



## Inspector's Report

**PL-500900-GY-26**

<b>Development</b>	To erect 3 no. 12 meters high lighting columns at existing ball wall and astro turf area and all ancillary works.
<b>Location</b>	Kilcornan, Clarinbridge, Co. Galway
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Galway County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	25337
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Clarinbridge GAA Club
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	Grant Permission + Conditions
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third Party Normal Planning Appeal
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Residents of Kilcornan
<b>Observer(s)</b>	None
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> May 2026
<b>Inspector</b>	Ciara McGuinness

## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1. This report relates to a third-party appeal against Galway County Council's decision to grant permission for the erection of 3 no. 12 meters high lighting columns at the existing ball wall and astro turf area at Clarinbridge GAA club.

1.2. A specialist report prepared by An Coimisiún Pleanála's Ecologist is appended to this report (Appendix 3).

## **2.0 Site Location and Description**

2.1. The existing site is located on the grounds of Clarinbridge GAA club, east of the village of Clarinbridge Co Galway. The site contains a recently constructed wall ball/astro turf area permitted under ABP-319170-21(PA Reg Ref 23/471). The development site also contains split level club house, a smaller outbuilding with toilet and changing facilities, and a car parking area. The site has a stated area of 0.92ha.

2.2. The site is bounded to the west by Kilcornan housing estate, to the southeast by a graveyard, to the north by detached dwelling houses and to the east by the wider GAA grounds and by agricultural land further east. The wider GAA grounds contains 3 no. full size grass pitches.

## **3.0 Proposed Development**

3.1. The proposal is for the erection of 3 no. 12m high lighting columns at the existing ball wall/astro turf area. The columns are proposed to be located on the east side of the proposed astro turf area.

3.2. A section of 2.5m solid fencing is also proposed to the north of the ball wall on the western boundary adjoining the recently constructed wastewater treatment system.

## **4.0 Planning Authority Decision**

### **4.1. Decision**

The Planning Authority issued notification of a decision to grant permission subject to 9 no. conditions. The conditions are summarised as follows;

**Condition 2** – The permission relates solely to that as advertised under the public notices.

**Condition 3** – No advertisements shall be displayed or erected within the curtilage of the site unless authorised by a further grant of permission.

**Condition 4** – All surface water generated by the development shall be disposed of within the site.

**Condition 5** – All construction operations shall be carried out in a manner such that air emissions, dust, odour, litter or other waste/debris do not result in significant impairment of, or significant interference with, amenities and environment beyond the site boundary.

**Condition 6** – Construction hours on the site shall be limited to 0800-1800 Monday to Friday and 0900-1700 hours on Saturday. No works shall take place on Sundays, bank holidays or public holidays.

**Condition 7** – Floodlights shall only be used in conjunction with the operating hours of the astro pitch and shall not extend beyond 22.00hrs Mon-Sat and 21:00 Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays in accordance with the details submitted to the Planning Authority.

**Condition 8** - Floodlighting shall be cowled and directed away from the public roadway and adjacent properties/structures.

**Condition 9** - All mitigation measures outlined in the Bat Report shall be implemented in full.

## **4.2. Planning Authority Reports**

### **4.2.1. Planning Reports**

The Planners Report (dated 06/02/26) notes the content of the submitted Bat Survey which outlines that the site is being utilised by bats for feeding and commuting purposes. Mitigation measures have been proposed to protect commuting routes by the creation of a dark corridor on the west boundary of the site at the end of the main pitch. Lighting has also been designed so as to prevent impacting on key bat features. The report concludes that after mitigation no significant long term residual impacts will occur to roosting and commuting bats. The applicant has stated that all

the work involved in constructing the 3 no. new lights will be in compliance with the Bat Survey Report and the Signify Lighting Report. Having regard to the existing pitches on site, and the planning history associated with the site, it is considered that in principle the proposed development is feasible at this location.

#### 4.2.2. Other Technical Reports

None.

#### 4.3. Prescribed Bodies

None.

#### 4.4. Third Party Observations

There are 6 third party submissions on file. The issues raised reflect the grounds of appeal and are dealt with in more detail in Section 8 below. The key issues raised in the submissions include;

- Impact on residential amenity from light pollution
- Deficiencies in the lighting assessment and strategy
- Negative Visual Impact
- Impact on bat species
- Intensification of use

### 5.0 Planning History

**PA Reg Ref 23/471 ABP-319170-21** Granted by GCC & Split Decision by An Bord Pleanála. To demolish existing Ball Wall, construct new longer ball wall, construct an approx. 1400sqm Astro Turf playing Area cum appropriate lighting, a new wastewater treatment system and new 2.4 meter high wire fence around the new Astro Turf playing Area plus all ancillary services. Gross floor space of proposed works: 1475 sqm.

Permission was refused for the flooding lighting element of the proposed development for the following reason;

*“The installation of the proposed floodlighting would not be considered acceptable pending the outcome of a bat survey to determine the impact the proposed*

*floodlighting may have on local bat populations. In this regard it is considered the proposal would not be in accordance with Policy Objective NHB 09 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022 - 2028 regarding the Protection of Bats and Bats Habitats. The proposed lighting columns would conflict with Policy Objective NHB 9 of the development plan and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.”*

**PA Reg Ref 22/684** – Permission granted to build a standalone two storey building to accommodate two changing rooms cum showers at ground floor and a gymnasium at first floor complete with all ancillary services on their lands. Gross floor space of proposed works 306 sqm.

**PA reg ref- 20/106** – Permission granted to Clarinbridge GAA to build a 528sqm, two storey extension to the existing club house.

## 6.0 Policy Context

### 6.1. Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028

#### **Chapter 7 – Infrastructure, utilities and Environmental Protection.**

**LP 1 Lighting Schemes** - To require that all developments shall ensure lighting schemes are designed so that excessive light spillage is minimised to ensure light pollution in the surrounding environment including residential amenity, wildlife and near public roads is limited. Such lighting schemes shall be submitted and agreed with the Planning Authority.

#### **Chapter 10: Natural Heritage, Biodiversity and Green/Blue Infrastructure**

**NHB 2 European Sites and Appropriate Assessment** - To implement Article 6 of the Habitats Directive and to ensure that Appropriate Assessment is carried out in relation to works, plans and projects likely to impact on European sites (SACs and SPAs), whether directly or indirectly or in combination with any other plan(s) or project(s). All assessments must be in compliance with the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011. All such projects and plans will also be required to comply with statutory Environmental Impact Assessment requirements where relevant.

**NHB 5 Ecological Connectivity and Corridors** - Support the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecological connectivity in non-designated sites, including woodlands, trees, hedgerows, semi-natural grasslands, rivers, streams, natural springs, wetlands, stonewalls, geological and geo-morphological systems, other landscape features and associated wildlife areas where these form part of the ecological network and/or may be considered as ecological corridors in the context of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.

