



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

PL-500984-DL-26

Development	Construction of a camper van park and all associated site works
Location	Naran Td., Portnoo, Co. Donegal
Planning Authority	Donegal County Council
Planning Authority Reg. Ref.	25/62257
Applicant(s)	Patrick Boyle
Type of Application	Permission
Planning Authority Decision	Refuse Permission
Type of Appeal	First Party
Appellant(s)	Patrick Boyle
Observer(s)	Gerald & Caroline McHugh
Date of Site Inspection	12 th June 2026
Inspector	Philip Maguire

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This case relates to an appeal by Patrick Boyle under the provisions of Section 37 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the Act'), following a refusal of permission by Donegal County Council in accordance with Section 34 of the Act.
- 1.2. This Inspector's Report (IR) and recommendation is made pursuant to Section 146(2) of the Act. The Commission is required to consider both before determining the case.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. Situated in the townland of Naran, the appeal site is prominently located to the southeast of Portnoo, in west Donegal, some 800m from Narin-Portnoo Strand. The site is accessible via an existing field gate along a local road (L2413) where the posted speed limit is 50kph. The site also includes some minor frontage on to the R261 (to Glenties) to the southeast and the wider landholding, as outlined in blue, is generally located between these two roads, albeit significantly elevated above the regional road.
- 2.2. The surrounding area is characterised by rough agricultural grazing land interspersed with rural housing, with more concentrated ribbons to the north and west. Some of the housing is tourism related and there are a number of caravan sites near Narin-Portnoo Strand which is one of the discovery point designations on the Wild Atlantic Way. The site and surrounding area are within an area designated as High Scenic Amenity.
- 2.3. The appeal site is roughly rectangular shaped and forms part of a larger field. It has a road frontage of 105 metres along the L2413 and a stated area of 1.15ha. The site consists of rough agricultural grazing/scrubland and is locally undulating with a number of rock outcrops evident, although generally falling from west to east with a sharp drop to the southeast corner. An open drain traverses the south of the site on a southwest-northeast alignment and exits at a low point on the western boundary adjacent to the R261. Overhead power lines also traverse the site and roughly perpendicular to the drain. There are expansive views of the surrounding lands and coast from the site.
- 2.4. Ground conditions were extremely soft and wet underfoot with waterlogging evident in places. The vegetation on site, which includes rushes, bog cotton, yellow flag and mosses around the outcrops is indicative of such conditions. The roadside (western) boundary is defined by a post and wire fence with remnants of a stone wall and

intermittent hedgerow. The northern boundary, which adjoins a residential property, includes trees and some vegetation. Other site boundaries are open and undefined.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1. Planning permission is sought for a camper van park and associated works.

3.2. The proposed development is described in the statutory notices as:

“A camper van park consisting of the following:

- (a) 10 no. Camper van parking bays with associated services*
- (b) internal pathways, laneways, additional parking areas*
- (c) play area and picnic benches with green areas*
- (d) service building containing showers/toilets/ reception area*
- (e) installation of new on-site sewerage treatment system and percolation area*
- (f) proposed new signage board at entrance to site together with all associated site development works.”*

3.3. In addition to a cover letter (Cornerstone, Dec. 2025), the following was submitted:

- Site Suitability Assessment Report (Ciaran Moy, February 2021)
- Traffic and Transport Assessment Form (December 2025)

4.0 Planning Authority Decision

4.1. Decision

4.1.1. Permission was refused on 19th February 2026 for the following reason:

“The subject site is designated as being in an ‘Area Under Strong Holiday Home Influence in the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 and it is a policy of the Plan, as set out in TOU-P-8, ‘That all development proposals for the creation of new, or the extension of existing Tourist Developments...shall comply with the following criteria:

- ‘a. The location, siting and design of the development (including associated infrastructure and landscaping arrangements) is of a high quality, integrates*

successfully with, and does not, either individually or in combination with existing and permitted developments, have an adverse impact on; the scenic quality, visual amenity, rural character, streetscape, vernacular character or built environment of the area.'

Furthermore, Policy TOU-P-8 states:

'g. The development will not significantly impact on existing residential amenities.'

Having regard to (a) the siting of the proposed camper van park on a visually prominent and exposed site, (b) its location within an area of High Scenic Amenity and the impact on the scenic quality, visual amenity and rural character of the area, and (c) the significant impacts on existing residential amenities of neighbouring dwellings, the proposed development fails to assimilate successfully into the landscape and would by reason of itself and the undesirable precedent it would set, cause a detrimental change to and further erode the existing residential amenities, rural character and visual amenities of this rural area. To permit the development would therefore be contrary to the aforementioned objective and policies of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 and thereby be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area."

4.2. Planning Authority Reports

4.2.1. The Planner's Report (09/02/26) can be summarised as follows:

Principle of Development

- Notes the site location within an Area Under Strong Holiday Home Influence.
- Notes the criteria set out under policy TOU-P-6 regarding the principle of development.
- Notes that whilst the principle is acceptable in a rural area, states the proposal does not comply with policy TOU-P-8 and technical standards of the Plan.

Siting and Design

- States that the proposal does not comply with criteria 'a' and 'g' of policy TOU-P-8.
- Notes the subject site is located within an Area of High Scenic Amenity (AHSA) and within an Area Under Strong Holiday Influence.

- Does not consider the proposal can integrate, given its elevated and exposed nature within an AHSA; adverse impact on rural character and visual amenity.
- Expresses concerns regarding the proximity of the proposal to nearby dwellings and the adverse effects on the residential amenity.
- States that proposal will result in an increase in noise and traffic, and as such significantly imposing on the privacy of the surrounding dwellings.
- Does not consider the proposal accords with TOU-P-8; refusal recommended.

Residential Amenity

- Notes the proposal is located within close proximity to a number of existing and established dwellings and states that this gives rise to potential for loss of amenity.
- Pitch No. 1 is c. 10m from the curtilage of the dwelling to the north and notes concerns in relation to loss of residential amenity raised in third-party submissions.
- States that the proposal contravenes policy TOU-P-8, in particular criteria 'g'; refusal recommended.

Public Health

- Notes the proposal includes an 18 PE packaged WWTS and refers to concerns raised by EHO in relation to design capacity and separation distances i.e., 28 metres for the recommended 21 PE system.
- Notes that the EHO also requested that any proposed mitigation measures are submitted only where the minimum separation distance cannot be achieved.
- Notes the proposed surface water along the site entrance is to connect to an existing open drain which runs through the southern section of the site.
- Also notes the proposed method of disposal of surface water associated with the camper van pitches is via a petrol interceptor which will discharge to land drain.

Appropriate Assessment

- States that significant adverse impacts on West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC cannot be ruled out based on the proximity of the site and the information submitted.
- States that an ecological report is required for an AA screening exercise.

Environmental Impact Assessment

- Excludes the need for EIA at preliminary examination stage.

Recommendation

- Considers it is necessary to refuse permission given the extent of concerns which have arisen i.e., the site's location within an AHSA, the adverse impact on visual amenity / rural character and the significant impacts on residential amenities.

4.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Fire (21/01/26) No objection subject to conditions.
- HSE–EHO (12/01/26) FI requested.
- Roads (undated) No objection subject to conditions.

4.3. Prescribed Bodies

None.

4.4. Third Party Observations

4.4.1. I note 4 no. observations received; summarised from the Planner's Report as follows:

- Fully supports the proposal on the basis of need i.e., camper vans currently park along the strand leaving little spaces for visitors.
- Harm to rural character, landscape and integrity of the scenic area; will set an undesirable precedent; important to protect landscape and visual amenity.
- Impact on residential amenity, compromising privacy and devaluing property; incompatible with established residential development.
- Inappropriate in terms of siting and design, fails to integrate on elevated, exposed site; visually dominant, more appropriately located at existing caravan park.
- Destruction of wildlife during construction; EIS not submitted; site is habitat to many species including the corncrake.
- Concerns raised regarding health / drainage / noise / odour / light pollution.
- Road safety hazard due to increase / intensification of traffic and pedestrians during the summer months; will require a footpath from the site to Naran.

