

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Direction
CD-021983-26
ABP-318220-23

The submissions on this file and the Inspector's report were considered at a meeting held on 05/03/2026.

The Commission decided to grant permission generally in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation, for the following reasons and considerations, and subject to the following conditions.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In performing its functions in relation to the making of its decision, the Commission had regard to the following in coming to its decision:

- (a) **European legislation**, including of particular relevance;
- Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU (Environmental Impact Assessment Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment,
 - Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive) which set the requirements for conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora throughout the European Union,
 - Directive 2000/60/EC (Water Framework Directive) and the requirement to exercise its functions in a manner which is consistent with the provisions of the

Directive, and which achieves or promotes compliance with the requirements of the Directive, and,

- Regulation Number 1315/2013 (Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)) and related European Union transport infrastructure policy Infrastructure TEN-T – Connecting Europe.

(b) **National Policy**

- The Board performed its functions in relation to the making of its decision, in a manner consistent with Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, (consistent with Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025 and the national long term climate action strategy, national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans set out in those Plans and approved sectoral adaptation plans (Transport Sectoral Adaption Plan (T-SAP-II) 2025-2030) set out in those Plans in furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State).
- National Development Plan 2021-2030, and review in 2025,
- National Planning Framework First Revision, April 2025,
- National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022,
- Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030, and
- the Water Action Plan 2024, A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland.
- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)

(c) **Regional level policy**, including:

- The Northern and Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032.

(d) **Local planning policy** including:

- Galway Transport Strategy, 2016, and the road scheme constituting a key action of the transportation strategy therein,
- Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 and Sustainable Mobility and Transportation 4.8 Specific Objective number 24,
- Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2025–2030,
- Galway City Heritage Plan 2025-2030,
- Galway City Council Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029,
- Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and Policy Objective for National Roads NR2 Key Road Infrastructure Developments,
- Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2024-2030, and
- Galway County Council Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029,
- Galway County Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028
- Galway City Council Noise Action Plan 2024-2028
- the nature, scale, extent and design of the proposed development as set out in the planning application and the characteristics and pattern of development of the Galway City and immediate area and in the vicinity,
- the entirety of the documentation submitted by Galway County Council on behalf of itself and Galway City Council (applicant) in support of the proposed development, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the Natura Impact Statement, the range of mitigation and monitoring measures proposed and in particular to the response by the applicant to submissions made.
- the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites, and,
- the examination, analysis and evaluation undertaken in relation to planning and sustainable development, Climate Action Plans, environmental impact assessment, appropriate assessment, Water Framework Directive Assessment and the Compulsory Purchase Order in the:

- i. supplementary Inspector's Report and recommendation of the Inspector,
- ii. the initial Inspector's Report of 2021, and,
- iii. the supplementary and initial report of specialist Ecologists and Hydrogeologist.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Commission agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000297), Lough Corrib Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004042), Galway Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000268), Inner Galway Bay Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004031), Inishmore Island Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000213), Kilkieran Bay and Islands Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002111), Ardrahan Grassland Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002244), Castletaylor Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000242), Kiltiernan Turlough Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 001285), Lough Fingall Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000606), Rahasane Turlough Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000322), Rahasane Turlough Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004089), Cregganna Marsh Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004142), Maumturk Mountains Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002008), The Twelve Bens/Garraun Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002031), Connemara Bog Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002034), Connemara Bog Complex Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004181), Ross Lake and Woods Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 001312), East Burren Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 001926), Moneen Mountain Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000054), Black Head-Poulsallagh Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000020) or Gortnandarragh Limestone Pavement Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 001271), are the European Sites for which there is a likelihood of significant effects.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2:

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the aforementioned European Sites in view of the Sites' conservation objectives. The Commission considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment:

In completing the assessment, the Commission considered, in particular:

- (i) the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects, specifically upon the aforementioned European Sites,
- (ii) the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposed development,
- (iii) the conservation objectives for these European Sites,
- (iv) the views of prescribed bodies in this regard, and,
- (v) the Ecologist and Hydrogeologist consultants' assessments.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Commission accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report which is supplementary to the Inspector's report of 2021 in respect of the potential effects of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Sites, having regard to the Sites' conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Commission was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites, in view of the Sites' conservation objectives.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Commission completed an environmental impact assessment of the proposed development, taking into account:

- (a) the nature, scale and extent of the proposed development,

- (b) the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted in support of the application,
- (c) the submissions made in the course of the application, and,
- (d) Inspector's report of 2021, the supplementary inspectors report of 2026 along with the various specialist reports prepared to assist and inform the Commission .