**NHB 9 Protection of Bats and Bats Habitats** - Seek to protect bats and their roosts, their feeding areas, flight paths and commuting routes. Ensure that development proposals in areas which are potentially important for bats, including areas of woodland, linear features such as hedgerows, stonewalls, watercourses and associated riparian vegetation which may provide migratory/foraging uses shall be subject to suitable assessment for potential impacts on bats. This will include an assessment of the cumulative loss of habitat or the impact on bat populations and activity in the area and may include a specific bat survey. Assessments shall be carried out by a suitably qualified professional and where development is likely to result in significant adverse effects on bat populations or activity in the area, development will be prohibited or require mitigation and/or compensatory measures, as appropriate. The impact of lighting on bats and their roosts and the lighting up of objects of cultural heritage must be adequately assessed in relation to new developments and the upgrading of existing lighting systems.

## **Chapter 11 – Community development and Social Infrastructure**

**SRA 1 Sport, Amenity and Recreation** - Support local sports groups and community groups in the development, improvement and expansion of authorised facilities for sporting and recreational needs of all sectors and ages through the reservation of suitable land where available and appropriate.

### **6.2. Natural Heritage Designations**

Inner Galway Bay SPA – c.400m west of the site

Galway Bay Complex SAC – c.400m west of the site

## 7.0 EIA Screening

The proposed development is not a class for the purposes of EIA as per the classes of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (or Part V of the 1994 Roads).

## 8.0 The Appeal

### 8.1. Grounds of Appeal

The appeal is a third-party appeal by residents of Kilcornan. The grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows;

#### **Ground 1 – Failure to address An Bord Pleanála’s (ABP) refusal**

The grant of permission did not explain why ABP’s refusal is no longer relevant, did not demonstrate compliance with NHB 9, did not address the ecological findings, and did not require independent ecological review.

#### **Ground 2 – independent expert ecologist**

The appellants have submitted an independent expert ecological assessment of the proposed floodlighting at Clarinbridge GAA. Key findings include;

- **No barrier on the northern boundary** – The most ecologically sensitive boundary, directly facing the bat habitat woodland, has no physical barrier.
- **Light spill exceeds published thresholds** – Light levels of 5-25 lux reach important Bat Habitats, exceeding the BCT/ILP GN 08/23 threshold for complete darkness ( $\leq 0.2$ lux) by up to 125 times.
- **Colour temperature non-compliant** – The proposed luminaires (4000-5500K) exceed the maximum recommended by all relevant guidance ( $\leq 2700$ K, BCT/ILP GN 08/23)
- **Unenforceable mitigation** - The proposed treeline is located outside of red line boundary.
- **No vertical illuminance modelling provided.**
- **No modelling above wall ball height** – Light levels above 4.75m not assessed

- **No Appropriate Assessment screening** - Despite presence of Annex II species

### **Ground 3 – Failure to consider third party submissions**

The Planner's report failed to summarise the content of the submissions, did not address the issues raised and did not demonstrate that the issues were considered as part of the assessment.

### **Ground 4 – Residential Amenity**

The Planner's report contains no assessment of light spill into gardens and homes, glare, visual dominance of 12cm columns, noise from extended hours, cumulative impact with lights from main pitch, proximity and impact on east facing gardens.

### **Ground 5 – Lighting Design Deficiencies**

In addition to above listed deficiencies by the ecologist, the proposed development allows 1-8 Lux to spill westward beyond the 2.5m fence toward the residential properties at No's 24-25 Kilcornan. The lighting report submitted does not assess cumulative lighting impacts from the wider GAA grounds.

### **Ground 6 – Policy Conflicts**

The proposal conflicts with NHB 9 Protection of Bats and Bat Habitats, NHB 5 Ecological Connectivity, NHB 2 Appropriate Assessment and DM Standards Residential Amenity and Lighting.

### **Ground 7 – Misapplication of ABP conditions**

An Bord Pleanála included a condition which limited hours of the operation of the astro turf to between 0900 and 2100 hours Mondays to Sundays including bank holidays. The Planning Authority have permitted the floodlighting to operate until 2200 hours Monday - Saturday. This is a direct contradiction of ABP's condition and a material worsening of residential impact.

### **Ground 8 – Disconnect between bat survey and lighting plan**

The ecological survey and lighting design were prepared independently and do not align with one another.

The applicants bat report proposed that lighting would only operate from September to April inclusive. It is noted that April and September fall within the active period for lesser horseshoe and other species on the site. The bat survey also acknowledged that 7.2% of the night after emergence would be lit. No conditions were attached limiting lighting during these periods.

### **Ground 9 – Procedural non-compliance, pre-emptive works, and enforcement failures.**

- Condition 8 of ABP-319170-21 which required the submission of a comprehensive landscape plan has not been complied with.
- Conduits and associated infrastructure for the proposed columns have already been installed.
- A preplanning meeting was attended by a TD with raised legitimate concerns regarding procedural fairness.
- A section of the old ball wall was not demolished and remains in use and has not been assessed.
- The applicant has not disclosed long term expansion plans.
- The procedural and compliance issues outlined undermine the reliability of the applicants submission and represents a failure of the planning authority to properly assess the planning application.

### **8.2. Applicant Response in the case of a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Appeal**

The applicant's response includes a cover letter from John Diskin and Associates, a Report with Light Modelling from Signify (Light Consultants) and a response from Eire Ecology.

The letter from John Diskin can be summarised as follows;

- The lesser horseshoe bat hibernates for a large part of the time when the proposed lights may be required.
- The standard for the acceptable level of obtrusive light is the "ILP Guidance Notes for Obtrusive Light GN01". The document outlines 5 environmental zone categories depending on surroundings and lighting environment. The two zones applicable to the proposed development site are E2 (rural) and E3

(suburban). The maximum acceptable level of obtrusive lighting in category E3 is 10lux and in category E2 is 5lux. Clarinbridge GAA has assumed the more onerous E2 standards apply. Based on the lighting models the maximum level of obtrusive light was calculated at <5 lux to the rear of house no.25.

- The applicant refutes the claim that there is an altered ecological baseline due to the removal of vegetation. It is noted that trimming of tree branches occurred within the statutory period for such work and no tree was cut down during this exercise.

