

April '22



## **Title**

**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT  
SCREENING REPORT**

## **Development Description**

*"Proposed Public Realm Improvements"*

## **Location**

*Duke Street, Duke Street Lower & Upper, Lemon Street,  
Anne's Lane and Anne Street South at Dublin 2*

## **Applicants**

*Dublin City Council*

## **Prepared by:**

*Colette Casey (B.SC) in partnership with  
James O' Donnell (BA, MRUP, Dip  
APM)*

**James O' Donnell**

**BA, MRUP, Dip APM**

**Planning Consultancy Services**

**Suite 3,**

**Third Floor,**

**Ross House,**

**Victoria Place,**

**Eyre Square,**

**Galway**

M: 087-6066166

info@planningconsultancy.ie

www.planningconsultancy.ie

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Legislative Background	2
1.1.1	EU Nature Conservation Legislation and Natura 2000 Sites.	2
1.1.2	Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites	3
2	Methodology	4
2.1.1	Appropriate Assessment Stages	4
3	Stage 1: Screening for Appropriate Assessment	5
3.1	Description of the Plan or Project	5
3.2	Description of the Existing Environment	5
3.2.1	Site Location in Relation to Natura 2000 Sites	5
4	Brief Description of the Natura 2000 Sites which may be affected	11
5	Soils, Geology & Hydrogeology	16
6	Other Plans and Projects in the Area	17
7	Screening Matrix for Appropriate Assessment in line with EU Commission Guidance	18
8	Conclusions	23

## APPENDICES

---

### APPENDIX A Site Layout Plan

### APPENDIX B NPWS Site Synopses for the South Dublin Bay SAC

### APPENDIX B NPWS Site Synopses for the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA

*Note: The scope of this report is to provide the necessary information to the competent authority, to assess whether the proposed development alone and in combination with other projects, could have significant effects on Natura 2000 sites in the area in view of the sites conservation objectives, in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, and does not purport to be an ecological assessment of the subject site.*

# 1 INTRODUCTION

---

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by Colette Casey (BSc) in partnership with James O' Donnell, Planning Consultant (BA, MRUP, Dip APM) on behalf of Dublin City Council who are applying for planning permission for "Public Realm Improvements" at Duke Street, Duke Street Lower & Upper, Lemon Street, Anne's Lane and Anne Street South at Dublin 2.

Colette Casey is an experienced and qualified ecologist. She has obtained a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science (BSc Hons) at the National University of Ireland, Galway. She has been involved in the completion of numerous Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports (AASR's), Natura Impact statements (NIS's), Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMP's), Otter and Bat Surveys in the Republic of Ireland. She is an active member of Birdwatch Ireland and Bat Conservation Ireland. She has completed a course with Bat Conservation Trust "British bats, their ecology and conservation". Colette is a registered member of CIEEM and has been issued a Bat Surveying license by National Parks and Wildlife services.

James O' Donnell is a qualified Town Planner and Project Manager with over 22 years planning experience in both the public and private sector in the west of Ireland, including 6 years' experience as a local authority planning officer. James has particular experience in the project management and delivery of a wide range of complex planning applications requiring environmental and ecological assessment, in accordance with the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive and EIA Directives.

The site for the proposed development lies 3.12km from the South Dublin Bay SAC and 2.79km from the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, which have been designated under the EU Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive, so it is necessary that the potential impacts of the proposed works be assessed by the competent authority, in accordance with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. This report provides the information necessary for the competent authority to complete an Appropriate Assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed works on sites of European importance in the area. This report has also had regard to the provisions of the March 2021 publication entitled "OPR Practice Note PN01- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management."

<p><b>Brief description of the project plan</b></p>	<p><i>“Public Realm Improvements including paving, public lighting, drainage, service ducts, tree planting works etc. “</i></p>
<p><b>Brief description of site characteristics</b></p>	<p>The site is located along Duke Street, Duke Street Lower &amp; Upper, Lemon Street, Anne's Lane and Anne Street South at Dublin 2.</p> <p>The subject site outlined in red consists of the public realm areas within the aforementioned streets. The subject site is bounded by existing mixed-use buildings which enclose each of the streets.</p> <p>The existing environment consists of built up, centrally located urban streets in heart of Dublin City.</p>

**Table 1.1: Step One: Description of the project/proposal and local site characteristics**

## 1.1 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

### 1.1.1 EU Nature Conservation Legislation and Natura 2000 Sites.

There are three main types of designation for nature conservation in Ireland: Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). NHAs are designated under the Irish Wildlife Act 1976 (amended 2000). SACs and SPAs are designated under European legislation, the EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (transposed into Irish law in the European Union (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997 as amended in 1998 and 2005) and the EU Birds Directive 79/409/EEC, respectively. These European designated sites (SACs and SPAs) are also known as Natura 2000 sites. This means that they are part of the Natura 2000 Network, a network of important ecological sites across the European Union.

Sites are designated on the basis of the presence of certain ‘Qualifying Features’, i.e., the habitats listed under Annex I and the species listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.

Once a site is designated as a SAC and publicly advertised it is legally protected and becomes a proposed candidate SAC (pcSAC). A three-month period follows during which landowners may lodge an objection to the designation. Details of each proposed SAC are then given to the EU Commission, and thereafter the site is called a “candidate SAC”. Once the sites are approved by the Commission, they are formally designated by the Minister.

## 1.1.2 Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites

Due to the proximity of the proposed development site to a candidate Special Area of Conservation, also known as a Natura 2000 site, an Appropriate Assessment may be required under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, Articles 6(3) and 6(4), Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites. Such assessments are required where it is identified that a proposed plan or project could have significant impact on a Natura 2000 site. Articles 6(3) and (4) of the Directive, state the following;

*6.3 'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to Appropriate Assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives... 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....'*

*6.4 'If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest... the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected...'*

## 2 METHODOLOGY

---

The screening exercise will be conducted in line with the recommendations and protocol set out in the Guidance from the Commission (EC, 2002). This protocol involves a four-stage process to complete an Appropriate Assessment. At each stage, the findings of certain issues and tests will determine whether the next stage in the process is required.

### 2.1.1 Appropriate Assessment Stages

The four stages in the Appropriate Assessment process are outlined below:

#### **Stage 1: Screening**

This step consists of examining the likely potential impacts of a project or plan, alone or in combination with other projects, upon a Natura 2000 site or sites, and considers whether these impacts may be considered significant. If no significant impacts are foreseen, then a 'finding of no significant effects' (FONSE) statement is issued to the appropriate authority, and the process is complete. If the effects are considered significant or their significance is unknown, then the process moves on to Stage 2.

