



An  
Coimisiún  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-322667-25

<b>Development</b>	GAA pitch, car park with ancillary and associated site development works.
<b>Location</b>	Tipperstown, Ardclough, Co. Kildare.
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Kildare County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	2460457
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Ardclough GAA
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Grant Permission
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Brian McElvaney
<b>Observer(s)</b>	1. An Taisce 2. Friends of the Irish Environment
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> August 2025
<b>Inspector</b>	Emer Doyle

## **1.0 Site Location and Description**

- 1.1. The appeal site is located on the edge of Ardclough, Co. Kildare on the L2008 opposite St. Anne's National School. It is located on lands outside of, but opposite the rural settlement boundary of Ardclough as indicated in the current Development Plan.
- 1.2. The site, which has a stated area of 1.880 ha, comprises a low-lying agricultural field with a native hedgerow along the site boundaries and a semi-mature ash and oak woodland adjacent to the eastern boundary.
- 1.3. The existing GAA grounds which includes playing pitches and a large clubhouse is located on the lands at the edge of the settlement boundary of the village c. 550m to the south.

## **2.0 Proposed Development**

- 2.1. Planning permission is sought to construct a new GAA pitch and gravel car park together with drainage, fencing and goal posts and ball stop netting. The ballstop netting both sides of the goal posts has a width of 45m and a height of 13.5m. It is proposed to accommodate 66 No. car parking spaces and 8 No bicycle parking spaces. One playing pitch is proposed which is stated to be a full sized GAA pitch with an area of 80m x 140m. A pedestrian entrance and vehicular entrance are proposed.
- 2.2. Revised significant further information was submitted which provided for the following:
  - No bus parking or electrical vehicle charging spaces proposed as it is stated that this is an overflow pitch with no electricity supply.
  - Increase in bicycle parking spaces to 20 spaces.
  - Relocated zebra crossing further west.
  - Details of gates.
  - Stage 1 Road Safety Audit.

- It is proposed that a qualified arborist and landscape architect or landscape designer will be retained throughout the life of the construction works.
- Landscape drawings and report including details of hedgerow and trees to be retained and to be removed together with details of additional planting proposed.

### 3.0 Planning Authority Decision

#### 3.1. Decision

- 3.1.1. The Planning Authority decided to grant permission for the proposed development on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025, subject to 15 no. conditions.

Conditions of note include:

#### **Condition 2**

(a) The existing trees/hedging along the southern site boundary indicated in green hatching on the 'Combined Landscape and Arborist Plan – Dwg No. 4' received by the Planning Authority on 27/03/2025, shall be retained in its entirety, save the portion required to be removed to provide the proposed pedestrian entrance.

(b) Prior to commencement of the development, the Applicant shall submit for the written approval of the Planning Authority, a revised landscaping proposal to augment/supplement the existing trees/hedging, as specified in Condition 2A.

(c) The 2.4m high fence indicated in orange on the 'Proposed Site Layout - Dwg No. 2337-DOB-XX-SI-DR-C-0050', received by the Planning Authority on 27/03/2025, shall be omitted along the southern boundary where the existing trees/hedging to be retained as specified in Condition 2A are located.

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

#### **Condition 3**

Prior to the commencement of development, the Applicant shall submit for the written approval of the Planning Authority, a revised landscaping proposal adjacent to the proposed site entrance which minimises the amount of existing hedging to be

removed to achieve the required sightlines. This revised landscaping proposal shall be accompanied by a comprehensive series of plans/cross sections/elevations.

Reason: In the interest of proper planning and public safety.

#### **Condition 4**

The Developer shall ensure that: (a) The services of the qualified Landscape Architect (or qualified Landscape Designer) as a Landscape Consultant are retained throughout the life of the construction works. The Developer shall inform the Planning Authority of that appointment in writing prior to commencement of development. A Practical Completion Certificate shall be signed off by the Landscape Architect when all landscape works are fully completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and in accordance with the permitted landscape proposals (b) All landscaping works shall be completed, within the first planting season following commencement of development, in accordance with the submitted plans to the Planning Authority. Any trees and hedging which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority or till the estate is taken in charge. Tree planting should be carried out to the British Standard, BS:8545:2014: Trees-From nursery to independence in the landscape. (c) The services of an independent qualified Arborist are retained, for the entire period of construction activity. The Developer shall inform the Planning Authority of that appointment in writing prior to commencement of development. (d) The Arborist shall carry out a post-construction tree survey and assessment of the condition of the retained trees and hedgerows. A Completion Certificate shall be signed off by the Arborist when all permitted development works are completed and in line with the recommendations of the tree reports and plans. The certificate shall be submitted to the Parks Section for written agreement upon completion of construction works on site. (e) Prior to the commencement of the development, submission of a report from the Landscape Architect/Arborist containing photographic evidence of fixed (nonmovable) tree protection fencing in place in locations as per the Tree Protection Plan and confirmation from the Landscape Architect/Arborist that all existing trees and hedgerows identified to be retained are retained and protected prior to development commencement.

