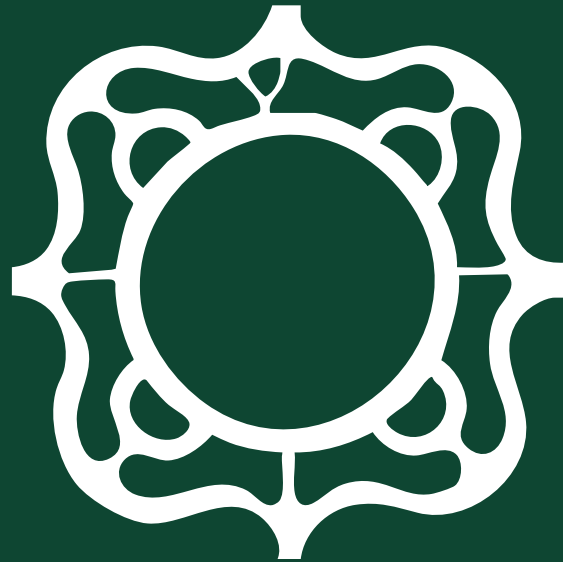


Mountjoy Square Park



1802

2025



Re-imagining Mountjoy Square

MOUNTJOY PARK
APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT
SCREENING REPORT
2025

Mountjoy Park Appropriate Assessment Screening Report 2025

Introduction

The following Appropriate Assessment (AA) (Screening Stage) has been prepared by Dublin City Council Biodiversity Section at the request of Dublin City Council Parks Department for the refurbishment and redesign of Mountjoy Park, Dublin 1.

An Appropriate Assessment is an assessment of the potential effects of a proposed project or plan, on its own, or in combination with other plans or projects, on one or more Natura 2000 sites. Natura 2000 sites are those sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA).

The AA Screening stage examines the likely significant effects of a plan or project, either on its own, or in combination with other plans and projects, upon a Natura 2000 site and considers whether, on the basis of objective scientific evidence, it can be concluded that there are not likely to be significant effects on any European site, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites. Where significant effects on any European site, or where mitigation measures are required to prevent such impacts, a Natura Impact Statement must be provided.

Dublin City Council Biodiversity Section

Dublin City Council has employed Biodiversity Officers for nearly two decades, producing the first Dublin City Biodiversity Action Plan 2008 – 2012.

Current Biodiversity Officers include Dr. Pauhla McGrane, Biosphere Co-ordinator, Kelly Mara and Astrid Lynn, Biodiversity officers.

Astrid Lynn authored this Appropriate Assessment Screening Report. Astrid Lynn has an MA Environmental Planning, BA (Hons) Social Science, Diploma in Management, Montessori teaching Diploma, was a chartered member of the RTPI from 1991 – 2023, is a member of the IPI and the CMI. Astrid Lynn received a certificate in Nature Conservation and Biodiversity from T.U.D. in 2024.

Astrid Lynn commenced work in the environmental field with Cambridge University Department of Applied Biology, on the fenlands of Cambridgeshire in 1984. Subsequent field work includes phase 1 habitat surveys in 25 years of environmental planning using ICEEM guidelines from 2009, raptor surveys with the RSPB and bat surveys following initial training with Bat Conservation Ireland, in addition to innumerable desk top survey assessments. Astrid Lynn has worked within competent authorities for appropriate assessment since appropriate assessment has been a requirement and has also worked in the private and voluntary sectors.

The ecological field data referred to in this Screening Report derives from the Ecological Report prepared by Openfield Ecological Services, April 2025.

Relevant Legislation and Guidance.

European:

Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC

Birds Directive 2009/1477/EC

The Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (together with the Birds Directive (2009/1477/EC)) forms the cornerstone of Europe's nature conservation policy. The Habitats Directive protects over 1000 animals and plant species and over 200 "habitat types" which are of European importance. In the Habitats Directive, Articles 3 to 9 provide the legislative means to protect habitats and species of European Community interest through the establishment and conservation of an EU-wide network of conservation sites (NATURA, 2000). These are Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Birds Directive, Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive set out the decision-making tests for plans and projects likely to affect European sites (Annex 1.1). Article 6(3) establishes the requirement for Appropriate Assessment:

The EC guidance document on Article 6(4) (January 2007) states that "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 and 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 implication for the site and subject to the provisions of paragraph 4, the component 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."

