

An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Order ABP-314597-22

Roads Acts, 1993, as amended

Planning and Development Acts, 2000 to 2022

Planning Authority: Galway City Council

Application by Galway City Council for approval under section 51 of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, in accordance with plans and particulars, including an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement, lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 9th day of September 2022.

Proposed Development: A road development consisting of the construction of the BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link (University Road to Dublin Road) Scheme which has an overall combined length of approximately 6.7 kilometres, comprising:

- 3.0 kilometres (two-way) of bus priority infrastructure and traffic management,
- 3.7 kilometres (two-way) of street infrastructure and traffic management,
- 1.2 kilometres (total both directions) of cycling infrastructure,
- provision of new/refurbished pedestrian facilities and footpaths along the scheme and associated ancillary works,
- provision of 11 new/amended traffic signal controlled junctions,
- provision of 19 new/amended controlled pedestrian crossings,
- provision of 29 new/refurbished raised table side entry facilities,
- provision of 9 new/refurbished raised table junctions/crossings,
- reconfiguration of existing and new bus stops resulting in 26 number bus stop facilities,

- reconfiguration of existing and new coach parking bays resulting in 18 number coach parking / set-down bays,
- public realm works including landscaping, planting, street furniture, street lighting, retaining walls, boundary walls and sustainable urban drainage (SUDs) measures,
- roads associated earthworks including excavation of unacceptable material, importation of material, temporary storage of materials,
- provision of road pavement, signing, lining and ancillary works,
- provision of gates, fencing and boundary treatment works,
- provision of new and diverted drainage infrastructure,
- diversion of utilities and services including associated ancillary works, and
- construction of accommodation works including boundary treatment and ancillary grading and landscaping works.

together with all ancillary and consequential works associated therewith.

All routed along the University Road, Saint Vincent's Avenue, Saint Francis Street, Eglinton Street, Eyre Square, Forster Street, College Road and Dublin Road and also encompassing numerous roads within the city centre including Fairgreen Road, Bothar Uí Eithir, Prospect Hill, Bothar na mBan, Saint Brendan's Avenue, Headford Road, Dyke Road, Woodquay, Daly's Place, Merchants Road, Forthill Street, Queen Street and Dock Road, all in the County of Galway and within the Galway City Council administrative area.

DECISION

APPROVE the above proposed road development based on the reasons and considerations under and subject to the conditions set out below.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

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

European legislation, including of particular relevance:

- The relevant provisions of European Union Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU (Environmental Impact Assessment Directive) on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment,
- Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive) and Directive 79/409/EEC as amended by 2009/147/EC (Birds Directives) which set the requirements for Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union, and
- Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy 2020 (EU Commission 2020).

National and regional planning and related policy, including:

- the Climate Action Plan 2024,
- the National Development Plan 2021-2030,
- Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework,
- Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future: A New Transport Policy for Ireland 2009–2020,
- the Department of Transport National Sustainable Mobility Policy, 2022,
- the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets, 2019,
- the Cycle Design Manual (National Transport Authority and Department of Transport 2023), and
- other relevant guidance documents.

Regional and local level policy, including:

- the Northern and Western Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2020-2032.

Local planning policy, including:

- the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029,
- Galway Transport Strategy,
- the nature, scale and design of the proposed road development as set out in the application for approval and the pattern of development along the route,
- the entirety of the documentation submitted by Galway County Council (applicant) in support of the proposed development, including the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the Natura Impact Statement, and the range of mitigation and monitoring measures proposed,
- the submissions and observations made to An Bord Pleanála in connection with the application,
- 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 European Sites, and
- the report and recommendation of the Inspector including the examination, analysis and evaluation undertaken in relation to appropriate assessment, environmental impact assessment and proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The Board considered that the proposed development would accord with European, national, regional and local planning policies and that it is acceptable in respect of its likely effects on the environment and its likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Board agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the following sites are the European Sites for which there is likelihood for significant effects:

- Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000297)
- Galway Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000268)
- Inner Galway Bay Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004031)

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2:

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposal for the European Sites, in view of the Sites' conservation objectives. The Board considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment.

