



Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

Bremore Regional Park Development Project

Balbriggan

Co. Dublin

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B.Sc. Hons. (E.R.M)



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Natura 2000 Sites Synopses

Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC 001957

Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000

Rogerstown Estuary SAC 000208

Rogerstown Estuary SPA 004015

Boyne Estuary 004080 SPA

Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA 004158

Skerries Islands 004122 SPA

Rockabill 004014 SPA

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1.0 Introduction

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report of the Part 8 Application for the Bremore Regional Park Development Project in Balbriggan, was commissioned by Áit Urbanism + Landscape Ltd., on behalf of Fingal County Council, and prepared by Environmental Consultant James Conroy, (BSc (Hons) Class II, Division I Honours Programme in Countryside Management, Ecology and Ecosystems awarded by John Moore's University and (BSc Level VII, Environmental Resources Management and Planning, Dublin Institute of Technology). The purpose of this report is to provide information to Fingal County Council, the relevant planning authority, to carry out the screening for Appropriate Assessment. This report should be read in conjunction with all drawings and reports submitted as part of the Part 8 Application for the Bremore Regional Park Development Project.

1.1 Background

Bremore Park is located north of Balbriggan along the coastal fringe of Fingal. The Park in its entirety is comprised of circa 43.5 hectares, and is bounded by high amenity agricultural land to the north and shoreline to the east. Balbriggan harbour is found at the southern tip of the park while residential areas frame the western boundary. The Dublin – Belfast railway line traverses the park along a north – south axis. The Park includes important historic sites (most notably Bremore Castle Complex) and landscapes, while providing significant public amenities.

Fingal County Council appointed Áit Urbanism + Landscape Ltd. to design an overall park design that considers the visual, historic and ecological attributes of the site and includes proposals towards the creation of active and passive recreation and linkages to Bremore Castle and surrounding residential areas. The subject site of the Part 8 Planning Application for the Bremore Regional Park Development Project is 15.07 ha, and comprises of lands to the west of rail-line and a pocket of land to the south-east of the site.

The Park Development Project Works which are the subject of this Part 8 Planning Application are presented in the following drawing :



Fig 1.0 Bremeore Regional Park Development Project

The Part 8 Planning Permission is sought by Fingal County Council for a series of development works within Bremore Regional Park as part of a Park Development Project.

These works will include :

- **Balbriggan Sports & Recreational Hub, and all associated infrastructure**

- **The Central Zone Open Spaces**

- **A formal Coastal Park and all associated infrastructure including improvement works to the existing car park at Bath Road & surrounds**

- **Park Boundaries**

1.2 Overall Screening Methodology

The methodology for this screening statement is clearly set out in a document prepared for the Environment Director General of the European Commission entitled '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' (Oxford Brookes University, 2001).

1.3 Relevant Legislation

The processes are set out under Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive and are commonly referred to as 'Appropriate Assessments' (which in fact refers to Stage 2 in the sequence under the Habitats Directive Article 6 assessment).

Article 6 of the Habitats Directive sets out provisions which govern the conservation and management of Natura 2000 sites. Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect Natura 2000 sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

"Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with

other plans and projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public"

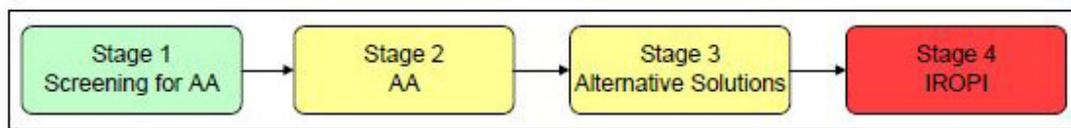
Where it is obvious or highly likely that a significant impact or impacts will be incurred to any Natura site, an Appropriate Assessment is required. However, where this is not the case, a preliminary screening must first be carried out to determine whether or not the full Appropriate Assessment is required. If it is found that there are no significant impacts on the conservation objectives of Natura 2000 sites, a Finding of No Significant Effects (FONSE) may be issued instead.

1.3.1 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

The screening document considers whether the proposed development has the potential to have an effect on any Natura 2000 site individually or in-combination with other plans and projects.

The AA process is a four-stage process, with issues and tests at each stage. 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 four stages of an AA, can be summarised as follows:



Stage 1: Screening.

The first stage of the AA process is to determine whether it can be excluded on the basis of objective information that the proposed development will have an effect on any Natura 2000 site, individually or together with other plans and projects. It should be noted that measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of a proposed development on a Natura 2000 site are not taken into account at this stage and that such measures are referred to in the AA Screening Report as

“mitigation measures”.

Stage 2: Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The second stage of the AA process assesses the impact of the project or plan (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. A Natura Impact Statement containing a professional scientific examination of the project or plan is required and includes any mitigation measures to avoid, reduce or offset negative impacts.

Stage 3: Assessment of alternative solutions.

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. This stage examines alternative solutions to the proposal.

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.

The purpose of Stage 1, the Screening Stage is to determine the necessity or otherwise for an NIS. Screening for AA examines the likely effects of a project or plan alone, and in combination with other projects or plans, upon a Natura 2000 site, and considers whether it can be objectively excluded that on the basis of objective information that the proposed development will have a significant effect on any Natura 2000 site, individually or together with other plans and projects.

If it cannot be excluded during the screening stage that the proposal will have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 site, then a NIS will need to be prepared.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Screening Steps

This AA Screening Report 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 (EC, 2001) and the European Commission Guidance 'Managing Natura 2000 sites' (EC, 2018). Screening for AA involves the following:

- Establish whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of a Natura 2000 site;
- Description of the plan or project and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the Natura 2000 site;
- Identification of Natura 2000 sites potentially affected;

Identification and description of potential effects on the Natura 2000 site and assessment of the likely significance of the impacts identified on the Natura 2000 site. Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

This AA Screening Report examines whether any potential effects upon a Natura 2000 site will be significant and determines whether the AA process for the proposed development at Bremore Park, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin alone and in combination with other developments in the area requires to proceed to a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

2.2 Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out to collate and review available information, datasets and documentation sources relevant for the completion of the Screening Report. The desktop study, completed between July 2020 and November 2020, relied on the following sources:

- Information on the network of Natura 2000 sites, relevant boundaries, qualifying interests and conservation objectives, obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at

www.npws.ie;

- Text summaries of the relevant Natura 2000 sites taken from the respective Standard Data Forms and Site Synopses available at www.npws.ie;
- Information on species records and distributions, obtained from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) at maps.biodiversityireland.ie;
- Information on bedrock, groundwater, aquifers and their statuses, obtained from Geological Survey Ireland (GSI)

Available at: <https://www.gsi.ie/en-ie/data-and-maps>;

Satellite imagery and map information obtained from:

- *Google maps [Available at: <https://www.google.com/maps>]*
- *Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) map layers accessed through National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) Biodiversity Maps application [Available at: <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map>]*
- Information on the extent, nature and location of the proposed development, provided by the applicant and their design team. All of this information is submitted with the application;
- Information on the construction methods to be followed as part of the proposed development obtained from the Construction and Environmental Management Plan submitted with this application;

The following guidance documents were consulted and followed in the completion of this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010);*
- *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10;*

- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2001); and
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2018).

2.3 Ecological Assessment and Management Recommendations for Bremore Park, Balbriggan, by Eibhlín Ní Chaithnia

The ecological field survey was carried out in April 2019 by Ecological Consultant Eibhlín Ní Chaithnia, and established baseline ecological conditions. Habitats were identified, mapped and classified and dominant plant species noted according to the guidelines given by the JNCC (2007) and The Heritage Council (2010). Habitat classification followed Fossitt (2000) and the floral nomenclature used follows Webb, Parnell and Doogue (1996). No rare, threatened or protected species of plants as per the Red Data Book (Curtis and McGough, 1988) were found. No species listed in the Flora Protection Order (1999) were found to be growing on the site.

2.3.1 Habitat Description

The sites recorded are labelled per habitat type with identifier codes as given by Fossitt (2000). The habitat areas within these and the surrounding area are described below:

Improved agricultural grassland (**GA1**)

Arable crops (**BC1**)

Amenity grassland (**GA2**)

Scrub (**WS1**),

Hedgerows (**WL1**)

Depositing lowland rivers (**FW2**).

Sand shores (**LS2**)

Mixed substrata shores (**LR4**)

Embryonic dunes (**CD1**)

Sedimentary sea cliffs (CS3)

Improved agricultural grassland and tillage.

