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Planning Report
Limerick City & County Council

ABP Ref: ABP-310286-21
Location: Thomastown and Fantstown, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick
Dev. Description: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line

This planning report relates to the Fantstown and Thomastown level crossings, which are located within County Limerick. We understand that Cork County Council have provided comments in respect of the five other level crossings that are the subject of this Railway Order application, located within County Cork. The report is set out under the relevant issues requested by the Board.

Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework

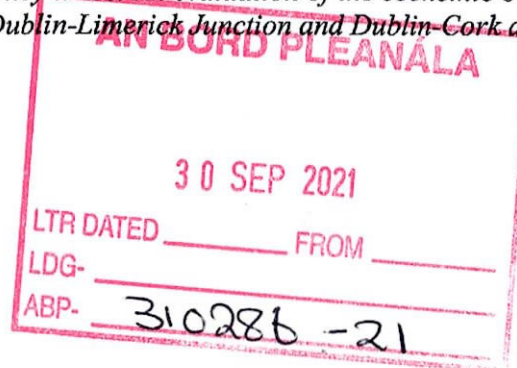
'Enhanced Regional Accessibility', 'Sustainable Mobility' and 'Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society' are the relevant National Strategic Outcomes of the NPF.

Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

RPO 170 Rail

It is an objective to seek to strengthen investment in the maintenance, improvement and strengthening of the rail network in the Region subject to appropriate environmental assessment and the outcome of the planning process. This will provide for:

- *Future proofed infrastructures for rail in our transition to smart transport networks and low carbon society.*
- *Improved journey times, services and passenger facilities to encourage greater use of rail travel between cities, towns and villages on the rail network across the Region.*
- *Take immediate actions to transition transport fleets to non-fossil fuel and renewable / low emission energy sources.*
- *Invest in integrated, real-time, passenger information systems and passenger facilities including weather proofed facilities.*
- *Optimisation of the existing rail network assets and the protection of these assets for our region's transition to greater levels of sustainable mobility, use of rail and achievement of lower carbon emissions.*
- *Investment in upgrading and modernisation of fleet, rail infrastructure and passenger facilities.*
- *Investment in commuter rail stations and services, especially in cities, suburbs and metropolitan areas.*
- *Investment in bike- and-ride and park-and-ride and multi-modal transport interconnection facilities with rail networks.*
- *Achieve improved and consistent journey times and frequencies.*
- *As identified in the National Development Plan, the Dublin – Limerick Junction/Cork rail lines are subject to an examination to move to higher speeds leading to improved connectivity to regional cities through improved rail journey times. An evaluation of the economic benefits of high-speed rail between Dublin-Belfast, Dublin-Limerick Junction and Dublin-Cork against*



improvements to existing line speeds will be carried out against relevant appraisal processes and value-for-money tests required by the Public Spending Code by 2020.

- Support feasibility assessments and investment in infrastructure to achieve high-speed intercity rail services.*
- Optimise rail freight to ports in the Southern Region*

Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016 (as extended)

The relevant policy and objectives are set out below.

Under the County Settlement Strategy, the Fantstown and Thomastown level crossings are located in an 'Area of Strong Agricultural Base' which is defined as:

"The rural areas that traditionally have had a strong agricultural base, that are restructuring to cope with changes in the agricultural sector and have an extensive network of smaller rural towns, villages and other settlements. In these areas, the focus of urban generated housing should be in the network of settlements to support the development of services and infrastructure and to take pressure off development in the open countryside."

Policy IN P6: *Protection of public transport assets and facilitation of public transport. It is Council policy to protect strategic public transport assets; to facilitate accessibility by public transport in development layouts; and to support the enhancement of public transport infrastructure and use through initiatives such as park and ride. To this end the Council shall seek, in particular, to implement the provisions of the emerging Mid Western Area Strategic Plan (MWASP) once fully assessed and adopted.*

Objective IN O5: *Protection of rail infrastructure - It is an objective of the Council to protect the following transport assets in rail infrastructure from inappropriate development that would compromise their safe operation or long term development:*

- a) Operating Railways of Limerick to Dublin via Ballybrophy and Castleconnell;*
- b) Those portions of railway line within Limerick between Limerick to Limerick junction and between Limerick junction to Charleville.*
- c) Rail infrastructure not in current use: the Limerick-Foynes line. The Council will ensure that no development or activities which would interfere with the possible re-use of the Foynes Limerick rail link will be permitted*
- d) The spur line to the cement factory at Mungret for freight use.*

Elsewhere the Council will continue to protect for amenity purposes the abandoned railway corridors from Limerick to Abbeyfeale and from Limerick to Charleville as long distance walking and cycling routes.

