

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Aughrim Library redevelopment

for Wicklow County Council

Author: Alan Lauder BSc(hons)
alan@alcnature.com

Alan Lauder Consulting is registered as a Sole Trader in The Republic of Ireland. No. 490559
VAT registered IE 1701879 R

Office Address: Unit D1 Wicklow Enterprise Park, The Murrough, Wicklow Town, County Wicklow
Registered business address: 7 Hargrove, Glenealy, County Wicklow
www.alanlauderconsulting.com

Document Control

Version	Date	Changes	Confidentiality	Prep	Rev	Auth
FINAL	22/09/2026		Not confidential	AL		AL

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.

Declaration of Compliance

“The information which we have prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in a manner consistent with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management’s Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed within this document are our true and professional *bona fide* opinions.”

Copyright

The contents and layout of this report are subject to copyright owned by Alan Lauder and associated trading names “Alan Lauder Consulting” and “ALCnature” (© Alan Lauder 2026).

Third Party Disclaimer

Any disclosure of this report to a third party is subject to this disclaimer. The report was prepared by Alan Lauder Consulting at the instruction of, and for use by, our client named on the front of the report. It does not in any way constitute advice to any third party who is able to access it by any means. No other warranty, expressed or implied is made as to the professional advice included in this report.

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Legislation and Background	3
3.	Guidance	3
4.	Methodology	4
4.1	Site Visit and Desk Study	4
4.2	Authors Qualifications & Expertise.....	4
4.3	AA Screening Methodology	5
4.4	Stage two – Appropriate Assessment	5
5.	Overview of Proposed Project and its Receiving Environment.....	5
5.1	Description of Proposed Project.....	5
5.2	Description of the receiving environment.....	6
6.	Provision of Information for Stage One Screening.....	8
6.1	Zone of Influence of the Proposed project.....	8
6.2	Relevant European Sites and Qualifying Interests	8
7.	Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on European Sites.....	9
7.1	Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts	9
7.2	Likely Changes to European Sites	9
8.	Effect of the Project in Combination with Other Plans or Projects.....	10
8.1	Conclusions on Information Provided for Stage One Screening Assessment	11
8.2	Appraising likely significant effects of the proposed project on relevant European sites..	11
	ANNEX 1 - CLIENT METHOD STATEMENT	12

1. Introduction

This report, which contains information required for the competent authority (in this case Wicklow County Council) to undertake a Stage One Screening Assessment (AA screening) in respect of the redevelopment of a brownfield site to create a new public Library in Aughrim, Co. Wicklow, was prepared by Alan Lauder of *Alan Lauder Consulting* on behalf of their client, Wicklow County Council.

This report provides information and appraises the potential for this project to have significant effects, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on any Natura 2000 sites (hereafter 'European sites').

2. Legislation and Background

Article 6(3) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (as amended) (hereafter 'the Habitats Directive') requires that, any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site, but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to AA of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The possibility of there being a significant effect on a European site will generate the need for an AA to be carried out by the competent authority for the purposes of Article 6(3). Accordingly, a screening for AA in respect of an application for consent for a proposed development must be carried out by the competent authority in order to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the proposed project, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on any European site.

A Stage Two AA is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that a proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site. The Screening (Stage One) operates to determine whether an AA (Stage Two) must be undertaken on the implications of the plan or project for the conservation objectives of relevant European sites.

This document comprises information to enable NPWS or another competent authority to perform a Stage One screening for AA.

3. Guidance

This AA screening report has been prepared with reference to the following guidance documents where relevant:

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. (Department of Environment, Heritage, and Local Government, 2010 revision)
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10
- 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 Directorate-General, 2001)
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC (EC Environment Directorate-General, 2000 updated draft April 2015)

- Guidance Document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC. Clarification of the Concepts of Alternative Solutions, Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest, Compensatory Measures, Overall Coherence. Opinion of the European Commission (European Commission, January 2007)
- Guidelines for Good Practice Appropriate Assessment of Plans under Article 6(3) Habitats Directive. Findings of an international workshop on Appropriate Assessment in Oxford, December 2009

4. Methodology

4.1 Site Visit and Desk Study

The information collected for this report, to assist the competent authority to screen the proposal for AA, was based on a desktop study, and a site visit carried out on 10 September 2026, to scope the site interest and its relevance to potentially affected European sites.

