An Bord Pleanála



Inspector's Report

Proposed Development

Remedial works to pier walkway, Coliemore Harbour, Dalkey, County Dublin.

Applicant:

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

Type of Application:

Application for approval under section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Date of Site Inspection:

7th September, 2022

Inspector:

Kevin Moore

1.0. Introduction

1.1. This is an application by Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council seeking approval from An Bord Pleanála under section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, further to its preparation of a Natura Impact Statement relating to proposed remedial works to a pier walkway at Coliemore Harbour, Dalkey, County Dublin. Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment has been deemed necessary by the local authority with regard to the proximity to and potential effects on Dalkey Islands SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SAC, Lambay Island SPA, and Rogerstown Estuary SPA.

2.0. Site Location and Description

2.1. Coliemore Harbour is located approximately 800m south-east of Dalkey village, within the administrative area of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council. It is used by small leisure crafts which use the slipway to access the water. The harbour is a protected structure listed in the Record of Protected Structures in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan. There was a localised collapse of granite bedrock supporting the footpath leading to the southern jetty in 2020 and access to the southern jetty has been closed. There is now restricted access to the southern jetty. A temporary gangway was installed in 2021 to allow public access to the jetty.

3.0. Description of Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposed development seeks to reinstate public access to Coliemore Harbour. The works comprise:
 - Mobilisation and site set-up, including access to a viewing platform and obstruction removal (bollards, etc.),
 - Removal of a temporary walkway to allow access for grouting;
 - Phased grouting of the harbour wall by gunition and/or pointing,
 - Installation of up to 16 rock anchors,
 - Grouting of rock anchors,
 - Headplate installation with metal rings welded to the top of the bars,
 - Resurfacing of the existing walkway, and
 - Pointing and post-condition works.
- 3.2. Details submitted with the application include:
 - A schedule of drawings and public notices,
 - An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report,
 - A Natura Impact Statement (NIS),
 - An Ecological Impact Assessment Report,
 - An Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report,
 - A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and
 - An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report.

4.0. Policy Context

4.1. <u>Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028</u>

Biodiversity

Policy Objectives include:

Policy Objective GIB18: Protection of Natural Heritage and the Environment

It is a Policy Objective to protect and conserve the environment including, in particular, the natural heritage of the County and to conserve and manage Nationally and Internationally important and EU designated sites - such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservations (SACs), proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs) and Ramsar sites (wetlands) - as well as non-designated areas of high nature conservation value known as locally important areas which also serve as 'Stepping Stones' for the purposes of Article 10 of the Habitats Directive.

Policy Objective GIB19: Habitats Directive

It is a Policy Objective to ensure the protection of natural heritage and biodiversity, including European Sites that form part of the Natura 2000 network, in accordance with relevant EU Environmental Directives and applicable National Legislation, Policies, Plans and Guidelines.

Policy Objective GIB21: Designated Sites

It is a Policy Objective to protect and preserve areas designated as proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Special Areas of Conservation, and Special Protection Areas. It is Council policy to promote the maintenance and as appropriate, delivery of 'favourable' conservation status of habitats and species within these areas.

Architectural Heritage

Coliemore Harbour is a designated protected structure (RPS No. 1898) and is included on the Record of Protected Structures in the Development Plan.

Policy Objectives include:

Policy Objective HER8: Work to Protected Structures

It is a Policy Objective to:

- i. Protect structures included on the RPS from any works that would negatively impact their special character and appearance.
- Ensure that any development proposals to Protected Structures, their curtilage and setting shall have regard to the 'Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities' published by the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- iii. Ensure that all works are carried out under supervision of a qualified professional with specialised conservation expertise.
- iv. Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a Protected Structure and/or its setting is sensitively sited and designed, and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout, and materials.
- v. Ensure that the form and structural integrity of the Protected Structure is retained in any redevelopment and that the relationship between the Protected Structure and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, or views and vistas from within the grounds of the structure are respected.
- vi. Respect the special interest of the interior, including its plan form, hierarchy of spaces, architectural detail, fixtures and fittings and materials.

