



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP309271-21

Development

Construction of a 24 metre monopole telecommunications support structure carrying antenna and dishes together with associated ground equipment cabinets.

Location

Doonflin Upper, Skreen, County Sligo.

Planning Authority

Sligo County Council.

Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

20/380.

Applicant(s)

Signal Infrastructure Limited.

Type of Application

Permission.

Planning Authority Decision

Refuse.

Type of Appeal

First Party -v- Refusal.

Appellant(s)

Signal Infrastructure Limited.

Observer(s)

Doonflin-Grangebeg Community Group.

Date of Site Inspection

21st April, 2021.

Inspector

Paul Caprani.

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1.0 Introduction

ABP309271-21 relates to a first party appeal against the decision of Sligo County Council to issue notification to refuse planning permission of the construction of a new 24 metre monopole telecommunications support structure¹ and associated infrastructure. Sligo County Council issued notification to refuse planning permission for a single reason on the basis that the proposed development, located in proximity to a designated scenic route, would form an obtrusive and incongruous feature in the landscape at this location and seriously injure the visual amenity and scenic quality of the area. One observation has been submitted by the Doonflin-Grangebeg Community Group supporting the decision of the Planning Authority.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The proposed telecommunications monopole and associated structure is to be located approximately 300 metres south of the N59 National Secondary Route (Sligo to Ballina) in North Sligo. The subject site is located approximately 3 kilometres west of the small settlement of Sk
- 2.2. reen on the N59, approximately 17 kilometres west of Ballisodare and 25 kilometres east of Ballina. The nearest settlement is the small village of Templeboy approximately 2 kilometres to the west of the subject site. The site is located in the townland of Grangebeg on the eastern side of a third class road (the L-2303-26) which runs southwards from the N59. The proposed monopole is to be located in relatively flat agricultural land on the western side of a large field and to the south-east of a cluster of agricultural farm buildings. The proposed mast is located approximately 140 metres to the east of the access road. Access to the proposed mast and associated equipment is to be provided via an existing entrance serving the cluster of agricultural buildings to the north-west of the site.
- 2.3. The landscape in which the proposed mast is to be located can be described as relatively flat open agricultural land with little screening in the vicinity of the site.

¹ Reduced to 21 meters in height in the grounds of the first party appeal.

There is a stand of trees located to the north of the agricultural buildings in the vicinity but with the exception of the row of conifer trees referred to, there is very little natural screening and mature woodland in the vicinity of the site. Lands to the south of the site rise significantly to form the Ox Mountains. The highest point of which Knockalongy is located approximately 4.5 kilometres to the south of the site. The Sligo Way walking/tourist route runs to the south of the site.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. Planning permission is sought for the construction of a 24 metre high monopole in order to host various types of telecommunication antenna and dishes. The drawings submitted indicate that c.22 antenna and dishes are to be erected on the upper portion of the monopole. The antennas range from 2.5 metres in length whereas the dishes are generally 0.6 metres in diameter. The monopole on which it is proposed to erect the antenna is approximately 1.2 metres in width at its base and this tapers to approximately 0.9 metres at the apex of the structure. Documentation submitted with the application indicate that the proposed structure has been designed to accommodate 2G voice operators as well as 3G and 4G broadband operators.
- 3.2. It is proposed also to incorporate a series of telecommunications cabinets on concrete plinths surrounding the proposed telecommunication masts. These cabinets are to be encased within a 2.4 metre high palisade green fence. The palisade fence is to incorporate additional planting around its perimeter. A new access track currently serving the existing farm buildings to the north-west is to be extended to provide access to the telecommunications mast. The 3 metre wide access track is approximately 60 metres in length. According to the planning application form the area of the subject site is 0.02 hectares.

4.0 Planning Authority's Decision

- 4.1. Sligo County Council issued notification to refuse planning permission for a single reason which is set out in full below.

1. *It is the policy of the Planning Authority, as stated in the current Sligo County Development Plan 2017 – 2023 (CDP)*

- *to protect the physical landscape, visual and scenic character of County Sligo (Policy T-LCAP-1);*
- *to preserve the scenic views listed in Appendix F of the County Development Plan and the distinctive visual character of designated scenic routes by controlling development along such routes and other roads (P-LCAP-3, Listed View No. 7 in Appendix F);*
- *to protect areas of significant landscape importance from the visual intrusion of largescale telecommunication infrastructure (P-TEL-1).*

Having regard to the scale and height of the proposed development and its proposed location in proximity to the national road N-59, which is a designated scenic route afforded scenic views of the Ox Mountains with their designated visually vulnerable ridge lines, it is considered that the proposed development would form an obtrusive and incongruous feature on the landscape at this location, which would seriously injure the visual amenity and scenic quality of the area.

