



# Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

## 1. Introduction

The EIA Directive 85/337/EEC, as amended, aims to determine the likely significant effects of a project on the environment. EIA Screening determines whether an EIA is required for a specified project. Projects requiring mandatory EIA are listed in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. In the case of development which is under these thresholds, planning authorities are required under Article 103 of the 2001 Regulations, (as amended) to request an EIS where it considers that the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Screening involves appraisal of impacts from the proposed development according to three main criteria:-

1. Characteristics of the project
2. Location of proposed project
3. Characteristics of potential impacts.

Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), outlines the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by a proposed development. These are: human beings, flora and fauna, soil and geology, water, air & climate, landscape, material assets, cultural heritage and the inter-relationships between the range of environmental criteria.

The proposed works comprise:

- Construction of a new 75 space car park to the north of the existing access road which will include additional universal access spaces and electric vehicle charging points.
- Modification to the existing surfacing to the front and rear of the house.  
Provision of drainage, public lighting, landscaping/screening and all other associated ancillary works for the new car park.

## 2. Screening Assessment

**Table 1. Characteristics of proposed development**

Is the size and design of the proposed works significant ?	75 space car park to the north of the existing access road. The works are contained within surrounding lands adjacent to Mount Congreve House and have been guided by
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	an understanding of the heritage significance of the house and it's landscape.
Potential for impacts from project in cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects	The development of Mount Congreve as an enhanced visitor attraction will attract increased visitor numbers in the range of 100,00-150,00 per annum with a maximum of 3,000 visitors per day at peak season. This requires installation of additional parking spaces. An integrated constructed wetland effluent treatment system to serve the increased visitor numbers was completed in 2022. The Waterford Greenway runs to the north of Mount Congreve Gardens.
Use of natural resources in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity ?	New land take is required for the proposed car park. The area subject to development comprises existing amenity grassland at the edge of broadleaf woodland.
Will the works produce waste ?	Construction works will produce waste which will be removed from site on completion of works.
Will the works create a significant amount of pollution or nuisance ?	Best construction practice as guided by an Environmental Method Statement will ensure avoidance of any risk of pollution from construction works. The site is self contained and away from other private residences minimising impacts on private residential amenity.
Risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the project including those caused by Climate Change in accordance with scientific knowledge?	The scale of the work is such that there is negligible risk of a major accident and/or disaster including those caused by climate change. No works are proposed for the area in the eastern part of the site which is a known flood risk area.
Risks to human health (water contamination , air pollution)	Best construction practice as guided by an Environmental Method Statement will ensure avoidance of any risk of pollution from construction works. This area of Waterford enjoys good air quality and while increased visitor numbers will increase level of traffic emissions the level of such should not change the overall air quality classification for the locality.

**Table 2. Location of Proposed Development**

Environmental Sensitivity of project in relation to existing and approved land use.	Mount Congreve County House is a Protected Structure rated of national
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	<p>importance and within an area classed as a sensitive landscape in the Waterford County Development Plan Scenic Landscape Evaluation.</p> <p>Screening of the car park involves the established Mount Congreve practice of layered ornamental planting with dense infill understorey, particularly at the south (exit) end so that the overall length of the carpark is not evident upon approach.</p> <p>The historic demesne is located beside the River Suir SAC. The proposed development will not incur loss of ecological footprint from the SAC. No Annex 1 habitats occur along this section of the River Suir. Under the Water Framework Directive water quality in the Mid Section of the River Suir- is classified as having poor status.</p>
<p>Relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground.</p>	<p>New land take will be required for car park and will incorporate a surface design appropriate for a sustainable drainage system. No works are proposed for the area in the eastern part of the site which is a known flood risk area.</p>
<p>Absorption capacity of the natural environment including wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths, coastal zones and the marine environment, mountain and forest area.</p>	<p>The design process for the provision of additional car parking at Mount Congreve has been guided by an understanding of the heritage significance of the House and its Landscape with regard to the content and recommendations of the Historic Landscape Assessment (the O’Kane Report) commissioned by the OPW in 2022.</p>
<p>Potential of works to impact directly or indirectly on sites designated for nature conservation (NHA/SAC/SPA)</p>	<p>An AA Screening was carried out and concluded no potential for significant effects on the conservation objectives for the qualifying interest habitats and species of the River Suir SAC.</p>
<p>Potential for impacts directly or indirectly on Habitats or Species listed on Annex I, II and IV of the Habitats Directive</p>	<p>Otter are known to occur widely in the River Suir. However the scale and location of the proposed works will not interfere with any breeding or resting area for this species.</p> <p>Freshwater Pearl Mussel and White-clawed Crayfish do not occur within this section of the River Suir and thus the project will not pose significant effects on the Conservation Objectives for these qualifying interests.</p>

