

# Part 8 MEMO

<b>To:</b>	Cathaldus Hartin, Senior Planner
<b>From:</b>	Ian Lacey, Senior Executive Planner
<b>Date:</b>	19 March 2026
<b>Subject:</b>	Part 8 AA/EIA Requirements in relation to the proposed Ballinahown Greenway a 1.3km combined pedestrian and cycleway from Ballinahown Sports Park through lands predominantly in agricultural use, located to the west of the L-1406 local road in Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath.

## 1. Project Description

Westmeath County Council (WCC) proposes to construct Ballinahown Greenway, a 1.3 km combined pedestrian and cycleway from Ballinahown Sports Park to the west of the L-1406 local road in Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath.

The proposed development will include the following:

- Construction of a 3m wide paved pedestrian and cycleway - a bound surface and grass verges, suitable for cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users, and buggies. Access will be provided from Ballinahown Sports Park, the rear of Ballinahown National School (subject to agreement), and from the northwest via the planned Bord na Móna Greenway.
- Erection of new boundary fences and hedges. Installation of a new 1.3 m-high stock-proof fence supplemented with native hedgerow planting. Existing hedgerows and trees will be retained where possible. Grassed strips between the track and boundaries will be maintained and reseeded as required.
- Construction of pedestrian/cycleway bridges. Provision of a bridge/culvert to carry the pedestrian and cycleway across an existing drainage channel.
- Ancillary Infrastructure: Installation of signage (map boards, tourist information, and directional signage) and provision of cycle parking and benches at Ballinahown Sports Park, the scheme's northern extent within Bord na Móna lands, and at other suitable locations.

### 1.1 Site Location and Surrounding Environment:

The application site is located within the village of Ballinahown. The proposed development will consist of a pedestrian and cycle link from Ballinahown Village to Bord Na Mona lands at Ballinahown. The proposed greenway a 1.3 km combined pedestrian and cycleway extending from Ballinahown Sports Park onto adjoining lands predominantly in agricultural use, located west of the L-1406 local road in Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath.

