

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

JUNE 2026



COMMUNITY PLAYGROUND

KNOCKMORE, CO. MAYO.

Report by

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Proposed Project

Kelly Environmental Consultancy and Advisory Services have been instructed by Mayo County Council to provide the information necessary to allow the competent authority to conduct an Article 6 (3) Screening for Appropriate Assessment to accompany a Part 8 planning application for a Community Playground at Knockmore, Co. Mayo.

The proposed development is not directly connected with, or necessary for, the management of any European Site, consequently the project has been subject to the Appropriate Assessment Screening process.

The assessment in this report is based on a field survey and subsequent desk study that was undertaken on the 4th of June, 2026. It specifically assesses the potential for the proposed project to impact on Natura 2000 sites.

This Report has been prepared with adherence to the European Commission guidance document 'Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (EC, 2001) and the Department of the Environment's Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (December 2009, amended February 2010). The report is in line with the requirements of Article 6 (3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011). In addition to the guidelines referenced above, the following relevant guidance documents were also considered when preparing this report:

1. DoEHLG (2009) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
2. European Communities (2000) *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.
3. Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.
4. EC (2007) *Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC – Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the commission*. European Commission.
5. EC (2013) *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats*. Version EUR 28. European Commission.

1.2 EU Legislative Framework

The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora) and the Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds) forms the basis for the selection of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) respectively. SACs and SPAs are referred to as Natura 2000 sites and are considered to be of exceptional importance in terms of rare, endangered or vulnerable habitats and species within the European Community. Under Article 2 (2) of the Habitats Directive, a network of sites of nature conservation importance have been identified by each member state of the EU for containing specified habitats or species that require specific management objectives that assist to maintain or return sites to favourable conservation status.

Under Article 6 (3) of the Habitats Directive an Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken for any plan or program that is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site. An Appropriate Assessment is an evaluation of the potential impacts of a plan on the conservation objectives of a Natura 2000 site, and the development, where necessary, of mitigation or avoidance measures to prevent adverse impacts.

It is important to note that the term 'Appropriate Assessment' is sometimes used more loosely to refer to the whole process set out under Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (Dodd et al., 2008), and therefore note that for the present assessment the term 'Habitats Assessment' (Stage 1) will be used, not 'Appropriate Assessment' (which refers to Stage 2 under the Habitats assessment. The requirement for Habitats assessment is set out in the EU Habitats Directive (92/43 EEC) in Article 6 (3) and 6 (4) which states:

6 (3) "Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives".

6 (4) 'If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted. Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission, to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest".

Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment process was published by the European Commission in 2002, this was later developed into guidance with reference to Ireland by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG, 2009). The guidance document references an approach from Stage 1 to Stage 4 employed when undertaking an Appropriate Assessment and is shown in Figure 1.1 below.

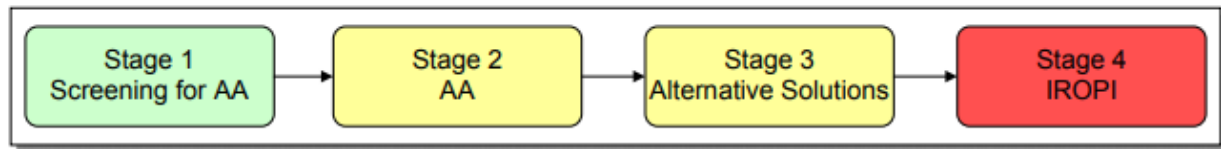


Figure 1.1 Appropriate Assessment Process (DoEHLG, 2009).

1.3 Stage of the Appropriate Assessment

There are four stages involved in the Appropriate Assessment process. Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1) is undertaken in order to ascertain whether or not there is a requirement to proceed with a more detailed assessment and undertake an Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Statement) (Stage 2). These stages as outlined by the DoEHLG (2009) guidance document titled '*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland*' are summarised in sections 1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3 and 1.3.4 below.

1.3.1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 1)

This process determines whether or not an Appropriate Assessment is required for a plan or project. Under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, screening must be carried out by the Competent Authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if a land-use plan or proposed project, individually or in combination with another plan or project, is likely to have a significant effect on a European site (Natura 2000 site). The Competent Authority must decide whether or not an Appropriate Assessment is required on the basis of objective information.

1.3.2 Appropriate Assessment (Natura Impact Statement) (Stage 2)

Where required, the Appropriate Assessment (NIS) should present the data, information and analysis necessary to reach a definitive decision on the implications of the plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects for a Natura 2000 site with regard to its conservation objectives and whether or not there will be any adverse effects on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. The NIS should be backed up by objective information, the best scientific knowledge and the precautionary principle. This should provide information to enable the competent authority to carry out the appropriate assessment. If the assessment is negative, i.e. adverse effects on the integrity of a site cannot be excluded, then the process must proceed to Stage 4, or the plan or project should be abandoned. The Appropriate Assessment is carried out by the competent authority and is supported by the NIS.

1.3.3 Assessment of Alternative Solutions (Stage 3)

As part of this process, an alternative method of achieving the objectives of the plan or project is sought that avoids adverse effects on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. The process must return to Stage 2 as alternatives will require appropriate assessment in order to proceed.

1.3.4 Assessments where Adverse Effects remain (Stage 4)

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in light of an assessment of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the project or plan should proceed. Each stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required. If, for example, the conclusions at the end of Stage One are that there will be no significant impacts on the Natura 2000 (European Site) site, there is no requirement to proceed further with the next stage. It is best practice however, to complete a 'finding of no significant effects' report. The relationship of the 4 stages of this assessment is illustrated in the NPWS guidance document.

1.4 Statement of Authority

Noel Kelly (BSc. Environmental Science and Technology) MIEI has over 24 years of experience in the field of Environmental Consultancy. He held a number of positions as Environmental Manager at various organisations throughout Ireland before going on to establish Kelly Environmental Consulting and Advisory Services in 2006 and has provided expertise on projects such as The Shell Corrib Gas on-shore terminal and pipeline, North Mayo; M17-M18 Gort-Tuam motorway; North Runway project at Dublin Airport; Dublin Port new Terminal project; the 4 Dublin Authorities Green Bin project and Red Bull World Series Cliff Diving Event, Downpatrick head among others.

