



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP-320212-24.

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| Development | Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Replacement works with temporary site compound and storage area. |
| Location | Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge, Trim, Co. Meath |
| Local Authority | Meath County 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 | Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine Inland Fisheries Ireland Transport Infrastructure Ireland. |
| Observer(s) | None. |
| Date of Site Inspection | 1 st October 2024. |
| Inspector | Heidi Thorsdalen |

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. Meath County Council is seeking approval from An Bord Pleanála to construct a replacement Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge across the River Boyne. River Boyne is within the designated European sites, River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater Special Protection Area (SPA) (Site code: 004232). There are no other designated European sites (SPAs and SACs) in proximity to the proposed works. 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 a 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.

2.0 Site and Location

- 2.1. The subject site is located within the townlands of Manorland (1st division) and Blackfriary (2nd division) in Trim, County Meath. It is located east of Trim town centre, north of Trim Castle and south of Porch Fields. The proposed replacement bridge spans the Boyne River, connecting the existing pedestrian path network along the River Boyne adjacent to Trim Castle and the Porch Fields. The site is located c. 120m downstream of the Old Bridge, Bridge Street and c. 365m upstream of the Boyne Bridge (R154). As noted above, the location of the proposed bridge is within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA.
- 2.2. The proposed bridge is to be constructed at the same location as the previous Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge. The original bridge, a wooden structure from 2001,

was demolished in August 2022 following the observation of significant structural failure. A temporary bailey bridge by the Irish Army is currently in place immediately west of the original and proposed bridge location. The site elevations vary between approximately 60m and 50 m above sea level and it generally has a topography with gentle slopes.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposed bridge will be installed at the same location as that of the demolished Trim Pedestrian Millennium Bridge. It will utilise the existing foundations (subject to geotechnical and structural verifications). The proposed bridge span is 30m matching the previous bridge and the bridge deck will have a clear width of 3m, an increase from the 2.5m clear width of the original bridge. The steel bridge superstructure will be prefabricated off site.
- 3.2. The proposed bridge deck level is set above that of the adjacent riverbanks to address design flood levels of the River Boyne. Approach embankments of up to c. 1m above the existing ground level will be constructed on either side of the bridge. The approach ramps will be at a gradient of 1:20 and extend approximately 20m in length from the proposed bridge abutments to tie in with existing footpaths. The width of the approach ramps will be 3m. The overall footprint of the proposed bridge and approach ramps will be largely the same as the original bridge. In summary, the **proposed bridge** will comprise of:
- New reinforced concrete abutments.
 - Bridge bearings including anchors for bearings.
 - Prefabricated steel bridge.
 - New approach ramps.
 - New footpaths.
 - Timber post and rail fencing.
 - Bridge deck joints.
 - Bollards.

- 3.3. The **temporary works** include two construction compounds. The main compound incorporating staff welfare facilities will be located in the grassed area adjacent to the existing Trim Castle car park, c. 50m setback from the southern abutment of the bridge. A second temporary storage compound will be located on grassed area, c. 30m setback from the northeastern corner of the bridge. Both compounds are located outside the European Sites.
- 3.4. No new roads are proposed as part of the works. Access to the north abutment for construction will be obtained from the Porch Field via either Abbey Lane from the west or the R154 from the east. Access to the south abutment for construction will be via Castle Street from the west. No new roads are proposed as part of the temporary works. In summary, associated ancillary works encompass:
- Welfare facility consisting of container with portaloo.
 - Employee parking.
 - Contractor lock-up facility.
 - Bottled water for potable supply.
 - Water tanker to supply water used for other purposes.
 - Fuel storage with bunded area to accommodate 110% of fuel storage.
 - Diesel generator.
 - Storage areas.
 - Waste management areas.
- 3.5. On completion of the construction phase, all temporary compounds and facilities will be removed and the lands fully reinstated.
- 3.6. The **construction phase** is estimated to last 6 months (includes the fabrication of the steel bridge off site) and the estimated length of time for works on site is approximately 10-12 weeks. The schedule of works is detailed within the submitted Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and can be summarised as follows:
- Existing reinforced concrete bankseats (ca. 2m³ of concrete) will be moved back via excavator or broken into pieces by a concrete breaker (if the

bankseats are attached to the foundational structure). Distance from river c. 1.5m (depending on water-level).

- New reinforced concrete abutments including wingwalls will be cast in-situ atop the mass concrete foundation. Distance from river c. 1.2m (depending on water-level).
- Bridge bearings will be bolted onto the anchors cast into the newly constructed abutment bankseats.
- The temporary bailey bridge will be removed by the Irish Army through reverse launching of the deck. Abutment blockwork will be removed after the removal of the bridge deck.
- The prefabricated steel bridge superstructure will be transported to site by lorry and lifted onto the bearings using a crane positioned on the southern bank of the River Boyne.
- Removal of topsoil and existing surfacing from the area below the approach ramps to a depth of approximately 0.3m, distance from river c. 4m (depending on water-level). The plan area for the northern approach is c. 140m² and c. 400m² for the southern approach.
- Fill will be imported for the backfill at the abutments and to raise the approach embankments to the required bridge level, c. 1m above ground level).
- The approach paths to the bridge will receive a bound finish to tie in with the adjacent approach paths.
- The side slopes of the approach ramps will be top soiled re-using existing topsoil and seeded with re-using stored sods and grass to match the surrounding areas.
- Timber post and rail fencing will be provided at each abutment to prevent falls.
- A bridge deck joint will be installed at each abutment at the interface between the bridge deck and the approach ramps.
- Permanent pre-cast concrete bollards will be installed at each end of the bridge to prevent vehicular access. Distance from river c. 4m (depending on water-level).

- 3.7. Periodic maintenance of the bridge will be required during the **operational phase** including re-painting (20-25 year cycle), re-placing rubber joints (every 20 years) and re-placing of bearings and parapets (design life of 50 years). More frequent re-touching of paint work may also be required.
- 3.8. For **decommissioning**, the bridge structure is self-supporting can be removed by reversing the actions outlined in the construction phase. The abutments are likely to remain in place for a replacement bridge structure.

3.9. **Accompanying documents**

- 3.9.1. This application for approval is accompanied by the following documents:
- Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS)
 - EIA Screening Report
 - Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA)
 - Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA)
 - Cultural Heritage Assessment
 - Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) and LVIA Photomontages
 - Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
 - Maps and Drawings
 - Planning Statement
 - Cover letter and copy of letters to prescribed bodies and of statutory notices.

4.0 **Planning History**

- 4.1. There is no recently recorded planning history for this site. The following Part 8s are noted:
- P8/19010: Porch Field, Trim. Improved pedestrian entrance at R154 and Old Lackanash Road, picnic area and areas for planting to the east of R154 and upgrading of the footpath surface along the river between Trim Castle and car park and the R154. The latter overlaps with the site.

- P8/23009: Trim Market House Building (Protected Structure RPS Ref. 91253) and surrounds, Castle Street, Trim. Demolition of Dance Hall, erection of rear extension to Market House, and covered access walkway.

4.2. There are several planning cases in the wider vicinity of the subject site, however, I note these are located within the existing urban environment and I do not consider these to be relevant to the project.

5.0 Legislative and Policy Context

5.1. Legislative Provisions

5.1.1. The following provides an overview of the relevant legislative provisions:

5.1.2. **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).

5.1.3. **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. The Regulations in particular require in Reg 42(21) that where an appropriate assessment has already been carried out by a 'first' public authority for the same project (under a separate code of legislation) then a 'second' public authority considering that project for appropriate assessment under its own code of legislation is required to take account of the appropriate assessment of the first authority.

5.1.4. **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.

- 5.1.5. The proposed site is located within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (Site code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (Site code: 004232). There are no other designated European sites in proximity to the proposed works. Furthermore, there are no NHA or proposed NHA in proximity to the works.
- 5.1.6. **Planning and Development Acts 2000 (as amended):** Part XAB sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments which could have an effect on a European site or its conservation objectives.
- a) 177(AE) sets out the requirements for the appropriate assessment of developments carried out by or on behalf of local authorities.
 - b) 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.
 - c) 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.
 - d) 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.
 - e) 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.
 - f) 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:
 - a. The likely effects on the environment.
 - b. The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
 - c. The likely significant effects on a European site.

