



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-307329-20

Development	An artificial all-weather sports pitch with 6 floodlights, a 78-space car park, and a new means of pedestrian access.
Location	St. Theresa's Place, Kanturk, Co. Cork.
Planning Authority	Cork County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	19/5682
Applicant(s)	Kanturk Community AstroTurf Company Ltd
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant, subject to 40 conditions
Type of Appeal	Third Party -v- Decision
Appellant(s)	Kevin Brennan & Angela O'Sullivan
Observer(s)	None
Date of Site Inspection	14 th July 2020
Inspector	Hugh D. Morrison

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1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The site is located on the outskirts of Kanturk, to the east of the River Allow and the R576. This site lies in a position between the residential areas of St. Theresa's Place, to the SW, and Edel Quinn Place at a short remove to the N. It is accessed off St. Theresa's Place (L-5057), which in turn is accessed off Greenane Street Upper (L-1029) which rises towards the NE from Greenane Street Lower (R576).
- 1.2. The main body of the site is a field, which is enclosed by hedgerows and fencing and which is subject to gentle downward gradients towards the S and towards the W. It adjoins other fields to the NNW, ENE and SSE. The fields to the NNE are dissected by a new road, which forms an E/W cul-de-sac from the L-1029 to the W. The northern portion of the WSW boundary to this site abuts two house plots, which have been developed to provide a pair of bungalows, while the southern portion abuts the extremities of the rear gardens to the nearest two-storey semi-detached dwelling houses on St. Theresa's Place.
- 1.3. The means of access to the site is along a laneway between the appellants' residential property, bound by a wall and a fence above a plinth, to the SSW, and a sports hall, bound by a palisade security fence, to the NNW. This means of access serves a farm gate into the main body of the site and it serves the aforementioned pair of bungalows, too.
- 1.4. A strip of land running around the back and far side of the sports hall and its accompanying forecourt is also included within the site, as are portions of the junction between St. Theresa's Gardens and Greenane Street Upper. This sports hall is run by Colaiste Treasa, which itself lies on the opposite side of St. Theresa's Place from it. Rows of perpendicular car parking spaces adjoining St. Theresa's Place lie along the frontage to the sports hall and this school, i.e. 28 spaces, which are identified as being for the use of staff. A further 17 spaces exist in a car park adjoining the nearside of Greenane Street Upper to the N of its junction with St. Theresa's Place.
- 1.5. The total area of the site is 1.984 hectares.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposal would entail the construction of an artificial all-weather sports pitch (116m x 76m) in the main body of the site. Due to the fall towards the S and W of this site, this construction would involve a cut and fill methodology whereby this pitch would be finished to a higher level than exists at present towards its southern corner and to a lower level than exists at present towards its northern corner. It would be enclosed by 2.4m high fencing and surrounded by football and ball-stop netting to a height of 5m, rising to 10m behind the goals. The pitch would be illuminated by 6 x 18m high floodlights.
- 2.2. The proposal would also entail the construction of a 78-space car park, which would be sited to the WSW of the pitch. This car park would be laid out to incorporate footpaths and lighting. It would be accessed via a widened laneway from St. Theresa's Place to the W, which would also be sealed and formally laid out. Pedestrian access would be by means of a new footpath from St. Theresa's Place, too. This footpath would run around the perimeter of an adjacent sports hall and its forecourt and it would connect with the junction between St. Theresa's Place and Greenane Street Upper where a new pedestrian crossing would be constructed on this Street.
- 2.3. The pitch and the car park would be the subject of a new surface water drainage system, which would incorporate an attenuation tank. The improved access road would drain to the public sewer.
- 2.4. The application is accompanied by a letter of explanation concerning the applicant, i.e. it is a non-profit company made up of representatives of the Rugby, GAA, and Soccer Clubs in Kanturk and local schools, all of whom would benefit from the proposal.

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Following clarification of further information, permission granted subject to 40 conditions.

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. Planning Reports

Further information was sought with respect to the following:

- A traffic management plan,
- A justification of the proposed 78-space car park,
- Pedestrian facilities at the proposed vehicular access,
- Access to the proposed footpath, which would be higher than the local road,
- Widening of the proposed footpath,
- Signage at the proposed vehicular access,
- Traffic prioritisation on the proposed vehicular means of access between existing dwelling houses and the proposed car park,
- Road markings at the proposed access point and that of the existing sports hall,
- Consent of landowner to the reduction in height of pier beside proposed access point,
- Interception channel for mouth of the proposed car park,
- Pedestrian facilities in the proposed car park,
- Site sections to show existing and proposed levels,
- Proposed treatment of the southern boundary,
- Hours of operation and security arrangements,
- Changing facilities,
- Justification of the height of the proposed floodlights,
- Photomontages of the proposed floodlights, and
- Hours of operation of the proposed floodlights.

