



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report

### ABP-318876-24

#### Development

Retention for temporary car park, and permission for additional car parking, construction of extension to rear, demolition of storage area, upgrade of wastewater treatment system and surface water system and all associated site works.

#### Location

Tarmon National School, Ballinphuill Townland and Termon Beg Townland, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon.

#### Planning Authority

Roscommon County Council

#### Planning Authority Reg. Ref.

2353

#### Applicant

The Board of Management of Tarmon National School

#### Type of Application

Permission & Retention

#### Planning Authority Decision

Grant Retention Permission & Grant Permission

#### Type of Appeal

Third Party

#### Appellant

John, Claire and John Patrick Larkin

**Observers**

None

**Date of Site Inspection**

7<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Inspector**

Ian Campbell

## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The appeal site is located in the townlands of Ballinphuill and Termon Beg, c. 4 km east of Castlerea, Co. Roscommon.
- 1.2. The appeal site has a stated area of 1.94 Ha. and accommodates Tarmon National School, a 259<sup>1</sup> pupil, eight classroom school with a stated floor area of c. 2,000 sqm. A pre-fabricated building/classroom is located to the east of the main school building. An astro-turf pitch and grass playing pitch are located to the north and north-west of the school building.
- 1.3. Access to the school is from a local road (L-1616-18) which in turn is accessed off the R377 east of the appeal site.
- 1.4. The area to the east of the school building, which previously accommodated a ball court, is use for car parking. A temporary car park, which it is proposed to retain, is provided within an gravel surfaced area east of the school (on lands owned by an adjacent landowner, letter of consent submitted). A permanent car park and set-down/turning area, which it is proposed to extend/reconfigure, is situated to the west of the school.
- 1.5. The adjacent area is rural in character. There are a number of detached dwellings in the vicinity of the school, the closest of which is located to the south-east. There are a number of residences c. 200 metres west of the school on the southern side of the local access road.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development comprises;

Retention permission for –

- Temporary car park (east of main school building) and comprising 32 no. spaces.

Permission for -

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<sup>1</sup> Updated enrolment figure submitted in response to PA's Further Information request.

- Demolition of storage areas (stated floor area 30 sqm).
- Construction of a single storey extension (stated floor area 672 sqm) to rear/north of existing school building to accommodate;
  - 5 no. classrooms (i.e. 3 no. mainstream classrooms and 2 no. special education needs classrooms).
  - Office, storeroom and circulation areas.
- Additional car parking spaces (i.e. a total of 56 no. permanent car parking spaces to be provided).
- Upgrading of existing foul and surface water treatment system (additional tank and infiltration pod).
- New footpath along front/roadside boundary of school.
- Associated site works.

2.2. The planning application was accompanied by the following;

- Cover letter.
- Civil Design Report.
- Landscape Plan (in response to Further Information request).

### 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

#### 3.1. Request for Further Information

Prior to the decision of the Planning Authority to grant permission and retention permission for the proposed development, the Planning Authority requested Further Information.

##### 3.1.1. Further Information was requested on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2023 as follows:

Item 1 – confirm pupil numbers.

Item 2 – confirm whether car parking spaces at ball court to south-east of site forms part of proposed development, and confirm access/egress arrangement for same.

Item 3 – confirm necessity for temporary car park to east of site, intended duration of use for same and submit a layout plan of this area including pedestrian route to school.

Item 4 – demonstrate compliance with Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 in terms of car parking standards and indicate car parking numbered sequentially on layout plan.

Item 5 – submit the following regarding the upgrade of the wastewater treatment system;

- a) evidence of survey.
- b) confirmation of size of existing infiltration system.
- c) details of specification of proposed additional tank and infiltration pod.
- d) confirm if size of percolation area is being increased.
- e) confirm that system has capacity for additional loading.
- f) confirm that existing system has been installed as per PA. Ref. 15/402.
- g) confirm any deviations from permitted system.
- h) confirm if system includes a balancing tank.
- i) submit details of original percolation testing and depth of trial hole.
- j) confirm if EPA Code of Practice separation distances can be met.
- k) submit cross section of system.
- l) submit records of maintenance of system.
- m) submit site layout plan indicating details of existing and proposed system.

Item 6 – submit surface water drainage proposal which do not entail discharging to the public road.

Item 7 – submit a site layout plan showing compliance with the requirements of conditions attached to ABP. Ref. 306701-20/PA. Ref. 19/608, specifically regarding car parking and landscaping.

Item 8 – submit a landscape plan.

**3.1.2. Further information<sup>2</sup> submitted on 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 2023:**

Item 1: 259 no. pupils are currently enrolled at the school given the unexcepted enrolment of non-national pupils. Pupil number projections indicate that pupil numbers will not exceed 260 no. and will likely fall back to c. 240 no. in the next five years.

