



Lackagh-Knockdoe Solar Action Group

Correspondence · Letter from a local resident

Personal names, contact details, home-location references and identifying signature details have been removed.

6 October 2026

In person and by email

Scoil Naomh Bhríde
Lackagh Beg
Turloughmore
Co. Galway

Re: Planning Application Ref. 2661567 — Blackthorn Solar Farm

Request for urgent Board consideration and a formal school submission

Submission deadline: 20 October 2026

Dear [name removed],

I am writing to ask that this letter be placed before the Board of Management of Scoil Naomh Bhríde immediately and that the Board consider making a formal submission to Galway County Council on Planning Application Ref. 2661567 before the submission deadline of 20 October 2026.

The proposed Blackthorn Solar Farm would bring an extended construction programme, articulated HGVs, construction plant, aggregate deliveries, piling or other foundation works, noise, vibration, dust and traffic disruption onto the L21332, the road on which the school is located and which provides access to the southern part of the proposed development.

The Board is not being asked to take a position on renewable energy generally. It is being asked to protect the school's pupils, staff, ASD-unit environment, Safe Routes to School programme, school access and long-term place in the Lackagh community.

The application does not appear to assess Scoil Naomh Bhríde as a noise-sensitive location. It does not assess the school route as a child-pedestrian or cyclist environment. It does not provide a school-specific analysis of construction traffic, vehicle queuing, reversing, dust, vibration, arrival and dispersal periods, or the impact on pupils with sensory and additional needs.

The Board's submission is essential because Galway County Council cannot know the school's day-to-day circumstances without hearing directly from the school. The Board is the only body able to place on the planning file information about pupil movements, school-gate safety, arrival

and collection periods, walking and cycling routes, ASD-unit needs, classroom locations, after-school activity, school transport and the likely effect of prolonged construction disturbance on the school community.

A Board submission need not be a blanket objection. However, on the information presently available, the Board should request that permission be refused, or at minimum not determined, until the applicant has provided sufficient school-specific evidence and Galway County Council has assessed the resulting safety, access, noise, vibration, dust and community effects.

If the Board does not make a submission before 20 October, the school will have no formal opportunity to place these matters before the planning authority while the application is being decided.

The proposed development

Blackthorn Solar Farm Limited has applied for ten-year permission for a solar development of approximately 93 hectares in the townlands of Cahernashilleeny, Knockdoebeg West, Knockdoemore and Lackagh Beg. The application includes approximately 352,500 square metres of panels, 18 transformer stations, internal access tracks, underground cabling, drainage works, security fencing, construction compounds and associated infrastructure. The stated operational period is 40 years.

The application documents refer to a construction programme extending over approximately 12 to 18 months overall. The southern parcel, which is served from the L21332 adjacent to the school, is stated to require approximately 56 weeks of construction activity. Figure 1 shows the proximity of the development site to Scoil Naomh Bhríde.

