FEHILY TIMONEY

DESIGNING AND DELIVERING
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

ATHY TRAILHEAD

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report

Prepared for:

Kildare County Council

Kildare County Council
Comhairle Condae Chill Dara

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BARROW BLUEWAY - ATHY TRAILHEAD
EIA SCREENING REPORT

REVISION CONTROL TABLE, CLIENT, KEYWORDS AND ABSTRACT

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Abstract: Fehily Timoney and Company is pleased to submit this EIA Screening Report having been prepared in consideration for the proposed Barrow Blueway - Athy Trailhead development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Fehily Timoney and Company (FT) has been commissioned by Kildare County Council (KCC) to provide consultancy services for the development of a new trailhead and car park in Athy, Co. Kildare, as part of the Barrow Blueway project. This includes the preparation of all documentation required for a Part VIII planning application.

The site is being developed as a pilot for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), and a separate drainage consultant (McCloy Consulting) has been appointed by KCC to design the drainage scheme.

This report presents an Environmental Impact Screening Assessment (EIA) screening of the proposed development, based on current Irish planning legislation and the EPA (2022) Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR), and considers the likelihood of significant effects on the environment.

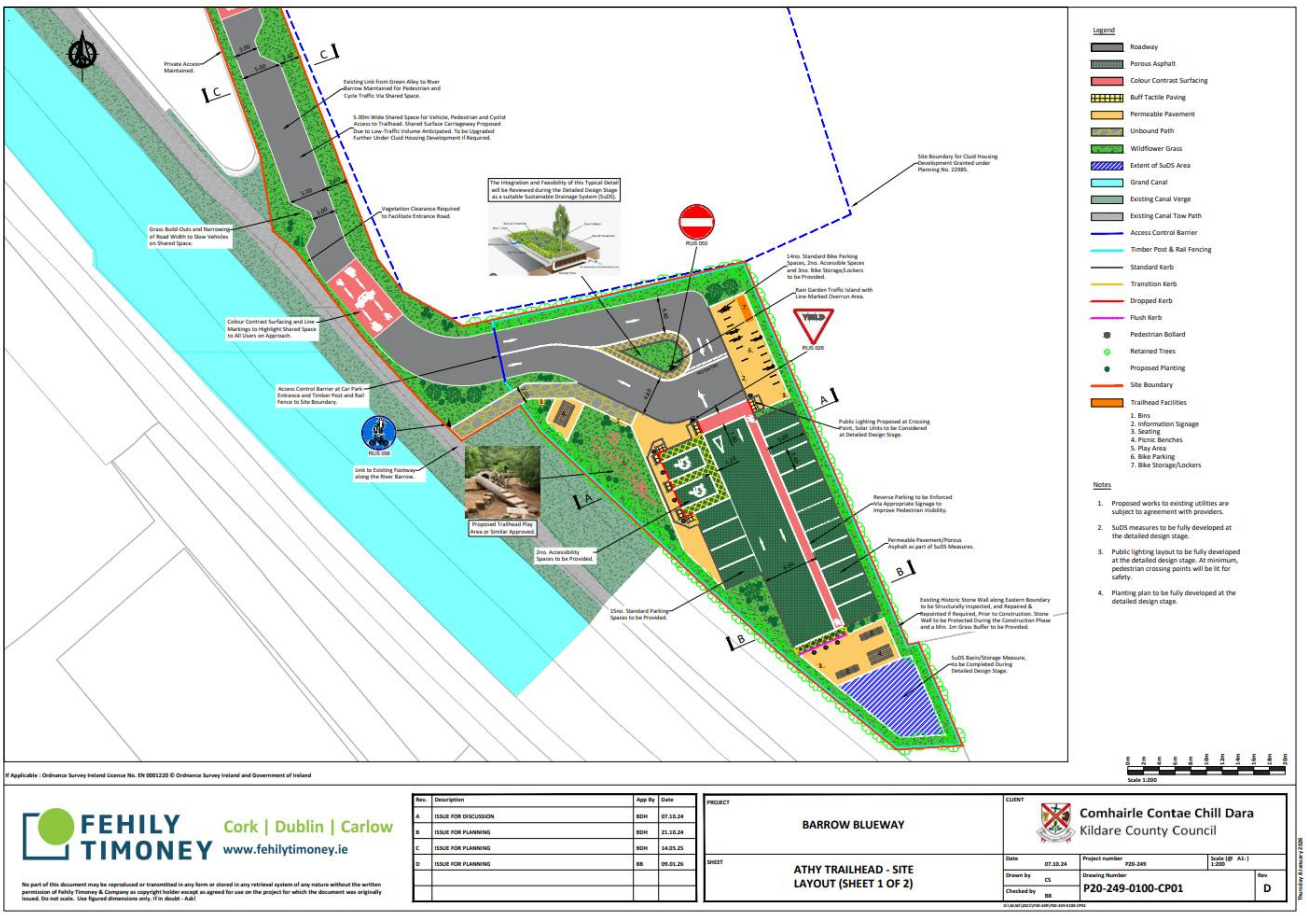

Figure 1: Site Layout

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Description of Scheme

The development aims to provide a high-quality, accessible trailhead and associated parking and amenity facilities on the Grand Canal Barrow Line, approx. 130m from the River Barrow. This will support increased recreational use of the Blueway while managing access, providing appropriate infrastructure, and protecting the environment. This site is in the Northern bank of the Grand Canal Barrow Line, Athy, Co. Kildare.

2.2 Existing Arrangements

The Athy Barrow Blueway Car Park development (hereafter referred to as 'the Site') is located in a suburban fringe setting on the northern bank of the Grand Canal Barrow Line, within the town of Athy, Co. Kildare. A desktop survey completed on 21st November 2024 identified the site as predominantly comprising rank grassland, with relatively flat topography throughout.

The Site is enclosed by mature hedgerows forming its boundaries. No watercourses are located within the Site itself; however, a dry drainage ditch is present along the southern boundary. The Grand Canal runs adjacent to the Site, with its confluence with the River Barrow located approximately 200m downstream to the south. This section of the River Barrow forms part of the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162), which is the only designated European site within a 9km radius.

