Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report & Screening Determination

<u>Project Title:</u> R585 Dromdeegy, Dunmanway – Road Realignment and Improvement Scheme

Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council

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1 INTRODUCTION

This Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report has been prepared by Cork County Council to consider the requirement for EIA of the proposed road realignment at Dromdeegy, County Cork (herein referred to as the 'project'). The purpose of this document is to assess whether or not the proposed development should be subject to EIA and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) in accordance with relevant European and Irish legislation. The assessment documented in this report has considered the project in the context of project categories/thresholds for mandatory EIA and the screening of sub-threshold development.

1. 1 PROJECT OVERVIEW

R585 Dromdeegy, Dunmanway – Road Realignment and Improvement Scheme is located in the townlands of Dromdeegy and Cooranig. The R585 is a Regional road which runs from Kealkill Village to its Junction with the N22, National Primary Road, east of Crookstown. The road is a busy rural road which is used as one of the main routes for motorists travelling from West Cork especially from the Beara Peninsula. There are high volumes of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) which use this route, for example articulated trucks travelling to and from the busy fishing Port of Castletownbere. Several accidents (including one fatality) have occurred along this stretch of road in recent years.

Description of the Project

The project study area is located circa 6.5km north of Dunmanway Town Centre. (*See Figure 1)*

The proposed overall road improvement works will consist of the following:

- Alteration to existing road alignment to improve road safety;
- Site Clearance;
- Relocation of overhead line;
- Constructing earth berms and fencing;
- Signage, road lining & roads studs;
- All ancillary works required to deliver the proposed scheme.

The works will be carried out on the footprint of the existing carriageway and on the adjacent roadside lands for the realignment, increasing the road carriageway width and providing verges on both sides to improve forward visibility for all motorists and road users. The realignment is over 410m in length and the area of hard standing will increase from 2,125m^2 prior to commencement to 5,700m^2 when completed.

The project requires excavation and removal of existing road surface material and the laying down of new surfaces.

Excavated material will be retained on site and the rock excavated will be used as fill material for the realigned carriageway.

1.2 INFORMATION SOURCES

- Cork County Development Plan 2014
- Cork County Development Plan 2022
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, completed by Dixon-Brosnan Environmental Consultants in November 2022. The Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report concluded that: *The proposed development, alone or in combination with other projects could potentially impact on the qualifying interests for the Bandon River SAC*.
- Natura Impact Statement (NIS) completed by Dixon-Brosnan Environmental Consultants in November 2022. This report concluded that: *It has been objectively concluded following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of the predicted effects from the proposed development and with the implementation of the mitigation measures proposed, that the construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development will not adversely affect (either directly or indirectly) the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. There is no reasonable scientific doubt in relation to this conclusion.*
- Ecological Impact Assessment Report completed by DixonBrosnan Environmental Consultants
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2018) Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanala on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.
- Environmental Protection Agency (2017) Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (Draft).
- European Commission (2017) Environmental Impact Assessment of Project: Guidance on Screening.
- European Commission (20150 Interpretation of definitions of project categories of Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive.
- National Roads Authority (2008) Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide.

1.3 LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

EIA Screening

The EIA Directive 2011/92/EU on the assessment of the effect of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended by Directive 2014/52/EU, sets out the process by which the likely significant effects of a project on the environment are assessed. The EIA Directive lists potential EIA projects in two categories:

• Annex I lists categories of projects where EIA is mandatory.

• Annex II lists those projects where EIA is necessary when a proposed development is likely to be associated with significant effects on the environment, based on development thresholds set at national level or a case-by-case examination of development below such thresholds.

In Ireland, Annex I of the EIA Directive has been transposed as Part 1 of Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2021.

Annex II has been transposed as Part 2 of Schedule 5 to the Planning and Development Regulations2001-2021. Within Part 2, the text of the Directive has been supplemented by a series of national thresholds which if exceeded, require that an EIAR is undertaken.

Schedule 7 of the P&D Regulations sets out relevant criteria to inform this screening process. Schedule 7 directly transposes the criteria specified in Annex III of the EIA Directive.

Screening of sub-threshold developments

Projects of a type listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the P&D Regulations which do not exceed the associated thresholds are classed as "sub-threshold development". Article 92 of the P&D Regulations defines this as:

"*Development of a type set out in Part 2 of Schedule 5 which does not equal or exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in that Schedule in respect of the relevant class of development*."

Class 15 in Part 2 of Schedule 5 requires that certain sub-threshold projects will be subject to EIA:

"*Any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7*."

For sub-threshold development, it is necessary for a planning authority to undertake a case-by-case examination of the likelihood of significant effects on the environment to determine if the project should be subject to EIA and require the submission of an EIAR.

For a local authority project, sub-threshold development is governed by Article 120 of the P&D Regulations.

Article 120

(1)(a) Where a local authority proposes to carry out a subthreshold development, the authority shall carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development.

(b) Where the local authority concludes, based on such preliminary examination, that—

(i) there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall conclude that an EIA is not required,

(ii) there is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, the information specified in Schedule 7A for the purposes of a screening determination, or

(iii) there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall— (I) conclude that the development would be likely to have such effects, and (II) prepare, or cause to be prepared, an EIAR in respect of the development.

EIA screening can be defined as the process of assessing the requirement of a project to be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment based on the project type and scale and on the significance of the receiving environment.

Roads Act 1993-2015

As the project involves the improvement of public roads, the provisions of the Roads Acts 1993-2015 are also considered for the purposes of this report. Section 50(1)(e) of the Roads Acts requires that the likelihood of significant effects of a road project be assessed, having regard to Annex III of the EIA Directive.

