



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report 22JP0042

Development	Repair / rehabilitation works to old bridge.
Location	Townparks / Carrickbeg, Carrick on Suir, Co Tipperary
Local Authority	Tipperary County Council.
Application	Application made under Section 177 AE(4)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000.
Prescribed Bodies /Observer(s)	Transport Infrastructure Ireland TII
Date of Site Inspection	22 nd March 2017
Inspector	Bríd Maxwell

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is an application for approval to the Board for the Bridge Rehabilitation Works to the Old Bridge, an eight span masonry structure approximately 82m long with an overall width of 5.5m in Carrick On Suir, Co Tipperary. The proposal involves works to enable the repair and improvement of the structural condition and stability of the bridge as is necessary to remediate deterioration of the structure.
- 1.2 The application is made pursuant to section 177 AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, which deals with Appropriate Assessment of certain development carried out by or on behalf of local authorities.
- 1.3 Section 177AE of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 refers to Appropriate Assessment of certain development carried out by or on behalf of local authorities. Section 177AE(6) requires that before making a decision in respect of proposed development under this section, the Board shall consider -
- the natura impact statement submitted and any other information furnished relating to
- (i) the likely effects on the environment of the development,
 - (ii) the likely consequences for proper planning and sustainable development in the area in which it is proposed to situate the said development of such development, and
 - (iii) the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site.
- 1.4 This report therefore considers the plans and particulars submitted, the submissions and observations made in respect of the development and other information that has been submitted in respect of it. Ultimately, on the basis of the relevant issues as outlined above, this report recommends whether or

not the Board should grant approval to the County Council for the proposed development.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site relates to the Old Bridge which crosses the River Suir (a component of the Lower River Suir SAC 002137) running from Bridge Street to Abbey Hill thereby connecting Carrick on Suir with Carrickbeg in the town of Carrick on Suir, County Tipperary.
- 2.2 The bridge carries a single one-way traffic lane from Bridge Street to Abbey Hill with a footpath on one side. The river Suir, which is a component of the Lower River Suir SAC (002137) is tidal at this location and notably the tidal influence of the river is considered to extend to the weir just upstream of Old Bridge. The rise in water level from low tide to high tide varies from 1.4m at neap tides to c 4.0m at spring tides.¹
- 2.3 The Bridge is a Protected Structure (RPS 1.2) and a recorded monument TS085-004007. The bridge is also located within the zone of archaeological potential as set out in the Carrick on Suir Town Development Plan, 2013. The bridge is recorded in the NIAH Reg 22123027 and is therein described and appraised as follows:

“Description

Eight-arch road bridge crossing River Suir, built 1447, with former two arches rebuilt as navigation arch c.1925. Segmental-headed arches with dressed stone voussoirs, random rubble limestone walls and parapets. Full height V-cutwater piers to west upstream elevation and slightly-projecting piers to east downstream elevation, all with pedestrian refuges. Piers rest on concreted stone bases, with larger central piers. Pedestrian footpath to west parapet wall.

Appraisal

The massive construction and narrowness of this bridge are significant in suggesting an early date and its appearance on the Down Survey Map of 1656 establishes that it already existed by that time. Its full height cutwaters are unusual, as is the large

¹ <http://waterlevel.ie>

refuge. The undulating elevations give a distinctive appearance, and the view from the bridge to the narrow winding streets of Carrickbeg complements the effect.”

- 2.4 The Urban Archaeological Survey of County Tipperary, South Riding (Farrelly and Fitzpatrick 1993) describe the bridge as follows:

“The present bridge is 91m long and 4.6m wide. It consists of eight segmental arches. All 6m wide except one of the most southerly which was enlarged in the eighteenth / early nineteenth century to a width of 15.2m, double that of the others. There are massive triangular cutwaters on the upriver side which have been brought up to the parapet level to form pedestrian refuges, while the triangular piers on the downriver side are also brought up to form similar refuges on the parapet wall. There is a large rectangular refuge in the middle of the bridge which is known as Mailers House. Simington and O Keefe date the bridge, based on the structural form to the fifteenth or sixteenth century.”

- 2.5 A plaque located adjacent to the downriver parapet in the centre of the bridge is inscribed as follows:

“Carrick Bridge

Droichead na Carraige

The Old Bridge holds an abiding place within the affections, experience and tradition of the people of Carrick, linking past and present along with communities and regions. Tradition has it that a charter to build a bridge at Carrick was granted in 1306 but this structure most certainly dates originally from around 1447, when it was built by Edmond Mac Richard Butler.