Two of the five proposed classes are to accommodate existing special classes, one which is accommodated in a sensory room and another which is accommodated in a public circulation area. The school operates 5 no. special autism classes and will not be opening any additional autism classes.

The three remaining proposed classrooms are intended to accommodate third, fifth and sixth class, which are currently accommodated in a dressing room, a temporary prefabricated building and a store respectively.

Item 2: the ball court is used for car parking. The ball court is to be replaced by car parking. *Drawing No. 21.103.A104-Rev PL1* indicates amendments to the configuration of car parking in the south-east corner of the site, including the setting back of car parking bays from the entrance. Pedestrian crossings are indicated on this drawing.

Item 3: *Drawing No. 21.103.A104-Rev PL1* indicates the layout of the temporary car park to the east of the site, including pedestrian crossings. This car park is on third party lands, serves the temporary classroom accommodation and will be removed once the proposed extension is completed and the temporary accommodation removed.

Item 4: *Drawing No. 21.103.A104-Rev PL1* indicates car parking for the entire site numbered sequentially. The temporary car park will not be in use once the proposed development is complete. The CDP car parking requirement is 1.5 car parking spaces per staff member, 5% (minimum) of which should be accessible spaces. There are 35 no. staff employed in the school and 52 no. car parking spaces are therefore required. 56 no. car parking spaces are provided, of which 3 no. should be accessible spaces. There are 2 no. existing accessible spaces provided plus 1 no. additional accessible space.

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<sup>2</sup> The further information submitted was deemed significant and revised public notices were submitted in accordance with Art. 35 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

Item 5: report prepared by Coyle Environmental addresses issues raised in Item 5 of the request for Further Information.

Item 6: the attenuation area has been removed and replaced with a soakaway into which storm pipes will connect (see *Drawing No.'s 21.103-201 and 21.103-202*).

Item 7: updated site plan (*Drawing No. 21.103 A104-Rev PL 1*) indicates the layout of car parking for the entire school, including set-down areas, standard car-parking spaces, accessible car parking spaces and pedestrian crossings.

Item 8: a Landscape Masterplan, Boundary Plan and Detail Plan has been submitted.

### 3.2. **Decision**

The Planning Authority issued a Notification of Decision to **GRANT** retention and permission on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 2023 subject to 14 no. conditions. The following conditions are of note;

**C2:** the maximum number of pupils at the school shall be 260. No increase in enrolment numbers in excess of 260 shall be permitted in the context of the development hereby permitted.

**C3:** traffic management plan to be submitted.

**C8:** temporary car park shall be retained in conjunction with the temporary classroom accommodation on site. Within three months of the cessation of use of the temporary classroom accommodation, the lands utilised for the temporary car park shall be returned to their former agricultural state, unless prior to that time permission has been granted for the retention of the car park for a further period.

**C10:** upgrade works to the wastewater treatment arrangements shall be completed and operational prior to or in conjunction with the first occupation of the extended area of the school as hereby permitted.

### 3.3. **Planning Authority Reports**

#### 3.3.1. Planning Reports

- 3.3.2. The first report of the Planning Officer generally reflects the issues raised in the request for Further Information. The report also notes the acceptability of the principle of the proposed development.

Further Information Recommended.

- 3.3.3. The second report of the Planning Officer notes that the applicant's response to the Further Information request is acceptable.

The report of the Planning Officer recommends a grant of retention and permission consistent with the Notification of Decision which issued.

- 3.3.4. Other Technical Reports

Environment Department – first report recommends Further Information in relation to the existing wastewater treatment system and the proposal for the attenuation tank to discharge to the storm drain. Second report recommends standard conditions.

Castlereagh Area Engineer – report recommends standard conditions.

**3.4. Prescribed Bodies**

None received.

**3.5. Third Party Observations**

The report of the Planning Officer refers to 1 no. observation having been received in relation to the planning application. The issues in the observation are summarised as, visual impact; the removal of landscaping; traffic congestion; and concerns regarding the proposal as it relates to the set-down area and temporary car park.

An observation was also made in respect of the Further Information submitted by the applicant to the Planning Authority. The issues in the observation are summarised as, no justification for extension to school; non-compliance with policies in CDP regarding placemaking and the creation of sustainable communities; school is not located in urban area or on a public transport corridor and does not therefore align with CDP Core Strategy; insufficient car parking provided; circulation area is inadequate; and landscape plan is not sufficient and conditions of previous permissions not complied with.



## 4.0 Planning History

### Appeal Site:

**PA. Ref. 21/131 & ABP. Ref. 310323-21<sup>3</sup>** – Permission GRANTED for floodlighting to astroturf pitch.

**PA. Ref. 20/257** – Permission GRANTED for 2 no. prefabricated classrooms.

**PA. Ref. 19/608 & ABP. Ref. 306701-20** – Retention permission GRANTED for (i) changes to development previously granted under PA. Ref. 15/402, including parking, changes to access road, elevations, and (ii) changes to the development granted under PA. Ref. 14/256 including changing rooms/storage to classrooms, elevational changes. Permission GRANTED for single storey ASD classroom block.

