



An
Bord
Pleanála

S. 6(7) of Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016

Inspector's Report on Recommended Opinion ABP-305726-19

Strategic Housing Development	547 no. residential units (279 no. houses, 268 no. apartments), 2 no. crèches and associated site works.
Location	Lissywollen, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.
Planning Authority	Westmeath County Council
Prospective Applicant	Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd.
Date of Consultation Meetings	11 th December 2019 and 30 th March 2020
Date of Site Inspection	30 th November 2019
Inspector	Una O'Neill

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1.0 Introduction

Having regard to the consultation that has taken place in relation to the proposed development and also having regard to the submissions from the planning authority, the purpose of this report is to form a recommended opinion as to whether the documentation submitted with the consultation request under section 5(5) of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 - (i) constitutes a reasonable basis for an application under section 4, or (ii) requires further consideration and amendment in order to constitute a reasonable basis for an application under section 4.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The appeal site is located approx. 1.2km to the northeast of Athlone Town Centre in County Westmeath.
- 2.2. The site is bounded to the north by the N6 Athlone Relief Road and is accessed via an existing distributor road from the west, which also serves the Athlone Regional Sports Centre, Athlone Stadium, a primary school, and Brawny housing estate. To the immediate west, the site is bounded by a primary school, Scoil na Gceithre Máistrí. The southern boundary of the site is bounded by the Old Rail Trail Greenway, an existing pedestrian/cyclist route adjoining an old rail line, which forms a section of the Galway-Dublin National Cycle Network. The eastern boundary adjoins existing green field lands. The Brawny housing estate is located on both the north and south side of the existing road within the site. The boundary to the site excludes the existing estate and central section of green open space and includes the entire length of existing road up to and including the Ballymahon roundabout to the west and includes a route to the east through undeveloped lands, linking up with an existing narrow bohreen and connecting to Garrycastle roundabout, with this route to be upgraded and realigned to form part of an east-west link street as part of the development.
- 2.3. The site comprises a stated gross area of 17.7 ha. The lands are predominantly greenfield/in agricultural use at present.

3.0 Proposed Strategic Housing Development

- 3.1. The proposed development comprises 547 no. units comprising, 279 no. detached, semi-detached and terraced houses and 268 no. duplex and apartment units.
- 3.2. The land is owned by Westmeath County Council and is being developed in partnership with Alanna Roadbridge Developments Ltd.
- 3.3. The proposed development is to comprise 70% private housing and 30% social housing, with the Part V arrangements incorporated within the 30% social housing element of the scheme.
- 3.4. The following details as submitted by the applicant are noted:

Parameter	Site Proposal
Application Site	17.7 ha gross; 12.82 ha net.
No. of Units	547 units (279 houses and 268 apartments).
Density	43 units per hectare net.
Height	2 storey dwellings; 3-5 storeys duplex and apartments.
Parking	885 spaces (2 per house and 1.2 per apartment).
Vehicular Access	An access road is proposed to connect to the existing roadway at Scoil na gCeithre Máistrí which will extend to the Garrycastle Road adjacent to the ESB facility. This road is an objective of the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024.

- 3.5. The breakdown of unit types as submitted by the applicant is as follows:

Unit Type	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	Total
Apartments	35	175	58	-	268

Houses	-	42	198	39	279
% Total	6%	40%	47%	7%	100%

3.6. The development proposes an east-west link street (referred to as Lissywollen Avenue) through the site which will connect into the existing distributor road to the west and will traverse the lands to the east up to the roundabout at Garrycastle. It is proposed to upgrade the existing distributor road to the west with a segregated cyclepath, which will also connect into and traverse the development site.

3.7. Four character areas are proposed with the development.

- Character area 1 is the western portion of the site/western entrance to the site and consists of 168 no. duplex/apartment units in 9 no. blocks, including a single storey crèche at the ground level of one of the blocks (Block K) and 26 terraced and semi-detached housing backing onto the existing estate.
- Character area 2 is located north and south of the existing central greenspace and consists of 84 semi-detached and terraced houses, and two apartment blocks (one to north of the road and one to the south).
- Character area 3 is located to the north and northeast of the site, adjoining the N6 and at the eastern entrance to the development. This area consists of 85 semi-detached, terraced and duplex units, 6 apartments in one block and a crèche.
- Character area 4 is located to the southeast of the site, south of the road/extended road and adjoining the greenway. This area consists of 142 detached, semidetached, terraces and duplex units.

