



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-320047-24

Development	Construction of a school and all associated site works. Natura Impact Statement (NIS) submitted with application.
Location	Dangan Lower, immediately to the north of the N59 Galway-Clifden road, adjacent to the Galway University Regional Sports Centre and immediately east of the Aughnacurra Housing Estate.
Planning Authority	Galway City Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	23141
Applicant(s)	St Josephs Patrician College Galway
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant Permission
Type of Appeal	Third Party
Appellant(s)	Michael & Catherine McDonnell Angela Lawless and Evan Molly.
Observer(s)	Denis O' Connor.

Date of Site Inspection

24th October 2024.

Inspector

Darragh Ryan

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The subject site, located on the northern side of the N59, adjoins the sports campus of the University of Galway and is currently in use as a greenfield site for low-intensity agriculture. It encompasses an area of approximately 2.575 hectares and features undulating topography, with a general slope descending from the public road towards the north. The site exhibits a level difference of approximately 8 meters from south to north.
- 1.2. To the north/northwest, approximately 500 meters from the site, lies the River Corrib. The residential estate of Dalgan Heights is situated to the south, across the N59, while the Aughnacurra housing estate borders the site to the west. The St. Anne's apartment complex is located to the east, alongside an access road and parking area serving the adjacent sports campus.
- 1.3. The site is traversed by overhead electricity transmission lines running parallel to the N59 on its southernmost portion. A mature woodland boundary, including a pedestrian walkway, separates the northern edge of the site from the University of Galway's parking area. The southern boundary features a traditional stone wall, while the eastern boundary is defined by a low hedge and scrub. Mature trees and hedgerows are present along the western boundary.

2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The development proposal includes the following:
 - An 11,134m² school building comprising classrooms, specialist room accommodation, a PE Hall/Multi-Purpose Hall, a 2-classroom Special Needs Unit, and ancillary accommodation.
 - Five external ball courts.
 - Car parking spaces, bicycle parking, smarter travel facilities, and hard and soft landscaping with a water attenuation system.
 - The building includes a central East-West block with a part three-storey, part four-storey structure, featuring PV panels on the roof, and two lateral blocks (part three-storey, part two-storey) with rooftop ball courts.

- An ESB substation.
- A centrally located tiered amphitheatre space and courtyard gardens with extensive hard and soft landscaping.
- An LPG gas store and attenuation area situated in the north-west portion of the site.
- A new signalised junction and access road, including a dedicated cycle lane from the N59 at the Circular Road junction, encircling the development and terminating at St. Anne's Road, with a north-south fire path enclosing the eastern boundary and pedestrian access from the N59
- New drainage systems, ancillary works, and boundary treatments along the N59

2.2. The application is accompanied by the following documentation:

- Traffic and Transport Assessment
- Road Safety Audit
- Mobility Management Plan (MMP)
- Cycle Facilities and Parking Justification
- DMURS compliance Statement
- Natura Impact Statement
- Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment
- Design Statement
- Landscape Design Statement
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Arboriculture Impact Assessment
- Archaeological Desktop Assessment
- Visual Impact Assessment

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

The planning authority issued a decision to grant permission subject to 23 conditions. The conditions of note include the following:

- C6 – The development shall be carried out and operated in accordance with the provisions of mobility management plan submitted to the planning authority on the 1st of May 2024.
- C7 – All of the 195 no bicycle stands on site shall be afforded sheltered covering and 10 of this provision shall be for non standard cycles.
- C8 – Arrangements for the closure of St Annes Road will be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to first occupancy of the development
- C11- The development shall proceed in accordance with the accepted Design Report (J177: St Josephs Patrican College, Dalgan Lower Galway/ n59 Circular Road Junction Design report)

No works shall be carried out in areas marked as “Area reserved for N6 Ring Road” as per Drawing 20042- MOB- A – 9007.

- C15 – All mitigation measures as outlined in the submitted Natura Impact Statement and Ecological Impact Assessment shall be strictly adhered to with adequate supervision by a suitability qualified person.
- C21 – the developer shall engage a suitably qualified Archaeologist to monitor all site clearance and preparatory works, engineering trial pits, site investigations, breaking/removal of existing surfaces, topsoil stripping and other groundworks associated with the development

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

3.2.1. There are two planning reports on file, the first planning report recommended a refusal for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is at variance with national policy in relation to development involving access to national roads and development along such

roads as set out in the DECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

2. A grant of permission, in this instance, is considered to be at variance with the provisions of the DECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) and the proposed development indicates inappropriate standards which is not in accordance with those set out in the DECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012). The proposed development would be contrary to the Core Strategy policies under Chapter 4 Sustainable Mobility and Transportation of the City Development Plan 2023 to 2029 to continue to progress a sustainable transport solution for the city through the implementation of measures included in the Galway Transport Strategy and required supporting projects, in particular the N6 Galway City Ring Road project.

3.2.2. An Addendum Planning Report was prepared on the 26th of July seeking further information as follows:

1. The applicant is advised that concerns have been raised by TII, the Galway city Ring road Project Office and Galway City Council Transportation Section that the proposed development as presented would be at variance with National Policy..... The applicant is requested to liaise with TII, Galway City Ring Road Project Office and Galway City Council Transportation Section before replying with a revised proposal to address these concerns.
2. The Cities Heritage Officer has advised that the proposed development plans show no hedgerows, traditional field walls being retained and take no account of an archaeological feature present on the site GA 082033 -A barrow which is a recorded monument. The applicant is advised to liaise with City Heritage Officer before replying with a revised proposal to address these concerns.

3.2.3. Upon receipt of further information, the planners report addressed the following:

- The development proposal is in line with zoning for the site as set out in the Current Galway City Development Plan – namely Recreation & Amenity (RA) zoning

- The proposal is consistent with wider policies as set out in the Galway City Development Plan
- The Mobility Management Plan (MMP) as submitted is considered acceptable
- Car Parking provision and justification considered acceptable
- Cycle facilities and cycle parking considered acceptable
- Traffic and Transport Assessment considered acceptable
- DMURs compliance statement considered acceptable
- Public Lighting deemed acceptable
- Road Safety Audit considered acceptable
- The proposed signalised junction and issues around the N59 have been deemed acceptable.
- Details supplied regarding onsite Archaeology are considered acceptable

3.2.4. Other Technical Reports

- Environment Section – Report states due to the size and nature of the proposed development, it is considered a Tier 2 project and prior to commencement of development the applicant shall submit a Construction and Demolition Resource Waste Management Plan
- Heritage Officer – concerns regarding design, loss of hedgerows and trees and lack of detailed supplied with regard to archaeological monument on site.
- Two reports on file from N6 Galway City Ring Road Project Office- the proposed development overlaps with the N6 GCRR boundary, The development boundary encroaches on a mainline embankment, drainage, a settlement pond and a junction on the N59. The boundary of the proposed development is in conflict with the GCRR and recommend refusal for this reason. A Design Report of the junction on the N59 National Secondary Road was not submitted as part of the application. The proposed development includes a right turn lane at the proposed signalised junction on the N59 which is not part of the N6 GCRR and is a potential point of conflict.

- A second report on file - post submission of further information response indicating no objection to the proposal.

3.2.5. Transportation Section Galway City Council – recommend a refusal of permission as the applicant has failed to provide a Mobility Management Plan, Traffic and Transport Assessment which are a pre-requisite for the consideration of such an application as advised during pre-planning consultation.

A second report on file from Transportation Section Galway City Council – post submission of further information response indicating no objection to the proposal.

3.3. **Prescribed Bodies**

3.3.1. Two reports on file from Transport Infrastructure Ireland:

1. The proposed development is at variance with national policy in relation to development involving access to national roads and development along such roads as set out in the DECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities.
2. A grant of permission, in this instance, is at variance with the provisions of the DECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012) and the proposed development indicates inappropriate standards which is not accordance with those set out in the DECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012). The proposed development would be contrary to the Core Strategy policies under Chapter 4 Sustainable Mobility and Transportation of the City Development Plan 2023 to 2029 to continue to progress a sustainable transport solution for the city through the implementation of measures included in the Galway Transport Strategy and required supporting projects, in particular the N6 GCRR project.

Following receipt of further information and consultation with the applicant a subsequent planning report was issued as follows:

1. The proposed new entrance onto the national road has been subject to a road safety audit in accordance with the guidelines in TII publications.

