

Appropriate Assessment Screening Report & Natura Impact Statement

Castle Gypsum Ltd.
Dx Connection,
Belview Port,
Co. Kilkenny.

March 2026

Prepared for:



O'DONNELL 
ENVIRONMENTAL



Summary

Project: Castle Gypsum Ltd. Distribution Network (Dx) Connection, Belview Port, Co. Kilkenny.

Coordinates: 52.278373, -7.042177 (WGS84).

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Company Profile: O'Donnell Environmental is an independent environmental consultancy established by Tom O'Donnell BSc (Hons) MSc CEnv MCIEEM in 2019. O'Donnell Environmental is a Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 'Registered Practice' which demonstrates our commitment to high professional standards, accountability and the delivery of the best outcomes for biodiversity and our Clients.

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Table of Contents

| | | |
|-------|---|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 2 |
| 1.1 | Appropriate Assessment Process | 2 |
| 1.2 | Legislative Context | 3 |
| 1.3 | Statement of Authority | 3 |
| 1.4 | Description of the Proposal | 4 |
| 1.4.1 | <i>Do Nothing Scenario</i> | 4 |
| 2 | Methodology | 6 |
| 2.1 | Desk Study | 6 |
| 2.2 | Site Visit | 6 |
| 3 | Appropriate Assessment Screening | 7 |
| 3.1 | Description of the Natura 2000 Sites | 7 |
| 3.1.1 | <i>Lower River Suir SAC</i> | 8 |
| 3.1.2 | <i>River Barrow and River Nore SAC</i> | 8 |
| 3.2 | Hydrological Context | 12 |
| 3.3 | Ecological Context | 12 |
| 3.4 | Identification of Potential Impacts on Natura 2000 Sites | 15 |
| 3.4.1 | <i>Potential Construction Phase Impacts</i> | 15 |
| 3.4.2 | <i>Potential Operational Phase Impacts</i> | 17 |
| 3.5 | Likely Impacts of the Project on the Natura 2000 Sites | 18 |
| 3.5.1 | <i>Size, Scale & Land-take</i> | 18 |
| 3.5.2 | <i>Distance from or Key Features of the Natura 2000 Sites</i> | 18 |
| 3.5.3 | <i>Resource Requirements (water abstraction etc.)</i> | 18 |
| 3.5.4 | <i>Excavation Requirements</i> | 18 |
| 3.5.5 | <i>Emission (disposal to land, water or air)</i> | 18 |
| 3.5.6 | <i>Transportation Requirements</i> | 18 |
| 3.5.7 | <i>Duration of Operations</i> | 18 |
| 3.5.8 | <i>Cumulative Effects</i> | 19 |
| 3.6 | AA Screening Conclusion | 25 |
| 4 | Stage 2: Natura Impact Statement | 26 |
| 4.1 | Mitigation Measures | 26 |
| 4.1.1 | <i>Surface Water</i> | 26 |
| 4.2 | NIS Conclusion | 27 |
| 5 | References | 28 |

Appendices

Appendix A - Photographic Record.

Appendix B - Project Design Information.

Executive Summary

Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) proposes the installation of a new 250PE-100 4bar main with an equal tee, connection to an existing 315PE-100 4bar main within the Belview Science & Technology Park and installation of a new proposed skid location at Castle Gypsum Ltd. in the Belview Port area, Co. Kilkenny. The proposal is in support of a permitted development (Kilkenny County Council Ref. 2460103; ABP-321962-25) at the Castle Gypsum site. Approx 725m of pipeline will be installed within existing carriageways and approx. 535m within the Castle Gypsum greenfield site.

The installation of the new distribution pipeline will require open trenching to a standard depth of 750mm minimum cover. Any trenching works within the boundary of the permitted development site will be covered by the Customer as well as any clearance works required prior to trenching. Works are expected to take approximately six weeks.

The report presents the results of a screening assessment, in support of the Appropriate Assessment process and presents relevant information in relation to the proposed project in the context of the Natura 2000 network. The purpose of the report is to inform a decision as to whether the proposed project is likely to result in adverse effects on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 sites.

This assessment consisted of two stages, namely AA Screening (Stage 1) and Natura Impact Statement (Stage 2). The Castle Gypsum Ltd. development is functionally dependent on the currently proposed gas pipeline and for consistency with that application, it is concluded that in the absence of targeted mitigation measures, the potential for adverse cumulative effects on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC cannot be discounted.

Mitigation measures applied at the NIS stage consisted of measures to avoid the potential for contaminated surface water to discharge into local drainage systems and watercourses during the construction stage, resulting in potential adverse effects on the qualifying interests associated with the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC.

Provided the mitigation measures referred to herein are fully implemented, it is objectively concluded that the proposed project, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is not likely to result in significant adverse effects on the Lower River Suir SAC, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any Natura 2000 site.

1 Introduction

O'Donnell Environmental Ltd. was commissioned by Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) to undertake an Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening in relation to the installation of a new distribution (Dx) pipeline, connecting a permitted development (Kilkenny County Council Ref. 2460103; ABP-321962-25) within the Castle Gypsum site at Belview Port in Co. Kilkenny to the local distribution network.

The pipeline will be installed within existing carriageways and partially within the Castle Gypsum Ltd. greenfield site, with connection to an existing main within the Belview Science & Technology Park and installation of a new skid within the Castle Gypsum site. This AA Screening report represents the product of the Appropriate Assessment process.

The works assessed in this report are required in support of a permitted development (Kilkenny County Council Ref. 2460103; ABP-321962-25) and will involve connection of the permitted development within the Castle Gypsum site to the existing distribution (Dx) network locally. Castle Gypsum Ltd. is manufacturer of gypsum products for Irelands construction sector. Works will take place within existing carriageways and an area of greenfield within the Castle Gypsum site. Works occurring within the Castle Gypsum site are permitted as part of the Customer's planning application. Works are expected to take approximately six weeks.

Sections of the proposed pipeline along the N29 and the L3412 are not included within the boundary of the Customer's permitted development. The proposed pipeline will be installed within the L3412 that crosses over the Gorteens 16 watercourse, proximal to the connection within the Belview Science & Technology Park. This watercourse discharges to the River Suir which is designated a Special Area of Conservation (Lower River Suir SAC).

The Natura Impact Statement (Malone O'Regan Environmental, 2024) associated with the permitted development at the Castle Gypsum site was reviewed as part of this assessment.

A site location map is presented in **Figure 1.1**.

This Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the following guidance documents:

- Assessment of Plans and Projects Significantly Affecting Natura 2000 Sites – European Commission Methodical Guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the 'Habitats' Directive 92/43/EEC (European Commission, 2021).
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG, 2009).
- Environmental Assessments and Planning in Ireland. (Office of Planning Regulator, 2021).

1.1 APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The 'Appropriate Assessment' process consists of up to four stages, carried out consecutively. This process is summarised as follows:

- Stage 1: A screening assessment is undertaken to identify whether in view of best scientific knowledge and in light of the conservation objectives of the Natura 2000 site(s) significant impacts on a Natura 2000 site(s) are likely to arise from the project or plan in question (individually or in combination with other plan or projects), in the absence of mitigation. If the

likelihood of significant impacts cannot be discounted, or if uncertainty exists, then the process moves on to Stage 2.

- Stage 2: Carried out when a screening assessment determines impacts on the Natura 2000 sites(s) are likely to arise from the project or plan, or where uncertainty exists, and considers potential mitigation measures to avoid or reduce adverse impacts.
- Stage 3: Carried out to assess alternative solutions when it is considered that mitigation measures will not be able to adequately avoid or minimise potential adverse impacts on a Natura 2000 site(s).
- Stage 4: Carried out to consider compensatory measures when no alternative solutions exist but the proposed activity or development is deemed to be of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI).

1.2 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) seeks to conserve natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora by the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC) seeks to protect birds of special importance by the designation of Special Protected Areas (SPAs). These designations form part of Natura 2000, a network of key conservation sites throughout the European Community. Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive requires member states to carry out an 'appropriate assessment' of the implications of plans and projects on the Natura 2000 network. The Habitats Directive has been transposed into Irish law and the relevant Regulations are the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011.

The EU Court of Justice has ruled in case C-721/21 that Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 must be interpreted as meaning that: in order to determine whether it is necessary to carry out an appropriate assessment of the implications of a plan or project for a site, account may be taken of the features of that plan or project which involve the removal of contaminants and which therefore may have the effect of reducing the harmful effects of the plan or project on that site, where those features have been incorporated into that plan or project as standard features, inherent in such a plan or project, irrespective of any effect on the site.

