KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Report prepared in accordance with Part XI of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended

Development proposed by, on behalf of, or in partnership with Local Authority

Report for submission to the members, prepared in accordance with Part XI, Section 179, Sub-section (3)(a) and (3)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

Type of Development:	A trailhead, parking and amenity area
Part 8 Ref	P82026.01
Site Address	Barrow Blueway towpath on the northern bank of the Grand Canal Barrow Line at Canalside, Athy, Co Kildare. ITM Co-ordinate: X-667981, Y-693615
Development proposed by	Proposed works comprise of the provision of a trailhead facility, a new shared surface access road, parking facilities including seventeen car parking spaces (including two accessible bays), sixteen bicycle spaces (including two accessible spaces), three bicycle storage lockers, one pedestrian access link to the Barrow Blueway towpath south west of the site, ancillary greenway amenities including lighting, play area, benches, picnic tables, bins, and associated signage.
Display period	Public display period from 11th March 2025 to 28th April 2026
Submissions Observations Reports	8 submissions: 4 no. submission received from Prescribed Bodies 4 no. submissions received from members of the Public

1. Site Location & Context

The subject site is located adjacent to the newly constructed Barrow Blueway towpath on the northern bank of the Grand Canal Barrow Line at Canalside in Athy town, Co Kildare.

The proposed project will be an integral feature of the overall Barrow Blueway scheme and will add to what is already a successful attraction in Athy. The Trailhead, when completed, will provide parking for both cars and bicycles as well as seating areas for picnicking and play areas. It will also be a pilot project to showcase how nature based sustainable drainage solutions can be delivered and demonstrate the importance of surface water management.



Fig 1: *Site location map*

2. Description of Development

The proposed works comprise of the provision of a trailhead facility, a new shared surface access road, parking facilities including seventeen car parking spaces (including two accessible bays), sixteen bicycle spaces (including two accessible spaces), three bicycle storage lockers, one pedestrian access link to the Barrow Blueway towpath south west of the site, ancillary greenway amenities including lighting, play area, benches, picnic tables, bins, and associated signage.

Drainage will be designed and delivered in compliance with Nature Based Sustainable Urban Drainage methods including the construction of a tree pit,

rain garden, permeable pavement and a swale drain with full on-site infiltration of all surface water.

The development will also include the construction of traffic control measures such as kerb buildouts on the access road, height restriction barrier on the entrance, installation of traffic bollards and all associated site works. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) Report has been prepared in respect of the proposed works.



Fig 2: *Site Layout Plan*

3. Purpose of Scheme

"The proposed project will be an integral feature of the Barrow Blueway scheme overall and will add to what is already a successful attraction in the Athy area. The Trailhead, when completed, will provide parking for both cars and bicycles as well as seating areas for picnicking and play areas. The development will be a pilot project to showcase how various methods of nature based sustainable urban drainage solutions can be delivered and demonstrate the importance of surface water management. All works will be in accordance with the recently published "Sustainable Urban Drainage Design Guide published by Kildare County Council Environmental Department in 2024."

4. Planning History

No relevant planning history traced to the subject site. The following planning permission is noted on the adjoining site (north):

22985 Planning permission granted for the construction of a part 2 storey and part 3 storey detached building with a gross internal floor area of 2223sqm, consisting of older person's social housing with 34 dwellings (including 29 x one bed apartments and 5 x two bedroom apartments with terraces at ground level and projecting balconies at first and second floor levels) communal area of 49sq m, management office, meeting room, mobility scooter charging room and ancillary areas including meter room and refuse area, a central landscaped courtyard measuring 449sq m, containing secure bicycle storage for 12 bicycles. The site works will provide 16 no. car parking spaces, 1 vehicular entrance and 1 pedestrian entrance from Green Alley, 2 pedestrian entrances on eastern boundary, an ESB substation, an internal access road, allotment gardens to the south and all associated site works, (A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared and accompanies this planning application)

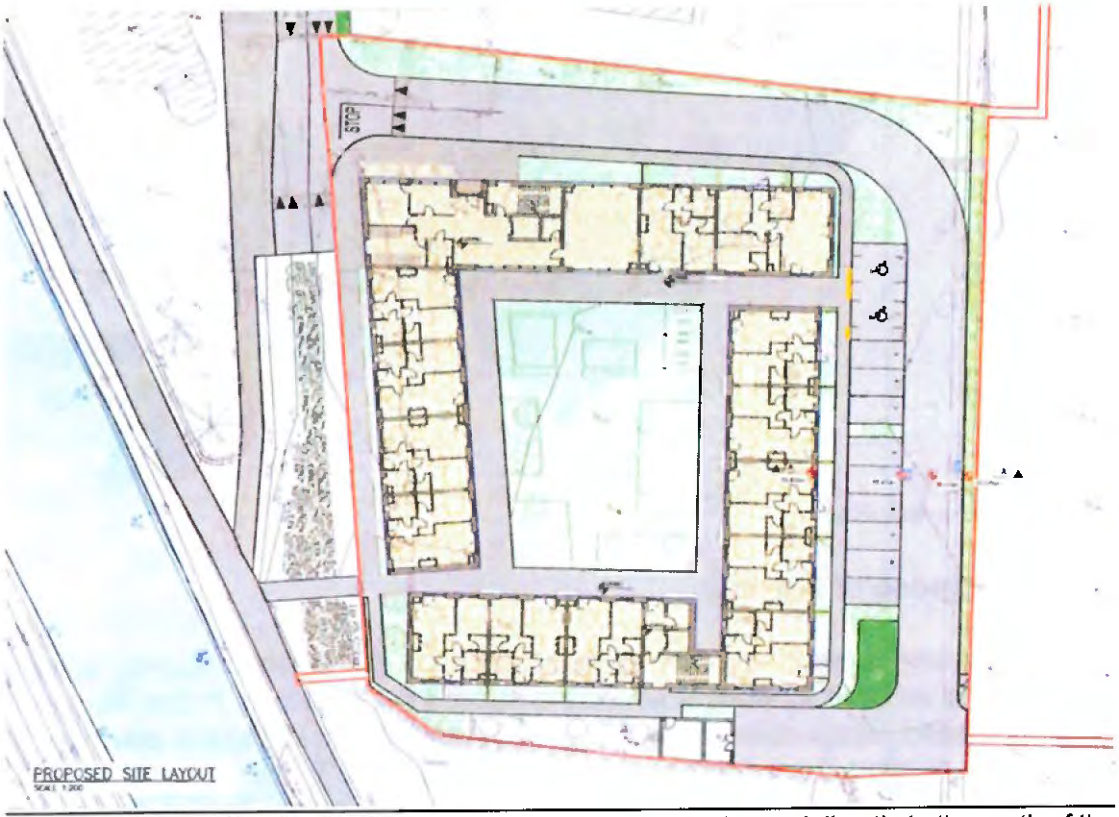


Fig. 3 Site Layout Plan for development permitted on the site located directly to the north of the subject site under Reg. Ref. 22985

5. Supporting Documents

The proposal is accompanied by the required plans and particulars, including:

- Part 8 Summary Sheet
- Application Form
- Newspaper Notice
- Site Notice

- Part 8 Distribution list
- AA screening
- EIA screening
- Athy Trailhead AASR
- Athy Trailhead EIA Screening
- Athy Trailhead EcIA
- Athy Trailhead Part VIII report
- Drainage Design Report
- Drainage Design Layout Plan
- Site location Plan
- Site Layout Plan
- Typical Sections Drawing

6. Internal Reports

Fire Service:	No objections raised
Flood Risk Management Team:	No objections raised
Nature & Heritage Team:	No objections raised

7. Referrals and Consultations

Submissions have been received from 4 no. members of the public and Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Health and Safety Authority, Uisce Éireann and An Taisce.
The referrals and consultation process are summarised and outlined in the 'Submissions Report' prepared by the Strategic Projects and Public Realm Section.

7. Policy Context

Relevent Government Policy

- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework (NPF).
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Regional Area.
- Flood Management Guidelines, 'The Planning System and Flood Risk Management, Guidelines for Planning Authorities November 2009.'
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (2018).

Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029

Chapter 2 – Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy
Chapter 5 – Sustainable Mobility and Transport

- Section 5.2.5 National Sustainable Mobility Policy (2022)
    - Policy TMP 1
    - Objectives TM O2, TM O5
- Section 5.4.1 Walking and Cycling
    - Policy TM P2
    - Objectives TM O20, TM O30

Chapter 10 – Community Infrastructure & Creative Places
- 10.8 Groups with Specific Design/Planning Needs

Chapter 11- Built & Cultural Heritage
Chapter 12- Biodiversity & Green Infrastructure
Chapter 13 – Landscape, Recreation & Amenity
Chapter 14 – Urban Design, Placemaking and Regeneration
Chapter 15 – Development Management Standards

Athy Local Area Plan 2021-2027

The subject site is zoned F: **Open Space and Amenity** in the Athy Local Area Plan, 2021 – 2027 where it is an objective:

"To protect and provide for open space, amenity and recreation provision."

