

# **EIA SCREENING REPORT**

**FOR A**

## **STRATEGIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AT SION ROAD, KILKENNY**

**PREPARED BY**



**ON BEHALF OF**

**TORCA DEVELOPMENTS LTD.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The report has been prepared by McGill Planning Limited, 45 Herbert Lane, Dublin 2, on behalf of Torca Developments Ltd, for a proposed Strategic Housing Development at Sion Road, Kilkenny consisting of 120 units including houses, duplexes and apartments. This EIA Screening Statement accompanies the application to An Bord Pleanála under Section 4 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act (2016).

The site is located north of the River Nore to the south east of Kilkenny City. It also consists of some parts of the Amenity/Green links/Biodiversity zoning along the river corridor. The proposed residential scheme is for 120 units that range between 2-4 storeys in heights. The existing mature trees and woodlands will be incorporated into the development as part of a proposed public park that will connect with the existing Nore Valley Walk to the south.

The Environmental Screening Report has been prepared to assess the potential impacts on the environment of the proposed development at the subject site. The full details of the scheme are as follows:

*The proposed development will consist of demolition of existing structures/buildings (c.3031 sq.m) and construction of a residential development of 120 no. units (36 no. 1-beds, 17 no. 2-beds and 67 no. 3+ beds) comprising 36 no. houses and 84 no. duplexes/apartments arranged within 7 no. blocks. Buildings range in height from 2 to 4 storeys. Community/childcare space, and associated car and bike parking spaces. Landscaping including a new public park connecting to the existing River Nore walk. Vehicular and pedestrian access provided from Sion Road. Pumping station, and all other site development works, boundary treatments and site services to facilitate development.*

This report is prepared with direct inputs from the design team that includes McGill Planning, Brian Dunlop Architects, DKP Chartered Engineers, Landscape architects Mitchell Associates, Goodwin Arborists, Kilkenny Archaeology, Hegsons Design Consulting, Atkins Global, and Whitehill Ecology has been engaged to ensure that the possible effect of the proposed development on the environment has been examined through the process of an EIAR Screening process (detailed below) and the most appropriate form of development is delivered at this site.

## PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT

The purpose of the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening is to demonstrate that there is no requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) for the proposed development and to identify any environmental issues that might arise.

The EIA Screening exercise has been guided by the following documents:

- Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).
- Planning and Development Regulations 2018 (as amended).
- Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 (as amended).
- Directive 2011/92/EU.
- Directive 2015/52/EU.
- Transposition of 2014 EIA Directive (2014/52/EU) in the Land Use Planning and EPA Licensing Systems – Key Issues Consultation Paper (2017; DoHPCLG).

- Preparation of guidance documents for the implementation of EIA directive (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) – Annex I to the Final Report (COWI, Millieu; April 2017).
- European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018.
- Guidelines on the information to be contained in environmental impact assessment reports, EPA, 2017 (Draft).
- Environmental Impact Assessment – Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (2018; DoHPLG).
- Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development (2003; DoEHLG)

Using the above documents, it has been possible to carry out a desktop EIA Screening using the best available guidance while operating within the applicable legislation. It is noted that Directive 2014/52/EU has been transposed into Irish Legislation through the Planning and Development (Amended) Act and Planning and Development Regulations 2018. The methodology employed in this screening exercise is in accordance with the EIA Guidelines published in August 2018 by the DoHPLG and the contents of Schedule 7 and 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2018.

## **EIA THRESHOLDS**

Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2018 (as amended) sets the thresholds for which if a project exceeds these limits, it then must be the subject of an Environmental Impact Assessment. Part 2 of Schedule 5 (10)(b)(i) identifies developments of more than 500 dwelling units and (iii) identifies urban development which would involve an area of greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.

The proposed development is sub-threshold and does not automatically trigger EIA having regard to Schedule 5, Part 2, 10 of the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001-2018. The proposed development is for 120 residential units (well below the 500 unit threshold) on a site of 5.85 ha gross (well below the 10ha threshold).

