

**MWP**

**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT  
SCREENING REPORT**  
**Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan**

**Tipperary County Council**

**October 2021**

## Contents

1.	Summary of Findings .....	1
1.1	Screening for Appropriate Assessment .....	1
2.	Introduction .....	2
2.1	Legislative Context .....	2
2.2	Stages of Appropriate Assessment .....	2
3.	Assessment Methodology .....	2
3.1	Appropriate Assessment Guidance .....	2
3.2	Desk Study .....	3
3.3	Site Visit .....	3
4.	Screening for Appropriate Assessment .....	3
4.1	Management of Natura 2000 Sites .....	4
4.2	Description of the Scheme .....	4
4.2.1	Operational Phase .....	5
4.2.2	Construction phase .....	6
4.3	Purpose of the Project .....	9
4.4	Site Location .....	9
4.5	Site Description .....	11
4.6	Ecology Survey .....	12
4.7	Ecology Survey Results .....	12
4.7.1	Habitats .....	13
4.7.1.1	Buildings and Artificial Surfaces BL3 .....	13
4.7.1.2	Scattered Trees and Parkland WD5 .....	14
4.7.1.3	Stone Walls and Other Stonework BL1 .....	14
4.7.1.4	Ornamental/Non-Native Shrub WS3 and Flower Beds and Borders BC4 .....	15
4.7.1.5	Exposed Calcareous Rock ER2 and Recolonising Bare Ground ED3 .....	16
4.8	Characteristics of the Project .....	17
4.9	Identification of Other Projects or Plans or Activities .....	20
4.10	Identification of Natura 2000 Sites .....	21
4.10.1	Zone of Impact Influence .....	21
4.10.2	Characteristics of Natura 2000 Sites .....	22
4.10.3	Conservation Objectives .....	23
4.11	Identification of Potential Impacts .....	25
4.12	Assessment of Significance of Potential Impacts .....	26
4.12.1	Natura 2000 sites outside the zone of potential impact influence .....	26
4.12.2	Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential impact influence .....	27
4.12.2.1	Water Quality .....	27
4.12.2.2	Habitat Loss and Alteration .....	27
4.12.2.3	Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species .....	28
4.12.2.4	Habitat or Species Fragmentation .....	29
4.12.2.5	Cumulative/In-combination Impacts .....	29
4.13	Conclusion of Screening Stage .....	30
5.	References .....	31

## Tables

Table 4.1:	Bird species recorded during ecological survey .....	12
Table 4.2	Project Proposal .....	17
Table 4.3	Natura 2000 Sites within zone of potential impact influence of the proposal site .....	22
Table 4.4	Natura 2000 sites with qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest. ....	22
Table 4.5	Potential likely ecological impacts .....	25

Table 4.6 Natura 2000 Sites excluded from further assessment ..... 26  
Table 4.7 Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential impact influence..... 27

**Figures**

Figure 4.2 Site location ..... 10  
Figure 4.3 Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential influence..... 24

Plate 1: Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) within the town centre (Left) and along the bridge (top right). Horse-chestnut trees in the town centre (bottom right)..... 13  
Plate 2: Area of Scattered Trees and Parkland WD5..... 14  
Plate 3: Stone Walls and Other Stonework (BL1) along the bridge crossing the River Suir (Left) and bounding the town’s graveyard (Right)..... 15  
Plate 4: Ornamental/non-native shrub WS3 and Flower Beds and Borders (BC4) throughout the project site. .... 15  
Plate 5: Exposed calcareous rock ER2 and Recolonising Bare Ground ED3 ..... 16

Project No.	Doc. No.	Rev.	Date	Prepared By	Reviewed By	Approved By	Status
22396	6003	A	22/10/2021	KB	SC	AR	Issue
22396	6003	B	04/11/2021	KB	SPOD	AR	Part 8

**MWP, Engineering and Environmental Consultants**

**Address:** Park House, Bessboro Road, Blackrock, Cork, T12 X251

**www.mwp.ie**



## 1. Summary of Findings

### 1.1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Project Title	Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report
Project Proponent	Tipperary County Council
Project Location	Cahir, Co. Tipperary.
Screening for Appropriate Assessment	The Screening for Appropriate Assessment is undertaken to determine the potential for likely significant effects of the proposed project, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the conservation objectives of the site on a Natura 2000 Site.
Conclusion	It has been objectively concluded during the screening process that the Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence of the proposed works will not be significantly impacted by the proposed project at Cahir, Co. Tipperary. These sites are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lower River Suir SAC - 0km</li><li>• Galtee Mountains SAC - 8.3km</li></ul>

## 2. Introduction

A Part 8 Planning Application is being lodged by Tipperary County Council (TCC) for Cahir Public Realm Plan.

The proposed development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Cahir's town centre comprising of the works involve the upgrade of footpaths and carriageway surfaces, with street furniture, seating, planting, bicycle parking and lighting. The proposed development is therefore relatively small in scale and will be enclosed within the existing urban area. New streetscape layout for Town Square, Castle Street, Church Street, Old Church Street and St Mary's Road with new alignment design for footpaths and trafficked areas incorporating new paving, kerbing, hard and soft landscaping and street furniture.

This screening for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken to determine whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site (i.e. Natura 2000 Sites), in view of the sites' conservation objectives.

This screening for Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken by a staff environmental scientist from Malachy Walsh and Partners, Engineering and Environmental consultants (MWP).

### 2.1 Legislative Context

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) seeks to conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora by the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)<sup>1</sup> seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protected Areas (SPAs). It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SPAs and SACs, both of which form part of Natura 2000, a network of protected sites throughout the European Community. Further information is available at:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/>

<http://www.npws.ie/planning/appropriateassessment/>

The current assessment was conducted within this legislative framework and also the DoEHLG (2009) guidelines. As outlined in these, it is the responsibility of the proponent of the project, in this case Tipperary County Council, to provide a comprehensive and objective screening for Appropriate Assessment, which can then be used by the competent authority, in order to conduct the Appropriate Assessment (DoEHLG, 2009).

### 2.2 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

The Appropriate Assessment process is a four-stage process with issues and tests at each stage. The purpose of the screening assessment is to record in a transparent and reasoned manner the likely effects on Natura 2000 sites of a proposed development. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. The stages are set out in **Appendix 1**.

## 3. Assessment Methodology

### 3.1 Appropriate Assessment Guidance

This screening for Appropriate Assessment, or Stage 1, has been undertaken in accordance with the European Commission Methodological Guidance on the provision of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC

---

<sup>1</sup> This is the codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended (see [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/birdsdirective/index_en.htm) )

(EC, 2001), the European Commission Guidance 'Managing Natura 2000 Sites' Brussels, 21.11.2018 C (2018) 7621 final (EC, 2000), and *Appropriate Assessment of Plans & Projects - Guidance for Planning Authorities* prepared by the NPWS (DoEHLG, 2009 (rev. 2010) and the *Planning Regulator: - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, OPR Practice Note PN01* Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021.

### 3.2 Desk Study

In order to complete the screening for Appropriate Assessment certain information on the existing environment is required. A desk study was carried out to collate available information on the subject site's natural environment. This comprised a review of the following publications, data and datasets:

- OSI Aerial photography and 1:50000 mapping
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) (on-line map-viewer)
- BirdWatch Ireland
- Teagasc soil area maps (NBDC website)
- Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) area maps
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) water quality data
- South Eastern River Basin District (SWRBD) datasets (Water Framework Directive)
- Other information sources and reports footnoted in the course of the report

### 3.3 Site Visit

An ecological field survey was conducted by a staff ecologist with MWP on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The aim of this survey was to characterise the site and environs and establish the ecological features and resources at the site, particularly in relation to the features of interest of the Lower River Suir SAC which is situated adjacent to the proposed footprint of works.

Aerial photography was used together with GPS to accurately enable field navigation. Notes were made on all habitats encountered, including notes on dominant and indicative vegetation. An assessment was also made of the topography and drainage, disturbance, and management of the area. The presence of any invasive plant species was also noted.

## 4. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

As set out in the NPWS guidance (DoEHLG, 2009), the task of establishing whether a plan or project is likely to have an effect on a Natura 2000 Site is based on a preliminary impact assessment using available information and data, including that outlined above, and other available environmental information, supplemented as necessary by local site information and ecological surveys. This is followed by a determination of whether there is a risk that the effects identified could be significant. The precautionary principle approach is required.

Once the potential impacts that may arise from the proposal are identified the significance of these is assessed through the use of key indicators:

- Habitat loss

- Habitat alteration
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species
- Water quality and resource.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) determines the need for a full Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2) and consists of a number of steps, each of which is addressed in the following sections of this report:

- 4.1 Establish whether the proposed remediation works are necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 Site
- 4.2 Description of the proposed remediation works
- 4.3 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites potentially affected
- 4.4 Identification and description of potential individual and cumulative impacts of the works
- 4.5 Assessment of the significance of the impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 Sites
- 4.6 Conclusion of screening stage

The purpose of the screening assessment is to record in a transparent and reasoned manner the likely effects, on relevant Natura 2000 Sites, of the proposed remediation works.

#### 4.1 Management of Natura 2000 Sites

The proposal is not connected with or necessary to the conservation management of a Natura 2000 Site.

#### 4.2 Description of the Scheme

The proposed development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Cahir's Town Centre comprising the upgrading of the existing Square and approach streets with new high-quality paving, kerbing, landscaping, public lighting, improved street furniture and utility diversions/works.

The proposed development will be carried out on Castle Street, Cahir Town Square, St Mary's Road, Old Church Street and Church Street in the townland of Townparks, Cahir, Co. Tipperary.

The nature and extent of proposed development is as follows:

- New raised table shared surface on Castle Street from Cahir Castle to the Castle Car Park entrance to the East and The Mall entrance to the North.
- New kerb alignment and pavement surfaces from the Castle Street Car Park entrance to The Square junction, including upgrading of pedestrian crossing, installation of new public lighting and soft landscaping.
- New streetscape layout for Cahir Square with new alignment design for footpaths, parking areas and trafficked areas incorporating a raised table shared surface from the junction with Castle Street, to the Junction with St Marys Road and to North of The Fountain, new kerb and pavement surfaces throughout The Square, new hard and soft landscaping, new street furniture, new bollards, new bicycle racks, installation of new and upgrade of existing public lighting.



