



CONSULTANTS IN ENGINEERING,
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE &
PLANNING

EAST GALWAY ECO PARK

Planning and Environmental Report

Prepared for:
Galway County Council



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

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PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this Planning and Environmental Report to Galway County Council in support of a Part 8 Planning Application for the East Galway Eco Park Development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Galway County Council (GCC) wishes to develop an amenity and biodiversity park at the site of the former East Galway landfill, Killagh More, Ballybaun (E.D. Killaan), Ballintober (E.D. Killaan), Ballinasloe, Galway.

GCC seeks to unlock the potential of this ecologically rich site and develop an amenity and biodiversity park which will act as a local and regional attraction, providing a range of amenity offerings to the public of all ages and abilities, local community and interest groups.

GCC have appointed Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) to prepare Part 8 Planning Application for this proposed development, which is to be known as 'East Galway Eco Park.'

The document reports on the Planning and Environmental considerations associated with the project and has been laid out as follows:

- Section 2 - Description of the Proposed Development
- Section 3 - Planning and Environmental Considerations
- Section 4 - Conclusion

1.2 Accompanying Documents

The following documents accompany this document and the Part 8 planning application for the project:

1. A **Part 8 Planning Application Form** prepared by FT.
2. An **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report** (Reference: P22-032 EIA Screening Report) - This assessment was carried out to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) in accordance with Directive 2014/52/EU is required for the project. This assessment involved an examination and an assessment of potential environmental impacts having regard to proposed environmental mitigation measures which will form part of the proposed development. It was determined that neither a Mandatory EIAR nor Sub-threshold EIAR is required for the project.
3. An **Appropriate Assessment Screening Report** (Reference: P22-032 AA Screening Report) - This assessment was carried out to determine whether the project would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European (Natura 2000) site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects. This assessment concluded on the basis of objective scientific information, the proposed development will not, either alone nor in combination with other plans or projects, have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European (Natura 2000) site. A Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required for the proposed development.
4. A **Construction Environmental Management Plan** (Reference: P22-032 CEMP) – This document reports on the Environmental Management Plan (which defines environmental mitigation measures for development works), the Health and Safety Management Plan and Emergency Response Procedures to be adopted and implemented during the construction phase of the proposed development.



1.3 Accompanying Drawings

The following drawings accompany this document and the Part 8 application for the project. These drawings have been enclosed with the Part 8 Planning Application.

Drawing No.	Drawing Title
P22-032-0100-0000	Drawing Index
P22-032-0100-0001	1:10,000 Site Location Map
P22-032-0100-0002	1:2,500 Site Location Map
P22-032-0100-0003	Existing Site Layout: Key Plan
P22-032-0100-0004	Existing Site Layout
P22-032-0100-0005	Existing Site Layout: Sheet 1 of 6
P22-032-0100-0006	Existing Site Layout: Sheet 2 of 6
P22-032-0100-0007	Existing Site Layout: Sheet 3 of 6
P22-032-0100-0008	Existing Site Layout: Sheet 4 of 6
P22-032-0100-0009	Existing Site Layout: Sheet 5 of 6
P22-032-0100-0010	Existing Site Layout: Sheet 6 of 6
P22-032-0100-0011	Existing Site Long Section
P22-032-0100-0012	Existing Site Long Section
P22-032-0101-0001	1:2,500 Proposed Site Layout: Masterplan
P22-032-0101-0002	1:2,500 Proposed Site Layout: Sheet 1 of 6
P22-032-0101-0003	1:2,500 Proposed Site Layout: Sheet 2 of 6
P22-032-0101-0004	1:2,500 Proposed Site Layout: Sheet 3 of 6
P22-032-0101-0005	1:2,500 Proposed Site Layout: Sheet 4 of 6
P22-032-0101-0006	1:2,500 Proposed Site Layout: Sheet 5 of 6
P22-032-0101-0007	1:2,500 Proposed Site Layout: Sheet 6 of 6
P22-032-0101-0008	Proposed Site Long Section
P22-032-0101-0009	Proposed Site Long Section
P22-032-0200-0001	Proposed Trails and Loops Masterplan
P22-032-0200-0002	Proposed Trails and Loops : Typical Stream Crossing Details
P22-032-0200-0003	Proposed Trails and Loops : Entrance Road Crossing
P22-032-0201-0001	Dome Trail: Long Section and Typical Details
P22-032-0201-0002	Trail Typical Details
P22-032-0300-0001	Proposed Entrance Upgrade Works
P22-032-0300-0002	Proposed Entrance Signage
P22-032-0400-0001	Proposed Public Car Park Plan
P22-032-0400-0002	Proposed Public Car Park: Details
P22-032-0400-0003	Proposed Site Access Layout Plan
P22-032-0400-0004	Proposed Pump Track Plan



Drawing No.	Drawing Title
P22-032-0400-0005	Proposed Dog Park Plan and Details
P22-032-0400-0006	Proposed Toilet Block Plan and Details
P22-032-0400-0007	Proposed Amphitheatre Details
P22-032-0400-0008	Proposed Typical Leachate Side Riser Detail
P22-032-0400-0009	Proposed Dome Trail Viewing Area Detail
P22-032-0500-0001	Proposed Fencing Layout
P22-032-0500-0002	Proposed Fencing Plan: Sheet 1 of 6
P22-032-0500-0003	Proposed Fencing Plan: Sheet 2 of 6
P22-032-0500-0004	Proposed Fencing Plan: Sheet 3 of 6
P22-032-0500-0005	Proposed Fencing Plan: Sheet 4 of 6
P22-032-0500-0006	Proposed Fencing Plan: Sheet 5 of 6
P22-032-0500-0007	Proposed Fencing Plan: Sheet 6 of 6

1.4 Description of the Site

1.4.1 Site Location

The overall site is 58.3 hectares in extent and is located in the townlands of Killagh More, Ballybaun and Ballintober, approximately 2.5km southwest of Kilconnell village off the R348. The site is approximately 3.6 km north of M6 running from Athlone to Galway at its nearest point. The former landfill facility is accessible from the M6 through the L3416 road and the R348 road north from the site.

A list of major settlement situated in the wider region surrounding the site, and the distance and cardinal direction of this settlement from the site is provided below:

- Ballinasloe – 15.5km east of the site
- Aughrim – 10km southeast of the site
- Loughrea – 22km southwest of the site
- Athenry – 26km west of the site
- Galway - 50km west of the site

A Site Location Map showing the site location and surrounding land uses adjoins this planning application (Drawing Reference: P22-032-0100-0001).

1.4.2 Site History

The site was historically used as agricultural land, with some pockets of the being used for forestry. Greenstar constructed a landfill at the site in 2005. This landfill was operated from 2005 to 2012. GCC took over the operation of the site in 2015 at the request of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). GCC subsequently undertook an extensive programme of landfill cell development and remediation works at the site. This included the full capping of the landfill, the planting of approximately 9,000 native trees and the seeding of 20 ha of grassland, all of which were completed by 2019/2020.



1.4.3 Existing Site

The site currently contains the capped landfill, associated landfill infrastructure, extensive open areas and woodland, and a network of tracks that can be readily converted to amenity trails. The former landfill site is undergoing aftercare and is being managed by GCC in accordance with an Industrial Emissions (IE) licence enforced by the EPA (W0178-02).

1.4.4 Site Context

The surrounding area is dominated by extensive, level plains of grasslands, with many areas of bog. The grasslands comprise of medium-to-large fields with low enclosures and many areas of low stone walls used for field boundaries. It includes elevated areas, as well as lakes, scattered forestry, wetlands, winding rivers and nearby turloughs.

There are many one-off residential dwellings and a dense network of small settlements and roads within 15 km from the site. One-off residential dwellings are found in all cardinal directions from the site. There are several one-off dwellings within 1 km of the site. One existing dwelling is located 50 m south of the site.

Several small settlements are present in the surrounding area, including Kilconnell, approximately 2.5 km north-east of the site, New Inn, situated 4 km south-west of the site, Woodlawn, about 3 km north-west, and Aughrim, 7.5 km east of the site.

