

An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Commission Order ABP-318573-23

Roads Acts, 1993, as amended

Planning and Development Acts, 2000 to 2022

Planning Authority: Meath County Council

Application by Meath County 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 Coimisiún Pleanála on the 29th day of November 2023, as amended by the further information received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 16th day of December 2024.

Proposed Development: A proposed road development consisting of:

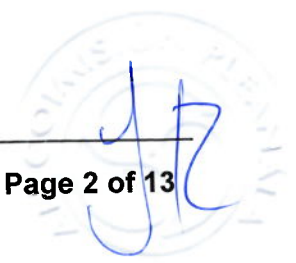
- Approximately 3.5 kilometres of mainline N2 bypass Type 2 dual carriageway;
- Approximately 1.4 kilometres of realigned N51 National Road;
- 1 major bridge crossing of the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation, approximately 258 metres long;
- 3 at-grade roundabouts at N2 South, N51 and N2 North;
- Reconfiguration of The Square junction in Slane, including removal of traffic light control;
- Public Realm improvement and traffic management measures in Slane Village Architectural Conservation Area, including the relocation of a cast-iron hydrant (Protected Structure 90662) and pavement works on Slane Bridge (Protected Structure 90684);

- Provision of a car park on the N51 east of The Square junction, to include new openings in rubble stone wall (Protected Structure 90697) for car park entrance and replacement field access;
- Provision of pedestrian/cyclist link to carpark, to include new opening in rubble stone wall (Protected Structure 90698) for access from existing N2 south of The Square junction;
- Approximately 2.7 kilometres of accommodation works and maintenance access tracks;
- 1 new road overbridge to allow the proposed N2 to pass under Rossnaree Road (L 16002);
- 2 farm accommodation overbridges;
- 3 number new culverts on the Mattock (Mooretown) Stream and removal of existing culvert under existing N2;
- Provision of shared footway/cycleway facilities, including a pedestrian/cyclist bridge to the existing Boyne Canal towpath;
- The acquisition of 3 private dwellings and demolition of 2 of these;
- The acquisition and demolition of a derelict gate lodge and agricultural buildings including uninhabited former dwelling;
- Utility diversions;
- Drainage system, including attenuated outfalls; and,
- Landscaping and environmental mitigation measures; together with all ancillary and consequential Scheme works.

The proposed road development will pass through the townlands of Johnstown, Slane, Cullen, Fennor, Slanecastle Demesne, and Cashel, all in the County Meath.

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 performing its functions in relation to the making of its decision, the Commission had regard to:

- Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, as amended by Section 17 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and the requirement to, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with Climate Action Plan 2024 and Climate Action Plan 2025 and the national long term climate action strategy, national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans set out in those Plans and in furtherance of the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State, and
- Directive 2000/60/EC, the Water Framework Directive and the requirement to exercise its functions in a manner which is consistent with the provisions of the Directive and which achieves or promotes compliance with the requirements of the Directive,

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

European legislation, including of particular relevance:

- the relevant provisions of European Union Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by Directive 2014/52/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
- European Union Regulation 2024/1679.

National and regional planning and related policy, including:

- Project Ireland 2040, National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan 2021-2030,
- Water Action Plan 2024: A River Basin Management Plan,

- the objectives and targets of Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030,
- the National Transport Authority Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy 2022-2042, and,
- the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031.

Local planning policy, including:

- Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027.

And the following:

- other relevant national policy and guidance documents,
- the nature, scale, design, layout and alignment of the proposed road development and associated works,
- 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 any likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites,
- the mitigation measures set out in the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment Report (including Volume 5 – Natura Impact Statement and Report to Inform Screening for Appropriate Assessment) for the application; and the submitted 'Slane Bypass and Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, Additional Information Response Document December 2024 ABP-318573-23' (received on the 16th day of December 2024), and,
- the submissions made in relation to the application and the report and recommendation of the Inspector, including the report of its appointed consultants for noise and ecology.

Appropriate Assessment: Stage 1:

The Commission agreed with the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of

Conservation (Site Code: 002299), River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004232), the Boyne Coast and Estuary Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 001957), the Boyne Estuary Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004080), and North-west Irish Sea Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004236) are European Sites for which there is a possibility of significant effects and must therefore be subject to appropriate assessment.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2:

The Commission considered the Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for European Sites, River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002299), River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004232), the Boyne Coast and Estuary Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 001957), the Boyne Estuary Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004080), and North-west Irish Sea Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004236), in view of those Sites' conservation objectives. The Commission considered that the information before it was sufficient to undertake a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed development in relation to those Sites' conservation objectives using the best available scientific knowledge in the field.

In completing the assessment the Commission considered, in particular, the following:

- (i) Site specific conservation objectives for these European Sites,
- (ii) current conservation status, threats and pressures of the qualifying interest features for these European Sites,
- (iii) likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects, and,
- (iv) mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Commission accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the

implications of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Sites, having regard to the Sites' conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Commission was satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of European Sites in view of the Sites' conservation objectives and there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of such effects.

