

An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Direction
BD-010076-22
ABP-310659-21

The submissions on this file and the Inspector's report were considered at a Board meeting held on 21/02/2022.

The Board decided to grant permission generally in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation, for the following reasons and considerations, and subject to the following conditions.

Reasons and Considerations

In coming to its decision, the Board had regard to the following:

- (a) the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- (b) the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015,
- (c) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European site,
- (d) the conservation objectives of the European site River Blackwater (Cork/Waterford) SAC (002170),
- (e) the policies and objectives of the Cork County Development Plan 2014-2021,
- (f) the nature and extent of the proposed works set out in the application for approval,
- (g) The report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Board to make a report and recommendation on the matter.

Appropriate Assessment

The Board agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion reached in the Inspector's report that the European site River Blackwater (Cork/Waterford) SAC (002170) is the only European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein and the submissions and observations on file. The Board completed an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for European site River Blackwater (Cork/Waterford) SAC (002170), in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Board considered that the information before it was adequate to allow for a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed development and enable them reach complete, precise and definitive conclusions for appropriate assessment.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the following:

- i. the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,
- ii. the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal, and
- iii. the conservation objectives for the European Site.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the potential effects of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Site, having regard to the site's conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Board was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Site, in view of the site's conservation objectives and there is no reasonable scientific doubt remaining as to the absence of such effects.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development/Likely effects on the environment:

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not contribute to downstream flooding, would not seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity, would not adversely impact on the cultural, archaeological and built heritage of the area and would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development is in accordance with the stated objectives of the Cork County Development Plan 2014-2020. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application and the information contained in the Natura Impact Statement, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where any mitigation measures or any conditions of approval require further details to be prepared by or on behalf of the local authority, these details shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the environment.

2. The local authority and any agent acting on its behalf shall comply with the mitigation measures contained in the application documentation including the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the European sites and the appropriate protection of flora and fauna.

3. Prior to commencement of development, the local authority or any agent acting on its behalf shall prepare a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) incorporating all measures set out in the application documentation including the mitigation measures indicated in the

Natura Impact Statement and demonstration of proposals to ensure best practice.

The plan shall address *inter alia* measures relating to emergency environmental response, preventing the spread of invasive species, construction stage traffic management, waste management and water quality.

The plan shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the amenities of the area and the environment.

4. Prior to the commencement development the local authority shall commission a specialist report prepared by a recognised and experienced bat expert. The report shall include measures to mitigate impacts on bats arising from the removal of trees and from the lighting and works in the construction and operation phase.

Reason : To ensure the protection of bats.

5. Removal of any trees and hedgerows shall be prohibited outside the period of September to February inclusive.

Reason : To ensure the protection of breeding birds.

6. A suitably qualified ecologist shall be appointed by the local authority to oversee the site set-up and construction of the proposed development and the ecologist shall be present on-site during construction works. Upon completion of works, an audit report of the site works shall be prepared by the appointed ecologist and submitted to the local authority to be kept on record.

Reason: In the interest of nature conservation, to prevent adverse impacts on the European sites and to ensure the protection of the Annex I habitats and Annex II species and their Qualifying Interests for which the sites were designated.

7. The local authority shall prepare and implement a long-term plan for the maintenance of the surface water drainage infrastructure associated with the road upgrade scheme.

Reason : To ensure that the surface water drainage measures which are part of the proposed development operate effectively.

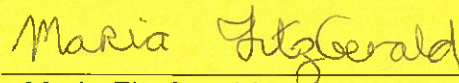
8. The detailed design of the proposed development shall have regard to the provisions of NRA publication 'Guidelines for the Crossing of Watercourses during the Construction of National Road Schemes' and the Eastern Regional Fisheries Board publication 'Requirements for the Protection of Fisheries Habitat during Construction and Development Work at River Sites'.

Reason: In the interests of ecological protection.

9. The local authority and any agent acting on its behalf shall facilitate the preservation, recording, protection or removal of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. In this regard, the County Council shall:
- a) employ a suitably qualified archaeologist prior to commencement of the development who shall assess the site and monitor all site investigations and other excavation works, and
 - b) provide suitable arrangements acceptable to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for the recording and removal of any archaeological materials which is considered appropriate to remove.

Reason: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site and secure the preservation and protection of any remains that may exist within the site.

Board Member



Maria FitzGerald

Date: 21/02/2022

