Inspector's Report

ABP-321776-25

Development	BusConnects Galway: Dublin Road Development
Location	R338 Dublin Road, Galway City.
Planning Authority	Galway City Council
Applicant(s)	Galway City Council
Type of Application	Application under Section 51 (2) of the Roads Act 1993 as amended
Prescribed Bodies	An Taisce DAU OPW TII HSE HSE – Merlin Park University Hospital
Submissions Third Parties	Refer to Appendix 1
Date of Site Inspection	24th June 2025 and 24th August 2025
Inspector	Donogh O'Donoghue

Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Galway City Council has submitted an application to the Commission under Section 51 (2) of the Roads Act 1993 as amended. This report sets out an assessment of the application submitted by Galway City Council for the development of a sustainable transport scheme which provides for both cycle and bus priority measures over a distance of 3.9km on the Dublin Road from Moneenageisha Junction in the west to the Doughiska Junction in the east.

1.2. The proposed scheme will tie in directly with the permitted Galway BusConnects – Cross City Link scheme (ABP-314597-22) at the western extremity and is accompanied by a Compulsory Purchase Order reference ABP 321882-25. The objectives of the scheme are to:

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

1.2.1. A single pre-application discussion was undertaken by the applicant with the Commission in accordance with Section 51A of the Roads Act 1993 as amended, which provides for consultations with An Coimisiún Pleanála before making an application under Section 51. The Consultation Meeting was held on the 26th February 2024. A determination in relation to whether the project is strategic infrastructure or

not is not required under this Act. The pre application discussions were closed on the 13th December 2024.

1.3. The Application is accompanied by an EIAR and a NIS. No Oral Hearing was held in relation to the application as per the Commissions Direction dated 07th July 2025.

2.0 Site Location and Description

2.1. The proposed development has an overall length of approximately 3.9km commencing at the Moneenageisha Junction in the west and tying into the Doughiska Junction in the east with junctions at Renmore Park, Renmore Road, Michael Collins Road, Ballyloughane Road, Skerritt Junction, Merlin Park Hospital, Lios an Uisce (Galway Crystal), Rosshill Road, Coast Road and Doughiska Road. The proposed development will tie in with the permitted Galway BusConnects: Cross City Link Proposed Development at the western extremity. The route is a main arterial route into Galway City Centre for both commuters and tourists and runs adjacent to the Atlantic Technological University, Merlin Park Hospital, Bon Secours Hospital and a number of schools and other amenity locations.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1. The proposed development is a public transport priority corridor, encompassing the provision of dedicated bus lanes and segregated cycle lanes and footpaths on both sides of the Dublin Road.

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

- Construction works to facilitate road widening for the construction/installation of footpaths, cycle tracks and bus lanes,
- Construction works for the construction compound establishment,
- Drainage works including the provision of Petrol Interceptors/Bypass oil separators,
- Removal and upgrade of existing public lighting and installation of new lighting,
- Construction works to facilitate the installation of new or amendment to existing traffic signal-controlled junctions,

- Construction works to facilitate the installation of new or amendments to existing bus stops with associated bus shelters,
- Removal of existing mature trees (no. 446), planting of replacement trees (no. 409), and any additional landscaping,
- Diversion, relocation and protection of multiple underground and overground utilities,
- Widening is required along the length of the Dublin Road which will require up to 6m of adjacent lands,
- Reconfiguration of traffic movements to facilitate improved pedestrian, cyclist and bus accessibility and movement.

3.3. The Application is accompanied by an EIAR and a NIS

4.0 Submissions

4.1. A total of 16 submissions were received. This included 6 no submissions from Prescribed Bodies and 10 no Public Submission.

4.2. The Board should note that the Council's response to the submissions was recirculated for further comment to the third parties and a total of 8 responses were received. No new issues arose and many of the third-party submissions reiterated their original concerns.

4.3. Prescribed Bodies

6 no submissions were received from Prescribed Bodies and are summarised below along with a summary of the response from the applicant, Galway City Council:

4.3.1. An Taisce

- A cycle lane on the Northern side of the road from the Doughiska Junction to the Coast Road should be provided. This would better meet the needs of cyclists and be a safer option for them, as it would not require crossing the Old Dublin Road twice. This would also offer better connectivity between both the Dublin Road Bus Connects project and the Athlone to Galway Greenway.

- Consideration should be given to offsetting the bus stops outside the bus lanes which would allow following buses and taxis to continue their journeys unhindered.
- Recommends future proofing of BusConnects infrastructure to accommodate future light rail as per the findings of the 'Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study Report', prepared by Atkins Réalis, and published by the National Transport Authority on 30 October 2024.

Response from Galway City Council

- A cycle track is to be provided on the northern side of the Dublin Road between Coast Road and Doughiska junction under the current proposed development. The provision of a cycle track to the south side of the route would result in a significant impact to Rosshill Woods along the southern boundary of the existing R338. The provision of a cycle link to Galway Clinic or Oranmore falls outside the scope of this development application.
- Bus stops have been designed in accordance with the NTA's Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet for BusConnects Core Bus Corridors in order to minimise the conflict between bus passengers and cyclists. Furthermore, the proposed development has been subject to a Road Safety Audit of the design and it has found no issues in relation to the proposal for inline bus stops.
- The NTA, in conjunction with Galway City Council and Galway County Council, is developing the Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS). This strategy will replace the existing Galway Transport Strategy adopted in 2016 and will provide a new long-term strategic planning framework for the delivery of transport. As part of the development of the new GMATS, mode specific analysis is being undertaken in the form of a Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study and a Strategic Roads Feasibility Study. Both studies will form part of the analysis used to inform the development of the multi-modal GMATS.

  The Light Rail Feasibility Study published by the NTA does not identify a preferred alignment of a light rail corridor in the city. The report is only intended to explore key issues and potential feasibility. The feasibility study does include an illustrative list of potential measures that could be introduced to accommodate LRT in Galway along an indicative route. This includes for the widening of the Dublin Road to facilitate the provision of dedicated eastbound

and westbound combined bus/tram lanes. The proposed development proposes to widen the existing route to provide dedicated bus lanes in both directions. It is the view of GCC that this supports the potential for further upgrades into the future.

4.3.2. **Development Applications Unit**

- The DoHLGH has reviewed the EIAR and is broadly in agreement with the findings in relation to Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.
- Recommends that a Project Archaeologist be appointed to advise and oversee all aspects of the scheme and the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to include all identified archaeological impacts and mitigation measures (a drafted archaeological condition is included in the submission).

Response from Galway City Council

- GCC note that the measures set out in the condition recommended by the DAU are generally set out in Chapter 15 (Cultural Heritage) and the Cultural Heritage Mitigation Plan in the EIAR. The CEMP will be updated by GCC prior to finalising the Construction Contract documents for tender, to include any additional measures required pursuant to conditions attached to the Commission's decision.

4.3.3. **Office of Public Works**

- The OPW notes that the proposed development affects the Western Regional Garda Station Head Quarters, Dublin Road, Renmore, Co Galway H91 F62K which is a critical infrastructure that includes Gardai prisoner cells.
- Access and egress to the building cannot be compromised and there is also a need to preserve sensitive and important utilities entering the site (along the frontage).
- As part of the scheme design, engagement with Utility Companies and detailed surveys of underground services would be required.
- Any Garda sign that needs to be taken down to facilitate works, will need to be re-instated in full.

- During construction, a 24 hour on-call service is required to address any concerns relating to impacts of construction activities or incidents that could potentially arise on site.

Response from Galway City Council

- GCC will ensure continuity of access 24/7 for vehicles and pedestrians during the construction phase. The appointed contractor will be required to liaise directly with the OPW and An Garda Siochana to facilitate the ongoing operational activities during the construction stage.
- Consultation has been undertaken with the major utility companies regarding the design, and measures required to protect or divert the infrastructure which is interfacing with the proposed development. All utility companies for which diversions are proposed will continue to be consulted during detailed design stage to ensure that service interruptions are kept to a minimum.
- The reinstatement of the of the Garda sign will, in so far as is possible, be on a 'like for like' basis.
- The CEMP requires the appointed contractor to prepare an Environmental Incident Response Plan which will identify any on-site risks and appropriate responses. The EIRP will detail the initial contact that should be made in case of an emergency incident.

4.3.4. **Transport Infrastructure Ireland**

- TII supports the development
- It is, critical that the strategic function of the existing N6 Bothar na dTreabh national road as well as the N67 is safeguarded in accordance with Government policy. TII notes that the N67 has been incorrectly referenced as the R446.
- They recommend that the NTA be asked to review the details attributed to the R446 and to ensure that Section 6.5.6.1 Construction Route with associated mitigations meets the requirements of TII Publications.
- TII understands that the Galway local authorities and the NTA are undertaking an update of the Galway Transport Strategy (2016) and this update should include proposals to respond to the capacity issues at the national road

junctions identified in the EIAR in order to safeguard the strategic function of the N6, and N67.

Response from Galway City Council

- Following the construction of the N17/N18 Gort to Tuam scheme in 2017, the Department of Transport published Statutory Instruments which included a number of road reclassifications arising from the construction of the motorway scheme. In respect to SI 434 and SI 435, the instruments altered the routing of the N67 National Route. The statutory designation of the route between the Coolagh Roundabout at the N6, to the Carrowmoneash Roundabout at Oranbeg is the R446.
- Based on this, the proposed development does not impact on the N67 National Route, which proceeds north to the Glennascaul junction from Carrowmoneash.
- GCC notes that the development of the update to the Galway Transport Strategy is under the remit of the National Transport Authority. GCC also notes that the underlying objective of both the Galway Transport Strategy and the proposed development is to reduce car dependence on local trips which will address transport capacity and demand across the city.

4.3.5. **HSE**

- Submission on behalf of the HSE, who own the Woodlands Campus, situated along the proposed public transport.
- The Woodlands campus is home to the Brothers of Charity Services, Galway who operate the Rosedale school at this location.
- The HSE is fully supportive of the project.
- They acknowledge the boundary treatment proposals, but requests that consultation will be made with the HSE, and that Method Statements are reviewed and approved prior to commencement of development.
- Clarification is requested regarding the management of the interface with the Woodlands Campus during the construction phase and the intended mitigation measures to protect the daily operations of the campus.

- A review of the CPO maps has identified discrepancies regarding the designation of land take – temporary versus compulsory within the Woodlands campus. They request clarification on the exact status of the land take in these locations and further details regarding the full reinstatement /replacement of these buildings.
- Temporary and permanent compensation is required to support day to day operation of the business arising from disruption associated with temporary and permanent works.

Response from Galway City Council

- Prior to commencement of the works, engagement with the HSE/Brothers of Charity and the preparation of detailed Method Statements will take place. GCC confirm that the HSE/Brothers of Charity will be provided with an opportunity to review and comment on these Method Statements prior to any works commencing.
- Any lands acquired temporarily to facilitate construction work will be returned to landowners on completion of the works. Existing boundary walls or fencing being relocated will be constructed to match the existing conditions, unless otherwise agreed. The removal of trees, vegetation, lawns, paving etc will be minimised in so far as practicable.
- GCC will ensure continuity of access for users of the Woodlands Campus and also the security and the safeguarding of operations within the Campus during the construction stage. A detailed plan will be established, to mitigate any adverse impact during construction phase.
- The proposed CPO at the Brothers of Charity site will result in the boundary between temporary and permanent acquisition dissecting two existing buildings within the site. The proposed acquisition will result in the demolition of the two buildings, the footprint of part of one such building being on the lands intended to be compulsorily acquired on a temporary basis.
- The issues of reinstatement/replacement of these buildings and the associated compensation for any disruption may be addressed through fair compensation. Subject to the proposed development being approved and the CPO confirmed

by the Commission, and following service of the Notice to Treat, the landowner will be required to submit a claim for compensation. Reinstatement of property frontage including gates, railings, driveway and footpath will be on a like for like basis.

4.3.6. **HSE – Merlin Park University Hospital**

- They fully support the proposed development.
- However, the scheme is inconsistent with the Galway City Development Plan and Galway Transport Strategy by not acknowledging the planned future access to the Merlin Park University Hospital (MPUH) campus. They recommend that the design of the Dublin Road/Galway Crystal junction should provide a fourth arm (to serve MPUH) and the overarching junction design in respect of signals, crossings, bus and cycle lane provision, should reflect this.
- These upgrades could assist with resolving the existing junction capacity issue identified in the GTS and that are an integral part of long established plans to facilitate improved accessibility to MPUH.
- In regard to the CPO Submission, concerns are raised that the land take at the interface between MPUH and the Dublin Road/Galway Crystal junction is considered to be insufficient to accommodate the extent of the works required for completion of the scheme, including the link into MPUH. To avoid delays and complications later in the process, the HSE requests that the Bus Connects Project thoroughly assess and make provision for the acquisition of the requisite lands as part of this current process.
- They acknowledge the boundary treatment proposals, but requests reassurance that consultation will be made with the HSE, and that Method Statements for the rebuilding of the existing wall are reviewed and approved prior to the commencement of development.
- Feasibility report prepared by Rhatigan Architects for the proposed new entrance and access road to MPUH campus included. It confirms that the development of a proposed new entrance and access road to MPUH campus is feasible to improve the functionality and accessibility to the campus as service demand necessitates in the fullness of time.

Response from Galway City Council

- GCC remain committed to the provision of a new access to Merlin Park Hospital as outlined in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 - Section 4.8 Specific Objectives, Objective 27 “Facilitate a new access to Merlin Park Hospital from the Dublin Road.” The proposed development does not preclude a future access to the MPUH campus at the Dublin Road/Galway Crystal junction. Subject to the approval of the Commission, GCC can future proof the proposed junction design for the provision of a fourth arm into the Merlin Park Campus, by ensuring that services and utilities are laid to sufficient depth, and that the footway and cycle track are constructed to facilitate a fourth arm in the future.
- As set out in the Traffic and Transport chapter of the EIAR the magnitude of impact of the proposed development on the Dublin Road /MPUH junction for the Opening Year 2028 and Design Year 2043 in both the AM and PM peak is expected to be negligible with the significance of effects being `not significant'.
- In relation to sufficient landtake for the CPO, the applicant is satisfied that should the HSE obtain planning permission for a new access road, the junction and associated signalling can be adapted to incorporate a fourth arm with associated amendments to signalling.
- Prior to commencement of the works, engagement with the HSE and the preparation of detailed Method Statements will take place. The HSE will be provided with an opportunity to review and comment on these Method Statements prior to any works commencing.

4.4. Public Submissions

10 no public submissions were received and are summarised below along with a summary of the response from the applicant, Galway City Council:

4.4.1. Brothers of Charity

- Requests that a detailed review take place to ensure no interruption to operation of their service which includes two special needs schools and a variety of support services during the proposed works.

- During the early phase of the project, review of the effect of school traffic was considered and reviewed with the City Council but now with the development of a new school on the campus they would like to ensure all consideration is given to the bus vehicles entering the east campus entrance and turning left towards the new school access road.

Response from Galway City Council

- GCC note that the Woodland Campus hosts two special needs schools and GCC will ensure via its contractor the continuity of access for the school community and that there will be no disruption of services while the works take place. Should the proposed development be approved, the appointed contractor will be required to liaise directly with the HSE and Brothers of Charity to facilitate the ongoing use of the access and egress points during the construction stage.
- The width of the east campus entrance is unchanged from that existing. Consideration will be given at detailed design stage to facilitate access for bus vehicles entering the east campus entrance and turning left towards the new school access road.

4.4.2. **Catherine Connelly TD**

- She shares the concerns raised by the residents of Woodhaven, Merlin Park, Galway City in relation to accessibility and safety concerns.

Response from Galway City Council

- See response to Woodhaven Residents Association below.
- GCC and their design consultants have duly considered the issues raised by the Woodhaven Residents Association. Key stakeholder suggestions and responses have been included in Section 9.3 of the Option Selection Report.

4.4.3. **Connacht Hospitality Ltd**

- The proposals will result in significant changes along the hotel's entire frontage, with intensified road use, construction-related disruption, and permanent alterations to access and movement patterns.

- They recognise the need for enhanced infrastructure and support the broad objectives of Bus Connects Galway, however the current scheme design fails to address their specific needs and undermine basic functional access requirements for staff, guests, and service providers.
- The scheme, in its current form, does not provide sufficient safeguards to protect essential operations during construction or thereafter. It does not adequately reflect the realities of their business that it depends on private vehicle and coach access. In addition, the hotel relies on a single-entry point.
- A particularly problematic feature of the proposed scheme is the removal of the existing right-turn lane that currently facilitates direct entry to the hotel from the eastbound (Oranmore) direction. With this movement eliminated, vehicles approaching from Oranmore and the eastern corridor would be forced to make circuitous and potentially congested detours. The current scheme design does not reflect the operational realities and places a disproportionate burden on them as an established and successful business.
- In the absence of a right turning lane there will be significant obstruction to traffic coming from the east. They strongly recommend that it should be retained in final design.
- In addition, the hotel's sole access point, located directly off Dublin Road, is included within the boundaries of the proposed Compulsory Purchase Order and is expected to be occupied during construction works. As there is no secondary entrance to the site, any disruption to this entry, even on a temporary basis, poses a serious operational risk.
- The entire entrance area falls within the CPO boundary and is proposed to be occupied during construction. This represents a critical threat to the hotel's operations. The construction timeline has not been clearly defined.
- The majority of hotel users arrive by private vehicle or coach. The potential for loss or restriction of on-site car parking is a significant concern due to the hotel’s dependence on high levels of vehicle access and parking all year round. The CPO boundary may stop short of marked spaces, but this remains unclear as the mapping is tight and ambiguous. This as well as hotel roadside sign needs to be resolved through formal clarification.

- The scheme will restrict the hotel's ability to expand in the future as well as accommodating future buses/coaches parking.
- Proposed location of temporary access point during construction is wholly unacceptable from a hotel operations point of views.
- They were not consulted prior to publication of the scheme. They remain open and committed to further engagement with the Council, NTA and ABP to explore revised design solutions.
- A technical report prepared by Gerard Hannify, Chartered Engineer and transportation consultant accompanies this submission and provides a detailed engineering review of the likely short term and long-term impacts of the proposed scheme on the operations of the Hotel. The short-term impacts include impaired access to the hotel and the loss of car parking and signage with the loss of the turning lane identified as a long-term impact.

Response from Galway City Council

- GCC will ensure that access arrangements to the hotel will be considered and discussed with the landowner prior to work commencement. The appointed contractor will be required to liaise with the Connacht Hospitality Group to develop specific local traffic management plans to minimise disruption to the hotel in so far as is possible. In addition, the contractor will appoint a Public Liaison Officer who will be responsible for liaising with locals and promptly resolving any reasonable issues that arise.
- The DMURS framework supports the removal of right-turn lanes where appropriate as a means to reduce carriageway width, enhance pedestrian facilities, and improve the quality of the public realm. Vehicles will still be able to turn right to access the hotel but will be required to wait for a gap in oncoming traffic. This would also be the case in the situation where a right turn lane was provided. In situations where there is traffic congestion, a yellow box is provided to allow access and egress for hotel guests, suppliers, coaches and emergency vehicles.
- Parking capacity both in the temporary and permanent situations will be fully retained. The proposed widening to facilitate the cycle track and footpath is

confined to the green area strip and does not impact the car parking spaces along the front boundary.

- The temporary land take is required for the duration of the construction period to allow working space for the construction works and boundary works/and or accommodation works and will be returned after construction. It will be reinstated in the same condition as was existing.
- The expected construction duration for this section of the route is estimated to be approximately 13 months. However, construction activities at individual plots will have shorter durations than outlined in the overview of construction works presented. At construction stage, the contractor will appoint a Public Liaison Officer who will be responsible for liaising with locals and can advise on the detailed construction programme.
- It is acknowledged that the hotel's road sign is located within the temporary land acquisition area and may not need to be relocated. This will be considered further at detailed design stage and if it needs to be relocated, GCC will engage with the hotel to find a mutually satisfactory alternative location. In addition, the relocation of the hotel roadside sign can be discussed as part of the CPO compensation negotiations.
- The proposed development is supported by an extensive framework of International, European, National, Regional and Local policy, planning strategies and plans.
- The hotel's ability to expand on-site parking in the future can be considered as part of the CPO compensation negotiations. Current car parking capacity will not be decreased either on a temporary or permanent basis. There will also be improved public transport means for patrons to access the hotel.
- GCC undertook comprehensive pre-application non-statutory public consultation, as detailed in Section 1.6 of Chapter 1 (Introduction) of the EIAR. Details of the non-statutory public consultation are presented in the Public Consultation Report which accompanies the application. GCC consider that the hotel has been given a fair opportunity to participate in the consultation process and raise its concerns regarding the Proposed development.

4.4.4. **Duggans Supermarket Ltd**

- The submission sets out that in the past, planning permission was granted for a retail development and that in leu of suitable car parking a contribution was paid to the City Council.
- The next two adjoining properties fronting the Old Dublin Road have been purchased with the intent of redeveloping.
- The proposed development as initially instigated in 2020 showed that the Duggan property was not required. No explanation for this change has been provided.
- They object to the proposed acquisition as it is possible that the development would mitigate against their plans for further development of this immediate area.
- They stress that in the event the applicant wishes to resume discussions they require details prepared by accountants showing proposed alternative planning proposals that might be permissible on site in the event the intended purchase might proceed.
- They also require details on the proposed management of the property post-acquisition in the event the ground was to be acquired.

<u>Response from Galway City Council</u>

- The intervention proposed in this location include the demolition of the boundary wall and reconstruction along a new boundary location. The land acquisition required is shown in the Figure 3-3 of the Response document.
- It should be noted that any changes to the proposed land take would result in increased impacts on other properties and could potentially require the acquisition of a residential dwelling. All areas included in the CPO have been carefully considered and only included where deemed absolutely necessary.
- Should the proposed development be approved, the appointed contractor will be required to liaise directly with Duggans Supermarket Limited to facilitate the ongoing use of the access and egress points during the construction stage.

- Subject to the proposed development being approved and the CPO confirmed by the Commission, and following service of the Notice to Treat, the landowner will be required to submit a claim for compensation.
- The temporary land take is required for the duration of the construction period to allow working space for the construction works and boundary works/and or accommodation works and will be returned after construction. It will be reinstated in the same condition as was existing.

4.4.5. **Flannery's Motor Inns DAC**

- The hotel has 134 bedrooms and one of its major selling point, is the parking adjacent to the hotel.
- At present there are 97 car park spaces, 2 of these will be lost to the CPO.
- In addition, as a result of the proposed area for works, 26 spaces will be lost and there will be no facility for coaches to enter and park at the premises for the duration of the works.
- The main driver behind the works area appears to be the proposed bus stop at the front of the hotel. They recommend its relocation in line with international best practice spacing guidelines of 400m between bus stops.
- The CPO will remove the green area and trees to the front of the hotel and therefore additional noise and fumes will be an issue.
- The impact particularly during the work period could lead to the closure of the hotel and job losses.
- No indication provided of duration of works.
- Report attached from Candor Chartered Accountants Ltd providing an assessment of losses from proposed CPO of Road Frontage and Car Parking Spaces. The report concludes that the CPO as proposed currently will lead to significant additional losses for the duration of the works.
- Engineering Assessment report by Gerard Hanniffy, Consultant Civil Engineer detailing both the short-term and long-term impacts on the hotel.

<u>Response from Galway City Council</u>

- All areas included in the CPO have been carefully considered, kept at a minimum and only included where deemed absolutely necessary to meet the

proposed development objectives. Private parking will be impacted temporarily and permanently to construct the proposed development. 2 number car parking spaces will be lost and coach parking will be impacted temporarily while constructing the boundary wall. The relocation of the existing picnic area will be given consideration at detailed design stage.

- Having considered the proposed amendments as set out in the submission, Galway City Council have no objection to, and would support An Coimisiún Pleanála making a condition to the grant of planning permission which would amend the proposed development in the vicinity of Galwegians whereby the bus stop is moved from the land by entrance of Flannery's Hotel to the land on the Dublin Road adjacent to the Galwegians Rugby Football Club. GCC have engaged with representatives of Atlantic Technological University ("ATU") who are agreeable to the proposal to relocate the Bus Stop and who are agreeable to GCC acquiring the necessary additional land. Email attached from ATU noting that they are agreeable to this amendment in principle.
- This modification in design would result in alterations to the proposed land take from Flannery's and ATU as described in the amended relevant extracts from the CPO schedule. From a traffic and safety perspective no significant impact is predicted. From an EIAR perspective the minor modification has been considered and no significant impact on the environment is predicted and no change to the overall conclusion of the EIAR and any benefit would be positive due to the requirement to remove less trees outside the hotel.
- Overall, this would also have the effect of reducing the land acquisition from Flannery's and increasing the land acquisition from ATU on the Compulsory Purchase Order. GCC suggest that this amendment be made by the Commission. For the avoidance of doubt, this change would not affect any landowners other than Flannery's Motor Inns DAC and ATU
- Street trees and groups of trees that may be impacted by the proposed development will be replaced as per the Planting Strategy as well as the introduction of new tree planting and street trees within other spaces and along streets. Reinforcement of green infrastructure along the route will help to improve the overall amenity, character and appeal of the route corridor and localities along it, as well as enhancing biodiversity.

- The EIAR sets out that the construction phase impact on trees and vegetation is predicted to be temporary, slight, negative to imperceptible. Following the establishment of the proposed landscape measures, the impact on trees and vegetation during operation is predicted to be short-term, slight, negative, improving to imperceptible as the proposed vegetation matures.
- The EIAR sets out that once the various mitigation measures are put in place, noise impacts associated with the construction phase will be of Negative, Not Significant to Moderate, and Temporary impact during all key construction phases during daytime periods. There are no significant residual Operational Phase noise or vibration impacts associated with the proposed development
- The EIAR sets out that with the implementation of the mitigation measures no significant adverse residual effects on air quality are predicted during the Construction Phase of the proposed development. The operation phase will have a generally neutral impact on air quality.
- When roads and streets are being upgraded, there will be some temporary disruption / alterations to access to premises in certain locations. The appointed contractor will be required to liaise directly with the management of Flannery's Hotel to facilitate the ongoing use of the access and egress points during the construction stage.
- The reinstatement of the hotel sign will, in so far as is possible, be on a 'like for like' basis.
- The permanent loss of land value will need to be assessed by a professional valuer.
- The overall construction works are anticipated to take approximately 24 months. The expected construction duration for this section is estimated to be approximately 13 months. However, construction activities at individual plots will have shorter durations than outlined in the overview of construction works presented in Section 5.4 of the EIAR.

4.4.6. **Galway City Community Network CLG**

- Established in 2014 Galway City Community Network (GCCN) is the Public Participation Network in Galway City.

- GCCN members wished to thank the NTA and Galway City Council for the design of the project and felt that much of their input was included in the design where possible and this was most welcome. They feel that the re-design of the route will be a transformational project for Galway City.
- The scheme should be accessibility and equality proofed with the expertise of people with lived experience to ensure accessibility for all road users including people with disabilities, older people, and children.
- The consultation process took inadequate account of community views given the very short consultation period of 4 weeks. GCCN requests an extended consultation period.
- The location outside the ATU effectively serves as an eastern bus station on the approach to the city. In this regard the high demand for buses pulling in and out and for bus users crossing the road there is a need for a 30km/h speed at this location and this should also include the junction at Belmont where the crossing has a specific role as a route to the schools in Renmore.
- All bus stops should be set back/ recessed from the planned bus lanes to ensure no back up in buses/taxi following on.
- At ATU just one bus stop is shown on both sides of the road even though this is a bus stop for both city bus services and non-stop intercity/commuter buses. GCCN'S position is that there should be three bus stops at these locations on both sides instead of one bus stop and all should be set back.
- A shared cycle /pedestrian path is shown on the south side of the Dublin Road between Doughiska Road and the Coast Road. A cycle lane inside the trees on the south side of the road should be incorporated into the design.
- There should be a cycle path connection between the Project and the emerging preferred route for Athlone to Galway Greenway. The most likely way to do this is through a cycle path on the coast road.
- There should be an incoming bus lane from the new traffic lights at the Martin Roundabout to the proposed incoming new bus lane starting at Doughiska Road.
- Due to the very high ecological Importance of the South Meadows and South Woods, a detailed construction plan should be brought before An Bord Pleanála and screened to ensure no impact.

- GCCN requests that all efforts must be made to ensure access to the meadows from the cycle lane is limited to ensure no impact going forward.
- There is an established mammal link between Unclin and Antin Woods and the South Woods. To minimize the level of road kills on the Dublin Road there should be access pipes/underpasses under the Dublin Road for mammals plus a high-level access wire for Red Squirrels on poles between trees on both sides of the Dublin Road.
- The Skerritt Roundabout at ATU contains large numbers of Pyramid Orchids and Bee Orchids. GCCN submits that all of these orchids should be identified and relocated to an appropriate alternative location before construction work on the Skerritt Roundabout begins.
- GCCN welcome the proposed new traffic lights at the current entrance to Merlin Park Hospital. They request that there should be no plans made to facilitate a new road entrance to Merlin Park Hospital at the Murrough Drive/ Eddies Takeaway traffic lights. Consideration should be given to formal cycling arrangements into and out of the campus.
- The proposals for floating bus stops are welcome.
- For each designated bus stop/bus stops at ATU, GCCN proposes that there should be a bus shelter set back from the path.
- At bus stops at ATU bus shelters similar to those on the north side of Eyre Square in Galway City should be considered.
- The proposals for floating bus stops are welcome. Guard rails to direct bus passengers towards the cycle track crossing point similar to those used on the Seamus Quirke road should be replicated here. Tramline or corduroy paving on any cycling surfaces should be avoided as it represents a hazard.
- GCCN expresses concern about the location of push buttons on pedestrian/toucan crossings and where they are intended for bicycle users at other locations in the city.
- GCCN welcomes the proposed Cyclops style junction at the Skerrit Roundabout. Similar arrangements should be considered at other junctions.
- GCCN would like clarity around phasing of the lights. The understanding is that it is assumed in UK practice that cyclists will have enough green time for a right turn in one phase. GCCN proposes that left slip lanes are needed for cyclists

on all quadrants as otherwise a proportion of cyclists will use the footpaths to take the shortest path.

- GCCN suggest that a new access point is needed into the ATU campus to avoid a likely outcome of cyclists coming from the south crossing at the Skerrit and cycling in the wrong direction along the cycle track north of the road.
- GCCN requests that consideration is given to combining the pedestrian crossing at the inbound bus stop into a signalised entry exit to the Woodlands (Brother of Charity Campus) and closing the other entry exit closer to the Moneenageisha junction.
- GCCN asks that the impact of the proposed graveyard between Wellpark Grove and the Connacht Hotel should be considered.
- GCCN suggests that a continuous footway treatment is needed across the mouth of the junction at Renmore Park and that it should be left in left out only with no right turns permitted off the Dublin Road.
- GCCN proposes that the house facing Duggan's shop on northside of the junction of junction of R338 Dublin Road and Renmore Road should be given a dedicated parking/driveway arrangement and consideration given to swapping the footway and cycle track through the junction on the northside, so the cycle track by-passes the junction and pedestrian crossings. The junction arrangements should also allow cyclists to bypass the lights to turn left unless there are people on foot using the crossings.
- Renmore Road is a route to two schools and adequate width is needed on the entry to Renmore Road. Consider bringing the outbound cycle track behind the pedestrian crossing such as a floating bus stop/cyclops junction arrangement. A formal cycling connection should be provided into Glenina Heights, this will also provide for cyclists turning left into Micheal Collins Road.
- There should be no "dishing" of the footway or cycle track at the property entrances on southside of Dublin Road at Galwegians. The kerbing should be sloped to allow vehicle access.
- The cross sections on the road section from Renmore Rd to Galwegians show 1.75m for the cycle track, GCCN suggests that this should be widened to 2m.

- Consideration should be given to making the Belmont junction into a Cyclops layout with a direct link Into the ATU campus. Formal cycling access is needed to and from the ATU campus at this location.
- Sightlines need to be checked to the right for traffic exiting Woodhaven.
- GCCN suggests that a cycling walking cut through is needed to car park area west of the hospital entrance instead of expecting left turning cycle traffic to use lights.
- At Merlin Bar/Supermacs footpaths should be continuous without dished kerbs.
- There is also a traffic free lane away from the Dublin Road that is the natural walking and cycling route to and from Galway Crystal/Lios An Uisce/Gleann Na Ri. GCCN asks that consideration is given to this becoming tied in with the Merlin junction.
- GCCN requests that consideration is given to the conversion of Galway Crystal Junction to a Cyclops Junction. Northside - the floating bus stop/island should be continued to, and through, the traffic lights. This will remove conflict with the eastbound cycle traffic. Southside - the connection along the boundary of Galway Crystal through to Rosshill road should be formalised and upgraded. This is the natural desire line for cyclists coming from, or to, the coast road or Rosshill itself.
- At Rosshill Park Woods GCCN welcomes the provision of cycle facilities on both sides of the road here.
- At the Junction of R338 Dublin Road and Coast Road GCCN recommends that cycling bypasses for cyclists turning left should be available on all arms. The design of the junction is not clear as to how cyclists are supposed to access the coast road. GCCN requests that consideration be given to converting this junction to a Cyclops junction.
- At Castlegar GAA Pitch the footway on the south side of the road is marked "Shared Pedestrian Cycle path" should be widened to 3m.
- At the Junction of R338 Dublin Road and Doughiska Road GCCN proposes that cycling bypasses for cyclists turning left should be available on all arms and consideration should be given to converting this junction to a cyclops junction.

