AtkinsRéalis

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening - Route B

Westmeath County Council

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0086381DG0045

ATHLONE ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEMES 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 construction of upgraded pedestrian and cycling facilities in addition to facilitate any necessary infrastructure provisions to cater for future public transport upgrades in Athlone, Co. Westmeath. The EIA Screening Report will be submitted as part of the Part 8 planning documents for the proposed works.

1.1 Background

The project is located in Athlone, a town on the border of counties Roscommon and Westmeath. It is situated on the southern coast of Lough Ree. In total there is approximately 15.4 km of active travel planned for Athlone. The 15.4 km identified has been divided into 6 separate sub routes, these routes are as follows:

- Route A [2.8 km] - Elliott Rd/Grace Rd/Old Galway Rd to Roscommon County Boundary at Baylough (R446) and Roscommon Rd (T914).
  - Route A1 [2.3 km] - Tesco Express in Boylagh to Luan Gallery and St. Peter and Paul church (R446).
  - Route A2 [0.5 km] - Junction of the Old Galway Road (R446) and Roscommon Road (R914) to the Roscommon County boundary (R914).
- Route B [2.7 km] - Creggan Roundabout to Town Centre (R446).
- Route B2 [0.7km] - Town Centre (R446/R915) to Ankers Bower Roundabout. (Subject to approval and funding)
- Route C [2.6km] - Coosan National School to Town Centre (L1478/L4005).
- Route D [2.2km] - Cornamaddy Roundabout to Town Centre (N55/R915).
- Route E [2.1km] - Garrycastle Roundabout via Retreat Road to Town Centre (L4006/L4008).
- Route F [2.3km] - Cornamaddy Roundabout to Wash House Turn Roundabout (R916).

The project is located in Athlone town, County Westmeath. The scheme extents and routes are identified in Figure 1-1, which also outlines 6 separate routes. Route B have been earmarked as the priority routes as they have been identified on the Department of Transport's Pathfinder Programme (which is made up of 35 exemplar transport projects to be delivered by local authorities and agencies around the country within the next 3 years).

This EIA Screening assess Route B ('the proposed scheme'), approximately 2.7km in length and extends from the Creggan Roundabout to Town Centre (R446). Route B corridor has been divided into four segments along with two major junctions and 4 roundabouts, as shown in Figure 1-1 below.

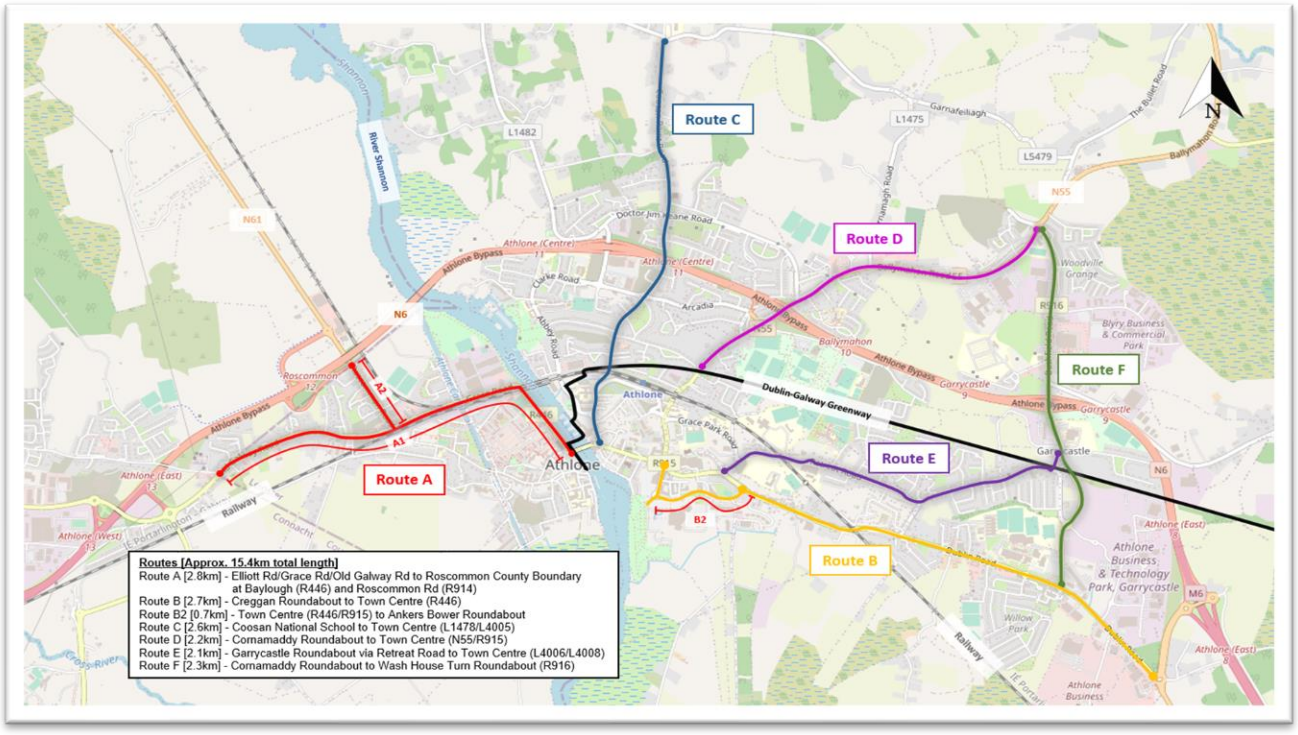

Figure 1-1 – Athlone Active Travel Schemes Site Location

A Feasibility, Options Selection and Appraisal Report was previously conducted by AtkinsRéalis (2024) which identified this route as the preferred option for Route B.

1.2 Project Overview

The overall purpose of the Athlone Active Travel Schemes 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.

1.3 Purpose of this Report

This report has been prepared to support the Part 8 proposal in relation to Route B of the Athlone Active Travel Schemes Bundle. The purpose of this report is to determine whether 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, 2025). 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 *'On the basis of objective information and in view of best scientific knowledge and applying a precautionary principle, it is concluded by the author of this report that with the absence of any mitigation measures the proposed Athlone Active Travel Schemes Bundle – Route B, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not result in likely significant effects on the River Shannon Callows SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA, Crosswood Bog SAC, Lough Ree SAC, Lough Ree SPA or any other Natura 2000 site. Thus, it is recommended that it is not necessary for the scheme to proceed to Appropriate Assessment. Should the scope, nature or extent of the proposed scheme change, a new assessment (AA Screening Report or AA Screening Addendum Report) would be required.'*

.'

1.4 Site Zoning

The Athlone Local Area Plan 2014-2020 sets out a strategy for the sustainable development and planning of Athlone building upon the previous Athlone Town Plan 2008-2014. It also outlined the policies and objectives for the future development of the town and its environs.

