Inspector's Report

ABP-314597-22

Development	BusConnects Galway Cross-City Link Scheme
Location	Galway City
Planning Authority	Galway City Council
Applicant(s)	Galway City Council
Type of Application	Application under Section 51 (2) of the Roads Act 1993 as amended.
Submissions Third Parties	Refer to Appendix I
Prescribed Bodies	Refer to Appendix II
Date of Site Inspection	30th March 2023 & 2nd May 2024
Inspector	Sarah Lynch

Contents

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1. Galway City Council has submitted an application to the Board under Section 51 (2) of the Roads Act 1993 as amended. This report sets out an assessment of the application submitted by Galway City Council for the development of a sustainable transport scheme which provides for both cycle and bus priority measures over a distance of 6.7km from University Road in Galway to Dublin Road.

1.2. The proposed scheme is 1 of the 5 no. bus corridor schemes within Galway City under the Cross City scheme and has been retitled BusConnects and is accompanied by a Compulsory Purchase Order reference ABP 314654-22. The objectives of the schemes are to:

- Enhance the capacity and potential of the public transport system by improving bus speeds, reliability and punctuality.
- Enhance the potential for cycling by providing safe infrastructure, segregated from general traffic wherever practicable.
- Support the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, supporting the achievement of Ireland's emission reduction targets.
- Enable compact growth, regeneration opportunities and more effective use of land in Dublin.
- Improve accessibility to jobs, education, and other social and economic opportunities; and
- Ensure that the public realm is carefully considered in the design and development of the transport infrastructure and seek to enhance key urban focal points where appropriate and feasible.

1.3. Pre-application discussions were undertaken by the applicant with the Board in accordance with Section 51A of the Roads Act 1993 as amended, which provides for consultations with An Bord Pleanála before making an application under Section 51. Four Consultation Meetings were held on 21st April, 2021, 20th May, 2021, 10th June, 2021, and 29th June, 2021. A determination in relation to whether the project is

strategic infrastructure or not is not required under this Act. The pre application discussions were closed on the 12th August 2021.

1.4. The Application is accompanied by an EIAR and a NIS. No Oral Hearing was held in relation to the application as per the Boards Direction dated 18th May 2023.

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1. The Proposed Scheme begins on R863 University Road at the intersection of R864 Newcastle Road. It proceeds along R863 University Road, across the Salmon Weir Bridge before continuing on R863 St Francis Street/Eglinton Street, from the intersection with the R866 St Vincent's Avenue. The Proposed Scheme continues around the north and east perimeter of Eyre Square (R863/R336) and on to R336/R339 Forster Street, R339 College Road and the junction with Lough Atalia Road. The Scheme continues on R339 College Road to Moneenageisha junction and terminates on R338 Dublin Road immediately prior to the entrance to the Woodlands Campus for Brothers of Charity.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1. The proposed scheme submitted under this application will provide for a Cross City Link (University Road to Dublin Road) scheme which has an overall combined length of approximately 6.7km and is routed along the University Road, St. Vincent's Avenue, St. Francis Street, Eglinton Street, Eyre Square, Forster Street, College Road and Dublin Road and also encompasses numerous roads within the city centre including Fairgreen Road, Bothar Uí Eithir, Prospect Hill, Bothar na mBan, St. Brendan's Avenue, Headford Road, Dyke Road, Woodquay, Daly's Place, Merchants Road, Forthill Street, Queen Street and Dock Road.

3.2. Specific works proposed within the development include the following:

- 3km (two way) of bus priority infrastructures and traffic management.
- 3.7km (two way) of street infrastructure and traffic management.
- 1.2km (total both directions) of cycling infrastructure.

- Provision of new /refurbished pedestrian facilities and footpaths along the scheme and associated ancillary works.
- Provision of 11 new / amended traffic signal-controlled junctions.
- Provision of 19 new / amended controlled pedestrian crossings.
- Provision of 29 new / refurbished raised table side entry facilities.
- Provision of 9 new / refurbished raised table junction / crossings.
- Reconfiguration of existing and new bus stops resulting in 26 number bus stop facilities.
- Reconfiguration of existing and new coach parking bays resulting in 18 number coach parking / set down bays.
- Public Realm works including landscaping, planting, street furniture, street lighting, retaining walls, boundary walls and sustainable urban drainage (SUDs) measures.
- Roads associated earth works including excavation of unacceptable material, importation of material, temporary storage of materials.
- Provision of road pavement, signing, lining and ancillary works.
- Provision of new and diverted drainage infrastructure.
- Diversion of utilities and services including associated ancillary works and,
- Construction of accommodation works including boundary treatment and ancillary grading and landscaping works together will all ancillary and consequential works associated therewith.

4.0 Submissions

4.1. Prescribed Bodies

Prescribed Bodies

1. **An Taisce**
   - Welcome the intent of BusConnects

- Cycling should become before mechanised travel this is not reflected in BusConnects.
- Scheme will lead to higher car usage on College Road and University Road, all on street parking should be converted to bus lanes on these roads.
- Galway Docks should be included in the scheme, with on street parking on Dock Street/R336 from St. Nicholas Street to New Dock Street being converted to outgoing bus lane.
- University College Galway Hospital should have been included with a plan to route buses through Hospital to Seamus Quirke Rd.

Response from Galway City Council

- In terms of how to practically make provision for this, the National Cycle Manual (Section 1.7.3) also sets out a hierarchy of provision for designers to consider when designing for cyclists. The first two steps in this hierarchy are traffic reduction and traffic calming, with the provision of cycle lanes and cycle tracks being number 5 in the hierarchy.
- 30Kmph speed limits have been recently agreed at Council and will be introduced. Cycle lanes are not to be provided on all streets and it is not practically possible to provide segregated cycle lanes on all streets.
- In relation to alternatives a detailed Options Assessment process and report was undertaken for the entire scheme, whereby alternative options were assessed on a section-by-section basis across the Proposed Scheme in order to determine the preferred option for each section.
- Galway City Council does not agree with the suggestion that the proposed scheme will lead to higher private car usage on College Road and University Road. The Proposed Scheme includes the provision of a bus-gate over the Salmon Weir Bridge and College Road. These bus gates will effectively remove through traffic on both of these roads (with the exception of buses, taxis and emergency services). The removal of

through traffic will result in lower traffic volumes on both University Road and College Road.

- The University Road / Newcastle Road junction was chosen as the extremity of the scheme to the west due to this being the location where all five GTS bus routes converge onto a single corridor, as well as representing a logical start point for the Cross-City Link. A future scheme is proposed to address connectivity from University Road to the Seamus Quirke Road, potentially via University Hospital Galway.

2. **DAU**

- The department recognises the assessment of archaeology within the EIAR submitted and recommends conditions.
- The EIAR and NIS has been reviewed and it is recommended that all mitigation measures within should be complied with.
- Insufficient information in relation to Bats.
- LED white lighting can be more harmful to insect populations. Lights should only be directed where needed and warm light bulbs should be used. Controls should be in built to lighting to allow cut off and dimming.
- In terms of built heritage, it is suggested that the information is not of sufficient detail and concerns are raised in relation to the lack of oversight given the absence of a conservation officer within the Council.
- It is recommended that a conservation officer is engaged to oversee the implementation of the proposed works.
- Conditions in relation to built heritage are recommended.

Response:

- The EIAR states in Section 12.5.2.3 that all trees to be impacted are assigned as Category 4 status indicating no roost potential. Although it is proposed to remove 56 trees, 186 new trees will be planted. However, the applicant would accept a condition requiring a further visual inspection of all trees to be removed to confirm no change to initial inspection prior to commencement of the works.
- Any new lighting will be LED type which is directional and reduces light spill to the surrounding environment.

- It is proposed to plant 186 trees, with the removal of 56 trees. In addition, there will be a net gain in biodiversity with approximately 2,500m2 of vegetation gain including new proposed amenity grassland areas. Therefore the proposed development avoids a net loss of biodiversity.

3. North Western Regional Authority

- Policy RPO 3.6.7 Supports the development of both the Galway Ring Road and the Galway Transport Strategy.
- Section 6.3 of the RSES is relevant.
- Overall the RSES supports the proposed project.

4. Transport Infrastructure Ireland

- Capacity issues are noted at a number of national road junctions in the study area. The N6 will remain a strategic national road corridor in the Galway and the region pending provision of the N6 Galway ring road.
- Proposals to respond to capacity issues at the national road junctions should be identified within the updated Galway Transport Strategy.

Response:

No significant adverse impact on national road junctions will occur during the operational phase of the Proposed Scheme.

4.2. **Third Party Observations**

4.3. 20 third party submissions have been received. All submissions are summarised in Appendix 1 attached. Submissions raise issues in relation to a number of factors including the quality of infrastructure proposed for cyclists, changes to taxi rank at Eyre Square, loss of forecourt at the Circle K, traffic redistribution and impacts arising from noise during construction, changes to market stall area at Eyre Square, lack of consultation, impact to businesses, loss/alterations to loading bays, inadequate consideration of alternatives, impact on accessibility of city arising from changes to Salmon Weir Bridge, impact to Fairgreen Coach park in terms of access, impact of pedestrianisation to rear of Court House, antisocial behaviour arising from bus stops.

4.4. The Board should note that the Council's response to the submissions was recirculated for further comment to the third parties and a total of 11 responses were received. No new issues arose and many of the third-party submissions reiterated their original concerns.

4.5. The Council's response to these submissions is outlined and considered within the context of the report hereunder and in the interest of conciseness will not be repeated.

5. Shane Foran

- Oral Hearing requested; objector is a community representative who sits on the Transport Strategic Policy Committee of Galway City Council.
- The overall intent of the scheme is welcomed.
- Bus priority measures should be trialled.
- Cyclist will be impeded by nature of the design.
- Scheme does not address current barriers to cyclists an assessment report is submitted and the issues raised can be summarised as follows:
    - No way for cyclist coming from east to access the new cycle bridge at newtownsmith.
    - Cycle lanes are too narrow.
    - Mixed or shared cycle lanes should only be permitted where traffic is low.
    - DMURS is inaccurate in relation to the recommended lane widths in cities and towns.
    - National Cycle manual is incorrect in relation to the suitability of narrow lane widths in circumstances of higher traffic volumes.
    - Extensive paragraphs within the submission are dedicated to the acceptability of the proposed cycle widths.
    - Removing parking from university road will provide additional space for improved lane widths.
    - Relocate parking to Millenium park.
    - No formal provision of cycle access from north to south Eyre Square, where traffic is restricted, bicycles should retain access.

- No cycling provision in Forster St, this is unacceptable.
- A shared surface with traffic and advisory cycle lanes could be provided.
- College road bus gate will encourage cycling on the footpaths.
- Additional lands to be acquired on college road to facilitate cycle lane for outbound cyclists.
- Only two routes in approach to city from east. One-way streets for cycling are not suitable. Two way cycling on all streets should be provided.
- Due to access restrictions on surrounding routes, the Salmon Weir Bridge will not be utilised to the level expected.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. National Policy

5.2. 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.

5.3. 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.

National Development Plan 2021-2030

The NDP Review contains a range of investments and measures which will be implemented over the coming years to facilitate the transition to sustainable mobility. These measures include significant expansions to public transport options, including capacity enhancements on current assets and the creation of new public transport links.

The NDP recognises Busconnects as a Strategic Investment Priority within all five cities.

Over the next 10 years approximately €360 million per annum will be invested in walking and cycling infrastructure in cities, towns and villages across the country.

Transformed active travel and bus infrastructure and services in all five of Ireland's major cities is fundamental to achieving the overarching target of 500,000 additional active travel and public transport journeys by 2030. BusConnects will overhaul the current bus system in all five cities by implementing a network of 'next generation' bus corridors including segregated cycling facilities on the busiest routes to make journeys faster, predictable and reliable.

Over the lifetime of this NDP, there will be significant progress made on delivering BusConnects with the construction of Core Bus Corridors expected to be substantially complete in all five cities by 2030.

National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland, 2021

One of the key challenges identified within this document relates to transport and the ability to maintain existing transport infrastructure whilst ensuring resilience of the most strategically important parts of the network. Population projections are expected to increase into the future and a consistent issued identified within the five cities of Ireland is congestion. Given space constraints, urban congestion will primarily have to be addressed by encouraging modal shift to sustainable modes.

Within the cities, frequent and reliable public transport of sufficient capacity and high-quality active travel infrastructure can incentivise people to travel using sustainable modes rather than by car.

Bus Connects is identified as a project which will alleviate congestion and inefficiencies in the bus service. The revised NDP 2021- 2030 sets out details of a new National Active Travel Programme with funding of €360 million annually for the period from 2021 to 2025. A new National Cycling Strategy is to be developed by the end of 2022, and will map existing cycling infrastructure in both urban and rural areas to inform future planning and project delivery decisions in relation to active travel.

Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020 (EU Commission 2020)

The Smart and Mobility Strategy is part of the EU Green Deal and aims to reduce transport emissions by 90% until 2050. The Commission intends to adopt a

comprehensive strategy to meet this target and ensure that the EU transport sector is fit for a clean, digital and modern economy. Objectives include:

- increasing the uptake of zero-emission vehicles
- making sustainable alternative solutions available to the public & businesses
- supporting digitalisation & automation
- improving connectivity & access.

Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020

- This is a government document that was prepared in the context of unsustainable transport and travel trends in Ireland. The overall vision set out in this policy document is to achieve a sustainable transport system in Ireland by 2020.
- To achieve this the government set out 5 key goals
  - (i) to reduce overall travel demand,
  - (ii) to maximise the efficiency of the transport network,
  - (iii) to reduce reliance on fossil fuels,
  - (iv) to reduce transport emissions and
  - (v) to improve accessibility to transport.

To achieve these goals and to ensure that we have sustainable travel and transport by 2020, the Government sets targets, which include the following:

- 500,000 more people will take alternative means to commute to work to the extent that the total share of car commuting will drop from 65% to 45%
- Alternatives such as walking, cycling and public transport will be supported and provided to the extent that these will rise to 55% of total commuter journeys to work.

Climate Action Plan 2024

- The Climate Action Plan (CAP24) sets out a roadmap to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. CAP24 will also continue with the

implementation of carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were introduced under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021 and outlined in CAP23.

- BusConnects is identified as a key action to deliver abatement in transport for the period 2024-2025 and is specifically supported within the plan.

Permeability in Existing Urban Areas Best Practice Guide 2015

Among the priorities of the National Transport Authority (NTA) are to encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport and to ensure that transport considerations are fully addressed as part of land use planning. This guidance demonstrates how best to facilitate demand for walking and cycling in existing built-up areas.

Department of Transport National Sustainable Mobility Policy on 7th April 2022.

The plan, prepared by the Department of Transport, includes actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys.

- United Nations 2030 Agenda

European Green Deal (EDG) 2019

The European Commission has adopted a set of proposals such as making transport sustainable for all, to make the EU's climate, energy, transport and taxation policies fit for reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels.

5.4. **Regional**

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

5.5. 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,

5.6. 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.

5.7. **Local policy**

5.8. **Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029**

5.9. The BusConnects Programme is seen within the plan as a key part of Government policy to improve public transport and address climate change. Within the Galway City area, investment in bus infrastructure and services will be delivered through BusConnects and the relevant parts of the GTS.

- Section 2.4 Integrating Climate Action into the City Development Plan
    - 4. Sustainable Mobility and Transportation - Supports the delivery of public transport and sustainable mobility projects in the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) such as Cross City Link, Bus Connects and the National Greenway Network in the city.
- Policy 4.3 Public Transport - Support the implementation of Bus Connects Galway and the overall bus transport network which will include for a high frequency cross-city network of services and all associated infrastructural requirements, traffic management and priority arrangements.
- Policy 4.4 Sustainable Mobility - Walk and Cycle - Facilitate cycling on the proposed Bus Connects Galway Routes where appropriate including on the proposed Cross-City Link.
- Section 4.8 Specific Objectives Modal Change: Public Transport - Facilitate the delivery of the Bus Connects Programme serving the City and the MASP area by securing and maintaining any required route reservations.

5.10. **Galway Transport Strategy 2016**

5.11. The GTS sets out the actions and policy position for the development of sustainable transport infrastructure in Galway over a 20 year period and sets out a framework to deliver the projects in a phased manner. The Cross City link which forms part of the BusConnects routes are supported within this document.

- **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.

5.12. **Legislative Context**

5.13. Under Section 51(2) of the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended by Section 9(1)(e)(i) of the Roads Act, 2007), a road authority shall apply to the Board for the approval of a proposed road development and shall submit to the Board an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) in respect of the development. The proposed road development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it or approved it with modifications. The Board shall ensure that it has, or have access as necessary to, sufficient expertise to examine the EIAR.

5.14. Before approval of the proposed road development, consideration must be given to the EIAR, any additional information, any submissions made in relation to the likely effects on the environment of the proposed road development, and the report and any recommendation of the person conducting any inquiry. Taking into account the preceding, the Board shall reach a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed road development on the environment.

5.15. **Natural Heritage Designations**

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

5.16. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared with regard to the foregoing European Sites and has been submitted to the Board in respect of the proposed road development under Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

5.17. 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.

5.18. **EIA Screening**

5.19. Galway City Council has submitted to the Board the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) prepared in accordance with section 50 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended) and Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and Council, 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 in respect of the proposed road development.

6.0 Assessment

6.1. The proposed development as outlined above is essentially an upgrade to existing bus priority and cycle facilities and provide priority measures and new infrastructure in areas where there is none at present. It is intended that the improved infrastructure and reallocation of road space will result in significant journey time reliability and reduce traffic congestion within the city.

6.2. Throughout the Proposed Scheme cycle facilities will be substantially improved with segregated cycle tracks provided were possible and protected junctions with enhanced signalling for cyclists provided at junctions.

6.3. Pedestrian facilities will also be upgraded, and additional signalised crossings are to be provided. In addition, public realm works will be undertaken at key locations with higher quality materials, planting and street furniture provided to enhance the pedestrian's experience.

6.4. This application is accompanied by a separate Compulsory Purchase Order ref: ABP 314654-22 in which it is sought to acquire various sections of lands along the route. The majority of lands to be acquired relate to the accommodation of boundary setbacks to accommodate proposed cycle lanes or road widening.

6.5. Given the variety of issues raised within the submissions received, I will consider the issues raised on a themed basis within the relevant sections of the report hereunder. All submissions are summarised within appendix 1 and 2 below for ease of reference and the Council's response to submissions has been briefly summarised above also.

6.6. I have read the entire contents of the file including the EIAR, Planning Report and supporting documentation and the NIS all submitted with the application. I have visited the subject site and its surroundings. I have read in full the submissions submitted in respect of the application including the third-party submissions, the submissions from the Planning Authorities and the submissions from prescribed bodies. I consider the critical issues in determining the current application before the Board are as follows:

- Need for the development.
- Adequacy of Consultation.
- Project Design – Provision for buses, cyclists and pedestrians, Bus Gate.
- Residential Amenity
- Visual Impact
- Parking
- Property Devaluation
- Other issues raised in submissions.
- Appropriate Assessment.
- EIAR.

<u>Need for the development</u>

6.7. The proposed development is being developed in response to the need for a sustainable, reliable form of public transport along the main radial routes from the City Centre. Sustainable transport infrastructure is known to assist in creating more sustainable communities and healthier places to live and work while also stimulating our economic development and also contributes to enhanced health and well-being when delivered effectively.

6.8. According to the National Planning Framework, 2018, the population of the Galway City is forecast to increase by 50% by 2040 and this growth will have associated travel demands, placing added pressure on the transport system. Significant congestion already occurs within the city from private car dependence and intervention is therefore required to optimise road space and prioritise the movement of people over the movement of vehicles.

6.9. At present, the reliability and effectiveness of existing bus and cycle infrastructure within the city is compromised by a lack of bus lanes and segregated cycle tracks. Furthermore, existing bus lanes are often shared with parking and cyclists and are not always operational on a 24-hour basis.

6.10. As noted above, the overriding motivation for BusConnects is to reduce CO_2 emissions and this is critical from a global climatic perspective. The proposed scheme is specifically identified and supported within the Climate Action Plan 2024 and is seen as a key action under the major public transport infrastructure programme to deliver abatement in transport emissions. The scheme is also identified within the National Sustainable Mobility Policy document and the accompanying action plan as a key piece of infrastructure to be delivered to achieve reductions in emissions and provide for more efficient cities in terms of accessibility for all. The scheme is also seen as an economic driver within the cities which currently experience significant congestion and impediments to movement and accessibility.

6.11. At the local and shorter-term level, the issue of congestion is more obvious, and both congestion and CO_2 emissions are continuing to rise. Any further increases in traffic levels will see an exacerbation of congestion, CO_2 emissions and of all of the associated issues highlighted above. Private car dependence will worsen unless there is intervention to optimise road space and prioritise the movement of people over the movement of vehicles.

6.12. When examining the functionality and capacity of road space to facilitate the movement of people it is important to consider the capacity of the space and how to optimise it. It is estimated that approximately 80% of road/ street space is dedicated to the car. A car travelling at 50kph requires 70 times more space than a pedestrian or cyclist.

6.13. The prioritisation of buses over cars and the creation of more space for pedestrians and cyclists will therefore allow for increased people movement capacity along the core bus corridor. This is vital given the existing congestion and the forecasted growth in population, jobs and goods vehicle numbers by 2040. The proposed scheme is expected to see a reduction in car use along the route and an increase in cycling and walking in addition to an increase in bus use.

6.14. Having regard to the above, the proposed scheme is of critical importance to the transport network in Galway to facilitate the actual movement of people and this can only be achieved through a realistic modal shift from the private car to sustainable modes. The proposed scheme will therefore make a significant contribution to carbon reduction, the easing of congestion and the creation of more sustainable travel patterns for the growing population, therefore demonstrating a clear community need for the proposed scheme.

6.15. In terms of local transport need it is outlined by the applicant that bus priority infrastructure is currently provided along approximately 25% of the length of the route. The Proposed Scheme will facilitate 97% bus priority. This will improve journey times for bus, enhance its reliability and provide resilience to congestion.

6.16. With regard to cycling it is stated that segregated cycling facilities are currently provided along approximately 9% of the route of the Proposed Scheme. The remaining extents have no segregated cycle provision or cyclists must cycle on the bus lanes. The Proposed Scheme will increase to 78%. The improvements to cycle infrastructure will vastly improve the current offer to cyclists and by doing so will signficantly increase the modal share.

6.17. In terms of pedestrian infrastructure improvements, I note that signal crossings will increase by 62% from 77 to 125 as a result of the proposed scheme.

6.18. The proposed scheme, therefore, will deliver the physical infrastructure necessary to sustain the projected population growth along and within the area of the route. It will

also provide a more accessible public transport facility to the most vulnerable in society in a safe, well-lit and protected environment.

6.19. In overall conclusion, it is clear that there is an obvious community need and justification for the proposed scheme which has been clearly demonstrated from a population growth and congestion perspective and in the interests of land use and transport planning integration.

Adequacy of Consultation

6.20. A number of submissions raised concerns in relation to the quality of consultation carried out by the Council. I note the Council's response to such concerns and note that a comprehensive non-statutory pre-application consultation for the Proposed Scheme was carried out and is outlined in the Consultation Document submitted and is referred to within the documentation provided.

6.21. Whilst I acknowledge third parties' submissions in this regard, I have reviewed the file in relation to the Statutory obligations in relation to engagement of landowners and note that the Council has complied with its statutory obligations in relation to the notification of landowners in relation to the process and also advertised the process accordingly. I can therefore find no failure in relation to the Council's compliance with the relevant legislation in this regard.

Project Design

6.22. The overall objective of the scheme design is to provide improved, attractive and safe sustainable transport infrastructure from University Road cross city to the Dublin Road. The Proposed Scheme begins on R863 University Road at the intersection of R864 Newcastle Road. It proceeds along R863 University Road, across the Salmon Weir Bridge before continuing on R863 St Francis Street/Eglinton Street, from the intersection with the R866 St Vincent's Avenue.

6.23. The Proposed Scheme continues around the north and east perimeter of Eyre Square (R863/R336) and on to R336/R339 Forster Street, R339 College Road and the junction with Lough Atalia Road. The Scheme continues on R339 College Road to Moneenageisha junction and terminates on R338 Dublin Road immediately prior to the entrance to the Woodlands Campus for Brothers of Charity. This scheme provides continuous cycle and bus priority facilities from University Road to the Dublin Road, including pedestrian facility and public realm improvements.

6.24. It is important to note at the outset that whilst the applicant refers to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, 2019. The applicant also refers to a design document, called the Bus Connects Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet (BCPDGB) which has been developed as a tool for the design of the BusConnects scheme across Dublin City and has informed the design of the scheme where appropriate across Galway city. Whilst this is useful reference for the design justification of the proposed route, I note that, contrary to third party submissions, the design of the proposed route largely complies with the requirements of DMURS. Any non-compliance with DMURS in terms of lane widths or design will be examined in detail under the relevant heading below.

6.25. It is also important to note that the Cycle Design Manual 2023 has been issued since the submission of this application and I have had regard to this manual in the assessment of the proposed scheme.

