

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Residential Development at Old Fort Road, Ballincollig Cork

June 2020



Prepared on behalf of
O'Flynn Construction Co. Unlimited Comany

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1.0 Introduction

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements derive from EU Directives. Council Directive 2014/52/EU amended Directive 2011/92/EU and is transposed into Irish Law by the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018.

Proposed development which falls within one of the categories of development specified in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, which equals or exceeds, a limit, quantity or threshold prescribed for that class of development must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). Where a project is of a specified type but does not meet, or exceed, the applicable threshold then the likelihood of the project having significant effects (adverse and beneficial) on the environment needs to be considered.

The purpose of this Screening Report is to provide supporting information to assist the competent authority, in this instance, An Bord Pleanála to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development is required.

The criteria for determining whether development listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 should be subject to an EIA are set out under Schedule 7. The information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for environmental impact assessment is set out under Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended by the 2018 Regulations. Paragraph 4 of Schedule 7A requires that: *'The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7.'* In this report, the information has been set out under the more detailed headings provided for under Schedule 7. In effect, this ensures that all of the information required under Schedule 7A has been furnished. It also presents the information in a manner that facilitates the competent authority in its screening assessment.

This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report has been prepared by McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultants on behalf of the applicant O'Flynn Construction Co. Unlimited Company, who intends to develop lands for residential development at Old Fort Road, Ballincollig, Cork.

2.0 Screening Assessment

2.1 Mandatory EIA

The subject development does not fall within any of the specified classes of development set out in Part 1 of Schedule 5.

The proposed development for 123 no. residential units and ancillary development falls within the category of an 'Infrastructure Project' within Schedule 5 (10) (b) of the Planning and Development Regulations, which provides that a mandatory EIAR must be carried out for the following projects:

- b)
- (i) *Construction of more than 500 dwellings*
 - (ii) *Construction of a car-park providing more than 400 spaces, other than a car-park provided as part of, and incidental to the primary purpose of, a development.*
 - (iii) *Construction of a shopping centre with a gross floor space exceeding 10,000 square metres.*
 - (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.*

(In this paragraph, "business district" means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)

The proposed development is for 123 units, on a site area of 1.22 ha. The proposed development does not trigger a requirement for a mandatory EIAR because:

- The number of accommodation units, at 123 units, falls below the threshold of 500 dwellings; and
- The site area of 1.22 ha falls below the area threshold for sites in built up areas.

2.2 Sub-threshold EIA

In cases where a project is mentioned in Part 2 but is classed as "sub-threshold development", it is necessary for An Bord Pleanála to undertake a case-by-case examination to determine whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The criteria for determining whether development listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 should be subject to an EIA are set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 ('the 2001 Regulations'), as inserted by Article 7 of the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 ('the 2018 Regulations') and the information to be provided by the Applicant for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for EIA is set out in Schedule 7A.

3.0 Description of the Project

This section provides information on the physical characteristics of the proposed development and a description of the location of the project, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected, as is required under paragraph 1 of Schedule 7A of the 2001 Regulations (as inserted by the 2018 Regulations, Article 97): See also Annex II(A) of 2014/52/EU.

3.1 Physical Characteristics

3.1.1 Size and Design

The proposed site is located in the town of Ballincollig, approximately 200m to the north of the main street and 8.2km from Cork City Centre. The site is 1.9km from the N22 – Ballincollig Bypass which is situated to the south of the site. The site area comprises 1.13 hectares and has a sloping topography. The site is rectangular in shape and formed part of the overall Ballincollig town centre redevelopment. Permission for the development of these land was originally granted under Ref. 03/122 on September 12th, 2003.

