



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-301284-18

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<b>Development</b>	Construction of a road of 232m in length on a site of 5,557sqm
<b>Location</b>	Stamullen & Gormanstown, Gormanstown Road, Co. Meath
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Meath County Council
<b>Planning Authority Reg. Ref.</b>	AA170598
<b>Applicant(s)</b>	McGarrell Reilly Homes.
<b>Type of Application</b>	Permission.
<b>Planning Authority Decision</b>	To grant.
<b>Type of Appeal</b>	Third Party
<b>Appellant(s)</b>	Transport Infrastructure Ireland.
<b>Observer(s)</b>	Thomas Byrne TD
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> October 2018
<b>Inspector</b>	Deirdre MacGabhann

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## 1.0 Site Location and Description

- 1.1. The c.0.6ha appeal site is located to the north east of Stamullen and c.400m to the west of the M1 in Co. Meath. The site lies immediately south of the City North Business Campus and to the south west of the City North Hotel. Access to the Business Campus, Hotel and appeal site is via Junction 7 of the M1. Junction 7 comprises on and off ramps for traffic travelling north and south, via two roundabout junctions, with one on each side of the bridge over the motorway.
- 1.2. There is no direct access to the appeal site or to the Business Campus from Stamullen. Instead, traffic is required to travel east from Stamullen along Gormanstown Road (to the south of the appeal site) via Gormanstown via the R132 (towards Julianstown) to Junction 7.
- 1.3. The appeal site forms part of an agricultural field and land to the east, west and south of the site is currently in agricultural use. At the time of site inspection, three principle buildings had been constructed on the Business Campus with most occupied by a mix of companies including pharmaceutical and energy businesses.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

- 2.1. The proposed development, as revised by way of submission of significant further information (advertised in January 2018), comprises the construction of a 232m link road between the distributor road within City North Business Campus and the distributor road provided to serve a residential development permitted on land to the south of the appeal site<sup>1</sup>. It would provide direct access from Gormanstown Road, to the south of the appeal site, to the Business Campus via this residential development.
- 2.2. The link road is 20m in width (6.5m carriageway, 2m footpaths, 1.5m cycle paths, 2.25m grass verges, 1m wide edge and external fences) and provides a junction which allows for future linkages to land to the west of the road. It also provides for below ground services infrastructure for future development.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally granted permission under PA ref. SA900975 and PL17.237144 and revised under PA ref. AA170505, granted in February 2018.

- 2.3. The application is accompanied by a Traffic Impact Assessment. It concludes that the proposed link road:
- Satisfies Objective 5 of the Stamullen Written Statement by establishing a direct connection between Gormanstown Road and City North Business Campus.
  - Will lead to a travel time saving of c.2.5 minutes between Stamullen village and City North Business Campus.
  - Will divert traffic away from the most saturated approaches to Junction 7 of the M1, thereby improving operation of the junction.
  - Will reduce traffic flows on Gormanstown Road, thereby improving pedestrian and cyclist safety.
  - Will facilitate the development of adjacent lands zoned for residential and enterprise development.
  - Will facilitate improved public transport provision to Stamullen village.
- 2.4. In addition, it concludes on the basis of the traffic modelling undertaken that Junction 7 of the M1 will continue to operate within capacity in year 2035, with the proposed link road in place, including once background traffic increases and residential and business park development lands trip generation are taken into account.
- 2.5. The applicant also states that the development is supported by strategic objectives of the Meath County Development Plan and, therefore, in conjunction with the TIA addresses the reasons cited by the Board for refusing this element of the road from the permission granted under PA ref. SA900975 (PL17.237144).
- 2.6. In response to the request for further information, the applicant provides:
- A validation of the Traffic Impact Assessment with TII's National Transport Model. Allowing for minor discrepancies in flows joining the motorway north of Junction 7 and leaving the motorway from the north (stated to arise as a consequence of toll avoidance and the absence of the access road to City North Business Campus from the TII model) the two sets of data are stated to be broadly in agreement.
  - Further analysis of junction performance/ traffic distribution as a consequence of the development, having regard to the TII data, the form of data

presentation requested by the planning authority and developments granted permission on zoned lands since the initial TIA. Again, the analysis indicates the link road will improve the performance of the junction in 2035 allowing for growth in traffic and development of zoned lands in Stamullen.