Habitats

Existing Habitats Present on Site

-  Improved agricultural grassland (GA1)
-  Amenity grassland (GA2)
-  Arable crops (BC1)
-  Scrub (WS1)
-  Dry meadows / grassy verges (GS2)
-  Re-colonising bare ground (ED3)
-  Depositing lowland rivers (FW2)
-  Earth banks (BL2)
-  Sedimentary sea cliffs (CS3)
-  Hedgerows (WL1)

Adjacent Habitats

-  Sand shores (LS2)
-  Mixed sub-strata shores (LR4)
-  Embryonic dunes (CD1)



Fig 2.0 Bremore Regional Park Development Project Habitat Map

Amenity grassland is the dominant habitat in terms of area. There is also a large tract of cultivated tillage land to the north-east of the site.

Semi-natural habitats at present are restricted to field margins and include some good quality mature hedgerows and some quite diverse grassy verges.

2.3.2 Mammal Activity

No Badger setts were found within the area under survey but it is highly likely that Badgers do use the site given its extent and the range of available habitats. It is also likely that the hedgerows would offer habitat for wood mice and hedgehogs.

A Bat survey and assessment was carried out in September 2018, October/November 2019, and September 2020 by Brian Keely BSc. Three species of bat were recorded:

Leisler's Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle and Common Pipistrelle (each of which are Annex IV of the Habitats Directive - covering species in need of strict protection).

Bat activity was noted around the Castle yard, along the hedgerows and in the grassland around the sports pitches. There were no bat roosts recorded although the report states that, *'It is possible that all three species are roosting in close proximity to Bremore Castle'*.

2.3.3 Bird Survey

Birdwatch Ireland were commissioned to undertake a *'Winter bird survey of farmland and parkland at Balbriggan, North County Dublin'* Nov 2020, covering the farmland and parkland along the coastline from Balbriggan to the Delvin River. The report is divided into 5 areas – A,B,C,D and E. Sections B and C are within the scope of the current project area; B corresponds to the northern agricultural fields and C corresponds to the amenity parkland.



Fig 3.0 Aerial Photo depicting Bird Survey Area areas A-E, from Birdwatch Ireland: 'Winter bird survey of farmland and parkland at Balbriggan, North County Dublin'.

SECTION B

A total of 45 bird species was recorded while surveying Section B which included 17 waterbirds, three raptors (Buzzard, Kestrel and Merlin) and 25 passerines. Of the waterbird species, eight species were recorded from the shoreline/marine area only, and therefore outside of the terrestrial field sections, and six species were recorded from both the shoreline and terrestrial survey area. Of

note were three species (Light bellied Brent Goose, Grey Heron and Black-headed Gull) that were only recorded from the terrestrial survey areas.

25 species of conservation concern were recorded within Section B including Annex I species Golden Plover and Merlin. In addition, the section supported a total of ten species red-listed under Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland and a further 15 species that are amber-listed.

Notable observations include Curlew with a peak count of 51. Section B was used more regularly by Curlew than any other survey section and were recorded from arable fields which were in stubble at the time of survey. A single observation was made of 70 Light-bellied Brent geese foraging former crop potato field. Fields further to the south supported flocks of foraging Redshank

SECTION C

A total of 42 bird species was recorded while surveying Section C which included 16 waterbirds and 26 passerines. Of note were two species (Golden Plover and Curlew) that were only recorded from the terrestrial survey areas.

20 species of conservation concern were recorded within Section C including the Annex I species Golden Plover. The section supported a total of nine species red-listed under BoCCI and a further 11 species that are amber-listed.

The red-listed wader, Curlew, was observed on a number of occasions in a ponded (flooded) area of the amenity grassland. This damp area also supported other wader species such as Redshank, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and gull species. The shoreline adjacent to the amenity grassland also supported a wader roost on rocks on more than one survey visit. Roosting species included Dunlin, Great Black-backed Gull, Grey Plover, Greenshank, Herring Gull and Lapwing, Golden Plover, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Turnstone.

Of the total 68 bird species recorded, three are listed on Annex I of the EU Bird's Directive (Great Northern Diver, Merlin and Golden Plover) and 32 species are listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland, including 11 that are Red-listed and are of highest concern and a further 21 species that are Amber-listed. The species list also included 11 waterbird species listed as Special

Conservation Interests (SCIs) for nearby Special Protection Areas (Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Lambay Island SPA and Skerries Islands SPA). Importantly, several species listed as Special Conservation Interests (SCIs) for nearby Special Protection Areas were recorded within terrestrial survey areas, including Light-bellied Brent Goose, Dunlin, Redshank, Lesser Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull, while Annex I Golden Plover, although infrequently occurring, could occur in relatively good numbers (450 maximum recorded). The survey also recorded some coastal waterbird roost sites, some utilised on a regular basis.

2.3.4 Bat Survey

A Bat assessment (with recommendations) was carried out by Brian Keely BSc in November 2018, October/November 2019 and September 2020. Three species of bat were recorded: Leisler's Bat, Soprano Pipistrelle and Common Pipistrelle. Bat activity was noted around the Castle yard, along the hedgerows and in the grassland around the sports pitches.

3.0 Stage 1 Screening

3.1 Management of Natura 2000 Sites

The production of the Part 8 application for the Bremore Regional Park Development Project, Balbriggan, Fingal (the proposed development) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of Natura 2000 sites in Co. Dublin or elsewhere.

3.2 Description of Project

3.2.1 Project Description

The proposal is to develop a park development project at Bremore Regional Park to guide its' future development in terms of biodiversity, access, circulation, permeability and provision of more passive and active recreational opportunities for the local and wider community. This Part 8 application for the Bremore Regional Park Development Project include the following:

- Balbriggan Sports & Recreational Hub, and all associated infrastructure

- The Central Zone Open Spaces

- A formal Coastal Park and all associated infrastructure including improvement works to the existing car park at Bath Road & surrounds

- Park Boundaries

The Park Development Project proposals are presented as The Northern Zone, The Central Zone and The Coastal Park. The detailed project development works in each zone are as follows:

The Balbriggan Sports & Recreational Hub and main ancillary infrastructure *(Section 4.2.1 pg.30 Part 8 Report and associated Drawings 19FG02-DR200 and 19FG02-DR212)*

- 8 Lane Athletics Track (All weather surface)
- 1 no. All Weather (3g Surface) Pitch, 100m x 60m
- 1 no. 5-a-side side All Weather (3g Surface) Pitch 40m x 25m
- 2no. 9-a-side football pitches, 70m x 50m
- 3no. Basketball courts 28m x 16m
- 2no. Tennis Courts 24m x 11m
- 1 no. GAA Pitch 145m x 90m
- Bleacher seating structures
- Sports enclosure fencing
- Primary Circulation Network

Main ancillary infrastructure:

- Changing & Toilets Building (341 sq.m)
- Vehicular Access from R132
- Bicycle Parking:
 - 57 no. 'Sheffield' type Bicycle Stands

Landscaped Car Park and Associated Car Parking:

- 50no. Standard Car Spaces
- 3no. Universally Accessible Spaces
- 1 no. Coach Set Down
- Associated Foul/ Fresh Water & ESB Connections and Fibre Optic Communications Connections

Proposed Sports & Recreational Hub Lighting:

- Public lighting of primary circulation network
- Public lighting of car park
- Sports lighting
 - 8m & 12m high columns to sports courts
 - 18m & 20m high columns to athletics track & all weather pitch

The Central Zone

Open Spaces

(Section 4.2.2 pg.35 Part 8 Report and associated Drawings 19FG02-DR200, DR211, DR210)

- Natural play elements
- Outdoor gym equipment and other park furniture elements
- Resurfacing and landscaping works
- Provision of over flow parking:
 - 50no. spaces on reinforced grass surface
- Signage, seating
- Bicycle Parking:
 - 13 no. 'Sheffield' type Bicycle Stands
- Public Lighting of select, primary circulation routes including associated ducting and ducting for future fibre optic connections

The Coastal Park

(Section 4.2.3 pg.38 Part 8 Report and associated Drawings 19FG02-DR200 & DR210)

- Basketball Half Court
- Skate Bowl
- Structural Planting (Trees & Shrubs)
- Amenity planting and grass mounds
- Paving surface treatments
- Terraced steps/ seating
- Bicycle Parking:
 - 25 no. 'Sheffield' type Bicycle Stands

Landscaped Car Park and Associated Car Parking (*Section 4.2.3 pg.38 Part 8 Report and associated Drawings 19FG02-DR200, DR210 & DR211*)

- 98no. Standard Car Spaces
- 6no. Universally Accessible Spaces
- Resurfacing and landscaping works
- SuDS Installation
- Removal of private car access to coastal car park area & relocation of 19 no. existing car parking spaces
- Bicycle Parking:
 - 18 no. 'Sheffield' type Bicycle Stands

Park boundaries (1220 lin.m)

(See Drawing 19FG02- DR250)

- 1.8m High Steel Railing; 925m
- 1.8m High Stone Wall and Railing; 295m

3.2.2 Existing Environment

The site is a public park in north County Dublin known as Bremore Park. The park is utilised by various user groups, walkers, sports clubs etc. It consists of a number of habitats including improved agricultural grassland, cultivated land, amenity grassland, scrub, hedgerow and freshwater stream. The habitats adjacent to the Park to the north and east include coastal cliffs, beaches and improved agricultural grassland and tillage.



