



COAKLEY O'NEILL
town planning

Planning Report

Proposed Footbridge, Oughterard, Co. Galway

Prepared in June, 2025 on behalf of the

AtkinsRéalis

Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd.

📍 NSC Campus, Mahon, Cork


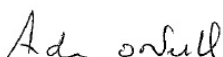
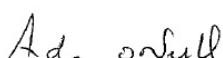
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 We, Coakley O'Neill Town Planning Ltd, NSC Campus, Mahon, Cork, have been instructed by AtkinsRéalis to prepare this planning report to accompany a planning application for the construction of a new footbridge over the Owenriff River, located approximately 150m downstream (north-east) of the existing N59 road bridge in the townlands of Cregg, Carrowmanagh, and Fough West, Oughterard, Co. Galway.
- 1.2 The proposed development will provide a new safe link for pedestrians and cyclists between N59 Clifden Road (Main Street) and Carrowmanagh in Oughterard, enhancing sustainable transportation, permeability and accessibility.
- 1.3 The planning application is to be made to An Bord Pleanála under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

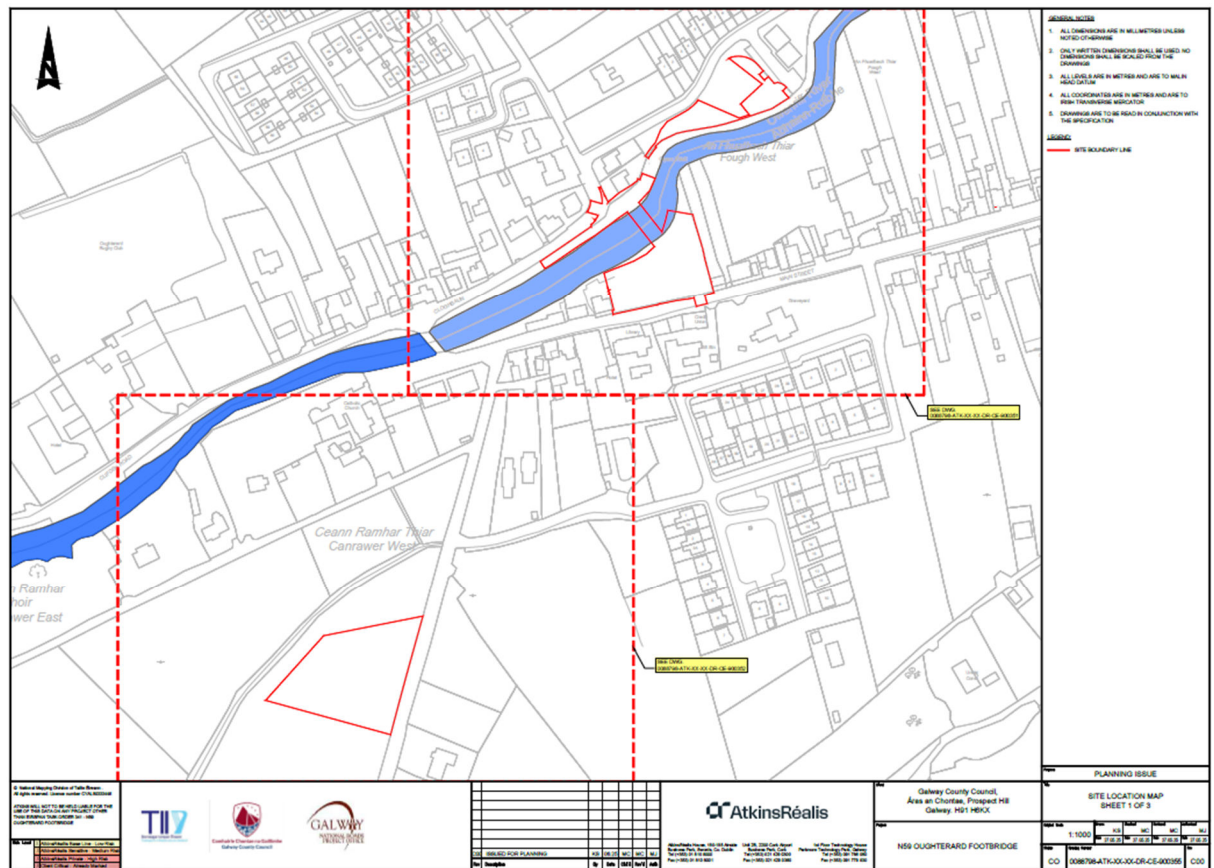


Figure 1: Proposed Development Site (generally identified in red)

- 2.1 The proposed development site is principally located in Oughterard town centre at the Owenriff River, to the north-east of the existing N59 Oughterard Bridge.

- 2.2 Adjacent to the northern riverbank is a riverside track which forms part of the Western Way, and adjacent to the track is a two-storey detached dwelling, with a low boundary wall, and to the west of which is a junction with the local road at Carrowmanagh. Adjacent to the south riverbank is part of the eastern curtilage of a two-storey detached dwelling known as The Old Barracks, and the N59 Clifden Road. The riverbank itself is 5-6m deep, sloping towards the river, and is characterised by amenity grassland with well-spaced medium sized trees. The lower area of the southern riverbank is c. 3-4m wide, with a steep gradient to the upper level, and is characterised by a small area of mixed Broadleaved Woodland.
- 2.3 The location of the proposed footbridge straddling the Owenriff River is c. 0.25ha in area. The proposed development site also includes a section of Carrowmanagh Park (c. 0.14ha) and an area to west of Station Road (c. 0.45ha). The overall site area is c. 0.84ha.