A response to the third-party appeal by the Eire Ecology can be summarised as follows;

- It is confirmed that the wall ball extends along the northern boundary of the astro turf pitch providing an effective physical barrier between the illuminated pitch and the adjacent woodland, intercepting low-angle light at bat-relevant commuting heights.
- During a detailed review of the lighting layout, it was identified that the luminaire closest to the northern boundary was originally orientated toward the northern section of the ball wall. This luminaire has been re-orientated westward, away from the northern boundary. The adjustment substantially reduces light spilling in the direction of the woodland and improves spatial containment of illumination within the pitch envelope. Updated modelling is provided which reflects the revised orientation. The model indicates that light levels at the edge of the northern woodland are below 1 lux, with rapid attenuation beyond the ball wall.
- Lesser Horseshoe bats are a clutter-adapted species that characteristically commute at low heights, frequently between 1m and 3m above ground level, closely following linear features such as hedgerows, walls and woodland edges. For this reason, best practice guidance emphasises the maintenance of dark, continuous low-level corridors, rather than reliance on a single flight height threshold. The revised lighting design and mitigation measures have specifically been developed to maintain dark conditions at these ecologically relevant heights along the western boundary.

- The proposed lighting scheme utilises luminaires with a colour temperature of 4000K, representing a reduction relative to standard sports lighting installations.
- When considered in combination, the lighting design, revised orientation, physical screening, and seasonal controls, ensure that the proposed development does not result in significant adverse effects on bat commuting behaviours or habitat connectivity, irrespective of colour temperature.
- The eastern treeline is not relied upon to mitigate lighting impacts or to maintain bat connectivity. The eastern treeline is proposed as an additional landscape and biodiversity enhancement, contributing to long term habitat structure and connectivity within the wider GAA grounds rather than as a measure to render the development acceptable.
- An updated light spill assessment has been undertaken which includes vertical illuminance modelling and dark zone grids at 0m, 1m, 2m, 4m, and 6m, all of which show very low lux levels in the northern corridor, consistent with the maintenance of a functional dark zone.
- While a standalone Ecological Constraints and Opportunities Plan was not produced, the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the site have been fully considered and embedded within the lighting design and mitigation strategy.
- The presence of Lesser Horseshoe bat at the site is acknowledged and was explicitly identified in the original bat survey. A total of six registrations were recorded across three survey periods, with the majority recorded at the northern boundary. These activity levels are low and are consistent with occasional commuting use, rather than regular foraging or roosting activity. No roosts were identified on site or in the immediate surroundings.
- The nearest SAC roost is located over 6.35km from the site, well beyond the 2.5km Core Sustenance Zone. No ecological linkages between the site and SAC designated roost have been identified.
- The presence of Annex II species alone does not trigger the requirement for Appropriate Assessment. The requirement for AA arises only where a plan or

project, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, is likely to have a significant effect on the conservation objectives of a European site.

### **8.3. Planning Authority Response**

None.

### **8.4. Observations**

None.

### **8.5. Further Responses**

None.

## **9.0 Assessment**

9.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on file, including all of the submissions received in relation to the appeal, the report/s 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 in this appeal to be considered are as follows;

- Impact on residential amenity
- Impact on bats
- Other Issues

### **9.2. Impact on residential amenity**

#### Light Spill

The appellants have expressed significant concerns regarding the potential adverse effects on residential amenity stemming from the light spill associated with the development. I note the applicant has submitted a revised Lighting Report with their response to the appeal. The revised assessment has regard to changes in the design which have included a change in angle of lighting at the most northerly luminaire, pointing the lighting from that luminaire away from the northern boundary back onto the astro surface. This has resulted in much reduced lux levels spilling outside of the ball wall. I consider that the submitted details comprehensively outline the positions,

angles and alignments of all lighting fixtures with lux levels calculated based on the luminaries employed.

The applicant refers to Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILPs) Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light. The guidance specifies 5 no. different environmental zones based on surroundings and lighting environment. The two zones that may be applicable to the subject development are E2 (rural) described as '*sparsely inhabited rural areas, village or relatively dark outer suburban locations*' and E3 (suburban) described as '*well inhabited rural and urban settlements, small town centres of suburban locations*'. The guidance notes that the maximum level of acceptable light pre-curfew (suggested as 23:00hrs) in Category E2 is 5 lux, and in Category E3 is 10 lux. Based on the submitted lighting modelling, the maximum level of obtrusive light was calculated at 4.78 lux at the side of House no. 25. The development conforms with the standards set out in the ILP Guidance Note. Furthermore, and as discussed below, the hours of operation will be limited to 21:00hrs, which is earlier than the suggested curfew time set out in the guidance.

I am satisfied that there will be no significant cumulative effect from lighting within the GAA grounds. The pitch adjoining the wall ball area does not benefit from floodlighting. The main pitch with flood lighting is removed from the subject development and is located c.100m to the southeast.

I am satisfied that the applicant has adequately addressed light spillage, and the proposed lighting design will ensure that the light spill remains within acceptable parameters and does not result in any significant or detrimental impact on the residential amenity of the surrounding property.

#### Hours of operation.

I note the discrepancy between condition 4 of the Boards Order under ABP-319170-21 which limited the operation of the astro turf to 2100 hours, and the condition attached to the grant of permission for the subject development by the Planning Authority which states that the floodlights shall only be used in conjunction with the operating hours of the astro turf and shall not extend beyond 2200hrs Mon-Sat and 2100hrs on Sundays and Bank Holidays. I recommend that a condition is attached limiting the hours of the floodlighting to 2100hrs in line with the hours of operation of the astro as required per Condition 4 of the Boards Order under ABP-319170-21.

### Visual Impact

I note that the proposed lighting columns are not significant in scale, and I consider that the extent of lighting is limited and appropriate to the wall ball/astro area. I am of the view that such features would be consistent with a field sports facility and therefore would not be out of character. I am satisfied the proposed lighting columns would be significantly screened from the adjoining residential developments by the existing hedgerow/trees and by the ball wall itself. I do not consider that the lighting columns would injure the visual amenity of the area.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not give rise to undue impacts on the residential amenities of neighbouring properties.

### **9.3. Impact on bats**

The appellant contends that the Planning Authority's grant of permission did not explain why ABP's refusal is no longer relevant and did not demonstrate compliance with Objective NHB 9 Protection of Bats and Bat Habitats. I note the previous appeal was considered in the absence of a bat report with the refusal reason noting that *"The installation of the proposed floodlighting would not be considered acceptable pending the outcome of a bat survey to determine the impact the proposed floodlighting may have on local bat populations"*. In contrast to the previous application, a bat report has now been submitted and can be used to assess the impact of the proposed development on the local bat population.