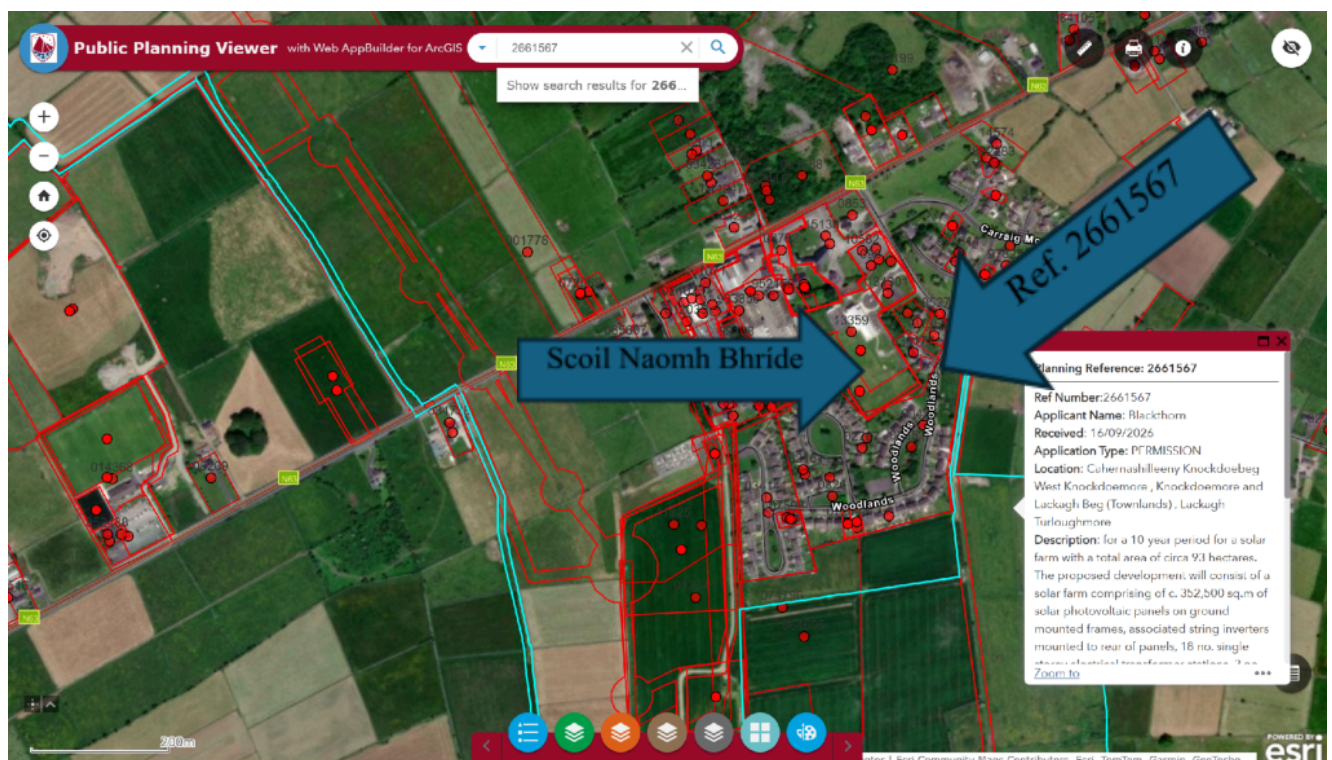


Figure 1. Proximity of proposed development site to Scoil Naomh Bhríde

The application must be assessed not only as an energy proposal but also for its practical consequences for Lackagh, the local road network, homes, farms, the school and the children who use the route every day.

The school route

The Construction Traffic Management Plan identifies the L21332 as providing access to Parcel 2. Scoil Naomh Bhríde is located on that local road.

The proposed construction traffic includes articulated HGVs, construction plant, delivery vehicles, dumper-truck movements, gravel deliveries, machinery mobilisation and electrical-equipment deliveries. The application estimates 1,811 vehicle trips associated with Parcel 2, including substantial movements of panels, mounting systems, fencing, machinery, aggregates and other materials.

The CTMP states that the L21332 has a carriageway width of approximately 3.5 metres. Local measurements indicate that the road width varies substantially along the route and narrows significantly beyond the school on the approach to the proposed site entrance. That constrained section has direct implications for the school because traffic approaching it from the R354 direction may wait, queue or reverse on the approach road outside or near the school.

The application does not appear to provide:

- measured carriageway and verge widths along the full L21332 route;
- a passing-place, holding-area or priority arrangement for constrained sections;
- an assessment of where opposing traffic will wait when a heavy vehicle occupies a narrow section;
- a swept-path assessment of the R354/L21332 junction used by deliveries to Parcel 2;
- a school-specific pedestrian, cyclist or school-gate assessment;
- a Road Safety Audit of the haul route and school approach;
- a defined maximum vehicle specification for all deliveries; or
- a construction-traffic assessment that includes staff traffic, school traffic and pupil movements together.

