



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report

### ABP-322130-25

<b>Development</b>	Construction of a 24m high telecommunications lattice structure with antennas, dishes and associated telecommunications equipment and all associated site works.
<b>Location</b>	Lurga, Gort, Co. Galway
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Galway County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	2560005
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	APW UK WIP Limited T/a Icon Tower
<b>Type of Application</b>	Planning permission
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Grant permission with conditions
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Annette McCabe
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> June 2025
<b>Inspector</b>	Sarah O'Mahony

## Contents

1.0 Site Location and Description .....	4
2.0 Proposed Development .....	5
3.0 Planning Authority Decision .....	5
3.1. Decision .....	5
3.2. Planning Reports .....	5
3.3. Other Technical Reports .....	6
3.4. Prescribed Bodies .....	6
3.5. Third Party Observations .....	6
4.0 Planning History .....	9
5.0 Policy Context .....	9
5.1. National and Regional Guidance .....	9
5.2. Development Plan .....	12
5.3. Natural Heritage Designations .....	14
5.4. EIA Screening .....	15
6.0 The Appeal .....	15
6.1. Grounds of Appeal .....	15
6.2. Applicant Response .....	17
6.3. Planning Authority Response .....	18
7.0 Assessment .....	19
7.2. Justification/Rationale .....	19
7.3. Health Impacts .....	20
7.4. Siting and Location .....	21
7.5. Access and Transportation .....	22

7.6. Visual and Landscape Impacts .....	23
7.7. Other Matters .....	24
8.0 AA Screening.....	26
9.0 WFD Screening .....	27
10.0 Recommendation .....	28
<b>Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Appendix 1 – Environmental Impact Assessment Screening	
Appendix 2 – Appropriate Assessment Screening	
Appendix 3: Water Framework Directive Screening	

## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The 0.01ha site is situated in a rural area of southwest Galway, 6.5km southwest of Gort. The M18 motorway is situated 260m to the east while the Clare-Galway county border is situated 1.4km northwest.
- 1.2. The site comprises agricultural land accessed from a tertiary local road at the north, via an agricultural track which does not form part of the site. There are a low number of detached dwellings and farmyards closeby including one situated either side of the vehicular entrance to the track. This entrance is situated 200m northeast of the site. Lurga National School is situated 125m northwest of the site.
- 1.3. The field in which the site is situated is elevated locally with a ridge running north-south through the centre of the field which falls down to the hedgerow boundaries at the east and west. The hill is referred to on mapping and in third party submissions as Rock Hill and there is a c.3m differential between the top of the ridge which is an elongated plateau and the surrounding land at the field boundaries.
- 1.4. The track is situated alongside the eastern boundary of this field while the 100m<sup>2</sup> site is in the southwest corner. There are a number of timber pylons situated along the eastern side of the field, between the track and the prow of the ridge which carry overhead cables through the landscape from north to south. The Castlelodge river is situated 210m north of the site, flowing from southeast to northwest alongside the northern side of the public road and opposite the vehicular entrance to the site.
- 1.5. The wider landscape is generally flat or gently undulating with long distance views achievable from the top of the ridge. The landscape is quite enclosed however at a local level with a dense network of hedgerows and trees giving more limited views at the roadside level. There is a large area of marshy ground to the west and southwest of the site immediately outside the confines of the field in which the site is situated. Much of the wider area comprises similar wetlands, small lakes and rocky outcrops with a mix of arable land and some forestry also amongst low density dwellings and farmyards.
- 1.6. There is a railway line situated immediately east of the motorway and a 30m tall lattice type telecoms structure situated 375m southeast of the site which is stated to be in the ownership of CIE.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. Planning permission is sought for development which comprises the following:

- Construction of a 24m high lattice type structure to support telecommunications infrastructure including antennas, dishes and associated equipment.
- A 100m<sup>2</sup> compound with equipment cabinets and lattice structure surrounded by 2.4m high security palisade fencing.
- 40m of new access track connecting to the existing agricultural track.

2.2. The following documentation was also submitted:

- RF Technical Justification Report stating that *“The main driver for the new site Lurga is to provide voice and data coverage on the M18 roads along with surrounding area which will experience sub-optimal coverage levels without a base station at this location.”*
- A cover letter/planning statement.

## 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

### 3.1. Decision

3.1.1. A notification to grant planning permission was issued by Galway County Council on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025 subject to 9 no. conditions including no. 3 requiring a colour scheme for the tower, ancillary structures and fencing to be agreed in advance with the Local Authority as well as no. 9 which required the preparation of a Traffic Management Plan for the construction stage to also be agreed prior to the commencement of development.

### 3.2. Planning Reports

- The Planners report recommendation to grant permission is consistent with the notification of decision which issued.
- Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) issues are both screened out.

- 3.2.1. The Case Planner's report accepted the technical justification provided with the application and states *"From a visual perspective, it is considered that the proposal will not adversely impact the amenity of the area including residential properties and heritage assets in the area and the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle at the proposed location where the site is a brownfield utilities site with the benefit of existing trees/vegetation providing screening when viewed from the east and west approach."*

### 3.3. Other Technical Reports

- The application was referred to the Gort Area Office however no response/report was submitted.

### 3.4. Prescribed Bodies

- No referrals were made.

### 3.5. Third Party Observations

45no. third party submissions were received from the following all objecting to the development on the grounds outlined below.

