

Report to Inform Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Broiler Breeder House

Gorteen

Co. Limerick

Report prepared for Enfield Broiler Breeders Ltd

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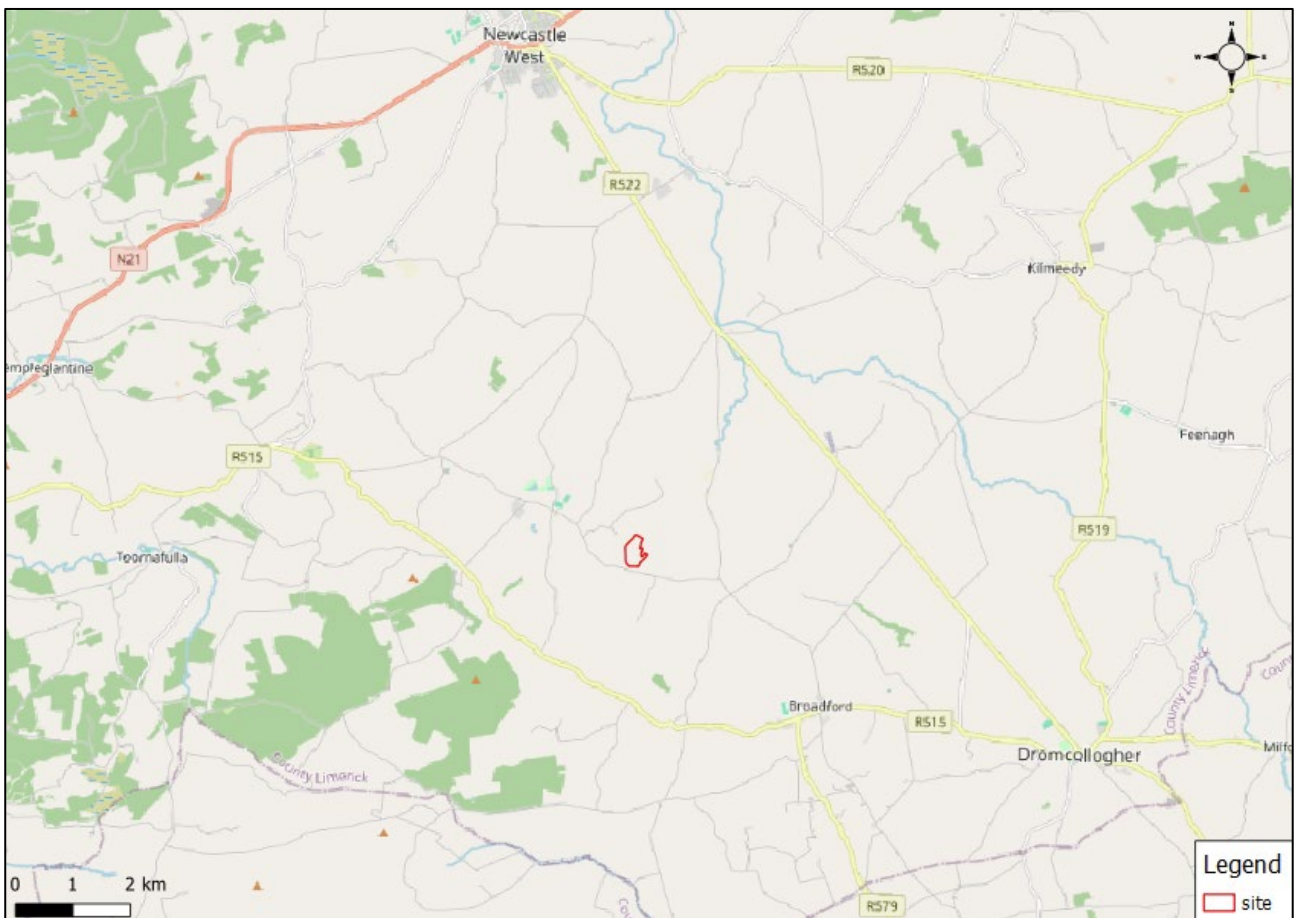
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1 Introduction

Greenleaf Ecology was commissioned by Enfield Broiler Breeders Ltd to prepare a report to inform Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) for a Broiler Breeder House at Gorteen, Co. Limerick (Figure 1-1). For the purposes of this report to inform Screening for AA, the broiler breeder house will be referred to as “the proposed project” hereafter.

This report comprises information in support of screening for AA to be undertaken by the competent authority in line with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Planning and Development Act (as amended), and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011) as amended.

Figure 1-1: Location of the broiler breeder house



1.1 Legislative Context for Appropriate Assessment

The Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, better known as “The Habitats Directive”, provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance. Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of sites known as Natura 2000.

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law by Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 - 2020 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477/2011) as amended. In the context of the proposed project, the governing legislation is the Birds and Habitats Regulations.

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to adversely affect the integrity of European sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for AA:

Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the [Natura 2000] site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subjected to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In 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.