#### **Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment**

Where the screening process has identified potential impacts which are considered significant or unknown, this process examines these potential impacts in detail, in relation to the conservation interests of the Natura 2000 site or sites. Mitigation measures may be suggested to reduce the likelihood or severity of these impacts. If the impacts are still considered to be significant or unknown after this stage is complete, then alternative solutions must be considered (Stage 3).

#### **Stage 3: Assessment of Alternative Solutions**

If the potential impacts are still considered to be significant or unknown after the Appropriate Assessment stage, then alternative ways of implementing the project are considered at this stage. If no alternative solutions are possible, then it is considered whether the project or plan may go ahead regardless, if imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) are found.

#### **Stage 4: Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI)**

If significant negative impacts on the Natura 2000 site are unavoidable, and no alternative solutions may be found, then this stage involves the consideration of whether the project or plan may go ahead despite these effects, for 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' (IROPI).

The results of a Stage 1 (Screening) Exercise are detailed in **Section 3** of this report.

### 3 STAGE 1: SCREENING FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

#### 3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN OR PROJECT

The proposed development included "Public Realm Improvements." A Site Layout Plan is included as **Appendix A** to this report.

#### 3.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

##### 3.2.1 Site Location in Relation to Natura 2000 Sites

The proposed site is located on Duke Street, Duke Street Lower & Upper, Lemon Street, Anne's Lane and Anne Street South at Dublin 2. at Dublin 2. (Easting: 315989.78, Northing: 233746.27). The site for the proposed development lies 3.12km from the South Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code-000210) and 2.79km from the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (Site Code-004024) (see **Figure 3.1** below).

All Natura 2000 sites within a 15km buffer of the proposed development are listed in **Table 3.1**, **Figure 3.2** and **Figure 3.3**.

**Table 3.1: Step Two: Identification of relevant Natura 200 sites using Source-Pathway-Receptor Model and Compilation of information on QI and Conservation Objectives**

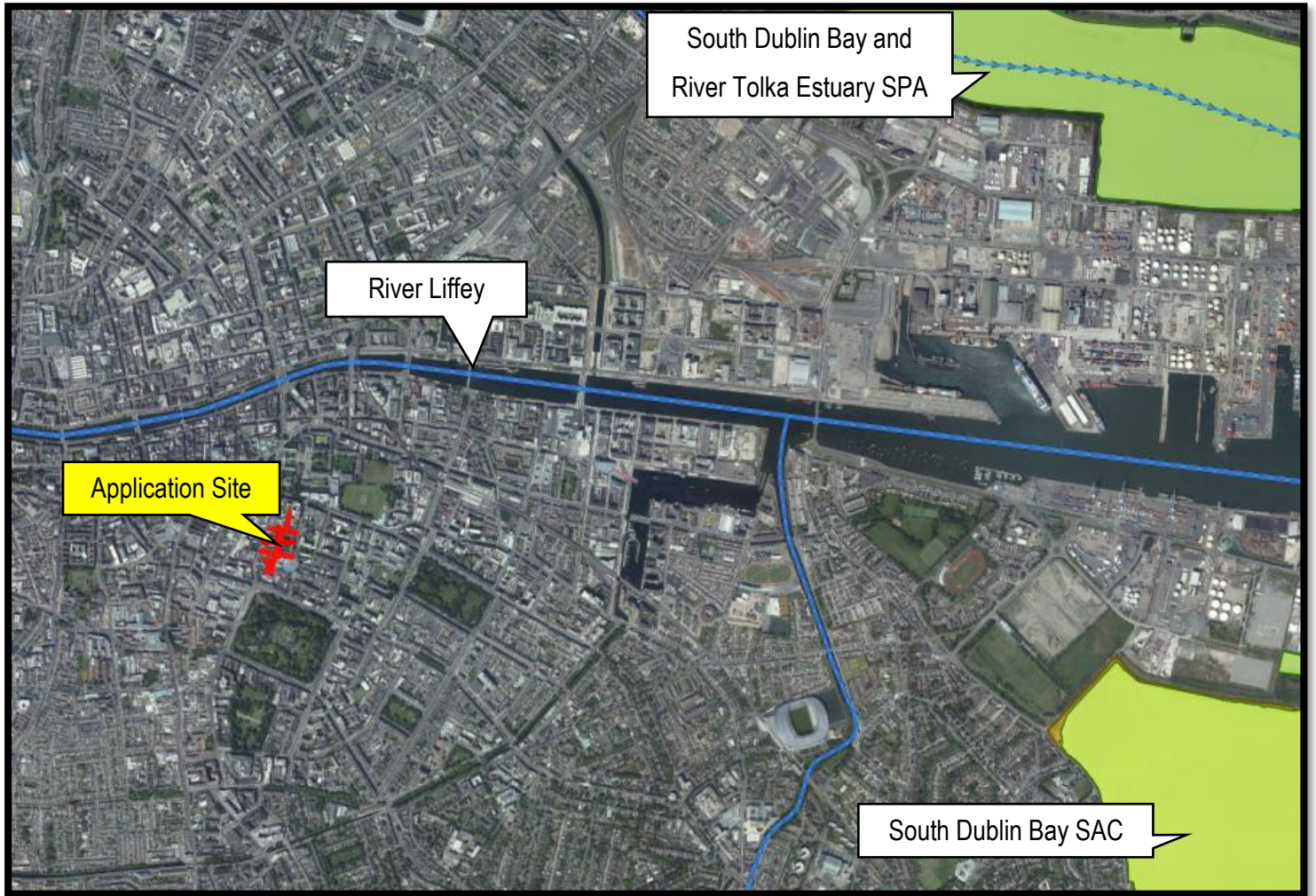
European Site (Code)	List of Qualifying Interest/Special Conservation Interest	Distance from the proposed development (km)	Receptor/Connection	Screen In – Yes/No
South Dublin Bay SAC (Site code 000210)	QI's 4 Habitats <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000210.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000210.pdf</a>	3.12km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site. No hydrological connections were identified, and the nature of the surrounding environment being highly developed.	No
North Dublin Bay SAC (Site code: 000206)	QIs – 9 Habitats and 1 Species <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000206.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000206.pdf</a>	5.56km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Baldoyle Bay SAC (Site code: 000199)	QIs – 4 Habitats <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000199.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000199.pdf</a>	10.66	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Howth Head SAC (Site code: 000202)	QIs – 2 Habitats <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000202.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000202.pdf</a>	11.27km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (Site code: 003000)	QIs – 1 Habitat and 1 Species <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf</a>	11.28km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No