1. Lurgan National School Board of Management	24. Michael McKeown
2. May Smith	25. Matthew Roseingrave
3. Mary McKeown	26. Annette McCabe
4. Teresa Rosengrave	27. Patricia Farrell
5. Shane Cummins	28. Marie Le Berre
6. Bernie Roseingrave	29. Mary Cuncliffe
7. Geraldine and Martin Hayes	30. Ann Marie Forde
8. Michael Harte	31. Barry Cuncliffe
9. Áine Stanford	32. Oisín Tuohey

10. Anne Linnane	33. Declan O'Connor
11. Francis Linnane	34. Nicola Lucey
12. Martina McGowan	35. Cepta Keane
13. Pat and Olivia Loughnane	36. Sarah Geagan Murray
14. Patrick L Roseingrave	37. Sharon Prendergast
15. Paddy Roseingrave	38. Teresa McKeown
16. Michael Roseingrave	39. Laura Dillon Gantley
17. Johnney Joyce	40. Michael McKeown
18. Declan Egan	41. Dane Canavan
19. Brendan Bogan	42. Mary Geagan
20. Lorraine Cummins and Community (211no. signatures)	43. Ciara McKeown
21. Laura Honan	44. Ann Marie Brogan
22. Christopher Fennessy	45. Geagan Family
23. Tommy McKeown	

#### 3.5.1. Concerns raised:

- Proximity to sensitive receptors including school and residences. Guidelines state masts should only be located adjacent to schools or residential areas as a last resort. Concern regarding viability of the school.
- Visual and landscape impact. Elevated site – 24m high mast will be visually obtrusive. Cumulative impact with CIE tower. Visual connection to the Burren. Lattice tower should be discouraged in favour of monopole design. Lack of photomontages in the application documents.
- Impact on ecology including migratory birds and bats. Adjacent stream feeds into East Burren Complex SAC. NIS is required.
- Impact to Fiddaun Castle as stream runs towards it.

- Cultural heritage impact from aviation hazard lights displacing light from St. Johns Eve bonfires set on Rock Hill.
- Lack of Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Lack of compliance with Galway CDP and National Planning Framework.
- Inadequate alternative assessment. Lack of co-location with CIE tower and others in the vicinity.
- Inadequate technical justification. National Broadband Plan provides rural broadband. No growth in demand in the area. Existing coverage for proposed end user, 'three', is good in the area.
- Inadequate red line boundary does not envelope entire site or proposed new access track.
- Lack of community engagement,
- Impact on public health from radiation and electro magnetic fields (EMF). Sensory impacts on school children with additional needs.
- Poor sightlines from unauthorised access road. Local road and bridge are used regularly for walking. Additional construction and maintenance traffic. Road has poor structural stability and surface. Interaction with school traffic and pedestrians.
- Traffic hazard due to visual impact and distraction.
- Lack of legal interest to access site from local road.
- Noise impacts from wind whistle, insulators, generators etc.
- Safety hazard from structural failure during extreme weather or unforeseen technical malfunctions.
- Construction impacts. No CMP.
- Flood risk on marshy land.
- Impact to aquifer.
- Property devaluation.
- Site notice was not in place for the full appropriate period.



- Incorrect Eircode on the application form.

## **4.0 Planning History**

There is no known planning history on the site.

## **5.0 Policy Context**

### **5.1. National and Regional Guidance**

#### **5.1.1. Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2025**

- CAP 2025 is to be read in conjunction with CAP 2024, the relevant part being Section 11.2.4.
- Section 10.1.8: Digital Transformation. The CAP supports the national digital transformation framework and recognises the importance of this transformation to achieve Ireland's climate targets.
- The transition towards green and digital societies is highlighted throughout the CAP 2025, as an overarching aim to achieve decarbonisation and net zero commitments.
- Section 15 of the Climate and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 as amended (the Climate Act), obliges the Board to make all decisions in a manner that is consistent with the current CAP.

#### **5.1.2. Harnessing Digital. The Digital Ireland Framework.**

- Section 2.1: Enable the physical telecommunication infrastructure and services delivering digital connectivity in line with the National Broadband plan.

#### **5.1.3. National Planning Framework 'Project Ireland 2040' First Revision (April 2025)**

- National Policy Objective 31: Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan as a means of developing further opportunities for enterprise, employment, education, innovation, and skills development for those who live and work in rural areas.

- National Policy Objective 62: In co-operation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, develop a stable, innovative and secure digital communications and services infrastructure on an all-island basis.

#### 5.1.4. **National Development Plan 2021-2030**

- The government recognises that access to quality high speed broadband is essential for today's economy and society.

#### 5.1.5. **National Broadband Plan 2020**

- The National Broadband Plan (NBP) is the Government's initiative to improve digital connectivity by delivering high speed broadband services to all premises in Ireland, through investment by commercial enterprises coupled with intervention by the State in those parts of the country where private companies have no plans to invest.

#### 5.1.6. **Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy, Northern & Western Regional Assembly 2020-2032**

- Section 3.5: Telecommunication infrastructure is essential for accessing employment, education and healthcare lifelines.

#### 5.1.7. **Telecommunication Antennae and Support Structures: Guidelines for Planning Authorities 1996**

- These guidelines were published in 1996 and provide general guidance on planning issues so that the environmental impact is minimised, and a consistent approach is adopted by the various planning authorities.
- Section 4.2 provides guidance in relation to design and siting while Section 4.3 refers to the visual impact of such structures. The Guidelines acknowledge that the applicant will only have limited flexibility as regards selecting a location given the constraints arising from technical radio and engineering parameters. It states that visual impact will, by definition, vary with the general context of the proposed development and that some masts will remain quite noticeable in spite of best precautions.

- It states that only as a last resort, and if the alternatives are either unavailable or unsuitable, should free standing masts be located in a residential area or beside schools. If such a location should become necessary, sites already developed for utilities should be considered, and masts and antennae should be designed and adapted for the specific location. The proposed structure should be kept to the minimum height consistent with effective operation and should be monopole (or poles) rather than a latticed tripod or square structure.

- Section 4.6 states:

*“As part of their planning application operators should be required to furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines (Health Physics, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Jan) 1988) or the equivalent European Pre-standard 50166-2 which has been conditioned by the licensing arrangements with the Department of Transport, Energy and Communications and to furnish evidence that an installation of the type applied for complies with the above guidelines.”*

#### **5.1.8. Circular Letter PL 03/2018**

- This circular provides a revision to Chapter 2 of the Development Contribution, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2013 and specifically states that the waiver provided in the Development Contribution, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, 2013 should apply not only to the provision of broadband services but also to mobile services.