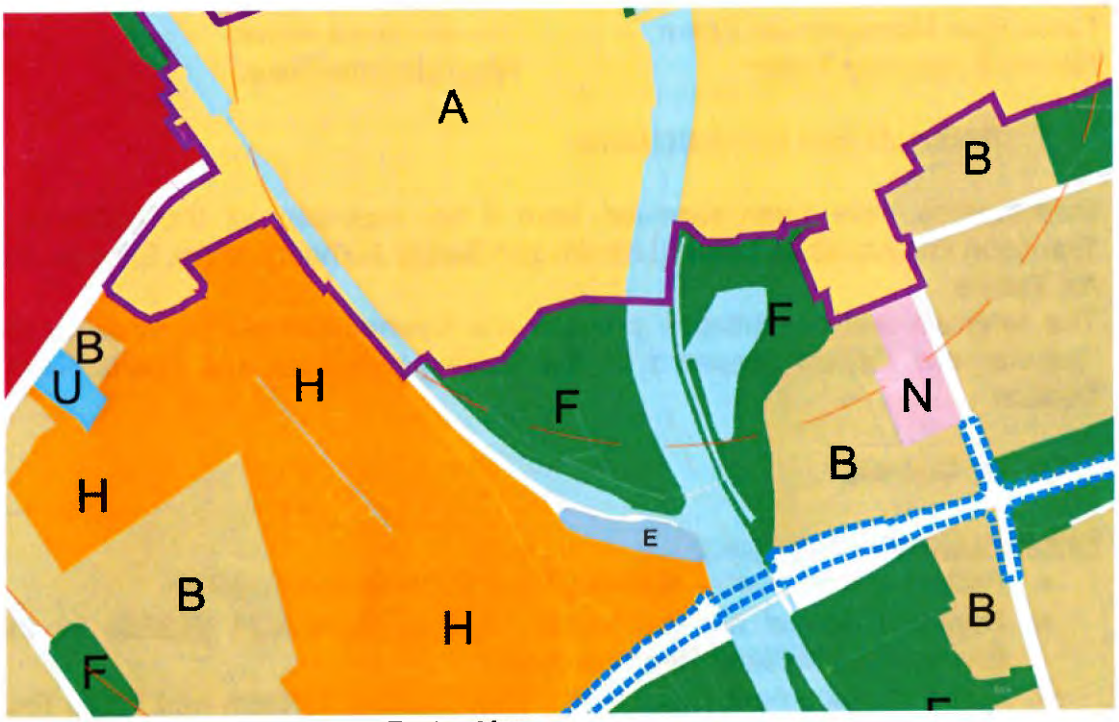


***Fig 5**: Extract of Athy Land Use Zoning Map*

Other Relevant Sections include (not exhaustive):

1. Athy LAP Vision Statement, which seeks to '...ensure that growth planned for the town ... occurs in a sustainable and sequential manner, ... linked by sustainable modes of transport including a robust network of pedestrian and cycle routes, providing a high level of connectivity...
2. Figure 3.2 Athy Development Strategy Map, the Barrow Blueway, which is under construction, will run through the subject site. The area is identified as Strategic Open Space as shown below.
3. Figure 4.4: Indicative Locations of Proposed Social Infrastructure details that New Outdoor Sports and New Equipped/Designated Play Spaces be considered for the subject area.

4. Figure 9.1: Green Infrastructure Survey - All Habitat Features in Athy illustrates that the subject site is in an area of improved agricultural grassland with the presence of treelines.
5. Figure 9.2: Map of Natural / Semi-Natural Green Space shows that the subject site is in an area of Natural Green Space.
6. Figure 3.1: Athy Character Areas shows that the subject site falls within character area number 3. Dominican Lands.
7. The Strategic Flood Risk Map indicates that the subject site is in a flood risk area.
8. The Green Infrastructure Map shows that there are Hedgerow and Tree lines within the subject site area.
9. The 1.2 Movement & Transport cycling measures Map shows that the subject site is in the area labelled CL11, with an objective to 'improve link along eastern side of Grand Canal, from N78, south to new pedestrian bridge (part of Barrow Blueway).
10. 2.7.5 Cycling Infrastructure
11. Figure 3.14 Indicative Design Framework for Site A – Dominican Lands: *'...The Dominican lands occupy a prominent location in the town centre which, notwithstanding environmental constraints, can accommodate a level of infill development which would contribute to improving the urban environment whilst also providing for an increased level of vitality and activities within this part of the historic core...Figure 3.14 also incorporates a proposed pedestrian/cycle link between the Blueway and the town centre...'*

8. Built / Natural Heritage

Built Heritage	There are no Protected Structures within the application site boundary and there are 109 no protected Structures within 500 meters of the site.
Archaeological Heritage	There are no recorded monuments within the application site and 14 proximate to the site.
Natural Heritage	The Grand Canal cNHA and the River Barrow and Nore SAC is located immediately proximate to the site.

9. Assessment

National, County and Local Area Plan policy supports Active Travel and the roll out of cycling and walking networks. The Athy Local Area Plan has a specific transport and movement objective CL11, to 'improve link along eastern side of Grand Canal, from N78, south to new pedestrian bridge (part of Barrow Blueway) at the location of the subject site. The following factors also support the proposal:

1. Proximity to the Barrow Blueway Towpath, Athy is currently the commencement point of the Barrow Blueway which continues north

through Laois and Kildare where it will then connect to the ongoing Grand Canal Greenway at Lowtown/Robertstown.

2. The SPPR Department, following completion of the Athy flood relieve scheme and subject to funding, will be actioning a masterplan of the Dominican lands which are bound to the east of the trailhead site. This will be progressed when the flood relief scheme is completed. The tailhead will be a positive addition to the area and will commence the 'uplift' of the area and the 'Blueway'.
3. Providing some parking as well as amenities to this area of Athy will allow Blueway users a safe off-street parking facility to commence their trip/visit to Athy.
4. The completion of the Cluid development to the north of the site in association with the proposed works in this application will greatly improve the access way from Green Alley to the Towpath, forming a clean street-like avenue to the trailhead.
5. Completion of the works on site in association with other internal departments, the proposed Landscape Architect and Arboriculturist will ensure the delivery of a special project which will demonstrate nature-based drainage solutions along with protection of existing Biodiversity as well as the introduction/encouragement of additional Biodiversity.

Planning Issues

Principle of Development and Zoning

The subject site is zoned F: Open Space and Amenity in the Athy Local Area Plan 2021 – 2027 (Athy LAP). It is considered that the principle is generally acceptable under this zoning, where tourism facilities, community buildings, park / playground are permitted in principle.

The rationale for this proposal is supported by policies and objectives outlined in the Athy LAP, specifically sections relating to cycling and walking and those relating to the Barrow Blueway. The Barrow Blueway is indicated on mapping in the LAP and its indicative line runs along the western boundary of the subject site before crossing the canal in a westward direction. It further links to the south and east, crossing the River Barrow thereby connecting to the eastern Athy lands.

Layout

The layout supports the circulation of pedestrians, cyclists and vehicular movement within the confined site. The trailhead site has a deficiency in passive surveillance and in the short-medium-term will rely on its significant use and the activity at the site. This should be ameliorated following the construction of housing development (construction not yet commenced) on the site located directly to the north of the subject site. The layout includes for the sustainable movement and collection of surface water.

Landscaping and Boundaries

It is unfortunate that portions of hedgerow / vegetation are proposed to be removed. A condition will be proposed to increase planting proposals at this

location in accordance Table 15.1 of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 – 2029 and to retain the stone wall (eastern boundary).

Environment and Biodiversity

Several reports were prepared to assess the impact of the proposed development on the environment and biodiversity. Their findings can be broadly summarised as followed:

1. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report
   The proposed development is a sub-threshold type project which is not likely to have a significant effect on the environment, either by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, and that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report is not required in this instance.

2. Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report
   There will be no likely significant negative impacts caused to any European sites as a result of the proposed works. A Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment was deemed not be required to inform the project appraisal either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, with respect to any Natura 2000 sites and their Conservation Objectives

3. Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA)
   'None of the elements of the proposed development area located within the boundaries of any Nationally or European designated sites…
   The Grand Canal pNHA is located c. 8m from the western boundary of the proposed development lands at its closest point The Grand Canal pNHA will not be subject to habitat loss due to the proposed development, given that all works will be undertaken outside the of pNHA and there is no hydrological connection between the pNHA and the development lands.' (Section 6.1 of the Assessment).

   Recommendations:
   - Retain stone walls and partial hedgerows.
   - Lighting cowled away from the canal and hedgerows

   Mitigation
   'Most of the environmental impacts identified relate to the construction phase which will be temporary in nature - these relate to loss of habitat and disturbance. These impacts would be as a result of impacts from vegetation removal and presence of staff/machinery on site. The operational phase will not cause significant negative effects with human disturbance being the only impact during operation'. (Section 7 of the Assessment). Mitigation includes, *inter alia*:
   - *Site supervision*
   - *Control of dust*
   - *Control of lighting / bat friendly options*
   - *Cutting of vegetation outside of breeding season / appointment of ECoW where vegetation clearance during the bird breeding season is unavoidable.*

Having regard to the above, a condition requiring all mitigation measures noted in the EcIA is recommended.

Architectural & Archaeological Heritage
The site contains no recorded monuments, protected structures, and is not located within an identified zone of architectural potential.

Civil Engineering – Surface Water Drainage, Foul Water Drainage, Water Supply System and Flood Risk Assessment

SuDS Drainage Strategy was prepared by McCloy Consulting. The drainage design is intended to demonstrate how water quantity and quality are dealt with as well as making provision for amenity and biodiversity where practicable. Proposed drainage strategy includes:

- Permeable surfacing (roads, seating and footpath)
- Infiltration to ground
- A swale constructed along the access road
- Two raingardens

The above is welcomed and is deemed to be compliant with current policy and is therefore acceptable.

Flood Risk Assessment
The development has been specifically designed to hold surface water on site and there will be no hydrological links to proximate water courses. The Flood Risk Management Section has stated that: *'The site is outside any area of known fluvial flood risk'.*

The above is welcomed and is deemed to be acceptable.

Transportation
The proposal includes traffic calming solutions, bicycle parking and vehicular manoeuvrability capacity, which are compliant with current policy. The guidelines outlined in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets document have been applied.

10. Conclusion
Having regard to:

- The provisions of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023– 2029
- The Athy Local Area Plan 2021-2027
- Kildare County Council internal departmental reports
- Prescribed Body report
- The EIAR Screening Report,
- The AA Screening Report,
- The EcIA
- Appendix 2 Submissions Report and the responses to the items/issues raised
- The location of the proposed development
- The nature, extent and design of the proposed development
- The recommendations set out below.

It is considered that the proposal would generally be in accordance with the provisions of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023 –2029 and the Athy Local Area Plan 2021 - 2027 and would therefore be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

11. Recommendation

It is recommended to the Cathaoirleach and Members of the Athy Municipal District that the proposed development be proceeded with, subject to the modifications set out below.

1. All mitigation and monitoring measures included in the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) shall be carried out. A suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works shall be appointed to oversee tree protection, habitat management, and compliance with biodiversity objectives during construction.

2. The historic stone wall along the eastern boundary shall be retained, repaired and protected during construction of the proposed project.

3. Existing trees and hedgerows on the site's boundaries, in particular mature broadleaf trees, shall be retained and incorporated into the site design, where practicable and feasible, in accordance with best-practice construction guidelines. A Tree Management Plan and arboricultural assessment shall be prepared prior to commencement, in compliance with BI O30.

