



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ABP-322151-25

Development

Pre-Application for the provisions of
mental health services - St
Edmundsbury Hospital

Location

St Edmundsbury Hospital, Lucan, Co.
Dublin

Prospective Applicant

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services

Type of Application

Pre-Application consultation under
182E

Planning Authority

South Dublin County Council

Date of Site Inspection

29th May 2025

Inspector

Rachel Gleave O'Connor

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The applicant, St. Patrick's Mental Health Services, intends to develop a new Mental Health Facility and associated development at the site of St. Edmundsbury Hospital Lucan.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The subject site is located to the north of the R835 Lucan Road and covers an area of approximately 7.03ha. The existing St. Edmundsbury Hospital is located to the northwest corner of the site and is adjacent to woodland area. The southern portion of the site comprises overgrown and derelict former farmyard area with partly demolished historic walled garden which is associated with the original estate on the site. To the north and west, and partly overlapping the site, is the Liffey River and associated proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA) Liffey Valley. Adjacent to the site and to the east, is St. Andrews National School, a primary school with associated grounds. Immediately to the north of the site is arable farmland. South of the site and to the south of Lucan Road, the area is characterised by residential use, with residential streets laid out with dwellings and associated uses (church, school etc).
- 2.2. The original St. Edmundsbury House on the site is included on the NIAH and is categorised of Regional importance, it is a Registered Protected Structure (RPS ref no. 003). Associated features for the original estate, including remains of the walled garden and outbuildings, are also included on the NIAH and similarly of Regional importance, as well as being Registered Protected Structures (RPS ref no's. 008 barn and coach house, 010 house and stable block, 012 walled garden, 013 wall and bell tower, and 028 gate lodge, pillars and gates).
- 2.3. There is a public walk on the eastern edge of the site, following the loop road access to the hospital, which also skirts the grounds adjacent to St. Andrews National School, before linking back to the Lucan Road.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1. It is proposed to construct a 200 bed adult in-patient, with c.14 no. adolescent beds, general psychiatric hospital set in and around the existing historic walled garden in

the southern portion of the site. The following works are proposed as detailed in the pre-application submission:

- Adult and Adolescent Inpatient Services;
- Adult and Adolescent Day Services;
- Eating Disorder Services;
- Age Care Services;
- Higher Acuity Services;
- General Psychiatric Care Services;
- Consultant and Hospital Administration;
- A full range of Therapeutic Services, including music, arts, crafts, and horticulture;
- The refurbishment and repurposing of Historic Farm Buildings in support of Adult Hospital operations;
- The construction of a new 14 Bed In-patient, general psychiatric Adolescent Unit, to be located on the site of existing 52 bed unit; and
- Continued use of St. Edmundsbury house for extended Day Care Service Provision.

3.2. Landscaping as part of the proposal includes:

- The provision of public open space to preserve the existing walking loop and ensure public access to the future Liffey Valley Park;
- The provision of open gardens that will be accessible by service users and staff only, connecting the new hospital to the existing buildings;
- The provision of private gardens, which will be secure spaces intended for services users and staff only, with direct access from the new hospital;
- The provision of private courtyards intended to be private and secure spaces situated within ward areas;

- The provision of green buffer strips at the perimeter of the new development to mitigate any potential overlooking or noise impact to the adjacent development.

4.0 Pre-Application Consultation Meetings

- 4.1. There were two pre-application consultation meetings held with respect to the proposals for the site.
- 4.2. The first meeting was held on 3rd June 2025 and discussions centred around the current use of the site (including zoning), the proposed development to take place (including heritage and ecological considerations) and the context to the provision of mental health services on the site.
- 4.3. The second meeting was held on the 1st September 2025 and comprised the applicant presenting a high level update on the proposed development, particularly with respect to the preparation of documentation to support the application. Discussion on consultation, heritage and biodiversity also took place.

5.0 Planning History/Relevant Cases

- 5.1. Planning history for the site relates to alterations to the building associated with its use as a mental health care facility. The building has undergone a number of alterations and extensions, estimated to have occurred in the early 19th century and c.1986, including window replacements and façade edits.
- 5.2. There is no previous planning applications of specific relevance to the current proposals for the site.

6.0 Prospective Applicants Case

- 6.1. The prospective applicant's case is outlined in a letter (accompanied by supporting detail) which was received with the consultation request dated 26th March 2025, and the presentations made to the pre-application consultation meetings held on 3rd June and 1st December 2025, and in the letter requesting closure of the pre-application dated 12th December 2025.