4.0 Planning History

No relevant planning history.

5.0 National Policy

5.1.1. Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework

- National Policy Objective 2b: The regional roles of Athlone in the Midlands, Sligo and Letterkenny in the North-West and the Letterkenny-Derry and Drogheda- Dundalk-Newry cross-border networks will be identified and supported in the relevant Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.
- National Policy Objective 3c: Deliver at least 30% of all new homes that are targeted in settlements other than the five cities and their suburbs, within their existing built-up footprints.
- National Policy Objective 4: Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.
- National Planning Objective 13: In urban areas, planning and related standards, including, in particular, height and car parking will be based on performance criteria that seek to achieve well-designed high quality outcomes in order to achieve targeted growth. These standards will be subject to a range of tolerance that enables alternative solutions to be proposed to achieve stated outcomes, provided public safety is not compromised and the environment is suitably protected.
- National Policy Objective 27: Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.
- National Policy Objective 33: Prioritise the provision of new homes at locations that can support sustainable development and at an appropriate scale of provision relative to location.

5.1.2. **Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines**

Having considered the nature of the proposal, the receiving environment, the documentation on file, including the submissions from the planning authority, I am of the opinion that the following policy documents and Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines are relevant:

- Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and the accompanying Urban Design Manual: A Best Practice Guide (2009)
- Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018)
- Urban Development and Building Heights, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018)
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2013)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (including the associated ‘Technical Appendices’) (2009)
- Childcare Facilities – Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2001 and Circular PL3/2016 – Childcare facilities operating under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme.

5.2. **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031**

- 5.2.1. The RSES states in relation to Athlone, that ‘key priorities are to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of Athlone as a regional driver, with a target population of 30,000 up to 2031, providing for an enhanced public realm and regeneration in the town centre along with significant employment growth linked to the further development of Athlone Institute of Technology (AIT) and building on the town’s existing strong economic base and enterprise clusters’.
- 5.2.2. With regard to residential development, the RSES state that the key to the success of Athlone is the availability of zoned and serviced lands within the existing built up area to facilitate significant population growth. It states that ‘In particular, the development of the strategic landbank at Lissywollen South, also offers the opportunity to develop a new urban quarter extending from the town centre...’
- 5.2.3. The following regional policy objectives are relevant:
- Regional Policy Objective 4.5: Promote Athlone as a key location for regional economic development supporting the provision of increased employment through the expansion of the existing enterprise ecosystem in Athlone and smart specialisation, that have developed through collaboration with the

relevant enterprise agencies including the IDA, Athlone Institute of Technology and the Midlands Innovation and Research Centre and support the provision of physical infrastructure and zoned lands to realise the phased delivery of strategic employment lands in central accessible locations.

- Regional Policy Objective 4.7: Support the development of a cross sectoral approach to promote Athlone as a key tourism destination in the Midlands, building on Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartlands brand and the forthcoming Shannon Tourism Masterplan to develop the recreation and amenity potential of waterways including the River Shannon and Lough Ree and the development of a greenway network including the Galway to Dublin Cycleway.
- Regional Policy Objective 4.8: Support the regeneration of underused town centre and brownfield / infill lands along with the delivery of existing zoned and serviced lands to facilitate significant population growth and achieve sustainable compact growth targets of 30% of all new homes to be built within the existing built up urban area.

5.3. Local Planning Policy

5.3.1. Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020

- Athlone is identified as a Strategically Linked Gateway Town which, along with Mullingar, is listed in Tier 1 of the county's Settlement Strategy.
- Core Strategy Policy P-CS8: To prioritise sustainable development in the Linked Gateway towns of Athlone and Mullingar, in line with National and Regional policy provisions.

5.3.2. Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020

- Lissywollen South area – map based objective for a Local Area Plan.
- Variation 3 to Athlone Town Development Plan incorporated Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024.

5.3.3. Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024

- Landuse Zoning Objectives relating to the plan lands:
 - Proposed Residential

- Section 3.6 – Access and Movement.
- Section 4 – Framework Plan.

6.0 Forming of the Opinion

6.1. Pursuant to section 6(7) of the Act of 2016, regard is had in the forming of the opinion to the documentation submitted by the prospective applicant; the Planning Authority submission and the discussions which took place during the two tripartite consultation meetings. I shall provide a brief detail on each of these elements hereunder.

6.2. Prospective Applicant's Case

Documentation Submitted for First Meeting

6.2.1. The prospective applicant has submitted information pursuant to section 5(5)(a) of the Planning & Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 and Article 285 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Housing Development) Regulations 2017.

