






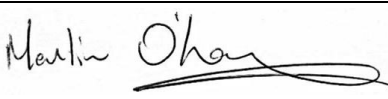
**ENVIRONMENTAL
SOLUTIONS LTD**

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

**ST. JOSEPHS COVENT,
FERBANE,
CO. OFFALY**

2025

Declaration

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROJECT BRIEF

Panther Environmental Solutions Ltd (PES Ltd) were commissioned by Kenny Lyons Associate Architects, acting on behalf of Offaly County Council, to carry out an environmental impact assessment screening report for a proposed development located at St. Josephs Convent, Ferbane, Co. Offaly.

The proposed development will consist of the relocation of community-based services to the old convent and its grounds with a new build extension and all associated site works at An Siolán Project, St. Joseph's Convent, Ferbane, Co. Offaly, R42 E090.

This EIA Screening assessment document has been prepared by PES on behalf of and for the exclusive use of the applicant.

This EIA Screening has been prepared with reference to Schedules 5 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

1.2.1 Site Location

The development site is located in the town of Ferbane, Co. Offaly. The site is located at Irish Grid Reference (211547 E, 224440 N) or Irish Transverse Mercator (611497E, 724465N).

The development is located within the town centre of Ferbane and would be considered urban in nature, with residential housing, primary and secondary level schools, local shops, community services, healthcare, sports clubs and amenities in the surrounding area.

Pedestrian access to the completed site would be via the existing entrance of the convent along the N62 national road (Main Street), with vehicular access to the completed site along the R436 (Ballycumber Road) located on the northern boundary of the site. This site has good connectivity to the national road network.

The site is bordered by the River Brosna along its southern boundary, Ferbane Garda Station and residential dwellings along its northern boundary and Ferbane GAA along its eastern boundary.

St. Josephs Convent was built c. 1880 and has been functioning as a convent/nunnery up until 2022.

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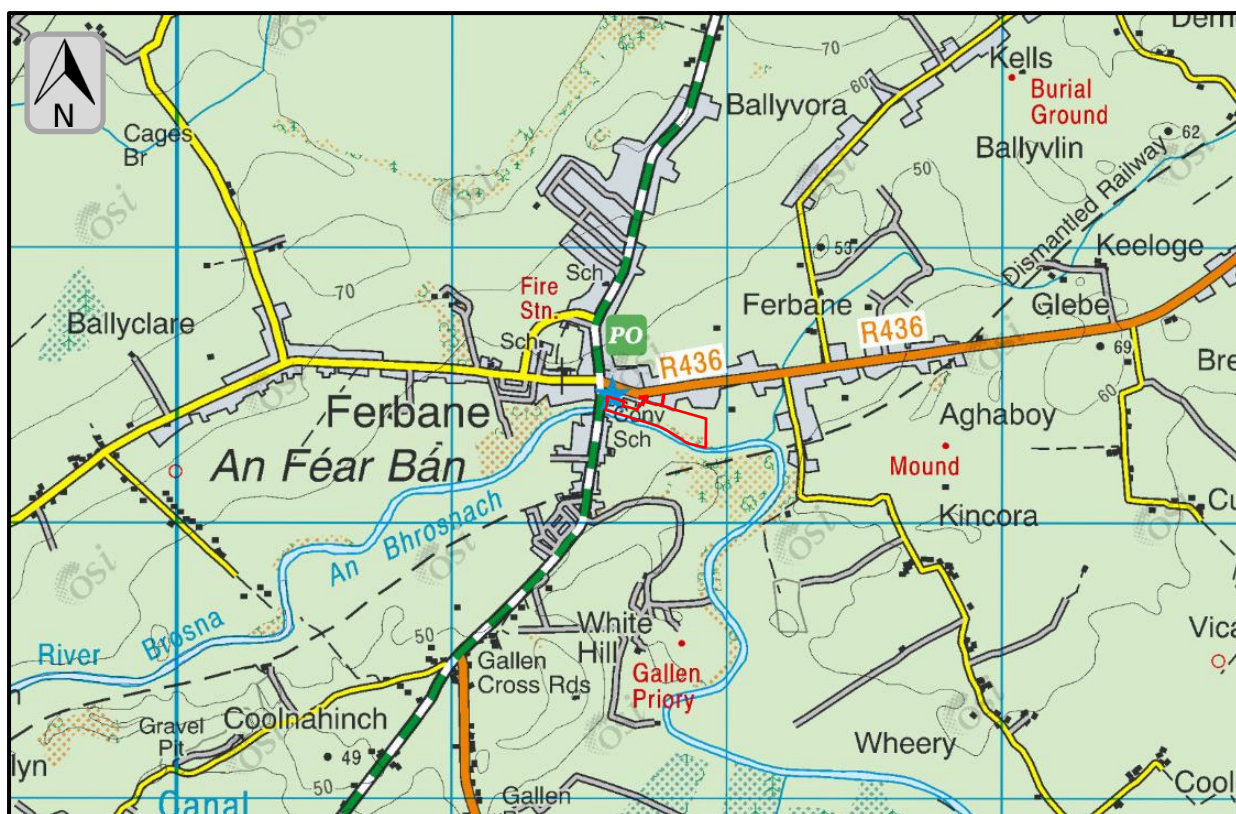


Figure 1.1: Site Location (Discovery Maps)



Figure 1.2: Aerial Image (Google Earth)

1.2.2 Description of the Development

The site currently consists of the existing St. Josephs Convent which includes the convent building, a coach house, prefabs, a hall and two other auxiliary buildings, amenity grasslands and an existing sports pitch.

The proposed development is for the relocation of community-based services to the old convent and its grounds with a new build extension and all associated site works at An Siolán Project, St. Josephs Convent, Ferbane, Co. Offaly (ITM Coordinates: 611497.93, 724466.27).

The estimated duration for the proposed development works is 24 to 36 months (2-3 years) and cover a total site area of 3.25 Ha.

The proposed development will include:

- The refurbishment of the exiting convent building;
- The demolition of the exiting extension to the south of the convent building and construction of a new extension to the southwest of the convent;
- Restoration of the existing hall building to be repurposed as an assembly hall for use as a multipurpose space;
- The demolition of existing coach house and modular classroom buildings;
- The construction of an urban garden and riverbank walk along River Brosna with the installation of a suspended wooden bridge;
- The demolition of an existing shed and construction of a new site entrance along the R436 (Ballycumber Road) and the provision of all groundworks, service corrections, site drainage, internal paths, parking spaces, public lighting, public open space and all associated site development works to complete the development.
- The construction of a new car park providing 48 spaces including accessible parking spaces, electric vehicles spaces and age-friendly spaces.
- The provision of 50 bicycle parking bays across the site

Proposed refurbishment and demolition works will involve the handling and removal of asbestos containing materials. An Asbestos Survey Report has been completed by CMSE Consultancy (Report No. PE23-802) to locate asbestos containing materials (ACMs) withing the existing buildings located onsite. Asbestos containing materials that require removal or that are in poor condition will be removed under controlled conditions by a specialist asbestos removal contractor and disposed of as asbestos waste. All asbestos removal work will be carried out in accordance with S.I. No. 386 of 2006 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010.

The creation of the riverbank walk will include the construction of a raised wooden cantilever viewing platform close to the boundary of the River Brosna. Construction will not include the use of concrete and will not require excavation works in the riverbanks. The construction of the suspended wooden pedestrian bridge over the drainage ditch will also not require excavation works in the banks or bed of the drainage ditch.

The site will be accessible via the R436 (Ballycumber Road) to the north of the site, which connects to the Main Street (N62) approximately 165m to the west. The demolition of an existing shed and site entrance works will be required to make the site accessible to vehicles.

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The landscape design prepared by LUC includes the creation of a community garden and orchard, a wildlife garden, garden lawns, species rich grasslands, terraced grass areas and retention of existing riverside vegetation. Planting will include native and non-native non-invasive species.

The proposed heating system for the existing convent building and the proposed extension as well as the existing hall is air to water heat pumps.

Water will be provided to the existing and proposed buildings via a new connection to the public mains to the west of the development site along the N62 (Main Street). Irish Water has been enquired about the feasibility of connection (Doc. Ref.: CDS24007773) and feasibility has been confirmed without infrastructure upgrade by Uisce Éireann.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities at the existing and proposed buildings would be directed to the existing foul water drainage network which runs along the northwest portion of the site. Irish Water has been enquired about the feasibility of connection (Doc. Ref.: CDS24007773) and feasibility has been confirmed subject to upgrades. Foul water would be directed to Ferbane WWTP (EPA Licence Number: DO147), which will discharge to the River Brosna (210946E, 224137N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 3,184 and the WWTP would be able to accommodate the proposed development.

A new stormwater drainage system will be provided for the development and will cater for surface water run-off from roadways, footways, pedestrianised zones and car parking areas. Surface water will be directed through a petrol interceptor before reaching a soakaway cellular unit. The soakaways are designed to hold water for the largest storage required over a 48-hour storm period with rainfall depths taken for the 100-year return period + 20% for climate change for sliding durations obtained from Met Eireann. Permeable paving, reinforced grass car parking and rain gardens with attenuating tree pits will be included in the surface water drainage system to create an integrated SuDs management chain.

During excavation works, soils would be temporarily stored onsite, and any excess soils would be used for landscaping or exported offsite via a licence contractor.

All construction activities would take place during normal working hours between 7:00am and 19:00pm, Monday to Friday and 7:00am and 13:00pm Saturday.

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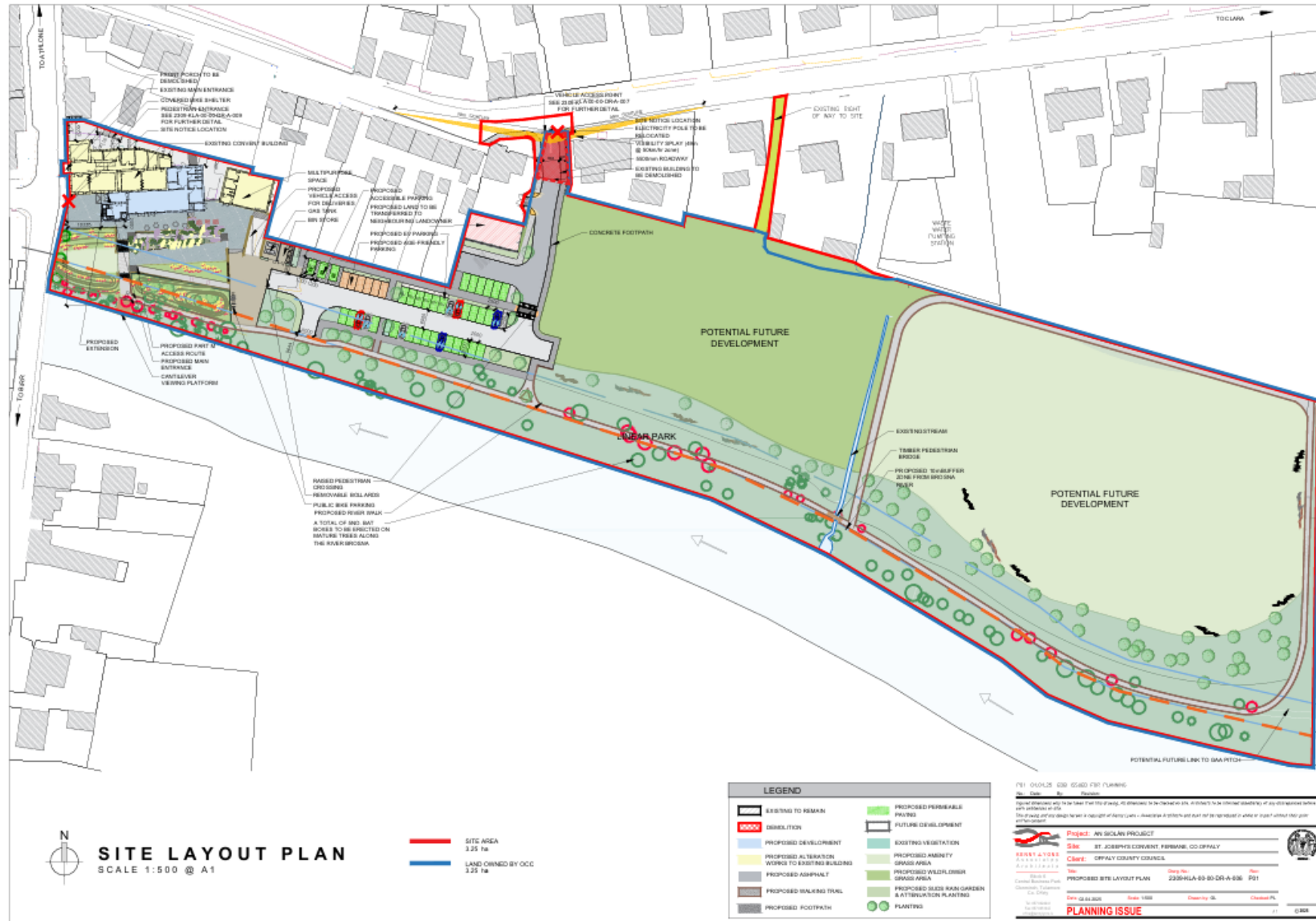


Figure 1.3: Site Layout Plan

2.0 PES LTD - COMPETENCY & EXPERIENCE

PES is a leading environmental consulting firm based in Carlow, Ireland. PES was formed in 2005 by environmental consultant Mr. Mike Fraher who has over two decades of experience working in the environmental consultancy industry, both in Ireland and in the United Kingdom.

The PES team are competent and experienced in preparing environmental planning documents. PES has completed environmental works in a wide range of industries including construction, waste management, industrial and intensive agriculture.

This Environmental Impact Assessment Report Screening has been prepared by experienced environmental consultants within PES Ltd.

Mr Mike Fraher has over 25 years of consultancy experience and has a B.Sc. Degree in Environmental Sciences from the University of Glamorgan, Cardiff in Wales and a Diploma in Food Sciences from Cork Institute of Technology.

Mr. Martin O’Looney has over ten years’ consultancy experience and has a B.Sc. Degree in Environmental Science and Technology from Sligo Institute of Technology.

Mr. Nial Ryan has over seven years’ consultancy experience and has a BSc. in Applied Physics from Dublin City University, an MSc. in Medical Device Regulatory Affairs, a Certificate in Introduction to AutoCAD, and a Certificate in Environmental, Health & Safety Management all from Institute of Technology Carlow.

Mr. Luis Soares has a BSc. in Aquatic Sciences and a MSc in Environmental Sciences and Technology from University of Porto.

Ms. Isabel Carr has a BSc. in Environmental Science from University of Galway.

This screening report has been prepared having regard to the following documents:

- The Irish Planning and Development Regulations 2001 to 2018 as amended (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018).
- Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (2014) On the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Public and Private Projects on the Environment. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Environmental Protection Agency’s (2022) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports. Dublin 14, EPA Publications.
- European Commission (2001). Guidance on EIA Screening. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

3.0 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT & MANDATORY EIA REVIEW

3.1 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

The requirements for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are derived from Council Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC, and 2009/31/EC) and as codified and replaced by Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (amended in turn by Directive 2014/52/EU).

This EIAR Screening is drafted based on the requirements of EU Directive 2014/52/EU. Under the Directive, 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16th April 2014 “*The assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment*” Annex I and Annex II class activities are described.

EIA Directives were transposed into Irish law under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

This EIAR Screening has been prepared with reference to Schedule 5 and 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations.

The first step in screening is to determine whether a project is listed in either Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5, which describes the thresholds of Part 1 projects, which require a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), or Part 2 projects which may have the potential to pose a risk to the environment and require screening to determine if an EIAR is required.

Schedule 7 is to be used in the case of screening determination (i.e. information to be provided by the developer on projects listed in Part 2). Schedule 7A details the criteria for determining whether a sub-threshold development would, or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

3.2 SCHEDULE 5 OF THE IRISH STATUTORY INSTRUMENT (S.I. NO. 296 OF 2018).

Schedule 5, of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 refers to development for the purposes of Part 10 (Environmental Impact Assessment Report) of the planning regulations.

An EIAR is required to accompany a planning application for development of a class set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 which exceeds a limit, quantity or threshold set for that class of development. An EIAR will also be required by the planning authority in respect of sub-threshold development where the authority considers that the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment (article 103).

3.3 SCHEDULE 7 OF THE IRISH STATUTORY INSTRUMENT (S.I. NO. 296 OF 2018)

The Annex III EIAR screening criteria of Directive 2014/52/EU are transposed into Irish law as Schedule 7, (parts 1 to 3) of the Irish Planning and Development Regulations 2001.

Schedule 7, sets out the Irish Member States criteria used for determining the likelihood of significant impacts from a development on the environment.

Part 1: Characteristics of the Proposed Development

The characteristics of proposed development, in particular;

- (a) the size and design of the whole of the proposed development,
- (b) cumulation with other existing development and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment,
- (c) the nature of any associated demolition works,
- (d) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity,
- (e) the production of waste,
- (f) pollution and nuisances,
- (g) the risk of major accidents, and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge, and
- (h) the risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).

Part 2: Location of the Proposed Development

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to;

- (a) the existing and approved land use,
- (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,
- (c) the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:
 - (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;
 - (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;
 - (iii) mountain and forest areas;
 - (iv) nature reserves and parks;
 - (v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and;
 - (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
 - (vii) densely populated areas;
 - (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

Part 3: Characteristics of the Potential Impacts

The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of ‘environmental impact assessment report’ in section 171A of the Act, taking into account;

- a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- b) the nature of the impact;
- c) the transboundary nature of the impact;
- d) the intensity and complexity of the impact;
- e) the probability of the impact;
- f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and;
- h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

The flow chart below describes the EIAR Screening process. This infographic is commonly referred to in EIAR Screening reports and is taken from the Environmental Protection Agency’s 2017 “*Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*” (see Figure 3.1).

Schedule 7A, sets out the Irish Member States criteria used for determining the likelihood of significant impacts from a sub-threshold development on the environment.

1. A description of the proposed development, including in particular;
 - (a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works, and
 - (b) a description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.
2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.
3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from;
 - (a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and
 - (b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.
4. The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7.

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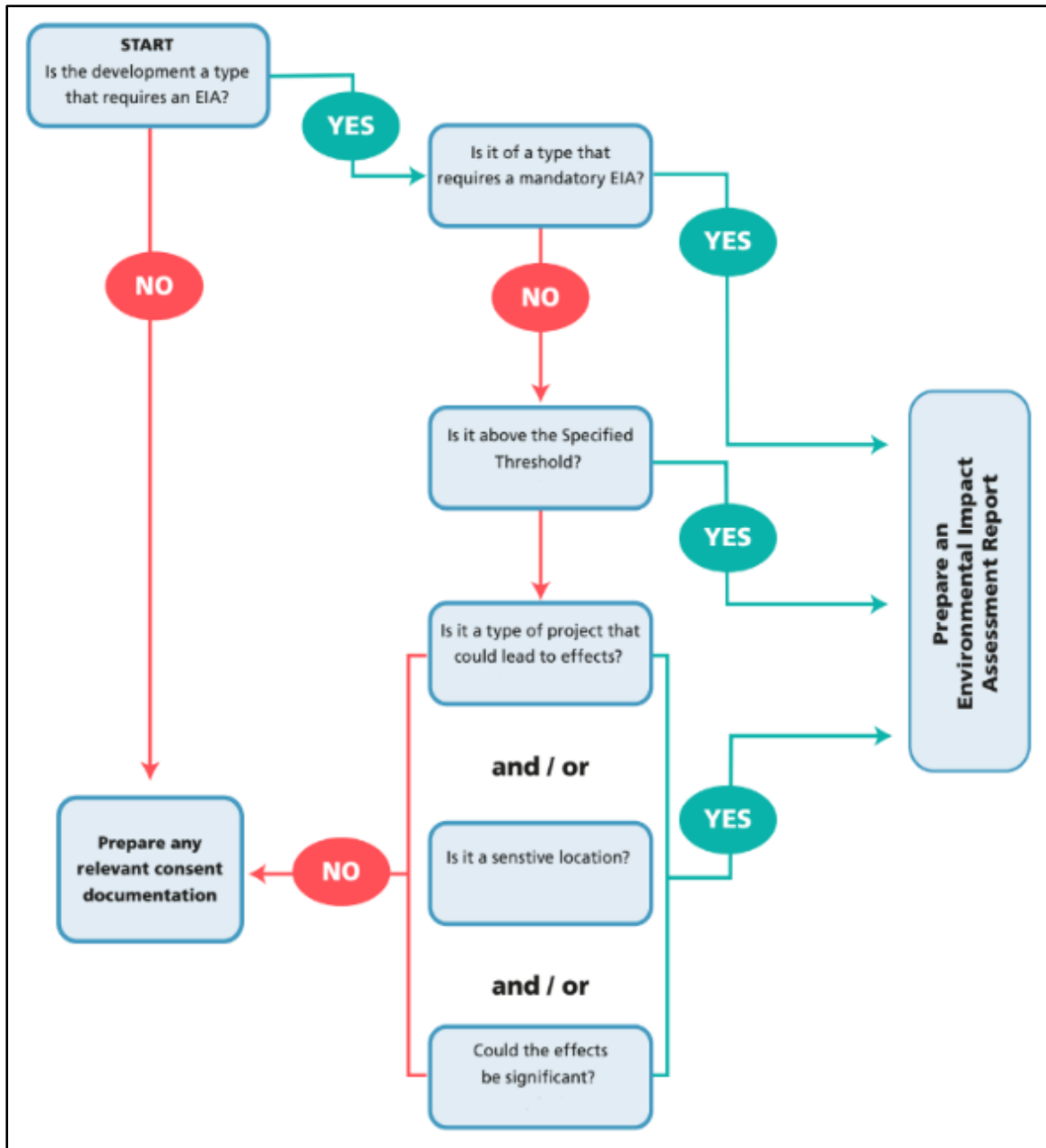


Figure 3.1: E.I.A. Screening Process Flow Chart

The overall purpose of this Screening Report is to identify and detail the findings of desktop and available field studies using the precautionary principle undertaken to analyse the impacts, if any, of the proposed development on the receiving environment and, based on the results, decide whether or not an EIAR is required.