6.26. At the outset it is important for the board to note that significant objection to the pedestrianisation of the area to the rear of the Court House was received, it is contended by the Court Service that this element of the proposed scheme would have significant impacts for the proper functioning of the court and would also result in potential security issues in relation to court staff and victims of crime. I have reviewed this section the development and note that the proposed pedestrianisation is not essential to the delivery of the proposed scheme, as such I recommend, should the board be minded to grant permission, to remove this element of the proposed scheme and to retain the current parking situation to the rear of the Court House. This can be adequately addressed by way of condition. The Board should note that the Council suggested this alteration within their response to submissions as a way of addressing the concerns of the Court in this regard.

Bus Stops

6.27. Three types of bus stop are proposed along the route as follows:

- **Island Bus Stops** – bus stops whereby cycle lanes pass behind the bus stop separating the bus stop area from the footpath. To prevent conflict with pedestrians, pedestrian priority crossings accompanied by on-call signals will be provided, with narrowing of the cycle track from 2.0m to 1.5m to prevent cyclists overtaking through the bus stop. Only 2 such bus stop types are proposed north of the Huntsman and west of Wellpark Shopping Centre.

- **Shared Bus Stop Landing Zone** - Where space constraints do not allow for an island bus stop, an option consisting of a shared bus stop landing zone is proposed. It is designed to reduce conflict between cyclists and stopping buses by ramping cyclists up to footpath level where they continue through the stop. The cycle track will also be narrowed when level to the footpath and tactile paving provided to prevent pedestrian/cyclist conflict. Only 1 share bus stop is proposed along the route which is north west of the G hotel.
- **Layby Bus Stop –** Bus stops which are indented off the bus lane allowing other buses to pass. These are used for buses with longer dwell times**.** Many layby bus stops are present along the proposed route.
- **In line Bus Stop -** Where there are no cycle tracks provided, Inline Bus Stops will be used, where the users departing the bus will exit straight onto the footway. A significant number of inline bus stops are present along the route.

6.28. **Bus priority measures** can be achieved by – dedicated lanes, bringing bus lane to junction stop and this means in some circumstances that left-turning traffic cannot use the bus lane at junctions and instead will be provided with a dedicated left-turn traffic signal phase for the turn movement off the general traffic lane or will be provided with a separate left-turning lane.

6.29. **Signal Controlled Priority** - An alternative measure for achieving bus priority at locations where the provision of bus lanes is not possible is the use of Signal Control Priority (SCP). SCP facilitates bus priority by using traffic signals to give buses priority ahead of general traffic on sections of a route with significant physical constraints or pinch-points impacting on the provision of a bus lane. It works through the use of traffic signal controls (typically at junctions) where the bus lane and general traffic lane must merge ahead and share the road space for a short distance until the bus lane recommences downstream. The general traffic will be stopped at the signal to allow the bus pass through the narrow section first.

6.30. **Bus Gates** - A Bus Gate is a sign-posted short length of stand-alone bus lane. This short length of road is restricted exclusively to buses, taxis, cyclists and emergency vehicles. It facilitates bus priority by removing general through-traffic along the overall road where the Bus Gate is located. General traffic is directed by signage to divert

towards other roads before it arrives at the Bus Gate. Bus Gates will be in place for specified hours during the day at the following locations:

- Bus Gate to be provided on R339 College Road (between City Hall and R339 Forster Street
- At the Moneenageisha Junction a bus gate is proposed on the inbound bus lane to provide priority for buses entering the junction.
- Salmon Weir Bridge will be closed to general traffic between the entrance to Fisheries Field and Galway Courthouse. Operating 07:00 – 19:00

Concerns raised in relation to Bus infrastructure and stop locations.

6.31. It is clear from the submissions received that there are concerns in relation to bus infrastructure, such as accessibility of bus stops for wheelchair users. Antisocial behaviour at bus shelters (University Road, Westbound stop in particular) and the potential for impacts to accessibility of entrances are also raised as concerns.

6.32. In relation to the accessibility of bus stops for the mobility impaired I note that the applicant states that bus stops have been designed in an accessible manner for this group. Submissions raise concerns about the absence of a Disability Audit and I note the Council's response in this regard in which it is stated that the Design Team have spent time reviewing and amending the proposed scheme from the perspective or all road users, including disabled road users, it is also intended to develop all details of the scheme to incorporate dropped kerbs, tactile paving, crossing points and street furniture de-cluttering. Furthermore, a full audit will be undertaken based on the final materials proposed for the scheme, prior to construction.

6.33. In relation to Bus islands, the Board should note that there are only 2 such stops proposed 30 metres from the Huntsman Inn and 80 metres west of Wellpark Shopping Centre. These types of stops are considered to reduce the potential for conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and stopping buses by deflecting cyclists behind the bus stop, thus creating an island area for boarding and alighting passengers. On approach to the bus stop island the cycle track is intentionally narrowed with yellow bar markings also used to promote a low-speed single file cycling arrangement on approach to the bus stop. A 1 in 1.5 typical cycle track deflection is implemented on the approach to the island to reduce speeds for cyclists on approach to the controlled pedestrian

crossing point on the island. To address the potential pedestrian/cyclist conflict, a pedestrian priority crossing point is provided for pedestrians accessing the bus stop island area.

6.34. Having reviewed the detailed design of the proposed island bus stop, I am satisfied that the applicant has had due regard to the requirements of the mobility impaired and has designed this infrastructure accordingly to meet the needs of not only the mobility impaired but also the visually impaired.

6.35. I note that there are no submissions from representative groups for either the visually impaired or mobility impaired to the scheme.

6.36. In relation to other bus stop types such as Shared Bus Stop Landing Zone, the Board should note that there are no submissions in relation to such bus stop types and I am satisfied that the applicant has had due regard to DMURS in the design of such a stop on the route as outlined above.

6.37. In a general sense, it is important to note that it is reasonable to expect that there will be instances whereby the optimal design cannot be achieved given that the proposed scheme is to be retrofitted into an existing urban fabric. The applicant, within the documentation, provides adequate justification for such reductions and has responded to these specific concerns within their response to the submissions as summarised above. Based on the information submitted and the context of the site I am satisfied that both the reduction in cycle lane width with behind the bus island is acceptable and adequately justified in the context of the overall scheme.

Access impacts

6.38. In relation to concerns raised in relation to bus stops and shelters impacting accessibility of existing entrances, I note that the applicant has responded to such concerns outlining the rationale for the selection of bus stops which is contained within the Preliminary Design Report. In response to concerns raised by third parties the applicant clarifies that the proposed bus stop will be a slim structure that will not impede visibility into and out of the adjacent properties. Based on the foregoing I am satisfied that the location of bus stops is acceptable.

Provision for cyclists

6.39. One of the objectives for the Proposed Scheme is to enhance the potential for cycling by providing safe infrastructure, segregated from general traffic wherever practicable.

6.40. New cycle tracks are to be provided along approximately 5.8km of the Proposed Scheme. At-grade cycle tracks will be provided as an alternative at locations whereby a no dig technique is required to protect trees. Slip kerbs will delineate cycle tracks in such instances.

6.41. In relation to the design of the proposed cycle lanes, I note that there are various arrangements including dual contraflow cycle lanes, segregated cycle lanes, shared lanes with buses and on road within parts of the city whereby speed limits are to be reduced to 30kmph.

6.42. I note from the National Cycle Manual that a lane width of 2 metres is preferred and allows for overtaking within cycle lanes and is the most appropriate minimum width for commuter routes. A number of concerns have been raised within submissions in particular that of Shane Foran, in relation to the overall provision of cycling infrastructure within the city. This submission refers to a number of streets within the city and suggests alternative measures to improve upon proposed cycling provisions. The Board should note section 2.20 of the applicant's response to submissions in which each street referred to within the submission is considered individually. In the interest of conciseness, I will not repeat the response to the submission but will consider the key aspects hereunder. Essentially this submission is dissatisfied with the width of cycle lanes to be provided at certain locations and suggests a number of measures such reducing footpath widths or removal of on street parking to accommodate increase cycle lane widths or to provide cycle lanes where shared surfaces are proposed.

6.43. Whilst I note that there are areas in which cycle lanes of 2 metres wide are not proposed and as mentioned above there are areas whereby cyclists will merge with general traffic, I recognise that the delivery of a 2.0m+ wide cycle track may not always be practicable given the constraints of retrofitting active travel infrastructure into a medieval city. Whilst the applicant has attempted to provide wider cycle lanes where possible I note that cycle track widths have also been reduced to typically 1.8m or 1.5m wide in some instances. This includes cycle lane widths which are reduced on approach to bus stops in order to reduce cyclist speeds at these locations.

6.44. The reduction in speed limits to 30kmph in areas where cyclists will also utilise the main carriageway is an accepted measure within guidance documents referenced above. In order to accord with the order of priority, measures which relate to the reduction in footpath widths are not acceptable and I note the applicant has stated this within their response to the submissions.

6.45. Overall, the removal of general traffic from some streets such as Eglinton Street and Forster Street will provide opportunities for significantly improved pedestrian facilities which will improve the experience of these streets and encourage increased footfall to businesses along them. I am satisfied that based on the provisions of DMURS and the National Cycle Manual that the design approach to such streets whereby the pedestrian is prioritised, and cyclists merger with bus lanes in a low speed environment, is acceptable and in accordance with the provisions of these documents.

6.46. Given the nature of the scheme and the location and reduction in traffic speeds I consider the provision of a mix of on road and segregated cycle ways as described will be a significant improvement over the current situation. The proposed development will provide a safe facility for cyclists of all abilities to utilise and will undoubtedly increase the modal share in favour of cycling. As mentioned above and in response to submissions, it is reasonable to expect that it will not be possible to retrofit the optimal infrastructure design without considerable impact to existing properties at locations whereby the road width is narrow. I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately justified such reductions in design widths and consider the proposed approach to be acceptable and a proportionate design response to the constraints that the city and built environment give rise to. Whilst I there is a lack of cycle lanes in some locations, I am satisfied that the applicant has provided the best quality cycle infrastructure in accordance with the requirements of DMURS.

Junction Design for cyclist

6.47. Concerns are also raised within the submissions received in relation to the various junction designs proposed by the applicant. It is suggested within the submissions received that the Cyclops style junction would be a preferable design to be implemented within the proposed scheme. The third parties are concerned that junction designs as proposed have the potential to create conflict with cyclists and lead to collisions with both pedestrians and vehicles.

6.48. As mentioned above the applicants have prepared a Junction Design Report which is appended to the EIAR in which each design approach is outlined, in addition typical junction designs are also fully outlined and described within the project guidance document referred to as the BCPDGB. The applicant contends that due to the inherently complex nature of mixed mode movements at junctions, the provision for cyclists at junctions is a critical factor in managing conflict and providing safe junctions for all road users.

6.49. It is important to note at the outset that the National Cycle Manual have been considered and has informed the design principles for the junctions proposed.

6.50. Given that no two junctions are the same within the proposed scheme the applicant contends that while layouts differ in terms of lanes, signals and crossings, the principles of safety and functionality contained within the NCM and DMURS are integral to each junction layout.

6.51. Overall, the proposed junction designs will ensure that pedestrian and cyclists safety is a priority whilst ensuring the free flow of buses and traffic along the route.

6.52. I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately justified the design approach and it is clear from the layout of the different types of junctions that there will be a significant improvement in terms of safety and accessibility for both cyclists and pedestrians. In addition, having a consistent design approach throughout the city will provide legibility within the streetscape for all users that is currently absent. A clear consistent approach to street and junction layouts will encourage people to interact with the landscape in the manner which is intended by the scheme. A recognisable junction layout removes uncertainty for users and can only improve safety in the longer term.

6.53. Having regard to the foregoing, I am satisfied that the proposed junction designs conform with the key sentiments of the National Cycle Manual and the requirements of DMURS in that the user hierarchy is pivotal to the design with pedestrians being served at the outset and cyclists followed by public transport. The proposed junctions along this route are restricted in widths and in many instances there is only one dedicated bus lane in one direction and there are instances whereby cyclists are not always protected by kerbs from main line traffic. As mentioned above this is as a result of space constraints. Overall, whilst I acknowledge that the proposed scheme does not propose a completely dedicated and separate bus lane in both directions for its

entirety and that cycle lanes are not at optimal widths or layouts for the entirety of the route, I acknowledge and am satisfied that the proposed development will be a significant improvement over the current bus and cycle infrastructure and will provide for a more efficient and safe experience for public transport users and cyclists along the route.

Provision for pedestrians

6.54. The proposed scheme provides segregated footpaths of 2 metres in width with a few exceptions. Pedestrian crossings will be simplified and shortened where possible, and straight crossings will be provided without staggers in median islands that require further waiting by pedestrians. At many existing junctions, pedestrian crossings are not currently available on all arms which requires pedestrians to go around the long way and to cross the junction in stages. In the Proposed Scheme, additional pedestrian crossings will be provided at all arms for more convenience and directness.

6.55. The Proposed Scheme will increase the number of controlled pedestrian crossings from 77-125. I note the improvements proposed and in the assessment of same I note the requirements of DMURS in relation to footpath widths and crossing design.

6.56. For the benefit of the Board the desired footpath width outlined in DMURS is 2 metres with a minimum of 1.8 metres. At specific pinch points Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach, defines acceptable minimum footpath widths as being 1.2m wide over a 2m length of path.

6.57. Pedestrian crossings are recommended to be provided to allow for a single, direct movement. To facilitate road users who cannot cross in a reasonable time, the desirable maximum crossing length without providing a refuge island is 19m. It is also recommended within DMURS that Build-outs should be used on approaches to junctions and pedestrian crossings in order to tighten corner radii, reinforce visibility splays and reduce crossing distances, this specification has been included within the junction designs outlined above.

Parking

6.58. Briefly I draw the Boards attention to the assessment of parking along the route which has been considered and examined in detail within the EIAR submitted and will in the interest of conciseness will not be repeated hereunder. This section of the report should therefore be read in conjunction with the EIAR section below. Nonetheless it is

important to note at this juncture that parking will be provided to service existing commercial units albeit relocated in some instance. The regularisation of parking at these locations will prevent the need to encroach onto the bus lane which is a current issue, and therefore protect the reliability of the service.

Residential Amenity.

6.59. Concerns are raised within the submissions in relation to antisocial behaviour at bus stops. In addition, general concerns are raised in relation to noise and pollution disturbance from additional buses along the route, these issues have been addressed within the EIAR section of this report and no significant impacts are expected in relation to air or noise pollution. In relation to anti-social behaviour at bus stops, it is of note that bus stops are present along the entirety of the route. Given that bus stops are already present along the scheme I am satisfied that the proposal will not introduce a new form of development or behaviour experience along the proposed route.

Visual Impact

6.60. As outlined above the proposed scheme is effectively the reallocation of road space with dedicated bus lanes and segregated cycle lanes for the full length. Works will include public realm upgrades in relation to footpath surface and alignment, supplementary planting and the realignment of and planting of central reservation areas along the route.

6.61. Upgraded junctions will provide for legible crossings for all modes and will be softened at all corners by the planting of trees, wild flowers or various grasses. The design of the overall scheme will provide a palate of consistent materials and finishes and a flow of green space along the full length of the route.

6.62. Currently, the route contains pockets of green spaces the overall landscape, particularly at junctions is dominated by hard landscaping and results in an uninviting harsh street appearance. I draw the Board's attention to Volume 3 – Figures of the EIAR in which the Landscaping general arrangement drawings are contained. Proposed landscaping along the route is clearly shown on these maps as are the trees etc to be removed.

6.63. It is evident that the landscaping and public realm proposals intend to soften the existing hard landscape with the use of edge planting, additional trees, pocket gardens

and green pockets at some junctions. Overall, the proposals provide for a more inviting space designed to cater for an improved pedestrian flow and environment.

6.64. Having regard to the plans submitted, I am satisfied that the proposal will have a positive impact to the landscape and to people's experience of the street. The softening of landscaping enhances the pedestrian and cyclist experience and has a positive impact on the perception of an area overall.

Property devaluation concerns

6.65. Third parties are concerned that the proposed scheme will devalue their properties. In general I note the Council's response to these contentions within the EIAR submitted with the planning application in which it is concluded that in overall terms the public realm improvements planned by the Council may lead to an increase in value of both residential and retail property prices, especially in the community centres along the corridors, with evidence showing that investing in public realm creates nicer places that are more desirable for people and business to locate in, thereby increasing the value of properties in the area.

Other Issues raised in submissions

Restricted Access to city due to closure of Salmon Weir Bridge

6.66. A number of submissions have raised concerns in relation to the proposed Salmon Weir Bridge bus gate and the impact that this traffic restriction will have on access and travel times into and out of the city. I note the Council's response in this regard in which it is acknowledged that the proposed works will increase the length of such journeys, the following example is used by the Council to demonstrate the proposed change:

> a journey from Woodquay to Galway Golf Club in Salthill is approximately 700m longer via the Wolfe Tone Bridge when compared to via the Salmon Weir Bridge.

6.67. I do not consider such a distance to be significant when travelling in a private car. The positive benefits in terms of increased public transport journey times and the overall reduction of general traffic along this route will significantly improve congestion within the city centre and provide for a more accessible route for active travel modes also. The Board should note that the Council has examined the capacity of all junctions that will receive redistributed traffic and includes reference to Browne Junction. No

significant impacts are expected at any of the junctions impacted by the proposed scheme.

6.68. Of significance to the Board are the submissions in relation to the closure of Waterside to traffic and the pedestrianisation of the area located to the rear of the Court House. A number of submissions have raised concerns in this regard, in particular the Court Service, in which concerns are raised in relation to security for court staff, judiciary and victims of crime. The rear of the Court House is used by such people for access to the Court and for the transportation of offenders.

6.69. The Board should note the Council's response to these matters in which it is stated that the omission of the pedestrianisation of this area would be acceptable to the Council in order to address the concerns raised. The retention of vehicle access to Waterside and the rear of the Courts would not have any impact to the delivery of the scheme objectives and would adequately address the concerns raised. Proposed amendments at this location are as follows:

- Waterside be retained to traffic, and the proposed pedestrian plaza to the rear of Galway Courthouse be removed from the scheme;
- The direction that traffic is permitted to travel on Waterside be reversed, from the Corrib House Tea Rooms to St. Vincent's Avenue at the rear of the courthouse;
- A contra-flow cycle track be provided along Waterside, from St. Vincent's Avenue to Courthouse Square;
- No alterations to the existing footpath and parking under the ownership of Galway Courthouse be proposed.

6.70. I am satisfied that such matters can be adequately addressed by way of condition should the Board be minded to grant permission.

6.71. In addition to the foregoing matter, it is of note that concerns are raised in relation to the removal of parking at the following locations Woodquay, Galway Cathedral, Gaol Road and Dyke Road. It is contended within the submissions that the removal of this parking will have a significant impact on residents, tourist and commuters.

6.72. I note that the proposed loss of parking will equate to 5% of the overall parking available for public use in the surrounding area. It is the policy of Galway City Council

to reduce on street parking within the city to provide additional road space for sustainable and active modes of transport and to improve public realm. Such provisions are contained within the Galway Transport Strategy and the current City Development Plan.

6.73. Thus, whilst I acknowledge that there will be a loss of parking which will undoubtedly cause a level of inconvenience to private car users, as mentioned above this loss will be minimal and will not significantly impact the level of available parking within the city and surrounding area. The proposed loss of parking, will, however, facilitate the delivery of significant public realm improvements particularly within the vicinity of the Cathedral whereby works will tie into the works completed with the construction of the pedestrian and cycle bridge and the Salmon Weir. The additional road space acquired from the loss of on street parking at the locations above will also facilitate the delivery of significant improvements to the public and active travel network across the city which will have a positive impact on residents in terms of emissions, reductions in noise on the route and improvements to the general environment. On balance whilst I acknowledge the inconvenience that the loss of parking will give rise to, I am satisfied that the delivery of a signficantly improved sustainable transport facility adequately justifies the need for the proposed loss.

<u>Fairgreen Coach Station impact on functionality of coach station</u>

6.74. The issues raised relate to the following issues:

- the lack of adequate information in relation to lands being acquired which has limited the objector's capacity to engage in the process,
- lack of traffic management plan,
- lack of final detailed design, scheme will have a severe impact on functionality of the Coach station,
- inappropriate positioning of the proposed pedestrian crossing adjacent to the exit route of the station.

6.75. In addition, the applicants are concerned that the proposed works would impact the accessibility of the entrance to the Coach station given that buses enter and leave this station on a regular basis over a 24hr period.

6.76. At the outset the Council state that the Coach station will be one of the main beneficiaries of the proposed scheme through the provision of bus priority infrastructure measures and traffic management restrictions which will improve accessibility, journey times and journey time reliability for buses to and through the city centre.

6.77. In response to concerns raised in relation to the lack of detail I refer the Board to Section 4.11 of the Preliminary Design Report and Section 5 of the EIAR which details the construction and typical details all aspects of the development. In addition, the Board should note that matters arising within this submission were discussed within the CPO Oral hearing and I refer the Board to ref: ABP-314654-22 in this regard. Having reviewed the forgoing and the general arrangement drawings submitted, I am satisfied that there is sufficient detail provided by the applicant to properly examine development at this location.

6.78. The duration of works and the method of construction in relation to the raised table at the Coach Station access were also discussed at length within the CPO Oral Hearing. It is clear that such works will be carried out in consultation with the owners and operators of the Coach station and will be completed incrementally at times of low activity to ensure that access to the station is not impeded. Based on the information submitted I am satisfied that such road improvement works are commonplace and the methodology proposed is reasonable and acceptable in this regard and will not unduly impact the operation of the Coach station.

6.79. Concerns were also raised in relation to the safety of a pedestrian crossing at the entrance to the Fairgreen Coach Station. The proximity of the crossing to the egress ramp was raised as being of particular concern to the station operators. The proposed crossing will be signal controlled, and I note that the Council states the that the crossing has been designed in order to avoid a conflict between exiting buses and waiting pedestrians. The use of a signalised crossing at this location will ensure that all road users come to a stop when pedestrians are utilising the crossing. I have reviewed the proposed location of the crossing and am satisfied that whilst it may stop buses coming out of the station, this is an inconvenience rather than an obvious safety issue as visibility of the crossing will be clear and unobstructed to coach drivers utilising the coach station access.

6.80. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed works will not impact or impede the operation of the coach station in any significant manner.

Cycle route and disabled parking

6.81. A number of issues were raised by the Galway City Commuting Network, the board should note that where issues are common across submissions such as those relating to bus stop access for people with disabilities or the visually impaired and the width of footpaths etc are raised these are dealt with under the relevant topic and will not be repeated. Issues raised within this submission which I will examine hereunder, relate to the loss of disabled parking at Woodquay, contra flow cycle lanes, cycle corridor through the city.

6.82. In response to the loss of disabled parking at Woodquay the Board should note that the Council confirms that two disabled spaces will be retained at this location.

6.83. In relation to the cycle corridor through the city I note that the submission refers to safety concerns in relation to cyclists which will be required to share surfaces with general traffic and buses. In response to these concerns, I note that speed limits within the city centre and along the Cross -City link will be reduced to 30kmph and that the proposed infrastructure provisions in terms of road space allocation is in line with the Galway Transport Strategy. The reduction of speed limits is a reserved function of the Local Authority and I note from the Council's response that it is the intention of the Council to have such measures in place prior to the opening of the proposed scheme.

6.84. Galway is a medieval city and as such has significant space constraints within the city area. Whilst I acknowledge that the design of the project in relation to cyclists could have gone further, I also recognise the need to maintain access and traffic flows within the city and to prevent any exacerbation of existing congestion which has a detrimental impact on the overall environment of the city. It is for this reason, that I consider the proposed cycle provisions to be acceptable and whilst I acknowledge the concerns raised within this submission, I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately complied with the design hierarchy set out within the National Cycle Manual.

Casual trading at Eyre Square

6.85. It is clear from the submissions received that there are concerns in relation to the removal of the trading area to the north of Eyre Square. I recognise that these trading stalls are an important service at this location and provide an important function to

maintaining the vitality of the area. In addition, I consider that such pockets of local traders in such locations provide an important attraction for tourists and are commonplace in cities and tourist locations across Europe.

6.86. Therefore, I consider it prudent to seek the retention of traders stall to the north of Eyre Square and whilst I acknowledge that a temporary relocation of these stalls will be required during the construction stage of the development it is important that they are relocated as soon as is practicable. Should the Board be minded to grant permission I recommend a condition is imposed which ensures the relocation of the existing trading area back to the same location following construction.

Olivia Heffernan loss of parking

6.87. Whilst the objection submitted relates in the main to the compulsory purchase of a section of the existing car parking area and is dealt with under the CPO report, I draw the Board's attention to the Council's response in this regard in which it is stated that the Galway City Council public carpark on College Road is located within 350m of the Bayview B&B and can be used as overflow parking for this business.

6.88. I further note that a reduction of 5 spaces is anticipated which will be adequately compensated for through the arbitration process.

6.89. In addition to the foregoing, I note that concerns were raised in relation to the proposed pedestrian crossing, and I further note that in response to the RSA concerns amendments were made to this crossing which relocated the crossing away from the B&B access. The proposed relocated pedestrian crossing will be approximately 5m north-west of its current position, in line with the proposed front boundary of Bayview B&B. The amended location addresses the concerns of the RSA and is now within an acceptable location which will not give rise to any traffic hazards.

