APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT

FOR

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

AT

A SITE LOCATED NORTH OF MINISTER'S ROAD, IN THE TOWNLAND OF REGLES, LUSK, COUNTY DUBLIN.

ON BEHALF OF

DWYER NOLAN DEVELOPMENTS LTD

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Enviroguide Consulting was commissioned by Dwyer Nolan Developments Ltd to undertake a screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) in relation to the Proposed Development at Regles, Lusk, Co. Dublin. This report contains information to enable the competent authority to undertake Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment screening in respect of the Proposed Development.

1.2 Legislative Background

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) seeks to conserve natural habitats and wild fauna and flora by the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protection Areas (SPAs). SACs and SPAs are collectively known as Natura 2000 or European sites. It is the responsibility of each member state to designate SPAs and SACs. SACs are selected for the conservation of Annex I habitats (including priority types which are in danger of disappearance) and Annex II species (other than birds). SPAs are selected for the conservation of Annex I birds and other regularly occurring migratory birds and their habitats. The annexed habitats and species for which each site is selected correspond to the qualifying interests of the sites; from these the conservation objectives of the site are derived.

An 'Appropriate Assessment' (AA) is a required assessment to determine the likelihood of significant impacts, based on best scientific knowledge, of any plans or projects on European sites. A screening for AA determines whether a plan or project, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site, in view of its conservation objectives.

This AA Screening has been undertaken to determine the potential for significant effects on relevant European sites. The purpose of this assessment is to determine, the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the Proposed Development in the context of the conservation objectives of such sites.

1.2.1 Legislative Context

An Appropriate Assessment is required under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive where a project or plan may give rise to significant effects upon a European site. Paragraph 3 states that:

"*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. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the competent national authorities shall agree to the plan or project only after having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public."*

These obligations in relation to Appropriate Assessment have been implemented in Ireland under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ("the 2000 Act"), and in particular Section 177U and Section 177V thereof. The relevant provisions of Section 177U in relation to AA screening have been set out below:

"***177U.—*** *(1) A screening for appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or application for consent for proposed development shall be carried out by the competent authority to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge, if that Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with another plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on the European site.*

(2)…

(3)…

(4) The competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or a proposed development, as the case may be, is required if it cannot be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the draft Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site.

(5) The competent authority shall determine that an appropriate assessment of a draft Land use plan or a proposed development, as the case may be, is not required if it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the draft Land use plan or proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site."

1.2.2 Stages of AA

This Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (the "**Screening Report**") has been prepared by Enviroguide Consulting. It considers whether the Proposed Development is likely to have a significant effect on a European site and whether a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required.

The AA process is a four-stage process, with issues and tests at each stage. An important aspect of the process is that the outcome at each successive stage determines whether a further stage in the process is required.

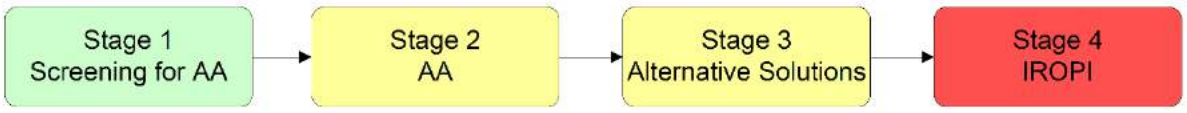

FIGURE 1. THE FOUR STAGES OF THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS (DEHLG, 2010).

The four stages of an AA, can be summarised as follows:

- Stage 1 *Screening* addresses:
  - whether a plan or project is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the site, or

    - whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on a European site in view of its conservation objectives.
- Stage 2: *Natura Impact Statement (NIS)*. The second stage of the AA process assesses the impact of the project or plan (either alone or in combination with other projects or plans) on the integrity of the European site, having regard to the conservation objectives of the site and its ecological structure and function. A NIS must provide the objective scientific information to enable the competent authority to carry out an appropriate assessment of the proposed development. It should describe any mitigation measures to avoid and reduce significant negative impacts.
- Stage 3: *Assessment of alternative solutions*. If the outcome of Stage 2 is negative i.e., adverse impacts to the sites cannot be scientifically ruled out, despite mitigation, the plan or project should proceed to Stage 3 or be abandoned. This stage examines alternative solutions to the proposal.
- Stage 4: *Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.* The final stage is the main derogation process examining whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) for allowing a plan or project to adversely affect a European site, where no less damaging solution exists.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Guidance

This AA Screening Report has been undertaken in accordance with the following guidance:

- *Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities.* (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010 revision),
- *Appropriate Assessment under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: Guidance for Planning Authorities.* Circular NPW 1/10 & PSSP 2/10,
- *Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological Guidance on the Provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2001),
- *Communication from the Commission on the precautionary principle* (European Commission, 2000),
- *Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC* (European Commission, 2021), and,
- *Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management, OPR Practice Note PN01, Office of the Planning Regulator March 2021.*

2.2 Screening Steps

Screening for AA involves the following steps:

- Establish whether the plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of a European site.
- Description of the plan or project and the description and characterisation of other projects or plans that in combination have the potential for having significant effects on the European site.
- Identification of European sites potentially affected.
- Identification and description of potential effects on the European site.
- Assessment of the likely significance of the effects identified on the European site; and
- Exclusion of sites where it can be objectively concluded that there will be no significant effects.

2.3 Desk Study

A desktop study was carried out to collate and review available information, datasets and documentation sources relevant for the completion of this Screening Report. The desktop study relied on the following sources:

- Information on the network of European sites, boundaries, qualifying interests and conservation objectives, obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) at *www.npws.ie*.
- Text summaries of the relevant European sites taken from the respective Standard Data Forms and Site Synopses available at *www.npws.ie*.
- Information on species records and distributions, obtained from the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) at *www.maps.biodiversityireland.ie*.
- Information on waterbodies, catchment areas and hydrological connections obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at www.*gis.epa.ie*.
- Information on bedrock, groundwater, aquifers and their statuses, obtained from Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) at *www.gsi.ie*.
- Satellite imagery and mapping obtained from various sources and dates including Google, Digital Globe, Bing and Ordnance Survey Ireland.
- Information on the existence of permitted developments, or developments awaiting decision, in the vicinity of the Proposed Development available at the National Planning Application Database and Fingal County Council.

For a complete list of the specific documents consulted as part of this assessment, see *Section 5 References*.