Reason: In the interests of residential and visual amenity, climate action and to ensure full and verifiable implementation of the approved landscape design. To ensure the retention, protection and sustainability of trees/hedgerows during and after construction of the permitted development.

#### **Condition 11**

The Developer shall ensure the proposed uncontrolled crossing will be in accordance with Kildare County Council Standard Toucan Crossing Layout 2024.

Reason: In the interest of pedestrian, cyclist and vehicular safety, proper planning and sustainable development.

#### **Condition 14**

Prior to occupancy of development, the Developer shall conduct and submit a Stage 3 Road Safety Assessment (RSA) for the written approval of the Planning Authority . The RSA Stage 3 shall be conducted by an independent approved and certified auditor. The recommendations of RSA should be incorporated into the remedial works.

Reason: In the interest of Road Safety

### **3.2. Planning Authority Reports**

#### **3.2.1. Planning Reports**

- Report (10/07/24) Required further information in relation to a large number of items including road safety, parking standards including bus and cycle parking and electric charging facilities, relocation of pedestrian access, arboricultural assessment report and landscaping proposals.
- Report (02/05/25) considered that the Further Information Response was satisfactory and recommended permission subject to conditions.

#### **3.2.2. Other Technical Reports**

- Transport (24/06/24 and Revision 1 29/06/24): Required Further Information including details in relation to electric parking, cycle parking, bus parking, size requirements of car parking spaces, footpath along site to provide connectivity to village, revisions to pedestrian crossing.

- Transport (29/04/25): No objection subject to conditions.
- Area Engineer (29/05/24): No objection subject to a condition that the proposed pedestrian entrance should be re-located further west along the roadside boundary of the application site to a point between the school access and the egress gates.
- Parks, Leisure and Recreation (25/06/24): Requires Further Information in relation to fencing, trees, hedgerow and landscaping proposals.
- Parks, Leisure and Recreation (29/04/25): Remain concerned regarding the volume of hedge removal and impact on visual appearance. The proposed planting scheme needs to be amended to include more tree planting and replacement of trees detailed to be removed due to Ash Dieback. Recommends permission subject to conditions.
- Water Services (27/06/24): No objection subject to conditions.
- Heritage Officer (02/07/24): Requires Further Information in relation to boundary hedgerow and proposals for compensatory planting of native hedgerow.
- Heritage, Biodiversity and Conservation Unit (01/05/25): Refusal recommended in light of the significant loss and disturbance to hedgerow habitat which is contrary to the policies and objectives of the Development Plan. Considers that the new boundary fencing at 2.4m in height through the base of existing hedgerow at 297m in length in addition to standard trees being removed comprises a significant loss and disturbance to local habitats.
- Fire Service (18/06/24): No objection subject to conditions.
- Environment Section (03/07/24): No objection subject to conditions.

### 3.3. Prescribed Bodies

Iarnród Éireann: Required that the applicant is advised in relation to construction in close proximity to a railway.

### 3.4. **Third Party Observations**

Two observations were submitted during the public consultation period. The issues raised are similar to those raised in the appeal.

## 4.0 **Planning History**

### **PA Reg. Ref. 19/595**

Planning permission refused to Aidan King for (a) Erection of a two storey type house; (b) Garage/fuel store for domestic use; (c) The installation of an Oakstown BAF wastewater treatment plant with polishing filter percolation area and (d) Amendment of condition No. 10 of planning file 90/1569 in order to allow residential development on the subject site; (e) Installation of new recessed entrance and all associated site works.

### **PA Reg. Ref. 19/723**

Planning permission refused to Una Buggy for (a) Erection of a two storey type house; (b) Garage/fuel store for domestic use; (c) The installation of an Oakstown BAF wastewater treatment plant with polishing filter percolation area, and (d) Amendment of condition No. 10 of planning file 90/1569 in order to allow residential development on the subject site; (e) Installation of new recessed entrance and all associated site works.

## 5.0 **Policy Context**

### 5.1. **Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP24)**

This plan is a roadmap to cut Ireland's emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, as mandated by the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

### 5.2. **Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25)**

The Climate Action Plan 2025 (**CAP25**) is the third annual statutory update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. CAP25 builds on previous Climate Action

Plans by refining and updating the measures required to deliver carbon budgets and sectorial emission ceilings. It provides a roadmap for taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by no later than 2050.

### Transport

Emissions in the transport sector increased by 0.3% in 2023, as the rebound in emissions since the Covid pandemic plateaus. Remaining within the sectoral emissions ceiling would now require an unprecedented 12.4% decrease in emissions in both 2024 and 2025. Key targets to further reduce emissions include a 20% reduction in total vehicle kilometres travelled relative to business-as-usual, a 50% reduction in fuel usage, and significant increases to sustainable transport trips and modal share. Fleet electrification and the use of biofuels will continue to provide the greatest share of emissions abatement in the medium term.

