



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-315622-23

### Development

Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme, Phase II – Mahon to Passage West, and all associated works. Phase II of the Greenway route commences on the northern side of the N40 near Bessborough, crosses the N40 Cork South Ring Road and the Douglas Estuary via bridges, traverses Harty's Quay and the R610 Rochestown Road, passes Hop Island and terminates at the Cork City boundary to the west of Passage West. The proposed development also includes improvement works to pedestrian / cycle tracks that extend from the northern section of the Greenway towards Mahon Industrial Estate and Mahon Interchange.

### Location

townlands of Ballinlough, Ballinure, Monfieldstown, and Rochestown, Co. Cork

### Local Authority

Cork City Council

**Type of Application**

Application for approval made under Section 177(AE) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (local authority development requiring appropriate assessment)

**Prescribed Bodies**

An Taisce

Bus Eireann

Cork County Council

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage –  
Development Applications Unit

ESB Networks

Environmental Protection Agency

Fáilte Ireland

The Heritage Council

Health Service Executive  
(Environmental Health National Office)

Inland Fisheries Ireland (Including  
Local Office)

Irish Water

National Transport Authority

Southern Regional Assembly

The Arts Council - An Chomhairle  
Ealaíon

Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

**Observer(s)**

Adrian Smith  
Johnathan Levy  
Ken & Val Walsh  
Marcia D'Alton  
Norma Lombard  
Passage West / Monkstown  
Biodiversity Group  
Peter Horgan  
St. Gerards Place Residents  
Association  
The Rochestown Community  
Development Group

**Date of Site Inspection**

07 & 09/05/2023.

**Inspector**

Auriol Considine

# Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	5
2.0 Proposed Development .....	6
3.0 Site and Location .....	8
4.0 Planning History.....	9
5.0 Legislative Context .....	10
6.0 Policy Context.....	11
7.0 The Natura Impact Statement.....	17
8.0 Consultations .....	19
9.0 Assessment .....	27
10.0 Recommendation .....	56
Appendix 1: .....	63

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Cork City Council is seeking approval from An Bord Pleanála to undertake improvement works to the Passage Railway Greenway identified as Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme Phase II – Mahon to Passage West, and all associated site works. The scheme will include works within and adjacent to the Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030), which is a designated European site. The Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 001058) lies approximately 1.1km to the east of the subject site. These two sites are the most relevant designated European sites (SPAs and SACs) within 15km of the proposed works. The Douglas River Estuary pNHA (Site code: 001046) is also located within the vicinity of the subject site. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and application under Section 177AE was lodged by the Local Authority on the basis of the proposed development's likely significant effect on a European site.
- 1.2. Section 177AE of the Planning and Development act 2000 (as amended) requires that where an appropriate assessment is required in respect of development by a local authority the authority shall prepare an NIS and the development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved the development with or without modifications. Furthermore, Section 177V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) requires that the appropriate assessment shall include a determination by the Board as to whether or not the proposed development would adversely affect the integrity of a European site and the appropriate assessment shall be carried out by the Board before consent is given for the proposed development.
- 1.3. The Board will note that, under the provisions of Section 50(1)(c) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), Cork City Council sought a direction from An Bord Pleanála as to whether or not the following scheme requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) ABP-312302-21 refers). The Board determined that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and that the preparation and submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is not, therefore, required.
- 1.4. The Passage Railway Greenway is a recreational amenity that extends along the line of the former Cork to Blackrock and Passage railway line. The route starts at the

Marina, adjacent to the River Lee, and continues along the old railway alignment through the southeast suburbs of Cork City and onwards to Passage West. Phase I of the overall improvement scheme, which runs from the Marina to Mahon (N40) has been completed. Phase I fell within S179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended and was the subject of a Part 8 process under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. It is submitted that the proposed works will enhance the overall Passage Railway Greenway, which is part of the wider 'Lee to Sea' Greenway corridor.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

2.1. The description of the proposed development, as advertised is as follows:

Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme, Phase II – Mahon to Passage West, and all associated works. Phase II of the Greenway route commences on the northern side of the N40 near Bessborough, crosses the N40 Cork South Ring Road and the Douglas Estuary via bridges, traverses Harty's Quay and the R610 Rochestown Road, passes Hop Island and terminates at the Cork City boundary to the west of Passage West. The proposed development also includes improvement works to pedestrian / cycle tracks that extend from the northern section of the Greenway towards Mahon Industrial Estate and Mahon Interchange.

The proposed development consists of the upgrade of approximately 5km of the existing Passage Railway Greenway and two interconnecting tracks including:

- Resurfacing of and widening of the existing Greenway to up to 4m,
- New surfacing of the tracks accessing Mahon Industrial Estate and the Mahon Interchange to form a share use pavement of c3m in width, including works to an existing modern path outside of the present-day boundary but within the historic curtilage of Bessborough House, a Protected Structure (RPS 490),

- Improvement works to the Black Bridge including replacement of decking plates and surface, and provision of non-slip surfacing, new drainage systems and protective paintwork to ironwork members,
- Provision of landscaped segregated zones where the Greenway runs alongside the R610 Rochestown Road, including narrowing and realignment of the R610, the provision of a retaining wall for c210m on the southern side of the R610, the removal and replacement of front boundary walls and gates to residences at Island View and at the corner of No. 1 St. Gerard's Place to facilitate the proposed revised arrangement,
- Provision of a bus shelter on the R610 Rochestown Road,
- Works to public car parks along the Greenway route including resurfacing of Harty's Quay Car Park and the extension and reconfiguration of Hop Island Car Par to accommodate a new exit only junction onto the R610 Rochestown Road and the provision of 22 no. car parking spaces in lieu of the existing 17 no. spaces,
- Public realm improvements and landscaping along the route to include planting and biodiversity enhancement measures; seating and play equipment; the provision of a single-span bridge over the Pouldougheric Stream; enhancement works to the former Rochestown Railway Station platform; water stations; and bicycle parking, repair and storage facilities,
- Provision of public lighting infrastructure; new and modified drainage infrastructure; information boards, signage and markings along the route, and
- All associated clearances and demolition, provision of temporary construction compounds, and ancillary site development works to facilitate the scheme.

2.2. The application included the following accompanying documents:

- Cover letter and description of the proposed works
- Planning drawings, relevant particulars and public notices

- Scheme Design Report
- Planning Report
- Photomontages
- AA Screening and Natura Impact Statement
- Environmental Report
- Stage 1 Road Safety Audit
- Stage 1/2 Flood Risk Assessment
- Preliminary Appraisal Report
- Prescribed Bodies to which the application was sent.

### **3.0 Site and Location**

- 3.1. The site lies entirely within the Cork Metropolitan area, between the suburb of Mahon, and the harbour town of Passage West. Phase II of the Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme extends for approximately 5km with the main line beginning at the northern side of the N40 where it joins Phase I of the greenway and finishes at the Cork City Council boundary with Cork County Council at the western end of Passage West. The scheme also includes linkages from Mahon Industrial Estate at Beesborough and to the Mahon Interchange.
- 3.2. The initial access to the greenway is via a small entrance adjacent to the Beesborough Centre, and just off a small roundabout. This section of the greenway runs in a north to south direction through a small area of woodland for a distance of approximately 600m, before turning at a right angle to the east. The route then runs to the north of the N20 for a distance of approximately 1km, extending from Beesborough to the west to the Mahon Retail Park to the east. Almost centrally located on this 1km stretch, the greenway route turns in a north to south direction, where it connects with Phase I of the Passage Railway Greenway to the north and with access to the footbridge over the N20 to the south, connecting the Mahon Retail Park to Harty's Quay to the south of Lough Mahon. This section of the greenway, approximately 1.4km in distance, crosses Black Bridge over the Douglas River and Estuary which forms part of the Cork Harbour SPA.



- 3.3. To the east of Harty's Quay, there is an existing park area which includes a range of outdoor exercise equipment. The greenway route extends along the R610 Rochestown Road using the public footpath on the northern side of the road, and to the south of the former Rochestown railway station building (currently derelict) and a number of residential properties. At Island View, the site extends to the south of the R610 incorporating an area of vegetated banks. At St. Gerard's Place, the site includes the access road to a number of residential properties, two green areas and car parking area.
- 3.4. Approximately 200m to the west of the Hop Island Car Park, the greenway leaves the public footpath and back onto the former railway line. From this point to the eastern boundary of the site, the greenway is bound to the north by Mahon Lake and the Cork Harbour SPA. This section of the greenway is separated from the R610 Rochestown Road by a strip of alluvial woodland. The greenway extends as far as the town of Passage West with the final section of the track located within the administrative boundary of Cork County Council. This final section of the greenway is not included in this current application to the Board.
- 3.5. The subject site bounds the Cork Harbour SPA, but no works are proposed within the Natura 2000 site. The Board will also note that the wider area is identified in the CDP as having a high scenic value. There are also a number of built heritage structures identified within the site area, with Black Bridge being included in the NIAH. The Bridge is also identified as a recorded monument. The line of the greenway also lies within the demesne of Bessborough House, and in proximity to a recorded monument – an Icehouse.

## 4.0 Planning History

- 4.1. **ABP-312302-21:** Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme Phase II EIAR direction under Section 50(1)(c) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).
- 4.2. Construction on improving and upgrading the existing greenway from Páirc Uí Chaoimh to Mahon, N40 (South Ring Road) as part of Phase I, commenced in December 2020 as a separate Part VIII project. The current proposed project (Phase II) will tie into Phase I to provide an improvement on the extended network south to Passage West.

## 5.0 Legislative Context

### 5.1. The EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC):

This Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union. Article 6(3) and 6(4) require an appropriate assessment of the likely significant effects of a proposed development on its own and in combination with other plans and projects which may have an effect on a European Site (SAC or SPA).

### 5.2. European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011:

These Regulations consolidate the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) (Control of Recreational Activities) Regulations 2010, as well as addressing transposition failures identified in CJEU judgements.

### 5.3. National nature conservation designations:

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the National Parks and Wildlife Service are responsible for the designation of conservation sites throughout the country. The three main types of designation are Natural Heritage Areas (NHA), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and the latter two form part of the European Natura 2000 Network.

European sites located in proximity to, and partially within the subject site include:

- Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030)

### 5.4. Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended):

Part XAB of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2017 sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments which could have an effect on a European site or its conservation objectives.

- 177(AE) sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments carried out by or on behalf of local authorities.
- Section 177(AE) (1) requires a local authority to prepare, or cause to be prepared, a Natura impact statement in respect of the proposed development.

- Section 177(AE) (2) states that a proposed development in respect of which an appropriate assessment is required shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it with or without modifications.
- Section 177(AE) (3) states that where a Natura impact assessment has been prepared pursuant to subsection (1), the local authority shall apply to the Board for approval and the provisions of Part XAB shall apply to the carrying out of the appropriate assessment.
- Section 177(V) (3) states that a competent authority shall give consent for a proposed development only after having determined that the proposed development shall not adversely affect the integrity of a European site.
- Section 177AE (6) (a) states that before making a decision in respect of a proposed development the Board shall consider the NIS, any submissions or observations received and any other information relating to:
  - The likely effects on the environment.
  - The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
  - The likely significant effects on a European site.

## 6.0 Policy Context

### 6.1. National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040, DoHP&LG 2018

- 6.1.1. The National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040 is a high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of Ireland to 2040. Key objectives of the Framework are to ensure the promotion of compact urban development, sustainable mobility and transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society. Embedded in these objectives is the promotion of recreational infrastructure, including greenways, and the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling.
- 6.1.2. National Policy Objective 22 seeks to facilitate tourism development and specifically refers to greenways and NPOs 23 and 27, as they relate to Healthy Communities, seek to support the objectives of public health policy and ensure the integration of

safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments.