4. A detailed landscaping and SuDS plans shall be prepared at detailed design stage (to be agreed with KCC Ecologist and Parks) to include native species planting, significantly increased pollinator-friendly areas, and green corridors to enhance ecological connectivity.

5. A detailed Lighting Plan shall be prepared to comply with Bat Conservation Ireland guidance and CIEEM best practice, and implemented to ensure use of low-intensity, warm-spectrum lighting, directional fittings to avoid light spill onto hedgerows, treelines, and roosting areas, motion sensors or timers where appropriate.

6. A minimum of 4 bat boxes shall be installed in suitable locations (e.g., mature trees or building elevations) designed suitable for Irish bat species and placed to avoid artificial light exposure.

7. Any subsequent minor modifications required to the scheme shall be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development.

Part 8 Reference P8 2026.01

Tracy McGibbon
Senior Executive Planner
12/06/2026

Jane O'Reilly
A/Senior Planner
15/06/2026

Sonya Kavanagh
Chief Executive
Kildare County Council

Appendix 1: AA Screening

	APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT AND CONCLUSION STATEMENT

(A) Project Details	
Part 8 ref	P8 2026.01
Applicant name	Trailhead, parking and amenity area
Development Location	Barrow Blueway towpath on the northern bank of the Grand Canal Barrow Line at Canalside, Athy, Co Kildare
Site size	
Application accompanied by an EIAR (Yes/NO)	No
Distance from Natura 2000 site in km	Within 500metres

Description of the project/proposed development
Proposed works comprise of the provision of a trailhead facility, a new shared surface access road, parking facilities including seventeen car parking spaces (including two accessible bays), sixteen bicycle spaces (including two accessible spaces), three bicycle storage lockers, one pedestrian access link to the Barrow Blueway towpath south west of the site, ancillary greenway amenities including lighting, play area, benches, picnic tables, bins, and associated signage

(B) Identification of Natura 2000 sites which may be impacted by the proposed development			
			Yes/No If answer is yes, identify list name of Natura 2000 site likely to be impacted.
1	**Impacts on sites designated for freshwater habitats or species.** Sites to consider: River Barrow and Nore, Rye Water/Carton Valley, Pollardstown Fen, Ballynafagh lake	*Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include freshwater habitats and/or species, or in the catchment (upstream or downstream) of same?*	NO
2	**Impacts on sites designated for wetland habitats - bogs, fens, marshes and heath.** Sites to consider: River Barrow and Nore, Rye Water/Carton Valley, Pollardstown Fen, Mouds Bog,	*Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include wetland habitats (bog, marsh, fen or heath), or within 1 km of same?*	NO

	Ballynafagh Bog, Red Bog, Ballynafagh Lake		
3	**Impacts on designated terrestrial habitats.** Sites to consider: River Barrow and Nore, Rye Water/Carton Valley, Pollardstown Fen, Ballynafagh Lake	*Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include woodlands, dunes or grasslands, or within 100m of same?*	NO
4	**Impacts on birds in SPAs** Sites to consider: Poulaphouca Reservoir	*Is the development within a Special Protection Area, or within 5 km of same?*	NO

Conclusion:
If the answer to all of the above is **No**, significant impacts can be ruled out for habitats and bird species.
No further assessment in relation to habitats or birds is required.
If the answer is **Yes** refer to the relevant sections of **C**.

(G) SCREENING CONCLUSION STATEMENT *Selected relevant category for project assessed by ticking box.*		
1	AA is not required because the project is directly connected with/necessary to the conservation management of the site	
2	No potential significant affects/AA is not required	X
3	Significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain. Seek a Natura Impact Statement Reject proposal. (Reject if potentially damaging/inappropriate)	
Justify why it falls into relevant category above (based on information in above tables)		
Having regard to the scale and nature of the proposed works, there being no hydrological links, it is not considered that there will be any impact on the nearest SAC.		
Name:	Tracy McGibbon	
Position	Senior Executive Planner	
Date:	11/06/2026	

APPENDIX 2 - SUBMISSIONS REPORT PREPARED BY SPPR

REPORT ON PART 8 SUBMISSIONS

BARROW BLUEWAY TRAILHEAD

P82026.01



FEHILY TIMONEY

CONSULTANTS IN ENGINEERING,
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & PLANNING

Report prepared in accordance with Part 8, Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

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BARROW BLUEWAY TRAILHEAD Ref No. P82026.01

1. PROCEDURE

In accordance with Part 8, Article 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, (as amended), notice of the proposed development was given by the placement of notices in the Kildare Nationalist, edition dated 10th March 2026.

Three site notices were erected on the main public thoroughfares adjacent to the Part 8 site area. These notices were maintained in place for the prescribed period.

Plans and particulars of the proposed development, Ref. No. P82026.01, were available for inspection during normal opening times at Kildare County Council, Aras Chill Dara, Devoy Park, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X77F from 9.00 am – 5.00 pm, Monday to Friday and at Athy Municipal District Office, Rathstewart, Athy, Co Kildare R14 Y163 from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday for a period of 6 weeks from Wednesday, 11 March 2026 to Tuesday, 28 April 2026 inclusive.

The plans and particulars of the proposed development were also available to view online, during the period noted above, on Kildare County Council's website at: https://kildarecoco.ie/AllServices/Planning/Part8Schemes/StrategicProjectsandPublicRealm/P8202601Part8-ProposedBarrowBluewayTrailhead/ and on Kildare County Council's Consultation Portal at: https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/consultation/part-8-proposed-barrow-blueway-trailhead

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development will be situated could be made to the Senior Executive Officer, Strategic Projects and Public Realm Team, Housing and Regeneration Department, Level 5, Kildare County Council, Aras Chill Dara, Devoy Park, Naas, Co. Kildare, W91 X77F or online at https://consult.kildarecoco.ie/en/consultation/part-8-proposed-barrow-blueway-trailhead, or by email to spprpart8@kildarecoco.ie no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 28 April 2026.

2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The proposed development consists of the construction of a new trailhead parking and amenity area adjacent to the newly constructed Barrow Blueway towpath on the northern bank of the Grand Canal Barrow Line at Canalside, Athy, Co Kildare. ITM Co-ordinate: X-667981, Y-693615.

The proposed works comprise of the provision of a trailhead facility, a new shared surface access road, parking facilities including seventeen car parking spaces (including two accessible bays), sixteen bicycle spaces (including two accessible spaces), three bicycle storage lockers, one pedestrian access link to the Barrow Blueway towpath south west of the site, ancillary greenway amenities including lighting, play area, benches, picnic tables, bins, and associated signage.

Drainage will be designed and delivered in compliance with Nature Based Sustainable Urban Drainage methods including the construction of a tree pit, rain garden, permeable pavement and a swale drain with full on-site infiltration of all surface water.

The development will also include the construction of traffic control measures such as kerb buildouts on the access road, height restriction barrier on the entrance, installation of traffic bollards and all associated site works. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) Report has been prepared in respect of the proposed works.

The proposed project will be an integral feature of the Barrow Blueway scheme overall and will add to what is already a successful attraction in Athy. As stated above the Trailhead when completed will provide parking for both cars and bicycles as well as seating areas for picnicking and play areas. It will also be a pilot project to showcase how nature based sustainable drainage solutions can be delivered and demonstrate the importance of surface water management.

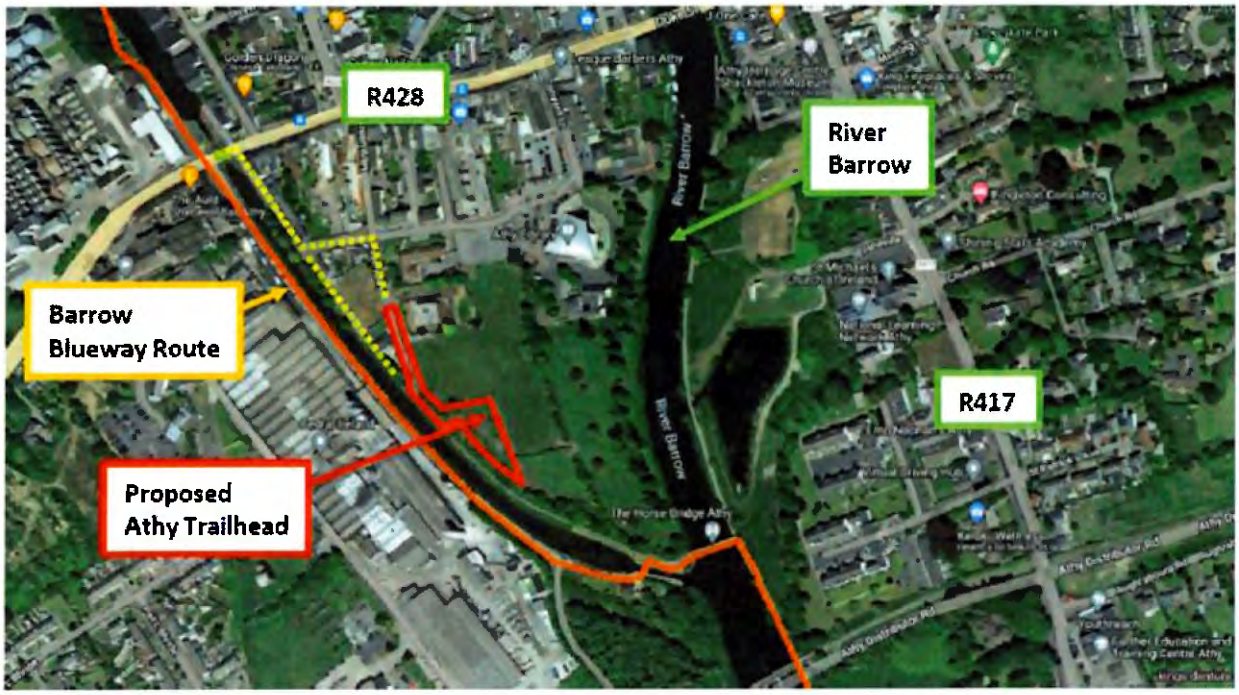


Image 1 - Site Location Map

3. PROPOSED SCHEME

3.1 Design Objectives

The proposed works comprise of the provision of a trailhead facility, a new shared surface access road, parking facilities including seventeen car parking spaces (including two accessible bays), sixteen bicycle spaces (including two accessible spaces), three bicycle storage lockers, one pedestrian access link to the Barrow Blueway towpath south west of the site, ancillary greenway amenities including lighting, play area, benches, picnic tables, bins, and associated signage.

