



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting ABP-314351-22

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	ABP-314351-22 - Limerick City Greenway (UL to Annacotty) - Castletroy, Co. Limerick		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	13/10/22	<b>Start Time</b>	11:00 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	Virtually	<b>End Time</b>	12:07 p.m.

### Representing An Bord Pleanála

#### Staff Members

Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Sarah Lynch, Senior Planning Inspector

Eimear Reilly, Executive Officer

e.reilly@pleanala.ie

01-8737184

#### Representing the Prospective Applicant

Brendan Larkin, Ryan Hanley

Karl Burke, Ryan Hanley

Fintan Morrin, The Planning Partnership

Barry Henn, Limerick City and County Council

Aidan Finn, Limerick City and County Council

Richard Gorey, Limerick City and County Council

Sean McGlynn, Limerick City and County Council

## **Introduction**

The Board's representatives welcomed the representatives of the prospective applicant and introductions were made. The Board's representatives then noted that the meeting was being held following a request received by the Board on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2022 on behalf of the prospective applicant, Limerick City & County Council, to enter into pre-application consultations under 51A of the Roads Act 1993, as amended. The Board referred to general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- 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.
- Under section 51A of the roads act, the Board may give advice to the perspective applicant on matters that may have a bearing on its decision. This will be done focusing on the areas specifically referenced in this section of the Act, namely, procedural matters, the effects on the environment and considerations in relation to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development and the holding of any further meetings is at the discretion of the prospective applicant, who can request closure of the process at any stage.
- 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.



- The Board does not make a determination as to whether or not the proposed development would or would not constitute a strategic infrastructure development on pre-application consultations held under section 51.

The Board's representatives then 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.

## **Presentation made by the Prospective Applicant**

### **Overview and Location:**

The prospective applicant, Ryan Hanley Consulting Engineers, began the presentation by noting that they act on behalf of Limerick City & County Council as agent and designers of the proposed development, and that funding for the proposed development would be provided by the National Transport Authority.

The prospective applicant then proceeded to give an overview of the proposed development which was stated to be an 6.8km long greenway located in County Limerick, east of the city of Castletroy, between University Limerick Boat Club and Annacotty, with cycleways and footways which extend out to the existing University Road and McLoughran Road. It was explained that the prospective applicant proposes to extend the existing tarmac from Limerick City to UL Boat Club and that the existing pathway which extends to Annacotty consists of a multitude of different surfaces that render the pathway inaccessible to wheelchair users.

### **Bridges:**

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development would include 4 no. steel-deck bridges. Bridge 1 is an existing narrow, roughly tarmacked, 2.5m wide bridge over a stream which is proposed to be widened to 3.5-4m and replaced by steel decks during construction. Bridge 2 is a narrow humpback bridge located approximately 0.5km after the UL Boat Club which a diversion will be constructed around. Bridge 3 is proposed to replace an existing bridge over Plassey Mill Race and will provide a link to the abandoned Plassey Mills. The prospective applicant noted that a rest area is proposed to be built adjacent to Plassey Mills. The fourth

bridge is the existing Black Bridge which currently extends across the Blackwater River and into Montpelier. It was noted that Waterways Ireland have plans to construct a greenway link to Killaloo and that the proposed development would provide a strategic link to this at Black Bridge.

#### **Trees:**

The prospective applicant stated that an arboriculture survey was completed in respect of the trees located along the proposed development and all trees present have been categorised according to importance. All significant older trees have been avoided by design. Trees containing bat and bird roosts have also been identified at various locations and are avoided by the proposed greenway route and protection of such trees is proposed during construction works.

#### **Plassey Beach/University Beach:**

Works at Plassey Beach include the construction of a retaining wall for bank stabilisation, the provision of wheelchair access to the river edge, bridge improvement works and the construction of a viewing point.

The PA proposes to widen the existing pathway in this area from approximately 2m to 3.5-4m wide, with a bridge of 4.5m wide. Planters are proposed to be inserted at 2 metre intervals along the retaining wall to soften the landscaping at this location.

#### **Plassey Beach to Troy Castle:**

The prospective applicant stated that the nature of the path changes past Plassey Beach and towards Troy Castle. An entrance to Kilmurry student village is proposed within this section of the greenway. The prospective applicant stated that provision of this access came about following consultation with the University of Limerick.

