# Inspector's Report
# ABP-308783-20

| | |
|---|---|
| **Development** | Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge |
| **Location** | Gaol Road to Newtownsmith, Galway City |
| **Local Authority** | Galway City Council |
| **Type of Application** | Application for approval made under Section 177(AE) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (local authority development requiring appropriate assessment) |
| **Prescribed Bodies** | Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media – DAU<br>Inland Fisheries Ireland<br>An Taisce |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Observer(s)** | Owen Hanley<br>Hands Across the Corrib<br>Mary & Francis O'Conghaile<br>Alice & William Holland<br>Anne Francis Coyne<br>Galway Cycling Campaign |
| **Date of Site Inspection** | 23rd February 2021 |
| **Inspector** | Sarah Lynch. |

# Contents

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1. Galway City Council is seeking approval from An Bord Pleanála to construct a pedestrian bridge over the River Corrib adjacent to the existing Salmon Weir Bridge which is positioned over the Lough Corrib SAC which is a designated European site. There are several other designated European sites (SPAs and SACs) downstream of the proposed development including the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA (see further analysis below). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and application under Section 177AE was lodged by the Local Authority on the basis of the proposed development's likely significant effect on a European site.

1.2. Section 177AE of the Planning and Development act 2000 (as amended) requires that where an appropriate assessment is required in respect of development by a local authority the authority shall prepare an NIS and the development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved the development with or without modifications. Furthermore, Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that the appropriate assessment shall include a determination by the Board as to whether or not the proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site having regard to the conservation objectives and the appropriate assessment shall be carried out by the Board before consent is given for the proposed development.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. The proposed development will comprise of the following:

- Construction of a three span pedestrian and cycle bridge over the lower River Corrib downstream of the existing Salmon Weir Bridge from Gaol Road to Newtownsmith in Galway City.
- Alterations to existing stone masonry walls to facilitate the footpaths and approach spans to the proposed bridge.
- Upgrading of existing footpaths at the tie in points at Gaol Road and Newtownsmith and a tie in to the public amenity area on Friar's River embankment.

2.2. **Accompanying documents:**

- Notices
- Appropriate Assessment Screening
- Natura Impact Statement
- Options Assessment Report
- Planning Report
- Photomontages
- Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Environmental Report
- Flood Risk Assessment
- 8 Planning Drawings
- List of prescribed bodies to which notice was sent.

## 3.0 Site and Location

3.1. The proposed works are to be carried south of the existing Salmon Weir Bridge which is located in the north east of Galway City Centre and is included within the Record of Protected Structures Ref: 3603 as listed within the Galway City Development Plan. The development site comprises 0.6ha and is located between Gaol Road to the west and Newtownsmith to the east. The proposed bridge will cross three separate watercourses, Persse's Distillery River, the Lower River Corrib and Friars River.

3.2. Galway cathedral is located to the west of the site and the Convent of Mercy is located to the east, both of which are Protected Structures. The network of Galway waterways which include walling, embankments, bridges and piers are also Protected Structures and are identified within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

3.3. Whilst the majority of lands are public there are sections of land owned by IFI and private landowners. Lands will be acquired by way of Compulsory Purchase. A detailed description of the lands with regard to current pavement finishes, and existing vegetation etc is contained within Section 2.2.2 of the Environmental Report submitted.

## 4.0 **Planning History**

- 307443 – Board determined that an EIA was not required for the proposed development. It was considered, having regard to the limited size of the development which is below the threshold set out in Article 8 of the Roads Regulations 1994, as amended, and the low-level structure proposed, that in terms of overall size and design, the impact is not likely to be significant to warrant EIA.

Applications within the vicinity of the site

- 19107 – Permission was granted to Irish Water for the following development:

Permission for development which comprises of a new raw water intake works located on the east bank of the River Corrib, 100m downstream of Quincentenary Bridge; associated pipework to transfer raw water from the new intake works to the existing intakes works , which in turn supplies Terryland Water Treatment Plant (WTP); and a new treated water rising main extending between Terryland WTP and existing rising main on the east bank of the River Corrib. The works comprises: New Intake Works. a) Underground inlet works chamber and associated equipment; b) Control building; c) Compound security fencing and gates, safety fencing, drainage, lighting, hard - standing areas and landscaping, ducting and water supply connection; d) Access road from Dyke Road with new entrance and gates; e) Floating boom system offset 5m inti the river from proposed headwall of the intake works. Slipway. f) A new slipway, including a new public access road from Dyke Road. The slipway will be located on the east bank of the River Corrib, circa. 140m downstream of the Quincentenary Bridge. Transfer Mains. g) 215m of 1200mm diameter underground transfer gravity main passing under Terryland parkland, the Quincentenary Bridge eastern approach road (N6) and Terryland River. This will connect the new intake works to the existing raw water mains, which supply Terryland WTP. Works will include 2 no. chambers along the transfer main ( north and south of the N6 Road) and 1 no. chamber for connection to the existing raw water mains at the existing intake site; h) Modifications to the existing intake works in Terryland (decommissioning and civil works). Rising Main. I) 535m of 600mm diameter ductile iron underground rising main from Terryland WTP of the eastern bank to the River Corrib, including a pipe - bridge over the Terryland River, to connect to the existing 450mm diameter ductile iron rising main

upstream of the River Corrib crossing. Surge Vessel. j) 1 no. 35m3 surge vessel tank at Terryland WTP for the proposed rising main. A Natura Impact Statement was submitted.

- 14210 – Permission was granted for the following development:

Flood prevention works to Distillery Channel waterway which passes through the centre of the main NUI, Galway Campus. The flood prevention works involves the following: a) A penstock on water course linking Distillery Channel with River Corrib (known as Gerry's Cut). b) Replacement of existing concrete culvert pipes under pathway with large concrete box culvert. c) Removal pipe culverts half way down along Gerry's Cut. All the above works are for urban drainage flow diversion directly to River Corrib. Distillery Channel is a protected structure falling under the heading 'Rivers/Waterways' unique identity no. 8501

Upstream of application site

- 302848 – An application for the N6 Galway City Ring Road has been lodged for consideration to the Board.

## 5.0 Legislative and Policy Context

5.1. **The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC):** This Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union. Article 6(3) and 6(4) require an appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of a proposed development on its own and in combination with other plans and projects which may have an effect on a European Site (SAC or SPA).

5.2. **European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011:** These Regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in CJEU judgements. The Regulations in particular require in Reg 42(21) that where an appropriate assessment has already been carried out by a ‘first’ public authority for the same project (under a separate code of legislation) then a ‘second’ public authority considering that project for appropriate assessment under its own

code of legislation is required to take account of the appropriate assessment of the first authority.

5.3. **National nature conservation designations:** The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the National Parks and Wildlife Service are responsible for the designation of conservation sites throughout the country. The three main types of designation are Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and the latter two form part of the European Natura 2000 Network.

5.4. **European sites located in proximity to the subject site include:**

- Lough Corrib SAC (site code 000297) – directly beneath the bridge
- Galway Bay Complex SAC (site code 000268) – c. 600m south of bridge
- Inner Galway Bay SPA (site code 004031) – c. 1.2km south of bridge
- Lough Corrib SPA (site code 004042) c. 3.28km north of bridge

The River Corrib is identified in the Galway Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2024 as a main wildlife corridor which provides a link between the coast and the rich mosaic of habitats in the city's hinterland.

5.5. **Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended):** Part XAB of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2017 sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments which could have an effect on a European site or its conservation objectives.

- 177(AE) sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments carried out by or on behalf of local authorities.
- Section 177(AE) (1) requires a local authority to prepare, or cause to be prepared, a Natura impact statement in respect of the proposed development.
- Section 177(AE) (2) states that a proposed development in respect of which an appropriate assessment is required shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it with or without modifications.

- Section 177(AE) (3) states that where a Natura impact assessment has been prepared pursuant to subsection (1), the local authority shall apply to the Board for approval and the provisions of Part XAB shall apply to the carrying out of the appropriate assessment.
- Section 177(V) (3) states that a competent authority shall give consent for a proposed development only after having determined that the proposed development shall not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.
- Section 177AE (6) (a) states that before making a decision in respect of a proposed development the Board shall consider the NIS, any submissions or observations received and any other information relating to:
    - The likely effects on the environment.
    - The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
    - The likely significant effects on a European site.

## 6.0 Policy Context

### 6.1. National Policy

6.2. The NPF recognised Galway city as the fastest growing city in Ireland over the last 50 years. The NPF seeks to support city and city region functions with relevant policies and investment but with a strong emphasis on securing a compact-growth development approach. The NPF also seeks to develop Galway City in a transformational and urban rejuvenation focused manner. Transport within the city is identified within the NPF as a challenge in relation to the accommodation of future population growth within the metropolitan boundary of the city.

6.3. The National Policy Objective 2a of the National Planning Framework seeks to deliver 50% of national population and employment growth within the four cities of Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Galway and to improve the collective offer in terms of quality of life. Challenges facing the development of Galway City identified within the NPF include transport.

Section 3.3 of the NPF recognises the strategic importance of Galway to drive growth in the west, identified future growth enablers include:

- Improving access and sustainable transport links to and integration with the existing employment areas to the east of the City at Parkmore, Ballybrit and Mervue;
- Provision of a Citywide public transport network, with enhanced accessibility between existing and proposed residential areas and the City Centre, third level institutions and the employment areas to the east of the city.
- Public realm and urban amenity projects focused on streets and public spaces, particularly in support of an extended city centre area and where residential and employment areas can be linked to pedestrian routes;
- Development of a strategic cycleway network with a number of high-capacity flagship routes.

The NPF also sets out a number of national policy objectives focused on sustainable transportation, greater accessibility and improved air quality arising from increased use of alternatives to the car which include the following:

- **NPO 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.
- **NPO 28 -** Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.
- **NPO 64-** Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.

## 6.4. Regional Policy

**Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy - Northern and Western Regional Assembly.**

6.5. Section 3.3 of the RSES seeks to achieve better integration between land use and transportation planning.

- Section 5.1 Investing in transport infrastructure
    - Prioritising future investment for the delivery of a strategic cycling and walking network,

6.6. Section 6.2 Transport - A best practice example of where the integration of transport, spatial and economic planning is to be delivered, is the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS). The GTS should be used as a template elsewhere.

6.7. **Local policy**

6.8. **Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023**

- **Section 3.6 Cycling and Walking**

  Safe access and improved permeability will be secured also through a number of new river crossings. These include a new pedestrian bridge adjacent to the Salmon Weir Bridge.

- **Section 3.10 Specific Objectives – Public Transport**

  Prioritise the accommodation of a bus and pedestrian bridge crossing of the River Corrib adjacent to the Salmon Weir Bridge.

- The site lies outside the City Core Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) identified as the most important area of built heritage in Galway.

- There are a number of buildings/structures in the vicinity of the site which are included in the Record of Protected Structures (Schedule 3 of the Plan). These include:
    - Courthouse, Courthouse Square (Ref 2601).
    - Cathedral, Earl's Island (Ref No 3602).
    - Salmon Weir Bridge (Ref No 3603).

- Rivers and Waterways, including bridges, walling, embankments, piers and other associated infrastructure (Newtownsmith and Goal Road) (Ref No 8501)
- Convent of Mercy (Ref No 7201).

The site lies within the Zone of Archaeological Potential which encompasses most of the city centre.

