AtkinsRéalis

EIA Screening

Westmeath County Council

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MULLINGAR ACTIVE TRAVEL BUNDLE

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1. Introduction

AtkinsRéalis has been commissioned by Westmeath County Council (WCC) to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report for the development of the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle, which comprises of a number of Active Travel schemes along a series of roads within the town of Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, hereafter referred as the 'proposed scheme'. The EIA Screening Report will be submitted as part of the Part 8 planning documents for the proposed scheme.

The scheme extents and routes are highlighted on the map below as shown in Figure1-1. As seen in Figure 1-1 the overall development is divided into 4 separate project routes which will be delivered independently from one another as stand-alone schemes, as outlined below:

- Project 1: St. Finian's to Harbour Street Footpath and Cycleway
- Project 2: Dublin Road Footpath and Cycleway and National Science Park Junction Improvements
- Project 3: Sundays Well Road - Lynn Road/Auburn Road - Millmount Junction Improvements and Mount Street Lower Pedestrian Interventions
- Project 4: Grange South to Orbital C-Link Segregated Cycling Scheme.

Project 2 is the subject for this Screening Report.

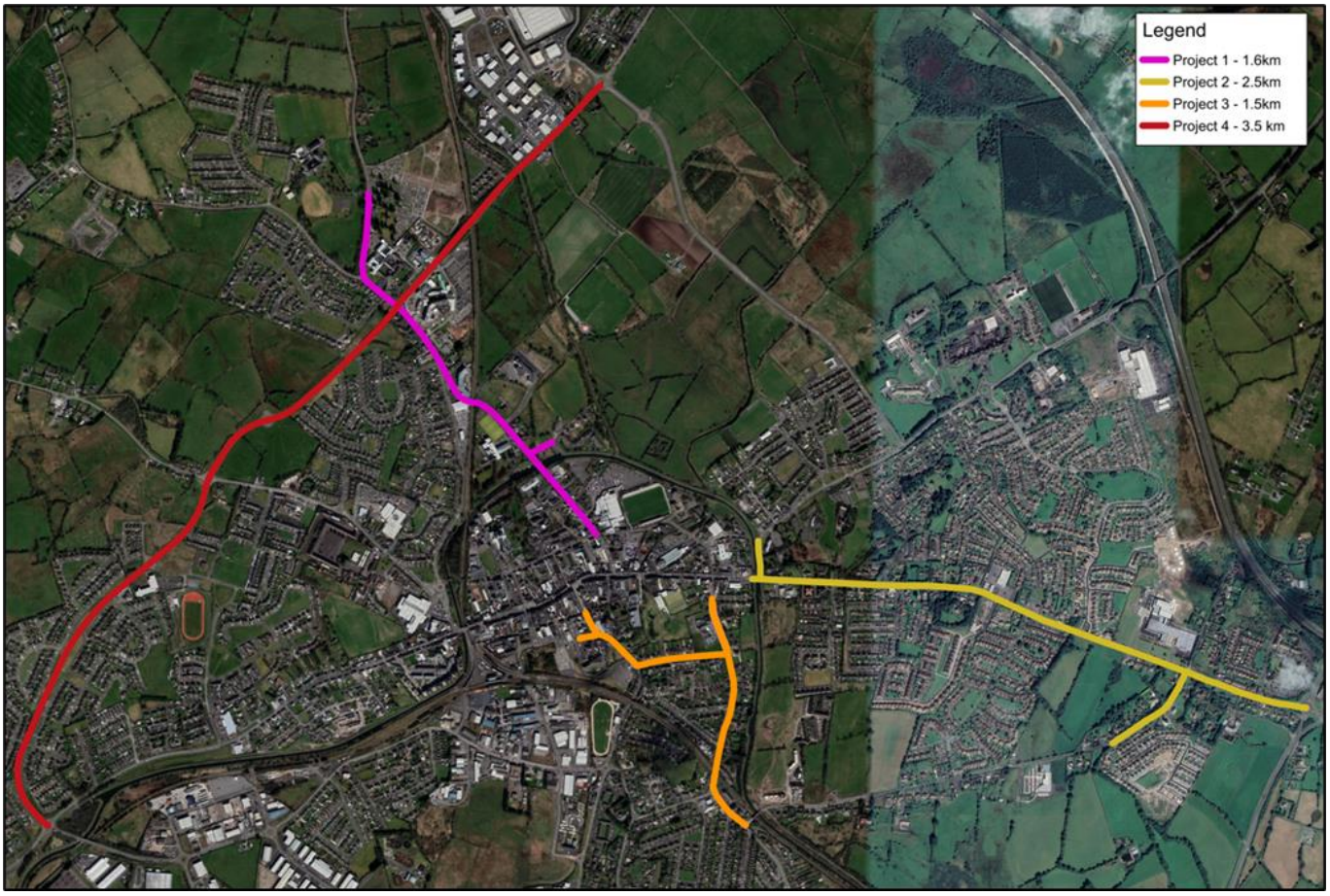

Figure 1-1 – Mullingar Active Travel Bundle Schemes

As mentioned above each project within the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle will be delivered independently from one another, as a stand-alone scheme complete with a full set of project appraisal and approval documentation. However, the schemes will be delivered with full consideration to provide integrated and consistent pedestrian and cycle facilities within Mullingar town.

This EIA Screening report assesses Project 2, which is approximately 2.5km long and located primarily along the Dublin Road (R392) as well as sections on Delvin Road and Ardmore Road. On the western end of the scheme, it links to the Royal Canal Greenway and Austin Friar's Street and on the eastern end it links to the existing active travel in place on Ardmore Road and tie-in near the Marlinstown Roundabout. The extent of the project is shown in Figure 1-2.

Figure 1-2 - Extent of the Proposed Scheme (Project 2)

A Feasibility, Options Selection and Appraisal Report was previously conducted by AtkinsRéalis in July 2024 and identified the proposed design as the preferred option for Project 2.

1.1 Project Overview

The overall purpose of the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle is to provide upgraded pedestrian and cycling facilities in addition to facilitating any necessary infrastructure provisions to cater for future public transport upgrades.

The main aims of the project are:

- To design new/upgrade existing cycleways/pedestrian footpaths, to reduce public dependence on private vehicles as a primary mode of travel, using best practice standards and complementing the surrounding environment.
- To meet and accommodate WCC and stakeholder requirements.
- To meet planning, statutory and procurement requirements.

The Project Objectives are:

- Reduced public dependence on private vehicles as a primary mode of travel.
- Integration of safe and convenient alternatives.
- Enhance the area and contribute to a more attractive place.
- Provide safe pedestrian and cyclist facilities for school children and students to travel to and from school.
- Create opportunities to be physically active and reduce the negative consequences of car-based commuting.
- Provides sustainable travel options.
- Enhanced safety of Vulnerable Road Users.

The objectives for the scheme are based on local, regional and national policies for the introduction of active travel measures as outlined in the following section as well as the criteria set out in the Department of Transport's *Transport Appraisal Framework (June 2023)'* (TAF). These-criteria headings are as follows:

- **Transport User Benefits and Other Economic Impacts:** To improve economic welfare of transport network users measuring the connectivity with existing and proposed public transport facilities as well as other economic impacts related to costs of construction and maintenance.
- **Accessibility Impacts:** To improve accessibility to key services, such as retails, healthcare and educational facilities, employment areas, etc for all road users and bring social inclusion benefits to those for whom non-motorised means are the predominate form of transit. This criterion will also assess four of the five main requirements for cycle-friendly infrastructure according to the Cycle Design Manual, which are: coherence, directness, comfort and attractiveness.
- **Social Impacts:** To improve accessibility for the socially, economically and physically disadvantaged groups; to provide increased health benefits by raising activity levels and to ensure gender impacts are addressed.
- **Land Use Impacts:** To integrate the scheme into strategic land use planning / strategies as set out in national and regional policies and guidelines.
- **Safety Impacts:** To reduce the potential for conflict between all road users along the routes through the provision of a facility which is in line with the current standards. The Scheme will seek to:
  - Improve safety and provide a better environment for vulnerable road users within the study area
  - Improve security by providing adequate lighting and visibility to deter anti-social behaviour.
- **Climate Change Impacts:** To reduce emissions in the transport sector by encouraging active travel through improved infrastructure and also to improve the robustness of infrastructure to be able to resist effects of climate change (extreme weather events).
- **Local Environmental Impacts:** To minimize impacts on the receiving environment, considering air quality, noise and vibration, biodiversity, water resources and soil quality, landscape and visual quality and cultural and heritage impacts.

