Galway Council

N6 Galway City Ring Road

Eco-hydrogeology Summary Report for Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh)

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Introduction 1

Moycullen Bogs NHA was identified as one of the sixteen Groundwater Dependant Terrestrial Ecosystems in Chapter 10 of the EIAR. The Moycullen Bogs NHA encompasses three separate bog sites including, from west to east, Na Foraí Maola Thiar, Lough Inch, Tonabrocky and Letteragh. The hydrogeology of the peatland water table has been assessed in detail in Section 10.3.3.1 of Chapter 10 of the EIAR and the impact assessment undertaken in Section 10.5.3 of Chapter 10 of the EIAR.

Those areas of the Moycullen Bogs NHA at Na Foraí Maola Thiar and Lough Inch are either in a separate catchment or down gradient of the proposed road development and therefore are not at risk from groundwater drawdown induced from cuttings.

The area of the Moycullen Bogs NHA at Tonabrocky lies in a distinct subcatchment to that of the proposed road development. Tonabrocky and the proposed road development are separated by a surface watercourse, with the proposed road development located 450m distant from Tonabrocky at its closest and the proposed road development is raised on an embankment in that section. Accordingly, the area of the Moycullen Bogs NHA at Tonabrocky is not at risk from groundwater drawdown induced from cuttings.

The area of the Moycullen Bogs NHA at Letteragh lies on high ground west of the River Corrib. The NHA lies on the catchment divide between (i) groundwater that drains eastward and northwards to the River Corrib and (ii) groundwater that drains southward towards Galway Bay. In the granite area, the surface water and groundwater catchments are the same.

The proposed road development in this location comprises:

- the main alignment, which is in a deep cutting at Letteragh
- the N59 Link Road North, which is at grade, or on embankment close to Moycullen Bogs and then in a cutting just before the N59 Moycullen Road

This Eco-Hydrogeology Report summarises the ecological and hydrogeological assessments which have been undertaken at the Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh) from the mainline of the proposed road development and the N59 Link Road North. The results of this assessment are presented in the application documentation and now, at the Inspector's request, includes four cross sections drawn between the proposed road development at Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh), which are presented in Appendix A. The sections comprise:

- Section A-A: North South section between the mainline Letteragh cutting and the main area of the NHA that is permanently ponded
- Section B-B: North South section between the mainline Letteragh cutting and a satellite area of the NHA that is permanently ponded
- Section C-C: West east section from the N59 North Link Road cutting to both the main and satellite ponded areas

Section D-D: North south section from N59 North Link Road a closest point to the NHA

2 **Groundwater Dependent Qualifying** Habitat in Moycullen Bogs NHA

Moycullen Bogs NHA is designated as a Natural Heritage Area under the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2019 for peatland habitats. The main habitat on the site is the Annex I habitat Blanket bog [*7130] but the site also supports a diversity of other peatland and fen habitats including Wet heath [4010], Dry heath [4030] and Alkaline fen [7230].

The Moycullen Bogs NHA lies immediately adjacent to the proposed road development boundary at Letteragh. At Letteragh, the NHA comprises a mosaic of habitats including dystrophic lakes (FL1), reed and large sedge swamp (FS1), wet grassland (GS4), dry siliceous heath (HH1), wet heath (HH3), lowland blanket bog (PB3), poor fen and flush, (PF2), transition mire and quaking bog (PF3) and scrub (WS1). The Annex I habitat types present at Tonabrocky are Dystrophic lakes [3160], Wet heath [4010], Dry heath [4030], Blanket bog [*7130], Transition mires [7140] and Rhynchosporion depressions [7150].

The extent, distribution and condition of peatland habitats are predominantly controlled by hydrological processes, with water being supplied by a combination of precipitation, overland flow and flow through the peat layer. The depth of peat and the depth of the water table are also critical components of a peatland ecosystem in determining habitat extent and distribution.

The hydrogeological regime, particularly the natural groundwater table, must be maintained so that the area, distribution and depth of the peatland habitats and their constituent/characteristic vegetation zones and communities are not reduced or compromised in any way.

