Inspector's Report ABP-322952-25

Development	Construct and install a clear-span pedestrian bridge and associated development
Location	Main Street and Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside, Oughterard, County Galway
Local Authority	Galway County Council
Type of Application	Application for approval made under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended
Prescribed Bodies	Inland Fisheries Ireland Transport Infrastructure Ireland Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
Observers	None
Date of Site Inspection	31st July 2025
Inspector	Colm McLoughlin

Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Under the provisions of Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (hereinafter 'the Act of 2000'), Galway County Council has made an application to An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) for a Local Authority development comprising the construction and installation of a footbridge over the Owenriff river between Main Street and Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside in Oughterard, County Galway. In initially assessing the proposed development, the Local Authority determined that it would be likely to have significant effects on European Sites and, accordingly, an Appropriate Assessment (AA) would be required.

1.2. Under the provisions set out in section 177AE(2) of the Act of 2000, should a proposed development require an AA it shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it, with or without modifications. Furthermore, section 177V of the Act of 2000 requires a determination by the Commission as to whether or not the proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site and the AA shall be carried out by the Commission before consent can be given for the proposed development.

1.3. Concurrently under ACP reference (ref.) 322956-25, Galway County Council has applied to the Commission to compulsory purchase areas forming part of the site intended to this proposed development.

2.0 Site Location

2.1. The application site comprises three parcels of land stated to amount to 0.84ha, with the primary development parcel for the footbridge totalling 0.25ha and situated between Main Street (N59 national road) and Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside (L-1310 local road). In addition to public roads and footpaths, the area intended to accommodate the footbridge comprises the side garden to a private residence, known as 'The Old Barracks', and sloped banks channelling the Owenriff river. An additional area amounting to a stated 0.14ha currently forming part of the amenity space serving the residents of Carrowmanagh Park is intended to be planted with trees as part of the project. The third parcel associated with the project is situated on Station Road, 250m to the southwest of the proposed footbridge site. This open

undeveloped field would accomodate a temporary construction compound stated to amount to 0.45ha to facilitate the development.

2.2. The area north of the proposed river crossing point is generally characterised by residential uses and schools, with the mix of uses immediately to the south of the river characteristic of a town centre. The Owenriff river flows northeast through the centre of Oughterard towards Lough Corrib, with the N59 national road bridge crossing the river approximately 150m to the southwest of the proposed footbridge and another crossing, the Glann Road bridge, located 450m to the northeast of the proposed footbridge.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1. The proposed development comprises the following:

- construction of a low steel-bow, string-truss footbridge over the Owenriff river, measuring approximately 48m in length, 3.6m in height and 4m in width;
- excavate and install footbridge abutments on both banks to the Owenriff river;
- provision of a 3m-wide access ramp and steps tying in with footpaths along Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside, and a 3m-wide pathway from Main Street to the proposed footbridge;
- provision of a pedestrian (zebra) crossing with speed table along Main Street and also along Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside, with realigned carriageway kerb lines;
- removal, rebuilding and realigning of a boundary wall, including vehicular access and dropped kerb, fronting the side garden to the residence 'The Old Barracks' on Main Street;
- removal, rebuilding and realigning of 24m-long stretch of a boundary wall, marking the side garden a residence on Riverside;
- planting of compensatory trees within an amenity area to Carrowmanagh Park;
- replace 35m-long sections of watermain and combined sewer pipe along the northern bank of the Owenriff river at Riverside;

- provision of temporary construction compound along Station Road;
- all ancillary works including boundary treatments, bollards, gated service access onto the riverside walkway from Carrowmanagh Park, signage, lighting, seating, hard and soft landscaping.

3.2. In addition to the standard contents, the application was accompanied by various technical reports with appendices and drawings, including the following:

- Planning Report;
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report;
- Natura Impact Statement;
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report;
- Ecological Impact Assessment;
- Road Safety Impact Assessment;
- Stage 1 Road Safety Audit;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Photomontages;
- Construction Environmental Management Plan;
- Updated Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment;
- Arboricultural Assessment.
- OPW Section 50 Report;
- Structure Options Report;
- Technical Note Bridge Design;
- OPW Section 50 Consent Letter;
- Uisce Éireann – Confirmation of Feasibility Letter.

4.0 Planning History

4.1. Application Site

4.1.1. I am not aware of any planning applications relating to the site of the proposed footbridge. The following applications relate to the area associated with that part of the application site intended to accommodate compensatory tree planting:

- Galway County Council (GCC) ref. 99/3610 – permission granted by the Planning Authority in December 1999 for 20 houses and a three-storey block containing eight apartments;
- GCC ref. 18/264 – retention permission granted by the Planning Authority in June 2018 for alterations to apartment block;
- GCC ref. 03/2175 – retention permission granted by the Planning Authority in September 2003 for alterations to apartment block;
- GCC ref. 18/1796 – retention permission granted by the Planning Authority in October 2019 for alterations to apartment block.

4.2. Surrounding Sites

4.2.1. Planning applications in the immediate area surrounding the application site primarily comprise alterations to various domestic and commercial properties, as well as residential and mixed-use developments.

5.0 Legislative and Policy Context

5.1. Legislative provisions

The European Union (EU) Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC)

5.1.1. This Directive deals with the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora throughout the EU. Articles 6(3) and 6(4) require an appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of a proposed development on its own and in combination with other plans and projects that may have an effect on a European Site.

European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011

5.1.2. These Regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in judgements of the Court of Justice of the EU. Regulation 42(21) requires that where an AA has already been carried out by a 'first' public authority for the same project (under a separate code of legislation) then a 'second' public authority considering that project for AA under its own code of legislation is required to take account of the AA of the 'first' public authority.

National Nature Conservation Designations

5.1.3. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) working under the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, are responsible for the designation of conservation sites in Ireland. The three designations comprise Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), with the latter two forming part of the European Natura 2000 network. European Sites located in proximity to the application site are listed in table 1 below.

Table 1. Neighbouring European Sites

Site Code	Site Name	Distance	Direction
000297	Lough Corrib SAC	0.0km	N/A
004042	Lough Corrib SPA	1.1km	Northeast
002034	Connemara Bog Complex SAC	5.1km	Southwest
001271	Gortnandarragh Limestone Pavement SAC	6.3km	Southeast
001312	Ross Lake and Woods SAC	7.3km	Southeast
004181	Connemara Bog Complex SPA	8.6km	Southwest
000479	Cloughmoyne SAC	11.2km	Northeast
002008	Maumturk Mountains SAC	11.9km	Northwest
000474	Ballymaglancy Cave, Cong SAC	12.0km	North
001774	Lough Carra / Mask Complex SAC	12.9km	North
004062	Lough Mask SPA	14.3km	North
002320	Kildun Souterrain SAC	15.1km	North
004031	Inner Galway Bay SPA	38.9km	Southeast

Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended

5.1.4. As stated above, section 177AE of the Act of 2000 sets out the requirements for AA of developments proposed to be carried out by or on behalf of Local Authorities. The Act of 2000 requires the Commission to determine whether a proposed Local Authority development would or would not adversely affect the integrity of a European Site and in doing so they shall consider the NIS, any submissions or observations received, and any other information relating to the likely effects on the environment, the likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and the likely significant effects on a European Site. Assessments in this regard are undertaken in sections 7, 8 and 9 below.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Amendment Act 2021

5.1.5. This legislation requires the Commission, in so far as practicable, to perform its functions in a manner consistent with the Climate Action Plan 2024 and the Climate Action Plan 2025, the national long-term climate action strategy, the national adaptation framework, and any approved sectoral adaptation plans set out in those Plans, in the furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse-gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

5.2. National & Regional Policy

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework

5.2.1. Project Ireland 2040 links planning and investment in Ireland through the National Planning Framework (NPF 2025) and a ten-year National Development Plan (NDP 2025). The NPF encapsulates the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to the year 2040. National strategic outcome (NSO) 5 addresses the policy context relating to sustainable mobility, including reference to the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022) and the National Transport Authority's (NTAs) Active Travel Investment Programme delivering integrated walking and cycling solutions and road space reallocation. NSO 7 of the NPF supports creation of attractive places, with integrated transport systems and 'green' modes of movement integral to this.

Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025

5.2.2. The Climate Action Plan 2024 is the third statutory annual update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan. The 2024 and 2025 Action Plans are prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and follow the introduction of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings in 2022. The Climate Action Plan 2025 builds upon the 2024 Plan by refining and updating measures and actions required to achieve carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings.

Northern and Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032

5.2.3. The 'Northern and Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032' supports the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the economic and climate policies of the Government, by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the region. According to the RSES, the site lies outside the Galway metropolitan area. The Strategy acknowledges strategic proposals for the N59 Oughterard bypass project and the Connemara greenway project, which is intended to connect Clifden with Galway city via Oughterard.

5.3. Planning Guidelines

5.3.1. The following planning policy and guidance documents are also considered relevant to this application:

- Water Action Plan 2024 - A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland;
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030;
- National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022);
- Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030 (2021);
- Appropriate Assessment Screening for Development Management - OPR Practice Note PN01 (2021);
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) (2019);
- Permeability: Best Practice Guide (2015);

- Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2012);
- Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011)
- The Planning System and Flood Risk Management - Guidelines for Planning Authorities, including the associated Technical Appendices (2009);
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities (2009);
- Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1999).

5.3.2. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) also provide a range of documents featuring design standards and guidelines in the assessment of transport and infrastructural elements of projects, including 'Road Safety Audits' (2017), 'Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines' (2014) and the National Roads Authority 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' (2013).

5.4. Local Plans

Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

5.4.1. Oughterard is identified in Volume 1 of the County Development Plan as a small growth town with local service and employment potential. Chapter 6 of the Development Plan includes policy objectives with respect to transport and movement, including policy objective GCTPS 4 pledging support for, and enhancement of, existing and new walking and cycling networks as the 'first choice' for shorter local journeys and to link settlements within the county. Policy objective WC 4 refers to the intention to continue to work and engage with the NTA, the Department of Transport and other agencies in developing a modern network of walking and cycling infrastructure in the county. Policy objective WC 5 aims to provide traffic-free walking and cycle routes, including filtered permeability, particularly where such routes would provide a more direct, safer and attractive alternative to the car.

5.4.2. Volume 2 to the Development Plan includes policy and zoning objectives for Oughterard. The Development Plan land-use zoning map for Oughterard identifies

the three subject site land parcels as primarily featuring an 'OS – open space / recreation / amenity' zoning, with the proposed zebra crossings located within a 'TI – Transport Infrastructure' zoning. A narrow section of the house on Riverside (Eircode: H91 E529) forming part of the site is within a 'R – Residential Existing' zoning, with an objective in the Development Plan to protect and improve such areas for residential amenities.

5.4.3. Along the Owenriff river channel and on Station Road, parts of the site overlap a 'Constrained Land Use' area associated with flood zones (A and B), which are identified in the flood risk management map accompanying the Development Plan as medium to high-risk flood areas. Part of the site overlaps an area identified in the zoning map as 'Water / Rivers / Streams', although this area is not assigned a specific land-use zoning objective in the Development Plan.

5.4.4. The majority of the site intended to accommodate the footbridge and approximately half of the tree compensation area are situated within an Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). Proposed development within the ACA will be required under Development Plan provisions to respect the architectural qualities of this ACA.

5.4.5. Other policy objectives of the Development Plan of relevance in considering the subject proposals include OSGT 6 (tourism development), OSGT 8 (pedestrian and cycle network), IW 1 (inland waterways), FL 7 (waterbodies and watercourses) and FL 8 (flood risk management). Chapter 15 of the Development Plan sets out development standards, including standards addressing design (1), walking and cycling (22), vehicular access (28), traffic, noise and road safety (33), pavement finishes (33), water supply and wastewater collection (36), boundary types (47), environmental assessments (50), green infrastructure (51), ACAs (60), archaeological conservation (61), sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) (67) and flooding (68).

6.0 Consultations

6.1. Prescribed Bodies

6.1.1. The Local Authority state that they notified the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (National Monuments Service and NPWS), the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, the Minister for Tourism, Culture,

Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, EirGrid, ESB Networks, the Health Service Executive (HSE), Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), the NTA, the Office of Public Works (OPW), An Chomhairle Ealaíon, The Heritage Council, An Taisce, Uisce Éireann, TII and Fáilte Ireland. Internal consultation was also undertaken with the Local Authority's Planning Department and Roads and Transportation Department. The Commission received submissions from the following prescribed bodies within the appropriate period:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage – assessment with respect to potential impacts on cultural heritage assets and proposals for archaeological testing are broadly agreed with, and a series of conditions with respect to archaeological testing and monitoring are recommended;
- TII – proposals have been designed and prepared in accordance with TII publications, leading to improved road safety, including for vulnerable road users along the N59 national road;
- IFI – details of the catchment are provided with reference to fish species, Freshwater pearl mussel habitat and Water Framework Directive (WFD) status. Measures to protect water quality and fisheries habitat are listed and conditions are recommended with respect to IFI guidance, IFI notification, monitoring of water quality and planting of native species only within the riparian zone.

6.2. Observations

6.2.1. None received.

6.3. Local Authority Response to Observations

6.3.1. On the 8th day of September 2025, in the interest of justice the Commission offered the Local Authority the opportunity to respond to the observations received. A response was received from the Local Authority on the 25th day of September, 2025, clarifying the following:

- archaeological testing and mitigation measures to address potential impacts on buried archaeology are set out in the Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment report submitted with the application;

- the extent of archaeological testing for the construction phase was agreed with representatives of TII and the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, with testing in advance standard for TII-funded projects, as it is more effective than monitoring, with better outcomes for the management of the project programme.

7.0 Assessment

7.1. Introduction

7.1.1. Prior to making a decision in relation to a Local Authority development, section 177AE (6) of the Act of 2000 requires that the Commission consider the development with respect to:

- the likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development in the area;
- the likely effects on the environment;
- the likely significant effects of the proposed development upon a European Site.

7.1.2. This planning assessment section of my report addresses the likely consequences of the proposed development on the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. While some overlapping occurs, the likely effects on the environment are primarily considered under section 8 below when addressing EIA Screening. Section 9 below considers the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites and section 10 addresses WFD compliance requirements.

7.1.3. In assessing the proposed development impacts on the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, I consider the substantive issues arising from the application and the submissions received, to relate to the following:

- Land-Use Zoning Objectives;
- Urban Design;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Impacts on Neighbouring Residents;

- Access;
- Biodiversity;
- Flood Risk.

