Inspector's Report
ABP 319306-24

Development	Cavan Town Sports Campus.
Location	In the townlands of Kilnavara, Lurganboy (Loughtee Upper By), Creighan and Rosscolgan in Cavan Town.
Local Authority	Cavan County Council.
Type of Application	LA Non Road Dev – Application.
Prescribed Bodies:	Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Uisce Eireann.
Observer(s)	Gerard and Shelia Cooney
Date of Site Inspection	26th August 2024
Inspector	Brendan Coyne

Contents

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1.1. This report concerns an application submitted by Cavan County Council to An Bord Pleanála for approval under Sections 175 and 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). The application pertains to the proposed development of the Cavan Regional Sports Campus on lands southwest of Cavan Town, specifically in the townlands of Kilnavara, Lurganboy (Loughtee Upper By), Creighan, and Rosscolgan.

1.1.2. The proposed development comprises the construction of an extensive sports campus, including an indoor sports complex with facilities including a sports building incorporating halls, fitness studios, changing rooms, reception, café, and associated accommodation. Additionally, the project includes seven outdoor sports pitches, a covered sports arena with a playing pitch and spectator seating, an athletics track, cricket practice nets, new vehicular and pedestrian access points, and extensive landscaping and ancillary works.

1.1.3. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), both prepared to assess the environmental implications of the project. The EIAR was deemed necessary following a screening assessment which classified the project under Part 2, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, due to its significant scale (over 28 hectares in a built-up area).

1.1.4. To facilitate the development, Cavan County Council seeks a 10-year planning permission, allowing for phased completion of the project. The Local Authority submits that the proposal would establish a sports facility of regional significance and considerably enhance Cavan as a destination for sport and recreation. The submission of this planning application follows the adoption of the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, whereunder Section 2.2.9.1 of the Plan details the background to the scheme, including the zoning of the lands for the proposed use after a feasibility study, consultation process, and strategic review.

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1.1. The site is located on c. 28 hectares of land to the southwest of Cavan Town. The site is situated between Kingspan Breffni Park Stadium and the Royal School, Cavan, extending to the west of Dublin Road. The lands encompass existing sporting facilities, including a shale gravel hockey pitch, an adjoining soccer field, and a GAA grass training pitch used by the Royal School and Cavan Gaels GAA for training purposes. The remainder of the site comprises undeveloped land. The site is bordered along its eastern side by the Royal School (a Protected Structure) and the Cavan River, which is hydraulically linked to the Lough Oughter SAC and SPA. To the northeast of the site lies the Terry Cole Park / Cavan Gaels GAA pitches and facilities, while residential developments are located to the north and across Kilnavarragh Lane to the northwest, west, and southwest. Agricultural lands are located to the south, and Breffni Park stadium and ancillary sports facilities are immediately to the southeast. The town of Cavan, consisting of a mix of residential, public, and commercial land use, is situated to the north.

2.1.2. The topography of the site is predominantly undulating, with some sections featuring steep gradients of up to 30%. The highest elevation is found adjacent to Kilnavarragh Lane, rising to 91 meters OD, while flatter areas c. 64mOD near the Cavan River are prone to periodic flooding, as recorded on OPW flood maps. Mature hedgerows define the boundaries of largely undeveloped agricultural fields within the site. The site is primarily served by Dublin Road (R212) to the east, providing access to Cavan Town and the N55 to the east. Kilnavarragh Lane (L2540-0 & L65091-0) runs along the northern and western boundaries, connecting to the R212 and providing additional access points. There are several bus stops along the Dublin Road (R212), Cavan town local route nos. C1, C2, and serving Bus Éireann route nos.109x and 170. Park Lane (Roscolgan Lane L65072-0) adjoins the southern part of the site, linking with Dublin Road (R212) and facilitating access to Kingspan Breffni Park and nearby areas. Swellan Lough is located c. 350m to the east, and Green Lough lies c. 315m to the east.

3.0 **Proposed Development**

3.1. **Application as lodged by the Local Authority on 11/03/2024**

3.1.1. The proposed development is described in the statutory notices as involving the provision of the Cavan Regional Sports Campus, consisting of the following components:

- Indoor sports complex to include sports halls with spectator seating, fitness studios, changing facilities, reception, café and ancillary accommodation.
- Covered sports arena with playing pitch, spectator seating and other ancillary accommodation.
- 7 no. outdoor sports pitches.
- Ancillary sporting facilities, including an 8-lane athletics track and cricket practice nets.
- New vehicular access/junction and closure of Park Lane (Roscolgan Lane L65072-0)/ Dublin Road (R212) vehicular junction, relocation of existing Breffni Park turnstiles to facilitate reconfiguration of Park Lane (Roscolgan Lane L65072-0), bridge structure, internal roads, cycle/pedestrian paths, associated car/bus/cycle parking, electric charge points and street lighting.
- Pedestrian access points from Kilnavara Lane (L2540-0 & L65091-0) and Dublin Road (R212)
- Hard and soft landscaping, including acoustic fencing, wildlife habitat areas/corridors, artificial badger sett, walking trails, and other ancillary works such as spectator stands, retaining walls, fencing and ball stop fencing, team shelters, toilet block, floodlighting, signage, drainage infrastructure including attenuation tanks, SUDS, and culverting of a minor watercourse, storage space, ESB substation, ancillary accommodation, and all associated site works to accommodate the development.

3.1.2. As stated in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report:

- The proposed new sports pitches would be used all year round during the daytime hours 0700 to 2300.

- The development would be delivered in two phases:
    - Phase 1 (Q2 2025 to Q3 2026) would include the construction of a wildlife habitat creation area, riparian planting adjacent to River Cavan, Dublin Road access, River Cavan bridge, the main arena, a hockey pitch, two sand mattress GAA fields, car parks, and an artificial badger sett.
    - Phase 2 (Q4 2027 to Q4 2029) would include the construction of a new sports building, an athletics track, and two additional sand mattress GAA fields. The facility would commence operation after Phase 1 and remain operational during Phase 2 construction.

3.1.3. As stated in the cover letter, Cavan County Council is seeking a 10-year planning permission to allow both phases of the development to be completed within a realistic timeframe.

3.1.4. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) have been prepared and included as part of the application for the proposed development.

3.1.5. Documentation submitted with the application includes the following:

- Newspaper and site notices
- Planning Drawings and Planning Statement
- Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and associated Appendices
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and associated Appendices
- Traffic Statement
- Drainage Assessment
- Copies of communications with Prescribed Bodies.

4.0 Planning History

4.1.1. **Centre of the Site**

PA Ref. 17507: Permission granted with conditions on 31/07/2018 to Cavan County Board for the development of 2 training pitches, floodlights, a spectator stand, fencing, a new roadway, and an access bridge from the existing carpark, as well as alterations

to the site layout including the widening of the existing access route and all associated works at Kingspan Breffni Park, Kilnavarragh & Creighan, Cavan.

PA Ref. 02991597: Permission granted with conditions on 22/04/2002 to Vincent Crowe to construct a slatted tank and house with cubicles to accommodate 30 suckler cows at Kilnavara, Cavan.

4.1.2. **Land Adjoining the South-Eastern Boundary at Breffni Park**

P.A. Ref. 021065: Permission granted with conditions on 02/07/2003 to Cavan County Board GAA to develop a new training pitch and associated facilities, redevelop the existing training pitch with a new running track and associated lighting at Kingspan Breffni Park, Rosscolgan, Creighan.

PA Ref. 19293: Permission granted with conditions on 24/10/2019 to Cavan County Board to erect a fully serviced single-storey gym and all associated works at Kingspan Breffni Park, Kilnavarragh, Creighan & Rosscolgan, Cavan.

PA Ref. 0955: Permission granted with conditions on 08/10/2009 to Cavan County Board GAA for alterations to a previously approved all-weather training pitch, including alterations to site boundaries (planning reg. no. 02/1065), associated lighting, fencing, parking facilities, and all ancillary site works at Rosscolgan, Creighan.

PA Ref. 09361: Permission granted with conditions on 13/11/2009 to Cavan County Board GAA for the construction of a two-story structure incorporating 4 changing rooms, a referees room, dining/meeting room, physio/medical room, gym area, and office, with all associated site works including vehicular parking, signage, connection to existing public services, landscaping, and boundary fencing at Kingspan Breffni Park, Rosscolgan & Creighan.

4.1.3. **Land Adjoining the Eastern Boundary at Royal School**

PA Ref. 18204: Permission granted with conditions on 10/08/2018 to Cavan (Local) Protestant Board of Education for new external lighting along existing avenues and student walkways, together with all associated site works. These proposed works are within the curtilage of a Protected Structure (Ref. No. 62) at The Royal School, Lurganboy Td, Cavan.

PA Ref. 09991953: Permission granted with conditions on 19/08/2009 to Protestant (Local) Board of Education to construct a fully serviced single-storey extension to the

existing detached science laboratory building and all associated site works within the curtilage of The Royal School, Lurganboy Td, Cavan.

PA Ref. 04991754: Permission refused on appeal on 23/02/2005 for the construction of 3 apartment blocks, each part 3 storeys and part 5 storeys high, comprising 87 apartments in total, and 13 single-storey covered cycle and bin stores together with roads, pavements, car parking, landscaping, and all associated site works off College St. adjoining the land of the Royal School.

PA Ref. 00991521: Permission granted on 08/01/2001 to Cavan Protestant Local Board of Education to extend the existing Royal School comprising a link corridor, classroom, staffroom, toilets, showers, and entrance at ground floor level, staircase, link corridor, and refurbished toilet facilities at basement level, all connected to existing services.

PA Ref. 97991358: Permission granted with conditions on 25/09/1997 to Cavan Protestant Board of Education to extend the existing school and retain a two-story block at Lurganboy, Cavan.

PA Ref. 7699461: Permission granted on 08/02/1977 to the Rehabilitation Association to erect a workshop, offices, canteen, and toilets (revised plans submitted) at Lurganboy, Cavan.

PA Ref. 94991253: Permission granted with conditions on 17/02/1995 to the Board of Governors to erect an extension at the Royal School, Lurganboy, Cavan.

4.1.4. **Land Adjoining Northern Boundary**

PA Ref. 16116: Permission granted with conditions on 16/06/2016 to retain existing clubrooms previously sought to be demolished under planning reference 122006, carry out minor internal works to the same, and erect new external escape stairs to clubrooms constructed under planning reference 12/2015, with all associated works at Terry Coyle Park, Lurganboy, Cavan.

5.0 Policy and Context

5.1. Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028

5.1.1. Cavan County Council Development Plan 2022-2028 is the statutory plan for the area. The following provisions are considered relevant:

5.1.2. Land Use Zoning

Under the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, the site is subject to two land use zonings, as follows:

- Sport and Recreation - This zoning allows for the development of sporting and recreational facilities.
- Public Community - This zoning provides for and protects civic, religious, community, education, healthcare, and social infrastructure, with sports facilities also considered an appropriate use.

5.1.3. Map-Based Specific Objective

The site is subject to the following map-based specific objective:

- **C06** - Support the provision of a sports campus to build on existing facilities and provide additional pitches and supporting infrastructure.

Adjoining land to the southeast is subject to the following map-based specific objective

- **C14** - Provide for linear river walk. To maintain an exclusion zone along the length of the river, which would be kept free from development, this would be of appropriate width depending on gradients along both sides of the river. This area will form a linear parkway and wildlife corridor.

5.1.4. Relevant Policies, Standards, and Objectives

5.1.5. Relevant policies, standards, and objectives concerning the development of a sports complex, organised by chapter and section, include the following:

Chapter 1: Core Strategy

- **Section 2.10.1 Key Town – Cavan**

- **KTC 01:** Support the continued growth and sustainable development of Cavan Town to act as a growth driver in the region and to fulfil its role as a Key Town, focused on employment, retail, quality of life and economic investment.

Chapter 2: Settlement Strategy

- **Section 2.2 Key Town Cavan - Cavan Town Local Area Plan 2022-2028**
- **Section 2.2.9.1 Regional Sports Facility**
  - **Objective CSC 05**: Support the delivery of the Sports Campus on zoned land in Cavan Town.
  - **Objective CSC 06**: Support the provision of a Regional Sports Facility for the County
- **Section 2.2.14 Map-Based Specific Objectives**
  - **Objective 6 -** Support the provision of a Sport Campus to build on existing sporting facilities, with the provision of additional pitch's and supporting infrastructure as well as:
    - Create permeability and linkages to the central town core and Dublin Road through strategic movement corridors
    - Identify appropriate development opportunities
    - Create visual and physical linkages to Swellan Lough
    - Support and provide amenity opportunities

Chapter 4: Community and Social Infrastructure

- **Section 4.13 Community Facilities**
  - **Objective CF 01**: Maintain and improve the provision of community facilities, including sports facilities in the County.
  - **Objective CF 08**: Support and promote the development of new and existing sports facilities within the County.
  - **Objective CF 09**: Support the provision of a Regional Sports Facility for the County.

- **Objective CF 11:** Ensure that new leisure facilities, where possible, are located in proximity to public transportation routes.

- **Section 4.16 Recreation, Amenity and Open Space**
    - **Objective RAOS 08:** Support the development of a regional scale Recreational Sports facility in Cavan Town.

Chapter 7: Transportation and Infrastructure

- **Section 7.5 Mobility Management Plans**
    - **MMP 01**: Mobility management plans will be required for significant new developments or trip-intensive developments.
- **Section 7.6 Car Parking**
    - **Objective CP 01**: Require development proposals to provide adequate car parking provision and associated servicing arrangements.
    - **Objective CP 05**: Ensure all applications for car parking are accompanied with EV Charging points.

Chapter 8: Environment, Water, and Drainage

- **Section 8.4 River & Lake Monitoring**
    - **Objective FDW 02**: Ensure that development will only be permitted in instances where there is sufficient capacity for appropriate collection, treatment, and disposal of wastewater.
    - **Objective FDW 05**: Ensure new developments provide a separate foul and surface water drainage system and incorporate sustainable urban drainage systems where appropriate in new development and the public realm.
    - **Objective FDW 06**: Incorporate the requirement for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) where appropriate in local authority projects and private development sites.
    - **Objective FDW 15**: Ensure new developments provide adequate stormwater infrastructure to protect property and infrastructure.
- **Section 8.9 Noise Pollution**

- The Council will require the submission of Noise Impact Assessments where it is proposed to introduce noise creating uses in proximity to noise sensitive uses, such as residential areas, and if permission is being granted, may impose conditions mitigating the impact.
- **Objective N 01**: Support the implementation of the Noise Directive 2002/49/EC and all associated Environmental Noise Regulations 2006.
- **Objective N 02**: Ensure developments are designed and operated to minimise and contain noise levels.

- **Section 8.10 Light Pollution**
  - **Objective LP 01**: Control lighting in urban, rural, and sensitive areas in accordance with Euronats and Darksky Circular.
  - **Objective LP 02:** Require the use of energy efficient public lighting in all new development proposals.
  - **Objective LP 04:** Require that the design of lighting schemes minimises the incidence of light spillage or pollution into the surrounding environment.
- **Section 8.11 Human Health**
  - **Objective HH 01**: Ensure new developments do not have significant adverse effects on the amenities of an area through pollution unless mitigation measures are implemented.

Chapter 13: Development Management Standards

- **Section 13.8 Biodiversity**
  - **Objective**: Promote biodiversity and integrate green infrastructure in development projects.
- **Section 13.7 Flood Zones and Appropriate Uses**
  - **Policy**: Ensure structural and non-structural risk management measures are implemented in flood-prone areas.

Chapter 14: Land Use

- **Section 14.12 Public and Community**
- **Section 14.14 Sport and Recreation**

5.1.6. **Protected Structures and Recorded Monuments:**

5.1.7. The Royal School Cavan (school) is listed in Cavan County Council's Record of Protected Structures (Ref. No. CV0612) and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (Ref. No. 40001142), where it is rated as being of National Importance. It is described as a detached neo-classical E-plan five-bay, three-storey school over a basement, built in 1819.

5.1.8. Additionally, the Royal School Cavan outbuilding is also a Protected Structure (Ref. No. CV0612) and is listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (Ref. No. 40001143), where it is rated as being of Regional Importance. It is described as a multiple-bay, two-storey former outbuilding in three ranges, built in 1819. The structure includes a six-bay south elevation adjoining the west of the school's front elevation with an advanced pedimented end bay, a nine-bay western elevation, and a four-bay northern range.

5.1.9. The site lies outside the zone of influence of any Recorded Monument. The closest Recorded Monument is a Hilltop Enclosure (SMR. No. CV025-074) located c. 105m to the west.

5.2. **Relevant Government Policy / Guidelines**

- National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040 (Government of Ireland)
- Northern and Western Regional Assembly - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032 (Northern and Western Regional Assembly)
- Development Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2007, Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government)
- Climate Action Plan 2024 (Government of Ireland)
- National Biodiversity Action Plan (2017-2021, Government of Ireland)
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment (2018, Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government)

- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government)
- Tree Preservation Guidelines (1994, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government)
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (2019, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)
- Traffic Management Guidelines (2019, Department of Transport)
- Geometric Design of Junctions (priority junctions, direct accesses, roundabouts, grade-separated and compact grade-separated junctions) (2017, DN-GEO-03060, TII)
- Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines (2007, National Roads Authority)
- Permeability – A Best Practice Guide (2015, National Transport Authority)
- Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018, Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government)
- Architectural Heritage Protection – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht)
- National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027 (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)

5.3. Natural Heritage Designations

5.3.1. The following Natura 2000 sites are located in the general vicinity of the proposed development site:

- Lough Oughter SPA (Site Code: 004049) – 3.6km to the northwest and c. 5km to the west.
- Lough Oughter and associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007) - 3.6km to the northwest and c. 5km to the west.

5.3.2. Lough Oughter And Associated Loughs Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (Site Code 000007) are located c. 3.6km to the northwest and c. 5km to the west.

5.4. Consultations

5.4.1. Inland Fisheries Ireland

Submission summarised as follows:

- The proposed development is in proximity to the Cavan River, which contains excellent salmonid habitat, Lamprey, and a suitable Lamprey habitat, protected under the EU Habitats Directive.
- The site is bordered by the Cavan River, with a proposed bridge over it, and has a hydrological link to the Lough Oughter SAC and SPA, approx. 7km upstream.
- Potential pollutants from stormwater runoff, including oil and debris, should be intercepted with regularly maintained oil/grease and silt traps to ensure only clean, uncontaminated water is discharged.
- Hard surfaces increase runoff could potentially cause downstream flooding and adverse effects on fish habitats. Where appropriate, water attenuation systems should be implemented.
- Measures should be put in place to minimise potential damage during construction, including sediment runoff, spillages, discharges (e.g., cement, paints, oils), and avoiding damage to riparian vegetation. IFI provides guidelines for protecting watercourses during construction on its website.
- All watercourses within or adjacent to the property should be protected in terms of water quality, topography, and habitat, preventing the discharge of suspended solids and other deleterious matter.
- Hedges and ditches with native trees and vegetation are important habitats for aquatic insects, crucial for fish diets, and should be retained where possible. Replanting should use native species to maintain biodiversity and ensure bank stabilisation.

- The introduction of alien invasive species should be avoided. IFI recommends hot-power-washing machinery before its introduction to the site and treating machinery with 1% aqueous virkon solution.
- Onsite storage of fuels, oils, greases, and hydraulic fluids should be stored away from watercourses in bunded, lined, and lockable areas, with refuelling, maintenance, and washing of vehicles conducted in these areas.
- Drip-trays should be used for generators and pumps, and stockpile areas for materials should be minimised and located away from watercourses.
- Runoff from machine service areas, concrete mixing areas, and stockpiles should not enter watercourses. Spill kits should be available onsite with staff trained in their use.
- Silt curtains should be used to prevent suspended solids from entering watercourses.
- The importance of the Cavan River and associated tributaries as sensitive salmonid habitats is emphasised, urging extreme care during construction and operation to prevent adverse impacts.

5.4.2. **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit**

Submission summarised as follows:

- An Archaeological Assessment Report by Gahan and Long was submitted with the application.
- The Department concurs with the recommendation for a geophysical survey of the entire site.
- The Archaeological Assessment should be submitted to the National Monuments Section of the Department and the relevant planning authority.
- Significant archaeological impacts should be further mitigated, as advised by the National Monuments Section.
- Further surveys for white-clawed crayfish and freshwater pearl mussel are planned for Spring/Summer 2024.

- Clarification is needed regarding the correct identification of the pearl mussel and for it to be reviewed by a qualified molluscan ecologist.
- Additional information is required on the construction of new outfalls, the proposed bridge, and culverting of the minor watercourse.
- Six trees have “low” roosting potential, three have “moderate,” and three have “high” potential for bats.
- Further surveys are required prior to felling high and medium-value trees.
- Detailed impact assessments on bats and mitigation measures for light spill and watercourse works are necessary.
- Additional surveys are recommended to determine bat presence in the Royal School.
- A detailed survey recorded pine martens foraging within the site, but more information is needed on mitigation during construction.
- Habitat compensation planting areas should be detailed, including expected vegetation growth and drawings.
- Several environmental protection plans are referred to in the application but are not included. These include a Construction Environmental Management Plan, Surface Water Management Plan, Habitat Management Plan and the proposed Woodland Enhancement strategy. Consequently, the Department cannot comment on their content.
- Environmental protection plans such as the Construction Environmental Management Plan and Surface Water Management Plan shall be included in the application.
- Details on proposed planting mixes, habitat layouts, and their relation to affected species need to be provided before consent is granted.
- Further detail on the partial translocation of the central hedgerow, including drawings and receptor ditches, is required.
- Collaboration with the Royal School on hedgerow translocation should be presented in advance or not relied upon.

- Grass/wildflower mix for habitat compensation is only necessary for slope stabilisation; natural recolonisation is preferred as per the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
- Riparian buffer areas should be fenced and allowed to recolonise naturally, not deliberately planted.
- Wooden hoarding may temporarily meet buffer requirements, as immediate planting buffers are unlikely.
- Scrub clearance should be undertaken outside the breeding season (1st March – 31st August) and be a condition of any consent granted.

5.4.3. **Uisce Eireann**

Submission summarised as follows:

- The applicant engaged with Uisce Eireann via a Pre-Connection Enquiry (Ref: CDS24001179), and Uisce Eireann issued a Confirmation of Feasibility for water and wastewater connections.
- A water connection is feasible without an infrastructure upgrade, but Uisce Eireann cannot guarantee a flow rate that meets fire flow requirements. The applicant should provide adequate fire storage capacity within their development.
- A wastewater connection is feasible without an infrastructure upgrade.
- One of the two proposed foul sewer connections connects to a private third-party pumping station. Connections via third-party assets are permitted subject to the following conditions:
    - The applicant shall obtain written agreement from the third party to connect via their infrastructure.
    - The applicant shall provide confirmation, supported by design calculations if required, that the third-party infrastructure has capacity and is structurally adequate.
    - If deemed high risk by Uisce Eireann, further information, such as a condition survey or CCTV survey, should be sought.

- Third-party infrastructure remains classified as a service connection and is not assumed to be adopted by Uisce Eireann unless expressly stated otherwise.
- The applicant shall obtain a Wayleave over the third-party infrastructure where possible.

- Any grant of permission should be conditioned, requiring the applicant to enter into a Connection Agreement with Uisce Eireann for service connections to the public water supply and/or wastewater collection network, comply with Uisce Eireann's Standard Details and Codes of Practice, and obtain written Confirmation of Feasibility of Diversion(s) from Uisce Eireann prior to any works commencing if building over or diverting existing services is proposed.

5.5. Observations

5.5.1. A third-party observation was received from Gerard and Shelia Cooney, the property owners of No. 10 Lurganboy, Cavan, H12 W012. The issues raised are summarised as follows:

- The owner's property is the last house on the eastern side of Kilnavarragh Lane and bounds the proposed development's north-western boundary for c. 85m.
- The observers support the development in general but were not engaged as stakeholders or consulted in the design process.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) lacks a description of the development's operation, including hours, access control, security measures, and anticipated numbers of users.
- Some information in the EIAR appears inaccurate, such as the section line shown on drawings A2156-100-11 and CSC-MCA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-4101, which do not allow an appreciation of the impact on the observer's property.
- The consultation process mentioned in the EIAR, conducted in 2018 as part of a feasibility study, did not include the property owners, and no public consultation on preferred options was offered.
- The application does not provide details on operations, 24-hour security, CCTV, or adequate lighting to prevent antisocial behaviour.

- The application lacks detailed boundary treatments and clear access control for pedestrian entrances at night.
- There are concerns about the ability of An Garda Síochána to respond to antisocial behaviour due to limited access points.
- The proposed bollard lighting does not provide adequate security or illumination to identify potential hazards or persons.
- Chapter 11 of the EIAR does not accurately assess the impact of noise, and the crowd sizes used are not realistic.
- The cumulative impact of noise on the property has not been accurately assessed, nor have appropriate acoustic barriers been proposed.
- The EIAR's assessment of the visual impact of the proposed development is incomplete and inconsistent with the provided drawings.
- Chapter 16 of the EIAR lacks accurate viewpoints and does not fully assess the visual impact on the most populous areas.
- The observer's property is classified as "High Sensitivity" within 500m of the proposed development, but the magnitude of effect is not accurately assessed.
- The observers contend that the visual impact cannot be assessed due to inconsistencies in the drawings.
- The general layout drawing A2156-100-11 shows section line 1B extending through several properties to the north, facing Kilnavarragh Lane. Drawing CRSP-MCA-00-00-DR-C-1800-PL shows earthworks cut and fill levels, but the sections provided do not align with section line 1B and omit boundary walls, fence lines, pathways, pitch boundaries, and floodlight towers.
- The building shown on section 1B of drawing CSC-MCA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-4101 does not match the elevation and scale of the spectator stand in drawing CSC-MCA-XX-XX-DR-A-2005.
- The observers consider the proposal would have a negative impact on their property unless proper mitigation measures are implemented.
- The property owners are amenable to discussing their concerns with design professionals to resolve outstanding issues.

6.0 Assessment

6.1. Having regard to the requirements of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), this assessment is divided into three main parts: the planning assessment, environmental impact assessment, and appropriate assessment. In each assessment, where necessary, reference is made to issues raised by all parties. There is an inevitable overlap between the assessments, for example, with matters raised falling within both the planning assessment and the environmental impact assessment. In the interest of brevity, matters are not repeated, but such overlaps are indicated in subsequent sections of the report.

7.0 Planning Assessment

7.1.1. In my opinion, the main issues to be addressed under this assessment are as follows:

- The Principle of the Proposed Development
- Layout
- Design and Visual Impact
- Residential Amenity
- Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

7.2. The Principle of the Proposed Development

7.2.1. Under the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, the site is subject to two land use zonings: ‘Sport and Recreation’ and ‘Public Community’. Chapter 14 of the Development Plan details the permissibility of proposed uses for these land use zonings, subject to the normal planning process and compliance with the relevant policies, objectives, standards, and requirements. For lands zoned ‘Public Community’ and ‘Sport and Recreation,’ the use of class’ Sports Facility’ is permitted in principle.

7.2.2. The site is subject to the map-based specific objective C06, which seeks to support the provision of a sports campus to build on existing facilities and provide additional pitches and supporting infrastructure. Relevant policies in the Cavan County Development Plan include KTC 01, which supports the continued growth and sustainable development of Cavan Town; Objectives CSC 05 and CSC 06, supporting

the delivery of the Sports Campus and the provision of a Regional Sports Facility; and map based Objective 6, which supports the provision of a Sports Campus and the creation of strategic movement corridors, development opportunities, visual and physical linkages to Swellan Lough, and amenity opportunities. Other Development Plan objectives include CF 01, CF 08, CF 09, and CF 11, which focus on maintaining and improving community facilities, supporting sports facilities, and ensuring new leisure facilities are near public transportation routes. Objective RAOS 08 supports the development of a regional scale Recreational Sports facility in Cavan Town.

7.2.3. As detailed in Section 3.0 above, the proposed development comprises the Cavan Regional Sports Campus, including an indoor sports complex with sports halls, spectator seating, fitness studios, changing facilities, reception, café, and ancillary accommodation; seven outdoor sports pitches; a covered sports arena with a playing pitch and spectator seating; an 8-lane athletics track and cricket practice nets; new vehicular access, bridge structure, internal roads, cycle/pedestrian paths, parking, and streetlighting; pedestrian access points; and landscaping with acoustic fencing, wildlife habitat areas, walking trails, spectator stands, fencing, ball stop fencing, floodlighting, drainage infrastructure including SUDS, and all associated site works.

7.2.4. The Local Authority, in the Planning Statement submitted with the application, sets out the need for the proposed development. The Local Authority outlines how the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport, and Media aims to increase participation and interest in sport, improve performance standards, and develop sports facilities at various levels through a policy and resource framework. The Local Authority states that this need is supported by the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region and the National Planning Framework 2040, which promote Cavan Town's economic development by (inter alia) providing a regional standard multisport facility. The Local Authority submits that the National Sports Policy (2018) established a Large-Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund, prompting Cavan County Council to submit a proposal for the Cavan Regional Sports Campus. This proposal is backed by numerous local and national sports bodies, stakeholders, and community groups. The Local Authority highlights that the Cavan County Development Plan and the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) identify a need for additional sports facilities to cater to the growing number of sporting organisations and the youth population, emphasising the importance of health and

wellbeing. Specific actions in the LECP recommend developing a multi-purpose sports facility and supporting community and sporting groups to access funding. The Local Authority commissioned a feasibility study that recommends a regional sports facility in Cavan Town, including an indoor facility with a synthetic pitch, a sports centre building, a 400m athletics track, an outdoor floodlit 3G pitch, a swimming pool, changing facilities, and a walking trail. The Local Authority asserts that the proposed development seeks to establish a sports facility of regional significance, enhancing Cavan as a destination for sport and recreation. The Local Authority states how the development requires partnerships with the Cavan County GAA Board and the Royal School for land acquisition and integration with existing plans at Kingspan Breffni Park, including a link road to alleviate traffic congestion and open access to future outdoor activities.

7.2.5. In consideration of the above, it is my view that the proposed development of the Cavan Regional Sports Campus is consistent with the zoning objectives and relevant policies outlined in the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028. The site is zoned for 'Sport and Recreation' and 'Public Community', both of which explicitly permit the development of sports facilities. The map-based specific objective C06 further supports the provision of a sports campus at this location to enhance existing facilities and infrastructure. I consider that the proposed development aligns with relevant Development Plan policy objectives including KTC 01, CSC 05, and CSC 06, which promote the growth and sustainable development of Cavan Town, including the establishment of a regional sports facility. Furthermore, the proposed development is consistent with objectives CF 01, CF 08, CF 09, CF 11, and RAOS 08, which emphasise the need to improve community facilities and support sports infrastructure. Therefore, I conclude that the proposed development is not only compliant with the zoning objectives of the site but would also benefit the community, enhancing Cavan's status as a destination for sport and recreation.

7.3. **Layout**

7.3.1. As detailed in Section 3.0 above, the proposed development incorporates an indoor sports complex featuring sports halls, spectator seating, fitness studios, changing facilities, a reception area, a café, and ancillary accommodation. As per the planning statement submitted, it includes a sports building that is two stories high and physically

linked to a sports arena, encompassing 6,000 square meters and including an eight-court sports hall with retractable bleacher seating, changing rooms, a gym, fitness studios, a reception area, a café, social spaces, storage, and additional facilities. The development also includes GAA sports facilities with four external floodlit sand mattress grass pitches with ball stop fencing, and a covered spectator stand accommodating 599 people, along with a toilet block and car parking.

7.3.2. The proposed campus features seven outdoor sports pitches, an external floodlit 4G multisport pitch with open mesh perimeter fencing, ball stop fencing, pitch-side team shelters, and a covered spectator stand for 242 people. The proposed also incorporates an external floodlit synthetic hockey pitch with perimeter and spectator fencing and team shelters. Additionally, there is a covered sports arena with a fabric-covered tensile roof structure, mezzanine-level spectator seating, and ancillary accommodation, covering 8,280 square meters. The arena also includes an internal synthetic pitch with mezzanine-level spectator seating along one side. An eight-lane external floodlit athletics track with a grass soccer pitch infield incorporates a covered spectator stand for 452 people.

7.3.3. The proposed development provides new vehicular access and junction modifications, including a new road junction to Dublin Road for access to the sports campus with the provision of a right-hand turn lane and pedestrian crossing, the closure of the existing Park Lane (Roscolgan Lane L65072-0) and the Dublin Road (R212) vehicular junction, the relocation of Breffni Park turnstiles, a bridge structure, internal roads, and cycle and pedestrian paths. It also features associated parking facilities with electric charge points and street lighting, providing parking for 310 vehicles, bus parking for four vehicles, and cycle parking for 24 bicycles. Proposed pedestrian access is provided from Kilnavara Lane (L2540-0 & L65091-0) and Dublin Road (R212).

7.3.4. The proposal includes hard and soft landscaping, incorporating paths and trails, wildlife habitat areas, wildlife foraging corridors, and walking trails. Additional features include acoustic fencing, an artificial badger sett, spectator stands, retaining walls, fencing, ball stop fencing, team shelters, toilet blocks, floodlighting, signage, and drainage infrastructure with attenuation tanks, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), and culverting of a minor watercourse. Other ancillary developments include bin storage, retaining wall structures, boundary walls with pedestrian gates, cut and fill earthworks to provide level surfaces for pitches and buildings, the creation of grass

banking for GAA pitches, grass terraced banking for the athletics track, storage space, an ESB substation, and all associated site works necessary for the development.

7.3.5. As detailed in the Site Layout Plans submitted, the proposed Sports Campus is situated adjacent to Breffni Park GAA stadium and the Royal School, providing integration with existing sports facilities and enhancing the overall connectivity within Cavan Town. The indoor sports complex and sports arena are centrally located within the site, positioned to the west of the Royal School. The sports building, a two-storey structure, is physically linked to the sports arena, which features a fabric-covered tensile roof. These central facilities would provide a focal point for the campus and would be easily accessible from the main entrance on Dublin Road.

7.3.6. The proposed sports building is situated c.32 meters west of the Royal School's main building, which is a Protected Structure. This distance allows for a buffer zone that includes pedestrian pathways and landscaped areas, maintaining a clear separation between the school and the sports campus while facilitating easy access for potential shared use.

7.3.7. The outdoor sports pitches are arranged on the western and southern peripheries of the campus, adjacent to Kilnavara Heights, St. Phelim’s Place and adjoining the side boundary of no. 10 Lurganboy and other properties along Kilnavarragh Lane. Four floodlit sand mattress GAA pitches are located to the southwest (each 143m x 86m plus 5m wide runoff width to all sides), each with ball-stop fencing at both ends (12m H x 30m W) and spectator facilities and a toilet block. An external 4G multisport pitch is positioned north of the GAA fields. The athletics track, located at the northern end of the site, is designed with a grass soccer pitch infield and a covered spectator stand. A synthetic hockey pitch is located to the east of the athletics track.

7.3.8. The primary vehicular access to the campus is from Dublin Road, with a newly designed junction. A bridge over the Cavan River would provide connectivity between different sections of the campus and surrounding areas. Gated pedestrian access points are placed at Kilnavara Lane and Dublin Road, would provide ease of movement for visitors and nearby residents. The internal road network and parking facilities, including spaces for cars, buses, and bicycles, are designed to accommodate large crowds during events.

7.3.9. The campus design incorporates extensive landscaping, including wildlife habitat areas, walking trails, and acoustic fencing along the north-western boundary of the site, which borders residential areas, including Kilnavara Heights, and properties along Kilnavara Lane. An artificial badger sett and wildlife foraging corridors are included along the western boundary of the site, adjacent to Kilnavara Heights, to support local biodiversity.