6.2.2. This information included, inter alia, a Completed SHD Application Form, Planning Report and Statement of Consistency, Architectural Design Rationale, Quality Housing Assessment, Architectural Drawings, Engineering Drawings, Landscape Drawings, Tree and Hedgerow Survey, Engineering Services Report, Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment, Traffic and Transport Assessment, Landscape Rationale, Landscape Masterplan, Combined Landscape and Engineer Plan, Noise Assessment, Archaeological Impact Assessment, Construction Environment Management Plan, and AA Screening Statement.

Documentation Submitted for Second Meeting

6.2.3. Revised information was submitted including, inter alia, a Design Statement, Revised Masterplan Layout, Revised Masterplan ABC Option Layout, Landscape Masterplan, Landscape Rationale, Boundary Plan and Site Sections.

6.2.4. I have reviewed and considered all of the documents and drawings submitted.

6.3. Planning Authority Submission – First Meeting

- 6.3.1. In compliance with section 6(4)(b) of the Act of 2016 the planning authority for the area in which the proposed development is located, Westmeath County Council, submitted a note of their section 247 consultations with the prospective applicant and also submitted their opinion in relation to the proposal. These were received by An Bord Pleanála on 14th November 2019.
- 6.3.2. Westmeath County Council's opinion included a description of the site and proposed development, planning policy context, and an assessment of the proposed development. The content of the report is summarised as follows:

Policy Context: The proposal is consistent with relevant Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines and the NPF. The application lands have been identified in the RSES for the delivery of strategic housing. Proposal is consistent with the zoning objectives for the site and the guiding principles of the Lissywollen South Framework Plan.

Density: Proposal is acceptable at a net density of 43 units per hectare.

Building Heights: The urban form, design approach and unit mix is acceptable. However, further assessment is required in relation to a number of matters, including car parking arrangements along Lissywollen Avenue; house types and requirement for dual frontage/active gables; positioning of Blocks B and C; observations within housing department report in relation to design elements; proximity of housing and crèche to N6; additional pedestrian and cycle movement required from north to south over the proposed Lissywollen Avenue; orientation of duplex units with blank gables onto Lissywollen Avenue to be reviewed; car parking provision for the apartments and location of same to be reviewed.

Landscape and Open Space Provision: Linear layout of Open Space is acceptable. However, some issues raised in relation to the location and design of certain swales; proposed central open space and positioning of Lissywollen Avenue flanking same and dividing the existing estate to the north and the south.

Part V: Proposals acceptable.

Surface Water: Some issues raised in relation to positioning and design of the swales.

Roads and Transport: The Roads and Transportation Department have raised issues in relation to specific aspects of the design of the east-west link road, car parking

proposals, traffic count data, location of cycle track, information required in relation to electric car charging, construction traffic management plan, and mobility management plan.

Lissywollen Avenue: General alignment acceptable subject to recommended revisions, including additional safe crossings of the proposed Lissywollen Avenue, which is not meant to be designed as a distributor road. In terms of phasing, the east-west Lissywollen Avenue and proposed upgrades to the existing roundabouts at both access points in addition to the associated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure are required to be constructed prior to the first occupation of any units.

Cycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure and Links: Generally acceptable, with further improvements required by way of additional links from the north to the Old Rail Trail to the south; additional raised pedestrian and cycle crossing points over the proposed Lissywollen Avenue; provision of shared surfaces/home zones extending from the proposed cul-de-sacs onto the Old Rail Trail; accommodation of cyclists as well as pedestrians at all access points onto the Old Rail Trail; infrastructure in relation to proposed footbridge over the N6; details in relation to how it is proposed to reconfigure the existing access way onto the Old Rail Trail.

Car Parking: Details required to demonstrate car parking provision and allocation for the apartments and duplexes, and further assessment of quantum of parking. A mobility management plan is also required and consideration of e car charging facilities.

Phasing: The proposed phasing of the distributor road is considered unacceptable from a traffic capacity perspectives and must be completed prior to the occupancy of any proposed residential unit.

Biodiversity: Clarification required.

Noise Assessment: Additional detail required.

Construction Environmental Management Plan: Additional detail required.

AA Screening Determination: Clarity required in relation to historic references to habitats on the site.

Flooding: No concerns raised.

Archaeology: No concerns raised.