The prospective applicant also noted that Troy Castle is a ruin with ground that are overgrown and poses a risk to those who walk into the castle. The prospective applicant therefore propose to install a railing around the castle, along with a rest area containing benches and information boards about the history of the castle. It was stated that this fencing is considered necessary to deter passers-by from accessing the castle grounds.



The prospective applicant also propose to include a rest area at the existing bottomless bridge located at the junction of the Mulcair and Shannon Rivers which would serve as a junction to possible future greenways. The design at Plassey Beach is proposed to incorporate a significant retaining structure.

In relation to existing streams located along the proposed greenway, the prospective applicant stated that it is proposed to include pipe culvers every 200 meters along the cycle lanes to allow for an overflow of water to drain underneath the path and into the river.

#### **UL Bohemians RFC Club Grounds:**

The proposed development would pass through the grounds of UL Bohemians RFC. In relation to this, the prospective applicant explained that the land to the left of the view shown in the presentation has recently been acquired by Johnston & Johnston and Vistakon and that in future this area will be fenced off from the rest of the existing rugby grounds. The prospective applicant noted that they have had extensive communications with the UL Bohemians who have requested that the proposed development be constructed away from the main pitches. Following these communications, the prospective applicant proposes to erect a 1.2m high fence between the proposed development and the rest of the rugby grounds.

#### **Mulcair Drive:**

The prospective applicant noted that where the proposed development would connect with Mulcair Drive, it is proposed that the roundabout be removed, the road narrowed and the footpath widened in order to provide a safe route to travel from the proposed development to the hospice which is located on the other side of the Mulcair river.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development would terminate in Annacotty and proposes to narrow, what was stated to be a very wide junction at Annacotty, by providing more pedestrian crossing facilities at this junction. The prospective applicant explained that following a suggestion made by a resident of the area a raised table will be provided at the proposed pedestrian crossing in order to better control the speed of vehicles which come from the old Dublin Road.

**Lighting:**

The prospective applicant proposes to provide public lighting along the entire length of the development. Following an expert recommendation, it is proposed that downward directional lighting with an overall height of 5 metres will be installed. Directional lighting is stated to reduce impacts to birds and bats in the immediate vicinity of the pathway.

**Construction and Phasing:**

The prospective applicant noted that construction would commence occur within four time periods and has referred to these periods in terms of colour: The red section illustrates the majority of the heavy works such as bridges. (The orange section illustrates areas of the route where mature trees are found. The prospective applicant noted that construction of this area of the route would be time sensitive and would need to commence during the winter). The purple section would be worked on during the entire 12 months of construction, and the green section would be the final section to be completed.

It was also stated that cell web would be used along the alignment of the entire route, with the path constructed on top of this. This construction methodology would allow for limited excavation of the gravel path and for bank stabilization.

The prospective applicant also noted that there would be construction compounds provided for each of the sections and that there are existing paths at the university where pedestrian diversions will be put in place for the duration of the works. Stated that the use of separate construction compounds would also ensure that cross contamination and/or spread of invasive species would not occur during construction

It was also noted by the prospective applicant that the hatched green area illustrated on the "Pedestrian diversion around Sectors" drawing illustrates an area of Irish Water treatments works along the proposed development, and stated that Irish Water have no objections to the proposed development.



### **Project Timeline:**

The prospective applicant outlined the project timeline for the proposed development as follows:

- The preliminary designs, which were completed between Q4 2020 and Q2 2021, informed detailed design and the ecology and environmental surveys which were carried out in between Q3 2021 and Q3 2022.
- The Appropriate Assessment Screening, and Natura Impact Statement have been finalised and the prospective applicant noted that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report is to be finalised soon.
- The Arboricultural Impact Assessment is yet to be completed, however, the Arborist has carried out a survey.
- A non-statutory public consultation was held on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2022, and was well attended, especially, by the key stakeholders. It was also noted that the prospective applicant is in the process of agreeing land acquisition.
- Following the closure of the pre-application consultation process, the prospective applicant plans to submit the application by the end of 2022, and, subject to approval, tendering in early 2023 with construction commencing in mid 2023.

### **Discussion:**

The following matters were discussed:

- In response to a query from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant clarified that compulsory purchase orders will be sought along the entire length of the proposed development. It was noted that the prospective applicant will submit a Compulsory Purchase Order application to the Board while also noting that it has had positive consultations with University Limerick, IDA, University Limerick Bohemians, and a third-party landowner of the area between UL Boat Club and Plassey Mills in relation to acquiring land through agreement. The Board advised that an indication as to the location of

the lands to be acquired by CPO should be included in the application documents.