Clarification of further information was sought with respect to the following:

- In the absence of a reduction in the height of pier, alternative means of improving sightlines at the proposed access point, and
- Photomontages of the proposed floodlights from within the settlement.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Irish Water: No objection + standard notes.
- Cork County Council
 - Public Lighting: No objection, subject to conditions.
 - Environment: No objection, subject to conditions.
 - Area Engineer: Following receipt of clarification of further information, no objection, subject to conditions, including a special development contribution condition to fund alterations to the public road at the proposed access point.
 - Heritage Unit: No objection, subject to conditions.

4.0 Planning History

Pre-application consultation occurred on 8th May 2019.

5.0 Policy and Context

5.1. Development Plan

Under the Cork County Development Plan 2014 – 2020 (CDP), Kanturk is categorised as being a town. Under the County Landscape Strategy, it lies within the Broad Marginal Middleground Valley (Landscape Type 11), which is deemed to be of high value and sensitivity and local importance.

Objective TM 3-3 of the CDP addresses road safety and traffic management.

Relevant extracts from this Objective are set out below:

(d) Ensure that all new vehicular accesses are designed to appropriate standards of visibility to ensure the safety of other road users.

(e) Improve the standards and safety of public roads and to protect the investment of public resources in the provision, improvement and maintenance of the public road network.

(f) Promote road safety measures throughout the County, including traffic calming, road signage and parking.

Appendix D of the CDP addresses parking and cycling standards. It sets no parking standard for recreational uses and it states that the numbers of cycle spaces would be dependent on the nature and location of the use.

Under the Kanturk Mallow Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017 (LAP), the site is shown as abutting the settlement boundary and as being in “an existing built-up area”. Objective ZU 3-1 of the CDP addresses such areas as follows:

Normally encourage through the LAP development that supports in general the primary land use of the surrounding existing built up area. Development that does not support, or threatens the vitality or integrity of, the primary use of these existing built up areas will be resisted.

Under the heading of “Open Space, Sporting and Cultural”, the LAP states the following, “Population growth is likely to increase demands for (recreational) facilities and in particular it is considered that an all-weather pitch...would be welcome.” General Objective KK-GO-09 adds the following, “Encourage the development of suitable sites for additional sports, recreation and open space provision, to ensure that that provision is properly co-ordinated with other forms of development and other land-use policies, and to protect open space and other land with recreational or amenity value...”

The LAP shows 2 hectares of adjoining land to the N as being zoned residential and subject to Objective KK-R-01, Medium B density residential development to include a mix of house types and sizes. Under Objective HOU 4-1 of the CDP, such residential development is envisaged as having a net residential density of between 12 and 25 dwellings per hectare, with a higher maximum of 35 dwellings per hectare envisaged for “smaller towns, i.e. less than 5000 population outside Metropolitan Cork. In the 2016 Census, Clonakilty had a population of 2350.

5.2. Natural Heritage Designations

Blackwater River (Cork/Waterford) SAC (002170)

5.3. EIA Screening

The proposal is for a leisure use that does not come within the ambit of any of the classes under the heading of “Tourism and Leisure” for the purpose of EIA and so it is “not a class” for this purpose.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

Kevin Brennan & Angela O’Sullivan of No. 1 St. Theresa’s Place

The appellants begin by stating that, while they would normally be in favour of community-oriented projects, the current proposal poses issues that prompt their objection on the following grounds:

- Access road

Details of how the widening of the existing access road would be undertaken are absent. Thus, how the lower level of the adjacent sports hall and the appellants’ fence would be affected have not been shown.

- Traffic volumes

- The existing access road presently serves 2 dwelling houses and so it is lightly trafficked. Under the proposal, this would change radically. Thus, during each weekday evening there would be 3 slots, each of which could attract up to 30 cars, and at weekends there would be 8 slots, each of which could attract up to 30 cars, i.e. 180 movements and 480 movements, respectively.
- No traffic management plan was submitted, only a template for completion in connection with special events.

- No RSA was submitted, despite the need for one under several headings, i.e. road widening, junction alterations, and increased traffic generation/road usage.
- Proposed junction/sightlines
 - As originally submitted, the applicant proposed to reduce the height of the appellants' pier, which lies between the proposed access point to the site and the entrance to their residential property. This pier and the incidence of on-street parking in St. Theresa's Place limit the availability of sightlines at this access point.
 - As revised, the applicant proposes a build out to the footpath beside the said pier. Details of this build out have not been submitted, e.g. would it incorporate tactile paving and dropped kerbs/a vehicular cross over to the appellants' entrance.
 - The presence of a school and a sports hall in the vicinity of the proposed access point ensure that traffic and parking are issues as it is.

- Noise nuisance

Traffic noise on the access road to the site would disturb the appellants' enjoyment of their residential property, e.g. vehicles accelerating up the incline of this road to the site.

- Access road boundary treatment

No details have been submitted with respect to the upgrade/noise attenuating of the appellants' northern boundary with the access road.