2.4 Assessment of Significant Effects

The potential for significant effects that may arise from the Proposed Development were considered through the use of key indicators, namely:

- Habitat loss or alteration
- Habitat/species fragmentation
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species
- Changes in population density
- Changes in water quality and resource

In addition, information pertaining to the conservation objectives of the European sites, the ecology of the designated habitats and species and known or perceived sensitivities of the habitats and species were considered.

3 STAGE 1 SCREENING

3.1 Management of European Sites

The Proposed Development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of European sites.

3.2 Description of Proposed Development

3.2.1 Site location

The Site is currently comprised of a greenfield site, approximately 8.3ha, and is located immediately west of Lusk and 1.3km east of the M1. The Site is bounded along the southeast by Minister's Road, and along the east by Round Towers GAA pitches, with the remaining boundaries abutted by agricultural land. The surrounding environment is agricultural and urban in nature.

3.2.2 Description of Development

The development will consist of 312 no. dwellings, comprised of 205 no. 3 & 4 bed, 2 & 3 storey, detached, semi-detached & terraced houses, 40 no. 2 & 3 bed apartment / duplex units in 3 no. 3 storey blocks (comprised of Duplex Types A1, A2, B1 & B2), and 67 no. 1, 2 & 3 bed apartments in 2 no. blocks (comprised of Block C, being 3 storeys, and Block E, being 2-5 storeys over a basement level car park). The development also includes a 1-2 storey crèche (c. 484.6m²) with associated outdoor space to the rear.

Access to the development will by via 2 no. vehicular access points from Minister's Road, along with the provision of a roadside footpath and cycle path along the front of the site at Minister's Road.

The Proposed Development also provides for: (i) all associated site development works above and below ground, (ii) public open spaces (c. 0.99 ha / 9,999m²), (iii) communal open spaces (c. 1,849m²), (iv) hard & soft landscaping & boundary treatments, (v) basement & surface car parking (Total: 583 no. car parking spaces, including EV parking), (vi) basement & surface bicycle parking (Total: 498 no. bicycle parking spaces), (vii) bin & bicycle storage, (viii) public lighting, and (ix) 2 no. ESB sub-stations, all on an overall application site area of 8.3ha.

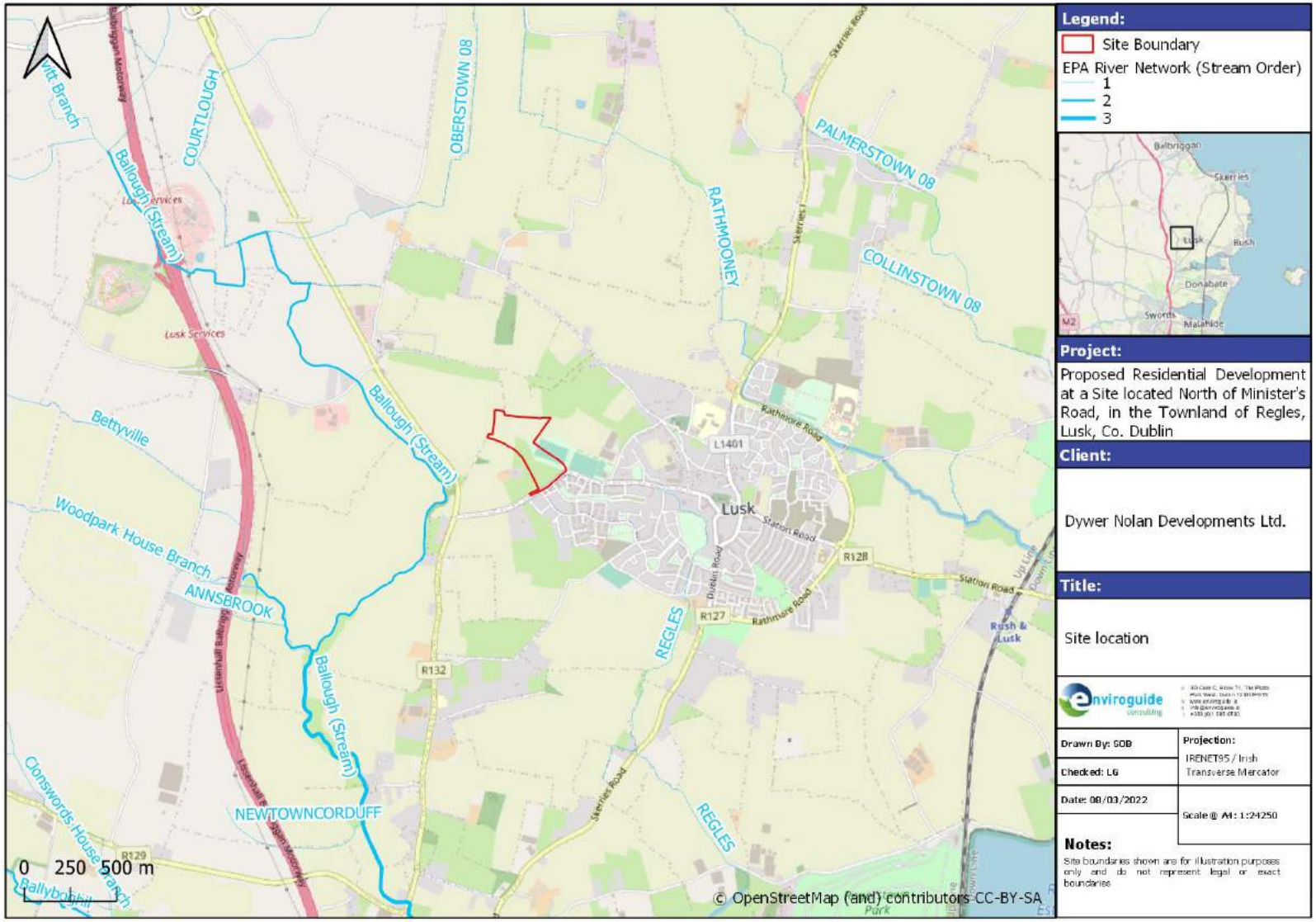

FIGURE 2. SITE LOCATION

FIGURE 3. PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT (DAVEY + SMITH ARCHITECTS)

3.3 Existing Environment

3.3.1 Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology

The Site of the Proposed Development is located within the Nanny-Delvin catchment and primarily within the Ballough[Stream]_SC_010 sub-catchment, with the southeast of the Site located in Palmerstown_SC_010. The Regles Stream flows approximately 500m east of the Site and receives surface water discharge from the urban area of Lusk, and then discharges to the Rogerstown Estuary. The ecological status of this watercourse is currently classed as *Unassigned* by the EPA, and the Rogerstown Estuary is currently *At Risk* of not meeting its WFD objectives.

