

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION TO
AN BORD PLEANÁLA

FOR APPROVAL OF (I) THE N6 GALWAY CITY RING ROAD
PURSUANT TO SECTION 51 OF THE ROADS ACT 1993 (AS
AMENDED); (II) THE N6 GALWAY CITY RING ROAD
MOTORWAY SCHEME 2018; and (III) THE N6 GALWAY CITY
RING ROAD PROTECTED ROAD SCHEME 2018

ABP Ref. ABP-302848-18 and ABP-302885-18

ORAL HEARING

STATEMENT of Evidence
Responses to Population
(Human Beings/Socio-economics)

Objection/Submissions

by

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Optimize

20 February 2020

1 Qualifications and Experience

- 1.1. My name is Craig Bullock. My qualifications include a PhD in Environmental Economics and a Diploma in Environmental Impact Assessment, both from University College Dublin. I have worked for 20 years in assessing the socio-economic impact of infrastructure developments for environmental impact assessment. I have completed around 40 such assessments. I regularly work on a variety of other types of projects requiring economic, socio-economic and environmental analysis, for which a list of recent work can be referenced at www.optimize.ie.

2 Role in Proposed Road Development

- 2.1 I prepared the “Human Being and Population” section of Chapter 18, Human Beings, Population and Human Health, of Volume 2 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) for the proposed road development for which I worked closely with colleagues in other disciplines such as human health. I have worked on the project since 2014, undertaking the constraints study, options assessment and informing the design of the proposed road development.

3 Key issues in relation to Human Beings (Population)

- 3.1 Chapter 18 of the EIAR is to be taken as read in its entirety and is not replicated here. To assist the Board in its consideration of the applications for approval, for the convenience of all participants at this hearing and to set the context for responding to the objections and submissions, the key items pertaining to the human beings and population assessment of the proposed road development detailed in Chapter 18 of the EIAR are summarised briefly below.
- 3.2 The assessment of impacts on Human Beings is undertaken at a community level rather than for individuals or identifiable properties. Specifically, the assessment addresses effects on journey patterns and journey time, on journey amenity (for vehicle users, public transport, pedestrians, and cyclists), on community amenity and severance, and on economy and employment. Impacts of all significance levels are summarised in Tables 18.14 and 18.15 of Chapter 18 of the EIAR. The area of Human Health impacts will be dealt with by my colleague Dr. Martin Hogan in his statement of evidence.
- 3.3 The proposed road development is 17.6km in length and takes a route around the northern edge of Galway City commencing just west of the village of Bearna on the R336 in the west and connecting into the existing N6 at Coolagh, Briarhill. The route passes through the communities of Bearna, Na Foráí Maola, Troiscaigh, An Chloch Scoilte, Cappagh, Ballymoneen, Keeraun, Mincloon, Dangan, Menlough, Ballindooley, Ballinfoyle, Castlegar, Parkmore, Doughiska and Coolagh, Briarhill.

It is mostly rural or semi-urban, but does include areas of urban and industrial development, e.g. at Briarhill, and considerable single house or linear residential development. Many roads into the city carry significant volumes of traffic, including both regional and commuter traffic. A full description of the receiving environment is provided in Section 18.3 of Chapter 18 of the EIAR.

