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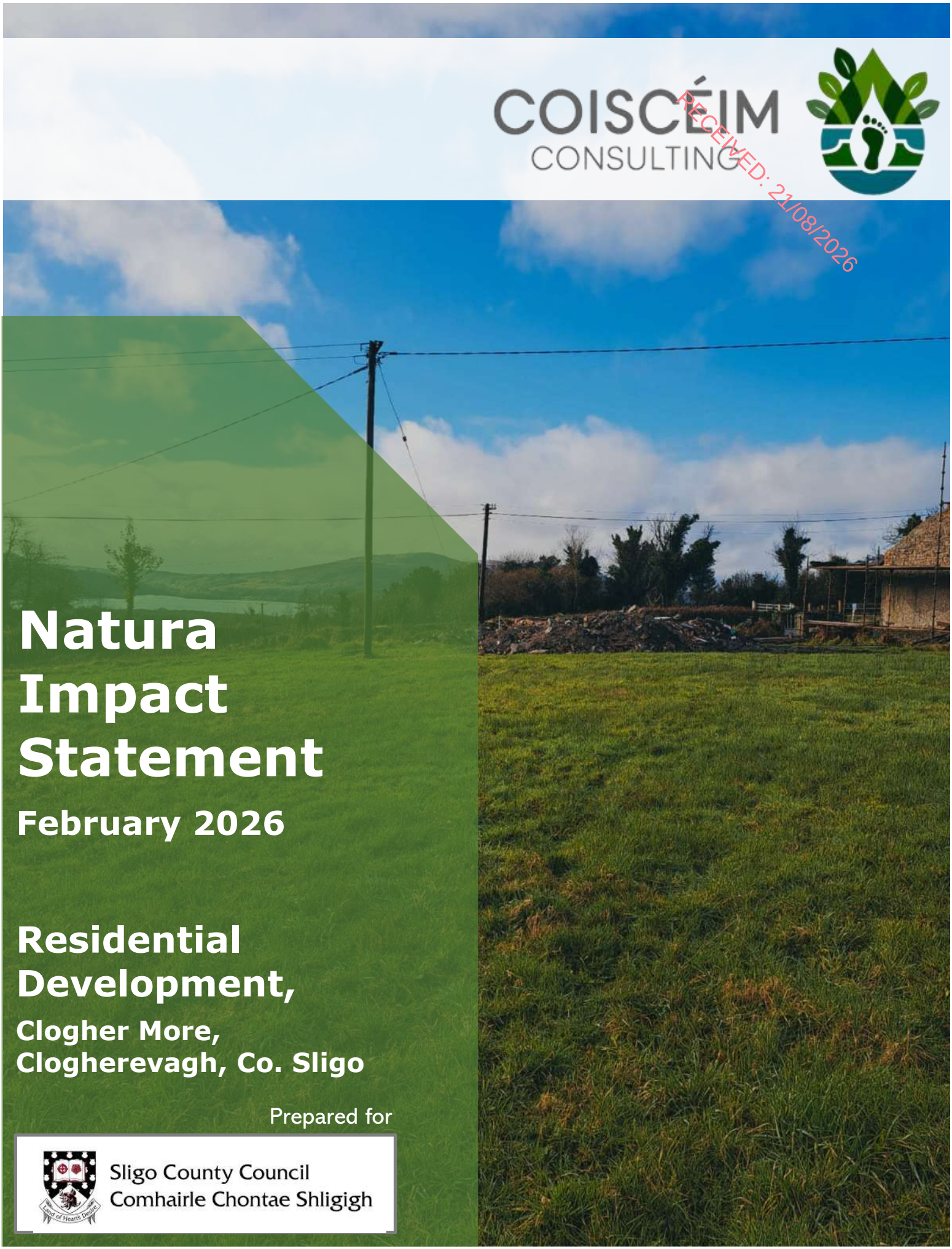

Natura Impact Statement

February 2026

Residential Development,

Clogher More, Clogherevagh, Co. Sligo

Prepared for

Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

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Project Title:	Clogherevagh Residential Development		**Project Ref:**	LGSH1
Document Title:	Natura Impact Statement		**Status:**	Final
Revision:	**Issue Date:**	**Author:**	**Reviewed by:**	**Approved by:**
V1.0	18.03.2026	AH	NB/ PH	NB

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1 Introduction

This Natura Impact Statement report has been prepared by Coiscéim Consulting on behalf of Aishling and Edwin Koenck who intend to apply for permission for the construction of a new 4-bedroom dwelling and garage on a site of 0.22 Ha located along Clogherevagh Road, Clogher More, Clogherevagh, Co. Sligo.

This NIS has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive), and with the provisions of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) ("Planning Act").

The report considers the implications of the Proposed Development, (on its own and in combination with other plans or projects), on European sites in view of the conservation objectives of those sites. It examines the evidence and data to identify and assess the implications of the Proposed Development on European sites, in view of the conservation objectives of each of those sites. It considers whether the Proposed Development, by itself and in combination with other plans or projects, would adversely affect the integrity of any European sites. In reaching a conclusion, the mitigation measures deemed necessary to avoid or reduce any potential negative impacts, are proposed and explained.

An Appropriate Assessment of the Proposed Development is required for this project as, in view of the best scientific knowledge and on the basis of objective information, it cannot be excluded that the Proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a likely significant effect on some European site(s) in view of their conservation objectives.

The purpose of this NIS is to provide an examination, analysis and evaluation of the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on European sites and to present findings and conclusions with respect to the Proposed Development in light of the best scientific knowledge in the field. This NIS will inform and assist the competent authority, An Bord Pleanála (ABP) in the remitted appeal), in carrying out its Appropriate Assessment as to whether or not the Proposed Development will adversely affect the integrity of any European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, taking into account their conservation objectives.

The Proposed Development is neither connected with nor necessary for the management of any European sites.

1.1 Legislative Context

The Birds and Habitats Directives - Council Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive) and Council Directive 92 /43 /EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive) – require Ireland to establish protected sites as part of a European wide network of sites (the Natura 2000 network which are known in Ireland as European sites) for habitats and species that are of international importance for conservation. In Ireland, European sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). SACs are selected for habitats listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive (including priority Annex I habitat types which are in danger of disappearance) and species listed on Annex II. SPAs are selected for bird species (listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive), regularly occurring populations of migratory bird species (such as ducks, geese and waders), and areas of international importance for migratory birds. The specified habitats and species for which each SAC and SPA is selected,

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correspond to the qualifying interests (in the case of SACs) or special conservation interest species (in the case of SPAs) for the sites, for which conservation objectives are prepared.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive states that:

'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.'

This provision is transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning Act. Section 177U(4) of the said Planning Acts provides for screening for Appropriate Assessment as follows:

'The competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of [...] a Proposed Development [...] is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the [...] Proposed Development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.'

Section 177T(1) and (2) provide that a NIS is '*a statement, for the purposes of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, of the implications of a Proposed Development, on its own or in combination with other plans or projects, for one or more than one European site, in view of the conservation objectives of the site or sites' and specifies that it 'shall include a report of a scientific examination of evidence and data, carried out by competent persons to identify and classify any implications for one or more than one European site in view of the conservation objectives of the site or sites'*.

The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has made relevant rulings in relation to Appropriate Assessment, regarding when it is required, its purpose and the standards it should meet. Two of the key rulings include, Case C-127/02 Waddenzee where the CJEU found that '*Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site is to be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that it will have a significant effect on that site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects*' and that the plan or project may only be authorised '*where no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects*', and Case C-258/11 where the CJEU found that *'[The Appropriate Assessment] cannot have lacunae and must contain complete, precise and definitive findings and conclusions capable of removing all reasonable scientific doubt as to the effects of the works proposed on the protected site concerned*'.

In this report, consideration also has been given to the evolution in interpretation and application of directives and national legislation arising from recent case-law studies of the European and Irish courts, in respect of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive.

2 Methodology

2.1 Statement of Competence

This report was authored by Aoife Hillman and reviewed by Niamh Burke of Coiscéim Consulting. The background and experience of the authors and contributors of this report are set out below.

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Niamh Burke is Principal Ecologist with Coiscéim Consulting. She holds a BSc (Hons) in Natural Sciences with Environmental Science and a PhD in salmonid ecology. She is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv) with the Society for the Environment (Soc Env) and a Full Member of the CIEEM (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management). Niamh is a senior scientist with academic research and consulting experience in terrestrial ecology, aquatic ecology and fluvial geomorphology. She is an experienced project manager with a full working knowledge of EIA, the planning process and relevant environmental legislation, both national and European. She also holds a post-graduate diploma in Environmental Law and Planning, from the honourable Society of Kings Inns.

With a specialism in aquatic habitats, she also has experience of terrestrial species' surveys and mitigation approaches. In her extensive consultancy roles, she has acted as reviewer for all ecological reporting, ensuring consistency of standards and approach.

Aoife Hillman-Allen is a Graduate Ecologist holding a First-Class Honours BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science with Ecology. She was presented with an award for Academic Excellence along with the Environmental Sciences Association of Ireland Undergraduate of the Year Award for her dissertation. Aoife took electives on EIA & Planning and has completed extensive coursework on terrestrial and aquatic ecology, environmental legislation and natural resource management. She has authored and contributed to numerous AA Screening, NIS and EcIA reports.

2.2 Guidance and Approach

This report has been prepared with site-specific information gained from a desktop study and survey visits undertaken in January 2026.

This Nature Impact Statement has been prepared in reference to the following documents:

European Commission Guidance:

- *Assessment of Plans and Projects in Relation to Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2021)
- *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2001)
- *Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The Provisions of Article 6 of the Habitat's Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2019)
- *Communication from the Commission on the Precautionary Principle* (European Commission 2000)
- *Nature and Biodiversity Cases – Ruling of the European Court of Justice* (European Commission 2006)
- *Article 6 of the Habitats Directive – Rulings of the European Court of Justice* (European Commission Final Draft September 2014)

National Guidance:

- *OPR Practice Note PN01. Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management* (Office of the Planning Regulator, 2021)
- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2010 revision)
- Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities. *Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10* (NPWS, 2010)

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- The following guidance has been referenced in characterising the habitats and impacts, including determining magnitude and significance of impacts, as relevant in the application to Appropriate Assessment and European sites:
- *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Assessment, 2018)
- *Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports* (EPA, August 2017)
- *Environmental Guidelines Series for Planning and Construction of National Roads* (National Roads Authority, 2005-2009)

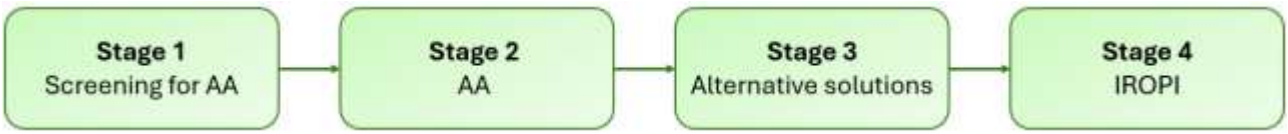
The following documents were referenced during the Desk-top study to inform the assessment:

- Online data available on European sites and protected habitats/species as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie, including conservation objectives documents
- Online data available on protected species as held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) from www.biodiversityireland.ie
- Information on the surface water network and surface water quality in the area available from www.epa.ie
- Information on groundwater resources and groundwater quality in the area available from www.epa.ie and www.gsi.ie
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from www.osi.ie
- Information on the location, nature and design of the Proposed Development supplied by the applicant's design team
- Sligo County Development Plan *2024 – 2030*

2.3 Appropriate Assessment Process

Guidance on the Appropriate Assessment (AA) process was produced by the European Commission in 2002, which was subsequently developed into guidance specifically for Ireland by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) (2009). These guidance documents identify a staged approach to conducting an AA, as shown in Figure 2.1:

Figure 2.1 The Appropriate Assessment Process



2.3.1 Stage 1 – Screening for AA

The initial, screening stage of the Appropriate Assessment is to determine:

a. whether the proposed plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European designated site for nature conservation

b. if it is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the European designated site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects

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For those sites where potential adverse impacts are identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, further assessment is necessary to determine if the proposals will have an adverse impact on the integrity of a European designated site, in view of the site's conservation objectives (i.e. the process proceeds to Stage 2).

2.3.2 Stage 2 – AA

This stage requires a more in-depth evaluation of the plan or project, and the potential direct and indirect impacts of them on the integrity and interest features of the European designated site(s), alone and in-combination with other plans and projects, taking into account the site's structure, function and conservation objectives. Where required, mitigation or avoidance measures will be suggested.

The competent authority can only agree to the plan or project after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site(s) concerned. If this cannot be determined, and where mitigation cannot be achieved, then alternative solutions will need to be considered (i.e. the process proceeds to Stage 3).

2.3.3 Stage 3 – Alternative Solutions

Where adverse impacts on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites are identified, and mitigation cannot be satisfactorily implemented, alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the plan or project that avoid adverse impacts need to be considered. If none can be found, the process proceeds to Stage 4.

2.3.4 Stage 4 - IROPI

Where adverse impacts of a plan or project on the integrity of Natura 2000 sites are identified and no alternative solutions exist, the plan will only be allowed to progress if imperative reasons of overriding public interest can be demonstrated. In this case compensatory measures will be required.

The process only proceeds through each of the four stages for certain plans or projects. For example, for a plan or project, not connected with management of a site, but where no likely significant impacts are identified, the process stops at stage 1. Throughout the process, the precautionary principle must be applied, so that any uncertainties do not result in adverse impacts on a site.

2.1 Source-Pathway-Receptor Approach

Consideration has been given to the **source-pathway-receptor** approach in this screening assessment. This is a standard tool in environmental assessment consistent with the approach outlined in National and European guidance. The source-pathway-receptor concept in ecological impact assessment relates to the idea that for the risk of an impact to occur, a 'source' is needed, e.g. a construction site; then a 'receptor', in this case, sites designated for nature conservation; and finally, a ‘pathway’ between the source and the receptor, (for example, a watercourse that links the development site to the designated site). Even though there may be connection between Source and Receptor, (i.e.: potential risk of impact), that does not mean that it might necessarily occur, and if it does occur, it may not be significant. Identification of a risk means that there is a possibility of ecological or environmental damage occurring, with the level and significance of the impact depending upon the nature and exposure to the risk and the characteristics of the receptor (in this instance, this is any Natura 2000 sites).

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2.2 Site Survey

The initial baseline survey of the proposed site for the Proposed Development (the Study Area) was conducted on 30/01/2026 to record the habitats within the site, and to detect the presence or likely presence, of a range of protected species.

Fauna were recorded by sightings, signs of presence and/or activity. Notes of potentially valuable habitat features for protected species that may occur on the site were made during the walkovers. The Proposed Development and study area for the purposes of this NIS are set out in Figure 3.1.

Any non-native invasive species were also recorded.

Ecological Survey methods were in general accordance with those outlined in the following documents;

- Habitat Survey Guidelines (The Heritage Council, 2011)
- A guide to Habitats in Ireland (the Heritage Council 2000)
- Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), 1990, revised 2003);
- Ecological Surveying Techniques for Protected Flora and Fauna during the Planning of National Road Schemes (NRA, 2009)
- *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Assessment, 2018)

Aerial photographs and site maps assisted the habitat survey.

Habitat maps have been produced in general accordance with the habitat codes as developed by Dr Julie Fossitt (Heritage Council 2000) and outlined in 'Habitat Survey Guidelines' (Irish Heritage Council, 2011)

3 Project Description

The project proposal involves the construction of a 2-storey 4-bedroom dwelling with a total floor area of 2250ft², a garage, a new site entrance and all associated ancillary works on a 0.23-hectare site in Clogher More, Clogherevagh, Co. Sligo. The proposed development layout is provided in Appendix A.