In completing the assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposal both individually or in combination with other plans or projects, specifically upon the European Sites,

- i. mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal,
- ii. conservation objectives for these European Sites, and
- iii. views of prescribed bodies in this regard.

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 Sites, having regard to the Sites' 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 Sites, in view of the Sites' conservation objectives.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Board completed an environmental impact assessment of the proposed development, taking into account:

- the nature, scale, location, and extent of the proposed development,

- the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted with the application,
- the submissions received during the course of the application, and
- the Inspector's report.

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, adequately considers alternatives to the proposed development, and identifies and describes adequately the direct, indirect, secondary, and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the environment.

The Board agreed with the examination, set out in the Inspector's report, of the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted by the applicant and submissions made during the course of the planning application.

Reasoned Conclusion for Environmental Impact Assessment:

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, provided information which is reasonable and sufficient to allow the Board to reach a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment. The Board is satisfied that the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report is up to date and complies with the provisions of European Union Directive 2014/52/EU amending Directive 2011/92/EU. The Board considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development, during construction and operation, on the environment are those arising from the impacts listed below.

The main significant effects, both positive and negative, are:

- Negative impacts on **human health and population** arising from construction include noise, traffic and dust disturbance to residents of neighbouring dwellings. All of these impacts are low to moderate. Adequate mitigation

measures are proposed to ensure that these impacts are not significant and include adequate mitigation for operational noise.

- **Benefits/positive impacts on the air and climate**, the operation of the proposed development will have a significant positive effect on human health and population due to the displacement of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere arising from an increased use of public transport which will be electrified and the reduction of cars on the route. Negative impacts during construction relate to the embodied carbon of construction materials which will have a negative significant impact but for the short term, any increase in carbon is considered significant, however the construction phase represents a significantly small percentage of the sectoral emission ceilings outlined in Climate Action Plan 2024 for the 2021-2025 carbon budget period.
- Negative impacts on **water** could arise as a result of accidental spillages of chemicals, hydrocarbons or other contaminants entering watercourses during the construction phase of the development. These impacts will be mitigated by measures outlined within the application documentation and can therefore be ruled out.
- Negative impacts on **biodiversity** relating to the removal of habitat in the form of hedgerows and treelines. Such impacts are not considered significant and can adequately be mitigated for within the scheme. Vegetation will be planted in the vicinity to bolster existing treelines and hedgerow. Significant impacts are therefore not expected in this regard. The avoidance of trees with roosting potential for bats and the maintenance of commuting corridors, as well as preconstruction bat surveys will ensure significant impacts to bats are avoided. Adequate mitigation measures including compensatory planting and pre-construction surveys, are proposed to ensure the protection of sensitive flora and fauna encountered. Significant impacts to biodiversity can therefore be ruled out.
- **Noise and dust** impacts arising during the construction phase from construction activities. These impacts will be mitigated through adherence to best practice construction measures in relation to dust and the use of noise abatement at sensitive locations. Significant noise impacts arise in relation to

construction noise during nighttime and weekend hours when thresholds are lower. Works will generally be carried out in daytime hours causing no significant effects. In the event that works are required during nighttime or weekend hours, liaison with residents in this regard and the use of noise abatement will reduce the level of impacts. Noise disturbance from the operation of the development can be ruled out, electric bus fleet and less cars will have a positive impact on operational noise. Significant impacts arising from noise and dust disturbance during the construction, operational and decommissioning stages can therefore be ruled out.

- Negative **traffic** impacts arising during the construction phase of the development, these impacts will be mitigated through the implementation of a Traffic Management Plan and a Construction Management Plan. Whilst some localised impacts arising from road closures may arise, significant impacts arising from traffic can be ruled out.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment Report has considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development, during construction and operation, on the environment would be primarily mitigated by environmental management measures, as appropriate.
- The Environmental Impact Assessment Report has considered the main significant direct and indirect and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the receiving environment. Following mitigation, no residual significant long-term negative impacts on the environment or sensitive receptors would occur.