- The Board's representatives sought clarification on sections of the route which are liable to flooding. The prospective applicant confirmed that the majority of the route is liable to flood for a short amount of time during flooding events and that the route would be back in use once flood waters recede. It was noted that there is a slope towards the IDA lands and an existing levee in that location where the potential for water to pool has been identified. To address this issue, culverts will be added at 200m intervals to aid surface water drainage.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be clear and precise when establishing baseline conditions and mitigation measures at application stage.
- The Board's representatives noted that the slopes shown on a number of the section drawings submitted are significant in places. The prospective applicant responded that the slope of the tarmac area is 2.5 degrees and will drain to the river, and that cell web will be draped across steeper slopes to prevent erosion and soil creep. The Board's representatives noted that overall, the scheme is quite an engineered approach with significant slopes evident. In relation to the severity of the slopes, the Board's representatives asked whether the riparian habitat would be impacted. The Board's representatives noted that drainage would be significant in this application and advised the prospective applicant to be clear in regard to how riparian habitat will be impacted by construction and how that would be impacted by drainage in the final scheme. The prospective applicant confirmed that sections of the riparian habitat would be removed during construction but would be replaced and added to. It was noted that the route consists mostly of wild carrot and that Himalayan balsam is dominant towards the river Mulcair and past Plassey Beach. An invasive species survey has been carried out and invasive species will be treated or removed in accordance with an Invasive Species Management Plan. The Board's representative sought clarity in relation to the methodologies proposed for treatment or removal of



these species. The prospective applicant replied that the Himalayan balsam would be pulled and left to the side, while the hogweed would be sprayed if treated in early May, and stem injected if treated during the summer.

- The prospective applicant confirmed, following a query on the matter, that an environmental survey has shown there to be no evidence of otters along the route of the proposed development.
- The Board's representatives advised that the overall landscaping design and the proposed railings around Troy Castle appear excessively engineered and result in an overall sense of hard landscaping adjacent to a nature habitat. The Board's representatives advised that the design be softened. In response, the prospective applicant stated this matter was also an issue raised during public consultations and that while soft landscaping options are limited, five native Irish species or trees will be added along Drumoid student village and hedgerows will be added along the River Mulcair in order to soften the design. The prospective applicant also added that while the railings at Troy Castle need to act as a deterrent, it may consider planting options to soften the aesthetic of the rest area.
- In response to a question regarding lighting and bat surveys, the prospective applicant confirmed that a bat expert carried out a dawn and dusk survey in order to locate all bat roosts along the proposed development. It was advised that a 5-10m buffer would be necessary to ensure that the bats would not be disturbed. It also clarified that the lighting was chosen with bats and feeding patterns in mind. The Board's representatives advised that the lighting would entice more people into the area at night and that the impacts of increased levels of traffic to the area should be addressed in the EIAR.
- The Board's representatives advised that the prospective applicant be clear about sedimentation mitigation measures during construction in NIS document.
- In response to a question regarding the EIAR and NIS, the prospective applicant confirmed that the NIS is complete and is currently with Limerick

City & County Council's environmental officer for review, and that 13 of the 14 chapters of the EIAR are also complete. It noted that the Arborist Assessment will be completed once a design alteration requested by University Limerick is completed.

- In response to a question regarding public consultations, the prospective applicant confirmed that NPWS have been consulted and that a number of mitigations have been identified including that works do not take place between 1<sup>st</sup> March and the end of September in potential bird-breeding areas.
- The prospective applicant stated that finalisation of the arborists assessment is imminent following a minor design change, and confirmed that winter and breeding bird surveys have been completed.
- The prospective applicant noted that the target users of the proposed development would be families and commuters towards the town, while also noting that an alternative route is being developed from Annacotty for speed cyclists.
- The Board's representatives advised that the potential for erosion or compaction of older sections of the paths along the proposed development due to increased foot traffic should be addressed in the application documents along with justifications for the overall design strategy. The Board's representatives also stated that any application should demonstrate a clear overall design strategy and how the main aspects of the development including materials, verges, boundaries, drainage and rest areas have been considered in an integrated way.

Following a question from the prospective applicant, the Board's representatives agreed to confirm the legislation required for the application to be lodged in accordance with following the instant meeting.

#### **Conclusion:**

The Board's representatives advised that onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application



consultation process. The Board's representatives advised that 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 prospective applicant stated that it may not request a further meeting.



---

**Stephen Kay**

**Assistant Director of Planning**