The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

4.2. Documentation Submitted with the Planning Application

- 4.2.1. A planning report was submitted with the planning application prepared by 4Site. It sets out details for the requirement for the new site together with the site location and description and the visual impact appraisal. It notes that the subject site is located in a landscape character area classified as “normal rural landscapes” in the Sligo County Development Plan. It is noted that there are a number of scenic routes in the area which follow the main road network. The visual impact arising from the proposed development is assessed from 14 vantage points. The significance of the impact is described as being from ‘slight/imperceptible’ to ‘moderate’. It states that impacts are limited to private views within field boundaries and not considered to be sensitive receptors. It is stated that wider and more distant public views are restricted by the extensive foliage and trees on the boundaries of the site as well as the topography of the area.

4.2.2. Also submitted is a technical justification report prepared by Villacon. It is stated that the site has been chosen to support broadband communications with antennas, transmission dishes and equipment for two mobile network operators and one wireless broadband provider, extending the reach of the communication technologies into areas that currently have poor to non-existent wireless mobile services. It is noted that the nearest mobile site is over 4.8 kilometres away and this site cannot provide coverage to the target coverage area.

4.3. Assessment by Planning Authority

4.3.1. A report from Environmental Services states that there is no objection in principle to the proposed development and recommends that a total of four conditions be attached in the event that planning permission is granted.

4.3.2. Many letters of objection, mainly from residents in the vicinity, were submitted to the Planning Authority. The contents of these letters have been read and noted. Some of the issues highlighted in the submission include:

- Excessive height/visual amenity.
- Proximity to scenic routes.
- Lack of consideration of alternative sites.
- Proximity to mud and wood house which is a well known and much loved building in the vicinity.
- Traffic concerns.
- Lack of sufficient legal interest in the land.
- Proximity to archaeological monuments.
- Potential groundwater pollution.
- Impact on property values in the area.
- Potential impact on Corncrake nesting sites.
- Impact on tourism.
- Impact on human and animal health
- Prematurity regarding the national broadband roll-out.

- 4.3.3. A report from the Area Engineer recommends a grant of planning permission subject to 5 standard conditions.
- 4.3.4. The planner's report sets out details of the site location and description and the proposed development before detailing national planning guidance and the provisions of the development plan in respect of telecommunication infrastructure. The third-party observations were also noted in the report.
- 4.3.5. The scenic landscape qualities in the development plan are noted and it is considered that the proposed development would have a significant impact on designated scenic routes in a landscape that has very limited capacity to absorb development.
- 4.3.6. The planner's report goes on to assess the development in the context and various issues raised in the various observations. It notes the following:
- The proposed does not require an environmental impact assessment and any issues regarding potential waste impacts can be addressed by way of condition. With regard to prematurity pending the roll out of the national broadband plan it is stated that should permission be granted for the proposed development the issue of obsolescence could be addressed by way of condition.
 - With regard to human and animal health reference is made to circular letter PL07/12 which notes that such matters should be addressed outside the planning code.
 - The Planning Authority is satisfied that the application has the consent of the landowner.
 - With regard to site access and road safety the area engineer has inspected the site and recommended a grant of planning permission subject to the widening of the access and the improvement of sightlines.
 - Precedent decisions in respect of telecommunication masts are noted.
 - With regard to impact on property values and views from private residents it is stated that remote views of landscapes from private residents are not protected by any planning policy.

- 4.3.7. The planner's report goes on to assess the proposed development with regard to compliance with National Planning Policy on Telecommunication Masts and compliance with Visual Impact and Landscape Policies contained in the Development Plan. It concludes that the technical justification is largely in accordance with national and regional planning guidance. However, the visual impact appraisal contained in the report submitted with the planning application is considered inadequate and has not considered sufficient viewpoints along important scenic routes and in the context of visually vulnerable ridgelines. It is on this basis it is considered that the proposed development would have a negative impact on the landscape and therefore it is recommended that planning permission be refused for the single reason set out above.

5.0 Planning History

There appears to be no relevant planning history associated with the appeal site.