Land use immediately surrounding the Site includes agricultural grassland to the north and east, while the wider environment comprises a mix of urban infrastructure including roads, industrial buildings, and residential housing typical of a town centre edge location.

2.3 Proposed Scheme

The proposed scheme aims to deliver a high-quality, accessible trailhead facility to support the Barrow Blueway in Athy, Co. Kildare. The development seeks to provide dedicated car and bicycle parking, improved access to the canal towpath, and a range of public amenities to encourage sustainable travel and enhance recreational use of the Blueway.

The scheme has been designed to prioritise accessibility, safe pedestrian movement, and integration with the surrounding landscape. A key component of the scheme is the inclusion of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), making it a pilot site for nature-based stormwater management in the region. The SuDS design has been developed by McCloy Consulting and incorporates various features to promote infiltration and water quality treatment within the site.

The proposed development will include the following elements:

- A total of 20nr. vehicle parking spaces, comprising of:
  a) 15nr. standard car parking spaces;
  b) 2nr. accessible parking spaces; and
- Bicycle parking, comprising of:
  a) 14nr. standard bicycle spaces;
  b) 2nr. accessible bicycle spaces; and

c) 3nr. bike storage lockers.

- Direct access to the existing canal towpath for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Ancillary public amenities, including:

a) Picnic tables, benches, play features, wayfinding signage, and bins.

- Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS) features, including:

a) Permeable paving / porous asphalt under all car and bicycle parking bays;

b) A 20m² rain garden; and

c) An 80m² drainage basin.

- Retention of boundary hedgerows to maintain ecological connectivity and screening.
- Vegetation clearance of approximately 2,211m² in areas not supporting high biodiversity value.
- Traffic bollards and buff tactile paving to enhance safety near accessible spaces.
- Permeable footways with precast kerbs, tactile paving, and colour contrast surfacing (total footway area approx. 265m²).
- A 5m-wide shared access road with over-the-edge drainage to:

a) A 0.5m-wide grass verge; and

b) A 2.1m-wide swale on the eastern side of the access road.

- Road markings, signage, and a timber post and rail boundary fence.
- Speed control measures to access road including localised narrowing and landscaped buildouts, as well as colour contrast surfacing and road markings on approaches;
- Planting of native species and landscaping to enhance amenity and biodiversity value.

The proposed development represents an opportunity to provide a gateway to the Barrow Blueway while incorporating climate-resilient drainage design and encouraging modal shift through improved facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

2.4 Compliance with Design Standards

The proposed Athy Trailhead and Car Park scheme has been designed in accordance with relevant national guidance and best practice for public realm and active travel infrastructure. Key standards referenced in the preliminary design include:

- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS, 2019)
- TII Publications on Sustainable Drainage (DN-GEO-03074)
- National Cycle Manual (NTA, 2011)
- Building for Everyone – A Universal Design Approach (NDA, 2012)

The car park layout has been adapted from a standardised Kildare County Council trailhead design, with modifications to suit the site topography, boundary constraints, and drainage strategy. This ensures consistency with previous trailhead facilities delivered by the Council, while also responding to local conditions and user needs.

Key design considerations include:

Accessibility: Two accessible car parking bays and two accessible bicycle parking spaces are included, with buff tactile paving and bollards provided to ensure safe navigation for all users.

Cycle Facilities: Bicycle parking has been designed to allow for secure and visible storage close to the main access points.

Surface Materials: Permeable pavement is proposed in car and bicycle parking areas to reduce surface water runoff, in line with SuDS principles. Concrete and tactile paving will be used selectively for footpaths and kerb edges, following universal design guidance.

Drainage: All drainage proposals align with sustainable drainage hierarchy principles, with no direct outfall to the River Barrow or Grand Canal.

Vehicular Access: The 5m-wide access road is designed as a shared surface to encourage low-speed vehicle movements and provide safe access for pedestrians and cyclists. Drainage is to be managed via over-the-edge discharge to grass verge and swale.

The proposed scheme aligns with Kildare County Council's objectives to improve access to green infrastructure and active travel routes while promoting climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable drainage practices.

3. EIA LEGISLATION

3.1 EIA Legislative Background

The first test is to examine whether the project is a type that is prescribed in the EIA Directive, as transposed into Irish law via the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) ('the Regulations'). If a project is not of a type that is included in the Regulations, then there is no statutory requirement for it to be the subject of an EIA.

The European Union Directive 2014/52/EU on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, requires member states to ensure that a competent authority carries out an assessment of the environmental impacts of certain types of projects, as listed in the Directive, prior to development consent being given for the project.

The EIA Directive requires that:

> *"in order to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and human health, screening procedures and EIA assessments should take account of the impact of the whole project in question, including where relevant, its subsurface and underground, during the construction, operational and, where relevant demolition phases."*

The requirements for the EIA of various types of development are transposed into Irish legislation under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), and the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended).

Schedule 5, Part 1 of the Planning Regulations includes a list of projects which are subject to EIA based on their type. Part 2 of the same schedule includes a list of projects which by reason of scale also fall into the EIA category, for example under Part 10 - Infrastructure Projects Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere fall into Part 2.

Schedule 5: Part 2 of the P&D Regulations includes a section relating to 'sub-threshold' (discretionary) EIA:

> *"Any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development, but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7."*

Any project listed in Schedule 5 Part 2 which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit (e.g. 10 hectares of a built-up area), should be subject to EIA where 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.

3.2 Establishing if the proposal is 'Sub-threshold development'

We review the Pedestrian Improvement Scheme against the infrastructure categories contained in Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001. The only category listed under Part 10 'Infrastructure' of relevance to this Pedestrian Improvement Scheme is set out below.

Category	Assessment
iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere. *(In this paragraph, "business district" means a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use.)*	The Car Park Development total site area is 0.25 ha, and does not fall within a business district. The scheme therefore falls below the 10 hectares threshold relating to built-up areas. It is concluded, if one were to screen the proposed development against the criteria set out in 'Planning and Development (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2023', the project is well below the threshold identified and therefore does not require mandatory EIA.