	<a href="#">sites/conservation_objectives/CO003000.pdf</a>			
Wicklow Mountains SAC (Site code: 002122)	QIs – 12 Habitats and 1 Species <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002122.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002122.pdf</a>	11.54km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Glenasmole Valley SAC (Site code: 001209)	QIs – 3 Habitats <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001209.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001209.pdf</a>	11.70km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Malahide Estuary SAC (Site code: 000205)	QIs – 6 Habitats <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000205.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000205.pdf</a>	13.64km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Ireland's Eye SAC (Site code: 000725)	QIs – 2 Habitats <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000725.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000725.pdf</a>	14.50km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Knocksink Wood SAC (Site code: 001209)	QIs – 3 Habitats <a href="https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001209.pdf">https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001209.pdf</a>	14.71km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (Site code 004042)	QI's 1 Habitat and 13 Species <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004042.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004042.pdf</a>	2.79km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
North Bull Island SPA (Site code 004006)	QI's 17 Bird species and 1 Habitat <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004006.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004006.pdf</a>	5.55km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Baldoyle Bay SPA (Site code 004016)	QI's 6 Bird species and 1 Habitat <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004016.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004016.pdf</a>	10.82km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Wicklow Mountains SPA (Site code 004040)	QI's 2 Bird species <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004040.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004040.pdf</a>	11.80km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Dalkey Islands SPA (Site code 004172)	QI's 3 Bird species <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004172.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004172.pdf</a>	12.96km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No



Malahide Estuary SPA (Site code 004025)	QI's 14 Bird species and 1 Habitat <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004025.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004025.pdf</a>	13.64km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Howth Head Coast SPA (Site code 004113)	QI's 1 Bird species <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004113.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004113.pdf</a>	13.82km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No
Ireland's Eye SPA (Site code 004117)	QI's 5 Bird species <a href="http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004117.pdf">http://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004117.pdf</a>	14.30km	No-due to the lack of connectors/receptors and significant distance from the proposed site	No

The South Dublin Bay SAC and the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA have been screened out due to the significant distance between the Natura 2000 sites and the application site. Furthermore there are no identifiable ecological corridors or hydrological connections. As the South Dublin Bay and the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA are the nearest Natura 2000 sites they will be further discussed below.



**Figure 3.1:** Site Location (outlined in Red) in Relation to the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 Sites



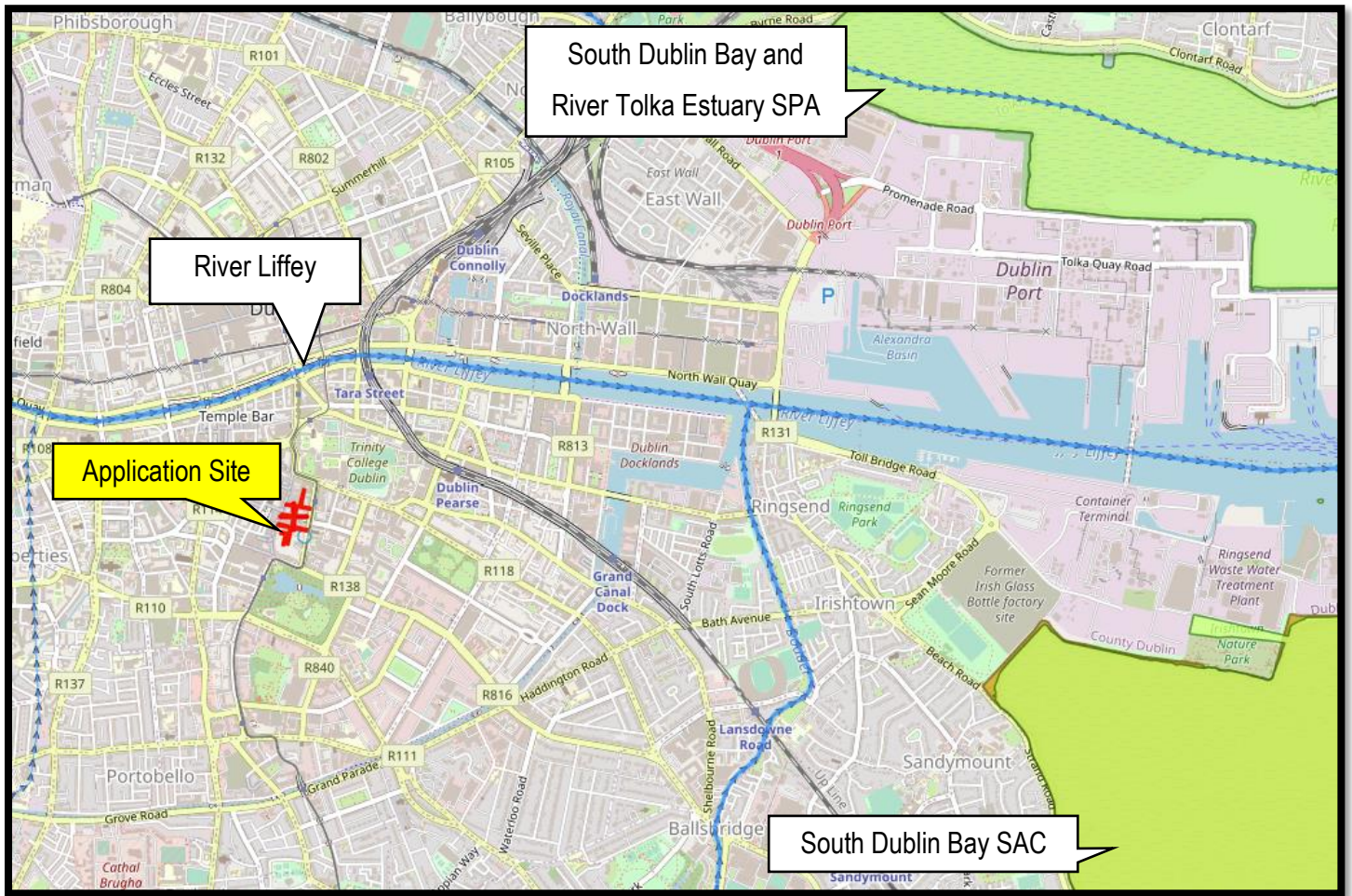


Figure 3.2: Site Location (outlined in Red) in Relation to the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 Sites