As outlined in "Managing European sites, The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC" (European Commission, 21 November 2018) *"The purpose of the appropriate assessment is to assess the implications of the plan or project in respect of the site's conservation objectives, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. The conclusions should enable the competent authorities to ascertain whether the plan or project will adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned. The focus of the appropriate assessment is therefore specifically on the species and/or the habitats for which the European site is designated."*

Appropriate assessments of the implications of the plan or project for the site concerned must precede its approval and take into account the cumulative effects which result from the combination of that plan or project with other plans or projects in view of the site's conservation objectives. This implies that all aspects of the plan or project which can, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, affect those objectives must be identified in the light of the best scientific knowledge in the field.

Assessment procedures of plans or projects likely to affect European sites should guarantee full consideration of all elements contributing to the site integrity and to the overall coherence of the network, both in the definition of the baseline conditions and in the stages leading to identification of potential impacts, mitigation measures and residual impacts. These determine what has to be compensated, both in quality and quantity. Regardless of whether the provisions of Article 6(3) are delivered following existing environmental impact assessment procedures or other specific methods, it must be ensured that:

- *Article 6(3) assessment results allow full traceability of the decisions eventually made, including the selection of alternatives and any imperative reasons of overriding public interest.*

- *The assessment should include all elements contributing to the site’s integrity and to the overall coherence of the network as defined in the site’s conservation objectives and Standard Data Form and be based on best available scientific knowledge in the field. The information required should be updated and could include the following issues:*
 - *Structure and function, and the respective role of the site’s ecological assets;*
 - *Area, representativity and conservation status of the priority and nonpriority habitats in the site;*
 - *Population size, degree of isolation, ecotype, genetic pool, age class structure, and conservation status of species under Annex II of the Habitats Directive or Annex I of the Birds Directive present in the site;*
 - *Role of the site within the biographical region and in the coherence of the European network; and,*
 - *Any other ecological assets and functions identified in the site.*
- *It should include a comprehensive identification of all the potential impacts of the plan or project likely to be significant on the site, taking into account cumulative impacts and other impacts likely to arise as a result of the combined action of the plan or project under assessment and other plans or projects.*
- *The assessment under Article 6(3) applies the best available techniques and methods, to estimate the extent of the effects of the plan or project on the biological integrity of the site(s) likely to be damaged.*
- *The assessment provides for the incorporation of the most effective mitigation measures into the plan or project concerned, in order to avoid, reduce or even cancel the negative impacts on the site.*

The characterisation of the biological integrity and the impact assessment should be based on the best possible indicators specific to the European assets which must also be useful to monitor the plan or project implementation.

National

Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011

Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Part XAB s.177U

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government: ‘Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.’ December 2009

OPR Practise Note PN01: Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management.

Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities. NPWS 2020

Dublin City Council

Dublin City Council Development Plan 2022 – 2028

Table 15-1 Thresholds for Planning Applications states that an appropriate assessment is required for all developments.

The Stages of Appropriate Assessment

The NPWS Guidance states that *'The competent authorities in Ireland are the national, regional or local authorities that are charged with or responsible for consenting, authorising, adopting or deciding to proceed with a plan or project'*.

The OPR Practise Note states that *'Screening should be carried out for all proposals which fall within the definition of a 'project' under the EIA Directive, i.e. 'the execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources.'*

This will include the vast majority of applications for planning permission. This requirement applies regardless of the location of the application inside or outside a protected site.