The site is within easy walking distance of a number of commercial and community facilities including local shops, churches and school. The main street of Ballincollig is situated 200m to the south and the Castlewest (Ballincollig) Shopping Centre is less than 100m to the south. The major employment centre of Barrack Square is to the east of the site with Dell EMC to the west of the town. The site is adjacent to a number of residential developments including ‘Waltham Abbey’ housing estate to the west and ‘The Crescent’ apartment complex to the south. The site is located approximately 200m from a bus route and stop, offering transport connections to the wider County and City via the 220 and 233 bus routes. A bus serves the area every 15 minutes 7 days a week. The area is well serviced with several large amenity sites located within walking distance of the site with the closest being the Ballincollig GAA Club bounding the site to the north east and the Ballincollig Regional Park 1.4km to the west.

The proposed development will consist of the following:

- The construction of 123 no. residential units in 3 no. blocks which range in height from 3 to 6 storeys and comprising a mix of 1 & 2 bed apartments;
- 1 no. creche / childcare facility, internal residential amenity space and residents gym;
- The provision of landscaping and amenity areas including play/amenity areas at podium level;
- The provision of a set-down area, footpaths, cycle lane and table-top junction arrangement at the access to the development on the Old Fort Road; and
- All associated ancillary development to include pedestrian/cyclist facilities, lighting, drainage, boundary treatments, bin storage, plant, ESB Sub-station and bicycle, motorbike and car parking provided at ground and under-croft level.

The **National Planning Framework, Project Ireland 2040** seeks to deliver 550,000 homes by 2040, and this is to be achieved by focussing growth in the State’s cities. It sets out a target of at least 40% of all new housing to be delivered within the existing built up areas on infill and/or brownfield sites. The proposed development of the subject site will assist with achieving National Policy Objectives of increasing housing supply in the right location through compact sustainable growth, thereby improving citizen’s quality of life and contributing toward promoting sustainable travel modes and stemming the impacts of climate change.

The **‘Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities’** promotes building up urban infill sites (which may not have been built on before) and states *“there is a presumption in favour of buildings of increased height in our town/city cores and in other urban locations with good public transport accessibility”*. Development of this site is entirely consistent with this Specific Planning Policy Requirement (SPPR) and satisfies the development management criteria for increased building height.

The subject site is located within the newly extended functional area of Cork City Council. Development at this location is governed by the objectives and policies contained within the **2015 Cork City Development Plan (CDP)** and the **2014 Cork County Development Plan (CDP)**. The CDP was subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) during the plan preparation process. The purpose of the SEA is to provide a clear understanding of the likely environmental consequences of decisions regarding the adoption and implementation of the Plan. Where potential conflicts with strategic environmental objectives (SEOs) are identified, the SEA determined that these are likely to be mitigated by complying with policies included in the plan. The SEA concludes that avoidance of conflict with SEOs and the environment is dependent upon compliance with the mitigation measures which have emerged through the SEA, Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment processes and which have been integrated into the Plan.

The results of the SEA as briefly referenced in the preceding paragraph have been taken into account for the purposes of this screening appraisal in so far as appears relevant, recognising that these results relate to strategic decision making rather than project level assessment.

Permission for the development of these lands was originally granted under Ref. 03/122 on September 12th, 2003.

A search of the **Cork City Council Planning Database** did not reveal any additional existing or approved consents within the immediate catchment (c. 500m) of the subject site that, which would have in-combination effects that would be capable of resulting in significant impacts to the environment. It is reasonable to assume that all development consents would incorporate conditions requiring protection of the environment during the construction phase.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development will have a significant permanent positive impact when considered in the context of existing and/or approved plans or projects.

3.1.2 The Nature of Any Associated Demolition Works

The site is a brownfield site and no demolition works are required.

3.1.3 Use of Natural Resources

The proposed development is on a brownfield site previously disturbed due to construction activities, with a low value ecological habitat. It will be connected to public main water supply and foul sewer system. The development is for 123 no. residential units and ancillary uses and there will be no activities on site which would have a high demand for water resources. Natural resources may be used in the construction process (i.e. stone, gravel, water), but during the operational phase there will be no out of the ordinary use of natural resources.