7.3.10. The proposed development would be closely integrated with Breffni Park Stadium, providing expanded facilities that complement the existing sports grounds. The layout includes the relocation of existing Breffni Park turnstiles and the pedestrian-only conversion of Park Lane, enhancing pedestrian connectivity between the campus and Breffni Park. The proximity to the Royal School would provide opportunities for shared use of the sports and recreation facilities.

7.3.11. The Local Authority in the Planning Statement states that the proposed Regional Sports Campus aligns with Map-Based Specific Objective 6, which aims to support the provision of a sports campus by enhancing existing sporting facilities, creating linkages to the town core and Dublin Road, identifying development opportunities, and providing amenity opportunities. The Planning Statement submits that the proposal establishes permeability through the site with a linear walk connecting Dublin Road and Kilnavarragh Road, enhancing connectivity to the centre of Cavan town. The report notes how the site design includes vehicular access off Dublin Road, with pedestrian walkways ensuring safety for users entering and exiting the campus. An additional pedestrian link is provided at the northeast corner, further improving access to Dublin Road and the town core.

7.3.12. The Planning Statement details that the proposed development would support the recreational use of Swellan Lough, acting as a catalyst for future opportunities in the area. By providing pedestrian connections from Cavan Town to the site and Swellan Lough, the proposal aims to foster development opportunities around the Lough. The Planning Statement submits that the proposal would enhance visual and physical connections to Swellan Lough, with pathways extending from Dublin Road to Kilnavarragh Road, allowing for pedestrian access to the Lough while maintaining physical connection points within the site boundaries. The development would also support the recreational use of Cavan and the surrounding area through green

infrastructure, walking, and cycling routes, improving permeability from the south and southwestern areas of the town.

7.3.13. In relation to Map Based Specific Objective 14, which seeks to provide a linear river walk with an exclusion zone along the Cavan River, forming a linear parkway and wildlife corridor, the Planning Statement states that the proposal includes a linear walk along the southeast boundary with a buffer zone to protect the river's environmental sensitivities, as highlighted in the Natura Impact Statement and the EIAR. The Planning Statement states how Objectives C06 (Sports Campus) and C16 (Linear Walk) have influenced the design, requiring a pedestrian-first approach and high-quality connections through the site, enhancing pedestrian links to Cavan Town and assets like Lough Swellan.

7.3.14. The proposal incorporates a pathway through the site, connecting focal points such as car parking areas and the public realm around key development features, including the sports building and arena. These areas connect directly to Dublin Road at two points: one pedestrian-only connection at the northeast corner and a shared pedestrian and vehicular access point. Additionally, several pedestrian access points are proposed along the western boundary, providing connectivity in previously inaccessible parts of Cavan Town. Cycling provision incorporates 24 no. bicycle parking spaces and integrated cycle lanes.

7.3.15. In consideration of the above and having reviewed the proposed layout of the Regional Sports Campus in Cavan, it is my view that the layout of the proposed development is well-designed and suitable for the location. The layout effectively responds to its surroundings by integrating with existing sports facilities at Breffni Park Stadium and the Royal School, providing a continuous extension of the town's sporting infrastructure. It is my view that the development would enhance the connectivity and accessibility of Cavan Town, with strategic access points from Dublin Road and Kilnavara Lane that would improve linkages between these roads and to the central town core and surrounding area. The incorporation of a pedestrian-only conversion of the existing Park Lane junction and the bridge over the Cavan River would further enhance these connections, providing safe and convenient access for pedestrians and cyclists.

7.3.16. I consider that the proposed campus would be inclusive and easily accessible, with pedestrian pathways and cycle lanes ensuring that all users, including those with disabilities, could navigate the site comfortably. The variety of facilities, including sports halls, pitches, fitness studios, and recreational areas, would promote a diverse range of activities catering to different sporting and community needs. The efficient use of land is evident in the placement of the sports facilities, which are positioned to maximise space while maintaining harmony with the existing greenfield site and adjoining land uses.

7.3.17. The inclusion of green infrastructure, wildlife habitats, and walking trails would enhance the site's ecological value, providing a pleasant environment for both recreation and wildlife. The public realm, paths and trails are designed to be safe and secure, served with bollard pathway lighting along footpaths or adjacent lighting columns and floodlights.

7.3.18. I conclude, therefore, that the layout of the proposed Regional Sports Campus is well-considered and aligns with key urban design principles. It effectively responds to the site's context, enhances connectivity, promotes inclusivity, offers a variety of activities, and makes efficient use of resources. The layout and design would create a safe, secure, and vibrant public realm that would serve the needs of the Cavan community, supporting the town's growth as a regional hub for sports and recreation.

7.4. Design and Visual Impact

7.4.1. The submitted floor plans and elevation drawings for the proposed sports building detail a modern, two-storey building measuring c. 178 meters in length and 79 meters in width, with a total area of 6,000 square meters and a maximum height of 16 meters. As per the documentation submitted, the ground floor includes an eight-court sports hall with retractable bleacher seating, changing rooms, a fitness suite, community space, a café, a reception area, and various storage and service areas. The first-floor features fitness studios, a gym, a spinning studio, meeting rooms, offices, and additional storage. The building's contemporary elevation treatment comprises grey-facing brickwork and PPC aluminium curtain wall systems, complemented by timber and corten steel cladding for added texture and contrast. Timber solar shading on glazed sections would provide functional sun protection and a distinct design element. The building features a flat roof, while the sports arena has a pitched roof with PVC

polyester fabric to facilitate drainage. Windows with PPC aluminium frames and clear glazing would enhance natural light penetration and transparency throughout the structure. I consider that the proposed materials and finishes would integrate well with the surrounding landscape, ensuring that the building complements its environment while serving as a focal point within the regional sports campus.

7.4.2. Spectator Stand No. 1, located on the southwestern section of the Sports Campus, is a modern structure measuring c. 53 meters in length, 7.5 meters in width, and 10.1 meters in height. It features a profiled polyester powder-coated metal roof deck and charcoal grey stretcher bond brickwork for the façade. The stand accommodates 599 spectators in a large, covered seating area, with the ground floor housing changing rooms, accessible facilities, and storage areas, while the first floor provides tiered seating. The proposal incorporates PPC aluminium louvred doors in a dark grey finish. I consider that the durable materials and design treatment would ensure the stand integrates effectively with adjacent sports facilities and the overall campus landscape.

7.4.3. Spectator Stand No. 2 is positioned on the southern side of the Sports Building, adjacent to the outdoor multisport 4G pitch, offering clear views for spectators. The building measures c.21 meters in length, 4.4 meters in width, and 5.19 meters in height. It features a profiled polyester powder-coated metal roof deck, providing durability and a modern design that would withstand weather elements. The façade consists of corrugated metal wall cladding in blue and charcoal grey stretcher bond brickwork, creating an appearance that aligns with the campus's architectural theme. Inside, the stand provides a spectator area with open seating designed for optimal visibility.

7.4.4. Spectator Stand No. 3 is located at the northern end of the Regional Sports Campus, adjacent to the eight-lane athletics track and grass soccer pitch infield, providing viewing for both track events and field activities. The building is c. 53 meters long, 5.8 meters wide, and 6.4 meters high, accommodating 452 spectators in a large, covered seating area. The roof features a profiled polyester powder-coated metal roof deck, ensuring durability and a sleek, modern appearance, while its 2° pitch would aid in water runoff and enhance the structure's streamlined look. The façade uses charcoal grey stretcher bond brickwork, providing a cohesive visual connection with the surrounding architecture. I consider that the design and materials would ensure

Spectator Stand No. 3 would integrate with the campus and enhance the spectator experience.

7.4.5. In consideration of the above and having reviewed the submitted drawings, it is my view that the form and design of the proposed sports complex are acceptable and align well with the principles outlined in the Urban Design Manual. The integration of modern architectural elements, such as grey-facing brickwork, PPC aluminium curtain wall systems, timber, and corten steel cladding, contributes to a cohesive and contemporary aesthetic that would enhance the campus's visual identity. The selection of materials and finishes, along with design considerations like solar shading and natural light penetration, would ensure that the sports building and arena stand out as a focal point within the Regional Sports Campus while integrating harmoniously with the surrounding landscape. The layout, form and design of the sports complex has been designed to respond to the site's context, complementing existing adjacent sporting land use while offering a distinct modern architectural presence. The proposed spectator stands are designed using durable materials that provide both aesthetic appeal and functional benefits, such as weather protection, natural light, and airflow. Their integration with adjacent facilities would create a unified architectural theme that would enhance the overall campus experience. The positioning of the sports building, particularly its proximity to the Royal School's main building, respects the existing Protected Structure while facilitating potential shared use. I conclude, therefore, that the proposed development would not detract from the surrounding area but would instead provide a functional addition that supports both sporting and community activities. Therefore, I conclude that the design and visual impact of the proposed sports complex is acceptable and would contribute positively to the surrounding area.

7.5. **Residential Amenity**

7.5.1. A third-party submission was received from the property owners of No. 10 Lurganboy, who expressed concerns regarding the potential impact on residential amenities. They expressed concerns regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment Report's inadequate assessment of noise, security, and visual impact. They noted the absence of detailed boundary treatments and the inadequate provision of acoustic barriers to mitigate noise. The owners also raised concerns about insufficient lighting, which

could encourage antisocial behaviour and limited access for An Garda Síochána to respond to such incidents. They consider the proposed development would negatively impact their property unless appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.

7.5.2. Adjoining lands to the north, north-west and west along Kilnavarragh Lane and also along the Dublin Road are zoned 'Existing Residential' with the objective to protect and enhance the amenity of developed residential areas. The closest residential properties along Kilnavarragh Lane are c. 30 to 35 meters from the proposed GAA pitches and c. 160m from the spectator stand No. 1. The distance between the northwestern boundary of the sports campus and the residential properties at Kilnavara Heights is c. 90 meters. The development incorporates 2m high acoustic fencing and landscaping along the western boundary. I am satisfied that this provides a buffer zone that would mitigate noise and visual impact on these residences, ensuring that the privacy and living conditions of residents are respected.

7.5.3. A distance of c. 35 metres is maintained between properties at St. Phelim's Place and the proposed Athletics Track. Dwelling No. 10 Lurganboy adjoins the northwestern corner of the site, adjacent to the proposed Athletics Track. As per the Site Layout Plan, the development does not incorporate 2m high acoustic fencing along the northwestern boundary adjacent to these properties. With regard to the submitted Landscape Plan, I note that the proposal incorporates a woodland-planted area along the northwestern boundary adjacent to Dwelling No. 10 Lurganboy. I am of the view that this woodland area, composed of mixed evergreen and deciduous species, would provide an effective natural noise barrier, enhancing visual amenity, biodiversity and the environmental character of the site while maintaining residential amenity. The dense planting would act as a buffer, reducing sound transmission from the sports activities. Notwithstanding this, given the potential 452 spectator capacity of Stand No. 3, located adjacent to the eight-lane athletics track and grass soccer pitch infield, I consider it appropriate that an effective noise barrier be provided along the side boundary Dwelling No. 10 Lurganboy within the site, to protect the residential amenity of this dwelling. This issue is addressed in further detail in Section 8.10 of this report under the EIA environmental topic Noise.

7.5.4. Regarding daylight and overshadowing, the Planning Statement asserts that the proposal would not impact daylight or cause overshadowing of any nearby sensitive receptors. Kilnavarragh Lane separates the site from residential properties to the west.

The report highlights how the design incorporates a buffer zone and landscaped walk, ensuring that all built forms are separated from these properties and located at a lower level. The report asserts how this layout, combined with planting and fencing, would effectively eliminate any potential for overshadowing. Having regard to the separation distance between the proposed Sports Building, Arena, and spectator stands from adjacent properties, along with the proposed tree planting, landscaping and fencing, I consider the proposed development would not have any adverse impacts on the residential amenities of adjacent properties by way of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impact.

7.5.5. Having regard to the Site Layout Plan, I note that bollard pathway lights are provided along the pedestrian and cycle pathways along the northwestern boundary and that a controlled pedestrian/cycle gate is provided at the northwest corner, which provides emergency vehicle access only when sporting events are taking place. I also note the EIAR specifies in Section 2.5.6 that a CCTV system comprising coverage to both the external of the proposed building and ground floor entrances and communal areas would be provided. The control system would offer full viewing of all cameras in a multi-screen format, and both recording and playback facilities would be provided at the digital recorder. The CCTV system would comply with the Data Protection Act and NACP 20 standards. I am satisfied that these measures would adequately address the third-party submission's concerns regarding security and access control. Potential impacts from floodlighting are addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment section of this report further below.

7.6. Stakeholder Engagement and Public Consultation

7.6.1. The third-party submission expressed concerns regarding public consultation and the proposed development. While they support the development in general, they submit that they were not engaged as stakeholders or consulted in the design process. They highlight inaccuracies and omissions in the EIAR, such as the lack of detailed descriptions of the development’s operation, security measures, and boundary treatments and inadequate public consultation. They are particularly concerned about the impact on their property, citing issues with noise assessment, visual impact, and security provisions. They point out inconsistencies in the provided drawings and the EIAR’s assessment criteria, arguing that the visual and noise impacts on their property

have not been properly evaluated. They express a willingness to discuss their concerns with design professionals to resolve these issues.

7.6.2. The Local Authority, in its Planning Statement, submitted with the application, outlines how Cavan County Council commissioned a feasibility study for the development of a regional sports facility for County Cavan. This study included findings from a consultation process with sports clubs, community organisations, and statutory bodies, highlighting the need, demand, and strategic context for such a facility. The Local Authority states that this consultation, along with a review of the strategic context and existing provisions, led to the establishment of a recommended capital vision for Cavan, identifying Cavan Town as the most appropriate location for a sports facility of regional significance. The Local Authority submits that this development would significantly enhance Cavan as a destination for sport and recreation, meeting the identified needs from the consultation process. They further assert that securing the project requires partnerships with the Cavan County GAA Board and the Royal School and the development of a link road to alleviate traffic congestion and open access to future outdoor activities.

7.6.3. The Local Authority outlines further details of public consultation in Section 3.1 of the EIAR. An extensive consultation process was conducted in 2018 as part of a feasibility study of the need for a Regional Sporting Facility for Cavan. This process included a web-based survey with 103 responses, focus groups with 10 National Governing Bodies of Sport, a public meeting attended by 17 representatives from 8 sporting clubs, and 12 individual meetings with key stakeholders. In total, 74 different organisations participated. The consultation identified key challenges faced by sporting clubs in promoting minority sports. In Section 5.5 of the EIAR regarding 'Alternative Site Layouts', the report states that further consultations with key stakeholders were undertaken to help develop development options within the site.

7.6.4. The public was informed of the proposed development of the Cavan Regional Sports Campus through a newspaper notice and site notices. These notices provided a description of the development and details on where the application could be inspected or purchased. The documents were available for inspection from 18th March to 29th April 2024 at the Cavan County Council Planning Offices and the Offices of An Bord Pleanála, as well as online at www.cavancoco.ie/cavanregionalsportscampus. The notices informed the public that any person could make a submission or

observation in writing to An Bord Pleanála or online at www.pleanala.ie within the specified period.

7.6.5. With regard to the issue raised, it is my view that the Local Authority has adequately engaged in public consultation in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). The extensive consultation process conducted in 2018, which included a web-based survey, focus groups, public meetings, and individual meetings with key stakeholders, demonstrates a comprehensive approach to stakeholder engagement. Under the subject application, the public was informed through newspaper and site notices, providing ample opportunity for inspection and submission of observations. Third-party observers exercised their right to submit observations and objections to An Bord Pleanála, and the concerns raised in their submission are thoroughly considered in this assessment. Therefore, I consider that the public was provided with the necessary opportunity to engage in the planning process under the subject application. Issues raised regarding the adequacy of the EIAR are addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment section of this report.

8.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

8.1. Statutory Provisions

8.1.1. The proposed development of the Cavan Regional Sports Campus includes an indoor sports complex with sports halls, fitness studios, changing facilities, a café, and spectator seating. It features seven outdoor sports pitches, a covered arena with a playing pitch, spectator seating, an eight-lane athletics track, and cricket practice nets. The development provides new vehicular access and junction modifications, including a new road junction to Dublin Road for access to the sports campus with the provision of a right-hand turn lane and pedestrian crossing, the closure of the existing Park Lane (Roscolgan Lane L65072-0) and the Dublin Road (R212) vehicular junction, the relocation of Breffni Park turnstiles, and a new bridge structure. Additional elements include internal roads, cycle and pedestrian paths, parking facilities, electric charge points, streetlighting, and pedestrian access from Kilnavara Lane and Dublin Road. The site will also incorporate landscaping, acoustic fencing, wildlife habitats, an artificial badger sett, walking trails, spectator stands, fencing, floodlighting, signage,

drainage infrastructure, SUDS, and an ESB substation, along with all necessary site works.

8.1.2. A mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is required for developments that fall under a class of development specified within Annex 1 of the EIA Directive (as amended) or within Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). According to Schedule 5, Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Class 10(iv) requires an EIA for "urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area, and 20 hectares elsewhere." Given that the site is located within the "built-up area" of Cavan town and the site area is approximately 28 hectares, the proposed development necessitates an EIA.

8.2. EIA Structure

8.2.1. This section of the report comprises the environmental impact assessment of the proposed development in accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the associated Regulations, which incorporate the European Directives on Environmental Impact Assessment (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU). Section 171 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) defines EIA as:

a) consisting of the preparation of an EIAR by the applicant, the carrying out of consultations, the examination of the EIAR and relevant supplementary information by the Board, the reasoned conclusions of the Board and the integration of the reasoned conclusion into the decision of the Board, and

b) includes an examination, analysis and evaluation, by the Board, that identifies, describes and assesses the likely direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed development on defined environmental parameters and the interaction of these factors, and which includes significant effects arising from the vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and/or disasters.

8.2.2. Article 94 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 and associated Schedule 6 set out requirements for the contents of an EIAR.

8.2.3. This EIA section of the report is, therefore, divided into two sections. The first section assesses compliance with the requirements of Article 94 and Schedule 6 of the Regulations. The second section provides an examination, analysis and evaluation of the development and an assessment of the likely direct and indirect significant effects of it on the following defined environmental parameters, having regard to the EIAR and relevant supplementary information:

- population and human health,
- biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive,
- land, soil, water, air and climate,
- material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape,
- the interaction between the above factors, and
- the vulnerability of the proposed development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters.

8.2.4. It also provides a reasoned conclusion and allows for integration of the reasoned conclusions into the Board's decision, should they agree with the recommendation made.

8.3. Issues Raised in Respect of EIA

8.3.1. Issues raised in respect of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) by third-party observers are summarised in Section 5.5 above. The submission highlights concerns regarding the lack of stakeholder engagement and consultation during the design process, as well as inaccuracies in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). The submission asserts the EIAR lacks sufficient details on the development's operational aspects, including hours, security measures, and anticipated user numbers. The submission also criticises the inadequacy of the consultation process, security measures, lighting, and access control, particularly regarding the ability of An Garda Síochána to respond to antisocial behaviour. Noise impact assessments are deemed inaccurate, with concerns over realistic crowd sizes and insufficient acoustic barriers. The visual impact assessment is also challenged for being incomplete and inconsistent, particularly regarding the classification of their property as "High Sensitivity" and the impact on it. Specific issues include

discrepancies in provided drawings, such as the alignment of section lines and missing details regarding boundary fencing and floodlight towers. The observers emphasise that these inadequacies could negatively impact their property unless appropriate mitigation measures are implemented.

8.4. Compliance with the requirements of Article 94 and Schedule 6 of the Regulations 2001 (as amended)

8.4.1. I assess below compliance with the requirements of Article 94 and Schedule 6 of the Regulations.

Article 94 (a) Information to be contained in an EIAR (Schedule 6, paragraph 1)	
A description of the proposed development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the proposed development (including the additional information referred to under section 94(b).	A description of the proposed development is provided in Chapter 2 of the EIAR. This includes details on the location, site, design, and size of the development, as well as arrangements for access and construction. The EIAR also covers the use of natural resources, production of emissions, and waste management strategies. The development site spans 28 hectares and includes indoor and outdoor sports facilities, sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDs), and necessary infrastructure improvements. The description is adequate to enable informed decision-making by presenting a comprehensive overview of the project's scale, design, and potential environmental impacts.
A description of the likely significant effects on the environment of the proposed development (including the additional information	The description of the likely significant effects on the environment of the proposed Cavan Regional Sports Campus is detailed across various chapters of the EIAR, with Chapter 17 summarising the cumulative impacts, significant interactions and risks of major accidents and/or disasters. I am satisfied that the assessment of significant

referred to under section 94(b).	effects is comprehensive and robust and enables decision making.
A description of the features, if any, of the proposed development and the measures, if any, envisaged to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment of the development (including the additional information referred to under section 94(b).	The EIAR describes the features of the proposed development and outlines measures to avoid, prevent, reduce, or offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment. These elements are detailed across each of the chapters of the EIAR.
A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the person or persons who prepared the EIAR, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and	The EIAR, in Chapter 5, outlines the reasonable alternatives considered for the Cavan Regional Sports Campus. The "Do-Nothing" alternative is discussed, highlighting the potential loss of socio-economic benefits. Several design and access configurations were evaluated to optimise environmental impact and stakeholder needs. The final design, "Option 5," was selected for its minimal habitat disruption, ecological integration, and enhanced connectivity. The preferred access via Dublin Road was chosen for its minimal ecological impact. The chosen site and design prioritise sustainability and accessibility,

an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the proposed development on the environment (including the additional information referred to under section 94(b).	balancing community needs with environmental considerations.
Article 94(b) Additional information, relevant to the specific characteristics of the development and to the environmental features likely to be affected (Schedule 6, Paragraph 2).	
A description of the baseline environment and likely evolution in the absence of the development.	The EIAR provides a detailed overview of the baseline environment and the likely evolution if the Cavan Regional Sports Campus is not implemented, as outlined in each technical chapter. Key aspects include population and human health (Chapter 7), biodiversity (Chapter 8), land, soils, and water (Chapter 9), air and climate (Chapter 10), noise and vibration (Chapter 11), and material assets (Chapter 12). The EIAR's baseline assessments support informed decision-making by documenting current conditions and projecting likely outcomes without the development, enabling the formulation of effective mitigation strategies.

A description of the forecasting methods or evidence used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information, and the main uncertainties involved	The EIAR outlines the forecasting methods used in each technical chapter to assess significant environmental effects, including biodiversity, land, soils, water, air quality, climate, noise, vibration, and cultural heritage. Challenges encountered, such as data limitations, seasonal variability, and uncertainties in ecological responses, are acknowledged in each section. Overall, the methodologies applied are robust and sufficient for informed decision-making regarding the environmental impacts of the proposed Cavan Regional Sports Campus, though some data gaps and uncertainties are noted.
A description of the expected significant adverse effects on the environment of the proposed development deriving from its vulnerability to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to it.	The EIAR addresses the vulnerability of the proposed Cavan Regional Sports Campus to major accidents and disasters, including flood risk (with mitigation through flood-resilient construction and SuDS), fire safety (with necessary systems and emergency plans), traffic accidents (with proposed traffic management measures), and chemical spills (with containment strategies). The EIAR generally provides an adequate assessment of these risks and outlines appropriate mitigation strategies.
Article 94 (c) A summary of the information in non-technical language.	The EIAR includes in Volume 1 a non-technical summary that fulfils the requirements of Article 94 (c). This summary provides an overview of the Cavan Regional Sports Campus, detailing the project's key features, site location, statutory requirements, methodology, and the study team

	involved. It addresses the need for the development, considerations of alternatives, and environmental topics such as air quality, biodiversity, noise, and more. It also discusses cumulative impacts, interactions, and major accidents, ensuring an accessible and comprehensive overview for stakeholders and the public.
Article 94 (d) Sources used for the description and the assessments used in the report	The sources used to inform the description and the assessment of the potential environmental impact are set out in each topic chapter of the EIAR. These sources appear to be adequate and generally sufficient for the assessments conducted, with any specific concerns addressed in relevant chapters.
Article 94 (e) A list of the experts who contributed to the preparation of the report	The EIAR includes a list of experts who contributed to its preparation, with details provided in Chapter 1, Section 1.5, and in Appendix 1.1, which lists the names, qualifications, and roles of the contributors. The Non-Technical Summary also acknowledges the interdisciplinary team and consultants involved.

8.4.18. **Consultations**

8.4.19. The application has been submitted in compliance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) concerning public notices. Submissions from statutory bodies and third parties have been received and are considered in this report prior to decision-making. Therefore, I am satisfied that appropriate consultations have been carried out and that third parties have had the opportunity to comment on the proposed development in advance of decision-making.

8.4.20. **Compliance**

8.4.21. Having regard to the foregoing, I am satisfied that the information contained in the EIAR and supplementary information provided by the Local Authority is sufficient to comply with Article 94 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended). The details of my assessment of likely significant effects are below.

8.5. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

8.5.1. This section of the report sets out an assessment of the likely environmental effects of the proposed development under the following headings, as set out in Section 171A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended:

- Population and human health.
- Biodiversity, with particular attention to the species and habitats protected under the Habitats and Birds Directives (Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC respectively).
- Land, soil, water, air and climate.
- Material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape.
- The interaction between these factors.

8.5.2. In accordance with section 171A of the Act, which defines EIA, this assessment includes an examination, analysis and evaluation of the application documents, including the EIAR and submissions received and identifies, describes and assesses the likely direct and indirect significant effects (including cumulative effects) of the development on these environmental parameters and the interaction of these. Each topic section is, therefore, structured around the following headings:

- Issues raised in the appeal/application.
- Examination, analysis and evaluation of the EIAR.
- The Assessment: Direct and indirect effects.
- Conclusion: Direct and indirect effects.

8.6. <u>Population and Human Health</u>

8.6.1. **Issues Raised**

8.6.2. The third-party submission received expresses concerns regarding the proposed sports complex's impact on population and human health. They support the development in general but submit that they were not consulted in the design process, and highlight several deficiencies in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). Specifically, the third-party submission criticises the lack of detailed information on the development's operation, including hours of operation, access control, security measures, and anticipated user numbers. They express concerns about inadequate security provisions, including insufficient 24-hour security, CCTV, and lighting to prevent antisocial behaviour and question the ability of An Garda Síochána to respond effectively due to limited access points. Additionally, the third-party submission finds the noise impact assessment in Chapter 11 of the EIAR unrealistic, citing that cumulative noise impacts and necessary acoustic barriers have not been accurately assessed. These concerns underscore the perceived shortcomings in addressing the potential adverse effects on population and human health associated with the proposed development.

8.6.3. The submissions from the Prescribed Bodies raised no specific concerns or issues directly related to Population and Human Health.

8.6.4. **Assessment Methodology**

8.6.5. The EIAR states that the methodology adheres to the EPA guidelines on the Information to be contained in EIAR and the amended EU EIA Directive. It describes how the assessment identifies, describes, and evaluates the direct and indirect significant effects on population and human health, as well as the interactions between these and other factors. The EIAR details the inclusion of health risks, environmentally related health issues, changes in living conditions, and impacts on vulnerable groups within the scope of the assessment.

8.6.6. The EIAR notes that the methods used must be tailored to each project, considering size, nature, and local context. It puts forward a chapter on population and human health, using extensive Health Impact Assessment (HIA) guidance to address project-specific and local conditions. The report states that the methodology combines findings from various technical disciplines, contextualising significant environmental effects concerning health protection, promotion, and care.

8.6.7. The EIAR indicates that a baseline demographic, health, and well-being database has been established to understand the local circumstances, displaying mostly quantitative data, with qualitative approaches where quantitative data is unavailable. It assesses the sensitivity of each affected receptor and the extent of potential impacts, weighing any significant detrimental effects against the benefits of the scheme. The assessment integrates policies from the National Planning Framework 2040 and the Cavan County Development Plan, highlighting objectives related to human health, social infrastructure, and community facilities. The EIAR posits that the methodology aligns with the goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework 2013, aiming to improve health outcomes, reduce health inequalities, and create supportive environments. Furthermore, the EIAR states that the assessment of potential effects on population and human health follows the World Health Organisation's (WHO) comprehensive definition of health, which includes physical, mental, and social well-being.

8.6.8. The EIAR details definitions for sensitivity, magnitude of impact, and significance of effects. Sensitivity is defined on a scale from negligible to very high, considering the importance of the receptor. The magnitude of impact ranges from no change to high, reflecting the extent of potential alterations due to the development. The EIAR indicates that potential environmental impacts are classified by their type and significance, from negligible to substantial, with substantial effects being crucial in decision-making, often relating to sites or features of international, national, or regional significance. The significance of effects is categorised into substantial, major, moderate, minor, and negligible, influencing decision-making based on the cumulative impact on resources or receptors. The assessment considers both social and ecological determinants to provide an understanding of how the proposed development could affect overall population health.

8.6.9. **Baseline Conditions**

8.6.10. The EIAR describes the strategic and local population context for Cavan County within the framework of the National Planning Framework (NPF) and the Cavan County Development Plan. It notes that the critical population projection periods are to 2026 and 2031, with the population of Cavan projected to be between 83,000-84,500 by 2026 and 86,000-88,000 by 2031. The EIAR highlights Cavan Town’s strategic importance within the Border Region, emphasising its excellent transport linkages and

potential for hosting regional and national events despite a current lack of appropriate facilities. The EIAR details a 4% population increase in Cavan between 2011 and 2016, with the 2022 Census indicating a further 7% rise to 81,704 people. It highlights the stable urban-rural population split and the slight increase in the average age of residents. The EIAR indicates that 84% of people in Cavan rated their health as good or very good in 2022, a slight decline from 87% in 2016.

8.6.11. Economic context is provided, noting Cavan's strategic location and transport connections facilitating economic growth. The EIAR points to a 25.7% rise in employment since 2013, expecting continued growth alongside population increases.

8.6.12. The health profile from the Department of Public Health's 2015 report is referenced, noting Cavan's higher-than-average population increase and lower rates of self-reported bad health and disability. It also details specific health statistics such as higher birth rates for those under 20, lower cancer incidence rates, higher death rates from certain causes, and higher suicide rates compared to national figures. Physical health data from the HSE and mental health statistics highlight concerns, including higher death rates from major diseases and significant mental health issues linked to socio-economic deprivation.

8.6.13. **Potential Effects**

8.6.14. The EIAR describes the potential effects on population and human health during the construction and operational phases of the proposed sports complex. During the construction phase, the EIAR states that there will be a low magnitude of impact on air quality due to construction dust from activities such as demolition, excavation, and transportation. The sensitivity of nearby residential areas and sensitive environmental zones is considered low, and the significance of the effect is expected to be minor, with localised increases in particulate matter being short-lived and reversible. Enhanced communication, frequent site inspections, advanced dust suppression technologies, and continuous air quality monitoring are proposed, resulting in minimal residual impact on air quality.

8.6.15. Noise and vibration levels during construction are anticipated to have a medium impact on sensitive receptors, with predicted sound levels exceeding threshold values. The receptors are stated to be of medium sensitivity, and the significance of the effect is deemed moderate, particularly for those closest to the construction sites. Mitigation

measures include noise barriers, community engagement, regular monitoring, and low-vibration construction methods, reducing residual effects but necessitating ongoing monitoring.

8.6.16. The impact on traffic flow is expected to be low, with construction traffic increasing overall volume by 0.75% and 0.62% during Phases 1 and 2, respectively. The surrounding community and road users are deemed of medium sensitivity, with the significance of the effect being minor. Construction activities would be confined to weekdays between 08:00hrs and 18:00hrs, as well as Saturdays from 08:00hrs to 13:00hrs, with no work planned on Sundays or Bank Holidays, to avoid major disruptions, resulting in minimal residual effect on transport.

8.6.17. Soil, land, and water quality impacts are considered low to medium. The report considers nearby residents to be moderate to highly sensitive due to contamination and pollution risks. The EIAR indicates no specific geological significance, with potential human health risks reduced by minimal cut-fill works. The significance of the effect is low, and further assessment and mitigation of made ground areas are required. Residual impacts are deemed to be neutral and temporary with good construction practices.

8.6.18. Income and employment generation during construction is expected to have a negligible impact on baseline health metrics, assuming high sensitivity among residential receptors. The significance of the effect is minor, with positive residual effects anticipated post-construction as employment benefits dissipate.

8.6.19. During the operational phase, the EIAR states that the impact on air quality would be negligible, with low sensitivity of receptors and minor significance of effect. No additional mitigation measures are proposed, resulting in minimal residual impact on air quality. The report states that noise and vibration levels would have a low impact, with the receptors being of low sensitivity and the effect expected to be negligible or minor. The report states that a 2m noise barrier would reduce operational noise levels, ensuring compliance with WHO guidelines. Residual impact are stated to be negligible.

8.6.20. Impacts on land, soils, and waters during the operational phase are considered low-medium, with the sensitivity of residents being low due to effective mitigation measures. The significance of the effect is deemed low, with sustainable drainage

systems and regulatory compliance ensuring no residual impacts. THE EIAR states that income and employment generation would have a minor impact, positively affecting the local economy, with high sensitivity assumed among residential receptors.

8.6.21. Health and well-being benefits are deemed significant, with a medium impact due to increased opportunities for physical activity and improved social cohesion, resulting in moderate significance. It is stated that the development would promote healthier lifestyles and community bonding, with significant positive residual impacts on health and well-being.

8.6.22. Overall, the EIAR concludes that the construction phase would stimulate economic activity without significant adverse effects on population and human health, while the operational phase would yield substantial socio-economic and health benefits. No significant cumulative effects are anticipated, and the impacts would align with strategic and local objectives for community health and wellbeing.

8.6.23. **Mitigation Measures**

8.6.24. The EIAR proposes several mitigation measures to address potential impacts on population and human health during both the construction and operational phases of the proposed sports complex.

8.6.25. Regarding Air Quality, the EIAR describes the development of enhanced communication channels and stakeholder engagement plans to foster community involvement and transparency. Rigorous site inspections would be conducted, particularly during activities prone to dust generation. Advanced dust suppression technologies would be adopted to minimise dust emissions. Continuous monitoring of air quality and adjustment of mitigation strategies based on real-time data are also proposed.

8.6.26. Regarding Noise Exposure, during the construction phase, the EIAR outlines measures, including the implementation of noise barriers around the perimeter of the construction site, proactive community engagement to address concerns and complaints, and regular monitoring of noise and vibration levels to ensure compliance with established thresholds. Additionally, adopting low-vibration construction methods and adhering to best practices are recommended to further mitigate the impact. During

the operational phase, a 2m noise barrier would be erected along the south/south-eastern boundary of the site. This barrier is designed to reduce operational noise levels by at least 5 dB. The barrier would be continuous in length with a surface density of at least 10 kg/m².

8.6.27. Regarding Transport, the EIAR proposes restricting construction work to designated hours to avoid disruptions during late hours, with the schedule confined to weekdays between 08:00hrs and 18:00hrs, and Saturdays from 08:00hrs to 13:00hrs, with no work planned on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

8.6.28. Regarding Soil, Land, and Water Quality, the EIAR indicates that further assessment of the made ground areas associated with the access road and bridge crossing is required prior to construction. The reuse of site-derived materials would be prioritised to minimise the volume of imported materials. Controls on the quality of imported materials will be implemented, and the importation of materials will comply with all regulatory requirements. For the operational phase, the EIAR states that Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) would be employed along with flow-control attenuation systems to manage runoff from hard surfaces. Engineered end-of-pipe controls would be deployed as part of the attenuation measures for managing runoff from vehicular routes and car parks. The EIAR states that mitigation measures would be implemented through consultation with NPWS and Inland Fisheries Ireland to ensure that the Cavan River remains unaffected throughout the construction and lifespan of the proposed development.