Environmental Impact Assessment

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

- (a) the nature, scale, location, and extent of the proposed development,
- (b) the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted with the application,
- (c) the submissions received during the course of the application, and,
- (d) the Inspector's report.

The Commission considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, during the course of the application, 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 Commission 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 Commission considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant during the course of the application, provided information which is reasonable and sufficient to allow the Commission 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 Commission 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 Commission considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment are those arising from the impacts listed below.

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

- **Population and human health** – With the application of mitigation, primarily comprising implementation of construction management measures, as well as Environmental Operating Plan and Traffic Management Plan, no significant negative effects during construction. During operation, very significant permanent direct positive residual effects predicted for residential and recreational amenity. Very significant permanent positive effect on journey amenity. Significant positive impacts predicted for reduction in journey times and indirect economic effect. Significant traffic hazard risk reduction by the reduction in volume and type (Heavy Goods Vehicles) of through traffic in Slane village centre. Significant positive residual effect upon healthy lifestyles and an overall net positive effect upon health predicted.
- **Biodiversity** - Potential for significant adverse impact due to terrestrial habitat loss in the short-term period at a local level, with the establishment of mitigation (specifically the landscape planting strategy and introduction of new habitat as part of the proposal), long term, residual impact upon terrestrial biodiversity overall is considered to be not significant. No significant adverse impact upon aquatic biodiversity is anticipated.
- In relation to **land, soils, geology and hydrology**, during construction and with mitigation in place, primarily formed of measures for the prevention of accidental hazardous emissions and loss of soil reserves, no significant effects are anticipated. During operation, mitigation relates to designed-in measures

such as oil interceptors and attenuation features, with no significant residual effects predicted.

- In relation to **water**, mitigation during construction relates to designed-in attenuation and the prevention of the release of pollutants, while during operation mitigation includes maintenance of such measures. With mitigation in place, no significant effects upon water are anticipated for either construction or operation phase.
- With respect to **air quality**, during construction dust mitigation and a Traffic Management Plan to be implemented. During operation, no specific mitigation measures are identified. With the application of mitigation, no significant effects are identified during construction. During operation, a net positive long-term impact is anticipated for the vast majority of properties. Substantial adverse effect is anticipated for five properties with respect to a slight increase in PM_{2.5} (Fine particulate matter) levels, however the effect is significant as the baseline is already above guideline levels. This impact is acceptable as it relates to only a slight increase as a result of the proposal, and the vast majority of receptors experiencing improved air quality levels as a result of the proposal, including the national school.
- In relation to **climate**, mitigation measures relate to reduce embodied carbon related with construction works. During operation, mitigation includes planting of trees and promoting sustainable and efficient transport. With mitigation in place, no significant effects are anticipated upon the climate during either construction or operation.
- **Noise and vibrations** – During construction mitigation includes noise barriers, buffer distance to receptors, implementation of noise control plan and monitoring. During operation, mitigation includes noise barriers and low noise road surfacing. During construction, no significant residual effect with respect to vibration is predicted. Temporary significant adverse impact from construction traffic noise is predicted in isolated areas. Potential for 'temporary significant adverse' residual impact for some noise sensitive locations is predicted during periods of high intensity work close to sensitive receptors. Noise effects will be

short-term and for isolated periods with mitigation to minimise and control impact. During operation no significant effect is anticipated.

- **Material assets (land use, telecommunications, electricity networks, air navigation, quarries and utilities)** – During construction mitigation includes the avoidance of impact, with operational mitigation formed of adherence to best practices. No significant negative effects anticipated during either construction or operation land use (agricultural and non-agricultural properties), utilities and resource/waste management. Major adverse impact is anticipated with respect to permanent land acquisition for a small number of properties with significant or profound effects, however these effects can be appropriately mitigated through the application of the statutory Compulsory Purchase Order process.
- **Material assets (traffic and transport)** – During construction mitigation primarily relates to implementation of a Construction Transport Management Plan, with no mitigation during operation. During construction, no significant adverse residual effects anticipated. During operation, significant positive impacts are predicted to result from traffic reductions through Slane village.
- **Archaeology and cultural heritage** – The primary mitigations proposed relate to mitigation through design, vegetation screening and archaeological testing, monitoring, recording and preservation where necessary. No significant negative effects anticipated during construction or operation. No significant adverse effects arising for the Bru na Boinne UNESCO World Heritage Property. Significant positive effects arising for the architectural heritage of Slane village through public realm improvement and reduction in the volume and type (Heavy Goods Vehicles) of through traffic.
- **Landscape and visual** – The primary mitigations relate to mitigation through design and landscaping, with no significant residual effects anticipated with respect to landscape character areas or Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment viewpoints after the establishment of mitigation planting (post 10 years growth). A small number of properties will experience moderate to major effects post establishment of mitigation planting. Significant positive long-term

effects arising for Slane village through public realm improvement and reduction in volume and type (Heavy Goods Vehicles) of through traffic.