## 5.3. National Planning Framework 2025 (First Revision)

### 5.3.1. Relevant objectives include the following:

**National Policy Objective 37** Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments, and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

#### **National Policy Objective 69**

Reduce our carbon footprint by integrating climate action into the planning system in support of national targets for climate policy mitigation and adaptation objectives, as well as targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions as expressed in the most recently adopted carbon budgets.

**National Policy Objective 85** In line with the National Biodiversity Action Plan; the conservation, enhancement, mitigation and restoration of biodiversity is to be supported by: Integrating policies and objectives for the protection and restoration of biodiversity, including the principles of the mitigation hierarchy of - avoid, minimise, restore and offset - of potential biodiversity impacts, in statutory land use plan. Retention of existing habitats which are currently important for maintaining



biodiversity (at local/ regional/national/international levels), in the first instance, is preferable to replacement/restoration of habitats, in the interests of ensuring continuity of habitat provision and reduction of associated risks and costs.

#### **5.3.2. Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 (NBAP)**

The NBAP includes five strategic objectives aimed at addressing existing challenges and new and emerging issues associated with biodiversity loss. Section 59B(1) of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 (as amended) requires the Commission, as a public body, to have regard to the objectives and targets of the NBAP in the performance of its functions, to the extent that they may affect or relate to the functions of the Commission. The impact of development on biodiversity, including species and habitats, can be assessed at a European, National and Local level and is taken into account in our decision-making having regard to the Habitats and Birds Directives, Environmental Impact Assessment Directive, Water Framework Directive and Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and other relevant legislation, strategy and policy where applicable.

The plans 5 objectives are as follows: 1. Adopt a whole-of-government, whole-of society approach to biodiversity; 2. Meet urgent conservation and restoration needs; 3. Secure nature's contribution to people; 4. Enhance the evidence base for action on biodiversity; and 5. Strengthen Ireland's contribution to international biodiversity initiatives.

#### **5.4. Development Plan**

##### **Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029**

Ardclough is designated as a rural settlement within Chapter 2 - Core Strategy & Settlement Strategy of the plan. The site is outside (but directly opposite) the rural settlement boundary outlined for Ardclough in Volume 2

The site is within the Northern Lowlands Landscape Character Area, with a Class 1 low sensitivity rating as per Map Ref: V1-13.1.

Relevant policies, objectives, standards and sections within the CDP are set out under Sustainable Mobility & Transport (Chapter 5), Infrastructure & Environmental

Services (Chapter 6), Landscape, Recreation & Amenity (Chapter 13) and Development Management Standards (Chapter 15).

### Social & Community

Objective SC O19: Support, facilitate and acquire, where possible, playing facilities for sporting organisations across the county including the County Kildare Ladies GAA and Camogie Association for their continued development.

Objective SCO9: Ensure that all communities are supported by a range of sporting facilities that are fit for purpose, accessible and adaptable and that recreational and sports amenity space is provided that supports the work of Kildare Sports Partnership in promoting participation in sports and physical activity for all.

### Section 15.5 - Social and Community Developments

This Section states that any application for community facilities, including sports grounds and playing pitches, shall have regard to the following:

- Overall need in terms of necessity, deficiency, and opportunity to enhance or develop local or county facilities.
- Practicalities of sites in terms of site location relative to uses, impact on local amenities, desirability, and accessibility.
- Conformity with the requirements of appropriate legislative guidelines.
- The potential multifunctional use of community facilities, including daytime and night-time usage.

### Bicycle/ Car Parking

Section 15.7.2 sets out the level of cycle parking in Table 15.4. This should be taken as minimum standards – playing pitch – 20 per pitch.

Section 15.7.8 sets out that a maximum of 15 car parking spaces to be provided per playing pitch (Table 15.8) and that the Council has the right to alter this requirement having regard to the circumstances of each particular development on a case-by-case basis.

## Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Requirements -Table 15.9

New buildings or buildings undergoing major renovations (containing one or more than one dwelling)	As per Chapter 5 - Objective TM O117 and TM O118.
New buildings or buildings undergoing major renovations (other than a dwelling)	As per Chapter 5 - Objective TM O117.

**Table 15.9 - Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Requirements**

Objective TM O116: Facilitate, along with the NTA and TII, the conversion of the private car fleet to electric in the following ways: • Providing public charging points at key destinations such as public car parks, Park and Ride facilities, on-street in town centres, and public parks; • Ensuring that where car parking is proposed as part of all new developments either public or private, provision is made for all spaces to be dedicated over time to electric cars with provision for charging infrastructure built-in from the outset; • Providing significantly expanded electric car charging facilities at service stations on the national road network; • Ensuring provision is made for fast charging points at service stations and public carparks in order to make provision for a shorter charging time than domestic charging; • Ensuring that charging infrastructure does not encroach on footpaths or otherwise compromise the free movement of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport. • Ensuring EV charging points are accessible to all, where possible.