- 3.4 On its completion, the proposed road development will have a very significant positive effect in terms of journey patterns, including improved connectivity between journey origins and destinations. It will better disperse the traffic that currently enters the city via separate radial roads and which contributes to major congestion. It will permit the transfer of a proportion of traffic away from existing roads, notably the existing urban section of the N6 where heavy traffic leads to regular congestion, delays and community severance. It will also collect and transfer out of the city, traffic that is making regional journeys from the east, south or north and which is destined for locations in the West Region. This transfer of a proportion of traffic from central city locations to the proposed road development will improve traffic flow, accessibility and journey time, and provide opportunities for reduced community severance and improved pedestrian and cycling facilities. This will enable the maximum benefits of the full Galway Transport Strategy to be realised, such as improvements to public transport and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. As such, it will have significant positive impacts on journey characteristics and journey amenity for all road users. There are also new facilities for pedestrians and cyclists included in the design of the proposed road development itself. The improved connectivity and freer movement of traffic will, in turn, support new residential development in the city and have a positive economic effect for Galway allowing the city to continue to attract investment and employment. The improved accessibility to the west of the city will also provide for sustainable economic development in the Gaeltacht area of Connemara.
- 3.5 Negative effects are mainly realised where the proposed road development passes near or through residential areas or intersects with the existing road network or rights of way. Most significant residual negative effects apply to communities affected by the unfortunate and unavoidable demolition of 44 dwellings and the further acquisition of 10 dwellings and relate to general amenity and community severance. The high number of homes impacted arises from the existing distribution of residential development and the difficulty of identifying a satisfactory route during the Route Selection process that meets the transport needs for the city without having an effect on human beings or natural heritage. These demolitions and acquisitions present a significant, or very significant effect, for home owners or those residing in these homes, which is further addressed by my colleague Dr. Martin Hogan in his statement of evidence. There are significant residual negative effects in the case of some communities affected by proposed demolitions and acquisitions. These effects relate to consequential changes in general residential amenity. This is a major issue that has been addressed in the response to specific submissions in Section 4 below.

- 3.6 In addition to these impacts on residential properties, two industrial properties (one of which includes four buildings) and two commercial properties will be demolished. There will also be a full acquisition of one commercial property and one landholding that has a full planning permission for a residential development. Prior to mitigation, there will also be significant impacts during construction on some other commercial businesses including the NUIG Sporting Campus, Galway Racecourse, Clada Group Limited and car dealerships.
- 3.7 In the operational phase, physical severance is mostly avoided, but there will be a degree of neighbourhood severance due to the presence of the proposed road development. There will, however, be significant relief from existing community severance at several locations, including in Bearna Village and Castlegar. There will be some residual negative effects on general amenity in the vicinity of the River Corrib and the NUIG Sporting Campus.
- 3.8 Mitigation measures are listed in Table 18.14 of Chapter 18 of the EIAR. During the construction phase, traffic management is proposed to minimise delays and community severance or disruption of access. Consultation and liaison is required with local communities affected by works, including demolitions or acquisitions. Construction works at the Galway Racecourse will be phased to minimise impacts on race events.
- 3.9 Residual impacts on journey characteristics during construction are imperceptible or slight in most instances. There are significant general amenity impacts on the NUIG Sporting Campus resulting from bridge construction works due to the non-availability of some pitches and facilities as well as effects on amenity use of the River Corrib walkway. There will be significant negative impacts on residential amenity in communities affected by demolitions or acquisitions. There are also instances of negative residual impacts on residential amenity due to construction works which are specifically addressed in the respective chapters of the EIAR dealing with noise, dust and visual effects. There are slight to significant residual impacts on some individual businesses due to the same effects and temporary access arrangements.
- 3.10 Following construction, mitigation has been provided by way of pedestrian and cycling facilities at various locations, including at all junctions between the proposed road development and primary or minor roads. Pedestrian footpaths have been included along the length of the N59 Link Road along with pedestrian and cycle facilities along the Parkmore Link Road. Appendix A.1.13 of the RFI Response provides detailed drawings showing proposed footpaths and cycle facilities.
- 3.11 During operation there will be moderate to significant residual impacts on general amenity in some locations due to traffic noise or visual effects, as well as on amenity use of the NUIG Sporting Campus and River Corrib walkway. There will be slight to moderate negative residual impacts in the hinterland of Bearna due to perception of neighbourhood severance as a consequence of the presence of the proposed road development and traffic movement.

- 3.12 The current NUIG planning permission application (Ref 19/373) to construct additional playing pitches would have a positive cumulative impact on human beings and socio economics. The two proposed strategic housing development applications which related to lands associated with (Ob_469 and S_003) would also have a positive cumulative impact.