8.6.29. **Residual Effects**

8.6.30. The EIAR describes various residual impacts of the proposed sports complex on population and human health. It states that during the construction phase, the impact on air quality would be minimal, with residual effects expected to be limited in geography and duration. Noise and vibration levels would have ongoing residual effects throughout the construction phase, although these are expected to be at reduced levels due to the implementation of noise barriers and other mitigation measures. The EIAR notes that residual effects on transport would be minimal post-construction, as any temporary disruptions caused by construction activities are anticipated to dissipate. Soil, land, and water quality impacts are also expected to be

neutral and temporary, with mitigation measures ensuring minimal risk to the water environment.

8.6.31. The EIAR indicates that while construction would generate job opportunities, the residual effect on income and employment generation during construction is expected to be positive, although temporary. During the operational phase, the EIAR details that air quality impacts would be minimal, with negligible or minor residual effects. Noise exposure would also have negligible residual impacts, with the 2m noise barrier along the south/south-eastern boundary designed to maintain noise levels below the 50 dB(A) threshold, in accordance with the established standard for sports activities and the guidelines set by the WHO for external amenity.

8.6.32. The EIAR posits that the impact on land, soils, and waters would be low, with no residual impacts expected due to effective mitigation measures, including the SuDS and flow-control attenuation systems.

8.6.33. The EIAR notes that the development of the sports complex would have a significant positive impact on the local economy of Cavan town and the wider county in terms of income and employment generation. It would also result in sustained improvements in public health indicators, such as increased physical activity levels, reduced rates of chronic diseases, and enhanced social cohesion within the community.

8.6.34. **Cumulative Effects**

8.6.35. The EIAR addresses the cumulative impacts of the proposed sports complex on population and human health. It states that the assessment of population and human health interacts with other chapters within the EIAR, incorporating conclusions from these chapters to account for combined impacts from both the proposed development and other developments considered cumulatively.

8.6.36. **Assessment**

8.6.37. I have examined, analysed, and evaluated Chapter 7 of the EIAR, as well as all of the associated documentation and submissions on file concerning Population and Human Health. It is my view that the proposed sports campus has been thoroughly assessed in terms of its potential impacts on population and human health, both during the construction and operational phases. The direct effects identified, such as potential

alterations in air quality, noise levels, and traffic volume, are mitigated through measures outlined in the EIAR.

8.6.38. The EIAR describes how rigorous site inspections would be carried out to promptly identify and address any potential issues during construction, ensuring compliance with environmental standards. Advanced dust suppression technologies, including water sprays and dust-binding agents, would be utilised to minimise particulate matter emissions. Additionally, 2m high noise barriers would be installed along the south and south-eastern boundaries of the site to reduce operational noise levels by at least 5 dB. Proactive community engagement would be conducted to address concerns and maintain transparency, supplemented by continuous air quality monitoring to adjust mitigation strategies in real-time.

8.6.39. I consider that the mitigation measures proposed for air quality, noise, and traffic during construction are adequate and would be effective. These are described in further detail under the respective environmental topic headings below. The predicted residual impacts on air quality would be minimal, given the use of advanced dust suppression and continuous monitoring. Noise impacts, while initially moderate, would be reduced significantly through the implementation of noise barriers and low-vibration construction methods. The residual noise impact would be negligible, particularly with the installation of a 2m noise barrier during the operational phase, designed to maintain noise levels below the 50 dB(A) threshold in line with WHO guidelines. This issue is addressed in further detail below under the heading Noise, where further details are taken into consideration, including hours of operation and the capacity of the proposed sports complex in terms of the number of people it can accommodate.

8.6.40. Regarding soil, land, and water quality, the EIAR indicates that the impacts are expected to be low to medium, with effective mitigation measures in place. These include the reuse of site-derived materials, proper assessment of made ground areas, and the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) along with flow-control attenuation systems. I consider these measures would prevent contamination and pollution, resulting in neutral and temporary residual impacts.

8.6.41. Income and employment generation during both the construction and operational phases would have positive effects on the local economy. While the impact on baseline health metrics would be negligible during construction, the operational phase

would likely see minor but positive residual impacts, enhancing local employment and economic activity.

8.6.42. In terms of health and well-being, the development of the sports complex would have significant positive impacts. The increased opportunities for physical activity and improved social connectivity would promote healthier lifestyles and community cohesion. These benefits align with the goals of the Healthy Ireland Framework 2019-2025 and NSO 7 of the National Planning Framework 2040.

8.6.43. **Conclusion**

8.6.44. I conclude, therefore, that the proposed sports campus would not have significant adverse effects on population and human health. The proposed mitigation measures would be effective, addressing potential impacts effectively. The cumulative effects, considering both the proposed development and other developments in the area, would not result in significant negative impacts. Overall, I consider the proposed development would yield substantial socio-economic and health benefits, enhancing the well-being of the local community.

8.7. **Biodiversity**

8.7.1. **Issues Raised**

8.7.2. The third-party submission raised no specific issues or concerns related to biodiversity in their submission.

8.7.3. The submission from the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage – Development Applications Unit raises several biodiversity concerns that require attention before the proposed development can proceed. The Department highlights the need for further surveys for white-clawed crayfish and freshwater pearl mussel, planned for Spring/Summer 2024. They request clarification on the correct identification of the pearl mussel, which must be reviewed by a qualified molluscan ecologist. Additionally, they seek more detailed information on the construction of new outfalls, the proposed bridge, and the culverting of the minor watercourse to ensure environmental protection.

8.7.4. The Department also identifies specific concerns about potential impacts on bats, noting that six trees have low roosting potential, three have moderate, and three have high potential for bats. They require further surveys before felling any high and medium-value trees. Detailed impact assessments on bats and mitigation measures for light spill and watercourse works are necessary. They recommend additional surveys to determine bat presence in the Royal School. The presence of pine martens foraging within the site also requires more information on mitigation during construction.

8.7.5. The Department states that habitat compensation planting areas need to be detailed, including expected vegetation growth and drawings. The Department notes that several environmental protection plans referenced in the application, such as the Construction Environmental Management Plan, Surface Water Management Plan, Habitat Management Plan, and the proposed Woodland Enhancement strategy, were not included in the application. Consequently, they cannot comment on their content and stress that these plans should be included. Furthermore, they emphasise the need for details on proposed planting mixes, habitat layouts, and their relation to affected species before consent is granted. They also request more detail on the partial translocation of the central hedgerow, including drawings and receptor ditches, and collaboration with the Royal School on hedgerow translocation. They suggest that grass/wildflower mix for habitat compensation is only necessary for slope stabilisation, with natural recolonisation preferred as per the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. Riparian buffer areas should be fenced and allowed to recolonise naturally, and scrub clearance should be undertaken outside the breeding season (1st March – 31st August) as a condition of any consent granted.

8.7.6. Inland Fisheries Ireland raises concerns about the potential impact of the proposed development on nearby watercourses. They emphasise that the Cavan River, which is in proximity to the site, contains excellent salmonid habitat, Lamprey, and suitable Lamprey habitat, all protected under the EU Habitats Directive. They highlight the potential for pollutants from stormwater runoff, including oil and debris, and recommend the use of oil/grease and silt traps to ensure only clean, uncontaminated water is discharged. They stress that hard surfaces increase runoff, potentially causing downstream flooding and adverse effects on fish habitats, and recommend the implementation of water attenuation systems where appropriate.

8.7.7. Inland Fisheries Ireland advises measures to minimise potential damage during construction, such as preventing sediment runoff, spillages, and discharges of cement, paints, and oils and avoiding damage to riparian vegetation. They emphasise the importance of protecting all watercourses within or adjacent to the property in terms of water quality, topography, and habitat, as well as preventing the discharge of suspended solids and other harmful materials. They recommend retaining hedges and ditches with native trees and vegetation, important habitats for aquatic insects that are crucial for fish diets, and replanting using native species to maintain biodiversity and ensure bank stabilisation. They caution against the introduction of alien invasive species and recommend hot-power-washing machinery before its introduction to the site and treating machinery with 1% aqueous Virkon solution. Onsite storage of fuels, oils, greases, and hydraulic fluids should be in bunded, lined, and lockable areas away from watercourses, with refuelling, maintenance, and washing of vehicles conducted in these areas. Drip trays should be used for generators and pumps, and stockpile areas for materials should be minimised and located away from watercourses. Runoff from machine service areas, concrete mixing areas, and stockpiles should not enter watercourses, and spill kits should be available onsite with staff trained in their use. Finally, they recommend using silt curtains to prevent suspended solids from entering watercourses and emphasise the sensitivity of the Cavan River and associated tributaries as salmonid habitats, urging extreme care during construction and operation to prevent adverse impacts.

8.7.8. Uisce Eireann's submission did not raise any concerns related to biodiversity.

8.7.9. **Assessment Methodology**

8.7.10. Section 8.3 8 of the EIAR outlines the methodology used for assessing the biodiversity impacts of the proposed development. The EIAR states that an extensive desk study was undertaken where key data was obtained from sources, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Consultations were undertaken involving discussions with key stakeholders, including NPWS conservation rangers and Inland Fisheries Ireland. The EIAR describes how site visits and meetings with these experts were essential in refining the survey approach, determining the extent of previous ecological surveys, and identifying suitable mitigation measures. During these consultations, specific focus was given to

the riparian buffer zone, with discussions on potential enhancements and future survey requirements.

8.7.11. Various field methods were employed. The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (refer to Appendix 8.1) combined desk-based reviews with systematic field surveys, which included habitat classification using the standardised Fossitt Habitat Classification Survey. The EIAR describes how these surveys involved mapping habitats, recording dominant flora species, and noting the presence of non-native invasive weeds. The field surveys extended to a systematic search for evidence of protected mammal species, including badgers, bats, otters, and pine martens.

8.7.12. For badgers, the EIAR notes that a thorough search was conducted across the site and within a 25-metre buffer zone, identifying setts, latrines, and well-worn paths. An extended survey was also conducted up to 1 kilometre beyond the site to locate other badger setts. The EIAR categorises the different types of setts, such as main, annex, subsidiary, and outlying setts, with detailed criteria provided for each.

8.7.13. Otter surveys, as outlined in the EIAR, involved a systematic search of the site and a 30-metre buffer zone. The EIAR highlights that field signs such as spraints, anal jelly, forage remains, slides, couches, and holts were recorded to determine otter presence and activity within the site.

8.7.14. The EIAR provides significant detail on bat surveys, including both Bat Roost Potential (BRP) and bat activity surveys (refer to Appendix 8.4). The BRP survey followed best practice guidelines from the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and involved assessing trees for potential roosting features (PRFs) such as cavities, trunk splits, and rot holes. Two specific trees identified as having moderate suitability for roosting bats were further investigated using an endoscope under licence, with results indicating that one tree's PRFs were downgraded from moderate to negligible. The EIAR also describes bat activity surveys conducted across three transects within the site, supplemented by static monitoring over several months. These surveys adhered to BCT Good Practice guidelines and were conducted on four occasions between June and September 2023 to capture relevant bat activity data.

8.7.15. The Pine Marten survey (refer to Appendix 8.5) focused on transects within riparian woodland and along linear habitat features. The EIAR explains that particular attention

was given to track intersections, stream crossings, and other prominent features, with the aim of detecting dens, scats, and tracks indicative of pine marten presence.

8.7.16. For breeding birds (refer to Appendix 8.6), the EIAR states that the survey methodology followed the 'Common Bird Census' (CBC) approach, devised by the British Trust for Ornithology. The site was visited on four occasions during the breeding season (May-August), with all bird species recorded, particularly those exhibiting nesting or territorial behaviours. The EIAR places emphasis on recording species listed as Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland.

8.7.17. **Baseline Conditions**

8.7.18. The EIAR details the baseline environmental conditions for biodiversity, starting with reference to the Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment, which identified hydrological links between the site of the proposed development and two European sites, Lough Oughter SAC and SPA. This necessitated a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, which the EIAR describes as focused on localised impacts within the Cavan River, primarily affecting otter habitats. The EIAR notes that mitigation measures are required to address indirect impacts, as there are no direct effects on the designated sites.

8.7.19. The EIAR details the species-specific surveys conducted on-site. It describes the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) provided in Appendix 8.1, which identified a range of agricultural grassland and woodland habitats, mainly valuable for supporting protected species rather than botanical diversity. The EIAR states that badger, otter, and white-clawed crayfish were present, and the site offered suitable habitats for bats and pine martens. The EIAR states that further surveys were recommended in the PEA, particularly for these species.

8.7.20. For badgers, the EIAR details an in-depth badger survey (Appendix 8.2), including remote camera monitoring, which confirmed the presence of a main sett used by a sow and two cubs. The EIAR highlights that the site offers extensive foraging habitat, both on and off-site, and recommends appropriate mitigation due to the absence of alternative setts within the vicinity.

8.7.21. Regarding otters, the EIAR describes the otter survey findings (Appendix 8.3) that included tracks and foraging evidence along the Cavan River, although no holts were

identified within the site boundary. The EIAR notes that otters are present at low levels, primarily using the river for foraging.

8.7.22. The EIAR discusses bat roost and activity surveys (Appendix 8.4), identifying several trees with varying levels of roosting potential. Although no roosting bats were observed, the EIAR emphasises the site's high bat activity due to abundant foraging and commuting features like woodland edges, mature trees, and the Cavan River. The bat assemblage identified during surveys consisted of all species of bat found in Ireland except for lesser horseshoe bats. Soprano pipistrelle, and to a lesser extent common pipistrelle, were the most frequently occurring species recorded across all transect surveys and through static recording.

8.7.23. Pine marten surveys (refer to Appendix 8.5) recorded a maximum of one adult and four kits foraging on-site, though no dens were found. The EIAR suggests a den is likely present either on-site or nearby.

8.7.24. The EIAR includes results from breeding bird surveys conducted between May and August 2023, which identified 31 species, including several amber-listed species and one red-listed species, although the latter was not nesting on-site. The EIAR posits that the site provides suitable breeding habitats and suggests that habitat enhancement could increase biodiversity. It is noted in the EIAR that a barn owl and long-eared owl were observed foraging within the site during nocturnal bat surveys.

8.7.25. The EIAR mentions that white-clawed crayfish and freshwater pearl mussel surveys were recommended due to the Cavan River's suitability as a habitat. Although these surveys were delayed due to high water levels, the EIAR notes earlier observations indicating the presence of these species.

8.7.26. The EIAR reports no evidence of invasive plant species on-site, though Japanese Knotweed was observed nearby, presenting a low risk of spreading to the site. The EIAR also notes that mink were recorded during remote camera monitoring.

8.7.27. **Potential Effects**

8.7.28. The EIAR states that the proposed development would result in the removal of semi-improved grassland, scrub, trees, and woodland, which would lead to a significant, long-term loss of natural habitat on the site. This habitat loss is characterised as a direct, long-term major negative (significant) effect at the local level, with the sensitivity

of these habitats considered medium and the impact irreversible without appropriate mitigation.

8.7.29. For badgers, the EIAR details the presence of an onsite main sett, which is highly sensitive to disturbance. The proposed development would include the destruction of this sett, along with the removal of foraging habitats within the site. The EIAR highlights the potential for excavations and earthworks to pose additional risks, such as trapping or injuring foraging badgers. The overall impact on the badger population is classified as a direct, long-term, major negative effect at the site level prior to the implementation of mitigation measures.

8.7.30. Regarding otters, the EIAR indicates that while no holts were identified within the site, the Cavan River serves as an important foraging area for local otters. The potential impacts include the loss of foraging habitat, pollution of water bodies, and disturbance from sound and light pollution. These factors could negatively affect otter activity and hunting behaviour, though the specific magnitude of impact is not fully quantified.

8.7.31. The EIAR describes the potential negative impact on bats, noting that several trees with roosting potential are proposed for removal. Although no active roosts were recorded during the 2023 survey season, the loss of these trees, along with the reduction of woodland, treelines, and hedgerows, would significantly decrease foraging habitats and commuting corridors. The introduction of site lighting could further disrupt bat activity, either deterring them from the area or altering their behaviour, which may increase their vulnerability to predation. The impact on the local bat population is assessed as significant and negative at a local level in the absence of mitigation.

8.7.32. The EIAR details the potential impact on pine martens, noting that the removal of woodland and individual trees could lead to the loss of foraging and commuting habitats, as well as potential den sites. The construction activities could cause injury or mortality to pine martens, particularly during the breeding season. The overall impact on pine martens is considered significant and negative at a local level without mitigation.

8.7.33. For birds, the EIAR indicates that the proposed development would disturb the local bird population through habitat loss and increased noise and light pollution. The report notes that there is the potential to impact hunting opportunities for certain species,

such as grey herons, due to the proposed bridge structure and works along the riverbanks. Although a diverse range of species was recorded on-site, including amber-listed species and one red-listed species (Golden Plover), the overall impact on nesting birds is assessed as low negative at the local level, given that only green-list birds were found nesting on the site.

8.7.34. Lastly, the EIAR raises significant concerns regarding white-clawed crayfish and other aquatic fauna, particularly in relation to the proposed bridge construction over the Cavan River. The EIAR notes that the presence of these species has been confirmed through preliminary site visits, and the potential for increased silt runoff and other pollutants during construction could have a major negative impact on the aquatic environment. This could lead to habitat degradation, decreased water quality, and eutrophication, thereby significantly reducing the river's capacity to support aquatic life. The impact on aquatic fauna is classified as a major negative effect at the local level prior to the implementation of mitigation measures.

8.7.35. **Mitigation Measures**

8.7.36. The EIAR outlines a range of mitigation measures aimed at minimising the adverse impacts on biodiversity during the construction and operational phases of the proposed sports campus. The EIAR states that the construction would be phased to retain as much habitat cover as possible, with an Ecological Clerk of Works overseeing the implementation of mitigation strategies. Phase One would include the creation of wildlife habitats, riparian planting adjacent to River Cavan, Dublin Road access and bridge over the River Cavan as well as the main arena, hockey pitch, two sand mattress GAA Fields, and two car parks. Additionally, Phase One would include the construction of an artificial badger sett, which would be established six months prior to the exclusion and destruction of the existing sett, within Phase 1. The EIAR states that existing habitats within the Phase 2 areas of the site would be retained and protected, with appropriate fencing throughout Phase 1 of construction. This would ensure ongoing provision of commuting and foraging habitat for local fauna throughout this period while compensatory habitats are established.

8.7.37. The EIAR describes the need for a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) that would include habitat protection measures, such as fencing around root protection areas of retained hedgerows and trees and maintaining a 10m works

exclusion buffer from the Cavan River. Habitat compensation would involve creating a mosaic of species-rich native habitats aligned with the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, and partially translocating the large central hedgerow to the compensation area. This translocation would facilitate the early establishment of mature vegetation, essential for screening the artificial badger sett. The EIAR suggests a Woodland Enhancement Strategy, potentially in collaboration with adjacent landowners including the Royal School, to ensure cohesive habitat management and biodiversity value enhancement locally.

8.7.38. The EIAR puts forward that mitigation measures from the Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, particularly those related to the riverine site, have been incorporated to ensure no residual effects on ecological receptors. Standard mitigation for all wildlife includes best practices such as limiting noise to daytime hours, implementing dust suppression, and ensuring that no light is directed onto sensitive habitats. Additionally, specific management protocols are detailed, such as covering excavations overnight to prevent wildlife from becoming trapped and securing harmful substances to avoid potential harm to wildlife.

8.7.39. Regarding badgers, the EIAR states that to protect the onsite badger clan, the existing sett would be closed under guidance from NPWS, with an artificial sett constructed within a designated habitat compensation zone in the west of the site. This artificial sett would need to be completed at least six months before the exclusion and destruction of the current sett to ensure the badgers have adequate time to adapt to the new environment. The EIAR describes that the artificial sett creation and sett closure would follow best practice guidelines, including those from NatureScot, NRA, and Badger Trust, and that the new sett would be encouraged for colonisation using baiting techniques and transfer of bedding and spoil from the existing sett.

8.7.40. The EIAR details that the habitat compensation zone would be designed to maintain site connectivity for foraging and commuting badgers, incorporating a species rich grassland mix (80% grass and 20% wildflower) and the planting of fruit and nut-bearing species such as rowan, elder, and hazel. Furthermore, a badger underpass would be constructed under the proposed roads to avoid severing east-west connectivity within the site, designed as a 600mm concrete pipe with guidance mesh fencing to prevent direct access onto the road and additional native planting at the entrances and exits to encourage use by badgers.

8.7.41. The EIAR indicates that light spill would be managed to minimise impacts on badger activity, with lights timed to go off by 10 pm and proposed shrub planting to reduce light spill. The EIAR specifically notes that the provided lighting plans have been reviewed, with advice from the consultant ecologist indicating that sensitive habitat areas generally show light spill of less than 1 lux, except where lights are required on the bridge. To further mitigate light impacts, the EIAR recommends that screening tree and shrub planting be undertaken between the habitat compensation area/replacement sett and any pitches.

8.7.42. As part of acoustic mitigation, 3m high acoustic fencing would be installed on the western side of the pitches to mitigate noise, with mammal passes incorporated at the base of the fence to maintain commuting links for badgers.

8.7.43. The EIAR also notes that bridge construction works, although beyond the direct impact zone of the badger setts, would require CFA Piling or other low-vibration techniques to minimise ecological impact.

8.7.44. Regarding Otters, the EIAR outlines several mitigation measures focused primarily on maintaining habitat connectivity during the construction of the bridge over the Cavan River. The EIAR states that mammal ledges would be installed within the bridge structure, with specific dimensions (45-60cm wide, c. 15cm above the highest flood level and min. 60cm below the top of the bridge) to ensure connectivity is preserved for otters using this area as a commuting route. The bridge design incorporates a minimum 5m setback from banksides. The report states that an updated otter survey is required before the construction of the bridge, with a 250m exclusion zone from any identified holts unless suitable licences are obtained.

8.7.45. The EIAR describes the necessity of a robust Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) to prevent construction-related suspended solids from entering the river system, incorporating measures such as silt fences, sedimentation mats, and SuDS systems for treating dewatered areas. Additional protective measures include exclusion zones, barriers between earthworks, and the implementation of temporary drainage and sediment control before earthworks commence, ensuring no direct discharge of contaminated water into watercourses.

8.7.46. The EIAR indicates that an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) would be appointed prior to the commencement of development to oversee on-site activities, with daily

visual checks for otter presence or evidence. Specific measures, such as ceasing noisy machinery two hours before sunset and directing security lighting away from mammal trails, are proposed to minimise disturbance to otters during construction. Additional proposed mitigation measures include ensuring an adequate water supply for dust suppression, capping exposed pipes, covering excavations or providing egress, securing buildings and harmful substances overnight, storing chemicals away from the river, and protecting water sources to prevent harm to otters.

8.7.47. For the operational phase, the EIAR proposes the installation of bypass separators to manage sediment and pollutants during storm events. Additionally, the EIAR recommends enhancement planting of native species in riparian buffer areas, following consultation with Inland Fisheries Ireland, to support otter populations and reduce human disturbance.

8.7.48. Regarding artificial lighting, the EIAR notes that otters are sensitive to increased lighting, particularly in dark corridors like the river habitat on-site. Therefore, the report proposes minimising artificial lighting around the river and bridge areas and using low-density lamps, LED lighting with a warm colour temperature, and timers or dimmers to reduce lighting impact during nocturnal hours.

8.7.49. Regarding Bats, the EIAR describes that trees with High and Moderate suitability for bats would require further surveys, such as emergence or endoscope surveys, before felling to ensure no impact on roosting bats. Trees with Low suitability would be retained where possible, and bat boxes would be installed on retained trees within dark corridors. The EIAR details that native planting in the habitat compensation area would benefit bats by enhancing invertebrate prey sources. The report notes that low-level, DarkSky-compliant Urba bollard lighting is planned for the site, with specific guidelines to minimise light pollution, including the use of fully shielded luminaires, warm-colour LEDs, and dimming capabilities. The EIAR states the proposal would adhere to best practice guidance from Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK, avoiding lighting in sensitive areas, and using timers to reduce light exposure during critical periods for bats. It also indicates that, while some exceptions to the 1 Lux limit along the river corridor exist, additional screening and consideration of site topography may mitigate these effects. The EIAR proposes a 9pm cut-off for artificial lighting in the northern pitches during bat activity periods and a 10pm cut-off year-round for the southern pitches to further limit residual impacts. While some residual impacts on

foraging and commuting bats are anticipated, the EIAR concludes that these would not be significant if the proposed mitigation measures are implemented.

8.7.50. Regarding Pine Marten, the EIAR states that boundary vegetation and areas of woodland where pine marten have been recorded would be retained, including a riparian buffer along the Cavan River. However, some isolated tree felling and low-level artificial lighting are proposed in the northern woodland for a pedestrian pathway. The EIAR indicates that tree felling would be limited to periods outside the breeding season (March and April) where possible, with advance surveys conducted by a qualified ecologist if felling during these months is unavoidable. The EIAR details that waist-high, DarkSky-approved bollards would be used to minimise light pollution, and no lighting is proposed within the riparian woodland zone (refer to Lighting Plan Dwg. 9955-JCP-ZZ-00-DR-E-6301). The EIAR notes that operating hours would mitigate disturbance due to the nocturnal nature of pine martens, and public access to sensitive areas would be limited by avoiding pathways in the riparian woodland and habitat compensation areas, with signage and dense shrub vegetation recommended to discourage off-path activity. The report asserts that provided the mitigation measures outlined in the Pine Martin Survey (Appendix 8.5) are adhered to, there is not expected to be a residual significant effect on the pine marten population.

8.7.51. Regarding Breeding Birds, the EIAR indicates that while no species-specific mitigation measures are required, general mitigation is recommended to enhance the habitats and biodiversity on-site. The EIAR details plans to plant native trees along the site boundaries and retain existing trees where possible, which would provide shelter, nesting, and foraging opportunities for various bird species. The report proposes the inclusion of a mix of native species like conifers, willow, and hawthorn, as well as the installation of swift boxes on suitable buildings and artificial nest boxes on retained mature trees. The EIAR notes that the removal of habitat, such as mature trees, hedgerows, and scrub, could negatively impact nesting birds, so replacement habitats or bird boxes should be provided where necessary. The report recommends that scrub clearance be minimised and carried out outside the breeding season (1st March – 31st August), or, if unavoidable, conducted under the supervision of a qualified ecologist to ensure no active nests are present. The EIAR also acknowledges the potential presence of Kingfishers in the wider Cavan River catchment and stresses adherence to strict pollution control measures to protect water quality and foraging resources.

8.7.52. Regarding White-clawed Crayfish and Freshwater Pearl Mussel, the EIAR notes that further detailed mitigation will be provided following completed surveys and additional consultation with Inland Fisheries. The EIAR outlines several mitigation measures to protect these species, including reducing sediment run-off and overall water pollution, adding vegetation and woody material to the habitat, and possibly undertaking translocation under licence if White-clawed Crayfish are recorded within the works area. The EIAR also describes the use of sediment traps to prevent sediment from entering the river and proposes reducing riverbank disturbance through the use of low-vibration CFA piling. Additionally, the EIAR indicates that compensation measures must be in place if harm cannot be fully mitigated, such as improving mussel habitat quality, fixing habitat connections, and investing in breeding and reintroduction programmes. The use of heavy-weight silt mats during construction near the river is also recommended to capture fine silt and sediment, preventing run-off and river pollution.

8.7.53. Regarding Invasive Species, the EIAR notes that while invasive plant species were not recorded on site, they are present nearby, particularly Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam. The EIAR recommends that their presence be addressed within the Construction Environmental Management Plan. Additionally, a detailed Mink Management Plan should be produced to mitigate the impact of onsite mink. The EIAR indicates that if these measures are implemented and adhered to, no residual effects on this factor are expected.

8.7.54. **Residual Effects**

8.7.55. The EIAR describes the residual impacts associated with the proposed sports campus, indicating that despite the implementation of extensive mitigation measures, some impacts on biodiversity would remain. The EIAR posits that the destruction of the existing badger sett and the creation of an artificial sett would lead to residual impacts on the local badger population, although these would be minimised through careful planning and phased construction. The EIAR notes that the residual impacts on bats, particularly due to habitat loss and lighting, are considered limited but not significant if mitigation is effectively implemented. Additionally, the EIAR details potential residual effects on the Pine Marten population, particularly due to disturbance from lighting and pathway construction, although these would be minimal with the proposed mitigation

measures. The EIAR indicates that for breeding birds, the residual impacts would be low, provided that habitat enhancement and nest box installations are carried out. Regarding the White-clawed Crayfish and Freshwater Pearl Mussel, the EIAR suggests that sediment control measures would mitigate most impacts, but some residual risk remains until further detailed assessments are completed. Regarding invasive species, the EIAR states that with the appropriate management of invasive species, the residual impacts in this area would be negligible.

8.7.56. **Cumulative Effects**

8.7.57. The chapter on Biodiversity in the EIAR does not include a section specifically addressing cumulative impacts. However, Chapter 17 of the EIAR considers the potential for cumulative impacts arising from the proposed development in conjunction with other developments, as well as the interactions between potential impacts on different environmental receptors. This analysis is summarised and addressed later in the EIA section of this report.

8.7.58. **Assessment**

8.7.59. I have examined, analysed, and evaluated Chapter 8 of the EIAR, along with all associated documentation and submissions on file concerning Biodiversity. It is my view that the proposed development has the potential to significantly impact local biodiversity through the loss of habitats, disturbance to protected species, and potential pollution of adjacent watercourses. The direct and indirect effects on species such as badgers, otters, bats, pine martens, and various bird species have been adequately identified in the EIAR, with appropriate mitigation measures proposed. However, the effectiveness of these measures is contingent upon their rigorous implementation.

8.7.60. I consider that the most significant direct impact is the proposed destruction of the main badger sett on-site, which would result in a major negative effect on the local badger population. The badger survey confirmed that this sett, although relatively small, functions as a main breeding sett due to the absence of larger setts in the surrounding area. This underscores the importance of the sett to the local badger clan. The proposed mitigation measures detailed in the EIAR, supported by the Badger Survey in Appendix 8.2, involve the construction of an artificial sett within a designated

habitat compensation zone. This proposed artificial sett would be designed in accordance with best practice guidelines from NPWS, NatureScot, and the Badger Trust, ensuring that it replicates the structure and conditions of a natural sett as closely as possible. The location of the artificial sett has been selected to provide a secure and flood-resistant environment, offering long-term suitability for the badger clan. Appendix 8.2 outlines that the artificial sett must be established and occupied for at least six months before the exclusion and closure of the existing sett can proceed. The phased exclusion process, including the use of one-way gates and continuous monitoring by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW), would be critical to ensuring the badgers successfully relocate without significant disruption. Additionally, the proposed habitat compensation zone includes the creation of high-quality foraging areas, a commuting corridor to maintain site connectivity, and a badger underpass to ensure safe passage under proposed roads. Specific lighting and acoustic mitigation measures, such as the use of DarkSky-compliant lighting and 3m high acoustic fencing with mammal passes, are also proposed to minimise disturbances to the badgers.

8.7.61. In consideration of the above, while the destruction of the main sett is a serious concern, the proposed mitigation strategy, as detailed in Appendix 8.2, provides a reasonable level of confidence that the residual impacts on badgers can be effectively managed and minimised. The continuous monitoring and adaptive management approach recommended in the Badger Survey should be a condition of any planning permission to ensure the ongoing protection and welfare of the Badger clan throughout the construction and operational phases of the development.

8.7.62. Regarding otters, the EIAR adequately identifies the potential impacts from the construction of the bridge over the Cavan River, including habitat loss and pollution risks. The proposed mitigation measures, such as the installation of mammal ledges and a robust Surface Water Management Plan, are appropriate and would be effective in reducing the significance of these impacts. I consider that, provided these measures are implemented as outlined, the impact on otters is not likely to be significant.

8.7.63. The impact of the proposed development on bats, protected under the EU Habitats Directive, is another critical consideration. The removal of trees with roosting potential and the introduction of artificial lighting could disrupt bat foraging and commuting routes. However, the mitigation measures proposed in the EIAR, including further surveys before tree felling and the use of DarkSky-compliant lighting, would minimise

these impacts. It is my view that, while there may be some residual impact on bats, it is not likely to be significant if the mitigation measures are fully implemented. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit (DAU) concerns regarding bats and the requirement for further surveys before felling high and medium-value trees has been integrated into the EIAR's mitigation strategy, with additional surveys to be conducted as necessary. The Department's emphasis on light spill and watercourse works impacting bats has been addressed through the proposed use of DarkSky-compliant lighting and careful planning around sensitive areas.

8.7.64. Regarding pine martens, the retention of boundary vegetation and the creation of a riparian buffer along the Cavan River are positive measures. The potential impact from pathway construction and low-level lighting in the northern woodland area has been identified, and the proposed mitigation measures, such as limiting tree felling to outside the breeding season and using DarkSky approved bollards, are appropriate. I consider that these measures would sufficiently mitigate the potential impacts on pine martens, resulting in no significant residual effects.

8.7.65. The impact on breeding birds, particularly through the loss of habitat such as mature trees, hedgerows, and scrub, is acknowledged in the EIAR. While the proposed mitigation measures, including habitat enhancement and the installation of nest boxes, are appropriate, I consider that the timing of vegetation clearance is crucial. To avoid significant residual impacts on breeding birds, all habitat clearance should be strictly limited to outside the breeding season (1st March – 31st August), with no exceptions. Additionally, ongoing monitoring during construction is essential to ensure that these measures effectively mitigate any adverse effects on bird populations.

8.7.66. I am satisfied that the EIAR addresses the DAU’s concerns related to white-clawed crayfish and freshwater pearl mussels. The mitigation measures proposed in the EIAR include (inter alia) reducing sediment run-off and overall water pollution, reducing riverbank disturbance low-vibration piling techniques to protect aquatic species, adding vegetation and woody material to the habitat, and potentially undertaking translocation of White-clawed Crayfish under licence if recorded within the works area. These measures, if implemented effectively, would reduce the risk of significant impact on these aquatic species. The DAU’s concerns about the need for further surveys for white-clawed crayfish and freshwater pearl mussel are acknowledged, and the EIAR

indicates that these surveys were planned for Spring/Summer 2024. Additionally, the Department's request for clarification on the correct identification of the pearl mussel and the need for review by a qualified molluscan ecologist has been noted. I am satisfied that these concerns can be addressed by way of Condition in the event of a grant of permission. The EIAR proposes further detailed mitigation and consultation with Inland Fisheries to ensure that the concerns regarding aquatic species are fully addressed. The EIAR states that the project would be conducted under the supervision of a qualified ecologist.

8.7.67. For the concerns raised by Inland Fisheries Ireland, the EIAR has proposed robust sediment control measures and a Surface Water Management Plan to prevent pollution of nearby watercourses, including the Cavan River. The use of oil/grease and silt traps, water attenuation systems, and measures for protecting watercourses during construction respond to the concerns about potential pollutants and habitat degradation. The implementation of these measures, along with ongoing monitoring, would adequately address the issues raised by Inland Fisheries Ireland.

8.7.68. **Conclusion**

8.7.69. Overall, I consider that the proposed development, subject to the application of the proposed mitigation measures, would not result in significant adverse effects on biodiversity. However, the successful implementation of these mitigation measures is crucial, and ongoing monitoring should be a Condition of any grant of permission to ensure that biodiversity is adequately protected throughout the construction and operational phases of the development.

8.8. Lands, Soil and Water

8.8.1. Key Development Components relating to Land, Soil and Water

8.8.2. Section 9.4.3 of the EIAR details how the proposed development includes significant land reprofiling through major cut-and-fill operations, involving the excavation and redistribution of approximately 223,402m³ of material, with 222,270m³ reused on-site and only 1,301m³ removed for off-site disposal. This process, necessary for creating suitable landforms for pitches and building structures, would involve deep excavation into the underlying geology, piling, and the construction of retaining structures and

inclined revetments. Additionally, the proposed development involves constructing a two-way pedestrian and vehicular bridge over the Cavan River, supported by piled foundations at least 5m from the river channel, and the culverting and diversion of c. 650m of the Kilnavarragh Stream into a new 600mm diameter culvert. The site would also benefit from a proposed new runoff drainage management system, incorporating SuDS measures and bypass separators to manage and treat runoff before discharging into the Cavan River.