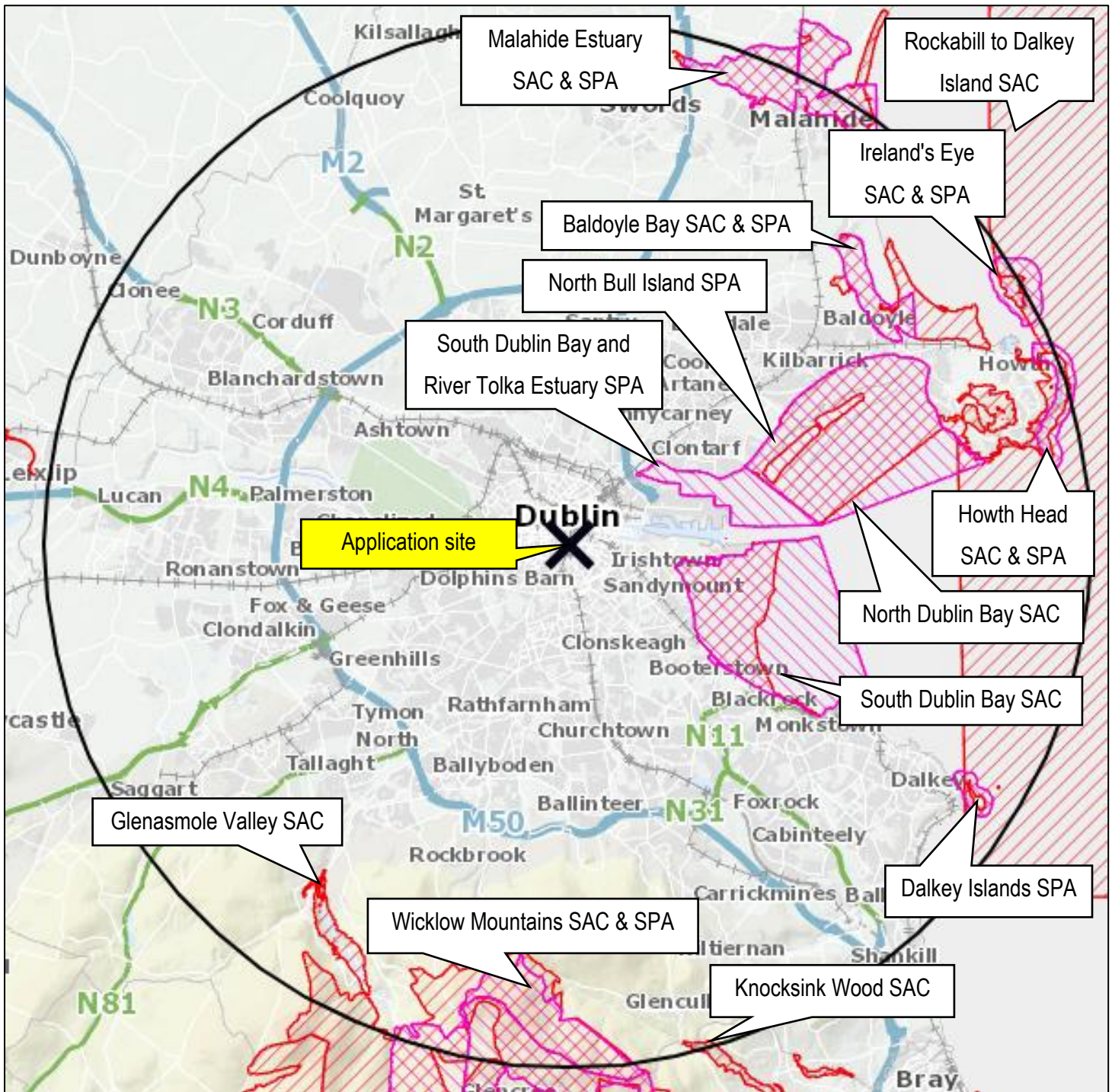


Figure 3.3: 15km Buffer Surrounding Site

## 4 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURA 2000 SITES WHICH MAY BE AFFECTED

### Qualifying Features

Natura 2000 sites are designated on the presence of certain habitats and species which are afforded protection under the Birds and Habitats Directives. These habitats and species are regarded as 'qualifying features' of the Natura 2000 sites. The following section provides details on the qualifying features of the Natura 2000 sites in question – South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 sites. The NPWS site synopses for the designated sites are given as **Appendix B & C** to this report.

**Table 4.1 South Dublin Bay SAC Habitat Information**

Habitat code	Habitat name	Cover (ha)	Representativity
1140	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	719.9478	B
1210	Annual vegetation of drift lines	0.01	A
1310	Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand	0.01	A
2110	Embryonic shifting dunes	0.03	A

**Table 4.2 South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Habitat Information**

Habitat code	Habitat name	Cover (ha)	Representativity
A999	Wetlands and Waterbirds	N/A	N/A

For species, a value is given for 'Population Significance'. This value is based on the relative density or size of the population of that species within the Natura 2000 site with that of the national population. Population Significance is ranked on a scale from A to D where A - 100>=p>15%, B - 15>=p>2%, C - 2>=p>0% and D - Non-significant population. The SCI species found in the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 sites are outlined in Table 4.2 below.

**Table 4.3 South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA SCI Species Information**

Species code	Latin name	English name	Population significance
A046	<i>Branta bernicla hrota</i>	Light-bellied Brent Goose	C
A130	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Oystercatcher	C
A137	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Ringed Plover	C
A141	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	Grey Plover	C

A143	<i>Calidris canutus</i>	Knot	B
A144	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Sanderling	B
A149	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Dunlin	C
A157	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	B
A162	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Redshank	C
A179	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Black-Headed Gull	C
A192	<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Roseate Tern	A
A193	<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common Tern	B
A194	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Arctic Tern	B

### Potential Pressures and Threats to the Natura 2000 Sites

The European Nature Information System (EUNIS) website contains data on all Natura 2000 sites, including details of the main threats to and pressures on their qualifying features. Potential threats to and pressures on the qualifying features of the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 sites are listed in **Tables 4.4 & 4.5**.

