

An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Order
ABP-311542-21

Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2021

Planning Authority: Donegal County Council

APPLICATION by Donegal County Council for approval under section 226 and section 177AE(3) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, in accordance with plans and particulars, including an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and a Natura Impact Statement, lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 30th day of September, 2021, as amended by further information received on the 28th day of April, 2022.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

A new community park with multi-purpose community facilities and amenities and will include:

- Construction of a single storey community resource building with a gross internal floor area 305 square metres, for use as community space including office and refreshment use;
- Construction of a 300 square metres maintenance compound, surrounded by 2.25 metre high ibex fencing and access gates, to include installation of an approximate 4.0 metre high by 6.0 metre wide by 9.0 metre long prefabricated maintenance shed vehicle storage, washdown area and material storage;
- Provision of a multi-functional outdoor space and external stage area to accommodate a variety of outdoor events;
- Creation of play areas, a river walk and river access;
- Construction of walkways and cycleways;

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- Associated landscaping inclusive of the wetlands of the River Foyle;
- Amenity lighting;
- Provision of car parking with 74 spaces and provisions for cycle parking;
- Site Security including estate style fencing, 2.4 metre high security fencing and lockable vehicle and pedestrian gates;
- Construction of a one-way traffic access road 4.5 metres in width and a two-way traffic access road 6 metres in width, with a combined length of 265 metres to be provided internally within the park;
- Demolition of the existing spectator stand and the construction of a new spectator stand to accommodate 123 spectators;
- Relocation of existing hare coursing track and the construction of greyhound training runs;
- Provision of an informal parking area to accommodate 8 cars;
- Provision of a new 10 kilovolt ESB Substation and diversion underground of existing Megavolt (10 kilovolt/20 kilovolt) ESB overhead cables traversing the site;
- Provision of ground mounted electrical kiosk;
- Provision of a new wastewater pumping station for onward transfer of foul wastewater to the local network;
- Reconfiguration of existing cinema drainage soakaway;
- Works on the foreshore including construction of a cast in-situ concrete slipway, 5 metres wide, with adjoining steps of natural stone paving and the provision of a reinforced grass path to a new timber fishing pod; and,
- all ancillary development, accommodation works and site services; on a site extending to 14.9 hectares.

All located at Station Road, Lifford, County Donegal.

DECISION

APPROVE the above proposed development based on the reasons and considerations set out below.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In coming to its decision, the Board had particular regard to the following:

- (a) Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU (The EIA Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment,
- (b) Directive 92/43/EEC (The Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (The Birds Directive) which sets out the requirements for the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora throughout the European Union,
- (c) the policies and objectives of the County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024,
- (d) 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 a European Site,
- (e) the conservation objectives, qualifying interests and special conservation interests for the River Finn Special Area of Conservation (Site Code:002301) and River Foyle and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: UK0030320),
- (f) the relative provisions of the Water Framework Directive,
- (g) the nature, scale and limited duration of the proposed works as set out in the application for approval,
- (h) the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the revised Natura Impact Statement,
- (i) the submissions and observations received in relation to the proposed development and the responses to further information, and
- (i) the report of the Inspector.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Board considered the revised Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out both an appropriate assessment screening exercise and an appropriate assessment in relation to the potential effects of the proposed development on designated European Sites.

The Board noted that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of a European Site.

In completing the screening for appropriate assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the River Finn Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002301) and the River Foyle and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: UK0030320) are the only European Sites for which there is a possibility of significant effects and which, must therefore be subject to appropriate assessment.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 2:

The Board considered the revised Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the European Sites in view of the sites' conservation objectives, namely the River Finn Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002301) and the River Foyle and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: UK0030320). The Board concluded that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment. In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the following:

- i. the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,
- ii. the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal,
- iii. the conservation objectives for the European Sites, and
- iv. the views contained in the submissions.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report 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 Board 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 and there is no reasonable doubt as to the absence of such effects.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Board completed an environmental impact assessment of the proposed development taking account of:

- (a) the nature, scale, location and extent of the proposed development,
- (b) the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and associated documentation submitted in support of the application, including the further information,
- (c) the submissions received during the course of the application, and
- (d) the Inspector's report.

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and EIAR addendum, 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. The Board agreed with the examination, set out in the Inspector's report, of the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted by the applicant and submissions made in the course of the planning application.

Reasoned Conclusions on the Significant Effects

The Board considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment are, and would be mitigated, as follows:

- **Population and Human Health:** Positive impacts in terms of the provision of enhanced open space and recreational facilities which benefit both communities on both sides of the Border.