#### **5.1.9. Circular Letter PL07/12**

- Circular Letter PL 07/12, dated 19th October 2012, sets out to revise Sections 2.2. to 2.7 of the Telecommunications Guidelines. The Circular was issued in the context of the rollout of the next generation of broadband (4G). It sets out elements of the 1996 Guidelines that required being revised. Broadly these are:
- Cease attaching time limiting conditions to telecommunications masts, except in exceptional circumstances;
- Avoid inclusion in development plans of minimum separation distances between masts and schools and houses;

- Omit conditions on planning permission requiring security in the form of a bond/cash deposit;
- Register or database of approved structures;
- Reiterates advice not to include monitoring arrangements on health and safety or to determine planning applications on health grounds; and

The circular also states that future development contribution schemes should include waivers for broadband infrastructure provision.

## 5.2. Development Plan

- The site is governed by the policies and provisions contained in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 (referred to hereafter as the CDP). The CDP identifies the site as being situated in the Central Galway Complex Landscape. It also states that the site is situated in a low sensitivity landscape.
- Chapter 7 refers to Infrastructure, Utilities and Environmental Protection and Section 7.8.2 therein refers specifically to Telecommunications. The following Policy Objectives are particularly relevant:
  - ICT 1: ICT Infrastructure: Support the delivery of high capacity Information Communications Technology Infrastructure, broadband connectivity and digital broadcasting, throughout the County in line with the Galway County Digital Strategy 2020 - 2023, in order to ensure economic competitiveness for the enterprise and commercial sectors and in enabling more flexible work practices i.e. remote working, smart hubs etc.
  - ICT 2: National Broadband Plan: Support and facilitate delivery of the National Broadband Plan.
  - ICT 3: Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures: To ensure the orderly development of telecommunications throughout the County in accordance with the requirements of the Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, Guidelines for Planning Authorities, DECLG, 1996, except where they conflict with Circular Letter PI07/12 which shall take precedence, and any subsequent revisions or expanded guidelines in this area.

- ICT 4: Co-location of antennae: To require co-location of antennae support structures and sites where feasible. Operators shall be required to submit documentary evidence as to the non-feasibility of this option in proposals for new structures.
- ICT 5: Siting and Design of Telecommunications Infrastructure: To require best practice in both siting and design in relation to the erection of communication antennae and support infrastructure, in the interests of visual amenity and the protection of sensitive landscapes.
- ICT 6: Visual Impact and Antennae Support Structures: To operate a presumption against the location of antennae support structures where they would have a serious negative impact on the visual amenity of sensitive sites and locations.

5.2.1. Chapter 15 of the CDP sets out Development Management Standards and DM Standard 42 refers to Telecommunications Masts as follows:

In order to facilitate the evaluation of development proposals for the erection of antennae and support structure with regard to the DoEHLG, Planning Guidelines for Telecommunications Antennae and Support (1996 including any updated/superseding document) and DECLG Circular PI 07/12 regarding the 1996 Planning Guidelines. While the current state of technology requires the construction of masts and antennae in the countryside the following standards will apply:

**a) Landscape Sensitivity**

In instances where telecommunications masts are essentially required in landscape sensitivity Class 3(Special) or Class 4 (Iconic), a Visual Impact Assessment shall be required with all planning applications for these locations.

**b) Amenity Impacts**

Masts and associated base station facilities should be located away from existing residences and schools.

**c) Landscape Impacts**

Masts should be designed and located so as to cause minimum impact on the landscape. If possible, sites should be located within forest plantations.

Access roads shall be permitted only where essential. Where provided, they should not scar the landscape on which they are located. Roads should follow the natural contours of the site in order to minimise their visual intrusion, and should be bordered with shrubs after construction. Masts should be sited to avoid the location of such structures in sensitive landscapes, in nature conservation areas, in highly sensitive landscapes and where views are to be preserved.

**d) Co-Location**

Licensees shall be required to co-locate their services by sharing a single mast or, if necessary, locating additional masts in cluster form. Co-location agreements to be provided where possible. Where new facilities are proposed applicants will be required to satisfy the Council that they have made a reasonable effort to share facilities or to locate facilities in clusters.

**e) Security**

Mast compounds should have security fencing and anti-climbing devices designed to local aesthetic and safety requirements.

**f) Redundancy**

In the event of the discontinuance of any mast installation the mast and its equipment shall be removed from the site and the land shall be reinstated.

All planning applications shall be required to furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines or the equivalent European Pre-Standard 50166-2 in the interest of health and safety.

**5.3. Natural Heritage Designations**

- 5.3.1. The site is situated 1.2km southeast of Termon Lough Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). It is also situated 2km east of the East Burren Complex SAC and pNHA and 3.5km southwest of Lough Cutra SAC.

## **5.4. EIA Screening**

- 5.4.1. The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (refer to Form 1 and Form 2 in Appendices of this report). Having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required.

## **6.0 The Appeal**

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

- 6.1.1. One third party appeal was received from Annette McCabe which raised the following concerns:
- Concerns made in the appeal are shared by the local community as evidenced by the submissions made at application stage.
  - The Planning Authority failed to engage with the submissions. Concerns were dismissed and not engaged with.
  - Given the proximity of the mast to the primary school, the development would not comply with DM Standard 41 of the CDP and the Telecommunications Guidelines.
  - Permission should also be refused due to proximity to a cluster of dwellings.
  - Health impacts from EMF, particularly for vulnerable children with special needs. Concerns particularly regarding potential noise from equipment such as cooling systems, generators and electrical installations.
  - Red line boundary does not include the existing or proposed access track. The existing access track is unauthorised, therefore any grant of permission would set an undesirable precedent.
  - The existing track is inadequate to provide sufficient access in winter.
  - No demonstration of sightlines from the existing entrance. No Construction Phase Methodology. Existing entrance is deficient in terms of alignment, surface and

structural condition. Permission should be refused due to traffic hazard and public safety.

