



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ACP-323873-25.

Development

Kingston Park and Millers Lane –
Public Park Urban Realm Project

Location

Kinston Park and Millers, Lane,
Galway City.

Local Authority

Galway City Council.

Type of Application

Application for approval made under
Section 177(AE) of the Planning and
Development Act, 2000

Prescribed Bodies

Department of Housing, Local
Government and Heritage
The Arts Council
Inland Fisheries Ireland
Uisce Eireann
Waterways Ireland
The Heritage Council
Fáilte Ireland
An Taisce
National Transport Authority

Observers

Connacht Hockey
Galway Bay Rugby Club
Galway Bohemians AFC
Galway Hockey Club
Galway Rapparees Rounders Club
Greenfields Hockey Club
Hockey Ireland
Knocknacarra FC
Gort Siar Residents
Marie Moran
Mary Tynan

Date of Site Inspection

22nd April 2026.

Inspector

Philip Davis.

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Proposed Development	4
3. Site and Location	7
4. Planning History.....	8
5. Legislative and Policy Context.....	9
6. Consultations	13
8. EIA Screening.....	22
9. Assessment.....	23
10. Recommendation.....	57
APPENDIX –	64
EIAR AND WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE FORMS.....	64
Screening Determination.....	70

1. Introduction

Galway City Council is seeking approval from An Coimisiún Pleanála to undertake public realm improvements on two areas of open space in the western suburbs of Galway City. The two sites are within 1km of the Inner Galway Bay SPA site code 004031 and the Galway Bay Complex site code 000268 which are designated European sites. There are several other designated European sites in proximity to the proposed works (see further analysis below). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and application under Section 177AE was lodged by the Local Authority on the basis of the proposed development's likely significant effect on a European site.

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

2. Proposed Development

The proposed development involves public realm improvements on two areas of open space within the western suburbs of Galway City. One (Millers Lane) is an existing football field with some ancillary facilities, the other (Kingston Park) is grazing/waste land. Key elements (summarized) include:

Millers Lane:

- Relocation and replacement of the 2 no. football pitches with 1 no. new 4G synthetic turf multisport pitch on soccer dimensions with 6 no. floodlights, and 1 no. 2G sand filled synthetic multi-sport pitch to hockey pitch dimensions, with 6. No. floodlights.

- New 2 storey multifunctional building for changing rooms with sports hall and associated activity rooms.
- New public spaces and amenities including a fenced children's play areas and paths, climbing wall, calisthenics area, public plaza, spectator areas and passive recreation.
- Planting and nature based drainage measures (i.e. SuDs).
- Relocated vehicular access and enhanced pedestrian/cyclist access.
- 27 no. car parking spaces, including 2 EV charging spaces, along with bike parking.

Kingston Park

- The development of 1 no. 4g synthetic multi-sport pitch to rugby pitch dimensions with associated fencing and 6 no. floodlights.
- Two-story, multifunctional building including public and sports team changing rooms and general purpose community hall with bleacher seating and associated activity rooms.
- New public spaces and amenities including all-ages play area, outdoor classroom amphitheatre, informal sports and play areas.
- Landscape planting.
- Replacement of the existing site access on the Altan Road and modification of new access road previously permitted for Aquatic Centre (24/60370).
- Improvement of existing active travel entrance, improved links to adjoining Knocknacarra National school and addition potential accesses.
- 50 no. car parking spaces including 4 no. EV places.

Accompanying documents

In addition to detailed plans and specifications, this application for approval is accompanied by the following documents:

- **AA Screening and Natura Impact Statement**

- **Ecological Impact Assessment, including a Bat Report.**
- **Planning Report**
- **Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report.**
- **Construction and Environmental Management Plan.**
- **Kingston Park Arboriculture Impact Assessment**
- **Millers Lane Arboriculture Impact Assessment**
- **Kingston Park Landscape Design Report**
- **Millers Lane Landscape Design Report.**
- **Kingston Lane Landscape Management Plan**
- **Millers Lane landscape Management Plan**
- **Park Visualizations Booklet**
- **Kingston Park Architectural Design Statement**
- **Millers Lane architectural Design Statement**
- **Kingston Park Lighting Simulation Report.**
- **Millers Lane Lighting Simulation Report**
- **Kingston Park Archaeological Screening Report**
- **Millers Lane Archaeological Screening Report**
- **Kingston Park Site Specific Flood Risk Assessments**
- **Millers Lane Site Specific Flood Risk Assessments**
- **Engineering Planning Report**
- **Kingston Park Stage 1 Road Safety assessment**
- **Millers Lane Stage 1 Road Safety Assessment**
- **Traffic and Transport Assessment**
- **Mobility Management Plan Final Public Consultation Report**
- **Scheme Sustainability Statement**

3. Site and Location

The two sites are located in the western suburbs of Galway City in the townlands of Rahoon and Clybaun, approximately 4km by road (2.5km directly) from the city centre and some 1.5 km north of the coastline of Galway Bay. The area is characterised by extensive existing housing and related developments dating predominantly from the late 20th century to several large ongoing or permitted residential and commercial developments. The underlying topography is of a series of mostly north to south ridges dropping to the coast, overlying Palaeozoic metamorphic rocks.

The area was formerly grazing land associated with a number of demesne lands, with wetter grazing lands on higher ground served by rural roads. The area is now served by the relatively modern distributor road network with numerous suburban connection routes and a small number of pedestrian/cycling routes. The main retail centre for the area is the Galway Retail Park, a large modern car dominated retail area known locally as Knocknacarra. The R337 and R336 regional road, linking Galway City to the coastal west of the county run to the south of the distributor road network. The area drains more or less directly to Galway Bay to the south – the main watercourses in the area appear to have been largely culverted.

Millers Lane

This 2.44 hectare area of flat land, apparently cut into a gentle slope rising to the east, consists of two grassed soccer fields with a carpark and temporary changing structure used by Galway Bohemians FC. There is a narrow strip of rough ground extending north of the site along the eastern side of Rahoon Road. A pedestrian pathway runs along the southern edge on rising ground, joining another pedestrian/cycleway on the eastern side on higher ground (Millers Lane) – there is a gorse filled embankment along the boundary and a low stone wall. The latter pedestrian way follows the alignment of an access road to Rahoon House to the north.

To the south, east, and north of the site, for the most part on higher ground, there are relatively modern suburban estates. The narrow stretch of rough ground to the north forms a gap between the main Road and the rear of one line of late 20th

century houses. To the west of the site is the Clyburn Road, and opposite this a recently completed Gaelscoil. There is a pedestrian link running on the western side of the road which runs past the adjoining Gaelscoil and connects to the retail park.

Kingston Road

This 3.43 hectare area of land is located south of the Western Distributor Road and consists of a mix of rough ground and some informal grazing land. An access road to a National School (St. John the Baptist/Knocknacarra) runs across the northern side of the site. Much of the land appears to be on made ground. There is a distinct rise in level to the south and some older farm boundaries.

North of the site, between it and the Western Distributor Road is a narrow line of modern housing called Gort Siar. To the north-east is a modern apartment complex (Altán Apartments). There is an extensive area of bare ground with large construction waste mounds to the east with permission for housing and recreational uses – beyond this further housing on higher ground. To the south is the end of a cul-de sac running north from the R337 in addition to two grazing fields. On the western boundary is a small estate of housing bounded by a block wall.

4. Planning History

There are no planning records on file relating to the Millers Lane Site. A recent permission was granted by ABP in 2023 for 227 dwellings on the site to the south-west on the opposite side of the Clybaun Road – **ABP-318689-23**. A number of applications relate to the Kingston Road site, including permission for a swimming pool (**24/6370**) to the north-east of the lands, and an adjoining application (decision pending) for a 362 unit residential development (**25/60320**) and a number of completed recent residential developments to the north-east of the site.

On 6th November 2025, the Commission approved with conditions a public realm scheme for the town of Clifden, County Galway – **ABP-321144-24** and a similar one for Gort Town centre (**ACP-323066**) was approved with conditions on the 12th January 2026.

5. Legislative and Policy Context

5.1 Relevant legislative provisions

The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC): This Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union. Article 6(3) and 6(4) require an appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of a proposed development on its own and in combination with other plans and projects which may have an effect on a European Site (SAC or SPA).

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

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

European sites located in proximity to the subject site include:

- Galway Bay Complex SAC site code 000268.
- Inner Galway Bay SPA site code 004031
- Lough Corrib SAC site code 000297.

Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended)

Part XAB sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments which could have an effect on a European site or its conservation objectives.

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

5.2 Policy and Guidelines of Relevance

The following policy and guidelines are relevant to the proposed development:

National Planning Framework

The National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040 is a high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to 2040. Key

objectives of the Framework are to ensure the promotion of compact urban development, sustainable mobility and transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. Embedded in these objectives is the promotion of recreational infrastructure, and the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling. In relation to community, **NPO 12** seeks to ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.

Climate Action Plan 2025

The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP 24) follows the commitment in the Climate Act 2015, as amended, and sets out the range of emissions reductions required for each sector to achieve the committed to targets. The document sets out Irelands plan to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2021-2030 and being carbon neutral by 2050. Section 15 of the Plan deals with transport and table 15.5 sets out the key actions to deliver abatement in transport for the period 2024-2025. Under the Active Travel Infrastructure Programme for the cited 2 years, the advanced roll-out of walking/cycling infrastructure are included for each year.

National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030

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

Regional Planning Guidelines

The RSES for the Northern and Western region (2020-2032) provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the region. It does not have specific policies relating to sport and recreation, but notes the importance of recreational infrastructure in national policy (policy 7 of the 'Ten National Strategic Outcomes').

Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029

Both sites are zoned RA 'Recreation and Amenity' in the CDP. These lands are identified as part of the 'Green Network' for the city (Section 5.2). Policy on open spaces is set out in more detail in the Galway Public Realm Strategy 2019 (this applies specifically to the city centre).

Areas zoned RA (11.2.2 of the Plan) are 'to provide for and protect recreational uses, open space, amenity uses, natural heritage and biodiversity'.

Other Galway Policy documents.

Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2005-2030

This plan represents a structured approach to biodiversity conservation in the city.

Galway City Recreation and Amenity Needs Study 2008.

Identifies Kingston Park as a 'Key Amenity Open Space', with Millers Lane identified as being extensively used. Need for a multipurpose pitch in the Knocknacarra area identified.

Galway City Green Spaces Strategy 2025-2029.

Identifies need for bring forward new open spaces, specifically in the Knocknacarra area (Figure 5-2).

Other Guidelines

Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines. Provides an overview and guidelines for the protection of both protected structures and Architectural Conservation Areas.

Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets: Provides detailed guidance on the design of urban streets and through-roads.

Cycle Design Manual August-September 2023 (NTA): Provides detailed recommendations on the provision of cycling infrastructure.

6. Consultations

6.1 Consultees Circulated

The application was circulated to the following bodies:

- Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
- The Arts Council (*An Chomhairle Ealaíon*)
- The Heritage Council
- Fáilte Ireland
- An Taisce
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- National Transport Authority
- Health Service Executive

6.2 Responses Received from Consultees

Dept. of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DAU)

- Notes the two archaeological reports submitted and broadly concurs with the recommended mitigation measures.

- A number of conditions are recommended – it is requested that the Commission applies the 11 recommended conditions verbatim. They relate to advance archaeological works and monitoring.
- Notes recording of bat species in the area. Proposed mitigation measures set out in the Bat Report should be implemented.
- Notes the survey report on birds and conclusion that impact will not be significant – states that the survey methodologies are generally appropriate.
- Requests that the Competent Authority considers whether the assessment adequately captures indirect and functional impacts on birds.
- Notes the NIS and states that the conclusion of no adverse effects relies on the effective implementation measures set out. Emphasises that mitigation must be precise, enforceable and supported by clear monitoring mechanisms.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

The Commission is advised that TII has no specific observations to make on the proposed developments.

Uisce Eireann

- Notes that the applicant has engaged with UE during development and it is considered that water and wastewater connections are feasible.
- Notes that build over of UE assets are not permitted.
- Requests that 4. No. conditions are added to any permission granted.

6.3 Public Submissions

Galway Bay Rugby Club

- Strongly supports both the proposed developments.
- Notes and supports the proposals for greater connectivity to the sites.
- Notes a loss of 1 net rugby pitch in the city.

Galway Bohemians FC

Strongly supports the proposed developments.

Notes existing problems with utilising the pitches at Millers Lane due to drainage, a lack of pitch numbers and poor floodlighting, in addition to inadequate changing facilities.

Galway Hockey Club

Supports the proposal and outlines the positive interactions and negotiations with the Council and other local sports clubs.

Notes with approval the nature-based drainage and pollinator friendly planting and other design details.

Galway Rapparees Rounders Club

Welcomes the proposal, in particular the multi-sport nature of the proposed development.

Welcomes the inclusivity and the proposed accessible nature of the two new sports grounds.

Gort Siar Residents (residential road just north of proposed Kingston Road site with access just south of roundabout on the Western Distributor Road).

- Outlines serious concerns regarding the Kingston Park proposals.
- Particular concerns set out on the issue of road access to the Western Distributor Road and issues around school drop offs. It is submitted that there are issues with illegal carp parking and inadequate access and turning areas.
- Outlines concerns about the proposed use generating anti-social behaviour and thus impacting on local amenities. Notes potential issues with proposed walkway to the rear boundary of Gort Siar.
- Concerns outlined on the potential impact of floodlighting on residential amenities.

- Questions whether the bat surveys were adequately carried out.
- Notes loss of grassland and other habitat due to use of synthetic pitch.
- Questions lack of detail on the café/server element at Kingston Park.
- Outlines concerns about the lack of integration with other proposed developments in the immediate area, in particular regarding traffic impacts.

Greenfields Hockey Club

Strongly supports the proposal.

Expresses gratitude to those who have worked to develop the designs and requests that ACP grants full permission for the works.

Hockey Ireland.

Expresses strong support for the proposal.

Specifically welcomes the nature-based drainage, improved lighting and spectator areas.

Connacht Hockey

Welcomes the proposed multisport campus and notes the long consultation period with Connacht Hockey and others.

The Commission is requested to grant permission, and it is stated that Connacht Hockey will be pleased to submit any supporting information required.

Knocknacarra FC

States that they have been an established and continuous user of the Millers Lane facility for over 20 years. Outlines concerns that they were not identified as a stakeholder during consultation.

It is submitted that this raises questions about procedural fairness in the consultation process, questions the adequacy and robustness of the public engagement, and

thus the overall principles of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

It is requested that ACP gives careful consideration to the exclusion of the club in the overall consultation process.

Mary Tynan of Gort Greine (this road runs north of the Millers Lane site).

- Objects on the grounds that it is contrary to the current Galway City Development Plan and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.
- Notes the proposed storage shed is directly on the boundary of her property – it is submitted that this will lead to loss of natural light and overshadowing.
- She states that she is disabled and with regard to the Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, her rights to equal status have not been recognised in the decision of the planning authority.
- It is submitted that the storage shed would have an overbearing impact on her property.
- It is argued that the proposed sports building is visually intrusive due to its bulk, massing and scale and is out of character with the area.
- Detailed concerns are set out regarding the impact of noise and nuisance on her property and her health (refers to specific health issues).
- It is argued that the proposed parking spaces are inadequate in number and will result in overspill parking with related hazard and congestion issues.
- It is argued that the applicants have failed to demonstrate how the proposed development complies with the above 2014 Equality act with regard to noise and visual/amenity impacts.
- It is argued that the proposed development would have a serious impact on the overall residential amenities of the area.

Marie Moran of Gort Gréine

- Argues that it would seriously impact on the amenities of her property by way of loss of daylight and sunlight and other direct impacts and as such is contrary to the development plan (amenity, urban design and community facilities policies).
- Requests that the pavilion and all ancillary structures be relocated further from residential areas to the land opposite the school.
- It is submitted that the pavilion is too close to existing residential properties with potential amenity impacts and should be relocated to the road frontage.
- It is submitted that locating facilities such as an equipment store, bike shelter, smoking shelter and bin store so close to dwellings is inappropriate due to potential security, safety and amenity impacts.
- It is submitted that the drawings do not give a clear demonstration of the height of the proposed equipment store.
- It is argued that the pitches would generate unacceptable levels of noise.
- It is submitted that one of the lighting columns is too close to the Gort Greine boundary and would result in light spillage into residential properties (refers to policy 11.3 of the Development Plan).
- It is argued that many of the issues above can be addressed by relocating the pavilion building to the roadside edge of the site – refers to policies 10.15 and 8.4 of the development plan with regard to design within urban areas.

6.4 Response of Applicant to Submissions

I have set out below a summary of the response by the applicant to the submissions. In its preamble, the County Council outlines the details of what it states was a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process and notes and welcomes the letters of support.

Issue raised	By	Galway CC Response
Loss of 1 no. existing pitches	Knocknacarra FC	It is noted that all pitches will be operated by Galway CC and will be bookable by any clubs or the public – no club will receive exclusive use. The new 4G synthetic pitch will allow for more intensive use and reliable scheduling. The 2G pitch for hockey will also be suitable for football training purposes.
Traffic congestion at Gort Siar (Kingston Park)	Gort Siar residents and others.	• The proposal is specifically designed to create a looped parking and drop off arrangement to facilitate school drop-offs, addressing the existing lack of turning facilities onto the Altan Road. • The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) active travel route has been designed to separate children walking and cycling from vehicular traffic. • The Commission is referred to the submitted TTA with regard to overall traffic impacts. This concludes that the proposed development will not contribute to capacity issues (also, Section 6.5.6 of the Planning Report). • It is intended that as part of the works there will be a significant extension of active travel projects to encourage safer walking and cycling in the area (refers to Figure 2.1 of the response document). • It is stated that the local authority is satisfied that the two schemes have been designed in a manner to address all traffic and access issues, many of which were proposed following consultations with local residents.
Anti social behaviour	Gort Siar Residents	• Attention is drawn to Sections A-A and C-C in drg. No. P612-KIN-LD-GA-102 – (also Fig.2.2 of the submission) with regard to the relationship

		between the rear gardens and the proposed structures. It is stated that there is a 2 metre levels difference from rear gardens to the application site and a minimum separation of 28.5 metres from the residents and the outdoor classroom. The top of the amphitheatre mound will be below the ground level of the back gardens in Gort Siar. • Figure 2-3 gives an indication of the proposed planting boundary. • The Commissions attention is drawn to the Landscape drawing Pack submitted with the application. • It is stated that deliberate and careful design was carried out to balance all trade-offs, including the amenity and tranquillity of Gort Siar residents and the Council is satisfied that the design is an appropriate response to the community's needs.
Lighting	Gort Siar Residents	Attention is drawn to Figures 2-4 and 2-5 of the response submission – this illustrates the extent of illumination from the proposed floodlights. It is stated that this demonstrates that the proposed lighting will fall below 2 lux before reaching the proposed parking area – it is not anticipated on the basis of the design that there will be any adverse effects on residential amenity.
Millers Lane residential amenity	M. Moran & M. Tynan	Loss of daylight (multi-functional building). Noted that there is a 40 metres separation between the building and the observer's residences. Storage shed/bike store – Refer to Figure 2-6 – it is submitted that the shed will not exceed the height of the existing boundary wall (except for the solar panels, which are 5-cm above that level).