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

- **Policy-EC10**: To continue to improve access to major areas of employment through sustainable transport modes.
- **Policy-AC1**: To create an environment in the Town Centre in which vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians can safely co-exist and share public space.
- **Policy-AC2**: To minimise vehicular traffic volumes in the town centre through traffic management measures. Create an environment in the Town Centre in which vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians can safely co-exist and share public space.
- **Policy-TR2**: To promote the sustainable development of walking, cycling, public transport and other sustainable forms of transport in Athlone, as an alternative to the private car, by facilitating and promoting the development of necessary infrastructure and by promoting initiatives contained within “Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020”.
- **Policy-WC1**: To encourage and facilitate safe walking and cycling routes in Athlone, as a viable alternative to the private car, in accordance with initiatives contained within “Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020”
- **Policy-WC2**: To develop walking and cycling strategies within Athlone and between the Linked Gateway towns of Athlone and Mullingar and Athlone and Tullamore.
- **Policy-WC3**: To improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs, by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience.
- **Policy-WC4**: To provide for sustainable transport movement at the earliest design stage of development proposals to ensure accessibility by all modes of transport and all sections of society.
- **Policy-WC5**: To implement proposals for pedestrian and cycle routes along the River Shannon as prescribed in the Athlone Waterfront Strategy.
- **Policy-WC6**: To support and facilitate the development through Athlone of the National Cycle Network between Dublin and Galway, including the construction of a new pedestrian and cycle Bridge across the River Shannon, subject to the requirements of the Habitats Directive, Water Framework Directive and environmental sensitivities identified in the SEA being addressed.
- **Policy-WC7**: To support and facilitate the provision of a cycleway and walkway in Athlone within the corridor of the disused Mullingar to Athlone railway line, pending the re-opening of this line as a railway, subject to environmental sensitivities identified in the SEA being addressed.
- **Objective-PT12**: To provide pedestrian and cycle linkages across the River Shannon and canal.
- **Objective-WC1**: To further the development of an integrated cycle network in Athlone.
- **Objective-WC2**: To provide for signal-controlled pedestrian facilities at all crossing points with an audible signal and dished kerbs with tactile paving to assist visually and mobility-impaired persons in crossing roads.
- **Objective-WC14**: To provide a network of on-road and greenway pedestrian and cycle routes within the town.

As identified within the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014 – 2020[1], land use zonings within the vicinity of Route B are as follows:

- Existing residential
- Community use – Education, community and institutional
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Proposed Residential

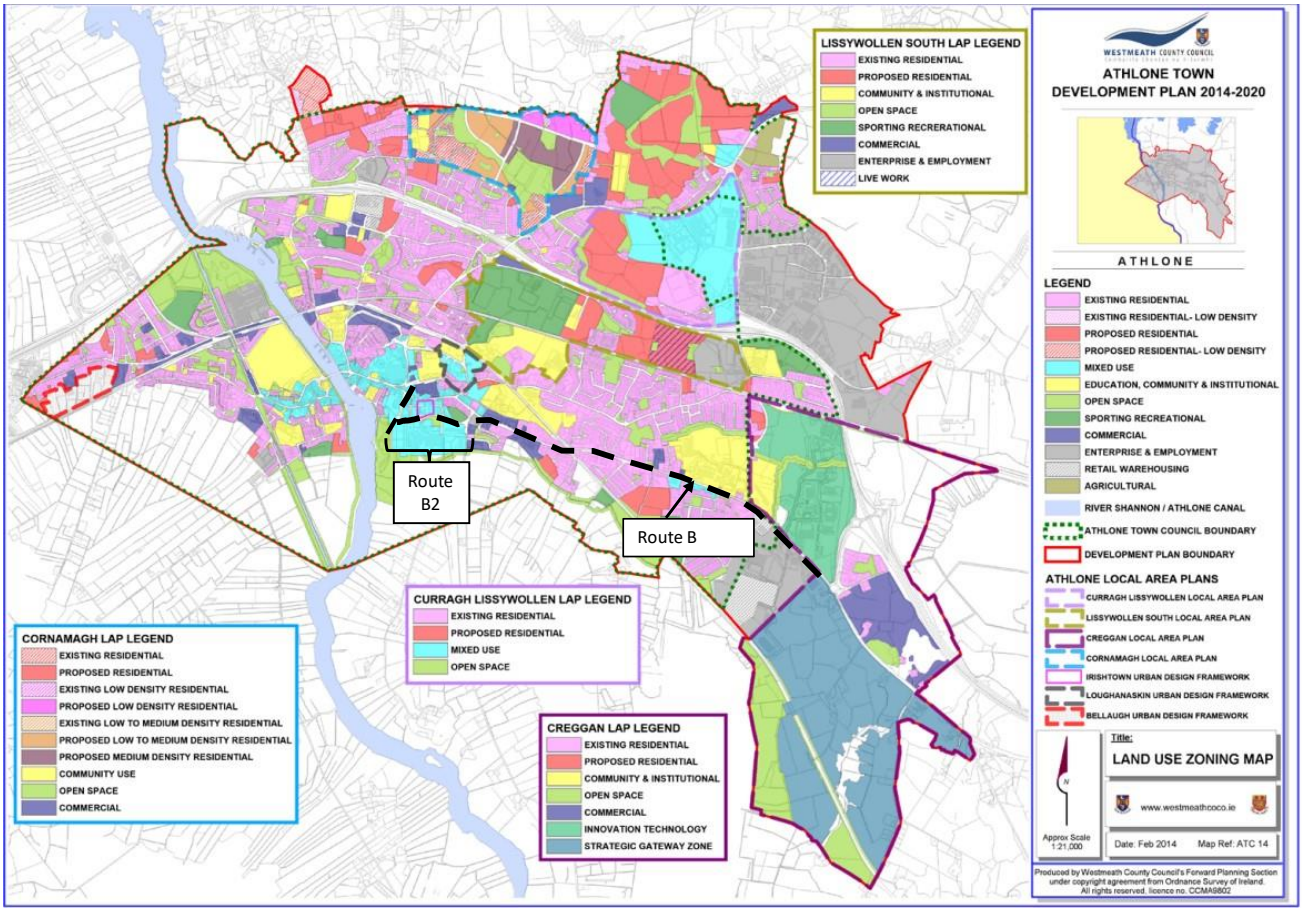

Figure 1-2 - Land Use Zonings within the vicinity (WCC, 2014)

It is considered that the proposed scheme is compatible with the zoning requirements of the development strategy for the area, under the Athlone Local Area Plan, improving local facilities, cycleways and pedestrian linkages.

[1] It should be noted that the Athlone Joint Urban Area Plan (Westmeath County Council and Roscommon County Council) is currently undergoing Pre-Draft Public Consultation. The policies, objectives and land-use zonings of the lands within the vicinity of Route B will need to be reviewed once this Urban Area Plan is implemented.

2. Receiving Environment

The proposed scheme will be constructed within the town of Athlone, from the Old Rail Trail, Whitegates east to the Creggan Roundabout between Ballymahon Road, Gleeson Street along (R915) to Irishtown Road, Castlemaine Street, Brideswell Street, Dublin Road along R446 roads which are maintained by Westmeath County Council.