### Sub-Threshold Development

Article 299B(1)(b)(ii)(II) of the Regulations state the following:

*Where the Board concludes, based on such preliminary examination, that there is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall satisfy itself that the applicant has provided to the Board:*

- (A) the information specified in Schedule 7A,*
- (B) any further relevant information on the characteristics of the proposed development and its likely significant effects on the environment, and*
- (C) a statement indicating how the available results of other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment carried out pursuant to European Union legislation other than the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive have been taken into account.*

Article 299B(1)(c) states:

*The information referred to in paragraph (b)(ii)(II) may be accompanied by a description of the features, if any, of the proposed development and the measures, if any, envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment of the development.*

Schedule 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations outlines the information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for Environmental Impact Assessment as set out below:

1. A description of the project, including in particular:
  - A description of the physical characteristics of the whole project and, where relevant, of demolition works.
  - A description of the location of the project, 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
  - the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant, and
  - the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.
4. Compilation of the above information taking into account criteria in schedule 7 as appropriate

The information as set out above shall take into account the criteria set out in Schedule 7 which provides a list of criteria for determining whether development listed in part 2 of schedule 5 should be subject to an environmental impact assessment. These can be grouped under broad headings and topics as set out below:

1. Characteristics of the Proposed Development.
  - a. The size and design of the whole project;
  - b. Cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects;
  - c. The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;
  - d. the production of waste;
  - e. Pollution and nuisances;
  - f. The risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;
  - g. The risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).
2. Location of the Proposed Development; and
  - a. The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by proposed development, with particular regard to:
  - b. The existing and approved land use;
  - c. The relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground;
  - d. The absorption capacity of the natural environment:
    - Wetlands, riparian areas, river mouth;
    - Coastal zones and the marine environment;
    - Mountain and forest areas;
    - Nature reserves and parks;
    - Areas classified or protected under national legislation;

- Natura 2000 areas designated by member States pursuant to Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/etc;
- Areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;
- Densely populated areas;
- Landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

### 3. Type and Characteristics of the Potential Impacts

The likely significant effects of projects on the environment must be considered in relation to criteria set out in points 1 and 2 above, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in Article 3 (1), taking into account:

- a. The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example the geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected);
- b. The nature of the impact;
- c. The trans-boundary nature of the impact;
- d. The intensity and complexity of the impact;
- e. The probability of the impact; The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;
- f. The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and or approved projects;

The possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

## EIA SCREENING STATEMENT

The following sections provide the information as required by Schedule 7A for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for Environment Impact Assessment.

### A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

#### Physical Characteristics of the Proposed Development

The proposal seeks to construct the following:

Development Proposal	Statistics
No. of units	120 residential units comprising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 36 no. 1-Bed (30%);</li> <li>- 17 no. 2-Bed (14%);</li> <li>- 53 no. 3-Bed (44%);</li> <li>- 13 no. 4-Bed (11%);</li> <li>- and 01 no. 5-Bed (1%);</li> </ul>
Site Area	Gross site area: c. 5.85 ha  Gross site density: 20.45 units per hectare  Net site area: 3.16ha (minus public open space)

	Net site density: 38 units per hectare (minus public open space)
Plot Ratio	0.41
Building Height	2-4 storeys
Civic Open Space	2.22ha
Public Open Space	4321 sqm
Carparking	154 no. parking spaces
Cycle parking	104 no. cycle parking spaces within covered and secure parking
Residential communal facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community/Childcare facility 69sqm within building 3</li> <li>- Ancillary to buildings - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bin stores 53.6sqm</li> <li>- Bike stores 115.7</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



**Figure 1 Proposed site layout**

### Location of the proposed development

The subject lands extend to c. 5.85 ha gross and is irregular in shape. It is located to the south east of Kilkenny city along the north banks of the River Nore. The current proposal is for the demolition of the existing structures on the site and for the construction of 120 residential units ranging in height from 2-4storeys. The site contains a well-preserved woodland area and other mature trees that have been incorporated into the development as part of the public open space. The site was part of Sion hermitage and seat of Catholic Bishops of Ossory from 1926. The main house was pulled down around 1970 and current buildings were built in its place. The buildings on site were part of the Peace in Christ Diocesan retreat centre which was opened in June 1967 as a joint initiative between the Daughters of Mary and Joseph and the late Bishop Peter Birch of Ossory. This initiative was closed in 2015 and the buildings since has been in the state of disrepair.

There are no protected structures within the site curtilage. The closest recorded monument to the site is a mill complex (RMP KK019-050) around 200m away on the opposite banks of the river Nore. This is an extensive structure that comprises of complex of mill buildings on the site of a medieval mill.