There are no protected views in the vicinity of the bridge. The closest lies to the north of the existing bridge and is described as follows:

- Protected Linear View V.11 'Views from Waterside of the River Corrib'

**Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021 (as varied)**

- Objective TI 1 – Sustainable Transportation Support and facilitate 'Smarter Travel' initiatives contained in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) and other initiatives together with the plan level environmental protection policies and mitigation measures set out in the GTS, which will improve sustainable transportation within the County including public transport, electric and hybrid vehicles, car clubs, public bike schemes, park and ride/park and stride facilities, improved pedestrian and cycling facilities, as appropriate.

6.9. **Galway Transport Strategy 2016**

6.10. The GTS sets out the actions and policy position for the development of infrastructure in Galway over a 20 year period and sets out a framework to deliver the projects in a phased manner.

- **F4.7 – City Centre**

  Proposal to remove access to this road for all private vehicles allowing public transport vehicles and cyclists only to use the bridge. There is an additional proposal to provide a dedicated pedestrian crossing facility, whether as a separate footbridge or a cantilevered structure. The combination of these measures will reduce traffic on the bridge and allow for the existing footpaths on the bridge to be removed, widening the carriageway available for buses and cyclists. An alternative possibility would be to create a separate bridge which caters for both cyclists and pedestrians.

- Section 4.1 City Centre Traffic Management
    - Table 4.1 – Salmon Weir Bridge was identified as the preferred bus only route on the west side of the city centre.
- Section 5.7 Supporting Measures for Local Public Transport- Segregation of pedestrians from buses at Salmon Weir Bridge through the provision of a new, parallel pedestrian bridge adjacent to the existing structure.

## 7.0 The Natura Impact Statement

7.1. Galway County Council's application for the proposed development was accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) which scientifically examined the proposed development and the European sites. The NIS identified and characterised the possible implications of the proposed development on the European sites, in view of the sites conservation objectives, and provided information to enable the Board to carry out an appropriate assessment of the proposed works.

7.2. The NIS was accompanied by details of habitats and species assessments.

## 8.0 Consultations

8.1. The application was circulated to the following bodies:

- An Chomhairle Ealaion
- Failte Ireland
- Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- The Heritage Council
- An Taisce
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

- Department of Climate, Communications, and the Environment
- Department Housing, planning and Local Government.

Responses were received from the following:

8.2. **Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media – Development Applications Unit.**

- The development is located within the historic town of Galway, Recorded Monument GA094-100 the proposed development has the potential to impact on subsurface archaeological remains.
- It is recommended that archaeological monitoring is carried out at the site and relevant standard conditions are recommended.

8.3. **Inland Fisheries Ireland**

- The River Corrib flows through the proposed development site, it is a designated SAC and forms part of the Galway Bay Complex. The proposal will also cross Persse's Distillery River and Friars River which both discharge into the River Corrib downstream of the Salmon Weir.
- The proposed development will encroach into an area which is legally an integral part of the Galway Fishery.
- The proposed Construction Environmental Management Plan must ensure that the proposed development does not lead to the spread of invasive species such as the Zebra Mussel and Japanese Knotweed, both of which are present in the catchment.
- It is requested that a condition is imposed seeking agreement with IFI in relation to measures outlined above and timings of proposed works in stream.

8.4. **An Taisce**

- Development is located a few short metres and abuts Lough Corrib SAC/pNHA.
- Lough Corrib is a RAMSAR Convention designated site.
- Site is located 800 metres from Galway Bay Complex which is also a RAMSAR Convention designated site.

- Site is located 1km from Inner Galway Bay SPA and 2km from Lough Corrib SPA.
- Site facilitates commuting by the Lutra Lutra (Otter) as well as other species and provides foraging areas for water birds.
- River Corrib is a designated Salmonid, salmon and otter have been seen in the area.
- Site is located near to a number of Protected Structures.
- It is requested that ABP vary the proposal and recommend a new road bridge is constructed in order to open up more options for additional public transport services in the future as the city grows.
- The introduction of a light rail tram transit
- Submission refers to Gluas committee concerns in which it is stated that a sustainable transport bridge should be built to the south of the Salmon Weir bridge and maintain the existing Salmon Weir Bridge for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Proposed bridge shows no future vision. Light Rail Transit will be needed in the future within the city.
- No plan written which demonstrates how the city will grow.
- Population projections and the requirement for 50% to be accommodated within the city will require better public transport.
- Buchannan LUTS report 1999 is flawed.
- New development of the city is planned for the east of the city and new housing is located in the west.
- An Taisce support the provision of river crossings that are built in suitable locations and opposes the N6 Ring road as it would encourage peripheral unsupported rural/urban housing sprawl. The road will only promote more car dependence.
- Population growth external to the city should be confined to supporting the growth of housing built in towns and villages and not made up of rural housing.
- Existing Salmon Weir should be retained for use by pedestrians and cyclists.
- New bridge to be used for public passenger vehicles only.

- Proposed removal of existing chicane.
- Regenerate the cathedral plaza which has now become a car park and could be linked in to the Nuns Island regeneration.
- The submission makes a number of suggestions regarding the redesign of the proposed bridge and the provision of a viewing platform on the existing Salmon Weir Bridge.
- Tram lines should be laid on the new bridge.
- Alternative options have not been fully presented for public consideration.
- No options have been presented to the Council's Strategic Policy Committee for Planning.
- It is suggested that all opposition to the project has been ignored.
- Proposal will disturb the architectural, environmental and visual aesthetic of the original bridge.
- Bat roosts will be disturbed, eel fisheries platforms could be retained.
- The proposed bridge does not accommodate pedestrian desire lines.
- An alternative could result in significant community gain.

8.5. **Public Submissions:**

8.6. 7 no. submissions have been received and are summarised as follows:

**Owen Hanley**

- The proposal is a long term objective of the Galway MASP, Galway Transport Strategy and the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023.
- Bridge can represent an iconic landmark.
- Railings along the main arch of the bridge open outwards and there are concerns about this in terms of safety.
- Pinch points are designed to indicate it is a shared space, this should be removed.
- Aesthetic goals can be accomplished without compromising utility.
- Provision of seating is welcomed but could be enhanced by the inclusion of design measures outlined in the Galway City Public Realm Strategy.

**Hands Across the Corrib**

- Salmon Weir is one of the oldest and greatest tourist attractions in Galway, the proposed bridge would hamper views that are currently provided for.
- Existing bridge is unsuitable for use by vehicles due to its age and bends at the approach.
- Proposal does not account for any future light rail or bendy buses.
- Retention of existing bridge as pedestrian and cyclist use is preferred and a new vehicular bridge should be built.
- The proposal is considered to be a cheaper option.
- Doing nothing would be a more suitable approach.

**Mary & Francis-O'Conghaile**

- Proposal would not best serve the movement of people or vehicles now or into the future.
- Submissions made by Gluas Group must be considered as real viable options.
- Very light rail (VLR), pedestrians and vehicular traffic must be catered for in one project, not on an ad hoc basis.
- A formal objection is made in relation to the proposal.

**Alice & William Holland**

- An iconic view would be lost of Salmon Weir Bridge.
- Existing bridge should be retained as pedestrian and cycle bridge and new bridge should be south of same.
- A new bridge would eliminate zig zag bend that buses and general traffic must take to enter the bridge.
- Traffic would flow a lot quicker if it moved in direct line.
- Proposal would hinder any future development of VLR and would condemn public transport to a disaster.

**Anne Francis Coyne**

- No consideration is given to VLR.
- Angled bends do not lead to the efficient flow of traffic.
- Galway should develop in a way that is true to its character.

**Galway Cycling Campaign**

- Proposal will present difficulties in relation to access. The following have been cited as areas of concern:
    - Crossings and transitions
    - Connectivity and network integration
    - Obstructions and pinch points of the design – create potential for conflict of users
    - Pitch and surface finishes – gradients at ends of spans appear steep – greater clarification of surface performance in all weather conditions.
    - Conditions are proposed relating to priority crossing, 2 way cycling on a number of routes.
- Development should be in accordance with the National Cycle Manual - several sections are outlined.
- A raised crossing should be provided in Newtownsmith.
- New zebra crossing at end of western end of Salmon Weir bridge.
- Greater detail is required at the crossing at Gaol Road.
- Raised surface should be widened to reduce pedestrian/cyclist conflict.
- A designated egress with a dropped kerb should be provided to the south with legible markings for cyclists.
- Bridge should be viewed as part of a network and connected to cycle infrastructure.
- The respondents submitted an annotated section of the alternatives examined which made reference to bicycle use.
- One-way systems should not be applied to cyclists.

- Various routes identified within the Bus connects documentation are critiqued by the respondent.
- Reference is made to connectivity with the riverside walk and the surfaces provided for at this location.
- Footpath south of the raised ramp on Newtownsmith should be widened.
- Seating will restrict movement. It is recommended that bridge is widened, or seating removed from one side.
- Planter boxes should be removed from areas where users merge.
- Oculus installations should be reduced and recessed.
- Improve impact of clear view sight to opposite side of the bridge. This will improve for wheelchair users etc.
- A sweeping curve has been used at the Gaol roadside of the bridge and it is recommended that this is used on the other side also. Sweeping curves will make the structure more inviting.
- Increased gradients will lead to increased cycling speeds and the appropriateness of gradients should be considered for wheelchair users.
- Surfaces should be safe for users and should be tested at an angle.
- Compliance with the National Cycle Policy is queried within the submission.
- Cycle and pedestrian facilities should not be impacted during construction.
- Details of surface water management are not evident.
- Level of additional lighting on either side of the bridge is not clear.
- Purpose and necessity of the posts at the entrance to the bridge on Newtownsmith Road.

**Gluas Committee**

- Committee's focus has been on the provision of a Very Light Rail powered by renewable energy.
- The submission refers to the development of a very light rail in Coventry and suggests this is suitable for Galway.

- The installation of a VLR would accommodate future population increases and create 10 minute urban villages where people could live and work.
- Reference is made to European cities whereby VLR has been installed successfully without affecting medieval cores.
- Reference is made to a study carried out by NUI Galway whereby it is stated that the layout of Galway is suited to such infrastructure.
- Implementation of a VLR would lead to achieving a compact city in accordance with NPF objectives.
- Reference is made to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The development of a VLR would assist in reaching target emission reductions.
- Reference is made to evidence submitted by Arup consultants at the N6 Galway bypass Oral Hearing.
- A VLR system would be required to connect with residential development across the city, a crossing is suggested to the south of the Salmon Weir Bridge.
- It is proposed that the Salmon Weir becomes a pedestrian and cycle bridge.
- Further suggestions are made in relation to public amenity improvements and the benefits of providing a new bridge to accommodate a VLR.
- Details are provided in relation to the Rosie Hackett Bridge in Dublin in which a comparison is made in terms of costs and suitability.
- Foresight in relation to sustainable planning is called for within the submission.
- The type of rail considered within the GTS was costed out, an alternative smaller rail is proposed by the respondent.
- The proposed development would be premature.

  The applicant accompanied the submission with a study carried out in relation to VLR in Galway.

## 9.0 **Assessment**

9.1. Under the provisions of Section 177AE (6) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), the Board is required to consider the following in respect of this type of application:

- The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area;
- The likely effects on the environment; and
- The likely impact on any European sites.

