

N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT SCHEME

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION TO AN BORD PLEANÁLA
FOR APPROVAL OF THE N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT
SCHEME

ABP Ref. ABP-312875-22 and ABP-312877-22

ORAL HEARING

Part 1.1 – Brief of Evidence – General

November 2022

Quality information

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1 Introduction

1.1 Qualifications and Experience

I, Eoin Greene am employed as a Technical Director in the AECOM Roads team with over 18 years' post-graduate experience. I hold a 1st Class Honours Degree in Civil, Structural, and Environmental Engineering (BA, BAI) from Trinity College Dublin, and achieved Chartered Engineer (CEng) status with Engineers Ireland in 2008. Further details in relation to my qualification and experience are provided in Appendix A.

I have been involved in numerous road schemes including the delivery of transportation schemes in both rural, urban, and regional town settings, with schemes including cycling improvements, junction upgrades, TII major schemes, and TII national and secondary schemes.

1.2 Role in the Proposed Development

I have been the Project Manager for the ROD-AECOM design team on the N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment Scheme since May 2019. I am responsible for the overall direction of the design, EIA, and NIS team for this project, which is supported by a team of engineering and environmental professionals and various specialist environmental consultants.

1.3 Evidence to this Oral Hearing

I have prepared this Brief of Evidence in accordance with the directions of An Bord Pleanála as set out in the letters to the Applicant dated 07/11/2022 and 08/09/2022.

This report has been commissioned by Galway County Council, the Applicant, for the purposes of an Oral Hearing in relation to the Compulsory Purchase (No.1) Order, 2021 for the N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment scheme (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Road Development') and it addresses the following specific items:

- Evidence to this Oral Hearing
- Overview of the proposed road development
- Overview of the Project Need and Justification
- Overview of Alternatives
- Responses to the submissions received from other parties

2 Proposed Road Development

2.1 Overview of the proposed road development

The Applicant is proposing to develop a c. 2.3 km national secondary road realignment on 13.8 ha of predominantly greenfield site to the north-east of the village of Abbeyknockmoy Co. Galway. The Proposed Road Development comprises a rural all-purpose Type 2 Single Carriageway Road, including a new river crossing over the River Abbert.

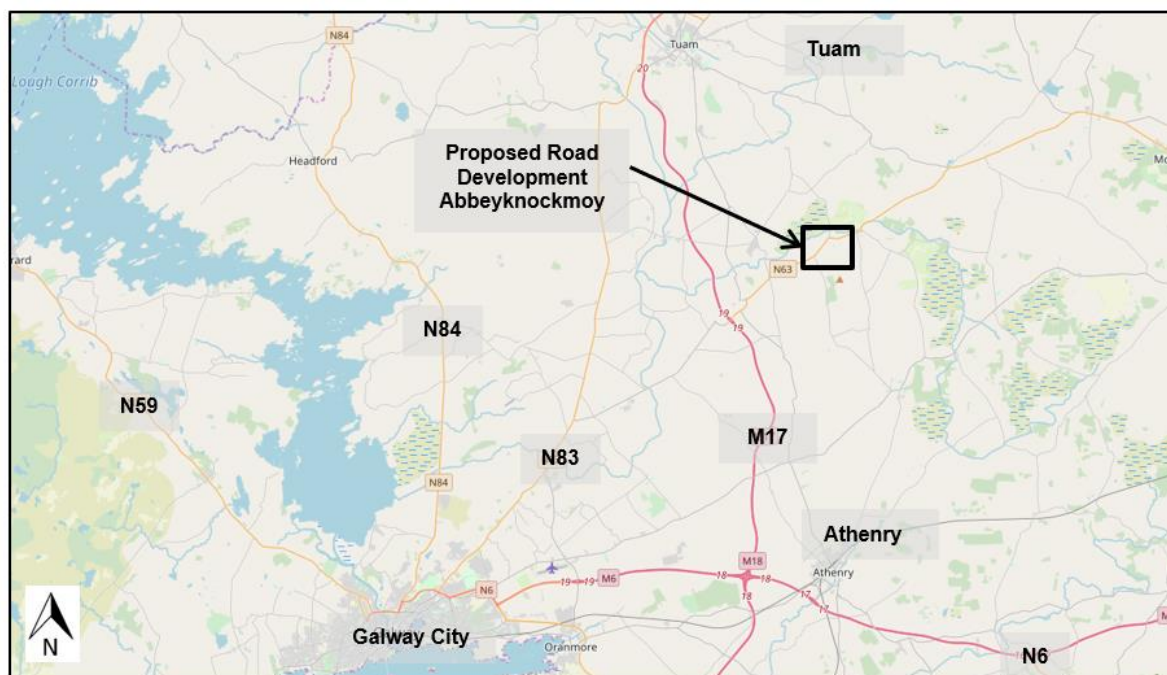


Figure 2-1 Location Plan (extract of EIAR - Volume 1 - Figure 1-1)

The Proposed Road Development is a multi-modal transport scheme, it will provide both cycling and walking facilities to connect significant adjacent community facilities to the residential area of Abbeyknockmoy. Strategically, the proposed road development will support the objectives of the TEN-T in broad terms by improving the connectivity to Junction 19 on the M17 TEN-T network.

The Proposed Road Development will facilitate a number of objectives in the Galway County Development Plan, including the provision of higher-quality national roads and the separation of regional and local traffic. The scheme will also meet a number of objectives of the Road Safety Authority's Road Safety Strategy.

The Proposed Road Development will include the introduction of one new roundabout to the east of Abbeyknockmoy and facilitate a change of priority at the junction with the L3110. There would also be a staggered junction between the L6159 and the Proposed Road Development. The Proposed Road Development will allow the priority on approach to the existing Liss Bridge to be changed to help minimise the risk of collisions, and to priorities the provision of space for active travel modes.

The Proposed Road Development includes a clear span crossing of the River Abbert, which has been designed to minimise impacts on the existing environment.

