



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 project comprises ;

- Renovation and up-grade of Mount Congreve House, a protected structure, to provide for public access as a visitor attraction, hosting of events, visitor accommodation and offices. Works will include installation of a lift, universal access, toilets, kitchen, fire safety improvements and installation of a bio-energy heating system.
- Development of the existing farm yard to incorporate a café; offices, meeting facilities, craft yard; children's play area and a retail unit.
- Other works will include the development of a car park, waste water treatment system, creation of a wetland garden, upgrade of existing greenhouse, upgrade of apartments and cottages to provide high quality tourist accommodation, enhance the grounds and path and development of a children's playground.

2. Screening Assessment

Table 1. Characteristics of proposed development

<p>Is the size and design of the proposed works significant ?</p>	<p>The works are contained within Mount Congreve House, Farmyard Complex and surrounding lands adjacent to the house. New land take beyond existing built areas will be required for proposed retail unit, car park and waste water treatment system and polishing filter.</p>
<p>Potential for impacts from project in cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects</p>	<p>The proposed development will increase visitor numbers to the area 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 on site. Other project proposals in the wider area include development of the North Quays 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 retail unit, car park and waste water treatment system. Areas subject to development comprise existing built land, amenity grassland and 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 a waste water treatment system on site.</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. 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. The site is self contained and away from other private residences minimising impacts on private residential amenity.</p>
<p>Risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the project including those caused</p>	<p>The scale of the work is such that there is negligible risk of a major accident and /or</p>

<p>by Climate Change in accordance with scientific knowledge?</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Risks to human health (water contamination, air pollution)</p>	<p>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.</p>

Table 2. Location of Proposed Development

<p>Environmental Sensitivity of project in relation to existing and approved land use.</p>	<p>Mount Congreve County House is a Protected Structure rated of national importance and within an area classed as a sensitive landscape in the Waterford County Development Plan 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. 14 km downstream of the Project, on the southern bank of the Suir Estuary at King's Channel and Ballinakill 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>Most of the proposed works will be contained within Mount Congreve House, Farmyard Complex and surrounding lands adjacent to the house. New land take beyond existing built areas will be required for proposed retail unit, car park and waste water treatment system and polishing filter. Area proposed for car park will incorporate a surface design appropriate for a sustainable</p>

	<p>drainage system. No works are proposed for the area in the eastern part of the site which is a known flood risk area. The creation of a wetland garden involves provision of access to an existing area of reed and sedge swamp and wet grassland.</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>The waste water treatment system will be located on sandstone soils with good percolation approximately 250m from the River Suir. A sand polishing filter forms part of the system to ensure minimising of negative impacts from treated effluent to surrounding ground area. A Bio-Barrier Membrane Waste Water Treatment System is proposed which will provide for up to 3000 people per day. This is a wastewater treatment system with membrane bioreactors that use biological processes in conjunction with membranes for producing a highly cleaned effluent. The Bio-Barrier Membrane reduces Faecal Coliforms and E. Coli to less than 10 cfu and final effluent will be 99.9% clean of contaminants. This means that water which has been treated by the Bio-Barrier system can be reused for toilet flushing, watering the gardens and other non-potable uses if required.</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, Twaite Shad and Atlantic Salmon are known to migrate through the Middle Suir during their migrations. All of</p>

	<p>these species are sensitive to water quality impacts. Effluent from the WWTP will be subject to secondary treatment and a sand polishing filter and shall be in compliance with Waste Water Discharge Regulations. 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 Kingø Channel and Ballinakill.</p>
<p>Potential for impacts on breeding places of any species protected under the Wildlife Act ?</p>	<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. An ecological survey shall be carried out on field drain proposed for culverting to the north of the car parking area to determine suitability for amphibians /fish habitat. There is potential for biodiversity enhancement of the site through installation of bat and bird boxes and pollinator enhancing management of meadows.</p>
<p>Potential to impact directly or indirectly on any listed ACA in the County Development Plan ?</p>	<p>Mount Congreve is a protected structure including the house and curtilage of associated out buildings but is not designated an Architectural Conservation Area.</p>
<p>Potential to impact directly or indirectly on any protected structure or recorded monuments and places of Archaeological Interest</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Potential to impact directly or indirectly on Listed or scenic views or protected landscape in the County Development Plan ?</p>	<p>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 and waste water treatment facility shall be designed in sympathy with the demesne landscape involving screening by tree planting.</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>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. Effluent from the WWTP will be subject to secondary treatment and a sand polishing filter soaking away to area of sandstone till and shall be in compliance with Waste Water Discharge Regulations. A Bio-Barrier Membrane Waste Water Treatment System is proposed which will provide for up to 3000 people per day. This is a wastewater treatment system with membrane bioreactors that use biological processes in conjunction with membranes for producing a highly cleaned effluent. The Bio-Barrier Membrane reduces Faecal Coliforms and E. Coli to less than 10 cfu and final effluent will be 99.9% clean of contaminants. This means that water which has been treated by the Bio-Barrier system can be reused for toilet flushing, watering the gardens and other non-potable uses if required.</p>
<p>Potential to impact on densely populated areas.</p>	<p>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).</p>

Table 3. Characteristics of Potential Impacts

<p>Human Beings</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>Flora and Fauna</p>	<p>Ecological surveys to determine suitability of buildings subject to renovation for bat roosts and suitability of field drains for amphibians (Frogs, Newts) and fish habitat will be</p>

	carried out to inform a Construction Environmental Management Plan in advance of any works being carried out.
Soils and Geology	No sites of geological heritage will be impacted. The site consists of sandstone till soils and alluvium soils. The only aspect proposed for development in the area of alluvium soils is the wetland garden which is compatible with this soil type.
Water	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. A path will be provided in the wetland garden which is a water compatible development. 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.
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. A Traffic Management and Mobility Plan will be prepared for the development which will future proof safe and sustainable access to the site. The existing heating system in Mount Congreve House is oil fired and it is proposed to replace this with a bio-energy heating system which will reduce fossil fuel based input on the site.
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. 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. Some tree removal will be required to the north of the proposed car park and to accommodate the new entrance at Doyle's Gate. A Tree Survey shall be carried out to identify and map proposed number and

	species of trees for removal and compensatory planting scheme.
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. 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.
Interaction of Foregoing	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.