The proposed project will be an integral feature of the Barrow Blueway scheme overall and will add to what is already a successful attraction in the Athy area. As stated above the Trailhead when completed will provide parking for both cars and bicycles as well as seating areas for picnicking and play areas. The development will be a pilot project to showcase how various methods of nature based sustainable urban drainage solutions can be delivered and demonstrate the importance of surface water management. All works will be in accordance with the recently published *"Sustainable Urban Drainage Design Guide published by Kildare County Council Environmental Department in 2024."*

Funding from Community Recognition fund was received to purchase the site.

3.2 Description of Proposed Works

In summary, the proposed development includes:

- A new trailhead parking and amenity area adjacent to the newly constructed Barrow Blueway towpath
- A new shared surface access road
- Car parking facilities
- Bicycle spaces and storage lockers.
- A pedestrian access link to the Barrow Blueway towpath southwest of the site
- Ancillary Amenities

3.3 Appropriate Assessment

A Screening Report in support of the Appropriate Assessment for the proposed development was prepared by Fehily Timoney Consultants in Engineering, Environmental Science and Planning in accordance with the requirements of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive. The AA process is an assessment of the potential for adverse or negative effects of a plan or Draft Project, in combination with other plans or Draft Projects, on the conservation objectives of a European Site. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs)

and provide for the protection and long-term survival of Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

In conclusion the proposed works will not cause significant effects on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 Site.

3.4 Environmental Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report was prepared in accordance with the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), to assess whether the proposed development of a trailhead and car park in Athy, Co. Kildare, as part of the Barrow Blueway project, is likely to give rise to significant effects on the environment and thereby require the preparation of a full Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

It has been assessed that the Proposed Development does not trigger the mandatory criteria for a full EIAR as set out within Schedule 5 Part 1 and Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations. A sub-threshold assessment of the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development in accordance with the criteria outlined within Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) was carried out to determine whether the proposed development is likely to have significant effects on the existing environment, requiring a full EIAR. The proposed development includes the provision of a new car park and trailhead infrastructure, bicycle parking, access to the Grand Canal towpath, and various public amenities. It incorporates nature-based drainage solutions (SuDS), native landscaping, and universal access features, and has been designed to integrate with the receiving suburban landscape.

The screening assessment confirms the following:

No significant effects are likely to arise in relation to the characteristics of the project, due to its modest scale (approx. 0.25 ha), limited land take, and absence of hazardous materials or high-intensity infrastructure.

No significant effects are likely to arise with respect to the location of the project, as the site is not within or adjacent to any Natura 2000 site, sensitive landscape, protected structure, or watercourse of concern. The nearest designated site (River Barrow and River Nore SAC) lies over 100m downstream and has no hydrological linkage with the site. The existing eastern boundary, characterised by a historic stone wall and dense vegetation, will be retained and protected. The project design incorporates a 1m grass margin buffer to safeguard the wall's structural integrity, and a pre-construction inspection will be conducted to facilitate any necessary repairs. Consequently, the development is considered compatible with its immediate physical and cultural environment.

No significant impacts are expected in terms of the types and characteristics of potential environmental impacts, which are primarily limited to temporary construction-phase nuisances (dust, noise, and vibration). These are of short duration and can be mitigated through standard construction best practices and a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

The project offers a positive contribution to sustainable mobility and local recreation infrastructure and is likely to result in long-term benefits for public health, access, and climate resilience.

In conclusion, it is the professional opinion of Fehily Timoney Consultants in Engineering that the proposed Athy Trailhead and Car Park development does not require sub-threshold EIAR, as it is not likely to result in significant environmental effects when considered against the criteria in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), and Annex III of Directive 2014/52/EU.

3.5 Ecological Impact Assessment

This assessment is an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) which examines the potential effects of the proposed Athy Trailhead development in Co. Kildare on biodiversity. This EcIA has been prepared in accordance with CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine Version 1.3 (Updated September 2024). An EcIA is not a statutory requirement, however, it is a requirement under Chapter 15 - Development Management Standards of the Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 that "*In order to comply with European and National legislation on nature conservation, and to ensure that areas of biodiversity value are adequately protected, an Ecological Impact Assessment will be required, as well as the provision of mitigation measures to address the proposals that have the potential to impact on environmentally sensitive sites".* This EcIA is provided to assist the Competent Authority with its decision-making in respect of the Proposed Development.

The purpose of this EcIA is to:

- Establish an understanding of the baseline ecological conditions at the Proposed Development site;
- Identify, quantify, and evaluate potential effects of development-related actions on habitats, species, and ecosystems;
- Identify flora and fauna (and/or their breeding and resting places) of ecological value, including those protected under the Wildlife Act (and under Flora Protection Order) or the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (as amended) which could be impacted by the Proposed Development;
- Evaluate the ecological significance of the receiving environment Botanical species were assessed in accordance with their occurrence on the Flora Protection Order (2022) and The Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants

(Wyse et al. 2016). Other species records were assessed according to the Irish Red Data Lists);
- Consider measures to mitigate the potential negative impact(s) of the Proposed Development on the ecology of the receiving environment.
- Clearly and concisely present the findings of the assessment.

A field study was conducted on the 07 February 2024, 07 and 08 July 2025, and 09 October 2025 by Fehily Timoney Ecologists. This included a habitat assessment of the habitats within and surrounding the site of the proposed project. The habitats were identified and classified according to 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland' (Fossitt, 2000). Habitats were mapped and species documented using the DAFOR scale.

The Report considered the effects of the development on international and national sites of importance including SAC's and SPA's as well as NHA's and pNHA's within the Zone of Influence of the proposed project. Table 5-4 of the EclA report evaluates habitats within the footprint of the works for the proposed project.

Potential impacts relating to the construction and operational phases were identified in section six of the EclA report with mitigation measures considered where required. Mitigations were outlined in section seven of the report and will be adhered to following commencement on site including provision for the appointment of an Ecological Clerk of Works for site supervision. Please refer to the Ecological Impact Assessment Report (January 2026) prepared by Fehily Timoney should you require any additional information.

Residual Impacts;

Following implementation of the mitigation measures detailed in the EclA report Section 6, residual negative impacts for all ecological receptors will be reduced below significant levels. There will be a slight permanent negative effect is likely from the loss of hedgerow during clearance works at the construction stage. During the operational phase, there will be a slight localised positive residual impact on local biodiversity is associated with the sunken rain garden and landscape planting.

4. PART 8 SUBMISSIONS AND RESPONSES

4.1 Part 8 Submissions / Observations

The closing date for submissions and observations was **5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 28 April 2026**.

A total of nine submissions were received (1 test submission was deleted), five internal department report was received.

Table 4.1 Submissions/Observation Record Summary

Submission No	***Submissions on behalf of: Individuals***	***Entity***
KCC-C454-BBT-1	Mohamad Roomy Shahull Hameed	Individual
KCC-C454-BBT-2	Test (since deleted)	N/A
KCC-C454-BBT-3	Transport Infrastructure Ireland	Prescribed Body
KCC-C454-BBT-4	Dominic Dunne	Individual
KCC-C454-BBT-5	Health and Safety Authority	Prescribed Body
KCC-C454-BBT-6	Veronica Anderson	Individual
KCC-C454-BBT-7	Lissa Oliver	Individual
KCC-C454-BBT-8	Uisce Éireann	Prescribed Body
KCC-C454-BBT-9	An Taisce	Prescribed Body

**Note reference KCC-C454-BBT-2 was a test submission by KCC to confirm that the portal was operational and was since deleted.

4.2 Table 4.2 Part 8 Internal Department Reports

Reference	**Department**
1	Parks Section
2	Transport Department
3	Environment Department
4	Fire Service Department
5	Hertitage and Nature Department

These submissions and internal reports are summarised in Appendix A of this report. The tables collate the comments raised and outline an appropriate response.

The submissions were largely supportive of the Barrow Blueway Trailhead facility; however, some queries have been raised in relation to the proposed works which will be addressed with the agreement of Internal Departments.

5. CONCLUSION / RECOMMENDATION

The proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area, and it has been demonstrated that it aligns with and supports national, regional and local planning policies and objectives. In accordance with the legislation, the proposed development may be carried out as recommended in this report and environmental reports prepared by the design team unless the Council, by resolution, decides to vary or modify the development otherwise than as recommended or decides not to proceed with the development.

The Strategic Projects and Public Realm department have responded to the submissions received within table 6.1 appended to this document with input received on environmental submissions being addressed by the design teams Environmental Department. We believe that the response from the design team clarifies the environmental items raised and further confirms the conclusions provided within the Environmental reports prepared as part of this application.

It is recommended that the development should proceed as per the associated drawings with adjustments as required to accommodate some of the suggestions contained in the Parks Department submission.

SIGNED: Pamela Pender DATE: 12th June 2026.

Pamela Pender,
Senior Executive Officer,
Strategic Projects & Public Realm

6. APPENDIX A – SUBMISSION AND INTERNAL DEPARTMENT REPORT RECORD

Table 6.1 - Submissions Record – Public Submissions

To be read in conjunction with Table 4.1

Submission Reference	Date Received	Submission Text	Responses/Comments
KCC-C454-BBT-1	13/03/2026	**RE: PROPOSED MATERIAL ALTERATIONS AND ENHANCEMENTS TO BARROW BLUEWAY TRAILHEAD** **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** I welcome the proposal for the Barrow Blueway Trailhead at Canalside, Athy and submit the following observations dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area While the core proposal provides essential infrastructure, I recommend **TWELVE** strategic enhancements to establish this facility as Ireland's first internationally-certified child-safe, inclusive, and sustainable trailhead positioned at the gateway to a 160km all-Ireland greenway network connecting EuroVelo 1 (Atlantic Coast Route) and EuroVelo 2 (Capitals Route) These recommendations draw on best practices from: • UK: Sustrans National Cycle Network, C2C Sea to Sea Route • Europe: EuroVelo Route Partnerships, EU Interreg programmes • Scandinavia: Copenhagen traffic gardens • USA: Seattle traffic gardens, Knightdale Police bike patrols The enhancements address critical gaps in child protection, disability inclusion, public health, community safety, climate resilience, and international tourism positioning ========== **SECTION 1: STRATEGIC CONTEXT** ========== **1.1 THE BARROW BLUEWAY NETWORK** The Athy Trailhead is located at the critical junction of two major routes: **BARROW BLUEWAY (Canal Section): 46km** • Route: Lowtown to Athy (Grand Canal Barrow Line) • Status: Under construction, completion Q1 2026 • Counties: Kildare (47km), Laois (16km) • Funding: €6.6 million Rural Regeneration and Development Fund • Infrastructure: 2.5m traffic-free surface, 9 lower jetties for paddlesports **BARROW WAY (River Section): 114km** • Route: Athy to St. Mullins (River Barrow towpath) • Status: Existing National Waymarked Way (walking) • Counties: Laois, Carlow, Kilkenny to New Ross/Waterford • Designation: Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	The content of the submission is noted. Proposals which are outside the scope of this project may be considered in the future. Note: EuroVelo1 traverses Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Donegal and Northern Ireland. It's focus is on the south and west coast line. The route is a considerable distance from the Barrow Blueway Trailhead in Athy. EuroVelo2 traverses Galway to Dublin via – Ballinsloe, Mullingar, Maynooth and Dublin. The route is a considerable distance from the Barrow Blueway Trailhead in Athy.