The Fossitt classifications of the habitats within Moycullen Bogs NHA at Letteragh, that lie in the immediate vicinity of the proposed road development, are shown on Figure 8.14.5 and 8.14.6 of the EIAR. For ease of reference the habitats with Fossitt classifications are reproduced below in Figure 1 noting that this was considered in the application documentation (Figure 1 below is a composite of Figure 8.14.5 and 8.14.6 of the EIAR for the purposes of clarification).

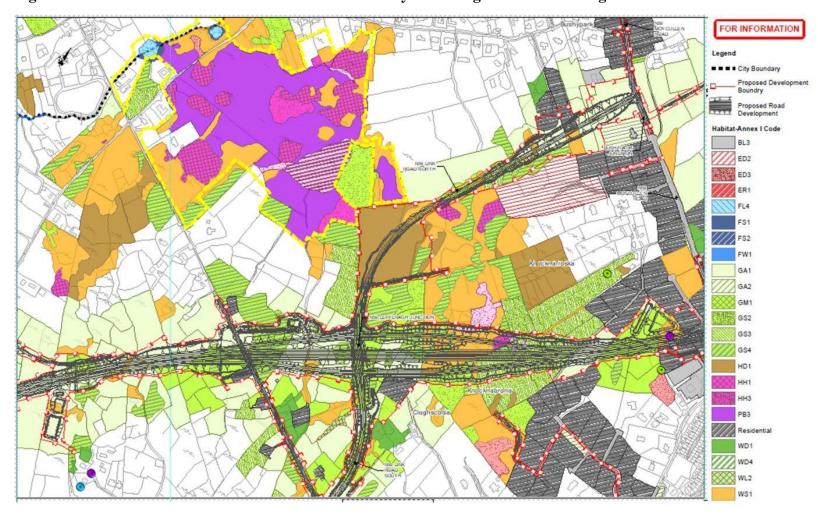


Figure 1: Fossitt classifications of the habitats within Moycullen Bogs NHA at Letteragh

The Annex I classifications of the habitats within Moycullen Bogs NHA at Tonabrocky, that lie in the immediate vicinity of the proposed road development, are shown on Figure 8.15.5 and 8.15.6 of the EIAR. For ease of reference the habitats with Annex I classifications are reproduced below in Figure 2 noting that this was considered in the application documentation (Figure 2 below is a composite of Figure 8.15.5. and 8.15.6 of the EIAR for the purposes of clarification).

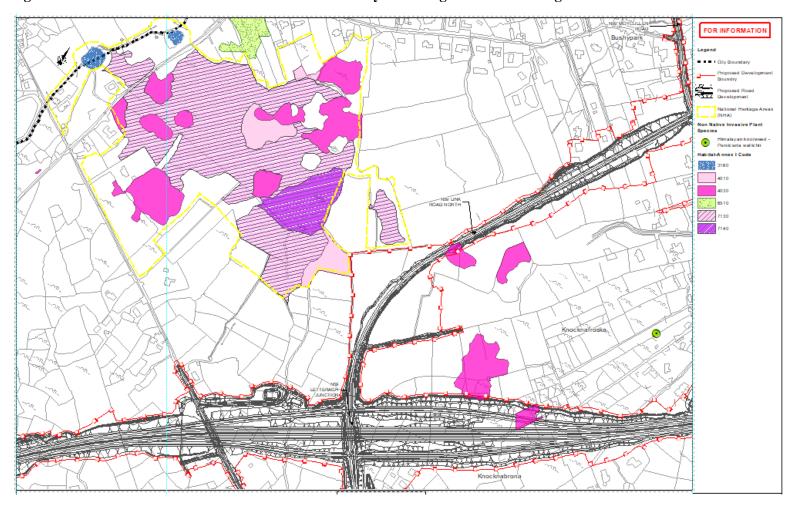


Figure 2: Annex I classifications of the habitats within Moycullen Bogs NHA at Letteragh

3 **Hydrogeology Impact Assessment**

The hydrogeology of the Galway Granite Batholith includes areas where there is poor drainage and water ponding at the surface, and these areas include the Moycullen Bogs NHA. Where surface water ponding occurs, there is often little or no seasonal variation in the water level, with most areas remaining ponded throughout the summer.

The undulating topography of the Galway Granite Batholith includes areas of topographic highs where bedrock is near surface and topographic lows where the subsoils are thicker (up to 3m). On the topographic highs, rainfall runs off as overland flow whilst it is the low lying ground where surface ponding, as discussed above, tends to occur.