- Alteration of on-street parking for Castle Street, The Square, Church Street, Old Church Street and The Square end of St Mary's Road.
- New pavement surfaces on St. Mary's Road, Old Church Street and Church Street.
- New controlled pedestrian crossings and soft landscaping on Church Street and Old Church St.
- Undergrounding of overhead electrical cables, installation of new public lighting and upgrading of existing public lighting across the entire project area. The Public Lighting scheme proposed uses single and double tear drop type LED lanterns mounted on 8m heritage columns together with localised uplighters in the Square and recessed wall lights to steps. All lighting schemes shall be in accordance with Tipperary County Councils Public Lighting Policy and IS EN 13201. These lights shall be controlled via individual dusk to dawn photocells.
- Development of associated drainage services and utilities across the entire project area. The proposed public realm project is a refurbishment of the existing streetscape and is a replacement of the existing hardstanding areas within the town square and approach roads. The area of hardstanding within the town centre will not be altered by the proposed design. SuDS techniques are incorporated into the design to provide sustainable surface water management. Where new trees have been introduced a localised reservoir beneath the trees is included as a SuDS design measure. Where manhole cover locations need to be repositioned to suit new line and level of the proposed streetscape design, this will be coordinated with Irish Water at detailed design. The proposed scheme does not include any new demands on the sewerage facilities.
- All associated site works

Footpath space will be widened, traffic calming will be developed through build out, reduced road carriageway widths and improved pedestrian crossings. Existing on-street parking to be reduced from the Square to a new Town Centre Car Park with a 86 car, 2 coach and 3 mini-bus spaces just off the Square to the north east. This car park is the subject of a separate Part 8 Planning application.

The traffic flow through the Square will be changed from the current two way on both the east and west sides of the Square to two way flow on the east side only. Service and emergency vehicle access will be maintained to the west side of the Square. Pedestrian movement will be prioritised by the design.

The development also includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement on Castle Street, Church Street, Old Church Street and the Square end of St Mary's Road. A raised table on Castle Street will link the Castle entrance with the river walkways to the north.

The proposed development will comprise a total works area of 8,500m<sup>2</sup> and will predominantly involve the regeneration of Town Centre. The land area of the proposed development is limited to and contained within the area of Cahir Square and its four approach Roads (Castle Street to the west, Church Street to the north, Old Church Street to the east and St Mary's Road to the south). The proposed development is therefore relatively small in scale and will be enclosed within the existing urban area.

#### **4.2.1 Operational Phase**

The proposed public realm plan focuses on the promotion of cycling and walking while minimising the impact of vehicles within the town center. Currently the Square has a two-way roads around each side with parking on both of the roads on the east and west side of the Square. The result is a Square that is dominated by traffic with very little space given over to pedestrians and public realm. The four approach roads to the Square have parking on one or both sides with the footpaths being quite tight in places.

The proposed scheme removes the two-lane road and parking from the west side of the Square to create a significant public realm space. The footpaths on the other sides of the Square and on the approach roads are widened to improve facilities for pedestrians. There will be a reduction in the number of parking spaces within the Square and on the four approach roads. However, this loss will be more than offset by the construction of a new 100+ space public car park to the northeast of the Square, with a pedestrian link directly to the Square. This is a separate scheme that has already been submitted for Part 8.

#### **4.2.2 Construction phase**

The renewal and reconfiguration of the square and street layouts will necessitate the excavation of the existing footpaths and pavements, formation of suitable subbase and levels, relocation of existing utilities, installation of new street surface paving, street furniture and lighting. Footpaths will be broken by mechanical hammer and roadway surfaces planed, the resultant materials will be loaded onto a dump truck by machine bucket for removal to an appropriately licensed waste facility.

The Public Lighting scheme proposed will use a combination of bollards, wall lights and lanterns mounted on 5m, 6m and 8m columns. All lighting schemes shall be in accordance with Tipperary County Councils Public Lighting Policy and IS EN 13201. The existing heritage columns will be retained and the existing heritage lantern will be upgraded to an LED heritage lantern. These lights shall be controlled via dusk to dawn photocells. The Square and approach roads will be lit using LED Lanterns mounted on 8m columns and will be controlled using individual dusk to dawn photocells. As part of the public realm upgrade works, it is proposed to liaise with ESB Networks and underground the existing overhead ESB cables. The majority of ESB cables within Cahir currently run underground. Where localised sections of overground cabling exist, new trenches will be required to underground these cables. Additional trenches will only be required where relocation of services is necessary. This will be advised during detailed design. The new finishes to the streets will be a mixture of high-quality limestone paving slabs, limestone or granite setts and asphalt.

The proposed public realm project is a refurbishment of the existing streetscape and is a replacement of the existing hardstanding areas within the town square and approach roads. The area of hardstanding within the town centre will not be altered by the proposed design. SuDS techniques are incorporated into the design to provide sustainable surface water management. Where new trees have been introduced a localised reservoir beneath the trees is included as a SuDS design measure. Where manhole cover locations need to be repositioned to suit new line and level of the proposed streetscape design, this will be coordinated with Irish Water at detailed design.

The works will be undertaken on a phased basis with Construction due to commence in mid-2022. It is anticipated that construction work will be completed within 12 months. Working hours will be 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and 8am to 2pm on Saturday. No work will be undertaken on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

The phasing of the construction works shall be outlined in the Construction & Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP will be prepared by the appointed contractor and issued to TCC for agreement prior to works commencing and will be implemented for the duration of the works.

Access to the Square, approach roads and properties within Cahir will be maintained at all times during the construction phase. This may require limited night works for final surfacing and utility installation etc. Scheduling of these activities will be addressed in the CEMP.

The construction works will always allow one lane of traffic on any section of road being worked on.

Bus routes will be maintained through the town.

The number of construction staff on site will vary throughout the works. The nature of the Cahir Town Centre Public Realm Plan enables multiple crews to work simultaneously in different areas. A typical crew will have 4-5 members plus a machine operator for excavation works. Where street paving resurfacing works are being

undertaken, the crew will increase to 12-15 members plus associated plant, and delivery trucks. It is expected that the peak number of staff working on the Public Realm project will be no more than 20-25 staff at any one time.

A detailed Construction and Traffic Management Plan will be prepared by the Main Contractor carrying out the works and issued to TCC for agreement prior to any works starting on site.

The Construction and Traffic Management Plan will include details of the location of construction site offices, staff parking, access routes and set down areas for construction vehicles for the delivery and removal of materials, this will be agreed with TCC.

Over the duration of the Plan, it is estimated that approximately 400 truck journeys would be required for the project based on estimated quantities of materials at the preliminary design stage. This equates to approximately 8 truck per week over the duration of the project.

The Contractor will ensure that the proposed works are carried out in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013 (S.I. No. 291 of 2013). As construction works are standard in nature and well understood, there is a low probability that accidents will occur. Normal good construction practices are to be employed and will ensure that the risk of accidents will be low. Having regard to substances or technologies used, it is envisaged that the risk of accidents, is very low.

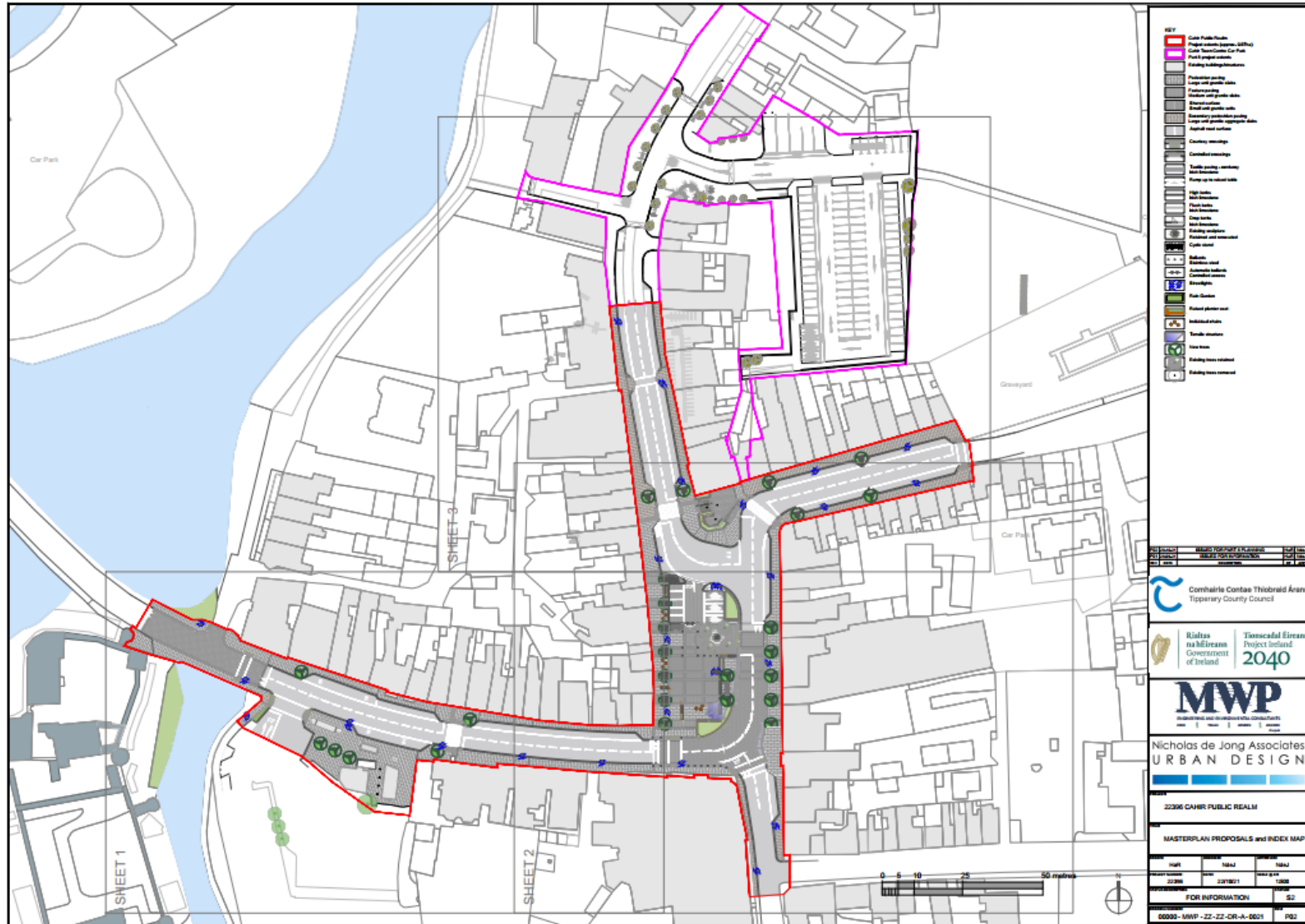


Figure 4.2 Site Layout/Project Plan

### 4.3 Purpose of the Project

To improve the environment for the public to enjoy, boost economic activity, encourage cycling and tourism within Cahir.

### 4.4 Site Location

The subject site is located in the Cahir town center which is located on the river Suir in Co. Tipperary and lies approximately 13km west of Clonmel and 65km northwest of Cork. The town is serviced by the R640 Regional Road and by a rail connection to Limerick Junction and to Waterford. The town is located approximately 2km east of the M8 Cork to Dublin motorway.

Cahir is located within the Electoral Division of 'Caher'. CSO data indicates that, in 2016, this ED had a total population of 1,134 person's resident. The dominant land-use surrounding the town is agricultural.

The site location is presented in **Figure 4.1**, below.