The site has good accessibility with a range of uses within cycling and walking distance. The site is located within Kilkenny City boundary and can access the facilities and services established in and around the city. The site has major roads running along at a reasonable distance to the site; Regional road (R712) and National roads(N10).



**Figure 2 Site location Map**

## **A DESCRIPTION OF THE ASPECT OF THE ENVIRONMENT LIKELY TO BE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

This section provides examines the possible effects on the environment under the topics prescribed by Directive 2014/52/EU. This approach provides a comprehensive description of the aspects likely to be affected by the proposed development that have not been identified.

### Population & Human Health

The site is located at the outskirts of Kilkenny town within a predominantly residential area in close proximity to a number of employment centres. The subject site is bounded to the north by Sion Rd, to the south river Nore forms the natural boundary of the site, to the immediate east and west of the site sits existing low-density residential buildings and its curtilage. Along the riverbank and to the north

east of the site is covered in woodlands that consist of mature trees that are remnants of the demesne design landscape. These woodlands and other mature trees have been incorporated into the design as part of a proposed public open space.

During the construction phase there is the likelihood of some short-term nuisances to human beings from noise and dust during construction. The demolition of existing buildings are likely to generate a significant amount of construction waste. Once appropriate mitigation measures as detailed in the Natura impact statement and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) are adopted it is unlikely that the construction works would result in significant environmental impacts for the local population and human health.

There are no operational impacts associated with this residential development that would be likely to cause significant negative effects in terms of population and human health. The opening up of the site for public access and provision of a significant civic space to connect to the River Nore walkway is a positive impact for the local area.

#### Biodiversity

Biodiversity is not likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development. Whilst the southern portion of the site is zoned for open space/amenity, and is located within an SAC, no development is proposed in that area, which we note contains part of the Nore Valley Walk and is used extensively by pedestrians and cyclists.

The western portion of the site which contains mature trees and a ecological and landscape pathway to the open area along the River Nore, is also to be kept free from built development and will form part of a new public park.

The residential development is located in the area of the site that already contains buildings, and the adjoining areas.

It is also noted that this site was subject to a previous permission housing (see Planning Report submitted).

Due to the proximity of the site with two Natura 2000 sites, in particular River Nore SAC 2162 and SPA 4233 an NIS has been prepared by Whitehill Ecology to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed development with regard to the effects upon the conservation objectives and qualifying interests (including the habitats and species) of the River Barrow and Nore SAC and the River Nore SPA. The NIS also appends the previous Habitat Study prepared by Roger Goodwillie for the SHD Stage 2 application and which concluded the residential in the area of the site proposed, with retention of the remainder of the site for open space, would not raise any significant ecological concerns.

With implementation of the mitigation measures it is unlikely that there will be any deterioration in water quality or impacts upon any designated habitat or any species dependent on these designated habitats. In light of the above, it is considered that the proposed works do not have the potential to significantly affect the conservation objectives or qualifying interests of the SAC and the SPA. The integrity of the site will not be adversely affected.

#### Lands and Soils

The subject site comprises of now disused and vacant buildings which was once part of the Peace in Christ retreat centre. The existing woodland walkway and pastureland was all part of the designed landscape of the demesne. The garden and the woodlands are now in a poor state of repair and overgrown in parts.

The land is undulating with the terrain descending steeply to the south of the site as it nears the river corridor. Proposed development is limited to the upper flat terrain of the site and residences are located closer to the access road. Proposed scheme will replace 140m of inactive frontage of the current structures with active street frontage. The proposal includes high quality landscaping, planting and SUDs measures to ease water run-off.

It is estimated that the development will generate topsoil that will be re-used for landscaping purposes. The development will also generate subsoil which is also proposed to be reused within the site for landscaping purposes. All construction waste must be removed from site by a registered contractor to a registered site. Evidence of the movement and safe disposal of the construction waste must be retained and presented to Local Authority upon request. The applicants and construction contractors will be responsible for the safe removal of any construction waste generated on site. Removal of the construction waste will occur as soon as possible after demolition / construction works.

The construction or operation of the scheme would not use such a quantity of soils or water to result in significant effects on the environment. The proposal includes high quality landscaping, planting and SUDS measures to be incorporated into the development to ease water runoff.

#### Water

The proposed development is on a site north of the river Nore to the South East of Kilkenny city. It is proposed to install a watermain to serve the proposed development connected to the existing public watermain on Sion Road. Irish Water have given design approval for the proposed development.