A more detailed description of works that would be facilitated by the CPO is included in Appendix B and General Arrangement Plans of the Proposed Road Development are included in Appendix C, as extracted from the EIAR.

It is noted that the scheme has been developed with a significant amount of consultation with both the public and the landowners affected by the scheme and those that are part of the CPO. This has been undertaken as part of the options development process and as part of ongoing landowner liaison with impacted landowners.



Figure 2-2 River Abbert Crossing (extract of EIAR - Volume Appendix A13-1, VIEW 4)

3 Project Need and Justification

3.1 Introduction

The EIAR outlined the limitations of the existing road network to serve the transport requirements detailed in policy and guidance at European, national, regional, and local levels. I just wish to briefly highlight these existing limitations for context.

The Proposed Road Development, as part of the N63, forms part of the National Secondary Road network. Overall, the need for the scheme revolves around the need to providing a safe, robust and resilient National Secondary Road network, allowing the more efficient movement of people and goods at a regional and local level, and the provision of improved facilities to encourage and promote active travel modal share.

3.2 Providing Improved Local Connectivity at a Community Level

Abbeyknockmoy is split into two distinct areas a residential area and a community facilities area, which houses schools, GAA pitches and a Church. The existing N63 provides a link between these two areas as well as catering for regional traffic, however, this link does not provide for any active travel modes and the mixing of local and regional traffic impacts both safety and journey time for both types of traffic and raises safety concerns in particular in the vicinity of the school drop-off areas.

The introduction of a new offline road alignment will help mitigate these safety and journey time issues by separating local and regional traffic.

The existing arrangement is also deemed to be suppressing an active travel modal shift at a local level. At a local level there is a demonstrated need for an active travel improvement linking the two sections of the community in Abbeyknockmoy which will again further improve safety for all road users.

In particular access to community facilities via provision of a high-quality pedestrian and cycling link was identified as a key need during the early scheme preparation. The community facilities which this scheme facilitates active travel access to include the local primary school, creche, St Bernards Church, and the local GAA Club

The need for the Proposed Road Development and associated active travel improvements was reiterated at both Public Consultations for the scheme. These were held in the local school and were extensively attended by the local community. The consultation events were undertaken during the options development phase and it is noted that the local community showed great support for the scheme and were very enthusiastic for the scheme to progress. This was reflected in the responses to the Public Consultation, which are detailed in EIAR Chapter 03 Consideration of Alternatives.

3.3 Existing Safety & Alignment Issues

The existing N63 is generally narrow with no hard shoulders. Alignment of the road is poor in both the horizontal and vertical planes. There is no off-carriageway provision for pedestrians or cyclists. The existing Liss Bridge is narrow and significantly restricts traffic flows, with two Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) travelling in opposite directions unable to safely pass on the Liss Bridge, in addition site inspections have identified a number of bridge strikes, with the existing sub-standard parapet walls repaired in several locations. The layout of the existing Liss Bridge can be seen in the Figure below.

The existing N63 does not cater for active travel users in any form, the existing cross section is dedicated for vehicles and has no provisions for cyclists or pedestrians. The existing cross section is narrow and due to the rural nature of the scheme there are vehicle conflicts between local road traffic and agricultural vehicles.

The area to the west of the existing Liss Bridge has twice above the average rate for collisions and the introduction of the Proposed Road Scheme would aim to alleviate this issue by segregating local and regional traffic.



Figure 3-1 Existing N63 at Liss Bridge (extract of EIAR - Volume 2 - Figure 2-1)

3.4 Providing Improved Regional Connectivity

The N63 is a regional collector route connecting Roscommon to the M17 which leads on to Galway. The proposed upgrade to the current sub-standard N63 alignment will improve the route consistency of the national road network. This will help with connectivity between these areas and improve journey times and reliability for a section of the national secondary network.

3.5 Project Benefits & Objectives

The implementation of the Proposed Road Development will provide the following benefits:

- To improve safety for all road users including pedestrians and cyclists along both the national road network and on the surrounding road network between Abbeyknockmoy village and Derreen (EIAR Section 2.2.9.3) by supporting the RSA Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030;
- To improve connectivity for the local community by segregating national and regional traffic and providing a dedicated route for pedestrians and cyclists along the existing road network, promoting healthy lifestyle choices, particularly with regard to children's movement to and from school (EIAR Section 2.2.9.3); and
- To reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability on the N63 for long distance trips between the West and North-West Regions and medium distance trips between Longford/Roscommon and Galway (EIAR Section 2.2.9.4);
- To assist in supporting the economic performance of the counties of Galway, Longford and Roscommon through the provision of improved transport infrastructure, which will reduce the cost of travel for business and tourism and assist in reducing the overall cost of production, thereby improving competitiveness (EIAR Section 2.2.9.4);;
- To support initiatives to bring investment into the West Region; and to support transport integration within the wider region, maximising the benefits of previous investment in the N63 route, and integrating with regional public transport facilities (EIAR Section 2.2.9.6);

4 Alternatives Considered

A requirement of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process is the consideration and presentation of reasonable alternatives studied which are relevant to the key project decisions in the context of environmental impact. EIA guidance and legislation requires that consideration of these alternatives should include, where relevant; design, location, routes, alignments/layouts, processes, technology, size, and scale.

Also, pursuant to Section 50(2)(b) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), the EIAR is to contain “a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, which are relevant to the proposed road development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the proposed road development on the environment”.

The EIAR outlines the reasonable alternatives considered during the lifetime of the project and provides an overview of the main reasons for selecting the Proposed Road Development option carried forward and assessed within the EIAR.

The alternatives considered are grouped as follows:

- ‘Do-Nothing’ Alternative;
- ‘Do-Minimum’ Alternative;
- Alternative Modes;
- Strategic Alternatives– Route Alignment options; and
- Design Development Alternatives (alternative locations and alternative layouts).

It is noted that a full Options Selection process was undertaken for this Proposed Road Development in accordance with TII guidelines. An overview of that process is outlined in the sections below.