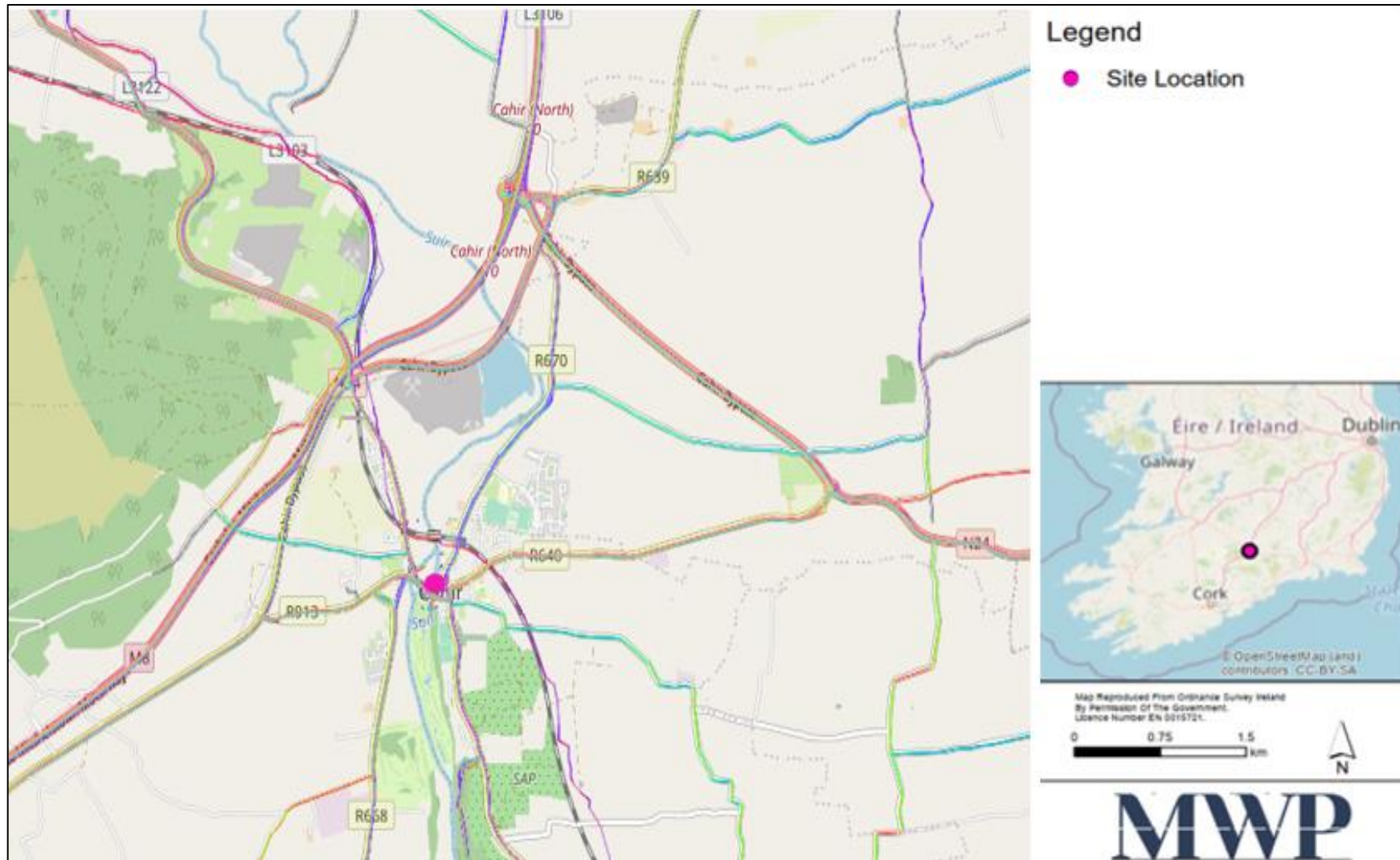


Figure 4.1 Site location

## 4.5 Site Description

Cahir is located within the Electoral Division of 'Caher'. CSO data indicates that, in 2016, this ED had a total population of 1,134 residing in the town. The dominant land-use surrounding the town is agricultural.

The Corine 2018 land cover is categorised as Artificial Surfaces, Urban Fabric and Discontinuous Urban Fabric.

The proposed development is located in the town of Cahir. The surrounding townlands in the region are Townlands, Carrigeen, Caherabbey Upper, Caherabbey Lower, Barnora, Monaraha, Ballyhenebery, Killemlly, Farranlahassry, Killeigh, Lissava Grange Beg and Ballymacadam West.

The underlying soil cover consists of a mixture Made ground, Sandstone till and Alluvium. The underlying bedrock consists of Limestone.

The River Suir flows in a northwest to southeast direction adjacent the western extent of the proposed development.

There are several EPA surface-water quality monitoring stations in the vicinity of the town centre. The EPA assessment of water quality is based on the macro-invertebrate community and physio-chemical characteristics of the waterbody at these locations. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) status of the River Suir for the 2013-2018 period was Moderate, based on Biological Status (Poor) and Dissolved Oxygen Saturation (Fail). The EPA has classified the River Suir as being 'At Risk' of failing to meet it's Water Framework Directive (WFD) objectives.

In terms of zoning, Public Realm Improvements have been identified in for the square in the Local Area Plan (LAP). The current Cahir LAP 2011 states the following in relation to redevelopment of the square:

*'The Square is the focal point of the town but is currently dominated by car parking rather than retailing and recreational uses. The relocation of car parking from the centre of The Square to the Castle Street Car Park and the redevelopment of the Square as a landscaped plaza, essentially making the town centre a pedestrian priority area will greatly enhance the Town Centre. The use of landscaping and street furniture will encourage residents and tourists alike to use this space and in turn improve the vitality and vibrancy of the area, blurring the barrier between buildings and the street and encouraging uses to spill out from the shops and cafés into the public realm. The development of a central plaza in the town would also enable the relocation of the Farmers Market from its existing location at the car park adjacent to the Craft Granary to The Square and could also be used as an entertainment space for street performance when and if the need arose. It is intended to restore the Memorial Fountain to its former condition and to reinstate the water supply to this feature. Planting will also be enhanced on either end of the proposed plaza. Ultimately the improvement works set out above will assist in developing the retail function, café culture and vitality and vibrancy of the town centre.'*

The Proposed Cahir Local Area Plan 2021-2027 has now been published and further emphasise the need for Public Realm Improvements at the Square. The proposed plans set out the following objectives in relation to the town centre development:

### Objective TCO4.1

*'Continue to develop and implement the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy in partnership with the Rural Regeneration Development Fund and other funding sources as may be available'*

### Objective TCO4.2

*'Prepare a plan for the improvement of the public realm in Cahir, including proposals for redesign of the square, improving the pedestrian environment for residents and visitors, and traffic management in the town'*

## 4.6 Ecology Survey

An ecological field survey was conducted by a staff ecologist with MWP on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2021. The objective of the site walkover was to document the baseline ecology of the site, carried out with regard to ‘A Guide to Habitats in Ireland’ (Fossitt, 2000) and following the guidelines contained in ‘Best Practice Guidance for Habitat Survey and Mapping’ (Smith *et. al*, 2011). As part of the site walkover, the presence of protected species or species and/or habitats listed as qualifying features of the relevant Natura 2000 sites. Particular focus was given to invasive plant species listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011, as amended).

## 4.7 Ecology Survey Results

No evidence of habitats or species of qualifying interest for Natura 2000 sites, were recorded during the site walkover. A number of bird species were recorded, primarily in the vicinity of the bridge (see **Table 4.1** below). No invasive alien species were recorded during the survey. Habitats within the footprint of the project site were classified according to Fossitt (2000) and are outlined below. A total of five habitats were identified within the study area (See **Table 4.1**), comprising of habitats primarily of low ecological value, with buildings and artificial surfaces being the most prominent habitat.

Table 4.1: Bird species recorded during ecological survey

Species	
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba yarrellii</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i>
Dipper	<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>



#### 4.7.1 Habitats

##### 4.7.1.1 Buildings and Artificial Surfaces BL3

The project site primarily comprises of roads, paths and walls of negligible ecological value. There are 4 no. heavily modified horse-chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) trees located within the town centre, in the middle of the project site. See **Plate 1** below.



Plate 1: Buildings and Artificial Surfaces (BL3) within the town centre (Left) and along the bridge (top right). Horse-chestnut trees in the town centre (bottom right).

#### 4.7.1.2 Scattered Trees and Parkland WD5

There are three mature lime *Tilia* spp. trees flanking the east bank of the River Suir within a small area of amenity grassland, adjacent to an access road and outdoor seating area for a local café. These trees may have some limited roosting potential for bats and act as a commuting corridor, connecting to a treeline north of the project site. See Plate 2 below.



Plate 2: Area of Scattered Trees and Parkland WD5

#### 4.7.1.3 Stone Walls and Other Stonework BL1

This habitat is primarily associated with the old stone walls bounding the bridge to the west, and rising from the east bank of the River Suir. This habitat was noted to support species such as Ivy leaved Toadflax (*Cymbalaria muralis*), Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), Sowthistle (*Sonchus* spp.) Maiden Hair Spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*), Polypody (*Polypodium* spp.) and Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*). Along the east bank wall, recorded vegetation also included Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), and Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*). There is an old stone wall in the east area of the project site bounding the town's graveyard. This wall was relatively free of vegetation at the time of the survey, apart from Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Maiden Hair spleenwort. See Plate 3 below.



Plate 3: Stone Walls and Other Stonework (BL1) along the bridge crossing the River Suir (Left) and bounding the town's graveyard (Right).

#### 4.7.1.4 Ornamental/Non-Native Shrub WS3 and Flower Beds and Borders BC4

There are small pockets of ornamental shrubbery in formal beds and flower boxes throughout the project site. See **Plate 4** below.



Plate 4: Ornamental/non-native shrub WS3 and Flower Beds and Borders (BC4) throughout the project site.

#### 4.7.1.5 Exposed Calcareous Rock ER2 and Recolonising Bare Ground ED3

There is a section of exposed calcareous rock at the base of Cahir Castle, separated from the bridge by an area of recolonising bare ground habitat. Both habitats were noted to support species such as Herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), Willow (*Salix spp.*), Ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), and Willowherb (*Epilobium spp.*) as well as Valarian and Alder. See **Plate 5** below.

