, European Commission, 2000.

Using the above documents it has been possible to carry out a desktop AA Screening using the best available guidance and operating within the applicable legislation.

### 1.4 Scope of Works

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

- Present a discussion of the proposed development and its potential effects on its receiving environment;
- Present a discussion of the current site status and key environmental influences around the site;
- Undertake and present a review of European sites in the region of the proposed development;
- Conduct and present a discussion on the screening of the identified European sites in relation to the potential effects arising from the project; and

- Provide a conclusion as to whether or not the proposed development is likely to, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, have a significant effect on any European site.

## 1.5 Limitations

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

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

This report has been prepared in line with best industry standards. The methodology adopted and the sources of information used by OCSC in providing its services are outlined in this Report. The assessment undertaken by OCSC and described was undertaken in November 2020 and is based on the information available during that period. The scope of this Report and the services are accordingly factually limited by these circumstances.

OCSC disclaim any undertaking or obligation to advise any person of any change in any matter affecting the Report, which may come or be brought to OCSC’s attention after the date of the Report.

The conclusions presented in this report represent OCSC’s best professional judgement based on review of the relevant information available at the time of writing. The opinions and conclusions presented are valid only to the extent that the information provided was accurate and complete.

## 2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

### 2.1 Project Description

This Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening report is prepared for a proposed Community Centre for the Rathdrum town centre; the site layout is shown in Appendix A.

### 2.2 Site Location

The site is located in Rathdrum, County Wicklow where there is a proposal under a Part 8 Application to construct a Community Centre, to the east of the existing Main Street in Rathdrum. The study area regionally location is identified in Figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1: Site - Regional Location (Source: OSI, 2020)

### 2.3 Site

The site is located in Rathdrum, County Wicklow where there is a proposal under a Part 8 Application to develop a site as a Community Centre. The study area consists of a parcel of land to the east of the town covering an approximate area outlined in Figure 2.1. There are two buildings within the site that will be retained as part of the development.



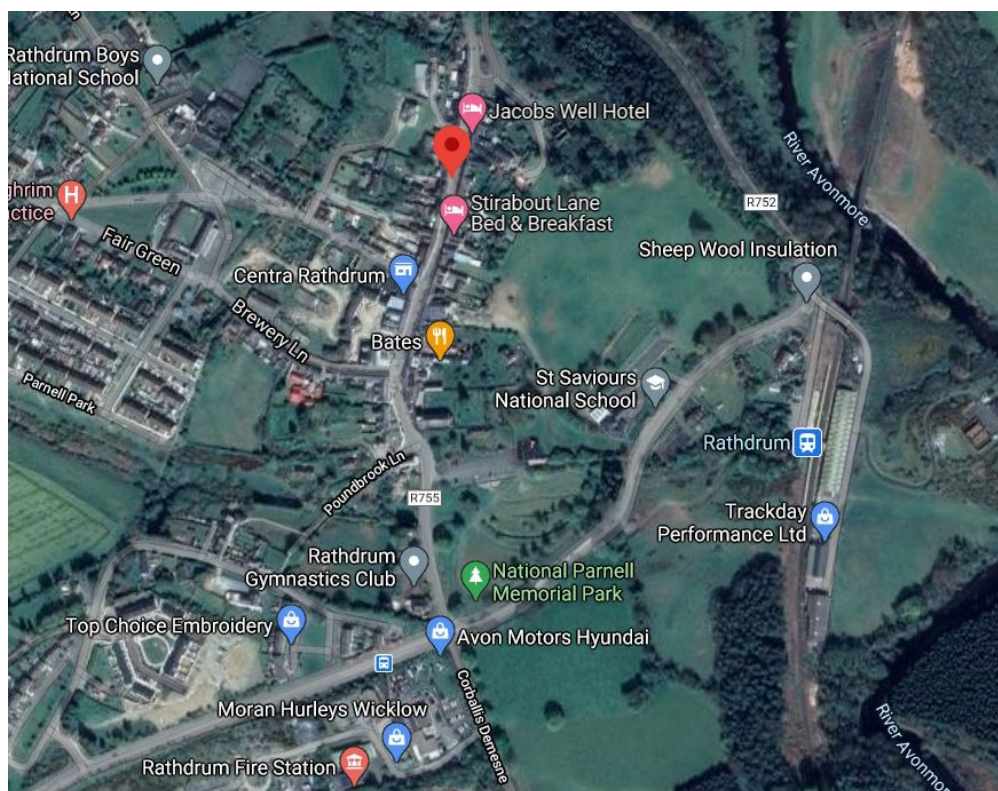
**Figure 2.1: Study Area**

## 2.4 Surrounding Land Use

The immediate surrounding area is in an residential, educational, recreational/ community use, commercial/retail businesses and agricultural/horticultural land uses. The site is bounded by the Parnell Memorial Park to the south and east including a carpark directly to the south, town centre to the west, St Saviours to the north. Further beyond immediate site surrounds lies the River Avonmore to the north and east along with woodlands and agricultural lands, and Rathdrum Railway Station to the east of the site. Refer to Table 2.1 for a full list of adjacent land uses.