Ray Tighe BSc. (Hons) Ecology, MPhil (Coastal Morphology and Vegetation Dynamics) TU Dublin, is an appropriately qualified ecologist with experience in habitat assessment and mapping. He has previously undertaken a broad spectrum of consultancy related ecological work across the country for MKO. This work has comprised of bat, bird and otter survey work for large scale wind farms and large-scale construction works. Ray has over 6 years of experience undertaking appropriate assessment screening reports for various projects coupled with extensive site ecological surveying and mapping and site supervision works over construction projects. He has undertaken environmental research in the ESHI group at the Dublin Institute of Technology, Grangegorman. Prior to this, Ray worked in the environmental department of South Dublin County Council. Ray now works for Kelly Environmental Consulting and Advisory Services where he specialises in ecological work.

1.5 Field Survey

A multi-disciplinary ecological field survey was undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist from Kelly Environmental Consulting and Advisory Services, Ray Tighe on the 4th of June, 2026. The site was assessed and the habitats of the site were classified according to the guidelines set out in 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000), which classifies habitats based on the vegetation present and management history. In addition, the field survey was designed to detect the presence, or likely presence,

of a range of protected species. Seasonal factors that affect distribution patterns and habits of species were taken into account when conducting the surveys. The potential of the site to support certain populations (in particular those of conservation importance that may not have been recorded during the field survey due to their seasonal absence or nocturnal/cryptic habits) were assessed. Using the information gained during this site visit, together with published information on the site and its environs, it is considered that a comprehensive ecological assessment was achieved.



Figure 1.2 View of the site from the local access road with the surface categorised as *Spoil and Bare Ground (ED2)*.

2 Description of the Proposed Project

2.1 Project Site Location

The proposed Community Playground site at Knockmore is located to the west of Corcoran's Fuel and Grocery stores. The existing area proposed for the community development is characterised by a rough, unmanaged hard-surfaced area comprising compacted maintenance material with a nil to limited amount of natural biodiversity habitat. The area has a relatively low ecological functionality.

The site is located along the L1318 local access road and is just off the main R310 Ballina to Pontoon road.

An aerial image of the location of the proposed project site is provided in Figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1 Aerial view of the proposed playground and site red line boundary planning drawing layer.

The proposal consists of a small-scale community amenity development with no requirement for wastewater treatment, no abstraction of water, no discharge to surface waters and no ongoing emissions likely to affect any EU designated Natura 2000 Site.

2.2 General Description of the Project

The Part 8 planning application is for permission for the development of a community playground area.

The proposed development comprises the construction of a new community playground facility on a site extending to approximately 0.194 hectares within Knockmore Village, Co. Mayo. The development has been designed to provide a high-quality recreational amenity for the local community and includes a range of play equipment suitable for children of different age groups and abilities.

An overview of the proposed development red line boundary and site layout and playground detail is provided below in Figure 2.4 and also in Appendix 1 of this report.

The surrounding area is a mixture of rural type settlement with some small commercial activity nearby the proposed site itself. The site lies to the south of the local GAA clubhouse and pitches, the local church, a number of house in the village and a pub.



Figure 2.2 Post and fencing delineate the northern boundary of the site adjacent to the L1318 local access road.

The development represents a community recreational amenity project within the existing village. The proposal is intended to enhance social infrastructure and quality of life for local residents. No residential, commercial or industrial use is proposed; the development is solely recreational in nature.

2.2.1 Proposed Elements of the Community Playground

The playground will incorporate a variety of play features including a cableway, junior and senior multi-play units, swing sets, an inclusive roundabout, balance beams, agility and climbing elements, spring-mounted play equipment, and associated play structures. The layout has been designed to encourage physical activity, social interaction, imaginative play and inclusive access for all users.

Ancillary works include the provision of pedestrian pathways, safety surfacing beneath play equipment, landscaped grassed areas, planting zones, seating areas, bicycle parking, boundary treatment and all associated site development works. The proposal also includes the provision of a dedicated car parking area to facilitate safe access for visitors.

Extensive landscaping is proposed throughout the site incorporating grassed areas, planting beds and ornamental planting to enhance the visual amenity of the development and integrate the playground into the surrounding village environment. The community playground is intended to provide a valuable community resource, promoting recreation, social wellbeing, active lifestyles and community engagement for residents and visitors to the village of Knockmore.



Figure 2.3 Image showing Hedgerow WL1 and an access road on the eastern side of the proposed site. This image looks towards the south. It is noticeable here that the local topography falls towards the adjacent road corridor and away from any hydrologically connected Natura 2000 site.

