

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Proposed Aughrim Library redevelopment

For: Wicklow County Council,
County Buildings,
Whitegates
Wicklow Town
Co. Wicklow

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Field Investigations and Data

Where field investigations have been carried out, these have been restricted to a level of detail required to achieve the stated objectives of the work. Where any data supplied by the client or from other sources have been used it has been assumed that the information is correct. No responsibility can be accepted by Alan Lauder Consulting for inaccuracies in the data supplied by any other party.

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Contents

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Project Brief and Purpose of the Report	5
1.2 Proposed Development	5
2. The EIA Screening Process	7
2.1 Introduction.....	7
2.2 Legislative Requirements	7
2.3 Methodology.....	7
2.4 Mandatory EIA Review	8
2.5 Preliminary Examination	9
2.6 Legislative Requirements	9
3. Preliminary Examination	10
4. Project Assessment	11
5. Conclusion.....	14
Appendix 1 – Project Overview	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 2 – Ballywaltrim Astro Pitch (Rev. 7) – All Weather Pitch	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 3 – Updated plans and drawings for Pitches 2 and 3 (2026).....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief and Purpose of the Report

This report has been prepared for Wicklow County Council (*the client*). It contains information required for the competent authority to undertake a Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment in respect of the proposed redevelopment of Aughrim Public library and community garden. This report is with regard to Article 123 A (1) (a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) where a sub-threshold development, as prescribed under Section 181 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), must undergo a preliminary assessment for likely significant effects on the environment. This assessment shall consider, as a minimum, the characteristics of the project, the location of the proposed project and the characteristics of potential impacts.

This report was prepared by Alan Lauder of *Alan Lauder Consulting* on Behalf of their Client Wicklow County Council.

1.2 Proposed Development

The proposed project is concerned with the redevelopment of a Public Library in Aughrim, Co. Wicklow, with the inclusion of a community garden. The proposed works in outline are as follows:

Development of a new public library in Aughrim, County Wicklow on a brownfield site extending to c. 0.1 hectares

The area is zoned as “Existing residential” in the local development plan and is on the edge of an area zoned as “Town Centre”.

The development which may take 1-2 years to completion, commencing in winter 2026.

It will involve clearing the site of existing rough grassland and ruderal vegetation, retaining trees

Development is of a two story public building using standard construction approaches, with associated services, such as exterior access /public space, development of a community garden, and provision of waste water, electrical supply etc.

An outline building drawing is shown in Figure 1 & 2 to characterise the proposed development and further details are presented by the client through the normal planning process.

There will be retention of the few existing trees on the site and boundary structures may be refurbished or altered.

Water supply and waste water will managed through connection to existing water and sewerage services.

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2. The EIA Screening Process

2.1 Introduction

This section of the report sets out the legislative basis for ‘Screening’ so as to decide whether or not the proposed development requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

2.2 Legislative Requirements

EIA requirements derive from Council Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC) and as codified and replaced by Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (and as amended in turn by Directive 2014/52/EU). Directive 2014/52/EU is transposed into Irish law under the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018.

Projects can be placed into one of the following categories:

- those that exceed the thresholds laid down and therefore have a mandatory requirement to prepare an EIA; and
- those projects that are sub-threshold and must be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether or not they are likely to have significant effects on the environment;
- projects that fall under Annex II (13) (a) of the Directive for any change or extension of projects listed in Annex I or Annex II, already authorised, executed in the process of being executed.

2.3 Methodology

Screening is the process of deciding whether a development requires an EIA Report (EIAR). The particulars of the assessment procedure are adopted through European Directives and correlate to the provisions set out in the Planning and Development Act 2001 (as amended). An EIA is required to be carried out as part of an application whereby the proposed development exceeds the limitations of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The methodology for screening generally considers the following documents:

- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports;
- Interpretation of definitions of project categories of annex I and II of the EIA Directive (European Commission 2015);
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (Environmental Protection Agency, 2003);
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements; and
- Guidelines on EIA Screening (The European Commission, June 2017).

The ‘Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports’ (Environmental Protection Agency, May 2022) provide a flow diagram of the screening process which is provided in Figure 3.

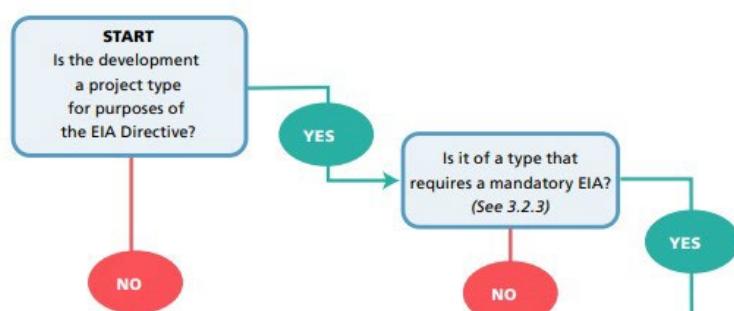


Figure 3: Diagram showing EIA Screening Process ('Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports') Environmental Protection Agency, May 2022

2.4 Mandatory EIA Review

EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, Annex 1 (transposed into the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) – Schedule 5, Part 1 – Development for the Purposes of Part 10) lists the project types that require a mandatory EIA due to the high likelihood of that project resulting in a significant effect on the environment.