Until the mid-18th Century Carrick Bridge was the first above the estuary and of great strategic and trading importance as the link between South Leinster and East Munster. Holding the Carrick Bridge was essential to Cromwell’s South Eastern Campaign in 1649 .

Repairs are recorded in 1614, 1688, 1788 and 1804.

On the 8th February 1799, a barge from Clonmel carrying 11 men, forty women and about sixty children smashed against the bridge in conditions of heavy flood. Over one hundred were drowned.

A hanging on the bridge is recorded in 1811.

The large navigation arch was rebuilt following civil war damage in 1922.

Salmon wait for the tide to still the weir. Boys are fishing from a bridge built before Columbus raised a sail.”

2.6 Photographs of the bridge taken on the date of my site visit are provided in the appendices to this report.

3.0 Proposed Development

3.1 The works proposed involve rehabilitation of the Old Bridge including

- (a) Removal of vegetation from the existing structure
- (b) Repair and repoint existing piers, abutments, elevations and arches where required
- (c) Repair scour depressions in the riverbed beneath the bridge and surrounding the piers by placing an arrangement of grout bags within
- (d) Install grout to the structure up to quarter point level
- (e) Install two tie bars to the southernmost arch
- (f) Install spray applied gunite to a concrete extension at the northwest corner.

3.2 The purpose of the project is to repair and improve the structural condition of Old Bridge.

3.3 The application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement compiled by Malachy Walsh and Partners Engineering and Environmental Consultants which includes as Appendix 2 an Ecological Field Survey Summary Report. The application also

includes an Archaeological Impact Assessment dated February 2017 compiled by John Cronin and Associates.

3.4 Application details outline the proposal to carry out vegetation clearance, masonry repair, repointing and grouting throughout the bridge structure. Tie bars will be installed to the southernmost bridge span (span 1) while a minor repair will be undertaken to an extension comprising of a concrete deck on steel beams at the north western corner of span 8². In terms of setting out a justification for the proposal it is noted that in general, the structure has suffered light to moderate mortar loss to the stonework throughout. The existing concrete aprons are scoured with depressions on the riverbed evident surrounding the existing piers. It is proposed that approximately 125m³ of grout bags will be installed to remediate the scour damage. The documentation submitted suggests a works period duration from late summer 2017 to end September 2017.

3.5 I note that the submitted documentation indicates that a site compound will be required for the contractor undertaking the works which will be situated a minimum of 25m from the river or any drain for the storage of machinery tools and fuels. The locational and other details of this compound are not identified and the Board may wish to seek further details on this matter.

4.0 Prescribed Bodies.

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

- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland
- An Taisce
- The Heritage Council
- Inland Fisheries Ireland

² I note reference within NIS page 4 Brief Description of the Project refers to “an extension comprising of a concrete deck on steel beams will occur at the northwestern corner of span 8. Screening for appropriate assessment refers to page 5 Section 4.2.4 describes the proposal as involving “minor repairs will be undertaken to an extension comprising of a concrete deck on steel beams at the northeastern corner of span 8. The drawings submitted also confirm the latter description to be the correct one.

- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Development Applications Unit (*Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht*)
- Department of Environment Community and Local Government
- Irish Water
- Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine

4.2 In addition to the above referrals and at the request of An Bord Pleanála by letter dated 15th March 2017 the subject, application was also referred to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

4.3 As regards Ministerial consent to undertake the works under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994 letter submitted with the application from the National Monuments Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs dated 7th October 2016 indicates no objection to the works outlined.

4.4 Submission received.

4.4.1 Arising from referrals to prescribed bodies and public notices inviting submissions from other interested third parties, only a single submission was received from Transport Infrastructure Ireland, TII. The submission notes that as the work relates to a local non-national road network, TII has no comment to make in relation to the proposed works.

5.0 Planning History

N/A

6.0 Policy Context

6.1 Legislative Requirements

6.1.1 Section 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) requires that where an appropriate assessment is required in respect of a local authority development, the local authority shall prepare a Natura Impact Statement and that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it with or without modifications.

6.1.2 As the competent authority for local authority development the Board is required to carry out the appropriate assessment and to determine whether or not the proposed development, alone or in combination would adversely affect the integrity of a European site in light of the site's conservation objectives. Prior to making its decision, the Board is required to consider the Natura Impact Statement submitted, any submissions or observations in respect of the proposed development and other information furnished in accordance with Section 177AE(5) of the Act relating to:

- (i) The likely effects of the proposed development on the environment.
- (ii) The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, and
- (iii) The likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site.