7.2. Land-Use Zoning Objectives

7.2.1. The Development Plan land-use zoning map identifies the majority of the subject site, including the area intended to accommodate the proposed footbridge, the tree compensation area and the temporary construction compound, as featuring an 'OS – open space / recreation / amenity' zoning. Subject to standard planning considerations, the Development Plan supports the protection and enhancement of such areas for open spaces and the provision of recreational and amenity uses. The proposed footbridge and tree compensation areas of the site are proposed to accommodate landscaped green areas, pathways and seating space, which I am satisfied would form public infrastructure and recreational space. The land-use zoning matrix included within volume 2 to the Development Plan stipulates that recreational use is permitted in principle on 'OS' zoned land. 'Utilities infrastructure and public service installations' are open for consideration on 'OS' zoned land.

7.2.2. For open for consideration uses to be permitted, the Development Plan states that they must be compatible with the policy objectives of the respective zone, they must not conflict with permitted uses and they must conform to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, including the policy objectives set out in the Development Plan. Use of 'OS' zoned land along Main Street and Riverside as a pedestrian route and 'OS' zoned land on Station Road as a construction compound for a temporary period of nine months, would not conflict with any permitted use in these areas or the stated policy objectives for these lands, particularly given that the footbridge would be open to the public and the land on Station Road could readily revert to its existing use following completion of the project.

7.2.3. The two proposed pedestrian crossings would also best fall into the land-use category 'utilities infrastructure and public service installations', which is a land use that is open for consideration on 'TI - transport infrastructure' zoned land. The policy objective for 'TI' zoned land is to facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential transportation infrastructure. In enhancing town centre pedestrian infrastructure, the

provision of the proposed crossings would not conflict with the stated Development Plan policy objective for 'TI' zoned land.

7.2.4. A boundary wall to a house on Riverside (Eircode: H91 E529) would be demolished as part of the project and rebuilt marginally closer to the house to provide a 3m-wide pedestrian path and the diversion of underground services. The boundary wall and area inside the curtilage of the house feature a 'R – Residential Existing' zoning, with an objective in the Development Plan to protect and improve such areas for residential amenities. The realignment of the boundary wall would appear to reduce the side garden area of the respective house by approximately 4sq.m, which would not have a substantive impact on the private amenity space to this house, with approximately 150sq.m remaining to the rear. The works to this boundary wall would also facilitate improved pedestrian infrastructure and the replacement of the underground wastewater and water supply services, which would be to the benefit of the wider residential community. The amenities of neighbouring residents would be protected and improved by this element of the project within the 'R - Residential Existing' land-use zoning.

7.2.5. Areas of the site overlap the Development Plan 'Constrained Land Use' area, including along the Owenriff river channel and on Station Road. The Development Plan stipulates that permissible land uses in this constrained area will be restricted to water-compatible and less-vulnerable uses, with particular cognisance of flood zones, subject to site specific flood risk assessment and development management standard 68. These matters are considered further below in section 7.8 of my report.

7.2.6. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the principle of providing a footbridge, a temporary construction compound and a tree compensation area on the application site, would accord with the statutory land-use zoning objectives for the site. Further consideration with respect to the appropriateness of the land uses relative to planning policy objectives is addressed in the proceeding sections of my report, including consideration regarding the impacts on Oughterard ACA.

7.3. Urban Design

7.3.1. The design and layout of the proposed development are considered in this section of my report in the interests of achieving good placemaking. DM Standard 1 of the

Development Plan supports the submission of Design Statements addressing various principles for significant developments. As part of the application the applicant submitted a Planning Report listing the key influences in developing the site, including flood risks and zoning, and the primary principles in designing and setting out the proposed development, including the intended route function, the avoidance of instream works and cultural heritage considerations. The Structure Options Report and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment also set out elements of the applicant's rationale in arriving at the subject proposals. The design for the proposed footbridge is stated by the applicant to cater for pedestrians, although cyclists would also be able to use this footbridge upon dismounting their bicycles.

Footbridge Position

7.3.2. Objective OSGT 7 of the Development Plan supports and encourages infrastructural development and improvement works that benefit Oughterard as a small growth town, and objective OSGT 8 of the Development Plan encourages and supports the development of a series of pedestrian and cycle routes linking the residential areas of Oughterard with the town centre and local community services. The Development Plan does not include a specific objective in relation to the provision of a footbridge across the Owenriff river.

7.3.3. In considering the layout and position of the footbridge, from the outset it is essential to consider limitations arising from the fact that the existing Oughterard N59 national road bridge over the Owenriff river does not feature segregated pedestrian paths. This bridge only features a carriageway of approximately 5m in width flanked by stone walls, making passage reliant on the courtesy shown by yielding motorists. The N59 is the busiest vehicular traffic route through Oughterard, connecting extensive areas of west Connemara and the Galway metropolitan area. It is clear that the present situation does not provide a safe, segregated crossing for pedestrians of the Owenriff river on the west side of Oughterard. Currently, the only other crossing of the river within Oughterard, which is on the Glann Road, serves the eastern side of the town, and despite the riverside walk extending from this bridge to the Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside area, it does not provide a convenient connection between town centre services and communities within the Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside area, including the Scoil Chuimín agus Caitríona primary school and the St. Paul's post-primary school. The applicant provided a

technical note stating that the desire line between the schools and the town centre provides substantive rationale for the position of the bridge, and as the construction could take place without operational impacts to the existing Oughterard N59 road bridge. In my opinion this provides reasonable justification for an alternative safer pedestrian crossing point of the Owenriff river on the western side of the town, connecting the Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside area with the town centre. Furthermore, this would support the increased pedestrian infrastructure sought under policy objective OSGT 8 of the Development Plan.

Layout

7.3.4. In contrast to the properties along the northern side of the river, properties along Main Street generally back onto the river. The proposed positioning of the bridge would not require demolition of any buildings along Main Street, as it would only require the inclusion of part of a side garden serving a residential property. With the introduction of hard and soft landscaping, as well as crossing points on the south and north landings for the bridge, the proposed route would tie into existing pedestrian infrastructures, thereby providing a more seamless, direct and efficient link between communities and services north and south of the river. The proposed route featuring landscaped paths and seating areas would draw greater footfall from the town centre towards the river, which would support policy objective OSGT 1 of the Development Plan, aiming to, amongst other things, promote the development of an intensive, high-quality, well-landscaped, human-scaled and accessible environment to Oughterard town centre. Extensive ground is not used to facilitate the crossing, including the abutments, with the private garden space along the southern landing area capable of reverting to garden space following completion of the project. The compensatory tree planting within Carrowmanagh Park would complement the existing use of this space, while maintaining extensive green space for informal recreational use, such as ‘kickabouts’, and this element of the project would not reduce the area of amenity space serving residents of Carrowmanagh Park.

Design

7.3.5. The design of the development is stated to address various constraints associated with constructing a bridge crossing in this location, including sensitive habitat, flood

risk, changes in ground level, the ACA setting and the visual amenities of the area. A Structure Options Report was provided with the application detailing the various options for the north landing tie-in area for the footbridge, and highlighting the safety, visual amenity, residential amenity, construction complexity, utility impacts, maintenance needs and efficiencies associated with each bridge design option. Durability, hydraulics, sustainability, build complexity, the environment and health and safety were also stated by the applicant as factors considered in arriving at the final footbridge design. The options report also considered structural form for the footbridge with the low steel-bow, string-truss form preferred, as it would not be a technically-demanding structure to design and build, which was reflected in the economic evaluation. The preferred proposed footbridge would feature a single span and would sit on abutments setback from the river channel. According to the details submitted, this footbridge would be 48m in length and the two tied arches would have a height of 3.6m. The span of the bridge would be key in addressing constraints associated with the ecological setting and the known flood risk levels. The deck level to the bridge would not be flat, as it would cater for a 1.7m drop in ground level from the landing area on the southern side to the northern side.

7.3.6. The bridge would be set back from Main Street by approximately 28m and coupled with the line of buildings fronting directly onto Main Street, as well as mature trees along the banks to the river, views of the new bridge would be limited. There would be greater scope to view the bridge from the western approach along Riverside / Carrowmanagh Road than from Main Street. To address the visual impact of the development, the applicant provided a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The zone of theoretical visibility of the bridge is included in appendix 3 to the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which guided the applicant to consider the visual impact of the development from 15 viewpoints within 200m of the footbridge. The riverside setting and landscape was adjudged by the applicant to be of medium sensitivity, with slight beneficial effects overall for this landscape via the introduction of the footbridge. According to the applicant, from viewpoint 11 at the southern landing to the footbridge on Riverside / Carrowmanagh Road, an adverse visual effect would arise for residents of the adjoining house (Eircode: H91 E529) with a window opening onto the location of the proposed footbridge. Users of the riverside walkway approaching the footbridge from the east would be subject to only

a slight adverse visual effect according to the applicant. From all other viewpoints neutral or beneficial visual effects are asserted by the applicant to arise.

7.3.7. Two photomontage images illustrating the likely appearance of the footbridge and associated development in the riverside landscape are provided. I consider that the visuals submitted accurately demonstrate the extent of visual change that would arise as a result of the proposed development and from the most critical areas. The applicant states that the colour for the bridge would be finalised at detailed design stage and that additional tree planting, high-quality finishes, including timber decking, and use of local materials, would allow the development to blend into its setting.

7.3.8. The scale of the bridge is sensitive to its context, with only modest heights proposed and slender structural form. The bridge design does not make a massively bold architectural statement that is intending to create a new focal point or a substantive visual landmark within the town; it is understated in terms of the design approach, with lightweight appearance and restrained elegance responding to its primary function as a safe link between two areas of the town, while being sensitive to the expansive riverside setting. I am satisfied that the design would be appropriate for the intended function of the footbridge, and any adverse effects arising from the visual impact of the development would be very much limited to locations immediate to the footbridge landings, with visual impacts dissipating rapidly moving away from the footbridge location. The provision of additional tree planting as part of the southern approach to the footbridge and within the tree compensation area would further alleviate the visual impacts of the development over time and would be in character with the immediate riverside setting. While there would be some adverse visual impacts along Station Road as a result of the use of an open field for the project construction compound, this would be only for a limited 9-month period at most, therefore, any short-term visual impacts would be addressed when reverting use of this area back to an open field.

7.3.9. Impacts on views from neighbouring residences, intermittent sections of the immediate transport network and within the site, would be reduced where screening is available, maintained and proposed, with viewers becoming accustomed to the appearance of the footbridge over time. I am satisfied that the proposed development would not result in significant negative visual impacts and the

footbridge would be beneficial in opening up views of the river setting for residents and visitors.

Boundary Walls

7.3.10. Policy objective TWHS 1 of the Development Plan seeks to retain important natural boundaries including stonewalls, and where possible replace these with a boundary type similar to the existing boundary. The marking of property boundaries by stonewalls generally with a height of 1m is characteristic of the area, and the subject proposals would require the demolition of a 25m-long stretch of stonewall along the house siding onto the proposed footbridge north landing area, as well as the demolition of a 66m-long stretch of stonewall along Main Street (N59 national road) fronting the side garden to The Old Barracks residence.

7.3.11. The wall along the northern Riverside residence would be dismantled to allow the proposed works to be completed, and this wall would be reconstructed slightly closer to the house, in form of a 300mm-thick stone masonry wall with a straighter alignment than the present wall. A similar approach would be undertaken with respect to the stonewalls along the frontage to The Old Barracks residence, where the wall would be rebuilt with castellated coping, but in a different position to provide for a new recessed vehicular entrance with splayed set back to facilitate visibility along Main Street. This stonewall would also wrap around to mark the western side of the pedestrian path approaching the proposed footbridge.

7.3.12. In reassembling the stonewall boundaries to the subject residential properties, albeit in slightly differing arrangements, but in a similar style, I am satisfied that the proposals at the footbridge site would not be contrary to the stated boundary treatment provisions of policy objective TWHS 1. Further consideration of this objective and proposals for a temporary construction compound is undertaken below (see section 7.7).

Conclusion

7.3.13. Accordingly, I am satisfied that there is sufficient rationale for the proposed position, design and treatments associated with the proposed footbridge. The proposed footbridge would benefit the town in offering a more convenient and safer pedestrian route between communities and schools on the northern side of the river and communities and town centre services on the southern side of the river. This would

comply with policy objectives OSGT 1, OSGT 8 and TWHS 1 of the Development Plan and would be in the interests of the sustainable development and proper planning of the area.

7.4. Cultural Heritage

7.4.1. As part of the application, a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment for the three land parcels forming the site was provided, listing the extent of cultural heritage assets in the environs, including built heritage and archaeology features.

Built Heritage

7.4.2. Oughterard Courthouse and Kilcummin Church on Main Street comprise the closest Protected Structures to the footbridge site that are recorded in the Development Plan. The Courthouse and Church are also included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) and are a stated 40m and 55m respectively from the proposed footbridge on the opposite side of Main Street. Other Protected Structures in the immediate town centre area include the aforementioned N59 road bridge, a water pump, the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Oughterard National School, Wellpark House and a two-storey farmhouse. Policy objective AH 2 of the Development Plan includes various provisions with respect to maintaining the character and setting of Protected Structures, while policy objective AH 3 requires regard to be given to structures listed in the NIAH.

7.4.3. The applicant asserts that the project would have positive impacts for the setting, views, character and amenity value of the Protected Structures closest to the proposed footbridge. The separation distances between the nearest built heritage assets, including screening and the physical buffer provided by the N59 national road, very much limit scope for the proposed footbridge to interfere with the setting or character of neighbouring Protected Structures, as well as structures in the NIAH. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not conflict with planning provisions within policy objectives AH 2 and AH 3 of the Development Plan.

7.4.4. As noted above, the application site comprises areas within Oughterard ACA, which primarily comprises properties fronting onto the central streets of the town, as well as the river corridor. Under article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2025, when giving notice of a proposed development in an approved

newspaper and erecting site notices, a Local Authority shall state whether the subject proposed development consists of or comprises the carrying out of works to the exterior of a structure that is located within an ACA, and the development would materially affect the character of the area concerned. The notices provided by the Local Authority with respect to the proposed development do not refer to the proposals as consisting of or comprising of works to the exterior of a structure that is located within an ACA and that the development would materially affect the character of the area. Notwithstanding this, I am satisfied that there was not a necessity to include the reference under article 81(2)(c)(ii) of the stated Regulations, as the proposed development would not feature works to the exterior of a structure within the ACA.

