



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report PL-500444-DF-25

Development	Introduction of a car parking management control with all associated site works
Location	Blanchardstown Town Centre, Coolmine, Dublin 15.
Planning Authority	Fingal County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	FW25A/0410E
Applicant(s)	Blanche Retail Nominee Limited
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Grant Permission
Type of Appeal	Third Party Normal Planning Appeal
Appellant(s)	John Burtchaell and others John Walsh Luke Daly and Jack O'Reilly
Observer(s)	Saddler's Residents' Associated Emer McGowan Greg Caffrey Mandate Trade Union Padraig Finnerty Patrick Quinlan

Julie Drew
Paul Donnelly
Tighearnán Noonan
Darragh O'Dwyer and others
Rita Bateson
Ted Leddy
Frances McDonnell
David and Frances McClelland
Keira Gilleece
St. Mochta's Residents' Association
Friends of the Irish Environment
Anna Stanuch
Emer Currie TD
Suzanne Finnerty
Lorraine Cawley
Anna Lloyd
Louise Keegan
Samantha Hanna
David Ashford
Christine and David Harmes and
others
Sheepmoorians Residents Association
Siobhan Barrett
Randal Plunkett

Date of Site Inspection

21st August 2026

Inspector

Darragh Ryan

1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1.1. Blanchardstown Town Centre is located approximately 10km north-west of Dublin City Centre and approximately 1km north of the main village of Blanchardstown. Blanchardstown is the largest urban area in the County of Fingal and serves as a service centre for the county along with Swords.
- 1.1.2. The construction of Blanchardstown Town Centre commenced in 1994 and the first stage (i.e.the Phase 1 Shopping Centre now known as the Blanchardstown Centre)was completed in October 1996, followed by a multiplex cinema, restaurants and further retail units which opened in early 1997. The centre has an extensive planning history, dating back to the first available record of a planning application on the site in 1977. It has evolved to become the commercial, civic, recreational and transportation hub of the area and is designated as a Major Town Centre.
- 1.1.3. Blanchardstown Town Centre is located within the Dublin City & Suburbs under the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2019 and a Level 2 'Major Town Centre' in the Retail Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area. The town centre is one of the key retail locations within Fingal and the Greater Dublin Area with in excess of 170,000 sq.m of retail floor space.
- 1.1.4. The application site relates to the surface car parks and multi-storey car park (known as the Green, Red, Yellow and Blue Car Parks) at Blanchardstown Centre, the surface car park at Retail Park 1, the surface car park (known as the White Car Park)at Retail Park 2, the surface car park (also known as the Yellow Overflow Car Park)to the to the west of Leisureplex at Road D, the surface car park (known as the Blue Library Car Park) at Road D to the south east of the Blanchardstown Library and Offices building, the car park (also known as the Red Overflow Car Park) to the east of Road C, Road C, Road D, Road E, Road F, a section of Road G, a section of the roundabout junction to the Westend Retail Park, a section of Blanchardstown Road South, a section of the Navan Road, a section of the L3020, and the associated verges, footpaths and entrances.

2.0 Proposed Development

The development was described as follows in the public notices submitted with the application:

2.1.1. "The proposed development will comprise:

- The introduction of car parking management controls to the existing surface car parks and multi-storey car park, including associated barriers and provision of variable message signs ('VMS') to the surrounding road network within the application site boundary;
- The proposal includes associated pedestrian and cycle improvements, including the provision of a cycle route along sections of Road C and D;
- The proposal includes associated alterations to the existing vehicular accesses to each of the car parks and the road infrastructure within the application site boundary to facilitate the barriers and entry/exit lanes from each car park, including the removal of one no. existing vehicular access to the southeast corner of the White Car Park, the removal of one no. existing vehicular access to the Blue Library Car Park, the removal of two no. existing vehicular access points and provision of two no. replacement vehicular access points to the existing surface car park at Retail Park 1, reconfiguration of the entrance to the drive-thru to Unit 457 and the incorporation of a proposed taxi stacking area within the Yellow Overflow Car Park, and associated reconfiguration and alterations to the existing retail car parking spaces for all car parks; and
- The proposed development includes landscaping and public realm improvements, cycle parking, provision of utilities and associated civil works, surface water drainage and public lighting, along with all ancillary and site development works."

2.1.2. The following additional information was outlined within the design statement submitted with the application that provides a further description of the development:

- Car Parking Management System and Improve Circulation Flows -
Introduction of a Commercial Car Parking Management System (which includes a new paid parking regime) to improve circulation flows and ensure

that car parking resources are managed efficiently, safely and in a transparent manner.

- Integration with BusConnects - The proposals will integrate with the existing road network and also with the BusConnects project / interchange at Blanchardstown Town Centre, and ensure that sufficient safeguards are in place once the BusConnects Core Bus Corridor is operational.
- Supporting Mobility Enhancements - The proposals will include supporting mobility enhancements, including improved wayfinding, with reconfiguration of car parking spaces where required/feasible, associated improvements to accessible car parking, parent and child car parking, age friendly parking, cycle parking and EV charging, along with upgrades to the quality of the environment, with landscaping and biodiversity enhancements where possible.
- Introduction of a comprehensive Variable Message Signs ('VMS') strategy
Provision of an appropriate level of on and off-site car parking guidance / VMS to minimise driver search patterns for available spaces and abortive trips on the road network and to ensure that demand is suitably spread across all of the car parks
- Access Infrastructure and Integration with Existing/Planned Cycle and Pedestrian Routes - Ensure that suitable access infrastructure is in place to integrate with existing and future cycle and pedestrian routes through Blanchardstown Town Centre, whilst also ensuring that customers can continue to enter and exit the car parks efficiently, with a suitable quantum of controlled entry and exit lanes provided to cover peak periods.
- Compliance with the Planning Policy Framework - The proposals will be developed in tandem with a Mobility Management Plan and will demonstrate compliance with relevant national, regional and local planning policy, including the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 and any relevant S. 28 Ministerial Guidelines

3.0 Planning Authority Decision

3.1. Decision

Fingal County Council (FCC) issued a notification of decision to grant permission for the proposed development, dated the 14th of November 2025, subject to 10 no.conditions

C4 - A tree bond of €70,000 shall be provided prior to commencement of development

C5 – revised landscaping scheme to be provided

C6 – A timeline for the implementation of parking management system and active travel routes to be provided.

Mobility management and Construction management plan to be provided

C10 – No construction activities likely to result in exceedance of the limits specified in BS5228-1:2009 + A1 Code of Practice for Noise Vibration Control

3.2. Planning Authority Reports

- 3.2.1. There is a single Planning Report of file. The following issues were addressed within the planning report.

Principle of development – The development is compatible with the overall policies and objectives for the zone and consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Visual & Residential Amenity – The proposed VMS signage is an appropriate design and appearance given the retail/commercial nature of the site and does not adversely impact the character or visual amenity of the area. With respect to residential amenity there are no neighbouring properties within the vicinity of the site to cause issues of overlooking, overdominance and overshadowing issues.

Permitted Developments – The proposal will no prejudice permitted developments and can be delivered separately which is appropriate

Tree Protection/ Landscaping – The overall tree replacement and retention measures are considered acceptable. The trees shall be replaced with a like for like canopy cover. Recommended conditions with respect to landscaping details.

Ecology – The subject site has a low biodiversity value – no undue impacts on biodiversity are anticipated.

External Lighting – existing lighting on site is currently a mix of new and old type luminaries. The provision of a revised proposal is considered acceptable. Additional detail to be provided through condition.

Traffic Management – Proposal will not have an undue impact on traffic management. Assessment of TTA carried out and satisfied with level of detail provided and agrees with conclusion of assessment.

SUDS – satisfied that the proposal integrates SUDS measures and contributes positively to the amenity value of the car parks.

AA Screening – The proposal will not have any significant effect on any European Sites.

3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Water Services Department

No objection – standard conditions recommended

- Parks and Green Infrastructure

No objection recommend conditions including revised landscaping detail

3.3. Prescribed Bodies

Transport Infrastructure Ireland

- The proposed development shall be undertaken strictly in accordance with the recommendations of the Transport (Traffic Impact) Assessment. Any recommendations arising should be incorporated as Conditions on the Permission, if granted. The developer should be advised that any additional works required as a result of the Assessment should be funded by the developer.

- The proposed development is located in proximity to a future national road scheme. The planning authority is advised that national road schemes should be protected and kept free from any developments or accesses in accordance with national policy. The applicant should be made aware of the plans for a new road scheme should the permission be granted.
- The Authority will entertain no future claims in respect of impacts (e.g. noise and visual) on the proposed development, if approved, due to the presence of the existing road or any new road scheme which is currently in planning.
- The Authority requests that the Council has regard to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines in the assessment and determination of the subject planning application.

National Transport Authority

Having reviewed the relevant application documents, the NTA are satisfied that the proposed development can be delivered in a manner that does not hinder the delivery of the BusConnects project.

The NTA would, however, request that, in the event of a grant of permission, a condition is attached to require the Applicant to liaise with the NTA prior to any development taking place, to ensure the coordination of future development at this location alongside the future development of the BusConnects project.

3.4. Third Party Observations

There are a number of third-party observations on file. The issues raised are addressed within the grounds of appeal.

- The proposal is a money-making venture and commercialisation of public parking
- Excessive removal of trees and landscaping
- Barriers will cause traffic congestion and increase CO2 emissions
- There will be a negative impact on local ecology
- Paid parking disproportionately affects vulnerable groups

- Placement of VMS will detract from residential amenities.

4.0 Planning History

4.1.1. Blue Mall Extension - Reg. Ref.: FW24A/0430E (Parent Permission)

4.3 On the 21st of January 2025, a final grant of permission, subject to 24 no. conditions, was issued by Fingal County Council in respect of a new extension for the existing Blue Mall within the Blanchardstown Centre under Reg. Ref.: FW24A/0430E, to replace and supersede the development permitted on the subject site under Reg. Ref.: FW18A/0168, as amended by Reg. Ref.: FW20A/0018, FW20A/0030 and FW22A/0175.

The description of the development was described as follows in the public notices submitted with the application:

- "The demolition of 598 sq.m of existing floorspace (including removal of 1 no. retail unit, 1 no. storage unit and 2 no. ATM units, and ancillary areas) to provide for an extension of the Blue Mall over two levels, with plant at roof level, an external mall plaza area and provision of a lobby to the internal mall, resulting in an additional GFA of 2,796 sq.m.
- The extension includes the provision of a replacement ATM unit and provision of 9 no. café/restaurant units ranging in size from 85 sq.m to 1,350 sq.m, and associated terraces with outdoor seating areas, seating areas in the external mall plaza and signage zones.
- A new Blue Mall entrance comprising of a large entrance portico, and centre signage which is flanked on either side by the proposed café/restaurant units and the associated terraces.
- Provision of 2 no. kiosk zones within the external mall plaza area (not to exceed 208 sq.m in total) and associated seating areas. The proposed use of individual kiosks to be for retail or commercial use in accordance with the definition of Class 1 (Shop) or Class 2 (Services) use, Part 4 of Schedule 2 of

the Planning & Development Regulations 2001, as amended, or for use primarily as a restaurant, café or food takeaway. A public plaza containing seating, landscaping and ancillary improvement works.

- Associated alterations to the Blue Mall service yard entrance and the realignment of the northern lane of Road D, the provision of new pedestrian crossings and the upgrade of the existing pedestrian crossing at the Blue Mall entrance to include shared surfaces on Road D and on the slip road south of Road D.
- The reconfiguration of part of the existing Leisureplex car park to incorporate a proposed taxi stacking area to provide for the relocation of the existing taxi rank.
- The proposal includes associated changes to car parking areas, provision of 28 no. additional bicycle parking spaces, an ESB double substation and switch room, lighting, landscaping, site development and ancillary works.

The Blue Mall Extension is expected to commence construction in the short term. The current proposals for the Mobility Enhancement Project will complement the uses and public realm improvements planned under the Blue Mall extension. The application documentation demonstrates how the current application ties into the proposed public realm infrastructure and the improvements planned under the Blue Mall extension. In particular, the proposals include for the incorporation of a taxi stacking area, as permitted under the Blue Mall Extension. Should any additional alterations be required to the Blue Mall extension, a separate amendment application will be progressed.

4.1.2. Blue Mall Extension - Reg. Ref.: FW25A/0349E (Proposed Amendments)

Fingal County Council issued a final grant on the 17th of November 2025, subject to 22 no. conditions, for proposed amendments to the development permitted under Reg. Ref.: FW24A/0430E at the Blanchardstown Centre, Blanchardstown Town Centre, Coolmine, Dublin 15.

The amendments are described as follows within the public notices:

"The proposed amendments comprise the following:

- Reduction in the area of existing floorspace to be demolished (from 598 sq.m to 158 sq.m), with the storage unit (218 sq.m), mall area (24 sq.m) and corridor (135sqm) to remain as existing;
- Alterations to the permitted Blue Mall entrance with removal of the large entrance portico, provision of a new entrance frontage to the internal mall, provision of amended cladding to the front elevation of the existing café /restaurants either side of the entrance to the internal mall, and associated alterations to the facade and fenestration;
- Alterations to the permitted extension, including increasing the building height by 250mm (from 74.3m AOD to 74.55m AOD), provision of a plant screen at roof level, revised elevation materials, and alterations to the permitted footprint, resulting in a reduction of GFA of 410 sq.m (from 4,107 to 3,697 sq.m in total);
- Alterations and reconfiguration of the permitted café / restaurant units to provide 8 no. units in total (ranging in size from 78 sq.m to 1,330 sq.m, with a total combined GFA of 3,392 sq.m), including alterations to permitted stair cores and internal corridors, and omission of an ATM unit. Associated alterations to the permitted signage zones, outdoor terrace areas, façade and fenestration ;
- Reconfiguration of the 2 no. permitted kiosk zones within the external mall plaza area (no increase in the maximum cumulative area of the kiosk zones which will not exceed 208 sq.m in total).
- Associated alterations to the external mall seating and landscaping, and all other associated site development works within the external mall plaza area;
- Associated alterations to the Blue Mall service yard, including maintaining the existing turning area arrangement;
- All associated ancillary amendments, including alterations to the public plaza and hard and soft landscape areas, reconfiguration of plant areas and provision of PV panels at roof level, associated alterations to the foul and surface water drainage, including attenuation areas, reconfiguration of the

permitted ESB double substation, and all associated development and ancillary works;

- The proposed amendments include an extension of the application site boundary;
- The omission of Condition 11 which relates to the control of delivery hours; Amendment to Condition 12 to extend the trading hours of café / restaurant units to the following:
 - Monday - Saturday: 0700 (7 am) to 2300 hours (11pm)
 - Sunday & Bank Holidays: 0900 (9 am) to 2300 hours (11 pm)-Unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.
- Amendment to Condition 13 to extend the operating hours of external kiosks to the following:
 - a) Monday to Sunday: 8am (0800 hours) to 11pm (2300 hours).
 - b) Any changes to these times shall be the subject of a new planning application."

It is noted the proposed amendments under Reg. Ref.: FW25A/0349E do not impact on the proposed Mobility Enhancement Project, noting there were no

alterations to the proposals to the Yellow Overflow Car Park (including the Taxi Stacking area), and the proposals for the alterations to the Blue Mall service yard do not impact on the proposals. It is noted that there is no change to the permitted cycle / pedestrian routes, which the proposed development continues to demonstrate a tie in with the Blue Mall Extension. However, as mentioned, should any additional alterations be required to the Blue Mall extension, a separate amendment application will be progressed

4.1.3. Blanchardstown to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme 313892-22

On the 21st of June 2024, An Coimisiún Pleanála granted permission for the proposed road development for the construction of the Blanchardstown to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme. The Board Order was subject to 16 no. conditions.

The proposals demonstrate they tie in with the permitted BusConnects proposals. As discussed further below, the application documents includes the Site Layout Plan 'with' BusConnects, which demonstrates how the layout and design of the mobility enhancements has been fully coordinated and ties into the BusConnects layout. General layout drawings are also provided by the architects, engineers and landscape team which provide details on each car park and how they tie in with the BusConnects proposals. The applicant has engaged on an ongoing basis with the NTA in relation to BusConnects proposals, to ensure the delivery of BusConnects within the Blanchardstown Town Centre and to ensure the successful coordinated interface between both developments.

4.1.4. Site A White Car Park for Retail Park 2 – LRD ACP ref 315709-23

The proposed Large-scale Residential Development comprises the construction of a mixed use development, consisting of 971 no. apartments (comprising 117 no. studio apartments, 368 no. 1 bed apartments, 422 no. 2 bed apartments, and 64 no. 3 bed apartments) in 7 no. buildings (Blocks A, B, C, D, E, F, and G) ranging from 1 no. to 16 no. storeys in height, over a basement level (below 6 no. of the blocks), and provision of a Mobility Hub, with 7 no. levels

ACP's Order was subject to 32 no. conditions, as confirmed by an amended Order issued on 21st July 2023

The applicant states that in respect of the permitted Site A and Site B/C permissions, due to current viability challenges, these developments are expected to come forward in the medium term however the Mobility Enhancement Project proposals will not preclude these developments from coming forward in due course and instead ensures appropriate car parking management is in place in the interim, particularly with the implementation of the BusConnects Core Bus Corridor Scheme, and once the permitted developments are brought forward for implementation, separate amendment applications will be progressed at that time to align the permitted developments with the car parking management in place and vice versa

4.1.5. Site B/C Library Car Park and Blue Car Park – ACP REF 314982-22

A final grant was issued by the Planning Authority on the 11th June 2024, following the ACP Order issued on the 20th May 2024.

In summary, the proposed development was described as ‘...the construction of 352 no. apartments (comprising 44 no. studios, 132 no. 1 bed apartments, 155 no. 2 bed apartments, and 21 no. 3 bed apartments) and ancillary resident amenity floorspace, 5 no. commercial units

The application site relates to the existing multi-storey car park and surface parking site (known as the Blue Car Park) located to the southeast of the Blanchardstown Centre, a section of the road and roundabout junction to the Westend Retail Park, and associated verges and footpaths

C3 of said permission reduces number of units to 348 residential units only.

5.0 Policy Context

5.1 National Planning Framework First Revision

- 5.1.1. The National Planning Framework is the Government’s plan to cater for the extra one million people that will be living in Ireland, the additional two thirds of a million people working in Ireland and the half a million extra homes needed in Ireland by 2040. The Government completed the review of the NPF in April 2025 and has now adopted a revised NPF.

The following National Policy Objectives are noted:

- National Policy Objective 12: “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”.
- National Policy Objective 14: “Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area”.
- National Policy Objective 20: “In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.”

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

5.2. Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Regional Authority

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midlands Region is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape the future development of the region to 2031 and beyond. The principal function of the assembly is the delivery of a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), a new concept in Irish planning where not only the spatial but also the economic factors that go into the future of the region are brought together into one all encompassing strategy.

The primary status of the RSES is to support the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan (NDP) and the economic policies and objectives of the Government by providing a long term strategic planning and economic framework for the development of the region.

The RSES is required under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) to address employment, retail, housing, transport, water services, energy and communications, waste management, education, health, sports and community facilities, environment and heritage, landscape, sustainable development and climate change.

The overarching framework for Fingal’s Settlement Strategy is set out in the RSES. The RSES identifies that Blanchardstown Town Centre is located within the Dublin City and Suburbs boundary and Table 6.1 ‘Retail Hierarchy for the Region’ of the RSES states that Blanchardstown is a Level 2 ‘Major Town Centre’.

Dublin City and Suburbs is included within the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP), which provides a 12 to 20 year strategic planning and investment framework for the Dublin metropolitan area. The MASP identifies Blanchardstown on

the North West Corridor which stretches from Dublin City Centre towards the Maynooth / Dunboyne lines, and is part of the DART expansion plans.

The RSES includes the following guiding principles for the integration of land use and transport:

“The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life. Accessibility by car does need to be provided for, but in a manner, which complements the alternative available modes. Local traffic management and the location / management of destination car parking should be carefully provided.”

“Support investment in infrastructure and behavioural change interventions to encourage and support a shift to sustainable modes of transport and support the use of design solutions and innovative approaches to reduce car dependency. Development will have regard to the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, where appropriate.”

5.3. Climate Action Plan 2025

The Climate Action Plan 2025 (CAP25) is the fourth statutory annual update to Ireland’s Climate Action Plan. The plan builds on CAP24 by refining and updating the measures required to deliver and implement the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings, as well as setting out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve our emissions by 2030, and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government. CAP25 sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland’s social and economic development.