Human Rights and Equality Commission Act (2014).	M. Moran	These issues are recognised and acknowledged. It is emphasised that the overall design and separation distances are such that there will be no significant impacts and as such no impact with regard to the 2014 and associated Acts.
Boundary Planting.	Various	Refers to the Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan – it is submitted that the planting has been carefully designed to ensure there are no unintended amenity impacts.
Lighting (Millers Lane)	Various.	Refers to Figure 2-5 of the response submission and Policy 9.9 of the development plan. It is submitted that while there will be some perceptible light flood, it is noted that there are existing floodlights, and there is no evidence of unwanted impacts from these.
Parking and Traffic (Millers Lane)	Various	Refers to Section 6.5.3 of the Planning Report. It is stated that parking provision is in line with standards set out in the development plan (notes that these are maximum provisions. Also refers to the proposed active travel network. Refers to submitted Mobility Management Plan.

Prescribed Bodies

Body	Comment	Response
DAU	Archaeology.	Generally agrees with the response and would accept the 11 no. suggested conditions.
	Bats and Lighting	Notes Appendix 6 of the EcIA and the recommendations. States that the design choices are in line with ILP Guidance
	Birds	Notes 6. No dedicated bird surveys carried out. Repeat surveys indicate that it is highly likely that the bird species overwintering are not

		dependent on the habitats within the site areas. The additional planting as part of the proposed development is highlighted.
	Water Quality and Pollution Prevention	Notes mitigation, monitoring and incident response procedures outlined in Sections 3 and 4 of the CEMP.
Transport Infrastructure Ireland		Notes no specific observations – welcomes the proposed development.
Uisce Éireann		Notes engagement was undertaken with UÉ. Confirms that it would be willing to accept and comply with all standard conditions requested.

8. EIA Screening

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

9. Assessment

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

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

9.1 The likely effects on the environment

In considering the likely effects on the environment, I will assess the proposed public realm works under the following general headings.

- Population and human health
- Material Assets
- Cultural heritage
- Biodiversity
- Land, soil, water, air and climate

Population and human health

The sites are located within the rapidly expanding western suburbs of Galway City, in an area acknowledged as being deficient in sports and amenity facilities. The Millers Lane site consists of an existing pair of football fields with a small temporary changing area – the two fields are floodlit. The Kingston Park site consists of mostly waste ground and some low grade grazing land, mostly surrounded by existing developments and some land with outstanding permissions for moderate to high density residential and sports related development. Both sites are accessed off the local distributor road network, with an existing pedestrian lane running past the Millers Lane site and to the east of the Kingston Park lands. They are both within a few minutes' walk of the Galway West Retail Park, and there are two schools in very close proximity to the lands.

The Council carried out extensive public consultations - outlined in detail in the Planning Report and attached Public Engagement Report. I note that one local football team state that they were excluded from the consultations but did not have substantive objections to the principle – the Council have confirmed that the proposed facilities will remain in Council control and will not be permanently allocated to any single, or any one group of, sports teams. I further note that the proposal has incorporated details of active travel routes for pedestrians and cyclists connecting the two sites with the main catchment.

A number of local objectors have raised issues with regard to traffic congestion and amenity impacts and the potential impact on those with disabilities. I will address these in more detail in the relevant sections in this report below. Notwithstanding any specific design details to be discussed further below, it is clear that the proposed developments will bring very substantial benefits to the overall local community by upgrading and enhancing sports facilities in this part of west Galway, and as such can be considered a strong net benefit to overall public health and wellbeing in the area.

Material assets

The proposed works will result in a significant upgrade to the existing playing pitches on Millers Lane – the number of pitches will be reduced, but in providing an artificial surface the year- round net availability of the pitches will increase significantly. The provision of a multifunctional building with both sites will significantly increase the overall level of amenity for sports users in the area and will additionally serve as an community resource in the event of an emergency. On Kingston Park there will be a loss of grassed area, although at present these lands are mostly made ground and unsuitable even for informal recreation due to its overgrown nature, uneven surface, and lack of footpaths. There will therefore be a very significant improvement in active recreational facilities in this area, in a part of the city acknowledged to be lacking in such.

I will address traffic issues in more detail in the relevant section below, but I note concerns outlined in the submissions about traffic impacts, particularly on the junction on the Western Distributor Road and the access to the Knocknacarra

National School. The provision of improved facilities will significantly increase traffic to both sites, in particular in the evenings and weekends, and this could potentially be 'peaky' traffic due to training/sports times. I note that the provision of parking is relatively modest, while the Council has focused on active travel proposals in line with development plan and regional/national policy. The area, while having somewhat substandard public transport, does have a reasonably good network of pedestrian facilities and most concentrated nodes in the area are well connected for walking and cycling - although for the latter there is much scope for improvement for safer cycling for children in the wider area. The projections in the Traffic and Transport Plan indicate no overall increase in traffic, and I note the proposals to improve the turnaround area for drop-offs to Knocknacarra NS.

I am satisfied that the overall proposals submitted by the Council will not result in a negative impact on traffic flow or capacity in the area and will in overall terms provide significant improvements in material assets for this part of Galway City.

Cultural heritage

The application was accompanied by an Archaeological Screening Report for both sites. The DAU accepted the results of these reports but recommended a number of specific conditions. These conditions are as follows:

Kingston Park

- 1. In advance of commencement of development, the Developer shall engage a suitably qualified Project Archaeologist to oversee the implementation of a suite of advance archaeological works, to include Archaeological Geophysical Survey and archaeological Test Excavation.*
- 2. The Developer shall facilitate the Project Archaeologist in carrying out pre-development Archaeological Geophysical Survey and Archaeological Test Excavation in areas of proposed ground disturbance.*

3. *Archaeological test excavation shall be informed and supplemented by licensed Metal Detection Survey.*
4. *Upon completion of the archaeological works, the Developer shall submit an Archaeological Impact Assessment Report for the written agreement of the Planning Authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service (NMS) department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in advance of any site preparation works or groundworks, including but not limited to, site investigation works, topsoil stripping, site clearance and construction works. The Report shall include a comprehensive Archaeological Impact Statement and clear Mitigation Strategy.*
5. *Where archaeological material is shown to be present, avoidance, preservation in situ, preservation by record (archaeological excavation) and/or monitoring may be required. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the Planning Authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the Developer.*
6. *No site preparation or construction or construction works shall be carried out on site until the Archaeologist's Report has been submitted to and approval to proceed is agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.*
7. *The Planning Authority and the Department shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any subsequent archaeological investigation 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:*

Millers Lane

8. *The Developer shall facilitate the Project Archaeologist in carrying out licensed Archaeological Monitoring of all groundworks required for construction of the development. The use of appropriate machinery to ensure the preservation and recording of any surviving archaeological*

remains shall be necessary. No ground disturbance shall take place in the absence of the Archaeologist without his/her express consent.

- 9. Should archaeological remains be identified during the course of archaeological monitoring, all works shall be suspended in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of the Planning authority, in consultation with the National Monuments Service, regarding appropriate mitigation (preservation **in situ**/excavation).*
- 10. The Developer shall facilitate the archaeologist in recording any remains identified. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the Planning Authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the Developer.*
- 11. Following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post excavation specialist analysis, the Planning Authority and the department shall be furnished with a final Archaeological Report describing the results of the monitoring and any subsequent required archaeological investigative work/excavation required. 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.*

Millers Lane

I note from my site visit and the information provided that the existing site is primarily on ground which has been flattened and levelled in the past in order to create the existing playing fields.

The Millers Lane Archaeological Screening Report (ASR) identifies one potential site of interest within the holding – GA094-056, described as a ‘Designated Landscape Feature’. A levelled ringfort lies some 80 metres to the south east and a house of indeterminate date (Rahoon House) is some 80 metres to the northeast. A holy well lies 200 metres to the northeast.

GA094-056 is described as 'non antiquity' and was described by a survey in 1992 as a D-shaped enclosure of large boulders, apparently a landscape feature of Ragoon House (Millers Lane runs along the alignment of the former avenue leading to this house). No remains of this are visible – it was apparently removed as part of the original construction of the soccer fields. The original survey concluded that it was relatively modern in date and had little to no archaeological value. Ragoon House dates to around 1860 and is now surrounded by modern housing. The NIAH survey indicates that the demesne predates the house, but little remains (the house itself is not on the NIAH register). The ASR concludes that due to clearance for the soccer fields the archaeological potential of the site is low. It notes several stone walls around the site which may be related to the former demesne, although if so, have been significantly altered in more recent times.

The report recommends that input from the National Monuments Service be sought prior to works and that if possible some of the stone walls be retained.

Kingston Park

The ASR for the proposed Kingston Park works notes that there are no national monuments or buildings on the NIAH on the site – there is a record of one levelled ringfort (GA094-019) within 500 metres to the south of the lands. There is what is described on older OS maps as a Christian Brothers graveyard to the south-east. The site is described as being occupied by a series of pasture fields, some of which are partially overgrown with scrub.

From my site visit, it would appear that the northern section of the site is mostly disturbed made ground. Kingston House and Gardens was close to the site but is no longer extant and there are no apparent remains. Older OS plans do not show any known remains apart from field boundaries. The report concludes that the archaeological potential of the site is low, with a recommendation that the Commission gains input from the National Monuments Service before any grant of permission.