- concerns about the adequacy of the current street lighting arrangements and reassurance required regarding the number and location of streetlights required. Lighting to take trees/vegetation and biodiversity into account, particularly at obvious crossing locations.
- The recommendation in relation to considering the future proofing of the new bus infrastructure to enable future conversion to LRT operations included in the Galway LRT Feasibiity Study Report 2024, should be fully respected.

Response from Galway City Council

- The consultation process provided multiple opportunities for stakeholders to engage with GCC and including two rounds of Non-Statutory Public Consultation, a briefing to elected members of GCC, ongoing dialogue with affected landowners and an 8-week statutory consultation period.
- The proposed development has generally been designed to urban standards in accordance with the DMURS and in addition criteria from other documents have been considered to provide the most appropriate design application including the National Cycle Manual (NCM), the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Publication, 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach' and the BusConnects Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet.
- Bus stops have been designed in accordance with the NTA's Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet for BusConnects Core Bus Corridors in order to minimise the conflict between bus passengers and cyclists. The Road Safety Audit report has found no issues in relation to the proposal for inline bus stops.
- There are 3 bus stops at ATU, two of which are recessed, and one is inline. The two recessed bus bays are for intercity busses which are expected to have significantly longer dwelling times. The local bus will use the inline bus stop.
- The scheme has been design based on the Default Speed Limit of 50km/h for Galway City, as defined by Section 5 of the Road Traffic Act 2004. The consideration of a change in speed limit post construction is subject to assessment and a separate statutory process and is not precluded by the proposed development.
- There is no proposal for a shared cycle/pedestrian path on the south side of the Dublin Road. A footpath only is proposed here. All westbound cycle traffic will

be directed onto the two-way cycle track on the north side of the Dublin Road at the Doughiska junction and then back to the south side of the road at the Coast Road junction. By consolidating the cycle infrastructure to one side, the current design minimises disruption, reduces the scale of temporary land acquisition, and lessens environmental and construction-related impacts.

- The provision of a link between the scheme and the emerging preferred option of the Athlone to Galway Greenway is detailed at Doughiska Road South and at Ballyloughane Road. However, the connectivity of these routes to the greenway is subject to the relevant statutory consent processes for these separate schemes which are outside the scope of this proposed development.
- In relation to the outgoing bus lane continuing to the new traffic lights at the Martin Roundabout it is noted that the scope of the proposed development, which has been approved by local representatives, costed and environmentally assessed, is from the tie-in with the Cross City Link project at the western end and to the Doughiska Road junction to the east. Extensions to the east would need to be considered as part of future developments.
- A permanent boundary, in the form of a fence or stone wall, will be provided to the rear of the proposed footpath along the extents of the South Meadows to deter bicycle access to this area.
- The translocation and/or replanting of the Pyramid Orchids and Bee Orchids at Skerritt Junction can be considered further at detailed design stage.
- In relation to mammal underpasses the Project Ecologist advised that, as the road works only involved localised widening, there was no opportunity to provide mammal underpasses under the Dublin Road. It was agreed that existing mammal paths would be retained and accommodated in any proposed boundary treatment. Regarding the high-level access wire for squirrels, the Project Ecologist advised that the trees on either side of the Dublin Road would not be at a sufficient height to accommodate this proposal. It was noted that the Merlin Park woodland habitat to the north is likely to be used by red squirrel however the proposed development is not expected to overlap or interact with these woodland areas.
- It is noted that fauna in the area will be accustomed to certain levels of disturbance with the urban area and existing R338. Overall, the EIAR sets out

that the effects on non-volant mammals during construction are assessed as Negative, Slight, Short-term and in the Local Context.

- Consideration can be given to formal cycling arrangements into and out of the Merlin Park Hospital campus to allow a means for cyclists to get past queueing motor vehicles and to facilitate all turning movements.
- Bus shelters will be provided at ATU in accordance with NTA's Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet for BusConnects Core Bus Corridors and the Cycle Design Manual, details of which will be confirmed at detailed design stage.
- The proposed development has provided junction designs in line NTA guidelines and will lead to significant improvements for pedestrians and cyclists. The accessibility of all push button units will be confirmed at detailed design stage and will cater for all types of bicycle users.
- Based on the signalised junction types, the scheme will have seven Protected Junctions, one On-Road Cycle Lane Junction and one Cyclops Junction. The greater space available at the Skerritt Roundabout has afforded adoption of a Cyclops type protected junction with cyclists provided with an orbital cycle track around the junction. This is not the case at other junctions where space is more constrained. More compact junction types have been used in other locations to suit the specific constraints at each location. As part of detailed design, the layout of these junctions will be reviewed for closer compliance with the Cycle Design Manual and will include exploring opportunities for adoption of the Cyclops junction layout at other junctions.
- A new entrance to ATU is not proposed at this time as it would be subject to third party agreement with respect to provision of same. Cyclists can continue straight to the Toucan crossing and enter ATU here.
- It is not proposed to construct a new signalised entrance to Brothers of Charity Campus. Unless there is very high flow of traffic, signalised junctions would not normally be adopted for private entrances
- The proposed cemetery was considered during the design phase, and it is not expected to have a significant impact on the BusConnects Dublin Road development.
- Restricting traffic from turning right into and out of Renmore Park would introduce a significant inconvenience and a potential safety concern caused by

drivers attempting U-turns on the R338 and is not therefore considered a viable proposal for the scheme.

- A parking facility will be provided for the property facing Duggan's shop within Glenina Heights and with no vehicular access to the property provided directly from the R338 at the proposed signalised junction.
- It is agreed that a cycle connectivity to Glenina Heights should be facilitated at the junction and can be included as part of detailed design.
- There will be no "dishing" of the footway or cycle track at the property entrances on the southside of Dublin Road at Galwegians and kerbing will be sloped to allow vehicle access.
- The treatment of the side road junctions and private accesses in Ireland are guided by the Cycle Design Manual Appendix A (Cycle Design Manual). The utilisation of the Dutch Keb will be considered at detailed design stage, where same aligns with the national guidance on side road treatments.
- In the Road section from Renmore Road to Galwegians a 2m width cycle tracks will be provided and not 1.75m as stated by GCCN.
- Proposed junctions for the scheme are designed as per the NTA's Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet for BusConnects Core Bus Corridors. Standard Protected Junctions are the preferred signalised junction form throughout. Skerrit junction is an exception as there is ample space there for a Cyclops type junction.
- At Woodhaven Entrance the detailed design phase will ensure that sightlines consistent with relevant standards are adhered to.
- At Merlin Hospital Access Road detailed design will review the layout of this junction under the context of the Cycle Design Manual, and this may include the provision of left-turns for cyclists outside of the signal control.
- At Merlin Bar/Supermac's there are considerable existing constraints along this boundary that will need to be further considered at detailed design stage. However, retention of the footpath and cycle track as a continuous and raised pathway through this area with Dutch type kerbs or similar, in accordance with the Cycle Design Manual, will be considered.
- The provision of a cycling route to and from Galway Crystal/ Líos an Uisce/Gleann Na Rí lies outside the scope of the Proposed Development and

would require a separate ecological assessment. This proposal can be explored in the future.

- Detailed design stage will review the Galway Crystal junction design in the context of the current requirements of the Cycle Design Manual for Protected Junctions, including consideration of the Cyclops configuration. There may be merit in this case in retaining the floating bus stop paved area through the junction and moving the cycle track to the rear of the footpath (like in a Cyclops layout) as suggested. This would need more detailed consideration. In relation to the connection along the boundary of Galway Crystal through to Rosshill Road, the scheme can easily accommodate westbound cyclists emerging from the track at the end of Rosshill Road.
- At the Junction of R338 Dublin Road and Coast Road eastbound cyclists can access the coast road via the cycle track to the eastern side of the signalised junction. Westbound cyclists can access the coast road via the same route. Detailed design stage will review the junction design at the R338/Coast Road in the context of the current requirements of the Cycle Design Manual for Protected Junctions, including consideration of the Cyclops configuration.
- At Castlegar GAA Pitch the drawings submitted as part of the planning submission include a footway only on the south side of Dublin Road. It will not be a Shared Pedestrian Cycle path. It is intended that all cyclists will use the dedicated two-way cycle track to the north.
- Detailed design stage will review the junction design at the R338 / Doughiska Road in the context of the current requirements of the Cycle Design Manual for Protected Junctions, including consideration of the Cyclops configuration and consider how the junction signalling will operate in an equable manner. There are particular existing constraints at this junction that may preclude adoption of a Cyclops configuration.
- In locations where road widening and/or additional space in the road margin is required, it is proposed that the public lighting columns will be replaced and relocated to the rear of the footpath to eliminate conflict with pedestrians, eliminating pedestrian obstruction. For existing columns that have specific aesthetic requirements, the intent for the replacement (where applicable) of such columns and replacing existing luminaires with approved LED heritage

luminaires. The lighting design for the proposed development follows the recommendations of the DAU (set out in their response to the EIA Scoping Report, 7th June 2023) regarding public lighting and biodiversity. Following implementation of these mitigation measures no significant residual effects on designated sites, habitats and flora or fauna are expected to arise during either the Construction or Operational Phases of the Proposed Development.

- In relation to considering the future proofing of the new bus infrastructure to enable future conversion to LRT operations, the applicant refers to the response the Response to An Taisce submission above.

4.4.7. **GLUAS Light Rail for Galway team**

- The GLUAS team respectfully requests that, in considering this scheme, the recommendation in relation to giving active consideration to the future proofing of the new bus infrastructure to enable future conversion to Light Rail Transit operations included in 'Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study Report', prepared by Atkins Réalis, and published by the National Transport Authority on 30 October 2024.

Response from Galway City Council

- The NTA, in conjunction with Galway City Council and Galway County Council, is developing the Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (GMATS). This strategy will replace the existing Galway Transport Strategy adopted in 2016 and will provide a new long-term strategic planning framework for the delivery of transport. As part of the development of the new GMATS, mode specific analysis is being undertaken in the form of a Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study and a Strategic Roads Feasibility Study. Both studies will form part of the analysis used to inform the development of the multi-modal GMATS.

  The Light Rail Feasibility Study published by the NTA does not identify a preferred alignment of a light rail corridor in the city. The report is only intended to explore key issues and potential feasibility. The feasibility study does include an illustrative list of potential measures that could be introduced to accommodate LRT in Galway along an indicative route. This includes for the

widening of the Dublin Road to facilitate the provision of dedicated eastbound and westbound combined bus/tram lanes. The proposed development proposes to widen the existing route to provide dedicated bus lanes in both directions. It is the view of GCC that this supports the potential for further upgrades into the future.

4.4.8. **Liam O Reilly, Yvonne O Reilly, Emily O Reilly**

- Serious concerns raised regarding the proposed bus corridor and its potential negative effects on Woodhaven, both direct and indirect.
- The proposed bus corridor has the potential to sever the Woodhaven community.
- The plans offer minimal benefits in terms of improved public transport accessibility locally.
- Consultation process was frustrating and protracted, with little meaningful engagement from the Project Team.
- They request the inclusion of conditions or amendments to the scheme.
- The proposed changes to the Woodhaven entrance will make it extremely difficult for residents to safely enter and exit the estate. The proposed layout introduces a significant level of complexity.
- The proposal includes measures to increase the speed limit to 80km/h on the Dublin Road which will result in road safety concerns.
- The reduction of the access junction to Woodhaven to 5m will give rise to significant difficulties for the swept path of vehicles entering and leaving the estate and will endanger public safety. Visibility will also be compromised by the alignment of boundary walls.
- The proposed access revisions will result in a reduced separation distance between the public road and internal junction which will lead to a traffic hazard.
- Proposal will result in removal of segregated walkways on both sides of vehicular entrance to Woodhaven.
- Proposal will result in loss of up to 90% of greenspace at properties 20 and 21 Woodhaven. This is a significant loss of reactional space/play area and will

have a determinantal impact on the resident's quality of life due to increase noise and pollution from nearby traffic.

- The Noise and Vibration Report is not considered satisfactory and inaccurately states that their properties are located 20m from the existing roadway when the correct distance is 16m. This oversight is significant as it disregards the potential significant impacts on quality of life and health. The report also fails to take into account noise pollution as a result of proposal.
- The development fails to provide a pedestrian crossing from the bus stop opposite Woodhaven and the need for one is all the more important given the significant widening of the Dublin Road.
- There is a disproportionate focus on wildlife over community impact.
- Lack of proper measurements regarding the exact boundary line on Woodhaven side and no timeline provided for reconstruction of the historical boundary wall.
- Concerns raised over removal of Woodhaven historic stone boundary wall constructed by the Blake family in the 19th century.
- Alternative proposals set out in submission including a new road/cycle lane to be provided adjacent to the railway, a shared roundabout including pedestrian crossing ramps to be provided at entrance to Woodhaven/Merlin Gate, a roundabout at Galway Crystal and prohibited right turn at Merlin Park Hospital and a reduction in width to 1.5m for both cycle lanes and pedestrian lanes thereby freeing up more greenspace for residents.
- Request an Oral Hearing with ABP.

<u>Response from Galway City Council</u>

- The applicant is of the opinion that it is clear from the series of consultation events that the public consultation process was comprehensive and substantive, and that comments that were raised during the consultation were fully considered and addressed in the EIAR.
- It is noted that the Woodhaven Residents Association submission does not reference any hindrance arising from the technical nature of the online documentation.

- Opportunities to egress turning right to Galway City will be increased with the signalisation of the Merlin Park Hospital junction. The Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, undertaken for the proposed development design, has not raised any safety concern with the proposed junction design.
- In relation to entering Woodhaven (Right Turn) the DMURS framework supports the removal of right-turn lanes where appropriate as a means to reduce carriageway width, enhance pedestrian facilities, and improve the quality of the public realm. Vehicles will still be able to turn right to access the Woodhaven Estate but will be required to wait for a gap in oncoming traffic. A yellow box will also be provided here to facilitate drivers entering or leaving the estate.
- The proposed development does not propose to alter the speed limit from the existing 50km/h.
- No reduction in the width of the existing Woodhaven Estate access is proposed. The proposed boundary wall will tie into the existing splay, ensuring that visibility is not compromised. No reduction in visibility is envisaged as the line of the wall will be two meters behind the cycle track, to maintain clear sightlines and minimize traffic hazards. The Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, undertaken for the proposed development design, has not raised any safety concern with the proposed junction design.
- The proposed development retains the existing position of westbound general traffic on the R338 Dublin Road outside the Woodhaven Estate. So, there will be no change in the relative distance between this traffic and the intersection inside the Woodhaven Estate with no compromise on visibility or safety.
- It is not proposed to remove the segregated pedestrian walkways as currently exist on both sides of the vehicular entrance to the Woodhaven Estate.
- As set out in the EIAR, the Construction Phase impact on trees and vegetation is predicted to be temporary, slight, negative to imperceptible. Following the establishment of the proposed landscape measures, the impact on trees and vegetation during operation is predicted to be short-term, slight, negative, improving to imperceptible as the proposed vegetation matures.
- In relation to Human Heath the EIAR sets out that overall, the significant residual Long-term effects of the Proposed Development on human health can be expected to be Positive and Significant to Very Significant.

- As part of the baseline noise surveys undertaken, there was an attended noise monitoring location at Woodhaven approximately 20m from the R338 Dublin Road. The EIAR sets out that once the various mitigation measures are put in place, noise impacts associated with the Construction Phase will be of Negative, Not Significant to Moderate, and Temporary impact during all key construction phases during daytime periods. There are no significant residual Operational Phase noise or vibration impacts associated with the Proposed Development.
- The EIAR sets out that the effect on air quality and human health of the Operational Phase traffic emissions is considered to be direct, long term and neutral and not significant at all modelled receptors.
- The applicant confirms that the distance from the property façade of Number 21 Woodhaven to the edge of the existing road is confirmed to be 26.39m. The distance of the new boundary wall to the objector's property at 21 Woodhaven, will be a distance of 19.26m from the property façade. The new boundary wall will be located 5m closer to the property compared to the current wall to enable the new cycle way and footpath to be constructed. A dedicated bus lane will be located at a distance of 23.5m from the property façade, moving a traffic lane less than 3m closer to the property. The EIAR sets out that the operational noise impact of the proposed development is therefore not significant as determined through the impact assessment.
- The impacts from vibration are negligible in terms of human response, the thresholds of which are magnitudes below those associated with any form of cosmetic damage to buildings.
- In relation to the bus stop location, it is situated 120m from the pedestrian crossing at the signalised junction at Merlin Park Hospital entrance. If it were to be moved closer to the junction it would conflict with the entrance to Merlin Gate or result in the demolition of residential properties. Therefore, the location of the bus-stop as appears in the Proposed Development is considered to be the optimal position.
- A robust and comprehensive EIAR and NIS have been submitted to the Board which describes the assessment of the impacts anticipated as a result of both the Construction and Operational Phases of the Proposed Development. The

EIAR thoroughly evaluates both human health and environmental impacts, including those on wildlife.

- In relation to the reconstruction of the historical boundary stone wall the approach to undertaking the new boundary treatment works along the development is replacement on a 'like for like' basis in terms of material selection and general aesthetics. The original walling will require sensitive re-building, it will be of high-quality stone mason quality, and the gate cleaned and repainted in accordance with best conservation measures. This will help with users passively engaging with the former boundary.
- In relation to alternative proposals the provision of road/cycle track adjacent to the railway line is beyond the scope of the proposed development. In addition, a new roundabout junction on the R338 Dublin Road is unfeasible based on the required large size of footprint of such a junction.
- The holding of an Oral Hearing is at the discretion of the Commission. GCC notes that the Woodhaven Resident's Association submission has not requested an Oral Hearing. Therefore, we suggest that this request is specific to the objector, as opposed to being on behalf of the wider Woodhaven Estate community.

4.4.9. **Shane Foran**

- Overall, the design and concept is very welcome and any comments are meant as a way of seeking improvements and not as a challenge to the overall scheme.
- Main concerns raised are with the correct management of cycle traffic and foot traffic.
- A significant improvement to the original plans is the proposed use of a cyclops traffic signal arrangement at the Skerritt Junction. This design pattern would also be beneficial at other locations on the scheme.
- It should be a general principle that at priority junctions and property entrances along any footways or cycle tracks are continuous and do not change levels to accommodate motor vehicle movements.

- The proposals for floating bus stops are welcome. The stops should be arranged to reduce potential conflicts between bus passengers and people using the cycle tracks.
- At Renmore Park a continuous footway/cycle track treatment is needed across the mouth of the junction
- At the junction of R338 Dublin Road and Renmore Road (Duggan's Shop) the house facing Duggan’s shop on northside of the junction should be given a dedicated parking/driveway arrangement within Glenina heights.
- At Renmore Road to Michael Collins Rd junctions the cycle-track width should be widened to 2m.
- At property entrances on the south side of Dublin Road opposite Galwegians and Flannery's Hotel there should be no "dishing" of the footway or cycle track at the properties.
- At Belmont/Ballyloughane Road Junction (ATU) consideration should be given to making the Belmont junction into a cyclops layout with a direct link into the ATU campus.
- At Skerritt Roundabout left slip lanes are needed for cyclists on all quadrants and a new access is need into the ATU campus.
- At Merlin Park Entrance the signalisation is very welcome.
- Consideration should be given to formal cycling arrangements into and out of the campus.
- At the south side of Merlin Park junction there is a traffic free lane away from the Dublin Road which could be tied into the Merlin junction in some way.
- Consider converting the Galway Crystal/Merlin Lane junction to a cyclops junction.
- At the junction of R338 Dublin Road and Coast Road cycling bypasses for cyclists turning left should be available on all arms and consideration given to converting the junction to cyclops junction.
- At Castlegar GAA pitch the shared pedestrian cycle path should have combined width of 3m in line with National Cycle Manual 2011.
- At junction of R338 Dublin Road and Doughiska Road cycling bypasses for cyclists turning left should be available on all arms and consideration given to converting this junction to a cyclops junction.

Response from Galway City Council

- GCC notes that some of the issues raised by Mr. Foran are very similar to those raised in the submission of GCCN.
- GCC notes that the transport planning within Galway City, i.e. the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS), does not fall within the scope of the TEN-T Regulations. It should be noted that the GTS does not preclude other cycle scheme proposals being developed for the city, they do not however form part of the proposed development
- As set out in Chapter 4 of the EIAR, the greater space available at the Skerritt Roundabout has afforded adoption of a Cyclops type protected junction with cyclists provided with an orbital cycle track around the junction. This is not the case at other junctions where space is more constrained and more compact junction types have been used to suit the specific constraints at each location. As part of detailed design, the layout of these junctions will be reviewed for closer compliance with the Cycle Design Manual and will include exploring opportunities for adoption of the Cyclops junction layout at other junctions.
- There will be no "dishing" of the footway or cycle track at the property entrances and kerbing will be sloped to allow vehicle access. With respect to kerb selection, the standard details contain two kerb types including “Bevelled Kerb” and “Short Ramp/Entrance Kerb”. The utilisation of the Dutch Kerb will be considered at detailed design stage, where same aligns with the national guidance on side road treatments.
- Bus stops will be provided at ATU in accordance with NTA’s Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet for BusConnects Core Bus Corridors and the Cycle Design Manual, details of which will be confirmed at detailed design stage.
- The preliminary design as submitted is to a level appropriate for a planning application and the level of detail presented does not extend to showing proposed pedestrian guardrails. The suggestions from Seamus Quirke Road are noted and the design will be further refined at detailed design stage to minimise the potential conflicts between bus passengers and cyclists.
- Restricting traffic from turning right into and out of Renmore Park would introduce a significant inconvenience and a potential safety concern caused by

drivers attempting U-turns on the R338 and is not therefore considered a viable proposal for the scheme.

- A parking facility will be provided for the property in question within Glenina Heights and with no vehicular access to the property provided directly from the R338 at the proposed signalised junction.
- At the junction of R338 Dublin Road and Renmore Road the signalised protected junction as presented is the correct solution. The proposal that cycle traffic on the crossing arm should have a green signal even when main arms are red, is feasible for the eastbound cycle track if the cycle track is segregated from the roadway and can be considered further at detailed design stage.
- At the Renmore Road to Michael Collins Junctions 2m width cycle tracks will be provided.
- The footpath and cycle track at the property entrances on the south side of Dublin Road opposite Galwegians and Flannery's Hotel will be continuous across these entries with no dishing of these surfaces, subject to existing local ground level constraints at each property access.
- Detailed design stage will review the junction design at Belmont / Ballyloughane Road in the context of the current requirements of the Cycle Design Manual for Protected Junctions, including consideration of the Cyclops configuration. The proposal to use a flashing amber for eastbound left turns into Belmont (known as a “Partial Conflict Arrangement” in the Cycle Design Manual) may have merit and will be brought forward for consideration at detailed design stage.
- It is accepted that the current Skerritt junction layout may encourage left-turning cyclists to use the footpaths as a short-cut of the junction. Detailed design stage will review the layout of this junction to better accommodate desire lines and avoid conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.
- A new entrance to ATU is not proposed at this time as it would be subject to third party agreement with respect to provision of same. Cyclists can continue straight to the Toucan crossing and enter ATU here. There may be merit in providing a diagonal pedestrian crossing at the Cyclops junction and this can be reviewed at detailed design stage.

- At the Merlin Park Entrance consideration can be given to formal cycling arrangements into and out of the campus to allow a means for cyclists to get past queueing motor vehicles and to facilitate all turning movements.
- The provision of a cycling route to and from Galway Crystal/Líos an Uisce/Gleann Na Rí lies outside the scope of the proposed development and would require a separate ecological assessment. This proposal can be explored in the future.
- Detailed design stage will review the junction design at Merlin Park Lane in the context of the current requirements of the Cycle Design Manual for Protected Junctions, including consideration of the Cyclops configuration. There may be merit in this case in retaining the floating bus stop paved area through the junction and moving the cycle track to the rear of the footpath (like in a Cyclops layout) as suggested. This would need more detailed consideration.
- In relation to the connection along the boundary of Galway Crystal through to Rosshill Road, the scheme can easily accommodate westbound cyclists emerging from the track at the end of Rosshill Road. The Proposed Development does not intend to upgrade the existing track leading to Rosshill Road however vegetation overgrowing onto the pavement edges could be cleared as part of the works.
- At Castlegar GAA pitch the drawings submitted as part of the planning submission include a footway only on the south side of Dublin Road. It will not be a Shared Pedestrian Cycle path. It is intended that all cyclists will use the dedicated two-way cycle track to the north.
- At the Junction of R338 Dublin Road and Doughiska Road there are particular existing constraints at this junction (the property boundary at the southeast corner at Durabhan estate and also the skewed nature of the junction) that may preclude adoption of a Cyclops configuration.

4.4.10. **Woodhaven Residents Association**

- Clarity required in relation to inconsistencies in ‘Appendix B5-Landscaping drawing’ and ‘OSR Appendix A – General Arrangement Drawing.’ Woodhaven is losing more green space in the latter drawing.

- In the interest of a safe exit onto the main road they request that a double yellow box outside of Woodhaven estate as per the entrance to Merlin Gate be provided.
- They query the need for the raised table at the access to Woodhaven estate as it will prove more challenging for people entering and exiting the estate while turning.
- The graphic design of the proposed access provided does not give an accurate representation as to how it will look post development. They request an updated graphic design of the proposed access to the estate be provided.
- Timelines for project requested.

Response from Galway City Council

- The applicant wants to reclarify that the current Proposed Development design drawings are contained in Volume 3 of the EIAR (Chapter 4 Proposed Development Description) and Appendix B5 of the Preliminary Design Report (PDR) provided as Supplementary Information. Extract of the proposed alignment and land take drawings at Woodhaven in Figure 2-26 and Figure 2-27 set out in the response.
- Consideration of a double yellow box can be provided at detailed design stage.
- The purpose of the raised table is to provide continuous pedestrian and cycle track crossings at all accesses on the scheme, including the access to Woodhaven Estate and the Merlin Gate estate, consistent with DMURS and the Cycle Design Manual.
- The photomontages have been prepared at specific locations by a specialist consultant. Further photomontages are currently not available.
- The expected construction duration for this section is estimated to be approximately 11 months. However, construction activities at individual plots will have shorter durations than outlined in the overview of construction works presented in Section 5.4.

5.0 **Planning History**

5.1. There are a number of permissions within the vicinity of the proposed development that are of strategic importance. Of relevance to this scheme are the following;

- ABP-314597-22 - BusConnects Galway Cross-City Link development was approved by the Board in September 2024 and provides improved walking, cycling and bus infrastructure on this key access corridor in Galway City. The Cross-City Link development ties directly into the proposed development at Moneenagisha.
- GCC Part 8 LA3/2023 - Permitted Ballybane Road and Castlepark Road Cycle Network Scheme for a cycle network located on the north side of the Old Dublin Road. Works began in March 2025 and is currently in progress.
- ABP 320955-24 - Permission was granted by the board for a development consisting of the demolition of 3 no. existing dwellings and the construction of a four-storey apartment building containing 24 no. residential units at 47, 49 & 51 Dublin Road, Galway
- ABP-318220-23 (previous application no. MA07.302885) - Galway Ring Road - proposed road development comprises approximately 18km of road infrastructure from a new junction with the R336 at the western side of Bearna to tie-in to the existing N6 to the east of Galway City at Coolagh, Briarhill. A decision is pending.
- ABP-321882-25 is a separate Compulsory Purchase Order which accompanies this application.
- ABP-318886-24 – Pre-Application Consultation for Bus Connects Galway - Dublin Road Section.

6.0 Policy Context

6.1. European

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

The Smart and Mobility Strategy is part of the EU Green Deal and aims to reduce transport emissions by 90% until 2050. The Commission intends to adopt a comprehensive strategy to meet this target and ensure that the EU transport sector is fit for a clean, digital and modern economy. Objectives include:

- increasing the uptake of zero-emission vehicles

- making sustainable alternative solutions available to the public & businesses
- supporting digitalisation & automation
- improving connectivity & access.

6.1.2. **European Green Deal (EDG) 2019**

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

6.1.3. **Towards a fair and sustainable Europe 2050: Social and Economic choices in sustainability transitions, 2023.**

This foresight study looks at sustainability from a holistic perspective but emphasises the changes that European economic and social systems should make to address sustainability transitions. The EU has committed to sustainability and sustainable development, covering the three dimensions (environmental, social and economic) of sustainability. Transport is identified as an area of opportunity to increase the speed of a cultural shift towards sustainably. The provision of well planned, affordable or free public transport system and bicycle lanes are encouraged**.**

6.2. National Policy

6.2.1. **National Planning Framework, First Revision of NPF, April 2025**

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of our country out to the year 2040. The NPF - First Revision is the revised and updated NPF taking account of changes that have occurred since it was published in 2018.

The NPF recognised Galway city as the fastest growing city in Ireland over the last 50 years. The NPF seeks to support city and city region functions with relevant policies and investment but with a strong emphasis on securing a compact-growth development approach. The NPF also seeks to develop Galway City in a transformational and urban rejuvenation focused manner. Transport within the city is identified within the NPF as a challenge in relation to the accommodation of future population growth within the metropolitan boundary of the city.

The National Policy Objective 4 of the National Planning Framework - First Revision seeks to deliver 50% of national population and employment growth within the four cities of Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Galway and to improve the collective offer in terms of quality of life. Challenges facing the development of Galway City identified within the NPF include transport.

Section 3.3 of the NPF - First Revision recognises the strategic importance of Galway to drive growth in the west, identified future growth enablers include:

- Improving access and sustainable transport links to and integration with the existing employment areas to the east of the City at Parkmore, Ballybrit and Mervue.
- Provision of a Citywide public transport network, with enhanced accessibility between existing and proposed residential areas and the City Centre, third level institutions and the employment areas to the east of the city.
- Public realm and urban amenity projects focused on streets and public spaces, particularly in support of an extended city centre area and where residential and employment areas can be linked to pedestrian routes.
- Development of a strategic cycleway network with a number of high-capacity flagship routes.

The NPF - First Revision also sets out a number of national policy objectives focused on sustainable transportation, greater accessibility and improved air quality arising from increased use of alternatives to the car which include the following:

- NPO 37 - Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.
- NPO 38 - Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.
- NPO 93 - Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated

land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.

6.2.2. **National Development Plan 2021-2030**

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

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

Over the next 10 years approximately €360 million per annum will be invested in walking and cycling infrastructure in cities, towns and villages across the country. Transformed active travel and bus infrastructure and services in all five of Ireland's major cities is fundamental to achieving the overarching target of 500,000 additional active travel and public transport journeys by 2030. BusConnects will overhaul the current bus system in all five cities by implementing a network of 'next generation' bus corridors including segregated cycling facilities on the busiest routes to make journeys faster, predictable and reliable.

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

6.2.3. **National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland, 2021**

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

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

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

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

This is a government document that was prepared in the context of unsustainable transport and travel trends in Ireland. The overall vision set out in this policy document is to achieve a sustainable transport system in Ireland by 2020. To achieve this the government set out 5 key goals:

(i) to reduce overall travel demand,

(ii) to maximise the efficiency of the transport network,

(iii) to reduce reliance on fossil fuels,

(iv) to reduce transport emissions, and

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

• 500,000 more people will take alternative means to commute to work to the extent that the total share of car commuting will drop from 65% to 45%

• Alternatives such as walking, cycling and public transport will be supported and provided to the extent that these will rise to 55% of total commuter journeys to work.

6.2.5. **National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022**

The purpose of this document is to set out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by the end of this decade. A key objective of the document is to expand the bus capacity and services through the BusConnects Programmes in the five cities of Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick and Waterford, improved town bus services and the connecting Ireland programme in rural areas.

6.2.6. **Permeability in Existing Urban Areas Best Practice Guide 2015**

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

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

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

6.2.8. **Climate Action Plan 2024 ("CAP24") and 2025 ("CAP25")**

The Climate Action Plan sets out a roadmap to halve emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050. CAP24 and CAP25 will also continue with the implementation of carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings that were introduced under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021. BusConnects is identified as a key action to deliver abatement in transport in 2025 and is specifically supported within the plan.

6.3. **Regional**

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

- Section 3.3 of the RSES seeks to achieve better integration between land use and transportation planning.

- Section 5.1 Investing in transport infrastructure
    - Prioritising future investment for the delivery of a strategic cycling and walking network,
- Section 6.2 Transport - A best practice example of where the integration of transport, spatial and economic planning is to be delivered, is the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS). The GTS should be used as a template elsewhere.
- The Regional Planning Objectives (RPOs) include RPO 6.50 - Continue to encourage Active Travel initiatives and where possible leverage technology and digital platforms to enhance the delivery of cycleway and walking infrastructure, particularly in our urban centres.