This report reflects the requirements of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001-2024) and accordingly contains:

1. A plan sufficient to identify the land;
2. A description of the development, including in particular:
   a. a description of the physical characteristics of the development and, where relevant, of demolition works;
   b. a description of the location of the development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected;
3. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development;
4. To the extent the information is available, a description of any likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment resulting from:
   a. the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and
   b. the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity; and

5. Such other information or representations as the person making the request may wish to provide or make, including any features of the Proposed Development or any measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

This report has been prepared to support the Part 8 planning application in relation to Project 2 of the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle. The purpose of this report is to determine if the scheme requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). The project has been screened to generate a summarised overview of the potential impacts on the receiving environment, and in the context of relevant statutory requirements.

A Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment has also been prepared for the Proposed Scheme (AtkinsRéalis, 2024). The Proposed Scheme has been assessed with regards to the likely significant effects of the project on European sites within the zone of influence (ZoL) of the Proposed Development. The AA Screening Report concluded that "*with the absence of any mitigation measures the proposed scheme, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not result in likely significant effects on Lough Ennell SAC, Lough Ennell SPA, Lough Owel SAC or any other European site. Thus, it is recommended that it is not necessary for the scheme to proceed to Appropriate Assessment".*

1.3 Site Zoning

As identified within the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014 – 2020[1] the land use zonings within the vicinity of Project 2 can be seen in Figure 1-3 and are listed as follows:

- Existing residential.
- Community use – Education, community and institutional.
- Commercial.
- Proposed Residential.
- Enterprise & employment.
- Mixed use.
- Open Space.
- Canals and Water Courses.

It is considered that the project scheme is compatible with the policies and objectives of the development strategy area as well as the zoning requirements, under the Mullingar Local Area Plan, improving local facilities, cycleways and pedestrian linkages.

[1] It should be noted that the Mullingar Local Area Plan (Westmeath County Council) is currently undergoing Preparation of Proposed Draft Local Area Plan 2024-2030. The policies, objectives and land-use zonings of the lands within the vicinity of Project 2 will need to be reviewed once this Local Area Plan is implemented.

Figure 1-3 - Land Use Zoning within the vicinity of the proposed scheme (Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020)

The Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 sets out a strategy for the sustainable development and planning of Mullingar which builds on the previous Mullingar Town Development Plan 2008-2014. It also outlines the policies and objectives for the future development of the town and its environs.

Some objectives and policies from the Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 that are relevant to the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle can be seen below:

- **Policy-SR10:** To ensure the development of sustainable residential communities through the promotion of innovative, high quality building design and layouts that prioritise non car-based movement and provide for a high level of permeability, accessibility and connectivity to the existing built environment, services and facilities.
- **Policy-EC10:** To continue to improve access to major areas of employment through sustainable transport modes.
- **Policy-TRM9:** To reserve where feasible, land adjacent to canal banks for public access and to facilitate the creation of linear parks to accommodate walking/cycling routes, subject to compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Directive.
- **Policy-TRM12:** To promote Mullingar as an attractive stop along the Royal Canal for pleasure boaters, walkers and cyclists.
- **Objective-TRM5:** To promote and facilitate the development of a Greenway with walking and cycling infrastructure along the Royal Canal, as part of the National Cycle Network between Dublin and Galway. This shall be undertaken in conjunction with Waterways Ireland, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the National Roads Authority and other relevant agencies, and shall be subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive.

- **Objective-RET4:** To align new retail development with existing and proposed public transport infrastructure and services and encourage access by foot and bicycle to reduce the dominance of the private car.
- **Policy-AC2:** To create an environment in the Town Centre in which vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians can safely co-exist and share public space.
- **Policy-AC4:** To secure the creation of a safe walking and cycling environment in the Town Centre and to limit the impact of vehicular traffic on the Town Centre environment.
- **Objective-OSR16:** To support and facilitate the development through Mullingar of the National Cycle Network between Dublin and Galway, including the provision of a walking/cycling route within the entirety of the Mullingar Athlone disused railway line, together with all related signage, way marking and all associated site works and connections, subject to environmental and habitats requirements.
- **Policy-TM5:** To promote the development of walking and cycling in the Mullingar area. Cycling and walking are environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient and healthy modes of transport, and their development is in line with the principles of sustainability.
- **Policy-TM6:** To ensure that the safety of road users, including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, will be a primary consideration in the design and/or improvement of roads and in the assessment of planning applications for new developments. Cyclists and pedestrians are especially vulnerable in road accidents and new design must pay particular attention to securing their safety.
- **Policy-TM12:** To further the development of an integrated cycle network in Mullingar.
- **Policy--FP7:** To provide for the establishment of an integrated movement network serving all modes with connectivity to the town centre and adjoining areas.

2. Receiving Environment

The proposed scheme will be constructed within the town of Mullingar. The proposed scheme is a 2.5km long route located primarily along the Dublin Road (R392) as well as sections on Delvin Road and Ardmore Road. On the western end of the scheme, it links to the Royal Canal Greenway and Austin Friar's Street and on the eastern end it links to the existing active travel in place on Ardmore Road and tie-in near the Marlinstown Roundabout.

2.1 Hydrology

The proposed scheme is located within the Lower Shannon Water Framework Directive (WFD) Catchment area, and the Brosna sub-catchment. There are no Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) watercourses within the site of the proposed scheme. The route crosses the Royal Canal at an existing bridge structure on the Dublin Road R392. The River Brosna runs ca. 204m from the proposed scheme.

2.2 Ecology

There are no internationally designated conservation sites within the study area. However, there are 6no. European sites within the zone of influence (ZoI) of the study area. The surface water drainage network from the proposed scheme's site is via the roadway drainage infrastructure and for the purposes of this assessment it is assumed to outfall to the River Brosna, therefore resulting in an indirect hydrological connection to designated conservation sites located downstream on the River Brosna. As the proposed scheme is remote from any European site and is not within the same groundwater body as the nearest European site there is no potential connectivity to any European site via groundwater pathways. The European sites within the ZoI of the proposed scheme's site are presented in Table 2-1 below. There will be no land take from any of the designated sites within 15km of the scheme and, based on the findings of the Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening report (AtkinsRéalis, 2024) "*it is concluded by the authors of this report that with the absence of any mitigation measures the proposed scheme, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not result in likely significant effects on Lough Ennell SAC, Lough Ennell SPA, Lough Owel SAC or any other European site. Thus, it is recommended that it is not necessary for the scheme to proceed to Appropriate Assessment.*"

Table 2-1 - Internationally Designated Conservation Sites within the ZoI of the proposed scheme

Site Name	Site ID	Distance and Connectivity to Study Area
Lough Owel SAC	000688	1.97km north of study area. No hydrological connectivity to site
Lough Owel SPA	004047	1.97km north of study area. No hydrological connectivity to site
Wooddown Bog SAC	002205	1.9km east of study area. No hydrological connectivity to site
Lough Ennell SPA	004044	3.8km south of study area. Indirectly hydrologically connected via Brosna
Lough Ennell SAC	000685	3.8km south of study area. Indirectly hydrologically connected via Brosna
Scragh Bog SAC	000692	4km north of study area. No hydrological connectivity to site

NHAs are nationally designated sites which are considered important for the habitats present or which support species of plants and animals whose habitat requires protection. NHAs are legally protected under the Wildlife Amendment Act 2000. pNHAs are sites that are of significance for wildlife and habitats. pNHAs are not statutorily designated, however their ecological value is recognised by planning and licensing authorities. There are no NHAs within or in the immediate vicinity of the proposed scheme site, the nearest is Wooddown Bog NHA located c. 1.3km northeast of the scheme extents. There is no connectivity to this NHA from the scheme site. The Royal Canal pNHA (002103) is located within the proposed scheme extents with the western most section of the proposed scheme aligned on an existing road bridge over the Royal Canal. There is 1no. NHA and 5no. pNHAs within 5km of the study area. Details of pNHAs within 5km of the study area are listed in Table 2-2 and illustrated in Figure 2-4.