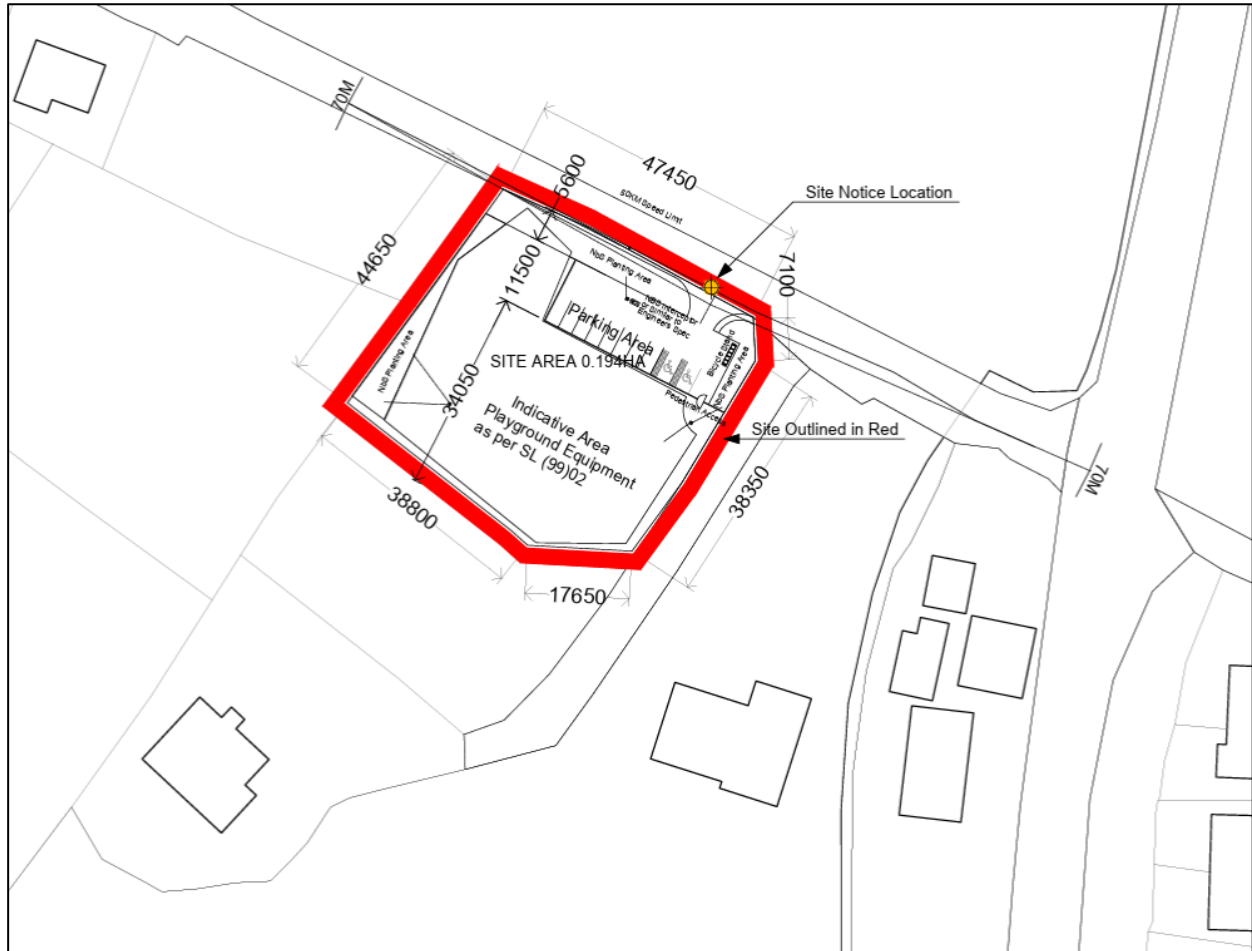


Figure 2.4 Image of the proposed Community Playground site layout at Knockmore showing the red line boundary (RLB).

A petrol hydrocarbon interceptor has been integrated into the site design to mitigate the risk of surface water contamination from vehicular runoff. This system ensures full environmental compliance and works alongside the nature-based planting to safeguard the playground environment.

2.3 Receiving Environment

Habitat classification at the proposed development as per Fossitt, 'A Guide to Habitats', 2000.

ED2 Spoil and Bare Ground	Surface layers comprising inert stone and gravel material
WL1 Hedgerow	Located alongside the access road that runs adjacent to the eastern periphery of the proposed site comprising <i>Leylandii</i> that have been topped to a height of approximately 1.5m.
WL2 Treeline	A line of Willow, Sycamore, Ash, Hawthorn and a large Lodgepole Pine tree occupy the western periphery of the site

Table 2.1 Fossit Habitat Classification for the proposed community playground at Knockmore.



Figure 2.5 Treeline (WL2) comprising Willow, Sycamore, Ash, Hawthorn and a large Lodgepole Pine occupy the western periphery of the propose site as viewed from the east on the L1318 local access road.



Figure 2.6 The southern periphery of the site currently extends to the area of Spoil and Bare Ground (ED2) and where it meets grass

A multi-disciplinary walkover survey was designed to detect the presence, or likely presence, of a range of protected species, including bat, otter and badger. Potential suitable habitats were investigated for all of these species but none were identified. The site is dominated by rank vegetation of low biodiversity value comprising Rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), Dock weed (*Rumex sp.*), White clover (*Trifolium repens*), Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), Ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum sp.*) and Common ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*).

During the field visit bird species were recorded flying over the proposed site comprised Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), and Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*). None of the bird species recorded within the site are Red listed under the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI) or in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive.

No supporting habitat connected to the avian Qualifying Interests of Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA [004228] will be lost or affected as a result of the proposed development. The site is physically separated from the SPA and there is no immediate fall in elevation towards the south. Currently, the site comprises Spoil and Bare Ground (ED2) which has a low biodiversity value within a developed village setting. Consequently, no impacts on the species or habitats for which the SPA is designated are predicted.

The site does not provide suitable foraging, roosting, loafing or breeding habitat for Greenland White-fronted Goose, Tufted Duck, Common Scoter or Common Gull, nor does it support habitat functionally connected to Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA.



Figure 2.13 Southern section of the nearby village of Knockmore for which the proposed playground will provide recreational and amenity provision.

The proposed development site at Knockmore does not provide any supporting habitat for any of the Qualifying Interest species of any Natura 2000 site such as the River Moy SAC or Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA. No other evidence of flora or fauna listed as a Qualifying Interest of any Natura 2000 site was identified. No non-volant mammal species of conservation concern were recorded during the site survey.

The habitat types that are within the existing area and the RLB are dominated by anthropogenically influenced features such as inert stone and gravel material and disturbed ground.

The proposed development site comprises a small area of disturbed ground within the existing village envelope of Knockmore and is physically separated from the River Moy SAC [002298] by intervening roads, residential development and agricultural lands. The site does not support habitat suitable for Otter, Atlantic Salmon, Brook Lamprey, Sea Lamprey or White-clawed Crayfish, nor does it contain any watercourses, wetlands or hydrological pathways linking the site to the SAC. Given the absence of a source-pathway-receptor connection, no direct, indirect or in-combination effects on the Qualifying Interests or conservation objectives of the River Moy SAC are anticipated.

No plant species listed under the Flora (Protection) Order 1999 (as amended) or the Irish Red Data Book were identified in the proposed site.

No invasive plant species as listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations (S.I. 477 of 2011) were identified on the proposed site.

2.4 Significance of Habitats

The Ecological evaluation within this section follows a methodology that is set out in Chapter 3 of the 'Guidelines for Assessment of Ecological Impacts of National Roads Schemes' (NRA, 2009). There are no habitats within the proposed site boundary that correspond to any habitats listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive. No species listed under Annex II of the Habitats Directive were recorded at the site.