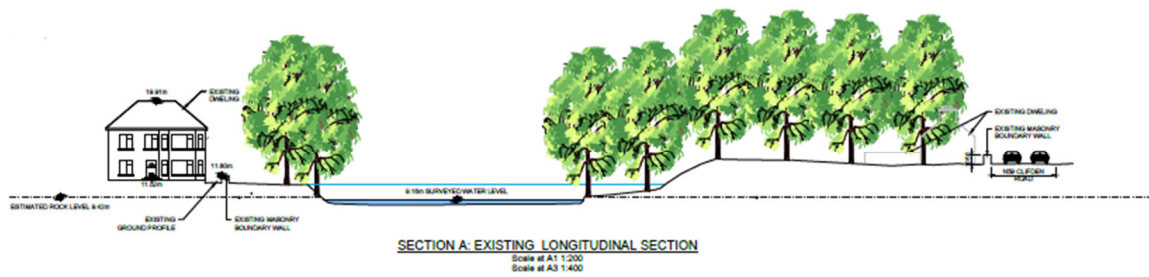


Figure 2: Existing Longitudinal Section

- 2.4 There are no protected structures, NIAH listings or recorded monuments at the proposed development site. The proposed development site is located in the Oughterard Architectural Conservation Area (ACA). It is also located in the Lough Corrib SAC (site code: 000297) and is c. 1.8km upstream of the Lough Corrib SPA (site code: 004042).



Plate 1: View of the proposed development site from the existing N59 road bridge



Plate 2: View of the existing two-storey detached dwelling, the existing boundary wall, the riverside walkway, and the northern riverbank



Plate 3: View of southern riverbank from the northern riverbank



Plate 4: View of The Old Barracks, the existing boundary wall, and the broadleaf woodland along the southern riverbank

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

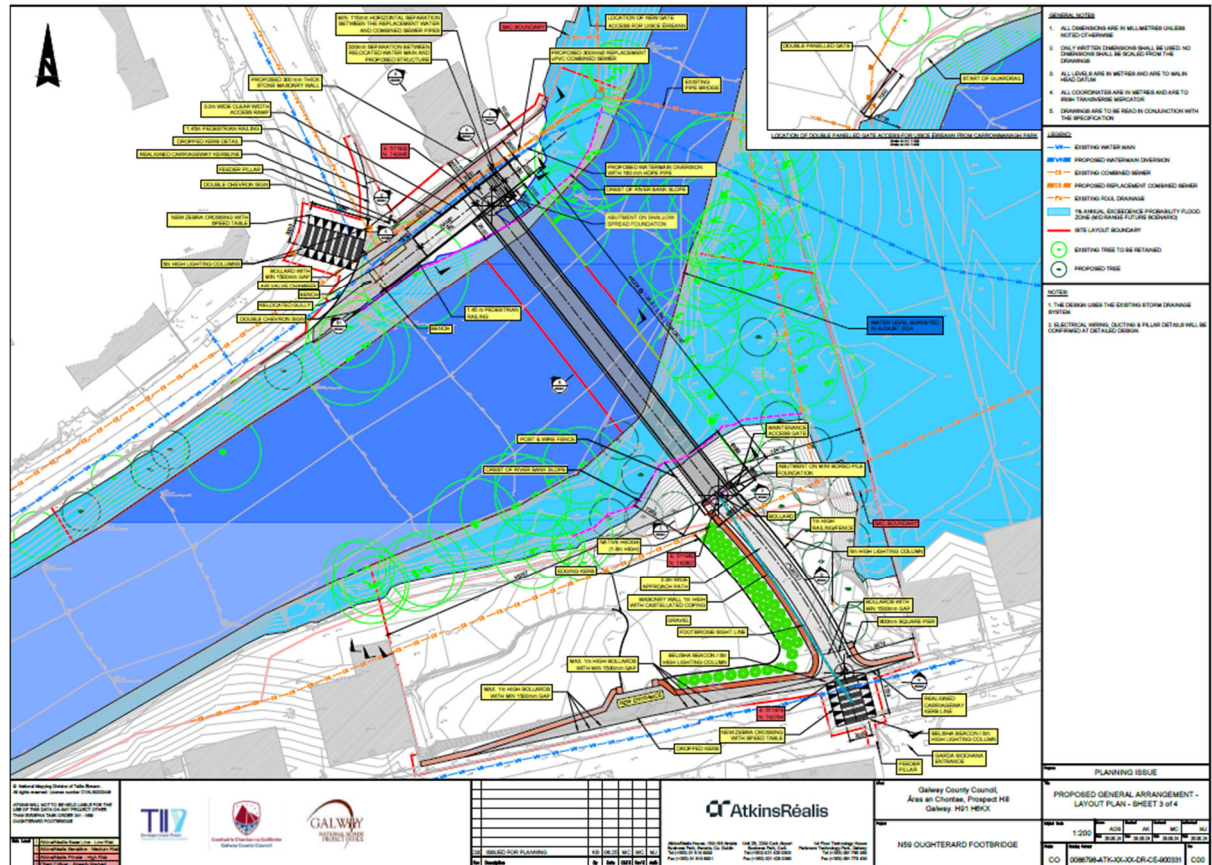


Figure 3: Proposed Development

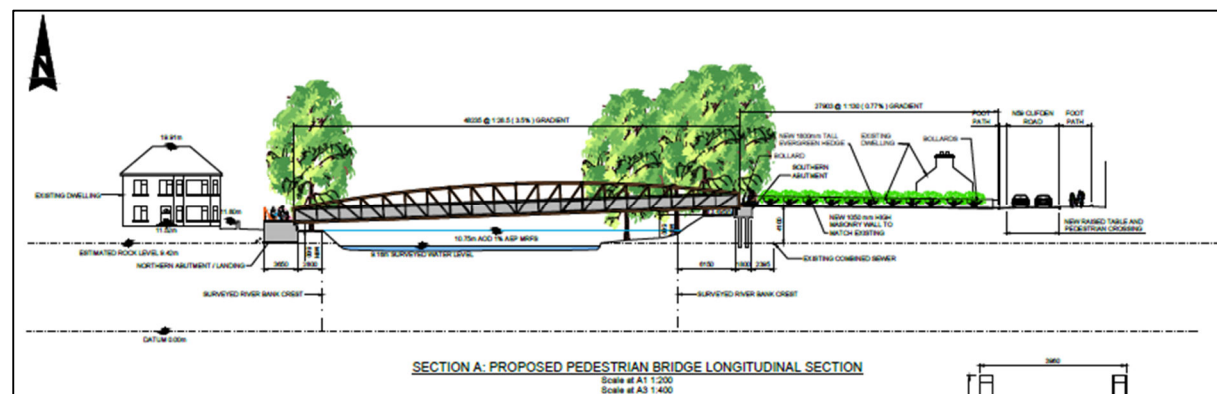


Figure 4: Proposed Longitudinal Section

- 3.1 Galway County Council intends to seek the approval of An Bord Pleanála under Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) to carry out a proposed development, described below.
- 3.2 The proposed development presented herein will consist of the construction of a new low, steel bow-string truss pedestrian footbridge over the Owenriff River, located approximately 150m downstream

(north-east) of the existing N59 road bridge, in the townlands of Cregg, Carrowmanagh, and Fough West, Oughterard, County Galway.