- The Applicant has not demonstrated sufficient legal interest to access the site from the county road.
- Impact to ecology. No bat survey was prepared but impacts should be clarified due to proximity to adjacent treeline and woodland. Impacts to wintering birds should be clarified due to proximity to adjacent lowland/wetland. Wintering bird surveys should be sought to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment.
- Site is uphill from a flood risk area.
- Stream along the north of the site flows into the East Burren Complex SAC. The application should have included road upgrade works at the vehicular entrance and therefore there is potential to contaminate the adjacent stream and impact the SAC downstream. It is likely that a Natura Impact Statement is required.
- The applicants justification for the development is to improve coverage along the M18 however this is contrary to principles of road safety.
- Failure to consider alternative locations including nearby CIE 30m mast. No proof submitted that the CIE tower is unavailable or not unsuitable. Policy Objective ICT 4 of the CDP requires co-location.
- Development would form an incongruous and visually obtrusive feature impacting property valuation and forming an adverse visual impact.
- The Telecommunications Guidelines discourage lattice type towers and encourage mono-pole structures. In this regard the proposed lattice tower contravenes Policy Objective ICT 5 of the CDP.
- No photomontages submitted.
- The development would form a distraction for road users on the motorway.
- The development was not referred to TII.



## 6.2. Applicant Response

- Existing Three Ireland service along the N18 is inadequate and the existing infrastructure is not fit for purpose to accommodate Three Ireland coverage. The main driver for the proposed development is to provide voice and data coverage on part of the M18 and local roads serving the rural community, local housing and railway line.
- The proposed development would not detract from the rural character of the area as demonstrated in the Local Authority's assessment.
- The original preferred site was situated closer to the primary school and was relocated by the applicant to increase the separation distance to 200m which is considerable from visual and radio perspectives.
- Response states the development is fully compliant with the spirit of the 1996 Guidelines.
- The applicant and its network operators have stringent health and safety policies and codes for its maintenance crews and the public, both for physical safety and standards set by the International Non-Ionising Radiation Committee and the site will operate well within these ICNIRP guidelines.
- Schools rely on wireless communications with similar Wi-Fi technologies situated in much closer proximity to students.
- Circular 07/12 requires that Planning Authorities do not have regard to health and safety matters relating to telecommunications infrastructure.
- Concerns regarding noise are irrelevant as the mast operates virtually silently and will be inaudible from any residence or the school. No generator is proposed for this site, and generators are only utilised on selected critical sites during emergency power outages.
- The applicant has sufficient legal interest in the site. The red site boundary outlines the proposed land to be leased from the landowner while the yellow area illustrating the access route will have a right of way.
- Maintenance trips will occur 4-6 times annually and therefore there will be no material change in intensity of use of the access point. No upgrade works are

proposed or required for the existing entrance which is adequate in its current state for access requirements to the mast.

- A *'very small new area of hardcore farm type access track'* will be constructed from the existing track to the site.
- The applicant will utilise the existing track, power supply and require a small scale construction phase. Specifically, the response states *'We feel the appellant is envisioning something of a much larger scale and scope which is not applicable in this situation.'*
- There are no direct ecological conduits or hydrological pathways to any European sites and therefore, in combination with the scale and use of the development no significant effect on natura 200 sites or their qualifying interests or conservation objectives is likely.
- *'It is a matter of fact that the CIE tower is not available or structurally designed to carry third party antennas and the associated load. The CIE towers are a lightweight lattice tower designed for rail communications purposes only.* As the applicant is a private infrastructure company which only deploys infrastructure where there is a third party demand, the proposed development is designed for co-location and available to all operators ensuring no unnecessary duplication of infrastructure. The mast therefore complies with Policy Objectives ICT1, ICT 2, ICT3, ICT 4, ICT5, ICT6 and DM standard 42.
- A multi-operator solid monopole structure would be more visually obtrusive than a lattice type mast structure as proposed.
- The proposed mast will not impact traffic safety by means of distraction for drivers. The existing CIE mast is situated adjacent to the motorway and there has been no reported increase in accidents as a result.

### **6.3. Planning Authority Response**

- No response received.

## 7.0 **Assessment**

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

- Justification/Rationale
- Health Impacts
- Siting and location
- Access and Transportation
- Visual and Landscape Impacts
- Other Matters

### 7.2. **Justification/Rationale**

7.2.1. The applicant stated that the development is required primarily to improve service coverage along the M18 but also residents in the locality. Service coverage maps were submitted which demonstrate how the service would improve greatly if the development were in place.

7.2.2. I note the appellants point that improving service for road users along the M18 would be contrary to road safety policy however I disagree. I consider enhanced telecommunication services could enhance a drivers experience by providing better availability of mapping and journey information. Further, as there is no prohibition on passengers using mobile devices such as phones, tablets and laptops, I do not agree that there is any conflict between the rationale for the development and road safety.

7.2.3. I also have had regard to the coverage map publicly available on the comreg website which notes that 4G and 5G service for all service providers is categorised as fringe or fair with some pockets with no coverage at all for 4G or 5G.

- 7.2.4. I therefore accept the applicant's justification for the proposed development, particularly when regard is had to national, regional and local policy to improve communications technology infrastructure including policy objectives ICT 1 and ICT 2 of the CDP.

### 7.3. Health Impacts

- 7.3.1. The appeal refers to potential health impacts from hazards such as radiation and EMF and that the mast should therefore not be situated in close proximity to the school and local dwellings as proposed. Circular PL 07/12 was issued in 2012 as an update to the Telecommunication Guidelines and states:

*"Planning authorities should be primarily concerned with the appropriate location and design of telecommunications structures and do not have competence for health and safety matters in respect of telecommunications infrastructure. These are regulated by other codes and such matters should not be additionally regulated by the planning process."*

- 7.3.2. In this regard I consider the assessment of potential health impacts is outside of the scope of this appeal.
- 7.3.3. In terms of noise I note concerns raised in the appeal regarding plant and equipment such as generators and cooling systems but also note the applicant's response which states that no such equipment is proposed and there is no likely source of operational noise from the mast.
- 7.3.4. I do note however that DM standard 42 of the CDP states: All planning applications shall be required to furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines or the equivalent European Pre-Standard 50166-2 in the interest of health and safety. The appeal response states that the site will operate within guidelines set by the International Non-Ionising Radiation Committee however no statement of compliance has been submitted with this application. In this regard I consider that the application does not comply with DM Standard 42.