5.2. Policy and Guidelines of Relevance

5.2.1. The following policy and guidelines are considered relevant to the proposed development:

- a) **National Planning Framework (2018) (NPF):** Sets out a high-level strategic plan for shaping future growth and development to 2040. Key policy priorities for the Eastern and Midland Region and Dublin City and the Metropolitan area include promoting sustainable forms of travel and activity based recreation through the delivery cycle network set out in the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan inclusive of key commuter routes and urban greenways on the canal river and coast corridors as well as continuing to develop an integrated network of greenway, blueways and peatways.
- b) **National Development Plan 2018-2027 (NDP):** Underpins the NPF and contains several priorities which include investment in sustainable transport including cycling and walking network.
- c) **Climate Action Plan (2024) (CAP24):** A roadmap of actions to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050, as committed to in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. A reorientation of the transport system and significant behavioural shift towards active travel and sustainable transport will be required to meeting transport abatement targets.
- d) **Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030 (BAP):** Ireland's 4th BAP was published 25th January 2024 and builds upon the achievements of the previous plan. The NBAP includes five strategic objectives aimed at addressing new and emerging issues associated with biodiversity loss.
- e) **Water Action Plan 2024:** A River Basin Management Plan for Ireland: 3rd cycle plan sets out how Ireland will manage its water resources and catchments up to 2027. Includes targeted measures for all water bodies, with the objective of either protecting water bodies at good or high status or restoring water bodies to at least good status. Identifies the site as located within 07 Boyne Catchment.
- f) **The Planning System and Flood Risk Management (2009):** These Guidelines seek to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and avoid

new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere and they advocate a sequential approach to risk assessment and a justification test.

- g) **National Cycle Network Plan (2024)**: The national cycle network (NCN) corridor between Mullingar and Navan is routed via Trim, connecting with Fáilte Ireland's proposed greenways and integration with the Royal Canal Greenway along its route.
- h) **Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways (2018)**: Applicable to the development of strategic greenways with the potential to link into a larger cycling and walking network and recognises urban greenways. States that the TII Standard for off-road cycleways should be used for Greenways and the NTA's Cycle Manual should be used for links on urban roads.
- i) **Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan** (NTA, 2022): The site forms part of the utility section of the greenway identified along the River Boyne in Trim.
- j) **Cycle Design Manual** (NTA, 2023): Sections 4.1.5.2 Gradient and 4.2.7 Greenways and Shared Active Travel Facilities are relevant.
- k) DN-GEO-03047-**Rural Cycleway Design** (Offline and Greenway) (TII, 2022).
- l) DN-STR-03005-**Design Criteria for Footbridges** (TII, 2004).
- m) **Great Outdoor Access Guidelines**, Section 4 Trails, Greenways & Public Parks (Irish Wheelchair Association).

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031

5.2.2. The regional transport strategy is set out in Chapter 8 Connectivity and includes measures on improvements to walking and cycling provision in towns and villages. Walking and cycling objectives include:

- Delivery of the cycle network set out in the NTA's Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan inclusive of key commuter routes and urban greenways on the canal, river, and coastal corridors.
- Delivery of the National Cycle Plan within the Region inclusive of the Greenway and Blueway projects.

- Provide safe cycling routes in towns and villages across the Region.
- Enhance pedestrian facilities in all urban areas in the Region.
- Investment priorities for cycleways feasibility and route selection studies for cycleways shall identify and subsequently avoid high sensitivity feeding or nesting points for birds and other sensitive fauna.

Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027

- 5.2.3. This is the operative development plan for the area. The site is located within land use zoning category H1 High Amenity, and the land use objective is to protect and improve areas of high amenity. Permitted uses include Cycleways / Greenways / Trail Development, Land & Water Based Recreational Activities Open Space, Cultural Activities.
- 5.2.4. The Movement Strategy is set out in **Chapter 5**, and a key priority for the plan is “the development of a sustainable transport system, promoting measures to increase the use of public transport, while also increasing the modal share for walking and cycling in towns and villages across the County.” A transition towards more sustainable modes of transport is recognised as essential to reduce Ireland’s carbon emissions.
- 5.2.5. The proposed bridge forms part of an existing footpath and cycle path network along the River Boyne, and objectives relevant to the proposed bridge include:
- **MOV OBJ 29:** to implement at appropriate locations pedestrian permeability schemes and enhancements.
 - **MOV OBJ 3:** to ensure that design for cycle infrastructure for all relevant developments shall be carried out in accordance with the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan, other relevant design standards or any successors to these documents.
 - **MOV OBJ 23:** to continue the development of a network of Greenways in the County in accordance with the Department of Transport Strategy for Future Development of Greenways.
- 5.2.6. In conjunction with the above objectives, policy **ED POL 61** sets out a commitment to develop a co-ordinated approach to the selection, delivery, and servicing of future greenways, blueways, trails and routes throughout the County.

- 5.2.7. **Universal access**, policy SOC POL 13 seeks to ensure that all buildings, public and open spaces, recreational and amenity areas are accessible for people with disabilities. Objective SOC POL 14 seeks to improve where necessary access to existing public open spaces and their usefulness as recreational spaces. Objective DM OBJ 8 in Chapter 11 encourages the implementation of best practice standards.
- 5.2.8. **Trim development strategy** (Volume II) sets out opportunities around the existing urban centre combined with environmental quality and amenities centred around the Porch Fields and the potential to increase tourist footfall.
- Trim’s modal share targets for 2026 are 22% for walking (increasing from 14% in 2016) and 4% cycling (increasing from 1% in 2016).
 - Objective, TRM OBJ 12 prioritises the delivery of Boyne Greenway.
- 5.2.9. The Cultural Heritage and Natural Heritage Strategy is set out in Chapter 8. There are several **Sites and monuments Records** and **Protected Structures** in close vicinity to the site, most notably those associated with Trim Castle. The site is located within the **Trim Historical Core Architectural Conservation Area (ACA)** (Appendix A.07 of the Development Plan).
- Policies HER POL 1 and HER POL 2 protect archaeology heritage sites, monuments, places, areas, or objects, and HER OBJ 2 seeks to protect the setting of these. Policies HER POL 2 to 5 are applicable to development management process and unrecorded objects.
 - HER OBJ 3 seeks to protect archaeological landscape.
 - HER POL 16 seeks to protect the setting of protected structures.
 - HER POL 19 seeks to protect ACA and HER POL 20 requires developments within an ACA to appropriately sited and designed.
- 5.2.10. The site is located within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA. The following **biodiversity** policies and objectives are noted:
- HER POL 27 and HER POL 28 seek to protect, conserve, and enhance biodiversity and requirements for impact assessment is covered under HER POL 31.

- HER POL 32 and HER OBJ 33 and 34 are applicable to designated sites and HER OBJ 35 is applicable to plant, animal and bird species protected by law.
- HER POL 44 requires the presence of invasive species to be addressed.
- HER POL 48 seeks to manage, enhance and protect wetlands including rivers.

5.2.11. **Public rights of way** are preserved and protected under policy HER POL 51 and identified in Appendix 12 and Map 8.61- 8.6.24.

- Map ref. ARU 2 includes the entire Porch Field complex, river walk along the Boyne River and access to and egress from Porch Field is noted to be available at Frenches Lane at Trim Castle and Abbey Lane at the northwest corner of the Porch Field.

5.2.12. **Green Infrastructure strategy** Policy HER POL 55 includes resources such as quality green spaces for walking and cycling and other physical activity.

5.2.13. Located within River Corridors and Estuaries **Landscape** Character Type and Landscape Character Area (LCA) 5 Boyne Valley which is of exceptional landscape value and high sensitivity (Appendix A05 Landscape Character Assessment). Recommendations include for improved public access to the river and historic features in a sensitive manner. The quality, character and distinctiveness of landscapes are protected under policy HER POL 52 and objective HER OBJ 49, and requirement for visual impact assessment is set out under HER OBJ 50.

5.2.14. Chapter 6 Infrastructure Strategy includes the following relevant policies and objectives relating to **Surface Water, Water Quality and Flood Risk Management**:

- INF POL 14 implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and INF POL 32 implementation of the River Basin Management Plan(s) and protection and improvement of drinking water, surface water and ground waters. INF OBJ 29 to strive to achieve 'good status' in all water bodies.
- INF POL 15 to continue to improve water quality and INF OBJ 14 requiring the use of SUDS in local authority development and infrastructure projects.
- INF POL 18 to implement the "Planning System and Flood Risk Management – Guidelines for Planning Authorities" (2009), INF POL 19 to implement

findings and recommendations of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and INF POL 20 requires a Flood Risk Assessment where applicable.

- INF POL 28 consultation with the Office of Public where the construction, replacement or alteration of a bridge or culvert is proposed and to require that the developers obtain consent from the OPW under relevant regulations.
- INF POL 33 to protect recognised salmonid water courses (in conjunction with Inland Fisheries Ireland) including the Boyne and Blackwater catchments.