- 3.3 The proposed footbridge will be up to approximately 3.6m in height, and approximately 48.2m in length, with a 3m clear deck width. It will be a single-span footbridge with abutments to either side of the Owenriff River, and there will be no instream works. It will also contain a 3m clear width access ramp to tie into the Carrowmanagh Road to the north-west with stepped access to the riverside walkway. A new pedestrian crossing with speed table is proposed on Carrowmanagh Road with realigned kerb line. A path is proposed to tie into the N59 Clifden Road to the south-east with a new pedestrian crossing with speed table, and realigned carriageway kerb line. Works will include the demolition and rebuilding/realignment of the existing boundary wall to the existing dwelling to the north (adjacent to the riverside walkway) and to the existing dwelling to the south known as The Old Barracks. Ancillary works will include walls, fencing, pedestrian railings, bollards, signage, lighting, benches, hard and soft landscaping, including compensatory tree planting at Carrowmanagh Park, the diversion/replacement of an existing watermain and combined sewer, and a temporary construction compound on lands at Station Road, Oughterard.
- 3.4 While the bridge is designed as a pedestrian footbridge and not a combined pedestrian & cycle bridge, it will benefit the cycling community by providing a safe route for dismounted cyclists between the N59 Clifden Road and Carrowmanagh Road. Technical Note 0088798DG0033, 'Bridge Width, Jan'25, enclosed with the application, describes the decision-making process in this regard.



Figure 5: Proposed Landscape Plan for Carrowmanagh Park

4.0 PLANNING ROUTE

- 4.1 Having regard to Article 80(1)(c) of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, the construction of a bridge constitutes a class of development prescribed for the purposes of Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. Planning permission is therefore required.
- 4.2 The proposed development has been screened against the Schedule 5 Parts 1 and 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. The proposed development has also been screened against the Schedule 7 and 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended. Neither a mandatory EIAR nor the preparation of a sub-threshold EIAR is required.
- 4.3 The proposed development site, which is located in the Lough Corrib SAC (site code: 000297) and is c. 1.8km upstream of the Lough Corrib SPA (site code: 004042), has also been screened for Appropriate Assessment. The Screening Report prepared by AtkinsRéalis and included with the application states that it cannot be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed works will not, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, give rise to any impacts which would constitute significant effects on Lough Corrib SAC (site code: 000297), in view of its conservation objectives. Therefore, it is recommended that the competent authority in this case may determine that Appropriate Assessment is required in respect of the proposed footbridge in Oughterard, Co. Galway.
- 4.4 The Appropriate Assessment undertaken by AtkinsRéalis, the Natura Impact Statement for which is included with the planning application, has concluded that, given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in the NIS, there is no reasonable scientific doubt remaining as to the absence of adverse effects on Lough Corrib SAC, or any other Natura 2000 site, in view of their conservation objectives.
- 4.5 Section 177AE(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, states that *where an appropriate assessment is required in respect of development by a local authority that is a planning authority, whether in its capacity as a planning authority or in any other capacity, the local authority shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, a Natura impact statement in respect thereof.* Section 177AE (3) states that *where a Natura impact statement has been prepared pursuant to Subsection (1), the local authority shall apply to the Board for approval and the provisions of Part XAB of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, shall apply to the carrying out of the appropriate assessment.*
- 4.6 In this context, the planning application for the proposed development is to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Framework (NPF) First Revision 2025

- 5.1 Section 1.3 of the NPF sets out the national strategic outcomes for the future development of the country to 2040, and emphasises, among others, compact growth, sustainable mobility, enhanced amenities and heritage, and a transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

- 5.2 The NPF also sets out a number of national policy objectives focused on sustainable transportation, greater accessibility, and improved air quality arising from an increased use of alternatives to the car, as follows:

National Policy Objective (NPO) 37

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

NPO 93

Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.

- 5.3 The NPF also advocates good placemaking, and to deliver good quality spaces for people to live and work in, as follows:

NPO12

Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.

NPO 14

Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.

National Policy Objective 20

In meeting urban development requirements, there will be a presumption in favour of development that can encourage more people and generate more jobs and activity within existing cities, towns and villages, subject to development meeting appropriate planning standards and achieving targeted growth.

- 5.4 The proposed development is fully aligned with the provisions of the NPF First Revision, as it:

- Will contribute to the creation of a liveable high quality urban place consistent with National Policy Objective 12;
- Will rejuvenate Oughterard with an enhanced level of amenity, consistent with National Policy Objective 14;
- Will encourage more activity in Oughterard, consistent with National Policy Objective 20;
- Will ensure the integration of a safe and convenient alternative to the car, prioritising walking and cycling accessibility consistent with National Policy Objective 37; and
- Will assist in improving air quality by facilitating increased walking and cycling in Oughterard, consistent with National Policy Objective 93.

Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2025

- 5.5 The key focus of the CAP is to identify how the Government plans to reduce Ireland's growing greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and achieve climate neutrality by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. The proposed development will have a positive impact on climate change by maximising the potential for sustainable transportation modes.

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021

- 5.6 The Act sets out that the state shall pursue the transition to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by the end of the year 2050. It brings in a system of 5-year economy-wide carbon budgets, which will outline a ceiling for total greenhouse gas emissions. There is also a requirement for all local authorities to prepare individual climate action plans which will include both mitigation and adaptation measures. It is in this context that the proposed bridge is being advanced. It will contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions in Oughterard and assist in transitioning to a climate resilient and climate neutral economy by 2050.