Natura 2000 sites are defined under the Habitats Directive (Article 3) as a coherent European ecological network of special areas of conservation, composed of sites hosting the natural habitat types listed in Annex I and habitats of the species listed in Annex II, shall enable the natural habitat types and the species' habitats concerned to be maintained or, where appropriate, restored at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. In Ireland, these sites are designated as European sites and include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), established under the EU Birds Directive (79/409/EEC, as codified by 2009/147/EC) for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), established under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC for habitats and species.

The competent authority is obliged to consider, in view of best scientific knowledge, whether the proposed works are likely to have a significant effect either individually or in combination with other plans and projects. If screening determines that there is likely to be significant effects on a European site, then AA must be carried out for the proposed project at Gorteen, including the compilation of a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) to inform the decision making.

1.2 Statement of Competence

This AA Screening was carried out by Karen Banks, BSc (Hons), MCIEEM. Karen is an ecologist with Greenleaf Ecology and has 18 years' experience in the field of ecological assessment. Karen is experienced in the production of reports to inform Appropriate Assessment screenings and Natura Impact Statements including those for transport infrastructure, small to large scale housing and mixed-use developments, flood alleviation schemes and wind farms.

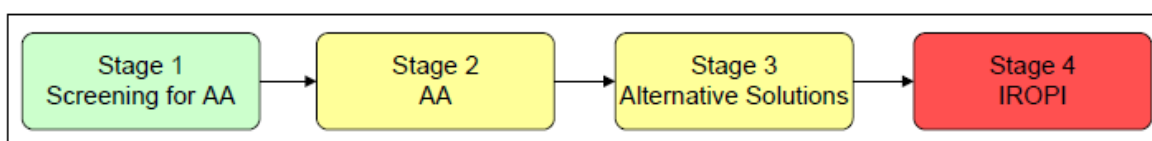
2 Methodology

2.1 Stages of Appropriate Assessment

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government guidelines (DELHG, 2009, rev. 2010) outlines the European Commission's methodological guidance (EC, 2002) promoting a four-stage process to complete the AA and outlines the 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.

The four stages are summarised diagrammatically in Figure 2-1. Stages 1-2 deal with the main requirements for assessment under Article 6(3), and Regulation 42 of the Birds and Habitats Regulations. Stage 3 may be part of the Article 6(3) Assessment or may be a necessary precursor to Stage 4. Stage 4 is the main derogation step of Article 6(4).

Figure 2-1: Four stages of Appropriate Assessment



Stage 1 - Screening is the process that addresses and records the reasoning and conclusions in relation to the first two tests of Article 6(3):

- i. whether a plan or project (in this instance the proposed project) is directly connected to or necessary for the management of the European sites, and
- ii. whether a plan or project, alone or in combination with other plans and projects, is likely to have significant effects on the European sites in view of their conservation objectives.

If the effects are deemed to be significant, potentially significant, or uncertain, or if the screening process becomes overly complicated, then the process must proceed to Stage 2 (AA). This report fulfils the information necessary to enable the competent authority to screen the proposal for the requirement to prepare an AA.

This report forms Stage 1 of the AA process and sets out the following information:

- Description of the proposed project;
- Characteristics of the proximal European sites; and
- Assessment of significance of the proposed project on the European sites in question.

The methodology followed in relation to this assessment has had regard to the following guidance and legislation:

- European Union Habitats Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora 92/43/EEC;
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland Guidance for Planning Authorities (DOEHLG 2009, rev 2010);
- The Planning and Development Act (as amended);
- Managing Natura 2000 Sites: the provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (EC, 2018);
- 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, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg (EC, 2021);

- Interpretation Manual of European Union Habitats. Version EUR 28. European Commission 2013;
- The European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats) Regulations 2011; and
- The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, S.I. No. 477 of 2011 (as amended).

2.2 Information consulted for this report

The Screening assessment had regard to the following sources of data and information:

- Information on the location, nature and design of the proposed project;
- Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government – online land use mapping www.myplan.ie/en/index.html;
- Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government- EIA Portal <https://www.housing.gov.ie/planning/environmental-assessment/environmental-impact-assessment-eia/eia-portal>
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – Water Quality www.epa.ie, <http://gis.epa.ie/Envision>;
- Geological Survey of Ireland – Geology, soils and Hydrogeology www.gsi.ie;
- [Water Framework Directive website – www.catchments.ie](http://www.catchments.ie);
- [Inland Fisheries Ireland website and www.wfdfish.ie](http://www.wfdfish.ie);
- National Parks and Wildlife Service – online European site network information, including site conservation objectives www.npws.ie;
- National Parks and Wildlife Service – Information on the status of EU protected habitats in Ireland (NPWS 2019);
- National Biodiversity Data Centre – www.biodiversityireland.ie;
- Ordnance Survey of Ireland – Mapping and Aerial photography www.osi.ie; and
- Site survey, undertaken on 19th April 2024.