The GSI vulnerability data and the project ground investigation data together with the Ordnance Survey topographic data show that the granite has an undulating rock topography. As the granite is of low permeability, it will perch surface water and where drainage is poor, such in flat lying areas, surface water will be impounded and ponded. Due to the way that granite weathers, it forms an undulating rounded topography of ridges. The ridges occur where the rock is competent, hard and not weathered. The low points form where the granite has weathered and these are the main areas where water collects and forms permanent ponds. The water level in these areas tends not to vary as it is limited to spill points in the surrounding rock topography.

Connectivity between groundwater and the ponded surface water will be slight. As such, the water ponding on the surface at the Moycullen Bogs is not groundwater from the bedrock but water ponded on the top of the bedrock that has saturated the subsoil, has no natural discharge point, and so breaches the ground surface (i.e. pluvial ponding).

The Letteragh cutting on the mainline is shown on Figure 10.6.006 (plan and profile) of the EIAR with minimum and maximum groundwater levels shown. The drawdown extents calculated for the Letteragh cutting and the N59 Link Road North are shown on Figure 10.7.106 (construction) and 10.8.106 (operation) of the EIAR.

As reference above, four additional cross sections are included in Appendix A of this report to show the extent of drawdown relative to the permanently ponded areas in Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh). These cross sections show drawdown from the mainline Letteragh cutting as well as the N59 Link Road North. Sections A-A and B-B show the drawdown from the mainline Letteragh cutting to the main permanent ponded area in the NHA as well as a satellite ponded area located to the southeast. Sections C-C shows drawdown from the main cutting on the N59 Link Road North and Section D-D shows the proposed road at its closest proximity to the Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh).

For all granite cutting assessments, the lateral extent of drawdown is calculated using the Sichardt calculation, which is an empirical calculation based on the vertical extent to which the groundwater table is lowered at the point of groundwater dewatering and permeability. The Sichardt calculation is presented in Appendix A.10.6 in Chapter 10, of the EIAR and for clarity also presented below:

 $R_0 = 3000 \text{ h}\sqrt{K}$ (Sichart equation) Where, $R_o = Radius of influence (m)$ h = Drawdown (m)

k = Hydraulic conductivity (m/sec)

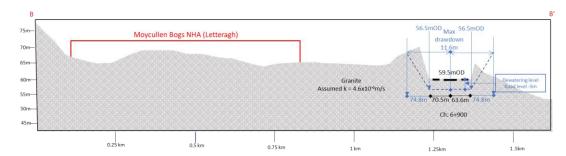
Both the vertical lowering and permeability were assessed conservatively. Vertical lowering is the height difference between drainage invert and peak recorded groundwater table (for granite the water table is often at, or near, surface). The dewatering level along any road level is the invert of trenches excavated for road drainage. In order to ensure that drawdown was assessed conservatively, the drainage invert was set to 1m deeper than the maximum invert level. On this basis a dewatering level of road surface minus 3m was set for the full alignment on granite. A conceptualisation of the cutting assessment is presented in Figure 3 below.

Further conservative measures where accommodated including using a permeability value of 4.6x10⁻⁶m/s, which is considered high for granite except where significant fractures are present. It is noted that fracturing is identifiable by geophysics and both seismic and resistivity surveys were completed along the full length of the mainline cutting at Letteragh and the cutting at the N59 Link Road North. The mainline cutting does not show any significant zones of weathering along its length. The N59 Link Road North cutting has a vertical weathering zone at Ch 0+260 but as with the dominant fracture orientation in the area this feature is aligned generally north south and away from the Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh). Managing groundwater inflows at cuttings is included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) in Appendix A.7.5 of the EIAR and Appendix C of the NIS. Where significant inflows occur then the karst protocol detailed in the CEMP will be used to manage flows and prevent impact to receiving waters.

Google Earth

Legend
NHA

Figure 3: Conceptualisation of the cutting assessment at Letteragh Cutting CH:7+900



Using this assessment, the drawdown extent has been delineated and is presented in Figure 10.7 (construction) and 10.8 (operation) of the EIAR.