Having regard to the above, the Commission is satisfied that the proposed development would not have any unacceptable direct or indirect effects on the environment. The Commission is satisfied that the reasoned conclusion is up to date at the time of making the decision. The Commission completed an environmental impact assessment in relation to the proposed development and concluded that, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures proposed and subject to compliance with the conditions set out herein, the effects on the environment of the proposed development by itself, and, cumulatively with other development in the vicinity, would be acceptable. In doing so, the Commission adopted the report and conclusions of the reporting Inspector.

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development:

It is considered that the proposed development would accord with European, national, regional and local planning policy provision. The Commission was satisfied that an approval for the proposed development would be consistent with the national climate ambitions and with the relevant provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2024 and 2025. Furthermore, the Commission has performed its functions in relation to the making of its decision, in a manner consistent with Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Act 2015. The Commission considered that by reason of scale, form and extent, that, subject to compliance with the following conditions, the proposed development would be in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and is supported under national, regional and local planning policy, with the submitted Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement for the application demonstrating that impact will be within acceptable parameters. The Commission considered that there is significant positive planning and environmental gain arising from the proposed development including by way of removal of a significant volume and type (Heavy Goods Vehicles) of through traffic in Slane village centre, the significant reduction in traffic hazard risk, traffic congestion and improvement on journey time arising through the upgrade of this part of the national road network which also forms

part of the TEN-T Trans-European Network, positive public realm enhancement in Slane village with positive consequences for the architectural heritage of the village which also benefits greatly by reduction in through-traffic, and significant gains for pedestrian and cyclist safety and comfort to be delivered through the proposal. The Commission considered that there would be no significant adverse effects arising for the Bru na Boinne UNESCO World Heritage Property. The Commission was satisfied that the proposed development would be consistent with the Climate Action Plans 2024 and 2025. The proposed development will not increase traffic on the national road network, it will significantly decrease vehicular traffic in Slane village with positive consequences for air quality in the village, consistent with the aims of the Climate Action Plans with regards to air quality. Public realm improvements and provision of active travel infrastructure (walking and cycling) as part of the development is also consistent with the aims of the Climate Action Plans. The proposed development, would therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

CONDITIONS

1. The proposal, mitigation measures and commitments set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (including all volumes and appendices) submitted for the application; and the 'Slane Bypass and Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, Additional Information Response Document December 2024 ABP-318573-23' received on the 16th day of December 2024; shall be implemented, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, to mitigate the environmental effects of the development, and to protect the amenities of properties in the vicinity.

2. The mitigation measures contained in the submitted Natura Impact Statement, as expanded upon or updated within the submitted 'Slane Bypass and Public Realm Enhancement Scheme, Additional Information Response Document

December 2024 ABP-318573-23' received on the 16th day of December 2024, shall be implemented.

Reason: To protect the integrity of European Sites.

3. All mitigation measures in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage as set out in Chapter 13 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report shall be implemented in full. In addition, the developer shall commission a pre-construction Underwater Archaeological Survey report to include the following:
 - (a) a licenced wade investigation, accompanied by a hand-held metal detection survey, centred on the area(s) where works are proposed within the Mattock (Mooretown) Stream. A Dive/Survey licence (Section 3 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1987) and Detection Device consent (Section 2 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1987) will be required for the wade survey and metal detection, respectively, and
 - (b) a final written report, to be submitted to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage describing the results of the Underwater Archaeological Survey. The report shall include mitigation recommendations.

The planning authority and the National Monuments Service shall be furnished with a final archaeological report describing the results of any archaeological investigative work/excavation required, following the completion of all archaeological work on site and any necessary post-excavation specialist analysis. All resulting and associated archaeological costs shall be borne by the developer.

Reason: To ensure the continued preservation (either in situ or by record) of places, caves, sites, features or other objects of archaeological interest.

4. An ecologist shall be appointed to undertake monitoring of all badger mitigation measures for a 3-year post construction period, including usage of underpasses and artificial setts, with adaptive management implemented to improve the take up and use of these mitigation measures where necessary.

Reason: To mitigate potential effect upon badgers arising from the development.

5. The hedgerow appraisal in Appendix F of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report shall be used to inform the landscaping/planning proposals. Planting shall include hedgerow features linked to the wider network, planted and maintained using hedge-laying techniques, focused in areas where higher value hedgerows (as categorised in Appendix F) are to be lost.

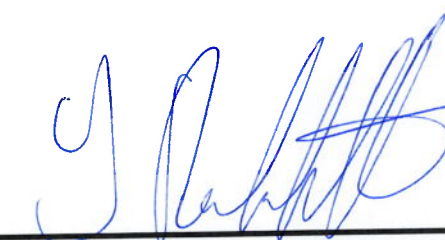
Reason: In the interest of clarity, to mitigate the potential effects of the development upon hedgerows.

6. The Environmental Operating Plan shall be updated to take account of tree removal measures specified at the end of Appendix 15.5 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment) and shall be implemented in full.

Reason: In the interest of clarity, to mitigate potential effect upon bats arising from the development.

7. Final material selection for the public realm shall be subject to appointment of a Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland accredited Grade 1 Conservation Architect and in consultation with Meath County Council's Architectural Conservation Officer.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and visual amenity.



Tom Rabbette

**Member of An Coimisiún Pleanála
duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Commission.**



Dated this 27th day of June 2025