2. The authority will entertain no future claims in respect of impacts (e.g noise & visual) on the proposed development.
3. The development shall proceed in accordance with the accepted Design Report (J177: St Joseph's Patrician College, Dangan Lower/ N59 Circular Road Junction Design Report)
4. As per drawing 20042 – MOB – A-9007, no works shall be carried out in areas marked as Area Reserved for N6 Ring Road.

3.3.2. An Taisce – location of development not suitable and may not be easily accessible for active travel routes. Without sufficient data it is not possible to assess the impact of the development on the traffic in the vicinity of the proposed site or along the routes likely to be used to assess the school and impact of traffic to and from the school environment.

3.3.3. HSE – no comments observations to make

3.4. **Third Party Observations**

There were 15 valid submissions on file including one letter of support. The issues raised are covered in the appeal. The main issues are grouped together and summarised as follows:

3.4.1. Need for the School

- There is an existing vacant school (Presentation School) beside the existing School (St Joseph's College) that could be reused and repurposed for students.
- Sports fields could be utilised at St Mary's School for students
- The site at Dalgan Road is too small for 1000 students and not in keeping with Department of Education (DOE) guidelines.
- It is likely that the vast majority of students will not come from the locality and would need to be transported by bus or car to the local school.
- The University have a considerable land bank suitably zoned that would adequately serve the needs of the school in the vicinity of Corrib village and Dangan site

- Approximately 1/3 of the school roll currently comes from the east of the river Corrib
- Location of this school will perpetuate the imbalance in school provision in the city which is concentrated west of the river Corrib

3.4.2. Traffic/ Active Travel

- Site unsuitable as it does not lend itself to sustainable modes of travel
- Increased levels of traffic in the area.
- 79 car parking spaces indicates level of traffic activity
- The signalisation of the N59 will lead to increased delays
- N59 Road is already very dangerous with zero capacity for additional traffic
- The site is outside of the city public bus routes
- Lack of Road Safety Audit, Traffic and Transport Assessment and Mobility Management Plan with the application.
- Access to the school by bicycle is not safe

3.4.3. Environment

- Possibility for loss of habitat as a result of proposed development.
- Proposal includes for knocking of trees and hedgerows.
- Lack of green space within the development

3.4.4. Archaeology

- Lack of assessment of potential archaeological impact on the development

4.0 **Planning History**

No recent Planning History on Site

5.0 Policy Context

5.1. National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework outlines that strategic planning of, and investment in education is central in reinforcing the delivery of sustainable communities, promoting inclusion and offering choice and accessibility to a high standard of education and employment.

National Strategic Outcome 10: ... Provide additional investment in the schools sector to keep pace with demographic demand and to manage increasing building and site costs so that new and refurbished schools on well located sites within or close to existing built-up areas, can meet demographic growth and the diverse needs of local populations.

5.2. Galway City Development Plan 2023 to 2029

5.2.1. Policy 4.3 Public Transport

Promote access to public transport services for those attending primary and post primary schools in consultation with the Department of Education and Skills

5.2.2. Policy 4.4 Sustainable Mobility - Walk and Cycle

Support and promote initiatives such as Park and Stride, Green Schools Travel and Safe Routes to School Programmes, School Streets and the concept of having safe routes to school.

5.2.3. Policy 4.5 Transport Demand Management Measures

Promote the implementation of Travel Plans with employers and schools, including Local Transport Plans (LTPs) using Area Based Transport Assessments (ABTA) as the methodology to prepare LTPs and Traffic and Transport Assessments (TTA) where the scale of development determines the need for integrated land use and transport planning policies.

5.2.4. Community & Education

The Council will also support urban-design schools, a model of carbon-neutral urban schools, as per DES Guidelines, including measures to facilitate reduced requirements for onsite parking and set-down and to support access to off-site public amenities and facilities. In order to encourage sustainable travel, maximise the sharing of facilities and ensure the development of sustainable residential neighbourhoods, the Council will encourage the location of schools adjacent to residential areas, public transport routes and community, cultural and recreational facilities. The provision of education, childcare and other community services will be an integral part of a new neighbourhood development and included for in Local Area Plans for new settlement areas such as Ardaun.

5.2.5. Policy 7.6 Education

1. Ensure that sufficient land is reserved for the establishment, improvement or expansion of education facilities within the city in accordance with the settlement strategy, targeted population and in collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills (DES).
2. Support the ongoing development and provision of third level education, further education and lifelong learning in the city.
3. Facilitate the upgrade and expansion of existing education facilities and the provision of new education facilities as required, including to:
 - Support the future improvement and sustainable expansion of University of Galway;
 - Support the development of Atlantic Technological University (ATU);
 - Support the role of the GTI in the delivery of education;
 - Support the role of the GRET in the delivery of Further Education and Training in the city.
4. Ensure that the design and layout of all educational establishments incorporate facilities for sustainable transport measures and public transport.
5. Ensure that safe and easy access for people with disabilities is incorporated in the design of all education developments.

6. Support the further development and diversification of third level education institutions in the city, including the promotion of knowledge based industry linked research and innovation hubs and facilities.

7. Encourage the multi-use of school facilities for other community uses outside of school hours to maximise community benefit and use of resources.

5.2.6. 11.2.2 Natural Heritage, Recreation and Amenity RA Land Use Zoning Objectives

Zoning Objective RA -To provide for and protect recreational uses, open space, amenity uses, natural heritage and biodiversity.

Uses which are compatible with and contribute to the zoning objective, for example:

- Outdoor recreation Uses which may contribute to the zoning objectives, dependent on the RA location and scale of development, for example:
- Development of buildings of a recreational, cultural or educational nature or car parking areas related to and secondary to the primary use of land/water body for outdoor recreation
- Public utilities
- Burial grounds and associated services

The following are specific development objectives for a number of RA zones throughout the city:

RA lands privately owned by University of Galway, comprising of 36.98 hectares, but not including the strip of land zoned RA located between the River Corrib and University (CF) lands. The Council will consider the development of these lands for university and related uses, which are compatible with and contribute to the CF zoning objective. An exception to this will be for the Council to allow for consideration of the development of a secondary school with associated ancillary development on lands of approximately 1.6 hectares (4 acres) between University of Galway Hockey Pitch and the N59 Road. Any development of this site for a secondary school shall include for a School Traffic Control Management Plan and a Mobility Management Plan which will be required to have targets for sustainable mode use, including public transport set targets for modal shift to sustainable modes and public transport for staff and students working at and attending school in accordance with climate action targets.

5.2.7. Table 11.6 Parking Space Requirement for Different Types of Development: Maximum Standards

1 space per classroom plus 2 additional spaces

5.2.8. Section 11.11.3 Travel Plans

5.2.9. Travel Plans, also known as Mobility Management Plans, comprise of a package of transport measures specific to a certain type, scale and location of development such as workplaces, schools/colleges, hospitals and mixed use developments. Travel Plans include sustainable and cost effective transport measures, initiatives and incentives to support and encourage sustainable travel for all commuting and travel to that development and to encourage a shift from single occupancy private car use. Measures may include the provision of infrastructure and incentives to facilitate walking, cycling and public transport, shuttle bus or car share schemes, parking restraints, video conferencing and flexible working arrangements.

The requirement for the submission of a Travel Plan will be assessed on a case by case basis by the Council and cognisance will be taken of the location, scale of development, the nature of uses proposed and the anticipated impact on the existing and proposed transport network. Preparation of a Travel Plan should be considered at the earliest possible stage of the planning process (pre-planning) with the Travel Plan demonstrating that it is an integral part of the development.

5.2.10. **National Guidelines**

5.2.11. The Provision of Schools & the Planning System - A code of Practice for Planning Authorities, the Department of Education & Science and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (July 2008).

5.3. **Natural Heritage Designations**

Lough Corrib SAC 490m to the North

Lough Corrib SPA 1km to the North

Galway Bay Complex SAC 1km to the South

5.4. EIA Screening

See completed Form 2 on file. Having regard to the nature, size and location of the proposed development and to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations, I have concluded at preliminary examination that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. EIA, or an EIA determination therefore is not required.

6.0 The Appeal

6.1. Grounds of Appeal

6.1.1. There are two third party appeals on file against the decision of Galway City Council to grant permission. In the interest of clarity, I have grouped the issues in both appeals

6.1.2. Suitability of Site for school

- The site size is below the recommended guidelines of the Department of Education. The recommended site size for a school of 1000 students is 11.3 acres. The site size is 4 acres.

