AN BORD PLEANALA ORAL HEARING

Mayo County Council Compulsory Purchase Order 2013 (No.1) - N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project. Ref. Pl 16.KA0028

&

N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project - Environmental Impact Statement. Ref. Pl 16.HA0042

BRIEF OF EVIDENCE

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15 January 2014
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1. PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE.

1.1 Qualifications.

- B.A Geography University of Strathclyde 1976.
- Member of the Irish Planning Institute.

1.2 Experience.

Since qualifying as a Town Planner I have been continuously employed in all aspects of town and country planning in various local authorities, Government Agencies and a Government Department.

I have worked with Meath County Council, Kildare Council and Riyadh Development Agency Saudi Arabia and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

I am a past president of the Irish Planning Institute serving three terms of office at various times.

1.3 Current Position.

I have been employed by Mayo County Council since 1988, initially as Executive Planner and now as Senior Planner. I have been responsible for the preparation of all Mayo County Development Plans since 1992, including the current Town and Environs Plans for Castlebar and Westport. I have also worked in development management in the county although now in a supervisory role.

2. INTRODUCTION.

N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project is the latest in a series of improvements to stretches of the N5 National Primary Route in County Mayo and further afield, road improvements such as the existing N5 route from Castlebar to Ballyvary (an off-line route of the original N5), Ballyvary By-pass, Castlebar Relief Road, Longford By-pass, Ballaghderreen By-pass, and various widening, re-alignment and pavement schemes.

The N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project has itself been through a number of designs concluding with the current proposal (the history of the scheme is dealt with in other evidence).

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE DEVELOPMENT.

The N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project involves the construction of a new road beginning at the N59 Westport-Mallaranny Road north west of Westport in the townland of Deerpark East and ending at the existing N5 to the east of Castlebar in the townland of
The new road runs parallel with and north of the existing N5 until the townland of Derrylea where the new road intersects the existing N5 and continues southwards and east of the town of Castlebar until it intersects with the N84 and N60 national secondary roads and continues northwards to join the existing N5 to the east of Castlebar in the townland of Liscromwell. From Liscromwell east of Castlebar the N5 Westport to Turlough Road Project comprises the upgrading of the existing N5 for approximately 4.5km to a proposed junction at Turlough before crossing the Castlebar River and tapering into the existing N5 carriageway at Capparanny.

The proposed works will consist of the following:

- 23.7 kilometres of Type 2 Dual Carriageway,
- 2.1 kilometres of Type 2 Single Carriageway,
- 0.6 kilometre taper from Type 2 Dual to existing Single Carriageway,
- Three compact grade separated junctions including overbridges,
- Six roundabouts,
- Two at grade left-in left-out junctions and one all movements at grade junction,
- One bridge widening over the Castlebar River,
- Two rail bridges over the Westport to Manulla Junction railway line,
- Eleven overbridges, two underbridges and seven farm underpasses,
- Associated earthworks diversion of services, realignment of existing roads, construction of accommodation tracks and ancillary works,
- Excavation of peat & unacceptable material, excavation of rock and disposal & recovery of unacceptable material,
- Drainage works, landscaping and diversion of services and ancillary works.

4. THE NEED FOR THE SCHEME.

This submission deals with the need for the proposed project in an overall planning and sustainable development context and is complementary to Chapter 2 of the EIS which sets out the need for the proposed N5 Westport to Turlough Road Scheme based on the deficiencies in the existing road network and identified future needs of the N5 corridor.

The spatial planning context for this road scheme is rooted in the concept of balanced regional development as set out in the National Spatial Strategy 2002 and translated downwards through the planning hierarchy by West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 and Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2013.

Balanced Regional Development.

One of the fundamental elements that underpin balanced regional development is access to and connectivity within a region, since accessibility is one of the key determinants of a region’s competitiveness. While there have been improvements in the rail service to Castlebar & Westport the predominant mode of travel in the county is by road and the county will remain dependent on car transport and longer travel distances to work given its predominantly rural character.

The view consistently expressed by development agencies and business interests is that poor quality road infrastructure is a major barrier to investment in Mayo. Poor road access increases companies' operating costs by increasing travel time and transport costs to and
from markets as traffic volumes increase. Long travel times can also deter potential investors, senior executives or tourists from travelling to Mayo and increases the peripherality of many parts of the county. Therefore as a matter of principle the quality of road transport linkages is of crucial importance to trade, investment, tourism and quality of life.