The Site is situated on the Lusk-Bog of the Ring groundwater body, which is Not at Risk of not meeting its WFD objectives. The aquifer type within the Site boundary is a *Locally Important Aquifer* (Lm) aquifer on bedrock which is *Generally Moderately Productive*. The groundwater rock units underlying the aquifer are classified as *Dinantian Upper Impure Limestones* (GSI, 2022). The level of vulnerability of the Site to groundwater contamination via human activities is *Low*. The soil is classified as *Elton* (Fine loamy drift with limestones), and the subsoil is Limestone till (Carboniferous) (*TLs*) (EPA, 2022).

3.4 Identification of Relevant European Sites

In order to identify the European Sites that potentially lie within the Zone of Influence (ZOI) of the Proposed Development, a Source-Path-Receptor method (S-P-R) was adopted, as described in 'OPR Practice Note PN01 - Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management' (OPR, 2021), a practice note produced by the Office of the Planning Regulator, Dublin. This note was published to provide guidance on screening for appropriate assessment (AA) during the planning process, and although it focuses on the approach a planning authority should take in screening for AA, the methodology is also readily applied in the preparation of Appropriate Assessment Screening Reports such as this.

The guidance document published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (then DEHLG) 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities' (2009) recommends an arbitrary distance of 15km as the precautionary ZOI for a plan or project being assessed for likely significant effects on European Sites, stating however that this should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

As such, the 15km ZOI is used in this report as an initial starting point for collating European sites for AA screening.

The methodology used to identify relevant European sites comprised the following:

- Use of up-to-date GIS spatial datasets for European designated sites and water catchments – downloaded from the NPWS website (www.npws.ie) and the EPA website (www.epa.ie) to identify European sites which could potentially be affected by the Proposed Development;
- The catchment data were used to establish or discount potential hydrological connectivity between the Project Boundary and any European sites.

- All European sites within the zone of influence (within 15km of the Proposed Development Site) were identified and are shown in Figure 4.
- The potential for connectivity with European sites at distances greater than 15km from the Proposed Development was also considered in this initial assessment. In this case, there is no potential connectivity between the Proposed Development Site and European sites located at a distance greater than 15km from the Proposed Development based on the S-P-R model.
- Table 1 provides details of all relevant European sites as identified in the preceding steps. The potential for pathways between European sites and the Proposed Development Site was assessed on a case-by-case basis using the Source-Pathway-Receptor framework as per the OPR Practice Note PN01 (March 2021). Those European sites where a pathway has been identified are highlighted in green. Pathways considered included:
    a. Direct pathways (e.g., proximity (i.e., location within the European site), water bodies, air (for both air emissions and noise impacts).
    b. Indirect pathways (e.g., disruption to migratory paths, 'Sightlines' where noisy or intrusive activities may result in disturbance to shy species.
- The site synopses and conservation objectives of these sites, as per the NPWS website (www.npws.ie), were consulted and reviewed at the time of preparing this report.
- There is absolutely no reliance placed in this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report on measures intended to avoid/reduce harmful effects on the European sites.

The result of this preliminary screening concluded that there is a total of five SACs and eight SPAs located within the ZOI of the Proposed Development Site. The distances to each site listed are taken from the nearest possible point of the Proposed Development Site boundary to the nearest possible point of each European site.

Potential pathways between the Proposed Development Site and three European sites within the ZOI were identified. The European sites linked to the Proposed Development include:

- Rogerstown Estuary SAC
- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA

TABLE 1. EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN THE 15KM PRECAUTIONARY ZONE OF INFLUENCE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL PATHWAYS BETWEEN THEM. THOSE EUROPEAN SITES FOR WHICH A S-P-R LINK WAS IDENTIFIED ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN GREEN.

Site Name & Site Code	Qualifying Interests (*= priority habitats)	Distance to Site	Connections (Source- Pathway- Receptor)
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)			
Rogerstown Estuary SAC (000208)	[1130] Estuaries; [1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; [1310] *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand; [1330] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*); [1410] Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*); [2120] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes); [2130] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)	2.4km	**Yes** – Weak hydrological pathway via contaminated surface water discharge into the Regles Stream during the Construction and Operational Phases.
Malahide Estuary SAC (000205)	[1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; [1310] *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand; [1330] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*); [1410] Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*); [2120] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with *Ammophila arenaria* (white dunes); [2130] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes)	5.9km	**None** – There is no hydrological connection. In addition, the intervening distances between the Site and the SAC are sufficient to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SAC arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the Site during the Construction Phase; increased traffic volumes during the Construction and Operational Phase and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the Site during Construction and Operational Phase; and increased human presence at the Site during Construction and Operational Phase.
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (003000)	[1170] Reefs; [1351] *Phocoena phocoena* (Harbour Porpoise)	7.4km	**Yes** – Weak hydrological pathway via discharges from Portrane Donabate WwTP during the Operational Phase.
Lambay Island SAC (000204)	[1170] Reefs; [1230] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts; [1364] *Halichoerus grypus* (Grey Seal); [1365] *Phoca vitulina* (Harbour Seal)	10.4km	**None** – There is no hydrological connection. In addition, the intervening distances between the Site and the SAC are sufficient to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SAC arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the Site during the Construction Phase; increased traffic volumes during the Construction and Operational Phase and
Baldoyle Bay SAC (000199)	[1140] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide; [1310] *Salicornia* and other annuals colonising mud and sand;	12.2km	