4 Responses to Submissions/Objections

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 109 of the 296 submissions made to An Bórd Pleanála (ABP) in respect of the N6 Galway City Ring Road (GCRR) Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), the Natura Impact Statement (NIS), Motorway Scheme (MS) and Protected Road Scheme (PRS), include observations relevant to human beings and socio economics. 9 of the 17 submissions made to ABP in respect to the Request for Further Information include observations relevant to human beings and socio economics. The items raised are listed below:

- Amenity:
 - Residential amenity and impact to neighbours due to the acquisition of homes
 - Recreational amenity - loss of open space and impacts at NUIG Sporting Campus and the River Corrib
 - Access to open space
- Community severance:
 - Impacts due to the presence of the proposed road development
- Access post construction:
 - Access to Rosán Glas
 - Access at Gort na Bró
- Impacts on commercial enterprises
- Potential impacts on property values

- 4.1.2 15 submissions are supportive of the proposed road development and believe that it is a vital component in developing the city as a regional centre of scale for the West that provides a high quality environment in which to live and work. The quality of physical connectivity in and around Galway is essential for retaining and attracting inward investment and employment. It will also have a beneficial impact, not only on the transport services in Galway, but also the attractiveness of the west of the county for business, investment and as a tourism location, as well as a place to live: S_005, S_014, S_025, S_026, S_033, S_034, S_035, S_047, S_050, S_052, S_054, S_064 S_072, S_073.1 and S_073.2.

- 4.1.3 9 submissions raise an issue of anti-social behaviour or security concerns arising from certain design aspects, such as cul-de-sacs, landscaped lands etc.: Ob_136; Ob_134; Ob_204; Ob_216, Ob_261; Ob_484, Ob_486, Ob_531.01 and S_008. This issue is addressed by Eileen McCarthy in her Statement of Evidence.

4.2 General Amenity: residential

Issue

- 4.2.1 8 submissions/objections raise the issue of the impact the demolition of 44 dwellings and acquisition of 10 dwellings. It is considered that these demolitions and acquisitions will have a detrimental effect on their community and will contribute to the “break up of long established communities” (Ob_228_229_540): Ob_158, Ob_220, Ob_228_229_540, Ob__O_517.11.02, Ob_521_O_517.14.02, Ob_666.1, Ob_630 and S_004.
- 4.2.2 Two submission/objections, Ob_679 and Ob_612, suggest that the Gaeltacht communities in Ballindooley and Cappanabornia will be impacted due to the loss of homes in these areas.
- 4.2.3 6 submissions/objections state that their own residential amenity will be impacted: Ob_135, Ob_531.01, Ob_666.1, S_008, S_029, S_059.

Response

- 4.2.4 The proposed road development provides wider benefits for Galway and its inhabitants, but given the pattern of built development and the unavoidable proximity of the proposed road development to residential areas, to achieve the wider benefits for Galway and its communities, it will unfortunately and unavoidably result in a number of property demolitions and business acquisitions. It is a very unfortunate outcome of this process that 54 homes will need to be demolished or acquired, although only 28 of those whose homes are to be acquired made a submission/objection to An Bord Pleanála. The material asset impact of loss of these homes is addressed by Eileen McCarthy in her Statement of Evidence. It is acknowledged that, for many occupants the loss or acquisition of a private home will be of considerable significance and the health impacts of this stressful process are addressed by Dr. Martin Hogan in his Statement of Evidence.
- 4.2.5 A significant residual effect will remain for other households and communities in the vicinity of these demolitions. This includes communities in the vicinity of Bearna, Na Foráí Maola, Dangan/Bushypark, Headford Road, Cappanabornia and in Castlegar. The severity of the effect of these acquisitions or demolitions at a community level will vary depending on how established the community is, the ties between households, the length of time for which residents have lived in the locality and the physical character of the location. Tables 18.14 and 18.15 of the EIAR, identify that, in many cases, this effect will be significant or very significant, for example at Aughnacurra and Ard an Locha, which are distinctive estates, at the Headford Road, where there will be a high number of acquisitions, and at the well-

established communities of Castlegar and Capanabornia. Over time, the effect is likely to diminish as new ties are formed and as new people move into the locality, but a significant short-medium term effect is acknowledged. Mitigation has been provided where appropriate in terms of landscaping, pedestrian crossings of the proposed road development, or pedestrian crossings of existing radial roads where crossings did not exist previously.

4.3 General amenity: NUI Galway Sporting Campus

Issue

- 4.3.1 Impacts on the NUI Galway Sporting Campus during construction, the loss of sports pitches and the loss of this public amenity are raised in 18 submissions/objections. Some of these submissions also raised issues of impacts to access along the River Corrib during construction and the Menlo Pier area: Ob_228_229_540, Ob_510, Ob_O_511.06, Ob_O_517.11.1, Ob_523, Ob_531.2, Ob_534, S_004, S_010, S_016, S_022, S_024, S_027, S_045, S_048, S_049.1, S_049.2 and S_068.