- Footpath/pedestrian access

No details have been submitted as to how level differences between the Grennane Street Upper and the proposed footpath would be negotiated or between the proposed car park and the astro-turf. While steps are cited in relation to the former difference, these would not meet the requirements of universal access.

- Flood lighting

Given that the astro-turf would be c. 6m above the ground floor level of the appellants' dwelling house, the proposed 18m high floodlights would be 24m above this level. The implications of these lights for their residential property are hard to decipher. However, the likely increased lighting of windows in the rear elevation of their dwelling house would affect family life.

- Visual appearance

Given the aforementioned difference in levels, the combination of floodlights and 10m high ball-stop netting would be unsightly and it would spoil existing views of the countryside.

- Traffic geometry

The proposed means of access and car park would be restricted in places. The applicant has not demonstrated that the site would be capable of being accessed by buses and emergency vehicles.

- General

- CCTV is cited: what would the implications be for neighbour privacy?
- How would changing facilities in the existing sports hall be accessed?
- Universal access requirements do not appear to be achievable.
- Should the appellants not have been consulted over the changes to their access arrangements on foot of the revisions submitted to the original proposal?
- Issues such as lighting remain to be resolved under conditions. Such resolution may not be satisfactory to the appellants.
- Would storm drainage arrangements be adequate?

6.2. Applicant Response

The applicant begins by setting out the background to Kanturk Community AstroTurf Company Ltd, which was formed in early 2019 and which represents the schools,

sports clubs, and town-wide organisations of Kanturk in their combined quest to improve sporting facilities for the town and the surrounding area of Duhallow.

The applicant outlines how pre-planning public consultation occurred and emerging plans were adapted to reflect local concerns, e.g. the incorporation of a lit dedicated public footpath to the site, prior to the making of the current application, which was further fine-tuned at the FI stage.

The applicant states that the site has been used as a sports playing field for training and competitive matches since 1971 by the local RFC and GAA and by Colaiste Treasa, which has also been involved in its reseeded and the clearance of ditches as recently as last year. This site thus has an established use as a sports playing field.

The applicant proceeds to respond to the appellants' grounds of appeal as follows:

- Access road

Pre-existing problems are outlined: This road is of single lane width, it has no footpath, it has no signage, and it is in poor condition. Additionally, the junction formed by this road, the exit from the adjacent sports hall, and St. Theresa's Place is uncontrolled and subject to an obstructed SE sightline.

The aforementioned problems would be solved under the proposal: Thus, the road would be widened to two lanes, a separate dedicated public footpath would be laid out around the adjacent sports hall, signage would be erected, and the surface would be sealed and road markings added. The junction would be formally laid out and, by means of a build out, the obstruction to visibility would be worked around. A right turn only sign would be erected to ensure that exiting traffic heads for the town centre rather than St. Theresa's Place housing estate.

Confidence is expressed that the above cited works would be undertaken without damage to the appellants' boundary fence and the minor level differences on the western side of the lane would be capable of being addressed by a combination of retaining walls and embankments.

- Traffic volumes

Traffic volumes on the existing access road are low and parking generated by the playing field use of the site occurs on the adjoining housing estate.

Residents expressed concern over such parking and so the proposal would entail the provision of a 78-space car park within the site.

A traffic management plan has been prepared, which anticipates a maximum of 30 cars in attendance per hour. With 12-hour usage at the weekends, a maximum of 360 round-trips would occur.

- Proposed junction/sightlines

The N sightline to the proposed junction would clear the adjacent row of parking spaces and this junction would be formalised with exiting traffic from the sports hall having to yield to traffic on the access road. Road safety would thereby be enhanced.

The build out would incorporate dropped kerbs to serve the appellants' existing vehicular entrance. Tactile paving would be incorporated, too, if deemed to be necessary.

The improved access road would incorporate surface water run-off drainage, which would discharge to the public sewer. (The main body of the site would have a separate surface water drainage system).

With the improved access road and associated junction and with the provision, too, of an off-street car park, existing congestion would be relieved by the proposal.

- Noise nuisance

The access road would be sealed and subject to a gentle gradient of 1: 20. Existing noise associated with its gravel surface would thus be overcome.

- Access road boundary treatment

The access road has been the subject of vehicular and pedestrian traffic generated by the playing field use of the site. The former traffic would be facilitated by the above cited improvements to this road and the latter traffic would be provided for by means of a new public footpath.

The residents of the two bungalows at the end of the access road have welcomed the proposed improvements to the same.

- Footpath/pedestrian access

In the main body of the site the public footpath from the set down area to the NW corner of the pitch would be 1: 12 and thus wheelchair accessible.

Steps would be needed to span the initial gradient of the proposed public footpath around the site of the sports hall from St. Theresa's Place. These steps would be the subject of a detailed design consistent with the capabilities of ambulant disabled persons.

- Flood lighting

The lighting study undertaken for the site indicates that light spillage would be minimal and that, in this respect, the proposed 18m high lighting would be optimal. The appellants nearest property boundary and dwelling house would be, variously, 68m and 88m away.