- The redistribution of traffic in the previously submitted TIA is based upon the premise that the addition of the proposed link road shall not alter the volumes of traffic joining or leaving the motorway at Junction 7. The increase in mixing of local and long-distance traffic at this location shall therefore be confined to those journeys between Stamullen and the R132 (from Julianstown) that the link road will allow to travel via the Junction 7 overbridge, rather than via Gormanstown Road and the L1130.
- The proposed priority junction, located part way along the proposed link road, is intended solely to access a small portion of lands currently zoned employment uses and residential. Access to the commercial/industrial zoned lands to the north of the priority junction will be possible via the westernmost existing junction, which it is proposed will be converted to a roundabout junction to accommodate future traffic – see drawing no. M090-029 (submitted with RFI).
- The proposed road has been designed to meet DMUR standards, with the road providing a ‘transition zone’ between the industrial/commercial area and Stamullen village itself. It is anticipated that HGVs and other large vehicles will continue to travel principally between the City North Business Campus and Junction 7 of the M1.
- Revised details of public lighting.
- The proposed development in conjunction with the signalised junction on Gormanstown Road (proposed under PA ref. AA170505) will influence the distribution of traffic movements at the junction, but not change total flows at this location. The proposed link road will enable traffic in the residential development to turn north, thereby reducing traffic on passing through the junction. There is no significant generator/attractor of HGV trips located in Stamullen village and it is considered that these vehicles trips will be concentrated between the M1 motorway and City North Business Park. The signalised junction has been designed to accommodate the existing dwelling

accesses on the Gormanstown Road (e.g. yellow box road markings). A swept path assessment and traffic analysis have been carried out under PA ref. AA170505 to ensure that the junction can be accommodated in its receiving environment.

## **3.0 Planning Authority Decision**

### **3.1. Decision**

3.1.1. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 the planning authority decided to grant permission for the development subject to 5 no. conditions. Of note:

- No. 2 – Requires the applicant to liaise with the planning authority to agree the design and layout of the proposed link road (to include relocation of the proposed roundabout).
- No. 3 – Requires the applicant to submit details of the extent and nature of any additional traffic modelling that may be required to assess the impact of the development on the M1 motorway, particularly Junction 7.
- No. 4 – Requires full details of signalised junction permitted under PA ref. AA170505 to be submitted to the planning authority for agreement and constructed prior to works commencing on site.
- No. 5 – Restricts the opening of the road link to through traffic, without the written permission of the planning authority, and details of measures/barriers to control vehicular access to be submitted for agreement.

### **3.2. Planning Authority Reports**

3.2.1. Planning Reports

- 14<sup>th</sup> July 2017 – This report refers to the planning history of the site, relevant policies of the Meath County Development Plan 2013 to 2019 and Stamullen Written Statement, submissions and reports made by prescribed bodies and internal departments. It considers the merits of the development under appropriate assessment, planning policy and road proposal. It considers that significant effects on European sites are unlikely to arise and that the

development is supported by local planning policies. It recommends further information on the matters raised in submissions and technical reports (see below).

- 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018 – This report refers to the applicant’s response to the request for further information and to the submissions, observations and technical reports made. It refers to strategic objectives in the County Development Plan for the growth of Stamullen and the upgrading of the M1 Junction 7 to facilitate vehicular access from the village to the M1, via the City North Business Campus. It considers that the proposed development complies with these objectives and that the development is an enabling piece of infrastructure to develop Stamullen in the future. Having regard to the comments of the Transportation Department, it recommends granting permission subject to conditions to address the matters raised.

### 3.2.2. Other Technical Reports

- Environment (20<sup>th</sup> June 2017) – Recommend conditions to be attached to any permission.
- Road Design (11<sup>th</sup> July 2017) – Recommends that the applicant validate the results of the traffic modelling exercise using the TII National Transport Model, provide confirmation analysis that mixing of local and long distance traffic is not significant and assess the impact of the proposed link on the carrying capacity and efficiency of the M1, consider provision of a roundabout junction to facilitate access to zoned lands, design of the link road in accordance with DMRB specification and liaison with MCC regarding public lighting.
- Road Design (22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018) – Considers that concerns remain regarding the proposed T-junction to access adjoining lands (roundabout preferred), alignment of route (and need to service other zoned lands), safety concerns re signalised junction at Gormanstown Road (including private entrances that will be affected) and impact of development on traffic flows in the region. Recommend refusing permission unless conditions can be applied to address (i) relocation of roundabout junction, (ii) additional traffic modelling to assess the impact of the development on the M1, particularly Junction 7 interchange, (iii) construction of signalised junction, granted under



AA170505, prior to works commencing on site, and (iv) opening of link road with express permission of MCC (and with agreed measures/barriers to control vehicular access).