Hydrology

The proposed scheme is located within the Upper Shannon Water Framework Directive (WFD) Catchment area. There are no Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) watercourses within the site of the proposed scheme. The route crosses the Athlone Canal via. an existing bridge structure / culvert and borders the River Shannon for ca. 500m along the R446 as shown in Figure 4-1 below.

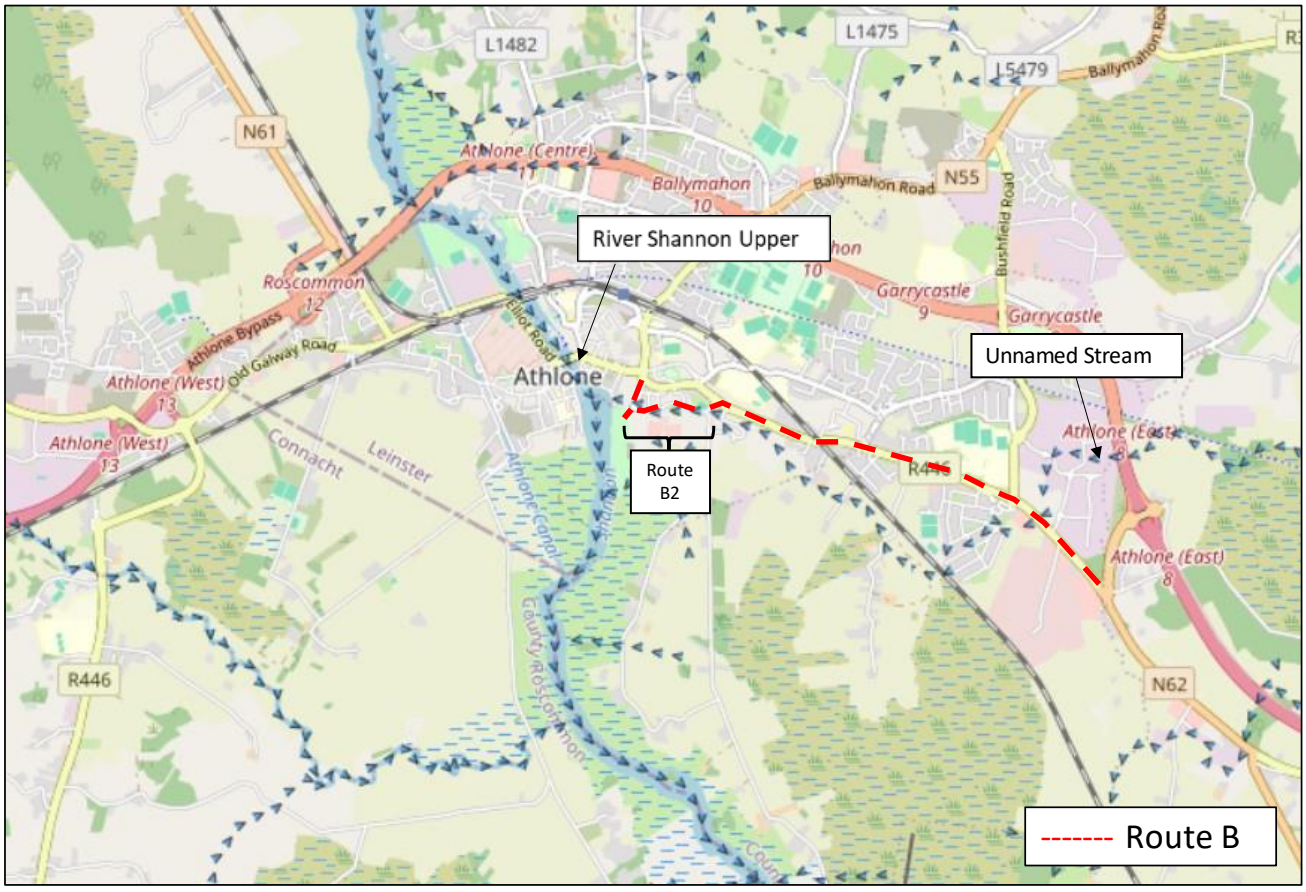

Figure 2-1 - Surface Water Features (EPA, 2025)

Ecology

There are 4 no. European sites within the Zone of Influence (ZoI) of the proposed scheme; the River Shannon Callows SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA, Lough Ree SAC, Lough Ree SPA. There will be no land take from any of the designated sites within 15km of the proposed scheme and, based on the findings of the Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening report (AtkinsRéalis, 2025) there will be no potential significant adverse effects, either alone or in-combination, to European sites arising from the Proposed Development.