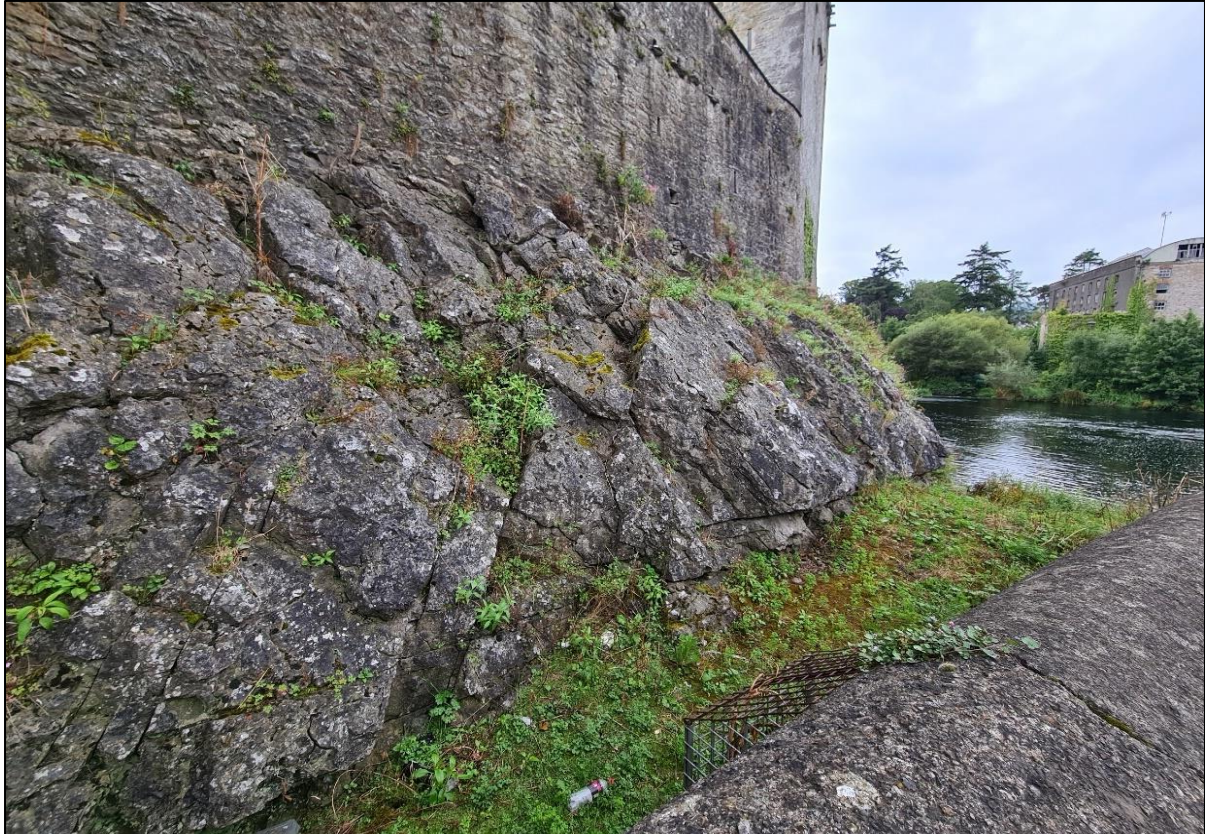


Plate 5: Exposed calcareous rock ER2 and Recolonising Bare Ground ED3

## 4.8 Characteristics of the Project

The proposal is described below and has been confirmed with the project engineer.

Table 4.2 Project Proposal

<p><i>Size, scale, area, land-take</i></p>	<p>Small scale project, with a total works area of approximately 8,500m<sup>2</sup>. The land area of the proposed development is limited to and contained within the area of Cahir Square and its four approach Roads(Castle Street to the west, Church Street to the north, Old Church Street to the east and St Mary’s Road to the south). The proposed development is therefore relatively small in scale and will be enclosed within the existing urban area.</p>
<p><i>Details of physical changes that will take place during the various stages of implementing the proposal</i></p>	<p>The proposed development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Cahir’s town centre comprising the upgrading of existing Square and approach streets with new high quality paving, kerbing, public lighting, improved street furniture and utility diversions/works (including undergrounding of overhead ESB cables).Footpath space will be widened, traffic calming will be developed through build out, reduced road carriageway widths and improved pedestrian crossings. Existing on-street parking to be reduced from the Square to a new Town Centre Car Park with 86 additional car, 2 coach and 3 mini-bus parking spaces immediately adjacent to the Square to the north east. This car park is the subject of a separate Part 8 Planning application.</p> <p>The traffic flow through the Square will be changed from the current two way on both the east and west sides of the Square to two way flow on the east side only. Service and emergency vehicle access will be maintained to the west side of the Square. Pedestrian movement will be prioritised by the design.</p> <p>The development also includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement on Castle Street, Church Street, Old Church Street and the Square end of St Mary’s Road. A raised table on Castle Street will link the Castle entrance with the river walkways to the north. A similar raised table will be provided on Church Street in front of the new Town Centre Car Park entrance. The renewal and reconfiguration of the square and street layouts will necessitate the excavation of the existing footpaths and pavements, formation of suitable subbase and levels, utility diversions/works, installation of new street surface paving, street furniture and lighting.</p> <p>Footpaths will be broken by mechanical hammer and roadway surfaces planed, the resultant materials will be loaded onto a dump truck by machine bucket for removal to an appropriately licensed waste facility. The majority of ESB cables within Cahir currently run underground.</p> <p>Where localised sections of overground cabling exist, new trenches will be required to underground these cables. Additional trenches will only be required where relocation of services is necessary. This will be advised during detailed design.</p>

	<p>The new finishes to the streets will be a mixture of high-quality limestone paving slabs, limestone or granite setts and asphalt.</p>
<p><i>Description of resource requirements for the construction/operation and decommissioning of the proposal (water resources, construction material, human presence etc)</i></p>	<p>The proposed works will be within an urban environment, which has been significantly modified by human activity. Soil cover is absent within the town centre, and the soil underlying the town centre site constitutes Made Ground.</p> <p>There will be no requirement for water abstraction for the proposed development as water requirements will be met by the public water supply.</p> <p>Construction activity will include shallow and localised excavations up to an approximate maximum depth of 200mm bgl. It is anticipated that most of the material excavated will be existing road surfacing, concrete footpaths and signage, and it is unlikely that any in-situ rock breaking will be required. It is proposed to use high quality natural stone material in the upgrade works. Overall, it can be concluded that there is no evidence to suggest the project will be detrimental to natural resources. The natural resources required including land, soil and geo-resources are typical for a project of this scale. A desktop study and ecological site walkover do not indicate loss of any protected plant or animal species.</p> <p>The following materials and approximate volumes are required for the works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete – 1,600m<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Precast/Granite setts/Tarmac/Resin Bound path – 1,000m<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Topsoil – Small quantities for tree pits and rain gardens within the urban space</li> <li>• Ducting – 2,200m.</li> </ul> <p>Over the duration of the project, it is estimated that approximately 400 truck journeys would be required for the project based on estimated quantities of materials at the preliminary design stage. This equates to approximately 8 truck per week over the duration of the project.</p> <p>The Contractor will ensure that the proposed works are carried out in accordance with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013 (S.I. No. 291 of 2013). As construction works are standard in nature and well understood, there is a low probability that accidents will occur. Normal good construction practices are to be employed and will ensure that the risk of accidents will be low. Having regard to substances or technologies used, it is envisaged that the risk of accidents, is very low and therefore will not result in significant environmental effects.</p>
<p><i>Description of timescale for the various activities that will take place as a result of implementation (including likely start and finish date)</i></p>	<p>The works will be undertaken on a phased basis with Construction due to commence in late 2022. It is anticipated that construction work will be completed within 12 months. Working hours will be 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 2pm on Saturday. No work will be undertaken on Sundays and Bank Holidays.</p>

<p><i>Description of wastes arising and other residues (including quantities) and their disposal</i></p>	<p>Waste is expected to consist of concrete from existing footpaths and surface planing from the existing roadways.</p> <p>Small quantities of incidental waste materials such as pallets and packaging will also be generated. No hazardous waste material will be generated.</p> <p>Volumes are estimated as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete/Blacktop/Precast concrete (average 250mm thickness) – 2,010m<sup>3</sup></li> </ul> <p>Waste materials from the construction site compounds will be disposed of/recycled at an authorised waste facility. In addition, any excess construction materials will be returned to the supplier. All construction waste will be managed in accordance with a Construction Waste Management Plan. The plan will be prepared by the main contractor carrying out the works and issued to TCC for agreement prior to any works commencing on site</p> <p>It is considered that the production of any waste associated with the construction of the development, as described above, will not cause unusual, significant or adverse effects.</p> <p>There will be no hazardous waste generated by the proposed works.</p>
<p><i>Identification of wastes arising and other residues (including quantities) that may be of particular concern in the context of the Natura 2000 network</i></p>	<p>No other waste and/or residues will arise that may be of particular concern in the context of the Natura 2000 network. There is potential for minor leaks and spills of hydrocarbons from construction plant and machinery used on site to leak to ground.</p>
<p><i>Description of any additional services required to implement the project or plan, their location and means of construction</i></p>	<p>No additional services are required to implement the project.</p>

## 4.9 Identification of Other Projects or Plans or Activities

The proposed development is within Cahir Town Centre, which is subject to ongoing retail, commercial and residential development. Current grants of permission include works such as demolition, remediation and extensions to existing private dwellings and commercial buildings in Cahir town (Tipperary County Council on-line planning enquiry system).

A desktop search of proposed and existing planning applications was undertaken on the 06/09/21. The search flagged planning applications within a period dating back to 2016; any refused, invalid or withdrawn applications were omitted. Furthermore, any small-scale residential type developments, such as extensions and modifications, minor amendments to existing dwellings and changes of use developments were omitted from the search.

The most recent (<5 years) grants of planning for the townlands adjacent to the proposed development include development, include predominantly include small scale single and two storey dwellings.

The findings show small, medium to large-scale developments within the 5 km radius scope that have been approved or on-going. The majority of planning applications within 5km of the proposed development are related to development of and alterations to residential properties and are considered to be small in scale. A summary of relevant developments considered in the cumulative assessment are given below:

- Ref No. 20952 (Granted 2020) Extension to Dolans Supervalu in 2 separate phases which is 150m north west of the proposed development closest point on red line boundary. Phase 1 – retail extension to the north side of the existing facility and Phase 2 – to extend the north entrance to the south and all associated site works
- Ref no. 19600845 (Granted 2021) construct 8 no. new dwellings including all associated site development works such as entrance, roadways, footpaths, new boundary treatments and connection to underground services as well as the closing up of an existing entrance to an existing neighbouring dwelling and opening a new entrance to the proposed estate roadway as well as providing a foul connection to the same existing dwelling and the decommissioning of the existing septic tank currently serving the existing dwelling. It is approximately 550m north east of the proposed development closest point on red line boundary.
- Ref No. 21402 (Granted 2021) the proposed development, which is approximately 740m south west of the proposed development closest point on red line boundary, will consist of the upgrade of the existing wastewater treatment plant to increase the treatment capacity, comprising of: the construction of 1 no. partially below ground screened storm overflow chamber; the decommissioning of the existing inlet works and the construction of a new above ground inlet screening works area; the construction of 1 no. partially below ground storm overflow weir chamber and 1 no. partially below ground stormwater overflow flume; 1 no. partially below ground splitter chamber and 1 no partially below ground clarifier tank; and ancillary development including associated underground chambers, cabling and piping and all associated site development works. A Natura Impact Statement has been prepared in respect of this planning application.
- Ref no 2046 (Granted 2021) amend previously approved planning consent 16/600565 for a grant of a ten-year planning permission for a solar farm, the development is approximately 1.5km east of the proposed development closest point on red line boundary, will consist of an increase in the previously approved mega wattage output; amendments to the previously approved site layout including a reduced number of overall panel modules; additional and revised battery storage units; additional and revised designs for inverters and field transformers; the inclusion of switchgear substations; revisions to the panel elevations to include bi-facial panels; revisions to the panel dimensions to include an increased panel (and leg) max height of no more than 2.5m; revisions to the individual panel width and length; and



a reduction in the spacing between the panel rows. Permission is also sought to extend the operational lifespan of the solar farm from 30 years to 35 years from commissioning to the grid.