The Athy Trailhead and Car Park is significantly below the threshold for mandatory EIA, however this project falls into the EIAR category for sub-threshold assessment pursuant to Part 15 of the Regulations, and therefore we have carried out a Schedule 7 Assessment on the development.

3.3 Sub-threshold EIA Screening

The following criteria are laid down in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) for the purposes of assessing if a proposed development would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment. These criteria have been updated in accordance with Annex III of the 2014 Directive 2014/52/EU:

1. **Characteristics of the Proposed scheme**

   The characteristics of projects must be considered, with particular regard to:

   c) *the size and design of the whole project;*
   d) *cumulation with other existing and/or approved projects;*
   e) *the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity;*
   f) *the production of waste;*
   g) *pollution and nuisances;*
   h) *the risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned, including those caused by climate change, in accordance with scientific knowledge;*
   i) the risks to human health (for example due to water contamination or air pollution).

2. Location of the Proposed scheme

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development, with particular regard to:

a) *the existing and approved land use,*
b) *the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground,*
c) *the absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas:*

(i) *wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths;*
(ii) *coastal zones and the marine environment;*
(iii) *mountain and forest areas;*
(iv) *nature reserves and parks;*
(v) *areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and;*
(vi) *areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;*
(vii) *densely populated areas;*
(viii) *landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.*

3. Types and Characteristics of Potential Impacts

The likely significant effects on the environment of proposed development in relation to criteria set out under paragraphs 1 and 2, with regard to the impact of the project on the factors specified in paragraph (b)(i)(I) to (V) of the definition of 'environmental impact assessment report' in section171A of the Act, taking into account:

a) *the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example geographical area and size of the affected population likely to be affected);*
b) *the nature of the impact;*
c) *the transboundary nature of the impact;*
d) *the intensity and complexity of the impact;*
e) *the probability of the impact;*
f) *the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact;*
g) *the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and;*
h) *the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.*

3.4 EIA Screening Guidelines

In order to assist the Competent Authority in their assessment, this report has been structured so as to present the information required under Schedule 7A against the criteria set out in Schedule 7.

This assessment was undertaken having regard to the following guidance:

- Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (EIAR) (EPA, 2022);
- Guidance on EIA Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU), European Commission, 2017;
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development DEHLG (updated December 2020);
- Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide (NRA, 2008);
- Office of the Planning Regulator Practice Note (PN02) 'Environmental Impact Assessment Screening' (OPR, 2021); and
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland – Guidance for Planning Authorities, 2009 (revised 2010).

3.5 Receiving Environment

Section 171A of the Planning and Development Act outlines the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by a proposed scheme, which must be considered in EIA. These are:

- population and human health;
- biodiversity and land;
- soil and water;
- air and climate;
- material assets; and
- cultural heritage and landscape.

A summary of each of the above topics as they relate to the receiving environment is provided below.

3.5.1 Population and Human Health

The proposed car park development will be located within the urban fabric of the study area to the southwest of Athy Town Centre, which is dominated by residential housing, a number of commercial premises, and several pockets of open space areas.

3.5.2 Biodiversity and Land

The proposed development comprises the construction of a new trailhead and car park to support the Barrow Blueway in Athy, Co. Kildare. The Site is not located within, or immediately adjacent to, any lands designated at a national or European level for the protection of habitats or species. The nearest designated site is the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162), located approximately 200m downstream of the Grand Canal, beyond the Site boundary. The Grand Canal pNHA (Site Code: 002104), is also located adjacent to the subject site. This is located to the west of the site boundary.

The Site itself comprises rank grassland with low ecological value and is bounded by mature hedgerows. These boundary hedgerows are to be retained where possible in order to preserve local biodiversity and maintain ecological corridors. The remainder of the site will be subject to vegetation clearance, covering an area of approximately 2,465m², to facilitate the proposed trailhead infrastructure and associated amenities.

The surrounding area includes a mix of agricultural grasslands to the north and east, with suburban and town-edge development characterising the wider environment. Residential housing and roads dominate the setting to the south and west. While the adjacent Grand Canal corridor is of higher ecological interest, no works are proposed within the canal or its bank, and the proposed development will maintain a physical buffer from the water's edge.

No mature trees are present within the Site, and no habitats of significant conservation value will be directly impacted. The overall ecological value of the site and immediate surroundings is considered to be low, due to its modified nature, absence of sensitive habitats, and context within a semi-urban fringe.

The development incorporates measures to support biodiversity, including the retention of hedgerows, native planting, and integration of SuDS elements such as rain gardens and swales, which will provide additional habitat features within the finished trailhead.

3.5.3 Soil and Water

The Site is underlain by relatively flat ground and comprises primarily rank grassland with no evidence of significant soil erosion or instability. There are no recorded geological features of conservation interest within the site boundary, and the site is not located within any geologically designated area. Given the nature and scale of the proposed works, there is no anticipated loss of or impact to significant soil resources.

Site infiltration tests were completed as part of the preliminary design stage; and it was confirmed that the proposed drainage strategy through infiltration can be achieved for a 1:100 year rainfall event with the extent of permeable pavement and SuDS measures proposed. Ground levels will be adjusted through minor regrading and the import of fill to achieve a suitable finished surface for parking and drainage. These works are considered to have limited impact in terms of soil loss or alteration.

There are no surface watercourses within the Site. A single dry drainage ditch is located along the southern boundary, and while the Grand Canal runs adjacent to the Site, no direct hydrological connectivity is proposed. The confluence of the Grand Canal with the River Barrow is located approximately 200m downstream. The drainage design for the site has been developed to avoid any outfall to this system, with all runoff to be managed through infiltration.

The proposed Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) will mitigate any potential impacts to water quality. SuDS measures include permeable paving, a rain garden, a detention basin, and a swale, all of which contribute to the attenuation and treatment of surface water before infiltration to ground. There will be no discharge to the River Barrow SAC, and it is confirmed that the local ditch network is not hydrologically linked to the SAC catchment.

There are no mapped groundwater vulnerability concerns at this location, and the proposed development is not anticipated to pose any risk to groundwater quality. Standard construction phase controls will be implemented to prevent any sediment or contaminant runoff during site works.

