



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Addendum Report

ABP-322130-25

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

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This report is an addendum report to the Inspector's report in respect of ABP-322130-25 dated 30th June 2025.
- 1.2. On 09th July 2025 the board decided to defer the decision and request further information under Section 132 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended requiring:
 1. *You are required to provide more comprehensive and robust information regarding the consideration of alternative sites and the applicant is required to provide a more detailed justification for choosing the subject site in the context of evaluating alternative sites.*
 2. *You are required to provide a detailed visual impact assessment, including a series of photomontages depicting the mast from appropriate vantage points in the vicinity of the site.*
 3. *You are required to submit further information regarding consent to use the access track from the public road to the site.*
 4. *DM Standard 42 of the Development Plan requires that all planning applications shall be required to furnish a statement of compliance with the International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Guidelines or equivalent European Pre-Standard 50166-2 in the interest of health and safety. You are required to submit such a statement.*
- 1.3. This report considers the submissions made on foot of the request.

2.0 Response of Relevant Parties/Observers to the Board's Decision to Request Further Information

- 2.1. The response outlines 7no. alternative sites which were considered during site selection. A map illustrating these sites and the reasons for their rejection is provided. Ultimately, the subject site was chosen as it met all technical criteria, had the largest separation distance from residential properties, lowest visual impact and lowest environmental impact due to the presence of existing access and power supplies.

- 2.2. Photomontages and a visual impact assessment for the subject site were submitted as per the request.
- 2.3. The applicant and landowner have agreed to put a lease agreement in place to facilitate access to the site via the existing agricultural track. The response states that the track was upgraded 15 years ago and prior to that there was a track in place and utilised by the landowners.
- 2.4. A statement of compliance with ICNIRP guidelines is submitted to demonstrate compliance with DM Standard 42.

3.0 Further Submissions

- 3.1. The appellant responded to the further information response with the following comments:
- Siting a mast within 200m of a school and dwellings conflicts with policy including the Telecommunications Antennae and Support Structures Guidelines (1996) which state that free-standing masts should only be located beside schools as a last resort, and DM Standard 41 which requires masts and base stations to be located away from schools and dwellings. The applicant has not demonstrated compliance with these policies.
 - The mast would negatively impact the ecology of neighbouring wetlands and treelines as well as bats and wintering birds. Adverse impacts cannot be ruled out in the absence of surveys.
 - The site is hydrologically connected to the East Burren Complex SAC and the absence of a NIS is a significant omission and the precautionary principle under the Habitats Directive therefore requires a refusal.
 - The visual impact assessment is incorrect and the development would be highly visible and result in a negative impact for local residents. Natural topography would not sufficiently screen the mast.
 - Concerns regarding health impacts.

4.0 Assessment

- 4.1. The further information response provides a clear assessment of alternatives which is very informative and provides a clear basis for site selection. It does not however address the specific requirements of Policy Objective ICT 4 which is set out as follows:

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.

- 4.2. Part (d) of DM Standard 42 also requires the following:

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.

- 4.3. In my opinion the applicant has not submitted documentary evidence to demonstrate why the CIE tower is unsuitable for co-location or why clustering in this location is also not possible. I acknowledge the multiple statements made by the applicant as to its unsuitability, however no documentary evidence has been submitted as expressly required both by Policy Objective ICT 4 and DM Standard 42(d). I therefore recommend that planning permission is refused on this basis.

- 4.4. I also note the points raised in the response suggesting that the proposed site would result in the least visual impact of the 3no. technically viable alternative sites. The response does not identify which 3 of the 7 alternatives were deemed viable from a technical perspective, however I am of the view that clustering or co-location with the existing CIE mast would result in a lower visual impact than erecting a new structure on the site. In the event that either new antennae were attached to the CIE mast or a second mast was constructed at the same site in close proximity to the first, in my opinion the degree of change and subsequent visual impact at the CIE site would be much lower compared to the proposed introduction of an entirely new structure at the subject site.

- 4.5. The applicant submitted a statement of compliance with the relevant radiation guidelines as required by, and demonstrating compliance with, that particular aspect of DM Standard 42.
- 4.6. The applicant's response regarding legal interest in the vehicular access track does respond adequately to the request made however it does not address the previously recommended reason for refusal. The proposed development seeks to utilise the existing track and to also construct a new section of track connecting the existing track to the site as illustrated on the application drawings and which therefore constitutes works necessary to facilitate the development. The previously recommended refusal reason referred to the absence of detailed design for the new section of track as well as the fact that this element of the proposed development was situated outside of the red line boundary of the site. I therefore recommend that the same reason for refusal is applied.
- 4.7. The appellant's response to the further information response raised a number of items which are already addressed in initial report I prepared dated 30th June 2025. This includes separation distances to dwellings and the school, ecological impacts, appropriate assessment, human health impacts and visual impact.

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1. I refer to the previous Inspector's Report and recommendation on this application dated 30th June 2025. Having regard to the additional submissions received I conclude that the applicant has failed to adequately address the issues as raised by the Board and recommend that permission is refused in accordance with the following:

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 while DM Standard 42 also requires applicants for new facilities to satisfy the Council that they have made a reasonable effort to share facilities or to locate facilities in clusters. 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 for co-location or clustering, 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 or clustering 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. 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.

Sarah O'Mahony
Planning Inspector

19th November 2025