1.3 STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

O'Donnell Environmental Ltd. is an independent environmental consultancy established by Tom O'Donnell BSc (Hons) MSc CEnv MCIEEM in 2019. Since then, O'Donnell Environmental has established itself as a provider of quality, Client-focused ecological and environmental services to public and private sector Clients nationwide. O'Donnell Environmental is a Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) 'Registered Practice' which demonstrates our commitment to high professional standards and accountability and the delivery of the best outcomes for biodiversity and our Clients.

Tom O'Donnell is a Chartered Environmentalist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. He was awarded a BSc in Environmental and Earth System Science [Applied Ecology] in 2007 and an MSc in Ecological Assessment in 2009, both from UCC. Tom has 19 years of professional experience in the environmental industry, including working on projects such as windfarms, overhead power lines, roads, cycleways and residential developments. Tom is licensed by NPWS for roost disturbance (Ref: DER/BAT 2026-91) and to capture bats (C031/2026).

Claire McCarthy BSc (Hons) MSc is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. She was awarded a BSc in Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences [Zoology] in 2018 and an MSc in Marine Biology in 2022, both from UCC. Claire has contributed to the preparation of EIAR and EclA reports for renewable energy developments and has experience in preliminary roost assessments and bat activity surveys. Claire is licensed by NPWS for bat roost disturbance (Ref: DER-BAT-2026-99) and to capture bats (C066/2026).

1.4 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is to provide Castle Gypsum Ltd. with connection to the existing distribution (Dx) network at Belview Port, Co. Kilkenny. Castle Gypsum Ltd. is a manufacturer of gypsum products for Ireland's construction sector.

The proposed involves the installation of a new 250PE-100 SDR17 4bar main with an equal tee, connection to an existing 315PE-100 4bar main with a 315PE x 250PN16 branch saddle, within the Belview Science & Technology Park, to a new proposed skid location at Castle Gypsum site. The proposed SP3 skid will be installed on a 9.8m x 2.8m concrete base within the Castle Gypsum site. The proposed is in support of a permitted development (KCC Ref. 2460103; ABP-321962-25). Approx. 725m of pipeline will be installed within existing carriageways (N29, L3412 and unnamed road) and approx. 535m within the Castle Gypsum greenfield site.

The pipeline will be installed via an open trenching method with an excavation depth of a minimum standard 750mm and 300mm-400mm width, within existing carriageways and hard shoulders (N29, L3412 and unnamed road) and within the Customer's greenfield site. Any trenching works within the boundary of the permitted development site will be covered by the Customer as well as any clearance works required prior to trenching. Temporary welfare facilities available at existing GNI sites nearby will be utilised during the construction phase. In total works are expected to take approximately six weeks.

Following installation of the new pipeline within the ground, no works, ongoing maintenance etc. are required as part of the operational phase of the proposed development.

Appendix A presents a photographic record of the condition of the proposed site at the time of the survey and **Appendix B** present the project design information.

1.4.1 Do Nothing Scenario

If the proposed development does not proceed, the 'do nothing' scenario is that the existing environment within the site boundary is likely to remain as described herein in the short term at least. The portion of the proposed that lies within the permitted site boundary will likely change according to the permitted development (KCC Ref. 2460103; ABP-321962-25). The operational capacity of the current gas distribution network locally will remain unchanged.



2 Methodology

This Appropriate Assessment was informed by desk-based and site-based assessments.

2.1 DESK STUDY

A desk study was carried out to collate relevant available information including the following:

- National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) (online)¹.
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) (online)².
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (online)³.
- The CFRAM Flood Maps (online)⁴.

2.2 SITE VISIT

This Appropriate Assessment is informed by a site visit that was carried out by Claire McCarthy BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM on the 18th of February 2026. The proposed location of works and its immediate environs were assessed. Any source-receptor pathways identified during the desktop review were surveyed. Additionally, surface expressions of invasive alien plant species, specifically those listed as 'Schedule III' Alien Invasive Species (AIPS) were surveyed for within and immediately adjacent to the proposed works footprint.

¹ Accessed 12/02/2026

² Accessed 12/02/2026

³ Accessed 12/02/2026

⁴ Accessed 12/02/2026

3 Appropriate Assessment Screening

The surrounding environment is predominantly industrial in nature, with the River Suir and Belview Port south of the site and the River Barrow to the east. The area is subject to much development. The proposed pipeline works will occur within the existing carriageway and hard shoulder of the N29, L3412 and an unnamed road, as well as an area of greenfield within the Castle Gypsum site, which was under construction for the permitted development at the time of the survey. The proposed skid location will be installed within the Castle Gypsum site and the connection to the existing pipeline will occur in a maintained grass verge within the Belview Science & Technology Park southwest of the Castle Gypsum site.

The proposed development is not connected with or necessary for the management of any Natura 2000 sites.

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE NATURA 2000 SITES

The proposed site is not located within a Natura 2000 site. Seven Natura 2000 sites are present within 15km of the proposed works. Four of these sites are Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), and the remaining three are Special Protected Areas (SPA) (see **Table 3.1**). It is important to note that this arbitrary distance of 15km is used for illustrative purposes only and all potential pathways for impact on designated sites have been included for both within and outside the 15 km zone.

Of the Natura 2000 sites considered, two sites have been identified where a possible source-receptor pathway exists between the proposed project location and the designated site through surface water drainage connection: the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (see **Figure 3.1**). The Qualifying Interests (QI) of these two Natura 2000 sites are summarised below in **Table 3.2**.

The Lower River Suir SAC (002137) is the most proximal to the proposed site and is located approximately 1.05km southeast of the site. The River Suir and River Barrow join downstream of this site. Where the geographical boundary of the Lower River Suir SAC ends, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC begins, which also encompasses Waterford Harbour.

No sites beyond the standard 15km search area are considered relevant to the current assessment due to the nature and scale of the proposed project and the lack of a viable source-receptor pathway between the proposed site and any other Natura 2000 sites.

Table 3.1 – Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development site.

| Site Name | Site Code | Distance (km) | Potential Pathway |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------|
| Lower River Suir SAC | 002137 | 1.05 | Yes |
| River Barrow and River Nore SAC | 002162 | 2.11 | Yes |
| Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC | 000671 | 10.90 | No |
| Tramore Backstrand SPA | 004027 | 10.90 | No |
| Bannow Bay SAC | 000697 | 14.25 | No |
| Bannow Bay SPA | 004033 | 14.78 | No |
| Seas off Wexford SPA | 004237 | 14.99 | No |

Considering the nature and scale of the proposed development, the lack of a viable source-receptor pathway, and the separation distance involved the remaining sites outlined in **Table 3.1** are not considered relevant to the current assessment and are not considered further, namely: Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC, Tramore Backstrand SPA, Bannow Bay SAC, Bannow Bay SPA and the Seas off Wexford SPA.

3.1.1 Lower River Suir SAC

The Lower River Suir consists of freshwater and tidal stretches and a number of tributaries which flow through the counties of Tipperary, Kilkenny and Waterford. This site has been selected for a variety of habitats, to include Atlantic salt meadows, floating river vegetation and *Hydrophilous* tall herb communities. The salt meadows occur below Waterford City where the embankment is absent. The site is also designated for alluvial forests and Yew woodlands listed priority habitats on Annex I of the E.U Habitats Directive. Throughout the Lower River Suir site there are small areas of woodland to include those mentioned and old Oak woodlands. Other habitats include wet and dry grassland, marsh, reedswamp, improved grassland, coniferous plantations, deciduous woodland, scrub, tidal river, stoney shore and mudflats.

The site is of particular conservation interest for the presence of a number of Annex II species, to include Freshwater Pearl Mussel species, White-clawed crayfish, Salmon, Twaite Shad, Otter and three Lamprey species. This site is only one of three known spawning grounds for Twaite Shad in the country. Parts of the site have been recognised as being of ornithological importance for a variety of Annex I bird species. Opposite-leaved pondweed, a Flora (Protection) Order (2022) (FPO) species, occurs at a few locations along the river. Another FPO species, Meadow Barley, has been recorded within the site, along the landward transition of the salt marshes.

The Lower River Suir has examples of Annex I habitats, Annex II species and the presence of two legally protected plant species (Flora (Protection) Order, 2022) all adding to its ecological importance and interest.

The objective of the designated Lower River Suir SAC is to maintain and restore the favourable conservation conditions of the habitats in terms of their range and species structure and function.