Fig 4.0 Bremore Regional Park Development Project Boundary

3.2.3 Existing Granted Planning Permissions in and adjacent to the site

Based on available information on <https://planning.agileapplications.ie/fingal> there are three projects of relevance with 'Granted Permission' that are relevant to the project site.

Planning Ref No. F18A/0389

Applicant Trustees of O'Dwyers GAA Club

Decision Grant Permission

Final Grant 17 Dec 2018

The proposal is as follows :

The development will consist of a two-storey Clubhouse building (total area 1,724sq.m.) (incl. double height sports-hall), 2no. playing pitches, ancillary fencing, floodlighting, carparking, outbuildings & hurling wall. Development comprises: (A) New Clubhouse/Sportshall building to include: Ground Floor: Sportshall (584sq.m.), changing facilities, ancillary toilets, stores, club shop, plant room, (combined area 675.3m²), First Floor: clubhouse bar & associated facilities (198sq.m.), balcony (32sq.m.); multi-function room 44.5sq.m.; 2no. meeting rooms (41sq.m.) (B) Formation & construction of 2no. natural-surface GAA playing pitches (1no. full size pitch, floodlit with 6no. c.22m high lighting masts & 1no. training/junior size pitch) each with associated ball-stop netting (c.15.5m high). (C) 1 detached field maintenance shed (51.8sq.m.) & 1 external equipment building (incl. generator) (70sq.m.). (D) Hurling wall & associated floodlighting & enclosure fencing. (E) New vehicular & pedestrian entrance gates, piers & railings (off R132); new bicycle & carparking (127 cars & 4 mini-buses). (F) All associated drainage (incl. foul pump station & surface-water attenuation tank), site development works, services, perimeter fencing (c32.4m high) & landscape works on a site of c.3.82 Ha located c.40 m North of the existing junction between R132 road and Flemington Lane.

This project is directly linked with the Bremeore Regional Park Development Project. It is located to the immediate north-west of the site and the proposals have been linked in with the overall design layout of the proposed recreational hub. An AA Screening Report was submitted with the planning application. The report concluded that based on the best available scientific information, demonstrated that the proposed development did not pose a risk of likely significant effects on the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA 00415. It also considered that the proposed development does not require progression to second stage Appropriate Assessment.

Planning Ref No. F15A/0392

Applicant Executive Comm Balbriggan Football Club

Decision Grant Permission

Final Grant 15 Oct 2015

The proposal is as follows :

A new indoor 'futsal' court/shared training facility (floor area 1232sq.m.- ridge height 6.5m.), to be located to southeast side of existing clubhouse along with all associated site works.

This project is directly linked with the Bremore Regional Park Development Project and is located within the site boundary, to the south-east of the existing club house. The proposal has been considered within the overall design of the Bremore Regional Park Development Project.

Planning Ref No. F17A/0295

Lands at the former Sea Mills Hosiery Factory, Baths Road, Balbriggan, Co Dublin

Applicant Colm Mohan & Sinead Mohan

Decision Grant Permission

Final Grant 14 Dec 2017

The proposal is as follows :Permission for a four storey (part 2 storey/part 3 storey and part 4 storey), 90 bedroom residential care home/nursing home with associated ancillary/common facilities and office/administration areas along with 23 no. surface level car parking spaces, set down area and 16 no. bicycle parking spaces (8 no. surface spaces and 8 no. secure covered spaces), a new vehicular access at Baths Road to the north and 2 no. pedestrian entrances to Baths Road ; 1 no. ESB substation/kiosk; bin storage area; provision of ancillary amenity space and landscaping, including landscaping at the existing chimney of the former Sea Mills Hosiery Factory (Protected Structure RPS Ref. 0019); boundary treatment; and all associated site and engineering works to facilitate the development.

On 14 Dec 2017, a decision GRANT PERMISSION was made by Fingal County Council on this application. Subsequently, an appeal was lodged on 15 Jan 2018 and a decision to Grant Permission was made by An Bord Pleanala on 25 Sep 2018. An AA Screening Report accompanied the planning submission. It concluded that the proposed project will have nor direct or measurable indirect impacts on any other Natura 2000 site in close proximity to the subject site, and that no significant impacts on the qualifying interests of the SPA's and SAC's are likely.

3.2.4 Stakeholder Consultation

Public consultation was undertaken by Fingal County Council throughout 2019 and 2020. These included workshops, presentations, online submissions and detailed stakeholders meetings. Consultation with Birdwatch Ireland, and the Biodiversity officer of Fingal County Council were undertaken by the project Ecological Consultant Eibhlín Ní Chaithnia. The lead consultants Áit Urbanism + Landscape Ltd. instigated pre-application consultation with The Developments Application Unit of The National Parks and Wildlife Service (North-Eastern Region) *DAU Ref: G Pre00221/2020 RE: Pre-Application Consultation: Bremore Park.*

3.3 Identification of Relevant Natura 2000 Sites

Sites designated for the conservation of nature include Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) which are designated for the protection of species, habitats and geological interests that are of national importance. Sites designated for protection by the EU are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). These form the Natura 2000 network of sites. It is these sites that are of relevance to the screening process for Appropriate Assessment.

All designated sites within 15km of the proposed works were considered during the desktop study stage of the screening assessment in order to assess the potential for significant effects upon their Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests and Conservation Objectives. This stage of the process is used to determine whether any of the designated sites may be 'screened out'. That is, that they can be regarded as not being relevant to the process, having no potential to be significantly affected or impacted upon.

This may be due to:

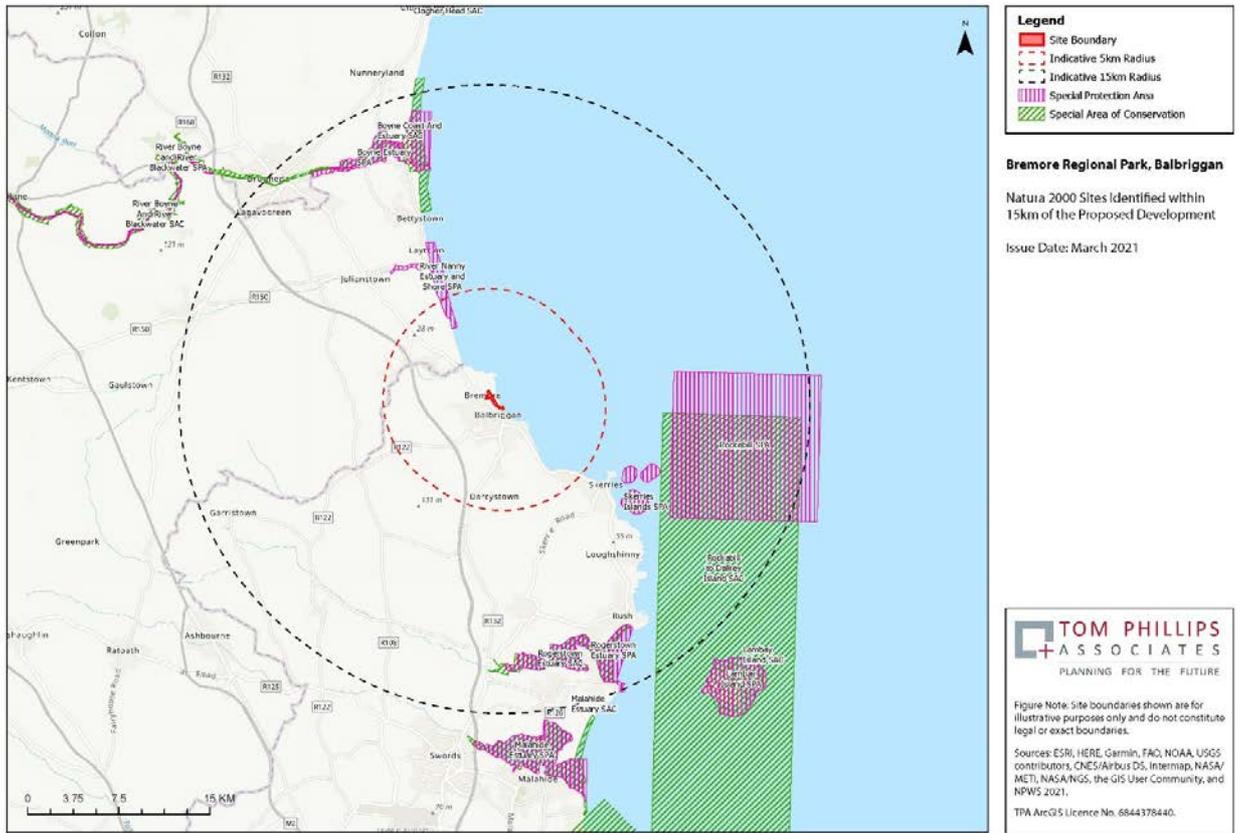
- a) The distance of the designated sites from the site of proposed works
- b) The lack of connectivity such as watercourse or habitat area between the designated sites and the site of the proposed works or
- c) The nature of the qualifying interests of the designated sites.