Removal of taxi rank eyre square

6.90. It is proposed to alter the existing taxi rank arrangements at Eyre Square from one singular rank which is divided up into 3 sections to three distinct ranks. The Proposed Scheme would have three separate taxi ranks, one on Prospect Hill (comprising of three bays), one on Eyre Square East (comprising of 2 bays) and one on Eyre Square South (comprising of one bay). Combined, these three ranks will have capacity for approximately 26 taxis. Passengers will have a choice on which taxi rank to use, likely dependant on their proximity and/or destination.

6.91. The proposed layout is expected to result in a higher turnover of taxis which will result in a positive impact to taxi drivers. I consider the proposed amendments to be reasonable and unavoidable due to the proposed changes to remove a section of road located between Eyre Square North and Bank of Ireland, and the creation of an enhanced public realm plaza combined with the cul-de-sac of Prospect Hill at its interface with the Cross-City Link.

6.92. Such changes will prevent the snaking of taxis around Eyre Square and will provide users with the option of the closest rank to choose from.

Access to rear of 3 headford road

6.93. Submission relates to the access lane to the rear of 3 Headford Road, concerns relate to access, security and an increase in noise, loss of privacy etc. The Board should note that access to this lane way will be maintained and noise levels on St. Brendan Avenue are predicted to decrease. As no changes are proposed to the rear of this property, I am satisfied that there will not be any impacts to privacy and the development will not give rise to light pollution. Additional issues raised in this submission relate to parking and are considered within the relevant section of the EIAR hereunder, I refer the Board to same in this regard.

139 College Road

6.94. Development at this location will involve both temporary and permanent acquisitions to facilitate the widening of the road. Concerns are raised in relation to the design team, it is stated that the input is not consistent with the EIA Directive. This is considered within the EIAR section of this report hereunder and I can find no failure in the compliance of the EIAR with the EIA Directive in this regard. Additional queries in relation to the EIAR, alternative and consultations are considered within the EIAR and other relevant sections of this report, and will not be repeated, however I note that concerns are raised in relation to the Appropriate Assessment of the GTS. This is not a matter that the Board can adjudicate on, however it is important to state that the proposed scheme has been the subject of an Appropriate Assessment which has been examined in detail hereunder.

Yellow boxes at huntsman

6.95. It is requested within this submission that the existing yellow boxes are retained as part of the proposed scheme. The Board should note that it is proposed to retain the

yellow boxes and as such no change to the access arrangements at this location will arise.

6.96.

Access to Yeats college.

6.97. Concerns are raised in relation to the accessibility to the college car park. The Board should note the Council's response in this regard in which vehicular access to Yeats (and all other properties along College Road) would continue to be accessible by vehicles after the proposed bus gate is implemented. All vehicle access (with the exception of bus, taxi and emergency vehicles), would take place via the Lough Atalia Road end of College Road. The Proposed Scheme includes amendments to the College Road / Lough Atalia Road junction to ensure vehicle access and egress to College Road is continued. The proposed bus gate would remove all through traffic along College Road (except cyclists, bus, taxi and emergency services), with only local access traffic remaining on this street.

6.98. Improved bus infrastructure with a bus stop adjacent to the college is expected to encourage a modal shift at this location. I am satisfied based on the foregoing that the proposed alterations at this location will not impact the current access to this facility.

6.99. Overall, it is clear that the proposed scheme has been designed in a manner that is compliant with the overriding government policy, guidelines and the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 in relation to such infrastructure and the applicant has been mindful to provide detailed analysis of all aspects of the proposed scheme and appropriate justifications for the approaches taken.

6.100. I am satisfied that the proposed scheme will provide a high quality, reliable, safe and aesthetically pleasing multimodal transport corridor and will encourage a significant modal shift in favour of active and sustainable travel modes into and out of the city. Whilst I acknowledge all of the concerns raised by third parties I am satisfied that the applicant has provided clear, robust and detailed information in relation to the design and layout of the proposed scheme and has provided clear detailed and robust justifications for all aspects of the scheme and has clearly outlined how this scheme can contribute to the achievement of a low carbon society and economy through the sustainable movement of people into and out of the city. I am therefore satisfied that

the proposed development is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

6.101. It must be acknowledged that a significant number of issues have been raised which I have considered and endeavoured to examine throughout this report. It must also be acknowledged, as discussed throughout this report that there is significant difficulty in retrofitting sustainable and active travel infrastructure into a densely developed urban fabric and as a general comment it must be recognised and accepted that optimum design standards cannot always be met in such situations. Guidance such as DMURS accepts that such situations arise.

6.102. Therefore, in overall conclusion of this assessment I am satisfied that the proposed development whilst it does not provide optimal design specifications in all instances, does provide for signficantly improved public transport and active travel infrastructure and general public realm improvements. In addition to the foregoing and in the context of improvements in journey times, it is also important to acknowledge that whilst in some instances speed of journeys improve moderately, the improvements to public realm and the improved and enhanced experience of public transport and safety of active travel infrastructure is significant. The proposed scheme from a visual and circulation experience signficantly improves the general environment within and surrounding the scheme and will therefore provide a positive experience for residents and commuters in the area of the scheme. Such improvements are proven to be effective in the reduction in antisocial behaviour which has been the concern of many third parties along the route.

6.103. It is of further note that all issues have been considered and whilst not specifically referred to within this report are considered in the context of the scheme and appropriate conditions have been recommended where considered necessary.

7.0 **Appropriate Assessment**

7.1. Consideration of the Likely Significant Effects on a European Site

Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive

7.2. The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to appropriate assessment of a project under part XAB are considered fully in this section. The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

- The Natura Impact Statement
- Screening for appropriate assessment
- Appropriate assessment of implications of the proposed development on the integrity of each European site.

The Natura Impact Statement and Supplemental Information

7.3. The application is accompanied by an AA Screening report and an NIS (2022) which describes the proposed development, the project area and the surrounding area. The construction management plan is also a key document in terms of the implementation of mitigation measures.

7.4. All Ecology and Appropriate assessment related documents have been compiled by Ger O'Donohoe and informed by desk study including reference material from the NPWS website and data base and by field surveys.

7.5. A description of all baseline surveys is outlined within section 4.6 of the NIS. The following is a list of surveys undertaken:

7.6. Habitats, Flora and Fauna surveys (which included Otter), –were carried out in the years 2019-2022.

7.7. The desk study identified all hydrological crossing points within the footprint of the Proposed Scheme and identified five watercourses adjacent to the proposed works area travelling from west to east along University Road to Newtownsmith: the Eglinton Canal, the Gaol River, Persse's Distillery River (formerly called Mill Race), the Lower River Corrib and Friar's River (formerly called Waterside canal). The Eglinton Canal and Gaol River are not designated for nature conservation but both discharge to the River Corrib downstream.

7.8. Works in the vicinity of the Salmon Weir Bridge are considered in terms of proximity to the River Corrib. On the western side, the lower River Corrib is separated from Persse's Distillery River by an existing embankment. Similarly on the east, the Lower River Corrib is separated from Friar's River by an existing embankment. The watercourses are linked upstream and downstream. The main channel of the lower

River Corrib is designated as part of the Lough Corrib SAC (Site Code 000297) and c. 600 metres downstream of the Salmon Weir Bridge, on the south side of Wolf Tone Bridge, the river is designated as part of Galway Bay Complex SAC (Site Code 000268). Neither Persse's Distillery River nor Friar's River are designated for nature conservation, but both discharge to the lower River Corrib and thus the Lough Corrib SAC and the Galway Bay Complex SAC downstream of the proposed works locations.

7.9. There are no direct points of connectivity or pathways to European sites for the majority of works in the City centre sections of the proposed works areas.

7.10. At the junction of College Road and Lough Atalia Road a new attenuation tank and petrol interceptor will need to be installed. The discharge point comprises an artificial rock armour habitat at the boundary of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

7.11. The footprint area of a proposed outfall to Lough Atalia at Lough Atalia Playground was deemed suitable for wintering birds and surveyed in November 2021, January 2022 and March 2022.

7.12. Wintering bird species recorded at low tide at Lough Atalia in the vicinity of the proposed outfall at Lough Atalia Playground includes Mute swan (Cygnus olor)(12) and Wigeon (Anas penelope)(12) in January 2022, flocks of Black-headed gulls (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) +70 on 2 March 2022, small numbers of Teal (Anas crecca)(8) and Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus)(12), Redshank (Tringa totanus)(4) and occasional single Little Egret (Egretta garzetta).

7.13. Repeated fieldwork particularly in the vicinity of the eastern extent of Lough Atalia and specifically in relation to the areas of amenity grassland, has determined that these areas are of reduced value to Wintering birds due to the existing levels of human activity and preference for the intertidal and aquatic habitats of the lagoon itself. However, works at the intertidal site of the proposed outfall at Lough Atalia Playground have the potential to disturb wintering birds given, the quieter more secluded location of the proposed outfall.

7.14. A nesting raft at the western end of the Lough Atalia opposite the Galmont Hotel has recorded breeding pairs of Common Tern. The nearest raft is located c. 570m from the work area at Lough Atalia Playground.

7.15. The receiving environment is described in line with standard methodology (Fossitt 2000) and results of the field surveys are presented in NIS Section 3.2 and considered further in my assessment below.

7.16. There were no areas of non-native invasive plant species listed on the Third Schedule of the Birds and Habitats Regulations identified along or directly adjacent to the Proposed Scheme. One record of two relatively small bushes of Japanese Knotweed were recorded during habitat surveys located c.32m to the east of a proposed site compound at Galway Harbour Enterprise Park.

7.17. There are two known records of Japanese Knotweed currently undergoing treatment by GCC in close proximity to the Proposed Scheme.

7.18. No records of any Annex II plant species were recorded within the footprint of the Proposed Scheme during field surveys.

7.19. Otter have been recorded upstream of the Salmon Weir Bridge, and at Nimmo's Pier. Survey work undertaken for the Proposed Scheme did not reveal any signs of otter usage at the point of discharge at Lough Atalia. It is clear from the records that otters are commuting from the lower River near the Claddagh Basin along the mill races at Parkavara and Nuns Island to the Eglinton Canal and the upper River Corrib. Records of otter are identified on Figure 24 of the NIS submitted.

7.20. The Board should note that the proposed scheme will travel over the Lough Corrib SAC (over the Salmon Weir Bridge) and will travel parallel to Galway Bay Complex via College Road and the Dublin Road. Otter is a qualifying interest of both of these sites.

7.21. All trees within the project boundary were assessed for bat roost potential – there were no trees of the appropriate size and with sufficient gaps, cracks, crevices or holes to be used by bats.

7.22. Harbour/Common seal (Phoca vitulina) are regularly seen in the estuarine waters downstream of Wolf Tone Bridge in the estuarine environment of the river between the Claddagh Basin and the Spanish Parade embankment. The River Corrib is registered as a Salmonid Water and is an important river for Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey have been recorded in the river system but Sea lampreys are confined to below the Galway Regulating Weir.

7.23. The scientific assessment to inform AA is presented in section 3.2 of the NIS and in the documentation submitted to the Board as part of the application. The conservation objectives of the various qualifying interest features and special conservation interest species are listed. Impact pathways are identified and the assessment of likely significant effects which could give rise to adverse effects on site integrity presented in Section 3.5.

7.24. Mitigation measures are presented within section 3.6 of the NIS and are also detailed in full in the Construction Management Plan (CMP). An assessment of potential in-combination effects is presented in Section 9 of the NIS.

7.25. The NIS together with supplemental information concludes that, following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including the nature of the predicted effects from the proposed development, and mitigation measures to avoid such effects, that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects.

Adequacy of information submitted by the applicant.

7.26. Having reviewed the NIS and supplemental information that accompanies the application, I am satisfied that there is adequate information to undertake Screening and Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development on lands from University Road through the city centre to the Dublin Road via Collage Road and lands at the Galway Harbour area. I am satisfied that all possible European Sites that could in anyway be affected have been considered by the Applicant.

7.27. I am satisfied that all ecological survey work and reporting has been undertaken and prepared by a competent expert in line with best practice and scientific methods. Information on the competencies and professional memberships of the Ecologist are provided in the NIS. I am also satisfied that all potential impact mechanisms have been considered and appropriately assessed within the NIS document.

Screening for Appropriate Assessment

7.28. The first test of Article 6(3) is to establish if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects to a European site, in which case the development is 'screened in' for further detailed assessment- appropriate assessment (stage 2).

7.29. The screening assessment undertaken on behalf of the applicant referred to within the NIS document submitted concluded that the potential for significant effects could not be ruled out for **3 no. European Sites** within the Galway Bay and city area in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and thus the proposed development must proceed to (stage 2) Appropriate Assessment, and an NIS prepared to inform this stage.

7.30. Potential impacts and effects considered are presented in table 1.

Table 1. Summary of European Sites for which the likelihood of significant effects cannot be ruled out (Applicant).

Potential impacts and zone of influence of effects	**European sites within Zone of Influence**
Habitat loss and Fragmentation No European sites are at risk of direct habitat loss impacts.	**No,** There are no European sites at risk of habitat loss impacts associated with the Proposed Scheme
Habitat degradation/ effects on QI/SCI species as a result of hydrological impacts: Habitats and species downstream of the Proposed Scheme and the associated surface water drainage discharge points, and downstream of offsite wastewater treatment plants	**Yes,** There are European sites at risk of hydrological effects associated with the Proposed Scheme: Inner Galway Bay SPA Lough Corrib SAC Galway Bay Complex SAC
Habitat degradation as a result of hydrogeological impacts: Groundwater-dependant habitats, and the species those habitats support, in the local area that lie downgradient of the Proposed Scheme.	**No,** There are no European sites at risk of hydrogeological effects associated with the Proposed Scheme
Habitat degradation as a result of introducing/spreading non-native invasive species: Habitat areas within, adjacent to and potentially downstream of the Proposed Scheme	**No**, there are no invasive species within or directly adjacent to the proposed development site.
Air quality impacts Potentially up to 200m from the Proposed Scheme boundary:	**No** There are no European sites at risk of air quality effects associated with the Proposed Scheme.
Disturbance and displacement impacts: Potentially up to several hundred metres from the Proposed Scheme, dependent upon the predicted levels of noise,	**Yes** The Inner Galway Bay SPA, Lough Corrib SAC and Galway Complex

vibration and visual disturbance associated with the Proposed Scheme, taking into account the sensitivity of the qualifying interest species to disturbance effects	SAC are located directly adjacent to the proposed works, there is a potential for disturbance to occur in relation to noise arising from construction works along the route.

Screening Determination (recommendation)

7.31. Having regard to the information presented in the AA Screening Report, NIS, submissions, the 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 concur with the applicant's screening determination that there is potential for significant effects on the

- Inner Galway Bay SPA,
- Galway Complex SAC and,
- Lough Corrib SAC.

7.32. Given the hydrological connections and the potential relationship with all European sites within the zone of influence, and their conservation objectives, it is reasonable to conclude that there is a potential for impacts to arise in relation to habitat degradation and disturbance and displacement.

7.33. As screening is considered at pre-assessment stage, further analysis is required to determine the significance of such impacts and if appropriate, where any potential impacts are identified on the qualifying interests associated with natura 2000 sites, to apply any mitigation measures to exclude adverse effects. Therefore, the Inner Galway Bay SPA, Galway Complex SAC and, Lough Corrib SAC are brought forward for inclusion in the Stage 2 AA.

Appropriate Assessment (recommendation)

7.34. The following is an objective assessment of the implications of the proposal on the relevant conservation objectives of the European sites based on the scientific information provided by the applicant and taking into account expert opinion and submissions on nature conservation. It is based on an examination of all relevant documentation and submissions, analysis and evaluation of potential impacts, findings conclusions. A final determination will be made by the Board.

7.35. All aspects of the project which could result in significant effects are assessed and mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects on site integrity are examined and evaluated for effectiveness. I have relied on the following guidance:

- DoEHLG (2009). Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities. Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, National Parks and Wildlife Service. Dublin
- EC (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites. The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC
- EC (2021) Assessment of plans and projects in relation to Natura 2000 sites. Methodological guidance on Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EC.

Relevant European sites:

7.36. In the absence of mitigation or further detailed analysis, the potential for significant effects could not be excluded for:

- Inner Galway Bay SPA,
- Galway Complex SAC and,
- Lough Corrib SAC.

7.37. A description of the sites and their Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Interests/Special Conservation Interests, including relevant attributes and targets for these sites, are set out in the NIS in section 3.2.

7.38. I have also examined the Conservation Objectives Supporting Documents for these sites, available through the NPWS website (www.npws.ie).

7.39. Tables 2-8 below summarise the information considered for the Appropriate Assessment and site integrity test. I have taken this information from that provided by the applicant within the NIS. I expand on certain issues further in my report.

Table 2: AA summary matrix for Inner Galway Bay SAC

Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) **Detailed Conservation Objectives available: ConservationObjectives.rdl (npws.ie)**

Summary of Appropriate Assessment			
Special Conservation Interest (SCI)	**Conservation Objectives** **Targets and attributes (summary- inserted)**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures**
Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002] Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition in relation to population and distribution – Long term population stable or increasing, no significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas.	There is the potential for indirect effects on water quality which could affect the availability of prey species and from disturbance of birds during construction works.	Detailed pollution control measures to protect water quality are outlined within section 3.6 and include but are not limited to: Implementation of measures in CEMP, provision of buffers and exclusions zones, tool talks, emergency response plan, dust control, silt curtains and fences, avoidance of disturbance through timing of works. Works will also be avoided at times of spring tides at locations adjacent to Lough Atalia. Direct effects arising from disturbance will be avoided by timing of works.
Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]	No significant decline, human activities should not disturb, no significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas.		
Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]	Long term population stable or increasing, no significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas.		
Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069] Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149]	'As above'		

Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]			
Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]	No significant decline, in breeding abundance, productivity rate, distribution, Prey biomass, Human activity should not create disturbance at breeding site		
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less than the area of 13,267ha, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation		

Overall conclusion: Integrity test

The applicant determined that following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of this proposed development alone or in combination with other plans and projects will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for Inner Galway SPA. No wetland habitat loss will occur. Adverse effects from water contamination and sediment release can be effectively prevented by mitigation measures ensuring the protection of all watercourses and existing surface water pipes which drain directly into Galway Bay. No increase in existing runoff rates will occur and appropriate treatment will ensure runoff quality.

Based on the information submitted, surveys carried out analysis provided I am satisfied that no uncertainty remains.

The proposed development would not delay or prevent the attainment of the Conservation objectives of the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

Table 3: AA summary matrix for Galway Bay Complex SAC

Galway Bay Complex SAC 000268 **Detailed Conservation Objectives available: ConservationObjectives.rdl (npws.ie)**			
Summary of Appropriate Assessment			
Special Conservation Interest (SCI)	**Conservation Objectives** **Targets and attributes (summary- inserted)**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures**
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Galway Bay Complex SAC: The permanent habitat area is stable or increasing, Conserve the following community types in a natural condition: Intertidal sandy mud community complex; and Intertidal sand community complex.	There is the potential for indirect effects on water quality which could affect the availability of prey species and impact the restoration and/or maintenance of the condition of habitats within the site. Direct effects arising from disturbance may also occur in relation to Otter.	Detailed pollution control measures to protect water quality are outlined within section 3.6 and include but are not limited to: Implementation of measures in CEMP, provision of buffers and exclusions zones, tool talks, emergency response plan, dust control, silt curtains and fences, avoidance of disturbance through timing of works. Works will also be avoided at times of spring tides at locations adjacent to Lough Atalia
Coastal lagoons [1150]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Coastal lagoons in Galway Bay Complex SAC – Habitat - Area stable, subject to slight natural variation, Habitat distribution – no decline, Salinity regime - Median annual salinity and temporal variation within natural ranges, Hydrological regime - Annual water level fluctuations and minima within natural ranges, Barrier: connectivity between lagoon and sea - Appropriate hydrological connections between lagoons and sea, Water quality – annual mean ranges for Chlorophyll, Molybdate Reactive Phosphorus, Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen, Depth of macrophyte colonisation - Macrophyte colonisation to at least 2m depth, Typical plant species - Maintain number and extent of listed		

	lagoonal specialists, subject to natural variation, Typical animal species - Maintain listed lagoon specialists, subject to natural variation, Negative indicator species - Negative indicator species absent or under control		
Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Large shallow inlets and bays, Habitat Area - The permanent habitat area is stable or increasing, subject to natural processes. Community extent - Maintain the extent of the Zostera-dominated community complex and the maërl-dominated community, subject to natural processes. Community structure: Zostera density - Conserve the high quality of Zostera-dominated communities Community structure - Conserve the high quality of the maërl-dominated community Community distribution – conserve community types		
Reefs [1170]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs, Distribution, habitat area and community extent – stable or increasing and Maintain the extent of the Mytilus-dominated reef community. Community structure - Conserve the high quality of the Mytilus-dominated reef community Community structure - Conserve the following community types in a natural condition: Fucoiddominated community complex; Laminariadominated community complex; and Shallow sponge-dominated community complex		

Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks – Habitat Area and Distribution – stable or increasing. Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply - Maintain the natural circulation of sediment and organic matter, without any physical obstructions, Vegetation structure: zonation - Maintain range of coastal habitats including transitional zones, subject to natural processes including erosion and succession, Vegetation composition - Maintain the typical vegetated shingle flora including the range of sub-communities within the different zones, Vegetation composition: negative indicator species – less than 5% cover.		
Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	Maintain favourable condition		
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand Habitat & distribution – no decline- stable or increasing. Structure – sediment, creeks and pans, flood regime, vegetation – maintain and restore and maintain more than 90% of area outside of creeks vegetated. Prevent establishment of Cordgrass		
Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae.		

	Habitat, structure – increasing, maintaining, no decline, etc, as above		
Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi)	As above		
Turloughs [3180]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Turloughs – Habitat & Distribution – stable no decline Hydrological regime – maintain Appropriate soil type, nutrients& physical structure. Appropriate water quality, peat formation and vegetation		
Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands. Habitat area & Distribution – no decline. Juniper population size - At least 50 plants Formation & structure – exceeding 0.5 in height, 10% cone bearing, not more than 10% dead plants Composition – min of 10 species		
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia) Habitat & Distribution – stable no decline Vegetation – over 10% present, 30-70% of sward 5-40cm high, bracken not more than 5%, not more than 10% bare ground.		

Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae. Habitat & Distribution – stable no decline Hydrological regime – maintain Appropriate soil type, nutrients& physical structure. Appropriate water quality, peat formation and vegetation composition, structure and species.		
Alkaline fens [7230]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens As Above including: Vegetation composition - Maintain vegetation cover of typical species including brown mosses and vascular plants. Less than 10% native trees and shrubs. Drainage and bare ground less than 10%.		
Limestone pavements [8240]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition		
Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Otter. Habitat area, Distribution, couching sites, prey availability – no decline. Barriers to connectivity – no increase		

Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Habitat – not restricted Breeding, Moulting behaviour, Resting, – conserve sites Human behaviour should not disturb sites.		

Overall conclusion: Integrity test

The applicant determined that following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of this proposed development alone or in combination with other plans and projects will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for Galway Bay Complex SAC. Adverse effects from water contamination and sediment release can be effectively prevented by mitigation measures ensuring the protection of watercourses and existing surface water pipes which drain directly into Galway Bay. No increase in existing runoff rates will occur and appropriate treatment will ensure runoff quality.

Based on the information submitted, surveys carried out and analysis provided I am satisfied that no uncertainty remains.

The proposed development would not delay or prevent the attainment of the Conservation objectives of the Galway Bay Complex SAC.

Table 4: AA summary matrix for Lough Corrib SAC

Lough Corrib SAC 000297 **Detailed Conservation Objectives available: ConservationObjectives.rdl (npws.ie)**			
Summary of Appropriate Assessment			
Special Conservation Interest (SCI)	**Conservation Objectives** **Targets and attributes (summary- inserted)**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures**
Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters	Habitat area & Distribution – no decline. Typical Species – present in good condition Vegetation composition & distribution – present and in good condition.	There is the potential for indirect effects on water quality which could affect the availability of prey species and impact the restoration and/or maintenance of the	Detailed pollution control measures to protect water quality are outlined within section 3.6 and include but are not limited to:

with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130] Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]	Hydrological regime – appropriate Lake substratum quality – restore appropriate substratum type. Water quality: transparency, nutrients, phytoplankton, algal biomass - Restore Acidification status, turbidity, DOC, Water colour- restore/maintain Fringing habitat – maintain.	condition of habitats within the site. Direct effects arising from disturbance may also occur in relation to Otter. Potential for impacts to arise in relation to dust emissions at the River Corrib, which could impact prey availability in the area and degrade water quality.	Implementation of measures in CEMP, provision of buffers and exclusions zones, tool talks, emergency response plan, dust control, silt curtains and fences, avoidance of disturbance through timing of works. Works will also be avoided at times of spring tides at locations adjacent to Lough Atalia. Erection of dust barrier to protect River Corrib at the Salmon Weir Bridge for the length of the Scheme required to prevent emissions to Persse's Distillery river, the main channel of the river and Friar's River at Newtownsmith from the proposed disturbance area.
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]	As Above Including : Flooplain connectivity – active area to be maintained. Riparian habitat - Maintain the area and condition of fringing habitats necessary to support the habitat and its sub-types.		
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	Habitat area & Distribution – stable or increasing Vegetation composition – 7 positive indicator species & 2 high quality, not more than 20% cover or 10% of individual species. Cover - non-native species not more than 1%, <5% bracken, broad leaf – 40-90%, 30% sward 5-40cm tall, >25% litter cover and >10% bare soil, grazing & disturbance >20m^2.		
Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) Habitat – stable/increasing. Distribution – No decline Similar to above including: vegetation structure – of at least 30% of sward between 10cm and 80cm tall.		