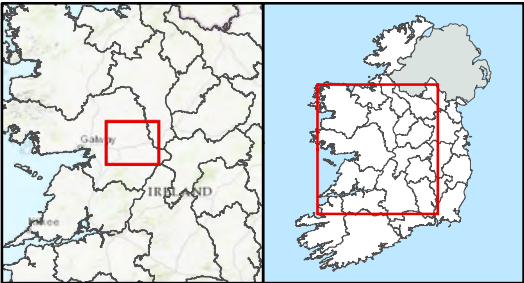
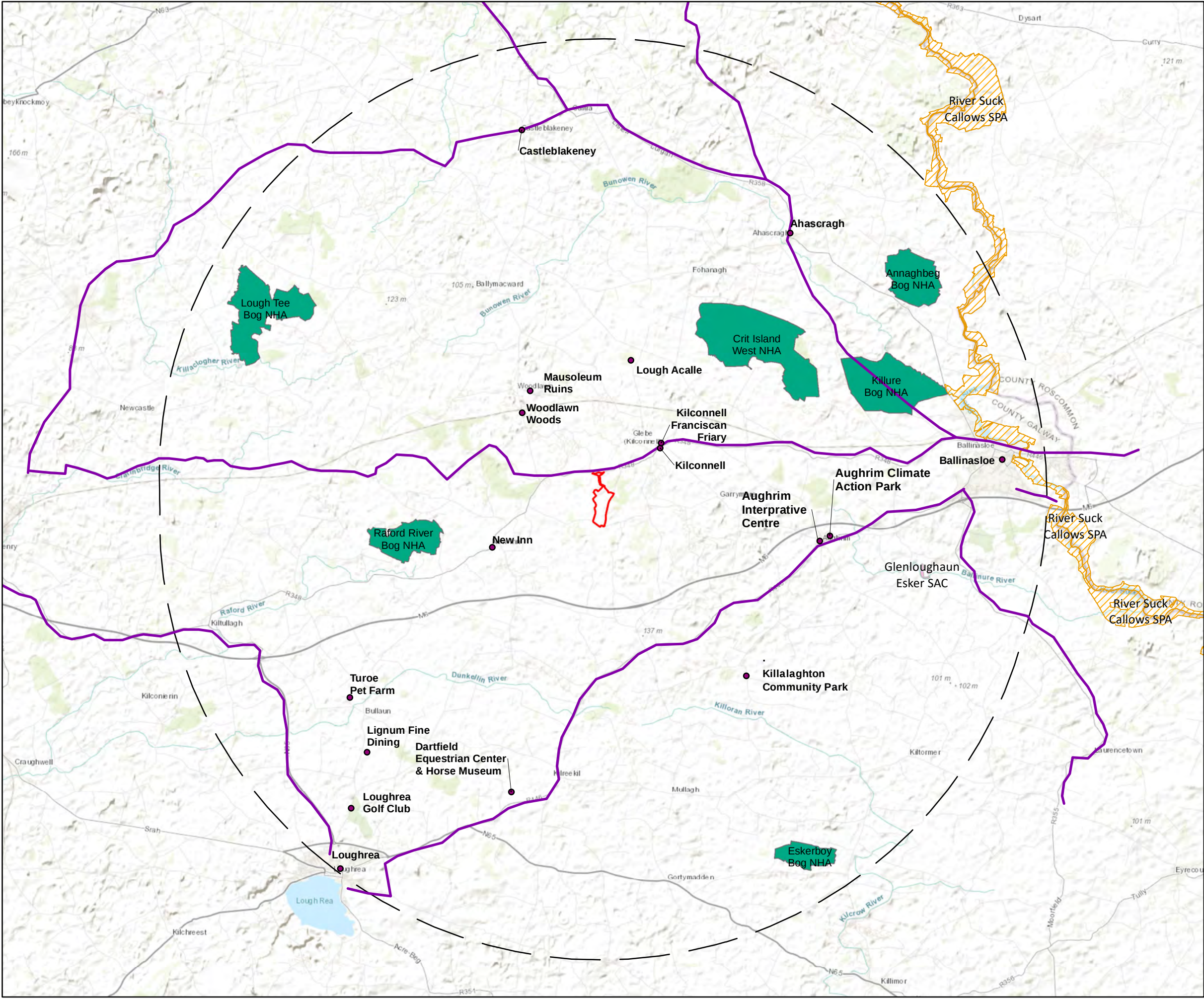
Kilconnell Franciscan Friary is a historical landmark located 2.9 km north-east from the site. Other notable place of interest locally include Woodlawn Woods, a public recreation area situated about 3.2 km northwest of the site, Woodlawn House, which is a historical landmark in the Woodlawn area, and Killalaghton Community Park situated 7.6 km south-east of the site.

There are several other historic structures and sites and places of interest in the wider vicinity of the site, including the Battle of Aughrim site and interpretative centre, Trench Mausoleum, Mountbellew Walled Garden, Carrownagappul Bog and Lignum Fine Dining.

European sites situated within 15 km of the site are- Lough Corrib SAC (ca. 12 km north west), River Suck Callows SPA (14 km east of the site), Glenloughaun Esker SAC (9 km east of the site). The site is hydrologically connected to several European sites, with the closest connected site being the Rahasane Turlough Special Protection Area (SPA)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC) approximately 24 km southwest of the site.

A variety of bogs designated as Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) are situated in the surrounding area also, including Lough Tee Bog, Crit Island West, Raforde Rover Bog, Killure Bog, Annaghbeg Bog, and Eskerboy Bog. Callow Lough Natural Heritage Area is also situated 4.5 km to the north of the site.

A Site Location and Context Map showing the site and features in the surrounding area is presented in Figure 1-1.



- Legend**
- Site Boundary
 - Site Boundary - 15km Buffer
 - Special Protection Area (SPA)
 - Special Area of Conservation
 - Natural Heritage
 - Approximate Location of Inter-Urban Cycle Connects Route
 - Places of Interest

TITLE:		Former East Galway Landfill: Site Location and Context Map	
PROJECT:		East Galway Eco Park Development	
FIGURE NO:		1-1	
CLIENT:		Galway County Council	
SCALE:	1:130000	REVISION:	0
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1.5 Site Ownership

Most of the development site, as defined by the Red Line Boundary shown in accompanying planning drawings, is under the ownership of the Applicant, Galway County Council under Tailte Éireann folios GY51545, GY75876F, GY75373F, GY75931F, GY81576F, GY86825F, GY91750F and GY84375F.

A portion of land contained within the development site boundary, and covering the site access road connecting the R348 to the main body of the site, is under the ownership of a third party under Tailte Éireann folio GY79245F. Galway County Council hold a registered Right of Way over these lands. This Right of Way is shown on drawing P22-032-0100-0001 and in various drawings contained in drawing sets P22-032-0100 and P22-03-0101.



2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Overview Description of the Proposed Development

Galway County Council (GCC) seek consent for the development of an amenity and biodiversity park to be known as 'East Galway Eco Park' at the former East Galway landfill site situated at Killagh More, Ballybaun (E.D. Killaan), Ballintober (E.D. Killaan), Ballinasloe, Galway. The footprint of the development site is 58.3 hectares.

The former landfill site is undergoing aftercare and is being managed by GCC in accordance with an Industrial Emissions (IE) licence enforced by the EPA (W0178-02).

The proposed development will consist of:

- The erection of park entrance signage (11.0 m x 2.1 m and 5.0 m x 2.1 m) at the main entrance to the site.
- The development of road-markings, signage and a traffic barrier arrangement at the point the existing site access road enters the main body of the site, to prevent and minimize conflict between amenity park users and occasional landfill maintenance and aftercare related traffic.
- The installation of fencing to restrict access to former landfill maintenance and operation areas (total length of fencing – 3,825 m).
- The development of an on-site parking areas at a central area at the main body of the site, with 88 no. of bicycle parking spaces, 57 no. of car parking spaces including six no. electric vehicle charging spaces, three no. of accessible parking spaces, one no. accessible electric vehicle charging space and 24 no. electric vehicle ready charging spaces.
- The development of a circulation area for a mobile café (335 m² in area), adjacent to the on-site parking area.
- The development of a toilet and changing room facility on-site (principle dimensions – 12.2m x 3.0m x 2.5 m high).
- The development of an amphitheatre on-site to the rear of the parking and circulation areas (principle dimensions – 18.0 m x 20.0 m)
- The development of a dedicated activity zone at a central area on-site for the carrying out of a variety of recreational activities (4,500 m² in area)
- The development of a pump track at a central area on-site (principle dimensions – 60.0 m x 35.0 m, 2,100 m² in area.)
- The development of a fenced off dog park at a central area on-site (2,000 m² in area), with surrounding fencing and gated access 240 m in length
- The conversion of a network of existing tracks on-site to amenity trails. This network of amenity trails to be developed will interlink all of the proposed development components listed above. The following amenity trails will be developed on-site:
 - Adventure trail (Ca. 1.0 km in distance)
 - Picnic trail (Ca. 0.6 km in distance)
 - Small loop (Ca. 0.9 km in distance)
 - Main loop (Ca. 2.0 km in distance)
 - Perimeter loop (Ca. 3.6 km in distance)



- Dome trail (Ca. 0.5 km in distance). This dome path will traverse the area of the existing landfill cap on-site.
- The development of an adventure/sensory play path with nature play elements on-site.
- The use of the proposed development site as an amenity and biodiversity park to be known as 'East Galway Eco Park.'

2.2 Purpose of/Rationale for the Proposed Development

GCC seeks to unlock the potential of this ecologically rich site and develop an amenity and biodiversity park which will act as a local and regional attraction, providing a range of amenity offerings to the public of all ages and abilities, local community and interest groups.