## **6.2. Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy – Southern Region**

- 6.2.1. The RSES for the southern region was adopted in January 2020 and provides a long-term, strategic development framework for the future physical, economic and social development of the Southern Region and includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) to guide the future development of the Region's three main cities and metropolitan areas – Cork, Limerick-Shannon and Waterford. The strategy seeks to achieve balanced regional development and the full implementation of the NPF. It is a 12-year strategic regional development framework and establishes a broad framework for the way in which our society, environment, economy and the use of land should evolve.
- 6.2.2. The RSES follows on from the NPF in terms of the overall strategy of achieving sustainable modes of transport which will in turn support active health initiatives and healthy communities, as well as promoting tourism and assisting to a transition to a lower carbon society. Regional Policy Objective 53 promotes the delivery of greenways in the context of developing sustainable walking and cycling trails and opening greater accessibility to the marine and countryside environments.
- 6.2.3. RPOs 124 and 125 deal with green infrastructure, and it is a stated objective to promote the concept of connecting corridors for the movement of wildlife and encourage the retention of features of biodiversity value, ecological corridors and networks that connect areas of high conservation value such as woodlands, hedgerows, earth banks, watercourses and wetlands. Transport infrastructure provides potential opportunities to act as Green Infrastructure corridors. It is an objective to support local authorities acting together with relevant national infrastructure providers to co-develop infrastructural management plans to enhance biodiversity.
- 6.2.4. Section 6.3.3.10 of the RSES deals with Walking and Cycling and states that active walking and cycle infrastructure will support active health initiatives and healthy communities, encourage transition to sustainable modes of travel, promote sustainable mobility and significantly assist our transition to a lower carbon society.

RPO 174 sets out the walking and cycling objectives, with many references to greenways noted.

- 6.2.5. Section 7.2.7 deals specifically with the development of Greenways, Blueways and Peatways and states that the RSES supports the development of Greenways, Blueways and Peatways including initiatives to extend existing routes and links to regional and national networks, ports and other transport hubs. Opportunities to develop new greenways along abandoned or disused railways should still allow for future rail use if feasible at a later stage. It is a stated objective to support investment in the development of walking and cycling facilities, greenway and blueway corridors within the region – RPO 201 refers.

### **6.3. Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP)**

- 6.3.1. The Cork MASP seeks to integrate sustainable economic and social development with the protection and enhancement of the natural environment to ensure our transition to a climate resilient society. Objectives seek a healthy, green and connected metropolitan area, green infrastructure, inter-connected parks, sports and recreation facilities and greenways. Placemaking initiatives and public realm enhancements are supported.
- 6.3.2. The MASP follows the NPF and RSES in terms of promoting cycleways and walkways, with Objective 8(i) which relates to transport objectives and the finalisation of the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, seeking to implement and further develop upon the Cork Metropolitan Area Cycle Network Plan 2017, invest in infrastructure to support the integration of the cycle networks throughout the Cork Metropolitan Area and region, improve and develop primary, secondary, greenway (including the Lee to Sea Greenway) and feeder cycle networks and support cycling through provision of a high proportion of segregated cycleways to provide a safe infrastructure for all.

### **6.4. Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028**

- 6.4.1. The Cork City Development Plan 2022 is the relevant policy document pertaining to the subject site. The Plan was adopted in June 2022 and came into effect on the 8th of August 2022, and it sets out how the city will grow and develop over the next six years, while complementing a longer 2040 vision.

- 6.4.2. The 2040 Concept Plan sets out the longer-term vision for land use planning and management in the city and transport-oriented development will stem from the planning and delivery of Light-Rail Transit and its interaction with the Lee to Sea Greenway, suburban rail network, orbital bus routes and strategic bus corridors in key areas. The subject application relates to part of the Lee to Sea Greenway.
- 6.4.3. The Cork City 2028 Vision identifies the planned 10 strategic regeneration and expansion areas. The strategy also focuses on delivering consolidated urban and district centres, new employment zones, core bus corridors, the Lee to Sea Greenway and the longer-term delivery of a Light Rail Transit alongside enhancing walking and cycling networks.
- 6.4.4. Chapter 4 of the City Plan deals with transport and includes active travel. The Lee to Sea Greenway is listed as one of the initiatives expected to be progressed to improve pedestrian and cycling connectivity during the lifetime of the Plan. The Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme is referenced at Table 4.3 as one of a number of walking and cycling schemes expected to come on stream.
- 6.4.5. Chapter 6 of the Plan deals with Green and Blue Infrastructure, Open Space and Diversity and is relevant in terms of the location of the site within an Area of High Landscape Value. Given the proposal for works to Black Bridge, and adjacent to the demesne of Bessborough House, a protected Structure, the provisions of chapter 8 are also considered relevant as they relate to heritage.

## 6.5. **Cultural Heritage**

The line of the greenway crosses the Black Bridge over the Douglas River Estuary, and the development proposes works to the bridge. The bridge is a National Monument (Ref no. CO10741) and is listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (Ref no. 20872013). It is included in the NIAH under the Architectural, Social and Technical Categories of Special Interest, dated 1845-1855 and with a regional rating. The description of the bridge is as follows:

Triple-span former railway bridge, built c.1850, as part of the Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway line and spanning the Douglas estuary. Cast-iron deck and riveted latticework parapets supported on rusticated limestone piers. Now in use as a pedestrian bridge along a public walk which follows the line of the former railway tracks.

## Appraisal

This bridge displays a high quality of craftsmanship and survives as a reminder of the railway between Cork and Passage West which was opened in 1850. A pleasing landscape feature, it is visible from many points around the estuary in a popular public leisure area.

Other built heritage features in the vicinity of the site include National Monuments in the form of:

- Icehouse (Ref no. C010720): In woodland; built into SW-facing slope in demesne of Besborough House (CO074-077---). Interior circular (diam. 3.7m); pit infilled to ground floor level; walls constructed of mortared rough limestone. Domed roof (H 2.55m). Door ope (Wth 1.4m) to SW with remains of splayed retaining walls for former earthen covering mound on either side of entry. Exterior composed of very rough stone surface; no remains of covering mound.
- Country House (Ref no. C010750): Mid-18th century 3-storey house overlooking Douglas Estuary to S; 3 bays deep. Entrance front (S) of 7 bays, 3-bay central breakfront, pedimented with oculus. Central door with fanlight, pedimented; central Venetian window at 1st floor, central Diocletian window at 2nd floor; limestone surrounds around all three opes. Sash windows decrease in size with height, prominent limestone keystone. Rendered walls with cut limestone band course, quoins and cornice exposed. Hipped roof with central valley. Numerous additions to rear. Victorian conservatory on W elevation. Farmbuildings to N, now been converted to heritage centre. Ice house (CO074-051---) to W.
- Midden (Ref no. C010860): On S side of Douglas River where it enters Lough Mahon. No visible surface trace. According to Atkinson (1874, 261. no. 12) 'nearer to Cork, the Cork and Passage Railway, about 100 yards from Rochestown Station, passes over a shell-mound'. By 1930s Power (1930, 123) and Coleman (1938, 43) could find no trace of site.

Structures listed on the NIAH (full details of each property provide in appendix 1 of this report):

- Bessboro Convent (Ref no. 20872005): Country House  
Also a Recorded Protected Structure (RPS ID PS490) as listed in the Cork City Development Plan, and former Mother and Baby Home.
- Bessborough (Ref no. 20872007): Folly
- Bessborough (Ref no. 20872006): Farmyard Complex
- Hop Island House (Ref no. 20975005): Country House
- Rochestown Wood House (Ref no. 20975007): Gate Lodge
- Rochestown Wood House (Ref no. 20975008): Country House.

#### 6.6. Other Relevant Policy Documents

- **Climate Action Plan 2023** - This plan is the first to be prepared under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and following the introduction, in 2022, of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The document sets out Ireland's plan to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2023 and being carbon neutral by 2050. Section 15 of the Plan deals with transport and table 15.7 sets out the key actions to deliver abatement in transport for the period 2023-2025. Under the Active travel Infrastructure Programme for the cited 3 years, the advance roll-out of national cycle and greenway networks are included for each year. The principle of the proposed works is considered to be in compliance with the principles and provisions of the Climate Action Plan 2023.
- **Cork City Council Climate Action Adaption Strategy 2019** – this strategy sets out how Cork City Council will aim to be as climate resilient as possible and how the council will engage with the public on matters of climate action.
- **Cork City Green and Blue Infrastructure Study 2021** – this study was prepared to inform the Cork City Development Plan as it relates to green and blue infrastructure. The study is considered to have informed Chapter 6 of the City Development Plan and provides information in terms of the benefits of such infrastructure.
- **Cork County Development Plan 2022** – the Passage Railway Greenway crosses into the administrative area of Cork County Council at its eastern



boundary. The Board will note that the Cork County Development Plan also provides for the Passage Railway Greenway and includes a stated objective to deliver the Cork Harbour Greenway a strategically important active travel commuting route linking Carrigaline to both Passage West and Ringaskiddy and forming an element of the Lee to Sea Greenway.

## 7.0 The Natura Impact Statement

7.1. Cork City Council's application for the proposed development was accompanied by a Natural Impact Statement (NIS), dated 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023, which scientifically examined the proposed development and the European sites. The NIS identified and characterised the possible implications of the proposed development on the European sites, in view of the site's conservation objectives, and provided information to enable the Board to carry out an appropriate assessment of the proposed works.

7.2. The AA Screening exercise, dated 25<sup>th</sup> August 2021 and included in Appendix A of the NIS, examined the potential impacts on two European Sites, which are located within the zone of influence of the proposed development, noted to extend to the downstream catchment. The AA concluded that in the absence of mitigation, the potential for likely significant effects on the Cork Harbour SPA and the Great Island Channel SAC could not be excluded on the grounds of:

- Potential of the development to result in water quality deterioration, impacting on SCI species in the SPA by negatively impacting food sources.
- A deterioration in water quality has potential to indirectly impact marine sub communities of QIs within the SAC.
- Potential for visual and noise effects to cause disturbance to the SCI species as a result of proposed works.
- Potential for the spread of Third Schedule invasive plant species during the proposed development works.
- Potential for dust and emissions from the proposed works to impact QI and SCI species of the SAC and SPA.

7.3. Chapter 4 of the NIS identifies 4 European Sites within the zone of influence including as follows:

- Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030)
- Great Island Channel (Site Code: 001058)
- The Gearagh SAC (Site Code: 000108)
- The Gearagh SPA (site Code: 004109)

The Gearagh SAC and SPA do not support connectivity to the proposed development site through any environmental vectors and having regard to the characteristics and habitat requirements of the QIs, these sites were not considered further in the screening for AA report.

7.4. Chapter 4 provides full details of the qualifying interests potentially exposed to risk and their conservation objectives while chapter 5 presents details of the existing environment.

7.5. Chapter 6 of the submitted NIS seeks to examine the potential for significant effects arising from the proposed development on the integrity of the Cork Harbour SPA and the Great Island Channel SAC, in light of their conservation objectives. Table 6.1 presents a summary of impacts on the QIs and SCI species of both the Cork Harbour SPA and the Great Island Channel SAC. Chapter 7 provides for an appraisal of potential impacts including mitigation measures and deals with the potential effect of the proposed development.

7.6. Chapter 8 concluded that, subject to the implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures, there would be no adverse impacts on the integrity of any European sites within the Natura 2000 network.

7.7. Section 9 of the document provides references and there are a number of appendices as follows:

- Appendix A: Appropriate Assessment Determination
- Appendix B: Report to Inform Screening for Appropriate Assessment
- Appendix C: Copy of Planning Drawings
- Appendix D: Tree Survey Report

- Appendix E: Invasive Alien Plant Species Report
- Appendix F: Winter Bird Survey & Assessment of Potential Impacts on Waterbird Populations.