6.0 Policy Context

6.1. Development Plan

- 6.1.1. The site is governed by the policies and provisions contained in the Sligo Development Plan 2017 – 2023. The site is located in a rural area on unzoned lands. Section 11 of the said Plan sets out policies and objectives in relation to energy and telecommunications. In relation to telecommunications (Section 11.2) it notes the National Broadband Plan for Ireland 2012 and notes that in County Sligo, the entire rural area (outside towns and larger villages) represents the target for the National Broadband Plan and its updated intervention strategy.
- 6.1.2. Section 11.2.2 relates to mobile telephony infrastructure. The importance of such infrastructure is noted. It is noted that due to the design and scale telecommunication structures can have a significant visual impact on the landscape both urban and rural. The Council will ensure that all new support structures meet co-location or clustering requirements of the Guidelines.
- 6.1.3. In terms of policies P-TEL-1 seeks to protect areas of significant landscape importance from the visual intrusion of large-scale telecommunications infrastructure.

- 6.1.4. P-TEL-2 seeks to ensure that telecommunications infrastructure is subject to compliance with the Habitats Directive and is adequately screened, integrated and landscaped so as to minimise any adverse visual impacts.
- 6.1.5. Section 13.9.4 sets out development management objectives in relation to telecommunication structures. It is stated that telecommunication masts, access roads and associated powerlines will be assessed with regard to siting and design, safety and the mitigation of intrusive impacts. The following standards will apply.
- (a) Masts will not generally be permitted in designated sensitive rural landscapes, visually vulnerable areas, pNHAs, SPAs, SACs or adjacent to scenic routes.
 - (b) Masts shall be designed and located so as to cause minimum impact on the landscape and where possible should be screened by forest plantations.
 - (c) Operators should seek to co-locate their services by sharing a single mast or if necessary locating additional mast in a cluster form.
 - (d) In the event of the discontinuance of any mast installations, the mast and associated equipment shall be removed from the site and the land restored in its original condition.
- 6.1.6. Section 7 of the development plan relates to heritage and Section 7.4 specifically relates to landscape character.
- 6.1.7. P-LCAP-1 seeks to protect the physical landscape, visual and scenic character of County Sligo and seek to preserve the County's landscape character. Planning applications that have the potential to impact significantly and adversely upon landscape character, especially in sensitive rural landscapes, visually vulnerable areas and along scenic routes, may be required to be accompanied by a visual impact assessment using agreed and appropriate viewing points and methods for the assessment.
- 6.1.8. P-LCAP-2 discourage any developments that would be detrimental to the unique visual character of designated visually vulnerable areas.
- 6.1.9. P-LCAP-3 preserve the scenic views listed in Appendix F and the distinctive visual character of scenic routes by controlling development along such routes and other roads while facilitating developments that may be tied to a specific location or to the

demonstrated needs of applicants to reside in a particular area. In all cases strict location siting and design criteria shall apply.

- 6.1.10. Appendix E lists scenic routes. In terms of national roads, the N59 from Dromore West to Beltra including views of the Atlantic Ocean and Ox Mountains are included as scenic view.
- 6.1.11. The site is located in an area designated as 'normal rural landscape'. However, the lands to the south of the site are designated as 'sensitive rural landscape' and there are a number of designated scenic routes to the east and west of the subject site.
- 6.1.12. The landscape characterisation map also notes that scenic routes or public roads from which the views and prospects to visually vulnerable features are to be preserved and that the environs of archaeological and historical sites are considered visually vulnerable areas.

6.2. Telecommunications Antenna and Support Structure – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (1996)

These guidelines set out the criteria for the assessment of telecommunications structures and relevant points as summarised below:

- An Authority should indicate any locations where telecommunications installations would not be favoured or where special conditions would apply. Such locations may include high amenity lands or sites beside schools (Section 3.2).
- In rural areas towers and masts can be placed in forestry plantations providing of course that the antenna are clear from obstructions (Section 4.3).
- Only as a last resort should freestanding masts be located within or the immediate surrounds of smaller towns and villages. If such location should become necessary, sites already developed for utility should be considered and masts and antenna should be designed and adopted for this specific location (Section 4.3).
- The sharing of installations and clustering of antenna is encouraged as co-location will reduce the visual impact on the landscape (Section 4.5).