#### 7.4. Siting and Location

- 7.4.1. Telecommunications support structures are limited to a degree in where they may locate due to technical factors, coverage requirements and physical obstructions such as hills, buildings and trees etc and this is recognised in the telecoms guidelines. The landscape in which the site is classified as low sensitivity in the CDP and there are no sensitive views or scenic routes in close proximity.

- 7.4.2. The application documents state:

*The presence of other infrastructure in the area namely ESB network high power line, the M18 motorway and associated local road underpass, the Galway to Limerick rail line and a CIE rail communications tower which collectively provide visual clutter which will help assimilate the mast into the landscape. In addition the height of the proposed mast has been set at 24m in height which is the minimum height needed to provide the required service.*

- 7.4.3. The Telecommunications Guidelines require a robust assessment of alternative locations in order to demonstrate that the proposed location is the optimal one. The only alternative discussed in the application documents is a reference to the CIE mast which was discounted and deemed unsuitable due to its lightweight construction which would allegedly not support co-location of multiple service providers. The application outlines merits of the proposed location but no assessment is demonstrated of other locations within the search area. It also does not discuss clustering together with the CIE tower. DM standard 42 requires applicants 'to satisfy the Council that they have made a reasonable effort to share facilities or to locate facilities in clusters' and in my opinion this has not been demonstrated.
- 7.4.4. Similarly, no evidence is provided to support the claim that the CIE tower is unsuitable. Policy Objective ICT 4 refers to co-location of antennae and requires Operators 'to submit documentary evidence as to the non-feasibility of this option in proposals for new structures'. This was raised in the appeal and the applicant replied by stating 'It is a matter of fact that the CIE tower is not available or structurally designed to carry third party antennas and the associated load. The CIE towers are a lightweight lattice tower designed for rail communications purposes only'. I do not consider this comprises documentary evidence and in my opinion is insufficient to

demonstrate non-feasibility. In this regard I consider the application does not comply with Policy Objective ICT 4.

- 7.4.5. Policy Objective ICT 5 requires best practice in terms of siting and design. I am not satisfied that the applicant has provided a robust assessment of alternative locations within a defined search area for the provision of the proposed telecommunications structure or has adequately demonstrated that opportunities for co-location on existing structures or clustering adjacent to existing structures were not possible. Accordingly, in my view this does not represent best practice in terms of siting and design and I consider that the proposal does not comply with the provisions of the Ministerial Guidelines or with Policy Objectives ICT 4 and ICT 5 of the CDP.
- 7.4.6. The appellant considers that given the proximity of the mast to the primary school, the development would not comply with DM Standard 42 of the CDP or the Telecommunications Guidelines which state that masts should only be located adjacent to schools or residential areas as a last resort. I note minimum separation distances are not set out in the guidelines between telecommunications towers and dwellings or schools, and note that the proposed separation distances between the site, school and dwellings would be in the range of 125-150m.
- 7.4.7. In my opinion, the proximity of the mast to the school or dwellings would not represent a significant visual impact on its own, however as outlined later below, its relationship to other infrastructure such as electricity poles and the CIE mast in the immediate area means there would be a cumulative negative visual impact. Part B of DM standard 42 however does not specify visual impact, it simply states

*Masts and associated base station facilities should be located away from existing residences and schools.*

- 7.4.8. In my opinion the separation distance of 125-150m in this rural setting does constitute 'located away from' and in this regard, solely relating to the topic of proximity of masts to schools and dwellings and notwithstanding other visual impact matters raised later, I consider the siting to be acceptable.

## **7.5. Access and Transportation**

- 7.5.1. The appeal submits that the proposed mast would constitute a traffic hazard due to driver distraction however I disagree. It is common practice to site such towers

adjacent to roads including motorways. Examples in that area alone include the CIE tower which is 35m from the M18 road edge, another CIE monopole type mast at Junction 14 of the M18 which is situated 20m from the road edge, and another situated 35m from the road edge of the N18, between junctions 6 and 7. The applicant has not put forward any evidence to support the claim of driver distraction and having regard to the established practice of siting them close to roads, I do not consider it likely that the development would cause a hazard in visual terms.

- 7.5.2. Concerns are raised regarding the adequacy of the existing access track and vehicular entrance in terms of sightlines, structural stability during winter, lack of upgrade proposals or construction methodology and assertions that the access is deficient in terms of alignment, surface and structural condition. The appeal recommends that permission should be refused due to traffic hazard and public safety. The applicant's response suggests that no upgrade works are required to the entrance and that the agricultural style track is adequate for the applicant's needs.
- 7.5.3. The existing entrance is a recessed agricultural type entrance, situated on a long straight stretch of local road with sightlines achievable in both directions for significant distances. Considering the scale of construction work and operational visits required for maintenance, I do consider the existing entrance is suitable.
- 7.5.4. Lastly, I note the appeal states there is no known grant of permission for the existing access track and therefore its use for the purposes of this proposed development should not be relied upon as it would compound unauthorised development. It is not clear from the site inspection if the track was specifically constructed in that location or has occurred as a result of a pattern of use over time. Analysis of aerial imagery is similarly inconclusive and therefore I do not consider it appropriate to refuse permission on this basis.

## **7.6. Visual and Landscape Impacts**

- 7.6.1. The Telecommunications Guidelines discourage lattice type towers and encourage mono-pole structures and in this regard the appellant contends that the proposed lattice tower contravenes Policy Objective ICT 5 of the CDP which requires best practice for siting and design. No photomontages were submitted however the

applicant submits that the lattice design type has a lower visual impact due to its transparency versus one singular block.

- 7.6.2. The application documents state that '*The proposed development and design will not have a significant visual impact on its surroundings and will be readily absorbed into the landscape*' however I disagree with this proposal. I consider the proximity of the existing CIE tower to the subject site, with a separation distance of 350m, would result in a cumulative visual impact to the area as well as a negative impact to the landscape.
- 7.6.3. I note the landscape has a low sensitivity, however in my opinion, the proliferation of tall structures in the landscape such as the mast and timber pylons on the site means the capacity of the landscape to absorb development and changes is already at a tipping point. In this regard, I agree with the appellant where the appeal states that the development would form an incongruous and visually obtrusive feature forming an adverse visual impact.
- 7.6.4. The applicant described the degree of existing visual clutter in the area and in my opinion, the addition of another 24m tall tower, regardless of its design, would be inappropriate and would lead to a proliferation of such structures in a low-lying landscape which does not have screening or capacity to absorb the development without negative impacts.