The proposed project outlined in this screening report does not fall into any of these categories.

Those projects not requiring a mandatory EIA should be further considered under the relevant list of activities which warrant discretionary consideration for the requirement of an EIA. Subject to EIA Directive 2011/92/EU, Article 2(4), for the projects listed in Annex II. These project classes are included in Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Project types included in Annex II are outlined in Table 1:

Table 1: Schedule 5, Part 2 - Class of Development

Schedule 5, Part 2 – Class of Development
1. Agriculture, Silviculture and Aquaculture
2. Extractive Industry

3. Energy Industry
4. Production and processing of metals
5. Mineral Industry
6. Chemical Industry
7. Food Industry
8. Textile, leather, wood and paper industries
9. Rubber Industry
10. Infrastructure projects
11. Other projects
12. Tourism and leisure
13. Changes, extensions, development and testing

Points 10, 12 and 13 were investigated in more detail. This Project does not fall under any described under points 10, 12 or 13.

Therefore, the proposed project falls below the level for mandatory EIA. The Project is considered a ‘sub-threshold’ project and requires a Preliminary Examination.

2.5 Preliminary Examination

For all sub-threshold developments listed in Schedule 5 Part 2, where no EIAR is submitted or EIA determination requested, a screening determination is required to be undertaken by the competent authority unless, on preliminary examination it can be concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.

2.6 Legislative Requirements

Where a proposed development is ‘sub threshold’ in nature, the competent authority shall decide whether the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The key issue, in the context of the possible need for EIA of sub-threshold development, is whether or not such development is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

In accordance with Article 123 A. (1) (a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) where a State authority proposes to carry out a subthreshold development prescribed under section 181 of the Act, the authority shall carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development.

The purpose of this preliminary screening exercise is to conclude whether:

1. There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall conclude that an EIA is not required;
2. There is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the development, it shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, the information specified in Schedule 7A for the purposes of a screening determination;

or

3. There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall— (i) conclude that the development would be likely to have such effects, and (ii) prepare, or cause to be prepared, an EIAR in respect of the development

3. Preliminary Examination

Where a Project is ‘sub-threshold’ and not accompanied by an EIAR or Schedule 7A information, a preliminary examination is required, addressing at a minimum:

- The nature of the development including the production of waste and pollutants
- The size of the development; or
- The location of the development including the potential to impact directly or indirectly on ecologically sensitive sites in the area

Table 2 addresses these points.

Table 2: Minimum points for preliminary examination

	Comment	Likelihood of significant effect on Environment
Nature of the development Is the nature of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment? Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, or result in significant emissions or pollutants?	The project is concerned with the establishment of a new Public library building in Aughrim. The accompanying AA screening identifies no significant adverse impacts are likely on European sites. It also identified that while the nearby river corridor may support notably Bats and Otters (Annex II species) there would be no likely significant impact on the river corridor thus no risk to these species.	Unlikely: The development is proposed for a peri-urban, brownfield site and is small and in keeping with the immediate surrounds. It does not impinge upon areas and habitats outside of its immediate footprint. Retention of surrounding trees and natural features will continue to complement the river corridor, drainage plans are to connect to mains and existing surface water drainage. Construction and operation will be predominantly daytime and prevent any likelihood of significant nocturnal effects.
Size of the development Is the size of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment? Are there cumulative considerations having regard to other existing and/or permitted projects?	The project footprint covers an area of c. 0.1 ha. No cumulative considerations are deemed significant as the project footprint is in a per-urban environment	None

Location of the development Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or does it have the potential to impact on an ecologically sensitive site or location? Does the proposed development have the potential to affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area?	The project footprint is not on or adjacent to a protected or ecologically sensitive site. The closest protected site is at c. 10km+ from the project footprint. The closest watercourse is adjacent (a tributary of the Aughrim river) but the project footprint does not impinge on the river corridor and sits well above the recognised flood zone.	None
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4. Project Assessment

Annex III of Directive 2011/92/EU sets out the below criteria against which the sub-threshold project and its potential impacts must be considered.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Proposed Development

Characteristics of the Proposed Development	Assessment
The size and design of the project in its entirety	The footprint of the proposed development occupies an area of c. 0.1 ha. of brownfield land. With a retained narrow border of mixed trees between it and the river corridor. The wider area comprises of a per-urban town landscape with commercial and residential buildings.
Potential for impact from the project in cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects	A search of the WCC planning database (20/09/2026) did not reveal other existing or approved projects which may have a cumulative impact with the proposed development – the project is discrete and does not change or impinge on wider areas.
Use of natural resources (in particular land, water soil and biodiversity)	The development consists of the installation of a building and some hard, semi-permeable and soft surfaces, seeks to retain existing trees and install a communit garden public space. The introduction of this development onto the site will not impact upon the natural resources of the area.
Production of waste	Construction and operational will be produced and managed within waste disposal standards.
Pollution and nuisances	The construction phase will be carried out in accordance with industry best practice, as per building and environmental regulations, including the management of surface water run-off.