- Public Lighting (10<sup>th</sup> July 2017 and 14<sup>th</sup> February 2018) – Recommend conditions.

### 3.3. Prescribed Bodies

- TII (19<sup>th</sup> June 2017) – Development conflicts with Section 2.7 of DoECLG’s Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for planning Authorities. Contrary to the guidelines, the development would create an adverse impact on the national road and associated junctions. Proposed connectivity to the M1 was previously refused by the Board (SA900975) on the grounds that it would undermine the carrying capacity of the M1 national route and diminish the level of service available to motorway users and the investment in the national roads infrastructure. The Board’s decision remains relevant to the proposed development.
- TII (30<sup>th</sup> January 2018) – Position remains as above.

### 3.4. Third Party Observations

3.4.1. The following observations on the planning application were made by third parties (H. Whoriskey and D. Nic Conghamna, Stamullen):

- The traffic arising as a consequence of the proposed development, signalised junction on Gormanstown Road (under AA170505) and associated residential development will change/increase greatly the flow of traffic/create congestion on Gormanstown Road and in particular will alter the pattern of traffic outside the property. This will have an impact on the amenity of properties in the vicinity of the proposed junction on Gormanstown Road (noise and vibration, including from HGVs, impede access and egress from property and impact on value of property) and diminish the rural setting of the village.

## 4.0 Planning History

4.1. The following planning applications are relevant to the appeal:

- PA ref. SA900975 and PL17.237144 – At appeal, the Board decided to (a) grant permission for 272 residential dwellings on land to the south of the appeal site, and (b) refuse permission for the proposed distributor road to link Gormanstown Road, to the south of the residential development to the City North Business Campus. The proposed distributor road was refused on the grounds that (a) impact on M1 and (b) absence of justification for the development in the statutory planning context.
- PA ref. AA170505 – Permission granted by the planning authority in February 2018 for the amendment of the above residential development (PA ref. SA900975 and PL17.237144), including reducing the number of units and providing the southern section of a roadway to link the Gormanstown Road to the lands to the north. The development also provides for a signalised junction at its interface with Gormanstown Road.

## 5.0 Policy Context

### 5.1. National Planning Framework (GoI, 2018)

- Section 3.2 – Refers to the Eastern and Midland Region, to the importance of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to the high levels of population growth in the region in the last 20 years. For the Mid-East region, it refers to the importance of a more balanced and sustainable pattern of development in the future, with a greater focus on addressing employment creation, local infrastructure needs and addressing the legacy of rapid growth. It states that housing development should therefore be primarily based on employment growth, accessibility by sustainable transport modes and quality of life, rather than on unsustainable commuting patterns. Priorities for the region include enhanced emphasis on measures to promote self-sustaining economic and employment based development opportunities.
- Section 8.3 – Recognises the importance of the Dublin-Belfast Corridor as the largest economic agglomeration on the island and the national entry point

to the island through its ports and airports. Policies seek to support and promote the development of the corridor and key settlements within it and to improve and protect key transport corridors such as the TEN-T network and the strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network from unnecessary development and sprawl.

- National Strategic Outcome 2 – Seeks to maintain the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network including planning for future capacity enhancements.
- National Policy Objective 73c – Requires planning authorities and infrastructure delivery agencies to focus on the timely delivery of enabling infrastructure to priority zoned lands in order to deliver planned growth and development.

## 5.2. Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010 to 2022

- Section 3.7.3 – Also recognises the importance of the M1 Dublin Belfast corridor, linking the two largest cities on the Island.