- Ref no 17600911 (Granted 2017) development which is approximately 330m east of the proposed development closest point on red line boundary, will comprise the demolition on the existing single storey our Lady of Mercy Girls Primary School, General Purpose Room and Classroom Annex building, together with the demolition of 3 no. X. existing single storey prefabricated buildings and the construction of a new part single storey, part two storey 16 no. X classroom primary school, incorporating an integrated 2 no. X classroom special needs unit, a general purpose room and all associated support accommodation, together with all associated site development, including new pedestrian and vehicle access gates at Convent Road, together with new on-site car parking and set down, including coach and minibus parking, external paths, pavements, play areas, 2 no. X hardcourts, a new overground gas storage tank and enclosure, the diversion and undergrounding of existing overhead electrical cables, new underground rain water harvesting and rain water attenuation tanks and a new underground sewerage pumping station, new site and boundary fencing and gates, together with all associated new over ground and underground site works and services, the entire development to facilitate the amalgamation of the existing Girls Primary School and Cahir Boys National School
- Proposed new Town Centre Car Park- There is a proposed car park which potentially bounds the north east side of the proposed development red line boundary. This is subject to a separate Part 8 planning application.

## 4.10 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites

### 4.10.1 Zone of Impact Influence

The screening stage of AA involves compiling a ‘long list’ of Natura 2000 sites within a zone of potential impact influence for later analysis which may or may not be significantly impacted upon by the proposal.

The “zone of influence” for a project is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the proposed project and associated activities (CIEEM, 2018). This is likely to extend beyond the site where there are ecological or hydrological connection(s) beyond the site boundaries.

The subject site and a distance of 15km is recommended as a potential zone of influence (Scott Wilson et al., 2006). However, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) guidance (NPWS, 2009) advises that this zone of influence be assessed on a case-by-case basis with consideration of the nature, size, and location of the project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors and the potential for cumulative effects. As such, Natura 2000 sites beyond 15km may also be considered based on the potential for an ecological and/or hydrological to the project site, bearing in mind the precautionary principle and using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework.

Following this, the potential impacts associated with the proposal will be identified before an assessment is made of the likely significance of these impacts.

As described above, the test for the screening for Appropriate Assessment is to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if the development, individually or in combination with other plans/project is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site. If there are any significant, potentially significant, or uncertain effects, it will be necessary to proceed to Appropriate Assessment and submit an NIS.

The locations of Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential significant impact influence of the proposal site, bearing in mind the precautionary principle, are shown on a map in **Figure 4.3**. Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential significant impact influence of the proposal site, including their proximity are shown in below. Site synopses for these sites are included in **Appendix 2**.

Table 4.3 Natura 2000 Sites within zone of potential impact influence of the proposal site

Designated Site	Site Code	Proximity of Site to Nearest Point of Designated Site	Hydrological/Ecological Connection? (Yes/No)
Lower River Suir SAC	002137	0km	Yes. This SAC is situated adjacent to the footprint of the proposed project. Existing road drainage within the footprint of works drains to the River Suir which comprises part of this SAC. As such, there is a hydrological link between the proposed works and the site.
Galtee Mountains SAC	000646	8.3km	No. There is a lack of hydrological and ecological connection between the proposed works and this SAC.

#### 4.10.2 Characteristics of Natura 2000 Sites

Table 4.4 lists the qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest for the Natura 2000 sites that lie within the zone of potential impact influence of the subject site. Information pertaining to the Natura 2000 sites is from site synopses, conservation objectives and other information available on [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie).

Table 4.4 Natura 2000 sites with qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest.

Natura 2000 Site	Qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest
Lower River Suir SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</li> <li>• Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]</li> <li>• Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260]</li> <li>• Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430]</li> <li>• Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]</li> <li>• Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0]</li> <li>• <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0]</li> <li>• <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</li> <li>• <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]</li> <li>• <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</li> <li>• <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</li> <li>• <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]</li> <li>• <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twait Shad) [1103]</li> <li>• <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</li> <li>• <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</li> </ul>

Natura 2000 Site	Qualifying features of Special Conservation Interest
Galtee Mountains SAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010]</li> <li>• European dry heaths [4030]</li> <li>• Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]</li> <li>• Species-rich <i>Nardus</i> grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230]</li> <li>• Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]</li> <li>• Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (<i>Androsacetalia alpinae</i> and <i>Galeopsietalia ladani</i>) [8110]</li> <li>• Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]</li> <li>• Siliceous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8220]</li> </ul>

### 4.10.3 Conservation Objectives

According to the Habitats Directive, the *conservation status of a natural habitat* will be taken as ‘favourable’ within its biogeographic range when:

- its natural range and areas it covers within that range are stable or increasing, and
- 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 as defined below.

According to the Habitats Directive, the conservation status of a species means the sum of the influences acting on the species concerned that may affect the long-term distribution and abundance of its populations. The conservation status will be taken as ‘favourable’ within its biogeographic range 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, and
- 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.

Site-specific conservation objectives are available for the following sites:

- Lower River Suir SAC (002137) (Version 1.0, produced March 2017)
- Galtee Mountains SAC (000646) (Version 1.0, produced July 2016)

These have been accessed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2021.

No management plan is not available for this site.

All conservation objectives together with other designated site information are available on <http://www.npws.ie/protectedsites/>.

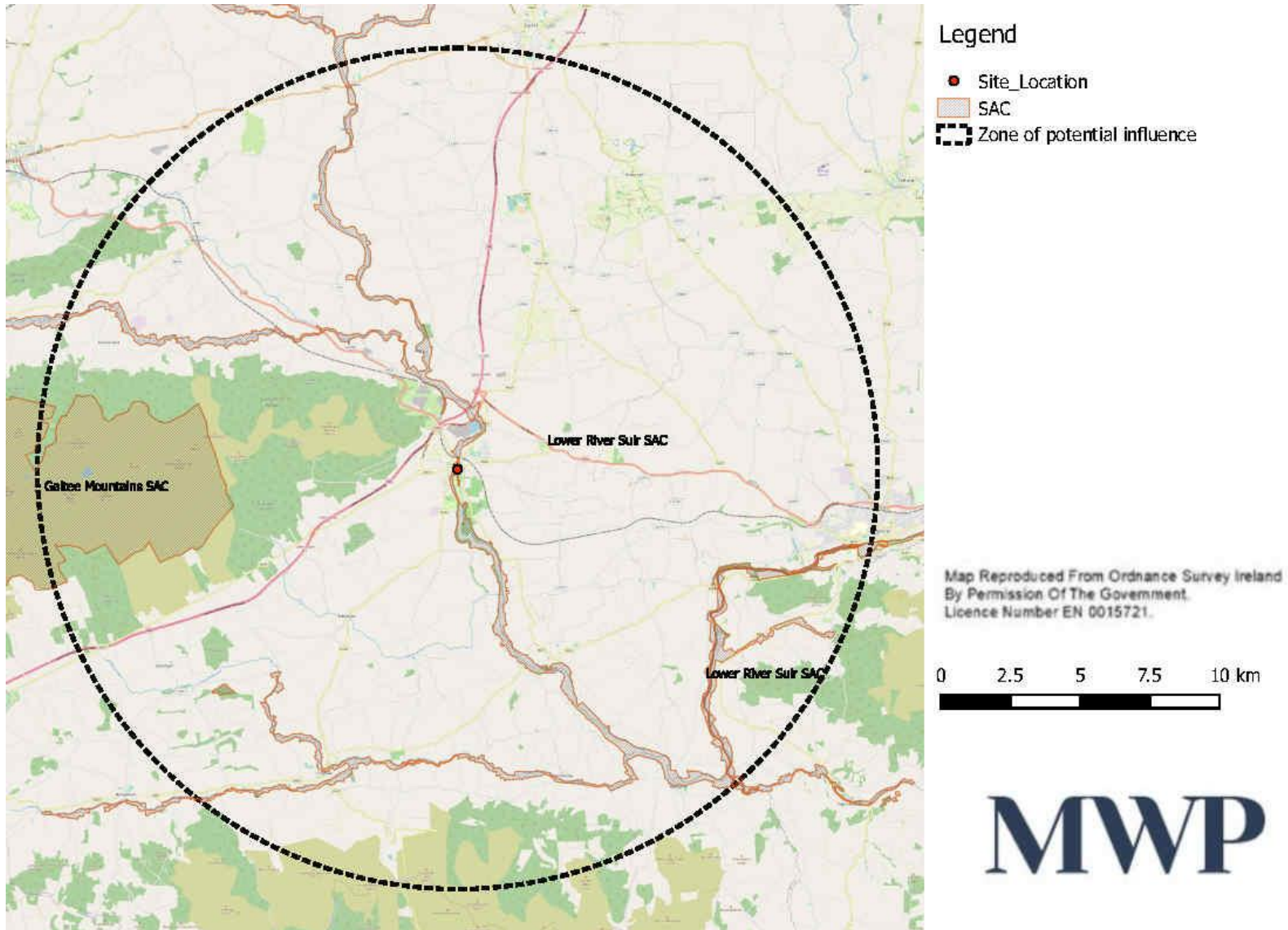


Figure 4.2 Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential influence

### 4.11 Identification of Potential Impacts

Potential likely ecological impacts arising from the project are identified in this section.