For wastewater it is proposed to construct a gravity flow foul sewer network which will flow to a foul sewer pump sump located at the lower part of the development site in the southern corner. The foul sewer pump will have sufficient capacity to store the total volume of effluent discharging from the proposed development per day. The foul sewage will be pumped to the public sewer on Sion Road with the final connection to the public sewer via a gravity sewer with a vented manhole.

Surface water will be dealt with on site and in general as close to the possible source. Run-off from each house site and from the estate roads and footpaths will be collected and delivered to soakaways located within the open space. The surface water drains discharges to the underground surface water soakaway storage system before soaking into subsoil.

The water services infrastructure proposed will be designed to ensure negative impacts to water quality do not arise to the hydrogeology or adjoining waterbodies (River Nore) when the project is established. A bypass separator is also proposed to be installed on the storm water sewer line prior to the soakaway to prevent hydrocarbons and grit entering the soakaway.

#### Air, Noise and Climate

There is no significant impact on air pollution expected from the development outside of the potential dust impact, and therefore the risk to human health is considered negligible in this regard. Dust control measures will be implemented to minimise dust generation and dispersion. Any activities which result in the creation of cement dust will be controlled by dampening down the areas.

There are no envisaged air or noise emissions arising from the residential proposal at this site other than noises arising from construction, demolition and operational traffic associated with the development. An Outline Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) by TORCA homes is included with the application that includes measures to reduce the number of noises generating

activities occurring concurrently. Demolition works will be strictly monitored so as to not create any disturbance to the residential neighbourhood of the site. Standard mitigation measures will be employed as part of an agreed CEMP. Guidance on noise emissions are laid down in regulations and both night and day limit will be adhered to. Where there are noise complaints, these will be acknowledged and controlled.

Air, Noise and Climate are not likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development.

#### Landscape

Detailed arboricultural and landscape proposals are included within the application. Whilst some trees are required to be removed within the residential zoning at the same time significant areas of mature trees will be retained as part of the landscaped open space strategy. The loss of trees within the residential area will be mitigated by additional planting within the open spaces along the streets.

The Natura Impact Statement prepared by Whitelhill Ecology for the proposed development has detailed mitigation measures to protect the woodland areas that are within the SAC. These include fencing of these areas by a robust fence to keep off any works, disposal or storage of soil, construction waste or machinery from this area. All the tree protection measures are incorporated in the Outline Construction Environment Management Plan and Construction Demolition Waste Management Plan and will be implemented from the very start of the works prior to the construction machinery coming on site and maintained throughout the construction phase of the project to ensure that the tree vegetation proposed to be retained is done so successfully.

The proposed development will not impact on any designated views or prospects within the Kilkenny Development Plan. As shown on the photomontages the development will be well screened to the west, south and east.

Along Sion Road the existing high stone wall will be replaced for housing fronting onto the road which is considered will be a positive addition to the streetscape.

No significant amenity, landscape or visual effects are likely to arise from the proposed development.

#### Material Assets

The land on which the site is situated is a material asset. It has been zoned for residential development and as such, the use of this material assets in a manner compatible with the zoning designation, is entirely appropriate. Once constructed, the operational phase will provide an important material asset for the area in terms of residential units and the provision of open space.

#### Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage

There are no protected structures or recorded monuments within the site curtilage. Archersgrove Mill (RMP KK019-050) is the nearest recorded monument to the site, on the opposite side of river Nore. The former demesne landscape is included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Survey of Gardens and Designed landscape (ref. KK-67-S-523552). The Archaeological Impact Assessment conducted for the site by Kilkenny Archaeology Ltd. did not find anything of archaeological interest on the site. Accordingly, it has been recommended *that the initial topsoil stripping of the site should be archaeologically monitored to mitigate any potential archaeological impact. An archaeological monitoring methodology should be agreed prior to commencement with the archaeological licensing section of the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.*

The proposed development has incorporated the majority of the mature trees existing within the site curtilage. Existing stone boundary walls have been retained wherever possible to ensure that the historic character of the site is remembered in the new development.

#### Vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and/ or disasters

Standard construction practices will be employed throughout the construction phase. The subject lands are not proximate to any SEVESO/COMAH designated sites. The Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment for the site by David Kelly Partnership indicates that the residential part of the subject site have a low probability of flooding due to the terrain of the site. The proposed development is not considered vulnerable to major accidents and/ or disasters, and therefore the expected effects are considered to be negligible.