The land surrounding the site is principally occupied by agriculture, with significant areas of natural vegetation and moderate housing density. Broadleaved woodland is present to the south and east. The Lough Gill Loop Road (R286) runs along the site's southern boundary.

The proposed development site slopes in a southeast direction, towards Lough Gill. There is existing vegetation around the perimeters of the site. The proposed works include earthworks to attain levels required for the build.

The development will be served in compliance with the EPA Code of Practice: Wastewater Treatment and Disposal Systems Serving Single Houses (p.e. ≤ 10), by 1 no. domestic Tricel Novo IRL6+ wastewater treatment plant designed to treat a maximum of 900 L per day. The Tricel Novo is fully in conformance with EN12566-3 and complies with SR66. The Novo IRL6+ has a capacity of 4000 litres, of which 2400 are in the primary chamber, this ensures a long desludging interval.

Liquids shall then be pumped to 1 no. Tricel Tero module with a coconut coir polishing filter for tertiary treatment and disposed into the ground through a 25 m^2 (5 m x 5 m) gravel distribution bed comprising of a 300 mm layer of 12 -32 mm gravel.

All foul and grey water will discharge to the new system with grease trap fitted to kitchen and utility.

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The proposed drainage layout has been designed in accordance with a site-specific Tricel Site Recommendation Report (Tricel, 2025). The proposed drainage layout is provided in Appendix B.

Figure 3.1 Site Location

4 Screening Assessment (Stage 1)

4.1 Overview of the Receiving Environment

4.1.1 European Sites

The proposed development is located along Clogherevagh Road, Clogher More, Clogherevagh, Co. Sligo.

There are 13 European sites located within 15 km of the proposed development. Lough Gill SAC is in closest proximity, located approximately 115 m at its closest point to the southeast.

All of the European sites present in the vicinity of the proposed scheme are shown in Figure 4.1 below. The QIs/SCIs of the European sites within 15km of the proposed scheme are provided in Table 4.1 below.

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Figure 4.1 European Sites in the Vicinity of the Proposed Scheme

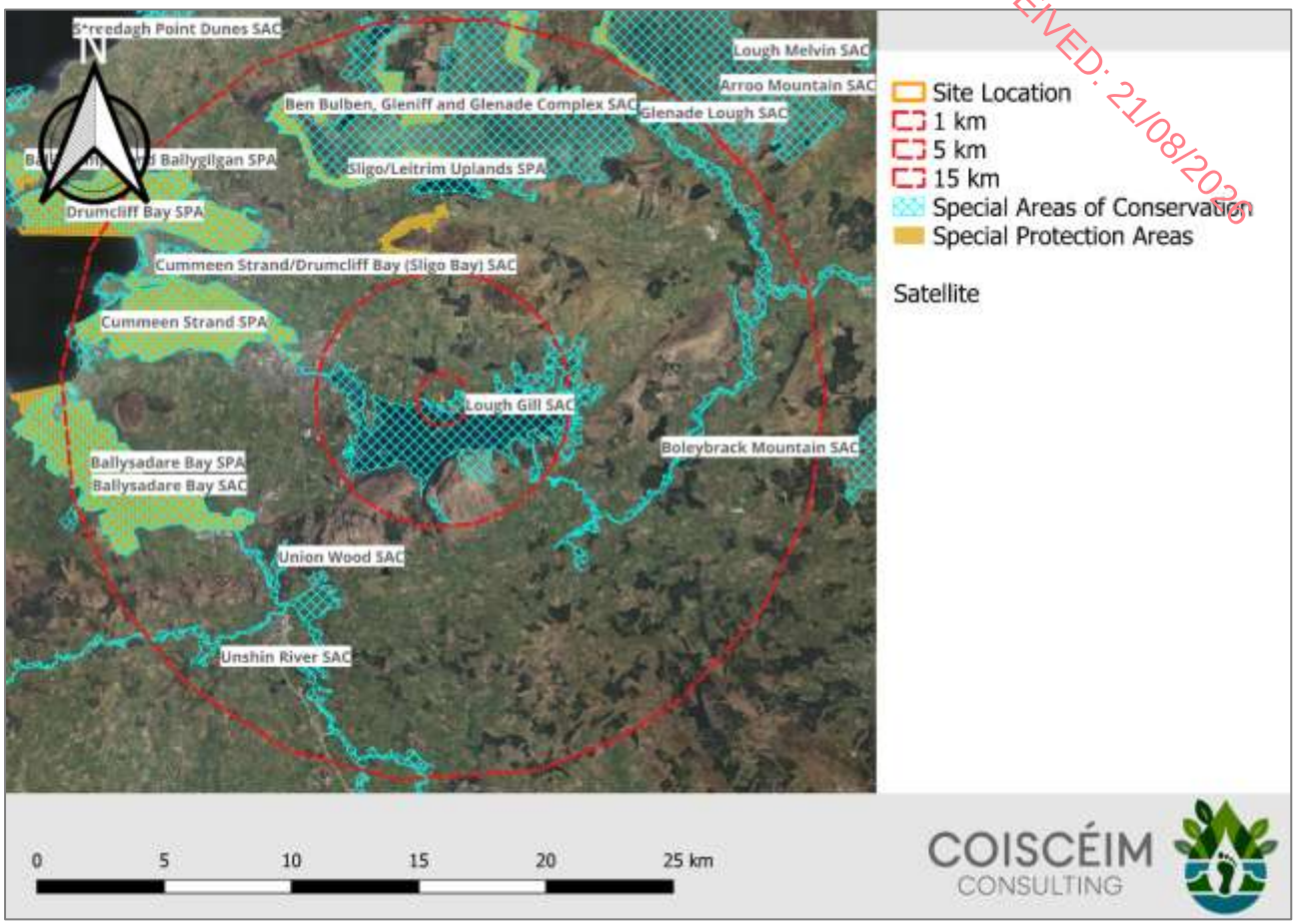

Figure 4.2 Location of the Proposed Development Site in Relation to Lough Gill SAC

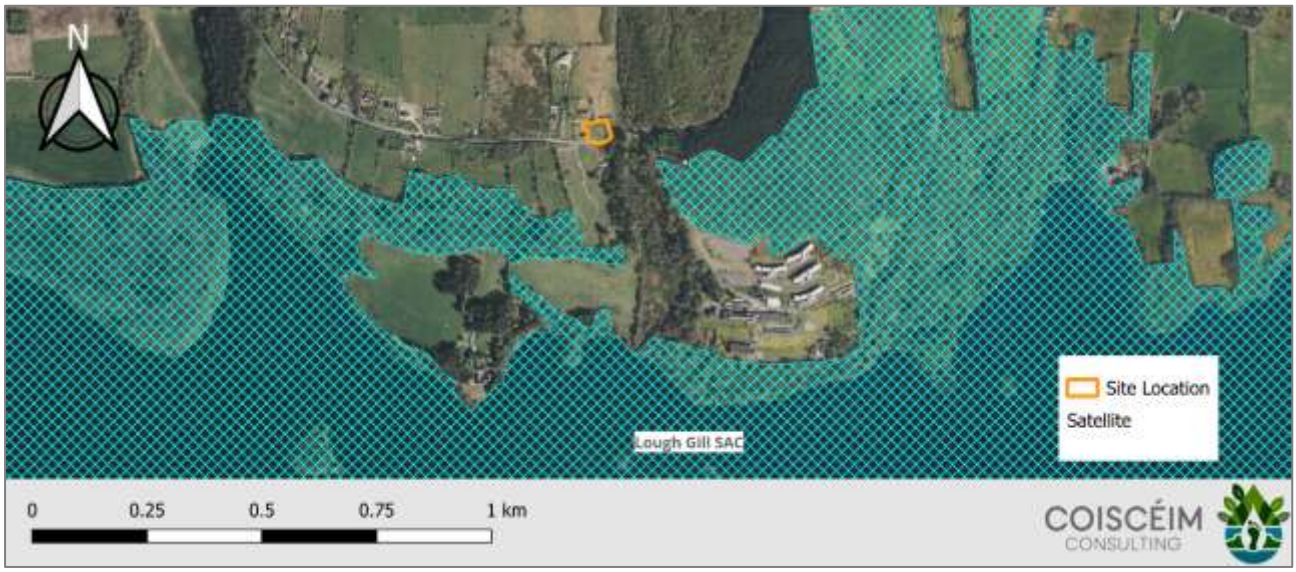

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Table 4.1 European Sites in the Vicinity of the Proposed Scheme

Site Name and Code	Distance from Operation	Reasons for designation[1] (*=Priority Annex I Habitat)[2] (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives)
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)		
Lough Gill SAC [001976]	115 m SE	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]
Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA [004187]	5.5 km N	Peregrine (Falco peregrinus) [A103] Chough (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax) [A346]
Cummeen Strand / Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC [000627]	5.6 km W	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]
Cummeen Strand SPA [004035]	6.0 km W	Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
Benbulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex SAC [000623]	7.2 km N	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]

[1] Qualifying Interests" for SACs and "Special Conservation Interests" for SPAs based on relevant Statutory Instruments for each SPA, and NPWS Conservation Objectives for SACs downloaded from www.npws.ie in September 2018. Data on NHA/pNHA sites from the site synopsis documents published by the NPWS (where available).

[2] Priority Annex I habitat types are denoted with an "*" and are habitat types which are in danger of disappearance at a European level – from the definition of "priority natural habitat types" in Article 1(d) of the Habitats Directive

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Site Name and Code	Distance from Operation	Reasons for designation[1] (*=Priority Annex I Habitat)[2] (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives)
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)		
		Species-rich Nardus grasslands, on siliceous substrates in mountain areas (and submountain areas, in Continental Europe) [6230] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Alkaline fens [7230] Siliceous scree of the montane to snow levels (Androsacetalia alpinae and Galeopsietalia ladani) [8110] Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (Thlaspietea rotundifolii) [8120] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210] Vertigo geyeri (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]
Union Wood SAC [000638]	8.2 km SW	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]
Unshin River SAC [001898]	8.2 km SW	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]
Ballysadare Bay SAC [000622]	8.6 km SW	Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] Vertigo angustior (Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail) [1014] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]
Ballysadare Bay SPA [004129]	8.6 km SW	Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
Drumcliff Bay SPA [004013]	9.6 km NW	Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]
Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA [004234]	13.0 km NW	Barnacle Goose (Branta leucopsis) [A045]

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Site Name and Code	Distance from Operation	Reasons for designation[1] (*=Priority Annex I Habitat)[2] (Sourced from NPWS online Conservation Objectives)
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)		
Glenade Lough SAC [001919]	13.4 km NE	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]
Arroo Mountain SAC [001403]	14.4 km NE	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Calcareous and calcshist screes of the montane to alpine levels (Thlaspietea rotundifolii) [8120] Calcareous rocky slopes with chasmophytic vegetation [8210]

4.2 Baseline Surveys

Baseline surveys of the site were undertaken by Aoife Hillman-Allen. The initial site visit was undertaken on 30/01/2026. Habitats and the potential for protected species within and close to the proposed development site were defined.

In addition, a desktop review was carried out to collate the available information on the ecological environment within a 15 km radius (or further where an ecological link exists) of the development site. The National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS) database was consulted concerning designated conservation areas, individual site synopsis for each conservation area, conservation objectives, standard Natura 2000 data forms and GIS layering. The following documents were referenced during the desk-top study to inform the Appropriate Assessment and the baseline ecology information:

- Online data available on European sites and habitats/species as held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) from www.npws.ie, including conservation objectives documents.
- Online data available on protected species as held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) from www.biodiversityireland.ie
- Information on the hydrology in the area available from www.epa.ie
- Information on soils, geology and hydrogeology in the area available at www.epa.ie
- Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) online Spatial Resources service. www.gsi.ie
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland mapping and aerial photography available from www.osi.ie
- GeoHive online mapping (https://geohive.ie/index.html)

4.2.1 Geology, Hydrogeology and Soils

The proposed development site is located above a Karstified (conduit) Regionally Important Aquifer upon the Dartry Limestone Formation which consists of dark fine-grained cherty limestone. This is a good aquifer capable of supplying regionally important supplies (e.g., large public water supplies). Soils, as described by Teagasc, consist of shallow well-drained mineral.

The groundwater body which the site is situated on is the Carrowmore East groundwater body (WFD Code: IE_WE_G_0042), with an overall groundwater status of 'Good' but is considered to be 'At Risk' of not

achieving its status objectives under the WFD. Groundwater vulnerability to human activities throughout the site and surrounding area is 'Moderate' to 'High'. Groundwater vulnerability is 'Extreme' or rock is near the surface of the majority of the site.

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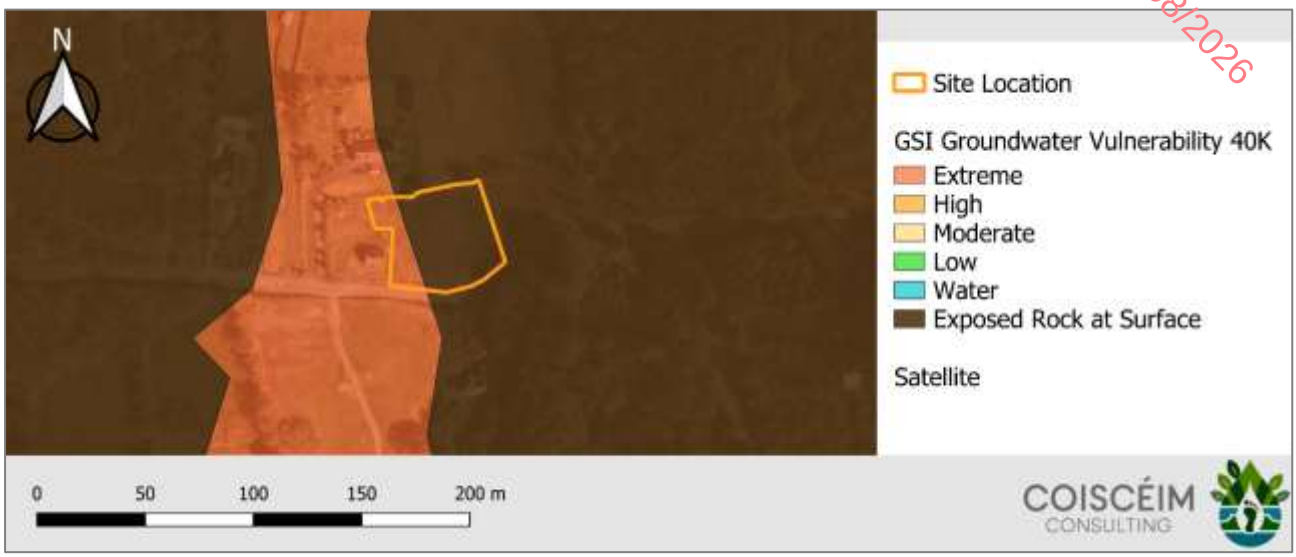
Figure 4.3 Groundwater Vulnerability in the Vicinity of the Proposed Development Site



4.2.2 Hydrology and WFD Status

The proposed development is located within the Bonet_SC_030 (ID: 35_10) sub catchment of the Sligo Bay catchment.

Lough Gill (WFD Code: IE_WE_35_158) is located approximately 400 m to the south of the proposed development site.

The lake is fed primarily by the River Bonet (WFD Code: IE_WE_35G010200), and outflows through the Garavogue (WFD Code: IE_WE_35G010200).