3.1.2 River Barrow and River Nore SAC

This site encompasses freshwater stretches of the Barrow and Nore River catchments as far upstream as the Slieve Bloom Mountains, with the inclusion of tidal habitats and estuaries as far as Creadun Head in Waterford. The site passes through Offaly, Kildare, Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny Tipperary, Wexford and Waterford. The site is designated for a variety of Annex II species and Annex I habitats under the E.U. Habitats Directive, to include habitats of priority status such as Alluvial forests.

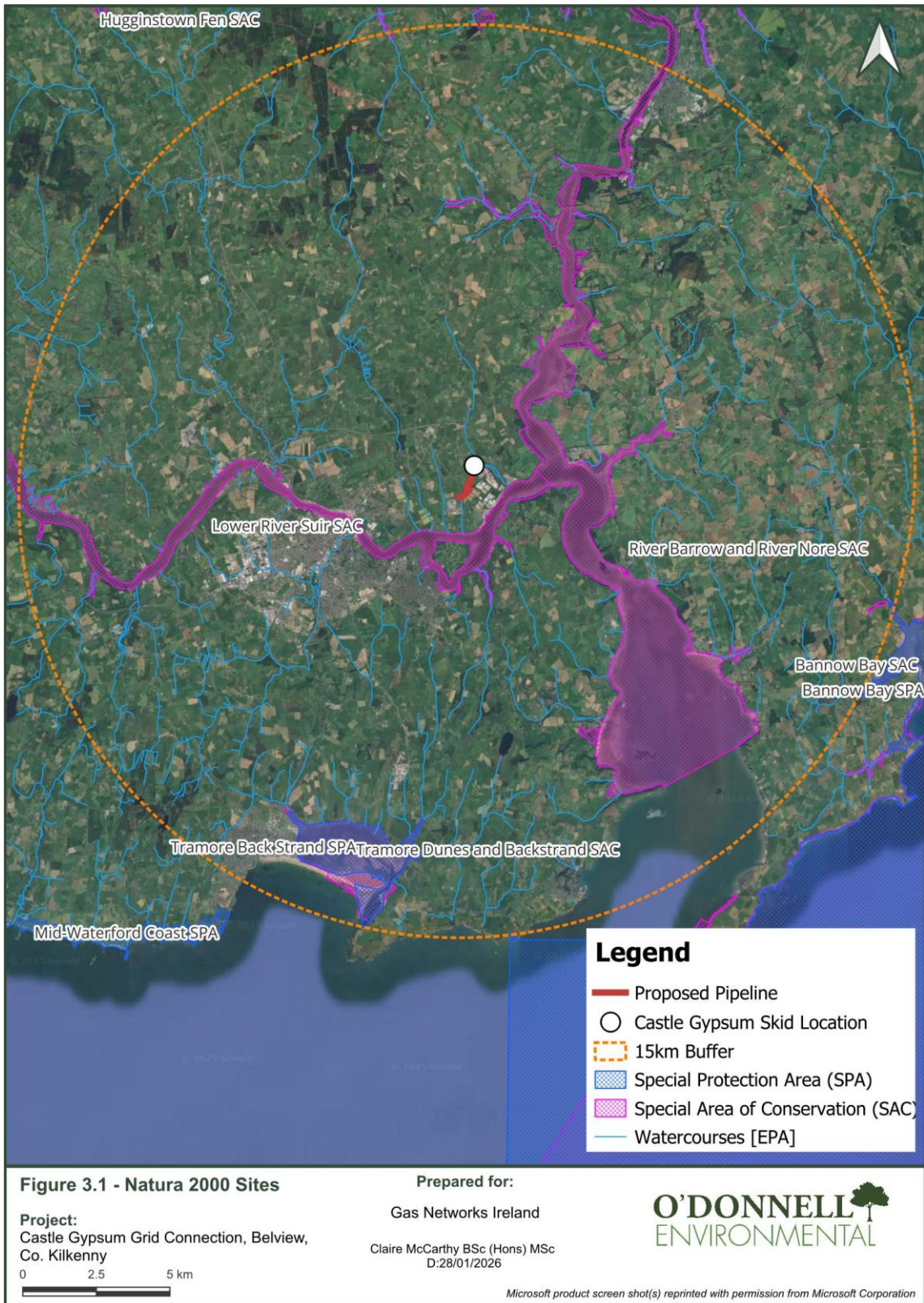
The objective of the designated River Barrow and River Nore SAC is to maintain and restore the favourable conservation conditions of the habitats in terms of their range and species structure and function.

Table 3.2 – Natura 2000 Site Details.

| Site Name & Code | Qualifying Interests | Minimum Distance from Site (km) |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| Lower River Suir SAC (002137) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] • <i>Hydrophilous</i> tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] • Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] • <i>Taxus baccata</i> woods of the British Isles [91J0] • <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] • <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] • <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] • <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] • <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] • <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaite Shad) [1103] • <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] • <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] | 1.05 |
| River Barrow and River Nore SAC (002162) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estuaries [1130] • Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] • Reefs [1170] • <i>Salicornia</i> and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] • Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] • Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] • Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation [3260] • European dry heaths [4030] • <i>Hydrophilous</i> tall herb fringe communities of plains and of the montane to alpine levels [6430] • Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220] • Old sessile oak woods with <i>Ilex</i> and <i>Blechnum</i> in the British Isles [91A0] | 2.11 |

| Site Name & Code | Qualifying Interests | Minimum Distance from Site (km) |
|------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (<i>Alno-Padion</i>, <i>Alnion incanae</i>, <i>Salicion albae</i>) [91E0] • <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> (Desmoulin's Whorl Snail) [1016] • <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] • <i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i> (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] • <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> (Sea Lamprey) [1095] • <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (Brook Lamprey) [1096] • <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> (River Lamprey) [1099] • <i>Alosa fallax fallax</i> (Twaiite Shad) [1103] • <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] • <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] • <i>Vandenboschia speciosa</i> (Killarney Fern) [6985] | |

* indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats directive.



3.2 HYDROLOGICAL CONTEXT

The proposed site is located in the Suir Catchment, Area 16 and sub-catchment Blackwater [Kilmacow]_SC_010. The proposed pipeline will cross the Gorteens 16 watercourse proximal to the connection within the Belview Science & Technology Park. This watercourse discharges to the River Suir which is designated a Special Area of Conservation (Lower River Suir SAC). The next most proximal surface waterbodies are the Lower Drumdowney Stream and the Luffany River located northeast of the proposed site of works, both of which discharge to the River Suir also. The River Suir and River Barrow join downstream of the site forming an estuary at Waterford Harbour. Where the geographical boundary of the Lower River Suir SAC ends, the River Barrow and River Nore SAC begins and encompasses Waterford Harbour.

The EPA undertakes water quality surveys of surface water and groundwater bodies in Ireland and the Gorteens16 Stream, Lower Drumdowney Stream and the Luffany River are still considered to be under review.

The Lower Suir Estuary (IE_SE_100_0500) has been assigned a 'Moderate' water quality status (Transitional Waterbody WFD 2019-2024) and a risk rating of 'at risk, not currently meeting water quality objectives. Further downstream the Barrow Suir Nore Estuary has received a 'Moderate' water quality status (Transitional Waterbody WFD 2019-2024) and a risk rating of 'at risk, not currently meeting water quality objectives.

As per the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment Management (CFRAM) Flood Maps, there is a low to medium risk of flooding from the River Suir which runs southeast of the proposed works, however the site of works does not lie within this potential flood zone.

3.3 ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Assessment of habitats and conservation interest species was carried out through a desktop review^{5,6,7} and a site visit. The qualifying interests associated with the relevant designated sites are related to marine, estuarine and freshwater habitats and associated species. The proposed will be confined to existing carriageways of the N29 and L3241, fields within the Castle Gypsum site, currently under construction as part of the permitted development, and an area of maintained grass verge near the Belview Science & Technology Park.

No Annex I habitats listed under the EU Habitats Directive or those associated with the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC were recorded in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development.

Annex I Atlantic Salt Meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*), designated for the Lower River Suir SAC are present upstream of the proposed development site (NPWS, 2016). This habitat is not likely to be impacted by the proposed development. Potential areas of this habitat are present downstream of the proposed site identified from a Saltmarsh Monitoring Project (NPWS, 2016). However, these are

⁵ <https://maps.biodiversityireland.ie/Map> Accessed 15/02/2026

⁶ <https://heritagedata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=a41ef4e10227499d8de17a8abe42bd1e> Accessed 15/02/2026

⁷ <https://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=71f8df33693f48edbb70369d7fb26b7e> Accessed 15/02/2026

not confirmed Annex I Atlantic Salt Meadows and the likelihood of adverse negative effects on this qualifying interest habitat as a result of the proposed development can be discounted.

