



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí Cork County Council



NIALL O DONNABHAIN, SENIOR PLANNER, PLANNING & DEV

TO : CORMAC Ó SUILLEABHÁIN, SENIOR ENGINEER, PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
DATE : 14th MAY 2021
RE : PART 8 PROPOSAL FOR THE LITTLE ISLAND SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT INTERVENTIONS PROJECT

DEVELOPMENT AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The Little Island Sustainable Transport Interventions project proposes to facilitate, improve and encourage a significant increase in the number of people using sustainable modes of transport for travelling to, from and around Little Island. This is proposed through improving the bus, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

The proposed bus corridor will travel from the west of the Island at the Little Island Industrial estate, through Eastgate, via a new bus gate and out onto Ballytrasna Road through another new bus gate. The route will then continue along Ballytrasna to its terminus at a new mini roundabout at Harbour Point on the east of the Island and then back along the same route. The route will have a large catchment area and will cover both residential and commercial areas.

A network of cycle lanes will run along a similar route as the bus infrastructure upgrades. They will begin at the new link road proposed as part of the Dunkettle upgrade and run along the L7074 to the new bus gate into Eastgate. The cycle lanes will run from the bus gate along Eastgate Avenue and onto Eastgate Road to the roundabout with the junction of Eastgate Way and then continue south on Eastgate Way. This roundabout will be upgraded to a continental style roundabout. Cycle lanes will run south from the roundabout and form a two-way cycle track on the R623 as far as the Little Island National School. Through the Eastgate Retail centre, cyclists will have the option of utilising the bus priority route to the Ballytrasna Road. An eastbound cycle lane will be added to Ballytrasna Road and westbound cyclists will have a dedicated lane from the new roundabout to the graveyard but will share the bus lane from there to the Junction. A new cycle connection into the Little Island Business Park will be added on to connect to the Ballytrasna Road at the graveyard.

Additional pedestrian facilities will be added to An Cromptán Roundabout in the form of signalised pedestrian crossings on all arms of the roundabout. The roundabout at the junction of Eastgate Way, Eastgate Ave. and Eastgate Road is being upgraded to a continental style roundabout to allow for easier pedestrian and cycle movements. Multiple signalised and zebra pedestrian

crossings are being added throughout the area to improve pedestrian safety and mobility. A pedestrian connection into the Euro Business Park from the N25 Westbound offramp is also proposed. The southern footpath on the Glounthaune Road is to be widened and a controlled crossing to the proposed greenway will be added.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

RELEVANT PART 8 APPLICATIONS

| Proposed Dev | Development Description | Site Location |
|--|---|---|
| Strategic Cycle Corridor – Burys Bridge to Carrigtwohill | <p>The construction of a dedicated pedestrian and cycle route on the norther site of the L3004 (former N25) road and includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A general cross section of 3m wide shared pedestrian and cycle path and a 1m landscaped separation between the path and the public road where possible; • Formalised parking and controlled (i.e traffic signals) pedestrian crossings • New footpaths, ducting and LED public lighting. | <p>Along the L3004 (former N25) road passing through the townlands of Dunkettle, Kilcoolishal, Ballyhennick, Glounthaune, Johnstown, Killahora, Killacloyne, Tullagree, Carrigtwohill and Terrysland.</p> |
| Glanmire Road Improvements and Sustainable Transport Works | <p>Road improvement scheme to address significant public infrastructure deficits, where the lack of infrastructure is considered to have hindered the development of housing. The project area includes Glanmire, Riverstown and Sallybrook areas to the northeast of Cork City extending from the Tivoli roundabout on the junction between the N8 and the R639 to the Brook Inn junction between the R639 and the L2973. The Proposed Development comprises a total of 16 no. infrastructural projects.</p> | <p>c.1.5km Southwest of Proposed Development</p> |

POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Framework

The National Strategic Outcomes identified within the NPF include the following:

- Compact Growth;

- Enhanced Regional Accessibility;
- Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities;
- Sustainable Mobility;
- A strong economy, supported by Enterprise, Innovation and Skills;
- High-Quality International Connectivity;
- Enhanced Amenity and Heritage;
- Transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient society;
- Sustainable management of water, waste and other environmental resources; and
- Access to quality childcare, education and health services.