9.2. **The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area:**

9.3. The proposed new pedestrian and cycle bridge is located c.24m downstream from the existing Salmon Weir Bridge and will comprise a low level three span bridge, which will cross three separate watercourses. The span arrangements over Persse's Distillery River, Lower River Corrib and Friar's River are approximately 13m, 54m, 18m respectively. It is proposed to construct foundations to the bridge along Gaol Road and Newtownsmith and, bridge abutments on the embankments of Persse's Distillery River and Friar's River. The proposed development area is stated as being 6,000$m^2$.

9.4. The Approach spans from Gaol Road and Newtownsmith will comprise a splayed walking and cycling surface with a maximum width at tie-in of c. 22 metres and a minimum width of the centre of the span of 4.5 metres.

9.5. The main span length of the bridge is c. 54m and the width widens from 4.5 to 8.5m. The deck width is stated to facilitate walking and cycling widths of 3.5 metres on both sides of the spine beam. It is stated that the proposed new bridge will be lightweight, robust and transparent offering uninterrupted views of the cathedral, convent, existing Salmon Weir Bridge and river below.

9.6. The new bridge will be formed of a slender, single span comprised of a shallow steel arch with a central spine beam, which is described as being the backbone of the structure from which the cantilevered deck supports the walkway and fully transparent parapets.

9.7. This section of the assessment will consider the particulars of the proposed structure in terms of compliance with National, Regional and Local policy, the physical

implications of the proposed structure in terms of visual impacts and accessibility and will consider the submissions received in this regard also.

9.8. It is of note that the Council considered a number of options in relation to the development of the proposed bridge. Options considered are outlined within the Options Assessment Report submitted with the application. I note that the location of the bridge was restricted to the south side of the bridge due to angling on the river. Seven options were considered south of the Salmon Weir Bridge with the proposed development emerging as the preferred option. Key considerations in considering the preferred option related to the alignment of the proposed bridge, views of existing Salmon Weir Bridge, twin approach over Persse's Distillery River and Friars River, capture of desire lines, finishes and materials and slope gradient. A geotechnical survey was also carried out in order to examine the stability of the ground structures to accommodate the proposal which informed the selection of the preferred option.

9.9. Compliance with National, Regional and Local Policy

9.10. With regard to the principle of the proposed development, it is recognised within the relevant policy documents, as outlined in Section 6 above, that the modal share in relation to walking and cycling which are currently at 23% and 5% respectively are in need of significant improvement in Galway City. The overriding purpose of the proposed development is to improve connectivity within the city for these users and therefore encourage a modal shift to increased cycling and walking and a reduction of reliance on the car within the city.

9.11. The requirement to provide a pedestrian bridge at this location across the Corrib has been policy for a significant period of time and I note from the documentation submitted that a Feasibility Study and an Options Appraisal report in 2011 identified the proposed development as the preferred option to improve walking and cycling connectivity within the city.

9.12. I further note that the proposed development is identified and supported within both the Galway Transport Strategy and Galway City Development Plan in which the proposal is specifically identified as a priority infrastructure development to be delivered.

9.13. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies for the North Western Region recognises the need for the proposed bridge and considers it necessary to achieve a reduction in traffic volumes in the city centre core of Galway.

9.14. Having regard to the foregoing it is abundantly clear that the development of the proposed bridge is considered to be a pivotal piece of infrastructure within the overall plan for the improvement of walking and cycling facilities in Galway City.

9.15. I note from the submissions received that many of the respondents have expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed development and consider that the provision of this bridge is essentially short sightedness on behalf of the Council and policy makers. It is proposed within a number of submissions that the provision of a very light rail would be more beneficial to the long-term sustainable development of Galway City, and would assist with the creation of 10 minute villages. It is further contended that the development of Galway City in a linear fashion lends itself ideally to the provision of such rail infrastructure and this should be capitalised on. The respondents compare Galway to other European Cities whereby Light Rail and Trams are provided in an effective and efficient manner and argue that Galway could benefit from a tram system similar to those with other European countries.

9.16. Whilst I note the concerns raised by the respondents and the significant research that has been carried out to inform these submissions, it is of importance to draw the Board's attention to the overriding policy position outlined within the current statutory plans which govern the future development of Galway City. The provision of a Very Light Rail service is not identified as a project to be delivered within any of these statutory plans (outlined within Section 6 above) and as such given the absence of any statutory status, a light rail cannot be examined as an alternative within this assessment.

9.17. It is important to note that the development, upgrade and improvement of bus, walking and cycling infrastructure, is identified within said plans as being essential to achieving a low carbon sustainable city. The provision of improved bus services such as the Bus Connects Galway- Dublin Road project and the dedication of routes solely for the use of public transport within the City are identified within these documents as being a priority for the City's sustainable travel infrastructure in tandem with improvements to cycle and pedestrian connectivity and infrastructure. The proposed development, as

mentioned above, is identified as being a key element of the proposed Cross-City-Link at both a regional and local level. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the overriding policy provisions of the relevant statutory plans for the area, i.e Galway City Development Plan, the Galway Transport Strategy and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the North western Regional Assembly. It is important to note, that the proposed development would not prohibit the development of a VLR or tram network in Galway City should it be identified as a requirement in the future.

9.18. With regard to zoning within and surrounding the development site, I note that there is a specific objective 'G' within the Galway City Development Plan to provide a bridge adjacent to the Salmon Weir Bridge. The lands surrounding the proposed development fall within a number of zoning objectives:

- RA – Recreational and Amenity - Gaol Road and Friars Embankment. Proposed bridge is compatible with this zoning.
- CF – Community, Cultural and Institutional - Carpark serving Galway Cathedral and the western bank of the Lower River Corrib. Outdoor recreational uses are compatible with the zoning objective.

9.19. The provision of a pedestrian/cycle bridge in the vicinity of the Salmon Weir Bridge has been a longstanding objective of Galway City & County Council and has been specifically identified within all plans for the future development of this area. It is important to note that these plans are recognised and endorsed by the Regional Assembly within the RSES for the area and as such the proposed development is embedded within the statutory documents which guide the future development of the city. Thus, having regard to the foregoing, I am satisfied that the proposed development is in accordance with the policies and objectives of the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023 and all other relevant National and Regional Plans as outlined above.

Accessibility

9.20. As mentioned above the proposed bridge will be accessed via the footpath at both Gaol Road and Newtownsmith. It is proposed to splay the exits from the bridge at both ends of the structure and resurface the existing footpaths in limestone paving which will be at the same level as the proposed paving associated with the bridge.

9.21. Falls at the pavement tie in areas are between 1-1.5% at the Newtownsmith side and 2.2-2.3% at the Gaol Road side. A maximum 5% fall is proposed at either end of the bridge and onto the walkway at Newtownsmith.

9.22. I note that concerns are raised, by the Galway Cycling Campaign in relation to the vertical alignment of the bridge and the impacts this can have on cycle speeds and wheelchair users. This submission also raises a general concern with regard to the compliance of the proposed design with the standards set out within the National Cycle Manual.

9.23. I note in this regard that section 4.10.2 of the manual states that a maximum ramp of 5% is acceptable. Given that falls range between 1% - 5% across the proposed development I am satisfied that the proposed bridge is in compliance with the requirements of the manual in this regard.

9.24. Concerns are also raised by the Galway Cycle Campaign in relation to the transitioning from bridge to footpath. The Cycle Manual advocates that such transitions should not be abrupt. In response to this requirement the proposed scheme provides a graded transition using similar materials which is splayed at both ends, providing a seamless transition from the proposed bridge onto the adjoining footpaths.

9.25. I note that the Galway Cycle Campaign within their submission are satisfied with the splay size at the Gaol Road and request a similar size at the opposite end of the bridge. Whilst I acknowledge the reasoning for such a request, I note that lands on the Newtownsmith side of the bridge are restricted by the existing road verge and the narrow width of the road at this location. It is therefore not possible to provide a significantly larger splay at this location. The Council have however, continued the surface to the edge of the road junction northwards and have also proposed similar surfacing on the opposite side of the road in order to ensure that the transition is not abrupt at this location. The fall from the cantilevered bridge across Friars River is splayed to the footpath and will allow for ease of access and egress to the bridge.

9.26. Pinch points are proposed at either end of the bridge, Galway Cycle Campaign have raised concerns in relation to these pinch points and in relation to the provision of planters and seating on the bridge. Their submission seeks the removal of these items in order to provide additional space to bridge users in order to facilitate effective movement across the bridge.

9.27. The provision of pinch points at the end of the bridge will slow pedestrian and cycle traffic on the bridge and reduce the potential for collisions to arise with pedestrians and other users both on the bridge structure and at transition zones at either end of the bridge. The provision of seating along the spine of the bridge provides a unique amenity for users and I consider this to be not only a functional amenity but also a visually enhancing design element of the structure.

9.28. I note that it is proposed to finish the bridge structure in slip resistant aluminium decking. It is contended within the submissions that surfaces should be carefully considered and should be suitable to all users during all weather conditions. I note from the plans submitted that the surface materials are to be confirmed at detailed design stage. I am satisfied that final finishes can be adequately dealt with by way of condition should the Board be of a mind to grant permission.

9.29. I have reviewed the National Cycle Manual and consider the bridge in terms of lane widths, transition zones, falls and gradients and materials used to be in accordance with the standards of the manual.

9.30. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed design is in accordance with the standards of the National Cycle Manual and that cyclists have been adequately catered for within this shared bridge facility.

9.31. <u>Infrastructure disturbance</u>

9.32. As mentioned above upgrade works will be carried out to the existing footpaths at the bridge tie-in to create a single level surface of limestone paved finish. A number of existing services will require diversion to facilitate the proposed development and include:

- ESB MV& LV underground cables and mini pillar on Newtownsmith to be relocated 1-2 m east of the existing footpath,
- EIR data duct on Gaol Road to be relocated 1-2 m west within existing footpath.
- Public toilet on Gaol Road to be removed,
- Removal of telephone box on Gaol Road,
- Diversion of an unknown service duct on Persse's Distillery River embankment.

9.33. The proposed works will not interrupt services related to these ducts for any significant period of time and the proposed works are necessary to facilitate the construction of this sustainable travel project. I have reviewed the relocation of these services which is common practice for such projects and consider the development in this regard to be acceptable. It is of note that no objections have been received by the Board in relation to the relocation of said service ducts from utility providers.

9.34. Protected Structures and Visual Impacts

9.35. The application site as mentioned in Section 6 above, lies outside of any ACA but is located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential. There are a number of Recorded Monuments and Protected Structures within the vicinity of the site, impacts arising in this regard will be examined hereunder. Of particular significance to the assessment of the proposed development is the presence of quay walls within the development boundary which are included within the Record of Protected Structures (RPS 8501 - Including Bridges, Weirs, Walls, Embankment, Piers & Other Associated Infrastructure).

9.36. Impacts in relation to Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage are examined within Section 9 of the Environmental report submitted. It is stated that the applicants carried out a full field inspection and a desk top study in order to determine the baseline conditions within and adjacent to the proposed site.

9.37. 36 no. Protected Structures have been recorded within a 150m radius of the site and range from buildings to sculptures and include the Salmon Weir Bridge (3603) directly to the north of the development site. All such structures are listed within Table 9.2 of the Environmental Report Submitted.

9.38. A total of 28 Recorded Monuments and 3 no. archaeological sites have been identified within the receiving environment. A number of archaeological investigations have been carried out within the surrounding area. Two such investigations resulted in no finds whilst a number of others discovered evidence of medieval and post medieval activity associated with religious complexes to the east, gaol complex to the west and industrial features in the surrounding area.