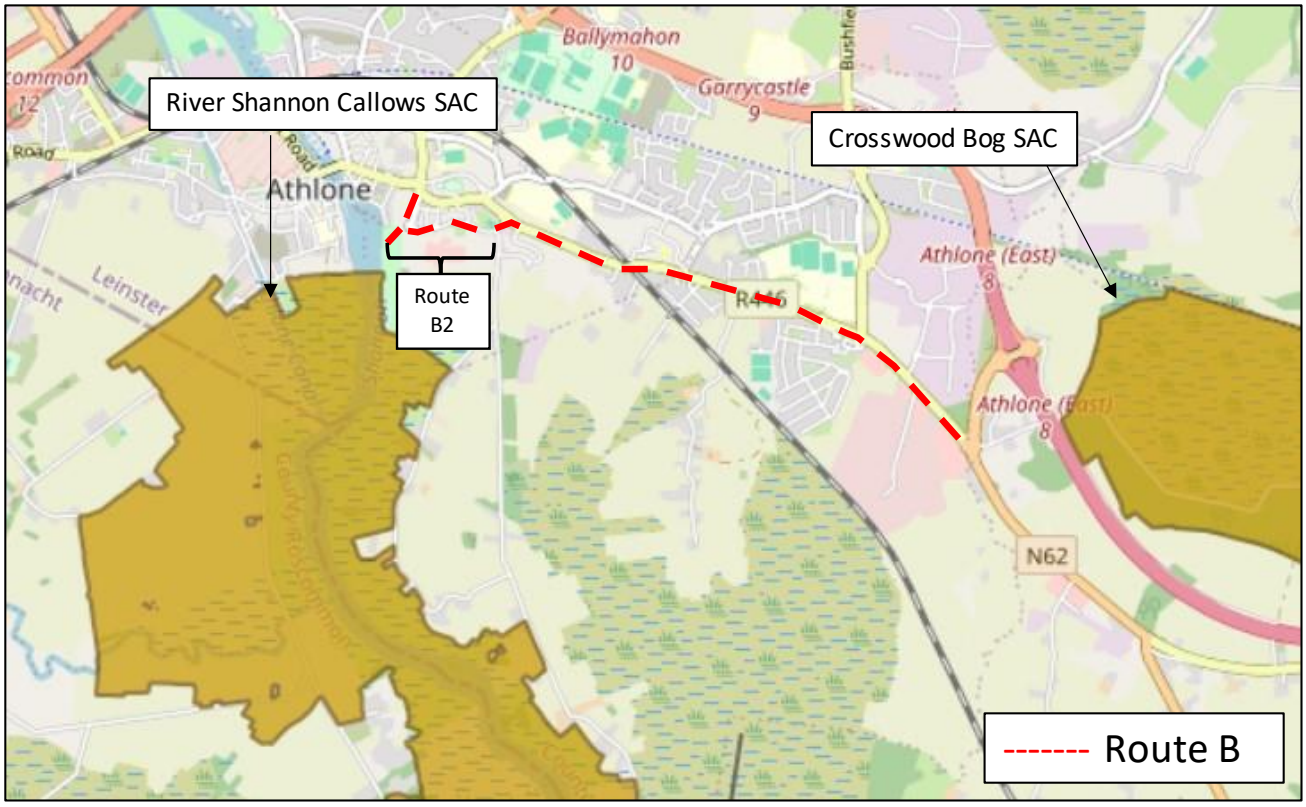

Figure 2-2 - SACs within the Zone of Influence of the Proposed Scheme (EPA, 2025)

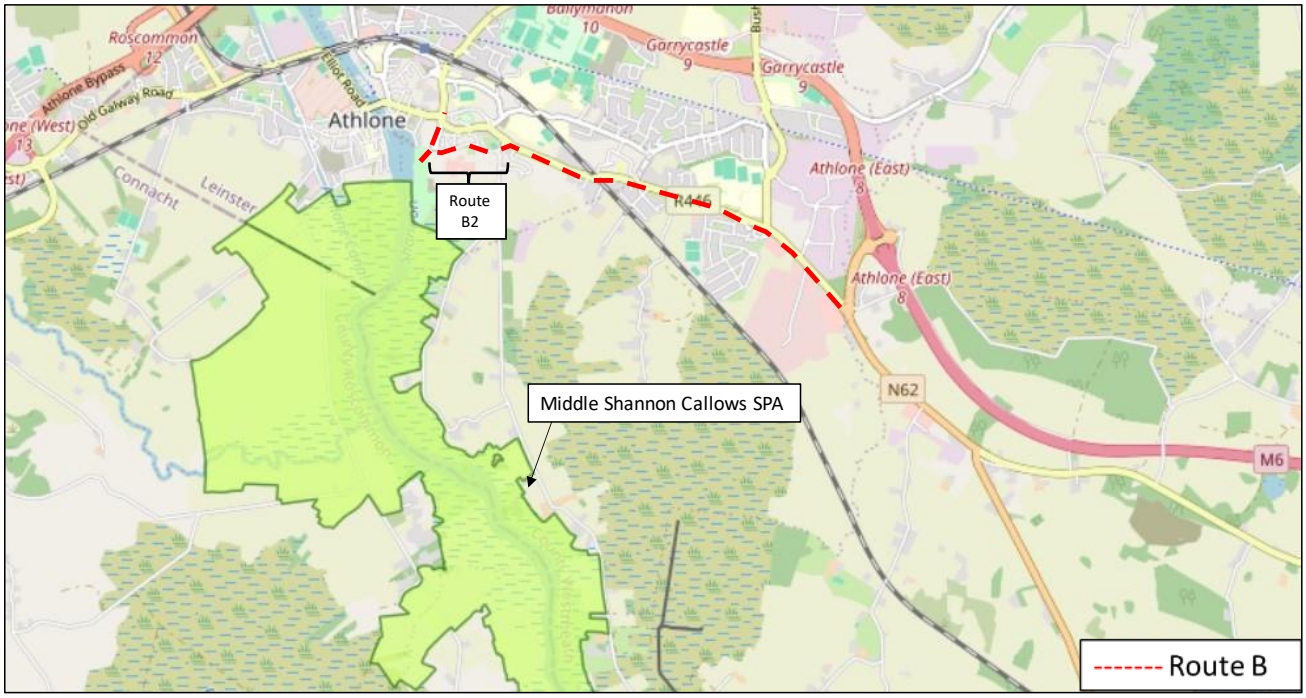

Figure 2-3 - SPAs within the zone of influence of the Proposed Scheme (EPA, 2025)

Hydrogeology

There are no GSI reported wells or springs within the town of Athlone, The closest well is a borehole (GSI ID: 2023NWW102) reported to 1km locational accuracy, located ca. 2.8km north east of the route.

There are no Ground Water Drinking Water Source Protection Areas within 5km of the route. Killeglan Public Water Supply Tobermore Spring is the closest drinking water protection area and is located ca. 8.5km west of Route B. There are no Group Water Schemes located within 10km of the route.

GSI (2025) have classified the groundwater vulnerability beneath Route B predominantly as 'High' with portions of 'Moderate' groundwater vulnerability reported also. Route B is within the Inny and Athlone Gravels Groundwater Bodies (GWB) which are reported by EPA (2025) 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.

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.
- Excavations will not be carried out during or following times of prolonged rainfall.

Geology

The geology underlining the proposed scheme comprises Waulsortian mudbank; Pale-grey massive limestone. There are no karst features within the project site, with the closest, a spring located ca. 3.8km northeast of the site (GSI ID: 2023NWK003) which is reported to within a 20m locational accuracy (GSI, 2025). There are no recorded landslide events in the vicinity of the site. Landslide susceptibility within the site and surrounds is Low and Low (inferred) (GSI, 2025).

There are no Geological Heritage Areas within the project site, with Loughandonning Mushroom Rock (Site Code: WH017), reported by GSI as '*an isolated, highly sculpted, limestone mushroom rock'*, situated within a pasture field located ca.0.25km south of Route B.