Conclusion: The proposal is substantially in compliance with the relevant objectives of the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020, the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018-2024, the NPF, RSES, and relevant section 28 ministerial guidelines.

6.4. Planning Authority Submission – Second Meeting

- 6.4.1. The Planning Authority was given an opportunity to response to the revised information submitted.
- 6.4.2. Westmeath County Council submitted their opinion in relation to the matters addressed by the applicant arising out of the first tripartite meeting between An Bord Pleanála, WCC and the applicant. This was received by An Bord Pleanála on 27th March 2020 and is summarised as follows:

Density: Proposal of 50 units per hectare gross is acceptable in principle.

Alternative Road Layout: Proposed ABC layout is presented as a concept and lacks detailed design in terms of layout and the consequent urban form that would be dictated by these significant changes. Notwithstanding the absence of detailed design, this alternative proposal is welcomed in principle. This alternative layout should be significantly developed further to ensure the delivery of stronger urban edges, particularly to the eastern portion of the site, to meet the 12 criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual, DMURS, and the urban design objectives and guidelines outlined in the Lissywollen South Framework Plan 2018, specifically P3-KS04 and O-LUF10.

Transportation and Housing Section: No objection to amendment of the design of Lissywollen Avenue east-west link road from a local distributor road to a street link road. ABC layout option requires amendments if it is to be progressed.

Parking: Further detail required to make a full assessment of proposals in terms of number of spaces, location proximate to residential units and ease of access, security, provision of electrical charging points, disabled access etc. The proposed underground parking and the elimination of perpendicular parking onto Lissywollen Avenue is welcomed. Parallel parking and associated tree planting/landscaping proposals a welcome design solution.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Movement: Crossings of Lissywollen Avenue for pedestrians and cyclists is imperative, particularly to the northeast of the site where no direct linkages are proposed. Facilitating works to develop established desire lines for residents of Brawny North are required. All linkages onto the Old Rail Trail greenway should be designed to facilitate cyclists as well as pedestrians. The provision of shared surfaces/homezones extending from proposed cul-de-sacs should be designed to accommodate same.

Open Space Strategy: The revised proposals have not fully addressed the weakness of the urban edge treatment and enclosure throughout. The urban form fronting Lissywollen to the central/eastern section has failed to capitalise on the opportunity to provide a strong and defined urban edge. Proposals do not address recommendation to reorganise public open space, building blocks and alignment of east west Lissywollen Avenue. Proposed central open space unsatisfactory as it is enclosed on all sides by roads. Layout is reminiscent of celtic tiger era housing development that provided large tracts of centrally located yet largely unusable green spaces to meet minimum standards.

Conclusion: Proposed layout while acceptable in principle, requires further detailed design in order to comply with Lissywollen Framework Plan 2018 and Athlone Town Development Plan 2014, in addition to Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas and Urban Design Manual. It is recommended that the proposals are developed further having regard to the comments/recommendations in the original written report, ABP guidance in correspondence received, and the observations outlined in this report in order to progress to Stage 2 – planning application.

6.4.3. I have reviewed and considered all of the documents and drawings submitted.

7.0 The Consultation Meeting

7.1. First Consultation Meeting

7.1.1. A Section 5 Consultation meeting took place at the offices of Westmeath County Council on the 11th November 2019, commencing at 11.00 am. Representatives of the prospective applicant, the Planning Authority and An Bord Pleanála were in attendance. An agenda was issued by An Bord Pleanála prior to the meeting.

7.1.2. The main topics raised for discussion at the tripartite meeting were based on the Agenda that issued in advance and contained the following issues:

1. Development Strategy for the site to include, inter alia, the layout and design of the street network, specifically the east-west Lissywollen Avenue and urban edge/interface of buildings with this street, with specific reference to criteria set out in the Lissywollen Framework Plan and compliance with the criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual, A Best Practice Guide 2009.
2. Pedestrian/Cyclist links across the development, links to the Old Rail Trail, and pedestrian priority from the school to the Old Rail Trail.
3. Urban Design Issues.
4. Appropriate Assessment Screening.
5. Site Services.
6. Any Other Matters.

