

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT WITH REGARD TO PART
8 PUBLIC CONSULTATION FOR THREE PLAYSPACES AND FOR A PLAY / SCULPTURE
TRAIL IN DODDER VALLEY PARK



Prepared July 2019 by:



Forest, Environmental Research and Services Ltd.

Sillogue

Kilberry

Navan

Co. Meath

046 9062021/087 7573121

dr_patmoran@eircom.net

OSI License No.: EN0064509

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	2
1.1	FERS Ltd. Company background	2
1.2	The aim of this report	2
1.3	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Legislation.....	4
1.3.1	EIA Directives	4
1.3.2	EIAR requirement.....	4
1.3.3	Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment	5
2	Methodology and Guidance as regards screening for EIA.....	6
3	Screening.....	8
3.1	Description of proposed project.....	8
3.2	Sensitivity of Project Location - description of receiving environment.....	16
3.2.1	Freshwater habitats - River Dodder.....	16
3.2.2	Grassland habitats.....	17
3.2.3	Woodland and Scrub habitats.....	19
3.2.4	Exposed Rock and Disturbed ground habitats.....	22
3.2.5	Designated sites within study area	22
3.3	Identification and evaluation of likely significant effect.....	24
3.3.1	Characterisation of the proposed project.....	24
3.3.2	Location of proposed project.....	25
3.3.3	Type and characteristics of potential impacts	26
4	Screening Conclusion	27
4.1	Characteristics of Proposed Development	27
4.2	Location of the Proposed Development.....	27
4.3	Characteristics of Potential Impacts	28
4.4	Impacts on Natura 2000 sites	28
4.5	Conclusion.....	28
5	References and Bibliography	29
6	Appendix I – Habitat Map	31

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

South Dublin County Council (SDCC) has prepared documentation for the public consultation phase of Dodder Valley Park Part 8 Play Space Project which proposes the provision of three large play spaces at Old Bawn, Mount Carmel and Cherrywood and for a play/sculpture trail to connect these play spaces in Dodder Valley Park. The project is at a "Preliminary Design" stage. The location of the Dodder Valley Park Part 8 Play Space Project is ecologically sensitive. The objective of Directive 2011/92/EU (as Amended) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (the Environmental Impact Assessment, or EIA, Directive) is to ensure that projects that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment are adequately assessed before they are approved. In accordance with the Precautionary Principle, the proposed project requires screening for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in order to determine if the proposed project requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

In June of 2019, FERS Ltd were successful in a competitive tender to provide, amongst other deliverables, an Environmental Impact Assessment screening report of the Dodder Valley Park Part 8 Play Space Project.

This EIA Screening exercise was undertaken to determine if EIA is required for the proposed development as set out in the mandatory and discretionary provisions of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

The proposed project is not of type listed in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) and as such the mandatory preparation of an EIAR is not required. Nevertheless, a 'sub-threshold' EIAR may be required, if it is determined that the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

The proposed "Play Space Project", is treated (for the purpose of initial screening) as a sub-threshold project and the decision by the Competent Authority as to whether an EIAR is required is determined by the likelihood that the project would result in significant environmental effects. Significant effects may arise due to the nature of the project, its scale or extent and its location in relation to the characteristics of the receiving area, particularly sensitive environments.

This EIA screening report, having assessed the proposed "Play Space Project", under the environmental impact criteria outlined in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended), considers that the proposed Play Space Project does not have the potential to have significant effects on the environment. Accordingly, it is concluded that the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is not deemed to be required in this case.

1 Introduction

1.1 FERS Ltd. Company background

Forest, Environmental Research and Services have been conducting ecological surveys and research since the company's formation in 2005 by Dr Patrick Moran and Dr Kevin Black. Dr Moran, the principal ecologist with FERS, holds a 1st class honours degree in Environmental Biology (UCD), a Ph.D. in Ecology (UCD), a Diploma in EIA and SEA management (UCD) a Diploma in Environmental and Planning Law (King's Inn) and a M.Sc. in Geographical Information Systems and Remote Sensing (University of Ulster, Coleraine). Patrick has in excess of 20 years of experience in carrying out ecological surveys on both an academic and a professional basis. Dr Emma Reeves, senior ecologist with FERS holds a 1st class honours degree in Botany, and a Ph.D. in Botany. Emma has in excess of 10 years of experience in undertaking ecological surveys on an academic and professional basis. Ciarán Byrne, a senior ecologist with FERS holds a 1st class honours degree in Environmental Management (DIT) and a M.Sc. in Applied Science/Ecological Assessment (UCC). Ciarán has in excess of 5 years in undertaking ecological surveys on both an academic and a professional basis.

FERS client list includes National Parks and Wildlife Service, An Bord Pleanála, various County Councils, the Heritage Council, Teagasc, University College Dublin, the Environmental Protection Agency, Inland Waterways Association of Ireland, the Department of Agriculture, the Office of Public Works and Coillte in addition to numerous private individuals and companies.

1.2 The aim of this report

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of Part X of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) based on the following documents:

- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (European Union, 2017);
- (Draft) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2017); and
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018).

The purpose of this Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report is to determine whether the proposed development (Dodder Valley Park Part 8 Play Space Project) requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

1.3 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Legislation

1.3.1 EIA Directives

The parent directive is Council Directive 85/337/EEC of 27 June 1985 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment.

Amended by:

- Directive 97/11/EC of 3 March 1997.
- Directive 2003/35/EC of 26 May 2003 (The Public Participation Directive).
- Directive 2009/31/EC of 23 April 2009.
- Codifying Directive 2011/92/EU of 13 December 2011.

Amended by:

- Directive 2014/52/EU of 16 April 2014.

1.3.2 EIAR requirement

1.3.2.1 *Mandatory EIAR*

The preparation of an EIAR is mandatory for projects specified under Schedule 5 of Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 where no threshold specified or where threshold exceeded.

The preparation of an EIAR is also mandatory for certain categories of changes or extensions to a development already permitted or implemented which would:

- 1) Result in the development being specified development, and
- 2) Result in an increase in size greater than
 - a. 25%, or
 - b. an amount equal to 50% of the appropriate threshold, whichever is the greater.