8.8.3. The Site Layout Plan indicates the locations of the submitted section drawings. Section 1A, through the southern part of the site, highlights cut-and-fill operations where the natural ground level must be adjusted to create a stable landform, while Section 1B, through the northern area, shows significant cut-and-fill activities to accommodate the proposed athletics track, sports arena, sports building and multi-sports pitch. Sections 2 and 3 illustrate the proposed cut excavations necessary to create flat surfaces for the athletics track and infield, and Section 5 demonstrates the cut-and-fill required for the sports building. Sections 6 and 7 show a combination of cut-and-fill operations to adjust the terrain, facilitating the construction of the multi-sports pitch and car parking in the central area of the site, as well as sports pitches in the southern section. Section 8, located at the southern end of the site, details significant fill operations where large quantities of material are added to raise the ground to the proposed level. Further details showing the extent of cut and fill are provided in the proposed layout section drawings submitted. Overall, I am satisfied that these sections provide a clear depiction of the extensive cut-and-fill operations required to reshape the landscape for the proposed development, with efficient on-site reuse of materials to minimize off-site disposal.

8.8.4. **Issues Raised**

8.8.5. The third-party submission received expressed no specific concerns regarding Lands, Soil, and Water.

8.8.6. As detailed previously, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit submission raised concerns regarding potential watercourse impacts and the need for further surveys, particularly regarding the white-clawed crayfish and freshwater pearl mussel and seeks clarification on watercourse-related constructions such as outfalls and the proposed bridge. Inland Fisheries

Ireland raises concerns about potential pollution and sediment runoff impacting the sensitive salmonid habitats of the Cavan River. They recommend specific mitigation measures, including the use of silt traps, water attenuation systems, and careful management of construction activities near watercourses to prevent habitat degradation and ensure the protection of aquatic species. Uisce Eireann's submission does not raise specific concerns regarding lands, soil, and water in relation to environmental impacts.

8.8.7. **Assessment Methodology**

8.8.8. The EIAR details that the significance of potential impacts was determined by assessing the importance of environmental features to be protected, alongside the magnitude of the potential impacts on these features. The methodology uses criteria from the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment guidance, which includes a thorough evaluation of both the sensitivity of the environment and the scale of impact.

8.8.9. The EIAR describes a structured approach, beginning with a desk study and site investigations to gather relevant data. This data was used to assess the sensitivity of the environment, categorised on a scale from local to international significance, and to estimate the magnitude of potential effects. The magnitude of effects was determined based on factors such as the scale, duration, and severity of potential impacts on water quality, aquifer yield, river morphology, and flood risk. The EIAR further notes that the likelihood of these impacts occurring was evaluated using historical data, quantitative analysis, and expert professional judgement, categorising the likelihood as certain, likely, unlikely, or rare. This methodology culminates in a matrix that combines the potential impact significance with the likelihood of occurrence, resulting in a final assessment of overall impact significance, ranging from negligible to major.

8.8.10. The EIAR details that a range of environmental surveys were conducted to establish the site's baseline conditions, including a Preliminary Risk Assessment (PRA – refer to Appendix 9.1)), a Generic Preliminary Sources Study Report (PSSR - Appendix 9.2), a Generic Quantitative Risk Assessment (GQRA - Appendix 9.3), a Water Features Survey (Appendix 9.4), and a Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 9.5). The EIAR indicates that the study area encompasses the site itself, as well as the

surrounding soils and water environments within a 2km radius, including upstream and downstream watercourses and both upgradient and downgradient groundwater resources. The site boundaries are illustrated in Figure 9.1 of the report.

8.8.11. Field walkover surveys were conducted during spring and summer 2023, extending into early 2024, focusing on verifying natural and artificial site drainage characteristics, hydrological features, and land status. These surveys aimed to assess potential issues related to site water features, sources of pollution, site hydraulics, and the likelihood of adverse effects on the soil and water environment due to the proposed development. Additionally, the EIAR notes that an intrusive ground investigation, including soil, groundwater, and surface water sampling, was carried out by Northwest Geotech to supplement the geological and hydrogeological understanding of the site. The borehole logs from this investigation are provided in Appendix 9-6.

8.8.12. The EIAR describes that the assessment focuses on the impacts of the proposed development on soils (including geology and land contamination), surface water, groundwater, and flood risk during both construction and operational phases. The EIAR indicates that the methodology involves establishing a baseline assessment and evaluating potential impacts on hydrology, hydrogeology, and land quality within the development boundary.

8.8.13. The EIAR outlines that the assessment addresses various environmental aspects, including land quality and contamination risks, groundwater resources, surface water quality, and dependent ecosystems. To achieve this, the EIAR states that relevant policies, baseline conditions, sensitive receptors, potential effects, and cumulative impacts are identified and evaluated. The EIAR notes that the significance of any adverse effects is determined by considering the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of the receptors. A residual impact assessment is also conducted, along with a discussion of the cumulative effects in conjunction with other developments.

8.8.14. The EIAR further details relevant European and national legislation and planning policies considered, including the EU Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, and various Irish statutory instruments. The report also references industry best-practice guidelines, such as those from CIRIA and the EPA.

8.8.15. **Baseline Conditions**

8.8.16. The EIAR describes the site as being located in the southern portion of Cavan town, adjacent to the Cavan River, with several small unnamed drainage ditches present. The site, covering c. 28 hectares, surrounds the Royal School, with parts of the school grounds included in the development area.

8.8.17. The EIAR provides a summary of meteorological data from the nearby Ballyhaise climate station, recording a monthly average rainfall of 82.3mm and an annual average of 934.2mm, placing the area in the second lowest rainfall band (500-1000mm) according to the Meteorological Office.

8.8.18. Topographically, the EIAR details the site's dramatic variability, with the land generally sloping towards the Cavan River. On the western side, elevations range from 91mOD at the northern boundary along the boundary with Kilnavarragh Lane to 64mOD near the river, while on the eastern side, the land slopes from approximately 80mOD near the Dublin Road to 65mOD at the river channel. The EIAR notes that the site is predominantly greenfield land with some previous development, including an access bridge, a car park, a grass pitch, and minor land disturbances. It also mentions that a portion of the site overlaps with the existing Breffni Park stadium development.

8.8.19. In terms of designations, the EIAR indicates that the site is not within any nationally or internationally designated nature conservation areas. However, it is c. 3.6km southeast of the Lough Oughter SPA and the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC, with a hydraulic distance of 5km. No proposed Natural Heritage Areas are within 15km of the site.

8.8.20. Regarding soils, the EIAR cites the Teagasc General Soil Map, suggesting that the site's soils are likely a mix of Drumlin Gleys and Drumlin Grey Brown Podzolics, common in Ireland and primarily used for grazing. Land cover is predominantly pasture, with some areas of discontinuous urban fabric. The EIAR details the drift geology, describing it as a product of repeated glaciation, forming a drumlin environment with Glacial Till deposits over 15m thick in some areas, and notes that thin alluvium overlays these tills near the Cavan River. The EIAR further explains that the site's bedrock geology consists primarily of the Carboniferous Cooldaragh Formation, with older Ordovician Greywacke present in the eastern portion. These formations are separated by a fault line running northwest to southeast through the

site. The EIAR indicates that there are no active or historical quarries, mining activities, or abandoned mines and shafts within the study area, suggesting limited potential for future mineral exploitation in the vicinity of the site.

8.8.21. The EIAR states that a review of the GSI Groundwater Karst Data indicates no mapped karst features within 1km of the site. During geological surveys, no surface karstic features were observed, although the underlying Cooldaragh Formation limestone may contain unrecorded karstic features.

8.8.22. The EIAR details two site investigations. The first, conducted by Causeway Geotech Ltd in 2022, involved boreholes revealing a stratigraphic sequence of topsoil, glacial till, and bedrock (limestone) at a depth of 3.7m (refer to Appendix 5 of the PRA). The second investigation, conducted by Northwest Geotech in 2023-2024, included 25 shallow boreholes, deeper rotary core boreholes, and trial pits. The findings confirmed a thick layer of gravelly glacial till across the site, with bedrock encountered at various depths near the Cavan River. The investigations identified significant areas of made ground, particularly on the eastern side of the site, which will require further assessment before construction.

8.8.23. Regarding land quality and contamination, the EIAR notes that soil samples analysed during the recent drilling works did not exceed Public Open Spaces (Park) standards (1%SOM LQM/S4Uls), and ground gas monitoring classified the site as CS1 Very Low Risk, requiring no mitigation measures. However, the area of made ground associated with the proposed access road and bridge site will need further assessment before construction to address any potential risks.

8.8.24. The EIAR describes the site's hydrology, noting that it is part of the Cavan River catchment within the Upper Lough Erne Catchment. The site includes small field drains and a main stream that bisects the site, which is proposed to be culverted for development. Flood risk data indicates that parts of the site are affected by fluvial flooding, particularly from the Cavan River.

8.8.25. Surface water quality, as assessed by an in-situ electrical conductivity survey, showed elevated readings in specific areas, suggesting groundwater-fed watercourses. However, chemical analysis of surface water samples detected minor exceedances in metal concentrations, which are considered naturally occurring and not environmentally significant.

8.8.26. The EIAR provides a detailed hydrogeological assessment, indicating that the glacial till at the site is not a significant aquifer and that the bedrock aquifer (Cooldaragh Formation) is only locally important. Groundwater flow is generally directed towards the Cavan River, with monitoring data showing hydraulic connectivity between the shallow groundwater system and the river. Deeper boreholes encountered groundwater in some areas, suggesting that the limestone bedrock functions as a water-bearing aquifer in certain parts of the site.

8.8.27. As detailed in the EIAR, groundwater quality analysis showed minor exceedances in iron and nickel concentrations, likely naturally occurring, with no detections of harmful substances. Overall, the EIAR concludes that there are no significant concerns regarding baseline groundwater quality.

8.8.28. **Potential Effects**

8.8.29. The EIAR indicates that the proposed development would have several potential impacts on the Land, Soil, and Water environment, particularly concerning the Cavan River, which serves as the main environmental receptor. The EIAR details that the site's shallow groundwater system is hydraulically connected to the Cavan River, providing modest baseflow, especially during low flow periods.

8.8.30. The EIAR describes the sensitivity of various receptors, noting that the Cavan River has high sensitivity due to its hydraulic connection to the Lough Oughter SAC, a designated Natura 2000 European site. Surface watercourses on-site are identified as having moderate sensitivity, while the groundwater quality and bedrock beneath the site are considered to have moderate sensitivity due to potential hydraulic connections and the presence of a nearby private groundwater abstraction borehole.

8.8.31. The EIAR assesses the potential impacts of the proposed development, starting with flood risk. The report notes that the development, deemed water-compatible and less vulnerable according to OPW Planning Guidelines for Flood Risk Management, is appropriate for the flood-prone areas (Flood Zones A and B) of the site. Detailed flood modelling, as presented in the Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 9.5), indicates that the proposed development would not result in an unacceptable increase in flooding risks to surrounding lands. Critical areas of the development, such as new buildings and grass pitches, would be sited to remain resilient to a 1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) flood event, including climate change considerations.

8.8.32. The EIAR posits that the land raising and construction of a new bridge across the Cavan River would not significantly affect flooding elsewhere. However, aspects of the proposed development, including the riverside walkway and access via an existing bridge to Breffni Park, would be inherently at risk of flooding. To address these risks, the EIAR proposes mitigation measures, including the use of flood-resilient materials and construction methods, alongside the implementation of a Flood Management Plan to ensure the safety of site users.

8.8.33. The EIAR describes potential hydrogeological impacts from the proposed development, particularly focusing on the risks associated with cut-fill works, construction, and operational activities. The report identifies several key mechanisms through which these activities could affect the shallow groundwater systems and, consequently, the Cavan River, which is hydraulically connected to the site.

8.8.34. The EIAR indicates that potential impacts include reduced baseflow to the Cavan River due to groundwater control or dewatering during construction and operations. Additionally, the removal of topsoil and overburden could increase aquifer vulnerability, heightening pollution risks. Piling works are also noted as a concern, potentially creating pathways for pollution migration and interfering with groundwater flow patterns, which could affect nearby groundwater abstraction boreholes. The potential transfer of pollutants from the site to the Cavan River, impacting sensitive species and downstream SACs, is highlighted as a significant concern. The EIAR further notes the possible loss of recharge to shallow groundwater, which could impact river baseflows.

8.8.35. To assess these risks, the EIAR presents Hydrogeological Cross Sections (detailed in Appendix 9.7), which illustrate the relationship between the proposed cut-fill works, the shallow groundwater table, and the bedrock. The sections demonstrate that the cut-fill operations would not intersect bedrock or affect shallow groundwater during construction, thus reducing the likelihood of significant impacts on groundwater flow patterns or recharge.

8.8.36. The EIAR surmises that, given the design of the works, including the non-excavation of the bedrock aquifer, the risks to nearby groundwater abstraction and long-term groundwater flow are not significant. The report also indicates that the risk of pollutant

liberation from made ground, particularly in the access road area, is low due to the limited cut-fill works planned for that section.

8.8.37. The EIAR refers to the Piling Risk Assessment (Appendix 9-8), which indicates that the use of Continuous Flight Auger (CFA) piles, which are low-vibration and permanently installed, presents a low risk to groundwater, surface waters, and local ecological receptors. The CFA piling method is highlighted as a conservative and ecologically protective approach. However, the EIAR notes that the area of made ground associated with the access road and bridge crossing, which has not yet been fully sampled or assessed, would require further hydrogeological impact assessment before construction begins to address any potential environmental risks.

8.8.38. The EIAR details potential hydrological impacts from the proposed cut-fill works, construction, and operations associated with the development, particularly concerning the risk of pollution to surface water systems, notably the Cavan River. The report identifies several key mechanisms through which these activities could negatively impact surface water.

8.8.39. The EIAR states that construction activities could lead to the discharge of sediment-laden water to the Cavan River, particularly through overland flow or throughflow, which would likely have a major negative impact on water quality. The disturbance of ground during construction would expose bare soils and clays, potentially leading to the mobilisation of sediments during rainfall events. This sediment could be transported into sensitive watercourses, posing a likely minor negative impact locally but a likely major negative impact on the hydrologically connected Lough Oughter SAC, SPA, and NHA.

8.8.40. The EIAR notes the risk of introducing contaminants, such as oils and fuels from construction machinery, into surface waters, which could have a likely major negative impact, particularly given the Cavan River's direct connection to the site. Additionally, the report indicates that the removal of topsoil and the addition of hard surfaces could reduce the infiltration of rainwater, potentially decreasing the baseflow to the river and increasing surface water runoff, leading to a likely moderate negative impact.

8.8.41. Construction phase impacts are described in detail, with the EIAR indicating that soil stripping and excavation would increase the risk of erosion and sediment mobilisation, potentially leading to a likely minor negative impact on local water quality. If sediment

were to enter watercourses connected to the Lough Oughter SAC, this would likely result in a major negative impact. The EIAR also highlights the risk of redirected surface water flows due to significant excavations, which could cause flooding in new areas, resulting in a likely moderate negative impact.

8.8.42. Material transport and stockpiling present additional risks. The EIAR posits that the transport of materials, particularly if unsecured, could lead to accidental spills, which, depending on the magnitude, could likely have a major negative impact on the designated sites downstream. Similarly, stockpiles of granular material pose a risk of sediment-laden water entering nearby watercourses during heavy rainfall, leading to a similar level of impact.

8.8.43. The introduction of impermeable surfaces is another concern. The EIAR indicates that new buildings, roads, and hardstanding would increase surface water runoff, potentially causing increased flood risk and erosion in downstream watercourses, leading to a likely moderate negative impact. Compaction of soils by construction traffic would exacerbate this issue, further increasing the rate and volume of runoff, potentially leading to erosion and flooding, which the EIAR describes as a likely moderate negative impact.

8.8.44. Regarding works in and adjacent to watercourses, the EIAR identifies several critical concerns. The construction of a bridge across the Cavan River, along with associated piling works and the installation of discharge headworks and culverts, would directly affect the river. The EIAR indicates that these activities would disturb soils near the river, increasing the risk of sedimentation and pollutant spillages, leading to a potential major negative impact on the Cavan River's water quality.

8.8.45. The report also highlights the specific risk associated with fields in the southern part of the site, where surface water flooding was observed at elevations similar to the river, suggesting a direct flow pathway into the Cavan River. The EIAR suggests that construction activities in this area, including soil disturbance and potential spills from machinery, would likely result in a major negative impact on the river, given the heightened risk of sediment and pollutant runoff directly entering the watercourse.

8.8.46. The EIAR describes the potential impacts during the operational phase of the proposed sports campus, primarily focusing on site infrastructure, stormwater management, sewage management, and the interaction with watercourses. The report

indicates that general public activities within the sports campus would have a negligible impact on land and water quality. However, there are some risks associated with fuel and oil spillages, which, though limited, could result in moderate negative impacts on land or water quality until remediated. A small-scale fuel spillage directly into the Cavan River would also likely cause a moderate negative impact.

8.8.47. The EIAR notes that the cut-and-fill works, which would significantly alter the site's topography, might impact water flow and recharge characteristics, potentially affecting the Cavan River. The report emphasises that while the sewage system is well-managed via a public sewer network, ensuring no risks to the soils and water environment, the stormwater management through a SuDS scheme is designed to attenuate flow to greenfield runoff rates, resulting in a negligible impact on receiving waters. The system includes geocellular attenuation tanks and flow control measures to protect water quality in the Cavan River.

8.8.48. Regarding watercourses, the EIAR details that outfalls during the operational phase could lead to increased erosion, sediment accumulation, and loss of riparian habitat, resulting in a minor negative impact. Additionally, the displacement of floodwater due to changes in ground levels associated with the new development, including paths, roads, and buildings within the floodplain, could cause a significant loss of flood storage and reroute floodwaters to adjacent flood-sensitive areas, leading to a likely major negative impact.

8.8.49. **Mitigation Measures**

8.8.50. The EIAR outlines a comprehensive range of mitigation measures to address potential impacts on the soils and water environments during both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.

8.8.51. <u>Construction Phase:</u>

- A project-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would be implemented, covering all potentially polluting activities, erosion control, and flood risk management.
- A Pollution Prevention Plan, an Emergency Response Plan for spillage events, and measures for managing pluvial flooding, stockpiles, and ground surfaces to prevent erosion would be established.

- Buffer zones of 10m around watercourses would be established for stockpiling and concrete pouring, and outfall designs would be aligned with best practices to minimise impacts on flow patterns and riverbanks.
- Silt management measures, the use of quick-setting cement, and protective barriers during concrete pouring near watercourses are essential to mitigate potential impacts.
- All fuels and chemicals would be stored within bunded areas with a 110% storage volume, and spillage kits would be readily available in working areas.
- Stationary plant equipment would be fitted with drip trays, vehicles and machinery would be regularly inspected and maintained, and on-site personnel would receive relevant training.
- Environmental monitoring for dust, surface waters, and groundwaters would be conducted in line with the Environmental Monitoring Plan (Appendix 9.9).
- For piling works, low-vibration techniques would be employed, with specific measures including works method statements, spillages/pollution risk assessments, PPE usage, and careful recording of groundwater occurrences. Stockpiled piling wastes would be stored 10m away from watercourses, and temporary SuDS systems would be utilised to control surface water runoff.

8.8.52. Regarding earthworks and excavations, the EIAR states that topsoil stripping would be phased and limited to areas where earthworks are immediately programmed to reduce erosion risk. Bare surfaces would be promptly restored through seeding, planting, or protected with geotextiles while existing topsoil would be retained for use in the development. A 10m buffer zone around watercourses would be maintained to minimise pollution risks, and dust control measures, such as water suppression and covers, would be employed. Additionally, the reuse of site-derived materials would be prioritised, and any imported materials would be strictly controlled to ensure compliance with regulatory standards.

8.8.53. Regarding dewatering, the EIAR notes that significant dewatering is not anticipated due to the low permeability of the shallow aquifer, which primarily comprises glacial till. The EIAR indicates that any encountered groundwater would be directed to the nearest swale and infiltration basin for treatment, ensuring it is not discharged directly into watercourses. The EIAR also describes that, in the event of groundwater being

encountered in excavations for geocellular attenuation tanks, impermeable membranes would be used to prevent uplift.

8.8.54. Regarding construction phase silt management drainage features, the EIAR describes that all construction runoff water would be treated through SuDS facilities before infiltration into the ground, avoiding direct discharges during the construction phase. The EIAR details that control mechanisms would include temporary settlement lagoons and SuDS ponds, with examples such as swales, which are vegetated drainage channels designed to capture and treat runoff while promoting infiltration and sediment attenuation. The EIAR details that temporary depressions can be used within or at the end of swale campuses or downgradient of disturbed areas to receive treated overflow waters. The EIAR indicates that various sediment control measures, such as silt fences, check dams, and sediment traps, would be strategically positioned downslope to prevent sediment from entering watercourses. Additionally, the EIAR notes that non-engineering solutions like vegetation or geotextile matting would be employed to further capture silt-laden runoff, with regular inspection and maintenance essential to ensure their effectiveness.

8.8.55. Regarding silt management, the EIAR states that silt fencing with associated capture trenches would be installed across working areas upstream of the nearest watercourse to act as an emergency containment measure. In high-risk areas, several sections of parallel silt fencing would be used as additional barriers to sediment release. The EIAR indicates that sediment matting and straw bales would be deployed where silt fencing is difficult to install or, as an additional control measure, placed strategically along excavation ridges and slopes.

8.8.56. The EIAR describes that all silt fencing and pollution protection measures would require regular inspection, sediment removal, and maintenance to ensure efficiency, with inspections carried out by the Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) daily. The EIAR notes that construction works would not proceed unless all measures are approved by the ECoW, and protection measures would remain in place until the risk of sediment release is deemed normalised.

8.8.57. In terms of timing and phasing, the EIAR details that scheduling construction activities to avoid heavy rainfall and respecting ecological constraints, such as migration or spawning periods, can reduce the need for sediment controls. Stockpiling on-site

would be minimised to reduce contaminated runoff, and any necessary stockpiles would be lined, located away from watercourses, and protected against erosion using geotextile matting. Runoff around stockpiles would be managed with cut-off ditches and directed to settlement lagoons or sediment tanks before any discharge to watercourses.

8.8.58. The EIAR details several mitigation measures for works on watercourses, emphasising that any installation of culverts or crossings would avoid obstructing flow or increasing flood risk. It states that crossings would be appropriately designed based on hydrological calculations to handle flow and reduce erosion, ensuring no increased flood risk. Good practice would be followed to prevent erosion during outfall installation. Concrete, cement, and grout use near watercourses would be carefully managed, using quick-setting products to minimise risks, and wash water would be contained and disposed of properly. Chemical, fuel, and oil storage would be within a secure, bunded compound, located away from watercourses to prevent contamination, with strict controls on handling and refuelling to avoid spills. The EIAR describes that construction compounds would be located away from watercourses, and all runoff would be treated before discharge.

8.8.59. The EIAR notes that wheel and plant washes would be installed to prevent the spread of contaminants, with high-pressure steam cleaning required for equipment used near watercourses. Monitoring during the construction phase would include daily visual inspections by the appointed Environmental Clerk of Works (ECoW) and implementation of a comprehensive Water Quality Monitoring Programme to detect any water quality degradation. Additionally, all site personnel would receive training on pollution prevention as part of their induction, and the contractor would follow best practice guidelines and regulations to prevent any deleterious discharges to watercourses.

8.8.60. The EIAR also outlines specific pollution prevention measures, such as bunging new drainage infrastructure daily, designating secure areas for fuel storage and refuelling, supervising all fuel and chemical deliveries, and ensuring proper washing of equipment in designated areas to prevent contamination. For the operational phase, the EIAR indicates that a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) would be employed, with flow-control attenuation systems to manage runoff, ensuring the Cavan River remains unaffected throughout the project's lifespan.

8.8.61. Table 9.12 of the EIAR provides a summary of predicted construction phase impacts, detailing the activity or source, the environmental receptor impacted, the predicted impact, sensitivity, magnitude, type of impact, probability of occurrence, significance level before mitigation, a summary of proposed mitigation measures, and the residual significance after mitigation. For instance, the table describes how cut-fill and other earthworks could lead to the erosion of exposed soils, potentially resulting in sediment-laden runoff entering the Cavan River, a receptor with very high sensitivity. The magnitude of this impact is assessed as very high, with a major negative effect likely to occur. Pre-mitigation, the significance level is deemed major. However, with the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), phased earthworks, and silt management strategies, the residual significance of this impact is reduced to not significant. Similarly, for the piling of bridge foundations, the table indicates that sediment generation near the river could result in a major negative impact on surface waters. With very high sensitivity and high magnitude, the significance of pre-mitigation is major. Mitigation measures such as the use of quick-setting cement, protective barriers, and silt fencing reduce this impact to not significant. The table also addresses the risks associated with material transport, stockpiling, and impermeable areas, each assessed with high sensitivity and magnitude before mitigation, with residual impacts reduced to not significant after applying appropriate controls/mitigation measures.

8.8.62. **Residual Effects**

8.8.63. The EIAR details that, following the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the residual impacts on lands, soils, and water would generally be reduced to levels that are not significant, as identified in Table 9.12. The EIAR indicates that, for activities such as cut-fill earthworks, piling, and material transport, the residual impacts on the Cavan River and its tributaries, after mitigation, would not be significant. Similarly, impacts from stockpiling, impermeable areas, and works on watercourses would also result in no significant residual impacts post-mitigation. The EIAR posits that the overall risk of residual impacts on sensitive environmental receptors, including surface and groundwater systems, would be neutral during both the construction and operation phases.

8.8.64. **Cumulative Effects**

8.8.65. Cumulative effects are detailed in chapter 17 of the EIAR and addressed further below.

8.8.66. **Assessment**

8.8.67. Having analysed Chapter 9 of the EIAR, along with all associated documentation and submissions on file in respect of lands, soil, and water, it is my view that the proposed development would not result in significant direct or indirect effects on lands, soil, and water, provided the proposed mitigation measures are fully implemented. The EIAR has appropriately identified potential impacts, including those related to cut-fill operations, piling, and material transport, which could affect the Cavan River and surrounding groundwater systems. However, the proposed mitigation strategies, particularly those outlined in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) and the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), have been designed to address these impacts effectively.

8.8.68. The oCEMP (Appendix 2.1) outlines an approach to managing and mitigating environmental risks during the construction phase. It emphasises the importance of adhering to best practices and regulatory standards, ensuring that all construction activities are carried out with minimal impact on the surrounding environment. The plan includes detailed measures for controlling pollution, managing waste, and protecting sensitive receptors such as the Cavan River and its associated ecosystems. Specifically, the oCEMP highlights the use of SuDS as a critical component in managing surface water runoff. The plan includes various SuDS elements, such as swales, infiltration basins, and attenuation tanks, which are intended to manage stormwater on-site, preventing it from directly entering watercourses. This approach would mitigate the potential for pollution and help maintain the natural hydrological balance, reducing the likelihood of adverse effects on the Cavan River and its tributaries. The oCEMP also proposes the need for continuous monitoring and adaptive management throughout the construction phase. This would ensure that any unforeseen environmental issues are promptly addressed, further minimising the risk of significant residual impacts. The plan's commitment to regular inspections, environmental monitoring, and the use of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) demonstrates the project's proactive approach to environmental management.

8.8.69. I consider that the likelihood of significant adverse effects occurring on the soil and water environment would be low, given the detailed mitigation measures proposed.

The construction phase risks, such as sedimentation, potential pollution from machinery, and alterations to the hydrological regime, have been adequately considered, and the EIAR has proposed adequate controls to minimise these risks. These include phased earthworks, silt management strategies, and careful monitoring, which align with best practice guidelines such as those from CIRIA and the EPA. The measures to prevent sedimentation and manage runoff, such as silt fencing, settlement lagoons, and swales, are standard in reducing the risk of watercourse contamination and would be effective if properly implemented.

8.8.70. In terms of residual impacts, I am of the view that post-mitigation, the effects on the Cavan River, its tributaries, and the local groundwater systems would be negligible. The analysis in the EIAR, supported by hydrological and hydrogeological assessments, indicates that the risk of significant residual effects would be minimal. The potential for the cumulative impacts of the various components within the project, including the proposed bridge crossing of the Cavan River and land raising in Flood Zones A and B, has been assessed by detailed flood modelling, and the measures proposed are adequate to prevent any compounded adverse effects on the soil and water environment.

8.8.71. The concerns raised by the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage regarding the protection of aquatic species and the potential for sedimentation have been appropriately addressed through targeted mitigation measures. These include specific strategies for silt management and runoff control, which align with the recommendations from Inland Fisheries Ireland. Therefore, it is my view that the concerns raised have been satisfactorily mitigated.

8.8.72. **Conclusion**

8.8.73. I conclude that subject to the full implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the proposed development would not significantly affect lands, soil, and water. The proposed mitigation measures, subject to rigorous enforcement, would ensure that any potential impacts are reduced to a level that is not significant, thereby protecting the environmental integrity of the area.

8.9. Air and Climate

8.9.1. Issues Raised

8.9.2. The third-party submission received expressed no specific concerns regarding air and climate. Similarly, the submissions from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Inland Fisheries Ireland, and Uisce Eireann raised no concerns or issues regarding the proposed development's impact on air quality or climate.

8.9.3. Assessment Methodology

8.9.4. The EIAR details that the assessment of air quality impacts for the proposed sports campus was conducted in accordance with the Directive on Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe (2008/50/EC), transposed into Irish legislation through the Air Quality Standards Regulations (S.I. 180 of 2011). These regulations set specific limit values for pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO2), nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulate matter (PM10, PM2.5), carbon monoxide (CO), sulphur dioxide (SO2), and others.

8.9.5. The EIAR states that the significance of potential environmental effects was determined by comparing the predicted air quality impacts against baseline conditions and relevant environmental criteria. The EIAR describes the methodology used for assessing these impacts, based on guidance from the Environmental Protection UK (EPUK) and the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM). The methodology involves a two-stage process: first, a qualitative or quantitative description of the impacts on local air quality; second, a judgment on the overall significance of these impacts. The EIAR indicates that the potential for construction dust impacts was assessed using the IAQM's 2014 guidance on dust from demolition and construction. The EIAR recommends good practice construction mitigation measures to minimise dust emissions during the construction phase.

8.9.6. Regarding dust deposition, the EIAR notes that there are no statutory Irish standards for dust, but it references German TA Luft Regulations, which set a dust deposition limit of 350 mg/m²/day to minimise nuisance. The EIAR posits that maintaining dust deposition within this limit would mitigate potential impacts on both human receptors

and sensitive ecosystems. The report also includes recommended limits for PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations, in line with established guidelines.

8.9.7. **Baseline Conditions**

8.9.8. The EIAR states that background pollutant concentrations were incorporated into the modelling process to accurately represent pollutant sources, including traffic, domestic, and industrial emissions near the study site. The EIAR notes that no baseline air quality survey was conducted, and existing air quality data were sourced from the EPA, specifically for the Cavan area.

8.9.9. The report details that the proposed site falls within "Zone D" as defined by the EPA, where air quality is recognised as very good, with pollutant concentrations well below the relevant limit values. The EIAR indicates that the Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH) places the area surrounding the proposed site in a region of good air quality, with a rating of 1 (Good).

8.9.10. The EIAR describes data from the nearest EPA air quality station, located c. 700 metres north of the proposed site, which monitors particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5). The recorded average concentrations from July to December 2023 were 14.1 µg/m³ for PM10 and 10.8 µg/m³ for PM2.5, both well within the annual mean limits of 40 µg/m³ for PM10 and 20 µg/m³ for PM2.5. The EIAR concludes that the limit values for these pollutants have not been breached during this period.

8.9.11. **Potential Effects**

8.9.12. The EIAR states that the most sensitive receptor locations near the proposed development were identified for assessment, as identified in Figure 10.3 and Table 10.4 in the EIAR. The potential operational impacts, particularly from traffic emissions, were evaluated using the Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB) Screening Model, which predicts pollutant concentrations like nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), PM_{10}, and other relevant air pollutants at these receptors.

8.9.13. The EIAR describes that the projected increase in traffic due to the development would be c. 378 vehicles on a typical weekday and 225 vehicles on a Saturday, with heavy-duty vehicles (HDVs) comprising 7.4% of this increase. This equates to an additional 28 HDVs on weekdays and 26 on Saturdays. The EIAR indicates that these changes

in traffic flow are below the thresholds set by the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) and Environmental Protection UK (EPUK) for requiring further detailed air quality assessments.

8.9.14. The EIAR posits that the projected traffic increase would not result in a significant impact on local air quality, with the magnitude of impact considered negligible. Consequently, local residents would not experience a significant deterioration in air quality due to the proposed development. The EIAR concludes that a DMRB Screening Assessment is unnecessary given the minimal changes in traffic flows, and the development would not breach the Air Quality Standards Regulations (S.I. 180 of 2011).

8.9.15. The EIAR describes the potential effects of the proposed sports campus on air quality and climate during both the operational and construction phases. For the operational phase, the EIAR details that the sports campus building would be heated by a modern air/water heat pump system. The EIAR posits that emissions from this heating system would result in an insignificant impact on local air quality, noting that specific data on the system is not yet available but concluding that the impact would not be significant. In the construction phase, the EIAR assesses the potential dust emissions using guidelines from the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM, 2014). It indicates that the sensitivity of the area includes high, medium, and low sensitivity receptors within 350 metres of the construction activities. The assessment categorises the potential dust emission magnitude for various activities as follows:

Demolition: The EIAR classifies the dust emission magnitude as "Small," due to the relatively low volume of demolition material (<20,000 m^3), low height of demolition activities (<10m), and the use of materials with low dust potential.

Earthworks: The EIAR defines the dust emission magnitude as "Large," citing a total site area of 27.5 hectares, potentially dusty soil (e.g., clay), and the involvement of 5-10 heavy earth-moving vehicles with approximately 35,000 tonnes of material to be moved.

Construction: The EIAR categorises the dust emission magnitude as "Medium," considering the total building volume of 25,000 to 100,000 m^3, the use of potentially dusty construction materials like concrete, and on-site concrete batching.

Trackout: The EIAR identifies the dust emission magnitude as "Large," based on an estimated 34 inward heavy-duty vehicle (HDV) trips per day and unpaved road lengths exceeding 100 metres.

8.9.16. The EIAR indicates that the sensitivity of the area to dust impacts takes into account the proximity and number of sensitive receptors, local PM10 background concentrations, and site-specific factors like natural shelters e.g. trees. The combined assessment of these factors determines the overall risk of dust impacts from each activity, which varies by activity but generally reflects a need for dust mitigation to protect local air quality and minimise potential nuisance.

8.9.17. The EIAR describes the potential impacts of the proposed sports campus on air quality and climate during the construction phase. The assessment includes dust emissions, human health impacts, and ecological impacts, evaluated using the IAQM guidelines.

8.9.18. The EIAR details the sensitivity of the area to dust soiling, human health impacts, and ecological impacts. The sensitivity of the area to dust soiling is classified as high due to the presence of sensitive residential properties within close proximity to the site. The sensitivity to human health impacts is considered low, given the good baseline air quality in the area (PM10 concentration of approximately 14 µg/m³). The sensitivity to ecological impacts is high, considering the site's hydrological connection to the Lough Oughter SPA/SAC.