Lough Gill holds a WFD status (2019-2024) of 'Moderate' as defined by biological elements (invertebrates), representing an improvement from the last WFD cycle (2016-2021), when it was classified as 'Poor'. Lough Gill is considered to be 'At Risk' of failing to achieve WFD objectives.

The inlet (River Bonet) and outlet (Garavogue) both hold a status of 'Poor' and are also considered to be 'At Risk' of failing to achieve WFD objectives.

4.2.3 Habitat Survey

This section describes the habitat as recorded currently on the site of the proposed development. Table 4.2 below list the Fossitt habitat types noted, and Figure 4.4 provides a spatial representation of these habitats within and in the surrounding lands of the site. Site boundaries upon the habitat map are denoted by a dashed white line. Land take is required as part of this scheme.

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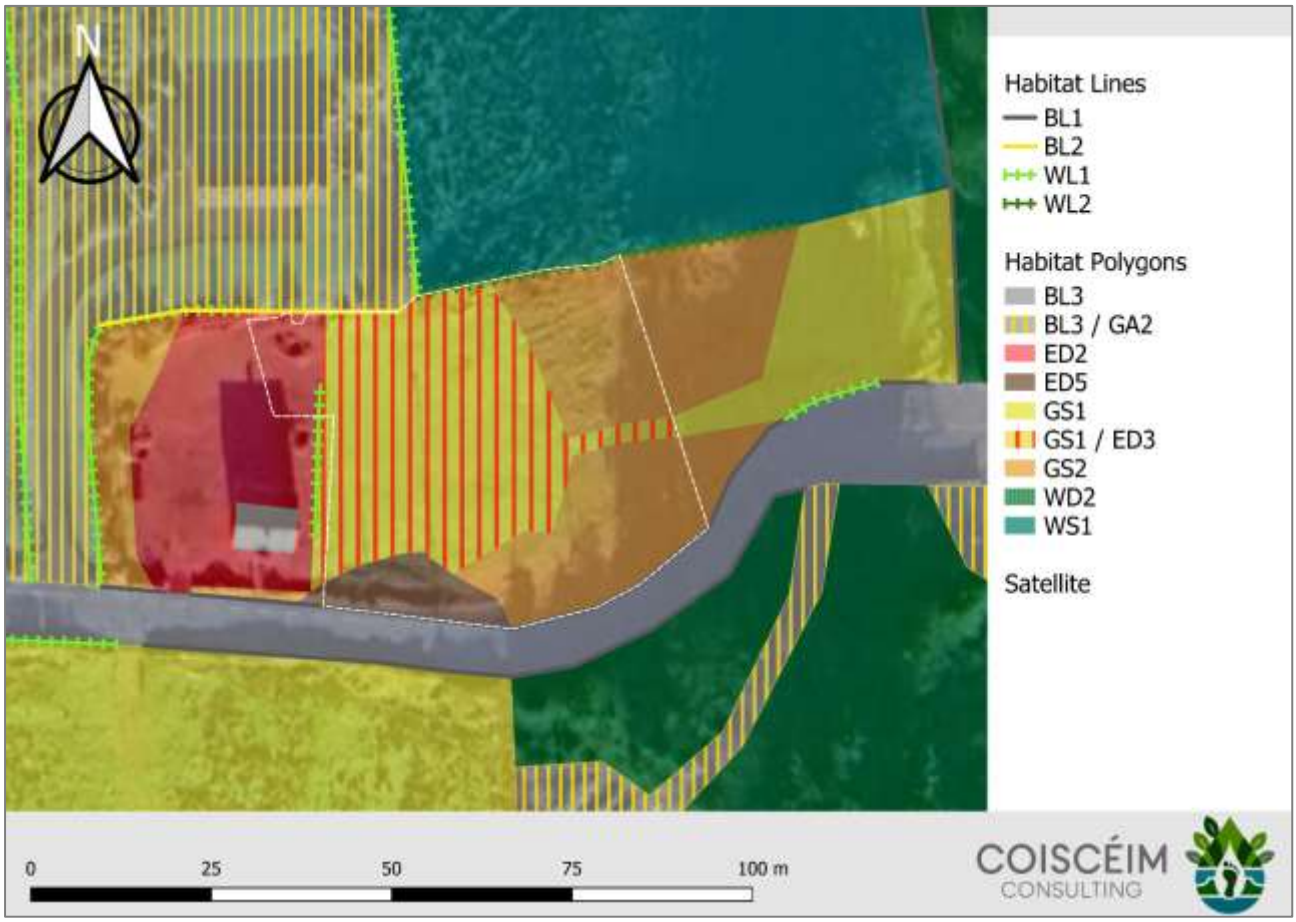
Table 4.2 Habitats recorded in proximity to the bridge site

Habitat Code	Fossitt Habitat	Habitat Code	Fossitt Habitat
BL1	Old stone walls	**GS1**	Dry neutral grassland
BL2	Earth banks	**GS2**	Dry meadows and grassy verges
BL3	Built and artificial surfaces	**WD2**	Mixed broadleaved / conifer woodland
ED2	Spoil and bare ground	**WL1**	Hedgerows
ED3	Recolonising bare ground	**WL2**	Treelines
ED5	Refuse and other waste	**WS1**	Scrub
GA2	Improved amenity grassland		

Figure 4.4 Habitat map of the proposed development site



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Buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3), Spoil and bare ground (ED2) & Refuse and other waste (ED5)

The proposed development site is located along the Lough Gill Loop Road (R286), which falls under the BL3 classification.

Ongoing works are being undertaken on the existing derelict cottage located immediately west of the site. This structure is also classified as BL3, and the associated activities have resulted in disturbance to the surrounding ground conditions. The cottage is directly encircled by gravel, with adjacent areas comprising bare and disturbed ground with spoil and builder's materials also present. These areas have been classified as ED2 and encroach onto the upper western portion of the proposed development site.

Builders' rubble (ED5) is stockpiled at the southern boundary of the proposed development site.

Private dwellings and associated gardens (BL3 / GA2)

Private dwellings and their gardens in the vicinity have been collectively mapped as buildings and artificial surfaces (BL3) / amenity grassland (GA2).

Recolonising dry neutral grassland (GS1 / ED3)

A substantial proportion of the site's flat terrain comprises dry neutral grassland at an advanced successional stage. This habitat has developed following the clearance of former broadleaved woodland by the previous landowner (c. 2019-2020).

Pointed spearmoss *Calliergonella cuspidata*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, and needle-like grasses were recorded here. Tiny shoots of Gorse *Ulex europaeus* were noted emerging from the ground layer. Other species noted include White clover *Trifolium repens*, Creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris,* Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., Vetch *Vicia* sp., Speedwell *Veronica* sp., Ribwort *Plantago lanceolata*, Common sorrel *Rumex acetosa* and Daisy *Bellis perennis*.

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Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2)

The sloping grounds of the site consist of grassland with a high proportion of coarse and tussocky grasses including False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*. Yorkshire-fog and Bent *Agrostis* sp., were also noted.

Characteristic of this habitat classification, tall-growing herbs noted include Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* and Ragwort alongside stem climbers Vetch *V. sepium*, Cleavers *Galium aparine* and Meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*.

Other species noted include Creeping buttercup, Broadleaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius* and Daffodil *Narcissus* agg. bulbs.

Old stone wall (BL1)

An old stone wall is located along the boundary of the proposed development site. This wall is partially vegetated with mosses, ferns, as well as shrubby and woody plants including Commom tamarisk *Thuidium tamariscinum*, Ivy *Hedera hibernica*, dispersed Willow *Salix* sp. shrubs, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum*, Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Hart's-tongue fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Buckler fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, Herb robert *Geranium robertianum* and Strawberry *Fragaria vesca*.

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Hedgerows (WL1), Treelines (WL2) & Earth bank (BL2)

There is a short stretch of young hedgerow reaching into the proposed development site, consisting predominantly of non-native Beech *Fagus sylvatica* with minor components of Gorse.

The land parcel within which the site is encompassed has a hedgerow to the west, consisting of ornamentals and hedgerow species including Gorse, Beech, Box honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Holly, Bamboo *Phyllostachys* sp., Ivy and Red osier *Cornus sericea.* This hedgerow rises up onto an earth bank along the western part of the upper site boundary. Other species include Daffodils, Geraniums, Himalayan honeysuckle, Crocosmia, Strawberry and Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea.*

A treeline then runs along the eastern part of the upper site boundary, consisting of Beech, Holly, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Gorse, Himalayan honeysuckle, Crocosmia, Bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, Tutsan, Raspberry *Rubus idaeus,* Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Bracken P*teridium aquilinum*.

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Mixed broadleaved / conifer woodland (WD2)

There is no woodland habitat present within the proposed development site.

To the east species noted within the woodland include Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Sycamore Acer pseudoplatanus, Hawthorn, Holly, Birch *Betula* sp., and Hazel. Conifers are present occasionally within this area.

Woodland to the south of the Lough Gill Loop Road contains a higher proportion of coniferous species.

Scrub (WS1)

There is no scrub habitat present within the proposed development site. The field to the north of the site is encroached with Gorse scrub.

4.2.4 Annexed Habitats

No annexed habitats were identified within the proposed development site.

6210 Orchid-rich calcareous grassland*, a priority habitat under the EU Habitats Directive, forms a mosaic with non-Annex calcareous grassland approximately 475 m to the south of the site, as mapped by the NPWS.

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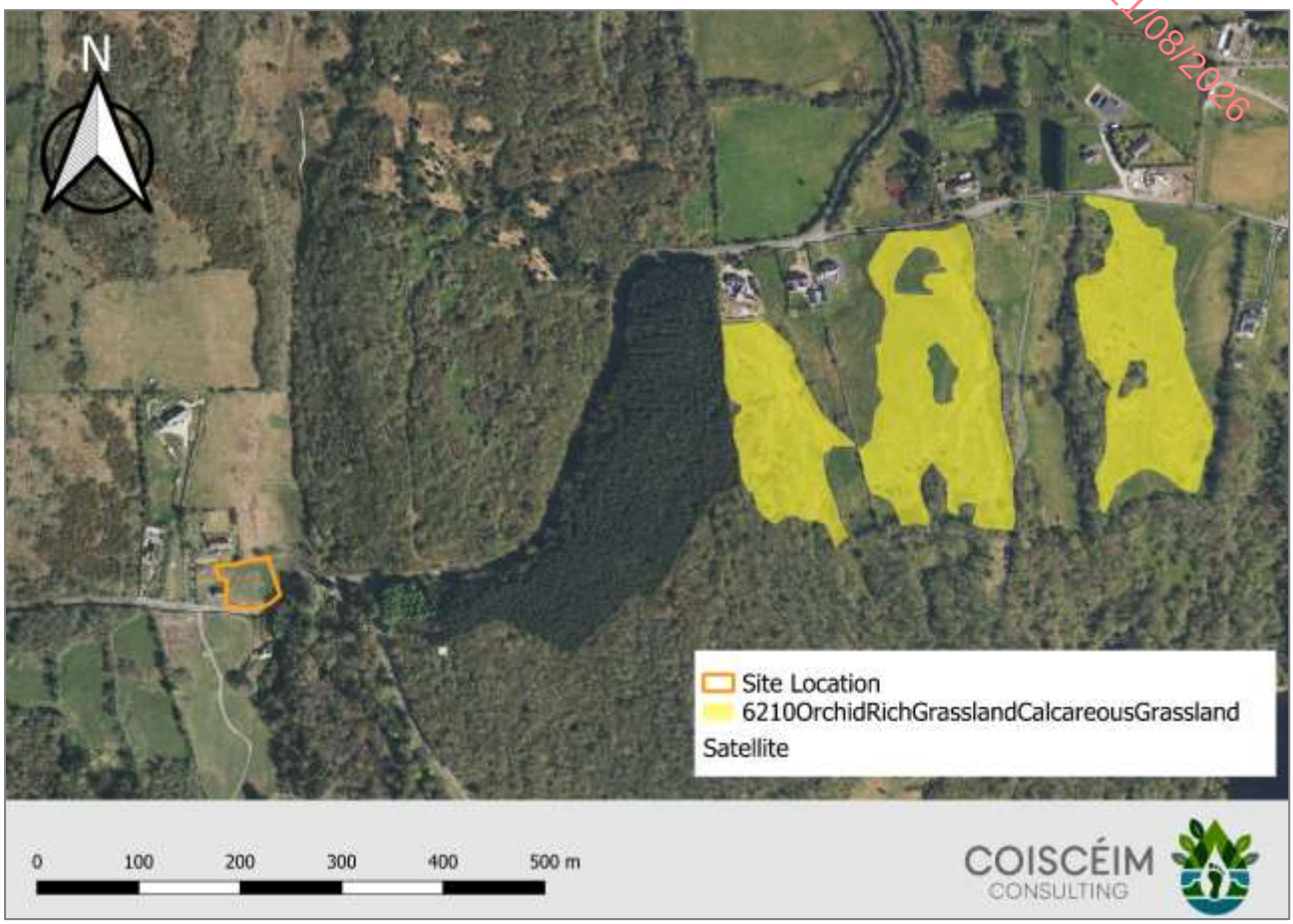
Figure 4.5 Annexed Habitats in Proximity to the Proposed Development Site



4.2.5 Invasive Species

No non-native invasive species listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 were encountered during the survey.

During the desktop study, 6 Third Schedule species, subject to articles 49 and 50 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, were found to have been reported within 2 km of the site in the last 20 years.

Undesirable non-native species not listed on the Third Schedule encountered during the field survey were;

- Montbretia *Crocosmia x crocosmiiflora;* Risk of Low Impact
- Himalayan honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa;* Risk of Medium Impact

The risk assessment undertaken by Invasive Species Ireland has generated prioritised lists of established and potential invasive species for Ireland and Northern Ireland. These lists have been used to inform the selection of species for the development of Invasive Species Action Plans for potential and established invasive species. These lists identify species that, under the right ecological conditions, may have an impact on the

conservation goals of a site, or impact on a water body achieving good / high ecological status under the Water Framework Directive. Non-native invasive species have been categorised based on risk to biodiversity as 'Low Impact', 'Medium Impact' and 'High Impact'.

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Table 4.3 Invasive Species Records within 2 km of the Proposed Development Site

Species	Group	Date of last record (within 2 km)	Location(s)	Invasiveness Risk
Third Schedule Invasive Species				
Greylag Goose (Anser anser) *Feral populations only	Birds	18/06/2024	• Colgagh Lough	Not assigned
Canada Goose (Branta canadensis)	Birds	13/01/2022	• Hazelwood Forest • Colgagh Lough	High
Rhododendron ponticum	Flowering plant	26/04/2021	• Kiltycahill • Hazelwood	High
Japanese Knotweed (Fallopia japonica)	Flowering plant	10/10/2016	• St Angela's campus • Corwillick	High
Fallow Deer (Dama dama) *Only specified provisions of Regulations 49 and 50 apply	Terrestrial mammal	31/12/2008	• Hazelwood	High
Zebra Mussel (Dreissena polymorpha)	Mollusc	05/06/2008	• Lough Gill	High
Other Undesirable Non-Native Species				
Sycamore (Acer pseudoplatanus)	Flowering plant	21/07/2011	• Clogher Beg	Medium
Roach (Rutilus rutilus)	Bony fish	31/12/2008	• Lough Gill	Medium

4.2.6 European Protected Species

No signs of European protected species were found during the site walkover survey.

No protected floral species listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive were recorded within the site boundaries nor have been reported to the NBDC in the vicinity of the proposed scheme.