## **7.7. Other Matters**

### Legal Interest

- 7.7.1. The appeal submits that the applicant has not demonstrated sufficient legal interest to access the site from the county road. No works are proposed to the public road and therefore no letter of consent is required from the Local Authority in this regard. A letter of consent is received from the landowner of the site and the entire area where works are proposed and I therefore consider the matter of legal interest to be addressed.

### Red line boundary

- 7.7.2. The site layout drawing illustrates the red site boundary surrounding the 100m<sup>2</sup> compound only. It does not encapsulate the area annotated as 'proposed new access track'. No information is provided on the drawings as to proposed finished



levels, finish or surface water management measures however the appeal response states that *'a very small new area of hardcore farm type access track as highlighted in the application drawings will be constructed from this existing track to the mast site.'*

- 7.7.3. In this context I consider the detail provided in the drawings is insufficient to determine the scale of works proposed, if any vegetation removal is required or if there would be any impacts to local ecology as discussed further below.

#### Ecology

- 7.7.4. The appeal suggests that the development may impact on ecology and specifically references bats in the adjacent mature trees and wintering waterbirds which visit the wetlands on adjacent land to the south and west.
- 7.7.5. I have had regard to the small scale of works proposed to accommodate the new 100m<sup>2</sup> compound, none of which requires removal of any trees or works in a root protection area and additionally no flood lighting is required and therefore I consider it highly unlikely that any impacts to bats are likely to occur as a result of the mast itself.
- 7.7.6. The proposed new access track however would be 40m in distance and its exact location is not illustrated on the site layout drawings. An indicative route corridor is portrayed however the width, final alignment and proposed finished levels etc are not provided. The lack of detail means it is difficult to quantify impacts to local ecology such as bats or overwintering birds. Removal of hedgerows, damage to root protection zones and siltation of water could all affect feeding habitat. The overall scale of the works are minor and therefore I do not consider it likely that impact assessment reports are required, but the lack of detail in the drawings received means there is a lack of certainty and a determination cannot be made on the impact to ecology, particularly as the proposed new road is outside of the red line boundary of the site.
- 7.7.7. The appellant raises a concern that wetlands to the north of the site may be affected by construction works to the entrance, a matter compounded as the area is situated in flood risk area on the National Indicative Fluvial Mapping. I note however that no works are proposed at the vehicular entrance and therefore consider it unlikely that any impact would occur. Any siltation from the construction of the new access track

and compound itself would flow downhill to wetlands at the south and west and any siltation would be significantly diluted before any contaminated surface water flows to the north. In this regard I am satisfied any that wetlands to the north are not likely to be affected by the proposed development.

7.7.8. Regarding potential operational impacts, the proposed tower would be a stationary obstacle and therefore unlikely to result in any mortality to birds or bats.

7.7.9. Matters regarding appropriate assessment are discussed later but in summary, the need to carry out a full stage 2 assessment is screened out.

7.7.10. I therefore conclude that I do not consider it likely that the proposed development is likely to impact ecology.

#### Referrals

7.7.11. The appellant questioned if the case was referred to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) given the proximity of the site to the M18 motorway. As outlined above I do not consider it likely that the development would constitute a traffic hazard. I note Article 28 (j) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (As amended) requires planning applications to be referred to the National Roads Authority, which has since been transformed to TII, in circumstances where it appears to the authority that

*'(i) the development consists of or comprises the formation, laying out or material widening of an access to a national road within the meaning of section 2 of the Roads Act, 1993 (No. 14 of 1993), not being a national road within a built-up area within the meaning of section 45 of the Road Traffic Act, 1961, or*

*(ii) the development might give rise to a significant increase in the volume of traffic using a national road,'*

7.7.12. The proposed development does not fall into either such category and therefore I do not consider a referral is required in this instance.

## **8.0 AA Screening**

### Finding of no likely significant effects

8.1.1. In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I

conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on any European Sites in view of the conservation objectives of this/ these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required.

This determination is based on:

- The small scale and nature of works,
- the 3.5km downstream separation distance from the East Burren Complex SAC, and
- lack of connections to other closer European Sites.

## **9.0 WFD Screening**

- 9.1. The subject site is located 210m south of the Castlelodge River and adjacent to an unnamed wetland. The proposed development comprises construction of a 24m telecommunications support structure, 40m of new access road and a 100m<sup>2</sup> compound with palisade fencing.
- 9.2. I have assessed the proposed development and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface & ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status), and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively.
- 9.3. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:
- Nature of works including the small scale of the construction phase and lack of operational impacts
  - The location of the site and distance from nearest water bodies, and

- The imposition of conditions, in the event of a grant of permission, requiring additional details regarding the proposed new access track as well as a Construction Environmental Management Plan setting out surface water protection details.

### Conclusion

- 9.4. 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.

## **10.0 Recommendation**

I recommend that planning permission is refused for the reasons set out below:

1. Policy Objective ICT 4 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 requires co-location of antennae support structures and sites where feasible, and for operators to submit documentary evidence as to the non-feasibility of this option in proposals for new structures. Policy Objective ICT 5 requires best practice in both siting and design in the interests of visual amenity. Having regard to:

- the presence of another telecommunications support structure in close proximity to the site and the lack of documentary evidence demonstrating its non-feasibility and
- the absence of any assessment of alternative locations in the area on which to construct the mast,

it is considered that, on the basis of the documentation submitted with the application and appeal, the applicant has not provided evidence for the need for the proposed telecommunications structure at this location, and that possible opportunities for co-location do not exist in the surrounding area. Accordingly, the proposed development would lead to an unnecessary proliferation of similar structures, which would be contrary to the Guidelines for Planning Authorities relating to Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures, issued by the Department of the Environment and Local Government in July 1996 as well as

the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. DM standard 42 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 requires all planning applications for telecommunications masts to furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines or the equivalent European Pre-Standard 50166-2 in the interest of health and safety. Such documentation was not submitted with the application or appeal and therefore the proposed development does not comply with the requirements of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
3. The application drawings submitted with the application and appeal indicate that a new access track is proposed as part of the application however these works do not form part of the application boundary for which permission is sought. There is a lack of information and certainty regarding this proposal including the layout, gradient, construction, finish and surface water management proposed. In this regard, there is an absence of certainty to enable determination of the scale and extent of the proposed development and to assess impacts and interactions therefrom. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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