Conclusions

On the basis of the submitted report and my site visit, there is little evidence of any significant archaeological or historical remains on the site or in the immediate environs. The remains identified on the Millers Lane site were removed in the 1990's and apart from some low stone walls along the outer boundary which may be related to the former demesne lands, anything of archaeological importance was likely destroyed during the laying out of the pitches. The Kingston Park site consists of a mix of made ground and grasslands – only the latter would have potential for archaeology although there is no evidence from desk top sources that any exist. As such, I would concur with the conclusion of both reports that the archaeological potential of the site is low.

The Department (DAU) recommended a series of conditions for monitoring. While I accept the principle that there should be archaeological oversight of the removal of undisturbed soils and recording of any features (including the visible field boundaries, which seem to have been unchanged since the date of the earliest OS Plans of the area), I do not recommend that the exact recommended wording is repeated by the Commission. The history of disturbance and the absence of evidence of any archaeology on the lands would make the presence of historically significant material very unlikely. I would consider a standard archaeological monitoring condition which would include the recording of any remains identified during the works to be sufficient.

Biodiversity

The proposed development is subject to an AA Screening and NIS, which I will address in more detail in the relevant section of this report.

In addition to the NIS, the applicants submitted an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) and a separate bat report. The main submission on these reports was by the DAU, which accepted the methodology and conclusions of all the reports (including NIS, which concluded no adverse impacts on any European sites), but noted the importance to a strict adherence to all suggested design and mitigation measures to ensure there the anticipated low to negligible impacts occur. It did note what it considers to be a somewhat inadequate assessment of the cumulative impact of

developments in the overall area, although it did not suggest that this requires additional information or justifies a refusal.

The Millers Lane site is managed sports fields, with the strip to the north and embankments primarily unmanaged gorse and scrub. The Kingston site is a more complex mix of scrub, hedgerow and grassland. The latter appears to be kept open by informal horse grazing. The EclA notes a single example of an invasive species, Sea Buckthorn, on the Kingston site.

No protected fauna species were detected during a walk over survey. Birds identified are typical of suburban/urban environments – breeding birds found include the Starling, Greenfinch, Willow Warbler, Linnet and Goldcrest. Six bat species were recorded as commuting and foraging across the site (May and September 2025 surveys). No roosts were recorded and it is considered that there are no suitable roosting features on the site. It is noted that the landscape within Kingston provide moderate quality habitats for commuting and foraging bats. Section 6 of the EclA outlines the impacts of habitat loss, with mitigation measures set out – these are mostly standard best practice mitigation measure for such sites. It is noted that significant mitigation planting is proposed for both sites, including a SuDs approach to drainage and extensive natural planting and appropriate management. Specific mitigation for bats is set out in the Bats report and 6.3.2.1 of the EclA – this includes a full lighting plan (Appendix 10 of the report), which addresses design and timing of the use of the lights and the maintenance of dark zones.

On the basis of the information provided and other file information and my site visit, I am satisfied that the submitted ecological information is in line with best practice and the proposed mitigation measures, if carried out in full, will ensure no significant net negative impact on habitats or individual species of value. There will be a loss of grassland and scrub on lands which are zoned for development (and the development plan was subject to full SEA), but I consider the overall design and proposed management to be fully in line with best practice for nature conservation for such urban developments. I would recommend standard conditions on landscaping and management to ensure the full implementation of the mitigation and design measures set out, particularly with regard to preventing any negative impacts on bats. I note the comments by the DAU on cumulative impacts – these are inevitable in a rapidly developing urban area such as this – but I conclude that the

proposals are fully in line with best practice and the relevant guidance and statutory requirements.

Land, soil, water, air and climate

In addition to the overall plans and specifications and management plans, the applicants have submitted a Planning Report, a CEMP, EcIA, Arboriculture Report, an Engineering Planning Report, and a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), which address general impacts on land, soil, water, air and climate. The overall design is intended to achieve SuD's standards by way of landscaping and hardstanding design and choice of materials.

The Millers Lane site is fully in use as a sports field and much of the non-playing field area is hardstanding – the exception being the unkempt roadside strip to the north, which is to be landscaped. The Kingston site includes relatively undisturbed grassland which will be removed with significant regrading of the surface. It is noted in the FRA that there are no records of flooding on either of the sites or the immediate vicinity. There is no visible evidence of a high water table. Older maps show a small watercourse (the Clybaun Stream) running to the west of both sites – this watercourse is now fully culverted within an 1800mm main – this culverting appears to have taken place in the 1990's.

The CEMP outlines standard methodologies for protecting water during construction and minimising loss of soil and air pollution (including noise). Section 6.7.2 of the Planning Report states that the design is intended to minimise and adapt to the risk from climate change. Solar PV and battery arrays are included for the main structures, and the landscaping focuses on appropriate native planting where possible, along with long term surface water management.

Section 6.7.2 of the Planning Report states that the design, particularly the use of SuDs criteria, is intended to support sustainability and resiliency in its use, in particular during weather events. The multi-functional buildings will be capable of serving as community resource hubs or emergency accommodation in weather emergencies and will be equipped with solar PV and battery arrays to at least partially allow functioning in the event of major weather events. With regards to Climate Action Plan and associated legislation, Section 5.1.2 of the Planning Report

notes that the design has incorporated sustainable and active travel provisions, integration with public transport, SuD's measures and eco-friendly landscaping. I would concur that the designs as submitted represent best practice in both minimising emissions and in climate resilience.

The application documents do not include a specific WFD assessment, but I am satisfied from the information provided that the proposed works will result in a quantitatively and qualitatively higher quality of run-off from the urban area to both ground and surface water. A full Water Framework Assessment is set out in the appendix to this report below.

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

In addressing the likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, I will address the proposed development under the following heading and sub-headings.

- Principle of development (National, Regional, Local Policy)
- Design considerations
 - o Overall design
 - o Amenity
 - o Lighting
 - o Traffic/parking/safety
 - o Mobility issues
 - o Crossing points
 - o Street furniture and trees
 - o Construction and implementation

Principle of development (National, Regional, Local Policy)

The proposed upgrade works are consistent with national and regional policies outlined previously in this report and in section 5 of the submitted Planning Report.

While there are few directly relevant policies on playing fields in the NPF and Regional Guidance, there are general policies favouring the provision of appropriate recreational facilities for urban areas, with a particular focus on accessibility. Relevant policy documents include the Climate Action Plan 2025, the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030, the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025, the Healthy Ireland Framework and the National Activity Plan. With regard to transport (Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, the Cycle Design Manual and the Safe Route to School Initiative), I will address these in further detail in the section on access below, but in terms of transport/accessibility policy I would conclude that the design is in accordance with the published policies and recommendations and that providing high quality playing fields within urban areas is fully in accordance with relevant national policy and specific policies on recreation and health in the regional plan. I note the full support for the proposals expressed in submissions by a range of sporting bodies.

The two sites are zoned RA – Recreation and Amenity in the current Galway City Development Plan - a very small section of Kingston site is within the ‘R-Residential’ zoned area. This designation has an objective *‘to provide for and protect recreational uses, open space, amenity uses, natural heritage and biodiversity’*. The Millers Lane site has been in use for playing fields since the 1990’s. The Kingston site is agriculture (largely abandoned) and vacant land. I would consider the proposed use to be entirely consistent with the zoning designation and directly related policies. The Development Plan was subject to an SEA and AA Report – these did not raise specific issues with the two sites.

The submissions and observations did not raise issues with the zoning designation of the sites – those observations which raised concerns that the proposed development is contrary to the development plan cite specific Development Plan policy objectives for amenity, environment and traffic. I will address those specific issues in the relevant sections below. I am satisfied that with regard to the overall principle of developing both sites for upgraded sports pitches and ancillary features is generally in accordance with national and regional policy, the planning history of the area, and the primary zoning designation of the sites.

Design considerations

Overall design – Millers Lane

The Millers Lane site has been in use for football since the 1990's, with floodlighting, paved areas used for parking and sports, and a number of uncultivated areas (the roadside strip to the north and the embankments on the western and southern side). The pitches are floodlit. There is a temporary structure on the western side of the lands in use as a changing room. The proposal replaces the existing pitches with two similar, but higher quality pitches with replacement floodlighting and extensive landscaping on the strip to the north and along the embankments and roadside. The proposed new multifunctional building is between the two pitches – it consists of a narrow structure aligned parallel to the pitches with access and parking provide on the northern side. The applicant has submitted Visualisations along with the plans and particulars and an Architectural Design Statement which I consider to provide an accurate overview of the design and overall conceptualisation.

The buildings are to be largely finished in stone cladding, white render with metal cladding – fenestration will be in bolder colours. The combination of new building of a high quality of design and the extensive landscaping will be a very clear upgrading and improvement of the current site, which is bare and exposed and the proposed changing rooms are clearly a very significant upgrade in terms of amenity and visual interest on those existing and will be able to provide a much wider range of associated community services.

Overall design – Kingston Park

This site is more complex than the Millers Lane site, with an existing service road cutting through and a mix of unused land and grazing land, mostly surrounded by housing (existing, permitted, and zoned) and a school. The proposed works will thus be a much more significant change to the site and immediate environs. It will include the construction of one large playing field and a significantly larger multifunctional building north of the proposed pitch east of the school, along with significant changes to the existing road alignment which will continue to service the school. The realignment of the entry road brings that road closer to the rear of dwellings to the north of the site (one aspect of the objection from residents here) but is intended to

allow for a circulatory movement to reduce traffic conflict from school and sports area drop-offs.

