

Our Case Number: ACP-322958-25



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Noreen Flannery
Bunslí
The Manse
Northgate Street
Athlone
N37 Y3C4

Date: 28 August 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

Tel
Glao Áitiúil
Facs
Láithreán Gréasáin
Ríomhphost

Tel
LoCall
Fax
Website
Email

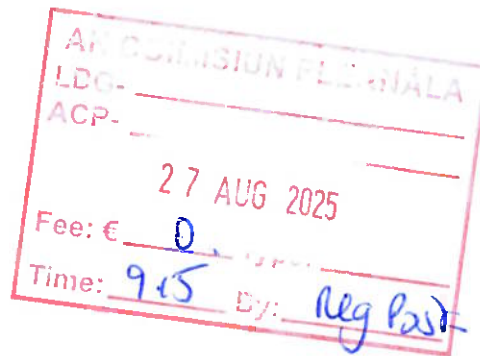
(01) 858 8100
1800 275 175
(01) 872 2684
www.pleanala.ie
communications@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde
Baile Átha Cliath 1
D01 V902

64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Noreen Flannery,
Bunsli,
The Manse,
Northgate Street,
Athlone
N37 Y3C4

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Rotunda,
Dublin 1
D01 V902



Subject: Objection to Proposed Road Construction [An Coimisiún Pleanála – Case
Reference Number: JP25M.322958]

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to formally object to the proposed construction of the new road, referred to as the Railway Field Road, as outlined in Westmeath County Council's planning application.

The proposed road duplicates an existing road less than 500 metres in length and serves no meaningful purpose. According to the Council's own submission, it "*is intended to improve traffic flow and reduce congestion in the town centre*". However, congestion in the town centre is clearly not caused by the existing road in question, as congestion is present leading away from it in both directions. Furthermore, the plan includes closing the existing road to private vehicle traffic, which will leave the overall traffic situation unchanged at best.

The current 'Orange Loop' has been in existence for over a decade at this stage and the prioritization of road users has changed in the intervening years. One must question the necessity of this road, given that all road users are used to the route at present. If anything, the proposed provision of a four-lane road, in sections, will do little to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists accessing transportation services, and create more traffic accessing the already very busy Crescent junction. Moreover, the traffic assimilation templates that provided the justification for the Orange Loop are now completely out of date and did not originally identify the relevant pinch points that motorists are experiencing on the Loop every day.

In addition, this project will convert a current 4-way intersection into a 5-way intersection. This configuration is highly likely to worsen, rather than improve traffic safety and flow. It is also well documented that constructing additional roads in urban areas to relieve traffic congestion is, at best, a short-term measure, with traffic volumes often returning to previous levels, or worse, within a relatively short period of time. Under the Planning and Development Act 2024, the legislation sets out that developments must be demonstrably necessary and proportionate to the issues they seek to address, this project fails this test.

The original design of the road was a further distance from my boundary wall, but the new design is *adjacent* to my boundary wall. This presents several difficulties. Firstly, it will be visually intrusive into my property. It will be aurally intrusive in terms of construction noise

and thereafter, from the noise of the traffic. The proposed development is also likely to cause light nuisance and light trespass onto my property, given the proximity of the road to my house. The height of the proposed boundary wall for the road development will do nothing to mitigate against this visual and light intrusion.

I have concern in relation to the expansion of the bus depot. I note from the plans that there is provision for nearly 50 buses to be parked up adjacent to each other. This may present a fire risk as has been seen in other bus depots across the island, and it is not clear from the documentation submitted whether a fire risk assessment has been undertaken. Also, it is unclear what restrictions will be in place to ensure that the duties of washing and charging buses will be restricted to daylight hours only.

It is also unclear from the drawings whether there will be a controlled signal crossing entering and exiting The Manse. In the interest of the safety and wellbeing of the residents and visitors to this area, and of the service users who avail of counselling services from the Accord building in The Manse, a controlled signal crossing needs to be provided for The Manse.

Beyond the traffic concerns, the proposed site is a green field site that provides a valuable natural habitat and sanctuary for many species of birds, insects, bats and small mammals. The Ecological Impact Assessment accompanying the planning application itself states that "This habitat may provide birds with nesting possibilities and bats with somewhere suitable to roost". This indeed is the case, as confirmed by regular observation from residents. The report also states that the site "*may be suitable for other small mammals such as hedgehog and pygmy shrew*", both of which are present and have been seen frequently in the area. Other mammals that have been seen include the fox, stoat, badger, pine marten, wood mouse, red squirrel, and rabbit. Several moorhens also frequent the main drains close to my house. Also, the environmental report suggests that the wet area needs to be retained in its current location, but the plan seems to relocate the wet area to what is currently the driest area of the field.

The destruction of this habitat will cause a significant and *avoidable* negative impact on local biodiversity, contrary to the Wildlife Acts 1976-2018 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (SI 477 of 2011), which afford protection to these species and their habitats.

I must also draw attention to the document titles "*120278-5001 PL1 Vegetation to be Removed*". This document omits a significant number of trees and bushes that are clearly within the path of the proposed road and the planned bus depot expansion. Many of these trees are **native Irish hardwood species**, which are of particular ecological value and whose removal conflicts with Ireland's **National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030** commitments. These omissions mean the document is inaccurate and fails to fully reflect the true environmental impact of the project.

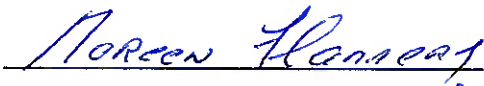
Furthermore, I have been informed that the trees on my property, which borders the proposed roadway, will also need to be removed to facilitate the construction of the boundary wall. These trees, which also include native Irish hardwoods, are absent from the "*120278-5001 PL1 Vegetation to be Removed*" document, further highlighting its inaccuracy and the underestimation of environmental loss.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for this proposed road. It is unnecessary from a traffic perspective, potentially counterproductive for congestion, and is harmful to the wildlife and natural landscape that inhabit the area.

However, should permission be granted despite these objections, I respectfully request that the plans be amended to include provisions for:

- 1) Increasing the height of the proposed boundary wall to at least 2.4m from my property's ground level to ensure adequate security, privacy, noise and light protection.
- 2) Wrapping the exterior of my house with high grade insulation and replacing all existing windows with triple glazed units to mitigate the significant noise impact that will result from the proximity of the roadway. These measures should be in line with obligations under the Environmental Noise Regulations 2006 (SI 140 of 2006), which transpose Directive 2002/49/EC on the assessment and management of environmental noise.
- 3) Restricting all works relating to the road construction project to daylight hours only, as per best practice in noise mitigation under the Environmental Noise Regulations, in order to minimize disturbance and negative impacts on adjacent residents.
- 4) That a comprehensive road construction programme is agreed with residents before any works start.
- 5) That a high-level noise-reducing surface for a speed limit of 50 km/hr such as porous asphalt or Stone Mastic Asphalt, or its most contemporary equivalent, is used to mitigate against any noise impact.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Noreen Flannery", written over a horizontal line.

Noreen Flannery