In terms of transport, CAP25 pledges to adopt the ‘Avoid – Shift – Improve’ approach and targets a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030. It also aims to:

Reduce the total distance driven across all journeys by 20%.

Ensure that walking, cycling and public transport account for 50% of all journeys.

With particular relevance to the development, CAP25 seeks to:

- TR/25/6: Advance roll-out of walking/cycling infrastructure in line with National Cycle Network and CycleConnects plans;

- TR/25/14: Ongoing delivery of Destination Charge Point Scheme
- TR/25/23: Prioritise the delivery of further phases of the BusConnects Network

5.4. Fingal County Development Plan 2023 - 2029

The following sections of the Fingal County Development Plan 2023-2029 are of relevance to the proposed development and have been taken into consideration within the assessment

Chapter 2 Core Strategy

- Section 2.4.3 Framework Plans
- Section 2.7 Settlement Strategy
- Section 2.7.2 Dublin City and Suburbs
- Policy CSP20 – Blanchardstown
- Objective CSO23 – Town Centre Regeneration
- Objective CSO26 – High Quality, Sustainable & Inclusive Development
- Objective CSO29 – LAP's, Masterplans & Frameworks Plans for Dublin City and Suburbs

Chapter 3 Sustainable Placemaking and Quality Homes

- Policy SPQHP3 - Successful Public Realms
- Policy SPQHP4 - Town Centre First
- Policy SPQHP5 – Quality Placemaking

Chapter 6 Connectivity and Movement

- Policy CMP3 – Integrated Land-Use and Transport Approach
- Objective CMO3 – Integration of Public Transport and Development
- Policy CMP5 – Mobility Management and Travel Planning
- Policy CMP7 – Pedestrian and Cycling Network
- Objective CMO6 – Improvements to the Pedestrian and Cyclist Environment
- Objective CMO7 – Integration of Active Travel with Public Transport

- Policy CMP17 – Behavioural Change Initiatives
- Objective CMO21 – Wayfinding
- Objective CMO23 – Enabling Public Transport Projects
- Objective CMO24 – NTA Strategy
- Objective CMO29 – Integration of Public Transport Services and Development
- Policy CMP20 – Public Transport Interchange
- Policy CMP25 – Car Parking Management
- Objective CMO33 – Accessible Car Parking
- Policy CMP32 – Sustainable Roads Infrastructure

Chapter 7 Employment and Economy

- Section 7.5.4 Retail
- Section 7.5.5 Retail Hierarchy
- Policy EEP8 – Promoting Major Urban Centres
- Objective EEO91 – Level 2 Centres
- Objective EEO92 – Facilitate improvements to the retail offer and function in Level 2 Centres

Chapter 11 Infrastructure and Utilities

- Policy IUP10 – Water Conservation and SuDS
- Objective IUO9 – Surface Water Drainage Systems
- Objective IUO10 – SuDS – Nature-Based Solutions
- Objective IUO11 – SuDS in New Developments
- Objective IUO64 – Design of Lighting Schemes
- Objective IUO65 – Lighting: New Developments

Chapter 13 Land Use Zoning

- Zoning Objective 'MC' Major Town Centre

Chapter 14 Development Management Standards

- Section 14.2 Key Principles for all Planning Applications
- Section 14.3 Assessments Required for Particular Projects
- Section 14.15.4 Retail Development
- Section 14.17 Connectivity and Movement
- Section 14.17.11 Pay and Display
- Section 14.18.1 Tree Policy
- Section 14.18.3 Landscapes Principles for Development
- Section 14.20.14 Construction and Demolition Waste Management Plan
- Section 14.20.15 Construction Noise

5.4 Natural Heritage Designations

The North Dublin Bay SAC (site code: 0206) – 11.5km south

The North Bull Island SPA (site code: 4006)

South Dublin Bay and Tolka Estuary SPA (side code: 4024) – 13.5km

South Dublin Bay SAC (side code: 0210)

North-West Irish Sea SPA (site code: 4236)

6.0 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, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. The proposed development, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not required.

7.0 The Appeal

- 7.1. There are three third party appeals against the Decision of Fingal County Council to grant permission for the development. The issues raised in all three**

Grounds of Appeal overlap to varying degrees. In the interests of clarity I have addressed each issue thematically and will follow through with same within my assessment. The Grounds of the three third party appeals can be summarised as follows:

7.1.1. Site History/ Blanchardstown Town Centre

A major element of all the third party appeals is that Blanchardstown Town Centre is not an ordinary shopping centre. The appellants emphasise that it performs the role of a de facto town centre for a large suburban catchment and accommodates or adjoins a broad range of civic, social, cultural, medical and practical services. These include, as listed in the appeals, the library, council offices and county hall functions, the Draiocht arts centre, leisure and entertainment facilities, postal services, health-related uses including BreastCheck and GP/pharmacy-type services, disability supports, banks, community-focused spaces and access to Millennium Park.

It is argued that, because of this mix of functions, parking at the centre cannot be considered solely through the lens of retail convenience or traffic engineering. Rather, the car parks are said to facilitate access to a concentration of services that many residents use for everyday life. The appellants therefore contend that the proposed charging regime would effectively place a financial barrier in front of a location that serves many public and community functions, including functions associated with the local authority itself. This point is developed into a wider planning argument: that the public role of the centre creates a special responsibility to ensure inclusive and practical access, and that introducing paid barrier controls across the car parks would undermine that role.

A recurring theme throughout the third-party appeals is that the applicant and the planning authority have described the scheme in neutral or positive transport-management language, whereas the appellants say its real purpose and effect is the monetisation of parking at Blanchardstown Town Centre. The appeal repeatedly argues that the proposal is not merely about efficiency, travel demand management, or sustainable mobility, but about turning an existing free parking regime into a permanent, revenue-generating, barrier-controlled system across the centre. In that respect, the appellants say the proposal amounts to a fundamental operational and economic change in how the town centre serves the public.

It is set out that once the proposed infrastructure is installed, the car parks will cease to function as open-access parking supporting a mixed civic and retail centre, and instead will become a managed commercial parking operation controlled in perpetuity by the landowner. The appeal presents this as a profound shift in the character of the centre and in the balance between private commercial interests and public accessibility.

7.1.2. Principle of Development

The appellants state that the proposal is unacceptable in principle. In this regard, the appellants state that:

- the site is zoned MC - Major Town Centre;
- the zoning objective is to protect, provide for and/or improve major town centre facilities;
- the centre serves as a major civic, social and service hub as well as a retail destination; and
- the proposal would commercialise access to that hub through the introduction of paid barrier-controlled parking.

The appellants state that the proposal does not constitute an improvement to the quality of life of residents, visitors and workers reliant on the centre. The appellants state that the proposal is, in substance, a parking monetisation scheme presented as a mobility enhancement measure. They state that the purpose and effect of the development is to:

- convert the existing parking stock into a revenue-generating operation;
- increase turnover of parking spaces;
- facilitate further expansion and operational change at the centre; and
- impose charges on users who rely on the centre for everyday and essential purposes.

7.1.3. Premature pending framework planning for the town centre

The appellants state that the proposal is premature in the absence of an up-to-date planning framework for Blanchardstown Town Centre. The appellants state that:

- there is no current specific Framework Plan in place for the town centre area;
- the proposal is being advanced in the absence of a wider adopted vision for the future development of the town centre;
- the current application is developer-led; and
- the proposal should not be determined in isolation from broader land use, movement and public realm planning for the area.

The appellants refer to earlier framework and masterplan documents and state that those documents envisaged:

- a more urban town-centre form;
- redevelopment of surface parking areas over time;
- greater intensification of development;
- less dominance of surface car parking;
- improved public transport integration; and
- parking demand management in a broader strategic context.

The appellants state that the current proposal is contrary to that longer-term planning direction.

7.1.4. Local Transport Plan and improved public transport provision

The appellants state that the proposal is premature from a transport planning perspective.

It is set out that

- Blanchardstown Town Centre remains heavily dependent on private car access;
- the area is not served by high-quality public transport comparable to other major centres;
- the public transport offer remains limited largely to bus services;
- the proposal would seek to alter travel behaviour in advance of sufficient public transport alternatives; and

- the development is being advanced before the delivery of the transport improvements relied upon in support of it.

The appellants refer to previous planning and strategic documents and state that parking demand management was contemplated in conjunction with significant public transport improvements. The appellants state that those improvements have not been delivered and that the present proposal therefore arises prematurely.

7.1.5. Future land use planning for the town centre would be hampered

The proposal would constrain the future planning and redevelopment of the town centre. It is stated that:

- earlier plans envisaged redevelopment of surface car parks;
- earlier plans referred to a shift towards underground and multi-storey parking over time;
- the present proposal would retain the existing parking areas and add permanent barrier and paid parking infrastructure; and
- the creation of a revenue stream from the car parks would make future redevelopment of those areas more difficult.

The appellants state that the proposal would:

- entrench the existing car-park-dominated structure of the town centre;
- make it more difficult to reduce the dominance of surface parking in future;
- hamper the delivery of a denser and more coherent urban form; and
- tie the future of the town centre to a permanent paid parking model.

7.1.6. Project splitting concerns

The appellants state that concerns arise regarding project splitting. The appellants refer to multiple planning applications in 2024 and 2025, including applications associated with the Blue Mall extension, and state that:

- the current proposals should not be viewed in isolation;
- the current application forms part of a wider sequence of changes at the centre;

- related proposals have been spread across more than one planning application; and
- a full view of the applicant's overall intentions has only emerged over time.

The appellants state that the cumulative effects of the wider proposals have not been fully and transparently presented in a single application.

7.1.7. Adverse traffic congestion and safety impacts

The proposal would give rise to adverse traffic congestion and safety impacts. The appellants state that the following impacts may arise:

- additional queueing at barrier locations;
- congestion on internal roads including Roads C and D;
- knock-on effects on surrounding roads including Blanchardstown Road South and other approach routes;
- interference with bus movements;
- displacement of vehicles to surrounding residential areas;
- increased conflict between vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists; and
- adverse effects on road safety and user convenience.

The appellants state that the applicant's TTA is overly optimistic and does not adequately reflect real-world operating conditions. One of the appellants have provided their own Traffic and Transport Assessment which shall be summarised separately.

7.1.8. Traffic and Transport Assessment is not adequate

The appellants, supported by the Ayrton Group, state that the applicant's Traffic and Transport Assessment requires independent and full validation. They state that concerns arise regarding:

- the accuracy of the applicant's traffic figures;
- the assumptions used regarding vehicle processing times at barriers;
- whether the traffic surveys covered the Christmas period;

- whether the survey evidence adequately captured the busiest periods at the centre;
- whether the modelling reflects the actual operating environment at the site; and
- whether the cumulative traffic effects have been fully examined.

The appellants state that:

- the TTA assumptions relating to barrier throughput are optimistic;
- delays may be greater in heavy traffic, poor visibility, adverse weather or where technical issues arise;
- surveys may not have captured the busiest trading conditions;
- the proposal has not been supported by sufficient independent monitoring data; and
- an independent road engineering review should be undertaken.

The appellants seek a fuller independent assessment and validation of the applicant's traffic evidence.

7.1.9. Insufficient promotion of sustainable mobility

The appellants state that the proposal does not genuinely promote sustainable mobility. They state that although the proposal includes certain pedestrian and cycle measures, these do not offset the central effect of the development, namely the introduction of paid parking controls across the centre. It is set out that:

- the proposal prioritises revenue generation from parking;
- it does not provide corresponding high-quality public transport improvements;
- local road conditions remain unsuited to substantial modal shift;
- existing cycling infrastructure in the wider area is limited; and
- the proposal seeks to force a behavioural shift without adequate alternatives being in place.

The appellants state that the proposal is therefore contrary to the claimed mobility enhancement rationale advanced by the applicant.

7.1.10. Negative socio-economic impacts and reduced accessibility

The appellants state that the proposal would adversely affect accessibility and would have negative socio-economic impacts. The development would disproportionately affect:

- lower-income households;
- retail and service workers;
- elderly persons;
- disabled users;
- families;
- persons accessing civic services; and
- persons reliant on essential services located within or adjacent to the centre.

The appellants state that many users of the centre do not have realistic alternatives to travel by private car. It is further stated that:

- workers may face substantial costs for long-duration parking;
- families and lower-income users may be deterred from accessing the centre;
- access to community and public services would become more burdensome;
- persons who are not digitally or financially equipped for cashless systems may be disadvantaged; and
- the proposal would place additional financial pressure on users during a cost-of-living context.

7.1.11. Retail and employment impacts

The appellants state that the proposal may adversely affect retail activity, footfall and employment at the centre. They state that:

- the centre is a significant retail and employment location;
- no Retail Impact Statement accompanied the application;
- the introduction of parking charges may deter visitors;
- trips may be displaced to competing locations with easier or free parking; and
- reduced accessibility may affect trading conditions and employment.

The appellants state that the economic and commercial effects of the proposed parking regime have not been adequately assessed.

7.1.12. Environmental impacts including trees, emissions and amenity

The appellants state that the proposal would give rise to environmental impacts.

- the installation of barriers and related infrastructure would add to the built and engineered character of the site;
- queueing and idling vehicles may increase emissions locally; and
- the proposal would adversely affect biodiversity, urban amenity and environmental quality.

The applicant's proposals which are described as being non-Intrusive and as having no undue impact on the public realm (by the applicant and by FCC's Planner's Report) in fact propose that 347 trees will be affected by upgrades to the on-site car parks. That is, they could be removed. Further, 145 trees will be impacted by the permitted BusConnects project, to be delivered by the NTA.

In such a hard surfaced area, trees are critical. The total tree loss is 492 which is 43%.

7.1.13. Visual and public realm impacts

The appellants state that the development would adversely affect the visual quality and public realm character of Blanchardstown Town Centre. They state that:

- the barriers, barrier plazas and variable message signs would alter the character of the centre;
- the development would create a more controlled and less open environment;
- the proposal would have a "fortress-like" quality;
- the visual effect of the works has been understated; and
- the development would detract from the civic and urban role of the town centre.

The appellants also state that the proposal is inconsistent with the objective of creating a high-quality urban environment and successful public realm.

7.1.14. Loss of parking spaces and loss of dual-use flexibility

The appellants state that the proposal would reduce parking supply while simultaneously introducing charges. It is set out that:

- existing parking provision has already reduced over time;
- the current proposal would result in a further reduction in parking numbers;
- the reduction in supply combined with paid parking would worsen impacts on users; and
- the development would remove the opportunity for flexible or dual use of the parking stock.

The appellants state that parking areas which have historically been available to support the wider range of town-centre and community uses would become permanently barriered and metered spaces.

7.1.15. Failure of EIA Screening & Cumulative Impact Assessment/ AA Screening

No meaningful cumulative environmental impact assessment was undertaken, particularly in relation to the significant overlapping works associated with BusConnects. The lack of air quality modelling, noise assessment, in season ecological surveys and coherent analysis of hydrological or arboricultural effects. The planning authority relied on inadequate documentation and, as such, could not lawfully conclude that no significant environmental effects would arise. The absence of proper AA screening assessment contravenes the Habitats Directive.

7.1.16. Third Party Traffic and Transport Assessment

- A separate and substantial element of the appeal concerns the applicant's Traffic and Transport Assessment, which is specifically challenged by the appellants and by the Ayrton Group Traffic Engineers. The essence of this objection is that the applicant's traffic evidence is said to be overly optimistic, insufficiently stress-tested and not adequately independently validated.
- The appeal submits that Blanchardstown Town Centre already experiences significant traffic pressures and that the surrounding road network and internal circulation routes operate with limited resilience, particularly during peak trading periods and seasonal

surges. Against that background, the appellants argue that the introduction of barriers at multiple car park entrances and exits, together with access reconfigurations and changes to circulation patterns, introduces new operational constraints and potential bottlenecks that have not been satisfactorily assessed.

- A key criticism relates to the assumptions used in the applicant's modelling of barrier operation and processing times. The appellants question whether the ANPR/ticketless system would function as smoothly in practice as assumed in the submitted assessment. It is argued that even modest underestimation of the time taken for individual vehicles to pass through barriers could result in materially greater queue lengths and delays, particularly in a centre of this scale where vehicle volumes are high and arrivals can be concentrated over relatively short periods. The Ayrton commentary notes that heavy traffic conditions, poor visibility, bad weather, technical malfunctions or user confusion could all affect performance and thereby worsen queuing.
- The appeal also questions whether the traffic surveys underpinning the applicant's assessment captured the most demanding operational periods. Particular concern is raised as to whether the Christmas period, which is described as the busiest time for the centre, was included in the survey evidence. The appellants argue that unless the scheme is shown to operate satisfactorily under those stress conditions, the assessment cannot be regarded as sufficiently robust. Concern is likewise expressed that the surveyed periods may not have fully reflected congestion patterns at other busy times, including evenings, Thursdays and other known peak shopping or event periods.
- The appellants further submit that the proposed access changes may redistribute congestion rather than solve it. The removal or reconfiguration of access points at locations such as the White Car Park, the Blue Library Car Park and Retail Park 1 is said to have the

potential to funnel traffic towards other already busy entrances and internal roads, thereby lengthening circulation routes, increasing merging movements and intensifying delay at particular junctions or conflict points.

- The appeal states that the risk of queue spillback from barrier locations onto internal roads and potentially onto surrounding public roads has not been satisfactorily addressed. In the appellants' view, queueing may interfere with the internal operation of the centre, affect access to adjoining uses, impede buses and general traffic, and create more difficult conditions for pedestrians and cyclists at or near altered access points. They also argue that the potential for overspill parking into surrounding residential areas and peripheral locations has not been fully resolved.
- Road safety is addressed as a related concern. The appellants submit that the proposal could give rise to additional rear-end collision risk at barriers, increased pedestrian-vehicle conflicts at barrier plazas and crossings, and more difficult conditions for vulnerable users, including older persons, families and persons accessing the library or community facilities. The interaction between queuing vehicles, narrowed or altered internal road arrangements, pedestrian movements and proposed cycle infrastructure is said to require more detailed scrutiny than that provided in the applicant's assessment.
- The transport objection also extends to the operational accessibility of the proposed system. The appellants question how users who are unfamiliar with digital or ticketless parking systems, or who require additional time or assistance, will be accommodated. This is presented both as an equality issue and as an operational matter with the potential to affect throughput and queueing in practice.
- A further criticism is that the applicant's assessment does not, in the appellants' view, sufficiently address cumulative impacts or long-term background growth. It is said that wider development,

population growth and associated trip generation in the Blanchardstown area may place further pressure on an already constrained road environment and that the proposal has not been assessed against a sufficiently broad or realistic cumulative scenario.

- The Ayrton Group material, as cited in the appeal, calls for a more comprehensive and independent validation exercise. In particular, it is suggested that automated traffic monitoring over a continuous 24-hour and 7-day period at the proposed barrier locations would provide a more reliable basis for assessing likely effects. The appellants request that the Commission secure or require independent technical review of the applicant's modelling inputs, assumptions and conclusions before accepting that the proposed parking management system would operate without unacceptable effects.

In overall terms, the traffic and transport objection is that the submitted Traffic and Transport Assessment may satisfy a formal modelling approach but does not provide a sufficiently reliable basis for concluding that the proposed barrier-controlled paid parking regime would operate acceptably in real-world conditions. The appellants contend that the assessment understates the risks of queueing, redistribution of traffic, safety conflicts, seasonal stress, overspill parking and operational difficulty, and that the evidence falls short of what is required for a development of this scale and significance.

7.2. Applicant Response

7.2.1. The Proposed Development and Applicant's Objectives

- The applicant states that the proposal is not simply a paid parking proposal but a Mobility Enhancement Project comprising parking management controls, variable message signage, pedestrian and cycle improvements, alterations to vehicular access arrangements, reconfigured parking layouts, landscaping, public realm improvements, drainage, lighting and ancillary works.