## 5.3. Policy on Spatial Planning and National Roads (DECLG, 2012)

- These section 28 Guidelines refer to the primary purpose of the national road network '*to provide strategic transport links between the main centres of population and employment, including key international gateways such as the ports and airports and to provided access between all regions*'. The document states that considerable investment has been made in the national road network, including along the Dublin-Belfast corridor connecting the Republic and Northern Ireland. It states that having made this investment it is important that the efficiency, capacity and safety of the road network is maintained. Key principles of the policy document include that land use and transportation policies be integrated, to minimise the need for travel, and that development be plan led.
- Section 2.7 – Refers to development at national road interchanges or junctions and states that '*planning authorities must exercise particular care in their assessment of development/local area plan proposals relating to the*

*development objectives and/or zoning of locations at or close to interchanges where such development could generate significant additional traffic with potential to impact on the national road. They must make sure that such development which is consistent with planning policies can be catered for by the design assumptions underpinning such junctions and interchanges, thereby avoiding potentially compromising the capacity and efficiency of the national road/associated junctions and possibly leading to the premature and unacceptable reduction in the level of service available to road users'. The Guidelines state that in certain circumstances additional junctions or enhancements to existing junctions on national roads may become necessary to service developments of national and strategic importance or in cases where a proposed development is demonstrated by the planning authority to be more appropriately located approximate to such junctions. The document states that in these circumstances, and subject to compliance with certain criteria, capacity enhancements and development proposals will be supported. Criteria include:*

- Need for additional connectivity by reference to national/regional policy documents,
- Consistency of Development Plan with these,
- Early identification of strategic land uses through the plan making process,
- Demonstration that all other options for servicing development needs have been examined,
- Ensuring that additional traffic loading can be accommodated at the junction concerned and on the national road network,
- Ensuring that the development will not give rise to an undesirable precedent for further traffic generating development at or in the vicinity of the development,
- Compliance with design standards, and
- Details of demand management measures.

#### 5.4. Meath County Development Plan 2013 to 2019

- 5.4.1. Stamullen is identified in the current Meath County Development Plan as a 'Small Town' (Section 2.3.1). The Plan states that the location of the town close to the M1 International Economic Corridor and within easy reach of Dublin as '*a major force for development in recent years*'. Further it states that the town is envisaged to ultimately grow to a moderate sustainable growth town status along the M1 Economic Corridor, with any change in status likely to occur as an incremental process (i.e. over several development plans), and subject to the approval by the Regional Assembly. Within this context, the Plan states '*Furthermore it is imperative for the sustainable growth of Stamullen that a direct road link be provided with Junction 7 of the M1 Motorway*' (section 3.4.5).
- 5.4.2. Within this context, the Land Use Zoning Map for Stamullen sets out the following;
- Zoning of the appeal site and adjoining lands for employment uses (E2 and E3). The employment lands are subject to policy objective LU OBJ 2 and the residential lands to policy objective LU OBJ 1. Both require the delivery of vehicular access from Gormanstown Road to the City Business Campus through the residentially zoned land to the east of Stamullen village (or other land).
  - Zoning of land to the south for new residential communities (A2).
  - An indicative route for a major distributor linking the employment lands to Gormanstown Road, to the east of the appeal site.
- 5.4.3. Policies/objectives of the Stamullen Written Statement (contained within the Development Plan) include the following:
- In section 03, Land Use – States that a need to create additional employment within Stamullen in order to reduce the level of commuting from the village and provide for a more sustainable community. The land use zoning to the north east of the village for industrial and employment related uses are stated to be sufficient to cater for the project population levels over the life of the Plan. It is essential that connectivity from City North Business Park to Stamullen is improved over the plan period.

- SP 3 - *To advance the possible upgrading of M1 Junction 7 to improve its capacity inclusive of the facilitation of vehicular access to / from Stamullen via the City North Business Campus to the M1 Interchange in co-operation with the National Roads Authority. Any upgrade of the capacity of the junction to facilitate the development of the adjoining employment lands shall be provided for by the developers of said lands at the developer's expense or as may otherwise be agreed with the Council and/or NRA.*
- MA OBJ 5 - To facilitate vehicular access to/from the village to commercial and employment uses on lands identified E2 and E3 which would serve, inter alia, Stamullen village and access to the M1 Motorway interchange.