Screening for appropriate assessment is intended to be an initial examination which must be carried out by the planning authority or An Bord Pleanála as the competent authority. If significant effects cannot be excluded based on objective information, without extensive investigation or the application of mitigation, a project should be considered to have a likely significant effect, and appropriate assessment should be carried out. This is a relatively light trigger and must be based on the precautionary principle

The project should only be considered to have no appropriate assessment issues if it is obvious that the entire project, through all of its stages, could not possibly have any effect on any European site, and that no measures intended to avoid or reduce potentially harmful effects on a European site are included'.

The OPR guidance states that:

1. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

This checks if the proposal /project is likely to have a significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on European site(s) in view of the site's conservation objectives.

The screening determination must be based on scientific information relevant to the likely effects on the conservation objectives of the relevant European sites. The information should be up-to-date and based on the best available techniques and methods to estimate the presence and extent of effects. This is because if there is any scientific uncertainty as to the absence of significant effects, the project must be screened in for appropriate assessment.

In the vast majority of cases the information provided by the applicant (including the project description) and publicly available information in relation to the European sites in question and information published by the NPWS, the EPA and others in relation to such sites, should provide a sufficient level of objective scientific information to allow the planning authority to make an informed decision on screening.

If no likely significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects - Decisions and reasons recorded - No further action required

2. *Appropriate Assessment: Natura Impact Statement (NIS)*

Will the project adversely affect the integrity of a European site(s) either individually or in combination with other plans and projects in view of the site's conservation objectives? The precautionary principle means that where the most reliable information available leaves obvious doubt as to the absence of significant effects, the project cannot be screened out and an appropriate assessment must be carried out.

If no likely significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects – (Planning) Permission can be granted.

If yes, alternative solutions must be addressed.

3. *Alternatives solutions to be addressed.*

Where acceptable alternatives which satisfy stages 1 and 2 are recommended in Stage 3 permission may be granted.

4. *Imperative reasons of overriding interest (IROPI)*

Article 6(4) derogation provisions for circumstances in which there are no alternatives and for which there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) requiring a plan or project to proceed.

If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for **imperative reasons of overriding public interest**, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.

Where the site concerned hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, the only considerations which may be raised are those relating to human health or public safety, to beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment or, further to an opinion from the Commission to other imperative reasons of overriding public interest.

Site Description.



Source: *Mountjoy Park Ecology Report: Openfield Ecological Services April 2025.*

The Ecology Survey Report prepared by Openfield Ecological Services, 2025, states that *'Aerial photography from the OSI and historic mapping shows that this area has long been a part of the built environment of Dublin City. The immediate vicinity of the site is predominantly composed of buildings and artificial surfaces and there are few significant areas of open green space or clusters of mature trees within 100m of the site (away from Mountjoy Square itself).*

Mountjoy Square was surveyed in accordance with best practice methodology (Smith et al., 2011) on April 8, 2025, and habitats are described as per standard classifications (Fossitt, 2000). April lies within the optimal survey period for general habitat surveys (Smith et al., 2010).

It was therefore possible to classify all habitats on the site to Fossitt level 3. April is also within the optimal season for breeding birds. It is within the optimal season for surveying large mammals and amphibians. Nevertheless, the lack of semi-natural habitats means suitable habitats for many species is not present.

Where the timing of the survey was a constraint to assessing the biodiversity features of the development site, this is clearly stated where relevant’.

The Ecology Report prepared by Openfield Ecological Services states that ‘*Mountjoy Square is of low biodiversity value due to the predominance of highly managed or artificial surfaces as well as non-native trees and shrubs. There are no pathways to any Natura 2000 sites or any sites which are designated for nature conservation.*

Although several mammals are known to be present in Dublin city, there are no habitats on Mountjoy Square which are suitable for most of these species. The habitat is not suitable for Badgers or Otters. Buildings are of low suitability to host bat roosts while there are no large/veteran trees with obvious cracks and holes. The low level of semi-natural vegetation in the immediate vicinity is a significant limiting factor in this location. Features on Mountjoy Square are considered to be of low roost potential (Hundt, 2013).