Objective TM O117 Support the Government's targets for electric vehicles on roads by prioritising parking for Electric Vehicles (EVs) in central locations, by supporting the provision of charging facilities on public and private land. Ensure a future proofed approach to the rollout of EV charging infrastructure by means of planning decisions by applying the following requirements of the EU (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 179 2021 (S.I. 393 2021) for Electric Vehicle recharging infrastructure: • New buildings or buildings undergoing major renovations (other than a dwelling) shall install at least one recharging point and ducting infrastructure for at least one in every 5 car parking spaces to enable the subsequent installation of recharging points for electric vehicles. • New buildings or buildings undergoing major renovations (containing one or more than one dwelling), which has more than 10 car parking spaces, shall install ducting infrastructure for each car parking space to enable the subsequent installation of recharging points for electric vehicles.

## Hedgerow

Objective TM O102: Minimise the extent of hedgerow removal in order to achieve adequate sightlines. However, where it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that there is no other suitable development site (for planning reasons) any removed hedgerow shall be replaced with native hedgerow species. Opportunities should be sought to translocate existing species rich hedgerows, where possible, and subject to proper biosecurity protocols.

Objective BI O26 Prevent, in the first instance, the removal of hedgerows to facilitate development. Where their removal is unavoidable, same must be clearly and satisfactorily demonstrated to the Planning Authority. In any event, removal shall be kept to an absolute minimum and there shall be a requirement for mitigation planting comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking to existing adjacent hedges. Ideally, native plants of a local provenance and origin should be used for any such planting. Removal of hedgerows and trees prior to submitting a planning application will be viewed negatively by the planning authority and may result in an outright refusal.

Objective BI O27 Require the retention and appropriate management of hedgerows and to require infill or suitably sized transplanted planting where possible in order to ensure an uninterrupted green infrastructure network.

Policy BI P6 Recognise the important contribution trees and hedgerows make to the county biodiversity resource climate mitigation, resilience and adaptation.

## Transport

Policy TM P1 Promote sustainable development through facilitating movement to, from, through and within the County that is accessible to all and prioritises walking, cycling and public transport.

Policy TM P3 Promote the sustainable development of the county by supporting and guiding national agencies in delivering major improvements to the public transport network and to encourage a shift from car-based travel to public transport that is accessible for all, regardless of age, physical mobility, or social disadvantage.

Objective TM O7 Introduce measures to reduce traffic congestion in town centres such as pedestrianisation, pedestrian priority and/or improved pedestrian/cycling facilities, in particular increasing the number of safe crossings.

Objective TM O17 Support and facilitate the provision of electric vehicles including Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and Plugin Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) including electric cars, bikes and scooters as a more sustainable low carbon option to the conventional private motor vehicle. The support of e-scooters will be subject to the enactment of legislation to regulate and legalise e-scooters.

Objective TM 020 Ensure new development areas are fully permeable for walking and cycling at a minimum, public transport (where appropriate) and provide for filtered permeability for private vehicle access in accordance with the NTA Permeability Best Practice Guide in order to give a competitive advantage to active travel modes for local trip making.

Objective TM 0111 All non-residential development proposals will be subject to maximum car parking standards (and minimum cycle parking standards) and all residential development proposals in areas within walking distances of town centres (800 metres i.e. a 10-minute walk) and high-capacity public transport services (including but not limited to DART+ services, Bus 178 Connects routes and any designated bus only/ bus priority route) will be subject to maximum car parking standards (and minimum cycle parking standards) as a limitation to restrict car parking provision and achieve modal shifts to sustainable modes of transport

## **5.5. Natural Heritage Designations**

- 5.5.1. The appeal site is not located on or within proximity to any designated Natura 2000 site(s), with the nearest being Rye Water Valley/Carton SAC (001398) located approx. 8.9km north of the site. The Grand Canal proposed Natural Heritage Area (Site Code 002104) is located c. 490m to the south of the site.

## **5.6. EIA Screening**

- 5.6.1. 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.

## **6.0 The Appeal**

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

- 6.1.1. The grounds of the third party appeal can be summarised as follows:
- Ardclough GAA has a history of ignoring matters in relation to biodiversity and have added additional floodlights and removed woodland without planning permission.
  - Kildare County Council have been very lenient in relation to these matters.
  - In anticipation of making this application, Ardclough GAA pre-emptively cleared woodland.
  - A significant amount of trees need to be removed to achieve sightlines and plans seems to propose replacing the roadside hedge with a weld-mesh fence.
  - Kildare County Council Ecologist recommended refusal and the Parks Department raised concerns.
  - The planner's report doesn't include any specific discussion of Objective BI 026 or Objective TM0102 of the Development Plan.