Reasoned Conclusion for Environmental Impact Assessment

The Commission considered that the updated Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, adequately considers alternatives to the proposed development and identifies and describes adequately the direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the environment and complies with the provisions of European Union Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU.

The Commission agreed with the examination, set out in the Inspector's report, of the information contained in the updated Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted by the applicant and submissions made in the course of the application.

The Commission considered, and agreed with the Inspector's reasoned conclusions, that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment are as follows:

Population and Human Health

- **Loss of dwellings:** There are 54 dwellings proposed for demolition or acquisition to facilitate the proposed development. This will result in a significant to profound permanent negative impact on homeowners. This impact will not be avoided, mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition.
- **Severance of communities due the physical road scheme:** As a result of the loss of 54 dwellings with loss of clusters of dwellings in areas such as Na Forai Maola/Troscaigh, Castlegar, and Dangan, there will be a severance impact on

remaining communities which will be a significant long-term negative impact that will not be avoided, mitigated or otherwise addressed by means of condition.

- Severance of communities due to changes in traffic patterns: There will be long-term positive impacts for some communities that are currently severed due to traffic volumes because traffic will reduce in villages, such as Bearna and Castlegar, thereby resulting in easier access for pedestrians and cyclists and improved amenities for more vulnerable persons.
- Severance of communities due to road closures: Where minor roads are closed, diverted or re-routed severing communities, there will be a significant medium to long-term negative impact depending on density of development and extent of re-route. This will not be avoided, mitigated or otherwise addressed by means of condition.
- Severance of communities due to construction traffic: During construction there will be slight negative and short-term severance issues caused by construction traffic which will be mitigated by measures outlined in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments.
- General amenities: There will be slight to moderate short-term negative impacts during construction on general amenities in areas such as Rosan Glas, Gort na Bro and Bushypark church and school as a result of construction traffic, noise and dust along haul routes. These will be mitigated by measures set out in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments. During operation there will be a slight negative impact on amenities.
- Amenities of University of Galway: During construction there will be significant negative impacts on the population using the University of Galway Sports Campus as a result of loss of pitches, modification to the sports pavilion, construction works in proximity to walkways as well as noise and visual impacts. These will be mitigated using standard construction practices as detailed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments. During operation there will continue to be a

long-term moderate impact on the general amenities of the sports campus that will be mitigated by the provision of the right of way and access to the lands under the viaduct as well as noise mitigation measures.

- Amenities along River Corrib: During construction there will be restricted access to the riverside in Dangan and there will be noise and visual impacts on both sides of the River Corrib. These will be mitigated using standard construction practices as detailed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments. At no time will access to the riverside be completely restricted. Impacts during construction will be moderate negative and short-term. During operation mitigation measures include the retention of existing vegetation and noise barriers. Impacts will be long-term moderate to significant negative due to the general loss of amenity.
- Amenities of Galway Racecourse: Construction impacts on Galway Racecourse can be avoided by measures including the provision of temporary stables (which have received planning permission separately) and the cessation of works during racing festival seasons. During the operation phase, a positive benefit will result for Galway Racecourse due to the mitigation measures.
- Socio-Economic: During construction there will be some negative short-term impacts for businesses as a result of noise and dust which will be mitigated by measures outlined in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments. Where visibility to businesses is impacted, mitigation measures include additional signage. Demolition of some industrial and commercial properties will not be avoided, mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition. During operation there will be significant positive impacts with respect to journey times, journey reliability and amenities.
- Journey Characteristics: During construction there will be some short-term temporary moderate negative impacts on journeys as a result of road closures or diversions which will be mitigated by the Traffic Management Plan. During operation, the road will have significant permanent positive impacts in terms of improved journey times, journey time reliability and journey amenities. There

will be improved connectivity across and beyond the city, releasing and freeing the existing city centre and inner suburbs from congestion.

- Health: During construction potential impacts on health arising from air, noise and water emissions will be mitigated using construction practices set out in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments. During operation impacts will be avoided having regard to the proposed development's compliance with air and noise standards set out in Transport Infrastructure Ireland guidelines.