Estuaries and mudflats are designated a qualifying interest of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. These habitats are present downstream of the proposed development site. Given the downstream distance, the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment and nature of these habitats, it is not likely that the proposed development will have an adverse effect on either of these habitats. All other habitats designated for the River Barrow and River Nore SAC are upstream of the proposed development site or at a considerable distance and the likelihood of adverse negative effects on these qualifying interest habitats as a result of the proposed development can be discounted.

Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) is a qualifying interest species associated with the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. Previous records are held for Freshwater Pearl Mussel in the Suir Catchment, but the status of this species is unknown in this catchment currently, following review of the NPWS *Margaritifera* Sensitive Area map (Version 10, 2020). The likelihood of significant adverse effects on Freshwater Pearl Mussel as a result of the proposed development works cannot be entirely discounted.

White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) is a qualifying interest of the Lower River Suir and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. This species occurs extensively on the River Suir and many of its tributaries. This species has been recorded on almost the entire length of the non-tidal river. The most proximal NBDC record for this species is upstream of the proposed site within the Smartcastle Stream, which discharges to the Lower River Suir SAC. According to NPWS, White-clawed Crayfish records are concentrated upstream of the proposed development site (NPWS, 2017). Records for Crayfish Plague (*Aphanomyces astaci*) are also held by the NBDC downstream of the proposed development site. Considering the lack of records for this species downstream of the proposed development site and its requirement for habitat heterogeneity, the likelihood of adverse negative effects on this qualifying interest species as a result of the proposed development can be discounted.

All records for Desmoulin's Whorl Snail (*Vertigo moulinsiana*) and Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) are upstream of the proposed development site (NPWS, 2025) and the likelihood of adverse negative effects on these qualifying interest species as a result of the proposed development can be discounted.

The River Suir catchment is internationally important for the presence of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*), Twaite Shad (*Alosa fallax*), Lamprey species and European Eel (*Anguilla anguilla*). The potential for adverse negative effects on these qualifying interest species as a result of the proposed development are considered relevant to the current assessment given their mobile nature and the high likelihood of occurrence in the receiving River Suir and Waterford Harbour and cannot be discounted.

Otter (*Lutra lutra*) is designated as a qualifying interest species of the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. No records are held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) for this species within the 2km grid squares in which the proposed site is located (S61L & S61M). However, the online NBDC map viewer shows numerous records for this species along this section of the River Suir, to include sightings of live and dead individuals, spraint and prints. No habitat considered suitable to support otter is present within the proposed site of works and no signs of otter were recorded at the time of the survey. However, the likelihood of adverse negative impacts on this mobile qualifying interest species cannot be discounted.

The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) holds no records for invasive plant species within the two 2km grid squares (S61L & S61M) within which the works are proposed. However, the NBDC online map viewer shows numerous records for the following 'high' impact Schedule III invasives within the 10km grid square in which the proposed development site is located (S61):

- Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)
- Giant Knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*)
- Canadian Waterweed (*Elodea canadensis*)
- Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)
- Common Cord-grass (*Spartina anglica*)
- *Rhododendron ponticum*
- Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)
- New Zealand Pigmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*)

During the walkover survey of the site, the only invasive species recorded within proximity to the proposed works was Cherry Laurel, along the N29 and L3412 (see **Plate 3.1**). This species is not listed on Schedule III of the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011). However, this species is considered a 'high' risk species ((risk-assessed by Kelly et al. (2013) and Flynn et al. (2014)).



Plate 3.1 Cherry Laurel recorded along the verge of the L3421 towards the Belview Science & Technology Park.

3.4 IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON NATURA 2000 SITES

Consideration is given here to identifying any aspects of the proposal which are likely to impact on the relevant Natura 2000 sites (identified above), and to identifying if uncertainty exists as to likelihood of occurrence.

The likelihood of effects is assessed considering a number of indicators including:

- Habitat loss.
- Habitat alteration.
- Habitat or species fragmentation.
- Disturbance and/or displacement of species.
- Water quality and resource.

3.4.1 Potential Construction Phase Impacts

The potential for direct and indirect impacts on any Natura 2000 site during the construction phase is discussed below.

3.4.1.1 Direct Impacts

The proposed works are not located within a Natura 2000 site nor do they require any resources from any Natura 2000 site. The proposed works area does not contain any of the habitats for which the named Natura 2000 sites have been designated. Therefore, direct impacts on the Natura 2000 sites can be discounted.

3.4.1.2 Indirect Impacts

Habitat loss or deterioration of the ecological status of designated sites can occur from the indirect effects of contaminated run-off or discharge into the aquatic environment, through siltation, nutrient release and/or contamination. Indirect disturbances to relevant species may also be caused by anthropogenic disturbances such as noise, light or emissions of dust. Should habitat loss or deterioration of the ecological status of the Lower River Suir SAC, River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other Natura 2000 site occur, a negative impact on the qualifying interest of the designated sites may result. In this instance the relevant qualifying interests are marine, estuarine and freshwater habitats and associated species (see **Table 3.1**).

3.4.1.3 Surface Water

During the construction phase, indirect impacts on the qualifying interests of the Natura 2000 sites could occur if siltation, nutrient release and/or contamination of downstream receptors were to occur. Indirect impacts on the designated site requires connectivity between the proposed works and the designated site in question through watercourses or through surface run-off.

A section of the proposed project will be installed within the existing carriageway of the L3412 road which crosses the Gorteens 16 watercourse, proximal to the connection within the Belview Science & Technology Park. This watercourse discharges to the River Suir which is designated a Special Area of Conservation (Lower River Suir SAC). There is potential for contaminated surface water run-off during the construction of the proposed pipeline installation to reach this watercourse which ultimately discharges to the Lower River Suir SAC, which meets the geographical boundary of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC downstream. Proposed works will involve excavation of existing surfaces, giving

rise to potential silt laden water run-off and the refuelling of necessary machinery which could result in accidental spillage of hydrocarbons contaminating the local environment.

The relevant qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC include the Annex II species Otter, Lamprey species, Freshwater Pearl Mussel (Annex II & Annex V), Twaité Shad and Atlantic Salmon. Salmon is very sensitive to the changes in water quality and depends on clean and unpolluted waters and any polluted run-off (e.g. contaminated with cement, excessive silt, hydrocarbons) has the potential to cause a decline in the water quality of the watercourses which run proximal to the site. Potential pollutants from the construction works could lead to the deterioration of the water quality and indirectly effect the food supply and foraging habitat of the qualifying interest species that utilise this river.

It is noted that silting up or accretion are natural processes in estuarine and marine environments, with estuarine/marine habitats experiencing fluctuations in sediment on a daily basis. Sediment movement is a natural process that occurs within the marine environment and associated marine organisms will be adapted to the natural processes of sediment movement, erosion and deposition, including the increased levels of sediment movement reached during storms. Therefore, the habitats and associated species as a whole will naturally adjust or reach equilibrium in response to any minor temporary local changes.

All excavation works to be completed by GNI will be completed in accordance with the Environmental Management Plan (GMC, 2022).

In isolation, the current proposed project is not likely to cause adverse effects on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC in relation to potential contaminated surface water run-off. However, the Castle Gypsum Ltd. development (Ref: 2460103; ABP-321962-25) is functionally dependant on the currently proposed gas pipeline and when considered cumulatively there is potential for adverse effects on the qualifying interest (QI) species and habitats associated with the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, which in the absence of site-specific mitigation measures cannot be discounted. This cumulative effect is discussed in detail in **Section 3.5.8**.

3.4.1.4 Noise and Air Emissions

Localised increases in noise levels are likely to occur during the construction phase of the proposed works due to the operation of machinery, including cutting tarmac roads. The project will require excavation and earthworks which will occur within existing carriageways (N29, L3412 and an unnamed road) and within a greenfield area of the Castle Gypsum site. The new proposed skid location will also be located within the Castle Gypsum site and the connection to the existing mains will occur within an area of maintained grass verge near the Belview Science & Technology Park. Any trenching works within the boundary of the permitted development (Ref: 2460103; ABP-321962-25) will be completed by the Customer and are covered under the Customer's NIS (Malone O'Regan Environmental, 2024).

All excavation works to be completed by GNI will be completed in accordance with the Environmental Management Plan (GMC, 2022).

Given the nature and scale of the proposed works, the GNI standard management procedures, and the urban nature of the surrounding environs, it is considered there is no likelihood of adverse effects on any Natura 2000 sites relating to noise.

