

**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Record of Meeting ABP-311682-21 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-311682-21 BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link (University Road to Dublin Road). University Road to Dublin Road, Galway City		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	13/01/22	Start Time	11.05 a.m.
Location	Virtual (MS Teams)	End Time	13.15 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Niall Haverty, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Michael Lally (Galway City Council)
Colm O’Riordan (Galway City Council)
Brian Burke (Arup)
Donal McDaid (Arup)
Sinead Whyte (Arup)
Conor Crowther (CAAS)

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultations and advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board; it also invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board mentioned general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- This pre-application consultation meeting is being held pursuant to section 51A of the Roads, 1993, as amended.
- The Board will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process. The record of the meeting will not be amended by the Board once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record which will form part of the case file.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- Further information may be requested by the Board and public consultations may also be directed by the Board.
- The Board may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Board in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or any legal proceedings.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant opened its presentation with a brief description of the proposed development and played a promotional video which is available online as part of non-statutory public consultations.

The proposed development will consist of the creation of an east-west priority corridor for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists through the city centre and an inner-city access route. Changes to the management of the roads within the city are proposed to facilitate this and to restrict non-essential private traffic and remove through traffic from the city centre. The scheme will include enhancements to public realm spaces. The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development will create certainty of frequency and journey time reliability for public transport.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development is referenced and supported in planning policy at national, regional, and local level. It noted the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) as a key policy document. The proposed development aligns with the seven principles set out in the GTS and implements and complements specific measures and proposals set out in the Strategy.

Lack of accessibility, traffic congestion and projected population growth were noted, among others factors, as contributing to the need for the scheme.

Non-statutory public consultation began in October, 2020. Submissions were permitted until May, 2021. The online consultation room is still live and 93 submissions were received in total. Five virtual 'sectoral' briefings have been held since December 2020, with over 130 stakeholders invited. These included public transport operators, community groups, emergency services, businesses, cycling groups and others. The application will be accompanied by a CPO application. Landowner meetings commenced in January 2021.

The prospective applicant gave a detailed description of the proposed works and traffic flow and road access changes proposed along the cross-city link, inner-city access route and around the city centre. It is proposed that priority will be given to public transport along the corridor at peak times. The Salmon Weir Bridge, Eglinton Street, Williamsgate Street, Eyre Square east and north and Forster Street will be restricted to public transport, cycling and taxis at peak times. It was noted that

planning permission had recently been granted for a new pedestrian/cycle bridge beside the Salmon Weir Bridge. Forster Street, Eyre Square East, Prospect Hill and Bóthar Uí hEithir will become two-way traffic routes, creating an inner-city access route and College Road will be open to public transport, taxis and local access only, with no through traffic allowed.

Improvements to the public realm, including at Eyre Square North, Wood Quay and Galway Cathedral were also noted. These improvements will be facilitated by closing current road space and removing traffic.

The prospective applicant proposes a bus gate on the Salmon Weir Bridge between the hours of 7am and 7pm, with a window between 10am and 1pm to allow access for business needs.

A draft EIA screening report has been prepared and concluded that an EIAR is required. This has yet to be finalised. A report on information on proposed approach to environmental assessment has been prepared and issued to statutory and non-statutory consultees seeking input. Response was received from Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI), Health and Safety Authority (has) and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). A draft appropriate assessment screening report has concluded that a Natura Impact Statement will be required, due to the scheme's proximity to Galway Bay SAC and SPA.

The prospective applicant intends to submit the application to An Bord Pleanála in mid May 2022.

Discussion:

There was some discussion regarding the nature of the application proposed and whether it would be an application under section 51 of the Roads Act with an accompanying CPO application or whether it might comprise a 'busway' application as defined in section 44 of the Roads Act. This was noted for consideration by the prospective applicant.

The prospective applicant clarified that the CPO application will include 22 folios. They advised that this includes two dwelling houses that it is proposed to demolish to facilitate the development. In response to a query from the Board's representatives,

they stated that the houses in question were not of particular heritage value. Other lands affected by the CPO include a petrol station and gardens of dwelling houses.