**PA. Ref. 15/402**– Permission GRANTED for extension to school, car parking, new entrance, astroturf pitch and new wastewater treatment system.

**PA. Ref. 14/256** – Permission GRANTED for extension to school.

**PA. Ref. 07/1415** – Permission GRANTED for extension to school.

**PA. Ref. 00/1916** – Permission GRANTED for extension to school and new septic tank.

## 5.0 Policy Context

### 5.1. Development Plan

5.1.1. The Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028 is the relevant development plan. The appeal site is not subject to a specific land-use zoning under the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028.

5.1.2. The provisions of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 relevant to this assessment are as follows:

#### Chapter 11 (Social, Community and Cultural Development)

- Objective SCCD 11.5

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<sup>3</sup> The decision of the Board was quashed by the High Court, GL1182 refers.

- Table 11.1 New Educational Facilities Required to 2028

## Chapter 12 (Development Management Standards)

- Table 12.1 Car Parking Standards

The appeal site appears to be located within the Tusk/Rathcroghan Plateau Landscape Character Area which is identified as being of Exceptional Value (one of two such areas in the County).

### **5.2. Natural Heritage Designations**

- Bellanagare Bog SPA (Site Code 004105) – c. 3 km north.
- Bellanagare Bog SAC (Site Code 000592) – c. 3 km north.
- Bellanagare Bog pNHA (Site Code 000592) – c. 3 km north.

### **5.3. EIA Screening**

(See Form 1 and Form 2 attached to this report) Having regard to the limited nature and scale of the development and the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity of the site, as well as the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

## **6.0 The Appeal**

### **6.1. Grounds of Appeal**

This is a third-party appeal against the decision to grant retention permission and permission. The grounds for appeal can be summarised as follows;

#### Re. Requirement for proposal:

- Census data does not support the requirement for the proposed development.

- Castlerea has a requirement for 2 no. additional classroom in the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (CDP), this is being provided at St. Michael's Special School. The Department of Education submitted an assessment of accommodation requirements to Roscommon County Council in preparation of the CDP (submission from Department of Education to RCC attached to appeal submission).
- The Department of Education projections advise that there is a downward trend in primary level demand.
- School places remain unfilled in other primary schools in the area however Tarmon NS has increased pupil number by over 107 since 2018.
- Pupils could be accommodated in other schools in the area where there is capacity to accommodate pupils, thereby negating overcrowding in Tarmon NS.
- The overcrowding at the school is due to diverting pupils from Castlerea and other settlements.
- The proposal will deplete pupil numbers from other schools in more sustainable and serviced areas. The proposal would be more appropriate in the town.
- A creche operates from Tarmon NS and this contributed to overcrowding.
- The proposal will affect other schools access to funding, as funding is based on pupil numbers.

Re. Non-compliance with Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 - 2028:

- The growth of Tarmon NS is contrary to the objectives of the CDP as the proposal could be accommodated within settlements. Core Strategy 2.16 and 2.18 are referred to as being of particular relevance in this context.
- The proposal is not required to serve local children. The proposal is not located in a sustainable settlement but a rural area serviced by a narrow local road, and is contrary to the Core Strategy in the CDP. The majority of pupils will travel to the school by car or bus from Castlerea and surrounding settlements, resulting in an increased travel demand, contrary to the aim of low carbon, climate resilience. The proposal does not align with Section 11.4 of the CDP in this regard.

#### Re Car Parking/Circulation Area:

- Concerns in relation to the impact of the proposed development on the local road network, which is narrow with no pedestrian/cycle infrastructure. Traffic often backs up/turns on the public road and vehicles use the driveways of houses in the area to turn, hampering access to property. Agricultural activity is also affected by traffic congestion.
- The proposal will reduce the number of car parking spaces at the school, thereby forcing buses and parents to park and turn on a narrow road.
- When the use of the temporary car park ceases the school will not be able to meet the needs of its staff, exacerbating traffic issues.
- A Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) is required.
- The views expressed by the Transport Department, as summarised in the PA's report, are incorrect.
- Maintaining a continuous flow of traffic within the circulation area is key to the access arrangement for the school. Making this area smaller will force traffic onto the public road.
- Roscommon County Council have not considered the cumulative impact in terms of traffic impact of the proposed development and the recently granted creche (PA. Ref. 23/60 refers), or the traffic implications of the proposal.
- The numbers of staff referred to by the applicant are incorrect. Reference has previously been made by the applicant to 40 no. staff members (i.e. submission in support of planning application to PA. Ref. 23/60 in July 2023, and attached to appeal submission). 60 no. car parking spaces would be required for 40 no. staff.
- The proposal does not accord with the guidance published by the Department of Education and Skills for primary and secondary schools in relation to drop off and pick up areas, specifically 1,500 sqm is recommended for schools of 8 no. classrooms or greater whereas the proposal would entail an area of 363 sqm serving 13 no. classrooms. Circulation areas should be increased when

catering for children with special needs. The set down area is constrained by car parking, hindering the free flow of traffic.