Site Name & Site Code	Qualifying Interests (*= priority habitats)	Distance to Site	Connections (Source- Pathway- Receptor)
	[1330] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*); [1410] Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*)		associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the Site during Construction and Operational Phase; and increased human presence at the Site during Construction and Operational Phase.
Special Protected Area (SPA)			
Rogerstown Estuary SPA (004015)	[A043] Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*); [A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*); [A048] Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*); [A056] Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*); [A130] Oystercatcher (*Haematopus* ostralegus); [A137] Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*); [A141] Grey *Plover* (*Pluvialis squatarola*); [A143] Knot (*Calidris canutus*); [A149] Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*); [A156] Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*); [A162] Redshank (*Tringa totanus*); [A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	2.4km	**Yes** – Weak hydrological pathway via contaminated surface water discharge into the Regles Stream during the Construction and Operational Phases.
Malahide Estuary SPA (004025)	[A005] Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*); [A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*); [A048] Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*); [A054] Pintail (*Anas acuta*); [A067] Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*); [A069] Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*); [A130] Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*); [A140] Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*); [A141] Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*); [A143] Knot (*Calidris canutus*); [A149] Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*); [A156] Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*); [A157] Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*); [A162] Redshank (*Tringa totanus*); [A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	5.9km	**None** – There is no hydrological connection. In addition, the intervening distance between the Site and the SPA is sufficient to exclude the possibility of significant effects on the SPA arising from: emissions of noise, dust, pollutants and/or vibrations emitted from the Site during the Construction Phase; increased traffic volumes during the Construction and Operational Phase and associated emissions; potential increased lighting emitted from the Site during Construction and Operational Phase; and increased human presence at the Site during Construction and Operational Phase. The Site does not provide significant *ex-situ* habitat for QI/SCI species within the Site of the Proposed Development.
Skerries Islands SPA (004122)	[A017] Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*); [A018] Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*); [A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*); [A148] Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*); [A169] Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*); [A184] Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*)	7.3km	
Rockabill SPA (004014)	[A148] Purple Sandpiper (*Calidris maritima*); [A192] Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougallii*); [A193] Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*); [A194] Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)	9.0km	

Site Name & Site Code	Qualifying Interests (*= priority habitats)	Distance to Site	Connections (Source- Pathway- Receptor)
Lambay Island SPA (004069)	[A009] Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*); [A017] Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*); [A018] Shag (*Phalacrocorax aristotelis*); [A043] Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*); [A183] Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus fuscus*); [A184] Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*); [A188] Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*); [A199] Guillemot (*Uria aalge*); [A200] Razorbill (*Alca torda*); [A204] Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*)	10.4km	
Baldoyle Bay SPA (004016)	[A046] Light-bellied Brent Goose (*Branta bernicla hrota*); [A048] Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*); [A137] Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*); [A140] Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*); [A141] Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*); [A157] Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*); [A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	12.3km	
River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (004158)	[A130] Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*); [A137] Ringed Plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*); [A140] Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*); [A143] Knot (*Calidris canutus*); [A144] Sanderling (*Calidris alba*); [A184] Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*); [A999] Wetland and Waterbirds	13.5km	
Ireland's Eye SPA (004117)	[A017] Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*); [A184] Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*); [A188] Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*); [A199] Guillemot (*Uria aalge*); [A200] Razorbill (*Alca torda*)	14.6km	

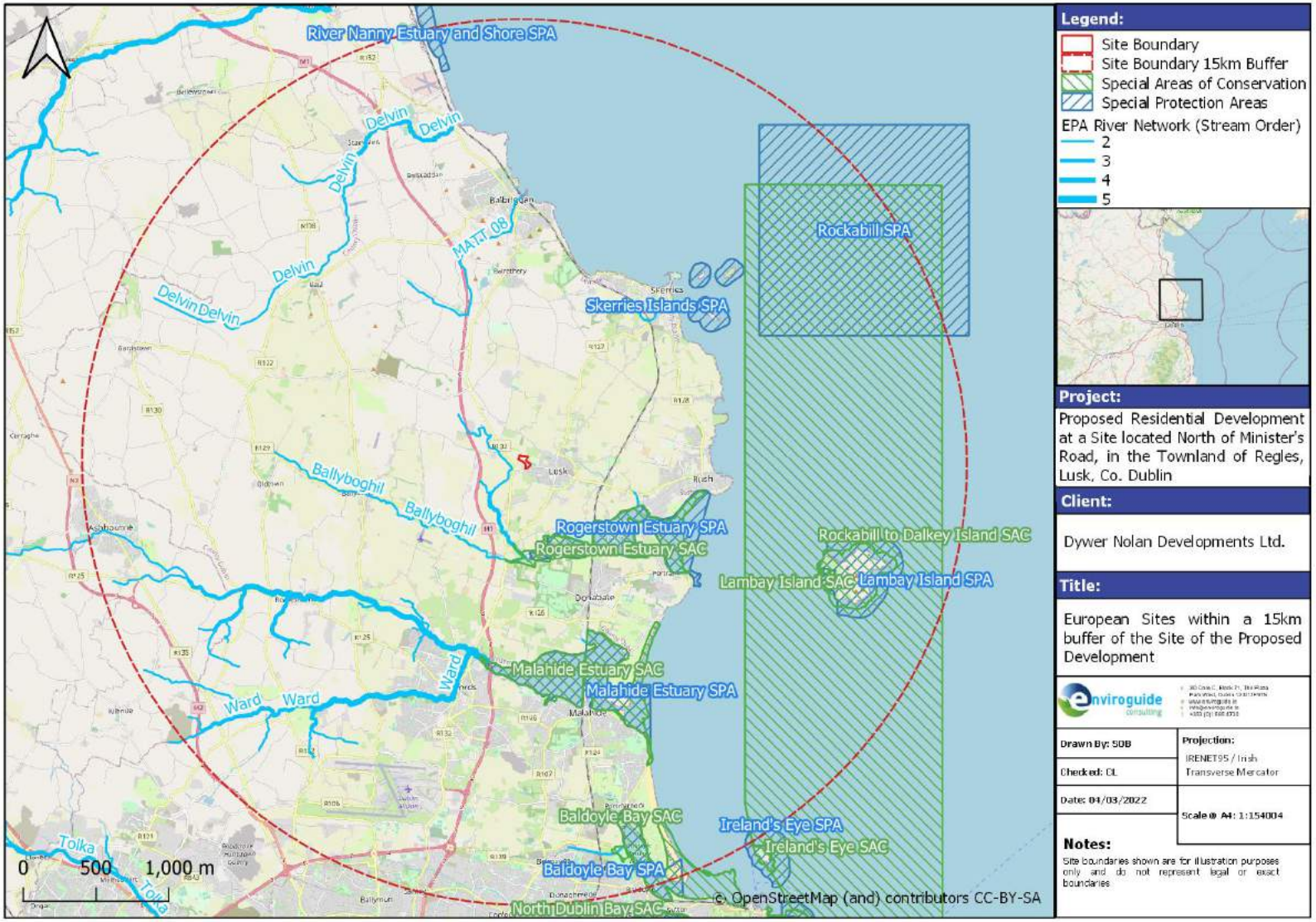

FIGURE 4. EUROPEAN SITES WITHIN 15KM OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE.

