



# 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 EIAR 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 health, 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 project comprises alteration and refurbishment of part of the ground floor of Mount Congreve House, ground floor of the east wing and roofing of the east courtyard to provide visitor reception, cafe and associated facilities and services including car parking and an integrated constructed wetland effluent treatment system.

## 2. Screening Assessment

**Table 1. Characteristics of proposed development**

Is the size and design of the proposed works significant ?	No. The works are contained within Mount Congreve House and surrounding lands adjacent to the house. New land take beyond existing built areas will be required for car park and integrated constructed wetland (approximately 4ha).
Potential for impacts from project in	The proposed development will increase

<p>cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects</p>	<p>visitor numbers to Mount Congreve which has seen increase in visitors since the opening of the Waterford Greenway in 2017. This will lead to increased traffic and requires provision of waste water treatment to cater for anticipated increase in visitor numbers. Other project proposals in the wider area include development of the North Quays and Greenway extension in Waterford City.</p>
<p>Use of natural resources in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity ?</p>	<p>New land take will be required for proposed car park and integrated constructed wetland. (3.5 ha and .5 ha for storm water wetland) Areas subject to development comprise existing built land, amenity grassland and wet grassland. The ICW will enhance biodiversity by introducing habitat and species diversity in the existing area of wet grassland.</p>
<p>Will the works produce waste ?</p>	<p>Construction works will produce waste which will be removed from site on completion of works. Development of the site as an enhanced visitor attraction will attract increased visitor numbers in the range of 100,00-200,00 per annum with a maximum of 3,000 visitors per day at peak season. This requires installation of an integrated constructed wetland effluent treatment system. Soil removal for the purpose of constructing the ICW will be reused in earth berms around the wetland cells.</p>
<p>Will the works create a significant amount of pollution or nuisance ?</p>	<p>Best construction practice as guided by an Environmental Method Statement will ensure avoidance of any risk of pollution from construction works. The treatment area will involve an area of 8,570m<sup>2</sup> providing capacity for up to 214 P.E The ICW will operate with zero discharge facilitating 100% treatment of wastewaters. The ICW design includes for wastewater and stormwater management that is designed to ensure effective treatment of all wastewaters whilst also catering for seasonal weather and visitor fluctuations. The ICW will receive overflows from the new and existing courtyard septic tanks via a distribution chamber to provide treatment prior to discharge to the Monveen Stream .The site is self contained and away from other private</p>

	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. Waste Water Treatment System will be required to comply with Waste Water Discharge Regulations, Ground Water Regulations and objectives in the River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021. 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 House is a Protected Structure rated of national importance and within an areas classed as a sensitive landscape in the Waterford County Development Plan 2012-2018 Scenic Landscape Evaluation. 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. The nearest occurrence of Annex I habitats (salt marsh) is c. 9 km downstream of the Project in Waterford City. Under the Water Framework Directive water quality in the Mid Section of the River Suir is classified as having poor status. The ICW will operate with zero discharge facilitating 100% treatment of wastewaters. The ICW design includes for wastewater and stormwater management that is designed to ensure effective treatment of all wastewaters whilst also catering for seasonal weather and
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	visitor fluctuations.
<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>The proposed works will be contained within Mount Congreve House and surrounding lands adjacent to the house. New land take beyond existing built areas will be required for proposed car park and integrated constructed wetland effluent treatment system.. Area proposed for car park 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>No works are proposed for the area in the eastern part of the site which is a known flood risk area.</p> <p>Car park surfacing will be compatible with a sustainable drainage system.</p> <p>Establishment of an Integrated Constructed Wetland shall comprise 3 wetland treatment cells connected sequentially by interconnecting pipes to serve the Mount Congreve visitor attraction based on 150,000 visitors per year and catering for potential future development of the visitor attraction. The treatment area will involve an area of 8,570m<sup>2</sup> providing capacity for up to 214 P.E The ICW will operate with zero discharge facilitating 100% treatment of wastewaters. The ICW design includes for wastewater and stormwater management that is designed to ensure effective treatment of all wastewaters whilst also catering for seasonal weather and visitor fluctuations. The ICW will receive overflows from the new and existing courtyard septic tanks via a distribution chamber to provide treatment prior to discharge to the Monveen Stream. Wetland cells will be planted with appropriate emergent wetland species found in areas within the estate e.g. <i>Carex riparia</i>, <i>Glyceria maxima</i>, <i>Typha latifolia</i>, <i>Scirpus lacustris</i> and <i>Iris pseudacorus</i>.</p> <p>Outflow if any from the ICWs will be to the Monveen Stream (EPA Ref 16M58 ) located north of the site, flowing north and joining the Ballymoat River (200m north east) before entering the River Suir a further</p>