7.4.5. Policy objective AH 4 of the Development Plan includes provisions to protect, conserve and enhance the special character of ACAs and the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2011) refer to the need for the design of new structures in ACAs to be harmonious to their setting. The applicant's Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment states that an Outline Architectural Heritage Appraisal directed the position, layout and type of footbridge development that should be progressed in light of the built heritage context, including views within the ACA. The applicant asserts that the proposals would have positive impacts on the setting and character of the ACA.

7.4.6. As noted above, views of the footbridge would be restricted to its immediate landing areas and along the river channel. The design of the proposed development has also been considered appropriate relative to the function of the footbridge and its riverside setting. The photomontages provided with the application illustrate how the development would affect the character of the ACA. The enabling works and landscaping, including planting and rebuilt stonewalls, would not result in material change to the character of the townscape along Main Street and the introduction of the footbridge would allow for views across the river corridor, including the ACA, to be harnessed and enjoyed by residents and visitors. I am satisfied that the proposed footbridge would not be detrimental to the character or setting of the Oughterard ACA, therefore the proposals would not conflict with policy objective AH 4 of the Development Plan.

Archaeology

7.4.7. Policy objectives ARC 1 and ARC 4 of the Development Plan aim to protect and preserve archaeological sites. The applicant's Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment provides an overview of archaeological features and investigations undertaken in the immediate area, including a walkover survey. According to the applicant, the footbridge site does not feature sites within the Record of Monuments and Places (RMPs), which is based on the sites and monuments record (SMR). The applicant asserts that the project construction compound on Station Road is located in an area of archaeological potential, as historic mapping depicts this area as grazing associated with a nearby clachan settlement. Further to this, the river is considered to have potential to yield archaeological remains or deposits. Notwithstanding the location of the tree compensation area within an area of archaeological potential associated with the river, it is noted to have been subject of extensive ground clearance works during the 1990s and, as such, there would be limited potential for archaeology to remain.

7.4.8. The applicant's assessment acknowledges seven formally-designated, cultural-heritage assets within the study area of the project. The two town centre churches are included in the SMR (refs. GA054-005 and GA054-007). Other known heritage features situated between 100m and 480m of the footbridge site included in the SMR comprise the town of Oughterard (ref. GA054-005), two holy well ritual sites (refs. GA054-015 and GA054-031), an 18th / 19th-century house (ref. GA054-016) and a vernacular house (ref. GA054-026). Undesignated archaeological sites were also identified primarily based on Ordnance Survey mapping, National Museum records and other archaeological investigations that have taken place in the area.

7.4.9. As with considerations in respect of the built heritage assets and the ACA setting, the applicant asserts that the proposed development would have positive effects on the setting of known archaeological sites close to the footbridge site. The development is not directly connected with known archaeological sites and is not of a scale or nature that could reasonably lead to substantive impacts for the known archaeological heritage assets in the area. Ground levelling works and excavation of service trenches is proposed in the temporary construction compound, which the applicant asserts could potentially have negative impacts on archaeology, should remains or deposits be found during these works. The Minister for Housing, Local

Government and Heritage is satisfied that the proposals would not be likely to impact on underwater archaeology.

7.4.10. Prior to construction works commencing, a programme of licensed archaeological testing is proposed to be carried out by the applicant on both landing areas for the footbridge. This archaeological testing would also be undertaken in the project construction compound area on Station Road. Results would be reported to the National Monuments Service (NMS) and consultation would be undertaken with relevant officers in the Local Authority and the TII-assigned project archaeologist. In their submission the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage states that they broadly accept the applicant's post-consent proposals in addressing archaeology, requiring the applicant's results of licenced tests to be accompanied by a hand-held metal-detection survey, along with an Archaeological Impact Assessment making recommendations regarding measures to avoid or, where necessary, mitigate all identified effects on archaeological heritage. Archaeological monitoring is also requested by the Minister, including suspension of construction activities should archaeological structures, features, deposits, sites or objects be suspected or verified. According to the Minister, should archaeological materials be discovered, the applicant should adhere to the mitigation requirements of the Department, which prioritise redesign or partial redesign to facilitate full or partial preservation of any newly discovered archaeological materials on site.

7.4.11. In response to the submission from the Minister, the applicant states that they are committed to the testing and reporting requirements required by the Minister, but they consider that standard text excavations would potentially offset the need for archaeological monitoring during the construction phase, as it would provide a more effective means of discovery, with the project only featuring a very limited development footprint.

7.4.12. The NMS 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (1999) stipulates that where archaeological heritage is affected or proposed to be affected by a development, either preservation in-situ or preservation by record through archaeological excavation and recording is required. In certain situations, on the basis of the results of archaeological assessment, it may be considered appropriate to carry out archaeological monitoring, however, such monitoring is only a means to ensuring that preservation in situ or preservation by

record take place, as appropriate. Section 3.7.2 of the Framework sets out the circumstances where archaeological monitoring may be appropriate, including where there are only slight grounds that archaeological materials or features may be found and archaeological testing might not be necessary, or where archaeological excavation might not be possible.

7.4.13. The applicant's assessment has identified numerous designated and undesignated archaeological heritage assets in the environs of the project application areas, consistent with a location within an historic urban area and along a river channel. The assessment indicates only limited potential for archaeology to be found on site, as well as scope for archaeological excavations to take place, the results of which can be reported to the NMS. The results of test excavations may or may not inform the need for archaeological mitigation, including monitoring of works should archaeology be uncovered.

7.4.14. The applicant is attempting to address the potential for unknown archaeological remains to arise in advance in order to streamline the project construction programme and address any unforeseen matters in a timely manner. I am satisfied that it would be unnecessary to specifically insist on archaeological monitoring for the entire project at this juncture based on the details of the archaeological assessment, the nature of the project comprising a limited development footprint and the provisions of the 'Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage' (1999). In conclusion, a condition can be attached to the decision to require standard pre-construction testing and reporting. Archaeological monitoring can subsequently take place should this be required based on the results of testing and reporting with the NMS.

7.4.15. I am satisfied that based on the information presented, the proposals do not result in a situation that would preclude the granting of permission for substantive archaeological reasons and the proposed development would not be contrary to Development Plan policy objectives ARC 1 and ARC 4.

7.5. Impacts on Neighbouring Residents

7.5.1. Observations were not received in relation to the proposed development from residents of the area. As noted in the Development Plan with respect to infill sites in

urban areas, residential amenities should not be adversely affected by development. As noted throughout this assessment, the provision of a footbridge connecting to existing pedestrian infrastructure has potential benefits for local residents in accessing the riverside and the town centre facilities.

Context

7.5.2. The closest house to the proposed construction works area would be the two-storey house siding onto the river at Riverside (Eircode: H91 E529). The other closest residential buildings to the construction site comprise houses along Main Street, including the house known as 'The Old Barracks', with the access to the footbridge proposed to cut through the side garden to this residence. The applicant's site section and longitudinal section drawings (nos. 0088798-ATK-XX-XX-DR-CE-900339, -900339 & -900344) illustrate the relationship between the closest existing houses and the proposed footbridge element of the project.

7.5.3. The house at Riverside features a ground-floor, side-elevation window serving a habitable room overlooking and 2m from the riverside walkway. This house also features front bay windows with angled views towards the river corridor, and a first-floor window onto the riverside, although this appears to serve a bathroom. The proposed walkway accessing the footbridge would be 2m from the ground-floor side elevation to this house.

7.5.4. The Old Barracks residence reads as a two storey house onto Main Street, although the drop in ground level towards the river facilitates a lower ground-floor level and a flat-roof rear projection to this house. The proposed footbridge would be approximately 45m from a side window within the rear projection to The old Barracks. The two-storey house known as 'Ringabella' (Eircode: H91 YFR6), with ground floor set below the adjacent road level along Main Street, does not appear to have windows opening onto the proposed walkway area.

Outlook and Overbearing Impacts

7.5.5. The two photomontage images revealing the likely appearance of the footbridge and associated development in the riverside landscape, illustrate the development context with respect to neighbouring buildings and structures. The proposed development would be visible from the private gardens and internal areas of several neighbouring houses, particularly those houses referenced above, and to an extent it

would partially change the outlook from these properties. As stated, the footbridge would feature modest heights that would not exceed the height of neighbouring houses. The outlook from the ground-floor side elevation window to the house on the Riverside north landing area for the footbridge would change substantially with the position of the footbridge immediately to the south of this.

7.5.6. The proposed footbridge height and lightweight appearance provide the primary means to avoid potential overbearing impacts arising from the development for neighbouring residential receptors. Screening by hedgerows and trees along the southern landing area and the approach to the footbridge would further soften the appearance of the footbridge where visible from residences along Main Street. The proposed development would introduce a new feature into the river corridor landscape, which already accommodates bridge crossings, albeit of a differing scale, design and function. I am satisfied that the drawings submitted, including the photomontages, demonstrate that the footbridge would not have a significant overbearing impact on the surrounding residences and the extent of visual change arising for neighbouring residents would be in character with the evolving urban landscape.

Overlooking

7.5.7. The walkways required in approaching the footbridge would draw people closer to neighbouring houses, with potential to impact on the privacy enjoyed by residents of these houses via overlooking. There are no strict guidelines with respect to separation distances to be achieved between residential properties and public walkways. In the interests of security, DM Standard 1 of the Development Plan supports overlooking of river paths for walkers and cyclists.

7.5.8. There would be scope for overlooking of private residences from the proposed walkways and footbridge, however, the existing and proposed planting, as well as the separation distances achieved, would not result in a situation whereby excessive overlooking of houses along Main Street would arise. On approaching the northern landing area, those using the footbridge would not face directly onto the ground-floor, side-elevation window to the Riverside house (see section B1 – drawing no. 0088798-ATK-XX-XX-DR-CE-900342). There is an existing walkway along the north riverside and the proposals would tie in with this. While an increase in walkway

users would arise based on information provided in the applicant's technical note (585 pedestrians / cyclists daily), the potential for overlooking of the side area to the house along Riverside would largely remain as is presently and the intensified use of the walkway would not justify refusing or altering the development for reasons relating to overlooking.

Lighting

7.5.9. I do not consider the scale of the footbridge, coupled with the stated separation distances from the footbridge to existing houses, would lead to circumstances that could result in substantive impacts via excessive overspill lighting to neighbouring housing. The proposed development would provide additional artificial lighting in the form of two 6m-high lighting columns along the approach to the southern landing area, two 8m-high beacon lights marking the pedestrian crossing on Main street, two 6m-high beacon lights marking the crossing on Riverside / Carrowmanagh Road, and LED strip lighting integrated into the handrails along the footbridge and the northern steps and ramp. The applicant asserts that this would provide for safe use of the pedestrian infrastructure, while minimising impacts on sensitive receptors. The extent of lighting that would be introduced to the area as part of the development would be similar to public lighting in the immediate area and would not be excessive in this urban context.

Construction Phase Impacts

7.5.10. Based on various standards and limits, the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) submitted with the application sets out the intended measures for the construction phase of the project to address noise, air quality, soils and geology, ecology, landscape and visual amenity, water, flooding, cultural heritage, traffic and local amenities, including pollution-prevention measures. Two weeks of site investigations are envisaged, followed by a 9-month enabling and construction period. During this construction period the applicant asserts that the six-week period to install the footbridge with a crane would lead to the most substantive period of disruption for residents along Main Street, and that a 13-day period in which a side boundary wall would be dismantled and services realigned would result in the most substantive disruption for residents along Riverside. The piling works for the southern footbridge abutment, would take place at substantive distances from the

closest residential properties, and best practice standards would be adhered to with respect to vibration and associated noise levels. The tree planting within Carrowmanagh Park is anticipated to take place over 15 days. Construction works would take place between the hours of 0800 to 1800 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, and between 0800 to 1300 hours on Saturdays. As these are the hours that were requested, in the event that permission is granted a condition should be attached to clarify this.

7.5.11. Hoarding and fencing would be installed around work areas to minimise nuisance to the public during construction works, including reduced visual impacts and noise and dust emissions. Mitigation measures to address identified risks are set out, including dust-suppression measures, informing local residents of potential noise and vibration impacts and implementation of a construction traffic management plan by the assigned contractor. Construction impacts on local air quality would be limited to the operation of plant and machinery, as well as vehicular movements, with various measures capable of being employed to address emissions to air. The efficacy of the measures set out in the CEMP are widely acknowledged in successfully ensuring that emissions and impacts during the construction phase activities are kept within reasonable limits.

7.5.12. With the manufacturing of the proposed footbridge structure offsite and its subsequent transport to a temporary holding area, the potential for disturbance and nuisance in the immediate environs of the footbridge site would be minimised. The construction phase impacts of the project would only be of a temporary nature and would also be subject of a finalised project CEMP requiring compliance with various standards. I am satisfied that the proposed development should not be refused permission consequent to the potential nuisance or other impacts for neighbouring residents during the construction phase of the project.

Conclusions

7.5.13. Having regard to the assessments and conclusions set out above, I am satisfied that the proposed development should not be refused permission for reasons relating to the potential impacts of the development on the amenities of neighbouring residents.

7.6. Access

7.6.1. From the outset I note that the proposed footbridge would allow pedestrians to avoid the existing narrow and heavily-trafficked carriageway bridging the river 150m to the west of the proposed footbridge site.

Pedestrian Access

7.6.2. Policy objective WC 1 of the Development Plan requires the design of pedestrian and cycle infrastructure to be in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the DMURS, TII Publications, 'The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads', and the NTA document 'Permeability: Best Practice Guide'. The applicant's landscape site plan (drawing no. 24055-CO-LP-0-01-REV-3) illustrates the layout for the proposed development, including the 3m-wide southside walkway leading to the 3m-wide deck to the footbridge, which would drop towards the Riverside area, with a 3m-wide ramped access along the west side of the landing area and a 3m-wide stepped access on the east side connecting into the existing pubic paths and the proposed pedestrian crossing.

7.6.3. A gate would also be installed along the boundary wall separating the amenity area to Carrowmanagh Park and the riverside walk, which the applicant indicates to provide access for Uisce Éireann personnel, whom I note to manage and maintain drainage and water supply services crossing the amenity space and along the immediate stretch of the river. The introduction of this gate would not substantially interfere with the use of the amenity space serving Carrowmanagh Park.

7.6.4. The applicant provided a technical note outlining the rationale for the footbridge width, which was guided by the need to reduce the impact of the footbridge on the environment and to address the intended function and context. The ramped and angular turns required on the north landing, as well as the limited proportion of surveyed cycle movements in 2022 along Riverside, are stated to have resulted in the applicant choosing to design the crossing to facilitate pedestrians only, although cyclists could use the footbridge upon dismounting.