5.4.4. Transport policies are set out in Chapter 6 of the Plan, and these include:

- TRAN POL 28 – To safeguard the capacity and safety of the national road network by applying the provisions of the DECLGs ‘Spatial Planning and National Roads – Guidelines for Planning Authorities’.
- TRANS OBJ 17 – To support where appropriate, major road improvements, including M1 Junction 7, possible upgrading of this junction to improve capacity inclusive of the facilitation of vehicular access to/from Stamullen via the City North Business Campus to the M1 Interchange.

## 5.5. Natural Heritage Designations

5.5.1. There are no sites of nature conservation interest in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site. The nearest Natura 2000 sites lie c.3km to the north east of the site and comprises the River Nanny Estuary and Shore SPA (see attachments).

## 6.0 The Appeal

### 6.1. Grounds of Appeal

6.1.1. The third-party appeal by TII makes the following arguments:

- The M1 Dublin to Belfast corridor is part of the EU TEN-T Core Network, the objective of which is to increase the benefits for road users by ensuring safe, secure, high quality standards for road users and freight transport in a co-

ordinated fashion to achieve integrated and intermodal long-distance travel routes across Europe.

- The importance of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor is recognised in the National Planning Framework and it is an objective of the NPF to improve and protect it (strategic function of the network).
- The development conflicts with the objective of safeguarding the strategic function of the national road.
- DoECLG Policy on Spatial Planning and the National Roads – Development conflicts with section 2.7 of the Guidelines. There is no evidence that the proposed development satisfies the circumstances set out in the Guidelines for development at national road interchanges/junctions. The provisions included in the Development Plan concerning additional connectivity to the M1 Junction 7 have not been developed in agreement with TII.
- The impact of the development on transport movements through M1 Junction 7 have not been adequately explored (a wider Local Transport Study is required). Reasonable access to the M1 corridor from Stamullen is provided via Junction 6 and 7. Connection of Stamullen directly to the M1 may underpin commuting patterns from Stamullen. It is not clear how traffic flows have been redistributed in the TIA accompanying the planning application. Redistribution should be underpinned by origin-destination surveys. TII is concerned that the development may materially impact on the safety and efficiency of the national road junction.
- The planning authority's decision has inappropriately deferred critical evidence based assessment of the development to post decision agreement with the planning authority (condition nos. 3 and 5).
- Neither the planning application for the development, or the decision, address the reasons for refusal given by the Board under PL17.237144. The development places very significant reliance on the M1 motorway for locally generated traffic, reinforcing commuting patterns which is inappropriate for a national motorway, but particularly so when it is the main economic artery between Ireland and Northern Ireland. Although a requirement has been

identified for the development of the lands adjoining the national road junction, this should not be to the detriment of national infrastructure.

- The development, therefore, conflicts with policies TRANS POL 28, TRANS POL 39 and section 6.10.5 and 6.10.6 of the County Development Plan (which requires compliance with section 2.7 of DoECLG Spatial Planning and National Roads and development of additional connectivity in agreement with TII). The development also conflicts with section 8.3 of the National Planning Framework (safeguarding strategic function of the Dublin to Belfast road network).
- Planning history and precedence – The development, if permitted, would set an undesirable precedent for other similar development impact on the strategic road network.

## 6.2. Applicant Response

6.2.1. The following comments are made by the applicant on the appeal:

- TIA – The applicant’s TIA indicated that the development would have a minimal but overall beneficial impact on the operation of the roundabouts at Junction 7.
- Strategic context – The proposed development is specifically supported by policies of the Meath County Development Plan 2012/3 to 2019. This context materially differs to the policy context for the Board’s previous decision under PL17.237144.
- Policy on Spatial Planning and National Roads – Consider that the criteria referred to are not directly relevant to the application as no new junction on the M1 or enhancement of an existing junction of the national road network is proposed. However, they address each of the 9 no. criteria in Table 4.1 of their response to the appeal (see submission). Having regard to the comments made by TII on the draft Meath County Development Plan and variations to it, it is evident that TII is opposed to several elements of the County Development Plan, including master planning at Stamullen, the potential to increase traffic movements at Junction 7 and the principle of connecting Stamullen to the M1. TII has not engaged in the merits or detail



of the application as submitted. The applicant is required to comply with the policy and objective of the County Development Plan, which it does. Further, the applicant has demonstrated that the proposed link road can be provided and operated to protect and maintain the efficiency of the M1 motorway.