3.3.1 Designated Sites within 15km of the Proposed Works at Bremore Park

All designated sites as described above within 15km of the proposed works were considered during the screening process for their potential to have significant effects upon their qualifying interests or special qualifying interests or conservation objectives.

The site synopses and conservation objectives of the sites were also examined during this stage of the survey. These sites are given in the table below. The table also gives distance from the proposed site of works and the outcome of the screening.

There are no Annexed or Priority Habitats within the site. Annex 1 species have been recorded outside the site boundary to the east, north-east of the proposed development site. There are no Annexed species within the site. There are 8 Natura sites within 15Km of Bremore Park.



**Fig 5.0 Bremore Regional Park Development Project
Dublin Bay showing Natura Sites within 5km and 15km of Bremore Park**

Natura 2000 Sites Synopses

- Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC 001957
- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC 003000
- Rogerstown Estuary SAC 000208
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA 004015
- Boyne Estuary 004080 SPA
- Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA 004158
- Skerries Islands 004122 SPA
- Rockabill 004014 SPA

Site Name: Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC

Site Code: 001957

Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC is a coastal site which includes most of the tidal sections of the River Boyne, intertidal sand- and mudflats, saltmarshes, marginal grassland, and the stretch of coast from Bettystown to Termonfeckin that includes the Mornington and Baltray sand dune systems.

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):

[1130] Estuaries

[1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats

[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines

[1310] Salicornia Mud

[1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows

[2110] Embryonic Shifting Dunes

[2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)

[2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)*

The Boyne River channel, which is navigable and dredged, is defined by training walls, these being breached in places. Intertidal flats occur on the sides of the channelled river. The sediments vary from fine muds in the sheltered areas to sandy muds or sands towards the river mouth. The linear stretches of intertidal flats to the north and south of the river mouth are mainly composed of sand. One or more species of eelgrass (*Zostera* spp.) occur in the estuary.

Parts of the intertidal areas are fringed by saltmarshes, most of which are of the Atlantic type, and dominated by Sea-purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*). Other species present include Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Lax-flowered Sea-lavender (*Limonium humile*) and glassworts (*Salicornia* spp.). Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*) occurs frequently on the flats and saltmarshes.

The two sand dune systems in the site, at Baltray and Mornington, are of conservation value, despite the restricted distribution of the intact areas and the high recreational pressure to which they are subjected. A gradient from embryonic dunes to Marram (*Ammophila arenaria*) dunes and then fixed dunes is shown at both systems.

The largest area of annual vegetation of drift lines within this SAC is located at Baltray, north of the estuary. The vegetation is highly representative of the habitat type, which is limited to a small number of highly specialised species that are capable of coping with harsh environmental conditions including high salinity, wind exposure, and unstable substrate and lack of soil moisture. Species present include oraches (*Atriplex* spp.), Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*), Prickly Saltwort (*Salsola kali*) and Sea Sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*). Embryonic dunes are particularly well-developed at Baltray where there is active accretion. Species present include Sand Couch (*Elymus farctus*), Lyme-grass (*Leymus arenarius*), Marram, Sea Sandwort and Prickly Saltwort. The embryonic dunes grade into a narrow band of shifting Marram dunes. Marram is dominant, though there are also such species as Cat's-ear (*Hypochoeris radicata*), Mouse-ear Hawkweed (*Hieracium pilosella*) and Dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.).

The areas of fixed dunes on the site have a typical diversity of species, including Marram, Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Common Restharrow (*Ononis repens*), Wild Thyme (*Thymus praecox*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and Wild Pansy (*Viola tricolor*). Vegetation dominated by bryophytes and lichens is limited, though such species as *Brachythecium albicans*, *Hypnum cupressiforme*, *Peltigera canina* and *Cladonia* spp. occur. Some dune slacks may still occur at the site. A number of scarce plants such as Viper's-bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), Adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*), Variegated Horsetail (*Equisetum variegatum*) and Wild Clary/Sage (*Salvia verbenaca*) have been recorded from the site in the past. The last-named species is of particular note as it is a Red Data Book species at its most northerly known Irish station.

The Boyne is the second most important estuary for wintering birds on the Louth-Meath coastline. From a recent wetland survey carried out over 4 seasons (1994/95-97/98), it is known that this site supports nationally important numbers of Shelduck (176 individuals), Golden Plover (5,338), Lapwing (4,755), Knot (1,559), Black-tailed Godwit (414), Redshank (539), Turnstone (104), Oystercatcher (922), Grey Plover (112) and Sanderling (93).

Other species of regional or local importance include Brent Goose (142), Wigeon (485), Teal (185), Mallard (160), Dunlin (627), Curlew (352) and Ringed Plover (approx. 100). An area of shingle at Baltray Dunes is also an important breeding site for Little Tern, with 14 pairs recorded in 1995. Little Tern is the rarest Irish tern species, and is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Part of the estuary is a Wildfowl Sanctuary and has been designated a Special Protection Area under the E.U. Birds Directive.

This site has been somewhat modified by human activities. The river is regularly dredged to accommodate cargo ships, which causes disturbance to the bird, fish and invertebrate communities in the estuary. Several factories operate upstream from the estuary and pollution and disturbance associated with them has had an impact on the ecology of the area. There is a proposal to create a deep water facility at the north end of Mornington Dunes on the mouth of the Boyne estuary.

The site is of considerable conservation interest as a coastal complex that supports good examples of eight habitats that are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, including one which is listed with priority status, and for the important bird populations that it supports.

Site Name: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC

Site Code: 003000

This site includes a range of dynamic inshore and coastal waters in the western Irish Sea. These include sandy and muddy seabed, reefs, sandbanks and islands. This site extends southwards, in a strip approximately 7 km wide and 40 km in length, from Rockabill, running adjacent to Howth Head, and crosses Dublin Bay to Frazer Bank in south Co. Dublin. The site encompasses Dalkey, Muggins and Rockabill islands.

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):

[1170] Reefs

[1351] Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

Reef habitat is uncommon along the eastern seaboard of Ireland due to prevailing geology and hydrographical conditions. Expansive surveys of the Irish coast have indicated that the greatest resource of this habitat within the Irish Sea is found fringing offshore islands which are concentrated along the Dublin coast. A detailed survey of selected suitable islands has shown areas with typical biodiversity for this habitat both intertidally and subtidally. Species recorded in the intertidal included *Fucus spiralis*, *Fucus serratus*, *Pelvetia canaliculata*, *Ascophyllum nodosum*, *Semibalanus balanoides* and *Necora puber*. Subtidally, a wide range of species include *Laminaria hyperborea*, *Flustra foliacea*, *Alaria esculenta*, *Halidrys siliquosa*, *Pomatocereos triqueter*, *Alcyonium digitatum*, *Metridium senile*, *Caryophyllia smithii*, *Tubularia indivisa*, *Mytilus edulis*, *Gibbula umbilicalis*, *Asterias rubens*, and *Echinus esculentus*. These reefs are subject to strong tidal currents with an abundant supply of suspended matter resulting in good representation of filter feeding fauna such as sponges, anemones and echinoderms.

The area selected for designation represents a key habitat for the Annex II species Harbour Porpoise within the Irish Sea. Population survey data show that porpoise occurrence within the site boundary meets suitable reference values for other designated sites in Ireland. The species occurs year-round within the site and comparatively high group sizes have been recorded. Porpoises with young (i.e. calves) are observed at favourable, typical reference values for the species. Casual and effort-related sighting rates from coastal observation stations are significant for the east coast of Ireland and the latter appear to be relatively stable across all seasons. The selected site contains a wide array of habitats believed to be important for Harbour Porpoise including inshore shallow sand and mudbanks and rocky reefs scoured by strong current flow. The site also supports Common Seal and Grey Seal, for which terrestrial haul-out sites occur in immediate proximity to the site. Bottle-nosed Dolphins has also occasionally been recorded in the area. A number of other marine mammals have been recorded in this area including Minke, Fin and Killer Whales and Risso's and Common Dolphins.