2.3 Screening Protocol

The sequence of events when completing the AA Screening process is provided below:

- Ascertain whether the plan or project is connected with, or is necessary to the management of the European site;
- Description of the plan or project and its impact factors;
- Definition of the likely zone of influence for the proposed project;
- Identification of the European sites that are situated (in their entirety or partially or downstream) within the likely zone of influence of the proposed project;
- Identification of the most up-to-date QIs and SCIs for each European site within the zone of influence;
- Identification of the environmental conditions that maintain the QIs/SCIs at the desired target of Favourable Conservation Status;
- Identification of the threats/impacts – actual or potential that could negatively impact the environmental conditions of the QIs/SCIs within the European sites;
- Highlighting the activities of the proposed project that could give rise to significant negative impacts; and
- Identification of other plans or projects, for which in-combination impacts would likely have significant effects.

2.3.1 Screening Determination

In accordance with Regulation 42(7) of the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011) as amended, the competent authority shall:

“determine that an Appropriate Assessment of a plan or project is not required where the plan or project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European site and if it can be excluded on the basis of objective scientific information following screening under this Regulation, that the plan or project, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on a European site”.

2.3.2 Zone of Influence

In accordance with EC (2021) *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*, identification of the European sites that may be affected should be done by taking into consideration all aspects of the plan or project that could have potential effects on any European sites located within the zone of influence of the plan or project. This should take into account all of the designating features (species, habitat types) that are significantly present on the sites and their conservation objectives.

In particular, it should identify:

- Any European sites geographically overlapping with any of the actions or aspects of the plan or project in any of its phases, or adjacent to them;
- Any European sites within the likely zone of influence of the plan or project. Natura 2000 sites located in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) that could still be indirectly affected by aspects of the project, including as regards the use of natural resources (e.g. water) and various types of waste, discharge or emissions of substances or energy;
- European sites in the surroundings of the plan or project (or at some distance) which host fauna that can move to the project area and then suffer mortality or other impacts (e.g. loss of feeding areas, reduction of home range);
- European sites whose connectivity or ecological continuity can be affected by the plan or project.
- The range of European sites to be assessed, i.e. the zone in which impacts from the plan or project may arise, will depend on the nature of the plan or project and the distance at which effects may occur.

2.3.3 Likely Significant Effects

The threshold for a likely significant effect is treated in the screening exercise as being above a *de minimis* level¹. The opinion of the Advocate General in CJEU case C-258/11 outlines:

“the requirement that the effect in question be ‘significant’ exists in order to lay down a de minimis threshold. Plans or projects that have no appreciable effect on a European site are thereby excluded. If all plans or projects capable of having any effect whatsoever on the site were to be caught by Article 6(3), activities on or near the site would risk being impossible by reason of legislative overkill.”

In this report, therefore, ‘relevant’ European sites are those within the potential zone of influence of the construction and / or operation of the proposed project, and to which likely significant effect pathways were identified through the source-pathway-receptor model.

¹ *Sweetman v. An Bord Pleanála* (Court of Justice of the EU, case C-285/11). A *de minimis* effect is a level of risk that is too small to be concerned with when considering ecological requirements of an Annex I habitat or a population of Annex II species present on a European site necessary to ensure their favourable conservation condition. If low level effects on habitats or individuals of species are judged to be in this order of magnitude and that judgment has been made in the absence of reasonable scientific doubt, then those effects are not considered to be likely significant effects.

3 Project Description

The description of the broiler breeder house operation is as follows:

- 39,000 birds on site at any one time
- Chicks arrive at 18 wks old
- Birds stay on site for approx. 13 months and site is run by 2-3 full-time staff during this time
- The site is effectively operated as a closed unit for this entire period
- Water is sourced from an on-site well
- Birds are then removed en masse by specialist operators
- Entire site (all 8 buildings) are emptied/cleaned/disinfected at the end of each 13 month cycle; the cleaning and restocking process takes c.6wks
- Litter is removed by licenced specialist operators (Kelly Brothers)
- 13 month cycle then restarts

Any wastewater generated from the cleaning process is diverted and stored in concrete slatted tanks. This wastewater is subsequently land spread during suitable weather conditions. No soiled wastewater enters the drainage ditches within the site at any time.

Surface water from roofs of sheds and clean concrete yards is diverted directly to land drains.

3.1 Existing Environment

A site survey was undertaken on 19th April 2024 by ecologist Ms. Karen Banks.

The proposed site comprises the poultry houses, staff building and access track (buildings and artificial surfaces, Fossitt Code BL3) and wet grassland (GS4) bound by hedgerows (WL1) and wet ditches (FW4).

The Ballintober East stream rises at the eastern site boundary.

No invasive plant species included within the Third Schedule of Regulations 49 & 50 in the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 were recorded at the proposed site and its immediate environs.

3.1.1 Surface Water

3.1.1.1 Water Bodies

The site is located within the Bunoke_020 sub-basin. The Ballintober East 1st order stream rises at the eastern site boundary. The Bunoke_010, a 3rd order watercourse, is located c.400m south of the site. The Ballintober East stream flows into the Bunoke River to the north of the site; the Bunoke River then flows into the Deel (Newcastle West)_070 c.4.9km north of the site. The Deel eventually flows into the Lower Shannon Estuary a total of c.40km downstream of the site.