6.1.3. N59/ Traffic Impact

- The proposal will cause significant commuter tailbacks along the N59.
- The Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) contains misleading statements
- TTA report does not acknowledge morning and evening movements that would add to traffic issues
- No details of where people who are not availing of school drop off system will leave their children off to get to school
- The vague nature of the conditions does nothing to alleviate the concerns of the local residents regarding usage of the estates by parents for drop off and collection
- The reduced level of car parking is unlikely to meet the needs of staff and pupils.

- Concerns regarding the presence of the school adjacent to the proposed Ring Road.
- The site is outside the City Public bus network. There is no public transport on the Circular Road. The recently published “New Bus Network for Galway’s Future” indicate there are no future proposals to service public transport in the area of the new school.
- There is no viable option to service the school with bicycle lanes on the N59 or Circular Road as both are already heavily trafficked. The short cycle lane transition zones are no substitute for a safe designated cycle lane.
- The only reasonable method for the majority of children to access school is by car as most school students do not reside in the local area.
- As the development will not allow for parents to park on the school grounds and with bollards on one side of the N59 plus traffic congestion on the N59 it is inevitable that the nearby housing estates will be used for car parking.
- The controlled signalised junction will lead to continuous build-up of traffic on the approach roads particularly at Peak Times
- The traffic management system proposed for the site is contrary to the Dept of Education Guidelines

6.1.4. Environmental Impact

- The NUIG grounds offer trees foliage, a river and wildlife this will be negated by the presence of a high-density institution in the vicinity of the site. Applicant Response

6.1.5. Possible Alternative Locations

- There are other more suitable sites for the development proposal rather than this site. e.g the University of Galway land in the vicinity of the Corrib village where there is substantial unused level ground.
- At present in Galway City there is an imbalance in the provision of Secondary Schools with most schools being situated West of the Corrib. The locating of the school at this location will only perpetuate this imbalance and require car journeys to access the school.

6.2. Applicant Response

- 6.2.1. Site Size – The Department of Education Guidelines allow flexibility for urban spaces with regard to site size. Although the Departments Standard recommendation is 11.3 acres the guidelines state that achieving this standard may not always be possible in more constrained or urban settings. To ensure ample open space is available for students, the school has access to playing pitches in the adjoining university campus, in addition rooftop ball courts are proposed.
- 6.2.2. Traffic – The development proposes an upgrade of the N59 Circular Road Junction. This will upgrade pedestrian and cyclist opportunities. The TTA was carried out in compliance with Transport Assessment Guidelines
- 6.2.3. Drop Off/ Set Down/ Collection – The design of the development provides for a dedicated set down area within the school grounds which maximises space efficiency and safety. This is a short -term activity and does not require a large amount of space as there is constant flow of traffic in and out of the site during these periods. The drop off and pick up areas will not impact the N59 as this area is approximately 230m from this point. There will be an improvement in active travel facilities in and around the site which will aid in promoting a positive modal to more sustainable travel. A mobility management plan has been submitted.
- 6.2.4. Parking – the car parking provision is to align with Galway City Councils request and to comply with DM standards as set out in the Galway City Development Plan.
- 6.2.5. Bus – There is ample bus facilities in the area- details provided.
- 6.2.6. Cycle Parking – Full details of all cycle lanes on site have been set out that indicates the schools intention to have a modal shift away from the car.
- 6.2.7. General Environmental Impact – An Ecological Impact Assessment has been submitted which demonstrates a comprehensive approach to preserving and enhancing the sites natural environment. SUDS measures have been incorporated into the design. The landscaping plan is a key component of the projects strategy to enhance the sites amenity value. Any trees or hedgerows lost to felling will be replaced. A NIS has been submitted with the application.

6.3. Planning Authority Response

- None

6.4. Observations

6.4.1. University of Galway

- The existing sports campus at University of Galway is currently accessible by the public from the N59 via St Annes Road and also via the Park and Ride facility at North Campus.
- In 2022 the University commenced the undertaking and review of its Campus masterplan in the full knowledge and awareness of the pending application by St Joseph's Patrician College for a new school at the Dangan Site.
- Each of the university campus precincts has been considered in terms of Permeability & Access, Public realm improvements and development opportunities.
- Engagement between then the university and Josephs Patrician college (The Bish) has been ongoing throughout both the Masterplan process and schools planning application.
- Permeability & Access considered under the masterplan identifies an alternative public access route into the university sports campus as shown in Item 1 a within Figure 2 of the masterplan. This new access is provided to provide greater safety measures for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle users including improved sightlines for accessing and egressing from the Sports Campus. The proposal once established will allow access to the sports campus via St Annes Road to be restricted to pedestrian and cyclist activities
- Nuns Island Redevelopment – It is envisaged that the University will acquire the lands on the west side of the university campus as part of a land transfer agreement between the university and St Joseph's college. The Nuns Island redevelopment will get the benefit of its own masterplan, and this will be redeveloped in conjunction with other stakeholders and Galway City Council to provide improved public realm spaces and habitable development.

The relocation of St Josephs's college in Nuns Island to the greenfield site at Dangan is integral to the University's plans for the redevelopment of Nun's Island.

- Traffic, Transport and Access Road – The university considers this new signalised junction at Circular Road to be significantly safer than the existing access to the University of Galway sports facilities via St. Annes Road on the east of the site. St Annes road will be closed to vehicular access to the university campus and sports facilities to provide for increased safety access.
- Amenity & Access Safety – The university supports the provision of a new pedestrian crossing at Dangan Heights which provides a safer means for pedestrians and cyclists to cross the N59 to gain access to both university and school facilities. This pedestrian crossing was designed in response to the request for further information from Galway City Council. The new entrance and crossing provides for safer access to the University Campus, River Corrib and future Galway to Oughterard Greenway.
- Transport and Mobility – The university encourages cycle access for students and staff to the new school through the university campus. The university provides free bus transport from the southern side of the campus right up to Dangan Park and Ride car park close to the site of the new school. This facility is free of charge to students of St Josephs students and staff.
- Site Size and Amenity – The university into a long term 15 year licence agreement with St. Josephs to provide student access to University sports field playing facilities, with the potential to extend that agreement when it expires. Additional car parking for occasional school events the university can be used for overflow parking.

7.0 Assessment

- 7.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including the submissions received in relation to this third-party appeal, the report of the local authority, having inspected the site, and having regard to the relevant local/regional/national policies and guidance, I consider that the substantive issues in this third-party appeal to be considered are as follows:

- Principle of Development
- Site Location
- Traffic Impact/ Road Safety
- Other Issues
- Appropriate Assessment

7.2. **Principle of Development**

- 7.2.1. The appellants have raised concerns regarding the suitability of the site for a development of this scale, particularly in relation to the size of the proposed site (2.575 hectares) as compared to the Department of Education's Guidelines (TOEG-25) for schools accommodating 1,000 students or more, which recommend a minimum site area of 4.45 hectares. They argue that the site is undersized and that its constraints could lead to various operational and logistical issues, particularly concerning traffic, pedestrian, and vehicular movements. The appellant further contends that there are alternative, more appropriate sites available for the proposed development, including land adjacent to the existing St. Patrician School.
- 7.2.2. While the applicant has provided a justification for the reduced site size, referencing allowances within the Department's guidelines, these matters warrant careful consideration. While the issues relating to traffic impact and road safety will be addressed in subsequent sections of this assessment, it is crucial to assess the site's overall suitability for the proposed development, including its location and alignment with relevant policy objectives.
- 7.2.3. **Policy Context**
- The site in question is located on the northern side of the N59, adjacent to the University of Galway's Dangan Sportsgrounds, on the northern outskirts of Galway City. The proposed access to the site is off the N59, which also provides access to the university's sports facilities. The site itself measures approximately 2.575 hectares and is zoned under the Galway City Development Plan as "RA – Recreation and Amenity." This zoning designation primarily seeks to encourage uses that contribute to recreational and amenity purposes, particularly outdoor activities.