The use of the proposed pitch would finish at 21.30 and the lights would be switched-off at 21.45. These times were agreed with the local residents association and they are conditioned by the PA.

- Visual appearance

A cut and fill methodology would be employed to ensure that the finished level of the proposed pitch coincides with the existing ground level in the centre of the site.

The proposal would ensure that the pitch is as far away from the nearest residential properties as possible and it is controlled by means of ball netting, which has not pertained heretofore.

- Traffic geometry

The access road would be widened to 5m and the one-way system in the proposed car park would be served by 6m carriageways.

The pitch would be capable of being accessed by emergency vehicles via a proposed maintenance gate in the NW corner.

Buses would not be in attendance on the site as they would use the existing car park in front of the adjacent sports hall, within which changing room facilities would be provided.

- General points
 - CCTV: This would be installed and operated by the applicant to secure the proposed pitch, car park, and entrance gate. The privacy of local residents would not be affected.
 - Changing facilities: An existing rear door in the sports hall would be used to enable changing facilities to be accessed. This door would connect with the proposed footpath around this hall and onwards to the main body of the site.
 - Universal access: See under footpath/pedestrian access
 - Works to front of the appellants' property: See under access road and proposed junction/sightlines.
 - Compliance with planning conditions: The applicant undertakes to do so.
 - Storm water drainage: See under proposed junction/sightlines.

The applicant's grounds of appeal are accompanied by letters of support from schools, sports clubs, and town-wide organisations of Kanturk.

6.3. Planning Authority Response

None

6.4. Observations

None

6.5. Further Responses

None

7.0 Assessment

7.1. I have reviewed the proposal in the light of the CDP and the LAP, the submissions of the parties, and my own site visit. Accordingly, I consider that this application/appeal should be assessed under the following headings:

- (i) The proposal and land use,
- (ii) Traffic, parking, and vehicular access,
- (iii) Pedestrian access,
- (iv) Visual amenity,
- (v) Residential amenity,
- (vi) Water, and
- (vii) Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment.

(i) The proposal

7.2. The proposal is for the construction of an illuminated artificial all-weather sports pitch with an accompanying car park on the subject site. This proposal would be shared between Kanturk's sports clubs and schools and it would function primarily as a training facility. (The applicant is a limited company the board of which is composed of representatives of these clubs and schools). Existing changing facilities would be made available in a sports hall adjacent to the site, which is run by Colaiste Treasa.

7.3. The LAP recognises, against the backdrop of an expanding population in the town, the need for an all-weather pitch. General Objective KK-GO-09 encourages the development of suitable sites for additional sports provision and it undertakes to ensure that such provision is properly co-ordinated with other forms of development and other land-use policies.

7.4. Under the LAP, the site is shown as abutting the settlement boundary and as being in "an existing built-up area". The CDP states that the PA will normally encourage development that supports the primary land use of the surrounding existing built up area.

7.5. The main body of the subject site is a field, which is surrounded by existing fields to the N, E, and S. The field to the N is inside the settlement boundary, too, and it is

zoned for residential development (Objective KK-R-01), while the other fields are outside this boundary. Beyond the said field lies an area of housing in and around Edel Quinn Place, while housing on St. Theresa's Place adjoins the remaining W boundary. Thus, the primary surrounding land use within the settlement boundary is residential.

- 7.6. If the aforementioned Objective KK-R-01 of the LAP is not to be prejudiced by the proposal, then mass tree planting along the northern boundary of the site to augment the existing hedgerow would be required. (By the same token, mass tree planting along the eastern boundary to augment the existing hedgerow would be of importance, too, to screen the proposal from existing dwelling houses further to the north). If the Board is minded to grant permission, then such planting would be capable of being conditioned.
- 7.7. At the appeal stage the applicant has stated that the subject field has been in use since 1971 as a sports playing field for training and competitive matches by the local RFC and GAA and by Colaiste Treasa, and that this school has also been involved in its reseeded and the clearance of ditches as recently as last year. The field is owned by Cork County Council.
- 7.8. During my site visit, I observed that the long grass in the subject field had just been cut with, presumably, a view to making hay. I did not observe any sports apparatus or any signage to indicate that the field was in use, or had been in use, as a sports field. It thus presented as being in agricultural use.
- 7.9. I note that, as cited above, the LAP shows the field in question as "existing built up area", which could possibly signal the presence of a use such as a sports field. That said, this Plan does zone sports fields elsewhere in the town as "open space", and so I would have expected this zoning if the field was formally in use for sport.
- 7.10. In the light of the evidence before me, I consider that the main body of the site is presently in agricultural use and that the applicant has not demonstrated that its principal use is as a sports field.
- 7.11. I conclude that the LAP is supportive of the quest to provide Kanturk with an all-weather pitch but that it has not identified/zoned the subject site for open space, as a precursor to such a pitch being sited on it.

