

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

Re: Cooloo Wind Farm (ACP Ref. 323761-25)

Applicants: StJohn & Ann-Marie Searle

Address: Cooloo, Moylough, Co. Galway. H53 EW25

Date: 07/07/2026

Response to the Applicant's Reply to Third Party Observations

Introduction

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to respond to the applicant's reply to my original submission. Having reviewed the applicant's response in detail, I respectfully submit that it fails to adequately address the substance of my objections. Rather than providing new evidence or addressing the site-specific concerns raised by residents, the applicant largely repeats conclusions already contained within its own Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). Consequently, the applicant has not demonstrated that the significant impacts identified by objectors have been satisfactorily assessed or mitigated.

1. Failure to Address Site-Specific Impacts

My original submission concerned the direct effects of this development on my home, family, property and daily life. The applicant's response is almost entirely generic. It repeatedly states that matters have been assessed within the EIAR but does not explain why the impacts on my particular property are considered acceptable.

The planning authority must determine whether this specific development is acceptable at this specific location. A general reference to compliance with guidance or conclusions contained within the EIAR cannot replace an assessment of the actual impacts on neighbouring residents.

2. Visual Impact and Residential Amenity

The applicant relies heavily on compliance with the draft 2019 setback guidance and concludes that residential visual amenity is therefore protected.

This is not sufficient.

Setback distances are guidance rather than an automatic indicator that visual effects are acceptable. Compliance with a numerical separation distance does not remove the obligation to assess whether turbines of this exceptional scale will dominate nearby dwellings, fundamentally alter the landscape setting or significantly diminish residential amenity.

My concerns regarding the long-term visual impact, loss of rural character and cumulative effect on the enjoyment of my home remain unanswered.

3. Construction Traffic and Road Safety

The applicant accepts that disruption will occur but relies upon a future Traffic Management Plan and future consultation with Galway County Council and An Garda Síochána.

This response demonstrates that many important matters remain unresolved.

The applicant has not shown:

- Precisely how abnormal loads will safely use constrained local roads;
- How prolonged disruption to residents will be minimised;
- How vulnerable road users will be protected;
- How emergency access will be maintained;
- What enforceable limits will apply to construction traffic;
- How cumulative impacts over an 18-24 month construction programme will be avoided.

The reliance on measures to be agreed after permission is granted provides no certainty that these impacts can actually be mitigated.

4. Reliance on Future Mitigation

Throughout the response the applicant repeatedly states that future management plans, monitoring, consultation, complaints procedures and operational controls will resolve potential impacts.

Examples include:

- Future Traffic Management Plans;
- Future environmental management measures;
- Future consultation with local authorities;
- Future monitoring of shadow flicker;
- Future investigation of complaints;
- Future operational controls; and
- Mitigation to be implemented if problems arise.

These commitments acknowledge that impacts may occur but postpone the detail of mitigation until after planning permission has been granted.

Planning permission should only be granted where the Board is satisfied that likely significant impacts have been properly assessed and can be effectively mitigated. Matters of fundamental importance should not be deferred.

5. Human Health

The applicant relies primarily upon published international literature suggesting that no direct causal relationship between wind turbines and adverse health effects has been established.

However, my submission was not limited to claims regarding direct medical effects.

I raised concerns regarding:

- Prolonged construction disturbance;
- Sleep disruption;
- Chronic stress;
- Reduced enjoyment of my property;
- Psychological impacts arising from the permanent industrialisation of the landscape;

- Cumulative effects arising from noise, shadow flicker, visual dominance and continuous turbine operation.

These cumulative effects are scarcely addressed. Instead, the applicant relies on broad scientific literature without demonstrating why the impacts experienced by nearby residents should be considered acceptable.

6. Property Value

The applicant accepts that an Irish study found measurable reductions in house prices within one kilometre of wind turbines before dismissing those findings on the basis of international research.

This does not amount to a rebuttal.

The applicant cannot simultaneously acknowledge evidence of potential devaluation while asserting that no meaningful effect will occur.

Furthermore, international property markets differ significantly from rural Ireland. Greater weight should be afforded to Irish evidence and the particular characteristics of the local housing market.

7. Community Benefit Fund

The applicant places considerable emphasis on the proposed Community Benefit Fund.

While community investment may provide benefits for local organisations, it cannot compensate individual residents for permanent environmental effects including:

- Loss of residential amenity;
- Visual intrusion;
- Prolonged construction impacts;
- Possible property devaluation;
- Reduced quality of life.

Community benefit should not be regarded as mitigation for adverse planning impacts

8. Applicant's Reliance Upon Its Own EIAR

Throughout the response, the applicant repeatedly states that issues have already been assessed within the EIAR.

This approach effectively asks the Board to accept the applicant's own conclusions without addressing the substantive criticisms raised by objectors.

Where legitimate concerns have been raised regarding the adequacy of assessment, simply referring back to the original EIAR does not constitute a meaningful response.

The purpose of responding to third-party observations is to engage with those concerns, not merely restate earlier conclusions.

9. Precautionary Principle

Where uncertainty exists regarding the extent of environmental or residential impacts, particularly over the proposed operational lifespan of the development, the precautionary principle should apply.

Several aspects of the proposal remain dependent upon future monitoring, future agreements, future operational controls and future mitigation.

This uncertainty weighs against granting permission for a development of this scale and duration.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, I respectfully submit that the applicant has failed to rebut the substance of my original objection.

The response relies predominantly upon references to the applicant's own EIAR, generic policy statements and future mitigation proposals rather than providing convincing evidence that the impacts on neighbouring residents have been avoided or

satisfactorily mitigated.

Accordingly, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála give full weight to my original submission together with these further observations when determining this application.

In light of the outstanding concerns regarding residential amenity, construction impacts, uncertainty surrounding mitigation measures and the cumulative environmental effects of the proposal, I respectfully request that planning permission be refused.

Yours faithfully,
StJohn & Ann-Marie Searle