1.4 Screening Methodology

The screening methodology undertaken for this report involved the following procedure:

1. The project was reviewed against the classes specified in Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Regulations in order to establish if mandatory EIA was warranted.

2. The project was then reviewed against the classes of development specified in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Regulations (Section 4.1.2).

3. The information to be provided by the developer (Cork County Council) for the purposes of screening sub-threshold development for EIA is set out in Schedule 7A of the Planning & Development Regulations. The likelihood of significant environmental effects due to the project has been assessed having regard to the 2017 EC *Guidelines on Environmental Impact Assessment of Project: Guidance on Screening.*

4. The information required under Schedule 7A above has been compiled with regard to the criteria for determining whether sub-threshold development should be subject to EIA, as set out in Schedule 7 of the Planning & Development Regulations.

5. The project was also reviewed under the mandatory criteria for EIA of road projects under Section 50 (1) of the Roads Act 1993-2015 and by the European Union (Roads Act 1993) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (Section 4.1.3).

2 Characteristics of the Proposed Development

2.1 Project Overview

Cork County Council is proposing to carry out the realignment of a 410 m section of the R585 road at Dromdeegy approximately 6.5 km north of Dunmanway town centre.

Traffic counts show 6,100 Annual Average Daily Traffic with 10% being HGV's.

The issues noted on site include:

- The existing road curve radius;
- The existing road cross section (road width varies from 5.5m to 5.8m);
- The lack of driver forward visibility;
- The nature of the existing road vertical alignment on approach to the bend (i.e. series of crests and sags);
- The vertical drop off on the northern roadside at the bend;
- The rock outcrop on the inside of the bend (i.e. southern roadside);
- The existing overhead telecoms line on the southern road edge.

The principal reason for the project is to make this section of the road safer as several accidents, including a fatality in 2016, have occurred along the section of road in question.

The project area is shown on Figure 2. The proposed works will include realignment of the road to facilitate safer driving conditions.

The proposed overall road improvement works will consist of the following:

- Alteration to existing road alignment to improve road safety;
- Site Clearance (involving some scrub clearance and rock breaking);
- Relocation of an overhead power line;
- Construction of earth berms and fencing;
- Signage, road lining & roads studs;
- All ancillary works required to deliver the proposed scheme.

The works will be carried out on the footprint of the existing carriageway and on the adjacent roadside lands for the realignment, increasing the road carriageway width and providing verges on both sides to improve forward visibility for all motorists and road users. The realignment is over 410m in length and the area of hard standing will increase from 2,125m^2 prior to commencement to 5,700m^2 when completed.

The project requires excavation and removal of existing road surface material and the laying down of new surfaces. Excavated material will be retained on site and the rock excavated will be used as fill material for the realigned carriageway.

2.2 Size and design of the development

The proposed realignment is over 410m in length and the area of hard standing will increase from 2,125m^2 prior to commencement to 5,700m^2 when completed.

The full extent of the proposed realignment is shown on Figure 2 below.

The proposed realignment has been designed to remove a dangerous bend and to substantially improve driver visibility.

A 1.2 metre wide central hatch area is included in the design to discourage overtaking.

The existing curve on the north side of the road will be hidden behind an earth berm and the area will gradually become engulfed by willow and birch scrub adjoining the north bank of the road.

2.3 Construction Phase

The proposed overall road improvement works will consist of the following:

- Alteration to existing road alignment to improve road safety;
- Site clearance, including the excavation of bedrock. All of this material will be re-used in the construction process;
- An overhead power line will be relocated during the construction phase;
- An earth berm will be constructed on the north bank to disguise the section of road on the bend that will cease to form part of the road.
- Fencing will be erected at appropriate locations along the roadside.
- Signage, road lining and roads studs will be put in place to increase road safety;
- Ancillary works such as drainage required to deliver the proposed scheme.

2.4 Operational Phase

Once completed, the realigned section of this busy road will result in substantially improved driving conditions and it is anticipated that it will also result in a significant reduction of road traffic accidents.
Once the project has been completed maintenance will be carried out by Cork County Council.

2.5 Use of natural resources

Land

This project involves the re-alignment and improvement of an existing 410 m length of road. The work involves using an additional 3,575 m^2 of land (mostly scrub of limited ecological value).

Soil

Soil will be removed from the land area required to complete the road and used as a berm on the north side of the road to cordon off the remaining part of the old road. No significant quantities of imported material will be required and no significant quantities of excavated material will be exported from the site as all of the excavated rock will be retained on site and the rock excavated will be used as fill material for the realigned carriageway.

Water

The project does not result in additional demand for water supply or the use of new/additional water resources.

Biodiversity

An ecological Impact Assessment Report (EcIAR) was prepared for the project by DixonBrosnan Environmental. The project area and adjacent land cover a variety of habitats (according to Fossitt habitat classification) and the wider landscape habitats include a mixture of immature and semi-mature conifer plantations, areas of wet heath with exposed bedrock and semi-intensive grassland. The Caha River is the most prominent potential ecological receptor in the wider landscape. A low-lying wet willow-alder-ash woodland (WN6) adjoins the Caha River downstream to the north of the site. The wet woodland grades into drier woodland dominated by Silver Birch. An area of coniferous woodland (WD4) forms the southern boundary of the site and this has recently been A small pond of standing water (FL2) is located adjacent to the existing hardcore area. A small number of drainage ditches (FW4) all ultimately drain into the Caha River, a depositing lowland river (FW2).

Walkover surveys of the partially completed project area were conducted in March, July and November 2022. No rare species of flora and fauna were found and the ecological value of the habitats was deemed to be of local importance varying from lower to higher importance.