6.4. Local policy

6.4.1. Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

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

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

- Policy 4.6 Road and Steet Network and Accessibility - Support the proposals in the Galway Transport Strategy for design interventions, revised traffic management arrangements and priority arrangements for walking, cycling and public transport on the road network.
- Section 4.8 Specific Objectives Modal Change: Public Transport - Facilitate the delivery of the Bus Connects Programme serving the City and the MASP area by securing and maintaining any required route reservations.

6.4.2. **Galway Transport Strategy 2016**

The GTS sets out the actions and policy position for the development of sustainable transport infrastructure in Galway over a 20 year period and sets out a framework to deliver the projects in a phased manner. One of the key proposals in the GTS is the proposed BusConnects Dublin Road, a corridor linking the western and eastern suburbs of the city, connecting with the Cross-City Link Scheme. The R338, Dublin Road, which forms part of the BusConnects routes are supported within this document.

- F4.10 – Renmore & Dublin Road

  Proposal to extend the existing bus lanes which may also be used by cyclists, along the full length of the Dublin Road. Skerritt Roundabout will be converted to signalised junction. An off-road two-way cycle path is also proposed along the Dublin Road to connect to the current entrance to Merlin Park Hospital. This will be located primarily on the north side but will switch to southside toward the western end of the road. Cycle track will transition to on-road for crossing facilities at junctions

- Section 4 Traffic Network
  - Table 4.1 – On the east side of the city centre, establishing a bus priority route along College Road is identified as the most appropriate and feasible means of ensuring that buses and coaches can travel directly to and from the city centre via both the Old Dublin Road and Wellpark Road.

6.4.3. **Galway City Council Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024-2029**

The Galway City Local Authority Climate Action Plan (LACAP) 2024-2029 sets out a strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change within the Local Authority. It considers

factors such as reducing emissions, creating a circular economy, adapting to more frequent severe weather, and creating more sustainable land use patterns. Action 27 of the LACAP commits GCC to working in partnership with key stakeholders across the city to support climate action initiatives, including active travel.

6.5. Legislative Context

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

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

6.6. Natural Heritage Designations

- Galway Bay Complex SAC (site code 000268) – c. 63m from route
- Inner Galway Bay SPA (site code 004031) – c. 55m from route

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

6.7. EIA Screening

Galway City Council has submitted, to the Commission, an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) prepared in accordance with section 50 of the Roads Act

1993 (as amended) and Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and Council, 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 in respect of the proposed road development.

7.0 **Assessment**

7.1. I have examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including the submissions from prescribed bodies and the public and the applicant's response to the submissions. I have inspected the site and the surrounding public roads and general wider area. I have had regard to relevant local, regional and national policies and other appropriate guidance where considered relevant. To avoid repetition and ensure clear articulation of the key issues my assessment is structured into three inter-related sections - the Planning Assessment, the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and the Appropriate Assessment (AA).

8.0 **Planning Assessment**

8.1. The proposed development is a public transport priority corridor, encompassing the provision of dedicated bus lanes, segregated cycle lanes and footpaths on both sides of the Dublin Road. It will allow for more active travel options for the residents and visitors that are attempting to travel west into and out of the city centre. It is intended that the improved infrastructure and reallocation of road space will result in significant improvement in journey time reliability and reduce traffic congestion within the city.

8.2. The proposed development has an overall length of approximately 3.9km commencing at the Moneenageisha Junction in the west and tying into the Doughiska Junction in the east. It will tie in with the permitted Galway BusConnects Cross City Link development at its western extremity. Throughout the scheme it is proposed to maintain the two-way general traffic lanes and introduce continuous bus lanes in both directions. In addition, the existing footpaths will be upgraded and extended and segregated cycle tracks will be provided on both sides of the Dublin Road along the entire length of the route. Signal-controlled crossings will be provided at all junctions through a combination of dedicated cycle crossings and a limited number of shared toucan crossings. In addition, public realm works, and landscaping will be undertaken

at key locations with higher quality materials, planting and street furniture provided to enhance user's experience.

8.3. This application is accompanied by a separate Compulsory Purchase Order ref: ABP 321882-25 in which it is sought to acquire various sections of lands along the route. The majority of lands to be acquired relate to boundary setbacks to accommodate the proposed bus lanes, cycle lanes or road widening.

8.4. Given the variety of issues raised within the submissions received, I will consider the issues raised on a themed basis within the relevant sections of the report hereunder. In section 4 above all submissions are summarised and the Council's response to each of the submissions has also been briefly summarised.

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

- Need for the development.
- Adequacy of Consultation.
- Project Design – Provision for cyclists, pedestrians and buses, bus shelters, junction design and Speed Limits
- Access to individual properties/businesses
- Ecological Impact
- Residential Amenity, Boundary Treatments and Loss of Greenspace
- Visual Impact
- Landtake – Permanent and Temporary
- Future proofing of BusConnects infrastructure for Light Rail

Need for the Development

8.6. The proposed development has been designed to facilitate improved efficiency of the transport network through the improvement of the infrastructure for active (walking and cycling) and public transport modes making them attractive alternatives to car-based journeys. Sustainable transport infrastructure is known to assist in creating more sustainable communities and healthier places to live and work while also stimulating economic development and contributing to enhanced health and well-being when delivered effectively.

8.7. According to the First revision of the National Planning Framework, 2025, the population of the Galway City is forecast to increase by 50% over 2016 level by 2040 and this growth will have associated travel demands, placing added pressure on the transport system. Traffic congestion in Galway has been an issue for decades and intervention is therefore required to optimise road space and prioritise the movement of people over the movement of vehicles.

8.8. At present, the reliability and effectiveness of existing bus and cycle infrastructure within the city is compromised by a lack of bus lanes and segregated cycle tracks.

8.9. As noted above, the overriding motivation for BusConnects is to reduce CO2 emissions and this is critical from a global climatic perspective. The proposed scheme is specifically identified and supported within the Climate Action Plan 2024 (“CAP24”) and 2025 (“CAP25”) and is seen as a key action under the major public transport infrastructure programme to deliver abatement in transport emissions. The scheme is also identified within the National Sustainable Mobility Policy 2022 document and the accompanying action plan as a key piece of infrastructure to be delivered to achieve reductions in emissions and provide for more efficient cities in terms of accessibility for all. The scheme is also seen as an economic driver within our cities which currently experience significant congestion and impediments to movement and accessibility.

8.10. At the local and shorter-term level, the issue of congestion is more obvious, and both congestion and CO2 emissions are continuing to rise. Any further increases in traffic levels will see an exacerbation of congestion, CO2 emissions and all of the associated issues highlighted above. Private car dependence will worsen unless there is intervention to optimise road space and prioritise the movement of people over the movement of vehicles. When examining the functionality and capacity of road space

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

8.11. The prioritisation of buses over cars and the creation of more space for pedestrians and cyclists will therefore allow for increased people movement capacity along the core bus corridor. This is vital given the existing congestion and the forecasted growth in population, jobs and goods vehicle numbers by 2040. In the absence of the proposed scheme, bus services will be operating in a more congested environment, leading to higher journey times for bus users and lower reliability which will lead to reduced levels of public transport use, making the bus system far less attractive and less resilient to higher levels of growth. The proposed scheme is expected to see a reduction in car use along the route and an increase in cycling and walking in addition to bus use.

8.12. Having regard to the above, the proposed scheme is of critical importance to the transport network in Galway to facilitate the actual movement of people and this can only be achieved through a realistic modal shift from the private car to sustainable modes. It will address sustainable mode transport infrastructure deficits while contributing to an overall integrated sustainable transport system as proposed in the Galway Transport Strategy. The proposed scheme, which will tie into the recently permitted BusConnects Cross-City Link scheme will therefore make a significant contribution to carbon reduction, the easing of congestion and the creation of more sustainable travel patterns for the growing population.

8.13. In terms of local transport need the proposed development is to form a central route for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians along the Dublin Road and tying in with the permitted BusConnects Cross City Link project. It will complement the proposed new city bus network routes approaching from the east and west of the city centre, which merge along this high-quality corridor, providing high-frequency services with journey time reliability and opportunities for interchange. It is outlined by the applicant that bus priority infrastructure is currently provided along approximately 49% of the length of the route. The proposed scheme will facilitate 100% bus priority. This will improve journey times for buses, enhance its reliability and provide resilience to congestion.

8.14. With regard to cycling it is stated that cycling facilities are not currently provided along the route of the proposed scheme. The proposed scheme will provide inbound and out bound segregated cycling facilities along the entire 3.9km route. This improvement to cycle infrastructure will greatly improve the current offer to cyclists and by doing so will significantly increase the modal share.

8.15. In terms of pedestrian infrastructure improvements, I note that pedestrian signal crossings will increase from 1 to 2 and the number of traffic signal-controlled junctions will increase from 6 to 9 as a result of the proposed scheme. This will lead to significant improvements for pedestrians and cyclists.

8.16. Overall the proposed scheme will therefore deliver the physical infrastructure necessary to sustain the projected population growth along and within the area of the route. It will also provide a more accessible public transport facility to the most vulnerable in society in a safe, well-lit and protected environment. In conclusion, it is clear that there is an obvious community need and justification for the proposed scheme which has been clearly demonstrated from a population growth and congestion perspective and in the interests of land use and transport planning integration.

Adequacy of Consultation

8.17. Three submissions raised concerns in relation to the quality of consultation carried out by the Council. The Galway City Community Network CLG raised concerns that the consultation period of 4 weeks was inadequate while the submission from Liam, Yvonne and Emily O' Reilly noted that the consultation process was frustrating and protracted, with little meaningful engagement from the Project Team. The submission from Connacht Hospitality Ltd stated that they were not consulted prior to publication of the scheme. I note the Council's response to such concerns and note that a comprehensive non-statutory pre-application consultation for the Proposed Scheme was carried out and is outlined in the Consultation Report submitted and is referred to within the documentation provided.

8.18. Whilst I acknowledge third party submissions in this regard, I have reviewed the file in relation to the statutory obligations associated with engagement of landowners and note that the Council has complied with its statutory obligations with respect to the

notification of landowners in relation to the process and also advertised the process accordingly. I am satisfied that the applicant has complied with the relevant statutory requirements in respect of the proposed development.

Project Design – Provision for cyclists, pedestrians and buses, bus shelters, junction design and speed limits

8.19. The overall objective of the scheme is to provide enhanced walking, cycling and bus infrastructure which will deliver efficient, safe, and integrated sustainable transport from east of Moneenageisha Junction to Doughiska Road Junction which aligns with the strategic aim of the Galway Transport Strategy. The route runs from the western end of the development at the Moneenageisha Junction where it is to tie into the 'Galway BusConnects: Cross City Link project,' towards the Doughiska Junction in the east, where the development will terminate.

8.20. The proposed route will pass through junctions for Renmore Park, Renmore Road and then will continue through the Michael Collins/ Hospice Access Road junction. It will then continue through a realigned junction to Belmont/Ballyloughane Road, which will lead to the Skerritt Roundabout. This roundabout is to be upgraded from its current roundabout design into a cyclops style junction, providing access to Ballybane and Murrough Avenue. It will then traverse the Merlin Park Hospital Access Road Junction, Merlin Park Lane Junction, Rosshill Road Junction, Coast Road Junction and finally, terminate at the Doughiska Junction. This scheme provides continuous cycle and bus priority facilities, including pedestrian facilities and public realm improvements.

8.21. The applicant sets out that the proposed development has generally been designed to urban standards in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS), 2019. The design philosophy adopted has applied a balanced and integrated approach to road and street design by applying as far as possible the design principles of DMURS. The applicant also refers to related design documents, including Cycle Design Manual 2023 and the Bus Connects Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet (BCPDGB) the latter which has been developed as a tool for the design of the BusConnects scheme across Dublin City and has informed the design of this scheme where appropriate.

8.22. Table 4-1 in the Preliminary design Report details the key design parameters which have been generally adopted to inform the proposed development design layout. The table describes the relevant geometric features set out in order of functional geometrical requirements for each road user including pedestrians (footpaths), cyclists (cycle tracks), bus lanes, general traffic lanes, junctions and parking/loading areas. The applicant sets out that in designing the geometrical elements of the proposed development, a balanced approach to the requirements for each of the road functions from a people movement perspective is provided for, noting that the aim of the proposed development is to provide enhanced walking, cycling and bus infrastructure.

8.23. It is important to note at the outset that in general there is no significant objection to the principle of the development. A number of submissions state that they are fully supportive of the project but require clarification of varies elements of the scheme. I also note the submission from Liam, Yvonne and Emily O Reilly who outline that the plans offer minimal benefits in terms of improved public transport accessibility locally and put forward an alternative proposal. In addition, a number of submissions including that from An Taisce and the GLUAS Light Rail for Galway team recommends that the BusConnects infrastructure is future proofed to accommodate future light rail as per the findings of the 'Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study Report', prepared by Atkins Réalis, and published by the National Transport Authority in October 2024.

8.24. A detailed development breakdown of existing and proposed cross section elements is provided in Table 4-2 in the Preliminary design Report. This table provides information on the existing facilities for pedestrians, cyclists bus lanes and general traffic lanes and compares them with the proposed development. The table breaks down the route into 10 various sections between junctions along the route. Throughout the development, footway widths of 2m or wider are proposed, with the exception of a limited number of stretches where a width of 1.8m – 2m is proposed due to the presence of localised space constraints. In general, 2.0m wide fully segregated cycle tracks along the full length of the development are proposed with localised narrowing over very short distances to cater for local constraints. 3.0m wide bus lanes and 3.0m wide traffic lanes are proposed in line with the guidance outlined in DMURS. An overview of the approach to junction design is provided in chapter 4 of the EIAR. Overall, I note that the design of the proposed route largely complies with the requirements of DMURS. Any non-compliance with DMURS in terms of lane widths,

junction configuration or design will be examined in detail under the relevant heading below.

Cycling Provision

8.25. A core objective of the proposed development is to provide segregated cycling facilities along the routes. A Cycle Track is a segregated cycle lane which is physically segregated from the adjacent traffic lane and/or bus lane horizontally and/or vertically. The applicant sets out that new segregated cycle tracks will be provided in both directions along the full length of the route.

8.26. The segregated cycle tracks are to be developed as per the guidance on the design of cycle facilities in the National Cycle Manual, 2011 and the Cycle Design Manual, 2023 both published by the NTA where the desirable minimum width for a single-direction, with-flow, raised-adjacent cycle track is 2m. At some locations along the scheme, the desired cycleway width cannot be achieved, and localised narrowing is required. It is also noted that cycle tracks narrow to minimum 1.5m width at bus stop islands.

8.27. Appendix B within the Preliminary Design Report show the extent of cycle provision, which is summarised as follows:

- 100% Proposed cycle priority (outbound) (98.5% cycle track, 1.5% quiet street); and
- 100% Proposed cycle priority (citybound) (98.5% cycle track, 1.5% quiet street/offline cycle track)

8.28. The applicant states that where necessary the use of cycle lanes, offline cycle track and quiet street treatment have been incorporated into the design. Cycle lanes have been limited to locations where transitioning to existing cycle lanes, typically on side roads of the main corridor alignment and transitioning to existing roadways that do not have cycle facilities. Offline cycle tracks are fully offset from the road carriageway by a grass verge, therefore providing a greater level of protection and comfort to cycle

users. Offline cycle tracks are provided at 5 no locations and are listed in Section 4.11.3 of the Preliminary Design Report.

8.29. A number of submissions recommend that there should be a cycle path connection between the project and the emerging preferred route for the Athlone to Galway Greenway. An Taisce submission notes that a cycle lane on the southern side of the road from the Doughiska Junction to the Coast Road (as clarified in their second submission dated 31st July 2025) should be provided. They are of the view that this would also offer better connectivity to the proposed Athlone to Galway Greenway, Oranmore and Galway Clinic and it would be a safer option as it would not require cyclist to cross the Old Dublin Road twice.

8.30. In response the applicant states that Figure 7.1 Proposed Cycle Network in the Galway Transport Strategy Executive Summary details connectivity to the emerging preferred option of the Athlone to Galway Greenway which is located to the south of the proposed route closer to the coast. This shows connectivity between the proposed route and the emerging greenway at Doughiska Road South and at Ballyloughane Road. The applicant sets out that the connectivity of these routes to the greenway is subject to the relevant statutory consent processes for these separate schemes and are outside the scope of this proposed development.

8.31. Also, the applicant sets out that to provide a cycle lane on the southern side of the road from the Doughiska Junction to the Coast Road would result in greater overall impacts, as it would require land take on both sides of the road. I can see merit in the applicants case that by consolidating the cycle infrastructure to the northern side and inside the existing tree line, the current design minimises disruption, reduces the scale of temporary land acquisition, and lessens the overall environmental and construction-related impacts.

8.32. Overall, the proposed segregated cycle tracks will be a significant improvement over the current situation. The proposed development will provide a safe facility for cyclists of all abilities to utilise and will undoubtedly increase the modal share in favour of cycling. I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately justified any reductions in design widths and consider the proposed approach to be acceptable and a

proportionate design response to the constraints that the city and built environment give rise to.

Pedestrian Provision

8.33. Throughout the development, footway widths of 2m or wider have been proposed, with the exception of a limited number of stretches where a width of 1.8m – 2m is proposed due to the presence of localised space constraints. The development therefore complies with DMURS where the desired footpath width outlined is 2 metres with a minimum of 1.8 metres. Table 4-2 in the Preliminary Design Report provides details of the existing and proposed development nominal footway widths over the length of the corridor.

8.34. New and enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities to promote increased pedestrian activity are included, providing safe desire lines for pedestrians to/from all directions. DMURS recommends the desirable maximum crossing length without providing a refuge island is 18m. The applicant sets out that the proposed development removes the existing lengthy uncontrolled crossings and the associated safety risks that they present to pedestrians at vehicle dominated locations. In addition, a pedestrian crossing is being proposed in all new non-signalized junctions and raised crossings in the minor junctions and entrances. In all, the proposed scheme will increase the number of traffic signal-controlled junctions from 6 to 9 and increase the number of pedestrian signal crossings from 1 to 2.

8.35. Along the proposed development, pedestrian crossings will vary from 2.4m and 4m in width. At signalised junctions and mid-block pedestrian crossings, the footway is to be ramped down to carriageway level to facilitate pedestrians who require an unobstructed crossing. At minor junctions, raised table treatments are provided to raise the road level up to footway level and facilitate unimpeded crossing for pedestrians. Tactile paving is provided at the mouth of each pedestrian in accordance with standards. Audio units are to be provided on each traffic signal push button.

8.36. The proposed scheme also involves providing separation between cycling and walking. The applicant sets out that there are no shared surfaces and very limited Toucan Crossings proposed for the development. Instead, cyclists will be provided with dedicated road crossing facilities, separated from pedestrian crossings. Formal crossing points of the cycle track are to be provided on the upstream side of bus stop

islands, consisting of a ramped zebra pedestrian crossing and appropriate tactile paving**.**

8.37. I note the submission from the Galway Community Network CLG who recommend the scheme should be accessibility and equality proofed with the expertise of people with lived experience to ensure accessibility for all road users including people with disabilities, older people, and children. In response Galway City Council sets out that the proposed development has generally been designed to urban standards in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS). In addition to DMURS, criteria from other documents have been considered to provide the most appropriate design application including the National Cycle Manual (NCM), the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Publication, 'Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach' and the BusConnects Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet. I also note that the document Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach has been referenced throughout Section 4 of the Preliminary Design Report.

8.38. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed scheme provides for enhanced pedestrian facilities and there has been a determined effort made to provide clear segregation of modes at key interaction points along the corridor.

Bus Provision

8.39. Bus priority for the proposed development is based on provision of a dedicated lane within the carriageway for the bus to travel unhindered by the general traffic along the road corridors between junctions. The proposed development is approximately 3.9km long from end to end and will provide for 100% bus priority along the route both outbound and citybound. A 3m wide lane is provided for bus and other authorised vehicles over the majority of the route. As dedicated lanes for buses to travel unhindered is provided no bus gates or sections of signal-controlled priority are required as part of the development.

8.40. The reconfiguration of existing and new bus stops will result in 21 number bus stop facilities. For BusConnects it is recommended that bus stops should be spaced approximately 400m apart on typical suburban sections of route, dropping to approximately 250m in urban centres. Table 4-6 in the Preliminary Design Report provides an overview of the key changes to the locations for bus stops along the route. The proposed distance between stops on the inbound route varies from 190m to

1245m and from 310m to 1205m on the outbound route. The longest section between stops is between the Galway Crystal Junction and the Coast Road junction. This is the more rural section of the route with the Meadow Fields associated with Merlin Park University Hospital to the north and Rosshill Park Woods to the south.

8.41. The rationale for the selection of bus stops is contained within the Preliminary Design Report. I note the submission from Flannery Motor Inn DAC who raise concerns in relation to the location of the proposed bus stop at the front of the hotel. They are of the view that the main driver behind the works area at the front of the hotel appears to be the proposed bus stop. They recommend its relocation in line with international best practice spacing guidelines of 400m between bus stops.

8.42. In response Galway City Council who having considered the submission from Flannery's Motor Inn DAC, have no objection to the bus stop being relocated, and would support An Coimisiún Pleanála making its relocation a condition of any grant of planning permission. They have provided details to amend the proposed development whereby the bus stop is moved from the land by the entrance of Flannery's Hotel to the land on the Dublin Road adjacent to the Galwegians Rugby Football Club. The have also engaged with the landowners, Atlantic Technological University ("ATU") who are agreeable to the proposal to relocate the bus stop and who are agreeable to GCC acquiring the necessary additional land. I have no objection to this amendment and agree that there are no issues from a traffic safety and environmental point of view. I also note that there would be no change to the overall conclusion of the EIAR and any benefit would be positive due to the requirement to remove less trees outside the hotel. I recommend to the Commission that a condition reflecting the above amendment be attached to any grant of permission.

8.43. The preferred bus stop arrangement for the proposed development is the island bus stop arrangement. Figure 4-6 on page 53 in the Preliminary Design Report provides an example of such a bus stop. This arrangement reduces the potential for conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and stopping buses by directing cyclists behind the bus stop, thus creating an island area for boarding and alighting passengers. A pedestrian priority crossing in the form of a zebra crossing is provided for pedestrians accessing the bus stop island area. In the proposed scheme the desired minimum island width of 3m has been adopted to accommodate the provision of a full end panel shelter and

nominal length of 25m to accommodate a 19m typical bus cage arrangement and adjusted to suit the site constraints (e.g. between driveway entrances).

8.44. In the proposed scheme the island bus stop design or a variation of it, is used for all the bus stops where there is a cycle track involved for the proposed development. I note that a number of submissions have welcomed this island bus stop design, also referred to as a floating bus stop. Conventional inline bus stops are provided for at 2 no inbound locations where there are no adjacent cycling facilities provided due to the provision of offline cycle facilities elsewhere.

8.45. A number of submissions have set out that consideration should be given to offsetting the bus stops outside the bus lanes. This would allow following buses and taxis to continue their journeys unhindered. In response the applicant sets out that bus stops have been designed in order to minimise the conflict between bus passengers and cyclists as per the NTA's Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet for BusConnects Core Bus Corridors. The guidance states lay-bys should only be used in urban areas where there is compelling safety or road capacity reasons and designers should consider in-line and boarder bus stop options first. I agree with the views that it is acceptable for general traffic to wait behind buses that are stopped at in-line bus stops and given the nature of the bus lane, traffic will be moving on relatively quickly. In addition, I note that the Road Safety Audit report has found no issues in relation to the proposal for inline bus stops.

Bus Shelters

8.46. The locations of the bus shelters have been presented on the GEO_GA General Arrangement drawing series in Appendix B - Preliminary Design Drawings. The optimum configuration is the 3-Bay Reliance 'mark' configuration with full width roof consisting mainly of a stainless-steel structure with toughened safety glass and extruded aluminium roof beams . This shelter is a relatively new arrangement and has been developed by JC Decaux in conjunction with the NTA. Figure 4-8 on page 55 of the Preliminary Design Report provides an example image of the preferred full end panel shelter arrangement. Figure 4-9 and 4-10 provide example images of alternative narrow bus shelters arrangements for more constrained footpath widths.

8.47. The Galway City Community Network raise a number of concerns with the scheme in the vicinity of the ATU. They recommend that there should be three bus stops at this

location on both sides of the road instead of one bus stop and all should be set back as this is a bus stop for both city bus services and non-stop intercity/commuter buses. In response the applicant states that there are 3 bus stops in this location, two of which are recessed, and one is inline. The two recessed bus bays are for intercity buses which are expected to have significantly longer dwelling times. The local bus will use the inline bus stop.

8.48. In addition, GCCN recommend that there is a need for a 30km/h speed at this location as the location outside the ATU effectively serves as an eastern bus station on the approach to the city and in this regard, there is a high demand for buses pulling in and out and for bus users crossing the road. In response the applicant states that the scheme has been design based on the Default Speed Limit of 50km/h for Galway City, as defined by Section 5 of the Road Traffic Act 2004. They also note that the setting and management of speed limits is governed by the 'Guidelines for Setting and Managing of Speed Limits in Ireland' published by the Department of Transport and since March of 2015, local authorities are required to set their Special Speed Limit Bye-laws in accordance with these guidelines.

8.49. Therefore, the consideration of a speed limit other than the prescribed Default Speed limit is a Reserved Function and requires a separate Statutory Process to progress. The applicant sets out that this consideration is outside of the scope of the proposed development and can only be considered following operation of the proposed development.

8.50. The GCCN also recommend that at ATU, bus shelters similar to those on the north side of Eyre Square in Galway City should be considered. In response Galway City Council state that bus shelters will be provided at ATU in accordance with NTA's Preliminary Design Guidance Booklet for BusConnects Core Bus Corridors and the Cycle Design Manual, details of which will be confirmed at detailed design stage.

8.51. Overall based on the information submitted and the context of the site I am satisfied that the location, number and design of the bus stops are acceptable and adequately justified in the context of the overall scheme.

Junction Design

8.52. Concerns are also raised within the submissions received in relation to the various junction designs proposed by the applicant. The submissions from the Galway

Community Network CLG and Shane Foran focus on the junctions and offer a number of amendments to improve the scheme in their view. The submissions from Woodhaven Residents Association, Catherine Connolly TD and that from Liam, Yvonne and Emily O Reilly raise concerns in relation to the design of the access to Woodhaven estate.

8.53. It is noted that chapter 4 of the EIAR provides an overview of the approach to junction design. Table 4-4 (Major/Signalised) and Table 4-5 (Non-Signalised) summarises the junction upgrade works to be provided along the Moneenageisha to Skerritt Junction section of the proposed development route. Table 4-7 (Major/Signalised) and Table 4-8 (Non-Signalised) summarises the junction upgrade works to be provided along the Skerritt Junction to Doughiska Road Junction section of the route.

8.54. The applicant sets out that a key policy for the proposed development is to ensure appropriate capacity and reliability for the bus services so as to maximise the overall throughput of people in an efficient manner. In addition, the design for each junction was developed to align with the geometric parameters set out in conjunction with the junction operation principles described in the DMURS.

8.55. The submissions from Galway City Community Network and Shane Foran welcome the proposed Cyclops style junction at the Skerrit Roundabout. They recommend that similar arrangements should be considered at other junctions such as Belmont Junction, Galway Crystal Junction, and Dublin Road/Doughiska Junction. It is suggested within the submission from GCCN that cyclops arrangements provide larger turning radii for bikes and that there is scope for all green phases for non-motorised traffic while the submission from Shane Foran makes the case that cyclops arrangements have certain advantages as cycle traffic is brought through the junction outside rather than inside the pedestrian crossings in an external orbital system.

8.56. The applicant has responded noting section 4.5 of Chapter 4 of the EIAR. This section sets out that the greater space available at the Skerritt Roundabout has afforded adoption of a Cyclops type protected junction with cyclists provided with an orbital cycle track around the junction. This is not the case at other junctions where space is more constrained. More compact junction types have been used in other locations to suit the specific constraints at each location. The applicant goes onto note that as part of detailed design, the layout of these junctions will be reviewed for closer compliance

with the Cycle Design Manual and will include exploring opportunities for adoption of the Cyclops junction layout at other junctions.

8.57. In relation to concerns raised with respect to the design of the access at the Woodhaven estate I note that raised tables are to be provided at the access to the Woodhaven estate and the Merlin Gate estate. The residents have concerns that proposed changes to the entrance will make it extremely difficult for them to safely enter and exit the estate and the proposed layout introduces a significant level of complexity. They also request that a double yellow box be provided outside of Woodhaven estate in the interest of providing a safe exit onto the main road.

8.58. In response the applicant sets out that consideration of a double yellow box can be provided at detailed design stage. In addition, no reduction in the width of the existing Woodhaven Estate access is proposed. The proposed boundary wall will tie into the existing splay, ensuring that visibility is not compromised. Furthermore, vehicle tracking analysis will be undertaken as part of the detailed design stage, to confirm the functionality and safety of the proposed design.

8.59. Overall, it is also important to note at the outset that the National Cycle Manual and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) have been considered and has informed the design principles for the junctions proposed. The applicant emphasises that junctions have been designed to facilitate a high level of safety, comfort, and priority for sustainable modes of travel (i.e., walking and cycling) and for public transport by prioritising the space and time allocated to these modes within the operation of a junction.

8.60. The proposed junction designs will ensure that pedestrian and cyclist's safety is a priority whilst ensuring the free flow of buses and traffic along the route. I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately justified the design approach, and it is clear from the layout of the different types of junctions that there will be a significant improvement in terms of safety and accessibility for both cyclists and pedestrians. In addition, having a consistent design approach throughout the city and integrated with the 'Cross City Link' Scheme will provide legibility within the streetscape for all users that is currently absent. A clear consistent approach to street and junction layouts will encourage people to interact with the landscape in the manner which is intended by the scheme.

A recognisable junction layout removes uncertainty for users and can only improve safety in the longer term.

8.61. Having regard to the foregoing, I am satisfied that the proposed junction designs conform with the key sentiments of the National Cycle Manual and the requirements of DMURS in that the user hierarchy is pivotal to the design with pedestrians being served at the outset and cyclists followed by public transport. The proposed development will be a significant improvement over the current bus and cycle infrastructure and will provide for a more efficient and safe experience for public transport users, cyclists and pedestrians along the route.

Speed Limits

8.62. The submission from Liam, Yvonne and Emily O Reilly raise concerns in relation to measures to increase the speed limit to 80km/h on the Dubin road and resultant road safety concerns. The Planning Report sets out that the speed limit will remain at 50kph for the whole development. The applicant states that there is a lack of existing speed limit signs from the Merlin Hospital Access Road along to the western end of the development, and the rural surroundings may currently suggest to the driver that the speed limit is higher than the posted speed. The proposed development aims to provide a consistent message by use of speed limit repeater signs placed at intervals along the development at immediately after junctions to inform drivers who have entered onto Dublin Road. In response to the submissions received the applicant reiterates that the proposed development does not propose to alter the speed limit from the existing 50km/h and the proposed development has utilised a design speed of 50km/h.

Access to Individual properties/businesses

8.63. Two submissions raise concerns in relation to the impact that the proposed development will have on their individual accesses. These are the submissions from the Connacht Hospitality Ltd and the HSE - Merlin Park. In addition, the submissions received from the OPW and Brothers of Charity generally seek re-assurance that no interruption to their facilities or service will occur either on a permanent or temporary basis.

8.64. In relation to the submission from the Connacht Hospitality Ltd they raise significant issue with the removal of the existing right-turn lane that currently facilitates direct entry to their hotel from the eastbound (Oranmore) direction. They assert that with this movement eliminated, visitors approaching from the Oranmore direction will be forced to make a circuitous and potentially congested detour to access the hotel. They contend that the current scheme design does not reflect the operational realities of their business.

8.65. In response the applicant asserts that the DMURS framework supports the removal of right-turn lanes where appropriate as a means to reduce carriageway width, enhance pedestrian facilities, and improve the quality of the public realm. This reflects its core objective of creating safe, attractive, and accessible streets that support a shift towards sustainable travel and more liveable urban environments.

8.66. It must also be noted that vehicles will still be able to turn right to access the hotel but will be required to wait for a gap in oncoming traffic. The applicant states that this would also be the case in the situation where a right turn lane was provided. In addition, the provision of a yellow box is provided to allow access and egress for hotel guests, suppliers, coaches and emergency vehicles in situations where there is traffic congestion. Overall, I am in agreement that the removal of the right turning lane will not impact traffic accessing or egressing the hotel and vehicles will still be able to turn right to access the property.

8.67. With regard to the submission from HSE Merlin Park they recommend that the design of the Dublin Road/Galway Crystal junction should provide a fourth arm to serve their campus. They note that by not acknowledging this planned future access the scheme is inconsistent with the current Galway City Development Plan and Galway Transport Strategy. In addition, they consider the land take at the interface between MPUH and the Dublin Road/Galway Crystal junction is insufficient to accommodate the extent of the works and recommend that the applicant make provision for the acquisition of the requisite lands as part of this current process. On the other hand the submission from the GCCN requests that there should be no plans made to facilitate a new road entrance to Merlin Park Hospital at the Murrough Drive/ Eddies Takeaway traffic lights and consideration should be given to formal cycling arrangements into and out of the campus.