The submitted bat report notes that seven of the nine Irish bat species were found within the site across 3 no. survey periods in 2025. While no bat roosts were found, the surveys confirmed that the vegetated western and northern boundaries of the proposed development site is utilised for feeding and commuting purposes by a number of bats. Low numbers of lesser horseshoe bat were recorded during 2025 surveys, indicating that the adjoining Reddington Woods is not currently functioning as a critical commuting corridor. However, this woodland does provide potential to support landscape connectivity for lesser horseshoe bats in the wider area and it is considered that any lighting at the appeal site should be sensitively designed to avoid disturbance or fragmentation of connectivity.

I note the closest SAC designated for lesser horseshoe bat is Lough Fingall Complex SAC, which lies 3.8 km from proposed development site, with the nearest designated roost of that SAC being 6.35 km from the proposed development site. This is outside the 2.5 km core sustenance zone which defines foraging areas for lesser horseshoe bat.

The appellant considers that the Planning Authority did not address the ecological findings and did not facilitate an independent ecological review. In this regard the appellants have submitted an independent expert ecological assessment of the proposed floodlighting. The issues outlined in the independent ecologists report are summarised in Section 7 above.

In the first instance, I would note the independent ecologist's assertion that the northern boundary has no physical barrier is incorrect. I note from my site visit that the northern boundary wall has been constructed and appears to be in accordance with the terms and condition of the Board Order which required that the ball wall be a maximum height of 4.75m (condition 3) and be relocated 4.5m northwards of its current location and 2m eastwards as set out in the applicants submission (Condition 2). I note a section of 2.5m solid fencing is also proposed under the subject application to the north of the ball wall on the western boundary ensuring the continuation of a dark zone for commuting bats.

Having regard to the conflicting bat reports on file, I refer the Commission to the Specialist Report received from An Coimisiún Pleanála's Ecologist (Appendix 3) in relation to the subject appeal. This report provides expert ecological input on bats in proximity to the site specifically in relation to the issues of light spill exceedances and colour temperature of the proposed lighting. The key findings of the report are summarised as follows;

- The applicant has submitted updated lighting modelling (at 0m, 2 m, 4 m and 6 m above ground level) following changes to the design, which has included moving the most northerly luminaire close to the northern boundary and pointing the lighting from that luminaire away from the northern boundary back onto the astro surface. This has resulted in much reduced lux levels spilling outside of the ball wall. The modelling indicates that light levels will drop to below 1 lux at the northern site boundary. The ecologist considers that the

*“impacts on light sensitive bat species, particularly lesser horseshoe bat, are likely to be negligible and it is considered that the lighting design as it relates to lux levels and light spill is acceptable”.*

- In relation to the temperature of lighting, the proposed lighting has a Colour Correlated Temperature (CCT) of 4000 Kelvin (K). CCT values at the higher end of the scale means increased blue light content and therefore more impacts on light sensitive species including effects on bat behaviour such as avoidance of these areas. Best practice for bat and artificial lighting at night (BCT/ILP, 2023) recommends  $\leq 2700$  K. Dark Sky Ireland guidance (2024) recommends  $\leq 3000$  K. It is considered therefore that the proposed CCT of 4000 K exceeds best practice for lighting design to minimise impacts on bats. It is recommended that a condition is attached to ensure the use of luminaires with CCT  $\leq 3000$  K in accordance with Dark Sky Ireland guidance.

The Report concludes that *‘I am satisfied that light spill will not give rise to significant effects on light sensitive bats at the northern boundary of the site and therefore I am satisfied that significant impacts on lesser horseshoe bat and other species are unlikely at this location and the lighting design in this respect is acceptable’.*

I note that the ecologist has recommended that conditions be attached in relation to colour temperature of the lights and post-construction monitoring and I have no objection to the inclusion of such conditions.

The appellant considers that the proposed mitigation measures are unenforceable noting that the proposed treeline is located outside of red line boundary. The applicant’s ecologist has noted that the proposed eastern treeline is not relied upon to mitigate lighting impacts or maintain bat connectivity and represents a voluntary enhancement measure. I note the proposed planting lies outside of the current application but is located within the applicant’s ownership (blue line boundary). In this regard the measure could be conditioned, however having regard to the acceptability of the proposal as outlined above, I do not consider this measure necessary.

I have dealt with the issue of Appropriate Assessment in Section 9 and Appendix 2 of this report. Given that there are no SACs designated for lesser horseshoe bat within 2.5km of the site, I consider that there is no potential for likely significant effects

arising from this project on lesser horseshoe bat populations associated with any European site.

Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed development is in accordance with Objective NHB 9 Protection of Bats and Bat Habitats, NHB 5 Ecological Connectivity and NHB 2 Appropriate Assessment.

#### 9.4. Other Issues

##### Noncompliance with conditions

The third parties have raised concerns with regards to non-compliance with the conditions of the previous Board Order. It should be noted that powers of enforcement and compliance with the terms of the Board Order are entirely matters for the Planning Authority.

##### Enabling Infrastructure already in place/Remains of demolished wall ball

I note from my site visit that the wall ball/astro turf area has been recently completed. The appellant contends that conduits and associated infrastructure for the lighting columns are already in place, and that a section of the previously demolished ball wall remains. I did not see any evidence of the enabling infrastructure for the fitting of the lighting columns during my site visit or any remains of the demolished wall ball. The appellant has not provided any evidence to support their claim. In any event, as noted above, powers of enforcement are entirely matters for the Planning Authority.

##### Pre-planning Meeting

The appellant has raised concerns with the procedures and fairness of the pre-planning meeting. Where it is proposed by a prospective developer that a third party attend a pre-application meeting under section 247 of the Act, it is a matter for the relevant planning authority to consider the appropriateness of that party to be in attendance. I would also note that in accordance with Section 247 (3) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), "*The carrying out of consultations shall not prejudice the performance by a Planning Authority of any other of its functions under this Act, or any regulations made under this Act and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in legal proceedings*".

##### Long term expansion plans

The appellant has raised concerns that the applicant has not disclosed long term expansion plans. The scope of this assessment relates only to the permission sought as described in the development description and illustrated in the drawings submitted. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have the appropriate consents/permissions for any future development at the site.

## 10.0 AA Screening

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on the Galway Bay Complex SAC or Inner Galway Bay SPA or any other European site, in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required.

This determination is based on:

- The relatively minor scale of the development and lack of impact mechanisms that could significantly affect a European Site
- Distance from and weak indirect connections to the European sites

## 11.0 Water Framework Directive

An assessment of the proposed development has been undertaken with regard to the objectives set out in Article 4 of the EU Water Framework Directive.

Having considered the nature, scale, and location of the proposed development, it is concluded that the proposal will not result in any risk of deterioration in the status of any water body, including surface waters (rivers and lakes), groundwater, transitional waters, or coastal waters. This applies to both qualitative and quantitative status, and in respect of temporary and permanent effects.