6.0 Consultations

6.1. Consultees Circulated

- 6.1.1. The application was circulated to the bodies listed below, and responses were received from the bodies highlighted.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An Chomhairle Ealaíon (Arts Council) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Environment, Climate and Communications |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Rural and Community Development |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department of Transport |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental Protection Agency |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fáilte Ireland |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geological Survey of Ireland |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health and Safety Authority |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Heritage Council |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inland Fisheries Ireland |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath County Council (Planning Department) • Minister for Justice • National Monuments Service • National Parks and Wildlife Service • National Transport Authority • Office of Public Works • An Taisce • Teagasc |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport Infrastructure Ireland |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterways Ireland |

6.2. Responses Received from Consultees

6.2.1. Key points raised by the **Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage** (Development Applications Unit [DAU]) (05/09/24) can be summarised as follows:

- Advised that the proposed bridge is situated in proximity to several nationally significant monuments including Trim Castle (ME036-048004-), lies within zone of potential for the historic town of Trim, and that the Boyne River has a very high potential for items and features of archaeological interest.
- Archaeological impact assessment (AIA) of impacts on terrestrial and underwater archaeological heritage and on the setting of significant archaeological monuments.
- Recommended archaeological conditions include appointment of a suitably qualified archaeologist; application for an extension/variation to Ministerial Consent No. C001141 and this is to be accompanied by an AIA; and, the location of archaeological and cultural heritage constraints, likely impacts and mitigation measures to be employed shall be identified within the CEMP.

6.2.2. Key points raised by the **Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine** (03/09/24) can be summarised as follows:

- i. Felling licence required for any felling or removal of trees, if this is required. The developer should take note of Felling and Reforestation Policy document and any EIAR and/or NIS relevant to the application should include an assessment of the impact on the environment arising from tree felling and replanting of trees.

6.2.3. **Inland Fisheries Ireland** advised no objection to the proposed development (25/07/25), and **Transport Infrastructure Ireland** (26/07/24) advised no observations.

6.3. **Public Submissions**

6.3.1. There are no public submissions on file.

6.4. **Response of Applicant to Submissions**

6.4.1. Response to DAU:

- AIA to be updated on completion of detailed design and services of a suitable qualified archaeologist will be engaged.
- CEMP to be updated prior to construction phase.

6.4.2. Response to Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine:

- Comments acknowledge and there is no intention to fell or remove trees.

7.0 **EIA Screening**

7.1. EIA pre-screening and an EIA screening determination are included in Appendix A and B of this Report. The EIA Screening Determination concludes that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and that an environmental impact assessment report is not required. This conclusion is based on regard being had to that having:

- a) the criteria set out in Schedule 7, in particular

(a) The limited scale and the design of the proposed pedestrian bridge, reusing the footprint and foundations of the original Trim Millenium Pedestrian Bridge and the approach footpaths within the public park.

(b) The footprint, design and the use of the proposed development in regards to significant environmental sensitivity located in the vicinity, and the absence of any relevant connectivity and/or potential for significant effects on same.

(c) The location of the development will not result in any significant effects on any sensitive location specified in article 109(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)

(d) The absence of any potential for significant cumulative effects.

- b) the results of other relevant surveys and assessments of the effects on the environment submitted by the applicant.
- c) the features and measures embedded in the design of the proposed development and those proposed by applicant envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant effects on the environment.

8.0 **Assessment**

8.1. The assessment will be undertaken in three parts as per the requirements of Section 177AE as follows:

- 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.

8.2. **The likely effects on the environment**

Population and Access

- 8.2.1. The proposed bridge will reinstate a permanent connection between the paths along the south and north side of the River Boyne in Trim and the westerly link between the Porch Fields and Trim Castle. It will provide a crossing on an existing shared pedestrian and cycle route and there is no interaction with the public road. The proposed approach ramps and bridge have a gradient of 5% (1:20) and a clear width of 3m between handrails. The internal height dimensions of the parapet are noted as 1.45m on both sides allowing for shared walking and cycling. A bollard is proposed on either approach with access gaps retained at c. 1.4m. I note these design specifications are consistent with the Cycle Design Manual for shared-use greenways in a rural location, the TII's design guidelines for rural cycleway and footbridges, and are generally consistent with the Irish Wheelchair Association's Guidelines for Trails, Greenway and Public Parks (Section 4).
- 8.2.2. With the construction of the bridge superstructure taking place offsite, the onsite construction phase will last around 10-12 weeks and the main noise generating activities will be during the preparatory works. Similarly, construction effects on local air quality will be limited to the running of plant, machinery and vehicles for the short duration of the onsite works. The applicant has outlined that no new roads are required for the construction phase and that the transport of materials to the site will result in temporary localised traffic increase.
- 8.2.3. Given the location and design of the proposed bridge, I satisfied that it will provide improved access and connectivity for both pedestrians and cyclists and consider that it has the potential to give rise to positive long-term effects on population. I am satisfied that any noise and air quality effects having regard to location, scale, duration of works and mitigation measures outlined within the CEMP will be temporary, slight and short-term.

Biodiversity

- 8.2.4. The applicant has submitted an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) (May 2024) and has been informed by desktop review and field surveys including aquatic survey including riverbank habitat survey, bird survey with dedicated Kingfisher survey and otter survey.
- 8.2.5. The site is within the boundary of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA. There are no additional European Sites in proximity to the site. Trim pNHA

(001357) is located approximately 3.5km downstream of the site and is contained within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. It is the only national designation located in proximity to the site and with a potential ecological or hydrological connection. Whilst there are other pNHAs further downstream of the site, I note these are also contained within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA which I have assessed in the Appropriate Assessment (**Section 8.4**).

- 8.2.6. The **habitats** identified and considered key ecological receptors were Depositing/Lowland River (FW2) and Riparian woodland (WN5). Amenity Grassland (GA2) was also identified, but not considered a key ecological receptor. No examples of Annex I habitats, including aquatic habitats associated with large lowland rivers including the Boyne, were recorded in the study area. No rare or protected flora was recorded during any of the surveys of the site and surrounding areas.
- 8.2.7. In terms of potential impact on key ecological receptors, the applicant states that no instream works is proposed, vegetation removal is limited to areas of grassland and possible low value vegetation along the river bank and that there will be no disruption to the riparian woodland habitat. In terms of the aquatic habitat, there is the potential for the construction works to cause siltation and pollution which would require to be mitigated to avoid negative effects downstream.
- 8.2.8. In addition to embedded design and best practice mitigation measures including no instream works, utilising existing footprint and foundations and a prefabricated single span bridge, a series of mitigation measures to minimise the potential for sedimentation and pollution release to the water environment are outlined within the CEMP and the NIS and I have summarised these in **Section 8.4 Appropriate Assessment, subsection 1e)** below.
- 8.2.9. **Invasive species** identified during surveys include sycamore and Elodea species. The applicant states that as there are no in-stream works proposed, there are no sources for impacts related to potential spread of this species which is present in the river.
- 8.2.10. Having regard to the information in the EclA and the footprint of the development, I am satisfied that there will be no removal of Annex I habitat and no significant vegetation removal. Taking account of mitigation and enhancement measures, I am

satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely impact on habitats in the area. Further analysis on the conservation objectives of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC is included in **Section 8.4** below and I have concluded that the proposed development would have no adverse effect on this European Site.

- 8.2.11. Suitability for **aquatic species** of high conservation value was noted. Salmon (*Salmo salar*) and lamprey (*Lampetra* sp.), both Annex II species and of special interest for River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, were detected via eDNA sampling. Good quality salmonid spawning and nursery habitat were noted in the vicinity of the proposed bridge and valuable holding areas for adult salmonids were noted downstream. Suitable spawning area for lamprey ammocoetes was also recorded, but nursery areas were more limited in extent. High suitability for the red-listed and critically endangered European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) was recorded downstream and for a range of coarse fish species. No white clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) was recorded by sweep netting or hand searching, but the presence of this species was detected via eDNA sampling and good physical suitability (abundant instream refugia) was recorded. Sampling also detected the invasive pathogen crayfish plague (*Aphanomyces astaci*).
- 8.2.12. Construction works could cause sedimentation and pollution which could impact on aquatic species and their spawning and nursery habitats. Mitigation measures to prevent or avoid the release of harmful sediment and pollution are outlined in the CEMP and the NIS and I have summarised these in **Section 8.4 Appropriate Assessment, subsection 1e** below. Having regard to the foregoing, I am satisfied that the proposed works will not adversely impact on aquatic species. Further analysis on the conservation objectives of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC is included in **Section 8.4** below and I have concluded that the proposed development would have no adverse effect on this European Site.
- 8.2.13. No **Kingfisher** or any other Annex I **bird species** were recorded during surveys. Several bird species were recorded near the site with Peregrin Falcon noted as frequent. Two red listed species grey wagtail and swift were noted and 12 amber listed species. Kingfisher is of special interest for River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA, and no suitable nesting habitat for kingfisher was found, although suitable perches and foraging habitat for kingfisher were identified. It was also noted that during surveys (last two visits July/August) that water levels were high, and the river

was moving too fast for foraging kingfisher. The applicant states that it is probable that previous records of kingfisher in this location refer to birds having moved out of their respective breeding territories. The EclA concludes that works during the breeding season, would not cause disturbance to kingfisher but could cause disturbance to other bird species and mitigation measures include restricting the timing of vegetation clearance to outside of the breeding bird season. Outside of breeding bird season, noise and human activity associated with works have the potential to cause temporary disturbance to foraging kingfisher and other bird species. The applicant states that this would not cause significant adverse effects.