Having regard to the above, the Board is satisfied that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable direct or indirect effects on the environment. The Board is satisfied that the reasoned conclusion is up to date at the time of making the decision and that the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report complies with the provisions of Article 3, 5 and Annex (IV) of European Union Directive 2014/52/EU.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development:

The proposed road development would deliver a key component of Galway City Council's BusConnects programme with the stated aim to improve bus services across the city. It would also provide safer infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists and would deliver sustainable connectivity and integration with other transport services. The public realm along the bus corridor would also be greatly improved.

The Board considered that the proposed road development, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, would be in accordance with national, regional and local planning policies, including multiple policies and objectives set out in the Galway City Development Plan 2023-2029 and having regard to all relevant provisions, including zoning objectives, at or adjoining the overall scheme area. It is further considered that the need, justification and purpose of the proposed road development has been adequately demonstrated, that it is acceptable in terms of its likely effects on the environment and that an approval for the proposed road development would be consistent with national climate ambitions and with the relevant provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2024 through the delivery of an efficient, low carbon and climate resilient public transport service, which supports the achievement of Ireland's emission reduction targets. The proposed road development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

CONDITIONS

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The following amendments shall be implemented:
- (a) Waterside shall be retained to traffic, and the proposed pedestrian plaza to the rear of Galway Courthouse be removed from the scheme.
 - (b) The direction that traffic is permitted to travel on Waterside be reversed, from the Corrib House Tea Rooms to Saint Vincent's Avenue at the rear of the courthouse.
 - (c) A contra-flow cycle track be provided along Waterside, from Saint Vincent's Avenue to Courthouse Square.
 - (d) No alterations to the existing footpath and parking under the ownership of Galway Courthouse be proposed.

Reason: In order to facilitate the appropriate operation of the Court House.

3. Parking at Woodquay shall include no less than 2 number disabled parking spaces.

Reason: In order to provide adequate disabled parking facilities.

4. (a) All mitigation, environmental commitments, and monitoring measures identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report shall be implemented in full as part of the proposed development.
- (b) All mitigation and environmental commitments identified in the Natura Impact Statement shall be implemented in full as part of the proposed development.

Reason: In the interests of development control, public information, and clarity.

5. In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist will be appointed by the contractor. The ecologist will advise the contractor on ecological matters during construction, communicate all matters in a timely manner to the road authority (Galway City Council) and statutory authorities as appropriate, acquire any licences/consents

required to conduct the work, and supervise and direct the ecological measures associated with the permitted scheme. Where appropriate, monitoring shall be undertaken by specialists. Monitoring schedules shall be included in Site Specific Habitats Protection and Re-instatement Method Statements.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection.

6. Prior to the commencement of any works associated with the development hereby permitted, the road authority shall make available a Construction Traffic Management Plan and a Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan for the construction phase of the development. The Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan shall promote the use of public transport, cycling and walking by personnel accessing and working on the construction site. The Construction Traffic Management Plan and Construction Stage Mobility Management Plan shall be implemented in full during the course of construction of the development.

Reason: In the interest of traffic safety and promoting sustainable travel during the construction period.

7. In accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, all works to, and in the vicinity of, protected structures, and structures of cultural heritage interest shall be monitored and recorded by an Architectural Conservation Specialist, in the event that any works are required at such properties, a Re-instatement Method Statements shall be available and held on file. The Architectural Conservation Specialist shall ensure adequate protection of the retained and historic fabric during the proposed works and across all preparatory and construction phases. Any features of new architectural heritage shall be made known to Galway City Council as soon as is practicably possible.

Reason: In the interest of environmental protection.

8. Noise monitoring shall be carried out during the construction phase of the proposed road development by the road authority to ensure that construction noise threshold levels (L_{Aeq} , period) shall not exceed the levels set out in Table

9.5 (Construction Noise Threshold (CNT) levels for the proposed scheme) of Chapter 9 (Noise and Vibration) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. During the construction phase, noise monitoring shall be carried out at representative noise sensitive locations as the work progresses along the scheme to evaluate and inform the requirement and/or implementation of noise management measures. Noise monitoring shall be conducted in accordance with ISO 1996–1 (ISO 2016) and ISO 1996–2 (ISO 2017).