7.6.5. TII Design Criteria for Footbridges (DN-STR-03005) is stated by the applicant to only require a clear width of 2m for the proposed footbridge based on the expected hourly flows and minimum standards. Based on forecasted demographic change, an

anticipated shift in modal share and the expected lifespan of the footbridge (120 years), the applicant asserts that it would be more prudent for the footbridge to be designed to cater for higher flow rates and in turn to increase its width beyond the minimum required arising from survey counts and the TII Design Criteria for Footbridges. In light of the existing modest average width of neighbouring footpaths (1.6m), the required footpath widths outlined in the DMURS and the low expectancy of cyclist flow rates, the applicant asserts that a 3m-wide clearance would be preferable in allowing small groups to pass comfortably in both directions and as the footbridge would be likely to cater for large groups of school children.

7.6.6. According to the applicant, the gradients of the pedestrian infrastructure have been guided by the standards required in the TII Design Criteria for Footbridges, the DMURS, the Cycle Design Manual and the TII guide 'Rural Cycle Design (Offline & Greenway) (DN-GEO-03047)'. The gradient of the approach path from the south would be 0.77% and a 5% gradient for the ramp on the northern approach to the footbridge, with a 3.5% gradient for the footbridge to account for the change in levels between the footbridge landing areas. A gradient of 1:20 or 5% is generally the minimum requirement for decks, ramps and paths under these guidelines, which the subject proposals would adhere to.

7.6.7. I am satisfied that the proposals feature due consideration for the technical standards outlined in policy objective WC 1 of the Development Plan and TII consider the proposal to comply with their publications. The applicant has provided ample justification for the width and gradients to be employed in the footbridge, which would also serve as a viewing area onto the river, further justifying the need for a deck width greater than that normally required for the anticipated number of pedestrian movements along the footbridge.

Vehicular Access

7.6.8. DM standard 28 of the Development Plan requires adequate provision of visibility at vehicular entrances and exit points. The applicant is proposing a new vehicular access to serve The Old Barracks residence, with the existing vehicular entrance shifting approximately 6m further to the west and recessed into the garden, with the rebuilt boundary walls splayed to increase visibility in both directions along Main Street. Double-yellow lines along the north side of Main Street currently restrict on-

street parking fronting the proposed footbridge site and the replacement vehicular access, and a 50km/hr speed limit applies to this urban road.

7.6.9. Based on the DMURS requirements, minimum sight-line visibility of 45m is required at a 2.4m setback along the mid-point of the proposed vehicular access. While visibility splays have not been illustrated on the application drawings, I am satisfied that this would be readily achieved, with bollards to be installed to prevent vehicles from parking within the splays along the new stretch of footpath.

Safety Audit

7.6.10. In compliance with DM standard 33 of the Development Plan, a Road Safety Audit has also been provided indicating a number of minor matters to be complied with in relation to access and visibility. Potential for motorists not to stop for crossing pedestrians was cited as a concern in the stage 1 audit, which the applicant appears to have addressed by prioritising progression for pedestrian via the raised zebra crossings with beacon lights. Visibility of pedestrians intending to use the zebra crossing from the northside of Main Street has been addressed by increasing the setback to the stonewall boundary. Another concern was raised regarding the potential for pedestrians to descend the access ramp on the northern landing area and walk directly onto the proposed pedestrian crossing without checking for approaching vehicles. To deter this the applicant intends installing limestone benches partially obstructing a direct line between the ramp and the crossing. As noted above, the applicant has considered the technical requirements for the pedestrian infrastructure and further audits of the scheme can be undertaken, as would be typical for a project of this nature, in order to fully address any currently unforeseen road or pedestrian safety concerns.

Active Travel

7.6.11. The applicant addresses the provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2025 and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, asserting that the development would contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions. The Climate Action Plan 2024 aims to achieve a 50% increase in daily active travel journeys by 2030. Within the Technical Note addressing the footbridge specifications, the applicant states that a mid-week survey during school term in 2022 recorded a total of 297 vehicular movements between the N59 road bridge and Carrowmanagh

during the morning peak hour (08:00 to 09:00 hours). This 2022 survey also recorded 159 peak pedestrian movements in the afternoon (13:00 to 14:00 hours). According to the applicant the proposed footbridge would encourage a shift towards more active travel modes and in doing so it would support policy objectives PT 1 and PM 5 of the Development Plan, which aim to promote sustainable transport options as an alternative to the private car, thereby facilitating the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society.

7.6.12. I acknowledge that the applicant has not estimated the modal shift that may arise from the proposed development, however, I am satisfied that the design and location of the proposed footbridge and associated infrastructure would be likely to encourage a shift towards more sustainable transport patterns, such as increased pedestrian journeys, given that it would offer a more attractive, convenient and safer route between communities, services and facilities. Accordingly, the proposed development would support the achievement of active travel journeys supported in the Climate Action Plan 2024.

7.7. Biodiversity

Local Ecology

7.7.1. This site lies within an urban area, with the current land uses in the vicinity of the site detailed in section 2 above. The Development Plan includes policy objective NHB 1 addressing the protection of biodiversity and natural heritage. Other policy objectives of the Development Plan set out the need to protect ecological sites, including European Sites.

7.7.2. An Ecological Impact Assessment report dated June 2025 was submitted with this application referring to the various ecological surveys undertaken and the habitats and species identified nearby, as well as referring to designated sites for nature conservation in the vicinity, including the Lough Corrib SAC following the Owenriff river channel towards Lough Corrib. The habitats recorded on site are stated to comprise eroding upland river, buildings and artificial surfaces, scattered trees and parkland, (improved) amenity grassland, mixed broadleaved woodland, hedgerows and treelines. During the ecological surveys Annex I habitats were not recorded within the works area of the subject site. Badger trails were noted along the

riverbanks, although setts were not identified. The immediate area was recognised by the applicant as being potentially suitable for bird species of varying protected status. Tree felling as part of the project would only take place outside of the bird breeding season.

7.7.3. Aquatic surveys indicated Freshwater pearl mussel (Margaritifera Margaritifera) and Atlantic salmon using the immediate stretches of the Owenriff river, with Atlantic salmon recorded to be spawning immediately north of the N59 road bridge in November 2024. Evidence of otter using the river was identified, although holts or couches used by otters were not recorded in the project area. The immediate stretch of river is considered suitable habitat for Sea Lamprey and Brook Lamprey. Threatened or protected invertebrates were not identified during the project ecological surveys.

7.7.4. Montbretia, an invasive species was recorded as being abundant on both immediate banks to the river and Cherry Laurel was recorded in the broadleaved woodland along the southern riverside of the site. Japanese knotweed and Himalayan knotweed, 'third schedule' invasive species, have been identified upstream of the site, close to the N59 road bridge. The development would not be expected to directly impact on knotweed species, however, in taking a precautionary approach the applicant states that the site and immediate area would be resurveyed for invasive species prior to construction commencing.

7.7.5. The Lough Corrib SAC, Lough Corrib SPA, Freshwater pearl mussel, bats and otters were considered by the applicant to be of international ecological importance. The treeline / hedgerow / woodland and watercourse habitat were considered by the applicant to be of local ecological importance (higher value), while badgers and other mammals were considered to be of national ecological importance. In my opinion Atlantic salmon would also have some elevated ecological importance based on the information presented and available.

7.7.6. To address potential impacts of the project on watercourses, the applicant refers to the proposed works methods to avoid pollutants entering the water during the bridge enabling works and installation, including silt-control measures. A works method to contain wastewaters during replacement of the underground services along Riverside is outlined by the applicant. Protection of water quality is viewed by the

applicant as being central to maintaining appropriate habitat for Freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic salmon and Common frog. Surveying of the Freshwater pearl mussel habitat would take place prior to and after the bridge installation and turbidity monitoring would be undertaken during the works, with emergency measures to halt works if needed.

7.7.7. The actual position and clear-span design of the footbridge is stated to have been arrived at having regard to potential ecological impacts, with the setback for the construction works from the riverbanks reducing the risk of excess sediment entering the watercourse. A series of guidance documents would be adhered to as part of the construction phase mitigation measures, including IFIs 'Guidance on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works In and Adjacent to Waters' and 'Guidance on Assessment and Construction Management in Margaritifera Catchments in Ireland'. Safe means of storing fuels and addressing spills would be implemented and an ecological clerk of works would be employed for the duration of the project. A works method for the construction of the bridge abutments lists the measures to be employed to address risk of cementitious materials entering receiving water.

7.7.8. The expected noise and vibration arising from the project are not considered to present significant impacts for ecological species using the area, including Freshwater pearl mussel, given the short duration of the proposed works and the distance from the river to the rotary coring works on the southern riverbank. Lighting would be minimised during construction works to limit spillage onto the aquatic habitat and the adjoining river corridor. Construction works would only take place during daylight hours and access along the river would be continually maintained for mammals, such as otters. Given the urban location, and recreational use of the river and the adjoining walkways, mammal species would already be accustomed to some extent to human activity in this urban area. As vehicles would not use the footbridge, potential for substantive levels of contaminants such as fuel oils and tyre-rubber particles to enter the river during the operational phase would not be expected to arise.

7.7.9. Any residual effects for species reliant on the river corridor would be imperceptible and of temporary or short-term duration. Section 10 of my report highlights that the proposed development would not result in a risk of deterioration on any waterbody either qualitatively or quantitatively, temporarily or permanently. Based on the

information submitted and available, I am satisfied that there would not be significant residual impacts from the project for the ecological receptors, including species using the aquatic habitat and riverbanks. Impacts on bats and trees are considered below.

Bats

7.7.10. The Development Plan includes policy objective NHB 9 aiming to protect bats and their roosts, feeding areas, flight paths and commuting routes. As part of their Ecological Impact Assessment the applicant considered foraging bats as a key ecological receptor that would be impacted by the construction phase impacts. Bat roost surveys, transect surveys and static detector surveys were carried out along the river channel and in the immediate areas between June and August 2024. A total of 17 potential roosts features were identified and subject of emergence / re-entry surveys. There are no buildings on the site, however, the survey findings are stated to suggest that whiskered bats possibly use neighbouring buildings for roosting. Roosting bats using trees were not identified, although mature trees, particularly along the south riverbank and the broadleaved woodland were considered to offer opportunities for bat roosting.

7.7.11. The survey results indicated that bat activity along the river and within the woodland was high with Soprano pipistrelle, Common pipistrelle, Leisler's, Daubenton's, Brown long-eared and Whiskered bats all identified. With the exception of a single call 60m west of the proposed footbridge site, Lesser horseshoe bat was not recorded along the river or within the immediate woodland. There will be a loss of some woodland habitat used as foraging and commuting lines by bats, however, according to the applicant, the replacement trees and the native evergreen hedgerow would mitigate the loss of these trees. As per the request of IFI, all replacement trees should be of a native variety and this should be addressed as a condition in the event of a grant of permission for the proposed development. While the proposals would increase lighting in the area, this would be kept to a minimum by using only a limited number of light stands and by focussing lighting downwards.

7.7.12. The development would not result in the loss of roosting habitat based on survey findings, although the mature trees could potentially be used for roosting prior to the proposed felling works. Use of sensitive lighting and native planting as part of landscaping would alleviate impacts on bats.

7.7.13. Having regard to the foregoing, including measures to mitigate the potential impacts on bats and the ecological value of habitat on site for bats, with recordings primarily indicating commuting and foraging of bats through the site and along the river within an existing built-up urban area, I am satisfied that it is not likely that the proposed development would have significant effects on bat species.

Trees

7.7.14. Policy objective TWHS 1 of the Development Plan also seeks to retain important trees, tree clusters and tree boundaries, ancient woodland, natural boundaries, in particular species-rich roadside and townland boundary hedgerows, and where possible replace these with a boundary type similar to the existing boundary. The applicant submitted an Arboricultural Assessment with their application describing 117 trees within the environs of the project site works, and the extent of tree and hedgerow removal intended to take place as part of the project. As referenced above, mature trees occupy the banks of the river channel, with the applicant identifying a mix of alder, sycamore, holly, willow, elderberry, elm, beech and hawthorn. The applicant states that the overall width of the proposed footbridge was restrained in part to reduce the extent of trees that would need to be felled to enable the development.

7.7.15. The site clearance works require the removal of 60 trees situated on the north and south banks of the river. Tree species to be maintained as part of the proposals would be dominated by alder and sycamore. All ash trees within the site would be felled and these trees are noted to be the surveyed trees in the worst condition, featuring varying stages of Ash die-back disease. The applicant asserts that the replacement of these trees with healthy native trees would represent a long-term biodiversity gain.

7.7.16. A series of standard protection measures for those trees intended to be maintained is outlined by the applicant, covering the enabling works, construction and post-construction phases of the development. The applicant proposes planting 23 trees adjacent to the footbridge, as well as a 1.8m-high native species hedgerow bordering the southern approach to the footbridge and the garden space to The Old Barracks residence. As sufficient space within the approaches to the footbridge would not be available to compensate for all trees to be felled to facilitate the project, the applicant

proposes planting 39 trees augmenting the tree planting already within the neighbouring amenity space to Carrowmanagh Park. I am satisfied that the proposed extent of trees to be felled and removed would be reasonable, with the loss of these trees addressed in a reasonable manner by supplementing existing trees along the river with new trees.

7.7.17. In addition, the proposals would require the removal of a section of hedgerow approximately 30m in length running across the proposed entrance to the construction compound along Station Road. The hedgerow is in reasonable mature condition and the applicant has not provided any details with respect to mitigating the loss of this hedgerow, such as its replacement following temporary use of the compound area. I am satisfied that a condition can and should be attached to any permission arising, requiring replacement native hedgerow to be planting along the temporary construction compound access following use of this area.

Conclusion

7.7.18. With the attachment of a suitably-worded condition addressing the need for replacement hedgerow planting along the construction compound access, I am satisfied that the proposals would not be contrary to the provisions of Development Plan policy objective TWHS 1. Furthermore, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not conflict with policy objectives of the Development Plan aiming to protect biodiversity, including policy objectives NHB 1 and NHB 9.

7.8. Flood Risk

7.8.1. Section 14.6 of the Development Plan and the associated policy objectives FL 1 to FL 18 inclusive, address flood risk considerations. In certain situations and locations, the Development Plan requires justification tests and / or site-specific flood risk assessments in accordance with the criteria set out under The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009) and Circular PL02/2014 (as updated / superseded). Management measures to address flood risk are listed as part of DM Standard 68 to the Development Plan. As the development involves the construction of a bridge over a watercourse, it is also subject of the requirements set out in Section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act, 1945, relating to the need for consent to be acquired from the OPW.