Overall, potential impacts to soil and water are considered to be negligible, with the drainage strategy designed to reflect best practice and minimise risk to receiving environments.

3.5.4 Air and Climate

The EPA host an air quality monitoring station at Portlaoise, Co. Laois (Station 16) monitoring PM10 and PM2.5, Nitrogen Dioxide and ozone. The station was commissioned in June 2020. Recent data from the station is available up to 09th April 2025 and this data indicates 'Good' Air Quality Index for Health. The second nearest station, at Carlow Town (Station 54) also indicates 'Good' Air Quality Index for Health in the area.

3.5.5 Material Assets

The proposed development is located on undeveloped grassland on the outskirts of Athy town, adjacent to the Grand Canal. The site is currently not serviced and does not contain any significant built infrastructure. As such, there are no existing buildings or underground utilities directly within the footprint of the proposed development.

A 38kV overhead electricity line is located approximately 890m to the south of the Site, and a 110kV transmission line is located approximately 1km to the northwest. The proposed development includes the potential for a new ESB connection if public lighting is required within the car park or along the access road.

3.5.6 Cultural Heritage

There are no records of any NIAH within or surrounding the site boundary. The Zone of Notification designated by the National Monuments Service (NMS) for the historic core of Athy is located approximately 150 metres north of the subject site. The existing eastern boundary consists of dense vegetation and a historic stone wall. A structural inspection of this wall will be completed in advance of any construction works, and the wall will be repaired if necessary. The wall will be protected during the construction phase, and a 1m buffer provided in the form of a grass margin.

4. ASSESSMENT AGAINST SCHEDULE 7 CRITERIA

Having considered the above environmental factors, the aim of the next section is to address likely impacts on the environment by the implementation of the proposed scheme. A brief overview of the sensitivities and impacts are highlighted. Whether an EIA would be deemed relevant to the scale of the project and the environment is determined. The following sections present the EIA Screening based on the criteria contained in Schedule 7 of the P&D Regulations and are grouped under the following headings:

1. Characteristics of the Proposed scheme - Table 4-1
2. Location of the Proposed scheme - Table 4-2
3. Types and Characteristics of Potential Impact - Table 4-3
4. EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions - Table 4-4

Table 4-1: Characteristics of the Proposed Scheme

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the development (i.e. the nature and extent):
The size and design of the whole of the proposed development	**The size and design of the whole of the proposed development** The proposed development consists of a new trailhead and car park adjacent to the Grand Canal in Athy, Co. Kildare. It includes 15 parking spaces (including accessibility spaces), bike parking, footpaths, an access road, and SuDS infrastructure. The design is compact and localised, with works primarily confined to a grassland site (approx. 0.25 ha). No demolition is required; only vegetation clearance is proposed. **Response to EIA Screening Criteria** The design of the proposed development is compact and localised, with a limited physical footprint. It is compatible with the surrounding semi-urban landscape and will not appear as an incongruous or inappropriate built feature. The scale and nature of the works are minor and are not anticipated to give rise to significant environmental effects. The existing eastern boundary, consisting of a historic stone wall and dense vegetation, will be retained. To ensure the project is compatible with the surrounding landscape, a 1m grass margin buffer will be provided to protect the wall during and after construction. The Proposed Development will be carried out in accordance with best practice construction guidelines and the submitted planning documentation. In conclusion, based on the size, nature, and design of the scheme, there are no characteristics of the Proposed Development likely to result in significant effects on the environment.

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the development (i.e. the nature and extent):
Other existing or permitted projects (including under other legislation that is subject to EIA) that could give rise to cumulative effects: Cumulation with other existing development and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment,	A desktop review was carried out to identify other relevant projects in the vicinity of the proposed development site, including existing developments, permitted developments, and live planning applications under consideration. This review considered the potential for environmental impacts, particularly in relation to sensitive environmental receptors such as European sites. The baseline environment for this assessment therefore includes both built and permitted development in the area. This review identified several permitted developments near the site, including Planning References 22/985 and 23/656. Both of these developments include drainage measures and were subject to Appropriate Assessment (AA) screening as part of the planning process. It is understood that these permissions have been granted but are not yet constructed. Given the limited scale and localised footprint of the proposed trailhead and car park, as well as the absence of hydrological connectivity to the nearby Special Area of Conservation (SAC), no cumulative or in-combination effects are anticipated to arise, either during construction or operation.
The nature of any associated demolition works	No demolition works are proposed as part of the development.
Use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity: Will construction or the operation of the proposal use natural resources such as land, soil, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or are in short supply? the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity,	Natural resources such as subsoil and surfacing materials (e.g. stone, asphalt) will be used during construction. The site is located on improved grassland and scrub habitat of low biodiversity value. Vegetation clearance will be required (approx. 2,211m²), though boundary hedgerows will be retained. No extraction of water or significant use of energy is anticipated. All resource use will be minor and localised. **Land** The Proposed Development will require a land take of approximately 0.25 ha. The site comprises greenfield land currently consisting of improved and wet grassland mosaic, classified as GA1/GS4 under Fossitt (2000). This land is not designated for conservation and is considered to be of low ecological value. **Soil and Aggregate** Subsoil excavation will be required to accommodate the car park, drainage and associated infrastructure. The AA Screening confirms that excavated material will be reused on site where suitable, with excess soils disposed of at a licensed facility. Imported materials including structural fill (stone) and asphalt surfacing will be used during construction. These will be sourced from authorised suppliers. A site investigation will be carried out prior to construction to confirm ground conditions and determine any contamination risks.