**Table 4.4 Potential Pressures and Threats to the South Dublin Bay SAC Natura 2000 Site**

Activity	Location	Intensity	Influence
Industrial or commercial areas	Outside	High	Negative
Walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles	Inside	High	Negative
Non-motorized nautical sports	Inside	Medium	Negative
Reclamation of land from sea, estuary or marsh	Outside	High	Negative
Accumulation of organic material	Inside	High	Negative
Bait digging / collection	Inside	Medium	Negative
Roads, motorways	Outside	Low	Negative
Paths, tracks, cycling tracks	Inside	Medium	Negative
Urbanised areas, human habitation	Outside	High	Negative
Nautical sports	Inside	Medium	Negative
Discharges	Both	Medium	Negative
Marine water pollution	Both	Medium	Negative

**Table 4.5 Potential Pressures and Threats to the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 Site**

Activity	Location	Intensity	Influence
Industrial or commercial areas	Outside	High	Negative
Leisure fishing	Inside	Medium	Negative
Nautical sports	Inside	Medium	Negative
Bait digging / collection	Inside	Medium	Negative
Discharges	Inside	High	Negative
Walking, horseriding and non-motorised vehicles	Inside	High	Negative
Roads, motorways	Outside	Medium	Negative
Urbanised areas, human habitation	Outside	High	Negative
Eutrophication (natural)	Inside	Medium	Negative
Reclamation of land from sea, estuary or marsh	Outside	High	Negative

## **Conservation Objectives of the Natura 2000 Sites**

Once a site has been designated as a Natura site, a management plan should be put together for the site which sets out the Conservation Objectives, these can be Site specific Conservation Objects (SSCO) or Generic Conservation Objectives for the site. Every effort should then be made to ensure that these objectives are fulfilled, in order to prevent potential impacts to the qualifying features of the site and maintain as far as possible their favourable conservation status.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain at favourable conservation status sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when: its natural range, and area it covers within that range, is stable or increasing, and the ecological factors that are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when: population data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself, and the natural range of the species is neither being reduced or likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Management plans have been published for the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 sites. Qualifying interests and objectives (bulleted) are listed below

### **South Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code 000210)**

#### 1140- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide

- Area of permanent habitat is stable or increasing, subject to natural processes
- Maintain the extent of the *Zostera*-dominated community, subject to natural processes.
- Conserve the high quality of the *Zostera*-dominated community, subject to natural processes
- Conserve the following community type in a natural condition: Fine sands with *Angulus tenuis* community complex

### **South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (Site Code 004024)**

#### Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*) [A046]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by light-bellied brent goose, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

#### Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) [A130]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by oystercatcher, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation



Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) [A137]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by ringed plover, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*) [A141]

- No conservation objectives published

Knot (*Calidris canutus*) [A143]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by knot, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) [A144]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by sanderling, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*) [A149]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by dunlin, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) [A157]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by bar-tailed godwit, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) [A162]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by redshank, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) [A179]

- Long term population trend stable or increasing
- No significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by black-headed gull other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*) [A192]

- No significant decline in passage population & individuals
- No significant decline in distribution: roosting areas
- No significant decline in prey biomass available
- No significant increase in barriers to connectivity
- Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the numbers of roseate tern among the post-breeding aggregation of terns

Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) [A193]

- No significant decline in breeding population abundance and apparently occupied nests
- No significant decline in productivity rate, fledged young per breeding pair
- No significant decline in passage population & individuals
- No significant decline in distribution of breeding colonies



- No significant decline in distribution: roosting areas
- No significant decline in prey biomass available
- No significant increase in barriers to connectivity
- Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the breeding common tern population
- Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the numbers of roseate tern among the post-breeding aggregation of terns

#### Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) [A194]

- No significant decline in passage population
- No significant decline in distribution: roosting areas
- No significant decline in prey biomass available
- No significant increase in barriers to connectivity
- Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the numbers of Arctic tern among the post-breeding aggregation of terns

#### Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

- The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less than the area of 2,192 hectares, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation

Therefore, the qualifying interests for the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA have been screened out for this report due to the distance between the SAC and application site, the lack of hydrological and ecological pathways and the surrounding environment. The distance between the SPA and the application site is significant and the level of development in the surrounding area makes it highly unlikely that any qualifying bird species nest or breed on site. Therefore, none of the Qualifying interests listed above are predicted to be impacted on by the proposed development.

## 5 SOILS, GEOLOGY & HYDROGEOLOGY

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) website was consulted for available geological / hydrological information. The site is underlain by man-made materials. Topsoil on site consists of man-made materials. The groundwater vulnerability within the site is rated as M Moderate, meaning that the groundwater vulnerability in the area is High. Vulnerability is a term used to represent the intrinsic geological and hydrogeological characteristics that determine the ease at which groundwater may be contaminated by human activities.

**Table 5.1** Details information gleaned from catchments.ie on the water status of the groundwater waterbody. This concludes that the groundwater is rated as good overall status.

Dublin Waterbody Information	
Name	Dublin
Code	IE_EA_G-008
Catchments	07 Boyne 08 Nanny-Delvin 09 Liffey and Dublin Bay 14 Barrow
Longitude	53.3593898
Latitude	-6.4891473
Cycle 1 RBD	Eastern
Local Authority	South Dublin County Council
Waterbody Category	Groundwater
WFD Risk	Not at risk
Protected Area	N/A
High Status Objective	No
Heavily Modified	N/A
Artificial	N/A
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	N/A
Length (km)	N/A
Transboundary	No
Canal	No
GW 2013-2018 Overall Groundwater Status	Good

## 6 OTHER PLANS AND PROJECTS IN THE AREA

It is a requirement of the Appropriate Assessment process to consider the 'in combination' effects of the proposed development with other plans and projects in the area. **Table 6.1** below gives details of the other plans and projects in the area which may be affecting the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 sites.