Habitats within the development site are assigned a status of *Local Importance (Lower Value)*. The proposed development site does not provide supporting habitat for any of the Qualifying Interest species of any Natura 2000 designated site.

3 Identification of Relevant European Sites

3.1 Background to Natura 2000 Sites

In order to ensure the survival of Europe's most endangered and vulnerable species, EU governments adopted the Habitats Directive in 1992 (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora). Together with the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), it sets the standard for nature conservation across the EU and enables all European Member States to collaborate within the same legislative framework in order to protect the most vulnerable species and habitat types across their entire natural range within the EU.

The Habitats Directive protects around 1200 European species other than birds which are considered to be endangered, vulnerable, rare and/or endemic. Included in the Directive are mammals, reptiles, fish, crustaceans, insects, molluscs, bivalves and plants. The protection provisions afforded to these species are similar to those in the Birds Directive. They are designed to ensure that the species listed in the Habitats Directive reach a favourable conservation status within the EU. With the introduction of the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directive which were transposed into Irish law as S.I. No. 94/1997 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997, the European Union formally recognised the significance of protecting rare and endangered species of flora and fauna, and also, more importantly, their habitats. The 1997 Regulations and their amendments were subsequently revised and consolidated in S.I. No. 477/2011- European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. This legislation requires the establishment and conservation of a network of sites of particular conservation value that are to be termed 'European Sites'.

Articles 3 – 9 of the EU Habitats Directive provide the legislative framework of protecting rare and endangered species of flora and fauna, and habitats. Annex I of the Directive lists habitat types whose conservation requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). Priority habitats, such as Turloughs, which are in danger of disappearing within the EU are also listed in Annex I. Annex II of the Habitats Directive lists animal and plant species such as Atlantic Salmon and Killarney Fern whose conservation also requires the designation of SAC. Annex IV lists animal and plant species in need of strict protection such as the Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Otter. Annex V lists animal and plant species whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures. In Ireland, species listed under Annex V include Irish Hare, Common Frog and Pine Marten. It is possible for species to be listed in more than one Annex. This is the case with Otter and Lesser Horseshoe Bat.

Europe is home to more than 500 wild bird species. At least 32 % of the EU's bird species are currently not in a good conservation status. The Birds Directive aims to protect all of the 500 wild bird species naturally occurring in the European Union. Concerned with their decline, Member States unanimously adopted the Directive 79/409/EEC in April 1979. It is the oldest piece of EU legislation on the environment and one of its cornerstones. Amended in 2009, it became the Directive 2009/147/EC. Habitat loss and degradation are the most serious threats to the conservation of wild birds. The Directive therefore places great emphasis on the protection of habitats for endangered and migratory species. It establishes a network

of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) including all the most suitable territories for these species. Since 1994, all SPAs are included in the Natura 2000 ecological network, set up under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. A particular group of bird species have been identified in the Directive and are listed in Annex I as requiring special conservation measures in relation to their habitats. These species have been listed on account of inter alia: their risk of extinction; vulnerability to specific changes in their habitat; and/or due to their relatively small population size or restricted distribution. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are to be identified and classified for these Annex I listed species and for regularly occurring migratory species, paying particular attention to the protection of wetlands (Article 4).

3.2 Identification of Natura 2000 Sites within the Likely Zone of Impact

The most up to date GIS spatial datasets for Surface Water Catchments and European designated sites were downloaded from the EPA website (www.eps.ie) and NPWS website (www.npws.ie), respectively, on the 04/06/2026. European sites within the likely 15km Zone of Likely Impact of the project were identified along with potential surface water connectivity. The following rationale was used to identify the Zone of Likely Impact. Initially, sites within a 15km radius of the proposed project were identified (as per the DoEHLG Guidance, 2010). In addition, using the precautionary principle, European Sites located outside the 15km buffer zone were also taken into account and assessed. In this case, no pathway for effects on any site that is further than 15 km from the site was identified. These European Sites were then individually assessed to determine whether impacts as a result of the proposed development were likely or not. All European sites located greater than 15km from the proposed development, with no identifiable connectivity or located in a separate hydrological catchment were deemed to be outside the zone of impact of the proposed development as no pathways for significant effects were identified.

Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show the location of the proposed project in relation to all Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Likely Impact as identified according to the criteria described above. Table 3.1 contains a list of all Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed project and the QI species and habitats for which the sites have been designated. The site synopsis and conservation objectives of these sites, as per the NPWS website (www.npws.ie), were considered at the time of preparation of this report (04/06/2026). Details of these sites, including their distance from the proposed project, are provided in Table 3.1. The table considers which of the sites require further assessment (from a precautionary point of view given their proximity to the proposed site) and those that can be quickly ruled out (due to the separation in distance or lack of connectivity between the proposed site and the Natura 2000 site). European Natura 2000 sites that have been selected for further consideration (due to their proximity or connectivity to the proposal) are further considered in Section 4 of this report.