3.5 Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

A European site will only be at risk from likely significant effects where the Source-Pathway-Receptor link exists between the Proposed Development and the European site. As such, the remainder of this AA Screening report will focus on the European sites for which a S-P-R link was identified, namely:

- Rogerstown Estuary SAC
- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA

3.5.1 Conservation objectives

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them.

Site specific conservation objectives (SSCO) have been compiled for the SAC listed above. Site-specific conservation objectives aim to define favourable conservation condition for habitats or species at a site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within European sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing.
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future.
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats.
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future.
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

3.5.2 Identification and Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

The conservation objectives of the European sites within the zone of influence were reviewed and assessed in order to establish whether the construction and operation of the Proposed Development has the potential to have a negative impact on any of the qualifying interests and/or conservation objectives of the European sites listed above.

The assessment framework is taken from the best practice guidelines issued by the European Commission, i.e., "Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites

– Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC".

The potential for significant effects resulting from the Proposed Development during the Construction and Operational Phases was determined based on a range of indicators, including:

- Habitat loss or alteration.
- Habitat/species fragmentation.
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species.
- Changes in population density; and
- Changes in water quality and resource.

The following elements of the Proposed Development were assessed for their potential for likely significant effects on European sites.

- **Construction Phase**
  - Uncontrolled releases of silt, sediments and/or other pollutants to air due to earthworks
  - Surface water run-off containing silt, sediments and/or other pollutants into nearby waterbodies.
  - Surface water run-off containing silt, sediments and/or other pollutants into the local groundwater.
  - Waste generation during the Construction Phase comprising soils, construction and demolition wastes.
  - Increased noise, dust and/or vibrations as a result of construction activity.
  - Increased dust and air emissions from construction traffic.
  - Increased lighting in the vicinity as a result of construction activity.

- **Operational Phase**
  - Surface water drainage from the Site of the Proposed Development.
  - Increased lighting in the vicinity emitted from the Proposed Development; and
  - Increased human presence in the vicinity as a result of the Proposed Development.

3.5.2.1 *Habitat Loss and Alteration*

The project is not located within any European site and therefore there will be no loss or alteration of habitat as a result of the Proposed Development.

3.5.2.2 *Habitat / Species Fragmentation*

As there will be no direct habitat loss within any European sites, no habitat fragmentation will arise as a result of the Proposed Development.

3.5.2.3 *Changes in Water Quality and Resource*

The existing surface water drainage network to the southeast of the Site discharges to the Regles Stream, which flows almost 500m east of the Site, and ultimately enters the Rogerstown Estuary. Therefore, there is a weak hydrological link between the Site and the Rogerstown Estuary SAC and Rogerstown Estuary SPA via surface water discharges from the Site during the Construction and Operational Phases.

- SuDS Measures are included in the Project Design however, they are not being relied upon in any way to mitigate against likely significant effects on a European Site:

- It is a policy of Fingal County Council (SW04) to "require the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to minimise and limit the extent of hard surfacing and paving and require the use of sustainable drainage techniques where appropriate, for new development or for extensions to existing developments, in order to reduce the potential impact of existing and predicted flooding risks". As such, the Proposed Development design will entail a suite of SuDS measures that will be incorporated into the Proposed Development.

The potential for surface water generated at the Site of the Proposed Development to reach the European Sites located within Rogerstown Estuary and cause significant effects, during both the Construction and Operational Phases, is negligible due to:

- The distance and consequent potential for dilution in the surface water network serving the urban area of Lusk and the Regles Stream. Surface water discharges would have to travel approximately 4km along the Regles Stream before discharging into Rogerstown Estuary.
- The potential for dilution in the surface water network during heavy rainfall events.

The Site will be served by the existing foul water sewer to the southeast of the Site via a new connection. Therefore, there is a weak hydrological link between the Site and Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC via discharges from Portrane Donabate WwTP during the Operational Phase.

The potential for foul waters generated at the Site of the Proposed Development to reach Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC and cause significant effects, during the Operational Phase, is negligible due to:

- The potential for dilution of treated foul water flows once they are discharged from Portrane Donabate WwTP into the Irish Sea via its offshore outfall point (TPEFF0900D0114SW001).

- The treated discharge from Portrane Donabate WwTP (D0114-01) is currently compliant with the emission limit values set in the wastewater discharge licence, according to the Annual Environmental Report (AER) for the facility (Irish Water, 2020). As of 2020 the facility had a spare treatment capacity of 30585 PE (Total capacity: 65000).

3.5.2.4 *Disturbance and / or Displacement of Species*

As outlined in section 3.5.2.3 above, the hydrological link between the Site and the European sites in Rogerstown Estuary and Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC assessed here will not result in significant effects on the water quality and resource indicator during both the Construction and Operational Phases. As such, aquatic species associated with these European Sites will not be affected by water quality impacts. In addition, there is no potential for negative impacts on these species due to the intervening distances between the Site of the Proposed Development and the corresponding European Sites.

3.5.2.5 *Changes in Population Density*

The Proposed Development does not have the capacity to cause any significant changes in the population density of any species within any European site.

3.5.2.6 *Potential for In-combination Effects*

Existing Planning Permissions

There are several existing planning permissions on record in the area ranging from small-scale extensions and alterations to existing residential properties to some larger-scale developments. The larger-scale developments identified within the vicinity of the Proposed Development are as follows:

Planning Application Reference: F19A/0479

Amendments to parts of Blocks 4 & 7 of approved development PL06F.247787 / Reg. Ref. F15A/0565. This application is being lodged concurrently with a separate application which seeks to omit the remainder of the permitted mixed use block 4.The cumulative effect of both these applications will be to reduce the permitted 6644m² of commercial accommodation in Block 4 by 3029m² and to omit 2 no. 1 bed apartments and 9 no. 2 bed apartments in Block 4. The amendments sought in this application comprise the construction of a 3.5 storey mixed use block 4B to contain 4 no. commercial units totalling 618m² and 1 no. cafe of 109m² at ground floor with 11 no. 1 bed and 14 no. 2 bed apartments over with parking and amenity space to the rear accessed from Scholars Walk and facing onto Scholars Walk and the new pedestrian street, with revisions to the extent of permitted Scholars Square; the omission of the permitted public open space at Scholars Green and the circular road feature on Scholars Court; the construction of 22 no. 2 storey 3 bed houses and 1 no. 2 storey 4 bed house on lands fronting Norsemans Walk, Scholars Walk and Scholars Court; the omission of permitted three storey Block 7A containing 12 no. 2 bed apartments from its permitted location on Norsemans Walk and construction of a new three storey Block 7A containing 4 no. 2 bed apartments and 8 no. 3 bed 2 storey maisonettes along Loughcommon Lane, with revisions to the permitted parking layout, landscaping and amenity facilities in the courtyard serving Block 7A & 7B apartments, with courtyard access moving from Norsemans Walk to Loughcommon Lane; revisions to kerbside parking and landscaping along Norsemans Walk and Loughcommon Lane; ancillary minor amendments to associated landscaping, site works and infrastructure. This application abuts slightly the site area of application F19A/0454. **(Decision: Grant Permission. Decision Date: 25/02/2020).**