Information relied upon included the following information sources, which included maps and ecological data:

- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from www.osi.ie
- Online data available on European sites as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie
- Online data on European sites and the river network help by the EPA from <https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool>
- Information gleaned from drawings and related information from Wicklow County Council regarding the approach to construction (Appendix 1)
- Information on the status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland (National Parks & Wildlife Service)

4.2 Authors Qualifications & Expertise

This report has been prepared by Alan Lauder, Owner/principal at Alan Lauder Consulting.

Alan gained an honours degree in Ecology from The University of Stirling in 1989 and a post graduate certificate in Environmental Sustainability from University College Dublin. He is an experienced ecologist, nature conservation and habitat management specialist with over 36 years professional post-graduate experience. His relevant professional experience includes extensive planning related casework for state and non-governmental organisations within Ireland and Scotland, input to and preparation of site designations, Environmental Impact Statements & Assessments. He is a highly experienced ecologist and ornithologist with notable expertise in raptor ecology and conservation (including notable experience relevant to this report with regards to Peregrine, Merlin and other upland raptors including work within the Wicklow Mountains SPA). He has extensive knowledge of survey and conservation management of upland and wetland habitats gained from over 30 years managing designated sites and nature reserves in Scotland and Ireland. Alan currently carries out a wide range of relevant work including management planning for designated sites, ecological assessment, and advisory works for a wide range of commercial and state clients. He has attended a

range of relevant training courses throughout his career including training in Appropriate Assessment from CIEEM (2016).

4.3 AA Screening Methodology

The above referenced guidance documents set out a staged process for carrying out AA, the first stage of which is referred to as Screening. This stage identifies the likely significant impacts on a Natura site, if any, which could arise from a proposed project either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. If the conclusions at the end of screening are that there is no likelihood of significant effects occurring on any European sites, as a result of the proposed plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, then there is no requirement to undertake AA.

However, even if screening makes a finding of no significant effects, and therefore concludes that AA is not required, these findings must be clearly documented in order to provide transparency of decision-making, and to ensure the application of the ‘precautionary principle’ where this may be required.

Screening for AA involves the following:

1. Determining whether a project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of any European sites
2. Describing the details of the project/plan proposals and other plans or projects that may cumulatively affect any European sites
3. Describing the characteristics of relevant European sites
4. Appraising likely significant effects of the proposed project on relevant European sites.

4.4 Stage two – Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate assessment will only proceed if there is assessed to be a likelihood of significant adverse impacts occurring on any European sites (screened in), as a result of the proposed project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, or where there is a requirement to apply the ‘precautionary principle’.

Appropriate assessment will not proceed where a project ‘screens out’, by assessing that there is no likelihood of significant adverse impacts occurring on any European sites or where there is no need to apply the precautionary principle.

5. Overview of Proposed Project and its Receiving Environment

5.1 Description of Proposed Project

The project consists of the development of a new public library in Aughrim, County Wicklow on a brownfield site extending to c. 0.1 hectares within an area zoned as “Existing residential” in the local development plan and on the edge of an area zoned as Town Centre.

This is a project which may take a significant period to complete, potentially 1-2 years, commencing in winter 2026. It will involve clearing the site of existing rough grassland and ruderal vegetation,

retaining trees, and developing a two story public building using standard construction approaches, with associated services, such as exterior access /public space and provision of waste water, electrical supply etc. An outline building drawing is shown in Appendix 1 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. Water supply and waste water will managed through connection to existing water and sewerage services.

Overall, this is a modest scale town centre project which does not apparently impinge on any natural features.

5.2 Description of the receiving environment

The project is proposed over an area of brownfield land extending to c. 0.1 hectares, within the conurbation of Aughrim, it bounds onto a well vegetated stream (Ballycreen Brook) a tributary of the Aughrim River. The site lies at significant distance from any European sites, the nearest being some 11km distant.

The area of ground is a small (<0.1Ha) area of brownfield rough grassland and scrub with some boundary trees, mainly non-native conifers and Sycamores. It sites adjacent to the main road running through the town. The area has remnant piles of aggregates from previous use, presumably as a feature of the now derelict mill nearby.

Figure 1 indicates the project site location.

Figure 2 Indicates the terrain/layout/habitats at the site from a reference image (from 2023).