- 7.2.4. The proposed development includes external ball courts, which align with the RA zoning objectives. According to Section 11.2.2 of the Galway City Development Plan, the subject lands, totalling 36.98 hectares, are owned by the University of Galway. The zoning policy specifies that development on these lands should contribute to both the recreation and amenity objectives, as well as the adjoining Community Facilities (CF) zoned lands. Importantly, an exception is made within the zoning framework, allowing for the development of a secondary school with associated ancillary facilities on approximately 1.6 hectares (4 acres) of land between the University's hockey pitch and the N59 – the site of the current application.
- 7.2.5. This exception is subject to strict requirements, including the preparation and implementation of a School Traffic Control Management Plan and a Mobility Management Plan. These plans must demonstrate how the development will contribute to sustainable transportation goals, including targets for increased public transport usage and other sustainable travel modes for both students and staff, in alignment with national climate action policies.
- 7.2.6. In considering the policy framework and the specific zoning of the site, the proposed development for a secondary school aligns with the objectives set forth in the Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029. While the site falls short of the Department of Education's ideal guidelines in terms of size, the zoning policies explicitly acknowledge and accommodate the development of a secondary school on lands of reduced size in this particular location. The exception granted under Section 11.2.2 indicates a degree of flexibility in the application of size guidelines, allowing for the provision of educational facilities where such development supports the broader zoning objectives. This flexibility, however, is conditional upon the implementation of robust management strategies to mitigate potential traffic and mobility impacts. Given the site's location adjacent to key university facilities, the proposal should be evaluated not only in terms of physical space but also its integration with existing and planned transport infrastructure.
- 7.2.7. In conclusion, the principal of developing a secondary school on this site is consistent with the RA zoning objective and Policy Objectives 11.2.2 as outlined in the Galway City Development Plan.

7.3. **Site Location –**

- 7.3.1. The proposed site for the school development is located at Dangan, on the northern side of the N59. This location is examined in the context of Section 7.5 of the Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029, which outlines the strategic objectives for community facilities, including education. One of the key principles emphasised in the Plan is the promotion of the “15-minute city” concept. This concept envisions that all residents should have access to essential services, including education, within 15 minutes by walking, cycling, or using public transport. However, the Plan also highlights the challenge of addressing the current imbalance in the geographic distribution of educational facilities across Galway City, which hinders the realisation of this objective.
- 7.3.2. The Dangan site, while somewhat removed from the city centre, is located between existing residential, educational, enterprise, light industry and commercial zoned lands. This strategic positioning can help bridge the gap in education facility distribution. Although the current St. Joseph's school is located at Nuns Island, which is closer to the city centre, I believe that relocating the school to Dangan brings the facility closer to expanding residential areas. This relocation aligns with the objectives of Section 7.5 of the Galway City Development Plan, as it promotes more equitable access to educational facilities for communities in the northern outskirts of Galway.
- 7.3.3. In addition, the proposed development complies with the principles set out in "The Provision of Schools and the Planning System: A Code of Practice for Planning Authorities" (July 2008). Section 3 of the guidance document outlines several key considerations for school planning, and this proposal demonstrates alignment with these principles:
- **Location and Fit-for-Purpose Site Selection**

The site is deemed fit for purpose in terms of location, access to services, and provision of adequate space for recreational and sports activities, as required by the Department of Education guidelines. The inclusion of outdoor ball courts and the site's proximity to the University of Galway's Dangan Sportsgrounds further support the creation of a conducive learning environment with access to high-quality sports facilities.

- **Access and Sustainable Mobility**

While detailed mobility management and access considerations will be discussed in Section 7.4 of this report, it is important to note that the site appears to meet the guidance regarding ease of access from surrounding areas. The location encourages sustainable mobility through walking, cycling, and public transport, consistent with the principles of the “15-minute city” and Department guidelines. The nearby N59 provides an established route for both vehicular access and public transport, making the site accessible for staff and students from surrounding residential areas.

- **Multi-Campus Schooling and Shared Facilities**

The guidance document encourages the consideration of multi-campus schooling arrangements and the potential for schools to anchor wider community facilities. The proposed school at Dangan will benefit significantly from its adjacency to the University of Galway’s sports facilities, allowing for shared use of these amenities. This collaboration aligns with the Department’s recommendation for educational developments to share facilities where possible, ensuring an efficient use of available resources and enhancing the student experience.

7.3.4. I am satisfied that the location of the proposed school development aligns with the relevant planning policy frameworks. The proposal complies with both the Department Guidance for Planning Authorities and the objectives set out in Section 7.5 of the Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029. The site’s strategic positioning between residential and community facilities, coupled with its alignment with for shared facility use, strengthens the case for its suitability for the proposed educational development.

7.4. **Traffic Impact/ Road Safety**

The appellant has expressed several concerns regarding the proposed development’s impact on road safety and traffic, particularly highlighting potential delays and the creation of traffic hazards. Specific issues raised include the lack of cycle paths in the vicinity, making it difficult for students to travel sustainably, as well as the limited viability of public transport in the area. Additionally, the appellant notes the absence of adequate set-down and pick-up areas for vehicles, which could exacerbate traffic congestion. For the purposes of clarity, this section of the report

will address the key issues under distinct sub-headings, including Traffic Impact, Road Safety and Mobility Management.

7.4.1. Layout

In response to a request for further information from Galway City Council Planning Department (dated 27th July 2024), the applicant submitted a revised layout for the proposed development, which was subsequently approved by Galway City Council. The site is to be accessed via a signalised junction off the N59, positioned at the northern end of the site. This junction will serve as the primary access and exit point for both the proposed school development and the University of Galway's sports campus. Additionally, vehicular access via St. Anne's Road to the university campus will be closed. A separate signalised pedestrian and cycle access will be provided off the N59 just east of the Dangan Heights access junction. Bollards are to be provided to prevent parking on the N59 footpath. An outline layout for a potential future N6 scheme (Galway City ring Road) has been shown on the drawings to show how the scheme would interact with the proposed development.

Vehicular traffic on St. Anne's will be prohibited in the University sports grounds once the school access road is opened. A retaining wall with transparent railing will be provided to the rear of the access road and along the sports pitch to take account of the level differences.

7.4.2. The design includes a 15-metre cycle transition zone at the signalised junction to ensure safe crossing for cyclists from the westbound lane of the N59 to the school's controlled crossing point. A 350-metre internal road will loop around the western side of the site, leading to a set-down area at the north of the school, adjacent to its main entrance. This will allow for all school drop-offs to be off the N59. Cycle lanes will be provided on each side of the access road. This road continues eastward, connecting with St. Anne's Road and an existing university car park.

7.4.3. A pedestrian path will be provided, linking the N59 with the school grounds and continuing to the university's internal road network to the north. Dedicated cycle lanes are incorporated throughout the scheme, and the site will provide 195 bicycle parking spaces. In addition, 65 car parking spaces will be available. The revised layout has been subject to a Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA), Road Safety Audit, and Mobility Management Plan. Importantly, no objections have been raised

by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, the Galway City Ring Road Project Office, or the Transportation Section of Galway City Council regarding the revised proposal.

7.4.4. Traffic Impact

Concerns were raised by the appellants and observers regarding the potential traffic impact on the local road network. In response, the applicant submitted a comprehensive Traffic and Transport Assessment (TTA) prepared by O'Connor Sutton Cronin & Associates. The appellants argue that the TTA lacks sufficient detail to assess the full traffic impact and claim that certain statements in the document are misleading. Having reviewed the TTA in full and considered the methodology used by the agent to gather information, I consider the TTA as prepared was carried out in accordance with best practice as prescribed by the Traffic and Transportation Assessment Guidelines 2014 as provided by Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

7.4.5. The TTA provides a detailed analysis of the study area, which includes the signalised junction off the N59, the proposed development area, and surrounding roads. The assessment covers traffic volumes across five junctions interacting with the N59 from Galway City towards the site. The background traffic data was collected over three survey dates in 2021 and 2022, with results attached in Appendix A of the report. A traffic volume growth rate was then extrapolated to a 2023 base year, applying Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) medium-range growth factors (Appendix B of the TTA). These growth factors account for increased traffic due to local development, car ownership, and economic activity.

7.4.6. To accurately assess the proposed development's traffic impact, three scenarios were analyzed:

- Base Year (2023): Reflects the current performance of the local road network.
- Year of Opening (2026): Projects the road network's performance when the development becomes operational.
- Design Year (2041): Considers long-term performance 15 years after the school opens.

7.4.7. A growth rate of 5.5% for light vehicles and 9.81% for heavy vehicles was applied over the three-year period up to 2026. These projections do not consider potential

reductions in traffic volumes due to increased remote working (as experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic), leading to a conservative estimate of traffic growth.

