Inspector's Report ABP-322037-25

Development	Proposed rehabilitation works on Park Road Bridge, Limerick
Location	Park Road Bridge, between Canal Bank and Lower Park Road, Limerick.
Local Authority	Limerick City and County Council
Type of Application	Application for approval made under Section 177(AE) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (local authority development requiring appropriate assessment)
Prescribed Bodies	Inland Fisheries Ireland Development Applications Unit on behalf of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Observer(s)	Cáit Ní Cheallacháin
Date of Site Inspection	7th July 2025
Inspector	Alaine Clarke

Contents

1.0 Introduction 3

2.0 Proposed Development 3

3.0 Accompanying documents 5

4.0 Site and Location 5

5.0 Planning History 6

6.0 Legislative and Policy Context 7

7.0 The Natura Impact Statement 10

8.0 Consultations 10

9.0 Further Information Request 14

10.0 EIA Screening 17

11.0 Assessment 18

12.0 Recommendation 29

13.0 Reasons and Considerations 29

Appendix 1: Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening 36

Appendix 2: Screening for WFD Assessment 38

Appendix 3: AA Screening Determination: Test for likely significant effects 42

Appendix 4: Appropriate Assessment 50

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Limerick City and County Council is seeking approval from An Coimisiún Pleanála to undertake rehabilitation works at Park Road Bridge which is within the Lower River Shannon SAC, a designated European site, while the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is located ca. 2km downstream of the site. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and application under Section 177AE was lodged by the Local Authority on the basis of the proposed development's likely significant effect on a European site.

1.2. Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that where an appropriate assessment is required in respect of development by a local authority, the authority shall prepare a NIS and the development shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved the development with or without modifications. Furthermore, Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that the appropriate assessment shall include a determination by the Commission as to whether or not the proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site and the appropriate assessment shall be carried out by the Commission before consent is given for the proposed development.

2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. The proposed development comprises rehabilitation works on Park Road Bridge, between Canal Bank and Lower Park Road, Limerick. The proposed works consist of:

- Removal of the bridge deck and support beams and replacing them with a new deck and beams at the same location;
- All associated site development works.

2.2. A structural inspection identified heavy corrosion of the structural steel beams to the soffit of the bridge deck. It is proposed to remove the existing bridge deck, while retaining the existing parapet and spandrel walls, and replace the deck with a precast beam solution. It is stated that the stone structures (arch, spandrel walls, parapet, wing walls and abutments) of the bridge are intact and will not need repairs.

There are two watermains crossing the bridge, 1 no. 3" cast iron pipe and 1 no. 9" asbestos pipe. These pipes will be temporarily diverted. Once works are complete the pipes will be reattached to the bridge.

2.3. In order to repair the bridge, the corroded steel will have to be replaced. This will involve removing the road surface above, the concrete that makes up the deck and the corroded steel itself. Once the damaged sections are removed, a new deck will be put in place and a new road surface will be laid.

2.4. The process will be as follows:

- A site compound will be set up and the works area fenced off.
- The old road surface will be removed by digger and loaded into trucks for removal from the area.
- Once the road surface is removed the old steel that makes up the bridge deck will be removed.
- Once all the old damaged structures are removed the new deck can be put into place.
- The precast MY beams will be lowered and concrete pour will fix them in place and create the surface for the road.
- A tarmacadam road surface 100mm thick will be laid.
- The water mains pipes will be re-attached to the underside of the bridge.

2.5. The proposed works will be undertaken during low level water periods. The timing of the works is stated will be in accordance with the requirements of IFI in 'Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries During Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters".

2.6. According to the Outline Construction and Environmental Plan (CEMP), a crash deck is proposed to be constructed below the bridge deck, extending 1.5m either site of the spandrel walls, to capture any falling debris.

2.7. A "possible" site compound is indicated ca. 100m to the south of the site.

2.8. The Outline CEMP indicates that a detailed Temporary Traffic Management Plan will be prepared and submitted to the local authority for approval and a full road closure for the duration of the works will be required.

3.0 Accompanying documents

3.1. This application for approval is accompanied by the following documents:

- NIS, which includes the AA Screening Report;
- An Outline CEMP;
- Drawings, including sections;
- A copy of the public notices, both newspaper and site notice;
- A list of prescribed bodies that were consulted;
- Cover letter.

4.0 Site and Location

4.1. The site lies to the east of Limerick city centre along a canal and relates to Park Road Bridge which is located west of an existing railway bridge and east of Pa Healy Road which traverses the canal to the west of the site. The canal is no longer navigable due to the presence of a weir located directly beneath Park Road Bridge.

4.2. Park Road Bridge is located within the Lower River Shannon SAC which is a designated European site. The River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is located ca. 2km downstream of the site.

4.3. The bridge spans 5.5m and carries the local road, L10161 (Park Road) over the Limerick City Canal. Park Road Bridge is a single span masonry arch structure which was constructed c 1760. The bridge is narrow – measuring 2.2m and allows only a single vehicle to cross in either direction at any one time, controlled by traffic lights on both sides. The bridge provides a shared crossing for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular traffic. There is a narrow substandard footpath on one side.

4.4. A lock, referenced as ‘Park Lock’ on historic maps, is located immediately to the west of the Park Road Bridge. Modern hard landscaped features are installed either side of the lock. A concrete wall is constructed underneath the bridge which has the effect of controlling water flow to the west and preventing navigation.

4.5. Lower Park Road runs along the north side of the canal and travels underneath the railway bridge to the east. It has a narrow carriageway and no footpaths. It currently

accommodates two-way traffic, pedestrians and cyclists. It provides access to property, including one house on the north side of the canal.

4.6. South Canal Bank travels along the south of the canal. It accommodates one-way traffic travelling west to east and accommodates a shared pedestrian/cycleway which forms part of a 3.25km walkway/cycleway from Limerick city to the University of Limerick, which passes underneath the southern span of the railway bridge to the east.

4.7. A modern landscaped platform sits in front of the western abutments, and the open spaces adjoining the lock have been redeveloped with paved surfaces forming a public amenity area.

4.8. Although located within the urban area, the local area is semi-rural in character dominated by the vegetated canal corridor and the walkways connecting the city to the west and the University of Limerick to the east. The area is surrounded by residential property to the north and south. There are a number of commercial properties further south and a substantial brownfield site to the south west, located between Park Road and Pa Healy road.

4.9. Neither the bridge nor the lock to the east are protected structures. They are not listed on the NIAH and there are no recorded archaeological monuments in the vicinity of the site.

5.0 Planning History

On the site:

- **ABP-309360**: Approval granted for a proposed new bridge development between South Canal Bank and Lower Park Road, Limerick. Development has not yet commenced. As part of this development, the Park Road Bridge would provide a dedicated pedestrian/cycle route with local vehicular traffic only.
- **19/8002** – Part 8 consent for a new two-way vehicular bridge 140 metres east of the existing Park Road Bridge, approved 22.09.2020. The existing bridge would revert to a pedestrian and cycle bridge only.

- **LCCC Ref. 2560704** – Waterways Ireland granted permission for Limerick Navigation and Park Canal 5-year Maintenance Works along the Abbey River and Shannon River Navigation from Quay Lock to Ardnacrusha Tail Race junction and the Park Canal which consists of essential maintenance works along the Shannon Navigation and Park Canal, including in relation to the Park Canal.

  In respect of the Park Canal, works comprise:

  - maintenance of overgrown vegetation impacting and overgrowing the water portion of the Park Canal, aquatic weed management as required, and removal of debris and litter.
  - Maintenance of the south back drain associated with the Park Canal.
  - Removal of vegetation impacting Park Canal structures and undertaking necessary physical minor repairs to Park Road Bridge and associated canal or lock wing and quay walls.