Active raised bogs [7110]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Active raised bogs. Water quality, hydrological regime, vegetation – to restore. Local distinctiveness – maintain. Air quality – nitrogen >5kg		
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	Inherently linked to that of Active raised bogs (7110) and a separate conservation objective has not been set.		
Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	As Above		
Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]	Maintain condition. Habitat Area and distribution – stable increasing, no decline. Ecosystem function – appropriate hydrological regimes Vegetation – non-native >1%, native - >10%, bare ground >10%, area of drainage/trampling >10%.		
Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]	Maintain condition. Habitat Area and distribution – stable increasing, no decline. Hydrological regime – maintain, nitrate & phosphate >10mg/l & 15mg/l. Vegetation – 3 high indicators, height 10-50cm, no dominant cover.		
Alkaline fens [7230]	Maintain condition. Habitat Area and distribution – stable increasing, no decline. Ecosystem function – appropriate hydrological regimes Vegetation non-native >1%, scatter >10%, soft rush cover >10%, Proportion of live leaves and/or flowering shoots of vascular plants that are more than 5cm >50%, drainage >10%, disturbed >1%		

Limestone pavements [8240]	Maintain Condition Habitat - Stable or increasing. Distribution – no decline Vegetation - At least seven positive indicator species present, Bryophyte cover at least 50%, negative indicator species >1%, non-native >1%, scrub >25%, canopy >30%, bracken >10%, sufficient dead wood.		
Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]	Maintain Condition Habitat - Stable or increasing. Distribution – no decline Woodland structure – No decline, diverse structure, non-native to be kept under control.		
Bog woodland [91D0]	As above		
Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]	Distribution - Maintain at 9.1km Population size - Restore Owenriff population to at least one million adult mussels. Population structure: 20% >65mm in length, no decline Suitable habitat, water quality, substratum, hydrological regime – restore. Host fish, fringing habitat – maintain.		
Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]	Distribution – no reduction Population structure – eggs in all tributaries. No disease, water quality Q3/4, habitat quality – no decline.		
Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]	Distribution - Greater than 75% of main stem length of rivers. Population structure of juveniles - At least three age/size groups present, density 1.m^3 Extent and distribution of spawning habitat – no decline, More than 50% of sample sites		

Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]	positive, with a minimum of four positive sites in a catchment		
Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]	Distribution - 100% of river channels down to second order accessible from estuary Adult spawning fish - Conservation limit (CL) for each system consistently exceeded. Salmon fry abundance - Maintain or exceed 0+ fry mean catchment-wide abundance threshold value. Out-migrating smolt abundance- No significant decline.		
Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]	Restore the favourable conservation condition. Population per roost - Minimum number of 100 bats for summer roost. Summer roosts, auxillary roosts, Extent of potential foraging habitat – No decline. Linear features - No significant loss, within 2.5km of qualifying roosts. Light pollution - No significant increase in artificial light intensity adjacent to named roost or along commuting routes within 2.5km of the roost.		
Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	Distribution and habitat – no significant decline Couching, biomass – no decline Barriers – no significant increase.		
Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]	Restore the favourable conservation condition. Population extent, depth, viability, abundance, distribution, habitat extent, lake substratum, water quality, water colour, associated species – restore and maintain. Fringe habitat – maintain.		

Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216]	Maintain the favourable conservation condition. Distribution, population size, cover, area of suitable habitat – no decline. Hydrological conditions – maintain. Vegetation – trees >15%, shrub >20%, grass >25%, bryophyte<50%, Calliergonella cuspidata >15%, vegetation height >40cm.		

Overall conclusion: Integrity test

The applicant determined that following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of this proposed development alone or in combination with other plans and projects will not adversely affect the integrity of this European site.

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects can be excluded for Lough Corrib SAC. Adverse effects from water contamination and sediment release can be effectively prevented by mitigation measures ensuring the protection of all watercourses and existing surface water pipes which drain directly into Galway Bay. No increase in existing runoff rates will occur and appropriate treatment will ensure runoff quality.

Impacts arising from dust will be mitigated through the use of protective screening to prevent dust from entering the site.

Based on the information submitted, surveys carried out analysis provided I am satisfied that no uncertainty remains.

The proposed development would not delay or prevent the attainment of the Conservation objectives of the Lough Corrib SAC.

Potential for Adverse effects

7.40. As outlined above the potential for adverse effects relates to the changes to water quality arising from pollution and sedimentation of watercourses arising at various locations and associated with various operations during the construction of the development, deposition of dust during construction works which are located in close proximity to the Lough Corrib SAC and disturbance through noise and vibration during construction works.

7.41. I will examine the foregoing impacts hereunder, the Board should note that designated sites will be considered and grouped under each relevant heading in order to prevent repetition. Potential impacts to water quality relate to all sites listed above.

7.42. The Board should note that the only areas where the Proposed Scheme intersects directly with a European site boundary are at the Salmon Weir Bridge, at site of the proposed outfall at Lough Atalia playground and at the inner extent of Lough Atalia at the Dublin Road.

7.43. The Board should further note that the zone of influence in relation to noise, is within 300m of the proposed works. Effects arising from the construction would not be expected beyond 150m for mammals such as otter.

Habitat loss and fragmentation

Habitat degradation/effects on QI/SCI species as a result of hydrological impacts

7.44. The release of contaminated surface water runoff and / or an accidental spillage or pollution event into any surface water features during construction, or operation, has the potential to affect water quality in the receiving aquatic environment. Such a pollution event may include: the release of sediment into receiving waters and the subsequent increase in mobilised suspended solids; and, the accidental spillage and / or leaks of contaminants (into receiving waters). The associated effects of a reduction of surface water quality could potentially extend for a considerable distance downstream of the location of the accidental pollution event or the discharge.

7.45. The Proposed Scheme is hydrologically connected to the River Corrib SAC and the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA via surface water outfalls and by virtue of crossing over the River Corrib at the Salmon Weir Bridge. It is stated by the applicant that whilst it is unlikely to occur, this reduction in water quality (either alone or in combination with other pressures on water quality) could result in the degradation of sensitive habitats present within the aforementioned sites. These potential impacts could occur to such a degree that they result in significant effects which could have implications for the conservation objectives of these sites.

7.46. In Combination Effects

7.47. In combination effects are examined within section 3.7 of the NIS submitted. The proposed works were considered in combination with all plans and/or projects with the

potential to impact upon the European sites outlined above. 6 projects were identified within the vicinity of the proposed works in the assessment of cumulative impacts, all of which are relatively small, and all could be ruled out, however the requirement for construction management necessitated further assessment.

7.48. In addition to the foregoing, works within the foreshore were also examined and are outlined within section 3.7 also. Such works include site investigations for subsea fibre optic, deployment of swim buoys, solar array, roundabout upgrade works, N6 Galway City by pass and Salmon Weir Bridge works.

7.49. It is important to note that since the submission of the application the Climate Action Plan 2024 and the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 have been adopted. I have had regard to these plans for the purpose of assessing the potential for cumulative effects in relation to the proposed development and note that no new issues arise within the development plan that would have a materially different impact upon the cumulative impacts assessed by the applicant under the previous development plan. In addition, I have reviewed the Planning Register in relation to proposed developments since the lodgement of the application and am satisfied that there are no new applications which would materially impact the proposed scheme in terms of cumulative impacts.

7.50. Considering the environmental protection policies included within the relevant land use plans, the range of mitigation measures included in the Proposed Scheme to avoid significant impacts and that alone the Proposed Scheme will not adversely affect the integrity of any European sites, I am satisfied that the above projects and plans will not act in combination with the Proposed Scheme to have an adverse effect on the integrity of any European sites.

7.51. The in-combination assessment within Section 3.7 of the NIS submitted has concluded that there is no potential for adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites including those within its ZoI, to arise as a consequence of the Proposed Scheme in-combination with any other plans or projects.

7.52. Mitigation measures detailed in Section 3.6 of the NIS will ensure that no adverse effects on European sites integrity will arise from the implementation of the Proposed Scheme.

7.53. The implementation of, and adherence to, the policies and objectives of the relevant plans including the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 will ensure the protection of European sites across all identified potential impact pathways and will include the requirement for any future project to undergo Screening for Appropriate Assessment and/or Appropriate Assessment, as appropriate.

7.54. As the Proposed Scheme will not affect the integrity of European sites within the Zol of the Proposed Scheme, and given the protection afforded to European sites under the overarching land use plans, I am satisfied that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites to arise as a consequence of the Proposed Scheme acting in-combination with any other plans or projects.

7.55. Overall, I am satisfied that the NIS and supplementary information provided as part of the application has examined the potential for all impact mechanisms in terms of the conservation objectives of the Lough Corrib SAC, Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA. The potential for adverse effects can be effectively ameliorated by both design-based and applied mitigation measures related to surface water quality, dust, and noise and disturbance.

Mitigation Measures and Monitoring

7.56. A summary of mitigation measures is presented in the tables above. Full details are provided in the NIS and the Construction Management Plan and are summarised below. The Board should note that site specific mitigation measures are proposed in relation to works at the Salmon Weir Bridge, the Eglinton Canal at University Road/Wards Shop, Lough Atalia Playground outfall, and works at Dublin Road adjacent to Lough Atalia.

Salmon Weir Bridge

7.57. Provision of dust control barrier to prevent dust entering the River Corrib at the Salmon Weir Bridge for the length of the Scheme required to prevent emissions to Persse's Distillery river, the main channel of the river and Friar's River at Newtownsmith from the proposed disturbance area.

Eglinton Canal at University Road/Ward's Shop

7.58. Provision of a barrier to prevent surface water entering the Eglinton Canal at gaps in the boundary wall leading to the canal and for the length of canal required to prevent drainage to the canal from the proposed disturbance area. The barrier will comprise a silt curtain placed with sand bags or a suitable supporting frame.

Lough Atalia Playground Outfall

7.59. Works at this location will be carried out outside of the wintering bird season in order to avoid disturbance. In addition works will be time to avoid Spring Tides and surface water discharge will be controlled sand bag dam and silt curtain to prevent surface water entering Lough Atalia from the proposed trench at the outfall.

Lough Atalia adjacent to the Dublin Road

7.60. The works at the Lough Atalia Dublin Road area will be timed to avoid 'spring' high water times and inclement weather (southerly/south-westerly winds) in order to avoid washing of surface water to the sea. In addition, silt fences will be installed to prevent any sedimentation of the lough.

7.61. I consider that all measures proposed are implementable and will be effective in their stated aims. Furthermore, I recommend, should the Board be minded to grant permission that an Ecologist is employed to ensure that measures are implemented as prescribed. A summary of mitigation measures is presented in Table 10 below this list is not exhaustive and I refer the Board to the NIS for full details of the extensive list of mitigation measures proposed.

Table 10. Mitigation Measures

Measures to protect surface water quality and groundwater quality during construction:	Use of silt traps, silt fences, bunds for run off to collect in, good construction practice in relation to concrete use and wash out on site. The use of bunded areas, secured areas for hazardous materials, fuels, lubricants and use of spill kits. The use of onsite treatment for surface water runoff, use of settlement tanks/ponds and management of same. Monitoring of water bodies. Specific

	measures such as sandbags are proposed for works near to River Corrib and Lough Atalia. Works to be avoided during Spring Tides and inclement weather in the vicinity of Lough Atalia.
Measures to protect surface water quality during operation.	Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) including bioretention areas and filtration drains water butts and permeable paving.
Measures to prevent disturbance to overwintering birds.	Avoid works during over wintering season.
Measures to prevent dust impacts	The appointed contractor will provide a site hoarding of 2.4m height along boundaries where works are taking place adjacent to ecological sensitive receptors(Lough Atalia and Lough Corrib) and at the Harbour Construction Compounds, which will assist in minimising the potential for dust impacts off-site. Review and monitoring of dust emissions and river quality will be carried out throughout the construction process.

Appropriate Assessment Conclusion: Integrity Test

7.71. In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposal to develop a multimodal sustainable transport route had the potential to result in significant effects on Lough Corrib SAC, Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA and that Appropriate Assessment was required in view of the conservation objectives of those sites.

7.72. Following a detailed examination and evaluation of the NIS all associated material submitted with the application as relevant to the Appropriate Assessment process and taking into account submissions of third parties, I am satisfied that based on the design of the proposed development, combined with the proposed mitigation measures, adverse effects on the integrity of Lough Corrib SAC, Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA can be excluded with confidence in view of the conservation objectives of those sites.

My conclusion is based on the following:

- A detailed assessment of all aspects of the proposed development that could result in significant effects or adverse effects on European Sites within a zone of influence of the development site.
- Consideration of the conservation objectives and conservation status of qualifying interest species and habitats
- A full assessment of risks to special conservation interest bird species and qualifying interest habitats and species
- Complete and precise survey data and analysis of wintering birds. The proposed development site has been scientifically verified as not being of significance to or an area favoured by SCI bird species at any stage of the wintering or summer seasons.
- Application of mitigation measures designed to avoid adverse effects on site integrity and likely effectiveness of same.

7.73. The proposed development would not undermine the favourable conservation condition of any qualifying interest feature or delay the attainment of favourable conservation condition for any species or habitat qualifying interest for these European sites.

8.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

Introduction

8.1. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) which was prepared by an environmental team led by Arup on behalf of the

applicant. This EIA section of the report should, where appropriate, be read in conjunction with the relevant parts of the Planning Assessment above.

8.2. The application falls within the scope of the amending 2014 EIA Directive (Directive 2014/52/EU) on the basis that the application was lodged after the last date for transposition in May 2017. The application also falls within the scope of the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, as the application was lodged after these regulations come into effect on 1st September 2018.

8.3. The impact of the proposed development is addressed under all relevant headings with respect to the environmental factors listed in Article 3(1) of the 2014 EIA Directive. The EIAR sets out a case regarding the need for the development (Section 2.0). The EIAR provides detail with regard to the consideration of alternatives in Section 3. An overview of the main interactions is provided at Section 20. Details of the consultation entered into by the applicant with prescribed bodies as part of the preparation of the project are also set out in Section 1 of the EIAR and the Public Consultation Report 2020-2021 which is a separate document.

8.4. Article 3 (2) of the Directive requires the consideration of the effects deriving from the vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and / or disasters that are relevant to the project concerned. The potential for 'unplanned events' is addressed in Section 19 of the EIAR.

8.5. The potential for 'flooding' is considered in Section 13 which relates to the Water Environment. I consider that the requirement to consider these factors under Article 3(2) is met.

8.6. In terms of the content and scope of the EIAR, the information contained in the EIAR generally complies with Article 94 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, (as amended), all studies informing the EIAR are up to date and recently acquired. Additional pre-construction surveys will be required in order to provide up to date information in relation to invasive species, mammals, bats and birds, however such issues can be adequately dealt with by condition.

8.7. It is important to note at the outset that the proposed development under consideration within this application does not cross international boundaries. Thus, there are no transboundary effects.

Alternatives

8.8. I note reference is made within the submissions received to a lack of consideration to alternative options for the proposed scheme. The consideration of Alternatives is documented within Section 3 of the EIAR submitted. I note that alternatives were considered at three levels, strategic alternatives, route alternatives and design alternatives.

8.9. In order to identify solutions analysis of the current situation was undertaken. The applicant states that currently, the bus network is characterised by discontinuity, whereby buses on routes have very limited dedicated bus lanes and / or supporting priority measures. This means that for most of the journey, buses and cyclists are competing for space with general traffic and are negatively affected by congestion. This results in delayed buses, unreliable journey times for passengers and safety risk for cyclist. The impact of congestion is clearly demonstrated in bus journey times whereby 1 in 4 buses take approximately an hour or more to complete a scheduled 25- minute journey in the evening peak hour.

Light Rail

8.10. It is stated that the appropriate type of public transport provision in any particular case is predominately determined by the likely quantum of passenger demand along the particular public transport route. With this in mind the applicant considered the option of constructing a light rail service which would cater for a passenger demand of between 3,500 and 7,000 per hour per direction (inbound and outbound journeys). Based on the number of passengers predicted to use the new service, it was considered that there would be insufficient demand to justify a light rail option. The light rail option would also require significantly more land take, necessitating the demolition of properties.

Demand Management

8.11. Demand management in the form of restricting car movement or car access through regulatory signage and access prohibitions, to parking restrictions and fiscal measures (such as tolls, road pricing, congestion charging, fuel/vehicle surcharges and similar) were all considered as alternatives to the proposed scheme. A key success factor of demand management is greater use of alternative travel modes, in particular public transport. This assumes of course that alternative reliable public transport services

exist. Whilst there is an identified need in the Galway Transport Strategy that public transport improvements are key to the accessibility of the city, it is also recognised that in order to achieve this, a certain level of demand management will have to occur. So whilst this approach would not be sufficient in isolation it will form part of the solution to the city congestion.

Technological

8.12. In terms of technological alternatives, it is recognised that such measures are becoming increasingly advanced, however the use of electric vehicles does not address congestion problems and the need for mass transit.

Route Alternatives

8.13. The applicant outlines within section 3.3.3 of the EIAR that alternative route options have been considered throughout the design development but were informed by the Galway Transport Strategy. High level options assessment concentrated on the existing limited bridge crossings over the River Corrib and the need to remove traffic congestion from the core city centre area while providing appropriate balanced alternatives for east-west orbital movement of traffic.

8.14. In order to consider alternatives in detail, the various routes were broken into sections and considered in the context of the ability to achieve the objectives of the GTS.

8.15. Following completion of the Stage 1 initial appraisal, the remaining reasonable alternatives options were progressed to Stage 2 of the assessment process and were also considered in sections. These route sections were then considered against the following criterion: economy, integration, accessibility and social inclusion, safety, physical activity, GTS policies and environment. Under each headline criterion, a set of sub-criteria were used to comparatively evaluate the options which included soils and geology, hydrology, flora and fauna, potential archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage impacts, air quality, noise and vibration and landscape and visual.

8.16. The options were also considered in the context of submissions received from the public consultation and various amendments made in response to the consultation.

8.17. Thus, having regard to the information provided by the Council in relation to the alternatives considered I am satisfied that a significant number of options have been considered in detail and that the process undertaken by the applicant has been a

robust assessment of alternative options having regard to environmental considerations and the stated Project Objectives, which are considered to be reasonable. I agree that the routes chosen are the ones which best meet these objectives. I also accept that the consideration of options within the selected route corridor and the strategy for key infrastructure provisions was a rigorous process, which had regard to environmental considerations and to the Project Objectives. I therefore generally concur with the reasons for choosing the preferred alternatives as presented in the EIAR.

Population and Human Health

8.18. Chapters 10 and 11 of the EIAR consider the impacts to population and human health as a result of the proposed development. I note from the EIAR that impacts to population were considered under two sub assessments, i.e Community Assessment and Economic Assessment. The Study area was informed by the CSO Census electoral division boundaries and are listed within section 10.2.1.1. of the EIAR. Economic study area is defined as individual businesses within the identified community areas that could be potentially impacted by the development as a result of displaced traffic.

8.19. Human health is considered in the context of the overall health status of the population within the study area, social inequalities, as this can be a determinant of health, and the overall exposure of the population in the study area to environmental impacts, such as the level of exposure to certain pollutants, noise, travel patterns and behaviour in the context of the proposed development.

8.20. It is important to note at this juncture that impacts to communities arising from traffic, air quality, noise and vibration and visual and landscape are considered within the relevant sections of the EIAR submitted and within the planning assessment above, and in the interest of conciseness will not be repeated hereunder. This Section of my report should therefore be read in conjunction with the relevant sections mentioned.

8.21. Issues raised in this context within the submissions received, relate to accessibility to properties both residential and commercial. Submissions have requested that access to commercial properties in terms of drop off and unloading areas are provided for and I note the Council's response in this regard is to work with local businesses to provide unloading in areas where no designated space is available.

8.22. Private residents are concerned about the functionality of their properties in terms of access, noise and loss of privacy. Concerns are also raised in relation to air quality and the impact to travel times as a result of diversions during construction or rerouted traffic.

Baseline conditions

8.23. In terms of baseline conditions, it is of note that based on available monitoring data, levels of air pollution are almost entirely within the EU limit values for NO2 and Particulate Matter (PM). However, there is a relatively high prevalence of exposure to traffic noise, particularly at nighttime for properties close to the Proposed Scheme corridor. In terms of the economic baseline, it is of note that the proposed scheme will pass circa 319 commercial businesses.

Potential Impacts

8.24. Overall construction impacts relating to construction noise, dust, traffic disruption will be temporary and short term in terms of the magnitude of affect and are largely mitigated without any significant residual effects.

8.25. Impacts are examined in detail within the relevant sections hereunder. However, it is important to note at this juncture that no significant offsite health risks are expected as a result of the construction or operation of the development. Temporary disturbances given the nature of the works will not extend in the long-term post construction. I am satisfied that such impacts will not result in significant effects and can adequately be dealt with by way of mitigation.

8.26. Thus, having regard to the information provided within the EIAR and the submissions received, I consider the disruption to traffic as a result of both the construction of the development and the operation of the development to be the greatest impact to population and human health. Such impacts give rise to driver frustration and imped access at times and there is a potential for increases to traffic on roads catering for diverted traffic. It must be stated however, that the proposed development will also see positive impacts which are expected during the operation of the proposed development when it is anticipated that more people will cycle, therefore improving physical health. An increase in bus use will see a reduction in car emissions along the route and will also have a positive impact on residents' overall health.

8.27. Reduced community severance will also have a positive impact on the local population in terms of overall health outcomes, as will improved accessibility to health care providers via a signficantly improved bus service.

Mitigation Measures

8.28. In relation to traffic disruption, I note that the applicant proposes to implement traffic management plans and protective measures to ensure that pedestrians and cyclists are provided with safe routes during the construction phase.

8.29. I further note that measures are proposed to facilitate deliveries to commercial premises both during construction and once the development is operational. Whilst such measures are not a perfect solution for all concerned, on balance I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately addressed the issue of traffic disruption by way of accommodation works during the operational phase of the development and mitigation during construction and I whilst I acknowledge that the inconvenience created by these diversions will cause annoyance to road users at certain times, it is for a limited period of time and the effect to population and human health is not a significant long term effect.

8.30. In relation to the permanent diversion of traffic to other routes as a result of the development, this will have a negative, moderate and long-term effect due to increases in traffic on some of the surrounding road network. It is anticipated that the improved access to a new multimodal route will reduce overall car dependence and therefore reduce the number of cars accessing the surrounding road network.

Conclusion

8.31. I have considered all of the written submissions made in relation to population and human health and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on population and human health can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on population and human health can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

Traffic and Transport

8.32. Section 6 of the EIAR examines the impact of the proposed scheme on traffic. For the purpose of assessment, the proposed route has been divided into 11 sections as follows:

- University Road to St. Francis St. junction
- St. Francis St. junction to Eglinton Street
- Eyre Square to Forester Street
- College Road (Lough Atalia to Fairgreen)
- College Road (Lough Atalia to Moneenageisha)
- R338 Dublin Road
- Fairgreen Road
- Bóthar Uí Eithir and Prospect Hill
- Bóthar na mBan / St. Brendan's Avenue / Dyke Road / Headford Road
- Section 10: Woodquay / Walsh's Terrace / Daly's Place / Mary Street;
- Forthill Street / Merchants Road / Queen Street

8.33. Overall mode share indicates that car is the most common form of transport at 59% of the mode share. Pedestrian is the second most common form of transport at 29%. Cyclists only make up 3% of the total mode share.

8.34. The following section of this report will outline the base line conditions in relation to the relevant sections mentioned above.

<u>Section 1 – University Road to St Francis Street Junction</u>

8.35. This section comprises University Road, Gaol Road, Salmon Weir Bridge, St. Vincent's Avenue, Newtownsmith and Waterside. There are footpaths and street lighting along both sides of the road throughout Section 1 of the Proposed Scheme. The footpaths are all a minimum of 1.8m wide. 3no. controlled crossings, no off road cycle infrastructure, and 3 no. bus stops. Various pay and display parking areas along this section, including Galway Cathedral car park comprising 152 parking spaces and five accessible spaces.

Section 2 – St. Francis Street to Eglinton Street

8.36. This section comprises St. Francis Street, Eglinton Street and Williamsgate Street. There are footpaths and street lighting along both sides of the road throughout Section 2. The footpaths are all a minimum of 1.8m wide, 1 no.-controlled crossing, no off road cycle infrastructure, no bus lanes and 2 no. bus stops. Various limited parking areas are available on this section.

Section 3 – Eyre Square to Forster Street

8.37. This section comprises Eyre Square, Rosemary Avenue, Eyre Street, Prospect Hill up to the Prospect Hill / Bothar Na mBan junction, and Forster Street up to the Bóthar Bhreandain Uí Eithir / Forster Street / Fairgreen Road junction. There are footpaths and street lighting along both sides of the road throughout Section 3 of the Proposed Scheme.