- The increase in pupil numbers the school (i.e. from 150 in 2019 to 259 in 2023) has been in the absence of adequate classrooms and car parking or traffic calming measures. The area is ill equipped to cater for the number of pupils and the proposal is overdevelopment of the site.
- Roscommon County Council's condition which caps pupil numbers at 260 no. should be upheld.

Re. Landscaping/Amenity Impacts:

- Tarmon is located in Landscape Character Area 28, which is of exceptional landscape value.
- The school is poorly integrated into the landscape.
- Reference is made to Department of Education guidelines in relation to landscape appraisal.
- The landscape plan submitted is ineffective in terms of assimilating the proposal into the receiving landscape. No landscaping is proposed along the western and south-western side of the site where the prominence of the school will be experienced. The school is also elevated c. 1.5 metres relative to the local ground levels, increasing its visual impact and also impact on adjacent dwellings.
- Without landscaping the glare from lighting at the school is particularly noticeable at nighttime.
- Landscaping proposals have been sought in previous permission but not submitted (e.g. under ABP. Ref. 306701-23).

Re. Department of Education Standards:

- The rationale for funding the proposed extension to the school has been sought from the Department of Education.

Re. Non-compliance with conditions of previous permissions:

- The proposal does not include a pedestrian crossing on the northern side of the site, as required by a Condition No. 2 of PA. Ref. 19/608 & ABP. Ref. 306701-20.

The appeal submission requests that the Board apply planning conditions to control the expansion of the school in line with the Roscommon CDP and to preserve the residential amenity of the rural area.

## **6.2. Applicant Response**

The applicant has submitted a response in respect of the third party appeal submission. The submission notes;

- Preference is frequently expressed for rural schools and this is why many pupils attending the school come from the urban area of Castlerea.
- Many pupils attend the school from Tarmon Manor, a housing estate on the edge of Castlerea.
- The size of the school and the proposed extension is driven by a general demand for school places and the demand from children with additional needs.
- The proposal entails 3 no. mainstream classrooms and 2 no. SEN classrooms. The school currently has 3 no. SEN classrooms, and in addition to the proposed 2 no. additional SEN classrooms will have 5 no. SEN classrooms, each SEN classroom will accommodate 6 no. pupils. The 3 no. mainstream classrooms will cater for existing numbers to address overcrowding, rather than providing additional capacity for new pupils.
- Aside from the school there is no other traffic generator in the area.
- Local roads operate above capacity as a result of the school for short periods, i.e. less than an hour per day and less than 200 days per year.
- Additional car parking has been provided. The 1.5 car parking space requirement per staff member is arbitrary and is set as a minimum whereas conventional guidance sets car parking standards at maximums.
- 7 no. staff members car share.

- The PA express no concerns in relation to traffic. There have been no serious accidents in the vicinity of the school in recent years.
- The applicant requests discretion in respect of attaching a condition capping pupil numbers at 260 given that siblings seek to attend the same school. The design of the building would facilitate pupil numbers of 1,144 no. in the context of fire safety. Whilst pupil number were capped under PA. Ref. 18/164 (Cloverhill School) traffic conditions at this school differed compared to Tarmon NS.
- The school has received very few complaints from agricultural operators in the area.

### 6.3. **Planning Authority**

None received.

### 6.4. **Observations**

None received.

## 7.0 **Assessment**

7.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including the appeal, and the applicant's response to same, and having inspected the site, and having regard to the relevant national and local policy and guidance, I consider the main issues in relation to this appeal are as follows:

- Principle of Development/Compliance with Development Plan
- Traffic Impact
- Impact on Visual and Residential Amenity
- Issues Arising

### 7.2. **Principle of Development/Compliance with Development Plan**

7.2.1. The appellants dispute the demand for the proposed development and contend that the extension of the school in a rural, un-serviced area would be contrary to the

provisions of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, including the Core Strategy, and that the proposal would be more appropriate within an established settlement which is served by public transport.