<u>In the area:</u>

- PL 30. JP0027: the Commission approved (in 2015) a shared 3m wide cycle/pedestrian path and 1.25m of raised boardwalk to the northeast along the banks of the River Shannon from the University of Limerick Boathouse to Guinness Bridge which included 3 no. new footbridges and the widening of a fourth.
- ABP-313205 To the immediate south west of the site,: permission was refused for a strategic housing development for a number of reasons including that ACP was not satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC and the River Fergus Estuaries SPA.

6.0 Legislative and Policy Context

6.1. Relevant legislative provisions

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC): This Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union.

Article 6(3) and 6(4) require an appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of a proposed development on its own and in combination with other plans and projects which may have an effect on a European Site (SAC or SPA).

European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011: These Regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in CJEU judgements. The Regulations in particular require in Reg 42(21) that where an appropriate assessment has already been carried out by a 'first' public authority for the same project (under a separate code of legislation) then a 'second' public authority considering that project for appropriate assessment under its own code of legislation is required to take account of the appropriate assessment of the first authority.

National nature conservation designations: The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the National Parks and Wildlife Service are responsible for the designation of conservation sites throughout the country. The three main types of designation are Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and the latter two form part of the European Natura 2000 Network.

European sites located in proximity to the subject site include:

- Lower River Shannon SAC
- River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA

Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended): Part XAB of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2017 sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments which could have an effect on a European site or its conservation objectives.

- 177(AE) sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments carried out by or on behalf of local authorities.
- Section 177(AE) (1) requires a local authority to prepare, or cause to be prepared, a Natura impact statement in respect of the proposed development.

- Section 177(AE) (2) states that a proposed development in respect of which an appropriate assessment is required shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it with or without modifications.
- Section 177(AE) (3) states that where a Natura impact assessment has been prepared pursuant to subsection (1), the local authority shall apply to the Commission for approval and the provisions of Part XAB shall apply to the carrying out of the appropriate assessment.
- Section 177(V) (3) states that a competent authority shall give consent for a proposed development only after having determined that the proposed development shall not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.
- Section 177AE (6) (a) states that before making a decision in respect of a proposed development the Commission shall consider the NIS, any submissions or observations received and any other information relating to:
    - The likely effects on the environment.
    - The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
    - The likely significant effects on a European site.

6.2. **Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028**

- There are no specific polices in the Limerick Development Plan with regard to works to bridges.
- The Park Canal bridge is indicated as an ‘indicative cycleway/walkway in Map 6 of the Limerick City and Suburbs Transport Map
- Chapter 6 deals with ‘Environment, Heritage, Landscape and Green Infrastructure’ and includes policies and objectives for the protection of the natural heritage and European Sites (e.g., EH O1) where the protection of the ecological status of designated site is required.
    - Objective EH O2 requires an ecological impact assessment to be submitted for development in area where there may be Lesser Horseshoe Bats.

- Objective EH O11 requires the submission of a control and management program for the particular invasive species as part of the planning process, if developments are proposed on sites where invasive species are present.

- Chapter 7 deals with 'Sustainable Mobility and Transport', and includes:
  - Policy TR P11 Road Safety and Carrying Capacity of the non-national Road Network; It is a policy of the Council to safeguard the carrying capacity and safety of the non-national road network throughout Limerick (as varied by Variation No.1).
  - Objective TR O38: Improvements to Regional and Local Roads; It is an objective of the Council to provide for and carry out sustainable improvements to sections of regional roads and local roads, that are deficient in respect of alignment, structural condition, or capacity, where resources permit and to maintain that standard thereafter.

7.0 The Natura Impact Statement

7.1. Limerick City and County Council's application for the proposed development was accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS), prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions Ltd, which scientifically examined the proposed development and the European sites. The NIS identified and characterised the possible implications of the proposed development on the European sites, in view of the site's conservation objectives, and provided information to enable the Commission to carry out an appropriate assessment of the proposed works. A screening determination forms part of the NIS.

7.2. Following a request for further information an addendum to the NIS, prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions Ltd, was submitted.

8.0 Consultations

8.1. Consultees Circulated

8.1.1. The application was circulated to the following bodies:

- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- OPW
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Waterways Ireland
- The Heritage Council
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- An Taisce

8.1.2. Following a request for further information Uisce Eireann were consulted. It is proposed to temporarily divert 2 no. Uisce Eireann assets mains water as part of the proposed development. The consultation response forms part of the response to the request for further information.

8.2. Responses Received from Consultees

8.2.1. Development Applications Unit (DAU) on behalf of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Archaeology (Underwater Unit)

- The proposed development area may be considered an area of high underwater cultural heritage potential, as evidenced by it incorporating canal and related structures and features (e.g. historic weirs, revetments), artefact-bearing alluvial deposits and other structures and features.
- Refers to the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987 and the Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage policy.
- Requests that an Underwater Archaeological Impact Assessment is carried out to include:
    - a desk-based assessment,
    - a field/boat based survey and visual inspection of canal banks, structures, canal bed and other waterbodies, and

- a detailed Archaeological Impact Statement.

- No construction works shall be undertaken until formal approval in writing from the Department has been received by the Developer.

Nature Conservation

- Insufficient information to determine that the proposed rehabilitation works, with the described mitigation, will not adversely affect the integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC.
- References an EIAR submitted for a nearby development which recorded **otter** activity in the area. It would be important to establish the level of usage of the site by otters. Refers to site clearance works which is referenced in the cover letter only. Recommends a detailed otter survey is carried out over a distance of 200m on sides of the bridge, including where vegetation is proposed to be removed. The report should address the potential impacts on the local otter population. If breeding or resting site for otter are found, a regulation 54 derogation licence must be obtained.
- The use of a scaffolding crash deck to collect solid debris would not appear to mitigate against the risk to **water quality** from freshly poured concrete during the curing process, entering the canal.
- A **protected plant species**, Opposite-leaved Pondweed Groenlandia densa, has been recorded in the canal. As the supports for the crash deck will be placed within the canal and with potential for instream vegetation clearance, it is recommended that a specific survey for Groenlandia densa is carried out for a distance of 20m upstream and downstream of the bridge. If it is found to be present, a section 21 licence must be obtained.
- A satellite Lesser Horseshoe roost is located a short distance to the west of the bridge, and have previously been recorded along the canal. Removal of vegetation is of concern, as there is the potential for increased light spill which may affect Lesser Horseshoes and other bats. Requests that an **Ecological Impact Assessment** is undertaken to include the likely effects of the proposed vegetation removal and any resulting increase in lighting. Mitigation measures should also be proposed.
- Any changes to mitigation measures or methodology proposed as a result of additional surveys undertaken should be incorporated into the final detailed

CEMP. Strongly recommends that any required licences are in place before the CEMP is finalised.

8.2.2. **Inland fisheries Ireland (IFI)**

In summary, the following points are made:

- No objection in principle;
- Main concern is in relation to the protection of the instream and riparian habitats.
- The canal is used extensively by local and youth-angling clubs.
- Protection of water quality is key.
- Recommendations in the NIS and CEMP shall be carried out.
- An Ecological ECOW shall be appointed.
- IFI shall be consulted on the final contractor CEMP.

8.3. Public Submissions

8.3.1. One submission was received from Cáit Ní Cheallacháin. In summary, she states:

- No mention of the history of the bridge – part of the Park canal project in the 1750's, citing Ferrar's History of Limerick from 1787. The Park Road Bridge was in the centre of the double length of canal between the Lock Mills and the Shannon.
- The bridge should be a protected structure.
- Inappropriate pointing on the bridge, attaches photos to illustrate.
- The superstructure of the bridge should be included in the works.
- Condition be added that the sand and cement pointing be removed and replaced with lime.

8.4. Response of Applicant to Submissions

8.4.1. A response to the submissions was requested as part of the request for further information, and the response is dealt with in Section 9.0 of this report.