8.38. The footpaths are all a minimum of 1.8m wide along the majority of this route, however some pinch points are present along Forster Street, Rosemary Avenue and Eyre Street. In addition, Eyre Square west is fully pedestrianised and Rosemary Avenue has a section which is fully pedestrianised. There are 4 no. controlled crossings, no on or off-road cycle lane infrastructure, a bus lane is present on Forster Street in the eastbound direction, operating Monday to Saturday between 16:00 and 19:00. No other bus lanes are present and there are 10 bus stops.

8.39. Parking is available at various locations both on and off street.

Section 4 – College Road (Lough Atalia to Fairgreen)

8.40. This section comprises College Road between the Bóthar Bhreandain Uí Eithir / Forster Road / Fairgreen Road junction and College Road / Lough Atalia Road junction. Footpaths are similar to section 3 with pinch points, and there is no off road cycle lanes or bus lanes. There are six bus stops in this section and various off road and on road parking options.

Section 5 – College Road (Lough Atalia to Moneenageisha)

8.41. This section comprises College Road / Loyola Park / Lough Atalia Road junction and the Moneenageisha Road / Dublin Road / Wellpark Road/ College Road junction.

8.42. Controlled crossings are found on the Atalia Rd College Rd. There are no dedicated cycle or bus lanes, or bus stops and parking is off road.

Section 6 – R338 Dublin Road

8.43. This section comprises Dublin Road between the Moneenageisha junction and to the entrance to the Brothers of Charity. There are footpaths and street lighting along both sides of the road throughout Section 6 of the Proposed Scheme. The footpaths are all a minimum of 1.8m wide. 1 no. controlled crossing, no dedicated cycle lanes, 2 no. bus stops, no parking facilities.

Section 7 – Fairgreen Road

8.44. This section comprises Fairgreen Road between Forster Street and Lough Atalia Road. Footpaths are similar to the foregoing, no cycle or bus lanes, and 1 coach stop for long distance routes. There are various off road parking facilities.

Section 8 – Bóthar Uí Eithir and Prospect Hill

8.45. This section comprises Prospect Hill between the Bóthar Na mBan and Bóthar Bhreandain Uí Eithir and the full length of Bóthar Uí Eithir. Pedestrian facilities similar to above with the exception of a short section of sub-standard footpath width in the vicinity of 38 Prospect Hill and a short section of footpath in the vicinity of St. Patricks Church., 2no. controlled crossings, no cycle lanes and one bus lane travelling southbound and one bus stop. No parking facilities are available along this section of the route.

Section 9 – Bothar na mBan/ St. Brendan's Avenue / Dyke Road/ Headford Road

8.46. This section comprises along St Brendan's Avenue and Bóthar Na mBan, between Headford Road and Prospect Hill and along Headford Road, Walsh's Terrace, O'Donoghue's Terrace and Dyke Road. Footpaths are similar to above with exception of the eastern side of the Dyke road. One controlled crossing, no dedicated cycling and no bus lanes or bus stops. Various on and off road parking facilities along this section of the route.

Section 10 –Woodquay / Walsh's Terrace / Daly's Place / Mary Street

8.47. This section comprises Mary Street and Woodquay, comprising Mary Street, St. Vincent's Avenue, Daly's Place, Woodquay and a section of Headford Street until the Headford Street/ Dyke Road / St Brendan's Avenue junction. Footpaths are similar to the above, with one controlled crossing. There is no dedicated cycle lane or bus lane and there are two bus stops. There are various on and off road parking facilities.

Section 11 – Forthill Street / Merchants Road / Queen Street

8.48. This section comprises Victoria Place and Bóthar Na nDuganna, comprising Queen Street, Merchants Road and Forthill Street. Footpaths are similar to the above with three controlled crossings. There is no dedicated cycle or bus lanes and there is one bus stop along this section. Various on and off road parking facilities are available along this section of the route.

Potential impacts

8.49. For the purpose of the assessment of potential impacts the applicant has considered the scheme under the 24 sections which comprise of subsections within the sections outlined above. I have reviewed the information in relation to all 24 sections and in the interest of conciseness I will consider potential impacts in relation to the individual mode, i.e. walking, cycling, bus, private car and parking in relation to both the construction and operational phases of the development in its entirety hereunder.

8.50. In terms of impacts, it is stated that traffic flows on all routes and at site compounds and works areas will be managed by the construction traffic management plan. Temporary diversions, and in some instances temporary road closures, may be required where a safe distance cannot be maintained to undertake works necessary to complete the Proposed Scheme. This in my view is reasonable having regard to the long-term benefits which will be derived for the proposed project.

8.51. All road closures and diversions will be determined by the Galway City Council, who will liaise with An Garda Síochána, as necessary. The need for temporary access restrictions will be confirmed with residents and businesses prior to their implementation. Impacts in relation to the foregoing are not stated to be significant or long term.

8.52. Disruptions to pedestrian and cycle movement will also occur on a temporary basis as works proceed, however alternative routes and access will be provided as required. Similarly, it is stated that bus stops may require temporary relocation, but access will be retained in order to ensure continuity in the service. The magnitude of effects in this regard is expected to be slight to moderate.

8.53. Parking and loading locations may be temporarily impacted by construction activities along the Proposed Scheme corridor, but it is also stated that alternatives will be provided.

8.54. In general, I note it is stated that significant impacts due to general traffic redistribution away from the direct study area are not anticipated as traffic flows are to be maintained in both directions. Access for general traffic to existing residential and commercial units immediately adjacent to the Proposed Scheme is to be accommodated throughout the Construction Phase.

8.55. Overall, the magnitude of impacts associated with the construction of the proposed scheme range between 'Negative, Slight and Temporary' to 'Negative, Moderate and Temporary'.

Operational Phase

8.56. In terms of the operational impacts, I note that the assessment of impacts relates to both the functionality of the infrastructure to be provided in terms of journey times, accessibility etc, and the qualitative nature of the infrastructure, i.e whether there are direct crossing, tactile paving, dropped kerbs etc. The applicant has developed a set of criteria for each mode which are outlined in tables 6.21 and 6.23 for pedestrians and cyclists respectively. Bus infrastructure is examined in relation to the frequency of service to be provided and the infrastructure such as shelters, seating, accessible kerbs etc.

8.57. In relation to parking the applicant has clearly outlined the number of spaces to be lost at each location and has provided a justification for such losses and in some cases has provided alternative solutions. The applicant has also examined parking and loading requirements for businesses in the area. It is of note that submissions have raised concerns in relation to the loss or relocation of parking and it is requested that the scheme provides for set down and loading areas to serve local businesses. It is important to note in this regard that no significant effects are expected to arise in relation to parking. The applicant has demonstrated that adequate car parking has been retained within both the on-street locations and off street locatons.

Pedestrian Infrastructure.

8.58. In terms of operational impact in relation to pedestrian infrastructure, it is important to note at the outset that all impacts to all sections of the proposed scheme are expected to be positive and long term. This is as a result of the proposed improvements to the existing pedestrian facilities in the form of additional crossing locations, increased pedestrian directness, provision of traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds

and improved accessibility. I note that all facilities have been designed in accordance with the principles of DMURS and the National Disability Authority (NDA) 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach' (NDA 2020) with regards to catering for all users, including those with disabilities.

Cycle Infrastructure

8.59. Cycle infrastructure impacts are also considered to be positive and long term in terms of magnitude of effects. A number of submissions raised concerns in relation to junction layouts, cycle lane widths, treatment of cycle lanes at bus stops and the turning movements provided for cyclists at junctions. Similar to the foregoing, all issues have been examined in detail within the assessment section of this report and will not be repeated hereunder, save to say that I am satisfied that the design approach to this infrastructure has been adequately justified by the applicant and I am satisfied that no significant negative impacts will arise in this regard. The use of dedicated cycle lanes, quiet roads in the case of cyclist diversions from the main route and the segregation of general traffic over significant distance of the route will provide for a signficantly enhanced experience for cyclists over that currently available. I am satisfied that the applicants have examined the potential for impacts to arise in relation to the proposed cycle infrastructure and have examined all reasonable alternatives in this regard also.

8.60. The magnitude of impacts in relation to cycling are stated to be positive and significant.

Bus Infrastructure

8.61. It is proposed that there will be a total of 35 bus stops along the entire length of the scheme which will be an overall reduction of 6 stops and one new stop. The layout of new bus stops is considered to better serve the existing and future catchment and be closer to existing and new pedestrian crossing facilities for improved convenience. The magnitude of effects arising from the operation of the proposed new bus stops is expected to be positive and very significant.

8.62. Similar to the foregoing, infrastructure, issues have been raised in relation to the relocation of some bus stops, the accessibility of bus stops for people with disabilities and the provision of shelters. See assessment section 7 Project Design of this report above for detailed assessment of bus shelter accessibility.

8.63. Based on the information submitted and the Council's responses to the concerns raised as outlined within the assessment section of this report, I am satisfied that the

applicant has adequately justified the proposed alterations to bus stops. I also note that all bus stops will have accessible kerbs and real time information and the majority will also have shelters which is currently not the case at all stops. Overall, the accessibility and reliability of the bus service will be signficantly improved to that available currently. Such improvements will have a positive and long-term impact for patrons and will not result in any significant negative effects.

Parking

8.64. As mentioned above, concerns have been raised by third parties in relation to the removal of on street car parking along the route of the proposed scheme. There are currently 1,190 spaces available on street along the route, it is proposed to remove 271 of these spaces in locations whereby additional spaces is required to accommodate sustainable travel infrastructure. I have reviewed all locations and note that in instances where loading bays are to be removed an alternative has been provided. In areas where this has not been possible or the loading bay is too far removed from the business, the Council has agreed to work with businesses to facilitate access for deliveries or building works.

8.65. The overall magnitude of impact in relation to parking is not expected to be significant. There are significant parking alternatives in terms of capacity within close proximity to each section which has been outlined in the EIAR. Whilst I acknowledge that the removal of parking can create an inconvenience to businesses and customers I am satisfied that the quantum of parking to be removed is acceptable and would not impact businesses to such an extent as to warrant a refusal of the proposed scheme.

8.66. The Proposed Scheme will formalise the parking arrangements and will improve the street environment, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists and enable a signficantly improved and more efficient bus service along the proposed route.

Benefits of the scheme

8.67. In terms of the modelled benefits of the proposed scheme, I draw the Board's attention to section 6.5.8.1 of the EIAR in which the movement of people is assessed. The modelling examines the potential for modal shift in the years 2023 and 2038 in relation to the am and pm peak times. The most significant shift is seen in the increase in people using the bus. In the year 2038 during the am peak in corridor 1 westbound it is predicted that sustainable travel modes will see an increase of 23%, increases are

also seen in the eastbound route and for both east and west bound in corridor 2. Private car use for the same year is predicted to decrease by 32% in corridor 1 westbound.

8.68. Modelled modal shifts for the year 2038 also see a significant increase in people walking and cycling. The Board should note that individual routes have been examined in terms of efficiencies and overall impacts to service are examined in detail within chapter 6 of the EIAR.

8.69. The overall magnitude of the forgoing modelled changes is positive, significant and long term. It is clear from the information provided that the proposed development will be a significant piece of infrastructure that will assist in the reduction of GHG in Galway City and will have a significantly positive impact on the sustainability of the city. In the do minimum scenario congestion levels continue to rise which would have significant impacts on the development of the city going forward.

8.70. It is clear that the improvements proposed will create the conditions for a modal shift to more sustainable modes of travel. Improved bus times and scheduling, travel information and accessibility to the bus infrastructure are positive changes that are supported at both a national and local level in terms of policy.

8.71. Given the improvements to bus priority, walking and cycling as a result of the Proposed Scheme, there will be an overall reduction in operational capacity for general traffic along the direct study area. This area will see a reduction in general traffic numbers of between -107 and -1,350 (vehicles per hour) combined general traffic flows along the direct study area during the AM Peak Hour in the Opening Year (2023).

8.72. This reduction in general traffic flow averages at -283 across all road links, which is determined as an overall Positive, Slight and Long-term effect on the direct study area.

8.73. However, there are other link roads which will experience an increase in traffic, of between 102 and 944 combined flows during the AM Peak Hour. A number will exceed the 100 flow additional traffic threshold (this is the threshold at which further analysis is required of road and junction capacity) at the AM peak hour, these roads are outlined in table 6.83 of the EIAR.

8.74. As a consequence of the increases in traffic, the roads listed in table 6.78 have been examined in terms of their operational capacity including junction capacity to

accommodate the additional traffic. I note that the modelling was based on the worst performing arm of each junction as a worst case scenario assessment.

8.75. The Board should note the following: redistributed traffic from the Proposed Scheme will have a less than 5% impact on turning flows at Browne Roundabout and Bothar na dTreabh/Tuam Road Junction. Turning flows see a decrease at three national road junctions (Bothar na dTreabh / Ballybana Road and Bothar na dTreabh / Monivea Road Junctions as well as Coolagh Roundabout.

8.76. Turning flows at Headford Road / Bothar na dTreabh (Kirwan Junction) will increase by 7.7%. However, this junction has been addressed as part of the General Traffic Impact Assessment shown in Table 6.90 and operates above 100% during both the Do Minimum and Do Something scenarios. Therefore, the impact is considered to be negligible.

8.77. Traffic flows at the signalised junction at either end of Quincentenary Bridge (N6 Quincentenary Bridge / Upper Newcastle / Lower Newcastle and N6 Quincentenary Bridge/Headford Road / Sean Mulvoy Road) will increase by 13.5% and 12.4% respectively. Similar to Kirwan Junction, both junctions have been analysed as part of the General Traffic Impact Assessment as shown in Table 6.90 which confirms that both junctions operate above 100% during both the Do Minimum and Do Something scenarios. Therefore, the impact is considered to be negligible.

8.78. According to the EIAR, the majority of assessed junctions that required further traffic analysis are operating with a maximum V / C ratio of below 85% during the AM Peak Hour in the 2023 Opening Year, and that the Proposed Scheme will have a negligible impact on the majority of assessed local / regional road links within the indirect study area. Junctions operating at a higher level are outlined in the EIAR.

8.79. The Board should note that combining the road sensitivity with the magnitude of impact determines that the significance of effects of the redistributed traffic as a result of the Proposed Scheme at the remaining junctions results in a Not Significant and Long-term effect at 61 junctions and Negative, Imperceptible and Long-term at five junctions. At three junctions, a Negative, Slight and Long-term effect is predicted. At eight junction a Negative, Moderate and Long-term effect is predicted. Further assessment into mitigation measures is therefore not considered necessary for any junctions in the AM Peak Hour of the 2023 Opening Year. No junctions are predicted to experience

significant effects. The Board should note that similar findings are expected in relation to the PM Peak Hour for the same year and design year 2028.

8.80. Overall, I am satisfied that the applicant has carried out a robust and detailed assessment of the surrounding road network and the capacity of the network to absorb an additional diverted traffic as a result of the proposed scheme.

Mitigation

8.81. Traffic and transport mitigation measures are set out in section 6.6 of the EIAR. It is stated within this section that construction related mitigation will be included within the CEMP and the implementation of this document will ensure disruption and nuisance are kept to a minimum during the Construction Phase. I note that the CEMP has regard to the guidance contained in the TII Guidelines for the Creation, Implementation and Maintenance of an Environmental Operating Plan.

8.82. A detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan has been prepared and included in the CEMP, and subsequently implemented, by the appointed contractor prior to construction, including Temporary Traffic Management arrangements prepared in accordance with Department of Transport's 'Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 8 Temporary Traffic Measures and Signs for Roadworks'. The CTMP will be agreed with the road authority and will include measures to minimise the impacts associated with the Construction Phase upon the peak periods of the day.

8.83. No mitigation measures are proposed for the operation of the proposed scheme. Residual impacts remain as stated above and will not be significant.

Conclusion

8.84. I have considered all of the written submissions made in relation to traffic and transport, and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on traffic and transport can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on traffic and transport can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise. I am also satisfied that the long term operational impacts will be positive for public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians

and will have an overall positive impact on the well being of people circulating within the area of the proposed scheme.

Air and Climate

8.85. Chapter 7 and 8 of the EIAR submitted address the potential for impacts to arise in relation to Air Quality and Climate.

Baseline Conditions

Air Quality

8.86. The key pollutants considered relevant to the proposed development are identified as:

- Nitrogen Dioxide
- Dust
- Particulate Matter PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$
- Greenhouse gases; Carbon Dioxide (CO_2), Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF_6)

8.87. The EIAR submitted outlines, within table 7.2, the upper limits for the above pollutants and within Sections 7.2.3, the relevant international and domestic legislation and policy pertaining to same. Baseline air quality is examined within section 7.3 of the EIAR and baseline line climate conditions are examined in section 8.4. Emissions are expected to arise in relation to both the construction and operation phases of the proposed development and will be examined in the context of the proposed mitigation measures hereunder.

8.88. In relation to baseline levels, I note that the most recent annual report at the time of assessment is Air Quality in Ireland 2022 (EPA). The Board should note that I have reviewed the most recent report and have taken it into account in my assessment hereunder. It is stated that a long term assessment of air quality was undertaken to inform the EIAR and data from zone C monitoring station for the years 2018, 2019 and 2020.

8.89. In addition, the EPA has gathered NO_2 data using the passive diffusion tube methodology in proximity to the Proposed Scheme and is outlined in table 7.16 of the EIAR.

8.90. In relation to data collection, the Board should note that under the TII Air Quality Guidelines (TII 2011), a minimum of one-month baseline monitoring is required, ideally

extending to at least three months, the applicants have complied with the minimum requirements in this regard. Air quality monitoring locations are outlined in table 7.17.

Potential Construction Impacts

8.91. During the Construction Phase of the Proposed Scheme, works will involve predominately utility diversions, road widening works, road excavation works (where required), road and junction reconfiguration and resurfacing works, public realm improvements including landscaping, and construction access routes including movement of machinery and materials within, and to and from, the Construction Compounds along the Proposed Scheme.

8.92. In terms of effects, it is considered that demolition, earthworks, construction and track out activities will give rise to dust. I note that the applicant has had regard to IAQM guidance in relation to the identification of the magnitude of effects which are defined in the said guidance document.

8.93. Overall the percentage change in air quality which is outlined in table 7.26 is negligible and no significant impacts are expected to arise.

Mitigation

8.94. Mitigation measures proposed during the construction phase of the development relate to the suppression of dust. Such measures include road sweeping, water misting or spraying during dust generating activities, use of tarpaulins when transporting materials and use of site hoardings of 2.4 metres in height. Significant residual impacts are not expected to arise.

Mitigation for Operational phase

8.95. No mitigation is proposed in relation to the operational phase of the proposed scheme and no residual impacts are expected.

8.96. I have considered the potential for cumulative impacts to arise in relation air quality and having regard to the information submitted and given the lack of any significant impacts associated with either the construction phase of the development or the operational phase of the proposal, I am satisfied that proposed development would not give rise to significant cumulative impacts in relation to air quality.

Climate

8.97. It is important to note at the outset when considering the proposed development in the context of climate, that Bus Connects is identified within the Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP 24) as a key project that will contribute to the reduction in GHG within Irelands cities. The CAP 24 supports the reallocation of road space to public transport and active travel and seeks to advance the bus connects programme in all 5 cities, over the coming years.

8.98. Impacts to climate are considered within section 8 of the EIAR and are considered in the context of GHG emissions relating to land use change and construction, traffic related emissions and operational related emissions. Recent weather patterns and extreme weather events reported by Met Eireann, have been considered in the context of climate change locally.

Potential Construction Impacts

It is important to note at the outset that the key phases of the GHG generation are the embodied carbon of the construction materials and the construction activities. The Proposed Scheme is estimated to result in total construction phase GHG emissions of 1,783 tonnes embedded CO2eq for materials, equivalent to an annualised total of 0.003% of Ireland's national GHG emissions in 2023.

8.99. In order to provide clarity to the Board, it is important to consider the proposed construction related emissions in the context of CAP24 and the agreed Sectoral Emission Ceilings for transport projects within this document. In the context of the 2021-2025 carbon budget period, the proposed development represents 0.003301% of the transport emission ceiling for the period. It is likely that construction will extend into the following carbon budget period of 2026-2030 and as such the proposal would represent 0.004818% of this period's emission ceiling allocation (if it were to be constructed fully in this period).

8.100. It is important to reiterate at this juncture that the aforementioned climate emissions relate solely to embodied carbon during the construction phase of the development.

8.101. In terms of identifying the magnitude of effect arising from the construction phase of the development I am satisfied that having examined the carbon emission equivalent of the proposal in the context of the Sectoral Emission Ceilings set out in CAP 24, that the construction phase of the proposed development would not give rise to any long

term significant climate impacts and has been adequately assessed and quantified within the EIAR .

8.102. In relation to mitigation measures proposed for the construction phase of the development I note that the applicant proposes a number of measures which include the reuse materials were feasible, the sourcing of materials locally and the replacement of concrete containing Portland cement with concrete containing ground granulated blast furnace slag.

8.103. The Board should note that the proposed development will also replace 59 trees with 127 and will increase the permeable area along the route by 1,770m^3.

8.104. In relation to the operational phase of the development I note that there will be a marginal increase in GHG emissions associated with the Proposed Scheme, which is attributable to the redistribution of traffic in both 2023 and 2038. Thus, the predicted impact to climate during the operational phase of the Proposed Scheme is predicted to be neutral and long-term as the change is less than 0.5%.

Potential Operational Impacts

8.105. With regard to the operational phase of the development is it important to note that climate is heavily influenced by GHG emissions and transport emissions are a significant factor in the level of GHGs released into the atmosphere. I draw the Boards attention to CAP 24 in which updated figures are provided. Transport has been the fastest growing source of GHG emissions over the past three decades, showing a 112% increase between 1990 and 2021.

8.106. Whilst transport emissions associated with the construction phase will increase slightly, it is important to consider the overall impact of the development during both the construction and operational phase. The proposed development is expected to be in use for 60 years and will support the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, which supports the achievement of Ireland's emission reduction targets. It is stated that the proposal has the potential to reduce GHG emissions and car trips signficantly per weekday from the road network.

8.107. The proposed scheme represents a significant contribution towards the national target of reducing car emissions which from new car fleet are required to reduce by 15% relative to 2021 levels and, by 2030, the average emissions from new car fleet are required to reduce by 37.5% relative to 2021. I note from the information submitted

that haulage and heavy goods road freight emissions are not projected to decrease and are essentially outside of the scope of this development.

8.108. In relation to impacts to sequestered carbon as mentioned above I note a number of trees (circa 59 no.) will be removed as part of the earth works and preparation stage of construction and third parties have expressed their concerns in this regard. Whist I acknowledge the concerns raised, I note it proposed to replant 127 no. trees, which taken in the context of the proposed construction works will have a neutral and positive effect on the sequestering of carbon over the life of the development.

8.109. In summary of the foregoing, the applicant has stated that the magnitude of effects arising from the operation of the development will be 'Neutral and Permanent' no mitigation measures are proposed for the operation of the scheme.

8.110. Having regard to the information submitted and the requirements outlined within CAP 24, I am satisfied that all impacts in relation to climate have been robustly assessed and the applicant has considered all aspects of the development in a detailed manner within both sections 7 and 8 of the EIAR and has provided extensive information in support of the analysis submitted within the relevant appendices to this document. I also satisfied that the proposal is supported by the recently adopted CAP 24 which was not finalised prior to the submission of this application but is nonetheless essential to the assessment of the development in the foregoing context.

8.111. It is important to state at this juncture that in considering the impact on climate I have had regard to the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 which requires Ireland to achieve a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030 (relative to 2018 levels) and a 20% reduction by 2025 and am satisfied that the proposed development which proports to achieving an overall reduction in CO2eq of 6000 tonnes will have a positive impact on achieving the overall reduction required for Ireland.

Conclusion

8.112. In conclusion, I have considered all of the written submissions made in relation to air quality and climate and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on air quality and climate can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am

therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on air quality and climate can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise, given that overall risks subject to mitigation being implemented are predicted as being negligible.

Noise and Vibration

8.113. Chapter 9 of the EIAR examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to noise and vibration. It is important to note at the outset that a significant number of third-party submissions have raised concerns in relation to operational noise which could impact residential amenity. The following section of this report will examine the potential for such impacts to arise in relation to the proposed development.

Baseline Conditions

8.114. In order to establish baseline conditions, the applicant carried out independent noise surveys in the form of attended surveys at various locations along the route. Attended surveys were undertaken at a total of 16 locations in the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme in January 2022.

8.115. Baseline data results identify road traffic as the dominant noise experienced along the route during both daytime and nighttime hours. Average background noise during daytime hours varies along the route with some areas experiencing higher background noise levels than others. Results indicate exceedances in existing ambient noise levels at various locations along the route. This can be attributed to traffic volumes along the route. Ambient noise recorded at the locations outlined ranged between 58dB and 76dB. It is clear from the range recorded that the study area is a high noise environment. High noise levels were also recorded during nighttime hours. Noise during this period is also dominated by road traffic.

8.116. I draw the Boards attention to Section 9.3 of the EIAR in which a description of baseline noise is provided for each section of the proposed scheme and the nearest noise sensitive locations identified. Noise sensitive locations comprise of dwellings, hotels, churches and educational facilities.

8.117. Vibration surveys were also conducted at various locations and results indicate that vibration levels associated with a heavily trafficked urban – suburban road with a mix

of fleet inclusive of dedicated bus lane result in negligible vibration levels at the edge of the road both in terms of human perception and building response.