The NSS highlights the inadequacy of road access to Mayo, in particular the N5 National Primary Route which is the main east/west access route from the Castlebar/Ballina Linked Hub and Westport to Dublin. The NSS acknowledges that the improvement of the N5 is essential for development needs of the county.

The proposed N5 Westport-Turlough project, being part of a “developmental strategy” rather than being simply based on existing traffic demand and road condition will:

- Substantially improve the links between Mayo and the rest of Ireland, the UK and Europe,
- Facilitate existing and future economic activity,
- Ensure speedy and efficient access to Dublin Airport as the national air hub,
- Improve access to and between the 3 towns in the county,
- Improve accessibility to/from the coast to support tourism and marine development.

The priority given to public infrastructure in the NSS and the National Development Plan recognise that upgrading the level and quality of provision is one of the keys to tackling regional disparities.

5. **COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY.**

**The National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020.**

The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) provides strategic planning guidance for a range of government policies and regional and local plans and a national framework to guide policies, programmes and investment.

The NSS is designed to achieve a better balance of social, economic, physical development and population growth between regions of the country.

The NSS recognises that achieving spatial balance will depend on enhancing the capacity for the movement of people, goods, energy and information between different areas of the country. Improvements in terms of time and cost can reduce the disadvantages of distance, and physical networks of infrastructure such as the N5 route are of particular relevance in this regard.

The identification of “linkages” in terms of good transport, communications and energy networks to enable places and areas to develop is central to the NSS.

With regard to road transport, one of the objectives of the NSS (set out in Section 3.7.1) is to build on Ireland’s radial transport system of main roads and rail lines connecting
Dublin to other regions, by developing an improved network of roads and public transport services.

Map 3 above indicates how Ireland’s spatial structure, including the gateways and hubs, will be supported by the strategic transport framework.

Map 3 of the NSS specifically identifies the N5 as one of a number of strategic radial corridors to be developed to improve the accessibility of the Castlebar-Ballina Linked Hub.

“Corridors to the West (x3) – good quality road and public transport connections between Dublin, Galway, Mayo and Sligo.”

The NSS identified implementation of the road investment programme under the NDP 2000-2006 as a key element to enhancing regional accessibility and underpinning better regional development.

At a more detailed level the NSS, in Section 4 outlines in summary form spatial policies for the West Region. Map 10 illustrates, in schematic form, how these policies apply in
different areas, including, in the West the principal road corridors that provide essential access to the regions.

The N5 is shown schematically on Map 10 above.

In Section 4.8 dealing with the West Region improvements in regional accessibility through advanced communications infrastructure, road and public transport is considered a “critical factor” particularly the linking of the Castlebar/Ballina hub to the Midlands Gateway (Mullingar/Athlone/Tullamore) through upgraded road, public transport and communications links.

**West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.**

The West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 are the formal policy bridge between national development priorities as set out in the NSS and planning policies at a more local level set out in the county development plans.
While working within the national framework of gateways, hubs, smaller towns & villages and rural areas, the RPGs provide more detailed regional level guidance, assisting planning authorities in framing County, City and Local Area Development Plans.

In particular the RPGs, in operating at a lower level than the NSS articulate a more detailed settlement structure. The West RPGs identify Westport as an extension to the Ballina-Castlebar Linked Hub.

4.6.2.3 Hub & Linked Hub In the West Region there is one Hub – Tuam and another Linked Hub of Ballina-Castlebar. The town of Westport is considered to be an extension of the Linked Hub towns by virtue of its size and role in the existing settlement structure of the county. The Hubs should provide for balanced patterns of growth supporting the role of the Gateway. The provision of key services is linked to the growth of these towns.
Key strategic goals outlined in the West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022 regarding the N5 Westport-Turlough Project include:

**SG1:** To identify, formulate and implement policies that will promote the gateway of Galway and the Hub Tuam and Linked Hub of Castlebar-Ballina into achieving their targets and fulfil their role as set out in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS), coupled with supporting a settlement strategy that will help to encourage the growth of towns and villages thereby enabling them to service their rural hinterlands. The process will take full account of the presence of the Natura 2000 sites in these areas and the requirement to protect these by subjecting all plans and projects to Habitats Directive Assessment and/or other relevant environmental assessment (where relevant).