9.0 Further Information Request

9.1. Further Information Sought

9.1.1. Further information was sought (July 2025) in respect of:

1) Information to address section 177AE(6)(a)
2) Responses to submissions, including the concerns raised by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in respect of underwater archaeology and nature conservation;
3) In-combination effects
4) Description of works
5) Correct test for NIS.
6) NIS addendum which assesses all qualifying interests for the Lower River Shannon SAC.
7) Additional consultation with Uisce Éireann.

9.2. Response to Request

9.2.1. A response to the request for further information was received on 20th October 2025.

The response includes:

- Mizen Archaeology and Ecology Research & Solutions Ltd Report;
- An addendum to the NIS, prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions;
- Additional drawings;
- Correspondence with Uisce Éireann.

9.2.2. The response was considered to contain significant further information and the applicant was requested to publish notice that significant information was submitted to the Commission, advising that submissions or observation in relation to same can be made, and to submit a copy of the notice. A copy of the notice was received on 4th December 2025.

9.3. Response of Applicant to Submissions

9.3.1. The applicant ‘s response to the items raised by the DAU can be found in the underwater archaeological assessment prepared by Mizen Archaeology and in the NIS Addendum.

With respect to underwater archaeology:

- The assessment was conducted from the bank, as entering the water would have posed health and safety risks due to stagnant water conditions and the presence of a debris trap beneath the bridge.
- Overgrown vegetation restricted visibility of parts of the bridge.
- The historical context of the site and Limerick are set out, as is detail on the Limerick navigation and Park Canal. Constructed during the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Park Canal served as an inland extension of Limerick’s commercial docks, enabling lighter craft to bypass tidal waters and navigate inland. From the 1850s, the Park Canal continued to function as a harbour approach to the city and was used for the mooring and maintenance of barges, though navigation traffic gradually lessened due to siltation and reduced draught. The Park Road bridge represents an important surviving component of Limerick’s 18th-century industrial infrastructure.
- The current proposal involves refurbishment and stabilisation of the existing bridge structure, with no direct impact on the adjacent lock chamber or canal walls, which will be preserved in situ. The planned works are limited in scope.
- No archaeological material earlier than the canal construction is expected to be uncovered, as the proposed works relate entirely to the refurbishment and stabilisation of the existing bridge. The archaeological potential of the site is therefore limited, and no subsurface excavation or ground disturbance is proposed.
- No archaeological material earlier than the canal construction is expected to be uncovered, as the proposed works relate entirely to the refurbishment and stabilisation of the existing bridge. No subsurface or ground disturbance is proposed.

- Mitigation measures are set out.

9.3.2. With respect to Nature Conservation:

- Otters:

  Otter surveys were carried out in July 2025, by ecologists, including in the water by kayak. A larger area than requested was surveyed. There were no signs of otter within the immediate vicinity of the bridge, nor further upstream or downstream. The area directly around the bridge appears somewhat unsuitable for otters. There are no potential impacts that could affect otters in the immediate area.

- Water Quality:

  Additional mitigation measures are proposed to ensure no cementitious runoff enters the canal to include containment of concrete works and rainfall protection.

- Protected Plant Species:

  Due to safety concerns, surveying was undertaken from a kayak. An extended area was surveyed. No presence of the plant, Groenlandia densa, was detected. Invasive species, was however, noted in abundance. Mitigation measures in respect of invasive species are detailed.

- Bats:

  An emergence and activity survey was carried out in July 2025. No bats were observed emerging from any structures within the bridge. Four bat species were encountered during the survey. No lesser horseshoe bats were encountered during the surveys. Any vegetation to be removed is minimal. This minor vegetation removal will have no bearing on the overall light regime on the canal, whatever bats use the area as it is, will continue to do so if some vegetation is removed. Precautionary measures are proposed.

9.3.3. The applicant's response to the items raised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) are summarised as:

- The project will include an Ecology Clerk of Works to supervise the construction phase of the project

- The Contractor's Method Statement for the execution of the Works will be agreed with the IFI in advance of mobilizing to site.

9.3.4. The applicant 's response to the items raised by Cáit Ní Cheallacháin are summarised as:

- The spandrel and parapet walls of the bridge will be repointed with NHL lime mortar - updated drawings refer.
- Where existing cement mortar is readily removeable, it will be replaced with NHL lime mortar. In situations where its removal would damage surrounding stonework, it will be left in place so as not to adversely affect the aesthetic of the bridge further.

9.3.5. The correspondence from Uisce Éireann indicates that the diversions query has been registered with the Connections and Developer Services Department.

9.4. **Consultation on Further Information**

9.4.1. One submission from was received from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DAU) respect of the further information, and is summarised below:

- Park Road Bridge, adjacent lock and canal are significant cultural heritage assets, representing an important surviving component of Limerick's 18th Century industrial infrastructure; the development area may be considered an area of high underwater cultural heritage potential.
- Notes the suite of mitigation measures proposed and recommends conditions in the event of a grant of permission.

10.0 **EIA Screening**

10.1. The proposed development is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or Part V of the 1994 Roads Regulations). No mandatory requirement for EIA therefore arises and there is also no requirement for a screening determination. Refer to Form 1 in Appendix 1 of report.

11.0 Assessment

11.1. The assessment will be undertaken in three parts as per the requirements of Section 177AE as follows:

- The likely effects on the environment.
- The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- The likely significant effects on a European site.

11.2. **The likely effects on the environment**

Cultural Heritage

11.2.1. Park Road Bridge is a single span masonry arch structure which was constructed ca.1760. It carries a local road over the Park Canal. A lock, referenced as 'Park Lock' on historic maps, is located immediately to the west of the Park Road Bridge, with towpaths extending along both canal banks. The canal forms part of the late 18th Century navigation system linking the River Shannon to the River Abbey. The further information submitted by the applicant indicated that the bridge originally had a humped-back bridge, but this was removed in 1960 with the introduction of a flat concrete deck supported on steel beams.

11.2.2. The archaeological report prepared by Mizen Archaeology submitted as part of the response to further information, states that the "surviving fabric of the Park Canal represents a prominent and well-preserved element of Limerick's industrial and infrastructural heritage. The canal, including the lock and bridge at Park Road retain their eighteenth-century masonry character and continue to illustrate the engineering achievement of the Limerick Navigation…".

11.2.3. There are no protected structures on the subject site. The site is not located within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and there are no Recorded Monuments on the site and the site is not located within a Zone of Archaeological Potential. The bridge is not included in the NIAH survey.

11.2.4. The DAU Archaeology (Underwater Unit) consider that the proposed development may be considered an area of high underwater cultural heritage potential, as

evidenced by it incorporating canal and related structures and features (e.g. historic weirs, revetments), artefact-bearing alluvial deposits and other structures and features. The DAU requested an Underwater Archaeological Impact Assessment to include a desk-based assessment, a field/boat-based survey and visual inspection of canal banks, structures, canal bed and other waterbodies, and a detailed Archaeological Impact Statement.

11.2.5. The submission from Cáit Ní Cheallacháin raises concern that there is no mention of the history of the bridge and considers the bridge should be a protected structure. She states that there is inappropriate pointing on the bridge and considers the superstructure of the bridge should be included in the works. She considers that a condition be added that the sand and cement pointing be removed and replaced with lime.