	<p>200m north.</p> <p>There will be no flow from the ICW at least during the summer months and likely in the short to medium term year round. No storm waters will enter the ICW system. Storm waters will be collected separate from the ICW in the proposed stormwater pond on the left of the main entrance, This stormwater collection area is fed via the existing drainage channel along the existing road to the main house.</p>
Potential of works to impact directly or indirectly on sites designated for nature conservation (NHA/SAC/SPA)	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.
Potential for impacts directly or indirectly on Habitats or Species listed on Annex I, II and IV of the Habitats Directive	<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, Twaite 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. 9 km downstream of the Project in Waterford City.</p>
Potential for impacts on breeding places of any species protected under the Wildlife Act ?	<p>The woodland demesne of Mount Congreve is an important habitat for bats providing rich foraging grounds. A bat survey will be carried out on all buildings proposed for renovation to determine location of any bat roost. Lighting schemes shall be designed in accordance with best practice to minimise impacts on bats e.g. by use of downward facing low sodium pressure lighting.</p> <p>The ICW offers great potential for biodiversity enhancement of the site including habitat for frogs which have been recorded from the site.</p>
Potential to impact directly or indirectly on any protected structure or ACA listed in the	Mount Congreve is a protected structure rated of national importance and the

County Development Plan ?	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 or recorded monuments and places of Archaeological Interest	There are no recorded monuments or archaeological sites within the site.
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 works are contained within the existing built footprint of the House and complex . The proposed car park and waste water treatment facility shall be designed in sympathy with the demesne landscape.
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 and at risk of not achieving objectives under the River Basin Management Plan which aims to achieve “good” status by 2027. The ICW operating with the current and proposed loading will operate with zero discharge from the ICW, giving 100% treatment of wastewaters. This scaling provides high treatment whilst optimising the amenity and habitat values of the entire site available for the ICW. Potential further development of the estate can be catered for within the proposed ICW.
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 (120,000).

**Table 3. Characteristics of Potential Impacts**

Human Health	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
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	<p>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.</p>
Flora and Fauna	<p>The ICW offers potential for biodiversity enhancement of the site. Wetland cells will be planted with appropriate emergent wetland species found in areas within the estate e.g. <i>Carex riparia</i>, <i>Glyceria maxima</i>, <i>Typha latifolia</i>, <i>Scirpus lacustris</i> and <i>Iris pseudacorus</i>.</p> <p>Ecological surveys for bat roosts to determine suitability of building renovation will be carried out to inform a Construction Environmental Management Plan in advance of any works being carried out.</p>
Soils and Geology	<p>No sites of geological heritage will be impacted. The site consists of sandstone till soils and alluvium soils. Ground conditions have been assessed as suitable for development of an ICW due to poor drainage and thus capacity to hold water.</p>
Water	<p>The eastern part of the site is within the floodrisk zone of the Ballymoat Stream that flows from Whitfield, Powersknock, Dooneen and Mount Congreve to the River Suir. No building works are proposed for this area.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The ICW operating with the current and proposed loading will operate with zero discharge from the ICW, giving 100% treatment of wastewaters. This scaling provides high treatment whilst optimising the amenity and habitat values of the entire site available for the ICW. Potential further development of the estate can be catered for within the proposed ICW. The ICW design includes a treatment area of 8570m<sup>2</sup> providing capacity for up to 214 P.E. with no/reduced discharges.</p>