**SG2:** To put in place an integrated sustainable transport and access infrastructure that:
- Facilitates access by all at a reasonable cost and with reasonable travel times to educational, work, leisure, health and other services.
- Promotes appropriate public transport services – rail or bus transport and other sustainable modes of travel such as walking and cycling.
- Provides a high level of service on major roads that minimises travel times and maximises safety and facilitates public transport by upgrading the network of national roads in the region in line with Transport 21 and NDP objectives.
- Facilitates the movement of goods in and out of the region in a way that promotes competitiveness.
- Minimise the need for car based travel where practical and viable

These two key strategic goals are a formal recognition that good transport infrastructure is vital to peripheral areas such as the West Region for promotion of economic and social well-being. The road network is by far the most used for inter-regional and intra-regional transport movement of goods and people.

The N5 Westport – Turlough Road Development is part of the key investment priorities set out in Section 1.5.3 26 of the RPGs:

**1.5.3 Future Investment Priorities**

The key investment priorities required to support the sustainable development of the region are as follows:......

- Construction of the new N5 Bohola to Westport dual carriageway.....
Throughout the National Development Plan (NDP) 2007-2013 there is an emphasis on the alignment of the NDP with the National Spatial Strategy concept of balanced regional development, in fact Chapter 3 is devoted solely to Regional Development and indicating how balanced regional development is central to the investment strategy of the NDP.

The Hubs identified in the NSS are also generally located on key transport corridors between the Gateways and will therefore benefit from ongoing investments under the NDP and Transport 21.
The NDP states that

“Continuing investment priorities in the Hubs will include:

• Delivery of enhanced connectivity in terms of the roll-out of Transport 21 in roads, public transport and in further support for regional air services and the continuing roll-out of high capacity broadband under the MANS programme; ....
• Measures to ensure strong linkages between the Hubs and their wider rural catchments through targeted investment for example in strategic non-national roads, rural public transport and rural broadband initiatives; and...”

**Transport 21**

*Transport 21*, sets out a 10-year transport investment framework from 2006 to 2015 for capital investment in national roads, public transport and regional airports. Whilst the *Transport 21* investment programme extends beyond the NDP 2007-2013, the transport investments set out in the NDP 2007-2013 are derived from, and form part of, the overall investment framework under *Transport 21*.

The Roads Sub-programme in the NDP 2007-2013 states that

**Roads Sub-Programme.**

“...The principal objectives of the Roads Sub-Programme will be the: ....
• Improvement of road links between the main NSS Gateways;
• Ongoing development of the Atlantic Road Corridor from Letterkenny through Sligo, Galway, Limerick, Cork and Waterford;....
• Targeted improvements of a number of key national secondary routes;
• Improvement and maintenance of the non-national roads network; and
• Investment in strategic non-national roads which will complement the national roads investment.”

As set out in Chapter 3, investment in national roads will be utilised to implement the objectives of the National Spatial Strategy. .... In combination with the Sub-Programme on Non-National Roads there will also be a significant investment in key routes impacting on NSS Gateways, Hubs and County Towns.”

The need to upgrade the national road network has been recognised by the inclusion in Transport 21 of projects to upgrade the N5 Dublin-Mayo road.

The proposed N5 Westport-Turlough Project meets the principal objectives of the NDP 2007-2013 Roads Sub-programme.

**BMW Region Operational Programme 2007-2013.**

The BMW Operational Programme takes account of EU priorities, regulations and guidelines, national policies and strategies and regional need.

The objective of the BMW Operational Programme is:
“To facilitate innovation, ensure sustainable development, improve accessibility and develop the urban fabric within the region, in order to enhance overall productivity and competitiveness.”

The Operational Programme is divided into 4 Priority Axes:

- **Priority Axis 1:** Innovation, ICT and the Knowledge Economy
- **Priority Axis 2:** Environment and Risk Prevention
- **Priority Axis 3:** Urban Development and Secondary Transport Networks
- **Priority Axis 4:** Technical Assistance

The objective of Priority Axis 3 is to;

“...strengthen the spatial structuring of the BMW Region by investing in integrated sustainable initiatives in order to enhance the competitiveness, accessibility and social cohesion of the region’s urban growth centres and to modernize the region’s transport infrastructure. “

The Operational Programme specifically recognises that the provision of an efficient, flexible and safe transport infrastructure, meeting the requirements of sustainable development as a necessary pre-condition for the economic development of the BMW Region by enhancing access to the region, connectivity within the region and facilitating the movement of people and goods (including public transport) between regions.