1.3.2.2 *Requirement of EIAR for sub-threshold developments*

The Competent Authority is obliged to request an EIAR where a development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment (decision made under Article 103 or Article 109 of the 2001 Regulations). In the event that the proposed project is located on, or would have the potential to impact upon, a European Site or is the subject of certain other designations, the likely significant effects on the environment of such sites must be considered.

1.3.3 Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment

One of the key amendments introduced by the 2014 amendment of the EIA Directive was the strengthening of procedures for Screening for Environmental Impact Assessment, requiring the Competent Authority to undertake a screening exercise to determine whether the proposed project, on its own or in combination with other projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the environment. The screening must have regard to criteria under Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations:

- 1) Characteristics of proposed development;
- 2) Location of proposed development; and
- 3) Characteristics of potential impacts.

2 Methodology and Guidance as regards screening for EIA

This EIA screening was undertaken based on European Union and National Guidelines.

According to EU Guidance¹:

“...The purpose of Screening is to determine whether or not an EIA is required for a particular Project listed in Annex II of the EIA Directive. Projects listed in Annex II will hereafter be referred to as ‘Annex II Projects’.

Screening has to implement the Directive’s overall aim, i.e. to determine if a Project listed in Annex II is likely to have significant effects on the environment and, therefore, be made subject to a requirement for Development Consent and an assessment, with regards to its effects on the environment. At the same time, Screening should ensure that an EIA is carried out only for those Projects for which it is thought that a significant impact on the environment is possible, thereby ensuring a more efficient use of both public and private resources. Hence, Screening has to strike the right balance between the above two objectives...”.

According to According to National Guidance²:

“...For all sub-threshold developments listed in Schedule 5 Part 2, where no EIAR is submitted or EIA determination requested, a screening determination is required to be undertaken by the competent authority unless, on preliminary examination it can be concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. This is initiated by the competent authority following the receipt of a planning application or appeal. A preliminary examination is undertaken, based on professional expertise and experience, and having regard to the ‘Source – Pathway – Target’ model, where appropriate. The examination should have regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 to the 2001 Regulations. Where, based on a preliminary examination of the information submitted with the application and any other supplementary information received, the competent authority concludes that, having considered the nature, size and location of the proposed development, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment, this should be recorded with reasons for this conclusion stated, and no EIA required or formal determination made. The recording of the competent authority’s view should be brief and concise, but adequate to inform the public. In many cases this considered view will be included in the planner’s/inspector’s report on the planning application and this may be cross-referenced in the competent authority’s decision. Normally, this will be published at the time of the decision of the competent authority...”

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening was undertaken according to these guidelines. It must also be noted that where development would be located on or in an area, site etc. set out in Article 103(2) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) it must be determined if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment for such site, area or land etc.

¹ Guidance on Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) – (European Union, 2017).

² Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018).

The information to be provided for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for Environmental Impact Assessment is provided in Schedule 7(A) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended):

“...

1. A description of the proposed development, including in particular—

- (a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole proposed development and, where relevant, of demolition works, and*
- (b) a description of the location of the proposed development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.*

2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.

3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the proposed development on the environment resulting from—

- (a) the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and*
- (b) the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.*

4. The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7. ...”

3 Screening

Development requiring mandatory EIA is set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. With regards to the proposed development, the provisions of Schedule 5 do not require an EIA to be undertaken or an EIAR prepared for this class of development.

The proposed “Play Space Project”, may be considered a sub-threshold EIA development. The information to be provided for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for Environmental Impact Assessment is outlined in Schedule 7(A) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

The key issue as regards the possible need for EIA of a sub-threshold development is whether or not such development is likely to have significant effects on the environment. Consideration of significant effect should not be determined by reference to size only. The nature and location of a project must also be taken into account. This EIA Screening Report is, therefore, undertaken in order to determine if the proposed project will require full EIA in light of the criteria listed in Schedule 7a of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

3.1 Description of proposed project

South Dublin County Council (SDCC) has prepared documentation for the public consultation phase of Dodder Valley Park Part 8 Play Space Project which proposes the provision of three play spaces at Old Bawn, Mount Carmel and Cherrywood and for a play/sculpture trail to connect these play spaces in Dodder Valley Park. The approximate location of the project area is indicated in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3.



Figure 1: Approximate location of Dodder Valley Park (1:100,000)