As part of the ground investigation undertaken in the area of the Letteragh cutting, boreholes were drilled to prove the depth to bedrock as well as a geophysical survey. This data confirms that the bedrock at the Letteragh cutting is either at or consistently close to surface. On this basis, groundwater levels will not be lowered beyond the maximum conservative drawdown presented in the EIAR. Based on the assessment there is no risk to the Moycullen Bogs NHA at Letteragh from drawdown in the bedrock groundwater induced by the Letteragh cutting or N59 Link Road North cutting.

4 Conclusion

The proposed road development poses no risk of affecting the hydrogeological/hydrological regimes supporting the peatland habitats in Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh).

Mitigation measures proposed ensure that the proposed road development does not affect the hydrogeological regime supporting the groundwater dependent habitats in Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh).

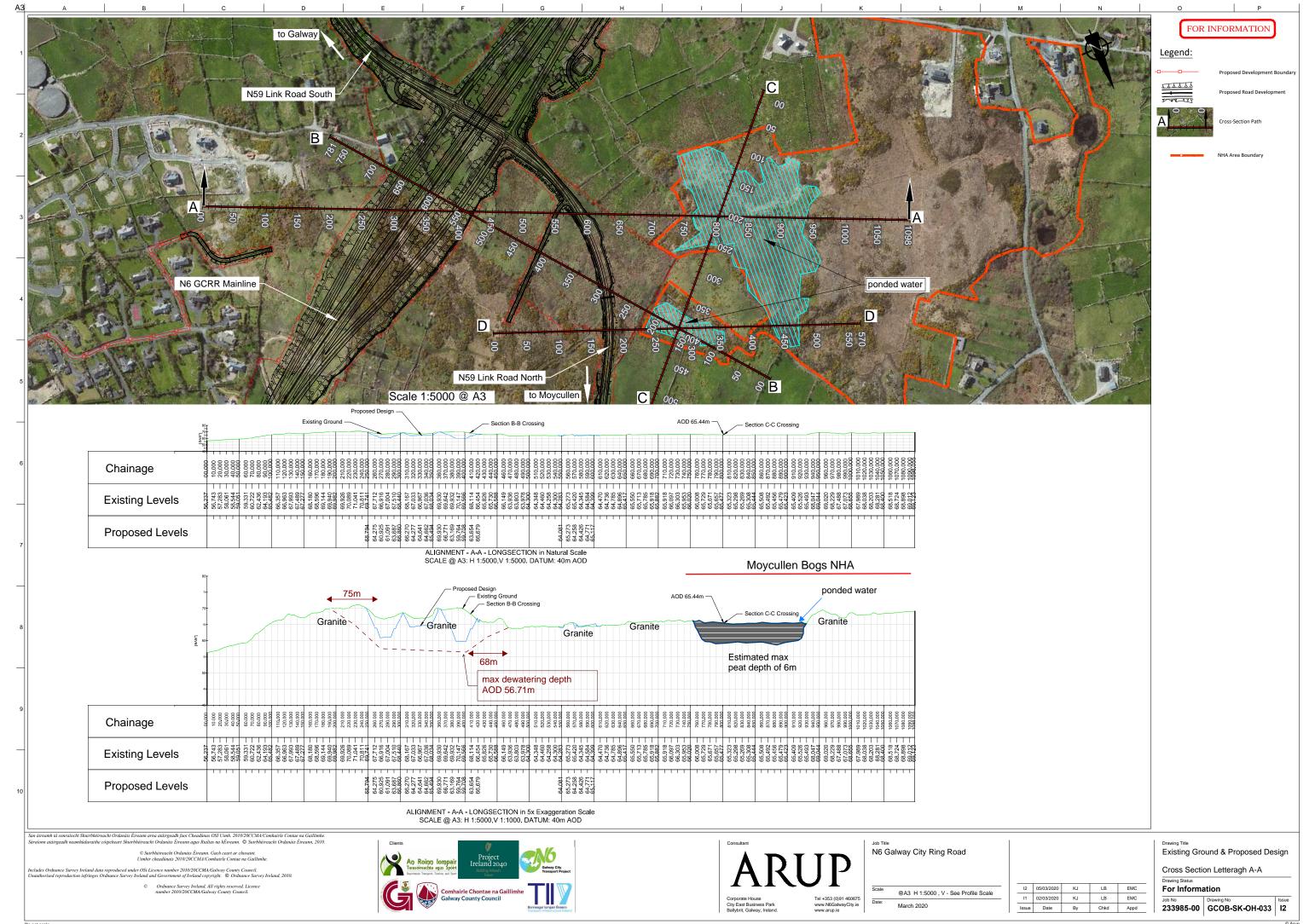
In circumstance where the hydrogeological zone of influence does not extend to Moycullen Bogs NHA, and where neither construction nor operation of the proposed road development will have any effect on the hydrogeological regime within Moycullen Bogs NHA, habitat degradation as a result of impacts on the existing groundwater regime in Moycullen Bogs NHA will not arise. Therefore, there are no residual direct or indirect groundwater related impacts that could have any likely significant residual effects on Moycullen Bogs NHA.