Appendix 1 contains information on the exact intended layout of the development

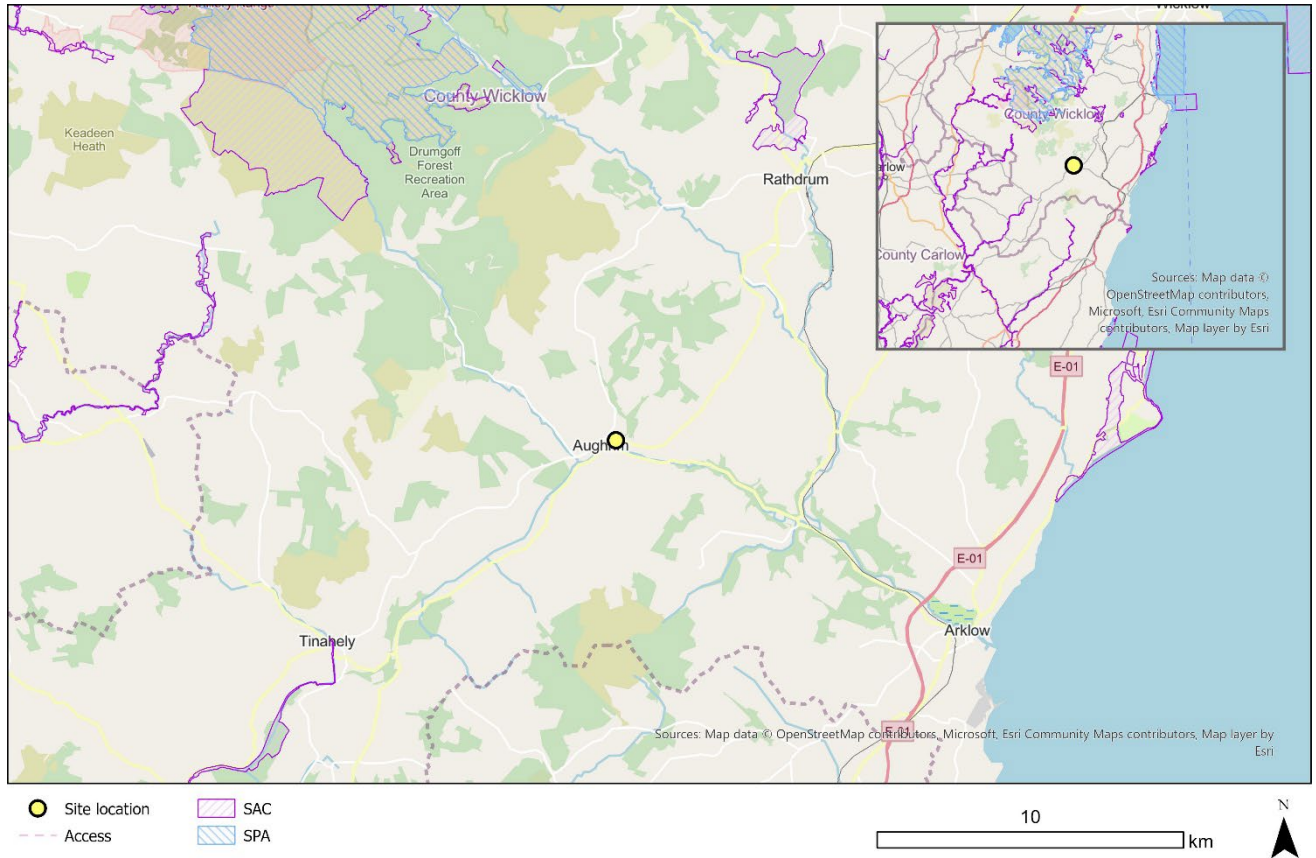


Figure 1 Location of project and European sites



Figure 2 Reference image of the site (2023) - the site appeared comparable in Sep 2026

6. Provision of Information for Stage One Screening

6.1 Zone of Influence of the Proposed project

While there is no recommended distance from a proposal for which European sites are considered as being relevant for AA, national standard guidance (NPWS, 2010) recommends that 'the distance should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, and the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in combination effects. As a general rule, it is often considered appropriate to look at European Sites which fall within 15km of a project for a moderate scale development projects such as large construction projects, and for large scale projects such as energy developments, which might introduce significant ecological or environmental factors such as pollution risk or effects on wildlife populations or large areas of habitats, may require sites to be examined at greater distance through potential catchment effects. Similarly, where large scale territories or ranging of important birds may take them beyond the boundaries of a designated site then a development in excess of 15km may have the potential to impact upon qualifying interests of a European site. Where projects are small and localised, such as individual dwellings, small buildings and similar, sites in the immediate vicinity are generally the only relevant sites where there are unlikely to be any significant ecological pathways, generally a 1-5km radius is usually more relevant.