National Sustainable Mobility Policy (SMP) (2022)

- 5.7 The SMP, which was published in April 2022, sets out Government's strategic policy framework for supporting walking, cycling and public transport use in Ireland to 2030, laying the foundations for the required system change in transport that will help achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.
- 5.8 Of all travel modes, the Policy indicates that walking and cycling have the lowest environmental impact. The SMP recognises that to successfully promote walking and cycling as a realistic alternative to the private car, a safe and pleasant experience must be provided. The proposed development is aligned with the SMP as it will contribute to improved infrastructure in the area that will assist in encouraging an increased uptake in active travel modes and will protect and maintain the safety of existing walking, cycling and public transport networks and ensuring that new sustainable mobility infrastructure meets the highest safety standards.

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

- 5.9 The RSES sets out the 12-year programme to translate the overarching objectives of the NPF to a local level. In this context, the RSES highlights the significance of Galway to drive investment and growth for the north-western region, being the only designated city in the region.
- 5.10 Section 3.3 of the RSES seeks to achieve better integration between land use and transportation planning. RPO 3.5 seeks to identify and develop quality green infrastructure.
- 5.11 The RSES sets out a number of policy objectives to support the development of pedestrian infrastructure to improve connectivity within the region, highlighting the broader benefits of infrastructure in terms of tourism, place-making, health and well-being, including:

RPO 6.26

The walking and cycling offer within the region shall be improved to encourage more people to walk and cycle, through:

(b) Safe walking and cycle infrastructure shall be provided in urban and rural areas, the design shall be informed by published design manuals, included the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and the NTA Cycle Manual.

RPO 6.29

The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life.

RPO 6.30

Planning at the local level should promote walking, cycling and public transport by maximising the number of people living within walking and cycling distance of their neighbourhood or district centres, public transport services and other services at the local level such as schools.

RPO 6.31

New development areas should be permeable for walking and cycling and the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling facilities should be undertaken where practicable in existing neighbourhoods, to give a competitive advantage to these modes. Prioritisation should be given to schools and areas of high employment density.

RPO 7.9

Promote the provision of high-quality, accessible and suitably proportioned areas of public open spaces and promote linkage with social, cultural and heritage sites and buildings. In this process prioritise access for walking and cycling.

5.12 The proposed development is fully aligned with these regional policy objectives, as it will:

- Improve the walking and cycling offered in Oughterard, consistent with policy objective RPO 6.26;
- Enhance permeability in Oughterard, consistent with policy objective RPO 6.29;
- Promote walking and cycling in Oughterard, consistent with policy objective RPO 6.30;
- Give a competitive advantage to walking and cycling, consistent with policy objective RPO 6.31; and
- Prioritise access for walking and cycling, consistent with policy objective RPO 7.9.

Galway County Development Plan (GCDP) 2022-2028

5.13 The proposed development site is subject to the provisions of the GCDP.

5.14 Oughterard is identified in the core strategy of the GCDP as a Small Growth Town. Table 2.12 of the GCDP describes such Towns as small towns with local service and employment potential. It is further stated that there is a need to promote regeneration and revitalisation of such towns and support local enterprise and employment opportunities to ensure their viability as service centres for surrounding rural areas. In Table 2.2 of the GCDP, a population of 1,318 persons was recorded in 2016 (CSO), and an allocation of an additional 350 persons is identified for the town to 2028 in the core strategy Table 2.11, with an allocation of 201 no. houses to 2028.

5.15 Section 2.3.10 of the GCDP states that the focus on the core strategy for County Galway includes support for the Small Growth Towns as areas for local services, residential and employment potential. Furthermore, policy objective CS 3 of the GCDP, in relation to Population Growth, seeks to support and manage the self-sufficient sustainable development of all settlements in a planned manner, with population growth and the development of economic, physical and social infrastructure.

5.16 In addition, one of the key principles of the core strategy is Climate Change and Environmental Sensitivity, and it is noted that the GCDP has a critical role to play in ensuring the communities develop having regard to sustainable infrastructure networks which build resilience to climate change.

5.17 The core strategy Map, Map 2.1, of the GCDP also identifies that Oughterard is located in a strategic development corridor. Map 5.1 of the GCDP also includes Oughterard as part of the county's economic engine.

5.18 Section 2.4.4 of the GCDP in relation to Future Settlement Growth notes that the further development of the county will be guided by the objectives and national and regional policy Small Growth Towns to grow to a sustainable level. Section 2.4.4 also seeks to facilitate and promote a transition to a low carbon society.

5.19 Chapter 3 of the GCDP sets out the county's vision in relation to placemaking, that is:

To develop the urban and rural settlements of the county as vibrant, connected and serviced locations that are attractive places to live, work and visit in a sustainable manner, based on the principles of placemaking, compact growth, high quality public realm where residential developments are connected to services and employment locations.

In implementing this vision, the Council aims to promote town and village centre living in a high-quality environment with good connectivity and access to local services, and to facilitate town and village centre public realm improvement works, regeneration and infrastructure upgrades as deemed appropriate. In this regard, policy objective AH 12 Placemaking for Towns and Villages seeks to promote the value of placemaking in co-operation with communities in their towns, villages and local areas.

- 5.20 In this context, and having regard to the nature and extent of the proposed development, policy objectives PM 4 and PM5, are of note:

PM 4: Sustainable Movement within Towns: It is a policy objective of the Planning Authority to encourage modal shift in our towns to more sustainable transport alternatives through mixed use development that enables local living and working which is well connected to sustainable transport infrastructure such as walking, cycling, public bus and rail transport.

PM 5: Sustainable Transport: Promote sustainable transport options as an alternative to the private car for people to access local services which will facilitate the transition to a low carbon climate resilient society.

- 5.21 Chapter 6 of the GCDP sets out the strategic aims and objectives for Transport and Movement in the county and one of the key strategic aims set out in the GCDP is to support the sustainable modes of transport and the transition to a low carbon economy.

- 5.22 The proposed development is supported by policy objective GCTPS 3: Sustainable Transport which seeks *to support a variety of measures which will reduce car dependency for residents and will specifically seek to improve access to sustainable transport choices (including responsive and "flexible" modes) for those residents in rural areas of the County.*

- 5.23 The proposed development is also supported by policy objective GCTPS 4: Walking and Cycling of the Plan which provides:

Support for, and enhancement of, existing and new walking and cycling networks as the "first choice" for shorter local journeys and to link settlements within the County and to Galway City.