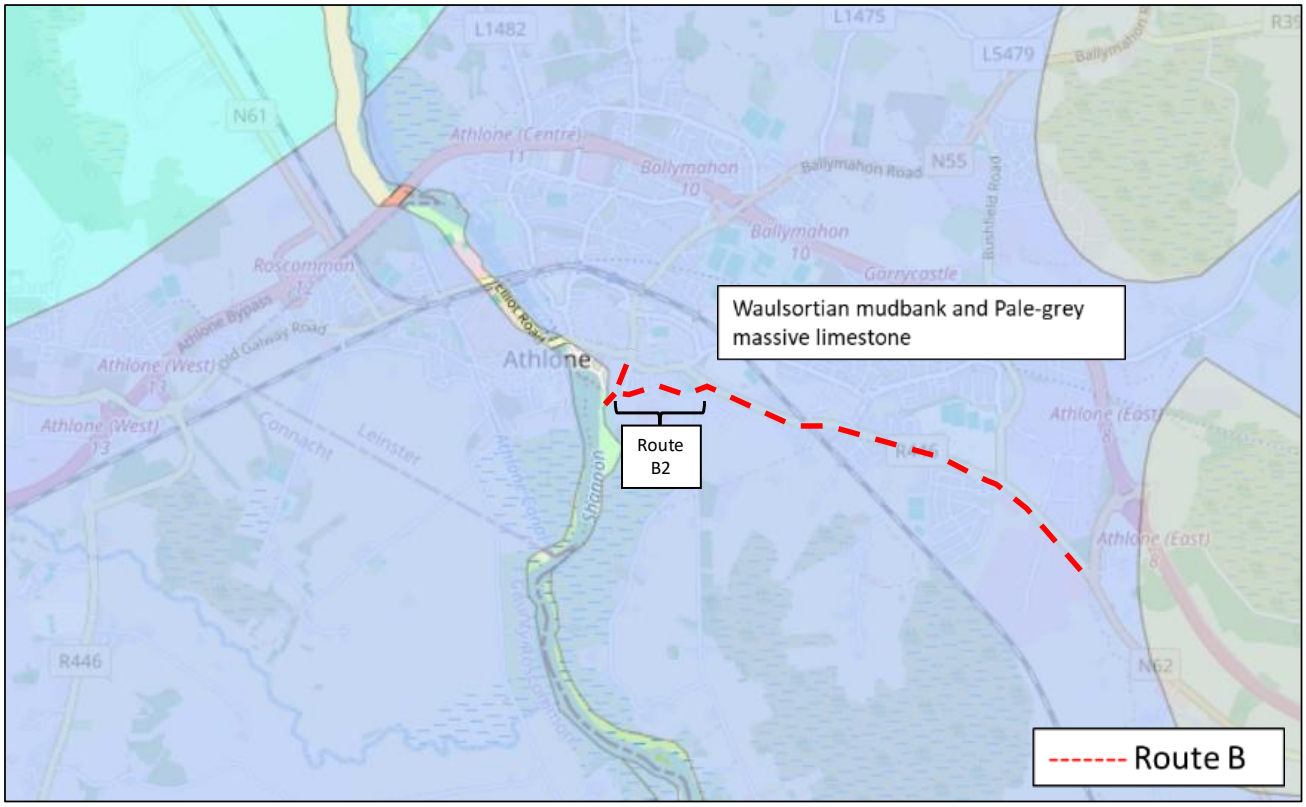

Figure 2-4 - Figure 4-4 - Bedrock Geology (GSI, 2025)

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 produced by the OPW.

OPW has reported no. recurrent flooding events within the vicinity of the proposed route.

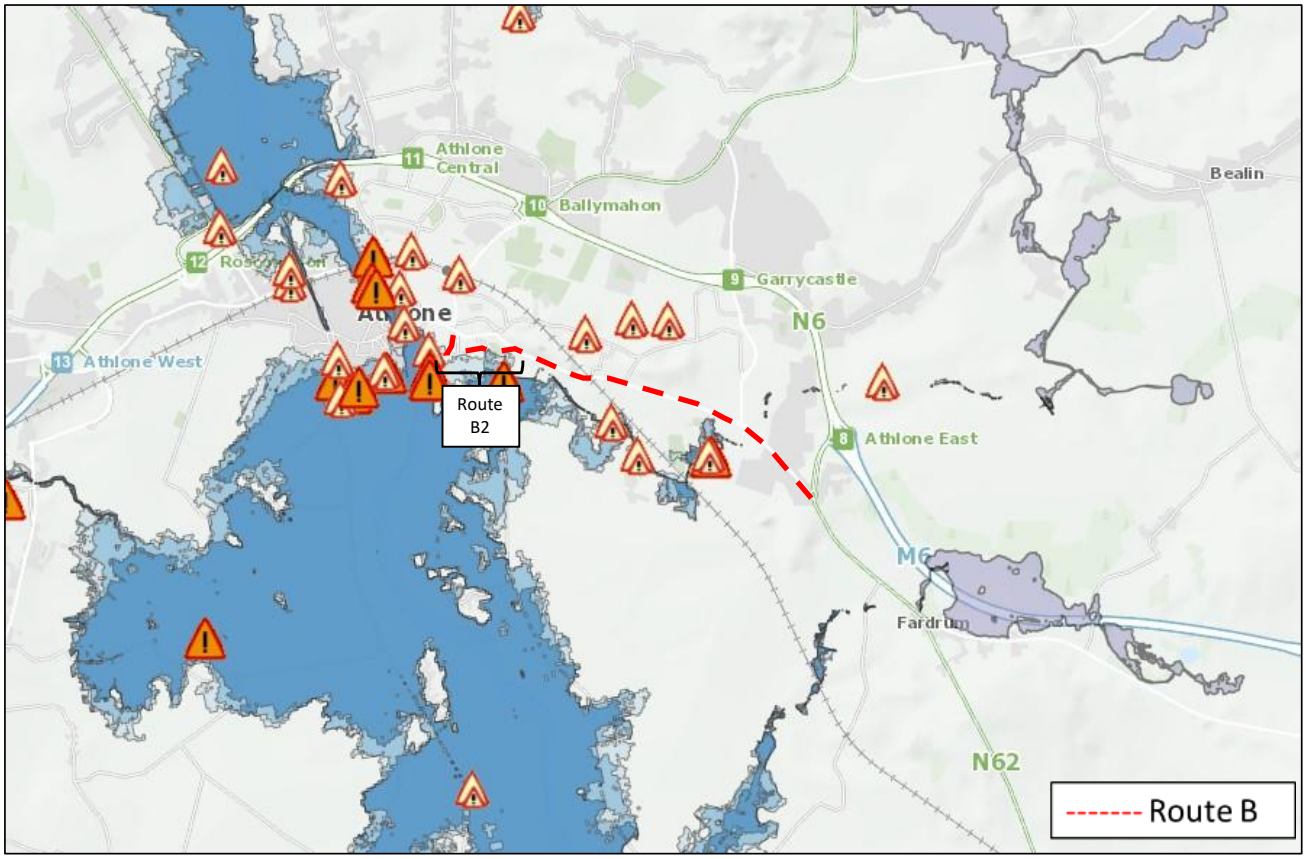

Figure 2-5 - Figure 4-5 - Historic Flood Events (OPW, 2025)

A Stage 1 Flood Risk Assessment was conducted by AtkinsRéalis (May 2024) which concluded that '*there is no historic risk of flooding at the site and given that the Proposed Development is located in Zone C and is appropriate development, consideration of the Justification Test is not required. The Proposed Development is not at risk of flooding from the 1% AEP event. The following recommendations should be considered;*

- *Suitable Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) are to be used within the proposed scheme to reduce surface water runoff from the route where feasible and designed in accordance with CIRIA report C753 'The SuDS Manual V-6'.*
- *Location of culverts along the proposed route if any, must be confirmed. Maintenance of the culverts must be carried out as and when necessary to prevent any blockage.'*

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

A search of the National Monuments Service (NMS, 2025) identified Athlone as a sensitive area in terms of archaeology and cultural heritage. The route borders a number of Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) features and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) features as shown in Figure 4-6 below. 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