During the desktop study 8 species listed **under Annex I** of the Birds Directive and 2 species listed under **Annex II** of the Habitats Directive were found to have been reported to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) within 2 km of the proposed scheme in the past 20 years.

Table 4.4 European Protected Species NBDC Records within 2 km of the Proposed Development Site

Species	Date of last record (within 2 km)	Location(s)	Status
Annex I Bird Directive Species			**BoCCI Status**
Little Egret (Egretta garzetta)	02/11/2024	• Colgagh Lough	Green
Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus)	02/11/2024	• 10 km Grid square: G73 • Colgagh Lough • Lough Gill	Amber
Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer)	21/04/2018	• Butler's Lane	Amber

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Species	Date of last record (within 2 km)	Location(s)	Status
Chough (Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax)	31/12/2011	• 10 km Grid square: G73	Amber
Common Tern (Sterna hirundo)	31/12/2011	• 2 km Grid squares: G73M, G73S	Amber
Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis)	31/12/2011	• 10 km Grid square: G73	Amber
Mediterranean Gull (Ichthyaetus melanocephalus)	31/12/2011	• 10 km Grid square: G73	Amber
Merlin (Falco columbarius)	31/12/2011	• 10 km Grid square: G73	Amber
Annex II Habitats Directive Species			**IUCN Status (Europe)**
Marsh Fritillary (Euphydryas aurinia)	31/12/2010	• 10 km Grid square: G73	Least Concern
Otter (Lutra lutra)	19/01/2006	• Colgagh Lough • Lough Gill	Near Threatened

5 Potential Impacts Identification of European Sites at Risk of Effects

This section identifies the potential impacts associated with the proposed development, examines if there are pathways of impact with European sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) due to effects from the proposed development, and assesses whether there is any risk of the proposed development resulting in a likely significant effect on any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

In assessing the potential for the proposed development to result in a likely significant effect on any European sites, any measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the project on European sites are not taken into account.

5.1 Identification of Relevant Natura 2000 Sites (Zone of Influence)

The potential zone of influence (ZoI) currently recommended for plans is a distance of 15 km from the plan boundary and derives from UK guidance (Scott Wilson et al. 2006). For projects however, the distance could be more or less than 15km and in some cases less than 100m, but guidance advises that this must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with reference to the nature, size and location of the project, the sensitivities of the ecological receptors, and the potential for in-combination effects.

A standard source-receptor-pathway conceptual model was used to identify 'relevant' European sites (i.e. those which could be potentially affected). For significant effects to arise, there must be a risk enabled by having all three elements of the Source-Pathway-Receptor model.

- Source(s) – e.g. sediment run-off from construction works at proposed project site
- Receptor(s) – e.g. qualifying habitats and/or species of European Sites
- Pathway(s) – e.g. a watercourse connecting proposed project site to a European site

The identification of a pathway does not automatically mean that significant effects will arise. The likelihood for significant effects will depend upon the characteristics of the source (e.g. duration of construction works), the characteristics of the pathway (e.g. water quality status of watercourse receiving run-off from construction) and the characteristics of the receptor (e.g. the sensitivities of the European site and its qualifying interests).

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Having considered the potential ecological impacts through source-receptor-pathway connectivity (e.g. hydrological link) and given the nature of the proposed works, the Zone of Influence for such project was considered as **5 km**.

One European site is located within a 5 km radius of the proposed development site. Lough Gill SAC is located 115 m to the southeast. This is the only European site found to have any direct or indirect connectivity for potential impact to the proposed development site.

Twelve other Natura 2000 sites were identified within a 15 km radius of the proposed development site but owing to distance and lack of connectivity to the proposed development site have consequently been screened out from further assessment.

In the absence of best practice design and site-specific mitigation measures, there is potential for adverse effects on Lough Gill SAC with regard to water quality impacts, direct and indirect impacts affecting the Annex I habitats and Annex II species for which this site has been designated.

Lough Gill SAC (Site Code: 001976)

Lough Gill SAC encompasses Lough Gill, Doon Lough to the north-east, the Bonet River (as far as, but not including, Glenade Lough), and a stretch of the Owenmore River near Manorhamilton in Co. Leitrim. Lough Gill itself, 2 km east of Sligo town, lies at a geological junction of ancient metamorphic rocks which produce acid groundwater, and limestone which dissolves in the groundwater.

Lough Gill is 8 km long, has steep limestone shores and underwater cliffs. It is over 20 m deep in places. The lake appears to be naturally eutrophic. Aquatic macrophyte flora is very limited, likely due to the rapid increase in depth around most of the margin. Where the lake shore has a shallow gradient, some swamp vegetation occurs.

The Old Oak Woodlands within this site are dominated by oak (Quercus spp.), Rowan (Sorbus aucuparia) and willows (Salix spp.). A number of interesting tree species occur. Strawberry Tree (Arbutus unedo) is found in its most northerly site in the world. Yew (Taxus baccata) occurs in abundance. Bird Cherry (Prunus padus), a Red Data Book species, is also found, as is the nationally scarce Rock Whitebeam (Sorbus rupicola). Some areas of conifer plantation occur in association with these woodlands.

There is a fringe of deciduous woodland along most of the length of the Garavogue River. In parts it is dense and impenetrable, with a very wet marshy underlayer. Some areas are dominated by Rusty Willow (Salix cinerea subsp. oleifolia), with Alder (Alnus glutinosa) also occurring commonly. Other tree species present include Goat Willow (Salix caprea), Hazel (Corylus avellana), Rhododendron (Rhododendron ponticum) and Cherry Laurel (Prunus laurocerasus). Both of the latter species are invasive aliens. In the understorey, species such as Guelder-rose (Viburnum opulus), Gipsywort (Lycopus europaeus) and Skullcap (Scutellaria galericulata) are found. Reedswamp is also common along the river.

Another area of alluvial wet woodland is found at the mouth of the Bonet River. Here there is dense willow (Salix sp.) scrub, along with Reed Canary-grass (Phalaris arundinacea), and also areas where Alder and Goat Willow are dominant.

Areas of unimproved wet and dry grassland also occur within the site, the former particularly by the lake and the latter well developed in the north-east of the site and in the vicinity of O'Rourke's Table. Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland, a priority habitat listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, has been reported from Clogher Beg, according to the Irish Semi-natural Grasslands Survey, 2010.

Heath covered hillsides above the woods are dominated by Heather (Calluna vulgaris).

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The site also supports several rare plant species, including Yellow Bird's-nest (Monotropa hypopitys), the lady's-mantle species Alchemilla glaucescens, Ivy Broomrape (Orobanche hederae), Black Bryony (Tamus communis), Intermediate Wintergreen (Pyrola media) and Bird's-nest Orchid (Neottia nidus-avis). There is also an unconfirmed record for Melancholy Thistle (Cirsium helenioides) from the eastern side of the site.

Both the woods and the mountains are used by a large herd of Fallow Deer. The site is of considerable importance for the presence of four Red Data Book fish species that are listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive - Brook Lamprey (Lampetra planeri), River Lamprey (Lampetra fluviatilis), Sea Lamprey (Petromyzon marinus) and Atlantic Salmon (Salmo salar). The Lough Gill system gets a very early run of spring salmon, while the Bonet holds stocks of salmon from spring right through to the end of the season.

White-clawed Crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes), Otter and Pine Marten are well established on this site, the first two are both Annex II species. The woodlands have a fauna which includes several rare snail species.

Lough Gill supports low numbers of wintering waterfowl, mostly Mallard (<150), Tufted Duck (20-30) and Goldeneye (<20). A small colony of Common Tern breed on the islands (20 pairs in 1993), while Kingfisher are found on the lake and rivers. Both of these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. A colony of Black-headed Gulls (63 pairs in 1992) occurs with the terns. The woods support a good diversity of bird species including Jay, Woodcock and Blackcap.

Conservation Objectives of Lough Gill SAC:

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation in Lough Gill SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) in Lough Gill SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in Lough Gill SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* in Lough Gill SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of White-clawed Crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes) in Lough Gill SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Sea Lamprey (Petromyzon marinus) in Lough Gill SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Brook Lamprey (Lampetra planeri) in Lough Gill SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of River Lamprey (Lampetra fluviatilis) in Lough Gill SAC
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon (Salmo salar) in Lough Gill SAC
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter (Lutra lutra) in Lough Gill SAC

5.2 Findings of the Screening for Appropriate Assessment

The purpose of this section of the screening for appropriate assessment is to examine the possibility that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, may result in significant negative effects on the Conservation Objectives and the integrity of the Natura 2000 Sites identified, which are potentially affected by the proposed project.

Table 5.1 below presents the criteria against which the impacts of the development may be measured in order to assess potential impacts on European sites.

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Table 5.1 Assessment of Proposed Development against Key Criteria of the Natura 2000 sites within the Zone of Influence

Key Criteria	Lough Gill SAC
Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans and projects) likely to give rise to impacts on Natura 2000 sites.	The Construction Phase will require vegetation removal and earthworks to modify the existing topography. Heavy machinery shall be used to complete the proposed works. Excavations shall temporarily leave bare soil on a sloped site. Invasive species have been reported within 2 km of the site. Operational Phase foul water shall be treated on-site. Installation and operation of the wastewater treatment system are on rock at or near surface of karst. Site size and shallow ground limits available percolation area.
Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project on the Natura 2000 Sites: **Size and scale** **Land-take** **Distance from Natura 2000 Site or key features of the Site** **Resource requirements** **Emissions** **Excavation requirements** **Transportation requirements** **Duration of construction** **Operation, etc**	Potential impacts of the proposed development are hydrological and hydrogeological in nature. Due to the distance between the proposed works and the nearest Natura 2000 site, there will be no direct loss of habitat. Due to the nature of the proposed works, and the habitat types present within and adjacent to the proposed development site, no direct impacts on Annex II species are expected. Water quality deterioration may occur as a result of surface water runoff or groundwater migration. Bare soils during proposed works may pose a risk of introducing sediment and other pollutants to the SAC via surface water runoff. Possible incidents of hydrocarbon spill from construction machinery, or potential incidents of the release of untreated effluent into groundwater may occur. In the event of one of these incidents, there is may be a risk of consequent significant impacts on the QI/SCI species and habitats of Lough Gill SAC.
Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of the following: **Reduction of habitat area** **Disturbance of key species** **Habitat or species fragmentation** **Reduction in species density** **Changes in key indicators of conservation value** **Climate change**	In the event of one of these incidents, there is a low risk of consequent significant impacts on the QI/SCI species and habitats of Lough Gill SAC. Hydrocarbons (oil, petrol, diesel, etc), sediment and nutrient loading can have negative effects on aquatic habitats and associated species.
Likely impacts on the Natura 2000 sites as a whole. Interference with the Key Relationships that Define the Site, Structure and Function of the Natura 2000 Site.	Water quality deterioration can cause shifts in community composition. Consequently, negative impacts on the restoration / maintenance of favourable conservation condition of the Qualifying Interests of Lough Gill SAC may occur.

5.3 Screening for Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

The potential impacts associated with the proposed development have the potential to affect the receiving environment and, consequently, have the potential to affect the conservation objectives supporting the

qualifying interest/special conservation interests of the following European sites: Lough Gill SAC. **Therefore, an Appropriate Assessment is required to fully assess the nature of these effects and to propose mitigation to avoid and / reduce those effects on these European sites.**

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As the proposed development is likely to have effects on the QIs/SCIs or conservation objectives of European sites, there is also potential for other plans or projects to act in-combination with it to result in significant effects to European sites.

Where significant effects on Natura 2000 sites cannot be ruled out, Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive require that an assessment of the potential impacts on the site's conservation objectives are undertaken (Appropriate Assessment – Stage 2).

In assessing the potential for the proposed development to result in a significant effect on any European sites, any measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the project on European sites are not taken into account.

6 Statement of Impact for Appropriate Assessment (Stage 2)

This section of the NIS assesses the direct and indirect impacts of the Proposed Development on the European sites which fall within its zone of influence. For each of these European sites, the assessment below sets out the relevant ecological baseline information, the analysis of the potential impacts, the qualifying interests/special conservation interests at risk of these potential impacts within the zone of influence in view of the sites' conservation objectives, and the mitigation measures (if required) to avoid/reduce the effects of any potential impacts.

6.1 Appropriate Assessment Methodology

At Stage 2 Of the Appropriate Assessment process, the impact of a project or plan alone and in combination with other projects or plans on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site is considered with respect to the conservation objectives of the site and to its structure and function.

6.2 Prediction of Potential Impacts

Prediction of impacts is addressed in the NIS, but the Competent Authority, in considering the information submitted needs to carry out the AA within a structured and systematic framework that is evidence-based. Conclusions should be objective and scientifically grounded. This requires that the types of impact be identified e.g. direct and indirect effects; short- and long-term effects; construction, operational and decommissioning effects; noise, light pollution and disturbance; hydrological effects; pollution, including diffuse pollution; habitat degradation and loss; and isolated, seasonal interactive and cumulative effects. Examples of impact prediction methods are outlined in Figure 6.1 below.

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Figure 6.1 Examples of Impact Prediction Methods (From EC (2002), Box 8)

Impact prediction methods for NIS and AA

Direct measurements, for example of areas of habitat lost or affected, can identify proportionate losses from species populations, habitats and communities.

Flow charts, networks and systems diagrams identify chains of impacts resulting from direct impacts; indirect impacts are termed secondary, tertiary, etc. impacts in line with how they are caused. Systems diagrams are more flexible than networks in illustrating interrelationships and process pathways.

Quantitative predictive models provide mathematically derived predictions based on data and assumptions about the force and direction of impacts. Models may extrapolate predictions that are consistent with past and present data (trend analysis, scenarios, analogies which transfer information from other relevant locations) and intuitive forecasting. Normative approaches to modelling work backwards from a desired outcome to assess whether the proposed project will achieve these. Some commonly used models predict the dispersal of pollutants in air, soil erosion, sediment loading of streams, and oxygen sag in polluted rivers.

Geographical information systems (GIS) can be used to produce models of spatial relationships, such as constraint overlays, or to map sensitive areas and locations of habitat loss or vulnerability. GIS are a combination of computerised cartography, storing map data, and a database management system, storing attributes such as land use and slope. GIS enable the variables stored to be displayed, combined, and analysed speedily.

Information from previous similar projects may be useful, especially if quantitative predictions were made initially and have been monitored in operation.

Expert opinion and judgment can be derived from previous experience and consultations.

In assessing the potential impacts of the proposed development on the Qualifying Interests of Lough Gill SAC, a combination of direct measurements relative to the nature of the risks assessed, of international and national data, site surveys, and expert opinion was used to assess the risk of impact on QI habitats, species and on site integrity, and to devise suitable and effective measure to avoid or reduce any potential impacts such that there will be no effect on site integrity.

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6.3 Assessment of Potential Impacts

The Qualifying Interests of Lough Gill SAC and overall Conservation Objectives are listed below in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Qualifying Interests and Conservation Objectives

Qualifying Interest(s)	Conservation Objectives(s)
Lough Gill SAC [001976] Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	**Generic Site Objective:** To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the habitats and species listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC.

In conjunction with considering the generic conservation objective for this European site ***"to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the habitats and species listed as Qualifying Interests for this SAC",*** the site-specific conservation objectives document for Lough Gill SAC also informed this assessment.

Site-specific conservation objectives documents set out the specific **attributes, measures and targets** that define the favourable conservation condition of the Qualifying Interests within European sites.

Affecting the conservation condition of the Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests is deemed to constitute an adverse effect on the **integrity of a European site**. Table 6.2 below outlines those species attributes and the conservation targets set for each attribute, as defined by a quantifiable 'measure'.