- 5.24 Further, the GCDP sets out a number of policy objectives to support the development of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the region, with which the proposed development is aligned, including:

- *Objective ILUTP 1 Sustainable Transportation: Encourage transition towards sustainable and low carbon transport modes, through the promotion of alternative modes of transport, and*

'walkable communities' and Active Travel, together with promotion of compact urban forms close to public transport corridors to encourage more sustainable patterns of movement.

- *Objective WC1 Pedestrian and Cycling Infrastructure: To require the design of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure to be in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, TII Publications, 'The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads', and the NTA document Permeability: Best Practice Guide.*
- *Objective WC 4 Modern Network of Walking and Cycling Infrastructure: To continue to work and engage with the National Transport Authority, the Department of Transport and other agencies in developing a modern network of walking and cycling infrastructure in the County.*
- *Objective PT 1 Sustainable Modes of Transport: To encourage a modal shift from use of the private car towards more sustainable modes of transport.*

5.25 It is noted that the proposed development area lies within Oughterard Architectural Conservation Area. In this context, policy objective AH4 Architectural Conservation Areas seeks to *Protect, conserve and enhance the special character of the Architectural Conservation Areas (ACA) included in this plan through the appropriate management and control of the design, location and layout of new development, modifications, alterations or extensions to existing structures, surviving historic plots and street patterns and/or modifications to the character or setting of the Architectural Conservation Area. Works within the ACA shall ensure the conservation of traditional features and building elements that contribute to the character of the area. The special character of an area includes its traditional building stock and material finishes, spaces, streetscape, shop fronts, landscape and setting. New proposals shall have appropriate regard to scale, plot, form, mass, design, materials, colours and function.* A Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Report (AMS, 2024) has concluded that the proposed new footbridge will positively contribute to the built heritage of Oughterard and amenity of the Owenriff River.

5.26 The proposed development site is located in the Lake Environs Landscape Character Area and is identified as 'Class 4: Iconic' where the area has a *'Unique Landscape with high sensitivity to change'*. Oughterard is located along the Lough Corrib Scenic Route and the Galway Clifden Scenic Route. There are also a number of Protected Views in the vicinity of Oughterard, but not within the town itself. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Eamonn Byrne Landscape Architects Ltd which states that the susceptibility of this landscape to the proposed development type i.e. a pedestrian scale bridge crossing, within a site that is partially screened by intervening built development or vegetation is medium.

5.27 In addition, Section 8.1 of Volume 2 of the GCDP sets out the following policy objectives for Oughterard:

OSGT 7 Public Infrastructure

Support and encourage infrastructural development and improvement works that benefit Oughterard as an SGT and the wider Region.

OSGT 8 Pedestrian and Cycle Network

Encourage and support the development of a series of pedestrian and cycle routes linking the residential areas to the town centre and local community services, where feasible.

5.28 The GCDP indicates that part of the northern extent of the proposed bridge and the proposed tree planting area on Carrowmanagh Park is located in Flood Zone A of the Owenriff River. However, the OPW Section 50 report prepared by SLR Environmental Consulting (Ireland) Ltd (November 2024) and approved by the OPW, and included with this application, has concluded that *'the soffit level of the proposed bridge is at least 772mm above the peak 1% AEP MRFS flood event in the river. This is in accordance with the OPW requirements which sets the freeboard being at least 300mm above the flood level. The proposed pedestrian bridge will be outside of the 1% AEP MRFS flood extent. Therefore, it won't have an effect on the flood levels in the river'*. The OPW Section 50 Report, which is based on site-specific topographical survey data and the latest hydrology datasets, is considered to be more accurate than the indicative flood mapping in the GCDP. Based on the Section 50 report, it is considered that the proposed development site is located in Flood Zone B or C in relation to the Flood Zone B designation, and having regard to Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of the Planning and Flood Risk Management Guidelines 2009, the proposed development would be considered to be less vulnerable development (local transport infrastructure) which is justified in the context of extensive national, regional and local level policy support for increased walking infrastructure and improved accessibility in urban areas. Mitigation in the form of a flood risk management plan is proposed, to be completed prior to the commencement of development, in the event of a grant of planning permission.

5.29 The proposed development is also supported by the applicable zoning objectives:

R Residential – Existing: To protect and improve residential amenities of existing residential areas. To provide for house improvements alterations, extensions and appropriate infill residential development in accordance with principles of good design and protection of existing residential amenity.

OS – Open Space/Recreation & Amenity: To protect and enhance existing open space and provide for recreational and amenity space.

TI – Transport Infrastructure: Facilitate the provision and maintenance of essential transportation infrastructure. To allow for the reservation of lands to facilitate public roads, foot paths, harbours, canals, cycleways, bus stops and landscaping together with any necessary associated works, as appropriate.

Having regard to Table 4.5 of Volume 2 of the GCDP, utilities infrastructure/public service installations are open for consideration uses in R, OS and TI zoned lands. Given the wider sustainable transportation objectives of the GCDP, in particular PM 4 and PM 5 as well as the specific OSGT 7 and OSGT 8 objectives for Oughterard, it is considered that the proposed development is aligned with the applicable zoning objectives.