- Impact on safety and operation of M1 Junction 7 – The proposed scheme has not been assessed in isolation. It includes modelling of potential traffic arising from undeveloped lands zoned under the County Development Plan and includes detailed surveys of 5 no. primary routes and junctions, including impacts on the redistribution of traffic arising from the scheme.
- Review of traffic and transport studies conducted (Appendix A of submission) – The TIA and response to FI assess the impact of the proposed link road on the operation of M1 Junction 7, taking account of the redistribution of existing traffic and the potential traffic that may be generated by the development of nearby zoned lands. The assessment demonstrates that the development will not undermine the safety or efficiency of Junction 7, but will have a positive impact on the roundabouts at the junction during the AM and PM peak. The TIA uses higher traffic volumes than the traffic data from the TII's own national model, and has regard to the effect of the toll on the M1 on traffic flows in the vicinity of Junction 7. Critical evidence has therefore been submitted and is not deferred. A full origin-destination survey of the wider area is not warranted as the link road will serve to connect existing demand centres, no new direct connection to a national road is proposed and no additional trip generation shall result from the development. The development will not alter the behaviour of existing drivers, from Stamullen, accessing the M1 via junction 6, as the existing route via Balscaddan Road is seen as being more direct. Commuter traffic to and from Stamullen passing through Junctions 6 or 7 is composed largely of journeys to/from workplaces around Swords or further south. Regardless of the route taken to the M1, this traffic will continue on the M1 to the south of Junction 6. The development will, therefore, not result in a change to the volume of traffic carried by the relevant stretches of the national road network (that are presently close to their carrying capacities i.e. M1 south of Junction 5 and M50).

- National and Local Plan Policy – The proposed development is not inconsistent with the policies referred to by TII for the protection and maintenance of the national road network. It has been demonstrated that a link between Stamullen and City North Business Park will safeguard the capacity and safety of the national road network and the development is supported by policies of the County Development Plan and policies in the NPF for the Mid-East region (to provide self-sustaining development in areas that have become dominated by commuter driven activity). By facilitating increased connectivity, it is envisaged that the link road would enable commercial and economic growth in Stamullen to redress the current imbalances between residential and employment and economic development (i.e. address unsustainable commuting patterns currently experienced in the town). It is also supported by National Policy Objective 73c (timely delivery of infrastructure to priority zoned lands).
- Planning history – The applicant has addressed the Board’s previous reasons for refusal under PL17.237144 (strategic planning context and impact on the M1).

### 6.3. Planning Authority Response

6.3.1. The planning authority make the following comments on the appeal:

- The proposed development complies with policies and objectives of the County Development Plan 2013 – 2019 and Stamullen Written Statement 2013 – 2019, in that it is proposing a link between the village and the motorway. Having regard to the location of Stamullen in relation to the motorway, a strategic route of European and national importance as identified in the NPF 2018, the proposed development is considered as an enabling piece of infrastructure to develop the village of Stamullen in the future. Having regard to the comments of the Transportation Department, it was considered that permission should be granted subject to a number of conditions.

## 6.4. Observations

6.4.1. Thomas Byrne TD – Observation made but no comments made on the appeal.

## 6.5. Further Responses (on applicant's submission)

6.5.1. The following additional comments are made in response to the applicant's submission on the appeal:

- TII (11<sup>th</sup> July 2018)
  - In the evolution of the development plan context for the appeal site, TII have consistently raised concerns with MCC in relation to land use planning impacts on the M1 strategic corridor at this location (see attachments on file). The TIA Report undertaken for the Stamullen Framework Plan, 2007, identified significant capacity constraints at M1 Junction 7 as a result of planned development and proposed distributor road links in the Stamullen area. TII remain of the position that concerns consistently raised remain unresolved and that the development, individually and in combination with other planned development in the area has the potential to significantly impact on the adjoining national road and national road junction.
  - The absence of the proposed link road does not preclude access to the employment opportunities in City North for residents of Stamullen i.e. there is access via the existing road network. Opportunities to develop alternative non-vehicular sustainable modes of transport to link Stamullen with nearby employment opportunities do not appear to have been considered i.e. car dependence is being promoted in this area.
  - TIA traffic data – The applicant's traffic data was observed in a single hour, whereas TII Model Data is the average of a two-hour period (7am to 9am and 12pm to 2pm). It is appropriate to directly compare the data.
- Planning Authority (5<sup>th</sup> July 2018) – No additional comments made in response.