Associated mapping of the extent of these European sites and the distribution of Annex I habitats of Qualifying Interest from NPWS Conservation Objectives documents have been included in Appendix C.

Table 6.2 Conservation Objectives of the Qualifying Interests of the Applicable European Sites and Potential Impacts

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Lough Gill SAC

Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]

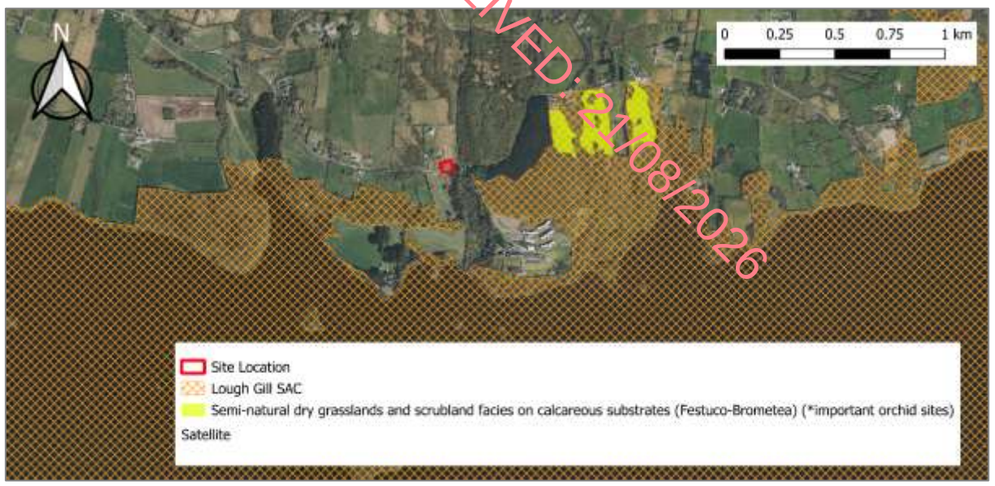
To restore the favourable conservation condition of Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	Potential Impacts
Habitat area // hectares // Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes	Lough Gill located approximately 0.4 km from the proposed development site is classified as a Natural eutrophic lake with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [3150]. While no direct impacts are expected, there is a risk of indirect effects from construction-related surface runoff or groundwater contamination. Exposed soils, sediment runoff, hydrocarbon spills, or accidental effluent release could introduce pollutants and nutrients into the lake. This may lead to increased turbidity, eutrophication, altered water chemistry, and reduced light penetration, potentially affecting macrophyte growth, species composition, natural vegetation zonation, and substratum quality. Increased organic matter and suspended solids could also affect water colour and dissolved organic carbon levels, with knock-on effects for fringing habitats through declining water quality.
Habitat distribution // Occurrence // No decline, subject to natural processes	
Vegetation composition: Typical species // Occurrence // Typical species present, in good condition, and demonstrating typical abundances and distribution	
Vegetation composition: characteristic zonation // Occurrence // All characteristic zones should be present, correctly distributed and in good condition	
Vegetation distribution: maximum depth // Metres // Maintain maximum depth of vegetation, subject to natural processes	
Hydrological regime: water level fluctuations // Metres // Maintain appropriate natural hydrological regime necessary to support the habitat	
Lake substratum quality // Various // Maintain appropriate substratum type, extent and chemistry to support the vegetation	
Transparency // Metres // Maintain/restore appropriate Secchi transparency. There should be no decline in Secchi depth/transparency	
Nutrients // µg/l P; mg/l N // Maintain the concentration of nutrients in the water column to sufficiently low levels to support the habitat and its typical species	
Phytoplankton biomass // µg/l Chlorophyll *a* // Maintain appropriate water quality to support the habitat, including high chlorophyll *a* status	
Phytoplankton composition // EPA phytoplankton composition metric // Maintain/restore appropriate water quality to support the habitat, including high phytoplankton composition status	
Attached algal biomass // Algal cover // Maintain/restore trace/absent attached algal biomass (<5% cover)	
Macrophyte status // EPA macrophyte metric (The Free Index) // Restore high/good macrophyte status	
Acidification status // pH units; mg/l // Maintain appropriate water and sediment pH, alkalinity and cation concentrations to support the habitat, subject to natural processes	
Water colour // mg/l PtCo // Maintain/restore appropriate water colour to support the habitat	
Dissolved organic carbon (DOC) // mg/l // Maintain/restore appropriate organic carbon levels to support the habitat	
Turbidity // Nephelometric turbidity units/ mg/l SS/ other appropriate units // Maintain/restore appropriate turbidity to support the habitat	
Fringing habitat: area and condition // Hectares // Maintain the area and condition of fringing habitats necessary to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat	

Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	Potential Impacts
Habitat area // Hectares // Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes	6210 Orchid-rich calcareous grassland*, a priority habitat under the EU Habitats Directive, forms a mosaic with non-Annex calcareous grassland approximately 0.5 km to the south of the site, as mapped by the NPWS.
Habitat distribution // Occurrence // No decline, subject to natural processes	

Vegetation composition: positive indicator species // Number at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops; within 20m surrounding area of monitoring stops // At least 7 positive indicator species present in monitoring stop or, if 5–6 present in stop, additional species within 20m of stop; this includes at least two 'high quality' positive indicator species present in stop or within 20m of stop	Due to topography of the intercepting lands and the nature of both the proposed development and the targets of this Conservation Objective, no targets of this Conservation Objective are considered to be at risk of potential impact as a result of the proposed development. 
Vegetation composition: negative indicator species // Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops // Negative indicator species collectively not more than 20% cover, with cover by an individual species not more than 10%	
Vegetation composition: non-native species // Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops// Cover of non-native species not more than 1%	
Vegetation composition: woody species and bracken // Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops // Cover of woody species (except certain listed species) and bracken (Pteridium aquilinum) not more than 5% cover	
Vegetation structure: broadleaf herb: grass ratio // Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops // Broadleaf herb component of vegetation between 40 and 90%	
Vegetation structure: sward height // Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops // At least 30% of sward between 5cm and 40cm tall	
Vegetation structure: litter // Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops // Litter cover not more than 25%	
Physical structure: bare soil // Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops // Not more than 10% bare soil	
Physical structure: grazing or disturbance // Area in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops // Area of the habitat showing signs of serious grazing or disturbance less than 20m²	

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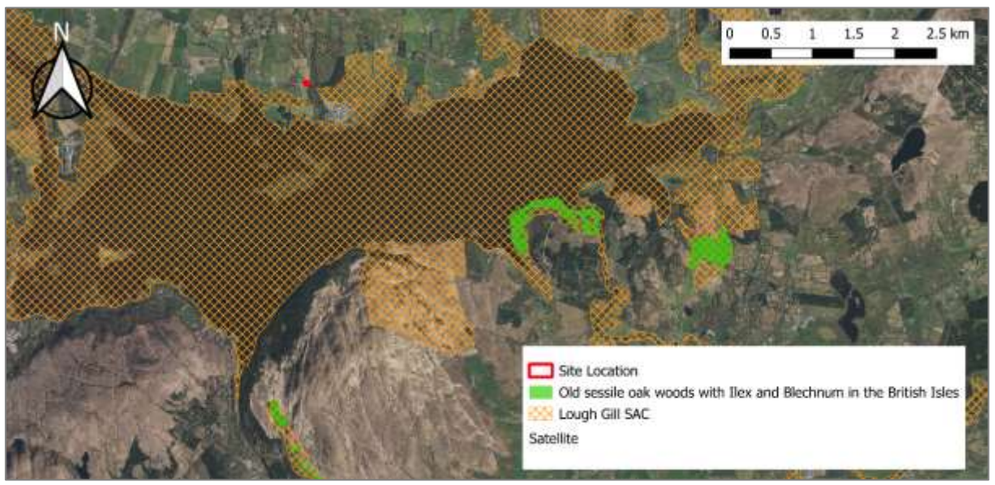
Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	Potential Impacts
Habitat area // Hectares // Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes	Given that the nearest occurrence of this habitat type is located approximately 2.9 km from the proposed development site, and considering the nature and scale of the proposed works, no targets of this Conservation Objective are considered to be at risk of potential impact as a result of the proposed development. 
Habitat distribution // Occurrence // No decline, subject to natural processes	
Woodland size // Hectares // Area stable or increasing. Where topographically possible, "large" woods at least 25ha in size and “small” woods at least 3ha in size	
Woodland structure: cover and height // Percentage; metres; centimetres // Total canopy cover at least 30%; median canopy height at least 11m; native shrub layer cover 10-75%; native herb/dwarf shrub layer cover at least 20% and height at least 20 cm; bryophyte cover at least 4%	
Woodland structure: community diversity and extent // Hectares // Maintain diversity and extent of community types	
Woodland structure: natural regeneration // Seedling: sapling: pole ratio // Seedlings, saplings and pole age-classes of target species for 91A0 woodlands and other native tree species occur in adequate proportions to ensure survival of woodland canopy	
Woodland structure: dead wood // Number per hectare // At least 19 stems/ha of dead wood of at least 20cm diameter	
Woodland structure: veteran trees // Number per hectare // No decline	
Woodland structure: indicators of local distinctiveness // Occurrence; population size // No decline in distribution and, in the case of red listed and other rare or localised species, population size	
Woodland structure: indicators of overgrazing // Occurrence // All four indicators of overgrazing absent	
Vegetation composition: native tree cover // Percentage // No decline. Native tree cover at least 90% of canopy; target species cover at least 50% of canopy	
Vegetation composition: typical species // Occurrence // At least 1 target species for 91A0 woodlands present; at least 6 positive indicator species for 91A0 woodlands present	
Vegetation composition: negative indicator species // Occurrence // Negative indicator species cover not greater than 10%; regeneration of negative indicator species absent	

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Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* [91E0]

To restore the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae)* in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	Potential Impacts
Habitat area // Hectares // Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes	Given that the nearest occurrence of this habitat type is located approximately 3.1 km from the proposed development site and considering the nature and scale of the proposed works, no targets of this Conservation Objective are considered to be at risk of potential impact as a result of the proposed development.
Habitat distribution // Occurrence // No decline, subject to natural processes	
Woodland size // Hectares // Area stable or increasing. Where topographically possible, "large" woods at least 25ha in size and "small" woods at least 3ha in size	
Woodland structure: cover and height // Percentage; metres; centimetres // Total canopy cover at least 30%; median canopy height at least 7m; native shrub layer cover 10-75%; native herb/dwarf shrub layer cover at least 20% and height at least 20cm; bryophyte cover at least 4%	
Woodland structure: community diversity and extent // Hectares // Maintain diversity and extent of community type	
Woodland structure: natural regeneration // Seedling:sapling:pole ratio// Seedlings, saplings and pole age-classes of target species for 91E0* woodlands and other native tree species occur in adequate proportions to ensure survival of woodland canopy	
Hydrological regime: flooding depth/height of water table // Metres // Appropriate hydrological regime necessary for maintenance of alluvial vegetation	
Woodland structure: dead wood // Number per hectare // At least 19 stems/ha of dead wood of at least 20cm diameter	
Woodland structure: veteran trees // Number per hectare // No decline	
Woodland structure: indicators of local distinctiveness // Occurrence; population size // No decline in distribution and, in the case of red listed and other rare or localised species, population size	
Woodland structure: indicators of overgrazing // Occurrence // All five indicators of overgrazing absent	
Vegetation composition: native tree cover // Percentage // No decline. Native tree cover at least 90% of canopy; target species cover at least 50% of canopy	
Vegetation composition: typical species // Occurrence // At least 1 target species for 91E0* woodlands present; at least 6 positive indicator species for 91E0* woodlands present	
Vegetation composition: negative indicator species // Occurrence // Negative indicator species cover not greater than 10%; regeneration of negative indicator species absent	
Vegetation composition: problematic native species // Percentage // Cover of common nettle (Urtica dioica) less than 75%	

White-clawed Crayfish Austropotamobius pallipes [1092]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of White-clawed Crayfish (Austropotamobius pallipes) in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	Potential Impacts
Distribution // Number of occupied 1km squares // No reduction from baseline	Given that the main population of White-clawed crayfish are found upstream on the Bonet River, Shanvaus River, Owenmore River and Doon Lough, no targets of this Conservation Objective are considered to be at risk of potential impact as a result of the proposed development.
Population structure: recruitment // Percentage occurrence of juveniles and females with eggs // Juveniles and females with eggs in at least 50% of positive samples taken at appropriate time and methodology	
Population size // Catch per unit effort // No reduction from baseline of 0.25	
Negative indicator species // Occurrence // No non-indigenous crayfish species present	
Disease // Occurrence // No instances of disease	
River water quality // EPA Q value // At least Q3-4 at all sites sampled by EPA	
Lake water quality // Water chemistry measures // Maintain appropriate water quality, particularly pH and nutrient levels, to support the natural structure and functioning of the habitat	

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Habitat quality: heterogeneity // Occurrence of positive habitat features // No decline from the baseline	
Sea Lamprey Petromyzon marinus [1095] To restore the favourable conservation condition of Sea Lamprey (Petromyzon marinus) in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:	
Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	**Potential Impacts**
Distribution: extent of anadromy // Percentage of river accessible // Greater than 75% of main stem length of rivers accessible from estuary	Lough Gill is located approximately 400 m from the proposed development site. Suitable spawning habitat for Sea Lamprey within the SAC is limited to sections of the Garavogue River in Sligo town and downstream of Dromahair on the River Bonet, and only a small number of records of this species exist within the site. Although no direct impacts are expected, there is potential for indirect effects associated with construction activities and the installation of the wastewater treatment system. Sea lamprey spawn in clean, well-oxygenated gravels where they create large nests. Pollution incidents involving sediment, hydrocarbons, or untreated effluent could adversely affect the extent and distribution of suitable spawning and nursery habitat through the alteration of substrate quality.
Annual run size // Number of sea lamprey nests // Annual run size should reflect that expected under near-natural conditions	
Larval lamprey in fine sediment // Larval lamprey/m² // Larval lamprey present in SAC catchment	
Extent and distribution of spawning and nursery habitat // m² and occurrence // No decline in extent and distribution of spawning and nursery beds	
Brook Lamprey Lampetra planeri [1096] To restore the favourable conservation condition of Brook Lamprey (Lampetra planeri) in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:	
Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	**Potential Impacts**
Distribution // Percentage of river accessible // Access to all water courses down to first order streams	Lough Gill is located approximately 400 m from the proposed development site. Although no direct impacts are expected, there is potential for indirect effects associated with construction activities and the installation of the wastewater treatment system. Brook lamprey spawn in clean gravels where they excavate shallow nests. Nursery areas comprising mainly sand/silt are necessary for the development of larvae. Larval lamprey live in fine sediments for up to six years. Pollution incidents involving sediment, hydrocarbons, or untreated effluent could adversely affect the extent and distribution of suitable spawning and nursery habitat through the alteration of substrate quality.
Distribution in suitable habitat // Percentage of positive sites in 2nd order channels (and greater), downstream of spawning areas // Not less than 50% of sample sites with suitable habitat positive for larval brook/river lamprey	
Population structure of larvae // Number of age/size classes // At least three age/size classes of larval brook/river lamprey present	
Larval lamprey density in fine sediment // Larval lamprey/m² // Mean density of brook/river larval lamprey in sites with suitable habitat at least 5/m²	
Extent and distribution of spawning and nursery habitat // m² and occurrence // No decline in extent and distribution of spawning and nursery beds	
River Lamprey Lampetra fluviatilis [1099] To restore the favourable conservation condition of River Lamprey (Lampetra fluviatilis) in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:	
Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	**Potential Impacts**
Distribution // Percentage of river accessible // Access to all water courses down to first order streams	Lough Gill is located approximately 400 m from the proposed development site. Although no direct impacts are expected, there is potential for indirect effects associated with construction activities and the installation of the wastewater treatment system. River lamprey spawn in clean gravels where they excavate shallow nests. Nursery areas comprising mainly sand/silt are necessary for the development of larvae. Larval lamprey live in fine sediments for up to six years. Pollution incidents involving sediment, hydrocarbons, or untreated effluent could adversely affect the extent and distribution of suitable spawning and nursery habitat through the alteration of substrate quality.
Distribution in suitable habitat // Number of positive sites in 2nd order channels (and greater), downstream of spawning areas// Not less than 50% of sample sites with suitable habitat positive for larval brook/river lamprey	
Population structure of larvae // Number of age/size classes // At least three age/size classes of larval brook/river lamprey present	
Larval lamprey density in fine sediment // Larval lamprey/m² // Mean density of brook/river larval lamprey in sites with suitable habitat at least 5/m²	
Extent and distribution of spawning and nursery habitat // m² and occurrence // No decline in extent and distribution of spawning and nursery beds	
Salmon Salmo salar [1106] To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon (Salmo salar) in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:	
Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	**Potential Impacts**
Distribution: extent of anadromy // Percentage of river accessible // 100% of river channels down to second order accessible from estuary	Lough Gill is located approximately 400 m from the proposed development site.