7.8. The NIS is supported by a number of other documents including an Environmental Report. The purpose of the ER is to provide an assessment of the potential likely impacts on the environment that will arise as a result of the construction and operation of the development, and to detail the required mitigation measures to be implemented. This report deals with topics including as follows:

- Biodiversity
- Water
- Cultural Heritage
- Population

The ER also includes a number of supporting appendices.

## 8.0 Consultations

8.1. In accordance with the provisions of Section 177AE(4)(b), a number of prescribed bodies were notified of the proposal and copies of the application and the accompanying Natura Impact Statement were circulated to the following bodies:

- An Taisce
- Bus Eireann
- Cork County Council
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit
- ESB Networks
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Fáilte Ireland
- The Heritage Council

- Health Service Executive (Environmental Health National Office)
- Inland Fisheries Ireland (Including Local Office)
- Irish Water
- National Transport Authority
- Southern Regional Assembly
- The Arts Council - An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Responses were received from the following bodies:

## 8.2. **Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit:**

The submitted report sets out the heritage related observations / recommendations under the headings of Archaeology and Nature Conservation. The report is summarised as follows:

- The Department is broadly in agreement with the findings of Chapter 5 of the submitted Environmental Report in relation to Archaeology & Cultural Heritage.
- Conditions for inclusion in a grant of permission provided.
- The report notes that the proposed works are for a small part, located within and mostly otherwise adjacent to the Cork Harbour SPA.
- The report notes the content of the Environmental Report as it relates to the area between Black Bridge and Bloomfield House and the second between Harty's Quay and the Old Rochestown Railway Platform, which are identified as being of particular importance for bird species using the SPA and for a number of duck and wader species.
- Without the mitigation measures identified in relation to the construction stage at Black Bridge, the potential for adverse effects cannot be ruled out.
- The need for vegetation clearance near Black Bridge is questioned and the NIS has not adequately addressed disturbance to wigeon in this area.

- The nature of the proposed dog fencing from Harty's Quay to the old Rochestown Railway Platform, or who is responsible for its long-term maintenance is not specified in the NIS and issues of lighting are not clear.
- Issues raised at the Ballinure section with regard to lighting and impact on bats. It is not clear if the light will shine towards or away from the wooded area at Ballinure.

### 8.3. **Health Service Executive:**

The submitted report sets out the comments of the HSE under a number of headings. The Environmental Health Service advise support for all efforts to create a sustainable development to enhance and improve the life of those in the community whilst limiting the negative impact of development on the environment. The report includes details of additional proposals which may be considered and incorporated into the Railway Greenway improvement scheme, including as follows:

- Get Ireland Active – National Physical Activity Plan for Ireland
- Healthy Ireland – A Healthy Weight for Ireland
- Tobacco Free Ireland
- Steering Group Report on a National Substance Misuse Strategy
- The National Positive Ageing Strategy
- Sustainable Development
- Research 195: Health Benefits from Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure
- Irelands Second National Energy Efficiency Action Plan to 2020
- Transport – Smarter Travel Policy, National Cycle Policy Framework
- Waste policies
- Biodiversity & Green Areas
- Noise – Construction and operational
- Odour and Air Quality

#### **8.4. Inland Fisheries Ireland:**

IFI welcomes the proposed development and the opportunity it presents for greater interconnectivity between citizens and the natural environment. It is requested that planning conditions ensure that all works are carried out in accordance with the IFI Guidelines on protection of fisheries during construction works in and adjacent to waters.

#### **8.5. Transport Infrastructure Ireland:**

TII supports the principles of the Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme and welcomes its advancement. As the proposal interacts significantly with assets associated with the N40 National Road, the following matters require to be clarified to enable a full assessment.

- Reference to the requirements of TII Publication – Technical Approval of Road Structures on Motorways and Other National Roads. Neither the City Council nor its agent have engaged with TII on these matters, which is a concern. The promoters of the scheme must review the proposal with TII.
- The proposals for the Mahon Interchange are raised as a concern, particularly as the Road Safety Audit indicates that the issue of road and greenway user safety is a matter which is not to be dealt with as part of the current scheme. It is envisaged that the improvements to the Greenway will result in increased user numbers. Public safety related to the current R852/N40 junction requires to be addressed appropriately and this element of the scheme is premature pending same and should be omitted in its current form.
- Proposals around the Sacred Heart Bridge require clarification in terms of the proposed width of the approach, parapet heights, proposals for addressing the concrete defect in the bridge superstructure and lighting.
- Retaining wall proposals require technical acceptance and revised plans and details are required.
- The Black Bridge is not an existing Eirespan structure but is likely to become part of the Eirespan framework in the future. Further information required in terms of parapet height, details of the extent of the rehabilitation of the

existing substructure and superstructure is unclear and technical acceptance is required.

- It is a requirement that the promoter demonstrates compliance with National Roads Active Travel Planning.

#### 8.6. **Public Submissions:**

Following the issuing of the public notices, 9 public submissions were made to the Board. The third parties who made submissions, and the issues are summarised, are as follows:

- **Adrian Smith**

Mr. Smith wishes to oppose the plans due to:

- lack of adequate parking for residents of St. Gerard's Place.
- The residents will ultimately suffer due to lack of parking.
- Proposals for paid parking at Harty's Quay will not help as people will continue to park in the residential area.

- **Johnathan Levy**

Mr. Levy request that the following elements of the enhancement works be refused:

- Design elements which have total disregard to the built heritage –
  - Glass and stainless-steel panels on the old platform will look too modern.
  - Positioning of plant boxes and plants alongside the platform which will obscure the old stonework from view.
- It is requested that the historic area be protected from modern interventions to maintain the character of the site.

- **Ken & Val Walsh**

- Supports the proposed upgrade to the passage greenway.
- Proposals are the best solution to a difficult area of the greenway and accommodates local residents' needs.

- Cllr. Marcia D'Alton
  - Submission sets out the history of the greenway and the former Cork, Blackrock and Passage Railway.
  - Notes that most of the Part X application is good but there are a few key areas of concern.
  - Lack of consideration of the Suez Pond in the planning report is a serious omission. While not a protected area, it is a valuable habitat. Impact of the widening of the greenway may result in the loss of gorse and other vegetation which is a valuable habitat around the pond.
  - Issues raised in terms of the proposed resting areas and associated ancillary elements would be incongruous and inappropriate to this rural environment.
  - Not all trees have been identified in the Tree Survey submitted.
  - Details of the existing exercise equipment have not been identified on the plans.
  - The application does not mention how important freshwater streams are to the birdlife of the SPA. The additional bridge over the Pouldouheric Stream should be omitted as there are already 2 bridges over the stream.
  - Issues around the stormwater proposals and proposed discharge to the Pouldouheric Stream.
  - Invasive species are noted on the greenway, but *Clematis vitalba* or Winter Heliotrope have not been discussed.
  - There is a stunning white cherry tree at the entrance to the Hop Island car park which is proposed to be removed. This should be retained by way of a little redesign.
  - A ramp should be included after the entrance to St. Gerard's Place.
  - Works at Island View have the potential to impact negatively on commuters. It is requested that the Board condition that works take place outside of peak commuting hours.



- It is requested that works only take place during the months of the year which will cause least disturbance to waders of the Cork Harbour SPA at Lough Mahon and the Douglas Estuary.

The submission includes a 2010 report titled 'The Suez Canal Biodiversity Project' and a 2018 report titled 'Management of *Clematis vitalba* at 'Suez Pond'.

- Norma Lombard
  - Impacts on the birds to be minimised with protection of existing and planting of more trees and shrubbery.
  - More screening is needed at the Station Platform for birds.
  - Bridge over the Pouldouheric Stream is not needed.
  - Invasive species to be dealt with.
  - Protection of the Suez Pond.
  - Lighting should be wildlife friendly.
- Passage West Monkstown Biodiversity Group
  - The groups aim is to protect and promote biodiversity.
  - The area of the greenway is very important to the group, and it is requested that the important habitats for birds are a priority for protection.
  - Additional screening is required for birds.
  - The proposal for rest stops along the Suez Pond will result in the loss of habitat which was not mentioned in the CCC plans.
  - Proper wildlife friendly lighting should be used in the long term.
  - Invasive species to be dealt with.
  - More screening is needed at the Station Platform for birds.
  - Bridge over the Pouldouheric Stream is not needed.
  - Issues with the proposed road drainage system.

- It is requested that works only take place outside of the nesting season.
- The plans should be redesigned to retain the cherry tree at the entrance to Hop Island.
- Peter Horgan
  - Welcomes the scheme but raises concerns in relation to the following:
    - Lack of provision for public bike share scheme station. The area has been identified as a potential site for Bus Connects and the planning for a bike station now would help with active travel commitments.
    - The number of tree removals appear large. Proper communication of the proposed removal and replanting process should be clearly communicated.
    - The proposals at Island View do not address safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists using the greenway. It is requested that the LA produce options for the riverside walkway at Island View for the consideration of the Board.
- St. Gerard's Place Residents Association
  - The residents of Island View, St. Gerard's Place and two properties just beyond St. Gerard's Place, are in general agreement with and support the proposals for the greenway which run to the front of their properties.
- The Rochestown Community Development Group
  - The RCDG expresses full support for the improvement project but wish to make the following observations:
    - Ongoing potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists due to e-bikes and scooters that can reach significant speeds. A speed limit should be imposed.
    - Frequent and clear signage should be installed indicating which side users should travel and pass.

## 9.0 Assessment

### 9.1. Introduction

9.1.1. The proposed development is described in 3 sections as follows:

**Section 1:** North of the N40 to former Rochestown Railway Station (Including Connections to Bessborough and Mahon Interchange and will include:

- Upgrade of existing tracks accessing the Mahon Industrial Estate and the Mahon Interchange (close to Mahon Point Shopping Centre).
- Widening of the existing greenway from 3m to 4m.
- Replacement of existing seating area to the north of Black Bridge.
- Replacement of deck plates and surface of the Black Bridge, and provision of non-slip surfacing, new drainage system and protective paintwork to ironwork members.
- Upgrading of existing lighting.
- Public realm/landscaping improvements.

**Section 2:** Former Rochestown Railway Station to Hop Island Car Park and will include the following;

- Protection and enhancement works to and around the former Rochestown Railway Platform, including landscape enhancements to include informal play areas and feature trees, restoration of the Pouldougheric Stream edge, benches, a single span bridge and new pathways.
- Widening of the existing greenway to 4m and associated accommodation works.
- Removal of c10m of an existing stone wall in front of the former Rochestown Railway Station House, removal of c70m of plastered blockwork wall between the existing Greenway and the green space at St. Gerard's Place, removal of c150m of an existing stone wall and c20m of wing walls on local authority owned lands between the residence 'Herons Bay' and the pedestrian access to Hop Island Car Park, and the construction of a new c40m length of wall to be provided along third-party residential boundary.

- Upgrading of public lighting.
- Provision of a min 1.3m landscape segregation zone between the greenway and the R610 Rochestown Road.
- Provision of a retaining wall of up to c2.6m high on the southern side of the R610 Rochestown Road for a distance of c210m to accommodate realignment to the south.
- Extension and revised configuration of Hop Island Car Park to accommodate new exit junction onto R610 and 22 car parking spaces in lieu of the existing 17 spaces.
- Development of the green open spaces at St. Gerard's Place to comprise new landscaping and the provision of 22 no. car parking spaces for use by residents.
- Provision of bus shelter on the R610.
- Revised configuration and landscaping of open space area to the west of Hop Island Car Park including planting, bird and bat boxes, seating and bike storage facility.