The proposed development site will also serve as a green infrastructure asset in Co. Galway that will be managed to deliver ecosystem services, enhance biodiversity, provide recreational space and mitigate anthropogenic impacts on climate changes (by promoting Greenhouse Gas (GHG) sequestration).

2.3 Components of the Proposed Development

Main Entrance Signage

Refer to Drawings P22-032-0300-0001 and P22-032-0300-0001.

The main entrance features will comprise 2 no. entrance signs. The primary sign on the west of the entrance measures 11.0m in length by 2.1m high. The secondary sign on the east of the entrance measures 5.0m in length by 2.1m high. The entrance signs shall comprise Corten steel panels with extruded stainless steel lettering attached. The lettering will be backlit by LED lights. The corten panels will be mounted atop gabion stone baskets. The Gabion baskets will be filled using recovered stone.

Site Access

Refer to Drawing P22-032-0400-0003.

The existing site access area comprises the following landfill associated infrastructure:

- Weighbridge
- Administration building
- Wheel wash
- Staff car parking
- Waste quarantine area
- Generator compound
- Maintenance shed
- Leachate storage tank
- Leachate Lagoon



Works are required to the site access area to ensure minimal interaction between the public and landfill maintenance and aftercare related traffic at this intersection.

The works to the site access area at the point the existing site access road enters the main body of the site will comprise line painting and traffic control signage. Lane marking, directional arrows and "no entry" road markings shall be implemented. Cobble strips shall be installed to visually delineate between the public and landfill traffic lanes.

An access control barrier shall be installed to the administration building car park to restrict access to landfill maintenance staff only.

Fencing

Refer to Drawings within the P22-032-0500 series.

Safety infrastructure on-site shall comprise fencing and appropriate safety signage to restrict access to the dedicated exclusion zones on site.

The fencing shall comprise approximately 3,500m of 1.2m high timber post and wire mesh fencing to restrict access to the following areas:

- Landfill maintenance and aftercare areas.
- Steep slopes adjacent to on-site streams.

Additional security fencing shall comprise approximately 325m of 2.4m high V-mesh paladin fencing to restrict access to the following areas:

- Existing derelict dwelling.
- Leachate Storage Tank
- Maintenance Shed

Stock proof fencing on-site will incorporate mammal passes at regular intervals to minimize habitat fragmentation.

On Site Parking Areas

Refer to Drawings P22-032-0400-0001, P22-032-0400-0002 and P22-032-0400-0004.

The proposed car park is approximately 1,760m². The car park shall provide 57 no. car parking spaces including 3 no. accessible parking spaces, 6 no. EV charging spaces, 1 no. accessible EV charging space and 24 no. EV ready parking spaces (a landscaping strip can be reutilized for charging connections at these spaces in the future). The proposed car park shall be constructed of geo-grid infilled with decorative gravel atop the existing hardcore.

Bicycle parking is proposed at the main car park, mobile café and pump track. The three bicycle parking areas shall provide parking for 128 no. bicycles. The proposed bike parking shall be constructed of geo-grid infilled with gravel. The total area of bicycle parking is 170m².



A coach set down area and turning area shall be provided adjacent to the car park. The coach set down area provides parking for 3 no. large coaches. The coach set down area shall be constructed with asphalt surfacing. The coach set down area occupies an area of 87m². The coach turning area avails of an existing concrete hardstanding area adjacent to the set down area.

Circulation Area

Refer to Drawings P22-032-0400-0001.

The proposed circulation area adjacent to the parking facilities shall comprise a mobile café, seating, and toilet and changing facilities. The proposed circulation area is approximately 335m². The proposed circulation area shall be constructed of geo-grid infilled with decorative gravel.

Toilet and Changing Facilities

Refer to Drawing P22-032-0400-0006.

The toilet and changing facilities shall comprise a modular toilet block constructed within a modified 40ft container. The toilet block shall include male, female and accessible toilets. Unisex changing facilities will also be provided. The toilet block shall be clad with recovered timber cladding.

Foul water from the toilet facilities shall be discharged to a macerator pump prior to discharge to the on-site leachate system.

The Amphitheatre

Refer to Drawing P22-032-0400-0007.

The amphitheatre shall comprise a main stage measuring approximately 65m² and sloped seating terrace. The main stage shall contain a tensile canopy roof structure mounted to a concrete base. A stepped footpath shall connected the main stage to the seating terrace. The seating to the amphitheatre shall be constructed into the natural slope retained by gabion baskets topped with natural timber seating affixed atop.

A short trail shall connect the amphitheatre to the main car park.

The Trails

Refer to Drawings P22-032-0200-0001, P22-032-0201-0001 and P22-032-0201-0002.

A total of six no. trails are proposed at the site. The trails vary in length and degree of difficulty. The following trails are proposed:

- Adventure trail (1.0 km in distance)
- Picnic trail (0.6 km in distance)
- Small loop (0.9 km in distance)
- Main loop (2.0 km in distance)
- Perimeter loop (3.6 km in distance)
- Dome trail (0.5 km in distance).



The proposed trails overlap in sections, with the total length of developed trails being approximately 5.5 km. The trails shall be surfaced with a quarry dust finish with the exception of a steep section of trail which will be surface with asphalt/macadam. Tanalised timber edge support shall be placed to the edges of the trails.

The proposed trails mostly avail of the existing access maintenance tracks on site. The proposed dome trail and sections of the perimeter loop comprise the construction of new trails. The proposed perimeter trail will require the construction of a single stream crossing and pedestrian crossing. The stream crossing shall be a single span structure to minimise disturbance to the watercourse. Refer to Drawing P22-032-0200-0002.

A raised table pedestrian crossing shall be constructed where the perimeter loop crosses the main entrance road. Refer to Drawing P22-032-0200-0003.

The adventure trail shall contain a number of nature and sensory play elements placed adjacent to the trail.

The top of dome trail will contain a viewing feature and seating area.

Benches and information boards shall be installed at regular intervals along the proposed trails.

The Activity Zone

The activity zone shall comprise a large grass/reinforced safagrass/bark mulch surface area (approximately 4,500m²). The area shall contain a low-level adventure/obstacle, twin trail course with gently-undulating earth mounding, planting and seeding.

The Pump Track

The pump track shall comprise of approximately 280 linear metres of asphalt cycle tracks over an area of approximately 1,200 m² (within a total area of 2,100 m² which includes the track itself and intervening and surrounding space) The asphalt cycle tracks shall contain undulating ground to achieve the required profile for the pump track.

The Dog Park

The dog park shall comprise of 2 no. grassed areas (approximately 2,000 m²) catering for both large and small dogs. The entire area shall be fenced securely fenced with 1.2m high paladin fencing. A "bell jar" dual gate-system shall be operated to the dog park entrance which allows dog owners to bring their dog into a confined space, on-leash, where the dog can be unleashed before entry to the park.

The park shall contain selected dog agility equipment, hardstanding area with benches, refuse bins and water drinking points.

2.3.1 Construction of the Proposed Development

Construction Duration and Programme

It is estimated that the construction phase of the proposed development will take 40-48 weeks to complete.



Construction Hours

The hours of construction activity will avoid unsociable hours and will be agreed with the planning authority in advance of site start. It is anticipated that this will restrict working hours at the site during the construction phase to between 07:00 to 19:00 Monday to Friday inclusive and to between 07:00 to 13:00 on Saturdays. Work on Sundays or public holidays will only be conducted in exceptional circumstances and subject to prior notification insofar as possible with the local community.

Overview of Proposed Construction Works

An overview of the principal works involved in construction is provided below:

Main Entrance Features

The construction on the main entrance feature will comprise the following:

- General clearance of shrub.
- Stripping of topsoil.
- Laying of base material – Clause 804 or similar.
- Installation of gabion baskets.
- Filling of gabion baskets with selected recovered stone.
- Mounting of Corten Panels and recovered timber atop gabion baskets.
- Trenching of electrical cabling from signs to existing power supply.

Site Access and Safety Infrastructure

The construction of the cobble strip lane delineators will comprise the following:

- Breaking out of existing asphalt surface.
- Excavation to formation level.
- Placement of concrete bedding.
- Installation of cobbles.
- Reinstatement of asphalt surfacing to tie into cobbles.

The installation of the access control barrier will comprise the following:

- Breaking out of existing asphalt surface.
- Trenching of electrical cabling from access control barrier to administration building.
- Reinstatement of asphalt surfacing.
- Placement of concrete foundation to access control barrier tower.
- Installation of access control barrier system.



The construction of the 3,500m of 1.2m timber post and tension wire mesh fencing will comprise the following:

- Driving of timber stakes.
- Installation of tension wire mesh.

The construction of the 2.4m high V-mesh paladin fencing will comprise the following:

- Excavation of ground for post foundations (300mm x 300mm x 600mm).
- Placement of paladin fence posts in concrete.
- Erection of 325m of paladin V-mesh panels.