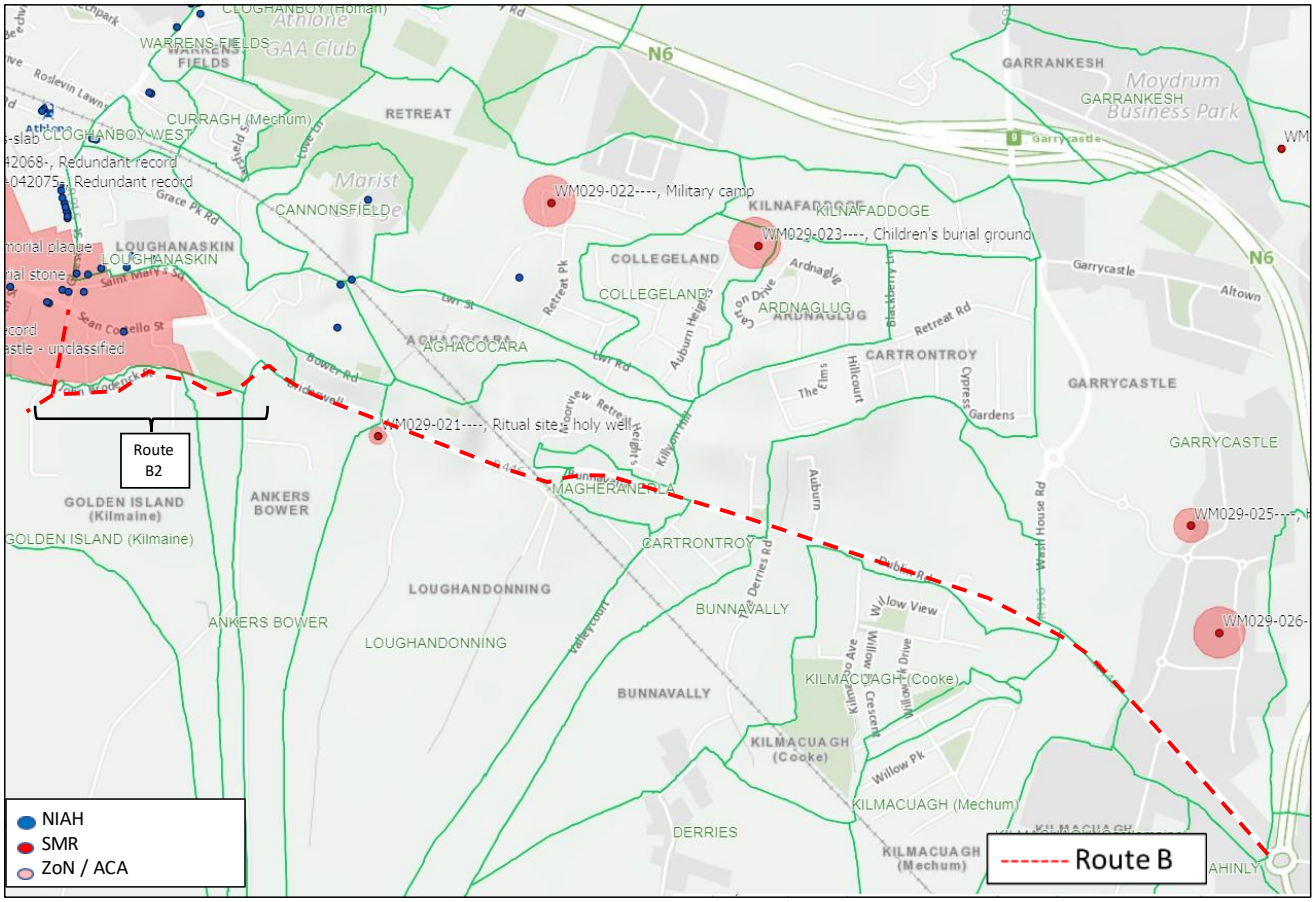

Figure 2-6 - SMRs, ZoNs and NIAHs within the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme (National Monuments Service, 2025)

3. Description of the Proposed Development

3.1 Nature and Extent of the Proposed Scheme

Route B consists of total 2.7km of the existing road network from Creggan Roundabout to Ankers Bower Roundabout (R446)

Route B has been broken down into 4 Segments and 3 Junctions proposal to provide for various link/junction's design types. These segments are as follows: -

Table 1-1 – Route B Corridor Preferred Options

Location	Proposal
Segment B3	Standard Two-way Cycle Track (traditional build, 11.9m cross section) 2.3m standard two-way cycle track on northern side of the road 1.8m footpaths on both sides of the road 6.0m carriageway
Segment B4	Standard Two-way Cycle Track (traditional build, 11.9m cross section) 2.3m standard two-way cycle track on northern side of the road 1.8m footpaths on both sides of the road 6.0m carriageway Standard Two-way Cycle Track (traditional build, 10.6m cross section near the constrained railway bridge location) 2.3m standard two-way cycle track on northern side of the road 1.8m footpaths on northern side with 0.5m rubbing strip on southern side 6.0m carriageway
Segment B5	Standard Two-way Cycle Track (traditional build, 11.9m cross section) 2.3m standard two-way cycle track on northern side of the road 1.8m footpaths on both sides of the road 6.0m carriageway
Segment B6	Standard One-way Cycle Track (traditional build, 13.0m cross section) 1.7m standard one-way cycle track on both sides of the road 1.8m footpaths on both sides of the road 6.0m carriageway
Junction B4	Existing Roundabout with Two-Way Cycle Track on Northern Side
Junction B5	Existing Roundabout with Two-Way Cycle Track on Northern Side
Junction B6	Protected Roundabout without Cycle Priority

3.2 Construction Methodology

The Construction period for the proposed scheme is anticipated to be 12 months and can be summarised as follows;

3.2.1 Cycle path Construction

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 diversion of utilities, 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 50mm 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 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 plantings 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 construction of the cycleway will also involve relocation and installation of footpaths and kerbs adjacent to the cycleway. Footpaths will be constructed similar to the cycleway; excavation of existing footpath with materials removed off site to a licenced waste facility, excavations along footpath alignment to depths of maximum 500mm, infill of footpath subbase materials (compacted stone) and the pouring of concrete footpaths in shuttered sections. A ca. 60mm high poured concrete kerb will also be installed along the footpath edge.

3.2.4 Drainage Alterations

Drainage works, which will run in tandem with the pavement construction phase, are considered to be minimal and restricted to areas where the scheme interfaces with the public road. The drainage works at these locations are limited to the relocation of existing road gullies with the larger existing road drainage infrastructure (i.e. carrier drains) not being altered or adjusted. During these works the main carrier drains will be isolated / blocked off from works activities / work zones to facilitate the relocation of drainage gullies.