The site overlies the Shanagolden Ground Waterbody (GWB).

EPA codes for these water bodies are shown below in Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: EPA water body codes

EPA water body name	Water body type	EPA Code	EPA water body code
Bunoke	River	24B06	IE_SH_24B060100
Deel (Newcastle West)	River	24D02	IE_SH_24D020600
Lower Shannon Estuary	Transitional	n/a	IE_SH_060_0300

Shanagolden	Groundwater	n/a	IE_SH_G_203
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3.1.1.2 Surface Water Quality and Risk Characterisation

The nearest Q-value available is at the Bunoke Bridge c.4.8km downstream from the site. The Q-value was given a rating of '4' classified as 'Good'. The Bunoke_20 waterbody is considered 'Not at risk' and 'Good' under the 2016-2021 WFD, while the Deel (Newcastle West) river is recorded as 'at risk' and 'moderate' under the WFD. The Lower Shannon Estuary was 'not at risk' and 'good' under the WFD. The Shanagolden ground waterbody was 'not at risk' and 'good' under the WFD.

A summary of WFD status and risk² is shown below in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2: Summary of WFD status for the waterbodies in the environs of the site

EPA Name	Waterbody	Code	Risk	WFD Status 2016-2021
Bunoke		IE_SH_24B060100	Not at risk	Good
Deel (Newcastle West)		IE_SH_24D020600	At risk	Moderate
Lower Shannon Estuary		IE_SH_060_0300	Not at risk	Good
Shanagolden		IE_SH_G_203	Not at risk	Good

3.1.2 Flooding

The Office of Public Works (OPW) flood mapping (<http://www.floodinfo.ie/map/floodmaps/>) indicates the flood extents for the Bunoke sub-basin. As indicated in Figure 3-1, coastal and fluvial flood extents do not reach the proposed site (site location marked with a red x), and no past flood events have been recorded within the proposed site.