The proposed building is of a high quality of design and finish. The choice of layout will move the road access closer to dwellings to the north – given the restricted size of the site, I would consider this a reasonable approach. The integrated design should result in a very significant improvement to amenity to the overall area and will be a visually attractive feature within the area.

Notwithstanding the more detailed issues I will address below, I consider the overall design and conception of the public realm scheme to be of a satisfactory quality.

Amenity

In the broadest sense, the proposed development is intended to provide high quality sports amenities to this part of Galway City, and the proposal and designs have been strongly supported by a range of sporting representative bodies. One local team expressed misgivings about the nature of the consultation, although I note that the facilities will remain under Council control and will not be limited to any specific clubs or organisations. It is also noted that while there is a net loss of one pitch on the Millers Lane site, it seems generally accepted that the higher quality of the proposed replacement will significantly enhance the year round all weather useability of the sites.

A number of submissions highlight concerns over anti-social behaviour. This applies to both sites, with submissions raising concerns about the proximity of some features to the rear of the dwellings next to the facilities, specifically the dwellings to the north of both sites – these have rear yards overlooking the site – in the case of Millers Lane, the dwellings are at a somewhat higher level relative to the proposed pitches.

As the Council have stated in their submission, there are inevitable trade-offs in such designs, which are specifically intended to draw more people, which raises the potential for impacts – but it is argued that the overall design was the result of a series of trade-offs, and will not have a significant net negative impact on any one or group of residents.

While it cannot be ruled out that such a facility could attract some anti-social behaviour in the evenings, the intensity of use, especially in the early evening and weekends, is likely to create significant community informal surveillance. The designs do not incorporate significant corners or blind spots that could attract specific forms of anti-social behaviour when not in use. In general, I would say the overall quality of the design and the likely far greater intensity of legitimate use will result in a reduced theoretical possibility of attracting anti-social use compared to the current situation (although there is some visible graffiti and littering, I saw no specific evidence of a major problem at present with anti-social activities).

The layout of Kingston Park will bring the new access road (which also serves the adjoining school), closer to the dwellings just north of the site. This will bring some minor increased daytime noise from traffic and children walking and cycling, but nothing that I would consider out of the ordinary for a suburban area next to a school. Any increase in negative amenity from noise would be balanced out by the improvement in circulation from drop offs and increased safety for children cycling to school.

Two submissions from residents near Millers Lane highlight potential issues with loss of daylight from the main structure and the storage sheds closer to the rear of the dwellings. As the Council has noted, the main building is 40 metres distant and at a somewhat lower level, so there is no anticipated significant loss of direct or indirect ambient light. From the submission (Figure 2-6 of the appeal response), it is clear that the storage structures will be largely below the level of the wall, with just a small exceedance of the existing boundary height of around 5cm from the solar panels. I am satisfied from this that there would be no significant loss of light or other significant amenity impact from these structures. Likewise, the separation distance and orientation of the main buildings on Kingston Park are such that there would be no significant overshadowing or loss of light on any existing dwelling.

One submission expresses concern about noise from the playing fields, and the potential consequent impacts on local residents. I note that with regard to Millers Lane, the existing pitches do not appear to have resulted in any amenity problems over around 3 decades of use. The new pitch at Kingston will replace what is otherwise unused land and grazing, but any noise from the sport itself will be well within what would be considered normal for recreational use within an urban area.

Any major sporting event involving spectators would be occasional and during normal sports hours only. Due to its nature, it would not be feasible to mitigate noise from players or spectators by way of physical design changes, but I would consider any such noise to be normal for the zoned recreational use.

One resident outlined strong concerns about her rights under the Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, specifically referring to potential impacts on her amenities. This Act specifically sets out the establishment of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and sets out provisions for equality reviews to ensure that public bodies adhere to human rights and equality standards. I acknowledge her concerns about the changes to the local area, but as outlined above, I am satisfied that no dwellings will be impacted to any significant or unacceptable degree by way of overlooking, anti-social behaviour, noise, light or other direct or indirect amenity effect. Any impacts will be negligible to minor and balanced out by the positive impacts on the overall neighbourhood. While acknowledging the observers concerns and rights under the 2014 Act, I am satisfied that there are no impacts that would contravene this Act or impact on any rights set out within this Act or related Regulations.

Lighting

The Millers Lane site has existing lighting for the two pitches. The proposal includes two separate Reports covering lighting – one for each site – these assess associated lighting, including for paths and roads. Section 6.5.3 of the Planning Report provides an overview. The overall area is well lit with typical street lighting for a suburban area, although the Kingston Park site is largely unlit apart from the access road to the school. It is stated that all lighting is to be implemented in line with best practice standards and policy 9.9 of the Galway City Development Plan, which states:

Policy 9.7 Light Pollution

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ensure the design of external lighting minimises the incidence of light pollution, glare and spillage into the surrounding environment and has due regard to the visual and residential amenities of surrounding areas. |
|--|

2. Require all new developments to be designed with the inclusion of energy efficient lighting schemes.
3. Lighting on linear infrastructures, including greenways and blueways, should be carefully managed to ensure coherence of the supporting habitats of European sites, as outlined in Article 10 of the Habitats Directive
4. Ensure the design of external lighting does not have an adverse impact on wildlife and ecosystems and encourage the use of dark zones and sensor lighting where feasible.

The Council refers to Drawing No. 24.2812 P-E101 which indicates the extend of illumination. Additionally, it is noted that boundary treatments and planting will provide additional screening. It is stated that the extent will fall below 2 lux² and as such will not result in significant light leakage or disturbance to residents.

I am satisfied that the design of the lighting system is in accordance with Development Plan requirements for amenity protection (I will address the ecological issues in the AA section below) and is in accordance with good practice and is appropriate for the location. For the avoidance of doubt, I would recommend a standard condition for playing field floodlights to control the orientation of the lights and the permitted times of floodlighting.

Traffic, parking and mobility

The Millers Lane site is located along a trunk road with direct access to an existing small carpark around the changing rooms. Kingston Park is accessed via a small cul de sac road which provides sole access to the adjoining school – this road joins the main network at a roundabout junction to the north.

In addition to the full plans and specification submitted, the applicants submitted a Traffic and Transport Assessment undertaken by PUNCH Consulting Engineers, A Mobility Management Plan, a Road Safety Audit Report for both sites, construction access arrangements are within the CEMP, and additional information is submitted in the Planning Report (Section 6.5) and the response to the Observations. Most submissions on the details relate to the Kingston park site only and primarily relate to

congestion, parking and traffic issues from the junction with the main roundabout to the site, in addition to concerns over cumulative impacts with traffic generated by the existing school.

The Millers Lane development proposes both vehicular and pedestrian access to the site via the L-5000 *Gort na Bró* Road (the road adjoining to the west). Three accesses are proposed, with the main vehicular access to the northern part of the site. The Millers Lane site is very well connected with the local community, with a pedestrian access to the Gaelscoil to the west and the main shopping centre, with pedestrian friendly lands on the south and east side, all connecting with existing residential areas. A total of 27 parking spaces is proposed for Millers Lane (50 for Kingston Park). 64 no. bike parking spaces (80 no. for Kingston Park) are also proposed, in line with Development Plan Management Standards. Addition, there are 2 no. coach drop off spaces, with 3 no. motorcycle spaces

The Kingston Park development proposes both vehicular and pedestrian access to the site via the L-1011 Altan Road (also referred to as the St. Johns school access road), with improvements to the existing pedestrian entrance from *Doira Gheal* on the north-west side. It is proposed to remove the existing access road to the Knocknacarra National School and replace it with a new layout which is intended to address the problem of drop offs to what is now a one-way car access. The provision of this is to be co-ordinated with the applicant for planning reference **24/60371** (swimming pool and sports facility). The site is well connected with the local community, albeit without the direct connectivity to local residential areas that Millers Lane enjoys. A total of 50 parking spaces, 80 bike parking spaces (both figures in line with Development Plan Management Standards, and additionally 1 no. coach drop off spaces, with 2 no. motorcycle spaces and one set down area are proposed.

The submitted TTA with appendices includes details of the existing traffic situation and models the potential use scenarios. A particular emphasis has been placed on active travel proposals (set out in the Mobility Management Plan) to emphasis public transport, pedestrian and cycling access. The local road network combines older rural roads, mostly upgraded, and more modern truck roads, generally with roundabout junctions. The Western Distributor Road dual carriageway is the main highway in the area – this is subject to a proposed cycle lane scheme intended to

upgrade safety. Section 3.3 of the TTA outlines studies of existing traffic flows with Figure 3-10 showing turning movements at peak times on the three major junctions serving the sites. It is noted that there are a number of transport proposals for the area set out in the development plan, with particular objectives to reduce car dependency. A number of nearby developments including the proposed Galway Regional Aquatic Centre (application reference 24/60370), a proposed Primary Care Centre, and some large scale office and residential developments are indicated in section 3.5 of the TTA.

Tables 5-1 and 5-2 of the TTA outline estimated traffic peak movements based on standard assessments for Sports Grounds, with a 20% estimated uplift in accordance with TRICS best practice. It is concluded that generated impact would be less than 5% of baseline. It is concluded in section 9 that although one junction is already operating above threshold for all years, and the overall impact of the proposed development on the junctions would remain minimal to negligible.

The overall design and layout have been carried out in accordance with DMURs. Both the layout and parking provision are in line with development plan guidelines. There are a number of bus services in the area serving the city area – most notably buses 411, 405 and 412. Ceannt Station (Irish Rail) is approximately 4km walk/cycle from the lands. Both sites are adjacent or very close to two schools (Gaelscoil Mhic Amhlaigh and St. John the Apostle (Knocknacarra) NS) and within easy walking distance of the main shopping centre for the area in addition to other community facilities such as the Knocknacarra Medical Centre.