8.68. I note that the provision of a new access to Merlin Park Hospital is outlined in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 - Section 4.8 Specific Objectives, Objective 27 “Facilitate a new access to Merlin Park Hospital from the Dublin Road.” I also note the applicants response that the proposed development does not preclude a future access to the MPUH campus at the Dublin Road/Galway Crystal junction and this can be future proofed as part of the proposed junction design, by ensuring that services and utilities are laid to sufficient depth, and that the footway and cycle track are constructed to facilitate a fourth arm in the future. This future proofing of the junction for fourth arm is a practical response at this stage. Overall, I am satisfied that the approach taken by the applicant is appropriate and will note prevent the achievement of the objective to provide a fourth arm.

8.69. In relation to temporary disruption to accesses during the construction phase I note that Chapter 5 (Construction) of the EIAR, sets out that details regarding temporary access provisions will be discussed with residents and business owners prior to construction starting in the area and access and egress will be maintained at all times except for short durations to facilitate tie ins of services and road alignments. Overall, I am satisfied with this approach.

Ecological Impact

8.70. The ecological impacts of the proposed scheme are addressed in the Biodiversity Section of the EIA in Section 10 below. In addition, the Appropriate Assessment in Section 9 addresses the effects of the proposal on European Sites. The issues raised in the submissions are the protection of mammal links between the woodlands on either side of the Dublin Road, the protection of the high ecological importance of the South Meadows and South Woods and the appropriate translocation of the Pyramid and Bee Orchids at the Skerritt Roundabout prior to construction works.

8.71. Potential impacts on biodiversity could occur from construction and earthworks, drainage and additional silt/ pollutant release into the drainage network, vegetation and tree removal, noise, vibration during construction, and invasive species

8.72. However, it is concluded in the EIA that no significant direct, indirect, or cumulative adverse effects on water quality, habitats and species are likely to arise. Mitigation measures will be put in place to protect the ecological integrity of the site during the

construction phase. It has also been ascertained in the Appropriate Assessment that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of any European site in the zone of influence, in view of these sites' Conservation Objectives.

Residential Amenity, Boundary Treatments and Loss of Greenspace

8.73. In the submissions general concerns are raised around the construction phase in relation to noise and pollution disturbance and clarifications requested around intended mitigation measures to protect residential amenity and daily business operations. I note that these issues have been addressed within the EIA section of this report and no significant impacts are expected in relation to air or noise pollution. In addition, the applicant in their response to the submissions have provided a table (Table 2-10) which provides a summary of the Construction and Operational Impact of the proposed development on Human Health as set out in Section 11.4.3 of Chapter 11 (Human Health) in the EIAR.

8.74. Any mitigation or monitoring requirements in relation to effects on human health are addressed by the measures set out in the relevant chapters. No specific mitigation or monitoring measures are proposed for human health over and above those identified elsewhere in this EIA below.

8.75. The submission from Liam, Yvonne and Emily O Reilly raise concerns over the removal of Woodhaven historic stone boundary wall constructed by the Blake family in the 19th century. Woodhaven stone boundary wall is described as a 19th-century wall and wrought iron gate. Chapter 15 (Cultural Heritage) sets out that the wall, gate and a narrow strip of the grass area to the immediate north will be removed (but can be re-hung on a new boundary) as part of the proposed development design. This is a direct impact of high magnitude on a low value receptor, resulting in a predicted (negative permanent) slight significance of effect during construction stage. I have no objection to the removal of the wall to facilitate the development and I note the mitigation measures includes for the wall and gate to be recorded (written, photographic) before removal and the wall will be rebuilt incorporating existing features (pillars, gate, width, height, coursing etc.) in the arrangement as they currently exist. I also note the submission from the DoHLGH who state that having reviewed the EIAR

they are broadly in agreement with the findings in relation to Archaeology and Cultural Heritage.

8.76. The submission from the HSE who own the Woodlands Campus and is home to the Brothers of Charity Services and the submission from the HSE-Merlin Park recommend that Method Statements for the rebuilding of existing boundary walls be agreed prior to the commencement of development. I note that Section 14, Landscape and Urban Realm in the Preliminary Design Report sets out that where private or commercial property boundaries are realigned, boundary walls and railings will be reinstated to match the existing and may be extended to other properties along the same street to enhance streetscape character. In addition, the applicant sets out in the response to the submissions received detailed method statements will be prepared by the appointed Contractor for all work elements prior to the commencement of the works and the HSE/Brothers of Charity will be provided an opportunity to review and comment on these Method Statements prior to any works commencing.

8.77. Loss of greenspace at the Woodhaven estate has been raised in submissions received from the Woodhaven Residents Association, Catherine Connelly TD, and Liam Yvonne, Emily O Reilly. As a result, negative impacts on their residential amenity due to increase noise and pollution from nearby traffic and loss of recreation/play space have been raised. To enable the new cycle way and footpath to be constructed the new boundary wall is to be located 5m closer to the properties fronting the greenspace/Dublin Road compared to the current wall.

8.78. The applicant sets out in their response to the submission received that the proposed bus lane will be located at a distance of 23.5m from the property façade of Liam Yvonne Emily O Reilly at no 21 Woodhaven. This means that the traffic lane will be moved less than 3m closer to the property. The applicant's response concludes that the only motorised vehicles moving closer to the property will be the public transport related vehicles which, due to the new dedicated lanes, will result in less dwell-time, less impact on traffic congestion, and, as such, any changes to noise and vibration arising from the proposed development will be imperceptible. I also note that over time the bus fleet is expected to transition to an electric and hybrid bus fleet.

8.79. Overall, the level of loss of open space at Woodhaven is relatively minor and I am in agreement that the provision of new boundaries and associated landscaping will have a positive long-term effect on amenity.

8.80. Flannery's Motor Inns DAC also have concerns that the CPO will remove the green area and trees to the front of the hotel and therefore additional noise and fumes will be an issue. In response the applicant sets out that a detailed alternatives assessment was undertaken throughout the design process to identify the optimum scheme and to avoid / minimise potential environmental impacts, including impacts on trees and woodland as far as reasonably practicable. Therefore, the proposed tree losses are limited to only where required to deliver a scheme which fulfils the proposed development objectives. I also note that the proposed relocation of the bus stop away from the front of the hotel as set out above will result in less trees being removed. In addition, with the implementation of the mitigation measures no significant adverse effects on noise and air quality are predicted during the construction phase of the proposed development.

8.81. Overall, I am satisfied that the general environmental quality along the route for residents, visitors and businesses will be much improved by the reduction in vehicle traffic congestion and associated noise and air pollution along with reduced visual intrusion.

Visual Impact

8.82. As outlined above the proposed scheme is effectively the reallocation of road space with dedicated bus lanes and segregated cycle lanes for the full length. The applicant sets out that the landscape and urban realm proposals are derived from an analysis of the existing urban realm, including existing street and public space character, any heritage features, existing boundaries, tree planting and existing vegetation, and the range of contemporary and heritage materials in use that inform the quality and character of different parts of the overall route.

8.83. Hardscape works will be complemented by soft landscaping including trees, hedgerows, native planting, ornamental planting, amenity grass areas and species rich grasslands as appropriate. Soft landscaping will enhance the amenity value and

visual character of streets and spaces, mitigate the loss of existing trees, and enhance ecological value along the route.

8.84. It is set out in the Preliminary Design report that the overarching planting strategy is to retain established trees and vegetation wherever possible for their arboriculture, amenity and biodiversity value. The proposed development will involve removal of a number of trees notably along the existing woodland boundaries on the Skerritt Junction to Doughiska Road Junction section of the route. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report identifies trees to be removed, and the Arboricultural Method Statement sets out how retained trees are to be successfully protected.

8.85. The planting strategy includes both the replacement of street trees and groups of trees that may be impacted, and also new tree planting along streets and within other spaces. This includes additional landscaping arising from junction reconfiguration, reinforcement of existing vegetation areas, and the establishment of new urban realm and landscape opportunity areas. Table 14-1 in the Preliminary Design report identifies proposed tree planting species while Table 14-2 identifies proposed ornamental planting, shrub and hedging species

8.86. The route contains a number of pockets of green spaces, that are to be enhanced. I draw the Board's attention to Volume 3 – Figures 16-2 and 16-2 of the EIAR in which the landscaping general arrangement drawings and planting schedule are contained. Proposed landscaping along the route is clearly shown on these maps as are the trees to be removed. Overall, 446 no. trees, will be removed to facilitate realignments along sections of the route, the majority of which are located along the eastern section of the proposed development. The proposal involves the replanting of 408 no. trees. This will ensure any visual impacts upon the landscape character will be temporary to short-term.

8.87. Overall, it is evident that the landscaping and public realm proposals intend to soften the existing hard landscape with the use of additional trees, woodland/parkland tree groups, amenity grass areas and species rich grasslands. Overall, the proposals provide for a more inviting space designed to cater for an improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists. Overall having regard to the plans submitted, I am satisfied that the proposal will have a positive impact on people's experience of the street and

wider area. The softening of the landscape and public realm enhances the pedestrian and cyclist experience and has a positive impact on the perception of the area overall.

Landtake - Permanent and Temporary

8.88. I have prepared a report in respect of the CPO under reference ABP 321882-25, where the particular considerations are addressed but to address a number of matters raised in the submissions to this application I propose to address a number of relevant specific issues.

8.89. The HSE submission seek clarification on the exact status of the land take required and also seek details regarding the full reinstatement /replacement of buildings identified to be demolished.

8.90. In response the applicant states that the separation of the site on a permanent and temporary acquisition basis will ensure that only the lands required for the construction and operation of the proposed development are acquired on a permanent basis. Similarly, the proposed temporary lands proposed to be acquired relate solely to the construction of the development. Lands acquired on a temporary basis will be returned to the landowner post construction.

8.91. I also note that the works in the Brothers of Charity will include demolition of two single-storey buildings located just inside the existing boundary wall. The proposed CPO results in the boundary between temporary and permanent acquisition dissecting these two existing buildings. The buildings are flat roof structures, of relatively modern construction and are of no architectural merit. I have no objection to their removal.

8.92. The applicant sets out that subject to the proposed development being approved and the CPO confirmed by the Commission, and following service of the Notice to Treat, the landowner will be required to submit a claim for compensation. Reinstatement of property frontage including gates, railings, driveway and footpath will be done on a like for like basis.

8.93. The submission from Duggan's supermarket Ltd outlines that they object to the proposed acquisition as the proposed development would mitigate against their plans for the further development of this immediate area. However, they note that in the event the intended purchase might proceed they require costed details of lost

opportunities on site as a result of the development. In response the applicant notes that any issues relating to the temporary and permanently land take will be addressed through fair compensation package and the landowner will be required to submit a claim for compensation.

8.94. The submission from the Connacht Hotel Ltd outlines that the hotel's sole access point is included within the boundaries of the proposed Compulsory Purchase Order and is expected to be occupied during construction works. They note that this represents a critical threat to the hotel's operations. Similarly, Flannery's Motor Inn DAC have concerns in relation the proposed works area and state that 26 car spaces will be lost and there will be no facility for coaches to enter and park at the premises for the duration of the works.

8.95. In response the applicant points out that they will ensure that access arrangements to the respective hotels will be considered and discussed with the landowner prior to work commencement. Local arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis to maintain continued access. I note that at the Connacht Hotel the proposed widening is confined to the green area strip and does not impact the car parking spaces along the front boundary. The applicant reiterates that parking capacity at the hotel is not impacted by the temporary or permanent land take and the temporary land take is required for the duration of the construction period to allow working space for the construction works and will be returned after construction.

8.96. In response to the submission from Flannery's Motor Inn the applicant states that 2 number car parking spaces will be lost at Flannery's Hotel and coach parking will be impacted temporarily while constructing the boundary wall. They go onto note that all areas included in the CPO have been carefully considered, kept at a minimum and only included where deemed absolutely necessary to meet the proposed development objectives.

Future proofing of BusConnects infrastructure for Light Rail

8.97. The submissions from the GLUAS Light Rail for Galway team, An Taisce and the GCCN all reference the 'Galway Light Rail Transit Feasibility Study Report', prepared by Atkins Réalis, and published by the National Transport Authority in October 2024. They request that its recommendation in relation to future proofing the new bus

infrastructure to enable future conversion to Light Rail Transit be given active consideration.

8.98. As noted in the report the study is a feasibility report and not intended to specifically identify a preferred alignment of a light rail corridor in the city. Route options will be explored in more detail during any subsequent process of options assessment and development.

8.99. The feasibility study does include an illustrative list of potential measures that could be introduced to accommodate LRT in Galway along an indicative route. This includes potential measures including the widening of the Dublin Road to facilitate the provision of dedicated eastbound and westbound combined bus/tram lanes. In response the applicant is of the view that as the proposed BusConnects Galway: Dublin Road scheme involves widening the existing route to provide dedicated / segregated bus lanes this would also supports the potential for further upgrades into the future.

9.0 Appropriate Assessment

9.1. Screening Determination

9.1.1. Appendix 2 below provides the Appropriate Assessment Screening Assessment.

9.1.2. In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that it is not possible to exclude that the proposed development alone will give rise to significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268) in view of the site's conservation objectives. Appropriate Assessment is required.

This determination is based on:

- discharge of poor-quality surface water from the proposed development site has the potential to affect the water quality downstream and therefore has the potential to act as a vector for surface water emissions to the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268).
- The proximity of the proposed development to the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Galway Bay Complex SAC results in a risk of spread of invasive species during the construction and operational phases. Invasive species could be

spread or introduced terrestrially, or via surface water run-off from the works, and therefore affect the wetland and coastal habitats of the SPA and SAC, as well as indirectly affect the species that utilise these habitats, by reducing habitat quality and suitability.

- Dust emissions during the construction phase could result in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats.

9.2. Appropriate Assessment Conclusion: Integrity Test

9.2.1. Appendix 3 below provides the Appropriate Assessment.

9.2.2. In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development could result in significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268) in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of S177U was required.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS, all associated material submitted and taking into account observations on nature conservation, I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268) can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

My conclusion is based on the following:

- Detailed assessment of the construction, operation and post-operational impacts.
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed including supervision and monitoring and integration into a live Construction and Environmental Management plan by the contractor at the development stage.
- Application of planning conditions to ensure application of these measures.
- The proposed development will not affect the maintenance or prevent or delay the restoration of favourable conservation condition of conservation objectives for the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268).

10.0 Environmental Impact Assessment

10.1. Statutory Provisions

10.1.1. Section 50(1)(a)(iv) of the Roads Act 1993 requires EIA for

"(a) The construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or the realignment or widening of an existing road so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new, realigned or widened road would be eight kilometres or more in length in a rural area, or 500 metres or more in length in an urban area

(b) The construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length"

The prosed development is a linear road development consisting of permanent works along 3.9 kilometres of road involving the realignment and widening of existing road so as to provide four or more lanes in an urban area. The proposed development exceeds the mandatory threshold outlined in Section 50(1)(a)(iv) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, and Article 8 of the Roads Regulations 1994, as amended. The proposed development therefore requires EIA.

10.2. EIA Structure

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

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

b. includes an examination, analysis and evaluation, by the Board, that identifies, describes and assesses the likely direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed development on defined environmental parameters and

the interaction of these factors, and which includes significant effects arising from the vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and/or disasters.

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

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

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

10.2.4. The assessment provides a reasoned conclusion and allows for integration of the reasoned conclusions into the Commission's decision, should they agree with the recommendation made.

10.3. **Issues Raised in Respect of EIA**

10.3.1. Broadly the issues raised in respect of EIA by parties to the application are:

- Impact on residential amenity.
- Loss of green areas, trees and recreational space.
- Noise, vibration, fumes during construction phase and from nearby traffic.
- Potential impact on the ecological important South Meadows and South Woods.
- Established mammal link between Unclin and Antin Woods and the South Woods require protection.
- Removal of historic stone wall boundary.

- Safeguarding the strategic function of the existing N6 Bothar na dTreabh national road and the N67.
- Future proofing of BusConnects infrastructure to accommodate future light rail.

10.4. Compliance with the Requirements of Article 94 and Schedule 6 of the Regulations 2001

10.4.1. Compliance with the requirements of Article 94 and Schedule 6 of the Regulations is assessed below.

Article 94 (a) Information to be contained in an EIAR (Schedule 6, paragraph 1)
A description of the proposed development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the proposed development (including the additional information referred to under section 94(b).
A description of the proposed development is contained in Chapter 4 of the EIAR including details on the location, design and length of the development, details of new access arrangements, and details of temporary and permanent land acquisitions required. The works in the Brothers of Charity lands will include the demolition of two single-story buildings located just inside the existing boundary wall. Key infrastructure elements associated with the proposed development including bus lane provision, bus stops, cycling and pedestrian provision as well as junction improvements are set out.
A description of the likely significant effects on the environment of the proposed development (including the additional information referred to under section 94(b).
An assessment of the likely significant direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of the development is carried out for each of the technical chapters of the EIAR. I am satisfied that the assessment of significant effects is comprehensive and robust and enables decision making.
A description of the features, if any, of the proposed development and the measures, if any, envisaged to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment of the development (including the additional information referred to under section 94(b).
The EIAR includes designed in mitigation measures and measures to address potential adverse effects identified in technical studies. These, and arrangements for monitoring, are summarised in Chapter 21 (Summary of Mitigation and Monitoring Measures), Appendix A5.1 (CEMP), and Appendix A15.5 (Cultural Heritage Management Plan). Mitigation measures comprise standard good practices and site-specific measures and are largely capable of offsetting significant adverse effects identified in the EIAR.
A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the person or persons who prepared the EIAR, which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking

into account the effects of the proposed development on the environment (including the additional information referred to under section 94(b).

A description of the alternatives considered is contained in Chapter 3 of the EIAR. The alternatives were considered at three levels - strategic alternatives, route alternatives and design alternatives.

"Do Nothing" Alternative

The bus network is currently characterised by discontinuity, whereby buses on routes have very limited dedicated bus lanes and / or supporting priority measures. This means that for most of the journey, buses and cyclists are competing for space with general traffic and are negatively affected by the increasing levels of congestion. Adopting a "Do Nothing" approach to infrastructure improvements would be likely to result in an exacerbation of the problems arising from discontinuity, such as delayed buses and unreliable journey times. In addition, there would also continue to be an insufficient level of safe segregated provision for cyclists who currently, and in the future would be otherwise attracted to use the route of the proposed development.

Light Rail Alternative

It is stated that the appropriate type of public transport provision in any particular case is predominately determined by the likely quantum of passenger demand along the particular public transport route. With this in mind the applicant considered the option of constructing a light rail service which would cater for a passenger demand of between 3,500 and 7,000 per hour per direction (inbound and outbound journeys). Based on the number of passengers predicted to use the new service, it was considered that there would be insufficient demand to justify the provision of a light rail alternative, particularly given the low to medium density nature of development along, and from existing corridors feeding into city centre.

Demand Management Alternative

Demand management in the form of restricting car movement or car access through regulatory signage and access prohibitions, to parking restrictions and fiscal measures (such as tolls, road pricing, congestion charging, fuel/vehicle surcharges and similar) were all considered as alternatives to the proposed scheme. A key success factor of demand management is greater use of alternative travel modes, in particular reliable public transport. This assumes of course that alternative reliable public transport services exist. In the context of Galway City and environs, there is a balance to be struck in terms of retaining accessibility to the city centre area for cars, while increasing accessibility by public transport. Overall whilst this approach would not be sufficient in isolation it will form part of the solution to the city congestion.

Technological Alternatives

In terms of technological alternatives such as advancements in electric bike technology and evolution of bike-share schemes, it is however recognised that there is no evidence that such developments will displace the need for mass transit, which is essential to the operation of a modern city.

Route Alternatives

The applicant sets out that alternative route options have been extensively considered during the design development of the proposed development. Following completion of the Stage 1 high level assessment, the remaining reasonable alternatives options were progressed to Stage 2 and taken forward to a more detailed qualitative and quantitative assessment. These route sections were then considered against the following criterion: economy, integration, accessibility and social inclusion, safety, and environment. Under each headline criterion, a set of sub-criteria were used to comparatively evaluate the options which included cultural heritage, biodiversity, soils and geology, hydrology, landscape and visual, air quality, climate and carbon, noise and vibration and land use and built environment. The options were also considered in the context of submissions received from the public consultation and various amendments made in response to the consultation.

The main reason for opting for the current route was based on minimising environmental effects. The current proposal performed significantly better for environmental criteria than the other options. I am satisfied, therefore, that the applicant has studied reasonable alternatives in assessing the proposed development and has outlined the main reasons for opting for the current proposal before the Commission and in doing so the applicant has taken into account the potential impacts on the environment.

Article 94(b) Additional information, relevant to the specific characteristics of the development and to the environmental features likely to be affected (Schedule 6, Paragraph 2).

A description of the baseline environment and likely evolution in the absence of the development.

A description of the baseline environment is included in each technical chapter of the EIAR and an assessment of the likely evolution of it, in the absence of the development.

A description of the forecasting methods or evidence used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information, and the main uncertainties involved

The methodology employed in carrying out the EIA, including the forecasting methods is set out, in each of the individual chapters assessing the environmental effects. No difficulties were encountered (technical or otherwise) in compiling the information to carry out EIA and I have not identified any areas where any significant impediments to the assessment are evident. I am satisfied that the forecasting methods are adequate in respect of likely effects on biodiversity etc.

A description of the expected significant adverse effects on the environment of the proposed development deriving from its vulnerability to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to it.

This issue is specifically dealt with in the in Chapter 19 of the EIAR. For the large part, the proposed development has a low risk to major accidents and/or disasters. However, there is a medium risk associated with the potential of striking a main gas

line, water contamination and the spreading of invasive species during construction. These risks are reasonable and are assessed in my report.
Article 94 (c) A summary of the information in non-technical language.
This information has been submitted as a separate standalone document (Vol 1). I have read this document, and I am satisfied that the document is concise and comprehensive and is written in a language that is easily understood by a lay member of the public.
Article 94 (d) Sources used for the description and the assessments used in the report
The sources used to inform the description, and the assessment of the potential environmental impact are set out at the end of each chapter. I consider the sources relied upon are generally appropriate and sufficient .
Article 94 (e) A list of the experts who contributed to the preparation of the report
A list of the various experts who contributed to the report are set out in Table 1-5 in Chapter 1 of the Report. I am satisfied that the EIAR has been prepared by experts with competency in the technical subject areas.

Consultations

10.4.2. Three of the submissions received raised concerns in relation to the quality of the consultation carried out by the Council. This has been dealt with in 'Section 8, Planning Assessment' above under the sub-heading 'Adequacy of Consultation.'

10.4.3. Overall, I am satisfied that the application has been submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) in respect of the public notices. In addition, the applicant has carried out public consultation. Non statutory public consultation undertaken by the applicant ran for a period of 12 weeks from the 08th October 2020 to the 07th January 2021 with a second phase of non-statutory public consultation carried out in January 2023 for a 4-week period. Consultation was undertaken with prescribed bodies and an EIA scoping report was issued to the prescribed bodies and relevant non statutory consultees in May 2023. Commencing in January 2023 there has been ongoing engagement with landowners whose properties are affected. Submissions have been received from statutory bodies and third parties and are considered in this report, in advance of decision making.

10.4.4. I am satisfied therefore, that appropriate consultations have been carried out and that third parties have had the opportunity to comment on the proposed development in advance of decision making.

Compliance

10.4.5. Having regard to the foregoing, I am satisfied that the information contained in the EIAR, and supplementary information provided by the developer is sufficient to comply with article 94 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001.

10.5. Assessment of Likely Significant Effects

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

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

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

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

11.0 Population and Human Health

11.1. Issues Raised

Issues raised under specific topics have been considered under those chapters.

11.2. Examination of the EIAR

11.2.1. Chapters 10 and 11 of the EIAR consider the impacts to population and human health as a result of the proposed development. I note the assessment addresses both the construction phase and the operational phase and has been split into two subsections, namely Community Assessment and Economic Assessment. The community assessment considers people and their use of community facilities, as well as public or community land and individual residential properties, including any land parcels being acquired on a temporary and permanent basis to accommodate the proposed development. The economic assessment considers potential impacts, including land take, on individual commercial businesses, as well as any commercial receptors which would experience negative impacts from displaced traffic during the construction or operational phase of the development.

11.2.2. The study area was informed by the CSO Census electoral division boundaries. The study area captures the Zone of Influence for the proposed development and extends for 500m on either side of the R338 Dublin Road. However, it recognises that the most affected areas are closer than this, with the key impacted study areas focused within 50m to 100m depending on the noise and vibration and potential impacts on air quality and the local area under consideration.

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

11.2.4. It is important to note at this juncture that impacts to communities arising from traffic, air quality, noise and vibration and visual and landscape are considered within the relevant sections of the EIAR submitted and within the planning assessment above. This section of my report should therefore be read in conjunction with the relevant sections mentioned.

11.3. Baseline

11.3.1. The baseline assessment describes the character, significance, and sensitivity of the community through which the proposed development will pass, including a description of the various community and commercial receptors in the study area and any notable features along the proposed development.

11.3.2. There are bus lanes in both directions on Dublin Road, but these are not continuous, especially eastbound and this therefore affects the frequency and reliability of the local bus services (402, 404, 409) service as well as private, regional and national buses which use Dublin Road.

11.3.3. There are no dedicated cycle lanes and cycling in the study area is currently severely discouraged by high traffic volumes.

11.3.4. Table 10-6 sets out Community Receptor Types by Community Area. It demonstrates that the Dublin Road has the highest concentration of community facilities and include the health facilities of the Bon Secours Hospital, Galway Hospice Foundation, Merlin Park Hospital and The Brothers of Charity.

11.3.5. Table 10-13a shows the mode of travel for those people travelling to work as of the 2022 Census. The figures show a reasonably high baseline level of bus use, especially in the Murrough ED, but with this being least in Lough Atalia where parts of the ED are close to the city centre, while other estates are distant from bus routes. Trips by bicycle are modest but have increased since 2016 in EDs north of the Dublin Road despite the limited infrastructure for cycling in the study area.

11.3.6. The number of commercial employers in the study area are presented in Table 10-15. Key centres of employment within the study area include Galway City Council, Merlin Park Hospital, Bon Secours Hospital, ATU Galway, and Metronics. Hotels are also an important employer with a tourism value and include the G-Hotel, Connacht Hotel and Flannery's Hotel which are located on the Dublin Road.

11.4. Potential Effects

11.4.1. The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Population and Human Health. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table PH1 below.

11.4.2. Table PH1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• There would be no change to land use • Bus journey duration would likely continue to lengthen in line with growth in travel demand and punctuality would deteriorate as public transport would continue to use the same lanes in place as private vehicles. • Cyclist journey amenity would continue to be very poor and there would be no increase in modal transfer to cycling and no improvement in the safety of cycle journeys. • Pedestrian journey amenity would not improve • Environmental quality, due to effects such as elevated noise levels and poor air quality, would continue to be poor.
Construction	• The chapter notes that the likelihood of effects are largely from the construction phase in terms of adverse effect on local residential and journey amenity due to construction traffic, noise, dust and impacts on visual amenity. These are short term in duration. • Location of construction compound will have adverse effect on guests and staff at adjacent hotel - Slight to moderate, negative, and short-term noise effects from the proximity of the proposed construction compound prior to mitigation • Construction works and temporary lane closures resulting in congestion and driver frustration – effects are likely to be negative and of slight significance
Operation	• No likely significant adverse effects identified for population and human health during operational phase. • In fact, much improved infrastructure for public transport, continuous segregated cycle tracks and improved pedestrian paths and signalised crossings • Improved connectivity resulting in greater ease to travel in and out of the city
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

11.5. Mitigation

Chapter 6 describes how Mitigation Measures have been incorporated into the project design which will minimise traffic, noise, dust and impacts on visual amenity during the construction process. All mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 21 of EIAR will be implemented in full for all phases. The EIAR notes that no additional effects have been identified as arising from the proposed development regarding public health and safety

issues and as a result, no additional mitigation measures are considered necessary, other than the implementation of standard health and safety legislation.

11.6. **Residual Effects**

Minor, non-significant, effects are predicted during the construction phase, largely related to noise emissions and annoyance due to traffic measures. These are short term in duration. The EIAR notes the proposed development will encourage greater use of more sustainable transport modes and potentially a transfer from private car with both private and public good benefits for traffic movement, social interaction, health, environmental effects and economic development. In addition, the general environmental quality for residents and visitors will be much improved by the reduction in vehicle traffic congestion and associated noise and air pollution along with reduced visual intrusion.

11.7. **Analysis, Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects**

11.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated Chapters 4 and 5 of the EIAR, and all of the associated documentation and submissions on file in relation to Population and Human Health.

11.7.2. Construction phase impacts will include traffic, noise, and impacts on visual amenity. Construction will occur over 24 months and will be phased. The applicant notes that to minimise disruption, works will occur in largely sequential phases beginning in Section 1 until Month 13, Section 3 in Month 10 to 20, and Skerritt Junction from Month 19. Works at Skerritt Junction will be undertaken during the summer months outside of the college term of ATU.

11.7.3. Aside from preparations within the construction compound, almost all works will be undertaken in daytime hours between 07:00 and 19:00. Some weekend works and night time work will be needed in specific circumstances.

11.7.4. The Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) aims to facilitate the movement of pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, and private vehicles in this hierarchical order. Bus movements will be prioritised over private vehicles during the construction phase so effects on journey time for bus users will be slight to moderate negative at peak travel times. No road closures or road diversions are anticipated, although temporary lane closures will be needed in each section using stop/go

systems. However, if congestion becomes severe, there is the provision for a temporary suspension of construction works to allow for the freer movement of traffic.

11.7.5. The CEMP, and Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan (CSMMP) for construction workers, include measures to minimise the number of construction traffic movements.

11.7.6. Construction phase benefits will include local employment of approximately 50 people or 70 at peak times.

11.7.7. In the operational phase there will be a much-improved infrastructure for public transport, segregated cycle tracks and improved pedestrian paths with more signalised crossings. In addition, the improved environment will result in less congestion and better air quality and amenity.

11.7.8. The improved infrastructure for walking, cycling and public transport will over time, allow for a reduction in the length of queueing traffic and associated effects on the amenity of adjacent residences and community facilities due to visual intrusion or poor air quality.

11.7.9. Accessibility for people with mobility impairment will be significantly improved making it easier for people with disabilities to enter buses and travel by public transport.

11.7.10. Temporary disturbances given the nature of the works will not extend in the long-term post construction. I am satisfied that such impacts will not result in significant effects and can adequately be dealt with by way of mitigation. Mitigation measures for construction traffic and noise have been included in the design of the project to reduce the significant likely effects. I have discussed these issues under the relevant sections of this report and will not repeat it here.

11.8. Conclusion: Direct and Indirect Effects (Population and Human Health)

I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on Population and Human Health, subject to compliance with relevant legislation and guidance, implementation of the EIAR and final CEMP mitigation measures and compliance with recommended conditions. Overall, for bus passengers, cyclists and pedestrians, the proposed development will have a significant positive effect on journey characteristics. The general environmental quality for residents and visitors will be much improved by the reduction in vehicle traffic congestion and associated

noise and air pollution along with reduced visual intrusion. In addition, the provision of new and often improved boundaries and associated landscaping will have a positive long-term effect on the amenity of the area.

12.0 Biodiversity

12.1. Issues Raised

Issues were raised in the submissions in relation to ensuring no impact on the high ecological importance of the South Meadows and South Woods. In addition, the protection of established mammal links between Unclin and Antin Woods and the South Woods was also raised. The appropriate translocation of Orchids at the Skerritt Roundabout was also noted.

12.2. Examination of EIAR

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

12.2.2. The assessment is undertaken in accordance with government and industry best practice guidelines. The assessment methodology includes consultations with statutory/non-statutory agencies, desk top survey, and species-specific surveys which are carried out at appropriate times of the year. Table 12-2 list the Ecological Surveys and dates that they surveys were carried out. The surveys include habitat survey, mammal surveys, bat surveys, breeding and wintering bird surveys, amphibians and reptile habitat suitability assessment as well as Marsh Fritillary species-specific survey.

12.2.3. No limitations are identified and are evident in the assessment.

12.3. Baseline

12.3.1. The lands within and adjacent to the development site are urban in nature with various sections of the route bounded by a variety of landscaped habitats. The main habitat types include buildings and artificial surfaces, amenity grassland, stone walls and other stonework, hedgerow and treelines. There is no watercourse, drains or other water bodies within the study area. No rare or protected plant species listed on the Flora (Protection) Order 2022 were identified within the footprint of the proposed

development during the habitat surveys. Table 12-3 sets out the potential Zone of Influence of the proposed development.

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

12.3.3. Air quality ZoI is set depending on the activity i.e 50m from proposed scheme, 500m from construction compound during construction phases and up to 200m from the proposed scheme boundary during the operational phase.