Table 4.5 Potential likely ecological impacts

<p><i>Description of elements of the project likely to give rise to potential ecological impacts.</i></p>	<p>The proposed works are for the regeneration of Cahir Town Centre primarily, Town Square, Castle Street, Church Street, Old Church Street and St Mary’s Road The works will be undertaken entirely within an existing built-up area.</p> <p>There will be no direct discharge from the project to the River Suir, however there may be potential for indirect surface water run-off entering the River Suir during the proposed construction phase.</p>
<p><i>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary ecological impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) by virtue of:</i></p> <p><i>Size and scale;</i></p> <p><i>Land-take;</i></p> <p><i>Distance from Natura 2000 Site or key features of the Site;</i></p> <p><i>Resource requirements;</i></p> <p><i>Emissions;</i></p> <p><i>Excavation requirements;</i></p> <p><i>Transportation requirements;</i></p> <p><i>Duration of construction, operation etc.; and</i></p> <p><i>Other.</i></p>	<p>The proposed overall works area is 8,500m<sup>2</sup></p> <p>The proposed works will be within an urban environment, which has been significantly modified by human activity. The proposed works are not located within any Natura 2000 site; as such there will be no land-take from any Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>There are two Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential influence of the proposed works:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower River Suir SAC (002137) - 0km</li> <li>• Galtee Mountains SAC (000646) – 8.3km</li> </ul> <p>There is no hydrological or ecological connection between the site of the proposed works and Galtee Mountains SAC (000646).</p> <p>Due to the proximity of the proposed works to Lower River Suir SAC (002137) (0km), there is a potential for impacts on this site.</p> <p>Water abstraction will not be required as part of the proposed project.</p> <p>Construction activity will include shallow and localised excavations up to an approximate maximum depth of 200mm bgl.</p> <p>There is potential for surface water run-off during the proposed construction phase.</p> <p>The proposed project will be in an urban area already subject to regular traffic noise.</p> <p>There will be no requirement to traverse through any Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>Construction works will be temporary and relatively short-term in nature. They are anticipated to begin in late 2022 and take approximately 12 months to complete. The operational phase of the project will continue indefinitely. No impact is envisaged as a result of the duration of this project.</p>

	There are no other potential sources of impacts associated with the proposed public realm works.
--	--

## 4.12 Assessment of Significance of Potential Impacts

This section considers the list of sites identified in **Table 4.3**, together with the potential ecological impacts identified in the previous section and determines whether the project is likely to have significant effects on a Natura 2000 site. When assessing impact, Natura 2000 sites are only considered relevant where a credible or tangible source-pathway-receptor link exists between the proposed development and a protected species or habitat type. In order for an impact to occur there must be a risk initiated by having a 'source' (e.g. excavation), and an impact pathway between the source and the receptor (e.g. a waterbody which connects the proposal site to the protected species or habitats). An evaluation based on these factors to determine which Natura 2000 sites are the plausible ecological receptors for potential impacts of the proposed remediation works will be conducted in sections below. The evaluation takes cognisance of the scope, scale, nature and size of the project, its location relative to the Natura 2000 sites listed in

**Table 4.3**, and the degree of connectedness that exists between the project and each Natura 2000 site's potential ecological receptors.

### 4.12.1 Natura 2000 sites outside the zone of potential impact influence

With regards to the proposed public realm plan at Cahir, it is considered that the works do not include any element that has the potential to significantly alter the conservation objectives for which certain Natura 2000 sites are designated. It is considered that the Natura 2000 site listed in **Table 4.6** is outside the zone of potential impact influence of the proposal due to the absence of plausible impact pathways and/or the attenuating effect of the distance intervening. Therefore, it is objectively concluded that significant impacts on this site are not reasonably foreseeable as a result of the programme of works described at **Section 4.2**. This site, which is listed in **Table 4.6**, along with its distance and the rationale for exclusion, will not be considered further in this document. A Finding of No Significant Effects report (FONSE) is presented in **Appendix 3**.

Table 4.6 Natura 2000 Sites excluded from further assessment

Natura 2000 Site	Proximity of subject site to nearest point of designated site (km)	Rationale for exclusion from assessment
Galtee Mountains SAC	8.3km	No source-pathway receptor present. Intervening distance of 8.3km

#### 4.12.2 Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential impact influence

Of the Natura 2000 sites listed in **Table 4.3**, one is considered to have the potential to be impacted as a result of the proposal. Construction projects generally pose potential threats to Natura 2000 sites through habitat alteration, species disturbance/displacement and/or water quality impacts. Given the proximity of the proposed development works, there is potential for these impacts to occur within this Natura 2000 site. Therefore, the assessment of significance of potential impacts that follows focuses on the following Natura 2000 sites:

**Table 4.7 Natura 2000 sites within the zone of potential impact influence**

Natura 2000 Site	Proximity of subject site to nearest point of designated site (km)	Rationale for inclusion in assessment
Lower River Suir SAC	0km	Proximity of site to proposed development works

The likelihood of significant effects to a Natura 2000 site from the project was determined based on several indicators including:

- Water quality and resource
- Habitat loss
- Habitat alteration
- Habitat or species fragmentation
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species

The likelihood of significant cumulative/in-combination effects is assessed in **Section 4.13**.

##### 4.12.2.1 Water Quality

The River Suir runs adjacent to Cahir town, which forms part of the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 002137).

There are some elements of the proposed works which could potentially result in impairment of water quality. In general, where works are conducted within proximity to water bodies, impairment of water quality may potentially occur as a result of run-off of sediment/fines or accidental fuel/oil spills from machinery/equipment. These elements of the proposal could therefore potentially result in pollution of the aquatic environment. All fuels will be stored within secure and impermeable storage areas. Re-fuelling areas and the temporary site compound will be located at least 25 metres from any drains or other water features.

There is no direct hydrological connection between the proposed works site and the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 002137). However, surface water does enter the river through the town drainage system, creating an indirect linkage between the proposed works and the river. With regards to runoff, works will be localised, and the extents of excavated surface will be less than 500m<sup>2</sup> at all times. When an area of pavement is removed or stripped, most rainfall, including any sediment will percolate into the ground rather than making its way to a gully. Where runoff does enter the existing drainage system it will pass through silt traps which are part of existing gullies.

Considering this and the short duration of works, no significant impacts to the Lower River Suir SAC from reduced water quality, will ensue as a result of the proposal.

##### 4.12.2.2 Habitat Loss and Alteration

The proposed works are not located within any Natura 2000 sites. There is a potential hydrological link via drainage between the proposed works site and the Lower River Suir SAC. The habitats within the site of the

proposed works are artificial in nature and not representative of those for which the Lower River Suir SAC is designated (**Table 4.3**). As outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, above, the proposed works will not result in a significant impact on water quality.

There will be no significant impacts to the Lower River Suir SAC by virtue of habitat loss and/or alteration.

#### **4.12.2.3 Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species**

The proposed works are not located within any Natura 2000 sites. There is a potential hydrological connection between the proposed works site and the Lower River Suir SAC, however as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, the proposed works will not have a significant impact on water quality. Therefore, it is considered there will be no disturbance and/or displacement of the species for which the Lower River Suir SAC is designated by virtue of habitat loss and/or alteration.

##### **Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*M. margaritifera*)**

Current distribution mapping for this species indicates that the known range and distribution does not encompass the 10km grid square, S02<sup>2</sup>, in which the proposal is located. There will be no in-stream works associated with the proposed works, and as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, the proposed works will not have an impact on water quality. Thus, no significant impact is envisaged on this species as a result of the proposed works.

##### **Sea lamprey (*P. marinus*), River lamprey (*L. fluviatilis*), Brook lamprey (*L. planeri*),**

A review of the most recent species assessments determined that range and distribution mapping for river lamprey does not encompass the 10km grid square S02, within which the proposed works are located, for the species' current known distribution. Nor is this grid square included within the current range and distribution for brook lamprey and sea lamprey (NPWS, 2019). There will be no in-stream works associated with the proposed works, and as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, the proposed works will not have a significant impact on water quality. Thus, no significant impact is envisaged on this species as a result of the proposed works.

##### **Salmon (*S. salar*)**

The current known range and distribution of the species does not include S02, the 10km grid square that encompasses the location of the proposed works. There will be no in-stream works associated with the proposed works, and as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, the proposed works will not have a significant impact on water quality. Thus, no significant impact is envisaged on this species as a result of the proposed works.

##### **Otter (*L. lutra*)**

The most recent assessment for this species determined that the 10km grid square, S02, within which the proposal is located, is included within the current known range and distribution for this species (NPWS, 2019). No signs of otter, including breeding signs were recorded during the site survey on 8th September 2021.

A review of on-line records held by the NBDC determined that the nearest on-line record for this species within the SAC relates to the otter spraint at the western end of the bridge. Water-quality impacts (as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**) can result in a reduction of aquatic species which comprise prey for otter. However, there will be no in-stream works associated with the proposed works, and as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, the proposed works will not have a significant impact on water quality.

While the works will result in increased human activity/noise levels this will be a temporary event only (expected duration of 12 months), are within an urban area already subject to regular noise, and will be restricted to daylight hours.

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map>



While otters may occasionally occur in the vicinity of the bridge (the part of the Lower River Suir closest to the proposed works), it is expected that these are most likely transient individuals moving through the area. Therefore, while the proposed works could potentially result in avoidance of the area by otters this is likely to occur only during such times as when construction activities at the bridge are taking place. As such, any potential avoidance of the site by otter are expected to be temporary and short-term and are not envisaged to result in any significant impacts to otters in the area. Therefore, with regard to potential disturbance/displacement of otter as a result of fugitive noise emissions and/or increased human activity associated with the works, the proposal is not considered to pose any risk of significant impacts over the course of the project.

In summary, bearing in mind the limited scope, scale and temporary duration of the proposal, and the availability of habitat of similar or ecologically higher value within the SAC site boundary, it is objectively concluded that significant disturbance/displacement impacts to otter, which would adversely impact on the conservation objectives of the species are not considered likely to occur.

#### **White-Clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)**

The most recent assessment for this species determined that the 10km grid square, S02, within which the proposal is located, is included within the current known range and distribution for this species (NPWS, 2019). However, there will be no in-stream works associated with the proposed works, and as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1** the proposed works will not have a significant impact on water quality. Thus, no significant impact is envisaged on this species as a result of the proposed remediation works.

#### **Twaite Shad *Alosa fallax fallax***

The most recent assessment for this species determined that the 10km grid square, S02, within which the proposal is located, is not included within the current known range or distribution for this species (NPWS, 2019). There will be no in-stream works associated with the proposed works, and as outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, the proposed works will not have a significant impact on water quality. Thus, no significant impact is envisaged on this species as a result of the proposed remediation works.

### **4.12.2.4 Habitat or Species Fragmentation**

As outlined in **Section 4.12.2.1**, the proposed public realm plan works will not have an impact on water quality. The works will not result in any barrier to the movement of species upstream or downstream. Therefore, considering this, there will be no fragmentation of the habitats or species for which the Lower River Suir SAC is designated. Thus, no significant impact will occur on the Lower River Suir SAC by virtue of habitat or species fragmentation.

### **4.12.2.5 Cumulative/In-combination Impacts**

As well as singular effects, the potential for in-combination or cumulative impacts also need to be considered. A cumulative impact arises from incremental changes caused by past, present and proposed projects together with the proposed development considered in this document.

Relevant plans and projects have been identified in **Section 4.9** above. These include an upgrade of the municipal waste water treatment plant, a solar farm 1.5km to the east, an upgrade to the Lady of Mercy primary school and an extension to the local Supervalu. A separate Part 8 application will be made for the proposed new Town Car park. In terms of cumulative impacts, there may be some overlap between the construction of the new Town Car Park and the public realm project. Cumulative impacts may occur in terms of noise and disruption to traffic, which will not result in negative effects on the Lower River Suir SAC. Neither project will involve direct discharges to the river Suir. No significant in combination effects are foreseen in relation to the aforementioned proposals in combination with the public realm plan.

The effect of the current proposal will be to improve the streetscape and infrastructure of the town. Any additional impact would be temporary, occurring only during the construction phase. Given the limited scale and scope of the proposed works, in-combination impacts to the identified Natura 2000 sites within this report as a result of the proposed works are not envisaged.