11.2.6. In response to the submissions, the applicant submitted the Mizen Archaeology Report which sets out the historic context and history of the canal infrastructure and the Park Road Bridge. The assessment was conducted from the bank due to health and safety risks, and it was noted that overgrown vegetation restricted visibility of parts of the bridge. The report notes that the archaeological potential of the site is limited as no subsurface excavation or ground disturbance is proposed. The current proposal involves refurbishment and stabilisation of the existing bridge structure, with no direct impact on the adjacent lock chamber or canal walls, which will be preserved in-situ. Section 8 of the report sets out mitigation measures, including:

- Photographic and documentation recording.
- Repointing and masonry repairs to be undertaken by qualified personnel.
- Mortar analysis with repointing to match the historic fabric in texture, colour, and finish.
- All stone repairs shall use matching local limestone, with replacement or repair confined to areas of demonstrable structural need.
- The removal of pipework affixed to the bridge will improve the bridge's visual and heritage integrity.

11.2.7. While I note that old pipes will be removed from the bridge, the NIS states (section 1.2) that once works are complete the pipes will be re-attached to the bridge. The

CEMP does not refer to removal or reinstatement of pipes. I consider it appropriate that a method statement is prepared in respect of the pipe work in consultation with the appointed Ecological Clerk of Works and with either a qualified archaeologist or conservation architect, and a condition is included in the Schedule of Conditions below for the Commission's consideration.

11.2.8. Updated drawings were submitted as part of the response to the further information request to address the concerns raised by Cáit Ní Cheallacháin. The spandrel and parapet walls of the bridge will be repointed with NHL lime mortar and existing readily removable cement mortar will be replaced with lime mortar where possible.

11.2.9. I note the Mizen Archaeology report which states that no archaeological material earlier than the canal construction is expected to be uncovered, as the proposed works relate entirely to the refurbishment and stabilisation of the existing bridge. The most recent observation from the DAU (Archaeology, Underwater Unit) acknowledges the suite of mitigation measures proposed, including archaeological monitoring and conservation interventions and recommends that archaeological conditions are attached in the event of a grant of permission. These conditions are included in the Schedule below for the Commission's consideration.

11.2.10. I am satisfied that the planned works are limited in scope. I am satisfied that the overall cultural heritage impact is minor and beneficial and I concur with the applicant that, subject to mitigation measures set out in section 8 of the Mizen Archaeology Report, the works will contribute to the long-term preservation of one of Limerick's most significant surviving industrial heritage features.

Biodiversity

11.2.11. The application is supported by a NIS and NIS addendum prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions Ltd. The NIS was informed by desk-based research, a site survey, and supplemented by an otter survey, an invasive plant species survey and a bat survey which were undertaken in July 2025.

11.2.12. Park Road Bridge is located within the Lower River Shannon SAC which is a designated European site. The River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA is located ca. 2km downstream and west of the site and the proposed Natural Heritage Area, Fergus Estuary and Inner Shannon, North Shore, is located ca. 1.2km downstream and west of the site.

11.2.13. The submission from the DAU raises concerns in relation to nature conservation and to what it considered was insufficient information regarding affects to the Lower River Shannon SAC. It recommended a detailed otter survey, which is a Qualifying Interest (QI) of the SAC, and a survey of Opposite-leaved Pondweed Groenlandia densa, a high conservation value sub-type of the QI Habitat Water courses of plain to montane levels has been recorded in the canal. Concern was raised with respect to the risk to water quality from freshly poured concrete and increased light spill from removal of vegetation which may affect bats. The DAU requested that an Ecological Impact Assessment is undertaken to assess impact on Lesser Horseshoe bats. This is considered further at section 11.2.20 of this Inspector's Report.

11.2.14. The IFI has no objection in principle to the proposed development. The IFI's main concern is in relation to the protection of the instream and riparian habitats and requested that it is consulted on the final CEMP. A condition to this effect is included for the Commission's consideration.

11.2.15. As stated above, section 5.0 Planning History, Waterways Ireland has been granted permission for Limerick Navigation and Park Canal 5-year Maintenance Works. The applicant advised in response to a request for further information that consultation will be undertaken with Waterways Ireland to ensure works are coordinated. A condition to this effect in included for the Commission's consideration.

Otters

11.2.16. Otter surveys were carried out following guidelines from both national and EU-level best practise. According to the NIS:

- A larger area than requested was surveyed.
- There were no signs of otter within the immediate vicinity of the bridge, nor further upstream or downstream.
- The area directly around the bridge appears somewhat unsuitable for otter.
- The NIS concluded that there are no otter potential impacts.

11.2.17. I am satisfied having regard to the documentation on file, including the results of the otter survey and the Appropriate Assessment undertaken at Appendix 4 to this Inspector's Report, that there is no likely effect on otters. I am satisfied that adverse

effects on site integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165) can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of this site, which includes otter, and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects.

Opposite-leaved Pondweed Groenlandia densa

11.2.18. A survey of Groenlandia densa from the canal bank was conducted due to difficulty with access. A significantly wider area was surveyed than requested by the DAU. No presence of the plant was detected during the survey. The NIS indicated that conditions at the bridge may not favour the plant which prefers slow-moving to almost still waters and that the existing sluice at the bridge accelerates the flow rate almost immediately downstream of the bridge. I am satisfied that there will be no negative effect on Groenlandia densa given its absence in the extended survey of the canal.

Invasive Species

11.2.19. The invasive species Elodea nuttallii (Nuttall's waterweed) and Nymphoides peltata (Fringed water-lily) were found in abundance in the canal. Both are regulated invasive plants in Ireland. Section 5.4 of the NIS Addendum sets out mitigation measures to prevent off-site spread of these species and includes pre-works biosecurity briefing, equipment cleaning protocols and sign-off by an appointed Ecological Clerk of Works. Having regard to the mitigation measures, I am satisfied that the proposed development is acceptable from a bio-security perspective.

Bats

11.2.20. In response to the request for further information, the applicant advises that an emergence and activity survey was carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines, using 3 surveyors and bat detector equipment. A static detector was left in-situ for a week. No bats were observed emerging from any structures within the bridge. 4 bat species were recorded: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, leisler's bat and daubenton's bat. No lesser horseshoe bats were encountered during the surveys.

11.2.21. The DAU submission raised concern about potential light spill from the removal of vegetation around the bridge with potential to impact on the flight corridor of bats. According to the NIS, any vegetation to be removed is minimal. The western

bank, closest to the known roost, is already unshaded and exposed to streetlight spill. Section 6.4 of the NIS sets out the mitigation measures and include:

- Lighting control: there will be no construction lighting at night or if works occur during winter, bats will be hibernating.
- Vegetation removal will be restricted to the single identified tree on the east bank.
- No additional clearance will be undertaken without prior ecological review.
- The potential for shielding or directional adjustment of the existing streetlamp to the north of the bridge will be discussed with the local authority to further reduce light spill onto the canal corridor

11.2.22. Having regard to bat surveys which showed no bats emerging from the bridge and the fact that no bat roosts were recorded in the section of canal between Park Road Bridge and the bridge to the west, or anywhere else surveyed, I concur with the NIS that the removal of one tree on the eastern bank will result in little or no additional impact on the use of the canal corridor by bats and that overall, subject to the mitigation measures proposed, that the proposed development will not have a significant effect on bats in the vicinity.

Water Quality

11.2.23. Concern was raised by the DAU that the use of a scaffold crash deck would not prevent runoff from freshly poured concrete into the canal. Additional measures are proposed to prevent cementitious runoff or alkaline leachate entering the canal. These are set out section 4.1 of the NIS Addendum and relate to containment of concrete works, rainfall protection, runoff capture and treatment, monitoring and oversight and emergency measures, such as spill kits.

11.2.24. Appendix 2 to this Inspector's Report contains a screening for a Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment. I have assessed the proposed bridge rehabilitation works 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 and 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. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- Nature of works i.e. the small scale and nature of the development;
- Best practice construction methodologies (included as part of the development proposal).

11.2.25. I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment.

11.2.26. Having regard to the enhanced mitigation measures to prevent a deleterious impact on water quality, I am satisfied that the proposed development will not have a negative impact on water quality.