6.1.3 Article 6 of the EU (Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats) (2) Regulations 2011 exempts Part 8 requirements for local authority development where there is an appropriate assessment requirement.

6.2 Development Plan

6.2.1 The South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009 as varied and the Carrick on Suir Town Development Plan 2013 refer.

6.2.2 Within the Carrick on Suir Town Plan, the Bridge is identified as part of the Zone of Archaeological Potential as depicted on Figure 9.

6.2.3 Policy AH 3 Archaeology refers to Policy to safeguard sites, features and objects of archaeological interest generally and the Council will protect (in-situ where

practicable or as a minimum, preservation by record) all monuments included in the Record of Monuments and Places and sites, features and objects of archaeological and historical interest generally.

6.2.4 Under the theme of Natural Heritage, The Lower River Suir SAC is addressed at 8.2.1 where the key objective of the maintenance of favourable conservation status for protected habitats and species within the River Suir SAC i.e. alluvial woodlands, Twaite Shad, Crayfish, Lamprey Species and Otter.

6.2.5 Policy AH4 River Suir and Tributaries. It is the policy of the Council to protect and improve the natural amenity potential and accessibility of the River Suir and its tributaries, to protect riparian habitats along the watercourses by maintaining an appropriate ecological buffer zone a minimum of 10m where feasible, from the top of the watercourse riverbank and to protect and improve access to the River Suir without compromising the quality and setting of the river.

6.2.6 Policy AH5: Lower River Suir SAC. "To conserve the favourable conservation status of species and habitats within the River Suir Special Area of Conservation and ensure that development is not permitted that adversely affects the integrity of the site unless of overriding public interest and subject to compliance with Article 6 of the EU Habitats Directive."

6.2.7 I note Infrastructure policies related to traffic management and congestion associated with traffic management and congestion issues associated with the Carrick on Suir Town Centre, in particular INF 2: Reservation Corridor for New Road and Policy Inf 3 New River Crossing.

7.0 Natural Heritage Designations

7.1 The bridge spans The Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 002137)

7.2 The Comeragh Mountains SAC (Site Code 001952) is located 11km southwest of the site.

8.0 Assessment

8.1 Having regard to the nature of the proposed development and to the site context and character, I consider that the details submitted in respect of the scale and form of the proposed development are sufficient to facilitate an assessment of the potential planning and environmental impacts.

8.2 Under the provisions of Section 177AE(6) there are specific requirements for the Board to consider in assessing applications of this nature namely,

(a) The likely effects on the environment

(b) The likely consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and

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

Accordingly, I propose to assess the current application before the Board under these three broad headings.

8.3 The Likely effects on the environment

8.3.1 The most significant potential for impact arises in relation to water quality and potential for consequent flora and fauna impact. This is discussed in some detail in relation to the impact on the Natura 2000 site in the appropriate assessment below, however the wider ecological impact on flora and fauna impact also needs to be addressed. Other potential impacts arising relate to archaeological and heritage impact, traffic and impact on the wider amenities of the area.

8.3.2 Flora and Fauna

8.3.2.1 The most significant potential for flora and fauna arises in relation to water quality in terms of potential risk of herbicide, lime mortar entering water from vegetation

clearance. Other potential risk of organic pollution through accidental spillage of hydrocarbons, grout wastewater, gunite and the introduction and spread of invasive alien species. It is considered that subject to best practice and implementation of the proposed control measures as outlined within the documentation the likelihood of contaminants entering the water is appropriately mitigated and it is not expected that the proposal will give rise to water pollution.

8.3.2.2 As regards potential for impact on birds and bat species, I refer to the ecological field surveys carried out by two ecologists (on 29th and 30th September 2016) as set out in the ecological Field Survey Summary Report compiled by Malachy Walsh and Partners, contained in Appendix 2 of the submitted NIS. The report outlines that during survey of the area 100m upstream and downstream of the bridge grey wagtail were observed in the vicinity of the bridge. Six birds recorded on the 29 September gathered over the course of the survey in the Buddleja growing on the downstream side of the bridge most likely in preparation for roosting. Two kingfishers were observed early on 30th September flying across the river circa 30m upstream of the bridge. Other birds observed were pied wagtail, mute swan and grey heron. I note that on the date of my site visit 22 March 2017 there I did not observe any evidence of nesting within the bridge structure. As the works may be undertaken during the bird breeding season it is recommended that a breeding bird survey be conducted at old Bridge by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist ahead of works to identify any nesting grey wagtails, dipper and kingfisher (though unlikely to be nesting in the structure). Should nesting bird species be found it is recommended that the NPWS be alerted and appropriate measures taken. As regards bats a dusk and dawn emergence bat survey was undertaken, no bats were observed either emerging or returning to the structure and the structure is considered to have low roost suitability for bats. In terms of mitigation, it is proposed that a further bat survey be conducted in advance of works in the event individual bats may use the bridge as a temporary roost.