Table 2-2 – pNHAs and NHAs within 5km of the proposed scheme

Site name (site code)	Distance from study area	Connectivity
Royal Canal pNHA (002103)	pNHA within study area	Direct connectivity via Royal Canal
Lough Owel pNHA (000688)	1.97km north	No direct or indirect (hydrological) connectivity
Wooddown Bog NHA (000694)	1.3km northeast	No direct or indirect (hydrological) connectivity
Lough Sheever Fen/Slevin's Lough Complex pNHA (000690)	2km north	No direct or indirect (hydrological) connectivity
Walshestown Fen pNHA (001731)	3.6km west	No direct or indirect (hydrological) connectivity
Lough Ennell pNHA (000685)	3.8km south	Indirectly hydrologic connectivity via Bronsa

The proposed site does not lie within a nature reserve. The closest nature reserve is Scragh Bog Nature Reserve approximately 5km north of the proposed site and has no connectivity to the proposed scheme. There are no National Parks within the vicinity of the proposed scheme.

2.3 Hydrogeology

There are no GSI reported karst features within Mullingar with the closest karst feature; a Spring (GSI ID: 2325SEK006) which is reported to within a 20m locational accuracy, located ca. 3km south of the proposed scheme (GSI, 2024). There are no Ground Water Drinking Water Source Protection Areas within 5km of the proposed scheme. There are no Group Water Schemes located within 10km of the proposed scheme.

GSI (2024) indicates that Mullingar, including the study area for the proposed scheme is underlain by a locally important aquifer – bedrock which is moderately productive only in local zones. GSI (2024) have classified the groundwater vulnerability beneath the proposed scheme predominantly as having ‘High’ vulnerability with a small portion at the eastern end classified as ‘Extreme’ and ‘Rock at or near surface or karst’ vulnerability, indicating that groundwater is potentially shallow and vulnerable to contamination. Refer to Figure 2-5. As indicated by the EPA (2024) the proposed scheme is within the Inny Groundwater Body which is reported as having ‘Good’ WFD status for the 2021-2027 monitoring period and are ‘Not at Risk’ of failing to achieve relevant WFD objectives by 2027.

2.4 Geology

GSI (2024) indicates that the Bedrock Geology within the vicinity of the proposed scheme comprises of 'Dark limestone & shale' of the Lucan Formation with the eastern most portion of the proposed scheme underlain by 'Massive unbedded lime-mudstone' of the Waulsortian Limestones Formation, as shown in Figure 2-6. A geological fault runs in a south west – north east direction, identified by GSI as a 'Structural linework feature' in the eastern portion of the proposed scheme. There are no karst features within the project site.

A review of GSI (2024) indicates that landslide susceptibility within the vicinity is 'Low', 'Low inferred' and 'Made' land. There have been no landslide events reported by GSI (2024) within Mullingar. Therefore, no issues are identified with regards to landslide potential. A review of GSI (2024) indicates that there are no Geological Heritage Areas within the project site, with 2no. Geological Heritage Areas (GHA) within 5km of the proposed scheme; Mullingar Bypass, described by GSI (2024) as 'A roadcut section along the N4 road north of Mullingar, exposing limestone strata', and Portnashangan Quarry, described by GSI (2024) as a 'Site comprising a disused, roadside quarry'.

2.5 Flood Risk

The site has been assessed in accordance with the "The Planning System and Flood Risk Management" Guidelines. As part of the sequential test, the OPW flood hazard maps have been consulted, as have the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment Maps (CFRAM) produced by the OPW.

OPW has reported no previous recurrent or standalone flooding events within the vicinity of the proposed scheme. With a number of areas prone to flooding located along the surrounding nearby river Brosna.

OPW have reported 3no. recurrent flooding events within the vicinity of the proposed scheme, as follows:

- 1no. event along Pearse St / Austin Friars St to the west of the Canal which is known as Brosna Austin Friar Pearse St Mullingar Recurring and is reported as a Recurring flood with a report in 2005 reporting it as 'Low lying floods every year after heavy rainfall. Inadequate drainage system – road culverts requiring maintenance'' (OPW, 2024). This recurring event is located ca. 400m from the proposed scheme.

- 1no. event along the Royal Canal Way south of the Canal which is known as Brosna Canal Aquaduct Mullingar Recuring and is reported as a Recurring flood with a report in 2005 reporting it as 'The River Brosna overflows its banks every year after heavy rainfall.' (OPW, 2024). This recurring event is located ca. 230m from the proposed scheme.

- 1no. event along the R400 south of the Canal which is known as Brosna Gaol Hill, Mullingar Recurring and is reported as a Recurring flood with a report in 2005 reporting it as 'The River Brosna overflows its banks upstream of the road culvert every year after heavy rain' (OPW, 2024). This recurring event is located ca. 500m from the proposed scheme.

A Stage 1 Flood Risk Assessment was conducted by AtkinsRéalis (2024), which concluded that '*in relation to the Proposed Dublin Road Scheme of the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle, historic flooding has not been identified on the site. Moreover, OPW flood maps indicate that the eastern section of the proposed route is located in Floodzone C. Therefore, a Stage 2 - Initial Flood Risk Assessment is not required to be undertaken'.*

2.6 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

A search of the National Monuments Service (NMS, 2024) identified Mullingar as a sensitive area in terms of archaeology and cultural heritage. The route borders numerous Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) features and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) features as shown in Figure 2-7. A review of the Record of Protected Structures (RPS) features listed within Volume 8 of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021 – 2027 has been undertaken, and there are no additional features identified as an RPS feature that have not been listed as a NIAH feature on the NMS historic environment viewer within the vicinity of either route.

It is recommended that an experienced archaeologist be appointed by the contractor prior to the commencement of the construction stage. The Project archaeologist will ensure that all proposed works are carried out appropriately and that any potential risk to archaeological / architectural features are minimised.

2.7 Population and Human Health

The proposed scheme is located along the existing road network within the town of Mullingar, which has a reported population of 22,667 (CSO, 2022). There are a number of residential and commercial properties located along the route which would be considered sensitive receptors.

3. Description of the Proposed Development

3.1 Nature and Extent of the Proposed Scheme

The proposed scheme is approximately 2.5km long located primarily along the Dublin Road (R392) as well as sections on Delvin Road and Ardmore Road. On the western end of the scheme, it links to the Royal Canal Greenway and Austin Friar's Street and on the eastern end links to the existing active travel in place on Ardmore Road and tie-in near the Marlinstown Roundabout.

The proposed scheme has been divided into 6 Segments of common characteristic types which are illustrated below in Figure 3-1 and summarised in Table 3-1.

Figure 3-1 - Segment division of the proposed scheme

For non-constrained segments the scheme will consist of a segregated 3.0m wide two-way cycle tracks with 0.5m buffer between the cycle track and carriageway, 2.0m wide footpaths on both sides of the road and a 6.5m road carriageway. At constrained (narrower) locations the width of the cycle track could be reduced to a minimum of 2.0m and a 0.3m buffer and footpaths could be reduced to a minimum of 1.8m, at locations where this cannot be facilitated the cycle track and footpath will merge into a shared path of 3.0m width with a 0.3m buffer.

The proposed scheme will be constructed using traditional build construction techniques, however, where feasible the existing kerb and grassed areas will be retained or upgraded. As the proposed cycle facilities are proposed on one side of the road, the opposite side will be retained where the existing width is deemed appropriate. Rapid build options were assessed, however, these options were not deemed to be appropriate based on the requirements for the proposed scheme.

Table 3-1 – Summary of the Proposed scheme segments

Location	Proposal
Segment 01	2.3m two-way cycle track on the south side of the road, locally changed to shared active travel paths at constrained locations 1.8m footpath on both sides of the road 6.5m carriageway
Segment 02	3.5m two-way cycle track on the south side Retention of the existing 1.8m+ footpaths on both sides of the road 6.5m carriageway
Segment 03	4.0m two-way cycle track on the south side Retention of the existing 1.8m+ footpaths on both sides of the road 6.5m carriageway
Segment 04	2.3m two-way cycle track on the south side Retention of the existing 1.8m+ footpath on the north side 6.5m carriageway
Segment 05	2.3m two-way cycle track on the east side 2.0m footpath on the east side 6.0m carriageway
Segment 06	3.3m shared active travel path on the western side Footpath on the eastern side Removal of left turning lane into Dublin Road 6.0m carriageway
Dublin Road/Delvin Road Signalised Junction	Upgrade Junction into a TL505 Protected T-Junction – Full Signal Control as per the Cycle Design Manual Removal of turning lanes on all three approaches Crossing facility on the western arm to be upgraded into a raised toucan crossing Removal of the yellow box
Dublin Road/Bellview Priority Junction	Removal of Slip Lane Tightening of the radii Provision of a raised uncontrolled pedestrian crossing facility
Dublin Road/Aldi Food Store/Glenmore Wood Signalised Junction	Removal of the Slip Lane off Aldi Upgrade Junction into a TL503 Protected Junction – Full Signal Control as per the Cycle Design Manual Removal of turning lanes along Dublin Road
National Science Park Roundabout	Upgrade into a TL703 Segregated Roundabout with Shared Active Travel Facilities as per the Cycle Design Manual Removal of the toucan crossing on the eastern arm and inclusion of raised zebra crossings on all arms

3.2 Construction Methodology

The Construction period for the proposed scheme is anticipated to be 18 months and can be summarised as follows.