9.39. I note that no excavations are required within the channel of the River Corrib itself and as such no significant effects are predicated on archaeological features or artefacts that may be present within the channel.

9.40. It is, however, possible that disturbances associated with proposed development on the eastern and western sides of the river channel may result in direct negative effects on previously unrecorded features or deposits that have the potential to survive beneath the current ground level. The DAU and An Taisce have raised concerns in this regard within their submissions to the Board. Mitigation is proposed in the form of archaeological monitoring. I am satisfied that such monitoring can be adequately dealt with by way of condition should the Board be minded to grant permission.

9.41. Architectural impacts relate to the removal of sections of wall that define Persse's Distillery River and any stone revetments on the western bank of the river, along with a section of low wall that forms the boundary between the area containing Persse's Distillery River and the public realm surrounding the cathedral. Persse's Distillery River will be preserved as an active watercourse, although culverting will be required during construction.

9.42. The proposal will also result in the removal of sections of the wall bordering Friar's River to the east including any ex-situ medieval stones and any revetments on the eastern bank of the river. Measures to reduce impacts to the fabric of the existing structures within the development site include:

- the creation of a photogrammetry survey of the river structures,
- the stone wall will be removed by hand and subject to monitoring by an archaeologist in order to identify any significant medieval or later stones that may have been used in the construction,
- the edges of the wall that abut the proposed development will be made good by a stone mason,
- any medieval stone recovered will require specialist analysis and appropriate storage.

9.43. It is recognised within the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities that works for various reasons can be required in relation to Protected Structures, the guidelines do not prohibit such works and provide high level guidance for best practice in relation to such works. Having reviewed the methodology proposed for works to the quay walls I am satisfied that the proposed works will be carried out

in a sensitive manner and given the limited impacts to the quay walls I am satisfied that the proposed works will not significantly impact the integrity of the quay walls.

9.44. With regard to the visual impacts on the surrounding townscape, I note that the applicants carried out a visual impact assessment, in which the quality and type of views in the area were examined, as were the extent of the visual envelope and the character and quality of the surrounding townscape.

9.45. A cumulative impact assessment in terms of visual impact was also prepared which had regard to permitted and planned development in the area, including elements of the Galway Transport Strategy, and Galway Public Realm Strategy.

9.46. The overall design is stated as being part of an iterative process informed by the potential townscape and visual effects with embedded mitigation. The receiving environment and townscape is strongly influenced by its waterbodies which include the River Corrib and its connected rivers, canals and millraces. The water ways are an important visual amenity within this area of the city which form part of the tourism attraction to Galway. The area within the immediate vicinity of the site comprises a number of distinctive visual features such as the Galway Cathedral, Salmon Weir Bridge, Galway Courthouse, Franciscan Friary Mercy Convent and Quay walls and the Country Club. Each of the foregoing provide for an overall distinctive sense of place.

9.47. The new bridge will comprise a low-level clear span structure crossing three watercourses. The structure will be constructed with a high-quality steel finish and has been designed as a low profile lightweight structure in order to reduce the visual impacts on the existing Salmon Weir Bridge. A number of changes to the streetscape will occur during the construction stage of the development which include the following:

- Removal of 13 no. mature trees,
- Removal of telephone kiosk & public toilet unit,
- Removal of topsoil and earthworks,
- Demolition and rebuilding of sections of stone walls along the quays,
- Upgrades and improvements to footpaths,

9.48. No works required, with the exception of the quay walls, will impact directly on any of the Protected Structures in the vicinity of the site. Permanent alterations to the townscape will arise from the operation of the bridge. It is contended by the applicant that the provision of enhanced pedestrian and cycle movement will have a significant positive effect on the surrounding area. The provision of an attractive, safe bridge is not considered to significantly affect the existing character and visual quality of the townscape in the vicinity and is seen as a positive addition to the landscape at this location.

9.49. Whilst it is recognised that the proposed structure will block views of the existing Salmon Weir Bridge to a degree it is contended by the applicant that the proposed bridge will become a visual feature in its own right. I note that the existing eel fisheries steel structures currently diminish views of the Salmon Weir from this side. The proposed bridge will reduce the visual dominance of these unsightly structures and will provide for a significantly improved streetscape at both the Gaol Road entrance and at Newtownsmith entrance with significant improvements to footpaths, surfaces and aesthetic planting.

9.50. Overall, having reviewed the photomontages submitted, and having taken into account the overall setting of existing Protected Structures, Recorded Monuments and the overall visual quality of the existing streetscape I consider that whilst the proposed development will introduce a new structure of significance in terms of scale, this introduction into the townscape is positive. Given the lightweight massing of this structure I do not consider the design to be overly intrusive on the townscape setting.

9.51. The proposed bridge will provide an attractive amenity for pedestrians and cyclists to enjoy views of the rivers and the surrounding area and will provide a significantly improved experience in terms of safety and enjoyment whilst navigating this area of the city. The current pedestrian and cycle arrangements crossing the Salmon Weir bridge do not provide for a safe or enjoyable experience with cars and large vehicles passing directly adjacent to a narrow path, cyclists are forced onto the road to share space with buses and other such vehicles where space is limited and where entry onto the bridge at the Newtownsmith can only be described as precarious.

9.52. It is important to note that the proposed bridge is not visible upstream and does not impact the setting of the Salmon Weir Bridge from this viewpoint. It is also important

to note that the provision of separate pedestrian bridges adjacent to historical vehicular bridges whereby road space is limited is commonplace and can be seen in many forms either as cantilever structures or separate adjacent structures in towns and cities across Ireland.

9.53. Having regard to the foregoing I consider on balance, that the proposed bridge is acceptable in terms of the overall visual intrusion within this townscape, and I am satisfied that the proposal will not significantly impact the integrity or setting of any Protected Structures in the vicinity. The development will enhance the overall experience of this townscape by users.

9.54. I further consider, in light of concerns raised within the submissions, that the proposed development will also enhance the overall experience of this area of the city by tourists, providing a high-quality amenity for tourists to access this part of the city and an aesthetic viewing point of the three watercourses underneath and the city skyline downstream.

9.55. Thus, I do not consider that the overall magnitude of the visual intrusion would be of such significance as to warrant a refusal. Details of materials and finishes to be used can be adequately dealt with by way of condition, should the Board be minded to grant permission. Whilst I acknowledge that there will be impacts to some degree during the construction stage of the development, these will be short in duration and as such limited in significance.

9.56. Cumulative impacts have been considered in the context of permitted and planned projects and are listed in Section 10.7 of Environmental Report submitted. Given the separation distance between projects and the extent of works proposed, I am satisfied that cumulative impacts in relation to the foregoing will not arise.

9.57. <u>Traffic Impacts</u>

9.58. Section 5 of the Environmental Report submitted examines the potential impacts of the proposed development on traffic and transport in the area. Pedestrian footfall and cyclist numbers and traffic movements crossing the Salmon Weir Bridge were recorded over a 12 hour period, 7am to 7pm on the 13th November in order to establish a baseline. Turning movements were also recorded during this time in order to establish desire lines. Cycle and pedestrian movements were relatively balanced in both directions. Results of counts carried out demonstrate that the number of people

utilising the existing bridge is within a comfortable level in quantitative terms in relation to accessibility. However, DMURS recommends that footpaths are a minimum of 1.8 metres in width to allow two wheel chairs or buggies to pass. Existing footpaths are only 1.1 metres in width on either side of the carriageway which in itself is only 5.8 metres wide. In order to cater appropriately for all users of the bridge it is necessary to provide an increased footpath width and cycle lane, given the restrictions of the bridge width this is not achievable within the current structure. A separate facility is therefore a reasonable proposal in this instance.

9.59. In order to facilitate the proposal a number of measures will be required which will disrupt the current flow of traffic within the area. A number of proposals are outlined within Section 5.8.2 of the Environmental Report submitted which include:

- Closure of north bound traffic lane on Newtownsmith for approx. 70 metres,
- Suspension of c. 5 no. on street parking spaces,
- Part closure of footpath on western side of Newtownsmith and eastern side of Gaol Road,
- Suspension of a limited no. of coach parking spaces on Gaol Road
- Full closure of Gaol Road and Newtownsmith for one weekend,
- Closure of a section of the Galway City car park to facilitate bridge assembly.

9.60. Effects of road closure are considered to be of moderate significance and short in duration. I consider such impacts to be reasonable to facilitate such a development. Similarly increases in construction related traffic will also be moderate in terms of impact and of short duration. Such disruptions will be mitigated with limited traffic flows permitted over the Salmon Weir at certain times of the day and traffic management on adjoining roads and traffic controllers managing construction traffic movements.

9.61. It is expected that the operational stage of the development will see growth in the number of pedestrian trips across the bridge to the city, it is also expected that cyclist trips will continue at current levels as it represents the more direct line of travel for cyclists approaching from the wider environment. It is expected that the provision of a traffic free space will attract more cyclists including those travelling to and from the city centre, leisure and school children. The effects of the proposed project are therefore considered to be positive and permanent for cyclists and pedestrians alike.

9.62. The proposed project does not alter the road network when operational, impacts to vehicular traffic will therefore be neutral.

9.63. In terms of cumulative impacts, the proposed development was considered in the context of a number permitted and proposed developments which are listed in table 5.3 of the Environmental Report submitted, of particular note is the proposed N6 Galway Bypass project, if permitted this route will provide an additional bridge across the River Corrib upstream which may result in a reduction of vehicular traffic on the Salmon Weir Bridge, giving rise to a positive cumulative impact. Other projects considered relate to infrastructure improvements and are also considered to give rise to positive cumulative impacts.

9.64. **The likely effects on the environment**

9.65. The proposed works will include the removal of vegetation and loose material from the existing bridge and the removal of sections of quay walls. The proposed works have the potential to give rise to a number of environmental impacts which are largely related to water quality, increases in sediment, impacts arising from noise and disturbance and impacts to habitat and species.

9.66. Given the location and scale of the proposed works, impacts arising from construction related activity in terms of noise and disturbance will be short term and are not considered to be significant. Such impacts will be considered in detail within the Appropriate Assessment Section of this report in relation to the qualifying interests of the surrounding European designated sites.

9.67. The applicants have submitted an Environmental Report in which the likely effects of the environment are examined. The need for an EIAR was considered by the Board within a previous EIA Determination ref: 307443 and was excluded having regard to the limited size of the development which is below the threshold set out in Article 8 of the Roads Regulations 1994, as amended. It was considered that the low-level structure proposed in terms of overall size and design, would not be likely to give rise to significant impacts which would warrant EIA.

9.68. I note that the proposed works will involve the removal of sections of the quay walls and vegetation which has the potential to dislodge material from the structure and impact the water quality of the river below. Impacts to water quality are examined in

detail below within the Appropriate Assessment section of this report and will not be repeated within this section.

9.69. Air & Climate

9.70. Impacts in relation to Air and Climate are examined within Section 6 of the Environmental Report submitted. The assessment was carried out in accordance with TII Air Quality guidelines and traffic volumes are predicted to be less than 5% for operation and less than 10% for construction and are therefore unlikely to result in significant air quality effects, a detailed assessment is therefore not required.