8.3.2.3 On the basis of the highly urbanised setting of the site and having regard to the short term duration of the proposed works, it is considered that subject to good environmental practice and subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures as outlined it is not expected that the proposed development will have a significant negative impact on the local ecology.

8.3.3 Archaeological and Architectural Heritage Impact

8.3.3.1 The Old Bridge is a key historical and heritage site within the town of Carrick on Suir.

The application is accompanied by an Archaeological Impact Assessment completed by John Cronin and Associates which is based on desk top study and site visit. The report sets out the historical background to the bridge in some detail. The bridge is attributed to a major building phase undertaken in Carrick-on-Suir by Edward Mac Richard Butler in 1444 and it probably replaced a timber bridge and a ferry service from the foot of Oven Lane. Bradley (1985) states that pontage grants were made in 1343 and 1356. Part of the old bridge may date from this period although O Keefe and Simmington (1991) suggest that certain architectural features support a mid-15th century date.

8.3.3.2 In terms of an assessment of the proposed works the Architectural Impact

Assessment notes that the works will not involve ground reduction works and the only in-channel works are the repair of scour depressions within the existing concrete footing beneath the bridge. These repairs will be undertaken by placing an arrangement of grout bags within the depression. In consultation with the national monuments service, it is proposed that an archaeologist will be engaged to undertake a watching brief during the works programme and to monitor operations associated with the installation of the tie-bars. A report on such archaeological monitoring shall be furnished to the National Monuments Service on completion of works.

8.3.3.3 The methodology or programme of works indicates that vegetation clearance will be carried out by way of hand or power tools as required and masonry repointing will be carried out using natural hydraulic lime mortar material. Masonry repair will involve the use of salvaged and new stone with patterns to match existing using natural hydraulic lime mortar material. The proposed repair / maintenance works as set out are non-intrusive and in my view will have a positive physical and visual impact on the bridge provided they are carried out in accordance with best conservation practice as set out in the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

8.3.3.4 Having considered the detail of the application, it is my view that the overall impact of the works have been justified and are clearly necessary to secure the structural integrity of the bridge. I consider that the mitigation in respect of archaeological and architectural heritage impact is appropriate. Works will not adversely impact the wider architectural heritage or overall character of the structure subject to best practice and adherence to principles of good conservation.

8.3.4 Traffic and Construction Impacts

8.3.4.1 As regards traffic impact in light of the nature of the works temporary traffic controls will be necessary. Given the temporary and short term duration of the works period (works envisaged to commence late summer 2017 and be complete by September 2017) the disruption will not be significant and I consider that there will be no significant inconvenience arising.

8.3.4.2 The Bridge is centrally located within a well-established mixed use area of Carrick on Suir. There are a number of residential and mixed use properties in close proximity and overlooking Old Bridge. Whilst the works will inevitably give rise to some level of disturbance and inconvenience, however I consider that the nature and short terms duration of works will ensure that there is no significant loss of amenity and therefore the significance of traffic and construction impacts arising from the works is limited.

8.3.4.3 As regards flood risk, on the basis of the short term duration of the proposed works the proposed development is not considered that the development will have an impact on the flooding regime.

8.3.4.4 Arising from my assessment, on the likely effects on the environment, I consider the effects to be positive in terms of securing the stability and future of the bridge structure and I consider that the impacts arising in terms of ecology, traffic, and residential and other amenities of the area will be of short term duration and will not be significant.

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

8.4.1 The proposed development is intended to repair and improve the structural condition and stability of Old Bridge in order to remediate the deterioration of the structure. The proposed development is in keeping with Policy AH4 River Suir and its tributaries which seeks to protect and improve the natural amenity potential and accessibility of the River Suir and its tributaries, ... and to protect and improve access to the River Suir without compromising the quality and setting of the river. The proposal is in keeping with the broader policies for the protection and improvement of critical infrastructure and ensuring accessibility and connectivity. Other policies in respect of archaeology and architectural heritage to preserve sites and features of archaeological and architectural heritage including Policy AH3 Archaeology are relevant.