- 7.4.8. The development's traffic generation potential was estimated using the TRICS software database, which models traffic based on surveys from comparable developments across Ireland and the UK. During the morning peak (08:00–09:00), an estimated 192 arrivals and 152 departures will occur, while in the afternoon peak (15:00–16:00), approximately 80 arrivals and 112 departures are projected.
- 7.4.9. Although there is a slight discrepancy between local road network peak hours and the development's peak hours (particularly in the afternoon), this timing offset will help reduce the overall traffic impact on the local roads. It is also important to note that the proposed development does not represent a completely new traffic source. The school is already operational, albeit in a different location, meaning the new site will mainly redistribute existing trips rather than introduce a substantial increase in overall traffic.
- 7.4.10. The highest traffic disruptions are anticipated at the new signalised junction on the N59. To manage this, the eastern and western approaches to the junction will receive the majority of green signal time to avoid the formation of excessive queues. The analysis predicts the following queue lengths at the junction for the opening year (2026):

Morning Peak (A.M.):

- 3.9 vehicle queue (approximately 20 meters) on the eastern approach.
- 9.6 vehicle queue (approximately 50 meters) on the western approach.

Afternoon Peak (P.M.):

- 5 vehicle queue (approximately 25 meters) on the eastern approach.
- 6.2 vehicle queue (approximately 30 meters) on the western approach.

The queue lengths are not expected to block any nearby access points to housing estates, with the closest access roads situated 130 meters to the east and 110 meters to the west of the new junction.

- 7.4.11. The TTA also sets out pedestrian connectivity and bus connections to the site however these will be viewed in the context of mobility management which will be assessed in Section 7.6 of this report.
- 7.4.12. The traffic assessment and supporting data provided by the applicant suggest that the anticipated level of traffic disruption caused by the development will be minimal for an urban site. The design of the signalised junction and allocation of green time at peak hours are expected to mitigate potential congestion. Additionally, the redistribution of existing school traffic, rather than the introduction of new trips, means that the overall impact on Galway City's road network will be minimal. Thus, based on the information supplied, the proposed development's traffic impact can be deemed manageable and compliant with Galway City Development Plan DM Standard 11.11.3 with regard to Travel Plans and Policy Objective 4.5 Transport Demand Management Measures. I am satisfied that the TTA has been carried out in accordance with best practice and the proposal as presented will not have a significant negative impact on traffic volumes in the local area to warrant a reason for refusal in this instance.

7.4.13. Road Safety Audit

To address concerns about road safety along the N59, the signalised junction, and within the proposed development site, the applicant submitted a Road Safety Audit (RSA) conducted by Burton Consulting Engineers. The appellants have argued that the development's proximity to the N59 and nearby residential areas introduces numerous conflicting traffic movements, potentially compromising road safety. A comprehensive review of the RSA findings, the design modifications recommended, and compliance with Galway City Development Plan standards is provided to assess the adequacy of the proposed measures.

- 7.4.14. The Road Safety Audit identified 18 specific safety concerns associated with the design of the proposed development. These concerns included issues relating to pedestrian and cyclist safety, vehicular traffic conflicts, visibility at junctions, and the overall design of internal roads. Each identified issue was analysed in terms of design criteria, and recommendations were made for potential design improvements, adjustments, or enhancements to mitigate risks and improve the overall safety of the scheme.

7.4.15. The recommendations in the RSA encompassed various aspects:

- **Signalised Junction Improvements:** Suggestions were made to optimise the layout and operation of the new signalised junction on the N59 to minimise potential conflicts between turning vehicles and non-motorized road users.
- **Cycle Lanes:** The provision and continuity of cycle lanes were examined to ensure adequate protection for cyclists, particularly at crossing points and transitions.
- **Internal Road Layout:** Recommendations focused on ensuring clear separation between pedestrian walkways, cycle paths, and vehicle routes within the development. The aim was to reduce potential points of conflict and enhance safety for all users.

7.4.16. The design measures put forward by the applicant, combined with the recommendations from the RSA, address key safety concerns. The principal design elements include:

- **Signalised Junction on the N59:** The proposed design incorporates a fully signalised junction with a dedicated cycle transition zone and pedestrian crossings. The junction layout prioritises safety by allowing for controlled movements of vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians. Adequate green signal time has been allocated to manage traffic flow and minimise queue formation, reducing the likelihood of rear-end collisions or hazardous merging.
- **Cycle Lanes:** Continuous cycle lanes have been integrated throughout the development to provide a safer environment for cyclists. The dedicated cycle transition zone at the junction enables safe crossings for cyclists approaching from both directions on the N59. The design follows best practices in urban road safety by providing physical separation between motorised and non-motorised traffic where feasible.
- **Internal Road Network and Pedestrian Interactions:** Within the development site, the internal road layout has been designed to accommodate both vehicular access and non-motorized traffic. The provision of separate pedestrian paths and designated crossing points minimises interaction between vehicles and pedestrians. Set-down and pick-up areas are

strategically located to manage vehicle movements during peak times, reducing potential conflicts and enhancing safety for students and other users. Set down areas are off the N59, therefore reducing potential traffic congestion and conflicting traffic movements.

7.4.17. The proposed design and associated road safety measures comply with the Development Management (DM) Standard 11.3.1 (a) of the Galway City Development Plan. This standard emphasises the need for safe and efficient road layouts, catering to all road users, including motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. The criteria require that new developments address traffic safety issues comprehensively, ensuring that design features and safety interventions are implemented to reduce risks and improve the overall safety of the road network.

7.4.18. The design measures for the N59 access, internal road network, cycle lanes, and pedestrian facilities adhere to the relevant best practices and standards. The submitted RSA has been thorough in identifying potential safety issues, and the applicant has incorporated the necessary design improvements to mitigate these risks effectively. I am satisfied all aspects of the development have been addressed in terms of road safety.

7.4.19. Mobility Management Plan

The applicant submitted a Mobility Management Plan (MMP) prepared by O'Connor, Sutton, Cronin Associates, outlining measures to promote sustainable travel modes and reduce dependence on private cars. The plan addresses the availability of public transportation, pedestrian and cycling facilities, and modal shift strategies. This section evaluates the proposed MMP in terms of its alignment with the Galway City Development Plan and its potential impact on transportation choices for the proposed development.

7.4.20. The MMP highlights the availability of several public transport options in close proximity to the development:

- School Transport Scheme: Two buses under the National School Transport Scheme, operated by Bus Éireann, serve the area, transporting over 100 pupils from Killanin, Roscahill, and Moycullen to the existing school at Nun's Island. These buses will serve the new development and use the proposed bus set-down areas at the new school entrance.

- University Park and Ride: The University of Galway has agreed to allow pupils to use its Park and Ride service between Dangan and the south campus, providing an alternative drop-off and pick-up point. The Park and Ride car park is approximately an 11-minute walk from the school, accessible via the University's North and Sports Campuses.
- Public Bus Services: Existing bus stops within 500 to 550 meters (5-6 minute walk) of the development, primarily on Thomas Hynes Road, provide access to Bus Éireann services. These services connect the site to Galway City's central bus and rail networks, offering convenient options for pupils and staff traveling from various parts of the city and surrounding areas.

7.4.21. The plan identifies Galway Cathedral and Eyre Square as central bus interchange points that offer multiple route options for pupils traveling to the development. Both locations provide direct links to the wider Galway public transport network, allowing for easy transfers. The potential for using the Cathedral car park as a "Drop 'n' Hop" site under the Galway City Park and Stride program is also explored, promoting sustainable travel practices by allowing students to walk independently to school.

7.4.22. The pedestrian infrastructure around the development site is of high quality, with wide, well-maintained footpaths along the N59 and surrounding roads. The proposed development will integrate new pedestrian links to these existing paths, ensuring safe access from nearby bus stops and residential areas. New pedestrian crossings at key locations, such as the N59 and Circular Road, will further enhance safety and accessibility.

7.4.23. The MMP aligns with the Galway Transport Strategy's (GTS) objective of developing a high-quality, safe cycle network throughout the city. The development is well-connected to the existing and proposed cycle infrastructure, including feeder routes along the N59 and nearby greenways. Key cycling facilities planned for the development include:

- Cycle Lanes: One-way cycle tracks will be provided on each side of the main access road, connecting to off-road cycle links through the University of Galway campus.
- Cycle Parking: A total of 195 bike parking spaces will be distributed throughout the site, exceeding the required provision and allowing for future

expansion. Additionally, two changing rooms with shower facilities will be available to encourage cycling.