#### Inter-relationship between the above factors

It is considered that any of the previously identified relatively minor impacts would not in themselves be considered significant nor would they cumulatively result in a likely significant effect on the environment.

## A DESCRIPTION OF ANY SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS TO THE EXTENT OF THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON SUCH EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

This includes information available on the environment including:

- (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.

It is expected that there will be some normal residues/emissions during the construction stage associated with the development works proposed which include ground preparation works, development of site infrastructure, construction of buildings and hardstanding areas and landscaping of the site including open soft landscaped areas.

There will be some waste materials produced in the construction of the proposed scheme which will be disposed of using licensed waste disposal facilities and by registered contractor to a registered site. As is standard practice the scale of the waste production in conjunction with the use of licensed waste disposal facilities and contractors will not cause concern for likely significant effects on the environment. This is set out in the Construction Demolition Waste Management Plan (by TORCA homes) accompanying the application. It includes detailed methodologies employed for the control, management, monitoring and disposal of waste from the site.

An Operational Phase Waste Management Plan (OWMP) by TORCA homes, accompanying the application sets out the measures to be used to maximise the quantity of waste recycled by providing sufficient waste recycling infrastructure, waste reduction initiatives and waste collection and waste management information to the residents of the development.

There will be no large-scale use of natural resources. The main use of natural resources will be land. The subject lands are zoned for residential use.

Other resources used will be construction materials which will be typical raw materials used in construction of residential and employment developments. The scale and quantity of the materials

used will not be such that would cause concern in relation to significant effects on the environment. The construction or operation of the scheme would not use such a quantity of water to cause concern in relation to significant effects on the environment. The use of natural resources in relation to the proposed development is not likely to cause significant effects on the environment.

## COMPILATION OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION TAKING SCHEDULE 7 CRITERIA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTO ACCOUNT

It is necessary to determine whether the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment and if an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required by reference to the type and scale of the proposed development and the significance or the environmental sensitivity of the receiving environment.

The proposed development is sub-threshold in terms of EIA having regard to Schedule 5, Part 2, 10 (b) (i) and (iv) of the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001-2019.

The number of housing units proposed is 120 and well below the 500 unit threshold, while the site area at c. 5.85 ha is also below the 10ha threshold for “urban development” on lands comprising “other parts of a built-up area” other than a business district.

### Sub-Threshold Development

Section 172(b)(i) and (ii) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, states that the competent authority can also require an EIA where a project is below the specified threshold due to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.

Article 103(3) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended states that in determining whether a proposed development would or would not be likely to have a significant effect on the environment, regard shall be given to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations.

The following assesses the development against the Schedule 7 criteria:

<b>Characteristics of Proposed Development</b>	
The size of the proposed development.	The site is c. 5.85ha and the development is for 120 residential units. The development is sub-threshold for EIA.
The culmination of other proposed development.	The site is currently underutilized and within an area that is predominantly residential development. Currently there are no other proposed developments of significant scale that are likely to cause significant cumulative impacts to the locality. Another permission for a new residential development of 31 new dwellings on lands to the west of the application site has been granted recently by the Local Authority.
The nature of any associated demolition works	Existing structures to be demolished amount to c.3,031 sq.m.
The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity.	The site slopes naturally towards the river and is at a higher level with the river valley. The residential development is confined to the main part of the site that comprises of fields of dry meadows and grassy verges. The fields are bordered by mature trees and woodlands. Otters, Badgers and Hedgehogs have been recorded within the river valley corridor south of the proposed development but not within the area