3.4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING THRESHOLDS

The development would not fall under any of the classes of development listed in Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations and a mandatory EIA is not applicable.

The following threshold would be applicable to the development class type:

Planning And Development Regulations 2001 – 2022:
Schedule 5:
Part 2:

10. Infrastructure Projects

(b) (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.

The proposed development involving the relocation of community-based services to St. Josephs convent is located on a total site area of 3.25 hectares. The area of the site zoned within the business district of Ferbane is 0.86 hectares. The remaining area of the site is located within an area zoned as *Open Space, Amenity and Recreation*.

Therefore, the proposed development is sub-threshold with regard to paragraph 10, *Infrastructure Projects*, of Schedule 5: Part 2.

In consideration of the sensitivities of the existing environment, a sub-threshold EIA screening assessment has been carried out in accordance with the criteria listed in Schedule 7 and Schedule 7A of the Planning Regulations.

4.0 PART I – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This section assesses the potential impacts of the development due to the scale and characteristics of the activities proposed to be carried out.

4.1 SIZE AND DESIGN OF THE PROJECT

The overall development consists of the relocation of community-based services to St. Josephs Convent and its grounds with a new build extension and all associated site works. The development will also require the demolition of existing structures within the site boundary.

The proposed development will consist of the refurbishment of the existing convent building, demolition of the existing south extension and construction of a new extension to the south west, restoration of the existing hall building to be repurposed as an assembly hall to be used as a multipurpose space, demolition of existing stable building and classroom buildings, demolition of exiting shed and creation of a new site entrance along the R436 and the creation of an urban garden and riverbank walk along the River Brosna.

The development site comprises a total area of 3.25 hectares. The proposed development of the convent building and hall building includes a total floor area of 1,636m², with 1,028m² allocated for the refurbishment of the existing convent and hall building, and 608m² for the proposed extension to the convent. The total area of proposed demolition is approximately 760m².

The proposed development will be connected to public services.

The proposed development applies accepted building standards and design for community developments, as outlined in submitted planning drawings.

The development falls within Town Centre/ Mixed Use zoning in the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 and meets the land-use zoning objective LUZO-02 to provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of town/village centres, through consolidating development, encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land, to ensure the efficient use of infrastructure and services, of Chapter 12 of the Development Plan.

It is not considered an EIAR would be required to further assess the size or design of the project.

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4.2 CUMULATION WITH OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The following figure and table provide information from the EIA portal of proposed developments requiring Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) within 10 kilometres of the proposed development.

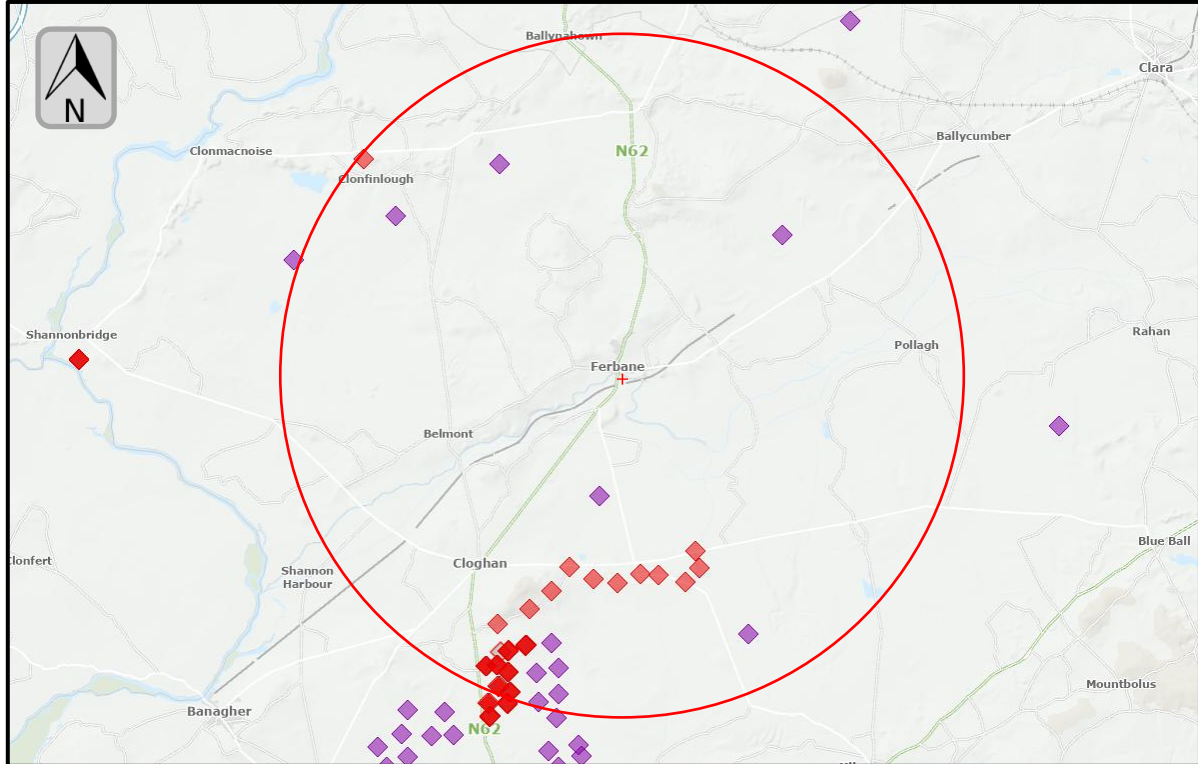


Figure 4.1: EIA developments within 10km (EIA Portal)

Table 4.1: EIA developments within 10km

Planning Ref No.	Description	Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
ABP-307282	Peat extraction carried out by the Applicant since 2012 and ancillary works.	-	The following Bord na Móna bogs - Bellair North, Lemanaghan, Kilaranny, Noggusboy, Boora, Derrinboy, Derryclure and Monettia located primarily in County Offaly and also in Counties Laois and Westmeath. c. 3.30km S
Offaly CC 19555	The installation of approximately 8km of underground electricity line with a capacity of up to 38kV from the permitted Cloghan Wind Farm substation to the permitted Derrycarney electricity substation in the townland of Lumcloon, County Offaly.	24/01/2020	Stonestown, Coraknock Glebe, Coolreagh or Cloghanhill, Cortullagh or Grove, and Lumcloon, County Offaly. c. 5.09km SSE
ABP-306706-20	Wind farm development of 21 no. turbines, 110kv substation, all associated works including amenity pathway and carpark.	26/08/2021	Derrinlough, and other townlands County Offaly c. 7.36km SSW

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Planning Ref No.	Description	Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
Offaly CC 19404	Amendments to the permitted Cloghan Wind Farm to include amendments to wind turbine height; minor re-siting of turbines; realignment of access tracks; and increased meteorological mast height	12/03/2020	Stonestown, Kilcamin, Crancreagh, Derrinlough and Ballindown, Co. Offaly. c. 7.64km SSW
ABP-244053	10 year permission for the erection of 9 no. wind turbines and all associated site development works. Lands at Stonestown,	27/10/2016	Across the townlands of Stonestown, Kilcamin, Crancreagh, Derrinlough, Clooneen, Whigsborough,, Galros East, Galros West, Cush, Boolinarig Big, Conspark, Ballaghanoher, Ross and Clondallow, Co Offaly c. 8.01km SSW
ABP-304951-19	Application consists of 0.97 Ha. which was subject to extraction of material after expiry of planning permission on 31/12/09. Extraction area is contained within the overall area of 15.34 Ha. consisting of areas ancillary to the extraction area (0.97 Ha.)	18/04/2024	Clonfinlough, Co. Offaly c. 8.88km NW

Table 4.2: Other developments within 1 km.

Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
21479	Upgrade of upstairs into a self-contained apartment unit, to include access from main street, reconfiguration of stair access, wc upgrade, new shower room and general reconfiguration and all ancillary works.	27/09/2021	Main Street, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 35m north
2215	Extension and modification of existing public licenced premises to include: creating access from existing licenced premises to attached unused shop unit, change of use of shop unit from drapery retail to licenced premises use, reconfiguration and upgrade of existing ladies and gents toilets, upgrade and configuration of former ground floor living space into kitchen and preparation area with storage & staff facilities and all ancillary works.	11/07/2022	Main Street, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 35m north
23347	Internal and external works carried out in the last 20 years to the building. Retention permission is sought for the alterations to the two no. Windows and existing entrance on the east elevation, the construction of two no. Windows on the north elevation, and to retain the construction of the rear extension (73 sq m) along the west elevation, as well as the internal block walls and partition walls as shown on the existing floor plans lodged with the application. Permission is also sought for the change of use from existing public house and restaurant to residential units. The proposed development will consist of a total of eight no. Residential units, two no. 2-bedroom units and three no. 1 bedroom units	30/7/2024	Main Street/Chapel Street, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 45m north northwest

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Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
	on the ground floor, and two no. 2-bedroom units and one no. 1-bedroom unit on the first floor. Permission is also sought for the demolition of the existing rear extension and all associated site works. (the proposed development consist of works to a protected structure ref 20-06).		
20394	Construction of a two storeyed semi-detached house block (2 houses), new entrances and connection to existing foul and surface water sewer.	20/10/2024	Cois Na hahhainn, Ferbane, Co.Offaly c. 80m west
2395	Works to the protected structure formally Fleming's shop, amended alterations as previously granted, file ref: 17409, namely; the renovation of the protected two-storey structure with internal alterations, alterations to the rear ground floor external wall and fenestration. Works include a single storey extension to the rear, with the reinstatement of a single sotrey lean to room. Works also include rooflight to the rear of the existing two-storey roof and a stone garden wall. The property is a protected structure, recorded in the offaly county development plan 2021-2027, rps ref: 20-08 (niah ref: 14806008)	12/07/2023	Fleming's, Main Street, Ferbane, Co.Offaly c. 90m north
21405	Proposed alterations to existing north elevation, consisting of, the removal of 3 no emergency exit doors and 1 window to existing demonstration room and replacement with new windows and rendered walls, planning permission for proposed construction of a new wall to north elevation at existing exit 4 and installation of a new roof vent, planning permission for proposed internal alterations, consisting of, the construction of 3 store rooms and the reconfiguration of the existing demonstration room to provide a general classroom, and all associated site works.	24/08/2021	Gallen Community School, Lower Main Street, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 95m south - southwest
2458	Demolishing existing dilapidated house and for the provision of 4 no residential units comprising 1 no studio apartment and 3 no. Maisonette apartments (3 no. 1 bed) measuring 232.6 sq m. The development also proposes cycle parking; hard and soft landscaping; balconies; solar panels; boundary treatments; bin storage; connection to the existing public foul sewer: connection to the existing water mains services on site and all associated site works. Retention permission is sought for the piecemeal demolition carried out to date to ensure the safety of adjoining residents and businesses.	-	Chapel Lane, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 170m west - northwest
2231	Construction of a funeral home, associated carparking, upgrade to rear pedestrian access router and all ancillary works.	18/10/2022	Ferbane, Co. Offaly
2069	The refurbishment of the existing two storey dwelling including application of external insulated render to full external façade, alterations to roof at southern façade, glazing and velux window to western elevation.	06/08/2020	Lower Main Street, Gallen, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 235m south
2178	Erection of 18m lighting poles with lights at top to provide illumination for games on the existing	16/4/2021	Gallen Demesne, Ferbane, Co. Offaly

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Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
	soccer pitch, associated ducting and wiring and all ancillary works.		c. 275m south-southwest
21782	To remove an existing 14 metre high wooden pole with communications equipment attached and to replace an existing 20 metre high telecommunications monopole with a 24 metre high telecommunications monopole together with antennas, dishes and associated telecommunications equipment including an extension of the existing security fenced compound	21/10/2022	Eircom Exchange , Chapel Lane Ferbane , Co. Offaly
21486	Installation of 215m2 (45kw) of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (pv) panels and all associated ancillary works.	28/09/2021	Ferbane Wastewater Treatment Works , Ballyclare Road , Ferbane Co. Offaly c. 400m west
21397	Demolition of existing sheds and construction of single storey extension to rear and side of existing dwelling and all ancillary works.	20/08/2021	7 Gallen View, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 445m south-southwest
2460528	Extension to existing dwelling house namely, ensuite bathroom and kitchen extension to the rear and all ancillary works.	-	Athlone Road, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 475m north
19597	Extension, conversion of existing garage into habitable space including en-suite bathroom and walk-in wardrobe at first floor, internal works to modify existing layout including removal of walls and doors, new door openings, walls, etc. Within the existing house, new roof structures to replace existing flat roof, construction of a domestic garage to rear and all ancillary works.	24/03/2020	Ballyclare Road, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c.620m west
22310	A new dwelling house, domestic garage, connection to public services and all associated site works.	16/08/2022	Knockaulin Drive, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 620m north
2480	Kitchen and utility/storage room to rear of existing dwelling (floor area 27.3 m2). Retention permission for existing domestic storage shed to rear of dwelling (floor area 66.4 m2). Permission for alteration to existing site boundary.	19/09/2024	Ballycumber Road, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 622m east
19502	A new dwelling house, domestic garage/fuel shed, and all ancillary site works	21/04/2020	Gallen, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 650m south
22564	Demolition of existing extension, alteration to the existing dwelling elevations, construction of a new extension to the existing dwelling and all associated site works.	10/02/2023	Ballyclare Road, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 655m east
19505	A new dwelling house, domestic garage/fuel shed, and all ancillary site works.	14/04/2020	Ballycumber Road, Ferbane, Co. Offaly
21396	Construction of 17 no. houses, consisting of 14 no. semi-detached two storey, 3 no. detached bungalow dwellings. The development will include the provision for the construction of service road, footpaths, grass margins, public lighting, open space, boundary wall treatment and connecting to mains water, storm water and foul water services within the adjacent 'Ard Glas' housing development	20/08/2021	Ballyvore, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 815m north

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Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
	and to connect to existing service in site and adjacent site boundaries and all associated site works.		
2051	Amenity provision development which consists of a 657m timber boardwalk, 120m gravel access path, post and rail boundary fencing, information signage, 25m parking bay, 1 no. Standard street lighting pole and all associated works. A natura impact statement (NIS) will be submitted to the planning authority with the application.	15/04/2020	Ferbane Bog SAC European Site Code IE0000575, Ferbane and Ballyvora Townlands , Co. Offaly c. 880m north-northwest
214	An existing 45m lattice communications structure together with associated equipment and compound and permission to attach 3 no. Antenna and 2 no. Transmission dishes together with associated equipment and cabinets	21/01/2022	Knockaulin Drive, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 885m north-northwest
22198	Construction of 20 no. Houses, consisting of 8 no. Semi-detached two storey houses, 5 no. Detached two storey houses, 1 no. Detached bungalow dwellings and 6 no. Terrace houses. The development will include the provision for the construction of service road, footpaths, grass margins, public lighting, open space, boundary wall treatment and connecting to mains water, storm water and foul water services within the adjacent 'ard glas' housing development and to connect to existing services on site and adjacent site boundaries and all associated site works.	21/03/2023	Ballyvore, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c.945m north
23123	Domestic Store. Planning permission to construct ground floor extension at rear of dwelling house and two storey extension at the side of the house to include domestic garage.	13/12/2023	35 Cluny Gallen, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 990m south-southwest
2422	Construction of an extension at the side of dwelling house, to include bedroom with ensuite upstairs, leaving access to rear of house at ground level.	11/06/2024	35 Cluny Gallen, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 990m south-southwest
21769	Alterations during the course of construction, to previously granted extension to existing i.t. building under planning file ref. 16/416. The application is for (a) retention of and planning permission to complete an increase of 168m2 in first floor office area and 6 no. Additional first floor windows to the rear (west) elevation currently under course of construction. (b) retention of and planning permission to complete omission of roller shutter doors on the side (north) elevation and exit door to rear (west) elevation currently under course of construction. (c) retention of and planning permission to complete new roller shutter door to rear (west) elevation and new fire exit door to side (north) elevation currently under course of construction. (d) retention of and planning permission to complete reduced height of roller shutter door to rear (west) elevation previously granted permission from 3.5m to 2.25m high (e) retention of and planning permission to complete the installation of 48m2 of solar photovoltaic panels on	15/02/2022	Ferbane Business and Technology Park, Ballycumber Road, Ferbane, Co. Offaly c. 995m east

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Planning Ref No.	Description	Decision Date	Location, Distance / Orientation
	the roof to the rear (west) elevation currently under course of construction. (f) retention of and planning permission to complete revised plot boundary with amended car parking arrangements currently under course of construction		

4.2.1 Cumulation with Construction Projects

As shown above, approved EIA scale developments are located a significant distance from the project site. Approved EIA scale developments in the area relate to wind farm infrastructure and peat extraction. The primary in-combination effect with these developments and the proposed project during the construction phase would be the increased HGV traffic on the national and regional road network.

Sub-EIA scale developments primarily involve residences or extensions to existing residences as well as various commercial and community projects.

Due to the expected 24–36-month construction period for the proposed development, it is anticipated that there would be a likelihood for these and other future developments to commence construction during the project's construction phase. Therefore, there is potential for in combination construction effects.

Potential in combination construction phase impacts would include nuisance (noise, dust etc.), use of natural resources and construction traffic.

However, the construction phase of each project would be temporary. Appropriate construction management practices should be implemented to prevent significant environmental impacts or nuisance (as screened in further detail within this report).

Therefore, it is not considered that cumulative environmental effects from the construction phase of the project requires further investigation within an EIAR.

4.2.2 Operational Cumulative Effects

The site is located in an urban area, with residential housing estates, local shops, community services, primary and secondary level schools, sports clubs, healthcare and amenities in the surrounding area. The River Brosna runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the site, Ferbane Garda Station and residential dwellings are located immediately to the north of the site, and Ferbane GAA is located to the east of the site. The majority of the other buildings in the locality consist of residential dwellings and commercial buildings.

These residences, services and surrounding economic activities, in combination with the development site facility have potential to have an impact on a number of environmental elements and municipal services.

Foul water generated by sanitary facilities would be directed to the exiting foul water network which runs along the northwest portion of the site. Foul water will then be directed to the Ferbane WWTP (EPA Licence No: D0147), which will discharge to the River Brosna

((210946E, 224137N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 3,184 and the WWTP would be able to accommodate the proposed development. Irish Water has been enquired about the feasibility of connection (Doc. Ref.: CDS24007773) and feasibility has been confirmed subject to infrastructure upgrade by Uisce Éireann.

Surface water will be directed to a soakaway to the south of the development site and rain gardens, attenuation planting, permeable paving and reinforced grass will also be incorporated as part of the development.

The development will source its water from a connection to the water mains supply. Irish Water has been enquired about the feasibility of connection (Doc. Ref.: CDS24007773) and feasibility has been confirmed without infrastructure upgrades by Uisce Éireann. The demand on the municipal water supply would increase once the operational phase of the development, however, there would be sufficient supply to accommodate the development.

Air emissions from the development during the operational phase are not anticipated to have significant adverse effect on the local air quality due to the nature of the development (community centre). Air emission would primarily be associated with emissions from traffic and electricity generation. Such combination emissions would be amenable to reductions through infrastructure and policy change over time. The existing and proposed buildings will be heated by air to water heat pumps. This method of heating emits significantly less emissions in comparison to fossil fuel (Gas or Kerosene) burners.

Once construction has been completed, site related traffic would consist of vehicles related to staff as well as visitors. Traffic volumes would be expected to increase on the local road network as a result of the developments operational phase. However, these increases are not likely to be significant and traffic impacts associated with the development would be minimal. The local road network is anticipated to be sufficient to accommodate site related traffic.

Therefore, it is not considered that cumulative environmental effects from the proposed development requires further investigation within an EIAR.

4.3 USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources are considered to be the physical resources in the environment, which may be either of human or natural origin. These include land, soil, water and biodiversity.

The construction process would include the use of various raw materials and should not require excessive levels of any one natural resource. Resources required for the development include concrete, stone fill material, sand, concrete blocks and timber, which would be sourced from local suppliers and quarries. There would be expected to be no uncommon use of natural resources for construction of the development.