7.1.3. **Point 1:**

ABP representatives sought further elaboration on:

- The design and layout of the east-west Lissywollen Avenue, its design as a distributor road, and lack of a strong urban edge, with specific reference to the vision of the Lissywollen South Framework Plan, DMURS, and guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Area.
- Lack of enclosure by buildings and question over the ability of planting to create enclosure along Lissywollen Avenue. Framework plan suggests proposals for innovatively designed buildings at key junctions along Lissywollen Avenue.
- Level of set backs along Lissywollen Avenue due to on street and in-curtilage parking.
- Requirement to reinforce the urban character of the area and comply with RSES in creating a new urban quarter at this location.
- Landscape strategy - requirement for strong definition and surveillance of open space (existing and proposed); clarity on hierarchy, function and usability of open space across the site.

- Landscaping and noise barriers along the N6.

7.1.4. **Point 2:**

ABP representatives sought further elaboration on:

- Pedestrian and cyclist movement strategy, which is recognised as being key to the success of the area given the existing asset of the Old Rail Trail Greenway and proximity via this route to the town centre, schools, Athlone IT and businesses.
- Proposal for existing pedestrian/cyclist route at western boundary to be altered to incorporate a street catering for car parking.
- Proposal for communal parking spaces located proximate to the pedestrian/cycle links onto the Old Rail Trail.
- Level of overlooking of the Old Rail Trail and ability to highlight the access points through design of dwellings which have a maximum height of two storeys.

7.1.5. **Point 3:**

ABP representatives sought further elaboration on:

- Passive surveillance of open space and along pedestrian/cycle routes through the scheme.
- Requirement for dual aspect units at appropriate locations.
- Design of apartment block J and interaction with open space.
- Design of entrance blocks and creation of a strong urban edge.
- Positioning of blocks B and C relative to the road and block A at the western entrance.

7.1.6. **Point 4:**

ABP representatives sought further elaboration on:

- Appropriate assessment screening report and historic issues raised in relation to Molinia Meadows.

7.1.7. **Point 5:**

ABP representatives sought further elaboration on:

- Site services issues as raised by the planning authority in relation to surface water management.
- Traffic and transport issues raised by the planning authority.

7.1.8. Point 6:

ABP representatives sought further elaboration on:

- Ensure all documentation submitted is accurate and drawings legible, eg number of character areas; breakdown of unit mix; site survey.
- To review development in context of objectives set out within Lissywollen Framework Plan.
- Clarify by way of a map what is the net area.
- Clarify the number of 2 bed 3 person apartments being proposed and compliance with SPPRs as set out in the apartment guidelines 2018.
- Crèche requirements.
- Noise impact assessment.
- Clarify flooding is not an issue.

7.1.9. Both the prospective applicant and the planning authority were given an opportunity to comment and respond to the issues raised by the representatives of ABP. Those comments and responses are recorded in the 'Record of Meeting ABP-305726-19' which is on file. I have fully considered the responses and comments of the prospective applicant and planning authority in preparing the Recommended Opinion hereunder.

7.1.10. A letter was issued on 18th December 2019 advising the applicant that a second consultation meeting was necessary for the purpose of forming an opinion. The following matters were requested to be addressed in the consultation documentation and submitted to An Bord Pleanála prior to the second consultation meeting:

1. Further consideration/justification of the documents as they relate to the overall layout of the proposed development particularly in relation to the 12 criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual which accompanies the

Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, and compliance with the local policy document Lissywollen South Framework Plan. Specifically, further consideration/justification in relation to:

- a. Site layout plan and design of the east-west link road/Lissywollen Avenue. This should be designed as a street and not as a distributor road, with an active and strong urban edge, and further consideration should be given across the development to achieving an appropriate level of enclosure of streets and open spaces (proposed and existing) through the built form, in addition to landscaping. This may involve a reorganisation of the proposed public open space, building blocks, and/or the alignment of the east-west Lissywollen Avenue, to ensure the creation of a positive new urban quarter, in accordance with the RSES.
- b. Car Parking Strategy, which should be re-examined in accordance with DMURS, with a focus on a layout which is not car dominant and which considers the level of in-curtilage parking across the site, including the potential for additional communal parking options such as positioning of car parking behind the building line and in carefully designed courtyards, as well as in communal areas along the street.
- c. Pedestrian and Cyclist Movement across the site, specifically north south across the proposed east-west Lissywollen Avenue and consideration of parking on the approaches to the access points to the Old Rail Trail Greenway.
- d. Open Space Strategy, which details the hierarchy, function and usability of open space across the development, and consideration of the requirement for direct overlooking, surveillance and greater sense of enclosure from the surrounding built form of open spaces and removal of inappropriately located turning heads/parking bays within open spaces.