**Table 2.1 – Adjacent Land Uses**

BOUNDARY	LAND USE
North	St Saviours directly to the north. River Avonmore (along the east), woodlands, agricultural land uses
South	A carpark directly to the south along with Parnell Memorial Park, residential, commercial/retail (Hyundai automotive dealer), vegetated lands, St Saviours National School and Lower Street.
East	Rathdrum Railway Station, woodlands
West	Town Centre

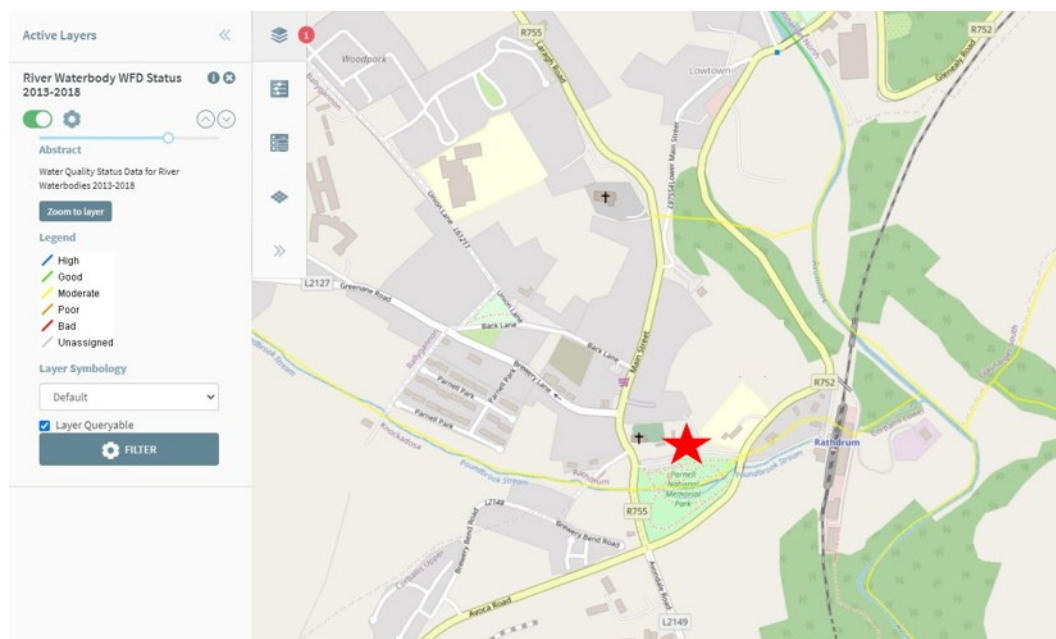


**Figure 2.3: Surrounding landuse (Google 2020)**

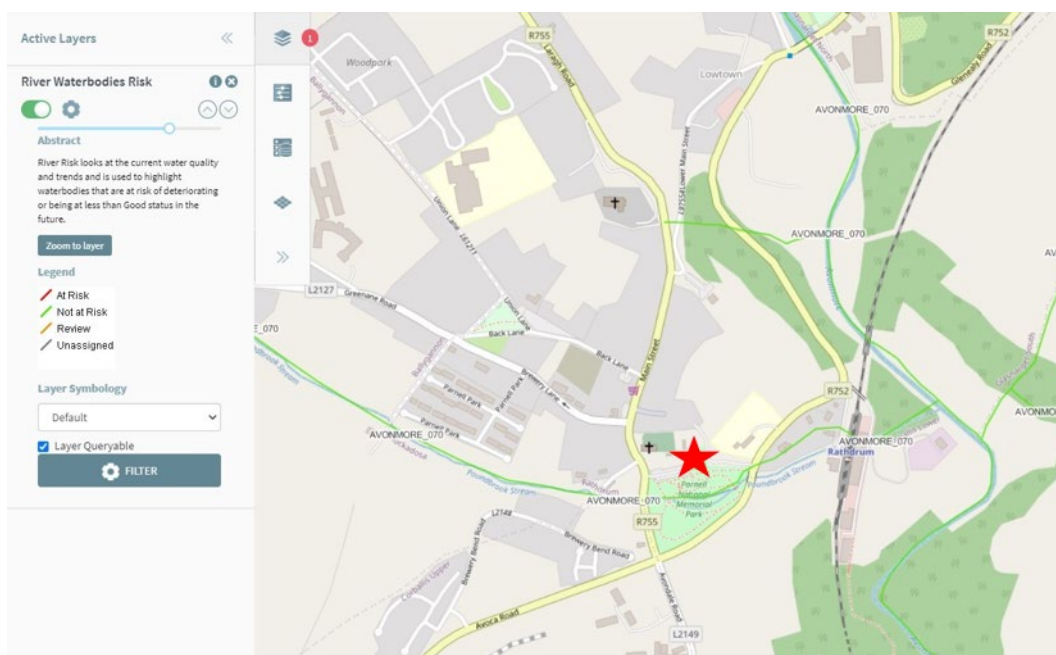
## 2.5 Hydrology

There are no surface water features mapped within the site area. The nearest surface water feature is the Poundbrook Stream that flows east approximately 50m south of the site, flowing from the west to the east into River Avonmore. This surface water feature feeds into the River Avonmore and based on the most recent water quality information 2013-2018, has an overall Water Framework Directive (WFD) Status of 'Moderate'. The EPA spatial dataset show that the WFD River Waterbody Risk associated with the stream is 'Not at Risk' (EPA 2020).

The second nearest surface water feature is River Avonmore, which is located 100m east of the most eastern point of the study area and flows from north to south until it enters into the bay at Arklow. This surface water feature has an overall WFD status of 'Moderate'. The EPA spatial dataset show that the WFD River Waterbody Risk associated with the river is 'Not at Risk' (EPA 2020). Poundbrook Stream and River Avonmore have the same EPA ID and code, which is IE\_EA\_10A050500.



**Figure 2.4: River Waterbody WFD Status (approximate site location indicated by red star) (Source: EPA Maps, 2020)**



**Figure 2.5: River Waterbodies Risk (approximate site location indicated by red star) (Source: EPA Maps, 2020)**

**Table 2.2 - WFD Summary Information – Poundbrook Stream and River Avonmore**

Waterbody Code	IE_EA_10A050500
Waterbody Name	Avonmore_070
Waterbody Type	River
Iteration	SW 2013-2018
Status	Moderate

Risk	Not at Risk
------	-------------

### 3 SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 Screening Process

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

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

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

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

“The integrity of a site involves its ecological functions. The decision as to whether it is adversely affected should focus on and be limited to the site's conservation objectives.”

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

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

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats;
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future; and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

## 3.2 Identification of relevant European Sites

This section of the screening process describes the European sites which exist within the Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the site. The Department of the Environment (2010 revised) Guidance on AA recommends a 15 km buffer zone to be considered for Natura 2000 sites, but projects are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. A review of all sites within the ZOI has allowed a determination to be made that in the absence of significant hydrological links the characteristics of the proposed works will not impose effects beyond the 15 km ZOI.