	<p>The ICW will consist of a series of three treatment cells through which inflowing water will be reduced of its various dissolved and particulate constituents. The final discharge if arising from the ICW will be of high water quality prior to discharging to the Monveen Stream and Ballymoat River respectively.</p> <p>Final effluent quality shall be of the following standard;</p> <p>pH 6-8  Suspended Solids &lt;2mg/l  BOD<sub>5</sub> &lt;10mg/lO<sub>2</sub>  Ammonia &lt;2mg/l NH<sub>3</sub>-N  Ortho-phosphate &lt;1mg/l P</p>
Air & Climate	<p>Increased visitor numbers to Mount Congreve the majority of which will be by private car and bus will give rise to increased traffic emissions along the N25 and local approach road. However it is not anticipated the level of such will change the overall air quality classification for the locality.</p> <p>The existing heating system in Mount Congreve House is oil fired and it is proposed to upgrade the area of the building being upgraded with an air-water heat pump installation that provide the heating and hot water requirements all of which will be NZEB compliant.</p>
Noise & Vibration	<p>There will be temporary disturbance during construction works . The site is self contained and away from other private residences.</p>
Landscape	<p>Mount Congreve Demesne is rated of national importance for its historic house and gardens. Set in extensive landscaped grounds much of the gardens are set under woodlands with 16 miles of path winding in and around the plants overlooked by C18th and C19th plantations of Oak and Beech.</p> <p>If tree removal is required to accommodate drainage works or car park a Tree Survey shall be carried out to identify proposed number and species of trees for removal and compensatory planting.</p>
Material Assets	<p>The proposed development will confer positive benefits to the county's tourism offering providing enhanced access to a historic house and landscape complementing</p>



	<p>existing recreational assets such as the Waterford Greenway, Curaghmore House Waterford Suir Valley Railway and Copper Coast Geopark.</p> <p>The development of an ICW will provide positive benefits for biodiversity and carbon capture along with a natural amenity that provides educational interest to the general public.</p>
Cultural Heritage	<p>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. Since the house ceased to be a private residence in 2012 the sustainability of the historic site had an uncertain future and the proposed development seeks to ensure its sustainability by enhancing the house and grounds as a visitor attraction providing revenue to maintain the historic site.</p>
Interaction of Foregoing	<p>The sensitive management of the built and natural heritage at Mount Congreve requires appropriate development of the house and its curtilage within the demesne landscape. 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.</p>

