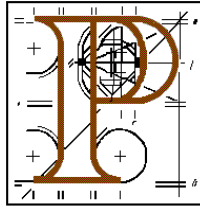


## **An Bord Pleanála**



### **Inspector's Report.**

**Case Ref. No:** 29N.PC0220

**Issue:** SID Pre-application – whether a project is or is not strategic infrastructure development.

**Proposed Development:** National Train Control Centre Building

**Location:** Sheriff Street Lower, Dublin 1

**Applicants:** Iarnród Éireann

**Planning Authority:** Dublin City Council

**Inspector:** Kevin Moore

## **1.0 Proposed Development**

- 1.1 Iarnród Éireann is progressing with the design of a new National Train Control Centre building on Sheriff Street Lower, Dublin 1, immediately adjacent to Connolly train station. The facility would replace the existing Centralised Traffic Control Centre to allow for continued control and management of train movements on the Iarnród Éireann network. It would allow for expansion in the territory controlled. It would accommodate all signalling control and traffic management functions at a single centralised location.
- 1.2 Iarnród Éireann's signalling, points and crossings and the telecommunications network are currently remotely controlled and managed from the existing Centralised Traffic Centre (CTC) building at Connolly Station and a number of other satellite signal cabins nationwide. The existing CTC building is at capacity and the facility technology is becoming increasingly obsolete, resulting in the need for the new development.
- 1.3 A site adjacent to Connolly Station and fronting onto Sheriff Street Lower is the preferred location. It is owned by CIÉ and is immediately adjacent to Connolly Station and associated secure lineside signalling, electrical and telecommunications infrastructure.

## **2.0 Prospective Applicant's Case**

- 2.1 With due regard to the provisions of the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and in particular infrastructure developments referred to under *Transport Infrastructure* therein, the prospective applicant submits:
- The development would not be proposed railway works that would require the application of a railway order under section 37(3) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001, as amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006.

- The proposed development would be for a building which would accommodate the National Train Control Centre. It would be a private building and secured to prevent unauthorised public access.

It is submitted that the development would be a building associated with the control of railway operations that would be secured to prevent passenger or public access. Thus, the building would not be infrastructure development included in the Seventh Schedule.

**2.2** With regard to the provisions of section 37(A)(2)(a) of the Act, the following is submitted:

- The National Train Control Centre would be of significant operational importance to Iarnród Éireann in the medium to long term.
- The development would not, in itself, result in an increase or uplift in the number of train services operating on the heavy rail network or influence passenger demand.
- It would not have any demonstrable social importance to the State or Greater Dublin Area.

Therefore, the development would not be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the Greater Dublin Area.

**2.3** With regard to the provisions of section 37(A)(2)(b) of the Act, the following is submitted:

- The development is listed in the National Capital Investment Plan (Infrastructure and Capital Investment Plan – Building on Recovery (2016-2021) (DPER, 2015)) and the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (April, 2016).
- The National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines seek statutory undertakers to provide improved transport systems to support the attractiveness and competitiveness of Core Economic Areas.
- In collaboration with the National Transport Authority, Iarnród Éireann is progressing other railway projects to provide improved train services.

- The proposed development would not provide additional capacity on the network. It would provide improved operational control and management of trains that currently operate on the network.

Therefore, the development would not satisfy this condition.

**2.4** With regard to the provisions of section 37(A)(2)(c) of the Act, the following is submitted:

- The site is within the functional area of Dublin City Council. The development would not have a significant effect on any other planning authority.

### **3.0 The Request to the Board**

**3.1** Iarnród Éireann requests the Board to assess:

- Is the building development to accommodate the National Train Control Centre a development type specified in the Seventh Schedule?; and
- Does it satisfy any of the test criteria for the development to be considered Strategic Infrastructure Development?

### **4.0 Legal Provisions**

**4.1** Of relevance is the following class of development in the Seventh Schedule inserted into the Planning and Development Act 2000 by section 5 of the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006:

*A terminal, building or installation associated with a long-distance railway, tramway, surface, elevated or underground railway or railway supported by suspended lines or similar lines of a particular type, used exclusively or mainly for passenger transport, but excluding any proposed railway works referred to in section 37(3) of the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 (as amended by the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006).*

- 4.2** Section 37A(1) states that an application for permission for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule shall, if the following condition is satisfied, be made to the Board under section 37E and not to a planning authority. Section 37A (2) says

*That condition is that, following consultation under section 37B, the Board serves on the prospective applicant a notice in writing that, in the opinion of the Board, the proposed development would, if carried out, fall within one or more of the following paragraphs, namely –*

- (a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,*
- (b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Spatial Strategy or in any regional planning guidelines in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,*
- (c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.*

## **5.0 Initial Assessment of the Request**

- 5.1** Having regard to the above, I consider that the proposed development of a National Train Control Centre would constitute a building associated with a long-distance railway that would be used exclusively or mainly for passenger transport purposes. It would be a development that would be integral to the provision of passenger transport, the primary function of Iarnród Éireann. I acknowledge that the building itself would not be used by passengers and that it would be secured to prevent unauthorised public access. However, it would remain a building whose use would exclusively or mainly be for Iarnród Éireann to meet essential passenger transport needs. Also, it would accommodate new services to be provided and would facilitate the expansion of services nationwide. I, thus, conclude that it may reasonably be determined that the development would constitute a building associated with a long-distance railway used exclusively or mainly for passenger transport and, thus, would fall within the provisions of the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- 5.2** I note the proposed development would comprise a new building. After its completion, it would replace the existing Centralised Traffic Control

Centre. It would allow for an expansion in the territory controlled. Its provision would result in accommodating all signaling control and traffic management functions at a single centralised location. It, thus, would have an expanded function over that which currently exists, replacing a Centralised Traffic Centre at Connolly Station and a number of other satellite signal cabins nationwide. It would be central to the functioning of Iarnród Éireann's management of passenger transport on a nationwide basis. It is acknowledged that it is described by the prospective applicant as a National Train Control Centre. In my opinion, the proposed development could reasonably be viewed as being of strategic economic and social importance to the State as so construed by the provisions of section 37A(2)(a) of the Planning and Development Act.

**5.3** The National Spatial Strategy seeks improvements on the State's transport systems with the objective to support balanced regional development. The importance of rail continuing to offer realistic alternatives to road travel on key inter-city routes is highlighted. The Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area 2010-2022 promote increased investment in public transport, inclusive of increased capacity in rail services. Neither the Strategy nor the Guidelines have a specific objective to provide for a National Train Control Centre. I, therefore, am of the opinion that the proposed development would not satisfy the condition contained in section 37A(2)(b) of the Act.

**5.4** The proposed development would be within the functional area of Dublin City Council. Its provision would not have a significant effect on the area of any other planning authority. I, therefore, am of the opinion that the proposed development would not satisfy the condition contained in section 37A(2)(c) of the Act.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

**6.1** Having regard to the above considerations, I recommend that Iarnród Éireann be informed at this stage of the pre-application proceedings that the proposed National Train Control Centre at Sheriff Street Upper, Dublin 1 constitutes an infrastructure development for the purposes of sections 37A and 37B within the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that it may fall within section 37A(2)(a) of the Act. Further to this, in the event that the Board concurs

with this conclusion, the Board would then enter into detailed pre-application consultation and commence with an initial meeting with the prospective applicant to acquire further details on the proposed development.

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**Kevin Moore**  
**Senior Planning Inspector.**  
**May 2016.**