3.2.1 Cycle path Construction

The exact construction depth for cycle track pavements is subject to the outcome of ground investigations to be carried out at detailed design stage. However, the typical cycle path construction will be in the order of 500 mm maximum excavation depth.

Works will commence with the clearance and off-site removal of redundant road signage, boundary treatment, road surface materials and topsoil. The works will be undertaken using a combination of operatives using hand tools, mechanical excavators and dumper trucks. To facilitate the main works, underground utilities which conflict with the main works will be uncovered using mechanical excavators and hand digging where appropriate. The need for significant utility diversions is not envisaged as part of the works; instead a 'lower and protect' approach will be favoured. This is likely to be restricted to locations where the walking and cycling facilities cross or interface with public roads.

Following the utility works, the initial pavement and cycle track construction phase will be undertaken. This will include the excavation and removal of the existing stone, soil, concrete ad bitumen materials along the route followed by the installation of new path and track base materials. Excavations will be largely undertaken by mechanical means, with any spoil arisings to be removed off site or reused locally where testing confirms its suitability. The proposed scheme involves an anticipated maximum excavation depth of 500mm below ground level to facilitate the base layers for the proposed footpaths / pavements and the ducting for the signalling associated with the scheme. The base layers of the pavement and track are to be made of compacted stone materials.

The works will also involve constructing the civil engineering elements required to facilitate the commissioning of the traffic signals and the public lighting elements at the latter stages of construction. Service chambers and underground duct sets will be laid within trenches and backfilled with granular material. Signal poles and public lighting columns will be erected, and ducting connections will be made to the base of each pole unit. Following completion of the lighting elements, the final pavement surface course will be laid using an asphalt paving machine followed by compaction using a vibrating roller.

3.2.2 Road Resurfacing

The typical new road construction, which is minimised throughout the scheme, will be in the range of 600 mm to 1 m depending on capping requirements if CBR is poor.

The scheme also involves the resurfacing of the roadways and painting of new road markings within the scheme footprint. The existing road surface course layer will be planed-out throughout the entire scheme extents with planings being removed off site. The planed-out area will be replaced with Hot Rolled asphalt (HRA) or Stone Mastic Asphalt (SMA) surface course ca. 40mm - 60mm thick. Additional to this, and where required, additional bituminous layers may be replaced in localised areas where there is evidence of pavement failure. It is not envisaged that the foundations layers (i.e. sub-base or capping) will require replacement. Following road resurfacing new road markings will be painted on road surfaces.

3.2.3 Footpath Construction

The exact construction depth of the footpath is subject to the outcome of ground investigations to be carried out at detailed design stage. However, the typical footpath construction will be in the order of 300 mm.

3.2.4 Drainage Alterations

Typically, drainage will be provided using new gullies and existing or new storm drainage pipes where appropriate. The new facilities will generally slope towards the road in order to minimise the need for additional drainage collection measures. In some areas, where this may not be possible, additional channels or measures may be required. The details of this will be developed as part of the detailed design.

3.2.5 Verge Reinstatement

For soft landscaping areas topsoil profiles will be graded to tie into the new pavement levels followed by grass seeding. The top soiling and seeding will be undertaken using a combination of mechanical excavator, tractor unit drawing a rotavator / rake / seed spreader and also operatives using hand tools for areas where machinery access is unavailable. There are areas along the scheme that will require embankments to be reduced in order to facilitate the active travel proposals, primarily along Segment 01 as can be seen in AtkinsRéalis Drawing Ref: 0086409-ATK-ST-P2-DR-C-900122) as well a small area in Segment 05 outside of Ardmore Hills (0086409-ATK-ST-P2-DR-C-900128).

3.2.6 Traffic Management

The construction of the cycle tracks and footpaths will be carried out in short segments (ca.100-200m in length) on one side of the roadway at a time to allow for continued traffic flow and will progress along the roadways, as such individual work zones will be relatively small.

3.2.7 Junctions

All signalised junctions along the scheme will be segregated. This will feature cyclists passing through the junction on their own cycle tracks with dedicated traffic signal phases which are separate to the vehicular phasing and separate to the pedestrian phasing (where applicable). The proposed junctions are to include kerb upstands throughout (except at crossing points), providing vertical segregation and thereby increasing protection to the cycle tracks. The Roundabout on the scheme will be segregated whereby cyclists and pedestrians will join a shared path and use zebra crossings to facilitate crossing, the roundabouts will require kerb upstands throughout.

3.2.8 Site Compound

It will be the responsibility of the Contractor to determine a suitable location for the site compound within the proposed development area, but away from any identified environmental sensitive receptors (watercourses, designated sites etc) so as to avoid potential impacts to the environment and the general public. It is planned that existing Local Authority (Westmeath County Council) controlled material storage yards in the locality, currently used for the storage of inert materials, will be utilised during the construction phase to store similarly inert materials for incorporation in the proposed scheme. Materials will be brought to site on a periodic basis as required directly from suppliers. Parking for operatives will be at the main compound only. Operatives will be transported from the compound to the works area. No parking will be allowed within the temporary works area or on-street.

4. EIA Screening Process

4.1 Desk-Based Studies

In undertaking this EIA Screening Assessment, AtkinsRéalis completed a detailed desk-based assessment using data from the following sources:

- Relevant guidance documents and legislation (listed in Section 4.3 below).
- Relevant published data from Government websites like the EPA's Catchment website (www.catchments.ie), the Geological Survey of Ireland (www.gsi.ie), the Westmeath County Development Plan etc.
- Information provided by Westmeath County Council on the proposed scheme.

4.2 Site Visits and Assessments

The entire Mullingar Active Travel Bundle scheme was subject to an arboricultural survey, undertaken by independent arboriculturist Dr Philip Blackstock (appointed by AtkinsRéalis) on 24th and 25th June 2024. The survey recorded information on trees (species, age, height, canopy size, condition etc.) growing on or immediately adjacent to the scheme site. Trees were categorized in accordance with BS5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction (2012) and recommendations for maintenance were provided in an associated tree survey report. Note: the arboricultural survey is not an ecological survey.

4.3 EIA Screening Legislation and Guidance

The Project Types listed in Annex I and Annex II of the 2011 EIA Directive were transposed into Irish Planning & Development legislation in Schedule 5 Parts 1 and Part 2, respectively. EIA Regulations ((Planning and Development) Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I No. 296 of 2018)) transposing the 2014 EIA Directive were adopted and came into operation on 1st September 2018. These regulations amend the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (S.I. No.600 of 2001); they seek to transpose EIA Directive 2014/52/EU and to give further effect to the 2011 Directive, as follows;

- An EIAR is required as a matter of course on specified large-scale projects which have a high likelihood of impacting on the receiving environment. These projects are listed in full within the Planning & Development Regulations (2001-2024), Schedule 5, Part 1 – Development for the purposes of Part 10.
- Each EU Member State has discretionary consideration for the requirement of an EIA in relation to Class 2 Project Types. These projects are listed in full within the Planning & Development Regulations (2001-2024), Schedule 5, Part 2 – Development for the purposes of Part 10. If the proposed project type is listed under Schedule 5, Part 2, but does not exceed the relevant stated thresholds, it is considered to be sub-threshold. Part 10, Article 92 of the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 as amended states "'sub-threshold development' means development of a type set out in Part 2 of Schedule 5, which does not equal or exceed, as the case may be, a quantity, area or other limit specified in that Schedule in respect of the relevant class of development". Any sub-threshold developments should be evaluated to determine if the project is likely to have a significant impact on the environment.
- Criteria to evaluate whether significant impacts on the receiving environment will arise from a Proposed Development are listed under Schedule 7 of the relevant Planning & Development Regulations (2001-2024). A list of the relevant information to be provided by the applicant or developer for the purposes of sub-threshold EIA screening is presented in Schedule 7A of the Regulations, and summarised below;

1. A description of the Proposed Development, including in particular:

   a. a description of the physical characteristics of the whole Proposed Development and, where relevant, of demolition works; and,

   b. a description of the location of the Proposed Development, with particular regard to the environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected.