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Fig 1 proposed route

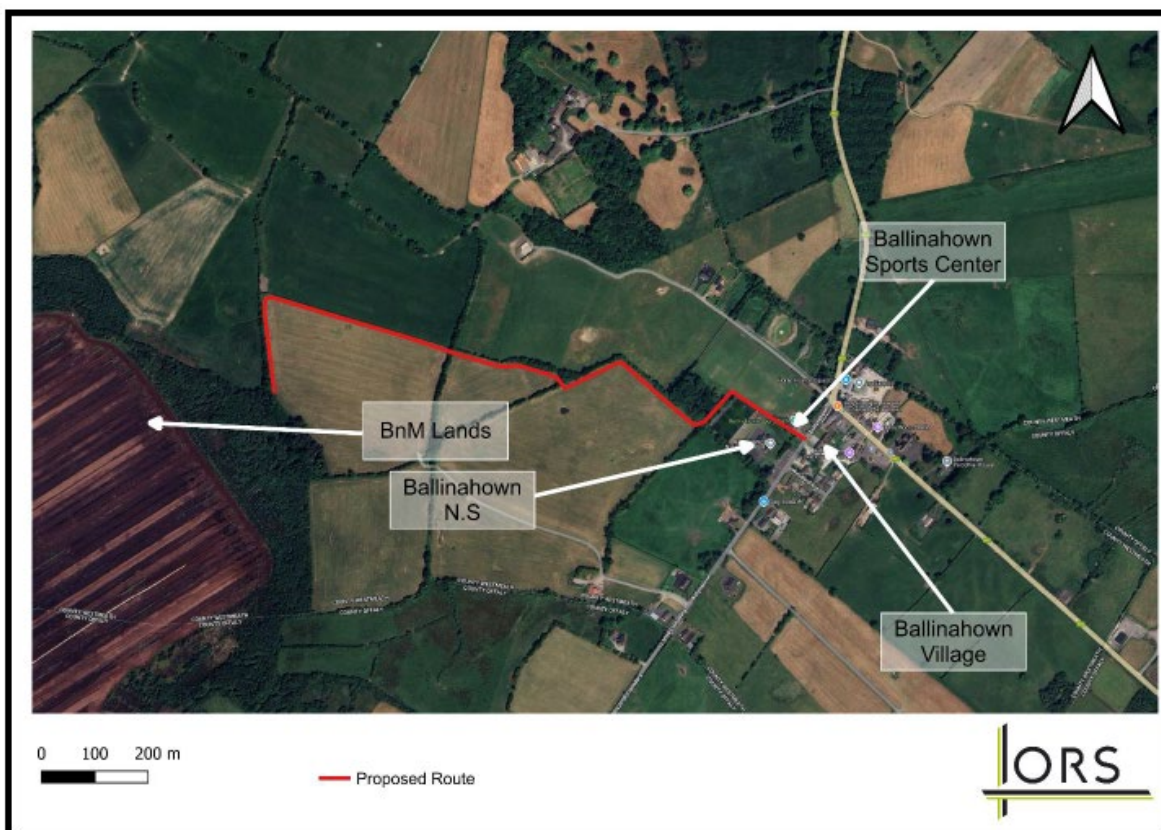


Fig 2 – aerial of proposed route

## 1.2 Details Received:

The documents provided for the purposes of determination are as follows:

- Drawings and Plans
- Project Execution Plan
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report

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## 1.3 Overview:

The proposed works to build a greenway are to land which includes lands adjoining the Ballinahown Sports Park and Ballinahown National School and agricultural lands to the west of the village. Within close proximity to the proposed greenway is the National Monument WM035-009---- Bullaun stone.

The subject lands are not located within or immediately adjacent to any European Site (designated SAC/SPA).

## 2. Recommendation:

Having reviewed the preliminary documentation associated with the above-named proposed project the development of the Greenway from Ballinahown Village (Sports Park) to Bord Na Mona lands at Ballinahown; it is considered, based on a preliminary assessment, that a **Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment (AA) & Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** are **not** required at this time.

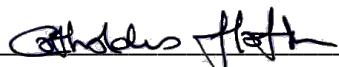
It is therefore recommended that the project proceed to detailed application design in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations (as amended), based on which the Planning Section will issue final determinations.

Considerations are set out as per the associate headings hereunder.



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**Ian Lacey, Senior Executive Planner**  
**Westmeath County Council Planning Section**  
13<sup>th</sup> of March 2026



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**Cathaldus Hartin | Senior Planner**  
Westmeath County Council | Planning, Transportation and Economic Development

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## 3. Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening

### Stage 1 Preliminary Examination

#### 3.1 Legislative Context

The European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 which transpose into Irish law both the European Union (EU) Directive 2009/147/EC (the Birds Directive) and the Habitats Directive and list habitats and species that are of international conservation importance and require protection. This protection is afforded in part through the designation of areas that represent significant examples of habitats that support populations of listed species within a European context, known as Natura 2000 sites. An area designated for bird species is classed as a Special Protection Area (SPA) and an area designated for other protected species and habitats is classed as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Together, SPAs and SACs form the Natura 2000 network of protected sites.

The Habitats Directive requires competent authorities to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of plans and projects that, alone and/or in combination with other plans and projects, would be likely to have significant effects on one or more Natura 2000 sites. The assessment process is divided into a Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment and where required, a full Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

#### 3.2 Natura 2000 Sites

Note: European Natura 2000 sites include SACs, cSACs, SPAs and pSPAs, but not NHAs. This Stage 1 screening assessment covers Natura 2000 sites within a 15km radius of the development boundary. In addition, any other sites further than this, but potentially within its zone of influence were also considered. The zone of influence may be determined by an assessment of the connectivity between the application site and the designated areas by virtue of hydrological connectivity, atmospheric emissions, flight paths, ecological corridors, etc. The measurements used here are taken from the closest point along the proposed work area to the SAC / SPA.