- Need to protect tourism; refers to PA ref. 13/50800 and policies TOU-P-11 and TOU-P-20; the principle of the development remains as per previous policy.
- Lack of information regarding operational hours, lighting, waste management etc.
- Wastewater treatment system not supported; malfunctioning system will have direct consequences for neighbouring dwellings.

5.0 Planning History

5.1. Appeal Site

- 5.1.1. PA ref. 22/50458 – in November 2022, the planning authority received notification of a withdrawal of application relating to a camper van park for 10 no. parking bays etc.
- 5.1.2. PA ref. 13/50800 – in February 2014, the planning authority refused permission for a caravan and camping park with 10 no. pitches for mobile homes and 10 no. camping pitches etc. Amongst the issues raised in the refusal reasons were: (1) the absence of suitable infrastructure or facilities resulting in a substandard facility contrary to policy TOU-P-9 i.e., detachment from the village of Portnoo and absence of connecting footpath network; (2) the detrimental and deleterious impact on the scenic and visual amenities and unspoiled rural fabric of the environment contrary to policy TOU-P-3 i.e., siting and location on elevated and prominent site; (3) the negative impact on residential amenities from transitory accommodation given the proximity to such development; (4) the substandard form of haphazard, piecemeal development where the receiving landscape does not have assimilation capacity, resulting in the prominent imposition of structures on locally elevated heights and the excessive working of the natural topography of the site i.e., the overall site does not lend itself to the proposed development by virtue of the adverse gradients and undulating topography; and (5) due to traffic safety concerns in respect of sightlines and as a distraction to road users.

5.2. Wider Area

Naran Sands Caravan Park

- 5.2.1. PA ref. 19/50536 – in June 2019, the planning authority refused permission for retention of an additional serviced mobile home stand as: (1) the proposal exceeded the density standards for such development as detailed in Appendix 3 of the Development Plan; and (2) failed to submit any wastewater capacity information etc.

6.0 Policy Context

6.1. Local Planning Policy

- 6.1.1. The County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 came into effect on 26th June 2024. It was subject to a draft Ministerial Direction in July 2024 and is pending a final decision by the Minister following public consultation and OPR recommendations (Sept. 2024). The planning authority decision was made under the provisions of this current Plan.
- 6.1.2. I also note that Proposed Variation No. 1 was on public display until 13th February 2026. It proposes new Area Plans for An Clochán Liath, Bridgend, Ballyshannon, Carndonagh, Donegal Town and Killybegs, the making of various Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) related zoning changes, and other minor changes to the Buncrana, Ballybofey/Stranorlar and Letterkenny Area Plans, none of which affect the site. Proposed Variation No. 1 is subject to Proposed Material Alterations at time of writing.
- 6.1.3. The site is located within a rural area to the southeast of Portnoo. The nearest designated settlements are Ardara and Glenties, c. 8km south and 10km southeast, respectively. Chapter 10 (Tourism) of the Plan is relevant to the development proposal.
- 6.1.4. The appeal site and adjoining lands are designated as ‘Areas of High Scenic Amenity’ and the site is also located within an Area Under Strong Holiday Home Influence.
- 6.1.5. Other guidance is set out in Chapter 8 (Infrastructure) and Chapter 14 (Marine etc.), and Chapter 16 (Technical Standards) under the heading of ‘Caravan and Camping’.
- 6.1.6. Summary of policies and objectives relevant to the proposed development:
- | | |
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| TOU-O-1 | Seeks to facilitate the sustainable development of Donegal’s tourism product as a key economic driver of, and social catalyst for the County, whilst protecting and enhancing the County’s landscape, natural heritage, built heritage, and communities from inappropriate development that would detract from the tourism product. |
| TOU-P-2 | Not to permit development which would materially detract from visual and scenic amenities along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way. |
| TOU-P-3 | Not to permit developments which would materially detract from the visual/scenic amenities on the approach roads to, the visual setting of, or the views to be had from, significant tourism attractions. |

- TOU-P-6 Subject to compliance with the criteria set out in TOU-P-8, Table 10.2 sets out locational criteria and specific requirements for touring caravans, campervans, motorhomes etc., i.e., up to an aggregate max. of 10 units / pitches in rural areas excluding Exceptionally High Scenic Amenity areas. In urban areas, the development shall be within safe walking distance of local services and facilities (i.e. via an existing or proposed footpath). Provision of quality supporting infrastructure including suitably designed surface parking bays, green space commensurate with the nature and capacity of the site, communal toilets/shower facilities, water sources, wastewater disposal facilities, signage and recycling facilities is also required for both locations.
- TOU-P-8 Sets out criteria for all new / existing Tourist Developments including campervan / motorhomes and touring caravan stopover sites:
- (a) The location, siting and design of the development (including associated infrastructure and landscaping arrangements) is of a high quality, integrates successfully with, and does not, either individually or in combination with existing and permitted developments, have an adverse impact on; the scenic quality, visual amenity, rural character, streetscape, vernacular character or built environment of the area.
 - (b) That there are no significant impacts on designated habitats such as Natura 2000 sites and designated Nature Reserves.
 - (g) The development will not significantly impact on existing residential amenities.
 - (i) Suitable on-site effluent treatment facilities to EPA standards can be provided in rural areas.
 - (p) The development will not compromise the water quality of water bodies within River Basin Districts designated under the Water Framework Directive or hinder the programme of measures contained within any associated River Basin Management Plan.

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|--------|---|
| WW-P-2 | Seeks to ensure that new developments do not have an adverse impact on surface and ground water quality, drinking water supplies etc. |
| L-P-2 | Seeks to protect areas identified as ‘High Scenic Amenity’ and ‘Moderate Scenic Amenity’. Within these areas, only development of a nature, location and scale that integrates with, and reflects the character and amenity of the landscape may be considered etc. |
| TS-P-1 | Requires compliance with the relevant technical standards in the Plan. |

6.2. National Planning Policy / Guidelines / Guidance

Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (EPA, March 2021)

- 6.2.1. Guidance relating to domestic wastewater treatment systems (DWWTSs) for single houses or equivalent development with a population equivalent (PE) of less than or equal to 10 is set out in this Code of Practice (CoP). It details methodology for site assessment and selection, installation and maintenance of an appropriate DWWTS.
- 6.2.2. Circular Letter NRUP 01/2021 sets out the relevant transitional arrangements.

Treatment Systems for Small Communities, Business, Leisure Centres & Hotels

- 6.2.3. This guidance manual (EPA, 1999) includes recommended wastewater loading rates from commercial premises, including touring caravan sites (Table 3). Table 4 sets out the recommended minimum distances from treatment systems i.e., 28m for 10-40 PE.

6.3. Natural Heritage Designations

- 6.3.1. Nearest relevant Natural Heritage Designations:
- West of Ardara/Maas Road pNHA and SAC (000197) – c. 65 metres north
 - Inishkeel SPA (004116) – c. 1.2km northwest
 - Sheskinmore Lough SPA (004090) – 2.1km southwest
 - West Donegal Coast SPA (004150) – 3.2km west
 - Roaninish NHA (000184) and SPA (004121) – 6.6km northwest
 - Slieve Tooey/Tormore Is./Loughros Beg Bay pNHA and SAC (000190) – 7.3km sth
 - Gannivegil Bog SAC (000142) – 9.9km northeast
 - Rutland Island and Sound SAC (002283) – c. 9.9km north

7.0 EIA Screening

- 7.1. The proposed development has been subject to preliminary examination for environmental impact assessment (Appendix 1). 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 proposal, therefore, does not trigger a requirement for environmental impact assessment screening and an EIAR is not therefore required.

8.0 The Appeal

8.1. Grounds of Appeal

- 8.1.1. A first-party appeal has been lodged by MCM Associates on behalf of the applicant, Mr Patrick Boyle. The grounds of appeal can be summarised as follows:

General Rebuttal

- Location, siting and design of proposal, including associated infrastructure and landscaping, is of a high quality which integrates successfully with the scenic quality, visual amenity, rural / vernacular character, built environment of the area.

Visual Prominence

- Proposal will have minimal visual impact.
- LVIA proves effects are very slight or imperceptible to overall area / community.
- No analysis provided by the planning authority to justify “significant impacts”.
- Earth berms, tree / shrub planting and fencing can mitigate any visual concerns.

