

3. Ecology (Appropriate Assessment)

- 3.1 Ecology Solutions previously prepared an assessment of the implications of the proposed development on nearby designated European sites in March 2019 (see Appendix 5.1 of the previous ES Addendum) and included a review of all the relevant information available at the time of the assessment.
- 3.2 Since this assessment, further detail has since been prepared in respect of drainage for the proposed development in the form of a Drainage Assessment (Appendix 2.1). Due to the hydrological connectivity of the application site to Lough Neagh and Lough Beg SPA/RAMSAR it is considered necessary to reassess the proposals in light of newly available Drainage Assessment.
- 3.3 The previous assessment anticipated that the competent authority may either (1) conclude that the proposed development did not have any significant effect on the nearby designated European sites (i.e. “screen out” the project from the need for appropriate assessment) or, alternatively (2) conclude that the proposed development was likely to have a significant effect on the nearby designated sites in the absence of any mitigation measures but, with such mitigation measures in place, it is satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of the nearby designated European sites.
- 3.4 In light of recent case law, the assessment now provided (see Appendix 3.1) does not anticipate that the competent authority will “screen out” the proposed development. Instead, this assessment anticipates that the competent authority will carry out an appropriate assessment and as such provides the information required to enable to competent authority to do so.
- 3.5 The assessment concludes that in view of the conservative objectives of the nearby designated European sites that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of the nearby designated European sites.