- vii. Ensure that new and adapted uses are compatible with the character and special interest of the Protected Structure.
- viii. Protect the curtilage of protected structures and to refuse planning permission for inappropriate development within the curtilage and attendant grounds that would adversely impact on the special character of the Protected Structure.
- ix. Protect and retain important elements of built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, entrance gates and piers and any other associated curtilage features.
- Ensure historic landscapes and gardens associated with Protected Structures are protected from inappropriate development (consistent with NPO 17 of the NPF and RPO 9.30 of the RSES.

5.0. Observations

The Observations received by the Board may be synopsised as follows:

5.1. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage submit that, if the measures to avoid water pollution set out in the NIS and the CEMP are implemented in full, they should result in the elimination of the potential detrimental effects on the Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC. The Department submits that there is greater concern arising from the proposed works for a small colony of rare black guillemots that nest annually in the vicinity of the harbour. Reference is made to the birds nesting in a retaining wall below an apartment complex north of the harbour and to anecdotal evidence that a single pair may have nested in the past in a crevice in the harbour wall above the southern jetty. It is submitted that the timing of the works should avoid any direct impact on the

guillemots. It is recommended that two nest boxes suitable for the birds be installed at Coliemore. Two conditions are recommended.

5.2. Geological Survey Ireland recommended the use of its range of datasets and attached a list of publicly accessible datasets. It is submitted that there are no envisaged impacts on Dalkey Island County Geological Site.

6.0 Assessment

6.1. Introduction

- 6.1.1 The proposed development comprises repair works of a pedestrian access to the jetty in Coliemore Harbour. This consists of grouting and infill works, rock anchoring, and reinstatement of the walkway. I note the provisions of section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. It is the local authority who has determined that appropriate assessment is necessary for these rudimentary repair works and it is the local authority who has decided to submit the Natura Impact Statement for approval by the Board. There is no provision under the Act for the Board to reassess the need or otherwise for Stage 2 appropriate assessment. Therefore, in accordance with section 177AE(6) of the Act, the Board is restricted to considering the NIS, the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development, the likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to situate the development, and the likely significant effects of the proposed development upon a European site.
- 6.1.2. Further to the above, I note the array of unnecessary reports submitted with this application to the Board which are not in any way relevant or necessary for this application. These reports are the Ecological Impact Assessment Report, the

Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report, the Construction Environmental Management Plan, and the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Report. These unnecessary reports in this application do not contribute to the Board's considerations for approval under section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

6.2. Appropriate Assessment

6.2.1. Background

The proposed development is not directly connected to or necessary for the management of any European site. It is therefore subject to the provisions of Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive. Following the planning authority's screening for appropriate assessment, it was determined by the planning authority that appropriate assessment is required as it cannot be excluded on the basis of objective information that the proposed development individually or incombination with other plans or projects will have a significant effect on Dalkey Islands SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SAC, Lambay Island SPA, and Rogerstown Estuary SPA.

6.2.2. Natura Impact Statement

The applicant's Natura Impact Statement (NIS) addresses methodologies employed, gives a description of the project, identifies the relevant Natura 2000 sites and assesses the potential significant effects thereon (inclusive of cumulative effects), and details mitigation measures. The NIS concluded:

"It has been objectively concluded by Scott Cawley Ltd., following an examination, analysis and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular the nature of the predicted impacts from the proposed development, that the proposed development will not adversely affect (either directly or indirectly) the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects."

6.2.3. Appropriate Assessment

Introduction

This assessment considers all aspects of the proposal which could result in significant effects, as well as the mitigation measures designed to avoid or reduce any adverse effects. The assessment has had due regard to the applicant's submitted Natura Impact Statement. Prescribed body submissions are noted and have been considered.

The following guidance is adhered to in the assessment:

DoEHLG (2009) Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland: Guidance for Planning Authorities.