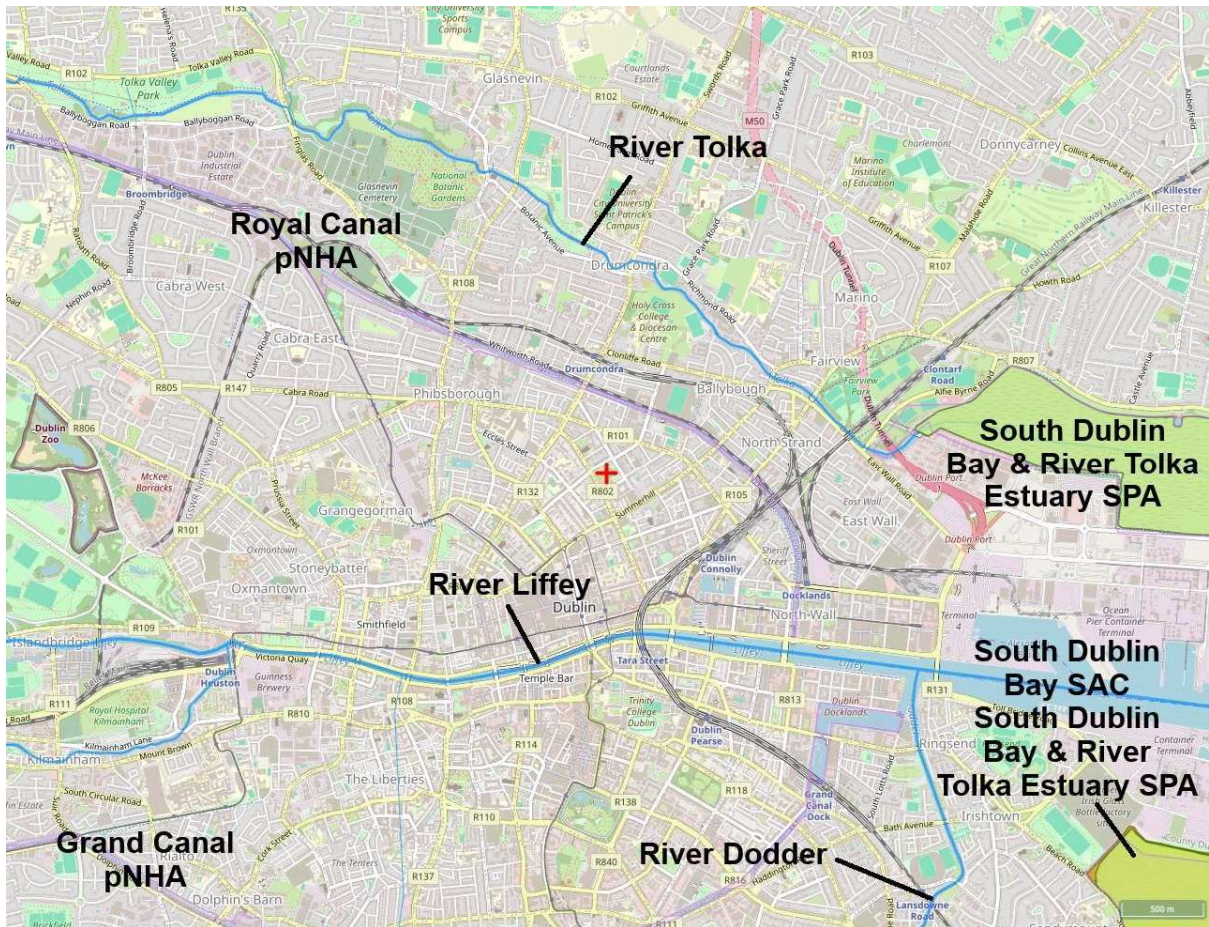
*Feral Pigeon *Columba livia* were noted during the survey and may be nesting, however no nests were found. No other nesting bird was recorded. Nesting cover for common, garden species is limited.*

There are no suitable habitats for amphibians or fish.