- The applicant states that the proposal will improve the operation of the town centre through a Commercial Car Parking Management System, including a paid parking regime, to improve circulation flows and ensure parking resources are managed efficiently, safely and transparently.
- The applicant states that the proposal will integrate with BusConnects, with the existing road network and with the proposed interchange at Blanchardstown Town Centre, and will ensure that suitable safeguards are in place when the Core Bus Corridor becomes operational.
- The applicant states that the proposal includes supporting mobility enhancements, including improved wayfinding, reconfiguration of parking spaces where required or feasible, associated improvements to accessible parking, parent and child parking, age-friendly parking, cycle parking and EV charging, as well as environmental improvements through landscaping and biodiversity enhancement.
- The applicant states that the proposal includes a comprehensive Variable Message Sign (VMS) strategy to provide an appropriate level of on-site and off-site guidance, minimise driver search patterns for available spaces and abortive trips on the road network, and spread demand across all car parks.
- The applicant states that the proposal will ensure that suitable access infrastructure is in place to integrate with existing and future cycle and pedestrian routes, while allowing customers to continue to enter and exit the car parks efficiently with an appropriate number of controlled entry and exit lanes to accommodate peak periods.
- The applicant states that the proposal complies with the planning policy framework and will be developed in tandem with a Mobility Management Plan.

7.2.2. Site Context and Planning History

- The applicant states that Blanchardstown Town Centre is a major retail, civic, recreational and transport hub within Fingal and the wider Dublin area, and that the proposal must be considered in that strategic context.
- The applicant states that references in the appeals to the Blanchardstown Village Urban Design Framework, the 2007 Blanchardstown Urban Structure

Plan and the 2009 Blanchardstown Town Centre Development Framework / Masterplan do not alter the position advanced by the applicant. It states that these are not statutory development plan documents and have not been incorporated into the current Development Plan. It further states that, in any event, the 2009 framework/masterplan actively sought a reduction in surface parking and expressly contemplated management measures and economic incentives such as parking charges.

- The applicant states that the planning history includes related development such as the Blue Mall Extension and other permitted schemes within the town centre, and that these provide relevant context for the current proposal.
- The applicant states that there is no project splitting. It says that the Blue Mall extension is a standalone project with its own long planning history, that it predates the current ownership of the centre, and that although it has been considered cumulatively where appropriate, it is not interlinked in a way that would require both proposals to have been made in one application.
- The applicant states that the reduction in parking provision has precedent, including the previously permitted Site A LRD, where a reduction of 525 existing retail spaces was accepted.

7.2.3. Principle of Development and Policy Support

The applicant states that the proposal accords with the MC - Major Town Centre zoning objective under the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029. It quotes the zoning vision as seeking to consolidate and further develop the major town centres through a mix of uses and urban streets, while delivering a quality urban environment, ensuring priority for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, and minimising the impact of private car-based traffic. It states that the proposal is consistent with that vision because it prioritises pedestrian, cycle and public transport movement, improves the urban fabric and manages car use more efficiently.

The applicant states that the principle of development is supported by transport and mobility policies in the Fingal Development Plan, including:

- Policy CMP3, providing for an integrated land-use and transport approach aimed at minimising travel demand and prioritising sustainable modes;

- Objective CMO3, supporting integration of public transport and development;
- Objective CMO6, seeking improvement of the pedestrian and cyclist environment;
- Objective CMO7, seeking integration of active travel with public transport;
- Objective CMO21, supporting wayfinding systems;
- Policy CMP17, supporting behavioural change initiatives to encourage modal shift;
- Objective CMO29, seeking to optimise accessibility to public transport and maximise permeability;
- Policy CMP25, supporting a balanced approach to car parking as a demand management measure;
- Objective DMSO121, which the applicant says requires paid parking arrangements for retail developments with more than 50 spaces.

7.2.4. The applicant states that the principle of development is also supported by higher-order policy, including:

- National Planning Framework, NPO 37, to ensure integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into communities by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility;
- the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, which supports high priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport in town and village centres, together with measures to reduce car dependency;
- RPO 5.2 and RPO 5.3 of the RSES, supporting sustainable transport projects and development that facilitates sustainable travel patterns;
- Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2042, Measure TM18, which supports the introduction of parking charges at retail developments in order to reduce the impact of car traffic on such locations and their local communities.
- The applicant states that the proposal is consistent with the car parking provisions of the Fingal Development Plan. It refers to Section 14.17.7 and states that Blanchardstown Town Centre lies within Zone 1, Major Town Centre, where parking standards are expressed as maxima. It states that a reduced parking provision may be acceptable where good public transport

links exist or are planned and where a mobility management plan demonstrates modal shift in favour of sustainable modes.

- The applicant states that the planning authority's decision to grant permission, subject to 10 conditions, demonstrates that Fingal County Council considered the proposal to accord with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It quotes the planner's report to the effect that the development is in accordance with the Major Town Centre zoning, the Fingal Development Plan 2023-2029 and relevant regional and national policies.

7.2.5. Response on Prematurity and Framework Plan Issues

The applicant states that the proposal is not premature pending a Blanchardstown framework plan or town plan. It says that, although the lands lie within a framework plan area, the Development Plan expressly allows development to come forward in advance of framework plans, to be assessed on its merits having regard to national, regional and local policy and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The applicant states that concerns raised by appellants regarding public transport capacity constraints, traffic congestion and judicial review delays to BusConnects do not undermine the proposal, because public transport improvements are already underway and the application is not dependent upon the final delivery timeline of the interchange or Core Bus Corridor.

7.2.6. Vitality and Viability

- The applicant states that a Retail Impact Assessment is not required because the proposal does not involve additional retail floorspace and therefore does not trigger the relevant thresholds in the development plan or the Retail Planning Guidelines. It states that the vitality and viability arguments advanced by appellants do not establish a requirement for such an assessment.
- The applicant states that the proposal will not harm the vitality and viability of the retail centre. It says the proposal will improve circulation, reduce inefficient searching for parking, retain significant parking provision, improve accessibility by a range of modes and thereby contribute positively to the functioning of the centre.

- The applicant states that reliance by appellants on non-statutory publications regarding parking charges and town centre impacts does not outweigh the adopted planning and transport policy framework, which it says supports parking management measures in this context.

7.2.7. Transport, Parking and Movement

- The applicant states that the centre is already a highly accessible location, within walking distance of high-quality public transport, and refers to the Traffic and Transport Assessment prepared by Systra. It states that there are a number of existing bus routes serving the town centre, including routes to Dublin City Centre, Ongar, DCU, Liffey Valley, Adamstown, Dunboyne, UCD, Tallaght and the IBM Campus.
- The applicant states that the town centre will also benefit from enhanced accessibility arising from the BusConnects proposals and from the wider network redesign. It states that the Blanchardstown to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme, including the new interchange, will provide a step change in public transport infrastructure, improve passenger comfort and support more reliable services.
- The applicant states that improvement in public transport at Blanchardstown Town Centre is ongoing and is not reliant solely on delivery of the new interchange or Core Bus Corridor. It states that:
 - the NTA currently operates 12 bus routes serving the centre, amounting to 27 buses per hour;
 - seven of these routes terminate at Blanchardstown Town Centre;
 - implementation of Phase 10 of BusConnects will introduce 11 new routes and, after associated changes, increase service levels to 62 buses per hour;
 - this represents an increase of over 100% in service frequency.

The applicant states that the proposal is therefore independent of, and not reliant upon, BusConnects, although it will complement those improvements.

The applicant states that the centre also benefits from pedestrian infrastructure on key roads, cycle lanes, pedestrian routes connecting to the R121 and Millennium Park, and proximity to Coolmine Station, which is approximately a 20-minute walk or

5-minute cycle from the site. It states that DART+ West will further enhance rail accessibility.

The applicant states that the proposal will improve car parking provision for a range of users. It states that:

- the number of accessible spaces will increase by 22, bringing the total to 113;
- those accessible spaces will include 1.2 m clear space to either side and rear and will be located close to shopping centre entrances;
- existing accessible spaces that do not meet current standards will be brought up to standard;
- the number of parent and child spaces will increase by 58, bringing the total to 74;
- 36 age-friendly spaces will be provided close to pedestrian access points.

The applicant states that the number of entry and exit barriers has been calculated from parking survey information and that generous stacking capacity is provided to ensure there will be no interaction with the external road network.

The applicant states that the Systra response confirms that the results of the DS assessment within the Traffic and Transport Assessment show that the small reduction in parking associated with the implementation of paid parking will have no impact on the operation of the car parks.

The applicant states that provision of parking management controls at town or retail centres is not unusual. It refers to Fingal County Council pay-and-display arrangements in Balbriggan, Swords, Malahide, Skerries, Rush and Clonsilla, and states in particular that Swords, which is also a Level 2 Major Town Centre, currently operates such controls and likewise does not have Luas or DART access.

The applicant states that the proposal will not lead to unacceptable traffic congestion, traffic safety issues, air quality effects or noise effects. It refers to the Traffic and Transport Assessment and the Systra appeal response and states that the barriers and revised arrangements have been modelled and assessed.

The applicant states that the outputs of the microsimulation modelling indicate that implementation of the barriers in the DS scenario will not result in additional idling compared with the DM scenario and therefore will not lead to deterioration in air quality or noise quality.

The applicant states that the proposal includes sufficient stacking capacity at the barriers to ensure that queuing will not extend back to the external road network.

The applicant states that the proposal was subject to road safety assessment. It states that two Stage 1 Road Safety Audits were undertaken, including one relating to the barrier/car park arrangements and one relating to the cycle infrastructure, and that designer responses were prepared and accepted.

The applicant states that overspill parking into surrounding residential areas is not expected to arise in any significant way. It states that examples relied on by appellants are not comparable, that users generally wish to park close to the centre, that dedicated staff parking will be managed separately and at a reduced rate, and that the VMS system and more efficient distribution of demand across the parking stock will improve parking efficiency.

7.2.8. Accessibility and Inclusive Access

- The applicant states that the proposal will not unduly affect access to civic and community facilities. It states that there are car parking spaces, including 12 accessible bays, located directly outside the library, council offices and Draiocht, and opposite the Blue Mall entrance, which includes the post office and credit union, and that these spaces will not be subject to the parking management controls. It also states that Millennium Park has its own car park where there is no parking charge.
- The applicant states that the existing Shopmobility service in the Red car park, beside Aldi, will remain in operation and will not change as part of the proposed development.
- The applicant states that there is no statutory requirement for an Equality Impact Assessment in connection with the proposal, and that none was requested by Fingal County Council. It nevertheless states that the proposal has considered relevant accessibility impacts and will improve parking provision for all users, including persons with disabilities, older persons and others with mobility difficulties.
- The applicant states that the proposal is consistent with various social inclusion and accessibility provisions in the Fingal Development Plan and the NPF because it improves connectivity, permeability and access for all.

7.2.9. Walking, Cycling and Sustainable Mobility Measures

- The applicant states that the proposal will create new, attractive and functional links throughout the site, with a public realm designed to give greater priority to pedestrians. It states that connections to and from the wider area, including Millennium Park, will be improved, key desire lines have been catered for, pedestrian crossings within the car parks will be enhanced, line marking will improve user-friendliness, and external lighting will be upgraded to eliminate dark spots and improve pedestrian safety.
- The applicant states that the proposal will also enhance existing and planned cycle infrastructure by addressing gaps in provision on Roads C and D. It states that the proposal will connect into cycle infrastructure being delivered through BusConnects and the Blue Mall Extension project.
- The applicant states that the centre currently has 132 cycle parking spaces and that this will increase to 206 under the proposal. It states that the proposal includes over 70 additional short-stay cycle parking spaces around the centre and two cycle hubs with secure long-stay parking for staff and visitors.

7.2.10. Visual Impact, Residential Amenity and Construction Effects

- The applicant states that the proposal will not result in undue visual impact or residential amenity impacts. It states that there are limited sensitive uses within the Major Town Centre and that the nearest residential receptor is at Whitestown Drive, separated from the White Car Park by Blanchardstown Road South.
- The applicant states that the proposed barriers, VMS and access configuration are not of a scale that will harm the character of the area and that such features are not unusual in a town centre location.
- The applicant states that only 27 VMS signs are proposed in total. It states that:
- 5 will be full-matrix, full-colour Type 1 signs on key access roads approaching the site, showing real-time parking availability and traffic management information;

- 22 will be Type 2 signs at the entrances to the car parks, comprising static retroreflective signage with integrated VMS panels to display live space availability.
- The applicant states that this coordinated VMS system will optimise the use of available parking, reduce congestion and visitor dwell times, and support efficient operation of the car park network.
- The applicant states that one static sign, VMS23, is located on Blanchardstown Road South adjacent to Whitestown Walk, with another sign on the opposite side of the road. It states that VMS23 is a smaller Type 2 sign and will have limited visual impact. It states that the proposals will not affect the Verdemonst residential development, which is approximately 190 metres from the site boundary.
- The applicant states that Fingal County Council's planner's report concluded that the signs nearest Whitestown Walk are of low-impact design and will not affect residential amenity, and that no adverse residential amenity impacts are anticipated for Verdemonst.
- The applicant states that the barriers are located within each of the car parks, set back from access points, and will not be readily visible. It states that they will therefore not appear as a "fortress". It also states that most existing access points are retained and that those removed are removed in order to improve circulation.
- The applicant states that the proposal includes a site-specific Construction Management Plan, including an Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan. It states that there are limited sensitive uses within the town centre, that the nearest residential units are approximately 35 metres from the boundary of the White Car Park and separated by Blanchardstown Road South, and that construction effects can be managed.
- The applicant states that traffic generated during construction will use the strategic road network and not residential roads, and that detailed construction management by condition is standard practice.

7.2.11. Landscape, Trees, Public Realm and Natural Heritage

- The applicant states that the landscaping and public realm improvements will improve mobility for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, increase biodiversity and introduce SuDS measures. It states that careful coordination has been carried out with the drainage engineers to maximise SuDS interventions.
- The applicant states that the landscape design identifies the primary axis between the future BusConnects interchange and the centre as a focus area and seeks to provide new attractive and functional links, green space amenity and improved connections with the wider area, including Millennium Park and Tolka Valley Park.
- The applicant states that the proposal will create opportunities for new green spaces where feasible, improve biodiversity through additional planting and species, and introduce more playful and socially engaging landscape spaces. It cites, for example, proposals in the Yellow Car Park to improve visual connectivity with the permitted BusConnects interchange and provide an opportunity for a quiet garden area.
- The applicant states that trees at the site were comprehensively surveyed and assessed. It states that 1,141 trees were surveyed, of which 347 trees will be affected by the proposal.
- The applicant states that the affected trees are predominantly of moderate to low quality and many are constrained, stunted or poorly established due to poor planting conditions, inadequate soil volumes and their location within an urban car park environment. It states that many of these trees will not reach full mature potential.
- The applicant states that the proposal originally included 171 replacement trees, and that further design development identified capacity for 269 replacement trees in total. It states that, although there remains a numerical shortfall, the replacement planting will be planted in appropriate conditions and will provide a better long-term outcome in terms of canopy, biodiversity, landscape quality and carbon sequestration.
- The applicant states that approximately 48% of replacement planting will comprise native or native-cultivar species, with other species chosen for resilience and ecological value for pollinators and birds.

- The applicant states that the proposal is consistent with the aims of the Climate Action Plan (CAP25) because it supports modal shift, reduces reliance on private cars and encourages sustainable transport.
- The applicant states that the proposal does not materially increase impermeable area and therefore does not increase flood risk. It states that the White Car Park in particular will include significantly more permeable and planted areas, including wildflower strips.

7.2.12. Ecology, AA and EIA Matters

- The applicant states that the site is of low biodiversity value and that no undue ecological impacts will arise. It refers to the Ecological Impact Statement and the response by Openfield Ecological Services.
- The applicant states that the ecology survey took place on 19 May 2025 and was undertaken in accordance with best practice standards. It states that this date falls within the optimal season for general habitat survey and that the survey data is therefore robust and up to date.
- The applicant states that the vegetation is generally of low value for nesting birds, but that tree and vegetation removal will nevertheless take place outside the nesting season or under the supervision of a qualified ecologist/ornithologist where necessary to comply with the Wildlife Act.
- The applicant states that the ecology survey examined trees and structures for bat roost potential and found none. It states that the site is highly urbanised, has high levels of human activity and artificial light, low levels of semi-natural vegetation and low value to bats.
- The applicant states that Fingal County Council reviewed the Ecology Impact Statement and concluded that the subject site is of low biodiversity value and that no undue impacts to biodiversity are likely to occur.
- The applicant states that lighting impacts have been considered. It states that the only additional lighting proposed relates to barriers and entrance/exit lanes, that the site already contains artificial lighting, and that ecological effects of lighting were assessed as part of the ecology documentation.
- The applicant states that Condition 7, requiring final external lighting details to be submitted to the planning authority, is a standard condition. It states that

the final lighting scheme to be submitted in compliance with that condition will align with the details submitted with the application and will not materially alter the assessed proposals or the conclusions of the assessments undertaken.

- The applicant states that the AA Screening was robust and undertaken in accordance with best practice. It states that the site lies approximately 11.5 km from the nearest Natura 2000 sites in Dublin Bay, that there are no watercourses on the site, and that the nearest watercourse, the River Tolka, is approximately 550 metres away.
- The applicant states that there are only indirect pathways to the Tolka via surface sewers and that the risk of pollution is very low. It states that, having regard to the distance to and nature of the Natura 2000 sites downstream, significant effects on European sites are not likely to arise.
- The applicant states that the AA Screening Report considered in-combination effects and concluded that there are no effects arising from the project which can act in combination with the current proposal to result in likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites. It states that this assessment included the BusConnects Blanchardstown to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme and the Blue Mall Extension, as amended.
- The applicant states that Fingal County Council concurred with the conclusions of the AA screening and concluded that the proposal, individually or in combination with another plan or project, would not have a significant effect on any European site and that Stage 2 AA / a NIS was not required.
- The applicant states that the proposal does not require EIA screening leading to EIAR, because it is not a category of development listed in Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations and does not create any additional floorspace. It states that, having regard to the nature and scale of the proposal and the criteria in Schedules 7 and 7A, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.
- The applicant states that sufficient information accompanied the planning application to enable preliminary environmental examination, including:
 - a Surface Water Drainage Report;

- a Traffic and Transportation Assessment;
 - an Ecological Impact Assessment;
 - a Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment; and
 - an Outline Construction Management Plan.
- The applicant states that all relevant specialist consultants have confirmed that the required surveys were carried out in accordance with best practice and relevant guidelines, including in the fields of ecology, arboriculture and transport, and that no additional environmental reports are required arising from the grounds of appeal.

7.2.13. Cumulative Effects, Conditions and Other Matters

- The applicant states that cumulative effects were assessed where relevant. It says, for example, that the Traffic and Transport Assessment considered the cumulative effects of extant planning permissions, including BusConnects, and that the AA screening also considered in-combination effects.
- The applicant states that the proposal will not, either alone or in combination with other developments, result in deterioration of connected water bodies in terms of chemical, ecological or quantitative status.
- The applicant states that the conditions attached to the grant are standard in nature and relate only to additional detail to be agreed prior to commencement. It says these are points of minor detail that would not affect, impact or alter the conclusions of the various assessments undertaken for the proposed development.
- The applicant states that essential matters have not been unlawfully deferred to post-consent stage. It says that the planning application was supported by comprehensive documentation in respect of lighting, landscaping and construction management, and that any matters to be agreed by condition are points of minor detail that do not affect the substantive conclusions of the assessments already carried out.
- The applicant states that the issues raised in the appeals are not particularly complex and can be fully addressed in written submissions. It states that an oral hearing is therefore not warranted.

7.3. Planning Authority Response

The Planning Authority submitted a response to the appeal documentation on the 16th of January 2026 as follows:

The application was assessed against the policies and objectives of the Fingal Development Plan 2023 – 2029, national and regional planning policies and existing government policy guidelines. The planning authority considers the applicable issues raised by the Third Parties has been covered in the assessment of the application. The Planning Authority has no further comment to make in the application. It is requested that the decision of the Planning Authority is upheld.

7.4. Observations

There are 28 Observers on file. Many of the issues raised have also been raised within the Grounds of Appeal. The observers on file are from the local area and consistently raise concerns in relation to the impact of charging for parking at this location and all state that the existing town centre development is a critical social and cultural hub for the community which offers multiple public facilities. The issues raised can be summarised as follows

- The proposal will limit social and cultural interactions
- Increase traffic congestion
- Negative Impact on workers within the centre/ Financial Burden on Low Paid Workers
- The impact of paid parking will affect attendance of people who attend Draiocht a local Arts venue
- The proposal will have a significant negative impact upon lower and middle class families in the area
- The proposal will have a significant negative impact on adjacent residential properties.
- A significant lack of information and consultation.