The development is taking place within a small to moderate (3.25Ha) sized area. The area is currently comprised mostly of built structures and grassland. Much of the surrounding area is already ready developed as residential, commercial and amenity. It is not anticipated that the consequential land take would have a significant environmental impact, and the proposed landscape plan includes the planting of native and non-native non-invasive species.

The operational phase of the residential development would cause no significant use of natural resources.

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It is not considered that the use of natural resources by the proposed development would require further investigation within an EIAR.

4.4 GENERATION OF WASTES AND BY-PRODUCTS

The management of waste is regulated under the Waste Management Acts, 1996– 2003, and associated regulations.

The principal wastes which may be generated during the demolition and construction phase of the project would be excess soil and C&D waste. In so far as is possible, this material would be reused to reinstate excavated ground and for landscaping purposed once the developments have been completed. C&D waste would be disposed of to an appropriately licenced waste facility via a suitably permitted waste contractor.

There is asbestos present within each of the existing buildings in which refurbishment and demolition works will take place. A Refurbishment / Demolition Asbestos Survey report was completed by CMSE Consultancy (Report No. PE23-802) to locate all asbestos containing materials onsite. Asbestos containing materials required for removal or in poor condition will be removed under controlled conditions by a specialist asbestos removal contractor and disposed of as asbestos waste.

Certain asbestos containing materials may be left in situ/encapsulated and managed in place unless forthcoming refurbishment works are likely to disturb the material in which case they must be removed. Any removal works of asbestos insulating board (AIB) will be carried out once 14 days notification to the HSA is given. All asbestos removal work will be carried out in accordance with S.I. No. 386 of 2006 Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Exposure to Asbestos) Regulations 2006-2010.

Other potential construction wastes may include general waste from workers, waste concrete etc. These wastes are appropriately segregated on-site and recycled or disposed of as appropriate.

Wastes generated at the site during the operational phase would consist of small volumes of general and recyclable wastes which would be recycled or disposed of appropriately by the staff or visitors. A designated bin store will be located adjacent to the car park allowing for ease of access for refuse vehicles.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities at the development during the operational phase would be serviced by the municipal sewerage network.

As waste volumes generated on-site are anticipated to be routine and relatively small, it is not considered that this would require an EIAR for further investigation of potential impacts.

4.5 POLLUTION AND NUISANCE

4.5.1 Pollution

4.5.1.1 Air Pollution

Air quality in the region would be expected to be principally influenced by commercial and industrial activities, agricultural activity, residential heating systems and traffic.

The development site is located in the Air Zone D (Rural Ireland), and the nearest currently active Air Monitoring Site is Ballinasloe (Zone D: Rural Ireland), in Ballinasloe town approximately 27.22km west-northwest of the site. Ballinasloe measures particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) and has a Current Index for Health of 2 – Good.

The main potential sources of air pollutants from the construction of the development would be combustion by-products from the operation of machinery and dust generated from excavations. Asbestos within buildings to be refurbished/demolished will be removed under controlled conditions by a specialist asbestos contractor and disposed of as asbestos waste and there would be no significant risk to workers or local residents.

Air emissions from construction machinery would be expected to be minor in a regional context. The potential for construction dust emissions is discussed further under nuisances in this report.

There would be anticipated to be no significant emissions to air from the site during the operational phase, due to the nature of the development (community centre). The proposed heating system for the existing convent building and the proposed extension as well as the existing hall is air to water heat pumps. Roof mounted solar PV panels will be included as part of the development supplementing the energy supply.

There is no indication that the development could potentially be impacted by dusts arising from surrounding areas. Potential impacts from dust are discussed in section **4.5.2**.

Potential air impacts to human health would not be anticipated to require an EIAR for further assessment.

4.5.1.2 Water Pollution

The proposed development is located within the Brosna_SC_060 (Sub catchment ID: 25A_8) sub-catchment which is part of the Lower Shannon (Catchment ID: 25A) catchment. The closest water course to the development site according to the EPA mapping site is the River Brosna (EPA Code: 25B09) (Order 6) located adjacent to the sites southern boundary flowing in a west/south westerly direction.

The next closest watercourse to the development site is the Ferbane Stream (EPA Code:25F31) (Order: 1), which joins the River Brosna approximately 20m to the southeast of the developments site boundary.

These watercourses are shown in **Figure 4.2** below.

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There are no other mapped water courses within the red line boundary of the site. A surface open drainage ditch runs from the north of the site directly south discharging into the River Brosna.

The majority of the site is located within the Clara groundwater body with a section to the southeast of the site located in the Ferbane groundwater body. The site is located on a Locally Important Aquifer (LI/Lm) and groundwater vulnerability for this area is classified as Moderate.

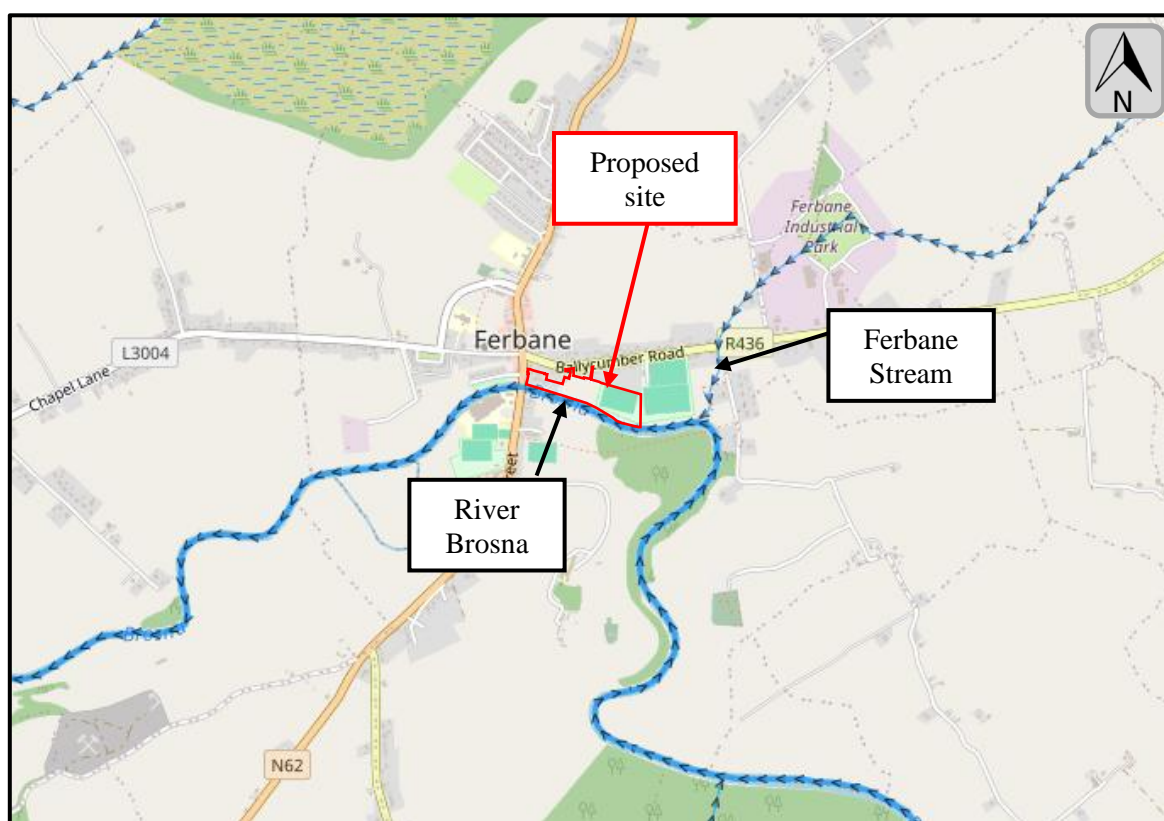


Figure 4.2: Surface Water Features (EPA Maps)

The overall site topography varies from 45mAOD to 48mAOD generally sloping towards the centre of the site

The principal risks to water quality would be due to suspended solids and uncured concrete entering surface and groundwaters during works. Construction works would be confined to the proposed development footprint and no works taking place within a watercourse or drainage ditch.

There would be no significant volumes of fuels, oils or other chemicals stored on-site during the construction phase of the development. Bunding should be provided for any stored liquid chemicals and be sized so as to provide a holding capacity of 110% of the largest tank within the bund or 25% of the total capacity of all the tanks within the bund, whichever is the greatest.

It is considered that there is no significant risk to water quality during construction works

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During the operational phase, it is not considered that contamination of waters would be likely due to the nature of the development (community centre).

Surface water run-off will be directed via new uPVC pipework to a soakaway to the south of the development. Permeable paving, reinforced grass car parking and rain gardens with attenuating tree pits will be included in the surface water drainage system to create an integrated SuDs management chain.

Foul water generated by sanitary facilities would be directed to the exiting foul water network which runs along the northwest portion of the development. Foul water will then be directed to the Ferbane WWTP (EPA Licence No: D0147), which will discharge to the River Brosna ((210946E, 224137N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 3,184 and the WWTP would be able to accommodate the proposed development. Irish Water has been enquired about the feasibility of connection (Doc. Ref.: CDS24007773) and feasibility has been confirmed subject to upgrades.

Heating systems are proposed to be air to water heat pumps, rather than heating oil.

It is not considered that risks of water pollution would require an EIAR for further assessment.

4.5.2 Nuisances

Nuisances can be defined as activities or emissions which are of a nature which can reasonably be expected to cause annoyance. As nuisances are defined on the basis of annoyance and infringement upon amenity, sensitive receptors are typically residences, service or amenity areas.

Typical nuisances which may occur from similar projects would include noise and dust during construction.

Residential and commercial properties are located in close proximity of the site. The nearest residential dwellings outside of the proposed site boundary are located along the northern boundary. See **Figure 4.3** below.

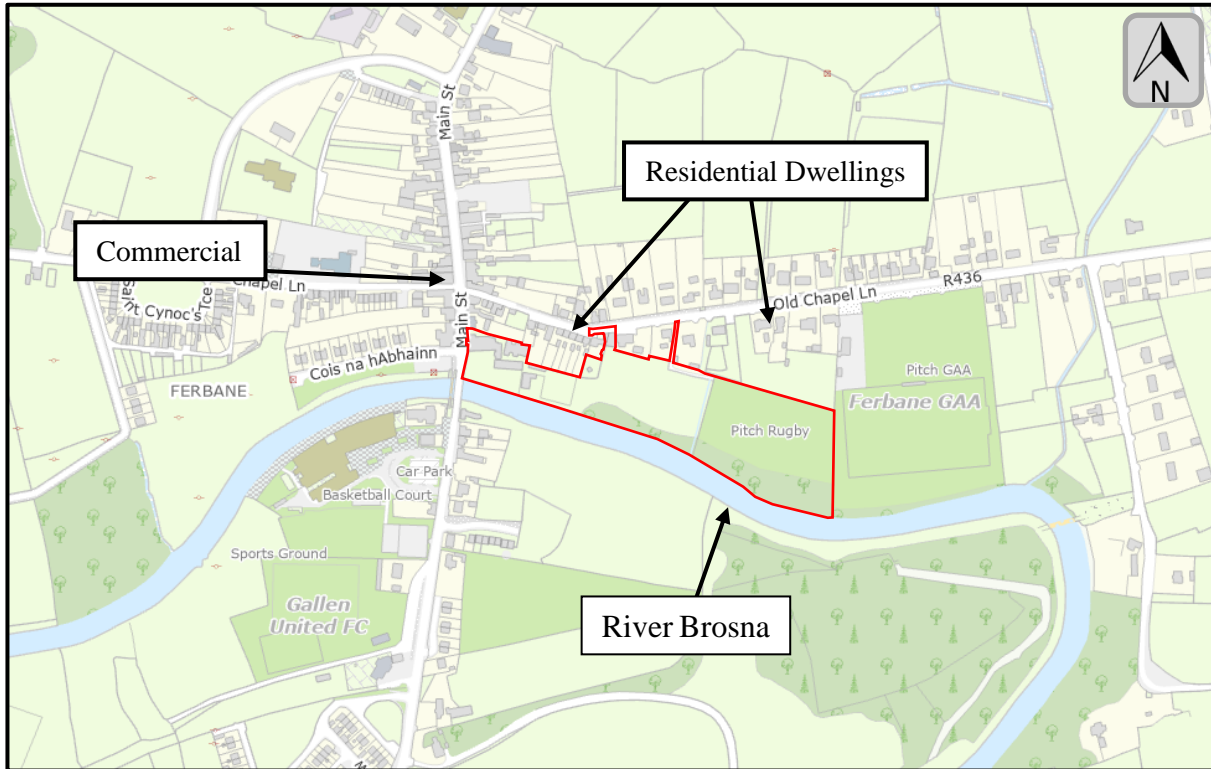


Figure 4.3: Nearest Sensitive Receptors

4.5.2.1 Noise

Operational

The development is located in the centre of Ferbane Town urban landscape and would be considered urban in nature, with residential dwellings, commercial properties, primary and secondary schools and sports clubs.

Operational noise from the complete development would be primarily as a result of human activity and domestic machinery: vehicle operations, raised voices, grass/hedge trimming etc. This noise environment would be characteristic of the existing urban noise environment and noise nuisance would not be anticipated.

Construction

This assessment has analysed the potential impacts of the noise generated during the construction phase of the proposed development on local sensitive receptors.

Relevant Noise Legislation & Guidance

Planning and Development Act 2024 (Number 34 of 2024)

Local authorities are responsible for the planning and environmental regulation of any proposed developments. The current planning and environmental regulatory framework require these developments to comply with the Planning and Development Act (2024) and related regulations.

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The local authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála (formerly known as An Bord Pleanála) attach conditions relating to environmental management of these developments to planning permissions granted. Local authorities consider the land use and planning issues associated with the proposed developments in their County Development Plans.

The EPA Act (Noise) Regulations 1994 (S.I. No. 179 of 1994)

The relevant part of the Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992 dealing with noise is Part VI, Sections 106 to 108. These Sections deal with the control of noise, the power of local authorities to prevent or limit noise and the issue of noise as a nuisance.

The 1994 Regulations came into effect in July 1994 and outline the procedures for dealing with noise nuisance. The Regulations allow affected individuals, local authorities or the EPA to take action against an activity causing a noise nuisance.

These Regulations replaced the procedures for noise complaints contained in the Local Government (Planning & Development) Act 1963. Companies must show that reasonable care was taken to prevent or limit the noise from their activities. If the courts decide that a company is responsible for causing a noise nuisance, they can order the company to take measures to reduce, prevent or limit it.

BS 5228:2014 Methodology

There is currently no statutory guidance relating to the maximum permissible noise level for a project's construction phase. Current guidance on permissible noise levels is therefore considered somewhat limited. In the absence of any statutory guidance or other specific limits prescribed by local authorities, an appropriate best practice measure has been adopted as the standard for this project.

Best practice guidelines are taken from the British Standard BS 5228 – 1: 2009 (+A1 2014): '*Code of Practice For Noise And Vibration Control On Construction And Open Sites – Noise*'. BS 5228 sets out an approach for setting appropriate construction noise limits for residential dwellings, but it does not provide guidance for commercial or office buildings.

The BS 5228 '*ABC Method*' calls for the designation of a noise sensitive location into a specific category (A, B or C) based on existing ambient noise levels in the absence of construction noise. This then sets a threshold noise value that, if exceeded, indicates a significant noise impact is associated with the construction activities as summarised in **Table 4.3** below.

Equipment

Used

The equipment used for the noise monitoring was a Cirrus CR:831C Sound Level Meter and a CR:515 Acoustic Calibrator. The CR:831C was calibrated on the 1st of October 2024 and the CR:515 was calibrated externally on 4th of June 2024. The CR:831C conforms to IEC 61672-3:2016.

A calibration check of 94 dB(A) at 1kHz was carried out on the instrument before and after measurement. The calibrator is a Class 1 grade, which conforms to IEC 60942:2003.

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The difference between the initial calibration value, any subsequent calibration check, and a final calibration check on completion of measurements did not exceed 0.5 dB, and the instrument calibration was found to be satisfactory.

Measurement periods were appropriate to establish a typical noise level reading at each location in order to establish a dB(A) LAeq reading.

Table 4.3: Threshold of Potential Significant Effect at Dwellings (BS 5228)

Assessment category and threshold value period	Threshold value, in decibels (LAeq, T)		
	Category A ^(a)	Category B ^(b)	Category C ^(c)
Night-time (23.00–07.00)	45	50	55
Evenings and weekends ^(d)	55	60	65
Daytime (07.00–19.00) and Saturdays (07.00–13.00)	65	70	75
NOTE 1: A potential significant effect is indicated if the LAeq, T noise level arising from the site exceeds the threshold level for the category appropriate to the ambient noise level.			
NOTE 2: If the ambient noise level exceeds the Category C threshold values given in the table (i.e. the ambient noise level is higher than the above values), then a potential significant effect is indicated if the total LAeq, T noise level for the period increases by more than 3 dB due to site noise.			
NOTE 3: Applied to residential receptors only.			
a) Category A: threshold values to use when ambient noise levels (when rounded to the nearest 5 dB) are less than these values.			
b) Category B: threshold values to use when ambient noise levels (when rounded to the nearest 5 dB) are the same as category A values.			
c) Category C: threshold values to use when ambient noise levels (when rounded to the nearest 5 dB) are higher than category A values.			
d) 19.00–23.00 weekdays, 13.00–23.00 Saturdays and 07.00–23.00 Sundays.			

Ambient Noise Monitoring Locations

Ambient noise monitoring was carried out in general accordance with the EPA, 2016 ‘Guidance Note for Noise: Licence Applications, Surveys and Assessments in Relation to Scheduled Activities (NG4)’.

The baseline environmental noise levels at NM1 – NM3 locations were determined by instrumented monitoring of existing noise levels. This was determined by taking broadband noise measurements at these four noise monitoring locations.

It is considered that noise levels measured at each of the NM locations would be representative of typical noise levels at the nearest residential property or noise sensitive receptors.

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Table 4.4: Noise Monitoring Locations

Ref.	Grid Ref		Type	Location
	X	Y		
NM1	212230	224436	Noise Monitoring Location	Along L30048 Local Road. approx. 300m east
NM2	211686	224468		Along Ballycumber Road (R436) approx. 5m north
NM3	211520	224378		Along Main Street (N62) approx. 65m south

All measurements were taken at:

- 1.25 metres height above local ground level
- >3.5 metres away from reflective surfaces

These monitoring points are mapped in **Figure 4.4** and **Figure 4.5**.



Figure 4.4: Noise Monitoring Locations Map

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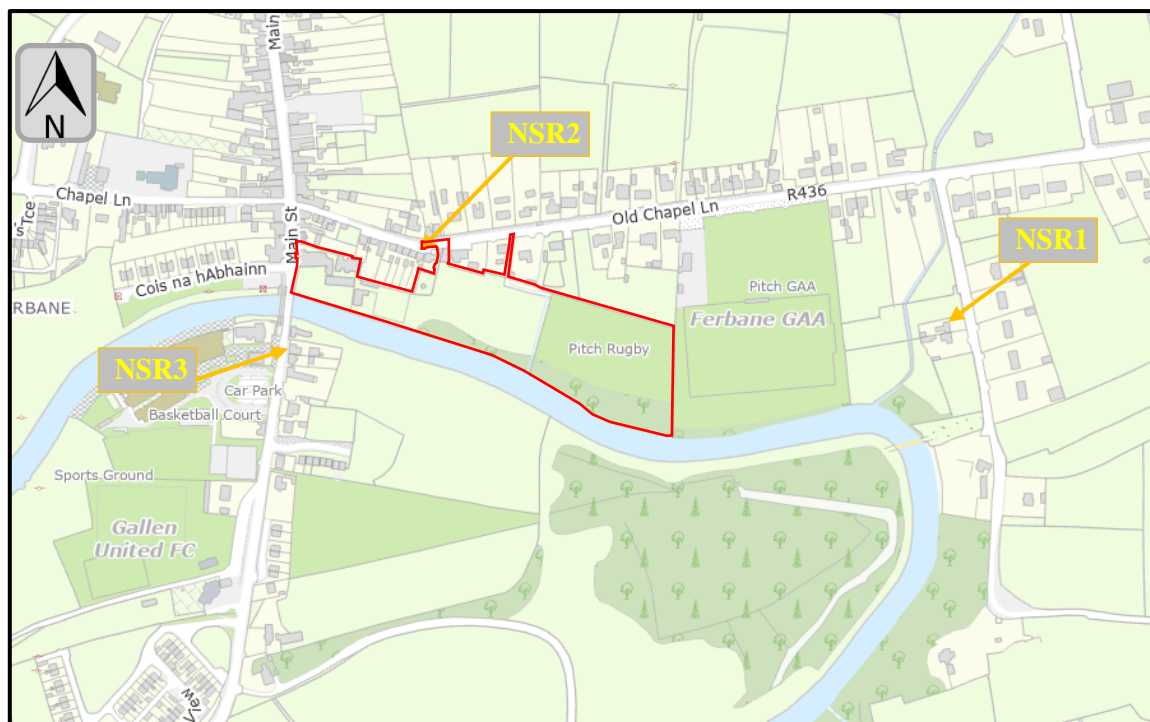


Figure 4.5: Noise Sensitive Receptors

Ambient Noise Monitoring Results

The table below show the ambient noise monitoring results taken at the four noise monitoring locations (NM's) outlined above.