Dust or other airborne emissions are likely to result from construction works at the proposed application site. Dust from construction is not generally significant beyond short distances. There is the potential for a small quantity of gas to be released from the installation and connection works, however this will be negligible within the urban environment which is already subject to various sources of air pollution, e.g. vehicle exhaust.

There is the potential for a small quantity of gas to be released during the proposed works, however this will be negligible within the urban environment which is already subject to various sources of air pollution, e.g. vehicle exhaust. All works will follow the Emissions Management Procedure within the Environmental Management Plan (GMC, 2022) as standard.

The release of these airborne emissions at the proposed site is not likely to have an adverse effect in such a way that the habitats would become unsuitable for the qualifying interest species of the Lower River Suir SAC or any other Natura 2000 site.

3.4.1.5 Alien Invasive Plant Species

The site is a mixture of brownfield and greenfield. A portion of the pipeline installation will take place within existing roadways and verges of the N29 and the L3421, and a portion will be installed within agricultural grassland habitat, currently undergoing pre-construction clearance as part of the permitted development (KCC Ref: 2460103; ABP-321962-25).

Cherry Laurel was recorded along the verge of the L3421. This species is not listed on Schedule III of the EC (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011). However, this species is considered a 'high' risk species ((risk-assessed by Kelly et al. (2013) and Flynn et al. (2014))). No other AIPS were recorded within or proximal to the proposed site of works.

The stands recorded do not lie within the proposed works area. Given the application of standard measures to prevent the spread of AIPS (GMC, 2022), it is not likely that the proposed will cause the spread of this species or have the potential to impact the Lower River Suir SAC or any other Natura 2000 site as a result.

3.4.1.6 Ex-situ Impacts

Disturbance and/or displacement may occur where populations of a mobile species listed as a qualifying interest of a Natura 2000 site suffer negative effects outside of the Natura 2000 site (ex-situ impacts). Such effects also include fatalities and loss of foraging opportunities.

There is potential for highly mobile qualifying interest (QI) species associated with the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC such as Atlantic Salmon, Twaite Shad, Lamprey species, European Eel and Otter, to at least occasionally make use of the Gorteens16 Stream over which the proposed pipeline will be installed. Should any of these QI species be present along this stream outside the geographical boundaries of the designated sites, there is potential for adverse ex-situ effects on these species to occur during the construction phase of the proposed development in the absence of site-specific mitigation measures.

3.4.2 Potential Operational Phase Impacts

The operational phase impacts of the proposed project otherwise do not differ significantly from the impacts already occurring at the site (the do-nothing scenario) in terms of habitat loss and disturbance. No additional potential impacts will arise as a result of the operational phase of the proposed development specifically.

3.5 LIKELY IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT ON THE NATURA 2000 SITES

As outlined above, the proposed development has the potential to result in adverse effects on the conservation objectives of the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, due to the presence of a viable source-receptor pathway and the potential for ex-situ impacts and the deterioration of surface water quality during the construction phase. It is not deemed that the proposed project has the potential to impact any other Natura 2000 sites via hydrological connectivity, ex-situ impacts or other source receptor pathways. All works completed by GNI will be carried out applying standard environmental controls throughout the construction phase and in accordance with the 'Environmental Management Plan' (GMC, 2022). The likely impact is discussed below.

3.5.1 Size, Scale & Land-take

There will be no direct impacts on any Natura 2000 site.

3.5.2 Distance from or Key Features of the Natura 2000 Sites

As detailed in **Table 3.1** and shown in **Figure 3.1**.

3.5.3 Resource Requirements (water abstraction *etc.*)

There will be no resource requirements (including water abstraction) from any Natura 2000 site as a result of the proposed works. Any water required during the works will be brought to site.

3.5.4 Excavation Requirements

The potential for adverse effects on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC is likely to occur as a result of excavation from the proposed works in the construction phase. This likely impact is discussed in **Section 4**.

3.5.5 Emission (disposal to land, water or air)

The potential for adverse effects on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC is likely to occur as a result of emissions from the proposed development works in the construction phase. This likely impact is discussed in **Section 4**.

3.5.6 Transportation Requirements

Transport requirements during construction and operation will use existing road networks and will not occur within the boundaries of any Natura 2000 sites.

3.5.7 Duration of Operations

For the purposes of environmental assessment, the duration of operations at the proposed facility is assumed to be permanent.

3.5.8 Cumulative Effects

While a single development may only result in a minor environmental impact, when considered in combination with other impacts it may result in a cumulative impact which could be considered significant (EPA, 2022).

Cumulative effects can result from individually insignificant but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time or concentrated in a location (CIEEM, 2018).

Projects to be considered in an assessment of cumulative effects would include the following types of future development within the same zone of influence:

- Proposals for which consent has been applied which are awaiting determination in any regulatory process (not necessarily limited to planning permission).
- Projects which have been granted consent (not limited to planning permissions) but which have not yet been started or which have been started but are not yet completed (i.e. under construction).
- Proposals which have been refused permission, but which are subject to appeal and the appeal is undetermined to the extent that their details are in the public domain.
- Proposed projects that will be implemented by a public body but for which no consent is needed from a competent authority (CIEEM, 2018).

In some situations, it may be necessary to also consider:

- Constructed developments whose full environmental effects are not yet felt and therefore cannot be accounted for in the baseline.
- Developments specifically referenced in a National Policy Statement, a National Plan or a Local Plan (draft or adopted) (CIEEM, 2018).

A review of the National Planning Database (NPD) and the An Coimisiún Pleanála website was undertaken on the 28th of January 2026 to identify relevant planning applications proximal to the study area, in terms of cumulative effects.

An appropriate site search area was defined as consisting of 1km from the boundary of the works along the N29, L3412 and an unnamed road and within the Castle Gypsum greenfield site. A search of planning applications within this area within the last 5 years was undertaken by O'Donnell Environmental. **Table 3.3** below provides the results of the search and includes the permitted application (Ref. 19328) which the proposed pipeline will facilitate. The locations of the applications are shown in **Figure 3.2**.

Table 3.3 – Summary of relevant planning applications within 1km of the proposed development.

| Application Number | Development Description | Decision | Decision Date |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------|
| 19328 | for a change of use at Units 3 and 4 Belview Port. It is intended to change its current warehousing use to allow for the acceptance and processing of non-hazardous waste into Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF) and for the composting of organic fines. The application will allow for acceptance and processing of up to 98,500 tonnes per annum at the facility. The application is accompanied by An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) | Conditional Permission | 11/11/2019 |
| 19668 (ABP-306136-19) | for a seven year planning permission for a Continental Cheese manufacturing plant. The development will include a part single storey and part two storey production building approximately 14 metres high with intakes, processing plant and equipment, packi | Conditional Permission | 30/06/2020 |
| 20769 | for (1) (a) Permission for the proposed erection of a Fertiliser Storage unit together with all associated site works, landscaping and ancillary services on site including (b) the removal of the existing septic tank on site, and the proposed installation | Conditional Permission | 13/01/2021 |
| 20552 | for a 7 year planning permission for Bulk Stores, an uncovered storage yard and associated offices, personnel facilities and site works including earthworks, road works, entrance, gates, and fencing, concrete paving, water services, borewell, drainage wo | Conditional Permission | 14/01/2021 |
| 20612 | for a 7 year planning permission for an extension to bulk stores and associated site works permitted by planning permission P.17/820. The stores will be used to store port related products such as break bulk, bulk and unitized loads | Conditional Permission | 26/01/2021 |
| 20920 | for (1) Permission for Retention of the following, (a) the erection of a concrete kerbing on site, (b) the revision of fencing layout from that previous granted under Planning reg No's P15/251 and P17/79 consisting of the removal of the palisade Fencing | Conditional Permission | 23/02/2021 |
| 20700 | to develop a log yard and associated works. The log yard will extend the area available for stockpiling and handling of logs for use in SmartPLY's oriented strand board mill which adjoins the site. A Natura Impact Statement will accompany the Applicati | Conditional Permission | 05/03/2021 |
| 214 | to erect a dwellinghouse, detached garage, sewage treatment system and all ancillary works | Conditional Permission | 13/05/2021 |
| 21586 | for a 7 year planning permission for a bulk store and associated site works. The store will be used to store port related products such as break bulk, bulk and unitised loads | Conditional Permission | 31/08/2021 |
| 2144 | for development. The development will comprise amendments to previously approved development (Planning Ref 12/324; An Bord Pleanála Ref PL10.241077 and Planning Ref 17/153) comprising the development of two boreholes and associated works for the purpose | Conditional Permission | 06/01/2022 |
| 21989 | for development at this site. The development consists of the installation of a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) unit including a 7.55m high stack, stack access ladder and platform, improvements to the internal estate road and ancillary site works at the p | Conditional Permission | 03/02/2022 |
| 211016 | to erect a dwelling house, detached garage, sewage treatment system & all ancillary works | Conditional Permission | 21/03/2022 |
| 2281 | for development. The development will consist of the installation of 5250 Solar PV panels over the roof of existing industrial buildings and all associated site works and services | Conditional Permission | 04/04/2022 |