Parking and Set Down Infrastructure

The construction of the car park will comprise the following:

- Excavation of existing gravel hardstanding to a depth of approximately 100mm.
- Installation of timber edging.
- Placement of bedding sand material.
- Placement of geo-grid.
- Infilling of geo-grid with gravel.
- Landscaping areas including shrubs, hedges, trees, and grasses.

The construction of the bike parking will comprise the following:

- Excavation of ground to a depth of approximately 200mm.
- Placement of sub-base material - Clause 804 or similar.
- Placement of bedding sand material.
- Placement of geo-grid.
- Infilling of geo-grid with gravel.

The construction of the coach set down area will comprise the following:

- Excavation of existing gravel hardstanding to a depth of approximately 100mm.
- Placement of base material – Clause 804 or similar.
- Placement of asphalt surfacing (base course and wearing course).



Sanitary Facilities

The construction of the sanitary facilities will comprise the following:

- Excavation of ground to a depth of approximately 300mm.
- Trenching for foul water and water supply.
- Placement of base material – Clause 804 or similar.
- Craneage of pre-fabricated toilet block.
- Reprofilng works to provide access to toilet block.

Amphitheatre

The construction of the amphitheatre will comprise the following:

- Excavation of ground to a depth of approximately 300mm.
- Slope reprofiling works to achieve required grade.
- Placement of geotextile separation membrane
- Placement of sub-base material - Clause 804 or similar.
- Placement of concrete stage and steps.
- Placement of concrete foundation to seating.
- Installation of gabion baskets.
- Filling of gabion baskets with decorative stone.
- Mounting of natural timber atop gabion baskets.
- Installation of handrails.
- Installation of tensile canopy structure.
- Placement of topsoil and grass seeding.

Trails

The construction of the trails will comprise the following:

- Clearance of existing shrub along existing tracks.
- Excavation of existing track to a depth of approximately 100mm.
- Placement of sub-base material - Clause 804 or similar.
- Placement of tanalised timber edge supports.
- Placement of surfacing (Quarry dust or asphalt).



The construction of the stream crossing will comprise the following:

- Excavation of ground.
- Placement of precast reinforced concrete foundations and abutments.
- Placement of pre-cast concrete slab.
- Backfilling with structural infill.

Activity Zone

The construction of the activity zone will comprise the following:

- Earthworks to achieve the required profile.
- Installation of obstacle course equipment.
- Grass seeding.

Pump Track

The construction of the pump track will comprise the following:

- Earthworks to achieve the required profile, including compacting, trimming and surface preparation.
- Placement of sub-base material - Clause 804 or similar.
- Placement of asphalt surfacing.
- Grass seeding.

Dog Park

The construction of the dog park track will comprise the following:

- Earthworks to achieve the required profile.
- Excavation of ground for post foundations (300mm x 300mm x 600mm).
- Placement of paladin fence posts in concrete.
- Placement of paladin V-mesh panels.
- Placement of sub-base material - Clause 804 or similar.
- Placement of quarry dust surfacing.
- Grass seeding.
- Installation of ancillary elements (benches, bins, water points).

Environmental Management during Construction

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been developed in order to manage, prevent and control potential environmental impacts associated with Construction Phase activities. This document accompanies the planning application. This document defines the environmental control and mitigation measures to be adopted during construction works to prevent adverse impacts on the environment due to these construction activities.



2.4 Operational Phase of the Proposed Development

Proposed Development Opening Times

East Galway Eco park will only be open during the year round daylight hours of 08:30 - 16:30 Monday to Sunday, inclusive of public holidays.

On-site Supervision

A park supervisor will be provided to inspect and attend to operational matters.

A system of Closed Circuit Television will be provided on-site.

Recreational Activities

A variety of social, recreational and educational activities will be undertaken at the operational East Galway Eco park, including potentially: recreational walking and exercise, sight-seeing, sporting events, cycling, school tours, cultural heritage and artistic events, environmental/ecology education and wildlife viewing.

Visitor Management

All activities on-site will be undertaken in accordance with a Visitor Management Plan. Visitor numbers, behaviour and activities will be managed under this plan to avoid significant effects on biodiversity and cultural heritage on-site, including habitats, identified sensitive flora and fauna species, and a protected monument situated on-site.

Health and Safety Management

Healthy and safety risk and constraints were a fundamental consideration during the concept design and option assessment process. The presence of landfill infrastructure that is subject to maintenance at the site and the potential for park users to interact with landfill related infrastructure and activities naturally creates a degree of health and safety risk on-site that needs to be carefully and appropriately managed and controlled.

A Preliminary Health and Safety Plan has been completed for the proposed development. This plan divided the site into the following three zones:

- Red Zone - Exclusion Zone
- Amber Zone - Shared Activity Zone
- Green Zone Park - Activity Zone

The Red zone shall comprise the former landfill maintenance and operation areas. Access to these areas by the public shall be prohibited. The Red zone shall be completely fenced off from the public with appropriate signage erected.

The Amber zone shall comprise the public access road from the R348 regional road to the public parking area to the west of the site. The entrance to the park off the R348 shall be the sole access point to the site, as such, landfill operation and maintenance activities will interact with park users in this area. Appropriate health and safety measures will be implemented at the Amber zone to manage health and safety risk (e.g., suitable speed limits and speed signage, pedestrian crossings and speed ramps).



The Green zone shall comprise the remainder of the site. The public shall have access to this zone during the opening hours of the East Galway Eco Park except for some areas containing hazards. The hazards in the Green zone shall comprise high-risk streams, steep slopes, wetlands, dense vegetation and derelict buildings. These hazards shall be completely fenced off from park users with appropriate signage erected.

A final, comprehensive Health and Safety Management Plan will be developed for the site prior to the commencement of park operations.

Traffic Management

Traffic will enter and exit the site via an existing planning approved site entrance which was designed to have suitable visibility splays and sightlines. Traffic will access and exit the main body of the site via the use of a site access road running from the R348. Electronic entrance gates will be used to control access to the site in accordance with the proposed opening hours for the park.

A raised table pedestrian crossing and signage will be developed where the proposed perimeter loop crosses the site access road to safely manage traffic and increase pedestrian safety (See Drawing Reference: P22-032-0200-0003).

A system of signs, road marking and bollards will be used to manage traffic entering the main body of the site (See Drawing Reference: P22-032-0400-0003). This system will serve to suitably segregate park visitor traffic and occasional landfill maintenance activity related traffic.

Traffic entering the main body of the site will be directed via signage along an access road leading to the proposed car park and proposed bicycle parking areas on-site. Access to landfill infrastructure components in the area surrounding the site entrance will be controlled through the use of proposed gates and fencing (Refer to Drawings within the P22-032-0500 series).

Waste Management

A moderate but appropriate number of waste receptacles will be provided at Sanitary facilities on-site and adjacent to the Mobile Café Set Down Area and Dog Park on-site.

A 'leave no trace' ethos will be promoted at all other areas on-site. This ethos will be promoted through the use of suitable posters and/or signage on-site, as appropriate.

Broadly, the park will be managed in accordance with the requirements of the Galway County Council Litter Management Plan 2023 – 2025 in order to prevent litter generation and dog fouling. An appropriate level of litter management will be implemented on-site to ensure litter accumulating on-site is collected. Collected litter will be transferred to a centralized waste receptacle contained situated adjacent to the existing Administrative Building present on-site.



Ongoing Park Maintenance

The following park maintenance activities will be undertaken on-site during the operational phase of the proposed development:

- Landscape maintenance
- Trail maintenance and re-surfacing (as required).
- Amenity feature maintenance and repair (e.g., play elements, pump track)
- Maintenance of signs, road markings, bollards etc.
- Toilet block cleaning and maintenance.
- Park administration, including inspections, auditing and management tasks.

Ongoing Landfill Maintenance

The following landfill maintenance activities will be undertaken on-site during the operational phase of the proposed development:

- Environmental monitoring - Monitoring staff will be required to access installed infrastructure to take samples and/or monitor gas quality during the aftercare period post construction.
- Management of Landfill Gas - There will be an on-going requirement to:
- Maintain landfill gas infrastructure on a periodic basis.
- Monitor landfill gas quality at dedicated monitoring locations.
- Ongoing maintenance of engineered cap on-site - The grass cover will require maintenance.
- Ongoing maintenance of drainage systems on-site - Sub surface drainage pipes may require periodic jetting of pipes if they become compromised with roots or silt.
- Leachate collection - Occasionally (2 - 3 times a week), a road tanker will access the site to collect leachate generated at the existing Leachate Storage tank on-site.

All landfill management and maintenance activities will be undertaken in accordance with the Industrial Emissions (IE) licence for the former landfill enforced by the EPA (W0178-02).



3. PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Relevant Planning History

An overview of the planning history of the proposed development site is presented in Table 3-1.