8.4.2 I am satisfied that the principle of the proposed works are acceptable and would accord with the wider policies and objectives of the Carrick on Suir Town Development Plan 2013 and the South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009 as amended. Furthermore, as set out above, I consider that subject to appropriate mitigation, the proposed development will not give rise to significant adverse impact on heritage, archaeology and will not detract from the amenities of the area. Accordingly, I consider that the proposal is beneficial and accords with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.5 Likely Significant Effects on a European Site - Appropriate Assessment.

8.5.1 Appropriate Assessment (AA) considers whether the plan or project alone or in combination with other projects or plans will adversely affect the integrity of a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives and includes consideration of any mitigation measures necessary to avoid, reduce or offset negative effects. This determination must be carried out before a decision is made or consent given for the proposed development. Consent can only be given after it has been determined that the proposed development alone or in combination with other

plans and projects would not adversely affect the integrity of a European site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

8.5.2 Guidance on appropriate assessment is set out in the European Commission's '*Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC*' (European Commission 2002) and in the Department of the Environment's '*Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland. Guidance for Planning Authorities*', (December 2009, revised February 2010).

8.5.3 The following assessment sets out to:

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

8.5.4 Screening - (Identification of European Sites which could be potentially affected using the Source Pathway Receptor Model)

8.5.4.1 The Application for consent is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement compiled by Malachy Walsh and Partners Engineering and Environmental Consultants. The Stage 1 screening identified 2 Natura 2000 sites within 15km of the proposed development namely the Lower River Suir SAC (the Bridge spans the SAC) and the Comeragh Mountains SAC (located 11km to the southwest of the site). The screening concluded that there is no pathway for the proposed works to impact on the Comeragh Mountains SAC. The Comeragh Mountains SAC (Site code 00132) is located 11km upstream of Old Bridge. The qualifying interests are :

- [3110] Oligotrophic Waters containing very few minerals
- [3260] Floating River Vegetation
- [4010] Wet Heath

[4030] Dry Heath
[4060] Alpine and Subalpine Heaths
[8110] Siliceous Scree
[8210] Calcareous Rocky Slopes
[8220] Siliceous Rocky Slopes
[1393] Slender Green Feather-moss (*Drepanocladus vernicosus*)

Having regard to the qualifying features and as the bridge is 11km downstream of the SAC there is no plausible hydrological or ecological pathways which could act as a conduit between the proposed development and the SAC. Therefore, significant impact on this SAC is not reasonably foreseeable.

8.5.4.2 In contrast significant effect or effects on the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 002137) cannot be ruled out having regard to the source pathway receptor model. Having reviewed the detail of the application, I would concur with the conclusion of the screening assessment that there is no potential for the proposed works to impact on the Comeragh Mountains SAC and the Natura 2000 site of relevance for consideration in terms of the Appropriate Assessment is the Lower River Suir SAC.

8.5.5 Identification of the Conservation Objectives of the Lower River Suir SAC (Site Code 002137)

8.5.5.1 The River Suir, 184km in length is Ireland's third largest river rising on the eastern flanks of Benduff in the Devils Bit Mountain near Moneygall northwest of Templemore. It flows through Thurles, Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir where it becomes tidal, before continuing to Waterford and the sea. The Suir Main channel and its tributaries flow primarily through the counties of Tipperary, Kilkenny and Waterford with some small parts in the catchment of Counties Limerick and Cork. The river lies largely in County Tipperary and forms part of its border with County Waterford. The main urban areas are Templemore and Thurles in the northern part of the Catchment, Clonmel and Carrick on Suir in the southern part with the city of Waterford at the head of the estuary. The tidal influence on the River Suir is considered to extend to the weir just upstream of Old Bridge in Carrick on Suir.

8.5.5.2 The Lower River Sur SAC consists of the freshwater stretches of the River Suir immediately south of Thurles, the tidal stretches as far as the confluence with the Barrow / Nore immediately east of Cheekpoint in Co Waterford and many tributaries

including the Clodiagh in Co Waterford. The Lingaun, Anner, Nier, Tar, Aherlow, Multeen and Clodiagh in Co Tipperary. The Lower River Suir contains excellent examples of a number of Annex I habitats, including the priority habitat alluvial forest and Yew woodland. The site is of particular conservation interest for the presence of a number of Annex II animal species including Freshwater Pearl Mussel (both *Margaritifera margaritifera* and *M margaritifera* subsp. *durrovensis* occur), White-clawed crayfish, salmon, twaite shad (*Alosa fallax fallax*), three species of Lampreys – Sea Lamprey, Brook and River Lamprey and Otter. This is one of only three known spawning grounds in the country for Twaite Shad.