6.3. Circular Letter PL07/12

- 6.3.1. This circular letter revises elements of the 1996 Guidelines. In particular Section 2.2 advises Planning Authorities to cease attaching time limiting conditions to telecommunications mast except in exceptional circumstances. Section 2.4 advises that the lodgement of a bond or cash deposit is no longer appropriate and advises that a condition be included stating that when the structure is no longer required, it should be demolished and removed from site and the site be reinstated at the operator's expense.

6.4. Natural Heritage Designations

- 6.4.1. The site is not located within or adjacent to a designated Natura 2000 site. The nearest Natura 2000 site is located 3.1 kilometres to the south-east. It is the Knockalongy and Knockachree Cliff SAC (Site Code: 001669). Ballisodare Bay SPA (Site Code: 004129) and Ballisodare SAC (Site Code: 000622) are located approximately 8.5 kilometres to the east of the site.
- 6.4.2. The Ox Mountains Bogs SAC (Site Code: 002006) are located at their closest point c.5 kilometres to the south and south-west of the subject site.

7.0 EIA Screening

Telecommunications mast is not a class of development for which EIA is required.

8.0 Grounds of Appeal

- 8.1. The decision of Sligo County Council was the subject of a first party appeal. The grounds of appeal are outlined below.
- The requirement for a new site at Doonflin Upper has been detailed in the technical justification report prepared by Villacon. There is currently a known coverage deficit in the wider Skreen area. The proposed 24 metres monopole structure will allow operators to bring a significant improvement in voice and broadband services to the area particularly along this section of the N59. All development along local roads including businesses, farms and residences would see a substantial improvement in telecommunication services. Both local and government policy and telecommunications infrastructure support

the continued investment in the infrastructure that is required to compete in a digital economy. Total mobile data traffic has grown 4,000 fold over the previous 10 years. The grounds of appeal go on to outline the various benefits that would be derived from a upgrade in broadband and telecommunication infrastructure.

- It is noted that the planner's report acknowledges the technical justification submitted as part of the application and acknowledges that the proposed development would be able to cover an existing blackspot in the Doonflin area.
- The applicant has engaged the services of ACP Consultants to undertake an independent visual impact report. This report is attached to the appeal submission. It acknowledges that from selected viewpoints there will be some change as a result of the proposed development and these changes range from 'slight' to 'significant'. A total of 22 photomontages are submitted both depicting a 21 metre high monopole and a 24 metre high monopole. The identification and description of effects are assessed and described along the N59 scenic route the Sligo Way and various other scenic routes in the vicinity of the subject site. It is acknowledged that many of the selected viewpoints will experience some change as a result of the proposed development where the impact is deemed significant, it arises where receptors are affected at close range because of the new discordant elements implemented in the landscape. It notes that the Sligo Way (which runs approximately a kilometre to the south of the site) is not a designated scenic route but adjoins sensitive rural landscape of the Ox Mountains with views towards the visually vulnerable coastal area.

8.2. In order to reduce the potential visual impact Section 6 of the report sets out a series of mitigation measures which include:

- The planting of a belt of Ash trees.
- The planting of boundary fences.
- The materials and colours of the proposed monopole and antenna and associated buildings should be selected with reference to the palette found in the immediate environment or sky backdrop.

- The reduction in the height of the monopole from 24 metres to 21 metres and details of the proposed boundary treatment to be agreed. It is argued that with the incorporation of these mitigation measures the potential impact would be significantly reduced.
- The Photomontage booklet submitted with the appeal documentation depicts both a 24 m high pole and a 21 m high pole from a total of 22 vantage points in the vicinity.

9.0 Appeal Responses

- 9.1. Sligo County Council in a letter dated 26th February, 2021 stated it had no further comments to make with regard to the appeal.

10.0 Observations

- 10.1. One observation was submitted by the Doonflin-Grangebeg Community Group.

- 10.2. This observation raises a range of issues which are summarised below.

- It is stated with technical advances, the current system of telecommunication equipment could be obsolete relatively quickly. Notwithstanding the fact that the monopole may become obsolete, the full impact of the height of the monopole would remain against the backdrop of protected views of the Atlantic Ocean to the north and the Ox Mountains to the south.
- It is disputed that the preferred site at Doonflin Upper is the only site from which the dearth of coverage can be addressed (the observers do acknowledge that there is a dearth of coverage in the area). The applicants have provided no assessment of any alternative site that could potentially address the lack of coverage.
- The site is located in open unimpeded views of scenic panoramas as a backdrop, and therefore is totally unsuited for a telecommunication infrastructure development.
- It is not accepted that the vehicular access serving the site is safe notwithstanding the conclusions contained in the Area Engineer's/

Technician's report. It is contested that adequate sightlines can be achieved to the south due to the configuration of buildings. The access is located on a road with an 80 km/h speed limit which requires sight distances of 160 metres in both directions.