Table 3-1: Planning History of Proposed Development Site

Planning File Reference	Applicant	Address	Development Description (as listed on GCC's Planning Portal)	Decision	Decision Date
023811	Celtic Waste Ltd.	Killagh More, Ballybaun, Ballintober, Co. Galway	For the construction of an engineered Landfill Site for Residual Waste and for Ancillary Facilities	Granted (Conditional)	29/10/2003
08324	Greenstar Holdings Limited	Killagh More, Co. Galway	For 1) the construction of a single storey extension (approx. 160 sqm) to existing offices and 2) to remove the regional restriction of the origin of the waste accepted at the facility by modifying Condition No. 2 of Permission Reg. Ref No. 02/3811 so that the facility can accept waste from other waste regions. Landfill access will continue at the existing permitted access at the R348. The proposed development relates to an activity covered by Waste Licence Ref. No. W0178-01 issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. The proposed development will not require a review of the Waste Licence. The proposed development is located at the East Galway Residual Landfill.	Granted (Conditional)	30/04/2008
081133	Greenstar Gas Energy (Galway) Ltd	Killagh More, Co. Galway	For a landfill gas utilisation plant on a 0.13 hectare site. The proposed development will be phased and will generate up to 4.2 MW of electricity for input into the national grid. The proposed development will consist of: (i) Three separate purpose build and environmentally controlled containers; (each circa 2.5m x 12.2m x 2.6m high) enclosing a landfill gas engine with a 6.0m high stack generating approx. 1.4MW of power each; (ii) Three separate purpose build and environmentally controlled containers (each 3.0m x 3.0m x 3.0m high) enclosing a transformer; (iii) ESB substation (ca 6.0m x 9.7m x 4.5m high); (iv) A steel equipment storage container (ca 2.5m x 12.2m x 2.5m high); (v) 2 No. bunded oil tanks (each 5m ³ capacity); and (vi) Ancillary concrete foundation slabs; earthworks and site grading; paladin fencing (2.4m high x ca. 180m long); double gates, ducting and services; above ground piping and all associated works. The proposed development relates to an activity covered by Waste Licence No. W0178-01 issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. The proposed development will not require a review of the Waste Licence (Gross floor area 210.7 sqm)	Granted (Conditional)	22/08/2008



Planning File Reference	Applicant	Address	Development Description (as listed on GCC's Planning Portal)	Decision	Decision Date
15300	Greenstar Properties Limited	Killagh More, Co. Galway	Extension of duration for the construction of an engineered Landfill Site for Residual Waste and for Ancillary Facilities as described in attachment No. 2, previous planning reference no. 02/3811, ABP Ref 07/205181	Granted (no conditions)	12/05/2015



3.2 Other Relevant Development surrounding the Proposed Development Site

The majority of recent grants of planning permission in the area surrounding the proposed development site relate to private dwellings, forestry access roads and entrances, utilities, or small-scale sports complex development.

An overview of recent development planning applications and decisions in the area surrounding the proposed development site - which are of particular relevance to the proposed Eco Park development in this case - is provided in Table 3-2.



Table 3-2: Other Relevant Development surrounding the Proposed Development Site

Planning File Reference	Applicant	Address	Development Description	Decision	Decision Date	Relevance to the Proposed Development
21694	Aughrim Community Dev. Co. Ltd	Foats / Levallynearl	Permission to develop a Climate Action Park at Foats / Levallynearl, Aughrim, Ballinasloe, Co Galway. The development will result in the creation of approximately 1,600 metres of pathways through an existing 1.7 hectare grassland site: the signposting of points of ecological, spiritual and archeological significance: the planting of carbon-sequestering trees, shrubs, hedgerows, wildflowers, bulbs and grasses and the introduction of picnic tables, benches and bins. Works will be in close proximity to but will not interfere with National Monument GA087-67 [Abbey of St. Conall / Religious House - Augustinian Canons]	Conditional	10/02/2022	Similar Park development project. The Vision for this development is broadly similar to the Vision for East Galway Eco Park, although this park is substantially smaller than the East Galway Eco Park and has potential to provide local/community amenity mainly. This development has synergies with the East Galway Eco Park development.
171416	Brendan Costello	Cloonameraun	Permission for a facility for the appropriate treatment and recovery of end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) and end-of-life trucks. The development is described as follows: 'the retention of an existing 254m2 building as a truck repairs workshop; 'the retention of an existing 49m2 building as site office; the change of use of an existing 131m2 building from a truck repairs workshop to a end-of-life vehicle depollution building; construction of 2 concrete hardstanding areas on site for the temporary outdoor storage of un-depolluted end-of-life vehicles; installation of a stormwater drainage system and associated oil/water interceptor; construction of a landscape mitigation berm and security fencing; and installation of weighbridge. Following the granting of planning permission, it is proposed to apply to Galway County Council for a waste permit for the operation of an Authorised Treatment Facility for the treatment of end-of-life vehicles.	Extension of Duration	20/11/2017	This End-of-Life Vehicle waste management facility is a significant local development that could in theory generate environmental impacts in the absence of appropriate management and mitigation. There will be no interaction between the activities at this facility and Park activities however given the distance between the two sites, and given the waste facility operates in accordance with a Waste Facility Permit which defines conditions relating to environmental protection at the site.



3.3 Planning Policy Context and Project Compliance with Planning Policy

3.3.1 National Policy

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (2018)

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF) is the Government’s high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the country to the year 2040. County Galway is situated within the Northern and Western Regional Area which historically has a lower level of urbanisation compared to other regions. Addressing economic resilience and connectivity will be strategic priorities for this area.

The subject site is located in an area characterised in part by rural land use. The NPF recognises that rural areas make a major contribution to Ireland’s identity and to the overall national development in economic, social, cultural and environmental terms. The relevant key future planning and development and place-making policy priorities for the Northern and Western Region includes:

- *Supported by the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, shaping and informing delivery of city, rural town and village rural rejuvenation priorities, harnessing publicly owned land and other assets that are not being used actively at present, such as former healthcare, military, transport and other complexes and combining the potential of such assets with community and wider private and public sector support and investment, to bring about the transformation of both urban and rural areas in an integrated manner.*

The document lists the National Strategy Outcomes. Regarding Ireland’s rural fabric, these include outcomes like strengthened rural economies and communities and enhanced amenity and heritage. The overarching strategy of the NPF is inclusive of the following:

- *Targeting a level of growth in the country’s Northern and Western and Southern Regions combined, to at least match that projected in the East and Midland Region*
- *Reversing town/village and rural population decline, by encouraging new roles and functions for buildings streets, and sites.*
- *Supporting the sustainable growth of rural communities, to include development in rural areas.*
- *Promoting new economic opportunities arising from digital connectivity and indigenous innovation and enterprise as well as more traditional natural ad resource assets (e.g., food energy, tourism), underpinned by the quality of life offering.*

The Irish countryside is, and will continue to be, a living and lived-in landscape focusing on the requirements of rural economies and rural communities, based on agriculture, forestry, tourism and rural enterprise, however, the NPF notes that creating the environment to support job creation in rural areas will be a key enabler to reinvigorating rural towns and villages and sustaining rural communities. Rural areas like Kilconnell support a mix of businesses of varying sizes, operating in a wide range of sectors from the traditional, such as agriculture and tourism, to more modern industries.

Section 9.3 of the NPF has regard to Ireland’s natural heritage, noting that Ireland has an abundance of iconic natural heritage areas which are a key part of our cultural heritage and are integral to our tourism industry for their contribution to the attractiveness of places for economic investment.. The objective below is applicable in this case:



National Policy Objective 17:

- *Enhance, integrate and protect the special physical, social, economic and cultural value of built heritage assets through appropriate and sensitive use now and for future generations.*

Ireland's natural resources are some of our greatest assets and through the development of the agriculture, food, forestry, tourism and renewable energy sectors, this will not only sustain rural employment, but also contribute to driving the national economy. Likewise, the built, cultural and natural assets which constitute the 'raw material' of the tourism industry are also essential to the 'production capability' of the sector. Tourism has the capacity to directly and indirectly sustain communities, create employment and deliver real social benefits for rural Ireland. The Concept Proposals have the potential to offer a unique alternative means for tourists and visitors to access and enjoy the rural area at the subject site. The below objective is relevant in this regard:

National Policy Objective 22:

- *Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatways Strategy, which prioritises projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.*

It is considered that the provision of an amenity and biodiversity park in East Galway will be a significant catalyst in assisting the county and the region to meet its full potential.