For this assessment, the daytime monitoring was carried out between 10:48 am and 12:47 pm on Thursday 17th January 2025.

Table 4.5: Ambient Noise Monitoring Results

Ref.	LAeq dB(A)	Rounded to nearest 5 dB
NM1	69.5	70
NM2	66.3	65
NM3	53.4	55
Average	66.5	65

Table 4.5 shows that, when rounded to the nearest 5 dB, the daytime ambient noise levels taken at NM locations in the vicinity of the existing site ranges between 55 – 70 dB, with an overall rounded average of 65 dB.

Therefore, the site would be designated as *Category B* as defined in **Table 4.3** and a daytime *threshold* value of 70 dB would apply to the site during the construction phase of the development. Recorded noise levels were impacted by traffic at noise monitoring locations NM2 and NM3. No construction works were carried out at the site or in its immediate surroundings during the assessment. Therefore, LAeq figures resulted not only from the existing environment.

Construction Source Noise

As part of these construction works, noise will likely be generated during phases when activities requiring heavy plant machine is required, such as site excavation and the laying of underground pipework.

Delivery of materials would likely occur during Phases 2 – 4, while on-site machinery movement is expected during Phases 1 – 3.

Depending upon the ground conditions encountered during construction and the contractor appointed, the methodology for the construction programme may vary. A review of standard noise values for various construction plant and equipment from the British Standard 5228-1:2009(+A1:2014) has therefore been undertaken.

The construction plant and machinery will change as the project develops, with plant and equipment only operating within any particular section of the site for a relatively short period of time.

Table 4.6 below contains a breakdown of the likely construction phases

Table 4.6: Construction Phases

Ref.	Title	Description of Works
Phase 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demolition & Site Setup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demolition of exiting structures Stripping of topsoil for the structure footprint; Stockpiling and removal of excavated topsoil; Cut and fill activities.
Phase 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pouring of reinforced concrete foundations; The import and rolling of hardcore material; The import, screeding and planning/finishing of internal concrete flooring.
Phase 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walls, Roofing and Drying-In 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Block work. Installation of roof woodwork/rafters. Tiling/slating of roofs. Installation of PVC windows and doors.
Phase 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Installation of internal lighting and electrical system. Installation of internal plumbing works. Plastering/rendering of internal walls. Fitting of kitchens and other carpentry works.
Phase 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscaping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor landscaping works.

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Table 4.7 contains typical noise levels from various construction plant that would be used during the construction phase. These standard noise emission data, recalculated from 10m to 1m, will be used for the purposes of the worst-case noise assessment of the proposed works.

Table 4.7: Noise Levels from Construction Phase (Ref: BS5228:2009)

Phase	Ref.	Plant/Equipment	Sound Pressure LAeq at 1m	Combined Sound Pressure LAeq at 1m
Phase 1	C2.1	Dozer (Clearing Site)	95	100 dB
	C1.5	Pulveriser Mounted On Excavator (29t) (Breaking Concrete)	92	
	C2.8	Wheeled Backhoe Loader (Clearing Site)	88	
	C2.28	Wheeled Loader (Loading)	96	
Phase 2	C2.8	Wheeled Backhoe Loader (Clearing Site)	88	98 dB
	C4.18	Cement Mixer Truck Discharging (Mixing Concrete)	95	
	C5.20	Vibratory Roller (Rolling And Compaction)	95	
Phases 3	C2.35	Telescopic Handler (Distribution Of Material)	91	97 dB
	C4.23	Small Cement Mixer (Mixing Concrete)	81	
	C4.94	Petrol Generator (Miscellaneous)	95	
Phase 4	C4.94	Petrol Generator (Miscellaneous)	95	95 dB
	C4.23	Small Cement Mixer (Mixing Concrete)	81	
Phase 5	C2.8	Wheeled Backhoe Loader (Clearing Site)	88	97 dB
	C4.3	Dumper (Distribution Of Material)	96	

$$\text{Combined} = 10. \text{Log} \sum_{i=1}^n 10^{Lp/10}$$

Noise Discussion

Table 4.5 shows that, when rounded to the nearest 5 dB, the daytime ambient noise levels taken at NM locations in the vicinity of the existing site ranges between 55 – 70 dB, with an overall rounded average of 65 dB.

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Therefore, the site would be designated as *Category B* as defined in **Table 4.3** and should operate to the following noise limits:

Table 4.8: Applicable Construction Noise Limits for St. Josephs Convent Development

Noise Limit and Period	Category B decibels (LAeq, T)
Night-time (23.00–07.00)	50
Evenings (19.00–23.00)	60
Daytime (07.00–19.00) and Saturdays (07.00–13.00)	70

Using the Phase 1 construction noise level of 100 dB (maximum noise within site area) outlined in **Table 4.7** and the reduction of noise as a result of distance, it is possible to calculate the potential noise impact at the closest NSL's during the construction phase.

Table 4.9 below shows that, when this calculated potential noise impact at the closest NSL's is compared to the BS5228 thresholds, levels at NSR1 and NSR3 are 4.8 dB and 18.7 dB under the 70dB threshold, while levels at NSR2 are over by 19.1 dB.

Table 4.9: Predicted Construction Noise Impact – Site Works

Ref	Construction Source dB	Dist (m)	A _{div} dB	LAeq at NSL	ABC Limit	Difference
NSR1	100	55	34.8	65.2	70	-4.8
NSR2	100	3.5	10.9	89.1	70	+19.1
NSR3	100	275	48.8	51.2	70	-18.7

Note: distances are from sensitive locations to closest potential area of construction.

$$A_{div} = 20 \cdot \text{Log} \left(\frac{\text{dist}}{d_o} \right) \quad \text{when } d_o = 1\text{m}$$

$$\text{LAeq at NSL} = \text{Construction Source} - A_{div}$$

$$\text{Difference} = \text{Level at NSL} - \text{ABC Limit}$$

It should be noted that these noise levels are considered a worst-case scenario, as it assumes that the construction activity of each phase are carried out simultaneously at a single point location (i.e. excavator, cement mixer operations and lifting of roof rafters). It is not anticipated that such an event would occur.

In practice, it is our experience that noise levels do not commonly exceed these levels. However, this screening assessment has determined that it is theoretically possible for noise levels to exceed these guidance limits.

In order to ensure that no noise nuisance occurs during the construction phase, it is recommended that the following measures be followed.

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All construction activities should take place between 7:00am and 19:00pm, Monday to Friday and 7:00am and 13:00pm Saturday. Any works that, by necessity, are required to be carried out outside of these times should be notified to any potentially effected local residents in good time and prior to specified works commencing.

It is recommended that guidance on control of noise, as per The National Roads Authority's '*Guidelines for the Treatment of noise and vibration in National Road Schemes*' (2004) and British Standard 5228-1 '*Code of practice for Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites*' be followed during the construction phase. Where noise levels are anticipated to exceed the guidance limit, as indicated above, it is recommended that these guidance documents be followed for the provision of noise mitigation measures, such as temporary noise barriers. This is particularly the case for any high noise works within 50m of the façade of any existing residence.

Inform on-site workers, hauliers and contractors of noise considerations on-site and on public access roads.

Timely and adequate maintenance of all construction equipment, including preventative maintenance, to ensure efficient operation and minimisation of potential noise.

It is not considered that further assessment within an EIAR would be required for nuisance noise risk.

4.5.2.2 Dust

Operational

Dust generation as a result of the operational phase would be anticipated to be negligible once seeding has become established and due to the scale of the community centre development.

There is no indication that the development could potentially be impacted by dusts arising from surrounding areas.

Construction

Dust may arise from loose excavated soils and imported aggregate material. The potential for dust emissions during the project would be expected to be minimised due to the moderate scale each phase of the development. Therefore, the quantities of materials available to generate dust would be limited at any one time.

The development has the potential to generate dust during the construction phase. The majority of dust would be generated during site excavation works. The introduction of class 804 and other gravels, sands and silts on to the site for the creation of hardcore surfaces will also increase the potential for dust to become a nuisance issue. The potential for construction dust dispersion depends on the local meteorological conditions such as rainfall, wind speed and wind direction.

The impact that dust from the site may have on the surrounding area was assessed with the use of **Table 4.10** below.

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The closest buildings within the vicinity of the site were identified and these will be the most likely receptors of any impacts from dust dispersal as a result of construction activities at the development site.

Table 4.10: Assessing the Criteria for the Impact of Dust from Construction with Standard Mitigation in place. (National Road Authority)

Source		Potential Distance for Significant Effects from the Source (meters)		
Scale	Description	Soiling	PM ₁₀ *	Vegetation
Major	Large construction sites, with high use of haul roads	100m	25m	25m
Moderate	Moderate sized construction sites, with moderate use of haul roads	50m	15m	15m
Minor	Minor construction sites, with limited use of haul roads	25m	10m	10m

* Significance based on the 2005 standard, which allows 35 daily exceedances/year of 50 µg/m³

The proposed development phase would be of minor to moderate scale, with no use of haul roads. Therefore, receptors within 50m of the site boundaries would be at risks of effects due to soiling. The main potential for dust creation at this site will come from excavation works, handling of gravels/sands and the transportation of the above materials to and from the site.

There are several surfaces, particularly residential buildings, where soiling within 50m could cause nuisance.

The likelihood of residences being impacted by PM10 particulates would be low, as there are little works that would occur within 15m of receptor locations.

The habitats and vegetation found in the area is mainly in the form of green fields, bounded by treeline / hedgerows. Vegetation occurs along the boundaries of the site and therefore would be within 15m works. Impacts on the vegetation in this area as a result of construction activities at the site are expected to be minimal and temporary as a result of the short duration of relevant works. Excavations in close proximity to the hedgerows / treelines will be minimal and will only be carried out for a short period of time.

The potential effects of dust would be lessened by the short duration that excavation works will take in the vicinity of the properties. Topsoil, sand, silt or gravel stockpiles should be stored away from existing receptors in so far as is possible with site constraints. The use of a road sweeper on appropriate roads and dust suppression techniques such as water misting during dry weather periods would also be recommended.

Dust dispersal from the site could be mitigated against by implementing typical dust control methods such as using water bowsers, sprays or vapour mists in very dry weather and covering any stockpiles of sand, gravel or silt on site.

Therefore, it is expected that soiling or PM10 particulates will not be an issue during the construction phase of this project.

Once the hardcore surfaces have been installed and seeding has become established, the likelihood of dust impacting the nearby residential properties would be very low.

Construction dust control is a common part of construction management practices. The effect of construction activities on air quality, in particular construction dust, would not be significant due to the limited construction timeframes and following the implementation of standard working practices and the standard mitigation measures which are highlighted below.

The construction works contractor will implement the following dust control measures for the duration of the proposed development:

- Cognisance would be taken of the guidelines published by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM), “Assessment of dust from demolition and construction 2014”;
- Material handling systems and site stockpiling of materials would be designed and laid out to minimise exposure to wind;
- Prolonged storage of materials onsite would be avoided;
- When transporting materials to and from the site, vehicles would be fitted with covers where possible to prevent material loss;
- Public roads outside the site would be regularly inspected for cleanliness and cleaned as necessary. A road sweeper would be used if required on the appropriately surfaced roads;
- While the natural recolonization of exposed areas of soil during reinstatement activities is preferred, re-seeding would be undertaken where required to promote the rapid stabilisation of soils;
- Regular visual inspections would be undertaken around the proposed site boundary to monitor the effectiveness of dust control measures.

Impacts associated with dust during construction would not be likely to be significant and would not be considered to require further assessment through EIAR.

4.6 RISKS OF MAJOR ACCIDENTS AND RISKS TO HUMAN HEALTH

As noted in the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU, precautionary actions need to be put in place for certain projects which, *“due to their vulnerability to major accidents and/or natural disasters (such as flooding, sea level rise or earthquakes) are likely to have significant adverse effects on the environment”*.

It is not anticipated that there would be a significant risk of environmental impacts as a result of accidents during the operational phase due to the nature of activities that will be taking place and particulars of the development as outlined in section 1.2.2.

The scale of construction occurring at any one time would be minor, with limited quantities of materials present as the development of the site progresses. Typical construction methods and practices would be anticipated to adequately mitigate against accidents or risks to human health.

The site does not fall within the Seveso III Regulations or European Communities (Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances) Regulations 2015, as no dangerous substances are being used at the site. All potentially polluting substances, including chemicals and fuels, are appropriately stored and banded within the site.

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OPW National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) shows that the proposed development site is partial located within an area of fluvial flooding, indicative of 10% AEP (10-yr) event, 1% AEP (100-yr) event or 0.1% AEP (1000-yr) event. However, no past flood events have been recorded on site. According to the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) Mapping tool by the OPW the site is not located within an area of groundwater flooding.

A Flood Risk Assessment has been completed by Tobin Consulting Engineers. The report notes that as the proposed works are a refurbishment to an existing development, the proposed Finished Floors Levels for the ground floor elements must tie into the existing infrastructure and have been set to a minimum of 44.20mOD. This provides a freeboard of 0.68m above the 1 in 1000 year (0.1% AEP) MRFS flood event water level. The report indicates that the proposed refurbishment is appropriately located in Flood Zone B and that the development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The development has been assessed against the criteria for Minor Proposals and found to be suitable. It is recommended that OPW Flood Information Service and Met Éireann alerts should be referred to for timely notifications of yellow, orange and red storm warnings and that emergency evacuations should follow the same safe access/ egress routes outlined in the fire evacuation procedures.

The proposed development will not involve the storage of any significant quantities of chemicals or fuels. The drainage design includes the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) features such as permeable paving, reinforced grass, rain gardens, attenuation planting, and the draining of surface water to a soakaway therefore minimising the area of impermeable surfaces. Proposed alterations on site within the flood extents consist of the demolition of existing buildings.

The proposed site is not in an area prone to landslides or earthquakes. The nearest recorded landslide event occurred in the townland of Derries, Co. Offaly close to the Grand Canal approximately 4km southeast of the development site.

Risks to human health would not be expected to change significantly as a result of the construction or operational phase of the development. There are no recorded drinking water abstractions in close proximity to the site.

Therefore, risks associated with major accidents or human health would not be considered to require an EIAR for further assessment.

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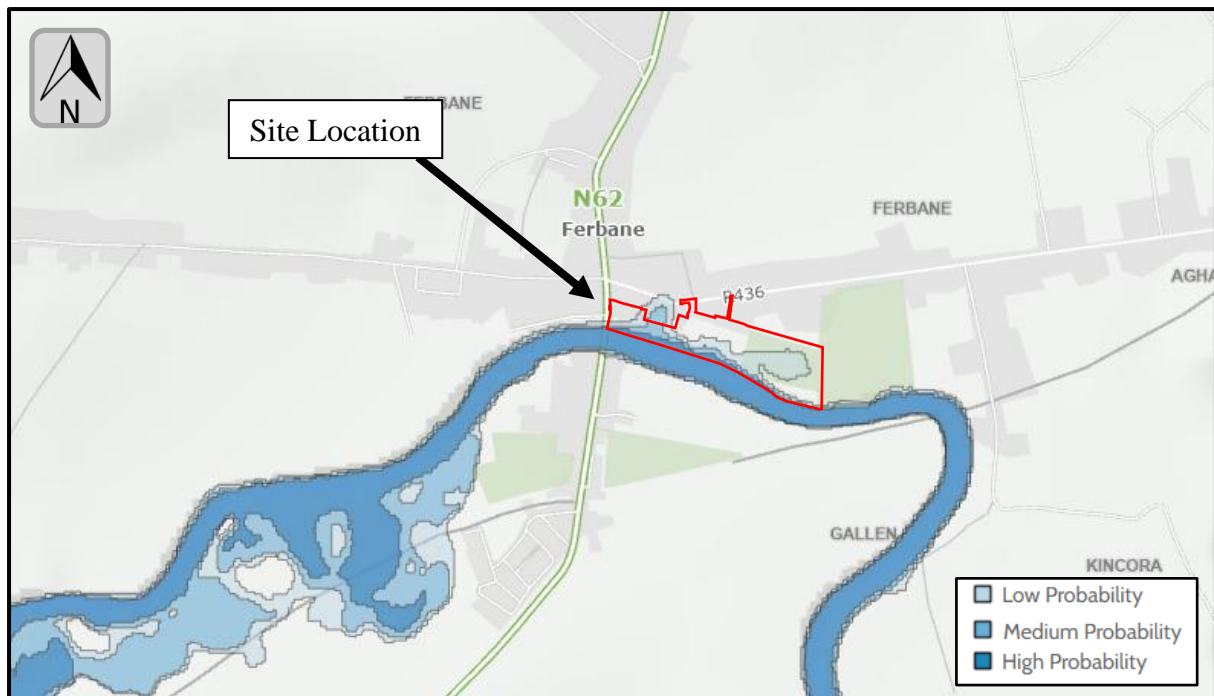


Figure 4.6: OPW CFRAM River Flood Extents Map

5.0 PART II – LOCATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT

This section assesses the potential impacts of the development due to the sensitivities of the proposed location.

5.1 EXISTING AND APPROVED LAND USE

The development is located in the centre of Ferbane Town urban area. According to the Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 Land Use Zoning Objectives, the proposed development falls under the land use objectives ‘Town Centre/Mixed Use’ and ‘Open Space, Amenity and Recreation’.

LUZO-02: Town Centre/ Mixed Use

Provide for, protect and strengthen the vitality and viability of town/village centres, through consolidating development, encouraging a mix of uses and maximising the use of land, to ensure the efficient use of infrastructure and services.

LUZO-10: Open Space, Amenity, Recreation

Protect and improve the provision, attractiveness, accessibility and amenity value of public open space, amenity and recreation.

The CORINE 2018 data series indicates that the land to the west within the development boundary is 112: Discontinuous urban fabric (Artificial Surfaces) and the land to the east is 231: Pastures (Agricultural Areas), as per **Figure 5.2**. The previous land use is known to be as a Convent. The land in the immediate vicinity of the site and surrounding area is mainly residential and commercial dwellings, sports grounds and agricultural land.

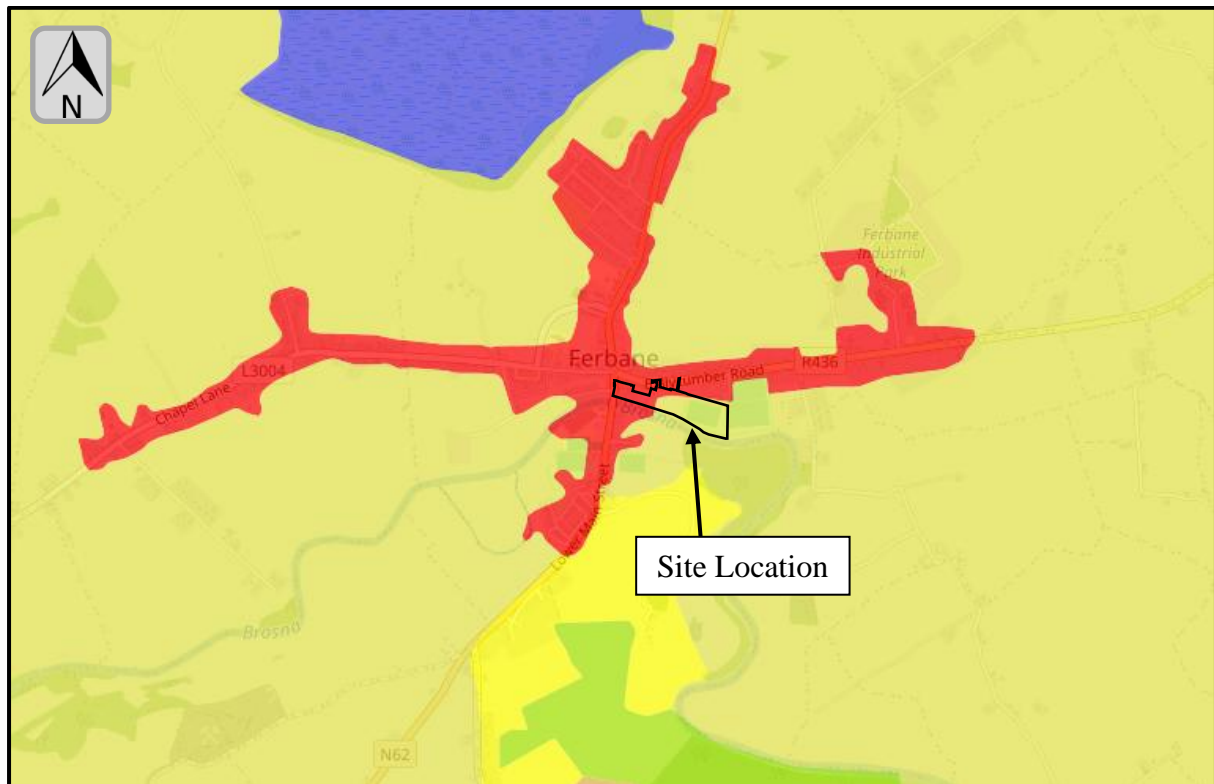


Figure 5.1: CORINE 2018, Land Use Map of The Region (EPA Maps)

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St. Josephs Convent was built c. 1880 and has been functioning as a convent/nunnery up until 2022. The proposed development would alter to the current site use to community based service provision. This is not considered to be a significant change to the existing land use.