8.5.5.3 The following Qualifying Interests of the Lower River Suir SAC002137

(* indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive)

[1029] Freshwater Pearl Mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*

[1092] White-clawed Crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*

[1095] Sea Lamprey *Petromyzon marinus*

[1096] Brook Lamprey *Lampetra planeri*

[1099] River Lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*

[1103] Twaite Shad *Alosa fallax fallax*

[1106] Atlantic Salmon *Salmo salar*

[1330] Atlantic salt meadows (*Glauco-Puccinellietalia maritima*)

[1355] Otter *Lutra lutra*

[1410] Mediterranean salt meadows (*Juncetalia maritimi*)

[3260] Flowating River Vegetation

[6430] Hydrophilous tall herb fringe communities

[91A0] Old sessile oak woods

[91E0] Alluvial forests *

[91J0] Yew Woodlands *

8.5.5.4 The Conservation Objectives for the Lower River Suir SAC Version 1, 28th March

2017 note the overall aim of the habitats directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and

- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

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

8.5.6 Prediction of Impacts

8.5.6.1 The NIS provides for an evaluation through scientific examination of evidence and data of whether or not qualifying features of the Lower River Suir SAC should be selected for further assessment is based on the potential for significant impact arising from the proposal. A number of qualifying features are appropriately screened out based on distance, scale and nature of works and lack of connection in terms of source pathway receptor. The likelihood of significant effects to the Natura 2000 site from the project in the absence of mitigation would arise from the following.

- Habitat loss or alteration.
- Water Quality and resource impacts.
- Disturbance and or displacement of species.
- Habitat or species fragmentation.

8.5.6.2 The qualifying features that are identified as relevant in terms of potential for significant impact are:

- Floating River Vegetation [3260]
- White-Clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) [1092]

- Sea Lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*) [1095]
- Brook Lamprey (*Lampetra planeri*)[1096]
- River Lamprey (*Lampetra fluviatilis*) [1099]
- Twaité Shad (*Alosa fallax*) [1103]
- Atlantic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) [1106]
- Otter (*Lutra lutra*) [1355]

Habitat Loss or alteration

8.5.6.3 Floating river vegetation is identified as the broad habitat type which is subject to potential significant impact arising from the proposed development. Water pollution particularly eutrophication is identified as the main pressure / threat to this habitat type. The removal and redistribution of stone and debris to facilitate the installation of grout bags is not predicted to have significant impact on the vegetation community within the river. Stone removal / clearance and redistribution will be localised and confined to the depressions formed by scour and the stable bed in the immediate vicinity of scour depressions. Notably regular movement of substrata occurs daily under tidal influence and during heavy flood conditions. Furthermore, as scour depressions are exposed to less light than substrata upstream or downstream of the bridge and as boulders cobbles and gravel will not be removed therefore significant habitat loss or alterations impacts to the floating river vegetation community in the vicinity of the bridge is not envisaged. Instream works will be temporary and specific to limited areas of scour damage. There will be no removal of vegetation from the river and significant impact to habitat distribution or habitat area are not reasonably foreseeable.

8.5.6.4 Potential for water quality impacts through the spread of invasive species or accidental spillage is identified as the most significant potential impact. As regards habitat loss / alteration to aquatic qualifying interest species, it is noted that excluding white clawed crayfish, all aquatic qualifying interest species spawn upstream of Old Bridge. Crayfish were recorded in the vicinity of the bridge during

the aquatic habitat survey September 2016. Removal and redistribution of stones from scour depressions has the potential to result in habitat alterations impacts to white-clawed crayfish within the footprint of the proposed in-stream works. Atlantic salmon and lamprey species spawn in the freshwater reaches of the river, therefore the tidal nature of the river in the vicinity of the bridge is considered unsuitable. The closest area of suitable spawning habitat for twaite shad was identified 30m upstream of the bridge. The substrate in the vicinity of the bridge and within the footprint of the instream works is considered to be unsuitable for spawning shad. However, as all fish species pass under the bridge during spawning migration and again on migration to the sea, and as white clawed crayfish were recorded at the bridge there is potential for significant alteration impacts through a reduction in water quality.