The submissions outlining concerns with traffic and parking are primarily from the *Gort Siar* estate, north of the Knocknacarra site. These focus on congestion and parking issues on the link road from the Western Distributor Road. It is clear from the layout of this road that it lacks a properly designed turning area for drop-offs at Knocknacarra NS, so it is likely that there would be a somewhat chaotic traffic situation in the morning and other peak times. As the applicant's response points out, the proposals include a significant redesign and re-orientation of the access which should result in a very significant improvement during times of congestion and will result in a much safer cycling/pedestrian access for children. The proposed new alignment is fully in line with DMURS. I am satisfied from the information provided that it will not result in a deterioration of the junction or this road.

A number of observers outlined concerns about inadequate parking, with the potential for spillover parking into local areas. While during very intense periods of use for the lands – such as during a high profile sports event – it cannot be ruled out that it may attract a very high peak of use with associated problems, there are no indications that this would be anything but a very occasional problem. The provision of parking is fully in line with published guidelines, and the proposal includes significant provision for encouraging non-car use. I am satisfied that the conclusions set out in Section 6 of the Planning Report and Section 16 of the TTA – that the proposed developments will not result in local capacity issues and that all designs and the Mobility Management Plan - are in accordance with national and development plan standards and objectives and are appropriate for the area, both with regard to the existing baseline situation and ongoing proposals for other developments in the immediate area.

The CEMP outlines access for work and heavy vehicles during the construction period – both sides have relatively good existing connections with the local distributor road network, so I do not consider that there would be significant issues that cannot be addressed by standard controls by way of condition.

I am satisfied that the design of the new accesses and access links and the overall proposals have had full regard to the nature of the area and potential cumulative impacts, and the details are fully in accordance with development plan guidelines and national guidance and standards for road design and parking provision. I do not consider that any additional conditions are required.

Construction issues

The proposed works have been accompanied by a Construction and Environment Management Plan, which I consider to be reasonable and in line with best practice for such works. Traffic management proposals are set out in section 3.5 of the CEMP. I note additional measures set out in the Appropriate Assessment. Construction access to both sites is relatively straightforward.

I would recommend a standard condition to ensure the CEMP measures and mitigation measures set out in the NIS are fully implemented.

Suggested conditions

If the Commission is minded to grant approval, I do not consider that any significant design alterations are required by conditions. I note the conditions requested above by the DAU set out in the Cultural Heritage section above – I would recommend a standard worded condition to address the issues raised.

9.3 The likely significant effects on a European site

The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

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

9.3.1 Compliance with Articles 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 the European site.

9.3.2 The Natura Impact Statement

This application was accompanied by an NIS which described the proposed development, the project site and the surrounding area. The NIS contained a Stage 1 Screening Assessment which concluded that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was required. The NIS outlined the methodology used for assessing potential impacts on the habitats and species within several European Sites that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. It predicted the potential impacts for these sites and their conservation objectives, it suggested mitigation

measures, assessed in-combination effects with other plans and projects and it identified any residual effects on the European sites and their conservation objectives.

The NIS was informed by the following studies, surveys and consultations:

- A desk top study.
- An examination of aerial photography and maps.
- A hydrological desk study.
- A baseline study of existing habitats.
- A wintering bird survey
- A bat survey of the proposal site and surroundings.
- Consultations with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The report concluded that there is a potential for likely significant effects on the following European Sites in the absence of any mitigation:

- Galway Bay Complex SAC (000268)
- Inner Galway Bay SPA (004031).

I am satisfied that the information is sufficient to allow for appropriate assessment of the proposed development (see further analysis below).

9.3.3 Appropriate Assessment

I consider that the proposed development of the Kingston Park and Millers Lane Public Park and Urban Realm improvement is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site.

Having regard to the information and submissions available, nature, size and location of the proposed development and its likely direct, indirect and cumulative effects, the source pathway receptor principle and sensitivities of the ecological receptors the following European Sites are considered relevant to include for the

purposes of initial screening for the requirement for Stage 2 appropriate assessment on the basis of likely significant effects

European sites considered for Stage 1 screening:

European site (SAC/SPA)	Qualifying Interests	Distance
Galway Bay Complex SAC site code 00268	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Turloughs [3180] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]	<1km

European site (SAC/SPA)	Qualifying Interests	Distance
Lough Corrib SAC site code 000297	Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the Littorelletea uniflorae and/or Isoeto-Nanojuncetea [3130] Hard oligo-mesotrophic waters with benthic vegetation of Chara spp. [3140] Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation [3260] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or clayey-silt-laden soils (Molinion caeruleae) [6410] Active raised bogs [7110] Degraded raised bogs still capable of natural regeneration [7120] Depressions on peat substrates of the Rhynchosporion [7150] Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] Petrifying springs with tufa formation (Cratoneurion) [7220] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240]	3km

European site (SAC/SPA)	Qualifying Interests	Distance
	Old sessile oak woods with Ilex and Blechnum in the British Isles [91A0] Bog woodland [91D0] Margaritifera margaritifera (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] Austropotamobius pallipes (White-clawed Crayfish) [1092] Petromyzon marinus (Sea Lamprey) [1095] Lampetra planeri (Brook Lamprey) [1096] Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Rhinolophus hipposideros (Lesser Horseshoe Bat) [1303] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Najas flexilis (Slender Naiad) [1833] Hamatocaulis vernicosus (Slender Green Feather-moss) [6216]	
Inner Galway Bay SPA site code 004031.	Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002] Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003] Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028] Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052]	<1 km

European site (SAC/SPA)	Qualifying Interests	Distance
	Red-breasted Merganser (<i>Mergus serrator</i>) [A069] Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>) [A137] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140] Lapwing (<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>) [A142] Dunlin (<i>Calidris alpina</i>) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa lapponica</i>) [A157] Curlew (<i>Numenius arquata</i>) [A160] Redshank (<i>Tringa totanus</i>) [A162] Turnstone (<i>Arenaria interpres</i>) [A169] Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Wigeon (<i>Mareca penelope</i>) [A855] Sandwich Tern (<i>Thalasseus sandvicensis</i>) [A863] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	
Lough Corrib SPA site code 004042	Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) [A059] Tufted Duck (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) [A061] Common Scoter (<i>Melanitta nigra</i>) [A065] Hen Harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>) [A082] Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>) [A125] Golden Plover (<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>) [A140]	3km

European site (SAC/SPA)	Qualifying Interests	Distance
	Black-headed Gull (<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>) [A179] Common Gull (<i>Larus canus</i>) [A182] Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) [A193] Arctic Tern (<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>) [A194] Greenland White-fronted Goose (<i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>) [A395] Shoveler (<i>Spatula clypeata</i>) [A857] Gadwall (<i>Mareca strepera</i>) [A889] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	

Based on my examination of the Screening report and supporting information, the NPWS website, aerial and satellite imagery, the scale of the proposed development and likely effects, separation distance and functional relationship between the proposed works and the European sites, their conservation objectives and taken in conjunction with my assessment of the subject site and the surrounding area, I would conclude that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required for 2.no of the European sites referred to above, i.e. the Galway Bay Complex SAC site code 00268 and the Inner Galway Bay SPA, site code 004031.

The remaining sites can be screened out from further assessment because of the nature and scale the scale of the proposed works, the nature of the Conservation Objectives, Qualifying and Special Conservation Interests, the separation distances and the lack of a substantive linkage between the proposed works and the European sites. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects

would not be likely to have a significant effect on these European sites in view of the sites conservation objectives and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required for these sites.

Relevant European sites

The Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Interests, including any relevant attributes and targets for these sites, are set out below.

Site Name	Qualifying Interests	Distance
Galway Bay Complex SAC site code 000268	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Coastal lagoons [1150] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Reefs [1170] Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220] Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Turloughs [3180] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (<i>Festuco-Brometalia</i>) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Calcareous fens with <i>Cladium mariscus</i> and species of the <i>Caricion davallianae</i> [7210] Alkaline fens [7230]	2km

Site Name	Qualifying Interests	Distance
	Limestone pavements [8240] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]	
Inner Galway Bay SPA site code 004031.	Black-throated Diver (Gavia arctica) [A002] Great Northern Diver (Gavia immer) [A003] Cormorant (Phalacrocorax carbo) [A017] Grey Heron (Ardea cinerea) [A028] Light-bellied Brent Goose (Branta bernicla hrota) [A046] Teal (Anas crecca) [A052] Red-breasted Merganser (Mergus serrator) [A069] Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) [A137] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Dunlin (Calidris alpina) [A149] Bar-tailed Godwit (Limosa lapponica) [A157] Curlew (Numenius arquata) [A160] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Black-headed Gull (Chroicocephalus ridibundus) [A179] Common Gull (Larus canus) [A182] Common Tern (Sterna hirundo) [A193] Wigeon (Mareca penelope) [A855] Sandwich Tern (Thalasseus sandvicensis) [A863] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	0.5 km

Site Name	Qualifying Interests	Distance

1. Galway Bay Complex 000268

Situated on the west coast of Ireland, this site comprises the inner, shallow part of a large bay which is partially sheltered by the Aran Islands. The Burren karstic limestone fringes the southern sides and extends into the sublittoral. West of Galway city the bedrock geology is granite. There are numerous shallow and intertidal inlets on the eastern and southern sides, notably Muckinish, Aughinish and Kinvarra Bays. A number of small islands composed of glacial deposits are located along the eastern side. These include Eddy Island, Deer Island and Tawin Island. A diverse range of marine, coastal and terrestrial habitats, including several listed in Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive occur within the site, making the area of high scientific importance.