Response

- 4.3.2 The provision of a viaduct structure at the NUI Galway Sporting Campus will permit access to the north and south of the Sporting Campus and the River Corrib during the operational phase, maintaining connectivity and permeability beneath the proposed road development. However, a significant amenity impact is acknowledged during construction with modifications required to the sports pavilion and the loss of two sports pitch. During the construction phase, the central part of the Sporting Campus will become a construction site for a period of approximately 18 months. Access across the site will be maintained, but managed for safety purposes. Construction traffic and works for the River Corrib Bridge will be managed to minimise interference with sporting activities and spectators.
- 4.3.3 During operation, there will be no severance of the facility. The principal effect for players and spectators will be the presence of traffic on the bridge overhead, for which noise screening is provided by way of mitigation. However, the bridge will induce a loss of general amenity for many users of the River Corrib walkway, although it has been sensitively designed, being single span with transparent noise barriers, and could be considered a landmark feature by others, including users of the proposed road development.
- 4.3.4 Menlo Pier is remote from the proposed road development and will not be impacted during construction or operation.

4.4 General amenity: access to open space

Issue

- 4.4.1 There will be a loss of residential amenity for householders living close to the proposed road development. Some submissions/objections refer to loss of amenity to rural land which provide for views or to which local residents may have informal access: Ob_155, Ob_158, Ob_228_229_540, Ob_584.2, S_010, S_022, S_049.1; S_024 and S_027.
- 4.4.2 Submissions from the Dangan area refer to a loss of amenity at the NUIG sports grounds and the River Corrib walkway which are addressed above.
- 4.4.3 Ob. 584.2 and S_074 refer to the continued accessibility of An Sean Bhothair and the local road network for the Menlo-Coolough-Ballinfoley-Ballindooley community. Ob_584.2 also comments that large roads such as the proposed road development will discourage walking and cycling. Two submissions/objections Ob_158 and Ob_228_229_540, refer to the loss of informal access to rural land and one, Ob_220, raises the issue of impacts to the amenity of safe and peaceful walks.

Response

- 4.4.4 The issue of any loss of personal residential amenity for householders living close to the proposed road development is specifically addressed by Thomas Burns in his Statement of Evidence on Landscape and Visual, and by Jennifer Harmon in Statement of Evidence on Noise and Vibration. There will be a slight to moderate residual effect on the amenity of walking or cycling on existing roads in the vicinity of proposed road development in the section of the study area west of Letteragh Junction and at Menlough, Castlegar or Coolagh due to the aforementioned slight severance where minor roads are used for amenity walking, cycling or jogging.
- 4.4.5 The observations refer to the impact on severance from open space used for amenity. In Dangan/Aughnacurra the area affected by demolitions will be landscaped and planted with trees and access will still be possible to the River Corrib and the Sports Campus, including to the south under the proposed viaduct.
- 4.4.6 Whilst both Bothar Nua and An Sean Bhothair will be used during the construction of Menlough Viaduct, these road will be safe for use by the general public. The proposed road development bridges over both roads and, as such, they will be available for safe use by the public during the operational phase also.
- 4.4.7 At Ballyburke the proposed road development does cross open rural land to the west, but at a distance of 500 metres from Drisin (road) with there being no severance of Ballymoneen Road. Elsewhere, along the route of the proposed road development, physical severance is avoided in the case of regularly used footpaths with the exception of Hynes Bóithrín.