The Operational Programme identifies the improvement of a limited number of key linking routes, particularly aimed at improving accessibility to and between growth centres within the BMW Region. This approach is consistent with the NRA strategy for the development of the national secondary road network over the period 2007-2013 and national policy as set out in *Transport 21*.

The development strategy outlined in the Priority Axis 3 of the Operational Programme includes:

**Key Linking Routes** The reconstruction, realignment, and widening of sections of selected national secondary routes to improve linkages to key regional growth centres, including safety and traffic calming measures. Other measures include capacity improvements, bridge replacement, and the provision of small bypasses and minor inner relief roads.

**Public Transport** The enhancement of public transport facilities, QBCs, station and track upgrades, automation of level crossings and signalling improvements.

The proposed N5 Westport-Turlough Project as the N5 is a key linking route, meets the objective of Priority Axis 3 to strengthen the spatial structure of the BMW Region by enhanced accessibility and modernisation of the transport infrastructure.

**Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014.**
Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 creates a clear strategic framework for the proper planning and sustainable development for the county and is consistent with longer-term planning and sustainable development aims, set out in the National Spatial Strategy and the West Regional Planning Guidelines. The County Development Plan also provides a framework for public and private sector investment in infrastructure and in development in the area.

The key message of the NSS and RPGs, that critical mass in the Gateways and Hubs and Key Towns is essential to facilitate balanced regional development and that critical mass in turn is dependant on the availability of good quality infrastructure (both physical and social), is developed in the Section 2.2.2 of the County Development Plan 2008-2014 which sets out the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy for the county.

Section 2.3.1 of the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 - Ballina/Castlebar linked hub, and Westport as its natural extension is a recognition that Westport by its function and as a centre of employment is the axis of development for the county as a whole.

The NSS and RPGs recognise that certain coastal areas in the country have experienced economic growth and revitalization, based on diversification of an economy previously centred on agriculture. Westport and its hinterland is one of those areas, the town’s scale, attractiveness and setting is seen as a central aspect of its promotion and development of a growing tourism sector and spin-off employment creation in other enterprises and local services. Improved accessibility to Westport is essential if the economic vitality of the town in its strategic complimentary role as a driver of development at county level is to continue.

The focus of the Core Strategy and Settlement Strategy is the continued facilitation of growth of the Linked Hub and Westport (as an extension of the Linked Hub).
A number of key objectives of the Core Strategy are directly related to the N5 Westport-Turlough Project:

9. Provision of infrastructure to meet the development needs of the Settlement Hierarchy
10. Consolidation of population growth in a way which best facilitates travel by sustainable modes in accordance with the Department of Transport ‘Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future – A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009 – 2020’
11. Development of strong transport links between the Galway gateway, other gateways and the linked hub and Westport together with the more peripheral areas
12. Maintain and protect the safety and efficiency of the national road network given its strategic role in catering for transport requirements between the linked hub and other settlements in the settlement hierarchy and other inter-urban and inter-regional transport requirements.

Objectives specific to the N5 Westport-Turlough Project are contained in Section 3.1.3 Transport & Public Infrastructure and detailed in Appendix 1 – National Primary Routes (Bullet Point 1 and Specific Objectives NP2, NP4 and NP5).

Variation of the Castlebar and Westport Town Plans.

Since the publication of the latest Town & Environs Development Plans for both Castlebar and Westport the indicative road line for this scheme shown on the original land use maps of those plans changed as the scheme progressed through the route selection and design process. The changes to the indicative road line were considered to be material and therefore it became necessary to vary the two Town & Environs Development Plans to facilitate the N5 Westport-Turlough Project.


The variation to the Castlebar Town & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014 incorporating the current proposal for the N5 Westport-Turlough Project as it affects the plan area was made on 13th December 2012 by Castlebar Town Council and 11th February 2013 by Mayo County Council.


The variation to the Westport Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016 incorporating the current proposal for the N5 Westport-Turlough Project as it affects the plan area was made on 21st June 2012 by Westport Town Council and 9th July 2012 by Mayo County Council.

The proposed N5 Westport-Turlough Project complies with the Goals, Policies and Objectives of the following statutory development plans:-

- Westport Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016
6. CO. MAYO: PLANNING TRENDS.

Castlebar/Ballina Linked Hub.

Recent socio-economic indicators based on the changes from 2006-2011 show that in the Castlebar/Ballina Linked Hub:

- The number of new firms established in the Hub fell from 9.52/1,000 employees in 2006 to 6.49/1,000 employees in 2011. The 2011 level is marginally below the national average for Hubs of 6.76.