12.3.4. The ZoI for small mammal species would be expected to be limited to no more than approximately 100m from the proposed development boundary due to their small territory sizes and sedentary lifecycle. The ZoI for other species are as follows:

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

12.3.5. The ZoI in relation to amphibian species is likely to be limited to direct habitat loss and severance within the proposed development boundary and / or indirect impacts to water quality in wetland habitats hydrologically connected to the proposed development.

12.3.6. The ZoI in relation to protected invertebrates is likely to be limited to direct habitat loss and severance within the proposed development boundary and disturbance/displacement effects in the immediate vicinity during construction.

12.3.7. Overall, it is clear that the determination of the zone of influence differs depending on the construction and operational activity.

12.3.8. It is also important to note that the nearest European sites are the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Galway Bay Complex SAC located circa 55m and 63m southwest of the

proposed development respectively. The AA Screening report identifies connectivity with these sites via the stormwater network within Galway City and the outfall locations within Lough Atalia and Galway Bay. Due to proximity, there is also the potential for non-native invasive species impacts that could spread over this short distance to the designated sites**.** All European Sites within the zone of influence of the proposed scheme are outlined and examined within the Appropriate Assessment section of this report and will not be repeated hereunder.

12.3.9. The closest Natural Heritage Areas to the proposed development is the Creggana Marsh NHA, located circa. 3.7 km south-east. This site is also designated as an SPA and so the potential for significant impacts on this site are covered in the NIS. The next closest NHA is the Moycullen Bog NHA, located ca. 4.7 km north-west. The closest proposed Natural Heritage Area is located circa. 55m south. This is the Galway Bay Complex pNHA and this shares a boundary with the Galway Bay Complex SAC, and therefore, is covered in the NIS

12.3.10. Overall in order to establish existing biodiversity baseline conditions, the applicant carried out numerous walkovers of the site and carried out detailed mammal, bird, bat, invertebrates and amphibian surveys of the route and the surrounding areas between 2022 and 2024, details of all surveys are outlined under Table 12-1 and Table 12-2.

12.4. Potential Effects

12.4.1. The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Biodiversity. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table B1 below.

12.4.2. Table B1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	**Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**
Do Nothing	• The habitat types present within the study area will not change and there will be no changes to the flora and fauna of the area.
Construction	• Designated sites - European sites hydrologically linked to the proposed development have the potential to be indirectly impacted. All surface water will be directed to the existing drainage network within the R338 road infrastructure. There are some storm drain outfalls with no WWTP or oil interceptors and thus these have potential to act as a vector for surface water

	emissions to the Inner Galway Bay SPA and Galway Bay Complex SAC. - Risk that machinery and surface water could act as vectors for dispersal of invasive non-native flora species within and without the site - In the absence of mitigation measures likely significant effects on the qualifying interests of the Inner Galway Bay SPA and Galway Bay Complex SAC cannot be excluded • Habitats and Flora - As a result of road widening there will be Loss of dry meadows and grassy verges which are evaluated as being of national ecological importance due to the potential affiliation of two fields to the Annex I Lowland Hay Meadows habitat type located within the HSE lands as part of Merlin Park Hospital. - Surface water may run-off into the Annex I affiliated grassland habitats, which may effect the characteristic flora species present in the Meadow fields. - Overall effect on Annex I Lowland Hay Meadows habitat not considered to be significant. - Proposed development could result in further spread of invasive species outside of the study area. Effects from invasive species during construction are assessed as Negative, Moderate, Short-term and in the Local Context • Fauna - Disturbance impacts to arise affecting non-volant mammals, with increased noise and human disturbance - Effects are assessed as Negative, Slight, Short term and in the Local Context. - Nocturnal mammals could also be affected by artificial lighting, potentially impacting commuting routes. - Barriers to mammal movement and habitat fragmentation is likely to arise due to site works, vehicles, noise and increased human activity - Effects on fauna are assessed as Negative, Slight, Short term and in the Local Context. - • Bats - The construction phase expected to take 24 months, will take place within sensitive times of the year for foraging and commuting bats. - Night work will be required, which may fall during the summer months when bats are most active. Therefore,

	disturbance and displacement impacts from temporary lighting could result. - Treefelling is required along the southern boundary of the Merlin Meadows which were identified as having low potential for bat roosting. Direct harm and potentially mortality, as well as disturbance could result. - Overall effects on bats during construction are assessed as Negative, Moderate, Short-term and in the Local Context. • Tree felling - A total of 446 number of trees are proposed to be felled along the length of the route. Replanting of 408 trees is proposed. - Disturbance to bird habitat - Effects are assessed as Negative, Slight, Short-term and in the Local Context
Operation	• Habitats and Flora - Impacts limited to regular maintenance of hedgerows and treelines along the road's edge for the purposes of safety, as required. - The drainage design for the proposed development includes a petrol interceptor and oil separator, which will be an improvement on existing conditions on site. - Effects on habitats and flora are assessed as Negative, Not Significant, Long-term and in the National Context. • Invasive Species - Potential introduction/spread could occur during regular maintenance of vegetation along the road's edge. - Effects relating to invasive species are assessed as Negative, Slight, Long-term and in the Local Context. • Fauna - Impacts on non-volant mammals from artificial lighting ranging from disturbance, displacement and reduced feeding successes for these mammals. - Disturbance from increased human activity and vehicles, as well as a likely increase in cyclists. - Impacts on invertebrates and other fauna relating to maintenance of habitats as required for road safety. - Effects on fauna are assessed as Negative, Not Significant, Long-term and in the Local Context. • Bats - Artificial lighting can alter foraging regimes and commuting routes, as well as affect predation levels for bats and it can

	delay emergence times resulting in reduced feeding successes. - Effects on bats are assessed as Negative, Not Significant, Long-term and in the Local Context. • Birds - Impacts on birds relate to maintenance of adjoining habitats along the road's edge for the purposes of safety, as required. - Mortality impacts for nocturnal birds due to passing vehicles and loss of foraging habitat due to artificial lighting - Effects on birds are assessed as Negative, Slight, Long-term and in the Local Context.
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

12.5. Mitigations

12.5.1. Within the scheme design and operation, good practice environmental and pollution and control measures will be employed. The design of the proposed development is such that buffer zones are present between the new proposed development layout and existing baseline habitats, by way of additional planting and retention of existing trees and vegetation. This will ensure appropriate buffer zones and will mitigate fragmentation impacts.

12.5.2. Mitigation measure relating to the protection of water quality are examined in detail within the water section of this EIAR assessment and will not be repeated hereunder. In addition, it should be noted that the mitigation measures required to ensure that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites are presented in the NIS.

12.5.3. Vegetation clearance will be kept to a minimum as required during the construction phase and in compliance with the conditions of any Derogation Licence, felling licence, statutory limits (including temporal) and the provisions of the Development plan on removing vegetation. All vegetation clearance works will be undertaken slowly to allow mammals and other animals sufficient time to escape if needed. The carrying out of works outside of bird nesting season will avoid any potential impacts to breeding and nesting birds. In the operation phase vegetation clearance along the roads edge will only be undertaken where necessary for safety.

12.5.4. Many of the trees for removal are immature and not suitable for bird nesting. Significant additional planting of 408 number of trees will be provided along with the installation of bird boxes in the vicinity of Merlin Park. In addition, the landscaping plan includes for additional planting with emphasis given to including a majority of native species, including pollinator-friendly and diverse plant species.

12.5.5. An Invasive Species Management Plan (ISMP) has been prepared and is included in Appendix A 5.1 - CEMP of Volume 4 of this EIAR. Measures outlined in the ISMP include the removal of Himalayan knotweed located adjacent to a stone wall at Merlin Park by a suitability qualified specialist prior to the commencement of construction. In addition, a pre-construction survey for invasive species will be carried out along the length of the route. Post-construction monitoring will be undertaken along the length of the route, to ensure no introduction of invasive species occurs during the construction phase

12.5.6. While there are no watercourses on the site, potential impacts were identified in relation to surface water run-off near the Meadow grassland fields in the HSE lands at Merlin Park. At a minimum, the works area will be fenced off from the Meadow fields during construction. Silt fences and sediment filter socks will be deployed along this fence to ensure no overland flows into the grassland.

12.5.7. In addition, in areas where temporary works are required along the southern edge of the Meadow fields, reseeding will be undertaken using seeds from the existing Meadows. Seeds from the Meadows will be harvested at an appropriate time prior to works commencing and stored for reseeding.

12.5.8. A number of mature trees were identified with potential roost features (PRFs), some of which will be felled, and some retained. A derogation licence was granted to the applicant by the NPWS as there is potential for bats to be present in suitable trees at any point of time. A copy of the derogation licence is included with the application. While the permitted Derogation Licence is not a mitigation measure per se, it has conditions attached to it which must be complied with.

12.5.9. A suitably qualified bat ecologist will be present on site for any tree felling works and setting up roost protection areas for retained trees with PRFs. In addition, due to the required loss of some mature trees with PRFs for bats a bat box scheme is provided for.

12.6. Residual Effects

12.6.1. Table 12-18 provides a summary of Construction Phase Significant Residual Impacts while Table 12-19 provides a summary of Operational Phase Significant Residual Impacts. Overall following implementation of the mitigation measures no significant residual effects on designated sites, habitats and flora or fauna are expected to arise.

12.7. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

12.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated Chapter 12 and all of the associated documentation and submissions on file in relation to Biodiversity.

12.7.2. As the proposed development is situated along an existing and busy road, it is considered that fauna in the vicinity are accustomed to background levels of disturbance, from traffic, lighting and pedestrians as well as businesses, residential housing and regular dog walking.

12.7.3. Land-take is required to facilitate the proposed development. No significant impacts are envisaged to arise with respect to habitats and flora. The majority of habitat types affected comprise common urban habitat types and all are along the linear strips adjacent to the existing road.

12.7.4. No mammal dwellings were present along the footprint of the proposed development, during the baseline walkover surveys. However, it is likely that mammals including the red squirrel would also use areas within the study area for commuting and foraging. The proposed development is not expected to overlap or interact with the nearby woodland areas. Effects on non-volant mammals during construction are assessed as Negative, Slight, Short term and in the Local Context.

12.7.5. The breeding bird survey revealed that the majority of birds using the study area are small passerine species with activity focussed along the woodland edges to the north of the Meadows fields towards Merlin Park, as well as on treelines separating these fields. Very little activity was noted towards the R338 side of the Meadows fields.

12.7.6. Similarly in relation to bat activity surveys the most activity levels were identified along the woodland edges north of the Meadows fields with very little activity recorded along the road itself. Effects on bats during construction are assessed as Negative, Moderate, Short-term and in the Local Context. However, a derogation licence is required as there is potential for bats to be present in suitable trees along the route.

The Derogation licence application was submitted to NPWS and a licence (Derogation Number DER-BAT-2025-33) was granted on the 24th November 2024. The derogation licence application, associated bat report and derogation licence issued by the Department all form part of the applicant's submission. The derogation licence is valid to the 31st December 2025.

12.7.7. Additional tree planting along currently bare edges of the meadow fields to the east, will create a barrier effect, minimising light spill to the optimal foraging habitats the north of the meadow fields and Merlin Park woodland during the operational phase. In addition, the temporary construction compound, where security lighting will be required, is located at a distance of circa 1.3 km from the woodlands and Meadows of Merlin Park.

12.7.8. Of particular note is Dry meadows and grassy verges (GS2) habitat type, located within the HSE lands as part of Merlin Park Hospital. Figure 12-7 provides a habitat map of the Annex I Lowland Hay Meadow. This is evaluated as being of national ecological importance due to the potential affiliation of two fields to the Annex I Lowland Hay Meadows [6510]. Approximately 4m widening of the road will be required in this area to facilitate the construction of the footpath and cycle track. I note that the habitat loss of Annex I Lowland Hay Meadows is considered to be minor, due to the buffer habitats present between the roads edge and the Meadows. The expected land-take of Annex I habitat is estimated to be less than 1% of the total area of Annex I habitat and not considered to be significant. The applicant sets out that monitoring of the Annex I habitat in the HSE lands within Merlin Park will be undertaken annually, over a period of three years and will involve consultation with the HSE.

12.7.9. The surveys showed no evidence of Marsh Fritillary breeding in the Meadow habitats in the study area. No devil's bit scabious was recorded during the habitat surveys. One record of an adult Marsh Fritillary was noted during the survey in 2023. However, during the validation surveys in 2024, the meadow fields were cut on the day of the survey 30th July. Overall, it is concluded that as there is no confirmed breeding evidence of Marsh fritillary from the limited suitable habitat in the study area, with no suitable habitat in 2024 due to early cutting, and the proposed development will largely follow the existing road, no significant impacts are expected to arise that could affect this Annex II species.

12.8. Conclusion: Direct and Indirect Effects (Biodiversity)

I have considered all of the submissions made in relation to Biodiversity and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on biodiversity (including habitat and species), subject to compliance with relevant legislation and guidance, implementation of the EIAR and final CEMP Mitigation and Monitoring Measures and compliance with recommended conditions

13.0 Land, Soil, Geology and Hydrogeology

13.1. Issues Raised

No specific issues have been raised in the submissions in relation to Land, Soil, Geology and Hydrogeology.

13.2. Examination of EIAR

13.2.1. Chapter 14 of the EIAR submitted examines potential impacts on land, soils, geology and hydrogeology. This includes the potential for contamination of soils and groundwater, changes to groundwater regime and the loss of natural soils from excavation activities associated with utility diversions, pavement resurfacing, road widening and realignments.

13.2.2. The assessment has been carried out according to best practice and guidelines relating to land, soils, geology, and hydrogeology assessment, and in the context of similar large-scale infrastructural projects. The potential impacts have been assessed by classifying the importance of the relevant attributes and quantifying the likely magnitude of any impact on these attributes. The assessment is undertaken in accordance with government and industry best practice guidelines. Data was collated from publicly available datasets, the findings of ground investigations, design information, walkover survey, and is outlined in Tables 14-1 and 14-2.

13.3. Baseline

13.3.1. The baseline environment is described in Section 14.3 of the EIAR. The western section of the proposed route is located on land that is underlain by made ground, that is soils which have been anthropogenically altered and generally used for

development. The eastern section of the proposed route is underlain by glacial till deposits derived from limestone, bedrock outcrops and made ground.

13.3.2. Karstified bedrock outcrops or suboutcrops are located to the north and south of the proposed development along the Merlin Woods. A review of GSI mapping, and the results from the geophysical survey indicated that there are eight (8 no.) karst features located within the study area. These are listed in Table 14-13. Overall, the entirety of the proposed development is underlain by limestone bedrock. The limestone bedrock is a Regionally Important Karstified Aquifer.

13.3.3. The Clarinbridge Groundwater Body (IE_WE_G_0008) underlies the study area and has a Groundwater Body status of 'Good' under the Ground Waterbody WFD 2016-2021. Groundwater vulnerability within the study area ranges from moderate/ high on the west to extreme vulnerability on the east of the proposed route. This variability is attributed to the composition of soils, influenced by anthropogenic or natural factors. Areas with natural soils, such as The Merlin Meadows, are classified as having extreme vulnerability according to the GSI classification.

13.3.4. There are two designated protected areas within the study area of the proposed development - The Galway Bay Complex SAC (and pNHA) and the Inner Galway Bay SPA. In addition, the Merlin Meadows are identified as being of national ecological importance and is discussed in the Biodiversity Section. These protected sites do not contain groundwater dependant habitats in the vicinity of the site development. However, while these sites may not be groundwater dependent, they will receive groundwater flow from within the study area.

13.4. Potential Effects

13.4.1. The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Land, Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table LS1 below.

13.4.2. Table LS1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• No resulting impacts on the land, soils, geology, and hydrogeology along the route of the Proposed Development.
Construction	• Loss/damage of Topsoil - the significance of the impact is considered imperceptible.

	• Construction of Structures including retaining wall - the significance of the impact is considered imperceptible. • Mobilisation of contamination into the Regionally Important Aquifer as a result of the removal of hardstanding - the significance of the impact considered to be moderate / slight. • The removal of hardstanding during the demolition of the existing Skerritt Roundabout will result in a small temporary increase in infiltration into the underlying aquifer - the significance of the impact is deemed to be imperceptible. • Several karst solution features which act as a source of point infiltration - The significance of the impact is considered imperceptible at these locations. • Contaminants runoff from could infiltrate into Lough Atalia, which is part of the Inner Galway Bay SPA - the impact is considered significant in the absence of mitigation. • Dewatering - Localised pumping of excavations may be required - the significance of the impact is considered imperceptible.
Operation	• Reduction in recharge to the aquifer due to slightly reduced available surface area - the significance of the impact is considered imperceptible. • Contamination of the aquifer due to contaminated road surface runoff - the significance of any permanent negative impact on groundwater quality is considered imperceptible as the runoff will be collected by a sealed drainage network. • Mobilisation of Contaminants into the Merlin Meadows - the significance of this impact is considered imperceptible due to sealed nature of the drainage system.
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

13.5. **Mitigation**

13.5.1. In the construction phase the excavation footprint is to be kept to a minimum, using shoring or trench boxes where appropriate. Silt traps will be installed by the appointed contractor to prevent silt and other fine particles from migrating off-site. In addition, the drainage network will be sealed throughout the proposed development to prevent surface runoff entering the Regionally Important Karstified Aquifer. Any dewatering will be designed by the appointed contractor to mitigate against the mobilisation of fines/ contaminants into the surrounding environment.

13.5.2. Good construction management practices, as outlined in the CIRIA guidance Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites – Guidance for consultants and contractors (Masters-Williams et al., 2001) will be employed by the appointed contractor to minimise the risk of transmission of hazardous materials as well as pollution of adjacent watercourses and groundwater. Measures are listed in section 14.5.1.3.

13.5.3. Additionally, the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) mandates that the contractor develop a Sediment Control Plan (SCP) before construction begins.

13.6. Residual Effects

Effective implementation of the outlined mitigation measures will result in imperceptible residual adverse impacts on the land, soil, geology, and hydrogeology in the construction and operational phase of the proposed development.

13.7. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

13.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapter 14 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to land, soil, geology, and hydrogeology. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment by way of desk and site surveys is comprehensive and that the key impacts in respect of likely effects on land, soil, geology, and hydrogeology have been identified.

13.7.2. I consider the mitigation measures proposed in the EIAR are sufficient to mitigate any impacts relating to the construction phase including contamination of aquifer. In addition, due to the slight increase in construction activity, potential impacts to soil contamination could occur from accidental spillages and leakages. The final CEMP will include mitigation measures, which will protect soils and groundwater from contamination. With the implementation of Mitigation Measures outlined in the EIAR, I consider that the proposed development is not predicted to give rise to significant adverse impacts to land, soil, geology, and hydrogeology at any phase of the development.

13.8. Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects

I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on lands, soil, geology and hydrogeology can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on lands, soils, geology and hydrogeology can be ruled out.

14.0 **Water**

14.1. **Issues Raised**

No specific issues have been raised in the submissions in relation to water.

14.2. **Examination of EIAR**

14.2.1. Chapter 13 of the EIAR submitted examines potential impacts on water. The potential surface water impacts associated with the development during the construction phase and operation phase are assessed in this chapter. Included also is an assessment of the proposed developments compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (Directive 2000/60/EC) requirements for the water bodies within the study area. This is set out in Volume 4 - Appendix A13.1 of this EIAR. In addition, flooding has been assessed within a dedicated Flood Risk Assessment (Volume 4 - Appendix A13.2) with the results summarised in Section 13.3.7. Overall, I am satisfied that the assessment has been carried out in accordance with best practice and guidelines for the assessment of surface water and has taken account of experience in assessment of similar largescale infrastructural projects.

14.3. **Baseline**

14.3.1. The baseline environment is described in Section 13.3 of the EIAR.

14.3.2. The study area for the assessment has been set to extend 250m beyond the landtake boundary of the proposed development as any significant impacts to local waterbodies are considered to occur within this offset distance. However, as the existing drainage outfall locations are located greater than 250m from the landtake boundary, it was considered prudent that the downstream waterbodies be included within the assessment. It is noted that there are no watercourse crossings within the boundary of the proposed development.

14.3.3. It is noted that along the length of the existing road, surface water drainage occurs via an informal over the edge drainage system, whereby surface water from the road pavement is shed onto private lands adjacent to the road. This runoff is then infiltrated through the soil adjacent to the road. The current road drainage system has surface runoff outfalls at Lough Atalia, Oranmore Bay and the Corrib Estuary as shown in

Figure 13-3. Some of these storms drain outfalls have no petrol interceptors and thus these have potential to act as a vector for surface water emissions.

14.3.4. As the proposed works incorporate kerbing, the existing over the edge drainage system cannot be utilised. In addition, the karstified limestone bedrock could act as a conduit between pollutants at ground level and the aquifer, which is considered highly vulnerable.

14.3.5. An assessment of the compliance of the proposed development with the WFD requirements is provided in Volume 4 - Appendix A13.1. The Study Area lies within Hydrometric Area (HA) 29 Galway Bay Southeast. Figure 13-5 shows the WFD Catchment / Sub catchment near the proposed development. This catchment is predominantly underlain by karstified limestone and the groundwater and surface water systems in the area are closely interlinked.

14.3.6. Relevant water body status is outlined within Table 13.11 of the EIAR. Apart from Oranmore Bay which is unassigned, it is of note from this table that the known status of the waterbodies encountered along the route range between moderate and good and all are at risk with pressures arising from urban wastewater, invasive species and storm water overflow.

14.3.7. The waterbodies examined for the purpose of EIA for the proposed scheme are set out in Figure13-6 and include the following:

- Lough Atalia / Corrib Estuary;
- Oranmore Bay.
- Clarinbridge GW
- Inner Galway Bay (North)

<u>Flooding</u>

14.3.8. A separate Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been prepared in accordance with the 2009 Department Guidelines and is included in Volume 4 - Appendix A13.2 of this EIAR.

14.3.9. The assessment notes that there are no records of flood events occurring within the vicinity of the proposed development. There are no watercourses intersecting or immediately adjacent to the proposed development.

14.3.10. The proposed development is not located in Flood Zone A or B. The various sources of flooding were assessed, and it was determined that the site is at low risk of fluvial and coastal flooding (Flood Zone C) but there is a moderate risk of pluvial and groundwater flooding. There is also a risk of flooding from failure of the pumping stations that is assessed as a moderate/high risk.

14.3.11. I note that mitigation measures have been included for the proposed drainage works which have reduced the flood risk to acceptable levels. Surface water management measures including upgraded surface water drainage system, additional green area and SuDS features, oversized pipes and attenuation tanks with flow control are incorporated in the design.

14.3.12. Overall I am satisfied that the FRA has demonstrated that the proposed development is in compliance with the core principles of the FRM Guidelines and does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

14.4. Potential Effects

14.4.1. The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Water. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table W1 below.

14.4.2. Table W1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	**Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**
Do Nothing	• No resulting impacts on the hydrology in proximity to the proposed development.
Construction	• Disruption to local drainage systems due to diversions required to accommodate the works. • Temporary increase in hardstanding areas and / or soil compaction. • Change in the natural hydrological regime due to an increase in discharge because of dewatering activities. • Sediment runoff from works including the stripping of topsoil / road surface. • Contamination of water bodies such as oil/chemical spills or concrete washings. • In the absence of mitigation, the potential impacts are considered to be short term, slight – moderate adverse for the Clarinbridge ground waterbody. As the Corrib Estuary and

	Oranmore Bay are classified as 'Extremely High' sensitivity, the magnitude of potential impacts is increased to significant • Contaminated surface water run-off from the Construction Compound – this is a short term impact and considered to be negligible.
Operation	• Increased impermeable area and changes to the nature, frequency and numbers of vehicles using the new route. • Hydromorphology changes due to changes in the flow regime as a result of increased surface water runoff from the improved drainage system. • Impacts are considered to be Long term, significant beneficial
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

14.5. Mitigation

14.5.1. Mitigation measures are outlined in section 13.5 of the EIAR and include measures to control sediments, restrict storage of fuels to bunded areas and restrict the method of concrete use near to water bodies which will ensure that accidental sediment and hydrocarbon release to waterbodies does not arise.

14.5.2. The Commission should note that it is proposed to incorporate SUDs measures into the proposed scheme along the entirety of its length where there are none at present. Such works will have a positive impact on the receiving waters surrounding the proposed scheme. Petrol interceptors have also been provided where possible, to remove hydrocarbons from the road runoff. Overall, the proposed development does not propose to significantly increase the current flow or volume of surface water runoff.

14.5.3. In particular, I note that the upgrades to the existing drainage system will address the long-term pollution of the Annex I grassland and Karstified Aquifer which has occurred in the past. The new sealed drainage system will replace the historical over the edge drainage system, which was previously polluting the aquifer via contaminants been washed from the road pavement and into the aquifer.

14.6. **Residual Effects**

No significant impacts are anticipated for any of the downstream waterbodies provided the mitigation measures outlined in Section 13.5 of the EIAR are implemented alongside the mitigation controls within the SWMP and CEMP

14.7. **Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects**

14.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapter 13 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to water. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment by way of desk and site surveys is comprehensive and that the key impacts in respect of likely effects on water.

14.7.2. There are no salmonid rivers, nutrient sensitive areas or shellfish areas within the Study Area, as per data on EPA geoportal.

14.7.3. I note there is potential for significant sediment generation associated with the widening of the existing footpath that bounds the Old Dublin Road to the south. As these works are in the vicinity of Lough Atalia, the potential impact of widening the existing footpath at this location relates to the accidental release of silt / sediment to a designated waterbody.

14.7.4. In this regard the Commission should also note that an Appropriate Assessment has been carried out as outlined above and considers the impact to other EU legislation accordingly.

14.7.5. I draw the Commission's attention to Section 13.3.4 of the EIAR in which it is stated that following the implementation of good practice design measures including the provision of sustainable drainage systems, pollution controls, flow controls and attenuation measures; the anticipated impacts of the proposed development on the biological, physico-chemical and hydromorphological quality elements will not compromise progress towards achieving 'Good' status or cause a deterioration of the overall Good Ecological Potential (GEP) of any of the waterbodies in proximity to the proposed development.

14.7.6. Overall the proposed scheme is expected to have an overall positive impact on water quality and is therefore in compliance with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive in that it will not cause a deterioration in status in any waterbody or prevent any waterbody from achieving good status.I have assessed the BusConnects Galway:

Dublin Road development and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface & ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status), and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively.

14.8. **Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects**

I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on water can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on water can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise.

15.0 Air Quality and Climate

Air Quality

15.1. **Issues Raised**

Issues were raised in the third-party submissions in relation to the impact on air quality. These were generally in relation to pollution during the construction phase and the removal of trees/green areas which would result in additional fumes thereby impacting the quality of life of residents and visitors to the area.

15.2. **Examination of EIAR**

15.2.1. Chapter 7 of the EIAR submitted examines the potential impacts in relation to Air Quality. Air quality assessments are concerned with the presence of airborne pollutants in the atmosphere. During the construction phase, the potential air quality impacts include construction activities such as utility diversions, road carriageway / cycleway / footway resurfacing and kerb road realignments. During the operational phase, the potential impacts to air quality relate to alterations to traffic patterns, with a particular attention focused on those areas that will be encroaching closer to air quality

receptors, specifically where bus or traffic lanes are moving closer to air quality receptors.

15.2.2. The air quality assessment has been carried out in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, the IAQM Guidelines (IAQM, 2024) and the TII guidance (TII, 2022).

15.3. Baseline

15.3.1. A detailed baseline air monitoring study was undertaken in order to characterise the existing ambient environment in areas along the proposed route. This was undertaken through a review of available published ambient air monitoring data and site-specific ambient air monitoring at sensitive locations along the proposed development. Air quality monitoring programmes undertaken in recent years by the EPA and Local Authorities informed the study.

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

- Nitrogen Dioxide NO2
- Construction Dust
- Particulate Matter PM10 and PM 2.5
- NH3 Ammonia

15.3.3. The EIAR submitted outlines, within Table 7.7, the limits values in the air quality regulations for the above pollutants and within Sections 7.2.3 and 7.2.3.5 the relevant international and domestic legislation and policy pertaining to same. Baseline air quality is examined within section 7.3 of the EIAR, and baseline meteorological conditions are examined in section 7.3.2. Emissions are expected to arise in relation to both the construction and operation phases of the proposed development and will be examined in the context of the proposed mitigation measures hereunder.

15.3.4. In relation to baseline levels, I note that the most recent annual report at the time of assessment is Air Quality in Ireland 2023 (EPA). The Commission should note that I have reviewed the most recent report and have taken it into account in my assessment hereunder. It is also stated that to inform the EIAR a site-specific baseline monitoring

study was undertaken at monthly intervals from June 2023 to August 2023 as part of the air quality assessment at 11 locations detailed in Section 7.3.3. In addition, data from zone C monitoring station for the years, 2019 to 2023 was reviewed.

15.3.5. It should also be noted that air quality monitoring programmes have been undertaken in recent years by the EPA and Local Authorities. In addition to the continuous monitoring stations, the EPA in conjunction with Galway City Council gathered NO2 data using the passive diffusion tube methodology in proximity to the proposed development in 20I8 and 2019.

15.4. Potential Effects

15.4.1. The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Air. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table AQ1 below.

15.4.2. Table AQ1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• No resulting impacts on Air Quality along the route of the Proposed Development.
Construction	• Construction dust from demolition, earthworks, road widening, utility diversions and construction traffic. Effects are at most direct, short-term, negative and not significant
Operation	• Minor decrease in emission concentrations for all pollutants, however with potential for an increased modal shift and further decreasing car usage, there is potential for the predicted emissions to be lower. • The proposed development will have a generally neutral to positive impact on air quality
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

15.5. Mitigation

15.5.1. Mitigation measures proposed during the construction phase of the development relate to the suppression of dust. Such measures include installation of screens during demolition, regular road sweeping, water misting or spraying during dust generating activities, use of tarpaulins when transporting materials and use of site hoardings of 2.4 metres in height. In terms of construction traffic, a Construction Traffic

Management Plan including designated delivery routes and the use of low emissions vehicles will be prepared. No specific operational phase mitigations are required as the proposed development will have a generally neutral impact on air quality.

Residual Effects

15.5.2. With the implementation of the mitigation measures during the construction phase there will be no significant adverse residual effects on air quality. Overall, it is considered that the residual effects as a result of construction are at most direct, short-term, negative and not significant, which is not significant in EIA terms. In the operational phase there will be no significant negative residual impacts. The proposed development will result in minor decreases in emission concentrations for all pollutants modelled for the opening year. In addition, there is potential for the predicted emissions to be lower with potential for an increased modal shift, further decreasing car usage and thus the associated emissions. These decreases are expected to have a positive, long-term impact to air quality.

15.6. **Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects**

15.6.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapters 7 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to Air Quality. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment by way of desk and site surveys is comprehensive and that the key impacts in respect of likely effects on Air Quality have been identified.

15.6.2. With the implementation of the mitigation measures in the construction phase no significant adverse effects on air quality are predicted to arise. Overall, the proposed development will result in a minor decrease in emission concentrations for all pollutants and is expected to have an imperceptible, positive, long-term impact to air quality. In addition, with the potential for an increased modal shift and further decreasing car usage, there is potential for the predicted emissions to be lower.

Climate

15.7. **Issues Raised**

No issues were raised in the third-party submissions in relation to Climate.

15.8. Examination of EIAR

15.8.1. It is important to note at the outset when considering the proposed development in the context of climate, that Bus Connects is identified within the Climate Action Plan 2024 (“CAP24”) and 2025 (“CAP25”) as a key project that will contribute to the reduction in GHG within Irelands cities. The CAP 24 supports the reallocation of road space to public transport and active travel and seeks to advance the bus connects programme in all 5 cities, over the coming years. A key action in CAP25 is the delivery of further phases of the BusConnects Network Design Plan.

15.8.2. Impacts to climate are considered within chapter 8 of the EIAR and are considered in the context of GHG emissions relating to the construction phase, traffic related emissions and operational related emissions. Recent weather patterns and extreme weather events recorded by Met Éireann have been reviewed and considered in the context of climate change locally.

15.9. Baseline

15.9.1. In relation to transport GHG emissions, the dominant source is road transportation (94%). In relation to road transport GHG emissions in Ireland in 2022 (EPA, 2024a), the dominant source is cars at 49% of total road transport GHG emissions with Heavy Goods Vehicles responsible for 21%, Light Goods Vehicles for 22% and Buses 8%.

15.9.2. In terms of modal split, private cars accounted for 73.7% of all road trips in 2019 whilst bus journeys accounted for 6.5% (DOT, 2020). Compared to 2018, there was a 3% increase in the number of public transport passenger journeys in 2019 whilst the total kilometres driven by private cars reduced by 1.5% (DOT, 2020). A more recent version of these trends was published in 2022, however these figures are heavily influenced by COVID-19 and its consequences.

15.9.3. A number of assumptions were made when calculating the total Construction Phase GHG emissions including the of use of reclaimed asphalt and recycled aggregate.

15.9.4. It is set out that as improvements in sustainability and recycling measures are progressed throughout the construction industry it is expected that the embodied carbon calculated as part of this assessment can be taken as a worst case scenario, and with time, this figure will improve.