4.5 Community Severance

Issue

- 4.5.1 17 submissions/objections raise the issue of community severance. These submissions relate to perceptions of neighbourhood or social severance due to separation from neighbours or perceived separation from the community to which residents consider they belong.
- 4.5.2 12 of these submissions/objections refer to the road bisecting the community and severing people from their neighbours and community facilities in Bearna and that the strong community bond which has developed between neighbours will be impacted. The objections state that their current access to community facilities will be impacted: Ob_116.1, Ob_116.2, Ob_135, Ob_136, Ob_141.3, Ob_151, Ob_152, Ob_155, Ob_158, Ob_159, Ob_199, Ob_201, Ob_204, Ob_228_229_540.
- 4.5.3 One submission/objection, Ob_654, raises an issue of community severance in Castlegar.
- 4.5.4 One submission/objection, Ob_724, suggests that the proposed road development will be a barrier that will make it difficult to integrate the new community in Ardaun with the existing community of Galway City and essentially lead to a new separate settlement.
- 4.5.5 One submission/objection, S_049, suggests that the proposed N59 Link Road will divide their community in Rosán Glas. Rosán Glas is addressed below in Section 4.6.
- 4.5.6 Two submissions/objections, S_067 and S_068, state that the proposed road development will sever the Dangan community in which they live.
- 4.5.7 In addition to the 17 submissions/objections referenced above, the HSE in their submission, S_078, note that the impact of community severance has been addressed in the EIAR and that where paths and access routes have to be severed, alternative access will be provided where possible.

Response

- 4.5.8 Community severance occurs when people are separated from community facilities, places of employment or from opportunities for social interaction (e.g. with family or neighbours). During the operational phase of the proposed road development, there will be distinct new physical severance at the L13215 Ann Gibbons Road. Traffic on this road is very light and the destination for most journeys is southbound towards community facilities in Bearna. There are no properties to the north of the severance point on the Ann Gibbons road where it is traversed by the proposed road development and only widely scattered individual properties on the connecting L1321 Bearna Moycullen Road.

- 4.5.9 Along the proposed road development west of the N59 Letteragh Junction facilities have been provided to allow pedestrians or cyclists to cross at signalised junctions or at roundabouts between the proposed road development and the R336 or local roads. The proposed road development will be only single carriageway in this section and pedestrian/cyclist phases are to be included at the two signalised crossings while pedestrian refuge islands will be provided at the two roundabouts. Elsewhere, east of the N59 Letteragh Junction along the motorway section of the proposed road development, pedestrian and cycle paths are provided at over or under bridges.
- 4.5.10 A number of submissions refer to the severance of a section of a wider hinterland from the core community. For example, submissions/objections Ob_116, Ob_155, Ob_158 and Ob_201 refer specifically to Bearna and describe the road as “splitting” or “fracturing” a community within which “strong bonds have developed between neighbours”. These cases allege a feeling of neighbourhood severance which arises when people are separated from others in the community by the presence of a perceived barrier such as a road.
- 4.5.11 However, west of the Ballymoneen Road Junction, the proposed road development is only single carriageway and traffic volumes will be modest relative to the eastern section of the proposed road development. Along the length of the proposed road development, the design of junctions and roundabouts, and the respective facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, have benefited from consultation with the community. Table 18.15 of Chapter 18 of the EIAR refers to ‘moderate’ severance prior to mitigation north of Bearna, but to ‘slight’ residual severance following the incorporation of these facilities in the design. The residual severance is mainly of a psychological nature, in part due to the character of the landscape or where the proposed road development is on an embankment.
- 4.5.12 Physical severance is avoided at Na Foráí Maola and Troscaigh because a new link road is provided between the two communities (which provides an example of relief from severance). However, it is acknowledged that a detour of up to 600 metres is required to cross the proposed road development using a new overbridge.
- 4.5.13 Within Bearna Village itself there will be significant relief from severance once traffic levels are reduced by more than 75% in the heart of the community where shops and leisure amenities are located. Along narrow and circuitous minor roads in the vicinity of Castlegar, the expected reduction in commuting traffic will reduce neighbourhood severance and severance from community facilities such as Castlegar School. Pedestrian crossings will be provided on the N84 Headford Road and N83 Tuam Road where crossings of these roads are currently challenging or hazardous in the absence of such facilities. Of considerable importance is the fact that the proposed road development will permit the transfer of a significant proportion of traffic from within the city including from locations along the existing N6 that experience very significant severance. This will present opportunities to provide pedestrian and cyclist crossing facilities that will further reduce severance at numerous locations.

4.6 Access for community's post construction

Rosán Glas

Issue

- 4.6.1 11 submissions/objections raise an issue in relation to the location of the proposed N59 Link Road South and future access to Rosán Glas estate along with possible implications for the neighbourhood grocery store: S_004, S_011, S_029, S_031, S_043, S_044, S_051, S_056, S_057, S_060 and S_065.