2. A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the Proposed Development.

3. A description of any likely significant effects, to the extent of the information available on such effects, of the Proposed Development on the environment resulting from:

   a. the expected residues and emissions and the production of waste, where relevant; and,

   b. the use of natural resources, in particular soil, land, water and biodiversity.

The compilation of the information at paragraphs 1 to 3 shall take into account, where relevant, the criteria set out in Schedule 7.

The Proposed Scheme has been screened in accordance with:

- Section 3.2 of the 'Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EPA, 2022);
- European Commission (2017), Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening;
- Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (2003), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Developments;
- ORP Practice Note PN02 Environment Impact Assessment Screening (2021);
- Environmental Impact Directive (85/337/EEC) and all subsequent relevant amendments;
- Planning and Development Regulations (2001-2024), including S.I. No. 296 of 2018 - European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018, which came into operation on 1st September 2018; and,
- Roads Act, 1993-2024 and the European Union (Roads Act 1993) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulation 2019 (S.I. No. 279 of 2019).

Figure 4-1 overleaf provides a summary of the main steps involved in the EIA screening process.

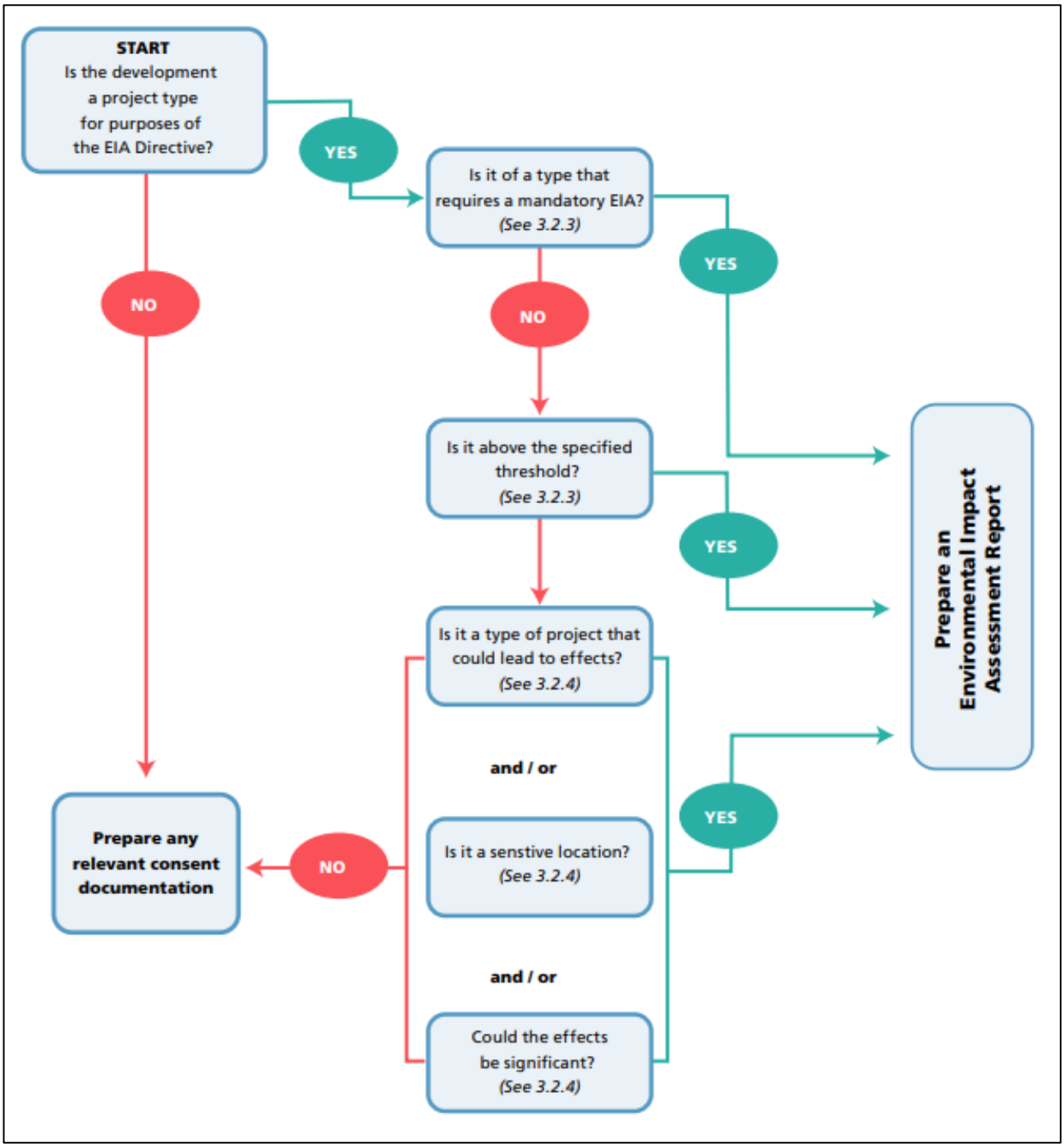

Figure 4-1 - EIA Screening Process (Source: 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' (EPA, 2022)).

4.4 The Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended - Screening

The 2011 EU EIA Directive differentiates between those projects that automatically requires an environmental impact assessment (listed as Annex 1 projects) and those which may require an assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects (Annex II projects). These project types have been transposed into Irish legislation under Parts 1 and 2 respectively of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

The proposed scheme was screened using the following criteria:

- If the project scheme is of a type listed in Schedule 5, Part 1;
- If not, whether:
  - it is listed in Schedule 5, Part 2;
  - it meets any of the relevant thresholds and criteria set out in Schedule 5, Part 2;
  - any part of it is located within sensitive area; or
  - it would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

4.4.1 Part 1 Type Projects

The project scheme has been screened against the list of Project Types which have a high likelihood of impacting on the receiving environment and therefore require a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment, under Schedule 5 Part 1 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2024. **This project does not fall within any category of development requiring a mandatory EIA; hence the preparation of an EIAR is not required under Schedule 5 Part 1.**

4.4.2 Part 2 Type Projects

The project scheme has been screened against the types of development, various processes and activities listed in Schedule 5 Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2024. The project scheme falls within the following categories outlined in Table 4-1 which provide that an EIA must be completed – subject to specified thresholds being met or exceeded.

Table 4-1 – Screening for Part 2 of Schedule 5

Class	Applicability	Screening
10(b) (iv) Infrastructure developments	Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere.	The proposed scheme is ca. 4.44 hectares (ha) in area and is not located within a business district. The proposed scheme is below the other relevant thresholds (i.e., 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere). Hence the preparation of an EIAR is not required under Schedule 5 Part 2 (10) (b) (iv).
15.	Any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development, but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7.	Based on the nature and scale of the scheme , it is considered that there is no potential for significant effects on the environment, as detailed further in the following sections of this report. Hence the preparation of an EIAR is not required under Schedule 5 Part 2 (15).

The proposed scheme is therefore screened out for an environmental impact assessment under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

4.5 Roads Act Screening

The scheme has been screened against the criteria outlined in Section 50(1)(b) and 50(1)(c) of the Roads Act 1993-2024, as follows;

> Section 50(1)(a) – 'A road authority shall prepare a statement of the likely effects on the environment (hereinafter referred to as an "environmental impact statement") of any proposed road development consisting of - (iii) any prescribed type of proposed road development consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road.
>
> Section 50(1)(b) – 'If An Bord Pleanála considers that any road development proposed (other than development to which paragraph (a) applies) consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road would be likely to have significant effects on the environment it shall direct that the development be subject to an environmental impact assessment.'
>
> Section 50(1)(c) – 'Where a road authority or, as the case may be, the Authority considers that a road development that it proposes (other than development to which paragraph (a) applies) consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, it shall inform An Bord Pleanála in writing prior to making any application to the Bord for an approval referred to in section 51(1) in respect of the development.'

Therefore, it is considered that the scheme should undergo an EIA screening to determine if an EIAR would be required in accordance with Sections 50(1)(a), 50(1)(b) and 50(1)(c) of the Roads Act 1993-2024.

Section 50 (1)(e) of the Roads Act (1993-2024) states 'where a decision is being made pursuant to this subsection on whether a road development that is proposed would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, An Bord Pleanála, or the road authority or the Authority concerned (as the case may be), shall take into account the relevant selection criteria specified in Annex III.' Annex III has been transposed into Irish Legislation via Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2024.

There are no exacting rules as to what constitutes "significant" in terms of environmental impacts. The responsibility is on Planning Authorities to carefully examine every aspect of a development in the context of:

- characterisation of the project;
- location of the project; and.
- type and characteristics of potential impacts.