- 8.2.14. Having regard to the information in the EclA, the scale and design of the proposed development, and mitigation measures, I am satisfied that the proposed development will not adversely impact on bird species. Further analysis on the conservation objectives of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA is included in **Section 8.4** below and I have concluded that the proposed development would have no adverse effect on kingfisher.
- 8.2.15. **Otter** is an Annex II species and of special interest for River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and are noted as historically present in the area. Surveys recorded two regular otter spraint sites on the east and west bank of the River Boyne between Old Bridge and Millennium Bridge. The surveys did not identify any otter holts or couches, and the modified banks were noted as unsuitable for breeding or resting areas. Good foraging and commuting habitat for otter were recorded, although a high level of human disturbance from Trim centre and footpaths was noted. The applicant states that otter is predominantly a crepuscular species, and works will take place during daylight hours and concluded that temporary noise disturbance to foraging otter will not cause significant adverse effects on this species. Further analysis on the conservation objectives of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC is included in **Section 8.4** below and I have concluded that the proposed development would have no adverse effect on otter species.
- 8.2.16. Potential **bats** foraging and commuting areas along the River Boyne and riparian woodland were noted. The applicant states that the impact on bats will be imperceptible taking account of limited vegetation clearance (low growing groundcover and very young shrubs) and construction during daylight hours. No evidence of other species recorded for the area was identified during surveys and

given scale, location and limited vegetation clearance, effects were considered unlikely and imperceptible to slight.

8.2.17. Overall, I am satisfied that the proposed development taking account of mitigation measures will not have an adverse effect on biodiversity and the following conditions are recommended:

- Appointment of an ecologist to oversee the site set up and construction phase.
- Standard measures to prevent accidental spreading of invasive species including pre-construction resurveying and checking of plant and machinery.
- Pre-construction otter survey.

Cultural Heritage

8.2.18. The proposed bridge spans the River Boyne within the centre of Trim, replacing a previous pedestrian bridge which was removed in 2022. The southern abutment of the proposed bridge is within lands associated with Trim Castle National Monument No.514 and the northern abutment lies within Blackfriary 2nd Division, which forms part of Trim Porch Field and Town Defences National Monument No. 679. The site is also located within the Trim Historical Core ACA.

8.2.19. The applicant has submitted a Cultural Heritage Assessment Report incorporating a review of the landscape and archaeological background and archaeological monitoring and results. Changes to the river bank at the location of the proposed bridge include post medieval period infill of the moat connection on the southern banks and more recent dumping of dredging materials in the 1970s, development of the public park and car park in the 1990s and increased approach levels (c. 1.2 - 1.5m) for the 2001 installation of the original bridge. No archaeological deposits or material were found during the Site Investigation (SI) test pit works (October 2023) carried out adjacent to the existing bridge abutments. The applicant states that there is a considerable archaeological potential on the southern bank associated with the moat and at a depth of approx. 2.5m-4m. More shallow excavations (approx. 1.5m–2.5m) on both sides of the river may uncover finds that have been removed from the riverbed through dredging. Mitigation measures during construction include archaeological monitoring by an archaeologist and all soils to be metal detected.

8.2.20. Given previous ground disturbance and taken account of mitigation measures, I do not consider that the limited footprint of the proposed development is likely to have an adverse direct effect archaeological heritage. Taking account of location, scale, design and the replacement of the bridge with a new one, I do not consider that the proposed bridge will have an adverse impact on the setting of adjacent archaeological and architectural heritage.

Landscape

8.2.21. The applicant has submitted a LVIA and Photomontages. The River Boyne provides public open space and an important landscape setting for Trim and Trim Castle. The exceptional landscape value and high sensitivity of LCA 5 Boyne Valley is noted. As noted, the proposed steel bridge spans the River Boyne within the centre of Trim, replacing a previous timber pedestrian bridge and the current temporary bailey bridge. I am satisfied that the magnitude of change to the landscape by replacing the bridge with a new bridge will be negligible. Furthermore, I consider the visual effects of the proposed will be positive when compared with the current temporary bailey bridge or neutral given there has been a bridge at this location since 2001. Given the above, I am satisfied that the proposed bridge would not detract from the landscape setting of Trim.

Land and Soil

8.2.22. As noted above, the location of the proposed bridge will be the same as the original bridge and the footprint of the approach ramps will closely align with existing. The applicant states that the plan area for removal of topsoil and existing surfacing material (to a depth of c. 0.3m) is approximately 140m² for the northern approach and approximately 400m² for the southern approach. The CEMP outlines that suitable materials and sods will be retained and reused as infill, topsoil or for replanting. Temporary works areas and any damage to the path network during construction will be restored or made good or better upon completion of the works. The temporary bailey bridge will also be removed. The proposed development will not change existing use of the land, and I am satisfied that the proposed development will not result in adverse effects on land and soil.

Water and Flooding

- 8.2.23. The site is located within the fluvial flood zone, Flood Zone A and B as per OPW flood maps¹ and Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Local transport infrastructure development, which would be applicable to the proposed bridge, is classed as less vulnerable development under the Planning System and Flood Risk Management (2009), Table 3.1. Less vulnerable development is classified as appropriate within Flood Zone B and required to meet the Justification Test within Flood Zone A. Table 5.1 of the SFRA identifies land zoning objective H1 as suitable for less vulnerable development and confirms the requirements for a Justification Test if located within Flood Zone A. The applicant has submitted a Site-Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA) which incorporates a Justification Test and hydrological and hydraulic analysis and modelling, and a comparison of water levels obtained from the existing and proposed scenarios has been carried out.
- 8.2.24. The SSFRA notes that the proposed bridge will be installed in the banks and flood plains of the River Boyne with a range between approximately 52 m OD and 53 m OD. The SSFRA indicates that there is susceptibility to flooding for 1 in 100 years and 1 in 1000 years fluvial events, particularly upstream and downstream of the proposed bridge. The applicant states that given the location of the bridge within the river channel and banks, measures to reduce flow restrictions that could potentially cause an increase in flood extents were incorporated into the design. These included the span and height of the bridge, and optimising the embankment to minimise the footprint and height the design. There will be no instream works with existing foundations used, and the existing channel cross section is retained. The proposed abutments are placed 1.2m from the river and the approach will be raised to c. 1 m above ground level to facilitate sufficient height. The bridge is designed to operate with a freeboard of at least 300mm and a 1 in 100 year fluvial flood flow plus 20% climate change which aligns with design standards set out in the Meath County SFRA.
- 8.2.25. I concur with the applicant's conclusions that the embedded design mitigation measures adequately address flood risk to the site and that the proposed

¹ [Flood Maps - Floodinfo.ie](https://www.floodinfo.ie)

development is not expected to negatively impact flood extent and levels in the vicinity. I am also satisfied that the mitigation measures within the CEMP addresses risks associated with the construction phase and a flood event. Whilst not a determining factor of this application, I note the applicant's reference to required consent by OPW under Section 50 of the Arterial Drainage Act 1945 and that a review of the design of the proposed bridge for the purposes of a Section 50 consent has been carried out.

- 8.2.26. The proposed development is situated within the Boyne catchment (ID: 07, Area: 2,678km²).² The site is located within sub catchments Boyne_SC_60 and Boyne_SC_80. The River Boyne (Boyne_090) within the sub catchments was recorded as achieving Moderate water quality status and At Risk of not achieving good status in Cycle 2 (2013-2018). Its projection under Cycle 3 (2016-2021) remains At Risk³. The EPA report on Cycle 3 (May 2024) recorded morphological, nutrients and organic pressures on this water body.⁴ The applicant has carried out surface water quality sampling upstream and downstream of the proposed bridge, and recorded moderate status and failed to meet the target good status. The applicant states that significant hydromorphological modifications and water quality pressures (including urban run-off, eutrophication & siltation) were noted during the surveys.
- 8.2.27. As noted above, no instream works or alterations to the river channel are proposed, and the proposed development will not lead to an increase in urban waste water runoff. Mitigation measures to prevent any negative impact on the water quality during construction are outlined in the CEMP and NIS and I have assessed these in **Section 8.4** below as reasonable to prevent any significant effects on water quality. I am therefore, satisfied the proposed development will not impede the objective of achieving good status of surface water body.