European sites that occur within 15 km of the proposed works are listed in Table 2.1 and illustrated in Figure 3.1. Details on the specific QIs and SCIs of each European Site are also identified in Table 3.1 as well as site-specific threats and vulnerabilities of each of the sites.

In order to determine the potential for effects from the proposed works, information on the qualifying features, known vulnerabilities and threats to site integrity pertaining to any potentially affected European sites was reviewed. Background information on threats to individual sites and vulnerability of habitats and species that was used during this assessment included the following:

- Ireland's Article 17 Report to the European Commission "*Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland*" (NPWS, 2019);
- Site Synopses (NPWS 2019a); and
- NATURA 2000 Standard Data Forms (NPWS 2019b).

The assessment takes consideration of the site-specific conservation objectives (SSCOs) of each of the sites within the ZOI. Since the conservation objectives for the European sites focus on maintaining the favourable conservation condition of the QIs/SCIs of each site, the screening process focused on assessing the potential effects of the proposed works against the QIs/SCIs of each site. The conservation objectives for each site were consulted throughout the assessment process.

- Conservation objectives that have been considered by the assessment are included in the following NPWS documents:
  - Conservation Objectives for Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC [000733]. Version 7.0 (07 April 2020).
  - Conservation Objectives for Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC [000717]. Generic Version 7.0 (07 April 2020).
  - Conservation Objectives for Wicklow Mountain's SAC [002122]. Version 1.0 (31 July 2017).
  - Conservation Objectives for Wicklow Mountain SPA [004040]. Version 1.0 (07/04/20).
  - Conservation Objectives for The Murrough Wetlands SAC [002249]. Generic Version 7.0 (07 April 2020).
  - Conservation Objectives for the Murrough SPA (004186).
  - Conservation Objectives for Buckroney-Brittias Dunes and Fen SAC [000729]. Version 1.0 (27 March 2017).
  - Conservation Objectives for Magherabeg Dunes SAC [001766]. Version 1.0 (27 March 2017).
  - Conservation Objectives for Wicklow Head SPA [004127]. (07 April 2020).



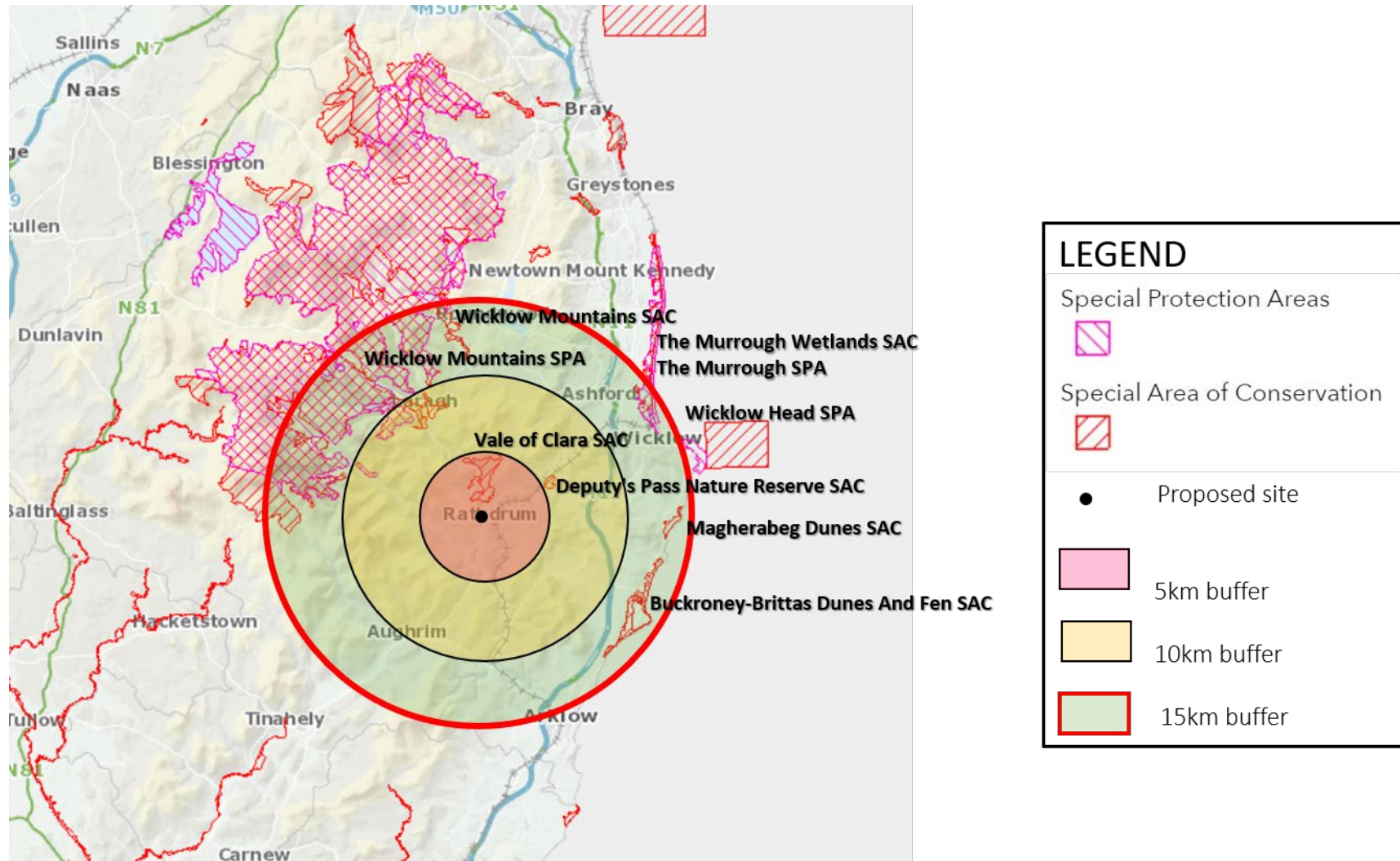


Figure 3.1: Designated Sites within 15km radius (NPWS 2020)