Sites situated with 15km of the proposed works, are set out at **Table 1** below. The site synopsis' and details of the conservation objectives of these site are available at: <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac> and <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa>

There are 5 no. Natura 2000 designated sites (SACs and SPAs) located within the Zol of the proposed site of which 4 no. have potential Source-Pathway-Receptor (S-P-R) connectivity, S-P-R linkage and are considered further, below:

Site Code	Site Name	Designation Type	Distance From (km) approx.	Potential S-P-R Linkage?
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	SPA	2.8km NW	Indirect linkage
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	SAC	2.8km NW	Indirect linkage
001776	Pilgrim's Road Esker SAC	SAC	5.1km SW	Indirect linkage
004017	Mongan Bog SPA	SPA	6.2km SW	Indirect Linkage
000580	Mongan Bog SAC	SAC	6.2km SW	Indirect Linkage
002337	Crosswood Bog SAC	SAC	6.3km N	No Linkage

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000575	Ferbane Bog SAC	SAC	6.9km S	No Linkage
000576	Fin Lough (Offaly) SAC	SAC	7.1km SW	No Linkage
002336	Carn Park Bog SAC	SAC	7.6km N	No Linkage
000581	Moyclare Bog SAC	SAC	8.7km S	No Linkage
004064	Lough Ree SPA	SPA	11.1km NW	No Linkage
000440	Lough Ree SAC	SAC	11.1km NW	No Linkage
000572	Clara Bog SAC	SAC	12.3km SE	No Linkage

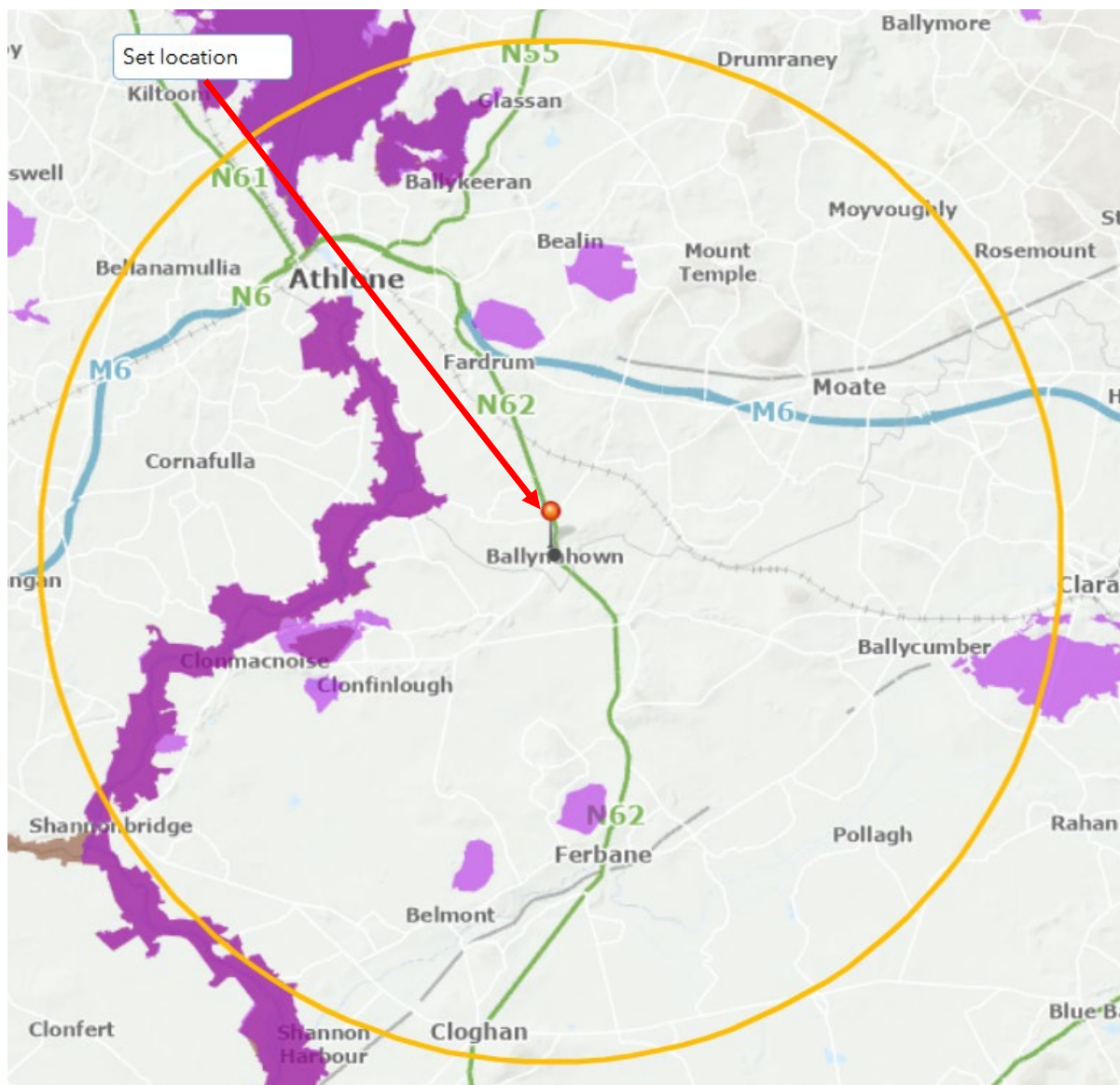
**Table 1:** Natura 2000 Sites within 15km