Characteristics of the Proposed Development	Assessment
	It is anticipated that the construction and operational phases of the development would not result in pollution and nuisances greater than that associated with comparable developments or to the extent that would have a significant impact on the environment.
Risk of accident or disaster including those caused by climate change in accordance with scientific knowledge and;	The construction phase will be carried out in accordance with industry best practice, as per building and environmental regulations. Emissions and noise pollution will be limited to temporary construction/excavation activity and an increase in lighting during operational use in darkness, this will be within daily and seasonal limits, typically as at, or below, levels generated by neighbouring and other nearby property.
The risk to human health (e.g. water contamination or air pollution).	Drainage will be through existing urban drainage systems. No significant air pollution sources are associated with developments of this nature. Dust and surface water management during the construction phase would be managed through a Construction Environmental Management plan as is standard practice.

Characteristics of the proposed development - Conclusion:

The proposed development is small scale in nature and size and sits within a discrete project footprint. As a result, the impacts on the environment are highly unlikely to be significant.

Table 2: Location of proposed development

Location of the Proposed Development The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development with particular regard to:	Assessment
a) existing and approved land use	The project footprint sits within an area zoned for residential use and on the edge of an area zoned for town centre use. This development will not alter the general character of these zones
b) the relevant abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area	There is no significant use or loss of significant natural resources – the development will seek to retain areas of trees and develop a brownfield site into a community space with significant elements which support biodiversity
c) The absorption capacity of the natural environment with particular regard to: i) wetlands ii) coastal zones iii) mountain and forest areas iv) nature reserves and parks v) areas protected under legislation including Natura 2000 area designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive vi) areas where environmental quality standards laid down by EC legislation have already been exceeded vii) densely populated areas viii) landscapes of historical, cultural or archaeological significance	The project site is located in Aughrim in an urban or peri-urban setting surrounded by residential and industrial/commercial premises, and alongside a river corridor. The nearest significant watercourse is adjacent. This watercourse flows into the Aughrim River. There are potential very minor surface water linkages to this watercourse but these will be managed during construction through a CEMP and during operation through connection to existing surface water drainage arrangements. The project screens out for Appropriate assessment and the nearest European Site is at >10km distance. The project footprint is located in a peri-urban environment which is moderately densely populated and does not alter the character of this area. An investigation of the Sites and Monuments Record found no results within the boundaries of the project footprint or the immediate environs.

Location of Proposed Development – Conclusion:

The project footprint is located in a peri-urban environment. It is at significant distance from the boundaries of any European Site. No significant ecological pathways connect the project footprint with any areas of ecological sensitivity.

Table 3: Characteristics of potential impacts

Characteristics of Potential Impacts	Assessment
Impacts considering potential significant effects of the proposed project in relation to criteria set out in Tables 1 and 2 above and having particular regard to:	
a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical area and the size of the population likely to be affected).	The project footprint is contained within an area of c.0.1ha. The site is currently brownfield. It is located in a peri-urban environment, surrounded by residential and commercial/industrial premises and would be in keeping with the immediately surrounding environment. Local residents and site users may experience some temporary disturbance during the construction phase of the project. This will be short term and insignificant.
b) the transboundary nature of the impact	N/A
c) the magnitude and complexity of the impact	No impacts of significance are anticipated, any impacts are short term and/or low level
d) the probability of the impact	Impacts are anticipated to be insignificant. Limited noise in the immediate environs of the construction footprint is certain but will be short term and can be managed in such a way as to prevent significant nuisance.
e) the expected duration, frequency and reversibility of the project	The development will be over a 1-2 year period be associated with the construction stage. subsequently a permanent structure will be in place. The project area could revert quickly to its previous state, if necessary, by removal of the building
f) the cumulation of the impact with any existing developments or those subject to approval	No significant cumulative impacts are likely.
g) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact	A Construction Environmental Management Plan will manage any negative construction effects, the long term operation of the site should be an enhancement on the overall site.

Characteristics of impacts – Conclusion:

No impacts are likely to be significant, any minor impacts created by the proposed development are limited to the construction phase. These are short term and low level, be managed through a Construction Environmental Management Plan and will terminate upon construction completion.

5. Conclusion

The proposed development **screens out for EIAR** on the following basis:

- The proposed development screens out for Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive.
- The proposed development falls below the threshold for statutory EIAR
- The potential for other impacts is insignificant.