(ii) Traffic, parking, and access

7.12. Under FI, the applicant outlined the operating pattern of the proposal and the associated predicted levels of traffic. Thus,

- During the week, the pitch would only be used by schools during the school day with negligible vehicular traffic, as staff and pupils would be expected to walk to and from the site. Between 17.00 and 21.30, there would be a maximum of 3 training slots, with each slot attracting up to 30 cars, i.e. 60 vehicle movements and 30 round trips. Thus, a maximum of 180 vehicle movements could occur throughout an early to mid-evening period.
- At the weekends, the pitch would be available between 09.00 and 21.30 for a maximum of 12 one-hour slots. Again, a maximum of 30 cars would be attracted per slot. Thus, 360 round trips and, thus, 720 vehicle movements could occur throughout the day.

I anticipate that the pattern of vehicular movements may tend to cluster around the change over time between slots with cars arriving and departing at around about the same time. However, where participants avail of the changing rooms in the adjacent sports hall, this pattern may be more spread out.

7.13. At present, the access road to the main body of the site from St. Theresa's Place affords vehicular access to a yard to the rear of the appellants residential property at No. 1 St. Theresa's Place and to the two bungalows, the grounds of which adjoin the western corner of the site. This road also affords agricultural access to the subject field via a farm gate. It is of single lane width and it has gravelled vehicular tracks. The initial portion of the access road rises upwards at a gentle gradient before largely levelling off. Clearly, it is lightly trafficked at present.

7.14. The junction between the access road and St. Theresa's Place occurs at the northern most corner of this housing estate, i.e. at its entrance from the N, which passes the sports hall adjacent to the site and Colaiste Treasa opposite, en route from its junction with Greenane Street Upper.

7.15. Under the proposal, a sign would be erected opposite the end of the access road stating that all traffic should turn right past the sports hall and school, thereby avoiding the housing estate itself.

- 7.16. The application is not accompanied by any existing traffic counts on either Greenane Street Upper or on St. Theresa's Place. The former Street is part of the L-1029, a primary local road that connects the town to its north eastern hinterland, while the latter Place is a secondary local road, the L-5057, which serves the housing estate. The presence of the existing sports hall and school ensure that non-residential traffic occurs on the initial portion of St. Theresa's Place as it is. The proposal would generate traffic outside of the school day in the evenings and at weekends and so the incidence of non-residential traffic would extend into these times, too.
- 7.17. The proposal would entail the construction of a 78-space car park in conjunction with the construction of the all-weather sports pitch. This car park would be sited at the end of the aforementioned access road. Its size would be sufficient to comfortably handle the coincidence of two slots with maximum numbers of cars in attendance, i.e. 60, and it was justified under FI on the basis that parking is already an issue during the school day in the locality. The applicant reports that, at the public consultation stage prior to the making of the current application, local residents were concerned that the proposed car park should be sufficiently large to ensure that the risk of overspill on-street car parking on St. Theresa's Place would not arise. Thus, competition for existing on-street parking would not be faced by local residents.
- 7.18. During my site visit, I observed that there are a considerable number of effectively off-street parking spaces in the vicinity of the site. Thus, on St. Theresa's Place between the sports hall and the school there are 28 spaces identified for the use of staff during the school day and there are a further 17 spaces in a parking area that is continuous with Greenane Street Upper just to the N of its junction with St. Theresa's Place, i.e. a total of 45 spaces. Given that the non-school use of the all-weather pitch would be outside school hours, the question arises as to the availability of these spaces outside the school day. The former 28 spaces are presently available to the public, insofar as they are continuous with St. Theresa's Place and uncontrolled. However, there is no guarantee that this will remain so. The latter 17 spaces are encompassed within Greenane Street Upper and so they are public car parking spaces.
- 7.19. During my site visit, which occurred outside the school day, the aforementioned car parking spaces were free and available to the public to park in. None of the spaces were occupied.

- 7.20. At the appeal stage, the applicant has stated that any buses that may be in attendance would park in the forecourt to the sports hall and so they would not need to use the proposed car park.
- 7.21. While the CDP does not set a maximum standard for the number of spaces that should accompany sporting facilities, it does set out other parameters that the design and layout of the proposed car park would fail to meet. Thus, spaces should be 4.9m long and circulation aisles should be 6.1m wide, rather than the 4.8m and 6m shown on the submitted plans, 5% of spaces should be for the mobility impaired, and 10% apiece should be for parents and children and the recharging of electric vehicles. Additionally, 1 space should be provided for motorcycles per 10 car parking spaces and cycle stands should be provided, too.
- 7.22. The proposal would entail the widening of the access road to the main body of the site and its formalisation by means of a sealed surface, lining, and signage. Under CFI, the junction between this road and St. Theresa's Place was the subject of attention, due to the identification of an obstruction to the SE sightline available to exiting drivers. As a result, a build-out is now proposed and an associated "kink" in the alignment of the carriageway to St. Theresa's Place would be introduced. The requisite sightlines would thereby be available in either direction.
- 7.23. The appellants have expressed concern over the implications of the build-out for the means of vehicular access to their adjoining residential property. The applicant has responded by stating that the works would safeguard such access by means of dropped kerbs and, presumably, the dishing of the build-out.
- 7.24. The appellants have also expressed concern over the fact that changes to the said junction and carriageway have been proposed without the undertaking of a RSA. I note from the submitted junction layout proposals plan that the build-out would be designed to encourage right hand turns on the part of exiting drivers and that the opportunity would be taken to introduce other changes to St. Theresa's Place, i.e. the reservation of space to the north of the access road by means of etching, the formalisation of the entrance to the sports hall forecourt off the access road, and the etching of space adjoining the offset road opposite the access road, to improve the available northern sightline to exiting drivers.

