

Part 8 Development – Midleton Cycle Network Scheme

Introduction/ Development Description

The aim of the proposed development is to create a new network of cycling paths for the Midleton town/ Ballinacurra urban area. The proposed route will connect Ballinacurra, Midleton and Water Rock including the residential areas in Ballinacurra and future residential development in Water Rock with the Town Centre. The scheme also connects Gaelscoil Mhainistir Na Corran with the Town Centre via an off-road greenway. There are other schools located along the route which can also be integrated into the scheme. The scheme also connects with Midleton Train Station and the Midleton to Youghal Greenway.

Compatibility of Proposal with relevant Development Plans / Guidelines

National Standards

The National Cycling Policy Framework 2009 – 2020 aims to create a strong culture of cycling in Ireland with an aim that 10% of all trips will be by bike by 2020

Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future, A new Transport Policy for Ireland (2009-2020)

County Development Plan 2014

County Development Plan Objective

TM 1-1: Transport Strategy

- a) Provide a choice of transport modes for all citizens and visitors. Foster sustainable economic and population growth by maintaining and developing an efficient and integrated transport system for the County and, at the same time, encourage balanced investment in less polluting and more energy efficient modes of public and private transport.
- b) Focus the provision of transport infrastructure and investment on the network of settlements broadly in line with the Atlantic Gateway Initiative and the South West Regional Planning Guidelines, so that all the settlements in the County, but particularly the main towns and key villages, can be served by a reliable and efficient transport service which also serves their rural catchment areas. See Chapter 12 Heritage Objective HE 2-1 and Paragraph 12.2.5.
- c) Identify the key transportation requirements of those areas experiencing most rapid growth, particularly through the development of a programme of Land Use Transportation Studies which seek to closely align transport and land use planning. The recommendations of these studies will inform Local Area Plans.
- d) Encourage co-ordination between all agencies involved, directly or indirectly, in the provision of transport services with the aim of developing and implementing various transport strategies i.e. bus operators, airport authorities, Iarnród Éireann, National Transport Authority, National Roads Authority, local authorities and other private transport companies.
- e) Support the establishment of a Public Transportation Task Force to promote more widespread provision of public transportation within the County and to ensure high levels of efficiency and integration of services.
- f) Support public transport improvements by reserving corridors for any such improvements free of development, including provision of setbacks where appropriate.
- g) Encourage the move to a 55% level of non car based transport within the Cork Gateway, Hubs and other main towns and a 20% level of non car based travel for journeys within rural areas of the County as set out in the South West Regional Planning Guidelines.

County Development Plan Objective

TM 2-2: Cycling

- a)** Encourage and facilitate a safe walking and cycling route network and a culture of walking and particularly cycling in the county, as a viable alternative travel choice. Local Area Plans will set out Active Travel Strategies (cycling and walking) for individual towns and their hinterlands.
- b)** Improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists and those with special mobility needs while seeking to provide facilities which enhance safety and convenience. The Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets (DMURS) is a useful guidance tool.
- c)** Ensure that development in urban areas, towns and villages is well located, permeable and prioritises walking, cycling and access to public transport and other important amenities. The Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets (DMURS) is a useful guidance tool.
- d)** Promote the development of an integrated and coherent local and countywide cycle network to form part of the wider National Cycle Network. Routes will be promoted which generally seek to avoid or minimise impacts on the environment and on EU designated sites.

The proposed cycle network covers the functional areas of “Midleton Environs” as set out under the **East Cork Municipal District LAP 2017** and the **Midleton Town Plan 2013**.