Conservation Objectives

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide.
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Coastal lagoons.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Large shallow inlets and bays.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Reefs.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Perennial vegetation of stony banks.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Salicornia and other annuals colonizing mud and sand.

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (*Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae*).
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritima*).
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Turloughs.
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of *Juniperus communis* formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (*Festuco-Brometalia*).
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Calcareous fens with *Cladium mariscus* and species of the *Caricion davallianae*.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens.
- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Otter.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Harbour Seal.

Potential direct effects:

No direct adverse effects on the SAC due to loss of QI habitat can be ruled out as no habitats associated with the Galway Bay SAC were recorded within the footprint or in close proximity to either development site.

Potential indirect effects:

The culverted Knocknacarragh stream runs directly under part of the proposed development and discharges to Galway Bay. There is a potential direct effect of run-off or other pollution entering the bay via this culvert and impacting upon the mudflats and sandflats along the coastline via a reduction in water quality. It could also indirectly impact upon the coastal lagoons and large shallow inlets and bays, in addition to the off-shore reefs. This could impact during construction, operational and decommissioning phase (the latter is not considered in the NIS, as the proposals are intended to be permanent).

Potential in-combination effects:

None identified.

Mitigation measures:

Detained water protection measures set out in the CEMP incorporating standard techniques to prevent spillages during operations, dust control, materials control during earthworks and ongoing monitoring. For the operational impact, foul water will be discharged to the public sewage network and surface water run-off will be controlled by way of a SuDs based drainage (full details in the Engineering Planning Report, Appendix 2).

Residual effects/Further analysis:

None identified.

NIS Omissions

None noted in submissions.

Suggested related conditions

Standard condition relating to water pollution control in construction methodology.

Conclusion: I am satisfied that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of this European site in light of its conservation objectives (subject to the implementation of mitigation measures outlined above).

2. Inner Galway Bay SPA 004031.

Inner Galway Bay SPA is a very large, marine-dominated site situated on the west coast of Ireland. The inner bay is protected from exposure to Atlantic swells by the Aran Islands and Black Head. Subsidiary bays and inlets (e.g. Poulinaclough, Aughinish and Kinvarra Bays) add texture to the patterns of water movement and sediment deposition, which lends variety to the marine habitats and communities.

The terraced Carboniferous (Viséan) limestone platform of the Burren sweeps down to the shore and into the sublittoral. The long shoreline is noted for its diversity, and comprises complex mixtures of bedrock shore, shingle beach, sandy beach and fringing salt marshes. Intertidal sand and mud flats occur around much of the shoreline, with the largest areas being found on the sheltered eastern coast between Oranmore Bay and Kinvarra Bay.

A number of small islands and rocky islets in the Bay are included within the site. The site is a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the E.U. Birds Directive, of special conservation interest for the following species: Black-throated Diver, Great Northern Diver, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Light-bellied Brent Goose, Wigeon, Teal, Red breasted Merganser, Ringed Plover, Golden Plover, Lapwing, Dunlin, Bar-tailed Godwit, Curlew, Redshank, Turnstone, Black-headed Gull, Common Gull, Sandwich Tern and Common Tern. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

Conservation Objectives:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Great Northern Diver.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Cormorant.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Grey Heron.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Light-bellied Brent Goose.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Wigeon.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Teal.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Shoveler.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Red-breasted Merganser.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Ringed Plover.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Golden Plover.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Lapwing.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Dunlin.

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Bar-tailed Godwit.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Curlew.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Redshank.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Turnstone.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Black-headed Gull.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Common Gull.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Sandwich Tern.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Common Tern.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of wetland habitat in Inner Galway Bay SPA as a resource for the regularly occurring migratory waterbirds that utilise it.

Potential direct effects:

No direct effects are identified as the identified species and habitats are not represented on or adjacent to the two development sites. The bird surveys did not identify significant evidence of the sites being used for nesting or feeding for the identified species.

Potential indirect effects:

The culverted Knocknacarragh stream runs directly under part of the proposed development and discharges to Galway Bay. There is a potential direct effect of run-off or other pollution entering the bay via this culvert and impacting upon the water quality of the coast of Galway Bay. It could also impact upon the coastal lagoons and large shallow inlets and bays, in addition to the off-shore reefs which are part of the habitats used by the QI species for the SPA. This could impact would be during construction, operational and decommissioning phase (the latter is not considered in the NIS, as the proposals are intended to be permanent).

Potential in-combination effects:

None identified.

Mitigation measures:

Detained water protection measures set out in the CEMP incorporating standard techniques to prevent spillages during operations, dust control, materials control during earthworks and ongoing monitoring. For the operational impact, foul water will be discharged to the public sewage network and surface water run-off will be controlled by way of a SuDs based drainage (full details in the Engineering Planning Report, Appendix 2).

Residual effects/Further analysis:

None identified

NIS Omissions:

None noted in submissions.

Suggested related conditions

Implementation of all CEMP measures and SUDs design.

Conclusion: I am satisfied that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of this European site in light of its conservation objectives, subject to the implementation of mitigation measures outlined above.

Appropriate Assessment Conclusions

The proposed works are to take place within the established suburban area and largely include lands which are either currently intensively used for recreation or lands which have been recently disturbed as part of ongoing developments. No QI habitats or species would be directly impacted. The NIS identifies possible indirect effects by way of water discharge via a former stream running along the western side of the Millers Lane site, now culverted. Standard construction mitigation measures are proposed to address construction impacts, and an overall SuD's approach is proposed for the operational period of the works.

I am satisfied that with standard control measures during works there would not be any effects outside the direct boundaries of the sites or Galway Bay so any effects on surrounding European sites can be ruled out. The use of SuDs in the design should result in a neutral or slightly positive impact on ground and surface water quality.

Having regard to the containment of the works within the existing urban area of Gort and the control measures addressing water pollution in the course of the works, I consider that it is reasonable to conclude on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to carry out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans and projects would not adversely affect the integrity of the European sites 000268 or 004031 or any other European site, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives.

10. Recommendation

On the basis of the above assessment, I recommend that the Commission approve the proposed development subject to the reasons and considerations below and subject to conditions including requiring compliance with the submitted details and with the mitigation measures as set out in the NIS.

Reasons and Considerations

The Board reached its decision in accordance with its duties under Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended, and the requirement to, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with inter alia the Climate Action Plan 2025 and the furtherance of the national climate objective.

And in coming to its decision, the Board had regard to the following:

- (a) the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- (b) the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015,

- (c) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site,
- (d) the conservation objectives, qualifying interests and special conservation interests for the Galway Bay Complex SAC site code 000268 and the Inner Galway Bay SPA 004031,
- (e) the policies and objectives of the Galway County Development Plan, 2022-2028,
- (f) the nature and extent of the proposed works as set out in the application for approval,
- (g) the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Natura Impact Statement,
- (h) the submissions and observations received in relation to the proposed development,
- (i) the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Commission to make a report and recommendation on the matter

Appropriate Assessment

The Commission agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the Galway Bay Complex SAC site code 000268 and the Inner Galway Bay SPA 004031, are the only European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and the Inspector's assessment. The Commission completed an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the affected European Sites, namely Galway Bay Complex SAC site code 000268 and the Inner Galway Bay SPA 004031, in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Commission considered

that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment. In completing the appropriate assessment, the Commission considered, in particular, the following:

- i. the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,
- ii. the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal, and
- iii. the conservation objectives for the European Sites.

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

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

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development/Likely effects on the environment

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

Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where any mitigation measures set out in the Natura Impact Statement or any conditions of approval require further details to be prepared by or on behalf of the local authority, these details shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record.

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

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

Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment, the protection of European Sites and in the interest of public health.

3. A suitably qualified ecologist shall be retained by the local authority to oversee the site set up and construction of the proposed development and implementation of mitigation measures relating to ecology. The ecologist shall be present during the works. Upon completion of works, an ecological report of the site works shall be prepared by the appointed ecologist to be kept on file as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interest of nature conservation and biodiversity.

4. Prior to the commencement of development, the local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the project ecologist and relevant statutory agencies, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), incorporating all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and Ecological Impact Assessment and demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The CEMP shall include:
 - a. all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and Ecological Impact Assessment,
 - b. location and extent of silt fencing to be installed on site.
 - c. specific proposals as to how the measures outlined in the CEMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness,

Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment and the European Site.

5. The developer shall engage a suitably qualified (licensed eligible) archaeologist to monitor (licensed under the National Monuments Acts) all site clearance works, topsoil stripping, groundworks, dredging and/or the implementation of agreed preservation in-situ measures associated with the development. [specify, as appropriate, following consultation with the Local Authority Archaeologist or the National Monument Service (NMS)]. Prior to the commencement of such works the archaeologist shall consult with and forward to the Local Authority archaeologist or the NMS as appropriate a method statement for written agreement. The use of appropriate tools and/or machinery to ensure the preservation and recording of any surviving archaeological remains shall be necessary. Should archaeological remains be identified during the course of archaeological monitoring, all works shall cease in the area of archaeological interest pending a decision of the planning authority, in consultation with the National Monuments Service, regarding appropriate mitigation.

The developer shall facilitate the archaeologist in recording any remains identified. Any further archaeological mitigation requirements specified by the planning authority, following consultation with the National Monuments Service, shall be complied with by the developer.

Following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation specialist analysis, the planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of the monitoring and any subsequent required archaeological investigative work/excavation required. 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.