- 7.2.2. The proposal comprises an extension to an existing school, specifically the provision of 2 no. SEN classrooms and 3 no. mainstream classrooms. In response to a request for Further Information the applicant confirmed that the 2 no. proposed SEN classrooms are to accommodate existing special classes (one which is accommodated in a sensory room and another which is accommodated in a public circulation area). The 3 no. proposed mainstream classrooms are intended to accommodate third, fifth and sixth class, which are currently accommodated in a dressing room, a temporary prefabricated building and a store respectively. The applicant's response to the appeal reiterates that the proposal does not provide additional capacity for new pupils. On the basis of the foregoing I note that the proposed development is not intended to cater for a significant expansion of the school in terms of pupil numbers over and above that currently enrolled.
- 7.2.3. The appellants contend that the proposal would be contrary to elements of the Core Strategy of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, in particular Objective 2.16 and Objective 2.18. I note that Objective 2.16 seeks to ensure that serviced settlements maintain existing population levels and services. Noting the nature and extent of the proposed development, that being an extension to an existing school, I do not consider that the proposed development would be contrary to, or affect the implementation of Objective 2.16. Objective 2.18 relates to rural areas and seeks to ensure that appropriate development is facilitated having regard to the carrying capacity and environmental sensitivity of the rural area. Similarly, having regard to the nature and scale of the proposal, and importantly noting that the proposed development does not provide for a significant expansion of the school in terms of pupil numbers over and above the number currently enrolled, I am satisfied that the proposed development accords with Objective 2.18.
- 7.2.4. The appellants state that the proposal is not required to serve local children and that the majority of pupils will travel to the school by car/bus from Castlerea and surrounding settlements, resulting in an increased travel demand, contrary to the aim



of low carbon, climate resilience. I note that there is no information available in the application/appeal in relation to where pupils reside/travel from. In any event, as stated above, the proposed extension to the school is intended to address overcrowding and is not intended to cater for an increase in new pupils. I am therefore satisfied that the proposed development will not result in an increase in travel demand.

7.2.5. Objective SCCD 11.5 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 provides that the expansion of existing schools in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area will be supported. The proposed development comprises an extension to an existing school which is located c. 4 km from Castlerea. The Development Plan seeks to encourage the development of new<sup>4</sup> schools along sustainable transport corridors (see Objective SCCD 11.6) given that the proposal comprises an extension to an existing school the appellants' contention that the proposal is contrary to the Development Plan as the school is not located along a sustainable transport corridor is moot in my opinion. As addressed above, noting the nature of the proposal, which does not cater for a significant increase in pupil numbers over and above the number currently enrolled I am satisfied that the proposed development is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and complies with Objective SCCD 11.5.

7.2.6. Regarding the justification for the proposed extension of the school, the appellants highlight the projected requirement for new educational facilities set out in Table 11.1 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, and also refer a submission which was made by the Department of Education to Roscommon County Council during the preparation of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 which suggests a low demand for school places in Castlerea. As addressed above the proposed extension is intended to address existing overcrowding at the school and accommodates existing pupils in this regard. In any event, having reviewed the information set out in Table 11.1 I do not consider that the Development Plan seeks to limit or cap school accommodation, but rather the information set out in Table 11.1 is a projection.

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<sup>4</sup> My emphasis.

7.2.7. In summation, having regard to the nature of the proposed development and its location, I am satisfied that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable at this location, that the proposal is justified and that it accords with the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, including the Core Strategy.

### **7.3. Traffic Impact**

7.3.1. The crux of the appellants' appeal concerns traffic impact. The appellants argue that the existing school generates traffic volumes which gives rise to congestion and on occasion inhibits access to individual properties, and hampers the carrying out of agricultural activity in the area. The appellants note that the turning area proposed is too small to cater for the number of vehicles using the school car park and raise concerns in relation to the impact of the proposed development on the local road network, given its narrow nature and absence of pedestrian/cycle infrastructure. The appellants also contend that a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA) is required and that Roscommon County Council have not assessed the cumulative impact of the proposed development with a recently granted creche (PA. Ref. 23/60 refers), or the traffic impact of the proposal in general.

7.3.2. I acknowledge that during particular times of the day traffic congestion may be an issue in the environs of the school, however I note that this is not atypical in the vicinity of schools and is confined to short periods of the day and is also limited to term time. Importantly however, I note that the proposed extension is replacing existing accommodation and therefore does not cater for a significant expansion of the school in terms of pupil numbers over and above the number currently enrolled. I also note that the school is the only significant generator of traffic in the area and that the proposed development provides car parking which is in excess of Development Plan standards.

7.3.3. Having reviewed the layout of the proposed car park (to the west of the school) I am satisfied that adequate space is available for cars to drop off pupils, and that cars can turn and exit the car park without the need for reverse manoeuvres. The appellants refer to Department of Education technical guidelines however I note that these guidelines are intended for new schools.