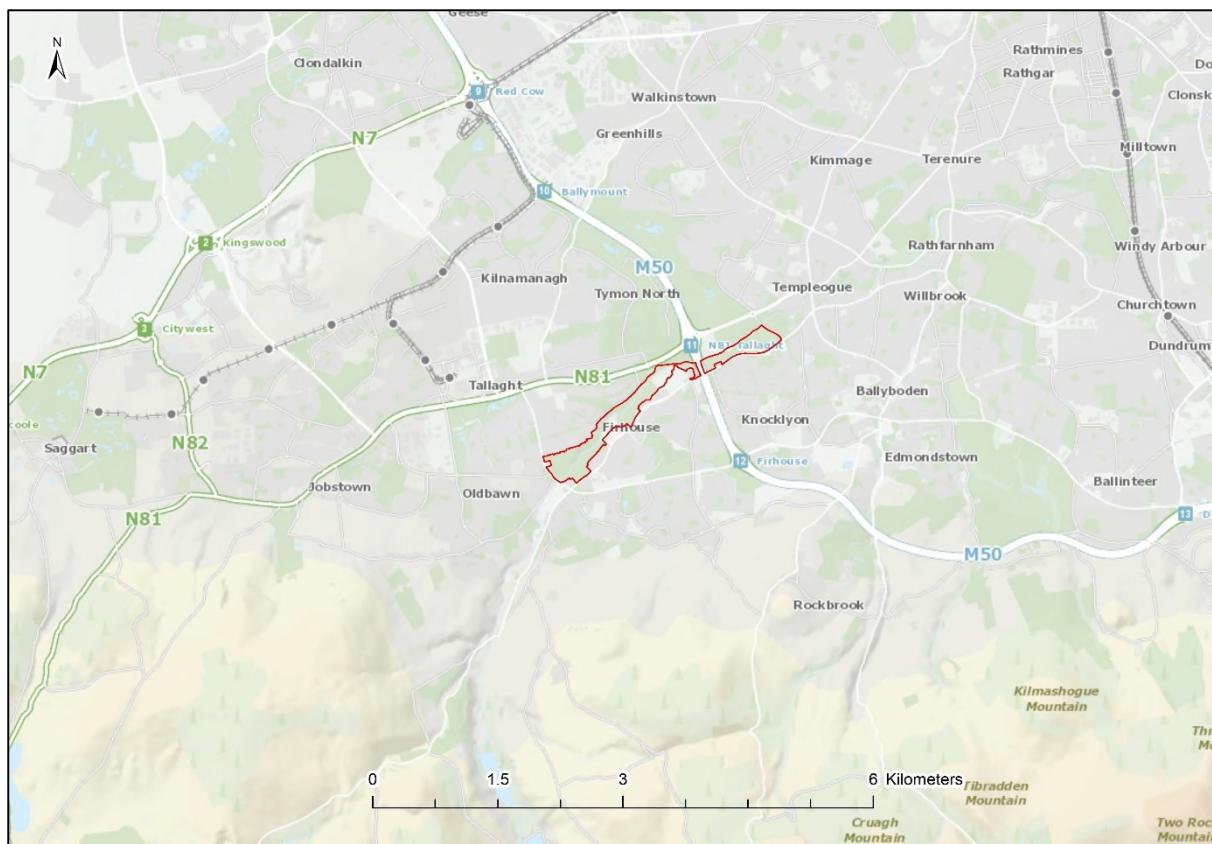


Figure 2: Approximate location of Dodder Valley Park (1:50000)

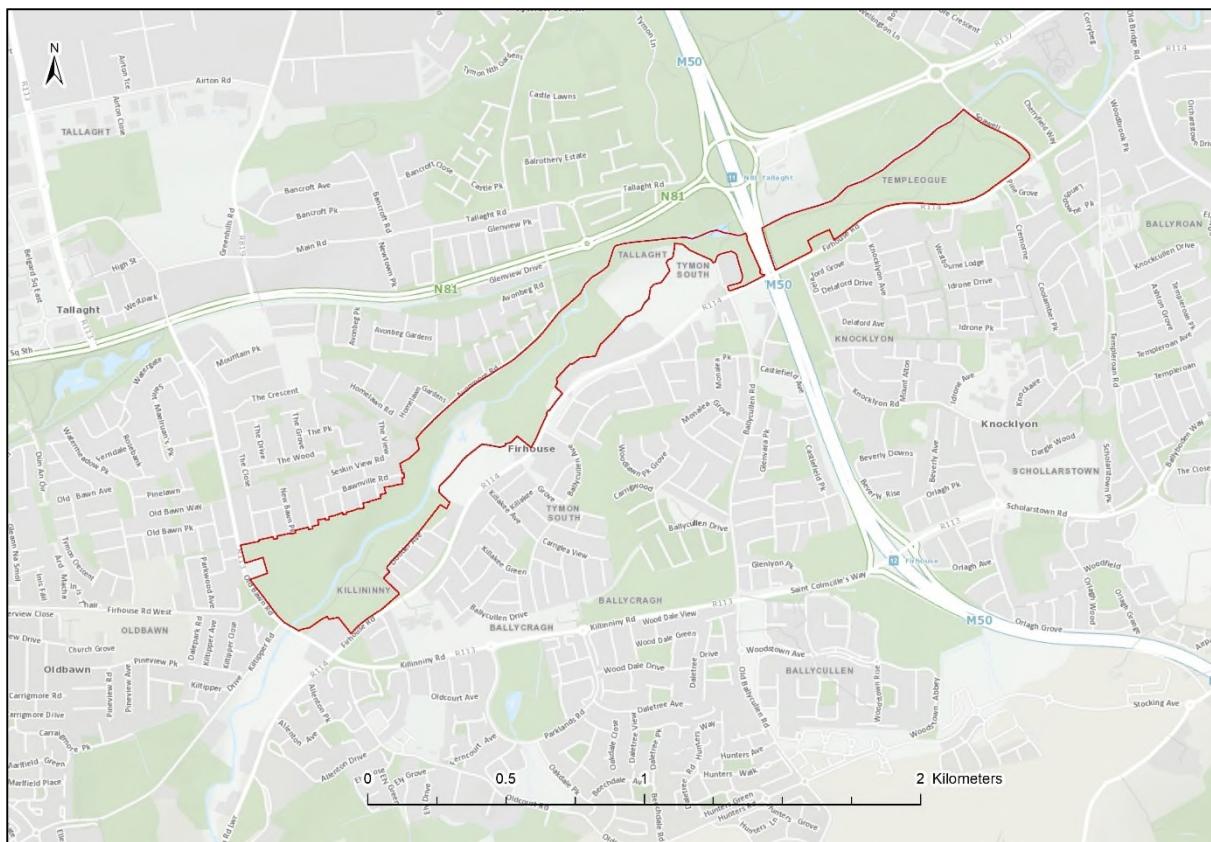


Figure 3: Approximation location of Dodder Valley Park (1:15,000)

The design brief is currently at the “Preliminary Design” stage. The following descriptions are excerpts from documentation provided by South Dublin County Council:

“Section 1: Old Bawn to Mount Carmel”

Access to Park at Old Bawn, Parking at Ahearn’s Pub and access to Park at Mount Carmel Car park off the Firhouse Road.