7.8.2. A stage 2 flood risk assessment was carried out for Oughterard as part of the preparation of the Development Plan, which identified areas at risk of fluvial, pluvial and groundwater flooding. The Development Plan indicates that in 2022 there were no structural works intended to address flood relief in Oughterard, as the identified flood relief measures were not considered economically justifiable. A flood risk map is contained in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment appended to the Development Plan and this indicates an indicative fluvial flood zone A on both sides of the Owenriff river, including areas within the tree compensation and temporary construction compound sites for this project. The temporary construction compound would also feature areas situated within the indicative fluvial flood zone B, as well as an area of pluvial flood risk.

7.8.3. As the development comprises local transport infrastructure and associated development, and parts of the site are located within the indicative Development Plan fluvial flood zone A, the aforementioned Flood Risk Guidelines require this less vulnerable development to meet a justification test. According to the applicant, their surveying allows for a more accurate assessment of flood risk levels to be arrived at, when compared with the indicative details provided in the Development Plan, and that their surveys justify a conclusion that the proposed footbridge would be within flood zone B and therefore appropriate for the site. In my opinion it is quite clear that the proposed footbridge traversing the river channel must be considered to be at least partially within flood zone A and the applicant has not specifically addressed the fact that the indicative flood maps contained in the Development Plan reveal the ancillary areas of the site in Carrowmanagh Park and on Station Road to be within flood zone A.

7.8.4. Owing to their consideration of the entire footbridge site as being within flood zone b, the applicant did not submit a standalone site specific flood risk assessment report specifically addressing the justification test to allow for the local transport infrastructure to permitted on this site. Notwithstanding this, I am satisfied that the information required to undertake this test was provided within the reports presented as part of the application, including within the Planning Report and in the OPW Section 50 Report. As noted above, the land-use zoning objectives for the site do not constrain the proposed provision of a footbridge in this location and the proposed development would support wider planning objectives in increasing permeability

within the town for pedestrians and indirectly supporting road safety improvements and climate change objectives.

7.8.5. The use of topographical data, as well as hydrological and hydraulic analysis, has allowed the applicant to detail flood levels along the Owenriff river, with the existing N59 road bridge noted to be causing a significant contraction in flows. A peak fluvial flood level for the Owenriff river of 10.75m OD was identified at the location of the proposed footbridge in a mid-range, future-scenario, flood event. The applicant's proposed general arrangement layout plan – sheet 3 of 4 (drawing no.0088798-ATK-XX-XX-DR-CE-900331) indicates the level of a 1% annual exceedance probability (AEP) flood event in the mid-range, future scenario. As the footbridge abutments would be located outside the 1% AEP flood extents and the soffit level for the bridge would be 0.72m above this AEP flood level, with a 300mm freeboard as a climate change allowance compliant with OPW requirements, the applicant asserts that the proposed development would not have any impact on the flood conveyance capacity of the river. Surface water runoff from the proposed hard surfaces would be minimal given the gaps in the bridge decking, the small area of additional hardstanding associated with the abutments and paths, and the adjoining green areas with scope to store surface and storm water.

7.8.6. According to the applicant mitigation in the form of a flood risk management plan would be completed prior to the commencement of the development. The applicant's NIS and CEMP include a host of measures to mitigate the potential impact on water, in particular the avoidance of instream works and the various pollution and sediment-control measures. The timing of the works would be undertaken cognisant of extreme weather events, with excavations for the bridge abutments to take place during dry conditions. Use of the construction compound would only be necessary for a temporary period (maximum of 9 months) and it is only intended to plant trees in Carrowmanagh Park. Use of these areas would be avoided during periods of heavy rainfall that could lead to their flooding. Limited works are proposed in the ancillary site areas and their use presents negligible potential to increase flood risk elsewhere.

7.8.7. The details available would suggest very low risk of flooding to works areas within the site. I am satisfied that based on the information available and presented the proposed development would not be at substantive risk of flooding and would not

present a substantive risk of flooding to other lands, with various precautionary measures included as part of the initial development design and as part of the application. In conclusion, the proposed development would be justified in this location and would comply with the relevant policy objectives and development standards set out in the Development Plan, as well as the provisions of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2009). Furthermore, this conclusion confirms that those aspects of the proposed development within the 'Constrained Land Use' area of the Development Plan would be acceptable.

7.9. Conclusions

7.9.1. Having regard to the planning policy provisions relating to this site and the proposed form of development, I am satisfied that subject to compliance with conditions, the proposed development would be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.0 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

Introduction

8.1.1. This section of my report considers the likely effects of the proposed development on the environment and should be read in conjunction with the EIA screening in appendix A of this report. An EIA Screening Report was submitted with the application. Class (10)(b) of Schedule 5 Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, provides that mandatory EIA is required for the following classes of development that I consider reliant to this proposal:

- 10(a)(iv) - urban development that would involve an area greater than 2ha in the case of a business district, 10ha in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20ha elsewhere ('business district' means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use);
- 15 - any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7.

Project Thresholds

8.1.2. This proposed urban development on a site comprising a stated area of 0.84ha would be below thresholds in class 10(a)(iv). Further consideration of the proposals with respect to the type of project listed in class 15 is undertaken below.

Project Characteristics, Location and Potential Impacts

8.1.3. The provision of a footbridge, compensatory tree planting and a temporary construction compound within an urban area would not be likely to have an adverse impact in environmental terms on the immediate surrounding land uses. It is noted that the site is not designated as being within a landscape in need of particular protection. The footbridge and compensatory tree planting area would be located within an ACA. Cultural heritage matters have been considered in section 7.4 above and I am satisfied that this highlights that the cultural heritage of the area would not be likely to be significantly affected by the proposed development. Matters with respect to flooding and potential flood risks have been considered in section 7.8 above, which concludes that the development would not be at substantive risk of flooding and that it would not increase risk of flooding to other areas, primarily due to the soffit height of the footbridge and its clear-span design.

8.1.4. Following various ecological surveys, Annex I habitats were not recorded within the application site works areas and only limited use of the application site by flora and fauna was identified, although the importance of the aquatic habitat along the Owenriff river was recognised. As concluded in section 7.7 of my report, I am satisfied that the information available and provided with the application reveals that the proposed development would not have any likely significant effects on local biodiversity. The development is not associated with any significant loss of habitat that could act in a cumulative manner to result in significant negative effects to any ecological site. The proposed development would not give rise to substantive waste, and measures and features would be put in place to prevent pollution and limit disturbance. Section 9 below addresses whether or not the subject proposals would adversely affect the integrity of European sites.

8.1.5. I note that the applicant has submitted various reports in relation to the proposed development and the likely significant effects on the environment. Construction of the proposed development would be of a temporary nature and short-term, with best

practice construction measures to be employed as part of an adaptive project CEMP. The implementation of standard best practice methodologies during the construction and operation phase of the proposed development will effectively reduce the potential impacts and mitigate against any likely significant effects on the environment. Should the Commission be minded to grant approval for the development, the additional requirements to comply with the conditions I have recommended below, have been factored into the assessment of likely effects on the environment.

Conclusion

8.1.6. Having regard to the matters considered in sections 7 and 9 of my report, the EIA Screening Report document submitted with the application and the submissions on the file, and when considering the characteristics and location of the proposed development and the types and characteristics of potential impacts, it is considered unlikely that there would be significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development.

9.0 Appropriate Assessment

9.1. This section of my report considers the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites and should be read in conjunction with appendix B of this report.

9.2. In screening the need for AA, it was determined that the proposed development could result in significant effects on European Site No. 000297 (Lower Corrib SAC) and European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA) in view of the conservation objectives of those sites and that AA under the provisions of section 177AE of the Act of 2000 was required.

9.3. Following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the NIS and all associated material submitted, and taking into account the observation from IFI, I consider that adverse effects on the integrity of European Site No. 000297 (Lower Corrib SAC) and European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA) can be excluded in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of such effects. This conclusion is based on a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed project and the following:

- detailed assessment of construction and operational impacts;
- the proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives of European Site No. 000297 (Lower Corrib SAC), including maintaining the favourable conservation condition of Otter, White-clawed crayfish, Brook lamprey and Atlantic salmon and restoring the favourable conservation condition of Freshwater pearl mussel and Sea lamprey. Furthermore, the proposed development will not affect the attainment of conservation objectives to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the qualifying interest bird species associated with European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA);
- the effectiveness of mitigation measures proposed and the adoption of the project CEMP;
- the application of planning conditions to require the implementation of mitigation measures detailed in the project CEMP and NIS.

10.0 Water Framework Directive Assessment

10.1. Appendix B of this report screens the impact of the proposed development with respect to the provisions of the WFD. I have assessed the proposed development and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the WFD, which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface water and groundwater bodies in order to reach good chemical and ecological status, and to prevent their 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 qualitative or quantitative risk to any surface water or groundwater bodies. The reasons for coming to this conclusion is as follows:

- the implementation of the measures outlined in the project CEMP and NIS;
- the measures proposed to protect the Owenriff river during the construction phase, such as the maintenance of buffers from the river, the absence of in-stream works and the installation of silt and pollution-control measures;
- the proposed replacement piped services method statement and the proposed bridge abutment excavation works, including the restriction of works

to periods of dry weather, the short-term duration of the works and the pumping out of any collected waters in excavations;

- the limited use of the footbridge for active travel purposes during the operational phase.

10.2. I conclude that on the basis of objective information, the proposed development would not result in a risk of deterioration on any waterbody (rivers, lakes, groundwater, transitional and coastal), either qualitatively or quantitatively, temporarily or permanently, or otherwise jeopardise a waterbody in reaching the respective WFD objectives and, consequently, the proposed development can be excluded from further assessment.

11.0 Recommendation

11.1. The details submitted reveal extensive consideration of the potential impacts and the alternative options in undertaking the project. The project would be of major benefit to local and visiting communities in Oughterard by providing a safe and attractive pedestrian route over the Owenriff river, particularly when compared with the existing N59 road bridge. The project would also encourage a modal shift towards active travel trips and it would facilitate impressive views over the tree-lined river landscape, while being sufficiently cognisant of flood risk and ecological sensitivities arising from its context and function.

11.2. Following the assessments above, I recommend that the Commission approve the proposed development for the reasons and considerations set out below, albeit subject to conditions, including the requirement to comply with the submitted details and with the mitigation measures set out in the NIS and CEMP.

11.3. 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.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

In performing its functions in relation to the making of its decision, the Commission had regard to Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and the requirement to, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with the Climate Action Plan 2024, the Climate Action Plan 2025, the relevant provisions of Ireland's Long-term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions 2024, the National Adaptation Framework Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland 2024, including the relevant sectoral adaptation plans as they relate to biodiversity, and in the furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse-gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

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

- the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC);
- the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (as amended);
- the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites;
- the conservation objectives and qualifying interests for Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (European Site No. 000297) and Lough Corrib Special Protection Area (European Site No. 004042);
- the policies and objectives of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028;
- the provisions of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) issued by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in 2019;

- the provisions of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2009;
- the nature and extent of the proposed works, as set out in the application for approval;
- the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Ecological Impact Assessment and the Natura Impact Statement;
- the submissions received in relation to the proposed development, and,
- the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Commission to make a report and a recommendation on this matter.

Appropriate Assessment – Stage 1

The Commission agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion arrived at in the Planning Inspector's report that the Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (European Site No. 000297) and Lough Corrib Special Protection Area (European Site No. 004042) are the only European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

Appropriate Assessment – Stage 2

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and the associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions on file, and the Planning Inspector's assessment and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (European Site No. 000297) and Lough Corrib Special Protection Area (European Site No. 004042), in view of the Sites' conservation objectives. The Commission considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment. In completing the appropriate assessment, the Commission considered, in particular, the following:

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

(ii) the mitigation measures that are included as part of the current proposal, and

(iii) the Conservation Objectives for the European Sites.

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

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

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development / Likely Effects on the Environment

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, would not seriously injure the visual amenities of the area or the amenities of property in the area, would not adversely affect the cultural heritage of the area, would be acceptable in terms of traffic and pedestrian safety, would not be at risk of flooding and would not give rise to a risk of flooding or pollution, would constitute an appropriate form of development at this location and would be in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

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

2. Details of the proposed service access gate along the boundary wall to Carrowmanagh Park amenity space, as well as the materials, colours and textures of all the external finishes to the proposed footbridge shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record prior to commencement of development.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity and to ensure an appropriate high standard of development.

3. The mitigation and monitoring measures outlined in the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application, shall be carried out and implemented in full. Prior to the commencement of the development, details of a time schedule for implementation of the mitigation measures and associated monitoring shall be prepared by the Local Authority, placed on file and retained as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment and the protection of European Sites.

4. A suitably-qualified ecologist shall be retained by the Local Authority to oversee the site set up and construction of the proposed development and implementation of the mitigation measures relating to ecology. The ecologist shall be present during the works. Within two months of the completion of works, an ecological report of the site works shall be prepared by the appointed ecologist, placed on file and retained as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interest of nature conservation and biodiversity.

5. Prior to the commencement of development, the local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the project ecologist and relevant statutory agencies, an updated Construction Environmental Management Plan for the development, demonstrating the proposals adhere to best practice and protocols. This Construction

Environmental Management Plan shall be placed on file, retained as part of the public record and shall include:

a) all mitigation and monitoring measures to be implemented under condition 3;

b) the locations and extent of silt-control measures to be installed on the site;

c) specific proposals as to how the measures outlined in the Construction Environmental Management Plan will be measured and monitored for effectiveness;

d) a construction traffic management plan.

Reason: In the interest of road safety, and the protection of the environment, European Sites and public health.

6. The following nature conservation requirements shall be complied with:

(a) prior to the commencement of development, details of measures to protect fisheries and water quality of the river system shall be outlined and placed on file. Full regard shall be given to Inland Fisheries Ireland 'Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and adjacent to Waters' (2016). A programme of water-quality monitoring shall be prepared in consultation with the appointed project ecologist and relevant statutory agencies and the programme shall be implemented in full thereafter, placed on file and retained as part of the public record;

(b) prior to the commencement of the replacement underground services excavation works along the proposed footbridge north landing area at Riverside, advance notification shall be issued to Inland Fisheries Ireland;

(c) vegetation removal shall not take place during the period between the 1st day of March and the 31st day of August, inclusive, without

the written approval of the project ecologist. Any approval arising shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record;

(d) the results of pre-construction surveys for otters, badgers and invasive species, which shall be carried out by a suitably-qualified ecologist, shall be placed on file and retained as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and nature conservation.