7.1.11. The letter issued to the applicant on the 19th December 2019 further stated the consideration of the above matters may require an amendment to the documents and/or design proposals submitted. The following specific information was identified:

Specific information

1. Cross sections and visualisations across the site and a report that addresses/rationalises the site layout with regard to the design of streets, positioning of the built form relative to the streets, overlooking of streets and public open spaces, and any set backs proposed.
2. A detailed Car Parking Strategy identifying parking provision and allocation for apartments and houses.
3. Pedestrian and Cyclist Strategy, which considers north-south as well as east-west movements, and specifically justifies the requirement for a vehicular route with car parking spaces along the western boundary at the location of the existing pedestrian/cyclist priority route and also justifies the arrangement of parking spaces at the entrances to the Old Rail Trail Greenway from an urban design perspective.
4. Cycle Parking Strategy to be submitted and considered in accordance with national guidance.
5. Further consideration of the design of the duplex units and interface with surrounding built edge/open space.
6. Review all corner sites and open spaces to ensure dwellings provide sufficient overlooking and definition of spaces and are of dual aspect design where required.
7. Noise impact assessment in relation to proposed houses to the north (inter alia house no.s 268-270) and the crèche to the northeast, adjacent the N6.
8. Childcare demand analysis and the likely demand for childcare places resulting from the proposed development relative to the scale of crèche proposed to the southwest.
9. Additional details in relation to surface water management, as raised in the report issued by the Water Services Department and detailed in an appendix report of the Planning Authority's Opinion dated 14th November 2019.
10. Additional details in relation to street access and circulation, as raised in the reports issued by the Roads and Transportation Department and detailed in

an appendix report of the Planning Authority's Opinion dated 14th November 2019.

11. A building life cycle report shall be submitted in accordance with section 6.3 of the Sustainable Urban housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018). The report should have regard to the long term management and maintenance of the apartments proposed in the scheme. The applicant should consider the proposed materials and finishes to the scheme including specific detailing of finishes, the treatment of balconies in the apartment buildings, landscaped areas, podium design, pathways, and all boundary treatments. Particular regard should be had to the requirement to provide high quality and sustainable finishes and details which seek to create a distinctive character for the development.
12. Mobility Management Plan.
13. Ecological impact assessment including inter alia a bat survey and which clearly identifies which trees/hedgerows that are to be removed and to be retained.
14. Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan.
15. Land ownership/consent submitted to include road network to west and east.
16. A map indicating the net development area.
17. Consideration to be given to e-car infrastructure.
18. A detailed schedule of accommodation which shall indicate compliance with relevant standards in the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2018.
19. A detailed phasing plan, including proposals in relation to the east-west Lissywollen Avenue and upgrades to the existing roundabouts at both access points in addition to the associated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

7.2. Second Consultation Meeting

- 7.2.1. The applicant submitted revised drawings to An Bord Pleanála on foot of the first consultation meeting and letter issued by An Bord Pleanála (18th December 2019). These were received by An Bord Pleanála on 6th March 2020. This information

included, inter alia, a Design Statement, Revised Masterplan Layout, Revised Masterplan ABC Option Layout, Landscape Masterplan, Landscape Rationale, Boundary Plan and Site Sections.

7.2.2. A second Section 5 Consultation meeting took place by way of Conference Call (due to Covid-19 restrictions) on the 30th March 2020, commencing at 11.30 am. Representatives of the prospective applicant, the Planning Authority and An Bord Pleanála were in attendance. An agenda was issued by An Bord Pleanála prior to the meeting.

7.2.3. The main topics raised for discussion at the tripartite meeting were based on the Agenda that issued in advance and contained the following issues:

1. Development Strategy for the site to include discussion on overall layout and urban design approach – rationale for maintaining route of east-west Avenue; interface of buildings with the Avenue; positioning/scale/definition of open space along the Avenue and across the scheme; DMURS and length of straight stretches of street; net area calculation and query over exclusions.
2. Urban Design Issues, including perimeter block designs and lack of variation in house typologies to address corners/blank elevations/high walls to streetscape/open space; proximity of apartment/duplex blocks to each other and sunlight/daylight analysis; dominance of car parking; level of in-curtilage parking and impact on width of streets; overall landscape strategy and design/location of proposed ‘urban squares’.
3. Pedestrian/Cyclist link from the School to the Old Rail Trail.
4. Rationale for delivery of a segregated cycle route and compliance with the National Cycle Manual.
5. Any Other Matters.