Biodiversity

- Significant residual effect on habitats as a result of the loss of priority Annex I habitat (outside of any European Site) comprising limestone pavement (*8240), active blanket bog (*7130), and a petrifying spring (*7220) cannot be avoided, mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition.
- Significant residual effect on habitats as a result of the loss of Annex I habitat (outside of any European Site) including Annex I wet heath (*4010), dry heath habitats and other habitats of international to local value, including within areas designated as Local and City Biodiversity Areas, which cannot or will not be avoided, fully mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition.
- Significant residual effect as a result of the loss of, or damage to, populations of plant species and one invertebrate species included in the Irish red data books, which will not be avoided, mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition.
- Significant residual effect on barn owl, peregrine falcon, lesser horseshoe bat, red squirrel and pine marten which will not be avoided, fully mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition. However proposed compensatory measure will lessen the effect.

Soils and Geology

- There will be the loss of small areas of limestone pavement (Annex I habitat) outside of the Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000297) that will be significantly impacted upon. This impact will not be avoided,

mitigated or otherwise addressed by means of condition. This loss is primarily associated with the construction of footings for a viaduct which will span over a larger area of limestone pavement.

- There will be impacts associated with the loss of soil along the route and the use of natural resources, including aggregates, to construct the proposed development. This will be mitigated by the re-use of excavated materials in the construction process and in the formation of material deposition areas for excess/unsuitable material and habitat creation. Other construction phase impacts including soil contamination, blasting impacts, tunnelling works, slope stability and earthworks impacts will be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by the measures which form part of the proposed development, the proposed mitigation measures included in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments

Hydrogeology

- There will be impacts on a number of existing wells which will be lost as a result of the proposed development. This will be mitigated by the provision of replacement wells, alternative water sources or compensation, as appropriate.
- Impacts on groundwater quality will be mitigated through the implementation of the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments, including the associated Karst Protocol and Sediment, Erosion and Pollution Control Plan during the construction phase, and in the operational phase through the design of the drainage system, which includes water attenuation and treatment ponds, wetlands and controlled discharge. Impacts on groundwater levels due to dewatering and recharge will arise but will be mitigated through the retention of run-off within the same water catchment area or groundwater body and in areas such as the Lackagh Tunnel, through the timing of construction works to avoid the need for dewatering. Structural impacts on properties in the vicinity of areas where groundwater levels will be lowered will be mitigated and monitored with property condition surveys.
- Impacts on groundwater dependent habitats will be avoided through the alignment and design of the proposed road development or mitigated through

measures such as flow control and pollution control measures. There will be no groundwater lowering within groundwater bodies that support groundwater dependent habitats within a European Site.

Hydrology

- Water quality impacts during the construction phase will be mitigated by the implementation of the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments, including the Incident Response Plan and Sediment Erosion and Pollution Control Plan as well as through obtaining necessary consents and consultation with prescribed bodies.
- Impacts on the water supply to the Terryland Water Treatment Plan will be avoided and mitigated through implementation of the Construction Environmental Management Plan, consultation and ongoing liaison with Uisce Éireann and the carrying out of works in accordance with best practice construction methods and guidance.
- During the operational phase, water quality impacts arising from road runoff or accidental spillages will be mitigated through the design of the drainage system for the proposed development which is responsive to the differing geologies in the area, and in particular the use of attenuation ponds, settlement ponds, reed beds, infiltration basins, flow control mechanisms etc. Flood risk impacts near the N83 Tuam Road at Twomileditch will be mitigated by flood compensation storage, provision of storm drainage on the N83 at this location and a pumping station to discharge to the existing storm sewer.

Noise and Vibration

- Noise and vibration impacts will arise during the construction phase, including from blasting operations which has the potential to impact upon residential and other sensitive receptors. However, it is considered that these potential impacts would be avoided, managed and mitigated by the measures which form part of the proposed development, the proposed mitigation and monitoring measures, through suitable conditions and noting the relatively short-term duration of the construction phase and the linear nature of the proposed development.

- During the operational phase, the majority of noise sensitive receptors will be in compliance with the design goal set out in the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Guidelines once noise mitigation measures are incorporated, such as noise barriers and the low noise road surface. There will also be positive impacts on a large number of receptors on the existing road network, due to reductions in traffic volumes on existing roads. A limited number of properties will, however, experience a residual noise impact marginally in excess of the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Design Goal. Noting the provisions of the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Guidelines for such a scenario and also noting the need to balance the provision and scale of noise barriers against other consideration, such as visual impact, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable direct, indirect or cumulative noise and vibration impacts.

Air Quality

- Potential air quality impacts would be avoided, managed and mitigated by the measures which form part of the proposed development, the proposed mitigation measures such as the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments.