TOTAL NETWORK: 160km continuous corridor from Lowtown to St Mullins

1.2 EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The trailhead sits at the confluence of two European long-distance cycle routes

EUROVELO 1 (Atlantic Coast Route): 2,500km from Norway to Portugal
• Ireland section Rosslare to Galway to Donegal
• Connection Barrow Way links Athy to Rosslare ferries

EUROVELO 2 (Capitals Route): 231km Galway to Dublin
• Connection Royal Canal Greenway to Grand Canal Greenway to Barrow Blueway
• Athy position Midpoint hub between Dublin and proposed Galway extension

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE: Athy is the ONLY facility serving a 22km gap between Vicarstown and Carlow on this 160km international route

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SECTION 2: THE 12 ENHANCEMENTS

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ENHANCEMENT 1: KINDERGARTEN TRAFFIC GARDEN (Learn-to-Ride Zone)

Current Gap: Proposed "play area" lacks definition as traffic education facility

Recommendation: Convert to dedicated Traffic Garden following Copenhagen's Fælledparken model and Seattle Traffic Garden Handbook

Specification:
• Size Minimum 20m x 30m (600 sq m) fully fenced
• Features Mini roundabout, zebra crossings, stop signs, working solar traffic signals, "petrol station" play feature
• Equipment Free balance bike library (10-15 bikes helmets loan system)
• Surfacing Poured-in-place rubber (ASTM 1951 compliant)
• Age zones Under-5s (balance bikes) 5-8s (pedal bikes)
• Security 1.2m perimeter fence with gated entry, 360° CCTV coverage

International Precedent: Copenhagen Fælledparken - free bike rental, 40+ years operation, integrated with school curriculum

ENHANCEMENT 2: DEDICATED CYCLE PATH NETWORK

Current Gap: No defined safe routes to early learning facilities

Recommendation: Construct segregated 2.5m cycle paths connecting trailhead to

Route 1: Trailhead to Model Court (1.5km)
• Target Tír na nÓg Nursery & Montessori
• Features Physical kerb separation, animal-themed wayfinding every 100m

		Route 2: Trailhead to Flinters Estate (2.0km) • Target: Tiny Tots Pre-School • Features: Bollard protection, child-height signage **Route 3: Trailhead to Ardreigh (2.5km)** • Target: Ardreigh Montessori School • Features: Quiet route, acoustic buffering **Design Standards (UK Sustrans compliant):** • Width: 2.5m (exceeds UK 2.0m minimum) • Surface: Smooth asphalt, suitable for balance bikes • Crossings: Raised tables, coloured surfacing • Emergency: Call points every 500m with direct Garda connection **ENHANCEMENT 3: SOLAR-POWERED INFRASTRUCTURE** **Current Gap:** No renewable energy strategy **Recommendation:** 100% solar-powered trailhead following Fonroche NOWATT standards. **Tier 1: Solar Pole Lights (4-5m)** • Locations: Parking, access points, amenities • Specification: 50% dusk-to-dawn, 100% on motion, 180mph wind rating **Tier 2: Solar Bollard Lights (1.0-1.5m)** • Locations: Cycle paths, wayfinding • Specification: 360° downward distribution, motion-activated **Tier 3: Integrated Solar Features** • Traffic Gardan: Working solar traffic signals • Emergency: Solar-powered SOS call points **Benefits:** No trenching (protects SAC), 365-night reliability, 60-70% cost savings **ENHANCEMENT 4: CCTV SURVEILLANCE & SMART MONITORING** **Current Gap:** No security infrastructure **Recommendation:** Comprehensive CCTV with EU BITS project smart features **Coverage:** • Entrance: ANPR-capable dome camera • Parking: Wide-angle IR cameras • Kindergarten Traffic Garden: 360° PTZ with privacy masking • Picnic/seating: Weather-resistant bullet cameras • Cycle path junctions: Motion-activated **Smart Features:** • AI anomaly detection • Thermal imaging	

		• Real-time feed to Athy Garda Station • Encrypted remote parent access (GDPR-compliant) **ENHANCEMENT 5: GARDA (POLICE) BIKE PATROL UNIT** **Current Gap:** No security personnel **Recommendation:** Dedicated Garda Bike Patrol following Knightdale Police model **Structure:** • IPMBA Certification 40-hour training for designated officers • Daily Patrols School drop-off/pickup times weekends • Community Engagement Quarterly "Bike Rodeo" events with local schools • Real-time Integration GPS-tracked units, CCTV feed • Emergency Response <10 minute commitment **ENHANCEMENT 6: DRUG & ALCOHOL-FREE FAMILY SAFE ZONE** **Current Gap:** No substance-use policy **Recommendation:** Statutory "Family Safe Zone" following Massachusetts model **Components:** Drug-Free Zone 500-foot radius 24/7 enforcement Alcohol-Prohibited Area All amenities confiscation powers Behavioral Code No smoking/vaping no intoxication **Legislative Action:** • Council designation as "Child Protection Priority Zone" • Bylaw amendment for alcohol prohibition • Service Level Agreement with Garda Síochána **ENHANCEMENT 7: INCLUSIVE DESIGN FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES** **Current Gap:** No accessibility features **Recommendation:** Full Universal Design compliance **Features:** • Wheelchair-accessible equipment with ramped access • Sensory play panels (tactile auditory visual) • Poured-in-place rubber surfacing (ASTM 1951) • Secure fencing (prevents eloping) • Quiet retreat zones (acoustically buffered) • Visual/contrasting wayfinding • Changing Places Facility (hoist, adult changing bench) **Rationale:** 74% of parents want inclusive play legal compliance with Disability Act 2005 **ENHANCEMENT 8: PUBLIC TOILET FACILITIES**	

		Current Gap: No sanitation facilities **Recommendation:** Family-accessible public toilet within 50m of play area **Specification:** • Family Toilet: Baby changing, child-sized fixtures • Changing Places Facility: Hoist, adult changing bench • 24/7 Access: Vandal-resistant, motion-activated lighting • Location: Visible from play area **ENHANCEMENT 9: DRINKING WATER & BOTTLE REFILL STATIONS** **Current Gap:** No hydration infrastructure **Recommendation:** Public water stations following NYC "Cool It! NYC" model **Specification:** • Bottle refill stations with UV-C LED disinfection • Wheelchair-accessible height • Child and adult height drinking fountains • Pet fountain for dog walkers **ENHANCEMENT 10: SHADE STRUCTURES & WEATHER PROTECTION** **Current Gap:** No sun/rain protection **Recommendation:** Hurricane-rated fabric shade canopies. **Specification:** • 99% UV block, temperature reduction 10-15°C • Coverage over all play equipment and seating • Hurricane-rated (180mph wind) • Integrated solar panels where feasible **ENHANCEMENT 11: PUBLIC BICYCLE REPAIR STATION** **Current Gap:** No maintenance support **Recommendation:** Dero Fixit Plus or equivalent **Specification:** • Adjustable height repair stand • Integrated high-pressure pump • 8-tool set on security cables • QR code instructions (multilingual) **ENHANCEMENT 12: DOG-FREE ZONE & QUIET ZONE** **Current Gap:** No pet policy or sensory management **Dog-Free Zone:** • Statutory prohibition within fenced Kindergarten Traffic Garden	

• Exceptions: Registered assistance dogs only
• Bilingual signage, physical boundary markers

Quiet Zone:
• Designated sensory retreat area
• Shaded seating, acoustic buffering
• Sensory planting (lavender, herbs)

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SECTION 3: FUNDING STRATEGY & ECONOMIC IMPACT

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3.1 FUNDING SOURCES

Funding Source	Amount	Relevance
Fáilte Ireland Midlands Trails	€5.7M	Midlands Trails Network
EU Just Transition Fund	€100M+	Sustainable tourism
TII Greenway Programme	€67M/year	Active travel infrastructure
EuroVelo Route Partnerships	—	Marketing EV1/EV2 junction
Interreg Atlantic Area	€5M+	Cross-border tourism

3.2 ECONOMIC IMPACT

Scenario	Annual Impact
Conservative (5,000 users/year)	€250,000
Moderate (10,000 users/year)	€750,000
Optimistic (15,000+ users/year)	€1.5M+

3.3 TOURISM POSITIONING

Target Markets:
• European Cycle Tourists (Dutch, German, Belgian) "Ireland's flattest route"
• Family Staycation "Traffic-free, safe for children"

• Heritage Tourists "Canal + river heritage corridor"
• Active Retirees "Gentle cycling, accessible facilities"

Unique Selling Points:
• ONLY Irish route combining canal + river
• ONLY EuroVelo 1/2 junction in Ireland
• FLATTEST 160km continuous route
• MOST ACCESSIBLE (wheelchair-friendly)

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SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTATION

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Phase	Timeline	Activities
Phase 1: Core Safety	Months 1-6	Garda liaison, CCTV installation, solar lighting
Phase 2: Construction Integration	Months 6-12	Traffic garden, cycle paths, toilets, shade structures
Phase 3: Community Launch	Month 12+	EuroVelo certification, international marketing

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SECTION 5: POLICY ALIGNMENT

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• National Cycle Policy Framework
• Healthy Ireland Strategy
• UN Convention on Rights of the Child
• National Disability Inclusion Strategy
• Climate Action Plan
• Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029
• Project Ireland 2040
• EuroVelo Strategy 2030