**Table 6.1: Other Plans and Projects Affecting the Natura 2000 Site**

Name of Plan or Project	Key policies/issues/objectives directly related to the relevant Natura 2000 sites	Potential cumulative or in-combination effects on the relevant Natura 2000 sites
<b>Dublin City Council Development Plan 2022- 2028</b>	Designated Sites, Habitats and Species Policies and Objectives, Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Policies and Objectives, Natural Water Systems Polices	Positive Impact
<b>River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 - 2021</b>	The River Basin Management Plan for Ireland, issued in April 2018, sets out a number of objectives and measures for all national water bodies which aim: (1) to prevent the deterioration of water bodies and to protect, enhance and restore them with the aim of achieving at least good status and (2) to achieve compliance with the requirements for designated protected areas.	Positive impact
<b>NPWS Conservation Management Plans</b>	A Conservation Management Plan is in place for the South Dublin Bay SAC and the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 site and its aims and objectives are outlined above.	Positive impacts
<b>Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) Corporate Plan 2022-2025</b>	Goals: To improve the protection and conservation of the resource. To develop and improve wild fish populations. To increase the number of anglers. To generate a better return for Ireland from the resource	Positive impact
<b>Planning Applications in the area</b>	A search was carried out on Dublin City Council's online planning system. It was ascertained that there has been a large number of planning applications in the area. Mainly these planning applications applied for changes of use, signage and other commercial alteration. Due to nature of the area already being well developed as a mixed-use commercial district, with no large scale developments or building works being carried out within the application site, no impacts are expected in this regard.	Neutral Impact

## 7 SCREENING MATRIX FOR APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT IN LINE WITH EU COMMISSION GUIDANCE

Having established the extent of the proposed project and the details of the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 sites, a screening assessment for possible impacts can be generated. This section follows the format of the Screening Matrix provided in Annex 2 of the following document;

*“Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites- Methodology guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, European Commission, 2001”.*

**Table 7.1: Step Three: Assessment of Likely Significant Effects**

<b>(a) Identify all potential direct and indirect impacts that may have an effect on the conservation objective of a European site taking into account the size/scale of the project under the following headings:</b>	
<b>Impacts:</b>	<b>Possible significance of Impacts (Duration/Magnitude)</b>
<b>Construction Phase (Examples)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetation Clearance</li> <li>• Demolition</li> <li>• Surface water runoff from excavation/infill</li> <li>• Dust, noise, vibration</li> <li>• Lighting disturbance</li> <li>• Impact on groundwater</li> <li>• Storage of excavation/construction materials</li> <li>• Access to site</li> <li>• Pests</li> </ul>	<p>The application site is located at a distance from the Natura 2000 sites that it will not result in any identifiable impacts or disturbance.</p> <p>There is no hydrological connection between the subject site and the Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>Given that the existing environment is largely developed and has been used for commercial and retail purposes for a prolonged prior of time no impacts are expected.</p> <p>No sewers will be redirected during the construction phase and all excavation works will not occur at a depth likely to affect the Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p>Due to the nature of the improvements to be for improved drainage and resurfacing works, the construction phase is unlikely to result in significant effects/impacts.</p> <p>Therefore, significant impacts/effects can be ruled out during the construction phase of the proposed development.</p>
<b>Operation Phase (Examples)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct emissions to air and water</li> <li>• Surface water runoff containing contaminant/sediment</li> <li>• Lighting Disturbance</li> <li>• Noise/vibration</li> <li>• Changes to water/groundwater due to drainage/abstraction</li> <li>• Presence of people, vehicles and activities</li> <li>• Physical presence of structures (collision risks)</li> <li>• Potential for accidents/incidents</li> </ul>	<p>The proposed development is to be designed in accordance with Dublin City Council Sustainable Drainage Design and Evaluation Guide (2021). This is likely to attenuate surface runoff to the existing combined drainage system, which is to be maintained. It is noted that no site-specific mitigation measures are required and that the measures detailed comply with best practice construction management principles.</p> <p>SUDS are a mandatory requirement intended to avoid flooding and to give effect to the environmental protections under the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC generally. The proposed SUDS measures are not directed at avoiding or reducing any harmful effect on a European Site. As such, the SUDS measures incorporated into the scheme are not considered to be mitigation in the context of AA.</p> <p>It is not expected that water runoff arising from the improvements will result in any significant effects on the Natura 2000 site in this regard.</p> <p>There are no identifiable hydrological connections (indirect or direct) to any European sites, and the separation distance is significant. As such, that</p>

	there is no real likelihood of any significant effects on the surrounding Natura 2000 sites in this regard.
In combination/ other:	No impacts are expected in terms of emissions. Due to the nature of the application not including or effecting the public sewers in the areas. Drainage will be maintained in areas with the proposed works including SUDS, provide this is maintained and there is sufficient capacity no impacts/effects are expected.
<b>(b) Describe any likely changes to the European site:</b>	
Examples of the type of changes to give consideration to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction/fragmentation of habitat</li> <li>• Disturbance to QI species</li> <li>• Habitat/species fragmentation</li> <li>• Reduction/fragmentation in species density</li> <li>• Changes in key indicators of conservation status value</li> <li>• Changes to areas of sensitivity/threats to QI</li> <li>• Interference with the key relationships that define the structure or ecological function of the site</li> </ul>	<p>None.</p> <p>The application site is not located within a European site, and is surrounded by commercial units and retail outlets, therefore there is no risk of habitat loss, fragmentation or any effects on the Qualifying Interests directly or ex-situ.</p> <p>The significant distance between the proposed development site and any European sites, and the absence of any identifiable direct or indirect ecological pathways is such that the proposal will not result in any likely changes to the European sites that comprise part of the Natura 2000 network.</p>
<b>(c) Are 'mitigation' measures necessary to reach a conclusion that likely significant effects can be ruled out at screening?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	

The findings of the screening matrix are summarised in **Table 7.2** below.

**Table 7.2 Stage 1 - Screening Matrix for the Proposed Development**

Brief Description of the Project or Plan
<p><b>Location:</b> The proposed site lies at Duke Street, Duke Street Lower &amp; Upper, Lemon Street, Anne's Lane and Anne Street South at Dublin 2. (Grid Ref: Easting: 315989.78, Northing: 233746.27)</p> <p><b>Distance from Designated Site:</b> The site for the proposed development lies 3.12km from the South Dublin Bay SAC and 2.79km from the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA</p> <p><b>Brief Description of the Project:</b> Planning permission is being sought "<i>Public Realm Improvements</i>"</p> <p>A Site Layout Plan for the proposed development is included as <b>Appendix A</b> to this report.</p>
Brief Description of the Natura 2000 Site
<p><b>Site Designation Status:</b> The South Dublin Bay SAC &amp; South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA are designated under EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC).</p> <p><b>Qualifying Features</b></p> <p>The South Dublin Bay SAC is of conservation significance due to the presence of 4 habitats which is listed under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive.</p>

The South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA is designated for the presence of 13 bird species and 1 habitat listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive (see below).

### Qualifying Habitats - South Dublin Bay SAC

- Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide
- Annual vegetation of drift lines
- Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand
- Embryonic shifting dunes

### Qualifying Species- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA

- Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*)
- Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)
- Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*)
- Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)
- Knot (*Calidris canutus*)
- Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)
- Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)
- Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)
- Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
- Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*)
- Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*)
- Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)
- Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)
- Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]

(EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC/ EU Birds Directive 79/409/EEC).