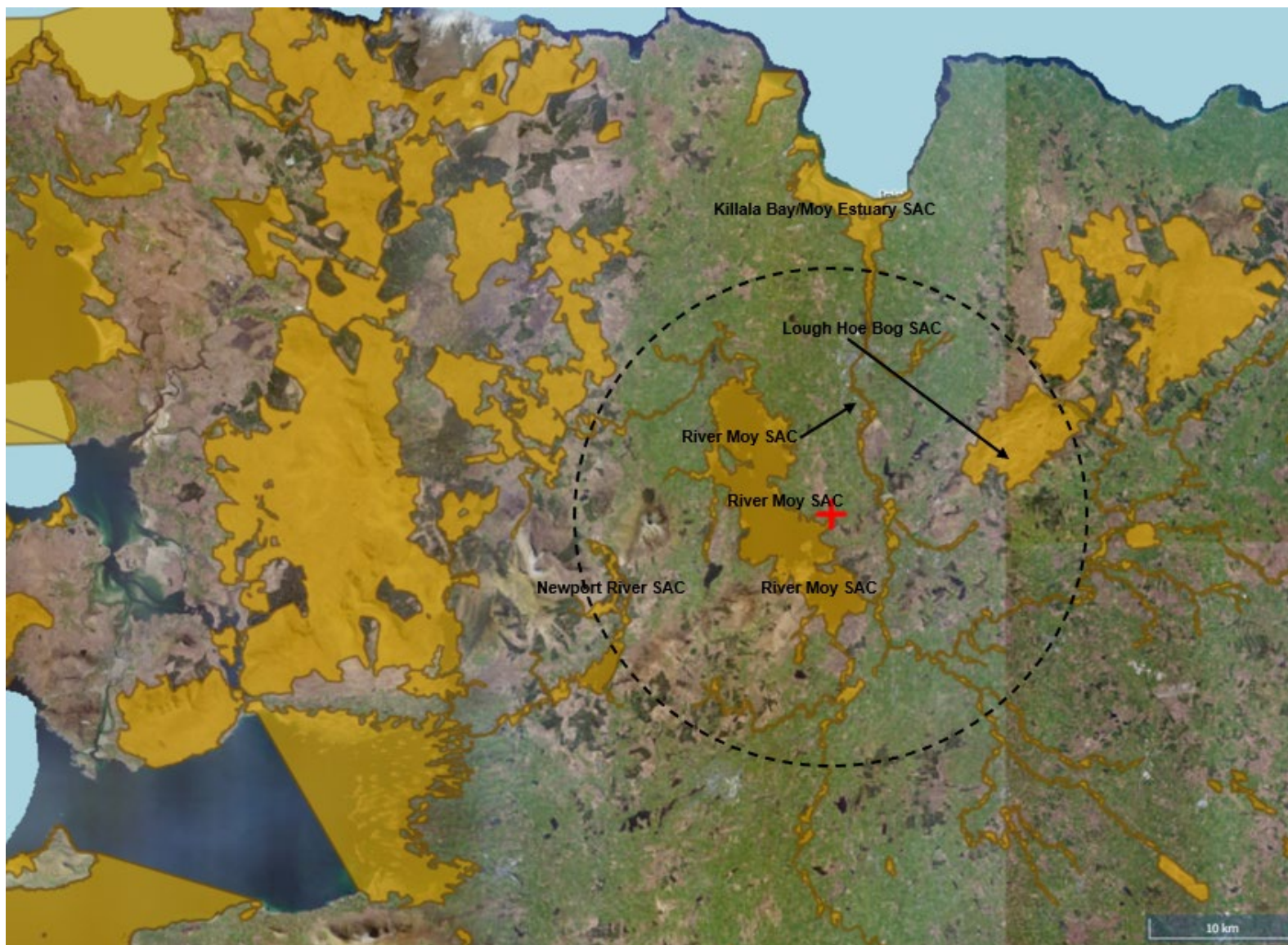


Figure 3.1 Location of proposed site (red marker) in relation to all Natura 2000 SAC sites (brown) within the 15km buffer likely zone of impact.

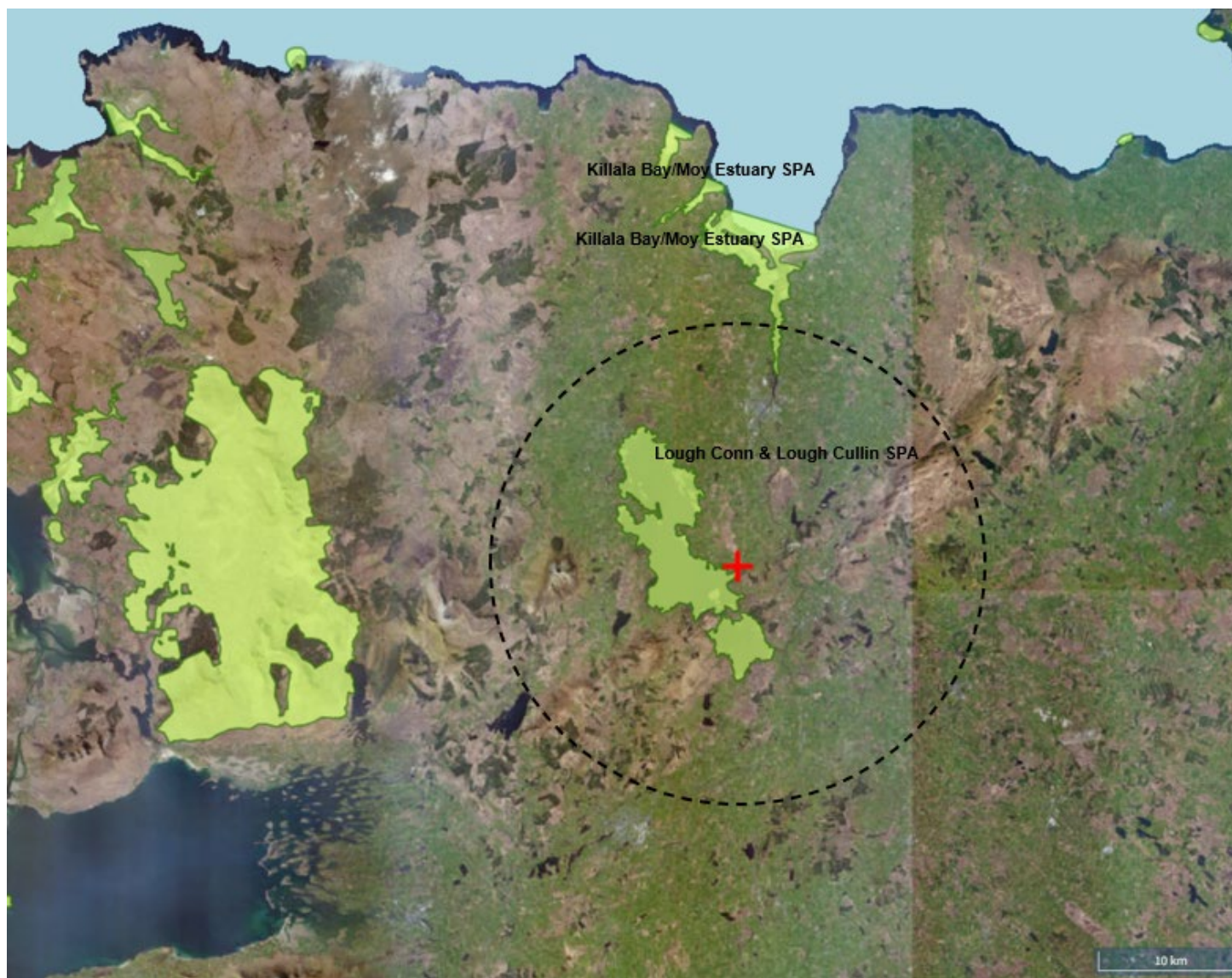


Figure 3.2 Location of proposed site (red marker) in relation to all Natura 2000 SPA sites (green) within the 15km buffer likely zone of impact.