*Most habitats, even highly altered ones, are likely to harbour a wide diversity of invertebrates. In Ireland only one insect is protected by law, the Marsh Fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*, and this is not to be found on built-up sites. Other protected invertebrates are confined to freshwater and wetland habitats and so are not present on this site.’*

No ex-situ Natura 2000 species were identified in Mountjoy Park.

Screening for impacts on Natura 2000 Sites



Source: Ecological report prepared by Openfield Ecological Services.

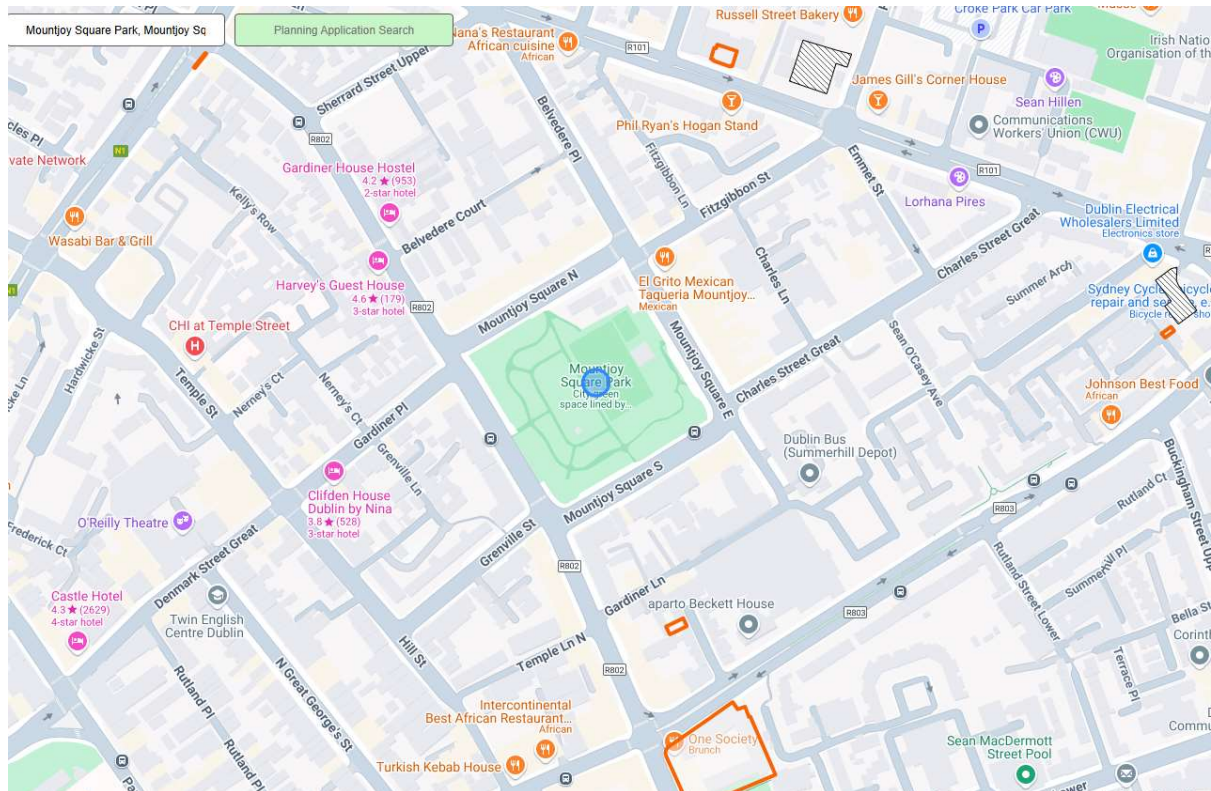
| Site Name | Site code | QI's / SCI's | Construction impact on conservation objectives | Operational Impacts on conservation objectives |
|--------------------------|-----------|---|---|---|
| Royal & Grand Canal pNHA | | Nationally valuable wildlife corridor: wide range of plants and animals, including the Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> and Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i> . | No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the pNHA | No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the pNHA |
| South Dublin Bay SAC | 000210 | Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] | Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation | Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation |