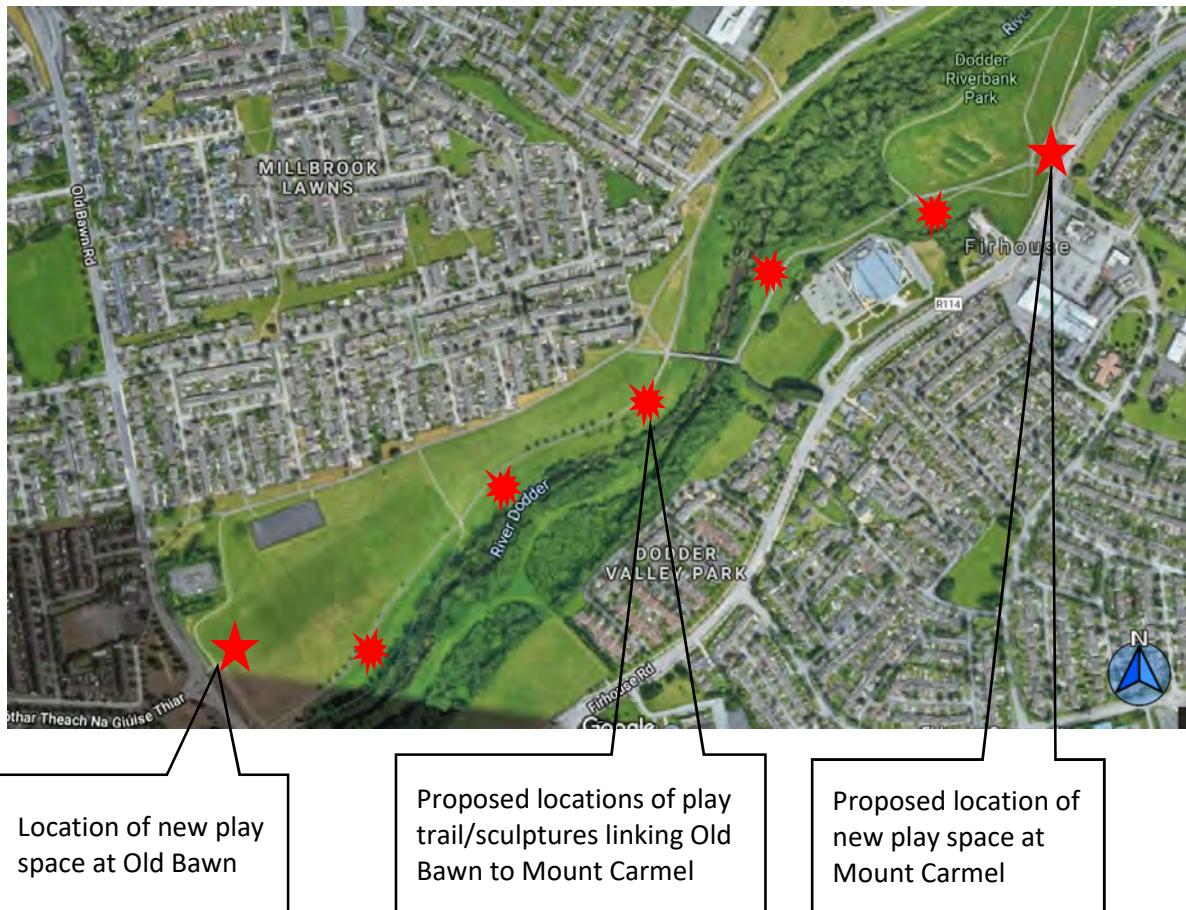
Section 2: Mount Carmel to Cherrywood

Access to Park at Mount Carmel Car park off the Firhouse Road and access to Park from Cherrywood Car Park off the Spawell Roundabout.