Table 4. Discussion of Potential Impacts

Will a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the proposed works ?	The majority of works are contained within Mount Congreve House, Farmyard Complex and surrounding lands adjacent to the house. New land take beyond existing built areas will be required for proposed retail unit, car park and waste water treatment system and polishing filter.
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	Water quality in the River Suir which borders

from proposed works?	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 will inform best conservation practice for interventions in the protected structure (installation of a lift, universal access, toilets, kitchen, fire safety improvements and installation of a bio-energy heating system) and historic landscape (Car parking and Waste Water Treatment System). Ecological surveys shall inform works that may affect bat and wetland habitats with appropriate mitigation measures such as timing of works and compensatory habitat measures.
Is there a high probability that the impacts will occur ?	Impacts will occur but are not considered significant and will ensure the 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 2020/21.
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 Tree will inform design measures to ensure minimisation of effects on flora and fauna. A Traffic Management and Mobility Plan will inform best design to minimise impacts on local residents, air and climate. 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, traffic and ecology which are being addressed by submission of an Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment, ongoing water quality monitoring in the River Suir under the WFD and commissioning of an Ecology Survey and Traffic Management and Mobility Plan 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.

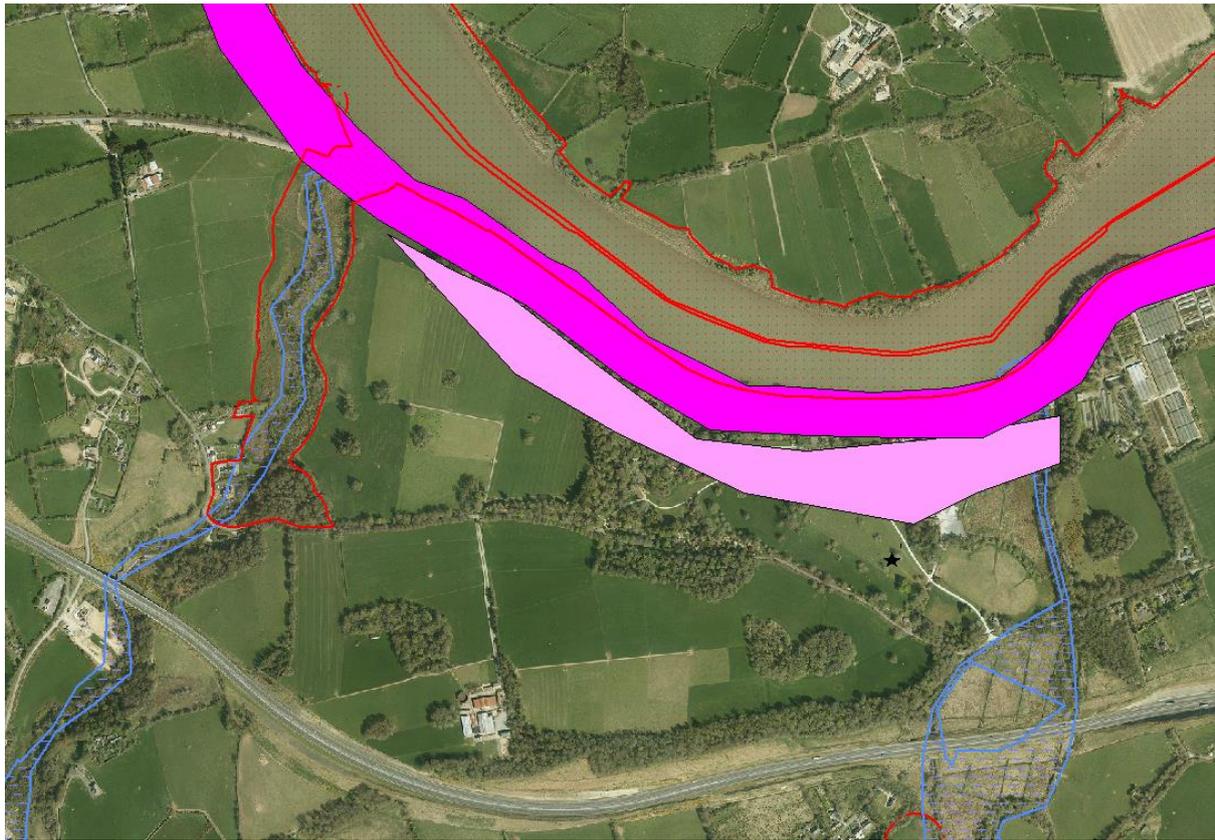


Plate 1. Mount Congreve Estate showing SAC boundary (in red), flood impact zone (hatched blue) visually vulnerable landscape area (dark pink), sensitive landscape (pale pink).