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the development (i.e. the nature and extent):
	Water Water usage during the construction phase will be limited to site preparation, dust suppression, and concrete mixing. No abstraction from watercourses or groundwater sources is proposed. During the operational phase, no significant water demand is anticipated. The drainage design includes Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) such as permeable paving, a rain garden, and attenuation basin, ensuring that surface water runoff is appropriately managed. Site infiltration testing confirms that the drainage strategy, including permeable pavement and SuDS measures, can accommodate a 1:100 year rainfall event, ensuring effective flood risk management within the proposed development **Biodiversity** According to the AA Screening Report, the site is dominated by species-poor improved and wet grassland, with bramble-dominated scrub and unmanaged hedgerows on the boundaries. Approximately 2,465 m² of vegetation will be cleared; however, boundary hedgerows will be retained to preserve habitat continuity. No evidence of Annex I bird species or otters was found during site surveys, and no invasive species were identified. The River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162) is located 100m east of the site, but no hydrological connection exists. The AA Screening concludes that no likely significant effects on any European site are expected, either alone or in combination with other projects.
The production of waste [Production of waste: Will the proposal produce solid wastes during construction, operation, or decommissioning?]	Waste generated during construction will include vegetation, excavated soil, and minor construction debris. A site investigation will be carried out pre-construction to assess the classification of material. Any excess soil not reused on site will be disposed of at a licensed facility. Waste volumes are expected to be small and will not result in significant impacts. Given the scale of the waste production, in conjunction with the use of licensed waste disposal facilities and contractors, it is anticipated that the Proposed Development would not cause a significant effect on the environment.
Pollution and nuisances: Will the proposal release pollutants to ground or surface water, or air (including noise and vibrations) or water, or lead to exceeding environmental standards set out in other Directives?	During construction, temporary localised nuisances such as noise, dust, and vibration may occur. These will be mitigated using standard best practice methods (e.g. silt fencing, dust suppression, limited working hours). The site does not interact with surface water or groundwater. No direct outfall is proposed to the Grand Canal or River Barrow, and SuDS measures will manage all surface runoff. During the operational phase, the development is expected to generate minimal emissions or nuisances. The site will be used primarily for parking and access to the adjacent Blueway, and no industrial or high-intensity use is proposed. Lighting, vehicle

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the development (i.e. the nature and extent):
	movements, and increased footfall may result in minor increases in local noise and activity levels, but these are typical for urban edge recreational infrastructure and not expected to exceed environmental standards. No odours, emissions to air, or discharges to water will occur during normal operation. The AA and NIS accompanying this Application also concludes that with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures (if there are any), the Proposed Development will not, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, adversely afftect the integrity or conservation status of any of the qualifying interest of the nearby River Barrow and River Nore SAC or any other European Sites in light of the best scientific knowledge available.
Major accidents and disasters: In accordance with scientific knowledge, is there a risk of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project, including those caused by climate change?	The project does not involve hazardous materials or high-risk processes. It is not located within a flood risk zone or a Seveso site. Construction and operation pose no significant risk of accidents or disasters. Construction activities will be carried out in accordance with the appointed contractor's standard health and safety procedures and relevant legislation to minimise risk to workers, the public, and the environment. Climate change resilience is embedded through the inclusion of SuDS elements to manage surface water sustainably.
Risks to human health, for example due to water contamination or air pollution:	No risks to human health are anticipated. Construction will follow best practice environmental management. Construction activities will be carried out in accordance with the appointed contractor's standard health and safety procedures and relevant legislation to minimise risk to workers, the public, and the environment. Operationally, the development will support active travel and recreation, with associated benefits to public health. Air and water quality will not be adversely affected. The site is not hydrologically connected to any drinking water source or groundwater-dependent habitat. No significant effects arising from the Proposed Development are likely to occur.

Table 4-2: Location of the Proposed Scheme

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development:	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the location (with particular regard to the (a) existing and approved land use, (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources, and (c) the absorption capacity of the environment):
The existing and approved land use	The proposed development is located on a parcel of undeveloped grassland on the outskirts of Athy, Co. Kildare. The land is currently unzoned and used informally as open space. It is bordered by agricultural grassland to the north and east, with the Grand Canal located immediately west. The development is compatible with nearby approved residential and recreational developments, including a permitted housing scheme to the north (Planning Ref: 22985). The project supports ongoing investment in amenity and active travel infrastructure within the town. As such, no significant impacts arising from the Proposed Development are likely to occur.
The relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources (including soil, land, water and biodiversity) in the area and its underground.	The development is relatively small in scale (~0.25 ha), located on rank grassland with low ecological or agricultural value. Topsoil and subsoil will be reused on site where possible, and any excess material will be disposed of in line with waste regulations. No significant water abstraction or depletion of natural resources will occur. The site includes a single dry ditch with no known hydrological connection to the River Barrow or Grand Canal. Biodiversity value is limited, but boundary hedgerows will be retained and supplemented with native planting
The absorption capacity of the natural environment, paying particular attention to the following areas: (i) wetlands, riparian areas, river mouths; (ii) coastal zones and the marine environment; (iii) mountain and forest areas; (iv) nature reserves and parks; (v) areas classified or protected under legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive and; (vi) areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure;	Furthermore, the subject site is a relatively small parcel of grassland at the urban fringe of Athy, the surrounding environment is already influenced by residential, amenity, and transport-related infrastructure. The infiltration capacity of the site, as confirmed by testing during preliminary design, supports the SuDS-based drainage strategy for a 1:100 year rainfall event, aligning with the site's absorption capacity and climate resilience. The site does not contain, and is not located within or adjacent to, any of the following sensitive environmental receptors: ***Wetlands, riparian areas, or river* mouths** – while the Grand Canal runs adjacent to the site, there is no direct hydrological connection between the site and any watercourse. A dry drainage ditch within the site is not hydrologically linked to the Grand Canal or to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC, located ~100m downstream. ***Coastal zones or marine environments*** – not applicable. ***Mountain or forest areas*** – not applicable. ***Nature reserves, parks, or Natura 2000 sites*** – the site lies outside any designated natural areas. An Appropriate Assessment Screening has confirmed that the proposed works will not result in likely significant effects on the nearby River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code: 002162) or any other European site.