Traffic and Access

11.2.27. The purpose of the project is to safeguard the bridge structure. A bridge inspection in 2023 concluded that damage was critical, and that it "is necessary to execute repair works at once". The outline CEMP states that a full road closure for the duration of the works will be required to safely execute the works and that a detailed Temporary Traffic Management Plan for the project in accordance with Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual, which will be submitted to the client for approval. While this diversion will result in an inconvenience, given that the nature of the works will be temporary and short term, I am satisfied that there will be no significant or long-term impacts arising. In this regard, I am satisfied that the proposed works are acceptable in terms of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Visual Amenity

11.2.28. Having regard to the nature and extent of proposed works, I am satisfied that the proposed works to Park Road Bridge will improve the visual amenity of the bridge and will therefore have a positive impact on the surrounding area. Given the

nature of the works and the landscape of the surrounding lands I am satisfied that significant visual impacts will not arise.

Flood Risk

11.2.29. As highlighted by the applicant (and noted on the OPW flood risk mapping website floodinfo.ie) part of the existing bridge is located with a designated flood zone, both coastal and river. Having regard to the nature of the proposed development, whereby the existing bridge deck is being replaced and no new structures are being constructed, it is considered that the proposed development would not increase the risk of flooding at the site or elsewhere.

Conclusion

11.2.30. The applicant advised in response to a request for further information that consultation will be undertaken with Waterways Ireland to ensure works permitted under LCCC planning ref. ref. 2560704 for a maintenance programme along Limerick Navigation and Park Canal are coordinated. A condition to this effect in included for the Commission's consideration.

11.2.31. The CEMP does not refer to removal or reinstatement of pipes attached to the bridge. I consider it appropriate that a method statement is prepared and forms part of the CEMP in respect of the pipe work in consultation with the appointed Ecological Clerk of Works and with either a qualified archaeologist or conservation architect. A condition to this effect is included for the Commission's consideration.

11.2.32. The IFI has requested that it is consulted on the final CEMP. The applicant stated in response that the Contractor's Method Statement of the Works will be agreed with the IFI in advance of mobilising to site; a condition to this effect is included for the Commission's consideration.

11.2.33. Having regard to the documentation submitted and a site visit, and having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development, I am satisfied that the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the environment.

11.3. **The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area**

11.3.1. The proposal relates to rehabilitation works on Park Road Bridge, Limerick. The proposed works consist of the removal of the bridge deck and support beams and replacing them with a new deck and beams at the same location. Diversion and re-attachment of utility pipes crossing the bridge and some limited vegetation clearance, including a tree along the eastern bank and ivy on the bridge structure.

11.3.2. The supporting documentation states that a bridge inspection report was carried out by Punch Consulting Engineers in 2023, which describes the condition of the bridge structure. The report notes areas of deterioration and damage. The assessment concludes that the condition rating of 4; “Damage is critical, and it is necessary to execute repair works at once” and recommends that remedial works must be carried out.

11.3.3. Relevant policies and objectives of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028 which support the proposed works include:

- Policy TR P11 - It is a policy of the Council to safeguard the carrying capacity and safety of the non-national road network throughout Limerick;
- Objective TR O38: It is an objective of the Council to provide for and carry out sustainable improvements to sections of regional roads and local roads…

11.3.4. The upgrade and maintenance of bridges and roads is an important function of the local authority. Having regard to the nature and scale of the works, I consider the principle of development acceptable.

11.4. **The Likely Significant Effects on a European Site**

11.4.1. The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

- Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive
- The Natura Impact Statement
- Appropriate Assessment

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

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

11.4.4. **The Natura Impact Statement**

11.4.5. The application was accompanied by a NIS and NIS Addendum, prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions Ltd, which describes the proposed development, the project site and the surrounding area. The NIS and Addendum contained a Stage 1 Screening Assessment which concluded that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was required in respect of Lower Shannon SAC (site code 002165). The NIS outlines the methodology used for assessing potential impacts on the habitats and species within the Lower Shannon SAC that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. It predicts the potential impacts for these sites and their conservation objectives, it suggests mitigation measures, assesses in-combination effects with other plans and projects and it identifies any residual effects on the European sites and their conservation objectives.

11.4.6. The NIS and Addendum were informed by the following studies, surveys and consultations:

- A desk top study
- A site survey
- Otter survey
- Bat survey
- Invasive species survey.

11.4.7. The NIS Addendum concluded that, subject to implementation of the mitigation measures set out in this Addendum, it is concluded that the proposed works will not result in adverse effects on the integrity of any European site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, in accordance with the requirements of the

Habitats Directive and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended).

11.4.8. Having reviewed the NIS and Addendum to the NIS and the supporting documentation, I am satisfied that it provides adequate information in respect of the baseline conditions, clearly identifies the potential impacts, and uses best scientific information and knowledge. Details of mitigation measures are summarised in Section 6.2 of the NIS and section 6.4 of the NIS Addendum. I am satisfied that the information is sufficient to allow for appropriate assessment of the proposed development (see further analysis below).

11.5. Appropriate Assessment (AA)

11.6. Appropriate Assessment Conclusion: Integrity Test

11.6.1. Appendix 3 to this Inspector's Report contains the AA Screening, Appendix 4 contains the AA itself.

11.6.2. In screening the need for Appropriate Assessment, it was determined that the proposed development could result in significant effects on the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165) in view of the conservation objectives of that site and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of 177AE was required.

11.6.3. Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS, the NIS Addendum and all associated material submitted, and taking into account observations on nature conservation, I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165) can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of this site and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects. My conclusion is based on the following:

- Detailed assessment of construction impacts.
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed.
- Application of planning conditions to ensure application of these measures.
- The proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives for the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165).

12.0 Recommendation

12.1. 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 NIS.

13.0 Reasons and Considerations

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

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

(a) the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),

(b) the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended,

(c) 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 a European Site,

(d) the conservation objectives, qualifying interests and special conservation interests for the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165),

(e) the policies and objectives of the Limerick Development Plan, 2022-2028,

(f) the nature and extent of the proposed works as set out in the application for approval,

(g) the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and NIS Addendum,

(h) the submissions and observations received in relation to the proposed development, and

(i) the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Commission to make a report and recommendation on the matter

Appropriate Assessment

The Commission agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's Report that the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165) is the only European Site in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and Addendum 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 Site, namely the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165), 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 Site.

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 Site, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development/Likely effects on the environment

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not have significant negative effects on the environment in the vicinity, would not give rise to a risk of pollution, would not be detrimental to the visual or landscape amenities of the area, would not adversely impact on the cultural, archaeological and built heritage of the area and would not interfere with traffic and pedestrian safety. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Conditions

1.	The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, and additional plans and particulars submitted on 7th March 2025, 13th October 2025 and 4th December 2025 except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where any mitigation measures set out in the Natura Impact Statement and Addendum Natura Impact Statement or 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 mitigation and monitoring measures identified in the plans and particulars, including the Natura Impact Statement and Addendum

	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.
3.	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.
4.	Prior to the commencement of development, the local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the project ecologist and relevant statutory agencies, including the IFI and Waterways Ireland, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), incorporating all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and the Natura Impact Statement Addendum and demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The CEMP shall include: a. all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and the Natura Impact Statement Addendum, b. a method statement to detach and re-attach pipes on the bridge in consultation with the appointed Ecological Clerk of Works and with either a qualified archaeologist or conservation architect,

	c. details of programming of works having regard to Waterways Ireland maintenance works permitted under Limerick City and County planning reg. ref. 2560704, d. a Traffic Management Plan, e. the location of any and all archaeological or cultural heritage constraints relevant to the proposed development as set out in the Underwater Archaeological Impact Assessment (Mizen Archaeology, Sept 2025) 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. f. Specific proposals as to how the measures outlined in the CEMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness, **Reason**: In the interest of protecting the environment and the European Site.
5.	The following nature conservation requirements shall be complied with: a. The works shall be carried out in compliance with the Inland Fisheries Ireland document, Guidelines on protection of fisheries during construction works in and adjacent to waters. b. No vegetation removal shall take place during the period of the 1st day of March to the 31st day of August (inclusive) without the written approval of the Ecological Clerk of Works. Such approval shall be placed on the public file. c. Prior to the commencement of development, pre-commencement surveys for protected plant and animal species shall be undertaken at the site, and where required, the appropriate licence to disturb or interfere with same shall

	be obtained from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The details of such surveys and licences (if required) shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record. **Reason**: In the interests of biodiversity and nature conservation.
6.	The Local Authority 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) All mitigation measures in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage as set out in Section 8 of the Underwater Archaeological Impact Assessment (Mizen Archaeology Ltd; date September 2025) shall be implemented in full, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the conditions of this Order. b) The planning authority and the Department 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.