In addition, the proposed development will not adversely affect the achievement of established environmental objectives, including the protection, maintenance, and improvement of water body status, as required under the Directive.

Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to be compliant with the requirements of Article 4.

## 12.0 Recommendation

I recommend that permission be granted for the reasons and considerations set out below and subject to the following conditions.

## 13.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and to the established use of the site, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenities of the area, nor have an adverse impact on the bat population in the vicinity of the appeal site, and would be in accordance with the policy objectives of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, including Objective NHB 9 Protection of Bats and Bat Habitats and NHB 5 Ecological Connectivity. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

## 14.0 Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application on the 5th of December 2025, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

**Reason:** In the interest of clarity.

2. All mitigation measure outlined in the Bat Survey Report lodged with the application on the 5th of December 2025 shall be implemented in full.

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

3. Construction on site shall be limited to between 0800 hours and 1800 hours, Monday to Friday and between 0900 hours and 1700 hours on Saturday, unless

otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. No work shall take place on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.

**Reason:** In the interest of residential amenity and orderly development.

4. The operational hours of the floodlighting shall not extend beyond 2100 hours with automatic cut-off of floodlighting at that time.

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

5. Lighting shall use luminaires with CCT  $\leq 3000\text{K}$  in accordance with Environmentally Friendly Lighting Guide - Dark Sky Ireland Guidance (2024). The floodlighting shall otherwise be in accordance with the lighting report submitted to An Coimisiún Pleanála on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026. The luminaires shall be maintained in good order to ensure compliance with the required Lux levels and to ensure the correct light angles are maintained on the astro pitch and do not create increased light spill to nearby properties.

**Reason:** In the interest of residential amenity and for the protection of bats, a protected species.

6. The applicant shall undertake monitoring of local bat populations for the first active season (April-October) post-construction to verify light levels and bat activity. This monitoring shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced bat expert and shall include an assessment of bat populations in the area to determine effectiveness or otherwise of the implemented design and other mitigation measures, on the bats foraging and commuting in the area. A report presenting findings shall be submitted to the planning authority and corrective measures implemented if required. Corrective measures may include, limitation of hours, adjustment of lighting angles and additional shielding.

**Reason:** For the protection of bats, a protected species.

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.

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Ciara McGuinness

Planning Inspector

11<sup>th</sup> June 2026

## Appendix 1: Form 1 EIA Pre-Screening

<b>Case Reference</b>	PL-500900-GY-26
<b>Proposed Development Summary</b>	To erect 3 no. 12 meters high lighting columns at existing ball wall and astro turf area and all ancillary works.
<b>Development Address</b>	Kilcornan, Clarinbridge, Co. Galway
<b>IN ALL CASES CHECK BOX / OR LEAVE BLANK</b>	
<b>1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a 'Project' for the purposes of EIA?</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a 'Project'. Proceed to Q.2.
	<input type="checkbox"/> 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)	
<b>2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. <b>EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.</b>	<b>State the Class here</b>

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
<b>3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?</b>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. <b>No Screening required.</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. <b>EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold.  <b>Preliminary examination required. (Form 2)</b> <b>OR</b> <b>If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)</b>	
<b>4. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted AND is the development a Class of Development for the purposes of the EIA Directive (as identified in Q3)?</b>	

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Screening Determination required (Complete Form 3)
No <input type="checkbox"/>	Pre-screening determination conclusion remains as above (Q1 to Q3)

Inspector: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: AA Screening Determination

<b>Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects</b>	
<b>Case Reference Number:</b> PL-500900-GY-26	
<b>Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics</b>	
<b>Brief description of project</b>	<p>To erect 3 no. 12 meters high lighting columns at existing ball wall and astro turf area and all ancillary works.</p> <p>See section 2 of my report above for further details.</p>
<b>Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms</b>	<p>The proposed development site is a brownfield site within an existing GAA club. To the west of the development is Kilcornan Residential Estate, to the south is an access road and graveyard, to the north is low density residential development and to the east is playing pitches and agricultural land. The development will comprise of the erection 3 no. lighting columns.</p> <p>There is a watercourse known as Clarin River 100m to the south of the development site and this connects into Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA. The area is within 200m of Kilcornan Woods. There are no other ecological features of note on the site that would connect it directly to European Sites in the wider area.</p>
<b>Screening report</b>	No
<b>Natura Impact Statement</b>	No
<b>Relevant Submissions</b>	None

**Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model**

The proposed development site is not located within or immediately adjacent to any site designated as a European Site, comprising a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Area (SPA). Two of European sites are located within 400m of the potential development site.

European Site (code)	Qualifying interests Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections	Consider further in screening Y/N
Inner Galway Bay SPA [004301]	Wintering water birds (20x species) Wetland and waterbirds	400m	No direct	No
Galway Bay Complex SAC [000279]	Habitats: Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] , Coastal lagoons [1150] ,Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] 400m Potential Hydrological Connectivity via the Clarin River Reefs [1170], Perennial vegetation of stony banks [1220], Vegetated sea cliffs of the Atlantic and Baltic coasts [1230] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-	400m	No direct	No

	<p>Puccinellietalia maritimae)  [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (Juncetalia maritimi) [1410] Turloughs [3180] Juniperus communis formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Calcareous fens with Cladium mariscus and species of the Caricion davallianae [7210] Alkaline fens [7230] Limestone pavements [8240]</p> <p>Species : Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] Phoca vitulina (Harbour Seal) [1365]</p>			
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**Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone or in combination) on European Sites**

Due to the limited nature of the development proposal and the relevant small scale construction impacts and brownfield nature I consider that the proposed development would not be expected to generate impacts that could affect anything but the immediate area of the development site, thus having a very limited potential zone of influence on any ecological receptors.

The contained nature of the site and distance from receiving features connected to Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA make it highly unlikely that the proposed development could generate impacts of a magnitude that could affect European Sites.

**Step 4: Conclude if the proposed development could result in likely significant effects on a European site**

I conclude that the proposed development (alone) would not result in likely significant effects on Galway Bay Complex SAC or Inner Galway Bay SPA. The proposed development would have no likely significant effect in combination with other plans and projects on any European site(s). No further assessment is required for the project. No mitigation measures are required to come to these conclusions.

**Screening Determination**

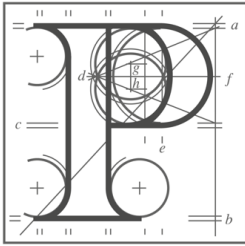
**Finding of no likely significant effects**

In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and on the basis of the information considered in this AA screening, I conclude that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to give rise to significant effects on the Galway Bay Complex SAC or Inner Galway Bay SPA or any other European site, in view of the conservation objectives of these sites and is therefore excluded from further consideration. Appropriate Assessment is not required.