The EcIAR concludes as follows: *The road realignment and improvement works will impact on habitats of low local value. Habitats to be impacted are almost exclusively manmade, with the exception of small areas of recolonising bare ground and grassland. There are no trees or significant areas of vegetation within the works area which could provide nesting/roosting habitat for birds or bats.*

Design measures and mitigation measures to protect water quality will ensure that no adverse impact on aquatic ecology or on designated sites (SACs, SPAs or pNHAs) and/or their conservation objectives will occur during construction or operation.

During construction, there will be a slight increase in noise and disturbance which could potentially impact on birds and mammals. However, this impact will be temporary (2-3 weeks approximately) and will not be significantly above existing disturbance levels along the R585.

A Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report has been prepared by DixonBrosnan Environmental Consultants and this report concluded that Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment would be required to assess the implications of the project on Natura 2000 sites.

2.6 Wastes and residues

Waste produced from excavation will be used as backfill for construction work. Quantities of waste material are expected to be very small and all waste will be removed to a licensed waste disposal facility.

No significant effects are considered likely to occur due to the production of wastes or the residues expected as a result of the project.

2.7 Emissions, pollutions and nuisance

Emissions

Construction work has the potential to result in short term emissions including noise and vibration, dust and surface water runoff. However, based on the nature and scale of this project, it is anticipated that the effects of any emissions will be localized and of limited duration. Best practice construction measures will ensure that adequate controls are in place to avoid pollution and excessive noise.

There will be no new or additional sources of emissions during the operational phase.

Pollution

During construction there is potential for runoff of construction materials such as fuel and oil into the Caha River. However, these materials will be used for a short time period and all re-fueling will take place off site and all vehicles and machinery will be stored off site each evening.

Nuisance

Possible sources of nuisance include noise, vibration, dust, lighting, waste and litter. All such sources of nuisance will be minimized through the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Waste & Resource Management Plan and Traffic Management Plan.

The project is in a relatively remote area and there are only four dwellings within 260 metres and the dwellings are somewhat screened from the site by the hilly topography of the surrounding landscape.

Any nuisance issues will be short term.

2.8 Risk of major accidents/disasters

The project does not involve the use of hazardous materials in significant quantities which could result in the possibility of serious accidents or disasters. The roadworks will be completed in a relatively short timeframe of four weeks as most of the groundworks have been completed and the foundation for the road is already in place, so the likelihood of any major accident is very low.

2.9 Risks to human health

This project will result in the improvement of driving conditions and its completion will result in the removal of a dangerous driving hazard and the project will result in the reduction of risks to human health.

The risk to human health posed by construction activities (e.g. noise, emissions to air including dust) is considered low especially given the low population density in the surrounding area. The remaining construction works mainly involve paving and a limited amount of landscaping to create the berm on the north side of the road. These works are relatively minor in nature and scale. Regardless of scale, best practice construction measures combined with the preparation of a CEMP will ensure that construction phase emissions are appropriately controlled.

2.9 Cumulative impacts

There are no other significant development proposals by Cork County Council for the surrounding area which could give rise to cumulative impacts. A search of Cork County Council's Planning Enquiry System found no other known third-party developments in the surrounding area.

3 Location of the Proposed Development

Schedules 7 and 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations stipulate that the location of the proposed development is outlined (as below), with particular emphasis on the environmental sensitivity of the geographical area to be affected.

3.1 Environmental sensitivity

The proposed project is located in a sparsely populated rural area in the townlands of Dromdeegy and Cooranig, approximately 6.5 km north of Dunmanway town centre. The surrounding landscape is a mixture of small pasture-based agriculture interspersed with hills of exposed rock and coniferous forestry plantations. The R585 is a Regional road which runs from Kealkill Village to its Junction with the N22, National Primary Road, east of Crookstown. The road is a busy rural road which is used as one of the main routes for motorists travelling from West Cork especially from the Beara Peninsula. There are high volumes of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) which use this route, for example articulated trucks travelling to and from the busy fishing Port of Castletownbere.

Natural Resources

The use of natural resources for the project is limited overall. The proposed road realignment and improvement works will serve the wider West Cork community from the Beara Peninsula as well as the surrounding townlands. The proposed works will have no significant impact on the availability, abundance or quality of land in the wider area. There will be no discharges to groundwater (excluding some rainwater seepage) which could impact negatively on soil or groundwater quality. There will be no bulk removal of soil from the area nor any groundwater abstraction. The project will not result in additional demand on water resources.

Biodiversity

The project area covers a variety of habitats and the wider landscape habitats include a mixture of immature and semi-mature conifer plantations, areas of wet heath with exposed bedrock and semi-intensive grassland. The Caha River is the most prominent potential ecological receptor in the wider landscape. A low-lying wet willow-alder-ash woodland (WN6) adjoins the Caha River downstream to the north of the site. The wet woodland grades into drier woodland dominated by Silver Birch. An area of coniferous woodland (WD4) forms the southern boundary of the site and this has recently been A small pond of standing water (FL2) is located adjacent to the existing hardcore area. A small number of drainage ditches (FW4) all ultimately drain into the Caha River, a depositing lowland river (FW2).

Walkover surveys of the partially completed project area were conducted in March, July and November 2022.

A Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment and Natura Impact Statement as well as an Ecological Impact Assessment Report have been completed by DixonBrosnan Environmental Consultants in recent months.

In summary, no rare species of flora and fauna were found and the ecological value of the habitats was deemed to be of local importance varying from lower to higher importance.

Absorption capacity of the natural environment

Having regard to paragraph 2(c), Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations, the absorption capacity of the natural environment in the context of the project is considered under the following headings:

1. **Wetlands, riparian areas, estuaries**

   The Caha River, a tributary of the Bandon River, is located approximately 200 metres north of the works area.