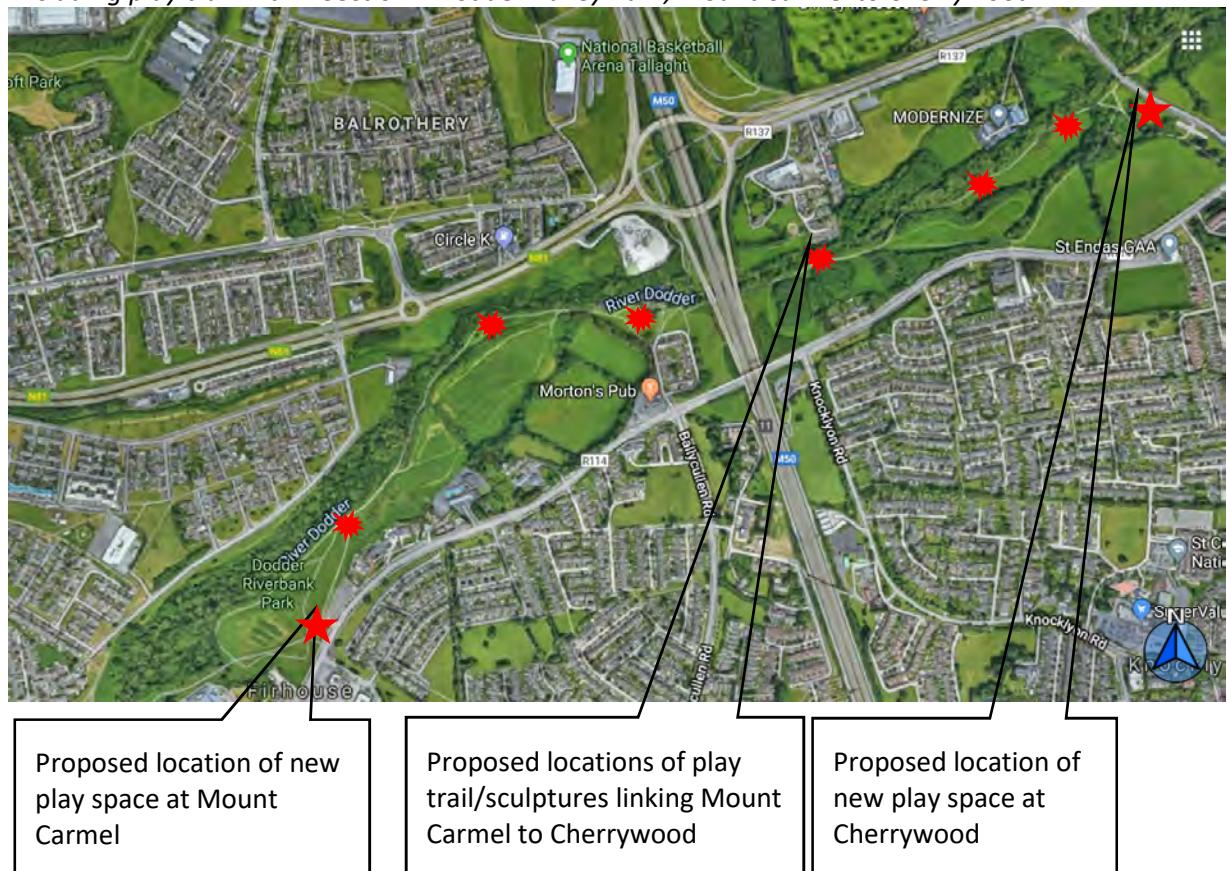


Figure 4: Location Map showing Extent of area of park

MAP 2: Location of proposed play spaces at Old Bawn and Mount Carmel including play trail within Section 1 Dodder Valley Park, Old Bawn to Mount Carmel.



MAP 3: Location of proposed play spaces at Mount Carmel and Cherrywood including play trail within Section 2 Dodder Valley Park, Mount Carmel to Cherrywood.



...As part of the over plan to development a system of play spaces including a play/sculpture trail in Dodder Valley Park, it is proposed to divide the Park into 3 sections; with each section/area containing a large play area and each of the play areas then linked by a play/sculpture trail. The overall concept is that the play areas in conjunction with the play trail which will be located along the length of the park, encouraging movement and exploration throughout.

These larger play areas will be located at:

1. Dodder Valley Park, Old Bawn
2. Dodder Valley Park, Mount Carmel
3. Dodder Valley Park, Cherrywood

As part of this design and build tender the first area to be developed will be area 1 at Old Bawn. it is proposed that the play trail be located along the length of the park, encouraging movement and exploration throughout. The Park currently features formal surfaced pathways along the riverbank and through areas containing pitches and more informal meadow/wild areas..."

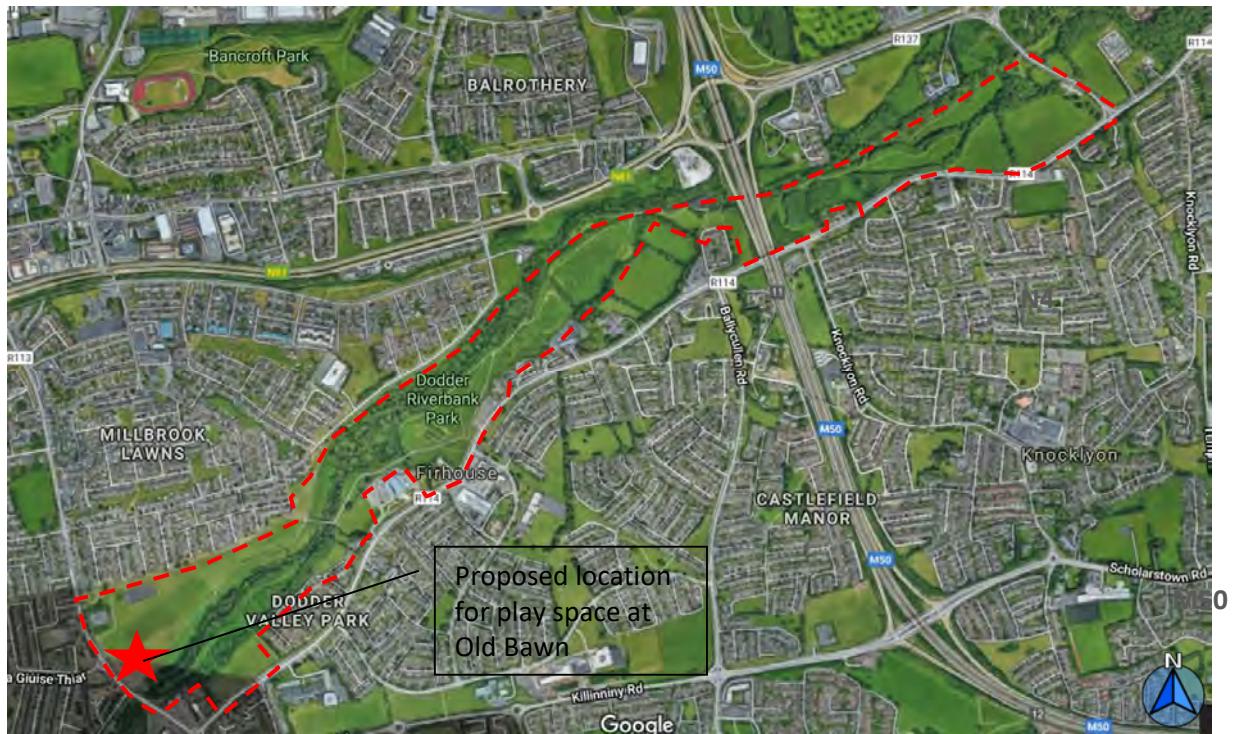


Figure 5 – Dodder Valley Park and proposed location for play space at old bawn

It is proposed that the Dodder Valley Park Playspace, Old Bawn Design Concepts comprise a large natural children's play area incorporating a harmoniously created playscape, set against the back drop of the Dublin Mountains and the Dodder River for all ages.