	<p>of the where the existing complex of buildings and attendant grounds are located. Also, no suitable breeding places were found to occur on the main part of the development site. Bat surveys conducted on the site indicate that a small local population utilize the site trees for feeding particularly at the river side where no development is proposed. No bats were recorded in the vicinity of the buildings on site. According to the NIS conducted for the site it was observed that no listed species or habitat will be affected adversely by the proposed development and since this is so, there is little possibility of a wider cumulative impact.</p>
The production of waste.	<p>Construction and Demolition waste produced will be controlled, stored and disposed of in a sustainable manner as per relevant environmental guidance. An Outline Construction Demolition Waste Management Plan by TORCA homes is submitted with the application. Detailed measures will be agreed with Kilkenny County Council prior to commencement of development.</p> <p>Operational waste for the residential development will be controlled by each household and dealt with by municipal services. Estate management will control pollution of public areas. Measures for waste management during the operation stage is included within the Operational Waste and Recycling Management Plan.</p>
Pollution and nuisances.	<p>The construction phase will create short term negative impacts particularly in terms of dust and noise. The demolition works on site will be conducted in a responsible way, limiting major machinery works to daytime or as discussed within the Construction Management Plan that will be agreed in writing with Kilkenny County Council prior to the construction.</p>
The risk of major accidents, and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge	None considered.
The risks to human health (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution).	Standard construction practices regarding noise and dust management will be implemented throughout the construction phase in accordance with an agreed Construction Management Plan.
<b>Location of Proposed Development</b>	
The existing and approved land use.	The site is within existing low-density residential neighbourhood. There is a previous permission on the site for 27 houses in a low density format spread across the site.
The relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground.	The site comprises significant mature trees within the southern and western/north-western parts of the site which will be retained and form new public open space which will also serve as an ecological corridor connection within the River Nore. The residential

	<p>development is located on the existing built footprint and adjoining fields which are relatively abundant in the area and which of themselves are not of significant ecological importance. The proposed development will not impact on the River Nore.</p>
<p>The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;</li> <li>(ii) coastal zones and the marine environment;</li> <li>(iii) mountain and forest areas;</li> <li>(iv) nature reserves and parks;</li> <li>(v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and;</li> <li>(vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;</li> <li>(vii) densely populated areas;</li> <li>(viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.</li> </ul>	<p>The woodland in the southern portion of the site next to the River Nore is designated an SAC. However, development will take place on the upper fields away from the SAC woodland valley area which are topographically at a different level from main development site. There are no existing drainage systems on site feeding into the Nore and the proposed development will control surface water on site. Wastewater will be via connection to the public system on Sion Road.</p>
<p><b><i>Types and characteristics of potential impacts</i></b></p>	
<p>The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).</p>	<p>It is expected that the proposed development will not have any significant environmental impact beyond the site and immediate vicinity.</p> <p>Some of the trees primarily around the buildings will be lost, however, the proposed development will retain a significant portion of mature trees within an extensive open space proposal and with additional planting.</p> <p>All construction activities will be governed as per an Construction Environment Management Plan, the details of which will be agreed with Kilkenny County Council prior to commencement of development. An Outline Construction Management Plan by TORCA homes is included with the application.</p>
<p>The nature of the impact.</p>	<p>The potential likely and significant impacts arising from the proposed development will be that of a medium scale residential development without basement construction with respect to noise dust, traffic etc. The proposed development is planned to take place in a number of phases. The nature of the impacts is expected to be of a magnitude that would not be significant, adverse or permanent.</p> <p>The impact of the development at operational stage will be typical of this residential area and will not be significant, adverse or permanent. The development has been assessed with respect to impact to local roads, environment and ecology. Impact from the development will be minimal when the</p>

	recommended mitigation measures are implemented.
The transboundary nature of the impact.	Any minor impacts will be contained in the immediate vicinity of the site. The subject lands are not located on any geographical or other boundary of relevance to assessment of likely significant effects on the environment.
The intensity and complexity of the impact.	The proposed development is not of any significant intensity or complexity such that would be likely to cause significant effects on the environment.
The probability of the impact.	It is probable that the minor impact of noise and pollution during the construction phase will occur; however, construction works on the site will be monitored and mitigated by Construction and Waste Management Plan that will be agreed with the County Council. On site working hours will be limited to hours set within the CEMP and as per the planning conditions.
The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.	<p>The minor impacts identified would occur during the construction phase, which are short term and not permanent, and will be mitigated by development in accordance with an agreed Construction Management Plan and as per the recommendations of the enclosed NIS.</p> <p>The frequency of impacts will vary throughout the construction phase; however, the impact is not considered to be significant. The minor impacts associated with the construction phase such as noise, dust and traffic will be temporary and will not lead to residual impacts.</p> <p>There are no significant negative impacts likely during the operational phase of the proposed development.</p>
The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment.	The subject site is zoned land designated for residential uses. The scale of the proposed scheme and any other permitted developments in the vicinity are not such that the characteristic of any potential impacts, in combination with each other, are likely to cause significant effects on the environment.
The possibility of effectively reducing the impact.	Mitigation measures to manage noise, dust and/or pollution, tree protection, ecology etc during the construction phase will be based on standard best practice and as per the recommendations from the NIS, policies and guidance and will be incorporated into a comprehensive Construction Management Plan to be agreed with Kilkenny County Council prior to commencement of development.