Response

- 4.6.2 The N59 Link Road will provide a necessary connection from the proposed road development with the west of the city, including the community in Ragoon, but has been kept separate from existing estates so that traffic is not introduced to residential areas such as Rosán Glas which will continue to be serviced by Bóthar Diarmuida Road. As detailed by Eileen McCarthy in her statement of evidence there is no change to this access at Ragoon Road. As also detailed by Eileen McCarthy, the northern access to Rosán Glas, whilst moving further north, will still serve the transport needs and access to the estate. The additional journey time to the access point with the proposed road development should be less than 60 seconds with the journey itself not exceeding 250m (see Chapter 6 of the EIAR).
- 4.6.3 A cycle path and pedestrian footpath are included in the design along both sides of the N59 Link Road beside Bóthar Diarmuida as far as Ragoon Road where a large proportion of traffic will egress. A pedestrian connection from the internal Rosán Glas estate road network to the Ragoon Road will be provided at the existing Ragoon Junction location so that the desire line for pedestrians is not affected by the relocation of the residential traffic entrances. Pedestrian and cycle facilities to be provided are shown on Figure 1.10.12 of Appendix A.1.13 of the RFI for this area and this new pedestrian access is detailed in Eileen McCarthy's statement of evidence. There will be no significant impact on the grocery store as this principally serves the Rosán Glas estate.

Gort na Bró

Issue

- 4.6.4 3 submissions/objections raise an issue in relation to access arrangements to Gort na Bró and pedestrian and cycle facilities at this location: Ob_473, S_003 and S_075.

Response

- 4.6.5 Pedestrian and cycle facilities to be provided as shown on Figure 1.10.12 of Appendix A.1.13 of the RFI for this area, which will provide for continued safe crossings for Gaelscoil Mhic Amhlaigh and for connectivity with other community

facilities including Miller's Lane soccer pitch. The existing pedestrian crossings on Gort na Bró Link Road will also be retained with the addition of cycle infrastructure between Gort na Bró junction and the gaelscoil. This commitment has been included in the Schedule of Environmental Commitments.

4.7 Impacts to commercial properties

Issue

- 4.7.1 13 submissions/objections raise an issue on potential impacts to their business as a result of the proposed road development:
- 4.7.2 Ob_298 – has a holiday home business and is concerned about impacts during construction and operation.
- 4.7.3 Ob_528_541_543_557 – NUIG raise concerns over the potential impact on their university strategy and recruitment and retention of students and investment.
- 4.7.4 Ob_602.1, Ob_602.2 – Clada Group will be impacted by the loss of one of their wells.
- 4.7.5 Ob_668 – Kenny Motor Group raise an issue as to the potential disruption to the business during the construction phase, and to the effect of traffic and need for signage. The company have made a submission regarding access, visibility and the display area of the car dealership.
- 4.7.6 Ob_673 – McMahon's business it to be fully acquired. This is addressed in Eileen McCarthy's Statement of Evidence.
- 4.7.7 Ob_691 – Galway Racecourse raise an issue as to the construction works and impacts to their racing festival.
- 4.7.8 Ob_0_696.13_14 – Biomedical Research question the level of interruption and disruption to their business during construction.
- 4.7.9 Ob_0_696.21 – M&M Qualtech question the construction and operational effect of the proposed road development on the operation of their business. The potential impacts of the construction activities such as blasting on the operation of this manufacturing company are addressed by Juli Crowley and Jennifer Harmon in their Statement of Evidence.
- 4.7.10 Ob_695.1, Ob_695.2 – Boston Scientific raised an issued as to the alignment of the proposed Parkmore Link Road and the impact it would have on their campus and their plans for expansion in their masterplan. This is addressed by Eileen McCarthy in her Statement of Evidence.
- 4.7.11 Ob_708_709 – The industrial units at this property are to be fully acquired. This is addressed in Eileen McCarthy's Statement of Evidence.
- 4.7.12 Ob_713 – The property which is leased to a builder's providers is to be fully acquired. This is addressed in Eileen McCarthy's Statement of Evidence.

- 4.7.13 Ob_717_720_721 – The Connolly Group are seeking assurances that commitments proposed are delivered in order to safeguard the operational capacity of their business.
- 4.7.14 Eileen McCarthy has dealt with the material assets impacts on businesses in her Statement of Evidence whilst I will assess the socio-economic impacts.