7. The landscaping scheme shown on the submitted site plan drawing number 24055-CO-LP-0-01-REV-3 shall be carried out within the first planting season following substantial completion of the construction works. In addition to the proposals in the submitted scheme, within the first planting season following substantial completion of the construction works the Local Authority shall reestablish a hedgerow with indigenous species along the access to the temporary construction compound on Station Road. Only indigenous tree species should be planted as part of the overall landscaping scheme, including the compensatory tree planting.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

8. A Quality Audit (which shall include a Road Safety Audit, Access Audit, Cycle Audit and a Walking Audit) shall be carried out at Stage 2 for the detailed design stage and at Stage 3 for the post-construction stage. All audits shall be carried out at the developer's expense in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets guidance and Transport Infrastructure Ireland standards. Details of the independent audit team(s) shall be prepared, placed on the file and retained as part of the public record and all measures recommended by the Auditor(s) shall be implemented unless there are exceptional circumstances allowing for deviation. The Stage 2 Audit reports shall be prepared, placed on the file and retained as part of the public record prior to the commencement of development.

Reason: In the interests of traffic safety and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

9. The developer shall engage a suitably-qualified (licence-eligible) archaeologist to carry out an Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA) following consultation with the National Monument Service (NMS) in advance of any site preparation works and groundworks, including site investigation works, topsoil stripping, site clearance and excavation works.

The AIA shall involve an examination of all development layout / design drawings, completion of documentary / cartographic / photographic research and fieldwork, the latter to include, where applicable metal detection survey and archaeological testing (consented / licensed as required under the National Monuments Acts). The archaeologist shall prepare a comprehensive report, including an archaeological impact statement and mitigation strategy, to be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record in advance of any site preparation works, groundworks and / or construction works.

Where archaeological remains are shown to be present, preservation in-situ, establishment of 'buffer zones', preservation by record (archaeological excavation) or archaeological monitoring may be required and mitigatory measures to ensure the preservation and / or recording of archaeological remains shall be included in the AIA. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the developer.

The National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any subsequent archaeological investigative works and / or monitoring following the completion of all archaeological work on site and the completion of any necessary post-excavation work. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation either in situ or by record of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.

10. Site development and building works shall be carried out only between the hours of 0800 to 1800 Mondays to Fridays inclusive, between 0800 to 1300 hours on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and public holidays. Deviation from these times will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and in order to safeguard the residential amenities of property in the vicinity.

Colm McLoughlin
Senior Planning Inspector

24th November 2025

Appendices

Appendix A. EIA Screening

EIA Pre-Screening

ACP ref.	322952-25		
Proposed Development Summary	Construction of a low steel-bow, string-truss footbridge over the Owenriff River, with bridge abutments on both banks to the river and associated development, including pedestrian infrastructure, boundary treatments, compensatory tree planting area in Carrowmanagh Park, replacement underground services, temporary construction compound along Station Road, signage, lighting, benches, hard and soft landscaping.		
Development Address	Main Street and Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside, Oughterard, County Galway		
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (For the purposes of the Directive, 'Project' means - the execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)		**Yes**	✓Proceed to Q.2
		No	No further action required
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)			
Yes	✓	Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2025 Part 2, Schedule 5 Class 10(b)(iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere. Class 15 Any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7. Roads Act 1993, Section 50(1)	Proceed to Q.3

		"(d) In particular, where a proposed development (other than development to which paragraph (a) applies) consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road would be located on – (i) a European Site within the meaning of Regulation 2 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), …the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, proposing the development shall decide whether or not the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment." <u>Roads Regulations, 1994, Article 8</u> "8. The prescribed types of proposed road development for the purpose of subsection (1)(a)(iii) of section 50 of the Act shall be— (b) the construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length. Classes identified.	
No			
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?			
Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold.			
Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.	✓	<u>Planning & Development Regulations 2001-2025</u> Part 2, Schedule 5 The project would provide an urban development comprising a 48m-long footbridge and associated paths. The urban development would be undertaken on a site comprising three parcels totalling a stated 0.84ha. <u>Roads Regulations, 1994, Article 8</u> The project would provide a 48m-long footbridge and associated paths.	Proceed to Q.4

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			

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?		
Yes	✓	EIA Screening Determination required (ACP Form 3 below)
No		Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: _____ **Date:** _24th November 2025__

EIA Screening Determination (ACP Form 3)

A. CASE DETAILS		
ACP Reference	322952-25	
Development Summary	Construction of a low steel-bow, string-truss footbridge over the Owenriff River, with bridge abutments on both banks to the river and associated development, including pedestrian infrastructure, boundary treatments, compensatory tree planting area in Carrowmanagh Park, replacement underground services, temporary construction compound along Station Road, signage, lighting, benches, hard and soft landscaping.	
	Yes / No / N/A	**Comment (if relevant)**
1. Was a Screening Determination carried out by the PA?	N/A	Direct application
2. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?	Yes	The application was accompanied by an EIA screening report (dated June 2025), which included Schedule 7a information.
3. Has an AA screening report or NIS been submitted?	Yes	AA Screening Report and NIS submitted.
4. Is a IED/IPC or Waste Licence (or review of licence) required from the EPA? If YES has the EPA commented on the need for an EIAR?	No	
Have any other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment which have a significant bearing on the project been carried out pursuant to other relevant Directives – for example SEA	Yes	The subject site is located on lands zoned 'OS – open space / recreation / amenity', 'TI – Transport Infrastructure' and 'R - Residential Existing' under the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. The Development Plan has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (EU Directive 2001/42/EC) and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (EU Directive 2007/60/EC). Ecological Impact Assessment considers the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC).

		The CEMP considers the Waste Framework Directive 2008/98/EC, Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC and Directive 2008/50/EC - Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe.	
B. EXAMINATION	**Yes / No / Uncertain**	**Briefly describe the nature and extent and Mitigation Measures (where relevant)** (having regard to the probability, magnitude, including population size affected, complexity, duration, frequency, intensity, and reversibility of impact) Mitigation Measures – Where relevant specify features or measures proposed by the applicant to avoid or prevent a significant effect	**Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?** **Yes / No / Uncertain**
This screening examination should be read with, and in light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report.			
1. Characteristics of proposed development (including demolition, construction, operation or decommissioning)			
1.1 Is the project significantly different in character or scale to the existing surrounding or environment?	No	The surrounding environment consists of an inner-urban area featuring a mix of uses, including transport infrastructures, residences, open space, schools, public service buildings, utilities and commercial properties. The project will introduce a new piece of local pedestrian infrastructure that would tie in with other pedestrian infrastructures within the town centre. It is considered that the project would not be significantly different to the character and scale of the existing surrounding environment.	No
1.2 Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works	Yes	The construction phase of the project would result in a side garden to a residence changing to use as a public amenity area between Main Street and the footbridge. The project would	No

cause physical changes to the locality (topography, land use, waterbodies)?		feature negligible change to topography. Operations on site during a circa 9-month construction period would comprise of enabling works such as site clearance, vegetation clearance, excavation for bridge abutments and replacement diverted sections of underground services, installation of clear-span bridge, hard and soft landscaping. The construction works are to be carried out in accordance with mitigation and monitoring measures set out in the submitted Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and NIS. Decommissioning or demolition works are not proposed.	
1.3 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy, especially resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?	Yes	There will be an increase in the use of energy such as electrical power and fuel for construction vehicles and machinery, however, the applicant states that this would be kept to a minimum. Limited soil and stone would be excavated for the bridge abutments (80m^3), the replacement diverted underground services, crane assembly, platform areas and other utilities, with scope to use this material in other parts of the site. Limited ground excavations (200mm below ground level to form hardstanding and 750mm below ground level for services) are proposed in the temporary construction compound. Materials proposed for the project (concrete. bridge bearings, lights, signage, replacement pipes, backfill and upfill rock/gravel), including the footbridge (steel	No

		with protective coating and timber decking) are listed in the CEMP. Materials have been considered with respect to various criteria, including environmental impact, with the extended maintenance period and the potential for recycling of the proposed structure capable of resulting in less carbon emissions compared to other materials considered.	
1.4 Will the project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substance which would be harmful to human health or the environment?	No	Operation of construction machinery and plant will require oil, fuels, lubricants and hydraulic fluids, which would be stored in bunded and secure areas away from watercourses. Storage, handling and protection measures are outlined within the CEMP, which includes management plans and an Emergency Response Plan.	No
1.5 Will the project produce solid waste, release pollutants or any hazardous / toxic / noxious substances?	No	Limited waste would be expected from the works. The construction phase of the project would potentially result in the release of pollutants associated with the operation of machinery and equipment. The submitted CEMP includes measures to prevent the release of pollutants and a waste management plan, with control measures including separation and segregating of redundant hazardous material for removal and disposal by an appropriately authorised contractor.	No
1.6 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground	Yes	The Owenriff river cuts through the site and a drain feeding this river is located approximately 11m to the northwest of the temporary construction compound on Station	No

or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?		Road. There is potential for construction works to release pollutants into the environment which could affect the surrounding hydrology and hydrogeology; however, the development will be managed in accordance with good practice construction methods and mitigation and monitoring measures as set out in the submitted NIS and CEMP. Surface waters from the paths and footbridge would not accommodate motorised vehicles, therefore, substantive hydrocarbons release from use of the pedestrian infrastructure is not expected to arise during the operation phase.	
1.7 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	There would be some noise and vibration disturbance during the onsite construction works, including pile foundation works for the southern bridge abutment. As per measures outlined in the CEMP, works will be restricted to standard construction hours, predominately taking place during daylight hours. Construction will be carried out in accordance with guidance set out in BS 5228:2009+A1:2014, with restriction of certain work timings and controls for machinery. Downlighting with LED fittings would be employed to reduce light levels and spillage.	No
1.8 Will there be any risks to human health, for example due to water contamination or air pollution?	Yes	There is potential for emissions from onsite construction machinery and traffic-derived pollutants, such as dust particles, carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide to be emitted during construction, however, due to the	No

		limited scale and temporary duration of the construction works, as well as the proposed mitigation measures, impacts on air quality would not be anticipated to be significant. Noise and vibration levels would be controlled to remain within relevant levels. Substantive risks to human health would not arise,	
1.9 Will there be any risk of major accidents that could affect human health or the environment?	No	The vulnerability of the development to major accidents or disasters is likely to be related to flood risk and the potential for climate change to increase this risk. An OPW Section 50 Report was submitted and this asserts that the proposed footbridge abutments would be outside flood risk extents (zones A and B) and that the proposed footbridge soffit level accounts for surveyed flood risk levels with a climate change freeboard, and as a result an increased risk of flooding would not arise. An emergency response plan and procedures are proposed as part of the project CEMP.	No
1.10 Will the project affect the social environment (population, employment)	Yes	The development would improve pedestrian permeability and increase amenity space in the town centre for the benefit of locals and visitors. Some disruption would be anticipated over the construction phase but this would be limited by virtue of the measures proposed as part of the project CEMP.	No
1.11 Is the project part of a wider large scale change that could result in cumulative effects on the environment?	Yes	This is a standalone project. Table 5-1 of the application EIA Screening Report listed other projects in the surrounding area, including permitted residential developments and a	No

		mixed-use development within the town centre environs. Sections 8.3 of the application NIS and Ecological Impact Assessment assess the proposals with respect to potential cumulative impacts with other plans, project and activities in the area, with significant impacts not expected to arise for ecology. The project CEMP would be a live document that would be updated should needs arise, including if the development was undertaken in tandem with other projects. The project is not of a scale that could result in significant cumulative effects on the environment.	
2. Location of proposed development			
2.1 Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on any of the following: - European site (SAC/ SPA/ pSAC/ pSPA) - NHA/ pNHA - Designated Nature Reserve - Designated refuge for flora or fauna - Place, site or feature of ecological interest, the preservation/conservation/ protection of which is an objective of a development	Yes	Part of the footbridge area of the site is located within the Lough Corrib SAC (site code: 000297) and it is 200m downstream of the Oughterard National School proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) (site code: 002082). Lough Corrib pNHA (site code: 000297) and Lough Corrib SPA (site code: 004042) are located 1.1km downstream of the site. Significant effects for neighbouring designated sites are not expected subject to the implementation of the mitigation, monitoring and management measures outlined in the application NIS, Ecological Impact Assessment and CEMP. Annex I habitat was not identified on site.	No

plan/ LAP/ draft plan or variation of a plan		The site area overlapping Lough Corrib SAC is proposed to accommodate similar features to those presently in situ, including landscaped riverside, footpaths and woodland planting. Tree planting would be provided within the neighbouring amenity space to Carrowmanagh Park. Appendix B of this report concludes that the project would not result in adverse effects for European Sites in view of their conservation objectives.	
2.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, for example: for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?	Yes	Ecological surveys have been undertaken with species recorded listed in the Ecological Impact Assessment. Owenriff river is an important habitat for Atlantic salmon and Freshwater pearl mussel, a species listed in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive and protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2021 (as amended). The immediate stretch of the Owenriff river forms part of the SAC Catchment for Freshwater pearl mussels, listed for protection in S.I. 296 of 2009, with the aim of supporting the achievement of favourable conservation status for Freshwater pearl mussel. Trees would be resurveyed for bird nesting prior to felling. Subject to mitigation measures, the application Ecological Impact Assessment anticipates that the project would not give rise to any significant negative effects on the biodiversity	No

		or ecology of the receiving environment, with instream works avoided and pollution-prevention measures to be installed.	
2.3 Are there any other features of landscape, historic, archaeological, or cultural importance that could be affected?	Yes	The site is within the settlement boundaries to Oughterard, with the proposed footbridge and tree compensation areas within Oughterard ACA. An assessment of cultural heritage impacts is undertaken in section 7.4 of my report, which does not indicate significant potential for impacts for neighbouring recognised features of heritage value and a condition can be applied to address impacts arising for any unknown archaeological finds.	No
2.4 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, for example: forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals?	Yes	The subject site comprises residential garden space, riverbanks, public transport infrastructure, public amenity space and undeveloped open ground, which are typical of the area and are not scarce land resources in this area. The river running through the site is fished for salmon and trout, however, the proposals would not impede continuation of this activity.	No
2.5 Are there any water resources including surface waters, for example: rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or groundwaters which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk?	Yes	The redline boundary of the site overlaps the Owenriff river. There would be no alterations to existing water levels within the river as a result of the development, including within mid-range future scenario flood events. Extensive mitigation measures are proposed in the NIS and CEMP to address the potential for impacts on water quality and the habitat of the river.	No