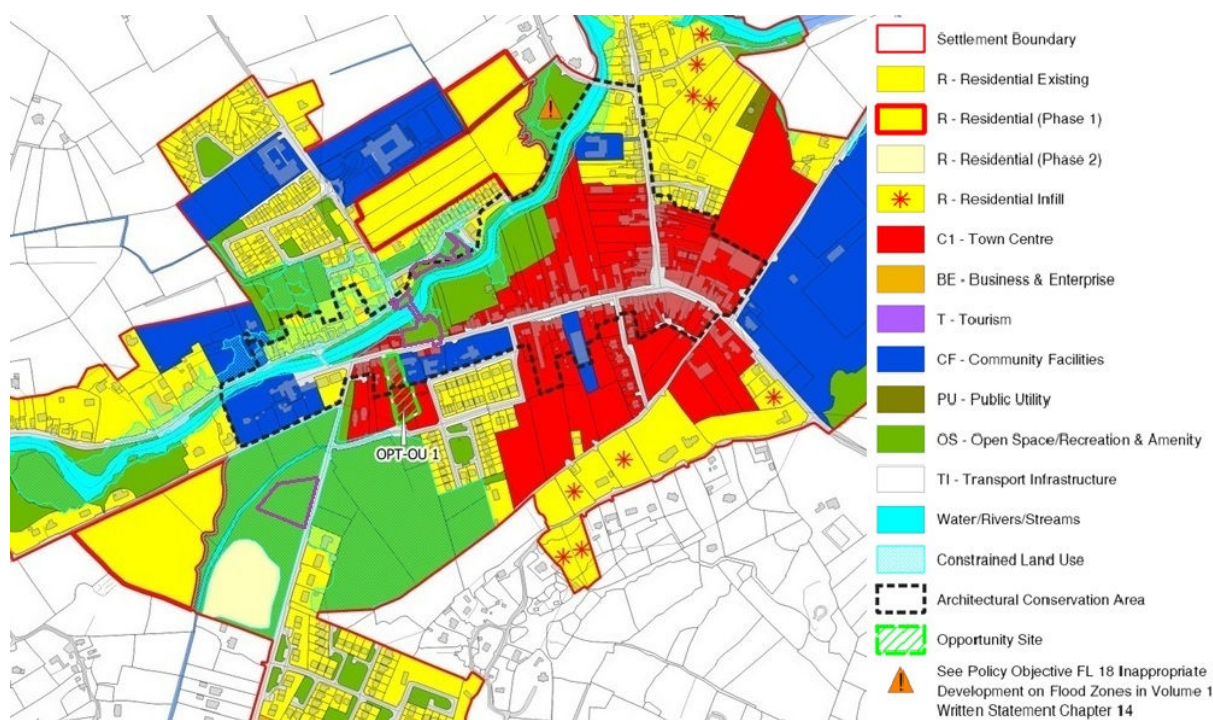


Figure 6: Proposed Development Site (identified in purple) relative to the Oughterard zoning map

Galway County Council Local Authority Climate Action Plan (GCCLACAP) 2024-2029

- 5.30 Section 4.3 of the GCCLACAP sets out strategic goal 4, transport, with the objective being to support the provision and uptake of sustainable mobility solutions.
- 5.31 It is stated that approximately 18% of Ireland's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions are associated with transport, and that the figure for County Galway is similar at 16%, the primary source of which comes from the burning of diesel and petrol in combustion engines.
- 5.32 In response, the transport-related actions in the GCCLACAP will support the uptake of active travel and public travel options. It is also noted that the promotion of sustainable travel and road safety initiatives can improve the safety of the roads and improve air quality in towns and villages throughout the county.
- 5.33 In this context, objective TR1 seeks to support active travel and modal shift to advance sustainable, accessible, and safe mobility, while objective TR2 seeks to support the development and use of low-carbon technologies such as electric vehicles and low-carbon fuels.
- 5.34 Accordingly action TR 1. 6 seeks to design and deliver new and improved walkways in the county.

6.0 PLANNING HISTORY

6.1 There is no recent planning history pertaining to the site of the proposed footbridge. The site of the Carrowmanagh Park is included in the following applications:

PA Ref. No.	Description	Decision
181796	Retention of alterations to previously granted apartment block (Pl. Ref: 99/3610) which consists of elevational changes as follows: 2 No. roof windows, façade to existing stairwells, brick finishes around windows and doors and alterations to internal layouts	Granted 07.10.2019
18264	Retention permission for apartment block previously granted under Pl. Ref: - 99/3610 which consists of elevational changes as follows: 2 no. roof windows, façade to existing stairwells, brick finishes around window and doors and alterations to internal layouts. Gross floor space of work to be retained 643sqm.	Granted 11.06.2018
99/3610	To construct 20 dwellinghouses and 8 apartments together with associated site development works, roads and services	Granted 13.12.1999

Table 1: Planning History

7.0 ASSESSMENT

7.1 In planning terms, there is clear and unambiguous policy support at national, regional and local level for increased walking and cycling and improved accessibility in urban areas.

7.2 The proposed development is specifically aligned with the relevant policies of the Plan as follows:

- It will support Oughterard's role as a Small Growth Town as set out in the Core Strategy of the GCDP, and contribute to its regeneration and revitalisation;
- It will enhance Oughterard's sustainable infrastructure networks, contributing to resilience to climate change and the transition to a low carbon society;
- It will contribute to good placemaking in Oughterard;
- It will encourage modal shift in Oughterard ;
- It will promote sustainable transport options;
- It will provide new pedestrian infrastructure;
- It will positively contribute to the built heritage of Oughterard and amenity of the Owenriff River policy objective AH4;
- It will deliver infrastructural development and improvement in Oughterard consistent with policy objective OSGT 7;
- It will encourage and support pedestrian routes in Oughterard consistent with policy objective OSGT 8; and
- The proposed development is considered to be supported by the applicable R, OS and TI zoning objectives, in the context of the wider sustainable transportation objectives of the Plan.

7.3 Noting its sensitive location, the proposed development, which will provide significantly improved pedestrian facilities, and will facilitate greater and safer connectivity within Oughterard:

- has been subject to both a route selection appraisal and an option appraisal to identify the most suitable location and design with the least potential for ecological impact while still achieving the project objectives;
- provides the largest setback from the river on both riverbanks to keep works as far from the river as possible and to allow sufficient space for the installation of mitigation such as silt control measures;
- is clear span so that no instream works are required;
- has been designed, as much as possible, to be prefabricated off site both minimising the work time on site and significantly reducing the quantity of wet concrete required on site;
- has its width kept to a minimum so as to minimise the amount of tree felling required and in turn reduce the size of abutment required which also reduces the level of excavation for foundations; In this respect, there was not sufficient space within the project area to replace all of the trees to be removed to facilitate the proposed development, therefore offsite planting is required within Carrowmanagh Park to replace the remainder of the trees. Almost half of the trees to be felled

are Ash trees which are suffering from different stages of Ash Die Back. As such the replacement of these trees with healthy trees will represent a long-term biodiversity gain.

