



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-318886-24.

Development

Proposed development of the
BusConnects Galway: Dublin Road
Scheme

Location

Galway City.

Planning Authority

Galway City Council.

Prospective Applicant

Galway City Council.

Type of Application

Section 51A of the Roads Act, as
Amended

Inspector

Philip Davis

Contents

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Roads Act – Legislative Provisions	3
3.0 Background to the Scheme	4
4.0 Proposed Development.....	4
4.1. Pre-application consultation	5
5.0 Conclusion	6

1.0 Introduction

Galway City Council requested Pre-Application Consultations under section 51A of the Roads Act 1993, for the development of the 'BusConnects – Cross City Link Scheme (Dublin Road section)'. The Council intends to submit applications for approval to the Board, pursuant to section 51a of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended) in relation to projects that fall under section 50(1)(a)(ii) and section 50(1)(a)(iii) of the Roads Act. Environmental Impact Assessment Reports are to be submitted in accordance with section 50(1)(c) of the Roads Act.

Related Compulsory Purchase Orders, pursuant to section 213 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), will also be submitted to the Board if required.

One pre-application consultation meeting took place between An Bord Pleanála and the prospective applicant, on 26th February 2024.

This report follows a request by the prospective applicant to close the Pre-Application Consultation between the prospective applicant and the Board. This report provides details of the legislative provisions, an overview of the proposed project, a summary of the meeting with the advice provided by the Board, and finally recommends a list of Prescribed Bodies who should be forwarded copies of the applications.

2.0 Roads Act – Legislative Provisions

The Roads Act of 2015 inserted Section 51A into the 1992 Roads Act. Section 51A provides for consultations with An Bord Pleanála before making an application under Section 51. The Act provides that the Board may give advice in relation to the procedures involved in making the application, and what may have a bearing on its decision in relation to the application in respect of the effects of a proposed road development on the environment, or an area, site or land, and proper planning and sustainable development.

Section 51A of the Roads Act consultations differs from other strategic infrastructure legislation. The Act does not require the Board to provide an opinion on whether the project is strategic infrastructure or not. Following the completion of any consultations between the Board and the applicant, the Roads Act states that the

applicant may apply to the Board for the approval in relation to a proposed road development.

3.0 Background to the Scheme

Galway City Council submits the Dublin Road Scheme as one part of the Galway BusConnects: Cross City Link Scheme. The Dublin Road scheme is an approximately 3.9 km multimodal corridor featuring enhanced bus lanes and cycle paths following the existing Dublin Road east from the Moneenageisha Junction to the Martin Junction on the N67. The Scheme starts close to the G Hotel in east central Galway City close to Lough Atalia, and extends out to the N67, passing Merlin Park University Hospital, the Bon Secours Hospital, Galwegians Rugby Club, and the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology.

The first BusConnects scheme has been submitted to the Board – ‘University Road to Dublin Road BusConnects’ (**ABP-314597-22**). ABP approved this road development on the 27th day of September 2024. Further BusConnects Projects may be lodged with ABP subject to the finalisation and adoption of the Galway Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy.

The objectives of the scheme are to address government policy to improve public transport, to align with the 7 principles set out in the Galway Transport Strategy 2016 and to promote public transport use and cycling.

4.0 Proposed Development

The route follows the existing Dublin Road for a distance of just under 4km. It will remodel the existing carriageway to incorporate a single lane for traffic, a dedicated bus lane, dedicated cycle paths, and improved pedestrian footpaths. It is intended to link up with the approved University Road to Dublin Road BusConnects scheme and other ongoing upgrades of cycle paths and footpaths within the city.

4.1. Pre-application consultation

A single consultation meeting was held – on the 26th February 2024. The Prospective Applicant provided an overview as follows:

- The background to the proposal - the project is one of a series of existing projects being developed as part of the Galway Transport Strategy. These include a range of projects to improve pedestrian, cycling, and public transport in the city to achieve national policy objectives for transport and reducing carbon emissions.
- Public consultations that have taken place over the previous three years (two stages, the first commencing October 2020, stage 2 commencing in January 2023. A further public consultation exercise would be held later in 2024.
- There are 31 landowners effected, with the potential for either permanent or temporary acquisition. Two minor structures may be acquired as part of the proposal. Negotiations are ongoing with the landowners, but CPO's may be required.
- EIA Screening Report prepared in April 2023 – this concluded that EIAR is required.
- An Appropriate Assessment Screening concluded that there could be significant effects on the Galway Bay SAC and Galway Bay SPA and a stage 2 Natura Impact Statement is being prepared in accordance with guidance and legislation.

The Boards representatives advised that:

- The applicants should be judicious in the assessment of which European sites are screened out regarding the NIS.
- Any interference with the curtilage or attendant grounds of a National Monument or protected structure on the route requires detailed consideration.
- Design considerations should have full regard in the NTA's most up to date Cycle Design Manual (August-September 2023).

5.0 Conclusion

Following the insertion of Section 51A into the Roads Act, a Road Authority or Authority as the case may be, can enter into consultations with the Board prior to submitting an application under Section 51(2) in relation to a proposed road development. The Board may give advice to the Authority regarding the procedures involved and what considerations relating to the effects of the proposed development on the environment, or the proper planning and sustainable development, may have on its decision in relation to the application.

During the meetings held, advice was provided as noted in the minutes on the file attached.

The prospective applicant now wishes to close the consultation stage and, following this stage, the applicant may apply to the Board for the approval of the BusConnects project.

A recommended list of Prescribed Bodies, who should be forwarded copies of the application documentation, is as follows:

Section 51(3)(b) lists the following bodies:

- (i) The Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland,
- (ii) Bord Fáilte Éireann,
- (iii) An Taisce – the National Trust for Ireland,
- (iv) Any other prescribed body or person.

It is considered that the following prescribed bodies should also be notified:

- (v) Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- (vi) National Transport Authority
- (vii) Galway County Council
- (viii) Northern and Western Regional Assembly
- (ix) Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

- (x) Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- (x) Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and Transport
- (xii) An Chomhairle Ealaíon



Philip Davis
Senior Planning Inspector

10th December 2024