In conclusion, there will be no groundwater related impacts to the Moycullen Bogs NHA (Letteragh).

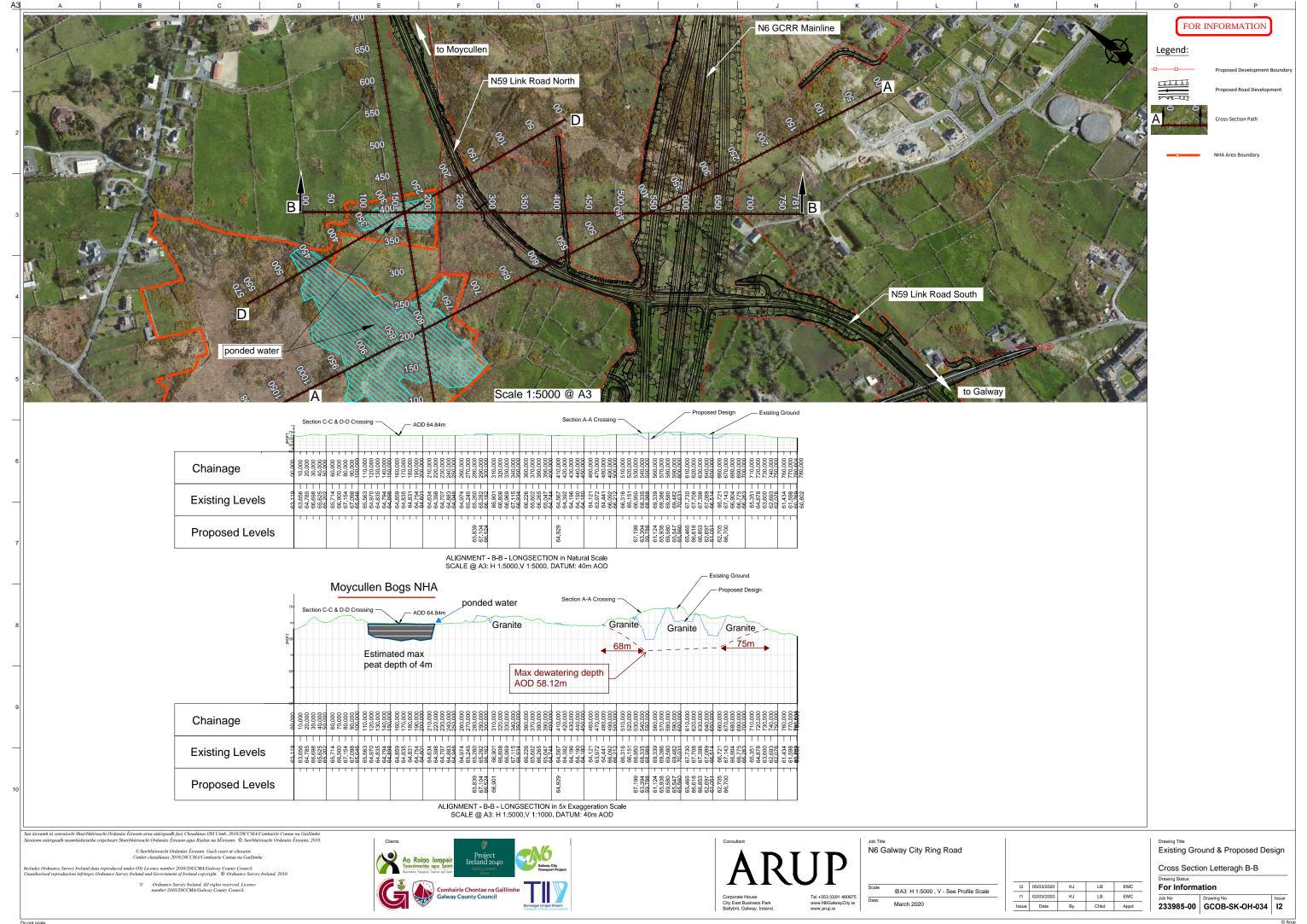
Appendix A

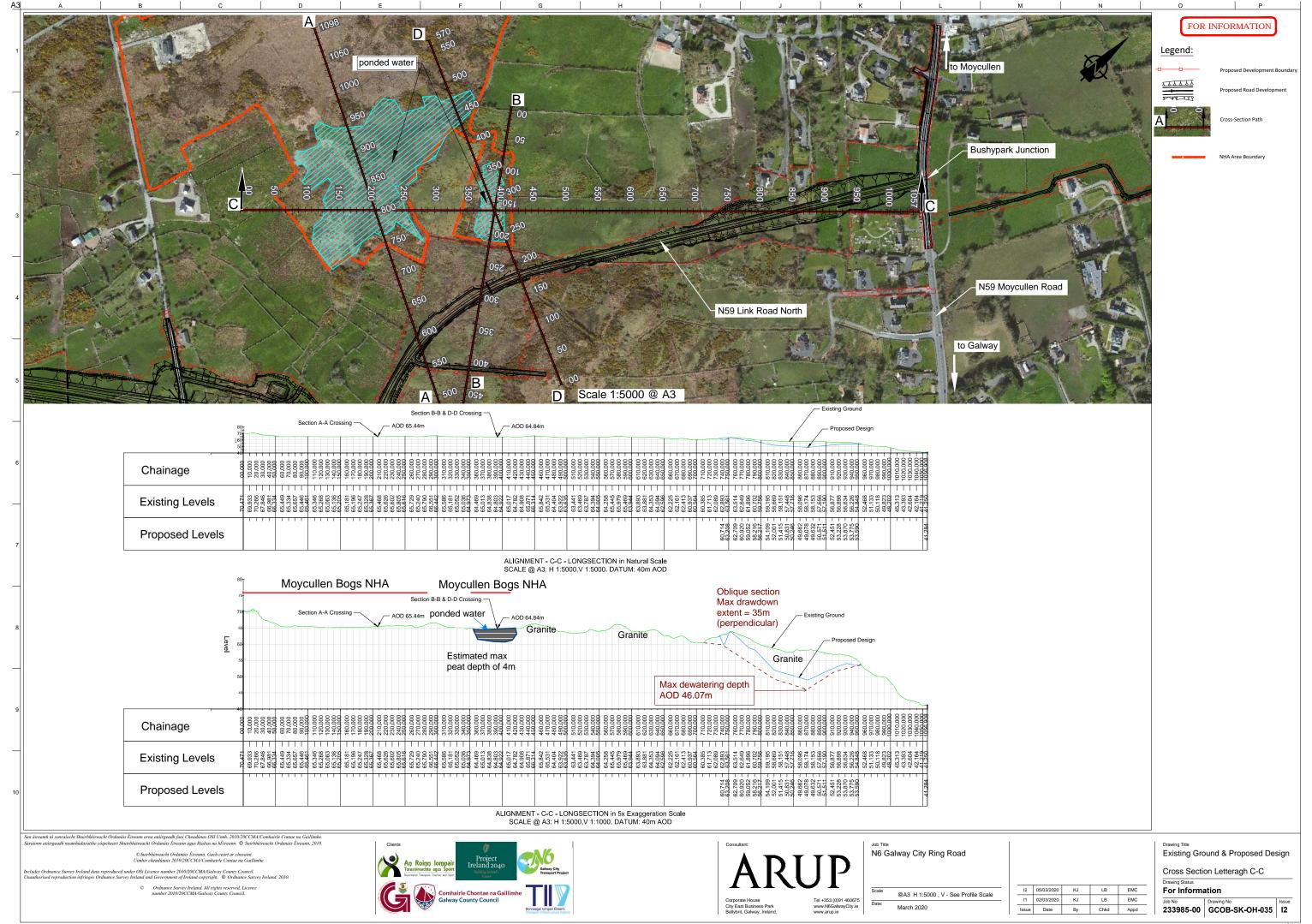
Cross Sections