The development includes areas of private open space, which would not be altered by this development. The development also includes for the landscaping of a portion of this open space. Portions of an existing hedgerow/treeline situated along the southern boundary of the proposed site will be removed. The proposed landscape plan includes additional planting of native trees and native riverine shrubs, retention of existing riverside vegetation and creation of a wildlife garden. Therefore, the proposed development would not have a significant impact.

Therefore, it is not considered that an EIAR would be required in order to further assess potential impacts on land use.

5.2 NATURAL RESOURCES

This section assesses the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground.

The proposed development would result in a continuation of existing uses of natural resources for the completion of the construction project.

5.2.1 Soil & Bedrock

Topsoil and overburden excavated at the site would be stored on-site during the construction phase. Once the construction phase has been completed, this topsoil would be used to landscape and level areas around the development site. Excess soil would be removed offsite using an appropriately permitted contractor.

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The majority of the site contains a soil type described as AlluvMIN – Mineral alluvium, which has a parent material described as alluvium undifferentiated. Other soil types present on site include, BminDW – Derived mainly from calcareous parent materials, which has a parent material described as Limestone till (Carboniferous) and Made/Built land. See **Figure 5.3**

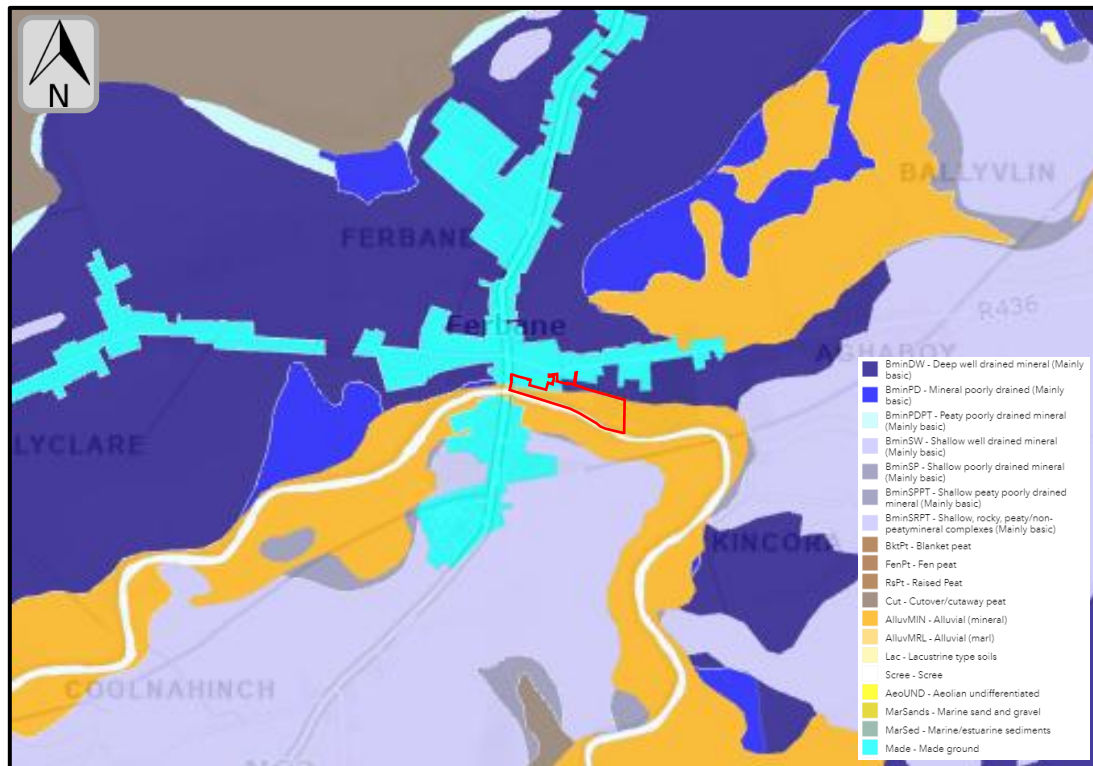


Figure 5.3: Teagasc Soils (GIS Maps)

As per the description above the soil has a permeability designation of Moderate, as per **Figure 5.4**.

The bedrock geology (100k) within the Navan Beds (CDNAV) on which the site is located is described as *dark limestone, mudstone, sandstone*. The groundwater rock or hydro stratigraphic rock is described as *Dinantian (early) Sandstones, Shales and Limestones* (DESSL).

There would be expected to be no significant impact to bedrock as any excavations that take place will not penetrate deep enough to cause significant adverse effects. Aggregate fill material and precast concrete structures would be source from local quarries in the area. Where excess soil or stone is generated, this would be disposed of to an appropriately licenced waste facility.

Therefore, it is considered that there is no significant risk to soils and bedrock as a result of the proposed project and further assessment in an EIAR would not be required.

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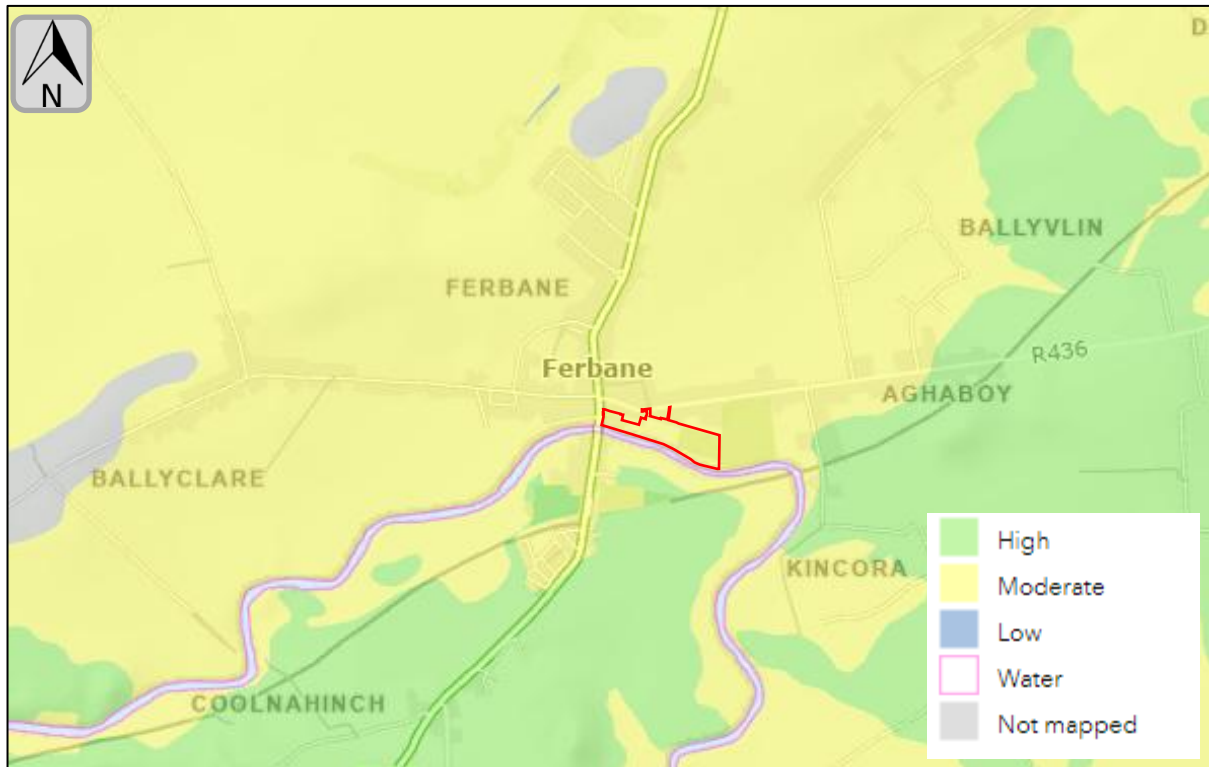


Figure 5.4: Soil Permeability (GIS Maps)

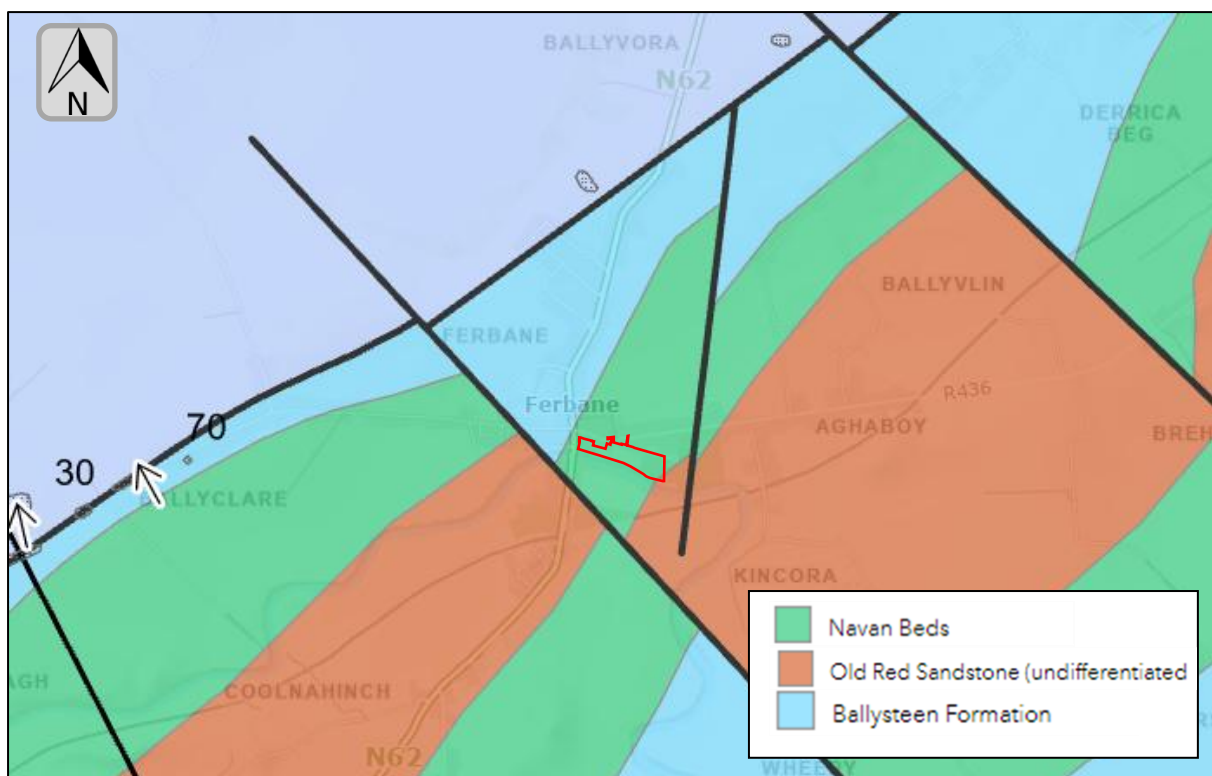


Figure 5.5: Bedrock Geology 100k (GIS Maps)

5.2.2 Water

Small quantities of water may be used during the construction phase of the proposed development, supplied by the existing connection to the mains water supply.

Two Locally Important Aquifers (L1 and Lm) underlie the site, being described as a bedrock aquifer which is moderately productive only in local zones and bedrock aquifer, which is generally moderately productive, respectively.

No groundwater abstractions are recorded in the vicinity of the site by the GSI.

During the operational phase of the development, the community centre would source water from municipal supplies. There would be an expected increase in water usage as a result of the operational phase of the completed development.

However, this increase in water usage as a result of the development is not anticipated to pose a significant risk to water resources and a further assessment in an EIAR would not be required.

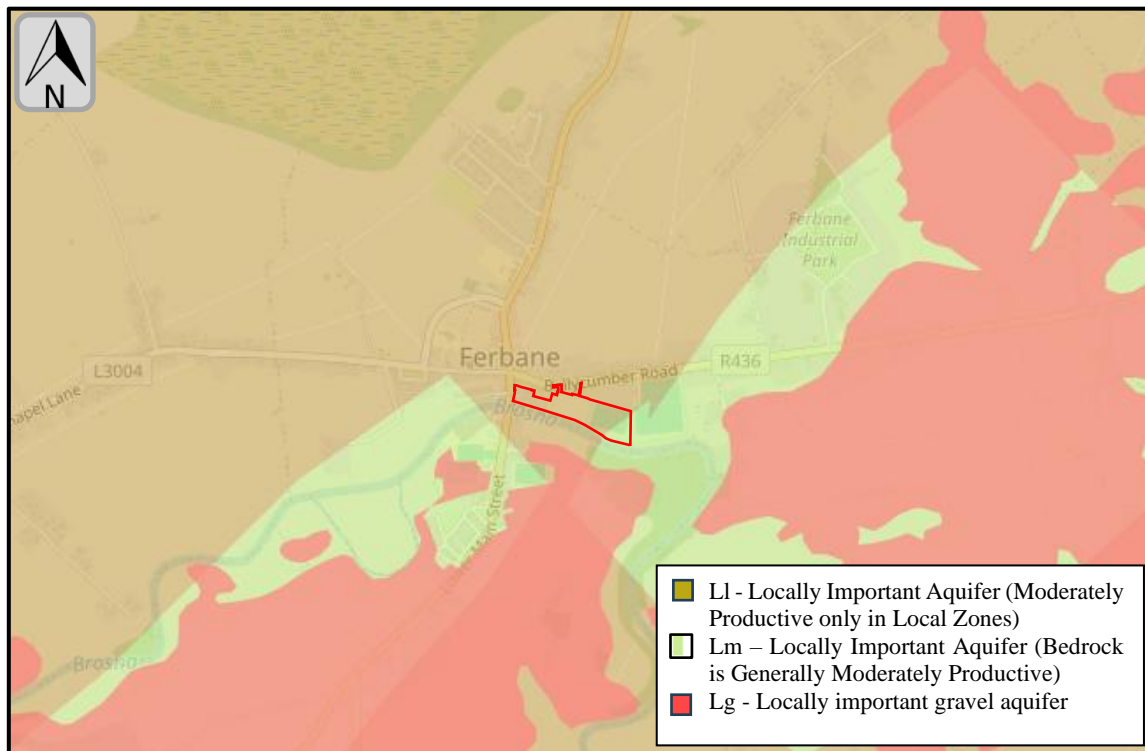


Figure 5.2: Aquifer Type Map (GIS Maps)

5.3 ABSORPTION CAPACITY OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

5.3.1 Surface Water Environment

The River Brosna is located adjacent to the southern boundary of the development site. The area is underlaid by moderate permeable subsoils. Primary flow routes would be via groundwater, which would flow generally west to south-west from the site.

The proposed development is located within the Lower Shannon catchment (ID: 25A) and within the Brosna_SC_060 sub-catchment (ID: 25A_8). The nearest mapped watercourse to the proposed development site is the River Brosna (EPA Code: 25B09 – Order 6) located adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. From its location adjacent to the development site the River Brosna flows for approximately 12.19km in a south-westerly direction until it reaches its confluence with the Shannon River (EPA Code: 25S01 – Order 6).

Other water courses in the vicinity of the proposed development include the Ferbane Stream (25F31 – Order 1) which joins the River Brosna approximately 20m to the southeast of the development site's boundary.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) undertakes regular surface water monitoring along the River Brosna. The results for the nearest monitoring stations of the River Brosna (as per **Table 5.1**) with available monitoring results for the period 2002-2023 are summarised in **Figure 5.8** below for indicative purposes.

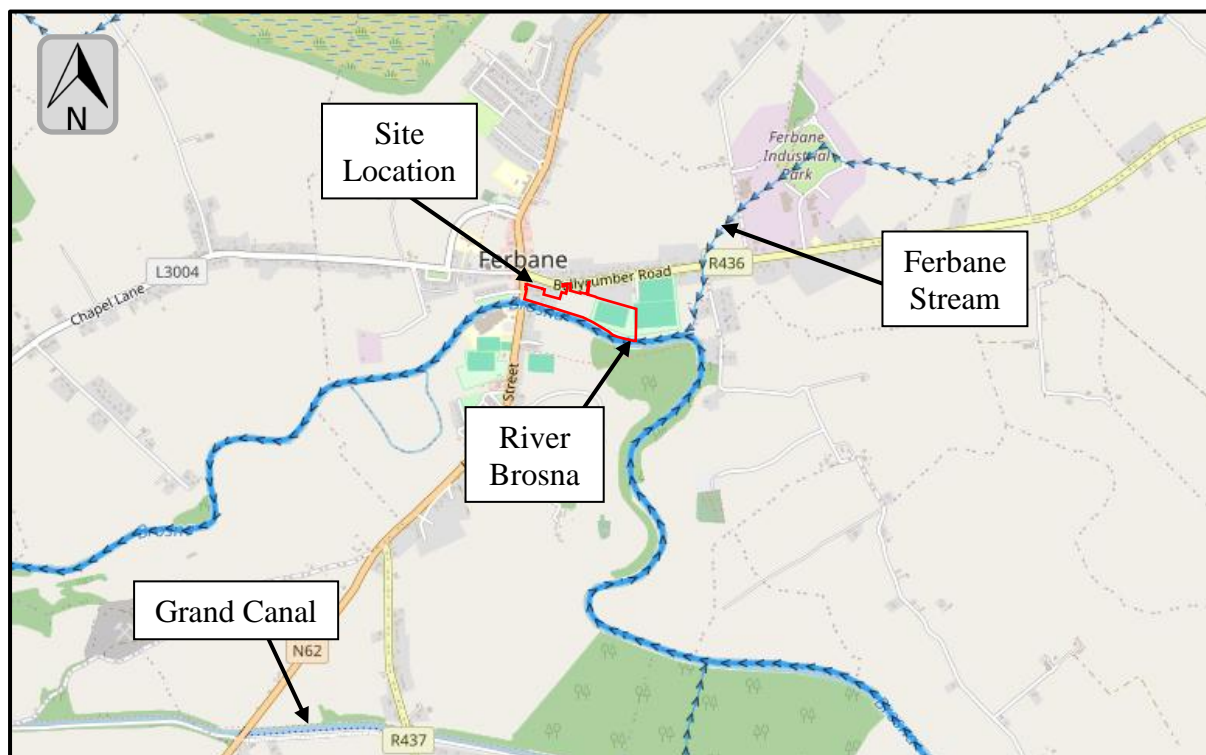


Figure 5.3: Surface Water Features (EPA Maps)

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Brosna river waterbody has a status of 'Moderate' and is currently 'at risk' of failing to meet its WFD objectives by 2027.

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Table 5.1: Active Monitoring Station of River Liffey

STATION NO.	STATION LOCATION	EASTING	NORTHING	APPROX. LOCATION
RS25B090800	Brosna – Br nr Kilcolgan	214983	223751	6.30km u/s
RS25B090950	Ferbane Br	211539.59	224405	Adjacent d/s
RS25B091000	Bellmount d/s Ferbane	207385	222255	5.41km d/s

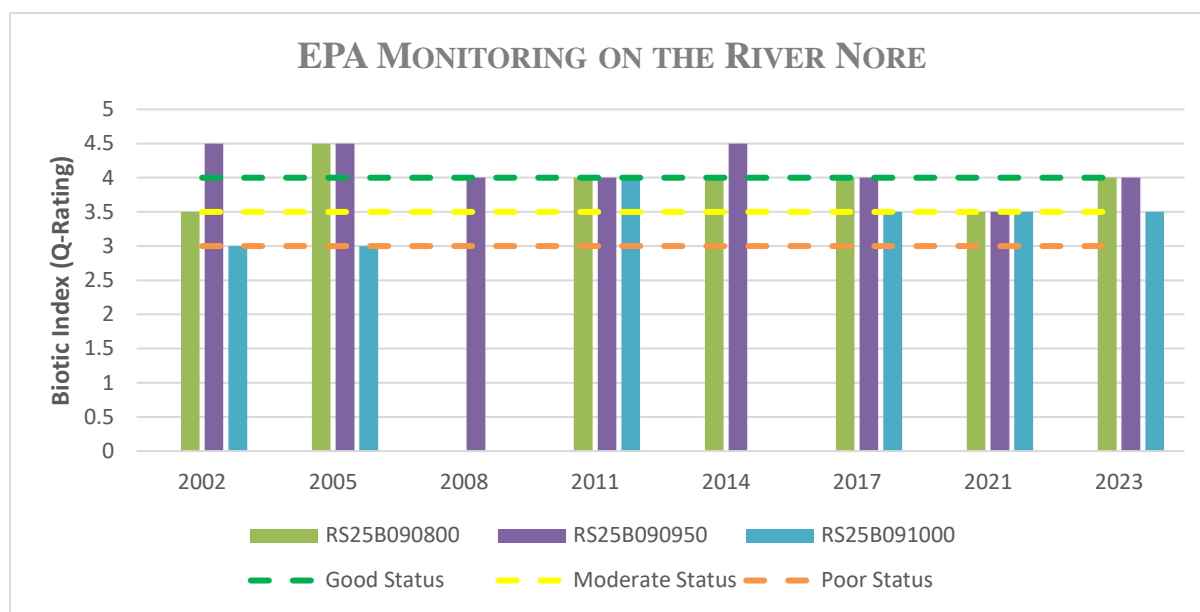


Figure 5.4: EPA Ecological Monitoring of the River Brosna 2002 – 2023

As can be seen in **Figure 5.4** above, the River Brosna is achieving a water quality status of between Q3-4 (Moderate) and Q4-5 (High) at the closest monitoring locations.