8.9.19. The EIAR categorises dust emission magnitudes for various construction activities as follows: small for demolition, large for earthworks and trackout, and medium for construction. Based on these magnitudes and the area's sensitivity, the EIAR assesses the risks as low for dust soiling during demolition, high for earthworks and trackout, and medium for construction. The risk to human health is considered negligible to low across all activities, while ecological impacts are deemed low for demolition, high for earthworks and trackout, and medium for construction.

8.9.20. The EIAR concludes that with the implementation of appropriate dust mitigation measures, the significance of these impacts would be negligible for all activities. The potential for fugitive dust emissions would be effectively controlled, ensuring minimal impact on nearby sensitive receptors.

8.9.21. Regarding construction traffic emissions, the EIAR states that the impact on Dublin Road traffic during the construction phase would be minimal, with increases of 0.75%

and 0.62% during Phases 1 and 2, respectively. These increases are classified as having a short-term, very localised negligible impact on air quality. Consequently, the construction traffic is not expected to have a significant impact on local air quality, according to the EPUK/IEMA Guidance.

8.9.22. **Mitigation Measures**

8.9.23. The EIAR details the proposed mitigation measures for the construction phase of the sports campus, indicating that there is no requirement for operational phase mitigation as no significant air quality impacts are anticipated during that phase. The EIAR indicates that, in line with IAQM Guidance, mitigation measures for a High-Risk site should be implemented, addressing general site operations, dust management, and specific activities such as demolition, construction, and trackout.

8.9.24. Proposed General Measures include:

- Develop a stakeholder communications plan, display contact details for air quality and dust issues, and engage in regular community engagement.
- A Dust Management Plan (DMP) would be developed, including dust monitoring and real-time PM10 continuous monitoring.
- All dust and air quality complaints would be recorded, with appropriate measures taken promptly. Regular liaison meetings with nearby high-risk construction sites would be held to coordinate dust management.
- Daily inspections on-site and off-site would be conducted to monitor dust levels, with increased inspection frequency during activities with high dust potential or adverse weather conditions.
- Measures such as planning site layout to minimise dust exposure to receptors, erecting solid barriers, and avoiding site runoff.
- Use of mains electricity instead of generators where possible, enforcing no idling policies, and implementing a maximum speed limit on haul roads.
- The production of a Construction Logistics Plan to manage the sustainable delivery of goods and materials, and a Travel Plan to promote sustainable travel.

- Implementation of dust suppression techniques, adequate water supply for dust control, and minimised drop heights for materials handling.
- Bonfires and burning of waste materials would be avoided.

8.9.25. Specific Measures include:

- Water suppression during demolition, avoiding explosive blasting, and soft stripping inside buildings before demolition.
- Storing sand and aggregates in bunded areas, ensuring bulk materials are delivered in enclosed tankers, and sealing fine powder material bags after use.
- Water-assisted dust sweepers on access roads, covering vehicles entering and leaving the site, and installing a wheel washing system.

8.9.26. **Cumulative Effects**

8.9.27. The EIAR states that there are no other projects in the Cavan area with the potential for significant local or national air quality or climate impact that have been recently undertaken or are proposed. The EIAR describes that the traffic assessment includes both existing and proposed traffic flows and the cumulative effects of these traffic flows have been assessed. The EIAR indicates that no significant cumulative impacts on air quality or climate are expected from the proposed sports campus when considered in combination with existing conditions. Cumulative Effects are dealt with in Chapter 17 of the EIAR.

8.9.28. **Assessment**

8.9.29. Having examined Chapter 10 of the EIAR, and relevant supplementary information, it is my view that the proposed development would not have significant adverse effects on air quality and climate, subject to the implementation of the outlined mitigation measures. I consider that the direct effects of the project, particularly in relation to construction dust and emissions, have been adequately assessed. The potential for dust emissions during demolition, earthworks, and construction is identified as a risk, but I am satisfied that the proposed dust suppression measures, including the development of a Dust Management Plan, real-time monitoring, daily inspections and the use of best practice construction techniques would effectively mitigate any likely significant effects.

8.9.30. The traffic emissions associated with the sports campus have been modelled and found to be below the thresholds outlined in Table 6.2 of the Institute of Air Quality Management (IAQM) and Environmental Protection UK (EPUK) document titled 'Land-Use Planning & Development Control: Planning for Air Quality' (January 2017), which would require further detailed air quality assessment. The projected increase in traffic, including heavy-duty vehicles, would be minimal and well within acceptable limits, ensuring that the development would not significantly impact local air quality during operation.

8.9.31. In terms of indirect effects, the projected increase in operational traffic and emissions from the heating system would not, in my view, result in significant impacts on air quality. The anticipated emissions are minor, and the modern air/water heat pump system would further limit the development's contribution to local pollution. I consider that these indirect effects are not likely to have a significant environmental impact.

8.9.32. Regarding cumulative impacts, I find that no other existing or planned projects in the area pose a significant risk of combined effects on air quality or climate. The assessment of cumulative traffic flows confirms that there would be no significant deterioration in air quality when considering existing conditions and the proposed development.

8.9.33. Residual impacts following the implementation of mitigation measures would be negligible. The rigorous dust management and sustainable construction practices proposed will minimise any potential nuisance or health risks. It is my assessment that the proposed mitigation measures are adequate to address all identified risks, ensuring compliance with both national and European air quality standards.

8.9.34. **Conclusion**

8.9.35. In conclusion, I consider that the proposed development, subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, would not have significant adverse effects on air quality or climate. The likely effects identified, both direct and indirect, would be either minimal or effectively mitigated, ensuring that no significant impact on the environment would occur.

8.10. Noise and Vibration

8.10.1. Issues Raised

8.10.2. The third-party submission received expresses concerns regarding the Noise and Vibration chapter of the EIAR for the proposed sports campus. Gerard and Shelia Cooney, the property owners of No. 10 Lurganboy, Cavan, which adjoins the site's northwestern corner boundary, raise specific issues about the accuracy and thoroughness of the noise impact assessment presented. They contend that Chapter 11 of the EIAR does not accurately assess the noise impact on their property, particularly criticising the unrealistic crowd sizes used in the assessment. Additionally, they express concerns that the cumulative impact of noise on their property has not been properly evaluated, and they point out the lack of appropriate acoustic barriers to mitigate this impact.

8.10.3. The submissions from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Inland Fisheries Ireland, and Uisce Eireann do not raise any specific concerns or issues regarding noise and vibration concerning the proposed development.

8.10.4. Assessment Methodology

8.10.5. The EIAR describes the methodology employed to assess noise and vibration impacts as relying on a series of planning policy standards and guidelines. It references the National Planning Framework and Cavan County Council Noise Action Plan (2019) to align the project with national policy objectives concerning noise management. The EIAR details the use of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Guidelines for Environmental Noise as a basis for assessing acceptable noise levels, noting that these guidelines provide thresholds for both internal and external environments, particularly for residential areas.

8.10.6. The EIAR indicates that the methodology incorporates the British Standard BS 8233:2014, which provides guidance on sound insulation and noise reduction, and BS 4142:2014, which addresses the rating and assessment of industrial and commercial noise impacts. These standards help determine when noise levels are likely to have an adverse impact, with adjustments made for tonal and impulsive sounds. The EIAR also details the application of International Standard ISO 9613-2:1996 to calculate sound attenuation over distances, considering factors like ground effects and

meteorology. For construction noise, the EIAR applies BS 5228:2009 to establish noise and vibration control measures, setting specific thresholds based on the duration and nature of the works. Vibration impacts, particularly during construction, are assessed against the thresholds provided in BS 5228-2:2009 to prevent cosmetic damage to buildings.

8.10.7. **Baseline Conditions**

8.10.8. The EIAR details that baseline noise monitoring was conducted to establish typical ambient, background, and maximum sound levels at the proposed sports campus site. This monitoring included both attended and unattended surveys. The EIAR notes that sound level meters and weather monitoring equipment were calibrated before and after each measurement, with no drift observed, ensuring accuracy. The EIAR provides specific data from the attended measurements carried out on 24th January 2024, which recorded sound levels at multiple locations during daytime hours (refer to Fig. 11.2 for locations). The results varied across locations, with LAeq values ranging from 45 to 62 dB, LAFmax from 66 to 93 dB, and LAF90 from 37 to 52 dB. Additionally, the EIAR presents data from unattended noise monitoring conducted in January and February 2024. This monitoring captured daytime, night-time, and evening noise levels over extended periods, indicating fluctuations in sound levels. For example, daytime LAeq levels ranged from 45.8 to 53.8 dB in January. Night-time LAeq levels varied from 39.2 to 51.4 dB, while evening levels ranged from 44.6 to 48.7 dB. In February 2024, daytime LAeq levels ranged from 47.0 to 49.3 dB, while night-time LAeq levels varied from 35.5 to 42.3 dB, and evening levels ranged from 41.3 to 46.5 dB. Baseline Noise Monitoring results are presented in Appendix 11.1

8.10.9. **Potential Effects**

8.10.10. The EIAR assesses the potential noise impacts of the proposed sports campus on nearby sensitive receptors during daytime hours (0700 to 2300). It states that noise levels were evaluated against current guidance for the operational phase of sports pitches and the likely significance of construction noise. The nearest noise-sensitive receptors, including residential areas like St. Phelim’s Place, Kilnavara Heights, and Kilnavarragh Lane, were identified for this assessment.

8.10.11. The EIAR notes that there are no specific criteria for assessing noise levels from Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs), but it adopts guidelines from sources such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), Sport England, and British Standard BS 8233. The EIAR describes that WHO guidelines suggest a maximum of 55 dB LAeq,16hour to protect people from serious annoyance, while Sport England recommends a maximum of 50 dB LAeq,1hour to maintain acceptable indoor noise levels. BS 8233 recommends a maximum of 55 dB LAeq,16hour as acceptable and 50 dB LAeq,16hour as desirable.

8.10.12. Noise modelling was conducted using CadnaA software, following the ISO 9613-2 standard. The EIAR details that the model considered various parameters, including meteorological conditions, distance, ground effects, and attenuation. The baseline noise level from AGP activities was set at 58 dB LAeq,1hour, measured 10 metres from the sideline halfway mark. Additionally, the EIAR describes that spectator noise was calculated using a formula factoring in crowd size, with specific day-to-day crowd sizes modelled for different sports pitches: 20 spectators for the athletics track, stand, and soccer pitch infield; 15 for the hockey pitch and multisport pitch and stand; 25 for the covered arena; 12 for the GAA pitch and stand; and 10 per GAA training pitch.

8.10.13. The EIAR posits that the magnitude of impact on these receptors would depend on the proximity to the noise sources and the level of activity on the sports pitches, with potential noise levels expected to stay within or near the recommended thresholds for outdoor noise.

8.10.14. The EIAR details the predicted noise levels at various noise-sensitive receptors due to activities on the sports pitches and associated spectator noise. Noise modelling results are presented in Appendix 11.2. Predicted noise levels at the noise-sensitive receptors from sports pitch activity noise are detailed in Table 11.11 of the EIAR. The EIAR states that the results show that at certain receptors, particularly those to the southwest of the proposed development, the noise levels from sports pitch activities could exceed the 50 dB(A) guideline by up to 3 dB(A). Specifically, the EIAR notes that receptors such as NSR9 could experience noise levels as high as 53 dB(A), which exceeds the acceptable threshold for outdoor amenity spaces. Other receptors exceeding the threshold include NSR6, NSR7, NSR8, NSR 10 and NSR 23. Predicted noise levels at the noise-sensitive receptors from sports pitch and spectator activity

noise are presented in Table 11.2. Receptors exceeding the 50 dB(A) level threshold include NSR6, NSR7, NSR8, NSR9, NSR10 and NSR23. When considering the combined effect of sports pitch and spectator noise, the EIAR notes that the predicted noise levels remain consistent with those from sports pitch activities alone, with no significant increase observed across the receptors.

8.10.15. To mitigate these effects, the EIAR describes the erection of a 2-metre high noise barrier along the south and southwest boundaries of the development site (refer to Dwg No. 800-03). The results of this mitigation, as shown in Table 11.3, show that the noise levels at all receptors would be reduced, ensuring that the 50 dB(A) LAeq, 1-hour guideline for outdoor amenity spaces are not exceeded. The EIAR posits that this mitigation would effectively address the potential noise impacts, particularly for the most affected receptors.

8.10.16. The EIAR assesses the noise impact from vehicle movements associated with the proposed development during peak times, specifically on Thursday at 19:15 and Saturday at 13:00. The EIAR details that noise levels were modelled based on the predicted vehicle movements, with a sound power level of 96 dB(A) and a travel speed of 32 km/h. The results indicate that even during the highest peak traffic scenarios, the predicted noise levels at the nearest noise-sensitive receptors would remain below 50 dB(A) LAeq,1hour. The EIAR states that the introduction of these vehicle movements would not result in a significant noise impact at the closest noise-sensitive receptors.

8.10.17. The EIAR assesses the noise impact of external plant equipment located at the roof level of building 1, as shown on Drawing No. 9955_JCP_ZZ_00_DR_M_5001-P03. The predicted noise levels from the plant units were modelled, with sound pressure levels ranging from 36 dB(A) to 70 dB(A) at 3 metres. The EIAR details that the highest predicted rating level at the noise-sensitive receptors, after applying a +3 dB acoustic feature correction as per BS 4142, is 34 dB(A). The EIAR compares these predicted noise levels with the baseline background sound level of 44 dB(A) during the daytime, as measured during noise monitoring. The results indicate that the predicted noise levels from the rooftop plant equipment are below the existing background levels at all receptors. Consequently, the EIAR concludes that the plant noise would not have an impact on the nearest noise-sensitive receptors.

8.10.18. The EIAR evaluates the significance of noise and vibration levels during the construction phase of the proposed development by referencing the Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Levels (LOAELs) and Significant Observed Adverse Effect Levels (SOAELs) outlined in BS 5228-1/2:2009 and BS 6472-1:2008. The EIAR provides specific thresholds for noise levels at the façades of residential buildings, which range from 45 dB LAeq,T to 75 dB LAeq,T depending on the time of day and day of the week. The report states that these levels are designed to ensure that noise remains below the SOAEL, thus avoiding significant adverse effects.

8.10.19. For vibration, the EIAR details that peak particle velocity (PPV) levels should not exceed 0.14 mm/s to 10 mm/s, with the higher levels only tolerated for very brief exposures. The vibration dose values (VDV) provided indicate that adverse comments are possible at 0.4 $ms^{-1.75}$ during the day and 0.2 $ms^{-1.75}$ at night, with higher values likely leading to probable adverse comments. The EIAR indicates that the contractor would ensure that all noise and vibration levels remain within these limits to prevent significant adverse impacts on nearby residential buildings during construction.

8.10.20. The EIAR assesses the potential noise impact from construction activities associated with the proposed development. Due to the absence of detailed information about specific construction phases and plant items, assumptions were made based on typical site preparation activities and noise levels provided in BS 5228-1:2009. The proposed working hours are Monday to Friday from 0730 to 1800, and Saturday from 0800 to 1300, with no work on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

8.10.21. The EIAR provides predicted noise levels for typical construction equipment, with sound levels measured at a distance of 10 metres. For instance, activities like ground excavation, articulated trucks and loading lorries are predicted to generate noise levels between 73 and 81 dB(A) at this distance. The EIAR further predicts how these levels would decrease with increasing distance from the source but notes that within 80 metres, many activities would still exceed the Category A threshold value of 65 dB(A) for daytime noise.

8.10.22. The noise-sensitive receptors closest to the construction site, such as St Phelim's Place, the Royal School, and Kilnavarragh Lane, are identified as being most at risk of experiencing higher noise levels. The EIAR indicates that at these receptors, predicted noise levels from typical construction activities range from 59 to 75 dB(A),

which exceeds the 65 dB(A) threshold. Consequently, the EIAR concludes that the proximity of these receptors to the construction works would likely result in a significant adverse noise impact during the construction phase.

8.10.23. **Mitigation Measures**

8.10.24. The EIAR outlines several mitigation measures to address potential noise and vibration impacts during both the operational and construction phases of the proposed sports campus.

8.10.25. Regarding operational mitigation measures, the EIAR describes the installation of a 2-metre high noise barrier along the south/southeast boundary of the site, which would reduce operational noise levels by at least 5 dB. The barrier would be continuous, with no gaps, and have a minimum surface density of 10 kg/m² to be effective (refer to Dwg No. 800-03).

8.10.26. Regarding construction mitigation measures, the EIAR states that a similar 2-metre noise barrier would be placed around the perimeter of the construction site adjacent to noise-sensitive receptors. This barrier would attenuate noise by at least 5 dB. Additionally, the EIAR proposes best practice measures, including:

- Planning work hours to minimise noise impact on receptors.
- Using quieter working methods and restricting large vehicle movements to specified hours.
- Implement noise control measures at the source and conduct regular noise and vibration monitoring to ensure compliance.
- Display appropriate signage and provide ear protection if high noise levels are expected.
- Low-vibration construction methods, such as continuous flight agender (CFA) piling, are used to minimise vibration impacts.

8.10.27. The EIAR recommends maintaining good communication with the community through regular updates and letter drops to nearby residents. This would include details on the scope and timeline of work, along with contact information for raising concerns. If noise or vibration complaints arise, the EIAR suggests monitoring and immediate action to address and mitigate the issue, with the contractor taking a proactive role in community engagement.

8.10.28. The EIAR indicates that contractors would be briefed on noise-sensitive receptor locations and mitigation strategies and follow best practices as outlined in BS 5228-1/2. A dedicated helpline would be set up to handle complaints, ensuring prompt investigation and mitigation. Overall, the EIAR posits that with these mitigation measures in place, the noise and vibration impacts of the proposed development would be reduced to acceptable levels in accordance with relevant guidelines and best practice standards.

8.10.29. **Cumulative Effects**

8.10.30. The EIAR assesses the cumulative noise impact of the proposed development's operational phase on nearby noise-sensitive receptors. The predicted cumulative noise levels at these receptors are compared against the guideline level of 50 dB(A) and baseline measurements from January and February 2024. The EIAR states that the predicted noise levels do not exceed the 50 dB(A) threshold at any of the receptors. For the daytime period, the highest predicted increase in noise level is 2 dB(A) at NSR16, while for the evening period, the highest increase is 6 dB(A) at the same receptor. Despite these increases, the EIAR indicates that the cumulative noise levels would remain within acceptable limits and would not introduce significant adverse effects. The report states that the overall noise impact from the sports pitches is expected to be at or below the lowest observed adverse effect level at the noise-sensitive receptors, meaning it would not lead to significant negative impacts on the surrounding area.

8.10.31. **Assessment**

8.10.32. I have examined, analysed, and evaluated Chapter 11 of the EIAR, all associated documentation, and submissions on file concerning noise and vibration, including the third-party concerns raised by Gerard and Shelia Cooney of No. 10 Lurganboy, Cavan. It is my view that the proposed development would not have significant adverse effects on noise and vibration, provided the mitigation measures are implemented as outlined.

8.10.33. The noise modelling considers spectator activity as part of the overall noise levels at noise-sensitive receptors, which is crucial given the potential capacity of the sports campus. As detailed in Section 2.4.2 of the EIAR, the facilities are designed to

accommodate a significant number of people, including the GAA sports facilities' covered spectator stand, which can accommodate up to 599 spectators, the multisport pitch spectator stand, which can accommodate 242 spectators, and the covered spectator stand for the athletics track, which can accommodate 452 people.

8.10.34. The noise modelling results in Appendix 11-2 present noise maps for scenarios that include the proposed 2-meter noise barrier. The introductory text with the Appendix outlines the noise maps as follows: Maps 1A, 1B, and 1C show sports pitch and spectator activity noise levels at noise-sensitive receptors. Maps 2A, 2B, and 2C include the impact of the 2-meter noise barrier. Map 3A depicts vehicle movement predicted noise levels during peak times at noise-sensitive receptors. Map 4 shows the predicted noise levels from the proposed rooftop plant at noise-sensitive receptors. I note, however, that the maps themselves are not explicitly labelled, although the maps include the proposed 2-meter noise barrier along the southwestern boundary.

8.10.35. While the noise modelling includes spectator noise, the EIAR and Appendix 11-2 do not explicitly detail or separately label spectator noise within the maps or accompanying text. The maps focus on overall noise levels, including the cumulative impact of activities associated with the sports pitches and related facilities, without breaking down specific noise sources such as spectator noise or player activities. I note, however, that the EIAR describes spectator noise as calculated using a formula factoring in specific day-to-day crowd sizes: 20 spectators for the athletics track, stand, and soccer pitch infield; 15 for the hockey pitch and multisport pitch and stand; 25 for the covered arena; 12 for the GAA pitch and stand; and 10 per GAA training pitch. It is evident that the crowd sizes used in the noise modelling do not account for the maximum spectator capacity of the sporting facilities. This discrepancy between modelled and actual potential crowd sizes raises concerns about the accuracy of the noise impact assessment, particularly during events when the sports campus operates at full capacity, as well as possible noise from adjacent Breffini Park stadium. The potential underestimation of noise levels could result in more significant impacts on nearby noise-sensitive receptors, especially residential properties like No. 10 Lurganboy, which adjoin the site boundary and in proximity to the proposed athletics track/pitch and associated spectator stand with a capacity for 452 people.

8.10.36. The EIAR’s assessment of noise and vibration identifies the likely direct and indirect effects on the environment, particularly on nearby noise-sensitive receptors,

as detailed above. Given the scale and capacity of the proposed sports campus, direct effects of noise during both the construction and operational phases would be expected. These effects would include noise from construction activities, sports pitch activities, spectator noise, and associated vehicular movements. I consider that, in the absence of mitigation, the potential noise impacts, particularly on residential properties near the identified receptors, would be significant. The noise levels, as modelled in the EIAR, indicate that certain receptors could experience noise levels exceeding the acceptable thresholds prescribed by World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, British Standard BS 8233, and Sport England recommendations. However, the proposed 2-meter high noise barrier is a critical mitigation measure that I consider would effectively reduce these noise levels to within acceptable limits. Specifically, with the noise barrier in place, the noise levels at all receptors, including those most affected including dwellings in proximity to receptors NSR6, NSR7, NSR8, NSR 10 and NSR 23 as detailed on the Noise Modelling Map, would be reduced to below the 50 dB(A) LAeq,1hour guideline for outdoor amenity spaces, as prescribed by BS 8233 and Sport England guidelines. The EIAR indicates that the barrier would reduce noise levels by at least 5 dB(A), ensuring compliance with the relevant thresholds.

8.10.37. The inclusion of the noise barrier, as presented in the noise modelling results, demonstrates a significant reduction in noise levels at the most affected receptors. Although the noise modelling does not explicitly break down noise sources, it does account for overall noise levels, including those generated by spectator activity. The reduction in noise levels due to the barrier, as reflected in the modelling, indicates that the likely significant effects on the environment, particularly in terms of residential amenity, would be mitigated to a level that is not significant and will comply with the relevant noise guidelines.

8.10.38. The observer's dwelling, No. 10 Lurganboy (labelled NSR 16), is not identified as a receptor where noise levels would exceed relevant thresholds. This property, adjoining the northwestern corner of the site near the proposed athletics track does not incorporate 2m high acoustic fencing along its boundary adjoining the site. However, the submitted Landscape Plan includes a woodland-planted area along this boundary. I am of the view that this mixed evergreen and deciduous woodland would effectively serve as a natural noise barrier while enhancing visual amenity, biodiversity, and the environmental character of the site, providing a more aesthetically

pleasing and functional buffer than a standard acoustic fence. Notwithstanding this, given the concerns raised in the observation received, the proximity of dwelling No. 10 Lurganboy to the proposed athletics track/pitch and spectator stand, which can accommodate up to 452 people, and considering that the noise modelling does not factor in the maximum crowd capacity of the sporting facilities, I consider it appropriate to provide a 2-meter high acoustic fence along the side boundary of No. 10 Lurganboy within the site. This fence should be accompanied by appropriate landscaping on both sides to minimise its visual impact and to enhance the environmental character of the site. This can be imposed by way of a condition, in the event of a grant of permission.

8.10.39. Regarding construction noise, I acknowledge the proximity of sensitive receptors such as St. Phelim's Place and Kilnavarragh Lane and that without mitigation, there could be significant noise impacts during construction activities. However, the proposed mitigation measures, including restricted working hours, noise barriers, and proactive community engagement, are appropriate and sufficient to minimise these impacts. The use of low-vibration construction methods would also effectively control vibration levels, ensuring that they remain below harmful thresholds. Therefore, I conclude that the direct impacts from construction will not result in significant long-term harm.

8.10.40. **Conclusion**

8.10.41. I conclude that the proposed development, subject to the implementation of the noise barrier and other mitigation measures, would not result in significant adverse effects on the environment concerning noise and vibration or detract from the residential amenity of nearby residents.

8.11. Material Assets

8.11.1. **Issues Raised**

8.11.2. The third-party submission raises concerns about the lack of detailed information on boundary treatments, lighting, and access control, which they believe could result in security issues and antisocial behaviour, with doubts about the capacity of police/ emergency services to respond effectively.

8.11.3. The Prescribed Body reports raised some concerns related to material assets. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage highlighted the need for further archaeological assessments and the inclusion of detailed environmental protection plans. Uisce Eireann noted that while water and wastewater connections are feasible, the applicant must ensure adequate fire storage and secure agreements for connections involving third-party infrastructure, with specific conditions attached.

8.11.4. **Assessment Methodology**

8.11.5. The EIAR states that the methodology for assessing material assets involved a combination of consultation and desk-based research, relying on published information relevant to the potentially impacted assets. The assessment was carried out adhering to key legislative frameworks, including the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Schedule 6(2)(d), as well as the EU Directives 2011/92/EU and 2014/52/EU, which govern the assessment of environmental effects for public and private developments. The EIAR describes that the assessment process was further guided by several key EPA documents, including the "Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Statements" (2002), the "Advice Notes on Current Practices in the Preparation of Environmental Impact Statements" (2003), the "Revised Draft Advice Notes for Preparing Environmental Impact Statements" (2015), and the "Revised Draft Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports" (2017). Additionally, the assessment referenced the European Commission Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (2017).

8.11.6. The EIAR indicates that the criteria for evaluating impacts on material assets were based on the definitions and classifications provided in the EPA Glossary of Impacts, as outlined in the 2017 Draft Guidelines. The EIAR notes that no significant limitations or difficulties were encountered during the assessment, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the material assets relevant to the proposed development.

8.11.7. **Baseline Conditions**

8.11.8. The EIAR details that the site is currently a greenfield area with no existing infrastructure for foul water, surface water, water supply, natural gas, electrical connections, or waste management. The EIAR describes the proposed development's

approach to providing these services. For foul water, the EIAR indicates that wastewater from the sports campus would be directed to the College Street Wastewater Pumping Station via a newly installed sewer system. The toilet block associated with the GAA playing fields would be connected via a gravity sewer discharging to a pumping station within Breffni Park grounds, where capacity is available for these flows. The report states the drainage design would comply with BSEN 12056: 2010 standards, ensuring proper venting, gradient, and access points for maintenance.

8.11.9. For water supply, the EIAR proposes two separate systems: a new fire main from Kilnavarragh Road, designed as a radial system feeding a ring main around the proposed buildings, and a domestic water connection from Dublin Road. The domestic supply would be monitored for leaks using a building management system that tracks flow discrepancies between the boundary and building meters. The EIAR notes that no natural gas supply is planned for the development. However, a new ground-mounted electrical substation will be constructed to supply power to the entire site, with electricity distributed via underground cabling within PVC ducts. For waste management, the EIAR details a dedicated bin and waste storage area within a concrete compound to the west of the Sports Building. This area will accommodate segregated bins for recyclable and general waste, with regular collection managed by Cavan County Council.

8.11.10. Regarding access, the EIAR describes the site's current limited vehicular and pedestrian access, primarily via the Royal School access road and Breffni Park's car park. The proposed development will convert an existing emergency access point off Dublin Road into the main access for the site. Additionally, a new bridge will be constructed over the Cavan River to connect to the main car park and other facilities. The EIAR also notes the inclusion of several pedestrian access points around the site to enhance connectivity with Cavan town centre and surrounding areas.

8.11.11. **Potential Effects**

8.11.12. The EIAR assesses the potential effects of the proposed sports campus on material assets, considering both the construction and operational phases. The EIAR states that if the development does not proceed, there would be no additional demand on existing built services, implying no changes to the current infrastructure or utilities.

8.11.13. During the construction phase, the EIAR describes that new connections to the existing wastewater, water, and electrical networks would be established to support the development. Temporary connections for wastewater and electrical supply would be arranged by the contractor, and if agreed with Uisce Eireann, local water supply would be utilised during construction. A significant aspect of the construction phase includes the diversion of existing overhead ESB cables underground, which the EIAR notes would be among the first tasks undertaken. The impact of these utility works on the local networks is predicted to be short-term and low in magnitude.

8.11.14. In terms of waste management, the EIAR indicates that the construction phase would generate a substantial amount of cut and fill, with most of the excavated material retained on-site for regrading purposes, thereby minimising the need for off-site waste disposal. Additionally, since no demolition is involved, the generation of waste materials is further limited. The potential impact on the local municipal waste disposal network due to construction-related waste is assessed as short-term and moderate, with adherence to best practice required to mitigate this impact.

8.11.15. During the operational phase, the EIAR details that the development would connect to main utilities, including water, wastewater, and electricity, which would result in a slight increase in demand on these services. The water and electrical supply would be metered, and only foul wastewater would be discharged into the local network. The potential impact on the wastewater and water supply network is expected to be long-term and low in significance. The EIAR posits that the diversion of overhead electrical cables underground would result in a long-term aesthetic improvement to the site, considered a beneficial impact.

8.11.16. Regarding waste management in the operational phase, the EIAR notes a marginal increase in demand for municipal waste disposal due to the development's operation. This impact is anticipated to be long-term and minor.

8.11.17. The EIAR considers the cumulative impact of the proposed development on foul and surface water disposal, water supply, electrical supply, and municipal waste management. The report indicates that these cumulative effects would be assessed and managed by the relevant utility providers, and they are not expected to be significant.

8.11.18. **Mitigation Measures**

8.11.19. The EIAR describes the proposed mitigation measures for the material assets impacted by the development, focusing on both the construction and operational phases. During the Construction Phase, the EIAR details the following mitigation measures:

- A construction management plan, including traffic management, would be implemented to protect local amenities and maintain the integrity of the local road network.
- The provision of utilities would adhere to the recommendations of relevant statutory bodies.
- Water metering and sub-metering would be installed throughout the site and buildings to monitor consumption, detect leaks and isolate sections during periods of no use. Boundary metering would also be implemented to identify any potential underground leaks in incoming infrastructure.

8.11.20. For the Operational Phase, the EIAR indicates that no additional mitigation measures are deemed necessary. The EIAR further details that the building services would align with The Climate Action Plan 2021 by incorporating a Nearly Zero Emissions Building Strategy (NZEB), aiming for a Zero Emissions Building target by 2030. This would involve early thermal modelling, detailed design, and ongoing efficiency monitoring throughout the building's lifecycle. The EIAR notes that the building is expected to significantly reduce CO2 emissions and energy consumption, with a calculated CO2 emission rate of 43.2 kgCO2/m².annum, well below the reference building's 94.3 kgCO2/m².annum. The building is also expected to achieve a Renewable Energy Ratio (RER) of 0.43, surpassing the minimum required ratio of 0.10.

8.11.21. The EIAR describes that materials for building services would be selected based on sustainability and longevity, with an emphasis on limiting landfill waste at the end of the building's life, including the reduction of single-use plastics. Systems would be designed to monitor leaks and efficiency losses, with comprehensive details provided in the health and safety file for client instruction and demonstration.

8.11.22. **Assessment**

8.11.23. I have examined, analysed, and evaluated Chapter 12 of the EIAR, all associated documentation, and submissions on file in respect of Material Assets. It is my view that the proposed sports campus would not result in significant adverse effects on Material Assets, based on the information provided and my own assessment of the potential impacts.

8.11.24. Direct impacts during the construction phase, such as the connection to existing utility networks (water, wastewater, and electricity) and the diversion of overhead ESB cables underground, would occur. However, I consider these impacts would be short-term and low in magnitude. The mitigation measures proposed, including the implementation of a construction management plan and adherence to Irish and European standards/technical guidance documents/standards and codes of practice, would effectively minimise any potential disruptions. The temporary increase in demand on local utility networks during construction would not cause significant strain, given the planned coordination with relevant statutory bodies.

8.11.25. Indirect impacts during the operational phase, such as the marginal increase in demand for municipal waste disposal and utility services, are likely to occur. However, I consider that these impacts would be long-term but minor and would not significantly affect the environment. The building's design, which incorporates a Nearly Zero Emissions Building Strategy (NZEB), aligns with environmental sustainability goals, including The Climate Action Plan 2024.

8.11.26. In considering cumulative effects, it is my view that the interactions between the various impacts within this project, as well as with other existing or approved projects in the area, would not result in significant cumulative impacts on material assets. The mitigation measures proposed, particularly those related to utility management and waste disposal, would prevent any significant cumulative effects.

8.11.27. Concerns raised by the third-party submission regarding boundary treatments, lighting, and access control, while important, primarily relate to security and are not directly tied to Material Assets. These concerns are addressed in other sections of this report. Similarly, the Prescribed Body reports, which highlighted the need for further archaeological assessments and utility management agreements, do not identify any significant unresolved issues related to Material Assets that would likely result in

adverse environmental impacts. Archaeology is dealt with specifically later in this report.

8.11.28. **Conclusion**

8.11.29. In conclusion, it is my view that the likely effects of the proposed development on material assets are minor and adequately mitigated. The proposed development would not result in significant adverse effects on material assets, either directly, indirectly, or cumulatively.

8.12. Traffic

8.12.1. **Issues Raised**

8.12.2. The third-party submission from Gerard and Sheila Cooney does not raise any specific concerns regarding traffic. Similarly, the Prescribed Body submission reports did not raise any particular concerns or issues regarding traffic concerning the proposed development.

8.12.3. **Assessment Methodology**

8.12.4. The EIAR details a methodology for assessing the traffic impacts of the proposed sports campus, grounded in data and specific adjustments to account for the unique aspects of the development. The EIAR indicates that baseline traffic conditions were established through a combination of existing data and additional traffic surveys, with comparisons made to The PEACE Link facility in Clones, Co. Monaghan, a similar but smaller sports campus. To ensure the assessment's robustness, the EIAR applied a factor of 1.5 to vehicle trips and doubled pedestrian trip estimates, recognising the proposed development's closer proximity to population centres.

8.12.5. The EIAR notes that peak traffic hours for the sports campus, identified as 19:30-20:30 midweek and 12:30-13:30 on weekends, fall outside the existing road network's peak hours. A projection of the number of vehicles and the estimated profile for a typical day were assessed, leading to the proposal of 160 parking spaces for the development. The report states that the modelling of these conditions indicates that the local junctions, particularly on Dublin Road, have sufficient capacity to handle the projected increase in traffic, even when accounting for additional traffic from the Royal

School and Breffni Park. This was done without applying any discounts for existing or pass-by traffic, enhancing the assessment's conservatism.

8.12.6. Car sharing was factored into the assessment, with a conservative estimate of 1.3 persons per vehicle, and the direction of vehicle approach was modelled using a gravity model, which projected a 70% traffic inflow from the north. The report states that no discounts for existing or pass-by traffic were applied as a form of sensitivity. The EIAR further describes significant infrastructure modifications, including the proposal to stop up Park Lane at its junction with Dublin Road and merge it with the new access route, which would improve safety and sightlines.

8.12.7. For The Royal School, the EIAR proposes that its traffic, including buses, would utilise the new development's car park during peak hours, which would reduce congestion on Dublin Road. The EIAR also details that the construction phase would be managed to minimise traffic disruption, with impacts on the surrounding road network expected to be low. Regarding GAA Breffni Park stadium, the EIAR indicates that the proposed scheme includes three additional pitches and associated parking, which would improve the facilities without generating additional traffic. The new pitches would facilitate ladies' GAA and reduce the use of Breffni Park itself as a training pitch.