## 7.0 Assessment

7.1. Having regard to the submission on file, the history file PL17.237144 and my inspection of the appeal site, the key matters for this appeal are and can be confined to, the matters raised by the parties:

- Compliance with planning policy, and
- Effect of the proposed development on Junction 7 of the M1 and the M1 itself.

7.2. Related to the above is the matter of precedent i.e. whether or not the applicant has overcome the matters raised in the Board's previous determination of PL17.237144.

### 7.3. Planning Policy

7.3.1. As set out in section 5.0 of this report, national and regional policies provide the following strategic context for the site:

- The Dublin to Belfast corridor is identified as a strategic economic corridor and the M1 is identified as a strategic national road linking the two cities (NPF, RPGs, Spatial Planning and National Roads). The motorway is also identified at European level as a strategic transport corridor within the EU (Trans-European Priority Route, TEN-T) for the movement of goods and people.
- National planning policy seeks to protect the investment in the national road network. This includes to carefully control development in locations close to motorway junctions, except in exceptional circumstances where development is of national or strategic importance or is demonstrated by the planning authority to be appropriately located approximate to such junctions.
- The NPF seeks to provide more sustainable forms of development in the Mid-East region in the future, notably addressing the legacy of rapid growth and unsustainable commuter patterns. It also seeks to maintain the strategic capacity and safety of the national roads network (Strategic Outcome 2).

7.3.2. At a local level Meath County Development Plan 2013 to 2019 refers to the location of the town close to the M1 International Economic Corridor and within easy reach of Dublin. It states that the town is envisaged to ultimately grow to a moderate sustainable growth town along the corridor, over several development plans and

subject to the approval of the Regional Assembly. Reflecting trends observed at a regional level, the Written Statement for Stamullen, refers to the need to create additional employment within the village in order to reduce the level of commuting and to provide for a more sustainable community. A number of policies within the Plan seek to provide a direct connection between the village of Stamullen and the M1, via the City North Business Park, with the link considered to '*imperative for the sustainable growth of Stamullen*' (Section 3.4.5).

7.3.3. The proposed development, which provides a direct link from Stamullen to the M1, via the Business Park, is therefore clearly supported by policies of the County Development Plan. However, the development not only links the village of Stamullen to the employment lands at Junction 7, but also the wider geographical area to the west of the motorway direct access to the motorway.

7.3.4. Section 2.7 of the Spatial Planning Guidelines and National Roads sets out criteria for circumstances where development adjoining a junction with the national road network would be supported (see attachments) and I comment on these criteria below:

- Strategic policy context - The need for additional connectivity to the motorway at Stamullen is not recognised in the National Planning Framework, or the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area. In addition, the future strategic growth of Stamullen is not referred to in the Regional Planning Guidelines or the National Planning Framework (e.g. as part of the planned growth/development of the Economic Corridor).
- Local policy context - Whilst the development is supported by policies of the County Development Plan, and it is, therefore, Plan led at a local level, the policies of the County Development Plan for the additional connectivity to Junction 7 are not directly supported by wider regional/national plans or by TII.
- Alternatives – The stated rationale for a direct connection between Stamullen and the employment lands at Junction 7, as set out in the County Development Plan, is the need reduce commuting and provide a more sustainable community. However, as stated by TII, given the very short distance between the village and the employment lands, it would seem

appropriate that alternative (non-vehicular) means to access these lands also be explored, which could equally reduce commuting from the village and provide a more sustainable community.

- Impact on national road/junction – The applicant’s TIA demonstrates that the proposed development, in conjunction with projected increase in road traffic and traffic arising from the zoned lands in Stamullen could be accommodated at Junction 7 and in the longer term would reduce critical flows on it. As stated in the following section of this report, whilst I would generally accept the findings of this study, the TIA has no regard for the wider effects of the development on traffic flows in the region, which I consider to be a significant flaw. I do not accept therefore, that it has been adequately demonstrated that the proposed development could be satisfactorily accommodated at Junction 7 and on the M1 motorway i.e. it could give facilitate significant changes in traffic flows which have not been identified or assessed.
- Design Standards – The proposed development has been designed to DMRB standards and this is consistent with Section 2.7 of the Guidelines.
- Demand management – In connecting the village of Stamullen to the employment lands at Junction 7, the proposed development would not only facilitate greater access to employment lands, but also greater access to the motorway. In the absence of any demand management measures, it could simply facilitate and underpin commuting activity.