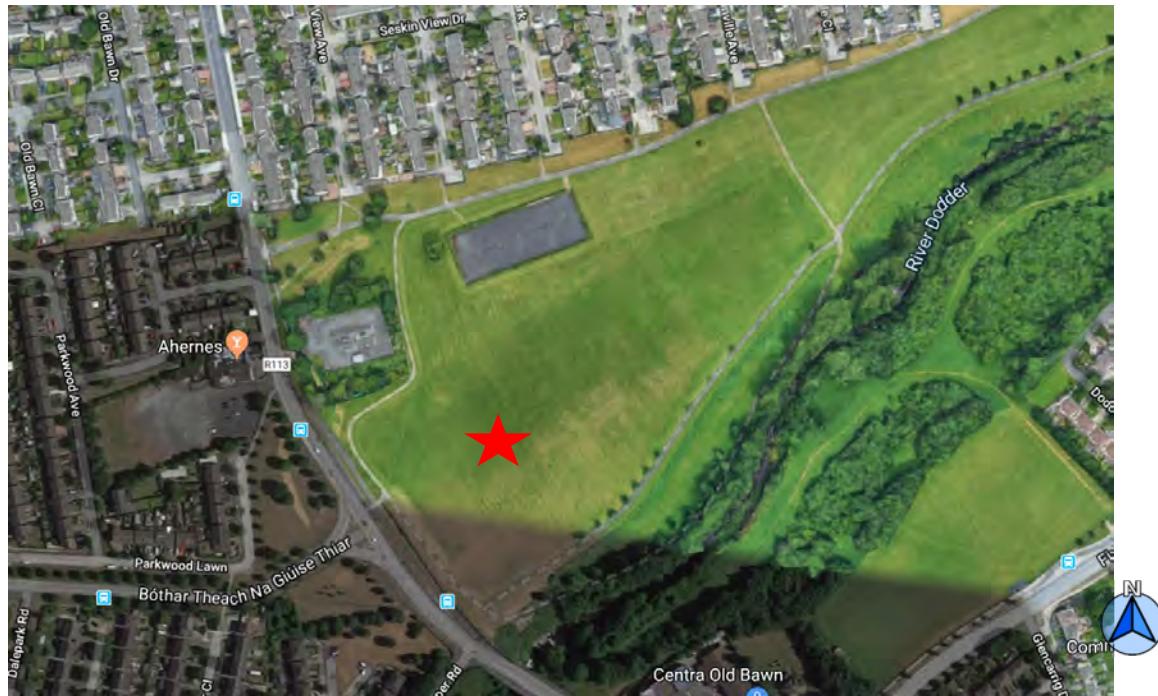


Figure 2 – detailed location for the play space at Old Bawn

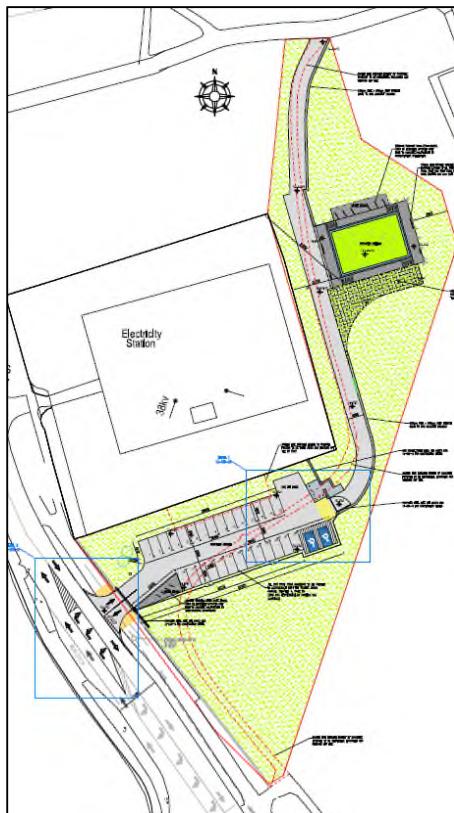


Figure 3 – location of the new pavilion and car park at old bawn



Figure 4 – detailed location for the play space at old bawn

...Design Concept and Requirements

This project involves installation of natural play features, sculptural elements and play equipment through the park. The play trail should highlight elements of the landscape such as spectacular trees, the meadow landscape and gain views/perspective over the river valley.

Design proposals should include for imaginative play, constructive play, group play and include natural play opportunities. It should be durable and limit opportunities for anti-social activity e.g. no hidden areas/roofs, large surfaces that could be graffiti targets, no light materials. It should look as naturalistic as possible. Engineered woodchip is our preferred safety surfacing. Play areas to be landscaped and no edgings or other trip hazards to be present. Signage is to be specified which includes a "young lungs at play"/smoking prohibited message..."

3.2 Sensitivity of Project Location - description of receiving environment

The study area was visited on several dates in June and July 2019 by Dr Patrick Moran, Dr Emma Reeves and Ciarán Byrne in order to determine the nature of the habitats occurring at the site. The Dodder Valley Park is a linear park with the River Dodder at its heart, much of which is associated with woodland. The River Dodder is a Nationally important ecological corridor, and many of the associated habitats within the Dodder Valley Park are regionally important as ecological stepping-stones along this corridor. In addition to the river and associated woodland habitats, there are also large areas of both amenity and semi-natural grassland and pockets of woodland. In excess of 200 species of vascular plant were recorded within the study area, including the Red Data List species, Green Figwort (*Scrophularia umbrosa*), which was found frequently along several sections of the River Dodder. Two species listed on Part (1) of the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations of 2011 occurs within the study area - Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). A habitat map of primary habitats encountered is presented in Appendix I. Primary habitats encountered were:

3.2.1 Freshwater habitats - River Dodder

The section of the River Dodder flowing through the study area corresponds to the Depositing/lowland river - FW2 habitat category.



Figure 6: Section of FW2 along the River Dodder

3.2.2 Grassland habitats

3.2.2.1 Amenity grassland - GA2

Amenity grassland accounts for a large proportion of grassland habitat within the study area. This comprises large areas of regularly mown grassland managed as playing pitches. Subject to a regular mowing regime, species diversity is relatively low.



Figure 7: GA2 amenity grassland

3.2.2.2 Dry calcareous and neutral grassland (GS1)

Throughout the site, in suitable conditions dry calcareous grassland occurs. This habitat is confined to two main areas within the site, a field within the eastern half of the site and an area of sloping ground along the River Dodder within the western half. Another area of GS1 which appears to have been seeded is located on raised ground adjoining a car park.



Figure 8: GS1 grassland (left) & Pyramidal Orchid (right)

3.2.2.3 Dry meadows and grassy verges - GS2

A large proportion of grassland throughout the site, which is not subject to regular mowing comprises tall, rank swards dominated by a limited number coarse, competitive species. This grassland type is best described as improved dry meadow.