National Development Plan (2019 – 2027)

The National Development Plan (NDP) is fully integrated with the National Planning Framework, and is intended to drive Ireland’s economic, environmental and social progress across all parts of the country over the next decade. As mentioned above, major national infrastructural projects identified in the NDP include the implementation of BusConnects schemes in Ireland’s cities.

Under ‘National Strategic Outcome 4 – Sustainable Mobility’, BusConnects Cork will be delivered through the NDP. A number of the necessary interventions identified within CMATS are therefore to be delivered via the BusConnects programme.

Southern Assembly RSES

The Southern Region’s Strategy is to build a strong, resilient, sustainable region through a number of measures including:

Sustainable Mobility: Transforming our transport systems towards well-functioning, sustainable integrated public transport, walking and cycling and electrical vehicles.

Cork MASP

Land Use and transportation

Sustainable regeneration and growth (particularly compact growth) will be achieved through effective sustainable transport and spatial land use planning. Sustainable higher densities must be delivered, especially at public transport nodal points. Significant investment across a host of agencies will be required to deliver holistic infrastructure for regeneration and growth to achieve population and jobs targets. The game change for Metropolitan Cork is the implementation of CMATS. Strategic residential and employment development must support the delivery of this network.

CMATS

The Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Study (CMATS) supports the growth of strategic employment areas such as Little Island. Little Island is identified by CMATS as a key strategic employment area with significant capacity potential. CMATS identifies the points below in relation to transport in Little Island.

Cycling Proposals:

- New cycle link from Dunkettle to Little Island;
- A Segregated Waterfront route from Cork City to Tivoli and Little Island;
- A greenway linking Cork City – Tivoli – Glanmire – Little Island – Carrigtwohill – Midleton;

BusConnects:

- An Orbital Bus Network comprises four orbital services which are proposed to serve a multiple of key destinations outside of the City Centre including Little Island;
- The Northern Inner Orbital Route will serve the north side of Cork City serving Little Island, Tivoli Docks, Mayfield, Blackpool and Knocknaheeny before crossing the River Lee and connecting with the City's western suburbs;
- The Inner Southern Orbital will run from Little Island, through the Jack Lynch Tunnel providing a much needed public transport alternative to the N40, serving Mahon, Turners Cross, Cork University Hospital and Cork Institute of Technology;
- In some cases, shuttle buses from Interchange points to serve centres of employment - for example, at Ballincollig, Midleton train station and Little Island - may be merited.
- Local mobility hubs may include formalising existing surface or multi-storey car parks at locations including Little Island, Mahon, Pouladuff Road, Carrigrohane Road and Blackpool. These hubs may potentially take the form of multi-storey car parks or basement car-parking in some circumstances. Existing rail and bus stations may also be retrofitted as mobility hubs.

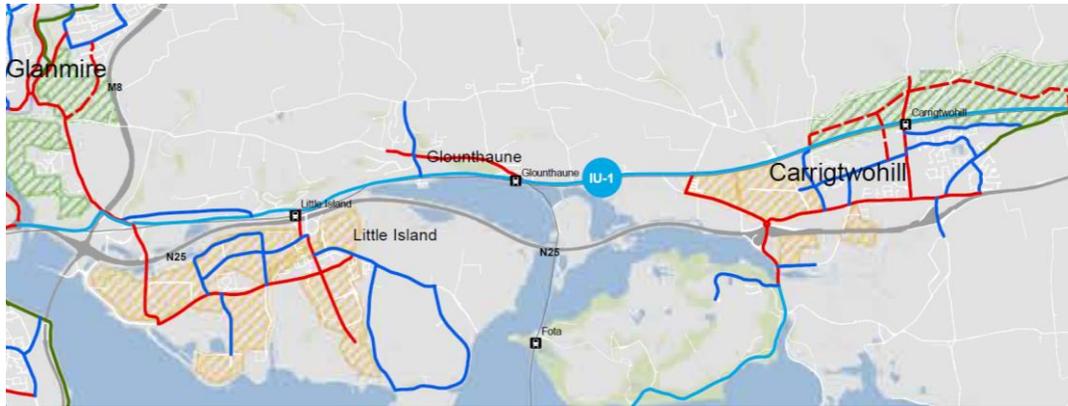
Road Network:

- Improvements to the road network at Little Island should be designed with the intention of prioritising walking and cycling access particularly between the railway station / bus services and employment destinations / residential areas.

Cork Cycle Network Plan 2017

Cork City and County Council commissioned the preparation of a Cycling Network Plan for the Cork city Metropolitan Area and surrounding towns. The objective of the project is to provide a clear plan for the future development of the cycling network within the Metropolitan Area to encourage greater use of cycling for trips to work, school, recreation and leisure.

Extract from Map CN1 – Cork Inter-Urban Route Network



Little Island Transport Study 2017

LITS will deliver enhanced access for public transport and pedestrians/cyclists on the Island.

Cork County Development Plan 2014

The proposed route runs through the Metropolitan Greenbelt Area as well as built up areas of Glounthaune and Carrigtwohill. Surrounding land uses include *Residential, Open Space, Community* and *Industry*. The following are relevant policies from the 2014 CDP:

TO 7-1 Walking / Cycling and Greenways

Promote the development of walking and cycling routes throughout the County as an activity for both international visitors and local tourists in a manner that is compatible with nature conservation and other environmental policies.

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 and 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 and 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.*

CS 4-1 County Metropolitan Cork Strategic Planning Area

Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017

The proposed route runs through the development boundary of Little Island which is designated as a Strategic Employment Area in the County Development Plan. The main towns in the Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017. The following LAP policy objectives are relevant:

| Development Boundary Objectives for Little Island | |
|--|--|
| LI-GO-01 | <i>To locate new business development within the development boundary which will provide an additional 2,000 jobs up to 2022.</i> |
| LI-GO-02 | <i>To secure the development of 250 no. new dwellings in Little Island over the lifetime of the plan. These dwellings will be located primarily within the LI-X-02 lands within the development boundary.</i> |
| LI-GO-04 | <i>The boundary of Little Island is adjacent to the Cork Harbour Special Protection Area and the Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation and the Cork Harbour Special Protection Area. Development in the town will only be permitted where it is shown that it is compatible with the requirements of the Habitats Directive and the protection of these sites. Protection and enhancement of biodiversity resources within the receiving environment of the town will be encouraged.</i> |
| LI-GO-05 | <i>To complete a detailed traffic and transportation study for Little Island. This study will need to specifically address the following issues:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>-Transport requirements of the existing community and of development lands, specifically in terms of; protection of the strategic employment function of the island; appropriate scale of residential development; and accessibility for community facilities and the protection and enhancement of existing residential areas and amenity;</i> <i>- Accessibility to the National Road Network including feasibility of a third entrance/exit point at the eastern end of the island;</i> <i>- Compatibility with the upgrade of the Dunkettle Interchange by TII;</i> <i>- The feasibility of Park and Ride as part of the solution to the provision of sustainable access to/from Little Island;</i> <i>-Public Transport proposals as part of the solution to the provision of sustainable access to/from Little Island; and</i> <i>- Pedestrian and cycling improvement within Little Island; and</i> |