² <https://www.catchments.ie/maps/>

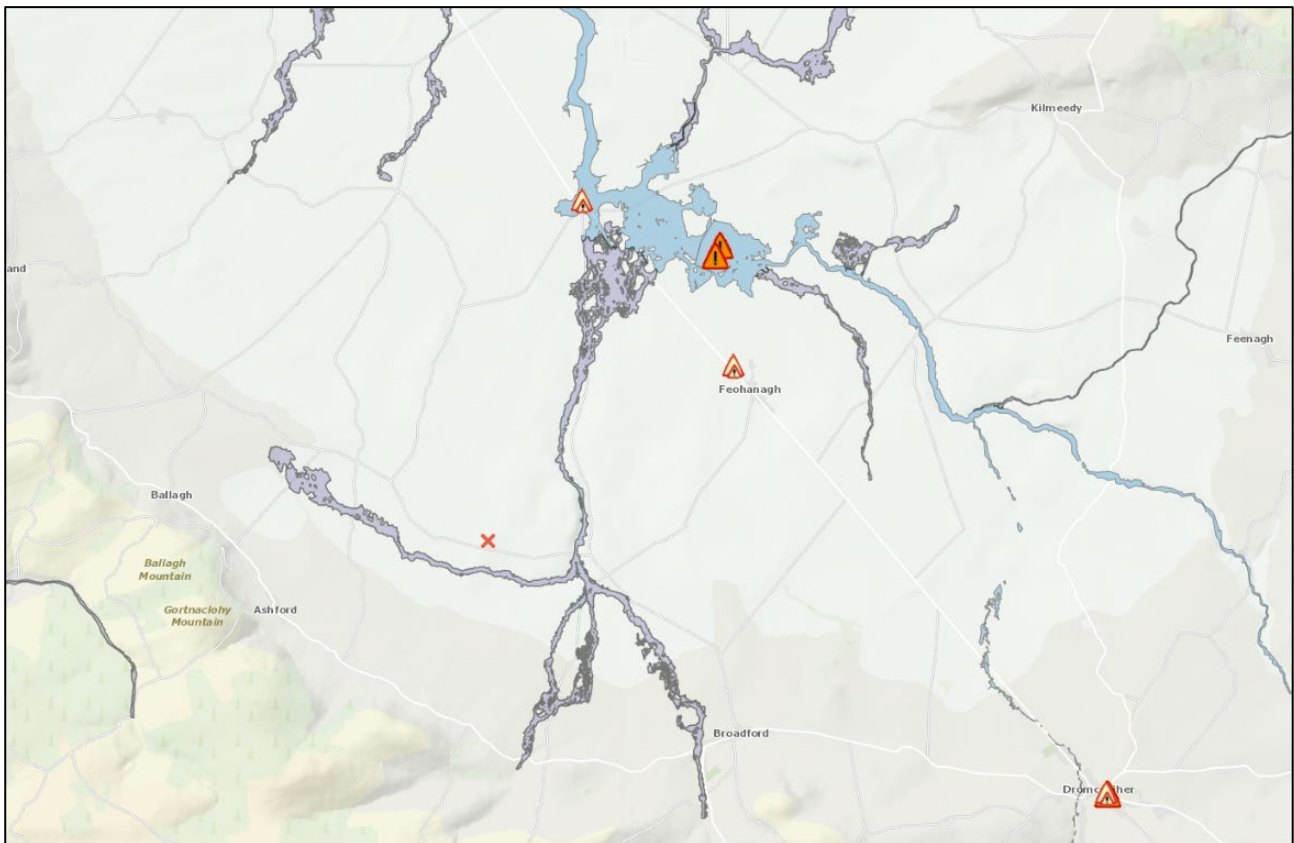


Figure 3-1: OPW flood risk mapping of the proposed site and surrounding area

3.1.3 Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) online database (www.gsi.ie) was consulted for available edaphic, geological and hydrological information of the site and its environs. The site is overlaid by AminSP - Shallow poorly drained mineral (Mainly acidic) and AminPD - Mineral poorly drained (Mainly acidic) soils.

The bedrock units which underlie the site are mapped by the GSI as part of the same Regionally Important Aquifer. Groundwater vulnerability is a term used to represent the intrinsic geological and hydrogeological characteristics that determine the ease at which groundwater may be contaminated. The proposed site is of 'Low' groundwater vulnerability. There are no karst features located in the vicinity of the proposed site.

3.2 Conservation Objectives of European Sites

The integrity of a European site (referred to in Article 6.3 of the EU Habitats Directive) is determined based on the conservation status of the qualifying interests of the SAC as set out above.

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

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and the 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, and
- 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, and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its population on a long-term basis.

3.3 Description of European Sites

This stage of the screening for AA process describes European sites within the likely zone of influence of the proposed project. The methodology for establishing the likely zone of influence is described in Section 2.3.2.

Connectivity between the proposed project and European sites has been reviewed. Connectivity is identified via the potential source-pathway-receptor model which identifies the potential impact pathways such as land, air, hydrological, hydrogeological pathways etc. which may support direct or indirect connectivity of the proposed project to European sites and/or their qualifying features.

In view of the location of the proposed project in relation to European sites (see Figure 3-2) and the characteristics of the proposed project (poultry unit, see Section 3) and the source, pathway and receptors of potential impacts, a 5km radius is considered an appropriate zone of influence to screen all likely significant effects that might impact upon the European sites. The establishment of the likely zone of influence is in line with EC (2021) *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*.

The European sites located within 10km of the proposed project are outlined in Table 3-1 and Figure 3-2. There are three European sites located within 10km of the proposed project:

- Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (Site Code: 004161)
- Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165)
- Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (Site Code: 002170)

Source – pathway – receptor dynamics were assessed for Lower River Shannon SAC and it was determined that there is remote hydrological connectivity to this SAC via the Ballintober East stream that rises on the eastern site boundary.