It is noted that a number of Alternative Modes were considered as early potential options, such as Cycling and Pedestrian improvements and Public Transport improvements, both of which were considered in detail as part of the options process but did not progress to the detailed assessment as they did not suitably provide for the project objectives.

4.1 Stage 1 – Preliminary Options Assessment

The Options Selection Report identified six primary Route Options (A to F) that may satisfy the Proposed Road Development objectives.

These Route Options were identified taking account of the engineering, economic and environmental considerations and having regard to the issues and constraints identified in the Constraints Study.

Each Route Option was developed to a sufficient level of detail with different tie-in options and junction layouts considered; this was to ensure that all options were potential feasible routes.

A Stage 1 Preliminary Options Assessment was undertaken in accordance with the TII Guidelines. The Route Options, in addition to the Do-Nothing/Do-Minimum option were subject to a Multi Criteria Analysis assessing Engineering, Economy and Environment.

The purpose of the Stage 1 assessment is to reduce the number of feasible route options to progress through a more detailed and refined assessment of the options as part of the Stage 2 Project Appraisal process.

Following the Stage 1 Preliminary Options Assessment, it was decided that three Options (A, B and C) and the Do-Nothing/Do-Minimum should be brought forward to Stage 2 Project Appraisal.

The six route options that were considered at Stage 1 can be seen in the Figure below.

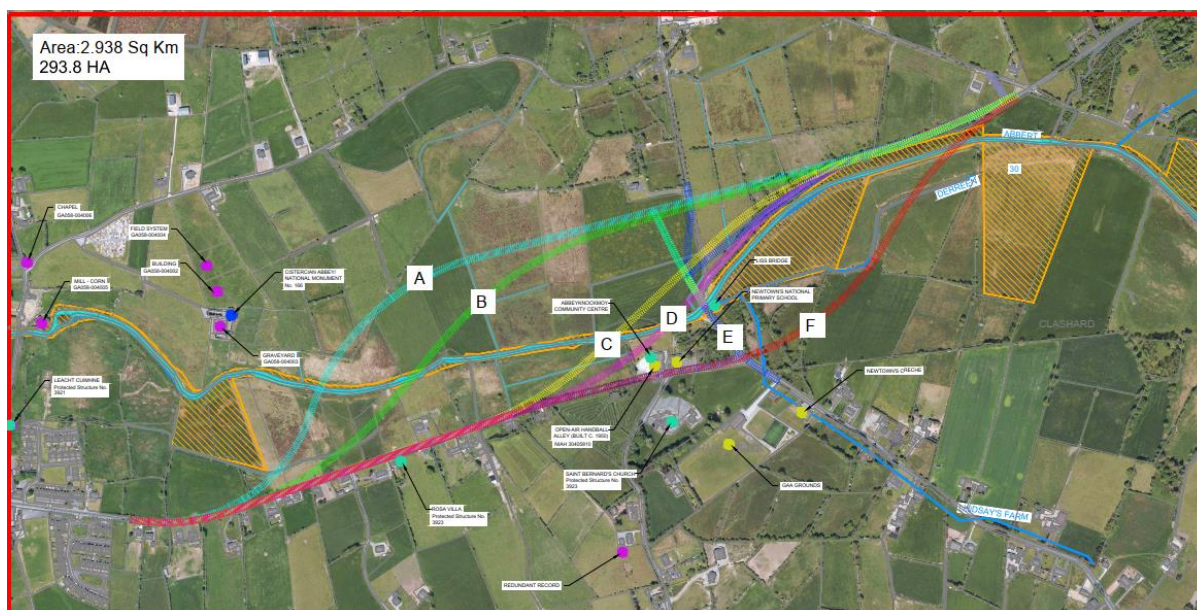


Figure 4-1 Stage 1 Route Options (extract of EIAR - Volume 3 - Figure A3-2)

4.2 Stage 2 Options

Prior to the commencement of Stage 2, further investigations were carried out along each of the three Route Options. The purpose of these investigations was to identify specific issues and to refine the alignments where possible to reduce any potential impacts. There were no major changes between the Stage 1 Route Options and those brought forward to Stage 2. Where possible, Route Options were amended locally and in consultation with all disciplines to minimise impacts, while respecting the study area constraints.

All the Route Options presented included one new crossing of the Abbert River and an at-grade junction with the L3110. All Route Options would have the same tie-in points to the east and west of the study area.

As part of the development of the Route Options and considering the feedback received at the Proposed Road Development Public Consultation event, it was proposed to include facilities for non-motorised users along the existing N63. As such, the provision for non-motorised users would not be required along the realigned section of the N63.

4.3 Preferred Route

From the Stage 2 assessment, it was recommended that Option B should be taken forward as the Preferred Option for the N63 Realignment Scheme.

The Preferred Route, which was subject to review and development during the Phase 3 design process leading to the scheme as presented in the EIAR can be seen in the Figure below.