### **6.2. Applicant Response**

- 6.2.1. A response submitted on behalf of the applicant can be summarised as follows:
- The hedgerow proposed to be removed has been assessed as being of low quality.

- The locations of both the pedestrian and vehicular access have been approved and reviewed by the Road Safety Auditor and Kildare County Council.
- Additional planting is proposed of a new native hedgerow behind the required sightlines and around the proposed car parking. In total this is more than twice the amount being removed.
- Condition 2(b) required a revised landscaping proposal to augment the existing trees/ hedgerow to be removed.
- Condition 2(c) stipulates that the proposed wire fence must be omitted where the existing trees/ hedgerows are to be retained.
- The proposal adheres to policy BI 026 and TM 0102.

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

- No response submitted.

### 6.4. **Observations**

#### 6.4.1. Two observations have been submitted as follows:

##### An Taisce

- The proposal provides for an undesirable level of hedgerow removal and does not meet Policy Objective BI 026 of the Development Plan.
- The proposal is unsustainably car based and fails to address the provision of Section 3.7.1 of the Kildare County Development Plan on sustainable mobility.
- The level of car parking has not been justified.
- The plan fails to provide a mobility strategy which would:
  - reduce car parking demand by promoting cycling access and car passenger sharing.
  - share parking use with other locations in proximity obviating the justification for new parking at this location.
  -

#### 6.4.2. Friends of the Irish Environment

- The proposed development raises concerns about the consistency of decision making with national, regional and county planning objectives, particularly those relating to climate action, sustainable mobility and biodiversity protection.
- The design prioritises private car dependent access, despite its close proximity to the local population, existing car parking at the primary school across the road and the nearby proximity to the original GAA facility.
- The Council's Ecologist recommended refusal in relation to tree removal.
- The Parks Department identified significant visual concerns. Whilst the visual impact concerns were largely mitigated through proposed conditions, the ecological concerns remain unaddressed.
- The proposal is contrary to Objectives BI 026 and TM0102.
- According to Chapter 15 of the County Development Plan, a maximum of 15 car parking spaces are permitted per pitch. The proposed development includes 66 spaces.
- Car parking should have been shared with the other locations within the village.
- No EV charging infrastructure is proposed.
- No bus access is provided or facilitated.

#### 6.5. **Further Responses**

6.5.1. None submitted.

### 7.0 **Assessment**

7.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on the appeal file, including the appeal submission, and inspected the site, and having regard to relevant local, regional and national policies and guidance, I consider that the main



issues in this appeal are those raised in the grounds of appeal. The issues can be addressed under the following headings:

- Principle of Development
- Traffic
- Loss of Trees and Hedgerow

## 7.2. Principle of Development

- 7.2.1. The appeal site is located outside of the settlement boundary of Ardclough opposite St. Anne's National School. The settlement boundary is located on the opposite side of the road at this location.
- 7.2.2. A cover letter submitted with the application and a similar letter submitted in the Further Information response outlines the need for the proposed development at this location. It indicates that Ardclough GAA club caters for adults and juveniles playing Gaelic Football, Hurling, Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football. Since 2020, membership of the club has grown by 38% and the club is fielding an additional ten teams and there is a need for more training and playing facilities. The club fundraised to buy the land for a new training pitch, which will allow them to meet the growing demand from within the club and the wider community. The club draws players from a wide hinterland to the village from all economic backgrounds and abilities. The facilities are open to all ages and this development will extend this offering and encourage greater participation in sport for all.
- 7.2.3. It is stated that the new housing development in the village continues to bring new people into the area and St. Anne's National School has more pupils than ever before. The existing facilities have one full sized pitch and is insufficient to cater for demand. The pitch is to act as an overflow to the existing facilities.
- 7.2.4. Having regard to the above, I am satisfied that the proposal is supported by adopted objectives within the plan, notably Objective SCO9 in ensuring that the community is supported by sporting facilities that are fit for purpose and which allow for the promotion of participation in sports & physical activity for all, and Objective SCO19 in supporting and facilitating playing facilities for the continued development of

established facilities. I am satisfied that the principle of the development proposed which will positively contribute to the enhancement of existing facilities in the village of Ardclough and also, positively contribute to the health and well-being of its users is acceptable, subject to its compliance with normal planning considerations.