Landscape Impact

- AHSA permits sensitively integrated tourism development.
- Seasonal, reversible and low profile and thus not a permanent alteration.
- Existing vegetation and topography provide screening to dwelling to the north.

Residential Amenity

- LVIA and residential amenity assessment confirm impacts are negligible.

- Noise and lighting controls are included along with additional landscaping etc.
- Campervans are transitory and low height, are not permanent structures and include seasonal variations to volume, thus will not affect residential amenity.

Precedent

- An Coimisiún Pleanála does not refuse permission on speculative precedent.
- Each application is assessed on its own merits but refers to analogous cases in County Donegal i.e., ABP-302575-18, ABP-309312-21 and ABP-311458-21.
- Cited decisions demonstrate a consistent principle that small, low-impact, well-screened rural tourism developments are acceptable, even in scenic areas.

Conclusion

- Complies with Development Plan policies TOU-P-6 and TOU-P-8.
- Delivers strategic tourism infrastructure and meets identified regional need.
- Recommends conditions including seasonal operation and EPA compliant WWTS.

8.2. Planning Authority Response

8.2.1. The planning authority's response can be summarised as follows:

- Relies on the content of the Planner's Report dated 9th February 2026.
- Advise that they have no further comments to make.

8.3. Observations

8.3.1. Observation received from Gerald and Caroline McHugh is summarised as follows:

- High ground and visible from all approach roads and even from Aranmore island.
- Visiting campervans have access to parking, toilets and food outlets at the beach.
- Traffic safety issues and particularly for pedestrians to / from the beach, bars etc.
- Proposal would have a serious effect on Corncrake.
- Light pollution for miles due to elevated nature of the site.
- Precedent for similar development on approach roads to Naran-Portnoo and there is ample campervan parking on existing sites in the area.

9.0 **Assessment**

9.1. **Preliminary Points**

9.1.1. Having examined the application details and all other documentation on the appeal file, including the appeal submissions and observations, and inspected the site, and having regard to relevant local, regional and national policies and guidance, I consider that the main issues in this appeal are those raised in the grounds of appeal.

9.1.2. The issues can be addressed under the following headings:

- Residential Amenity Impacts
- Visual Amenity Impacts
- Drainage – *New Issue*
- Other Issues

9.2. **Residential Amenity Impacts**

9.2.1. Planning permission is sought for a camper van park consisting of 10 no. parking bays, a service building containing reception, toilets and showers, on-site sewage treatment system (WWTS), landscaping and a signage board at the proposed site entrance etc.

General Arrangements

9.2.2. Vehicular access would be to the northwest corner of the appeal site at 38.4mAOD and just inside the 50kph posted speed limit. A note on the layout drawing indicates sightlines of 3 metres by 90 metres in each direction. Whilst the full extent of the north-westerly sightline is not illustrated on the drawing, the horizontal road alignment suggests that 90 metres is achievable as has been illustrated for the southern sightline.

9.2.3. The parking bays are located to the northern half of the site, with bay nos. 1 to 6 sited along the eastern boundary on east-west alignments, spaced equidistantly and bookended to the south by the camper van wash area which includes the effluent disposal point to the proposed WWTS. Bay nos. 7 to 10 are sited to the west of the wash area on north-south alignments with similar 6 metre equidistant spacing. All bays are generally 4.4 metres by 14.5 metres save for the bay at the wash area which is 6 metres wide and marginally shorter than the others. The proposed ground levels for the parking bays have not been illustrated but it is anticipated that significant cut / fill

would be required to achieve a sufficiently level bay. For example, bay no. 1 is located between the 34m and 35m contour with a spot height of 35.69m to the back of the parking bay. This is a significant difference over a distance of 14.5 metres. Likewise, bay no. 6 is generally located between the 37.5m and 34.5m contours with adjacent spot heights of 37.98m, 35.62m and 34.84m and a steep drop east of the 34m contour. There are similar topographical challenges for bays 7 to 10, rising back up to 39.5m.

- 9.2.4. The office block, a 50.4sq.m single-storey structure with a 3.3-metre-high mono-pitch roof, is located generally between the parking bays and site entrance. Whilst it has a stated FFL of 37.5mAOD, it is sited between the 38m and 35.5m contours. This again is a considerable drop over a distance of 10.3 metres. There would be 5 no. car parking spaces opposite the office block to the south with a bin storage area to the rear of the spaces. Internal circulation would surround the office, parking and bin storage area.
- 9.2.5. The proposal also includes stormwater infrastructure for each of the bays and the internal road network. It discharges to the open drain which traverses the site before it exits the site and following treatment in a petrol interceptor. There is a green area with picnic table seating to the west of the office block and a rough grass area will be retained to the north between the office block and the neighbouring dwelling. The northern boundary will be retained and augmented with additional planting. I note that the appeal submission also states that additional berm screening will be provided but this has not been illustrated on the layout drawing. Finally, I note a number of lighting columns throughout the site. These are indicated as bollards and 3-4m shielded poles.

Refusal Reason

- 9.2.6. As noted, the refusal reason refers to Development Plan policy TOU-P-8. It is an all-encompassing policy that sets out individual criteria that tourist developments, including campervan / motorhomes and touring caravan stopover sites, 'shall comply with'. The criteria are therefore definitive policy bite points and, in this regard, criterion (g) requires development not to significantly impact on existing residential amenities.
- 9.2.7. Having regard to the siting of the proposal on a visually prominent and exposed site, of which there can be little dispute, and its location within an Area of High Scenic Amenity, which is a Development Plan designation, and its stated impact on the scenic quality, visual amenity and rural character of the area, and significant impacts on existing residential amenities of neighbouring dwellings, the planning authority

considers that the proposal fails to successfully assimilate into the landscape and thus would cause a detrimental change to, and further erode the existing residential amenities, rural character and visual amenities of this rural area. In this context, whilst I do understand the applicant's suggestion that the 'significant impacts' on residential amenity have not been fully explained, it can be deduced from the wording that the impacts are derived from, and perhaps somewhat conflated with the visual impacts.

Appeal Grounds

- 9.2.8. The appellant does, however, submit that the proposal will have minimal visual impact and suggests that the landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) and residential amenity assessment submitted with the appeal confirms that impacts are negligible.
- 9.2.9. They also state that noise and lighting controls are included along with additional landscaping, and submit that campervans will not affect residential amenity given they are non-permanent structures and subject to seasonal variations in terms of volume.

Observer's Comments

- 9.2.10. I also note the observer's comments and whilst not expressly related to residential amenity impacts, they do state that the proposed development will be visible from all approach roads and also result in light pollution due to the elevated nature of the site.

Consideration of the Issues

- 9.2.11. Having reviewed the refusal reason and the Planner's Report which informed it, I somewhat agree with the applicant that the stated 'significant impacts' have not been fully justified but in many respects, this relates to the wording of the policy which sets out far reaching and disparate criteria which must be complied with. The temptation is therefore obviously to shoehorn much of the justification under a single refusal reason.
- 9.2.12. The fundamental issue remains however that the appeal site is elevated and prominent in the landscape and is adjacent to a number of residential properties to the north and south / southeast. In reductionist terms the merit of a parking area for at least 15 no. vehicles (10 no. camper vans and 5 no. cars) is questionable, let alone one remote to the service or amenity it is proposed to serve, in this case the coastal tourism setting. Thus, the haphazard, transient nature of same, even if seasonal, is of concern and notwithstanding the suggested 8 no. car trips per day as indicated in the TTA form.