7.2.4. **Point 1:**

ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion on:

- Development Strategy for the site – Question the alignment of the east-west avenue and overall weak urban form along its length, problematic positioning and scale of proposed central open space, proposed weak urban edge to existing open spaces in Brawney Estate, and weak urban

edge/passive surveillance of proposed open spaces in sections of the development. Compliance with Urban Design Manual and DMURS required, in addition to Lissywollen South Framework Plan.

7.2.5. Point 2:

ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion on:

- Urban Design Issues, including perimeter block designs and weak house typologies proposed to address corners/blank elevations/high walls to streetscape/open space; close proximity of apartment/duplex blocks to each other and sunlight/daylight analysis; dominance of car parking; level of in-curtilage parking and impact on width of streets; overall landscape strategy and design/location of proposed 'urban squares'.
- Communal parking area at C and D not fully resolved and car dominant environment overall particularly in area M, N and C.

7.2.6. Point 3:

ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion on:

- Location of cycle route relative to the school. Consideration of the location of the cycle lane on the same side as the school to be considered to prevent crossing of multiple streets and parking areas.

7.2.7. Point 4:

ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion on:

- Examine design and layout of cycle lanes in accordance with National Cycle Manual.

7.2.8. Point 5:

ABP representatives sought further elaboration/discussion on:

- Proposed development requires character areas; high quality design; quality materials and finishes. Further details to be submitted in this regard.

7.2.9. Both the prospective applicant and the planning authority were given an opportunity to comment and respond to the issues raised by the representatives of ABP. Those comments and responses are recorded in the 'Record of Meeting ABP-305726-19

2nd Meeting' which is on file. I have fully considered the responses and comments of the prospective applicant and planning authority in preparing the Recommended Opinion hereunder.

8.0 **Assessment**

- 8.1. Based on the entirety of the information before me, it would appear that the proposed development falls within the definition of Strategic Housing Development, as set out in section 3 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016.
- 8.2. I have examined all of the information and submissions before me including the documentation submitted by the prospective applicant, the submissions of the Planning Authority and the discussions which took place at the tripartite meeting. I have had regard to both national policy, via the s.28 Ministerial Guidelines, and local policy, via the statutory plan for the area.
- 8.3. Having regard to all of the above, I recommend that further consideration and/or possible amendment of the documents submitted are required at application stage as set out in the recommended Opinion below.

Conclusion

- 8.4. Having regard to the above, I recommend that the Board serve a notice on the prospective applicant, pursuant to Section 6(7)(b) of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016, stating that it is of the opinion that the documentation submitted with the consultation request under section 5(5) of the Act requires **further consideration and amendment** in order to constitute a reasonable basis for an application under section 4 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016.
- 8.5. I would also recommend that the prospective applicant be notified, pursuant to article 285(5)(b) of the 2017 Regulations, that specified information (as outlined hereunder) be submitted with any application for permission that may follow. I believe the specified information will assist the Board at application stage in its decision making process. I am also recommending that a number of prescribed bodies (as listed hereunder) be notified by the prospective applicant of the making of the application.

9.0 Recommended Opinion

- 9.1. An Bord Pleanála refers to your request pursuant to section 5 of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016. Section 6(7)(a) of the Act provides that the Board shall form an opinion as to whether the documents submitted with the consultation request (i) constitute a reasonable basis for an application under section 4 of the Act, or (ii) require further consideration and amendment in order to constitute a reasonable basis for an application under section 4.
- 9.2. Following consideration of the issues raised during the consultation process, and having regard to the opinion of the planning authority, **An Bord Pleanála is of the opinion that the documentation submitted requires further consideration and amendment to constitute a reasonable basis for an application for strategic housing development to An Bord Pleanála.**
- 9.3. In the opinion of An Bord Pleanála, the following issues need to be addressed in the documents submitted to which section 5(5) of the Act of 2016 relates that could result in them constituting a reasonable basis for an application for strategic housing development:
1. Further consideration/justification of the documents as they relate to the overall layout of the proposed development particularly in relation to the 12 criteria set out in the Urban Design Manual which accompanies the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, and compliance with the local policy document Lissywollen South Framework Plan. Specifically, further consideration/justification in relation to:
 - a. Site layout plan and design of the east-west link road/Lissywollen Avenue. This should be designed as a street and not as a distributor road, with an active and strong urban edge, and further consideration should be given across the development to achieving an appropriate level of enclosure of streets and open spaces (proposed and existing) through the built form, in addition to landscaping. This may involve a realignment of the east-west route,

re-examination of the location and scale of the proposed central public open space, and re-examination of the layout of the building blocks relative to streets and open spaces.