3.1.4 Production of Wastes

Residues and emissions from the construction phase of the development will be related to construction waste and emissions from construction plant. No out of the ordinary residues, or emissions, are likely during the construction phase of the development and an environmental construction waste management plan will include details of any mitigation measures if required. No residues are likely during the operational phase of the development. Emissions will be linked to air conditioning and heating systems and will fall within regulated standards for modern residential developments. Operational waste generated will be domestic waste from the residential units. All domestic waste will be disposed of by a licensed waste contractor.

3.1.5 Pollution and Nuisances

A **Construction and Environmental Plan Management Plan (CEMP)** by McCutcheon Halley Planning has been prepared for the development. It will describe the environmental measures and procedures to be followed for the duration of the construction phase. It proposes mitigation measures where appropriate for managing noise, dust, suspended solids, accidental spillages, traffic and waste.

In terms of dust nuisance during the construction phase, the site is surrounded by existing residential development. Standard dust mitigation measures will be integrated into the construction phase and it is considered that any impact would be short-term and not significant i.e. an effect which causes noticeable changes in the character of the environment but without significant consequences

During the operational stage it is considered that the proposed residential development would not have any negative impact in terms of pollution or nuisance. The site is located proximate to a host of public transport services easily accessible to future occupants. The need to travel by car would be reduced and local air quality would benefit.

The design incorporates energy efficiency measures to meet the standards of the recently introduced NZEB Part L Regulations and will thus positively contribute to a reduction in fossil fuel use and associated greenhouse gas emissions.

3.1.6 Risks of Accidents and/or disasters

The site, of circa 1.22 ha, is located west east of Cork City Centre. The surrounding area is made up of predominantly residential dwelling units.

The proposed development is on a brownfield site, of low ecological value in terms of habitat. An Appropriate Assessment Screening has been carried out by McCutcheon Halley Planning, which concludes that the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the qualifying interests and conservation objectives for Natura 2000 sites, and that the integrity of these sites will not be adversely affected.

The site is not located within a Flood Zone.

The most environmental sensitive aspect of the geographical area is the amenity of existing residential units.

3.1.7 Risks to Human Health

Construction sites pose potential risk to the health and safety of the public. However, access by the public would be considered trespassing on private property. Assuming observance of private property, no health and safety impacts to the public would be anticipated.

A description of the measures to manage construction traffic on the public road to ensure the protection of human health will be provided in the CEMP.

To reduce the potential for health and safety risks, the project developer would require that all contractors prepare a site-specific health and safety plan before initiating construction activities. The plan would inform those on site of the measures to take in the event of an emergency and would be maintained for the duration of the construction phase.

During the operational phase the risk to human health is considered to be negligible. The proposed design provides for the segregation of pedestrians and traffic and incorporates the principles of universal access and the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations so that the development will be readily accessible to all, regardless of age, ability or disability.

The integration of energy efficient measures into the design will provide for healthier living standards for future occupants.

The design has been reviewed by a Fire Consultant and has been assessed as meeting all requirements to ensure the protection of future occupants in the event of a fire.

4.0 Location of the Proposed Development

4.1 Existing and Approved Land Use

The site, of circa 1.22 ha, is located 8.2km west of Cork City Centre. The surrounding area is made up of predominantly residential dwelling units.

There have been a number of relevant planning applications relating to our client's site. These are summarised below:

Cork County Council Ref. 03/122 – Parent permission

Cork County Council granted planning permission for a mixed-use town centre development (including residential, retail/service, civic and office uses). An EIS was submitted as part of this application. This permission has expired.