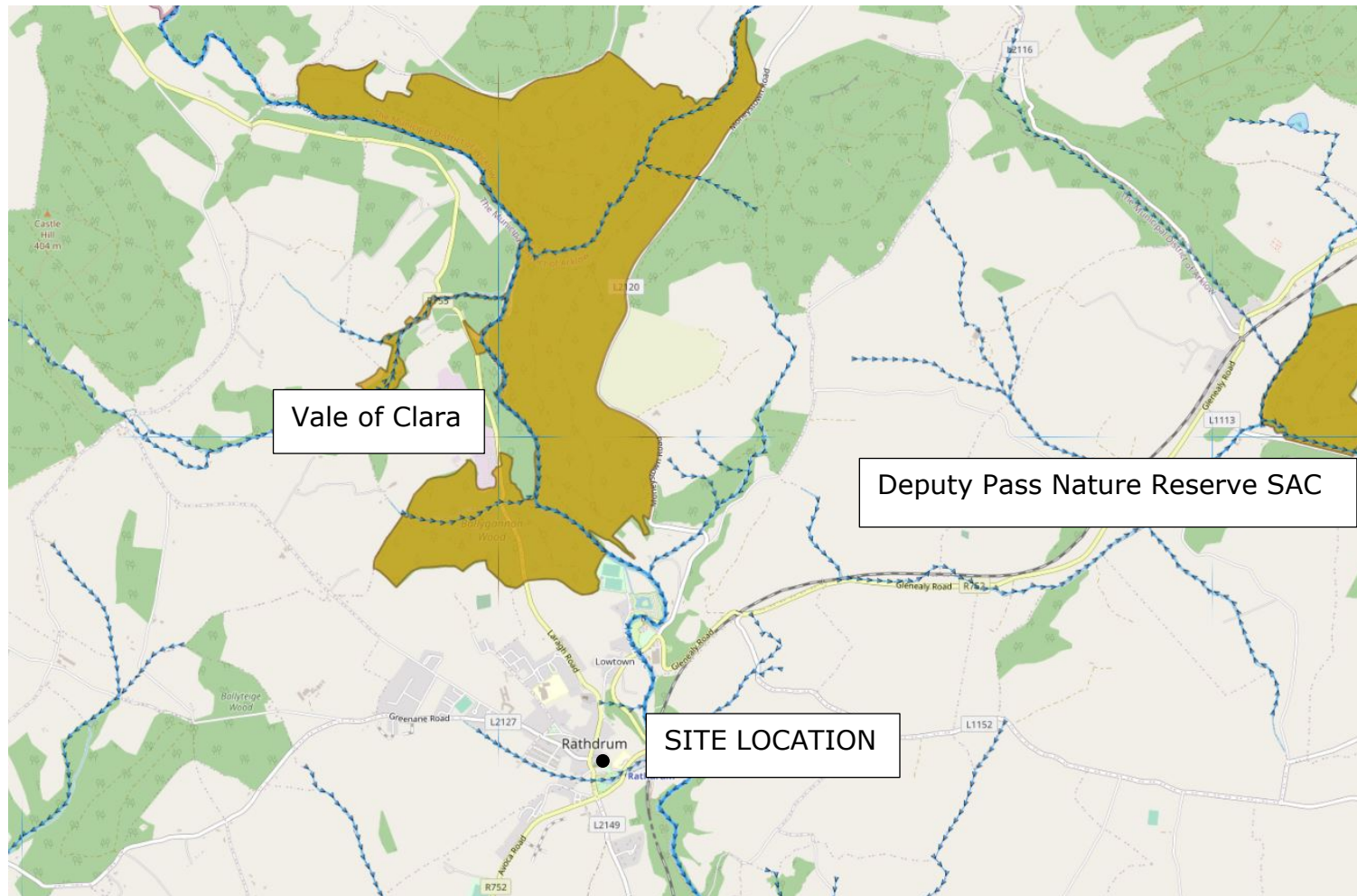


Figure 3.3: Nearest European Sites, EPA Rivers relative to study area

**Table 3.1 European Sites relative to the proposed site**

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Site Synopsis and Existing threats or Sensitivities
000733	Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC	1.07 NW	Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]	<p>Vale of Clara SAC has a site area of 378.25 ha and the old sessile oak woods cover an area of 175.55ha, mostly within the Vale of Clara Nature Reserve.</p> <p>The site synopsis details the woods in the Vale of Clara are a mosaic of relatively pure oak woodland (Sessile Oak, <i>Quercus petraea</i>), mixed woodland and commercial plantations, growing on an acidic orange-brown, sandy loam over a schist bedrock. A distinct mor humus, often several centimetres thick, overlies the mineral soil.</p> <p>Threats to the site include: B04 (use of biocides, hormones and chemicals (forestry)); F05.04 (poaching); I01 (invasive non-native species); E01.03 (dispersed habitation); F04.02 (collection); F03.01.01 (damage caused by game (excess population density)) ; and G01.02 (walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles)</p> <p>Two bird species were identified and listed in the Annex II Habitats within the SAC and are <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i> (Code A314) and <i>Sylvia atricapilla</i> (A311). A flowering species, <i>Cephalanthera longifolia</i>.</p>
000717	Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC	4.7 NE	Old Oak Woodlands [91A0]	<p>Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC has a site area 47.88ha and the Old Oak Woodlands ha site area of 42.47ha.</p> <p>The site synopsis details the woods as a good example of the <i>Blechno-quercetum petraeae</i> association which is characteristic of the valleys of Wicklow mountains. Oak is dominant over more than half of the site, the remainder being a mix of deciduous (native and non-native species) and coniferous woodland. The structure and species composition of the oak-dominated areas appear typical and there is natural regeneration. A narrow area of wet woodland (<i>Fraxinus icorylus</i>) along a small stream adds diversity to the site. This wood, although relatively small, is an important link in a series of oakwoods which extend from Glen of the Downs across to the Glendalough area</p>