Potential impacts of noise and vibration

8.118. Noise generation will arise in relation to construction works and the operation of plant during the construction phase. Increased noise levels are also anticipated due to the increase in buses utilising the route during operational phase. There is also a potential for noise disturbance to arise in areas which cater for diverted traffic both during construction and permanently during the operation of the development.

8.119. The applicant has examined all sources of noise associated with the construction and operation of the development. The EIAR examines each construction activity at specific locations and considers the impact in terms of a range of distances from the proposed works at noise sensitive locations. I draw the boards attention to tables 9.16 – 9.23 in which each construction activity is outlined in terms of noise emissions relative to the distance from NSLs. In the absence of mitigation, it is clear from the tables that noise exceedances will occur in relation to all activities at the closest distances to NSLs and at some other distances to varying degrees of intensity. The magnitude of impacts ranges from slight to very significant, on a temporary basis and over the short term during both daytime and nighttime hours.

8.120. Whilst there are exceedances expected in relation to unmitigated noise emissions from construction activity, in the majority of instances as shown within the aforementioned tables, a number of significant exceedances are expected within the Headford Rd and St. Brendan Avenue sections of the proposed route whereby high noise levels of up to 79dB are expected arising from road works, road widening works at various locations will experience noise levels of up to 84Db.

8.121. Modelling has been carried out at numerous locations outlined in section 9.4.3.2 of the EIAR which will not be repeated hereunder. Modelling results during the assessed design year 2023, indicate that the highest potential noise impacts are calculated along Presentation Rd, Lough Atalia Road and Cross Street due to the operation of the Proposed Scheme. The change in traffic noise is defined as ‘major’ and ‘moderate’ with the traffic noise level calculated at the closest NSLs along these three roads categorised as ‘medium’. The overall impacts are determined to be ‘Negative’, ‘Moderate to Significant’ and ‘Temporary’.

8.122. Significant impacts are expected during the operation of the scheme in the design year 2038 at the Lough Atalia Road. The board should note that this is a high noise environment at present and the change in traffic noise level is 4.7dB.

8.123. For all other roads across the study area, traffic noise impacts are not potentially significant, and are defined as from Positive, Imperceptible to Slight, and Longterm to Negative, Not Significant to Slight, and Long-term.

8.124. Potential impacts arising from vibration are associated with the groundbreaking activities and piling. I note from the information submitted that the magnitude of effects associated with this activity is stated as negative, slight to moderate and temporary at distances of 10m from the activity. Beyond 50m from this type of activity, impacts are stated to be reduced to imperceptible to slight and temporary.

8.125. I further note that the applicant states that all construction works are orders of magnitude below limits values associated with any form or cosmetic or structural damage for structurally sound or protected or historical buildings or structures. Based on the information submitted I am satisfied that a robust and detailed assessment of vibration has been carried out by the applicant and that a no significant effects arise from the proposed works.

8.126. In terms of the operational phase of the development, as mentioned above, noise impacts have the potential to arise from changes in traffic volumes, private traffic will reduce on the route and there will be an increase in buses along the route. In addition, redistributed traffic onto surrounding local road network will also have the potential to affect noise levels. It is important to note at this juncture that impacts in this regard are not expected to be significant in the long term.

8.127. The Board should note that there is reference to the Malahide Road within Section 9.4.5 and I am satisfied that this is a typographical error.

Mitigation Measures

8.128. Mitigation measures are included within the Construction Management Plan and are discussed in Section 9.5 of the EIAR. It is clear that the largest magnitude of effects arises at distances of 15 metres from the proposed works and relate to construction related activities whereby concrete is to be removed and replaced and road widening is to be carried out. Other significant impacts arise in relation to works

being carried out during evening and weekend hours whereby the upper limit for ambient noise is lower.

8.129. Thus, whilst mitigation is proposed in relation to all construction related works, of particular note are the measures relating to general road works, road widening and diversion, works relating to site compounds and boundary treatment. I note in this regard that machinery will be fitted with acoustic exhausts and within enclosure panels which will reduce noise by up to 10dB. Mufflers will be fitted to pneumatic concrete breakers and tools, noisy machinery will be placed away from NSLs and sensitive boundaries. Compressors will be sounded by acoustic lagging or enclosed within the acoustic enclosure. Screens will be used to dampen noise near NSLs when breakers or drill bits are used. Such measures can also reduce noise levels by up to 10dB.

8.130. Works will be carried out largely within daytime hours, however it will be necessary to carry out some works infrequently during nighttime hours. The applicant states that cumulative noise impacts will be carefully considered and avoided in order to protect NSLs. It is intended that construction activities will be scheduled in a manner that reflects the location of the site and the nature of neighbouring properties.

8.131. The type of works and the duration will be communicated to residents at all times so that residents are aware of the type of work to be carried out and can plan accordingly. Noise monitoring will ensure that any exceedances are addressed without delay. Similarly works which may give rise to vibration will only be carried out during daytime hours and monitoring will ensure exceedance of upper limits do not arise.

8.132. Overall mitigation measures are expected to reduce noise levels by 10dB. As outlined above, baseline daytime noise levels are c. 76dB and evening baseline levels are 78dB. The higher impacts will be at those properties where the prevailing baseline is below the specific predicted construction works noise levels. No significant effects are expected during daytime hours post mitigation. Significant residual effects only remain in relation to nighttime and weekend hours whereby upper limit thresholds are lower at these times.

8.133. The board should note that concerns have been raised in relation to noise emissions at various properties along the route and in particular 139 College Road, whereby works are to be carried out in close proximity to the dwelling. I recommend that all

measures are taken to reduce noise emissions at these locations and that the duration of such works is not carried out for any prolonged period of time.

8.134. Overall, it is common in such roads projects that noise generated by works assimilates into the existing background noise levels and will not give rise to significant impacts. In addition, as the proposed development is a linear route works will move continuously therefore being temporary in nature at any location along the route.

Residual Impacts

8.135. The application of the proposed noise thresholds and restricted hours of operation, along with implementation of appropriate noise control measures, will ensure that noise impact is controlled within acceptable limit values. During the Construction Phase of the Proposed Scheme, noise levels at properties closest to working areas will be temporarily increased. Construction activities will, for the majority of activities, operate within 5 dB of the adopted noise thresholds at the nearest properties to the works once mitigation measures are incorporated. Once the various mitigation measures are put in place, noise impacts associated with the Construction Phase will be Negative, Not Significant to Significant, and Temporary during all key construction phases within 10 to 15m from the works during daytime construction periods.

8.136. Once operational, there will be a Positive to Neutral direct impact along the Proposed Scheme due to a reduction in traffic volumes during both the year of opening and the design year.

8.137. As outlined above significant impacts do not arise in relation to vibrations and as such significant residual impacts will not occur. In addition, the magnitude of effects arising from the operation of the development is ‘positive’ to ‘negative’ and ‘slight’, mitigation measures are therefore not proposed in relation to the operational phase of the development.

Conclusion

8.138. I have considered all of the written submissions made in relation to noise and vibration and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on noise and vibration can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts in relation to noise and vibration can be ruled out

I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

Archaeology, Cultural Heritage & Architectural Heritage

8.139. Section 15 & 16 of the EIAR submitted examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Architectural Heritage.

Baseline Conditions - Archaeology & Cultural Heritage

8.140. In terms of baseline conditions with regard to monuments, archaeology and cultural heritage I refer the board to Section 15.3 of the EIAR in which the historical baseline conditions are outlined. The central portion of the Scheme occupies the north-eastern area of the archaeological zone of notification for the historic town of Galway (GA094-100, AH1), which is a recorded monument. There are 18 further archaeological sites and groups of sites recorded within 50m of the Proposed Scheme, 17 are recorded on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). The last (AH17) is a redundant record.

8.141. Of these RMP sites and groups of sites, two are additionally listed on both the RPS and NIAH Survey and a further three are included on the RPS. One, Galway Town Defences (AH13), is also a National Monument. The Proposed Scheme crosses the route of the town defences along Eglington Street and towards the north-eastern end of Williamsgate Street.

8.142. There are 86 protected structures and groups of protected structures within the Proposed Scheme and its study area. These include the rivers and waterways of Galway, (and associated bridges, walling, embankments, piers, and other infrastructure (BH1), Galway Cathedral (BH5), remains of the town defences (BH75, BH77, BH83) and numerous residential and commercial buildings, several of which incorporate medieval remains.

8.143. Of the 86 individual and groups of protected structures, three are also part of a National Monument (Town Defences), three are also listed on both the RMP and the NIAH Survey; two are listed both as an SMR and on the NIAH; three are also listed on the RMP only and 41 are included on the NIAH Survey

8.144. Aside from the archaeological and built heritage features discussed above, twelve purely cultural heritage sites have been identified within, or within the vicinity of the

Proposed Scheme. Arguably the most significant of these consists of the JFK Memorial Park (Eyre Square), which, whilst a number of protected sites are present in and immediately bordering the park, is not subject to specific statutory protection itself, other than lying within the Eyre Square ACA.

8.145. Eyre Square is visible on historic mapping as early as 1651 and remains an important cultural focus point for the city. The remaining eleven cultural heritage sites were identified during a field inspection and consist of smaller sites such as statues and street furniture, as well as a footbridge and the dock walls at the northern end of Lough Atalia, associated with BH100. The field inspection also established that one NIAH structure, a 19th century house at No. 19 Forster Street (BH51), is no longer extant having been demolished, apparently relatively recently.

8.146. The site is adjacent and runs through Eyre Square ACA, and will have a slight direct negative impact on the City Core ACA.

Potential impacts

8.147. Potential impacts to archaeology and cultural heritage relate to the construction phase of the proposed development and are associated with works relating to groundbreaking activities which would be carried out in relation to pavement construction, repairs and reconstruction works; resurfacing works; piling; and any excavations of soil, including landscaping works, ground disturbance for utilities and grubbing up works. Further potential Impacts relate to the interference with street furniture, and interference with cultural heritage infrastructure. The Board should note that no significant impacts are expected throughout the proposed scheme.

Mitigation

8.148. In order to minimise and avoid such impacts, it is proposed to carry out monitoring of any excavation or groundbreaking works. This will ensure that in the event such material is encountered, it is preserved and recorded appropriately.

- In the event of archaeological features or material being uncovered during the Construction Phase, all machine work will cease in the immediate area.
- Secure storage for artefacts recovered during the course of the monitoring and related work will be provided.

- Archaeological investigation will be carried out prior to any works where any newly discovered features are present along the site.
- Features to be removed or relocated will be done under supervision.

8.149. No operational mitigation is required in relation to architectural heritage and cultural heritage.

Conclusion

8.150. I have considered all the written submissions made in relation to Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Architectural heritage and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Architectural heritage can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and Architectural heritage can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site are not likely to arise.

Landscape and Visual

8.151. Section 17 of the EIAR submitted examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to landscape, townscape and visual impact. It is of note that visual impacts in relation to the proposed scheme have been examined in the context of the project design and the public realm within the assessment section of this report. Such matters will not be repeated hereunder and this section of the EIAR should be read in conjunction with the aforementioned. It is important to mention at the outset that likely significant adverse effects will arise but are short term and temporary in nature.

Baseline Conditions

8.152. The establishment of baseline conditions was carried out based on initial desk studies, supported by full route walkovers and augmented by further specific site reviews. The Proposed Scheme includes a wide variety of suburban and inner-city suburban residential landscapes, townscape and visual features from streetscape boundary and public realm features, to residential and mixed-use zonings, historic landscapes and boundaries, to biodiversity and heritage assets.

8.153. Galway City Centre is negatively influenced by busy vehicular traffic, with congestion affecting the character of the urban environment, impacting on quality of life of residents and the safety of all roads. In places, there is an overdominance of vehicular traffic and parking, with narrow footpaths for pedestrians and limited space for cyclists

Potential impacts

8.154. The potential for impacts to arise relate to both the construction and operational phase of the development. The applicant within section 16.4.1 of the EIAR has listed the key characteristics of the proposed development which are of particular relevance to the townscape and visual assessment. Such characteristics relate to proposed works at specific locations such as the provision of new junction layouts, lighting, drainage, road markings and surfaces, land take for the widening of surfaces, removal of trees and landscaping open space landscaping.

8.155. Other impacts relate to the location of construction compounds on open space areas and within the existing road corridor all of which are detailed in Section 16.4.3.2 of the EIAR.

8.156. In terms of the operational phase of the development, visual and landscape changes relate to the change in traffic movements, the provision of SUDs, the change to road surfacing, improvements and changes to public realm.

8.157. The applicant has provided photomontages of the scheme which I have had regard to in the assessment of effects to landscape, townscape and the visual aspects of the proposed development. These demonstrate that the overriding visual changes to the proposed route relate to the loss of trees and vegetation and the replacement of same with species at a smaller growth stage.

8.158. The potential visual impacts from the representative viewpoints as a result of the Proposed Scheme are outlined in Table 16.4. The Board should note that no significant visual impacts are anticipated. This is reasonable given that the majority of works relate to works within the carriage way. Improvements at Eyre Square will have a positive impact on the setting of the square and are a welcomed addition.

Mitigation

8.159. In order to reduce the magnitude of effects to landscape, streetscape and townscape it is proposed to protect vegetation that is to be retained during construction through

the use of protective fencing. Where boundaries and vegetation are to be removed a record will be kept in order to replace the features with similar items. Where possible vegetation will be retained and replanted. All works will be carried out in accordance with a CEMP.

8.160. No mitigation or monitoring is proposed for the operational phase of the development.

Residual Impacts

8.161. Whilst mitigation will achieve a reduced impact and protect trees and vegetation to be retained, it will not eradicate the impacts listed above. The removal of mature trees cannot be mitigated and as such significant Construction Phase impacts at a local level remain unchanged in the post-mitigation and monitoring scenario. Operational phase impacts will improve with time as vegetation matures and will therefore not be significant. In conclusion therefore, significant long-term impacts to landscape and visual amenity do not arise in relation to the proposed development.

Conclusion

8.162. I have considered all of the written submissions made in relation to Landscape, Streetscape and Visual and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential long term impacts on landscape, streetscape and visual amenity can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect long term impacts on landscape, streetscape and visual amenity can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site are not likely to arise.

Land, soil, geology and hydrogeology

8.163. Section 14 of the EIAR submitted addresses lands, soils, geology and hydrogeology.

Baseline Conditions

8.164. The land uses in the region are mainly comprised of urban developments including but not limited to; industrial, commercial, residential and recreational. Geomorphology and topography are examined within the EIAR in order to give context to any potential

changes to land, soils, geology, and hydrogeology that could influence the importance of a feature and the magnitude of any impacts.

8.165. The Proposed Scheme is predominantly underlain by made ground over alluvium over glacial till over limestone bedrock.

8.166. The majority of the soils expected to be encountered within the study area are made ground comprising varying forms of hard standing materials including road pavements and footpaths. Alluvium and marine sediments are also present along the route mostly around Lough Corrib. Subsoils comprise glacial till for the most part with areas of gravels and shallow bedrock.

8.167. The underlying bedrock of the study area is predominantly comprised of the Lucan Formation (of carboniferous limestone). Excavations will not exceed 300mm in depth, reference to bedrock is therefore for context and not related to concerns relating to potential impacts. There are no karst features identified within the study area.

8.168. Given the urban setting of the proposed development it was considered prudent to examine the potential for contaminated lands to be present within the route of the scheme. A number of sites were identified which included uses such as petrol stations along the route, all are outlined within table 14.16 of the EIAR.

Potential Construction Impacts

8.169. It must be stated at the outset that no significant impacts are expected to arise in relation to land, soil, geology and hydrogeology. Impacts are expected to occur in relation to the following:

- Loss or damage of topsoil – works giving rise to potential effects – contamination of soils due to spillage of concrete/hydrocarbons/bitumen sealants etc, excavations and soil stripping and construction machinery – magnitude of effects is expected to be **imperceptible to slight.**
- Excavation of potentially contaminated ground – works resulting in exposure of contaminated material – magnitude of effects - **slight**
- Loss or damage of proportion of aquifer - minimal excavation into the limestone rock as part of the Proposed Scheme – magnitude of **imperceptible** impact

- Mobilisation of Contamination into the SAC - The removal of hardstanding on the central and eastern sections of the Proposed Scheme will result in a small increase in infiltration which could mobilize contamination into the underlying Regionally Important Aquifer **significant and temporary** in the absence of mitigation.
- Change to groundwater regime - Localised pumping of excavations could lead to change in groundwater levels – magnitude of effects – **imperceptible.**

Potential Operational Impacts

The Operational Phase has the potential to result in the following:

- Reduction in Recharge to the Regionally Important Aquifer - **imperceptible.**
- Impact of the Made Ground Under College Road Service Station on the Regionally Important Aquifer - **permanent beneficial impact.**
- Contamination of the Aquifer from Road Runoff - **imperceptible**

Mitigation

8.170. Standard mitigation measures are proposed in relation to the protection of soils, geology and geomorphology during construction and are outlined in section 14.5 of the EIAR and the CEMP accompanying the application. No mitigation measures are deemed necessary for the operational phase of the development. Consequently, subject to the implementation of construction mitigation, no residual effects are expected.

8.171. Cumulative impacts have been considered in this regard and given the nature of the proposed works are considered to be unlikely.

Conclusion

8.172. I have considered all of the written submissions made in relation to lands, soils, geology and hydrogeology and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on lands, soil, geology and hydrogeology can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on lands, soils, geology and hydrogeology can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects,

in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

Water

8.173. Section 13 of the EIAR submitted examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to hydrology. As mentioned above the proposed route will commence at University Road and progress over the River Corrib at the Salmon Weir Bridge through the city to College Road and the Dublin Road. The proposed scheme lies within Hydrometric Area (HA) 29 Galway Bay South East and HA 30 Corrib. Relevant water body status is outlined within table 13.14 of the EIAR. It is of note from this table that the known status of the waterbodies encountered along the route range between moderate and good, and all are at risk with pressures arising from urban and domestic wastewater, invasive species and urban runoff. Very little SUDs measures are present along the proposed routes.

Baseline Conditions

8.174. The waterbodies examined for the purpose of EIA for the proposed scheme include the following:

- Corrib_020
- Terryland_010
- Carrowmoneash (Oranmore)_010
- Lough Atalia/ Corrib Estuary
- Eglinton Canal
- Gaol River
- Persse's Distillery River
- Friar's River

8.175. Hydrological connections to the above waterbodies are via the sewer system and roadside gullies. A number of crossings which include the Salmon Weir Bridge, Eglinton Canal, Gaol River, Persse's Distillery.

8.176. I draw the Board's attention to Section 13.3.6 of the EIAR in which it is stated that the proposed Scheme will not compromise progress towards achieving "Good" Status or

cause a deterioration of the overall GEP of any of the water bodies that are in scope. It is concluded that the Proposed Scheme does not require assessment under Article 4.7

8.177. The Board should note that an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out as outlined above and considers the impact to other EU legislation accordingly.

Potential Construction Impacts

8.178. The potential for impacts to arise in relation to the construction phase of the development mainly relate to the mobilisation of sediments, hydrocarbons or concrete wash to waterbodies via surface water runoff outfalls. The Board should note that there are a number of outfalls within the River Corrib system and Lough Atalia. Other potential construction related impacts include:

- Dewatering – which may affect the groundwater regime and affect the baseflow to a surface water receptor,
- Disruption to local drainage
- Modifications to the hydraulic characteristics of water features through modifications to the channel dimensions during construction of outfalls and culverts, where required; and
- Additional hard standing areas during construction could affect run off rates.
- Creation of sediment plumes due to significant run off.
- Oil, chemical spillages.

Potential Operational impacts

8.179. The potential impacts for the Operational Phase are related to water quality and hydromorphology only. No potential changes to hydrology are predicted as the drainage design ensures no net increase in runoff rates. The magnitude of effects to the waterbodies listed above is of imperceptible significance. The Board should note that it is proposed to incorporate SUDs measures into the proposed scheme along the entirety of its length where there are none at present. Such works will have a positive impact on the receiving waters surrounding the proposed scheme.

8.180. It is important to acknowledge that there will be additional traffic flows on diverted routes both during the construction and operation of the phases of the proposed

scheme. I have considered such changes and consider that the proposed development, due to the absence of any significant impacts arising in this regard, would result in an imperceptible impact to the water environment within these areas and will therefore not give rise to significant environmental effects.

8.181. In addition, the proposed scheme will result in a loss of 65m of soft canal bank to accommodate the ramp and bridge, however in the context of the overall length of the canal I am satisfied that this loss will not be significant.

8.182. Overall, I have considered the submissions and the contents of the application in relation to water and am satisfied having regard to the existing baseline environment and proposed mitigation measures that there will be no significant residual impacts on the hydrological environment within or connected to the proposed scheme.

Flooding

8.183. The applicant has carried out a flood risk assessment for the proposed scheme, which is appended to the EIAR. The Board should note that stage 1 of the Flood Risk Assessment Concluded that at least part of the site is at risk of fluvial, tidal and groundwater flooding. As a consequence, a stage 2 assessment was necessary.

8.184. Whilst the majority of the site is located in flood zone C I note the following:

- Works at Gaol Road and Galway Cathedral – partially located in Flood zone B, the flood risk to the road is from overtopping of the Gaol River during the 0.1% AEP **fluvial** flood event.
- Dyke Road/Headford Road - partially located in Flood zone B,overtopping of the Dyke Road embankment could result in a 0.1% AEP **fluvial** flood event.
- Victoria Place/Merchant's Road/Queen Street - The area of development is predominantly within the 0.5% AEP extent and is therefore classified as Flood Zone A for **Tidal** flooding. Historic records show that pluvial floods occurred near the site along Dock and Flood Street.
- College Road (to junction with Lough Atalia Road) -Most of the area of development is outside of the 0.5% but a small portion of it is within the 0.1% AEP and is therefore classified as Flood Zone B for **Tidal** Flooding.

- College Road/Lough Atalia Road Junction - The area of development is predominantly within the 0.1% AEP extent and is therefore classified as Flood Zone B for **Tidal** flooding.
- College Road/Lough Atalia Road to Moneenageisha Junction within Flood Zone B (between 1 in 200 and 1 in 1,000-year tidal flood extents).
- Moneenageisha Junction - The area of development is predominantly outside the flood extents with a small portion at the Dublin Road tie-in falling within the 1:1000 year or 0.1% AEP extent and is therefore classified as Flood Zone B for **Tidal** flooding.
- R338 Dublin Road - The area of development is predominantly outside the flood extents with a small portion at the Dublin Road tie-in falling within the 1:1000 year or 0.1% AEP extent and is therefore classified as Flood Zone B for **Tidal** flooding.
- Site Compounds -The compound is predominantly outside the flood extents except for the bridge over Lough Atalia (New Docks) falling within the 1:200 year or 0.5% AEP extent and is therefore partially within Flood Zone A for **Tidal** flooding.

8.185. Given that sections of the proposed project are located within flood zones A and B, a justification test was required as part of the stage 2 assessment. The justification test was applied to the scheme in its entirety and given that the proposed development is classified as essential infrastructure it satisfied the requirements of the justification text.

8.186. The scope of the Proposed Scheme is in keeping with the existing road profile and does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. However, as sections of the area are situated in flood risk zones, the proposal includes drainage design measures including upgrade of the surface water drainage system with additional (or relocated) gullies, additional green area where there is a net increase in impervious area, and attenuation systems via SUDs including tree pits, bioretention areas and catchpits, oversized pipes, and an attenuation tank at College Road/Lough Atalia Road. There remains a residual risk to sections of the Study Area from tidal sources. The worst impacted area are at Victoria Place and at the junction of College Road/Lough Atalia Road.

8.187. In conclusion, the FRA has demonstrated that the risks relating to flooding to the Proposed Scheme are moderate and can be managed for during construction and operation of the Proposed Scheme. Flooding of the access road to the construction compounds will be temporary and will subside, in addition works will be avoided during tidal flood events. Based on the information provided I am satisfied that the proposed development will not exacerbate flooding in the area or downstream in the Corrib river channel and complies with the requirements of the Flood Guidelines.

Mitigation in relation to construction related activities.

8.188. Mitigation measures are outlined in section 13.5 of the EIAR and include measures to control sediments, restrict storage of fuels to bunded areas and restrict the method of concrete use near to water bodies which will ensure that accidental sediment and hydrocarbon release to waterbodies does not arise. The proposed scheme is expected to have an overall positive impact on water quality and is therefore in compliance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive in that it will not cause a deterioration in status in any waterbody or prevent any waterbody from achieving good status. No residual significant negative impacts are therefore expected to arise.

8.189. I have considered all of the written submissions made in relation to Water and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on water can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on water can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

Biodiversity

8.190. Chapter 12 of the EIAR submitted examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to biodiversity. This element of the development will focus on biodiversity in general within the site and its surrounds.

Baseline Conditions

8.191. The lands within and adjacent to the development site are urban in nature with various sections of the route bounded by mosaics of landscaped habitats including hedgerows, treelines and amenity grassland. The predominant habitats under the

majority of the footprint of the Proposed Scheme are artificial and include road and paved surfaces. There are no potential effects on the terrestrial habitats of the Proposed Scheme. There are no rare or protected flora under the footprint of the Proposed Scheme.