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.

Alaine Clarke
Senior Planning Inspector
24th March 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	ABP-322037-25
Proposed Development Summary	Proposed rehabilitation works on Park Road Bridge, Limerick. The proposed works consist of the removal of the bridge deck and support beams and replacing them with a new deck and beams at the same location. Further detail in section 2.0 of the Inspector's Report.
Development Address	Park Bridge, between Canal Bank and Lower Park Road, Limerick.
	In all cases check box /or leave blank
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means: The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2. ☐ No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. **EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.**	
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	

☒ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. **No Screening required.**	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. **EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required**	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. **Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)** **OR** **If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)**	

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?	
Yes ☐	
No ☒	**Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)**

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2: Screening for WFD Impact Assessment

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	ABP-3220137-25	**Townland, address**	Park Road Bridge, between Canal Bank and Lower Park Road, Limerick
Description of project		The proposed works consist of the removal of the bridge deck and support beams and replacing them with a new deck and beams at the same location. Further detail in section 2.0 of the Inspector's Report.	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		The Park Canal waterbody on which the subject bridge lies is not a designated WFD waterbody. Upstream, the River Shannon is located ca. 822m to the east. This is a designated WFD waterbody, Lower Shannon_060. Downstream, ca. 800m to the west, the Park Canal flows into the River Shannon, known as Limerick Dock, transitional waterbody, code IE_SH_060_0900.	
Proposed surface water details		N/a	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		N/a	

Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues	N/a. A site compound is proposed to be located close to the site during construction works.
Others?	N/A

Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection

Identified water body	Distance to (m)	Water body name(s) (code)	WFD Status (2019-2024)	Risk of not achieving WFD Objective e.g.at risk, review, not at risk	Identified pressures on that water body	Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater)
Limerick Dock waterbody (Transitional)	800m	IE_SH_060_0900	Poor	At risk	Hydromorphology	Surface water run-off
Shannon (Lower)_060	822m	IE_SH_25S012600	Moderate	Review	None	Surface water run-off
Limerick City East Groundwater body	0m	IE_SH_G_138l	Good	At risk	Domestic wastewater pressures; Agricultural pressures	Groundwater

Step 4: Detailed description of any component of the development or activity that may cause a risk of not achieving the WFD Objectives having regard to the S-P-R linkage.

CONSTRUCTION PHASE

No.	Component	Water body receptor (EPA Code)	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact/ what is the possible impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure*	Residual Risk (yes/no) Detail	**Determination** to proceed to Stage 2. Is there a risk to the water environment? (if 'screened' in or 'uncertain' proceed to Stage 2.**
1.	Surface: Site clearance & Construction	Limerick Dock waterbody (IE_SH_060_0900)	Indirect impact via potential hydrological pathway	Water Pollution from construction run off - Siltation, pH (Concrete), Hydrocarbon spillages.	Use of Standard Construction Practice and CEMP/ Conditions	No	Screen out at this stage.
2.	Surface: Site clearance & Construction	Shannon (Lower)_060 (IE_SH_25S012600)	Indirect impact via potential hydrological pathway	Water Pollution from construction run off - Siltation, pH (Concrete), Hydrocarbon spillages.	Use of Standard Construction Practice and CEMP/ Conditions	No	Screen out at this stage.
3.	Ground: Site clearance	Limerick City East (IE_SH_G_138l	Indirect impact via Potential	Water Pollution from construction run off - Siltation,	Use of Standard Construction	No	Screen out at this stage.

	& Construction		hydrological pathway	pH (Concrete), Hydrocarbon spillages.	Practice and CEMP/ Conditions		
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
1.	Surface waterbodies	Limerick Dock waterbody (IE_SH_060_0900)	No risk identified	n/a	n/a	n/a	Screen out at this stage.
2	Surface waterbodies	Shannon (Lower)_060 (IE_SH_25S012600)	No risk identified	n/a	n/a	n/a	Screen out at this stage.
3.	Ground waterbodies	Limerick City East (IE_SH_G_138 l	No risk identified.	n/a	n/a	n/a	Screen out at this stage.
DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
	n/a						

Appendix 3: AA Screening Determination: Test for likely significant effects

Screening for Appropriate Assessment - Test for likely significant effects	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics **Case file: ABP-322037-25**	
Brief description of project	The proposed development comprises rehabilitation works on Park Road Bridge, between Canal Bank and Lower Park Road, Limerick. The proposed works consist of the removal of the bridge deck and support beams and replacing them with a new deck and beams at the same location. Further detail in section 2.0 of the Inspector's Report.
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	The site measures ca. 89 sq m. and comprises the extent of the Park Road Bridge over the Park Canal. The Park Canal connects the River Shannon at one point to a point further downstream. The length of the canal is ca. 1.6km. The site is located within the Lower River Shannon SAC and is upstream of the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA. The construction compound is proposed to be located ca. 100m to the south of the site/Park Road Bridge. In order to repair the bridge, the corroded steel will have to be replaced. This will involve removing the road surface above, the concrete that makes up the deck and the corroded steel itself. Once the damaged sections are removed, a new deck will be put in place and a new road surface will be laid. The process will be as follows: • A site compound will be set up and the works area fenced off.

	• The old road surface will be removed by digger and loaded into trucks for removal from the area. • Once the road surface is removed the old steel that makes up the bridge deck will be removed. • Once all the old damaged structures are removed the new deck can be put into place. • The precast beams will be lowered and concrete pour will fix them in place and create the surface for the road. • A tarmacadam road surface 100mm thick will be laid. • The water mains pipes will be re-attached to the underside of the bridge. • The proposed works will be undertaken during low level water periods.
Screening report	Yes, prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions Ltd. One site screened in – Lower River Shannon SAC.
Natura Impact Statement	Yes, prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions Ltd, supplemented with NIS Addendum.
Relevant submissions	DAU, on behalf of the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government. Relevant to Natura 2000 sites, the following points were made: • Insufficient information has been included with the application to determine that the proposed rehabilitation works, with the described mitigation, will not adversely affect the integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC. • References an EIAR submitted for a nearby development which recorded otter activity in the area. Queries site clearance works. Recommends a detailed otter survey is carried out. The report should address the potential impacts on the local otter population. If breeding or resting site for otter are found, a regulation 54 derogation licence must be obtained.

	• The use of a scaffolding crash deck to collect solid debris would not appear to mitigate against the risk to water quality from freshly poured concrete during the curing process, entering the canal. • A protected plant species, Opposite-leaved Pondweed Groenlandia densa, a high conservation value sub-type of the Qualifying Interest Habitat Water courses of plain to montane levels has been recorded in the canal. It is recommended that a specific survey for Groenlandia densa is carried out. If it is found to be present, a section 21 licence must be obtained.