EPA comments on the most recent monitoring results for the River Brosna are as follows: *“Eight stations were surveyed on the Brosna in 2023, of which only three (0800, 0950, 1100) stations were in a satisfactory ecological condition. Station 0800 and 0950 improved to Good ecological quality however low dissolved oxygen was noted at 0950 on the survey day. The lowermost station (1100) maintained its Good ecological quality. Station 0760 declined to Moderate and the remaining stations were also Moderate ecological quality.”*

As described in **section 4.5.1.2**, standard construction control measures would be adopted to ensure no significant impact from works to the water environment.

Construction works would be confined to the proposed development footprint, with no works taking place within a watercourse. Risk materials are banded where necessary, spill kits are available onsite, and workers are required to inform management and address spills as soon as they occur. Surface water runoff will be directed via new uPVC pipework to a soakaway to the south of the development site. Surface water will pass through a petrol interceptor before entering the soakaway. The storm water drainage system will also incorporate rain gardens attenuation planting, reinforced grass and permeable paving.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities at the proposed development would be directed to the existing foul water network. Irish Water has been engaged regarding confirmation of

feasibility of a connection. Foul water would be directed to Ferbane WWTP (EPA Licence No: D0147), which will discharge to the River Brosna ((210946E, 224137N). The existing p.e of the agglomeration, according to the EPA, is 3,184 and the WWTP would be able to accommodate the proposed development.

During the operational phase, it is not considered that contamination of waters would be likely due to the nature of the development (community centre).

It is considered that there is no significant risk to the absorption capacity of the surface water environment as a result of the proposed project and further assessment in an EIAR would not be required.

5.3.2 Groundwater Vulnerability and Protection Areas

Groundwater vulnerability is classified as follows: Rock near surface or karst (X) Extreme (E) High (H) Moderate (M) Low (L). Assessing the risk of contamination to groundwater is complex. It is assessed by the aquifer category, the proximity to down-gradient targets such as a well or ecosystem and the preventive measures taken. These measures will be dependent on the land-use practices and potential for pollution.

The site is located on an area which has a vulnerability classification of moderate (M).

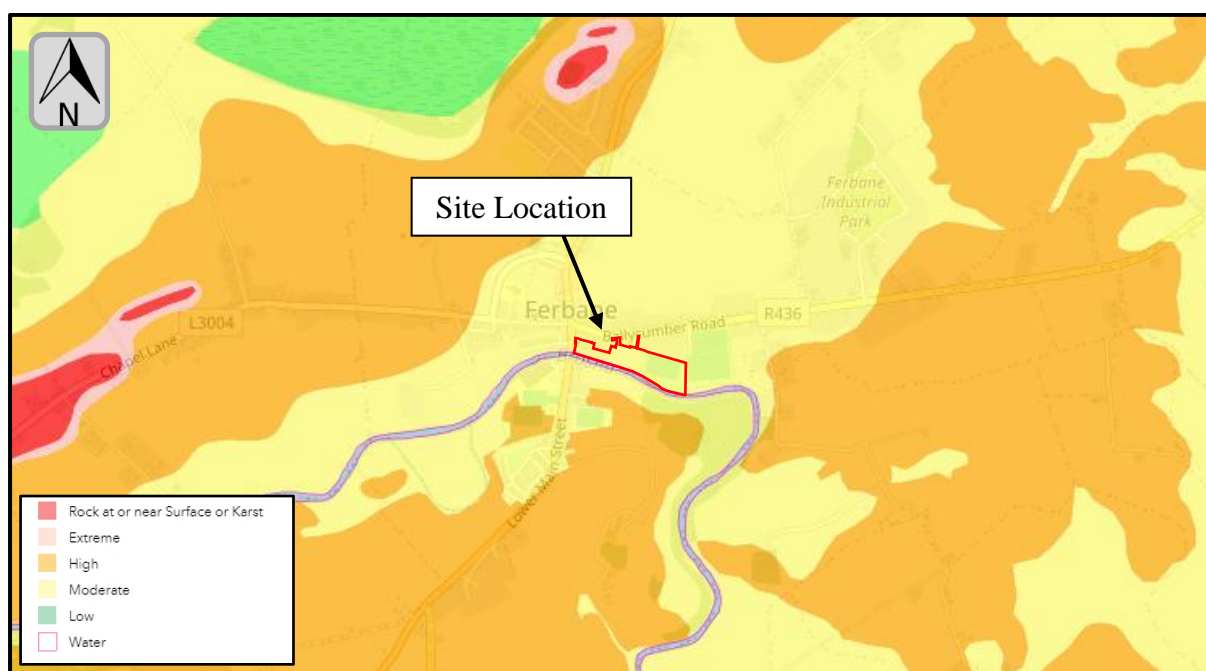


Figure 5.5: Groundwater Vulnerability (EPA Maps)

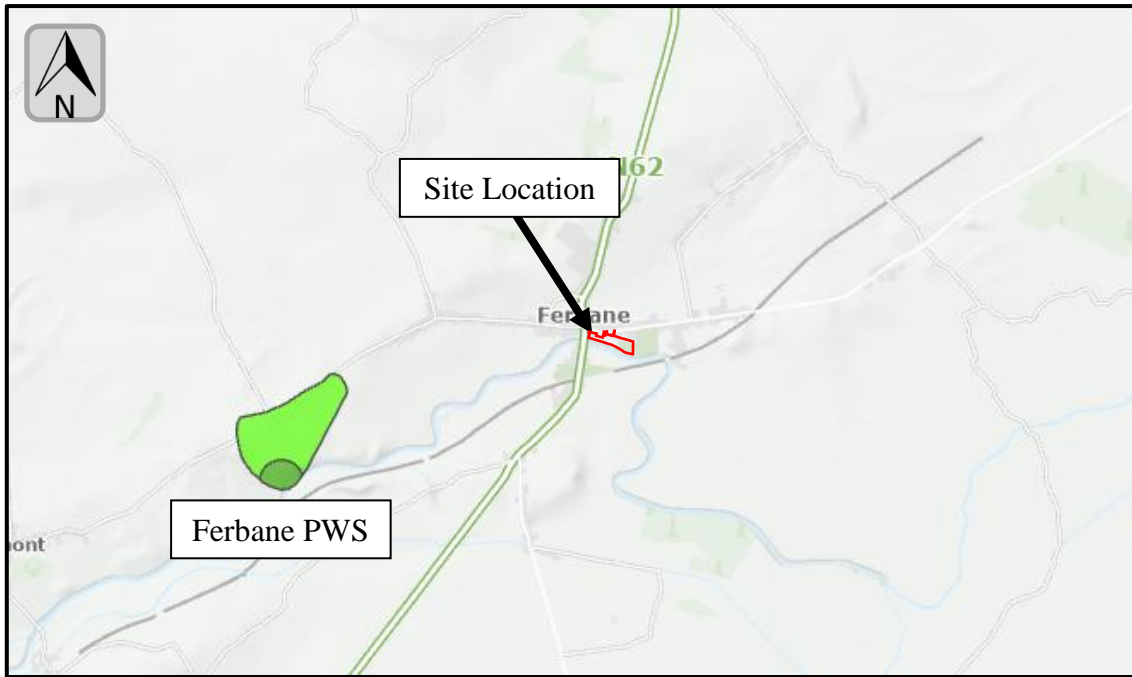


Figure 5.6: Groundwater Source Protection Areas (GSI Maps)

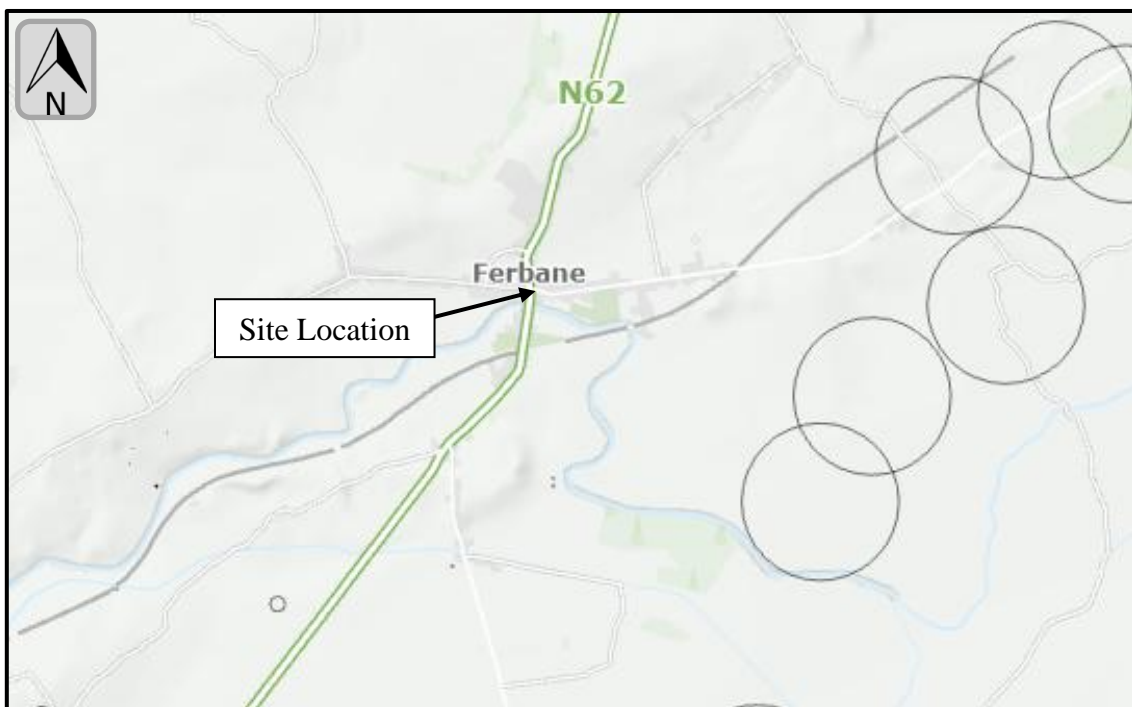


Figure 5.7: Groundwater Wells, Springs and Karst Data (GSI Maps)

The development site is situated predominately on the Clara groundwater body. This GWB is designated to have good overall WFD water quality status and the overall risk status is currently “*not at risk*”.

The nearest groundwater source protection zone is the “Ferbane” PWS, which is located c. 1.9km to the south-west partially within the same groundwater body as the proposed development (Clara GWB). There would be no direct hydraulic connectivity between this or any other groundwater source protection zone from the site.

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There would be no significant volumes of fuels, oils or other chemicals stored for construction. It is not anticipated that there would be a significant risk to groundwater during the construction phase. It is not anticipated that there would be significant volumes of chemicals or potentially hazardous liquids present at the site during the operational phase, due to the nature of the development (community centre).

During the operational phase, rainwater would generally be directed to the soakaway to the south of the development. Storm water will pass through a petrol interceptor before being discharged into the soakaway.

It is not considered that the proposed development would require further assessment within an EIAR in terms of groundwater resource vulnerability and absorption capacity.

5.3.3 Bio-Diversity and Designated Sites

The location of the site in relation to Natura 2000 sites is shown in the map in **Figure 5.8** below. The closest Natura 2000 site is the Ferbane Bog SAC (Site Code: 000575) located approximately 840m to the northwest of the proposed development (see Figure 2 below). The closest Natura 2000 sites hydrologically connected to the development site are the River Shannon Callows SAC (Site Code: 000216) and Middle Shannon Callows SPA (Site Code: 004096), located approximately 9.9km from the development site.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening report has been prepared by Panther Ecology Ltd. (Doc. Ref: PE_AA_10223) to accompany this application.

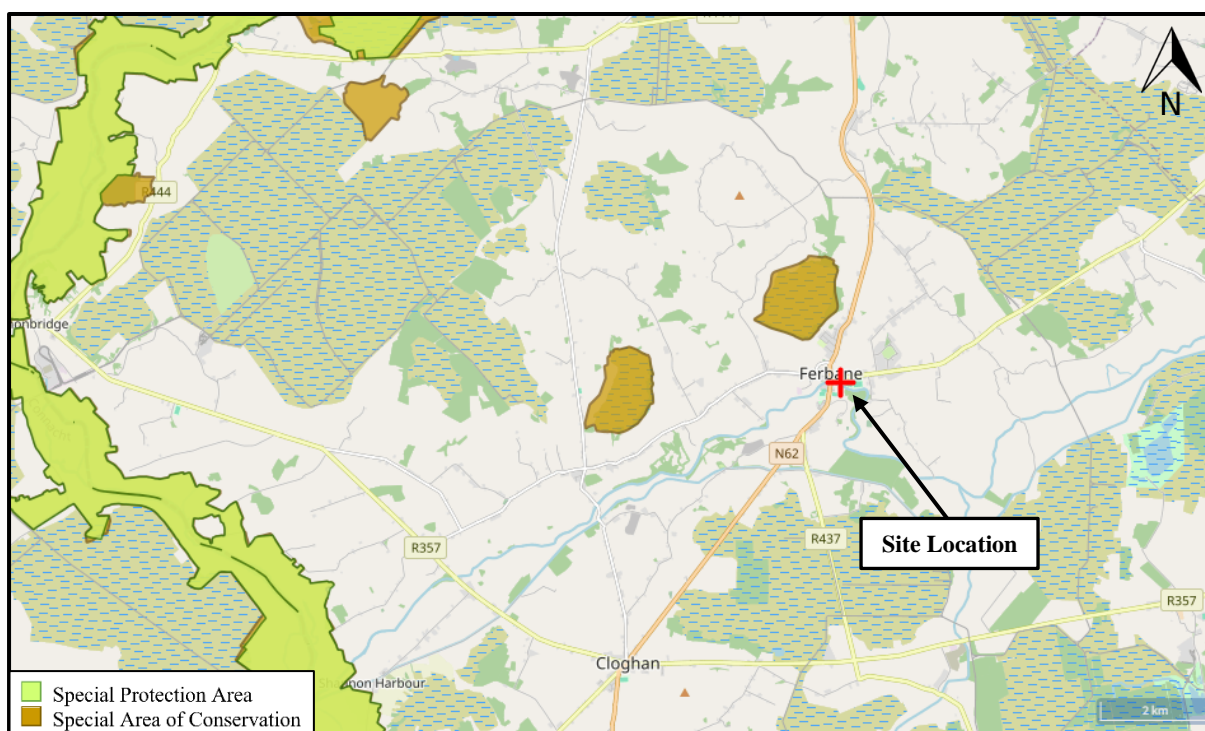


Figure 5.8: Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protected Areas

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Table 5.2: Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Area potentially within the zone of influence of the proposed development.

SITE NAME	DESIGNATION	SITE CODE	DISTANCE FROM PROPOSED SITE
Ferbane Bog	SAC	000575	840m NW
Moyclare Bog	SAC	000581	3.2km W
Fin Lough (Offaly)	SAC	000576	9km NW
Pilgrim's Road Esker	SAC	001776	9.2km NW
Mongan Bog	SAC	000580	9.7km NW
Mongan Bog	SPA	004017	9.8km NW
River Shannon Callows	SAC	000216	9.9km SW
Middle Shannon Callows	SPA	004096	9.9km SW
Clara Bog	SAC	000572	11.3km NE
Lough Derg, North-east Shore	SAC	002241	30.8km SW
Lough Derg (Shannon)	SPA	004058	49.3km SW
Lower River Shannon	SAC	002165	65.6km SW
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries	SPA	004077	86.6km SW

A site visit was undertaken on the 23rd August 2024 to examine the ecological context of the proposed development. The existing site is mostly comprised of grassland and built structures, bordered by treelines/hedgerows and a small stretch of woodland.

The **Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3)** habitat comprises the existing buildings and concrete yards, and surrounding walls. Species present within this habitat include Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Moss (Bryophyta), Wall Rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*), Bindweed (*Calystegia* spp.). The **Amenity Grassland (GA2)** habitat is present in the gardens adjacent to the existing buildings and in the greenfields to the east. These grasslands are managed and most of these had been recently mowed by the time this assessment took place. The species composition includes Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*) and Ryegrass (*Lolium* spp.). The **Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)** habitat is mostly present along the borders of the amenity grasslands forming strips of unmanaged grassland. The species composition is dominated by tall tussocky grasses such as False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Cock's Foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Common Couch Grass (*Elymus repens*), and Timothy (*Phleum pratense*). The **Recolonising bare ground (ED3)** habitat is mostly present around the existing buildings in areas of bare ground and gravel that currently have over 50% of vegetation cover. The species composition includes Mosses (Bryophyta), Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Broadleaved Plantain (*Plantago major*), Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*) and Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), White Clover (*Trifolium repens*), Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Cock's Foot Grass (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.).

The woodland that borders the river is comprised of **Riparian Woodland (WN5)** to the east of the drainage ditch and **(Mixed) Broadleaved woodland (WD1)** to the west of the drainage ditch. The Riparian Woodland is dominated by Willow (*Salix* spp.) with occasional Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Elm (*Ulmus* spp.) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*). The (Mixed) Broadleaved woodland (WD1) includes Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Willow (*Salix* spp.) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*). The **Hedgerows (WL1)** habitat is present along part of the borders of the fields to the east and along the borders of the drainage ditch. The species composition includes Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), Rose (*Rosa* spp.) and Elm (*Ulmus* spp.). The **Treeline (WL2)** habitat borders part of the site's boundaries and includes tree species such as Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Cypress (*Chamaecyparis* spp.) and Yew (*Taxus baccata*). There are a few patches of **Scrub (WS1)** between the grasslands and the treeline/woodland habitats dominated by Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). There is a **Drainage ditch (FW4)** between the two grasslands to the east which flows in a north to south direction into the River Brosna. The drainage ditch had a regular flow of water which was up to 20cm deep. The drainage ditch is approximately 1m wide and the banks are up to 0.5m tall. The water was clear, and the substrate is silty/muddy with a few medium calibre stones. No vegetation was present within the drainage ditch. Vegetation present in the banks of the drainage ditch include Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Mosses (Bryophyta), Harts' Tongue Fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*), Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) and Wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*). The garden to the rear of the main building contains **Ornamental/non-native shrub (WS3)** and **Flower beds and borders (BC4)** habitats. Habitats of note outside of the red line boundary include the **Depositing/ lowland River (FW2)** adjacent to the south boundary of the site. The river was turbid, slow and sluggish during the site assessment. Vegetation present within the river included Willow (*Salix* spp.) and Water-lily (*Nuphar* spp.).

No flora species listed in the Third Schedule of the European Communities Birds and Natural Habitats) Amendment (S.I. No. 355 of 2015) of Regulations 2011-2015 were recorded onsite during the ecological assessment. No flora species protected plant species under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2022 (S.I. No. 235 of 2022) were recorded onsite during the ecological assessment.

Bird species noted during the previous site assessments included Rook (*Corvus frugilegus*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Pied Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*), Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) and Magpie (*Pica pica*). None of the recorded species is red listed. Swallow is amber listed. None of the bird species recorded are listed under Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive.

There was a footprint present at the border of the river which could potentially be an Otter footprint given the shape and size (Couzens et al., 2021; Rhyder, 2021; Muir & Morris, 2013). There are limited areas of tall vegetation on site that could be suitable for Otter Couches. The River Brosna at its closest to the development site could contain preys of interest for Otter and could offer suitable habitat for Otter holts. The woodland along the river could offer suitable habitat for mammals in general. There are tracks/paths throughout the hedgerow, treeline, scrub and woodland habitats suggesting passage of mammals between the development site and adjacent sites. Two small burrows were found within the Riparian woodland habitat: one of them was less than 10cm wide and the other has an entrance greater than 20cm wide which narrows to approximately 10cm wide inside. Given the size and shape these burrows have most

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likely been dug by small mammals such as rabbits (Muir & Morris, 2013). Due to the presence of cobwebs and dead foliage at the entrance, it is likely that these burrows are currently inactive. No evidence of recent use such as droppings and footprints were found in the area. No other fauna or evidence of fauna was observed at the site.

Fauna typical of that found throughout the rest of Ireland which would be expected to be found in the area include Bat species, Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), Badger (*Meles meles*), Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Wood Mouse (*Apodemus sylvaticus*), Pine Marten (*Martes martes*), Stoat (*Mustela erminea hibernica*), American Mink (*Mustela vison*), Deer, Irish Hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*), Hedgehog (*Erinus europaeus*), Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) and Grey Squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*).