- Cycle Transition Zones: Safe crossing points are incorporated at the new signalised junction on the N59 to facilitate cyclist movement.

7.4.24. Modal Split and Travel Behaviour - Based on a travel survey conducted in October 2022 at the existing school:

- Staff Modal Split: Currently, 79% of staff commute by car, with lower usage of sustainable modes such as cycling (15%) and walking (12%).
- Pupil Modal Split: Pupils show a higher uptake of sustainable modes, with 47.5% using buses, bicycles, or walking. Private car use remains prevalent, driven by convenience and the need for child drop-offs.

7.4.25. To achieve a shift towards more sustainable travel, the MMP proposes:

- Regular Travel Surveys: Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of travel habits will inform future strategies to encourage alternative modes.
- Enhanced Public Transport Coordination: The plan includes negotiation with transport providers to improve service frequency, route directness, and cost.
- Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Improvements: Upgrades to footpaths, cycle lanes, and secure parking aim to increase the attractiveness of these modes.
- Promotion of Travel Apps: Tools like the TFI Journey Planner and Real Time Ireland app will be promoted to staff and pupils to facilitate journey planning using sustainable modes.

7.4.26. Communication and Implementation Strategy -A robust marketing and communication strategy will ensure the ongoing promotion of the MMP. A Mobility Management Plan Coordinator will be appointed to oversee implementation, conduct surveys, and work with stakeholders to continuously improve the plan's effectiveness.

7.4.27. The Mobility Management Plan demonstrates a well-considered strategy to encourage sustainable travel to the proposed development. The plan integrates public transport, pedestrian, and cycling facilities with marketing and policy

measures to support a shift away from private car use. By addressing key connectivity, safety, and infrastructure requirements, the MMP complies with Section 11.3.3 of the Galway City Development Plan and presents a realistic framework for promoting sustainable travel behaviours. I consider, the MMP adequately addresses the site's mobility needs, with a particular focus on sustainable modes of travel. The development's location and the measures proposed are likely to facilitate a positive modal shift, supporting a reduction in car journeys and improving overall accessibility. The applicant has sufficiently demonstrated the capacity to deliver the MMP, and the plan should be regarded as a suitable strategy for achieving the desired mobility outcomes.

7.4.28. In conclusion, I find that the applicant has effectively addressed concerns related to potential traffic impact and safety. The submitted Traffic and Transport Assessment, Mobility Management Plan, and Road Safety Audit collectively demonstrate the site's capability to accommodate the proposed development safely. I am satisfied that the applicant has shown sufficient capacity to implement the measures outlined in the Mobility Management Plan. Therefore, I consider that traffic impact and safety issues have been adequately addressed, and the proposal as outlined complies with the Galway City Development Plan 20203 -2029 as follows:

- Objective 4.5 Transport Demand Management Measures,
- Section 11.3.1(a) with regard to road design and layout,
- Section 11.11.3 with regard to Mobility Management Plans and Traffic and Transport Assessments.

I do not consider Road Safety and Traffic Impact to be a substantive issue to warrant a refusal in this instance.

7.5. Other Issues

7.5.1. The appellants have expressed concerns about the proximity of the proposed Galway City Ring Road to the development site, particularly regarding potential noise and air pollution. In response, the applicant provided a revised layout that shows the location of the proposed ring road to the northwest of the site and outlines its interaction with the development.

- 7.5.2. A noise analysis was conducted to assess the potential impact of the ring road on the site. The results indicate that current baseline external noise levels, which range from 49 dB to 57 dB, are projected to increase to 60 dB with the construction of the N6 Ring Road. To mitigate this, the proposed building design includes the use of acoustic trickle vents, which will maintain internal noise levels at 40 dB or lower. This complies with the Department of Education guidelines and Policy 9.6 on Air Quality and Noise as set out in the Galway City Development Plan 2023 - 2029. These measures aim to minimize noise levels through the building's design.
- 7.5.3. Regarding air quality, the applicant has outlined that the school will utilise a mechanical heat recovery ventilation system for all teaching areas, which will ensure appropriate indoor air quality is consistently achieved. While the appellants raised concerns about outdoor air quality, it is noted that relocating the school from one urban setting to another would present a similar level of exposure to air pollution. The measures proposed to reduce vehicular traffic on site, are discussed in Section 7.4, represent the practical steps the school can take to address this issue. It is also acknowledged that air pollution is a regional concern and not unique to the school site.
- 7.5.4. I consider that the applicant has demonstrated sufficient compliance with Policy 9.6 on Air Quality and Noise as outlined in the Galway City Development Plan 2023–2029. The potential impacts of the Galway City Ring Road, in this case, do not constitute a substantive issue that would justify a refusal of the application.
- 7.5.5. Flood Risk
- A Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA) was conducted by OCSC Multidisciplinary Consulting Engineers in support of the planning application. The assessment aligns with the Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (PSFRM), which categorise the proposed development as "highly vulnerable." The development site lies within Flood Zone C. According to the guidelines, construction within a Flood Risk Zone C, which has a low probability of flooding, is considered appropriate for this type of development.
- 7.5.6. Section 4 of the SSFRA outlines the results of various flood risk evaluations, including fluvial, pluvial, groundwater, and coastal flood risks. The findings confirm that the proposed development site is situated within Flood Zone C for both fluvial

and coastal flooding, indicating a low likelihood of flooding from these sources. Additionally, the assessment finds no significant risk of flooding from pluvial (surface water) or groundwater sources. The SSFRA further concludes that the proposed development will not exacerbate flood risk in the surrounding area. The proposal includes specific measures to mitigate any potential flood risk impacts, such as sustainable drainage solutions.

7.5.7. Based on these findings, the proposed development is compliant with Section 10.2 of the Galway City Development Plan and adheres to the Flood Risk Management Guidelines. The flood risk mitigation measures, site location, and assessment results ensure that the development is consistent with best practices for flood risk management.

7.5.8. Landscaping/ Loss of Trees

7.5.9. The appellant has expressed concerns regarding the loss of trees and the impact on local ecology resulting from the proposed development. In response, the applicant has submitted a comprehensive Landscape Design Statement, Ecological Impact Assessment, and Arboriculture Impact Assessment.

7.5.10. A mature tree line exists to the northeast of the site, which serves as a buffer between the development and the University sports campus. During the site inspection, it was observed that this tree line is frequently used by pedestrians as an informal walking path, indicating its high amenity value. The Arboriculture Impact Assessment, conducted by Arbor-Care Ltd, evaluated all trees on the site and found that while the majority are in poor condition and classified as low quality, the woodland to the north is of significant amenity value and is recommended for retention.

7.5.11. The proposed development includes the removal of 85m of treeline and approximately 50m of hawthorn hedgerow. In addition, 0.62ha of mixed broadleaved woodland at the northern and eastern section of the site will be lost. To mitigate this loss, the Landscape Design Statement outlines plans for significant tree replacement within the site. Although the Galway City Development Plan does not designate Tree Preservation Orders for the area, Policy 4.4.1 regarding Urban Woodland Parks and Trees aims to protect trees, woodlands, and hedgerows of special amenity and environmental value whenever feasible.

- 7.5.12. To address the considerable tree loss, the applicant's Landscape Design Statement specifies which trees will be retained and which will be removed. The landscaping plan allows for the planting of 0.64ha of trees throughout the site, including 0.27ha of native woodland, 0.27ha of individual trees and small clusters of trees throughout the campus. Approximately 150m of treeline is proposed along internal roads and approx. 520m of hedgerow throughout the site. This extensive landscaping program aims to mitigate against habitat loss and restore ecological corridors while providing screening for the development. The landscaping plan is comprehensive and includes mixed planting throughout the site to address potential habitat loss.
- 7.5.13. The applicant has submitted an Ecological Impact Assessment with the application. The assessment has considered the area generally to be of Local Importance (Higher value). The habitat is considered common in a local, national and international context and the loss of trees/hedgerows does not constitute a significant effect on biodiversity nationally. The replanting of 150m of linear habitat will allow retention of ecological corridors to the wider areas. It is considered that impacts would be local and mostly temporary once the appropriate mitigation in the form of landscaping is introduced.
- 7.5.14. I am satisfied that the proposed landscaping scheme addresses issues of biodiversity and habitat loss over the long term and the mitigation measures as provided offer an appropriate balance between potential local habitat loss and the delivery of the secondary school in this instance.