East Cork Municipal District LAP 2017

Section I.7.8 of the LAP refers to TM 1-1 (above) and states that same has informed the preparation of the local area plan

Section 3.3 *“promotes the continued use of all forms of public transport within and around Midleton improve opportunities for walking and cycling around the town”*

Midleton Town Plan 2013

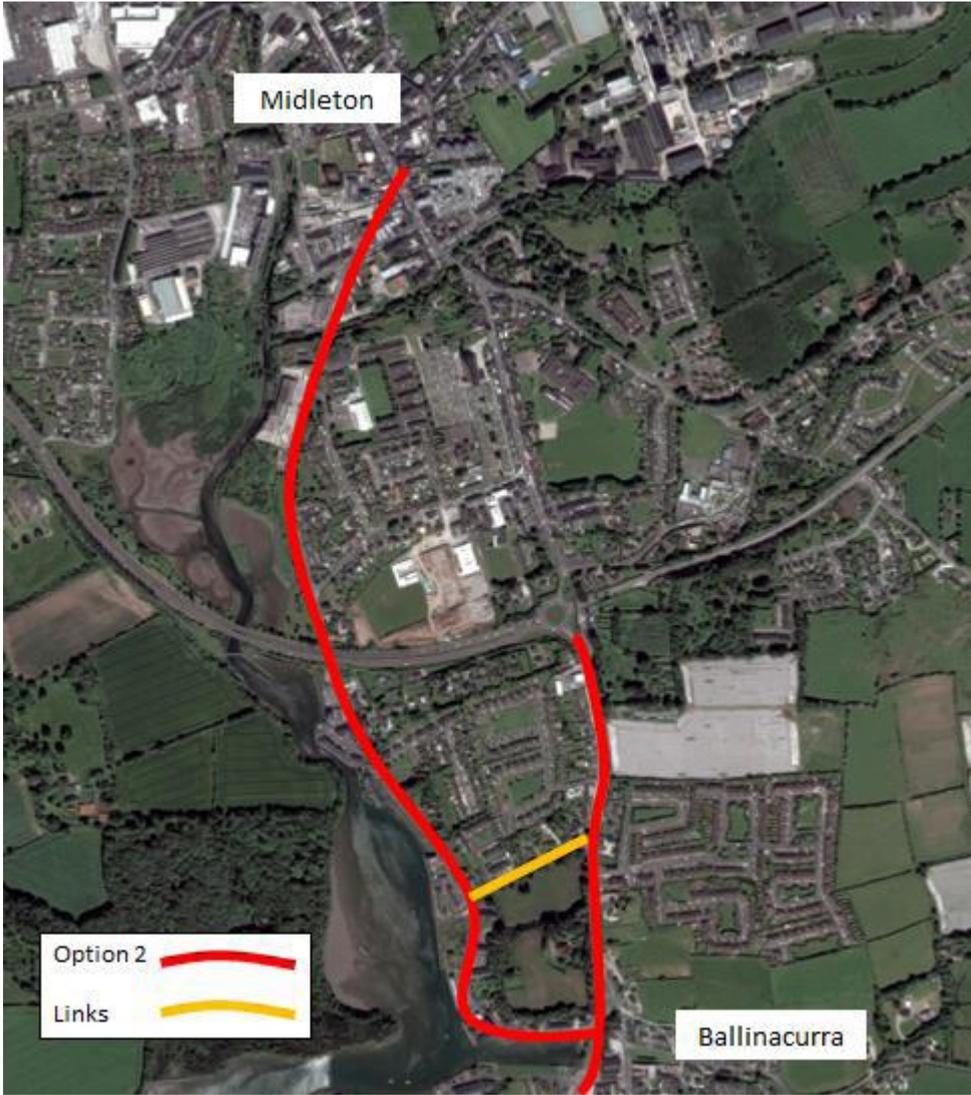
TT 8-9 Access to Transport Choice

It is an objective to improve the level of access for the residents in Midleton, to a choice of transport modes and, in particular, to promote forms of development that reduce levels of dependence on private car transport.