2. **Coastal zones and the marine environment**
   The works site is more than 22 km from the nearest coastline.

3. **Mountain and forest areas**

   The works site is approximately 1.2 km south of the foothills of the Shehy Mountains. Numerous small conifer plantations have been planted in the surrounding landscape.

4. **Nature reserves and parks**

   There are no nature reserves, Natural Heritage Areas, or Proposed Natural Heritage Areas in the vicinity of the project.

5. **Areas classified or protected under European legislation, including Natura 2000 areas designated pursuant to the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive**
   The Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement completed in November by DixonBrosnan Environmental Consultants identified three Natura 2000 sites within 15 km of the project, namely,
   - the Bandon River Special Area of Conservation (SAC) 2.2 km to the southeast;
   - the Gearagh SAC 11.6 km to the northeast;
   - the Gearagh Special Protection Area (SPA) 13.4 km to the northeast.

   The NIS concluded that the proposed work will not have a significant impact on the Natura 2000 network.

   The EcIAR for the project also reviewed the potential impact on habitats and species within the immediate environs of the project and found that: "*The road realignment and improvement works will impact on habitats of low local value. Habitats to be impacted are almost exclusively manmade, with the exception of small areas of recolonising bare ground and grassland. There are no trees or significant areas of vegetation within the works area which could provide nesting/roosting habitat for birds or bats."*

6. **Areas in which there has already been a failure to meet the environmental quality standards laid down in legislation of the European Union and relevant to the project, or in which it is considered that there is such a failure**

   The Caha River west of Poulnaberry Bridge is rated as 'High Status' and 'Good Status' east of the bridge. Ground water is rated as 'Good' (EPA 2021).

7. **Densely populated areas**
   The European Commission and OECD defines a 'densely populated area'10 as having at least 50% of the population living in high-density clusters i.e. contiguous grid cells of 1 km2 with a density of least 1,500 inhabitants per square kilometre and a minimum population of 50,000. Based on the 2016 Census, Dunmanway town has a population of 1655 and is not a densely populated area in the context of EIA.
8. **Landscapes and sites of historical, cultural, or archaeological significance**
   No sites of historical, cultural or archaeological significance are located close to the woks area.
9. **Impact of the proposed development on climate change**
   This project has involved and will involve the use of machinery for ground clearance, ground preparation and paving. This work will involve emission of greenhouse gases but not at a scale that would significantly increase the effects of climate change.
10. **Technologies and substances used**
    The road will be constructed using hardcore chippings and asphalt.

3.2 Local environmental conditions

Geology and soils

The Dromdeegy area is situated on a bedrock of purple and green sandstone and siltstone of the Caha Mountain formation and the Geological Survey of Ireland Spatial Resources also highlights occasional areas of bedrock exposed at ground level.

Hydrology, hydrogeology and water

The land on both sides of Poulnaberry Bridge (including the wet woodland west of the bridge) has a low probability of flooding. Low Probability flood events have an indicative 1-in-a-1000 chance of occurring or being exceeded in any given year. This is also referred to as an Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP) of 0.1%.

Air quality

For the purposes of air quality monitoring and further to the requirements of EU and Irish air quality legislation, Dromdeegy is located within Zone D (Rural Ireland). The EPA's most recent annual air quality report14 identified that air quality in Ireland is generally good. Particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) were highlighted as problem pollutants, associated with emissions from burning of solid fuel and transport emissions in urban areas respectively but given the very low population density in the vicinity of the project site it can be assumed that air quality is good.

Landscape and visual

There are no protected views or scenes within the project area.

Transport and roads

The R585 is a Regional road which runs from Kealkill Village to its Junction with the N22, National Primary Road, east of Crookstown. The road is a busy rural road which is used as one of the main

routes for motorists travelling from West Cork especially from the Beara Peninsula. There are high volumes of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV's) which use this route, for example articulated trucks travelling to and from the busy fishing Port of Castletownbere.

4 EIA Screening

4.1 Mandatory EIA

4.1 Schedule 5, Part 1

The project was reviewed against the classes specified in Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the P&D Regulations in order to screen for whether mandatory EIA was warranted.

Annex I
Projects subject to mandatory EIA include:

c) construction of motorways and express roads;

The project does not fall under any of the relevant classes as set out in Part 1 of Schedule 5 or Annex I.

Planning and Development Act, 2000
Exempted Development
4.—(1) The following shall be exempted developments for the purposes of this Act—
e) development consisting of the carrying out by the corporation of a county or other borough or the council of a county or an urban district of any works required for the construction of a new road or the maintenance or improvement of a road; (Irish Statute Book – electronic).

4.1.3 Roads Acts 1993-2015
The project was reviewed against the mandatory criteria for EIA of road projects set out under Section 50(1) of the Roads Act 1993-2015 and by the European Union (Roads Act 1993) (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 201915. This review is documented in Table 3.

Table 3 - EIA screening of the project under the Roads Acts 1993-2015

Road Acts Reference	Mandatory Criteria	Mandatory Criteria met?
50 (1) (a)	(i) The construction of a motorway;	No
	(ii) The construction of a busway;	No
	(iii) The construction of a service area;	No
	(iv) any prescribed type of road development consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road, namely – The construction of a new road of four or more lanes, or the realignment or widening of an existing road so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new, realigned or widened	

	road would be eight kilometres or more in length in a rural area, or 500m or more in length in an urban area; or The construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length.	No No

Environmental Considerations Where No EIA Is Required

Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, specifies a procedure to be applied to certain prescribed developments that do not require EIA. These development types are prescribed in Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001. The following types of road development come within the scope of Part 8:
- The construction of a new road or the widening or realignment of an existing road where the length of the new road or the widened or realigned portion of the existing road, as the case may be, would be:
(a) in the case of a road in an urban area, 100m or more, or;
(b) in the case of a rural road, 1km or more.