Planning Application Reference: F21A/0139

The development consists of the completion of the construction of the permitted development granted under ABP Ref: ABP -306963-20 (Fingal Co Co. Reference F19A/0469 subject to an amendment to condition 14(a) of the above planning permission, to increase the trading hours as follows: 0800hrs to 2200hrs Monday to Saturday 0900hrs to 2100hrs on Sundays and bank holidays. The application includes the following amendments to the building:

(1) Fire escape staircore increased in size;

(2) Proposed double fire escape door;

(3) Revised car parking and pedestrian walkway;

(4) Proposed mechanical plant area;

(5) Revised undercroft car park layout;

(6) Proposed additional Sheffield bicycle stands;

(7) Proposed 'no park zone' in front of permitted sub station;

(8) Proposed EV car parking;

(9)Proposed IT room location.

All ancillary works to facilitate the development. **(Decision: Grant Permission. Decision Date: 13/08/2021).**

Planning Application Reference: F19A/0454

Planning Permission for revisions to part of previously permitted development PL 06F.247787/Reg. Ref F15A/0565 to omit 2-storey commercial Block 2 (642m² food-drink use) and 3-storey mixed residential Block 3 (1 No. 2-bedroom gate lodge and 6 No. 2-bedroom village apartment, 3 No. 3 bedroom village apartments over 259m² retail use, 157m² non-retail services use and 217m² food-drink use) and to now provide 12 No. 3-bedroom 2-storey houses. The development includes 24 No. car parking spaces and all associated and ancillary site works. **(Decision: Grant Permission. Decision Date: 03/02/2020).**

Planning Application Reference: F19A/0633

For the demolition of an existing dwelling and commercial buildings and amendments to Blocks 5A, 5B & 6 of approved development PL06F.247787 / Reg. Ref. F15A/0565. This application is being lodged alongside applications to revise parts of Block 2 & 3 (F19A/0454), part of Block 4 (F19A/0469) and the remainder of Block 4 & part of Block 7 (F19A/0479). The amendments sought in this application comprise the construction in a revised format of Blocks 5A, 5B & part of Block 6 consisting of the construction of 48no. 2 storey 3 bed houses; 3no. 2 storey 4 bed houses; 9no. 3 storey 4 bed houses; 1no. 3 storey mixed use Building A containing 1 no. 139sqm cafe unit; 1 no. 76sqm retail unit and ancillary bin stores at ground floor with 6no. 2 bed apartments over with separate direct access to street and to rear courtyard; 1no. 2 storey Building B containing 504sqm of bar / restaurant space with ancillary yard and bin store; 1no. 3 storey Building C with 2no. retail units totalling 260sqm and ancillary bin stores at ground floor and 6no. 2 bed apartments and 2no. 1 bed apartments over, with separate direct access to street and to rear courtyard; 1no. 2 storey Building D crèche totalling 497sqm with landscaped external play areas; 162no. surface car parking spaces; 2 loading spaces and 5 crèche drop off spaces; bicycle parking ; amendment to permitted street linking Scholars Walk and Loughcommon Lane to include two way vehicular traffic along a mixture of dedicated vehicular carriageways and shared surface zones; new civic plaza measuring 1134sqm, with additional Class 1 Open Space allocated in the New Park described in F18A/0645 & F18A/0646; ancillary minor amendments to associated roads, paving, landscaping, street signage, public lighting , utility supply installations, drainage & attenuation and other site works and infrastructure. The application site is located at Station Road Lusk Co Dublin adjacent the Remount Roundabout, and is comprised of blocks 5A,5B & part of Block 6 of approved development PL 06F.247787, together with an additional area of .022 ha that consists of the SMF Motor Factors, car salesroom and garage and adjacent dwelling on Station Road and the adjoining access cul-de-sac. The application site includes all lands subject to Condition 2 of the original permission PL 06F.247787 / Reg. Ref. F15A/0565, which required a separate application to be made for parts of Blocks 5B & 6. **(Decision: Grant Permission. Decision Date: 21/07/2020).**

Planning Application Reference: F21A/0217

Permission for amendments to 8 no. semi-detached houses previously approved under Reg. Ref. F16A/0577 as follows:

1) relocation of side entrance for 4 no. houses to front with new canopy to all 8 no. semi-detached houses 2) new pair of gable windows at first floor in 4 no. houses 3) Increasing the depth of all 8 no. houses by 0.5 metres with increased floor areas of 9.00 sq, 4) internal layout changes with minor changes to window positions shown on elevations. **(Decision: Grant Permission. Decision Date: 14/06/2021).**

Planning Application Reference: F20A/0401

The scheme will provide floodlighting on the two playing pitches and a training area between the two pitches. It will consist of 16 no. 20m high columns supporting a total of 86 led type luminaires. **(Decision: Grant Permission. Decision Date: 09/04/2021).**

At the time of writing, there are no proposed or permitted forestry operations (thinning, clear felling, road construction) in close proximity to the Site of the Proposed Development[1].

Given the distance between abovementioned permitted developments and the European Sites within the zone of influence, it is concluded that there is no potential for in-combination effects to arise as a result of the Proposed Development.

Relevant Policies and Plans

The following policies and plans were reviewed and considered for possible in-combination effects with the Proposed Development.

- Fingal Development Plan 2017 – 2023
- Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 – 2023

The Fingal County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 has directly addressed the protection of European Sites through specific policies (NH15). The relevant recommendations and mitigation measures have been integrated into the plan. The Fingal Biodiversity Action Plan 2018 – 2023 is set out to protect and improve biodiversity, and as such will not result in negative in-combination effects with the Proposed Development.