In addition to the site walkover, flora and fauna records were reviewed on the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) website for the proposed development site and vicinity. One protected plant species under the Flora (Protection) Order, 2022 (S.I. No. 235 of 2022) was recorded within the 10km square (Tetrad – N12) in which the proposed development site is located: Large White-moss (*Leucobryum glaucum*). This

One invasive plant species listed in the Third Schedule of the European Communities Birds and Natural Habitats) Amendment (S.I. No. 355 of 2015) of Regulations 2011-2015 was recorded within the 10km square (Tetrad – N12): Nuttall's Waterweed (*Elodea nuttallii*).

Protected fauna species of note recorded within the NBDC 10km square (Tetrad – N12) include the protected species Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), Smooth Newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*), Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*), Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*), Badger (*Meles meles*), Pygmy Shrew (*Sorex minutus*), Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*), Otter (*Lutra lutra*), Lesser Noctule (*Nyctalus leisleri*), Pine Marten (*Martes martes*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

High impact invasive species listed include American Mink (*Mustela vison*), Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*) and Zebra Mussel (*Dreissena (Dreissena) polymorpha*).

Bird species of note include Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*), Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*), Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus* subsp. *bewickii*), Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*), Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*), Grasshopper Warbler (*Locustella naevia*), Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*), Pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*), Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*), Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Swift (*Apus apus*), Wood Pigeon (*Columba palumbus*), Corn Crane (*Crex crex*), Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Teal (*Anas crecca*), Wigeon (*Anas penelope*), Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*), Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*), Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), Grey Partridge (*Perdix perdix*), Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*), Hen Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyrtus minimus*), Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Northern Shoveler

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(*Anas clypeata*), Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*), Red Grouse (*Lagopus lagopus*), Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*), Sky Lark (*Alauda arvensis*), Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), Stock Pigeon (*Columba oenas*), Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*), Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*), Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*) and Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*).

None of the protected habitats of the Ferbane Bog SAC or the River Shannon Callows SAC are present onsite. The habitats that will be removed to allow for the construction of the proposed building are of low ecological value (BL3/WS3/BC4). The works that will take place within the woodland habitat for the construction of the walking footpath and the installation of the deck will cause minimal, transient disturbance to these habitats. It is not considered that the proposed development would offer suitable habitat for the bird species of the Middle Shannon Callows SPA. No Third Scheduled invasive species were found onsite. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed development would have the potential to directly affect the Qualifying Interests of the Ferbane Bog SAC, River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA due to habitat destruction/fragmentation or direct reduction in species density.

Some of the qualifying interests of the Ferbane Bog SAC, River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA are sensitive to water quality deterioration. There is a drainage ditch that crosses the site from north to south between the two grasslands which is hydrologically connected to the River Brosna forming a direct hydrological connection to the River Shannon Callows SAC and Middle Shannon Callows SPA. However, the AA Screening report by Panther Ecology determined that the proposed development does not have the potential to significantly affect the Qualifying Interests of these protected sites due to a deterioration in water quality. No works will take place within this drainage ditch or within the watercourse. During the operational phase, surface water comprised of rainwater runoff from roofs and hardcore areas will be directed to a new proposed soakaway close to the south boundary after passing through a hydrocarbon interceptor. The proposed SuDS features onsite such as rain gardens and “green” car park will allow for rainwater to percolate to ground in these areas. Foul water from the proposed development will ultimately be directed to the Ferbane WWTP (D0147) which currently has available capacity according to the Offaly County WWTP Capacity Register. According to the most recent environmental report for the Ferbane WWTP (2023), “*discharge from the wastewater treatment plant does not have an observable negative impact on the Water Framework Directive status*”.

On the basis of information provided in this report, and the information taken from the accompanying AA Screening report, it is considered that there would be no significant impact on any European sites.

The habitats that will be removed to allow for the proposed development are mostly buildings and artificial surfaces and amenity spaces. The amenity areas are of low ecological value for protected fauna and therefore its loss would not be considered significant. The buildings to be demolished are of low ecological value for most protected fauna species, however these are of high ecological value for Swifts and Bats as these could use the buildings for nesting.

A total of 23 trees will be removed to allow for the construction of the walking footpath within the woodland habitats to the south. The woodlands would offer limited opportunities for roosting bats. The landscape plan includes the planting of native trees. Therefore, it is considered that any potential impact on protected fauna in the area due to tree removal would

be temporary until the planting schedule becomes established. The buildings to be demolished could offer opportunities for roosting bats. Therefore, a full bat survey is required.

A full bat survey has been carried out by Gannon and Associates to assess the presence of roosting bats onsite. A potential pipistrelle roost was identified in the main convent building. The report includes the following measure: “*a derogation licence will be required from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) for works to roof and attic space of this part of the building*”. Evidence of a brown long-eared bat roost was recorded within the stone Outbuilding. Based on the evidence collected within this building and given that no brown long-eared bat activity was recorded during the emergence surveys, the report has determined that this is either a maternity roost or a feeding site for brown long-eared bats. Two Soprano Pipistrelle roosts have also been recorded in the Outbuilding. Soprano pipistrelle activity was recorded at these roosts. The bat survey report recommends that the Outbuilding is retained where possible as part of the redevelopment plans given the confirmed presence of the three roosts. Other mitigation measures within the bat survey report include scheduling the demolition works for the winter months as well as the provision of bat boxes and the use of a bat friendly lighting design. According to the site layout 5 bat boxes will be erected in trees along the border of the River Brosna.

Swifts could potentially use the buildings onsite. Swift (*Apus apus*) is on the Red list of birds of conservation concern in Ireland as its population has declined by over 40% in the last 15 years. The site layout includes the provision of eight swift nest bricks which will be fitted on the North Elevation of the extension to the convent (See Drawing no. 2309-KLA-00-ZZ-DR-A-222 P01). According to the guidelines by Bird Watch Ireland regarding swift bricks, “*Swifts nest in colonies, so any number between two and twenty is advisable.*” The bricks will be installed at least five metres above ground and will follow the recommendations of Swift Conservation Ireland guidance documents.

It is not considered that the proposed development would require further assessment within an EIAR in terms of biodiversity vulnerability and absorption capacity.

5.3.4 Landscapes & Visual Impact

The importance of landscape and visual amenity in the role of planning is recognised in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Act requires that Development Plans include objectives for the preservation of the landscape, views and prospects. It requires objectives for Landscape Conservation Areas, Areas of Special Amenity and also for the assessment of landscape character. This approach towards landscape issues (based on the Draft Landscape Character Assessment) stresses the distinctiveness of differing kinds of landscape and how differing kinds of development can best be integrated within them.

The County Offaly Development Plan 2021-2027 classified the landscape within the following sensitivity classes:

- Low Landscape Sensitivity
- Moderate Landscape Sensitivity
- High Landscape Sensitivity

The development would be located in an area of Low Landscape Sensitivity, see **Figure 5.13** below. Low Landscape Sensitivity areas are described as ‘*robust landscapes which are tolerant*

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to change, such as the county's main urban and farming areas, which have the ability to accommodate development.'

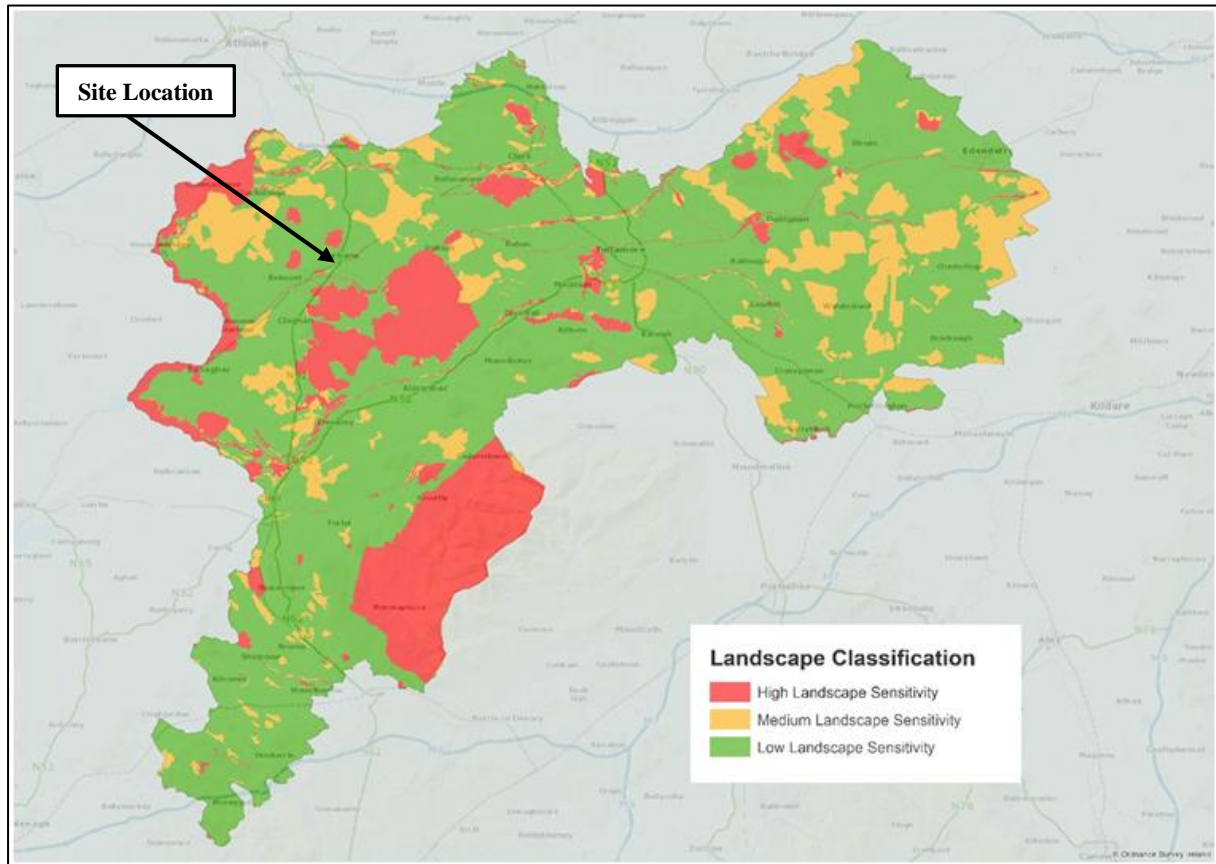


Figure 5.9: Landscape Classification Areas in County Offaly

The proposed development does not hinder on any key scenic views or prospects, as per **Figure 5.14** below.

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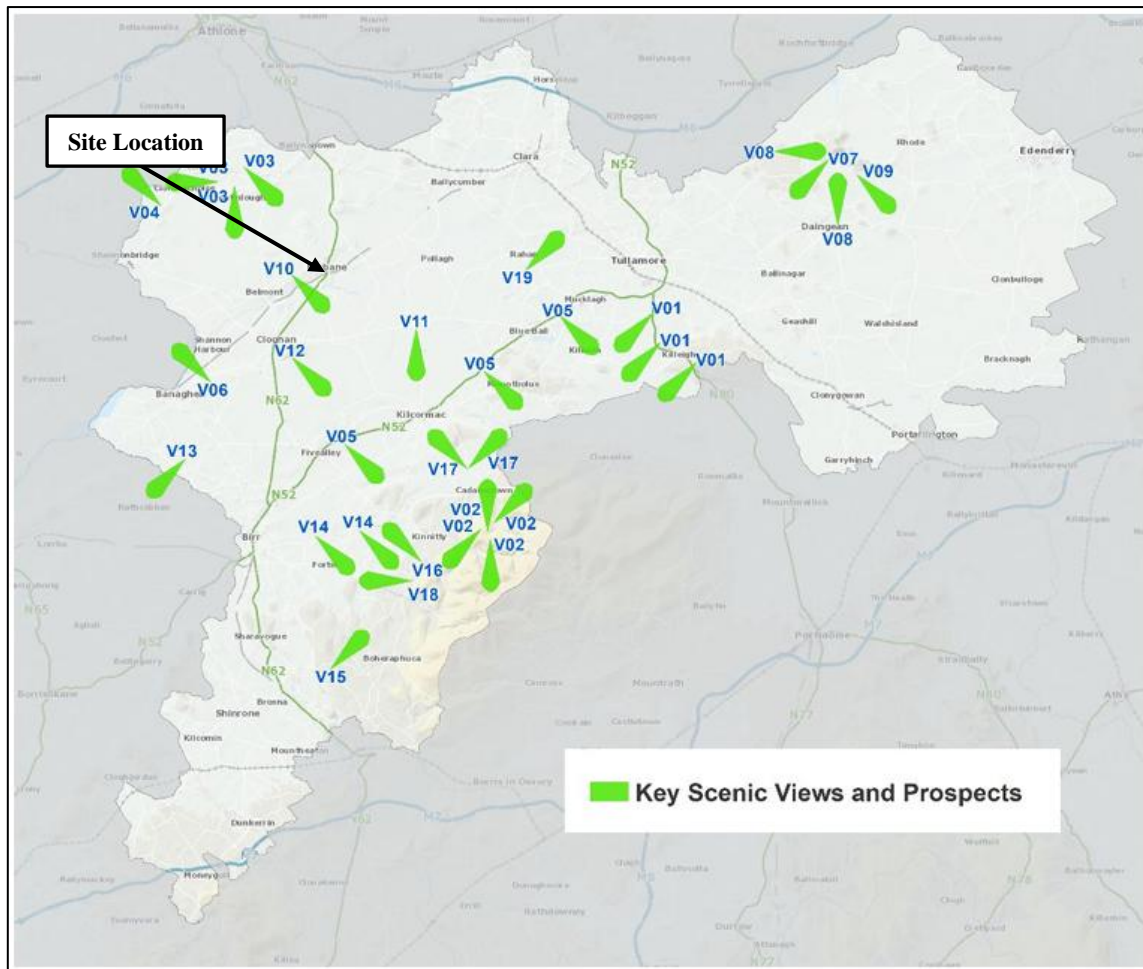


Figure 5.14: Key Scenic Views and Prospects

The Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027 includes the following objectives for Landscape:

- BLP-38: It is Council policy to protect and enhance the county's landscape, by ensuring that development retains, protects and where necessary, enhances the appearance and character of the county's existing landscape.
- BLP-39: It is Council policy to seek to ensure that local landscape features, including historic features and buildings, hedgerow, shelter belts and stone walls, are retained, protected and enhanced where appropriate, so as to preserve the local landscape and character of an area, whilst providing for future development.
- BLP-40: It is Council policy to ensure that consideration of landscape sensitivity is an important factor in determining development uses.

The development is located in the centre of Ferbane Town urban landscape and would be considered urban in nature, with residential dwellings, commercial properties, primary and post primary schools, healthcare and sports clubs. The proposed development is located in an area of Low Landscape Sensitivity which is tolerant to change and has the ability to accommodate a wide range of development. As well as this, much of the surrounding area is dominated by urban features and the proposed development would adhere to the overall development pattern of the area.

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In January 2025, a visual assessment was carried out of the existing site. For this assessment, a total of five viewpoints were utilised, which are outlined in **Figure 5.15**



Figure 5.15: Viewpoint Location Map

Views from the viewpoints selected for this assessment are represented in **Plate 5.1** to **Plate 5.10** below.

Viewpoint No.1 represents the viewpoint from the south end of Ferbane Bridge, along the Main Street (N62), to the southwest of the site boundary. The trees along the southwest boundary are to be retained and therefore the view of the development will be partially screened. Renovation works to the front of the convent building, which is visible from this viewpoint, will be carried out in accordance with conservation best practice. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be any significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location.

Viewpoint No.2 represents the viewpoint from north end of Ferbane Bridge, along Main Street (N62), to the west of the site boundary. This point would afford the highest degree of visibility to the proposed development. The design of the proposed extension to the convent building will focus on modern architecture and will make clear that it is a later intervention in line with the principles of conservation. The proposed extension will be in keeping with the urban landscape of the area.

Viewpoint No.3 represents the view from the Ballycumber Road (R436) to the north of the site boundary. This point offers views of the roofline and east end of the existing convent. The proposed extension will be partially screened by the existing convent building. The modern

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design of the proposed extension will make clear that it is a later addition and is in line with the principle of conservation.

Viewpoint No.4 represents the view from the Ballycumber Road (R436) to the north of the site boundary and the existing shed to be demolished to allow for an access point to the proposed car park along the Ballycumber Road. The proposed development would be in keeping with the urban landscape of the area.

Viewpoint No.5 represents the view from the Ballycumber Road (R436) to the north of the site boundary. The proposed development will not be visible from the viewpoint. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be any significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location.

Viewpoint No.6 represents the view from the L30048 local road to the east of the site boundary. The proposed development will be screened from view by existing hedgerows and treeline located to the east of the site boundary. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there would be any significant visual impacts from the proposed development at this location.

The site is publicly visible mostly in nearby areas along the Main Street (N62) looking east and northeast and from the Ballycumber Road (R436) looking south, as it is screened from view by hedgerows/treelines in several directions from the south and east.

The proposed development is a community project and would conform to the existing primarily urban character of the area. Once completed, the development will have a similar visual impact as other developments in the direct vicinity of the site, albeit of a more modern design.

It is considered that additional investigation within an EIAR for landscape and visual impacts from the development would not be required.

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Plate 5.1: Viewpoint 1 – Ferbane Bridge, Main Street (N62) looking NE



Plate 5.2: Viewpoint 2 – Main Street (N62) looking E



Plate 5.3: Viewpoint 3 – R436 (Ballycumber Road) looking SW



Plate 5.4: Viewpoint 4 – R436 (Ballycumber Road) looking S

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Plate 5.5: Viewpoint 5 – R436 (Ballycumber Road) looking S



Plate 5.6: Viewpoint No.6 – L30048 looking west

5.3.5 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage

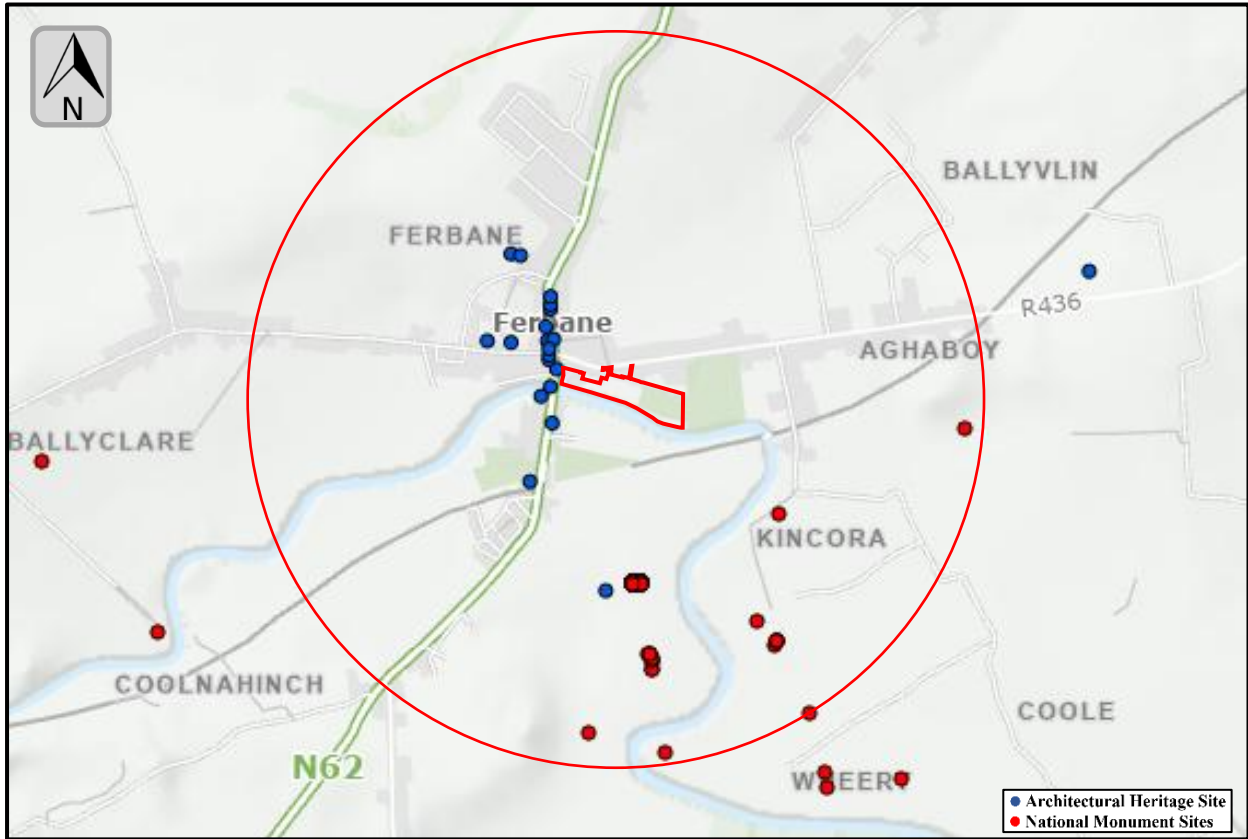


Figure 5.16: National Monument and Architectural Heritage Sites

The following tables summarise the recorded archaeological heritage sites and protected buildings as per the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage database within 1km of the site:

Table 5.3: Archaeological Heritage Sites within 1km of the Site

Record No.	Classification	Townland	Distance
94370	Castle - unclassified	Kincora	400m SE
SMR Zone ID: R142025 (Group of 128)	Cross-slab	Gallen	465m S
100364	Cross-slab	Gallen	485m S
100450	Cross-slab	Gallen	485m S
100650, 100628	Cross-slab	Gallen	495m S
100624	Cross-inscribed stone	Gallen	495m S
96209	Cross-inscribed stone	Gallen	495m S
94353	Cross-inscribed pillar	Gallen	495m S

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Record No.	Classification	Townland	Distance
94355	Church	Gallen	495m S
100462	Inscribed slab	Gallen	495m S
100546	Inscribed slab	Gallen	495m S
100661	Enclosure	Kincora	640m SE
94354	Mound	Gallen	700m S
100592, 100593	Cross-slab	Gallen	700m S
133838	Cross-slab	Gallen	705m S
94325	Bullaun Stone	Gallen	710m S
145859	Cross-slab	Gallen	715m S
96205	Graveyard	Gallen	715m S
96210	Ritual site – holy tree/bush	Gallen	720m S
100443, 100441, 100442	Wall monument	Kincora	720m SE
94350	Church	Kincora	720m SE
96204	Religious house – Augustinian canons	Gallen	725m S
94345	Graveyard	Kincora	730m SE
100490, 100491	Cross-slab	Gallen	745m S
96237	Burial mound	Kincora	860m E
94357	Enclosure	Wheery	955m SE
96166	Enclosure	Gallen	975m S
94356	Enclosure	Kincora	998m S

Table 5.4: National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Sites within 1km of the Site

Registration No.	Site Name/Original Use	Townland	Distance
14806005	House	Ferbane	36m NW
14806006	House	Ferbane	51m NW
14806001	Ferbane Bridge	Ferbane, Gallen	51m S
14806007	House	Ferbane	70m NW
14806002	Saint Mary's Parochial Hall	Gallen	88m SSW

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Registration No.	Site Name/Original Use	Townland	Distance
14806008	Fleming	Ferbane	90m NNW
14806009	Grennan	Ferbane	93m N
14806010	House	Ferbane	132m N
14806016	Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception	Ferbane	160m NW
14806003	Gallen Lodge	Gallen	160m S
14806011	K.Egan	Ferbane	185m N
14806012	House	Ferbane	200m N
14806013	Ulster Bank	Ferbane	224m N
14806017	Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception	Ferbane	224m NW
14806015	Ferbane Church	Ferbane	360m NNW
14806014	Ferbane Church	Ferbane	378m NNW
14806019	Gallen Priory	Gallen	682m SSE

The nearest national monument to the site is an unclassified castle, located on a natural rise of the River Brosna floodplains, within the townland of Kincora approximately 400m southeast of the proposed development. The nearest NIAH building to the site is a house located approximately 36m to the northwest, within the townland of Ferbane. The proposed development site is not located in any Architectural Conservation Areas.