Typically, drainage will be provided using new gullies (relocated to alongside the proposed kerb positions) connecting to the existing surface water drainage infrastructure / main carrier drain. The new footpaths and cycle tracks will generally slope towards the road in order to minimise the need for additional drainage collection measures specific for these facilities. Alternatively, and where the proposed scheme results in a marked increase in catchment area (due to an increased hard-standing area), sections of footway and/or cycle track will be constructed using either porous surfacing; or where appropriate, the cross-fall will fall towards an adjacent grass verge (thus not discharging into the surface water network).

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 will be no additional demolition works associated with this scheme.

3.2.6 Traffic Management

The construction of the cycleway 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 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.

3.2.8 Watercourse Crossings

The scheme crosses 1 no. unnamed watercourse which is a tributary of the River Shannon. The route will use the existing bridge to cross the watercourse and there scheme will not necessitate any interaction with this watercourse.

3.2.9 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. The final proposed site compound location will not be permitted within the Lough Ree SAC/SPA or the River Shannon Callows SAC / Middle Shannon Callows SPA nor within 25m of the River Shannon. 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.

3.2.10 Services

A Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) and utility survey, including slit trenches for verification, will be carried out during the detailed design stage to determine the location of services to the most accurate extent possible. Any service diversions or protections works required will also be designed at that phase.

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 4.2 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 EIA Screening Legislation and Guidance

The Project Types listed in Annex I and Annex II of the 1985 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 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);
- 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);
- the Environmental Impact Directive (85/337/EEC) and all subsequent relevant amendments; and,
- the 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.
- the Roads Act, 1993-2021 and the European Union (Roads Act 1993) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulation 2019 (S.I. No. 279 of 2019).

Figure 3-1 overleaf provides a summary of the main steps involved in the EIA screening process.

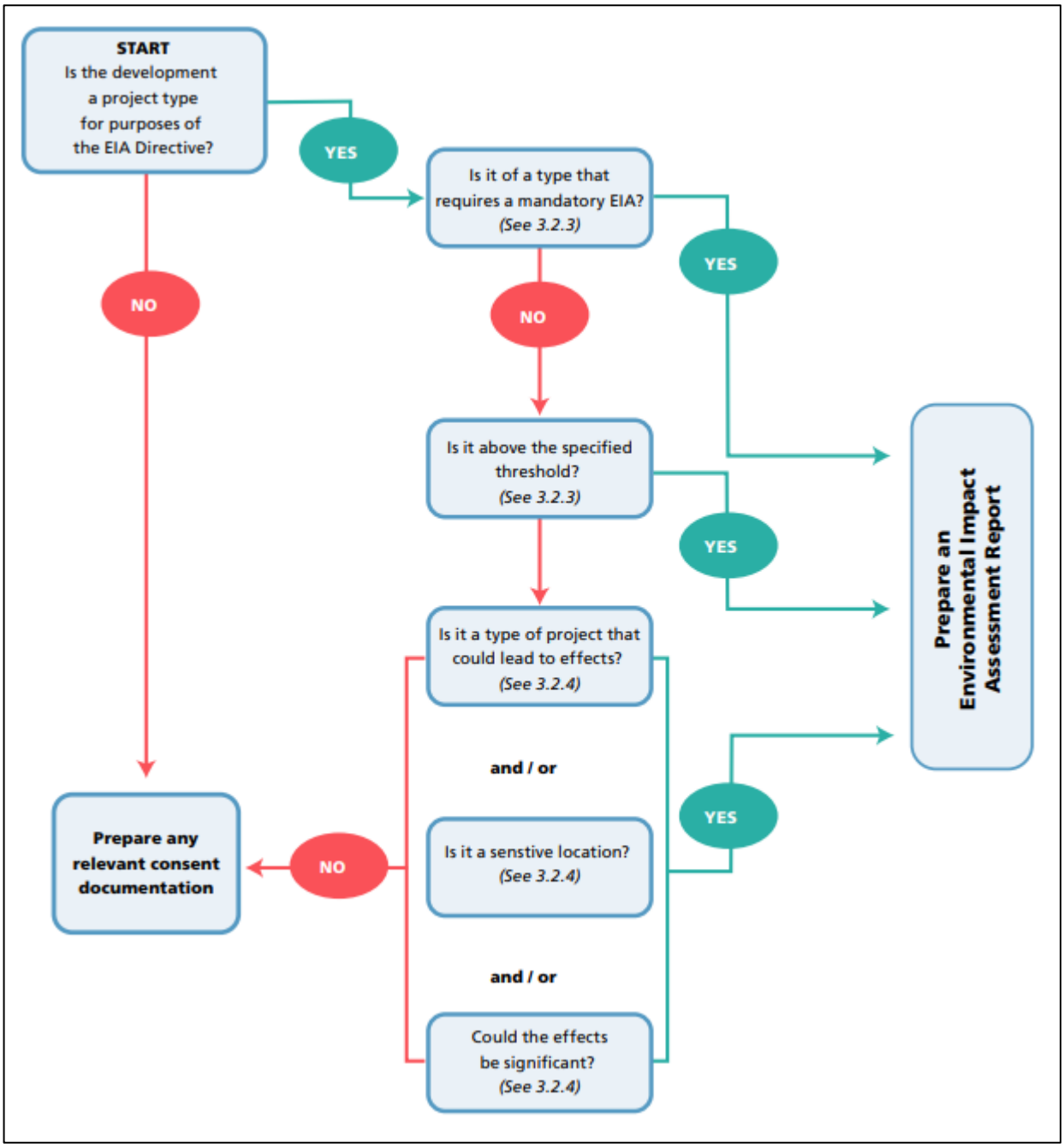

Figure 4-1 - EIA Screening Process (Source: 'Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports' (EPA, 2022)).

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

The 1985 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 proposed 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.

4.3.1 Part 1 Type Projects

The proposed 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.**

4.3.2 Part 2 Type Projects

The proposed 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 proposed scheme falls within the following categories which provide that an EIA must be completed – subject to specified thresholds being met or exceeded.

Table 3-2 Screening for Part 2 of Schedule 5

Class	Applicability	Screening
10(b) (iv)	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. 4.8 hectares (ha) in size 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 proposed 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.

4.4 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 1993-2023, 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 1993-2023.

Section 50 (1)(e) of the Roads Act (1993-2021) 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. 8.3ha 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 project	
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 06/03/2025). 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: ▫ 207074: Widening of the existing vehicular entrance. The application will also include alterations to the boundary wall, erection of gates, and all associated landscaping works.