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CONCLUSION

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		The Barrow Blueway Trailhead represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create Ireland's first internationally-certified child-safe, inclusive, and sustainable trailhead Positioned at the confluence of EuroVelo 1 and EuroVelo 2, this facility can serve as the gateway to a 160km all-Ireland greenway network attracting European cycle tourists and delivering significant economic impact I urge the Council to **INCORPORATE** all 12 enhancements **APPLY** for EuroVelo certification **LIAISE** with Fáilte Ireland **ESTABLISH** Garda bike patrol commitment **DESIGNATE** Child Protection Priority Zone **COMMIT** to 5-year maintenance plan ========== == **REFERENCES** ========== == **International Best Practice:** • Copenhagen Fælledparken Traffic Playground (Denmark) • Seattle Traffic Garden Handbook (USA) • Knightdale Police Department Bike Patrol (USA) • Sustrans National Cycle Network (UK) • Walk Wheel Cycle Trust (UK) • C2C Sea to Sea Cycle Route (UK) • EuroVelo Route Partnerships (EU) • Fonroche NOWATT Solar Lighting (France) • EU BITS Project Smart Surveillance (EU) • Massachusetts Drug-Free Zone Legislation (USA) • Seattle Children's PlayGarden (USA) • NYC Parks "Cool It' NYC" (USA) • Shade Systems CoolNet (USA) • Dero Fixit Public Bike Repair (USA) • UK Changing Places Campaign (UK) **Irish Policy:** • National Cycle Policy Framework • Healthy Ireland Strategy • National Disability Inclusion Strategy • Climate Action Plan 2023 • Kildare County Development Plan 2023-2029 • Project Ireland 2040	
KCC-C454-BBT-2		N/A Test only	Submitted by KCC as a test to confirm portal was operational.
KCC-C454-BBT-3	18/04/2026	Transport Infrastructure Ireland has no observations to make	Noted

KCC-C454-BBT-4	15/03/2026	I wish to propose that a Motorhome parking area be included in this plan. The town would greatly benefit from having an area for visitors to come and enjoy our great facilities. The financial spin off would be more than welcome. A lot of towns have such and more needed	Kildare County Council welcome the submission, however the provision of motor home parking in the area may be considered as part of a future project. Til publication DN-GEO-03047– Rural Cycleway Design (Offline and Greenways) provides requirements for greenway trailhead ancillary infrastructure. The provision of motorhome parking at trailheads is not included in this publication. Motorhome parking was considered when developing the design for this site. It was deemed unsuitable as it could not provide sufficient bays to achieve a viable and successful attraction.
KCC-C454-BBT-5	20/04/2026	The Health and Safety Authority does not have any submissions or observations to make on this proposed development.	Noted
KCC-C454-BBT-6	02/04/2026	I am surprised that digging up a green field and then covering it with asphalt does not require an Environmental Impact Assessment. What does the Biodiversity Officer have to say about it? Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 attached to submission	Please see below response from the consultant; *"The proposed project is not of a type that is prescribed in the EIA Directive, as transposed into Irish law via the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) ('the Regulations'). There is no statutory requirement for it to be the subject of an EIA. The competent authority must assess whether that the project would be likely to have significant effects on the environment having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the Regulations. To that end, an Environmental Impact Screening Assessment (EIA) screening report was prepared to inform the competent authority, which has concluded that proposed Athy Trailhead and Car Park development does not require sub-threshold EIAR, as it is not likely to result in significant environmental effects when considered against the criteria in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), and Annex III of Directive 2014/52/EU".*
KCC-C454-BBT-7	06/04/2026	The provision of a 17-space car park at the Trailhead of the Barrow Blueway in Athy is long overdue and the planning outlined appears to be well-thought and fit for purpose. However, once completed, there is no mention of parking charges Kildare County Council is embarrassingly one of the very few councils demanding parking fees from tourists, visitors and those hoping to use amenities. If a parking fee is demanded at the Barrow Blueway Trailhead, it will prevent access to this section of the Blueway to all other than locals living within walking distance. While you mention Accessible Parking spaces, you are not addressing accessibility for others who must drive in order to enjoy the Barrow Blueway. The current Pay & Display options in Athy limit motorists to a two-hour stay, which is insufficient to avail of the Barrow Blueway. The Trailhead Car Park, as elsewhere in the country, should not be subject to parking fees. At the very least, there should be no more than a nominal fee for an All-Day parking option, enabling those using the amenity to take their time.	We thank you for your comments relating to this project and look forward to providing a much-needed ancillary to the Barrow Blueway project.

KCC-C454-BBT-8	17/04/2026	Uisce Éireann (UÉ) has reviewed the plans and particulars submitted with the application and has the following observations, The applicant has not included a proposal for a new water / wastewater connection in this planning application Furthermore, it is anticipated that there will be no adverse impact on any assets or sources belonging to Uisce Éireann To ensure adequate provision and protection of water and wastewater facilities Uisce Éireann recommends the following, 1. Where the applicant seeks a connection to the public network, the applicant shall enter into a connection agreement with Uisce Éireann prior to the commencement of the development and adhere to the standards and conditions set out in that agreement 2 There shall be no build over of public infrastructure from these proposals Separation distances as per Uisce Éireann's Standards Codes & Practices shall be achieved where public infrastructure is in situ within and/or adjacent to site boundaries* 3 The development shall not impact public drinking water sources and/or abstraction point(s) and/or abstraction infrastructure** 4 The design and construction of the Water & Wastewater pipes and related infrastructure to be installed in this Development shall comply with the Uisce Éireann Connections and Developer Services Standard Details and Codes of Practice **Advisory Note(s):** *Uisce Éireann does not permit build over of its assets. Separation distances from public infrastructure, as per Uisce Éireann's Standards Codes and Practices must be achieved. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit a diversion enquiry to Uisce Éireann Diversions Section (diversions@water.ie) prior to construction, where a potential build over of public assets is in question and/or where the applicant's proposals cannot achieve separation distances from public infrastructure as per UÉ Standards & Codes of Practice ** Protection of drinking water source(s) from potentially adverse impacts is a priority for Uisce Éireann It is Uisce Éireanns current policy to maintain safe and secure drinking water supplies and ensure that development will not give rise to any deterioration in water quality Development proposals shall not impact public drinking water sources and/or abstraction point(s) It is also a requirement of the Water Framework Directive that waters used for the abstraction of drinking water are protected to avoid deterioration in quality Development proposals shall not impact public drinking water sources and/or abstraction point(s). Any person discharging trade effluent** to a sewer must have a Trade Effluent License issued pursuant to section 16 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act, 1977 (as amended) More information and an application form for a Trade Effluent License can be found at the following link https://www.water.ie/business/trade-effluent/about/ Trade effluent is defined in the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act, 1977 (as amended) Uisce Éireann does not permit surface waters into the public sewer network	Noted, there is currently no proposal to provide a drinking water supply or discharge wastewater from the site. Kildare County Council will complete the required feasibility and connection enquiry should the status of these requirements change.
KCC-C454-BBT-9	28/04/2026	It is noted that the Otter species is listed as a Qualifying Interest (QI) species for the nearby River Barrow and River Nore SAC (site code 002162) In Case C-461/17 Holohan v An Bord Pleanála (2018) the CJEU held that an Appropriate Assessment must examine the implications of a proposed project, not just for the species within a European site but also the significant ex situ implicetions for the habitat types and species found beyond the defined boundaries of a European site *"(3) The assessment provided for in Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 must also include adverse effects on species or habitats outside the protected areas, where such adverse effects may be detrimental to the conservation objectives of the protected areas (Question 3)"* [An Taisce emphasis] Therefore, the provided AA Screening Report and Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) must at least implicitly contain complete precise and definitive findings capable of excluding all reasonable scientific	Please see below response from the consultant; *"The report to inform Appropriate Assessment screening considers fully the potential for the proposed project to interfere with the key relationships that define the structure and function of the SAC for otter This has been informed by otter field survey of the proposed development lands and all habitats within the zone of influence of the project. As such precise and up to date scientific information has been used to inform the screening assessment.*

		doubt as to the effects of works under consideration on protected QI habitat types and species including but not limited to riparian area habitat for otter holts and migratory activity. The creation of hard infrastructure should not create habitat loss and displacement of the species which may hinder attainment of the SAC's conservation objective to restore favourable condition for the Otter species, especially when considered cumulatively with other projects in the region Another important consideration is the requirements of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive concerning preservation of ecological corridors including habitat areas and species locations *"Member States shall endeavour, where they consider it necessary, in their land-use planning and development policies and, in particular, with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, to encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild fauna and flora.* *Such features are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems for marking field boundaries) or their function as stepping stones (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species."* [An Taisce emphasis] This requires close consideration by the planning authority to ensure the absence of adverse impact upon the Otter and ecological connectivity by this single project, and cumulatively with other projects and the existing urban footprint. The Site Layout Plan appears to indicate that a degree of habitat fragmentation may occur in this respect. We also note that the proposal is adjacent to the Grand Canal pNHA (site code. 002104) in which the NPWS has previously noted the occurrence of hedgerow, tall herbs, calcareous grassland, reed fringe, open water, scrub and woodland along the canal's boundaries. It should be ensured that ecological surveys conducted have considered the presence of these habitats and that the proposed development would not lead to an undesirable loss of important riparian habitat and vegetation	*The Site Layout Plan will not result in habitat fragmentation for otter. The assessment found that the predominant otter activity occurs along the River Barrow (c. 115m away from the project) and that there are no otter breeding or resting places identified within 150m of the project, nor was there any evidence of otter using the project site itself as an ecological corridor.* *Additionally, the proposed project will have no interaction with the Grand Canal and will not lead to any loss of important riparian habitat and vegetation".*