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| | - <i>Pedestrian and cycling improvement within Little Island, and connectivity to the local cycle network,, in line with the measures outlines within the Cork Cycle Network Plan 2017.</i> |
| LI-GO-07 | <i>All development shall contribute to improved pedestrian and cyclist connectivity and shall include proposals for the provision of improved pedestrian/cycle access routes, provision of new footpaths or improvement of existing footpaths and provision of facilities for cyclists, as appropriate. It is an objective of this plan that a network of designated walking and cycling routes shall be established to provide safe, convenient and pleasant routes between the town’s main residential areas, schools, the town centres in accordance with the Cork Cycle network Plan 2017.</i> |
| LI-GO-08 | <i>All proposals for employment related development shall be required to prepare and submit a mobility management plan that maximise the use of public transport options/passenger rail services.</i> |

| Specific Development Objectives for Little Island: Utilities | |
|---|---|
| LI-U-01 | Junction upgrade of Primary Road Access onto N25 to include widening of the existing overpass and pedestrian and cycling connectivity to the railway station. |

ASSESSMENT

The Little Island Transportation Study was commissioned by Cork County Council in 2017 to identify the existing transport issues in Little Island and to explore potential solutions, which would ensure an integrated and balanced approach to transport for the Island in the future. The Little Island Transport Study is generally consistent with the Cork Metropolitan Area Transportation Strategy (CMATS). The findings of the study were published in the Little Island Transport Study Strategy Design Report in 2019. Following this the Little Island Sustainable Transport Interventions (LISTI) was commissioned. This Part 8 now proposes the implementation of the LISTI and comprises a series of measures which can be implemented to achieve an immediate improvement in the transport issues in Little Island. The proposal is in compliance with a number of the National Strategic Outcomes of the National Planning Framework and the Southern Regional Assembly’s strategy to build a strong, resilient and sustainable region.

The Proposed development is located on lands which are designated within the “Existing Built Up Area” of the settlement boundary of Little Island as per the Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017.

The proposal consists of the provision of the following:

- A high-quality bus corridor which will run from Wallingstown in the west via Eastgate and Ballytrasna Road to Harbour Point Business Park in Lower Courtstown. This bus route will have a large catchment area and will cover both residential and commercial areas.
- A network of cycle lanes which will run along a similar route to the bus route. In addition, a new cycle lane will link the PepsiCo Ireland plant via the Little Island Business Park Road to the Ballytrasna Road at St Joseph's Cemetery. Little Island National School will be served by a new two-way cycle lane which will run westward along the R623 from its junction with Eastgate Way to the school car park.
- The proposal includes the upgrade of existing pedestrian facilities as well as the addition of new facilities. Additional pedestrian facilities will be provided to An Crompán Roundabout on the R623 in the form of signalised pedestrian crossings on the four arms of the roundabout. The Eastgate roundabout, at the junction of Eastgate Way, Eastgate Avenue and Eastgate Road is being upgraded to a continental style roundabout to allow for easier pedestrian and cycle movements. Multiple signalised and zebra pedestrian crossings will be added throughout the area to improve pedestrian safety and mobility. A pedestrian connection into the Euro Business Park from the N25 Westbound offramp is also proposed. A new footpath will run westward along the R623, from the Cork Plastics entrance to the car park which serves Little Island National School on St Lappan's Place.

The proposed development is an important package of strategic sustainable transport interventions which will enable a significant number of people to use a sustainable mode of transport when travelling to, from or around the Settlement of Little Island. Little Island is one of the key employment locations in Metropolitan Cork and is designated as a Strategic Employment Area in the County Development Plan 2014. In addition, land has been zoned for residential development, which the current Local Area Plan states should be located primarily within the LI-X-02 lands. This proposal links those zoned lands as well as existing residential developments to key employment areas, the local primary school and the retail offering in Eastgate as well as improving access to the train station, enabling existing and any future development in its catchment to contribute to compact growth and a shift to sustainable modes of transport.

There are no Architectural Conservation Areas either within the line of the proposed development route or within the 500m study area extending from the boundaries of the proposed development route.