| | | | |
|---------|--|------------------------|------------|
| 22119 | to build a garage and store in the paddock to the rear of Thornbridge House (their dwellinghouse), together with associated site development works, including access from their existing entrance driveway. All on their lands | Conditional Permission | 15/06/2022 |
| 22297 | for the refurbishment of the existing gate house / security office at the main entrance to Belview Port to include new external cladding and windows, and a proposed extension to the existing structure to add toilet facility and associated site works | Conditional Permission | 30/06/2022 |
| 22569 | to construct 3No wood based, biomass storage bays an ash storage building and associated site works including road widening to an existing internal road and a new concrete yard area. A Natura Impact Statement will accompany the Application. Smartply Euro | Conditional Permission | 12/01/2023 |
| 22480 | for a Maintenance Building, roof mounted solar panels and associate site works at Belview Port, the building is to provide storage for port vehicles, workshops for the maintenance and storage of port machinery and equipment, ancillary office accommodatio | Conditional Permission | 19/01/2023 |
| 2329 | or the construction of a slatted tank, cattle shed, alongside all associated site works | Conditional Permission | 30/03/2023 |
| 22549 | for a single-storey extension to existing warehouse (BV2) to north of site, new storm water attenuation tank and the part realignment of existing concrete yard together with all associated site development works | Conditional Permission | 28/04/2023 |
| 22318 | for a laydown area for equipment and break bulk materials. The works will include earthworks, drainage, concrete paving, retaining walls and landscaping works. A Natura Impact Statement will accompany this application | Conditional Permission | 17/05/2023 |
| 2360274 | Seed Technology Ltd. is applying for Planning Permission for (1) New single storey warehouse, incorporating a 2 Storey office block; (2) Open sided covered goods in-take area from proposed warehouse to existing building; (3) New single storey storage bui | Conditional Permission | 02/11/2023 |
| 2360315 | for (1) Retention Permission for storage of felled trees, to maximum height of 6m to part of the site; 2) Planning Permission for a 3-year duration for additional storage area to the site for felled trees, to maximum height of 6m, together with all assoc | Conditional Permission | 14/11/2023 |
| 2360511 | for the construction of a new roof on each of the previously granted concrete storage structures (Planning Ref 22/569). SmartPly Europe currently hold an Industrial Emission Licence issued by the EPA | Conditional Permission | 10/01/2024 |
| 2360046 | for the proposed erection of a Security Cabin on site comprised of Security Office, Canteen and WC together with Treatment Plant and associated Polishing Filter and all associated site works and ancillary services on site | Conditional Permission | 06/02/2024 |
| 2460055 | for alterations to previously granted permission (PD Ref: 23/60274) to close in the permitted open-sided yard area, elevational alterations and the reduction in height to 9m to eaves, together with all associated site development works | Conditional Permission | 02/04/2024 |
| 2460152 | for development, at Unit 2, Belview Port, Gorteens, Co. Kilkenny. The development will consist of the amendment of condition no. 3 PI. Ref. 11/397 to include for the acceptance, unloading and storage of non-hazardous waste including construction and demo | Conditional Permission | 22/05/2024 |
| 2460256 | for the development of 2no. grain silos and associated site works | Conditional Permission | 23/07/2024 |

| | | | |
|---------|--|------------------------|------------|
| 2360426 | for a 7-year planning permission for 3 No Bulk Stores, a marshalling yard and site works including earthworks, road works, entrance, gates and fencing, concrete paving, water services, drainage works, site lighting and landscaping. The stores will be us | Conditional Permission | 16/09/2024 |
| 2460103 | for development on lands with a site area of approximately 11.57ha located at Gorteens, Co. Kilkenny. The development will consist of the construction of an integrated plasterboard manufacturing facility, incorporating a production plant with access fro | Conditional Permission | 12/02/2025 |
| 2460656 | for development, at Unit 1, Belview Port, Gorteens, Co. Kilkenny. The development will consist of the amendment of condition no. 3 Pl. Ref. 11/397 to include for the acceptance, unloading and storage of non-hazardous waste including construction and demo | Conditional Permission | 21/02/2025 |
| 2560050 | to refurbish and extend our dwelling. Works will include to construct a single storey extension to the front, a single storey extension to the rear, Elevation changes and to connect the dwelling to the public sewer, along with all associated site develo | Conditional Permission | 02/04/2025 |
| 2560152 | for the use of an existing storage shed for the storage of selected waste materials in addition to the current storage of bulk port related materials at Shed H4 located at the Suir Shipping site, Belview Port, Co. Kilkenny. The proposal for shed H4 will | Conditional Permission | 20/05/2025 |
| 2560177 | for the construction of a bulk store and associated site works. The store will be used to store port related products such as break bulk, bulk and unitised loads | Conditional Permission | 27/05/2025 |
| 2560233 | constructing 2 no. industrial warehouse blocks for bulk storage, with Block A housing 4 no. single storey storage units (floor area - 3,488.4m2) and Block B housing 4 no. single storey units (floor area - 8446.2m2), new weighbridge and cabin, new interna | Conditional Permission | 23/06/2025 |
| 2560384 | for the construction of 2no. weighbridges, 1no. single storey modular weighbridge office building, alterations to the existing access road and entrance (Planning Ref No. 20/552), boundary treatments, ancillary service connections, landscaping and all as | Conditional Permission | 18/08/2025 |
| 2560254 | for the extension of the existing access road that provides access to lands located at Belview Port, Gorteens & Drumdowney Upper, Co. Kilkenny. The proposed development works will consist of the extension of the existing access service road, construct a | Conditional Permission | 05/12/2025 |
| 2560730 | for a development at this site. The development will consist of alterations to a previously permitted development (Planning Ref. 2560233) and will include the following: â€¢ Construction of additional 428m2 of single storey bulk storage to Block B. | Conditional Permission | 19/01/2026 |
| 2560391 | a 10 Year Planning Permission for a solar farm with a total area of circa 189 hectares in the townlands of Atateemore or Blackneys, Ballyhobuck, Ballyrahan, Carriganurra, Charlestown, Davidstown, Drumdowney Lower, Drumdowney Upper, Gorteens, Grogan, Kilm | New Application | - |
| 2560631 | TirlÃ¡n Ireland are applying for retention permission for the following existing development. The Existing Development consists of two existing groundwater abstraction wells and associated works for the purpose of water abstraction to serve the existin | Further Information | - |
| N/A | GNI propose the installation of approximately 400 meters of 250PE and 900m of 180PE main within the existing carriageway and hard shoulder of the L3421 and N29 roads to facilitate a permitted development in the Belview Port area. | N/A | N/A |

Note 1: 'Development Description' field was truncated by the Planning Authority when providing data to the NPD.

The planning developments which were found within a 1km buffer of the proposed works at Belview Port, Co. Kilkenny were assessed.

The permitted Castle Gypsum Ltd. development (Ref: 2460103; ABP-321962-25) is functionally dependant on the currently proposed gas pipeline. For consistency with that application, it is concluded that in the absence of targeted mitigation measures, the potential for negative effects on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC with regard to cumulative effects (surface water quality during the construction stage which has the potential to negatively affect relevant species downstream) cannot be discounted.

The planning application for the Customers project was supported by a Natura Impact Statement (Malone O'Regan Environmental, 2024) and in their Order, An Bord Pleanála (as it was then known) accepted this report and the mitigation measures contained within. Malone O'Regan Environmental (2024) concluded that the Castle Gypsum Ltd. project is not likely to have adverse effects on the Lower River Suir SAC or the River Nore and River Barrow SAC given the application of appropriate mitigation measures.

Given the scale and nature of the proposed pipeline installation, and the application of standard environmental controls throughout the construction phase in accordance with the 'Environmental Management Plan' (GMC, 2022), it is considered that the proposed project alone would not have an adverse effect on the conservation objectives of Lower River Suir SAC, River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other Natura 2000 site.

However, for consistency with the Customers application, it is concluded that in the absence of targeted mitigation measures, the potential for adverse effects on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC with regard to cumulative effects (surface water quality during the construction stage) cannot be discounted.