Table 6.2 - Report Record – Kildare County Council Internal Departments

To be read in conjunction with Table 4.2

Department	Date Received	Comments	Response
Parks Department	25/04/2026	**1.0 Preamble/Introduction** **2.0 Assessment** The Parks Section has reviewed the documents and submitted drawings The proposed development raises a number of significant concerns, particularly given its location adjacent to the canal and within a designated Natural Heritage Area (NHA) A tree survey assessment has not been carried out, despite the proposal involving the removal of a substantial volume of existing vegetation Without this information, it is impossible to understand the ecological value of what is being lost or to assess the impact of the proposed works The bat survey was undertaken as part of the EcIA A standalone bat report would have been helpful given the site's proximity to the canal, which functions as an ecological corridor supporting protected species. The site's identification as a Natural Heritage Area in official mapping and in Chapter 12 of the County Development Plan further heightens the need for a robust ecological assessment No detailed landscape plan or planting proposals have been submitted beyond a basic site plan The proposed timber post-and-rail boundary fence is not an appropriate treatment for the site The play area proposed should be removed as its inappropriate and has no passive surveillance The seating proposed appears vulnerable to damage and requires reconsideration to ensure durability and suitability The proposed bike racking should be reviewed to be scale appropriate to the site **3.0 Recommendation** In relation to the above proposed development, this section has reviewed the application and recommends the following further information be requested **3.1 Trees and Vegetation.** 3 1 a Retention of the services of a qualified independent Arbonst as an Arboricultural consultant, for the entire period of construction activity The applicant shall inform the planning authority of that appointment in writing prior to commencement of development The Applicant is requested to provide the following 3 1b An Arboricultural Assessment report in accordence with BS 5837 2012,Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction of the trees and hedgerows located on and adjacent to the proposed	It is agreed to conduct an arboricultural survey of the site boundary during the final design stage. All ecological reports and screening were completed by a suitably qualified independent consultant and reviewed by Kildare County Council Planning and Heritage Department. Please see below response from the consultant; *"Bat surveys were conducted in accordance with best practice guidelines: Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). All information necessary to allow a robust assessment of the potential impacts on bats was presented in the EcIA report in accordance with CIEEM (2018, updated 2024) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.3. A standalone bat report is not required.* *The importance of the Grand Canal as a NHA and also as an ecological corridor is recognised and assessed in the EcIA, and it is recognised that the treelines/hedgerows and stone walls around the project site are of moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats, providing habitat continuity to the wider landscape including to the riparian habitat on the Grand Canal and River Barrow.* *The bat surveys carried out to inform the impact assessment followed Collins (2023) guidelines and included a bat habitat suitability assessment, ground level tree assessment (GLTA) and potential roost feature (PRF) inspection surveys. All trees likely to be affected by the project were assessed as having low roost suitability, and as per the Collins (2023) guidelines, no further survey was necessary. The night-time walkover bat activity surveys determined a low level of bat activity within the site. Notwithstanding, mitigation is prescribed to ensure no impacts on bats from construction or operational stage lighting.*

		development site prepared by an independent, qualified Arborist as an Arboricultural Consultant and shall include all of the following 1 Tree Survey Plan all trees and hedges on and adjacent to the subject site (i e. within falling distance thereof and where their rootzones maybe impacted by the development) shall be accurately plotted, tagged, and shown on a scaled drawing of a topographical survey of the site Drawings of both existing and proposed layouts with trees plotted need to be provided 2 Tree Survey Schedule, a summary of the surveyed trees and hedges, giving a breakdown of their tag nos , species, size, age, condition, and useful life expectancy 3 Arboricultural Impact Assessment, a thorough, detailed and realistic analysis and assessment of the likely impacts of the proposed development on the surveyed trees and hedges, along with a summary table of the tree population and quantification of impacts/losses etc (total number surveyed and total numbers/percentage to be retained and felled respectively) 4 Tree Constraints Plan a scaled site plan (1:500@A1) showing the impacts of all surveyed trees in relation to the site layout of the proposed development 5 Tree Protection Plan, a scaled site plan (1 500@A1) of the proposed development clearly showing and distinguishing (by colour coding) those trees and hedges to be retained and protected and those to be removed , showing alignments of Tree Protection Fencing and areas to be excluded from construction activities and compound(s), site office(s), plant, equipment and materials storage. Root Protection Areas (RPAs') of all trees and hedgerows to be clearly shown on this drawing. 6 Arboricultural Method Statement: clear and practically achievable measures to be used during the construction period for the profection and management of all trees and hedges that are to be retained, as shown in the Tree Protection Plan 7 Summary Table: Summary of all trees and hedgerow proposed for removal and retention to include numbers and percentages 8 Arborist's name, arboricultural qualifications and contact details. 9 Date that the survey was carried out (surveys > 12 months are unacceptable) **Specific recommendations relating to Arboricultural Works** • All recommendations pertaining to tree retention, tree protection and tree works as detailed in the Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan in the submitted tree report shall be implemented in order to ensure the protection of trees and hedgerows on the site • All tree felling, surgery and remedial works shall be completed prior to the completion of construction works on site. • All works on retained trees shall comply with proper arboricultural techniques conforming to *BS 3998: 2010 Tree Work – Recommendations* • The clearance of any vegetation including trees and scrub shall be carried out outside the bird-breeding season (1 March – 31 August inclusive) or as stipulated under the Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000. • The Arborist shall carry out a post-construction tree survey and assessment of the condition of the retained trees and hedgerows A Completion Certificate shall be signed off by the Arborist when all permitted development works are completed and in line with the recommendations of the tree reports and plans The certificate shall be submitted to the Parks Section for written agreement upon completion of construction works on site	*A detailed landscape plan and planting proposals will be prepared during the final design stage, which, as committed to in the EcIA, be in accordance with the pollinator friendly planting code, and as such will increase feeding resource for bats compared to the existing baseline habitat within the site".* Between the proposed parking area being provided, visibility from the towpath to the site and also the future housing project soon to commence to the north of the site, the surveillance will be greatly improved. The local Garda Station is less than two hundred meters from the site and with the support of Gardaí, patrols could be arranged. The Strategic Projects & Public Realm team will agree suitable equipment and seating with the parks department during the detailed design phase. The project proposal is designed to benefit the local residents and users of the Blueway and not solely intended for visitors using the Trailhead. 3.1a – The Strategic Projects & Public Realm team will allow for inclusion of a suitably qualified independent Arboricultural consultant to be appointed for periodic inspections during the construction phase. 3.1b - An Arboricultural Assessment report in accordance with BS:5837:2012 will be included in the final design requirements, to include for items 1-7 list in the submission received from the Parks section. An agreed hedgerow removal/protection and replacement plan with the parks department prior to commencement of works on site. 3.2a – A Landscape plan will be prepared as part of the final design and agreed with the parks department prior to commencement on site to comply with the request of items 1-3, 4-7 will be agreed with the Parks department during final design. The services of a landscape architect will be sought for the detailed design to rationalise the proposal submitted for Part VIII approval and certify its completion.

		3.2 Landscape Design. 3.2 a The applicant is required to submit a comprehensive Landscape Design Rational & Landscape Proposal prepared by a suitable and qualified Landscape Architect (or qualified Landscape Designer) The following shall be included, 1 A scaled Landscape Masterplan with cross- sections (where appropriate) showing the general layout and hard and soft landscape treatment of all external areas/spaces, boundaries structures and features This shall be generally provided at a maximum scale of 1/200 2 Details of Hard Landscape Design (where applicable) for boundaries (walls, fences screens) lighting seating, kerbing, edging, surfacing 3 Details of Soft Landscape Design detailed Planting Plan(s) and Planting Schedule(s) [species/varieties, quantities, sizes, rootball presentation, spacings] Proposed planting should have a wide variety of species/varieties, using both native planting and non-native planting. The overall objective of planting in areas is that they are easily manageable, visually appealing, enhances biodiversity and pollinator friendly A clearly outlined Landscape Plan which demonstrates that the proposed location of underground/over ground services will not impinge on the proposed trees or planting 4 The proposed play area shall be removed 5 The proposed bike racks shall be revised to a more scale appropriate amount of fencing reviewing who will store bikes here in the long and short term 6 Proposed seating shall be steel galvanised and powder coated, stone or concrete only 7 Timber post and rail fencing to be removed and replaced with a fence type, in keeping with section 15 6 6 of the county development plan, standard parks requirements in relation to boundary treatments A Completion Certificate may be required by the planning authority, signed off by the Landscape Architect when all landscape works are fully completed in line with the agreed landscape proposals detailing that they have been implemented in full	
Transport Department	09/06/2026	The proposed Part 8 scheme provides a trailhead facility incorporating a shared surface access road, car and cycle parking, and connectivity to the Barrow Blueway The layout promotes low vehicle speeds and prioritises pedestrian and cyclist movement, supported by traffic calming measures and a clear access arrangement From a Roads perspective, the development is appropriate in scale and function subject to detailed design agreement in relation to access geometry, parking layout, drainage (SuDS) and road safety measures The layout ties into the permitted Clúid Housing development (Reg Ref 22/985) via the Green Alley junction, maintaining continuity of vehicular, pedestrian and cycle movement This is acceptable from a Roads perspective The scheme has been identified as a pilot project to demonstrate the effective implementation of SuDS meesures **Recommendation** The Kildare County Council Transport Mobility & Open Spaces has examined the Part 8 documentation and has no **objection** to the proposed development subject to the following conditions	A Design consultant will be appointed to complete the works and include where feasible other aspects mentioned including EV Parking. A Road Safety Audit, boundary treatment and Public Lighting Lux Layout will be provided for agreement as with previous internal report response to the Parks Department.