Road Acts Reference	**Mandatory Criteria**	**Mandatory Criteria met?**
50 (1) (d)	In particular, where a proposed development (other than development to which paragraph (a) applies) consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road would be located on -	
	(i) a European Site within the meaning of Regulation 2 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011)	No
	(ii) land established or recognised as a nature reserve within the meaning of section 15 or 16 of the Wildlife Act 1976 (No. 39 of 1976),	No
	(iii) land designated as a refuge for fauna or flora under section 17 of the Wildlife Act 1976 (No. 39 of 1976), or	No
	(iv) land designated a natural heritage area under section 18 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000,	No

The proposed improvements to public roads do not involve a motorway, busway or service area. Similarly, the project does not involve the provision of four or more lanes greater than 500 m in length, nor the provision of any bridge or tunnel. Therefore, the proposed improvements to public roads as part of the project do not exceed any of the thresholds in the Roads Acts.

The project does not meet the mandatory criteria for EIA under the Roads Act 1993-2015, as amended.

4.2 Sub-threshold screening for EIA

The following assessment has been completed using the criteria in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Regulations and the Screening Checklist provided in the 'Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU)' (EC, 2017) in order to determine if the project requires an EIA.

The criteria used are as listed below and detailed further in Tables 4 to 7.

1) Characteristics of the project

2) Location of the project

3) Characteristics of potential impacts

4.3 Characteristics of the project

Screening question	**Yes/No**	**Is this likely to result in a significant impact? (Yes/No)**
1. Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works of the Project involve actions that will cause physical changes in the locality (topography, land use, changes in waterbodies, etc.)?	Yes	No The proposed realignment is over 410m in length and the area of hard standing will increase from 2,125m^2 prior to commencement to 5,700m^2 when completed. The scale of the development is relatively minor within the scale of the surrounding landscape and a significant section of the old roadway located behind the earth berm will eventually be colonised by native vegetation adjacent to the road.
2. Will construction or the operation of the Project use natural resources such as land, water, materials or energy, especially any resources which are non-renewable or are in short supply?	Yes	No None of the materials required for the project are in short supply.
3. Will the Project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of	Yes	Best construction practices will be implemented during the

substances or materials which could be harmful to human health, to the environment or raise concerns about actual or perceived risks to human health?		proposed works to protect human health and the receiving environment and all machinery will be stored away from the site when not in use.
4. Will the Project produce solid wastes during construction or operation or decommissioning?	Yes	No Most of the excavated material has/will be used in the construction of the new section of road. All of the remaining waste will be removed from the site and taken to a licensed facility for recovery where possible or disposal.
5. Will the Project release pollutants or any hazardous, toxic or noxious substances to air or lead to exceeding Ambient Air Quality standards in Directives 2008/50/EC and 2004/107/EC)?	Yes	No The scale and time duration of the project (circa 4 weeks) will not give rise to significant emissions. Construction phase emissions will be short-term and construction best practices will be used to minimise impacts and prevent pollution. No significant water or air-borne emissions will occur as a result of the project.
6. Will the Project cause noise and vibration or the releasing of light, heat energy or electromagnetic radiation?	Yes	No The generation of noise, vibration and light will be short-term and construction best practices will be used to minimise impact to ensure compliance with construction limits.
7. Will the Project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?	Yes	No The use of materials will be short-term and construction best practices for the storage and use of materials along with the control of any run-off will be used to minimise impact and prevent pollution.

8. Will there be any risk of accidents during construction or operation of the Project that could affect human health or the environment?	No	The proposed construction works will employ best practice methodologies subject to rigorous Health and Safety regulations and inspections.
9. Will the Project result in environmentally related social changes, for example, in demography, traditional lifestyles, employment?	No	No The purpose of the project is to improve safety conditions on a dangerous length of the R585 road and when completed, the road will result in improved conditions for the local population.
10. Are there any other factors that should be considered such as consequential development which could lead to environmental impacts or the potential for cumulative impacts with other existing or planned activities in the locality?	No	No This short section of road (410 metres) will not result in any consequential development in the locality.

4.4 Location of the project

Screening question	**Yes/No**	**Is this likely to result in a significant impact? (Yes/No)**
1. Is the project located within or close to any areas which are protected under international, EU, or national or local legislation for their ecological, landscape, cultural or other value, which could be affected by the Project?	Yes	The Stage 1 Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact undertaken by DixonBrosnan Environmental Consultants concluded that no significant negative impacts are anticipated on the three closest designated sites: • the Bandon River SAC (2.2 km to the southeast); • the Gearagh SAC (11.6 km to the northeast); • the Gearagh SPA) 13.4 km to the northeast.