- Poor Traffic Management Practice
- Impact on Employment and Economic Wellbeing
- The area is many more things other than a shopping district – the community considerations need to be considered.
- Loss of trees and biodiversity
- Trees that are to be replaced should be native Irish Trees
- Significant Lack of Public Transport Options for locals
- The proposal will result in an erosion of the local community
- The proposal betrays the Blanchardstown Town Centre as a Public Space as originally envisaged.
- The proposal fails to properly recognise the civic, employment and community function of Blanchardstown Centre
- The proposal fails to Safeguard access to essential public services and places of work
- Address the disproportionate and unfair impact on workers and lower-income users
- Adequately justify or mitigate the extensive loss of trees
- People will park in other residential areas which will have a significant negative impact on these residential areas
- Vulnerable people and people with disabilities will be significantly affected in a variety of ways including financial and physical access.

7.4.1. There is one submission from Friends of the Irish Environment in support of the introduction of controlled parking charges and seeks those existing permissions for residential development be taken up as quickly as possible.

- The submission questions whether it is required to apply for permission to introduce car parking charges. A landowner who has permission to use the land for car parking is entitled to charge for that use. There is no need to apply for permission to charge for car parking.

- The proposal as set out is in compliance with Fingal Development Plan Policies, The Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy, the Climate Action Plan and the National Sustainable Mobility Policy.
- The applicant should be far more ambitious in relation to tree retention with more extensive tree planting greening and sustainable water management.
- Bicycle Parking targets should be based on modal split targets consistent with local, regional and national policies.
- Greatly concerned in relation to the applicants stated intention to delay the construction of 1319 housing units for which it has permission under 315079-23 and 314985-22 on the White Car park and on the Library car Park and the Blue Car Park. The deliberate delay of housing is shocking in terms of housing crises and the national objective to increase the provision of housing. The observer recommends that these areas be excluded from this permission as the use most consistent with proper planning and sustainable development is housing, not car parking. It is also recommended that the yellow car park is reserved for housing and excluded from the permission. The Commission should use every lever to shift the balance towards the developments of these two sites which already have permission for housing and this other site which appears to also be highly suitable. The introduction of charging for parking makes the alternative for housing less attractive.

7.5. Further Responses

- None

8.0 Assessment

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

- Overview of Proposed Development

- Principle of Development/Development Plan Policy
- Traffic and Transport
- Residential and Visual Amenity
- Landscaping, Tree Removal, Biodiversity
- Reduced Number of Parking Spaces / Impact on Social Inclusion
- Viability of Blanchardstown Shopping Centre
- Other Matters

8.2. **Proposed Development – Overview**

The proposal relates to the introduction of car parking controls and paid parking arrangements across nine existing car park areas within Blanchardstown Centre. The car parks subject to the proposed mobility enhancement works comprise White Retail (CP01) to the north-west, Green Retail (CP02) to the north, Red (CP04) and Red Overflow (CP05) to the east, Blue Multi-Storey (CP06) and Blue Library (CP07) to the south, and Yellow Overflow (CP08) and Yellow (CP09) to the south-west, together with Retail Park 1 (CP03).

- 8.2.1. The application includes two site layout scenarios, namely a ‘without BusConnects’ scenario and a ‘with BusConnects’ scenario. The ‘without’ scenario illustrates the works and access arrangements based on the existing site conditions and provides for the situation where the proposed development is implemented in advance of the BusConnects proposals. The ‘with’ scenario demonstrates how the proposed mobility enhancement works have been coordinated with, and designed to tie into, the BusConnects layout.
- 8.2.2. White Car Park – CP01 (Retail Park 2) -At the White Car Park, two existing access points are to be retained, with one existing access point removed. A further access is proposed as part of the BusConnects scheme, providing a direct connection to the R121 Blanchardstown Road South. This new access does not form part of the current mobility enhancement works; however, the proposed barriers and associated infrastructure have been designed to safeguard and facilitate the future connection when delivered as part of BusConnects. A central pedestrian walkway is proposed to connect the car park with the BusConnects interchange and the shopping centre.

The car park will also incorporate cycle parking, accessible parking spaces, parent and child spaces and age-friendly spaces, while trolley bays will be re-provided at their current levels. In the 'without BusConnects' scenario, the car park would operate with two access points from the south and east, with the internal layout designed to facilitate connection to the future R121 access. The layout also safeguards an area for the future BusConnects interchange.

- 8.2.3. Green Car Park – CP02 -The Green Car Park is proposed to operate with one access point for entry and one for exit, both located at the existing access points on Road F. The eastern access would facilitate vehicles entering the car park, while the western access would accommodate exiting vehicles. The proposal provides for two entry barriers and three exit barriers. A central pedestrian walkway would connect the car park to the shopping centre, with an additional pedestrian route extending eastwards to serve an existing pedestrian desire line. The car park would incorporate cycle parking, accessible spaces, parent and child spaces and age-friendly spaces, together with trolley bays.
- 8.2.4. Under the 'with BusConnects' scenario, amendments are proposed to the indicative road markings shown for the BusConnects 'Green Road' to reflect the revised car park access arrangements. The submitted documentation states that these changes have been agreed with the NTA, with the final road markings to be confirmed by the NTA as part of the detailed BusConnects design. The planning authority raised no concerns with regard to design detail
- 8.2.5. Retail Park 1 Car Park – CP03 - At Retail Park 1, the two existing access points on Road F would be closed to general traffic, although they would remain available for emergency vehicle access. A new entry point would be provided on Road F to the south-east, with the exit located to the north-west and connecting to the existing Road E/Road F roundabout. The entry would incorporate two barriers, with three barriers at the exit. The internal parking layout would remain largely unchanged, apart from modifications associated with the new barrier plazas. The proposal includes accessible and EV parking spaces, including four new EV spaces, one of which would have accessible capabilities. Existing EV charging points would be retained.

Red Car Park – CP04 -The Red Car Park would operate with one entry and one exit, both located at the existing access point on Road C. The proposal provides for two entry barriers and three exit barriers. The access arrangement is designed to separate inbound and outbound traffic, with vehicles entering on one side of the car park and exiting on the other. The internal parking layout would undergo minimal alteration and would generally operate on a one-way circulation system to facilitate efficient movement through the car park. A pedestrian walkway along the north-western and south-western edges of the car park would connect it to the shopping centre. The car park would also provide cycle parking, accessible spaces, parent and child spaces, age-friendly spaces and trolley bays.

8.2.6. Red Overflow Car Park – CP05 -The Red Overflow Car Park would similarly provide one entry and one exit at the existing access point on Road C. Two entry barriers and two exit barriers are proposed. The access arrangement separates inbound and outbound vehicle movements, with the car park operating generally as a one-way loop system. The internal parking layout would remain substantially unchanged, apart from the areas required for the barrier plazas. Two existing pedestrian crossings on Road C would provide a connection from the car park to the shopping centre via the Red Car Park. Accessible and age-friendly parking spaces would also be provided.

8.2.7. Blue Multi-Storey Car Park – CP06 - The proposal introduces a revised access strategy at the Blue Multi-Storey Car Park using the existing single point of access. The revised arrangement seeks to separate inbound and outbound traffic, with vehicles entering the car park being directed towards the southern end, while exiting vehicles would circulate along the northern edge of the multi-storey car park. The access arrangement provides for three entry barriers and three exit barriers. A number of existing parking spaces would be removed from the external area of the multi-storey car park to accommodate the entry barrier plaza, with further spaces removed at ground-floor level to facilitate the exit barrier plaza. A dedicated area at the southern end of the multi-storey car park would provide accessible and parent and child parking spaces, while four age-friendly spaces would be provided within the ground-floor area. A dedicated staff parking area is also proposed on Levels 2 and 3. This would require an additional access barrier at the foot of the ramp

between Levels 1 and 2, together with an ANPR camera on the downward ramp from Level 2 to Level 1.

- 8.2.8. Blue Library Car Park – CP07 At the Blue Library Car Park, one existing access point at the Road C/Road D roundabout would serve both entry and exit movements, while the other existing access point on Road D would be closed. The proposed arrangement includes two entry barriers and two exit barriers. The existing Road D footway would connect the car park to the internal pedestrian network and onward to the shopping centre. A new section of cycleway would also be provided adjacent to the car park and running parallel with Road D, referred to as the 'Blue Road'. The car park would include four age-friendly parking spaces.
- 8.2.9. Yellow Overflow Car Park – CP08 -The Yellow Overflow Car Park would provide four access points. One entry and one exit would be located on Road D opposite the Yellow Car Park, while two additional access points, each capable of accommodating both entry and exit movements, would be located adjacent to the existing fast-food units opposite the White Car Park. The principal area of the car park would separate inbound and outbound vehicle movements and is designed to avoid conflict between vehicles exiting the Yellow Overflow Car Park and those exiting the Yellow Car Park opposite. One entry barrier lane would be widened to accommodate service vehicle access to the rear of the Leisureplex unit, including existing bin collection arrangements. An exit barrier would similarly be widened to facilitate service vehicle movements. The proposed arrangement is intended to enhance serviceability for the Leisureplex.
- 8.2.10. Two existing pedestrian crossings across Road D (Blue Road) would connect the Yellow Overflow Car Park to the shopping centre via the Yellow Car Park. The car park would incorporate accessible spaces, age-friendly spaces, trolley bays and cycle parking. The layout also includes a taxi rank holding area, which forms part of the previously consented Blue Mall proposals. The previous Blue Mall proposals also included EV charging facilities and accessible parking spaces within the Yellow Overflow Car Park. The current proposal would effectively supersede those elements, with the accessible spaces relocated further into the car park to facilitate the new entry barriers and the EV spaces relocated to the Retail One Car Park. Any additional alterations required in connection with the Blue Mall extension would be dealt with by way of a separate amendment application.

8.2.11. McDonald's and Krispy Kreme Drive-Through Facilities -The McDonald's car park and associated drive-through lane on the western side of the layout are outside the proposed car parking controls and would continue to operate independently of the proposed barrier system. No changes are proposed to the existing layout in these areas. The existing Krispy Kreme drive-through is to be retained. To facilitate its continued operation alongside the proposed exit barriers serving the Yellow Overflow Car Park, the entrance to the Krispy Kreme drive-through lane would be realigned. Vehicles entering the drive-through would continue to use the existing entrance opposite the White Car Park. On exiting the drive-through, motorists would have the option of leaving via the Yellow Road exit barriers or via the exit opposite the White Car Park.

8.2.12. Yellow Car Park – CP09 -The Yellow Car Park would provide a single access point serving both entry and exit movements, located at the existing access point on Road D. The proposal provides for two entry barriers and two exit barriers, with the internal car parking arrangement remaining largely unchanged from the existing layout. A central pedestrian walkway would connect the car park to the shopping centre. The car park would also incorporate cycle parking, accessible spaces, age-friendly spaces, trolley bays and parent and child spaces. Overall, the proposal therefore comprises a coordinated series of access, circulation, pedestrian, cycling and parking-control interventions across the existing car parking areas serving Blanchardstown Centre, with the layouts designed to operate both in advance of, and following implementation of, the relevant BusConnects infrastructure.

8.2.13. The planning authority considered all aspects of the alterations to car parking and considered the proposal to be acceptable. As part of my assessment I will examine the traffic implications, visual amenity issues and ecology/biodiversity impact from the respective loss of trees. In support of the application and within the appeal documentation the applicant has provided the following assessments to help aid in the assessment of the application. These include:

- Planning Statement
- Design Statement
- Traffic and Transport Assessment
- Road Safety Audit

- Landscaping Plan
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Arborist Report.

8.3. **Principle of Development**

The appellants on file primarily object to the introduction of car parking charges at this location. The appellants state that the proposal does not constitute an improvement to the quality of life of residents, visitors and workers reliant on the centre. The appellants state that the proposal is, in substance, a parking monetisation scheme presented as a mobility enhancement measure. They state that the purpose and effect of the development is to:

- convert the existing parking stock into a revenue-generating operation;
- increase turnover of parking spaces;
- facilitate further expansion and operational change at the centre; and
- impose charges on users who rely on the centre for everyday and essential purposes.

The appellants further state that the proposal is premature pending the introduction of Framework Plan for Blanchardstown Town Shopping Centre. It is set out that Blanchardstown Shopping Centre is far more than a retail experience but is used for a host of civic amenities including Council Offices, Motor Tax, Library and Medical Services. It is stated that to now charge for car parking is impinging on the social character of the town and how people interact with the town.

- 8.3.1. In response to the grounds of appeal, the applicant states that the proposed introduction of car parking charges is consistent with the MC – Major Town Centre zoning objective under the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029. The applicant refers to the zoning vision, which seeks to consolidate and further develop major town centres through a mix of uses and improved urban streets, while providing a high-quality urban environment, prioritising public transport, pedestrians and cyclists, and minimising the impact of private car-based traffic.
- 8.3.2. The applicant considers that the proposal accords with this vision by seeking to manage private car use more efficiently and prioritise sustainable modes of

transport, including walking, cycling and public transport. It considers that the proposal should therefore be viewed as a transport and mobility demand-management measure, rather than simply as a parking monetisation scheme.

- 8.3.3. The applicant further refers to a number of transport and mobility policies and objectives contained within the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029 in support of the proposal. The applicant also refers to Objective DMSO121, which it states requires paid parking arrangements in retail developments providing more than 50 parking spaces. On this basis, the applicant considers that the proposed parking charges are consistent with the Development Plan's wider objective of managing parking demand and encouraging a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport. In relation to the appellants' contention that the proposal is premature pending preparation of a Framework Plan for Blanchardstown Town Shopping Centre, the applicant does not accept that the proposed development should be deferred on this basis and maintains that the proposal can be assessed in accordance with the existing zoning, transport and mobility provisions of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029.

The planning authority accepted the principle of the development is compatible with the overall policies and objectives for the zone and consistent with proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The principal issue arising in relation to the proposed development is the introduction of controlled/paid parking arrangements across nine existing car park areas serving Blanchardstown Centre. The lands are zoned MC – Major Town Centre under the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029. The zoning vision seeks to consolidate and further develop Major Town Centres through a mix of uses and improved urban streets, while providing a high-quality urban environment, prioritising public transport, pedestrians and cyclists and minimising the impact of private car-based traffic. I note that the zoning matrix for the MC designation does not specifically identify the introduction of paid or controlled parking as either a permitted or prohibited use. In this regard, I consider that the proposal is not contrary to the MC zoning objective. The stated zoning vision expressly seeks to minimise the impact of private car-based traffic and to prioritise public transport, walking and cycling. The proposed introduction of controlled parking can reasonably be regarded as a mechanism for managing demand for private car travel and parking within an established Major

Town Centre. I therefore consider that the proposed parking controls are compatible with the underlying land-use and transport strategy for the MC zoning designation.

- 8.3.4. The principle of parking control shall also be considered having regard to the wider objectives and policies of the Development Plan, rather than being determined solely by the zoning matrix.
- 8.3.5. Integrated Land Use and Transport – Policy CMP3– Integrated Land-Use and Transport Approach seeks an integrated approach to land use and transportation aimed at minimising travel demand and prioritising sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport. I consider the proposed development to be consistent with this policy. The proposal does not provide for a significant expansion of the existing parking resource, rather, it seeks to introduce a controlled parking regime across the existing parking areas and to modify the manner in which vehicles enter, circulate within and exit those areas. The parking control measures are accompanied by a number of physical interventions intended to improve the integration of the car parks with alternative modes of transport. These include improved pedestrian connections, cycle parking, accessible parking, parent and child spaces and age-friendly parking spaces across the various car parks.
- 8.3.6. For example, the White Car Park (CP01) incorporates a central pedestrian walkway linking the car park towards the shopping centre and the proposed BusConnects interchange, together with cycle parking and accessible, parent and child and age-friendly spaces. The layout also safeguards land for the future BusConnects interchange and has been designed to facilitate a future connection to the R121 Blanchardstown Road South. Similarly, the Green Car Park (CP02) provides a central pedestrian connection to the shopping centre and an additional pedestrian route along an existing desire line, together with cycle parking and accessible, parent and child and age-friendly spaces. I therefore consider that the proposal is consistent with the integrated land-use and transport approach promoted under CMP3.
- 8.3.7. Pedestrian and Cycling Environment – Objective CMO6 seeks to maintain and improve the pedestrian and cyclist environment and promote pedestrian and cycle routes linking residential areas with schools, employment, recreational destinations and public transport stops, creating a safe and accessible environment. The proposed controlled parking arrangements are accompanied by measures which

facilitate pedestrian and cycle movement through and around the Centre rather than treating the proposal solely as a vehicle-management intervention. The Red Car Park (CP04) incorporates pedestrian walkways along its north-western and south-western edges connecting to the shopping centre, together with cycle parking. The Red Overflow Car Park (CP05) retains two existing pedestrian crossings on Road C providing a connection to the shopping centre via the Red Car Park. The Blue Library Car Park (CP07) provides a connection from the existing Road D footway to the internal pedestrian network and onward to the shopping centre. A new section of cycleway is also proposed adjacent to the car park and parallel to Road D. The Yellow Overflow Car Park (CP08) similarly retains two pedestrian crossings across Road D, providing a connection to the shopping centre through the Yellow Car Park, while cycle parking is incorporated within the layout. The introduction of parking controls is not occurring in isolation but forms part of a wider alteration to the management and circulation of the existing parking areas, with pedestrian and cycling infrastructure being retained, enhanced or incorporated as part of the proposed layouts. Accordingly, I consider the proposal to be consistent with the intent of Objective CMO6.

- 8.3.8. Integration of Active Travel and Public Transport – Objective CMO7 seeks to facilitate the integration of active travel with public transport and ensure ease of access for all. I consider this particularly relevant given the strategic location of Blanchardstown Centre and its relationship with existing and proposed public transport infrastructure. The proposal has been designed around both a ‘without BusConnects’ and a ‘with BusConnects’ scenario. The latter demonstrates how the proposed mobility enhancement works are intended to integrate with the BusConnects layout. The White Car Park, in particular, safeguards the area required for the future BusConnects interchange and provides a central pedestrian connection towards that interchange and the shopping centre. The Green Car Park has also been designed having regard to the BusConnects proposals, with amendments to the indicative Green Road markings identified to reflect the revised car park access arrangements. The documentation states that these changes have been agreed with the NTA, with the final road markings to be confirmed as part of the detailed BusConnects design.

- 8.3.9. I consider the proposal complies with Objective CM07 in that the applicant has shown the ability of the proposed parking arrangements to integrate with BusConnects, together with the provision of pedestrian and cycling connections, supports the objective of facilitating a greater integration between private transport, active travel and public transport.
- 8.3.10. Behavioural Change and Modal Shift Policy CMP17 – Behavioural Change Initiatives supports measures intended to achieve modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport. In my view, the proposed introduction of paid parking is directly relevant to this policy objective. Parking management is capable of influencing travel behaviour by managing the demand for private car journeys and encouraging consideration of alternative modes where those alternatives are available. I acknowledge the appellants concerns that the proposal will impose a financial cost on persons who currently use the Centre. However, the planning assessment of the proposal must have regard to the Development Plan's express policy direction concerning parking management and behavioural change. The fact that a parking management measure may have a financial consequence for some users does not, in itself, render the measure contrary to the Development Plan where the stated purpose and effect is to manage parking demand and support modal shift. I therefore consider that the proposal is consistent with the policy direction contained in CMP17, subject to the detailed consideration of accessibility and the operation of the parking arrangements elsewhere in this assessment.
- 8.3.11. Integration of Public Transport and Development – Objective CMO29 seeks to optimise accessibility to public transport, increase catchment and maximise permeability through the provision of high-quality walking and cycling routes linking development with public transport stops. As outlined above, the proposed layouts provide a number of pedestrian and cycling connections and, importantly, safeguard and facilitate integration with the future BusConnects infrastructure. The White Car Park provides for a central pedestrian connection to the future BusConnects interchange, while the wider site provides pedestrian connections between the various parking areas and the shopping centre. The Blue Library Car Park includes a new cycleway parallel to Road D, while cycle parking is provided across a number of the car parks. I therefore consider that the proposal is consistent with CMO29, particularly in its integration with planned public transport infrastructure and the

enhancement of permeability between parking areas, the Centre and surrounding transport infrastructure.