² [Data - Catchments.ie - Catchments.ie](https://data.catchments.ie)

³ [EPA Maps](#)

⁴ [07 Boyne Catchment Summary WFD Cycle 3.pdf](#)

8.3. The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area

- 8.3.1. Meath County Council is proposing a new pedestrian bridge at the location of the former Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge. The applicant states that the original bridge was removed in 2022 following the identification of a critical failure. A temporary bailey bridge has been installed, retaining the pedestrian link between Trim Castle and the Porch Fields and connectivity of the River Boyne path network in Trim. The temporary bridge will be removed following the instalment of the proposed bridge. The footprint of the proposed bridge is similar to the original bridge, existing foundations will be utilised, and the bridge is of a single structure design.
- 8.3.2. There are no specific policies in the CDP that relate to the proposed development. The site is however, located within land use zoning H1 High Amenity and I consider the proposed pedestrian bridge and its function to be consistent with permitted uses, specifically greenways and cycleways. A key priority of the CDP and the Trim development strategy is to increase modal share for walking and cycling. Objective MOV OBJ 29 refers to implementing at appropriate locations pedestrian permeability schemes and enhancements and objectives MOV OBJ 23 and TRM OBJ 12 seek to continue developing a network of greenways and to prioritise the Boyne Greenway. The path network along the River Boyne within Trim is identified as a greenway within the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan and forms part of the preferred option for the Mullingar to Navan NCN.
- 8.3.3. Having regard to the forgoing, I consider the principle of development acceptable and in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.4. The likely significant effects on a European site

- 8.4.1. 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

- 8.4.2. 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.
- 8.4.3. The proposed development is not directly connected to or necessary to the management of any European site and is therefore subject to the provisions of Article 6(3).

The Natura Impact Statement

- 8.4.4. The application was accompanied by an NIS which described the proposed development, the project site and the surrounding area. The NIS contained a Stage 1 Screening Assessment which concluded that a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment was required. The NIS outlined the methodology used for assessing potential impacts on the habitats and species within several 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, it suggested mitigation measures, assessed in-combination effects with other plans and projects and it identified any residual effects on the European sites and their conservation objectives.
- 8.4.5. The NIS was informed by:
- Desktop review.
 - kingfisher surveys and aquatic surveys including otter and in-stream and riparian habitat surveys to assess the potential presence of Annex I habitat types were carried out of the proposal site and along the banks of River Boyne in the vicinity of the site (survey reports included in Appendix 4 of the NIS).
 - Planning application search.

- 8.4.6. The report concluded that, subject to the implementation of best practice and the recommended mitigation measures, the proposed development is not foreseen to give rise to any significant adverse effects on designated European sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects.
- 8.4.7. Having reviewed the NIS and the supporting documentation, I am satisfied that it provides adequate information in respect of the baseline conditions, does clearly identify the potential impacts, and does use best scientific information and knowledge. Details of mitigation measures are provided, and they are summarised in Section 4.3 of the NIS. I am satisfied that the information is sufficient to allow for appropriate assessment of the proposed development (see further analysis below).

Appropriate Assessment

- 8.4.8. I consider that the proposed development of the Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge replacement works is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European site.
- 8.4.9. 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.
- 8.4.10. European sites considered for Stage 1 screening, their qualifying interests and distance to the proposed site are listed in the table below.

| European site (SAC/SPA) | Qualifying Interests | Distance |
|--|--|----------|
| River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC <a href="https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002299<sup>5</sup>">https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/002299⁵ | Alkaline fens [7230] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] | 0km |

⁵ Visited 20th January 2025

| European site (SAC/SPA) | Qualifying Interests | Distance |
|---|--|--|
| | Salmo salar (Salmon) [1106] Lutra lutra (Otter) [1355] | |
| River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004232 ⁶ | Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis) [A229] | 0km |
| Boyne Estuary SPA https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/spa/004080 ⁷ | Shelduck (Tadorna tadorna) [A048] Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) [A130] Golden Plover (Pluvialis apricaria) [A140] Grey Plover (Pluvialis squatarola) [A141] Lapwing (Vanellus vanellus) [A142] Knot (Calidris canutus) [A143] Sanderling (Calidris alba) [A144] Black-tailed Godwit (Limosa limosa) [A156] Redshank (Tringa totanus) [A162] Turnstone (Arenaria interpres) [A169] Little Tern (Sterna albifrons) [A195] Wetland and Waterbirds [A999] | c. 36km (direct) and c. 54km downstream on the River Boyne |
| Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001957 ⁸ | Estuaries [1130] Mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide [1140] Annual vegetation of drift lines [1210] Salicornia and other annuals colonising mud and sand [1310] | c. 36km (direct) and c. 54km downstream on the River Boyne |

⁶ Visited 20th January 2025

⁷ Visited 20th January 2025

⁸ Visited 20th January 2025

| European site (SAC/SPA) | Qualifying Interests | Distance |
|-------------------------|--|----------|
| | Atlantic salt meadows (Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritimae) [1330] Embryonic shifting dunes [2110] Shifting dunes along the shoreline with Ammophila arenaria (white dunes) [2120] Fixed coastal dunes with herbaceous vegetation (grey dunes) [2130] | |

8.4.11. Based on my examination of the NIS report and supporting information, 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 River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (002299) and SPA (004232) of the four European sites referred to above.

8.4.12. The two remaining sites can be screened out from further assessment because the separation distances and the very remote hydrological links which are unlikely to be a viable pathway as even with the most extreme scenarios and without mitigation, it is considered dilution, dispersal and settlement would occur before the surface water reach 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 Sites, Boyne Estuary SPA (004080) and the Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (001957), in view of the sites' conservation objectives and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required for these sites.

Relevant European sites

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

| Site Name | Qualifying Interests | Distance |
|--|---|----------|
| 1. River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC | Alkaline fens [7230] Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae) [91E0] Lampetra fluviatilis (River Lamprey) [1099] <i>Salmo salar</i> (Salmon) [1106] <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter) [1355] | 0km |
| 2. River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA | Kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>) [A229] | 0km |

1. River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code: 002299)

Description of site: This River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC comprises the freshwater element of the River Boyne as far as the Boyne Aqueduct, the Blackwater as far as Lough Ramor and the Boyne tributaries including the Deel, Stoneyford and Tremblestown Rivers. These riverine stretches drain a considerable area of Meath and Westmeath, and smaller areas of Cavan and Louth. Most of the site is underlain by Carboniferous limestone but Carboniferous shales and sandstones occurs close to Trim. There are many large towns adjacent to but not within the site, including Trim, Slane, Navan, Kells, Athboy and Ballivor.

a) Conservation Objectives:

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alkaline fens.
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Alluvial forests with *Alnus glutinosa* and *Fraxinus excelsior* (Alno-Padion, Alnion incanae, Salicion albae).
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*).

- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*).
- To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Otter (*Lutra lutra*).

b) Potential direct effects:

- The applicant records that there are no Annex I habitats present in the vicinity of the proposed site. There will be no direct reduction of Annex I habitat or habitat fragmentation.
- No instream works are proposed and there will be no impact on any connectivity along the river. There will be no direct impact on Salmon [1106] or River Lamprey [1099].
- No holts have been identified within 150m upstream and downstream of the site and there will be no instream works or obstruction of commuting routes for otter [1355]. Noise during works could cause temporary disturbance on foraging otter.

c) Potential indirect effects:

- Potential for the Annex I habitats, Alkaline fens [7230] and Alluvial forests [91E0], to occur within the downstream zone of influence of the proposed development. Potential effects on water quality from siltation and water pollution (dust, concrete or hydrocarbons) could have an indirect negative effect on these Annex I habitats.
- Excessive sedimentation and discharges during construction activities could impact on water quality and spawning and nursery habitat in relation to River Lamprey [1099].
- Excessive sedimentation and discharges during construction activities could impact on water quality and holding areas, spawning and nursery habitat in relation to Salmon [1106].
- Excessive sedimentation and discharges during construction activities could impact on water quality and fish spawning habitat, and thereby reducing the fish biomass in otter [1355] foraging territories.

d) Potential in-combination effects:

The applicant's "in-combination" effects assessment in Section 3.2 of the NIS did not identify any plans or projects that could act in combination with the proposed development to cause significant effects on the SAC and/or the SPA. A number of medium and small-scale planning applications within the past 5 years (January 2024) were identified, however the risk of significant in-combination effects between the proposed development and these were ruled out due to their scale, location and nature. With the addition of the two Part 8s identified in **Section 4.0** above, I am satisfied that the information detailed in the applicant's assessment remains relevant to my assessment.