- 7.3.4. Regarding the requirement for the submission of a Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), I note that TIA's are required for developments which are of a size or type that would generate significant additional trips on adjoining transport infrastructure. Table 2.1 of the Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (TII), 2014 sets out thresholds for such developments. From reviewing these thresholds I note that the proposed development does not fall within a category of development where a TIA would be required based on Table 2.1. I further note that the proposed development would not fall under the sub-threshold criteria in Table 2.3 of the Guidelines. I am therefore satisfied that a TIA is not required.
- 7.3.5. The appellants note that Roscommon County Council have not taken account of the potential cumulative impact of a recently permitted childcare facility on the local road network. From reviewing the documentation on Roscommon County Council's planning portal I note that the childcare facility permitted under PA. Ref. 23/60 was previously accommodated within Tarmon NS and as such the development permitted under PA. Ref. 23/60 entails a relocation of this service. Information submitted under PA. Ref. 23/60 refers to the facility as accommodating 76 no. children and 8 no. staff. I note that 48 no. children are enrolled in the afternoon session and would therefore likely come from Tarmon NS. Given that the development permitted under PA. Ref. 23/60 entails the relocation of a childcare facility from Tarmon NS to the adjacent site, the degree of overlap in terms of afterschool provision and the likelihood of linked trips between both Tarmon NS and the permitted childcare facility I consider that the cumulative impact of the development permitted under PA. Ref. 23/60, when considered in conjunction with the proposed development, would be negligible on the local road network.
- 7.3.6. The proposed development also entails retention permission of a temporary car park (accommodating 32 no. spaces) to the east of the school. In response to a request for Further Information the applicant confirmed that the temporary car park is intended for the duration of the temporary classroom accommodation on the site and that the site of the temporary car park will revert back to its original use once the proposed extension is constructed and the temporary classroom accommodation is removed. Condition No. 8 of the PA's Notification of Grant of permission and retention permission requires that within three months of the cessation of use of the temporary

classroom accommodation the temporary car park shall be returned to its former agricultural use. I consider this condition to be reasonable and should the Board permit the proposed development I recommend that a similar condition is attached. I consider a period of 6 months more reasonable in this regard.

7.3.7. In relation to the quantum of car parking for primary schools, Table 12.1 of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 requires 1.5 no. car parking spaces for each staff member. Based on the information submitted to the PA's request for Further Information the proposed development has a requirement of 52.5 no. spaces, based on 35 no. staff employed in the school, and that a minimum of 5% of the spaces provided should be accessible spaces. 56 no. car parking spaces are provided, of which 3 no. are indicated as accessible spaces. Whilst the provision of car parking is marginally in excess of that required under Table 12.1 noting the location of the school in rural area and the level of overprovision concerned I consider the provision of car parking generally acceptable.

7.3.8. In summation, having regard to the nature and extent of the proposed development, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not give rise to significant traffic congestion in the area, generate significant traffic volumes, result in a traffic hazard or cause an obstruction to road users.

#### **7.4. Impact on Visual and Residential Amenity**

7.4.1. Concerns are raised in the appeal in relation to the impact of the proposed development on the visual amenity of the area. In particular the appellants note that the appeal site is elevated relative to the adjoining area and as such will appear prominent in the receiving landscape.

7.4.2. From reviewing the appended document 'Landscape Character Assessment' of the Development Plan I note that the appeal site appears to be located within the Tulsk/Rathcroghan Plateau Landscape Character Area and is identified as being of Exceptional Value (one of two such areas in the County). I note that the proposed extension is located to the rear of the existing school, and noting its single storey nature, form, massing and design, I am satisfied that it will not give rise to significant impacts on the visual amenity or landscape character of the area. Whilst the appeal

site is slightly elevated relative to the neighbouring lands I do not consider the site to be elevated when viewed within the wider adjoining area, and I do not anticipate that the proposed development would be particularly dominant when viewed in the context of the wider landscape.

7.4.3. The issue of landscaping/screening is raised by the appellants, and was also raised by the PA in a request for Further Information. The applicants submitted a landscape plan which mainly addresses landscaping within the site. In order to assist with the visual integration of the proposal, I consider that screen planting (trees) should be provided along the western boundary of the appeal site. Should the Board grant retention and permission for the proposed development this may be addressed by condition.

7.4.4. I note that the appellants raise concerns in relation to the effects of glare, although this would appear to be in the context of the existing school. I note that neither the development description contained in the public notices nor the plans and particulars submitted with the planning application/appeal refer to proposals for external lighting and in the absence of same I do not anticipate any significant effects from glare on the adjacent area.

7.4.5. Regarding potential impacts on residential amenity I note that the appeal submission refers to overlooking. Having regard to the scale, design and location of the proposed extension, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not result in significant negative impacts on the residential amenity of property in the vicinity of the appeal site as a result of overlooking.