EC (2002) Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2002 sites. Methodological guidance on the provisions of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of te Habitats Directive 92/43/EC.

EC (2018) Managing Natura 2000 sites.

General Observations

The following is noted:

- The site is not within or adjacent to any European site. Therefore, there is no risk of direct effects on any such sites.
- The walkway is a long-established access and the remedial works constitute conventional repair works. It is not anticipated that the re-use of the access would result in significant effects for any European site at the operational phase.
- The duration of the proposed works is short and is estimated to take eight weeks.

European Sites

Arising from the planning authority's determination that appropriate assessment was necessary for these works, the following sites were considered by the authority to be subject to appropriate assessment:

- Dalkey Islands SPA (Site Code: 004172)
- Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (Site Code: 003000)
- South Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code: 000210)
- South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA (Site Code: 004024)
- North Dublin Bay SAC (Site Code: 000206)
- North Bull Island SPA (Site Code: 004006)
- Howth Head Coast SPA (Site Code: 004113)
- Baldoyle Bay SPA (Site Code: 004016)
- Ireland's Eye SPA (Site Code: 004117)
- Malahide Estuary SPA (Site Code: 004025)
- The Murrough SPA (Site Code: 004186)

- Lambay Island SPA (Site Code: 004069)
- Rogerstown Estuary SPA (Site Code: 004015)

A description of these sites and their Qualifying Interests / Special Conservation Interests are set out in Section 5 of the NIS. The nearest European site is Dalkey Islands SPA which is 93m to the east. Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC is some 183m to the east. The proposed development is also hydrologically linked to the array of other European sites referenced in the NIS, each of which is located in the wider Dublin Bay area. It is observed that this extends up to Rogerstown Estuary which is beyond Portrane in north County Dublin, some 24km to the north of the site for the proposed repair works.

The Conservation Objectives for the above-referenced SACs are generic and seek to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the Annex I habitat and Annex II species for which the SACs have been selected.

The Conservation Objectives for the above-referenced SPAs are generic and seek to maintain or restore the favourable conservation condition of the bird species listed as SCIs.

Relevant Aspects of the Proposed Development

Section 4 of the applicant's NIS details the characteristics of the proposed development and Section 8 identifies other plans, projects and activities relating to potential in-combination effects. The main aspects of the proposed development that could adversely affect the conservation objectives of the European sites are set out in Section 6 of the NIS. These are:

- Habitat loss and fragmentation from rock stabilisation and machinery use at the construction stage,

- Habitat degradation as a result of hydrological impacts from surface water runoff and discharges via an accidental pollution event at the construction stage, and
- Disturbance and displacement impacts at the construction stage arising from noise and vibration from the works.

The potential effects, therefore, relate to indirect effects on water quality associated with pollution at the construction phase from pollutants being carried out to sea to the European sites and noise and vibration from the works over a period of eight weeks at the established access.

Assessment of Effects

Dalkey Islands SPA (Site Code: 004172)

The Special Conservation Interests of this SPA are:

Roseate Tern (*Sterna dougalli*) Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

The loss of habitat arising from the proposed development, namely the intertidal rocky shore, would be negligible and it would lie outside of the SPA. The loss would be temporary and would re-establish in a short period. The construction works would be carried out over a very short period, some eight weeks. Contaminated surface water runoff, silt or an accidental pollution incident could affect habitats and food supply. Construction-related disturbance and displacement could potentially occur, affecting bird species beyond the site. I acknowledge the applicant has estimated that, in a worst case scenario, noise

levels above a 70dB threshold would not arise at 300m from the proposed works. It is further noted that the works would be completed within eight weeks and that there are substantial suitable foraging habitats within Dalkey Islands SPA. For these reasons I concur with the applicant that the proposed development would have no potential to result in any population level effects on foraging SCI tern species. It is further acknowledged that the applicant proposes to carry out the works in the autumn/winter season, i.e. the disturbance works would be carried out outside of the breeding and pre-migration season for tern species.

Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC (Site Code: 003000)

The Qualifying Interests of this SAC are:

Reefs

Harbour Porpoise (Phocoena phocoena)

This SAC is located some 183m at its nearest point to the site of the proposed development. I note that the loss of suitable aquatic habitat for harbour porpoise arising from the proposed works would be negligible and the loss would be temporary, with a short eight-week construction programme. It is noted that harbour porpoise would be vulnerable to an accidental pollution incident and reef habitat would be susceptible to sedimentation and changes in water quality. Noise and vibration at the construction phase could also potentially result in temporary disturbance and displacement effects on marine mammals.

I acknowledge the applicant has referred to behavioural response criteria for marine mammals and estimates that the proposed works would not elicit a behavioural response, temporary threshold shift or permanent threshold shift in marine mammals. Having regard to this, as well as the short eight-week duration

of the works and the extent of suitable alternative foraging habitat within the SAC, it is reasonable to conclude that the proposed works would not have any population level effects on harbour porpoise.

South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA

The Qualifying Interests of these European sites are set out in Table 7 of the applicant's NIS. The potential effects relate to habitat loss and fragmentation and habitat degradation as a result of hydrological impacts. Once again it is noted that the loss of intertidal rocky shore habitat would be negligible and temporary. It is also noted that there are extensive areas of suitable alternative foraging and loafing habitats in Dublin Bay. I, thus, concur with the applicant that the proposed development has no potential to result in any population level effects on the QI/SCI species of any of these European sites. The applicant notes that an accidental pollution event of a sufficient magnitude, either alone or cumulatively with other pollution sources, could potentially affect water quality in Dublin Bay.

6.2.4. Mitigation

Section 7 of the applicant's NIS details the range of mitigation measures intended to be employed as part of the construction phase of the proposed development. The measures include the engagement of an Environmental Manager, monitoring, and basic good management/work practices. In my opinion, these constitute suitable, robust, and comprehensive measures to avoid any adverse effects on the integrity of the European sites in the vicinity and beyond in Dublin Bay.

6.2.5. Potentially Significant Cumulative Effects

I note that Section 8 of the applicant's NIS addresses in-combination effects. Reference is made to existing projects, permitted projects yet to be carried out, projects pending consents, and projects at plan level. The NIS also refers to development plan provisions.

In light of the nature and extent of the minor repair works which constitute the proposed development, their location outside of any European site and the mitigation measures proposed to be employed to mitigate habitat loss and fragmentation, habitat degradation and disturbance, and displacement impacts, it is reasonable to determine that there would be no significant effects on any European sites arising from the proposed development. It appears reasonable, therefore, to conclude there is no potential for any other plan or project to adversely effect the integrity of any European site in combination with the proposed development.

6.2.6. Residual Impacts

I submit that, if the proposed mitigation measures are implemented in full, it is expected that significant effects would not result for the qualifying features of any of the above-referenced European sites.

Following my appropriate assessment of the proposed development and with due regard to consideration of the proposed mitigation measures, I am able to ascertain with confidence that the proposed development would not adversely affect the integrity of Dalkey Islands SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA,

Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SPA, and Rogerstown Estuary SPA.

This conclusion is drawn on a complete assessment of all implications of the proposed development alone and in combination with other plans and projects.

6.2.7. Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

The proposed development has been considered in light of the assessment requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

Following an appropriate assessment, it has been ascertained that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of Dalkey Islands SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SPA, and Rogerstown Estuary SPA, or any other European site, in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives.

This conclusion is based on a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed project and there is no reasonable doubt as to the absence of adverse effects.

This conclusion is founded on:

 A full and detailed assessment of all aspects of the proposed project including proposed mitigation measures in relation to the Conservation Objectives of Dalkey Islands SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SPA, and Rogerstown Estuary SPA.

- Assessment of in-combination effects with other plans and projects, including current proposals.
- No reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of adverse effects on the integrity of Dalkey Islands SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SPA, and Rogerstown Estuary SPA.