- Concern is expressed that the proposed development would significantly impact on the setting and character of the “mud and wood house” which is an excellent example and model for sustainable and energy efficient construction practices. The proposal also runs a series of workshops and is in itself a tourist attraction which provides great spinoffs for the local community.
- While the observation acknowledges that there is no right for private views to be protected, the proposed development will undoubtedly give rise to significant impacts in terms of visual amenity which in turn will damage residential amenity. The proposed monopole will also significantly damage local tourism in the area which is expanded in recent years through rural tourism, the Wild Atlantic Way and the mud and wood house. There are also a large number of archaeological sites in the vicinity which also attract tourism.
- The observation goes on to evaluate the visual impact assessment report submitted with the grounds of appeal. It is stated that the proposed mitigation measures will achieve nothing in terms of reducing the negative impact arising from the proposed development. It is noted that the visual impact assessment report did not include any views from the roads to the south of the site notwithstanding the fact that receptors along this road have a high sensitivity to the potential impacts.
- It is suggested that the proposed Ash trees to be planted would not screen the proposed structure in the short or medium term and would only screen the structure when it is in leaf during the summer months. The proposed boundary treatment will do little to reduce the visual impact. Nor will the reduction in the height of the monopole by 3 metres have any material impact in reducing the visual impact.
- It is on the above basis that An Bord Pleanála are requested to uphold the decision of Sligo County Council and refuse planning permission for the proposed development.

11.0 Planning Assessment

I have read the entire contents of the file, visited the subject site and its surroundings, have had particular regard to the Planning Authority's reason for refusal, the applicant's rebuttal of this reason, and the issues raised in the observation submitted. I consider the critical issues in determining the current application and appeal before the Board are as follows:

- Visual Impact
- Other Issues

11.1. Visual Impact

- 11.1.1. Sligo County Council issued notification to refuse planning permission for a single reason on the basis that the proposed development would form an obtrusive and incongruous feature on the landscape and would therefore seriously injure the visual amenity and scenic qualities of the area. The applicant in the appeal stated that there is inherent need for improved broadband telecommunications infrastructure in the general area and this is supported by the justification test submitted, which the Planning Authority acknowledged to be the case. The applicant also submitted a detailed set of photomontages depicting a 24-metre-high monopole and a 21-metre-high monopole. It is suggested that with the incorporation of mitigation measures, including the reduction in height of the monopole, appropriate planting and screening, and the incorporation of an appropriate palette of colours which blend into the surrounding environment, that the proposed development would be acceptable on the subject site and would not give rise to significant adverse visual amenity issues.
- 11.1.2. A critical issue in determining the current application and appeal before the Board relates to the nature of the receiving environment. While the subject site is located in an area identified as "normal rural landscape" within the Landscape Characterisation Map of the Sligo County Development Plan, the proposed development is located adjacent to a number of scenic routes and is located to the immediate north of a designated sensitive rural landscape. The N59 National Secondary Route is designated as scenic route. That section of the N59 in the vicinity of the subject site is in my opinion particularly sensitive being located in the vicinity of Augrigh Head to

the north and the Ox Mountains to the south. The area is characterised by flat open fields which gently undulate towards the coast to the north. Lands on the southern side of the N59 are more dramatic rising abruptly to the immediate south of the site towards the summit of Knockalongy in the Ox Mountains. The area is characterised by flat open fields with relatively low hedgerows interspersed with one-off predominantly single storey dwellings. There are few stands of trees in the vicinity and the area on the whole comprises of open agricultural grasslands with a limited capacity to absorb development.