Cork County Council Ref. 06/13556

Cork County Council granted permission the construction of a two storey extension to shopping centre to include 7 no. retail units and all ancillary staff facilities and storage areas, partial removal of existing surface car park and construction of 78 no. space surface car park, construction of four storey building with 2 no. retail units and retail showroom at ground floor level and 4 no. office units on three upper floor levels, single storey drive-thru restaurant / take away, 20 no. surface car parking spaces with access onto the Spine Rd and 210 no. basement/surface car parking spaces with access via existing entrance from Main St., construction of 2 storey office building with 6 no. units and attached 3 level 444 no. space multi-storey car park and all ancillary site development works to include pedestrian facilities, landscaping, 3 no. kiosk access points to underground parking, fencing, 3 no. ESB substations and signage and modifications to 2 no. permitted vehicular entrance and 2 no. existing entrances.

Cork County Council Ref. 08/5508

Cork County Council granted permission for the provision of 46 no. additional car parking spaces, adjoining and with access from the multi-level car park permitted under planning ref. 06/13556.

Cork County Council Ref. 08/6613

Cork County Council granted permission for the provision of 47 no. additional car parking spaces, adjoining and with access from the multi-level car park permitted under planning ref. 06/13556.

The proposed site is on lands zoned for “*Town Centre Uses*” in the 2017 Ballincollig – Carrigaline Municipal District Local Area Plan where Objective BG-T-03 applies. This objective states as follows:

“Completion of the Ballincollig Town Centre (former Murphy Barracks) site for town centre uses. The redevelopment of vacant properties for office-based activities including incubator units and start-ups will be considered in this area.”

The proposed development is in line with this objective.

4.1.1 Transboundary Impacts

Given the location of the proposed development there will be no transboundary impacts.

4.2 Natural Resources & Absorption Capacity

4.2.1 Landscape Character

The site may be considered as comprising an open character with grassed areas.

It is entirely appropriate that the site be developed for residential use and this is consistent with the site's zoning objective and compatible with its existing surrounding environment.

The proposed development consists of:

- a) The construction of 123 no. residential units in 3 no. blocks which range in height from 3 to 6 storeys and comprising a mix of 1 & 2 bed apartments;
- b) 1 no. creche / childcare facility, internal residential amenity space and residents gym;
- c) The provision of landscaping and amenity areas including play/amenity areas at podium level;
- d) The provision of a set-down area, footpaths, cycle lane and table-top junction arrangement at the access to the development on the Old Fort Road; and
- e) All associated ancillary development to include pedestrian/cyclist facilities, lighting, drainage, boundary treatments, bin storage, plant, ESB Sub-station and bicycle, motorbike and car parking provided at ground and under-croft level.

4.2.2 Visual / Amenity Impact

During the construction phase, plant and machinery will be required on-site. The impact of the construction phase is considered to be neutral, not significant and temporary.

The layout and design of the proposed development is cognisant of the amenities of surrounding land uses. While the construction of the proposed development is likely to result in change to the visual environment from some nearby viewpoints, having regard to the planning history of the site, the pattern of residential development that has taken place on the sites in the area and local, regional and national planning policy for the densification of the urban area, these changes are considered not significant, and consistent with emerging trends for development in the area.

4.2.3 Biodiversity

An AA Screening report for Appropriate Assessment has been carried out by McCutcheon Halley Planning and is based on the best available scientific information and shows that the proposed development at Ballincollig poses no risk of likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, and therefore does not require progression to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. Based on this conclusion it is submitted that the competent authority can determine, based on objective scientific information, that an Appropriate Assessment is not required.

4.2.4 Land & Soil

The site is not within a Geological Heritage Area. Development of the Ballincollig site will necessitate the stripping of topsoil and excavation of the underlying subsoils. However, given the location of the site, within an existing built-up area, the loss of both land-use and soils is considered appropriate. The proposed scheme retains a significant amount of land for open space and the excavated topsoil will be reused for landscaping.

4.2.5 Water Environment

It is not considered that the construction stage would pose a significant risk to the local surface water environment, subject to standard proven construction mitigation measures being implemented.