In this case the proposed project is:

1. Very restricted in total area 0.1ha
2. Has no apparent novel construction or transportation requirements
3. While it is adjacent to a watercourse, the catchment downstream is not part of a European site and drainage of the site sites within the urban surface water drainage layout

For significant effects to arise, there must be:

1. A risk from a 'source' (e.g. construction works at a site)
2. A 'receptor' (e.g. a Natura site or its qualifying interests)
3. A pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a blockage obstructing a flightpath, hydrological catchment link etc)

The presence of a pathway does not necessarily mean that significant effects will arise. The likelihood for significant effects will depend upon the characteristics of the source (e.g. removal or exclusion of qualifying Natura features), the characteristics of the pathway (e.g. water quality status of a watercourse receiving run-off from construction) and the characteristics of the receptor (e.g. the level of sensitivity, condition or robustness of the European site and its qualifying interests).

Figures 1 provides a map of the site location in relation to the nearest European sites.

6.2 Relevant European Sites and Qualifying Interests

Given the notes regarding the nature of the project (Section 5) and its zone of influence in Section 6, there are no European sites of relevance within 5km.

Sites at greater distance have not been selected as relevant as the scale and nature of the project is small, and highly localised whereby sources of risk are low or localised and receptors are either not present or separated from any potential source of risk by significant distance thereby not creating a clear pathway.

7. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects on European Sites

The following assessment is in line with the structure detailed 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 (EC, 2001).

7.1 Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts

There are no direct, indirect, or secondary, impacts likely, due to the location, small and localised scale. This is further detailed in tables 7.1.1 and 7.1.2.

There are no elements of the proposed project that are considered as having potential to give rise to a Likely Significant Adverse Impact (LSI) on a European Site.

Table 7.1.1 Likely Effect of the Proposed Development on European Sites

Size and Scale	Highly limited <c. 0.1Ha of non-qualifying brownfield site and low value habitat mosaic
Land-take	No land take from European Sites
Distance from the European Sites or Key Features of the Site	>10km
Resource Requirements	No resource requirements from European sites
Emissions	Limited to emissions from construction activities, within legal limits and none of which will impinge upon any European site
Excavation Requirements	None required from or on European sites
Transportation Requirements	Construction traffic for access to site will use public road network well away from European sites
Duration of Construction, Operation, Decommissioning	1-2 years construction
Cumulative Effects with other Projects or Plans	No cumulative effects - see section 9 of this report

7.2 Likely Changes to European Sites

Any potential changes to the European Sites are described in Table 5.3.

Table 7.2.1 Likely Changes to European Sites

Reduction of Habitat Area	No proposed reduction of qualifying habitats on any European Site
Disturbance to Key Species	None -there are no qualifying interest species present. There is a likelihood that several species of bat and potentially Otter (all European Annex II species) may utilise the nearby stream river corridor for foraging but the development will not affect the river corridor habitats or create disturbance at nighttime when these species are most active.
Habitat or Species Fragmentation	None predicted – access and operations are localised and not on any European site, qualifying habitats or within important areas for key species
Reduction in Species Density	None predicted
Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value	None predicted – access and operations are low key and low impact and are not predicted to impact upon qualifying interests or features supporting qualifying interests
Climate Change	The development does not occur on any European site. While climate change may affect sites in the long term through changes to species distribution or habitat composition this will not be exacerbated or accelerated by this project at a significant level. The project sits within Aughrim town and the flood mapping was examined and the project site is outside any areas of significant flood risk

8. Effect of the Project in Combination with Other Plans or Projects

The small scale and limited temporal nature of the project means it is unlikely to interact or combine with other plans or projects to create significant impacts, but to re-iterate the key points:

- The project has a highly limited footprint
- Is not within or close to any European sites
- Is in an area already zoned for comparable developments
- A search of the planning database of Wicklow County Council on 20 September 2026 indicated only c. 10 extant planning applications active within 500m radius of the site, all of which were for small scale developments broadly in line with the typical peri-urban landscape of the area and none of a nature which significantly interact with this project in a negative way or which could, in combination with this project, increase any impact risk to ‘significant’ on any European site of qualifying interest.