2.6 Is the location susceptible to subsidence, landslides or erosion?	Yes	There is no evidence of subsidence or landslide risks in the immediate area based on the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) landslide database. The section of Owenriff river running through the site is described in the Ecological Impact Assessment as an 'eroding upland river' habitat, however, extensive ongoing erosion of the river channel is not in evidence.	No
2.7 Are there any key transport routes(e.g. National primary Roads) on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project?	Yes	The N59 national road running through Oughterard is noted to experience congestion, particularly during peak commuting hours, which the project would not be expected to substantively add to, as it would improve scope for travel on foot within Oughterard. A construction traffic management plan would be implemented as part of the final project CEMP.	No
2.8 Are there existing sensitive land uses or community facilities (such as hospitals, schools etc) which could be affected by the project?	No	The site is located in a town centre location, with primary and post-primary schools located to the north of the footbridge site along Carrowmanagh Road. The footbridge would provide a safer pedestrian route to these schools.	No
3. Any other factors that should be considered which could lead to environmental impacts?			
3.1 Cumulative Effects: Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulative effects during the construction/ operation phase?	Yes	Cumulative effects with other projects are not likely to give rise to significant impacts.	No

3.2 Transboundary Effects: Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No		
3.3 Are there any other relevant considerations?	No		
C. CONCLUSION			
No real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	✓	EIAR Not Required	
Real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.		~~EIAR Required~~	
D. MAIN REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS			

Having regard to -

1. the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as revised;

(a) the position and design of the proposed footbridge avoiding instream works;

(b) the location of the proposed local pedestrian infrastructure and associated development on lands identified in the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028 as being within the 'OS – open space / recreation / amenity' land-use zoning with a stated objective to support the protection and enhancement of such areas for open spaces and the provision of recreational and amenity uses, and also being within the 'TI - transport infrastructure' land-use zoning, with a stated objective to facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential transportation infrastructure, and the 'R – Residential Existing' land-use zoning, with a stated objective to protect and improve such areas for residential amenities, and the results of the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028;

(c) the location of the development, which would not result in any significant effects on any sensitive location specified in Article 109(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2025;

(d) the absence of any potential for significant cumulative effects.

2. the results of relevant surveys and assessments submitted by the applicant of the effects of the proposed development on the environment;

3. the features and measures embedded in the design of the proposed development and proposed by the applicant to avoid or prevent what might otherwise be significant effects on the environment, including features and measures identified in the project Construction Environmental Management Plan, the Natura Impact Statement and the Ecological Impact Assessment.

It is considered that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and that the preparation and submission of an environmental impact assessment report would not, therefore, be required.

Inspector _____ **Date** _24th November 2025
Colm McLoughlin

Approved (ADP) _____ **Date** _24th November 2025

Appendix B. AA

The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to appropriate assessment of a project under part XAB, sections 177U and 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, are considered fully in this section. The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

- compliance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive;
- screening the need for AA;
- the NIS and associated documents;
- AA of implications of the proposed development on the integrity of European sites.

1. Compliance with Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive

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

The proposed development is not directly connected to or necessary to the management of any European site and therefore is subject to the provisions of Article 6(3). This matter will be addressed in more detail below.

2. Screening the Need for AA

2.1 Site

The site comprises three land parcels, with the primary development site featuring residential gardens, riverside embankments, public paths and roads. This part of the site traverses the Owenriff river. The temporary construction compound on Station Road comprises open undeveloped ground with a hedgerow along the roadside boundary. The tree compensation area comprises amenity space associated with

Carrowmanagh Park, a residential estate. Habitats identified on site are outlined in section 7.7 of the report above. The Owenriff river traverses the site, flowing in an easterly direction towards Lough Corrib. A drainage channel running along a field boundary 11m from the temporary construction compound site on Station Road discharges to the Owenriff river.

Annex I habitats were not recorded within the application site works area and only limited use of the application site by flora and fauna was identified within the applicant's ecological surveying, primarily as a result of the urban context, although the aquatic habitat and river corridor was noted to support various species. Bats have been recorded foraging and commuting along the river corridor, although only one call of a Lesser horseshoe bat was recorded and this was outside the application site. Evidence of otters using the river corridor was recorded. Aquatic habitat along the riparian corridor is noted, including records of Freshwater pearl mussel, Atlantic salmon, White-clawed crayfish, Sea lamprey and Brook lamprey using the river. 'Third schedule' invasive species were not identified in the project works areas, but they were identified along the immediate stretches of the river. Medium-impact invasive species were noted within the site boundaries.

2.2 Project

A detailed description of the proposed development is provided in section 3 of the main report above and expanded upon below where necessary. Details of the construction phase of the development are provided throughout the application documentation, including the AA Screening Report and the CEMP, with cognisance of the site context and connections to a sensitive waterbody. In-stream works would be avoided as part of the construction phase with a clear-span structure crossing the river to be installed and sitting on abutments set back from the riverbanks. The footbridge site would be served by a compound on Station Road and the amenity area in Carrowmanagh Park would be subject of tree planting and a service gate.

2,3 Relevant Submissions

The applicant submitted an AA Screening Report' and a NIS, both dating from June 2025 and prepared by qualified and experienced ecologists from AtkinsRéalis. The AA Screening Report provides a description of the site, the receiving environment and the proposed development, as well as identifying European sites potentially

within the zone of influence of the development. The applicant's AA screening concluded that the possibility of the proposed development having a significant effect on two European sites (Lough Corrib SAC and Lough Corrib SPA) cannot be excluded. With the implementation of avoidance and mitigation measures, the NIS concluded that the proposed development would not have adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites, individually or in combination with other plans and projects.

The submissions from prescribed bodies are summarised in section 6 above, with IFI noting that the Owenriff river provides habitat for Freshwater pearl mussel, which have a symbiotic relationship with salmonoids. Measures to protect water quality and fisheries habitat are listed by IFI and planning conditions are recommended.

2.4 Zone of Influence

The closest European sites, including SACs and SPAs, and the direction and distance to same from the proposed footbridge site, are identified in table 1 above. Table 2 below identifies any ecological connections between the site and European Sites in the zone of influence of the project.

Table 2. European Sites within the Project Zone of Influence

Site Name / Code	Qualifying Interests	Ecological Connections
Lough Corrib SAC 000297	Maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat(s) and/or the Annex I species for which the SAC has been selected. https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO000297.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	Hydrological connections exist through surface water leaving the site entering the Owenriff river and ultimately discharging to Lough Corrib. Otter, Atlantic salmon, Freshwater pearl mussel, White-clawed crayfish Sea lamprey and Brook lamprey recorded as using the Owenriff river may be associated with this SAC.

		Outside of Lesser horseshoe bat prime roost foraging range (2.5km).
Lough Corrib SPA 004042	Restore the favourable conservation condition of Gadwall, Shoveler, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Hen harrier, Coot, Black-headed gull, Common gull, Common Tern, Arctic Tern and Greenland white-fronted goose. Maintain the favourable conservation condition of Common Scoter and Golden Plover. Maintain the favourable conservation condition of wetlands https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004042.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	Hydrological connections exist through surface water leaving the site entering the Owenriff river and ultimately discharging to Lough Corrib, 1.3km to the northeast.
Connemara Bog Complex SAC 002034	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002034.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	Substantive distance upstream.
Gortnandarragh Limestone Pavement SAC 001271	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Limestone pavements.	Upstream of Lough Corrib.
Ross Lake and Woods SAC 001312	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. To restore the favourable conservation condition of Lesser Horseshoe Bat.	Upstream of Lough Corrib and outside of Lesser horseshoe bat prime roost foraging range (2.5km).
Connemara Bog Complex SPA 004181	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004181.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	None.
Cloughmoyne SAC 000479	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Limestone pavements.	Upstream of Lough Corrib.

Maumturk Mountains SAC 002008	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO002008.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	Substantive distance and upstream of Lough Corrib.
Ballymaglancy Cave, Cong SAC 000474	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Lesser Horseshoe Bat.	Outside of Lesser horseshoe bat prime roost foraging range (2.5km).
Lough Carra / Mask Complex SAC 001774	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO001774.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	Upstream of Lough Corrib and outside of Lesser horseshoe bat prime roosts foraging range (2.5km).
Lough Mask SPA 004062	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004062.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	Upstream of Lough Corrib.
Kildun Souterrain SAC 002320	To restore the favourable conservation condition of Lesser Horseshoe Bat.	Outside of Lesser horseshoe bat prime roost foraging range (2.5km).
Inner Galway Bay SPA 004031	https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/conservation_objectives/CO004031.pdf Accessed 6/11/2025	Substantive distance downstream.

While some European sites are downstream of the application site, given the separation distance from the proposed development to the respective European Sites, the length of the hydrological link, the dilution and dispersion action of watercourses and waterbodies, the potential for significant effects on these European Sites would not be likely to arise from the proposed development. Having regard to the foregoing, my screening assessment will focus on the impacts of the proposals on the conservation objectives of the Lough Corrib SAC and Lough Corrib SPA. Other than those sites summarised in table 3 below, I am satisfied that no other European Sites would be potentially at risk from the proposed development.

2.5 Likely significant effects on European sites

Based on the above, including connections and the nature of the project, the following issues are considered for examination in terms of their implications for

likely significant effects on the conservation objectives of European Sites within the potential zone of influence of the project:

- Effect 1 – changes in water quality and resource;

  Potential damage to riparian and river habitats associated with inadvertent spillages of hydrocarbons and / or other chemicals during construction phase;

  Potential damage to the habitats and freshwater qualifying interest species dependent on water quality, an impact of sufficient magnitude could undermine the Sites conservation objectives;

  Potential negative effect on prey availability.

- Effect 2 – disturbance and / or displacement of species;

  Potential disturbance risks to qualifying interest species for the SAC, which could be associated with increased noise and vibration, lighting, increased human activity at both construction and operation phases.

- Effect 3 – habitat change - spread of invasive species;

  Potential spread of invasive species associated with ground disturbance activities during the construction phase.

The conservation objectives for the two sites in the zone of influence of the project are detailed in table 3 below, with discussion regarding the effects of the proposed development on these conservation objectives following the table.

Table 3 Could the Proposed Development alone undermine Conservation Objectives

Site	**Conservation Objectives**	**Conservation Objectives Potentially Undermined?**			
		Effect	**1**	**2**	**3**
Lough Corrib SAC 000297	Restore - Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] Restore - Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]		Yes	Yes	Yes

	Restore - Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] Maintain - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Maintain - Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Maintain - Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Restore - Active raised bogs [7110] Not set - Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Not set - Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Maintain - Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] Maintain - Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Maintain - Alkaline fens [7230] Maintain - Limestone pavements [8240] Maintain - Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Maintain - Bog woodland [91D0] Restore- Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] Maintain - Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Restore - Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Maintain - Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Maintain - Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Restore - Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]				

	Maintain - Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Maintain - Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833] Maintain - Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216]				
Lough Corrib SPA 004042	Restore - Pochard (Aythya ferina) [A059] Restore - Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061] Restore - Maintain - Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065] Restore - Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082] Restore - Coot (Fulica atra) [A125] Maintain - Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Restore - Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Restore - Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182] Restore - Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] Restore - Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194] Restore - Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395] Restore - Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857] Restore - Gadwall (Mareca strepera) [A889] Maintain - Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]		Yes	No	Yes

Changes in Water Quality and Resource

The most challenging elements of the proposed development from a water quality perspective would be at construction stage, primarily due to the need to work adjacent to the banked river channel, to provide the watercourse crossing, and to undertake excavation works associated with bridge abutments and replacement of underground services. The operation phase of the project would not be likely to result in pollution to receiving waters, given that the proposed transport infrastructure is not intended to serve motorised vehicles.

Should potential pollutants flow downstream and lead to a deterioration in water quality, this could indirectly affect the food supply and foraging habitat of bird species

associated with the Lough Corrib SPA and aquatic ecology associated with the Lough Corrib SAC. This would appear a reasonably logical assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development adjacent to the river channel, as the site activities could have impacts on water quality that may influence the achievement of the site conservation objectives specifically relating to aquatic species, otter and bird species. The development could reasonably effect the maintenance or restoration of the favourable conservation condition of aquatic habitats in Lough Corrib SAC given that the development could lead to pollutants and sediment entering these habitats.

Disturbance and / or Displacement of Species

Based on the distances to the nearest European sites and the findings of ecological surveying undertaken for the project, as well as core-foraging ranges, disturbance or displacement of bird species associated with European Sites would not be likely to arise from the project.

There is potential for the project to result in disturbance or displacement of otter associated with the Lough Corrib SAC.

There would be limited potential for the development to result in reduced extent and distribution of spawning beds for Brook lamprey, Sea lamprey and Freshwater pearl mussel, or alteration of habitat quality for Atlantic salmon and White-clawed crayfish associated with the Lough Corrib SAC.

Habitat Change – Spread of Invasive Species

There is potential for disturbance of invasive species that are known to occupy the immediate riverbanks to the site, with potential to result in changes to aquatic habitat relied upon by species using the river channel and Lough Corrib, including birds.

2.6 In-combination Effects

In combination effects are examined within section 8 of the NIS submitted. The proposed works were considered in combination with the provisions of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028. No significant cumulative impacts are predicted as this Plan was subject to AA and features a range of biodiversity policy safeguards. Current and planned development was examined in the context of in-combination effects. Neighbouring projects were noted to be subject to safeguards

with respect to wastewater treatment and the project would not be anticipated to occur in parallel with a housing scheme neighbouring the proposed northern bridge abutment. It is noted that the proposed works associated with these projects would not result in any in poor water quality or habitat loss / damage. The applicant's NIS concluded that there would be no significant in-combination effects arising from these projects with the proposed development. Having regard to the foregoing, I do not consider that the potential for in-combination effects would be likely to arise.

2.7 Screening Conclusion

While part of the site overlaps the Lough Corrib SAC, it is clear that the habitats surveyed on site are not those that are intended to be maintained or restored as part of the conservation objectives for this European site. Furthermore, the development site does not comprise works within the river channel, as the clear-span bridge would be situated above this, including the flood risk levels. This reaffirms that the proposed development is not directly connected to or necessary to the management of any European Site and therefore is subject to the provisions of Article 6(3).