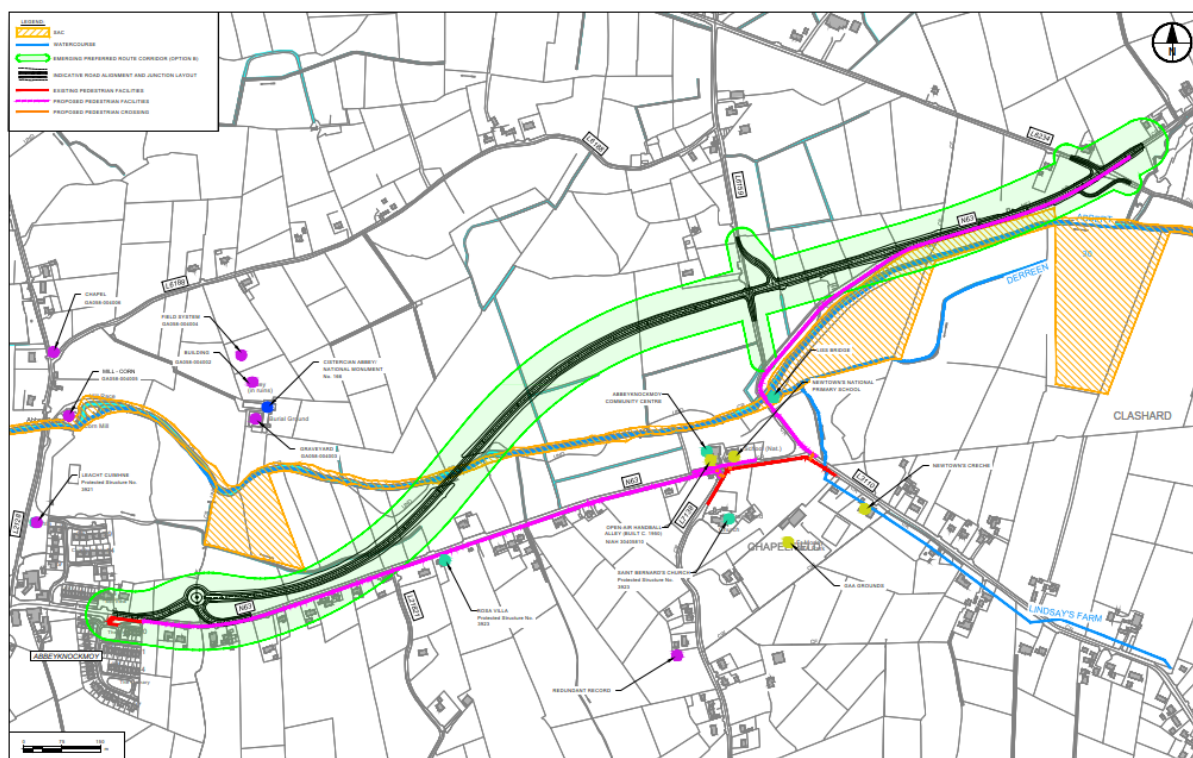


Figure 4-2 Preferred Route (extract of EIAR - Volume 3 - Figure A3-5)

4.4 Design Updates and Further Public Consultations

Further design refinement continued along the Preferred route. These comprised refinements of the route corridor based on detailed surveys, further assessments and Public Consultation updates. Further details were developed to include proposed amendments or variations to the design, proposals for junction locations, access arrangements, and watercourse diversions.

During the design development five junction locations were identified along the Proposed Road Development and optioneering was undertaken to identify the best junction for each location, and a Structures Option Report was prepared to identify the best proposal for the river crossing. The road alignment was developed due to Public Consultation feedback and areas were identified where Sustainable Urban Drainage Ponds could be located.

As a direct outcome from the Public Consultations the existing N63 carriageway space was reviewed to identify if any of this space could be reallocated to promote active travel between the community facilities and the residential area of Abbeyknockmoy. This resulted in a proposed active travel connection along the existing N63. Combined with the realignment this will provide significant benefit to the local community. The alignment and specification of this connection was detailed during this design development stage.

4.5 Commitment to maintaining access to properties

It is noted throughout the EIAR that access to side roads will be maintained during the construction period, that any alternative access to agricultural land that is required will be provided, and that access to properties will be maintained. Existing services connections are to be maintained and there are to be no interruptions during the construction phase.

5 Responses to the submissions received from other parties

There have been a number of submissions that have been received by the Board in relation to the Proposed Road Development. Three submissions have been submitted in relation to the EIAR and NIS and two submissions were submitted in relation to CPO objections. It is noted that there are forty-six landowners affected by CPO due to the Proposed Road Development and only two residual submissions.

Note that one submission related to both the EIAR/NIS and the CPO.

The three submissions in regard to the EIAR and NIS are summarised below;

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland: this submission noted that they have no observations to make.
- The Developments Application Unit provided a comprehensive submission, and their submission is dealt with in detail in Part 2.2 of our oral hearing documentation.
- The third submission is from a private landowner in regard to extent of land purchase under CPO, land use, boundary treatment on private land, protected structures and the impact on agricultural land (Submission for both EIAR/NIS and CPO).

The submission in regard to the CPO objections are summarised below;

- A submission from a private landowner is in regard to the removal of existing boundary features, a stone wall and a hedge and the impact of the Proposed Road Scheme on planning applications.

Further details of the submissions and responses can be found in Part 2.1 'Response to Submissions & CPO Objections' of the applicants Oral Hearing documentation.

6 CPO Certification

In conclusion, the preceding evidence presents a summary of the results of assessment and appraisal of alternatives and an overview of the scheme, all of which is set out in more detail in the application documentation.

I certify that the land described in the schedules of the Compulsory Purchase (No.1) Order, 2021 for the N63 Liss to Abbey Realignment scheme are necessary and suitable for the development of the Proposed Road Development, and particularly:

- 1) The maps marked with the reference no N63-ACM-CPO-0000-DR-HW-0001 to 0003 are a true and accurate description of the lands to be compulsorily acquired for the proposed road development and are a true and accurate description of the lands over which it is proposed to extinguish the public and private rights of way.
- 2) The CPO schedules are a true and accurate description of the lands which will be affected by the works.

Date: 21/11/2022

Signed: Eoin Greene



Appendix A – Qualification

Eoin Greene is a Technical Director in the AECOM Roads team with more than 18 years' post-graduate experience. He has been employed by AECOM since 2004 and has spent his career to date working on transportation projects

He has extensive experience in all types of transportation schemes in Ireland, with recent direct experience leading the planning and design of a number of road schemes in Ireland and the UK. He has experience of leading the delivery of transportation schemes in both rural, urban, and regional town settings, with schemes including cycling improvements, junction upgrades, TII major schemes, and TII national and secondary schemes.

Eoin has experience of all types of statutory processes for transportation schemes including EIA, Appropriate Assessment, Compulsory Purchase Orders, Part 8 planning schemes, Section 38 traffic management schemes and has delivered a large number of public consultations on behalf of road authorities.