### **Section 3: East of Hop Island Car Park**

- Widening of the existing greenway from 3m to 4m.
- Upgrading of existing lighting.
- Provision of rest areas and focal points, including play equipment, seating and bike parking and repair stations.
- Provision of bicycle storage to the east of the access road to Hop Island and Hop Island Car Park.

9.1.2. Under the provisions of Section 177AE of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 as amended, the Board is required to consider the proposed development in terms of the following:

- (a) The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area
- (b) The likely effects on the environment and

- (c) The likely significant effects of the proposed development on any European sites.

**9.2. The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area:**

- 9.2.1. The nature of the proposed development, which involves improvement works to the existing Passage Railway Greenway, from Mahon to Passage West, is strongly supported at national, regional and local policy level. The existing facility supports the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling, as well as the objectives of public health in terms of NPOs as they relate to healthy communities. Regional policy supports the delivery of greenways in the context of developing sustainable walking and cycling trails and opening greater accessibility to the marine and countryside environments and it is a stated objective in the current Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy – Southern Region, to support investment in the development of walking and cycling facilities, greenway and blueway corridors within the region – RPO 201 refers.
- 9.2.2. In terms of local policy, the Cork Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) follows the NPF and RSES in terms of promoting cycleways and walkways, with Objective 8(i) considered relevant. The current Cork City Development Plan 2022 includes a longer vision to 2040 for the development of the city and specifically refers to the delivery of the Lee to Sea Greenway as one of the initiatives expected to be progressed to improve pedestrian and cycling connectivity during the lifetime of the Plan. The Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme is referenced at Table 4.3 as one of a number of walking and cycling schemes expected to come on stream. In the interests of completion, the Board will also note that the Passage Railway Greenway crosses into the administrative area of Cork County Council at its eastern boundary. The Board will note that the Cork County Development Plan also provides for the Passage Railway Greenway and includes a stated objective to deliver the Cork Harbour Greenway a strategically important active travel commuting route linking Carrigaline to both Passage West and Ringaskiddy and forming an element of the Lee to Sea Greenway.

## **Conclusion**

- 9.2.3. The proposed improvement works for this section of the greenway would be consistent with strategic policy objectives to encourage and promote designated cycle and walking trails and provide enhanced recreational and tourism amenities in the city. It complements the previous improvement works already carried out to the northern part of the greenway and will continue to encourage more sustainable transport options for residents and commuters. In addition, I consider that subject to appropriate mitigation, the proposed development will not give rise to significant adverse impact on heritage or archaeology, the general biodiversity of the area or on the wider population and will not detract from the wider amenities of the area.
- 9.2.4. I am therefore satisfied that the proposed improvement works to the existing pedestrian and cycle greenway at this location would be consistent with national, regional and local policy and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

### **9.3. The likely effects on the environment**

- 9.3.1. The Board will note that, under the provisions of Section 50(1)(c) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), Cork City Council sought a direction from An Bord Pleanála as to whether or not the scheme required the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), ABP-312302-21 refers and file attached for reference. This request was accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report which considered the likelihood of the development to have significant effects on the environment under the criteria set out in Annex III and IIA of the EIA Directive and Schedules 7 and 7A of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. The report presented an evaluation on a number of topics under the following three headings:
1. Characteristics of projects.
  2. Location of projects
  3. Type and characteristics of the potential impact
- 9.3.2. The Board determined that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment and that the preparation and submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report is not, therefore, required. It was further

considered that the impacts likely to arise including potential impacts on European sites and the likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area arising from impacts on biodiversity, water, cultural heritage and the local population can be addressed in a Section 177AE application to the Board. I propose to address the following issues here and matters relating to appropriate assessment are discussed further below in section 9.4 of this report.

- Biodiversity & Water
- Cultural Heritage
- Population
- Roads & Traffic

### **Biodiversity & Water**

- 9.3.3. The submitted ER identifies the results of a number of surveys carried out to inform the baseline environment and details of consultation with the NPWS. The proposed site includes an area at the mouth of the Douglas River and runs along the western and southern side of Cork harbour. Cork harbour is designated as a SPA for its wetlands and waterbirds and the Douglas River Estuary is also designated as a proposed NHA. An area of Saltmarsh Coastal Habitat with potential *Spartina* clump/mudflat mosaic (Mudflats and sandflats not covered by sea water at low tide) is located to the west of Hop Island with two further areas located to the south, between Hop Island and the existing greenway. The development also proposes culverting works and the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over the Pouldougheric stream, as well as works to the Black Bridge. Much of the work is located on or within the existing footpath, but the development, if permitted, will also extend into the riparian areas associated with the adjacent waterbodies. Such works, which include the removal of vegetation within the riparian buffer, may negatively impact the foraging, nesting and roosting habitat and behaviours of SCI bird species and / or bat species through the loss of foraging and commuting habitats.
- 9.3.4. Any works within the site / adjacent to the SPA, and over the water body in the case of the Black Bridge, have the potential to adversely impact on habitats and species within these Natura sites, with likely significant effects arising in terms of noise, vibration, lighting and the presence of humans and vehicles during the construction

phase on SCI birds. The improvement scheme is also likely to generate additional users in terms of cyclists and pedestrians once operational, which could have a negative effect on the foraging, nesting and roosting habitat and behaviours of SCI bird species. Other mammals that may be impacted by increased numbers of users include the otter. The ER concludes that badger, hedgehog, invertebrates and amphibians are unlikely to be impacted as no significant habitats were noted to be present within the environment for significant populations of these protected species to occur. Works adjacent to and over the adjacent waterbodies, including drainage proposals, have the potential to give rise to significant effects on the water quality of the identified bodies.

- 9.3.5. Having regard to these water bodies, the Board will note that the water quality ratings for the watercourses indicate that some of them are likely to have very limited absorption capacity. The proposed greenway is bordered by the Lough Mahon transitional waterbody which has a Transitional Waterbody risk of 'at risk' and a Moderate Water Framework Directive (WFD) Transitional waterbody status. The Moneygurney\_010 (Hop Island) watercourse (also known as Pouldougheric stream) crosses the proposed greenway improvement works close to the junction with the R610 (Rochestown Road) and Monastery Road, this watercourse WFD Risk is currently under review.
- 9.3.6. In light of the above, surface water run-off, accidental spillages or the introduction of alien species on machinery could also have an impact during the construction phase where excavation is required, vegetation removal is proposed and stockpiling of materials. Such practices may result in sediment laden run-off affecting water quality. Other activities which have the potential for sediment run-off include works to Black Bridge and the Rochestown Road including the construction of the retaining wall and the removal of invasive native species. The Board will note that a number of invasive plant species were recorded at a number of locations along the greenway including Japanese knotweed, rhododendron, giant rhubarb and Himalayan knotweed, with common cord-grass noted within the intertidal salt marsh habitat of the adjacent estuary.
- 9.3.7. Mitigation measures with regard to Biodiversity are detailed in Section 3.5 and Water Section 4.4 of the submitted ER. Mitigation measures are considered necessary to avoid potential adverse effects on the environment and I note that a programme of



monitoring, under the supervision of a suitably qualified Ecologist or Ecological Clerk of Works, is also proposed.

9.3.8. In terms of the proposed works to the Black Bridge, the Board will note the proposal to use a temporary containment system which will be erected to fully encapsulate the scaffolding to maintain a controlled environment for blasting and painting works. Details of the containment system are presented on drawing MCT0815-RPS-00-ST01-DR-C-BR0103-03 submitted with the application to the Board on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2023, and the use of this system will prevent debris entering the waterbody. I further note that best practices will be employed to ensure that any possible discharges of suspended solids are minimised.

9.3.9. With regard to mitigation measures around the issue of Invasive Alien Plant Species, I note that an IAS Management Plan is being developed for the proposed scheme which will address the following:

- The eradication of IAS in advance of construction commencing.
- Tasks associated with the construction phase to avoid the risk of transporting or spreading IAS.
- Landscaping / re-vegetation phase on completion of construction to avoid the risk of IAS re-establishing.

The IAS Management Plan will provide an effective management approach for the eradication of IAS within the site.

9.3.10. The Board will note that third parties have raised concerns that in the discussion of invasive species on the greenway, *Clematis vitalba* or Winter Heliotrope have not been noted. The issue arises in relation to the 'Suez Canal' in particular, and I note the submission of a 2010 report titled 'The Suez Canal Biodiversity Project and a 2018 report titled 'Management of *Clematis vitalba* at 'Suez Pond' with the submission from Cllr. Marcia D'Alton. In this regard, I refer the Board to the submitted Invasive Alien Plant Species Report submitted with the application (Appendix 4 of the ER). Sections 4.2.5 and 4.2.6 of this report make specific reference to these species, with the Winter Heliotrope also mapped. In addition, I note that while identified as non-Third Schedule species, and therefore attracting no legal obligation to control the spread of such species, the applicant has made

recommendations to manage these, and other non-Third Schedule species, to prevent further spread. I am satisfied that the matter has been adequately addressed by the applicant and a condition could be included in any grant of permission requiring the matter of these non-Third Schedule species be addressed as part of the proposed IAS Management Plan for the greenway improvement works.

9.3.11. The Board will also note the landscaping plan for the greenway which proposes the removal of 33 trees along the route. The main areas for the felling of trees are to the north of Harty's Quay (18 no) and around the Hop island Car Park (11 no), including a beloved cherry tree at Hop Island Car Park. The Board will note that third-parties have requested that this tree be retained.

9.3.12. The plans propose the planting of 254 trees across the scheme, primarily at the intersection of the greenway and the links to Mahon Industrial Estate and Mahon Interchange, around the former Rochestown Railway Platform, at St. Gerards Place and in lands to the east of the 'Lennoe' property. In addition, the plan proposes the removal of c645m<sup>2</sup> of vegetation / hedgerow and replacing same with c2,316m<sup>2</sup> of hedgerow and ornamental shrubs. All proposed planting will comprise native species, other than the fuchsia hedging proposed around the Hop Island Car Park area. A total of 1,861m<sup>2</sup> of wildflower planting areas is also proposed across the development and will include species used by nocturnal pollinators such as moths, which form part of bat species diet. Nesting habitats and bug hotels will also be provided at a number of locations. While I acknowledge the loss of trees to facilitate the proposed improvement works, including the cherry tree at Hop Island, I consider that the landscaping plan is appropriate and acceptable. I have no objection to the proposed development in this regard.

9.3.13. In terms of impact of the development on species, I would note that the improvement works include upgrading the existing public lighting along the route. Light overspill into sensitive habitats would have a negative effect on local fauna, including bats in terms of commuting and foraging. I would accept that the potential for impacts is low during the construction phase of the development, and that the majority of the work will be carried out in daylight hours, without the need for additional construction lighting. During the operational phase of the development, the impact on species, and in particular bats, is considered moderate due to the numbers of commuting and foraging bats recorded using the area. The ER concludes however, that the impact is

not significant as the project lighting design will minimise light spill onto sensitive areas.

