

Our Case Number: ACP-322958-25



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Louise Heavin
42 Beechpark
Athlone
Co. Westmeath

Date: 03 September 2025

Re: Athlone link road phase 2. Proposed link road, joining the Crescent Junction (R915) to Southern Station Road Junction
Athlone, County Westmeath

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Coimisiún Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

Please note that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it with or without modifications.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Commission at laps@pleanala.ie

Please quote the above mentioned An Coimisiún Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Commission.

Yours faithfully,

Lauren Griffin
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737244

AA02

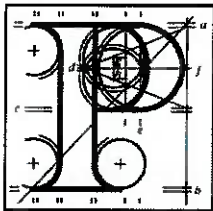
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Tel
LoCall
Fax
Website
Email

(01) 858 8100
1800 275 175
(01) 872 2684
www.pleanala.ie
communications@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902



An
Bord
Pleanála

Observation on a Strategic Infrastructure Development Application

Observer's details

1. Observer's details (person making the observation)

If you are making the observation, write your full name and address.

If you are an agent completing the observation for someone else, write the observer's details:

(a) Observer's name

Louise Heavin

(b) Observer's postal address

42 Beechpark,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath, N37E5D6

Agent's details

2. Agent's details (if applicable)

If you are an agent and are acting for someone else **on this observation**, please **also** write your details below.

If you are not using an agent, please write "Not applicable" below.

(a) Agent's name

na

(b) Agent's postal address

na

Postal address for letters

3. During the process to decide the application, we will post information and items to you or to your agent. For this **current application**, who should we write to? (Please tick ✓ one box only)

You (the observer) at the postal address in Part 1

☒

The agent at the postal address in Part 2

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Details about the proposed development

4. Please provide details about the **current application** you wish to make an observation.
- (a) **An Bord Pleanála case number for the current application (if available)**
(for example: 300000)

Case reference: JP25M.322958

- (b) **Name or description of proposed development**

Athlone link road phase 2. Proposed link road, joining the Crescent Junction (R915) to Southern Station Road Junction

- (c) **Location of proposed development**

(for example: 1 Main Street, Baile Fearainn, Co Abhaile)

The Railway Field, the Crescent Junction (R915) to Southern Station Road Junction, Athlone, County Westmeath

Observation details

5. Grounds

Please describe the grounds of your observation (planning reasons and arguments). You can type or write them in the space below. There is **no word limit** as the box expands to fit what you write.

You can also insert photographs or images in this box. (See part 6 – Supporting materials for more information).

This submission outlines significant concerns regarding environmental impact, traffic and transport deficiencies, safety and accessibility issues, and non-compliance with relevant local development plans and policies.

Environmental and Air Quality Concerns

The proposal entails substantial removal of trees, wetlands, and meadows that are crucial for maintaining local biodiversity and mitigating air pollution. The drawing 1202785001_PL1_Vegetation_to_be_Removed is inaccurate and misleading. See below figure 4.2 from Page 20 of the Natura Impact Statement by Coisceim Consulting Ltd. illustrating the biodiversity and vegetation currently on the site.



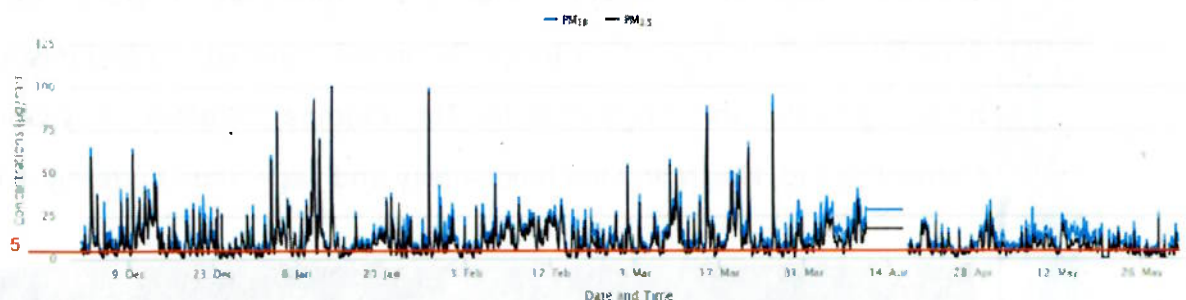
5. Grounds

The submitted drawings underestimate the extent of vegetation clearance, which will exacerbate poor air quality issues already documented by the Athlone Air Quality Monitor, with particulate matter levels exceeding WHO guidelines. The increase in bus depot capacity from 13 to 44 buses threatens elevated noise and air pollution near residential areas.

The Athlone Air Quality Monitor is located less than 100m from the proposed site. The dataset, publically available, gives an annual average of $8.63 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for particulate matter in the area from June 2024 to May 2025. This is above the World Health Organisations safe guidelines of $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

See figure indicating levels across a 6 month period with $5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ highlighted.

Air Quality Levels at Athlone Civic Centre & Library, Co. Westmeath



The data also shows that the daily average exceeded the WHO recommended limit of $15 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ on a number of days in the year.

Alternative brownfield locations within Athlone could accommodate the depot with far less environmental impact. The proposal contradicts the Athlone Town Development Plan objective to relocate the bus garage out of the town centre, preserve green spaces, and support sustainable connectivity.