- 7.25. While the majority of the above cited changes appear to be consistent with greater road safety, I am concerned that the introduction of a “kink” in the carriageway of St. Theresa’s Place to skirt the protruding access road would lead to a situation wherein traffic approaching from the N may be in danger of colliding with exiting vehicles on the access road. In this respect, the reservation of space to the N of the access road by means of etching would offer inadequate protection and, in any event, its extent, as shown on the submitted junction proposals plan, would fall short of the portion of carriageway where protection would be most needed. This concern illustrates the need for a RSA.
- 7.26. I conclude that traffic generated by the proposal would be locally significant and yet it would occur outside school hours when the greatest pressure on the local road network and existing off-street parking spaces arises. I conclude, too, that the size of car park proposed would generate an inordinate number of vehicular movements on the access road to the main body of this site. While this road would be widened, surfaced, and improved, in the absence of a RSA, the proposed alterations to its junction with St. Theresa’s Place have not been sufficiently reviewed/ revised to command confidence as to the resulting safe and efficient usage of this junction.

(iii) Pedestrian access

- 7.27. Under the proposal, pedestrian access to the site would be provided by means of a dedicated route that would be separate from the proposed vehicular means of access. This route would run around the northern and eastern boundaries to the site of the adjacent sports hall. It would connect to the NW with a new public footpath on the nearside of the junction between Greenane Street Upper and St. Theresa’s Place, which in turn would connect with a new pedestrian crossing of Greenane Street Upper on the eastern side of the said junction. It would connect to the SE with another pedestrian crossing at the top of the laneway to the main body of the site, which in turn would connect with the footpath network proposed for this site.
- 7.28. The proposed pedestrian access would be lit and it would entail a change of levels at its north western end. This change would be negotiated by means of steps and platforms, the detailed design of which remains to be submitted to the PA.

- 7.29. The appellants have critiqued the pedestrian means of access at the aforementioned point on the basis that it would not afford universal access to the site. They similarly critique the pedestrian means of access to the proposed astro-turf pitch.
- 7.30. The applicant has responded by stating that the said steps would be designed to ensure that they could be used by the ambulant disabled. Those with disabilities that impede their mobility would thus not be able to use the proposed pedestrian route. By contrast, the pedestrian access to the pitch would be laid out at a gradient of 1:12 and so it would be accessible to wheelchair users. Thus, universal access would be achievable within the main body of the site, as distinct from the proposed pedestrian access to the site.
- 7.31. I note that within the red edge of the application site and the adjoining public road network there would not appear to be scope to lay out ramps to overcome the difference in levels at the said NW point so the opportunity to provide universal access would not arise.
- 7.32. I note, too, that, whereas the visibility of the proposed pedestrian access would be good along the northern boundary of the site of the sports hall, along the eastern boundary it would run between a building and a hedgerow and so it would be less visible. Accordingly, the opportunity for informal surveillance would be limited with adverse implications for the safety and security of the route.
- 7.33. I conclude that, while the proposed means of pedestrian access would provide a dedicated route to the main body of the site, which would be separate from the proposed means of vehicular access, it would fail to afford universal access and its characteristics would militate against a consistently safe and secure route.

(iv) Visual amenity

- 7.34. The proposal would entail considerable earthworks to the main body of the site to ensure that the envisaged pitch would have a level surface. Thus, a cut and fill methodology would be employed to overcome the existing gradients on this site. Consequently, the southernmost corner of the pitch would be significantly higher than existing levels and the northernmost corner would be significantly lower.
- 7.35. The pitch would be an all-weather astro-turf one, which would be accompanied by 2.4m high fencing, 5m high ball nets, which would rise to 10m behind the goals, and 6 x 18m high floodlights. The heights of the ball nets and the floodlights would be

such that their visibility from within the surrounding area would be assured. Light spillage from the floodlights would be minimal and so during dark evenings the lighting impact would be an indirect one arising from the proximity of the intensively illuminated pitch itself. The applicant undertakes to ensure that the floodlights would be turned-off no later than 21.45.