9.3.14. The proposed development provides for a number of new lighting forms as part of the improvement works including,

- Mahon Industrial Estate Link
  - Ch. 00.0m – Ch. 558.6m: One-metre high lighting bollards every 15m approx.
  - Ch. 558.6m – Ch. 1,148.5m – Wall mounted sephora luminaries below the capping of the wall for c375m with one-metre high lighting bollards every 15m approx. for the remaining 215m.
- Mahon Interchange Link
  - Ch. 0.00m – Ch. 487.2m: One-metre high lighting bollards every 15m approx. for the first 80m with wall mounted sephora luminaries below the capping of the wall for the remaining 409m.
- Passage Railway Greenway
  - Ch. 0.00m – Ch. 231.2m: On the pedestrian / cycle bridge over the N40, the handrail will be replaced with a new handrail with lights.
  - Ch. 231.2m – Ch. 456.2m: New lanterns to be installed on 6m columns.
  - Ch. 456.2m - Ch. 511.3m: The Black Bridge will be provided with a new handrail with lights.
  - Ch. 511.3m - Ch. 1,277.9m: Existing public lighting will be upgraded with new columns and lantern fittings.
  - Ch. 1,277.9m – Ch. 1,731.4m: Five existing roadside public lighting columns will be relocated northwards by c1-2m, with the remaining existing public lighting staying in place. Secondary lanterns mounted at a lower height, 4m, facing the greenway on three of the existing columns is proposed with 11 lanterns to be replaced with new LED lanterns.

- Ch. 1,731.4m – Ch. 3,447.75m: Existing public lighting will be upgraded with new columns and lantern fittings.

9.3.15. The new lanterns to be installed on 6m columns will adopt an advanced intelligent light control system which will have automatic dimming and sensor control. This will allow for increased illumination when pedestrians and cyclists go past, but they will dim accordingly when there are no users on the Greenway. While I would acknowledge that lighting can have an impact on species, and in particular bat species, I would note the presence of existing lighting along the Greenway. I further note that the proposed new lighting will utilise modern and wildlife friendly systems which overall, I consider to be acceptable.

**Biodiversity & Water Conclusion:**

9.3.16. Having regard to the nature of the proposed development, together with the existing use associated with the site, I would note that the principle of the enhancement of the existing Passage Railway Greenway is to improve facilities for users, but also to protect and enhance biodiversity along the route. In particular, I note the proposals with regard to the management of existing invasive alien plant species along the route, and the proposed landscaping and planting programme to be implemented. In addition, other features such as the installation of bird boxes, bat boxes, bug hotels and dipper boxes will contribute to the offer for local biodiversity. Lighting proposals will see the upgrading of the existing lighting along the route to a more wildlife friendly system and signage and landscaping will also increase protection for birds foraging and nesting in the area.

9.3.17. In terms of the potential impacts of the development on water, I would accept that the proposed works to the Black Bridge represent a significant concern. However, the Board will note the proposal to use a temporary containment system which will be erected to fully encapsulate the scaffolding to maintain a controlled environment for blasting and painting works. Details of the containment system are presented on drawing MCT0815-RPS-00-ST01-DR-C-BR0103-03 submitted with the application to the Board on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2023, and the use of this system will prevent debris entering the waterbody. I further note that best practices will be employed to ensure that any possible discharges of suspended solids are minimised. A Construction and Environmental Management Plan will also be prepared for the development, which

should include mitigation measures in terms of design and avoidance, accidental spills and contamination and drainage management (Surface Water Management & Drainage Management Plans).

9.3.18. With regard to the matter of Invasive Alien Plant Species, I am satisfied that the applicant has appropriately addressed this issue. An Invasive Alien Species Management Plan for the greenway improvement works is to be prepared and the Board will also note the intention of the applicant to deal with non-Third Schedule species identified on the route.

9.3.19. Having regard to the forgoing and noting the mitigation measures proposed in Chapter 7 of the NIS and those contained in the submitted Environmental Report, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not have any significant adverse impacts on ecology or biodiversity along the greenway route subject to the implementation of said mitigation measures and compliance with the recommended conditions.

### **Cultural Heritage**

9.3.20. Chapter 5, and Appendices 9 to 12, of the submitted Environmental Report deal with Cultural Heritage, and identifies two protected structures and five NIAH sites located within the subject developments study area. Table 5-5 identifies the Cultural Heritage Assets within the study area and the relevant structures are listed above in Section 6.5 of this report – NIAH summaries are presented in Appendix 1 to this report. The zone of influence associated with Cultural Heritage is noted to be the development footprint and lands extending for 100m on either side of the boundary. The ER presents details of the sources of information used to inform the assessment as well as setting out the key parameters for assessment and methodology.

9.3.21. The line of the greenway crosses the Black Bridge over the Douglas River Estuary, and the development proposes works to the bridge. The bridge is a steel viaduct railway bridge and is identified as a National Monument (Ref no. CO10741) and is listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (Ref no. 20872013). It is included in the NIAH under the Architectural, Social and Technical Categories of Special Interest, dated 1845-1855 and with a regional rating. Black Bridge comprises the only railway feature within the study area which is afforded statutory protection.

Although the Rochestown Station and platform survive, they are not included as features in the RPS, NIAH or RMP.

- 9.3.22. The ER concludes that direct impacts associated with the construction phase of the development include potential disturbance on unknown sub-surface features of potential heritage interest due to the resurfacing of existing paths. The magnitude and significance of potential direct impacts are considered negligible, given the limited ground works proposed and the presence of the existing footpaths.
- 9.3.23. In terms of Black Bridge, the proposed interventions include the replacement of modern bridge decking, installed in the 1980s, grit blasting and application of protective paintwork to protect the deck plate soffit against corrosion, localised replacement of damaged/corroded sections of secondary bracing members between the piers and vegetation clearance and masonry repointing to the abutments. The ER concludes that the works to the Black Bridge will result in a direct, permanent, positive impact of slight significance to the bridge.
- 9.3.24. I would note that the ER has submitted details of mitigation measures to be implemented as part of the proposed development at Section 5.4. Of particular note, a suitably qualified archaeologist is to be appointed to monitor the construction phase of the development, under licence. I would accept that this is an appropriate measure and that in the event of any sub-surface archaeological remains are identified, works will halt in order to consult with the Cork City Council Archaeologist and the National Monuments Service.
- 9.3.25. With regard to the proposed works to the Black Bridge, I note that a post-consent application for Ministerial Consent to carry out the works will be submitted to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage. A building conservation specialist will be appointed to supervise and record the planned works to the bridge and experienced masonry specialists will be engaged to carry out works to the stonework.
- 9.3.26. There are no interventions proposed to the small stone bridge over the Pouldougheric Stream, with works confined to the resurfacing of the modern path. While not a protected structure, the ER also notes that the development will not result in the removal of any of the Rochestown Station platform's stone and brickwork. Landscaping of this feature will, however, have a direct impact on the

structure and Appendix 12 of the document presents a built heritage report on platform. The platform will be maintained as a public amenity and viewing point with full accessibility and seating proposed. Landscaping of this feature includes containerised tree and shrub planting on the surface which will be finished in a resin-bound aggregate. The elevated platform will be edged with a combination of raised planters or glazed panels and all works, including the proposed access to the platform, will be designed to be fully reversible if desired in the future.

9.3.27. In terms of indirect impacts associated with the construction phase, I would accept that there will be negative impacts associated with the removal of public access to Black Bridge and other sections of the greenway. However, this impact will be temporary. In terms of the operational phase of the development and having regard to the existing use of the site as a greenway, I am generally satisfied that the works proposed to the cultural heritage assets, are acceptable and unlikely to be considered negative.

9.3.28. A residual impact on the visual amenity of the Rochestown Station Platform is identified by third parties due to the works proposed in terms of access. Design elements which are also considered disregard the built heritage include the proposed glass and stainless-steel panels on the old platform and the positioning of plant boxes and plants adjacent to the platform, which will obscure the old stonework from view. Third parties request that the historic area be protected from modern interventions to maintain the character of the site. In this context, I would advise that I have no real objections to the proposed landscaping plans for the Rochestown Station Platform. I would consider that the proposed works will result in the platform being brought into active use and that the glass panels will prevent any blocking of views over Lough Mahon from the adjacent public realm and seek to maintain the character of the area. The interventions will also be clearly identifiable as modern interventions, to which I have no objection.

9.3.29. In terms of the above however, I would note that the Rochestown Station Platform is not identified as a protected structure and the works proposed are fully reversible. The Board will also note that the DoHLG&H - Development Applications Unit is broadly in agreement with the findings of the ER in relation to archaeology and cultural heritage.

### **Cultural Heritage Conclusion:**

9.3.30. Overall, subject to the inclusion of appropriate conditions relating to the appointment of a suitably qualified archaeologist and conservation specialist, associated monitoring and reporting, I am satisfied that the proposed improvement works to the existing pedestrian and cycle greenway at this location would be consistent with national, regional and local policy as they relate to the protection of cultural heritage and to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Having regard to the scale and nature of the linear project, I am satisfied that the proposal would not adversely affect cultural heritage in the surrounding area to any significant extent.

### **Population**

9.3.31. In terms of potential impacts on population, the subject site is located within an urban and semi-urban residential area, as well as commercial and industrial areas. The route is an established greenway and amenity route, and the settlement pattern in the immediate vicinity of the line, and other than the apartment development at Harty's Quay, is generally low density. The geographical extent of the site is also limited, and the proposed works seek to improve the amenity and provide improved facilities for users. I note that the proposed development will not give rise to any significant new development which might impact negatively on the existing settlement patterns of the area, other than the potential for increased use of the facility.

9.3.32. In terms of the location, the site traverses two Electoral Divisions, Mahon B ED to the north of Black Bridge and the Douglas ED to the south of Black Bridge. Both Eds are noted to have experienced an increase in population between 2011 and 2016, but both EDs increase, at 1.9% and 3.2% respectively, are below the percentage change for both Cork City (5.4%) and County (4.4%) over the same period. Population densities within the EDs however, are much higher than that of the state. The Census data also suggests that the area the subject site lies within, has a greater percentage of young adult population cohort (25-44) and fewer older people when compared to that of the State.

9.3.33. In terms of the use of the greenway, the applicant undertook patronage surveys on a Sunday and a Wednesday in November, while car parking surveys were also



undertaken on a Sunday and Wednesday in October 2020. The results of the patronage survey suggests that at weekends, there were c1,200 pedestrians / cyclists in each direction to the north west of Harty's Quay, and c460 users in each direction from Harty's Quay to Hop Island. Using the data, the applicant has predicted that the future levels of use of the Greenway for the peak weekend scenario and has presented the findings in Table 10-1 of the Scheme Design Report submitted with the application. The forecasting suggests a 16% increase in use in the short term (which was identified as 2023) with the longer-term forecast – 2040 – advising an increase of between 60% - 156%, with the greatest increase predicted to be between Harty's Quay and Hop Island.

9.3.34. During the construction phase of the development, there is likely to be some impacts on local residents and greenway users in terms of construction traffic, noise and dust, and possibly access issues during the realignment of the Rochestown Road. However, I note that no full road closures are proposed, that these impacts will be short term in duration and mitigation measures, including best construction practices, will be implemented. I also noted no objections from residents impacted by the required land-take to accommodate the proposed improvement works to the greenway. Works to the Black Bridge will also affect access for a period of 18 weeks and there will be closures along the route for periods of up to 8-9 weeks. The car park at Hop Island will also be closed while in use as a construction compound for a period of 10 months. In terms of the construction period, I would accept that there will be a general reduction in amenity for residents who live along the route. I do not consider the impacts to be such as to warrant a refusal of permission.

9.3.35. In terms of the operational phase of the development, it is not considered that the works will impact on the population, population density, number of households or average household size or population structure. It is anticipated that people from outside the immediate area will travel to use the amenity. An increase in users of the Greenway has the potential to have a long-term, moderate positive economic effect to the local businesses in the area. The works will improve the accessibility to the greenway which will have a long-term positive effect on residents, works and visitors.

### **Population Conclusion:**

9.3.36. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely affect residential amenities to any significant extent as a result of visual intrusion, overlooking, overshadowing or general disturbance (including noise, vibration or dust emissions). The loss of access to green areas during the construction phase, although negative, is temporary with positive impacts arising in terms of the improved access to the greenway and the slight movement of the road carriageway from a number of properties (which are the subject of land-take) is deemed to be positive. I have no objections in this regard.