Figure 3-2: European Sites Located within 10km of the Proposed Project

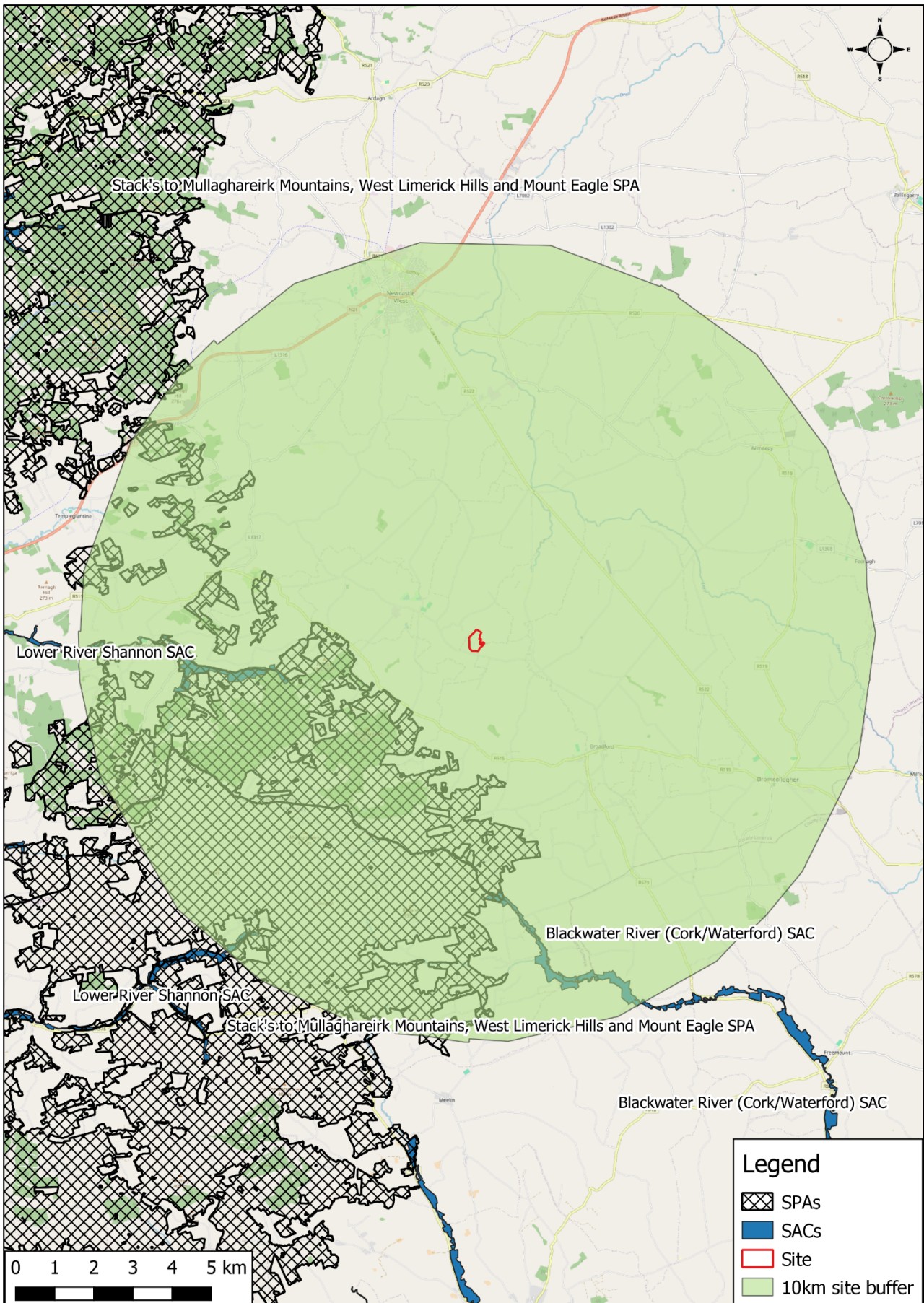


Table 3-3: European Sites within 10km of the Proposed Project

Site Name and Code	Qualifying Interests	Distance from Proposed Site (km) ³	Connectivity
Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (Site Code: 004161) ⁴	Bird Species Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) [A082]	2.2km	There is no hydrological connectivity between the proposed site and this SPA. The proposed site and this SPA are both located within the Shanagolden ground waterbody. However, review of local topography indicates that ground water at the proposed site would not flow in the direction of this SPA. No connectivity.
Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165)	Annex I Habitats Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time [1110] Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] <i>Molinia</i> meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinion caeruleae</i>) [6410]	4.7km	The Lower River Shannon SAC is located c.40km downstream of the proposed site. There is no hydrogeological connectivity or connectivity via any other pathway.

³ Distance measured "as the crow flies"

⁴ [Lower River Shannon SAC | National Parks & Wildlife Service \(npws.ie\)](https://www.npws.ie/)

	<p>Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]</p> <p>Annex II Species</p> <p><i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p><i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p><i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p> <p><i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p><i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p><i>Tursiops truncatus</i> (Common Bottlenose Dolphin) [1349]</p> <p><i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p>		
<p>Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (Site Code: 002170)</p>	<p>Annex I Habitats</p> <p>Estuaries [1130]</p> <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]</p> <p>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]</p> <p><i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</p> <p>Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]</p> <p>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260]</p> <p>Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0]</p> <p>Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]</p> <p>Annex II Species</p> <p><i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]</p> <p><i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]</p> <p><i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095]</p> <p><i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096]</p> <p><i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099]</p> <p><i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaité Shad) [1103]</p> <p><i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106]</p> <p><i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355]</p>	<p>6.1km</p>	<p>There is no connectivity via surface water, ground water or any other pathway.</p>

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	<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i> (Killarney Fern) [1421]		
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4 Screening Assessment Criteria

4.1 Management of European Sites

Appropriate Assessment is not required where the proposed project is connected with, or necessary to, the management of any European site. In this case, the proposed project is not connected with the management of any European site.

4.2 Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts of the Project on the European Sites

Table 3-1 details the European sites located within 10km of the poultry house. There are three European sites within the likely zone of influence of the proposed project, namely Lower River Shannon SAC, Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC and Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA. The proposed project is not located within any European site; therefore, no direct impacts will occur through land take or fragmentation of habitats.

The Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA is located c.2.2km from the poultry house at its closest point. The SCI for this SPA is hen harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) [A082]. The poultry house is already constructed and operates as a broiler breeding unit. There are no noise emissions associated with the poultry house that would result in likely significant effects on Hen Harrier as a result of disturbance impacts. The preferred breeding habitat of hen harriers in Ireland is pre-thicket forest habitats and the preferred foraging ground is moorland/ grassland habitat mosaics, which support large numbers of prey species (e.g. meadow pipit). In Ireland, hen harrier also forage in afforested habitats.⁵ Areas supporting a higher proportion of improved grassland are generally avoided.⁶ The proposed site comprises species poor wet grassland and built land bound by hedgerows; as such, the proposed site does not support suitable breeding habitat or a sustained foraging resource for Hen Harrier. The operation of the poultry house will not have significant adverse effects on the conservation objectives of the Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA due to the unsuitability of the site and its immediate environs as breeding and foraging habitat for hen harrier, the SCI for this SPA.