It is generally not necessary to provide specialist studies or technical reports to complete this screening process, rather to investigate whether further studies may be required, and where risks, if any, to the integrity of the receiving environment may lie.

For the purposes of screening sub-threshold developments for EIA, all of the relevant information as presented within EIA Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, (Schedule 7A) has been provided on behalf of the applicant, Westmeath County Council. The potential for the project to pose a significant impact to the receiving environment has also been evaluated in accordance with criteria listed in the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001 - 2024 (Schedule 7).

The findings of the EIA screening assessment prepared for the project has informed our professional opinion as to whether an EIAR is warranted for the proposed project, with due regard to all relevant statutory requirements and

technical guidance. However ultimately it is the responsibility of the relevant planning authority to decide as to whether an EIAR is required for a particular project, based on screening conducted by the planning authority.

5. Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

5.1 Determining if the project is likely to have significant effect on the receiving environment

All relevant information as required under Schedule 7 and 7A has been provided on behalf of Westmeath County Council and is presented within this screening report. The potential for this project to pose a significant impact to the receiving environment has also been evaluated in accordance with criteria listed in the Planning & Development Regulations, 2001-2024 (Schedule 7), as presented within the tables below.

5.1.1 Characteristics of the proposed development

Table 5-1 below details the development characteristics criteria, as required under Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended.

Table 5-1 – Characteristics of the proposed scheme

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
• Size and design of the project	
Will the size and design of the whole project be considered significant.	No. The site area is ca. 4.44ha and the scheme scale and nature is not considered significant within the urban setting. Refer to the detailed description in Section 3 above.
• Cumulation with other projects	
Will other existing project and/ or approved project be able to affect the project.	A search of the Westmeath County Council Planning Applications, An Bord Pleanála planning portal, Uisce Éireann and Transport Infrastructure Ireland project portals has been undertaken for the applications submitted within the past 5 years in the vicinity of the scheme (last reviewed 07/2024). Some of the granted applications have already been completed and of those which are not completed, most are generally small scale in nature (i.e. residential extension works, or property improvement works). Completed or granted applications of such small scale (such as residential improvements) have not been considered further in terms of potential for cumulative impacts. For the purposes of this study, only significant new developments that are likely to generate a significant number of trips and developments that may encroach nearby to the existing corridor have been considered, as follows: ▫ 206017: The construction of a two-storey detached dwelling, a detached domestic garage, a new entrance off the public road and all ancillary site works. ▫ 206220: Construction of a high bay warehouse and manufacturing extension to the rear of the existing facility, with 20m high exhaust flue and all associated site works and services. ▫ 206214: The construction of a two-storey detached dwelling, a detached domestic garage, a new entrance off the public road and all ancillary site works

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
	▫ 206365: Permission to part demolish existing 4 bed dwelling superstructure and remove existing roof, construction of rear ground floor extension with new flat roof windows and construct new dormer roof structure over with roof windows to form new 5 bed family home, connection to utilities to existing connections within curtilage of the site. ▫ 21397: The development will consist of a new manufacturing facility, warehouse and offices and associated car parking and delivery areas and all site works and services. ▫ 2274: The proposed development will comprise the demolition of the existing domestic dwelling and construction of 10 no. 3 bed end-terrace/semi-detached houses; 9 no. 3 bed mid-terrace/townhouses; 1 no. 3 bed duplex apartment; and 4 no. 2 bed apartments. The development provides for 32 no. car parking spaces, 6 no. external bicycle parking spaces, the provision of communal open space, all associated hard and soft landscaping, boundary treatments, footpaths and all other ancillary works above and below ground. ▫ 2214: The construction of 3 no detached houses with associated site works and services connections ▫ 2360192: Development of 245 no. residential units (a Large-scale Residential Development - LRD) and supporting infrastructure at Dublin Road, Petitswood Td., Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, a site of c. 9.76 ha. (Been subject to an AA) ▫ 2260036: Development of 65 no. residential units at Ardmore Hills, Marlinstown, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, a site of c. 2.24 ha. ▫ 22347: Permission is also sought for vehicular/pedestrian entrance, signage, new timber post-and-rail boundaries, car parking, cycle shelters, landscaping, gas skid, underground storage tank, independent ESB substation & switch room building, access road and all associated site works. (Been subject to an AA) ▫ A review of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) publicly available planned projects did not identify any major road granted projects within 10km of the proposed scheme. The N4 Mullingar to Longford (Roosky) road realignment project is at early design stages (i.e. not a granted project) and is remote (c. 2.4km) from the proposed scheme. Given the distance, lack of connectivity and differing construction timeframes, the road project will not act in-combination with the proposed scheme to give rise to any cumulative effects on any European site. (Been subject to an AA) Based on the nature and scale of the project scheme, outlined in Section 3 above, and based on the fact that construction mitigation measures will be implemented for the Proposed Development, no significant cumulative effects are anticipated. Additionally, the AA Screening stated that *"It is considered that there are no An Bord Pleanála or Council approved / planned developments or projects that will act in combination with the proposed scheme to give rise to significant in-combination effects on the Lough Ennell SAC, Lough Ennell SPA or Lough Owel SAC"* and *"it is concluded by the authors of this report that with the absence of any mitigation measures the proposed scheme, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not result in likely significant effects on Lough Ennell SAC, Lough Ennell SPA, Lough Owel SAC or any other European site"*
• Nature of any associated demolition works	

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
Will the construction of the project include any significant demolition works.	No. There are no demolition works proposed for the proposed scheme.
• Use of natural resources	
Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources above or below ground which are non-renewable or in short supply?	The use of natural resources will be kept to a minimum; aggregates and soil will be re-used on site, where possible. Should vegetation clearance be required along the proposed route, it would take place outside of the nesting season (February – August). If this is not possible, an ecologist will survey the vegetation for breeding birds no longer than 24 hours prior to clearance. If nesting birds are identified, then an alternative approach to the work will be used.
• Production of waste	
Will the project produce wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Construction waste will be kept to a minimum with only contaminated waste being removed off site. The following waste streams will be produced during the construction: ▪ Waste produced by the construction of the cycle and pedestrian paths ▪ Generic construction waste. The proposed scheme involves an anticipated excavation depth of 500mm bgl to facilitate the foundation for the footpaths / pavements and the ducting for the signalling associated with the scheme. The base layers of the pavement and track are to be made of compacted stone materials. All soil requiring disposal offsite will require waste classification in accordance with EPA requirements as set out in the documents 'Waste Classification List of Waste & Determining if Waste is Hazardous or Non-hazardous' (EPA, 2015), and 'Determining if waste is hazardous or non-hazardous' (EPA, 2018), and all relevant waste management legislation. In addition to screening against relevant WAC, the preparation of a waste classification tool (hazwaste online / EPA paper tool or similar etc.) will be required to be carried out in order to determine the relevant LoW / EWC code for the transport of any waste soils which require offsite removal and disposal. Prior to construction of the proposed works, the appointed contractor will prepare a Construction Resource and Waste Management Plan (RWMP). The RWMP will provide the segregation of all construction wastes into recyclable, biodegradable and residual wastes including any litter arising during the construction phase of the proposed works
• Pollution and nuisances	
Will the project release any pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air?	Regional air quality in the vicinity of the proposed scheme is 'good' (EPA, 2024). The closest Local Air Quality Monitoring Station to the proposed scheme is Mullingar, Co. Westmeath (Station TNO4159) located ca. 400m to the west and the closest National Air Quality Monitoring Station is Edenderry Library, Co. Offaly (Station 102) located ca. 27km to the south east. Management of dust will be set out in the CEMP, created in line with relevant best practice measures such as those set out in 'Guidelines for the Treatment of Air Quality During the Planning and Construction of National Road Schemes' (NRA, 2011). Due to the nature and scale of the project detailed in Section 3, it is anticipated that the construction works and operation of the scheme will not have a significant effect on air quality.
• Will the project cause:	