Response

Ob_298 Holiday home business

- 4.7.15 It is acknowledged that there will be some inconvenience experienced during construction. However, there will be improved access to this property during the operational stage with access from the N59 Letteragh Junction via the N59 Link Road South to the Letteragh Road and this property. Therefore, there will be no adverse impacts on this business during operation.

Ob_528_541_543_557 NUIG

While there will be a residual effect on the NUIG Sporting Campus as discussed in Section 4.3 above due to the presence of the viaduct, NUIG will retain its high quality sports facilities. The facilities will be more easily accessible than before to participants and clubs based in Galway and to visitors and so will continue to attract staff, students and investment.

Ob_602_698_699_704.1 and Ob_602.2_698_699_704 Clada Group

- 4.7.17 It is acknowledged that there will be a very significant impact on the business due to the impact on water supplies from a well which is required by one part of the business. The loss of this well is addressed by Dr. Leslie Brown in his Statement of Evidence which explains that compensation will be paid as part of the statutory compensation process for the loss of this well which will allow Clada Group Limited to source an alternate offsite water supply that is of comparable quantity and quality. However, it should be noted that access to the business will be much improved including the new access available to the proposed road development from the N84 Headford Road Junction. This is a significant positive impact given that the business is involved in wholesale and product distribution.

Ob_668 Kenny Motor Group

- 4.7.18 Traffic signage will be provided in the vicinity of the car dealership during construction so that the visibility and access to the business can be facilitated and maintained (see Table 18.14). Issues of noise and dust impacts are addressed by Jennifer Harmon and Sinéad Whyte in their Statements of Evidence respectively. During the operational phase of the proposed road development, there will be improved access from the City North Business Park Link. The business is contained in a prominent building and will continue to have good visibility from the overpass for the proposed road development and from the N83 Tuam Road. The proposed road development will relieve current traffic congestion in the area facilitating customer access while the Parkmore and Business Park Link roads will provide both for access and suitable routes for vehicle test drives.

Ob_691 Gawlay Racecourse

- 4.7.19 A 230m cut and cover tunnel is to be provided to avoid operational impacts on Galway Racecourse. A construction works programme has been agreed with the racecourse and is included in Appendix A.7.4 of the EIAR (see also Section 18.5.3.3 of Chapter 18 of the EIAR). Following consultations with the racecourse it has been agreed that there will be a cessation of construction works during the summer/autumn racing schedule to avoid disruption to participants and spectators of racing events. There are no proposals to cancel the summer racing festival. The proposed tunnel will entail the acquisition of lands and the demolition of stables, but these will be replaced with temporary stables for the duration of the construction until such time as the permanent stables are provided. Both temporary and permanent stables will be of at least equivalent quality to the existing stables.
- 4.7.20 On completion of the proposed road development, the presence of the tunnel will mean that race events will not be impacted in any way by traffic from the proposed road development. In addition, whereas severe traffic congestion is a feature of the current dependence on access to the race events from the south, affecting both attendees and the wider community, access to these and other events will be greatly improved due to the proposed Parkmore Link Road connection to the N83 Tuam Road. An at least moderate positive residual impact is anticipated. The impacts to Galway Racecourse are further addressed by Michael Sadlier in his Statement of Evidence.

Ob_695.1, Ob_695.2 Boston Scientific

- 4.8.21 The modification to the Parkmore Link Road avoids any severance of the Boston Scientific Campus or impact on the implementation of their masterplan. A net positive economic impact can be expected due to the direct transport link that will be provided between the Parkmore and Ballybrit Business Parks, and between the N83 Tuam Road and the proposed road development, together with the provision of a footpath, cycle lane and public transport route.

Ob__0_696.12_14 Biomedical Research

- 4.7.22 It is acknowledged that there will be some inconvenience experienced during construction. However, there will be improved access to this business during the operational stage via the Parkmore Link Road. Therefore, there will be no adverse impacts on this business during operation.

Ob_717_720_721 The Connolly

- 4.7.23 It is acknowledged that there will be some inconvenience experienced during construction. The environmental commitments as set out in Chapter 21, Schedule of Environmental Commitments, are an integral element of the application for Approval. There will be no adverse impacts on this business as a result of the operation of the proposed road development.