### 7.3. Traffic

- 7.3.1. The main concerns raised are that the proposal is substantially car based and fails to address the provision of Section 3.7.1 of the Kildare County Development Plan on sustainable mobility. It is also considered that the proposal doesn't align with key principles of the Climate Action Plan, Project Ireland 2040, and the National Planning Framework. Concerns are also raised that the level of car parking provision has not been justified, there is no element of car sharing with car parks in Ardclough, including the school car park opposite the site and that no bus parking or no electric charging facilities are provided.
- 7.3.2. The proposed development provides for c. 66 car parking spaces. The 66 spaces proposed is substantially in excess of the Development Plan standard which requires only 15 no. spaces per pitch. Only one playing pitch is proposed at this location with no buildings. The pitch is proposed as an overflow facility for the existing GAA club which has a clubhouse and changing facilities c. 550m from the site. There is a footpath between both locations although pedestrians would have to cross the road twice to reach the proposed pitch including the proposed pedestrian crossing in front of the site.
- 7.3.3. No justification is put forward for the excessive car parking spaces. I note that the applicant revised the bicycle parking spaces from 8 No. to 20 No. in line with Development Plan requirements in the Further Information Response. The Further Information raised queries in relation to car parking spaces, bicycle spaces, electric charging and bus spaces. No revised details were submitted in relation to car parking spaces. It was stated that no bus spaces were proposed as the pitch is a supplementary pitch and that no provision was made for electric charging spaces as the site has no electricity. I note that Section 2.2 of the Road Safety Audit submitted in the Further Information Response recommended that the car park should be amended to accommodate access, circulation and parking for buses and coaches

- 7.3.4. Key principles with regard to sustainable transport as set out in the Climate Action Plan 2024 and 2025, the National Planning Framework First Revision and the Kildare County Council Development Plan require a significant cut in transport emissions and a focus on sustainable transport by the provision of alternatives to the private car. It is a policy of the National Planning Framework to support delivery of EV charging at a national level in line with Climate Action Plan targets.
- 7.3.5. Having regard to the site location at the edge of Ardclough, and the accessibility between the existing clubhouse and the site, I do not consider that the number of spaces proposed can be justified at this location. I note that no buildings are proposed and there is no development plan requirement to provide electric charging spaces at this location at present in the absence of buildings. The facility is to act as an overflow pitch and there is no electricity serving the site.
- 7.3.6. In the interest of sustainable development, I would recommend a mobility management plan that requires the club to provide for incentives to encourage the use of mini-bus transport, cycling, walking and car pooling by users of the development. In addition, I consider that parking provision should be reduced in line with Section 15.7.8 of the Development Plan which sets out that a maximum of 15 car parking spaces to be provided per playing pitch (Table 15.8). I note that the plan states that the Council has the right to alter this requirement having regard to the circumstances of each particular development on a case-by-case basis. The Transport and Planning Reports are silent with regard to this aspect of the development and no information has been submitted by the applicant to justify the level of car parking spaces proposed. Bus parking facilities should be provided to expand the range of sustainable travel options on offer. I consider that there should be alternatives to car transport to reduce congestion and emissions and enable the GAA club to provide for their members travelling to their facilities in a sustainable manner.

#### 7.4. Loss of Trees and Hedgerow

- 7.4.1. The main concerns raised in the appeal and observations relate to the amount of trees and hedgerow proposed to be removed in order to facilitate development at this location.

- 7.4.2. In response to a Further Information Request by the Planning Authority, the applicant submitted an Arboricultural Report dated 27/03/2025. The report identifies that the proposal will require the part removal of the low-quality (C Category) native roadside hedgerow (H11) to provide a new vehicle and pedestrian entrance and to create sufficient clearance for the proposed sightlines. The existing hedgerow is overgrown with several large gaps in place and consists mainly of hawthorn and blackthorn. In addition, 3 poor quality (U Category) ash trees are required to be removed for arboricultural reasons. These 3 No. trees are infected with the fungal pathogen ash dieback and given their roadside location, removal is recommended for health and safety reasons. The extent of removal is shown on Drawing No. 4 submitted with the response. Alongside the road boundary at this location, it is proposed that c. 37% (c. 102m) of existing hedgerow will be removed. It is stated that a qualified arborist and qualified landscape architect (or qualified landscape designer) will be retained for the entire period of construction.
- 7.4.3. It was noted in the Arboricultural Report that the loss of hedgerow would have an initial visual impact on the immediate local area and that mitigation planting proposes a new native hedging behind the required sightlines and around the car park area. In total the quantity of new hedging is significantly more than that proposed to be removed.
- 7.4.4. Condition No. 2 of the Planning Authority requires additional planting and the removal of the proposed 2.4m fence on the southern boundary. The report from the Council Ecologist considers that the new boundary fencing at 2.4m in height through the base of existing hedgerow at 297m in length in addition to standard trees being removed comprises a significant loss and disturbance to local habitats. Refusal was recommended in light of the significant amount of tree and hedgerow removal. The Parks Department remained concerned regarding the volume of hedge removal and impact on visual appearance. It was considered that the proposed planting scheme needs to be amended to include more tree planting and replacement of trees detailed to be removed due to Ash Dieback. Permission was recommended by the Parks Department subject to conditions.
- 7.4.5. I consider that in the overall context of the tree and hedge cover within the site, the extent of tree and hedge cover being lost to facilitate the proposed development will have a minimal impact on the treescape of the greater area. I agree with the