- 9.2.13. Moreover, no information has been provided in relation to the quantum of groundworks required to facilitate the proposal and whether these works would further elevate the site towards road level, which is likely in order to achieve sufficient gradient along the access / internal circulation road. Thus, whilst the actual impact on the dwellings to the north and those at a lower elevation along the regional road is challenging to quantify, and these impacts do not relate to overlooking, overshadowing or overbearance, they do introduce additional noise, lighting and general nuisance that in my opinion is at the threshold of significant. Moreover, the inter-related visual impact, the focus of the refusal reason, will adversely impact on the rural setting currently enjoyed by these dwellings. I am unpersuaded that additional planting, berms or lighting cowls can mitigate these concerns and I thus agree that impacts are significant having specific regard to the generally unspoilt baseline in the immediate vicinity.
- 9.2.14. Section 7.5 of the Development Management Guidelines (DEHLG, 2007) states that in the case of a use which may possibly be a “bad neighbour” to uses already existing in the immediate vicinity, it may sometimes be appropriate to grant a temporary permission in order to enable the impact of the development to be assessed, provided that such a permission would be reasonable having regard to the expenditure necessary to carry out the development. The option remains open for the Commission to grant permission on a temporary basis in accordance with the above guidance, and indeed restrict operation to between Easter and Halloween, as suggested by the applicant, but I do not recommend such a course of action given the quantum of site works anticipated to facilitate the proposal. The works are not reversible in my opinion.

Conclusion on Residential Amenity

- 9.2.15. Whilst I accept that there is a demand for this type of tourism development in Donegal generally and along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way specifically, this is not a suitable site. On balance, I consider that the proposal would significantly impact on existing residential amenities by reason of noise, lighting and general nuisance derived from its haphazard, transient nature and overall disconnect from the coastal tourism setting.
- 9.2.16. The proposal would therefore contravene criterion (g) of policy TOU-P-8 of the Development Plan and I recommend that this aspect of the refusal reason be upheld. I also recommend that the refusal reason be modified so as to ensure that the visual impacts on residential amenity are clearly distinguishable from visual amenity impacts.

9.3. Visual Amenity Impacts

- 9.3.1. As noted, visual amenity impacts are also referenced in the Council's refusal reason.

Refusal Reason

- 9.3.2. A second definitive bite point is set out under criterion (a) of Plan policy TOU-P-8. It requires that the location, siting and design of the development proposed (including associated infrastructure and landscaping arrangements) be of high quality, integrate successfully with, and not, either individually or in combination with existing and permitted developments, have an adverse impact on the scenic quality, visual amenity, rural character, streetscape, vernacular character or built environment of the area.

Appeal Grounds

- 9.3.3. The applicant suggests that the location, siting and design of the proposal, including associated infrastructure and landscaping, is of a high quality which integrates successfully with the scenic quality, visual amenity and rural character of the area; and the LVIA proves that effects to the area / community are very slight or imperceptible.
- 9.3.4. They also suggest that earth berms, tree / shrub planting and fencing can mitigate any visual concerns and state that the existing vegetation and topography provide screening to the dwelling to the north, adding that Areas of High Scenic Amenity permit sensitively integrated tourism development. However, I also note the suggestion that the proposal is seasonal, reversible and low profile, thus not a permanent alteration.

Observer's Comments

- 9.3.5. As noted above, the observer's raise concerns regarding visibility and light pollution.

Consideration of the Issues

- 9.3.6. Whilst I have reviewed the referenced LVIA in the applicant's appeal submission, it is important to note that it does not follow industry standard approaches for such an assessment, including but not limited to those outlined in *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA3), 3rd edition, (Landscape Institute, April 2013). Moreover, and as noted above, there is no information before the Commission to illustrate the level of groundworks required to facilitate the proposal and given the likelihood that the levels will be raised, including the proposed berms, this is of concern.

- 9.3.7. The appeal site, as noted, is located within an Area of High Scenic Amenity but it is also adjacent to an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity, and this setting is appreciable from the adjoining road network. Notwithstanding the level of groundworks anticipated to facilitate the proposal, which in itself will impact on the visual prominence of this exposed site, I am unconvinced that the haphazard, transient nature of the proposal, will successfully integrate with, or reflect the character and amenity of this baseline, much of which is derived from the scrubland cascading down from Naran Hill.
- 9.3.8. I note that the appeal site is also located along the key southern approach to Naran-Portnoo Strand, a significant tourism attraction and national Discovery Point along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way, albeit some 800 metres (half mile) from the site. Whilst I appreciate that the genesis of the proposal is grounded in this tourism resource, its evident detachment from the coastal tourism setting does not warrant the associated impacts on the visual and scenic amenities of this key approach road. Simply put, the adverse impacts on visual amenity are not outweighed by need for the development and in fact the proposal would likely materially detract from the tourism resource itself.

Conclusion on Visual Amenity

- 9.3.9. On balance, I consider that the proposal would adversely impact on the scenic quality, visual amenity and rural character of the area, and materially detract from the visual and scenic amenities of this important approach to Naran-Portnoo Strand, a significant tourism attraction and national Discovery Point along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way.
- 9.3.10. The proposal would therefore contravene criterion (a) of policy TOU-P-8 of the Development Plan in addition to policies TOU-P-2, TOU-P-3 and L-P-2 of the Plan. I therefore recommend that the refusal be broadly upheld as per the Council's decision.

9.4. Drainage – New Issue

- 9.4.1. As noted, policy TOU-P-8 is all-encompassing and sets out criteria which tourist developments shall comply with. Criterion (i) requires existing capacity in the public wastewater infrastructure or suitable on-site treatment to EPA standards in rural areas.

General Arrangements and Design

- 9.4.2. The proposed development includes the installation of a new on-site sewerage treatment system and percolation area. It would be located to the southeast corner of

the appeal site between the 35m and 34.5m contour lines and would be fed from an effluent disposal point at the camper van wash area to the east of camper bay No. 7.

- 9.4.3. The associated percolation area is located to the east of the treatment system and is stated to include a 45 square metre, raised sand polishing filter as per the site assessment report. This area is located between the 34.5m and 32.5m contour lines.
- 9.4.4. Assuming 60g BOD₅ per day PE, the site assessment report indicates that total PE would be 20.4. However, considering the possible seasonal and intermittent use in addition to the shower facility provided, it states that a PE 18 capacity system would be adequate to serve the proposal with secondary treatment designed on this basis.
- 9.4.5. The applicant's appeal submission, as noted, includes recommended conditions including that wastewater treatment shall be as per the EPA guidelines and the percolation area increased and implemented as per the HSE-EHO recommendations.
- 9.4.6. I have reviewed the EHO report, and in addition to the PE capacity of the proposed system, they raised concerns regarding the ability of the proposal to achieve the required minimum separation distances i.e., 28 metres from any accommodation type.
- 9.4.7. They note that the reason for the separation distance is to eliminate or reduce public health nuisance through exposure to foul odour and/or noise. Given the poor percolation rates identified in the trial holes, they also note that the gravel distribution layer, which underlies the sand polishing filter, should be sized in accordance with Option 6 in Table 10.1 of the EPA CoP (2021) i.e., at least 525 square metres in area.
- 9.4.8. Whilst I note the applicant's intention to adhere to these requirements, they did not take the opportunity to demonstrate that these minimum criteria are possible within the confines of the appeal site. A site where, as noted, localised topography is challenging.
- 9.4.9. Moreover, I note that the site assessment report is dated February 2021 and based on the 2009 CoP. The transitional arrangements under Circular Letter NRUP 01/2021 are explicit. They state that the 2009 CoP can only be used for site assessments and subsequent installations commenced before 7th June 2021 or where permission has been applied for before that date. The application date is 17th December 2025 and therefore it was incumbent on the applicant to carry out the site assessment in accordance with the 2021 CoP, including the requirement to pre-soak test holes twice.