This determination is based on:

- The relatively minor scale of the development and lack of impact mechanisms that could significantly affect a European Site
- Distance from and weak indirect connections to the European sites

## **Appendix 3 - Specialist Report - Ecology**



An  
Coimisiún  
Pleanála

# Specialist Report to Inspector

## 500900

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<b>Development</b>	Erection of 3 no. 12m high lighting columns at Clarinbridge GAA Club, Galway.
<b>Location</b>	Clarinbridge, Galway
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Galway County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	25/337
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	Clarinbridge GAA
<b>Type of Application</b>	Normal Planning Appeal
<b>Inspector</b>	Ciara McGuinness
<b>Ecologist</b>	Donncha Madden
<b>Topic</b>	Floodlighting effects on bats – ecological advice on light spill and colour temperature
<b>Report No</b>	R500900_App1
<b>Date</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> June 2026

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. The proposed development comprises the erection of three 12m high floodlighting columns at an existing ball wall and astro turf facility within Clarinbridge GAA Club.
- 1.1.2. Previously, permission was granted for the construction of a ball wall, Astro Turf area, fencing, package wastewater treatment system and all ancillary services under ABP-319170-21 and Galway County Council Reg. Ref. 23/471. That application also included six floodlights, 12m in height, which were refused pending submission of bat survey information to determine the impact of the floodlighting on local bat populations and mitigation measures that may be required.
- 1.1.3. The current proposal documentation includes a bat survey and assessment, prepared by Eire Ecology on behalf of the applicant (titled “Bat Survey Report for Clarinbridge GAA,” dated October 2025).

## 2.0 Scope of Specialist Ecology report to Inspector

- 2.1.1. This report has been prepared in response to a request from the Planning Inspector for ecological input on bats in proximity to the site in relation to:
  - Light spill exceedances
  - Colour temperature of the proposed lighting
  - Whether the applicant’s response adequately addresses these issues
- 2.1.2. Other ecological matters are addressed within the main Inspector’s assessment and are not considered further here.

## 3.0 Documentation

### 3.1. Overview

- 3.1.1. I have reviewed the documentation on file relating to the case including:
  - Bat Survey Report for Clarinbridge GAA (Eire Ecology, October 2025)
  - Applicant Letter Response to Appeal (Eire Ecology, dated 25<sup>th</sup> March 2026)

- Various Appellant submissions including Independent Expert Ecological Assessment of Proposed Floodlighting at Clarinbridge GAA prepared by Ash Ecology dated 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026
- Lighting design and lux modelling report entitled “Clarinbridge GAA AWP 3x12m – 200 lux – R6” (Signify Commercial Ltd, March 2026)
- Relevant drawings and plans, including “Plan of Proposed Ball Wall & New Astro Turf Area' Drawing No: 'C\_bridge2023\_100’”, submitted under application 23/471

3.1.2. I have also reviewed aerial imagery and photos taken by the inspector from the site.

3.1.3. I have had regard to the following relevant guidance and publications in my review of the proposed development:

- Bat Conservation Trust ‘Good Practice Guidelines, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Collins, 2023)<sup>1</sup>
- National Parks and Wildlife Service Bat Mitigation Guidelines for Ireland – V2 (Marnell, 2022)<sup>2</sup>
- Bats And Artificial Lighting at Night. Guidance Note GN08/23 BCT/ILP (2023)<sup>3</sup>
- Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland Guidelines CIEEM (2018)<sup>4</sup>
- Environmentally Friendly Lighting Guide - Dark Sky Ireland Guidance (2024)<sup>5</sup>
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat - Mapping Landscape Connectivity to facilitate Species Recovery and Expansion in Ireland. BCT (2026)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, J. (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines. 3rd edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

<sup>2</sup> Marnell, F., Kelleher, C. & Mullen, E. (2022) Bat mitigation guidelines for Ireland v2. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 134. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Lighting Professionals (2023) Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night. Guidance Note GN08/23 Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals

<sup>4</sup> CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.2. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

<sup>5</sup> Environmentally Friendly Lighting Guide - Dark Sky Ireland Guidance (2024)

<sup>6</sup> Wright, P., Guilfoyle, C., Smyth, D., Roche, N. & McAney, K. (2026) The Lesser Horseshoe Bat - Mapping Landscape Connectivity to facilitate Species Recovery and Expansion in Ireland. Bat Conservation Ireland, Dublin.

- Using Species Distribution Models to Identify Potential New Roosting Sites of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat in Ireland. BCT (2025)<sup>7</sup>
- Using Circuitscape to identify potential landscape corridors for the lesser horseshoe bat in Ireland. BCT (2020)<sup>8</sup>
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat Species Action Plan 2022-2026. NPWS & VWT (2022)<sup>9</sup>

3.1.4. I have also reviewed relevant policy and legislation as they pertain to protection of bats, particularly relevant Galway County Council (GCC) policy as set out in the Galway County Development Plan (CDP) 2022-2028.

3.1.5. The Galway CDP Policy Objective “NHB 9 Protection of Bats and Bat Habitats” sets out GCC policy in relation to this matter, with protection to be sought for bats, their roosts, feeding areas, flight paths and commuting routes.

## 4.0 Summary of Third-Party Concerns in relation to bats and lighting

### 4.1. Overview

4.1.1. The appellants raise a number of concerns regarding the proposed development. Only concerns relating to the potential effects of the proposed lighting on bats are dealt in this report. Issues relating to bats raised by all appellants are considered collectively here. It should be noted that separate surveys were not carried out by the appellants. The key issues raised are summarised as follows:

4.1.2. The appellants assert that the proposed lighting results in significant light spill at commuting height for bats (up to 25 lux), which could create a barrier to bat movement, particularly along the northern boundary of the proposed development site.

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<sup>7</sup> Fialas, P. & Roche N. (2025). Using Species Distribution Models to Identify Potential New Roosting Sites of the Lesser Horseshoe Bat in Ireland. Bat Conservation Ireland, Dublin, Ireland.

<sup>8</sup> Finch, D. and McAney, K. (2020). Using Circuitscape to identify potential landscape corridors for the lesser horseshoe bat in Ireland. Vincent Wildlife Trust.

<sup>9</sup> NPWS & VWT (2022) Lesser Horseshoe Bat Species Action Plan 2022-2026. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland.