8.192. The Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the Proposed Scheme in relation to terrestrial habitats is generally limited to the footprint of the Proposed Scheme, and the immediate environs. The applicant acknowledges within the EIAR that Hydrological and Air Quality impacts can cause effects to biodiversity at significant distances from the development boundaries. The potential for significant effects is therefore considered within a wider zone of influence for these two issues.

8.193. Air quality ZoI is set depending on the activity i.e 50 m from proposed scheme, 200m from construction compound during construction phases and 200m proposed scheme boundary or local road during the Operational Phase.

8.194. The ZoI for aquatic plant and animal species incorporates all estuarine habitats located downstream of where the Proposed Scheme will drain to the proposed crossing points and the marine environment of Galway Bay.

8.195. The ZoI for impacts to aquatic fauna species, such as Atlantic salmon (Salmo Salmar) and lamprey species Lampetra spp., is limited to those water courses that will be crossed by the Proposed Scheme or water bodies to which runoff from the Proposed Scheme could drain to during construction.

8.196. ZoI for other species are as follows:

- Otters, badgers, stoat, and hedgehogs – extends to greater distances and breeding sites is 150m from boundary of scheme.
- Bat roost – 200m which can be adjusted accordingly depending on species. Habitat severance could extend for several km.
- Breeding birds – ex-situ up to 300m.

8.197. Overall, it is clear that the determination of the zone of influence differs depending on the construction and operational activity. It is important to note that the proposed development crosses the Lough Corrib SAC and is adjacent to the Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA. All European Sites within the zone of

influence of the proposed scheme are outlined and examined within the Appropriate Assessment Section of this report and will not be repeated hereunder.

8.198. There are no points of direct connectivity or no direct pathways to European sites for the majority of works in the city centre sections of the proposed works areas, indirect connectivity is via surface water that may drain to the River Corrib. The proposed works include the diversion of surface water drainage to Lough Atalia at the junction of College Road and Lough Atalia Road with the placement of a new drainage pipe and non-return valve to be installed at discharge point into Lough Atalia. Additionally, a new attenuation tank and petrol interceptor will be installed. The discharge point comprises an artificial rock armour habitat but is also the boundary of the Galway Bay Complex SAC and the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

8.199. In order to establish biodiversity baseline conditions, the applicant carried out numerous walkovers of the site and carried out detailed mammal, bird, bat, reptile and amphibian surveys of the route and the surrounding areas between 2019 and and 2022, details of all surveys are outlined under individual sections within chapter 12 of the EIAR.

8.200. In relation to fauna I note the following:

Otters

8.201. Otters are well known to occur in the River Corrib both upstream of the Salmon Weir, in the Eglinton Canal and in the lower estuarine section of the river along Nimmo's Pier and signs have been record in Lough Atalia. This was confirmed during surveys in 2022.

Bats

8.202. The dusk mobile detector survey was carried out on 17 July 2019 completing walked transects of the site of two buildings to be removed the junction of the Headford Road and St. Brendan's Avenue to survey for commuting, feeding and potential roost sites. There were no recorded calls or passing bats on the night of 17 July 2019. There were no signs of emergence from either building during the survey.

8.203. All trees within the project boundary were assessed for bat roost potential – there were no trees of the appropriate size and with sufficient gaps, cracks, crevices or holes to be used by bats.

8.204. I draw the Board's attention to the Inspectors report in relation to the Salmon Weir Bridge ref: ABP-308783 in which it is stated that Bats have been recorded in the vicinity of the bridge. The Board should further note that whilst bats were recorded at this time the area overall was not observed as being significant for bats and only 2 trees were identified as have suitable roost characteristics.

8.205. The Salmon Weir Bridge is lit and it would therefore be reasonable not to observe bats at this location. Thus, whilst I acknowledge the area is not an optimal location for bats to roost I nonetheless consider it prudent to draw the Board's attention to the fact that bats have been recorded historically in the area and it would therefore be reasonable to consider pre construction surveys in relation to the felling of any trees.

Seals

8.206. Harbour/Common seal (Phoca vitulina) are regularly seen in the estuarine waters downstream of Wolfe Tone Bridge.

Salmonids

The Galway Fishery starts from just below the weir and extends the short distance of 250m down to the Salmon Weir Bridge. It is one of the most prolific salmon fisheries in Ireland as the fish queue up to navigate the weir. The River Corrib is registered as a Salmonid Water under the Salmonid Regulations.

Lamprey

The River Corrib is noted as an important river for Sea Lamprey

Birds

8.207. Common breeding birds were observed during fieldwork. I note a number of gull species were observed flying overhead and Herons were observed on the bank, sides. Other species include Mute swans and Dippers, while Common Tern were observed in Lough Atalia and are known to utilise a raft which is 570m from the works area at the outfall near to the Lough Atalia Playground.

8.208. Inner Galway Bay is a key site supporting numbers of waterbirds of international and national importance. Based on counts between 2013/14 and 2017/1837, the mean peak annual count is 13,294 and includes the following species; Great Northern Diver, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Bar-tailed Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Cormorant, Curlew, Dunlin, Little Egret, Great Crested Grebe, Greenshank, Golden Plover, Grey Plover,

Grey Heron, Lapwing, Little Grebe, Redshank, Red-breasted Merganser, Ringed Plover, Shelduck, Shoveler, Teal, Turnstone and Wigeon.

8.209. Wintering bird species recorded at low tide at Lough Atalia in the vicinity of the proposed outfall at Lough Atalia Playground includes Mute swan (Cygnus olor)(12) and Wigeon (Anas penelope)(12) in January 2022, flocks of Blackheaded gulls (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) +70 on 2 March 2022, small numbers of Teal (Anas crecca)(8) and Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus)(12), Redshank (Tringa totanus)(4) and occasional single Little Egret (Egretta garzetta).

8.210. Repeated fieldwork particularly in the vicinity of the eastern extent of Lough Atalia and specifically in relation to the areas of amenity grassland, has determined that these areas are of reduced value to Wintering birds due to the existing levels of human activity and preference for the intertidal and aquatic habitats of the lagoon itself.

Potential Impacts

8.211. Potential impacts relate to contamination of waterbodies arising from sedimentation, accidental leakages and spillages from machinery during construction and the impact that such events could have directly on species and habitat or prey availability for species within the area. In addition, potential impacts relate to noise and disturbance in relation to species such as otter and all bat and bird species within the zone of influence of the scheme. Each species will be examined hereunder.

Otter

Given the nature of the proposed works and the commuting routes of otter in the area and that species utilising this section of the river would be climatised to urban background noise levels it is unlikely that the proposed scheme would have any impact on Otter in the area. Mitigation measures to prevent dust and sedimentation to the river and other waterbodies and measures to protect water quality in terms of chemical contamination will prevent any significant effects arising in relation to Otter.

Bats

8.212. Both residences to be demolished were not determined to have any significant potential for bat roosts, and no bats were recorded. All trees surveyed were similarly unsuitable for roosting bats. There will therefore be no significant adverse effect on bats.

Seals

8.213. There will be no direct effect on Common seals; potential impacts are indirectly related to water quality and food sources. Mitigation for the protection of water quality will therefore prevent such impacts from arising.

Salmonids & Lamprey

8.214. There will be no direct impact on salmonids; potential impacts are indirectly related to water quality and food sources. Mitigation for the protection of water quality will therefore prevent such impacts from arising.

Birds

8.215. There will be no direct effects on birds and there will be no significant loss of bird habitats. Impacts to water quality are unlikely to be of such a magnitude to impact Galway Bay. Disturbance to birds at the proposed outfall at Lough Atalia is possible with the magnitude of effects prior to mitigation would be negative, moderate and temporary.

8.216. Given the proximity of the adjacent Dublin Road opposite the Eye Cinema and the existing level of urban disturbance on a busy national road and walkers on the Lough Atalia pathways, the potential effects from disturbance on birds in this section of the SPA are unlikely in an area up to 150m from the works area.

8.217. The Board should note that the Proposed Scheme will not have any operational effects on Habitats or Flora.

Mitigation measures

8.218. As outlined above mitigation measure relating to the protection of water quality are examined in detail within the water section of this EIAR assessment and will not be repeated hereunder. Measures such as carrying out works outside of bird seasons will avoid any potential impacts to breeding and nesting birds.

8.219. Notwithstanding that there are no invasive plant species within the boundary of the site the applicant nonetheless has submitted an invasive species management plan and will carry out preconstruction surveys to ensure that such species can be adequately prevented from spreading.

8.220. The Board should note that there are specific mitigation measures proposed at 4 locations, these have been examined within the Appropriate Assessment section of the report and are considered to be robust and appropriate to protect waterbodies and such locations.

8.221. Given, the inclusion of avoidance measures for bats and birds and given the inclusion of best practice construction management measures to be employed as per a site specific CEMP with regard to the protection of water courses and maintenance of good water quality for Salmonids, Lamprey, Otters and Seals, there will be no predicted residual effects after the construction phase is completed.

8.222. In addition the Proposed Scheme will incorporate SuDS features in accordance with the Development Plan requirements to reduce the quantity of surface water discharging into the receiving system particularly at Lough Atalia. This is predicted to be a positive long term residual effect.

8.223. Thus, having regard to the foregoing, and having considered the written submissions made in relation to biodiversity and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR, I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on biodiversity can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect significant impacts on biodiversity can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

Material Assets & Waste

8.224. Section 18 & 19 of the EIAR examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to waste and material assets. The study area regarding major infrastructure and utilities comprises all areas within the Proposed Scheme, including both permanent and temporary land take boundaries. The study area for waste has been carried out on a regional basis an encompasses the Connacht Ulster Region.

Material Assets

8.225. All major infrastructure and utilities which may be impacted by the Proposed Scheme have been assessed including:

- Electricity;
- Water / Wastewater;
- Surface Water Drainage;
- Gas; and
- Telecommunications

8.226. Aside from the listed utilities, there are no other major infrastructure items such as railway lines or canals within the Proposed Scheme. The Board should note that the majority of utilities listed are buried beneath the road and footpaths.

8.227. A table listing all major utilities in the vicinity of the proposed scheme is outlined in table 18.5 of the EIAR and refers mainly to overhead lines and underground cables.

8.228. It is important to note at the outset that significant effects are not likely to arise in relation to the proposed development during either the construction phase or operational phase of the development.

8.229. Impacts on existing infrastructure and utilities may occur in order to accommodate changes to junction layouts or changes to carriageway widths. Where protection of utilities in place is not an option, this will involve realignment, upgrade, or replacement of this infrastructure as part of works within those areas.

8.230. I note from the information submitted that the proposed development would require the diversion of medium and low voltage underground and overhead lines, watermains, gas mains and telecommunication ducts and chambers. These diversions will result in temporary and short-term interruptions to services in the vicinity of the proposed works.

8.231. The magnitude of effects arising from infrastructure diversions ranges between imperceptible to Negative, not significant long term. Impacts relating to each individual infrastructure element are outlined in tables 18.12 of the EIAR submitted. Impacts arising to such infrastructure during the operational phase of the development relate to the use of electricity to power new traffic lights and street lighting. Overall effects are expected to be imperceptible in this regard.

8.232. In considering the impacts to material assets, I note that the applicant has also considered the impact of the development on imported materials, such as concrete

and aggregate. No significant effects are expected in relation to imported materials during either phase of the development.

Mitigation

8.233. Mitigation in relation to material assets include protection of major utility and diversion if necessary and ongoing liaison with the utility providers throughout construction. In the event of service disruption, the public will be notified, and disruptions will be minimised in terms of duration. Materials will be sourced locally where possible. There are no mitigation measures proposed for the operation of the development as impacts are expected to be minimal during this phase of the development.

8.234. Residual impacts are not expected.

8.235. Overall, it is clear that the proposed scheme seeks to reduce the impact on material assets within the area and within the scheme itself and I am satisfied that the applicant has made adequate provisions to protect major infrastructure assets and reduce overall materials being brought into the site.

Waste

8.236. Construction waste, including demolition and excavation waste, will be the main type of waste generated as a result of the Proposed Scheme. Waste licenced facilities within the area have been identified and will be used according to the waste management plan.

8.237. It is important to note at the outset that impacts arising from waste are not deemed to be significant.

8.238. It is the intention of the applicant to monitor, manage, reduce and reuse waste where possible. Waste will be appropriately segregated. It is anticipated that up to 700 tonnes of demolition waste which will be generated as a result of the Proposed Scheme which is equivalent to 0.09% of the C&D waste management baseline in the CUWR. The total forecast of surplus excavation material from the Proposed Scheme will be 68,100 tonnes and is equivalent to 8.56% of the C&D waste management baseline for the CUWR. The most likely type and quantity of general construction waste will be surplus concrete and unusable or damaged pipe segments which may arise on-site. Quantities of these materials are estimated to be small; assumed to be approximately between 5% to 15% of construction material delivered to site

8.239. All monitoring and auditing of waste will form part of the mitigation measures to reduce waste arising from the development in compliance with Article 27 of the Waste Directive Regulations.

8.240. Where practicable and appropriate, and if in reusable condition, materials to be reused include street and roadside infrastructure such as bus stops, lighting poles, traffic signals, manhole access covers and signs. It is estimated that potentially up to approximately 19,800 tonnes of recycled / reused aggregates could be incorporated into the Proposed Scheme.

8.241. Operational waste may arise as a result of carriageway maintenance which will be undertaken at regular intervals, or as necessary. This will primarily consist of bituminous mixtures due to maintenance of carriageway pavement. It is envisaged that bituminous mixtures will be reused within new carriageway construction as far as practicable and in accordance with all applicable legislation. It is important to note that the quantity of bituminous mixtures generated over the assumed lifetime of the Proposed Scheme (60 years), will decrease due to an overall narrowing of the carriageway. Therefore, there will be a decrease in maintenance needs during operation of the Proposed Scheme. The magnitude of effects during the operation will therefore be beneficial and long term.

8.242. Given the limited percentage of waste to be generated from the site it is reasonable to state that cumulative effects arising from development along the route will not arise in this instance. The proposed development once operational will in fact reduce waste and therefore have a positive effect on waste quantities in the region.

Waste Mitigation

A construction and demolition resource and waste management plan has been prepared and it is stated that this will be implemented and include measures as follows:

- Stockpiling of existing subbase, capping layer and topsoil material generated on-site for direct reuse in the Proposed Scheme, where practicable, in the proposed Construction Compounds (subject to material quality testing to ensure it is suitable for its proposed end use); and
- Recycled aggregates and reclaimed bituminous mixtures will be specified in the Proposed Scheme, where practicable. For example, suitable recycled

aggregates and appropriate site won material may be specified in the proposed road base / binder layers, subbase layers under footpaths / cycle tracks, and capping layer material within the road, footpath and cycle track pavement, subject to testing to ensure material is suitable for its proposed use.

- Source segregation: Metal, timber, glass and other recyclable material will be segregated (and waste stream colour coding will be used) during construction works and removed off site to a permitted / licensed facility for recycling;
- Material management: 'Just-in-time' delivery, where practicable, will be used to minimise material wastage;
- Any hazardous waste arising will be managed by the appointed contractor in accordance with the applicable legislation; and
- Waste auditing: The quantity and types of waste and materials leaving site during the Construction Phase will be recorded by the appointed contractor. The name, address and authorisation details of all facilities and locations to which waste and materials will be delivered will be recorded along with the quantity to each facility. Records will show material which is recovered, which is recycled and which is disposed of.

8.243. Overall residual impacts in relation to construction waste in terms of both the operational and construction phases following mitigation are not expected to arise. Having reviewed the relevant documents and chapters of the EIAR submitted I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately addressed waste arising from the development and has adequately employed the principles of the circular economy in this regard through the inclusion of waste materials within the project construction where appropriate and the reuse of existing materials along the route. Measures to reduce waste such as on demand delivery will further reduce waste during the construction phase is in accordance with the key tenets of the Connacht, Ulster Waste Management Plan.

Conclusion

8.244. I considered all of the written submissions made in relation to Waste & Material Assets and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on Waste & Material Assets can be avoided, managed and/or avoided by

measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on Waste & Material Assets can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

Risk of major accidents and / or disaster

8.245. An assessment of the risk of major accidents or disasters is outlined in section 19 of the EIAR. In terms of potential risks, it is noted that for the large part the proposed development has a low risk to major accidents or disasters. However, I note that there is a medium risk associated with the potential of striking a main gas line, spreading of invasive species and water contamination during construction.

Mitigation

8.246. Mitigation is proposed in this regard, an invasive species management plan will be implemented to prevent the spread of such plants, surface water management as outlined within the water section of this EIAR assessment will prevent the contamination of surface watercourse and an emergency incident plan will also be prepared and implemented in the event of an emergency.

Conclusion

8.247. Following mitigation, it is stated that the risk of such incidents occurring is low and no significant residual effects are expected in this regard. I considered all of the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR in relation to risk of major accidents or disaster. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on major accidents or disaster can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on major accidents and or disasters can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

Interactions between the Factors and Cumulative Impacts

8.248. Section 20 of the EIAR considers the potential for cumulative impacts to arise and the potential for interactions between factors to occur. Cumulative impacts are considered in the context of other permitted and planned development in the area. Development considered in the context of cumulative development include but are not limited to the following:

- Hanover Limited development comprising demolitions works and the construction of a three-story boutique hotel;
- O'Malley Group (Homes and Developments Limited) comprising demolition works and the construction of additional floors and extension;
- Seagulpoint Limited large scale residential mixed use development and urban regeneration masterplan;
- Bonha, Dock Limited mixed use office development; and
- K. King Construction Clare Galway Limited development of 27 residential units.
- N6 Galway City Ring Road, and
- The Galway Harbour Port Extension

8.249. The applicant has also had regard to the relevant plans for the area and I am satisfied that a robust and detailed assessment of the potential for cumulative impacts to arise has been carried out.

8.250. It is important to note at the outset that for the large part no significant adverse cumulative impacts are expected. All cumulative impacts are outlined in detail within Section 20 of the EIAR and whilst I will not repeat all of the information hereunder, I will have considered the full details of this chapter in my assessment of the cumulative impacts. It is important to note at the outset that cumulative impacts in relation to human health are considered in the long term to be positive, significant.

<u>Water, soils, geology and hydrogeology</u>

8.251. Water, soils, geology and hydrogeology are examined as a group of receptors for the purpose of the consideration of cumulative effects. Standard mitigation measures as outlined within the relevant sections above will avoid significant impacts from arising in relation to such factors and therefore no significant effects are expected. Similarly,

mitigation measures to avoid such impacts also form part of the permitted schemes and I am therefore satisfied that significant cumulative impacts will not arise in this regard. It is of note however that the applicant considered 2 other projects in relation to cumulative impacts arising in relation to water, i.e. N6 Galway Bypass and The Galway Harbour Port Extension, and note overall that impacts are predicted to be not significant.

Traffic

8.252. It is stated in this regard that appropriate construction planning of the Proposed Scheme and other nearby projects will mitigate potential cumulative impacts of general construction disruption on neighbouring communities.

Dust and air pollution & Climate

8.253. An appraisal has been carried out to assess the cumulative risk to sensitive receptors as a result of dust soiling and the health impacts and ecology impacts due to the construction phase of the Proposed Scheme. Other projects within 350 metres of the proposed scheme, as outlined above were considered in this regard. Mitigation measures to prevent dust are to be implemented as outlined within the relevant section above and as such no significant dust impacts are expected to arise in relation to the proposed scheme. Given that such mitigation is standard practice in relation to construction and excavation works, it is reasonable to state that significant cumulative dust emissions are not expected to arise in relation to other development within the area. Such mitigation measures are included within the permitted schemes referred to and I am therefore satisfied given the limited nature of the proposed works and the measures proposed within it to avoid dust emissions, that no significant cumulative impacts will arise.

8.254. Cumulative impacts in relation to climate are considered within the EIAR within a national context. The impacts to climate have been quantified within the Air Quality and Climate Section of this EIAR above and will not be repeated hereunder, however it is important to note that impacts arising from the operation of the development are positive and the proposal will result in a reduction of carbon emissions over the life of the scheme. As mentioned above, construction impacts in terms of climate are considered to be significant this was determined in the absence of ceiling thresholds which are now provided for within the Climate Action Plan 2024. This issue has been

discussed in detail above and will not be repeated hereunder. However, in the context of the proposed development as a whole I acknowledge that the scheme will ultimately have a positive impact on climate I am therefore satisfied that significant long term adverse cumulative impacts will not arise.

Noise & Vibration

8.255. In relation to construction noise, it is stated that due to the nature of the construction works along the Proposed Scheme (i.e., transient, intermittent, and short term at any one sensitive receptor) any cumulative construction noise impacts at sensitive receptors will also be intermittent, transient, and short term. Cumulative vibration impacts are not predicted to have a significant impact on sensitive receptors. All good practice guidelines for construction noise and vibration mitigation measures will be followed to minimise impacts at sensitive receptors during construction period. I am therefore satisfied that significant cumulative impacts will not arise in this regard.

Biodiversity

8.256. Cumulative impacts to biodiversity relate to habitat loss and degradation, disturbance and loss of foraging and habitat fragmentation. It is important to note given the location of the Proposed Scheme and the on-going urban development trends across Galway, there is likely to be continued habitat loss and fragmentation in the area. The applicant however has had regard to the environmental protective policies of the relevant development plan for the scheme and the scheme is compliant with same.

8.257. Cumulative impacts for birds will be local in scale and not significant. The removal of trees will be compensated by the replanting program proposed as part of the scheme, any potential impacts will therefore be temporary in nature.

8.258. Disturbance or displacement impacts to mammals during construction will be temporary or short-term and are not likely to have long-term population level effects, even cumulatively with any future projects that might be proposed.

8.259. In relation to fish it is expected that the proposed development will not result in any cumulative impact.

Archaeology & Architectural Heritage

8.260. The archaeological and cultural heritage assessment did not identify any projects with the potential to give rise to cumulative effects during construction. This was because

works associated with other projects within the ZoI for archaeology and cultural heritage can and will be archaeologically mitigated for. Taken in conjunction with the Proposed Scheme, no significant cumulative impacts have been identified.

Landscape and Visual

8.261. The proposed N6 Galway City Ring Road, permitted An Bord Pleanála (HA07.302848), is likely to give rise to significant, very significant and profound landscape and visual effects along its route. However, as it is separated from the Proposed Scheme by an intervening distance of over 2km, with no intervisibility, potential townscape and visual cumulative effects are considered to be imperceptible during construction. No other potential significant cumulative impacts are envisaged from the construction of the projects included in

8.262. Having regard to the very detailed information provided by the applicant in relation to cumulative effects, I am satisfied that a robust assessment of all cumulative impacts has been carried out and I am satisfied based on the information submitted that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant cumulative effects.

Interactions

8.263. I have considered the interrelationships between factors and whether these may as a whole affect the environment, even though the effects may be acceptable when considered on an individual basis.

8.264. I consider that there is potential for population and human health to interact with all of the other factors (biodiversity, water, air and climate, noise, landscape and visual, cultural heritage and material assets – traffic). The details of all other interrelationships are set out in Section 20.4 of the EIAR which I have considered.

8.265. The proposed construction phase of the development has the most potential to interact with human health and biodiversity in relation to water contamination. Spills to waterbodies of hydrocarbons, concrete wash or other chemicals can have a direct effect on human health and biodiversity. It is important to note therefore that residual impacts to water were expected to be imperceptible and as such there is no likely significant interaction between Water and Human Health or Water and Biodiversity from this Proposed Scheme during construction.

8.266. Similarly human health and biodiversity can interact with Air Quality, noise & vibration and traffic no significant impacts are expected in this regard and I am satisfied on the basis of the information provided that there is no likely significant interaction between these factors and human health. A number of trees and grassland are to be removed as part of the scheme; however these works will be temporary in that trees will be replanted and grass areas reseeded.

8.267. Interactions between soils and water will arise but as mentioned above due to mitigation will not give rise to significant interaction. Similarly, interactions between water traffic and transport, however, all changes in traffic flows would occur within the same drainage catchments and so there would be no significant impacts from this interaction.

8.268. Interactions also occur between Landscape (Townscape) & Visual, Architectural Heritage, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage. The Construction Phase will have impacts on a number of local features of heritage value, Conservation Areas, historic street furniture etc. Excavations may interact with archaeology, but this would be restricted to the construction phase of the development. Having regard to the mitigation measures proposed by the applicant in this regard I am satisfied that significant interactions will not arise.

8.269. Having regard to the foregoing I am satisfied that effects as a result of interactions, indirect and cumulative effects can be avoided, managed and / or mitigated for the most part by the measures which form part of the proposed development, the proposed mitigation measures detailed in the EIAR, and with suitable conditions.

9.0 **Recommendation**

9.1. I recommend that permission is granted subject to the following conditions.

10.0 **Reasons and Considerations**

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

European legislation, including of particular relevance:

- Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directives) which set the requirements for Conservation

of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union, and

- Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020 (EU Commission 2020).