7.4 A detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is included with the application, which sets out:

- the proposed enabling works, to include site clearance works, including the removal of 62no. trees, the majority of which are on the southern bank of the river (and approximately 50% of the trees to be removed are diseased ash trees in various stages of decline), and the temporary dismantling of the masonry walls along the frontage of the dwelling on the south side (The Old Barracks) adjacent to the N59 Clifden Road and the dwelling on the north riverbank, with the masonry set aside for when the wall is re-built/realigned after the works are complete.
- the proposed construction works, to include the construction of the north and south abutments and ramps, the installation of a crane on the south side (The Old Barracks).
- the assembly of 3 no. prefabricated sections of the footbridge and then lifting of the assembled footbridge on to the abutments.
- construction of approach paths and zebra crossings, walls, signage and landscaping.
- a site compound will be set up before commencement of the works. The site compound is a contractor designed element, but it is envisaged that the site compound will be set up on lands in the ownership of Galway County Council on Station Road which is approximately 300m south-west of the proposed development site.
- subject to the receipt of planning permission, and the completion of site investigations, a 9-month construction programme is anticipated, with works to commence in Q4 2026. Standard construction hours are proposed (Monday to Friday: 08:00 to 18:00 and Saturday: 09:00 to 13:00).
- an ecological specialist will be employed by Galway County Council to ensure compliance with all environmental commitments. In addition, an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECow) will be employed by the contractor for the duration of the project.
- The following temporary traffic management is envisaged, subject to confirmation:
 - Traffic management will be needed on the N59 Clifden Road to narrow the carriageway and provide a working space for takedown and reconstruction of the existing masonry wall frontage to The Old Barracks;
 - Closure of the eastbound lane of the N59 Clifden Road will be needed along the frontage of The Old Barracks to enable HGVs to deliver/collect the crane, footbridge sections, components etc.;
 - Lane closures with stop/go lights and shuttle working will be needed on N59 Clifden Road to construct the proposed zebra crossing with raised table; and
 - Lane closures with stop/go lights and shuttle working will be needed on Carrowmanagh Road to construct the proposed zebra crossing with raised table, realign the kerb line, relocate the gully, install paving etc.
- The contractor will develop a traffic management plan (designed by a suitably qualified person).

7.5 The proposed lighting design, which will ensure the safe use of the proposed development and will minimise the impact of such lighting on sensitive receptors, will consist of:

- Luminaires integrated into the top rail of the north parapet on the northern ramp;
- Luminaires integrated into the north handrail on the northern steps;
- Luminaires integrated into the east parapet on the footbridge;
- 2 no. 6m high lighting columns on the east side of the southern path;
- 2 no. 8m high lighting columns adjacent to the pedestrian crossing on N59 Clifden Road; and
- 2 no. 6m high lighting columns adjacent to the pedestrian crossing on Carrowmanagh Road.

7.6 As noted above, the proposed development site is located in the Lake Environs Landscape Character Area and is identified as 'Class 4: Iconic'. Oughterard is also located along the Lough Corrib Scenic Route and the Galway Clifden Scenic Route. There are also a number of protected views in the vicinity of Oughterard, but not within the town itself. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Eamonn Byrne Landscape Architects Ltd which notes the following:

- The value of local landscape character in the study area, is judged to be *medium*;
- The susceptibility of this landscape to the proposed development type i.e. a pedestrian scale bridge crossing within a site that is partially screened by intervening built development or vegetation is *medium*;
- No buildings will be demolished to facilitate the new bridge crossing;
- The height of the new bridge crossing will not appear above the roof line of nearby buildings and is an appropriate scale to the surrounding townscape;
- A section of existing stone wall along the two-storey detached dwelling to the north will be removed and replaced;
- The existing stone masonry wall along the N59 frontage of The Old Barracks will be removed and re-built to accommodate the proposed relocated entrance, and the southern path to the proposed footbridge.
- Material finishes for the new bridge include stainless steel parapets, GRP decking, limestone paving, and masonry walls, which will contribute to local architecture and urban form. The magnitude of effect is judged to be *minor improvement*;
- The single span of the footbridge will ensure views along the river are kept largely open. There will be no adverse changes to key views. The new footbridge will also provide a new prospect for people to experience views of the Owenriff River and adjacent townscape. The magnitude of effect is judged to be *minor improvement*;
- The combination of medium sensitivity and minor magnitude suggests the significance of the effects on overall landscape/townscape character within the study area is judged to be *slight beneficial effect*; and
- In relation to visual effects, 15 viewpoints were selected to represent the experience of different types of visual receptor, and the assessment concludes as follows:

- The significance of the visual effect of the development was judged as *neutral* from 9no. viewpoints. This means the proposed development would be difficult to distinguish and/or there would be barely perceptible change in view;
 - The significance of the visual effect of the development was judged as *slight beneficial* from 3no. viewpoints. This means the proposed development would cause limited improvement to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity or would cause greater improvement to a view from a receptor of low sensitivity;
 - The significance of the visual effect of the development was judged as *moderate beneficial* from 1no. viewpoint. This means the proposed development would cause obvious improvement to a view from a moderately sensitive receptor, or perceptible improvement to a view from a more sensitive receptor;
 - The significance of the visual effect of the development was judged as *slight adverse* from 1no. viewpoint. This means the proposed development would cause a limited deterioration to the view; and
 - The significance of the visual effect of the development was judged as *large adverse* from 1no. viewpoint (viewpoint 11, from the riverside path at Carrowmanagh and the adjacent dwelling). This means the proposed development would cause a major deterioration to a view from a highly sensitive receptor.
- Mitigation to reduce any potential adverse effects, to be considered at detailed design stage, includes:
 - Existing riverside trees should be retained and protected where feasible. A scheme of additional riverside tree planting along the riverside at Oughterard should be implemented to anchor the development into its wider setting;
 - High-quality architectural finishes to the bridge structure, balustrade and approach ramp, and an appropriate colour to paint the bridge should be considered at detailed design;
 - High quality finishes and junction design will be required to achieve a high-quality public realm to the proposed pedestrian crossings/ approach paths and ramp at N59 Clifden Road (Main Street) and Carrowmanagh; and
 - Materials of local character such as natural stone have been incorporated into the bridge boundary walls/ approach ramp/ railing plinths and steps.