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Site Synopsis and Existing threats or Sensitivities
				Threats to the site are listed on the standard data form as: I01 (invasive non-native species); A04 (grazing) : G02.06 (attraction park); B06 (grazing in forests/ woodland): G01.02 (walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles) ; E03.01 (disposal of household / recreational facility waste) ; and G05.04(Vandalism).
002122	Wicklow Mountains SAC	9.2 NW	[3110] Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals [3160] Dystrophic Lakes [4010] Wet Heath [4030] Dry Heath [4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths [6130] Calaminarian Grassland [6230] Species-rich Nardus Grassland* [7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)* [8110] Siliceous Scree [8210] Calcareous Rocky Slopes [8220] Siliceous Rocky Slopes [91A0] Old Oak Woodlands [1355] Otter (Lutra lutra)	<p>Wicklow Mountains SAC has a site area of 32,931.37 ha and has twelve habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.</p> <p>The site synopsis details the vegetation over most of Wicklow Mountains SAC is a mosaic of heath, blanket bog and upland grassland (mostly on peaty soil, though some on mineral soil), stands of dense Bracken (Pteridium aquilinum), and small woodlands mainly along the rivers. Due to the underlying rock strata, the water of the rivers and streams is acid rather than alkaline. The water is generally oligotrophic and free from enrichment. Large areas of the site are owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and are managed for nature conservation based on traditional land uses of upland areas. The most common land use is traditional sheep grazing, but others include turf cutting, mostly hand-cutting but some machine-cutting also occurs.</p> <p>Threats to the site listed with 15 threats, including invasive non-native species, human habitation and grazing.</p>
004040	Wicklow Mountains SPA	9.2 NW	Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098] Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]	This is an extensive upland site, comprising a substantial part of the Wicklow Mountains. Most of the site is in Co. Wicklow, but a small area lies in Co. Dublin. The underlying geology of the site is mainly of Leinster granites, flanked by Ordovician schists, mudstones and volcanics. The area was subject to glaciation and features fine examples of glacial lakes, deep valleys and moraines. Most of site is over 300 m, with much ground being over 600 m; the highest peak is Lugnaquilla (925 m). The substrate over much of site is peat, with poor mineral soil occurring on the slopes and lower ground. Exposed rock and scree are features of the site. The

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Site Synopsis and Existing threats or Sensitivities
				<p>predominant habitats present are blanket bog, heaths and upland grassland.</p> <p>The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Merlin and Peregrine.</p> <p>A series of surveys of the Wicklow Mountains SPA indicates that up to 9 pairs of Merlin breed within the site in any one year. Traditionally a ground-nesting species, Merlin in the Wicklow Mountains are usually found nesting in old crows nests in conifer plantations. The open peatlands provide excellent foraging habitat for Merlin with small birds such as Meadow Pipit being their main prey. The cliffs and crags within the site also provide ideal breeding locations for Peregrine (20 pairs in 2002).</p> <p>Other birds of the open peatlands and scree slopes that have been recorded within the site include Ring Ouzel and Red Grouse. The Wicklow Mountains SPA is of high ornithological importance as it supports nationally important populations of Merlin and Peregrine, both species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Part of Wicklow Mountains SPA is a Statutory Nature Reserve.</p>
002249	The Murrough Wetlands SAC	13.2 NE	<p>[1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows [7210] Cladium Fens* [7230] Alkaline Fens</p>	<p>The Murrough Wetlands SAC has a site area of 602.70 ha including a marine area of 5.9% and has six habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.</p> <p>The site synopsis describes The Murrough is a coastal wetland complex which stretches for 15 km from Ballygannon to north of Wicklow town, and in parts, extends inland for up to 1 km. A shingle ridge stretches the length of the site and carries the mainline DublinWexford railway. Formerly the area of wetland was more extensive but the integrity of the site has been diminished through drainage, agricultural improvement and levelling of sand hills. The railway line has influenced the development of the entire system. It is an important site for winter wildfowl and supports internationally important nos of</p>

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Site Synopsis and Existing threats or Sensitivities
				<p>Branta bernicla hrota as well as nationally important numbers of several species. Sterna albifrons (Annex I Birds Directive) breeds in the site. Many other Annex I species are also present. The site is also of importance for the populations of rare invertebrate and plant species that it supports.</p> <p>Threats to the site include ten threats including fertilisation, sand and gravel extraction, paths and tracks and erosion.</p>
004186	The Murrough SPA	13.2 NE	<p>Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001]                      Greylag Goose (Anser anser) [A043]                      Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]                      Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]                      Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]                      Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]                      Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184]                      Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195]                      Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>	<p>The Murrough SPA is an important site for wintering waterbirds, being internationally important for Light-bellied Brent Goose and nationally important for Red-throated Diver, Greylag Goose, Wigeon, Teal, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull. It is probably the most important site in the country for nesting Little Tern. The regular occurrence of Red-throated Diver, Little Egret, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose, Golden Plover, Little Tern, Sandwich Tern, Short-eared Owl and Kingfisher is of note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Part of the Murrough SPA is a Wildfowl Sanctuary.</p>
000729	Buckroneys-Brittias Dunes and Fen SAC	11.95 SE	<p>[1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines                      [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks                      [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows                      [2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes                      [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)                      [2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)*                      [2150] Decalcified Dune Heath*                      [2170] Dunes with Creeping Willow                      [2190] Humid Dune Slacks                      [7230] Alkaline Fens</p>	<p>Buckroneys-Brittias Dunes and Fen SAC has a site area of 320.65 ha including 13.03% marine area and ten habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.</p> <p>The site synopsis describes the SAC as an extensive sand dune and fen system that covers an 8 km stretch of the coastline of Co. Wicklow. The site contains three sand dune systems - Brittias Bay, Buckroneys and Pennycomequick. Sediment source is mainly siliceous (low shell fragment content), with maximum carbonate levels of 3.5%. The site contains a range of well-developed dune types, which are typical of those found in eastern Ireland. The dune systems are fairly extensive in area and generally of good quality. Of particular note are the fixed dunes, the decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea), the humid dune slacks, the dunes with Salix repens and the shifting Marram dunes. Buckroneys fen is a fine example of a diverse wetland system, including alkaline fen, and is one of the most important examples in eastern Ireland. The site is particularly notable for its eastern flora and</p>