The coastal environment of Co. Dublin is a very significant resource to birds with some nationally and internationally important populations. Of particular note in this site are the large number of terns (Arctic, Common and Roseate) known to use Dalkey Island as a staging area (approx. 2,000) after breeding. Other seabirds commonly seen include Kittiwake, Razorbill, Guillemot, Puffin, Fulmar, Shag, Cormorant, Manx Shearwater, Gannet and gulls.

This site is of conservation importance for reefs, listed on Annex I, and Harbour Porpoise, listed on Annex II, of the E.U. Habitats Directive.

Site Name: Rogerstown Estuary SAC

Site Code: 000208

Rogerstown Estuary is situated about 2 km north of Donabate in Co. Dublin. It is a relatively small, narrow estuary separated from the sea by a sand and shingle bar. The estuary is divided by a causeway and narrow bridge, built in the 1840s to carry the Dublin-Belfast railway line.

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):

[1130] Estuaries

[1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats

[1310] Salicornia Mud

[1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows

[1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows

[2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)

[2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)*

The estuary drains almost completely at low tide. The intertidal flats of the outer estuary are mainly of sands, with soft muds in the north-west sector and along the southern shore. Associated with these muds are stands of Common Cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*). Green algae (mainly *Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*) are widespread and form dense mats in the more sheltered areas. The intertidal angiosperm Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*) grows profusely in places beneath the algal mats. The Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*) is common in the outer estuary and large Mussel beds (*Mytilus edulis*) occur at the outlet to the sea.

The area of intertidal flats in the inner estuary is reduced as a result of the local authority refuse tip on the north shore. The sediments are mostly muds, which are very soft in places. Common Cordgrass is widespread in parts, and in summer, dense green algal mats grow on the muds. In the extreme inner part, the estuary narrows to a tidal river.

The habitat 'Salicornia mud' occurs in both the outer and inner estuaries, and *S. dolichostachya* is the main glasswort species found. Other species include *S. ramosissima*, *S. europaea* and Annual Sea-blite (*Suaeda maritima*).

Saltmarsh fringes parts of the estuary, especially the southern shores and parts of the outer sand spit. Common plant species of the saltmarsh include Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Sea-purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*). Salt meadows and wet brackish fields occur along the tidal river. Low sand hills occur on the outer spit, including some small areas of fixed dunes and Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) dunes. Fine sandy beaches and intertidal sandflats occur at the outer part of the estuary.

Two plant species which are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, occur within the site: Hairy Violet (*Viola hirta*) occurs on the sand spit and Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) occurs in the saline fields of the inner estuary. This species has declined, apparently due to reclamation and embankment of lands fringing estuaries. Another rare species, Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*), occurs in the sandy areas of the outer estuary.

Rogerstown Estuary is an important waterfowl site, with Brent Goose having a population of international importance (1176). A further 16 species have populations of national importance: Greylag Goose (186), Shelduck (785), Teal (584), Pintail (30), Shoveler (69), Oystercatcher (1028), Ringed Plover (152), Golden Plover (1813), Grey Plover (245), Lapwing (4056), Knot (2076), Dunlin (2625), Sanderling (57), Black-tailed Godwit (272), Curlew (1549), Redshank (732) and Greenshank (22) (All counts are average peaks over four winters 1994/95 - 1997/98). The presence of a significant population of Golden Plover is of note and this species is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The estuary is a regular staging post for autumn migrants, especially Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank.

Little Tern has bred at the outer sand spit, but much of the nesting area has now been washed away as a result of erosion. The maximum number of pairs recorded was 17 in 1991. Ringed Plover breed in the same area.

The outer part of the estuary has been designated a Statutory Nature Reserve and a Special Protection Area under the E.U. Birds Directive. The inner estuary has been damaged by the refuse tip which covers 40 ha of mudflat.

This site is a good example of an estuarine system, with all typical habitats represented, including several listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Rogerstown is an internationally important waterfowl site and has been a breeding site for Little Terns. The presence within the site of three rare plant species adds to its importance.

SITE NAME: ROGERSTOWN ESTUARY SPA

SITE CODE: 004015

Rogerstown Estuary is situated about 2 km north of Donabate in north County Dublin.

It is a relatively small, funnel shaped estuary separated from the sea by a sand and shingle peninsula; the site extends eastwards to include an area of shallow marine water. The estuary receives the waters of the Ballyboghil and Ballough rivers and has a wide salinity range, from near full seawater to near full freshwater. The estuary is divided by a causeway and narrow bridge, built in the 1840s to carry the Dublin-Belfast railway line. At low tide extensive intertidal sand and mud flats are exposed and these provide the main food resource for the wintering waterfowl that use the site. The intertidal flats of the estuary are mainly of sands, with soft muds in the northwest sector and along the southern shore. Associated with these muds are stands of Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*). Green algae (mainly *Ulva* spp.) are widespread and form dense mats in the more sheltered areas. The intertidal vascular plant Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*) grows profusely in places beneath the algal mats and is grazed by herbivorous waterfowl (notably Light-bellied Brent Goose and Wigeon). Salt marsh fringes parts of the estuary, especially its southern shores.

Common plant species of the saltmarsh include Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*).

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Greylag Goose, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Shelduck, Shoveler, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Knot, Dunlin, Black-tailed Godwit and Redshank. The

E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

Rogerstown Estuary is an important winter waterfowl site and supports a population of Light-bellied Brent Goose of international importance (1,069) - all counts are mean peaks over the five winters 1995/96 – 1999/2000. A further 10 species have populations of national importance as follows: Greylag Goose (160), Shelduck (773), Shoveler (59), Oystercatcher (1,345), Ringed Plover (188), Grey Plover (229), Knot (2,454), Dunlin (2,745), Black-tailed Godwit (195) and Redshank (490). The Greylag Geese are part of a larger population which spends most of the winter on Lambay Island. Other species which occur regularly include Wigeon (358), Teal (346), Mallard (214), Red-breasted Merganser (30), Golden Plover (1,059) Lapwing (2,129), Sanderling (50), Curlew (505) and Turnstone (77). Large numbers of gulls including Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull and Black-headed Gull are attracted to the area, partly due to the presence of an adjacent local authority landfill site. Little Egret, a species which has recently colonised Ireland, also occurs at this site.

Some of the wader species also occur on passage, notably Black-tailed Godwit with numbers often exceeding 300 in April. The estuary is a regular staging post for scarce migrants, especially in autumn when Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank may be seen. Shelduck breed within the site.

Rogerstown Estuary SPA is an important link in the chain of estuaries on the east coast. It supports an internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Goose and nationally important populations of a further 10 species. The presence of Little Egret and Golden Plover is of note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Rogerstown Estuary is also a Ramsar Convention site, and part of Rogerstown Estuary SPA is designated as a Statutory Nature Reserve and a Wildfowl Sanctuary.

SITE NAME: BOYNE ESTUARY SPA

SITE CODE: 004080

This moderately-sized coastal site is situated west of Drogheda on the border of Counties Louth and Meath. The site comprises most of the estuary of the Boyne River, a substantial river which drains

a large catchment. Apart from one section which is over 1 km wide, its width is mostly less than 500 m. The river channel, which is navigable and dredged, is defined by training walls, these being breached in places. Intertidal flats occur along the sides of the channelled river. The sediments vary from fine muds in the sheltered areas to sandy muds or sands towards the river mouth. The linear stretches of intertidal flats to the north and south of the river mouth are mainly composed of sand. One or more species of Eelgrass (*Zostera* spp.) occur in the estuary. Parts of the intertidal areas are fringed by salt marshes, most of which are of the Atlantic type, and dominated by Sea-purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*). Other species present include Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*), Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Lax-flowered Sea-lavender (*Limonium humile*) and Glasswort (*Salicornia* spp.). Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*) occurs frequently on the flats and salt marshes.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Shelduck, Oystercatcher, Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Lapwing, Knot, Sanderling, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Turnstone and Little Tern. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

The Boyne Estuary is the second most important estuary for wintering birds on the Louth-Meath coastline. Black-tailed Godwit occurs here in internationally important numbers (471). A further nine species of wintering waterbirds have populations of national importance, i.e. Shelduck (218), Oystercatcher (1,179), Golden Plover (6,070), Grey Plover (146), Lapwing (4,771), Knot (1,944), Sanderling (81), Redshank (583) and Turnstone (221) - all figures are mean peaks for the 5 year period 1995/96-1999/2000. Of particular note is that the site supports 6.8% of the all-Ireland population of Knot and almost 3% of the total for Golden Plover. Other species which occur include Bar-tailed Godwit (86), Cormorant (97), Brent Goose (172), Wigeon (454), Teal (230), Dunlin (498), Curlew (395), Mallard (197), Red-breasted Merganser (14), Greenshank (6), Ringed Plover (80) and Mute Swan (13). The site provides both feeding and high-tide roost areas for the birds. The estuary also attracts large numbers of gulls in winter, including Black-headed Gull (593), Common Gull (145), Herring Gull (403) and Great Black-backed Gull (160).