Site Suitability

- 9.4.10. I have reviewed the site suitability assessment report, nonetheless. It indicates that the appeal site is located on a 'LI – locally important aquifer' where vulnerability is 'extreme'. The supporting maps in Appendix 2 of the report identifies the bedrock here is generally unproductive and clarifies the vulnerability as 'X – rock at or near surface'.
- 9.4.11. In this regard, the 'typical bedrock outcrops' illustrated in Appendix 1 of the report were indeed evident 'throughout the site' during my visit. Moreover, historical 25-inch mapping illustrates rock cropping and rough pasture which aligns with Teagasc maps.
- 9.4.12. The suitability assessment indicates that the trial hole was dug to 2mBGL and the water table is stated at 1.35mBGL. The soil conditions found in the trial hole are described as 'gravelly sandy silt / clay' but peat like material >1mBGL is stated as a cause of concern and thus groundwater is identified as a potential target risk at the appeal site.
- 9.4.13. Thus, a Ground Protection Response of 'R2¹' is noted by the applicant as per Table E1 of the EPA CoP. This indicates the acceptability of the appeal site subject to normal good practice with particular focus on the depth of subsoil over bedrock so the minimum depths are met, and the likelihood of microbial pollution is minimised etc.
- 9.4.14. Percolation test holes were dug and whilst Appendix 4 of the report illustrates pre-soaking, there is no indication that it occurred twice, as noted above. Indeed, I would have expected to see images of the test holes before being filled with water and the means by which the drop level was recorded. Moreover, there is no indication in the submitted report or layout plan as to where the test holes were located and whether the ground conditions correspond to the locus of the percolation area. This is critical given the ground conditions including possible varying depths of bedrock and the fact that subsurface (T) tests confirmed that the site is unsuitable for discharge at an invert of 0.65mBGL despite reasonable weather conditions on the date of actual assessment.
- 9.4.15. Based on Table 6.3 of the CoP, the site is unsuitable for a septic tank system as depth of unsaturated soil and/or subsoil beneath percolation trench and above the bedrock would be less than 1.20m. In this regard, the report records a surface (P) test value of 59.05. It states that this test was carried out to establish percolation values for soils that are being considered for use in either constructing a mounded percolation system or for use in polishing filters. The site assessment report goes on to recommend a

treatment system with pumped arrangement to a 6 metre by 7.5 metre sand polishing filter raised 0.5mAGL and underlaid by in situ subsoils between ground and 0.5mBGL.

9.4.16. Table 6.3 of the CoP requires a minimum depth of 0.9m of unsaturated soil and/or subsoil between the point of infiltration (the base of the distribution gravel) and the bedrock and the water table for infiltration areas following secondary systems such as that proposed. A section through the proposed WWTS has not been submitted and there is no detail in relation to the invert level of a 300mm gravel distribution layer as per EPA guidance and noted in the EHO report. This is hugely significant given the undulating, sloping site topography. I am also concerned with the recommendation to construct the WWTS in conjunction with a land drainage programme with the intention of lowering the existing water table. This would not be required if the site is suitable.

9.4.17. Moreover, the report states that the “client confirmed all test water had emptied the following morning” and this draws into question the impartiality of the report as a whole.

Conclusion on Drainage

9.4.18. Based on the information submitted, I am not convinced that the appeal site is suitable for development irrespective of whether an engineered solution is possible, including secondary and possibly tertiary treatment. The key issue here is varying depth of bedrock underlying the appeal site and accordingly the varying depth in groundwater.

9.4.19. In some instances, an engineered response simply cannot overcome the challenges presented and I am resolute in that view. I certainly reject the suggestion by the applicant that compliance with the EPA CoP can simply be conditioned, it cannot.

9.4.20. In the absence of sufficient information to demonstrate that the proposed development can be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the 2021 EPA CoP regarding groundwater protection, the Commission cannot be satisfied that the proposal would not be prejudicial to public health. This is a new issue, and the Commission may wish to seek the views of the parties. However, having regard to the other substantive reasons for refusal set out below, it may not be necessary to pursue the matter further.

9.4.21. Moreover, I do note that compliance with EPA standards is explicitly stated in TOU-P-8 and thus is relevant and an important policy bite point. Additionally, a deficient WWTS will give rise to general nuisance through exposure to foul odour and/or noise as noted by the EHO and thus remains highly relevant from a residential amenity perspective.

9.5. Other Issues

- 9.5.1. The observers raise a number of other issues in relation to the adequacy of existing parking facilities at the beach, adverse planning precedent and effects on wildlife i.e., Corncrake. They also raise traffic safety concerns and particularly in the case of pedestrians heading to and from the beach. I am, however, satisfied that my stated concerns regarding the detachment and disconnect of the appeal site to the Naran-Portnoo Strand and assessment of same has adequately reflected these concerns, albeit in the context of visual and residential amenity. I note that the planning authority did not raise any traffic or transport issues and I do not propose to either as a new issue. I am also satisfied that effects on wildlife is fully considered in Section 10 below.
- 9.5.2. Whilst planning precedent is also raised in the Council's refusal reason, and the applicant addresses this in their appeal grounds, I do not consider this a relevant ground for refusal. In this regard, I fully agree with the applicant that all appeal cases should be assessed and determined on their own merits having regard to the sensitivity of the receiving environment and the specifics regarding the proposed development.
- 9.5.3. The applicant does, however, list a number of 'supporting precedent cases' in their appeal statement; three indicated as 'Donegal cases' and ten as 'National cases'. They submit that the cited decisions demonstrate a consistent principle that small, low-impact, well-screened rural tourism developments are acceptable, even in scenic areas. I reviewed each of the cases on none of the thirteen relate to tourism proposals.

Conclusion on Other Issues

- 9.5.4. The above assessment represents my *de novo* consideration of all planning issues material to the proposed development for camper van park at the appeal site.

10.0 AA Screening

- 10.1. In accordance with Section 177U of the Planning Act, and on the basis of the information considered in this Appropriate Assessment screening, I conclude that it is not possible to exclude that the proposal alone or in combination with other plans and projects will give rise to significant effects on West of Ardara / Mass Road SAC, Inishkeel SPA or other European sites in view of those sites' conservation objectives.

10.2. This is a new issue, and the Commission may wish to seek the views of the parties, however this is not recommended given the other reasons for refusal noted previously.

11.0 Water Framework Directive

11.1. I have carried out a screening for the purposes of the WFD (Appendix 3). As noted above, and notwithstanding the relatively modest scale of the proposal, I am not satisfied that wastewater / stormwater would not result in a risk of deterioration of waterbodies or that it would not jeopardise these waterbodies in reaching their WFD objectives. On the basis of objective information, it cannot be concluded that the proposal will not result in a risk of deterioration on any water body, specifically groundwaters and coastal, either qualitatively or quantitatively or on a temporary or permanent basis or otherwise jeopardise any waterbody in reaching its objectives.

12.0 Recommendation

12.1. I recommend that permission be **refused** for the reasons and considerations below.

13.0 Reasons and Considerations

1. Having regard to the visually prominent and exposed nature of the appeal site devoid of substantial natural boundaries or screening, and its location within an Area of High Scenic Amenity, adjacent to an Area of Especially High Scenic Amenity, the proposed development, by virtue of its haphazard, transient nature, detachment from the coastal tourism setting and general failure to integrate with, and reflect the character and amenity of this landscape, would adversely impact on the scenic quality, visual amenity and rural character of the area, and materially detract from the visual and scenic amenities of this important approach to Naran-Portnoo Strand, a significant tourism attraction and national Discovery Point along the route of the Wild Atlantic Way. The proposed development, if permitted, would thus contravene policies TOU-P-2, TOU-P-3, TOU-P-8 (a) and L-P-2 of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

2. Having regard to the visually prominent and exposed nature of the appeal site devoid of substantial natural boundaries or screening, and its location in close proximity to adjacent and adjoining rural housing, the proposed development would significantly impact on existing residential amenities of same by virtue of its haphazard, transient nature, and particularly in terms of noise, lighting and general nuisance, and the overall disconnect from the coastal tourism setting. The proposed development, if permitted, would thus contravene policy TOU-P-8 (g) of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 and would therefore be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
3. It is considered that the proposed wastewater treatment system (WWTS) would be prejudicial to public health because:
 - (a) the poor percolation characteristics of the ground as indicated by the tests undertaken at the site, render it unsuitable for the on-site treatment / disposal of effluent from the development, notwithstanding the use of the secondary system proposed,
 - (b) the site is inadequate to permit the satisfactory disposal of treated effluent by percolation by virtue of the separation distances and topography involved.

In such circumstances, the proposed development, if permitted, would adversely impact on ground and surface water quality contrary to policies WW-P-2 and TOU-P-8 (i) and (p) of the County Donegal Development Plan 2024-2030 and to the objectives of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC.