Role	Consultant	Position & Qualification
Project Manager/Project Director	Eoin Greene	Technical Director, BA, BAI, MIEI, CEng 1 st Class Honors Degree: Civil, Structural, and Environmental Engineering
















Appendix B – Description of the works that would be facilitated by the CPO

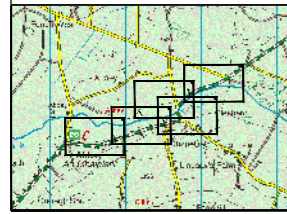
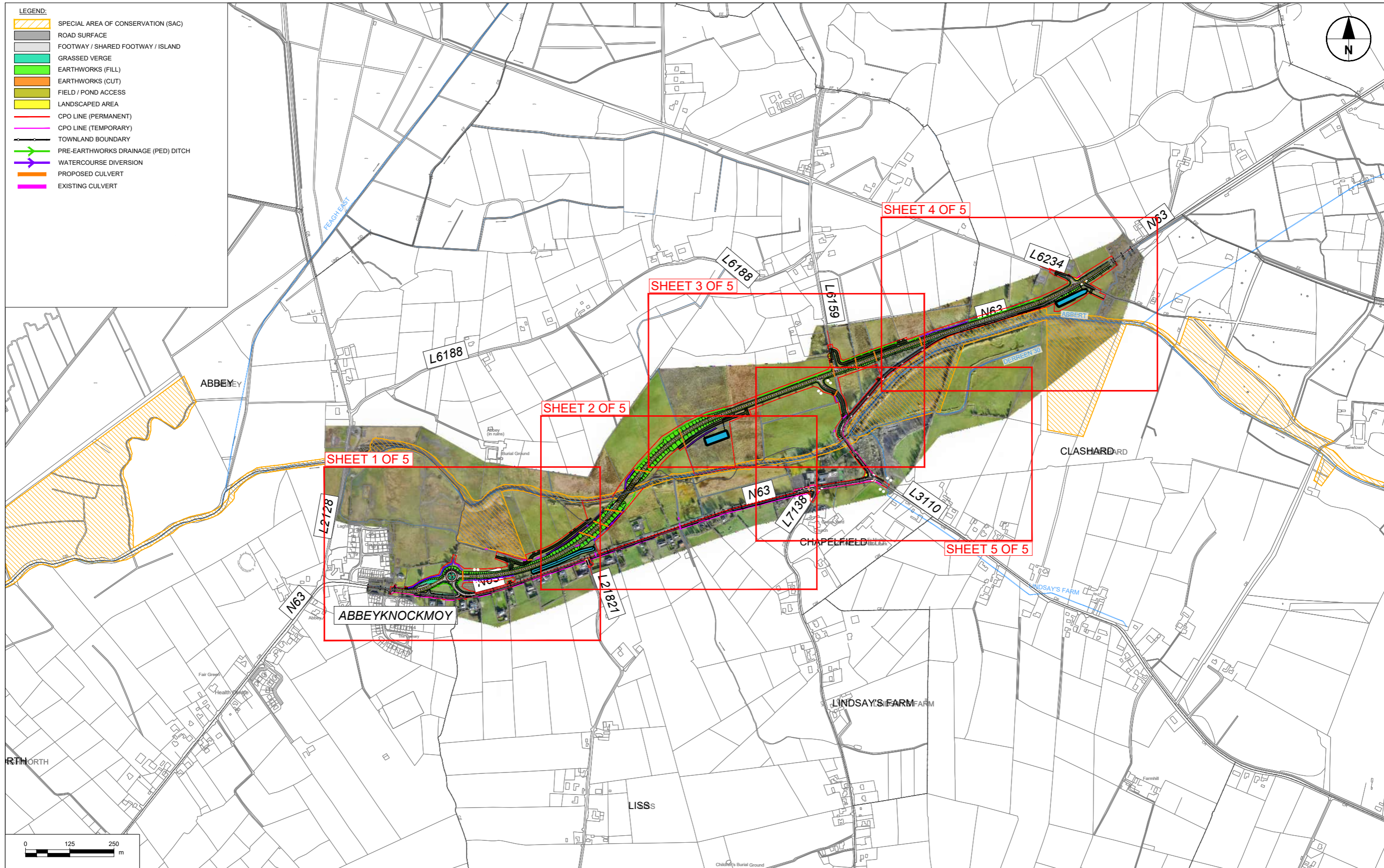
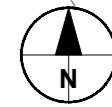
The Proposed Road Development includes the following;

- Approximately 2.3km of new Type 2 Single Carriageway road (predominantly offline);
- One new roundabout at the western end of the scheme to provide connection with the existing N63;
- Two new priority junctions to provide connection to the existing L6159 and L6234, including some minor local road realignments;
- One new clear span bridge crossing of the River Abbert;
- Seven new piped culverts and five box culverts over existing field ditches;
- Flood culverts to minimise impact on the Abbert River;
- New pedestrian and cycle facilities, predominantly located along the existing N63;
- Associated earthworks including excavation of unacceptable material, excavation and processing of rock and other material, and recovery of unacceptable material for re-use in the works;
- Accommodation works, including the provision of access roads and accesses;
- Drainage works, including the construction of attenuation ponds;
- Utilities and services diversion works;
- Safety Barrier, Public Lighting, Fencing;
- Landscaping works; and
- Environmental measures and other ancillary works.