Water Quality

8.5.6.5 The main risk to water quality arises as a result of the potential for the discharge of polluting substances required in the carrying out of the repair works in particular grout, gunite and fuels/oils. The potential for uncontrolled discharge of polluting substances from a number of activities are identified including the potential risk of herbicide entering the water from vegetation clearance operations through run off, from excess application and fall off of sprayed vegetation, potential for risk of excess old lime mortar entering the watercourse, potential risk of organic pollution through accidental spillage of hydrocarbons, risk of grout wastewater escape and risk of gunite accidental spillage.

Disturbance and or displacement of species.

8.5.6.6 Due to tidal effects and river flow works will be carried out during a period of low tide, therefore the potential for significant disturbance / displacement of migrating aquatic species will be reduced. However, owing to the potential for water quality impairment during the works, indirect impact to aquatic species cannot be ruled out. The proposed works have the potential to result in direct disturbance to white clawed crayfish during instream works as well as potential indirect impacts owing to water quality impairment.

8.5.6.7 The proposed rehabilitation works at Old Bridge therefore have the potential to cause significant disturbance displacement impacts to aquatic species within the Lower River Suir SAC. The works may temporarily displace commuting or foraging otters, however the impact is considered to be limited given the localised and temporary nature of the works and the wide availability of suitable habitat upstream and downstream of the works.

Habitat or species fragmentation,

8.5.6.8 The potential exists for water quality, habitat alteration and disturbance displacement impacts to arise owing to the proposed rehabilitation works in the absence of mitigation.

8.5.7 Cumulative and in Combination Effects

8.5.7.1 I note that Carrick on Suir Town Development Plan 2013 has been subject to Appropriate Assessment. As regards an assessment of potentially significant cumulative effects, The Lower River Suir is subject to various point and diffuse sources of pollution arising from ongoing industrial, wastewater, agricultural and urban activities. A number of the point sources of pollution are controlled, monitored and/ or treated through various licences whilst diffuse pollution is generally less controlled and unlicensed. In the event of significant water quality impacts arising as a result of the discharge of relatively large volumes of grout wastewaters or hydrocarbons to the receiving river, there is potential for significant cumulative water quality impact in combination with the existing various point and diffuse sources of pollution.

8.5.8 Mitigation

8.5.8.1 In terms of methodology of the works the application provides some level of detail and mitigation measures are set out at Section 7 of the NIS. As regards vegetation clearance, this is proposed by way of hand or power tools as required.

A suitable crash deck will be installed and removed vegetation will be disposed of offsite at a suitable waste management facility. Root stumps will be treated with an approved weed killer using a wick applicator. As regards masonry repointing the areas of existing spandrel walls, parapets piers arch barrels and abutments which require repointing will be identified and joints will be raked out and repointed using Natural Hydraulic Lime mortar material. The external wall and arch barrel repointing will be carried out using an in situ suspended scaffold or underbridge unit and falling fresh mortar will be collected using a suspended crash deck placed against the walls, under the area being repointed. As regards masonry repair the stonework will be rebuilt using salvaged and new stone with patterns to match the existing. This will be done during a period of low tide and a protective fly sheet will need to be installed to collect any falling material beneath the works area. Grouting and installation of tie bars and installation of grout bags will not require machinery in stream. Grout bags are to be fitted with a non-return valve to prevent leaking of grout through nozzle. A layer of gunite will be applied to the tapered extension on the northwest corner of span 8. Heavy gauge plastic will be laid outside the works area to collect any rebounding sprayed material and these works will be undertaken at low tide when span 8 has no water flow and the bed is dry. During rehabilitation works to the external wall and arch barrels and spans an in situ 'crash deck' comprising suspended scaffold or underbridge unit is proposed to be installed to collect any accidental waste or falling debris, thereby preventing ingress of potentially polluting material to the river beneath. A protective fly sheet will be installed prior to masonry repair work. All waste material will be removed from site and disposed of to a licensed waste facility approved by Tipperary County Council.

8.5.8.2 Control measures to prevent the likelihood of contaminants being released to the River Suir during rehabilitation works are outlined. In order to remediate scour damage, empty grout bags will be laid in position at low tide. Grout bags will be fitted with a non return valve to prevent leaking of grout through the nozzle. Potential for introduction or spread of invasive alien species through the use of contaminated equipment within the river is also addressed.