		1 A Consulting Engineer shall be appointed to undertake the detailed design of the access, parking, public realm and associated infrastructure works, including surface water management, to prepare tender documentation, assist with procurement and supervise the works on site 2 The final design of the access arrangements shall have regard to the permitted Clúid Housing development (Reg. Ref. 22/986), including the Green Alley junction, to ensure a safe and consistent interface for all road users 3 Roads, footpaths, turning areas and corner radii at junctions should be designed and constructed in accordance with the DMURS standards within the development 4 The access road and shared surface areas shall be designed to prioritise pedestrian and cyclist movement, incorporating appropriate traffic calming measures, surface treatments and signage 5 All surface water generated within the site shall be managed on-site in accordance with SuDS principles. No surface water shall discharge onto the public road 6 A Stage 2 Road Safety Audit shall be carried out at detailed design stage and a Stage 3 Road Safety Audit shall be undertaken on completion of the works. Any recommendations shall be implemented unless otherwise agreed in writing 7 Car parking spaces, including accessible spaces, shall be provided in accordance with current standards, with standard spaces measuring 2.4m x 5.0m and accessible spaces provided in accordance with best practice 8 Secure and accessible bicycle parking shall be provided in accordance with the submitted drawings 9 Details of boundary treatment, including planting along the northern boundary, shall be submitted for agreement, ensuring no adverse impact on visibility or road safety 10 Provision for EV charging infrastructure shall be considered at detailed design stage 11 Public lighting shall be provided in accordance with Kildare County Council standards. Prior to commencement, detailed lighting proposals (including lux contour plans, column locations and ducting details) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority	
Environment Department	10/06/2026	The site is outside any area of known fluvial flood risk, so no comment.	Noted
Fire Services	10/06/2026	The fire service has no comment on this Part 8	Noted
Heritage and Nature Department	12/06/2026	**Introduction** A review of the proposed Part 8 development for the Barrow Blueway Trailhead, Canalside, Athy, Co. Kildare has been undertaken by the Heritage and Nature Unit. The assessment considered the Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA), the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). The purpose of this review is to ensure that the proposed development complies with relevant ecological and environmental legislation, including the EU Habitats Directive, and that potential impacts on biodiversity, protected species, and designated sites are appropriately addressed. The evaluation focuses on the adequacy	Noted, SPPR department will liaise with the Heritage and Nature Department following approval of this permission and will where practicable and within the scope of the project deliver on the items contained in the report. Public Lighting will be assessed in conjunction with the Traffic Department. Arboriculture will be assessed with the Parks Department.

		of the screening process for European Sites, the robustness of the ecological impact analysis, and the suitability of proposed mitigation measures to safeguard local biodiversity, particularly otters, bat species and existing habitat features. The Heritage and Nature Unit engaged with SPPR at pre part 8 stage particularly with Darragh Carey (KCC Project Manager) and Fehily Timoney Ecological Consultants for KCC. All surveys have been updated as requested in February 2026. Survey effort for otter, bay hydrological connectivity and habitats is considered to be robust and complete. No significant or deleterious ecological impacts are predicted, provided mitigation measure are carefully implemented. **1. Ecological Impact Assessment** Additional targeted surveys for **bats, otters,** and **hydrological connectivity** were completed by Fehily Timoney, who also committed to strengthening the otter impact screening in line with best-practice guidance. **(a) Otter Survey and Impact Screening** The additional otter survey confirmed: • Otters are present **primarily along the River Barrow** an use adjacent to the canal was not recorded. • These locations lie **outside the Zone of Influence (ZoI)** of the proposed development. • **No otter holts or couches** were identified within or near the project site. • Although otters may traverse the Grand Canal, the canal's exposed and modified riparian character makes it considerably less attractive for resting or breeding compared with the River Barrow. This strengthened assessment supports screening out significant impacts on otter in accordance with current ecological guidance. **(b) Hydrological Connectivity Assessment** An independent surveyor, along with KCC site inspection, confirmed: • **No direct hydrological connection** exists between the site and the River Barrow. • The adjoining drainage ditch is **hydrologically isolated** and does not pose a pathway for surface water impacts. This finding further supports the conclusion that the project will not affect aquatic ecological receptors. **(c) Bat Assessment – Updated Surveys and Habitat Review** Updated bat surveys were undertaken within the recognised validity timeframe (≤18 months), ensuring robustness of results. **Landscape Context** • The National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) bat landscape suitability mapping provides a **moderate suitability score (28.56)** within the 10 km grid square. • Bat species recorded in 1 km grid square S6893 include: ○ **Daubenton's Bat (Myotis daubentonii)** ○ **Leisler's Bat (Nyctalus leisleri)** ○ **Common Pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pipistrellus s.s.)** ○ **Soprano Pipistrelle (Pipistrellus pygmaeus)** Daubenton's bat is known to roost at **Horse Bridge in Athy**, located approx. 165 m southeast of the site, placing the development within its **Core Sustenance Zone (2 km)**. **Site Survey Findings** • Hedgerows, treelines, and stone walls provide **moderate-quality foraging and commuting habitat.** • No suitable **tree roost features** were identified. • The stone wall had **low roost potential,** and endoscope checks found **no evidence of bats.** • Night-time surveys conducted on 11th and 17th September 2025 found **low levels of bat activity,** summarised below:	An eCOW will be procured for the duration of the relative works.

Species	11 Sept 2025	17 Sept 2025
Common Pipistrelle	1	2
Soprano Pipistrelle	4	7
Leisler's Bat	0	0
Daubenton's Bat	1	—
Brown Long-eared Bat	0	0

Appropriate mitigation measures relating to lighting, timing of works, and habitat retention have been outlined to protect all bat species potentially using the area.

(d) Mammals (Non-Bat)

The mammal survey confirmed:

- No evidence of pine marten, despite suitable wall habitat.
- Camera trapping recorded only brown rat.
- Hedgehog and wood mouse may be present due to habitat characteristics, but no signs were confirmed on site.

(e) Habitats and Hedgerow Review

- **No Annex I habitats** occur within the proposed development lands.
- Hedgerows are the primary ecological receptor.
- Approx. **30 m of hedgerow** will be removed, with all remaining hedgerows retained.
- Given the limited loss and extensive hedgerow network in the surrounding landscape, this represents a **slight, permanent negative effect** of **Local (Higher) Value**, which can be effectively mitigated.

The site layout has been reviewed for opportunities to further enhance hedgerow protection, especially those identified in the Local Area Plan (LAP) and Architectural Conservation Area (ACA).

EcIA Conclusion

1. All surveys have now been updated and fall within recognised ecological validity periods.
2. Survey effort for otter, bat, hydrological connectivity, and habitats is robust and complete.
3. No significant or deleterious ecological impacts are predicted, provided mitigation measures are implemented.

2. Screening for Appropriate Assessment

Following review of the updated *Screening for Appropriate Assessment* for the Barrow Blueway Trailhead, the Heritage and Nature Unit is satisfied that the proposed development will not result in any deleterious impacts to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162). This conclusion is based on the findings summarised below:

(a) Habitat Loss, Degradation, or Fragmentation

The proposed development requires the removal of an area of improved grassland (GA1) / wet grassland (GS4) mosaic and approximately 30 m of hedgerow (WL1).

- While they can be deemed to be locally important, none of these habitats are qualifying features of the SAC. Removal of hedgerows should be kept to a minimum.
- They are not used by qualifying interest species.

		• Due to the *very limited scale of works*, any sediment runoff to the canal will be minimal, and no habitat reduction, degradation, or fragmentation of **qualifying habitats** will occur. **Conclusion:** No Likely Significant Effect on qualifying habitat integrity, either alone or in combination. **(b) Disturbance to Qualifying Interest Species** Qualifying species with theoretical pathways for effect include otter and white-clawed crayfish. The assessment confirms: • No evidence of otter holts, couches, or resting places within the Zone of Influence. • No disturbance to otter or crayfish is expected based on the **nature, scale, and location** of works. • No reduction in populations or density of any protected species will occur. **Conclusion:** No Likely Significant Effect from disturbance, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. **(c) Changes to Essential Ecological Functions** The project will not alter: • Water quality • Water quantity • Hydrological processes • Nutrient pathways or ecological conditions essential for qualifying habitats or species. The hydrological assessment confirms no direct hydrological connection between the site and the River Barrow. **Conclusion:** No Likely Significant Effect on ecological functions. **(d) Interference with Key Ecological Relationships** No pathways were identified for any effect on: • Processes supporting qualifying habitats • Predator–prey relationships • Riparian habitat functions supporting otter • Structure or function of the SAC The proposed works are small in scale and do not impact any features linked to the structure or function of the SAC. **Conclusion:** No Likely Significant Effect, either alone or in combination. **(e) Overall AA Screening Conclusion** The updated source–pathway–receptor assessment demonstrates that: • All potential pathways for effect have **negligible impact**. • No qualifying interests, special conservation interests, or conservation objectives of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC will be adversely affected. • No significant effects are predicted **during construction or operation**, whether alone or in combination with other relevant plans or projects. Based on the updated information, site inspections and clarified pathways for effect, it is concluded that the proposed Barrow Blueway Trailhead will not result in any deleterious impacts on the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. Therefore, Appropriate Assessment is not required. **3. Heritage/Historic features on site**	

		The Heritage and Nature Unit are satisfied that the existing stone wall along the eastern boundary will be retained, repaired and protected during the construction phase of the project with a minimum of 1m grass buffer on either side. **Recommendation:** As per agreement with Darragh Carey (KCC Project Manager) and Fehily Timoney Ecological Consultants for KCC the following mitigation measures should be undertaken should the Part 8 be agreed by KCC and proceed following approval: (i) **Implementation of all bat mitigation and Bat-Friendly Lighting Plan** ○ Prior to commencement, a detailed Lighting Plan shall be prepared in consultation with a qualified bat ecologist. ○ The plan must comply with Bat Conservation Ireland guidance and CIEEM best practice, ensuring: Use of low-intensity, warm-spectrum lighting, directional fittings to avoid light spill onto hedgerows, treelines, and roosting areas, motion sensors or timers where appropriate. (ii) **Bat Boxes and Roosting Features** ○ A minimum of **4 bat boxes** shall be installed in suitable locations (e.g., mature trees or building elevations) as advised by the bat ecologist. ○ Boxes must be of a design suitable for Irish bat species and placed to avoid artificial light exposure. **(iii) Hedgerows** Protection of retained hedgerows in accordance with best-practice construction guidelines. **(iv) Ecological Clerk of Works** Adherence to ecological supervision by a suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works during key phases of works. • Implementation of otter protection protocols. • Retention and enhancement of ecological connectivity on site. **(v) Tree Management and Arboricultural Assessment** ○ Submit a comprehensive Tree Management Plan and arboricultural assessment prior to commencement, in compliance with BI 030. ○ Retain mature broadleaf trees wherever feasible and incorporate them into the site design. **(vi) Biodiversity-Sensitive Landscaping and SuDS** ○ Prepare a detailed landscaping plan and SuDS at detailed design stage (to be agreed with KCC Ecologist and Parks) to include native species planting, significantly increased pollinator-friendly areas, and green corridors to enhance ecological connectivity. **(viii) Monitoring and Compliance** ○ Appoint an independent ecological clerk of works to oversee tree protection, habitat management, and compliance with biodiversity objectives during construction. **(ix) Stone wall** • The historic stone wall along the eastern boundary shall be retained, repaired and protected during construction of the proposed project.	