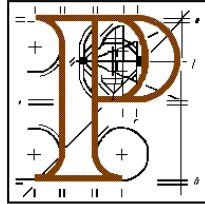


An Bord Pleanála



Inspector's Report

Proposed Development

Metro for Swords - Dublin Airport - Dublin City Centre

Prospective Applicant: Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)

Planning Authorities: Dublin City Council
Fingal County Council

Nature of Development: Railway Infrastructure

Inspector: Kevin Moore

1.0 **LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS**

I note the definition of ‘strategic infrastructure development’ as set out in section 3 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). This includes the following:

‘ strategic infrastructure development ’ means — ...

(g) any proposed railway works referred to in section 37(3) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 (as amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006), ...

The Board will note that metro development would constitute a ‘strategic infrastructure development’ for the purposes of the Planning and Development Act.

Regarding pre-application consultation, the following are the relevant provisions of section 50 of the *Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006* as they relate to pre-application consultation for railway infrastructure:

50.— The Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 is further amended by inserting the following sections after section 47A (inserted by section 49):

“Discussions with Board before making an application.

47B.— (1) The Agency, CIÉ or any other person who proposes to apply for a railway order in accordance with section 37(1) shall, before making the application, enter into consultations with the Board in relation to the proposed railway works.

(2) Such a person is referred to subsequently in this section and in section 47C as a ‘prospective applicant’.

(3) In any consultations under subsection (1), the Board may give advice to the prospective applicant regarding the proposed application and, in particular, regarding—

- (a) the procedures involved in making an application under this Part and in considering such an application, and
- (b) what considerations, related to proper planning and sustainable development or the environment, may, in the opinion of the Board, have a bearing on its decision in relation to the application.

Section 47B: supplemental provisions.

47C.— (1) A prospective applicant shall, for the purposes of consultations under section 47B,

supply to the Board sufficient information in relation to the proposed railway works so as to enable the Board to assess those works.

(2) The Board may, at its absolute discretion, consult with any other person who may, in the opinion of the Board, have information which is relevant for the purposes of consultations under section 47B in relation to the proposed railway works.

(3) The holding of consultations under section 47B shall not prejudice the performance by the Board of any other of its functions under this Act or the Planning and Development Act 2000 or regulations under either of those Acts and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in legal proceedings.

(4) The Board shall keep a record in writing of any consultations under section 47B in relation to proposed railway works, including the names of those who participated in the consultations, and a copy of such record shall be placed and kept with the documents to which any application in respect of the proposed railway works relates.

2.0 **THE PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS**

2.1. A request by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) to enter into pre-application consultations in relation to the proposed Metrolink development was received by the Board on 28th June, 2018 in accordance with section 47B of the *Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001*, as inserted by section 50 of the *Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006*. The Board's representatives met with the prospective applicant on the following dates:

2.2. Seven Pre-Application Consultation meetings took place between An Bord Pleanála (the Board) and the prospective applicant on the following dates:

6th December, 2018

29th May, 2019

8th November, 2019

28th October, 2020

31st March, 2021

15th September, 2021

28th October, 2021

2.3. The Board's representatives had further meetings with representatives of Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, the Office of Public Works and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and the National Transport Authority on the following dates:

Dublin City Council 3rd September, 2019

Fingal County Council 16th September, 2019

Office of Public Works and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the
Gaeltacht 18th September, 2019

National Transport Authority 17th December, 2019.

- 2.4. This Report is prepared following the request by the prospective applicant to close the Pre-Application Consultations between the applicant and the Board. This Report provides an overview of the proposed project and gives a summary of the meetings between the prospective applicant and the Board and between the Board and other public bodies. I attach a list of Prescribed Bodies who it is considered should be forwarded copies of the application.

3.0 **THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

3.1. Overview

MetroLink proposes to provide a high speed, high capacity, high frequency public transport service for people travelling along the Swords/Airport to City Centre corridor in Dublin and finishing at Charlemont station, with a total length of 19km. It would be an automated system, having a 90-second headway at peak periods and a three-minute headway during off-peak periods. It is estimated that it would carry 50 million passengers annually. 16 stations would be provided. The scheme would have linkages with Dublin Airport, Irish Rail, Dart and Luas services. The underground section of the scheme would be tunnelled in two places using a single bore tunnel – south of Dublin Airport northwards under the Airport and from Northwood to Charlemont. The stations for the underground section would be constructed using the ‘cut-and-cover’ method.

3.2. Alignment and Stations

The proposed development would be as follows:

- The scheme would begin at a station at ground level at Estuary, north of Swords, where a multi-storey park and ride facility would be provided.
- The route would proceed along the east side of the R132 below the road level. Three further stations would be provided to serve Swords and would be at ground level on the east side of the R132 – Seatown, Swords Central, and Fosterstown. The road crossings in the Swords area would be by cut-and-cover.
- The route would then proceed to Dublin Airport where it would be underground under the Ground Transportation Hub below the existing T2 surface parking.
- It would then arise out of tunnel to Dardistown, where the depot and a ground level station would be developed. This station would not be opened at the initial phase of the scheme.
- The route would cross over the M50 via a new bridge and would proceed to the Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) launch site.
- Northwood station would be developed underground under the R108.
- The tunnel would proceed to Ballymun, where an underground station would be developed on the west side of the R108 at the location of a former shopping centre site.
- The tunnel would proceed southwards to Collins Avenue, where an underground station would be developed on the east side of Our Lady of Victories Church.
- Proceeding further south, a ventilation and intervention shaft would be provided at Albert College Park.