Appendix C – General Arrangement Plans

C.1 General Arrangement Plans: (EIAR - Volume 3 - Figure 4.1 to 4.6)

- LEGEND:**
-  SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)
 -  ROAD SURFACE
 -  FOOTWAY / SHARED FOOTWAY / ISLAND
 -  GRASSED VERGE
 -  EARTHWORKS (FILL)
 -  EARTHWORKS (CUT)
 -  FIELD / POND ACCESS
 -  LANDSCAPED AREA
 -  CPO LINE (PERMANENT)
 -  CPO LINE (TEMPORARY)
 -  TOWNLAND BOUNDARY
 -  PRE-EARTHWORKS DRAINAGE (PED) DITCH
 -  WATERCOURSE DIVERSION
 -  PROPOSED CULVERT
 -  EXISTING CULVERT



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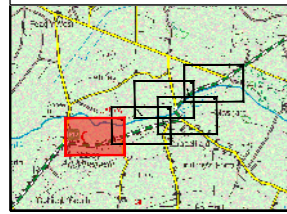
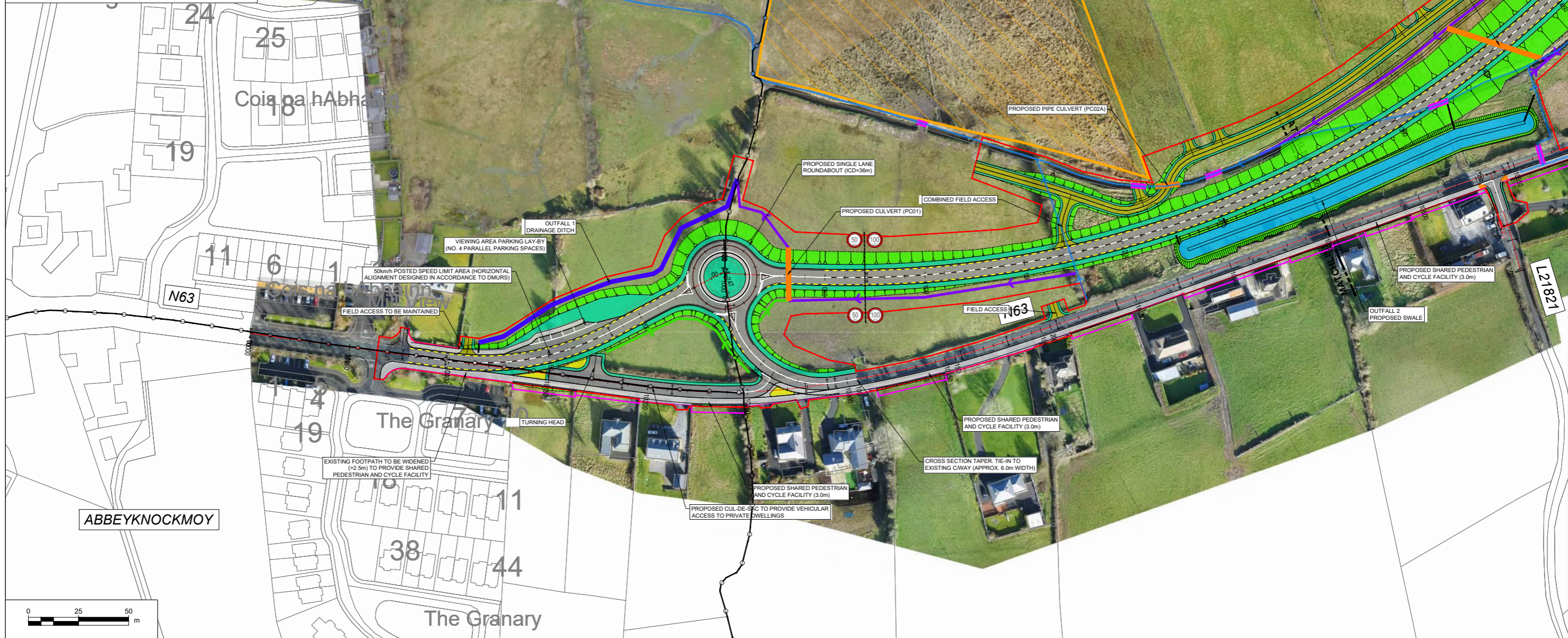
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Drawn	Designed	Checked	Approved	Suitability Code - Description
AC	LB	PC	EG	S2 - Information/Planning

Project Title	N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT SCHEME					
Drawing Title	FIGURE A4.1 - GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN - SHEET LAYOUT					
Project	Originator	Phase	Series	Type	Dept.	Number
N63	ACM	PH03	0000	DR	HW	0010
Scale: 1:5000 @A1 / 1:10000 @A3	Date: FEB 2022	Job No: 60597858	Rev: 0			

- LEGEND:**
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 -  PRE-EARTHWORKS DRAINAGE (PED) DITCH
 -  WATERCOURSE DIVERSION
 -  PROPOSED CULVERT
 -  EXISTING CULVERT