- 4.1.3. The appellants contend that the lighting design is not sufficiently directional or controlled to avoid light spill into adjacent habitats beyond the site boundary.
- 4.1.4. The proposed lighting specification of 4000K is considered by the appellants to be inappropriate, having regard to best practice guidance for bat-sensitive environments.
- 4.1.5. The appellants suggest that there is insufficient physical screening along the northern boundary of the proposed development site, thereby increasing the potential for light spill into adjacent woodland beyond.
- 4.1.6. The appellants assert that vegetation adjacent to the site forms part of an important bat commuting corridor within a wider landscape connectivity network, and that impacts from the proposed development on the vegetation could be significant.
- 4.1.7. The appellants raise concerns regarding the lighting modelling, including the heights assessed and the reliability of the conclusions drawn.
- 4.1.8. The appellants note that proposed planting lies outside the application boundary and therefore cannot be relied upon as mitigation.

## 5.0 **Issues examined and suggestions for consideration by the Inspector/Commission**

### 5.1. **Overview**

- 5.1.1. I have reviewed and provided commentary on each of the main matters relating to bats as they pertain to assessment of impacts for this proposed development. I also provide a separate consolidated response to each of the concerns raised by appellants and then set out conclusions and recommendations for consideration by the inspector/commission. This includes sections as set out below:

- Bat Activity and Site Use
- Ecological Function of the Site
- Landscape Connectivity
- Assessment of Lighting Impacts

## 5.2. Bat Activity and Site Use

5.2.1. Bat surveys undertaken by Eire Ecology recorded seven species across three survey periods in 2025. I am satisfied that:

- Eire Ecology has sufficient qualification and experience to carry out survey and assessment for bats
- Surveys were carried out at appropriate times as per Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines' (Collins, 2023).
- Survey methods accord with relevant guidance
- The baseline ecological information is sufficient to inform this assessment

5.2.2. It should be noted that currently there is limited existing lighting in proximity to that proposed, including lighting around the car park to the south of the site and existing floodlights around one of the club's pitches approximately 100 m to the southeast of the site.

5.2.3. Eire Ecology surveys installed one static detector on the western and one on the northern boundaries of the proposed development site. No confirmed roosts were identified during those surveys but seven species were recorded with activity distributed between western and northern boundaries dominated by the following species (which are widely recognised as relatively tolerant of artificial lighting):

- Soprano pipistrelle
- Common pipistrelle

5.2.4. The Eire Ecology Bat Report presents Bat Conservation Ireland bat roost records within a 5km radius of the site. The most recent records are from 2020 with a number of species roosting at a historic stone structure just over 1 km from the site. The closest lesser horseshoe bat records presented in the Eire Ecology report are at 4 km and 4.9 km from the site, recorded at an old stone building in 1994 and a souterrain in 1996 respectively.

- 5.2.5. It should be noted that the NPWS Conservation Objectives supporting document for lesser horseshoe bat (2018)<sup>10</sup> uses a 2.5 km core sustenance zone to define foraging areas for lesser horseshoe bat for the purpose of the current SSCO targets and therefore this is a reasonable distance to consider for effects on SACs. The closest SAC designated for lesser horseshoe bat is Lough Fingall Complex SAC, which lies 3.8 km from proposed development site, with the nearest designated roost of that SAC being 6.35 km from the proposed development site.
- 5.2.6. There are other European sites in the vicinity of Clarinbridge, including Galway Bay Complex SAC and Inner Galway Bay SPA, however lesser horseshoe bat is not a qualifying interest of these or any other European sites in closer proximity than Lough Fingall Complex SAC. Given that there are no SACs designated for lesser horseshoe bat within 2.5km of the site, I consider that there is no potential for likely significant effects arising from this project on lesser horseshoe bat populations associated with any European site.
- 5.2.7. I have reviewed further data sources online, including the National Biodiversity Map Biodiversity Maps and the Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 85 Lesser horseshoe bat: population trends and status of its roosting resource (Roche *et al.* 2015)<sup>11</sup> and have identified that there a number of relatively small (historically less than 15 individuals) lesser horseshoe bat roosts to the south, just under 10 km from the site.
- 5.2.8. Eire Ecology surveys recorded light-sensitive species (including lesser horseshoe bat, *Myotis* spp. and brown long-eared bat) at comparatively low levels, with lesser horseshoe bat recorded on six occasions, primarily along the northern boundary of the site.
- 5.2.9. Based on the evidence provided in the Eire Ecology Bat Survey Report as informed by their bat surveys in 2025, and information contained within relevant publications and data sources, I am satisfied that:

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<sup>10</sup> NPWS (2018) Conservation objectives supporting document – lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) Version 1. Conservation Objectives Supporting Document Series. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dublin, Ireland.

<sup>11</sup> Roche, N., Aughney T. and Langton S. (2015) Lesser horseshoe bat: population trends and status of its roosting resource. Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 85. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Ireland.

- The vegetated western and northern boundaries of the proposed development site are used for commuting and foraging by a number of bat species.
- Activity of light-sensitive species is relatively limited compared to use by those species more tolerant of light, with most activity, particularly for lesser horseshoe bat, concentrated on the northern boundary. Therefore, the northern boundary is considered more sensitive to any increase in light spill with the potential for significant effects on bats arising without mitigation.
- The site is not currently a core commuting corridor or area of elevated activity for lesser horseshoe bat but see below regarding the potential for woodland adjacent to the site to provide landscape connectivity for lesser horseshoe bat.

### 5.3. **Ecological Function of the Site / Landscape Connectivity**

- 5.3.1. Although no roost was identified during Eire Ecology surveys and there are no European sites designated for lesser horseshoe bat in proximity, I consider that the site is located within a broader landscape of woodland and hedgerows in the Clarinbridge area which support activity of a number of bat species. This is evidenced by results from Eire Ecology 2025 surveys.
- 5.3.2. There is boundary vegetation along the western and northern boundaries of the site. The survey results from Eire Ecology 2025 surveys shows that the woodland along the northern boundary (known as Reddington Woods) and along the eastern boundary provides provide habitat for a number of species, although light sensitive species were more frequently recorded along the northern boundary.
- 5.3.3. The Eire Ecology Bat Report highlights that Reddington Woods, immediately north of the site, has been mapped as having both high functional connectivity for lesser horseshoe bat, and some highly favourable habitat for lesser horseshoe bat (as per referenced sources Fialas and Roche (2025); and Finch and McAney (2020)). Therefore, I consider that whilst low numbers of lesser horseshoe bat were recorded during 2025 surveys, indicating that Reddington Woods is not currently functioning as a critical commuting corridor, this woodland does provide potential to support landscape connectivity for lesser horseshoe bats in the wider area. Given Galway County Council Development Policy Objective NHB 9 Protection of Bats and Bat

Habitats, I consider that any lighting in proximity to Reddington Woods should be sensitively designed to avoid disturbance or fragmentation of connectivity.