8.12.8. **Baseline Conditions**

8.12.9. The EIAR describes the baseline traffic environment in Cavan Town, highlighting its strategic location on major routes, the N3 linking Dublin to Enniskillen and the N55 connecting Athlone to Cavan, which makes it a critical junction for regional traffic. The EIAR notes that traffic volumes have significantly increased over the past two decades due to population growth and economic activities, impacting both through traffic and internal traffic within the town. The EIAR indicates that the construction of the N3 and N55 bypasses in 1999 has helped alleviate some traffic pressure on the town's streets, though managing the benefits of these routes remains crucial. Despite these bypasses, Dublin Road (Old N3) continues to experience high traffic volumes, particularly during peak hours, with the intersection of Dublin Road and Ballinagh Road being historically prone to congestion, though this has been somewhat mitigated by the N55 bypass.

8.12.10. The EIAR details other significant roads and junctions, such as Swellan Road and Railway Road, which are key radial routes to the west, with a critical roundabout

at the junction of Railway Road, College Road, and Farnham Street. The report also notes that Cathedral Road and Cootehill Road are less congested distributor routes to the north. In the town centre, the EIAR describes the operation of a one-way traffic system due to high volumes and narrow streets, particularly on Main Street and Farnham Street, which directs traffic southward through Church Street/Main Street to Connolly Street.

8.12.11. The EIAR states that Dublin Road, where the proposed access to the sports campus would be located, is the primary local traffic environment to be considered in the assessment of the project's traffic impacts. The Traffic Statement in Appendix 13.1 of Volume 3, prepared by HoyDorman, provides further detail on the baseline traffic conditions, reinforcing the strategic importance of Cavan Town's location on the N3 and N55 routes. The report highlights that Dublin Road (Old N3) remains a critical high-traffic route, particularly during peak hours, with specific concerns at the Dublin Road/Ballinagh Road crossroads due to historical congestion, despite some relief from the N55 bypass. The EIAR describes key junctions within the town, such as the Dublin Road/Park Lane junction, where substandard sightlines and steep approaches present safety concerns, particularly for traffic associated with Breffni Park. The report also notes the significant role of Breffni Park as a major sports and recreational facility accessed via Park Lane, which, along with nine residential dwellings, contributes to local traffic. Additionally, the Royal School, adjacent to the proposed development site, is highlighted for its contribution to congestion on Dublin Road during peak hours, particularly due to limited access for private vehicles and buses, which causes traffic backups.

8.12.12. **Potential Effects**

8.12.13. The EIAR, supported by the Traffic Statement in Appendix 13.1, assesses the potential traffic impacts of the proposed sports campus, focusing on both the construction and operational phases. The EIAR describes that the development includes the creation of a new vehicular access/junction from Dublin Road, which would involve the closure of the existing Park Lane/Dublin Road junction. The new access road would serve both the sports campus and Breffni Park, doubling as an emergency access route. The egress from the site would have dual exit lanes to facilitate both left and right turns onto Dublin Road.

8.12.14. The proposed development also includes significant upgrades to internal roads, cycle/pedestrian paths, and the provision of associated parking facilities, including car, bus, and cycle parking with electric charge points. The parking facilities would be expanded and formalised, with the lower car park at Breffni Park being extended to accommodate approximately 150 vehicles. The EIAR notes that this expansion is intended to improve existing facilities without generating additional traffic.

8.12.15. For pedestrian access, new crossing points are planned, including a pedestrian island on Dublin Road and two Zebra crossings within the site, all equipped with Belisha beacons and tactile paving for enhanced safety. The Royal School would utilise the new upper car park for student drop-offs and pick-ups, alleviating congestion on Dublin Road by moving this activity off the main road. Additionally, the EIAR indicates that multiple pedestrian accesses would lead to a shared walkway/cycleway circulating around the entire site, with connections to both Dublin Road and Kilnavarragh Road. This pathway is designed with a gradient of no greater than 5% to ensure accessibility for all users. The development also includes the provision of a right-turn lane off Dublin Road into the proposed site.

8.12.16. Traffic management measures for the car park associated with Breffni Park include gating the area and maintaining existing traffic management practices with plans issued before major events. Speed control within the internal roads would be managed via signage. The Traffic Statement states that the closure of Park Lane for vehicles at its junction with Dublin Road and its integration into the new development access offers significant safety improvements, including better sightlines and approach gradients to Dublin Road while maintaining a footway to facilitate pedestrian access to Breffni Park.

8.12.17. During the construction phase, the EIAR details that there would be a significant number of vehicle movements, with an average of 186 HGVs per week in Phase 1 and 121 HGVs per week in Phase 2, alongside additional LGV and staff traffic. The overall increase in traffic on Dublin Road due to construction is quantified at 0.75% for Phase 1 and 0.62% for Phase 2. These impacts, while measurable, are deemed low in magnitude and temporary. The EIAR states that a comprehensive Traffic Management Plan would be implemented, which includes restrictions on construction hours, the use of temporary road signage, and coordination with local authorities to mitigate any potential disruption.

8.12.18. In the operational phase, the EIAR indicates that traffic impacts would stem from the regular use of the sports facilities. The provision of 150 additional parking spaces at Breffni Park, the formalisation of existing parking, and the integration of the Royal School's drop-off and pick-up points within the new car park are deemed key mitigation measures. The report states that these actions would reduce congestion on Dublin Road, particularly during peak school hours, and improve overall traffic flow.

8.12.19. The EIAR states that construction activities would be limited to weekdays between 08:00hrs and 18:00hrs, and Saturdays between 08:00hrs and 13:00hrs, with no work on Sundays or Bank Holidays to avoid unsociable hours. It notes that in specific circumstances, such as the delivery of large precast concrete structures, out-of-hours work may be necessary but would require prior approval from the Local Authority and inclusion in a specific Traffic Management Plan. Emergency works, if required, might also extend beyond normal working hours for safety or environmental protection.

8.12.20. The EIAR provides a detailed assessment of the traffic impacts associated with the proposed development, focusing on traffic forecasting and generation. The EIAR indicates that the assessment used design years between 2032 and 2042 to model traffic impacts, in line with TII Project Appraisal Guidelines. Growth rates were applied to base network traffic flows, with the report using National Roads Authority Growth Rates (TII) to account for future increases in traffic. The growth factors applied are 1.049 for the opening year (2027), 1.083 for the five-year forecast (2032), and 1.1044 for the fifteen-year forecast (2042).

8.12.21. The EIAR describes that traffic generation was estimated using data from the PEACE Link facility, with adjustments made for the larger scale of the proposed development. The assessment expects the sports campus to generate c. 378 vehicle movements on a typical weekday and 225 vehicle movements on a Saturday. The EIAR posits that the peak traffic hours for the development would fall outside the peak hours of the surrounding road network, thereby minimising the impact on local traffic flows. The vehicular profiles provided in Figure 9 of the Traffic Statement support this conclusion, showing expected traffic patterns for both a Thursday and a Saturday.

8.12.22. The Traffic Statement assesses the potential traffic impacts by examining the modal split, trip distribution, and various trip types associated with the proposed

development. The EIAR uses data from the existing PEACE Link development to estimate the modal split for the proposed sports campus. The assessment applies adjustments to account for the larger scale of the new development. The projected modal split includes 3% of trips by bicycle, 18% by walking, 7% by bus, 56% by private vehicle drivers, and 17% by private vehicle passengers.

8.12.23. For trip distribution, the EIAR describes the expected catchment area for the facility, noting that while local use will primarily involve residents of the Cavan area, events and competitions could attract visitors from a much wider area, similar to the current usage patterns of Breffni Park. The EIAR posits that transfer trips, where passengers switch between modes of transport during a journey, are unlikely to be significant for this development, except for occasional local bus journeys. Pass-by trips, where travellers stop at the facility on their way to another destination, are anticipated to be significant, especially for the gym; however, no discount has been applied in the traffic modelling to ensure a conservative assessment. The EIAR also considers combined trips, where individuals might combine multiple purposes into a single journey, and notes that this behaviour is expected for the proposed development. Again, no discount has been applied in the traffic modelling for these combined trips.

8.12.24. The EIAR further elaborates on the trip assignment for the proposed development, incorporating data from the 2022 population census and considering the likely direction of approach for users of the sports campus. The EIAR indicates that a gravity model was used to estimate the directional split of traffic, with 15% of traffic expected to approach from the north, 45% from the south, and the remaining 40% from within Cavan town centre itself. This analysis is visualised in Figure 10, which shows the percentage distribution of travel direction.

8.12.25. The EIAR details that, for trip assignment purposes, it is assumed that 30% of vehicles will approach the site from the south and 70% from the north, with a similar split for vehicles leaving the development. This approach is intended to capture a realistic distribution of traffic flows based on population data and the proximity of the town centre.

8.12.26. For the Royal School and Park Lane (which primarily serves Breffni Park), the EIAR describes that private vehicle drop-offs and school buses would be redirected to

use the proposed car park for both AM and PM peak periods. This trip assignment was informed by existing traffic surveys at the Royal School's current entrance, applying similar directional travel patterns to the new development. The same methodology was applied to Park Lane traffic, with the assumption that most of this traffic will continue to serve Breffni Park via the newly integrated access road.

8.12.27. The EIAR provides a detailed analysis of the traffic modelling results, focusing on the impact of the proposed development, including the Royal School and Park Lane (Breffni Park) traffic on Dublin Road. The EIAR indicates that the traffic impact of the proposed development alone is below the 5% threshold on Dublin Road during peak hours, leading to a focused assessment of the proposed junction with Dublin Road.

8.12.28. The combined impact of the development, Royal School, and Park Lane traffic on Dublin Road is noted to reach a 10% increase. However, the EIAR clarifies that this includes traffic already present on the local road network, with the primary change being the new access point via the proposed development. To ensure a robust assessment, the traffic modelling includes all these traffic flows combined. The results, depicted in Figure 12, demonstrate that there is sufficient residual capacity at the proposed development access junction, even when development flows are doubled as part of sensitivity testing. Further modelling, as shown in Figure 13, isolates the impact of the proposed development's traffic only, revealing that the actual impact is significantly lower than the worst-case scenario assessed. The modelling confirms that the proposed junction with Dublin Road would adequately handle the expected traffic without causing significant congestion or delays.

8.12.29. The EIAR also addresses road impact, noting that the peak hours for the development differ from those of the existing road network, occurring outside the typical AM and PM road network peaks. This further reduces the potential for traffic conflicts. The Traffic Statement posits that the sensitivity testing performed by doubling the development traffic and applying it to future year traffic flows (2047) indicates that the proposed junction would maintain sufficient capacity, ensuring that the development's impact on the local road network remains manageable.

8.12.30. Regarding parking, the report states that a parking profile was created by surveying the PEACE Link carpark, with adjustments made by applying a factor of 2 to account for the size difference between the PEACE Link and the proposed

development. Although this factor is deemend an overestimation, the report states it ensures a robust assessment. The analysis determined a maximum parking demand of 122 spaces, but the development would provide 160 spaces, as depicted in Figure 14. Four bus spaces are included for use by the sports facility and the Royal School, specifically during the school's drop-off and pick-up times. Since these school activities fall outside the peak hours of the proposed development, the report states that there is no anticipated conflict in parking usage. Additionally, accessible parking spaces would be located closer to the sports facilities and would be accessible only through automated gates. The report details how Breffni Park would receive a new car park with approximately 150 spaces as part of the overall development, which is considered an improvement to the existing Breffni Park campus.

8.12.31. The EIAR, supported by the Traffic Statement, outlines the proposed sports campus's public transport and pedestrian/cyclist accessibility. The report states that the nearest bus stop to the site is at Breffni Stores, served by route C2, with connections to key regional destinations like Donegal, Dublin, Longford, and Belfast. The report states that the site is well-served by public transport, and the surrounding road network, as demonstrated by Breffni Park, can accommodate additional public transport usage during large-scale events.

8.12.32. The EIAR also details pedestrian and cyclist access, noting that a significant portion of Cavan town falls within a 2km walking distance and a 5km cycling distance from the site. The EIAR highlights that pedestrian and cyclist safety would be addressed through the construction of new pedestrian crossings and pathways within the site, ensuring that non-vehicular traffic is safely integrated. The report states the proposed pedestrian and cycling access points would further enhance connectivity, particularly to the north and west of the site. There would be five dedicated public pedestrian/cycle access points, along with a private pedestrian access for the Royal School. The report states that the shared footway/cycleway around the site would maintain a 5% gradient throughout, with crossing points on the internal roads and at the right turn lane, ensuring safe and accessible routes for pedestrians and cyclists.

8.12.33. Regarding accessibility, the EIAR states that the design incorporates several features to ensure barrier-free access for individuals with mobility impairments, including dropped kerbs, tactile paving, and a consistent 5% gradient across site footways. Accessible parking spaces and level-access buildings are also included.

The report further highlights that tactile guidance would be used to facilitate easy navigation along internal pedestrian routes. The development would comply with relevant standards, such as European Standard EN 301549 and the Irish National Disability Authority (NDA) guidelines, to ensure that the infrastructure meets minimum accessibility requirements.

8.12.34. **Mitigation Measures**

8.12.35. The EIAR outlines several mitigation measures aimed at addressing traffic congestion, improving safety, and enhancing pedestrian access. The report details that a dedicated right-turn lane would be implemented at the proposed entrance on Dublin Road to alleviate congestion. The EIAR states that improvements to Park Lane's sightlines and approach geometry are proposed to enhance visibility and reduce accident risks at the junction. To further mitigate traffic impacts, the EIAR describes a re-routing strategy for school buses and private vehicles associated with the Royal School, directing them into the proposed upper car park to ease congestion on Dublin Road.

8.12.36. The EIAR also indicates that dual egress lanes would be introduced at the exit of the proposed development to improve capacity and reduce queuing delays during peak hours, thus enhancing traffic flow. For pedestrian safety, the EIAR posits that new pedestrian accesses would be established, including crossings, tactile paving, and dedicated internal pathways, to ensure safe movement for all users, including those with mobility impairments.

8.12.37. During the construction phase, the EIAR notes that working hours would be restricted to avoid unsociable hours. Activities would be limited to between 08:00 and 18:00 on weekdays and 08:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays, with no work permitted on Sundays or Bank Holidays. These measures are designed to minimise the development's impact on the surrounding road network and ensure safe and efficient traffic management.

8.12.38. **Residual Effects**

8.12.39. The EIAR posits that there would be no residual impacts from the proposed scheme concerning traffic when the scheme is embedded into the community for use.

8.12.40. **Assessment**

8.12.41. I have examined, analysed, and evaluated Chapter 13 of the EIAR, along with all associated documentation and submissions on file regarding traffic. In my view, the proposed development would not result in significant adverse effects on traffic, access, parking, or pedestrian and cyclist accessibility. The EIAR provides a comprehensive assessment that considers direct and indirect impacts on the existing road network, supported by robust data and appropriate modelling techniques. I consider that the identified impacts, including increased vehicle movements and changes to access points, would occur. However, they would not be significant due to the effective mitigation measures proposed.

8.12.42. The proposed introduction of a right-turn lane from Dublin Road into the development site would alleviate potential congestion at this key access point and streamline vehicle flow, particularly during peak hours, by providing a dedicated space for vehicles turning into the site. This, combined with the improvements to Park Lane's sightlines and the re-routing of school traffic into the new car park, are effective measures designed to reduce potential traffic bottlenecks and enhance overall safety. The dual egress lanes are a robust solution to manage the anticipated traffic volumes, ensuring that vehicles can exit the site efficiently without causing significant delays. These collective measures would ensure that the development integrates seamlessly with the existing traffic infrastructure, minimising any adverse impacts and maintaining smooth traffic operations.

8.12.43. The proposed development has taken significant measures to ensure that pedestrian and cyclist access is thoroughly integrated into the site plan. The inclusion of multiple access points, pedestrian crossings, and pathways with a maximum gradient of 5% demonstrates a commitment to accessibility and safety. These features would promote non-vehicular movement, which aligns with current best practices in sustainable transport infrastructure. By providing dedicated pathways and ensuring they are accessible and illuminated for all users, the development would encourage walking and cycling, thereby reducing reliance on cars and contributing to the overall sustainability of the project. This approach would enhance connectivity within the site and to the surrounding areas, ensuring that the development is well-integrated into the broader urban fabric.

8.12.44. Regarding parking, the proposed development provides 310 parking spaces, which is based on an analysis that considered comparable facilities, particularly the Peace Link in Clones, which is of a similar albeit smaller scale. The assessment was conducted during peak times on weekends to ensure the proposed parking capacity would be adequate. I am of the view that the parking provision aligns with Objective CP 01 of the Cavan County Development Plan, which requires developments to provide sufficient car parking based on the characteristics of the development and its location. The proposed development includes a Sports Arena with a gross internal area of 8,280 square metres and a two-storey Sports Building with a gross internal area of 6,000 square metres, resulting in a total combined floor area of 14,280 square metres. I also note that the maximum capacity of the outdoor spectator stands is 1,293 spectators, which includes 599 for the GAA sports facilities, 242 for the multisport pitch, and 452 for the athletics track. Table 7.4 of the Cavan County Development Plan outlines car parking standards, and for sports grounds require 1 space per 20 m. sq. of GFS. It is noted that Car Parking Standards are expressed in Maximum Standards. Addressing this issue, the Planning Statement contends that these standards do not directly apply to the diverse range of sporting and community uses within the proposed sports campus.

8.12.45. With regard to the above, it is my view that the provision of 310 parking spaces for the proposed development is both reasonable and appropriate, taking into account the specific characteristics and varied uses of the sports campus. The proposed development is in close proximity to Cavan town centre and public transport, which enhances its accessibility by cycling and walking. Its location significantly reduces the dependency on car travel, as many users of the sports campus would likely arrive by alternative modes of transport. The development provides bus parking for four vehicles and includes well-planned pedestrian and cyclist access, with multiple dedicated access points and pathways designed to promote non-vehicular movement. This design, coupled with its proximity to public transport, further supports a reduction in the need for extensive parking facilities.

8.12.46. I concur with the applicant's Planning Statement, which argues that the generic standards for "sports grounds" are not directly applicable to this campus and its multifaceted development. Instead, the applicant has adopted a pragmatic approach by benchmarking against a comparable facility, the Peace Link in Clones, which,

although smaller, provides relevant insights into parking demand. The data gathered from peak times at this facility ensures that the proposed parking capacity is grounded in actual usage patterns rather than theoretical calculations. Furthermore, the car parking standards in the Development Plan are maximum standards and allow for flexibility in their application based on the specific characteristics of the development and its location. Given the site's excellent accessibility by public transport, cycling, and walking, alongside the strategic intent to promote sustainable modes of transport, it is my view that the proposed parking provision is both appropriate and in alignment with Objective CP 01 of the Development Plan. This approach would ensure that the development meets its parking needs without over-provision, thereby encouraging a shift towards more sustainable travel behaviours.

8.12.47. The inclusion of 5% electric vehicle charging bays and accessible parking spaces demonstrates a commitment to future-proofing the development in line with sustainability goals. The design of the parking spaces, measuring a minimum of 2.5m x 5m, also adheres to the standards, ensuring functionality and convenience for all users. Additionally, the development includes 24 cycling parking spaces with covered Sheffield stands, further supporting sustainable transport options. However, considering the scale of the development and the expected demand, I consider the provision of 24 cycling parking spaces to be inadequate. To better support the anticipated number of cyclists and promote active transportation, it would be prudent to increase the number of cycle parking spaces, ensuring alignment with the Cavan County Development Plan's standards, which require 1 bicycle stand per 20 m² of GFS. This adjustment would enhance the development's sustainability credentials and ensure it meets the needs of all users effectively. This can be dealt with by way of Condition in the event of a grant of permission.

8.12.48. Regarding cumulative impacts, I consider that the interaction between the proposed development and existing traffic from the Royal School and Breffni Park stadium has been adequately assessed. The inclusion of these existing traffic flows in the modelling strengthens the conclusion that the proposed development would not exacerbate current traffic conditions. The sensitivity testing, which involved doubling traffic flows in future scenarios, provides further assurance that the development would remain within the capacity of the local road network, even under the most demanding conditions.

8.12.49. **Conclusion**

8.12.50. I conclude that subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the traffic impacts associated with the development would be minimal and manageable, without significant adverse effects on the environment or local community. The proposed development demonstrates a proactive approach to traffic management and accessibility, ensuring a well-integrated and sustainable outcome.

8.13. Cultural Heritage

8.13.1. **Issues Raised**

8.13.2. No specific concerns related to cultural heritage were raised in the third-party submissions or the submissions from Prescribed Bodies.

8.13.3. **Assessment Methodology**

8.13.4. The EIAR and the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) in Appendix 14.1 describe the methodology employed in the AHIA for the proposed sports campus, outlining an approach that includes background research, communication with the design team and a site survey to assess existing Protected Structures and heritage within the development context. The EIAR notes that the assessment also considered the proximity of Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) and aligned with conservation principles and policies from the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028. The EIAR assessment included identifying key heritage assets, commenting on potential impacts, and ensuring that any adverse effects are mitigated or eliminated, with final proposals aligning with local heritage policy.

8.13.5. **Baseline Conditions**

8.13.6. The EIAR provides an analysis of the existing cultural heritage environment surrounding the proposed sports campus and notes that the site does not lie within any Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs). The EIAR identifies several nearby Protected Structures, each recognised in the Record of Protected Structures for their architectural, historical, and social significance. These include:

Royal School, Cavan (Ref No: 40001142, Rating: National) - The AHIA describes this neo-classical, three-storey school, built between 1815 and 1820 by Francis

Johnston, as significant both architecturally and historically, noting its origins under King James I. Despite some alterations, the school remains an essential example of early 19th-century architecture.

Royal School Outbuildings (Ref No: 40001143, Rating: National) - The AHIA details these 1819 neo-classical outbuildings, emphasising their historic architectural features and contribution to the Royal School campus's overall significance.

Cavan School, Dublin Road (Ref No: 40000449, Rating: Regional) - The AHIA details this mid-19th-century, two-storey school building, noting its strong architectural presence with a neo-classical design. It features roughcast rendered walls and a gabled central breakfront, making a notable statement at the town's entrance.

St. Clare's Cottage, Dublin Road (Ref No: 40000448, Rating: Regional) - The AHIA describes this mid-19th-century house, highlighting its balanced design and use of local sandstone. It notes the cottage's hipped slate roof and red brick window surrounds, contributing to its architectural significance.

8.13.7. The AHIA further examines the views and context of these Protected Structures within the existing environment, particularly focusing on how the Royal School and its outbuildings interact with their surroundings. The Royal School is described as occupying an elevated position, which enhances its architectural dominance in the landscape. The AHIA indicates that the natural topography plays a crucial role in mitigating the visual impact of the proposed sports buildings, ensuring that these new structures do not overshadow the school. This consideration extends to the outbuildings of the Royal School, which, although altered, still contribute to the overall significance of the site. Additionally, the Cavan School and St. Clare's Cottage are both acknowledged for their prominent locations on the Dublin Road, where their architectural presence is immediately noticeable to those entering the town. The AHIA notes that the proposed development, situated on lower ground, is designed to avoid visual intrusion on these structures, maintaining the integrity of their views and the broader townscape. It is stated that the careful siting and design of the proposed buildings reflect an effort to preserve the historical context and visual prominence of these heritage assets within their environment.

8.13.8. **Potential Effects**

8.13.9. The EIAR describes the potential effects on cultural heritage, focusing on the nearby Protected Structures and their settings. The report and AHIA notes that the proposed development would not involve any physical alterations, demolitions, or re-use of these Protected Structures, including the Royal School and outbuildings, Cavan School, and St. Clare's Cottage. The primary concern is the impact on views and the visual setting of these structures.

8.13.10. The EIAR states that existing structures already compromise views of the Royal School, particularly from the south across existing sports pitches. The report states the proposed development would rationalise these structures, potentially enhancing the openness of the space and mitigating visual clutter. The report posits that the new sports buildings, located at a lower elevation than the Royal School, would not dominate the landscape due to the natural topography, thereby maintaining the school's visual prominence.

8.13.11. For the approach to the Royal School from the north, the EIAR indicates that the existing tree-lined driveway and the school's landscaped setting would remain unaffected by the new development, preserving the integrity of this approach. The report details how views out from the school to the south and west are currently impacted by the existing Breffni Stadium and all-weather pitches. The proposed sports buildings would be located in this area, but the impact is considered mitigated due to their lower elevation and the existing visual context. The EIAR states that the overall significance of the effect on these Protected Structures is minor, given the existing compromised landscape and the careful siting of new structures to minimise visual intrusion.

8.13.12. The AHIA notes that the existing landscape acts as a natural buffer, and additional landscaping beyond the school's boundaries would be maintained and enhanced to further mitigate visual impacts. The report states that the proposed sports buildings, being contemporary in design, are deliberately distinct from the historical architecture, ensuring they are legible as modern elements that do not detract from the historical character of the protected structures.

8.13.13. The AHIA concludes that, given the sensitive siting of the new structures and the existing compromised views due to the Breffni Stadium and all-weather pitches,

the potential impacts on the cultural heritage significance of the Royal School and other nearby Protected Structures would be minimal. The significance of any residual effects is deemed minor, with appropriate mitigation measures, such as screen planting and careful landscape management, ensuring that the historical setting and visual prominence of the protected structures are preserved.

8.13.14. **Mitigation Measures**

8.13.15. The EIAR describes that the mitigation of potential impacts on cultural heritage was a priority from the early stages of the project, with the early engagement of a Conservation Architect to ensure heritage protection was integrated into the design process. The report details that the design work was informed by initial heritage analysis, allowing the findings to shape decisions and mitigate impacts effectively. The EIAR indicates that the identification of Protected Structures and a considered response to Protected Structure policies were central to the mitigation strategy. Site visits were conducted to assess important views and potential impacts firsthand, allowing for a more informed approach to mitigating visual impacts. The report notes that alternative design options were explored by the Lead Architects and the Design Team to further reduce potential impacts on the protected structures. In addition, the EIAR states that enhanced landscaping has been designed, particularly around the boundaries beyond the curtilage of the Royal School, as an additional layer of mitigation, ensuring that the natural setting and visual context of the heritage assets are preserved.

8.13.16. **Assessment**

8.13.17. Having reviewed and assessed Chapter 14 of the EIAR, all associated documentation, and submissions on file concerning cultural heritage, it is my view that the proposed sports campus, as outlined, would not have significant adverse effects on the cultural heritage of the area, particularly concerning the identified Protected Structures, including the Royal School and outbuildings, Cavan School, and St. Clare's Cottage. Direct effects on cultural heritage would be limited due to the siting of the proposed development, which avoids any physical alterations to these Protected Structures. The proposed buildings and sports pitches would ensure that the visual prominence and integrity of these heritage assets, especially the Royal School and

outbuildings, are preserved. This approach aligns with best practices in heritage conservation, preserving the spatial relationship and visual dominance of Protected Structures, and is consistent with Objective RPS 1 of the Development Plan, which seeks to protect, conserve, and sustainably manage County Cavan's built heritage.

8.13.18. The proposed landscaping, as shown in the site layout and landscape drawing, would mitigate the visual impact of the sports campus on the adjacent Protected Structure, the Royal School Cavan and outbuildings. The design incorporates the retention of existing trees to the rear/north of the building and the provision of additional semi-mature trees along the rear boundary and in the car parking area to the front of the building. Furthermore, other woodland-planted areas throughout the site would minimise the visibility of the proposed development and mitigate its visual impact on the adjacent Protected Structures.

8.13.19. I consider that the indirect effects, primarily related to visual impact, have been appropriately mitigated through the design process. The existing landscape, which already includes compromised views due to existing developments such as the Breffni Stadium and buildings along the R212, acts as a visual buffer. The proposed new sports buildings are designed to be contemporary and distinct, ensuring they are perceived as separate, modern additions that would not detract from the historical context of adjacent Protect Structures, in particular the Royal School. I am of the view that the residual effects on the cultural heritage significance of these Protect Structures would be minor.

8.13.20. Regarding cumulative impact, the existing visual context, dominated by Breffni stadium, already imposes on the landscape. I do not consider the proposed development would introduce additional significant visual intrusion, and the proposed landscaping measures would further mitigate any potential adverse effects. The proposal aligns with relevant policies outlined in Section 11.2 of the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028 regarding Protected Structures.

8.13.21. **Conclusion**

8.13.22. I conclude that the proposed development would not result in significant adverse effects on the cultural heritage of the area. The identified effects would not be significant, and subject to the proposed mitigation measures as outlined, the potential

impacts on the environment, particularly the cultural heritage context, would be minimal and acceptable.

8.14. Archaeology

8.14.1. Issues Raised

8.14.2. The submission from the Development Applications Unit in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage highlights the need for a geophysical survey of the entire site, agreeing with recommendations from the Archaeological Assessment Report. The Department also calls for further mitigation measures for significant archaeological impacts, as advised by the National Monuments Section of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Additionally, it stresses the importance of submitting the Archaeological Assessment to both the National Monuments Section of the Dept. and the relevant planning authority.

8.14.3. Assessment Methodology

8.14.4. The EIAR states that the archaeological impact assessment was conducted in three stages: a detailed desktop survey, a walkover survey by a qualified archaeologist, and an assessment of potential impacts on archaeology. The desktop survey involved reviewing principal sources such as the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP), alongside cartographic sources, local development plans, and various relevant databases, including the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). The EIAR describes the walkover survey as a thorough inspection of the proposed site, leading to an informed assessment of the archaeological impact and the development of a mitigation strategy. The EIAR details that the assessment and mitigation strategy were guided by national and international policy, including the National Monuments Act and relevant sections of the County Cavan Development Plan 2022-2028. The EIAR indicates that the methodologies employed align with best practices in archaeological conservation, ensuring that the cultural heritage is protected in accordance with statutory requirements and local policies.

8.14.5. **Baseline Conditions**

8.14.6. The EIAR states that no known archaeological sites or architectural assets were identified within the proposed development area. The site, historically agricultural land, shows no surface evidence of archaeological features. The EIAR notes that within a 1km buffer, 18 recorded archaeological sites were identified, including ringforts and a battlefield, but none would be physically impacted by the development. The EIAR indicates that 16 NIAH properties, all listed on the Record of Protected Structures, were identified within the wider search area, but none would be affected. Additionally, the EIAR reports 27 archaeological excavations in the vicinity, most of which found no significant archaeological remains. Full details are provided in Appendices 15.1 to 15.3.

8.14.7. The EIAR, in Appendix 15.1, identifies several known archaeological sites within 1km of the proposed development site. These include:

- CV020:54 (Killynebber): A large raised ringfort/rath with a roughly circular area, partially levelled in the late 1980s but with the fosse's outline still traceable.
- CV020:55 (Abbey Land): The historic town of Cavan, founded around 1300, featuring sites such as a Franciscan friary, market cross, and castle, though many features no longer have visible remains.
- CV020:55002 (Abbey Land): The remains of a Franciscan friary, primarily a three-storey square tower that survived multiple burnings, including one in 1576.
- CV020:55003 (Town Parks): Site of a market cross depicted on a 1593 plan of Cavan Town, with no visible remains at ground level.
- CV020:55004 (Town Parks): Former site of a probable late 14th-century O'Reilly castle, now occupied by a fair green with no visible remains.
- CV020:55007 (Abbey Land): The early 17th-century site of a school, associated with the Plantation commissioners, with no visible remains today.
- CV020:55008 (Abbey Land): A historic bridge depicted as early as 1593, located at the present-day bridge site in Cavan Town.
- CV020:87 (Tullymongan Lower): A Bronze Age ring ditch discovered during pre-development testing in 2003, associated with a circular house and burnt mound.

- CV020:88 (Tullymongan Lower): A burnt mound discovered in 2003, composed of burnt stone, located on the east shore of a silted-up lake.
- CV020:90 (Town Parks): Site of a ringfort/rath, possibly a Jacobite garrison fort from the 1690 Battle of Cavan, with no visible remains.
- CV020:91 (Tullymongan Upper): The site of a historic battlefield, though details are minimal.
- CV025:32 (Creighan): A ringfort/rath on a low outcrop knoll beside Green Lough, with well-preserved earthen banks and a causeway.
- CV025:33 (Tirquin): A crannog in Green Lough, described as a circular mound surrounded by a stone kerb, with logs arranged in a criss-cross pattern.
- CV025:74 (Kilnavara): A large, circular hilltop enclosure defined by an earthen bank and external fosse, with parts levelled but still traceable.
- CV025:75 (Kilnavara): A ringfort/rath with a raised circular area, partially ploughed out but still traceable, though the original entrance is not recognisable.
- CV025:106 (Rosscolgan): A ringfort/rath with a substantial earthen bank, part of which is incorporated into a field boundary.
- CV025:110 (Swellan Lower): A well-preserved moated site marked as 'Fort' on historic maps, featuring a rectangular area enclosed by earthen banks and a deep fosse.

8.14.8. **Potential Effects**

8.14.9. The EIAR describes the potential archaeological impacts of the proposed development during both the construction and operational phases. The EIAR notes that the desktop survey identified no known archaeological sites within the application site boundary, though subsurface remnants of early 19th-century dwellings along Kilnavarragh Lane might exist and could be impacted by construction. The EIAR also indicates that the wider search area contains 18 known archaeological sites, including seven early medieval sites, suggesting a historically active landscape in which the site may be situated. The EIAR posits that the largely undeveloped 18.5-hectare site could contain previously unknown subsurface archaeological deposits that might be affected by the development.

8.14.10. Regarding the operational phase, the EIAR details that the majority of the 18 archaeological monuments identified in the wider area are sufficiently distant or situated within the urban environment of Cavan, thus not affected by the development. The closest monument, CV 025:074 (a hilltop enclosure c. 100m from the western boundary), would not be impacted due to screening by existing housing and local topography.

8.14.11. The EIAR further notes the presence of 16 buildings listed in the Record of Protected Structures and the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, with four located in closer proximity to the site. Two of these, NIAH 40001142 (Royal School Cavan) and NIAH 40001143 (associated outbuilding) would experience a change in their setting with the introduction of the sports campus. However, the EIAR states that the new development, predominantly consisting of low-lying sports pitches and landscaping, would not dominate the school's prominent elevated position. The EIAR states that while the rural character of the setting would be altered, the overall impact on the buildings' setting would not be significant. Additionally, the increased public access due to the sports campus could enhance public appreciation of the historic Royal School campus.

8.14.12. **Mitigation Measures**

8.14.13. The EIAR indicates that the 18.5ha site, being largely undeveloped, could contain previously unknown sub-surface archaeological deposits. To address this, the EIAR proposes the following mitigation measures:

- A geophysical survey of the development area would be conducted to non-invasively assess the potential for underlying archaeological deposits.
- Pre-construction test trenching would follow the geophysical survey to evaluate any anomalies, with all work completed well before construction begins.
- Both the survey and test excavation would be conducted under a licence from the National Monuments Service (NMS), with a method statement and licence application submitted in advance.
- If archaeological material is uncovered, mitigation would include preservation in situ, by design, or by record, subject to NMS approval.

- The developer would allow for potential delays and costs related to further excavation or mitigation, including additional licencing if required.

8.14.14. **Assessment**

8.14.15. Having reviewed Chapter 15 of the EIAR, all associated documentation, and submissions on file concerning archaeology, it is my view that the proposed development, while situated in a historically active landscape containing 18 known archaeological sites within a 1km radius, would not have significant effects on archaeological resources, provided that the proposed mitigation measures are fully implemented.