6. The operational hours of the floodlighting shall not extend beyond 2200 hours with automatic cut-off of floodlighting at that time.

Reason: To protect the residential amenity of properties in the vicinity.

7. Floodlighting shall be angled and constructed so that no light is emitted above a horizontal plane through the fitting. Positioning and design shall also ensure that no glare is caused to users of the public roads in the vicinity of the development.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity and traffic safety.

8. The Local Authority and any agent acting on its behalf shall ensure that all plant and machinery used during the works should be thoroughly cleaned and washed before delivery to the site to prevent the spread of hazardous invasive species and pathogens.

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

Philip Davis
Senior Planning Inspector
10th June 2026

APPENDIX –

EIAR AND WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE FORMS.

Form 1 - EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	
Proposed Development Summary	ABP-323873-25
Development Address	Kingston Park and Millers Lane, County Galway
	In all cases check box /or leave blank
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'project' for the purposes of EIA? (For the purposes of the Directive, "Project" means: - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q2. ☐ No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.	
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
☐ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2,	

Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	
☒ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	Relevant classes include: Class 10(b)(iv) of Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the P&D Regulations 2001 as amended which includes “(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 14. Works of Demolition Works of demolition carried out in order to facilitate a project listed in Part 1 or Part 2 of this Schedule where such works would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7. 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. In addition, Section 50(1)(a) of the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended), lists road developments in respect of which

	there is a mandatory requirement to carry out Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as follows- (i) the construction of a motorway, (ii) the construction of a busway, (iii) the construction of a service area, or (iv) any prescribed type of proposed road development consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of any existing public road. I note that Article 8 of the Roads Regulations 1994 (S.I. 119 of 1994) states that: "The prescribed types of proposed road development for the purpose of subsection (1)(a)(iii) of section 50 of the Act shall be – a) the construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or the realignment or widening of an existing road so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new, realigned or widened road would be eight kilometres or more in length in a rural area, or 500m or more in length in an urban area; b) the construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100m or more in length." Section 68(1) of the Roads Act references a cycleway and states that a 'cycleway' means "a public road or proposed public road reserved for the exclusive use of pedal cyclists or pedal cyclists and pedestrians".
--	--

4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?

Yes ☒

No ☐	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)
-----------------------------	--

Case Reference	
Proposed Development Summary	Public Park and Urban Realm Project
Development Address	Kingston Park and Millers Lane, Galway City.
This preliminary examination should be read with, and in the light of, the rest of the Inspector's Report attached herewith.	
Characteristics of proposed development	The proposed development is within the western suburbs of Galway City. It is in on lands largely used for recreation or unused, with a small area of uncultivated farmland. The proposal is to redevelop one area of playing fields with improved facilities, and the creation of new sports facilities on the second site.
Location of development	The site is within the western suburbs of Galway in an area developed and/or zoned for development. The two sites are largely surrounded by existing residential and commercial uses..
Types and characteristics of potential impacts	The potential for pollution, wastes and nuisances arising at construction stage on the population would be controlled and mitigated by way of the implementation of a CEMP. The extent of the impact will be limited to the geographical area of scheme for population. The proposed development is intended to have a potential positive impact on population and human health. Having regard to the nature and location of the development no significant impacts on landscape are anticipated. Works will reuse excavated materials in the reinstatement of landscaping where appropriate. It is considered the nature of environmental impacts is not complex/intense. While there is a potential for impacts on European Sites and water bodies within the site vicinity, given the waterbodies onsite/adjacent, potential runoff of pollutants from works would be mitigated by way of measures in the CEMP and NIS. Potential impacts on the cultural heritage of the area are considered to be low given the nature of the works, their location and implementation of mitigation measures. No potential significant impacts on cultural heritage are anticipated as the works do not include significant excavations and will not directly impact

	upon protected structures. There will be no transboundary impacts. The construction phase will be short term. The site is zoned and the Development plan has been subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment. Subject to mitigation significant cumulative effects are not anticipated. Environmental impact assessment assesses the potential for significant environmental effects. There is no potential for significant environmental effects.
Conclusion	
Likelihood of Significant Effects	Conclusion in respect of EIA
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIA is not required.

Inspector: _____ Date: _____

DP/ADP: _____ Date: _____

Screening Determination

A. CASE DETAILS		
An Bord Pleanála Case Reference	ACP-323066-25	
Development Summary	Public Park and Urban Realm works	
	Yes / No / N/A	Comment (if relevant)
1. Was a Screening Determination carried out by the PA?	Yes	No EIAR required
2. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted?	Yes	
3. Has an AA screening report or NIS been submitted?	Yes	The NIS concluded that there were no significant effects on designated EU habitats.
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	
5. 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	Development Plan and LAP subject to SEA

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 attached herewith			
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?	Yes	One site is to have upgraded and improved sports grounds and facilities – this site is already used as a sports ground. The other site is currently largely unused or is unused grazing.	No
1.2 Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works cause physical changes to the locality (topography, land use, waterbodies)?	Yes	Minor changes to existing hardstanding, application of SuDs criteria mitigates any alterations.	No
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	Redevelopment of the site including significant new buildings, although these are relatively modest in scale for the area.	No.

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		
1.5 Will the project produce solid waste, release pollutants or any hazardous / toxic / noxious substances?	Yes	Minor arisings from replacing pavements and regrading soil, all to be disposed of according to CEMP in licensed landfills if required.	No
1.6 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	Yes	Possibility of run-off entering nearby watercourses – one culverted watercourse runs through part or adjoins the site. To be mitigated by way of standard construction controls.	No
1.7 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	Changes to street lighting are proposed in addition to new street and pitch lighting.	No
1.8 Will there be any risks to human health, for example due to water contamination or air pollution?	Yes	Dust arisings during works. Standard construction mitigation measures proposed.	No
1.9 Will there be any risk of major accidents that could affect human health or the environment?	No		No
1.10 Will the project affect the social environment (population, employment)	Yes	Positive impacts in improving the Public Realm – more public space, safer traffic movements.	No
1.11 Is the project part of a wider large scale change that could result in cumulative effects on the environment?	No	No similar developments proposed in the locality.	No
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 plan/ LAP/ draft plan or variation of a plan	Yes	Several SAC's and SPAs within 15km, some within 1km (both in Galway Bay. NIS addresses all potential issues with mitigations focusing on preventing run-off to rivers and groundwater and bat protection measures.	No
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	None identified. Some bat activity in the area, but none directly associated with the sites.	No
2.3 Are there any other features of landscape, historic, archaeological, or cultural importance that could be affected?	Yes	None. Most of the lands have previously been disturbed so any archaeological remains are very unlikely.	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?	No		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	One culverted stream runs under part of the site – this is not to be disturbed. The stream discharges to Galway bay.	No

2.6 Is the location susceptible to subsidence, landslides or erosion?	No		No
2.7 Are there any key transport routes(eg 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 works will be served from the existing suburban road network.	No
2.8 Are there existing sensitive land uses or community facilities (such as hospitals, schools etc) which could be affected by the project?	Yes	The works will change the public realm in the vicinity of schools. The overall impact is expected to be positive.	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?	No	No developments identified with the potential for cumulative impacts.	No
3.2 Transboundary Effects: Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	No		No
3.3 Are there any other relevant considerations?	No		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, in particular
 - (a) the limited nature and scale of the proposed public realm and park works development, in an established urban area served by public infrastructure
 - (b) the absence of any significant environmental sensitivity in the vicinity, and the careful design with regard to sensitive receptors
 - (c) the location of the development outside of any sensitive location specified in article 109(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)
2. the results of other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment submitted by the applicant, including an NIS, which concluded that there were no significant effects on any qualifying species of an EU designated habitat.
3. the features and measures proposed by applicant envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant effects on the environment, including best practice in construction management, and the use of SuDs design approach to reduce run-off from pavements.

The Board concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and that an environmental impact assessment report is not required.

Inspector _____

Date _____

Approved (DP/ADP) _____

Date _____

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING

Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality

An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	ACP-323873-25	Townland, address	Kingston Park. Galway City
Description of project		Public Park and Urban Realm project	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening,		The site is in two parts, one an existing sports ground, the other a mix of unused land and grazing, all within the urban area of the western suburbs of Galway.	
Proposed surface water details		Standard SuDs layout	
Proposed water supply source & available capacity		Galway City mains supply	
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues		Galway City main WWTS	
Others?		No	

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

Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection						
Identified water body	Distance to (m)	Water body name(s) (code)	WFD Status	Risk of not achieving WFD Objective e.g.at risk, review, not at risk	Identified pressures on that water body	Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater)
River Waterbody	0m	Knocknacarragh_010	Review	At risk	Urban runoff	Stream is fully culverted through the urban area.
Groundwater waterbody	Underlying site	Spiddal EI_WE_G_0004	Good	Not at risk	None.	None.

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

CONSTRUCTION PHASE							
No.	Component	Water body receptor (EPA Code)	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact/ what is the possible impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure*	Residual Risk (yes/no) Detail	Determination** to proceed to Stage 2. Is there a risk to the water environment? (if 'screened' in or 'uncertain' proceed to Stage 2.
1.	Surface	Knocknacarragh_010	Urban run-off	None	Standard water mitigation measures	No	Screened out
3.	Ground	Spiddal EI_WE_G_0004	Spillage during works	Hydrocarbon Spillages	Standard Construction Measures	No	Screened out
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
3.	Surface	Knocknacarragh_010	Run-off	None	Application of SuDs criteria	No	Screened out
4.	Ground	Spiddal EI_WE_G_0004	None	None	Application of SuDs.	No	Screened out

DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
5.	NA						