Adult spawning fish // Number // Conservation limit (CL) for each system consistently exceeded	Although no direct impacts are expected, there is potential for indirect effects associated with construction activities and the installation of the wastewater treatment system. Salmon spawn in clean gravels. Pollution incidents involving sediment, hydrocarbons, or untreated effluent could adversely affect the SAC's water quality and consequently numbers of fry, smolt and redds, influencing spawning stock in later years.
Salmon fry abundance // Number of fry/5 minutes electrofishing // Maintain or exceed 0+ fry mean catchment-wide abundance threshold value. Currently set at 17 salmon fry/5 minutes sampling	
Out-migrating smolt abundance // Number // No significant decline	
Number and distribution of redds // Number and occurrence // No decline in number and distribution of spawning redds due to anthropogenic causes	
Water quality // EPA Q value // At least Q4 at all sites sampled by EPA	

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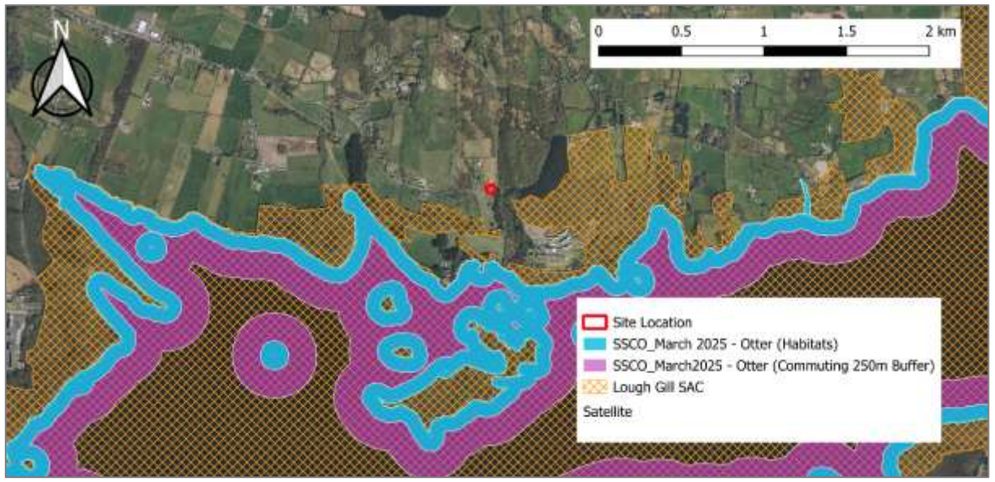
Otter Lutra lutra [1355]

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter (Lutra lutra) in Lough Gill SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute // Measure // Target of the Conservation Objective	Potential Impacts
Distribution // Percentage positive survey sites // No significant decline	Lough Gill is located approximately 400 m from the proposed development site. There is potential for deterioration in water quality arising from sediment mobilisation and/or the accidental release of hydrocarbons during construction activities or untreated effluent during operation. Such effects could result in reductions in freshwater habitat suitability for Otter, including a diminution of fisheries value, with consequent effects on prey availability and foraging efficiency. 
Extent of terrestrial habitat // Hectares // No significant decline. Area mapped and calculated as 193.91ha along river banks/ lake shoreline/around ponds	
Extent of freshwater (river) habitat // Kilometres // No significant decline. Length mapped and calculated as 80.38km	
Extent of freshwater (lake) habitat // Hectares // No significant decline. Area mapped and calculated as 353.39ha	
Couching sites and holts // Number // No significant decline	
Fish biomass available // Kilograms // No significant decline	
Barriers to connectivity // Number // No significant increase	

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6.4 Examination and Analysis of Potential Direct and Indirect Impacts

The proposed development site is located approximately 115 m from Lough Gill SAC. The scale of the proposed works are limited to the footprint of the proposed site, avoiding any potential for significant direct effects on Qualifying Interests of the SAC.

No works are required within or directly adjacent to the aquatic environment of Lough Gill SAC, precluding any direct impacts on the Annex II aquatic qualifying interests of the Lough Gill SAC (Otter, Salmon, White-clawed Crayfish, Lamprey species). During the site survey, no otter activity, holts or prints, were identified within or in the vicinity of the proposed works area.

The Construction Phase will require vegetation removal and earthworks to modify the existing topography. Heavy machinery shall be used to complete the proposed works and excavations shall temporarily leave bare soil on a sloped site. There is risk of silts, cement, bare soils and hydrocarbons during the Construction Phase.

Operational Phase foul water shall be treated on-site. Installation and operation of the wastewater treatment system are on rock at or near surface of karst, and potential incidents of the release of untreated effluent into groundwater may occur.

The indirect impacts by which the Proposed Development could (in the absence of mitigation measures) potentially affect the conservation objective attributes and targets supporting the conservation condition of the qualifying interests of Lough Gill SAC via surface water or groundwater migration are:

- Suspended silt or other sediments, which can reduce water quality in watercourses, and harm aquatic fauna
- Hydrocarbons (oil, petrol, diesel, etc), solvents and other chemicals, which can be toxic to aquatic fauna.
- Nutrients from untreated effluent can lead to shifts in community composition, eutrophication, algal blooms and depletion of oxygen in aquatic environments

6.5 In-combination effects

The resources referenced in carrying out the assessment on in-combination effect were as listed below:

The National Planning Application database (www.myplan.ie - accessed February 2026)

An Board Pleanála database (www.pleanala.ie – accessed February 2026)

EPA Appropriate Assessment Tool Mapping Resource (www.gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/AAGeoTool - accessed February 2026)

EIA Portal (www.housinggovie.maps.arcgis.com – accessed February 2026)

An application (Planning ref: 2460304) was approved in 2024 directly adjacent to the site for renovations to the existing cottage. The works include proposed internal alterations, new septic tank, percolation area and associated site works, amendments to external fenestration to west elevation, new external paved area and amendment to existing driveway to provide safe vehicle circulation within the curtilage.

An Appropriate Assessment was not deemed necessary for this planning application according to the Inspector's Report as due to the nature and scale of the development and its remove from the EU designated sites in the Natura 2000 network it was considered that the proposed development on its own or in combination with other projects will not have any impact on such sites. On inspection of the details

submitted; the Environment Section had no objection in principle to the proposed development subject to conditions.

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The Northern and Western Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2019) includes a range of policy objectives relevant to the protection of European sites, to which the relevant planning authorities must have regard to in the preparation and adoption of their development plans.

Under the Sligo County Development Plan 2024 – 2030, the main criterion for assessing applications for single houses in all rural areas will be the suitability of the proposed development in the context of the broader and long-term proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The "normal planning and sustainable development considerations" used in assessing planning applications include criteria set out in Section 5.5 Strategy for rural settlement (development management standards). These standards will prevent any major developments or inappropriate residential developments being granted in the vicinity of the site, so future development in the area would be small in scale and unlikely to cause cumulative / in-combination impacts with the proposed development.

Due to the distance between the proposed works location and the above-mentioned Natura 2000 sites, and the lack of significant interactions with other concurrent projects, there is **no potential for a significant in-combination effect on these sites.**

7 Mitigation Measures

This section presents the mitigation measures proposed to be implemented during the Construction and Operational Phases of the proposed development to avoid the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on Lough Gill SAC. All mitigation measures will be implemented in full and are best practice, tried and tested, effective control measures to protect the receiving environment.

7.1 Construction Phase Mitigation

Site preparation and construction shall be confined to the development site only and adhere to all the mitigation measures outlined below:

- Method statement to be submitted to Sligo County Council for approval prior to construction works.
- Maintenance schedule and operational procedure to be established by the Contractor for sediment and pollution control measures during the construction period.
- Removal of topsoil to be kept to a minimum.
- All earthworks to be undertaken exclusively under dry ground conditions and dry weather periods.
- Operation of heavy machinery on unprotected grounds to be suspended during wet weather conditions and periods of heavy rainfall.
- Any fuel/chemical storage containers to be appropriately bunded and roofed.
- Re-fuelling of machinery and vehicles to be undertaken off site, or in a designated bunded and impervious area.
- Oil booms and oil soakage pads to be maintained on-site to enable a rapid and effective response to any accidental spillage or leakage.
- No storage of materials on sloped area.

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- No cement grout or concrete to be mixed/stored on sloped area.
- All vehicles entering site to be checked for Invasive Species, with operators familiar with biosecurity measures to be taken.
- Verification that all soils imported to the site are certified free of invasive species.
- Installation of Tricel Novo Package Plant and Tricel Tero to be installed as per the Tricel Site Recommendation Report and as per manufacturers requirements. To be undertaken under the supervision of suitably qualified persons with grease trap fitted.
- Areas of bare soil to be seeded / revegetated as appropriate prior to the Operational Phase

7.2 Operational Phase Mitigation

- Wastewater Treatment System and percolation to be operated and maintained in accordance with its design specifications.
- Applicants to enter into maintenance agreement for Wastewater Treatment System including a regime of yearly inspections and maintenance.
- Wastewater Treatment System to be de-sludged at least once per annum by a registered contractor.

7.3 In-Combination Effects

Any projects which have recently been granted planning permission in the area (Planning ref: 2460304) and may run concurrently with the proposed development have shown to demonstrate compliance with all environmental and ecological assessment requirements. Those which have not yet been granted permission will be subject to additional examination to ensure compliance with the objectives of the Sligo County Development Plan 2024-2030.

No additional impact will occur as a result of the Proposed Development, which is in itself is predicted not to have impacts which may affect the integrity of Lough Gill SAC, provided the proposed mitigation measures provided under Sections 7.1 and 7.2 are adhered to. Therefore, it is the author's expert view that there will be no impact or interaction between the Proposed Development and other proposed plans or projects.

Therefore, no In-Combination effects are predicted.

7.4 Residual Impacts

With the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in Section 7.1 and 7.2, the Proposed Development poses no significant risk of affecting the conservation objectives, or the favourable conservation condition, of the qualifying interests of Lough Gill SAC, and there are therefore no residual direct or indirect impacts associated with the Proposed Development that could adversely affect the integrity of these European sites.

8 Conclusion of Assessment

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Following an examination, analysis and evaluation in light of best scientific knowledge, of all relevant information in respect of the qualifying interests of the European site within the Zone of Influence namely Lough Gill SAC, the potential impacts, the proposed mitigation measures, and whether or not the predicted impacts would affect the conservation objectives that support the conservation condition of the qualifying interests, it has been concluded that the Proposed Development does not pose a risk of adversely affecting (either directly or indirectly) the integrity of these European sites, *and there is no reasonable scientific doubt in this conclusion.*

Indeed, following the examination of existing environmental conditions, the proposed project and analysis of the conservation objectives of Lough Gill SAC, as set out in this NIS, together with the implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures as also set out in this NIS and an assessment and evaluation of any potential effect of the Project that in fact not only is there not any adverse impact on the integrity of these European sites but it is also the considered view of the authors that that the Project will in fact not have any likely significant effects at all on Lough Gill SAC.

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NPWS (2024) *Conservation Objectives: Ballintemple and Ballygilgan SPA 004234. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

NPWS (2013) *Conservation Objectives: Ballysadare Bay SAC 000622. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2013) *Conservation Objectives: Ballysadare Bay SPA 004129. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2021) *Conservation Objectives: Ben Bulben, Gleniff and Glenade Complex SAC 000623. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

NPWS (2013) *Conservation Objectives: Cummeen Strand SPA 004035. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2024) *Conservation Objectives: Cummeen Strand/Drumcliff Bay (Sligo Bay) SAC 000627. Version 2.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

NPWS (2013) *Conservation Objectives: Drumcliff Bay SPA 004013. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

NPWS (2021) *Conservation Objectives: Glenade Lough SAC 001919. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

NPWS (2021) *Conservation Objectives: Lough Gill SAC 001976. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

NPWS (2025) *Conservation Objectives: Sligo/Leitrim Uplands SPA 004187. Version 1.* National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

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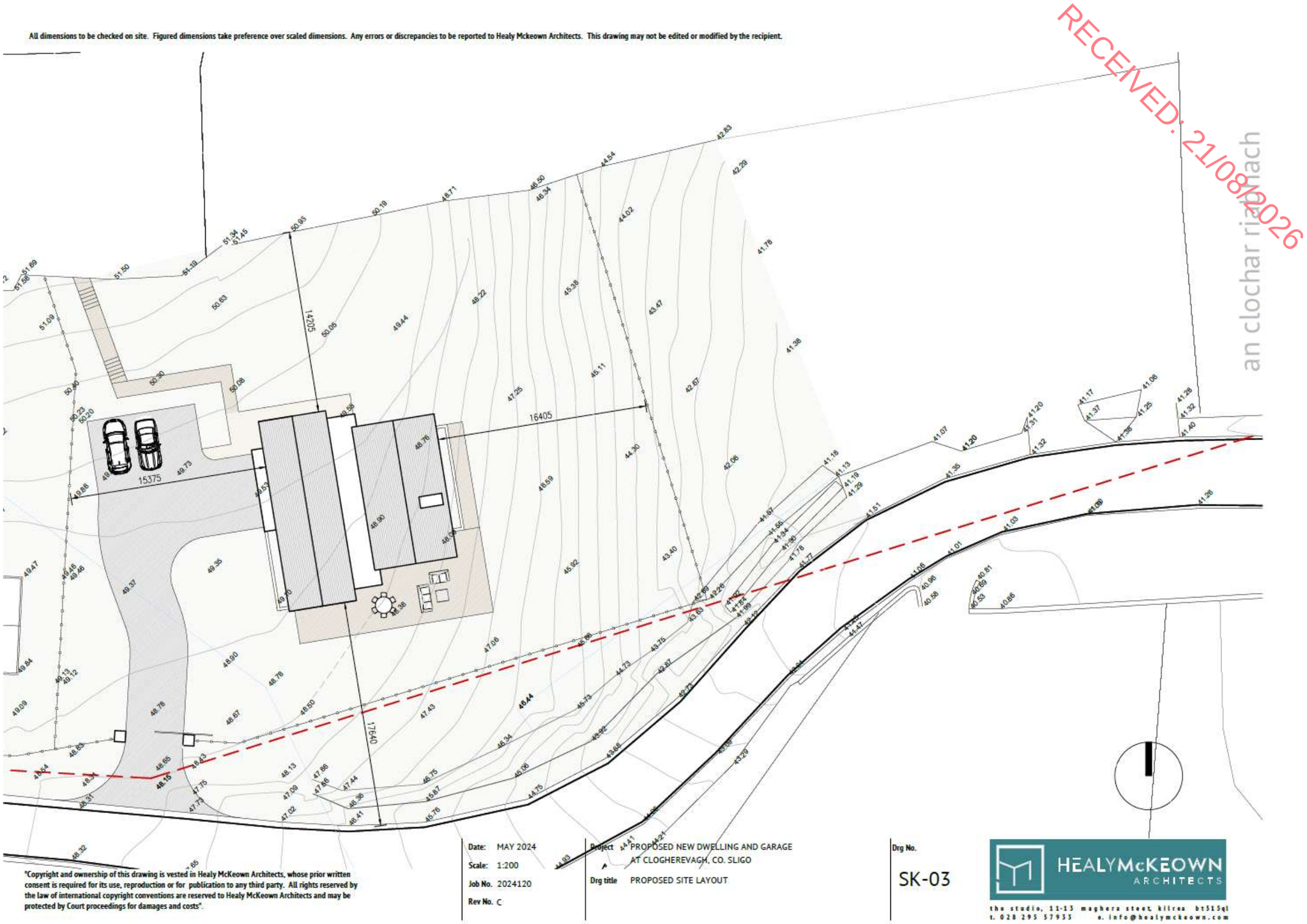
Appendix A: Proposed Site Layout