## **7.5. Issues Arising**

7.5.1. Pupil Cap - Condition No. 2 of the Planning Authorities Notification of Decision to Grant permission and retention permission provides that the maximum number of pupils at the school shall be 260, and that no increase in enrolment numbers in excess of 260 is permitted. The applicant notes that such an approach is overly restrictive and intimates that it would prevent siblings of existing pupils enrolled at the school from attending in the future. I note that the numbers of pupils attending the school is affected by a number of factors, including pupil teacher ratios and the number of classrooms,

and that expansion at the school is self-limiting to a degree in this regard. It is also important to note that the proposed development does not result in increased pupil capacity but rather seeks to address current overcrowding. I also note that pupil numbers fluctuate year to year and that imposing a cap of 260 no. pupils would effectively result in siblings of existing pupils having to attend different schools, thereby negating any benefits which accrue from linked trips and as such would be contrary to the principle of sustainable development. I therefore concur with the applicant that the imposition of a cap on pupil numbers would be unreasonable. Additionally, I note that a condition of this nature could raise issues in terms of children who do not currently attend the school but who may have their names on enrolment lists for the coming year(s), and also for children who may repeat a year, and therefore the enforceability of such a condition attached to a proposal for an extension to an existing school is questionable. I submit to the Board that should they be minded to grant retention and permission for the proposed development that such a condition is not attached.

7.5.2. Development Contribution – Section 14 (r) of the Roscommon County Council Development Contribution Scheme 2014 (as amended on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2020) provides a 100% exemption from development contributions for the construction of new and extension to publicly funded schools. In the event that the Board grant retention and permission for the proposed development a condition requiring the payment of a financial contribution is not required.

7.5.3. Compliance with Conditions – the appellants allege that the applicant has not complied with conditions which were attached to previous permissions relating the appeal site. I note that these conditions relate to car parking, pedestrian crossings and landscaping. I note that compliance with the conditions of previous permissions is an issue for the enforcement section of the Planning Authority and I submit to the Board that this issue is therefore outside the remit of this appeal.

## **8.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening**

8.1. I have considered the proposed development at Tarmon NS in light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

- 8.2. The subject site is located c. 3 km south of Bellanagare Bog SPA (Site Code 004105) and Bellanagare Bog SAC (Site Code 000592).
- 8.3. The proposed development comprises retention of existing car parking (32 no. spaces on compacted hardcore), reconfiguration/extension of existing car park, upgraded wastewater treatment system and surface water system, and construction of a 5 classroom extension.
- 8.4. No nature conservation concerns were raised in the planning appeal.
- 8.5. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any European Site. The reason for this conclusion is as follows;
- The nature and small scale of the development.
  - The location of the development site and distance from nearest European site(s), and the lack of connections between the development site and European sites.
  - Taking account of the screening report/determination by the Planning Authority.
- 8.6. I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 8.7. Likely significant effects are excluded and therefore Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) (under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000) is not required.

## **9.0 Recommendation**

Having regard to the above it is recommended that retention and permission is granted based on the following reasons and considerations and subject to the attached conditions.

## **10.0. Reasons and Considerations**

Having regard to:

- (a) The design, scale and layout of the proposed development,

(b) Noting that the proposed extension replaces existing accommodation and does not provide for a significant expansion of the school in terms of pupil numbers over and above the number currently enrolled,

(c) The provisions of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028,

it is considered that subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not result in a traffic hazard or seriously injure the residential or visual amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 11.0. Conditions

1.	<p>The development shall be carried out and retained in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as amended by the further plans and particulars received by the Planning Authority on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of November 2023, 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 development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of clarity.</p>
2.	<p>Within six months of the extension (hereby permitted) becoming operational, the use of the temporary car park shall cease and the lands utilised for the temporary car park shall be reinstated.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of clarity.</p>
3.	<p>Prior to commencement of development the applicant shall submit to the Planning Authority for its written agreement proposals for landscaping/screening along the western boundary of the site. The landscape proposal shall provide for semi-mature trees and shall be in place within the first planting season following substantial completion of external construction works. All planting shall be adequately protected</p>



	<p>from damage until established. Any plants which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, within a period of five years from the completion of the development shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> To protect the visual amenity of the area.</p>
4.	<p>Details of the materials, colours and textures of all the external finishes shall be as submitted with the application, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development. In default of agreement the matter(s) in dispute shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of visual amenity.</p>
5.	<p>The works hereby permitted to the wastewater treatment system shall be completed and operational upon the extension becoming operational.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of public health.</p>
6.	<p>Construction and demolition waste shall be managed in accordance with a construction waste and demolition management plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall be prepared in accordance with the “Best practice guidelines for the preparation of resource &amp; waste management plans for construction &amp; demolition projects”, published by the EPA, 2021. The plan shall include details of waste to be generated during site clearance and construction phases, including potential contaminated soil, and details of the methods and locations to be employed for the prevention, minimisation, recovery and disposal of this material in accordance with the provision of the Waste Management Plan for the Region in which the site is situated.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of sustainable waste management.</p>
7.	<p>The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with a Construction Management Plan, which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the Planning Authority prior to commencement of</p>