- **Biodiversity:** Habitat loss associated with construction will impact on habitats of low ecological value with no rare or protected species recorded. Potential impacts to habitats and faunal species, aquatic fauna, avian species and bats would be mitigated by the implementation of the measures during the construction and/or operational phases set out in the revised Environmental Impact Assessment Report
- **Land soil and water (Flooding):** The site will continue to be subject to fluvial flooding but will not increase flood risk on the site or contribute to flood risk elsewhere.
- **Material assets (Roads & Traffic):** will be mitigated during construction by the measures set out in the revised Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Traffic Assessment. The impacts during the construction stage will be short term, temporary and capable of effective mitigation. Traffic during the operational stage will be accommodated without significant adverse effects on the road network.

The Board is satisfied that the reasoned conclusion is up to date at the time of making the decision.

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

Having considered the totality of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, associated documentation submitted with the application and the report of the Inspector, the Board concluded that any likely significant effects on the environment would be mitigated by the mitigation measures proposed by the applicant.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development /Likely effects on the environment:

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not have significant negative effects on the environment or the community in the vicinity, would not pose a risk to water quality, would not contribute to flooding on the site or increase flood risk downstream, would not seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity, would not adversely impact on the cultural, archaeological and built heritage of the area and would constitute an acceptable public amenity use at this location. The proposed development accords with international and national objectives to deliver shared infrastructure projects of mutual benefit within the border region of Ireland and Northern Ireland and is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Conditions

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, and the further plans and particulars received by the Board on the 28th day of April, 2022 except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where any mitigation measures or any conditions of approval require further details to be prepared by or on behalf of the local authority, these details shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure protection of the environment.

2. The mitigation measures and monitoring commitments identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), the Addendum EIAR and other plans and particulars submitted with the application shall be implemented in full.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and the protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the development.

3. The mitigation measures contained in the revised Natura Impact Statement shall be implemented in full.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of European Sites.

4. Construction works shall be undertaken in accordance with best practice and relevant guidance in relation to all matters as set out in the outline Construction and Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) received by An Bord Pleanála on the 28th day of April 2022. These measures shall be integrated in full into the final CEMP by the eventual contractor as a means of effective implementation of all measures. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise management measures, surface water management proposals, the management of construction traffic and off-site disposal of construction waste. The CEMP shall be retained on file as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment.

5. Construction works shall be confined to between 0700 and 1900 hours Monday to Friday inclusive and between 0800 hours and 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of property in the vicinity.

6. A suitably qualified freshwater ecologist shall be retained by the local authority to oversee the site set up and construction of the proposed development and implementation of the mitigation measures relating to ecology set out in the revised Natura Impact Statement. The ecologist shall be present during the construction works. Upon completion of the works, an ecological report of the site works shall be prepared by the appointed ecologist to be retained on the file as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interest of nature conservation and the protection of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity.

7. The local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf shall retain the services of a suitably qualified and experienced bat specialist to survey the site for the presence of bat roosts, prior to commencement of development. In the event that any roosts are identified, the National Parks and Wildlife Service shall be consulted regarding how best to deal with such roosts. The removal of any roosts identified shall be carried out only under licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

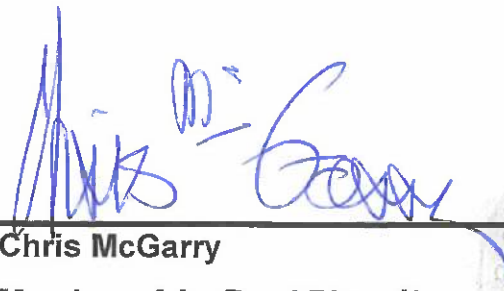
Reason: In the interests of protecting ecology and wildlife in the area.

8. The local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall retain the services of a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist to survey the site for the presence of badger, prior to commencement of development. In the event that any setts are identified, the National Parks and Wildlife Service shall be consulted regarding how best to deal with such setts. The removal of any setts identified shall be carried out only under licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Reason: In the interests of protecting ecology and wildlife in the area.

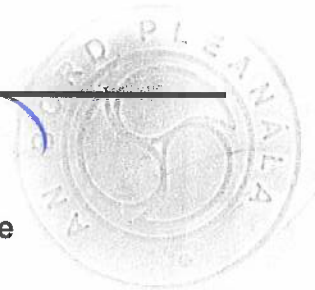
9. The local authority, and any agent acting on its behalf, shall facilitate the preservation, recording, protection or removal of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. In this regard the local authority shall-
- (a) employ a suitably qualified archaeologist who shall access the site and monitor all excavation and site works, and
 - (b) provide suitable arrangements acceptable to the Department of Housing Local Government and Heritage for the recording and removal of any archaeological material which is considered appropriate to remove.

Reason: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site and to secure the preservation and protection of any remains that may exist within the site.



Chris McGarry

**Member of An Bord Pleanála
duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Board.**



Dated this 14th day of February 2023