- The Hub has a comparatively high share of services in the economy. In 2012, the Castlebar/Ballina Hub supported a 1.83% share of services in the economy with 1.41% of the national population. In comparison, the average percentage of services present in all NSS Hubs was 1.19%.

- The unemployment rate has increased significantly, 11.19%, since 2006 rising from 7.94% in 2006 to 19.12% in 2011. The average unemployment figure for all NSS Hubs in 2011 was 20.07%.

- The decline in the number of people using green transport modes was more significant in this Hub than in any other NSS Hub and has the lowest green transport usage rate of any Hub town. From 10.45% in 2002 to 7.03% in 2011. In comparison, the average green transport usage across all Hubs was 10.59% in 2011.

- While in the urban area of the Hub the percentage of population living less than 30 minutes from their place of work increased from 74.47% in 2006 to 76.43% in 2011, the percentage of population in the wider area around the Hub living less than 30 minutes from their place of work decreased from 68.25% in 2006 to 67.54% in 2011.

- The number of retail outlets per household in the Hub is 3.34 to every 100 is higher that the a national average for Hubs of 3.06).

Source: Gateways & Hubs Development Index 2012

Key development issues and requirements identified for the Castlebar/Ballina Hub include road and rail infrastructure. While some of the development issues and requirements have been or are being addressed reduced public investment and funding for infrastructure projects has meant that many projects have been suspended or cancelled.

Population.

The population of Mayo has increased each Census since 1971 19% (21,113 persons) between 1971 and 2011 and currently stands at 130,908. In the 2006 to 2011 inter-census period the population of the county increased by 5.5% (or 6799 persons) only a marginal increase of 0.1% over the period 2002 to 2006.

Within the overall population growth between 2006-2011 there are clear trends in the Hub towns, Westport and Key towns with the Environ of the Hub showing significant increases in population, Castlebar, 21%, Ballina 105% and Westport (67%). The four Key Towns and their environs also increased; Claremorris 32%; Ballinrobe, 29%, Belmullet, 25%; and Louisburgh, 34%.
However, the population within the urban areas of both Hub towns actually fell, Castlebar Urban, -2% and Ballina Urban -6%. One Key Town lost population, Swinford -5%.

Westport is the third largest town in Mayo with an urban population of 5,543 (Census 2011).

**Economic Development.**

The structure of the Mayo economy highlights how reliant that economy is on having a good transport network. While all sectors of the economy require a good road infrastructure to some extent 43.8% of the economy (Manufacturing, Commerce/Trade and Transport itself) is directly dependent on access to the east, and Dublin in particular. Almost all manufactured goods are transported via the N5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Daytime Working Population</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>3019</td>
<td>8.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building and construction</td>
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<td>3.2</td>
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<td>Manufacturing</td>
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<td>Commerce and trade</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5099</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>36944</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Census 2011

The N5 Westport-Turlough Project will benefit particularly the major manufacturing employers located in Castlebar and Westport.

**Tourism.**

The NSS has identified that the key strategic role for the area in which the N5 Westport-Turlough Project is located as “Revitalising” (NSS Map 10). In such areas economic diversification is either already taking place and which and can be intensified and extended as in the case of Mayo or has the potential to develop.

The Key Considerations for the “Revitalising Areas” are:

- Exploiting economic opportunities of the the Hub Towns
- Improvement of transportation, communication and energy links to the rest of the country, especially to and from nearby gateways.
- Enhancement of access to social and other services and improving quality of life.
- Establishing a spatial framework for the development and conservation of key marine and natural resources that underpin economic and quality of life attractions.

A major element in realising the economic potential of Mayo, and particularly west Mayo as a “Revitalising Areas” is tourism.
In 2012 a total of 1.164 million overseas visitors holidayed in the West of Ireland contributing €339 million to the economy, of these 234,000 visitors came to Mayo contributing €67 million to the local economy.

It is estimated that overseas visitors have an average spend of €50.71/head/day and domestic visitors (from outside the County) have an average spend of €10.12/head/day.

Mayo receives approximately 1,350,000 – 1,550,000 visitors (domestic and overseas). The primary mode of access for overseas visitors is by air (87%) with the majority arriving through Dublin, Shannon and Knock airports 94%). The primary mode of access for domestic visitors coming to Mayo is by car and public transport.