### **Roads & Traffic:**

9.3.37. There are a number of access points along the Greenway for pedestrians and cyclists including from the Blackrock area and Mahon area to the north of the N40, and along the Rochestown Road and Passage West to the south. There are also connections from the Mahon Industrial Estate and the Mahon Interchange, as well as from Jacobs Island where it connects just north of the Black Bridge. With regard to vehicular access, there are two car parks which connect to the Greenway, at Harty's Quay and Hop Island, with the Harty's Quay car park segregated from the Greenway path. Vehicles cross the Greenway to access the Equestrian Centre and houses on Hop Island.

9.3.38. In terms of the interface of the Greenway with public roads, I would advise concerns are noted particularly in terms of the entrance at Mahon Industrial Estate and the Mahon Interchange. The TII, while supporting the principles of the Greenway Improvement Scheme and welcoming its advancement, advise that a number of issues are required to be clarified to enable a full assessment. The particular area of concern is the interface with the Mahon Interchange and the N40 National Road. In their submission, I note that the TII advise that neither the City Council or its agents engaged with TII as required under the TII Publication – Technical Approval of Road Structures on Motorways and Other National Roads.

9.3.39. In particular, the TII raise concerns in terms of the proposals for the Mahon Interchange, particularly as the Road Safety Audit, submitted with the application, indicates that the issue of road and greenway user safety is a matter which is not to be dealt with as part of the current scheme. In addition, I note that while the Road

Safety Audit identifies 8 problems, 2 relate to the junctions with public roads at Bessboro Road and the Mahon Interchange. In terms of these two identified problem areas, the recommendation is that the road layout and crossing facility (at the Mahon Interchange) be reviewed to provide for vulnerable road users. Neither of the recommendations were accepted as the existing road network and mini-roundabout at Bessboro Road and the junction at the Mahon Interchange are outside the scope of the project. As it is envisaged that the improvements to the Greenway will result in increased user numbers, the TII submit that public safety related to the current R852/N40 junction requires to be addressed appropriately and this element of the scheme is premature pending same and should be omitted in its current form.

- 9.3.40. In addition to the above, the TII require further information with regard to proposed works to the Sacred Heart Bridge - in terms of the proposed width of the approach, parapet heights, proposals for addressing the concrete defect in the bridge superstructure and lighting, retaining wall proposals and works to the Black Bridge - in terms of parapet height, details of the extent of the rehabilitation of the existing substructure and superstructure, which is considered to be unclear. Technical acceptance is required.
- 9.3.41. In terms of the concerns raised above, and in acknowledging same, the Board will note that the proposed works are advised to be acceptable by the Cork City Councils local roads engineers, and the current City Development Plan supports the development of the Lee to Sea Greenway as part of the planned 10 strategic regeneration and expansion areas, focusing on delivering consolidated urban and district centres, new employment zones, core bus corridors and the longer-term delivery of a Light Rail Transit alongside enhancing walking and cycling networks. The Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme is referenced at Table 4.3 of the CDP as one of a number of walking and cycling schemes expected to come on stream during the lifetime of the Plan. I would also note that national and regional policies support the development and promotion of cycleways and walkways and the Cork MASP seeks to integrate sustainable economic and social development with the protection and enhancement of the natural environment to ensure our transition to a climate resilient society. Objectives seek a healthy, green and connected metropolitan area, green infrastructure, inter-connected parks, sports and recreation facilities and greenways.

9.3.42. In addition, the Board will note that the section of the R852 immediately to the north of the entrance to the Greenway from the Mahon Interchange was the subject of a previous grant of permission under SHD case ABP-301991-18 which included upgrades to a section of the Mahon Link Road (R852) north of the Mahon Interchange to incorporate a dedicated bus and cycle lane. These measures will enhance the safety, although not eliminate the risk, of pedestrians and cyclists accessing the Greenway at this location. Overall, I am satisfied that the development would be satisfactory and in the interests of sustainable transport. I would recommend, however, that a condition be included in any grant of planning permission, that the concerns of the TII be fully addressed prior to the upgrading of the Greenway at the Bessboro Road / Mahon Industrial Estate and the Mahon Interchange junctions.

9.3.43. Finally, I note concerns raised in relation to the impact of the proposed works on car parking, particularly for residents in the vicinity of the site. Having regard to the nature of the proposed scheme, together with the proposals around the provision of parking, including improved layout at St. Gerard's Place, I do not consider that the proposed improvement works will unduly impact existing residents with regard to the provision of parking.

#### 9.4. **The likely significant effects on a European site:**

9.4.1. The areas addressed in this section are as follows:

- Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive
- The Natura Impact Statement
- Appropriate Assessment

#### **Compliance with Articles 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive:**

9.4.2. The Habitats Directive deals with the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora throughout the European Union. Article 6(3) of this Directive requires that any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's

conservation objectives. The competent authority must be satisfied that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the European site.

**The Natura Impact Statement:**

- 9.4.3. The Board will note the planning history of the subject proposed development, and in particular, ABP ref: ABP-312302-21 whereby a direction, under the provisions of Section 50(1)(c) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), was sought from the Board by Cork City Council as to whether or not the scheme the subject of this current application, required the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR). An AA Screening Report was submitted as part of the direction application which concluded that there was potential for direct and indirect effects on Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) and indirect effects on Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 001058). Therefore, it was concluded that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) was required to inform Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment. Under ABP-312302-21, the Board determined that EIAR was not required and that the impacts likely to arise, including potential impacts on European sites and the likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area arising from impacts on biodiversity, water, cultural heritage and the local population can be addressed in a Section 177AE application to the Board.
- 9.4.4. The subject application is accompanied by an NIS which describes the proposed development, the project site and the surrounding area. The NIS contains the concluding statement from the Stage 1 Screening Assessment, Section 1.2, and includes the full AA Screening Report in Appendix B of the NIS. The AA Screening Report concluded that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was required.
- 9.4.5. The NIS outlined the methodology used for assessing potential impacts on the habitats and species within the relevant European Sites that have the potential to be affected by the proposed development. It predicted the potential impacts for these sites and their conservation objectives, suggested mitigation measures, assessed in-combination effects with other plans and projects and identified any residual effects on the European sites and their conservation objectives.
- 9.4.6. The NIS was informed by the following studies, surveys and consultations:
- A desk top study.

- Field study
- Identification of relevant European Sites.
- Consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.
- Tree Survey Report
- Invasive Alien Plant Species Report
- Winter Bird Survey – Waterbird Populations.

9.4.7. The report concluded that, one European Site, Cork Harbour SPA has been identified within the Zone of Influence of the proposed development works due to effects associated with disturbance to key species. Subject to the implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures for avoidance of key species during the construction and operation of the greenway, the NIS concludes that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of any European Site.

9.4.8. Having reviewed the NIS and the supporting documentation, I am satisfied that it provides adequate information in respect of the baseline conditions, clearly identifies the potential impacts, and uses best scientific information and knowledge. Details of mitigation measures are provided, and they are summarised in Section 7 of the NIS. I am satisfied that the information is sufficient to allow for appropriate assessment of the proposed development.

### **Appropriate Assessment**

9.4.9. Appropriate Assessment (AA) considers whether the plan or project alone or in combination with other projects or plans will adversely affect the integrity of a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives and includes consideration of any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. This determination must be carried out before a decision is made or consent given for the proposed development. Consent can only be given after it has been determined that the proposed development alone or in combination with other plans and projects would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

9.4.10. Guidance on appropriate assessment is set out in the European Commission's 'Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites:

Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC' (European Commission 2002) and in the Department of the Environment's 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities', (December 2009, revised February 2010).

9.4.11. I consider that the proposed development comprising the Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme, Phase II, is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site. The following assessment sets out to:

- Identify of European Sites which could be potentially affected using the Source Pathway Receptor Model
- Identify the Conservation Objectives for these sites
- Examine the Predicted Impacts on sites and assess whether these impacts would likely be significant.
- Assess likely significant impacts against the conservation objectives. Assess whether these impacts would be likely to be significant
- Consider cumulative and in-combination effects
- Consider Mitigation
- Assess Residual Effects
- Appropriate Assessment Conclusion

9.4.12. Having regard to the information and submissions available, nature, size and location of the proposed development and its likely direct, indirect and cumulative effects, the source pathway receptor principle and sensitivities of the ecological receptors the following European Sites are considered relevant to include for the purposes of initial screening for the requirement for Stage 2 appropriate assessment on the basis of likely significant effects:

- Cork Harbour SPA, Site Code 004030
- Great Island Channel SAC, Site Code 004030

9.4.13. Based on my examination of the NIS report and supporting information (including the Environmental Report, and other reports submitted with the application), the NPWS

website, aerial and satellite imagery, the scale of the proposed development and likely effects, separation distance and functional relationship between the proposed works and the European sites, their conservation objectives and taken in conjunction with my assessment of the subject site and the surrounding area, I would conclude that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is required for the two European sites referred to above.

9.4.14. The Board will note that the NIS submitted also identifies that The Gearagh SAC and SPA are considered to be within the zone of influence of the subject site. However, I consider that these two sites can be screened out from further assessment given the scale of the proposed works, the nature of the Conservation Objectives, Qualifying and Special Conservation Interests, the separation distances of approximately 37km and the lack of a substantive linkage between the proposed works and the European sites. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on European Site The Gearagh SAC, Site Code 000108 and The Gearagh SPA, Site Code 004109 in view of the sites conservation objectives and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required for these sites.

**Relevant European sites:**

9.4.15. The Conservation Objectives and Qualifying Interests, including any relevant attributes and targets for these sites, are set out below.

European site (SAC/SPA)	Qualifying Interests	Distance
<p><b>Cork Harbour SPA,</b> <b>Site Code 004030</b></p>	<p>Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) [A004] Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) [A005] Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) [A017] Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) [A028] Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>) [A048] Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) [A050] Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) [A052]</p>	<p>Partially within the subject site</p>



European site (SAC/SPA)	Qualifying Interests	Distance
	Pintail ( <i>Anas acuta</i> ) [A054] Shoveler ( <i>Anas clypeata</i> ) [A056] Red-breasted Merganser ( <i>Mergus serrator</i> ) [A069] Oystercatcher ( <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> ) [A130] Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> ) [A140] Grey Plover ( <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i> ) [A141] Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> ) [A142] Dunlin ( <i>Calidris alpina</i> ) [A149] Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> ) [A156] Bar-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa lapponica</i> ) [A157] Curlew ( <i>Numenius arquata</i> ) [A160] Redshank ( <i>Tringa totanus</i> ) [A162] Black-headed Gull ( <i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i> ) [A179] Common Gull ( <i>Larus canus</i> ) [A182] Lesser Black-backed Gull ( <i>Larus fuscus</i> ) [A183] Common Tern ( <i>Sterna hirundo</i> ) [A193] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999]	
<b>Great Island Channel SAC, Site Code 004030</b>	Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Atlantic salt meadows ( <i>Glaucopuccinellietalia maritimae</i> ) [1330]	Approximately 1.7km to the east

### 1. Cork Harbour SPA, Site Code 004030:

#### Description of site:

9.4.16. Cork Harbour is a large, sheltered bay system, with several river estuaries - principally those of the Rivers Lee, Douglas, Owenboy and Owennacurra. The SPA site comprises most of the main intertidal areas of Cork Harbour. Owing to the sheltered conditions, the intertidal flats are often muddy in character and support a

range of macro-invertebrates. Salt marshes are scattered through the site, and these provide high tide roosts for the birds.