- 8.3.12. Car Parking Management –I consider Policy CMP25 Car Parking Management to be the most directly relevant Development Plan policy to the proposed development. CMP25 seeks to implement a balanced approach to the provision of car parking, using parking as a demand-management measure to promote a transition towards more sustainable forms of transportation, while meeting the needs of businesses and communities. The proposal is directly aligned with this policy objective. It does not simply seek to provide additional parking capacity, rather, it introduces a mechanism for actively managing the use of the existing parking resource. The proposed arrangements across CP01–CP09 include controlled entry and exit points, barrier systems, revised internal circulation and, in certain locations, separation of inbound and outbound vehicle movements. In my view, these measures demonstrate that the proposal is not solely concerned with the introduction of a payment mechanism. It involves the active management of an extensive existing parking resource, together with changes to access, circulation and the integration of pedestrian, cycling and public transport infrastructure. I also note that Section 6.5.8 of the Development Plan, Car Parking Management, places particular emphasis on car parking as a demand-management tool and as a driver for behavioural change within the existing road network and private developments. Objective DMSO121 further provides for paid parking arrangements in retail developments with more than 50 car parking spaces, as referenced in the submitted documentation.
- 8.3.13. Having regard to these provisions, I consider there is a clear policy basis within the Fingal Development Plan for the management of parking through controlled and paid parking arrangements. The Development Plan does not treat car parking solely as infrastructure to be provided to meet demand, it expressly identifies parking management as a means of influencing travel behaviour and reducing reliance on the private car.
- 8.3.14. Framework Plan / Prematurity- I have also considered the appellants contention that the proposal is premature pending preparation of a Framework Plan for Blanchardstown Town Centre. The lands are identified as being within Framework Plan Area FP13.A. However, Section 2.4.3 of the Fingal Development Plan provides that, pending preparation of Framework Plans, development within the relevant

areas will be guided by the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan and national and regional planning policy, with planning applications assessed on their individual merits having regard to proper planning and sustainable development. I note that there is currently no Framework Plan in place for the area and no specific timeframe has been identified for its preparation. I therefore do not consider that the absence of a Framework Plan, of itself, prevents the Commission from determining the current application. Furthermore, the proposed parking arrangements do not, based on the information before me, preclude the indicative future light rail corridor identified on the Development Plan mapping or the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network. The applicant has also demonstrated how the proposed arrangements can integrate with the BusConnects proposals. I therefore consider that the proposal can appropriately be assessed against the existing Development Plan framework and does not, in principle, constitute premature development pending preparation of the Framework Plan.

- 8.3.15. I acknowledge the importance of Blanchardstown Centre as more than a retail destination, given the range of civic, community and other services located within the Centre. However, in considering the principle of development, I must have regard to the adopted planning policy framework. The Fingal Development Plan contains a clear policy direction towards integrated land use and transport planning, behavioural change, active travel, public transport integration and, most particularly, the use of parking as a demand-management measure. The proposal is located within an MC – Major Town Centre where the zoning vision expressly seeks to minimise the impact of private car-based traffic. The proposal is consistent with Policy CMP3, Objective CMO6, Objective CMO7, Objective CMO21, Policy CMP17, Objective CMO29 and, most directly, Policy CMP25, together with the car parking management provisions of Section 6.5.8 and Objective DMSO121. I consider it particularly significant that CMP25 expressly identifies parking as a demand-management measure intended to promote a transition towards more sustainable forms of transportation. The proposed development gives practical effect to this policy direction through the controlled management of the existing parking resource, while simultaneously providing and improving pedestrian and cycling connections and facilitating integration with BusConnects.

- 8.3.16. At national level, the policy objective identified in the submitted material seeks to “ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities”, with particular emphasis on prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to existing and proposed development and facilitating physical activity for all age groups. I consider that the proposed controlled parking arrangement is consistent with this objective insofar as it provides for the necessary management of vehicular parking while supporting a wider approach whereby walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised within the development. The controlled nature of the parking provision is important in this regard, as it assists in managing demand for private car use rather than facilitating unrestricted parking provision.
- 8.3.17. At regional level, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) identifies Blanchardstown Town Centre as a Level 2 Major Town Centre within the Dublin City and Suburbs area. The town centre is also located within the Dublin Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and the North West Corridor, which is identified in the regional strategy as an important transport corridor and forms part of the wider planned investment in the metropolitan public transport network.
- 8.3.18. The RSES specifically promotes the management of space within town and village centres in a manner which gives priority and permeability to walking, cycling and public transport, with accessibility by private car being provided in a manner which complements those alternative modes. The RSES further identifies that local traffic management and the location and management of destination car parking should be carefully considered. In this context, I consider that the controlled parking measures proposed are directly aligned with the regional policy approach. Rather than providing unrestricted parking which could encourage increased reliance on the private car, the proposal provides a mechanism for the management and regulation of parking demand within an established urban location.
- 8.3.19. In conclusion - I consider that the principle of introducing controlled/paid parking at Blanchardstown Centre is acceptable and consistent with, National Policy , Regional Policy and the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029. The detailed impacts of the proposed charging regime, including its effect on the operation of the Centre, accessibility for different users, traffic movements, parking displacement, residential areas and the functioning of the various civic and commercial uses, are matters which I consider separately below. I am satisfied that the principle of the

development is not contrary to the MC zoning objective for the site and complies with specific development plan policy CMP25 which seeks to implement a balanced approach to the provision of car parking, using parking as a demand-management measure to promote a transition towards more sustainable forms of transportation, while meeting the needs of businesses and communities

8.4. Traffic and Transport (Cycle and Pedestrian)

All appellants on file have made stated that the proposed development will have a significant negative impact on the existing traffic situation in Blanchardstown Shopping Centre. It is stated that the barrier entrance system will lead to extensive queuing or stacking on internal road system that could lead to queueing on external road network . It is set out that the applicant's traffic evidence within the traffic and transport assessment is overly optimistic, insufficiently stress-tested and not adequately independently validated.

- 8.4.1. The appeals submit that Blanchardstown Town Centre already experiences significant traffic pressures and that the surrounding road network and internal circulation routes operate with limited resilience, particularly during peak trading periods and seasonal surges. Against that background, the appellants argue that the introduction of barriers at multiple car park entrances and exits, together with access reconfigurations and changes to circulation patterns, introduces new operational constraints and potential bottlenecks that have not been satisfactorily assessed. The appellants state that no independent Road Safety Audit or barrier specific Road Safety Audit has been submitted (with reference to the case *Ahern & Others v An Bord Pleanála* 2016) and that the Traffic and Transport Assessment does not include modelling of vehicle queuing at barrier locations. Reference is made to a report prepared by Ayrton Group Traffic Engineers, submitted as an appendix to the BPS Planning appeal document. The report states that a limited on-site traffic survey was undertaken on 28th November 2025 and state that delays may occur at the barriers during periods of heavy traffic, poor visibility, adverse weather conditions or technical issues.
- 8.4.2. As part of the application a Traffic and Transport Assessment has been carried out and prepared by Systra. The TTA undertakes this assessment for each of the nine car parks and also includes a microsimulation model of the wider Blanchardstown

Centre and surrounding road network. The assessment is based principally on the Sunday lunchtime peak of 27 October 2024, identified by the applicant as the busiest period for traffic entering the Centre's car parks. The applicant states that traffic data from 2018 and 2024 was reviewed, with additional survey data collected in April 2025, and that both weekday and weekend conditions were considered. The applicant considers the Sunday survey appropriate because, while weekday background traffic is generally higher, traffic associated with the Centre itself is considerably higher at weekends. The barrier capacity assessment considers the peak entry and exit demand at each car park and tests the operation of the proposed barrier plazas. Importantly, a sensitivity assessment is also undertaken assuming that one barrier is unavailable, thereby testing whether the remaining barriers retain sufficient capacity to accommodate peak demand. I consider the survey data as provided is reasonable baseline from which to undertake an assessment. The data as provided complies with Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines 2014. The assessment also considers both the pre- and post-BusConnects arrangements.

- CP01 – White Car Park

The proposed White Car Park provides six entry barriers, giving a stated total entry capacity of 5,400 vehicles per hour. The reported residual entry capacity during the peak operating period is 80%, increasing to 85% in the post-BusConnects scenario. There are also six exit barriers, providing a stated exit capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 47%, increasing to 65% post-BusConnects. The TTA also stress-tests the arrangement by assuming one barrier is unavailable. In that circumstance, five entry barriers would remain, providing 4,500 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 72%, increasing to 83% post-BusConnects. Five exit barriers would remain, providing 1,500 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 37%, increasing to 60%.

Of particular relevance to the appellants' concerns regarding external queuing, the TTA identifies capacity for 70 vehicles to stack before passing through the entry plaza, with a further capacity for 21 vehicles before entering the main internal circulation area.

On exit, there is capacity for 44 vehicles to stack before passing through the exit plaza, with a further 32 vehicles before joining the internal street network. I consider this to be a substantial level of stacking provision relative to the assessed peak

demand. It provides a significant buffer between the barrier operation and the internal road network and, importantly, between the car park and the external public road network.

- CP02 – Green Car Park

The Green Car Park provides two entry barriers, with a stated combined capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour. The reported residual entry capacity during the peak period is 76%, increasing to 82% post-BusConnects. There are three exit barriers, providing a stated capacity of 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 55%, increasing to 65% post-BusConnects. The TTA also considers the failure of one barrier. With one entry barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides a capacity of 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 52%, increasing to 64% post-BusConnects. With one exit barrier unavailable, two exit barriers remain, providing 600 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 33%, increasing to 48%.

In terms of physical stacking, the car park provides capacity for 12 vehicles before the entry plaza and a further 6 vehicles before entering the main circulation. On exit, there is capacity for 15 vehicles before the exit plaza and a further 22 vehicles before joining the internal street. I consider the additional 22-vehicle internal stacking capacity on exit particularly relevant, as this means that vehicles delayed at the barriers have an area within the Centre in which to queue before affecting the internal street network.

- CP03 – Green Retail Car Park

The Green Retail Car Park provides two entry barriers, with a combined capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour, and three exit barriers, providing 900 vehicles per hour.

The reported residual capacity during the peak operating period is 82% for entry and 65% for exit. The sensitivity assessment, assuming one barrier is unavailable, gives reported residual capacities of 64% for entry and 48% for exit.

The physical stacking provision comprises 8 vehicles before the entry plaza, with a further 7 vehicles before entering the main circulation. On exit, there is capacity for 12 vehicles before the exit plaza and a further 8 vehicles before joining the internal

street. The significance of this arrangement is that the car park is not dependent upon vehicles stopping directly on the adjoining road to access the barrier. There is dedicated stacking provision within the car park itself. I consider there is sufficient detail provided in this regard and the proposal as set out is acceptable.

- CP04 – Red Car Park

The Red Car Park provides two entry barriers, with a stated capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour, and three exit barriers, with a stated capacity of 900 vehicles per hour. The reported residual entry capacity is 82%, while residual exit capacity is 70%. The sensitivity assessment indicates that with one entry barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 64%. With one exit barrier unavailable, the remaining two barriers provide 600 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 48%. The physical stacking capacity is 15 vehicles before the entry plaza, plus a further 11 vehicles before entering the main circulation. On exit, there is capacity for 16 vehicles before the exit plaza, plus a further 15 vehicles before joining the internal street. I consider this to provide adequate separation between barrier operation and the internal road network.

- CP05 – Red Overflow Car Park

The Red Overflow Car Park provides two entry barriers, with a stated capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour, and two exit barriers, with a stated capacity of 600 vehicles per hour. The reported residual entry capacity is 92%, while residual exit capacity is 79%. In the event of one entry barrier being unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 84%. With one exit barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 300 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 59%.

The stacking provision comprises 10 vehicles before the entry plaza, with a further 5 vehicles before entering the main circulation. On exit, there is capacity for 11 vehicles before the exit plaza, plus a further 5 vehicles before joining the internal street. The TTA therefore demonstrates that even this car park, with a relatively smaller barrier arrangement, has substantial residual barrier capacity and dedicated internal stacking provision.

- CP06 – Blue Multi-Storey Car Park

The Blue Multi-Storey Car Park provides three entry barriers, giving a stated capacity of 2,700 vehicles per hour, and three exit barriers, giving a stated capacity of 900 vehicles per hour. The reported residual entry capacity is 88%, while residual exit capacity is 71%. With one entry barrier unavailable, the remaining two barriers provide 1,800 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 82%. With one exit barrier unavailable, the remaining two provide 600 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 56%. There is capacity for 20 vehicles to stack before the entry plaza, plus a further 12 vehicles before entering the main circulation.

On exit, there is capacity for 16 vehicles before the exit plaza and a further 18 vehicles before joining the internal street. I consider the provision of three entry and three exit barriers, together with this level of stacking capacity, to provide considerable resilience against temporary increases in demand.

- CP07 – Blue Library Car Park

The Blue Library Car Park provides two entry barriers, with a stated capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour, and two exit barriers, providing 600 vehicles per hour. The reported residual capacity is 90% for entry and 80% for exit.

The sensitivity test indicates that with one entry barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 79%. With one exit barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 300 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 60%. The entry arrangement allows for 10 vehicles to stack before the entry plaza and a further 11 vehicles before entering the main circulation.

On exit, the TTA identifies capacity for 10 vehicles before the exit plaza and a further 6 vehicles before joining the internal street. I note that the source material refers to this section of the barrier assessment as “P07 Blue Overflow”, while the design information identifies CP07 as the Blue Library Car Park. I would retain the latter terminology in the Inspector's Report to avoid confusion.

- CP08 – Yellow Overflow Car Park

The Main Yellow Overflow Car Park has a recorded peak entry flow of 206 vehicles per hour. The proposed arrangement provides two entry barriers, with a combined capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour. The reported residual entry capacity is 89%. Two exit barriers provide a capacity of 600 vehicles per hour, with reported residual

exit capacity of 73%. The sensitivity assessment shows that with one entry barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 77%. With one exit barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 300 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 45%. The stacking provision is 14 vehicles before the entry plaza, plus a further 8 vehicles before entering the main circulation.

On exit, there is capacity for 13 vehicles before the exit plaza and a further 13 vehicles before joining the internal street.

- Krispy Kreme Yellow Overflow Car Park.

This provides two entry barriers with a stated capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour and two exit barriers with a capacity of 600 vehicles per hour. The reported residual capacity is 90% on entry and 72% on exit.

With one entry barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 80%. With one exit barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 300 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 58%. There is capacity for 10 vehicles to stack before the entry plaza, plus 5 vehicles before entering the main circulation.

On exit, there is capacity for 7 vehicles before the exit plaza, plus a further 7 vehicles before joining the internal street or adjoining car park.

- CP09 – Yellow Car Park

The Yellow Car Park provides two entry barriers, with a stated capacity of 1,800 vehicles per hour, and two exit barriers, with a stated capacity of 600 vehicles per hour. The reported residual entry capacity is 85%, while residual exit capacity is 55%. With one entry barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 900 vehicles per hour, with reported residual capacity of 70%. With one exit barrier unavailable, the remaining barrier provides 300 vehicles per hour, with reported residual exit capacity of 10%.

The entry arrangement provides for 12 vehicles to stack before the entry plaza, plus a further 15 vehicles before entering the main circulation. On exit, there is capacity for 17 vehicles before the exit plaza, plus a further 12 vehicles before joining the internal street.

I note that the 10% residual capacity in the single-exit-barrier failure scenario is the lowest residual capacity identified across the car parks. Nevertheless, this represents a sensitivity scenario in which one of two exit barriers is unavailable. The normal two-barrier arrangement retains a reported 55% residual exit capacity, together with 17 vehicles of stacking before the plaza and a further 12 vehicles before the internal street. I therefore do not consider this sensitivity scenario, in itself, to demonstrate that the proposed arrangement would result in unacceptable traffic impacts.

8.4.3. Overall Barrier and Stacking Assessment

When the individual car parks are considered collectively, I consider that the submitted TTA provides a considerably more robust assessment of the potential queuing issue than would be apparent from considering the proposal solely as the introduction of parking charges. The assessment does not simply state that sufficient capacity exists. It provides, for each car park:

- the number of proposed entry barriers;
- the number of proposed exit barriers;
- the theoretical hourly barrier capacity;
- the assessed peak-period utilisation/residual capacity;
- a sensitivity assessment assuming one barrier is unavailable; and
- the physical number of vehicles capable of stacking before and after the barrier plaza.

The assessment therefore directly addresses the principal concern raised by the appellants, namely whether the introduction of barriers could cause queues to migrate from the car park onto the internal or external road network. Across the nine car parks, the barrier arrangements provide substantial theoretical hourly capacity. For example, the White Car Park provides 5,400 vehicles/hour entry capacity, the Blue Multi-Storey provides 2,700 vehicles/hour, and the Green, Green Retail and Red Car Parks each provide 1,800 vehicles/hour entry capacity. The remaining car parks provide 1,800 vehicles/hour where two entry barriers are proposed.

The physical stacking provision is also significant. The White Car Park alone can accommodate 70 vehicles before the entry plaza and a further 21 vehicles before the

main circulation, while the Blue Multi-Storey provides 20 and 12 vehicles respectively. Similar, albeit smaller, buffers are provided throughout the remaining car parks.

I consider these figures important because the relevant issue is not whether a queue can ever form. A queue is an entirely foreseeable consequence of a controlled parking system. The relevant issue is where that queue forms and whether it can propagate backwards to obstruct the internal or public road network.

In this regard, the TTA's microsimulation confirms that the predicted average queue lengths do not extend beyond the dedicated vehicle stacking areas at the car park entrances and onto the main road network. The assessment further concludes that no car park exceeded 24% of entry capacity or 53% of exit capacity, demonstrating substantial overall barrier capacity during the assessed peak operating period.

8.4.4. Internal and External Road Network

The barrier assessment is supplemented by a VISSIM microsimulation model of the wider Blanchardstown Centre and surrounding network. The model focuses on the Sunday 12:00–13:00 peak, identified as the period with the highest inbound car park flows. The model incorporates junction turning counts, pedestrian crossing counts and journey-time data. Calibration was undertaken against observed conditions, with the results reported as satisfying the relevant calibration criteria.

The modelling also specifically incorporated the barrier operation. Individual barrier stop lines were coded into the VISSIM model and, where multiple barriers were provided, dynamic routing was used to distribute vehicles between barriers. A ± 4 -second dwell time on entry and ± 12 -second dwell time on exit was applied to represent the expected barrier processing time. I note the appellants had issue with the accuracy of the timing used for the barrier processing, stating that such processing may be impeded by weather and lighting conditions that will be present at anyone time. While I consider this to be relevant concern there is no guideline on barrier times withing the TTA Guidelines or Development Plan however I note that the TTA does not treat the barriers as merely a theoretical capacity calculation, their operation and associated delay are incorporated into the wider traffic model.

Therefore, I am satisfied with the level of detail provided with respect to expected barrier processing times.

The model predicts negligible or minimal queuing at a number of the car park exits. For example, the Green Car Park has forecast average queues of 1 vehicle in the Do-Minimum scenario and 3 vehicles in the Do-Something scenario. The Red Car Park has forecast average queues of 8 and 1 vehicles respectively, while the Red Overflow, Blue Overflow and Yellow Overflow exits have no forecast exit queues during the assessed lunchtime peak. The model further indicates that average queues at the car park entrances do not extend beyond the dedicated stacking areas onto the main road network. In this regard, I do not consider the proposed introduction of barrier controls will have a significant impact on internal and external road network in terms of additional stacking/queueing.

8.4.5. Existing Congestion

I acknowledge the appellants contention that Blanchardstown Centre already experiences congestion and that the existing network may have limited resilience during particularly busy periods. I do not consider, however, that the existence of existing congestion establishes that the proposed parking management arrangements would create an unacceptable additional traffic impact.

The TTA has considered the existing conditions and has selected the Sunday lunchtime period of 27 October 2024 as the relevant peak for the Centre based on its review of available traffic data. The applicant has also reviewed weekday and weekend conditions and additional 2025 traffic data. I note appellants have raised concerns over the accuracy of this baseline data, but I am satisfied with the level of detail provided in this regard. The applicant as part of their submission states that in order to identify a suitable and robust peak period for modelling, a detailed review of available traffic data collated for 2018 and 2024 was undertaken. In addition, further traffic count data was collated for April 2025. Data collated for Sunday 27th October 2024 during the lunchtime peak represented the busiest period for traffic entering BTC car parks and was therefore used for the modelling. In relation to the survey period, SYSTRA did examine both weekday and weekend survey data at BTC. Whilst weekday peak periods will typically see higher background traffic levels than weekends, the traffic impact at BTC is considerably higher on weekends. The weekend survey days are therefore considered appropriate for this assessment.