2. Are there any other areas on or around the location that are important or sensitive for reasons of their ecology e.g. wetlands, watercourses or other waterbodies, the coastal zone, mountains, forests or woodlands, that could be affected by the Project?	Yes	No The Ecological Impact Assessment Report (EcIAR) prepared by DixonBrosnan Environmental Consultants concluded that: *The road realignment and improvement works will impact on habitats of low local value. Habitats to be impacted are almost exclusively manmade, with the exception of small areas of recolonising bare ground and grassland. There are no trees or significant areas of vegetation within the works area which could provide nesting/roosting habitat for birds or bats.*
3. Are there any areas on or around the location that are used by protected, important or sensitive species of fauna or flora e.g. for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, overwintering, migration, which could be affected by the Project?	No	No The EcIAR found that the surrounding habitats directly impacted by the footprint of the proposed road realignment were of "low local value". No sensitive species of flora or fauna were identified.
4. Are there any inland, coastal, marine or underground waters (or features of the marine environment) on or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	Yes	No The design of the project and the work procedures involved have ensured that the nearby Caha River will be protected from any potential runoff (which will be limited given the stony nature of the substrate) by a series of silt screens and the removal of all machinery off site when not in use.
5. Are there any areas or features of high landscape or scenic value on or around the location which could be affected by the Project?	No	No When completed, the realigned section of road will have no significant impact on the surrounding landscape.
6. Are there any routes or facilities on or around the location which are used by the public for access to recreation	Yes	No There may be some slight traffic disruption for a short period during completion of

or other facilities, which could be affected by the Project?		the road works, but this will be temporary (circa 4 weeks).
7. Are there any transport routes on or around the location that are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the Project	Yes	No The R535 may be subject to temporary short delays during the construction period but congestion is not anticipated.
8. Is the Project in a location in which it is likely to be highly visible to many people?	No	No The road realignment will only be visible to road users.
9. Are there any areas or features of historic or cultural importance on or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	No	No
10. Is the Project located in a previously undeveloped area where there will be loss of greenfield land?	Yes	No A small area of dry heath has been removed in the initial phase of the work.
11. Are there existing land uses within or around the location e.g. homes, gardens, other private property, industry, commerce, recreation, public open space, community facilities, agriculture, forestry, tourism, mining or quarrying that could be affected by the Project?	Yes	No There are four dwelling houses within 260 metres but sufficiently distant from the project to avoid any serious impacts. An area of forestry at the northern boundary of the works area was recently clear-felled so no disruption to forest activities is anticipated during the short time span of the project.
12. Are there any plans for future land uses within or around the location that could be affected by the Project?	No	No
13. Are there areas within or around the location which are densely populated or built-up, that could be affected by the Project?	No	No
14. Are there any areas within or around the location which are occupied by sensitive land uses e.g. hospitals, schools, places of worship, community facilities, that could be affected by the Project?	No	No

15. Are there any areas within or around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources e.g. groundwater, surface waters, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, minerals, that could be affected by the Project?	Yes	No A small area of forestry at the northern boundary of the works area was recently clear-felled so no disruption to forest activities is anticipated during the short time span of the project.
16. Are there any areas within or around the location which are already subject to pollution or environmental damage e.g. where existing legal environmental standards are exceeded, that could be affected by the Project?	No	No
17. Is the Project location susceptible to earthquakes, subsidence, landslides, erosion, flooding or extreme or adverse climatic conditions e.g. temperature inversions, fogs, severe winds, which could cause the Project to present environmental problems?	No	No

4.5 Type and characteristics of potential impacts

Screening question	**Yes/No**	**Is this likely to result in a significant impact? (Yes/No)**
1. Would a large geographical area be impacted as a result of the project?	No	No The project area comprises just 0.57 ha.
2. Would a large population of people be affected as a result of the project?	No	No The immediate and surrounding area is sparsely populated.
3. Are any transboundary impacts likely to arise as a result of the project?	No	No
4. Would the magnitude of impacts associated with the project be considered significant?	No	No The project will provide safer driving conditions for locals

		and people travelling through the area.
5. In considering the various aspects of the environment, would the impacts of the proposed development be considered complex?	No	No The project comprises upgrades to a dangerous section of road and impacts will be short-term in nature and associated largely with the construction phase of the development.
6. Is there a high probability that the effects will occur?	No	No long-term or permanent significant adverse effects are foreseen. The project will result in long-term positive impacts on safe travel.
7. Will the effects be permanent rather than temporary?	No	No Construction impacts will be short-term. No permanent significant adverse effects as a result of the project are foreseen.
8. Will the impacts be irreversible?	No	No Construction impacts will be short-term. No permanent significant adverse effects as a result of the project have been identified.
9. Will there be significant cumulative impacts with other existing and/or approved projects?	No	No In the absence of significant known third-party development in the local area, the project is not likely to result in significant cumulative effects.
10. Will it be difficult to avoid, or reduce or repair or compensate for the effects?	No	No Construction best practice and pollution prevention methodologies will be implemented via a project specific CEMP.

4.6 Aspects of environment and potential effects

Environmental Aspect	Aspect likely to be significantly affected? (Yes/No)
Air Quality and Climate	No During construction, potential dust emissions may arise during certain activities. These emissions will be localised and short-term in nature. Construction best practice measures, including the implementation of a dust management plan will reduce these emissions and therefore they will not be significant. There are no new sources of emissions to air associated with the operational phase.
Biodiversity	No The ecological appraisal conducted of the project area concluded that the existing biodiversity within the project area is of low local value and that no significant impacts as a result of the project would occur. Three Natura 2000 sites were identified within 15 km of the works area: • the Bandon River SAC (2.2 km to the southeast); • the Gearagh SAC (11.6 km to the northeast); • the Gearagh SPA) 13.4 km to the northeast. The NIS concluded that the project will not have any significant impacts on these sites.
Landscape and Visual	No It is likely that there will be short-term localised negative effects on the immediate surrounding landscape and visual setting during the construction phase of the proposed development. These will arise from excavation and removal of existing surface materials, repaving and construction vehicle movements etc.
Land and Soils	There has been some excavation of rock and limited excavation of soil, but all of this material has or will be re-used on site. There will be no importation of topsoil. The operational phase of the proposed development is predicted to have an overall neutral long-term effect on the land and soils within the study area.
Noise and vibration	No Short-term noise and vibration emissions will be generated during the construction of the proposed development due to traffic and machinery in the area, however this will be managed through best practice measures. There are no new sources of