On examination of the above it is considered that there are no means for the Proposed Development to act in-combination with any plans or projects, that would cause any likely significant effects on any European sites.

[1] https://forestry-maps.apps.rhos.agriculture.gov.ie/

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT ON EUROPEAN SITES AS A RESULT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

Site	Habitat Loss / Alteration	Habitat or Species Fragmentation	Disturbance and/or Displacement of Species	Changes in Population Density	Changes in Water Quality and/or Resource	In-combination effects	Stage 2 AA Required
SAC							
Rogerstown Estuary SAC (000208)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Malahide Estuary SAC (000205)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (003000)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Lambay Island SAC (000204)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Baldoyle Bay SAC (000199)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
SPA							
Rogerstown Estuary SPA (004015)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Malahide Estuary SPA (004025)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Skerries Islands SPA (004122)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Rockabill SPA (004014)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Lambay Island SPA (004069)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Baldoyle Bay SPA (004016)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (004158)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO
Ireland's Eye SPA (004117)	No	No	No	None	None	None	NO

4 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING CONCLUSION

The Proposed Development at Regles, Lusk, Co. Dublin has been assessed taking into account:

- the nature, size and location of the proposed works and possible impacts arising from the construction works.
- the qualifying interests and conservation objectives of the European sites
- the potential for in-combination effects arising from other plans and projects.

In conclusion, upon the examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information and applying the precautionary principle, it is concluded by the authors of this report that, on the basis of objective information; the possibility **may be excluded** that the Proposed Development will have a significant effect on any of the European sites listed below:

Rogerstown Estuary SAC (000208)

Malahide Estuary SAC (000205)

Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (003000)

Lambay Island SAC (000204)

Baldoyle Bay SAC (000199)

Rogerstown Estuary SPA (004015)

Malahide Estuary SPA (004025)

Skerries Islands SPA (004122)

Rockabill SPA (004014)

Lambay Island SPA (004069)

Baldoyle Bay SPA (004016)

River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (004158)

Ireland's Eye SPA (004117)

In carrying out this AA screening, mitigation measures have not been taken into account. Standard best practice construction measures which could have the effect of mitigating any effects on any European Sites have similarly not been taken into account.

On the basis of the screening exercise carried out above, it can be concluded, on the basis of the best scientific knowledge available, that the possibility of any significant effects on any European sites, whether arising from the project itself or in combination with other plans and projects, can be excluded. Thus, there is no requirement to proceed to Stage 2 of the Appropriate Assessment process; and the preparation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) is not required.

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APPENDIX I – NPWS SITE SYNOPSES

SITE SYNOPSIS

SITE NAME: ROGERSTOWN ESTUARY SPA

SITE CODE: 004015

Rogerstown Estuary is situated about 2 km north of Donabate in north County Dublin. It is a relatively small, funnel shaped estuary separated from the sea by a sand and shingle peninsula; the site extends eastwards to include an area of shallow marine water. The estuary receives the waters of the Ballyboghil and Ballough rivers and has a wide salinity range, from near full seawater to near full freshwater. The estuary is divided by a causeway and narrow bridge, built in the 1840s to carry the Dublin-Belfast railway line. At low tide extensive intertidal sand and mud flats are exposed and these provide the main food resource for the wintering waterfowl that use the site. The intertidal flats of the estuary are mainly of sands, with soft muds in the north-west sector and along the southern shore. Associated with these muds are stands of Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*). Green algae (mainly *Ulva* spp.) are widespread and form dense mats in the more sheltered areas. The intertidal vascular plant Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*) grows profusely in places beneath the algal mats and is grazed by herbivorous waterfowl (notably Light-bellied Brent Goose and Wigeon). Salt marsh fringes parts of the estuary, especially its southern shores. Common plant species of the saltmarsh include Sea Rush (*Juncus maritimus*), Sea Purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*).

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

Rogerstown Estuary is an important winter waterfowl site and supports a population of Light-bellied Brent Goose of international importance (1,069) - all counts are mean peaks over the five winters 1995/96 – 1999/2000. A further 10 species have populations of national importance as follows: Greylag Goose (160), Shelduck (773), Shoveler (59), Oystercatcher (1,345), Ringed Plover (188), Grey Plover (229), Knot (2,454), Dunlin (2,745), Black-tailed Godwit (195) and Redshank (490). The Greylag Geese are part of a larger population which spends most of the winter on Lambay Island. Other species which occur regularly include Wigeon (358), Teal (346), Mallard (214), Red-breasted Merganser (30), Golden Plover (1,059) Lapwing (2,129), Sanderling (50), Curlew (505) and Turnstone (77). Large numbers of gulls including Herring Gull, Great Black-backed Gull and Black-headed Gull are attracted to the area, partly due to the presence of an adjacent local authority landfill site. Little Egret, a species which has recently colonised Ireland, also occurs at this site.

Some of the wader species also occur on passage, notably Black-tailed Godwit with numbers often exceeding 300 in April. The estuary is a regular staging post for scarce migrants, especially in autumn when Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank may be seen. Shelduck breed within the site.

Rogerstown Estuary SPA is an important link in the chain of estuaries on the east coast. It supports an internationally important population of Light-bellied Brent Goose and nationally important populations of a further 10 species. The presence of Little Egret and Golden Plover is of note as these species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. Rogerstown Estuary is also a Ramsar Convention site, and part of Rogerstown Estuary SPA is designated as a Statutory Nature Reserve and a Wildfowl Sanctuary.

SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Rogerstown Estuary SAC

Site Code: 000208

Rogerstown Estuary is situated about 2 km north of Donabate in Co. Dublin. It is a relatively small, narrow estuary separated from the sea by a sand and shingle bar. The estuary is divided by a causeway and narrow bridge, built in the 1840s to carry the Dublin-Belfast railway line.

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):

[1130] Estuaries
[1140] Tidal Mudflats and Sandflats
[1310] *Salicornia* Mud
[1330] Atlantic Salt Meadows
[1410] Mediterranean Salt Meadows
[2120] Marram Dunes (White Dunes)
[2130] Fixed Dunes (Grey Dunes)*

The estuary drains almost completely at low tide. The intertidal flats of the outer estuary are mainly of sands, with soft muds in the north-west sector and along the southern shore. Associated with these muds are stands of Common Cordgrass (*Spartina anglica*). Green algae (mainly *Enteromorpha* spp. and *Ulva lactuca*) are widespread and form dense mats in the more sheltered areas. The intertidal angiosperm Beaked Tasselweed (*Ruppia maritima*) grows profusely in places beneath the algal mats. The Lugworm (*Arenicola marina*) is common in the outer estuary and large Mussel beds (*Mytilus edulis*) occur at the outlet to the sea.