9.71. In terms of dust generation it is stated within the Environmental report submitted that there is a potential for impacts to arise in relation to $PM_{10}$ and vegetation effects arising from construction activities at properties along the western and eastern boundary of the development. Mitigation measures are proposed to reduce such impacts and are outlined in Section 6.6 of the Environmental Report submitted. Such measures include spraying of the site during dry periods, maintenance of construction vehicles to reduce exhaust emissions, limiting vehicle speeds, wheel washing facility, covering of temporary stockpiles, erection of hoarding around site works, and employee awareness training.

9.72. No significant impacts in relation to Air and Climate are expected during the operational stage of the development.

9.73. Cumulative impacts are considered within section 6.7 in this regard. Four projects have been identified in the context of potential cumulative impacts and include the following:

- Upgrade works at Kirwans roundabout
- Installation of solar PV panel array
- N6 Galway City Ring Road
- Bus Connects Cross City Link.

9.74. Cumulative impacts relate to the construction phase of the foregoing developments and having regard to the location, which are removed from the development site, duration of works, which is limited, and scale of these projects, which in some

instances is significantly limited, relative to the proposed development, I am satisfied that significant cumulative impacts will not arise in relation to Air quality or Climate.

9.75. Hydrogeology and Hydrology

9.76. Section 11 and 12 of the Environmental Report examine the potential for impacts to arise in relation to hydrogeology and hydrology. Baseline conditions were established in relation to both topics. A site investigation was commissioned to inform the geotechnical design of the scheme and bedrock type and conditions were found to generally correspond with that mapped by the GSI.

9.77. It is proposed to excavate c. 933 tonnes from the development site and reuse c. 140 tonnes, the remainder will be disposed of at licenced facilities. Measures relating to the recycling, reuse and disposal of material will be outlined within the final CEMP for the development.

9.78. It is stated within section 11.6.2.2 of the Environmental Report submitted that some minor dewatering will be required during construction of the bridge abutments and will mainly occur with Friar's River. No significant dewatering will be required at the Corrib or Persse's Distillery as excavations will not extend below the water level. Where the rock is deeper in the excavation area an alternative foundation solution will be adopted using mini piles within a temporary cofferdam. It is stated within section 11.6.2.2 that the estimated dewatering rates will be negligible in comparison to the flow of the two rivers and as such the effects of the dewatering will be insignificant and short in duration. Impacts arising from the proposed works mainly relate to the release of sediments and contaminants. Mitigation measures in this regard are outlined within Section 11 and 12 and are also examined in the context of the Appropriate Assessment. Such measures will be outlined hereunder and examined in detail within the Appropriate Assessment Section of this report.

9.79. A separate Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared by the applicant in order to examine the vulnerability of the development to flooding. The potential for coastal, pluvial and fluvial flooding was examined within the flood risk assessment.

9.80. It is apparent from flood mapping that the proposed development does not lie within the coastal flood plain and it is also outside of the 1:100 year and 1:1000 year pluvial flood extents. The risk of pluvial flooding or coastal flooding are therefore considered to be extremely low.

9.81. The bridge is located within the 1:10 year flood plain of the River Corrib, Distillery River and middle rivers. The applicants have had regard to the CFRAMS modelling and have carried out an analysis of the flow levels and potential for flooding events. It has been concluded within Section 9 of the Flood Risk Assessment that the proposed bridge will not be at risk of fluvial flooding for both existing and Climate change scenarios. The bridge soffit level will be higher than peak design flood water levels for each bridge section across the three watercourses. It is further stated that access and egress points are unlikely to be compromised during flood events and the proposed development will have no impact on existing floodplain storage and conveyancing.

9.82. Having regard to the information submitted and that the proposed development will be finished at a height above any potential flood levels I am satisfied that the proposed bridge will not be vulnerable to flooding and will also not exacerbate flooding in other locations.

9.83. Potential impacts therefore can be attributed to the potential for the proposed development to negatively affect water quality within the three adjacent watercourses. Impacts may arise from stockpiling of materials, falling objects during the erection of the bridge, wash water from dust suppression sprays and spillage of fuel and lubricants from construction vehicles and mechanical equipment.

9.84. It is stated that temporary surface water drainage will be provided for during construction works to prevent any direct discharge to the adjacent watercourses. Surface water during the operational phase will be carried via pipes running underneath the bridge and connected to the existing surface water drainage system. Increases in surface water drainage are not expected to be significant and therefore impacts to the existing system are not expected to arise.

9.85. Foul sewerage arsing from welfare facilities for construction workers will be disposed of by removal offsite to a licensed facility at regular intervals. Water will be supplied from mains and where not feasible a portable bowser will be provided.

9.86. A number of mitigation measures are proposed in order to prevent impacts to water quality and include but are not limited to the following:

- Earthworks will have adequate falls to prevent pooling or ponding.
- Concrete mixing and batching will be carried out away from watercourses.

- Collection system will be used to prevent any contaminated drainage entering watercourses.
- Good house keeping and use of trigger operated spray guns.
- Regular inspection of fuel storage facilities.
- Dewatering shall be overseen by a qualified hydrogeologist and treated appropriately in a site water treatment facility before being discharged to the local drainage network.
- Installation of a precast bottomless culvert in Persse's Distillery River to ensure flows in river can be maintained.
- Soil excavation carried out in dry weather.
- Construction compounds in areas that are low risk.
- Adequate flood storage

9.87. These measures will be examined in detail within the Appropriate Assessment Section of this report. Nonetheless, it is important to note at this juncture that I am satisfied that such mitigation measures are sufficient to prevent impacts to water quality within both the development site and surrounds.

9.88. It is of note that water monitoring will be carried out by the appointed contractor which will monitor the oxygen levels, turbidity, temperature and salinity of the water. Should changes in these parameters occur, works will be ceased until levels return to normal. I am satisfied that any issues pertaining to hydrology and hydrogeology can be adequately avoided and mitigated where required and no significant effects will arise in this regard.

9.89. Biodiversity

9.90. Section 8 of the Environmental Report submitted examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to flora and fauna within and adjacent to the development site. The study area included general habitats upstream of the existing Salmon Weir Bridge including Persse's Distillery River from the Fishery Field downstream to the entrance to the 'County Club House', the Cathedral Carpark and specifically the area of the main channel of the Lower River Corrib downstream up to 150 metres from the existing Salmon Weir Bridge. The study also included the embankments between Waterside

and the main river channel and Friars River and Newtownsmith as far as the wooden footbridge along the riverside walk. The study area is illustrated in Fig 8.1 of the Environmental Report submitted.

9.91. A number of site visits and walkovers were undertaken on the 16th August 2017, 19th July 2019, 15th October 2019, 5th November 2019 and 10-12th April 2020. These site visits and walkovers recorded habitats and species present within the study area and also looked for the presence bats, otters and birds.

9.92. Habitats

9.93. A mix of habitats were recorded ranging from artificial surfaces and flower beds to areas colonised by ivy and mixed broadleaf wooded areas. The left bank of the main river channel is comprised of Friars River embankment which divides the main channel from the Waterside Canal which flows along the area to the rear of the Court House becoming Friar's River downstream at Newtownsmith. The riverbed bankside, upstream of the Salmon Weir becomes dry in summer and allows wetland species to establish. A small area of reed bed is stated to develop further downstream. It is important to note at this juncture that there are no Annexed habitats located under the footprint of the proposed development and there will be no direct impacts on any Annexed habitats. Such considerations will be examined in detail within the Appropriate Assessment hereunder.

9.94. The embankment upstream of the existing bridge was comprised of bramble scrub and juvenile ash and sycamore saplings. Downstream is colonised by species such as hawthorn and dogwood among others which are listed in section 8.3.2.1 of the Environmental Report. Areas along the banks are generally mowed grassland with various species of tree cover. The existing Salmon Weir Bridge, millrace and canal walls are colonised by varying degrees of cover by ivy, red valerian, dandelion, common polypody and ivy leafed toadflax. No invasive species were encountered within the development site. An area of Japanese Knotweed was noted c. 190 m upstream of the development site and will not be impacted upon by the development. I note that the IFI raised concerns in relation to the spread of invasive species including Japanese Knotweed within their submission and based on the information submitted I am satisfied that the proposed development will not give rise to the spread of this species. Should the Board be minded to grant permission, I recommend that a pre-

construction survey is carried out for such species and any such species to be dealt with in accordance with an Invasive species management plan which shall be submitted to the Council.

9.95. The proposed development will require the felling of 13 no. trees, 11 are located on Gaol Road and Persse's Distillery River embankment and one on Friars River embankment and one on Newtownsmith. An arborist report has been included within the documents submitted and classifies the proposed trees to be felled as Category A which are high quality. Impacts arising from the felling of these trees relates to nesting which can be avoided by felling outside of nesting season. The overall impact to biodiversity in relation to the loss of these trees is considered to be insignificant given the number of trees present within the development site overall.

9.96. The development will give rise to the removal of a minor area of amenity grassland at Friars embankment, this area is of low ecological value. The removal of a small section of bankside scrub on the main channel riverside wall is also necessary. The species within this scrub are non-native and are also of low ecological value. It is proposed to replace lost planting and grasslands where appropriate to reduce the overall net loss of these habitats.

9.97. <u>Species</u>

9.98. I note from the information submitted that otters were not recorded within the study area, known sites are located both upstream and downstream of the development site. It is suggested by the applicant that the absence of otters in the development site may be due to the restrictions present such as weirs and barriers and the use of this part of the river by the Kayaking club.

9.99. Bats were recorded within the area, with the most common species recorded being the Soprano Pipistrelle and the second most common being the Leisler's Bat. Other bat species were also recorded but at a much lower levels.

9.100. I note that 46 no. trees were investigated for possible roost sites and only 2 mature Horse Chestnut trees were identified as having high potential as roosting sites. The existing Salmon Weir bridge contains a large crevice; however, it is stated that the crevice is mouldy and wet and not suitable for roosting bats. This area of the bridge is also lit which would deter roosting bats at this location.

9.101. I further note that no calls of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat were recorded in any of the surveys and other project surveys including the N6 Galway City Ring Road have shown that this bat does not forage in the city and will therefore not be affected.

9.102. No seals were recorded within the development site but have been recorded further downstream in the estuarine environment. Impacts to seals are not expected.

9.103. The River Corrib is registered as a Salmonid Water, the Galway Fishery starts just below the weir and extends the short distance of c. 220 metres to the Salmon Weir Bridge whereby fish queue to navigate the weir. It is of note that the adjacent watercourses are less important to fish with Persse's Distillery river being of low value to fish and Friars River being of some value to trout and coarse fish.

9.104. Brook Lamprey were the only species recorded within the development site. A number of bird species which are listed within Table 8.2 were recorded during site visits and walkovers and included Chaffinch, Herring Gulls, Black headed Gulls, Mute Swan and a Dipper among others.

9.105. Impacts in relation to species relate largely to changes in water quality and increases in sediments but also arise from noise and light disturbance. These impacts are not solely related to species, increases in sediments and changes to water quality can also impact habitats adversely.

9.106. Works which have the potential to give rise to such effects include; demolition relating to the insertion the temporary culvert within the Persse's Distillery River, the demolition of low stone wall along Gaol Road and Newtownsmith and the demolition, removal of two redundant eel storage tanks and the installation of piles. These works will be temporary in duration; 2-3 months and will be carried out in controlled environments with the use of a cofferdam. Other protective mitigation measures will also be employed as outlined in Section 8.6 of the Environmental report submitted.