Reason: In the interests of management of construction noise and protection of adjoining amenities.

9. The contractor shall ensure that drainage arrangements, including the attenuation and disposal of surface water, comply with the requirements of Galway City Council for such works in respect of both the construction and operation phases of the proposed development.

Reason: In the interests of environmental protection and public health.

10. Any new or improved surface water outfalls shall be constructed in a manner which protects riparian habitat and does not result in excessive erosion of such habitat.

Reason: In the interest of habitat protection.

11. Prior to commencement of development, the road authority, and/or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the relevant statutory agencies, an updated Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), incorporating all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Assessment Report and a demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols.

The updated CEMP shall also include details of intended construction practice for the development, including hours of working, compound/works area lighting, noise management measures and surface water management proposals.

The construction of the development shall be constructed in accordance with the updated CEMP.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the environment, the landscape, the integrity of European Sites and sensitive receptors and in the interest of public health.

12. The contractor shall monitor queuing time / delays at each works location and record traffic flows on the local road network at locations to be agreed with Galway City Council. Such monitoring information shall be provided in a report to the road authority on a weekly basis.

Reason: In the interest of orderly development.

13. Prior to the replacement of trees, hedging and planting which is to be removed, Galway City Council shall liaise with the relevant landowner with regard to the species, size and location of all replacement vegetation. Galway City Council shall also employ the services of an appropriately qualified arboriculturist and Landscape Architect for the full duration of the proposed works to ensure landscaping and tree works are implemented appropriately.

Reason: In the interests of visual and residential amenity.

14. Tree protection measures, where required, for all existing trees to be retained shall be put in place prior to the commencement of development or phases of development.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of biodiversity.

15. All details of soft landscaping shall be available and held on record by the road authority prior to implementation.

Reason: In the interest of orderly development.

16. Comprehensive details of the proposed public lighting system to serve the proposed scheme shall be available and held on record by the road authority, prior to commencement of development.

Reason: In the interests of public safety and visual amenity.

17. The road authority shall facilitate the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. In this regard, the planning authority shall –

- (a) employ a suitably-qualified archaeologist who shall monitor all site investigations and other excavation works, and
- (b) provide arrangements, for the recording and for the removal of any archaeological material which the authority considers appropriate to remove.

All archaeological pre-construction investigations shall be carried out in accordance with the details specified with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted with the application.

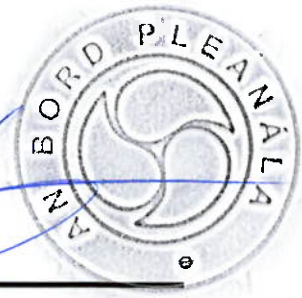
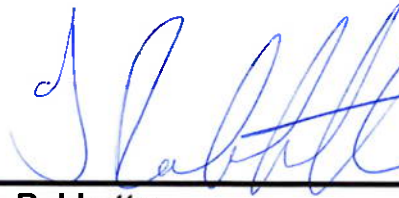
Reason: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site and to secure the preservation and protection of any remains that may exist within the site.

18. Prior to the commencement of development, the road authority shall make available and hold on record an Invasive Species Management Plan, which includes details of a pre-construction survey to be carried out. The plan shall include full details of the eradication of such invasive species from the development site prior to construction or if discovered during construction as soon as is practicably possible.

Reason: In the interests of nature conservation and mitigating ecological damage associated with the development.

19. (a) Trees to be felled shall be examined prior to felling and demolition to determine the presence of bat roosts. Any clearance works shall be in accordance with the Transport Infrastructure Ireland Guidelines for the Treatment of Bats During the Construction of National Road Schemes.
- (b) No ground clearance shall be undertaken and no vegetation shall be cleared from the 1st day of March to 31st day of August, unless otherwise agree.

Reason: In the interest of protection of local biodiversity.



Tom Rabbette

Member of An Bord Pleanála

**duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Board.**

Dated this 27th day of Sep 2024