There is no connectivity between the proposed site and Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC.

There is remote hydrological connectivity between the proposed project and Lower River Shannon SAC via the Ballintober East stream, which rises on the eastern site boundary. The Ballintober East stream flows into the Banoke River and eventually discharges into the Shannon Estuary, which forms part of Lower River Shannon SAC c.40km downstream of the site.

The Ballintober East stream is a small stream that rises on the eastern site boundary and, at its location adjacent to the site, has been modified to flow within a drainage ditch adjacent to a hedgerow. The Ballintober East stream is overgrown with Bramble and Willow and does not support suitable habitat for salmon spawning and nursery. Other than water quality, this stream does not contribute to supporting conservation objectives for aquatic QI species for Lower River Shannon SAC (river, brook and sea lamprey, salmon and freshwater pearl mussel). There are no works proposed in the vicinity of the Ballintober East stream and the poultry house does not discharge any emissions to the Ballintober East stream. In view of the location of the poultry house site in relation to the Lower River Shannon SAC (i.e. 4.7km at its closest point and c.40km downstream) and the absence of emissions from the poultry house to the Ballintober East

⁵ Ruddock, M. & Dunlop, B.J., O'Toole, L., Mee, A., Nagle, T. (2012) Republic of Ireland National Hen Harrier Survey 2010. Irish Wildlife Manual, No. 59. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.

⁶ Wilson, M.W. et al., 2009. The importance of pre-thicket conifer plantations for nesting Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* in Ireland. Ibis, 151(2), pp.332–343.

stream, there is no potential for likely significant effects on Lower River Shannon SAC as a result of a reduction in water quality from operation of the poultry house.

No likely significant effects on European sites as a result of operation of the poultry house at Gorteen have been identified.

4.2.1 Cumulative Impacts with Other Plans and Projects in the Area

As part of the screening for an AA, in addition to the proposed works, other relevant projects and plans in the region must also be considered at this stage and assessed in the context of potential for in-combination effects. These plans and projects are outlined and assessed in Table 4-1 below.

It is concluded that there will be no negative in-combination effects between the proposed project and plans or project in the area.

Table 4-1: Other Projects and Plans that could result in potential cumulative impacts

Plan / Programme/Policy	Key Objectives/Policies/Proposals	Potential for In-combination Effects and Mitigation
<p>Limerick County Development Plan 2022-2028</p>	<p>The Limerick County Development Plan includes the following Policies and Objectives of relevance to this report:</p> <p>Policy EH P1</p> <p>Protection of Natural Heritage and Biodiversity</p> <p>It is a policy of the Council to:</p> <p>a) Protect and conserve Limerick’s natural heritage and biodiversity, in particular, areas designated as part of the European Sites Natura 2000 network, such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservations (SACs), in accordance with relevant EU Directives and national legislation and guidelines.</p> <p>b) Maintain the conservation value of all Natural Heritage Areas and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) for the benefit of existing and future generations.</p> <p>Objective EH O1</p> <p>Designated Sites and Habitats Directive</p> <p>It is an objective of the Council to ensure that projects/plans likely to have significant effects on European Sites (either individually or in combination with other plans or projects) are subject to an appropriate assessment and will not be permitted under the Plan unless they comply with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive. The Council, will through the planning enforcement process where applicable, seek to restore the ecological functions of designated sites, where they have been damaged through inappropriate development.</p>	<p>Policies and objectives of the Limerick County Development Plan 2022-2028 ensure that local planning applications comply with proper planning and sustainability and with the requirements of relevant EU Directives and environmental considerations, there is no potential for adverse in-combination effects on European Sites.</p>
<p>Draft River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027</p>	<p>The project should comply with the environmental objectives of the Irish RBMP which are to be achieved generally by 2027.</p>	<p>The implementation and compliance with key environmental policies, issues and objectives of this</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure full compliance with relevant EU legislation ▪ Prevent deterioration ▪ Meeting the objectives for designated protected areas ▪ Protect high status waters ▪ Implement targeted actions and pilot schemes in focus sub-catchments aimed at: targeting water bodies close to meeting their objective and addressing more complex issues which will build knowledge for the third cycle. 	<p>management plan will result in positive in-combination effects to European sites. The implementation of this plan will have a positive impact for the biodiversity. It will not contribute to in-combination impacts with the proposed development.</p>
<p>River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021</p>	<p>The project should comply with the environmental objectives of the Irish RBMP which are to be achieved generally by 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure full compliance with relevant EU legislation ▪ Prevent deterioration ▪ Meeting the objectives for designated protected areas ▪ Protect high status waters ▪ Implement targeted actions and pilot schemes in focus sub-catchments aimed at: targeting water bodies close to meeting their objective and addressing more complex issues which will build knowledge for the third cycle. 	<p>The implementation and compliance with key environmental policies, issues and objectives of this management plan will result in positive in-combination effects to European sites. The implementation of this plan will have a positive impact for the biodiversity. It will not contribute to in-combination or cumulative impacts with the proposed project.</p>
<p>Inland Fisheries Ireland Corporate Plan 2021 -2025</p> <p>The Inland Fisheries Act 2010.</p>	<p>To place the inland fisheries resource in the best sustainable position possible for the benefit of future generations. To protect, manage and conserve Ireland’s inland fisheries and sea angling resources and to maximise their sustainability and natural biodiversity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To sustainably develop and improve fish habitats. ▪ To protect, maintain and enhance Ireland’s wild fish populations. ▪ To actively engage with stakeholders in the continued stewardship of our shared resource. ▪ To play a leadership role in achieving our climate action and biodiversity goals. ▪ To value our people and support their development and performance. ▪ To foster a culture of value for money and evaluation of performance in a measurable, transparent and accountable manner. ▪ Harness the power of innovation to continue to deliver a modern fisheries service. 	<p>The implementation and compliance with key environmental issues and objectives of this corporate plan will result in positive on-combination effects to European sites. The implementation of this corporate plan will have a positive impact for biodiversity of inland fisheries and ecosystems. It will not contribute to in-combination or cumulative impacts with the proposed project.</p>
<p>WWTP discharges</p>	<p>Dromcollagher Town and Environs</p>	<p>Discharges from municipal WWTPs are required to meet water quality standards. Irish Water Capital Investment Plan 2020-2024 proposes to upgrade water treatment services countrywide. The long-term</p>