There are four archaeological features within the proposed development route. All four of these sites were excavated in 1999 in advance of the construction of Eastgate and include one Fulachta Fia and three Kiln's. The EIAR screening report should be referred to the Council's Archaeologist for comment.

Having reviewed the policy context for the area and the plans and particulars received, I consider the proposed development conforms to the policies and objectives of the Cork County

Development Plan 2014 and the Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017 and will encourage a modal shift away from private transport to public transport, cycling and walking and public transport in line with the Government's Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future, the Southern RSES, Cork MASP and the Council's Cycle Network Plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING

An Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report has been prepared by ARUP. The screening report outlines the mandatory criteria considered during the EIAR screening assessment which concludes that the mandatory criteria for a road development under the Roads Act have not been met and therefore the application is subject to sub threshold assessment where the likely significant effects on the environment must be determined in order to ascertain if a sub-threshold EIA is required.

Schedule 5, Article 93, Parts 1 & 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001, as amended) set out the thresholds for different classes of development for the purposes of Part 10 where an EIAR is required. Screening of the proposed development with regards to Planning and Development Act is also required.

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 almost entirely along an existing/ developed road network. The proposal allows a re-purposing of this existing route to give greater priority to cyclists, pedestrians and public transport. The proposed works will not introduce an entirely new element or user. Furthermore, the works proposed are likely to have overall positive impact on the existing environment in that it may lead to a reduction in car use and the associated congestion/ pollution associated with same. Considered in the manner, S10(b)(iv) would not appear applicable Accordingly the requirement for EIA can be satisfactorily screened out.

Conclusion:

The EIA Screening Report has considered the characteristics of the proposed development and potential impacts, the environmental site setting and the type and characteristics of potential impacts. Based on the information and documentation submitted I concur with the EIA screening

report which concludes that an EIAR is not a mandatory requirement for the proposed development as the site does not fall under the criteria outlined in the Roads Act, 1993 (as amended). In addition, as detailed above, I am satisfied that the proposed development does not meet the criteria for a mandatory requirement for an EIA under Schedule 5, Article 93, Parts 1 & 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations (2001, as amended) and can be screened out.

I have considered the criteria identified in the *EIA Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-threshold Development* and the contents of the screening report and its conclusion that the nature, scale and location of the proposed development is such that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. I am satisfied that the proposed development does not require a Sub Threshold EIAR.

The EIAR screening has identified potentially significant impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed development as well as recommendations for mitigation measures which are deemed appropriate:

- There is the possibility that archaeological features could exist beneath the greenfield area for the proposed development. Cognisant of the Cork County Development Plan Objective HE 3-6 it is recommended that an archaeological watching brief is carried out during the construction phase.
- There is potential for the spread of invasive species during construction and operation of the proposed development. The screening report states that before construction commences, any ground likely to be disturbed by the proposed development will be surveyed for the presence of invasive species. An invasive species management plan will be developed and implemented, following best practice guidance, to manage, and prevent the spread of any invasive species present in the area of the works.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The site is located within the designated Screening Zone for the Great Island Channel Special Area of Conservation and the Cork Harbour SPA. An Appropriate Assessment Screening report was carried out by ARUP for this development. This report should be referred to the Ecologist for comment.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development is an important package of strategic sustainable transport interventions which will enable a significant number of people to use a sustainable mode of transport when travelling to, from or around the Settlement of Little Island. This proposal links lands zoned for residential as well as existing residential developments to key employment areas, the local primary school and the retail offering in Eastgate as well as improving access to the train

station, enabling existing and any future development in its catchment to contribute to compact growth and a shift to sustainable modes of transport.

Having reviewed the policy context for the area, based on the attached plans and particulars including the EIA Screening Report, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the proper planning and development of the area. The proposal is in accordance with a number of national, regional and local planning policies and objectives and is consistent with the Cork County Development Plan 2014 and the Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan 2017.



Sharon O'Connell
Executive Planner



Niall Ó Donnabháin
Senior Planner