- Beyond this, an underground station would be developed at Griffith Park on the east side of St. Mobhi Road.
- At Glasnevin there would be an underground station developed at the junction of Finglas Road/Botanic Road adjoining the Royal Canal, where there would be interchange with the Dublin/Sligo rail line and the Newbridge to Grand Canal Dock rail line.
- The route would continue southwards and an underground station would be developed at the Mater on the south side of Eccles Street.
- An underground station would be developed on the west side of O'Connell Street under the former Carlton Cinema site.
- The route would then proceed to Tara Street where an underground station would be developed and where there would be interchange with DART and Irish Rail services.
- It would then proceed to St. Stephen's Green where an underground station would be developed on St. Stephen's Green East.
- The scheme would terminate at Charlemont where an underground station would be developed. The development would include for the turn back of trains.

The construction phase is estimated to take approximately 7 years. The proposed tunnelling works are intended to occur on a 24/7 basis. It would take approximately 15 months to construct the Airport tunnel and approximately 69 months for the City tunnel.

4.0 **POLICY CONTEXT**

- 4.1. The development of a metro system is consistent with national, regional and local policy, which includes the following:

National

Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040 – National Development Plan

Regional

Regional Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region

Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area

Fingal/North Dublin Transport Strategy

Local

Fingal County Development Plan

Dublin City Development Plan

5.0 **PRE-APPLICATION CONSULTATION**

- 5.1. Seven Pre-application consultation meetings were held with the prospective applicant. The following is a summary of these meetings:

6th December, 2018

It was understood that this first meeting constituted an information-gathering exercise to gauge an understanding of the scope of the proposed development. The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed development, which at that stage comprised a metro rail line extending between Estuary Park and Ride to the north of Swords, via Dublin Airport to Dublin City Centre, and then connecting to the existing Luas Green Line and providing metro services to Sandyford. Reference was made to the national, regional and local policy context for the proposal. Public consultation and changes arising were referenced. The principal elements of the scheme were outlined. The format of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report was discussed. Key issues expected to arise were viewed by the prospective applicant as including alternatives and construction waste management. The Board's representatives asked that the issue of alternatives would fully address the implications of the scheme for the operation of the Luas Green Line and requested further elucidation regarding the disposal of construction materials.

29th May, 2019

The prospective applicant gave an update on changes to the proposed development, which included the omission of the connection to the existing Luas Green Line and the last stop being provided at Charlemont Station. The Board was informed that an interchange would be provided at Charlemont and the tunnel boring works would allow for future connection to the Green Line. The preferred route would provide 16 stations and a single bore tunnel was proposed for the scheme. Station locations were identified and outstanding consultations with interested parties were outlined. Details of public consultation were set out. It was confirmed that over-site development was envisaged for the stations at

Ballymun, O'Connell Street, and Charlemont and the options for Tara Street were outlined. The potential impacts to St. Stephen's Green were set out. Materials management arising from the construction were discussed further.

8th November, 2019

The prospective applicant was informed of the meetings the Board's representatives had held with Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, the Office of Public Works and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The prospective applicant reported a number of alterations to the scheme, including provision of a viaduct at Balheary Park and alteration to the location of the proposed Dardistown Depot. An update on the development of the proposed works at Glasnevin and on public consultations was given. Discussion on materials management and the provision of a power supply at the construction and operational phases took place. The proposed structure for the EIAR was set out.

The Board's representatives brought up a number of high-level issues for discussion relating to the Swords area, the North City area, and the South City area. With regard to the Swords area, these related to the justification of the Swords to Dublin Airport corridor and its alignment, the future role of the R132 and access to stations, with particular regard to Swords Central station and the consideration of extending the station under the R132. For the North City area, the rationale for Glasnevin being favoured over Drumcondra was queried, with regard given to the proximity to the Luas Green Line and accessibility to Croke Park. For the South City area, the selection of the east side of St. Stephen's Green was queried, given the distance from Grafton Street and the possible future interchange with the Dart Underground. The appropriateness of the selection of Charlemont Station, in light of the decision to omit the Luas Green

Line upgrade, was also queried. Other matters raised related to the location of Collins Avenue Station relative to Dublin City University.

28th October, 2020

The prospective applicant provided details on the power supply/grid connection for the proposed development and clarified that a separate application would be made for the permanent connection. Consultation with local authority stakeholders and design changes arising were outlined. The proposed development of the scheme in the Swords area was addressed, with discussion focused on the form and access to Swords Central station and justification for the Seatown station. Further details were provided on the depot location and the park and ride facility. Discussions with Dublin City Council on city centre station design were outlined. Clarity was provided on the selection of the locations for the Collins Avenue, Glasnevin and St. Stephen's Green stations. The design of the Charlemont station was also addressed. Further consultation with other transportation and waste management stakeholders was outlined.