Appendix B: Proposed Wastewater System Plan

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Scale: 1:250
Job No. 20241.20
Rev No. -

Project: PROPOSED NEW DWELLING AND GARAGE AT CLOGHEREVAGH, CO. SLIGO

Drg title: PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT

Drg No. PL-03

HEALY McKEOWN ARCHITECTS

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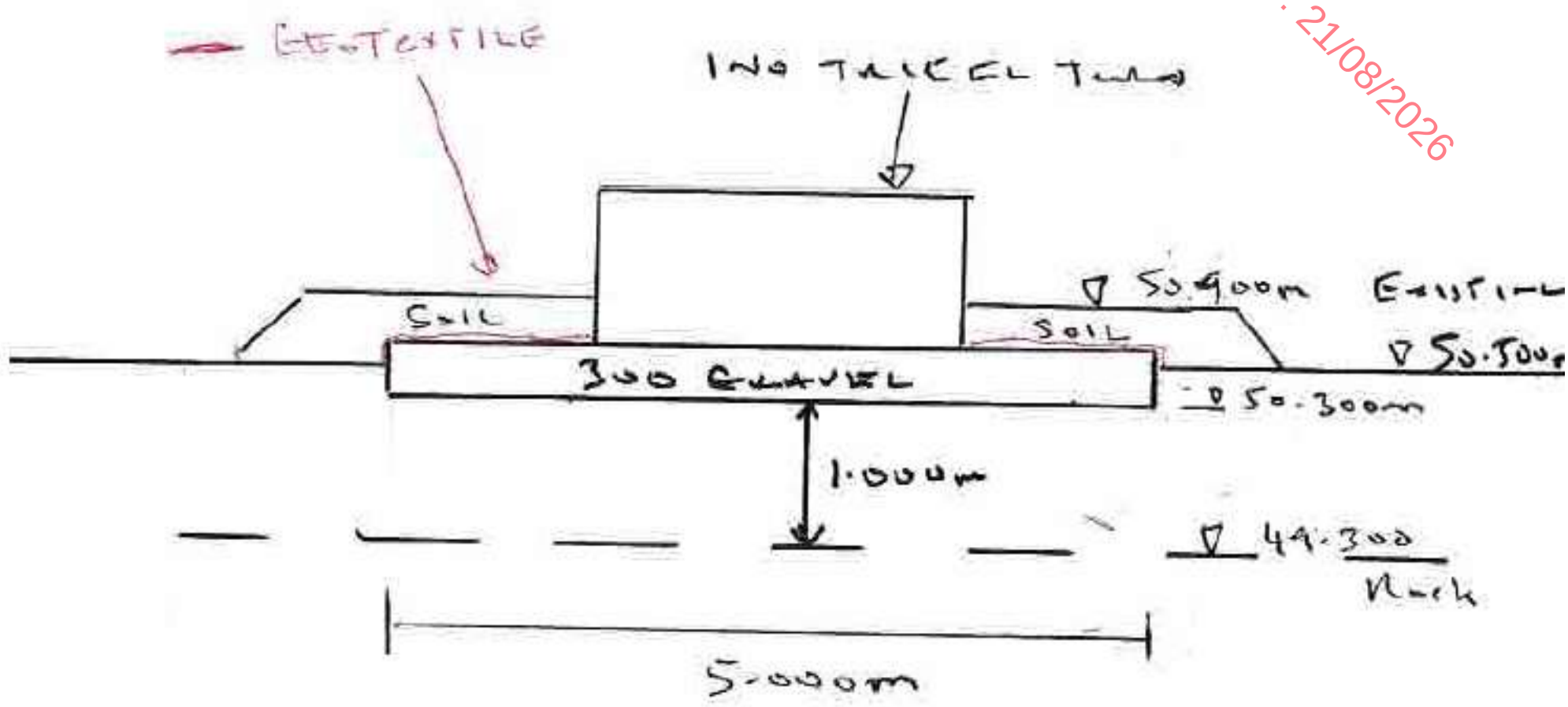
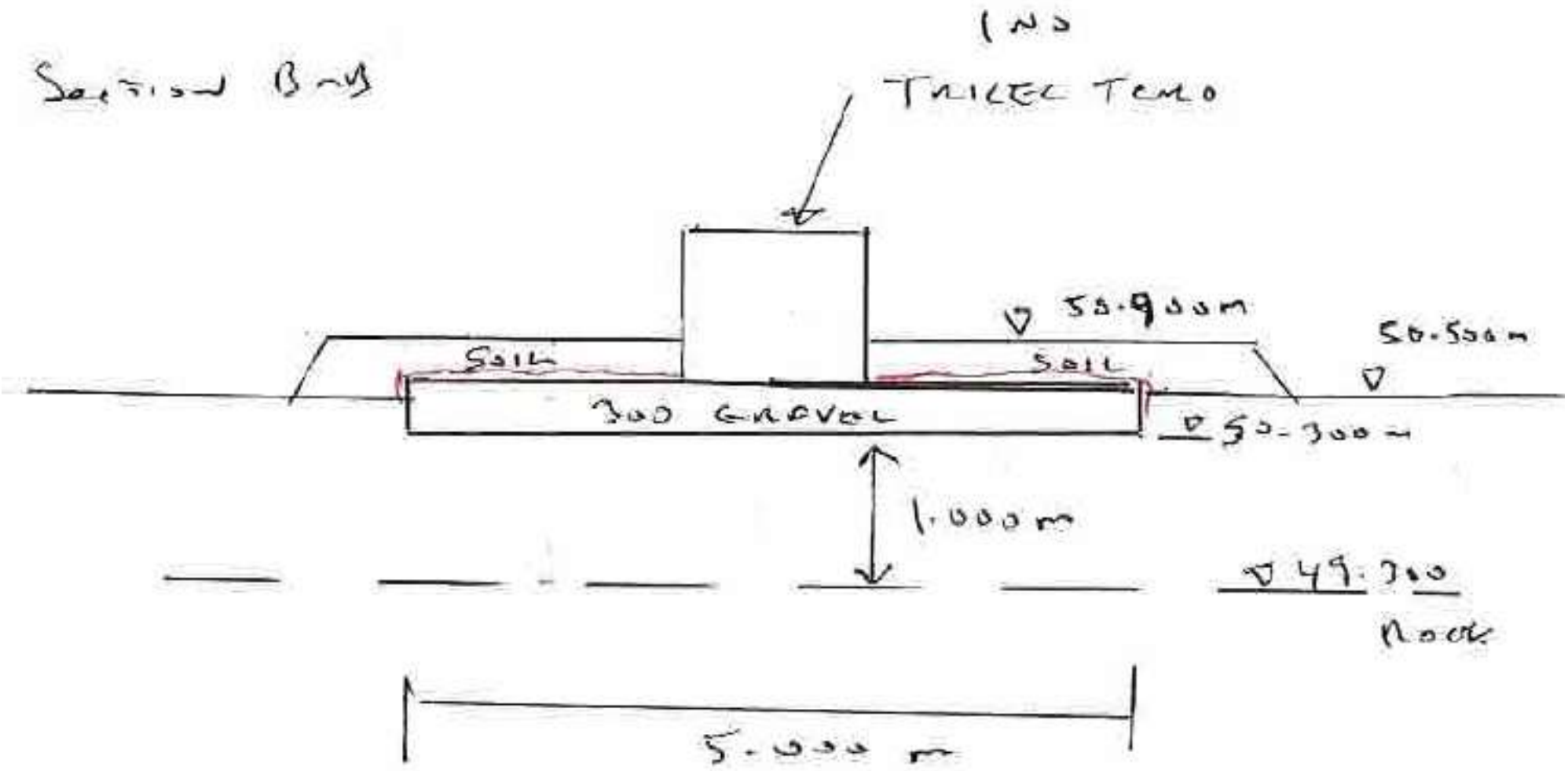
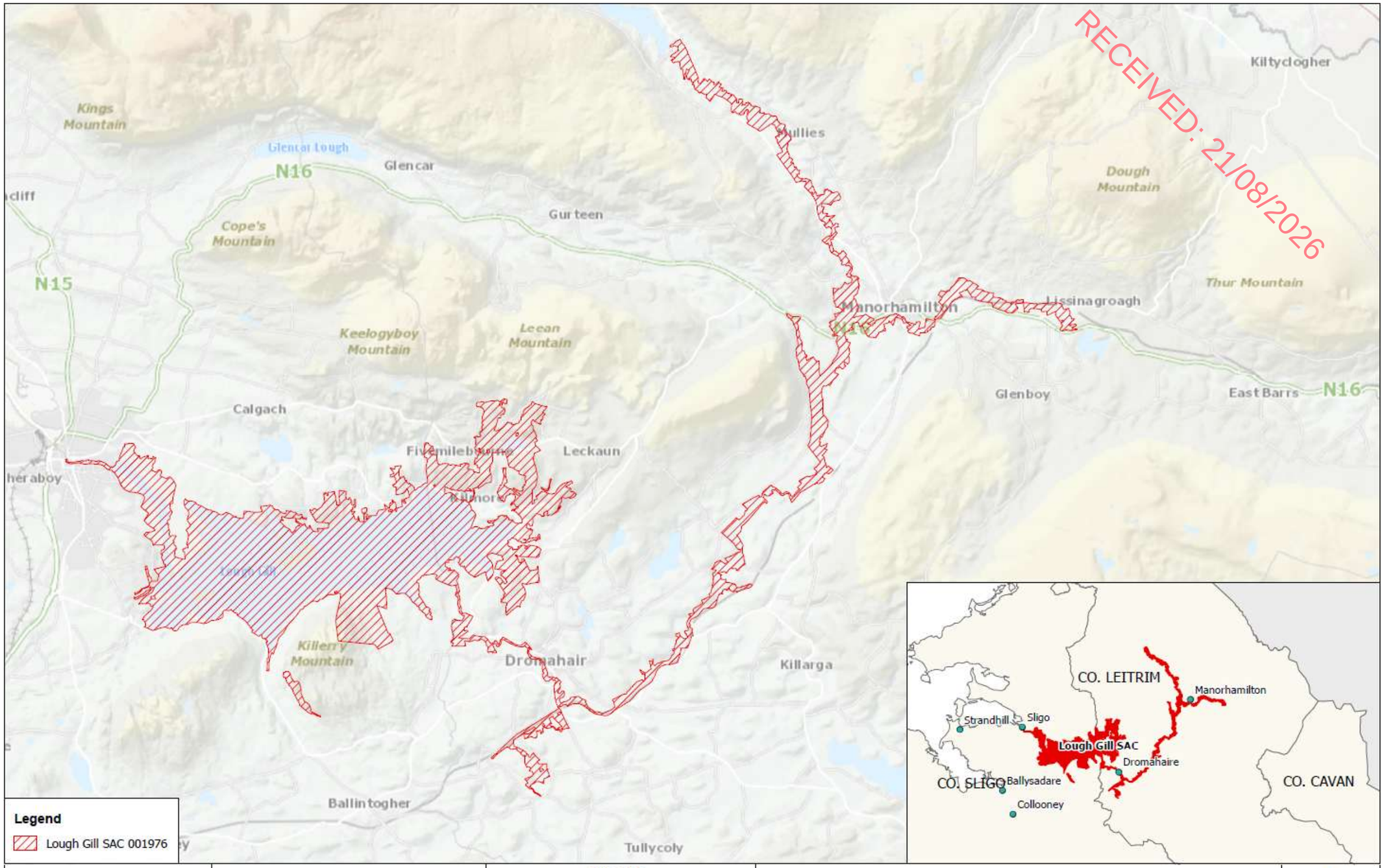




Appendix C: European Site Maps of Extent and Annex I Habitat Distributions (NPWS, 2021)



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Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

MAP 1:
LOUGH GILL SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
SAC DESIGNATION

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document

SITE CODE:
SAC 001976; version 3.
CO. SLIGO / LEITRIM

0 1 2 4 Kilometres

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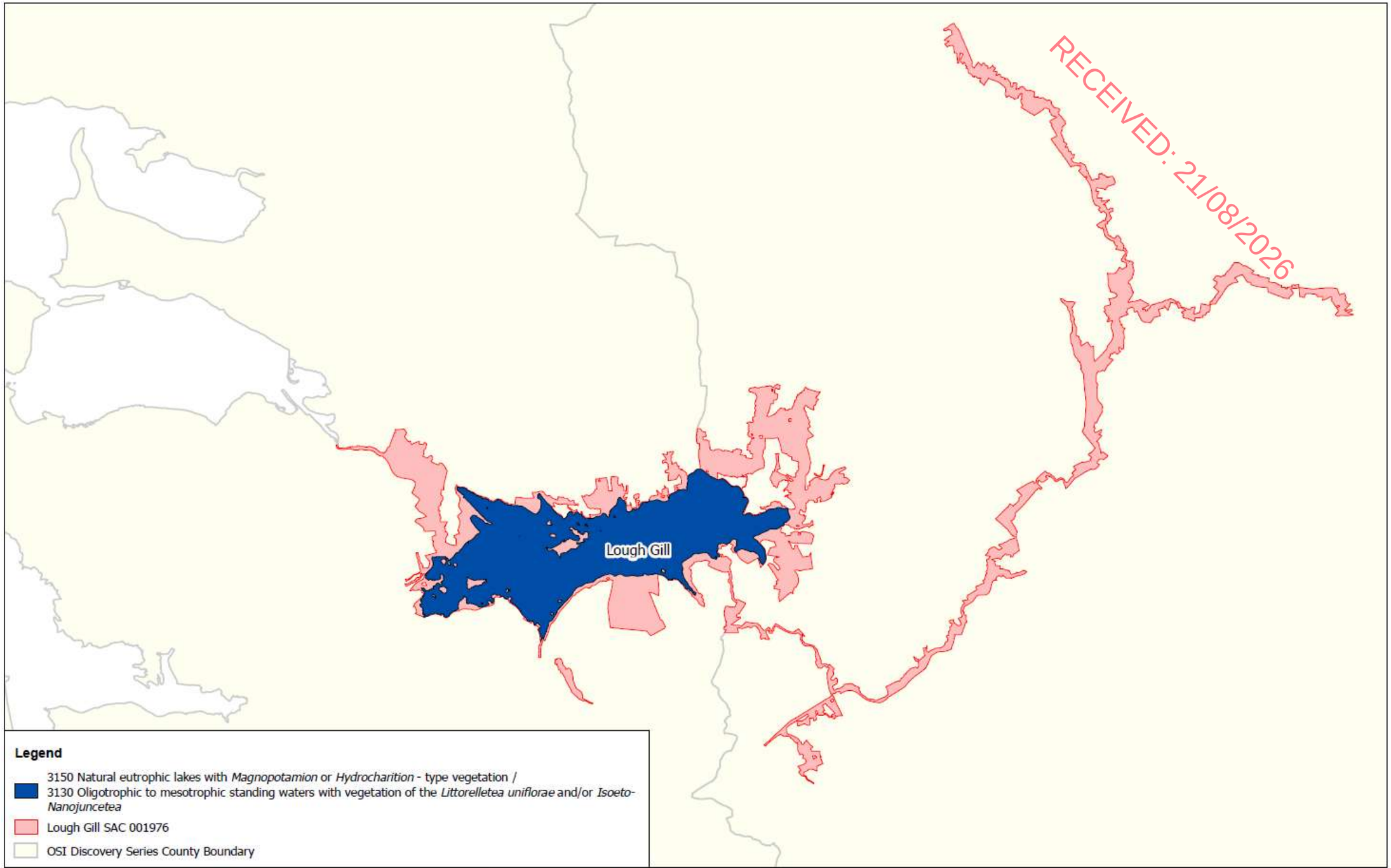