The modelling as provided demonstrates that the introduction of controlled parking has a minimal effect on overall network congestion, with queueing associated with the barriers contained within the car park stacking areas. There are locations on the wider network where congestion is forecast to continue. However, these are identified as conditions which already occur during peak periods rather than new congestion generated by the proposed parking management system.

8.4.6. BusConnects

Appellants have raised concerns that the TTA is overly reliant on Bus Connects in order to demonstrate no traffic impact from the development proposal. The TTA includes BusConnects within its future-year modelling scenarios, but I do not consider that the traffic acceptability of the proposed development should be dependent upon BusConnects being implemented. I further note the applicant's evidence regarding the ongoing BusConnects Network Redesign. Phase 10 was identified as due for implementation in Q2 2026 and proposes the introduction of 11 new routes — L61, L62, L63, L64, B1, B2, B3, B4, 34, 35 and 37 — alongside the withdrawal of nine existing routes. The applicant states that following implementation, approximately 62 buses per hour would serve Blanchardstown Town Centre, representing an increase of over 100% compared with the existing level of service. I recognise that the precise timing of the proposed Blanchardstown to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme, including the proposed new Bus Interchange at Blanchardstown Town Centre, cannot presently be confirmed. I therefore do not consider it appropriate to rely upon the delivery of that infrastructure as being necessary to establish the acceptability of the current proposal

8.4.7. The application provides a “without BusConnects” arrangement, which demonstrates how the parking management system can operate based on existing site conditions. The “with BusConnects” arrangement demonstrates how the proposal can subsequently integrate with the planned transport infrastructure. The TTA also specifically incorporates the barrier infrastructure into the model and tests the operation of the parking system. Accordingly, I consider BusConnects to be an additional future transport intervention and integration opportunity, rather than the infrastructure upon which the current proposal depends for traffic capacity. This is important because some of the external network congestion identified in the TTA

persists even with BusConnects. For example, queuing remains forecast at the Green Road/Yellow Road/Retail Park One/M3 junction and at the Old Navan Road/Green Road/Red Road junction. The fact that some existing network congestion remains following the introduction of BusConnects reinforces my view that BusConnects should not be treated as the basis upon which the current proposal is justified. Rather, the proposal must be capable of operating within the existing network, with BusConnects representing a future improvement and integration opportunity. I am satisfied that the level of traffic impact is existing and not exacerbated by the proposed controlled parking measures. The TTA as submitted does not rely on the delivery of Bus Connects to indicate traffic capacity. The purpose of Bus Connects scenarios was to demonstrate how the proposal connects into wider public transport options for the site into the future.

8.4.8. Pedestrian Movement and Permeability

The TTA Guidelines require consideration of the transport implications of a development and the manner in which the development integrates with the existing transport network. The proposals provide for improvements to the pedestrian environment throughout the Centre and seek to strengthen connections between the Centre and the surrounding areas. The applicant identifies connections to the wider area, including Millennium Park, and states that the principal pedestrian desire lines have been accommodated. This complies with Objective CMO6 of the Development Plan, which seeks to improve the pedestrian and cyclist environment, and Objective CMO29, which seeks to optimise accessibility and maximise permeability.

I consider that the proposed improvements are not confined to the provision of a pedestrian route to the Centre itself. The proposals seek to improve movement through the Centre and between the Centre and the surrounding area, thereby allowing the Centre to function more effectively as a connected destination within the wider urban area.

8.4.9. The proposed public realm is also intended to give greater priority to pedestrians. Within the car parks, enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities and improved road markings are proposed. These measures are significant because the car parks currently represent areas where pedestrian movement can be subordinated to vehicular movement. The proposed improvements would make pedestrian routes

more legible and improve the ability of pedestrians to move between parking areas, entrances and the wider Centre. I also note the proposed enhancement of external lighting throughout the site, including the removal of existing dark spots. This has a direct bearing on the usability and perceived safety of pedestrian routes, particularly during hours of darkness. I consider that improved lighting, combined with enhanced crossing facilities and line marking, would contribute to a more legible, welcoming and pedestrian-friendly environment. The proposal therefore provides improvements not merely in terms of the quantity of pedestrian infrastructure, but in the quality, legibility and safety of pedestrian movement through the site

8.4.10. Cycling

8.4.11. The Development Plan seeks to promote active travel and integrate walking and cycling with public transport. In this regard, Objective CMO6 seeks improvements to the pedestrian and cyclist environment, while Objective CMO7 seeks the integration of active travel with public transport. The proposed improvements to the public realm and internal movement network provide opportunities for improved cycling accessibility to the Centre and better integration with the wider active travel network. As part of the proposal there will be the introduction of a designated cycle route along the designated Blue and Red Road, which can later connect into a designated Bus Connects Scheme. All car parks will have shared cycle/pedestrian routes. This has been accompanied by a designated cycle audit to address safety concerns. Furthermore, I note the provision of a new cycle hub adjacent to the Yellow Car Park and permitted Busconnects Interchange. This will provide secure lockers and covered cycle stands. This location offers secure connectivity to bus connections and Blanchardstown shopping centres.

8.4.12. I consider the relationship between cycling and public transport to be particularly relevant in this case. The Centre is already served by a substantial bus network and the proposed improvements to pedestrian and active travel infrastructure provide improved opportunities for users to access those services without reliance upon the private car. The proposal therefore supports the Development Plan's objective of facilitating multi-modal journeys, whereby walking and cycling can form part of a journey involving public transport rather than requiring the entire journey to be undertaken by private car.

8.4.13. I also have regard to Objective CMO21, which supports the provision of appropriate wayfinding systems. The proposed improvements to the public realm, pedestrian crossings, road markings, lighting and connections between the Centre and surrounding areas will assist in making pedestrian routes more identifiable and legible. The improvements proposed therefore have the potential to make movement through the Centre more intuitive for pedestrians and cyclists, reducing conflict between different users and improving the overall legibility of the movement network.

I consider that these measures collectively improve the permeability of the Centre and provide a stronger basis for movement by sustainable modes.

8.4.14. Conclusion

Having regard to the detailed Barrier Capacity Assessment, I am satisfied that the submitted TTA provides sufficient quantitative evidence to address the concerns raised by the appellants regarding queuing and stacking. The assessment demonstrates that the nine controlled car parks have substantial barrier capacity, with multiple entry and exit barriers provided at the principal car parks. The assessment further demonstrates that, even where one barrier is assumed to be unavailable, substantial residual capacity remains in the majority of cases. The physical stacking provision ranges from 70 vehicles before the entry plaza at the White Car Park to the smaller but still defined stacking areas at the other car parks, with further stacking capacity generally available between the barrier plaza and the internal circulation network.

8.4.15. I am satisfied that the assessment considers the point at which queuing could transition from a car-park management issue into a traffic-management issue. The available stacking areas mean that vehicles can queue within the Centre before reaching the internal street network, while the microsimulation demonstrates that predicted queues do not extend beyond these stacking areas onto the surrounding public road network. I am satisfied that the evidence before me demonstrates that the proposed controlled parking system can accommodate the assessed peak traffic demand without resulting in unacceptable internal queuing or obstruction of the surrounding public road network.

8.4.16. This conclusion is not dependent upon the implementation of BusConnects. The proposed parking management system has been assessed in the context of the

existing car park and access arrangements, while the future BusConnects scenario demonstrates the ability of the proposal to integrate with planned transport infrastructure.

- 8.4.17. Accordingly, having regard to the quantified barrier capacities, the residual capacity identified at each car park, the available stacking provision, the sensitivity testing of barrier failure, the VISSIM microsimulation and the absence of evidence that queues would extend onto the surrounding public road network, I am satisfied that the submitted TTA adequately demonstrates that the proposed development would not result in an unacceptable traffic impact. I therefore do not consider traffic capacity, barrier operation, internal stacking or external queuing to constitute grounds for refusal.

8.5. Visual Impact and Residential Amenity

- 8.5.1. A number of third-party submissions raise concerns regarding the visual impact of the proposed controlled parking infrastructure, in particular the introduction of barriers and Variable Message Signs (VMS). It is submitted that the combined effect of the barriers, VMS and revised access arrangements would result in a more fortified or “fortress-like” appearance to Blanchardstown Town Centre. Specific concerns have also been raised regarding the potential visual and residential amenity impacts of VMS signage on the adjoining residential areas, particularly Whitestown Walk and Verdemont. The planning authority did not consider the proposed signage detail would have a detrimental impact on the visual or residential amenity of neighbouring properties
- 8.5.2. I have considered these concerns having regard to the submitted Architectural Design Statement, architectural drawings, VMS drawings and photomontages/CGIs submitted with the application. I have also had regard to the existing character and established land use pattern of Blanchardstown Town Centre and the relevant signage and visual amenity provisions of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029. I do not consider the proposed development will have a significant negative effect on the visual or residential amenities of the area.
- 8.5.3. Section 14.4.6 of the Fingal Development Plan recognises that the presence and location of signage can have a significant impact on the visual amenity of an area and that poorly positioned or unnecessary signage can reduce overall visual quality.

The Development Plan requires particular regard to be had to the design and location of signage, with signage, where permitted, expected to be simple in design, sympathetic to its surroundings and not unduly obtrusive. Objective DMS012 – Evaluation of Signage Proposals, which requires signage proposals to be evaluated having regard to:

- the surroundings and features of the buildings and structures on which signs are to be displayed;
- the number and size of signs in the area, both existing and proposed; and
- the potential for the creation of undesirable visual clutter.

The VMS proposed as part of this development are principally operational and traffic-management infrastructure, intended to direct motorists to available parking and distribute traffic efficiently throughout the existing car park network. They are not proposed as billboards or advertising structures. The purpose of the signage is therefore directly related to the management of traffic associated with the Centre. The signage will provide motorists with information concerning available parking spaces and, consequently, assist in reducing unnecessary circulation, driver searching and abortive trips within the Centre and on the surrounding road network. I consider that this operational function is relevant when assessing the number and location of the signs under Objective DMS012. The assessment should not therefore consider the signs simply as additional visual structures, but should also have regard to their functional necessity and their relationship with the existing extensive commercial and transportation infrastructure at Blanchardstown Town Centre.

- 8.5.4. The application proposes 27 VMS signs in total, comprising two distinct types. There are 5 no. Type 1 VMS signs, which are full-matrix, full-colour VMS units. These are strategically positioned on key access roads approaching the Centre and provide real-time information concerning parking availability in the principal car park areas, together with traffic-management information. A further 22 no. Type 2 VMS signs are located at the entrances to the individual car parks. These are predominantly static, retroreflective signage units incorporating VMS panels capable of displaying dynamic alphanumeric information indicating live parking availability. The five Type 1 signs are positioned at locations where advance information is required to allow motorists

to identify the appropriate car park before entering the Centre. The 22 Type 2 signs are located at the individual car-park entrances and perform a more localised function. The signage system is therefore intended to operate as a coordinated parking guidance system rather than as a proliferation of independent advertising signs. I am satisfied that the proposed distribution of signage has a clear operational rationale. By providing motorists with information on parking availability before and at the point of entry to the individual car parks, the system should reduce unnecessary circulation and assist in distributing parking demand across the available car parks. In this regard, I consider that the proposed signage is consistent with the intent of Objective DMS012, as the number and location of signs have a clear functional relationship with the extensive scale and configuration of the existing town-centre car park network.

8.5.5. Relationship with Existing Character

Blanchardstown Town Centre is an established major retail and commercial centre, containing extensive areas of surface and multi-storey car parking, internal roads, access infrastructure, directional signage, lighting and other transportation-related infrastructure. The proposal is therefore not introducing substantial traffic-management infrastructure into an otherwise undeveloped or visually sensitive environment. I note also that the site is predominantly a brownfield suburban commercial/town-centre environment, with limited residential development within the Centre itself. There are no Architectural Conservation Areas or Protected Structures directly affected by the proposal. Accordingly, I do not consider the visual context to be comparable with the introduction of large-scale signage within a historic streetscape, ACA or an area of particular architectural sensitivity. Having regard to the scale and character of Blanchardstown Town Centre, the operational nature of the signage, its siting and the submitted drawings and visualisations, I consider that the proposed VMS can be satisfactorily assimilated into the existing commercial and transportation environment.

8.5.6. Impact on Whitestown Walk

The residential area with the greatest potential for visual impact is Whitestown Walk. I note that one static sign, identified as VMS23, is proposed on Blanchardstown Road South immediately adjacent to Whitestown Walk. A further static sign is

located on the opposite side of the road. Drawing E01T25A34/P/VMS/16 provides details of the proposed signage. VMS23 is a Type 2 sign and is therefore smaller in scale than the Type 1 full-matrix VMS signs located at strategic approaches to the Centre. I have had regard to the visual information and CGIs supplied with the application, which illustrate the relationship between the proposed signage and the adjoining residential environment. Having regard to the scale and form of VMS23, its position relative to the existing road infrastructure and the established commercial character of the area, I do not consider that the sign would appear as an unduly dominant structure when viewed from Whitestown Walk.

8.5.7. I acknowledge that the sign will introduce an additional element of traffic-management infrastructure into the streetscape. However, I consider that its scale and functional appearance are capable of being assimilated into the existing road and commercial environment and that it would not constitute a visually dominant or overbearing structure when viewed from adjoining residential properties. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal does not give rise to an unacceptable impact on the visual amenities or residential character of Whitestown Walk.

8.5.8. The Verdemont residential development is located approximately 190 metres from the boundary of the application site. Having regard to this separation distance, the intervening development and the nature and scale of the proposed signage, I do not consider that the VMS proposals would have a material visual impact upon the residential environment of Verdemont. The proposed development does not directly intervene in the established visual relationship between Verdemont and the surrounding area and I am satisfied that the separation distance is sufficient to prevent the proposed signage from becoming an overbearing or visually dominant feature when experienced from the residential properties.

8.5.9. Barriers and Access Configuration

I have also considered the appellants concern that the introduction of barriers and the revised access arrangements would result in a “fortress-like” appearance to the Centre. I do not consider that the physical arrangement proposed supports this conclusion. As demonstrated in the Architectural Design Statement and associated drawings, the proposed barriers are located within the individual car parks and set back from the principal access points. They are therefore not positioned as

substantial structures at the external boundary of the Centre or across the principal public-road interfaces. The barriers will principally be experienced as part of the internal car-park environment rather than as a continuous defensive edge enclosing the Centre. The majority of existing vehicular access points are also retained. While certain access points are proposed to be removed or altered, these changes are principally associated with improving internal circulation and managing the movement of vehicles through the Centre. I therefore do not consider that the access configuration would create a continuous physical barrier or visually fortified perimeter. I am satisfied that there is no substantial negative impact from a visual amenity perspective on neighbouring residential properties.

8.5.10. Construction Hours

I also note concerns raised by appellants regarding the absence of specifically defined construction hours for the proposed works. It is submitted that the applicant has not proposed conventional or restricted construction working hours and that this could give rise to impacts on the residential amenities of adjoining properties. The planning authority did not recommend conditions with respect to construction hours, in its place recommended noise mitigation measures. I have considered this matter having regard to the particular nature of the proposed development and the fact that the works principally comprise alterations to an existing operational town-centre parking and access network.

8.5.11. In this instance, I consider that the absence of rigidly defined construction hours is acceptable having regard to the nature and operational requirements of the proposed works. The works are associated with the introduction and implementation of a controlled parking system across an extensive existing commercial site and will necessarily have to be undertaken having regard to the continued operation of Blanchardstown Town Centre. Restricting all works to conventional daytime construction hours could, in my view, result in a significant adverse effect on the operation of the Centre, including the potential displacement of construction activity into periods of greater customer and traffic activity. This could also have significant negative effects on traffic for neighbouring residential properties owing to traffic disruptions. There is therefore a reasonable operational basis for allowing flexibility in the timing of works in this particular circumstance.

- 8.6. I further note that the majority of the car parks and associated works are located a considerable distance from the adjoining residential development and are separated from residential properties by existing roads, commercial development and the intervening site layout. Consequently, the potential for construction-related noise, activity, lighting or general disturbance to materially affect residential properties will vary considerably across the site, with the majority of the proposed works occurring within an established commercial environment rather than immediately adjoining residential curtilages. I acknowledge that certain elements of the works, particularly those associated with access points and VMS located closer to residential areas, have greater potential to result in temporary disturbance. However, I consider that such works are limited in scale and duration and can be appropriately managed through the construction management measures associated with the development. I acknowledge the outline construction management plan provided with the application which acknowledges proximity of adjacent Whitestown residential estate. The applicant proposes keeping a construction works within British Standard 5228 'Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites Part - Code of practice for basic information and procedures for noise control. I note recommended condition 6 with proposed by Fingal County Council in relation to the provision of a final Construction Management Plan which is would recommend be included into any grant of permission. I do not consider that the nature or location of the proposed works is such that unrestricted construction activity would necessarily result in unacceptable residential amenity impacts. I therefore consider that, in this particular case, the absence of prescriptive construction hours does not of itself render the proposal unacceptable. The operational characteristics of the Centre, the need to maintain access and circulation during the implementation of the works, the predominantly commercial setting and the separation of the majority of the works from residential properties are material considerations in this regard.
- 8.6.1. I therefore consider that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable loss of visual amenity, sense of openness or residential character for adjoining properties, either through the completed development or, having regard to the nature and location of the works, during its implementation. I consider that the signage proposals are appropriately located and designed having regard to the requirements of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029, including Section 14.4.6 and Objective

DMS012, and that the proposal would not give rise to an unacceptable proliferation of signage, undesirable visual clutter or a fortress-like character. I therefore do not consider visual impact, construction activity or residential amenity to constitute grounds for refusal of permission.

8.7. Trees, Landscaping and Biodiversity (Ecology)

A number of third-party submissions raise concerns regarding the extent of tree removal associated with the proposed development. In particular, it is stated that the proposal would result in the removal of up to 43% of the existing trees on the site, that insufficient justification has been provided for their removal and that alternative arrangements which could facilitate greater tree retention have not been adequately examined. Concerns are also raised regarding the proposed use of non-native tree species and the potential implications of tree removal for biodiversity, climate resilience, surface water management and the visual character of the area. It is further stated that the removal of such a quantity of trees in this instance is contrary to Development Plan policies GINHP21, GINH046 and Policy Cap 35. The planning authority having assessed the submitted reports considered that the tree removal would not be detrimental to local biodiversity and the proposal would have a nett long term gain in terms of tree canopy and improving biodiversity in the locality.

- 8.7.1. I have considered these matters having regard to the Landscape Design Statement, Landscape Drawings and Planting Schedule prepared by Cameo Landscape Architects, the Arboricultural Assessment and Impact Report, Tree Survey Data and Tree Protection Method Statement prepared by CMK Urban Forestry Consultants, together with the standalone responses to the third-party appeals prepared by Cameo and CMK. I have also had regard to the Ecological Impact Assessment and the wider landscape proposals for the Blanchardstown Town Centre site.
- 8.7.2. The information submitted indicates that the Blanchardstown Town Centre campus was developed from approximately 1990, with the majority of the existing trees planted by 2002. Accordingly, most of the trees on the site are approximately 24 years old. A total of 1,141 trees were surveyed across the Blanchardstown Town Centre site. Of these, 347 trees, representing approximately 30% of the total surveyed tree population, are identified as being impacted by the proposed

development. I note that the arboricultural assessment identifies approximately 71% of the surveyed trees as Category B trees, comprising approximately 1.6% B1, 23.5% B2 and 46.2% B3, with Category B3 representing the lowest grade within the Category B classification. A further approximately 24% are Category C trees, with approximately 5% classified as Category U, comprising trees in an advanced state of decline or dead. The age-class assessment further identifies approximately 80% of the trees as young, approximately 19% as early mature, and less than 1% as mature. I note that the age classification is based upon the current size and dimensions of the trees rather than simply the length of time since planting. This is relevant given that a number of the trees have been present on the site for approximately 24 years but have not developed to dimensions that would ordinarily be expected of trees of that age.