Little Tern have bred here since at least 1984 and a nationally important population was recorded in 1995 (14 pairs). In the intervening years breeding numbers and fledgling success has varied

significantly. In 1996 approximately 20 pairs fledged 15 - 20 chicks but in 1998 and 1999 part of the shingle bank where the birds nested was washed away by storms. In 2008 35 pairs of Little Tern were recorded.

The site is of considerable ornithological importance for wintering waterfowl, with Black-tailed Godwit occurring in internationally important numbers and nine other species having populations of national importance. Of particular significance is that three species that regularly occur, Golden Plover, Bar-tailed Godwit and Little Tern are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Part of the Boyne Estuary SPA is a Wildfowl Sanctuary.

SITE NAME: RIVER NANNY ESTUARY AND SHORE SPA

SITE CODE: 004158

The site comprises the estuary of the River Nanny and sections of the shoreline to the north and south of the estuary (c. 3 km in length), in Co. Meath. The estuarine channel, which extends inland for almost 2 km, is narrow and well sheltered. Sediments are muddy in character and edged by saltmarsh and freshwater marsh/wet grassland. The saltmarsh is best developed in the eastern portion of the estuarine channel, with species such as Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Sea Aster (*Aster tripolium*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) occurring.

Further up the estuary, the marsh habitats support species such as Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*) and Yellow Flag (*Iris pseudacorus*). The shoreline, which is approximately 500 m in width to the low tide mark, comprises beach and intertidal habitats. It is a well-exposed shore, with coarse sand sediments. The well-developed beaches, which are backed in places by clay cliffs, provide high tide roosts for the birds. The village of Laytown occurs in the northern side of the River Nanny estuary.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Knot, Sanderling and Herring Gull. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

This is an important site for wintering waders, with nationally important populations of Golden Plover (1,759), Oystercatcher (1,014), Ringed Plover (185), Knot (1,140) and Sanderling (240) present (all figures are mean peaks for the 5 year period 1995/96-1999/2000). The populations of Knot and Sanderling are of particular note as they represent approximately 4% of their respective national totals. Herring Gull (609) also occurs here in nationally important numbers. A range of other waterbirds also occurs, including Cormorant (35), Light-bellied Brent Goose (145), Mallard (76), Grey Plover (55), Lapwing (1,087), Dunlin (721), Bar-tailed Godwit (59), Curlew (107), Redshank (150), Turnstone (59), Black-headed Gull (926), Common Gull (66) and Great Black-backed Gull (70). The site is of most importance as a roost area for the birds but the intertidal flats also provide feeding habitat.

The River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA is of ornithological importance as it supports five species of wintering waterbirds and one gull species in numbers of national importance. The regular occurrence of two species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Golden Plover and Bar-tailed Godwit, is of note.

SITE NAME: SKERRIES ISLANDS SPA

SITE CODE: 004122

The Skerries Islands are a group of three small uninhabited islands, Shenick's Island, St Patrick's Island and Colt Island, situated between 0.5 km and 1.5 km off the north Co. Dublin coast. Skerries Islands SPA comprises the three islands and the seas surrounding them, to a distance of 200 m from the shore. The three islands are all low-lying with maximum heights ranging from 8 m to 13 m above sea level. St Patrick's Island and Colt Island have low cliffs, while Shenick's Island has more extensive expanses of intertidal rocky shore and sand flats. Shenick's Island also has a shingle bar and is connected to the mainland at low tides; it became a BirdWatch Ireland Reserve in 1987. The vegetation of the islands is dominated by rank grasses, with Brambles (*Rubus* spp.) and other species such as Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) occurring commonly.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Cormorant, Shag, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Herring Gull. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest

for Wetland & Waterbirds. The islands are of importance for both breeding seabirds and wintering waterfowl.

In 1999 a survey recorded an internationally important population of breeding Cormorant (558 pairs) and a nationally important population of Shag (100 pairs) on St Patrick's Island. The Cormorant population, which was only established in the early 1990s, when taken together with the nearby associated colonies on Lambay Island and Ireland's Eye, comprises about 30% of the total Irish population. A nationally important population of Herring Gull (300 pairs) occurs on St Patrick's Island and Shenick's Island. Other breeding seabirds recorded during the 1999 survey include: Fulmar (35 pairs), Lesser Black-backed Gull (1 pair) and Great Black-backed Gull (95 pairs). Large gulls also breed on Colt Island but there has been no census in recent years. Other breeding birds present include Shelduck, Ringed Plover and Oystercatcher (several pairs of each).

In winter the islands regularly support a range of waterfowl species, including an internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Goose (242) and nationally important populations of Cormorant (391), Purple Sandpiper (46), Turnstone (242) and Herring Gull (560) – all counts are mean peaks for the five year period 1995/96- 1999/2000. Other species utilising the site during winter include Wigeon (205), Mallard (240), Oystercatcher (463), Ringed Plover (66), Golden Plover (240), Grey Plover (15), Lapwing (238), Dunlin (42), Snipe (27), Curlew (327), Black-headed Gull (110) and Great Black-backed Gull (250). The islands are also a regular wintering site for Short-eared Owl, with several birds recorded in most winters.

The Skerries Islands SPA is of high ornithological importance for both breeding seabirds and wintering waterfowl. Internationally important populations of breeding Cormorant and nationally important populations of two other breeding seabirds occur on the islands. The wintering population of Light-bellied Brent Goose is of international importance and four other species occur in nationally important numbers during the winter. The presence of Golden Plover and Short-eared Owl, two species that are listed on Annex I of the E.U Birds Directive, is of note.

SITE NAME: ROCKABILL SPA

SITE CODE: 004014

Rockabill consists of two small, low-lying, granitic islets situated c. 7 km off the Co. Dublin coast. The islands are separated by a narrow channel, though are connected at low spring tides. The main

island, known as the Lighthouse Island, is vegetated by a scrubby sward of Tree Mallow (*Lavatera arborea*), with a range of other maritime species occurring, such as Sea Mayweed (*Matricaria maritima*), Sea Campion (*Silene maritima*), Sorrel (*Rumex* spp.), Common Scurvy-grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*), Orache (*Atriplex* spp.) and Rock Sea-spurrey (*Spergularia rupicola*). The smaller island, known as the Bill, is very exposed and is sparsely vegetated. A lighthouse, manned until 1989, is situated on the main island. The site includes the two islands and the surrounding seas to a distance of 3.5 km from the islands.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Purple Sandpiper, Roseate Tern, Common Tern and Arctic Tern.

Rockabill has a long history of nesting by terns and it is now the most important Roseate tern colony in Europe. The All-Ireland Tern Survey in 1995 recorded an internationally important population of Roseate Tern (554 pairs) and nationally important populations of Common Tern (351 pairs) and Arctic Tern (49 pairs) on Rockabill. Intensive wardening, management and monitoring since the 1980s has seen the colony grow significantly. In 2010 the Roseate population had increased to 1,093 pairs, which represents approximately 65% of the entire European biogeographic population. The Common Tern population is the largest in Ireland with 1,940 pairs recorded in 2010. The Arctic Tern population has also increased with 250 pairs recorded in 2010. Sandwich Tern nested up to the 1930s but apparently not since. Surveys of the foraging behaviour of the Roseate Tern population on Rockabill have recorded up to 73% of Roseate Terns foraging within 3.5 km of the islands. The seas surrounding the islands, to a distance of 3.5 km, are therefore included within the SPA to protect the foraging resource of this internationally important Roseate Tern population.

The terns nest amongst the scrubby vegetation and increasingly so in the nest boxes which are provided as part of the BirdWatch Ireland/National Parks and Wildlife Service conservation programme. Large gull species are discouraged from nesting on the islands, for the benefit of the terns, and visitors to the islands are strictly controlled. Detailed research is carried out each year, including studies on breeding behaviour, productivity and feeding. A ringing programme has been in operation since the 1980s and this has produced important information on the movement of the birds in an international context.