31st March, 2021

The prospective applicant noted the production of the "St. Stephen's Green Station Options Report" and the "Strategic Principles Report". The nature and extent of the rail corridor to form the Railway Order application were outlined and proposed limits of deviation were clarified. Details were outlined on the following stations – Seatown, Swords central, Fosterstown, Dublin Airport, Northwood, Ballymun, Collins Avenue, and Griffith Park. Reference was also made to the proposed R132 Connectivity Project by Fingal County Council, to co-ordination with the BusConnects project, and to ESB works. Association with DART Plus,

the replacement of playing fields at parklands, and the extent of works at O'Connell Street station were also discussed. Further stakeholder engagement and the considerations on the management of waste materials were outlined.

15th September, 2021

The prospective applicant presented details of project elements, including station types, the park and ride facility, and the depot. Details were outlined on the following stations –Glasnevin, Mater, O'Connell Street, Tara Street, St. Stephen's Green, and Charlemont. Key consultations with stakeholders were referred to and further discussion arose in relation to deviation limits for the scheme and on access to the Swords Central station.

28th October, 2021

This final meeting addressed the urban realm design for the stations and other constituent element of the proposed scheme to be included as part of the application. An overview of the construction programme was set out, including the phases involved, the tunnelling component, working hours, etc. The approach set out in the EIAR to accompany the upcoming application was also outlined, with considerations on alternatives, noise and vibration, settlement, traffic and transport, biodiversity, soils and geology, the urban realm and landscape, architectural heritage, cumulative impacts, and sustainability. A summary of public consultations to date was provided. The prospective applicant set out its intended timeline for the lodgment of the railway order application.

Documents provided to the Board during the consultations included” Metrolink Preferred Route, March 2019”, “St. Stephen’s Green Station Study: Location Assessment Report”, and “Strategic Development Principles Report”.

6.0 **CONSULTATION WITH PUBLIC BODIES**

6.1 The following consultations were undertaken by the Board’s representatives in accordance with section 47C(2) as inserted by section 50 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006:

Dublin City Council

The range of issues discussed at a meeting on 3rd September, 2019 included:

- Interconnectivity with other modes of transport, including cycling and BusConnects;
- Over-site development at city stations;
- Inter-connectivity of stations with pedestrian movement;
- The TBM launch site and the development of City Council land,
- Demolition at Tara Street; and
- Spoil management.

Fingal County Council

The range of issues discussed at a meeting on 16th September, 2019 included:

- The design of and accessibility to Swords Central station;
- The provision of the open cut along the R132;
- The development of the R132 as an urbanised roadway;

- Compatibility of Swords Masterplans with the development of the metro;
- Residential expansion in the Swords area and connectivity to the metro;
- Operational hours of the scheme;
- The level of service to Swords; and
- The location of Dardistown depot.

Office of Public Works and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

The range of issues discussed at a meeting on 18th September, 2019 included:

- The maintenance of St. Stephen's Green as a public park;
- Need for further surveys.
- The site selection for the St. Stephen's Green Station;
- An alternative location at Earlsfort Terrace;
- The negative impact of the scheme on the Green;
- Potential impacts for other buildings in the OPW's portfolio.

National Transport Authority

The range of issues discussed at a meeting on 17th December, 2019 included:

- The provisions of the scheme for the Swords area;
- The park and ride component;
- The location of Collins Avenue station;
- Alignment and selection of Glasnevin;
- The St. Stephen's Green station selection; and

- The selection of Charlemont as a terminal.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1. Further to section 47B of the *Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001*, as inserted by section 50 of the *Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006*, Transport Infrastructure Ireland entered into consultations with the Board prior to submitting an application for the proposed MetroLink. The Board gave advice to TII regarding the procedures involved and what considerations relating to the effects of the proposed development on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development may have on its decision in relation to the application. During the meetings held, advice was provided as noted on the file attached.
- 7.2. The applicant now wishes to close the consultation stage and, following this stage, the applicant may apply to the Board for a railway order for the proposed development.
- 7.3. A recommended list of Prescribed Bodies, who should be forwarded copies of the application documentation, is as follows:
 - (a) Department of Transport
 - (b) Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
 - (c) Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media
 - (d) Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
 - (e) Dublin City Council
 - (f) Fingal County Council
 - (g) Irish Water
 - (h) An Chomhairle Ealaíon
 - (i) Fáilte Ireland

- (j) An Taisce
- (j) Heritage Council
- (k) The Commissioners of Public Works
- (l) Dublin Airport Authority
- (m) EirGrid
- (n) ESB
- (o) Health Service Executive
- (p) Health and Safety Authority
- (q) Inland Fisheries Ireland
- (r) Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
- (s) National Transport Authority
- (t) Waterways Ireland
- (u) Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- (v) Commission for Railway Regulation
- (w) Córas Iompair Éireann

Kevin Moore

Senior Planning Inspector

26th November, 2021