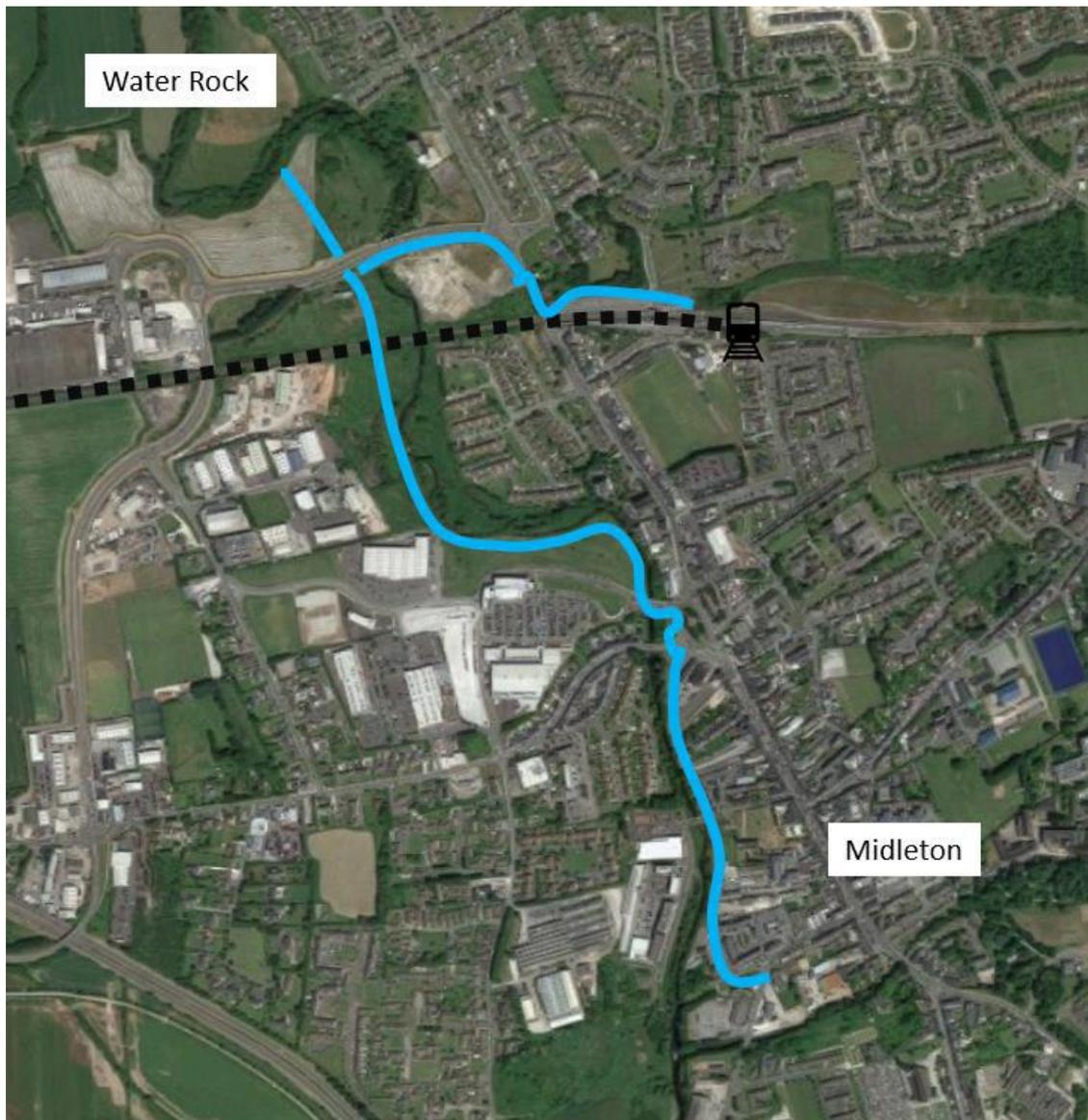
Planning Assessment

The documents submitted as part of the overall submission outline the various route options that were considered. The rationale for the final route choice is noted and final route options are outlined on the images below.