People, Place and Policy – Growing Tourism to 2025

The document sets out the key priorities for Irish Tourism up to 2025, recognising that tourism is one of Ireland's most important economic sectors and has significant potential to play a further role in Ireland's economic prosperity. In this document, it is indicated that the Government affirms that it will place tourism as a key element of its economic strategy, with development in the tourism sector reflecting the highest standards of environmental and economic sustainability. Moreover, by supporting tourism, the Government aims to maximise the wide-ranging economic and social benefits of the sector, by promoting Ireland, supporting enterprise and jobs and providing an attractive, competitive overall offering for tourists. The document defines a selection of distinct consumer segments that have a higher likelihood to select Ireland as a destination. These include:

- **Culturally Curious** – Travellers in the over 45 age group taking a holiday with their partner. They are out to broaden their minds and expand their experience by exploring new landscapes, history and culture.
- **Great Escapers** – these tend to be younger and are specifically interested in rural holidays. Great escapers are on holiday to take time out, and experience nature at close range.
- **Social Engineers** – Younger visitors who like to holiday in groups or as couples. Friends or colleagues looking for an exciting trip to a new and vibrant destination.



The proposed development – East Galway Eco Park - could support the above policies and objectives. The variety of outdoor activities as well as experiences associated with nature, conservation, art, health and well-being, that the proposed development can offer, would cater to the differing needs of the three consumer groups which are identified as those offering the best potential for Irish tourism. The proposed development will enhance the tourism and recreation offering provided in the region. In-combination with other existing and prospective tourism and recreation offerings in the region, the proposed development has the potential to support attracting domestic and overseas visitors to the region.

Tourism Development & Innovation – A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022

Fáilte Ireland sets-out its strategic plan for national tourism development in its publication ‘Tourism Development & Innovation – A Strategy for Investment 2016-2022’. This strategic plan has not yet been superseded by a more current plan.

The strategic objectives of the investment strategy are:

- *To successfully and consistently deliver a world class visitor experience;*
- *To support a tourism sector that is profitable and achieves sustainable levels of growth and delivers jobs;*
- *To facilitate communities to play an enhanced role in developing tourism in their locality, thereby strengthening and enriching local communities; and*
- *To recognise, value and enhance Ireland’s natural environment as the cornerstone of Irish tourism.*

The overarching theme of Fáilte Ireland’s strategy is on building memorable experiences for visitors and almost every tourism experience can be broken down into four components:

1. Product – must be authentic
2. Service – must be high quality
3. Story – must be distinctive
4. Narration – must have unique character

The strategy seeks to identify the areas of investment that should be focused on that will deliver sustainable growth in the Irish tourism sector resulting in higher revenue and more jobs. It is a priority for investment to seek specific outcomes listed in Section 4.1 of the document which is inclusive of:

- *Engagement with the outdoors – access to the landscape, improving the visitor experience of State lands, and opportunities for outdoor activity businesses.*
- *Engagement with heritage – increased capacity at iconic attractions, enabling access to heritage and culture, and conservation and sustainability.*

The proposed development promises outdoor activities and experiences associated with nature, conservation, health and well-being. This is in line with the desired outcomes of the strategy to improve engagement with the outdoors and heritage, including both natural and cultural heritage.



National Recreation Outdoor Strategy 2023 – 2027

The National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027 sets out a vision, mission and series of actions which will lead, guide and facilitate the sustainable development and management of the outdoor recreation sector for the next five years. It also aims to increase participation, in order to realise social, health and economic benefits. The mission of the Strategy is as follows:

‘To lead, guide and facilitate the sustainable development and management of outdoor recreation and increased participation, in order to realise social, health and economic benefits. We will do this whilst respecting the custodians of land and water, caring for the environment and promoting responsible recreation.’

The following Strategic Objectives have been defined in the Strategy:

‘To increase and support the number of people active in the outdoors, especially young people and under-represented groups’

‘To protect the environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation, in keeping with best practice management of landscape and habitats.’

‘To protect and improve access to the outdoors, for the benefit of all.’

The proposed development, as planned and designed, will expressly support the vision, mission and the above Strategic Objectives defined in the Strategy. The presence of East Galway Eco Park will improve access to outdoor recreation in the East Galway region. The park will specifically cater to young people (e.g., through the provision of a play area, activity zone etc.) and those with disabilities (through the provision of navigable trails on-site, disabled parking facilities etc).

3.3.2 Regional Policy

County Galway Tourism Strategy 2023-2031

On 29 November 2023, Galway County Council adopted the first-ever tourism strategy for County Galway, aiming to spread tourism and its benefits across “the wider county” to grow visitor spend by 10pc¹.

Areas like Galway City and Connemara attract more visitors than the eastern and southern parts of the county.

The strategy will be formally launched in early 2024 within an implementation plan and will focus on six Development Zones. These zones will allow targeted interventions where required to address more local challenges and opportunities. East Galway Eco Park is located within an area which is overlapped by Zone 1 and Zone 3. Zone 1 is southeast Galway, including Loughrea and Portumna. Zone 3 is northeast Galway (including Athenry, Tuam and Ballinasloe).

The proposed development will serve to support the strategy by attracting more visitors to the East Galway region.

¹ <https://www.independent.ie/life/travel/travel-news/a-unique-county-galway-adopts-first-ever-county-wide-tourism-strategy/a1953562549.html>



Ireland's Hidden Heartlands Regional Tourism Development Strategy 2023 – 2027

This is a five- year strategic framework for the sustainable development of tourism in the Hidden Heartlands region. Its aim is to build greater capacity and capability into the industry and provide a clear strategy for attracting visitors that will stay longer and spend more in the region. The following Strategic Objectives are defined under the Strategy:

- Strategic Objective 2: Enhance the range and quality of our visitor experiences to underpin the Hidden Heartlands brand proposition, leveraging the natural and cultural assets of the region in a sustainable way with a focus on eco-tourism.
- Strategic Objective 4: Establish the region as one of the leading regenerative tourism destinations in Europe in which tourism results in net positive outcomes for communities and nature.

The proposed development, as planned and designed, will expressly support the overarching goals of the Strategy and the above Strategic Objectives defined in the Strategy. East Galway Eco Park will provide natural and recreational amenity which will serve to enhance the tourism offering in the East Galway region specifically. The transformation of the former East Galway landfill site into an Eco Park aligns well with the regenerative tourism ambitions defined in the Strategy.

3.3.3 Local Planning Context

3.3.3.1 Galway County Development Plan (CDP) 2022 - 2028

East Galway Eco Park is supported by planning policy defined in the Galway County Development Plan (CDP) 2022 - 2028.

Chapter 8 of the CDP supports the development of additional tourism experiences or attractions which serve to enhance tourism and employment within the county. The CDP supports the sustainable development of facilities such as outdoor activity or leisure parks at suitable locations throughout the county. This is a part of the following policy objective:

- **Policy Objective ATE 1** - Additional Tourism Initiatives: To facilitate the sustainable development of the tourism sector and provide for the delivery of a unique combination of tourism opportunities drawing on the network of attractions in County Galway and potential future attractions.

Two policy objectives contained in the CDP that more specifically support the development of the East Galway Eco Park are as follows:

- **Policy Objective WM10** - Landfill Sites: 'Galway County Council will put in place a plan during the lifetime of 2022-2028 County Development Plan for Kilconnell Landfill to deal with the remediation of the Kilconnell Landfill site to a standard consistent with the end use of Kilconnell Landfill to open space / park amenity area for community use including community sustainable energy/ climate action measures.
- **Policy Objective SRA 4** - Passive and Active Open Space: Seek to develop multifunctional open spaces throughout the County which will support a range of recreational and amenity activities that provides for active and passive needs.



3.3.3.2 *Draft Galway County Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029*

Galway County Council are in the process developing the Galway County Local Authority Climate Action Plan. The Draft Plan sets out how Galway County Council will promote a range of mitigation, adaptation, and other climate action measures, to help deliver on the national climate obligations and the Government's overall national Climate Objective, which seeks to pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

The Draft Plan expressly promotes Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure in the County. The following objective is defined in the Plan:

- Objective LN2 - Protect, conserve and enhance County Galway's biodiversity and heritage.

The proposed development will expressly support the Strategic Goals of the Plan and the objective to enhance biodiversity in the County. The proposed development will serve to enhance biodiversity at the former East Galway landfill site and will serve as a key Green Infrastructure asset. The native tree and vegetation enhancement that will be facilitated by the proposed development will promote carbon sequestration in line with the goals and objectives of this Plan.

3.3.3.3 *Draft Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2024 - 2030*

Galway County Council are in the process of preparing the Galway County Heritage and Biodiversity Plan 2024-2030. The main aim of the Draft Plan will be to place heritage and biodiversity at the heart of public life in the county. This will be achieved through increasing awareness, participation, enjoyment, knowledge and understanding of our shared heritage to lead to its proper conservation, management and protection and safeguarding it for future generations.

The Vision of the Draft Plan is as follows:

- The rich heritage and biodiversity of County Galway will be cherished, valued, conserved and enhanced in a manner that is respectful of our past, mindful of our present needs and sustainable for future generations.