There are an identified 13(no.) designated Natura 2000 sites situated within a 15km radius (refer Table 1 above) of the proposed site and 4(no.) with potential indirect linkages. The development works proposed are not required for the nature conservation management of these sites. It is noted that the conservation objectives for the SACs and SPAs in the vicinity are to maintain or restore favourable conservation condition of habitats and species listed as Special Conservation Interests for which the SPA/SAC has been selected.

There are no Natura 2000 sites in close proximity and no hydrological connectivity between the development site area and these SPA/SAC sites. Having regard to the narrow footprint of the proposed Greenway Path within the rural/agricultural area of Ballinahown - and in considering the content of the Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment prepared by ORS; it is considered that there is no potential source-pathway-receptor links to any of the Natura 2000 sites listed in table 1 above, or other Natura sites outside of this 15km defined area. There are no potential for impacts arising from the construction or operation phase of the project to give rise to impacts on water quality of any Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence of the project. Given the absence of impact pathways or potential for interactions between the project and any Natura 2000 sites, there will be no potential for the project to result in any significant effects to any Natura 2000 sites.



Map 1: Natura 2000 Sites in proximity to proposal.



**Map 2:** Natura 2000 Sites within 15km to the proposal site.

### 3.3 Relationship with other Relevant Plans and Programmes

The site of the proposed development is located in the Ballinahown Village settlement as designated rural node referenced in the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

An Appropriate Assessment for this Plan was carried out and concluded that, mitigation measures identified are adequate to ensure that the integrity of site in the Natura 2000 network will not be adversely affected as a result of potential impacts of the policies contained within the Plan and with the inclusion of relevant mitigating policies in the Plan, there is no potential for significant effects either alone or in combination with other plans.

However, all individual plans/projects must also be considered for their compliance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive on a case-by-case basis.

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It is considered that having regard to the siting of the proposed development from the SPAs and SACs (illustrated at **Map 1** above and **Table 1**), that the proposal would not give rise to any significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any nearby Natura 2000 sites having regard to the nature of the proposed development and separation distances involved to adjoining Natura 2000 sites.

### **3.4 AA Preliminary Screening Conclusions**

It is considered that the proposed development is not likely to give rise to significant effect, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, on any European Natura 2000 Sites in the vicinity.

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## 4. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening

### 4.1 EIA Preliminary Screening Examination

Examination		
	Yes / No / Uncertain	Comment
Is the size of development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?	No	The Greenway is a 3m wide path at a length of 1.3km
Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on a sensitive site or location*?	No	
Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, or result in emissions or pollutants?	No	
Conclusion		
<b>Based on a preliminary examination of the nature, size or location of the development, is there a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment? **</b>		
There is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIAR not required.	✓
There is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	Stage 2 Screening Determination required.	
	Schedule 7A information required?	Yes   No
There is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment.	EIAR required.	

### 4.2 EIA Preliminary Screening Conclusion

On the basis of the preliminary information received, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination; it is reasonable to conclude that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development of the Ballinahown Greenway (a 1.3 km combined pedestrian and cycleway from Ballinahown Sports Park through lands predominantly in agricultural use, located to the west of the L-1406 local road in Ballinahown, Co. Westmeath) and an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required in this instance.