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development:	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the location (with particular regard to the (a) existing and approved land use, (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources, and (c) the absorption capacity of the environment):
(vii) densely populated areas; (viii) landscapes and sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance.	***Areas failing EU environmental quality standards*** – there are no known failures to meet relevant EU environmental standards in the vicinity of the site. ***Densely populated areas*** – the site is located at the edge of an urban area but is not within a high-density residential zone. ***Landscapes and sites of cultural or archaeological significance*** – While the site is not on a designated scenic route or recorded archaeological site, the eastern boundary consists of a historic stone wall. The project design absorbs this feature by providing a 1m grass margin buffer and performing a structural inspection and necessary repairs to ensure its preservation. Furthermore, the absorption capacity for biodiversity is enhanced through extensive landscaping, including wildflower meadows and grassed zones, which replace low-value rank grassland with high-quality local habitats. ***Conclusion***: Given the existing urban fringe context, absence of environmental designations within the footprint, and confirmation of no connectivity to Natura 2000 sites, the receiving environment has a high capacity to absorb the proposed development without significant environmental effect. <u>Use and Availability of Natural Resources</u> The construction phase will involve the use of natural resources including: ***Land*** – a land take of approx. 0.25 ha of non-designated greenfield land currently in grassland/scrub use. ***Soil and aggregates*** – excavation of subsoil will occur for surface and drainage installation. Imported fill materials (e.g. stone, asphalt) will be required for surfacing and structural layers. All materials will be sourced from authorised suppliers. ***Water*** – small quantities of water will be required during construction for dust suppression and concrete mixing. No abstraction from groundwater or surface water is proposed. ***Energy*** – minor, temporary use of fuel and electricity during construction. Vegetation clearance (approx. 2,211 m^2) will be required, but boundary hedgerows will be retained to preserve some ecological connectivity. The AA Screening confirms the site supports low-value habitat and that no significant impacts on protected species or habitats are anticipated.

The environmental sensitivity of geographical areas likely to be affected by the proposed development:	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the location (with particular regard to the (a) existing and approved land use, (b) the relative abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources, and (c) the absorption capacity of the environment):
	Conclusion: The scale of natural resource use is minimal and typical for a development of this size. No significant environmental impacts are anticipated in relation to the use or availability of natural resources.

For criteria 3 'Types and Characteristics of Potential Impact' the Regulations require that the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment (in relation to criteria set out under 'Characteristics of the Proposed Development' and 'Location of the Proposed Development') are assessed for the environmental topics set out in section 171A of the Planning and Development Act (i.e. population and human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air and climate, material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape) taking into account—

a) the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (for example, geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected),

b) the nature of the impact,

c) the transboundary nature of the impact,

d) the intensity and complexity of the impact,

e) the probability of the impact,

f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact,

g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and

h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

Table 4-3: Types and Characteristics of Potential Impact

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
(a) Magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical area and size of the population likely to be affected)	Any potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed development are expected to be limited to the Subject Site, which covers a total area of c. 0.25 hectares. The site comprises unmanaged improved and wet grassland with encroaching scrub and is located at the urban fringe of Athy, Co. Kildare. While the lands are unzoned, the eastern boundary contains a historic stone wall. The spatial extent of impacts is highly localised. Potential impacts to the stone wall are limited to the construction phase and are physically confined to the site boundary.No sensitive populations are located within the immediate vicinity of the site, and there are no hydrological connections to nearby European sites. The spatial extent of any impacts is highly localised and confined within the redline boundary.	The implementation of best practice construction measures and surface water management (e.g. SuDS) will prevent off-site effects. The historic stone wall on the eastern boundary will be protected via a 1m grass margin buffer. Vegetation clearance will be limited, and boundary hedgerows will be retained where it is possible to maintain habitat continuity.	No – The impacts are localised, small in magnitude, and managed through specific design buffers and standard practices.
Population & Human Health	Potential for short-term nuisance to nearby residents during construction due to noise, vibration, dust, and vehicle movements. The operational phase will provide enhanced access to the Barrow Blueway and promote active travel.	Implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), including dust suppression, noise controls, limited working hours, and pedestrian safety measures.	Likely slight temporary negative effect during construction. Likely positive long-term effect during operation.

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
Biodiversity	The site is composed of low-value grassland and scrub. A dry drainage ditch is present, but it is not hydrologically connected to the SAC. No Annex I habitats or protected species recorded. One red-listed bird (greenfinch) observed. However, greenfinch is not an Annex I species, but it is red-listed under Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BoCCI).	Vegetation clearance outside of bird nesting season (March–August). Retain existing hedgerows where possible. Use native species in landscaping.	Not significant. Temporary minor impacts during clearance. No likely significant effect on European sites.
Land, Soil, Water, Air and Climate	Minor excavation for drainage and surfacing works. No significant use of land or natural resources. No watercourses on site; surface water managed through SuDS. No anticipated impact on air or climate. The drainage strategy, incorporating permeable pavement and SuDS measures, has been confirmed by infiltration testing to handle a 1:100 year rainfall event, reducing flood risk and protecting water quality.	Use of best practice construction methods including CIRIA guidance. Permeable paving and SuDS features to manage stormwater on site.	Slight short-term effects may occur but are not significant. No long-term impacts expected.
Air and Climate	Temporary increase in dust and machinery emissions during construction. These may include: • Land clearing and vegetation removal • Earthworks and excavation operations	Dust suppression will be carried out using water sprays on exposed surfaces and haul roads, covering stockpiles, limiting vehicle speeds, and avoiding dust-generating activities during high winds. and maintenance of machinery to reduce emissions.	Slight temporary effect during construction. Positive long-term effect due to modal shift and improved active travel access.