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Site Synopsis and Existing threats or Sensitivities
				<p>fauna. In addition to five Red Data Book plant species, there are a number of nationally scarce species including an abundance of <i>Thelypteris palustris</i> and <i>Galium uliginosum</i>. The invertebrate fauna is of high interest, with some rare species including <i>Machimus cowini</i>. <i>Sterna albifrons</i> has bred at the site in the past.</p> <p>Threats to the site include twenty threats including non-intensive grazing, stock feeding, trampling/overuse, vandalism, erosion, species change (succession) and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions.</p>
001766	Magherabeg Dunes SAC	12.85	<p>[1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines [2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes) [2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)* [7220] Petrifying Springs*</p>	<p>The Magheraeg Dunes has a site area of 74.6% with a marine area of 15.3% and six habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.</p> <p>The site synopsis describes the SAC is of conservation importance because it is a fine example of a dune system which is fairly intact and which has a well-developed flora. The lack of easy public access to this site has undoubtedly helped in preventing damage and erosion from amenity activities. The presence of wetland vegetation on the site is of additional interest.</p> <p>Threats to the site include nine threats including non-intensive grazing, walking/horseback riding and missing or wrongly directed conservation measures.</p>
004127	Wicklow Head SPA	15	A188 Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> )	<p>Wicklow Head has a site area of 195 ha and marine area of 96.5% and has one</p> <p>The site synopsis describes the Wicklow Head SPA has a good diversity of breeding seabirds, with nationally important populations of <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> and <i>Cepphus grylle</i>, and regionally important numbers of <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>, <i>Uria aalge</i> and <i>Alca torda</i>. This seabird colony has developed mostly since the 1970s and has been monitored regularly since. The site also supports a pair of breeding <i>Falco peregrinus</i>, and has some typical heathland species, including <i>Sylvia communis</i>.</p>



Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Site Synopsis and Existing threats or Sensitivities
				There is one listed threat to the site and is walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles.

### **3.3 Assessment Criteria**

#### **3.3.1 Exclusion from Appropriate Assessment**

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

In this case however, the development of a Community Centre in Rathdrum is neither necessary for, nor directly connected with the management of a European Site. As such the proposed development cannot be excluded from AA. It is considered that the operational phase elements of the proposed project will not introduce effects, over and above those already existing as the site is located in an urban area adjacent to an existing main road.

#### **3.3.2 Elements of the works with the potential to give risk to Effects**

The construction and operational phases of the proposed Community Centre have the potential to introduce effects such as indirect disturbance due to noise/vibrations. These effects are examined in detail in relation to the sensitive receptors of each of the European sites identified with regard to the conservation objectives and the potential pathways for effects.

#### **3.3.3 Identification of Potential Effects and Screening of Sites**

This section documents the final stage of the screening process. It uses the information collected on the sensitivity of each European Site and describes any potential effects to the integrity of European sites resulting from the proposed works. This assumes the absence of any controls, conditions, or mitigation measures. In determining the potential for effects, a number of factors have been taken into account. Firstly, the sensitivity and reported threats to the European Site. Secondly, the individual elements of the proposed works and the potential effect they may cause to the site were considered.

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

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

### 3.4 Assessment of Significance of Potential Effects

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

**Direct and Indirect Impacts** – An impact can be caused either as a direct or as an indirect consequence of a proposed development;

**Magnitude** - Magnitude refers to size, amount, intensity and volume. It should be quantified if possible and expressed in absolute or relative terms (e.g. the amount of habitat lost, percentage change to habitat area, percentage decline in a species population). Magnitude measures the size of an impact, which is described as high, medium, low, very low or negligible.

**Extent** - The extent is the spatial or geographical area over which the impact/effect may occur under a suitably representative range of conditions (e.g. noise transmission under water);

**Duration** - The time for which the effect is expected to last prior to recovery or replacement of the resource or feature. The time for which the effect is expected to last prior to recovery or replacement of the resource or feature.

- Temporary: Up to 1 Year;
- Short Term: The effects would take 1-7 years to be mitigated;
- Medium Term: The effects would take 7-15 years to be mitigated;
- Long Term: The effects would take 15-60 years to be mitigated; and
- Permanent: The effects would take 60+ years to be mitigated.

**Likelihood** – The probability of an impact/effect occurring. The probability of the effect occurring taking into account all available information.

- Certain/Near Certain: >95% chance of occurring as predicted;
- Probable: 50-95% chance as occurring as predicted;
- Unlikely: 5-50% chance as occurring as predicted; and
- Extremely Unlikely: <5% chance as occurring as predicted.

EC identified in 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission Environment DG, 2001' outlines the types of effects that may affect European sites. These include effects from the following activities:

- Land take
- Resource Requirements (Drinking Water Abstraction Etc.)
- Emissions (Disposal to Land, Water or Air)
- Excavation Requirements
- Transportation Requirements
- Duration of Construction, Operation, Decommissioning

In addition, the guidance outlines the following likely changes that may occur at a designated site, which may result in effects on the integrity and function of that site:

- Reduction of Habitat Area

- Disturbance to Key Species
- Habitat or Species Fragmentation
- Reduction in Species Density
- Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value (Water Quality Etc.)
- Climate Change

The elements detailed above were considered with specific reference to each of the European sites identified within a 15km radius.

### **3.4.1 Land Take/Habitat Loss**

The proposed development will see a minor land take for the development of the new Community Centre; however, the nearest European Sites or qualifying habitat features is at a distance of over 1km from the site (i.e. Vale of Clara SAC); therefore, there will be no effects posed to European sites in this respect.