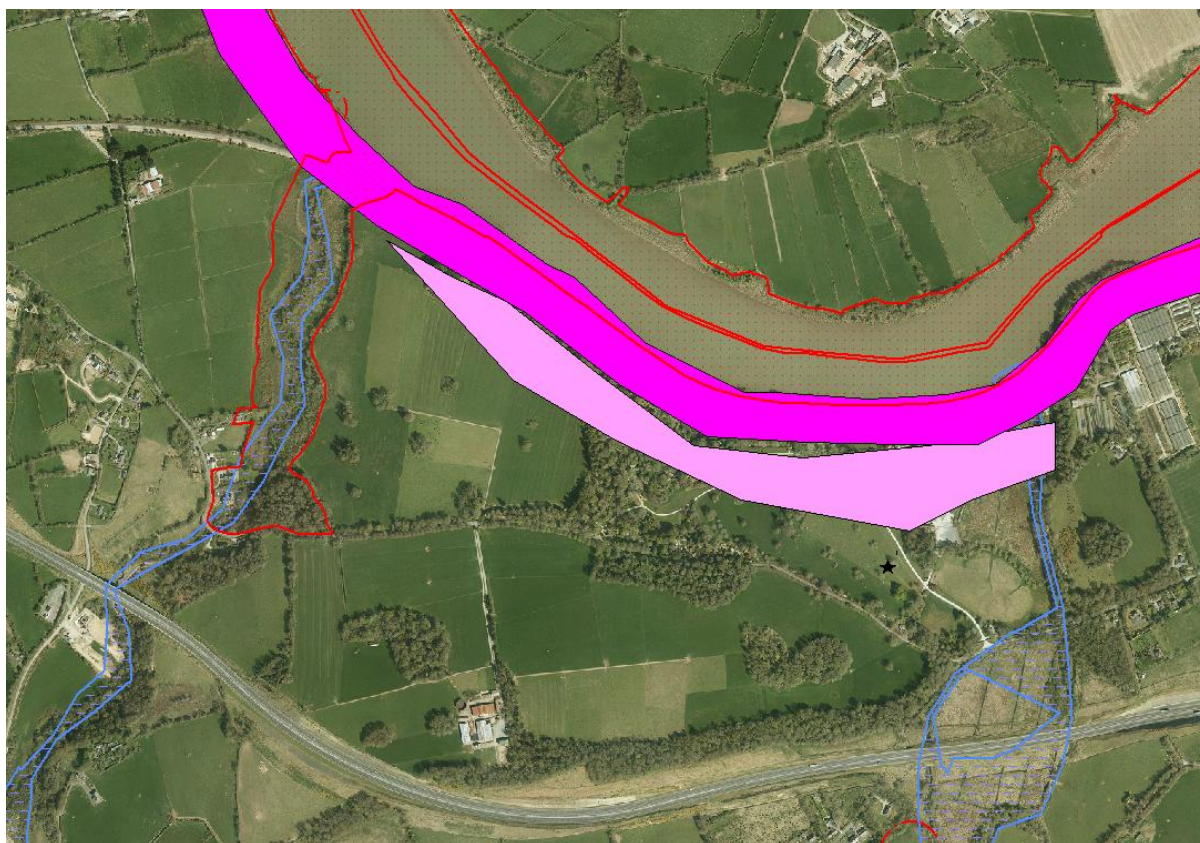
**Table 4. Discussion of Potential Impacts**

Will a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the proposed works ?	<p>The works are contained within Mount Congreve House and surrounding lands adjacent to the house. New land take beyond existing built areas will be required for proposed car park and waste water treatment system.</p>
Will a large population be impacted as a result of the proposed works ?	<p>No, works are contained within the site buffered from local residences and the Greenway by the surrounding woods and demesne landscape.</p>
Are any trans-frontier impacts likely to arise from proposed works?	<p>Water quality in the River Suir which borders County Kilkenny will be subject to regular monitoring under the River Basin</p>

	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 for interventions in the protected structure. 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.
Is there a high probability that the impacts will occur ?	Impacts will occur but are not considered significant and will ensure the future sustainability of the historic house and gardens.
What is the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact ?	Subject to planning and funding works are anticipated to commence in 2021.
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 will inform best practice for interventions in the protected structure and historic landscape. An Ecological Survey including survey of bat habitat, field drains and Trees will inform design measures to ensure minimisation of effects on flora and fauna. A Construction Environmental Management Plan shall be drawn up informed by the foregoing survey reports to ensure minimal adverse impacts on the historic house and landscape.

### **3. Conclusion**

In consideration of the above involving appraisal of characteristics and location of proposed development and characteristics of potential impacts it is noted that the key environmental receptors to be affected are architectural heritage, water quality and ecology which are being addressed by submission of an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment, Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, ongoing water quality monitoring in the River Suir under the WFD and Ecological Survey all of which shall inform a Construction Environmental Management Plan to guide the proposed development works. It is concluded that an EIAR is not required for the proposed development.



**Plate 1. Mount Congreve Estate showing SAC boundary (in red), flood impact zone (hatched blue) visually vulnerable landscape area (dark pink), sensitive landscape (pale pink).**