The CEMP also contains a delivery-route description referring to the L2309 at Colmanstown, notwithstanding that the development is at Lackagh and the application identifies access from the N83 and L21332. That discrepancy requires explanation before reliance can be placed on the submitted traffic material.

School safety and Safe Routes to School

Scoil Naomh Bhríde has been selected for the Safe Routes to School programme. The purpose of that nationally supported programme is to improve safety at school gates and facilitate walking, cycling and active travel by children.

The proposed development creates an obvious conflict requiring formal assessment: Galway County Council is supporting safer travel to school while considering an application that would introduce extensive construction traffic, including articulated HGVs, onto the same local route.

The application contains no apparent assessment of:

- the number of pupils walking or cycling to school;
- arrival, collection and after-school activity periods;
- staff parking, bus/minibus use or visitor movements;
- footpath provision, road crossings or informal pedestrian routes;
- the effect of HGVs on children using the road;
- the effect of construction traffic on Safe Routes to School measures; or
- the particular risks created by queuing, waiting, reversing or turning movements near the school.

The Board is uniquely placed to supply this information. Unless it is placed on the planning file now, the planning authority cannot properly take account of the school's actual operating circumstances.

Noise, vibration and the learning environment

The application has not assessed Scoil Naomh Bhríde as a noise-sensitive location. The submitted Noise Impact Assessment identifies residential receptors but does not appear to consider the school, notwithstanding that the school is close to the construction route and within the broader area of construction effects.

This omission is material because the application does not fix the foundation method for the solar arrays. It refers to driven piles, screw piles or alternative arrangements, subject to future geotechnical assessment and detailed design. Those construction methods have materially different noise and vibration consequences.

Local residents adjacent to the nearby Ballymoneen Solar Farm have reported prolonged periods of daily piling and associated construction disturbance. Those reports do not establish that Blackthorn will produce identical effects. They do, however, illustrate why a generic construction-noise assessment is insufficient where a school is on or beside the proposed construction route and the final foundation method remains unsettled.

The Board should request:

- assessment of construction noise at the school boundary and at relevant classrooms;
- assessment of construction vibration at the school;
- confirmation of the final foundation method before planning permission is determined;
- modelling of noise and vibration during the most disruptive construction phases;
- enforceable restrictions on driven piling, percussive works and vibration-generating activity during teaching hours and pupil-sensitive periods; and
- a school-specific complaint, incident and corrective-action procedure.

Pupils with additional and sensory needs

The school operates an ASD unit. This is especially significant.

For some pupils with autism, sensory-processing differences or other additional needs, repeated construction noise, vibration, dust, visible HGV movements, queuing traffic and changes to established arrival and dispersal routines may have a greater effect than they would on the general population.

The Board need not disclose personal information about any pupil. It should, however, state clearly that the school has pupils with particular sensory and educational needs, that the school has a duty to provide a safe and suitable learning environment, and that the application contains no school-specific assessment of sustained construction noise, vibration, traffic disturbance or changes in the roadside environment.

This issue cannot sensibly be deferred until after permission is granted and a contractor has been appointed.

The long-term future of the school community

Scoil Naomh Bhríde is not simply a building beside a construction route. It is a core community institution serving Lackagh and the surrounding rural catchment. Its long-term future depends upon families choosing to remain in, move to and raise children in the locality.

The proposal would introduce a large-scale industrial solar installation, extensive fencing, long-term infrastructure, heavy construction traffic, disruption, noise, vibration, dust and a substantial change to the character of the village and its rural setting.

It cannot be assumed that such change will have no effect on family retention, parental decisions, local confidence, residential amenity or demand for school places. Rural schools are particularly sensitive to changes in catchment population. Small reductions in enrolment can have disproportionate consequences for staffing, class structure, resources, extracurricular activities and the school's long-term viability.

The Board should request that the planning authority consider whether the proposed development has adequately assessed the effect of prolonged construction disruption and long-term environmental change on:

- the school catchment;
- family retention and attraction;
- parental confidence in the local environment;
- pupil enrolment and school sustainability; and
- the wider social and community infrastructure of Lackagh.