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

Two European sites were identified as being located within a potential zone of influence of the proposed development as detailed in Table 1 below. I note that the applicant included a greater number of European sites in their initial screening consideration with sites within 15km of the development site considered. There is no ecological justification for such a wide consideration of 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**
Lower River Shannon SAC (002165)	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002165.pdf (NPWS, August 2012) 1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel 1095 Sea Lamprey 1096 Brook Lamprey 1099 River Lamprey 1106 Atlantic Salmon (only in fresh water)	0	The site is within this SAC	Y

	1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time 1130 Estuaries 1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide 1150 *Coastal lagoons 1160 Large shallow inlets and bays 1170 Reefs 1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks 1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts 1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand 1330 Atlantic salt meadows 1349 Bottlenose Dolphin Tursiops truncatus 1355 Otter Lutra lutra 1410 Mediterranean salt meadows 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation 6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils 91E0 *Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior			

River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077)	River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA | National Parks & Wildlife Service (Sept. 2012) Cormorant [A017] Whooper Swan [A038] Light-bellied Brent Goose [A046] Shelduck [A048] Teal [A052] Pintail [A054] Scaup [A062] Ringed Plover [A137] Golden Plover [A140] Grey Plover [A141] Lapwing [A142] Knot [A143] Dunlin [A149] Black-tailed Godwit [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit [A157] Curlew [A160] Redshank [A162] Greenshank [A164] Black-headed Gull [A179]	2 km	There is a hydrological connection between the site and this SPA. It is 2km downstream of the proposed works.	Y

	Wigeon [A855] Shoveler [A857] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]			

[1] Summary description / **cross reference to NPWS website** is acceptable at this stage in the report
[2] Based on source-pathway-receptor: Direct/ indirect/ tentative/ none, via surface water/ ground water/ air/ use of habitats by mobile species
[3]if no connections: N

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

Sources of impact and likely significant effects are detailed in the Table below.

AA Screening matrix

Site name	**Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site***	
	Impacts	**Effects**
Lower River Shannon SAC (002165)	Direct pathway to SAC: Release of silt and sediment during site works Release of construction related compounds including hydrocarbons to surface water. Spread of invasive plant species. Increased human disturbance at this site, particularly during the construction phase	Potential disturbance risks to Otter, a qualifying interest species for the SAC, which could be associated with increased noise, additional lighting and increased human activity at construction stage; Potential damage to riparian and river habitats associated with inadvertent spillages of hydrocarbons and/or other chemicals during construction phase; Potential spread of invasive species associated with ground disturbance activities during the construction phase. Opposite-leaved Pondweed Groenlandia

		densa, a high conservation value sub-type of the Qualifying Interest Habitat Water courses of plain to montane levels, has been recorded in the canal. Potential damage to the habitats, and freshwater qualifying interest species dependent on water quality. An impact of sufficient magnitude could undermine the sites conservation objectives.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Yes	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?	
	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	**Effects**
River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA (004077)	None anticipated.	None anticipated. There is no suitable forage, nesting or roosting habitats in the footprint of the proposed works. In the worst case scenario of sediment being released into the canal, it would not be enough to seriously undermine the main feeding habitats of these birds located further out in the estuary.
	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? No, due to distance of site, and scale of projects.	
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 the potential to result in significant effects on the Lower River Shannon SAC.

Such impacts could be significant in terms of the stated conservation objectives of the SAC when considered on their own and in combination with other projects and plans in relation to pollution related pressures and disturbance on qualifying interest habitats and species.

With respect to the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries SPA, I conclude that the proposed development (alone) would not result in likely significant effects on this European site due to the nature of the works and distance to this European site. No mitigation measures are required to come to this conclusions.

Screening Determination: Finding of likely significant effects

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of objective information provided by the applicant, I conclude that the proposed development could result in significant effects on the Lower River Shannon SAC in view of the conservation objectives of a number of qualifying interest features of the site.

It is therefore determined that Appropriate Assessment (stage 2) [under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000] of the proposed development is required.

Appendix 4: Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment
The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to Appropriate Assessment of a project under part XAB, or S 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 substation and underground cable development in view of the relevant conservation objectives of **Lower River Shannon SAC** based on scientific information provided by the applicant and considering expert opinion through observations on nature conservation. The information relied upon includes the following: • Natura Impact Statement and Addendum to NIS prepared by Ecology Research and Solutions • Conservation objectives for the **Lower River Shannon SAC (002165)** (August 2012) I am satisfied that the information provided is adequate to allow for Appropriate Assessment. 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 Prescribed Bodies: <u>Development Applications Unit</u>

- Insufficient information has been included with the application to determine that the proposed rehabilitation works, with the described mitigation, will not adversely affect the integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC.
- References an EIAR submitted for a nearby development which recorded otter activity in the area. Queries site clearance works. Recommends a detailed otter survey is carried out. The report should address the potential impacts on the local otter population. If breeding or resting site for otter are found, a regulation 54 derogation licence must be obtained.
- The use of a scaffolding crash deck to collect solid debris would not appear to mitigate against the risk to water quality from freshly poured concrete during the curing process, entering the canal.
- A protected plant species, Opposite-leaved Pondweed Groenlandia densa, a high conservation value sub-type of the Qualifying Interest Habitat Water courses of plain to montane levels has been recorded in the canal. It is recommended that a specific survey for Groenlandia densa is carried out. If it is found to be present, a section 21 licence must be obtained.

IFI

- The recommendations of the NIS should be carried out.

LOWER RIVER SHANNON SAC (002165):

Summary of key issues that could give rise to adverse effects (from screening stage):

(i) Water quality degradation (construction)

(ii) Disturbance of mobile species

(iii) Spread of invasive species

See Table in 6.1 of the NIS and mitigation measures in section 6.2 of the NIS, also section 4.1 and 5.4 of the NIS Addendum			
Qualifying Interest feature	**Conservation Objectives Targets and attributes: Site Specific Conservation Objectives, August 2012**	**Potential adverse effects**	**Mitigation measures**
1029 Freshwater Pearl Mussel	To restore the favourable conservation condition.	No - considered to be outside the zone of influence of this project. Map 15 of the Conservation Objectives document indicate that the FWPM is at some distance from the proposed works site. In addition, the habitat at the proposed works site is not suitable for FWPM.	Not applicable / none necessary
1095 Sea Lamprey	To restore the favourable conservation condition	Yes - these species have the potential to be negatively affected by water quality issues that may arise as a result of the project taking place, without relevant mitigation measures being put in place. Construction works have the potential to introduce cementitious materials, along with silts/sediments and hydrocarbons from the machinery into the canal. Whilst these actions are unlikely to affect any of the spawning gravels	Yes, per 6.2 of the NIS relating to control of sediments, cement control and wheel washing, waste management, disruption to breeding, appointment of an
1096 Brook Lamprey	To maintain the favourable conservation condition		
1099 River Lamprey	To maintain the favourable conservation condition		
1106 Atlantic Salmon (only in fresh water)	To restore the favourable conservation condition		

		used by these organisms, given the nature of the water body being a canal 1km away from the estuary, they could introduce chemical pollutants (cement, tarmacadams, hydrocarbons) that could negatively affect water quality in the estuary, which could negatively affect any of these species which could be migrating up or downstream in the estuary.	Ecological Clerk of Works. Of note: In order to mitigate against disruption to lamprey (brook and river) during the breeding season, works shall be carried out outside their breeding season. In order to mitigate against disruption to salmonids, works shall be completed before their breeding season commences. Making the ideal time for works to be carried out in August/September. Also, section 4.1 of the NIS Addendum

			which sets out enhanced mitigation, relating to containment of concrete works, rainfall protection, runoff capture and treatment, monitoring & oversight and emergency measures.
1110 Sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	Considerable distance from mapped sandbanks, Map 3 of Conservation Objectives refers. Any silts/sediments created during the proposed works do not have the potential to cause any negative impacts, given the distance away.	Not applicable / none necessary
1130 Estuaries	To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Estuaries	The proposed site is ca.800m from estuaries, Map 4 of the Conservation Objectives refers. Any silts/sediments created during the proposed works do not have the potential to cause any negative impacts, due to the nature of the habitats and scale of project.	Not applicable / none necessary