I consider that with the implementation of specific environmental protection and control measures as outlined below to avoid/negate any potential adverse impacts, there will be no cumulative impacts arising in combination with any other plans or projects which would be of significance in respect to impacts affecting the conservation objectives of integrity of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC.

e) Mitigation measures:

Section 4.3 of the applicant's NIS outlines the various mitigation measures proposed as part of the proposed development to mitigate against the identified potential impacts.

Mitigation measures incorporated into the design are summarised as follows:

- The proposed bridge utilises the footprint of the original bridge including foundations and existing footpaths and ramps.
- No in-stream works will take place.
- The proposed bridge will be prefabricated offsite and will be lifted into place in one piece by a crane. The reverse is applicable for decommissioning.
- No new roads will be established to build the proposed bridge development.

Further mitigation measures prescribed to reduce and/or avoid generation of suspended solids, dust and any other contaminant mobilisation and to minimise the

risk of silted runoff, pollution and hydrocarbons entering the River Boyne are summarised as follows:

- Toolbox talk on implementation and maintenance of mitigation measures.
- Daily review of weather forecasts and restrictions on earthworks and concrete works during or immediately after periods of heavy rainfall (>10mm/hour).
- Careful excavation of earthen (sod) banks within grassy areas and surface sods retained for use during reinstatement.
- Temporary spoil heaps will be setback more than 20m from the watercourse, preferably placed in well vegetated areas, surrounded by silt fences, not exceed 2m in height and cover during heavy rainfall. Surplus material to be transported off site to an authorised soil recovery facility.
- Construction waste to be reused as fill or landscaping where suitable and safe to do so. Any disposal will be to authorised sites.
- Stockpiles will be stored in bunded safe areas, setback more than 20m from a watercourse and not to exceed 2m in height. Surplus material to be transported off site and disposed of to an authorised site.
- Installation of temporary twin layer of silt fencing along the river bank and around soil stockpiles. Additional silt fencing to be kept on site.
- Concrete management will take place to best practice measures to ensure no concrete emissions will enter the River Boyne.
- Hazardous materials will be stored in bunded storage tanks with surplus volume and not within 20m of any watercourse.
- Appropriate spill control equipment to be kept in the construction area and in each item of plant.
- Planting of the disturbed slopes of the new approaches will include the reuse of existing sods and a diverse native grassland and wildflower seed mix.
- Shrubby vegetation selected from willow species and hawthorn will be planted adjacent to abutments.

f) Residual effects/Further analysis:

No residual effects on any of the Annex I habitats and Annex II species were identified.

g) NIS Omissions:

None noted.

h) Suggested related conditions:

The following conditions are recommended:

- Appointment of an ecologist to oversee the site set up and construction phase.
- Standard measures to prevent accidental spreading of invasive species including pre-construction resurveying and checking of plant and machinery.
- Pre-construction otter survey.

i) Conclusion:

I am satisfied that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC in light of its conservation objectives (subject to the implementation of mitigation measures outlined above).

2. River Boyne and Blackwater SPA (site code: 004232)

Description of site: The River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA is a long, linear site that comprises stretches of the River Boyne and several of its tributaries. The SPA includes the river channel and marginal vegetation of the following river sections: the River Boyne (M1 motorway bridge, west of Drogheda, to the junction with the Royal Canal, west of Longwood, Co Meath); the River Blackwater (junction with the River Boyne in Navan to the junction with Lough Ramor in Co. Cavan); the Tremblestown River/Athboy River (junction with the River Boyne at Kilnagross Bridge west of Trim to the bridge in Athboy, Co. Meath); the Stoneyford River (junction with the River Boyne to Stonestown Bridge in Co. Westmeath); and the River Deel (junction with the River Boyne to Cummer Bridge, Co. Westmeath). Most of the site is underlain by

Carboniferous limestone but Carboniferous shales and sandstones occurs close to Trim.

a) Conservation Objectives:

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of kingfisher.

b) Potential direct effects:

- No suitable kingfisher [A229] nesting habitat was identified, but suitable perches and foraging habitat noted. Noise during works could cause temporary disturbance on foraging kingfisher.

c) Potential indirect effects:

- Excessive sedimentation and discharges during construction activities could impact on water quality and fish spawning habitat, and thereby reducing the fish biomass in kingfisher [A229] foraging territories. This could cause a reduction in species population in the area.

d) Potential in-combination effects:

The cumulative information contained in **Section 1d)** above is applicable. Considering this, I am satisfied that with the implementation of specific environmental protection and control measures summarised in **Section 1e)** above, there will be no cumulative impacts arising in combination with any other plans or projects which would be of significance in respect to impacts affecting the conservation objectives of integrity of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA.

e) Mitigation measures:

Section 4.3 of the applicant's NIS outlines the various mitigation measures proposed as part of the proposed development and these have been summarised in **Section 1e)** above.

f) Residual effects/Further analysis:

No residual effects on kingfisher were identified.

g) NIS Omissions:

None noted.

h) Suggested related conditions:

The following conditions are recommended:

- Appointment of an ecologist to oversee the site set up and construction phase.
- Standard measures to prevent accidental spreading of invasive species including pre-construction resurveying and checking of plant and machinery.

i) Conclusion:

I am satisfied that the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA in light of its conservation objectives (subject to the implementation of mitigation measures outlined above).

Appropriate Assessment Conclusions

- 8.4.14. Having regard to the proposed Trim Millenium Pedestrian Bridge replacement works, 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, River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code: 002299) and SPA (site code: 004232), or any other European site, in view of sites' Conservation Objectives. This conclusion is based on a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed development and there is no reasonable doubt as to the absence of adverse effects.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1. 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.

9.2. **Reasons and Considerations**

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

- the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC);
- the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended;
- 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;
- the conservation objectives, qualifying interests and special conservation interests for the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code: 004232);
- the policies and objectives of the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027;
- the nature and extent of the proposed works as set out in the application for approval;
- the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Natura Impact Statement;
- the submissions received in relation to the proposed development; and
- the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Board to make a report and recommendation on the matter.

9.3. **Appropriate Assessment**

9.3.1. The Board agreed with and adopted the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code:

004232), are the only European Sites in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

9.3.2. The Board considered the Natura Impact Statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions 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 River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code: 002299) and the River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (site code: 004232), in view of the sites' conservation objectives. The Board considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment.

9.3.3. In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board considered, in particular:

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

9.3.4. 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.

9.3.5. 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.

9.4. Proper Planning and Sustainable Development/Likely effects on the environment

9.4.1. 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, would not interfere with the existing land uses in the area and would not interfere with traffic and pedestrian safety. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

10.0 Conditions

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| 1. | <p>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.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of clarity and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the environment.</p> |
| 2. | <p>The mitigation and monitoring measures identified in the Natura Impact Statement submitted with the application shall be implemented in full. 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.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment, the protection of European Sites and in the interest of public health.</p> |
| 3. | <p>The mitigation and monitoring measures outlined in the plans and particulars relating to the proposed development, including those set out in Ecological Impact Assessment, Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment, Landscape and Visual Assessment, Cultural Heritage Assessment and Construction and Environmental Management Plan shall be</p> |

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| | <p>implemented in full. 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.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment, the protection of European Sites and in the interest of public health.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Prior to the commencement of development, the local authority, or any agent acting on its behalf, shall prepare in consultation with the project ecologist, project archaeologist and relevant statutory agencies, a detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP shall include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All mitigation and monitoring measures to be implemented under Conditions 2 and 3, and any additional mitigation measures as may be required in order to comply with conditions outlined herein. b) Location and extent of silt fencing to be installed on site. c) Demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. d) Specific proposals as to how the measures outlined in the CEMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness. <p>Reason: In the interest of protecting the environment, European Sites and public health.</p> |
| 5. | <p>The following nature conservation requirements shall be complied with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Prior to the commencement of development, details of measures to protect fisheries and water quality of the river system shall be outlined and placed on file. Full regard shall be had to Inland Fisheries Ireland's published guidelines for construction works near waterways (Guidelines on Protection of Fisheries during Construction Works in and Adjacent to Waters, 2016). A programme of water quality monitoring shall be prepared in consultation with the contractor, the local authority and relevant statutory agencies and the programme shall be implemented thereafter. |

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| | <p>b) No vegetation removal shall take place during the period of the 1st day of March to the 31st day of August (inclusive) without the written approval of the Ecological Clerk of Works. Such approval shall be placed on the public file.</p> <p>c) A pre-construction otter survey by a suitability qualified ecologist shall be carried out before works commence.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of biodiversity and nature conservation.</p> |
| 6. | <p>A suitably qualified ecologist shall be retained by the local authority to oversee the site set up and construction of the proposed development and implementation of mitigation measures relating to biodiversity. The ecologist shall be present during site set up and 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.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of nature conservation and the protection of biodiversity.</p> |
| 7. | <p>The local authority 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.</p> <p>Reason: In the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and to ensure the protection of the European sites.</p> |
| 8. | <p>A suitably qualified archaeologist shall be appointed by the local authority to oversee the site set up and construction of the development and implementation of mitigation measures relating to archaeology. The archaeologist shall be present on site during site set up and construction works. The location of archaeological and cultural heritage features in proximity to work areas and buffer zones shall be identified. The local authority and any agent acting on its behalf shall facilitate the</p> |

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| | <p>preservation, recording, protection or removal of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site.</p> <p>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.</p> |
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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.