6.2. The applicant stresses the importance of the proposed development to provide essential care to a number of patients in the region and wider State, with significant social importance. The applicant states that the Irish Health Care System is currently experiencing immense strain, and the need for adequate efficient services is at an all-time high. The applicant highlights research conducted by St. Patrick's Mental Health Services has shown that mental health services are in highest demand in areas within Co. Dublin, with reference to records from St. Patrick's University Hospital, SPUH, Willow Grove Adolescent Unit, and St. Edmundsbury House, which show c. 80% of patients utilising inpatient services are travelling from Co. Dublin but also from other areas of the country. The applicant's case is that the proposed development will also be of significant economic benefit, including significant on-site employment, alongside ancillary jobs created through servicing the site.

6.3. The applicant states that the proposed development represents a nationally important mental health facility that is urgently required. The applicant's case is that the National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF, emphasis the need for access to quality health services, such access is mentioned and highlighted in outcome no.10; that health services are also highlighted as a strategic investment priority with reference to National Strategic Outcome 5; and that the proposed development will enhance the site with reference to National Strategic Outcome 7. In addition, National Policy Objective 26 relates to public health policy and 11 relates to development that generates jobs. (Note: Applicant refers to outcomes and objectives as numbered in the original NPF, pre revision 2025).

6.4. The applicant states that the proposed development is in line with the Sláintecare Action Plan 2023 as it aims to provide timely access to essential medical care and increase capacity in mental health services in Ireland. It is also stated that the proposal is aligned with the Healthy Ireland Strategic Action Plan 2021-2025, Sharing the Vision – Implementation Plan 2022-2024, The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly RSES 2019-2031 (specifically RPO 9.23 provision of health services), and South Dublin County Development Plan 2022-2028.

6.5. The applicant is a long-standing mental health care provider in the region with St. Patrick's Hospital itself founded c.270 years ago. St. Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS) provides a range of community and outpatient care through a number of clinics, including institutes at St. Patrick's University Hospital; St. Patrick's

Hospital Lucan (the subject site); and Willow Grove Adolescent Unit. It is the applicant's case that the entire site has established use for mental health services and associated use.

- 6.6. The applicant contends that the proposed scale of the facility is of national and regional importance and meets the requirements of a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) as per the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, under s.37A, Health Infrastructure –
- 6.7. *'Development comprising the following: A health care facility (other than a development which is predominantly for the purposes of providing care services (within the meaning of section 3 of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009)) which, whether or not the facility is intended to form part of another health care facility, shall provide in-patient services and shall have not fewer than 100 beds in order to so provide'.*

7.0 Legislative Provisions

7.1. Planning and Development Act 2000, as Amended

- 7.1.1. Section 2(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('PDA'), defines 'strategic infrastructure' as including, *inter alia*:
- 7.1.2. (a) any proposed development in respect of which a notice has been served under section 37B(4)(a),
- 7.1.3. Section 37A of the Act states that:
- 7.1.4. (1) An application for permission for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule (inserted by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006) shall, if the following condition is satisfied, be made to the Board under section 37E and not to the planning authority.
- 7.1.5. (2) That condition is that, following consultations under section 37B, the Board serves on the prospective applicant a notice in writing under that section stating that in the opinion of the Board, the proposed development would, if carried out, fall within one of more of the following paragraphs, namely –

- 7.1.6. (a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,
- 7.1.7. (b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate.
- 7.1.8. (c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.
- 7.1.9. The current SID thresholds are set out within the 7th Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The relevant threshold for the proposed project is '*A health care facility (other than a development which is predominantly for the purposes of providing care services (within the meaning of section 3 of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009)) which, whether or not the facility is intended to form part of another health care facility, shall provide in-patient services and shall have not fewer than 100 beds in order to so provide*'.

8.0 Assessment

8.1. Strategic Infrastructure

- 8.1.1. Strategic Infrastructure Development is defined under the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) for the purposes of sections 37A and 37B of the Act. At section 4 of the Seventh Schedule, Health Infrastructure is detailed to comprise "A health care facility (other than a development which is predominantly for the purposes of providing care services (within the meaning of section 3 of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009)) which, whether or not the facility is intended to form part of another health care facility, shall provide in-patient services and shall have not fewer than 100 beds in order to so provide.]"
- 8.1.2. In relation to the exception cited in the schedule, care services as defined under section 3 of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 means long-term residential care services, which would not include the proposed development.
- 8.1.3. The proposed development relates to the construction of a new in-patient mental health facility, consisting of 3 storeys over basement, and facilitating c.200 no.

inpatient beds, with c.14 no. adolescent beds. Having regard to the proposed development description for a mental health care facility facilitating c.200 beds, I am satisfied that the development accords with Section 37A(1) of the Act, being Health Infrastructure as described under the Seventh Schedule of the Act.