Westport is located at the end of the N5 National Primary Route, which makes it a destination town rather than a stopping off point on a through route. Westport is the primary tourism destination in the county. A designated heritage town, the attraction of Westport to tourists has been enhanced by it’s record in Environmental and Heritage Competitions, having won the Tidy Towns Award in 2001, 2006 and 2008 and in 2012 was awarded the title of "Irelands Best Place to Live"

The N5 as far as Castlebar is also the main access to Achill Island, the second most popular tourism destination in Mayo.

Transport & Mobility.

Within the labourforce 63.6% of the journeys to work were by car averaging 23 minutes with 18.7% of workers faced a commuting time in excess of 30 minutes. Only 445 persons commuted using public transport (bus or rail).

Recent trends and the N5 Westport-Turlough Project.

Recent socio-economic trends both nationally and regionally highlight the competitive advantages that both Dublin (and its region) and the Gateway cities have over the NSS Hubs. Job creation has largely been confined to the Greater Dublin area and the Gateways while in Mayo job losses have occurred in Castlebar and Key towns. In this context, the Hub towns, already starting for a position of competitive disadvantage now see that competitive disadvantage increasing as economic development becomes polarised in Dublin and the Gateways.

The project if completed should address the Regional imbalances that Mayo has experienced in the past due to it peripheral location. Mayo would be able to successfully compete against Sligo and Galway in attracting inward investment. It would open up greater opportunities to the towns of Castlebar and Westport, by improving the link to Ireland West Airport which is envisioned to become a strategically important transportation and economic hub for the Region.

The proposed N5 Westport to Turlough Project is considered a crucial infrastructural project in the overall spatial planning framework for Mayo that will facilitate the delivery of sustainable economic and social growth in a manner that is consistent with the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region. The N5 Westport-Turlough Project, as part of the Westport-Bohola and N26 Ballyvary/Ballina...
Road Scheme will facilitate and reinforce the spatial development of the county which is predicated on a strong Ballina/Castlebar/Westport axis.

A significant proportion of the Mayo economy is dependent on having good roads infrastructure. The N5 Westport-Turlough Project will improve access from Westport and Castlebar to the Dublin and the east, reducing competitive disadvantage in transport time and reliability. The project is one of a number of key infrastructural projects that will reduce the peripherality of Mayo along the West Coast. The project will be the first step in providing an efficient transportation network that will link Mayo’s three largest towns, the linked hub of Castlebar/Ballina and the key town of Westport to the planned North-South Atlantic Corridor and to the Greater Dublin Area. The N5 project would also give greater security to the existing International Companies based in Mayo by improving transportation links for exporting goods.

Furthermore there is a real concern that, in terms of economic recovery, current tendencies for economic and regional policy to focus on the major cities will hinder the potential of development in smaller urban centres such as Castlbar Ballina & Westport. In this regard it is considered essential that investment in critical infrastructure such as the N5 takes place.

The N5 project will provide better access for the tourism potential of the County and reduce traffic congestion in both Castlebar and Westport, making them more attractive destinations.

7. IMPACT ON THE LANDSCAPE.

The impact of the N5 Westport-Turlough Project on the landscape, visual analysis and mitigation is dealt with in considerable detail in Chapter 11 of the EIS. Section 3.1.5 of Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014 - Environment, Heritage & Conservation deals with the protection of the landscape.

**LANDSCAPE PROTECTION POLICIES**

**P/EH-LC 1** It is the policy of the Council, through the Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo, to recognize and facilitate appropriate development in a manner that has regard to the character and sensitivity of the landscape, to ensure that development will not have a disproportionate effect on the existing or future character of a landscape in terms of location, design and visual prominence, and that development will have regard to the effects of developments on views from the public realm towards sensitive or vulnerable features and areas. In this regard, proposals for development that have the potential to impinge on the integrity of significant landscape resources will be assessed having regard to the guidelines set out in Section 4.18 of the Development Management Guidelines.

**P/EH-LC 2** It is the policy of the Council that all proposed development shall be considered in the context of the Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo with reference to the four Principal Policy Areas shown on Map 9 Landscape Protection Policy Areas and the Landscape Sensitivity Matrix (Figure 3), provided such policies do not conflict with any specific objectives of this Plan.
VIEWS AND PROSPECTS
POLICIES

P/EH-VP 1 It is the policy of the Council to ensure that development does not adversely interfere with views and prospects and the amenities of places and features of natural beauty or interest when viewed from the public realm. Views and prospects worthy of preservation and protection are indicated on Map 10.