- 11.1.3. With regard to the proposed mitigation measures, I consider that reducing the overall height of the structure by 3 metres will not have any significant or material effects in reducing the visual impact arising from the proposed development. I refer the Board to the photomontages submitted and on comparing the two sets of photomontages for both the 24 and 21 metre monopole, I consider that there is no discernible difference in terms of the overall visual impact. The provision of screening around the proposed monopole will not, in the short to medium term, have any discernible effect on reducing the visual impact as it will take many years or perhaps decades to substantially or completely screen the proposed monopole. By such time the infrastructure may in fact be obsolete.
- 11.1.4. The proposed colour scheme around the boundary fences and finished materials of the mast would in my view have a very modest effect in terms of reducing the visual impact. The fact that the pole is a relatively heavy and solid structure with the majority of antenna and dishes being located in the upper portion of the monopole will in my view exacerbate and accentuate the visual impact on such a sensitive landscape.
- 11.1.5. The proposed telecommunication mast is located between vantage points associated with both the Wild Atlantic Way to the north and the Sligo Way to the south and will be readily visible and discernible from both routes. The visual impact arising from the structure both looking northwards from the Sligo Way down towards the coastal area to the north and looking southwards from the N59 towards the ridgeline associated with the Ox Mountain makes the subject site especially sensitive in visual terms. On this basis I would agree with the Planning Authority that the visual impact arising from the proposed structure would be unacceptable and contrary to the landscape policies contained in Chapter 7 of the County Development Plan in

particular Policies P-LCAP-1 and P-LCAP-3 and would result in a development that would seriously injure the visual amenities and scenic qualities of the area. It would also be contrary to Policy P-TEL-1 which seeks to protect areas of significant landscape importance from the visual intrusion of large-scale telecommunications infrastructure. On this basis I consider that the decision of Sligo County Council in this instance should be upheld.

11.2. Other Issues

- 11.2.1. A number of other issues were raised in the observations submitted which are briefly commented upon below.
- 11.2.2. Much of the observation critiques many of the conclusions arrived at in the local authority planner's report. It is not proposed to critically assess all the conclusions reached in the local authority planner's report for the purposes of evaluating the current application and appeal before the Board. However, two pertinent issues are briefly commented upon which were raised in the observation.
- 11.2.3. In relation to road safety issues, I would agree with the observer's opinion that sightlines are somewhat restricted in a southerly direction at the access to the proposed telecommunication structures. However, I do not consider that restricted sightlines should be fatal to the overall application on the basis that the proposed telecommunication mast is unlikely to generate significant trip generation during the operational phase. Any issues regarding construction could be appropriately managed by way of a construction traffic management plan to ensure that vehicles travelling to and from the site during the construction phase are appropriately monitored so that they do not constitute a traffic hazard or road safety risk.
- 11.2.4. With regard to the potential impact of the proposal on tourism and in particular the impact on the setting and context of the mud and wood house which is located on the western side of the local road approximately 140 metres from the subject site I would note the following. While direct views from the house of the telecommunication mast would be afforded to occupants of the house, I consider that the telecommunication mast is sufficiently far removed from the house to ensure that the context and setting of the house is not unduly adversely affected. Direct views of the telecommunications structure would be available to the occupants of the dwelling when looking in an easterly direction from the rooms along the eastern elevation of

the site. This in itself does not in my opinion justify a refusal of planning permission. To suggest that any view of a telecommunication mast from the private dwelling would be unacceptable in residential amenity terms would significantly and severely restrict potential sites for such necessary infrastructure. The key consideration in determining the visual impact arising from the proposed structure relates to the impact of the proposal on designated scenic views and prospects contained in the development plan and the site's location in the context of the sensitive rural landscape to the south of the site associated with the Ox Mountains.

12.0 Appropriate Assessment

Having regard to the minor nature of the proposed development in terms of construction works and land disturbance during the construction phase together with the separation distance and absence of any direct pathway to any of the Natura 2000 sites located in the vicinity, it is considered that no appropriate assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

13.0 Conclusions and Recommendation

Arising from my assessment above I consider that the Board should uphold the decision of Sligo County Council in this instance and refuse planning permission for the reasons set out below.

14.0 Reasons and Considerations

The proposed development is located within an area surrounded by sensitive rural landscapes and is located within the vicinity of designated scenic routes as identified in the Landscape Characterisation Map of the Sligo County Development Plan 2017 – 2023. It is the policy of Sligo County Council as per Policy P-TEL-1 to protect areas of significant landscape importance from the visual intrusion of largescale telecommunications infrastructure. This policy is considered reasonable. The proposed development by virtue of its siting in the vicinity of the N59 National Secondary Route which is a designated scenic route and its location to the immediate north of a designated sensitive rural landscape associated with the Ox Mountains, it is considered that the proposed structure would constitute an obtrusive and incongruous form of development which would seriously injure the visual amenity of the area and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Paul Caprani,
Senior Planning Inspector.

28th April, 2021.