Three overarching objectives have been defined in the Draft Plan. These are as follows:

- To increase awareness, appreciation and participation.
- To gather and share knowledge.
- To manage and conserve our heritage, including biodiversity.

The proposed development will support the achievement of the Draft Plan Vision and Objectives. The development, management and enhancement of the proposed development site as an Eco Park will increase people's engagement with and understanding of natural heritage. The Eco Park will support the carrying out of ecology/wildlife related educational activities in accordance with the goals of the Draft Plan.



3.4 Environmental Considerations

An overview of baseline environmental conditions and sensitivities at and surrounding the site, and environment management/mitigation measures that will be adopted during the construction and operational phases of the proposed development is provided below, under the following headings:

- Human Environment
- Surface Water
- Groundwater, Soils and Geology
- Biodiversity
- Air Quality and Climate
- Noise
- Cultural Heritage
- Traffic and Transportation
- Landscape and Visual Amenity

3.4.1 Human Environment

The immediate areas surrounding the site consist mainly of agricultural pastureland, forest and semi-natural woodland. One-off and linear housing and farmsteads (typical of a rural environment) surround the site in all cardinal directions. There are a number of houses situated within relative close proximity to the boundary of the site in various cardinal directions, although no significant construction activities will take place near to these houses.

A Construction Phase Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been developed for the construction of the proposed development. This plan defines management and mitigation measures that will avoid and minimize negative impacts on human receptors on-site and in the surrounding area due to construction phase activities. This Plan defines a framework for health and safety management during construction and defines measures to prevent and minimize negative dust, noise and traffic impacts that affect people on or near to the site.

During the operational stage of the proposed development - the Eco Park will operate in accordance with a Health and Safety Management Plan to ensure human health and safety on-site. This Plan will be based on the principles of safety and risk management defined in the Preliminary Health and Safety Plan prepared for the proposed development. Health and safety risk on-site generally and risk associated with interactions between park users and landfill maintenance activities will be managed appropriately. A summary of the primary control measures that will be adopted on-site is provided below:

- Fencing and signage to prevent access to landfill infrastructure areas/components.
- Securing of landfill infrastructure components.
- Use of speed limits and traffic calming measures.
- A raised pedestrian table crossing will be installed on-site where trails cross the site access road.
- Fencing will be provided to prevent access to steep slopes on-site.
- An LLDPE liner will be installed at the dome trail to prevent gas migration to areas accessed by the public



- Streams and wetlands will be fenced off to prevent access and signage will be erected to communicate hazards associated drowning.
- A no smoking or barbequing policy will be adopted at the park and signage will be erected to communicate hazards associated with naked flames.

The park supervisor will be tasked to monitor conformance with the Health and Safety Management Plan.

A CCTV system will also be in operation on-site to monitor park user behaviour and safety.

Park operating hours will only allow for day-time access to the park to promote park user safety.

3.4.2 Surface Water

The proposed development site is primarily located within the Galway Bay South East catchment (Catchment ID 29) and Raftord_SC_010 sub-catchment (Sub-catchment ID 29_5), with an area within the southeast area of the site located within the Upper Shannon Catchment (Catchment ID 26D) and Suck_SC_080 sub-catchment (Sub-catchment ID 26D_2).

Raftord 29 (River Waterbody Code IE_WE_29R010100; Segment Code 29_21), a first order water body arises adjacent to the northeast corner of the site. This is locally known as the Ballintober Stream. The water body flows in a northerly direction adjacent to the access road and merges with Clooncallis, discussed below, approximately 1.2km north-northwest of the site.

Clooncallis (River Waterbody Code IE_WE_29R010100; Segment Code 29_522), a first order water body arises within the proposed development site. This is locally known as the Killaghmore Stream.

The site is not situated in a flood risk zone (e.g., as determined under the National Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme).

Construction Phase

There will be no effects on receiving water environment given: the limited magnitude of construction, the temporary nature of works, proposals to carry out works in a clean, tidy and orderly manner in accordance with good industry practice, and proposals to store waste materials generated during construction properly and remove them from the site promptly. In addition, only very minor excavation works will be carried out on-site which significantly limits the potential for the generation of silt laden surface water affecting downstream water body receptors.

A stream crossing will be constructed as part of the proposed development. This structure will be constructed in accordance with good industry practice to protect the stream from silt laden surface water ingress. All concrete used for this structure will be pre-cast, to avoid the risk of concrete pours being accidentally released to the stream and causing damage (as a result of the highly alkaline nature of concrete).

Operational Phase

Once the construction of the proposed works has been completed, the operation of the proposed development will have no impact on the surrounding water environment.



3.4.3 Groundwater, Soils and Geology

The majority of the site is underlain by the GWDTE-Rahasane Turlough (SAC000322). This groundwater body consists of poorly productive bedrock.

The south eastern corner of the site is underlain by the Aughrim groundwater body. This groundwater body consists of poorly productive bedrock.

There is no karst bedrock within the red line boundary of the proposed development site.

Groundwater vulnerability on-site is extreme in centre of site corresponding with landfill vulnerability reducing towards high and moderate vulnerability at site boundary.

Subsoils beneath the site consists of cut over raised peat and Till derived from limestones.

Bedrock beneath the site consists of the Lucan Formation. The formation comprises dark-grey to black, fine-grained, occasionally cherty, micritic limestones that weather paler, usually to pale grey.

Construction Phase

There will be no effects on receiving groundwater or soils environment during the construction of the proposed development given: the limited magnitude of construction, the temporary nature of works, proposals to carry out works in a clean, tidy and orderly manner in accordance with good industry practice, and proposals to store waste materials generated during construction properly and remove them from the site promptly. In addition, only very minor excavation works will be carried out on-site which significantly limits the potential for the generation of silt laden surface water affecting downstream water body receptors.

Operational Phase

There will be no impacts on groundwater or soils during the operational phase of the proposed development given the nature of recreational activity that will be carried out on-site (i.e. walking, running, cycling etc.) All site components (e.g., trails, play path etc.), will be constructed, surfaced and maintained to accommodate park user footfall/use, preventing soil erosion and mud.

3.4.4 Biodiversity

Ecological Conditions

GCC commissioned Beo Ecology to undertake a Habitat Assessment and Mammal Survey of the site. The survey reports that the site supports numerous habitats ranging from treelines, scrub development, recolonising bare ground to mixed broadleaved woodland and degraded bog. Mature Native Broadleaf Woodland (c 3.4 ha) with predominant Hazel trees, located to the South-west. This area of woodland has a high conservation and landscape value, and it appears on OSi historic 6 and 25 Inch maps.

The evidence for the following mammal survey species were recorded within the study area during a target mammal survey: pine marten, hare, badger, fox and otter.

JL Ecology was commissioned by GCC to undertake a survey of breeding birds on the site. Of the 41 species recorded, three are on the Red-list on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Grey Wagtail, Meadow Pipit and Snipe) and seven are on the Amber-list on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (Goldcrest, Mallard, Linnet, Skylark, Starling, Swallow and Willow Warbler).



A Bat Roost Assessment and Survey was also carried out and recorded a number of bat species indicating that the area has good quality habitat to support the local bat population and acknowledged that an amenity development of the site can be achieved without negatively impacting the site's protected species. The site also contains an historic enclosure and a derelict two-storey dwelling with potential for bat roosting.

Ecological Enhancement and Mitigation

The proposed development focuses on ecological enhancement at the site. Native woodland will be retained, protected and conserved. A minimal intervention area will be left unmanaged to retain open habitats (grassland and wetland areas), encourage natural rewilding, native woodland regeneration and return of native species.

The following biodiversity enhancement measures will be implemented on-site as part of the proposed development:

- Grassland Management, including appropriate management of existing wildflowers, as appropriate.
- Woodland Management, including allowing native woodland development and enhancement, at relevant locations on-site.
- Hedgerow Management, to include additional planting and layering, where necessary, using appropriate species.
- Scrub Management, including restricting management outside the breeding bird season (legal requirement) and iterative cutting.
- Bat Protection, including the protection of potential bat roosts on-site, and appropriate habitat enhancement.
- Bird Protection, including hedge cutting restriction, as necessary, and a preference for planting appropriate native fruit bearing plant species, offering a food source and shelter for bird species.
- Retention of existing mammal passes present in existing security fencing on-site. Incorporation of appropriate mammal passes in all proposed fencing.
- All seeds and saplings that may be planted on-site. should be from locally sourced cultivars, as far as practicable.

Several mitigation measures are proposed within the CEMP which accompanies this Part 8 planning application to ensure the construction phase of the proposed development does not impact any sensitive receptors within the proposed development site area.

Mitigation has been incorporated into the design of the proposed development. Amenity trails and activities have been positioned where they will not impinge on identified sensitive ecological areas. The proposed dog park will be fenced. Stock proof fencing on-site will incorporate mammal passes to minimize habitat fragmentation. The derelict house with bat roosting potential will be protected from access and intrusion by fencing (with mammal passes). No lighting which could affect sensitive flora and fauna species will be provided on-site as part of the Park development. The park will only be open during daylight hours throughout the year.