Full details of the sites are found in South Dublin Bay SAC Site Synopses included as **Appendix B** to this report.

Full details of the sites are found in South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Site Synopses included as **Appendix C** to this report

### Unit Size:

**South Dublin Bay SAC– 733.4207948 ha**

**South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA – 2193.166418 ha**

## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### Describe the individual elements of the project likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site.

There are no impacts predicted on South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA due to the proposed development, due to the distance from the proposed development, the lack of hydrological and/or ecological connections and the nature of the surrounding environment being build up and developed. Therefore, the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA have been screened out for these reasons.

**Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project on the Natura 2000 site by virtue of the following;**

- **Size and Scale**  
The development site comprises an overall area of 5446 sqm. At this size and scale, and due to the fact that the works will be located entirely outside the designated area, it is not expected that the development will have any significant impact (direct, indirect or secondary in nature) on the Natura 2000 sites in this regard.
- **Land-Take**  
The proposed works will be entirely located outside the designated site and so there will be no impacts in this regard.
- **Distance from Natura 2000 site or key features of the site**  
The site for the proposed development lies 3.12km from the South Dublin Bay SAC and 2.79km from the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA. There are no impacts expected due to the significant distance between the Lough Corrib SAC and the development site.
- **Resource Requirements**  
It is not expected that the proposed development will have any significant impact (direct, indirect or secondary in nature) on the designated sites in this regard.
- **Emissions**  
“The existing combined drainage system will be maintained and where possible, existing gully connections will be reused. The proposed development is to be designed, in accordance with Dublin City Council Sustainable Drainage Design and Evaluation Guide (2021). No emissions are expected to arise from the drainage system set out provide that, there is sufficient capacity for water runoff, drainage systems are maintained and no blockages occur. Therefore, no impacts/ effects are predicted from the proposed development in this regard.
- **Excavation Requirements**  
No impacts are expected on the Natura 2000 site in this regard.
- **Transportation Requirements**  
During the construction phase of the proposed development, there will be a slight increase in the volume of traffic in the area for a short time. It is not expected that this slight increase will result in direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the Natura 2000 site in this regard.
- **Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning**  
The construction phase of the proposed development will last approximately 2 years. It is expected that the new pavement will remain for 100 years or more. The construction & operational phase of the proposed development is unlikely to result in indirect on the Natura 2000 site, due to lack of pathways/connectors.

**Describe any likely changes to the site arising as a result of the following;**

- **Reduction of Habitat**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Disturbance to Key Species**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Habitat or Species Fragmentation**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Reduction in species density**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Changes in key indicators of conservation value**  
There will be no changes in this respect.
- **Climate change**  
There will be no changes in this respect.

**Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of the following;**

**- Interference with key relationships that define the structure and function of the site**

No potential impacts which are likely to interfere with the key relationships that define the structure or function of the site are expected

**Provide Indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effects set out above in terms of the following;**

**- Loss**

No loss is expected.

**- Fragmentation**

No fragmentation is expected.

**- Disruption**

No disruption is expected.

**- Disturbance**

No disturbance is expected.

**- Change to key elements of the site**

No change is expected

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

No significant impacts/effects are predicted due to the proposed development on the surrounding Natura 2000 site. The South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA have been screened out due to distance, lack of pathway and no identifiable corridors ecological or hydrological.



## 8 CONCLUSIONS

---

Planning is being sought for “Public Realm Improvements” at Duke Street, Duke Street Lower & Upper, Lemon Street, Anne's Lane and Anne Street South at Dublin 2. A Site Layout Plan for the proposed development is included as **Appendix A** to this report. The screening exercise examined impacts on the South Dublin Bay SAC & South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA Natura 2000 site.

The existing combined drainage system will be maintained and where possible existing gully connections will be reused and SuDs measures implemented.. No emissions are expected to arise from the drainage system set out provided that, there is sufficient capacity for water runoff, drainage systems are maintained and no blockages occur. Therefore, no impacts/ effects are predicted from the proposed development in this regard.

SUDS are a mandatory requirement intended to avoid flooding and to give effect to the environmental protections under the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC generally. The proposed SUDS measures are not directed at avoiding or reducing any harmful effect on a European Site. As such, the SUDS measures incorporated into the scheme are not considered to be mitigation in the context of AA.

The site for the proposed development lies 3.12km from the South Dublin Bay SAC and 2.79km from the South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA. At this distance and due to the nature of the surrounding area, the level of development already present, it is not expected that the proposed development will give rise to any direct impacts on the Natura 2000 sites in question.

Therefore, the conclusion of this screening exercise is that no significant effects are expected on the qualifying interests or conservation objectives of the surrounding Natura 2000 sites, as a result of the proposed development in question, alone or in combination with the other plans and projects in the area. This report is therefore issued as a ‘Finding of No Significant Effects’ (FONSE) statement, in accordance with the EU Commission’s methodological guidance (EC, 2001)



## APPENDIX B-NPWS Site Synopses for South Dublin Bay SAC

**Site Name: South Dublin Bay SAC**

**Site Code: 000210**

This site lies south of the River Liffey in Co. Dublin, and extends from the South Wall to the west pier at Dun Laoghaire. It is an intertidal site with extensive areas of sand and mudflats. The sediments are predominantly sands but grade to sandy muds near the shore at Merrion Gates. The main channel which drains the area is Cockle Lake.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats

[1210] Annual vegetation of drift lines

[1310] *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand

[2110] Embryonic shifting dunes

The bed of Dward Eelgrass (*Zostera noltii*) found below Merrion Gates is the largest stand on the east coast. Green algae (*Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*) are distributed throughout the area at a low density. Furoid algae occur on the rocky shore in the Maretimo to Dún Laoghaire area. Species include *Fucus spiralis*, *F. vesiculosus*, *F. serratus*, *Ascophyllum nodosum* and *Pelvetia canaliculata*.

Several small, sandy beaches with incipient dune formation occur in the northern and western sectors of the site, notably at Poolbeg, Irishtown and Merrion/ Booterstown. The formation at Booterstown is very recent. Drift line vegetation occurs in association with the embryonic and incipient fore dunes. Typically drift lines occur in a band approximately 5 m wide, though at Booterstown this zone is wider in places. The habitat occurs just above the High Water Mark and below the area of embryonic dune. Species present are Sea Rocket (*Cakile maritima*), Frosted Orache (*Atriplex laciniata*), Spear-leaved Orache (*A. prostrata*), Prickly Saltwort (*Salsola kali*) and Fat Hen (*Chenopodium album*). Also occurring is Sea Sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*), Sea Beet (*Beta vulgaris* subsp. *maritima*) and Annual Sea-blite (*Suaeda maritima*). A small area of pioneer saltmarsh now occurs in the lee of an embryonic sand dune just north of Booterstown Station. This early stage of saltmarsh development is here characterised by the presence of pioneer stands of glassworts (*Salicornia* spp.) occurring below an area of drift line vegetation. As this is of very recent origin, it covers a small area but ample areas of substrate and shelter are available for the further development of this habitat.

Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*), Cockles (*Cerastoderma edule*) and annelids and other bivalves are frequent throughout the site. The small gastropod *Hydrobia ulvae* occurs on the muddy sands off Merrion Gates.

South Dublin Bay is an important site for waterfowl. Although birds regularly commute between the south bay and the north bay, recent studies have shown that certain populations which occur in the south bay spend most of their time there. The principal species are Oystercatcher (1215), Ringed Plover (120), Sanderling (344), Dunlin (2628) and Redshank (356) (average winter peaks 1996/97 and 1997/98). Up to 100 Turnstones are usual in the south bay during winter. Brent Goose regularly occur in numbers of international importance (average peak 299). Bar-tailed Godwit (565), a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, also occur.

Large numbers of gulls roost in South Dublin Bay, e.g. 4,500 Black-headed Gulls in February 1990; 500 Common Gulls in February 1991. It is also an important tern roost in the autumn, regularly holding 2000-3000 terns including Roseate Terns, a species listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. South Dublin Bay is largely protected as a Special Protection Area.

At low tide the inner parts of the south bay are used for amenity purposes. Baitdigging is a regular activity on the sandy flats. At high tide some areas have windsurfing and jet-skiing.

This site is a fine example of a coastal system, with extensive sand and mudflats, and incipient dune formations. South Dublin Bay is also an internationally important bird site.

## APPENDIX B-NPWS Site Synopses for South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA

**Site Name: South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA**

**Site Code: 004024**

The South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA comprises a substantial part of Dublin Bay. It includes the intertidal area between the River Liffey and Dun Laoghaire, and the estuary of the River Tolka to the north of the River Liffey, as well as Booterstown Marsh. A portion of the shallow marine waters of the bay is also included.

In the south bay, the intertidal flats extend for almost 3 km at their widest. The sediments are predominantly well-aerated sands. Several permanent channels exist, the largest being Cockle Lake. A small sandy beach occurs at Merrion Gates, while some bedrock shore occurs near Dun Laoghaire. The landward boundary is now almost entirely artificially embanked. There is a bed of Dwarf Eelgrass (*Zostera noltii*) below Merrion Gates which is the largest stand on the east coast. Green algae (*Ulva* spp.) are distributed throughout the area at a low density. The macroinvertebrate fauna is well-developed, and is characterised by annelids such as Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*), Nephthys spp. and Sand Mason (*Lanice conchilega*), and bivalves, especially Cockle (*Cerastoderma edule*) and Baltic Tellin (*Macoma balthica*). The small gastropod Spire Shell (*Hydrobia ulvae*) occurs on the muddy sands off Merrion Gates, along with the crustacean *Corophium volutator*. Sediments in the Tolka Estuary vary from soft thixotropic muds with a high organic content in the inner estuary to exposed, well-aerated sands off the Bull Wall. The site includes Booterstown Marsh, an enclosed area of saltmarsh and muds that is cut off from the sea by the Dublin/Wexford railway line, being linked only by a channel to the east, the Nutley stream. Sea water incursions into the marsh occur along this stream at high tide. An area of grassland at Poolbeg, north of Irishtown Nature Park, is also included in the site.

The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Light-bellied Brent Goose, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Grey Plover, Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, Redshank, Black-headed Gull, Roseate Tern, Common Tern and Arctic Tern. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands, and as these form part of the SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

The site is an important site for wintering waterfowl, being an integral part of the internationally important Dublin Bay complex – all counts for wintering waterbirds are five year mean peaks for the period 1995/96 to 1999/2000. Although birds regularly commute between the south bay and the north bay, recent studies have shown that certain populations which occur in the south bay spend most of their time there. An internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Goose (368) occurs regularly and newly arrived birds in the autumn feed on the Eelgrass bed at Merrion. At the time of

designation the site supported nationally important numbers of a further nine species: Oystercatcher (1,145), Ringed Plover (161), Grey Plover (45), Knot (548), Sanderling (321), Dunlin (1,923), Bar-tailed Godwit (766), Redshank (260) and Black-headed Gull (3,040). Other species occurring in smaller numbers include Great Crested Grebe (21), Curlew (127) and Turnstone (52). Little Egret, a species which has recently colonised Ireland, also occurs at this site.

South Dublin Bay is a significant site for wintering gulls, with a nationally important population of Black-headed Gull, but also Common Gull (330) and Herring Gull (348). Mediterranean Gull is also recorded from here, occurring through much of the year, but especially in late winter/spring and again in late summer into winter.

Both Common Tern and Arctic Tern breed in Dublin Docks, on a man-made mooring structure known as the E.S.B. dolphin – this is included within the site. Small numbers of Common Tern and Arctic Tern were recorded nesting on this dolphin in the 1980s. A survey in 1995 recorded nationally important numbers of Common Tern nesting here (52 pairs). The breeding population of Common Tern at this site has increased, with 216 pairs recorded in 2000. This increase was largely due to the ongoing management of the site for breeding terns. More recent data highlights this site as one of the most important Common Tern sites in the country with over 400 pairs recorded here in 2007.

South Dublin Bay is an important staging/passage site for a number of tern species in the autumn (mostly late July to September). The origin of many of the birds is likely to be the Dublin breeding sites (Rockabill and the Dublin Docks) though numbers suggest that the site is also used by birds from other sites, perhaps outside the state. This site is selected for designation for its autumn tern populations: Roseate Tern (2,000 in 1999), Common Tern (5,000 in 1999) and Arctic Tern (20,000 in 1996).

The South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA is of ornithological importance as it supports an internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Goose and nationally important populations of a further nine wintering species. Furthermore, the site supports a nationally important colony of breeding Common Tern and is an internationally important passage/staging site for three tern species. It is of note that four of the species that regularly occur at this site are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Bar-tailed Godwit, Common Tern, Arctic Tern and Roseate Tern. Sandymount Strand/Tolka Estuary is also a Ramsar Convention site.