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
Noise and vibration.	Noise levels will not exceed the indicative levels of acceptability for construction noise in an urban environment as set out in the NRA guidance 'Good Practice Guidance for the Treatment of Noise during the Planning of National Road Schemes' (NRA, 2014). The construction phases will have noise barriers in place as required, to minimise / eliminate noise disturbances to sensitive receptors i.e. residential dwellings and businesses along proposed scheme located adjacent to the site while construction is taking place. Works will be scheduled during day-time hours. Construction contractors will be required to comply with the requirements of the European Communities (Construction Plant and Equipment) (Permissible Noise Levels) Regulations, 1988 as amended in 1990 and 1996 (S.I. No. 320 of 1988, S.I. No. 297 of 1990 and S.I. No. 359 of 1996), and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Control of Noise at Work) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 371 of 2006). Due to the nature and scale of the project, detailed in Section 3 it is anticipated that the construction works, and operation of the scheme will not have a significant effect with regards to noise.
Release of light.	The lighting will be designed to minimise the effects of light pollution on neighbouring properties. Low energy LED lighting will be used to illuminate areas.
Heat.	The development will not cause release of heat.
Energy.	The development will not cause release of energy.
Electromagnetic radiation.	The development will not cause release of electromagnetic radiation.
Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants, including leachate, onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or sea?	The potential for accidents or incidents causing oil and chemical spillages are limited. With the adoption of site-specific risk management and remediation measures, as appropriate, during construction, no adverse impacts would arise and the residual effects on sensitive receptors would not be significant. Excavation works will be monitored and in the event that contaminated materials are encountered these will be segregated from uncontaminated soils, temporarily stored (any stockpiles will be lined and covered by heavy duty 1000-gauge plastic), sampled and analysed for relevant parameters (Waste Acceptance Criteria suite e.g. Rilta Disposal Suite). Any contaminated soils will be characterised as per the requirements of the relevant Waste Acceptance Criteria (WAC) under the relevant European Communities Council Decision (EC) (92003/33/EC). The waste material will be classified in accordance with the requirements of the EPA as set out in the following documents 'Waste Classification List of Waste & Determining if Waste is Hazardous or Non-hazardous' (EPA, 2018). Any contaminated soils will be transported by appropriately permitted hauliers and disposed of to an appropriate EPA licensed Waste Facility in accordance with all relevant waste management legislation. Waste disposal records will be maintained by the Contractor.
• Risk of major accidents and/or disasters relevant to the project concerned	
Will there be any risk of major accidents (including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge) during construction, operation or decommissioning?	Ireland in general is at low risk of natural disasters: earthquakes are rare and of low magnitude, there are no active volcanos, and severe weather events are rarely experienced. Flooding is experienced throughout Ireland on a regular basis. A Stage 1 Flood Risk Assessment was conducted by AtkinsRéalis (May 2024) which concluded that '*in relation to the Proposed Dublin Road Scheme of the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle, historic flooding has not been identified on the site. Moreover, OPW floodmaps indicate that the eastern section of the proposed route is located in Floodzone C. Therefore, a Stage 2 - Initial Flood Risk Assessment is not required to be undertaken'.*

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
	Possible accidents relevant to the development include vehicle collisions and fire, for both of which there will be plans in place to minimise the risk of harm caused by emissions or discharges. Major accidents affecting the development include generic risk of fire or explosion. All these events will be covered by risk assessments and contingency plans which apply to the proposed scheme. In the event of accidents or fire, measures will be in place to limit emissions to land, water and air, as far as practicable. With these arrangements in place the impact of emissions on human health and sensitive receptors in general would be mitigated such that adverse impacts would be unlikely to arise in the event of an accident.
Is the location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme /adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	The location is not susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, or extreme/adverse climatic conditions. Flooding is the most common and relevant for the proposed works. A Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared which concluded '*in relation to the Proposed Dublin Road Scheme of the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle, historic flooding has not been identified on the site. Moreover, OPW floodmaps indicate that the eastern section of the proposed route is located in Floodzone C. Therefore, a Stage 2 - Initial Flood Risk Assessment is not required to be undertaken'.*
• The risks to human health	
Will the project present a risk to the population (having regard to population density) and their human health during construction, operation or decommissioning? (for example, due to water contamination or air pollution)	Construction will be undertaken in accordance with the commitments to be set out in a site-specific CEMP prepared by the appointed Contractor, such that no significant construction effects on construction workers, residents and the environment would arise. Given the nature of the scheme impacts on population during operation, from water contamination, noise and vibration or air quality and climate are not anticipated to be significant.

5.1.2 Location of the development

Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, requires a description of the location of the proposed scheme, with regards to the environmental sensitivity of the geographical area likely to be affected by the project. Table 5-2 below details the criteria considered and provides an assessment relating to same.

Table 5-2 - Location of the proposed scheme

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
• Existing and approved land use	
Are there existing or approved land uses or community facilities on or around the	The proposed scheme is located within urban lands along the existing road network compromising lands zoned as; existing

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
location which could be affected by the project?	residential, with some areas of commercial, proposed residential, enterprise & employment and mixed use. The major destinations include Bellview Clinic, Aldi Food store, Aspire Training, National Science Park and Mullingar Park Hotel. The construction of the development could have an effect on these properties. A CEMP will be produced to identify potential environmental issues and control measures for their avoidance/mitigation. The contractor will inform and work with all stakeholders to address concerns. Control measures to avoid/mitigate impacts will be included in the CEMP. No existing, approved land uses for health, education, or community facilities in general, on, or around, the location will be affected by the proposed scheme. The construction, operation or decommissioning of the scheme will not involve actions which will cause significant physical changes in the topography of the area.
• The relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground	
Are there any areas on or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project?	Materials will be brought to site on a periodic basis as required directly from suppliers. It is planned that existing Local Authority (Westmeath County Council) controlled material storage yards in the locality, currently used for the storage of inert materials, will be utilised during the construction phase to store similarly inert materials for incorporation in the proposed scheme. As noted above, excavation works will be monitored and in the event that contaminated materials are encountered these will be segregated from uncontaminated soils, temporarily stored (any stockpiles will be lined and covered by heavy duty 1000-gauge plastic), sampled and analysed for relevant parameters (Waste Acceptance Criteria suite e.g. Rilta Disposal Suite). Any contaminated soils will be characterised as per the requirements of the relevant Waste Acceptance Criteria (WAC) under the relevant European Communities Council Decision (EC) (92003/33/EC). The waste material will be classified in accordance with the requirements of the EPA as set out in the following documents 'Waste Classification List of Waste & Determining if Waste is Hazardous or Non-hazardous' (EPA, 2018). Any contaminated soils will be transported by appropriately permitted hauliers and disposed of to an appropriate EPA licensed Waste Facility in accordance with all relevant waste management legislation. Waste disposal records will be maintained by the Contractor.
• Absorption capacity of the natural environment	
Are there any other areas on or around the location which has the potential to impact on the absorption capacity of the natural	There are no wetland habitats in the immediate vicinity of the proposed scheme. The Royal Canal Main Line (which is also a pNHA: 002103) is crossed by the proposed scheme via. the

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
environment, paying particular attention to wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths?	existing Dublin bridge / culvert structure. Further along, this man made waterway runs through an area of cut over raised peat ca. 330m from the proposed scheme. Marlinstown Cutover Complex and Baltrasna North Fen have indirect connectivity to the site via the Royal Canal. This connectivity exists as the canal borders these wetland sites. An AA Screening (AtkinsRéalis, 2024) prepared for the proposed scheme concluded that "*with the absence of any mitigation measures the proposed scheme, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not result in likely significant effects on Lough Ennell SAC, Lough Ennell SPA, Lough Owel SAC or any other European site. Thus, it is recommended that it is not necessary for the scheme to proceed to Appropriate Assessment*''. Based on the location of the proposed scheme, there is no potential for impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment.
Has the project the potential to impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to coastal zones and the marine environment?	The proposed scheme is located at an inland location. Therefore, it is not anticipated that it will have a significant impact on the coastal zone or marine environment.
Has the project the potential to impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to mountain and forest areas?	There are no mountain or forest areas within 2km of the proposed scheme and therefore no impacts on this habitat type. A tree survey was carried out by Dr Philip Blackstock (2024) along the route of the proposed scheme. In total there were 41 trees surveyed, of these 26 trees have suggested actions to be undertaken including; mostly routine crown lifts, monitor for death, confirm ownership, maintain as hedge, clear lamp, remove ivy and clear overhead cables.
Has the project the potential to impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to areas classified or protected under national legislation; Natura 2000 areas designated by Member States pursuant to Directive 92/43/EEC and Directive 2009/147/EC?	A screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) has been prepared for the scheme (AtkinsRéalis, 2024) which investigated the potential for the proposed development to have significant effects on a European Site(s) either alone or in combination with other plans or developments. The AA screening concluded that there is no absorption capacity of the natural environment under national legislation.
Has the project the potential to impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards, laid down in Union legislation and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure?	The absorption capacity of the natural environment is characterised as follows: The area around the proposed development is urban in nature. There are 6no. European Sites within the potential zone of influence of the proposed scheme; Lough Ennell SAC, Lough Owel SAC, Scragh Bog SAC, Wooddown Bog SAC, Lough Ennell SPA, Lough Owel SPA. There is no direct connectivity to Natura 2000 sites located within the ZoI of the project, however indirect connectivity exists via. The Brosna River, to which surface waters from the proposed scheme site discharge, flows