7.36. Existing screening of the site is afforded by hedgerows to the perimeter of the main field. The height and density of these hedgerows varies with implications for the resulting level of screening that would be afforded to nearby residential properties. In this respect, the two adjacent bungalows would experience the lowest levels of screening, while the adjoining elongated rear gardens to the nearest dwelling houses on St. Theresa's Place would have a varied experience.

7.37. In time, landscaping would be capable of improving screening levels, although in the case of the more southerly of the two bungalows, there would be the need to set back the proposed car park from the boundary of the site that corresponds with the rear elevation of this bungalow to ensure that a planting strip would be available. Given the above cited heights of the ball nets and the floodlights, their visibility would persist. They would, however, be slender light weight structures and so their visual impact would be limited.

7.38. I, therefore, conclude that the proposal would be compatible with the visual amenities of the area.

(v) Residential amenity

7.39. The applicant has stated that the proposal would operate during the school day and in the evenings and at weekends. (While it has not addressed school holidays, I would anticipate considerable usage during such periods, too). Thus, if the school day is typically between 09.00 and 16.00, with perhaps an extra hour for sports, then evening usage would be between 17.00 and 21.30. Weekend usage would be between 09.00 and 21.30. Clearly, as might be expected, the proposal would be intensively used.

7.40. The usage of the proposal would be supervised and so the inevitable noise and general disturbance resulting from training sessions would be managed and kept within the stated hours. Insofar as this proposal would serve the local community, I

would anticipate that the general impact on the residential amenities of the area would be viewed in that light.

- 7.41. As discussed under the second heading of my assessment, vehicular traffic on the access road to the main body of the site would be generated in the evenings, at weekends, and, during school holidays, in the working daytime. Such traffic would be far greater than the existing very low levels on this road and its pattern would be likely to cluster around the start and finish times of training sessions or slots. The environmental impacts of traffic in terms of noise, fumes, and light spillage would thus increase massively.
- 7.42. The access road, essentially, runs between the adjacent sports hall and the northern boundary of the appellants' residential property. This boundary is denoted by a low concrete wall beside the front garden/drive-in, the side elevation of a lean-to attached domestic garage, and a high concrete wall/timer fence above a concrete plinth. The appellants two-storey semi-detached dwelling house has been the subject of a two-storey rear extension, the rear elevation to which overlooks at short range the eastern half of the access road, which falls at a gentle gradient towards it. This elevation contains a pair of first floor windows, which appear to serve habitable rooms.
- 7.43. Clearly, the appellants residential property would be, uniquely, affected by the environmental impact of the projected traffic. Thus, noise, fumes, especially from stationary vehicles queuing on the access road, and light spillage, due to the juxtaposition of the access road and the aforementioned windows, would ensue. Given the low baseline of existing usage, I consider that this impact would be disproportionate to any that could be reasonably expected to be compatible with the residential amenities of the appellants' residential property, especially as the rear of this property would be affected.
- 7.44. The applicant has drawn attention to the works proposed for the access road, which would entail its widening and sealing. These works would be capable of being carried out without damaging the above cited boundary treatment to the appellants' residential property.
- 7.45. I note that the space available for the proposed road widening to achieve two lanes is limited and so there appears to be little if any scope to introduce any noise

mitigation measures. I anticipate that even if it could be established that an appropriate acoustic structure would be capable of reducing the noise impact upon the appellants' residential property, the agreement of the appellants to its installation either attached to or in place of their existing boundary treatment would be needed.

7.46. I, therefore, conclude that, while the use of the proposed pitch would be compatible with the residential amenities of the area, the environmental impact of traffic generated thereby would be incompatible with the residential amenities of the appellants' property.

(vi) Water

7.47. The proposal would not entail the provision of any new changing room facilities as existing such facilities in the adjacent sports hall would be used. Thus, questions of water supply and waste water disposal would not arise.

7.48. The proposal would be the subject of a new surface water drainage system. This system would serve the proposed all-weather playing pitch and the proposed car park. It would incorporate a hydrocarbon interceptor and an attenuation tank with a volume of 86 cubic metres. A restrictive valve would be installed to ensure that the outflow from this tank is set to 62.7 litres per second, i.e. the calculated greenfield run-off rate into the ditch, which runs along the western boundary of the site.

7.49. The accompanying calculations for the proposed attenuation tank show that a rainfall intensity figure has been selected for 1 hour every 20 years with a 10% allowance for climate change. Conventionally, the 100-year figure is used in such calculations and so I consider that the proposed tank would need to be larger, accordingly. If the Board is minded to grant permission, then this matter could be conditioned.

7.50. The proposed works to the access road to the main body of the site would incorporate separate surface water drainage arrangements, which would be connected to the public system in St. Theresa's Place.

7.51. The OPW's flood maps do not show the site as being the subject of any identified flood risk. A historic flood event to the N of the site in Greenane occurred due to a road drainage issue, which has subsequently been resolved.

7.52. I conclude that, subject to the specification of a larger attenuation tank, the proposed surface water drainage system would be satisfactory.