9.4.17. Cork Harbour is an internationally important wetland site, regularly supporting in excess of 20,000 wintering waterfowl. It is of major ornithological significance and is an internationally important wetland site due to the total numbers of wintering birds it supports - > 20,000 – including the internationally important populations of Black-tailed Godwit and Redshank. In addition, it supports nationally important wintering populations of 22 species, as well as a nationally important breeding colony of Common Tern. Several of the species which occur regularly are listed on Annex I of the E.U. Birds Directive. The site provides both feeding and roosting sites for the various bird species that use it.

9.4.18. The E.U. Birds Directive pays particular attention to wetlands and, as these form part of this SPA, the site and its associated waterbirds are of special conservation interest for Wetland & Waterbirds.

**Conservation Objectives:**

9.4.19. The Conservation Objectives for the Cork Harbour SPA, notes that the overall aim of the habitats directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. The site-specific conservation objective for the Cork Harbour SPA is to maintain the favourable conservation condition of qualifying interests detailed above. The NPWS has prepared specific attributes and targets for the qualifying interests protection of habitats and species associated with the Cork Harbour SPA.

9.4.20. Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

**Potential Effects on QIs:**

9.4.21. The NIS identifies potential impacts around the disturbance of all key species associated with the Cork Harbour SPA other than the Common Tern and wetlands. No impacts in terms of loss/reduction of habitat area, habitat or species fragmentation, reduction in species density or changes in key indicators of conservation values are envisaged in these categories. Disturbance to the majority of the qualifying bird species of conservation value associated with the SPA was identified in the AA screening for further assessment as it is likely to arise and can lead to a decrease in the range, timing or intensity of use of areas by a number of bird species.

9.4.22. The construction phase of the development has the potential to give rise to noise, vibration, lighting and the presence of humans and vehicles with the potential to disturb roosting and feeding of SCI species and QI of Cork Harbour SPA. The site enabling works which will include the removal of the existing Greenway surface, vegetation clearance works, refurbishment works on the Black Bridge and the installation of the new Greenway surface are most likely to cause disturbance to the birds. The NIS submits that the disturbance to birds will be short term and temporary with construction works envisaged over a 10-month period. The greatest impact will occur during the wintering bird season – October to March. It is concluded that the construction phase of the development, in the absence of mitigation measures, there is potential for the bird species for which the Cork Harbour SPA is so designated, to be disturbed.

9.4.23. In terms of the operational phase of the development, the NIS submits that the area between Harty's Quay and the Rochestown Railway Platform is the primary area of the Greenway which is visible from the mudflats. This area also includes access to

the mudflats and the shingle beach and is known to support large numbers of waterbirds for short periods on ebb and flood tides. The existing use of the greenway has been noted to cause moderate disturbance to waterbirds and the proposed works to the Greenway, and with increased usage at the location of Harty's Quay and the proposed upgraded Rochestown Railway Platform, the disturbance to birds is considered to be long-term and permanent. The greatest impacts from disturbance, in the absence of mitigation measures, will be from humans, and uncontrolled dogs, particularly during the wintering bird season.

**Potential in-combination effects:**

9.4.24. Section 6.2.2 of the submitted NIS presents details of other plans and projects in the vicinity of the subject site where were considered in terms of the cumulative effects on the environment. The applicant undertook a comprehensive search in a number of data sources and the results are presented in Tables 6-2, 6-3, 6-4 and 6-5 of the NIS. No plans or projects were considered to give rise to potential for adverse effects on the European Site in combination with the proposed development.

**Mitigation measures:**

9.4.25. Chapter 7 of the NIS sets out the relevant mitigation measures proposed to avoid the potential for any direct or indirect impacts to Annex II species designated within the Cork Harbour SPA. The measures proposed are submitted as best practice measures, tailored to suit the proposed development having regard to the particular environmental constraints. The measures proposed particularly relate to noise, vibration and human disturbance on the SCI bird species of the SPA and include as follows:

- Construction Phase:
  - Works in areas clearly visible from the estuary waters will be carried out in the summer months – May to June – when wintering birds are not present.
  - The works will take place during daylight hours, avoiding the need for artificial light which may cause disturbance to SCI species.
  - The total containment unit on the Black Bridge will remain in situ for the duration of the works. Site investigation and grit blasting (highest noise

potential) will be restricted to being undertaken outside of the wintering birds season – October to March.

- Vegetation currently screening the estuary from the old Rochestown Railway Station Platform will not be removed.
- Operational Phase:
  - Information boards will be placed away from areas visible from the adjacent estuary waters.
  - Dog proof fencing will be installed between Harty's Quay and the old Rochestown Railway Station Platform to prevent disturbance of foraging and roosting waterbirds from uncontrolled dogs accessing the area.

**Residual effects:**

The NIS submitted in support of the proposed development concludes that subject to the implementation in full of the mitigation measures indicated, no residual effects are anticipated.

**NIS Omissions:**

None noted.

**Suggested related conditions:**

Should the Board be minded to approve the proposed works, I consider that the Project Ecological Clerk-of-Works and the Licenced Ecologist who will be present during the course of the proposed construction phase of the development should have power to cease operations in the event of incident which has potential to impact on the habitats and species of the SPA.

In addition, a condition should be included preventing works which have been noted as having the potential to cause the greatest disturbance to the bird species associated with the Cork Harbour SPA being carried out during the wintering bird season (October to March).

**Conclusion:**

I am satisfied that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of this European site

in light of its conservation objectives, and subject to the implementation of mitigation measures outlined above.

## **2. Great Island Channel SAC, Site Code 004030:**

### **Description of site:**

- 9.4.26. The Great Island Channel stretches from Little Island to Midleton, with its southern boundary being formed by Great Island. It is an integral part of Cork Harbour which contains several other sites of conservation interest. The main habitats of conservation interest in Great Island Channel SAC are the sheltered tidal sand and mudflats and the Atlantic salt meadows. Owing to the sheltered conditions, the intertidal flats are composed mainly of soft muds. The saltmarshes are scattered through the site and are all of the estuarine type on mud substrate.
- 9.4.27. The site is extremely important for wintering waterfowl and is considered to contain three of the top five areas within Cork Harbour, namely North Channel, Harper's Island and Belvelly-Marino Point. Shelduck is the most frequent duck species with 800-1,000 birds centred on the Fota/Marino Point area. There are also large flocks of Teal and Wigeon, especially at the eastern end.
- 9.4.28. All the mudflats support feeding birds with the main roost sites are at Weir Island and Brown Island, and to the north of Fota at Killacloyne and Harper's Island. Ahanesk supports a roost also but is subject to disturbance. The numbers of Grey Plover and Shelduck, as given above, are of national importance. The site is an integral part of Cork Harbour which is a wetland of international importance for the birds it supports.
- 9.4.29. While the main land use within the site is aquaculture (oyster farming), the greatest threats to its conservation significance come from road works, infilling, sewage outflows and possible marina developments. The site is of major importance for the two habitats listed on Annex I of the E.U. Habitats Directive, as well as for its important numbers of wintering waders and wildfowl. It also supports a good invertebrate fauna.

### **Conservation Objectives**

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide in Great Island Channel SAC.

- To restore the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae*) in Great Island Channel SAC.

**Potential Effects on QIs:**

9.4.30. There are no potential direct effects identified within the Great Island Channel SAC as there are no works proposed within the habitats identified as QIs for the European Site.

**Potential in-combination effects:**

9.4.31. None noted.

**Mitigation measures:**

9.4.32. None noted.

**Residual effects:**

9.4.33. None noted.

**NIS Omissions:**

9.4.34. None noted.

**Suggested related conditions:**

9.4.35. None.

**Conclusion:**

9.4.36. I am satisfied that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of this European site in light of its conservation objectives.

**Appropriate Assessment Conclusions:**

9.4.37. I consider that it is reasonable to conclude on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to carry out a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans and projects would not adversely affect the integrity of the European sites Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) and the Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 004030), or any other European site, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives.

## 10.0 Recommendation

On the basis of the above assessment, I recommend that the Board **approve** the proposed development subject to the reasons and considerations below and subject to conditions including requiring compliance with the submitted details and with the mitigation measures as set out in the NIS.

### **Reasons and Considerations**

In coming to its decision, the Board had regard to the following:

- (a) the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- (b) the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015,
- (c) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site,
- (d) the conservation objectives, qualifying interests and special conservation interests for the Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) and the Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 004030),
- (e) Project Ireland 2040 – the National Planning Framework,
- (f) the Government of Ireland Climate Action Plan 2019,
- (g) the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region,
- (h) the National Cycle Policy Framework, 2009-2020,
- (i) the Strategy for the Development of National and Regional Greenways, 2018,
- (j) the Rural Cycle Design (Offline) DN-GEO-03047, TII, 2017,
- (k) the policies and objectives of the Cork City Development Plan, 2022-2028,
- (l) the nature and extent of the proposed works as set out in the application for approval,
- (m) the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Natura Impact Statement,



- (n) the submissions and observations received in relation to the proposed development, and
- (o) the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Board to make a report and recommendation on the matter.

**Appropriate Assessment:**

The Board agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) and the Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 004030), are the only European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and the Inspector's assessment. The Board completed an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the affected European Sites, namely the Cork Harbour SPA (Site Code: 004030) and the Great Island Channel SAC (Site Code: 004030), in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Board considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment. In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the following:

- i. the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,
- ii. the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal, and
- iii. the conservation objectives for the European Sites.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the appropriate assessment carried out in the Inspector's report in respect of the potential effects of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Sites, having regard to the site's conservation objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Board was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites, in view of the site's conservation objectives.

**Proper Planning and Sustainable Development/Likely effects on the environment:**

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would not have significant negative effects on the environment or the community in the vicinity, would not give rise to a risk of pollution, would not be detrimental to the visual or landscape amenities of the area, would not seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity, would not adversely impact on the cultural, archaeological and built heritage of the area and would not interfere with the existing land uses in the area. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**Conditions**

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where any mitigation measures set out in the Natura Impact Statement or any conditions of approval require further details to be prepared by or on behalf of the local authority, these details shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record.

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

2. Prior to the commencement of any development to the north of the N40, and particularly in terms of the entrance at Mahon Industrial Estate and the Mahon Interchange, the developer shall consult with Transport Infrastructure Ireland to agree the entrance points to the Greenway from Bessboro Road / Mahon Industrial Estate and the Mahon Interchange junctions.

**Reason:** In the interests of safety.

3. The mitigation and monitoring measures outlined in the plans and particulars relating to the proposed development, including those set out in Chapter 7 of the Natura Impact Statement and those set out in Chapters 3-6 of the Environmental Report, shall be implemented in full or as may be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Prior to the commencement of development, details of a time schedule for implementation of mitigation measures and associated monitoring shall be prepared by the local authority and placed on file and retained as part of the public record.

**Reason:** In the interest of protecting the environment, the protection of European Sites and in the interest of public health.

4. Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall submit to the Council for approval, an Invasive Alien Plant Species Management Plan, which will address the eradication of IAS, tasks associated with the construction phase to avoid the risk of transporting or spreading IAS and landscaping / re-vegetation phase on completion of construction to avoid the risk of IAS re-establishing. The IAS Management Plan shall also address the non-Third Schedule species identified within the Greenway site and shall include recommendations to manage non-Third Schedule species, to prevent further spread.

**Reason:** In the interests of proper planning and sustainable development.

5. Prior to the commencement of development, the local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the relevant statutory agencies, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), incorporating all mitigation measures indicated in the Natura Impact Statement and all other relevant reports, and demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The CEMP shall include:
  - a) As necessary, and
  - b) Specific proposals as to how the measures outlined in the CEMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness.

**Reason:** In the interest of protecting the environment, European Sites, protected structures and in the interest of public health.