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Sarah O'Mahony  
Planning Inspector

24<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## Appendix 1: Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

### Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

<b>Case Reference</b>	322130-25
<b>Proposed Development Summary</b>	Construction of a 24m telecommunications support structure, 40m of new access road and a 100m <sup>2</sup> compound with palisade fencing.
<b>Development Address</b>	Lurga, Gort, Co. Galway
	<b>In all cases check box /or leave blank</b>
<b>1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA?</b>  (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)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2.  <input type="checkbox"/> No, No further action required.
<b>2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1.  <b>EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
<b>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?</b>	

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 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.  <b>No Screening required.</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.  <b>EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.  <b>Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)</b>  <b>OR</b>  <b>If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)</b>	<p>Class 10 (dd), Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) All private roads which would exceed 2000 metres in length.</p> <p>(1)(a)(iii) of section 50 of the Roads Act–  (a) The construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or the realignment or widening of an existing road so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new, realigned or widened road would be 8 kilometres or more in length in a rural area or 500 metres or more in length in an urban area;  (b) the construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length.</p>

<b>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)?</b>	
<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)</b>
<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)</b>

## Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
<p><b>Characteristics of proposed development</b></p> <p>(In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).</p>	<p>The rural site is very small and is not exceptional for a rural area.</p> <p>A short-term construction phase would be required and the development would not require the use of substantial natural resources, or give rise to significant risk of pollution or nuisance due to its scale. The development, by virtue of its type and nature, does not pose a risk of major accident and/or disaster, or is vulnerable to climate change.</p>
<p><b>Location of development</b></p> <p>(The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).</p>	<p>The development is situated in a rural area adjacent to residential and community properties but is removed from large centres of population, designated sites and landscapes of identified significance in the County Development Plan. Land take would be minor, and no natural resources are required.</p> <p>When regard is had to the proximity of the proposed 24m mast to the existing 30m mast situated 350m to the east, there would be cumulative visual impact which would likely be significant. This singular environmental impact however is not likely to trigger a requirement for EIA.</p>
<p><b>Types and characteristics of potential impacts</b></p> <p>(Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration,</p>	<p>Having regard to the nature of the proposed development and works constituting development, likely limited magnitude and spatial extent of effects, and absence of in combination effects, there is no potential for significant effects on the environmental</p>



cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	factors listed in section 171A of the Act besides visual impacts as outlined above.
<b>Conclusion</b>	
<b>Likelihood of Significant Effects</b>	Conclusion in respect of EIA
<b>There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.</b>	EIA is not required.

**Inspector:** Sarah O'Mahony

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025

## Appendix 2: Appropriate Assessment

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects				
<b>Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics</b>				
<b>Brief description of project</b>		Construction of a 24m telecommunications support structure, 40m of new access road and a 100m <sup>2</sup> compound with palisade fencing.		
<b>Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms</b>		<p>24m high lattice tower situated within a 100m<sup>2</sup> compound surrounded by palisade fencing. Access will be provided from an existing farm track via a new 40m spur to the site.</p> <p>The site is currently in agricultural use and is situated in a very rural area.</p> <p>There is an area of wetland situated to the south and west of the site which flows north towards the Castlelodge River which flows along the northern side of the local road adjacent the vehicular entrance to the site. The Castlelodge River flows southwest through a series of other lakes and wetlands before entering the East Burren Complex SAC 3.65km downstream.</p> <p>Termon Lough SAC is situated 1.2km northwest of the site while Lough Cutra SAC is situated 3.5 northeast of the site.</p>		
<b>Screening report</b>		No		
<b>Natura Impact Statement</b>		No		
<b>Relevant submissions</b>		N/A		
The appeal raises concerns regarding impacts to the East Burren Complex Special Area of Conservation.				
<b>Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model</b>				
European Site (code)	Qualifying interests <sup>1</sup> Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections <sup>2</sup>	Consider further in screening <sup>3</sup> Y/N
Lough Cutra SAC (000299)	Lesser horseshoe bat <a href="#">Conservation Objectives July 2018</a>	3.5km	No	No
Termon Lough SAC	Turloughs	1.2km	No	No

(001321)	<a href="#">Conservation Objectives January 2021</a>			
East Burren Complex SAC (001926)	14 wet and dry habitats including turloughs, caves, fens, petrifying springs and heaths. 3 fauna species: Marsh Fritillary, Lesser horseshoe bat and otter. <a href="#">Conservation Objectives January 2022</a>	2km directly or 3.5km via surface watercourses	Yes	Yes

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

[From the AA Screening Report or the Inspector's own assessment if no Screening Report submitted, complete the following table where European sites need further consideration taking the following into account:

- (a) Identify potential direct or indirect impacts (if any) arising from the project alone that could have an effect on the European Site(s) taking into account the size and scale of the proposed development and all relevant stages of the project (See Appendix 9 in Advice note 1A).
- (b) Are there any design or standard practice measures proposed that would reduce the risk of impacts to surface water, wastewater etc. that would be implemented regardless of proximity to a European Site?
- (c) Identify possible significant effects on the European sites in view of the conservation objectives (alone or in combination with other plans and projects)

**AA Screening matrix**

Site name Qualifying interests	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	Effects
<b>Site 1: East Burren Complex SAC (001926)</b>  Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]  Turloughs [3180]	Direct: None  Indirect: Negative impacts (temporary) on surface water/water quality due to construction related emissions including increased sedimentation and construction related pollution.	Negative affect on habitat quality/function and prey availability.  Undermine conservation objectives related to water quality.