Other breeding seabirds while utilise the site include Black Guillemot (82 pairs in 2010) and a small colony of Kittiwake (163 pairs in 2010). Both of these species are monitored annually and most of the chicks produced are ringed.

In winter the site supports a nationally important population of Purple Sandpiper (48). Other species recorded include Cormorant (18), Oystercatcher (14) and Turnstone (38) – all figures are 3 year mean peaks for the period 1997/98 to 1999/2000.

Rockabill SPA is of ornithological importance as it supports the most important Roseate Tern colony in Europe. The site also supports nationally important breeding populations of Common Tern and Arctic Tern, and a nationally important wintering population of Purple Sandpiper. All three species of tern which occur are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Owing to its international and national importance, Rockabill is a designated Refuge for Fauna.

Table 1. Natura Sites Within 15Km of the Proposed Development Site

Site Name	Protection Afforded	Distance	Annex I Habitats/Annex II Species/Qualifying Interests
Boyne Coast and Estuary 001957	Special Area of Conservation	11Km	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima) [1330] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]
Rogerstown Estuary 000208		13Km	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]

			<p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima) [1330]</p> <p>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]</p> <p>Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120]</p> <p>Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130]</p>
Rockabill to Dalkey Island 003000		10Km	<p>Reefs [1170]</p> <p><i>Phocoena phocoena</i> (Harbour Porpoise) [1351]</p>
Boyne Estuary 004080	Special Protection Area	11Km	<p>Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]</p> <p>Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]</p> <p>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]</p> <p>Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]</p> <p>Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]</p> <p>Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143]</p> <p>Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144]</p> <p>Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156]</p> <p>Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]</p> <p>Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169]</p> <p>Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) [A195]</p> <p>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>
Rogerstown Estuary SPA 004015		13Km	<p>Greylag Goose (<i>Anser anser</i>) [A043]</p> <p>Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046]</p> <p>Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048]</p> <p>Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056]</p> <p>Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130]</p> <p>Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137]</p> <p>Grey Plover (<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>) [A141]</p> <p>Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143]</p>

			Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>) [A156] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
Nanny Estuary and Shore 004158		5Km	Oystercatcher (<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>) [A130] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Knot (<i>Calidris canutus</i>) [A143] Sanderling (<i>Calidris alba</i>) [A144] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
Skerries Islands 004122		7Km	Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>) [A018] Light-bellied Brent Goose (<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>) [A046] Purple Sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>) [A148] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) [A184]
Rockabill 004014		10Km	Purple Sandpiper (<i>Calidris maritima</i>) [A148] Roseate Tern (<i>Sterna dougallii</i>) [A192] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194]

3.4 Identification and Assessment of Potential Impacts

The identification of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites considered all potential linkages from both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development. The following elements of the proposed development were assessed for their potential for likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites.

Birdwatch Ireland's report on winter bird usage at Bremore divides the area into five sections – A,B,C,D and E. Section C is partially within the scope of the project and is largely recreational land and built surfaces. The largest 'field' section, C1, comprised largely parkland (amenity grassland GA2), edged by semi natural grassland (GS) and bordered by hedgerows (WL1). Amenity grassland also dominated fields C2, C4 and C5, while C3 is the car park of Balbriggan FC (built surfaces BL3). C5 and C3 are within the boundaries of the project.

A total of 42 bird species was recorded while surveying Section C which included 16 waterbirds and 26 passerines. Of the waterbird species, eight species were recorded from the shoreline/marine area only, and therefore outside of the terrestrial field sections, and six species were recorded from both the shoreline and terrestrial survey area. Of note were two species (Golden Plover and Curlew) that were only recorded from the terrestrial survey areas.

20 species of conservation concern were recorded within Section C including the Annex I species Golden Plover. The section supported a total of nine species red-listed under BoCCI 2013 (Colhoun & Cummins, 2013) and a further 11 species that are amber-listed.

The red-listed wader, Curlew, was observed within Field C1 on two survey occasions. This species occurred in a ponded (flooded) area of the amenity grassland. This damp area also supported other wader species such as Redshank, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover and gull species. The shoreline adjacent Field C1 also supported a wader roost on rocks on more than one survey visit. Roosting species included Dunlin, Great Black-backed Gull, Grey Plover, Greenshank, Herring Gull and Lapwing, Golden Plover, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Oystercatcher, Redshank, Ringed Plover and Turnstone. Waterbirds of conservation concern were also recorded within Field C2 (amenity grassland), and a rocky roost site was also located off Field C4. Overall Fields C5 and C6 supported fewer birds than fields further north, the scrub in the northern part of C6 perhaps most notable for numbers of passerines.

Section C1 appears to be important to overwintering wildfowl and waders but is outside the footprint of the project area. Section C2 is also of some importance but is similarly outside the project footprint. The amenity grassland at C5 appears to be of limited importance to overwintering wildfowl and waders.

Construction Phase

- Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity

- Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic
- Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity
- Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity

The grassland in C1 and C2 is not going to change and wintering waders or wildfowl will still be able to utilise these areas. The project therefore will have no direct impact on any bird species linked to the designated sites in the area.

Operational Phase (estimated duration: indefinite)

During the operational phase of development the site will operate as a public park with no emissions or potential for impact on Natura sites.

Public usage of the park and dog walking in particular could cause disturbance to feeding and/or roosting wildfowl and waders. However, the most important areas for winter birds are outside the footprint of the project.

The features of the proposed development that have the potential to directly or indirectly impact on the qualifying interests and/or conservation objectives of the 3 SACs and 4 SPAs that are located within the precautionary zone of influence (15km) of the proposed development site are detailed in Table 2. This assessment framework is taken from the best practice guide lines issued by the European Commission, “Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance” (EC, 2001)

Natura 2000 Site	Potential for Likely Significant Effects on Natura 2000 site	Further Assessment Required
Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SAC due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic</p> <p>Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p>	No

	<p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SAC due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c.4.7km between the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SAC arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases;</p>	
<p>Rogerstown Estuary SAC</p>	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SAC due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic</p> <p>Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p> <p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SAC due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c 12km between the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SAC arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases;</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC</p>	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SAC due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic</p> <p>Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p> <p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SAC due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c 7km between the proposed development and the SAC.</p> <p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SAC arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases;</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Rogerstown Estuary SPA</p>	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic</p> <p>Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p> <p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c 13km between the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SPA arising from: emissions of</p>	

	<p>noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases;</p>	
<p>Boyne Estuary SPA</p>	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p> <p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c 11km between the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SPA arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases;</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA</p>	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p> <p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c 5km between the proposed development and the SPA.</p>	<p>No</p>

	<p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SPA arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases;</p>	
<p>Skerries Islands SPA</p>	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic</p> <p>Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p> <p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c 7km between the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SPA arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases;</p>	<p>No</p>

Rockabill SPA	<p><i>Potential for likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic</p> <p>Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity</p> <p>Potential for the spread of invasive species during construction activity</p> <p><i>No possibility of likely significant effects on SPA due to:</i></p> <p>The intervening minimum distance of c 10km between the proposed development and the SPA.</p> <p>This intervening distance is considered sufficient in order to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SPA arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the site during the construction phase; increased traffic volumes during the construction and operational phases and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the site during construction and operational phases</p>	No
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3.4.1 In-combination Effects

There are three other projects with Granted Permission in the vicinity of the park which have been reviewed to assess if, in combination with the proposed works at Bremore Regional Park, could lead to significant impacts on Natura sites.

The three projects with Granted Permission include O’Dwyers GAA fields to the north-west of the site (immediately outside the site boundary line for Bremore Regional Park); Balbriggan FC Futsal (within the park boundary) and the proposed Nursing Home at Bath Road to the south-east of the site.(See Section 3.2.3 Existing Granted Planning Permissions, in and adjacent to the site)

Planning Ref No. F18A/0389

Applicant Trustees of O'Dwyers GAA Club

Decision Grant Permission

Final Grant 17 Dec 2018

This project is directly linked with the Bremore Regional Park Development Project. It is located to the immediate north-west of the site and the proposals have been linked in with the overall design layout of the proposed recreational hub.

An AA Screening Report was submitted with the planning application. The report concluded that based on the best available scientific information, it demonstrated that *'the proposed development did not pose a risk of likely significant effects on the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA 00415'*. It also considered that the proposed development *'does not require progression to second stage Appropriate Assessment'*.