8.0 AA Screening

Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

(Stage 1, Article 6(3) of Habitats Directive)

- 8.1.1. I have considered the proposed development of a covered storage area in light of the requirements of S 177S and 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

A Natura Impact Statement was submitted as part of the application.

- 8.1.2. A detailed description is presented in Section 1 of my report. In summary, the proposed development site is a greenfield site on zoned land within the City Boundary of Galway City. The site is bounded to the north by the university of Galway Campus, to the south, east and west the site is bounded by residential development of various densities. The development will comprise of construction of a school (11,134sqm) with internal road and associated vehicular and bicycle parking. The site area is 2.575ha. The proposed development includes a new surface water drainage system to manage the increased runoff from additional hard surfaces on the site. The system is designed to accommodate a 20% increase in rainfall intensity to account for climate change, in line with the Galway County Council Development Plan and the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS). Wastewater will be directed to the sewer network.
- 8.1.3. Due to the natural topography of the site, the drainage system is divided into three distinct catchments. Surface water will be discharged to the ground via three soak pits/infiltration tanks. Before reaching the soak pits, runoff will pass through a bypass oil separator to remove hydrocarbons. An overflow system will be installed to allow excess water to drain by gravity to the existing Galway City Council stormwater network on the N59, southeast of the site, at a controlled rate of 4 liters per second.
- 8.1.4. The drainage network will feature a gravity-fed sewer system to collect surface water from roofs and paved areas, directing it to the on-site soak pits. All primary surface water pipes are sized to prevent surcharging during rainfall events up to a 1 in 5-year Annual Recurrence Interval (ARI), with an additional 10% allowance for increased rainfall intensity due to climate change.
- 8.1.5. There is no watercourse on site and the nearest water body is the Lough Corrib SAC and 490m to the north of the development site. Galway Bay Complex SAC is 1km from the development site. The Corrib River partially lies within the same groundwater catchment (the Maam-Clonbur) as the proposed development site and this river discharges into this SAC. The proposed development is underlain by the Burren formation, which is comprised of pale grey clean skeletal limestone which is a highly porous substrate

There are no other ecological features of note on site or in the vicinity of the site that would connect it directly to European Sites in the wider area. As per the Ecological

Impact Assessment and Natura Impact Statement provided No birds listed in Annex 1 of the EU Bird Directive were recorded during the field Survey. It is considered the site does not provide significant supporting habitat for any bird species protected under the legislation.

European Sites

The proposed development site is not located within or immediately adjacent to any site designated as a European Site, comprising a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA). Four European sites are located within 490m and 1km of the potential development site.

Lough Corrib SAC [000297]

Lough Corrib SPA [004042]

Galway Bay Complex SAC [000268]

Inner Galway Bay SPA [004031]

Given the limited scale of the proposal, I do not consider it necessary to examine the potential for significant effects on any European Sites beyond those of Lough Corrib SAC and SPA and Galway Bay Complex SAC.

European Site	Qualifying Interests (summary)	Distance	Connections
Lough Corrib SPA [000402]	Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>) [A051] Shoveler (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) [A056] Pochard (<i>Aythya farina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) [A082] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>)	1km	No direct connections

	[A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Wetlands [A999]		
Lough Corrib SAC [000279]	<p>Habitats:</p> <p>Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals [3130] Oligotrophic to Mesotrophic Standing Waters [3140] Hard Water Lakes [3260] Floating River Vegetation [6210] Orchid-rich Calcareous Grassland* [6410] Molinia Meadows [7110] Raised Bog (Active)* [7120] Degraded Raised Bog [7150] Rhynchosporion Vegetation [7210] Cladium Fens* [7220] Petrifying Springs* [7230] Alkaline Fens [8240] Limestone Pavement* [91A0] Old Oak Woodlands [91D0] Bog Woodland*</p> <p>Species:</p> <p>Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) [1092] White-clawed Crayfish (<i>Austropotamobius pallipes</i>) Version date: 07.03.2022 2 of 5 000297_Rev22.Docx [1095] Sea Lamprey (<i>Petromyzon marinus</i>)</p>	490m	Lough Corrib SAC partially lies within the same groundwater catchment (the Maam-Clonbur) as the proposed development site. The proposed development is underlain by the Burren formation, which is comprised of pale grey clean skeletal limestone which is a

	[1096] Brook Lamprey (<i>Lampetra planeri</i>) [1106] Atlantic Salmon (<i>Salmo salar</i>) [1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>) [1355] Otter (<i>Lutra lutra</i>) [1833] Slender Naiad (<i>Najas flexilis</i>) [6216] Slender Green Feather-moss (<i>Hamatocaulis vernicosus</i>)		highly porous substrate.
Galway Bay Complex SAC	<p>Habitats</p> <p>Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons* [1150]</p> <p>Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]</p> <p>Reefs [1170]</p> <p>Perennial vegetation of stony Banks [1220]</p> <p>Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]</p> <p>Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]</p> <p>Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330]</p> <p>Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410]</p> <p>Turloughs* [3180]</p>	3.52km to the South	The proposed development is underlain by the Burren formation, which is comprised of pale grey clean skeletal limestone which is a highly porous substrate.

	<p>Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) [6210]</p> <p>Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p>Limestone pavements [8240]</p> <p>Species:</p> <p>Otter (Lutra lutra) [1355]</p> <p>Harbour Seal (Phoca vitulina) [1365]</p>		
<p>Inner Galway Bay SPA [004031]</p>	<p>Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002]</p> <p>Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]</p> <p>Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]</p> <p>Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]</p> <p>Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]</p> <p>Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050]</p> <p>Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]</p> <p>Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069]</p>	<p>3.2km</p>	<p>The proposed development is underlain by the Burren formation, which is comprised of pale grey clean skeletal limestone which is a highly porous substrate.</p>

	<p>Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137]</p> <p>Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]</p> <p>Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142]</p> <p>Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149]</p> <p>Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157]</p> <p>Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160]</p> <p>Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162]</p> <p>Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169]</p> <p>Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179]</p> <p>Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182]</p> <p>Sandwich Tern (<i>Sterna sandvicensis</i>) [A191]</p> <p>Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193]</p> <p>Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]</p>		
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8.1.6. Likely impacts of the project (alone or in combination)

Due to the limited nature of the development proposal on a 2.75ha site on zoned land within Galway City and the relevant scale of construction impacts I consider that the proposed development would not be expected to generate impacts that could affect anything but the immediate area of the development site, thus having a very limited potential zone of influence on any ecological receptors. The applicant has set out mitigation measures under Section 6 of the NIS, these mitigation measures are not exceptional to standard best practice construction techniques and have also

been set out as part of a construction and environmental management plan. In my view the development is not likely to have significant negative impacts on any European site. The main mitigation measures are focused on surface water management during the construction and operational phase. I consider these practices to be best practice construction management techniques to protect water quality and SUDS measures as required under the Galway City Development Plan 2023 – 2029 and not specific mitigation measures to offset potential impacts on a European Site.

The proposed development would not have direct impacts on any European site. During site clearance, construction of the proposed school, internal road and site works, possible impact mechanisms of a temporary nature include generation of noise, dust and construction related emissions to surface water. However there is no surface water body on site and the site is at a significant distance from nearest European site with a number of intervening land uses between the development and nearest European site.

The contained nature of the site and distance from receiving features and intervening land uses connected to Lough Corrib SPA and SAC and Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Complex SPA make it highly unlikely that the proposed development could generate impacts of a magnitude that could affect European Sites.

8.1.7. Likely significant effects on the European sites in view of the conservation objectives

The construction or operation of the proposed development will not result in impacts that could affect the conservation objectives of any SAC or SPA. Due to distance, intervening land uses and lack of meaningful ecological connections there will be no changes in ecological functions due to any construction related emissions or disturbance.

There will be no direct or ex-situ effects from disturbance on mobile species during construction or operation of the proposed development. There will be no significant

disturbance to any wintering birds (ex-situ) that may occasionally use the amenity grassland area adjacent to the proposed development site.

8.1.8. **In combination effects**

The proposed development will not result in any effects that could contribute to an additive effect with other developments in the area. No mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions. I consider the construction methodology as set out in Section 6 of the submitted NIS are standard measures to maintain groundwater quality and is not a mitigation measure for the purpose of avoiding or preventing impacts to the SAC or SPA.