7.7 The proposed development has been screened against the Schedule 5 Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. The EIA Screening Report prepared by AtkinsRéalis that accompanies this application has concluded that the proposed development does not fall within any category of development requiring a mandatory EIA, hence the preparation of an EIAR is not required under Schedule 5 Part 1. The report also concludes that the proposed development also does not fall within any category of development requiring EIA under Schedule 5 Part 2. The proposed development has also been screened against the Schedule 7 and 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended, including as follows:

- The use of natural resources will be kept to a minimum; aggregates and soil will be re-used on site, where possible and if required;
- Vegetation clearance be required along the proposed development, and it will take place outside of the nesting season (February – August). If this is not possible, an ecologist will survey the vegetation for breeding birds no longer than 24 hours prior to clearance. If nesting birds are identified, then an alternative approach to the work will be used;
- Construction waste will be kept to a minimum with only contaminated waste being removed off site.
- It is anticipated that the construction works, and operation of the proposed development will not have a significant effect on air quality;
- It is anticipated that the construction works, and operation of the proposed development will not have a significant effect with regards to noise; and
- The potential for accidents or incidents causing oil and chemical spillages are limited.

It is concluded that, due to the size, nature, and characteristics of the proposed development, no significant effects on the receiving environment are expected; hence the preparation of a sub-threshold EIAR is not required.

7.8 The Owenriff River is important as a Salmonid River and the presence of a significant population of Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera*), a species listed on Annex II of the E.U. Habitats Directive and protected under the Wildlife Acts 1976-2021 (as amended). The Owenriff River is one of the most densely populated *Margaritifera* rivers in the world. As noted above, there is direct hydrological connectivity to the Lough Corrib SAC and further downstream to the Lough Corrib SPA. In this respect, the screening report prepared by AtkinsRéalis and included with the application states that it cannot be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed works will not, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, give rise to any impacts which would constitute significant effects on Lough Corrib SAC (site code: 000297), in view of its conservation objectives.

7.9 The Appropriate Assessment undertaken by AtkinsRéalis (the Natura Impact Statement for which is included with the planning application) has provided an assessment of all potential direct or indirect impacts which have the potential to cause adverse effects on European sites, specifically Lough Corrib SAC (site code: 000297). Where the potential for adverse effects on the SAC was identified, mitigation measures have been prescribed. The measures ensure that impacts from the proposed works are avoided or minimised such that they will not adversely affect the integrity of the site. These include:

- Construction of the proposed development is to be programmed so that all critical works (excavations, coring, pouring of concrete etc) shall be carried out between 1st April and 30th of September. Detailed trigger levels for rainfall have been set out in the specific mitigation measures section below. Both NPWS and IFI will be informed in advance of works commencing;
- All operations will be in accordance with, but not limited to, the following guidelines: - Guidance on Assessment and Construction Management in *Margaritifera* Catchments in Ireland (Atkinson *et al*, 2023). There has also been consultation with the NPWS in relation to the Freshwater Pearl

Mussel, and shadow analysis and vibration monitoring has been undertaken to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effect on the Freshwater Pearl Mussel;

- The construction management of the site will take account of the recommendations of the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) guidelines '*Control of Water Pollution from Construction Sites*' and '*Groundwater control - design and practice*' and CIRIA 2010 '*Environmental Good Practice on Site*' to minimise as far as possible the risk of pollution; and
- Guidance on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters (IFI, 2016).

In conclusion, given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in the NIS, there is no reasonable scientific doubt remaining as to the absence of adverse effects on Lough Corrib SAC, or any other Natura 2000 site, in view of their conservation objectives.

7.10 Noting that the proposed footbridge is located within the Oughterard Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), a Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Report (AMS, 2024) is included with the application. This notes that:

- The development of the proposed footbridge will result in no negative impacts to cultural heritage assets. Thus, it is proposed that the proposed new footbridge will positively contribute to the built heritage of Oughterard and amenity of the Owenriff River;
- Four direct effects of Moderate Positive significance are predicted to result from the construction of the N59 Oughterard Footbridge. These include positive impacts to the setting, views, character and amenity value of Oughterard Architectural Conservation Area, Kilcummin Church of Ireland Church (SMR GA054-032----; RPS 666; NIAH 30326013), the former Oughterard Courthouse (RPS 667; NIAH 30326012), and the existing late eighteenth-century bridge over the Owenriff River (RPS 3753; NIAH 30326008);
- No impacts are predicted for any of the remaining cultural heritage assets in the study area;
- Furthermore, it is proposed that the attractive new footbridge will positively contribute to the built heritage of Oughterard and amenity of the Owenriff River; and
- On present information there are no features, deposits or objects of archaeological interest in the development site, or in proximity to it. However, it is recommended that a programme of advance archaeological testing is carried out post-consent and in advance of construction works.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 In conclusion, the proposed development is supported in principle having regard to national, regional and local planning policy which advocates increased walking and improved accessibility.
- 8.2 The proposed development will provide significantly improved pedestrian and cycle facilities and will facilitate greater and safer connectivity within Oughterard.
- 8.3 The design of the proposed development has been informed by the environmental sensitivities of the location, including the avoidance of instream works, and the use of prefabrication off site.
- 8.4 The EIA screening report concludes that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment.
- 8.5 It is the conclusion of the NIS that, given the full and proper implementation of the mitigation prescribed in the NIS, there is no reasonable scientific doubt remaining as to the absence of adverse effects on Lough Corrib SAC, or any other Natura 2000 site, in view of their conservation objectives.
- 8.6 Overall, from a planning perspective, while it is noted that the proposed development will impact existing stone walls, trees and vegetation, will result in temporary impacts during the construction phase, and will result in an adverse visual impact from the riverside path at Carrowmanagh and the adjacent dwelling, for which mitigation is proposed, it is considered that these impacts are to be balanced against the wider benefits of the proposed development to Oughterard.
- 8.7 Ultimately, the proposed development will provide a significantly improved and safe pedestrian and cyclist facility in Oughterard, in line with adopted planning policy, and is in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.