- 8.7.3. The applicant's arboricultural consultants identify particular constraints associated with the existing tree planting within the car parks. Many of these trees were planted in approximately 2002 within relatively small and inadequate planting pits, with limited soil volume and rooting space. It is stated that this has restricted normal root development and annual extension growth and has left many of the trees susceptible to pests, disease and progressive decline as available soil resources become depleted. I consider these matters relevant to the assessment of the existing tree resource. The numerical loss of trees should not be considered in isolation from the quality, condition, age, species composition, rooting environment and long-term potential of the trees proposed for removal.
- 8.7.4. I acknowledge the appellants' concern that greater retention of existing trees should have been explored and that the extent of tree removal is excessive. However, having reviewed the submitted arboricultural information and the proposed landscape layout, I am satisfied that a substantive justification has been provided for the tree removal proposed.
- 8.7.5. The removal of trees is not solely attributable to the introduction of the proposed controlled parking barriers. The landscape and site design proposals also seek to provide full-sized accessible spaces and Parent and Child parking bays within the Green, Yellow and White car parks, together with improved pedestrian circulation and, in particular, improved north/south pedestrian connectivity through the White Car Park. These interventions form part of a broader redesign of the existing car-

park environment. The proposed tree removal therefore needs to be considered in conjunction with the proposed improvements to accessibility, pedestrian movement, parking layout, public realm, biodiversity and surface water management. I also note that a significant proportion of the existing trees proposed for removal comprise species and trees which have not developed their full potential owing to their restricted growing conditions. The applicant's arboricultural assessment considers that many of these trees are unlikely to reach true maturity in their existing conditions.

I therefore consider that the applicant has provided sufficient information to demonstrate the rationale for the proposed tree removal and that the removal is not simply a consequence of the introduction of parking-control infrastructure. I consider the applicant has adequately justified the tree removal as required under Objective GIN046 of the Fingal Development Plan 2023 – 2029.

8.7.6. Proposed Replacement Planting and Wider Landscape Strategy

I consider it important that the proposed landscaping is assessed as a whole-site landscape strategy, rather than solely as compensation for the individual trees being removed. I note the planning department accepted the landscaping strategy for the site and recommended condition for revised landscaping detail to include specifications of tree planting – depth, circumference etc., The Landscape Design Statement provides for a reworking of the landscape structure throughout the Centre. The proposals seek to combine new tree planting with improvements to pedestrian and cyclist movement, biodiversity, public realm, sustainable drainage and the overall visual quality of the car parks. The original landscape proposals provided for 171 replacement trees. Following further review of the landscape proposals during the appeal process, the landscape architect identified potential for a further 98 tree planting locations across the site. This increased the proposed replacement planting from 171 to 269 trees in total. I acknowledge that, even with the increased planting, there would remain a numerical net loss of approximately 94 trees when compared with the 347 trees identified as being impacted.

- 8.7.7. The proposed replacement trees will be planted in substantially more appropriate growing conditions, with adequate rooting areas and soil volumes. The submitted information indicates that approximately 16 cubic metres of rooting volume per tree

is to be provided. This represents a significant improvement over the existing constrained planting conditions within many of the car parks. The proposed planting is also to be undertaken at appropriate densities and with suitable soil, drainage and nutrient conditions. Irrigation and aeration pipes to root balls are proposed to facilitate establishment and watering during periods of drought where required.

8.7.8. I consider that these matters are important in assessing the long-term value of the proposed landscape. The objective is not simply to replace each existing tree with another tree in an equally constrained environment, but to provide a more sustainable and resilient tree population capable of achieving its intended mature growth potential.

8.7.9. I have also considered the concerns regarding the proposed use of non-native species. The submitted landscape proposals provide that approximately 48% of the proposed planting will comprise native species or cultivars of native species. The selection of species has been informed by the receiving environment and the physical constraints of the site, including the use of columnar or compact forms where appropriate. The non-native species proposed have not, in my view, been selected simply for ornamental purposes. The applicant identifies their ecological value, including nectar-rich flowers supporting pollinators and fruit and berries supporting birds, while also having regard to their suitability for the receiving environment. I therefore consider that the proposed planting strategy provides a reasonable balance between the use of native and native-cultivar planting, the physical constraints of an urban town-centre environment and the wider biodiversity value of species selected for pollinators and birds.

8.7.10. I am satisfied that the landscape proposals have had regard to Objective GI21, including the use of native planting and consideration of biodiversity value, and I do not consider that the inclusion of a proportion of non-native species would, in itself, render the landscape proposals unacceptable.

8.7.11. Climate Resilience and Ecosystem Services

The appellants have also raised concerns regarding the loss of existing trees and the consequent effect on carbon sequestration, climate resilience and the urban heat-island effect. I acknowledge that existing mature vegetation can provide important ecosystem services. However, in this particular case, the arboricultural evidence

indicates that the overwhelming majority of the existing trees are young or early mature, with less than 1% classified as mature, and that many of the car-park trees have been constrained by inadequate planting pits and limited soil volume. The proposed planting strategy provides substantially improved growing conditions and greater rooting volumes. The applicant's landscape consultants consider that healthy trees planted in appropriate conditions will be capable of achieving significantly greater growth and canopy development than many of the existing constrained trees.

8.7.12. I therefore consider that the long-term performance of the proposed landscape is an important consideration. The replacement trees will have the opportunity to develop larger and healthier canopies and, consequently, provide ecosystem services including carbon sequestration, shade, biodiversity benefits and contribution to the mitigation of the urban heat-island effect. I consider that the proposed landscaping therefore represents an opportunity to improve the long-term quality and resilience of the site's tree resource, notwithstanding the acknowledged short-to-medium-term numerical reduction in tree numbers.

8.7.13. Surface Water, Permeability and Landscaping

I have also considered the relationship between the proposed tree removal and surface water management -SUDS. Third parties have expressed concern that the loss of trees would reduce rainfall interception and increase surface water runoff and flood risk. The submitted response from Systra indicates that the development will not increase the impermeable area of the site and that the overall permeability of the site will be enhanced. Of particular relevance is the White Car Park (P01), which accounts for approximately 40% of the total site area. The proposed landscape intervention will substantially increase the permeable area within this car park, including approximately 2,330m² of wildflower planting along the carriageway edges. I consider that this is an important component of the wider landscape strategy. The proposal does not simply remove vegetation and replace it with additional hardstanding. Rather, the landscape proposals incorporate new planting and permeable areas alongside the reconfiguration of the car parks.

I therefore consider that the proposed landscape strategy provides wider surface-water-management and biodiversity benefits and that the concerns regarding an

increase in runoff arising solely from the loss of trees are not substantiated by the information before me.

8.7.14. Wider Landscape Proposals and Relationship with BusConnects

I have also considered the wider landscape context of the site, including the permitted BusConnects Core Bus Corridor Scheme (ACP Ref. 313892-22) The BusConnects scheme proposes the removal of approximately 159 trees along the boundary with the subject site, together with significant landscape interventions including approximately 210 replacement semi-mature trees, ornamental and woodland planting, and amenity and species-rich grassland. I do not consider it appropriate to attribute the effects of that separate scheme to the current proposal. However, it is relevant to understand the cumulative landscape context in which the proposed development will operate.

8.7.15. The landscape proposals before me have themselves evolved during the assessment process. Following the Planning Authority's decision and as part of the subsequent design development, the landscape architect reviewed the proposals and identified a further 98 potential tree planting locations, increasing the proposed planting from 171 to 269 trees. The Cameo Planting Masterplan, Drawing C0183L300, demonstrates the distribution of this proposed planting throughout the site. I consider that the significance of this masterplan is that it demonstrates that the proposed planting is not confined to isolated replacement trees at the locations of trees being removed. Rather, it forms part of a wider landscape restructuring of the entire Blanchardstown Town Centre site, incorporating opportunities to improve the landscape structure while simultaneously improving pedestrian and cycle movement, accessibility, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and public realm.

8.7.16. Natural Heritage and Ecology

8.7.17. The Ecological Impact Assessment was undertaken on 19 May 2025, which is within the optimal period for general habitat surveys. The submitted ecological assessment therefore provides relatively recent survey information. The site is highly urbanised, characterised by extensive hardstanding, existing car parking and significant levels of human activity and artificial lighting. The ecological assessment identifies generally low ecological value associated with the existing vegetation.

8.7.18. In relation to birds, while the vegetation is generally considered to be of low value for nesting birds, the ecological assessment recommends that tree and vegetation removal should take place outside the nesting season in accordance with the Wildlife Act, or, where this cannot be achieved, that removal should be undertaken under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist or ornithologist. The assessment of trees and structures for bat roosting potential identified no structures with suitable roosting opportunities. The trees on the site were not identified as having bat roost potential, which is generally associated with larger mature trees containing holes, cracks and other suitable features. I note also that the site is not located within a designated Natura 2000 site. Having regard to the urbanised character of the site, the existing levels of human activity and artificial lighting, the low level of semi-natural vegetation and the ecological mitigation measures proposed, I do not consider that the proposed tree removal and landscaping strategy would result in an unacceptable impact on natural heritage.

8.7.19. I have had regard to the relevant provisions of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029, including the tree, green infrastructure and natural heritage objectives. In particular, Objective GINH046 requires adequate justification for tree removal, with sufficient documentation and recording of the reasons where tree felling is proposed. Having regard to the Arboricultural Assessment, Tree Survey Data, Tree Protection Method Statement, Landscape Design Statement and the subsequent appeal responses, I consider that the applicant has provided sufficient information to justify the proposed tree removal. I have also had regard to Objective GI21, including the requirement to incorporate native planting and consideration of biodiversity value. As outlined above, approximately 48% of the proposed tree planting comprises native species or cultivars of native species, while the proposed non-native species have been selected having regard to their suitability for the receiving environment and their value to pollinators and birds. I further note Policy GINHP22 and the relevant provisions concerning tree planting and appropriate growing conditions. The proposed planting strategy, including approximately 16m³ rooting volume per tree, improved soil conditions, appropriate drainage and irrigation/aeration measures, represents a substantial improvement on the existing constrained planting conditions. I have also had regard to Objective CSO19 – Tree Lined Approaches, which seeks to retain existing tree-lined approaches to towns and villages in order to

preserve their special character. I note that the trees proposed for removal are predominantly located within the existing car parks and that no trees are proposed for removal from the approach to the town. I therefore do not consider that the proposal would adversely affect a tree-lined approach of the type contemplated by this objective.

8.7.20. In conclusion

I acknowledge that the proposal will result in the removal of a significant number of existing trees, with 347 trees identified as being impacted. I also acknowledge that the proposed replacement planting of 269 trees will not provide a one-for-one numerical replacement and will result in a net numerical loss of approximately 94 trees. However, I consider that the numerical comparison does not, in itself, adequately represent the landscape impact of the proposal. The existing tree population is predominantly young or early mature, with approximately 80% classified as young, 19% early mature and less than 1% mature. A substantial proportion of the existing trees are located within constrained car-park planting pits with inadequate soil volume and limited opportunity for normal root development. The arboricultural evidence indicates that many of these trees are unlikely to achieve their full mature potential in their existing conditions. Therefore their ecological value and their ability to sequester carbon is significantly limited.

In contrast, the proposed 269 replacement trees form part of a comprehensive landscape strategy for the entire site and will be planted in substantially improved conditions, including appropriate soil, drainage and rooting environments, with approximately 16m³ of rooting volume per tree. The landscape strategy also incorporates wildflower planting, including approximately 2,330m² within the White Car Park, improvements to permeability, biodiversity measures, SUDS opportunities and enhanced public realm. I therefore consider that the proposed landscape strategy represents more than compensatory tree planting. It provides an opportunity to fundamentally improve the quality, structure and long-term resilience of the landscape throughout the existing town-centre car-park environment.

8.7.21. I am also satisfied that the applicant has adequately justified the proposed tree removal having regard to the requirements of Objective GINH046, and that the proposed planting strategy has had appropriate regard to Objective GI21, Policy

GINHP22 and Objective CSO19, together with the wider green infrastructure, climate action, biodiversity and placemaking objectives of the Development Plan.

8.7.22. On balance, I am satisfied that the proposed tree removal, replacement planting and wider landscape strategy are acceptable having regard to the characteristics of the existing tree resource, the justification provided for removal, the quality and quantity of replacement planting, the improved growing conditions proposed and the wider landscape, biodiversity, permeability and surface-water benefits arising from the scheme. I therefore do not consider that the proposed loss of trees or the associated landscaping proposals would result in an unacceptable impact on the visual amenities, natural heritage, green infrastructure or climate resilience of the area, subject to the implementation of the submitted Landscape Design Statement, Planting Masterplan and associated arboricultural protection and mitigation measures by condition.

8.8. Reduced Number of Parking Spaces / Impact on Social Inclusion

8.8.1. A number of appellants raise concerns regarding the proposed reduction in the overall number of car parking spaces within Blanchardstown Town Centre. It is submitted that the proposed reconfiguration would result in a reduction from 5,444 existing parking spaces to 4,788 spaces, representing a reduction of approximately 656 spaces or 14.4%. Concerns are also raised regarding the potential implications of this reduction for users of non-retail facilities within the wider Centre, including the public library, civic offices and leisure facilities, and whether the reduction could adversely affect persons who are more reliant on private car access. It is further stated that the loss of parking spaces will have an impact on social equality and an Equality Impact Assessment should be undertaken.

8.8.2. I have considered these concerns in the context of the overall parking strategy proposed, including the introduction of controlled parking, the provision of Variable Message Signage (VMS), the reconfiguration of staff parking, the increased provision of accessible and parent and child spaces, the provision of age-friendly spaces and the wider sustainable transport and active travel measures proposed as part of the development. While I acknowledge that the proposal will result in a numerical reduction in the overall parking stock, I do not consider that the assessment of the impact of the reduction can reasonably be based solely on the

number of spaces lost. I do not consider the impact will be detrimental to the residential amenities of the area or have a detrimental impact on social equality. The proposal represents a fundamental change from the existing arrangement, whereby parking is effectively uncontrolled, to a managed parking system designed to improve the efficiency, utilisation and distribution of the remaining parking stock.

- 8.8.3. The proposed VMS system will provide drivers with real-time information regarding parking availability and will identify when particular car parks are full. This will allow drivers to be directed towards car parks where spaces remain available and should reduce unnecessary circulation and searching for spaces within the Centre. I consider that this is particularly relevant given the scale of the existing parking provision and the dispersed nature of the car parks. The introduction of VMS therefore has the potential to result in more efficient utilisation of the available parking stock by directing demand towards peripheral and less heavily utilised car parks. In this regard, the loss of parking spaces is partly offset by a more efficient and coordinated management of the 4,788 spaces that will remain.

8.8.4. Staff Parking

The proposal provides for a dedicated staff parking area within the upper levels of the multi-storey car park (MSCP), specifically Floor 2 and Floor 3. There are 246 spaces on Level 2 and 249 spaces on Level 3, providing a total of 495 dedicated staff parking spaces. The stated strategy is to direct staff parking away from the other, busier surface car parks and consolidate staff parking within this central location. I consider that this is a logical use of the existing parking resource and should have the effect of freeing up spaces within the more accessible and heavily utilised surface car parks for customers and visitors. Furthermore, it is proposed that staff parking will be subject to a reduced parking cost. I consider that this provides an additional incentive for staff to utilise the designated staff parking areas while reducing competition between staff and customers for spaces located in the most convenient areas of the Centre.

- 8.8.5. I therefore consider that the proposed staff parking strategy is an important component of the overall parking-management approach and helps to offset, in practical terms, some of the effects arising from the reduction in the overall parking quantum.

8.8.6. Accessible, Parent and Child and Age-Friendly Parking

I have also had particular regard to the potential implications of the proposed reduction in parking for persons with mobility difficulties, families with young children and older members of the public. I note that the proposal does not simply reduce the overall parking stock but provides a significant enhancement in the quality, location and accessibility of designated parking spaces. The number of accessible parking spaces will increase by 22 spaces, providing 113 accessible spaces in total. These spaces will provide a 1.2 metre clear space to either side and to the rear and will be located within the car parks in close proximity to the shopping centre entrances. The existing provision of 113 accessible spaces, which do not currently meet the applicable dimensional standards, will also be upgraded as part of the proposed works. Accordingly, the proposal provides both an increase in the number of accessible spaces and an improvement in the standard of the existing accessible spaces.

The proposal also provides a significant increase in parent and child parking spaces, with the number increasing by 58 spaces to a total of 74 spaces. These spaces will have enlarged dimensions and will be located in close proximity to the shopping centre entrances. I consider that this represents a material improvement for families with young children and provides more convenient and safer access to the Centre.

8.8.7. In addition to accessible and parent and child parking, the proposal provides 36 age-friendly parking locations. These are standard-sized parking spaces but are specifically located closer to pedestrian access points to facilitate easier access for older members of the public. I consider that these measures are particularly relevant when considering the appellants' concerns regarding social inclusion. While the overall number of parking spaces is reduced, the proposal provides a greater level of targeted and appropriately located parking for groups who may have a greater reliance on convenient vehicular access.

8.8.8. Parking Provision for Other Uses within the Centre

I have also considered the concern that the reduction in parking could adversely affect persons attending non-retail uses, including the public library and civic offices . I note that the proposal does not result in all parking within the wider Centre becoming subject to the same level of parking control. In particular, 12 accessible

parking bays located outside the public library and Council offices, directly opposite the Blue Mall entrance to the shopping centre, are not impacted by the proposed parking controls. I also note that the Millennium Park has its own existing car parking management arrangements. Accordingly, there remains a level of parking provision which is available in connection with other uses within the wider Blanchardstown area and which is not subject to the proposed controlled parking regime. I consider this to be relevant in assessing whether the proposal would disproportionately affect users of non-retail facilities.

I consider that the proposed reduction in parking provision is consistent with the broader policy direction of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029, which does not seek to maximise car parking provision irrespective of demand but instead supports the use of parking management as a means of encouraging more sustainable travel patterns. In particular, Policy CMP3 – Integrated Land-Use and Transport Approach seeks an integrated approach to land use and transportation aimed at minimising travel demand and prioritising sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport.

Policy CMP17 – Behavioural Change Initiatives supports measures intended to achieve behavioural change and modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport. I consider that the introduction of controlled parking, in combination with the proposed active travel improvements and Mobility Management Plan, is consistent with this objective by reducing the extent to which unrestricted and free parking encourages reliance on the private car. I have also had regard to Policy CMP25 – Car Parking Management, which supports a balanced approach to the provision of car parking, with the objective of using parking as a demand-management measure to promote a transition towards more sustainable forms of transportation while meeting the needs of businesses and communities.

- 8.8.9. I consider that the proposed development represents the type of balanced approach envisaged by Policy CMP25. It does not seek to eliminate car parking or prevent access by car. Rather, it provides for a reduced but substantial parking stock, combined with a managed system designed to make more efficient use of the spaces available. The proposal should also be considered alongside the wider sustainable movement measures proposed for the Centre, including the bicycle hub, enhanced pedestrian and cycle connections, improved pedestrian facilities within the

car parks and enhanced permeability These measures provide alternative means of accessing the Centre and support the policy objective of reducing dependency on the private car.

On balance, therefore, I consider that the reduction in the overall parking quantum is adequately justified and represents a reasonable and proportionate component of the proposed parking-management strategy. The proposal retains a substantial level of parking provision while seeking to improve its efficiency, accessibility and distribution and, at the same time, encouraging a greater use of sustainable modes of transport. Having regard to the substantial parking provision that will remain, the proposed controlled parking system, VMS technology, dedicated staff parking provision, enhanced accessible, parent and child and age-friendly parking, the continued availability of parking for other uses within the Centre and the wider sustainable transport measures proposed, I am satisfied that the reduction from 5,444 to 4,788 parking spaces would not result in an unacceptable impact on the functioning of Blanchardstown Town Centre, social inclusion or the amenities of users of the Centre. I therefore consider the proposed reduction in parking provision to be acceptable and consistent with the Fingal County Development Plan 2023–2029, the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022–2042 and the Climate Action Plan 2025. I do not consider that the reduction in parking spaces constitutes a reason to refuse permission.

8.9. Viability of Blanchardstown Shopping Centre

- 8.9.1. The appellants also raise concerns regarding the absence of a Retail Impact Assessment and a retail health check and contend that the proposal does not adequately assess the potential implications of the proposed parking changes for the vitality and viability of the Major Town Centre. Reference is made to Objectives EEO91 and EEO92 of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029 and to Annex 2 of the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012. Concerns are also raised regarding the absence of details concerning the proposed pricing structure and operational arrangements for the barrier-controlled parking facilities.
- 8.9.2. I note that the proposal does not provide any additional retail floorspace or alter the existing retail offer of Blanchardstown Town Centre. The principal purpose of the development is the reconfiguration and management of the existing car parking and

movement arrangements, together with associated pedestrian, cycling, public realm and mobility improvements.