	noise or vibration emissions associated with the operational phase of the development.
Materials Assets	No There is no requirement for construction of foul water infrastructure, as there is no new source of foul water generation associated with the operational phase. With regard to traffic movements, there will be some disruption during construction that will be mitigated via temporary diversions. Local access to residential areas will be maintained. Overall, there will be no significant negative effects on material assets during the construction and operational phase of the proposed project.
Waste Management	No During the construction phase, quantities of construction and demolition (C&D) waste will be produced but most of this material will be re-used on site. Any construction waste generated for removal will be treated in line with the Waste and Resource Management Plan contained within the CEMP. There will be no significant negative effects associated with waste as a result of the proposed project.
Cultural Heritage	No There are no significant archaeological or architectural structures within the project site.
Water	No Environmental protection measures (attenuation ponds and silt screens) are and will be in place throughout the construction period. No significant effects on the water environment are anticipated.
Population and Human Health	No The area surrounding the project has a low population density. During the construction phase of the proposed development, there will be some localised disruption to nearby residents and road users, as well as potential for noise, vibration and dust emissions. This may result in short-term slight negative effects. However, best construction practice measures which will be included in the CEMP will be implemented to ensure that emissions will be kept within standard construction limits. A Traffic Management Plan will be implemented for the duration of the construction works to ensure maintenance of local access and minimal disruption.

	When completed, the project will result in long-term positive effects for the local population and people travelling through the area as the new road alignment will produce much safer driving conditions.

5 Conclusion

This project is not a development for which there is a mandatory requirement for EIA either under Part 1 or Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the P&D Regulations or Section 50(1) of the Roads Acts 1993 to 2015.

This screening report has considered the nature, size and location of the project and having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7 of the P&D Regulations, concludes, that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and that EIA is not required. This is based on the following:

• The proposed project is of a relatively small scale (0.57 ha) and involves normal routine road construction works in a rural area with low population density.

• Any potential negative effects are associated with the construction phase of the project, will be short-term in duration and localised given that the project is likely to be developed in phases. Standard best practice construction and pollution prevention methods will be in place to minimise risks to the surrounding environment and ensure that any potential negative effects are limited and localised (e.g. construction phase noise). The operational phase of the project will result in positive, long term effects for the local and wider area population .

• The proposed project will not adversely affect any Natura 2000 sites or sensitive habitats either on its own or in combination with other projects.

Screening Determination Statement

Screening Determination Statement		
Describe how the proposed development (alone or in-combination) is/is not likely to have significant effect on the environment.		
On the basis of the information on file, which is considered adequate to undertake a screening determination, a site visit and having regard to: • The nature and scale of the proposed development, • The intervening land uses and distance from European sites, • The lack of direct connections with regard to the Source-Pathway-Receptor model, • The lack of potential negative impacts, it is concluded that the proposed development, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effects on the surrounding population and environment. Environmental Impact Assessment is therefore not required.		
Conclusion:		
	Tick as appropriate	Recommendation
(1) It is clear that **no likelihood** of significant effects arises.	☒	The proposal can be screened out: Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.
(2) It is **uncertain** if the proposed development will have a significant effect on a European site.	☐	Request further information to complete screening ☐ Request EIA ☐ Refuse planning permission ☐
(3) **Significant effects** are likely.	☐	Request EIA ☐ Refuse planning permission ☐

Signature and date of Recommending Officer:	 Tony Nagle Cork County Council Ecologist 14/12/2022