- 8.1.4. Accordingly, under Section 37A(2), the proposed development must fall within one or more of the following conditions:
- 8.1.5. (a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate -
- 8.1.6. The prospective applicant's case is that the proposal satisfies the conditions under s.37A(2)(a) of the Act due to the scale of the project, which will provide essential care to a number of patients in the region and wider State, holding significant social importance. The prospective applicant highlights that the Irish Health Care System is currently experiencing immense strain and the need for adequate efficient services is at an all-time high. Significant economic benefit is also anticipated to result from significant on-site employment.
- 8.1.7. The scale of the development and services provided would contribute significantly to service provision across the region and wider state. Therefore, development would be of social importance to the region and State with respect to the provision of mental health services. The scale of development would also require a significant number of employees, and employment associated with the development would also be of strategic economic importance.
- 8.1.8. Having regard to the national and regional policy context and the details of the subject proposal outlined above, I am satisfied that the development would be of strategic economic and social importance to the state and the Region and would, therefore, comply with the condition set out in section 37A(2)(a) of the Act.
- 8.1.9. (b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework (NPF) or any regional spatial and economic strategy (RSES) in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate -
- 8.1.10. The prospective applicant highlights objectives under the NPF and RSES which the proposed development would contribute towards. Reference is made to the NPF pre-

revision version by the applicant. In my assessment I will refer to the NPF First Revision 2025, which is broadly in keeping with that established in the original NPF, but with a change to the numbering to some objectives.

- 8.1.11. National Policy Objective 12 states 'Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being'. I accept the prospective applicant's case that the proposed development for mental health services of strategic and social importance would support quality of life and therefore contributes this objective under the NPF.
- 8.1.12. National Policy Objective 36 states 'Support the objectives of public health policy including the Healthy Ireland Framework and the National Physical Activity Plan, though integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy'. The vision under the Healthy Ireland Framework is for a healthy Ireland where everyone can enjoy physical and mental health and wellbeing. I accept the prospective applicant's case that the proposed development for strategic health infrastructure would contribute to this objective.
- 8.1.13. The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019-2031 includes RSO 4 'Healthy Communities' which supports quality healthcare and services that support human health; and RPO 9.23: Facilitate the development of primary health care centres, hospitals, clinics and facilities to cater for the specific needs of an ageing population. I accept the prospective applicant's case that the proposed development for strategic health infrastructure would contribute to these objectives under the RSES.
- 8.1.14. Having regard to the objectives in the NPF and RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region, and the details of the subject proposal outlined above, I am satisfied that the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of the aforementioned objectives of the NPF and RSES, and would therefore comply with the condition set out in section 37A(2)(b).
- 8.1.15. (c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority -
- 8.1.16. The site is fully contained within the area of one planning authority, South County Dublin. I am satisfied that the proposed development will not have a significant effect

on the area of more than one planning authority. Accordingly, I am of the opinion that the proposal would not come within the scope of this requirement to be considered as complying with section 37A(2)(c) of the Act.

8.2. **Prescribed bodies**

8.2.1. In view of the scale, nature, and location of the proposed development, as described in this report, it is recommended that the prospective applicant should consult with the prescribed bodies listed in the attached Appendix in respect of any future application for approval.

9.0 **Recommendation**

9.1. I recommend that St. Patrick's Mental Health Services be informed that the proposed development of the construction of a c.200 bed adult in-patient hospital, with c.14 no. adolescent beds, for the provision of mental health services at St. Edmundsbury Hospital, Lucan Road, South County Dublin, falls within the scope of section 37A(a) and (b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should be made directly to the An Coimisiún Pleanála.

Rachel Gleave O'Connor

Senior Planning Inspector

17th December 2025

Appendix A: Prescribed Bodies

The following is a list of prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Commission:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- South Dublin County Council
- National Transport Authority
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- An Taisce
- Fáilte Ireland
- Heritage Council
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Irish Water
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Health Service Executive
- The Commission for Railway Regulation

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.