Climate

- The proposed development, individually and cumulatively with other identified projects, is likely to result in a permeant, moderate and adverse impacts on climate. Therefore, the proposed development results in an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and does not meet Ireland's target of net zero.
- There are mitigation measures available during the construction phase, such as ground granulated blast furnace slag and green procurement, to reduce the generation of embodied carbon, which results in a moderate construction phase impact.
- There are no mitigation measures available during operation phase to reduce generation of carbon emissions. For the purposes of this environmental impact assessment, the proposed development does not rely on wider governmental mitigation measures as set out in the Climate Action Plan 2025 as these many of these measures are not in the control of the applicant

Traffic and Transportation

- Potential impacts associated with construction traffic will be avoided or mitigated by the Construction Environmental Management Plan, including the Construction Traffic Management Plan.
- During the operational phase, the proposed development will have positive impacts on traffic congestion, journey times on key routes, network statistics and the ratio of flow to capacity at key junctions. It will also facilitate the implementation of various measures contained within the Galway Transport Strategy to increase active travel and public transport provision in the city and will have a positive impact on sustainable transport mode share when considered together with the other Galway Transport Strategy measures that it will support.
- The proposed development will assist in enabling the significant population and employment growth forecast for the city by adding additional links to the road network, including a new river crossing and linkages between various radial routes serving the city, thereby improving accessibility and providing a basis for the compact growth of the city.

Landscape and Visual

- The construction phase of the proposed development will result in a range of landscape and visual impacts on certain landscapes and receptors, including significant and profound impacts. The mitigation measures proposed during this phase will have limited effect due to the scale and nature of the proposed development, and negative landscape and visual impacts will continue during the construction phase.
- During the initial operation stage, landscape and visual impacts will continue, but the significance and severity of these impacts will generally abate over time as the proposed landscape mitigation proposals become established and increasingly effective at screening the proposed development and/or incorporating it into the landscape. However, significant and profound negative

residual visual impacts will continue to arise for numerous residential properties located close to or adjoining the boundary of the proposed development, and particularly in the vicinity of major engineering structures at post-establishment stage.

- Significant residual impacts on landscape character will also continue to arise at a number of locations. The proposed mitigation measures, and particularly the extensive and comprehensive landscaping planting proposals will not fully mitigate these significant or profound impacts, however they will ameliorate the impacts to a certain extent, and this will increase over time as planting matures.
- Significant residual visual impacts will also occur in the River Corrib valley at Menlo Castle and the University of Galway Sporting Campus, primarily due to the visual intrusion associated with the proposed River Corrib bridge and associated viaduct.

Cultural Heritage

- There will be significant negative direct and indirect impacts on a number of archaeological and built heritage sites which will be mitigated by the undertaking of detailed photographic and written records prior to construction and the use of test trenching and monitoring.
- There will also be a very significant and permanent impact on a thatched cottage (protected structure, Build Heritage number 12) which it is proposed to demolish, and which will not be fully mitigated by the preparation of a record. Potential impacts on unknown archaeological features will be mitigated or avoided through monitoring of construction works by an archaeologist and excavation where appropriate. There will be a very significant impact on a bullaun stone (Record of Monuments and Places - Archaeological Heritage number 2) and structure (proposed Record of Monuments and Places - Archaeological Heritage number 42), tomb (Cultural Heritage number 49), and boulder (Cultural Heritage number 51).

Material Assets Agriculture

- The acquisition of the land required to construct the proposed development will have a range of negative impacts, including significant and profound impacts on

landowners. There will be significant or profound negative impacts on a number of farm enterprises and equine enterprises, due to issues such as severance, impacts on farm viability, disruption and impacts on the availability of services.

- The loss of land will not be avoided, mitigated or otherwise addressed by means of condition. There is no mitigation for this impact within the environmental impact assessment process. Impacts due to land severance are mitigated to a degree through the proposed provision of alternative access arrangements and services, however the agricultural enterprises that are significantly or profoundly adversely affected are likely to require major changes to their operations, management and scale and there is no mitigation for this impact within the environmental impact assessment process.