National and regional planning and related policy, including:

- the Climate Action Plan 2023.
- the National Development Plan 2021-2030,
- Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework,
- the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy – 2022-2042,
- Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020,
- the Department of Transport National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022,
- the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, 2019,
- the Cycle Design Manual, 2023, and
- other relevant guidance documents

Regional and local level policy, including the:

- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region

The local planning policy including:

- The Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029
- Galway Transport Strategy
- the nature, scale and design of the proposed road development as set out in the application for approval and the pattern of development along the route,
- the entirety of the documentation submitted by Galway County Council (applicant) in support of the proposed development, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the Natura Impact Statement, and the range of mitigation and monitoring measures proposed,
- the submissions and observations made to An Bord Pleanála in connection with the application,

- 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 European Sites, and
- the report and recommendation of the Inspector including the examination, analysis and evaluation undertaken in relation to appropriate assessment, environmental impact assessment and proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

It is considered that the proposed development would accord with European, national, regional and local planning and that it is acceptable in respect of its likely effects on the environment and its likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Board agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the following sites are the European Sites for which there is likelihood for significant effects on:

- Lough Corrib SAC (site code 000297)
- Galway Bay Complex SAC (site code 000268)
- Inner Galway Bay SPA (site code 004031)

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2:

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 European Sites, 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 likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposal both individually or in combination with other plans or projects, specifically upon the European Sites,

i. mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal,

ii. conservation objectives for these European Sites, and

iii. views of prescribed bodies in this regard.

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.

Environmental Impact Assessment

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

- the nature, scale, location, and extent of the proposed development,
- the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted with the application,
- the submissions received during the course of the application, and
- the Inspector's report.

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, adequately considers alternatives to the proposed development, and identifies and describes adequately the direct, indirect, secondary, and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the environment.

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

Reasoned Conclusion for EIA

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, provided information which is reasonable and sufficient to allow the Board to reach a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment. The Board is satisfied that the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report is up to date and complies with the provisions of EU Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU. The Board considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development, during construction and operation, on the environment are those arising from the impacts listed below.

The main significant effects, both positive and negative, are:

- Negative impacts on **human health and population** arising from construction include noise, traffic and dust disturbance to residents of neighbouring dwellings. All of these impacts are low to moderate. Adequate mitigation measures are proposed to ensure that these impacts are not significant and include adequate mitigation for operational noise.
- Benefits/positive impacts on the **Air and Climate**, the operation of the proposed development will have a significant positive effect on human health and population due to the displacement of CO_2 from the atmosphere arising from an increased use of public transport which will be electrified and the reduction of cars on the route. Negative impacts during construction relate to the embodied carbon of construction materials which will have a negative significant impact but for the short term, any increase in carbon is considered significant, however the construction phase represents a significantly small percentage of the sectoral emission ceilings outlined in Climate Action Plan 2023 for the 2021-2025 carbon budget period.
- Negative impacts on **Water** could arise as a result of accidental spillages of chemicals, hydrocarbons or other contaminants entering watercourses during the construction phase of the development. These impacts will be mitigated by measures outlined within the application documentation and can therefore be ruled out.
- Negative impacts on **biodiversity** relate to the removal of habitat in the form of hedgerows and treelines. Such impacts are not considered significant and can

adequately be mitigated for within the scheme. Vegetation will be planted in the vicinity to bolster existing treelines and hedgerow. Significant impacts are therefore not expected in this regard. The avoidance of trees with roosting potential for bats and the maintenance of commuting corridors, as well as preconstruction bat surveys will ensure significant impacts to bats are avoided. Adequate mitigation measures including compensatory planting and pre-construction surveys, are proposed to ensure the protection of sensitive flora and fauna encountered. Significant impacts to biodiversity can therefore be ruled out.

- **Noise and Dust** impacts arise during the construction phase from construction activities. These impacts will be mitigated through adherence to best practice construction measures in relation to dust and the use of noise abatement at sensitive locations. Significant noise impacts arise in relation to construction noise during nighttime and weekend hours when thresholds are lower. Works will generally be carried out in daytime hours causing no significant effects. In the event that works are required during nighttime or weekend hours, liaison with residents in this regard and the use of noise abatement will reduce the level of impacts. Noise disturbance from the operation of the development can be ruled out, electric bus fleet and less cars will have a positive impact on operational noise. Significant impacts arising from noise and dust disturbance during the construction, operational and decommissioning stages can therefore be ruled out.
- Negative **traffic** impacts arise during the construction phase of the development, these impacts will be mitigated through the implementation of a traffic management plan and a construction management plan. Whilst some localised impacts arising from road closures may arise, significant impacts arising from traffic can be ruled out.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment Report has considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development, during construction and operation, on the environment would be primarily mitigated by environmental management measures, as appropriate.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment Report has considered that the main significant direct and indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the receiving environment. Following mitigation, no residual

significant long-term negative impacts on the environment or sensitive receptors would occur.

Having regard to the above, the Board is satisfied that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable direct or indirect effects on the environment. The Board is satisfied that the reasoned conclusion is up to date at the time of making the decision and that the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report complies with the provisions of Article 3, 5 and Annex (IV) of EU Directive 2014/52/EU.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

The proposed road development would deliver a key component of Galway City Council's Bus Connects programme with the stated aim to improve bus services across the city. It would also provide safer infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists and would deliver sustainable connectivity and integration with other transport services. The public realm along the bus corridor would also be improved.

The Board considered that the proposed road development, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, would be in accordance with national, regional and local planning policies, including multiple policies and objectives set out in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 and having regard to all relevant provisions, including zoning objectives, at or adjoining the overall scheme area. It is further considered that the need, justification and purpose of the proposed road development has been adequately demonstrated, that it is acceptable in terms of its likely effects on the environment and that an approval for the proposed road development would be consistent with national climate ambitions and with the relevant provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2024 through the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, which supports the achievement of Ireland's emission reduction targets. The proposed road development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Conditions

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the proposed development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed particulars.

   Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The following amendments shall be implemented:

   (a) Waterside shall be retained to traffic, and the proposed pedestrian plaza to the rear of Galway Courthouse be removed from the scheme;

   (b) The direction that traffic is permitted to travel on Waterside be reversed, from the Corrib House Tea Rooms to St. Vincent's Avenue at the rear of the courthouse;

   (c) A contra-flow cycle track be provided along Waterside, from St. Vincent's Avenue to Courthouse Square;

   (d) No alterations to the existing footpath and parking under the ownership of Galway Courthouse be proposed.

   Reason: In order to facilitate the appropriate operation of the Court House

3. Parking at Woodquay shall include no less than 2 no. disabled parking spaces.

   Reason: In order to provide adequate disabled parking facilities

4. (a) All mitigation, environmental commitments and monitoring measures identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report shall be implemented in full as part of the proposed development.

   (b) 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.

5. In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist will be appointed by the contractor. The ecologist will advise the contractor on ecological matters during construction, communicate all matters in a timely manner to the developer (Galway City Council) and statutory authorities as appropriate, acquire any licences/consents required to conduct the work, and supervise and direct the ecological measures associated with the permitted scheme. Where appropriate, monitoring shall undertaken by specialists. Monitoring schedules shall be included in Site Specific Habitats Protection and Re-instatement Method Statements.

   Reason: In the interest of environmental protection.

6. Prior to the commencement of any works associated with the development hereby permitted, the Council shall make available a Construction Traffic Management Plan and a Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan for the construction phase of the development. The Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan shall promote the use of public transport, cycling and walking by personnel accessing and working on the construction site. The Construction Traffic Management Plan and Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan shall be implemented in full during the course of construction of the development.

   Reason: In the interest of traffic safety and promoting sustainable travel during the construction period.

7. In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, all works to Protected Structures, and Structures of Cultural heritage interest shall be monitored and recorded by an Architectural Conservation Specialist, in the event that any works are required at such properties, a Re-instatement Method Statements shall be available and held on file. The Architectural Conservation Specialist shall ensure adequate protection of the retained and historic fabric during the proposed works and across all preparatory and construction phases. Any features of new architectural heritage shall be made known to the Conservation Section of Galway City Council as soon as is practicably possible.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection.

8. Noise monitoring shall be carried out during the construction phase of the proposed road development by the developer to ensure that construction noise threshold levels (L_{Aeq}, period) shall not exceed the levels set out in Table 9.7 (Construction Noise Threshold (CNT) levels for the proposed scheme) of Chapter 9 (Noise and Vibration) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. During the construction phase, noise monitoring shall be carried out at representative noise sensitive locations as the work progresses along the scheme to evaluate and inform the requirement and/or implementation of noise management measures. Noise monitoring shall be conducted in accordance with ISO 1996–1 (ISO 2016) and ISO 1996–2 (ISO 2017).
Reason: In the interest of management of construction noise and protection of adjoining amenities.

9. Drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the relevant planning authority for such works in respect of both the construction and operation phases of the proposed development.
Reason: In the interests of environmental protection and public health.

10. Any new or improved 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.

11. Prior to commencement of development, the developer, and/or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the relevant statutory agencies, an updated Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), incorporating all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Assessment Report and a demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols.

The updated CEMP shall also include details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, compound/works area lighting, noise management measures and surface water management proposals.

The construction of the development shall be constructed in accordance with the updated CEMP.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the environment, the landscape, the integrity of European Sites and sensitive receptors and in the interest of public health.

12. The contractor shall monitor queuing time / delays at each works location and record traffic flows on the local road network at locations to be agreed with the planning authority. Such monitoring information shall be provided in a report to the planning authority on a weekly basis.

    Reason: In the interest of orderly development.

13. Prior to the replacement of trees, hedging and planting which is to be removed Galway City Council shall liaise with the relevant landowner with regard to the species, size and location of all replacement vegetation. The Council shall also employ the services of an appropriately qualitied arboriculturist and Landscape Architect for the full duration of the proposed works to ensure landscaping and tree works are implemented appropriately.

    Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity.

14. Tree protection measures for all existing trees shall be put in place prior to the commencement of development or phases of development.

    Reason: In the interest of the protection of biodiversity.

15. All details of soft landscaping shall be available and held on record by the planning authority prior to implementation.

    Reason: In the interest of orderly development.

16. Comprehensive details of the proposed public lighting system to serve the proposed scheme shall be available and held on record by the planning authority, prior to commencement of development.

Reason: In the interests of public safety and visual amenity.

17. The developer shall facilitate the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. In this regard, the developer shall –

(a) employ a suitably-qualified archaeologist who shall monitor all site investigations and other excavation works, and

(b) provide arrangements, for the recording and for the removal of any archaeological material which the authority considers appropriate to remove.

All archaeological pre-construction investigations shall be carried out in accordance with the details specified with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted with the application.

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

18. Prior to the commencement of development, the applicant shall make available and hold on record an Invasive Species Management Plan, which includes details of a pre-construction survey to be carried out. The plan shall include full details of the eradication of such invasive species from the development site prior to construction or if discovered during construction as soon as is practicably possible.

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

20. (a) Trees to be felled shall be examined prior to felling and demolition to determine the presence of bat roosts. Any clearance works shall be in

accordance with the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Guidelines for the Treatment of Bats During the Construction of National Road Schemes.

(b) No ground clearance shall be undertaken and no vegetation shall be cleared from the 1st day of March to 31st day of August, unless otherwise agreed.

Reason: In the interest of protection of local biodiversity.

Sarah Lynch
Senior Planning Inspector

7th June 2024

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

Appendix I

1. Angela Shaw

- Concerns in relation to lack of consultation
- Impacts relating to noise, dust, vibrations and general disturbance are expected.
- Documentation takes not account of the third party's personal health circumstances.
- Third party states the level of disturbance will render her homeless.
- Concerns relating to the validity of the process.
- Applicant is not on schedule of CPO

2. Ard Services Limited

- Objections relates to lands at Circle K College Road which are subject to CPO.
- No objection to scheme as a whole.
- Concerns regarding the impact of day-to-day operations and viability of business due to proposed works.
- Site zoned for 'Enterprise, Light industry and Commercial'
- Works will result in the station being closed for a period of time and in the potential of a complete rebuild.
- Loss of 11 parking spaces will seriously impact the functioning of the site.
- Loss of underground fuel storage tank and pumping stations will result in a loss of 4 of the 8 fuelling stations thus signficantly impacting revenue and causing traffic congestion.
- Impacts can be mitigated through the loss of a small section of cycle lane and the reduction of right turning lane onto Dublin Road.
- The reinstatement of the right turn in to the site.
- Clarification of duration of temporary acquisition, if duration is in excess of 3 months new tanks will be required.
- It is stated that the removal of tank no. 6 will result in a reduction of fuel storage of 20,000l and as such will result in additional deliveries to the site.

- The permanent acquisition of lands will result in any delivery tanker overhanging public land by 2 metres which is contrary to Dangerous Substance Regulations.
- Fuel pipes will also be located under public footpath.
- Canopy will have to be demolished and replaced.
- Storm water services will be outside of the service station site boundaries and will have to be replaced.
- Temporary land take will close station for the duration and impact fuel tanks and associated health and safety of the site.

3. Connacht Hospitality Services

- Overall support, with concerns relating to operational issues.
- Concerns relate Forster Street and relocation of loading bay and the implications for deliveries to businesses at this location.
- Concerns relating to viability of An Pucán, it is requested that loading bay is retained.
- Two-way bus service on Forster Road should be reduced to one way with a stop-go system.
- Agreements for deliveries outside of the hours of 10am and 1pm should be made to facilitate access to properties when needed.
- Service vehicles and emergency vehicles should be allowed access Forster Street at all times. This will permit the functionality of the businesses on the street.

4. Conor Dowd

- Removal of housing at a time of shortage, it is stated that this should not occur.
- Lack of cycle lanes proposed.
- Scheme will not encourage modal shift; an east west orbital bus route should be developed from Knocnacarra to Parkmore to reduce number of buses going through the city.
- A light rail should be investigated.

- More walking and cycling is identified in the plan in the city centre and east of the city.

5. Diarmuid Croghan

- Closure of Salmon Weir bridge result in no direct access for residents from Wood Quay to the hospital. Proposal would add 1.7km onto the distance to the hospital through congested roads.
- Clarification is sought in relation to the use of the bridge at times of emergency.
- Restricted access across the Salmon Weir Bridge will impact access to city for workers and access to the cathedral.
- Details of how the third party and family will be impacted in terms of restitched access over the Salmon Weir Bridge are outlined within the submission.
- Concerns relating to closure of road from Salmon Weir Bridge to Waterside.
- 175 car parking spaces will be lost, concerns are raised in this regard.
- Concerns raised in relation to the adequacy of consultation.
- Scheme will result in significant traffic congestion.
- Traffic is light on University Road.

6. Fairgreen Coach Station Limited – plots 108a.101 & 108a.202

- 586.8sqm of permanent land acquisition.
- Lack of detail in relation to mitigation measures and maintenance of access into property, third party cannot properly assess impact to building.
- No consideration of vehicle movement at the site has been carried out.
- The development will have a severe impact on the functionality of the coach station.
- Position of pedestrian crossing opposite coach exit is considered dangerous.
- Galway City Council have issued a CPO notice in respect of lands they own – 108.a.202.

- Some of the land at 108.a.a202 and 108.a.101 are at the existing entrance to the bus station which was subject to planning permission conditions.
- Lands are owned by GCC and are subject to a 999 year lease.
- Proposal will result in closure of entrance for the duration of construction.

7. Galway City Commuting Network CLG

- Scheme should be accessible by all with a hierarchy applied starting with pedestrians and vulnerable road users.
- Reference is made to current guidance relating to cycling and sustainable transport infrastructure.
- Oral Hearing requested.
- Scheme will have a significant impact on disabled parking.
- Loss of parking spaces (3-5) and replacement at different locations removes accessibility to central locations.
- Wide foot paths and zebra crossings rather than push button crossings are recommended.
- Zebra crossing recommended south of Cathedral Car park and at McSwiggans crossing to Wood Quay Plaza and eastern end of Atalia Road.
- Not clear from drawings how cycle route from west through city will be addressed.
- How will cyclist access Newtownsmith from east and north of city.
- Unclear how contraflow on Daly's Place is to work.
- Dock road is hazardous due to railings.
- College Road – lack of clarity regarding contraflow.
- Restore access from Dyke Road for cyclists.
- Traffic calming measures are recommended to protect cyclists.
- College Road Bus Gate not wide enough to safely overtake cyclists, a separate signalised junction for cyclists is recommended.
- CYCLOPS junctions should be incorporated.
- Appendix to the submission.
- Traffic lane withs are not compliant with international best practice.
- Proposal will discourage cycling and encourage cycling on footpaths.
- One way streets are incompatible with cycling.

- A critique of the proposal in comparison to national policy is provided within the submission. The third party also provides a critique of DMURS and the National Cycle Manual and states that there are inaccuracies in these documents which undermines the appropriateness of the proposed scheme. The proposal is therefore ultimately flawed in its design.
- Concerns are raised in relation to the width of traffic lanes - narrow lanes should only used where there is no through traffic or low speeds and low traffic.
- Third Party states that DMURS recommendations in relation to lane widths are incorrect.
- A critique of all aspects of the development is provided within the appendix to the submission.

8. Gleann Noinin Owners Management Company

- Concerns are raised in relation to Noise, Visual impact,
- Increases in traffic to college road
- Restricted right turning movement will hamper access to estate.
- Impact on property value

9. Kieran Devaney and Family

- Devaney family hold a casual trading licence for the area to be acquired at Eyre Square and has traded on the lands since 1964.
- CPO notification letter was only correspondence from Council.
- The scheme does not facilitate casual trading areas.
- A stay is requested in relation to the lands upon which the Devaney family trade.
- The family are happy to relocate temporarily to facilitate construction but want to relocate once complete.
- No alternative locations for trading have been identified within the scheme.
- Revision is requested to retain trading area and van access.
- City bylaws have to amended to remove trading area.
- Current area is optimal for foot flow.

10. Mary & Patrick Browne

- Objection relates to the bus stop at no. 8&9 University Road.
- Bus stop impedes entrances to no's. 7, 8 & 9 University Road with people queuing a shelter would exacerbate the situation and create a blind spot for drivers.
- Bus shelter will encourage anti-social behaviour and litter.
- Bus stop is used by multiple services not just Bus Eireann.
- Bus Stop to be moved to lands directly at university gates.

11. Niall Faherty

- Removal of 66% of carparking at Woodquay will significantly affect business and residential properties.
- Scheme will put pressure on east to west commuters.
- Traffic has increased due to university students commuting due to a lack of accommodation which has put additional pressure on road network.
- Scheme will worsen traffic congestion.

12. Olivia Heffernan

- Submission relates to an existing 11-bedroom guest house
- Occupancy rates are said to directly correlate to the availability of free parking at the b&b.
- Existing car park will be reduced by 34% with an additional reduction of 76.7sqm for temporary acquisition.
- During construction carparking spaces will reduce to 2 from 12. This is state to result in the closure of the business.
- Certainty in terms of project dates is required as bookings are taken a year in advance.
- On completion of the project only 5 permanent parking spaces would be achievable which will result in the closure of the b&b.
- Relocation of B&B entrance closer to junction will impact health and safety of road users which will impact the third party's ability to get insurance for the property.
- Proposed layout will result in more accidents at junction.

- Alternatives for college road/Moneenageisha Road junction were not explored, junctions works would be better located at Huntsman Inn.

13. Progressive Friends Taxi Association

- Object to removal of taxi rank at Eyre Square

14. Ryan Family

- Concerns in relation to lack of correspondence and lack of detail on plans.
- Concerns relating to increased noise, light and air pollution.
- Loss of privacy and amenity.
- Security concerns.
- Concerns over access to oil tank for refilling at rear of property.
- Double decker buses will overlook house.
- Reduction of on street parking.
- Any reduction in the number of bridges will have a direct effect on residents and businesses in the city.

15. Sean & Phil Scahill

- Scheme design and EIAR appear to be carried out by one team.
- EIAR reads as a support document for scheme.
- EIAR is not an objective critique of the scheme and is contrary to EIA Directive.
- Scheme relies on Galway Transport Strategy and there is no evidence that this strategy was subject to SEA.
- Any grant of permission would be contrary to European Community Law.
- Scheme would signficantly impact the residential environment of the suburb.
- The need for the scheme contradicts that stated within the Galway Bypass.
- Proposed vehicle to be used in scheme contradict the Climate Action Plan 2021.
- Galway Transport Strategy was not subject to AA.
- Need for scheme is not relevant to EIAR.
- Consideration of the alternatives does not comply with the EIA directive.

- The consideration of light rail as an alternative was not within the jurisdiction of Galway County Council to consider or implement, the consideration of this infrastructure is therefore considered to be futile by the third party's representative.
- Scheme will have a devastating impact on third party's property.
- Concerns relating to dust, noise, vibrations and access to property and the assessment of same within the EIAR.
- Violates third party's property rights and cannot be approved under the Roads Act S 51.

16. Shane Cosgrave

- No provision of segregated cycle lanes.
- Design report does not indicate that segregation was properly considered in accordance with the national cycle manual.
- Disability audit and Road User audit are not included in the documents.
- In relation to University Road, the report fails to include analysis in relation to traffic reduction in order to justify the provision of a non-segregated cycle lane.
- In this section of the scheme, wide footpaths and parking are prioritised over cycling.
- The road safety audit does not address safe access for cyclists into the university.
- It is requested that a segregated cycle lane is provided along University Road with a safe connection to the university.
- It is also requested that a contra flow or segregated cycle path to connect Gaol Road to Nuns Island should be provided.

17. Shane Foran

- Oral Hearing requested; third party is a community representative who sits on the Transport Strategic Policy Committee of Galway City Council.
- The overall intent of the scheme is welcomed.
- Bus priority measures should be trialled.
- Cyclist will be impeded by nature of the design.

- Scheme does not address current barriers to cyclists, an assessment report is submitted and the issues raised can be summarised as follows:
    - No way for cyclist coming from east to access the new cycle bridge at newtownsmith.
    - Cycle lanes are too narrow.
    - Mixed or shared cycle lanes should only be permitted where traffic is low.
    - DMURS is inaccurate in relation to the recommended lane widths in cities and towns.
    - National Cycle manual is incorrect in relation to the suitability of narrow lane widths in circumstances of higher traffic volumes.
    - Extensive paragraphs within the submission are dedicated to the acceptability of the proposed cycle widths.
    - Removing parking from university road will provide additional space for improved lane widths.
    - Relocate parking to Millennium Park.
    - No formal provision of cycle access from north to south Eyre Square, where traffic is restricted, bicycles should retain access.
    - No cycling provision in Forster St, this is unacceptable.
    - A shared surface with traffic and advisory cycle lanes could be provided.
    - College road bus gate will encourage cycling on the footpaths.
    - Additional lands to be acquired on college road to facilitate cycle lane for outbound cyclists.
    - Only two routes in approach to city from east. One-way streets for cycling are not suitable. Two way cycling on all streets should be provided.
    - Due to access restrictions on surrounding routes, the Salmon Weir Bridge will not be utilised to the level expected.

18. Stephan Francis

- Submission relates to the Huntsman Inn and generally supports the project and the retention of two yellow boxes at both entrances.

19. The Court Service

- Removal of direct access to the rear of the Courthouse is a serious concern for the operation of the Court.
- The redesign of the northern and western area of the Courthouse as a pedestrian area will impact rear access used by An Garda Siochana and prevent separate access into the Court for prisoners, members of the Judiciary and Gardai. These are required under EU law to protect victims of crime.
- Parking will be removed which is used by Court Staff to transport and unload sensitive documents. Carparking at the Court house is requested to remain.
- The introduction of pedestrian area and access to the rear of the Court poses a significant security threat to employees of the Court or members of Jurys.
- Meeting rooms are located to the rear of the Court, bringing pedestrians closer to these rooms increases the risk of being overheard.
- It is proposed to develop a cycle way near the waterside away from the court property.
- Prison vans should be allowed access the rear of the Courthouse via St. Vincent Avenue R863.

20. (a) Yeats College

- Introduction of a mini roundabout to allow traffic to return up college road.
- The proposal would have a detrimental impact on the accessibility of Yeats College for all users.

Appendix 2

An Taisce

- Welcome the intent of BusConnects
- Cycling should become before mechanised travel this is not reflected in BusConnects.
- Scheme will lead to higher car usage on College Road and University Road, all on street parking should be converted to bus lanes on these roads.
- Galway Docks should be included in the scheme, with on street parking on Dock Street/R336 from St. Nicholas Street to New Dock Street being converted to outgoing bus lane.
- University College Galway Hospital should have been included with a plan to route buses through Hospital to Seamus Quirke Rd.

DAU

- The department recognises the assessment of archaeology within the EIAR submitted and recommends conditions.
- The EIAR and NIS has been reviewed and it is recommended that all mitigation measures within should be complied with.
- Insufficient information in relation to Bats.
- LED white lighting can be more harmful to insect populations. Lights should only be directed where needed and warm light bulbs should be used. Controls should be in built to lighting to allow cut off and dimming.
- In terms of built heritage, it is suggested that the information is not of sufficient detail and concerns are raised in relation to the lack of oversight given the absence of a conservation officer within the Council.
- It is recommended that a conservation officer is engaged to oversee the implementation of the proposed works.
- Conditions in relation to built heritage are recommended.

North Western Regional Authority

- Policy RPO 3.6.7 Supports the development of both the Galway Ring Road and the Galway Transport Strategy.

- Section 6.3 of the RSES is relevant.
- Overall the RSES supports the proposed project.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

- Capacity issues are noted at a number of national road junctions in the study area. The N6 will remain a strategic national road corridor in the Galway and the region pending provision of the N6 Galway ring road.
- Proposals to respond to capacity issues at the national road junctions should be identified within the updated Galway Transport Strategy.