15.9.5. The potential changes in GHG emissions due to the direct operational phase traffic impacts of the proposed development has been assessed using the TII REM tool (TII, 2024b)

15.10. Potential Effects

15.10.1. The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Climate. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table C1 below.

15.10.2. Table C1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• GHG Emissions will continue to increase as private car trips and traffic congestion continue to increase
Construction	• Enabling infrastructure provision including road excavation/widening • Total construction phase GHG emissions of 7,840 tonnes CO2eq • The impact of GHG emissions associated with the development assessed over its lifetimes is considered direct, long-term, positive and not significant
Operation	• Modal shifts towards more sustainable modes of transport leading to a decrease in GHG emissions associated with the proposed development. • Changes to traffic patterns and the redistribution of traffic which may result in an increase in vehicle kilometres travelled in some locations. • Maintenance and changes to the number and type of traffic trips including public transport. • Overall predicted impact to be positive and long-term
Cumulative	• Proposed development will contribute to the cumulative reduction in national emissions.

15.11. Mitigation

15.11.1. The construction traffic and the embodied energy of construction materials will be the dominant source of GHG emissions as a result of the Construction Phase. Mitigation measures proposed in the construction phase include the reuse materials where feasible, the sourcing of materials locally and the replacement of concrete

containing Portland cement with concrete containing ground granulated blast furnace slag. The applicant sets out that combined measures, will lead to an estimated saving of 771 tonnes of CO2eq.

15.11.2. The proposed development will deliver integrated sustainable transport movement along this route. No further mitigation measures are proposed during the Operational Phase as the impact of the Operational Phase traffic is predicted to be positive.

15.12. Residual Effects

15.12.1. The residual impacts of the proposed development on climate due to GHG emissions in both the Construction and Operational Phases, after the inclusion of mitigation measures, is predicted to be positive, long-term and not significant, which is not significant in EIA terms

15.13. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

15.13.1. The proposed development is estimated to result in total construction phase GHG emissions of 7,840 tonnes CO2eq for the materials use and construction processes. Key sources of GHG emissions associated with construction phase is the embodied carbon from the materials used accounting for 90% of emissions.

15.13.2. The estimated total construction phase GHG emissions, when annualised over the 30-year proposed development lifespan, are equivalent to 0.0004% of Ireland's total GHG emissions in 2023 and 0.001% of Ireland's non-ETS 2030 emissions target. The estimated GHG emissions associated with energy use during the construction phase are equivalent to 0.0002% of the 2030 Electricity budget, while the total GHG emissions associated with transport-related activities are 0.0004% of the 2030 Transport budget.

15.13.3. In the operational phase the infrastructural works proposed will provide an attractive alternative to private car travel and encourage more passenger travel by more sustainable modes.

15.13.4. It is predicted that in 2028 the proposed development Do Something scenario total CO2emissions will decrease by 506 t CO2eq, relative to the Do Minimum scenario. Similarly, decreases in CO2 emissions are predicted to occur in 2043 with

total CO2 emissions decreasing in the Do Something by 124 t CO2eq, relative to the Do Minimum.

15.13.5. The sensitivity and exposure of the scheme to various climate hazards e.g. flooding, extreme heat/cold; wildfire, drought, extreme wind, lightning, hail, landslides and fog are classified as low.

15.13.6. The proposed development will also result in the removal of 446 no trees and these will be replaced with the replanting of 409 no trees. As the land the proposed development is located on is already developed for urban use, there is no significant change to carbon sequestration in either the construction or operational phases.

15.13.7. The delivery of the proposed development will also aid in contributing to the national target of 500,000 additional trips by walking, cycling and public transport per day by 2030 as outlined as a target in the 2024 Climate Action Plan (CAP24) (DECC, 2023).

15.13.8. Overall the impact on climate due to the operational phase of the Proposed Development in accordance with the TII significance criteria is beneficial. In accordance with the EPA guidelines (EPA, 2022) this is a direct, long-term, positive effect and not significant, which is not significant in EIA terms.

15.14. Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects

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

16.0 Archaeological and Cultural Heritage

16.1. Issues Raised

Concerns were raised in one of the submissions in relation to the removal of the historic stone boundary wall at Woodhaven. The report from the DAU section of DoHLGH notes that they reviewed the EIAR and are broadly in agreement with the findings in relation to Archaeology and Cultural Heritage. They recommend that a Project Archaeologist be appointed to advise and oversee all aspects of the scheme and the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to include all identified archaeological impacts and mitigation measures (a drafted archaeological condition is included in the submission).

16.2. Examination of EIAR

16.2.1. Chapter 15 of the EIAR submitted examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to Archaeological and Cultural Heritage.

16.2.2. The assessment has been carried out according to best practice and guidelines relating to archaeological heritage assessment, and in the context of similar large-scale infrastructural projects. The assessment methodology includes a review and collation of available archaeological, historical and cartographic data sources, combined with field inspections. A walkover survey was undertaken along the extent of the Study Area, including offline elements, in October 2022 and June 2023. Recorded archaeological sites or monuments within the Study Area (and relevant monuments outside of it were inspected. Figure 15.2 in Volume 4 of this EIAR details the locations for all archaeological and cultural heritage assets identified in the course of the assessment.

16.2.3. No limitations are identified and are evident in the assessment.

16.3. Baseline

16.3.1. The baseline environment is described in Section 15.3 of the EIAR. Much of the lands is directly adjacent to the existing road carriageway and has been previously reduced in ground level to accommodate modern services, wall foundations and surface treatments. There are a total of seven designated cultural heritage features and eight undesignated cultural heritage features within the study area.

16.3.2. The Study Area is situated outside the Zone of Notification for the historic town of Galway (GA094-100----). There are two archaeological sites within the Study Area, a boundary stone located on the boundary of the townlands of Rinmore and Milestone (RMP GA094-030001-, RPS no. 8406) and a disused quarry (SMR GA094-018-----) within Merlin Park. The EIAR sets out that the latter is not scheduled for inclusion on the next revision of the RMP. Within the Study Area there are two protected structures. These comprise Rosedale School and Lakeview School (Brothers of Charity) (RPS no. 8405) and the aforementioned Boundary Stone which is also a recorded archaeological RMP site (RPS no. 8406, RMP GA094-030001-).

16.3.3. There are no buildings recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) within the study area. However, it is noted that Glenina House, which is now in use as the clubhouse for the former Galwegians Rugby Club is located 190m from the study area, with the associated southern boundary wall and former gated entrance located along the proposed development footprint.

16.3.4. There are three demesnes depicted on the first edition OS map and listed on the Garden Survey of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) within the Study Area. These are Renmore House demesne, Merlin Park demesne and Wellpark demesne, all of which have been impacted by modern development over several decades, particularly from the middle of the 20th century onward. A review of the National Museum of Irelands topographical files for the townlands that are located within the Study Area show a total of three stray artefacts recorded within these townlands and are listed in Table 15-9. These comprise two axe heads and a fragment of rotary quern.

16.3.5. Table 15-10 sets out details of 8 no Undesignated Cultural Heritage features within the Study Area, some of which will be impacted by the proposed development.

16.3.5.1. Overall, the potential to uncover previously unrecorded sub-surface archaeological deposits during ground works associated with the proposed development is considered negligible-low, due to the heavily disturbed nature of much of the lands along Dublin Road. The only notable area to retain archaeological potential across the

proposed development footprint is the small portions of undisturbed greenfield within Merlin Park demesne landscape.

16.4. Potential Effects

The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Archaeological and Cultural Heritage. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table CH1 below.

Table CH1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• No resulting impacts on archaeological and cultural heritage along the route of the Proposed Development.
Construction	• Table 15-14 provides a summary of likely Construction Phase effects on the Cultural Heritage resource. No significant impacts are expected throughout the proposed scheme • Archaeological Sites: 1. Boundary stone CH002, which is a protected structure (RPS no. 8406) and archaeological monument (RMP no. GA094-030001-) is set in an elevated overgrown green area on the southern side of Dublin Road. The boundary stone itself will not be directly impacted, as it will remain in situ. However, some portions of the green area around it, including portions within its Zone of Notification/curtilage will be removed and developed upon to facilitate road widening and the installation of a cycle path. The encroachment is predicted to have a (negative temporary) slight-moderate significance of effect on CH002 during constructions stage. 2. CH011 is the site of a former quarry (SMR GA094-018---) and is located 35m north of the Proposed Development footprint, and although not directly affected there is an indirect impact on the area adjacent to the former site. This is a negative permanent impact of low magnitude on a low-medium value receptor, resulting in a predicted slight significance of effect on CH011 during construction stage. • Protected structures: 1. CH004, the former Renmore House (now Brothers of Charity), is a protected structure (RPS 8405A).The house is located 15m south of the edge of the Study Area and will not be directly affected. There will be a measurable indirect impact on the setting and former designed landscape (CH013 & NIAH Garden Survey ID 5376) of the former house. However, the original demesne landscape has been

	significantly modified with modern interventions. This is a negative temporary impact of low magnitude on a medium-high value receptor, resulting in a predicted slight-moderate significance of effect on CH004 & CH013 during construction stage 2. Boundary stone CH002, which is a protected structure (RPS no. 8406) and archaeological monument (RMP no. GA094-030001-) – See above • NIAH The Proposed Development will involve the removal of the wall and setback of the Galwegians RFC boundary. The wall removal will also have an indirect impact on the former Glenina House itself (CH015), of which it forms a part of the original landscaped late nineteenth century property layout. This indirect impact on Glenina House and its original layout/setting is of medium magnitude on a medium value receptor, resulting in a (negative permanent) moderate significance of effect during construction stage. • Undesignated cultural heritage The boundary wall at Woodhaven is identified as undesignated cultural heritage and is to be removed. Woodhaven stone boundary wall (CH009) is described as a 19th-century wall and wrought iron gate. The assessment concluded that the magnitude of impact during construction on this undesignated cultural heritage is expected to be high with the significance of effects being `not significant.' The Wall and gate is to be recorded (written, photographic) before removal and gate reinstated post-works. The Wall is to be rebuilt incorporating existing features (pillars, gate, width, height, coursing etc.) in the arrangement as they currently exist. • Green areas The limited green areas required for the Proposed Development footprint generally contain evidence for ground reduction and modern landscaping. The potential to uncover previously unrecorded sub-surface archaeological deposits during ground works associated with the construction phase of the Proposed Development is considered low, due to the heavily disturbed nature of much of the lands along Dublin Road.
Operation	• Table 15-15 provides a summary of likely Operational Phase effects on the Cultural Heritage resource • Protected structures 1. Boundary stone CH002 is both a protected structure (RPS no. 8406) and an archaeological monument (RMP no.

	GA094-030001-). The encroachment of the Proposed Development within close proximity to the milestone is a measurable direct (negative permanent) impact on the setting of the boundary marker. This is considered to be a medium magnitude impact on a medium-high value receptor, resulting in a moderate/significant significance of effect during operational phase. 2. The Proposed Development will involve the removal of the original entrance and former building façade elevation wall (CH003) along the former boundary of Renmore House (now Brothers of Charity) CH004, a protected structure (RPS 8405). Much of the boundary is of recent re-built construction and its removal will not result in significant loss to the built heritage environment • Designed landscapes Encroachment into the former designed landscape of former demesne lands (CH013) and buildings/original entrance location (CH003) associated with Renmore House and of Merlin Park (CH014) is an indirect (negative permanent) impact (setting) during operational stage. This is considered a low magnitude impact on medium value receptors, resulting in a predicted slight/moderate significance of effect during operational phase. • Undesignated cultural heritage In relation to the removal and reinstatement of the boundary wall and gate at Woodhaven no effect is predicted at operational phase
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

16.5. Mitigation

16.5.1. Table 15-16 and Table 15-17 provides a summary of the mitigation measures for the Cultural Heritage resource during the construction phase and operational phase. This outlines that there is a total of 15 no. identified cultural heritage receptors located within the Study Area. Of these, a total of nine are directly affected, while five have indirect impacts and one has No Predicted Effect at construction stage.

16.5.2. The proposed development will require removal of a number of Cultural Heritage receptors during the construction phase: remnants of building façade of former Renmore House estate (CH003 & CH013); two modern memorial markers (CH005

and CH008); a portion of a townland boundary wall and former gated entrance to Glenina House (CH006); a cast-iron vent pipe (CH007); 19th century walling and vernacular gate (CH009) and a dressed stone (CH010). Measurable direct impact in these instances has been reduced by means of mitigatory measures to fully record (written, drawn, photographic) the receptors prior to removal, and where feasible to re-build to current heights (with coursing / detail to match adjacent wall) and to retain and repair any unaffected sections (CH003) and to re-site/re-build as close to the original location as possible (CH005 and CH008 memorials, CH006 boundary walling, CH007 vent pipe, CH009 vernacular gate, walling and dressed stone (CH010). Direct impact at the former Merlin Park demesne is limited and provision of archaeological monitoring oversight during construction works will reduce any potential impact on potential sub-surface remains at this location (CH014)

16.5.3. A Cultural Heritage Mitigation Plan has been prepared and is included as Appendix A15.5 (CHMP) in Volume 4 of the EIAR. The CHMP details specific measures proposed to mitigate adverse effects and/or enhance opportunities concerning the Cultural Heritage resource. Table 1 of the CHMP sets out Cultural Heritage mitigation measures and commitments required for all identified receptors in advance of the main stage of the construction works. Table 2 of the CHMP sets out Cultural Heritage mitigation measures and commitments required for all identified receptors during the main stage of construction works and Table 3 provides Cultural Heritage mitigation measures and commitments required for all identified receptors at final operational stage.

16.5.4. Table 1 in the CHMP summaries the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures proposed for the Woodhaven stone boundary wall (CH009). This includes Built heritage record in line with NIAH standards prior to removal (written and photographic) and careful removal, cataloguing, packaging and labelling of the gate. The wall will be rebuilt of high-quality stone mason quality, and the gate cleaned and repainted in accordance with best conservation measures**.**

16.5.5. In addition, the Full Mitigation Measures are set out in Chapter 21 of the EIAR – 'Summary of Mitigation & Monitoring Measures.' Measures are extensive and include:

- An experienced and competent licence-eligible archaeologist will be employed by the appointed contractor to advise on archaeological and cultural heritage matters during construction, to communicate all findings in a timely manner to GCC and statutory authorities, to acquire any licenses / consents required to conduct the work, and to supervise and direct the archaeological measures associated with the proposed development.
- Preservation by avoidance is the principle mitigatory measure applicable to the Cultural Heritage resource. Where avoidance in whole or in part via design refinement has been exhausted, recourse to preservation in situ or preservation by record shall be the primary applicable mitigation measures, subject to statutory agreement.
- Buffer/exclusion area to be installed and protective barrier to be installed to avoid any inadvertent damage during works that abuts the upstanding features.
- Full built heritage record prior to removal (written, photographic, drawn).
- Archaeological monitoring during works.

16.6. **Residual Effects**

16.6.1. No significant residual impacts have been identified either in the Construction or Operational Stage of the proposed development. Table 15-18 and 15-19 outline the residual effects on the Cultural Heritage resource at the construction phase and operational phase.

16.6.2. For construction phase impacts that are permanent in duration reflecting direct impacts and complete removal of a cultural heritage receptor (including potential presently unknown archaeological sites), mitigation measures can reduce the significance of effect by means of preservation in situ and/or preservation by record.

16.6.3. In the construction and operational phase there are slight (temporary negative) residual effects on the building façade and entrance (location only) at the former Renmore House estate (CH003), the estate itself (CH013) and at the former Glenina House estate layout (CH015). All other identified residual effects on the cultural heritage resource at construction stage are considered not Significant or Imperceptible.

16.7. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

I have examined, analysed and evaluated Chapter 15 of the EIAR, all of the associated documentation, reports and observations on file in respect of archaeological and cultural heritage. I am satisfied that the applicant's understanding of the baseline environment is comprehensive and that the key impacts of likely effects on archaeological and cultural heritage as a consequence of the development have been identified. Having regard to the location of the site, much of which is directly adjacent to the existing road carriageway and has been previously reduced in ground level to accommodate modern services, wall foundations and surface treatments, the work methodologies for archaeological sites, protected structures and undesignated cultural heritage and the arrangements for archaeological monitoring, I am satisfied that there is no potential for any significant direct, indirect or cumulative effects on archaeological and cultural heritage as a result of the proposed development.

16.8. Conclusion : Direct and Indirect Effects

Having regard to the foregoing and the examination of environmental information in archaeological cultural heritage, it is considered that there is no potential for significant effects.

17.0 Landscape and Visual

17.1. Issues Raised

No specific issues have been raised in the submissions in relation to Landscape and Visual. A number of submissions acknowledge the new boundary treatment proposals, but requests that consultation be made with them and Method Statements agreed prior to the commencement of works. The submission from the Woodview Residents raise concerns that the graphic design of the proposed access to their estate does not give an accurate representation as to how it will look post development, and they request an updated graphic design of the proposed access to the estate.

17.2. Examination of EIAR

17.2.1. Chapter 16 of the EIAR submitted examines the potential for impacts to arise in relation to Landscape and Visual. It assesses the likely significant effects of the proposed project on landscape and visual amenity.

17.2.2. The primary study area is a boundary-to-boundary carriageway and Active Travel corridor situated along Dublin Road, in Galway City. Having regard to the ground level nature of the proposed development, the ZoI is kept close to the proposed development, focusing on residential receptors in close proximity to Dublin Road, as well as open spaces. However, it extends where appropriate to incorporate wider viewpoints and sensitive receptors in the wider landscape, such as Protected Structures (RPS) and National Monuments (NMS).

17.2.3. Following desktop study and site visits, a number of key reference viewpoints in the immediate surroundings were identified, photographed, and surveyed for the purpose of preparing photomontages. The photomontages help to illustrate the visual effects of the proposed development on specific views from specific viewpoints in the short to mid-term, which is between 5 to 7 years post completion of the construction works.

17.2.4. Verified photomontages were produced by external consultants using images taken on-site. They illustrate the proposed development in the Operational Phase, 5-7 years post completion of construction. Photomontages and a location plan are provided in Figure 16.3 in Volume 3 of the EIAR.

17.3. Baseline

17.3.1. The baseline environment is described in Section 16.3 of the EIAR.

17.3.2. The majority of the works associated with the proposed development include improvements to the existing roadway, pedestrian facilities, and public spaces. The western portion, approximately 1.8 km in length, is set within a fully urban setting, whereas the eastern portion, approximately 2.1 km, is directly alongside Merlin Meadows and Rosshill Park Woods and therefore is a more natural setting with open fields and woodlands. On exiting Galway City heading east, the Merlin Park vehicular entrance generally marks the beginning of a more naturalised landscape and shifts away from a more urban character.

17.3.3. There is no Landscape Character Assessment in the Galway City Development Plan, however it sets out strategic aims and objectives to ensure that the County's landscapes are suitably protected and that new developments avoid negative impacts upon the natural environment. Table 16-4 in the EIAR describes the relevant policies within the development plan that relate to the proposed development. In general, the receiving landscape is composed of mainly three land uses, "Residential," "Community, Culture and Institutional" and "Recreation and Amenity." Some pockets of "Enterprise, Light Industry and Commercial" are located to the west, in proximity to the city centre to the southwest but are rare in the receiving landscape.

17.4. Potential Effects

The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Landscape and Visual Impact. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table LV 1 below.

Table LV 1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	**Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**
Do Nothing	• No negative effects on Landscape and Visual Impact associated with the proposed development. Similarly, there would be no scope for positive changes associated with reallocating sections of the road to public transport and the additional planting and landscaping associated with the project
Construction	• Temporary impacts on landscape character through the use of construction machinery, temporary erection of hoarding and construction compounds. • Removal of 446 no. trees, which is required for the proposed realignments along sections of the proposed route. These impacts upon the landscape character are considered temporary to be short-term, as the replanting of 409 no. trees is proposed.
Operation	• Tree removal will result in a slight impact. In general the impact upon the landscape is further reduced due to the already urban nature of most of the site, and the existing and retained screening vegetation in the eastern portion of the site.
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

17.5. Mitigation

17.5.1. The proposed planting of 409 no trees is expected to reduce the magnitude of change to a negligible extent overtime.

17.5.2. Figure 16.1 in Volume 3 of the EIAR sets out the Landscape General Arrangement while Figure 16.3 sets out photomontages. This includes details of existing views and photomontage views.

17.5.3. Boundaries walls to be removed to facilitate the development will generally be replaced on a like for like basis.

17.6. Residual Effects

17.6.1. Construction impacts will be typical of road works and road maintenance and will not be significant. For most receptors, residual impacts during construction will be temporary, slight, negative to imperceptible. The planting of heavy-standard trees in advance of construction along the Merlin Park boundary will reduce the visual effects at this location to temporary, moderate to slight, negative effects, which will improve to imperceptible over time. Most residual impacts in the operational phase will be imperceptible and will improve over time as the proposed tree planting along the route matures.

17.7. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

17.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapter 16 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to Landscape and Visual Impact. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment by way of desk and site surveys is comprehensive and the key impacts in respect of likely effects on landscape and visual impact.

17.7.2. The majority of the works comprise road and path surface works and marking, which will not affect the surrounding landscape. The applicant has provided photomontages of the scheme which I have had regard to in the assessment of effects to landscape and visual impact of the proposed development. These demonstrate that the overriding visual changes to the proposed route relate to the loss of trees and vegetation and the replacement of same with species at a smaller growth stage. With

the implementation of a replacement planting programme as outlined in the EIAR, I consider that the proposed development will not give rise to significant adverse impacts to landscape and visual impact and the magnitude of change will be reduced to a negligible extent overtime.

17.7.3. Table 16-5 provides a Visual Assessment Summary which sets out that the effect on landscape character beyond 0.5km would be imperceptible, reducing to neutral with distance. Outside the study area, i.e., beyond 1km, the proposed development is expected to have no impact on landscape character. This is reasonable given that the majority of works relate to works on the existing carriageway.

17.7.4. The landscape character of Merlin Park Meadows will remain unaltered, with changes in vegetation being localised to the southern boundary where vegetation loss will be replaced with new native hedgerow and tree planting.

17.7.5. At the Woodhaven Junction the expected visual impact has been assessed as short-term, slight, negative, improving to imperceptible to positive as the proposed tree planting matures. Photomontage no 8 provides a viewpoint looking out from Woodhaven estate at the new relocated boundary wall and landscaping. Overall as a result of the proposed development the character of the view will not change from that of a landscape buffer and a stone boundary wall.

17.8. **Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects**

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

18.0 Noise and Vibration

18.1. Issues Raised

Issues were raised in the third-party submissions in relation to the impact of noise and vibration arising from the proposed development. These were generally in relation to noise during the construction phase and the removal of trees/green areas resulting in additional noise for residents and visitors to the area.

18.2. Examination of EIAR

18.2.1. Chapter 9 of the EIAR submitted examines potential impacts from noise and vibration.

18.2.2. The existing land use in the vicinity of the R338 Dublin Road is a mixture of residential, commercial, and public service use properties, as well as recreational open green spaces. During the construction phase, the potential noise and vibration impacts include construction activities such as utility diversions, road resurfacing and road realignments as well as construction traffic along construction access routes. During the operational phase, the potential noise and vibration impacts are associated with altered traffic flows along the proposed development, realigned traffic lanes and displaced traffic flows.

18.2.3. The extent of the overall study area is typically up to 300m from a specific area of construction work with the key impacted study areas focused within 50m to 100m depending on the noise and vibration sources in question and the local area under consideration. For the operational phase, the focus of the assessment is on Noise Sensitive Locations (NSL's) and Vibration Sensitive Locations (VSLs) that bound the proposed development and those along diverted traffic routes.

18.2.4. The significance of impacts have been assessed in accordance with the EPA Guidelines (EPA 2022)

18.3. Baseline

18.3.1. The baseline environment has been characterised through a desk study of publicly available published data sources and measured noise surveys. There are no sources of vibration in the surrounding environment that would give rise to any notable vibration

levels to human or building response. Table 9-1 provides a description of Closest NSLs along proposed development.

18.3.2. Baseline noise surveys were conducted at locations representative of the nearest noise sensitive areas which have the potential to be impacted by construction works and / or those likely to be impacted during the operational phase of the proposed development. Baseline noise measurements were undertaken using both attended and unattended surveys to inform the assessment. A total of 12 attended and two unattended noise monitoring locations were surveyed within the study area and are listed in Table 9-3 Noise Monitoring Positions. Both Attended and Unattended noise survey results within the study area are dominated by road traffic from the Old Dublin Road.

18.3.3. Attended baseline vibration surveys have been conducted by AWN Consulting as part of the overall Bus Connects Dublin – Core Bus Corridor Infrastructure Works and were undertaken to obtain typical baseline vibration levels along roads with both mixed vehicular traffic lanes and individual bus lanes. The results of the surveys confirm vibration levels associated with a heavily trafficked urban – suburban road with a mix of fleet, inclusive of dedicated bus lanes, result in negligible vibration levels at the edge of the road both in terms of human perception and building response.

18.4. Potential Effects

The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects from Noise and Vibration. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table NV1 below.

Table NV1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• No change in the prevailing baseline noise environment other than expected traffic growth in line with national forecasts
Construction	• Direct construction noise from plant and machinery e.g. breakers, excavators, lorries, dumpers and planers – For road widening potential impacts during day time on weekdays are Negative, significant to very significant and temporary at NSLs within 15m distance from the proposed works and Negative,

	moderate to significant and temporary at NSLs at distances between 15m to 25m from the proposed works.
Operation	• Increased bus usage and addition or relocation of bus stops. • Changes to traffic noise associated with redistributed traffic onto the surrounding road network. • Overall the proposed development results in a positive to neutral imperceptible short and long-term direct impacts along the proposed route and negative imperceptible to slight short- and long-term indirect impacts along the surrounding road network
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects. Other construction activities will be scheduled at different times to not result in significant cumulative noise levels

18.5. Mitigation

18.5.1. Table 9-34 provides a summary of the potential construction phase noise impacts pre-mitigation and post mitigation. For road widening works carried out during daytime hours on weekdays the noise impacts within 25m of the proposed works will reduce from Negative, moderate to significant and temporary to Negative, not significant and temporary subject to mitigation.

18.5.2. In the construction phase, the appointed contractor will be required to manage the works to comply with the limits detailed in Section 9.2.4.1.1 using methods outlined in BS 5228–1:2009 +A1 2014 Code of Practice for noise and vibration control of construction and open sites - Part 1: Noise. BS 5228–1 includes guidance on construction site practices including selection of quiet plant, control of noise sources, noise screens, hours of work, liaison with the public and monitoring.

18.5.3. I note that machinery will be fitted with acoustic exhausts, the utilisation an acoustic canopy to replace the normal engine cover and maintaining enclosure panels closed during operation can reduce noise levels by up to 10 dB. In addition, a well-placed and designed mobile temporary screen around a breaker or excavation can effectively reduce noise emissions by 10 dB(A).

18.5.4. Works will be carried out largely within daytime hours, between 07:00 and 19:00 on weekdays and between 08:00hrs and 14:00hrs on Saturdays. However, night-time,

Saturday, and Sunday working will be required during certain periods to minimise the impact on road traffic movements during the daytime.

18.5.5. The type of works and the duration will be communicated to residents at all times so that residents are aware of the type of work to be carried out and can plan accordingly.

18.5.6. During the construction phase the appointed contractor will carry out noise monitoring at representative NSLs to evaluate and inform the requirement and / or implementation of noise management measures. The selection of monitoring locations will be based on the nearest representative NSLs to the working area which will progress along the length of the proposed development.

18.5.7. The assessment has determined that along the surrounding road network the operational phase will result in a negative imperceptible to slight short- and long-term indirect impact. The range of noise level changes and overall noise levels calculated do not require any specific noise mitigation measures.

18.5.8. Across the study area the assessment has determined a positive to neutral imperceptible short and long-term direct impacts. The provision of new or relocated bus stops are determined as negative, not significant and long-term taking account of their location away from noise sensitive buildings and the expected transition to electric and hybrid bus fleet. No noise mitigation measures are proposed.

18.6. Residual Effects

18.6.1. Given the linear nature of the works, noise emissions related to construction works will be of temporary impact at any one area as the works progress along the length of the proposed development. Once the various mitigation measures are put in place, noise impacts associated with the construction phase will be of Negative, Not Significant to Moderate, and Temporary impact during all key construction phases.

18.6.2. Once operational, there will be a direct positive impact along the proposed development due to a reduction in traffic volumes. The proposed development aligns with the policy objectives of the Galway City NAP to reduce traffic noise exposure to populations across the city through the incorporation of improved public transport. Overall, there are no significant residual operational phase noise or vibration impacts associated with the proposed development.

18.7. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

18.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapter 9 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to noise and vibration. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment by way of desk and site surveys is comprehensive and that the key impacts in respect of likely effects from noise and vibration have been identified.

18.7.2. The applicant has examined all sources of noise associated with the construction and operation of the development. The EIAR examines each construction activity at specific locations and considers the impact in terms of a range of distances from the proposed works at noise sensitive locations. I draw the Commissions attention to Tables 9.18 – 9.28 in which each construction activity is outlined in terms of noise emissions relative to the distance from NSLs. In the absence of mitigation, when construction works are occurring immediately outside NSLs, they will be clearly audible and will generate high levels of construction noise. However, the works is transient in nature and each activity will occur for intermittent periods at any one time.

18.7.3. Overall mitigation measures are expected to reduce construction noise levels by 10dB. Table 9-34 presents the predicted construction phase impacts following the implementation of mitigation. Once the various mitigation measures are put in place, noise impacts associated with the Construction Phase will be of Negative, Not Significant to Moderate, and Temporary impact during all key construction phases.

18.7.4. Vibration levels associated with construction activities are not expected to give rise to vibration that is either significantly intrusive or capable of giving rise to structural or cosmetic damage to the range of buildings in the study area.

18.7.5. Table 9-3 identifies the Noise Monitoring Positions. It notes that as part of the baseline noise surveys undertaken, there was an attended noise monitoring location at Woodhaven (AT9) approximately 20m from the R338 Dublin Road. I am satisfied with the accuracy of the information provided as part of the assessment and the appraisal of the impact.

18.7.6. Overall having regard to the submissions received I am satisfied that once the mitigation measures are put in place, noise impacts associated with the construction phase will be not significant and short term in duration. In addition, the noise

assessment for the operational phase confirms that a reduction in traffic noise can be achieved along the proposed development.

18.8. Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects

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

19.0 Traffic and Transport

19.1. Issues Raised

19.1.1. A number of issues have been raised by third parties in relation to traffic and transport. These include the location of the development, future proofing of BusConnects infrastructure to accommodate a future light rail, provision and location of bus stops, access to property and services during both the construction and operational phase and design details such as the provision of more cyclops style junctions and cycle path widths.

19.2. Examination of EIAR

19.2.1. Chapter 6 of the EIAR deals with traffic and transport issues associated with the proposed development and addresses the likely significant effects of the proposed development on transportation infrastructure.

19.2.2. The chapter describes the traffic and transport impacts in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) guidance on the information to be contained in EIARs (EPA 2022). Reference is also made to Transport Infrastructure Ireland's (TII) most recent Traffic and Transport Assessment

Guidelines (TII 2014) which is considered best practice guidance for the assessment of transport impacts related to changes in traffic flows and general traffic trip redistribution on the surrounding road network.

19.2.3. The Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), in section 6.5.8 of this EIAR Chapter, follows the Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines and provides a description of the likely impacts, outlining both its positive and negative aspects.

19.2.4. The study area impacts have been considered with reference the direct Study Area which is the route of the proposed development and the indirect study area which is the area of influence the proposed development has on changing traffic volumes.

19.2.5. The assessment of the Traffic & Transport impacts considers two distinct parts, qualitative methods which consider the physical changes to transport networks and quantitative methods which are based upon traffic modelling.

19.2.6. Overall, no limitations are identified and are evident in the assessment.

19.3. Baseline

19.3.1. In describing the baseline environment, the proposed development has been divided into 2 sections and is outlined in Figure 6-6. Section 1 is East of Moneenageisha Junction to Skerritt Junction; and Section 2 is Skerritt Junction to Doughiska Junction.

19.3.2. Figure 6-7 depicts the existing average mode share with the car the most common form of transport at 61% of the mode share. Walking is the second most common form of transport at 31% while cyclists and public transport each make up 4% of the total mode share.

Section 1 - East of Moneenageisha Junction to Skerritt Junction

19.3.3. Throughout Section 1 there are minimum 1.8m wide footpaths along both sides of the road. There is limited cycle infrastructure along Section 1 and cyclists are expected to share the traffic lanes in both directions. There is a significant level of bus priority in place for eastbound traffic on Section 1, with approximately 765 metres of the route comprising a bus priority lane. Additionally, there is a bus lane for westbound traffic on Section 1, approximately 521 metres in length between the Renmore Road/ Dublin Road junction and to the west of Skerritt roundabout. There are currently eight bus stops along Section 1 of the proposed development.