Traffic and Transport Impact Deficiencies

There has been no traffic impact assessment carried out as part of this proposal. The proposal adds additional road to the area and more junctions. Without proper study

5. Grounds

and analysis this has the potential to cause increased delays and traffic idling in the area. From my own use of this section of road the traffic is usually quick enough until it meets the crescent junction. Traffic on the existing southern station road builds at peak times and a train arrival/departure times. The current drop off and pick up system, although not best practice works well with many cars stopping briefly on the road adjacent to the car park and taxi rank. Delay is limited. The new proposal alters this considerably. There is no detailed study or drawing of how or where quick drop offs or pick-ups from the station will happen. There is potential for traffic to and from the station to be congested as cars will need to turn to come back down from the station. It is also not clear how the bus only system will work. If buses meet at the single lane section of the road, will this cause access issues for cars trying to enter or exit the carpark?

This proposal may have the unintended consequence of increased traffic on the Ballymahon Road. At the moment many people from east of the town use the western end of the Southern Station road to get to the train station. As this access is now blocked off for buses only this may encourage people coming from the east to use the Ballymahon Road. This is already a hugely congested road and a big cause of delay for people looking to access the town centre.

A Traffic and Transport Assessment in line with TII's Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines should be carried out for this specific road. The design of the road should also take into account the objective in the Athlone Area Based Transport Study to reduce speed limits in the town core to 30kph and be designed as such.

5. Grounds

Safety and Accessibility Issues

The proposal inadequately addresses pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. The footpath details are insufficient for ensuring accessibility, especially for people with disabilities. Unsafe and unclear routes for cyclists, combined with a poorly located and unsecured bike storage area, undermine active travel goals.

As mentioned in page 22 of the submitted quality audit. No bus shelter, seating, or bus-boarder kerb facilities are indicated on the bus stops in the proposed development.

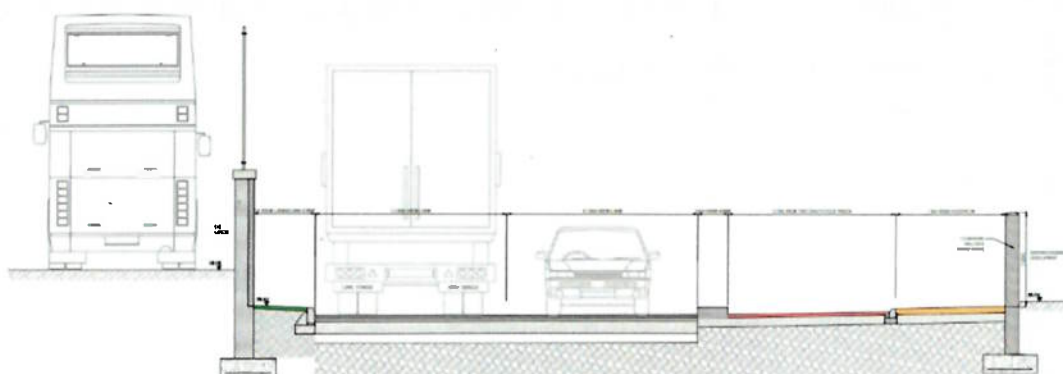
The link road's design prioritised private car use, creating a pedestrian-hostile environment with limited surveillance and lighting, contrary to guidelines in DMURS and national cycling manuals.

The cross section of the road as outlined in *Pl2_Typical_Cross_Section* is similar to Figure 2.13 on page 22 of DMURS which illustrates an example of a street that is hostile to pedestrians and cyclists (especially after dark). See below:



Figure 2.13: Example of a street that is hostile to pedestrians and cyclists (especially after dark). The unwillingness of people to interact with this type of environment will serve to undermine the viability of public transport services.

5. Grounds



Proposed Cross section above.

Non-Compliance with Planning Policies

The development conflicts with the current Athlone Town Development Plan and Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, which emphasize preserving open space, enhancing permeability, and protecting residential amenity. The removal of green space promised in the previous planning permission is unacceptable and detrimental to community.

In summary:

Unfortunately, this proposed road amounts to poor urban design in the heart of our town. Athlone as a regional growth centre and a growing urban population deserve better than this proposal. The people of St. Frances terrace also deserve the green space they were promised as part of the previous part 8 planning.

Traffic congestion in the town core of Athlone is an issue. There is nothing in the proposal here to give evidence that this link road will solve the congestion issues we have in the town. The proposal to expand the bus depot is not linked to an proposal

5. Grounds

to expand the bus service provision to Athlone or around the town. The proposal is not justified at this time, conflicts with the local development plan and requires more thought and design input.

Supporting materials

6. If you wish, you can include supporting materials with your observation.

Supporting materials include:

- photographs,
- plans,
- surveys,
- drawings,
- digital videos or DVDs,
- technical guidance, or
- other supporting materials.

You can insert photographs and similar items in your observation details: grounds (part 5 of this form).

If your supporting materials are physical objects, you must send them together with your observation by post or deliver it in person to our office. You cannot use the online uploader facility.

Fee

7. You must make sure that the correct fee is included with your observation.

Observers (except prescribed bodies)

- strategic infrastructure observation is €50.
- there is no fee for an oral hearing request

Oral hearing request

8. If you wish to **request the Board to hold an oral hearing**, please tick the “Yes, I wish to request an oral hearing” box below.

You can find information on how to make this request on [our website](#) or by contacting us.

If you do not wish to request an oral hearing, please tick the “No, I do not wish to request an oral hearing” box.

Yes, I wish to request an oral hearing

☐

No, I do not wish to request an oral hearing

☐

Final steps before you send us your observations

9. If you are sending us your observation using **the online uploader facility**, remember to save this document as a Microsoft word or PDF and title it with:

- the case number and your name, or
- the name and location of the development and your name.

This also applies to prescribed bodies sending an observation by email.

If you are sending your observation to us by post or delivering in person, remember to print off all the pages of this document and send it to us.

For Office Use Only

FEM – Received		SIDS – Processed	
Initials		Initials	
Date		Date	

Notes