Material Assets Non-Agriculture

- Loss of dwellings: There are 54 dwellings proposed for acquisition or demolition to make way for this project. This will result in a significant to profound permanent negative impact on homeowners. This impact will not be avoided, mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition.
- Commercial and industrial buildings: There is no mitigation for the loss of commercial and industrial buildings within the environmental impact assessment process. This will result in a moderate to significant impact. This impact will not be avoided, mitigated, or otherwise addressed by means of condition. There will be construction impacts on some businesses which will be mitigated using standard construction practices as detailed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments.
- Public and community buildings: During construction noise and air emissions can be mitigated using standard construction practices as detailed in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments. During operation there will be positive impacts on Galway Racecourse by way of a permanent access from Parkmore Link Road.
- Utilities: The proposed development will result in some relocation of utilities. This impact will be mitigated using standard construction practices as detailed

in the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Schedule of Environmental Commitments.

Resource Management, Major Accidents and Disasters

- Waste and surplus materials will be generated throughout the construction and operation phases. The impacts can be mitigated through measures which would be standard, good practice and readily implementable in a project of this nature such as the Construction and Demolition Resource and Waste Management Plan.
- The proposed development has inherent design measure to reduce risks of major accidents and disaster particularly major road traffic accidents. There is also suite of plans and procedures to manage and minimise risks including the Construction Environmental Management Plan, Construction and Demolition Resource and Waste Management Plan, Construction Traffic Management Plan, Non-Native Invasive Species Management Plan, Sediment, Erosion, Pollution Control Plan, Environmental Incident Response Plan and Pest Control Plan. Post mitigation, there is low risk assigned to events like ground collapses, utility disruption, major traffic accidents, bio-security events, and industrial accidents. Following the implementation mitigation measures no significant residual impacts are expected.

Notwithstanding the conclusion reached in respect of the inability of the proposed measures to fully mitigate the significant negative residual impacts in respect of various environmental matters as set out above, it is considered that these environmental impacts would not justify a refusal, having regard to the overall benefits of the proposed development including its identified strategic importance at European, national, regional and local level, its role in alleviating congestion and underpinning the sustainable transport measures of the Galway Transport Strategy and its role in facilitating Galway to grow in a more compact manner, as identified in the National Planning Framework.

With regard to the significant adverse impact on carbon emissions and climate, it is noted that this arises due to the sensitivity of the receiving environment. Noting the role of the proposed development in facilitating the implementation of active travel and public transport measures as set out in the Galway Transport Strategy and its

role in supporting the compact and more sustainable development of the city, it is not considered that the proposed development would undermine, or be contrary to Ireland's climate obligations, given that climate action requires a broad sectoral and economy-wide approach. Ireland has committed to becoming climate neutral/ zero emission by 2050, and carbon emissions associated with necessary infrastructural projects such as the proposed development can be mitigated through reductions in other areas as mechanisms such as demand management measures set out in the Climate Action Plan 2025, carbon tax and carbon budgets are developed and will be increasingly mitigated in the operational phase as electric vehicles are adopted.

The Commission completed an environmental impact assessment in relation to the proposed development and concluded that, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the effects on the environment of the proposed development, by itself and in combination with other development in the vicinity, would be acceptable. In doing so, the Commission adopted the report and conclusions of the Inspector.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development:

It is considered that the proposed development, subject to conditions below, would accord with European, national, regional and local planning and that it is acceptable in respect of its likely effects on the environment and its likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The Commission noted that the proposal road alignment necessitates the demolition of a protected structure, a thatched cottage (BH No.12 as listed in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report). And while this is an application under the Roads Act 1993, under the provisions of Section 57 (10)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) the Commission shall not grant permission for the demolition of a protected structure or proposed protected structure, save in exceptional circumstances. The Commission is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist in this instance on the basis that the provision of the N6GCRR is embedded in European, National and Regional and Local policy and that the through various design iterations and a comprehensive evaluation of alternatives, the applicant has

explored all reasonable available options and that no reasonable and preferable options exist other than the demolition of the thatched cottage in question.

The Commission is also satisfied that the proposed development will play a key role in facilitating the implementation of active travel and public transport measures as set out in the Galway Transport Strategy and its role in supporting the compact and more sustainable development of the city as set out in the most recently adopted National Planning Framework, by removing through vehicular traffic away from the City Centre and freeing up road space for more sustainable forms of active travel and transport. The development will result in the provision of greater public transport and active travel measures such as cycling and walking which will have significant permanent and positive impacts by way of improved journey times, greater reliability and a more comprehensive public transport network across and beyond the City.