1140 Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	The proposed site is ca.1km from mapped habitat, Map 5 of the Conservation Objectives refers. Any silts/sediments created during the proposed works do not have the potential to cause any negative impacts, due to the nature of the habitats and scale of project	Not applicable / none necessary
1150 *Coastal lagoons	To restore the favourable conservation condition	This habitat is a considerable distance (c. 24km) from the proposed development site, map 6 of the Conservation Objectives refers. Any silts/sediments created during the proposed works do not have the potential to cause any negative impacts, due to distance.	Not applicable / none necessary
1160 Large shallow inlets and bays	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	This habitat is a considerable distance (c. 25km) from the proposed development site, map 7 of the Conservation Objectives refers. Any silts/sediments created during the proposed works do not have the potential to cause any negative impacts, due to distance.	Not applicable / none necessary
1170 Reefs	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	This habitat is a considerable distance (c. 32km) from the proposed development site, map 8 of the Conservation Objectives refers. Any silts/sediments created during the proposed	Not applicable / none necessary

		works do not have the potential to cause any negative impacts, due to distance.	
1220 Perennial vegetation of stony banks	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	All of these habitats are coastal features. Any silts/sediments the works could potentially introduce would have settled out of the water in the estuary before having any chance of negatively effecting these habitats. Maps 10, 11 and 12 of the Conservation Objectives refer.	Not applicable / none necessary
1230 Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts	To maintain the favourable conservation condition		
1310 Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand	To maintain the favourable conservation condition		
1330 Atlantic salt meadows	To restore the favourable conservation condition		
1410 Mediterranean salt meadows	To restore the favourable conservation condition		
1349 Bottlenose Dolphin Tursiops truncatus	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	This species exists out in the estuary and as such no negative effects are envisaged, Map 16 of the Conservation Objectives document refers.	Not applicable / none necessary

1355 Otter	To restore the favourable conservation condition	Map 17 of the Conservation Objectives documents indicates otters use (commute) close to the site, ca. 800m from the proposed works site.	Yes, refer to NIS Addendum, the mitigations aimed at other aspects of the local ecology will serve to protect the water quality in the area, which will serve to protect any potential otters downstream that weren't detected during the survey.
3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	The NPWS Conservation Objective documents has mapped the species opposite-leaved pondweed Groenlandia densa as being present in this stretch of canal. Map 13 of the Conservation Objectives refers. Groenlandia densa survey was undertakne and found not to be present within 20 metres either side of the bridge. Nor throughout the area of canal surveyed.	Yes, per 6.2 of the NIS relating to spread of invasive species and appointment of ecological clerk of works. Also, section 5.4 of the NIS Addendum which sets detailed invasive

			mitigations including pre-works biosecurity briefing, equipment cleaning protocols, waste management, water management and verification.
6410 Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils	To maintain the favourable conservation condition	Extent of this habitat is unknown. This habitat does not exist within the site, nor is it the type of habitat that could be damaged due to being hydrologically connected to a project of this size and nature.	Not applicable / none necessary
91E0 *Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior	To restore the favourable conservation condition	These habitats are mapped by in the Conservation Objective document (Map 14) and are upstream and at some distance from the proposed works site. Any silts/sediments created during the proposed works do not have the potential to cause any negative impacts, due to distance.	Not applicable / none necessary
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

Good quality water is necessary to maintain the populations of the Annex II species listed. Water quality degradation is the main risk from unmanaged site works where silt laden surface water could reach the main channel of the River Shannon. Decrease in water quality would compromise conservation objectives for the identified Annex II species at risk from the proposed development – otter, salmon, Sea Lamprey, Brook Lamprey and River Lamprey and increase sedimentation could alter habitat quality or indirectly adversely affect the local food supplies for species. No operational phase impacts are anticipated.

Mitigation measures and conditions:

Yes, per 6.2 of the NIS relating to control of sediments, cement control and wheel washing, waste management, disruption to breeding, appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works.

Of note: In order to mitigate against disruption to lamprey (brook and river) during the breeding season, works shall be carried out outside their breeding season. In order to mitigate against disruption to salmonids, works shall be completed before their breeding season commences. Making the ideal time for works to be carried out in August/September.

Also, section 4.1 of the NIS Addendum which sets out enhanced mitigation, relating to containment of concrete works, rainfall protection, runoff capture and treatment, monitoring & oversight and emergency measures.

(ii) Disturbance of mobile species

Ecological surveys have demonstrated that there were no signs of otter within the immediate vicinity of the bridge, nor further upstream nor downstream. The immediate bridge area is unsuitable for otters. There is a barrier in the water which would restrict otter passage and is a deterrent for otter use. No potential impacts are identified.

Mitigation measures and conditions:

The mitigations aimed at other aspects of the local ecology will serve to protect the water quality in the area, which will serve to protect any potential otters downstream that weren't detected during the survey.

(iii) Spread of invasive species

The invasive species Elodea nuttallii (Nuttall's waterweed) and Nymphoides peltata (Fringed water-lily) were however found in the canal. Both Nymphoides peltata (Fringed water-lily) and Elodea nuttallii (Nuttall's waterweed) are regulated invasive plants in Ireland. Both species are already widespread throughout the surveyed canal reach. Accordingly, there is no realistic risk of further spread within the canal arising from the proposed works. The primary risk is the transfer of fragments or propagules off-site via machinery, materials, or personnel.

Mitigation measures and conditions:

- All contractors will be briefed on invasive species risks and the requirement to prevent transfer off-site.
- All machinery, plant, tools, and temporary works materials (e.g. crash deck components, pumps, hoses) will be inspected and cleaned before leaving the site.
- Cleaning will follow the "Check, Clean, Dry" protocol recommended by Inland Fisheries Ireland.

- Any removed vegetation, sediment, or contaminated material will be contained and transported to a licensed waste facility.
- Stockpiling or composting on site.
- Any wash water from equipment will be collected in lined containment areas/tanks and disposed of appropriately, not discharged to drains.
- The Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will check and sign off all biosecurity procedures during high-risk phases.

I am satisfied that the preventative measures which are aimed at interrupting the source-pathway-receptor are targeted at the key threats to protected aquatic species and habitats by arresting these pathways or reducing possible effects to a non-significant level, adverse effects can be prevented. Mitigation measures are captured in Planning condition 2 of the Inspectors Report – standard condition relating to NIS compliance.

In-combination effects

I am satisfied that in-combination effects has been assessed adequately in the NIS and NIS Addendum. The applicant has demonstrated that no significant residual effects will remain post the application of mitigation measures that could act in combination with other plans and projects to generate significant effects on this SAC in view of the conservation objectives.

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 Lower River Shannon SAC. No direct impacts are predicted. Indirect impacts would be temporary in nature and mitigation measures are described to prevent ingress of silt laden surface water and other construction related pollutants. Monitoring measures are proposed. I am satisfied that the mitigation measures proposed to prevent such effects have been assessed as effective and can be implemented and conditioned if permission is granted.

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 attainment Conservation objectives of the Lower River Shannon SAC. 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 Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165) in view of the conservation objectives of that site and that Appropriate Assessment under the provisions of 177AE was required.

Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS, the NIS Addendum and all associated material submitted, and taking into account observations on nature conservation, I consider that adverse effects on site integrity of the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165) can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of this site and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects. My conclusion is based on the following:

- Detailed assessment of construction impacts.
- Effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed.
- Application of planning conditions to ensure application of these measures.
- The proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives for the Lower River Shannon SAC (site code 002165).