19.3.4. There are 15 paid/commercial private parking spaces at the Dublin Road/ Woodlands Campus (Brothers of Charity Services). There are 18 commercial private parking spaces adjacent to the Dublin Road/ Renmore Road junction at the Duggan's Spar. Further to this, there is a bus set down parking opposite the ATU campus.

Section 2 - Skerritt Junction to Doughiska Junction

19.3.5. In section 2 there are minimum 2m wide footpaths along both sides of the road. There is limited cycle infrastructure along Section 2 of the proposed development with cyclists having to share the lane with traffic in both directions. For westbound traffic, there is a continuous bus lane running between Martin Roundabout and Skerrit Roundabout. There are currently six bus stops along Section 2 of the proposed development.

19.3.6. There is no parking or loading facilities along Section 2 of the proposed development, nor in its surrounding area.

19.4. Potential Effects

The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Traffic and Transport. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table TT1 below.

Table TT1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• No changes to existing transport infrastructure. The baseline situation of congestion and journey time reliability issues for buses would continue and potentially be exacerbated over time.
Construction	• Two-way traffic along the route will generally be maintained but traffic flows will be impacted. Work areas will be managed by a construction traffic management plan. Temporary diversions, and in some instances temporary lane closures and road closures will be required. • Pedestrian and Cyclist movement will be impacted and where practicable, provisions for matching existing facilities will be made. • Temporary closures of sections of existing dedicated bus lanes and temporary relocation of some existing bus stops.

	• Parking and access may be temporarily impacted but alternatives will be provided. Local arrangements will be made on a case-by-case basis to maintain continued access to homes and businesses. • Overall potential impacts during the construction phase are regarded as Negative, Slight and Temporary.
Operation	• Pedestrians - Additional crossing locations, increased pedestrian directness, provision of traffic calming measures to reduce vehicle speeds, improved accessibility and increased footpath and crossing widths. • Cycling - Provision of segregated cycle lanes in both directions and improved junction safety for cyclists. • Bus - Provision of dedicated bus lanes in both directions, improved accessibility of bus stops for people with disabilities, the provision of shelters with seating and facilities to incorporate real-time passenger information. • Overall, there is positive, significant and long-term impacts in relation to the proposed walking, cycling and bus infrastructure • Parking and Loading - Impact on existing private parking (loss of 7 no spaces) and loading along Section 1 of proposed development. These changes are considered to have a Negative, Slight and Long-term effect. • Overall reduction in operational capacity for general traffic along the proposed route will create some level of trip redistribution onto the surrounding road network. The impacts surrounding road network and junctions are generally regarded as Not Significant and Long-term.
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

19.5. Mitigation

19.5.1. Traffic and transport mitigation measures are set out in section 6.6 of the EIAR. It is stated within this section that construction mitigation measures will be included within the CEMP. The CEMP is set out in Appendix A5.1 in Volume 4 of the EIAR and will be updated by any additional measures which may be required by conditions.

19.5.2. A detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan has been prepared and will be updated by the appointed contractor prior to construction, including Temporary Traffic Management arrangements. The CTMP includes measures to minimise the impacts associated with the Construction Phase upon the peak periods of the day.

19.5.3. In the operational phase mitigation and monitoring measures have not been considered as the proposed development results in a positive impact for walking, cycling, bus and people movements.

19.6. **Residual Effects**

19.6.1. With the implementation of the mitigation measures, there will be no residual impacts associated with the proposed development.

19.7. **Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects**

19.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapter 6 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to traffic and transport. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment by way of desk and site surveys is comprehensive and that the key impacts in respect of likely effects on traffic and transport have been identified.

19.7.2. The issues raised in the submissions received have been examined in detail within the assessment section of this report and will not be repeated hereunder, save to say that I am satisfied that the proposal has been adequately justified by the applicant and I am satisfied that no significant negative impacts will arise in this regard.

19.7.3. Under the proposal, 7 no parking / loading spaces will be lost, all paid for/commercial spaces. These are located along section 1 of the proposed development. It is noted that these are all private parking spaces, and other parking spaces in the vicinity are available. The overall magnitude of impact in relation to the loss of parking is not expected to be significant and I am satisfied that the quantum of parking to be removed is acceptable.

19.7.4. In terms of the modelled benefits of the proposed scheme, I draw the Commission's attention to section 6.5.8.1 of the EIAR in which the movement of people is assessed. The modelling examines the potential for modal shift in the years 2028 and 2043 in relation to the am and pm peak times. The most significant shift is seen in the increase in people using the bus. In the year 2043 during the pm peak in the eastbound direction it is predicted that sustainable travel modes will see an increase of 23%. This is a result of the volume of flows which use the corridor to exit the city and the fact that there is no existing bus lane in this direction at present.

19.7.5. In the period 2028 to 2043 the modelling shows that car trips will not grow in line with population. Therefore, the proposed development is providing a substantial opportunity for growth of sustainable modes whilst it discourages car usage along the corridor.

19.7.6. Overall, the proposed development has been adjudged to deliver a Positive, Significant and Long-term impact in terms of People Movement by sustainable modes. It is clear that the improvements proposed will create the conditions for a modal shift to more sustainable modes of travel. Improved bus times and scheduling, travel information and accessibility to the bus infrastructure are positive changes that are supported at both a national and local level in terms of policy.

19.7.7. It is, however, recognised that there will be an overall reduction in the operational capacity for general traffic along the direct study area given the proposed changes to the road layout and the rebalancing of priority to walking, cycling and bus. This reduction in operational capacity for general traffic along the proposed route will likely create some level of trip redistribution onto the surrounding road network. The road links which experience additional traffic volumes of over 100 combined flows are illustrated by the blue lines in Figure 6-28.

19.7.8. As a consequence of the increases in traffic, the roads listed in table 6.45 have been examined in terms of their operational capacity including junction capacity to accommodate the additional traffic. I note that the modelling was based on the worst performing arm of each junction as a worst-case scenario assessment.

19.7.9. The results of the junction analysis are illustrated in Table 6-50 and demonstrate that the majority of junctions are operating with a maximum V / C ratio of below 85% during the AM Peak Hour in the 2028 Opening Year, and that the proposed development will have a negligible impact on the majority of assessed local / regional road links within the indirect study area. Overall, I am satisfied that the applicant has carried out a robust and detailed assessment of the surrounding road network and the capacity of the network to absorb an additional diverted traffic as a result of the proposed scheme.

19.7.10. In conclusion I am satisfied that the proposed development will deliver a reliable alternative to car-based travel that can support future sustainable growth and provide a positive contribution towards reducing carbon emissions.

19.8. Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects

19.8.1. I have considered all of the submissions made in relation to traffic and transport, and the relevant contents of the file including the EIAR. I am satisfied that the potential for impacts on traffic and transport can be avoided, managed and/or mitigated by measures that form part of the proposed scheme, by the proposed mitigation measures and with suitable conditions. I am therefore satisfied that the potential for direct or indirect impacts on traffic and transport can be ruled out. I am also satisfied that cumulative effects, in the context of existing and permitted development in the surrounding area and other existing and proposed development in the vicinity of the site, are not likely to arise. I am also satisfied that the long-term operational impacts will be positive and significant in terms of people movement by sustainable modes and the proposal will have an overall positive impact on the well-being of people circulating within the area of the proposed scheme.

20.0 Material Assets and Waste

20.1. Issues Raised

No specific issues have been raised in the submissions in relation to Material Assets and Waste.

Material Assets

20.2. Examination of EIAR

20.2.1. This chapter focuses on built services, specifically major infrastructure and utilities and imported material.

20.2.2. The assessment examines the potential impacts on all major infrastructure and utilities including electricity, water, wastewater/surface water run-off, gas and telecommunications, the majority of which are buried within and along the roadway.

20.2.3. Imported materials will include standard construction materials, paving materials, landscaping materials, street furniture, paints, lighting, junction infrastructure materials and fill materials.

20.3. Baseline

20.3.1. The Material Assets study area has been defined as the area in which there is potential for direct and indirect impact on built services as a result of the proposed development within both the permanent and temporary land take boundaries.

20.3.2. The utility location and specification details are based on preliminary data obtained from the various utility providers. Table 18-6 lists the types of major infrastructure and utilities within the study area, along or crossing the proposed development. Aside from the listed utilities, there are no other major infrastructure items such as railway lines or canals within the proposed scheme.

20.4. Potential Effects

The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects on Material Assets. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table MA1 below.

Table MA1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• No change to existing infrastructure or utilities as a result of the Proposed Development
Construction	• Diversion of utilities - Electricity - Temporary electricity provision for works areas and site compound required. In addition, a number of interfaces between the existing electricity infrastructure and the proposed development have been identified, some of which will require diversion resulting in possible temporary local interruptions to the electricity provision. The worst-case potential impact will be Negative, Moderate and Temporary - Water - A water supply for welfare facilities within the Construction Compound is required, as well as for dust suppression at certain construction areas where the conditions require it. In addition, a number of interfaces between the existing water infrastructure and the proposed development have been identified, some of which will require diversion resulting in possible temporary local interruptions to the water provision. The worst-case potential impact will be Negative, Moderate and Temporary. - Wastewater and Surface Water Run-off - wastewater and surface water runoff will be created by the Construction Compound and construction areas. In addition, there is limited upgrade works (proposed new road gullies and SUDS measures) to the surface water drainage network to

	facilitate the changes to the road alignment. The potential impacts are Negative, Not Significant and Short-term - Gas - A single interface between the existing gas infrastructure and the proposed development has been identified and will require diversion, resulting in possible temporary local interruptions to the gas provision. The worst-case potential impact will be Negative, Moderate and Temporary. - Telecommunications - Telecommunications access will be required by the Construction Compound. In addition, there are a number of interfaces between the existing telecommunications infrastructure and the proposed development, some of which will require diversion, resulting in possible temporary local interruptions to the telecommunication provision. The worst-case potential impact will be Negative, Moderate and Temporary • Importation of a number of key construction materials including concrete, granular fill / aggregate, asphalt and structural steel. The potential impact will be Negative, Slight and Long-Term.
Operation	• There will be some demand on utilities by the proposed development once operational - Electricity - required to power such elements as street lighting, junction signalling, storm water pumping stations, bike share stands and RTPI displays. The potential impact will be Negative, Imperceptible and Long-Term. - Telecommunications - required for equipment such as traffic signal controllers, and for RPTI displays at bus stops and on bus information apps. The potential impact will be Negative, Imperceptible and Long-Term • Importation of material for maintenance and repair of infrastructure. The quantities required will be very small. The potential impact will be Neutral and Long-Term.
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

20.5. **Mitigation**

20.5.1. Mitigation in relation to material assets include protection of major utility and diversion if necessary and ongoing liaison with the utility providers throughout construction. In the event of service disruption, the public will be notified, and disruptions will be minimised in terms of duration.

20.5.2. The majority of the proposed development will require minimal intervention, being comprised mainly of localised road widening and lane reconfigurations. Materials will be sourced locally where possible to reduce the amount of travelling required to get the material to the site

20.5.3. No specific mitigation measures are necessary during the operational phase due to the measures which are included within the design and the fact that impacts are anticipated to be minimal.

20.6. Residual Effect

20.6.1. No significant residual impacts have been identified either in the Construction or Operational Phases of the proposed development

20.7. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

20.7.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapter 18 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to material assets. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment is comprehensive and that the key impacts in respect of likely effects on material assets have been identified.

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

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

Waste

20.8. Examination of EIAR

20.8.1. Chapter 17 of the EIAR submitted examines potential impacts of Waste. Demolition, site clearance, excavation and construction are activities which will take place during the construction phase which are likely to generate surplus materials.

20.8.2. A summary of the surplus materials arising from excavation, demolition, construction and operation of the proposed development is presented in Section 17.4.

20.8.3. The appointed contractor will have regard to the principles of the waste hierarchy, as set out the Waste Framework Directive. The impact assessment and waste management options are set out in Section 17.5 and Section 17.6 of the EIAR and have been considered in line with the waste hierarchy and the Waste Framework Directive.

20.9. **Baseline**

20.9.1. The baseline environment is described in Section 17.4 of the EIAR and was established for both the Construction and Operational Phases. Construction waste, including demolition and excavation waste, will be the main type of waste generated. There will also be small quantities of municipal type waste generated during the construction and operational phases.

20.10. **Potential Effects**

The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects of Waste. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table W1 below.

Table W1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	**Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects**
Do Nothing	• No resulting impacts from waste along the route of the Proposed Development.
Construction	• C & D waste including Excavation waste - All material generated will be considered for reuse for construction within the proposed development or in other construction projects in accordance with Article 27 of the Waste Directive Regulations. It is estimated that 1,646 tonnes of demolition waste will be generated which is equivalent to 0.08% of the C&D waste management baseline in the Connacht Ulster Waste Region (CUWR). The total forecast of surplus excavation material will be 13,161 tonnes and is equivalent to 0.68% of the C&D waste management baseline for the CUWR. - The most likely type and quantity of general construction waste will be surplus concrete and unusable or damaged pipe segments which may arise on-site. Quantities of these materials are estimated to be small, assumed to be between

	approximately 5% and 15% of construction material delivered to site. - The potential impact of construction waste during the construction phase, prior to mitigation, is Adverse, Imperceptible and Short-Term. • Municipal waste - Small volumes of general municipal wastes will be generated by construction staff (circa 50 staff) - Segregation facilities will be provided on site to ensure that recovery and recycling of such wastes is maximised - The potential impact of Municipal Waste during the Construction Phase, prior to mitigation, is Adverse, Imperceptible and Short-Term
Operation	• Carriageway maintenance will be result in waste, primarily consisting of bituminous mixtures. The potential impact of operational C&D waste will be Adverse, Not Significant and Long-Term. • The potential impact of municipal waste, generated during maintenance activities, prior to mitigation, is Neutral and Long-Term.
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

20.11. **Mitigation**

20.11.1. A Construction and Demolition Resource and Waste Management Plan (CDRWMP) has been prepared and this will be implemented (and updated as necessary) by the appointed contractor to ensures compliance with the provisions of the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended. The CDRWMP includes the following measures:

- Stockpiling of existing sub-base, capping layer and topsoil material generated on-site for direct reuse in the proposed development where practicable in the proposed construction compound.
- Recycled aggregates and reclaimed bituminous mixtures will be specified in the proposed development where practicable. For example, suitable recycled aggregates and appropriate site won material may be specified in the proposed road base / binder layers, sub-base layers under footpaths / cycle tracks, and

capping layer material within the road, footpath, and cycle track pavement, subject to testing to ensure material is suitable for its proposed use.

20.12. Residual Effects

20.12.1. No significant residual impacts have been identified either in the Construction or Operational Phases of the proposed development

20.13. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

20.13.1. I have examined, analysed and evaluated chapter 17 of the EIAR and all of the documentation on file in respect to waste. I am satisfied that the applicants understanding of the baseline environment is comprehensive and that the key impacts in respect of likely effects of waste have been identified.

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

20.13.3. It is the intention of the applicant to monitor, manage, reduce and reuse waste where possible. Waste will be appropriately segregated. Waste licenced facilities within the area have been identified and will be used according to the waste management plan. As set out in table 17-12 it is estimated that potentially up to approximately 12,973 tonnes of recycled / reused material could be incorporated into the proposed development.

20.13.4. Overall, having reviewed the relevant documents and chapters of the EIAR submitted I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately addressed waste arising from the development and has adequately employed the principles of the circular economy in this regard through the inclusion of waste materials within the project construction where appropriate and the reuse of existing materials along the route. Measures to reduce waste such as on demand delivery will further reduce waste during the construction phase is in accordance with the key tenets of the Connacht, Ulster Waste Management Plan.

20.14. Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects

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

21.0 Risk of Major Accident and/or Disaster

21.1. Issues Raised

No specific issues have been raised in the submissions in relation to risk of major accident and/or natural disaster.

21.2. Examination of EIAR

21.3. Chapter 19 of the EIAR provides an assessment of the risk of major accidents or disasters.

21.4. The proposed development does not fall within the consultation zones of any identified Seveso Sites.

21.5. The methodology sets out that the identification, control and management of risk is an integral part of the design and assessment process throughout all stages of the project lifecycle.

21.6. Potential Effects

The EIAR identifies the potential for a range of environmental effects of major accident and/or natural disaster. Likely significant effects of the development, as identified in the EIAR, are summarised in Table RA1 below.

Table RA1: Summary of Potential Effects

Project Phase	Potential Direct, Indirect and Cumulative Effects
Do Nothing	• No changes to existing infrastructure or utilities
Construction	• Risk of striking or damaging utilities – Gas, Mains sewer, Mains water, Underground and overhead cables • Water contamination event • Spread of invasive species • Major road traffic accident • Extreme weather event • Industrial incident The risk of such incidents occurring is generally unlikely/very unlikely and low/medium
Operation	• Extreme weather event • Industrial incident • Major road traffic accident Incidents occurring in the operational phase are considered low
Cumulative	• Proposed development not likely to result in any significant cumulative effects.

21.7. Mitigation

21.7.1. Section 19.5 outlines mitigation measures. A CEMP has been prepared to demonstrate how the proposed construction works can be undertaken in a logical, sensible and safe sequence with the incorporation of specific environmental control measures. Invasive Species Management, Surface Water Management and an Environmental Incident Response Plan are addressed in the CEMP. In addition, the applicant has prepared a Construction and Demolition Resource and Waste Management and a Construction Traffic Management.

21.7.2. Overall following mitigation, the risk of such incidents occurring is very unlikely and low

21.8. Residual Effects

21.8.1. No significant residual impacts have been identified either in the construction or operational phases of the proposed development.

21.9. Evaluation and Assessment: Direct and Indirect Effects

21.9.1. In terms of potential risks, it is noted that for the large part, the proposed development has a low risk to major accidents and/or disasters. However, I note that there is a medium risk associated with the potential of striking a main gas line, water contamination and the spreading of invasive species during construction. Following mitigation, it is stated that the risk of such incidents occurring is very unlikely and low and no significant residual effects are expected in this regard.

21.10. **Conclusions: Direct and Indirect Effects**

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

22.0 Cumulative Impacts and Environmental Interactions

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

- BusConnects Galway CrossCity Link (ABP 314597)
- N6 Galway City Ring Road (ABP 318220 (old no.302848))
- Ballybane Road and Castlepark Road Cycle Network Scheme (GCC Part 8 LA3/2023).
- A four-storey apartment building containing 24 no. residential units at 47, 49 & 51 Dublin Road, Galway (ABP 320955).

- N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge (ABP 300493).
- Ceannt Station Redevelopment.
- Mixed Use development to the rear of Ceannt Train Station, Galway (ABP 310568)
- Galway Harbour Development

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

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

22.4. It is important to note at the outset that cumulative impacts in relation to human health are considered in the long term to be positive, and significant.

Lands, Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology

22.5. Lands, Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology are examined as a group of receptors for the purpose of the consideration of cumulative effects. Standard mitigation measures as outlined within the relevant sections above will avoid significant impacts from arising in relation to such factors. Therefore, the residual impacts on Land, Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology are expected to be of negligible magnitude and imperceptible significance as a result of the operational phase of the proposed development. The applicant sets out that the interaction between the N6 Galway City Ring Road and the proposed development is minimal, and the cumulative impact is not considered significant.

Traffic

22.6. It is set out that appropriate construction planning of the proposed development, as detailed in Chapter 5 (Construction), and other nearby projects will mitigate potential cumulative impacts of general construction disruption on neighbouring communities. Significant impacts due to general traffic redistribution away from the direct study area

are not anticipated during the construction phase as traffic flows will generally be maintained in both directions.

Biodiversity

22.7. In general, impacts on biodiversity arising from the operational phase of the proposed development relate to habitat loss, contaminated surface water run-off, invasive species spread, and disturbance and displacement. All residual operational phase impacts were assessed as being Not Significant, with the exception of impacts on Designated Sites, which were assessed as being Imperceptible.

22.8. Due to the operational works required, it is assessed that the permanent and temporary impacts from habitat loss and invasive species will be limited to a ZoI in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development. Considering the existing land use of these areas, which generally consists of existing roads and pathways, the proposal is not likely to result in a significant effect on biodiversity.

22.9. There are no predicted in-combination effects relating to surface water run-off and contamination, given that the listed developments have or are proposed to have connection to the existing public sewer network for the treatment of surface water and wastewater.

Water

22.10. The Water assessment examined a number of projects with potential for likely direct significant cumulative effects with the proposed development during construction. The further assessment predicted that given the mitigation measures set out in the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) within the CEMP and considering the projects at issue are obliged to implement the same mitigation measures via their respective planning permissions, the cumulative impacts on hydrology during construction would be not significant

Air and Climate

22.11. The proposed development has been assessed as having at most a high risk of dust soiling, a low risk of human health impacts and a high risk of ecological impacts during the construction phase. A number of mitigation measures have been proposed in order to ensure significant dust impacts do not occur.

22.12. No significant cumulative effects on human health or ecological receptors due to construction dust is predicted on the basis that the mitigation measures proposed are implemented throughout the construction phase. The cumulative effect is predicted to be not significant.

22.13. Cumulative impacts in relation to climate are considered within the EIAR within a national context. However, it is important to note that impacts arising from the operation of the development are direct, positive and long term and the proposal will result in a reduction of carbon emissions over the life of the scheme. I am therefore satisfied that significant long term adverse cumulative impacts will not arise.

Noise and Vibration

22.14. Due to the linear nature of works associated with the proposed development, construction noise impacts will occur over temporary periods at any one location. It is set out that with the implementation of the mitigation measures to reduce construction noise levels and due to the separation from the nearest adjacent permitted Bus Connects Galway Cross-City Link Scheme, there are no significant cumulative impacts predicted to occur from the concurrent construction of the proposed development in combination with the other Bus Connects Cross City Scheme and other projects identified. In this regard I am therefore satisfied that significant cumulative impacts will not arise. Overall, in the operational phase there are no significant noise impacts in combination with other schemes in the surrounding area.

Cultural Heritage

22.15. The applicant sets out that although a cumulative measurement of a range of Cultural Heritage receptor impacts is acknowledged, none have been identified as of such magnitude, that when considered in tandem with the proposed development, result in an overall significant cumulative effect on the resource. As such, the cumulative impact at construction stage is considered Not Significant. I am satisfied that the archaeology and cultural heritage can and will be archaeologically mitigated for and no significant cumulative impacts will occur.

Landscape and Visual

22.16. The removal of trees during construction and relocation of stone walls will have a negative impact on visual amenity and landscape in the area. The cumulative impact

assessment is expected to result in reversible, short-term, moderate to slight, negative effects to residential receptors and users of the footpaths and cycleways. The proposed tree planting is expected to reduce this impact. I am satisfied that the long-term effect will be temporary slight to permanent, imperceptible to neutral once the proposed replacement tree planting reaches full growth.

Material Assets and Waste

22.17. Material quantities for the proposed development are considered insignificant and therefore no likely significant cumulative effects on material quantities are predicted in combination with other projects.

22.18. Due to the nature of waste management in Ireland cumulative effects for waste have been considered on a regional basis. Table 20-3 sets out a list of regional developments included in Cumulative Assessment. Overall, it is considered that that there will be no likely significant effects as a result of the construction of the proposed development in combination with the projects listed in Table 20-3.

Interactions

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

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

22.21. The Traffic and Transport assessment has informed the assessments of population, human health, biodiversity, air quality, and noise and vibration as there is significant interaction between these topics. The Human Health assessment has considered the evidence of associations with health outcomes from exposure to air pollution, traffic noise as well as changes to wider determinants of health such as traffic and transport, and access. I am satisfied on the basis of the information provided that there is no likely significant interaction between these factors and human health.

22.22. Similarly, the biodiversity assessment has considered how species, habitats and various other environmental issues interact. During the construction phase, some trees and vegetation will be removed, and this can have negative effects on habitats and species that utilise these habitats. However, the Landscape and Visual chapter includes for planting of new trees and vegetation. Although it will take time for trees and other planted vegetation to mature to full ecological value, no significant or medium-term impacts on biodiversity are expected from the changes in landscape and visual factors.

22.23. Interactions between land, soils, geology and hydrogeology and water are closely linked, primarily through the relationship between groundwater and surface water. However, due to the limited earthworks at the construction stage, it is anticipated that this impact will be of negligible magnitude and imperceptible significance. In addition, the application of mitigations will not give rise to significant interaction.

22.24. Interactions also occur between Landscape and Visual and Cultural Heritage. The construction phase will have impacts on a number of local features of heritage value. Having regard to the mitigation measures proposed by the applicant in this regard I am satisfied that significant interactions will not arise.

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

23.0 Reasoned Conclusion

23.1. Having regard to the examination of environmental information contained above, and in particular to the EIAR and supplementary information provided by the developer, and the submissions from the local authority, prescribed bodies and third parties in the course of the application, it is considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment, with the implementation of proposed mitigation measures, are:

Population and Human Health

- Minor, non-significant, effects are predicted during the construction phase, largely related to noise emissions and annoyance due to traffic measures.
- An improved general environment will result in less congestion, better air quality and amenity and much improved access to services and opportunities.
- Overall, the long-term effects of the proposed development on population and human health are expected to be positive and significant.

Biodiversity

- Habitat loss of Annex I Lowland Hay Meadows due to road widening is considered to be minor. The expected land-take of Annex I habitat is estimated to be less than 1% of the total area of Annex I habitat and not considered to be significant. Monitoring of the Annex I habitat will be undertaken annually, over a period of three years. Tree planting along the bare edges will create a barrier effect.
- A number of mature trees were identified with potential roost features (PRFs), some of which will be felled, and some retained. A suitably qualified bat ecologist will be present on site for any tree felling works and setting up roost protection areas for retained trees with PRFs. Works will comply with the derogation licence granted to the applicant by the NPWS.
- Adequate mitigation measures including compensatory planting and pre-construction surveys, are proposed to ensure the protection of sensitive flora and fauna encountered. Significant impacts to biodiversity can therefore be ruled out.

Water

- Negative impacts on Water could arise as a result of accidental spillages of chemicals, hydrocarbons or other contaminants entering watercourses during the construction phase of the development. These impacts will be mitigated by measures outlined within the application and can therefore be ruled out.

Air and Climate

- Benefits/ positive impacts on the Air and Climate in the operational phase as the proposed development will result in a minor decrease in emission

concentrations for all pollutants. In addition, with the potential for an increased modal shift and further decreasing car usage, there is potential for the predicted emissions to be lower.

- Negative impacts during construction relate to the embodied carbon of construction materials, however the construction phase represents a significantly small percentage of the sectoral emission ceilings and when annualised over the 30-year proposed development lifespan, are equivalent to 0.0004% of Ireland's total GHG emissions in 2023 and 0.001% of Ireland's non-ETS 2030 emissions target.

Noise and Dust

- During the construction phase these impacts will be mitigated through adherence to best practice construction measures in relation to dust and the use of noise abatement at sensitive locations. Significant noise impacts arise in relation to construction noise during night-time and weekend hours when thresholds are lower. Works will generally be carried out in daytime hours causing no significant effects. In the event that works are required during night-time or weekend hours, liaison with residents in this regard and the use of noise abatement will reduce the level of impacts.
- Noise disturbance from the operation of the development can be ruled out, electric bus fleet and less cars will have a positive impact on operational noise.

Traffic

- Negative traffic impacts arise during the construction phase of the development, these impacts will be mitigated through the implementation of a traffic management plan and a construction management plan. Whilst some localised impacts arising from road closures may arise, significant impacts arising from traffic can be ruled out.
- In the operational phase there is a positive, significant and long-term impact in terms of people movement by sustainable modes including significantly reduced bus journey times.

23.2. I am, therefore, satisfied that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable direct or indirect effects on the environment.

24.0 **Recommendation**

On the basis of the above assessment, I recommend that the Commission approve the proposed development subject to the reasons and considerations below and subject to conditions including requiring compliance with the submitted details and with the mitigation measures as set out in the EIAR and NIS.

25.0 **Reasons and Considerations**

25.1. The Commission performed its functions in relation to the making of its decision, in a manner consistent with:

> Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and the requirement to, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025 and the national long term climate action strategy, national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans set out in those Plans and in furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

and in coming to its decision, the Commission had regard to the following:

European legislation, including of particular relevance:

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

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

- Directive 2011/92/EU (The EIA Directive) as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU as implemented by Article 94 and Schedule 6 (paragraphs 1 and 2) of the Planning Regulations as amended.
- Directive 2000/60/EC, the Water Framework Directive and the requirement to exercise its functions in a manner which is consistent with the provisions of the Directive and which achieves or promotes compliance with the requirements of the Directive.
- Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020 (EU Commission 2020).

National and regional planning and related policy, including:

- the National Development Plan 2021-2030,
- the National Planning Framework, First Revision of NPF, April 2025
- Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020,
- the Department of Transport National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022,
- the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, 2019,
- the Cycle Design Manual, 2023, and
- other relevant guidance documents

Regional and local level policy, including the:

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

The local planning policy including:

- The Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029
- Galway Transport Strategy
- the nature, scale and design of the proposed road development as set out in the application for approval and the pattern of development along the route,
- the entirety of the documentation submitted by Galway City Council (applicant) in support of the proposed development, including the Environmental Impact

Assessment Report and the Natura Impact Statement, and the range of mitigation and monitoring measures proposed,

- the submissions and observations made to An Coimisiún Pleanála in connection with the application,
- the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites, and
- the report and recommendation of the Inspector including the examination, analysis and evaluation undertaken in relation to appropriate assessment, environmental impact assessment and proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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

Appropriate Assessment:

The Commission agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268), are the only European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and the Inspector's assessment. The Commission completed an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the affected European Sites, namely the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268), in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Commission considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an

appropriate assessment. In completing the appropriate assessment, the Commission considered, in particular, the following:

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

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

iii. the conservation objectives for the European Sites.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Commission accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the potential effects of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Sites, having regard to the site's conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Commission was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Environmental Impact Assessment

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

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

The Commission considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, adequately considers alternatives to the proposed development, and identifies and describes adequately the direct, indirect, secondary, and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the environment. The Commission agreed with the examination, set out in the Inspector's report, of the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report

and associated documentation submitted by the applicant and submissions made in the course of the planning application.

Reasoned Conclusion for EIA

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

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

Population and Human Health

- Minor, non-significant, effects are predicted during the construction phase, largely related to noise emissions and annoyance due to traffic measures.
- An improved general environment will result in less congestion, better air quality and amenity and much improved access to services and opportunities.
- Overall, the long-term effects of the proposed development on population and human health are expected to be positive and significant.

Biodiversity

- Habitat loss of Annex I Lowland Hay Meadows due to road widening is considered to be minor. The expected land-take of Annex I habitat is estimated to be less than 1% of the total area of Annex I habitat and not considered to be significant. Monitoring of the Annex I habitat will be undertaken annually, over a period of three years. Tree planting along the bare edges will create a barrier effect.
- A number of mature trees were identified with potential roost features (PRFs), some of which will be felled, and some retained. A suitably qualified bat ecologist will be present on site for any tree felling works and setting up roost

protection areas for retained trees with PRFs. Works will comply with the derogation licence granted to the applicant by the NPWS.

- Adequate mitigation measures including compensatory planting and preconstruction surveys, are proposed to ensure the protection of sensitive flora and fauna encountered. Significant impacts to biodiversity can therefore be ruled out.

Water

- Negative impacts on Water could arise as a result of accidental spillages of chemicals, hydrocarbons or other contaminants entering watercourses during the construction phase of the development. These impacts will be mitigated by measures outlined within the application and can therefore be ruled out.

Air and Climate

- Benefits/ positive impacts on the Air and Climate in the operational phase as the proposed development will result in a minor decrease in emission concentrations for all pollutants. In addition, with the potential for an increased modal shift and further decreasing car usage, there is potential for the predicted emissions to be lower.
- Negative impacts during construction relate to the embodied carbon of construction materials, however the construction phase represents a significantly small percentage of the sectoral emission ceilings and when annualised over the 30-year proposed development lifespan, are equivalent to 0.0004% of Ireland's total GHG emissions in 2023 and 0.001% of Ireland's non-ETS 2030 emissions target.

Noise and Dust

- During the construction phase these impacts will be mitigated through adherence to best practice construction measures in relation to dust and the use of noise abatement at sensitive locations. Significant noise impacts arise in relation to construction noise during night-time and weekend hours when thresholds are lower. Works will generally be carried out in daytime hours causing no significant effects. In the event that works are required during night-time or weekend hours, liaison with residents in this regard and the use of noise abatement will reduce the level of impacts.

- Noise disturbance from the operation of the development can be ruled out, electric bus fleet and less cars will have a positive impact on operational noise.

Traffic

- Negative traffic impacts arise during the construction phase of the development, these impacts will be mitigated through the implementation of a traffic management plan and a construction management plan. Whilst some localised impacts arising from road closures may arise, significant impacts arising from traffic can be ruled out.
- In the operational phase there is a positive, significant and long-term impact in terms of people movement by sustainable modes including significantly reduced bus journey times.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report has considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development, during construction and operation, on the environment would be primarily mitigated by environmental management measures, as appropriate. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report has considered that the main significant direct and indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the receiving environment. Following mitigation, no residual significant long-term negative impacts on the environment or sensitive receptors would occur.