8.5.8.3. To avoid times of migration of shad species, and salmon smolts and the period when female crayfish are carrying eggs or young, works are proposed to be carried out in the period July to September inclusive. Works are scheduled so that no more than two bridge piers and spans are being repaired at any given time to minimise disturbance impacts on adult salmon and lamprey that are migrating during the works period. To avoid direct impact on crayfish at the works site they will be removed by a suitably qualified person under a wildlife license by hand searching and trapping and translocated to suitable habitat upstream. A project ecologist employed for period of works. All personnel will be informed of the necessary environmental controls and mitigation measures. Best practice measures will be implemented to prevent potential spread of invasive species. Weather reports will be monitored to assist in planning of work and in order to anticipate high water levels. Vegetation clearance measures to minimise potential for herbicide entering the watercourse. The project will involve the use of suitably qualified stone masons with a proven track record in repair of bridges and use of lime mortar. A fuel management plan is proposed to be developed and implemented prior to works.

8.5.8.4As noted at 3.5 above the submitted documentation indicates that the site compound to serve the contractor undertaking the works will be required and this will be situated a minimum of 25m from the river or any drain. Secure storage, bunding, spill kits, procedures and contingency plans are envisaged. All plant will be refuelled within this compound. Locational details are not provided and the Board may wish to seek clarification in this regard.

8.5.8.5Other best practice measures in relation to mixing of materials and during application of grout and gunite and method statements to be approved by the IFI and project ecologist. Site Environmental Auditing will be carried out weekly.

8.5.9 Residual Effects

8.5.9.1The submitted NIS predicts that provided that the mitigation measures are implemented in full it is not anticipated that significant impacts will result to the qualifying features identified and therefore will not have an adverse impact on the integrity of the Natura 2000 site. I consider that the conclusion of the NIS is

reasonable and I conclude on the basis of the information on the file that the proposed rehabilitation works, individually or in combination with other plans and projects will not result in an adverse residual impact on the Natura 2000 Lower River Suir SAC 002137 or any other European site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In my view the mitigation measures are appropriate to the risks identified and would if implemented correctly be sufficient to avoid any significant impacts.

8.5.10 Appropriate Assessment Conclusion.

8.5.10.11 consider it 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 or projects would not adversely affect the integrity of the Lower River Suir SAC (002137) or any other European Site in view of the site's conservation objectives.

8.6 Recommendation

8.6.1 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 requiring compliance with the submitted details and with the mitigation measures as set out in the NIS.

REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

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

- (a) the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC),
- (b) the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015,
- (c) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the

proposed development and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site,

- (d) the conservation interests and conservation objectives of the Lower River Suir Special Area of Conservation (site code: 002137),
- (e) the policies and objectives of the South Tipperary County Development Plan 2009 as varied and the Carrick on Suir Town Development Plan 2013,
- (f) the nature and extent of the proposed Old Bridge rehabilitation works as set out in the application for approval,
- (g) the information submitted in relation to the potential impacts on habitats, flora and fauna, including the Natura impact statement,
- (h) the submissions and observations received in relation to the likely effects on the environment, and on the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European Site, and
- (i) the report and recommendation of the person appointed by the Board to make a report and recommendation on the matter.

Appropriate Assessment:

The Board agreed with the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's report that the Lower River Suir Special Area of Conservation (site code: 002137) is the only European Site in respect of which the proposed development has the potential to have a significant effect.

The Board considered the Natura impact statement and associated documentation submitted with the application for approval, the mitigation measures contained therein, the submissions and observations on file, and the Inspector's assessment. The Board completed an appropriate assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the affected European Site, namely the Lower River Suir Special

Area of Conservation (site code: 002137), in view of the site's conservation objectives. The Board considered that the information before it was adequate to allow the carrying out of an appropriate assessment.

In completing the appropriate assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the following:

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

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

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

Proper Planning and Sustainable Development:

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

Conditions

1. The development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application except where otherwise may be required in order to comply with the following conditions.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

2. The mitigation measures identified in the Natura Impact Statement shall be implemented in full by the local Authority.

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

3. All repair works to the protected structure shall be carried out under the supervision of a qualified professional with specialised conservation expertise and in accordance with best conservation practice as detailed in “Architectural Heritage Protection: Guidelines for Planning Authorities” issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2011. The repair works shall retain the maximum amount possible of surviving historic fabric in-situ, and shall be designed to give rise to minimum interference with the fabric of Old Bridge.

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

4. The local authority shall engage the services of a project ecologist for the duration of the bridge rehabilitation works to monitor the site set up and construction of the proposed development in accordance with the mitigation measure proposed. On completion of the works, an audit report of the site

works shall be prepared by the appointed person within a period of three months, which shall be maintained on record by the local authority.

Reason : In the interest of clarity and to ensure the protection of local ecology in the area.

Bríd Maxwell
Planning Inspector
22nd May 2017