8.1.9. **Overall Conclusion**

Screening Determination

Having carried out Screening for Appropriate Assessment of the project in accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), I conclude that that the project individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on European Sites within Lough Corrib SAC, Lough Corrib SPA, Galway Bay Complex SAC or Inner Galway Bay SPA or any other European site, in view of the sites Conservation Objectives, and Appropriate Assessment (and submission of a NIS) is not therefore required.

This determination is based on:

- The relative scale of the development on a 2.75ha site and lack of impact mechanisms that could significantly affect a European Site
- Distance from and weak indirect connections to the European sites
- No significant ex-situ impacts on wintering birds

9.0 **Recommendation**

For the reasons outlined above, I consider that the proposal is in compliance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and I recommend that permission is GRANTED subject to the following conditions.

10.0 Reasons and Considerations

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would be in accordance with the RA zoning objective and Policy Objectives 11.2.2 of Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029. The proposal as set out complies with Policy Objective 4.5 Transport Demand Management Measures and DM Standard 11.3.1 (a) and 11.3.3 in relation to Traffic Safety and Mobility Management therefore the proposal would be acceptable in terms of traffic and pedestrian safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

11.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application on the 7th June 2023 and as per revised drawings, reports and documents submitted on the 1st of May 2024, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development, or as otherwise stipulated by conditions hereunder, and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars. In default of agreement the matter(s) in dispute shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

Reason: In the interest of clarity

2. The developer shall engage a suitably qualified licensed eligible archaeologist (licensed under the National Monuments Acts) to carry out pre-development archaeological testing in areas of proposed ground disturbance and to submit an archaeological impact assessment report for the written agreement of the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, in advance of any site preparation

works or groundworks, including site investigation works/topsoil stripping/site clearance/dredging/underwater works and/or construction works. The report shall include an archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy. Where archaeological material is shown to be present, avoidance, preservation in-situ, preservation by record [archaeological excavation] and/or monitoring may be required. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the developer. No site preparation and/or construction works shall be carried out on site until the archaeologist's report has been submitted to and approval to proceed is agreed in writing with the planning authority. The planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any subsequent archaeological investigative works and/or monitoring following the completion of all archaeological work on site and the completion of any necessary post-excavation work. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation [either in situ or by record] of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest

3. All service cables associated with the proposed development such as electrical, telecommunications and communal television should be located underground. Ducting shall be provided by the developer to facilitate the provision of broadband infrastructure within the proposed development.

Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity

4. The construction of the development shall be managed in accordance with an updated Construction Management Plan, Environmental Management Construction Plan, Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan (CDWMP) and Construction Traffic Plan which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise and dust management measures, traffic management arrangements/ measures and off-site disposal of construction/demolition waste.

Reason: In the interests of public safety.

5. Surface water from the development shall be managed as set out in the submitted Engineering Services report. Final design details of the proposed system shall be agreed in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development. The development shall be completed in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: In the interest of proper planning and sustainable development.

6. The development shall be carried out and operated in accordance with the provisions of the Mobility Management Plan (MMP) submitted to the planning authority on 1st of May 2024. The specific measures detailed in Section 8 and Section 9 of the MMP to achieve the objectives and modal split targets for the development shall be implemented in full upon first occupation of the development. The developer shall undertake an annual monitoring exercise to the satisfaction of the planning authority for the first 6 years following first occupation of the development and shall submit the results to the planning authority for consideration and placement on the public file.

Reason: To achieve a reasonable modal split in transport and travel patterns in the interest of sustainable development.

7. All of the 195 no. bicycle parking stands on site shall be afforded sheltered covering and 10% of the overall provision shall be provided for non-standard cycles.

Reason: In the interests of sustainable development

8. Arrangements for the closure of St Anne's Road will be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the first occupancy of the development. Arrangements shall include the erection of signage, appropriate road markings and consultation with relevant parties. The development shall be completed in accordance with the agreed details.

Reason: In the interest of proper planning and sustainable development.

9. (a) The development shall proceed in accordance with the accepted Design Report (J177: St Joseph's Patrician College, Dungal Lower Galway/ N59 Circular Road Junction Design Report)
(b) Junction detailed design including phasing and technical details of the signalised junction and pedestrian crossing will be subject to the approval of Galway City Council

Road authority prior to commencement of any works on the public roadway. The development shall be in accordance with the agreed details.

(c) The recommendations of the Road Safety Audit of the proposed new entrance onto the N59 National Road shall be implemented in full and any additional works required because of the Road Safety Audit shall be carried out by the developer.

(d) No works shall be carried out in areas marked as Area Reserved for N6 Ring Road as per Drawing 20042-MOB-A-9007.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, traffic and pedestrian safety and orderly development.

10. The mitigation measures and best practice construction, operation and environmental protection methodologies and monitoring outlined in the Engineering Services report (dated 30th of April 2024) shall be implemented in full and supervised by a suitably qualified and bonded person(s).

Reason: In the interest of orderly and sustainable development.

11. Prior to occupation of the school development, details of external elevation and public realm signage shall be submitted and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.
- (b) All landscaping on site shall be completed as per the detail submitted in the "Outline Landscape and Maintenance Specification Document and Landscape Plan (22/002- P-P01) prior to the occupation of the development.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, orderly and sustainable development.

12. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances where prior written approval has been received from the planning authority.

Reason: In order to safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion of 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.

Darragh Ryan
Planning Inspector
17th of October 2024

Appendix 1 - Form 1

EIA Pre-Screening

[EIAR not submitted]

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	320047-24		
Proposed Development Summary	Construction of a school and all associated site works. Natura Impact Statement (NIS) submitted with application.		
Development Address	Dangan Lower, immediately to the north of the N59 Galway-Clifden road, adjacent to the Galway University Regional Sports Centre and immediately east of the Aughnacurra Housing Estate.		
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings)		Yes	X
		No	
2. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 1 or Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and does it equal or exceed any relevant quantity, area or limit where specified for that class?			
Yes			
No	X		Proceed to Q.3
3. Is the proposed development of a class specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) but does not equal or exceed a relevant quantity, area or other limit specified [sub-threshold development]?			
		Threshold	Comment (if relevant)
No			
Yes	X	Class 10 Infrastructure Projects (iv) 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	Proceed to Q.4

		20 hectares elsewhere. – The development site is less than 10 hectares		
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4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?		
No	X	Preliminary Examination required
Yes		

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

Form 2

EIA Preliminary Examination

An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	320047-24	
Proposed Development Summary	Construction of a school and all associated site works. Natura Impact Statement (NIS) submitted with application.	
Development Address	Dangan Lower, immediately to the north of the N59 Galway-Clifden road, adjacent to the Galway University Regional Sports Centre and immediately east of the Aughnacurra Housing Estate	
The Board carries out a preliminary examination [Ref. Art. 109(2)(a), Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)] of, at least, the nature, size or location of the proposed development having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations.		
	Examination	Yes/No/ Uncertain
<p>Nature of the Development</p> <p>Is the nature of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</p> <p>Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, emissions or pollutants?</p>	<p>The site is located on a site on underutilised agricultural land and is zoned. The proposed development is not exceptional in the context of existing environment.</p> <p>The proposal involves construction of a school and internal road with associated site. A construction waste management plan has been submitted. All waste can be managed through standard waste management procedures.</p>	No
<p>Size of the Development</p> <p>Is the size of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</p> <p>Are there significant cumulative considerations having regard to other existing</p>	<p>No the red line boundary of the site remains the same. There is no extension to boundary as a result of proposed development. The site area is 0.25ha.</p> <p>There are no other developments under construction in proximity to the site. All other development are established uses.</p>	No

and/or permitted projects?		
<p>Location of the Development</p> <p>Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or does it have the potential to significantly impact on an ecologically sensitive site or location?</p> <p>Does the proposed development have the potential to significantly affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area?</p>	<p>The proposed development is located 490m north of Lough Corrib SAC and Lough Corrib SPA. The proposal includes standard best practices methodologies for the control and management of wastewater and surface water on site.</p> <p>There are no other locally sensitive environmental sensitivities in the vicinity of relevance.</p>	No
Conclusion		
<p>There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.</p> <p>EIA not required.</p>		

Inspector: _____

Date: _____

DP/ADP: _____

Date: _____

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)