## 6.0 Assessment of Lighting Impacts

### 6.1. Overview of Lighting Impacts

- 6.1.1. The potential for impact on bat species arising from lighting relates to the light spill on to any areas which light sensitive bats might use. This is measured in lux levels, with light sensitive bats changing behaviour with minimal increases in artificially introduced light. I have focused the discussion below on impacts relating to light spill on the area north of the ball wall, to the edge and into the northern woodland (Reddington Woods) as I believe this is the area where impacts on bats would be most likely to occur without mitigation.
- 6.1.2. CCT (Correlated Colour Temperature) is the measurement of the warmth or coolness of light, measured in Kelvin (K). In lighting, the scale typically runs from 2000 K to 6500 K. Lower Kelvin values produce warm, yellow lights, while higher values produce crisp, bluish-white lights that mimic daylight. I consider that the design of any light spill on the area north of the ball wall up to the edge of the woodland should seek to reduce impacts arising from higher colour temperatures.

### 6.2. Ball Wall and Site Layout

- 6.2.1. Submitted drawing 'Plan of Proposed Ball Wall & New Astro Turf Area' Drawing No: 'C\_bridge2023\_100', submitted under application 23/471 confirm the presence of a continuous ball wall along the northern boundary.
- 6.2.2. The height and location of the ball wall as submitted under application 23/471 was amended by the conditions attached to the Board order for ABP-319170-21 including a slightly lower maximum height of 4.75 m high in contrast to 5 m.
- 6.2.3. This height (4.75 m) and length (along the full extent of the northern boundary) provides:
- Screening of light at lower levels
  - Retention of darker conditions along the boundary

### 6.3. Lighting Design and Assessment of Lux Levels

- 6.3.1. The applicant has submitted updated lighting modelling (Signify, 2026) following changes in design to lessen light spill beyond the site boundary. These changes in design have included moving the most northerly luminaire close to the northern boundary and pointing the lighting from that luminaire away from the northern boundary back onto the astro surface. This has resulted in much reduced lux levels spilling outside of the ball wall. The modelling indicates that light levels will drop to below 1 lux at the northern site boundary.
- 6.3.2. Whilst Ash Ecology, acting on behalf of the appellants, had identified values of 5–25 lux at the northern boundary, these relate to earlier design iterations and the revised design modelling now predicts 0 lux at 2 m, 4 m and 6 m above ground level at the woodland edge along the northern boundary of the site meaning that there will be no new light spill introduced at lesser horseshoe commuting height levels i.e. up to 4 m.
- 6.3.3. Given that 0 lux is recorded at 2–6m height at the boundary I consider that:
- No measurable illumination occurs at commuting height.
  - A barrier effect will not arise.
- 6.3.4. Therefore, I consider that impacts on light sensitive bat species, particularly lesser horseshoe bat, arising from light spill lux on the Reddington Woods to the north of the site are likely to be negligible and I consider that the lighting design as it relates to lux levels and light spill is acceptable.

### 6.4. Colour Temperature

- 6.4.1. Whilst the lux levels at the woodland boundary are acceptable there will still be light spill in the area between the ball wall and the woodland boundary and therefore colour temperature of any light in this area will impact on light sensitive bat species commuting to the north of the site. The proposed lighting has a CCT of 4000 K. CCT values at the higher end of the scale means increased blue light content and therefore more impacts on light sensitive species including effects on bat behaviour such as avoidance of areas of these areas.
- 6.4.2. Best practice for bat and artificial lighting at night (BCT/ILP, 2023) recommends  $\leq 2700$  K. Dark Sky Ireland guidance (2024) recommends  $\leq 3000$  K. I consider

therefore that the proposed CCT of 4000 K exceeds best practice for lighting design to minimise impacts on bats.

## 6.5. Green Club / Best Practice Alignment

- 6.5.1. Clarinbridge GAA is a recognised Green Club and presents this fact in their letter accompanying the response to appeal. GAA Green Club status includes commitments to sustainable and environmentally responsible practices<sup>12</sup> and GAA Green Club floodlighting guidance<sup>13</sup> recommends minimising disruption to local wildlife whilst referencing Dark Sky Ireland guidance. The proposed 4000K lighting does not align with this, exceeding Dark Sky Ireland guidance recommended threshold of  $\leq 3000$  K.

## 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1. Conclusions

- 7.1.1. I am satisfied that light spill will not give rise to significant effects on light sensitive bats at the northern boundary of the site and therefore I am satisfied that significant impacts on lesser horseshoe bat and other species are unlikely at this location and the lighting design in this respect is acceptable.
- 7.1.2. However, the proposed colour temperature of 4000 K exceeds best practice for limiting impacts of lighting on bats and therefore could have impacts on bat use between the ball wall and the woodland edge. I consider that it is reasonable that a condition could be added to address this such that likely significant effects on bats can be avoided.
- 7.1.3. Given the sensitivity of bats to lighting and the potential importance of woodland to north of the site I consider that in the event of a grant of permission, a condition to carry out post construction monitoring of lux levels and bat activity should be carried out.

### 7.2. Conditions

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/green-clubs-sustainability>

<sup>13</sup> [https://learning.gaa.ie/sites/default/files/2023-05/Energy\\_Identify\\_LED%20Floodlighting.pdf](https://learning.gaa.ie/sites/default/files/2023-05/Energy_Identify_LED%20Floodlighting.pdf)

- 7.2.1. I recommend post construction monitoring to include Lux measurements at 0m, 2m, 4m, 6m heights at various points north of the ball wall up to and into the woodland on the northern boundary.
- 7.2.2. I recommend bat surveys during the first active season (April–October) post construction.
- 7.2.3. All results should be submitted to the planning authority so that corrective measures can be implemented prior to the following active bat season. Corrective measures may include:
- Limitation of hours
  - Adjustment of lighting angles
  - Additional shielding
  - Reduction in intensity

### 7.3. **Suggested conditions**

- 7.3.1. In the event of a grant of permission, I have provided suggested conditions to ensure no significant effects on bats.

### 7.4. **Lighting Colour**

- 7.4.1. Lighting shall use luminaires with CCT  $\leq 2700\text{K}$  and be installed in accordance with approved design.

### 7.5. **Monitoring**

- 7.5.1. Post-construction monitoring shall verify light levels and bat activity. A report presenting findings shall be submitted to the planning authority and corrective measures implement if required.

### 7.6. **Conclusion**

- 7.6.1. Having had regard to all of the information provided and to best practice guidance relating to impacts on bat species, I consider that the applicant's response is acceptable in relation to light spill. I consider that the applicant's response is not fully acceptable in relation to colour temperature without condition. In the event of a grant of permission subject to conditions, the development is acceptable and significant impacts on bat species will not arise.

**Signed:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Donncha Madden', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Donncha Madden, BSc, PGDip, CIEEM CEco

Senior Inspectorate Ecologist

10th June 2026