The Board's representatives queried whether the GTS would be reviewed in 2022, noting reported comments by the Minister. The prospective applicant clarified that the current GTS was implemented in 2016 and there is no timeline for review of same. They also stated that, while the new Galway City Development Plan is currently being developed, the proposed application will be made under the current City Development Plan. The Board's representatives advised that any changes in policy should be considered in the application.

The Board's representatives asked about the envisaged frequency of buses along the proposed corridor and whether the bus routes can be introduced independently of the proposed development. The prospective applicant outlined the proposed re-designed bus routes, confirmed that they could be implemented independently and clarified that it is operating on the basis of a bus every 2 minutes crossing the Salmon Weir Bridge. Each route, of five, will operate at 10-15 minute frequency.

When asked whether consideration had been given to 24hr traffic restrictions over portions of the route including, for example, the Salmon Weir Bridge, the prospective applicant stated that this had been considered but the benefits did not outweigh the challenges of extinguishing accesses. The viability of closing the bridge to private vehicles during the proposed hours will be assessed in the Traffic Assessment section of the EIAR.

The nature of the Traffic Assessment and likely impacts on modal share was discussed. The prospective applicant advised that the assessment would address the impacts of redistributed traffic on surrounding roads and streets.

The Board's representatives queried whether the bus parking indicated to the south of Galway Cathedral would be for private coach parking or whether it would be for public bus interchange. The prospective applicant advised that it would not be an interchange and would not be limited to private coaches.

The Board's representatives noted that a considerable amount of on-street parking was being retained and queried whether this would conflict with the objectives of the project, including reliability of bus services. The prospective applicant stated that it

did not anticipate this causing delay to bus routes because of the localised nature of access being proposed.

The prospective applicant stated that the alternatives in the EIAR will look at various options including mode, route and scheme options.

It was noted that the public realm works will be in keeping with the Galway Public Realm Strategy regarding materials, finishes etc. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to consider the landscape and cultural heritage value of public realm spaces, impacts associated with ancillary elements that often accompany such transport projects and impacts on existing historic street furniture/paving etc.

It was clarified that bus lanes will be designated primarily through road markings and signage as opposed to different surface finishes.

The Board's representatives advised that the prospective applicant comprehensively address potential construction phase impacts within the application documentation/EIAR, i.e., noise, dust, disturbance, run-off, traffic management, potential night-time works and impacts on residential amenity and on commercial/business operations.

The Board's representatives noted that a number of large-scale commercial and residential developments were proposed or permitted in Galway City Centre and advised that cumulative impacts and in-combination effects should be comprehensively addressed in the application.

The Board's representatives queried whether works were proposed within Eyre Square Park. The prospective applicant confirmed that no such works were proposed, with public realm works proposed to the north of the park, to tie-in with the existing.

In response to a query from the Board's representatives regarding the exact nature of the proposed works, the prospective applicant gave an overview of the physical intervention/construction works required along the route. These include various levels of intervention including road widening, road drainage works, utility diversions, resurfacing, re-alignment of carriageways and junctions, road markings and full depth-construction in places. The Board's representatives requested that the

prospective applicant provide the Board with an overview document and drawings detailing the physical intervention works required along the length of the proposed scheme.


The Board's representatives queried the basis upon which the prospective applicant had determined that EIA was required and emphasised that the prospective applicant should be clear in the application as to the reason for preparing an EIAR, with reference to the relevant legislation. The prospective applicant clarified that the proposed development is deemed to fall under section 50(1)(c) of the Act, [ie. the Road Authority considers that the proposed development, consisting of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road, would be likely to have significant effects on the environment], and, therefore, requires EIA.

Noting that the prospective applicant is required by the legislation to inform the Board of such a case and to publish its EIA Screening Determination, the Board's representatives asked that a copy of this, and the supporting screening documentation, be submitted, once that determination has been made.

Conclusion:

The Board advised the prospective applicant that it is open to it to keep the pre-application process open for the time being and said that a further meeting can be facilitated. In the meantime, the prospective applicant is to provide the Board with documentation/drawings regarding the physical interventions required along the length of the proposed scheme and a copy of the EIA Screening Determination, including supporting documentation, once complete.

The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing or alternatively bring any comments for discussion at the time of any further meeting. The onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process.


pp. **Brendan Wyse**

Assistant Director of Planning

21 January 2022