Natura 2000 Site	Distance from Proposed Development	Qualify Interests/Special Conservation Interests for which the Natura 2000 Site has been designated (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives, www.npws.ie on the 04/06/2026)	Conservation Objective	Likely Zone of Impact Assessment
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)				
River Moy SAC (002298)	229m	Habitats 7110 Active raised bogs* 7120 Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration 7150 Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> 7230 Alkaline fens 91A0 Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles 91E0 Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>)* Species 1096 Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) 1106 Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) 1355 Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) 1092 White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) 1095 Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected (Version 1, 3rd August, 2016) www.npws.ie	The proposed development site is located outside the SAC which is located 229m away to the south-east. In addition, there is no initial fall in elevation towards the SAC or towards the south. The proposed development site is not hydrologically linked to this SAC and there is no initial fall in elevation to the south. White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) are not present within this particular WFD Sub-Catchment as is evident in the Conservation Objectives document (Map 7). This species is best suited to the upper tributaries of the River Moy and all identified cases are located upstream of the propose site.

				Given that the proposed site already has secure access in-situ, hard-standing, dry road access already, there will be no adverse impact. There will be no negative impact on Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>), Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>), Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) or Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) due to the lack of any hydrological connectivity between the proposed site and the SAC. No complete source-pathway-receptor linkages for direct or indirect impacts exist. The site is therefore not within the likely zone of impact.
Lough Hoe Bog SAC (000633)	9.26km	Habitats • 3110 Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (<i>Littorelletalia uniflorae</i>) • 7130 Blanket bogs (* if active bog) Species • 1013 <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> (Geyer's Whorl Snail)	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected	The proposed site development is located completely outside the Lough Hoe Bog SAC which is located over 9.2km away in a different WFD sub-catchment. There are no hydrological conduits within the development

		1092 <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish)	(Version 1, 31st August, 2017) www.npws.ie	site red line boundary that drain to any Natura 2000 site. There is no surface water connectivity between the proposed site and the Lough Hoe Bog SAC and therefore no potential conduit for any hydrological input from the site to the SAC exists. No complete source-pathway-receptor linkages for direct or indirect impacts exist. The site is therefore not within the likely zone of impact.
Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SAC 000458	10.66km	Habitats - Estuaries [1130] - Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] - Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] - Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] - Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] - Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex II species for which the SAC has been selected (Version 1, 11th August, 2016) www.npws.ie	The proposed development site is located outside the SAC which is located 10.66km away to the north-east and within a different WFD Sub-catchment. The proposed development site is not hydrologically linked to this SAC. There is no potential for indirect effects from the proposed playground project on any of the

- Embryonic shifting dunes [2110]
- Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes) [2120]
- Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]
- Humid dune slacks [2190]

Species

- Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (*Vertigo angustior*) [1014]
- Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) [1095]
- Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) [1365]

habitats listed on the left-hand column due to lack of hydrological connectivity between this proposed site and the particular habitats for which the SAC has been designated.

A wet grassland/marsh habitat site shown on the NPWS Conservation Objective document (Map 8) is over 12km away to the north and is a habitat for the Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail (*Vertigo angustior*). There will be no impact on this habitat or this species as a result of the lack of hydrological connectivity.

There is no potential impact for similar connectivity reasons as per above, for the Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*). The proposed site has no hydrological connectivity with the SAC. Their preferred areas are shown on the NPWS Conservation Objectives document (Map 9) to be over

				14km away to the north nearer to Bartragh Island. Given the lack of hydrological connectivity, the proposed playground by its inert nature and composition will not result in the installation of any barriers within the River Moy or any other stream for the migratory life stages of Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>) moving from fresh water to marine habitats or vice versa which is a target of the SAC's conservation objectives. Given that the proposed site has secure access in-situ, hard-standing and a dry-road access already there will be no adverse impact on the SAC. There are no watercourses or drainage ditches located within the red line boundary of the site that drain to any Natura 2000 site and it is not therefore hydrologically connected to this SAC.
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				No complete source-pathway-receptor linkages for direct or indirect impacts exist. The site is therefore not within the likely zone of impact.
Newport River SAC (002144)	14.7km	Species • Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] • Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex II species for which Newport River SAC [002144] has been selected: Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) and Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) (Version 1, 6th August, 2019) www.npws.ie	The proposed site development is located completely outside Newport River SAC which is located 14.7km upstream (hydrological distance) and in a different WFD sub-catchment and sub-basin. There are no hydrological conduits within the development site red line boundary that drain to any Natura 2000 site. There is no surface water connectivity between the proposed site and this SAC and therefore no potential conduit for any hydrological input from the site to the SAC exists. No complete source-pathway-receptor linkages for direct or

				indirect impacts exist. The site is therefore not within the likely zone of impact.
Special Protection Area (SPA)				
Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA	331m	Birds - A395 Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) - A061 Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) - A065 Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) - A182 Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) Habitats Wetlands and Waterbirds	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA (21st February, 2018) www.npws.ie	The proposed playground is located outside of Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA. The site is not hydrologically linked to this SPA. In addition, there is no initial fall in elevation towards the SPA and the south. The proposed site is located within an area that comprises rough ground. This site therefore does not make itself amenable to the Qualifying interest bird species listed for this SPA. There will be no negative impact on Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>), Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>), Common Scoter