P/EH-VP 2 It is the policy of the Council to ensure that all proposals have regard to the potential effects of development on views from the public realm towards sensitive or vulnerable features and areas.

The principle underlying the policies of the development plan is that development will be permitted or supported only where is demonstrated that it will not have an adverse impact on the landscape.

The primary policy instrument dealing with landscape impact is the Landscape Appraisal of County Mayo referred to in Policy P/EH-LC 2 above. The Landscape Appraisal specifically incorporates the benefit to the public as part of the evaluation of the impact of any particular development.

The N5 Westport-Turlough Project falls almost entirely within Landscape Protection Policy Area 4 - Drumlins and Inland Lowlands. (Sections B,C and D of the project described in 11.1.1 of the EIS). A small portion of the scheme, Section A of the project described in 11.1.1 of the EIS, the area immediately in the area of Westport Town lies within Landscape Protection Policy Area 2 – Lowland Coastal Zone.

The Landscape Sensitivity Matrix of the Appraisal shows that road developments have low potential in Policy Area 4 (i.e. Sections B, C and D of the project) and low/medium potential to create adverse impacts on landscape character in Policy Area 2 (i.e. Section A of the project).

It is recognised that while the N5 Westport-Turlough Project will have an impact on the landscape to some extent however there are several locations where the impact on the landscape will be significant eg Black Lough at Islandeady where the road adjoins the lake and Lough Lannagh at Castlebar where the road will cross the lake and and a limited number of other locations where impact will be significant despite mitigation but such impacts are localised.

Taking the scheme as a whole, including length, design and mitigation it is the council’s opinion that while the development will inevitably give rise to visual impacts, the number of locations where that impact is particularly significant is limited and that on balance the interest of the public good served by the scheme.

Tree Preservation Orders.

The N5 Westport-Turlough Project impacts on a number of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) all located along the existing N5 at Clogher, Castlebar.

Clogher (No.1) Tree Preservation Order 1993.
Clogher (No.2) Tree Preservation Order 1993.
Clogher (No.3) Tree Preservation Order 1993.
It is the policy of the development plan to “protect, enhance and conserve” the natural environment, including tree preservation orders.

**NATURAL HERITAGE POLICIES**

*P/EH-NH 1* It is the policy of the Council to protect, enhance and conserve:

......

c) Features of natural interest and amenity, which provide a unique habitat for wildlife including ecological networks (including ecological corridors and stepping stones), riparian zones, hedgerows, stonewalls, shelterbelts, woodlands, individual or groups of trees and forest amenity areas.

g) Trees or groups of trees under Tree Preservation Orders as listed in Appendix VII, as well as trees and woodlands of particular amenity and nature conservation value, or which make a valuable contribution to the character of the landscape, a settlement or its setting......

While the project requires the removal of a number of trees in each TPO area the fact that most of the trees to be removed are dead, diseased or dying and therefore not subject to the TPO, and that significant numbers of trees in the area of each of the TPOs are to be retained the TPOs were amended rather than revoked.

The TPOs were amended by Mayo County Council on the 9th December 2013. It is the view of the council that, given the extent to which trees within the TPO areas are retained, the proposals set out in Table 11.7 Mitigation Proposals LM-D3 to LM-D5 in Table 11.7 of the EIS, the proposed amendments to the Tree Preservation Orders development is consistent the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in that they will allow for improvements to the N5 National Route while maintaining important groups of trees that contribute significantly to the landscape of the area.

8. **CONCLUSION.**

**Consistency with proper planning and sustainable development.**

This submission is based on the principle that the Castlebar Linked Hub and Westport as its extension will perform an important role within the national structure at the regional and county level as drivers for the overall development of wider sub-region within the West and county Mayo in particular thereby supporting balanced regional development. This is the view set out in the National Spatial Strategy 2002, the West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010 and Mayo County Development Plan 2008.

A critical factor in the achievement of spatial balance in the West Region generally, and county Mayo in particular is improvement in regional accessibility through road and public transport and advanced communications infrastructure. Enhancing capacity for the movement of people, goods, energy and information between different places and consequent improvement in terms of time and cost have been shown to reduce the disadvantages of distance.

The N5 route is considered to be a vital element of the Core Strategy for the county, including the spatial development framework and the settlement structure. Whilst the development of Castlebar-Ballina as a Linked HWestport is the ultimate aim of the Core
Strategy, other settlements play an important complementary role and particularly relevant to the N5 project are Swinford and Charlestown, both are identified as Key Towns within the settlement structure with the function of absorbing development demand in the wider Mayo context.