8.14.16. The direct effects on archaeology during the construction phase are primarily related to the potential discovery of unknown subsurface archaeological deposits. The EIAR identifies no known archaeological sites within the application site, but it acknowledges the possibility of remnants from early 19th-century dwellings along Kilnavarragh Lane, as well as the broader context of 18 identified archaeological sites within a 1km radius. I consider that the potential for significant archaeological discoveries exists, given the largely undeveloped nature of the site. However, I consider that undertaking the proposed geophysical survey and subsequent test trenching, as stated in the EIAR, would adequately identify and mitigate any potential impacts before construction begins. These measures are in accordance with best practices and statutory requirements under the National Monuments Act.

8.14.17. Regarding the operational phase, I consider the indirect effects on the setting of nearby archaeological sites would not be significant. The identified archaeological sites are sufficiently distant or separated by urban development, with no direct inter-visibility or connection with the proposed sports campus. The closest site, a hilltop enclosure (CV 025:074) located approx. 100m from the western boundary would not be visually impacted due to existing housing and local topography.

8.14.18. Cumulatively, the proposed development would not introduce additional significant impacts when considering the existing urban environment and the nature of the proposed sports facilities. The proposed mitigation measures, including the possibility of preservation in situ or by record, would ensure that any archaeological discoveries are appropriately managed, thereby aligning with relevant guidelines and

conservation principles. In the event of a grant of permission, a condition should be imposed requiring that the proposed mitigation measures, including geophysical surveying and test trenching, be undertaken prior to construction to identify and address any archaeological findings, with a suitably qualified archaeologist to assess and monitor the site, ensuring the preservation and protection of any discovered remains.

8.14.19. **Conclusion**

8.14.20. In conclusion, it is my view that subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the potential direct and indirect effects on archaeological resources would be effectively managed, and the development would not result in significant adverse impacts on the archaeological heritage of the area.

8.15. Landscape and Visual Impact

8.15.1. **Issues Raised**

8.15.2. The third-party submission expressed concerns about the landscape impacts, citing the EIAR's incomplete and inconsistent visual impact assessment, which complicates the evaluation of effects on their 'High Sensitivity' property. They contend that the magnitude of effect is inadequately assessed, highlight the lack of detailed boundary treatments, and point out discrepancies in the sections and drawings, contending that these issues prevent a full evaluation of the visual impact, potentially leading to negative effects on their property unless proper mitigation measures are implemented.

8.15.3. The Prescribed Bodies reports raised no concerns relating to landscape and visual impact.

8.15.4. **Assessment Methodology**

8.15.5. The EIAR states that the methodology for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment adheres to the "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment," third edition (2013), by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. The EIAR describes how the study area was investigated through a combination of fieldwork, map studies, and reviews of relevant documents from Cavan County Council. The area was visited multiple

times between November 2023 and January 2024 to document its physical characteristics and assess visibility from various vantage points. Key environmental features were recorded, and the visibility from selected viewpoints (VP1 to VP12) was documented with supporting photographs provided in Appendix 16.5.

8.15.6. The EIAR details that an extensive search of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was undertaken to identify key features of the environment. Selected viewpoints within the ZTV were chosen to represent typical views from different directions and distances around the site, forming the basis for the visual impact assessment. These viewpoints include significant locations such as Park View, Dublin Road, Lakeview, and Kilnavarragh Lane, as well as views from the vicinity of the Royal School and Recorded Monument Ref CV025-074.

8.15.7. The EIAR further elaborates on the methodology by categorising the landscape quality and sensitivity into high, medium, and low categories based on their character, presence of notable features, and overall value. The site is assessed as falling into the "Low/Medium" quality category due to the presence of visual detractors such as existing built forms, floodlight masts, and other infrastructure. This classification indicates that the landscape could potentially tolerate significant or some change.

8.15.8. The EIAR indicates that the magnitude of effect on the landscape and visual receptors is assessed using specific definitions, ranging from high adverse to high beneficial impacts. These are correlated with the sensitivity of the receptors to determine the overall significance of the effects, which is graded from substantial to negligible or no change. The significance of effects for each viewpoint is analysed in the schedules relating to the viewpoint photographs, with results summarised in Table 16.2 in Appendix 16.6.

8.15.9. Appendix 16.1 includes the Site Layout and Landscape Plan, Appendix 16.2 details the Site Character Viewpoint Locations, and Appendix 16.3 provides photographs of the Site Character Viewpoints. Appendix 16.4 outlines the Photo Viewpoint Locations, and Appendix 16.5 presents the corresponding photographs of these viewpoints. Appendix 16.6: Table 16.2 provides a detailed local context visual analysis for various viewpoints (VP1 to VP12) around the proposed development site. It assesses the impact on landscape character (LC) and visual amenity (VA) for each viewpoint, noting the nature of changes due to the development, such as the introduction of sports

pitches and associated infrastructure. The table categorises the magnitude of effects as low to medium adverse, with significance reducing over time as mitigation planting becomes established. Specific comments are made regarding the impact on residents, pedestrians, and other receptors, with mitigation measures expected to lessen the visual intrusion over time.

8.15.10. **Baseline Conditions**

8.15.11. The EIAR states that the proposed development site, located within the "Lakelands" Landscape Character Area as defined by the Cavan County Development Plan 2022–2028, is an area noted for its natural beauty, characterised by an extensive network of inland lakes within the Erne drainage system. The site encompasses c. 28 hectares and features varied topography, with elevations ranging from 62.00m AOD on the floodplain of the Cavan River to 78.50m AOD at its highest point in the northwest. This variation in elevation contributes to the site's distinct landscape character.

8.15.12. The EIAR describes the existing vegetation as primarily rough grassland, remnants of boundary hedges, and several mature trees, reflecting its agricultural past. However, the surrounding ribbon development along Kilnavarragh Lane, the extensive Breffni GAA campus to the east, and the historic Royal School campus lend the site a suburban or "urban fringe" character. Despite this, the EIAR notes that no high landscape areas, scenic viewing points, scenic routes, or designated county heritage sites would be affected by the proposed development. Furthermore, the EIAR indicates that the site is currently accessed from the Dublin Road through the Breffni GAA campus or via gateways onto Kilnavarragh Lane, with circulation within the site influenced by existing infrastructure. The report details how the suburban influences, combined with the site's natural features, create a unique landscape context that would be a key consideration in the development's integration into the surrounding environment.

8.15.13. **Potential Effects**

8.15.14. The EIAR assesses the landscape and visual impact of the proposed sports campus, focusing on the sensitivity of the landscape and visual receptors in relation to the magnitude of the changes introduced by the proposed development. The report

categorises the landscape within the site and its surroundings as "Low/Medium" quality. The report states that this categorisation reflects the presence of visual detractors, such as the existing built environment, including the large stadium campus, floodlight masts, and utility infrastructure. These elements already contribute to a landscape that, while not devoid of value, is less sensitive to change than higher-quality landscapes. As a result, the EIAR posits that the landscape is somewhat tolerant of the proposed development, which involves substantial changes, including new sports facilities, buildings, and infrastructure.

8.15.15. The EIAR indicates that the magnitude of effect on the landscape as ranging from "Low to Medium Adverse," depending on the specific area affected. This assessment is based on the landscape's classification as "Low/Medium" quality, which is potentially tolerant of significant/some changes.

8.15.16. For visual receptors, the EIAR identifies different sensitivity levels: "High Sensitivity" for residents within 500 metres and users of nearby recreational spaces, "Medium Sensitivity" for those living between 500 metres and 2 km away, and "Low Sensitivity" for those further than 2 km, such as occasional travellers and workers. The report indicates that high-sensitivity receptors would experience substantial to moderate adverse effects due to the introduction of visually prominent elements. In contrast, medium and low-sensitivity receptors would experience moderate to slight or negligible adverse effects. The significance of these effects is assessed by correlating the magnitude of change with the sensitivity of the receptors. High-sensitivity receptors with high-magnitude changes are categorised as experiencing "Substantial Adverse" effects. However, the overall impact on the landscape and visual environment is moderated by the existing character of the site, which already includes the existing Breffni stadium campus.

8.15.17. **Mitigation Measures**

8.15.18. The EIAR describes several mitigation measures intended to reduce the visual and landscape impact of the proposed sports campus. The EIAR suggests that the architectural design, characterised by its modern materials and contemporary style, would positively influence the site's character, contrasting with and complementing the historic Royal School. The EIAR details that the main structures would be partially sunken into the existing topography to minimise visual intrusion, with regrading

necessitating retaining walls in certain areas (refer to Dwg. Nos. CSC-MCA-XX-XX-DR-A-8001/2).

8.15.19. The EIAR indicates that existing trees and boundary hedges, as shown on the Site Layout & Landscape Plan, would be retained and protected according to best arboricultural practices, following BS 5837 2012 guidelines. Furthermore, the EIAR posits that the proposed extensive specimen tree planting, using mainly indigenous or naturalised species, along with hedge planting and the establishment of woodland stands, would visually integrate the new development into the surrounding landscape, enhancing biodiversity and aligning with the Cavan County Development Plan. The EIAR notes that the proposed landscape measures would improve the species and age diversity of habitats within the site, fully incorporating recommendations from the ecology chapter, thereby contributing positively to the site's ecological value.

8.15.20. **Assessment**

8.15.21. Having analysed and evaluated Chapter 16 of the EIAR, along with all associated documentation and submissions on file, concerning the landscape and visual impact of the proposed sports campus, it is my view that while the proposed development would introduce significant changes to the landscape, particularly through the construction of new sports facilities, buildings, and infrastructure, these changes would not result in significant adverse effects on the overall landscape character or visual amenity, provided that the proposed mitigation measures are fully implemented.

8.15.22. The direct effects of the proposed development on the landscape involve alterations to the site's topography, introduction of new structures, and modification of the existing visual context. As detailed in Section 10.16.1 of the Cavan County Development Plan and Appendix 14: Landscape Categorisation, the site is located within the Lakelands Landscape Character Area, an extensive region characterised by inland lakes, rolling drumlins, and a patchwork of hedgerows and woodlands. While much of this area is protected under various designations such as SAC, SPA, and pNHA, the proposed development site, situated near Cavan town centre, lies within a more developed and urbanised context. This proximity to the town has influenced the landscape character, which now reflects a blend of natural and suburban elements. The site's visual impact is moderated by existing built forms, including the Breffni GAA

stadium, which already contributes to the area's "Low/Medium" landscape quality, as categorised in the EIAR. Although the proposed development would introduce new structures and sports facilities, I consider these would integrate with the existing topography and vegetation, thereby minimising potential visual intrusion. Furthermore, the site does not impact any high landscape areas, scenic viewpoints, or designated heritage sites, which are more prevalent in the broader Lakelands region. Given this context, I consider that the landscape is somewhat tolerant of further change. I consider the magnitude of change would be low to medium adverse, particularly in areas closest to new structures and earthworks. However, these effects would not be significant in the broader landscape context, as the surrounding area already accommodates substantial built forms, including the Breffini stadium.

8.15.23. In reviewing the appendices, which include the Site Layout and Landscape Plan, Site Character Viewpoints, and Photo Viewpoints, these documents provide an adequate visual analysis of the proposed sports campus's impact on the surrounding landscape. However, I consider that the inclusion of 3D perspective drawings depicting the proposed development in relation to contiguous buildings and the surrounding landscape would have provided a more comprehensive understanding of its visual impact. Furthermore, the inclusion of sectional drawings illustrating the proposed structures alongside contiguous buildings e.g. the Royal School and outbuildings, would have been beneficial in offering a clearer representation of the development's scale and relationship with its surroundings. Notwithstanding this, the Site Layout and Landscape Plan (Appendix 16.1) illustrates the overall design and spatial arrangement of the proposed development, highlighting the retention of existing vegetation and the integration of new landscaping features, demonstrating how the proposed development would fit within its environment. The Site Character Viewpoints (Appendix 16.3) present specific locations within the site, showing existing conditions and key features like the Royal School and surrounding vegetation. The Photo Viewpoints (Appendix 16.5) provide before and after images from various key locations around the site, such as Park View, Dublin Road, and Kilnavarragh Lane. These images illustrate the visual changes that would occur due to the development, particularly in areas with high-sensitivity receptors. The comparisons between existing and proposed views demonstrate the visual impact of the proposed development and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation measures. Overall, it is my view that the

appendices demonstrate that while there would be noticeable changes to the landscape, the proposed mitigation measures would integrate the development into its surroundings effectively, minimising its visual impact.

8.15.24. Appendix 16.6 - Table 16.2 provides a detailed local context visual analysis for various viewpoints around the proposed development site. The EIAR categorises the magnitude of effects on landscape character and visual amenity as generally low to medium adverse, with significance expected to reduce over time as mitigation planting becomes established. For most viewpoints, particularly those with high sensitivity receptors, the impact is initially moderate adverse but diminishes to slight adverse or negligible once the proposed landscaping measures mature. I concur with the EIAR's assessment and consider that, with the proposed mitigation measures in place, the proposed development would integrate effectively into the existing landscape, minimising long-term visual intrusion.

8.15.25. I consider that indirect effects, particularly concerning visual impact, would differ based on the sensitivity of the receptors. As identified in the EIAR, high-sensitivity receptors, such as residents within 500 metres of the site, would experience moderate to substantial adverse effects. For medium and low-sensitivity receptors, however, the impact would be less significant. However, I agree with the EIAR's assessment that these impacts would decrease over time as the proposed mitigation measures, including extensive tree planting and landscape integration, become established.

8.15.26. In terms of cumulative impacts, I consider that the proposed development, when viewed in conjunction with the existing built environment and ongoing developments in the area, would not lead to significant additional adverse effects. The landscape in this area is already characterised by a mix of urban and suburban elements, and the introduction of the sports campus would be consistent with this evolving character.

8.15.27. **Conclusion**

8.15.28. I conclude that while the proposed development would have some adverse effects on the landscape and visual amenity, these effects would not be significant, particularly given the existing context and the proposed mitigation measures. The design approach, which includes structures situated on lower contours of the site, retention of existing vegetation, and extensive new planting, would ensure the

development integrates harmoniously with the surrounding environment. Overall, the proposed sports campus, subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, would integrate into the surrounding landscape and would not detract from the visual amenity of the surrounding area.

8.16. Cumulative Impacts, Interactions & Major Accidents and Disasters

8.16.1. Article 3(1) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Directive, as updated by Directive 2014/52/EU, requires the identification, description, and assessment of the direct and indirect significant effects of a project on various environmental factors, including the interaction between these factors. Annex IV of the amended Directive further specifies the need to describe direct, indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent, and temporary, positive and negative effects of the project.

8.16.2. Article 3 of the EIA Directive, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, also mandates that: “The effects referred to in paragraph 1 on the factors set out therein shall include the expected effects deriving from the vulnerability of the proposed development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters that are relevant to the proposed development concerned.” Furthermore, Annex IV, Section 8 of the Directive requires that the EIAR include: “A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the proposed development on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the proposed development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the proposed development concerned.”

8.16.3. Chapter 17 of the EIAR addresses the cumulative impacts, interactions, and potential risks of major accidents and disasters associated with the proposed development. The key findings from this chapter are summarised below.

8.16.4. Cumulative Impacts

8.16.5. The EIAR states that a review of the Cavan County Council and An Bord Pleanála planning registers was undertaken to identify existing and approved developments relevant to the cumulative assessment of the proposed sports campus. The EIAR details that developments were selected based on criteria such as scale, proximity, and potential for significant cumulative effects. It notes that no live planning

applications exist within the site and only a few minor residential works nearby, which are unlikely to result in cumulative impacts.

The EIAR describes three specific permitted developments in the area:

- Training Pitches and Associated Works (Ref: 17507): The EIAR notes that this development's uncompleted elements will be absorbed by the proposed sports campus, eliminating the potential for cumulative impacts.
- Single Storey Gym (Ref: 19293): The EIAR indicates that, due to its small scale and separate access, there are unlikely to be cumulative traffic impacts from this development.
- Residential Development (ABP Ref: PL02.314299): The EIAR posits that this residential development, located c.1 km from the proposed site, would not contribute to cumulative noise, air quality, or traffic impacts.

8.16.6. Additionally, the EIAR highlights the ongoing Cavan Town Flood Relief Scheme, acknowledging that new hydrological and hydraulic analysis data is pending. The EIAR asserts that the flood risk assessment for the proposed sports campus is sufficient and supersedes existing data, mitigating any concerns regarding cumulative impacts from flood relief works.

8.16.7. I am satisfied that the EIAR adequately identifies and assesses the potential cumulative impacts of the proposed development in conjunction with existing and approved developments. The EIAR provides a thorough review of relevant planning registers and applies appropriate criteria to evaluate the significance of cumulative effects. It also outlines effective mitigation measures where necessary, ensuring that the proposed sports campus would not contribute to significant cumulative impacts in the area.

8.16.8. **Impact Interactions**

8.16.9. The EIAR presents Table 17.2 as a matrix that identifies significant interactions between various potential impacts of the proposed development. The EIAR notes that these interactions span multiple environmental factors, indicating the campus interrelationships that may arise. The table highlights potential relationships between impacts such as population and human health, biodiversity, soils and waters, air quality, noise and vibration, material assets, and visual impacts. The EIAR states that

while the level of interaction between these factors would vary, the table serves as a tool to recognise and address these interactions as necessary. Summary details of the anticipated interactions are provided, underscoring the need for specific mitigation measures to manage the potential cumulative effects. For example, the EIAR details that increased visitors might impact biodiversity, but this is mitigated by creating a wildlife habitat and controlling light pollution. Similarly, interactions between noise and biodiversity are addressed through the relocation of badger setts and the use of low-vibration piling techniques. The EIAR also highlights that soil mobilisation during construction could lead to runoff into the nearby Cavan River, potentially impacting aquatic habitats. However, this is mitigated through stringent soil and water runoff controls. Furthermore, the EIAR indicates that the visual impact of the development, particularly the acoustic barriers, could intrude on the landscape; however, over time, these impacts would be reduced as vegetation matures, and the barriers blend into the natural surroundings. The table details the interaction between air quality and human health, with the EIAR noting that impacts on air quality during construction and operation would be minimal and temporary, with mitigation measures ensuring that any residual effects are limited in scope and duration.

8.16.10. I am satisfied that the EIAR adequately identifies and describes the interactions and potential impacts of the proposed development on the environment. It provides appropriate mitigation measures to manage these impacts effectively.

8.16.11. **Major Accidents and Disasters**

8.16.12. The EIAR considers the potential effects arising from the vulnerability of the proposed development to major accidents and disasters. The EIAR details that the proposed development would be constructed and operated in accordance with best practice and relevant health and safety legislation, ensuring the project's resilience to potential accidents or disasters. A desktop study was conducted to understand the potential consequences, and the findings are summarised in a risk assessment table. The EIAR identifies several major risks, including:

- Flood Risk: The EIAR notes that the site is partly within the fluvial floodplain of the Cavan River. It describes the implementation of flood-resilient construction, porous boundary treatments, and a comprehensive flood management plan to mitigate flood risks. The residual impact is assessed as "Not Significant."

- Road Accidents: The EIAR details the risk of hazardous load spills during construction. Mitigation includes careful planning of construction routes, coordination with the roads departments, and the implementation of a Construction Travel Plan. The residual impact is considered "Not Significant."
- Fire Safety: The EIAR indicates that the sports buildings, although relatively small-scale, would include fire alarms and safety systems designed to meet regulatory requirements. The structures would be built to the required standards, with the residual risk deemed "Not Significant."
- Containment Failure: The EIAR describes the potential release of hazardous substances as a result of infrastructure failure. Mitigation measures include strict monitoring during construction and high levels of maintenance during operation, with the residual impact again assessed as "Not Significant."

8.16.13. I am satisfied that the EIAR has adequately addressed the potential impacts of major accidents and disasters, and has proposed appropriate mitigation measures to manage these risks effectively.

8.17. Reasoned Conclusion

8.17.1. Having regard to the examination of environmental information detailed above, the EIAR and supplementary information provided by the applicant, the issues raised in the Prescribed Bodies reports, and third-party submission in the course of the application, I consider that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment are as follows;

Population and Human Health: The proposed sports campus has the potential to impact air quality, noise levels, and traffic, particularly during the construction phase, with moderate noise impacts anticipated for nearby sensitive receptors. The EIAR outlines mitigation measures such as advanced dust suppression, noise barriers, and restricted hours of construction to minimise these effects. The operational phase would have negligible residual impacts on air quality and noise, with significant positive effects on public health due to increased opportunities for physical activity and enhanced social cohesion. The cumulative effects would not be significant, and the development would provide substantial socio-economic and health benefits to the local community.

Biodiversity: The proposed sports campus has the potential to significantly impact local biodiversity, particularly through habitat loss, disturbance to protected species such as badgers, otters, bats, and pine martens, and potential pollution of adjacent watercourses. The EIAR outlines extensive mitigation measures, including habitat compensation, phased construction, installation of artificial setts, and strict pollution controls, which aim to minimise these impacts. Residual effects on biodiversity, particularly badgers and aquatic species, are anticipated but would be managed effectively if the proposed mitigation measures are rigorously implemented and monitored throughout the construction and operational phases.

Lands, Soil, and Water: The proposed sports campus involves significant land re-profiling, cut-and-fill operations, and construction activities that could impact the Cavan River and surrounding groundwater systems. Potential adverse effects include increased sedimentation, pollution from construction activities, and alterations to hydrological regimes. The EIAR proposes comprehensive mitigation measures, including a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), and stringent pollution prevention protocols. These measures would minimise the risk of significant impacts, ensuring that residual effects on lands, soil, and water are not significant if fully implemented.

Air and Climate: The proposed sports campus has been assessed for its potential impacts on air quality and climate, particularly regarding dust emissions during construction and operational traffic emissions. Given the good baseline air quality, the development's impact on local air quality would be negligible with appropriate mitigation. These mitigation measures include a Dust Management Plan and best practice construction techniques, ensuring that residual impacts on air quality remain insignificant. Additionally, the projected increase in traffic and emissions from the heating system would be minimal, leading to no significant adverse effects on air quality or climate, either directly or cumulatively.

Noise and Vibration: The proposed development would generate significant noise impacts on nearby sensitive receptors during construction and sports activities. Adverse effects include potential exceedance of noise thresholds, particularly near residential areas. Mitigation measures, including a 2-meter-high noise barrier, limited construction hours, and quieter construction methods, are proposed to reduce noise

levels to acceptable limits. With these measures, the noise and vibration impacts would be minimised, protecting residential amenities.

Material Assets: The proposed development would have minor direct and indirect effects on material assets during both the construction and operational phases. Direct impacts include connections to utility networks and undergrounding of overhead cables, which would be short-term and low in magnitude. Indirect impacts, such as a slight increase in demand for utilities and waste disposal, would be long-term but minor. Mitigation measures, including a construction management plan, adherence to relevant standards, and sustainable building design, would effectively minimise these impacts. Overall, the development would not result in significant adverse effects on material assets.

Traffic: The proposed development would result in minimal and manageable traffic impacts. Key measures include a new access junction with a dedicated right-turn lane, dual egress lanes, and improved sightlines at Dublin Road, all designed to enhance traffic flow and safety. Pedestrian and cyclist access would be integrated with multiple access points and safe pathways, promoting non-vehicular movement. Parking provision, including 310 spaces and electric vehicle charging bays, is deemed appropriate. The development's impact on the local road network, including cumulative effects, would be effectively mitigated, ensuring no significant adverse effects on traffic, access, or safety.

Cultural Heritage: The proposed development would not result in significant adverse effects on cultural heritage. The direct effects would be limited, as the new building sand pitches would avoid physical alterations to nearby Protected Structures, including the Royal School. The visual impact would be minimised by enhanced landscaping, ensuring the prominence and integrity of these heritage assets are preserved. The existing landscape and modern design of the new structures would further mitigate indirect visual impacts, making any residual effects minor and consistent with heritage conservation objectives.

Archaeology: The proposed development would not significantly impact archaeological heritage, subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures. No known archaeological sites exist within the development area, but the site could contain unknown subsurface deposits. Mitigation, including a geophysical survey and test trenching, would identify and manage any finds under the National

Monuments Service. Indirect effects on nearby archaeological sites would be minimal due to distance and urban separation. With the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, the proposed development would not significantly affect the area's archaeological heritage.

Landscape and Visual Impact: The proposed sports campus would introduce changes to the landscape and visual environment, but these changes would not result in significant adverse effects. The site, by reason of its context and existing urban elements, is tolerant of change. While high-sensitivity receptors, such as nearby residents, would experience moderate to substantial adverse visual impacts, these effects would lessen over time with the establishment of mitigation measures, including extensive tree planting and landscape integration. Overall, the development would integrate into the existing landscape, minimising long-term visual intrusion, and would not significantly detract from the area's visual amenity.

8.17.2. The EIAR has considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment would be primarily mitigated by environmental management measures, as appropriate. With regard to the above, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable direct or indirect effects on the environment, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures detailed in the EIAR and associated documents.

9.0 Appropriate Assessment

9.1.1. Introduction

9.1.2. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) provides legal protection for habitats and species of European importance by establishing a network of designated conservation areas collectively referred to as Natura 2000 (or ‘European’) sites. Matters relating to the likely significant effects on a European site are considered in this section of the report under the following headings:

- Compliance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive.
- The Natura Impact Statement.
- Screening the need for Appropriate Assessment.

- Appropriate Assessment.

9.1.3. **Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive:**

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

9.1.5. The proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site. The Board will note that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was submitted as part of the documentation for permission for the proposed development to assess the likely or possible significant effects, if any, arising from the proposed development on any European site.

9.1.6. In accordance with these requirements, the Board, as the competent authority, prior to granting consent, must be satisfied that the proposal, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, is either not likely to have a significant effect on any European Site or adversely affect the integrity of such a site, in view of the site(s) conservation objectives.

9.1.7. Guidance on Appropriate Assessment is provided by the EU and the NPWS in the following documents:

- Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC (EC, 2001).
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities (DoEHLG), 2009.

9.1.8. Both documents provide guidance on Screening for Appropriate Assessment and the process of Appropriate Assessment itself.

9.2. Stage 1 - Screening for Appropriate Assessment

9.2.1. Overview of Screening Report

9.2.2. The Screening Report considered Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the proposed Cavan Regional Sports Campus, which represents the likely zone of impact. Two Natura 2000 sites were identified within this zone, specifically Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007) and Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049). Table 4 of the NIS provides a detailed list of these sites along with a summary of their qualifying features of conservation interest. Each site was examined in the context of its location in terms of the zone of influence of effect from the proposed development and their relevant Designated Site Conservation Objectives.

9.2.3. Evaluation of European Sites

9.2.4. The Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report employs the 'source-pathway-receptor' model to evaluate the potential impacts of the proposed sports campus development on nearby European sites. The findings are summarised as follows:

9.2.5. **Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007):** Located c. 3.69km northwest/west of the proposed sports campus, this SAC includes habitats such as Natural Eutrophic Lakes, Bog Woodland, and species like the Otter (Lutra lutra). The report identifies a hydrological connection between the development site and this SAC via the Cavan River, which presents potential indirect risks of surface runoff, debris, and hydrocarbon pollution affecting water quality. Given these factors, the Lough Oughter SAC is not screened out and requires further assessment.

9.2.6. **Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049):** Similarly located c. 3.69km northwest/west of the development site, this SPA is designated for species such as the Whooper Swan, Wigeon, and Great Crested Grebe. The Cavan River's hydrological link to the SPA raises concerns about potential indirect impacts on the water quality that could affect the habitats that support these bird species. The potential for disturbance to waterbirds, particularly during the construction phase, has also been identified due to the site's proximity and the possible movement of species between the SPA and areas near the proposed development. Consequently, the Lough Oughter Complex SPA is not screened out and requires further detailed assessment.

9.2.7. **Potential for In-Combination Effects**

9.2.8. The potential for in-combination effects with other projects is specifically noted for the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC and Lough Oughter Complex SPA. Recent planning permissions within the area, such as the construction of additional sports facilities and infrastructure projects within the curtilage of the proposed development site, have the potential to compound impacts on water quality and disturbance to protected species, particularly through hydrological pathways connected to the Cavan River. The cumulative increase in surface runoff, potential pollution, and habitat disruption could pose additional risks to the conservation objectives of the nearby Natura 2000 sites.

9.2.9. **Screening Conclusion**

9.2.10. Having reviewed the Screening Report and the supporting documentation, which provides comprehensive information on the baseline conditions, identifies the potential impacts, and applies the best available scientific knowledge, along with the data available from the NPWS website, I am satisfied that the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007) and Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049) cannot be screened out from further assessment. This assessment takes into consideration the scale and nature of the proposed sports campus development, its potential impacts, the separation distance from the European sites, the hydrological connections via the Cavan River, and the relevant conservation objectives of the SAC and SPA. Despite the separation distance of approximately 3.69 km, the hydrological links and the presence of qualifying species, such as the Eurasian Otter, within proximity to the development site, indicate that there is a risk of likely significant effects on these sites.

9.2.11. In the absence of mitigation measures, the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC and Lough Oughter Complex SPA are deemed to have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development, primarily due to potential contamination of watercourses and disturbance to species. As such, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required to evaluate and mitigate these potential impacts.

9.3. Natura Impact Statement

9.3.1. The application was accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS, prepared in February 2024), which examined the potential impacts of the proposed sports campus development on the following European Sites:

- Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049)
- Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007)

9.3.2. The NIS identifies and characterises the possible impacts of the proposed development on these Natura 2000 European sites, in view of the site's conservation objectives, and provide information to enable the Board to carry out an Appropriate Assessment of the proposed works. The NIS also considers the potential cumulative impacts of other development projects in the vicinity over the last five years, including smaller-scale projects within the site's curtilage and other developments with hydrological links via the Cavan River.

9.3.3. The NIS outlines the assessment methodology employed to identify and assess the potential impacts on habitats and species identified as qualifying interests of the European Sites and their conservation objectives, including cumulative/in-combination impacts. Specific attention was given to the hydrological connection via the Cavan River, with potential risks from surface runoff, silt introduction, and hydrocarbon spills during construction. The NIS sets out mitigation measures during the design, construction, and operational phases of the proposed development, focusing on pollution prevention strategies, habitat preservation, and specific protections for species like the Eurasian Otter (Lutra lutra).

9.3.4. The assessment investigates the potential adverse effects on the qualifying interests of European Sites arising from the proposed sports campus. It considers whether the proposed works and operations, alone or in combination with other projects or plans, would have adverse effects on the integrity of a European site, and includes any necessary mitigation measures to avoid, reduce, or offset adverse effects.

9.3.5. Having reviewed the NIS and the supporting documentation, I am satisfied that it provides adequate information with respect to the baseline conditions, clearly identifies the potential impacts, and uses the best scientific information and knowledge. The mitigation measures are well-detailed and robust, aiming to protect both the habitats

and species of the designated sites. I am generally satisfied that the information is sufficient to allow for an Appropriate Assessment of the proposed development.

9.4. Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment

9.4.1. The Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Interests, including any relevant attributes and targets for the relevant European Sites, are set out below.

9.4.2. **Table 1: European Sites and their connectivity to the site**

European sites	Qualifying Interests	Direct line distance to the site	Links
Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049)	[A005] Great Crested (Grebe Podiceps cristatus) [A038] Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) [A050] Wigeon (Anas penelope)	3.69km	Hydrological and Ecological
Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007)	[1355] Otter Lutra lutra [3150] Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation [91D0] Bog woodland*	3.69km	Hydrological and Ecological

9.4.5. **Description of European Sites**

9.4.6. A description of the Natura 2000 sites likely to be affected, the species and habitats significantly present on the site (designating features), and their conservation objectives are provided below.

9.4.6.1. **Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049)**

9.4.7. The Lough Oughter Complex Special Protection Area (SPA) covers a significant portion of the lowland drumlin landscape in north and central County Cavan, including Lough Oughter and its surrounding loughs. The site is characterised by a network of interconnected waterways, islands, small lakes, and peninsulas, forming a naturally eutrophic lake system with shallow waters. The main inflows to the SPA are the River Erne and the Annalee River, with the River Erne serving as the main outflow, connecting to Upper and Lower Lough Erne to the north.

9.4.8. This SPA is designated under the E.U. Birds Directive for its conservation interest in several bird species, particularly those that rely on wetland habitats. It supports an internationally important population of Whooper Swan and nationally important populations of Great Crested Grebe and Wigeon. These species depend on the diverse habitats within the SPA, including the lakes and surrounding wetlands, for roosting, feeding, and breeding. The conservation objectives for the Lough Oughter Complex SPA focus on maintaining or restoring the favourable conservation condition of these bird populations and their habitats, which are crucial for the site's ecological integrity. The site also supports other waterbird species such as Mute Swan, Teal, Mallard, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Lapwing, Curlew, Little Grebe, Cormorant, Black-headed Gull, and a small breeding colony of Common Tern. Notably, Lough Oughter is central to the breeding range of the Great Crested Grebe in Ireland, harbouring more than 10% of the estimated national breeding total for this species.

9.4.9. Potential threats to the SPA include water pollution from agricultural runoff and sewage discharges, which can elevate nutrient levels, leading to habitat degradation. Human disturbances and habitat modifications also pose risks to the ecological balance of the site. The Natura Impact Statement identifies that while the proposed sports campus is c. 3.69 km from the SPA, potential indirect impacts exist, primarily through hydrological connections via the Cavan River, which could lead to habitat degradation and disturbance of qualifying species. Mitigation measures are proposed to minimise runoff, siltation, and pollution, thus protecting the SPA's integrity and its bird populations.

9.4.9.1. **Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007)**

9.4.10. Lough Oughter and its associated loughs are located within the lowland drumlin belt of north and central Cavan, extending between Upper Lough Erne, Killeshandra, and Cavan town. This SAC encompasses a network of waterways, islands, small lakes, and peninsulas, including approx. 90 inter-drumlin lakes and 14 basins along the Erne River. The site's diverse topography is underlain by Silurian and Ordovician strata, bordered by Carboniferous limestone, which contributes to the area's campus hydrology and nutrient-rich (eutrophic) conditions.

9.4.11. The Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC is designated for its support of several key habitats and species under the E.U. Habitats Directive. These include Natural Eutrophic Lakes [3150], Bog Woodland [91D0], and the Otter (Lutra lutra) [1355], listed under Annex I and II, respectively. The SAC also supports a variety of other habitats such as dry woodland, marsh, reedbeds, and wet pastures, which provide essential ecological niches for numerous plant and animal species.

9.4.12. The conservation objectives for Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC aim to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of these habitats and species. Specifically, efforts are directed towards stabilising the natural range and area of eutrophic lakes and bog woodlands, as well as ensuring the long-term viability of otter populations. The site is ecologically significant as it contains rare wetland plant species and supports substantial populations of waterbirds, including internationally important numbers of Whooper Swan and nationally important populations of Tufted Duck and Cormorant.

9.4.13. Threats to the SAC include water pollution from agricultural runoff, sewage discharge, and increased nutrient loading, which have led to hypertrophic conditions in some lakes. Additionally, housing and boating developments, along with significant fishing and shooting pressures, pose risks to habitat integrity and species populations. The NIS for the proposed sports campus identifies potential impacts on this SAC, particularly concerning hydrological changes, water quality degradation, and disturbances to the habitats and species. Mitigation measures, including silt and pollution prevention strategies, are proposed to minimize these impacts and preserve the site's ecological integrity.

9.4.14. **Conservation Objectives**

9.4.15. The Conservation Objectives for the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC/SPA note that the overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. The favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- Its natural range, and the area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- The specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- The conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

9.4.16. The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- Population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- The natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- There is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

9.4.16.1. **Detailed Conservation Objectives for Lough Oughter Complex SPA**

9.4.17. The detailed Conservation Objectives for Lough Oughter Complex SPA, as outlined in the NPWS Conservation Objectives Series for the site dated October 2022, aim to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species and wetland habitats for which the SPA has been designated. These objectives are aligned with the overarching goals of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives, which seek to ensure that species and habitats within the Natura 2000 network achieve favourable conservation status at both national and European levels.