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
	• Movement and operation of heavy machinery and construction equipment • Vehicular transport of materials and waste • On-site construction activities (e.g., concrete, mortar and plaster mixing; drilling; cutting; grinding) • Windblown dust from temporary unpaved access roads and exposed ground surfaces To minimise air and dust emissions, a range of best practice mitigation measures will be implemented, including: • Use of dust suppression techniques (e.g. water sprays) • Covering of soil/material stockpiles • Limiting vehicle speeds on site • Regular maintenance of machinery to minimise fuel consumption and emissions		

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
	• Restriction of construction activities during high wind conditions where necessary • Use of local suppliers to reduce transport distances During the operational phase, the development is not expected to result in significant traffic-related emissions due to its limited scale. It is anticipated that the project will encourage a modal shift toward walking and cycling by enhancing access to the Barrow Blueway, thereby contributing positively to local air quality and climate resilience in the long term. No significant traffic-related emissions expected post-construction.		
(b) Nature of the Impact			
Material Assets	The development may cause brief service disruption if utilities are impacted. The site is not located within any area of archaeological, architectural, or landscape sensitivity.	Subsurface utilities survey before excavation. Hand digging in sensitive areas. No works near recorded monuments or protected structures.	Temporary construction effects not considered significant. No long-term negative impact.
Cultural Heritage	The proposed development is located on a greenfield site on the urban fringe of Athy, Co.	A precautionary approach will be taken during groundworks. In the unlikely event	No – There are no recorded archaeological

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
	Kildare. A review of the National Monuments Service (NMS) and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) databases confirms that there are no recorded archaeological sites or protected structures within the site. However, the existing eastern boundary consists of a historic stone wall. While not a "Protected Structure," it is a significant local heritage feature. Potential impacts include accidental structural damage during excavation or construction movements.It is noted, however, that the Zone of Notification for the historic core of Athy lies approximately 150 metres to the north of the subject site, reflecting the broader archaeological sensitivity of the town. Any potential impacts would be negligible, localised, and fully reversible.	of any unexpected archaeological finds, works will cease and the appropriate authorities will be notified, in line with standard procedures. A structural inspection of the historic stone wall will be completed in advance of any construction works, and the wall will be repaired if necessary. The wall will be protected during the construction phase, and a 1m buffer provided in the form of a grass margin to ensure no machinery or material storage impacts the structure.	sites on-site. The historic stone wall will be protected and enhanced through a structural survey and a 1m exclusion buffer, preventing significant effects.
Landscape and Visual	In terms of visual impact, this will be minimal and limited to the immediate locality of the Proposed Development.	No mitigation measures are required.	The visual effects of the Proposed Development will be minimal

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
Traffic and Transport	It is assumed all construction materials, will be sourced locally where possible and brought to site by road. Construction material will be transported in clean vehicles and lorries/trucks will be properly enclosed or covered during transportation of friable construction materials and spoil to prevent escape of material along the public roadway. Construction of the Proposed Development is not anticipated to cause significant environmental effects. For the operational phase, the Proposed Development will not result in emission to air and/or water.	N/A	No
Waste	The key phases regarding resource and waste management is the construction phase. Waste generated from the onsite construction works, which is minimal in nature, should be controlled, transferred and disposed of in accordance with the relevant waste management acts and associated regulations. Any waste produced as part of the Proposed Development will be dealt with in a sustainble	N/A	The Proposed Development is not anticipated to cause significant, or adverse effects.

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
	manner and in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996 (S.I No. 10 of 1996) and the Waste Management (Amendment) Act 2001. Where waste material would be taken offsite for segregation or disposal, it has been assumed the contractor would ensure this is undertaken by a licensed haulier under chain of custody procedures to an appropriately licensed waste facility. The appointed contract will consider the EPA guidance (2021) 'Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource Waste Management Plans for Construction & Demolition Projects'.		
Cumulative Effects	No significant cumulative effects are identified. Other nearby developments have drainage and environmental controls in place.	N/A	No significant cumulative effects anticipated.
Transboundary Effects	The project is not near any transboundary location. It is small in scale and localised in effect.	N/A	No transboundary effects anticipated.

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
(c) the transboundary nature of the impact	The proposed development is entirely within the State, situated in Athy, Co. Kildare. The development is localised and of limited scale.	N/A	No – the development will not result in transboundary impacts.
(d) the intensity and complexity of the impact	The development involves minor land take and standard construction activities. No hazardous materials or complex operations are involved.	Works will be managed in accordance with standard construction best practices and health & safety procedures.	No – impacts are typical, low intensity, and manageable.
(e) the probability of the impact	Short-term, low-magnitude impacts (e.g. dust, noise, traffic) during construction are probable but fully reversible. Operational impacts are negligible.	Short-term, low-magnitude impacts (e.g. dust, noise, traffic) during construction are probable but fully reversible. Operational impacts are negligible.	Short-term, low-magnitude impacts (e.g. dust, noise, traffic) during construction are probable but fully reversible. Operational impacts are negligible.
(f) the expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact	Construction-related impacts will begin during site preparation and last only for the duration of construction. No ongoing emissions or significant effects are expected post-construction. All are fully reversible.	Standard environmental controls during construction will reduce duration and intensity of temporary effects.	No – the temporary nature of the works ensures no lasting impacts.

Criterion	If relevant, briefly describe the characteristics of the potential impacts under the headings below. (including where relevant the magnitude and spatial extent of the impact (e.g. geographical areas and size of population likely to be affected), nature of impact, intensity and complexity of impact, probability of impact, and duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact):	If relevant, briefly describe any mitigation measures proposed to avoid or prevent a significant effect.	Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?
(g) the cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or development the subject of a consent for proposed development for the purposes of section 172(1A)(b) of the Act and/or development the subject of any development consent for the purposes ofthe Environmental Impact Assessment Directive by or under any other enactment, and	No cumulative effects identified. Other nearby permitted projects include drainage/SuDS measures and were screened for AA individually. No hydrological or ecological links identified.	N/A – cumulative effects were assessed as part of the AA Screening.	No – cumulative impacts are not anticipated
(h) the possibility of effectively reducing the impact	All identified impacts are minor and can be effectively reduced or avoided using established construction and environmental best practice methods.	Dust suppression, drainage controls (SuDS), restricted working hours, use of licensed hauliers for waste, etc.	No – impacts can be effectively mitigated and are not significant.