TIIV
Bonneagar Iompair Éireann
Transport Infrastructure Ireland



GALWAY
NATIONAL ROADS
PROJECT OFFICE



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



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








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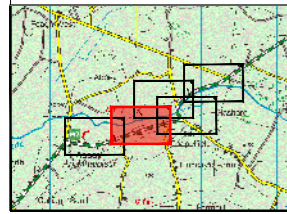
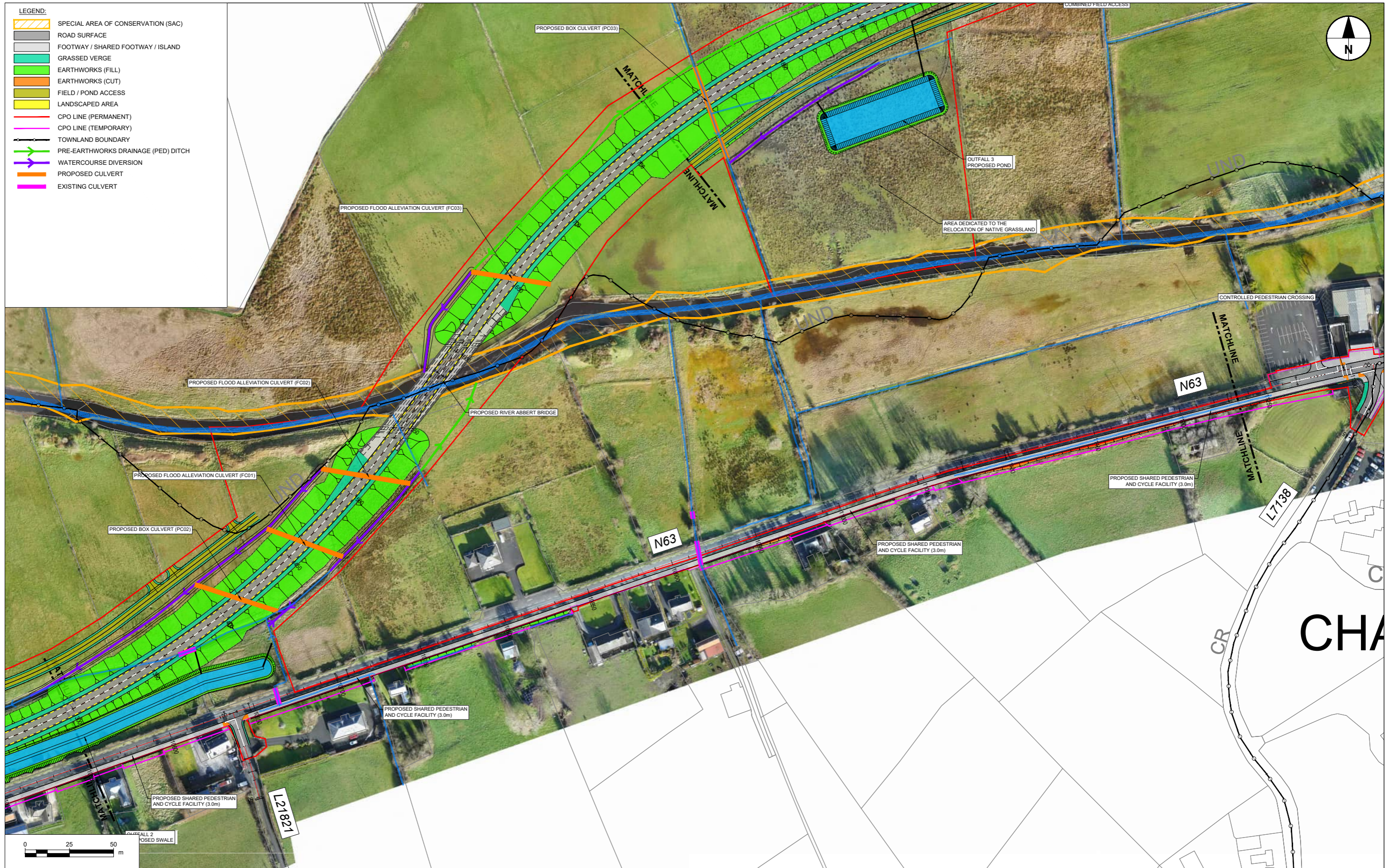
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 Suitability Code - Description: S2 - Information/Planning

Project Title	N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT SCHEME					
Drawing Title	FIGURE A4.2 - GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN - SHEET 1 OF 5					
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Scale	1:1000 @A1 / 1:2000 @A3		Date	FEB 2022		Job No: 60597858
Rev	0					

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- LEGEND:**
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No.	Revision	Date	By	Chk'd	App'd

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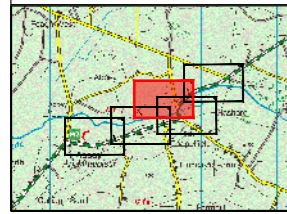
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 Suitability Code - Description: S2 - Information/Planning

Project Title	N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT SCHEME					
Drawing Title	FIGURE A4.3 - GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN - SHEET 2 OF 5					
Drawing Number	Project	Originator	Phase	Series	Type	Dept. Number
Scale:	N63	- ACM	- PH03	- 0000	- DR	- HW - 0012
Date:	1:1000 @ A1	FEB 2022	Job No:	60597858	Rev:	0

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 - EARTHWORKS (CUT)
 - FIELD / POND ACCESS
 - LANDSCAPED AREA
 - CPO LINE (PERMANENT)
 - CPO LINE (TEMPORARY)
 - TOWNLAND BOUNDARY
 - PRE-EARTHWORKS DRAINAGE (PED) DITCH
 - WATERCOURSE DIVERSION
 - PROPOSED CULVERT
 - EXISTING CULVERT



TIIV
Bonneagar Iompair Éireann
Transport Infrastructure Ireland

GALWAY
NATIONAL ROADS
PROJECT OFFICE

Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Project Ireland 2040
Building Ireland's Future