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

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development

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

services. The public realm along the bus corridor would also be improved. The Commission considered that the proposed road development, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, would be in accordance with national, regional and local planning policies, including multiple policies and objectives set out in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 and having regard to all relevant provisions, including zoning objectives, at or adjoining the overall scheme area. It is further considered that the need, justification and purpose of the proposed road development has been adequately demonstrated, that it is acceptable in terms of its likely effects on the environment and that an approval for the proposed road development would be consistent with national climate ambitions and with the relevant provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2024 ("CAP24") and 2025 ("CAP25") through the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, which supports the achievement of Ireland's emission reduction targets. The proposed road development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

26.0 **Conditions**

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where any conditions of approval require further details to be prepared by or on behalf of the local authority, these details shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record.
   Reason: In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the environment.

2. The proposed development shall be amended in the vicinity of Flannery's Hotel and Galwegians Rugby Football Club, with the bus stop relocated to land adjacent to the Galwegians Rugby Football Club as per Figure 2-13 to Figure 2-16 as detailed in Galway City Councils Response on the Submissions and Objections, June 2025.
   Reason: In the interest of orderly development and protecting the visual

amenities of the area.

3. The mitigation measures and monitoring commitments identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and other plans and particulars submitted with the application shall be carried out in full except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with other conditions. Prior to the commencement of development, a schedule of mitigation measures and monitoring commitments identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and details of a time schedule for implementation of the mitigation measures and associated monitoring, shall be prepared by the local authority and placed on file and retained as part of the public record.
   Reason: In the interest of clarity and protection of the environment during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.

4. The mitigation and monitoring measures identified in the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application shall be implemented in full. Prior to the commencement of development, details of a time schedule for implementation of mitigation measures and associated monitoring shall be prepared by the local authority and placed on file and retained as part of the public record.
   Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment, the protection of European Sites and in the interest of public health.

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

6. The applicant and any agent acting on its behalf shall ensure that all plant and

machinery used during the works should be thoroughly cleaned and washed before delivery to the site to prevent the spread of hazardous invasive species and pathogens.

Reason: In the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the European sites.

7. A suitably qualified ecologist shall be retained by the local authority to oversee the site set up and construction of the proposed development and implementation of mitigation measures relating to ecology. The ecologist shall be present during the works. Upon completion of works, an ecological report of the site works shall be prepared by the appointed ecologist to be kept on file as part of the public record.

   Reason: In the interest of nature conservation and biodiversity.

8. Prior to commencement of development, the developer, and/or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the relevant statutory agencies, an updated Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), incorporating all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Assessment Report and a demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The updated CEMP shall also include details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, compound/works area lighting, noise management measures and surface water management proposals. The construction of the development shall be constructed in accordance with the updated CEMP.

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

9. (a) All mitigation measures in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage as set out in Chapter 15 of the EIAR shall be implemented in full, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions of this Order.

   (b) A Project Archaeologist shall be appointed to oversee and advise on all

aspects of the scheme from design, through inception to completion.

(i) The Project Archaeologist shall liaise with the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage and the Planning Authority to agree in advance an overall strategy for archaeological works to be carried out both in advance of and in parallel with construction of the development.

(ii) This shall include the scope of any Archaeological Monitoring as well as any additional mitigation measures that may be required to protect archaeological heritage.

(c) The Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) shall include the location of any and all archaeological or cultural heritage constraints relevant to the proposed development as set out in Chapter 15 of the EIAR and by any subsequent archaeological investigations associated with the project. The CEMP shall clearly describe all identified likely archaeological impacts, both direct and indirect, and all mitigation measures to be employed to protect the archaeological or cultural heritage environment during all phases of site preparation and construction activity.

(d) The planning authority and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of all archaeological monitoring and any archaeological investigative work/excavation required, following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation specialist analysis. 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.

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

Traffic Management Plan and Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan shall be implemented in full during the course of construction of the development.

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

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

Donogh O' Donoghue
Planning Inspector

12th September 2025

Appendix 1 - List of Public Submissions

- Brothers of Charity
- Catherine Connelly TD
- Connacht Hospitality Ltd
- Duggans Supermarket Ltd
- Flannery's Motor Inns DAC
- Galway City Community Network CLG
- GLUAS Light Rail for Galway team
- Liam O Reilly, Yvonne O Reilly, Emily O Reilly
- Shane Foran
- Woodhaven Residents Association

Appendix 2: Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Case File – ABP-321776-25	
Brief description of project	BusConnects Galway: Dublin Road Development on the R338 Dublin Road, Galway City.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	The proposed development for is for a sustainable transport scheme which provides for both cycle and bus priority measures over a distance of 3.9km on the Dublin Road from Moneenageisha Junction in the west to the Doughiska Junction in the east. The proposed development will tie in with the permitted Galway BusConnects: Cross City Link Proposed Development at the western extremity. The site generally comprises the existing hardstanding of the R338 and the adjacent footpaths. The development includes alteration of existing road layouts, including junction layouts, footpaths, signalling, pedestrian crossings, drainage and other associated works. There are no watercourses intersecting or adjacent the site, therefore no direct connectivity to the surrounding river network. Surface water from the site currently exits the area via the existing surface water drainage network as well as over the road's edge on un-kerbed areas. Outside the main road network along the western section of the site are a mix of gardens and amenity spaces of existing dwellings, a hospital, a school and hotels. Outside the main road network along the eastern section of the site are large sections of deciduous woodland, immature woodland, semi-natural grassland and scrub associated with Merlin Park and surrounding woodlands. The grassland within Merlin Park has been identified as Annex I habitat. This Annex I habitat also includes potential food plant for Marsh fritillary (Euphydryas aurinia), a protected species under the Habitats Directive.

	The Proposed Development will be connected to the closest water bodies (Lough Atalia and Galway Bay) via the existing drainage/ stormwater network. Therefore, the proposed development site has potential indirect hydrological connectivity to two European designated site, the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268).
Screening report	Y
Natura Impact Statement	Y
Relevant submissions	Galway City Community Network note the following: • Due to the very high ecological importance of the South Meadows and South Woods, a detailed construction plan should be brought before An Bord Pleanála and screened to ensure no impact. • All efforts must be made to ensure access to the meadows from the cycle lane is limited to ensure no impact going forward. • There is an established mammal link between Unclin and Antin Woods and the South Woods. To minimize the level of road kills on the Dublin Road there should be access pipes/underpasses under the Dublin Road for mammals plus a high-level access wire for Red Squirrels on poles between trees on both sides of the Dublin Road. • The Skerritt Roundabout at ATU contains a large number of Orchids and these should be identified and relocated to an appropriate alternative location before construction work

Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model

4 No European sites were identified as being located within a potential zone of influence of the proposed development as detailed in the Table below. I note the applicant included European sites within a 15km search radius initially, before considering further screening of 4 No European sites. There is no ecological justification for such a wide consideration of the sites, and I have only included those sites with any possible ecological connection or pathway in this screening determination.

European Site (code)	**Qualifying interests[1] Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)**	**Distance from proposed development (km)**	**Ecological connections[2]**	**Consider further in screening[3] Y/N**
Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)	Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002]	0.055	Yes -	Y

	Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003] Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028] Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056] Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069] Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]		Indirect hydrological connectivity via the stormwater network within Galway City and the outfall locations within Lough Atalia and Galway Bay Noise emissions during the construction along with the site being within the core feeding range for the QI species	

	Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004031			
Galway Bay Complex SAC	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia 171irundo171) [1410] Turloughs [3180] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	0.063	Yes – Indirect hydrological connectivity via the stormwater network within Galway City and the outfall locations within Lough Atalia and Galway Bay	Y

	Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365] https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000268			
Lough Corrib SAC	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130] Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Active raised bogs [7110]	1.5	Yes - There are mobile aquatic species designated in this SAC, (e.g., Salmon and lamprey) that migrate within Galway Bay, there is an indirect pathway for impacts. The Site is also within the Core Sustenance Zone (CSZ) of 2km for Lesser Horseshoe Bat.	Y

	Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Bog woodland [91D0] Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833] Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216] https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/000297			

Lough Corrib SPA (004042)	A051 Gadwall Anas strepera A056 Shoveler Anas clypeata A059 Pochard Aythya 174irund A061 Tufted Duck Aythya fuligula A065 Common Scoter Melanitta nigra A082 Hen Harrier Circus cyaneus A125 Coot Fulica atra A140 Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria A179 Black-headed Gull Chroicocephalus ridibundus A182 Common Gull Larus canus A193 Common Tern Sterna 174irundo A194 Arctic Tern Sterna paradisaea A395 Greenland White-fronted Goose Anser albifrons flavirostris A999 Wetlands https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004042	3.9	Yes - There is overlap in QI's between the SPA and the Inner Galway Bay SPA and along with the Site being within the core feeding range for the QI species, the SPA is considered within the ZoI of the Proposed Development.	Y
All surface water from the proposed site will be directed to the existing drainage network within the R338 road infrastructure. The drainage outfalls for the exiting network associated with the proposed development are located at Lough Atalia, Ballyloughane Beach and north of Rabbit Island. The outfalls of Lough Atalia, Ballyloughane and north of Rabbit Island are stormwater only, have no WwTP or oil interceptors and therefore, have potential to act as a vector for surface water emissions to the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Galway Bay Complex SAC.				

Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone or in combination) on European Sites

The proposed development will not result in any direct effects on any Natura 2000 sites. However, there is a risk of indirect habitat degradation and damage due to potential surface water impacts during both the construction and operational phases of the project. There is also a risk of habitat degradation and damage resulting from non-native invasive species impacts due to the proximity of the scheme to the affected Natura 2000 sites.

Sources of impacts and likely significant effects are detailed in the Table below:

AA Screening matrix

Site name **Qualifying interests**	**Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site***	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Site 1: Name (code) Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031)	Direct: None – construction noise will not be significantly above the current traffic noise, therefore QI species already acclimatized to noise levels. Indirect: Yes Surface water directed to existing drainage network/outfall has the potential to act as a vector for surface water emissions during both the construction and operational phases. Invasive species impacts due to the proximity of the scheme and potential pathways to the affected Natura 2000 sites. Dust emissions during construction could result in deterioration of sensitive designated habitats.	Habitat loss or degradation effecting bird species that forage or roost in vicinity.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Y	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	

Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Site 2 : Name (code) Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268)	Direct: None Indirect: Yes – Surface water directed to existing drainage network/outfall has potential to act as a vector for surface water emissions during both the construction and operational phases of the project. Invasive species impacts due to the proximity of the scheme and potential pathways to the affected Natura 2000 sites Dust emissions during construction could result in deterioration of sensitive designated habitats.	Habitat loss or degradation
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Y	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	

Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Site 3: Name (code) Lough Corrib SPA (004042)	Direct: None - There is no direct hydrological connectivity between the Site and the SPA. Indirect: None There is no downstream hydrological connectivity as the SPA is upstream of any outfall locations The site is beyond the potential impact zone for dust and air emissions	None

	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): N
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?
The proposed development has potential to contribute to surface water emissions to receiving waterbodies with connectivity to Natura 2000 sites. There is no direct or indirect hydrological connectivity between the Site and the SPA.	

Site name **Qualifying interests**	**Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site***	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Site 4: Name (code) Lough Corrib SAC (000297)	Direct: None – There is no downstream hydrological connectivity as this SAC is upstream of any outfall locations and the Site itself. There is no potential for significant effects on the Lough Corrib SAC's otter population as they are located further upstream and outside of the ZoI. The otter population within Lough Atalia and the River Corrib are considered to be part of the Galway Bay Complex SAC. The roosts designated for the Lough Corrib SAC Lesser Horseshoe population, are over c. 30 km from the proposed development. No Lesser Horseshoe bats were recorded in surveys undertaken in 2023 and 2024. Indirect: None – The aquatic species in the Lough Corrib SAC migrate within Galway Bay and the River Corrib. However, there is no potential for indirect impacts on aquatic species in the Lough Corrib SAC which rely on other aquatic species as a prey resource. The site is beyond the potential impact zone for dust and air emissions.	None
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): N	

	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?
The proposed development has potential to contribute to surface water emissions to receiving waterbodies with connectivity to Natura 2000 sites. There is no direct or indirect hydrological connectivity between the Site and the SAC.	

Further Commentary / discussion

The works will be along the existing road with limited land take on the fringes of the existing road. For bird species in the SPAs, habitats on the existing road and the surrounding habitats where works will take place are unsuitable for these wetland bird species.

The temporary construction compound consists of an existing sports pitch which is actively used by people and dog walkers, with flood lighting also present. There are numerous habitats preferred by the QI species in the surrounding landscape. Therefore, the QIs are not reliant on the habitats within the site as a feeding and/or breeding/wintering habitat.

For Mobile Species such as otters there are no watercourses within the footprint of the Site.

The grassland of the fields within Merlin Park have been identified as Annex I habitat and approximately 4 m widening of the road will be required in this area to facilitate the development. The field surveys identified this 'Meadow' habitat as Dry Meadows and Grassy Verges (GS2) and corresponds with the Annex I habitat type 'Lowland Hay Meadows', considered to be of national importance. The only overlapping area of required land-take and Annex I habitat is a total area of approximately 1,540 m2 and this area of land take is a strip closest to the existing road. The land being impacted (1,540 m2), is not mapped as part of an area within an SAC and therefore the possibility of likely significant effect on any SAC can be excluded. Overall, the habitat loss impacts are considered to be minor and any surface water run-off onto this Annex I habitat is considered to be temporary and outside the boundary of any designated site. The possibility of likely significant effects on the Natura 2000 network or its ecological coherence by virtue of the degradation / loss of this Annex I habitat can be excluded.

Overall there is potential for significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Galway Bay Complex SAC relating to air and surface water emissions. Bird species that forage or roost in the vicinity are likely to be affected indirectly, including the wetland habitats that they utilise. In addition, the proximity of the Proposed Development to the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Galway Bay Complex SAC results in a risk of spread of invasive species during the construction and operational phases

Step 4 Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site

Based on the information provided in the screening report, site visit, review of the conservation objectives and supporting documents, I consider that in the absence of mitigation measures beyond best practice construction methods, the proposed development has potential to result in significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268).

I conclude that it is not possible to exclude the possibility that proposed development alone would result in significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268) from effects associated with indirect habitat loss or deterioration. An appropriate

assessment is required on the basis of the possible effects of the project 'alone'. Further assessment in-combination with other plans and projects is not required at screening stage.

Proceed to AA.

Screening Determination

Significant effects cannot be excluded
In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that it is not possible to exclude that the proposed development alone will give rise to significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268) in view of the site's conservation objectives. Appropriate Assessment is required.

This determination is based on:

- discharge of poor-quality surface water from the proposed development site has the potential to affect the water quality downstream and therefore has the potential to act as a vector for surface water emissions to the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268).
- The proximity of the proposed development to the Inner Galway Bay SPA and the Galway Bay Complex SAC results in a risk of spread of invasive species during the construction and operational phases. Invasive species could be spread or introduced terrestrially, or via surface water run-off from the works, and therefore affect the wetland and coastal habitats of the SPA and SAC, as well as indirectly affect the species that utilise these habitats, by reducing habitat quality and suitability.
- Dust emissions during the construction phase could result in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats.

Appendix 3: Appropriate Assessment Determination

Appropriate Assessment
The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to appropriate assessment of a project under part XAB, sections 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) are considered fully in this section.
Taking account of the preceding screening determination, the following is an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development of BusConnects Galway: Dublin Road on the R338 Dublin Road, Galway City in view of the relevant conservation objectives of the Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268) based on scientific information provided by the applicant and considering observations on nature conservation. The information relied upon includes the following: • Natura Impact Statement prepared by APEM Ireland. I am satisfied that the information provided is adequate to allow for Appropriate Assessment. I am satisfied that all aspects of the project which could result in significant effects are considered and assessed in the NIS and mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects on site integrity are included and assessed for effectiveness.
Submissions/observations **Galway City Community Network** made the following comments: • Due to the very high ecological importance of the South Meadows and South Woods, a detailed construction plan should be brought before An Bord Pleanála and screened to ensure no impact. • All efforts must be made to ensure access to the meadows from the cycle lane is limited to ensure no impact going forward. • There is an established mammal link between Unclin and Antin Woods and the South Woods. To minimize the level of road kills on the Dublin Road there should be access pipes/underpasses under the Dublin Road for mammals plus a high-level access wire for Red Squirrels on poles between trees on both sides of the Dublin Road. • The Skerritt Roundabout at ATU contains a large number of Orchids and these should be identified and relocated to an appropriate alternative location before construction work.

Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031): **Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage):** (i) Water quality degradation resulting in indirect habitat disruption (ii) Spread of invasive species (iii) Dust emissions resulting in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats				
Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	**Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes (summary- inserted)**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures (summary)**	
Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002] Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition in relation to population and distribution – Long term population stable or increasing, no significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas.	Surface water emissions resulting in deterioration in water quality, thereby reducing habitat quality and prey availability. Spread or introduction of invasive species, affecting habitats and indirectly the species that utilise them. Dust emissions resulting in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats.	Detailed Preventative Measures to avoid impact on water quality during construction area are outlined within section 5.1.6 and include but are not limited to: A Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) will be included in the CEMP, Implementation of measures in CEMP, All fuels, oils and construction fluids will be stored in the designated construction compound, spill kits will be available, silt fencing to be erected within 15m of watercourses, duration that any subsoil layers are exposed will be kept to a minimum, emergency response plan, surface water drainage system including petrol / oil separator will be regularly checked. A pre-construction invasive species survey	
Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017]	No significant decline, human activities should not disturb, no significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas.			
Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028]	Long term population stable or increasing, no significant decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas.			
Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046]	As above			

Wigeon (Anas penelope) [A050] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Shoveler (Anas clypeata) [A056] Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069] Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]			to be undertaken and all equipment working on Site will be steam cleaned prior to and after use on Site. A precautionary approach to construction dust including fully enclosed structures with screens during demolition, regular cleaning of roads along the site, water misting on site and tarpaulin-covering of material that has potential to generate dust.
Sandwich Tern (Sterna sandvicensis) [A191] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]	No significant decline, in breeding abundance, productivity rate, distribution, Prey biomass,		

	Human activity should not create disturbance at breeding site		
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	The permanent area occupied by the wetland habitat should be stable and not significantly less than the area of 13,267ha, other than that occurring from natural patterns of variation		

The above table is based on the documentation and information provided on the file and I am satisfied that the submitted NIS has identified the relevant attributes and targets of the Qualifying Interests.

Assessment of issues that could give rise to adverse effects:

***(i)* Water quality degradation**

Surface water emissions during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development could potentially result in a deterioration of water quality, thereby reducing habitat quality and prey availability. This would also give rise to potential indirect impacts to the QI bird species of the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

(ii) Spread of Invasive Species

Non-native invasive flora species have been identified within the lands (gardens and woodland etc) to be used for the Proposed Development. In addition, field surveys identified Himalayan knotweed in one location near the entrance to Merlin Park. There is a risk that machinery, vehicles and surface water could also act as vectors for dispersal of the invasive non-native flora species within and around the Site. The conservation objectives and conditions of designated species and habitats in the SPA are defined by attributes including habitat area and distribution of bird populations. The introduction or spreading of invasive species would pose a risk of the designated site not complying or meeting its conservation objectives and thus adversely affecting the integrity of the site.

(iii) Dust Emissions

Dust emissions during the construction phase of the Proposed Development could result in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats. This would also give rise to potential indirect impacts to the QI bird species of the Inner Galway Bay SPA.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Preventative measures to avoid impact on water quality.

- A Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) will be included in the CEMP.
- An Environmental Emergency Response Plan will be prepared and communicated to staff prior to commencement of works.
- Sediment barriers, such as silt fencing, will be used for works within 15 m of watercourses, such as any upgrades of the surface water drainage near outfalls or to install petrol or oil interceptors.
- All fuels, oils and construction fluids will be stored in the designated construction compound. Refuelling of machinery, where required, will only be undertaken within the construction compound.
- Spill Kits will be available on site.
- Any cement mixing where required will be undertaken away from surface water drainage systems
- Vegetation clearance will be done in a controlled manner, and waste disposed of appropriately away from any watercourse or surface water drainage system.
- The duration that any subsoil layers are exposed for will be kept to a minimum to reduce the time soils are exposed to weather conditions.

Preventative measures to avoid Invasive Species impacts.

- Prior to the commencement of works, a pre-construction survey for invasive species will be carried out along the length of the Proposed Development.
- The identified high-risk invasive species Himalayan knotweed will be appropriately removed to prevent further spread.
- All equipment working on Site will be steam cleaned prior to and after use on Site.
- During the operational phase checks will be made for invasive species and, where found, appropriate signage and measures introduced to ensure there is no further spread.

Preventative measures to avoid impact on air quality.

- Fully enclose structures with screens during demolition to minimise dust dispersion.
- Public roads outside the Proposed Development will be regularly inspected for cleanliness and cleaned as necessary.
- Material handling systems and site stockpiling of materials will be designed and laid out to minimise exposure to wind.
- Water misting or sprays (or similar dust suppression methods) will be used as required if particularly dusty activities are necessary during dry or windy periods.
- Trucks will be covered with tarpaulin and before entrance onto public roads.
- Site hoarding of 2.4m height to be erected along boundaries where works are taking place adjacent to ecological sensitive receptors and at the main construction compound.

I am satisfied that the preventative measures proposed which are aimed at interrupting the source-pathway-receptor are targeted at the key threats and by arresting these pathways or reducing possible effect to a non-significant level, adverse effects can be prevented. Mitigation measures related to water quality, air quality and threats from invasive species spread are captured in Planning Conditions 4, 5 and 6 of the Inspectors Report.

In-combination effects
I am satisfied that in-combination effects have been assessed adequately in the NIS. The applicant has demonstrated satisfactorily that no significant residual effects will remain post the application of mitigation measures and there is therefore no potential for in-combination effects. I have also reviewed the Planning Register in relation to the proposed development since the lodgement of the application and am satisfied that there are no new applications which would materially impact the proposed scheme in terms of cumulative impacts.

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

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects arising from the proposed development can be excluded for the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031). No wetland habitat loss will occur. The mitigation measures will ensure that suspended solids and other pollutants will not be discharged to surface waters during construction and operation nor via emissions to air, and that there will be no deterioration in water quality, reduction in habitat quality or indirect effects to QI and non-QI bird species. No increase in existing runoff rates will occur and appropriate treatment will ensure runoff quality. Appropriate invasive removal and biosecurity measures will be implemented on site to ensure there is no spread and / or introduction of invasive species which could affect habitat quality. I am satisfied that the mitigation measures proposed to prevent adverse effects have been assessed as effective and can be implemented.

Reasonable scientific doubt
I am satisfied that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of adverse effects.

Site Integrity
The proposed development will not affect the maintenance of the Conservation objectives of the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031). Adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded and no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268):

Summary of Key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage):

i. Water quality degradation resulting in indirect habitat disruption
ii. Dust emissions resulting in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats
iii. Spread of invasive species

Qualifying Interest features likely to be affected	**Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes (summary-inserted)**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures (summary)**
Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Galway Bay Complex SAC: The permanent habitat area is stable or increasing. Conserve the following community types in a natural condition: Intertidal sandy mud community complex, and Intertidal sand community complex.	Surface water emissions resulting in deterioration in water quality, thereby reducing habitat quality and prey availability. Dust emissions resulting in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats. Spread or introduction of invasive species, affecting habitats and indirectly the species that utilise them	Detailed Preventative Measures to avoid impact on water quality during construction area are outlined within section 5.1.6 and include but are not limited to: A Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) will be included in the CEMP, Implementation of measures in CEMP, All fuels, oils and construction fluids will be stored in the designated construction compound, spill kits will be available, silt fencing to be erected within 15m of watercourses, duration that any subsoil layers are exposed will be kept to a minimum, emergency response plan, surface water drainage system including petrol / oil separator will be regularly checked.
Coastal lagoons [1150]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Coastal lagoons in Galway Bay Complex SAC – Habitat - Area stable, subject to slight natural variation,		

	Habitat distribution – no decline, Salinity regime - Median annual salinity and temporal variation within natural ranges, Hydrological regime - Annual water level fluctuations and minima within natural ranges, Barrier: connectivity between lagoon and sea - Appropriate hydrological connections between lagoons and sea, Water quality – annual mean ranges for Chlorophyll, Molybdate Reactive Phosphorus, Dissolved Inorganic Nitrogen, Depth of macrophyte colonisation - Macrophyte colonisation to at least 2m depth, Typical plant species - Maintain number and extent of listed lagoonal specialists, subject to natural variation, Typical animal species - Maintain listed lagoon specialists, subject to natural variation, Negative indicator species - Negative		A precautionary approach to construction dust including fully enclosed structures with screens during demolition, regular cleaning of roads along the site, water misting on site and tarpaulin-covering of material that has potential to generate dust. A pre-construction invasive species survey to be undertaken and all equipment working on Site will be steam cleaned prior to and after use on Site.

	indicator species absent or under control		
Large shallow inlets and bays [1160]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Large shallow inlets and bays, Habitat Area - The permanent habitat area is stable or increasing, subject to natural processes. Community extent - Maintain the extent of the Zostera-dominated community complex and the maërl-dominated community, subject to natural processes. Community structure: Zostera density - Conserve the high quality of Zostera-dominated communities Community structure - Conserve the high quality of the maërl-dominated community Community distribution – conserve community types		
Reefs [1170]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs,		

	Distribution, habitat area and community extent – stable or increasing and Maintain the extent of the Mytilus-dominated reef community. Community structure - Conserve the high quality of the Mytilus-dominated reef community Community structure - Conserve the following community types in a natural condition: Fucoid dominated community complex; Laminaria dominated community complex; and Shallow sponge-dominated community complex.		
Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks – Habitat Area and Distribution – stable or increasing. Physical structure: functionality and sediment supply - Maintain the natural circulation of sediment and organic matter, without any physical obstructions, Vegetation structure: zonation - Maintain range of coastal		

	habitats including transitional zones, subject to natural processes including erosion and succession, Vegetation composition - Maintain the typical vegetated shingle flora including the range of sub-communities within the different zones, Vegetation composition: negative indicator species – less than 5% cover.		
Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230]	Maintain favourable condition		
Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand Habitat & distribution – no decline- stable or increasing. Structure – sediment, creeks and pans, flood regime, vegetation – maintain and restore and maintain more than 90% of area outside of creeks vegetated. Prevent establishment of Cordgrass		

Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae. Habitat, structure – increasing, maintaining, no decline, etc, as above		
Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410]	As above		
Turloughs [3180]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Turloughs – Habitat & Distribution – stable no decline Hydrological regime – maintain Appropriate soil type, nutrients& physical structure. Appropriate water quality, peat formation and vegetation		
Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands.		

	Habitat area & Distribution – no decline. Juniper population size - At least 50 plants Formation & structure – exceeding 0.5 in height, 10% cone bearing, not more than 10% dead plants Composition – min of 10 species		
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco Brometalia) Habitat & Distribution – stable no decline Vegetation – over 10% present, 30-70% of sward 5-40cm high, bracken not more than 5%, not more than 10% bare ground.		
Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae. Habitat & Distribution – stable no decline		

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

	Barriers to connectivity – no increase		
Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]	Habitat – not restricted Breeding, Moulting behaviour, Resting, – conserve sites Human behaviour should not disturb sites.		

The above table is based on the documentation and information provided on the file and I am satisfied that the submitted NIS has identified the relevant attributes and targets of the Qualifying Interests.

Assessment of issues that could give rise to adverse effects:

(i) Water quality degradation

Surface water emissions during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development could potentially result in a deterioration of water quality. The conservation objectives and conditions of designated habitats and species in the SAC are defined by attributes related to water quality, including salinity regimes, dissolved inorganic nitrogen (DIN), molybdate reactive phosphorus (MRP), community structure, physical structure and sediment supply, plant species and negative indicator species, which all would be negatively impacted by a deterioration in water quality. This would then pose a risk of the designated site not meeting their conservation objectives and thus affecting the overall integrity of the site.

(ii) Dust Emissions

Dust emissions during the construction phase of the Proposed Development could result in a deterioration of sensitive designated habitats. The conservation objectives and conditions of the designated habitats and species in the SAC are defined by attributes including habitat distribution, habitat area, vegetation composition, vegetation structure, physical structure and extent of habitat, which could all be negatively impacted by the emissions to air. This would then pose a risk of the designated site not meeting their conservation objectives and thus affecting the overall integrity of the site.

(iii) Spread of Invasive Species

Non-native invasive flora species have been identified within the lands (gardens and woodland etc) to be used for the Proposed Development. In addition, field surveys identified

Himalayan knotweed in one location near the entrance to Merlin Park. There is a risk that machinery, vehicles and surface water could also act as vectors for dispersal of the invasive non-native flora species within and around the Site. The conservation objectives and conditions of the designated habitats and species in the SAC are defined by attributes including habitat distribution, habitat area, vegetation composition, vegetation structure, physical structure, extent of habitat, barriers to connectivity and access to suitable habitat. The introduction or spreading of invasive species would then pose a risk of the designated site not complying or meeting their conservation objectives and thus affecting integrity of the site.

Mitigation measures and conditions

Preventative measures to avoid impact on water quality.

- A Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) will be included in the CEMP.
- An Environmental Emergency Response Plan will be prepared and communicated to staff prior to commencement of works.
- Sediment barriers, such as silt fencing, will be used for works within 15 m of watercourses, such as any upgrades of the surface water drainage near outfalls or to install petrol or oil interceptors.
- All fuels, oils and construction fluids will be stored in the designated construction compound. Refuelling of machinery, where required, will only be undertaken within the construction compound
- Spill Kits will be available on site.
- Any cement mixing where required will be undertaken away from surface water drainage systems.
- Vegetation clearance will be done in a controlled manner, and waste disposed of appropriately away from any watercourse or surface water drainage system.
- The duration that any subsoil layers are exposed for will be kept to a minimum to reduce the time soils are exposed to weather conditions.

Preventative measures to avoid impact on air quality.

- Fully enclose structures with screens during demolition to minimise dust dispersion.
- Public roads outside the Proposed Development will be regularly inspected for cleanliness and cleaned as necessary.
- Material handling systems and site stockpiling of materials will be designed and laid out to minimise exposure to wind.
- Water misting or sprays (or similar dust suppression methods) will be used as required if particularly dusty activities are necessary during dry or windy periods.
- Trucks will be covered with tarpaulin and before entrance onto public roads.
- Site hoarding of 2.4m height to be erected along boundaries where works are taking place adjacent to ecological sensitive receptors and at the main construction compound.

Preventative measures to avoid Invasive Species impacts.

- Prior to the commencement of works, a pre-construction survey for invasive species will be carried out along the length of the Proposed Development.

- The identified high-risk invasive species Himalayan knotweed will be appropriately removed to prevent further spread.
- All equipment working on Site will be steam cleaned prior to and after use on Site.
- During the operational phase checks will be made for invasive species and, where found, appropriate signage and measures introduced to ensure there is no further spread.

I am satisfied that the preventative measures proposed which are aimed at interrupting the source-pathway-receptor are targeted at the key threats and by arresting these pathways or reducing possible effect to a non-significant level, adverse effects can be prevented. Mitigation measures related to water quality, air quality and threats from invasive species spread are captured in Planning Conditions 4, 5 and 6 of the Inspectors Report.

In-combination effects

I am satisfied that in-combination effects have been assessed adequately in the NIS. The applicant has demonstrated satisfactorily that no significant residual effects will remain post the application of mitigation measures and there is therefore no potential for in-combination effects. I have also reviewed the Planning Register in relation to the proposed development since the lodgement of the application and am satisfied that there are no new applications which would materially impact the proposed scheme in terms of cumulative impacts.

Findings and conclusions

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

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects arising from the proposed development can be excluded for the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268). The mitigation measures will ensure that suspended solids and other pollutants will not be discharged to surface waters during construction and operation nor via emissions to air, and that there will be no deterioration in water quality or reduction in habitat quality. No increase in existing runoff rates will occur and appropriate treatment will ensure runoff quality. Appropriate invasive removal and biosecurity measures will be implemented on site to ensure there is no spread and / or introduction of invasive species which could affect habitat quality. I am satisfied that the mitigation measures proposed to prevent adverse effects have been assessed as effective and can be implemented.

Reasonable scientific doubt

I am satisfied that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of adverse effects.

Site Integrity

The proposed development will not affect the maintenance of the Conservation objectives of the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268). Adverse effects on site integrity can be excluded, and no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

Appropriate Assessment Conclusion: Integrity Test

In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development could result in significant effects on the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268) in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of S177U was required. Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS, all associated material submitted and taking into account observations on nature conservation, I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268) can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

My conclusion is based on the following:

- Detailed assessment of the construction, operation and post-operational impacts.
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed including supervision and monitoring and integration into a live Construction and Environmental Management plan by the contractor at the development stage.
- Application of planning conditions to ensure application of these measures.
- The proposed development will not affect the maintenance or prevent or delay the restoration of favourable conservation condition of conservation objectives for the Inner Galway Bay SPA (SITE CODE - 004031) and the Galway Bay Complex SAC (SITE CODE - 000268).