<p>Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculus fluitans</i> and <i>Callitriche-Batrachium</i> vegetation [3260]</p> <p>Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060]</p> <p><i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130]</p> <p>Calaminarian grasslands of the <i>Violetalia calaminariae</i> [6130]</p> <p>Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210]</p> <p>Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510]</p> <p>Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210]</p> <p>Petrifying springs with tufa formation (<i>Cratoneurion</i>) [7220]</p> <p>Alkaline fens [7230]</p> <p>Limestone pavements [8240]</p> <p>Caves not open to the public [8310]</p>		
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Alluvial forests with Alnus glutinosa and Fraxinus excelsior (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0]  Euphydryas aurinia (Marsh Fritillary) [1065]  Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]  Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]		
	<b>Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone):</b> No.	
	<b>If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects?</b> No	
	<b>Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*</b> Not likely.	
There is a hydrological connection between the site and East Burren Complex SAC via the Castlelodge Stream. However, that hydraulic connection is via 3.5km of surface water features including flowing through Loughaslaan and therefore, in the event of any contamination of surface water from activities at the site, significant dilution and dispersal would occur due to hydraulic activities along the considerable downstream route. Significant effects are therefore not likely to occur.		
<b>Step 4 Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site</b>		
I conclude that the proposed development (alone) would not result in likely significant effects on the East Burren Complex SAC. The proposed development would have no likely significant effect in combination with other plans and projects on any European site(s). No further assessment is required for the project.		
No mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions.		
<b>Screening Determination</b>		
<b>Finding of no likely significant effects</b> In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on any European Sites in view of the conservation objectives of this/ these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required.		

This determination is based on:

- The small scale and nature of works,
- the 3.5km downstream separation distance from the East Burren Complex SAC, and
- lack of connections to other closer European Sites.

**Inspector:** Sarah O'Mahony

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025

### Appendix 3: Water Framework Directive Screening

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	322130-25	Townland, address	Lurga, Gort, Co. Galway
Description of project		Telecoms support structure and access track	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		<p>The site is situated on the western slope of a small, elongated ridge which itself is c.3m above an adjacent wetlands. The wetlands drain into Castlelodge River which is situated 210m north of the site and which flows into the East Burren Complex SAC 3.65km downstream via Loughaslaan.</p> <p>A water quality monitoring station is located 365m northwest of the site on a bridge carrying the L4514 local road over the Castlelodge River.</p>	
Proposed surface water details		Not outlined.	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		N/A	

Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues			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	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)
River Waterbody	210m	Castlelodge_010	Poor	At risk	Forestry and Agriculture	Yes – site is on a slope where surface water flows downhill into adjacent wetlands draining to the river.
Groundwater Waterbody	Underlying site	Ennis IE_SH_G_080	Good	At risk	Forestry, Agriculture and unknown	Yes – well drained soils on the site



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	Waterbody 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	Castlelodg e_010	Site is on a slope where surface water flows downhill into adjacent wetlands draining to the river.	Siltation, pH (Concrete), hydrocarbon spillages	None provided or outlined	Yes – lack of details regarding proposed new access track	Screened in
2.	Ground	Ennis IE_SH_G_080	Pathway exists via good drainage soil characteristics	As above	As above	As above	Screened in
OPERATIONAL PHASE							

3.	Surface	Castlelodge_010	Site is on a slope where surface water flows downhill into adjacent wetlands draining to the river.	None	None outlined	No	Screened out
4.	Ground	Ennis IE_SH_G_080	Pathway exists via good drainage characteristics	None	None outlined	No	Screened out
DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
5.	NA						
STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT							
Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives – Template							
Surface Water							
<b>Development/Activity</b> e.g. culvert, bridge, other crossing, diversion, outfall, etc	<b><u>Objective 1: Surface Water</u></b> Prevent deterioration of the	<b><u>Objective 2: Surface Water</u></b> Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of surface	<b><u>Objective 3: Surface Water</u></b> Protect and enhance all artificial and heavily	<b><u>Objective 4: Surface Water</u></b> Progressively reduce pollution from priority	<b>Does this component comply with WFD Objectives 1, 2, 3 &amp; 4? (if</b>		

	<b>status of all bodies of surface water</b>	<b>water with aim of achieving good status</b>	<b>modified bodies of water with aim of achieving good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status</b>	<b>substances and cease or phase out emission, discharges and losses of priority substances</b>	<b>answer is no, a development cannot proceed without a derogation under art. 4.7)</b>
	<b>Describe mitigation required to meet objective 1:</b>	<b>Describe mitigation required to meet objective 2:</b>	<b>Describe mitigation required to meet objective 3:</b>	<b>Describe mitigation required to meet objective 4:</b>	
<b>Construction works</b>	<p>Accurate access track details including layout and construction.</p> <p>Site specific construction mitigation methods set out in a CEMP e.g. silt fences, site-</p>	<p>Accurate access track details including layout and construction.</p> <p>Site specific construction mitigation methods set out in a CEMP e.g. silt fences,</p>	NA	NA	YES – in the event of a grant of permission, a condition should be attached requiring these details to be provided.

	specific design of settlement ponds, etc	site-specific design of settlement ponds, etc			
<b>Stormwater drainage</b>	As above	As above	NA	NA	YES
<b>Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives – Template</b>					
<b>Groundwater</b>					
<b>Development/Activity e.g. abstraction, outfall, etc.</b>	<b><u>Objective 1: Groundwater</u></b> <b>Prevent or limit the input of pollutants into groundwater and to prevent the deterioration of the status of all bodies of groundwater</b>	<b><u>Objective 2 : Groundwater</u></b> <b>Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of groundwater, ensure a balance between abstraction and recharge, with the aim of achieving good status*</b>	<b><u>Objective 3: Groundwater</u></b> <b>Reverse any significant and sustained upward trend in the concentration of any pollutant resulting from the impact of human activity</b>	<b>Does this component comply with WFD Objectives 1, 2, 3 &amp; 4? (if answer is no, a development cannot proceed without a derogation under art. 4.7)</b>	

	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 1:	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 2:	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 3:	
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Inspector:** Sarah O'Mahony

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> June 205