Progress on achieving balanced regional development as envisaged in the NSS has been limited due to a number of factors including the significant national slowdown in development since late 2007.

Improved accessibility is considered to be a vital aspect of economic development and the upgrading of the N5 between Westport-Turlough is considered to be a significant development in the challenge of attracting investment to Mayo and the major economic centres of Castlebar and Westport in particular the Castlebar/Ballina Linked Hub and its extension to Westport. The Castlebar/Ballina Linked Hub and Westport play a significant role in wider West Region in relation to industry, public services, retail and tourism, and this could be expanded upon with improved transport links.

Having considered:-

(a) the National Spatial Strategy 2002-2020 and the objectives set out therein to support balanced regional development and improve infrastructure networks such as roads,

(b) the National Development Plan 2007-2013 and the objectives set out therein to ensure strong linkages between hubs and their wider catchments, and delivery of enhanced connectivity in terms of the roll-out of Transport 21,

(c) the Regional Planning Guidelines for the West Region 2010-2022, and policies and objective contained therein to improve national roads in the region – in particular the N59 between the boundary with Co. Sligo and the boundary with Co. Galway,

(d) the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014, and specific policies and objectives to improve national secondary routes within the county,

(e) the Westport Town & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016, and objectives contained therein to safeguard identified routes for the N5 and N59 and the northern relief road for the town, in particular,

(f) the Castlebar Town & Environs Development Plan 20008-2014, and objectives contained therein to safeguard identified route for the N5,

(g) the Environmental Impact Statement and Natura Impact Statement submitted by Mayo County Council, including the mitigation measures set out therein and the consideration of likely ‘in-combination’ effects of other plans and projects,

(h) the community need and public interest served to be achieved from use of the acquired lands for the purpose identified in the order,

it is my opinion that the proposed development would not seriously injure the visual amenities or landscape character of the area, would not seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity, would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience, would not be prejudicial to public health and would not, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
APPENDIX 1

Detailed Policies of the Mayo County Development Plan 2008-2014

“3.1.1 THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.
Ballina/Castlebar/Westport Development Hub.

DF-DH 4 It is an objective of the Council to prioritise transport, energy, and major public infrastructure projects that will give effect to the development of Ballina/Castlebar/Westport as a development hub as indicated in the Development Framework.

3.1.3 TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE.

TRANSPORT.

Land Use Integration & Transport.

TI-LUT 1 It is an objective of the Council that proposals for all new major developments shall make provision for the incorporation of public transport infrastructure development so as not to prejudice the future delivery of a public transport service in County Mayo.

ROAD.

TI-R 1 It is an objective of the Council to secure improvement to the standard and safety of the public road network to cater for the economic, social and cultural development of the County.

TI-R 2 It is an objective of the Council to protect the investment of public resources in the provision, improvement and maintenance of the public road network.

TI-R 3 It is an objective of the Council, in partnership with the NRA and in conjunction with adjoining local authorities to secure the improvement of road links to the regions.

TI-R 4 It is an objective of the Council in partnership with all statutory agencies to maintain and upgrade both national and county roads to an appropriate capacity to meet regional and inter regional transport needs,

National Primary Roads.

TI-NP 1 It is an objective of the Council in co-operation with the National Roads Authority to have the major improvements identified in Appendix I carried out on the National Primary roads.

TI-NP 4 It is an objective of the Council to provide new relief roads and town by passes on the National Primary Network.

Appendix I: List of Road Improvements

National Primary Routes

• It is an objective to complete improvements to the three National Primary Routes N5, N17 and N26 to their entirety.
• Major schemes on the N26 will include Ballina-Bohola including Foxford by-pass.
• It is an objective that the new road to be constructed from Ballina to Bohola shall be declared a National Primary road - to replace the existing N26 from Ballina to Swinford.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Route</th>
<th>Proposal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP2</td>
<td>N5</td>
<td>Commence land acquisition and construction of Westport–Castlebar section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP4</td>
<td>N5</td>
<td>Commence design and land acquisition for Castlebar by-pass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP5</td>
<td>N5</td>
<td>Commence design and land acquisition for Westport Northern Relief Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP9</td>
<td>N5</td>
<td>The examination of converting the existing N5 to an Enhanced cross-section incorporating by-passes.</td>
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