Figure 9: GSi2 grassland along pathway

Species composition is relatively uniform across the site with tall, tussocky grasses False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) dominating the sward. Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) is abundant in some areas of GSi2. Wall Barley (*Hordeum murinum*) was abundant at park entrances within semi-improved (GSi2) habitat along the base of walls where grass remained uncut.

3.2.2.4 Wet grassland - GS4

Wet grassland is confined to a flushed area in the eastern half of the site where Hard Rush (*Juncus inflexus*) and sedges Glaucous Sedge (*Carex flacca*), Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirta*) and False Fox-sedge (*Carex otrubae*) are the main components of the vegetation. Frequent species include Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), Common Spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) and Field Horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*).



Figure 10: GS4 Wet grassland

3.2.3 Woodland and Scrub habitats

3.2.3.1 *Mixed broadleaved woodland - WD1*

Mixed broadleaved woodland stands of varying sizes, ages and species compositions are found throughout the survey area, ranging from small isolated blocks to more extensive wooded areas along the River Dodder. The majority of these stands have originated from planting with canopies typically dominated by non-native tree species.



Figure 11: WD1 with Ash, Italian Alder, Wild Cherry, Small-leaved Lime, Pedunculate Oak & Beech

3.2.3.1.1 Riparian woodland - WN5

Riparian woodland is fragmented along the River Dodder and the original wet woodland along the river margins has largely been replaced or altered by plantings. Riparian woodland along more natural sections of the River Dodder comprises mature willows including Grey Willow (*Salix cinerea*) and Crack-willow (*Salix fragilis*) along with frequent Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and occasional Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).



Figure 12: WN5 riparian woodland along River Dodder

3.2.3.1.2 Linear wooded features– WL

Treelines/hedgerow are occasional within the study area and are mainly found in the eastern half of the site. The main tree species include Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), and Wych Elm (*Ulmus glabra*) with occasional Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*) and Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*). Shrub species include Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) along with occasional Dog-rose (*Rosa canina*). The ground flora along treelines/hedgerows is typically dominated by ruderals.



Figure 13: Mature WL2 treeline with Ash

3.2.3.1.3 Scrub - WS1

This habitat within the Park is commonly found along woodland margins, within areas of grassland not actively managed, and along the banks of the River Dodder. Scrub habitat is fragmented across the site and often occurs in a mosaic woodland and grassland habitats.



Figure 14: WS1 Scrub dominated by Gorse

3.2.4 Exposed Rock and Disturbed ground habitats

3.2.4.1 Recolonising bare ground - ED3

There are several areas of ED3 habitat throughout the Park in disturbed areas. These revegetating areas are dominated by ruderals, with species such as Bastard Cabbage (*Rapistrum rugosum*), Wild Turnip (*Brassica rapa* subsp. *campestris*) and Charlock (*Sinapis arvensis*).

3.2.4.2 Buildings and artificial surfaces - BL3

This habitat includes all buildings and various areas of hard-standing that are covered with artificial surfaces. This habitat is comprised mainly of the network of pathways and cycle paths, in addition to car-parking areas to accommodate visitors to the Park.

3.2.5 Designated sites within study area

It must be noted that the Dodder Valley pNHA is located within the survey area and that according to the South Dublin County Council Development plan it is an objective:

“...HCL10 Objective 3:

To ensure that development proposals within the Liffey Valley and Dodder Valley, including local and regional networks of walking and cycling routes, maximise the opportunities for enhancement of existing ecological features and protects and incorporates high value natural heritage features

including watercourses, wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, mature trees, hedgerows and ditches, as part of the County's Green Infrastructure network...”.

3.3 Identification and evaluation of likely significant effect

3.3.1 Characterisation of the proposed project

Screening Elements	Summary
Development size	The footprint of the proposed development will be minimal, relative to the overall size of the Dodder Valley Park. The land-take relates largely to the existing path network and associated grassland.
Cumulative impact	The proposed development will be a component of the Dodder Greenway Route. There are potential cumulative impacts associated with the overall Greenway project that are taken into account in the assessments of the Greenway Route.
Demolition works	No demolition works.
Use of natural resources	None of the materials required are in short supply. All materials should be sourced locally where possible
Production of waste	Some light excavation may be required. This material should be used elsewhere within the site for levelling, etc. Waste materials (packaging, etc.) will be produced during the construction phase - this should be removed from the site for disposal or recycling in accordance with all relevant Waste Management Legislation. Persons using the facilities may produce waste during the use of the proposed development - appropriate waste management measures should be put in place.
Pollution and nuisances	There will be minimal CO2 emissions associated with the construction works; The proposed "Play Space Project" is located proximate to the River Dodder. In order to prevent any contamination during construction, construction should be undertaken according to all relevant regulations/ guidelines for the protection of watercourses; All construction activities should be located at minimum 20m from the River Dodder. Mass use of concrete must be located at minimum 50m from the River Dodder; Owing to the scale and location of works, it is envisaged that disturbance to humans and wildlife during the construction phase will be minimal - no habitats of potential local conservation concern should be impacted upon, with the play spaces limited to the existing pathway and immediate habitat adjacent; No lighting should be utilised or put in place. Any drainage associated must be SUDS compliant and it is assumed that any discharge will be to the existing infrastructure.
Risk of accidents	The proposed development would not entail risk of accidents associated with unusual, significant or adverse effects. All construction activities should be located at minimum 20m from the River Dodder. Mass use of concrete must be located at minimum 50m from the River Dodder.
Risk to human health	No risk to human health associated with the proposed project is foreseen.