Heidi Thorsdalen

Senior Planning Inspector

29th January 2025

Appendix A: EIA Pre-Screening Form

| | | | |
|--|---|--|----------------|
| An Bord Pleanála Case Reference | ABP-320212-24 | | |
| Proposed Development Summary | Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Replacement Works with temporary compound and storage area | | |
| Development Address | Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge, Trim, Co. Meath | | |
| 1. Does the proposed development come within the definition of a ‘project’ for the purposes of EIA? (that is involving construction works, demolition, or interventions in the natural surroundings) | Yes | ✓ | |
| | No | | |
| 2. Is the proposed development of a CLASS specified in Part 1 or Part 2, Schedule 5, Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)? | | | |
| Yes | ✓ | DIRECTIVE 2011/92/EU, Annex II, 10. Infrastructure Projects <i>“(e) Construction of roads, harbours and port installations, including fishing harbours (projects not included in Annex I);”</i> Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Schedule 5, Part 1 and 2 – no relevant class identified. Roads Act 1993, Section 50(1) <i>“(d) In particular, where a proposed development (other than development to which paragraph (a) applies) consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road would be located on -</i> | Proceed to Q3. |

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| | | <p><i>(i) a European Site within the meaning of Regulation 2 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011), ...the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, proposing the development shall decide whether or not the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.”</i></p> <p>Roads Regulations, 1994, Article 8</p> <p><i>“8. The prescribed types of proposed road development for the purpose of subsection (1)(a)(iii) of section 50 of the Act shall be—</i></p> <p><i>(b) the construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length.”</i></p> | |
| No | | | |
| 3. Does the proposed development equal or exceed any relevant THRESHOLD set out in the relevant Class? | | | |
| Yes | | | |
| No | ✓ | <p>The proposed development does not a type of project for which EIA is mandatory, as per</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIRECTIVE 2011/92/EU, Annex I • Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), Schedule 5, Part 1 • Roads Act 1993, Section 50(1)(a) • Roads Regulations, 1994, Article 8 <p>The proposed development does not meet or exceed any relevant thresholds.</p> | Proceed to Q4 |

| 4. Is the proposed development below the relevant threshold for the Class of development [sub-threshold development]? | | | |
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| Yes | ✓ | <p>DIRECTIVE 2011/92/EU, Article 4, 2. (a) case-by-case examination, is applicable.</p> <p>The proposed development is located within River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC and SPA, and Roads Act 1993, Section 50(1)(i) and (e).</p> | |

| 5. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted? | | |
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| No | | |
| Yes | ✓ | Form 3 – EIA Screening Determination enclosed. |

Inspector: _____

Date: 29th January 2025

Appendix B: EIA Screening Determination Form

| A. CASE DETAILS | | |
|--|---|---|
| An Bord Pleanála Case Reference | ABP-320212-24 | |
| Development Summary | Trim Millennium Pedestrian Bridge Replacement Works with temporary compound and storage area | |
| | Yes / No / N/A | Comment (if relevant) |
| 1. Was a Screening Determination carried out by the PA? | N/A | |
| 2. Has Schedule 7A information been submitted? | Yes | Presented in an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report (June 2024) which considers the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU, as amended by 2014/52/EU). |
| 3. Has an AA screening report or NIS been submitted? | Yes | Screening Report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) (May 2024) |
| 4. Is a IED/ IPC or Waste Licence (or review of licence) required from the EPA? If YES has the EPA commented on the need for an EIAR? | No | |
| 5. Have any other relevant assessments of the effects on the environment which have a significant bearing on the project been carried out pursuant to other relevant Directives – for example SEA | No | Other assessments carried out include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) which considers the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and, Birds Directive (2009/147/EC). • Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA) relevant to the EU Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) and Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which consider the content of the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/ED as amended by 2018/851) | |
| B. EXAMINATION | Yes/ No/ Uncertain | <p>Briefly describe the nature and extent and Mitigation Measures (where relevant)</p> <p>(having regard to the probability, magnitude (including population size affected), complexity, duration, frequency, intensity, and reversibility of impact)</p> <p>Mitigation measures –Where relevant specify features or measures proposed by the applicant to avoid or prevent a significant effect.</p> | <p>Is this likely to result in significant effects on the environment?</p> <p>Yes/ No/ Uncertain</p> |
| This screening examination should be read with, and in light of, the rest of the Inspector’s Report attached herewith | | | |
| 1. Characteristics of proposed development (including demolition, construction, operation, or decommissioning) | | | |
| 1.1 Is the project significantly different in character or scale to the existing surrounding or environment? | No | The location is within the centre of Trim within the park surrounding River Boyne and Trim Castle. Location and span of the proposed crossing match the original bridge, and the design facilitates shared pedestrian and cyclist use. A bridge has been in situ at this location since 2001 providing pedestrian connectivity within the park. There are a number of existing bridges in the vicinity, and the temporary bailey bridge which will be removed. The character and scale are considered to align with existing surroundings and environment. | No |
| 1.2 Will construction, operation, decommissioning or demolition works | Yes | Demolition of the original bridge has already taken place. The temporary Bailey bridge located immediately west will be lifted out and temporary abutment blockwork removed. | No |

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| <p>cause physical changes to the locality (topography, land use, waterbodies)?</p> | | <p>The proposed bridge structure will be constructed off site and lifted into place by a crane. The existing foundations of the original bridge are to be used and new abutments constructed. No instream works or physical changes to the river channel are proposed. The approach ramps and embankment will be raised (c. 1m above ground level) to address flood risk and gradient, resulting in localised changes to topography. No further changes to existing path network and no change to land use are proposed. Maintenance during operation will not cause physical changes. Any decommissioning, if required, will reverse the construction works with abutments likely to be left in situ to accommodate a new bridge.</p> | |
| <p>1.3 Will construction or operation of the project use natural resources such as land, soil, water, materials/minerals or energy, especially resources which are non-renewable or in short supply?</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>It is noted that existing foundations to be used. Existing surface and abutment material where suitable, are to be retained and reused during construction. The bridge will be a prefabricated steel structure, constructed offsite. Concrete is needed for the abutments and infill materials for the approach. These are standard construction materials and not considered to be in short supply. There will be some water and energy use during construction, but the extent of this is considered limited given the scale of the project. Construction programme is 6 months allowing for offsite bridge construction and 10-12 weeks onsite works.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>1.4 Will the project involve the use, storage, transport, handling or production of substance which would be harmful to human health or the environment?</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Operations of construction machinery and plant will require oil, fuels, lubricants and hydraulic fluids. Oils/hydrocarbons will be stored in a designated in watertight containers with 110% storage capacity and within secure bunded area. Machinery and plant will also be stored in impermeable areas. Storage, handling and protection measures are outlined within the CEMP which includes Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and Emergency Response Plan (ERP).</p> | <p>No</p> |