4. Having regard to the proximity of the appeal site to nearby European sites and the paucity of information submitted with the application in this regard, including the full extent of groundworks, including those required to facilitate the proposed wastewater treatment system and stormwater drainage system, and the possibility of the associated effects of these works on West of Ardara/Mass Road SAC (site code 000197), and Clooney Lough specifically where the occurrence of *Najas flexilis* (Slender Naiad), a rare Annex II aquatic plant, is known, and on supporting habitat for Inishkeel SPA (site code 004116) and other sites of ornithological importance, the Commission cannot be satisfied that the proposed development, individually, or in combination with other plans and projects would

not be likely to have an adverse effect on these European sites in view of the sites conservation objectives. There remains significant reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed development would not adversely impact on the integrity of West of Ardara/Mass Road SAC, Inishkeel SPA and other European sites, and these matters cannot be addressed by way of planning conditions. In such circumstances, the Commission is currently precluded from granting permission.

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.

Philip Maguire

Inspectorate

10th July 2026

Appendix 1 (EIA Screening)

Form 1 – EIA Pre-Screening

Case Reference	PL-500984-DL-26
Proposed Development Summary	Camper van park (see IR for full description)
Development Address	Naran Td., Portnoo, Co. Donegal
	In all cases check box /or leave blank
1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a ‘project’ for the purposes of EIA? (For the purposes of the Directive, “Project” means: - The execution of construction works or of other installations or schemes, - Other interventions in the natural surroundings and landscape including those involving the extraction of mineral resources)	☒ Yes, it is a ‘Project’. Proceed to Q2.
	☐ No, No further action required.
2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)?	
☐ Yes, it is a Class specified in Part 1. EIA is mandatory. No Screening required. EIAR to be requested. Discuss with ADP.	
☒ No, it is not a Class specified in Part 1. Proceed to Q3	
3. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) OR a prescribed type of proposed road development under Article 8 of Roads Regulations 1994, AND does it meet/exceed the thresholds?	
☐ No, the development is not of a Class Specified in Part 2, Schedule 5 or a prescribed	

type of proposed road development under Article 8 of the Roads Regulations, 1994. No Screening required.	
☐ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class and meets/exceeds the threshold. EIA is Mandatory. No Screening Required	
☒ Yes, the proposed development is of a Class but is sub-threshold. Preliminary examination required. (Form 2) OR If Schedule 7A information submitted proceed to Q4. (Form 3 Required)	Class 12(d) 'permanent camp sites and caravan sites where the number of pitches would be greater than 100' 10 no. camper van parking bays / pitches proposed.

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: _____

Form 2 - EIA Preliminary Examination

Case Reference	PL-500954-DL-26
Proposed Development Summary	Camper van park (see IR for full description)
Development Address	Naran Td., Portnoo, Co. Donegal
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).	Permission is sought for a 10 no. bay camper van park, a 50.4sq.m single-storey office building, including toilet and shower facilities, and 5 no. parking spaces all served by on-site WWTS and accessed via the L2413. Visually prominent, locally undulating 1.15ha site between 38m to 40mAOD along the western boundary and 34m to 36mAOD along the eastern boundary but dropping down significantly to the southeast corner to between 34m and 27mAOD. Ground levels of the parking bays have not been indicated. Proposed FFL of office building is 37.5mAOD. Substantial excavations, cut and fill anticipated but not illustrated on the drawings – stability of underlying peat may also be an issue. Excavations will require the removal of peaty soils, boulder clay, rock/bedrock and vegetation. Construction activities would require the use of potentially harmful materials, such as fuels, concrete and other such substances and give rise to waste for disposal. Such wastes will be typical of construction sites and significant wastes; emission or pollutants are not anticipated. Noise and dust emissions during construction are likely but such construction impacts would be localised and temporary in nature. Operational impacts of the transient nature of the use have not been fully detailed. Connection to public water infrastructure is proposed. Application referred to Uisce Éireann but no response nor confirmation of feasibility (CoF) with application.
Location of development (The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the development in particular existing and approved land use, abundance/capacity of	Rough grazing scrubland with rock outcroppings within an Area of High Scenic Amenity; traversed by open drain. Nearest European site, West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC is within 65 metres of appeal site. It is also a proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA). Other sites in the geographic location include Inishkeel SPA, Sheskinmore

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).	Lough SPA and West Donegal Coast SPA. Sheskinmore Lough is also a wildfowl sanctuary with adjacent Nature Reserve. No other sensitive designations within 5km of the appeal site. One additional SPA (within commutable distance) and three additional SACs 5-10km range. There are no protected / NIAH structures in immediate proximity of the site, the closest being a water pump, post box and Edwardian-style house c. 500-700 metres northwest in Portnoo (NIAH refs. 40906416, 40906417 and 40831003) with another post box and National School building c. 600-650 metres west along the R261 (NIAH refs. 40906415 and 40906412). The nearest monument, a standing stone (SMR ref. DG064-008----), is located on Narin-Portnoo strand, c. 0.85km to the northwest. A church (SMR ref. DG064-007----) and graveyard (SMR ref. DG064-007001-) are located west of the shorefront car parking area. There are a significant number of sites of historic, cultural or archaeological significance on Inishkeel Island which is a state-owned National Monument in the care of the OPW.
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).	Likely effects would be generally limited to the construction phase through increased noise and dust from construction traffic and operations but will be substantially below the threshold of significance through established construction management practices. Notwithstanding the scale of the proposal, it is uncertain whether there is potential to adversely impact on environmental parameters or on the ecological sensitivities of the aforementioned European sites, but this is unlikely to reach the threshold of significant for the project as a whole. See AA Screening below.
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)

Appendix 2 (AA Screening)

Screening for Appropriate Assessment Test for likely significant effects	
Step 1: Description of the project and local site characteristics	
Brief description of project	Camper van park (see IR for full description).
Brief description of development site characteristics and potential impact mechanisms	Visually prominent, locally undulating 1.15ha site with rock outcrops and scrub / rough pasture. Proposed FFL of office building is 37.5mAOD – none proposed for parking bays. Substantial excavations, cut and fill anticipated but not illustrated on drawings. Excavations will require the removal of peaty soils, boulder clay, rock /bedrock and vegetation. stability of underlying peat may also be an issue. Southern and eastern boundaries are undefined; post and fencing with stone wall remnants and intermittent hedging to the west; trees and vegetation to the north. Open drain crossing the southern part of the site and groundwater vectors also possible given saturation. Construction activities would require the use of potentially harmful materials, such as fuels, concrete and other such substances and give rise to waste for disposal. Such wastes will be typical of construction sites and significant wastes; emission or pollutants are not anticipated. Noise and dust emissions during construction are likely but such construction impacts would be localised and temporary in nature. Operational impacts of the transient nature of the use have not been fully detailed. Connection to public water infrastructure is proposed. Application referred to Uisce Éireann but no response nor confirmation of feasibility (CoF) with application.
Screening report	No
Natura Impact Statement	No
Relevant submissions	Observer raises concerns in relation to Corncrake.
Additional information	Donegal Co. Council unable to screen out the need for AA – stated that an ecological report is required. I note that the application was also referred to An Taisce, DHLGH (DAU) and The Heritage Council and no objections were received by the planning authority.