Furthermore it is not considered that the proposed development would undermine, or be contrary to Ireland's climate obligations, given that climate action requires a broad sectoral and economy-wide approach. Ireland has committed to becoming climate neutral/ zero emission by 2050, and carbon emissions associated with necessary infrastructural projects such as the proposed development can be mitigated through reductions in other areas as mechanisms such as demand management measures set out in the Climate Action Plan 2025, including carbon tax and carbon budgets which are being developed and will be increasingly mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in the operational phase as electric vehicles are adopted. The Commission notes the traffic modelling undertaken for the proposed development in conjunction with the public transport and active travel infrastructure improvements together with demand management measures anticipates a 16% reduction in total vehicle kilometres travelled in the city in 2030 compared to a 'business as usual' scenario; and a 43% reduction in carbon emissions from transport within the area of influence of the proposed GCRR in 2030 when compared with 2018 levels. This substantial reduction in vehicle emissions will be achieved against a backdrop of an anticipated 30% increase in population for Galway City Metropolitan Area between 2016 and 2030. The forecasted reduction in vehicle kilometres travelled and carbon emissions will contribute to the key targets for the transport sector nationally as set out in CAP 2024 and CAP 2025 which are a 20% and 50% reduction respectively. The Commission is therefore satisfied that, with the incorporation of sustainable

transport measures as set out in the Galway Transportation Study together with the demand management measures set out in the Climate Action Plans of 2024 and 2025, that the proposed development would not undermine and will in fact assist Ireland in meeting its climate change obligations. The proposal is therefore fully in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Water Framework Directive Assessment

Having considered the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, together with the assessment undertaken by the Inspector, the Commission is satisfied that there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively.

The reason for this conclusion is due to the nature and location of the proposed works which will be subject to extensive mitigation measures during the construction and operational phases as tabulated in Chapter 23 of the updated EIAR and individually in Chapters 10 and 11, hydrology and hydrogeology, respectively. The Commission is further satisfied in the detailed consideration of reasonable alternatives undertaken by the applicant including extensive route selection exercises which considered water impacts as a criteria had due regard to and generally avoided impacts on surface and groundwater bodies impact.

Where impacts could not be avoided, detailed surface water control measures and best practice construction methods are included in the design to protect water bodies. The applicant also intends to monitor the water quality during the construction phase and post construction and can take relevant action as required.

The Commission therefore concludes that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, streams, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal water bodies) either qualitatively or quantitatively, directly or indirectly or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives. The Commission therefore conclude that appropriate measures will be in place to prevent the deterioration of the status of all waterbodies in the vicinity of the proposed road alignment and consequently can be excluded from further assessment.

CONDITIONS

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application on the 23rd day of October 2018, as amended by the further information received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 14th day of April 2025, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

Reason: the interest of clarity.

2. The mitigation measures contained in the updated Natura Impact Statement submitted on the 14th day of April 2025, shall be implemented.

Reason: To protect the integrity of European Sites.

3. The mitigation measures contained in the submitted updated Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted on the 14th day of April 2025, shall be implemented.

Reason: To protect the environment.

4. The updated Schedule of Environmental Commitments shall be updated to incorporate the following additional commitments:
 - (i) Galway County Council will offer to provide or pay for similar alternative accommodation for the occupants of Plot 123 for the duration of earthworks in Construction Section S1.
 - (ii) All third Schedule non-native species subject to restrictions under Regulations 49 and 50 Part 1: Plants listed in Statutory Instrument

Number 477/2011 European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 shall be treated prior to the commencement of construction works.

(iii) No stockpiling is permitted within any Annex I habitat area.

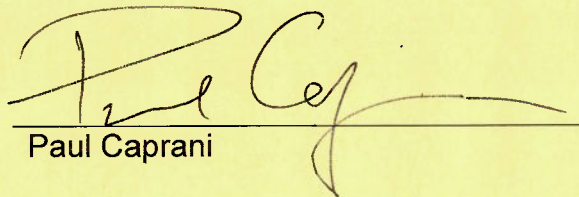
Reason: In the interests of clarity, control of construction phase environmental impacts, residential and visual amenity and to protect the integrity of European Sites.

5. Prior to the commencement of development, the planning authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall agree in consultation with the relevant statutory agencies (including the National Parks and Wildlife Service), the details of surface and groundwater monitoring during construction including water quality parameters, sampling intervals and locations and detailed response plan. Where practical, water quality parameters shall be measured and recorded electronically on an hourly basis, with the monthly and quarterly monitoring being used to verify and calibrate the electronic monitoring. The monitoring report and response plan shall be retained on the file as part of the public record.

Reason: In protect the integrity of European Sites and control of construction phase environmental impacts.

Planning

Commissioner:


Paul Caprani

Date: 05/03/2026