The area of intertidal flats in the inner estuary is reduced as a result of the local authority refuse tip on the north shore. The sediments are mostly muds, which are very soft in places. Common Cordgrass is widespread in parts, and in summer, dense green algal mats grow on the muds. In the extreme inner part, the estuary narrows to a tidal river.

The habitat '*Salicornia* mud' occurs in both the outer and inner estuaries, and *S. dolichostachya* is the main glasswort species found. Other species include *S. ramosissima, S. europaea* and Annual Sea-blite (*Suaeda maritima*).

Saltmarsh fringes parts of the estuary, especially the southern shores and parts of the outer sand spit. Common plant species of the saltmarsh include Sea Rush (*Juncus*

maritimus), Sea-purslane (*Halimione portulacoides*) and Common Saltmarsh-grass (*Puccinellia maritima*). Salt meadows and wet brackish fields occur along the tidal river. Low sand hills occur on the outer spit, including some small areas of fixed dunes and Marram Grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) dunes. Fine sandy beaches and intertidal sandflats occur at the outer part of the estuary.

Two plant species which are legally protected under the Flora (Protection) Order, 1999, occur within the site: Hairy Violet (*Viola hirta*) occurs on the sand spit and Meadow Barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) occurs in the saline fields of the inner estuary. This species has declined, apparently due to reclamation and embankment of lands fringing estuaries. Another rare species, Green-winged Orchid (*Orchis morio*), occurs in the sandy areas of the outer estuary.

Rogerstown Estuary is an important waterfowl site, with Brent Goose having a population of international importance (1176). A further 16 species have populations of national importance: Greylag Goose (186), Shelduck (785), Teal (584), Pintail (30), Shoveler (69), Oystercatcher (1028), Ringed Plover (152), Golden Plover (1813), Grey Plover (245), Lapwing (4056), Knot (2076), Dunlin (2625), Sanderling (57), Black-tailed Godwit (272), Curlew (1549), Redshank (732) and Greenshank (22) (All counts are average peaks over four winters 1994/95 - 1997/98). The presence of a significant population of Golden Plover is of note and this species is listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The estuary is a regular staging post for autumn migrants, especially Green Sandpiper, Ruff, Little Stint, Curlew Sandpiper and Spotted Redshank.

Little Tern has bred at the outer sand spit, but much of the nesting area has now been washed away as a result of erosion. The maximum number of pairs recorded was 17 in 1991. Ringed Plover breed in the same area.

The outer part of the estuary has been designated a Statutory Nature Reserve and a Special Protection Area under the E.U. Birds Directive. The inner estuary has been damaged by the refuse tip which covers 40 ha of mudflat.

This site is a good example of an estuarine system, with all typical habitats represented, including several listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive. Rogerstown is an internationally important waterfowl site and has been a breeding site for Little Terns. The presence within the site of three rare plant species adds to its importance.

SITE SYNOPSIS

Site Name: Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC

Site Code: 003000

This site includes a range of dynamic inshore and coastal waters in the western Irish Sea. These include sandy and muddy seabed, reefs, sandbanks and islands. This site extends southwards, in a strip approximately 7 km wide and 40 km in length, from Rockabill, running adjacent to Howth Head, and crosses Dublin Bay to Frazer Bank in south Co. Dublin. The site encompasses Dalkey, Muglins and Rockabill islands.

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):

[1170] Reefs
[1351] Harbour Porpoise (*Phocoena phocoena*)

Reef habitat is uncommon along the eastern seaboard of Ireland due to prevailing geology and hydrographical conditions. Expansive surveys of the Irish coast have indicated that the greatest resource of this habitat within the Irish Sea is found fringing offshore islands which are concentrated along the Dublin coast. A detailed survey of selected suitable islands has shown areas with typical biodiversity for this habitat both intertidally and subtidally. Species recorded in the intertidal included *Fucus spiralis*, *Fucus serratus*, *Pelvetia canaliculata*, *Ascophyllum nodosum*, *Semibalanus balanoides* and *Necora puber*. Subtidally, a wide range of species include *Laminaria hyperborea*, *Flustra folicacea*, *Alaria esculenta*, *Halidrys siliquosa*, *Pomatocereos triqueter*, *Alcyonium digitatum*, *Metridium senile*, *Caryophyllia smithii*, *Tubularia indivisa*, *Mytilus edulis*, *Gibbula umbilcalis*, *Asterias rubens*, and *Echinus esculentus*. These reefs are subject to strong tidal currents with an abundant supply of suspended matter resulting in good representation of filter feeding fauna such as sponges, anemones and echinoderms.

The area selected for designation represents a key habitat for the Annex II species Harbour Porpoise within the Irish Sea. Population survey data show that porpoise occurrence within the site boundary meets suitable reference values for other designated sites in Ireland. The species occurs year-round within the site and comparatively high group sizes have been recorded. Porpoises with young (i.e. calves) are observed at favourable, typical reference values for the species. Casual and effort-related sighting rates from coastal observation stations are significant for the east coast of Ireland and the latter appear to be relatively stable across all seasons. The selected site contains a wide array of habitats believed to be important for Harbour Porpoise including inshore shallow sand and mudbanks and rocky reefs scoured by strong current flow. The site also supports Common Seal and Grey Seal,

for which terrestrial haul-out sites occur in immediate proximity to the site. Bottle-nosed Dolphins has also occasionally been recorded in the area. A number of other marine mammals have been recorded in this area including Minke, Fin and Killer Whales and Risso's and Common Dolphins.

The coastal environment of Co. Dublin is a very significant resource to birds with some nationally and internationally important populations. Of particular note in this site are the large number of terns (Arctic, Common and Roseate) known to use Dalkey Island as a staging area (approx. 2,000) after breeding. Other seabirds commonly seen include Kittiwake, Razorbill, Guillemot, Puffin, Fulmar, Shag, Cormorant, Manx Shearwater, Gannet and gulls.

This site is of conservation importance for reefs, listed on Annex I, and Harbour Porpoise, listed on Annex II, of the E.U. Habitats Directive.