### **3.4.2 Resource Requirements**

There are no resource requirements (i.e. mineral/drinking water abstractions etc.) of the proposed enhancements which will be additional to existing requirements. Therefore, there will be no interactions with resources necessary for the maintenance of the ecological integrity of any European sites.

### **3.4.3 Duration of Works**

The construction phase of the proposed works is anticipated to be short term in nature. Given the relatively small-scale and short-term nature of the construction works, the duration of the works will not have a significant impact on nearby European sites.

### **3.4.4 Emissions (Disposal to Land, Water or Air)**

Drainage will require a new surface water drainage system for the site and tie in to existing infrastructure. Construction phase elements of the plan may give rise to increased temporary site effects such as noise or contamination due to dust. Given the distance (minimum of 1km to the Vale of Clara SAC) between the closest European site and the development, combined with the small-scale nature of the development, these effects are determined to be negligible. The operational phase elements of the project will be consistent with existing urban land use of Main Street.

### **3.4.5 Excavation Requirements/ Erosion/Sedimentation**

The proposed development does not require major excavation works. Some small-scale works will be completed.

A portion of Vale of Clara SAC (Rathdrum Woods) is located approx. 1km to the northwest of the proposed site. The land between the site and the Vale of Clara is mixed use with residential, schools, commercial/retail businesses, River Avonmore, agricultural/horticultural

land use and woodlands. Its topography is undulating in nature and sees several hills and troughs and a low-lying plain surrounding the river. There is a potential for erosion of bare ground, and/or sediment movement resulting from surface run-off during the construction phase. However, given the relatively small-scale and short-term nature of the works, coupled with the distance of the development works from the European Site, and the fact that the European Site is located upstream of the study area, there is no direct significant effects to the European Site anticipated as a result of erosion and/or sedimentation.

Poundbrook Stream is situated beyond the southern boundary and flows directly into River Avonmore, which continues heading south. There is no direct or indirect link to the Poundbrook Stream. Additionally there is no hydrological link between the River Avonmore and the SAC as the study area is downstream of the SAC.

The River Avonmore is situated to the east and north of the site, and at its closest, is approximately 100 m east from the site. The River Avonmore flows south from the site until it enters the bay near the town of Arklow and would not directly impact to any European site and would not be a direct pathway.

The impacts associated with the proposed development are not considered to be significant. Therefore, given the scale of the development and distance the effects arising from these works will be negligible.

### **3.4.6 Transportation Requirements**

There will be a minor temporary increase in traffic during the construction phase. However, these effects are considered to be negligible with regard to European sites due to the small-scale nature of the works, the distances observed and the indirect pathways for effects.

### **3.4.7 Duration of Construction, Operation, Decommissioning**

The proposed project duration is short term. The construction will result in a Community Centre which will be permanent features with no decommissioning phase. The duration of the construction will have no effects on European sites given the small-scale nature of the works, the distances and indirect pathways identified.

### **3.4.8 Habitat Reduction**

There are no supporting habitats identified within the site footprint for any Annex I or Annex II species, and the nearest European sites or qualifying habitat features is located 1km from the site. As such, there will be no reduction of habitat of European sites resulting from the proposed development.

### **3.4.9 Species Disturbance**

Of the protected species and habitats identified, the Vale of Clara SAC is located 1km from the proposed development and as such, disturbance from noise, vibrations, lighting etc. are not a valid link. There are no pathways for disturbance effects identified due to the distance between the proposed development and the nearest European site.

### **3.4.10 Habitat or species fragmentation**

The nearest European site is 1km away from the site. Given the scale, timeline and distance from the European sites the proposal is considered to have no potential effects on any European site in this regard.

### **3.4.11 Changes in Key indicators of Conservation Value**

The nearest European site is 1km away from the proposed community centre. There are no surface water features within the site area. The nearest surface water feature is the Poundbrook Stream located beyond the southern boundary which flows east into River Avonmore. Therefore, given the scale and timeline of the development, combined with the distance and indirect pathways identified, effects arising from these works will be negligible.

### **3.4.12 Climate Change**

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

**Table 3.2 Screening assessment of the potential effects arising from the proposed works**

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Characterisation of Potential Effects	Potential Significant Effects	Potential In-combination Effects
000733	Vale of Clara (Rathdrum Wood) SAC	1.07 NW	Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]	<p>Threats to the site include: B04 (use of biocides, hormones and chemicals (forestry)); F05.04 (poaching); I01 (invasive non-native species); E01.03 (dispersed habitation); F04.02 (collection); F03.01.01 (damage caused by game (excess population density)); and G01.02 (walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles)</p> <p>There are no sources for effect to the terrestrial habitats of the SAC. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance (less than 250m<sup>1</sup>), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.</p> <p>The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes (see below for details). Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible.</p>	No	No
000717	Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC	4.7 NE	Old Oak Woodlands [91A0]	<p>Deputy's Pass Nature Reserve SAC has a site area 47.88ha and the Old Oak Woodlands ha site area of 42.47ha.</p> <p>There are no sources for effect to the terrestrial habitats of the SAC. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.</p>	No	No

<sup>1</sup> Tian, G., Li, G., Yan, B.L., Huang, Y.H. and Qin, J.P., 2008. Spatial dispersion laws of fugitive dust from construction sites. Huan jing ke xue= Huanjing kexue, 29(1), pp.259-262.