	<p>Lamprey species, Twaité Shad and Atlantic Salmon are known to migrate through the Middle Suir during their migrations. All of these species are sensitive to water quality impacts.</p> <p>No Annex 1 habitats occur along this section of the River Suir. The nearest occurrence of Annex I habitats (salt marsh) is c. 14 km downstream of the Project, on the southern bank of the Suir Estuary at King's Channel and Ballinakill.</p> <p>The woodland demesne of Mount Congreve is an important habitat for bats providing rich foraging grounds.</p>
Potential for impacts on breeding places of any species protected under the Wildlife Act ?	The woodland demesne of Mount Congreve is an important habitat for bats providing rich foraging grounds. The lighting scheme involves luminaires with no upward light output and colour temperature of <3000 Kelvin with tones of warmer light and an appropriate dimming schedule to avoid impacts on foraging bats along the woodland edge.
Potential to impact directly or indirectly on any listed ACA in the County Development Plan ?	Mount Congreve is a protected structure including the house and curtilage of associated out buildings.
Potential to impact directly or indirectly on any protected structure or recorded monuments and places of Archaeological Interest	Mount Congreve is a protected structure rated of national importance and the proposed works are informed and designed in accordance with the findings of an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment supporting the Part 8 application.
Potential to impact directly or indirectly on Listed or scenic views or protected landscape in the County Development Plan ?	Mount Congreve Demesne is designated as a sensitive landscape and the river corridor along the Suir is classed as Visually Vulnerable. The existing vista from the River Corridor will not be impacted as it faces on to a vegetated buffer and the walled garden. The majority of works are contained within the existing built footprint of the House and complex. The proposed car park shall be designed in sympathy with the demesne landscape involving screening by tree planting, a sawtooth' parking arrangement reducing the overall width of the car park and creating an informal layout more suitable to the country estate context and safeguards the root protection area of the large beech tree on the woodland edge.

Potential to impact on areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure.	Under the Water Framework Directive water quality in the Mid Section of the River Suir is classified as having poor status. New land take will be required for car park and will incorporate a surface design appropriate for a sustainable drainage system. No works are proposed for the area in the eastern part of the site which is a known flood risk area.
Potential to impact on densely populated areas.	The project will complement the Waterford Greenway in terms of tourism offering and visitor attractions in the Waterford area and will increase level of visitor use to the area from existing levels to projected numbers of 100-200,000 per annum. It will also enhance the site as public amenity resource to residents of Waterford City (50,000) and the wider county (80,000).

**Table 3. Characteristics of Potential Impacts**

Human Beings	The proposed project will confer positive benefits on human beings providing benefits for recreation and quality of life and enhanced access to the historic demesne and woodland gardens. The development will allow appreciation of the natural and built environment providing access to the historic house and landscape within easy reach of Waterford City.
Flora and Fauna	The area subject to development comprises existing amenity grassland at the edge of broadleaf woodland. AA Screening concluded no potential for significant effects on the SAC.
Soils and Geology	No sites of geological heritage will be impacted. The site consists of sandstone till soils.
Water	No building works are proposed in the floodrisk area. Mount Congreve is bounded by 3 rivers- Whelanbridge to the West, Ballymoat Stream to the East and the River Suir to the north. Water quality in the Mid Section of the River Suir is rated as poor. New land take will be required for car park and will incorporate a surface design appropriate for a sustainable drainage system. No works are proposed for the area in the eastern part of the site which is a known flood risk area.

Air & Climate	Increased visitor numbers to Mount Congreve majority of which will be by private car and bus will give rise to increased traffic emissions along the N25 and local approach road. The level of such should not change the overall air quality classification for the locality.
Noise & Vibration	There will be temporary disturbance during construction works. The site is self contained and away from other private residences.
Landscape	Mount Congreve Demesne is rated of national importance for its historic house and gardens. The proposed car park is designed in sympathy with the demesne landscape involving screening by tree planting, a sawtooth' parking arrangement reducing the overall width of the car park and creating an informal layout more suitable to the country estate context and safeguards the root protection area of the large beech tree on the woodland edge.
Material Assets	The proposed development will confer positive benefits to the county's tourism offering providing enhanced access to a historic house and landscape complementing existing recreational assets such as the Waterford Greenway, Curaghmore House Waterford Suir Valley Railway and Copper Coast Geopark.
Cultural Heritage	The Mount Congreve Estate is a nationally important historic park and garden. Set in extensive landscaped grounds, the impressive palatial country house forms an important element of the architectural heritage of County Waterford and a landmark in the locality, most notably from the vantage point of the River Suir to the north. The re -development of the house and gardens seeks to ensure its sustainability by enhancing the house and grounds as a visitor attraction providing revenue to maintain the historic site.
Interaction of Foregoing	The proposed development shall respect the heritage qualities of the demesne and conserve the integrity and setting of the heritage buildings and surrounding natural environment.

**Table 4. Discussion of Potential Impacts**

Will a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the proposed works ?	New land take will be required for proposed car park.
Will a large population be impacted as a result of the proposed works ?	No, works are contained within the site buffered from local residences and the Greenway by the surrounding woods and demesne landscape.
Are any trans-frontier impacts likely to arise from proposed works?	Water quality in the River Suir which borders County Kilkenny will be subject to regular monitoring under the River Basin Management Plan.
Is the intensity and complexity of impacts associated with the proposed works considered significant ?	No. An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment has informed best conservation practice.
Is there a high probability that the impacts will occur ?	Impacts are not considered significant and will ensure the sustainability of the historic house and gardens for the protected structure and historic landscape.
What is the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact ?	The works are scheduled for 2023 and designed to be a permanent intervention in the landscape.
Cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved projects ?	The proposed development will complement the amenity offering to walkers and cyclists who use the Waterford Greenway and visitors to Curraghmore , Copper Coast Geopark and the Waterford Suir Valley Railway.
Will it be difficult to avoid, or reduce or repair or compensate for the effects ?	No significant impacts anticipated. An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment has informed best practice for interventions in the protected structure and historic landscape.

### **3. Conclusion**

In consideration of the above including scale and design of the proposed development and having appraised the characteristics and location of the proposed development which has been informed by an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment and appraisal of the characteristics of potential impacts it is concluded that an EIAR is not required for the proposed development.