9.107. It is of note that access will not be inhibited for mammals such as otters and the proposed works will in the long term provide an improved cleaner commuter route for such species.

9.108. It is important to note at this juncture, that the use of cofferdams within the Persse's Distillery River will not significantly impact existing flows and velocities of the watercourse and is a reasonable and appropriate measure to protect aquatic habitats

and species within both the development site and the river channel downstream of the proposed works.

9.109. With regard to impacts arising from light disturbance, it is proposed to install sensitive lighting which will not create excessive glare or light spillage which would impact bats or fish life. I am satisfied that such matters can be adequately dealt with by way of condition, should the Board be of a mind to grant permission.

9.110. Seals are not present in this area and as such will not be impacted directly by the development. Impacts arising to lamprey and salmon will be examined in detail within the Appropriate Assessment, hereunder, however it is important to note at this juncture that the proposed development will comprise a clear span bridge avoiding in channel works within the River Corrib. Where works are proposed within the adjacent watercourses, the applicant proposes to employ mitigation measures to prevent sediment escape and hydrocarbon leakage into both the subject watercourses and the River Corrib. Such mitigation measures as aforementioned are outlined within section 8.6 of the environmental report submitted and are standard practice and known to be effective.

9.111. It is important to note in this regard that Persse's Distillery River is of low ecological value and not of importance to salmonoids and fish.

9.112. Whilst impacts in relation to the qualifying interests of the River Corrib SPA will be examined within the AA hereunder, it is nonetheless important to note at this juncture that the proposed development given the urban location of the proposed development and surrounding habitat it is not expected that the proposed development would give rise to significant effects on birds including birds identified as the qualifying interests of the SPA. Potential effects on nesting birds will be avoided by appropriate timing.

9.113. Overall, having regard to the foregoing, I am satisfied that impacts to habitats and species will not be significant subject to the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.

9.114. **The likely significant effects on a European site:** The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

- Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive
- The Natura Impact Statement

- Screening the need for appropriate assessment
- Appropriate Assessment

9.115. **Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive:** The Habitats Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union. Article 6(3) of this Directive requires that any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. The competent authority must be satisfied that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

9.116. **The Natura Impact Statement**

9.117. The NIS dated November 2020 has been prepared by the Moore Group on behalf of Galway County Council.

9.118. The NIS prepared by the Moore Group describes the proposed development, its receiving environment and relevant European Sites in the zone of influence of the development. It was informed by desk top study of maps and ecological and water quality data from a range of sources as outlined in Section 1.5 of the NIS submitted. A number of walkovers were also carried out of the site as detailed above with the most recent in April 2020.

9.119. It is clear from the NIS submitted that none of the qualifying interests of the River Corrib SAC were found to occur within the footprint of the proposed development with the exception of migratory salmon. Otters have been observed upstream of the proposed development site and may commute via the proposed development site but there was no evidence of otter holts or spraints with the development site and immediate surrounds. Brook lamprey are the only known lamprey species to exist within the river, however the development site is not identified as being of significance to this aquatic species. This is reasoned on the basis that the weir presents an obstruction to these species. It is argued that the presence of Brook lamprey upstream arises from a historic colony which was present prior to the development of the weir adjacent to the development site.

9.120. The habitat survey also included the recording of any invasive species listed in the third schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. None were observed within the development site at the time of site inspection, a cluster of Japanese Knotweed was observed at the time of walkovers c. 190 metres upstream of the development site and as mentioned above, will not be impacted by the proposal.

9.121. The report concluded that, taking into account the project design and the implementation of mitigation measures identified in the NIS, the proposed development will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site.

9.122. Having reviewed the NIS and the supporting documentation, I am generally satisfied that it provides adequate information in respect of the baseline conditions, identifies the potential impacts, uses best scientific information and knowledge and provides details of mitigation measures. I am satisfied that the information allows for a complete examination and identification of all the aspects of the project that could have an effect, alone, or in combination with other plans and projects on European sites.

9.123. **Stage 1 Screening**

9.124. The project is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European Site and therefore it needs to be determined if the development is likely to have significant effects on a European site(s).

9.125. Notwithstanding the submission of a NIS, it is necessary to review the screening process to ensure alignment with the sites brought forward for AA and to ensure that all sites that may be affected by the development have been considered.

9.126. Having regard to the information and submissions available, nature, size and location of the proposed development and its likely direct, indirect and cumulative effects, the source pathway receptor principle and sensitivities of the ecological receptors, I consider the following European Sites relevant to include for the purposes of initial screening for the requirement for Stage 2 appropriate assessment on the basis of likely significant effects.

**Table 1. European sites considered for Stage 1 screening**

| European Site Name & Code | Distance | Qualifying Interest | Source-pathway-receptor | Considered further in screening |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lough Corrib SAC<br>000297 | Flows underneath proposed bridge | Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]<br><br>Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]<br><br>Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]<br><br>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]<br><br>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]<br><br>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]<br><br>Active raised bogs [7110]<br><br>Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]<br><br>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]<br><br>Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]<br><br>Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] | Works are adjacent to and over this SAC. | Yes, potential for significant effects arising from sedimentation and contamination of the river from run off from construction and potential disturbance to otters and other qualifying interests such as salmon, lamprey due to changes in quality. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Alkaline fens [7230]<br><br>Limestone pavements [8240]<br><br>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]<br><br>Bog woodland [91D0]<br><br>Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]<br><br>Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]<br><br>Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]<br><br>Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]<br><br>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]<br><br>Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]<br><br>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br><br>Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]<br><br>Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216] | | |
| Inner Galway SPA<br><br>004031 | c. 1km downstream | Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002]<br><br>Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]<br><br>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br><br>Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]<br><br>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]<br><br>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]<br><br>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]<br><br>Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069] | Works are upstream of this designated site and are connected via the River Corrib, which flows into Galway Bay. | Yes, potential for significant effects arising from sedimentation and contamination of the river from run off from construction. Potential for works to disturb qualifying |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137]<br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]<br>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]<br>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]<br>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]<br>Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169]<br>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]<br>Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]<br>Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191]<br>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]<br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | | interests of the site that may feed near to development site. |
| Galway Bay Complex<br>000268 | C. 1.5km downstream | Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]<br>Coastal lagoons [1150]<br>Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]<br>Reefs [1170]<br>Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]<br>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]<br>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] | Works are upstream of this designated site and are connected via the River Corrib, which flows into Galway Bay. | No |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]<br><br>Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]<br><br>Turloughs [3180]<br><br>Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]<br><br>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]<br><br>Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]<br><br>Alkaline fens [7230]<br><br>Limestone pavements [8240]<br><br>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br><br>Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365] | | |
| Lough Corrib SPA<br><br>004042 | c.3.2km upstream of site. | Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002]<br><br>Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]<br><br>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br><br>Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]<br><br>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]<br><br>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]<br><br>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]<br><br>Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069]<br><br>Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] | No meaningful pathway to this site as development is downstream. No suitable habitat within the development site for the qualifying interests of this site. | No |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br><br>Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142]<br><br>Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]<br><br>Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157]<br><br>Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160]<br><br>Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162]<br><br>Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169]<br><br>Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]<br><br>Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]<br><br>Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191]<br><br>Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]<br><br>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | | |
| Connemara Bog Complex SAC | c.13km west of site | Coastal lagoons [1150]<br><br>Reefs [1170]<br><br>Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]<br><br>Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]<br><br>Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds [3160]<br><br>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] | No meaningful pathway to this site. | No |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Northern Atlantic wet heaths with Erica tetralix [4010]<br><br>European dry heaths [4030]<br><br>Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]<br><br>Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130]<br><br>Transition mires and quaking bogs [7140]<br><br>Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]<br><br>Alkaline fens [7230]<br><br>Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]<br><br>Euphydryas aurinia (Marsh Fritillary) [1065]<br><br>Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]<br><br>Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]<br><br>Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833] | | |
| Connemara Bog Complex SPA | C.18km | Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]<br><br>Merlin (Falco columbarius) [A098]<br><br>Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]<br><br>Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182] | No meaningful pathway to this site. | No |
| Cregganna Marsh SPA<br><br>0004142 | c.8.6km | Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395] | No direct pathway to the site and no habitat of significance to this qualifying interest at the development site. | No |

9.127. The applicants have carried out a screening assessment for the purpose of the Appropriate Assessment and have considered that the following three sites should be brought forward for Appropriate Assessment:

- Lough Corrib SAC
- Inner Galway Bay SPA
- Galway Bay Complex SAC

9.128. **Screening Determination**

9.129. Section 2 of the NIS submitted screens out all Natura 2000 sites except the foregoing sites on the grounds that they are removed from the development. This approach seems reasonable, and I am satisfied that based on my examination of the NIS report and supporting information, and consideration of the sites within Table 1.0 that the three sites listed above are the only sites which should be examined in greater detail and brought forward to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment by virtue of the potential for the proposed development to contaminate the Corrib River and due to the scale of the proposed development.

9.130. The remaining sites as outlined within table 1.0 are removed from the development and whilst some have a hydrological connection to the site, it is not a meaningful connection in that the site is upstream of the development works or is located downstream of the works within Galway Bay and due to the dilution and distribution action of the river and sea, any contaminate would not meet these sites in such concentrations that would impact any of the qualifying interests of the designated sites.

9.131. Furthermore, in the case of bird species, the site is located in an urban setting with little in the way of meaningful bird habitat within or adjacent to the development site

9.132. A stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is therefore required for Lough Corrib SAC, Inner Galway Bay SPA, Galway Bay Complex SAC.

9.133. It is important to note that mitigation measures have not been considered in the Appropriate Assessment Screening.

9.134. **Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment**

9.135. The following Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the proposed works alone and in combination with other relevant plans and projects will be carried out in relation to the following European sites in view of their conservation objectives:

- Lough Corrib SAC
- Inner Galway Bay SPA
- Galway Bay Complex SAC

9.136. The NIS submitted by the applicant concluded that the proposal will not beyond reasonable scientific doubt, adversely affect the integrity of any European Site either directly or indirectly.

9.137. The following is a summary of the objective scientific assessment of the implications of the project on the qualifying interest features of the European sites using the best scientific knowledge in the field. All aspects of the project which could result in significant effects are assessed and mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects are considered and assessed.

9.138. **Potential for direct and indirect effects**

9.139. **Lough Corrib SAC**

9.140. It is important to note at this juncture that Lough Corrib SAC which flows directly under the development site is the second largest lake in Ireland, with an area of approximately 18,240 ha (the entire site is 20,556 ha). The lake can be divided into two parts: a relatively shallow basin, underlain by Carboniferous limestone, in the south, and a larger, deeper basin, underlain by more acidic granite, schists, shales and sandstones to the north. The surrounding lands to the south and east are mostly pastoral farmland, while bog and heath predominate to the west and north. A number of rivers are included within the SAC as they are important for Atlantic Salmon. These rivers include the Clare, Grange, Abbert, Sinking, Dalgan and Black to the east, as well as the Cong, Bealanabrack, Failmore, Cornamona, Drimneen and Owenriff to the west. In addition to the rivers and lake basin, adjoining areas of conservation interest, including raised bog, woodland, grassland and limestone pavement, have been incorporated into the site. Otter and Irish Hare have been recorded regularly with the site and salmon use the lake and rivers as spawning grounds.

9.141. The main threats to the quality of this site are from water polluting activities resulting from intensification of agricultural activities on the eastern side of the lake, uncontrolled discharge of sewage which is causing localised eutrophication of the lake, and housing and boating development, which is causing the loss of native lakeshore vegetation.