Step 2. Identification of relevant European sites using the Source-pathway-receptor model				
European Site (code)	Qualifying interests ¹ Link to conservation objectives (NPWS, date)	Distance from proposed development (km)	Ecological connections ²	Consider further in screening ³ Y/N
West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC (000197)	Marine, coastal and freshwater habitat, temperate heath and scrub, <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands, natural and semi-natural grassland formations, raised bogs and mires and fens Geyer's Whorl Snail Freshwater Pearl Mussel Marsh Fritillary Atlantic Salmon Otter Harbour Seal Petalwort Slender Naiad Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2026)	c. 65m north of appeal site (from closest point)	Yes – indirect, tentative hydrological connection.	Y

Inishkeel SPA (004116)	Barnacle Goose Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2024)	c. 1.2km northwest of appeal site	Yes, indirect-tentative given proximity and suitability for foraging and/or roosting.	Y
Sheskinmore Lough SPA (004090)	Greenland White-fronted Goose Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2025)	c. 2.1km southwest of appeal site	Yes, indirect-tentative given proximity and suitability for foraging and/or roosting.	Y
West Donegal Coast SPA (004150)	Fulmar Cormorant Shag Peregrine Herring Gull Kittiwake Razorbill Chough Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2025)	c. 3.2km southwest of appeal site	Yes, indirect-tentative given proximity and suitability for foraging and/or roosting.	Y
Roaninish SPA (004121)	Barnacle Goose Herring Gull Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2025)	c. 6.6km northwest of appeal site	Yes, indirect-tentative given proximity and suitability for foraging and/or roosting.	Y
Slieve Tooley/Tormore Island/Loughros Beg Bay SAC (000190)	Marine and coastal habitat, Alpine and Boreal heaths, Blanket bogs Narrow-mouthed Whorl Snail	c. 7.3km south of appeal site	No, no hydrological connection or relevant mobile species due to distance.	N

	Otter Grey Seal Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2026)			
Gannivegil Bog SAC (000142)	Oligotrophic waters Northern Atlantic wet heaths Blanket bogs Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2017)	c. 9.9km northeast of appeal site	No, no hydrological connection or relevant mobile species.	N
Rutland Island and Sound SAC (002283)	Marine and coastal habitat Harbour Seal Conservation Objectives Link (NPWS, 2013)	c. 9.9km north of appeal site	No, no hydrological connection or relevant mobile species due to distance.	N

¹Summary description / **cross reference to NPWS website** is acceptable at this stage in the report

²Based on source-pathway-receptor: Direct/ indirect/ tentative/ none, via surface water/ ground water/ air/ use of habitats by mobile species

³if no connections: N

Further Commentary / Discussion

All Conservation Objective links are up to date at the time of writing and have been cross-referenced against the Statutory Instruments, where relevant.

Due to the anticipated scope of the works and notwithstanding the nature of the appeal site, I consider that the proposal is unlikely to generate impacts that could extend to a large geographical area, thus a potential zone of influence limited to c. 10km is reasonable.

Sources of impact and likely significant effects are considered in the Table below.

Step 3. Describe the likely effects of the project (if any, alone or in combination) on European Sites

AA Screening matrix

Site name Qualifying interests * priority habitat	Possibility of significant effects (alone) in view of the conservation objectives of the site*	
	Impacts	Effects
West of Ardara/Maas Road SAC (000197) Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Large shallow inlets and bays [1160] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Atlantic salt meadows (<i>Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima</i>) [1330] Mediterranean salt meadows (<i>Juncetalia maritimi</i>) [1410] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] Decalcified fixed dunes with <i>Empetrum nigrum</i> [2140]	Indirect: Given the topography and location of outfall, it is reasonable to consider that the existing open drain crossing the site flows towards Clooney Lough within the SAC, c. 450m northeast of the site. Substantial risk of surface water borne pollutants via this S-P-R during construction phase. During operation, stormwater follows a similar pathway, albeit subject to hydrocarbon interception prior to outfall. Resultant degradation of water quality has the potential to adversely impact on QIs of this SAC, and particularly on <i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad), the rare Annex II aquatic plant for which Clooney Lough is noted for and its occurrence there suggests that lake habitat 3130 is also present.	In the absence of evidence to demonstrate otherwise, it is not currently possible to conclude that the proposed development would be unlikely to generate impacts of a magnitude that could affect habitat quality within the SAC for the QIs listed, including but not limited to those mentioned opposite. Conservation Objectives could be undermined.

Atlantic decalcified fixed dunes (Calluno-Ulicetea) [2150] Dunes with <i>Salix repens</i> ssp. <i>argentea</i> (Salicion arenariae) [2170] Humid dune slacks [2190] Machairs (* in Ireland) [21A0] Oligotrophic waters containing very few minerals of sandy plains (Littorelletalia uniflorae) [3110] Oligotrophic to mesotrophic standing waters with vegetation of the <i>Littorelletea uniflorae</i> and/or <i>Isoeto-Nanojuncetea</i> [3130] Northern Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica tetralix</i> [4010] European dry heaths [4030] Alpine and Boreal heaths [4060] <i>Juniperus communis</i> formations on heaths or calcareous grasslands [5130] Semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland facies on calcareous substrates (Festuco-Brometalia) (* important orchid sites) [6210] Molinia meadows on calcareous, peaty or		
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clayey-silt-laden soils (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>) [6410] Lowland hay meadows (<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>, <i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>) [6510] Blanket bogs (* if active bog) [7130] Depressions on peat substrates of the <i>Rhynchosporion</i> [7150] Alkaline fens [7230] <i>Vertigo geyeri</i> (Geyer's Whorl Snail) [1013] <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater Pearl Mussel) [1029] <i>Euphydryas aurinia</i> (Marsh Fritillary) [1065] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] <i>Phoca vitulina</i> (Harbour Seal) [1365] <i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i> (Petalwort) [1395] <i>Najas flexilis</i> (Slender Naiad) [1833]		
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Uncertain	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? N/a	

	Impacts	Effects
Inishkeel SPA (004116) Barnacle Goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i> [A045]	Indirect: Conservation Objectives for the SPA indicate that foraging is currently associated with mostly improved and semi-improved agricultural grasslands and the maximum foraging distance is c. 7km for wintering birds. When roosting, this species uses open habitats that provide wide sightlines for birds. Loss of suitable ex-situ foraging and/or roosting habitat and general disturbance during the operational phase has the potential to adversely impact on the SPA's CO's.	Given the proximity of the SPA to the appeal site and in the absence of evidence to demonstrate otherwise, it is not currently possible to conclude that the proposed development would be unlikely to result in ex-situ habitat impacts and general disturbance of a magnitude that could affect the SCI species for which the SPA is designated. Conservation Objectives could be undermined.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Uncertain	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? N/a	
	Impacts	Effects
Sheskinmore Lough SPA (004090) Greenland White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i> [A395]	Indirect: Conservation Objectives for the SPA indicate that the wintering population can make extensive use of suitable habitats in important areas outside the SPA, for foraging and roosting but notes that	Given the proximity of the SPA to the appeal site and in the absence of evidence to demonstrate otherwise, it is not currently possible to conclude that the proposed development would be unlikely to result in ex-situ habitat impacts and general disturbance of a magnitude that could affect the SCI

	overnight roosting mainly consists of permanent waterbodies such as lakes. Foraging distances for wintering birds is stated as 5-8km from night roosts. Degradation of water quality during the construction and operational phases has the potential to impact on the Clooney Lough, as noted above, a possible ex-situ roosting site. Loss of ex-situ foraging habitat also a potential impact.	species for which the SPA is designated. Conservation Objectives could be undermined.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Uncertain	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? N/a	
	Impacts	Effects
West Donegal Coast SPA (004150) Fulmar <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> [A009] Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> [A017] Shag <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i> [A018] Peregrine <i>Falco peregrinus</i> [A103] Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i> [A184] Kittiwake <i>Rissa tridactyla</i> [A188]	Indirect: Conservation Objectives for the SPA indicate extensive foraging ranges for the species listed. Loss of suitable ex-situ foraging and/or roosting habitat and general disturbance during the operational phase has the potential to adversely impact on the SPA's CO's.	Given the proximity of the SPA to the appeal site and in the absence of evidence to demonstrate otherwise, it is not currently possible to conclude that the proposed development would be unlikely to result in ex-situ habitat impacts and general disturbance of a magnitude that could affect the SCI species for which the SPA is designated. Conservation Objectives could be undermined.

Razorbill <i>Alca torda</i> [A200]		
Chough <i>Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax</i> [A346]		
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Uncertain	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? N/a	
	Impacts	Effects
Roaninish SPA (004121) Barnacle Goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i> [A045] Herring Gull <i>Larus argentatus</i> [A184]	Indirect: As per Inishkeel SPA (above) in respect of Barnacle Goose; the appeal site is just within the foraging range of 7km i.e., 6.6km. Conservation Objectives for the SPA indicate extensive foraging ranges for Herring Gull. Loss of suitable ex-situ foraging and/or roosting habitat and general disturbance during the operational phase has the potential to adversely impact on the SPA's CO's.	Given the proximity of the SPA to the appeal site and in the absence of evidence to demonstrate otherwise, it is not currently possible to conclude that the proposed development would be unlikely to result in ex-situ habitat impacts and general disturbance of a magnitude that could affect the SCI species for which the SPA is designated. Conservation Objectives could be undermined.
	Likelihood of significant effects from proposed development (alone): Uncertain	
	If No, is there likelihood of significant effects occurring in combination with other plans or projects? N/a	
Further Commentary / discussion (only where necessary)		
N/a.		