| | | | | |
|--|--------|--|---|---|
| | | Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] | condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level. No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SAC. | condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level. No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SAC. |
| South Dublin Bay and Tolka Estuary SPA | 004024 | Wetland & waterbirds | Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level. No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SPA. | Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level. No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SPA. |
| North Bull Island SPA | 004006 | Wetland & waterbirds | Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable | Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable |

| | | | | |
|----------------------|--------|--|---|---|
| | | | <p>conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level.</p> <p>No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SPA.</p> | <p>conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level.</p> <p>No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SPA.</p> |
| North Dublin Bay SAC | 000206 | <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinelli Talia maritima) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncadella maritimi) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Humid dune slacks [2190] Petalophyllum ralfsii (Petalwort) [1395]</p> | <p>Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level.</p> <p>No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SAC.</p> | <p>Conservation objective: Maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at national level.</p> <p>No potential impacts foreseen and no direct or indirect pathway from subject site to the SAC.</p> |

In combination impacts

There are several development proposals within the vicinity of the subject site. The following list of planning applications are identified from the Dublin City Council database, 25 April 2025.



Source: Dublin City Council Planning Applications Interactive Map

Planning applications in the vicinity of the subject site include:

1. **WEB1613/24** 13 The development will consist of proposed 2 storey rear extension (34m²), demolition of existing single storey outbuilding at the rear and all ancillary site works. Langrishe Place, Summerhill, Dublin 1, D01 E6C1. **Permission 15 July 2024.**
2. **WEB1283/25** Permission to erect 3 No. telecommunication antennas with 6 No. radio remote units supported on 3 No. ballast mounted support frames together with 1 No. wall mounted outdoor cabinet and associated equipment. Kavanagh Court, 1, Gardiner Street Lower, Mountjoy, Dublin 1. **Further information requested** 11 April 2025.
3. **WEB2178/24** Protected Structure: Change-of- use of the existing entrance-level from commercial use to studio apartment with balconies, and change-of-use of the existing first-floor level from commercial use to one bed apartment with balconies along with all associated site works. 32, Frederick Street North, Dublin 1. **Further information requested.**
4. **WEB1911/24** Installation on the retail unit's external facade. Retail Unit3, The School Yard, 519-533 North Circular Road, Dublin 1. **Further information requested.**
5. **WEB1423/25** Construction of a new raised helipad with a diameter of 26.4m on a structural metal frame on the rooftop of the existing Rock Wing of Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, approx. 36m above Ground Level.

Associated access/egress ramp from the helipad to the existing roof at Level 09 and emergency

escape stairs to the existing roof at Level 07.

New external rooftop access hatch above Level 06 to provide alternative escape access to existing internal fire escape stairs towards Eccles Street with subsequent change of existing storeroom and staff room to stairs and link corridor at Level 06.

Associated services and plant including a Deck Integrated Fire Fighting System (DIFFS) with water storage and water retention tanks at Level 08.

Associated lighting to landing deck of Helipad and access/egress routes.

Roof mounted windsock on adjacent McGivney Wing with associated new maintenance ladder.

Internal alterations to the existing adjacent circulation core including widening the existing stairs between levels 09 and 07 and revising a lobby to the existing fire-fighting shaft at level 07. Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Eccles Street, Dublin 7. **Pending decision.**

Following a review of the above-mentioned development proposals, it is considered that in combination effects with other existing and proposed developments in proximity to the subject site would be unlikely, not significant, and localised. It is concluded that no significant effects on Natura 2000 Sites are likely as a result of the subject development in combination with other development projects. No in combination effects are foreseen. No projects in the vicinity of the proposed development would be seen to have a significant in combination effect on Natura 2000 Sites.

Appropriate Assessment recommendation:

That the activity is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site.

It can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the subject proposal, individually or in combination with any other plans or projects, will have a significant effect on any European site.

Accordingly, it is determined that an Appropriate Assessment of the subject proposal is not required.

This determination is based on the best scientific evidence available, no hydrological connectivity to the subject site to any Natura 2000 Site and no potential effects the activity may have on European Sites and their qualifying interests.

End.