Arboriculturist Report that the hedgerow and trees proposed to be removed are of low quality. To mitigate the loss of the aforementioned tree and hedge vegetation, significant additional hedge and tree planting will take place throughout the site particularly in the area of the proposed car park and to the north and east of the pitch. A total of c. 404 linear metres of native hedgerow is proposed together with 2 No. trees. I consider that if the Commission is minded to grant permission, similar conditions to condition 2 of the Planning Authority could be included to augment the existing planting along the southern boundary particularly in the area where the existing hedgerow is to be retained as 3 No poor quality ash trees are to be removed due to ash dieback and there are no proposals in the current landscaping plan to replace these trees. I note that 2 No. new trees are proposed in the car parking area. The omission of the proposed 2.4m high fence would be helpful as this could compromise existing biodiversity and could have a negative impact on the visual amenities of the area in terms of easing the transition from the rural countryside to the more urban setting of Ardclough at this location. I note that the appeal response notes condition 2 (c) which requires the fence to be removed and considers that it eliminates the concern regarding the potential impact on the area where it is proposed to retain the existing hedgerow. I consider that the removal of the fence along the full extent of this roadside boundary would address both the potential impact on biodiversity and visual concerns.

- 7.4.6. There are a number of policies and objectives in the Kildare County Council Development Plan in relation to the protection and trees and hedgerows and biodiversity including BI P6, BI 026, BI027 and Objective TM O102. These policies and objectives recognise the important contribution trees and hedgerows make to the county biodiversity, and support the minimisation of the removal of hedgerows and trees. There is a requirement for mitigation planting comprising a hedge of similar length and species composition to the original, established as close as is practicable to the original and where possible linking to existing adjacent hedges.
- 7.4.7. I am satisfied that in this case the removal of hedgerow is unavoidable in order to provide sightlines at this location. I consider that the removal has been kept to a minimum in this instance. I am satisfied that the replacement planting is considerably in excess of what it is proposed to remove and that native planting is proposed. I note that the appeal suggests that past breaches by the GAA club in relation to

biodiversity matters in their current main site in Ardclough and the removal of trees on part of the current site. I note that the Board has no role in enforcement matters. Any trees removed from the current site were removed at a location not visible from the public realm and do not detract from the visual amenities of the area. I note that the reports from the ecologist, parks section or planning section do not raise this as an issue.

- 7.4.8. The new planting will in my view offset the loss of the aforementioned tree and hedgerow along part of the southern boundary and consist primarily of native species. This approach aims to sequester carbon, enhance air quality, and promote biodiversity. As this new vegetation matures, it will contribute to longterm, sustainable hedge and tree cover and continually offset the initial ecological impact.
- 7.4.9. Having reviewed the Arboricultural Report, it is my view that the proposed development will not result in significant adverse effects on the local tree population or hedge cover. The hedge proposed to be removed is of low quality and is required to provide adequate sightlines in the interests of safety. The 3 ash trees proposed to be removed are of poor quality as stated above. The design of the proposed development seeks to retain a maximum amount of hedgerow along the roadside boundary whilst allowing the developer to provide adequate sightlines. Proposed mitigation strategies, including new planting of trees and hedging, would offset any loss of existing tree vegetation. As this new hedging matures, it will contribute to a sustainable, long-term green canopy that continually compensates for the initial loss. It is proposed that a qualified arborist and landscape architect or landscape designer will be retained throughout the life of the construction works.
- 7.4.10. On this basis, I conclude that the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant negative impact on the trees and hedgerow within and around the project area.

## **8.0 AA Screening**

- 8.1. I have considered the proposed development in light of the requirements of S177U the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. The subject site is not located within or adjacent to any European Site. The closest European Site, part of the

Natura 2000 Network, is the Rye Water Valley/Carlton SAC (001398), located approximately 8.9 km north of the proposed development. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any appreciable effect on a European Site.

8.2. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- Scale and nature of the development
- The location of the development adjacent to an established rural settlement, distance from European Sites and the absence of any ecological or hydrological pathways to any European Site.

I consider that the proposed development would not be likely to have a significant effect individually, or in-combination with other plans and projects, on a European Site and appropriate assessment is therefore not required.

## 9.0 Water Framework Directive Screening

9.1. Please refer to Appendix 3. The river body REEVES\_010 IE\_EA\_09R140550 is located c. 400m to the west of the site (good water body status) and the groundwater body is Dublin IE\_EA\_G\_008 (good groundwater status). The proposed development is detailed in section 2.0 of my report. No water deterioration concerns were raised in the planning appeal. I have assessed the proposed development of a playing pitch and associated 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 & 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 e.g. small scale and nature of the development

- Location-distance from nearest water bodies and/or lack of hydrological connections

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 permission for the proposed development be granted, subject to conditions as set out below.