No.	Revision	Date	By	Chk'd	App'd

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












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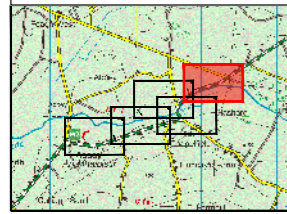
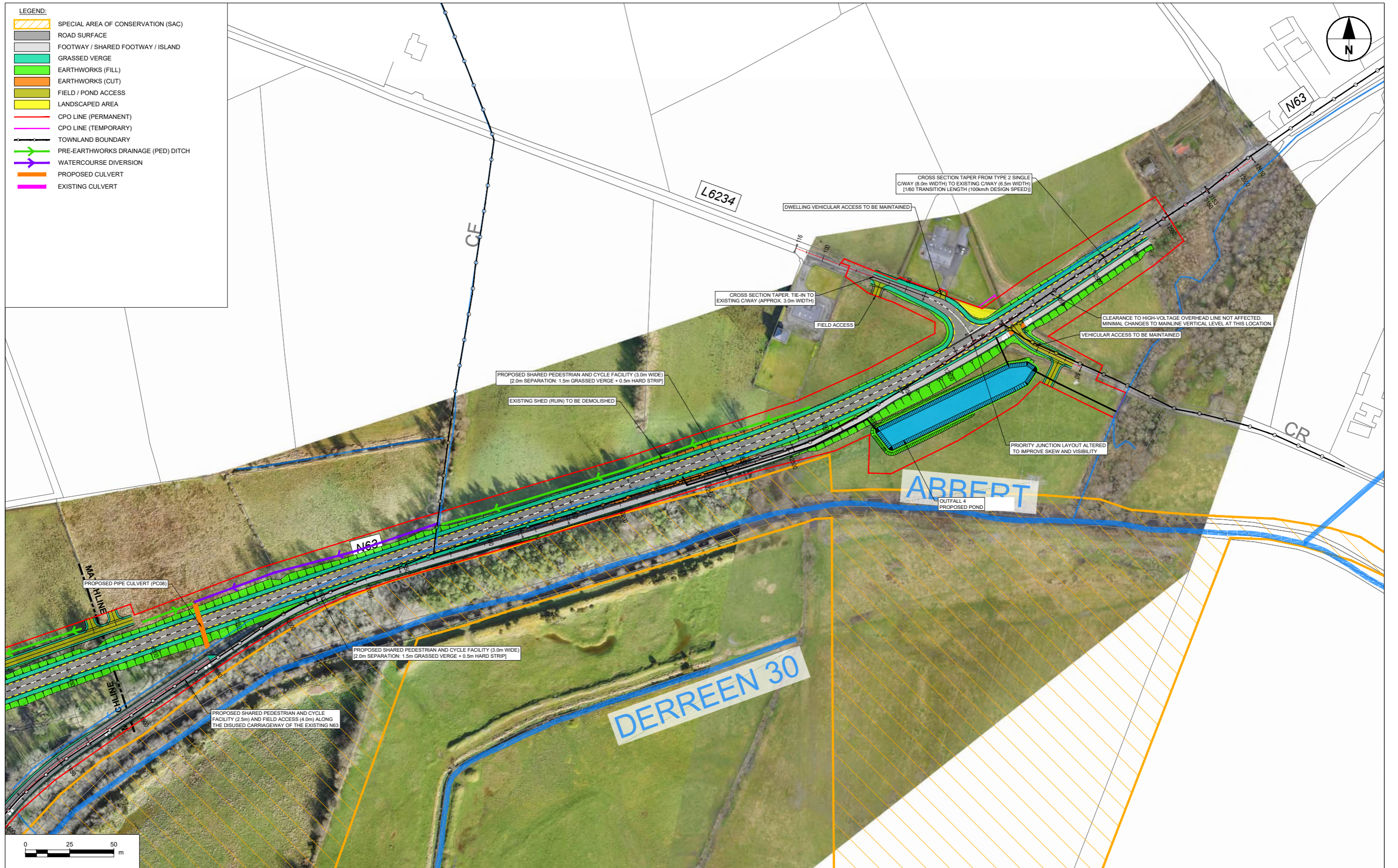
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Drawn	Designed	Checked	Approved	Suitability Code - Description
AC	LB	PC	EG	S2 - Information/Planning

Project Title		N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT SCHEME					
Drawing Title		FIGURE A4.4 - GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN - SHEET 3 OF 5					
Project	Originator	Phase	Series	Type	Dept.	Number	
N63	ACM	PH03	0000	DR	HW	0013	
Drawn Number	Scale: 1:1000 @A1 / 1:2000 @A3					Date: FEB 2022	
Job No:	60597858					Rev: 0	

- LEGEND:**
-  SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)
 -  ROAD SURFACE
 -  FOOTWAY / SHARED FOOTWAY / ISLAND
 -  GRASSED VERGE
 -  EARTHWORKS (FILL)
 -  EARTHWORKS (CUT)
 -  FIELD / POND ACCESS
 -  LANDSCAPED AREA
 -  CPO LINE (PERMANENT)
 -  CPO LINE (TEMPORARY)
 -  TOWNLAND BOUNDARY
 -  PRE-EARTHWORKS DRAINAGE (PED) DITCH
 -  WATERCOURSE DIVERSION
 -  PROPOSED CULVERT
 -  EXISTING CULVERT



No.	Revision	Date	By	Chk'd	App'd

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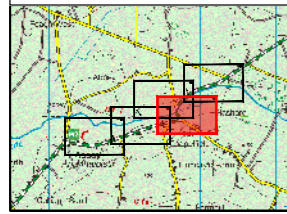
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Drawn: AC, Designed: LB, Checked: PC, Approved: EG
S2 - Information/Planning

Project Title		N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT SCHEME			
Drawing Title		FIGURE A4.5 - GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN - SHEET 4 OF 5			
Project	Originator	Phase	Series	Type	Dept. / Number
N63	ACM	PH03	0000	DR	HW - 0014
Scale: 1:1000 @A1 / 1:2000 @A3		Date: FEB 2022	Job No: 60597858	Rev: 0	

- LEGEND:**
- SPECIAL AREA OF CONSERVATION (SAC)
 - ROAD SURFACE
 - FOOTWAY / SHARED FOOTWAY / ISLAND
 - GRASSED VERGE
 - EARTHWORKS (FILL)
 - EARTHWORKS (CUT)
 - FIELD / POND ACCESS
 - LANDSCAPED AREA
 - CPO LINE (PERMANENT)
 - CPO LINE (TEMPORARY)
 - TOWNLAND BOUNDARY
 - PRE-EARTHWORKS DRAINAGE (PED) DITCH
 - WATERCOURSE DIVERSION
 - PROPOSED CULVERT
 - EXISTING CULVERT



No.	Revision	Date	By	Chkd	App'd

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Drawn: AC, Designed: LB, Checked: PC, Approved: EG

Suitability Code - Description: S2 - Information/Planning

Project Title		N63 LISS TO ABBEY REALIGNMENT SCHEME			
Drawing Title		FIGURE A4.6 - GENERAL ARRANGEMENT PLAN - SHEET 5 OF 5			
Project	Originator	Phase	Series	Type	Dept. Number
N63	- ACM	- PH03	- 0000	- DR - HW	- 0015
Scale: 1:1000 @A1 / 1:2000 @A3		Date: FEB 2022	Job No: 60597858	Rev: 0	