Planning Ref No. F15A/0392

Applicant Executive Committee Balbriggan Football Club

Decision Grant Permission

Final Grant 15 Oct 2015

This project is directly linked with the Bremore Regional Park Development Project and is located within the site boundary, to the south-east of the existing club house. The proposal has been considered within the overall design of the Bremore Regional Park Development Project.

Planning Ref No. F17A/0295

Lands at the former Sea Mills Hosiery Factory, Baths Road, Balbriggan, Co Dublin

Applicant Colm Mohan & Sinead Mohan

Decision Grant Permission

Final Grant 14 Dec 2017

On 14 Dec 2017, a decision GRANT PERMISSION was made by Fingal County Council on this application. Subsequently, an appeal was lodged on 15 Jan 2018 and a decision to Grant Permission was made by An Bord Pleanála on 25 Sep 2018.

An AA Screening Report accompanied the planning submission. It concluded that the proposed project will not have direct or measurable indirect impacts on any other Natura 2000 site in close proximity to the subject site, and that no significant impacts on the qualifying interests of the SPA's and SAC's are likely.

Therefore based on the outcome of the above applications, it is considered that they are unlikely to have direct or measurable indirect impacts on any Natura 2000 site in close proximity to the subject site, Bremore Regional Park, and that there will be no likely significant impacts on qualifying interests of the relevant SPA's or SAC's.

3.4.2 Direct Effects

There is no land connection between Bremore Park and any of the protected Natura sites; the closest being River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA to the north (5Km) and Skerries Islands SPA to the south (7Km). It is not anticipated that there will be any direct impact on the Natura sites as a result of the proposed development works at Bremore Park due to the nature of the proposed works, as well as distance from the site itself.

However, based on the most recent study by Birdwatch Ireland, *'Wintering bird survey of farmland and parkland at Balbriggan, North County Dublin.'* Nov 2020, this AA Screening Report has considered the potential impact on both the Features of Interest and Conservation Objectives of the relevant Natura 2000 sites.

The Birdwatch survey concluded that the areas used by the birds is the amenity grassland along the coast is important for wildfowl and waders and other terrestrial birds of conservation concern. And although recreation brings many benefits, there are also conservation concerns that need to be addressed in the form of future management of sites where protected winter migratory and terrestrial bird species feed and roost. The survey identified both large numbers and a good diversity of bird species in the coastal amenity grassland survey area.

- 68 bird species were recorded
- 3 are listed as Annex 1 of the EU Bird's Directive and include :
 - o Great Northern Diver
 - o Merlin
 - o Golden Plover

- 32 Species are listed on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland
- 11 of these are Red listed (Highest Concern)
- 21 of these are Amber listed
- 11 of these include Waterbird species listed as Special Conservation Interests (SCI's) for nearby SPA's and include the following species :
 - o Light-bellied Brent Goose
 - o Dunlin
 - o Redshank
 - o Lesser Black-backed Gull
 - o Herring Gull

- Annex 1 Golden Plover occurred infrequently but in substantial numbers
- Coastal waterbird roost sites also identified
- Passerine species such as Yellowhammer were notable in agricultural lands to the north of the site in hedgerows, assisted by their remote location.

Of higher relevance to the Bremore Park site itself is the presence, in Section C, of non-agricultural lands comprising of playing pitches or amenity grassland. These areas have been identified as providing important winter grazing for Light-Bellied Brent Geese, and feeding grounds for the Curlew and Oystercatcher. These three species were also recorded further north in Sections A and Section B.

The most important areas for overwintering birds are outside the footprint of the project area. It is therefore considered that there will be no direct impact on the identified listed bird species and in particular the winter grazing grounds of the Light Bellied Goose, Curlew and Oystercatcher, as the proposed development is taking place away from the key roosting and feeding sites identified in the Birdwatch report.

To assess the potential impact, the following is considered:

The proposed nature of the project can be categorised as public park development project. The CEMP (Construction and Environmental Management Plan) sets out the timing of construction works throughout the project. The CEMP also emphasises that in accordance with Section 40 of the Wildlife Act 1976, and amended by the Wildlife Amendment Act 2000 and Heritage Act 2018, removal of any vegetation must occur outside the period beginning 1st March – 31st August in any year.

The Landscape Strategy for the Bremore Regional Park Development Project states, in Section 5.2 Construction and Operational Stages, that prior to the construction of the proposed works, a Management and Maintenance Plan for Bremore Regional Park will be prepared by the relevant departments of Fingal Council Council, and in direct consultation with Birdwatch Ireland and a consultant ecologist, to ensure best practice in management and maintenance regimes of all habitats are adhered to, and should be monitored in terms of impact on protected migratory bird species. *The Winter Bird Survey of farmland and parkland at Balbriggan, North Dublin (Birdwatch Ireland, Nov 2020)* will act as baseline data for future assessments. Additional research is being undertaken by Birdwatch Ireland in the survey area and they are liaising directly with the Biodiversity Officer of Fingal County Council, Mr Hans Visser on outcomes.

It should also be noted that the winter bird survey also states that *'the proposed coastal greenway and associated impact assessments must therefore proceed with great care.'* The proposed coastal greenway route will be subject to a separate assessment and Part 8 Planning Application.

3.4.3 Screening matrix

<p><i>Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.</i></p>	<p>There are three Granted Permissions for projects within and adjacent to the subject site (See Section 3.2.3 above). AA Screening Reports have been prepared for two of the projects. Neither identified impacts on the Natura Sites or on their qualifying interests.</p> <p>The project site is physically removed from all of the Natura sites and from both of the closest by a factor of several kilometres each. However a number of qualifying interest species occur at the project site. The CEMP defines specific measures to ensure no impact on the winter feeding or roosting areas identified in the Birdwatch Ireland Winter Bird Survey Oct 2000. There will be no effluent or emissions from the site either during the construction or implementation phases of the project and no disturbance to the qualifying interests.</p>
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Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:

<i>Size and scale</i>	Project is relatively large scale but is distant from Natura sites
<i>Land-take</i>	No land-take from Natura sites will occur.
<i>Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site</i>	Project area is approx. 5Km from the closest Natura 2000 site
<i>Resource requirements</i>	None
<i>Emissions</i>	No emissions are predicted from project.

<i>Excavation requirements</i>	There will be some excavations carried out but these will be contained within the site and are accompanied by a Construction Environmental Management Plan
<i>Transportation requirements</i>	During the construction phase machinery will be on site

Describe any likely changes to Natura sites arising as a result of:

<i>Reduction of habitat area</i>	No reduction to habitat area will occur.
<i>Disturbance of key species</i>	No disturbance to key species
<i>Habitat or species fragmentation</i>	One linear section of hedgerow will be removed to accommodate the development of the Recreational Hub. There will be substantial additional tree and hedgerow planting as part of the overall landscape design and the creation of a more diverse series of habitats within the park as a whole. No habitat or species fragmentation is predicted as a result of the proposed project.
<i>Reduction in species density</i>	No reduction in species density is predicted as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Changes in key indicators of conservation value</i>	No reduction in conservation value of Natura sites is predicted.
<i>Climate change</i>	No damage to any Natura site as a result of enhanced climate change is predicted as a result of the proposed development.

Describe any likely impacts on Natura 2000 sites as a whole in terms of:

<i>Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site</i>	No likely negative impacts are predicted that could interfere with the key relationships that define the current structure of any of the Natura sites.
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<i>Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site</i>	No likely negative impacts are predicted that could interfere with the key relationships which define the current function of the Natura sites.
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Provide indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of:

<i>Loss</i>	No habitat loss to the Natura sites is predicted.
<i>Fragmentation</i>	No habitat fragmentation is predicted.
<i>Disruption</i>	No disruption is predicted
<i>Disturbance</i>	No disturbance is predicted
<i>Change to key elements of site (e.g. water quality etc.)</i>	No likely impacts are predicted upon key elements of the Natura sites.

Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.

No impacts are predicted.

4.0 Conclusion

This Stage 1 AA Screening has been undertaken so as to ensure that the competent authority is enabled to make an informed Screening Decision whether it can be excluded on the basis of objective information that the proposed development will have an effect on any Natura 2000 site, individually or together with other plans and projects.

Based on the location, nature and the zone of impact of potential effects, this screening assessment has concluded that there are no pathways between the proposed development and Natura 2000 sites. Although qualifying interest species associated with nearby SPAs are present on the amenity grassland and pitches on the seaward side of the park, the park development works will not affect these species directly or indirectly in any significant manner.

This report concludes that no impacts may be predicted upon any of the Natura sites listed in Table 1. Possible impacts to Natura sites have been screened out and Appropriate Assessment is not recommended.

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