## **11.0 Reasons and Considerations**

Having regard to the nature, scale and layout of the proposed sports facility and its location relative to the rural settlement of Ardclough, it is considered that the proposed development, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, would be in accordance with the provision of the Kildare County Council Development Plan 2023-2029, would not injure the visual or residential amenities of the area, would not be prejudicial to public health, would be acceptable in terms of the safety and convenience of pedestrians and road users and would not constitute a traffic hazard. The proposed development would therefore be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## **12.0 Conditions**

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, as amended by the further plans and particulars submitted on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2025 except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the



developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars. Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The landscaping scheme shown on drawing No. 4 (Combined Landscape and Arborist Plan) as submitted to the Planning Authority on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2025 shall be carried out within the first planting season following commencement of development. In addition to the proposals on the submitted scheme the following shall be carried out: (a) the proposed 2.4m fence shall be omitted along the entirety of the southern boundary in order to minimise biodiversity loss of trees and hedgerow proposed to be retained at this location (b) Additional planting of trees shall take place to replace the three trees required to be removed due to ash dieback along the southern boundary of the site. Details of tree planting shall be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development.

**Reason:** In order to minimise biodiversity loss and in the interests of visual amenity.

3. A revised site layout shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development which shall provide for 15 No. car parking spaces only in line with the requirements set out for car parking in Table 15.9 of the Development Plan. The revised site layout shall also provide for 1 No. bus parking space.

**Reason:** In the interests proper planning and sustainable transport.

4. A mobility management strategy for the proposed development shall be implemented in full. This shall provide for incentives to encourage the use of mini-bus transport, cycling, walking and car-pooling by users of the development and to reduce and regulate the extent of traffic and parking. The mobility strategy shall be prepared and implemented by the applicant, details

of which shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority within three months from the date of this order.

**Reason:** In the interest of sustainable transportation.

5. The Developer shall ensure that:

(a) The services of the qualified Landscape Architect (or qualified Landscape Designer) as a Landscape Consultant are retained throughout the life of the construction works. The Developer shall inform the Planning Authority of that appointment in writing prior to commencement of development. A Practical Completion Certificate shall be signed off by the Landscape Architect when all landscape works are fully completed to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority and in accordance with the permitted landscape proposals together with the amendments to the permitted design as set out in Condition 2 above.

(b) All landscaping works shall be completed, within the first planting season following commencement of development, in accordance with the submitted plans to the Planning Authority. Any trees and hedging which die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced within the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. Tree planting should be carried out to the British Standard, BS:8545:2014: Trees-From nursery to independence in the landscape.

**Reason:** To ensure the retention, protection and sustainability of trees/hedgerows during and after construction of the permitted development.

6. The disposal of surface water shall comply with the requirements of the Planning Authority for such works and services. Prior to the commencement

of development, the developer shall submit details for the disposal of surface water from the site for the written agreement of the Planning Authority.

**Reason:** To prevent flooding and in the interests of sustainable drainage.

7. Prior to commencement of works, the developer shall submit to, and agree in writing with the planning authority, a Construction and Environmental Management Plan, which shall be adhered to during the construction stage. This plan shall provide details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, noise and dust management measures and off-site disposal of waste.

**Reason:** In the interest of public safety and the protection of amenities.

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

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

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.

---

Emer Doyle  
Planning Inspector

10<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

<b>Case Reference</b>	322667-25
<b>Proposed Development Summary</b>	GAA pitch and gravel car park
<b>Development Address</b>	Tipperstown, Ardclough, Co. Kildare.
	<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.  <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>
<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>	State the Class here  <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>
<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	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>

<p>development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994.</p> <p><b>No Screening required.</b></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.</p> <p><b>EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required</b></p>	
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.</p> <p><b>Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)</b></p>	

<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></p>	
<p><b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

**Inspector:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2

### Screening the need for Water Framework Directive Assessment Determination

The subject site is located at Tipperstown, Ardclough, Co. Kildare. The nearest water body is the River REEVES\_010 IE\_EA\_09R140550, c. 400m to the west of the site (good water body status) and the groundwater body is Dublin IE\_EA\_G\_008 (good groundwater status). The proposed development is detailed in section 2.0 of my report. No water deterioration concerns were raised in the planning appeal.

I have assessed the development proposed of a playing pitch and gravel car park together with associated drainage, fencing and goal backstops and I 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.

The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- Nature of works e.g. small scale and nature of the development
- Location-distance from nearest water bodies and/or lack of hydrological connections

#### Conclusion

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.