Table 4-4: EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions

EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions	Yes/No/Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant impact? Yes/No/Why?
1. Will construction, operation, decommissioning, or demolition works of the Project involve actions that will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies, etc.)?	Yes - The proposed scheme comprises construction of a trailhead and car park on a greenfield site adjacent to the Grand Canal. Minor changes to topography will occur due to regrading. No change to existing land use patterns or waterbodies is proposed. Site infiltration testing has confirmed that the drainage design can manage a 1:100 year rainfall event using SuDS and permeable pavement, ensuring robust flood resilience for the proposed development.	No - The works are small in scale and will assimilate well into the semi-urban environment. No significant impact anticipated.
2. Will construction or the operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or are in short supply?	Yes - Use of land, aggregates, stone, and energy during construction.	No - The quantities are minor and not expected to significantly affect availability of natural resources.
3. Will the Project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substances or materials which could be harmful to human health, to the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?	No - No hazardous substances are proposed for use or storage.	No - No impact anticipated.
4. Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes - Soil and vegetation waste during site clearance; minor construction waste.	No - Waste volumes are low and will be reused or sent to a licensed facility. No significant impact.
5. Will the Project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air or lead to exceeding Ambient Air Quality standards in Directives 2008/50/EC and 2004/107/EC?	Yes - Only minor dust and emissions from machinery are expected during construction.	No - Managed through standard construction best practices. No significant impact.

EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions	Yes/No/Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant impact? Yes/No/Why?
6. Will the Project cause noise and vibration or the releasing of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes - Short-term noise and vibration during construction. No post-construction sources of light, heat, or radiation.	No - Noise will be managed through construction timing and best practice. No significant impact.
7. Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	No - SuDS will manage surface water. Groundwater risk is negligible. Site infiltration testing has confirmed that the drainage design can manage a 1:100 year rainfall event using SuDS and permeable pavement, ensuring robust flood resilience for the proposed development.	No - Managed by environmental controls and best practice methods. No significant impact.
8. Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project that could affect human health or the environment?	Yes - Risks are typical of small-scale construction and will be mitigated.	No - Industry-standard safety protocols will be implemented. No significant impact.
9. Will the Project result in environmentally related social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	Yes - The development promotes active travel and improved recreation access.	No - Positive long-term social and environmental impact.
10. Are there any other factors that should be considered such as consequential development which could lead to environmental impacts or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	No - No significant in-combination impacts identified with nearby developments.	No - No significant cumulative effects anticipated.

EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions	Yes/No/Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant impact? Yes/No/Why?
11. Is the Project located within or close to any areas which are protected under international, EU or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the Project?	Yes - River Barrow and River Nore SAC is 100m from site but not hydrologically connected.	No - Appropriate Assessment Screening confirms no likely significant effects.
12. Are there any other areas on or around the location that are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g., wetlands, watercourses or other waterbodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, that could be affected by the Project	No - The site is isolated from ecological features like wetlands or woodlands.	No - No significant impact.
13. Are there any areas on or around the location that are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g., for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected by the Project?	Yes - One red-listed bird recorded (greenfinch). No protected habitats present.	No - Vegetation clearance outside of nesting season will avoid impact. No significant effect.
14. Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters (or features of the marine environment) on or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	Yes - A dry ditch is present but not connected to any surface waters.	No - No significant impact.
15. Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	No - The site is not located in a scenic or designated landscape.	No - No significant visual or landscape impact.
16. Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation or other facilities, which could be affected by the Project?	Yes - The Grand Canal towpath will be upgraded with improved access. Minor short-term disruption possible.	No - Long-term positive impact on recreation and access.

EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions	Yes/No/Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant impact? Yes/No/Why?
17. Are there any transport routes on or around the location that are susceptible to congestion, or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the Project?	No - The project will not contribute to traffic congestion.	No - No significant impact.
18. Is the Project in a location in which it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	Yes - The development will be visible but fits the character of the area.	No - No visual or landscape sensitivity expected.
19. Are there any areas or features of closed or cultural importance on or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	No - No NIAH features or recorded monuments are within the site.	No - No heritage or cultural impact anticipated.
20. Is the Project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be a loss of greenfield land?	Yes - The site is currently grassland.	No - The project is small in scale. No significant impact to greenfield land.
21. Are there existing land uses within or around the location e.g., homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying that could be affected by the Project?	Yes - Residential areas are nearby and may experience temporary construction impacts.	No - Mitigation measures will manage short-term effects. No significant impact.
22. Are there any plans for future land uses within or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	No - No future land uses are expected to be affected.	No - No significant impact.
23. Are there areas within or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, that could be affected by the Project?	Yes - The site lies near residential housing on the edge of Athy.	No - Temporary impacts managed by best practice. No long-term effect.
24. Are there any areas within or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g., hospitals,	Yes - There are residential and possibly community facilities nearby.	No - No direct interaction anticipated. No significant impact.

EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions	Yes/No/Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant impact? Yes/No/Why?
schools, places of worship, community facilities, that could be affected by the Project?		
25. Are there any areas within or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g., groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, that could be Affected by the Project?	No - No high-quality or scarce environmental resources nearby.	No - No significant effect.
26. Are there any areas within or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g., where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, that could be affected by the Project?	No - There are no known issues with pollution or water quality at the site.	No - No significant impact.
27. Is the Project location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g., temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the Project to present environmental problems?	No - The site is not within a flood zone or geologically unstable area.	No - No risk from natural hazards. No significant impact.
28. Summary of features of Project and of its location indicating the need for EIA	No - This EIA Screening Assessment has been prepared for the proposed Development which comprises a car park with a total site area of approximately 0.25 ha. It has been assessed that the Proposed Development does not trigger the mandatory criteria for a full EIA as set out within Schedule 5, Part 1 and Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations. A sub-threshold assessment of the likely environmental effects of the Proposed Development in accordance with Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) was carried out to determine whether the Proposed Development is	No – The project is small in scale (c. 0.25 ha), involves no high-risk activities, is not located in a sensitive area, and includes standard best practice mitigation. All likely impacts are minor, localised, temporary and fully reversible. Therefore, it is not likely to result in significant effects on the environment.

EU Guidance EIA Screening Checklist Questions	Yes/No/Briefly describe	Is this likely to result in a significant impact? Yes/No/Why?
	likely to have significant effects on the existing environment, requiring a full EIAR. Takin into consideration embedded mitigation and assuming works will be carried out in accordance with the documentation submitted as part of this Application and best practice guidance, it is the view of Fehily Timoney and Company that an EIA is not required for the Proposed Development. However, it is noted that this is a recommendation only and the final determination will be made by the competent authority.	

5. CONCLUSION

This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report has been 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 and Company 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.

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