7.3.5. Having regard to the above, I consider that the proposed development conflicts with national, regional (and local) planning policies which seek to safeguard the investment in and carrying capacity of the national road network. I consider that the development could have a significant effect on the Junction 7, with the development enabling it to serve not only serve the village but the wider environs of the village and land to the west of the motorway. Such development seems premature and inconsistent with the current strategic policy context, unjustified and inadequately assessed.

7.3.6. The planning authority have conditioned certain of the above information to be submitted to the planning authority. However, I consider this approach to be inappropriate, as matters of principle remain unresolved.

#### **7.4. Effect of the proposed development on Junction 7 of the M1 and the M1**

- 7.4.1. The applicant's Traffic Impact Assessment assesses the effect of the development, together with the projected increase in traffic and development of zoned lands in the vicinity of the site, to 2035, on Junction 7 of the M1. I have read this assessment, the applicant's response to the planning authority's request for further information and the appeal and I would generally accept its overall findings i.e. that the development and associated growth and development on zoned lands, as referred to in the study, would not appear to impact on the operation of Junction 7 and would in fact reduce likely deficiencies. However, it is significant that the assessment assumes that the proposed link road will not alter volumes of traffic joining or leaving the motorway at Junction 7. I consider that this scenario is unlikely, for example, greater access to Junction 7 could increase flows of traffic from the west, through Stamullen to the M1, or provide an alternative means of traffic from the north west avoiding the toll on the M1 (situated between junction 7 and 8). It may also attract traffic from the south of Stamullen providing an alternative to Junction 6.
- 7.4.2. The assessment, therefore, has no regard for the likely indirect effects of the connection of Stamullen to the motorway i.e. how it would affect traffic movements in the area to the west of Stamullen and potentially other junctions and flow patterns on the M1. Given the strategic economic importance of the M1 linking the capital City to Belfast, the very clear policies at national and regional level which seek to safeguard the carrying capacity of the national road network, such an omission is significant.
- 7.4.3. In addition to the above, in the absence of a wider assessment of the implications of the development for traffic flows in the region, the development could result in unforeseen traffic flows through the residential lands to the south of the site (including HGVs) and the junction of this estate road with Gormanstown Road, to the detriment of residential amenity and amenity of the village of Stamullen.

#### **8.0 Appropriate Assessment**

- 8.1.1. 'Having regard to the modest nature of the proposed development and its distance from the nearest European site, no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is not considered that the proposed development would be likely to have a significant effect individually or in combination with other plans or projects on a European site.

## 9.0 Environmental Impact Assessment – Screening

- 9.1.1. The proposed development, is a sub-threshold development, of a class that falls within Part 2, Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) i.e. Class 10(dd) – Infrastructure projects - *‘All private roads which would exceed 2000 metres in length’*.
- 9.1.2. However, having regard to the modest scale and form of the proposed development, the nature of the receiving environment and distance of the site from any nearby sensitive site, there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. The need for environmental impact assessment can, therefore, be excluded at preliminary examination and a screening determination is not required.

## 10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1. Having regard to the above, I am of the opinion that the reasons given by the Board in their previous determination of PL17.237144 have not been satisfactorily addressed. I recommend, therefore, that permission for the proposed development is refused for the reasons and considerations set out below.

## 11.0 Reasons and Considerations

Having regard to:

- i. The location of the proposed development in relation to the M1 motorway, a strategic route of European and national importance,
- ii. The nature of the proposed development which would facilitate a direct connection from the settlement of Stamullen and its hinterland area to the Motorway network,
- iii. The absence of justification for the development in national and regional policy documents, and
- iv. The absence of assessment of the likely indirect effects of it on traffic flows in the area and on the national road network,



The Board is not satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely affect the strategic role and function of the national road network. The proposed development would, therefore, conflict with policies to protect investment in national roads as set out in the Government's Spatial Planning Guidelines and National Roads, and be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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Deirdre MacGabhann  
Senior Planning Inspector

12<sup>th</sup> November 2018.