During the operational stage generated foul effluent and surface water will be discharged to the existing municipal sewer. The development will not impact on the local surface or groundwater environment.

4.2.6 Flood Risk

The Office of Public Works (OPW) Flood Maps identifies that the site or its surrounds have not flooded in the past. There is very low potential for surface water run-off from neighbouring properties to enter the site. All neighbouring lands are composed of built up mature residential areas with their own surface water collection and drainage systems in place.

4.2.7 Cultural Heritage

There will be no impacts on Cultural Heritage in the area as a result of the proposed development.

5.0 Type & Characteristics of Potential Impacts

This section of the report focuses on those effects that are likely to occur during both the construction and operational stages. The potential for impacts arising during the construction and operational phases has already been considered in the report above. The characteristics of the likely effects arising from the proposed development are rated using the descriptive terminology presented in the EPA (2017) *Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports – Draft*.

We note the criteria of paragraph 3 of Schedule 7, *Characteristics of Potential Impacts*;

-) *The potential significant effects of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2 above, and having regard in particular to:*
 -) *the extent of the impact (geographical area and size of the affected population),*
 -) *the trans frontier nature of the impact,*
 -) *the magnitude and complexity of the impact,*
 -) *the probability of the impact,*
 -) *the duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.*

These criteria are dealt with in the report above and **Table 1** below summarises the predicted post-mitigation significance, quality and duration of the identified likely effects.

Table 1 demonstrates that post-mitigation there is no significant negative effect predicted to result from the development of the lands at Old Fort Road, Ballincollig, Cork.

Characteristic	Possible Effect	Probability	Extent	Significance of Effect	Quality of Effect	Duration
Landscape	Loss of open space character as a result of development of Brownfield area	Unlikely	Local	Not significant	Neutral	Permanent
Visual	Emergence of plant and machinery associated with the construction phase	Likely	Local	Not significant	Neutral	Temporary
Land	Loss of brownfield land	Likely	Local	Not significant	Neutral	Permanent
Soil	None	-	-	-	-	-
Water	Potential increase in surface water run-off to existing surface water sewer	Likely	Local	Not significant	Neutral	Permanent
Air	Dust emissions associated with construction works, wind blow from stockpiles, or machinery movement may lead to reduction in air quality.	Likely	Local	Not significant	Neutral	Temporary
	Exhaust emissions from construction vehicles may result in a reduction of air quality.	Likely	Local	Imperceptible	Neutral	Temporary

Noise	Increase in noise during construction phase	Likely	Local	Imperceptible	Neutral	Temporary
Cultural Heritage	Damage to unrecorded subsurface archaeological features that may exist within the site	Unlikely	Site	Imperceptible	Neutral	Permanent

Table 1 Description of Effects – Post Mitigation

6.0 Conclusion

Development of the site for residential use is appropriate in the context of the site's zoning objective and national policy. With proposed mitigation measures in place, it is not anticipated that the construction or operational phases of the proposed development, whether considered on its own or together with in-combination projects or plans, will give rise to likely significant environmental effects. Therefore, a sub-threshold environmental impact assessment is not required to accompany the application.

Likely positive effects are forecast as the land will provide much needed sustainable residential development consistent with the zoning objective for the site. The retention of existing vegetation on-site, where possible and their enhancement through new landscaping will result in a positive biodiversity impact. The energy efficient measures incorporated into the design will have a positive effect on climate change.

The change to the landscape as a result of the development is not significant as it is consistent with existing urban development.

A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) by McCutcheon Halley Planning has been prepared for the development. It describes the environmental measures and procedures to be followed for the duration of the construction phase. It will refer to mitigation measures for inter alia, managing noise, dust, suspended solids, accidental spillages, traffic and waste. The detailed CEMP will be implemented for the construction phase and likely impacts and nuisances that arise during all development proposals of this nature will be managed using standard proven controls.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report that is included with the planning application demonstrates that the proposed development will not impact on identified European Designated Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed development either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.