6. A suitably qualified Project Ecological Clerk-of-Works and Licenced Ecologist shall be retained by the local authority to oversee the site set up and construction phase of the proposed Passage Railway Greenway Improvement Scheme Phase II and the implementation of mitigation measures relating to ecology set out in the NIS. The ecologist shall be present during site construction works. Upon completion of works, an ecological report of the site works shall be prepared by the appointed ecologist to be kept on file as part of the public record. Where necessary, the project ecologist shall have 'Cease Works' powers.

**Reason:** In the interest of nature conservation and the protection of terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity.

7. Works in areas clearly visible from the estuary waters shall not be carried out during the wintering bird season (October to March) in order to minimise disturbance to the bird species associated with the Cork Harbour SPA.

The total containment unit on the Black Bridge, as presented on drawing MCT0815-RPS-00-ST01-DR-C-BR0103-03 submitted with the application to the Board on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2023, will remain in situ for the duration of the works to the Black Bridge, and works which have been identified as having the highest noise potential - site investigation and grit blasting - will be restricted to being undertaken outside of the wintering birds season.

**Reason:** In order to minimise the impact of construction activities on species and habitats of conservation interest in the interest of proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8. All repair works to the Black Bridge, Protected Structure shall be carried out under the supervision of a qualified professional with specialised conservation expertise and in accordance with best conservation practice as detailed in

“Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities” issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2011. The repair works shall retain the maximum amount possible of surviving historic fabric in-situ and shall be designed to give rise to minimum interference with the fabric of the Black Bridge.

**Reason:** To ensure that the character and integrity of the protected structure is maintained, and that the Black Bridge is protected from unnecessary damage and loss of fabric.

9. The County Council and any agent acting on its behalf shall facilitate the preservation, recording, protection or removal of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. A suitably qualified archaeologist shall be appointed by the County Council to oversee the site set-up and construction of the proposed development and the archaeologist shall be present on-site during construction works.

**Reason:** In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site and to secure the preservation and protection of any remains that may exist within the site.

10. Prior to the commencement of any development, full details of the proposed lighting scheme, including details of the proposed advanced intelligent light control system and automatic dimming and sensor control, and its management and direction of illumination, shall be provide for agreement with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Development Applications Unit, in order to ensure that the scheme is wildlife friendly.

**Reason:** In order to minimise the impact of the development and ongoing activities on species of biodiversity and conservation interest, and in the interest of proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

11. The City Council and any agent acting on its behalf shall ensure that all plant and machinery used during the works should be thoroughly cleaned and

washed before delivery to the site to prevent the spread of hazardous invasive species and pathogens. All works shall be carried out in accordance with the IFI Guidelines on protection of fisheries during construction works in and adjacent to waters.

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

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.

---

A. Considine  
Planning Inspector  
8<sup>th</sup> June 2023

## Appendix 1:

### NIAH listed properties in the vicinity of the site:

#### 1. **Bessborough, Bessboro Road, BALLINURE, Cork.**

Included in the NIAH under the Architectural, Artistic, Historical and Social Categories of Special Interest, dated 1755-1765 and with a regional rating.

The original use of the property is noted to be County House with Historic use noted as Convent / Nunnery.

#### **Description**

Detached seven-bay (three-bay deep) three-storey over basement country house, built 1760, on a square plan centred on three-bay three-storey pedimented breakfront. Sold, 1922, to accommodate alternative use. Hipped slate roof on an E-shaped plan with rendered chimney stacks on axis with ridge having cornices below capping supporting terracotta pots. Rendered, ruled and lined walls on cut-limestone chamfered cushion course on plinth with rusticated cut-limestone quoins to corners supporting bitumen felt-covered cut-limestone cornice. Segmental-headed central door opening approached by flight of five bull nose-detailed cut-limestone steps, cut-limestone doorcase with rusticated pilasters on plinths supporting ogee-detailed open bed pediment on fluted consoles framing timber panelled door having overlight. Venetian window (first floor) with cut-limestone sill on fluted consoles, and cut-limestone surround with monolithic mullions supporting ogee-detailed cornice on frieze on architrave framing replacement uPVC windows. Diocletian window (top floor) with cut-limestone sill, monolithic mullions, and cut-limestone archivolt framing replacement uPVC windows. Square-headed window openings with cut-limestone sills, and concealed dressings with cut-limestone double keystones framing one-over-one timber sash windows (ground floor) or replacement uPVC windows (upper floors). Set in landscaped grounds with cut-limestone cylindrical piers to perimeter having beaded cornices below fluted dome finial-topped capping supporting spear head-detailed cast-iron double gates.

## Appraisal

A country house representing an important component of the mid eighteenth-century domestic built heritage of Cork. The compact square plan, the symmetrical façade with pedimented breakfront, the Classical doorcase, the Venetian and Diocletian windows, and the finely cut silver-grey limestone dressings, all contribute to its architectural interest. The survival of much historic fabric, including some timber sash windows, contributes to its character while the interior is believed to retain contemporary joinery and decorative plasterwork of artistic interest. A curvilinear conservatory attributed to Richard Turner (c.1798-1881) survives substantially intact and its glazed pilasters show crisply-detailed "Tower of the Winds" capitals with rows of acanthus leaves and palm leaves. Bessborough was built by the Allens and was labelled as "Bisboro [of] Allen Esqre." by Taylor and Skinner (1778, pl.167). The house was purchased (1820) by Joseph Pike (1768-1828) and later passed to Ebenezer Pike (1806-83) and Lydia Clibborn Pike (1821-1900). It was last occupied by their daughters Anne Emily Pike (1850-1920) and Florence Lilas Pike (1860-1917). The abolition of the Poor Law Unions by the Irish Free State, and the imminent closure of the Cork City Workhouse, prompted an appeal to the Board of Guardians for alternative accommodation for unmarried mothers and their children. The vacant Bessborough, for sale with 'a very low reserve', was identified as a suitable site and, purchased at a cost of £6,000 or £9,000, it was given over to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary on the 1st February 1922. Bessborough, a Mother and Baby Home, was the subject of a Commission of Investigation (2015) whose findings were published in Chapter 18 of the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes (2021).



## **2. Bessborough, Bessboro Road, BALLINURE, Cork**

Included in the NIAH under the Architectural Category of Special Interest, dated 1870-1890 and with a regional rating. The original, and in use, use is noted as Folly.

### **Description**

Freestanding three-bay two-storey folly, c.1880, on a rectangular plan. Rubble limestone walls with rubble limestone "destroyed" Irish battlemented parapets. Pointed-arch central door opening. Pointed-arch flanking window openings. Pair of lancet loops (second stage). Lancet window openings (side elevations). Set in grounds shared with Bessborough.

### **Appraisal**

A folly contributing positively to the setting of the Bessborough estate. The folly, its crumbling battlements rising above a small copse, has drawn comparisons with an earlier belvedere in the grounds of Coolmore House [SMR CO099-007----]. An adjoining plot is labelled as "Childrens' [sic] Burial Ground" on the historic Ordnance Survey but the accuracy of the label has been disputed.

## **3. Bessborough, Bessboro Road, BALLINURE, Cork**

Included in the NIAH under the Architectural Category of Special Interest, dated 1870-1890 and with a regional rating. The original use is noted as Farmyard Complex and historical use as a Heritage Centre / interpretative centre.

### **Description**

Farmyard complex, c.1880, including (north): Attached three-bay two-storey house on a rectangular plan. Pitched slate roof with ridge tiles, coping to gables with chimney stacks to apexes having red brick stringcourses below capping supporting yellow terracotta octagonal pots, and cast-iron rainwater goods on timber eaves boards with cast-iron downpipes. Part repointed

coursed rubble limestone walls with rough cut limestone flush quoins to corners. Square-headed central door opening with replacement red brick block-and-start surround framing timber boarded door. Square-headed flanking window openings with sills, and replacement red brick block-and-start surrounds framing two-over-two timber sash windows. Square-headed window openings (first floor) with red brick header bond sills, and replacement red brick block-and-start surrounds framing two-over-two timber sash windows. Set in grounds shared with Bessborough.

### **Appraisal**

A farmyard complex contributing positively to the setting of the Bessborough estate. The farmyard complex, variously labelled as "Besboro' Farm" or "Besborough Farm" on the historic Ordnance Survey (1901; 1950), included barns, a dairy and stables together with accommodation for farm labourers and the farm manager. The complex was repurposed as a heritage centre (1990) but is no longer in use (2011).

### **3. Hop Island House, Hop Island, HOP ISLAND, Rochestown, Cork**

Included in the NIAH under the Architectural, Artistic and Social Category of Special Interest, dated 1760-1780 and with a regional rating. The original, and in use, use is noted as House.

### **Description**

Detached five-bay two-storey Georgian house, built c.1770, having three-bay two-storey return to rear (west) and recent single-storey conservatory to front (east). Hipped slate roof with rendered eaves course to main block, having rendered chimneystacks and cast-iron rainwater goods. Pitched slate roof to return having rendered chimneystack and cast-iron rainwater goods. Rendered walls. Square-headed window openings having tooled limestone and rendered sills, having raised rendered surrounds and uPVC casement windows. Replacement one-over-one pane timber sliding sash to interior of conservatory. Elliptical-headed door opening within timber doorcase, having

engaged Ionic columns on rendered plinths surmounted by panelled frieze and dentilated cornice. Timber panelled door with brass door furniture, decorative fanlight and sidelights. Recently inserted square-headed door openings to side (north) elevation of return, with moulded timber surrounds, pointed archivolts and glazed timber doors.

### **Appraisal**

This impressive middle sized eighteenth century house occupies a picturesque location on Hop Island, overlooking Lough Mahon. Its wide, symmetrically proportioned façade is typical of its time. Though some historic fabric has been lost, it retains much of its early character and a particularly fine doorcase.

### **5. Rochestown Wood House, ROCHESTOWN, Rochestown, CORK**

Included in the NIAH under the Architectural and Social Category of Special Interest, dated 1860-1900 and with a regional rating. The original use is noted as gate lodge.

### **Description**

Detached circular-plan two-storey gate lodge, built c.1880, having single-bay single-storey projection to rear (east). Now ruinous. Rendered chimneystack, roof now missing. Roughcast rendered walls. Pointed arch window openings with rendered sills, having remains of two-over-two pane timber sliding sash windows. Square-headed door opening with raised render surround surmounted by lead-clad canopy.

### **Appraisal**

This unusual gate lodge with its interesting form provides an unusual introduction to Rochestown Wood House. Taking the form of a miniature tower, its relatively simple façade is greatly enhanced by its pointed arch window openings.

## **6. Rochestown Wood House, ROCHESTOWN, Rochestown, CORK**

Included in the NIAH under the Architectural, Artistic and Social Category of Special Interest, dated 1860-1900 and with a regional rating. The original use is noted as Country House.

### **Description**

Detached six-bay two-storey country house, built c.1880, having single-bay gable-fronted breakfronts and gable-fronted porch to front (north). Now derelict. Single-storey lean-to addition to side (east) elevation. Hipped slate roofs having rendered chimneystacks and cast-iron rainwater goods, pitched slate roofs to gabled break-fronts and porch with timber bargeboards. Rendered walls. Square-headed window openings with stone sills, having remains of timber casement and one-over-one pane timber sliding sash windows. Pointed door opening with timber surround to porch, having panelled pilasters, double-leaf glazed timber panelled doors with fanlight and glazed timber side panels. Limestone stepped approach flanked by rendered wall with square piers with limestone copings.

### **Appraisal**

Despite its derelict condition, this house retains much of its original form and character. Its facade is greatly enlivened by its repeated gable-fronts and asymmetrical fenestration. Sited on a steep hill overlooking Lough Mahon, this fine country house forms part of a group of imposing houses which were built between Rochestown and Passage West in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.