	<p>development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Location of the site and materials compound(s) including area(s) identified for the storage of construction refuse;</li> <li>(b) Location of areas for construction site offices and staff facilities;</li> <li>(c) Details of site security fencing and hoardings;</li> <li>(d) Details of on-site car parking facilities for site workers during the course of construction;</li> <li>(e) Details of the timing and routing of construction traffic to and from the construction site and associated directional signage, to include proposals to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads to the site;</li> <li>(f) Measures to obviate queuing of construction traffic on the adjoining road network;</li> <li>(g) Measures to prevent the spillage or deposit of clay, rubble or other debris on the public road network;</li> <li>(h) Alternative arrangements to be put in place for pedestrians and vehicles in the case of the closure of any public road or footpath during the course of site development works;</li> <li>(i) Details of appropriate mitigation measures for noise, dust and vibration, and monitoring of such levels;</li> <li>(j) Containment of all construction-related fuel and oil within specially constructed bunds to ensure that fuel spillages are fully contained. Such bunds shall be roofed to exclude rainwater;</li> <li>(k) Off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste and details of how it is proposed to manage excavated soil;</li> <li>(l) Means to ensure that surface water run-off is controlled such that no silt or other pollutants enter local surface water sewers or drains.</li> </ul>
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	<p>A record of daily checks that the works are being undertaken in accordance with the Construction Management Plan shall be kept for inspection by the Planning Authority.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of amenities, public health and safety.</p>
8.	<p>Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the detailed requirements of the Planning Authority for such works and services.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interest of public health.</p>
9.	<p>All service cables associated with the proposed development (such as electrical, telecommunications and communal television) shall be located underground.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In the interests of amenity.</p>
10.	<p>Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the Planning Authority.</p> <p><b>Reason:</b> In order to safeguard the amenities of property in the vicinity.</p>

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.

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Ian Campbell  
Planning Inspector

7<sup>th</sup> August 2024

## Appendix 1 - Form 1

### EIA Pre-Screening

**[EIAR not submitted]**

<b>An Bord Pleanála Case Reference</b>	ABP-318876-24		
<b>Proposed Development Summary</b>	Retention for temporary car park and permission for additional car parking, upgrading of existing wastewater treatment system and surface water system, construction of extension, demolition of storage area and all associated site works.		
<b>Development Address</b>	Tarmon National School, Ballinphuill Townland and Termon Beg Townland, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon		
<b>1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA?</b> (that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings)		<b>Yes</b>	X
		<b>No</b>	No further action required
<b>2. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 1 or Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it equal or exceed any relevant quantity, area or limit where specified for that class?</b>			
<b>Yes</b>			EIA Mandatory EIAR required
<b>No</b>		X	Proceed to Q.3
<b>3. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but does not equal or exceed a relevant quantity, area or other limit specified [sub-threshold development]?</b>			
		<b>Threshold</b>	<b>Comment (if relevant)</b>
<b>No</b>		N/A	No EIAR or Preliminary Examination required
<b>Yes</b>		Class 10 (b) (iv)	Significantly below 20Ha threshold
			<b>Conclusion</b>

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?		
No	X	Preliminary Examination required
Yes		Screening Determination required

Inspector: Ian Campbell

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024

## Form 2

### EIA Preliminary Examination

<b>An Bord Pleanála Case Reference</b>	ABP-318876-24	
<b>Proposed Development Summary</b>	Retention for temporary car park and permission for additional car parking, upgrading of existing wastewater treatment system and surface water system, construction of extension, demolition of storage area and all associated site works.	
<b>Development Address</b>	Tarmon National School, Ballinphuill Townland and Termon Beg Townland, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon	
<b>The Board carries out a preliminary examination [Ref. Art. 109(2)(a), Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)] of, at least, the nature, size or location of the proposed development having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations.</b>		
	<b>Examination</b>	<b>Yes/No/ Uncertain</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Nature of the Development</b></li> <li>• Is the nature of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</li> <li>• Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, emissions or pollutants?</li> </ul>	<p>The proposed development comprises an extension to a school, retention of a car park, additional car parking and upgrading of existing wastewater treatment system and surface water system.</p> <p>The proposed development will not give rise to the production of significant waste, emissions or pollutants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Size of the Development</b></li> <li>• Is the size of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</li> <li>• Are there significant cumulative</li> </ul>	<p>The size of the proposed development would not be described as exceptional in the context of the existing environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> <li>• No</li> </ul>

considerations having regard to other existing and/or permitted projects?	There are no significant developments within the vicinity of the site which would result in significant cumulative effects/considerations.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Location of the Development</b></li> <li>Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or does it have the potential to significantly impact on an ecologically sensitive site or location?</li> <li>Does the proposed development have the potential to significantly affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area?</li> </ul>	<p>Having regard to the limited nature and scale of development and the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity of the site, as well as the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No</li> <li>No</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Conclusion</b></li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.</b></li> <li>EIA not required.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>There is significant and realistic doubt regarding the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.</del></li> <li><del>Schedule 7A Information required to enable a Screening Determination to be carried out.</del></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><del>There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.</del></li> <li><del>EIAR required.</del></li> </ul>

Inspector: Ian Campbell

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024

DP/ADP: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)