#### 4.13 Conclusion of Screening Stage

This screening for Appropriate Assessment was undertaken to determine the potential for likely significant effects of the proposed works, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, in view of the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site. The proposed works described, are within the zone of potential influence of two Natura 2000 sites. It has been objectively concluded that the following sites are not likely to be significantly affected by the proposed works, and can therefore be screened out for Appropriate Assessment:

- Lower River Suir SAC
- Galtee Mountains SAC

#### Reasons for Conclusion:

- The proposed works will be carried out in the dry; there will be no in-stream work and there will be no *significant* impacts to water quality;
- There is no potential for impacts on the qualifying interests for which Natura 2000 sites are designated. As such, there will be no significant direct or indirect impact on qualifying habitats or species associated with any Natura 2000 sites;
- The lack of significant in-combination effects arising from other proposed and permitted developments in the vicinity.

Measures intended to avoid or reduce negative effects on the Natura 2000 sites have not been relied upon in reaching this conclusion.

A Finding of No Significant Effects Report (FONSE) has been prepared and is presented in **Appendix 3**.

## 5. References

- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) (2009). *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Directorate General Environment (DGE), (2013), *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats- EUR 28*. The European Commission.
- Directorate General Environment (DGE) (2007). *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats*, European Commission, Brussels.
- European Commission (EC) (2000). *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- European Commission (EC) (2001). *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*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Franklin, Alan B., Noon, Barry R. & Luke George T., (2002). What is Habitat Fragmentation?, *Studies in Avian Biology* No. 25: 20-29.
- NPWS, 2013. The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Species Assessments Volume 3, Version 1.0., Dublin, Ireland: Unpublished report. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- Colhoun, K. & Cummins, S., 2013. Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2014-2019. *Irish Birds*, Volume 9, pp. 523-544.
- DGE, 2013. *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats EUR28*, s.l.: European Commission Directorate General of Environment.
- King, J. L. et al., 2011. *Ireland Red List No. 5: Amphibians, Reptiles and Freshwater Fish*, Dublin, Ireland: National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- NPWS, 2013a. *The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Habitats Assessment Volume 2. Version 1.1.*, Dublin, Ireland: Unpublished report, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- NPWS, 2013b. *The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland. Species Assessments Volume 3, Version 1.0.*, Dublin, Ireland: Unpublished report. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- NPWS (2016) Conservation Objectives: Galtee Mountains SAC 000646. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.
- NPWS (2017) Conservation Objectives: Lower River Suir SAC 002137. Version 1. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

# **Appendix 1**

## **Stages of Appropriate Assessment**

### **Stage 1 - Screening**

This is the first stage of the Appropriate Assessment process and that undertaken to determine the likelihood of significant impacts as a result of a proposed project or plan. It determines need for a full Appropriate Assessment.

If it can be concluded that no significant impacts to Natura 2000 Sites are likely then the assessment can stop here. If not, it must proceed to Stage 2 for furthermore detailed assessment.

### **Stage 2 - Natura Impact Statement (NIS)**

The second stage of the Appropriate Assessment process assesses the impact of the proposal (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of the Natura 2000 Site with respect to the conservation objectives of the site and its ecological structure and function. This is a much more detailed assessment than Stage 1. A Natura Impact Statement containing a professional scientific examination of the proposal is required and includes any mitigation measure to avoid, reduce or offset negative impacts.

If the outcome of Stage 2 is negative i.e. adverse impacts to the sites cannot be scientifically ruled out, despite mitigation, the plan or project should proceed to Stage 3 or be abandoned.

### **Stage 3 - Assessment of alternative solutions**

A detailed assessment must be undertaken to determine whether alternative ways of achieving the objective of the project/plan exists.

Where no alternatives exist the project/plan must proceed to Stage 4.

### **Stage 4 - Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain**

The final stage is the main derogation process examining whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project to adversely affect a Natura 2000 Site where no less damaging solution exists.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Site Synopses**

|



## SITE SYNOPSIS

**Site Name: Galtee Mountains SAC**

**Site Code: 000646**

Situated in east Limerick and south Tipperary, the Galtee Mountains are Ireland's highest range of inland mountains. Galtymore has an elevation of 920 m and the main ridge, mostly above 700 m, extends approximately 10 km from east to west. The mountains are derived from folding of Old Red Sandstone and Silurian rocks. Heath is the main vegetation type within the site, with significant amounts of humid grassland and blanket bog occurring also. There is a series of small corrie lakes on the northern side of the mountain range, and the site encompasses the headstreams of numerous tributaries of the river Suir. The cliffs above the corries support arctic-alpine vegetation and the site as a whole supports several notable Irish rarities.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[4010] Wet Heath  
[4030] Dry Heath  
[4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths  
[6230] Species-rich *Nardus* Grassland\*  
[7130] Blanket Bogs (Active)\*  
[8110] Siliceous Scree  
[8210] Calcareous Rocky Slopes  
[8220] Siliceous Rocky Slopes

In areas of dry heath Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) dominates the vegetation, with Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) also common. This habitat type often grades into wet heath and alpine/subalpine heath. It is probably best developed on the steeper slopes. Additional species recorded from the areas of alpine/subalpine heath include Dwarf Willow (*Salix herbacea*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Hare's-tail Cottongrass (*Eriophorum vaginatum*), Great Wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) and Starry Saxifrage (*Saxifraga stellaris*), amongst others.

Species-rich upland grassland occurs on steep slopes, particularly in the west of the site, and often in mosaic with humid grassland and heath. The rare species Small-white Orchid (*Pseudorchis albida*) has been recorded from within this habitat. The main grass species present include Common Bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), Mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), Sweet Vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Sheep's-fescue (*Festuca ovina*), while the main sedges are Green-ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*), Carnation Sedge (*C. panicea*) and Pill Sedge (*C. pilulifera*). Herb species include Heath

Bedstraw, Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), Lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*), Heath Milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*) and Common Milkwort (*P. vulgaris*). Heath species such as Heather and Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) are also found.

Blanket bog is localised at the site and occurs mainly at high altitudes, largely confined to flatter areas along and beside ridge tops. There is often good cover of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.), along with Common Cottongrass (*E. angustifolium*) and Heather. Erosion is severe on many ridges and cols where deep peat deposits (up to 2 m) have accumulated. The uncommon species Stiff Sedge (*Carex bigelowii*) is found in this habitat at the site.

The north-facing cliffs within the site are of botanical importance as they support arctic-alpine communities with some rare plant species. These areas are linked to the habitats 'calcareous rocky slopes', 'siliceous rocky slopes' and 'siliceous scree'. Uncommon species include Northern Rock-cress (*Cardaminopsis petraea*), Mountain Sorrel (*Oxyria digyna*), Roseroot (*Rhodiola rosea*), Alpine Saw-wort (*Saussurea alpina*), Irish Saxifrage (*Saxifraga rosacea*) and the Red Listed bryophytes *Bartramia ithyphyllo* and *Pohlia elongata* var. *greenii*. Other specialised mountain plants found on the site include Viviparous Fescue (*Festuca vivipara*), Fir Clubmoss (*Hyperzia selago*) and Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*). The cliffs also support patches of Great Wood-rush, Bilberry, birch (*Betula* sp.), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and Eared Willow (*Salix aurita*). There are several fern species recorded, most notably Brittle Bladder-fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*), Wilson's Filmy-fern (*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*), Tonbridge Filmy-fern (*H. tunbridgeense*) and Green Spleenwort (*Asplenium viride*).

The rare species Small-white Orchid, Northern Rock-cress and Alpine Saw-wort have been recorded from the site. These species are included in the Red Data Book and the first two are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015.

The site supports breeding Peregrine, a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

Over-grazing by sheep and frequent burning are causing potentially serious damage to some areas of heath and grassland. Afforestation threatens the lower slopes and valleys. Hill walking takes place at the site and may result in trampling damage in places.

This site is of high conservation value due to the fact that it contains a range of important upland habitats in a relatively isolated inland mountain site. Eight of these habitats are listed in Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, and two of those have priority status. The presence of a number of rare, scarce and uncommon plant species adds greatly to the significance of the SAC.





## SITE SYNOPSIS

### Site Name: Lower River Suir SAC

### Site Code: 002137

Lower River Suir SAC consists of the freshwater stretches of the River Suir immediately south of Thurles, the tidal stretches as far as the confluence with the Barrow/Nore immediately east of Cheekpoint in Co. Waterford, and many tributaries including the Clodiagh in Co. Waterford, the Lingaun, Anner, Nier, Tar, Aherlow, Multeen and Clodiagh in Co. Tipperary. The Suir and its tributaries flow through the counties of Tipperary, Kilkenny and Waterford.

Upstream of Waterford city, the swinging meanders of the Suir criss-cross the Devonian sandstone rim of hard rocks no less than three times as they leave the limestone-floored downfold below Carrick-on-Suir. In the vicinity of Carrick-on-Suir the river follows the limestone floor of the Carrick Syncline. Upstream of Clonmel the river and its tributaries traverse Upper Palaeozoic Rocks, mainly the Lower Carboniferous Visean and Tournaisian. The freshwater stretches of the Clodiagh River in Co. Waterford traverse Silurian rocks, through narrow bands of Old Red Sandstone and Lower Avonian Shales, before reaching the carboniferous limestone close to its confluence with the Suir. The Aherlow River flows through a Carboniferous limestone valley, with outcrops of Old Red Sandstone forming the Galtee Mountains to the south and the Slievenamuck range to the north. Glacial deposits of sands and gravels are common along the valley bottom, flanking the present-day river course.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

- [1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows
- [1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows
- [3260] Floating River Vegetation
- [6430] Hydrophilous Tall Herb Communities
- [91A0] Old Oak Woodlands
- [91E0] Alluvial Forests\*
- [91J0] Yew Woodlands\*
  
- [1029] Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*)
- [1092] White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)
- [1095] Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*)
- [1096] Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*)
- [1099] River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*)

[1103] Twaité Shad (*Alosa fallax*)  
[1106] Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*)  
[1355] Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Alluvial wet woodland is a declining habitat type in Europe as a result of drainage and reclamation. The best examples of this type of woodland in the site are found on the islands just below Carrick-on-Suir and at Fiddown Island. Species occurring here include Almond Willow (*Salix triandra*), White Willow (*S. alba*), Rusty Willow (*S. cinerea* subsp. *oleifolia*), Osier (*S. viminalis*), with Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*), Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*), Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Pendulous Sedge (*Carex pendula*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Common Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*). The terrain is littered with dead trunks and branches and intersected with small channels which carry small streams to the river. The bryophyte and lichen floras appear to be rich. A small plot is currently being coppiced and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. In the drier areas species such as Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) occur.

Eutrophic tall herb vegetation occurs in association with the various areas of alluvial forest and elsewhere where the floodplain of the river is intact. Characteristic species of the habitat include Meadowsweet, Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), Marsh Ragwort (*Senecio aquaticus*), Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*) and Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*).

Old oak woodlands are also of importance at the site. The best examples are seen in Portlaw Wood which lies on both sides of the Clodiagh River. On the south-facing side the stand is more open and the oaks (mainly Pedunculate Oak, *Quercus robur*) are well grown and spreading. Ivy (*Hedera helix*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) are common on the ground, indicating relatively high light conditions. Oak regeneration is dense, varying in age from 0-40 years and Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) is fairly common but mostly quite young. Across the valley, by contrast, the trees are much more closely spaced and though taller, are poorly grown on average. There are no clearings; large oaks extend to the boundary wall. In the darker conditions, Ivy is much rarer and Holly much more frequent, forming a closed canopy in places. Oak regeneration is uncommon since there are as yet few natural clearings. The shallowness of the soil on the north-facing slope probably contributes to the poor tree growth there. The acid nature of the substrate has induced a 'mountain' type oakwood community to develop. The site is quite species-rich throughout, including an abundance of mosses, liverworts and lichens. The rare lichen *Lobaria pulmonaria*, an indicator of ancient woodlands, is found here.