An Operation Management Plan will be developed to prevent park user activity on-site impacting biodiversity, flora and fauna. This Plan will be adaptive in nature and will minimize intrusion on ecologically sensitive areas on-site, wherever necessary. A strict policy of having dogs on leashes outside the fenced dog park will be adopted on-site to prevent disturbance of mammals.

There will be no significant effects on biodiversity during the construction or operational phase of the proposed development. The proposed development - as designed and planned - will support ecological enhancement on-site.



3.4.5 Air Quality and Climate

Construction Phase

Operations at the proposed development will be undertaken in accordance with good construction industry practice to prevent the build-up of dust. Construction waste will be properly stored on-site and promptly removed from the site to prevent the built up of dust generating material on-site. All dusty wastes will be covered to prevent dust generation.

Construction phase activities are limited in magnitude and temporary in nature, and there will be only very minor excavation works carried out during construction, therefore it is not envisaged significant levels of dust will be generated on-site. Wetting of surfaces will be carried out where necessary to limit dust generation on dry and windy days. Activities that have a significant potential to generate dust will not be carried out during dry and windy conditions. Construction and demolition waste generated on-site will be promptly removed from the site to prevent the generation of material stockpiles which may be a source of dust. Fencing covered with dust netting will be erected wherever any dust generating construction activities take place - to prevent dust deposition outside of working areas.

Operational Phase

The proposed development will not have any impact on air quality once constructed.

The development of this site as a Green Infrastructure asset will promote carbon sequestration. The native trees and vegetation which will be allowed to develop as part of the proposed development will act as natural carbon sinks by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere through photosynthesis.

3.4.6 Noise

Construction Phase

The works are proposed within a rural area which has low levels of background noise. The main sources of noise on-site during construction will be as follows:

- Minor levels of traffic movements.
- Material and waste handling activities including waste loading and unloading.
- Mobile plant operation - for excavation, road-marking and construction activities.

The main measure to control noise on-site will be to ensure that all operations are strictly carried out within defined operating hours. No operations will take place during evening or night-time operating hours as defined by the EPA in their Guidance Note for Noise NG4. Noise intensive equipment will be operated only on a temporary and occasional basis during construction. A system for handling and managing any noise complaints will be established prior to the commencement of construction works. There will be no significant noise impacts on surrounding sensitive receptors given the temporary nature of the works and give that noise intensive equipment will only be utilized on an intermittent basis and outside early morning, evening or night-time hours, as well as Sundays and bank holidays.

There will be no significant noise effects during the construction phase of the proposed development.



Operational Phase

There will be an increase of vehicle traffic and human presence on-site during the operational phase of the proposed development. Noise levels associated with park activity will be minimal, however. No noisy activities will be carried out at the park. Cultural events may be carried out occasionally at the Amphitheatre on-site, however these activities will be small-scale in nature and will occur during daytime hours only. The Amphitheatre is located toward the centre of the site - a significant distance away from any noise sensitive location. A Visitor Management Plan will be used to manage Park activities and visitor behaviour on-site. This Plan will define measures to reduce noisy activity on-site that may impact humans or sensitive ecology.

3.4.7 Cultural Heritage

The site was subject to an archaeological site walkover and assessment under the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the Celtic Waste planning application for the construction of the landfill (Planning Reference: 023811). A single recorded archaeological feature was identified as being present on-site. It was described in the 2002 EIA as follows:

- An enclosure (Reference: GA086-165) is situated at the south end of the site. This consists of a subcircular earthen mound (north/south 31.7 m, east/west 19.8 m), which is situated in a low lying area of marshy ground. The site has a good short-range aspect in all directions apart from the north-east, which is obscured by nearby hillocks. A stream runs to the east of the site. The mound/platform (average height 1.6 m) is well-defined and delimited by a sharp fall-off in height on all sides apart from the north-eastern quadrant, which appears to merge with an adjoining area of high land. There is evidence of interference, with a cut-away area in the western sector, which exposes a considerable amount of stone in the profile of the mound (disturbed area: north/south 5 m; east/west 3.4 m). the mound appears to have been constructed by utilising a natural hummock. There is no evidence for any internal structures.

A ringfort (Reference: GA086-253) was reputed to be situated at the centre of the site to the south of the footprint of the capped landfill. This feature was not identified as being present during the 2002 archaeological survey of the site. Such a feature is not existent on-site currently. This area is comprised of made ground which arose during landfill related works.

A souterrain (Reference: GA086-252) was previously situated at the southern end of the site. This feature was preserved by record and has been excavated and removed from the site .

Mitigation has been incorporated into the design of the proposed development. Amenity trails and park components have been positioned in locations which are a significant distance away from the existent enclosure on-site (Reference: GA086-165).

Construction Phase

All construction works will take place in locations that are a significant distance away from the identified existent enclosure on-site. Construction works are limited in magnitude. Minimal excavation will be undertaken during construction, making it unlikely unrecorded archaeological monuments will be disturbed during construction of the proposed development.

There will be no significant effects on cultural heritage during the construction phase of the proposed development.



Operational Phase

Visitor numbers, behaviour and activities will be managed under a Visitor Management Plan to avoid significant effects on heritage on-site. This plan will provide a framework for managing visitor movement on-site and directing/keeping people away from the identified enclosure.

There will be no significant effects on cultural heritage during the operational phase of the proposed development.

3.4.8 Traffic and Transportation

The site is accessed via the R348 road from Kilconnell to New Inn. The existing site entrance has been constructed to the required standard and has suitable visibility splays and sightlines. This entrance was previously utilized for landfill related traffic during the operation of the former East Galway Landfill.

There will be relatively limited levels of construction phase traffic due to the minimal scale of construction activity proposed. A Construction Phase Traffic Management Plan will be adopted to manage construction traffic that does arise. Details of this Plan are provided in the CEMP which accompanies this planning application.

Operational phase traffic on-site will be carefully managed to minimize traffic risk, and the risk associated with Park user traffic interacting with occasional landfill maintenance related traffic. Detail on Traffic Management during operations has been provided in Section 2.5.1.

3.4.9 Landscape and Visual

The proposed development site is situated in the Castlegar Basin Unit of the North Galway Complex Landscape which has a Low landscape sensitivity. There are no designated protected views or scenic routes in the vicinity of the proposed development site. The site is mostly low lying in nature and is visually screened. There are minimal views into or out of the site from/to the wider area. The existing landfill cap (dome) at the site rises above other parts of the site and is more visually prominent.

Construction activities inclusive of associated vehicle movements and mobile plant operation will be undertaken within the confines of the site during development works.

Working areas will be surrounded by perimeter fencing with non-transparent netting to minimize views into site areas from the surrounding public realm during construction wherever there are views from public areas into working areas. Visual changes associated with construction activities will be temporary in nature and there will be no lasting, significant adverse visual impact on the surrounding area due to construction.

The proposed development works aim to improve the overall views and character of the site. A dome trail will be constructed to allow Park users access the top of landfill cap (dome) where they will be able to enjoy views of the wider landscape.

The addition of aesthetically pleasing hard and soft landscaping features will improve the visual amenity at the site. There will be no negative visual impacts associated with the proposed development works once complete. All proposed finishes will be high quality in nature.

The proposed development will enhance visual amenity at the site.



4. CONCLUSION

There is a very clear rationale for the proposed development, which has been outlined in Section 2.1.2.

There is a robust justification for the proposed development, having regard to the planning policy defined in Section 3.3. In summary, the proposed development will align with and support planning policy, national and regional tourism policy, and local climate, heritage and biodiversity related policy.

East Galway Eco Park will contribute towards the need for additional recreation and tourism sites in the East Galway region. It will act as a local and regional attraction and will provide a wide range of amenity offerings to the public of all ages and abilities, local community and interest groups.

As discussed in Section 3.4, the Eco Park will be developed, operated and maintained in a manner that is sensitive to environmental receptors at and surrounding the site, including biodiversity and heritage features at the site. The Eco Park has been designed to enhance environmental features on-site.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report has been prepared for the proposed development. This assessment concluded the following:

- *'It has been evaluated that there are no likely significant effects on the qualifying interests, special conservation interest or the conservation objectives of any designated European site.'*

An EIA Screening Report has been prepared for the proposed development which has concluded that neither a Mandatory EIAR nor Sub-threshold EIAR is required for the project, and that no element of the proposed development is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the receiving environment (with the adoption of proposed environmental management and mitigation measures).

A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be in place to ensure environmental protection during development works.

In light of the above, it can be concluded that the proposed development will accord with all relevant planning and environmental protection criteria and the principles of proper planning and sustainable development enshrined in the Planning and Development Act (as amended). The proposed development should therefore be granted planning consent.



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