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
	to Lough Ennell thereby providing a hydrological link between the scheme site and this SAC and SPA. Based on the nature, scale and location of the proposed scheme as detailed in section 3, there is no potential for impact on absorption capacity of the natural environment. The route borders numerous Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) features and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) features, none of which will be impacted by the proposed works. The scheme is located within the Lower Shannon Water Framework Directive (WFD) Catchment area. The route crosses the Royal Canal via. the existing Dublin bridge structure / culvert and the River Brosna runs ca. 340m from the proposed scheme; the EPA (2024) status of which is 'Poor' for the 2016-2021 monitoring period and is 'At Risk' of failing to meet relevant Water Framework Directive (WFD) by 2027. Contamination of these watercourses via. siltation or hydrocarbon spillages, is a risk during the construction phase, however, best practice measures will be employed through adherence to the CEMP which will be prepared and accidental spills and silt generation will be dealt with through prescribed spill response and silt collection measures. Leaching of pollutants to groundwater is a risk during the construction phase, however, best practice measures will be employed through adherence to the CEMP which will be prepared and accidental spills will be dealt with through prescribed spill response measures. Should groundwater be encountered during excavations, the following measures will be implemented: ▪ Any groundwater temporarily dewatered during the excavation works, will be stored in a contained area and treated off-site; ▪ The Contractor will be required to provide a Site-specific dewatering plan, clearly setting out proposed excavation methodology, estimated dewatering rates, details of proposed treatment system, and discharge location; ▪ The time period that excavations are left uncovered will be reduced in so far as reasonably practical with impermeable coverings being used to cover excavations over night or in times of heavy rainfall during working hours. These coverings will be secured at night to prevent mammals becoming trapped; and, ▪ Excavations will not be carried out during or following times of prolonged rainfall.

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
Has the project the potential to impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to densely populated areas?	No. There is no significant effect on the absorption capacity of the natural environment in relation to densely populated areas as a result of the proposed scheme. The proposed scheme will result in a positive impact in terms of facilitating active travel for the population of the surrounding area.
Has the project the potential to impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or Archaeological significance?	As discussed above, the proposed scheme is bordered by numerous SMR and NIAH features none of which will be impacted by the works. An archaeological assessment will be prepared and the National Monuments Service and Minister for Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht will be notified in advance of any works proposed at these locations and the required measures will be implemented. A tree survey was carried out by Dr Philip Blackstock along the route of the proposed scheme. In total there were 41 trees surveyed, of these 26 trees have suggested actions to be undertaken including; mostly routine crown lifts, monitor for death, confirm ownership, maintain as hedge, clear lamp, remove ivy and clear overhead cables. There is no potential for impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment.

5.1.3 Characteristics of potential impact

Table 5-3 below details the types and characteristics of potential impacts of the scheme as required under Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended.

Table 5-3 - Characteristics of the proposed scheme

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
• The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	
Outline the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected).	The spatial extent of the proposed scheme measures ca. 4.44 hectares. The expected duration of the construction works is approximately 18 months. Direct impacts associated with the proposed works are likely to be located within the environs of the site, chiefly associated with impacts on pedestrians and vehicular movement within the local area. Traffic management will be implemented during construction so as to minimise disruption to traffic flow. Due to the nature of the proposed works it is likely that the population of the local area would potentially be affected by the development.
• Nature of the impact	
Outline the nature of the impact.	There could be potential adverse construction and operation impacts arising from temporary disruption or disturbance associated with the proposed works. This has potential to result in noise and air quality impacts but with the implementation of the control measures included in the CEMP it is unlikely that impacts would give rise to significant environmental effects. Potential adverse operational impacts of the development would be associated with footfall as well as the lighting. The design will be developed to reduce operational impacts by incorporating control measures. Westmeath County Council will engage with stakeholders including the adjacent residents and commercial, premises throughout the design and construction stages to address any concerns.
• Transboundary nature of the impact	
Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects?	Given the location of the site no transboundary impacts would occur.
• The intensity and complexity of the impact	
Outline the intensity and complexity of the impact.	The impacts identified are unlikely to cause significant changes in environmental conditions within the site and surrounding area.
• The probability of the impact	
Outline the probability of the impact.	During construction, conventional construction and best environmental practice techniques can be readily deployed. In order to minimise disruption, a CEMP will be implemented. There is no significant environmental impact during the operational phase anticipated, the proposed scheme will have an overall positive impact as it will provide active travel opportunities for the local population.
• The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	

Screening Criteria	Proposed Scheme
Outline the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact.	It is expected that the duration of construction works will be approximately 18 months. Normal working hours during the construction period are expected to be Monday to Friday 08:00 to 18:00, and Saturday 08:00 to 14:00. During the construction stage it may be necessary to carry out some work outside of normal working hours however, this will be kept to a minimum and only undertaken following approval from Westmeath County Council. The noise and air quality impact peaks during construction will be intermittent with a potential background level of nuisance as they will depend on the construction activities which are for their nature variable and not continuous. It is not expected that noise levels will be significant during the operational stage. The selection and implementation of established best practice procedures as set out by the appointed Contractor will ensure potential environmental impacts during the construction phase are offset.
• Cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development	
Could this project together with existing and/ or approved project result in cumulation of impacts together during construction/ operation phase?	As discussed previously, there are a number of approved developments in the vicinity however none with which cumulative impacts could arise.
• Possibility of effectively reducing the impact	
What measures can be adopted to avoid, reduce, repair or compensate the impact?	The design of the proposed scheme is being developed to reduce both construction and operational impacts. During construction the impact of the proposed works would be further reduced through the implementation of the CEMP. During operation, potential impacts would be reduced by the inclusion of design measures, operational control plans including Westmeath County Council guidance and standards.

6. Potential for Significant Effects on the Receiving Environment

All relevant information as required under Schedule 7A has been provided on behalf of the client and is presented within Section 5 of this screening report. The potential for this project to pose a significant impact to the receiving environment has also been evaluated in accordance with criteria listed Planning and Development Regulations (2001-2024) (Schedule 7), as presented within Section 5 of this screening report.

From an assessment of the types and characteristics of the potential impacts likely to arise from the proposed project 2 scheme of the Mullingar Active Travel Bundle, it is considered it will not constitute EIA development. With the implementation of the control measures included in a CEMP during construction few impacts would be likely to arise. Those that do, would be restricted to the site and a limited area in proximity to the site and would not be significant. Apart from pedestrians and road users near the site the local population and other sensitive receptors are unlikely to be affected by construction activities. At the operational stage, visual impacts and noise impacts are anticipated. However, it is not considered likely that there will be any significant effects.

It is considered that due to the size, nature, and characteristics of the proposed scheme, no significant effects on the receiving environment are expected; hence the preparation of a sub-threshold EIAR is not required.

7. Screening Conclusion

This EIA screening report has been carried out in accordance with the Planning and Development Regulations as amended 2001- 2024 (which give effect to the provisions of EU Directive 2014/52/EU). The report assessed the impact of the proposed scheme in conjunction with committed developments in the surrounding area.

Based on all available information, and taking account of the scale, nature and location of the proposed scheme it is our opinion that the preparation of an EIAR is not a mandatory requirement (under Schedule 5, Part 1 and 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 - 2024). The project is deemed a sub-threshold development; hence the potential for significant environmental effects arising as a result of the scheme has been evaluated, in accordance with the requirements of Schedule 7A and Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Acts 2001-2024.

Key findings are summarised as follows;

- Due to the limited nature of the works it is considered that there will be no significant cumulative impacts with other developments in the general area;
- Limited noise, vibration and dust emissions may be generated during construction; however, this is anticipated to be minimal in effect and will cause no significant impacts;
- There will be no significant impact on biodiversity, groundwater, surface water or traffic; and,
- There will be no significant impacts on recorded monuments or historic features.

In summary, no significant adverse impacts to the receiving environment will arise as a result of the proposed scheme.

Accordingly, we consider that the preparation of an EIAR is not required for the proposed Mullingar Active Travel Bundle – Project 2. However, the competent authority will ultimately determine whether an EIA is required or not.

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