Excavations.ie have a number of recorded excavations around Ferbane town. The nearest excavation to the proposed development was undertaken as part of requirement of planning permission for the demolition of outhouses and construction of townhouses approximately 377m to the west northwest (ITM E 611148m, N 724628m). An inspection of the outhouses to be demolished was conducted and well as eight trenches tested. In trench 1, testing exposed a cobbled yard surface.

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Figure 5.17: Aerial Image – 2023 (Google)

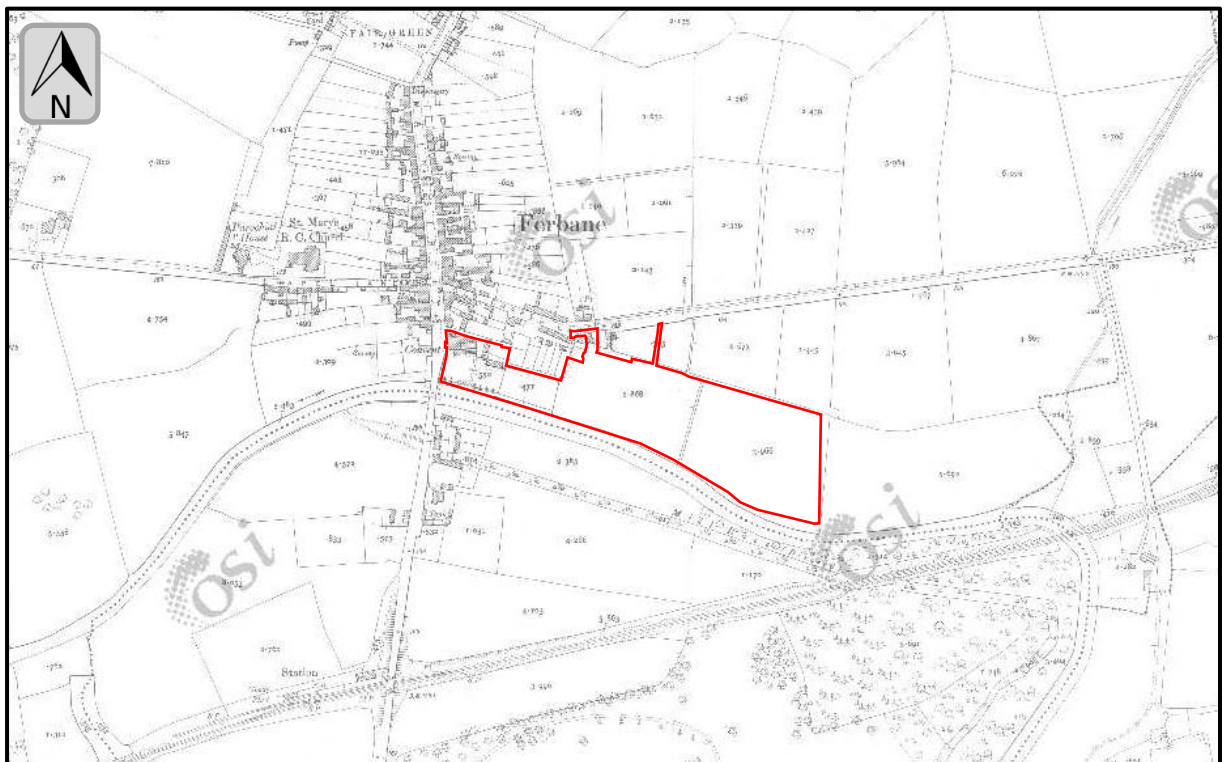


Figure 5.18: 25 Inch Historical Map (1897-1913)

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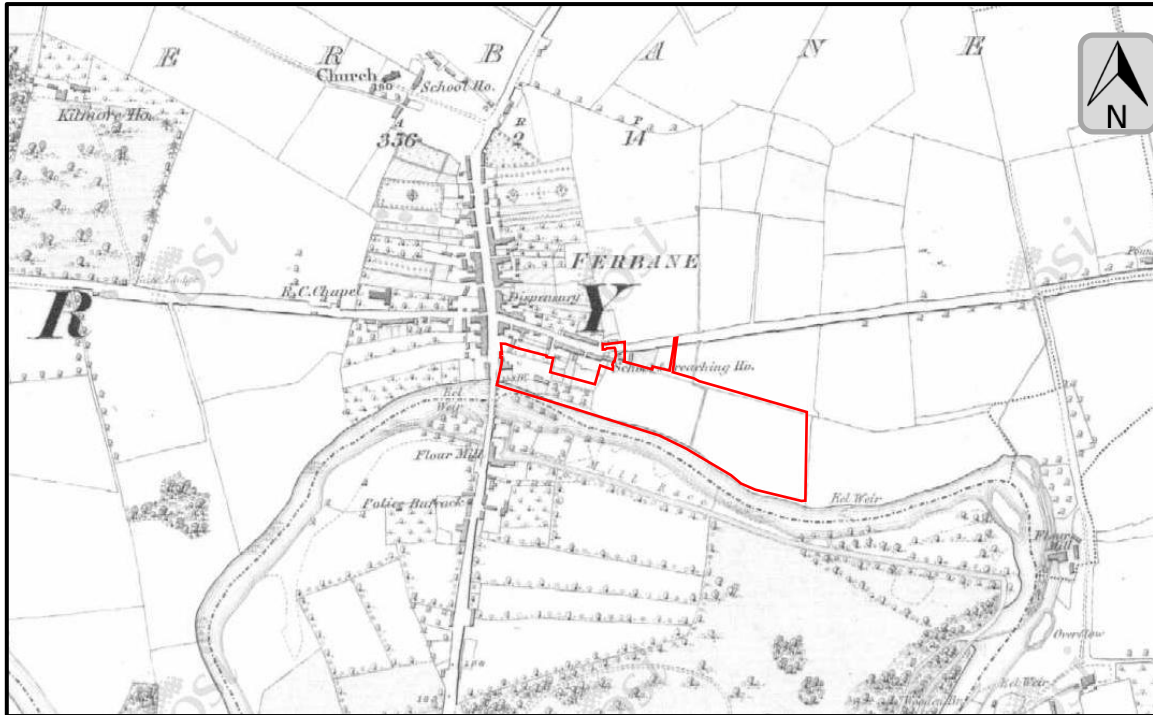


Figure 5.19: 6 Inch B&W (1829-41)

The historical maps provided in **Figure 5.17**, **Figure 5.18** & **Figure 5.19**, ranging from 1829 - 2023 indicate that the site upon which the development is located has continuously been predominantly a greenfield site with the convent located to the west.

St. Josephs Convent is included in on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH Reg. No. 14806004), however it is not a protected structure and is not listed on Offaly County Council's Record of Protected Structures. A Built Heritage Assessment has been prepared by Kenny Lyons Associates Architects to evaluate the Built Heritage of the site, assess any potential impacts of the proposed works, and recommend mitigation strategies to protect St. Joseph's convent.

The proposed works to redevelop St. Josephs Convent aim to modernise whilst limiting the impact on the convent itself. The proposed wraparound extension will be easily identified as being a modern addition and can be demolished in the future if there is a desire to return the convent to its original form. Any renovation within the structure itself will maintain its heritage value as well as bringing the building closer to its original appearance improving its visual and architectural integrity.

Mitigation and conservation measures include restoring the convents original form, retaining key architectural features and avoiding major internal demolition by including features such as lifts in the proposed extension. Non- historic buildings will be demolished in a careful manner to minimise disruption. Overall, the development will preserve the convent building whilst simultaneously safeguarding the Built Heritage of the site and modernising it for contemporary use.

Following this desk study, it is considered that there would be a possibility of undiscovered archaeological, architectural or cultural heritage finds within the proposed development site or within its immediate environs. There would be no risk of impacting recorded archaeological

and architectural records as identified in the Sites and Monuments Database of Archaeological Inventory of Ireland.

It is considered that there would be potential to impact upon unrecorded or unknown sub-surface archaeological features during excavations. It is recommended to carry out archaeological test excavation post demolition work and prior to site preparation excavation works and that a qualified archaeologist is retained and present throughout excavation works in order to identify archaeological evidence as it arises.

Therefore, it is considered that additional investigation within an EIAR for archaeological and cultural heritage impacts from the development would not be required.

5.3.6 Traffic & Transportation

This section will address the aspects of the project having regard to traffic and transportation, including the potential for traffic generation. The likelihood of impact would be discussed in the context of the existing urban traffic environment.

Construction

Construction sites invariably involve a certain amount of HGV movements. These movements are primarily associated with the importation of supply materials, machinery and other plant equipment on to the site.

Traffic impacts may arise via the following:

- Delivery of construction plant and equipment to the site;
- Delivery of raw materials to the site;
- Vehicle movements from staff, sub-contractors and site visitors travelling to and from the site;
- Vehicle movements associated with waste removal at the site.

The site will be accessed via the regional R436 road (Ballycumber) which is located adjacent to the site's northern boundary. This road connects with the Main Street (N62) approximately 165m down from the proposed site entrance. The site is located in the centre of Ferbane Town. The M6 motorway is at its closest to the development site approximately 18km to the north accessible via the N62.

Construction works have the potential to impact upon traffic volumes in the area, which may subsequently impact upon the generation of noise and dust emissions.

The majority of the HGV movements would take place during the initial demolition and construction phases as machinery would have to be brought to the site along with other supplies and site infrastructure. In-fill such as gravel, sands and cement will also be brought on to the site.

This is a moderate sized development. The surrounding road network is well laid out and capable of carrying increased construction traffic.

The construction works contractor should ensure the following:

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- Deliveries to the site would be via suitably contained vehicles, with sheeting and covers where required;
- Deliveries to the site would be scheduled during the construction hours of 8:00am to 7:00pm Monday to Friday, and 7:00am to 1:00pm on Saturdays;
- Where possible, large volumes of traffic or traffic movements associated with the site would be timed to occur outside peak hours on the local road network to reduce the potential for traffic congestion;
- The contractor shall provide for the safe passage of pedestrian and vehicular traffic and measures to keep the impact of the works on local roads, and local communities to a minimum;
- Local roads would be inspected and cleaned as necessary to ensure that access roads are kept clear of mud and debris;
- Advise haulage contractors on the appropriate routes to and from the site and to adhere to good traffic management principles;
- Delivery of materials to the site would be timed to ensure efficiency and to reduce traffic on the local road network.

Cognisance should also be taken of recommended traffic mitigation measures within the following guidance documents:

NRA (2008) Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes

The guidelines provide advice with regard to EIAR on road schemes. The guidance also provides consolidated legislation, general guidance on mitigation and sources of further relevant information.

EPA (2006) Environmental Management in the Extractive Industry

Open sites (construction sites, quarrying and in-fill activities) by their nature, generate similar traffic impacts. Construction materials transported from quarries to construction sites have the potential to cause environmental impacts due to traffic at the source and destination. This guidance document provides general recommendations for the management of traffic and transport of materials.

Operation

Once construction has been completed, site related traffic would consist of vehicles related to staff and visitors at the community centre. Traffic volumes are expected to increase on the local road network as a result of the developments operational phase. However, these increases are not likely to be significant and traffic impacts associated with the development would be minimal. The local road network is anticipated to be sufficient to accommodate site related traffic.

A total of 48 car parking spaces will be provided including accessible parking spaces, electric vehicle charging spaces and age-friendly spaces. A total of 50 bicycle parking bays will be provided across the site. The proposed development also has appropriate pedestrian access being located within the town centre of Ferbane. Additionally, public transport services such as the TFI Local Link Laois Offaly (Route 840) and Bus Éireann (Route 72) service Ferbane Town.

It is not considered that further assessment within an EIAR is required for potential traffic impacts.

6.0 PART III – CHARACTERISATION OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACTS

6.1.1 Magnitude and Spatial Extent of the Impact **(for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)**

The site is positioned within an urban area, located in the town of Ferbane, Co. Offaly. Environmental effects from the development would generally be localised to the area of activities, within urban and peri-urban landscapes. In the absence of appropriate controls or mitigation, potentially impacted population numbers would be moderate.

The total site area is 3.25 hectares.

Environmental effects from the proposed development would generally be localised, related to potential construction nuisance emissions. Potential impacts to air quality from the use of fuels would apply to a regional extent, however these impacts would be insignificant in terms of intensity. It should be noted that no fossil fuels will be burned at the development site to heat the existing and proposed buildings. Buildings will be heated by air to water heat pumps. These devices release significantly less emissions in comparison to traditional fossil fuel (gas or kerosene) burners. There would be expected to be no significant effects on water quality during construction or operation, considering proposed mitigation and controls.

6.1.2 Nature of the Impact

During the construction phase, potential environmental impacts would be common for construction projects and include:

- Potential noise impacts to sensitive receptors,
- Potential nuisance airborne dust,
- Potential contamination of surface waters with soil, concrete etc.
- Potential increased traffic congestion.

While such environmental risk can occur from all construction activities, it is considered that these risks would be minimal due to the minor to moderate scale of the development, construction practices and the location of the proposed site, as discussed within this report.

The construction phase of the development has the potential to have a significant effect on unrecorded archaeological features. It is recommended to carry out archaeological test excavation post demolition work and prior to site preparation excavation works and that a qualified archaeologist is retained and present throughout excavation works in order to identify archaeological evidence as it arises.

The proposed development site has been identified as being located within an area of fluvial flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment carried out by Tobin Consulting Engineers has indicated that the proposed refurbishment is appropriately located in Flood Zone B and that the development will not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The development has been assessed against the criteria for Minor Proposals and found to be suitable. It was noted that as the proposed works are a refurbishment to an existing development, the proposed FFLs for the ground floor elements must tie into the existing infrastructure and have been set to a minimum of 44.20mOD. This gives a freeboard of 0.68m above the 1 in 1000-year (0.1% AEP) MRFS

flood event water level. The report also provides recommendations on flood warnings and evacuation procedures.

Surface water drainage has included the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), there will be limited storage of chemical or fuels on site and any alteration on site within the flood extents are limited to the demolition of existing buildings.

6.1.3 Transboundary Nature of the Impact

The proposed development is located a significant distance from international boundaries, and it is unlikely that emissions would have any significant transboundary impacts.

6.1.4 Intensity and Complexity of the Impact

The site as a whole would be considered moderate in terms of area constructed / being constructed. Due to the scale and type of development, the potential intensity of impacts would be minor.

Potential impacts from the development would not be complex and would be amenable to mitigation. Design principals with regards to wastewater treatment and site drainage for urban developments are well established and appropriate environmental mitigation during construction and operation have been proposed.

Due to the nature of the development (community centre), it is not anticipated that such activities related to this site during the operational phase, would have significant potential to cause complex interactions with the environment which would not be managed by standard design and control measures.

6.1.5 Probability of the Impact

During the construction phase, assuming typical construction controls, impacts in relation to airborne dust are considered to be unlikely. Construction noise has the potential to cause likely short-term nuisance impacts in the absence of mitigation. However, the potential severity of the noise impacts would be reduced by the transient short term nature of the construction noise, appropriate timing of works and using temporary mitigation measures, if necessary. Impact to water quality would be unlikely following the implementation of standard construction controls.

Good management practice would be expected to mitigate the risk of significant environmental impacts during the construction phase.

The operational phase of the development would result in a community centre for the population of Ferbane and surrounding areas and any operational phase impacts, as controlled or mitigated, would be certain.

Wastewater generated by sanitary facilities would be directed to the municipal wastewater treatment plant which has sufficient capacity to accommodate the completed development. Surface water run-off will be directed via a new uPVC network to a soakaway to the south of the site. The drainage network will also include rain gardens, attenuation planting, reinforced

grass and permeable paving for surface water run-off. The proposed heating system for the houses are air to water heat pumps, rather than from burning stored heating oil.

Therefore, there is no significant risk that this development would adversely impact surface water.

6.1.6 Expected Onset, Duration, Frequency and Reversibility of the Impact

Impacts during the construction phase of the development are likely to be short-term and reversible.

Impacts during the operational phase of the development are expected to be permanent but minimal.

The completed development would result in the construction of a community centre in Ferbane, Co. Offaly

6.1.7 Cumulation of the Impact with other Existing and / or Approved Projects

As detailed in section 4.2, there are several proposed developments and activities within the area which may have the potential to have in-combination effect with the development.

While it is not known at this time if the identified approved developments within the area will commence construction during the project construction phase, there is a potential for in combination construction effects.

Potential in-combination construction phase impacts would include nuisance (noise, dust, vibration etc.), use of resources and construction traffic. However, the construction phase of each project would be temporary.

The adoption of standard construction management practices would prevent significant environmental impacts or nuisance from the proposed development and reduce the potential for in-combination effects. Individual potential construction phase impacts are discussed in more detail within this report.

The completed community centre development would be anticipated to have cumulative effects with existing housing and business developments in the area. The proposed design and control infrastructure is expected to have no significant in-combination effect on the quality and capacity of the receiving environment. It is considered that there would be a low likelihood of significant cumulative environmental impacts.

The development would be expected to have a positive in-combination impact on the local economy and community by providing employment during the construction phase, with the creation of a modern community centre for the people of Ferbane and beyond during the operational phase.

6.1.8 Possibility of Effectively Reducing the Impact

There is a high likelihood of reducing potential impacts from construction activities through the implementation of standard construction practices for the protection of surface waters and the minimisation of potential impacts from traffic, dust and noise.

Potential impacts which may occur as part of the operational phase of the development are generally not anticipated to require ongoing mitigation, beyond proposed built infrastructural controls. This is due to the type of development (community centre), the nature of activities taking place, the location and the moderate scale of the development.

7.0 CONCLUSION

An EIA Screening exercise was carried out to assess the proposed development in terms of environmental risks and location sensitivity. This exercise has been informed by onsite assessments and a desk study of the site based on the best available information.

The completed development would result in the construction of a community centre in Ferbane, Co. Offaly

The proposed development is sub-threshold with regard to paragraph 10, *Infrastructure Projects*, of Schedule 5: Part 2.

The proposed development is well situated and appropriate to the area.

The potential for the proposed development to cause significant adverse environmental impacts by itself, or in combination with other developments, in consideration of the project management and design during the construction and operational phases of the project are not anticipated to be significant. Where potential significant effects have been identified, these have been addressed through appropriate design or proposed mitigation measures.

The proposed design of the development is considered to be in line with applicable standards and would pose no significant risk to the environment. It is considered that the development, as proposed, would not significantly impact upon the sensitivities of the existing environment.

Therefore, it is considered that an Environmental Impact Assessment Report would not be required to be completed for this project.