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| <p>1.5 Will the project produce solid waste, release pollutants or any hazardous / toxic / noxious substances?</p> | <p>No</p> | <p>Surplus materials generated onsite and not suitable for reuse during site preparation works will be transported to a recovery facility or to a licenced waste facility depending on the type of waste as per measures outlined within the CEMP. Given the scale and design, volumes of waste generated are likely to be low. As noted above, best practice protection and emergency response measures are outlined within the CEMP.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>1.6 Will the project lead to risks of contamination of land or water from releases of pollutants onto the ground or into surface waters, groundwater, coastal waters or the sea?</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>There is the potential for sediments and pollution runoff into surface water during the construction phase and mitigation measures to avoid or prevent such occurrence are outlined within the CEMP and the NIS.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>1.7 Will the project cause noise and vibration or release of light, heat, energy or electromagnetic radiation?</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>There will be some noise and vibration disturbance during the onsite construction works. As per measures outlined in the CEMP, works will be restricted to standard construction hours, predominately taking place during day light hours. Construction will be carried out in accordance with guidance set out in BS 5228:2009+A1:2014. The onsite work programme will be approximately 10-12 weeks. Decommissioning if required, will cause similar or less than disturbance to the construction phase. Operation of the crossing will be linked to existing use within the site.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>1.8 Will there be any risks to human health, for example due to water contamination or air pollution?</p> | <p>No</p> | <p>There is no risk to human health during operation of the pedestrian bridge. As noted above, best practice mitigation measures to avoid or prevent release of sediments and pollution to watercourse are set out in the CEMP and the NIS. Potential for emissions from the operation of machinery, plant and vehicles during construction, however the units used are likely to be small and the use would be intermittent. Mitigation measures are outlined within the EMP.</p> | <p>No</p> |

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| <p>1.9 Will there be any risk of major accidents that could affect human health or the environment?</p> | <p>No</p> | <p>The great risk of accidents is the potential release of sediments and pollutants into watercourse which has been considered above. There is also the potential for fire during construction, and mitigation measures and procedures reducing this risk are detailed within the CEMP.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>1.10 Will the project affect the social environment (population, employment)</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>The bridge replaces the original bridge and the current temporary bridge, any changes to the social environment are likely to be negligible but positive given the improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists with the 3m clear bridge width. On site construction works is approximately 3 months given the offsite construction of the bridge, and effects on employment are likely to be negligible.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>1.11 Is the project part of a wider large scale change that could result in cumulative effects on the environment?</p> | <p>No</p> | <p>The replacement bridge is noted to be a standalone project, and the requirement for the works has arisen due to the structural failure of the original bridge which was installed in 2001.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>2. Location of proposed development</p> | | | |
| <p>2.1 Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or have the potential to impact on any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European site (SAC/ SPA/ pSAC/ pSPA) - NHA/ pNHA - Designated Nature Reserve - Designated refuge for flora or fauna - Place, site or feature of ecological interest, the preservation/conservation/ protection of which is an objective | <p>Yes</p> | <p>The site is located within the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code: 002299) and SPA (site code: 004232). No other sites designated for their ecological interests are located in proximity to the site. As noted, no Annex I habitats were recorded within the site, no instream work is proposed and limited vegetation clearance is proposed. There is the potential for indirect effects on aquatic habitat and species from the release of sediments and pollution to the River Boyne during construction works. Mitigation measures are outlined in the CEMP and the NIS, and includes no vegetation clearance during breeding bird season, daytime working hours, and best practice measures to prevent or avoid the release of sediments and pollution to surface water.</p> | <p>No</p> |

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| <p>of a development plan/ LAP/ draft plan or variation of a plan</p> | | <p>I have carried out an appropriate assessment in Section 8.4 of the Inspector Report, and conclude that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans and projects would not adversely affect the integrity of the European sites, River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (site code: 002299) and SPA (site code: 004232), or any other European site, in view of sites' Conservation Objectives.</p> | |
| <p>2.2 Could any protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna which use areas on or around the site, for example: for breeding, nesting, foraging, resting, over-wintering, or migration, be affected by the project?</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>The applicant has carried out habitat, fish, bird and otter surveys, these are recorded within the submitted EclA. No Annex I habitat or rare flora have been identified. Suitable foraging areas for Kingfisher, otter and bats were identified. Suitable spawning and nurse habitats for Salmon, River Lamprey and other fish were identified. As previously noted, no instream work is proposed, and vegetation will be limited and no clearance will take place during breeding bird season. Best practice mitigation measures as per CEMP and NIS will prevent or avoid the release of sediments and pollution to River Boyne. The onsite construction phase will last for 10-12 weeks. Having regard to mitigation measures, potential effects on protected, important or sensitive species of flora or fauna would be temporary, direct and indirect, not significant and short-term.</p> | <p>No</p> |
| <p>2.3 Are there any other features of landscape, historic, archaeological, or cultural importance that could be affected?</p> | <p>Yes</p> | <p>Located within the Trim Historical Core ACA with several Sites and monuments Records and Protected Structures in close vicinity including Trim Castle National Monument No.514 and Trim Porch Field and Town Defences National Monument No. 679. Located within LCT River Corridors and Estuaries and LCA 5 Boyne Valley, of exceptional landscape value and high sensitivity. The applicant has submitted a Cultural Heritage Assessment and LVIA. Proposed is noted to be located on raised made ground from historic works. Given ground conditions, location, character, scale and use, and archaeological monitoring and recording during construction, potential effects on archaeological, heritage</p> | <p>No</p> |

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| | | and landscape features would be direct and temporary during construction, and indirect and long-term during operation and not significant. | |
| 2.4 Are there any areas on/around the location which contain important, high quality or scarce resources which could be affected by the project, for example: forestry, agriculture, water/coastal, fisheries, minerals? | No | No additional important, high quality or scarce resources with the potential to be affect by the development has been identified. Impact on the aquatic environment has been considered above. | No |
| 2.5 Are there any water resources including surface waters, for example: rivers, lakes/ponds, coastal or groundwaters which could be affected by the project, particularly in terms of their volume and flood risk? | Yes | The site is located within the fluvial floodplain, Flood Zone A and B. The applicant has submitted a SSFRA. No instream works are proposed and there will be no changes to the existing river channel. A single span bridge is proposed, and flood design levels have been incorporated into the design, placing the bridge and approach ramp above the riverbank. With design mitigation, the proposed bridge is not likely to affect flood risk and the volume in the river will not be affect. Having regard to mitigation measures in the CEMP to prevent or avoid sediment and pollution release to the River Boyne during construction, potential effects on water quality would be temporary, not significant and short-term. | No |
| 2.6 Is the location susceptible to subsidence, landslides or erosion? | No | The proposed bridge will use existing foundations from the original bridge. It is noted that ground investigation has been carried out. The riverbank is noted as raised in this location with dredging material and previous bridge works. No risk of subsidence, landslide or erosion have been identified. | No |
| 2.7 Are there any key transport routes(eg National primary Roads) on or around the location which are susceptible to congestion or which cause environmental problems, which could be affected by the project? | No | Construction access will be via Castle Street and Trim Castle Car Park. On site construction works will be approximately 10-12 weeks and traffic generated is not likely significantly affect existing traffic conditions on local road. The CEMP include a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) | No |

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| | | outlining best practice mitigation measures which would be applicable to the construction phase. | |
| 2.8 Are there existing sensitive land uses or community facilities (such as hospitals, schools etc) which could be affected by the project? | No | The site is located within the park area around Trim Castle and Porch Fields. No other sensitive uses which could potential be affect have been identified. | No |
| 3. Any other factors that should be considered which could lead to environmental impacts | | | |
| 3.1 Cumulative Effects: Could this project together with existing and/or approved development result in cumulative effects during the construction/ operation phase? | No | There are several planning cases in the wider vicinity of the site, these are located within the existing urban environment and predominately smaller developments. Given the scale, location and the short onsite construction phase of the proposed bridge, no potential for significant cumulative effects have been identified. The removal of the temporary bridge is noted to form part of the proposed development. | No |
| 3.2 Transboundary Effects: Is the project likely to lead to transboundary effects? | No | No potential for transboundary effects identified. | No |
| 3.3 Are there any other relevant considerations? | No | No other relevant considerations with potential for significant effects identified. | No |
| C. CONCLUSION | | | |
| No real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | EIAR Not Required | |
| Real likelihood of significant effects on the environment. | <input type="checkbox"/> | EIAR Required | |
| D. MAIN REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS | | | |
| | | | |

Having regard to: -

1. the criteria set out in Schedule 7, in particular
 - (a) The limited scale and the design of the proposed pedestrian bridge, reusing the footprint and foundations of the original Trim Millenium Pedestrian Bridge and the approach footpaths within the public park.
 - (b) The footprint, design and the use of the proposed development in regards to significant environmental sensitivity located in the vicinity, and the absence of any relevant connectivity and/or potential for significant effects on same.
 - (c) The location of the development will not result in any significant effects on any sensitive location specified in article 109(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)
 - (d) The absence of any potential for significant cumulative effects.
2. the results of other relevant surveys and assessments of the effects on the environment submitted by the applicant.
3. the features and measures embedded in the design of the proposed development and those proposed by applicant envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant effects on the environment.

The Board concluded that the proposed development would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and that an environmental impact assessment report is not required.

Inspector _____

Date **_29th January 2025**_____

Approved (DP/ADP) _____

Date _____