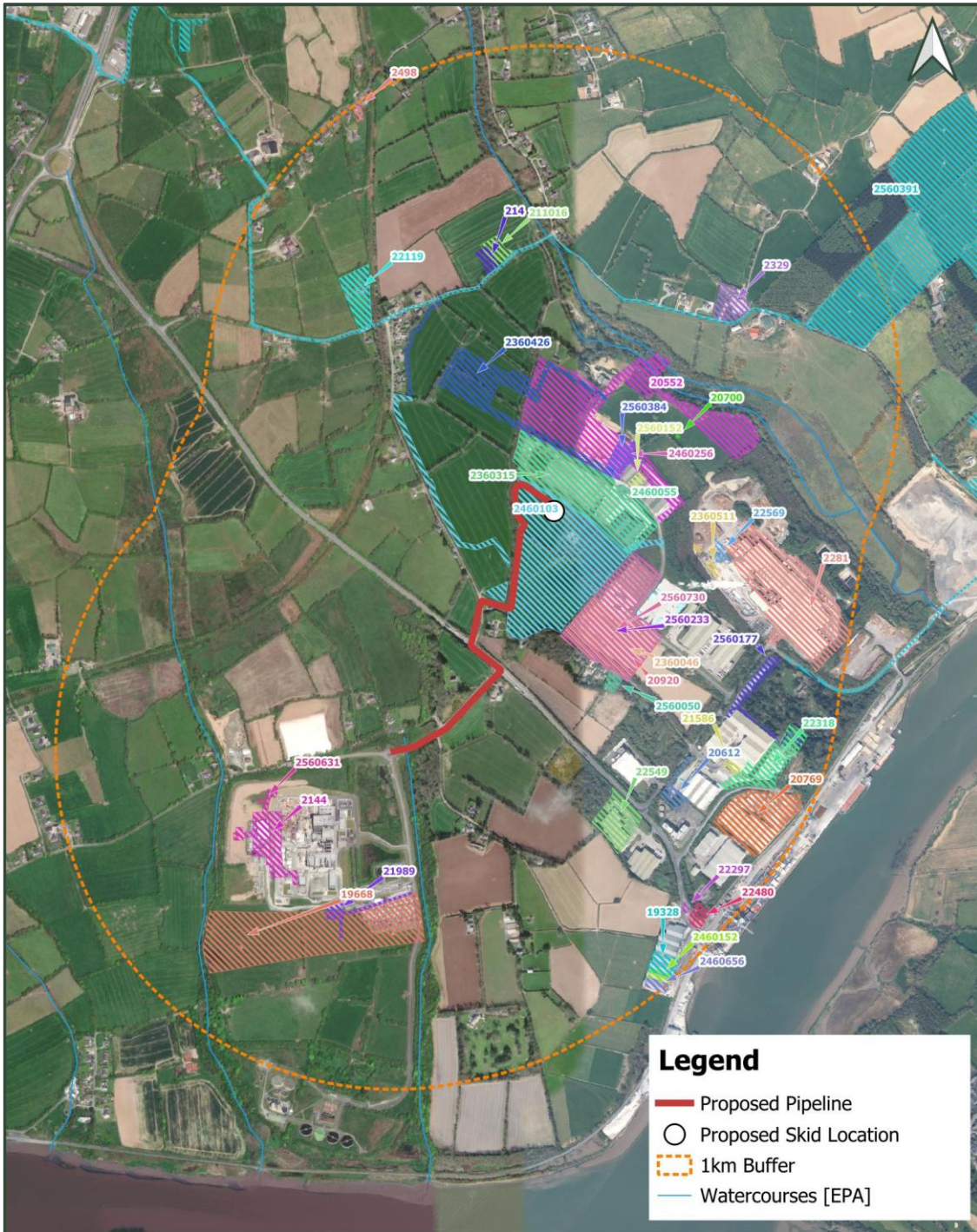


Figure 3.2 Planning Search

Project:
Castle Gypsum Grid Connection, Belview,
Co. Kilkenny

0 0.25 0.5 km

Prepared for:

Gas Networks Ireland

Claire McCarthy BSc (Hons) MSc
D:28/01/2026

3.6 AA SCREENING CONCLUSION

This Appropriate Assessment screening exercise has been carried out based on the best available scientific information and data, an ecological site walkover and project details provided by Gas Networks Ireland.

The Castle Gypsum Ltd. development is functionally dependant on the currently proposed gas pipeline. For consistency with that application, it is concluded that in the absence of targeted mitigation measures, the potential for negative effects on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC with regard to cumulative effects (surface water quality during the construction stage) cannot be discounted.

A Stage 2 'Appropriate Assessment' (NIS) is therefore required to consider the effects of proposed mitigation measures, and this is presented in **Section 4** of this report.

All potential impacts of the proposed development have been identified and assessed. With the exception of the specific impacts outlined above, all other potential impacts are considered not likely to cause significant adverse effects on Lower River Suir SAC, River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other Natura 2000 sites, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, due to the separation distances involved, the lack of any viable source-receptor pathway and the implementation of industry standard measures and best practice guidelines. It is considered that there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.

4 Stage 2: Natura Impact Statement

Consideration is given here to the residual impacts of the likely significant effects identified in the preceding section, on the relevant qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC following application of avoidance and specific mitigation measures.

Details of the relevant designated sites including conservation objectives and qualifying interests are outlined in **Section 3.1**.

The Conservation Objectives documents for the Lower River Suir SAC and the River Barrow and River Nore SAC are available at the following link: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites>.

4.1 MITIGATION MEASURES

The industry standard and site-specific environmental control measures are outlined below to address identified potential negative effects on designated sites during the construction and decommissioning phases of the proposed development.

4.1.1 Surface Water

The Customer's Natura Impact Statement (NIS) (Malone O'Regan Environmental, 2024) sets out minimum measures which will be delivered as part of the permitted project (Ref: 2460103; ABP-321962-25) to manage surface water quality. The relevant measures include:

- All concrete will be supplied by accredited suppliers and pours planned to avoid impacts.
- Concrete washing will be carried out on site in a controlled manner in a designated location away from surface water drainage features.
- Provision of 20m exclusion zones between stockpiled materials and any proposed surface water drainage features.
- Storage of hydrocarbons or other polluting chemicals will occur within a designated, bunded area in the construction compound. Regular water removal from the bund will be undertaken after periods of high rainfall, with hydrocarbon levels tested and disposed of by a licensed facility.
- Spill kits and absorbent materials (i.e. sand) will be available and accessible across the site and disposed of correctly when used.
- The contractor will be responsible for ensuring all personnel on site are trained in pollution incident control and training records will be maintained.
- Kilkenny County Council will be informed if an emergency occurs on site.

The above relevant measures will be applied to the pipeline installation works, in addition to further industry standard measures detailed within the contractors 'Environmental Management Plan' (GMC, 2022).

The measures detailed above are considered appropriate to eliminate the likelihood of a significant adverse effects arising on the qualifying interests of the Lower River Suir SAC and River Barrow and River Nore SAC during the construction period, as a result of the cumulative effect of surface water run-off due to proposed pipeline, in addition to the Customers project.

4.2 NIS CONCLUSION

With the implementation of the mitigation measures outlined above, it is objectively concluded that the proposed project is not likely to result in adverse effects on Lower River Suir SAC, River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other Natura 2000 site, individually or in combination with other plans or projects. It is considered that there is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion. In reaching this conclusion, consideration has been given to the conservation objectives of the relevant designated sites and their special conservation interests.

5 References

Council of the European Communities (1992) Council Directive of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (92/43/EEC). OJL 206/35, 1992.

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Appendix A Photographic Record



A1. Fenced off grassland area within which the proposed skid location will be installed.



A2. View of the greenfield site currently under construction within which the pipeline will be installed.