9.4.18. The objectives for Lough Oughter Complex SPA include:

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the following bird species:

  [A005] Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus)

[A038] Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus)

[A050] Wigeon (Anas penelope)

- To maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the wetland habitat at Lough Oughter Complex SPA as a critical resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.

9.4.18.1. Detailed Conservation Objectives for Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC

9.4.19. The detailed Conservation Objectives for the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC, as outlined in the NPWS Conservation Objectives Series for the site dated November 2021, aim to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the habitats and species for which the SAC has been designated. These objectives include:

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation (habitat code [3150]) within Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC. This habitat's favourable condition is defined by attributes such as stable or increasing habitat area, appropriate vegetation composition, and maintaining necessary hydrological regimes and water quality.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Bog woodland (priority habitat code [91D0], which involves ensuring the habitat's structure, function, and distribution remain intact. This includes maintaining the diversity and extent of community types and controlling overgrazing and invasive species to preserve the habitat’s integrity.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of the Otter (Lutra lutra, species code [1355]) in Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC. The objectives focus on sustaining the otter population and its habitat requirements, including maintaining sufficient freshwater and terrestrial habitats, secure couching sites, adequate fish biomass for feeding, and ensuring connectivity across the site is not obstructed.

9.4.20. These objectives are framed to achieve stable or increasing natural ranges and areas for these habitats and species, ensure the continued existence of structures and functions necessary for their long-term maintenance, and promote the favourable conservation status of the species within the SAC.

9.4.20.1. **Table 2: Summary of NPWS Conservation Objectives, Attributes, and Targets for QI Species Sensitive to Changes**

Species Code	Species Name	Conservation Objective	Attributes and Targets
A005	Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus)	Maintain the favourable conservation condition	Stable or increasing breeding population size, suitable nesting sites, disturbance levels, and prey availability.
A038	Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus)	Maintain the favourable conservation condition	Stable or increasing population size, suitable wintering and roosting sites, low disturbance levels.
A050	Wigeon (Anas penelope)	Maintain the favourable conservation condition	Stable or increasing population size, suitable feeding and roosting habitats, minimal disturbance.
Wetland and Waterbirds	N/A	Maintain the favourable conservation condition	Maintain wetland habitat extent and quality as a resource for migratory waterbirds, minimise disturbances.

9.4.21. **Description of the proposed development and its likely potential significant effects**

9.4.22. The proposed Cavan regional sports campus includes a range of sports facilities and associated infrastructure. The proposed development is located on lands to the north, south, and west of the Royal School Cavan, and west of the Breffni Park GAA grounds in County Cavan. The site covers c. 28 hectares and includes existing sports facilities, such as a shale gravel hockey pitch and a soccer field, with the remaining area being undeveloped. The project site is located c. 3.69 km southeast of Lough Oughter SPA

and SAC, which are designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

9.4.23. The proposed development encompasses an indoor sports campus featuring sports halls with spectator seating, fitness studios, changing facilities, a café, and other ancillary accommodations. It also includes seven outdoor sports pitches, a covered sports arena with a playing pitch and spectator seating, an eight-lane athletics track, and various vehicular and pedestrian access points. Additionally, the project proposes new vehicular access, internal roads, cycle paths, pedestrian walkways, and extensive parking facilities for cars, buses, and bicycles, equipped with electric charging points and street lighting. The proposed development also integrates sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to manage surface runoff, incorporating features such as permeable pavements, infiltration trenches, and attenuation areas. Additionally, there would be landscaping and habitat creation measures to enhance the site's ecological value.

9.4.24. The potential significant effects of the proposed sports campus development on the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC/SPA have been identified and assessed in the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) in view of the site's conservation objectives. The NIS details the impact of the entire project, encompassing all phases: preparation, construction, and operation, and categorises the impacts as follows: The impacts have been categorised into various types, including:

Direct Loss: This could involve the reduction of habitat coverage resulting from the physical destruction or alteration of existing habitats. For instance, the development's construction phase could lead to the direct loss of foraging and resting areas for bird species due to land clearance and site preparation activities.

Degradation: Potential degradation impacts could include the deterioration of water quality due to increased runoff and sedimentation, particularly during the construction phase. This could affect aquatic habitats and lead to a reduction in species abundance or alterations in community structure. For example, the development's construction activities could increase the levels of suspended sediments in the nearby watercourses, impacting the water quality and thereby affecting aquatic flora and fauna.

Disturbance: The increased human activity and noise during the construction and operational phases could disturb local wildlife, potentially causing displacement or

changes in species behaviour. The noise from construction machinery and the presence of people could particularly disturb sensitive bird species, leading to altered feeding or breeding behaviours.

Fragmentation: The development could lead to habitat fragmentation, creating physical or ecological barriers that could alter the distribution of species or habitat patches. This is particularly relevant where the construction of new access roads and parking areas could divide previously continuous habitats into smaller, isolated units.

Reduction of Species Diversity: The potential reduction of species diversity due to habitat loss, degradation, and disturbance. This could result in a decline in the number of species or changes in community composition, affecting the overall biodiversity of the area. For example, changes in vegetation cover or water quality could reduce the availability of suitable habitats for less adaptable species, leading to a loss in species diversity.

Other Indirect Effects: Indirect effects could include changes to nutrient availability or light penetration, potentially resulting from changes in land use or vegetation cover. These changes could increase the vulnerability of the site to invasive species or other new threats.

9.4.25. These effects have been analysed in relation to the site-specific conservation objectives for the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC/SPA. The analysis considers both the current and desired conditions of the habitats and species significantly present within the site, as defined by the conservation objectives. For example, an increase in population size or habitat coverage by a certain percentage might be a desired conservation outcome that could be jeopardised by the proposed development.

9.4.26. **Cumulative and In-Combination Effects**

9.4.27. The NIS identifies potential cumulative and in-combination effects with other plans and projects, particularly in relation to hydrological connections and pollution risks. The key points identified in the NIS include:

Hydrological Connections: The proposed development is hydrologically connected to the Lough Oughter SAC and SPA via the Cavan River. This hydrological connection raises concerns about cumulative impacts related to water quality, such as increased

sedimentation, pollutant run-off, and potential hydrocarbon spills. These impacts could combine with other existing or proposed developments within the catchment area to exacerbate water quality issues, affecting aquatic habitats and species dependent on these habitats for survival.

Potential Runoff and Pollution: The NIS discusses the risk of cumulative effects from multiple sources of pollution, particularly during the construction phase. The presence of other developments in the vicinity (as listed in the NIS under recent planning permissions) suggests that cumulative run-off and potential pollution from multiple sites could lead to significant water quality degradation in the Cavan River, impacting the Natura 2000 sites downstream.

Disturbance and Habitat Fragmentation: The proposed development, along with other projects, could lead to increased human activity, noise, and light pollution, contributing cumulatively to the disturbance of species such as the Eurasian Otter and various waterbird species. While the NIS suggests that direct impacts from the proposed development alone may not be significant, the combined effects of multiple developments could result in a more considerable disturbance impact, potentially affecting the breeding, foraging, and resting behaviours of these species.

Extended Territorial Ranges of Species: The NIS mentions that species like the Eurasian Otter have extensive territorial ranges that could overlap with multiple developments. The cumulative effects of habitat loss, fragmentation, or degradation from several projects within these ranges could adversely affect the species' ability to maintain viable populations within the Natura 2000 sites.

Other Developments in Proximity: The NIS acknowledges that several other planning proposals have occurred within the last five years, some within the curtilage of the proposed development site. This overlap suggests a potential for cumulative impacts when considering all ongoing and planned developments. These could include increased pressure on local habitats, reduced water quality from construction activities, and combined disturbances from traffic and human presence.

9.4.28. **Analysis of the Effects of the Proposed Development on the Integrity of the Natura 2000 Site(s)**

9.4.29. The integrity of the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC/SPA is defined by its ecological structure, function, and processes that sustain the habitats and species for which the site has been designated. The site's key natural features include a network of inter-drumlin lakes, wetlands, and riparian habitats that support diverse bird species (e.g., Great Crested Grebe, Whooper Swan, and Wigeon) and other species such as the Otter. The ecological processes vital to the site's integrity include hydrological regimes (maintaining water levels and flow), sediment transport, and natural vegetation dynamics, which contribute to the resilience and self-repair capacity of the site under natural conditions. The site's capacity for self-renewal is supported by these processes, which ensure that habitats remain suitable for the species that rely on them.

9.4.30. The proposed development has the potential to affect the integrity of the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC/SPA in several ways, as follows:

- Direct Effects: The development could lead to habitat loss or degradation due to construction activities, including land clearance and site preparation. This would result in the removal of vegetation, loss of breeding or resting areas for protected bird species, and disturbance to riparian habitats crucial for the Otter. Fragmentation could occur if new infrastructure (e.g., roads and buildings) creates barriers that divide continuous habitats into smaller, isolated patches.
- Indirect Effects: Changes in water flow, increased sedimentation, and nutrient loading due to construction and operational runoff could alter the water quality and hydrological balance of the connected water bodies. Such changes could degrade aquatic habitats, reduce the availability of key resources for species, and disrupt the ecological balance required to maintain the site's conservation objectives.
- Short-term and Long-term Effects: Short-term effects could include temporary disturbances during the construction phase, such as noise, light pollution, and human activity that could affect sensitive species' behaviour and habitat use. However, these impacts might allow for recovery if properly managed and mitigated. Long-term effects would involve permanent changes to the site's ecological structure and function, such as habitat loss or degradation and

persistent changes in water quality and flow regimes, which could lead to long-term deterioration of habitat quality and reduced species populations.

- Cumulative and In-Combination Effects: The NIS identifies potential cumulative impacts from the proposed development in combination with other existing and planned developments. These could include increased pollutant concentrations in water bodies, greater habitat fragmentation, and increased pressure on habitats and species. Such cumulative impacts might exceed levels compatible with the site's ecological requirements, affecting its ability to maintain favourable conditions for the protected habitats and species.
- Disturbance Effects: The proposed development, particularly during construction and operation, could result in increased noise, light pollution, and human presence, leading to disturbances that affect the behaviour, population size, or density of species such as the Otter and waterbirds. These disturbances could cause displacement, alter foraging and breeding behaviours, and reduce habitat suitability within the site.

9.4.31. The NIS uses several methods to predict the potential impacts of the proposed development on the site's integrity, including GIS for spatial analysis of habitat loss, fragmentation, and proximity to sensitive areas; qualitative assessments based on expert judgment and ecological knowledge to evaluate potential disturbances and indirect effects; and evidence-based evaluations to determine the likelihood and magnitude of cumulative impacts, drawing on data from similar projects and studies on species' ecological requirements.

9.4.32. **Mitigation Measures**

9.4.33. The NIS outlines several mitigation measures categorised by the stage of development and specific impact areas:

Design Stage Mitigation (Avoidance):

- Establish a minimum 10m buffer zone adjacent to the Cavan River to reduce silt and pollution runoff and minimise disturbance to riparian mammals.
- Implement a works exclusion zone within the riparian buffer during construction to further prevent watercourse contamination.

- Ensure any bridge construction over the Cavan River includes piling works at least 5m from the riverbank to protect the aquatic environment.
- Incorporate native riparian planting to mitigate noise, reduce nutrient and sediment runoff, and stabilise riverbanks. Detailed planting plans to be included in a Habitats Management Plan post-planning approval.

Construction Stage Mitigation:

- Appoint an ECoW on-site during key construction phases to monitor activities near the Cavan River, ensuring compliance and effectiveness of mitigation measures.
- Conduct regular monitoring around construction areas and within the river basin to prevent disturbance to protected fauna (e.g., transient otter) and maintain water quality.
- Implement emergency procedures (e.g., spill kits, bunding) in case of mitigation failures; halt all work and coordinate responses through the ECoW to protect designated sites.
- Adhere to guidelines in the outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) to prevent water pollutants during construction, with a focus on maintaining water quality throughout the project.

Otter-Specific Mitigation Measures:

- Maintain a minimum 10m buffer between the development and watercourses to minimise impacts on otters.
- Develop and implement a plan to protect watercourses and water quality from potential construction impacts.
- Ensure fencing allows free movement of otters for foraging and site navigation.
- Incorporate culverts or ledge structures in bridge landings to provide otters with safe land access across riverbanks.
- Install fencing around work areas to prevent otters from entering during construction, reducing the risk of accidental injury.

Water Quality and Environmental Protection Measures

- Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP)**:** Implement measures to control construction impacts, including:
    - Controlled construction compounds and biosecurity protocols.
    - No direct discharge into Cavan River; use of silt fencing, silt traps, and silt curtains.
    - No on-site mixing or washing out of concrete; use bunded storage areas.
    - Controlled refuelling in designated areas and use of spill kits and plant nappies.
    - Proper storage of hydrocarbons and safe disposal of waste according to regulations.
    - Maintain a 50m buffer for watercourses near construction and refueling areas.
- Conduct regular monitoring of surface water, groundwater, and dust levels to ensure compliance with environmental standards.
- Use a designated bunded area away from watercourses for concrete storage; follow best practices for handling and use.
- Develop and implement a Dust Management Plan, ensuring regular wetting of the site and proper covering of vehicles to prevent dust.
- Prevent the spread of invasive species through site-specific biosecurity protocols, including disinfection of machinery and containment of invasive species materials.
- Designate areas for refuelling and washing vehicles; use biodegradable lubricants where possible and maintain a spill response plan.
- Use less impactful piling methods (e.g., CFA piling), implement soft start procedures for machinery, and enforce a works exclusion buffer to minimise noise and vibration impacts on otters.

General Mitigation:

- All works would adhere to best practices: Waste Management Act (1996), NRA Otter Guidelines (2006), CIRIA C532 for water pollution control.

- Follow UK Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPPs) related to pollution prevention, oil storage, works near water, spill management, and safe storage.
- Implement mammal protection measures: cover excavations or provide egress, secure buildings and hazardous materials overnight.
- Prohibit refuelling and cement deposition within 10m of waterbodies; refuel in designated areas with spill controls.
- Cease all work and notify an ecologist if priority species are discovered or disturbed.
- Appoint a competent foreman to oversee adherence to best practices and environmental monitoring.

Operational Stage Mitigation

- Control site runoff using a Sustainable Urban Drainage Scheme (SUDS) with silt traps, silt fencing, and soakaways to prevent direct discharge into the Cavan River.
- Mitigate potential pollution from vehicular roadways and car parks by implementing interceptors and an environmentally safe drainage system.
- Incorporate permeable surfaces, infiltration trenches, and flow attenuation controls to minimise surface runoff and promote groundwater infiltration.
- Ensure drainage system operates at standard green field discharge rates, preventing surface flooding without high flow discharge or pumps, minimising impact on the SAC.

9.4.34. Each mitigation measure is planned to be implemented during specific project phases (preparation, construction, and operation) and would be carried out by designated contractors under the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). The timing and location of these measures have been chosen to align with the ecological requirements of the site and the species it supports. Each mitigation measure includes specific steps and a clear timeline. For instance, silt fences would be in place before earthworks begin, and noise barriers would be installed around construction sites before heavy machinery is used. Regular monitoring of water quality, species behaviour, and habitat conditions would be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of mitigation measures. It is my view that the proposed mitigation measures are comprehensive and designed to address the identified adverse effects effectively.

9.4.35. **Integrity Test**

9.4.36. Following the appropriate assessment and the consideration of mitigation measures, I am able to ascertain with confidence that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of the Lough Oughter Complex SPA or the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC, in view of the Conservation Objectives of those sites. This conclusion has been based on a complete assessment of all implications of the project alone and in combination with plans and projects. Table 3 below summarises the appropriate assessment and site integrity test.

9.4.37. **Table 3: Appropriate Assessment Summary: Impacts on European Sites and Conservation Objectives**

European Site and Code	Qualifying Interests (QIs)	Conservation Objectives: Targets and Attributes	Potential Adverse Effects	Mitigation Measures	In-Combination Effects	Can Adverse Effects on Integrity Be Excluded?
Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (000007)	Otter (Lutra lutra), Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition-type vegetation, Bog Woodland	Maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of habitats and species, focusing on population size, distribution, and habitat quality.	Water pollution, habitat degradation, disturbance to species, particularly Otter, due to hydrological connections with the Cavan River.	Implement erosion and sediment control measures, including silt traps, sediment basins, and biosecurity protocols. Use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and adhere to a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Ensure proper refuelling and waste management.	No significant in-combination effects identified, provided mitigation measures are adhered to.	Yes, with the implementation of robust mitigation measures.
Lough Oughter Complex SPA (004049)	Great Crested Grebe, Whooper Swan, Wigeon	Maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the	Potential disturbance to bird species, habitat	Establish buffer zones around sensitive areas, limit construction	No significant in-combination effects identified.	Yes, with implementation of mitigation measures, such as

		bird species, ensuring sufficient breeding, foraging habitats, and minimal disturbance levels.	degradation through water quality impacts from construction runoff.	to daylight hours, use noise barriers and direct lighting away from sensitive habitats. Implement SuDS for runoff management and ensure ecological monitoring during and post-construction.		restricted working times and noise minimisation.
Overall Conclusion: Integrity Test	Following the implementation of mitigation, the construction and operation of this proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC or the Lough Oughter Complex SPA, and no reasonable doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.					

9.4.38. **Appropriate Assessment Conclusion**

9.4.39. The proposed development has been considered in light of the assessment requirements of Sections 177U and 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

9.4.40. Having carried out screening for Appropriate Assessment of the project, it was concluded that the proposed development may have a significant effect on the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007) and the Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049). Consequently, an Appropriate Assessment was required to determine the implications of the project on the qualifying features of those sites in light of their conservation objectives.

9.4.41. Following an Appropriate Assessment, it has been ascertained that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of European site Nos. 000007 and 004049 or any other European site, in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives.

9.4.42. This conclusion is based on a full and detailed assessment of all aspects of the proposed development, including proposed mitigation measures in relation to the Conservation Objectives of these European sites and an assessment of likely in-combination effects with other plans and projects. No reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of adverse effects on the integrity of these European Sites.

10.0 Recommendation

10.1.1. Having regard to the foregoing I recommend that the Board approve the proposed development subject to the conditions set out below.

11.0 Reasons and Considerations

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

a) EU legislation, including in particular:

- **EU Directive 2014/52/EU** amending Directive 2011/92/EU (EIA Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment,

- **Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directives)**, which set out the requirements for the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Fauna and Flora.

b) National Legislation, including in particular:

- **Section 175 and Section 177 of the Planning and Development Act 2000** (as amended) which set out the provisions in relation to local authority projects which are subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

c) National and Regional Policy and Guidance, including in particular:

- **National Planning Framework,** which supports the sustainable development of community and recreational facilities as part of compact growth and town centre regeneration,
- **Climate Action Plan 2024,** which promotes a modal shift towards sustainable transport through the provision of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, place-making, and compact development,
- **Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities**, 2011,
- The **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Northern and Western Region 2020-2032,** which seeks to develop a regional standard multi-sports facility to service the current and future needs of Cavan town and the wider county,

d) Local Planning Policy, including in particular:

- The provisions of the **Cavan County Development Plan, 2022-2028**, including specific objectives supporting the development of a regional sports campus.

e) The following matters:

- The nature, scale, and design of the proposed development, as set out in the application for approval, and the existing character and pattern of development in the area, particularly its proximity to Cavan town centre.

- The documentation submitted with the application, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, Natura Impact Statement, and associated documentation, as well as the range of mitigation and monitoring measures proposed.
- The submissions and observations made to An Bord Pleanála, including concerns raised by stakeholders, and the Board's assessment of how these concerns were addressed through the proposed mitigation measures.
- The likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, as well as the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European sites.
- The conservation objectives, qualifying interests, and special conservation interests for the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007) and the Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049), ensuring that any potential impacts on these sites are adequately mitigated.
- The report and recommendation of the Inspector, including the Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Board agreed with and adopted the screening assessment carried out and conclusions reached in the Inspector's report that the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007) and the Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049) are the only Natura 2000 European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 2:

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and the Inspector's assessment. The Board completed an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the European Sites, namely the Lough Oughter and Associated

Loughs SAC (Site Code: 000007) and the Lough Oughter Complex SPA (Site Code: 004049), 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 Appropriate Assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the following:

i. the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development, both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,

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

iii. the conservation objectives for the European Sites.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the Appropriate Assessment carried out in the Inspector's report with respect to the potential effects of the proposed development on the European Sites, namely, the Lough Oughter and Associated Loughs SAC and the Lough Oughter Complex SPA, having regard to the site's 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 site's conservation objectives.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

The proposed development is in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, particularly the zoning objectives for 'Sport and Recreation' and 'Public Community,' and is therefore acceptable in principle. The development supports the delivery of a regional-scale sports facility as outlined in the County Development Plan and will enhance Cavan's profile as a hub for sports and recreation. The development aligns with the Cavan County Development Plan 2022-2028, particularly the map-based specific objective C06, which supports the creation of a sports campus to enhance existing facilities and provide additional infrastructure. It meets key objectives such as KTC 01, CSC 05, and CSC 06, which promote sustainable growth and the provision of a regional sports facility in Cavan Town. The proposal also adheres to objectives CF 01, CF 08, CF 09, CF 11, and RAOS 08, ensuring improved community amenities and sports infrastructure, thus reinforcing Cavan's role as a regional hub for sports and recreation.

In particular, the proposed sports campus will create a significant community and recreational asset for the region. The development's scale and layout incorporate multiple sports facilities, including an indoor complex, outdoor pitches, and athletics tracks, all designed to integrate with existing amenities in Cavan Town. This will promote health and well-being through increased participation in sports and physical activities. The inclusion of new pedestrian and cycling infrastructure will also support sustainable transport options, contributing to a modal shift towards active travel modes.

Overall, the proposed development is a well-considered response to the current and future needs of Cavan's growing population. It supports compact growth, connectivity, and recreational opportunities, which will have a positive impact on the quality of life in the area. The development represents a sustainable addition to the urban fabric of Cavan, enhancing the town's infrastructure while respecting its existing character and surrounding land uses. Subject to conditions, the Board concludes that the proposed development is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Environmental Impact Assessment

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

(a) the nature, scale and extent of the proposed development;

(b) the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted in support of the application;

(c) the submissions from the observers and prescribed bodies in the course of the application and the submissions of the applicant, observers and prescribed bodies during the oral hearing, and

(d) the inspector's report

The Board agreed with the summary of the results of the consultations and information gathered in the course of the environmental impact assessment and the examination 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 application, as set out in the Inspector's report. The Board was satisfied that the Inspector's report sets out how these various environmental issues were addressed in the examination and recommendation and are incorporated into the Board's decision.

Reasoned Conclusions on the Significant Effects:

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, provided sufficient information 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 was 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 effects, both positive and negative, of the proposed development on the environment are:

- Positive indirect impacts on **population and human health** will include health and social well-being benefits from the provision of enhanced sports facilities, which will encourage physical activity and community engagement. The development will also generate employment during both the construction and operational phases.
- In relation to **biodiversity**, the proximity of the development to the Cavan River and its hydrological connection to the Lough Oughter SAC requires careful management. Mitigation measures, including the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and appropriate habitat protection strategies, will ensure that the risk to local ecosystems, particularly in relation to potential impacts on aquatic habitats, is minimal.
- In relation to **water** quality, there is potential for short-term impacts during construction due to runoff, siltation, and petrochemical pollution. However, the implementation of a comprehensive Construction Environmental Management Plan, along with best practice measures to control water pollution, will ensure that these risks are mitigated effectively.

- In relation to **material assets**, the development will significantly enhance local infrastructure, particularly in terms of sporting facilities and public amenities. The provision of new access points, pedestrian pathways, and associated facilities such as car parking and cycle lanes will improve connectivity and accessibility in the area.
- In relation to **noise** and **visual impact**, the layout of the sports campus, including acoustic fencing and strategic landscaping, ensures that impacts on nearby residential areas are minimised. Floodlighting and noise from outdoor activities will be managed through appropriate operational controls and mitigation measures.
- In relation to **archaeology** and **cultural heritage**, the development is adjacent to the Royal School, a protected structure, and mitigation measures such as buffer zones and architectural treatments will ensure that the visual and heritage integrity of the site is maintained.

The Board completed an environmental impact assessment in relation to the proposed development and concluded that subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, including proposed monitoring as appropriate, and subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the effects on the environment of the proposed development, by itself and in combination with other development in the vicinity, would be acceptable. In doing so, the Board adopted the report and conclusions set out in the Inspector's report. The Board is satisfied that this reasoned conclusion is up to date at the time of making this decision.

12.0 **Conditions**

1.	The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), and other associated documentation, lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions set out below **Reason:** In the interest of clarity.

2	(a) All mitigation measures detailed in the submitted documentation, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and the Natura Impact Statement (NIS), shall be fully implemented within the timescales specified in the EIAR and NIS. The developer shall appoint a project manager with appropriate experience to oversee the implementation of these mitigation measures within the required timescales. (b) Where any mitigation measures outlined in the EIAR or any conditions of this Approval require further details to be prepared by or on behalf of the Local Authority, such details shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record. (c) Prior to the commencement of development, a schedule outlining the timeframe for implementing the mitigation measures and associated monitoring shall be prepared by or on behalf of the Local Authority. These details shall also be placed on file and retained as part of the public record. **Reason:** In the interest of environmental protection.
3.	Prior to the commencement of development, a Final Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) shall be prepared by Cavan County Council or any agent acting on its behalf, in consultation with the relevant statutory agencies. The CEMP shall adhere to best practice environmental management and incorporate the following: (a) A detailed construction programme and supervisory measures, (b) Noise management measures, water sampling, dust minimisation, pest control, and construction hours, (c) A comprehensive programme for the implementation and monitoring of all environmental commitments made in the application and supporting documentation, (d) Surface water management proposals and off-site disposal of construction waste, (e) An emergency response plan, (f) Proposals for construction traffic management, including traffic routes, parking arrangements, storage of plant and machinery, and delivery locations,

	(g) Proposals for public information and communication during the construction phase, (h) Appointment of a full-time liaison officer responsible for monitoring compliance with the CEMP. The CEMP, along with daily records of compliance, shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record for inspection by the planning authority. **Reason:** In the interests of environmental protection, sustainable development, and proper planning.
4.	The results of all monitoring conducted shall be published at the offices of the local authority within one month of completion and made available for public inspection for a period of at least five years following the completion of construction. **Reason:** In the interest of clarity, the protection of the environment, and of orderly development.
5.	A suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) shall be appointed by Cavan County Council to oversee the site set-up and construction of the proposed development, ensuring all mitigation measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) are implemented. The ECoW shall conduct continuous monitoring of all ecological mitigation measures, and submit quarterly reports to the planning authority during the construction phase and biannual reports for the first two operational years. Any adaptive management actions identified in these reports shall be implemented immediately. Upon completion of the construction stage, an audit report of the site works shall be submitted to the local authority. **Reason:** To ensure the protection of the environment and effective implementation of ecological mitigation measures throughout the construction and operational phases.

6.	Prior to the destruction of the main badger sett, an artificial sett shall be constructed in accordance with best practice guidelines from the NPWS, within the designated habitat compensation zone. The artificial sett shall be established and occupied for at least six months before the phased exclusion of the existing sett can commence. Exclusion shall be carried out using one-way gates and monitored by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW), appointed by Cavan County Council. The ECoW shall oversee the site set-up, construction, and continuous monitoring of the artificial sett, foraging habitat, commuting corridors, and mitigation measures as outlined in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. Quarterly reports during construction and biannual reports during the first two years of operation shall be submitted to the planning authority, with any necessary adaptive management actions implemented immediately. Upon completion of the construction phase, the ECoW shall prepare and submit an audit report to the local authority for the public record. **Reason:** To ensure the protection and welfare of the local badger population and the environment throughout the construction and operational phases and to ensure the effectiveness of mitigation measures through ongoing monitoring and adaptive management.
7	Surveys for White-clawed Crayfish and Freshwater Pearl Mussel, as referenced in the EIAR and planned for Spring/Summer 2024, shall be completed prior to the commencement of development. If these surveys have not yet been conducted, they shall be carried out prior to the commencement of development, with the correct identification of the Freshwater Pearl Mussel reviewed by a qualified molluscan ecologist. The results of these surveys shall inform any necessary updates to the mitigation measures outlined in the EIAR. Mitigation measures, including sediment control, low-vibration piling, and translocation under licence (if required), shall be implemented to protect aquatic species. The survey findings and any adjustments to the mitigation measures shall be submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage –

	Development Applications Unit, and Inland Fisheries Ireland for their written agreement prior to the commencement of development. All monitoring results shall be submitted to the relevant authorities and made available for public inspection at the offices of the local authority within one month of completion. These shall remain available for at least five years following the completion of construction. **Reason:** To ensure the protection of aquatic biodiversity.
8.	Site development and building works shall be carried out between the hours 08:00hrs and 18:00hrs Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 08:00hrs to 13:00hrs on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times shall only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written agreement has been received from the planning authority. **Reason:** To safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.
9.	Cavan County Council or any agent acting on its behalf shall retain the professional services of a qualified Landscape Architect as Landscape Consultant throughout the life of the site development works. The Landscape Consultant shall be engaged to procure, oversee and supervise the landscape contract for the implementation of the permitted landscape proposals. When all landscape works are inspected and completed to the satisfaction of the Landscape Consultant, he/she shall submit a Practical Completion Certificate (PCC) to the planning authority to be placed on the public file, as verification that the approved landscape plans and specification have been fully implemented. **Reason:** To ensure full and verifiable implementation of the approved landscape design proposals for the permitted development, to the approved standards and specification.
10.	All site vegetation clearance, including the removal of mature trees, hedgerows, and scrub, shall be strictly carried out outside the breeding season for birds, from 1st March and 31st August.

	Reason: To prevent significant impacts on breeding birds and ensure the protection of their habitats during the construction phase.
11.	Retained trees and hedgerows shall be protected from damage during construction works. Within a period of six months following the substantial completion of the proposed development, any planting which is damaged or dies shall be replaced with others of similar size and species. **Reason:** In the interests of amenity, ecology and sustainable development.
12.	Prior to the commencement of development, the local authority, or any agent acting on their behalf, shall undertake a pre-construction invasive species survey and, following the completion of the survey, shall prepare an Invasive Species Management Plan for the proposed development site. The details of this Plan shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record prior to the commencement of development. **Reason:** In the interest of the protection of the environment and in the interest of public health.
13.	Water supply and drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, shall comply with the requirements of the local authority for such works and services. **Reason:** In the interest of public health and to ensure a proper standard of development.
14.	All new surface water outfalls shall be constructed in a manner which protects riparian habitat and does not result in excessive erosion of such habitat. **Reason:** In the interest of habitat protection.
15.	Prior to the commencement of development, Cavan County Council or any agent acting on its behalf shall enter into water and wastewater connection agreements with Uisce Eireann. **Reason**: In the interest of public health.
16.	A two meter high acoustic fence shall be erected along the side boundary of No. 10 Lurganboy within the site. The fence shall be constructed of

	materials that provide effective noise attenuation and shall be installed with appropriate landscaping on both sides to minimise visual impact. The landscaping shall include a mix of evergreen and deciduous species to enhance biodiversity and ensure year-round screening. **Reason:** In the interest of residential and visual amenities.
17.	During the operational phase of the proposed development, the noise level shall not exceed 55 dB(A) rated sound level between the hours of 0700 to 2300 (corrected for a tonal or impulsive component) as measured at the nearest dwelling or noise-sensitive location. Procedures for the purpose of determining compliance with this limit shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record. **Reason:** To protect the amenities of property in the vicinity of the site.
18.	The operating hours for the sports campus hereby approved shall be confined to 08.00 to 22.00 Mon-Sun. **Reason:** In the interest of clarity.
19.	The operational hours of floodlighting for the sports pitches and athletics track shall not extend beyond 22.00 hours, with an automatic cut-off at that time. During bat activity periods, floodlighting to the northern pitches shall be restricted to a 21.00 hours cut-off. All lighting shall be DarkSky-compliant, fully shielded, and designed to minimise light pollution, adhering to best practice for bats and artificial lighting. **Reason:** To protect the residential amenity of nearby properties and to mitigate impacts on biodiversity, particularly foraging and commuting bats, through the implementation of appropriate lighting controls.
20.	Public lighting shall be provided in accordance with a scheme, which shall include lighting along pedestrian routes through the open spaces and shall take account of trees within the landscape plan drawing no. CSC-MLA-XX-00-DR-L-2001. Details of the scheme shall be prepared by the local authority prior to the commencement of development and shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record. All lighting shall be operated

	in such a manner as to prevent light overspill to areas outside of compounds and works areas. **Reason:** In the interest of amenity and public safety.
21.	The proposed development shall include drinking water source(s) at appropriate locations within the grounds of the sports campus. Revised drawings showing compliance with this requirement shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record. **Reason:** In the interest of public convenience.
22.	All service cables associated with the proposed development (such as electrical, telecommunications and communal television) located outside buildings or not attached to buildings shall be located underground. Ducting shall be provided by the developer to facilitate the provision of broadband infrastructure within the proposed development. All existing overground cables shall be relocated underground as part of the site development works. **Reason:** In the interest of public safety and visual amenity.
23.	A minimum of 10% of the proposed communal car parking spaces shall be provided with electrical connection points, to allow for functional electric vehicle charging. The remaining car parking spaces shall be fitted with ducting for electric connection points to allow for future fit-out of charging points. Details of how it is proposed to comply with these requirements shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record prior to the commencement of development. **Reason:** To provide for and/or future proof the development such as would facilitate the use of electric vehicles.
24.	The local authority shall provide cycle parking facilities at a rate of 1 bicycle stand per 20 m² of gross floor space of the indoor sports building, sports arena, and spectator stands. A minimum of 50% of these cycle parking spaces shall be covered to provide adequate protection for bicycles. The final layout and details of the cycle parking facilities, including the location, design, and materials, shall be prepared in accordance with the Cavan

	County Development Plan's standards and submitted to the Planning Authority for review. These details shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record prior to the commencement of development. **Reason:** In the interest of promoting sustainable transport options and ensuring adequate provision for cyclists in accordance with the Cavan County Development Plan standards.
25.	The local authority shall facilitate the archaeological appraisal of the site and shall provide for the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features which may exist within the site. In this regard, the local authority shall employ a suitably qualified archaeologist prior to the commencement of development. The archaeologist shall assess the site prior to the commencement of development and monitor all site development works. The assessment shall address the following issues: (i) the nature and location of archaeological material on the site, (ii) the impact of the proposed development on such archaeological material. (iii) details of any further archaeological requirements arising from this assessment (including, if necessary, archaeological excavation). A report containing the results of the assessment shall be made available for public inspection at the offices of the local authority for a period of at least five years following completion of the development. **Reason:** To conserve the archaeological heritage of the area and to secure the preservation and protection of any archaeological remains that may exist within the site.
26.	The developer shall ensure that all plant and machinery used during the works are thoroughly cleaned and washed before delivery to the site to prevent the spread of hazardous invasive species and pathogens. **Reason:** In the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
27.	Details of the materials, colours and textures of all the external finishes to the proposed sports buildings, structures, and spectator stands shall be

	prepared by the local authority prior to the commencement of development and shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record. **Reason:** To protect the visual amenity of the area.
28.	A plan containing details for the management of waste within the development, including the provision of facilities for the storage, separation and collection of the waste and, in particular, recyclable materials shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record prior to commencement of development. Thereafter, the waste shall be managed in accordance with the agreed plan. **Reason:** To provide for the appropriate management of waste, and in particular recyclable materials, in the interest of protecting the environment.

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.

Brendan Coyne
Planning Inspector

25th September 2024