3.3.2 Location of proposed project

Screening Elements	Summary
Existing land-use	<p>The proposed "Play Space Project" is located within the Dodder Valley Park along an existing pathway. The South Dublin Co. Development Plan 2016 - 2022 indicates (HCL10 Objective 6) that it is an objective:</p> <p><i>"...To recognise the key role the Dodder River plays in the County's Green Infrastructure network by facilitating and supporting the continued development of the Dodder Valley (Zoning Objective 'HA – DV') as a linear park, greenway and an area of special amenity, recreational, heritage, geology, biodiversity and conservation value to include for the completion of the Dodder Green Route along the full length of the Dodder River ...".</i></p>
Relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area	<p>The proposed "Play Space Project" is located within the Dodder Valley Park along an existing pathway. The only habitats to be impacted upon are built land and artificial surfaces and associated grassland. The grassland habitat is abundant within the Park.</p>
Absorption capacity of the natural environment	<p>The overall site of the Dodder Valley Park is ecologically sensitive. The only habitats to be impacted upon by the proposed "Play Space Project" will be the pathways within the park and associated grassland. No hedgerows or trees will be removed, and no lighting will be put in place. No wetlands, coastal zones, mountain or forest areas will be affected. The Dodder Valley pNHA is located within the Dodder Valley Park, but the location, scale and nature of proposed development would indicate that there will be no negative impacts associated with the proposed play-spaces. The Red Data Book plant species <i>Scrophularia umbrosa</i> was recorded during surveys along the River Dodder. The proposed project will not impact on this species. Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam were recorded from within the park, but not in the vicinity of the proposed play-spaces. The AA screening report noted that there was no direct impact on Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the proposed development. The nature, location and scale of the proposed project would indicate that it is unlikely to negatively impact on persons utilising the Park. When the exact locations are finalised, the sites of the proposed play spaces must be inspected by an ecologist to ensure appropriate siting.</p>

3.3.3 Type and characteristics of potential impacts

Screening Elements	Summary
Extent of the impact	The effects of the proposed development are limited to the immediate vicinity of the existing pathways and associated grassland habitat. There will be minor disruption during the short construction period.
Transfrontier nature of impact	There are no transfrontier impacts associated with the proposed development.
Magnitude and complexity of impact	Significant impacts on the receiving environment are not foreseen. The magnitude and complexity of the impacts on local traffic, etc. are minimal.
Probability of impact	Given the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, the probability of any negative impacts is low.
Duration, frequency and reversibility of impacts	Given the nature, scale and location of the proposed development and low probability of any negative impacts, any potential impacts would be foreseen to be of small duration, low frequency and high reversibility.

4 Screening Conclusion

This Environmental Impact Assessment screening report has been undertaken in accordance with a methodology based on:

- (Draft) Guidelines on information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements (EPA. 2017);
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018); and
- Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (European Union, 2017).

The proposed development does not constitute a category of development for which the preparation of an EIAR is a mandatory requirement. The project is a sub-threshold development and has been assessed in accordance with the criteria for sub-threshold development to determine the potential impact on the environment of the project.

4.1 Characteristics of Proposed Development

South Dublin County Council (SDCC) has prepared documentation for the public consultation phase of Dodder Valley Park Part 8 Play Space Project which proposes the provision of three large play spaces at Old Bawn, Mount Carmel and Cherrywood and for a play/sculpture trail to connect these play spaces in Dodder Valley Park. The proposed project is at the “Preliminary Design” stage. The footprint of the proposed project will be minimal, limited largely to the existing pathway and associated grassland. Owing to the nature, location and scale of the proposed project, no cumulative or complex effects with other schemes are foreseen (the Dodder Valley Park is a component of the Dodder Greenway).

4.2 Location of the Proposed Development

The location of the proposed project is within the Dodder Valley Park, along an existing pathway and associated grassland. Although the Dodder Valley Park itself is a sensitive ecological receptor, the nature, scale and location of the proposed project and the pre-existing pathway network would indicate that no features of ecological importance will be impacted upon by the proposed project. There will be no lighting, and as such no increased disturbance to bats, etc. It is considered that a project of this nature, at this particular location will not have a significant detrimental impact on the environment, the park or surrounding communities.

4.3 Characteristics of Potential Impacts

The effects of the proposed project are limited to the pathway through the park and grassland habitat immediately adjacent (which is subject to regular disturbance). It is considered that the characteristics of the potential impacts associated of a development of this nature, at this particular location will not have a significant detrimental impact on the environment, the park or surrounding communities.

4.4 Impacts on Natura 2000 sites

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, and applying the precautionary principle, the Appropriate Assessment screening report concluded that there would be no adverse impact on the integrity of any of relevant Natura 2000 sites associated with the proposed project. The proposed project would result in no risk of adverse effects on Qualifying Interest habitats or species, nor the attainment of specific conservation objectives, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects on any Natura 2000 site.

Significant negative effects are not likely to arise as a result of the proposed project and direct impacts can be objectively ruled out. The AA Screening concluded that the proposed “Play Space Project” was “screened out” and a Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment was not deemed necessary.

4.5 Conclusion

Having assessed the proposed “Play Space Project” under the environmental impact criteria outlined in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) it is considered that the proposed development does not have the potential to have significant effects on the environment. It is, therefore, concluded that an EIAR is not required.

5 References and Bibliography

Environmental Protection Agency (1995) Advice notes on current practice in the preparation of Environmental Impact Statements. EPA, Wexford, Ireland.

Environmental Protection Agency (1997) Draft Guidelines to be contained in the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements. EPA, Wexford, Ireland.

European Commission (2000) Managing Natura 2000 Sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the 'Habitats' Directive. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

Fossitt, J. (2001) A Guideline to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny, Ireland.

European Commission (2002) 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. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

European Commission (2007) European Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the 'Habitats Directive' 92/43/EEC; Clarification of the concepts of: alternative solutions, imperative reasons of overriding public interest, compensatory measures, overall coherence, opinion of the Commission.

DEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities. DEHLG

DEHLG (2011) European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. DEHLG.

DAHG (2013). The Status of EU Protected Habitats and Species in Ireland 2013. DAHG.

Environmental Protection Agency. (2017) Draft Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR). EPA, Wexford, Ireland.

Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (European Union, 2017).

Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018).

www.sdcc.ie – official website of South Dublin Co Council.

www.npws.ie – website of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, source of information for data regarding Natura 2000 sites and Article 17 Conservation Assessments.

www.europa.eu – official website of the European Union, source of information on EU Directives.

www.epa.ie – official website of the Environmental Protection Agency.

www.biodiversityireland.ie – official website of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

6 Appendix I – Habitat Map