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MAP 3:
LOUGH GILL SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
INDICATIVE LAKE HABITATS

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document

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MAP 4:
LOUGH GILL SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
GRASSLAND HABITATS

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document

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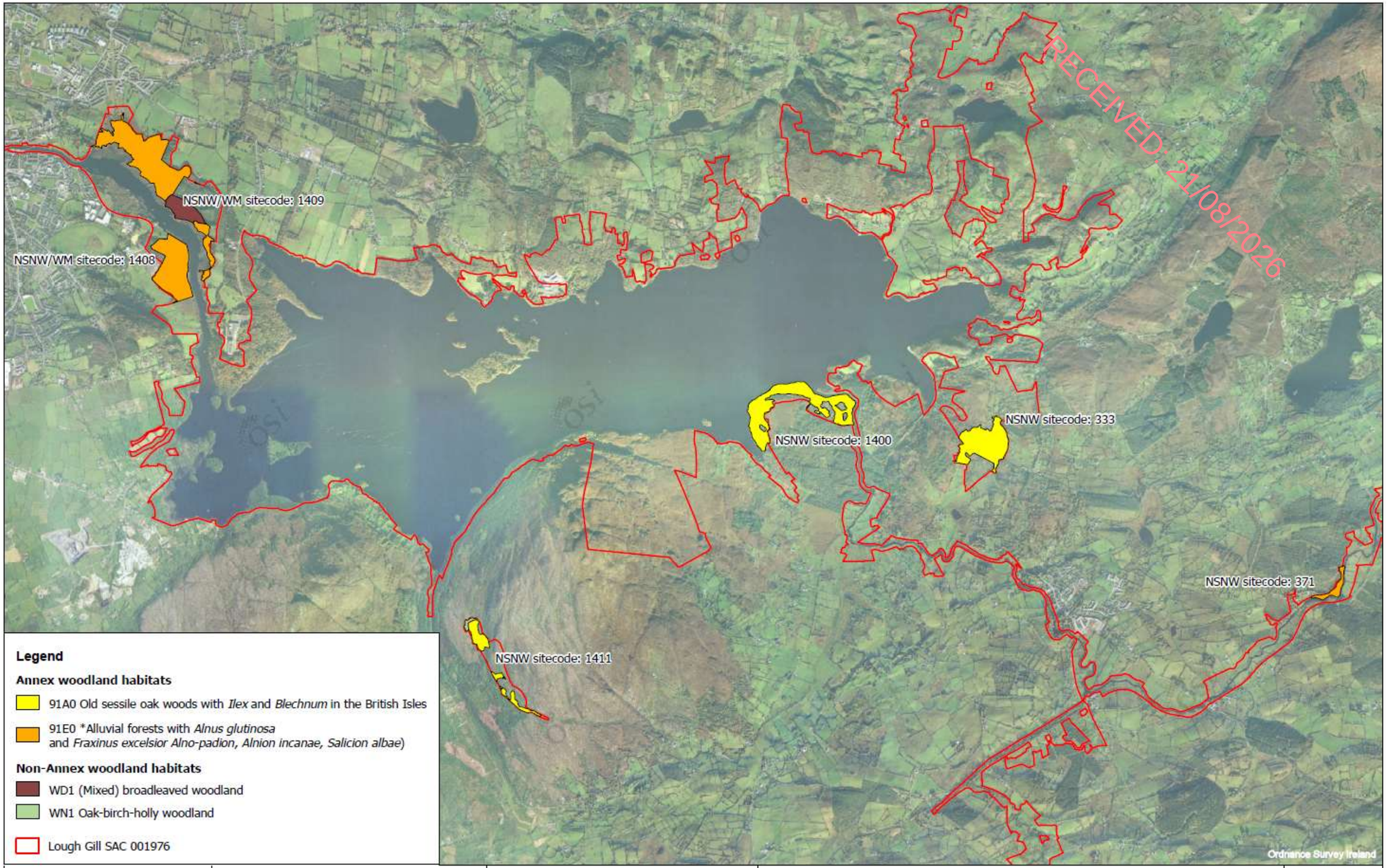

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Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

MAP 5:
LOUGH GILL SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
WOODLAND HABITATS

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document

SITE CODE:
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0 0.45 0.9 1.8 Kilometres

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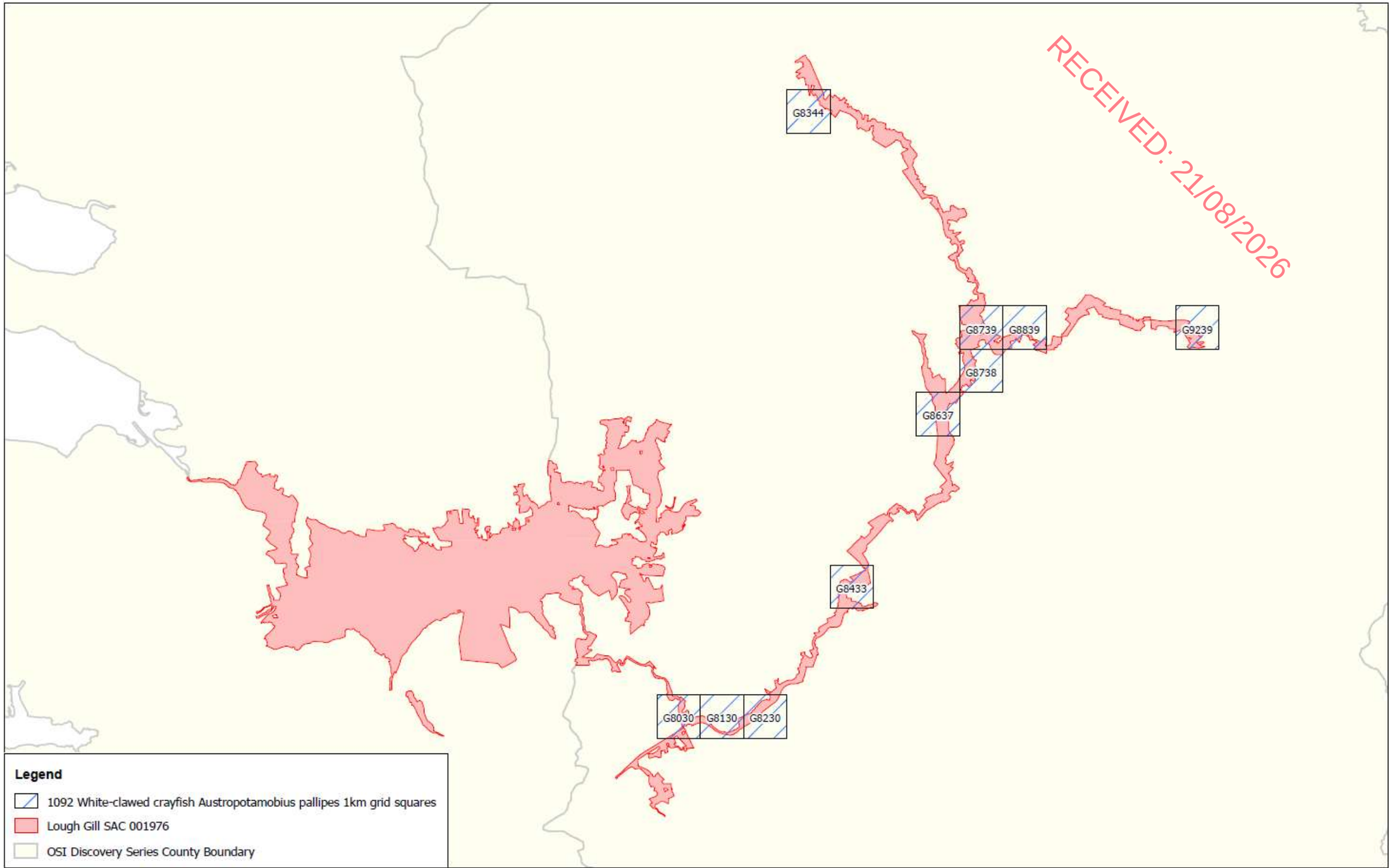

An Roinn Tithíochta, Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

MAP 6:
LOUGH GILL SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document

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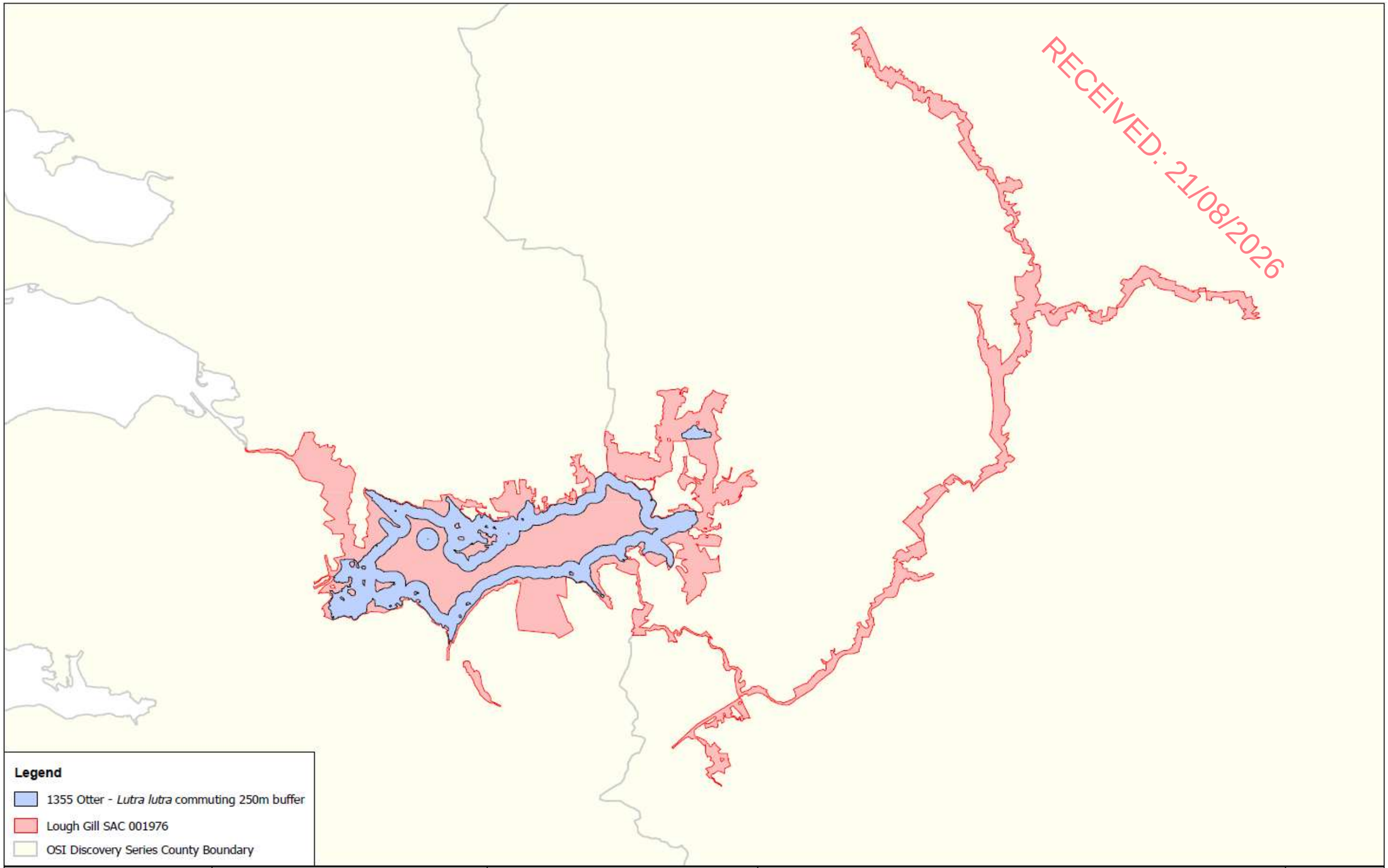

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MAP 7:
LOUGH GILL SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
OTTER COMMUTING

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document

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Appendix D: Sligo CDP Policies

The proposed scheme is located within the functional area of Leitrim County Council. Plans and developments within the county must comply with the following policies and objectives of the **Sligo County Development Plan 2024 - 2030** relevant to the protection of European sites and of water quality in County Leitrim and its coastal areas and waters:

Policies of Sligo County Council:

P-DSNC-1: Protect and maintain the conservation status of all natural heritage sites designated or proposed for designation in accordance with European and national legislation and agreements. These include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA), Ramsar Sites, Statutory Nature Reserves, as identified by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and any other sites that may be proposed for designation during the lifetime of this Plan.

P-DSNC-3: Carry out an appropriate level of assessment for all development plans, land-use plans and projects that the Council authorizes or proposes to undertake or adopt, to determine the potential for these plans or projects to impact on designated sites, proposed designated sites or associated ecological corridors and linkages in accordance with the Habitats Directive. All appropriate assessments shall be in compliance with the provisions of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

P-DSNC-4: Ensure that all development proposals are subject to the process of Screening for Appropriate Assessment and subsequent stages of Appropriate Assessment, as relevant, carried out to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority, in consultation with National Parks and Wildlife Service, as appropriate.

P-WWT-4: … In cases where a settlement is not served by a public wastewater treatment plant, or where no spare capacity exists in the relevant wastewater treatment plants, proposals for single houses using on-site wastewater treatment will be considered subject to appropriate scale, site assessment, design and ground conditions, taking groundwater vulnerability into account and subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive. Any such permitted development shall be subject to legally binding maintenance arrangements agreed with the Planning Authority and shall be required to connect to the public wastewater treatment plant when adequate capacity becomes available…

P-WWT-5 All proposals for on-site treatment systems shall be designed, constructed and maintained in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency's 2021 Code of Practice: Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems (Population Equivalent ≤10) and/or Treatment Systems for Small Communities, business, Leisure Centres and Hotels, (EPA, 1999) as amended, and any guidance documents issued by the County Council.