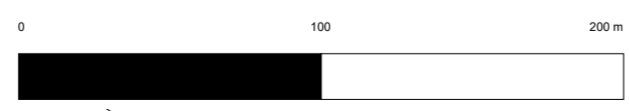
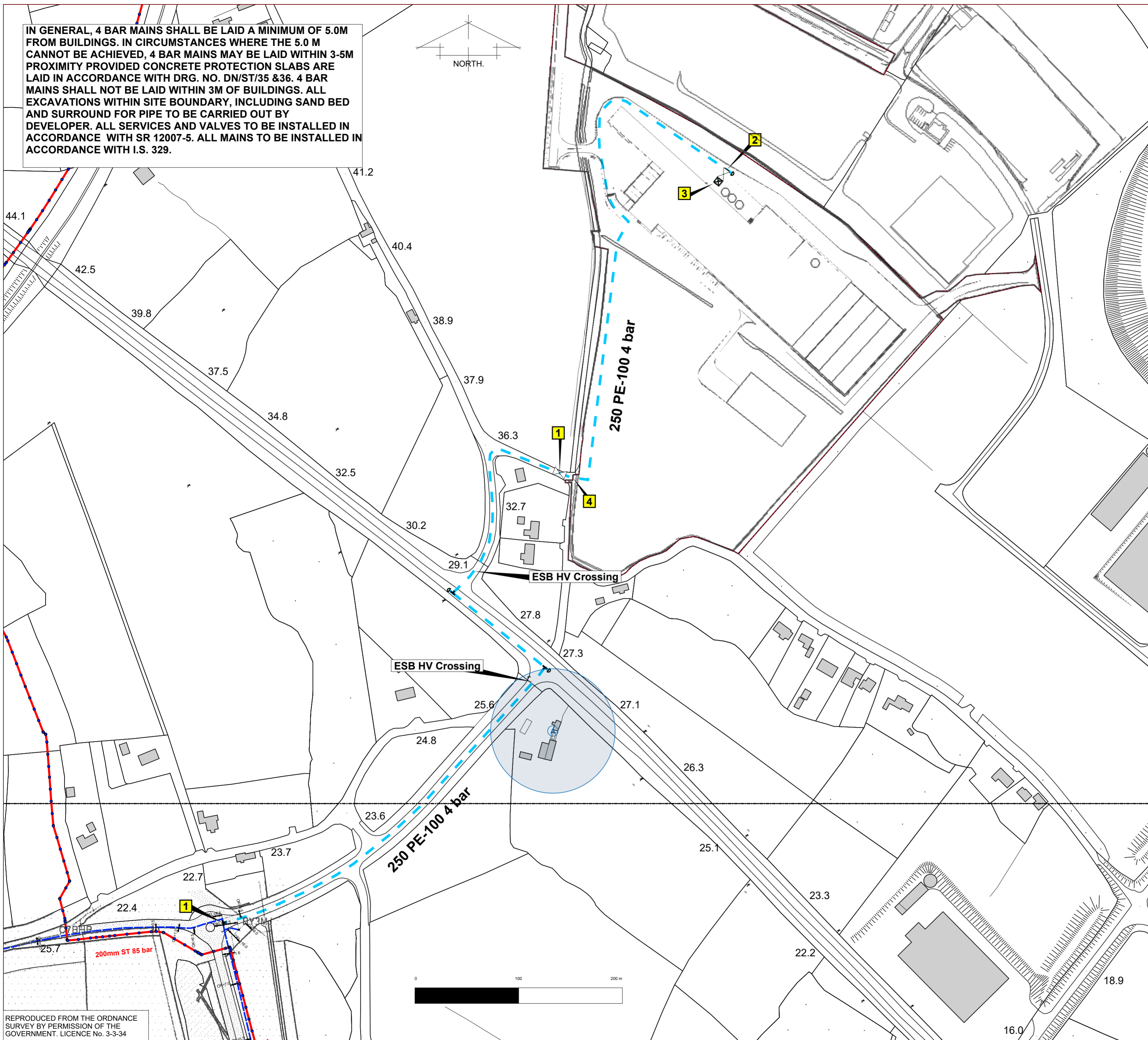
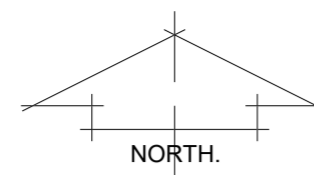
A3. View along the N29 leading along which the pipeline will be installed.



A4. View of the L3421 towards the Belview Science & Technology Park along which the proposed pipeline will be installed.

Appendix B Project Design Information

IN GENERAL, 4 BAR MAINS SHALL BE LAID A MINIMUM OF 5.0M FROM BUILDINGS. IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THE 5.0 M CANNOT BE ACHIEVED, 4 BAR MAINS MAY BE LAID WITHIN 3-5M PROXIMITY PROVIDED CONCRETE PROTECTION SLABS ARE LAID IN ACCORDANCE WITH DRG. NO. DN/ST/35 & 36. 4 BAR MAINS SHALL NOT BE LAID WITHIN 3M OF BUILDINGS. ALL EXCAVATIONS WITHIN SITE BOUNDARY, INCLUDING SAND BED AND SURROUND FOR PIPE TO BE CARRIED OUT BY DEVELOPER. ALL SERVICES AND VALVES TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SR 12007-5. ALL MAINS TO BE INSTALLED IN ACCORDANCE WITH I.S. 329.



REPRODUCED FROM THE ORDNAVANCE SURVEY BY PERMISSION OF THE GOVERNMENT. LICENCE No. 3-3-34

Important Safety Notice:

Damage to gas pipelines can result in serious injury or death. Gas network information is provided as a general guide. The exact location and depth of medium or low pressure distribution gas pipes must be verified on site by carrying out necessary investigations, including, for example, hand digging trial holes along the route of the pipe. Service pipes are not generally shown but their presence should always be anticipated.

High pressure transmission pipelines are shown in red. If a transmission pipeline is identified within 10m of any intended excavations then work must not proceed before GNI has been consulted. The true location and depth of a transmission pipeline must be verified on site by a representative of GNI. Contact can be made through 1800 427 747.

All work in the vicinity of the gas network must be completed in accordance with the current edition of the Health & Safety Authority publication, Code of Practice For Avoiding Danger From Underground Services which is available from the Health and Safety Authority (01 614 7000) or can be downloaded at www.hsa.ie.

Legal Notice:

Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) and its affiliates, accept no responsibility for the accuracy of any information contained in this document including data concerning location and technical designation of the gas distribution and transmission network (the Information). The Information should not be relied on for accurate distance or depth of cover measurements.

Any representations and warranties, express or implied, are excluded to the fullest extent permitted by law. No liability shall be accepted for any loss or damage including, without limitation, direct, indirect or consequential loss, arising out of or in connection with the use or re-use of the Information.

- Connect to existing 315PE-100 4bar main with a 315PE x 250PN16 branch saddle, install Donkin 158 and lay 250PE-100 SDR17 4bar mains to end cap. Install valve in public carriageway on entry to client site as per DN/ST/111.
- Connect to proposed 250PE-100 4bar main with an equal tee and lay 1 no. 250PE-100 4bar valved service as per DN/ST/111 and install 1 no. SP3 MP T/S skid located externally as per DN/ST/161 with palisade fence as per DN/ST/125. GNI shall install concrete base as per DN/ST/124. Install daily metering and BMS equipment as per DN/ST/220 Sheet 1 of 2.

Stream A: Outlet 400mbar, Relief 592mbar, Slam 643mbar.
Stream B: Outlet 360mbar, Relief 592mbar, Slam 693mbar.

- Customer shall provide a 220v power supply to the edge of the skid base to facilitate daily metering as per DN/ST/220 Sht 1 of 2.

- Install ATEX "Zone 2" sign per DN/ST/167 and safety sign per DN/ST/168. There shall be no window / door / vent openings or potential sources of ignition permitted within 2.5m from the vent tip per DN/ST/184 - Sheet 1of 3. Relief valve to be vented to 3m above ground level as per DN/ST/160. NOTE: if mechanical air handling units exist in vicinity of meter location then the distance from the vent tip needs to be increased by 1m.
- Client shall provide pre-ex trench from site boundary.

- ESB HV supervision may be required for 38kV (O/H) line along N29. Contact Sinead O'Donell (087-1972169).
- Archaeological monitoring required. Contact Declan Moore (091-875749).
- Section 39A Consent required prior to construction.

Approx. Pipe Length:
250PE-100 SDR17 = 1280m

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| 1 | Construction Issue | LG | TK | DB |
| | | 30/10/25 | 30/10/25 | 30/10/25 |
| ISSUE | REVISION | DATE | DATE | DATE |
| WAYLEAVE REQD: | No | O.S. REF. NO'S: | N/A | |
| MATRLS. DELIVERY: | N/A | SURVEYED BY: | N/A | |
| METER SIZE: | SP3 | SUPPLY PRESS: | 4bar | OUTLET PRESS: |
| | | | | 400mbar |
| Design Department - DUBLIN | | | | |
| PROJECT: | Castle Gypsum Ltd. | DATE: | 30/10/2025 | SCALE: |
| | | DRAWN: | LG | APPR.: |
| | | | | DB |
| TITLE: | Design Drawing | DRG. NO. | PROJ. NO. | SH. |
| | | 48517068 | 48517068 | 1 of 3 |

O'DONNELL 
ENVIRONMENTAL

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