				(<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) or Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) due to the absence of suitable foraging, roosting or breeding habitat within the proposed site and the lack of any ecological pathway connecting the development site to Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA. The proposed development is located within an existing village setting and will not affect the freshwater, wetland or open-water habitats upon which these species depend. There is no surface water connectivity between the proposed site and this upstream SPA and therefore no potential conduit for any hydrological input from the site to the SPA exists. No pathway for any effect was observed. The site is therefore not within the likely zone of impact.
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Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA (004036)	12.95km	Birds • A157 Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) • A162 Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) • A160 Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) • A149 Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) • A144 Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) • A141 Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) • A140 Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) • A137 Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) Habitats • Wetlands	To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as Special Conservation Interests for this SPA (Version 28th May, 2013) www.npws.ie	The proposed site development RLB is located well outside of Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA (over 12.9km) and to the south. The proposed playground area currently has no habitat area suitable for any of the avian QI's for which the SPA is designated. The proposed site is located within an area that comprises a mix of recreational, tourist and small-scale business activity comprising buildings, tarmacadam & concrete roads. This site therefore does not make itself amenable to the Qualifying interest bird species listed for this SPA as a result of poor value habitat. There is no surface water connectivity between the proposed playground site and the Killala Bay/Moy Estuary SPA and therefore no potential conduit for
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				any hydrological input from the site to the SPA exists. No pathway for any effect was observed. The site is therefore not within the likely zone of impact.
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Table 3.1 Identification of Sites within the Likely Zone of Impact of the Proposed Project.

4 Article 6 (3) Screening Assessment

The Screening Assessment criteria examined in the impact assessment section of this report has taken into consideration the screening matrix detailed in *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive* (EC 2001). Any likely direct or indirect impacts of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, on Natura 2000 Sites by virtue of the following criteria: size and scale, land-take, distance from the Natura 2000 Site or key features of the site, resource requirements, emissions, excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction, operation, decommissioning have been considered in this Screening Assessment.

None of the components of the proposed children's playground as planned at Knockmore are likely to have a significant impact on any European Sites given the small scale of the development and the nature of the features of interest relating to the nearest European Site as previously assessed.

4.1 Description of any likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary impacts of the proposed development on European Sites

Any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the proposed development, both alone and in combination with other plans or projects, on Natura 2000 sites via the following criteria: size and scale, land-take, distance from the European Sites or key features of the site, resource requirements (such as water abstraction), emissions (disposal to land, water or air), excavation requirements, transportation requirements and duration of construction, operation, decommissioning are presented below.

Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts of the proposed development on Natura 2000 sites	
Size and Scale	The proposed development comprises a small-scale community playground development within an existing village setting at Knockmore, Co. Mayo. The site extends to approximately 0.194 ha and consists primarily of improved grassland and disturbed ground. The proposal includes playground equipment, ancillary parking, bicycle parking, landscaping, pedestrian access routes and associated site works. Given the modest scale of the development and its location outside any Natura 2000 site, no direct, indirect or secondary impacts on any European Site are anticipated.
Land Take	There will be no land take from any Natura 2000 site as a result of the proposed development. The proposed works are confined entirely within the red line boundary and do not result in the loss, fragmentation or deterioration of any Annex I habitat or supporting habitat associated with the Qualifying Interest species of

	any SAC or SPA. The site is located within an existing village environment and does not contain habitat of particular ecological significance.
Distance from Natura 2000 sites or important features of any site	The proposed development site does not overlap with the boundaries of any Natura 2000 site. The River Moy SAC is located approximately 229m to the south of the proposed development site, while Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA is located approximately 331m to the north. The proposed site is physically separated from these designated sites by existing roads, residential development, agricultural lands and other intervening features. There is no initial fall in elevation towards either the SAC or SPA towards the south. No hydrological pathways, watercourses, drainage channels or ecological corridors linking the site to any Natura 2000 site have been identified. Consequently, no pathway exists through which significant effects could arise.
Resource Requirements	The proposed development will not require the abstraction of water from any Natura 2000 site nor will it exploit any natural resources associated with any European Site. No watercourses occur within the site boundary and there is no requirement for the extraction of materials from designated sites. The development is limited to the provision of a local community amenity and will not place any additional resource demands upon any Natura 2000 site.
Emissions	The proposed development is not expected to generate emissions capable of impacting upon any Natura 2000 site. Surface water runoff generated within the site will infiltrate locally or be managed through standard and current best practice drainage measures for similar type facilities. Given the absence of hydrological connectivity between the proposed development and any Natura 2000 site, there is no potential for impacts relating to water quality. Dust, noise and other temporary construction-related emissions will be localised, short-term and negligible in nature.
Excavation Requirements	Only limited and non-intrusive excavation and ground preparation works will be required to facilitate the installation of playground equipment, parking areas, pathways and associated infrastructure. Excavation depths will be shallow and localised. No watercourses, wetlands, groundwater-dependent habitats or Natura 2000 sites will be affected by the proposed works. Accordingly, no direct, indirect or secondary impacts on any European Site are anticipated.
Transportation Requirements	Construction of the proposed community playground will result in a temporary and minor increase in vehicle movements associated with the delivery of materials and equipment. Traffic volumes will remain low and confined to the local road network.

	The limited duration and scale of construction traffic will not result in direct, indirect or secondary impacts on any Natura 2000 site.
Duration of Construction, Operation, Decommissioning	Construction of the proposed development is expected to be completed within a relatively short timeframe. Following completion, the playground will operate as a passive community recreational facility with minimal environmental emissions or disturbance. Neither the construction phase, operational phase nor any future decommissioning of the development will result in direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the conservation objectives, Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests of any Natura 2000 site.

Table 4.1 Potential Impacts of the proposed community playground on Natura 2000 sites

4.2 Likely Cumulative Impact of the Proposed Project on Natura 2000 Sites in combination with other plans and projects

The proposed community playground was assessed in combination with other plans and projects within the wider Knockmore area and County Mayo that could potentially result in cumulative effects on Natura 2000 sites.

The online planning system for Mayo County Council was consulted for the townland of Knockmore and the surrounding area adjacent to the proposed community playground. The majority of planning applications granted within the locality over recent years relate to small-scale community regeneration dwelling units, domestic extensions, agricultural developments, retention permissions, alterations to existing buildings, ancillary site work and other small-scale community infrastructure projects.