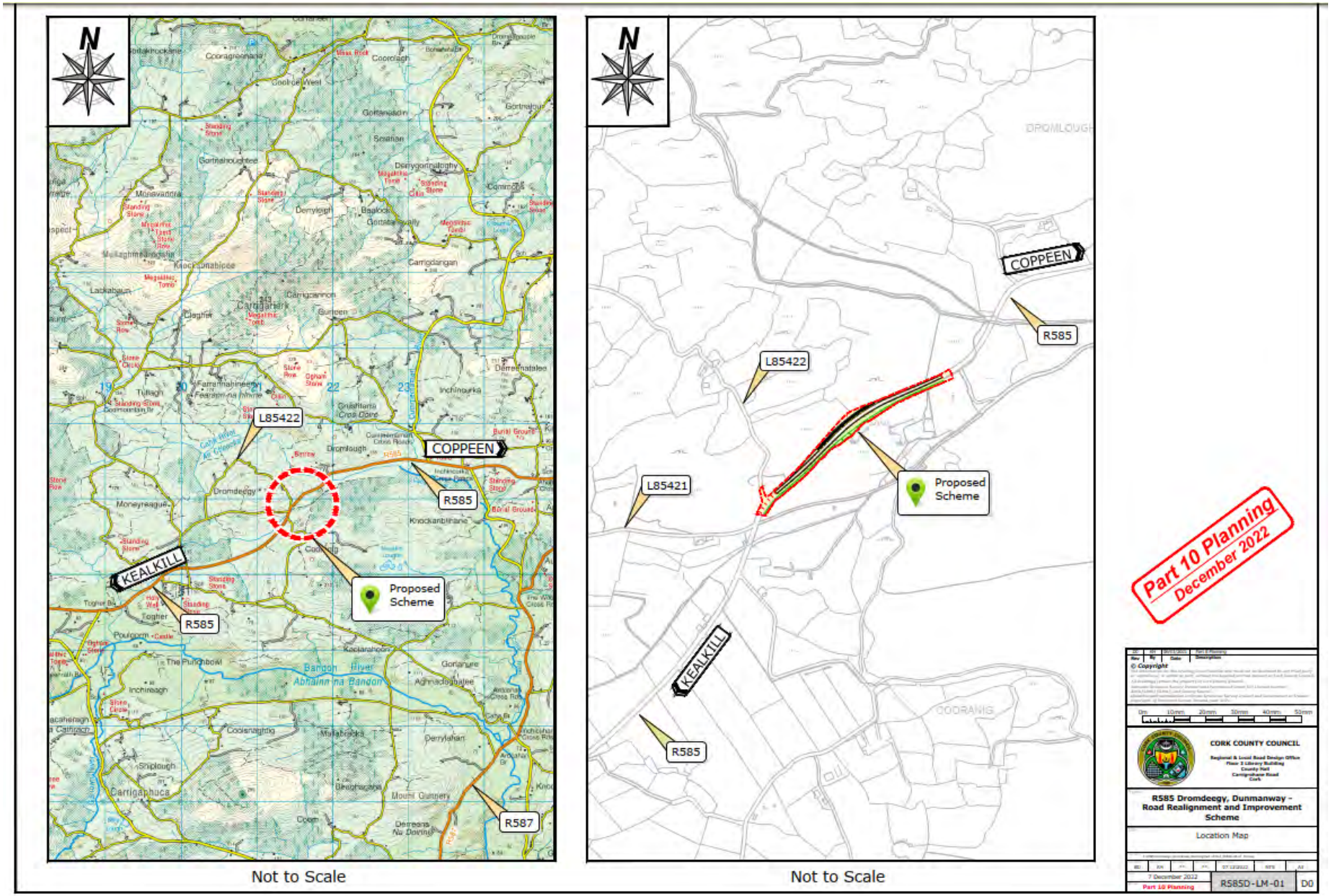

Figure 1 Project Location Map

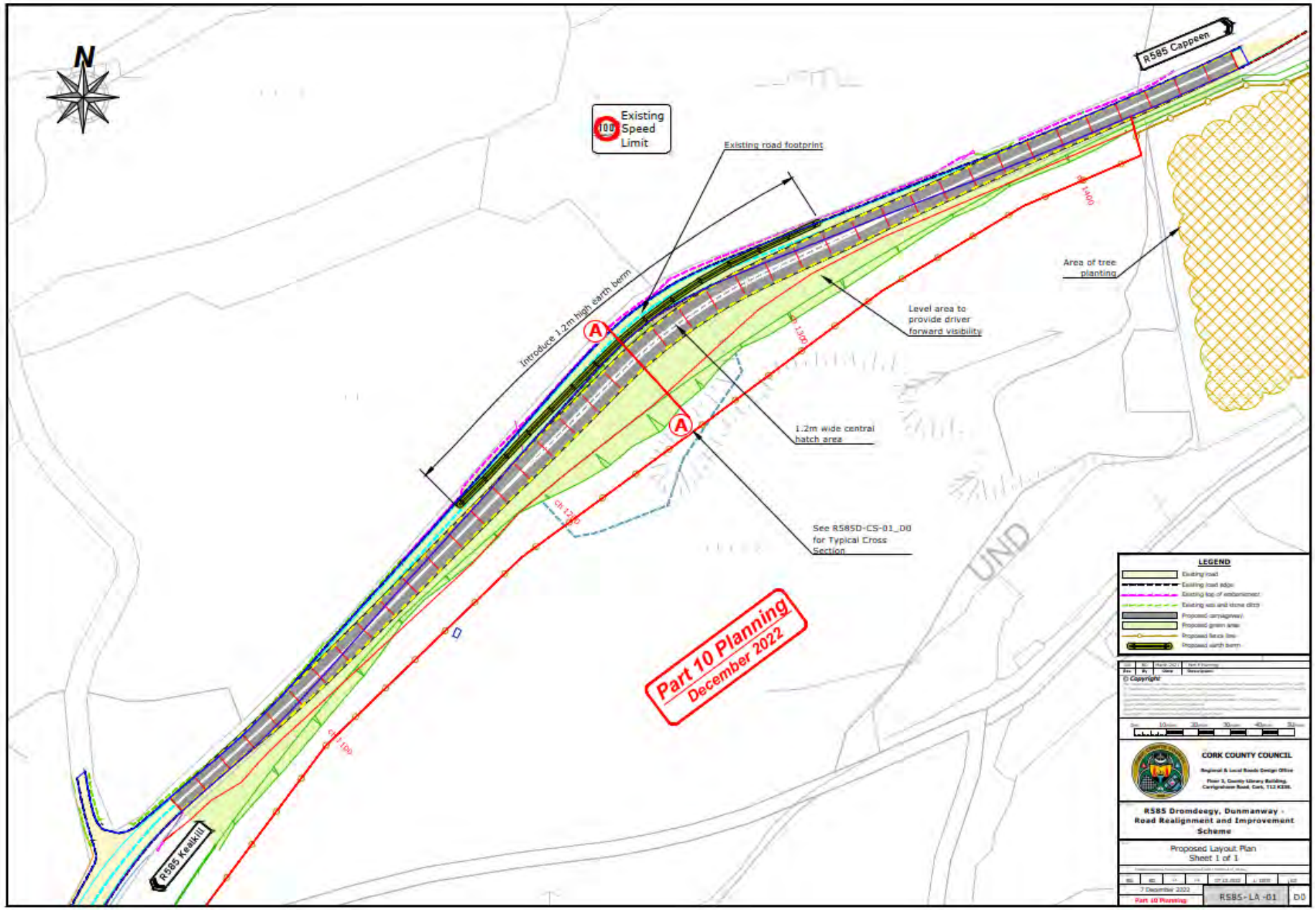

Figure 2 Project Overview Plan