		cumulative impact is predicted to be negligible.
Residential Applications⁷	Local developments ⁸ in the zone of influence of the proposed site that may contribute to potential cumulative or in-combination effects on European sites include a broiler breeder house (Ref: 19497), poultry house and hardstand (Ref: 20758 & 211715 respectively), agricultural (Ref: 211594) and domestic dwelling developments (Ref: 21473, 21668, 22350, 22767 & 22372).	No potential for significant adverse in combination effects on European sites has been identified.

4.3 Screening Assessment

Table 4-2 identifies the potential direct, indirect and secondary impacts of the proposed project on European sites within a 10km radius.

Table 4-2: Potential Significant Effects on European Sites from the Proposed Project

Site Name and Code	Direct Impacts	Indirect / Secondary Impacts	Resource Requirements	Emissions (Disposal to land, Water or Air)	Excavation Requirements
Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (Site Code: 004161)⁹	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI
Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165)	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (Site Code: 002170)	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI	No impact on QI

4.4 Likely Changes to the European Site(s)

The likely changes that could arise from the Broiler Breeder House at Gorteen, Co. Limerick have been examined in the context of a number of factors that could have a significant effect on the relevant European Sites (Table 4-3).

⁷ The Local Planning Applications included in this potential in-combination impacts assessment support the following criteria: planning applications granted within the past five years that may contribute to potential cumulative impacts on European sites of concern.

⁸ [Planning Enquiry \(limerick.ie\)](https://www.limerick.ie) (accessed 13/03/2024)

⁹ [Lower River Shannon SAC | National Parks & Wildlife Service \(npws.ie\)](https://www.npws.ie)

Table 4-3: Likely Changes to European Sites

Site Name and Code	Reduction of Habitat Area	Disturbance to Key Species	Habitat or Species fragmentation	Reduction in Species Density	Changes in Key Indicators of Conservation Value (Water Quality, etc.)	Climate Change
Stack's to Mullaghareirk Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA (Site Code: 004161) ¹⁰	None	None	None	None	None	None
Lower River Shannon SAC (Site Code: 002165)	None	None	None	None	None	None
Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (Site Code: 002170)	None	None	None	None	None	None

4.4.1 Elements of the Project where the Impacts are Likely to be Significant

No elements of the Broiler Breeder House at Gorteen, Co. Limerick are likely to cause significant effects to the relevant European sites.

¹⁰ [Lower River Shannon SAC | National Parks & Wildlife Service \(npws.ie\)](https://www.npws.ie/)

5 Conclusion

This AA screening report has been prepared to assess whether the proposed project, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, and in view of best scientific knowledge, is likely to have a significant effect on any European site(s).

The screening exercise was completed in compliance with the relevant European Commission guidance, national guidance and case law. The potential impacts of the proposed project have been considered in the context of the European sites potentially affected, their qualifying interests or special conservation interests, and their conservation objectives.

Through an assessment of the source-pathway-receptor model, which considered the zone of influence of effects from the proposed project and the potential in-combination effects with other plans or projects, the following findings were reported:

- The Broiler Breeder House at Gorteen, Co. Limerick, either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects, does not have the potential to significantly affect any European site, in light of their conservation objectives. Therefore, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is deemed not to be required.

6 References

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