Raised bog habitats are susceptible to degradation. Fishing and shooting still occur and bat roosts are susceptible to disturbance or development.

9.142. Lough Corrib is one the best examples of a large lacustrine catchment system in Ireland, with a range of habitats and species still well represented. These include 15 habitats which are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, six of which are priority habitats, and nine species which are listed on Annex II. The lake is also internationally important for birds and is designated as a Special Protection Area.

9.143. **Inner Galway Bay SPA**

9.144. Inner Galway Bay SPA is a very large, marine-dominated site situated on the west coast of Ireland. The long shoreline is noted for its diversity, and comprises complex mixtures of bedrock shore, shingle beach, sandy beach and fringing salt marshes. Intertidal sand and mud flats occur around much of the shoreline, with the largest areas being found on the sheltered eastern coast between Oranmore Bay and Kinvarra Bay. A number of small islands and rocky islets in the Bay are included within the site. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Wigeon, Teal, Redbreasted Merganser, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Sandwich Tern and Common Tern. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds. Inner Galway Bay supports an excellent diversity of wintering wetland birds, with divers, grebes, cormorants, dabbling duck, sea duck and waders all well represented.

9.145. Inner Galway Bay SPA is of high ornithological importance with two wintering species having populations of international importance and a further sixteen wintering species having populations of national importance. The breeding colonies of Sandwich Tern, Common Tern and Cormorant are also of national importance. Also of note is that six of the regularly occurring species are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive, i.e. Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Golden Plover, Bartailed Godwit, Sandwich Tern and Common Tern. Inner Galway Bay is a Ramsar Convention site and part of the Inner Galway Bay SPA is a Wildfowl Sanctuary.

9.146. **Galway Bay Complex SAC**

9.147. This site comprises the inner, shallow part of a large bay which is partially sheltered by the Aran Islands. The Burren karstic limestone fringes the southern sides and extends into the sublittoral. West of Galway city the bedrock geology is granite. There are numerous shallow and intertidal inlets on the eastern and southern sides, notably Muckinish, Aughinish and Kinvarra Bays.

9.148. Galway Bay South holds a very high number of littoral communities (12). They range from rocky terraces, to sandy beaches with rock or sand dunes behind. Saltmarshes are frequent within this extensive coastal site, with both E.U. Habitats Directive types, 'Atlantic Salt Meadow' and 'Mediterranean Salt Meadow' well represented.

9.149. Shingle and stony beaches can be found throughout the site, and soft coast cliffs and lagoons of different types, sizes and salinities also occur within this site.

9.150. This large coastal site is of immense conservation importance, with many habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, four of which have priority status: lagoon, Cladium fen, turlough and orchid-rich calcareous grassland. The examples of shallow bays, reefs, lagoons and saltmarshes found within this site are amongst the best in the country. The site supports an important Common Seal colony and a breeding Otter population (Annex II species), and six regular Annex I E.U. Birds Directive species. The site also has four Red Data Book plant species, plus a host of rare or scarce marine and lagoonal animal and plant species

9.151. Fishing and aquaculture are the main commercial activities within the site. A concern is that sewage effluent and detritus of the aquaculture industry could be deleterious to benthic communities. Reef and sediment communities are vulnerable to disturbance or compaction from tractors accessing oyster trestles. The Paracentrotus lividus populations have been shown to be vulnerable to over-fishing. Extraction of maerl in Galway Bay is a threat. Owing to the proximity of Galway city, shoreline and terrestrial habitats are under pressure from urban expansion and recreational activities. Eutrophication is probably affecting some of the lagoons and is a continued threat. Drainage is a general threat to the turlough and fen habitats. Bird populations may be disturbed by aquaculture activities.

9.152. The general conservation objectives for the qualifying interests of these sites seek to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition for habitats and/or species

at these sites. The maintenance of habitats and species within the Natura 2000 sites at favourable condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those species at a national level.

9.153. The NIS submitted acknowledges that the proposed works will give rise to a potential for both direct and indirect significant impacts. Such impacts relate to only a limited number of qualifying interests as follows.

9.154. **Qualifying interests at risk within Lough Corrib SAC**

9.155. Having regard to the NIS submitted, the nature and scale of the proposed work and the location of the following qualifying interests of Lough Corrib SAC relative to the proposed works, I consider that these are the specific qualifying interests that are at risk of potential impact. Impacts have the potential to arise from the deterioration of water quality and/or increased levels of sedimentation and habitat disturbance in relation to noise and lighting. It is important to note at this juncture that the qualifying interests not brought forward for further examination are not located within the zone of influence of this proposed development. Many QIs are located upstream of the proposed development and therefore have no meaningful connection to the site and many are located further downstream and within the Galway Bay area. Given the nature of the proposed works which comprises a clear span bridge and minor works to quay walls any contaminates entering the water within the site would not reach QIs in such concentrations that could result in adverse impacts to these QIs due to the dilution and dispersion action of the river and sea. As aforementioned, the following QIs will be examined in more detail, given the potential for such species to be located proximate to the proposed development area.

- Otter
- Salmon
- Sea Lamprey
- Brook Lamprey

<u>Otter</u>

9.156. No otters were observed during surveys of the site, it is stated within the NIS submitted that there are limited resting places or potential for otter holts in the mill race or main river channel given the solid bedrock and artificial surfaces historically placed as a foundation for the main river channel and given the high variable fluctuation in water

level and speed of flow. Otters have been recorded upstream and one was observed during surveys c. 500 metres upstream of the weir to the rear of NUIG campus. Sightings have also been recorded within the upper river along the Eglinton Canal.

9.157. The NIS states that it is clear that otters are commuting from the lower river near Claddagh Basin along the mill races at Parkavara and Nuns Island to the Eglinton Canal and upper River Corrib, it is further stated that it is likely that the Salmon Weir is likely a limiting factor in terms of movement on the main river channel and as such hampers movement at this location. The use of Persse's Distillery River by kayakers would further deter the use of this watercourse by otter. Having regard to the foregoing direct impacts to otters are not expected.

9.158. Otters are sensitive to disturbance from construction activities and changes in water quality which would impact feeding. Potential indirect impacts could arise in relation to deterioration of water quality and the resultant loss of aquatic prey.

Salmon

9.159. Salmon are known to pass through this section of river on their way to spawning grounds in Lough Corrib. As mentioned within the biodiversity section above, Persse's Distillery River is of low ecological value to fish which has been confirmed by IFI with the applicant. Friars Distillery River is of some value to trout and coarse fish with movements stated to be predominantly from the upstream area of Waterside and the upper river. Direct impacts to Salmon are not expected to arise given that movement will not be impeded by the proposed works.

9.160. Potential indirect impacts could arise in relation to the deterioration of water quality or sediment levels within the Corrib River.

Lamprey

9.161. No river lamprey have been recorded, however the River Corrib is of importance to sea lamprey. It is noted within the NIS that cormorants were observed feeding on lamprey on both the riverbank at Fisheries Tower and from the river downstream of Wolf Tone Bridge. It is stated within the NIS submitted that Sea Lamprey are restricted to below the Galway Regulating Weir, it is further stated that records of this type of lamprey within tributaries of the Corrib predate the construction of the existing weir. No direct impacts are expected in relation to Sea Lamprey or Brook Lamprey, however

indirect impacts could arise in the event that water quality is adversely affected by the development.

9.162. **Qualifying Interests at risk within the Inner Galway Bay SPA**

9.163. This designated site is of special conservation interest for its wetland and waterbirds. Impacts may arise in relation to deterioration of water quality and a resultant loss of aquatic prey or collisions with the proposed structure by commuting birds.

9.164. It is of note that the proposed development site does not contain any habitat of significance to the qualifying interests of the Inner Galway SPA.

9.165. A single dipper was observed c.20 m downstream of the Salmon Weir Bridge and birds flying over included Herring Gulls, and Black-headed Gull. Common species such as Blackbirds, Chaffinch and Wren were observed within the site.

9.166. **Qualifying Interests at risk within Galway Bay Complex SAC**

9.167. The specific qualifying interests that are at risk of potential impact include the following, all other qualifying interests of this site are discounted by virtue of the distance from the proposed development site to the location of the qualifying interests within this site and the dilution and dispersion action of the sea.

- Otter
- Harbour Seal

Otter

9.168. The occurrence of otter within the development site is dealt with above and will not be repeated hereunder.

Harbour Seals

9.169. Harbour Seals do not occupy the area within the vicinity of the site and are located further downstream. Direct impacts are therefore not expected. Indirect impacts may arise in relation to adverse impacts on water quality which would affect the availability of aquatic prey.

9.170. The applicant considered within the NIS submitted that there would be no direct impacts on the Inner Galway Bay SPA, Galway Bay Complex SAC or the Lough Corrib SAC. There will be no habitat loss or fragmentation as a result of the proposed development.

9.171. The impact of indirect effects will be discussed in detail in the context of proposed mitigation measures within the integrity test below.

9.172. **Potential in-combination effects.**

9.173. In combination effects are examined within section 3.7 of the NIS submitted. The proposed works were considered in combination with the Galway City Development Plan 2017-2023. No significant cumulative impacts are predicted as the plan has a range of environmental and natural heritage policy safeguards in place.

9.174. Current and planned development was examined in the context of in combination effects. Four projects were identified which were examined for the potential to give rise to significant effects.

9.175. It is noted that the proposed works associated with these projects with mitigation will not result in any in poor water quality or habitat loss/damage. The NIS submitted, therefore concluded that there would be no cumulative / in-combination effects arising from the proposed development.

9.176. Having regard to the foregoing, I do not consider that the potential for in-combination effects are likely to arise.

9.177. **Mitigation Measures**

9.178. Mitigation measures have been set out within Section 3.6 of the NIS submitted and include standard best practice in relation to construction. It is stated within these documents that good site management, environmental buffer zones, housekeeping and an environmental emergency response plan will ensure that no impacts arise. The project has been designed to avoid adverse impacts to water quality.

9.179. Measures proposed by the applicant within the NIS submitted include, strict management of concrete delivery, installation and curing and prevention of wash out after delivery.

9.180. Strict management of fuels and oils, chemicals to be stored in sealed containers, use of drip trays for refuelling, use of bunded storage areas, maintenance of plant.

9.181. Protection of water courses, use of cut off drains to prevent water from entering excavations, soil heaps and excavated material to be located at compounds away from watercourses, maintenance of roads. Use of cofferdam to prevent sediment and stone and rubble from entering the river channel.

9.182. Deliveries to be checked for leakage and contingency plans to be agreed and suitable materials available to deal with any incident.

9.183. A CEMP has been submitted as an appendix to the NIS submitted and outlines all mitigation proposed in relation to the entire project.

9.184. I note that notwithstanding that no invasive species were encountered at the site and surrounds during surveys, it is nonetheless proposed to carry out a preconstruction survey in this regard. In the event that invasive species are found at the site a site-specific management plan will be prepared in order to ensure that no spread occurs.

9.185. Method statements will be prepared for each element of the work in order to provide clarity for construction workers. A toolbox talk will be given to contractors and a project ecologist will be employed for the duration of the works.

9.186. Access routes to the bridge will be clearly defined and no other access will be permitted.

9.187. Spill kits will be available at site work locations and any oils or hydraulic fluids will be stored in leak proof containers and checked for leaks on a regular basis.

9.188. I note that mitigation measures proposed, include drainage controls to be put in place to prevent any waters from entering the river.