A1

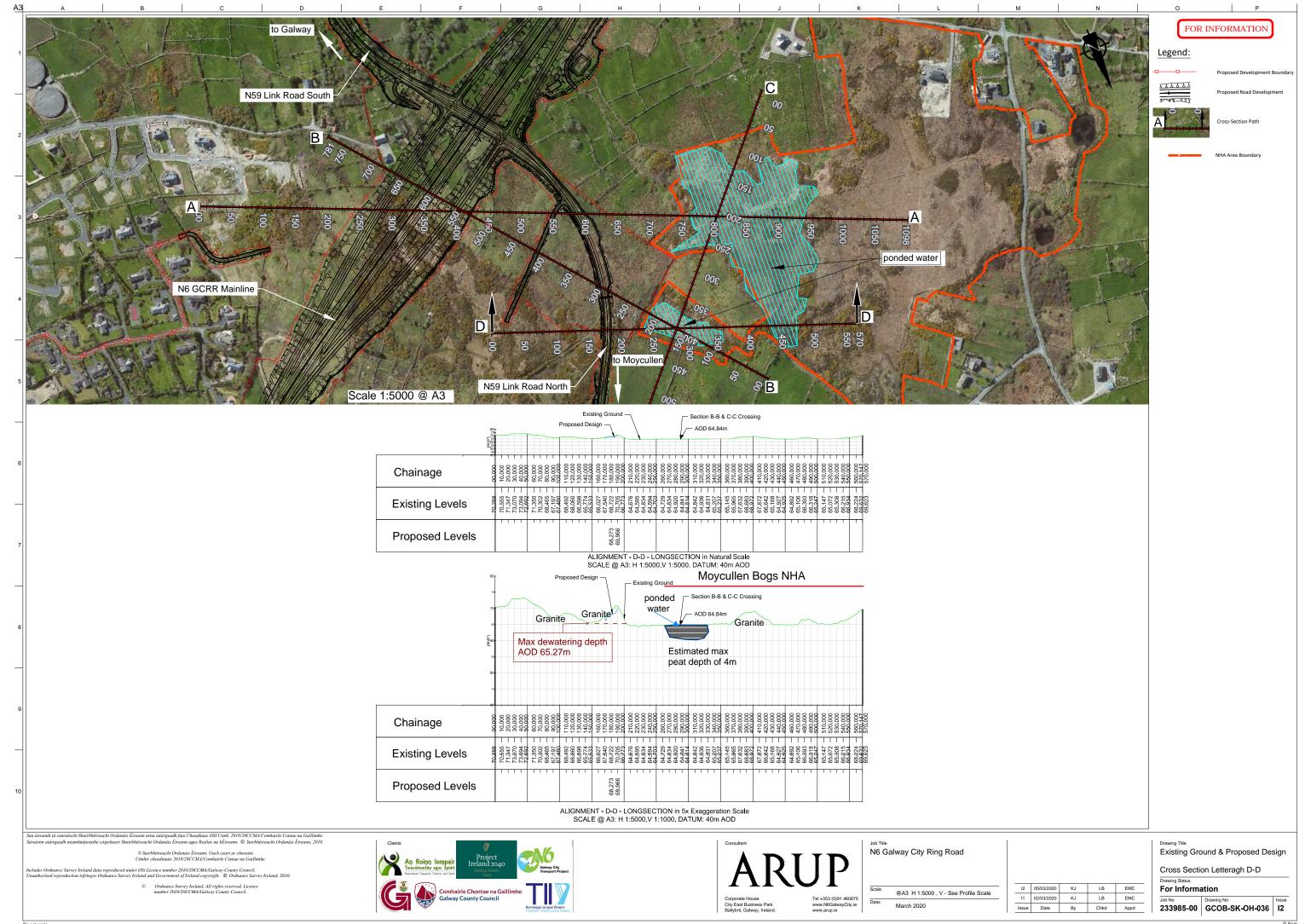


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