8.1 Conclusions on Information Provided for Stage One Screening Assessment

Determination of whether a project or plan is directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of any European sites

This project is a small scale development in an urban or peri-urban setting and is not connected with the conservation management of any European site. The development does not form part of the activities to manage any site for conservation but does not impede the achievement of those objectives.

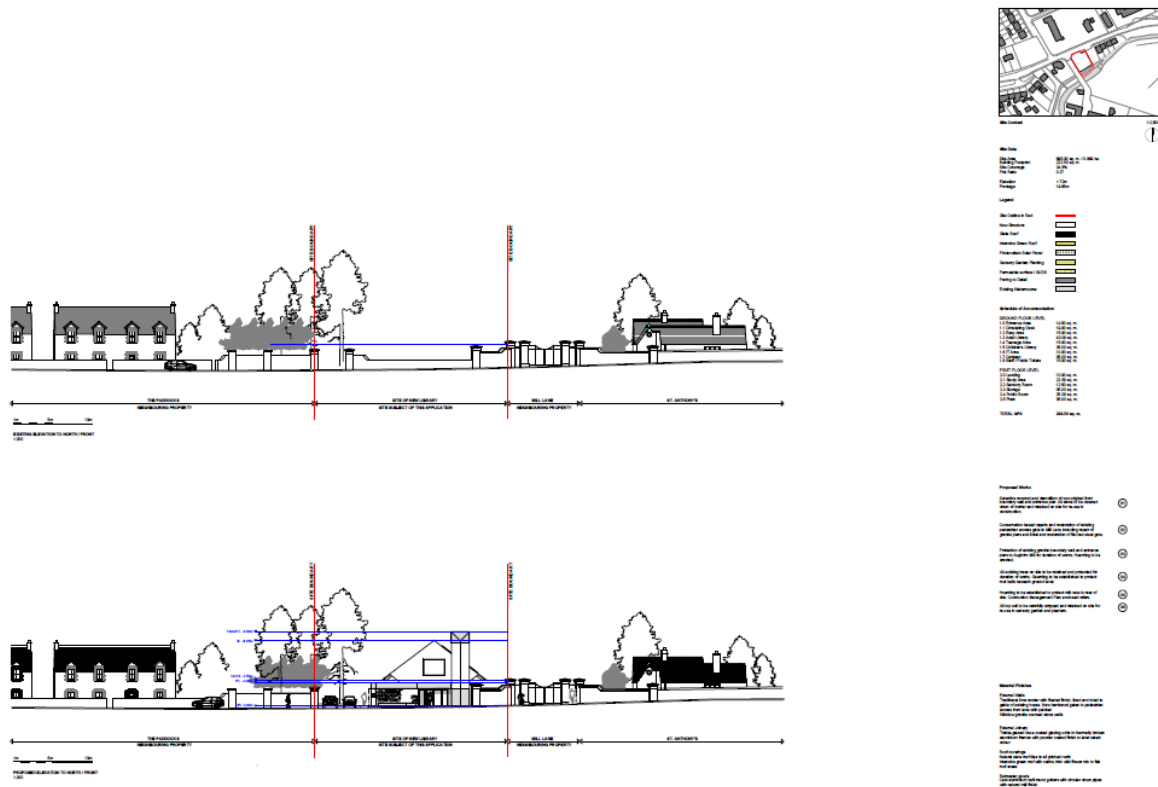
8.2 Appraising likely significant effects of the proposed project on relevant European sites

An analysis of the project and its potential to interact with, or impact upon, any SAC or SPA or their qualifying interests is provided in Section 6. In light of the analysis provided, using all available information, it is considered that there will be no likely significant effect on the features of conservation interest of the relevant European sites.

There is a high degree of certainty that the project will be able to be delivered as described and as the proposed methods used are routine. Thus, given the high degree of certainty and absence of significant risk to any European sites or qualifying interest, it is recommended that the precautionary principle need not be applied in this case.

In view of the analysis provided here it is recommended that this project is screened out for appropriate assessment.

ANNEX 1 - CLIENT METHOD STATEMENT



Aerial map of the study area in the city of Curitiba, Brazil. The map shows a residential area with a red rectangle highlighting the study area. The map is oriented with North at the top. The text 'Curitiba' is visible in the top right corner.