The proposed development comprises a community playground development on a site extending to approximately 0.194 ha and includes playground equipment, ancillary parking, bicycle parking, pedestrian access, landscaping and associated site works. The development is located outside the boundaries of any Natura 2000 site and has no direct hydrological, ecological or functional connectivity with the River Moy SAC [002298] or Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA [004228].

Given the small scale and localised nature of the proposed development, the absence of any identified source-pathway-receptor linkage, the lack of emissions capable of affecting Natura 2000 sites and the absence of any significant habitat loss, it is considered that the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other permitted or proposed developments within the area, will not result in likely significant effects on any Natura 2000 site.

Therefore, significant cumulative effects on the conservation objectives, Qualifying Interests or Special Conservation Interests of any Natura 2000 site can be objectively excluded.

5 Article 6 (3) Screening Statement and Conclusions

The findings of this Screening Assessment are presented following the European Commission guidance document 'Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (EC, 2001) and the Department of the Environment's Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland (December 2009, amended February 2010).

5.1 Assessment of Significant Impacts

- The community playground project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any Natura 2000 Site.
- With regard to the Cumulative Impact Assessment, there are no other projects or plans together with the assessment of the proposed project that could impact on any Natura 2000 Site. No cumulative impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed project.
- There will be no direct impact on the Qualifying Interests or Sites of Community Importance of any Natura 2000 Site and no pathways for indirect impacts were identified.
- As proposed, the project will not have any significant direct or indirect impact on any Natura 2000 sites.

5.2 Data Collected to Carry Out Assessment

For the purpose of the preparation of this report, the following sources of information were employed:

- NPWS Site Synopsis and Conservation Objectives for Natura 2000 Sites were reviewed.
- A field survey of the site was conducted on the 4th of June, 2026.
- A desk study was undertaken pertaining to the relevant ecological data that was required.

5.3 Conclusions

The proposed Knockmore Community Playground represents a small-scale community amenity development designed to provide enhanced recreational, social and wellbeing benefits for local residents whilst incorporating landscaping, biodiversity enhancement measures and Nature-based Solutions (NbS) planting within the overall site design. The proposal will improve the visual amenity and recreational value of the site through the provision of inclusive play facilities, pedestrian access infrastructure, bicycle parking, native planting and green space enhancement within the existing village environment.

Given the small nature and scale of the proposed development, the absence of any direct or indirect hydrological connectivity to any Natura 2000 site, the lack of suitable habitat for the Qualifying Interest species of the River Moy SAC [002298] and the Special Conservation Interest species of Lough Conn and Lough Cullin SPA [004228], and having regard to best scientific knowledge in the field, it can be concluded that the proposed development, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, will not give rise to likely significant effects on any Natura 2000 site.

Accordingly, it is objectively concluded that the proposed Knockmore Community Playground, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, will not adversely affect the integrity of any European Site in view of its conservation objectives. Therefore, the proposed development does not require Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

Advocate General Sharpston in Case C-258/11 *Sweetman* states at paras 47-49: “47.

It follows that the possibility of there being a significant effect on the site will generate the need for an appropriate assessment for the purposes of Article 6(3). The requirement at this stage that the plan or project be likely to have a significant effect is thus a trigger for the obligation to carry out an appropriate assessment. There is no need to establish such an effect; it is, as Ireland observes, merely necessary to determine that there may be such an effect.

In this case there is no *possibility* of there being an effect.

6 References

Birds Directive (2009/47/EC)

Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.

Dodd, A.M., Cleary, B.E., Dawkins, J.S., Ferry, C.D., and Williams, G.M. 2008. *The Appropriate Assessment of Plans in Northern Ireland: a guide to why, when and how to do it*. The RSPB, Sandy.

DoEHLG (2009) *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities*. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

EC (2002) *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.

EC (2007) *Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC – Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the commission*. European Commission.

EC (2013) *Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats*. Version EUR 28. European Commission.

European Communities (2000) *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg. European Commission.

Fossitt JA (2000) *A Guide to Habitats in Ireland*. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny

Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC).

<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/> Accessed 4th of June, 2026.

National Roads Authority, 2008. *Guidelines for the Assessment of the Ecological Impacts of National Road Schemes*.

NPWS Protected Site Synopses and maps available on <http://www.npws.ie/en/ProtectedSites/>.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Site Layout Plan

PROJECT DESCRIPTION	DRAWING LEGEND
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	SITE NOTICE LOCATION SITE SUBJECT TO PART VIII CONSULTATION OUTLINED IN RED.
REGULATIONS	CALCULATIONS
To be Built in Accordance with the current Technical Guidance Documents.	SITE AREA = 0.194HA

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- All drawings are to be read in conjunction with other consultant's drawings
- All dimensions, unless otherwise stated, are given in millimetres and must be confirmed and checked by the Contractor on site.
- Levels are generally given in metres from a specified datum. All Levels must be confirmed and checked by the Contractor on site.
- Any discrepancies on this drawing are to be brought to the attention of Mayo County Council Architects immediately.
- Do not scale this drawing. Written dimensions only to be used.

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2 Site Approach from Southeast



3 Site Approach from Northwest

1 Site Layout Area = 0.433HA

1: 500 Scale at A1

Status Key			
SHARED / FOR INFORMATION			
S0	WORK IN PROGRESS	Rev. No.	Date:
S1	COORDINATION	1	04.06.2026
S2	INFORMATION	2	08/06/2026
S3	REVIEW / COMMENT		
S4	CONST. APPROVAL		
D1	COSTING		
D2	TENDER		
D3	CONTRACTOR DESIGN		
PUBLISHED			
A1	PTS / FSC / DAC		
A2	CONSTRUCTION		
AB	AS-BUILT		

Mayo County Council, Architects Department, The Mall, Castlebar, Co. Mayo 094 9047695



ARCHITECTS DEPARTMENT
MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL



Project Title: Knockmore Community Playground		Project No: D_2XX	Drawing No. L(99)01	Purpose : A3/PT8
Drawing Title: Site Layout Plan		Element		Revision: 2
		Scale:		1:500
Project Number MA000 - PT8-	Sub-Phase -	Element/Syst. -	Spatial Zone -	Level Type DR - MCC - AR - L(99)01
Drawn By: MAK		ISSUED:		
Checked By: MM		03.05.2026		