In conclusion, having regard to the criteria specified in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001; the context and character of the site and the receiving environment, the nature, extent, form and character of the proposed development, this Screening Assessment concludes that an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development is not required.

## NATURA IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A Natura Impact Assessment by Whitehill Ecology is included with this application. It also appends a Biodiversity Report prepared by Roger Goodwillie.

The site lies adjacent to the river Nore, and partially falls within the zone of influence of River Barrow and Nore SAC 002162 and River Nore SPA 004233. Therefore, following consideration of the location of the River Barrow and Nore SAC and SPA in relation to the proposed development at Sion Road, and the potential impacts that may occur, a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been carried out by Whitehill Ecology.

The main concerns and impacts identified in the assessment are listed below:

- 1. Deterioration of surface water quality in designated areas arising from pollution from surface water run-off during site preparation, demolition of existing structures and construction.*
- 2. Deterioration in ground or surface water quality in designated areas arising from pollution during the operation of the proposed development.*
- 3. Deterioration in water quality in designated sites arising from potential flood events on the site.*
- 4. Risk to Annex I or Annex II species associated with the site.*
- 5. Cumulative impacts with other proposed/existing developments*

In order to prevent any impacts upon the subject SAC/SPA, a number of mitigation measures has been recommended and agreed to be implemented. The primary parties responsible for their implementation includes the applicants and the construction team. These measures aim to protect the water quality and integrity of River Nore, ensure the protection of Natura 2000 habitats and species, and the local non-designated ecological receptors. With the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in this report, it is unlikely that the proposed application will lead to any cumulative impacts upon the River Barrow and Nore SAC and the River Nore SPA when considered in combination with other developments.

The Biodiversity Report (appended to the NIS) does not identify any habitats of protected species of flora or fauna within the main residential development site.

The woodland is also noted very much as a planted one with few native species and a very limited ground flora. Any value it has is as habitat for songbirds and feeding area for bats. No bats or bat roosts were noted on site. Protected habitats are restricted to the river valley that is ecologically separated from the development site.

## CONCLUSIONS

The screening exercise has been completed based on the methodology as informed by the available guidance, legislation and directives.

It is considered that a sub threshold EIAR is not required for the proposed development as the proposal is below the thresholds of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development regulations. The

proposal is unlikely to have effects on the Natura 2000 Network, either alone or in combination with other plans; the development will be connected to public services such as water and foul systems; standard construction practices can be employed to mitigate any risk of noise, dust or pollution; and no identified impact in the screening exercise either individually or cumulatively will have significant impacts on the environment.

It is considered that the proposed development will not have any significant impacts on the environment. All recommended mitigation measures and standard practices will be employed throughout the construction and operation phase of the development to ensure that the proposed development will not create any significant impacts on the quality of the surrounding environment.

In conclusion:

- The proposed development is not a development for which an EIAR is mandatory as it falls below the required threshold
- In terms of scale, the proposed development (i.e. 120 units that include houses, duplexes and apartments on a site of circa 5.85 hectares) falls significantly below the thresholds set out in either Class 10(b)(i) or Class 10(b)(iv) in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.
- An EIA Screening exercise was carried out to determine the potential for the proposed development to have significant environmental effects or not.
- The nature or characteristics of the proposed development are not considered likely to result in significant effects on the environment. Standard best practice methodologies as recommended by the NIS will be employed during the construction phase to limit any potential disturbance to the surrounding area and prevent any risk of pollution to the site or the environment surrounding it.
- No significant negative effects on the environment have been identified for the operational phase of the proposed development.
- The proposed works have been assessed in the Natura Impact Statement, which has concluded that with implementation of the mitigation measures recommended in the assessment the proposed works do not have the potential to significantly affect the conservation objectives or qualifying interests of the River Barrow and Nore SAC and the River Nore SPA.
- The development site is not subject to risk of flooding.
- Therefore, the type and characteristics of the potential impacts are not considered significant, taking into account the characteristics of the proposed development and its location.
- The overall conclusion and determination of the screening for requirement for EIA is that there is no requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development.