I conclude that the proposed development could potentially have a likely significant effect on the qualifying interests associated with European Site No. 000297 (Lower Corrib SAC) and European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA) from activities and works that could impact on water quality in the Owenriff river catchment discharging to Lough Corrib. The proposed development could potentially have a likely significant effect for otter and other species reliant on the habitats associated with European Site No. 000297 (Lough Corrib SAC). Furthermore, the proposed development could potentially have a likely significant effect for species reliant on the aquatic habitat associated with European Site No. 000297 (Lough Corrib SAC) and European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA) as a result of activities that could spread invasive species along the riverbanks. An AA is required on the basis of these likely significant effects of the project on these two European sites.

3. Stage 2 - Appropriate Assessment

The requirements of Article 6(3) as related to AA of a project under part XAB, section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, are considered fully in this section.

Taking account of the preceding screening determination, the following is an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development in view of the relevant conservation objectives of European Site No. 000297 (Lower Corrib SAC) and European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA) based on scientific information provided by the applicant and considering expert opinion set out in the observation from IFI. The information relied upon includes the following:

- NIS prepared by AtkinsRéalis;
- Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by AtkinsRéalis;
- CEMP prepared by AtkinsRéalis
- NPWS data.

I am satisfied that the information provided is adequate to undertake an AA. I am satisfied that all aspects of the project which could result in significant effects are considered and assessed in the NIS and mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects on site integrity are included and assessed for effectiveness.

3.1 Test of Effects & Mitigation Measures

See table 7-1 of the NIS for a description of the effects.

Table 4 Adverse Effects on Conservation Objectives and associated mitigation measures

Lough Corrib SAC (Site Code: 000297)			
Qualifying Interest	**Conservation Objective**	**Potential Adverse Effects**	**Mitigation Measures**
Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.
Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.

Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.
Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.
Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.
Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.
Active raised bogs [7110]	Restore the favourable condition	Upstream – no adverse effects	
Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120]	Not set – linked to active raised bog objective	Upstream – no adverse effects	
Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150]	Not set	Upstream – no adverse effects	
Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.

Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.
Alkaline fens [7230]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area.
Limestone pavements [8240]	Maintain the favourable condition	Upstream – no adverse effects	
Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0]	Maintain the favourable condition	Upstream – no adverse effects	
Bog woodland [91D0]	Maintain the favourable condition	Upstream – no adverse effects	
Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat Disturbance / displacement	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area. Control of works to avoid excess emissions to river corridor.
Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat Disturbance / displacement	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area. Control of works to avoid excess emissions to river corridor.
Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and

		Disturbance / displacement	treat any invasive species within works area. Control of works to avoid excess emissions to river corridor.
Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat Disturbance / displacement	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area. Control of works to avoid excess emissions to river corridor.
Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat Disturbance / displacement	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area. Control of works to avoid excess emissions to river corridor.
Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303]	Restore the favourable condition	Outside core foraging range of roosts	
Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat Disturbance / displacement	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat any invasive species within works area. Control of works to avoid excess emissions to river corridor.
Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833]	Maintain the favourable condition	Upstream – no adverse effects	
Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216]	Maintain the favourable condition	Upstream – no adverse effects	

Lough Corrib SPA (Site Code: 004042)			
Qualifying Interest	**Conservation Objective**	**Potential Adverse Effects**	**Mitigation Measures**
Gadwall (Mareca strepera) [A889]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Shoveler (Spatula clypeata) [A857]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Pochard (Aythya ferina) [A059]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Tufted Duck (Aythya fuligula) [A061]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Common Scoter (Melanitta nigra) [A065	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus) [A082]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Coot (Fulica atra) [A125]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.

Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140]	Maintain the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Arctic Tern (Sterna paradisaea) [A194]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Greenland White-fronted Goose (Anser albifrons flavirostris) [A395]	Restore the favourable condition	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering condition of habitat used by species	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.
Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	Maintain the favourable condition of wetlands	Change in water quality and spread of invasive species altering habitat	Measures to prevent pollution and sediment entering receiving waters and treat invasive species within works area.

The above table 4 is based on the documentation and information provided with the application and I am satisfied that the submitted NIS has identified the relevant attributes and targets of the Qualifying Interests.

Water Quality & Resource

As the site of the proposed development does not consist of Lough Corrib SAC qualifying interest habitat and would not involve works within the Owenriff river, no direct effects would occur for the associated European Sites. In terms of indirect effects the key element is the potential impact on water quality and resource during the construction phase.

Management measures, including best practice control measures, application of industry standards and specific measures for this project to prevent excess sedimentation and pollution downstream affecting water quality and control of waters discharging from the site, are outlined in the NIS and the CEMP. These measures would ensure that there are no likely effects on the Owenriff river and other receiving waters, including Lough Corrib, during the construction phase of the project, thereby avoiding negative effects on water resources.

I am satisfied that with the implementation of the specific measures outlined in the CEMP and NIS for the management of surface water, such as silt mats, fences and wattles, the containment of wastewater, fuels and other hydrocarbons, as well as the avoidance of instream works, monitoring by an Ecological Clerk of Works and compliance in line with the Guidelines on the Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters (IFI, 2016), the proposed works and operations would not have likely significant effects on surface water quality at the site or downstream. Furthermore, I am satisfied that with the implementation of the specific measures outlined in the CEMP, for the management and monitoring of groundwater during excavation processes, such as measures to undertake excavation works in dry spells and pump out any water encountered, the proposed construction works would not have likely significant effects on groundwaters.

Disturbance and / or Displacement of Species

Breeding sites or holts for otter were not observed during surveys, although evidence of otter using the river channel confirms that this watercourse forms suitable habitat for this species. In the absence of mitigation measures to address the potential for

the site to serve otter, the project could have significant impacts for this species. Given the lapse in time since surveys for otter were undertaken (November 2023), the applicant sets out that a pre-construction survey would be carried out for otter holts. Otters are a transient species, moving their nest sites, and I am satisfied that a pre-construction survey would be necessary. The applicant states pre-construction surveys of the aquatic habitat would be undertaken prior to commencing the construction. During the construction phase working hours would be restricted to daylight hours and artificial lighting of the river corridor would not occur during dusk and darkness. Consequent to the measures to safeguard against disturbance and / or displacement of otter, I am satisfied that the impact of the project on this terrestrial mammal species would not be significant.

Measures would be put in place to avoid works within the river channel that could alter the spawning beds for Brook lamprey, Sea lamprey and Freshwater pearl mussel, or alteration of habitat quality for Atlantic salmon and White-clawed crayfish. Artificial lighting to be employed during the construction phase would be utilised in a manner that would limit light spilling onto the river corridor. Lighting for the bridge would be downlit and directed inwards via the footbridge handrails. The level of shading, bank stability and organic material seepage to the river, which can impact on species such as Freshwater pearl mussel, arising from the installing of the footbridge and felling of trees, is not expected to substantially alter. The timeline of the works would be limited to reduce the potential for disturbance of aquatic species, with excavation of the northern bridge abutment expected to take 2-3 days and an additional day for the diversion of services. The southern abutment would feature mini-bore piles, and as these works would be 14m from the riverbank, negative impacts from vibrations would not be anticipated. Consequent to the measures to safeguard against disturbance and / or displacement of otter, I am satisfied that the impact of the project on aquatic species would not be significant.

Invasive Species

Management measures, including resurveying and specific measures for this project to prevent the spread of invasive species known to occupy the immediate banks of the Owenriff river, are outlined in the NIS and the CEMP, which would ensure that there are no likely effects on the aquatic habitat and receiving waters, including

Lough Corrib, during the construction phase of the project, thereby avoiding change in the habitats of Lough Corrib SAC and Lough Corrib SPA.

3.2 Conclusion of Test of Effects / Mitigation Measures

The evidence available provides certainty that the project, including mitigation, would not result in pollution of water or significant adverse impacts for qualifying interests, and it can be concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant adverse impacts on European Site No. 000297 (Lower Corrib SAC) and European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA), in view of the sites' conservation objectives.

I am therefore satisfied that the development would not cause changes to the key indicators of conservation value, hence there is no potential for any adverse impacts to occur on either the habitat or the species associated with European Site No. 000297 (Lower Corrib SAC) and European Site No. 004042 (Lough Corrib SPA).

3.3 Appropriate Assessment – Conclusion

Based on the information provided, I am satisfied that adverse effects arising from aspects of the proposed development can be excluded for the European sites considered in the AA. No direct impacts are predicted. Indirect impacts would be temporary in nature and mitigation measures are described to prevent excess pollution and sediment to receiving waters. The management of the construction phase would minimise the potential for disturbance of species known to use the immediate environs of the site, and measures would be put in place to avoid the spread of invasive species. Monitoring measures are also proposed to ensure compliance and effective management of measures, including water quality. I am satisfied that the mitigation measures proposed to prevent adverse effects have been assessed as effective and can be implemented.

I am satisfied that in-combination effects has been assessed adequately in the NIS. The applicant has demonstrated satisfactorily that no significant residual effects would remain post the application of mitigation measures and, therefore, there would be no potential for in-combination effects. I am satisfied that no reasonable scientific doubt remains as to the absence of adverse effects.

Appendix C. WFD Screening

Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
ACP ref.	322952-25	**Address**	Main Street and Carrowmanagh Road / Riverside, Oughterard, County Galway
Description of project		The project involves the construction of a low steel-bow, string-truss footbridge over the Owenriff river, with bridge abutments on both banks and associated development, including pedestrian infrastructure, boundary treatments, compensatory tree planting area, replacement underground services, temporary construction compound along Station Road, signage, lighting, benches, hard and soft landscaping. The project works methods are outlined in the CEMP, including site investigations, enabling works, underground services and construction details. The CEMP outlines the extent of excavations required with respect to installing of bridge abutments and replacement underground services.	
Brief site description (relevant to WFD Screening)		The site for the proposed footbridge traverses the Owenriff river in the town of Oughterard. The southern approach to the footbridge comprises the side garden to a residence, including broadleaved woodland. The northern approach primarily comprises landscaped banks and walkways adjoining a local road. Soils and geology under the site are stated in the applicant's CEMP to comprise alluvium, till derived chiefly from granite and made ground. The bedrock beneath the site is mapped by Geological Survey Ireland as consisting of a limestone formation. Short, steep banks channel both sides of the river.	
Proposed surface water details		Surface water infrastructure specifically to serve the development is not proposed, although a 35m stretch of a combined sewer would be realigned along the northern riverside.	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		The development would not be reliant on the provision of a water supply, although a 35m stretch of a watermain would be realigned along the northern riverside.	

Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues	Wastewater infrastructure to serve the development is not required, although a 35m stretch of a combined sewer would be realigned along the northern riverside.					
Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies & Step 3: S-P-R connection						
Identified water body	**Distance to (m)**	**Water body name(s) (code)**	**WFD Status (2019-2024)**	**Risk of not achieving WFD Objective**	**Identified pressures on that water body**	**Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater)**
River Waterbody	0km	Owenriff (Corrib)_020 IE_WE_30O020200	Poor	At Risk	Morphological, nutrients, organic, other significant impacts	Owenriff river cuts through the site, therefore, it has a hydrological connection to this waterbody.
Groundwater waterbody	Underlying site	Maam-Clonbur IE_WE_G_0006	Good	Not at risk	No pressures identified	During the construction phase, excavation works would take place below bedrock. Therefore, there will be a direct groundwater connection.
Lake Waterbody	1.3km northeast	Corrib upper IE_WE_30_666b	Good	Not at risk	No pressures identified	Potential hydrological connection via Owenriff river.

Lake Waterbody	11.6km east	Corrib upper IE_WE_30_666a	Good	Not at risk	No pressures identified	Potential hydrological connection via Owenriff river and upper Lough Corrib.
River Waterbody	20.1km southeast	Corrib_010 IE_WE_30C020300	Good	Not at Risk	No pressures identified	The site has a potential hydrological connection via Owenriff river and upper and lower Lough Corrib.
Transitional waterbody	25.4km southeast	Corrib Estuary IE_WE_170_0700	Good	Review		The site has a potential hydrological connection via Owenriff river, the upper and lower Lough Corrib and the Corrib river.
Coastal waterbody	27.7km southeast	Inner Galway Bar North IE_WE_170_0000	Good	Not at risk		The site has a potential hydrological connection via Owenriff river, Lough Corrib and the Corrib river and estuary.
Step 4: Detailed description of any component of the development or activity that may cause a risk of not achieving the WFD Objectives having regard to the S-P-R linkage.						
CONSTRUCTION PHASE						

No	Component	Water body receptor (EPA Code)	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure*	Residual Risk (yes/no)	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 water runoff to river system	Surface Owenriff (Corrib)_020 IE_WE_30O020200 Corrib upper IE_WE_30_666b Corrib upper IE_WE_30_666a Transitional Corrib_010 IE_WE_30C020300 Corrib Estuary IE_WE_170_0700 Coastal Inner Galway Bar North IE_WE_170_0000	Owenriff river	Potential discharge of silt and pollutants into Owenriff river	Good practice construction methods. Design avoidance measures (clear-span bridge etc.) and mitigation measures outlined in the submitted CEMP and NIS.	No	Screened out
2.	Groundwater discharge	Maam-Clonbur IE_WE_G_0006	Leaching and dewatering	Discharge of contaminants during rock excavation and	Standard design and construction measures such as groundwater drainage around	No	Screened out

				dewatering works.	subsurface structures. Avoidance and mitigation measures outlined in the submitted CEMP and NIS		
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
No	**Component**	**Water body receptor (EPA Code)**	**Pathway (existing and new)**	**Potential for impact**	**Screening Stage Mitigation Measure***	**Residual Risk (yes/no)**	**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 water drainage	Surface Owenriff (Corrib)_020 IE_WE_30O020200 Corrib upper IE_WE_30_666b Corrib upper IE_WE_30_666a Transitional Corrib_010 IE_WE_30C020300 Corrib Estuary IE_WE_170_0700 Coastal	Owenriff river	None. Surface waters would drain naturally from surfaces not intended to be used by vehicles and pollutants to surface waters would not arise.	None	No	Screened out

		Inner Galway Bar North IE_WE_170_0000					
2.	Groundwater discharge	Maam-Clonbur IE_WE_G_0006	Leaching	None. Land use would not entail potential for leaching of pollutants to groundwater	None	No	Screened out

* Decommissioning phase – while it is understood that the estimated service lifespan of the footbridge would be 120 years, the project comprises a permanent piece of infrastructure and an operational lifespan is not applied to the project. Furthermore, separate permission(s) would be necessary in the case of decommissioning of the project, which would be subject to further assessments.