6.3. Third Party Submissions

- 6.3.1. I am satisfied to conclude that the proposed development is not in conflict with the submission from Geological Survey Ireland.
- 6.3.2. It is noted that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage principal concerns relate to nesting guillemot outside of any European site and that the information on such nesting at Coliemore Harbour is anecdotal. Guillemots are not Special Conservation Interests or Qualifying Interests of any European site near the site of the proposed development. They are of Special Conservation Interest for Ireland's Eye SPA, which is 13.6km from the site, and Lambay Island SPA, which is 23.2km from the site. I note that two conditions are recommended to be attached with any approval issued and these conditions can be accommodated. It is clear that the Department is satisfied that the proposed development would not have any significant effects on any European sites when the mitigation measures proposed to be employed are implemented.

6.4. Likely Effects on the Environment

6.4.1. Environmental Impact

My considerations are as follows:

- I acknowledge that the proposed repair works would be carried out on a long-established access at Coliemore Harbour.
- The proposed works would secure and improve access and would, thus, constitute a positive impact for users of the harbour.
- The proposed development would return the access to its functional use without undermining biodiversity. It would secure the condition of the land and reduce any continued impact on the adjoining waterbody, while having no known significant impacts on air and climate.
- The improvement works would return the access use to its intended purpose, securing a significant community material asset.
- The proposed development would help secure a feature of cultural heritage, which is a protected structure.
- The proposed development would return the access to its function, thus enhancing the landscape and visual presentation of the harbour.

Overall, I submit to the Board that the proposed development would likely have significant positive environmental impacts and would constitute sustainable development.

6.5. Likely Consequences for Proper Planning and Sustainable Development of the Area

- 6.5.1. I note that the proposed development can reasonably be viewed as being wholly compatible with the development plan provisions for these lands as set out in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028. The proposed works would secure the access arrangements, protecting further deterioration. These works would aid in the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of this location, being compatible with Policy Objectives GIB18, GIB19, GIB21, and HER8 of the Plan.
- 6.5.2. Overall, having regard to the provisions clearly set out in the statutory Development Plan, one must reasonably conclude that the proposed development is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of this area.

7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

I conclude that:

- (a) subject to full implementation of the mitigation measures set out, the proposed development would not result in significant adverse environmental effects and in particular would not adversely affect the integrity of European sites in the vicinity, and
- (b) the development is in accordance with statutory development plan policies and provisions and constitutes proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

I recommend that the Board approves the application for the reasons and considerations and subject to the conditions below.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Having regard to the provisions of:

- (a) the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- (b) the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011,
- (c) the provisions of the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Development Plan 2022-2028,
- (d) the nature and scale of the works, and
- (f) the submissions and observations made in connection with the proposed development,

it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not adversely affect the environment and would otherwise be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The Board agreed with the appropriate assessment and conclusions contained in the Inspector's report that Dalkey Islands SPA, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, South Dublin Bay SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, North Dublin Bay SAC, North Bull Island SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, The Murrough SPA, Lambay Island SPA, and Rogerstown Estuary SPA are the European sites for which there is a likelihood of significant effects. The Board considered the submitted Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an appropriate assessment in relation to the potential effects of the proposed development on the above referenced European sites in the vicinity of the application site. The Board noted that the proposed development is not directly connected with or necessary for the management of a European site and considered the nature, scale and location of the proposed development, as well as the report of the inspector. In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board adopted the report of the inspector and concluded that the proposed development, by itself, or in combination with other plans or projects in the vicinity, would not be likely to have a significant effect on any European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

CONDITIONS

 The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application on the 4th day of May 2022, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

 The local authority and any agent acting on its behalf shall implement in full the mitigation measures contained in the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of European sites.

3. On the completion of the proposed remedial works, two nest boxes suitable for black guillemots shall be installed at Coliemore Harbour. The siting, design and methodology for their installation shall be agreed in writing with the planning authority.

Reason: To enhance local biodiversity at Coliemore Harbour.

Kevin Moore Senior Planning Inspector

14th September 2022