4.8 Potential Impacts on Property Values

Issues

- 4.8.1 36 of the submissions/objections raise an issue in relation to the potential impacts on their property value and that the proposed road development will devalue their property: Ob_119; Ob_134; Ob_136; Ob_141.2; Ob_141.3; Ob_151; Ob_152; Ob_155; Ob_158; Ob_199; Ob_201; Ob_204; Ob_215; Ob_216; Ob_252; Ob_260; Ob_298; Ob_476_719; Ob_521.3; Ob_531.2; Ob_663.02; Ob_666.1; Ob_671; Ob_688; Ob_O_517.05; Ob_O_666.2; Ob_531.01; S_008; S_037; S_055; S_061; S_063; S_066; S_035; S_036; and S_040.

Response

- 4.8.2 It is difficult to assess the impact of any infrastructural development on property prices because of the broad range of factors that will determine the price of an individual property.

With regard to road schemes, these can often have a positive impact on property prices where the scheme leads to improved accessibility. For example, with the M17 / M18, the opening of the motorway, linking Tuam, Corofin and Gort both north and south, has had a positive impact on property prices in the catchment area. It is noted in that regard that improved accessibility and in turn, reliable and improved journey times is at the core of the proposed road development. Plates 18.4 to 18.6 of Chapter 18 of the EIAR, present an analysis of accessibility on a zone-by-zone basis. This analysis shows that most zones experience a decrease in car journey times, except for a small number mainly in the city centre; all zones will experience improved cycling journey times; and most zones will experience a decrease in public transport journey times. The proposed road development is a key component of the GTS and its construction will enable the maximum benefits of the GTS be realised, including improved accessibility. It can, therefore, be expected that the value of many properties will be increased by the proposed road development.

- 4.8.3 However, a road scheme can have a negative impact on property prices where it results in a loss of amenity, either during the construction or operational phases. As described in the EIAR, various mitigation measures have been put in place to minimise the effects of the proposed road development on the amenity of nearby properties both during the construction and operational phases. Accordingly, there will not be any significant impact on the value of most properties in the vicinity of the proposed road development, although it will have a negative impact on the value of some properties that are located immediately adjacent to it.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The proposed road development is a major undertaking. It will have very significant positive effects for Galway City due to the transference of a proportion of traffic from urban areas and the opportunity this presents to provide improved pedestrian and cycling facilities and public transport. On the other hand, there will be negative impacts at various locations due to the unfortunate level of property demolitions and acquisitions. These will also have an effect on the wider community during construction and for some time afterwards as communities evolve following the completion of the proposed road development. The construction works will also have effects on residential amenity of properties close to the development and on some businesses. These effects will be mitigated by noise and visual mitigation measures. Physical severance during both construction and operation has been kept to a minimum.
- 5.2 During operation, the proposed road development will have a mostly significant or very significant positive impact on traffic movement and journey patterns, including improved connectivity. The transfer of a proportion of both cars and HGV traffic from urban locations will relieve the frequency of traffic congestion and provide improved journey and environmental amenity for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. This transfer of traffic will also open up opportunities which will enable the full benefits of the Galway Transport Strategy to be realised through the provision of improved public transport and pedestrian and cyclist facilities such as crossings, foot and cycle paths. These outcomes will remove the serious constraint on the city's economic development presented by excessive traffic, congestion and poor environmental amenity, and help to sustain economic growth and employment. As well as the city area, these same benefits will apply to communities such as Bearna. Benefits will also apply to the accessibility and potential development of areas to the west of the city, including the West Region and the Gaeltacht in Connemara.
- 5.3 There will be negative effects too as discussed above in terms of the high level of property acquisitions, the impact on some businesses, the effect on general amenity in some locations which currently experience light traffic, and on the NUIG Sporting Campus and riverside walk. These issues have been raised in submissions and objections and have been appropriately considered in the assessment for Human Beings.

- 5.4 Overall, having considered the submissions and objections, the conclusions of the EIAR remain valid, namely that the proposed road development will have a very significant positive effect on traffic movement in Galway, which will have amenity and economic benefits and permit opportunities to improve pedestrian and cycling facilities and public transport.