The Board need not assert that enrollment will decline. It should state that the issue is foreseeable, material and has not been assessed.

The Board's planning role

A Board submission is neither political nor an endorsement of any wider campaign. It is a necessary act of school governance.

The Board is the only body able to provide authoritative information on:

- pupil numbers;

- school opening, arrival and dispersal times;
- pupil walking, cycling, bus and car movements;
- after-school activities and periods of heightened pupil movement;
- footpath, gate, crossing and drop-off arrangements;
- the ASD-unit environment;
- classroom locations and outdoor learning areas;
- school transport arrangements;
- staff access and parking;
- emergency access;
- the Board's engagement with Safe Routes to School; and
- the likely effect of prolonged construction activity on the school community.

The current public-submission process is the appropriate point at which that information should be placed on the planning record. The detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan is proposed to be prepared and agreed after permission, at which point the school's opportunity to influence the planning decision will have passed.

Requested Board action

I respectfully ask the Board to:

1. Convene urgently to consider Planning Application Ref. 2661567 before 20 October 2026.
2. Make a formal submission opposing permission unless and until the applicant demonstrates that the development can proceed without unacceptable effects on pupil safety, school access, the learning environment, Safe Routes to School works, pupils with additional needs, staff welfare and the school's long-term sustainability.
3. Request that Galway County Council seek further information from the applicant addressing the school-specific issues identified in this letter.
4. Request that the Council consult its Roads and Transportation, Active Travel, Environment, Planning, School Transport and any relevant education or child-welfare functions before deciding the application.
5. Request that the applicant assess Scoil Naomh Bhríde as a construction-noise and vibration-sensitive receptor.
6. Request a school-specific construction traffic assessment addressing pupil movements, Safe Routes to School, the L21332, the R354/L21332 junction, pinch points, queuing, passing, reversing, delivery vehicles, staff traffic and emergency access.
7. Request confirmation of the maximum delivery vehicle, including any abnormal-load vehicle, and swept-path analysis for the actual route serving Parcel 2.
8. Request that any material further information be placed on the public planning file and made available for public comment before determination.

Minimum safeguards if permission is not refused

If the planning authority is minded to grant permission, the Board should request, at minimum, enforceable conditions requiring:

- no HGV, articulated-vehicle or abnormal-load movements during school arrival, dispersal, break, sport or other pupil-movement periods specified by the Board and incorporated into the permission;
- no construction traffic waiting, queuing, reversing or turning at or near the school entrance or frontage;
- an agreed holding and passing arrangement away from the school;
- a banksman at the site entrance and at any necessary constrained road section;
- no driven piling, percussive works, vibration-generating compaction or other activity exceeding agreed trigger levels during teaching hours, examination periods, ASD-unit activity periods or other pupil-sensitive times notified by the school;
- continuous construction-noise, vibration and dust monitoring at the school boundary during the relevant phases, with results provided to the Board and planning authority;
- a named senior developer contact, a 24-hour emergency contact, advance notice of abnormal-load movements, weekly programme updates, a school liaison protocol, an incident-response procedure and a complaints log;
- mandatory road sweeping, debris management and dust suppression measures, with specified inspection frequency and triggers rather than optional contractor measures;
- review of the final Construction Traffic Management Plan and construction-noise/vibration method statement by the Board before approval by the planning authority, with the Board's comments placed on the planning file; and
- a requirement that the traffic and school-protection measures be reviewed before each construction phase and after any incident, complaint or material programme change.

The Board should make a valid planning submission even if it ultimately takes no position on the merits. Only a party making a valid submission can participate further in the statutory planning process, including by appealing a planning decision where applicable.

I respectfully urge the Board to act now. The Board should ensure that the safety, welfare and educational needs of Scoil Naomh Bhríde's pupils and staff are placed squarely before the planning authority before the deadline expires.

Yours sincerely,

[Name and identifying signature details removed]