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Characterisation of Potential Effects	Potential Significant Effects	Potential In-combination Effects
				<p>The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes (see below for details). Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible</p> <p>Threats to the site are listed on the standard data form as: I01 (invasive non-native species); A04 (grazing) ; G02.06 (attraction park); B06 (grazing in forests/ woodland); G01.02 (walking, horse-riding and non-motorised vehicles) ; E03.01 (disposal of household / recreational facility waste) ; and G05.04(Vandalism).</p>		
002122	Wicklow Mountains SAC	9.2 NW	<p>[3110] Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals [3160] Dystrophic Lakes [4010] Wet Heath [4030] Dry Heath [4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths [6130] Calaminarian Grassland [6230] Species-rich Nardus Grassland* [7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)* [8110] Siliceous Scree [8210] Calcareous Rocky Slopes [8220] Siliceous Rocky Slopes [91A0] Old Oak Woodlands [1355] Otter (Lutra lutra)</p>	<p>Wicklow Mountains SAC has a site area of 32,931.37 ha and has twelve habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Threats to the site listed with 15 threats, including invasive non-native species, human habitation and grazing.</p> <p>There are no sources for effect to the terrestrial habitats of the SAC. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance<sup>4</sup> (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.</p> <p>The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes. Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible</p>	No	No
004040	Wicklow Mountains SPA	9.2 NW	Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098]	The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Merlin and Peregrine.	No	No



Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Characterisation of Potential Effects	Potential Significant Effects	Potential In-combination Effects
			Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103]	<p>There are no sources for effect to the habitats of the SPA. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance<sup>4</sup> (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.</p> <p>The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes. Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible</p>		
002249	The Murrough Wetlands SAC	13.2 NE	<p>[1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows [7210] Cladium Fens* [7230] Alkaline Fens</p>	<p>The Murrough Wetlands SAC has a site area of 602.70 ha including a marine area of 5.9% and has six habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.</p> <p>There are no sources for effect to the terrestrial habitats of the SAC. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance<sup>4</sup> (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.</p> <p>The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes. Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible</p> <p>Threats to the site include ten threats including fertilisation, sand and gravel extraction, paths and tracks and erosion.</p>	No	No
004186	The Murrough SPA	13.2 NE	<p>Red-throated Diver (Gavia stellata) [A001] Greylag Goose (Anser anser) [A043]</p>	<p>The Murrough SPA is an important site for wintering waterbirds, being internationally important for Light-bellied Brent Goose and nationally important for Red-throated Diver, Greylag Goose, Wigeon, Teal, Black-headed Gull and Herring Gull. It is probably the most important site in the country for nesting Little Tern. The regular occurrence of Red-throated Diver, Little Egret, Whooper Swan, Greenland White-fronted Goose,</p>	No	No

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Characterisation of Potential Effects	Potential Significant Effects	Potential In-combination Effects
			Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) [A184] Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Golden Plover, Little Tern, Sandwich Tern, Short-eared Owl and Kingfisher is of note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Part of the Murrough SPA is a Wildfowl Sanctuary.  There are no sources for effect to the habitats of the SPA. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance <sup>4</sup> (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.  The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes. Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible		
000729	Buckroney-Brittass Dunes and Fen SAC	11.95 SE	[1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines [1220] Perennial Vegetation of Stony Banks [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows [2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes) [2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)* [2150] Decalcified Dune Heath* [2170] Dunes with Creeping Willow [2190] Humid Dune Slacks	Buckroney-Brittass Dunes and Fen SAC has a site area of 320.65 ha including 13.03% marine area and ten habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.  Threats to the site include twenty threats including non-intensive grazing, stock feeding, trampling/overuse, vandalism, erosion, species change (succession) and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions.  There are no sources for effect to the terrestrial habitats of the SAC. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance <sup>4</sup> (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.  The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes. Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible	No	No

Site Code	Site Name	Distance (km)	Sensitive Receptors (Qualifying Interest & Special Conservation Interests) [including the relevant code for the qualifying feature]	Characterisation of Potential Effects	Potential Significant Effects	Potential In-combination Effects
			[7230] Alkaline Fens			
001766	Magherabeg Dunes SAC	12.85	[1210] Annual Vegetation of Drift Lines [2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes [2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes) [2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)* [7220] Petrifying Springs*	<p>The Magheraeg Dunes has a site area of 74.6% with a marine area of 15.3% and six habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive.</p> <p>Threats to the site include nine threats including non-intensive grazing, walking/horseback riding and missing or wrongly directed conservation measures.</p> <p>There are no sources for effect to the terrestrial habitats of the SAC. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance<sup>4</sup> (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.</p> <p>The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes. Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible</p>	No	No
004127	Wicklow Head SPA	15	A188 Kittiwake ( <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> )	<p>Wicklow Head has a site area of 195 ha and marine area of 96.5% and has one</p> <p>There is one listed threat to the site and is walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles.</p> <p>There are no sources for effect to the habitats of the SPA. Drainage for the site will be managed by a new site surface water drainage system. There is no hydrological link given the sites location downstream of the protected area. Construction phase effects such as dust are known to persist over a short distance<sup>4</sup> (less than 250m), all other effects from the sites are identified to be localised.</p> <p>The projects identified in the surrounding area are also small scale and were subject to their own AA processes. Therefore, these effects are determined to be negligible</p>	No	No

## 4 CONCLUSION

This stage 1 screening for AA of the proposed Community Centre in Rathdrum, Co Wicklow shows that implementation of the proposed project is not foreseen to have any likely significant effects on any European site.

The nearest European sites or qualifying habitat features is located 1km from the proposed development site. The AA screening process has considered potential effects which may arise during the construction and operational phases as a result of the implementation of the project. There are no direct hydrological pathways between the proposed site and any European site. Therefore, given the scale of the development and distance the effects arising from these works will be negligible.

Through an assessment of the pathways for effects and an evaluation of the project characteristics, taking account of the processes involved and the distance of separation from European sites, it has been evaluated that there are no likely significant adverse effects on the qualifying interests, special conservation interest or the conservation objectives of any designated European site. The ecological integrity of the European sites is not foreseen to be significantly affected by the project.

Given the nature of the development, its scale, the existing localised and temporary nature of the construction effects identified as potential sources the proposed development will not lead to a significant in-combination effect with any other plans or projects.

It is concluded that the project is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects on any designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. This evaluation is made in view of the conservation objectives of the habitats or species for which these sites have been designated. Consequently, a Stage Two is not required for the project.



# **APPENDIX A – Proposed Site Layout**