(vii) Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment

- 7.53. The applicant has submitted a Stage 1 Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment (AA) and the PA's Heritage Officer has, likewise, commented. I draw upon these submissions and the NPWS's website in carrying out my own Stage 1 Screening for AA below.
- 7.54. The site is neither in nor beside a Natura 2000 site. The nearest such site is the Blackwater River SAC (002170), which includes the River Allow that runs some 240m to the west of the application site. Accordingly, there would be no direct impacts upon the habitat of this SAC.
- 7.55. Existing and proposed surface water arrangements for the site incorporate a ditch, which runs along the western boundary. This ditch is overgrown. At some remove to the south is the Paal East Stream, which flows past St. Oliver's Place, beyond St. Theresa's Place, and into the SAC. The applicant and the PA's Heritage Officer advise that the said ditch is not connected to this Stream and so there is no source/pathway/receptor route between the site and this SAC. Accordingly, the potential does not exist for indirect impacts to arise that would be likely to significantly effect its Conservation Objectives.
- 7.56. Relevant qualifying interests are as follows:
- Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculus fluitantis* and *Callitriche-Batrachion* vegetation,
 - Freshwater Pearl Mussel,
 - Sea Lamprey,
 - Brook Lamprey,
 - River Lamprey,
 - Salmon, and
 - Otter.
- 7.57. The Conservation Objective for all the above interests except the FPM is to maintain their favourable conservation condition. The Conservation Objective for the FPM is to restore its favourable conservation condition.

- 7.58. The above cited qualifying interests are either a watercourse or marine creatures and so they do not depend on the management of the habitat of the application site. The exception is the Otter. The applicant reports that there was no evidence of this mammal in Paal East Stream, which during its ecologist's survey was dry and thus devoid of fish. Given the physical removal of this Stream from the said site, I consider that it is reasonable to conclude that the Otter does not depend on the management of its habitat either.
- 7.59. It is reasonable to conclude on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposal, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on European Site No. 002170, or any other European Site, in view of the Site's Conservation Objectives, and a Stage 2 AA (an submission of a NIS) would not therefore be required.
- 7.60. In reaching this conclusion, I took no account of mitigation measures intended to avoid or reduce the potentially harmful effects of the project on any European Sites.

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

- 8.1. In the light of my assessment, several issues arise from the proposal that have yet to be resolved. Thus, the specification of a 78-space car park would lead to a different order of traffic on the access road to the main body of the site, which passes the appellants' residential property, than has existed heretofore. Consequently, the environmental impact of such traffic would adversely affect the amenities of this property. No noise mitigation measures have been proposed in this respect.
- 8.2. The impetus for the size of car park proposed appears to have arisen at least in part from public concern over the operation of existing car parking spaces in the surrounding area associated with school use. As traffic generated by the proposal would occur outside the school day, the possibility of using these existing spaces has not been explored, within the context of the current application, in a bid to reduce the size of the proposed car park and thus the number of vehicular movements on the access road.
- 8.3. The junction between the access road and St. Theresa's Place would be altered to improve the south eastern sightline in conjunction with the envisaged increased

usage of this road. However, the alterations envisaged have not been the subject of a RSA and *prima facie* they do not appear to be wholly consistent with road safety.

- 8.4. The proposed pedestrian route to the site would fail to afford universal access and its safety and security would need to be enhanced to ensure its usability in practise.
- 8.5. I have considered whether the aforementioned issues would be capable of being addressed by conditions. However, I have concluded that, insofar as the possible use of school car parking spaces and the likely need for agreement by the appellant to any noise mitigation measures would entail the involvement of third parties, conditions would not be tenable. (I am also conscious that the local residents association is reported to have favoured the proposed car park and so any requirement that it be reduced in favour of the greater use of existing spaces may need to be the subject of further public consultation). Furthermore, the findings of any RSA of the proposed junction alterations and the achievement of universal access may have implications for third parties, too.
- 8.6. Accordingly, in the light of the foregoing factors, I consider that it would be premature to grant permission to the current application and so I recommend that it be refused.

9.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to the size of the proposed car park, the vehicular access to the site, which runs past the entire depth of the residential property at No. 1 St. Theresa's Place, and the projected step change in the vehicular usage of this access, the Board considers that the environmental impact of vehicular movements generated by the proposal, in terms of noise, fumes, and light spillage, would, in the absence of any mitigation measures, be seriously injurious to the residential amenities of this property and thus contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
2. Having regard to the projected step change in the vehicular usage of the access road to the main body of the site and the proposed alterations to the junction between this road and St. Theresa's Place, the Board considers that these alterations would not be self-evidently consistent with road safety and so they should be the subject of a Road Safety Audit. The applicant has failed to undertake such an Audit and so it remains to be demonstrated that these alterations would be consistent with road safety. In these circumstances, to grant planning permission to the proposal would be premature, as road safety would be potentially compromised, and so it would thus be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Hugh D. Morrison
Planning Inspector

22nd September 2020