9.189. All mitigation measures will be examined in relation to the potential for likely significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA, Galway Bay Complex SAC or the Lough Corrib SAC within the following integrity test.

9.190. **Integrity Test**

9.191. I have considered the NIS along with the information submitted with the application and have had regard to the mitigation measures outlined. Potential for impacts to arise in relation to the leakage of oils and diesels or other such contaminates from construction vehicles has been dealt with within the mitigation measures outlined in Section 3.6 of the NIS submitted and the appended CEMP. All machinery will be checked prior to entering the works area and all fuel, lubricants and hydraulic fluids will be kept in a secure bunded area removed from the river.

9.192. These mitigation measures are standard in nature and are known to be effective. I am therefore satisfied that the mitigation measures outlined in relation to hydrocarbon contamination of soils and waters are acceptable.

9.193. It is important to note at this juncture that no in channel works will be carried out within the River Corrib. Works within Persse's Distillery River will occur largely above the water level whilst works at Friars River will occur within an area protected by a cofferdam. I consider it reasonable to impose conditions for the use of geotextile nets where required to prevent material from the dislodging of stones entering into the river. This will ensure that increases in sediment to the river arising from soil dislodgement does not occur.

9.194. Details in terms of timing of works shall be agreed between the Council and the Contractor in order to carry out works within the optimum period to reduce any potential impacts to fish life. With regard to bird collisions the proposed structure is low in terms of height and would not affect commuting birds.

9.195. I note that IFI and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media – Development Applications Unit had no objections to the development and merely sought conditions in relation to timelines and archaeological monitoring. I note that An Taisce raised concerns in relation to the potential for indirect impacts to arise with regard to Otters. I note that no resting areas where observed during the habitat surveys. I also note that existing activity along the riverbank would discourage the use of the lands by Otters within the immediate vicinity of the proposed works. As impacts to water quality are unlikely and the Otter food source is therefore protected, the remaining potential for impacts arise from disturbance during the construction works. Given the current level of human activity within the immediate vicinity of the works site and the lack of any resting or breeding sites observed in this area I consider that the likelihood of significant effects to arise to be insignificant. Otters utilising this site would be habituated to noise arising from the current urban use of the land and given the short duration of the proposed works disturbance is not considered likely.

9.196. Thus having regard to the information submitted in relation to sediment transportation, water pollution and habitat disturbance I am satisfied that the mitigation measures outlined are acceptable and will adequately prevent impacts arising in this regard.

9.197. **Overall Conclusion**

9.198. I have considered the location of the qualifying interests of both the Inner Galway Bay SPA, Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Lough Corrib SAC in relation to the proposed works and the existing context of the site within urban lands and the activities and

noise associated with such a location and I consider, on the basis of the information provided with the application, including the Natura Impact Statement, and in light of the assessment carried out, I am satisfied that the proposed development individually, or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely effect the European site Nos**. 000297, 000268 and 004031** in view of these sites Conservation Objectives.

**Table 2 AA summary matrix – Inner Galway Bay SPA**

**The Inner Galway Bay SPA site code: 004031**

**Summary of likely significant effects**

- **Water Quality deterioration**
- **Sedimentation**
- **Habitat Disturbance**

**Conservation Objectives: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of species which is defined by list of attributes and targets.**

| | | **Summary of Appropriate Assessment** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Qualifying Interest feature** | **Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes** | **Potential adverse effects** | **Mitigation measures** | **In-combination effects** | **Can adverse effects on integrity be excluded?** |
| Wetland and Waterbirds | Population trend - Long-term population trend stable or increasing | Potential for ex-situ affects due to increase in siltation and pollution due to construction works could have an impact on water quality and could affect all QI listed and reduce availability of aquatic prey for birds. | Use of designated bunded areas for refuelling, in channel works to be carried out in cofferdam. Storage of materials in designated construction compound. | Additional development in area. | Yes |

**Overall conclusion: Integrity test**

Following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of this proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

**Table 3 AA summary matrix - Galway Bay Complex SAC site code: 000268**

**Galway Bay Complex SAC site code: 000268**

**Summary of likely significant effects**

- **Water Quality deterioration**
- **Sedimentation**
- **Habitat Disturbance**

**Conservation Objectives: To restore the favourable conservation condition of Otter in Galway Bay Complex SAC, which is defined a list of attributes and targets.**
**To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal in Galway Bay Complex SAC, which is defined by the a list of attributes and targets.**

| | | Summary of Appropriate Assessment | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Qualifying Interest feature** | **Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes** | **Potential adverse effects** | **Mitigation measures** | **In-combination effects** | **Can adverse effects on integrity be excluded?** |
| Otter<br><br>Harbour Seal | Distribution: No significant decline,<br>Fish biomass available: No significant decline<br>Barriers to connectivity: No significant increase.<br><br>Number of artificial barriers: Species range within the site should not be restricted by artificial barriers to site use.<br>Level of impact: Human activities should occur at levels that do not adversely affect the harbour seal population at the site | Increase in pollution due to construction works could have an impact on water quality and availability of aquatic prey. Otters could be disturbed by noise. | Use of designated bunded areas for refuelling, In channel works to be carried out in cofferdam. Storage of materials in designated construction compound. | Additional development in area | Yes |

**Overall conclusion: Integrity test**

Following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of this proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

**Table 3 AA summary matrix - Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297**

**Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297**

**Summary of likely significant effects**

- **Water Quality deterioration**
- **Sedimentation**
- **Habitat Disturbance**

**Conservation Objectives: To maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest**

| | | **Summary of Appropriate Assessment** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Qualifying Interest feature** | **Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes** | **Potential adverse effects** | **Mitigation measures** | **In-combination effects** | **Can adverse effects on integrity be excluded?** |
| Sea lamprey & Brook Lamprey | 1) Distribution extent of anadromy - Greater than 75% of main stem length of rivers accessible from estuary.<br>2) Population structure of juveniles - At least three age/size groups present.<br>3) Extent and distribution of spawning habitat - No decline in extent and distribution of spawning beds. | Increase in siltation and pollution due to construction works could have an impact on water quality and could effect all QI listed and reduce availability of aquatic prey. Noise arising from construction could also disturb otters. | Use of designated bunded areas for refuelling, In channel works to be carried out in cofferdam. Storage of materials in designated construction compound. | Additional development in area. | Yes |
| Otter | Distribution: No significant decline,<br>Fish biomass available: No significant decline<br>Barriers to connectivity: No significant increase. | | | | |
| Salmon | Distribution: extent of anadromy<br>Adult spawning fish - Conservation | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | limit (CL) for each system consistently exceeded.<br>Out-migrating smolt abundance - No significant decline.<br>Water quality - At least Q4 at all sites sampled by EPA | | | | |

**Overall conclusion: Integrity test**
Following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of this proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

## 10.0 Recommendation

10.1. On the basis of the above assessment, I recommend that the Board approve the proposed development subject to the reasons and considerations below and subject to conditions including requiring compliance with the submitted details and with the mitigation measures as set out in the NIS.

## 11.0 Reasons and Considerations

**Reasons and Considerations**

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

a) the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),

b) the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)

c) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site,

d) the conservation objectives, qualifying interests and special conservation interests for the Inner Galway Bay SPA site code: 004031, Galway Bay Complex SAC site code: 000268 or the Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297 the policies and objectives of the Galway City Development Plan, 2017-2023,

e) the nature and extent of the proposed works as set out in the application for approval,

f) the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Natura Impact Statement,

g) the submissions and observations received in relation to the proposed development, and

h) the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Board to make a report and recommendation on the matter

**Appropriate Assessment:**

The Board agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the inspector's report that the Inner Galway Bay SPA site code: 004031, Galway Bay Complex SAC site code: 000268 or the Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297, are the European sites for which there is a likelihood of significant effects.

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal for the Inner Galway Bay SPA site code: 004031, Galway Bay Complex SAC site code: 000268 or the Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297, in view of the Sites Conservation Objectives. The Board considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment.

In completing the assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the

i. Likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposal both individually or in combination with other plans or projects, specifically upon the Inner Galway Bay SPA site code: 004031, Galway Bay Complex SAC site code: 000268 or the Lough Corrib SAC site code: 000297

ii. Mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal,

iii. Conservation Objectives for these European Sites, and

iv. Views of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, (DAU) and all other submissions received.

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

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

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

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not have significant negative effects on the environment or the community in the vicinity, would not give rise to a risk of pollution, would not be detrimental to the visual or landscape amenities of the area, would not adversely impact on the cultural, archaeological and built heritage of the area and would not interfere with the existing land uses in the area. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 12.0 **Conditions**

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application except where otherwise may be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

   **Reason:** In the interest of clarity.

2. All mitigation and environmental commitments identified in the Natura Impact Statement shall be implemented in full as part of the proposed development.

   **Reason:** In the interest of development control, public information and clarity.

3. The mitigation measures identified in the Environmental Report and other plans and particulars submitted with the planning application, shall be implemented in full by the Council, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions of this permission.

   **Reason:** In the interest of clarity and protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.

4. The Council shall employ preventative measures such as the use of geotextile nets at locations where works will be carried out at existing quay walls to prevent material from entering watercourses.

   **Reason:** In the interest of protecting water quality.

5. Trees to be felled shall be examined prior to felling and demolition to determine the presence of bat roosts. Any works shall be in accordance with the TII Guidelines for the Treatment of Bats during the construction of National Road Schemes.

   **Reason:** In the interest of wildlife protection.

6. A pre-construction survey shall be carried out to determine the presence of any invasive plant species. In the event that invasive plant species are found prior to or during works at the development site, the applicant shall submit an Invasive Management Species Action Plan to be put on the file of the planning authority which shall include full details of the eradication of the such invasive species from the development site as soon as is practicably possible.

   **Reason**: In the interest of nature conservation and mitigating ecological damage associated with the development.

7. The Council shall facilitate the archaeological appraisal of the site and shall provide for the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features which may exist within the site. In this regard, the developer shall:

   a) employ a suitably-qualified archaeologist prior to the commencement of development. The archaeologist shall assess and monitor all preparatory works and all site development works.

   b) investigate areas of archaeological potential and depending on the findings, carry out test excavations if deemed necessary following consultation with the National Monuments Services Section of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

   c) submit a report to the planning authority to be held on file, containing the results of the archaeological investigations and assessment.

   **Reason**: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the area and to secure the preservation in-situ or by record and protection of any archaeological remains that may exist within the site.

8. Lighting shall be installed in manner that does not affect/disturb bat or fish life within the development site or within the immediate surrounds.

   **Reason:** In the interests and protection of local biodiversity.

9. Galway County Council and any agent acting on its behalf shall ensure that all plant and machinery used during the works should be thoroughly cleaned and washed before delivery to the site to prevent the spread of hazardous invasive species and pathogens.

   **Reason:** In the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the European sites.

10. All works shall have regard to Inland Fisheries Ireland's published guidelines for construction works near waterways (Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters, 2016). A programme of water quality monitoring and timing of works shall be prepared in consultation with the contractor, and relevant statutory agencies and the programme shall be implemented thereafter.

    **Reason:** In the interest of the protecting of receiving water quality, fisheries and aquatic habitats.

11. All new surface water outfalls shall be constructed in a manner which protects riparian habitat and does not result in excessive erosion of such habitat.

    **Reason:** In the interest of habitat protection.

Sarah Lynch
Senior Planning Inspector

9th July 2021