In principle terms, the proposed development is welcomed and could deliver a transformative cycle network for the town of Midleton. The delivery of alternative modes of transport (outside of private car) for urban areas is guiding national aspiration and a core policy objective underpinning the County Development Plan and by extension, the lower order plans (LAP and Town Plan). In particular, the transport strategy outlined under TM 1-1 of the CDP seeks to achieve a “55% level of non-car based transport” within the main towns. The current project, if delivered would enable the practical implementation of this objective. As such, the proposal fully accords with the aims/ objectives of the CDP 2014, the East Cork Municipal District LAP 2017 and the Midleton Town Plan 2013



Chosen route (Southern section)



Chosen route (Northern section)

In broader planning terms, the key aim with any cycle network is that it achieves maximum reach in terms of existing and proposed development. The proposed route choice is noteworthy in this regard insofar as it extends from the Southern extent of the designated urban area (Maple Woods, Ballincurra) and connects to the train station and future greenway on the opposite end of the overall settlement. The scheme also runs close to several schools (which could all be connected to the base network in time). In addition, the scheme also connects to the future urban expansion area, i.e. Waterrock in the NW of the settlement where Cork County Council is committed to delivering 2500 residential units in addition to schools, parks and an additional railway station. Accordingly the scheme has been designed fully accordance with the planned expansion of the Town.

Having considered the overall proposal, the main impacts associated with same are likely to be in the area of construction/ traffic management. The potential impact of the proposal on

the nearby Natura 2000 site (Cork Harbour SPA and Great Island Channel SAC) would also need to be carefully considered.

EIA Screening

Having assessed the proposal against the categories of development requiring EIA as set out under Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) the proposal is not of a type that of itself triggers a specific requirement for a mandatory EIA. The only reference which could be construed as applicable falls under S 10 (b)(iv)

“Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere”

The intention of S10(b)(iv) is to account for substantial new interventions in an urban or rural area which by their scale are likely to generate significant new impacts on the receiving environment. The current proposal is along an existing/ developed road network. The proposal allows a re-purposing of this existing route to give greater priority to cyclists/ pedestrians- i.e. persons who already use this route. The proposed works will not introduce an entirely new element or user. Furthermore, the works proposed are likely to have an overall positive impact on the existing environment in that it may lead to a reduction in car use and the congestion/ pollution associated with same. Considered in this manner, S10(b)(iv) is not deemed applicable.

As none of the prescribed categories listed under Schedule 5 are applicable, there is no requirement to screen this proposal against “sub threshold” development as no existing threshold applies.

Accordingly, the requirement for EIA can be satisfactorily screened out.

AA Screening

An AA screening document has been included as part of overall documents. The review and report of the ecology section of the Council would be required in relation to same.

Heritage Impact

Elements of the route may impact on the curtilages of existing protected structures/ heritage sites. It is understood that the file has been referred to the Council’s Conservation Officer in this regard whose recommendations should be incorporated in any finalised design to ensure any negative impact is mitigated.

Flood Impact

Parts of Midleton town are susceptible to flood risk and the proposed route will pass through some areas designated in this regard. A flood defence scheme for the town is currently being prepared and the documents submitted indicate that the proposed cycle network integrate with this scheme. Consultation should be had with the OPW and the Council's Coastal Flood Management Team to ensure proposed plans are consistent and conflicts avoided.

Conclusion

This is an infrastructure project to provide a new cycle network to cater for the town of Midleton/ Ballinacurra. The proposal is to be welcomed and has been shown to fully accord with both national guidance and adopted policy objectives outlined in both the County Development Plan 2014 and associated plans, namely the East Cork Municipal District LAP 2017 and Midleton Town Plan 2013. Provided risks to Natura 2000 sites can be satisfactorily screened out, impacts on protected built heritage can be satisfactorily addressed and flood risk issues mitigated, the proposed development accords with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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