- b. Car Parking Strategy, which should be re-examined in accordance with DMURS, with a focus on a layout which is not car dominant and which considers the level of in-curtilage parking across the site, including the potential for additional communal parking options such as positioning of car parking behind the building line and in carefully designed courtyards, as well as in communal areas along the street.
- c. Pedestrian and Cyclist Movement across the site, specifically north south across the proposed east-west Lissywollen Avenue.
- d. Open Space Strategy, which details the hierarchy, function and usability of open space across the development, and consideration of the requirement for direct overlooking, surveillance and greater sense of enclosure from the surrounding built form of open spaces and removal of inappropriately located turning heads/parking bays within open spaces.

The further consideration of these issues may require an amendment to the documents and/or design proposals submitted.

Pursuant to article 285(5)(b) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Housing Development) Regulations 2017, the prospective applicant is hereby notified that in addition to the requirements as specified in articles 297 and 298 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Housing Development) Regulations 2017, the following specific information should be submitted with any application for permission arising from this notification:

1. Cross sections and visualisations across the site and a report that addresses/rationalises the site layout with regard to the design of streets, positioning of the built form relative to the streets, overlooking of streets and public open spaces, and design and positioning of car parking, in accordance with the Lissywollen Framework Plan, Urban Design Manual accompanying

the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas, 2009, and DMURS.

2. A detailed Car Parking Strategy identifying parking provision and allocation for apartments and houses.
3. Pedestrian and Cyclist Strategy, which considers north-south as well as east-west movements and re-consideration of the location of the cycle lane relative to the school site.
4. Cycle Parking Strategy to be submitted and considered in accordance with national guidance.
5. Review all corner sites and open spaces to ensure dwelling designs provide sufficient overlooking and definition of spaces and are of dual aspect design where required, minimising dominance of boundary walls onto streets.
6. Noise impact assessment in relation to proposed houses to the north, adjacent the N6.
7. Childcare demand analysis and the likely demand for childcare places.
8. Sunlight-daylight analysis in relation to apartments proposed and neighbouring residential dwellings.
9. Additional details in relation to issues raised in the report issued by the Roads and Transportation Department dated 24th March 2020.
10. Additional details in relation to issues raised in the report issued by the Housing Department dated 23rd March 2020.
11. Additional details in relation to surface water management and SUDS strategy.
12. A building life cycle report shall be submitted in accordance with section 6.3 of the Sustainable Urban housing: Design Standards for New Apartments (2018). The report should have regard to the long term management and maintenance of the apartments proposed in the scheme. The applicant should consider the proposed materials and finishes to the scheme including specific detailing of finishes, the treatment of balconies in the apartment buildings, landscaped areas, podium design, pathways, and all boundary treatments.

Particular regard should be had to the requirement to provide high quality and sustainable finishes and details which seek to create a distinctive character for the development.

13. Mobility Management Plan.

14. Ecological impact assessment including inter alia a bat survey and ecological connectivity across the site, specifically addressing trees/hedgerows that are to be removed and to be retained.

15. Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan.

16. Land ownership/consent submitted to include road network to west and east.

17. A map indicating the net development area.

18. Consideration to be given to e-car infrastructure.

19. A detailed schedule of accommodation which shall indicate compliance with relevant standards in the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities' 2018.

20. A detailed phasing plan, including proposals in relation to the east-west Lissywollen Avenue and upgrades to the existing roundabouts at both access points, in addition to the associated bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Pursuant to article 285(5)(a) of the Planning and Development (Strategic Housing Development) Regulations 2017, the prospective applicant is informed that the following authorities should be notified in the event of the making of an application arising from this notification in accordance with section 8(1)(b) of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016:

1. Irish Water
2. Transport Infrastructure Ireland
3. National Transport Authority
4. Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
5. Coras Iompair Eireann
6. Westmeath Childcare Committee

PLEASE NOTE:

Under section 6(9) of the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016, neither the holding of a consultation under section 6, nor the forming of an opinion under that section, shall prejudice the performance by the Board, or the planning authority or authorities in whose area the proposed strategic housing development would be situated, of any other of their respective functions under the Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2016 or any other enactment and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in legal proceedings.

Una O'Neill
Senior Planning Inspector

6th May 2020