Inchinsquillib Wood consists of three small separate sloping blocks of woodland in a valley cut by the young Multeen River and its tributaries through acidic Old Red Sandstone and Silurian rocks. Two blocks, both with an eastern aspect, located to the north of the road, are predominantly of Sessile Oak (*Quercus petraea*) and Hazel, with Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Ash and Holly. The ground flora is quite mixed with,

for example, Wood-sedge (*Carex sylvatica*), Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), Wood-sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and Hard Fern (*Blechnum spicant*). The base poor nature of the underlying rock is to some extent masked by the overlying drift. The third block, to the south of the road, and with a northern aspect, is a similar although less mature mixture of Sessile Oak, Birch and Holly. Here the influence of the drift is more marked, with the occurrence of Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) amongst the ground flora.

Two stands of Yew (*Taxus baccata*) woods, a rare habitat in Ireland and the E.U., occur within the site. These are on limestone ridges at Shanbally and Cahir Park. Both are in woods planted with non-native species, including conifers. However, the area at Cahir Park is fairly substantial in size and includes some relatively undisturbed patches of wood and some very old trees. Regeneration of the Yew trees is mostly poor, due to competition from species such as Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and, at Shanbally, due to heavy grazing by goats. Other native species which occur with the Yew trees include Ash, Pedunculate Oak, Hazel and Spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*). Future prospects for these Yew woods are good as the sites are proposed for restoration under a Coillte E.U. LIFE programme.

Floating river vegetation is evident in the freshwater stretches of the River Suir and along many of its tributaries. Typical species found include Canadian Pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*), water-milfoils (*Myriophyllum* spp.), Fennel Pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*), Curled Pondweed (*P. crispus*), Perfoliate Pondweed (*P. perfoliatus*), Pond Water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus peltatus*), other crowfoots (*Ranunculus* spp.) and the moss *Fontinalis antipyretica*. At a couple of locations along the river Opposite-leaved Pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*) occurs. This species is protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999.

The Aherlow River is fast flowing and mostly follows a natural unmodified river channel. Submerged vegetation includes the aquatic moss *Fontinalis antipyretica* and Stream Water-crowfoot (*R. pectinatus*), while shallow areas support species such as Reed Canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), Brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*). The river bank is fringed in places with Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and willows (*Salix* spp.).

The Multeen River is fast flowing, mostly gravel-bottomed and appears to follow a natural unmodified river channel. Water-crowfoots occur in abundance and the aquatic moss *Fontinalis antipyretica* is also common. In sheltered shallows, species such as Water-cress (*Nasturtium officinale*) and water-starworts (*Callitriche* spp.) occur. The river channel is fringed for most of its length with Alder, Willow and a narrow strip of marshy vegetation.

Salt meadows occur below Waterford City in old meadows where the embankment is absent, or has been breached, and along the tidal stretches of some of the in-flowing rivers below Little Island. There are very narrow, non-continuous bands of this habitat along both banks. More extensive areas are also seen along the south bank at Ballynakill, the east side of Little Island, and in three large salt meadows

between Ballynakill and Cheekpoint. The Atlantic and Mediterranean sub-types are generally intermixed. The species list is extensive and includes Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), oraches (*Atriplex* spp.), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Sea Couch (*Elymus pycnanthus*), frequent Sea Milkwort (*Glaux maritima*), occasional Wild Celery (*Apium graveolens*), Parsley Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe lachenalii*), English Scurvygrass (*Cochlearia anglica*) and Sea Arrowgrass (*Triglochin maritima*). These species are more representative of the Atlantic sub-type of the habitat. Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*), is rather frequent along the main channel edge and up the internal channels. The legally protected (Flora (Protection) Order, 1999) Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) grows at the landward transition of the saltmarsh. Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), an indicator of the Mediterranean salt meadows, also occurs.

Other habitats at the site include wet and dry grassland, marsh, reedswamp, improved grassland, coniferous plantations, deciduous woodland, scrub, tidal river, stony shore and mudflats. The most dominant habitat adjoining the river is improved grassland, although there are wet fields with species such as Yellow Iris, Meadowsweet, rushes (*Juncus* spp.), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*).

Cabragh marshes, just below Thurles, lie in a low-lying tributary valley into which the main river floods in winter. Here there is an extensive area of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) with associated marshland and peaty fen. The transition between vegetation types is often well displayed. A number of wetland plants of interest occur, in particular the Narrow-leaved Bulrush (*Typha angustifolia*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*) and Blunt-flowered Rush (*Juncus subnodulosus*). The marsh is naturally eutrophic but it has also the nutritional legacy of the former sugar factory which discharged into it through a number of holding lagoons, now removed. Production is high, which is seen in the size of such species as Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), as well as in the reeds themselves.

Throughout the Lower River Suir site are small areas of woodland other than those described above. These tend to be a mixture of native and non-native species, although there are some areas of semi-natural wet woodland with species such as Ash and willow. Cahir Park Woodlands is a narrow tract of mixed deciduous woodland lying on the flat-lying floodplain of the River Suir. This estate woodland was planted over one hundred years ago and it contains a large component of exotic tree species. However, due to original planting and natural regeneration there is now a good mix of native and exotic species. About 5 km north-west of Cashel, Ardmayle pond is a long, possibly artificial water body running parallel to the River Suir. It is partly shaded by planted Lime (*Tilia* hybrids), Sycamore and the native Alder. Growing beneath the trees are shade tolerant species such as Remote sedge (*Carex remota*).

The site is of particular conservation interest for the presence of a number of Annex II animal species, including Freshwater Pearl Mussel (both *Margaritifera margaritifera* and *M. margaritifera* subsp. *durrovensis* occur), White-clawed Crayfish, Salmon, Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax fallax*), three species of Lampreys - Sea Lamprey, Brook

Lamprey and River Lamprey, and Otter. This is one of only three known spawning grounds in the country for Twaite Shad.

The site also supports populations of several other animal species. Those which are listed in the Irish Red Data Book include Daubenton's Bat, Natterer's Bat, Pipistrelle Bat, Pine Marten, Badger, Irish Hare, Smelt and Common Frog. Breeding stocks of Carp are found in Kilsheelan Lake. This is one of only two lakes in the country which is known to have supported breeding Carp. Carp require unusually high summer water temperatures to breed in Ireland. As the site is therefore unusual in this regard, it may also support interesting invertebrate populations.

Parts of the site have also been identified as of ornithological importance for a number of Annex I (E.U. Birds Directive) bird species, including Greenland White-fronted Goose (10), Golden Plover (1,490), Whooper Swan (7) and Kingfisher. Figures given in brackets are the average maximum counts from four count areas within the site for the three winters 1994-1997. Wintering populations of migratory birds use the site. Flocks are seen in Coolfinn Marsh and also along the reedbeds and saltmarsh areas of the Suir. Coolfinn supports nationally important numbers of Greylag Goose on a regular basis, with numbers between 600 and 700 recorded. Other species occurring include Mallard (21), Teal (159), Wigeon (26), Tufted Duck (60), Pintail (4), Pochard (2), Little Grebe (2), Black-tailed Godwit (20), Oystercatcher (16), Lapwing (993), Dunlin (101), Curlew (195), Redshank (28), Greenshank (4) and Green Sandpiper (1). Nationally important numbers of Lapwing (2,750) were recorded at Faithlegg in the winter of 1996/97. In Cabragh marshes there is abundant food for surface feeding wildfowl which total approximately 1,000 in winter. Widgeon, Teal and Mallard are numerous, and the latter has a large breeding population, with up to 400 in summer. In addition, less frequent species like Shoveler and Pintail occur and there are records for both Whooper and Bewick's swans. Kingfisher, a species that is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, occurs along some of the many tributaries throughout the site.

Land use at the site consists mainly of agricultural activities including grazing, silage production, fertilising and land reclamation. The grassland is intensively managed and the rivers are therefore vulnerable to pollution from run-off of fertilisers and slurry. Arable crops are also grown. Fishing is a main tourist attraction on stretches of the Suir and some of its tributaries, and there are a number of Angler Associations, some with a number of beats. Fishing stands and styles have been erected in places. Both commercial and leisure fishing takes place on the rivers. The Aherlow River is a designated Salmonid Water under the E.U. Freshwater Fish Directive. Other recreational activities such as boating, golfing and walking are also popular. Several industrial developments, which discharge into the river, border the site including three dairy related operations and a tannery.

The Lower River Suir contains excellent examples of a number of Annex I habitats, including the priority habitats alluvial forest and Yew woodland. The site also supports populations of several important animals species, some listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive or listed in the Irish Red Data Book. The presence of two

legally protected plants (Flora (Protection) Order, 1999) and the ornithological importance of the site adds further to the ecological interest and importance.

## **Appendix 3**

# **Finding of No Significant Effects Report**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS REPORT	
<b>Natura 2000 Site</b>	<b>Proximity of subject site to nearest point of designated site (km)</b>
<b>Name of project or plan</b>	Cahir Public Realm Plan
<b>Name and location of Natura 2000 site</b>	Galtee Mountains SAC – 8.3km
<b>Description of the project</b>	The proposed development includes for public realm refurbishment and enhancement in Cahir’s town centre comprising the upgrading of existing Square and approach streets with new high quality paving, kerbing, public lighting, improved street furniture and utility diversions/works (including undergrounding of overhead ESB cables). Footpath space will be widened, traffic calming will be developed through build out, reduced road carriageway widths and improved pedestrian crossings. Existing on-street parking to be reduced from the Square to a new Town Centre Car Park with a 86 spaces just off the Square to the north east. This car park is the subject of a separate Part 8 Planning application. The proposed works area for the entire scheme is circ 8,500m <sup>2</sup> .
<b>Is the project or plan directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site?</b>	No
<b>Are there other projects or plans that together with the project or plan being assessed could affect the site</b>	No
THE ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS	
<b>Describe how the project or plan (alone or in combination) is likely to affect the Natura 2000 site(s).</b>	No impact is envisaged as a result of the proposed works. There is no hydrological or ecological connection between the site of the proposed works and Galtee Mountains SAC (000646).
<b>List of agencies consulted: provide contact name and telephone or e- mail address.</b>	N/A
<b>Response to consultation.</b>	N/A
DATA COLLECTED TO CARRY OUT THE ASSESSMENT	
<b>Who carried out the assessment?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kieran Barry, Environmental Scientist with MWP</li> <li>• Zeba Haseeb, Environmental Scientist with MWP</li> <li>• Marie Kearns, Ecologist, MWP</li> </ul>
<b>Sources of data</b>	Refer to references.
<b>Level of assessment completed</b>	Desktop study and Field Study