Blanchardstown is identified as a Level 2 Major Town Centre within the Fingal retail hierarchy and represents one of the principal retail and employment locations within the County. This is consistent with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, which also identifies Blanchardstown as a Level 2 Major Town Centre, with Dublin City Centre being the only Level 1 centre within the regional retail hierarchy. Policy EEP8 – Promoting Major Urban Centres, which seeks to support economic growth within Fingal through strengthening and promoting the strategic importance of the major urban centres, including Blanchardstown. I have also had regard to Objective EEO91 – Level 2 Centres, which seeks to develop and promote Swords and Blanchardstown as sustainable, vibrant and prosperous Major Town Centres operating at the highest retail level within the Fingal retail hierarchy and to further strengthen, improve and diversify their retailing performance within a regional context. I do not consider that these policies require the retention of unrestricted or free car parking as a prerequisite for maintaining the vitality and viability of Blanchardstown Town Centre. Rather, the objectives seek to ensure that Blanchardstown continues to function as a sustainable, vibrant and prosperous Major Town Centre and that its retail function is strengthened and enhanced. In this regard, I consider that the proposed development is consistent with the overall intent of EEP8, EEO91 and EEO92. The proposal seeks to improve the operation of the existing Centre through more effective management of the existing parking resource, improved pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, improved public realm and measures intended to encourage modal shift. The introduction of controlled parking is therefore not, in itself, inconsistent with the Development Plan objectives for Blanchardstown. I consider the proposal seeks to support the longer-term sustainable functioning of the Centre by managing private car demand while improving the choice and quality of alternative means of accessing the Centre.

- 8.9.3. Section 4.9 of the Retail Planning Guidelines provides that the threshold at which a Retail Impact Assessment is required is to be determined in the context of the development plan policies and objectives for retailing and may be raised by the planning authority during pre-application discussions or in the course of determining

the planning application. This is also reflected in Objective DMS095 of the Fingal Development Plan, which requires major retail proposals exceeding 1,000 sq.m to provide a detailed Retail Impact Assessment, Transport Impact Assessment and Appropriate Assessment screening, as appropriate.

- 8.9.4. In this instance, the proposal does not involve the provision of additional retail floorspace. I therefore do not consider that a Retail Impact Assessment is required in respect of the proposed development. I am also satisfied that the absence of a retail health check does not render the proposal unacceptable, having regard to the nature and scale of the development and the fact that the existing retail floorspace and retail offer of the Centre are not being materially altered.

I consider that the Retail Planning Guidelines 2012 do not treat car parking as an objective requiring the maximum possible quantum of parking to be provided. Annex 2 recognises accessibility as encompassing the ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including the quality, quantity and type of car parking, the frequency and quality of public transport, the range of customer origins served and the quality of provision for pedestrians and cyclists.

Annex 2 also recognises that, in certain circumstances, car parking surveys should be considered, as circulation and car parking management strategies can play a proactive role in contributing to the vitality of a town centre. The proposal therefore addresses accessibility in the broader sense contemplated by the Retail Planning Guidelines, rather than considering accessibility solely in terms of the number of free car parking spaces available.

- 8.9.5. I acknowledge the appellants concern that the introduction of parking charges could discourage some customers from travelling to the Centre and potentially affect the vitality and viability of the retail offer. However, I do not consider that the evidence before me demonstrates that the proposed introduction of controlled parking would result in an unacceptable impact on the vitality or viability of Blanchardstown Town Centre. The proposal retains a substantial parking resource, with 4,788 spaces remaining, and introduces measures intended to improve the efficiency of this parking stock.
- 8.9.6. On balance, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not undermine the vitality or viability of Blanchardstown Town Centre. I acknowledge that the proposal

will introduce controlled parking and will result in a reduction in the overall number of parking spaces. However, I consider that the applicant has demonstrated that this will be accompanied by a more efficient use of the remaining parking stock and significant improvements to the quality and accessibility of parking and the wider movement network. The proposal is consistent with the policy direction of the Fingal Development Plan 2023–2029, including Policy EEP8, Objectives EEO91 and EEO92, Policies CMP3, CMP17 and CMP25 and Section 14.17.7, which collectively support the sustainable development of Blanchardstown as a Major Town Centre while promoting integrated transport, behavioural change, modal shift and appropriate parking management.

8.9.7. I am also satisfied that the proposal is consistent with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012. In particular, the Guidelines recognise that accessibility to a retail centre comprises access by a choice of transport modes and that parking and circulation management strategies can play a proactive role in supporting the vitality of a town centre. The submitted Traffic and Transport Assessment incorporates car parking surveys and assesses the proposed parking-management arrangements. The proposal further improves accessibility through enhanced pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, additional cycle parking, improved accessible parking, parent and child spaces and age-friendly spaces. I am satisfied that the proposed development will support rather than undermine the sustainable functioning of the Centre in terms of vitality and viability.

8.10. **Other Matters**

8.10.1. **Post Compliance Conditions**

8.10.2. A number of appellants raise concerns that the proposed development is reliant on matters being addressed through post-compliance conditions. It is contended that such an approach is unlawful and that the use of post-compliance conditions indicates that the Planning Authority did not have sufficient information before it when making its decision. Specific reference is made to the proposed lighting arrangements, with the appellants suggesting that the relevant condition effectively defers a decision in respect of environmental assessment. Reference is also made to the Parks Department requirement for a “revised landscape proposal” and the Roads Department requirements for a “revised site layout” and Road Safety Audits.

It is argued that these requirements demonstrate that the application was deficient at the time of assessment.

- 8.10.3. In general, I do not agree with the assertions made by the appellants in this regard. I do not consider the information sought by the planning authority to be fundamental to the assessment of the development. I consider the conditions to be matters of detail which can reasonably be addressed by way of a condition of permission. The use of conditions requiring the submission of further details for the written agreement of the Planning Authority is an established practice within the planning system to ensure that a permitted development is constructed and implemented to the required standards.
- 8.10.4. In this regard, I note Condition No. 7, which seeks the submission of details of the proposed lighting scheme for the written agreement of the Planning Authority. I consider this to be a reasonable and appropriate requirement in the context of the proposed development. The condition does not, in my view, defer the fundamental assessment of the development. Rather, it seeks to ensure that the detailed design and installation of lighting is undertaken in accordance with the relevant requirements and standards of Fingal County Council and that sufficient detail is provided to facilitate its proper implementation. I also do not consider that the requirement for further detail in respect of landscaping, road layout or other elements of the development necessarily indicates that the application could not be assessed. Such conditions can be used to secure appropriate detailed design and implementation measures where the principle, location, overall layout and impacts of the development have been adequately assessed as part of the application and appeal process.
- 8.10.5. Having regard to the information submitted with the application, including the drawings, supporting technical documentation and assessments, I am satisfied that sufficient information was available to allow the Planning Authority, and now the Commission, to assess the planning merits and potential impacts of the proposed development. I consider that the matters identified by the appellants are matters of detailed implementation rather than matters which fundamentally prevent an assessment of the development.

8.10.6. Accordingly, while I acknowledge the appellants concerns regarding post-compliance conditions, I do not consider that the use of such conditions in this instance demonstrates that the application was inadequately assessed or that there was insufficient information available to make a reasoned planning decision. I therefore do not consider post-compliance conditions to constitute a substantive issue which would warrant a refusal of permission in this instance.

8.10.7. Permitted LRD Schemes on White Car Park

8.10.8. I note the submission from Friends of the Earth which raises concerns regarding the existing permitted Large Residential Development (LRD) schemes affecting the White Car Park and other lands within Blanchardstown Town Centre. The observer considers that the applicant should be compelled to carry out and complete the residential development permitted under the relevant LRD permissions. It is contended that the delay in delivering the permitted housing contributes to the current housing crisis and undermines national objectives to increase housing supply.

8.10.9. The observer further recommends that areas subject to the permitted residential schemes should be excluded from the current application and that the use most consistent with proper planning and sustainable development at these locations would be residential development rather than continued or reconfigured car parking. It is also recommended that the Yellow Car Park be reserved for housing and excluded from the current application.

Having regard to the planning history of the site and, in particular, the permitted LRD schemes referred to by the observer, including ABP-315079-23 and ABP-315079-23, which provide for the construction of approximately 1,319 residential units on lands incorporating the White Car Park, Library Car Park and Blue Car Park. I acknowledge that the delivery of the permitted residential development at Blanchardstown Town Centre would represent a welcome intervention in terms of housing provision and the consolidation of residential development within an established Major Town Centre. However, I consider that the planning history of the site must be distinguished from the assessment of the current application before the Commission.

Each planning application is required to be assessed on its own individual merits having regard to the development plan, relevant national and regional policy, the site circumstances and the particulars of the proposal before the decision-maker. The existence of a previous permission does not, in itself, determine the outcome of a subsequent planning application relating to the same or adjoining lands.

8.10.10. I also note that there is no requirement or legal obligation on a applicant to implement a permission which has been granted. While a planning permission establishes a lawful entitlement to carry out the permitted development, the Commission has no general mechanism to compel an applicant or landowner to proceed with one particular permitted development type where that permission has not been implemented.

8.10.11. In this regard, I do not consider that the Commission can reasonably require the applicant, as part of the determination of this application, to construct the residential units permitted under the previous LRD permissions, nor do I consider that the existence of those permissions provides a basis to exclude the relevant car parking areas from the current application.

8.10.12. I have also considered the suggestion that the White, Library, Blue and Yellow Car Parks should be excluded from the current proposal in order to facilitate the future delivery of residential development. I do not agree that such an approach would be appropriate in the circumstances of this application. The current proposal seeks to provide an integrated car parking and movement-management strategy across Blanchardstown Town Centre, including controlled parking, parking barriers, VMS signage, reconfiguration of existing car parks and improvements to pedestrian and cycling facilities. The different car parks form part of an interconnected system and are not isolated parking interventions. Excluding individual car parks or elements of the proposed controlled parking infrastructure would, in my view, undermine the overall objective and operation of the scheme. In particular, the proposed system is intended to manage the distribution of vehicles across the available parking stock, direct motorists towards available spaces, reduce unnecessary circulation and improve the overall efficiency of the parking network. The associated pedestrian and cycle improvements also rely on the wider integrated approach to movement through the Centre.

The applicant's stated intention is that the proposal will improve permeability and sustainable movement through the Centre and integrate with existing public transport services and future transport improvements, including the potential BusConnects interventions. Accordingly, while I acknowledge the planning history of the site and the concerns raised regarding the delivery of the previously permitted residential development, I consider that these matters do not provide a basis for refusing or materially restricting the current application. The previous permissions remain separate planning permissions and their implementation is a matter for the relevant applicant/landowner.

- 8.10.13. Having regard to the foregoing, I consider it appropriate that the current application be assessed in its totality, including the proposed controlled parking arrangements, barriers, VMS infrastructure, car park reconfiguration and associated pedestrian and cycling improvements. I do not consider that the exclusion of individual car parks or elements of the controlled parking system would be appropriate, as this would undermine the integrated nature and functionality of the proposed development.

I therefore do not consider the existence of the permitted LRD schemes, or the concerns regarding their implementation, to constitute a substantive reason to refuse permission for the current proposal or to exclude individual elements of the proposed development.

9.0 AA Screening

- 9.1. I have considered the proposed installation of controlled parking (barriers & VMS signage, landscaping and associated site works in light of the requirements S177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. The subject site is located in a heavily modified brownfield site well-serviced urban settlement. The nearest European Site South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA is 11.3km west of the site
- 9.2. The proposed development comprises the installation of parking barriers and VMS signage with associated landscaping to existing car parking facilities within existing Town Shopping Centre. The site is already extensively modified. The applicant has

submitted an Appropriate Assessment Screening report and Ecological Impact Assessment Report as part of the appeal.

Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because it could not have any effect on a European Site. The reason for this conclusion is as follows:

- The limited scale and nature of works
- The location of the site within an established, serviced urban environment
- Lack of connections to nearest European sites

I conclude, on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development would not have a likely significant effect on any European Site either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Likely significant effects are excluded and therefore Appropriate Assessment (under Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000) is not required.

10.0 Water Framework Directive

10.1. I have assessed the proposed development, on an established Twon Centre retail site and have considered the objectives as set out in Article 4 of the Water Framework Directive which seek to protect and, where necessary, restore surface and ground water waterbodies in order to reach good status (meaning both good chemical and good ecological status), and to prevent deterioration. Having considered the nature, scale and location of the project, I am satisfied that it can be eliminated from further assessment because there is no conceivable risk to any surface and/or groundwater water bodies either qualitatively or quantitatively. No water deterioration concerns were raised in the planning application or appeal.

10.2. I conclude that on the basis of objective information, that the proposed development will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body (rivers, lakes, groundwaters, transitional and coastal) either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any water body in reaching its WFD objectives and consequently can be excluded from further assessment.

11.0 Recommendation

Having regard to the above, I recommend that permission be GRANTED for the proposed development, subject to conditions, for the reasons and considerations set out below.

12.0 Reasons and Considerations

It is considered that the proposed installation of controlled parking (barriers & VMS signage), landscaping and associated site works is in accordance with Fingal County Development Plan 2023 -2029 policies and objectives. The proposal is located within an MC – Major Town Centre where the zoning vision expressly seeks to minimise the impact of private car-based traffic. The proposal is consistent with Policy CMP3 – Integrated Land Use, Objective CMO7 - Integration of Active Travel and Public Transport, Policy CMP17 Behavioural Change and Modal Shift Policy and Policy CMP25 – Car parking Management, together with the car parking management provisions of Section 6.5.8 and Objective DMSO121. The proposal as set out will not exacerbate existing traffic conditions on site, or raise concerns regarding the residential and visual amenities of the area. It is considered the controlled parking measures will not detract from the vitality or viability of Blanchardstown Shopping Centre. The proposal seeks to implement a balanced approach to the provision of car parking, using parking as a demand-management measure to promote a transition towards more sustainable forms of transportation, while meeting the needs of businesses and communities. It is considered that the development would not seriously, or disproportionately, injure the amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity, or detract to an undue degree from the visual amenities of the area and would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

13.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application received by the planning authority on the 10th day of December 2025, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. This permission relates solely to that detailed in the statutory public notices and does not refer to any other aspects of the development that may be shown in the lodged plans.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

3. The trees shown for retention on the submitted Impact Assessment & Tree Protection Drawings shall be protected in accordance with the Arboricultural Assessment and Impact Report. Prior to the commencement of works on site, a meeting shall be held between the site arborist and the Parks and Green Infrastructure Division to inspect the tree protection measures and agree on any further measures which shall be required.

Reason: To ensure the preservation of amenity & biodiversity.

4. Prior to the commencement of works on site a revised landscape plan shall be submitted and agreed with Parks and Green Infrastructure Division. This plan shall include the following:

- Precise location of each constructed integrated tree pit. Provision of constructed tree pits is required where trees are planted in hard surfaces or in grass verges less than 1.2 meters wide between kerbs.

- Full details of tree and shrub planting. including botanical names and sizes.
- Labeling of grass verge widths where tree planting is proposed.
- A long- and short-term management plan for retained and new planting.
- Details of compensation tree planting to mitigate the significant tree loss resulting from the proposed development.

Reason: To ensure the provision of amenity afforded by appropriate landscape design.

5. The following requirements shall be complied with in full:
- (a) The timeline for the introduction of the parking management system and active travel routes and paid parking becoming operational shall be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to construction or otherwise shall be in place when the Busconnects project becomes operational.
 - (b) The applicant shall liaise with the NTA and the Planning Authority prior to any work being carried out to ensure the coordination of future development at this location and the future Bus Connects Project to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.
 - (c) The proposed design and construction of the active travel pedestrian and cycle routes and where the routes cross access and egress points within the development shall be re-assessed and junction tightening and pedestrian and cycle priority shall be provided in accordance with the Cycle Design Manual and the details shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of the development
 - (d) The fixed parts of the proposed signs shall be designed in accordance with the requirements for car park signs Chapter 4 of the Traffic Signs Manual current edition and the Variable Message
 - (e) Road Safety Audits shall be carried out as part of the proposed development at all of the relevant stages as outlined in current edition Of Transportation Infrastructure Ireland guidelines GE- STY-1027. Any required amendments to the proposal resulting from the road safety audits shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to construction.

- (f) A Mobility Management Plan shall be prepared for the Blanchardstown Centre Mobility Enhancement Project and the details agreed with the Planning Authority. A Mobility Management Plan/Travel Plan/ shall be submitted for approval in writing with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development. The Mobility Management Plan shall be fully adhered to.
- (g) A detailed Construction Management Plan and Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted for the approval of the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development.

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

- 6. Prior to commencement of development, proposals for external lighting to serve the developmental shall be submitted for the written agreement of the planning Authority and provided in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: In the interest of amenity, public safety and the sustainable development of the area.

- 7. The following requirements shall be complied with in full:
 - (a) All necessary measures shall be taken by the contractor to prevent the spillage or deposit of clay, rubble or other debris on adjoining roads during the course of the works. In the event of any such spillage or deposit, immediate steps shall be taken to remove the material from the road surface at the applicant/developers own expense.
 - (b) The applicant/developer shall be responsible for the full cost of repair in respect of any damage caused to the adjoining public road arising from the construction work and shall either make good any damage to the satisfaction of Fingal County Council or pay the Council the cost of making good any such damage upon issue of such a requirement by the Council.

Reason : To protect the amenities of the area.

8. The following requirements shall be complied with in full:

No construction activities likely to result in exceedance of the limits specified in BS5228- 1 :2009+A1 :2014 Code of Practice for Noise Vibration Control on Construction and Open Sites at the nearest sensitive receptors shall be carried out unless prior written approval has been received from Fingal County Council.

The applicant/developer shall comply with any future requirement of the Planning Authority in relation to any nuisance issues that may arise but only become apparent when construction has commenced. The construction activity hours may be reviewed at any time by the Planning Authority and adjustments shall be made by the developer. Reason: In the interest of public health and in the interest of amenity.

9. Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the planning authority a cash deposit, a bond of an insurance company, or such other security as may be acceptable to the planning authority, to ensure that the trees and hedgerows proposed for protection in the submitted documents are protected and maintained in good condition throughout the course of the development. The form and amount of the security shall be as agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Coimisiún Pleanála for determination. Reason: To ensure satisfactory reinstatement of the site.

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

Darragh Ryan

Planning Inspector

31st August 2026

Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	500444- DF- 25
Proposed Development Summary	installation of controlled parking (barriers & VMS signage, landscaping and associated site works
Development Address	Blanchardstown Town Centre, Coolmine, Dublin 15.
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?	☒ Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	☐ No, No further action required.
(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)	
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	State the Class here

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	State the Class and state the relevant threshold
☒ 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)	Section 10 (b) iv and 10 (b) iii Part 2 of Schedule 5 2ha

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)

Inspector: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix 2: Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	500444- DF-25
Proposed Development Summary	installation of controlled parking (barriers & VMS signage, landscaping and associated site works
Development Address	Blanchardstown Town Centre, Coolmine, Dublin 15.
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 (In particular, the size, design, cumulation with existing/ proposed development, nature of demolition works, use of natural resources, production of waste, pollution and nuisance, risk of accidents/disasters and to human health).	Briefly comment on the key characteristics of the development, having regard to the criteria listed. The development has a modest footprint, comes forward as a standalone project, does not require demolition works, does not require the use of substantial natural resources, or give rise to significant risk of pollution or nuisance. The development, by virtue of its type, does not pose a risk of major accident and/or disaster, or is vulnerable to climate change. It presents no risks to human health.
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to	Briefly comment on the location of the development, having regard to the criteria listed

be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of natural resources, absorption capacity of natural environment e.g. wetland, coastal zones, nature reserves, European sites, densely populated areas, landscapes, sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance).	The development is in a highly modified urban area which is made up of tarred surfaces and carparking. The development is removed from sensitive natural habitats, centres of population and designated sites and landscapes of identified significance in the County Development Plan.
Types and characteristics of potential impacts (Likely significant effects on environmental parameters, magnitude and spatial extent, nature of impact, transboundary, intensity and complexity, duration, cumulative effects and opportunities for mitigation).	Having regard to the characteristics of the development and the sensitivity of its location, consider the potential for SIGNIFICANT effects, not just effects. Having regard to the modest nature of the proposed development, its location removed from sensitive habitats/features, likely limited magnitude and spatial extent of effects, and absence of in combination effects, there is no potential for significant effects on the environmental factors listed in section 171A of the Act.
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: _____

(only where Schedule 7A information or EIAR required)