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

Based on the paucity of information provided by the applicant and having regard to my subsequent site visit and review of the relevant Conservation Objectives and supporting documents, it is not currently possible to exclude the possibility that the proposed development alone would result in significant effects on West of Ardara / Mass Road SAC, Inishkeel SPA or other European sites from effects associated with the construction and operational phase of the proposed development.

Screening Determination**Finding of 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 it is not possible to exclude that the proposal alone or in combination with other plans and projects will give rise to significant effects on West of Ardara / Mass Road SAC, Inishkeel SPA or other European sites in view of those sites' conservation objectives.

Appropriate Assessment is required.

Appendix 3 (WFD Screening)

WFD IMPACT ASSESSMENT STAGE 1: SCREENING			
Step 1: Nature of the Project, the Site and Locality			
An Bord Pleanála ref. no.	PL-500984-DL-26	Townland, address	Naran Td, Portnoo, Co. Donegal
Description of project		Camper van park (see IR for full description)	
Brief site description, relevant to WFD Screening		Visually prominent, locally undulating greenfield site with rock outcrops and scrub / rough pasture. Roughly rectangular shaped plot with a stated area of 1.5ha and generally sloping from west to east and south to north i.e., between 38m to 35mAOD along the northern boundary and 40m to 34mAOD along the eastern boundary but dropping down significantly to the southeast corner from c. 34m to 27mAOD. Section 3.1 of the site suitability assessment report provides a 'visual assessment' of the site as per the site characterisation proforma albeit in accordance with the 2009 EPA CoP. It states that ground conditions are generally firm underfoot although soft in parts beyond the site. Notably, it records rush / bedrock / heathery outcrop in parts through the site. The ground conditions were however generally saturated underfoot with localised ponding observed at the time of inspection along with common rush <i>Juncus effusus</i>, bog cotton <i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>, and yellow iris <i>Iris pseudacorus</i> all present. An open drain traverses the southern half of the south and exits at the southeast corner.	

Proposed surface water details			‘Watercourse’ ticked in Q. 20 of the Application Form. Stormwater will be piped to open drain following hydrocarbon interception. Other overland flow within the site is directed to open drain by gradient.			
Proposed water supply source & available capacity			‘New’ ‘public mains’ ticked in Q. 20 of the Application Form. Uisce Éireann mains water connection – potential capacity available – Level of Service (LoS) improvement required (Glenties-Ardara).			
Proposed wastewater treatment system & available capacity, other issues			‘New’ ‘other on-site treatment system’ ticked in Q. 20 of the Application Form and specified as a ‘wastewater treatment system with sand polishing filter (45sq.m)’.			
Others?			N/a			
Step 2: Identification of relevant water bodies and Step 3: S-P-R connection						
Identified water body	Distance to (m)	Water body name(s) (code)	WFD Status	Risk of not achieving WFD Objective e.g.at risk, review, not at risk	Identified pressures on that water body	Pathway linkage to water feature (e.g. surface run-off, drainage, groundwater)
Groundwater Waterbody	Underlying site	Northwest Donegal IE_NW_G_049	Good	Not at risk	None identified	Yes – indication of high water table in the soils
River Waterbody	c. 280m	MAAS_010 IE_NW_38M880 970	Moderate	Review	None identified	Yes – via surface water via existing drain / runoff (topography).

Step 2: Detailed description of any component of the development or activity that may cause a risk of not achieving the WFD Objectives having regard to the S-P-R linkage.							
CONSTRUCTION PHASE							
No.	Component	Waterbody receptor (EPA Code)	Pathway (existing and new)	Potential for impact/ what is the possible impact	Screening Stage Mitigation Measure*	Residual Risk (yes/no) Detail	Determination** to proceed to Stage 2. Is there a risk to the water environment? (if 'screened' in or 'uncertain' proceed to Stage 2.
1.	Ground	Northwest Donegal IE_NW_G_04 9	Existing – indication of high water table in the soils. New – via exposed soils and groundwater flooding i.e., saturation in the surface and subsurface layers.	Siltation, pH (Concrete), hydrocarbon spillages. Impact on hydrological regime due to site excavation and increased ponding.	None proposed but standard construction practices anticipated.	No	Screened out

2.	River	MAAS_010 IE_NW_38M 880970	Existing – surface water pathway overland (steep topography) and via open drain. New – stormwater infrastructure pathway which outfalls to open drain and in turn discharges this stream and on to Clooney Lough.	Siltation, pH (Concrete), hydrocarbon spillages, surface water outfall. Impact on hydrological regime (open drain) due to site excavation and increased site ponding.	None proposed but standard construction practices anticipated. Measures may also include specific mitigation to protect receiving waterbodies within SAC.	No	Screened out
OPERATIONAL PHASE							
1.	Ground	Northwest Donegal IE_NW_G_04 9	On-site wastewater treatment (WWTS) / stormwater infrastructure.	Hydrocarbon spillage / pollution, stormwater / wastewater pollution.	None proposed and concerns relate to the interaction between the WWTS and	Yes Potential remains for untreated effluent / stormwater migration directly	Screened in

					stormwater drainage given the high water table, proximity of the proposed percolation area to the storm drain and lack of SuDS.	to ground / surface waters in the absence of systems specifically designed in response to the ground conditions.	
2.	River	MAAS_010 IE_NW_38M 880970	Stormwater would discharge Clooney Lough. On-site wastewater treatment (WWTS).	As above.	As above	Yes. As above.	Screened in
DECOMMISSIONING PHASE							
1.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

STAGE 2: ASSESSMENT					
Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives					
Surface Water					
Development/Activity e.g. culvert, bridge, other crossing, diversion, outfall, etc	<u>Objective 1: Surface Water</u> Prevent deterioration of the status of all bodies of surface water	<u>Objective 2: Surface Water</u> Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of surface water with aim of achieving good status	<u>Objective 3: Surface Water</u> Protect and enhance all artificial and heavily modified bodies of water with aim of achieving good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status	<u>Objective 4: Surface Water</u> Progressively reduce pollution from priority substances and cease or phase out emission, discharges and losses of priority substances	Does this component comply with WFD Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4? (if answer is no, a development cannot proceed without a derogation under art. 4.7)
	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 1:	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 2:	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 3:	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 4:	
Stormwater / Wastewater Drainage	Surface water management to prevent pollution and control run-off quantity; specific wastewater management measures to demonstrate site suitability and negate the risk of migration to stormwater infrastructure in order to prevent pollution.	Surface water management to prevent pollution and control run-off quantity; specific wastewater management measures to demonstrate site suitability and negate the risk of migration to stormwater infrastructure in order to prevent pollution.	N/A	N/a	No

Details of Mitigation Required to Comply with WFD Objectives – Template				
Groundwater				
Development/Activity e.g. abstraction, outfall, etc.	<u>Objective 1: Groundwater</u> Prevent or limit the input of pollutants into groundwater and to prevent the deterioration of the status of all bodies of groundwater	<u>Objective 2: Groundwater</u> Protect, enhance and restore all bodies of groundwater, ensure a balance between abstraction and recharge, with the aim of achieving good status*	<u>Objective 3: Groundwater</u> Reverse any significant and sustained upward trend in the concentration of any pollutant resulting from the impact of human activity	Does this component comply with WFD Objectives 1, 2, 3 & 4? (if answer is no, a development cannot proceed without a derogation under art. 4.7)
	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 1:	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 2:	Describe mitigation required to meet objective 3:	
Stormwater / Wastewater Drainage	Surface water management to prevent pollution and control run-off quantity; specific wastewater management measures to demonstrate site suitability and negate the risk of migration of pollutants to groundwater.	Surface water management to prevent pollution and control run-off quantity; specific wastewater management measures to demonstrate site suitability and negate the risk of migration of pollutants to groundwater.	N/A	No

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