- 21693: Demolish existing derelict roofless ruin of house and to construct new 2 storey house, together with associated shed building, siteworks, landscaping and associated works.
- 207021: The removal of a temporary office cabin and the provision of a new office building and ancillary site works. The office building will include eight offices, boardroom and support facilities. The existing entrance to the facility will not be affected by these works.
- 207070: Two single-storey extension areas, total floor area 371sqm, to existing school, internal changes to existing building to include; alterations to main entrance to south west side to provide single-storey 52sqm extension; provision of temporary construction entrance to Love Lane for the duration of works and all associated site development works
- 21646: Demolition of 2 No. single storey dwelling houses and 1 No. domestic garage. (B) Construction of a 4-storey block of 20 No. apartments to accommodate along with the construction of a semi basement car park with provision of 19 car parking spaces; Construction of a stand-alone 3 storey block of 6 No. 1 bedroom apartments and all ancillary site works and associated works.
- 22403: Reconstruction of part demolished existing B & B bungalow type dwelling with basement to match existing together with proposed rear extensions at ground and basement floor levels.
- 2129: Permission for change of use of existing snooker/pool hall facility into student accommodation, including the demolition of some external walls and changes to elevations to incorporate windows to serve units.
- 21107: Construction of an on-grade car park to accommodate 160 car spaces including site lighting, drainage and landscaping.
- 187213: Construction of a 3-storey extension to the existing Midlands Innovation and Research Centre, as part of the Athlone Institute of Technology Campus.
- 197210: Demolition of the existing building on site and provision of a new Advance Technology Building at the IDA Business & Technology Park, Garrycastle, Athlone, along with associated works.
- 21172: Demolition of existing metal clad open storage area and the construction of a single storey flat roof Craft Apprentice Facility Classroom extension.
- 2395: Construction of a 2-storey building containing 4 No. apartments with rear stores and courtyard together with associated site development works.
- 2360182: Demolition of an existing Industrial building and erect a single storey office building for use as a car rental hub, as well as associated works.
- 207079: Change of use of the old 1889 Convent Building (Our Lady's Bower) and later 1960s extension from convent and boarding school to library and residential apartments
- 187159: Development of 55no. residential units with public open space and associated site works

	▫ 22170: Tunnel sewer and associated shafts crossing under the River Shannon in Athlone Townland and Athlone and Bigmeadow Townland, Athlone Town Centre between The Quay Road on the western side of the river to The Strand Carpark south west of Strand St. on the eastern side of the river including works on The Quay Road and in the Strand Carpark. ▫ 2360143:The demolition of (a)an existing nightclub, (b) an external shed, and (c)the partial demolition of an existing public house at ground level and residential accommodation at first floor level. The construction of internal and external alterations to an existing public house; and the construction of a new student housing scheme to consist of 26 apartments providing 91 student units within 5 apartment blocks of 2 and 3 storeys with ancillary bin and bicycle stores, carparking, landscaping, new boundary treatment, new connection to existing public foul and water services, and all associated site development works ▫ Athlone Town Centre Regeneration and Enhancement, comprising the proposed pedestrianisation of Sean Costello Street; Kerb and junction realignment to widen existing footpath; Improvements to vehicular traffic management at key junctions; provisions of safe pedestrian crossing points for all town centre users. ▫ Athlone Main Drainage Scheme comprising the construction of new pumping stations in Golden Island and Coosan West, installing over 2.8 km of sewer network, decommissioning five existing pumping stations, decommission six existing stormwater overflows, constructing two new stormwater overflows designed to Uisce Éireann standards, connecting the new and existing sewer network together Based on the nature and scale of the proposed 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.
▪ Nature of any associated demolition works	
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 would be kept to a minimum; aggregates and soil would 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 would 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 project involves an anticipated excavation depth of 0.5m bgl to facilitate the foundation for the proposed footpaths / pavements and the ducting for the signalling associated with the scheme. 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.
▪ 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, 2025). The closest Air Quality Monitoring Station to the Proposed Development is Athlone Civic Centre & Library, Co. Westmeath (Station 70) located ca. 50m to the west. Management of dust will be 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 Proposed Development will not have a significant effect on air quality.
▪ Will the project cause:	
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 units 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 Proposed Development 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 '*there is no historic risk of flooding at the site and given that the Proposed Development is located in Zone C and is appropriate development, consideration of the Justification Test is not required. The Proposed Development is not at risk of flooding from the 1% AEP event.* 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 Development. 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	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 *'there is no historic risk of flooding at the site and given that the Proposed Development is located in Zone C and is*

/adverse climatic conditions, e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the project to present environmental problems?	*appropriate development, consideration of the Justification Test is not required. The Proposed Development is not at risk of flooding from the 1% AEP event.'*
▪ 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 location which could be affected by the project?	The proposed scheme is located within urban lands along the existing road network. 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?	Material will be imported for the works including in-fill and concrete. 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 environment, paying particular attention to wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths?	Route B crosses an unnamed Stream[2] which appears to be culverted beneath made ground to the south of the route, and the R446 along which the route is aligned. An AA Screening (AtkinsRéalis, 2025) prepared for the proposed scheme concluded that '*that with the absence of any mitigation measures the proposed Athlone Active Travel Schemes Bundle – Route B, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, will not result in likely significant effects on the River Shannon Callows SAC, Middle Shannon Callows SPA, Crosswood Bog SAC, Lough Ree SAC, Lough Ree SPA or any other Natura 2000 site. Thus, it is recommended that it is not necessary for the scheme to proceed to Appropriate Assessment.Should the scope, nature or extent of the proposed scheme change, a new assessment (AA Screening Report or AA Screening Addendum Report) would be required.'* *.'* 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.

[2] This watercourse passes beneath what is referred to as *Garrycastle Bridge* on 6-inch historic mapping, and has a structure nameplate of WH-R446-008.00, located opposite *Heavins Topline* store, Dublin Road.

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.
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, 2025) 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 5 no. European sites within the vicinity of the proposed scheme; River Shannon Callows SAC, Lough Ree SAC, Lough Ree SPA, Middle Shannon Callows SPA and Crosswood Bog SAC which are discussed further below. There are 3 no. pNHAs and 1 NHA within the vicinity of the proposed scheme; River Shannon Callows pNHA , Lough Ree pNHA, Crosswood Bog pNHA and Carrickynaghtan Bog NHA. Based on the nature, scale and location of the proposed development as detailed om Section 3, there is no potential for impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment. Based on the nature, scale and location of the proposed development as detailed om Section 3, there is no potential for impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment. The route borders a number of Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) features and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) features. A review of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (WCC) identifies that Route B is within the Athlone Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and Zone of Architectural Potential. The proposed scheme is located within the Shannon Lower Water Framework Directive (WFD) Catchment area. Route B crosses an unnamed Stream which appears to be culverted beneath made ground to the south of the route, and the R446 along which the route is aligned the EPA (2025); the EPA status of which is ‘Poor’ for the 2016-2021 monitoring period. This stream 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.
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 partially located within the Athlone Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and Zone of Architectural Potential and is bordered by numerous SMR and NIAH features. 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. 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. 4.8 hectares. The expected duration of the construction works is approximately 12 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 resident population 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 scheme. 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	

Outline the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	It is expected that the duration of construction works will be approximately 12 months. Normal working hours during the construction period are expected to be Monday to Friday 07:00 to 19:00, 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 no approved developments in the vicinity 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 3.4 of this screening report.

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 proposed 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 Development.

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

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