Objective IN O6: *Improvement of rail infrastructure - It is an objective of the Council to, where feasible, work with Iarnrod Eireann to promote improvements to extend the reach of passenger and commuter train services to more areas within the County, with the following priorities:*

- a) Improvements to the Limerick-Foynes line, for both freight and passenger use, with railway stations (and associated park and ride) at Patrickswell, Adare, and Foynes.*

b) The protection and redevelopment of Kilmallock railway station on the Limerick junction to Charleville railway line. Proposed developments for stations additional to the above will also be considered in consultation with Iarnrod Eireann.

c) Improvement to the Limerick-Mungret spur railway line including consideration of stations and park and ride to enable it to be used for commuter passenger services.

Draft Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028

Limerick City and County Council published the Draft Development Plan on the 26th of June 2021. The consultation period closed on Monday 6th September 2021.

Local Area Plan

The Fantstown and Thomastown level crossings are not within the boundary of an existing or draft LAP.

Planning History

Thomastown Level Crossing

8626190 Alterations and extension to house at Thomastown Level Crossing. Conditional permission.

0154 Erection of non residential accommodation unit and connection to existing septic tank. Conditional permission.

Enforcement history – None.

Fantstown Level Crossing

0153 Erection of non residential accommodation unit, parking, waste water treatment system. Conditional permission.

Relevant Adjacent:

18679 developing a solar farm on a site located in the townland of Gibbonstown, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick. The proposed solar farm will comprise the construction and operation of solar PV arrays mounted on metal frames on an approx. 20 ha site inclusive of a single electrical control building up to 5 inverter units, a temporary construction area and ancillary facilities, drainage swales, boundary security fence with CCTV units, an access track, all associated works (inclusive of gross floor space of proposed works up to 146 sq. m) and habitat management and enhancement measures. The planning application is accompanied by an environmental report and stage 2 screening for appropriate assessment. Conditional permission.

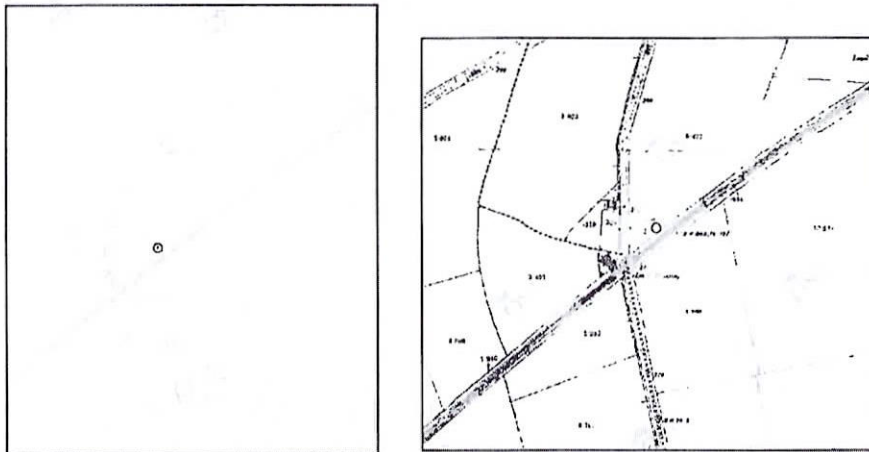
Enforcement history – None.

Protected Structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, Recorded Monuments

The Thomastown and Fantstown sites are not within an ACA and do not contain or adjoin any Protected Structures. Council's Conservation Officer has commented that "There are no

implication, insofar as I can determine at this remove, in respect of the built heritage other than the loss of traditional level crossing infrastructure” (full submission enclosed).

Council’s Archeologist has reviewed the proposal and has advised that the crossing in Fantstown does not appear to have any archaeological issues. The two maps below show the Thomastown crossing which is immediately adjacent to a recorded Monument and within the zone of notification and consequently the works require to be Notified to the National Monuments Service (National Monuments Act 1930-2014 (Amendment 1994 Section 12). Full submission enclosed.



Flood Risk

The Fantstown and Thomastown sites are not located within a flood zone (Flood Zone A or B) or OPW Benefitting Land.

Landscape Character Areas & Scenic Views and Prospects

The Fantstown site is within the Agricultural Lowlands Landscape Character Area.

Objective EH O7: Agricultural Lowlands Landscape Character Area:

It is the objective of the Council to:

- (a) Encourage, where housing is permitted, design that reflects existing housing stock, such as the two-storey farmhouses which are a feature in the area.*
- (b) Encourage retention of existing landscape features such as hedgerows and trees and their incorporation into landscaping for new developments.*
- (c) Discourage development of locally prominent sites.*
- (d) Encourage the regular arrangement of turbines with equal spacing in proposed wind farm developments, which take field boundaries into account.*
- (e) Encourage development within existing settlements.*

The Thomastown site is located at the edge of the Ballyoura/Slieve Reagh Landscape Character Area, adjoining the Agricultural Lowlands Landscape Character Area.

Objective EH O8: Ballyhoura/Slieve Reagh Landscape Character Area:

It is the objective of the Council to:

- (a) Where housing is permitted encourage appropriate scale and high quality design for this landscape area coupled with sensitive site location and landscaping. Respect traditional scale particularly on elevated or locally prominent sites.*
- (b) Strongly encourage retention of earth bank field boundaries particularly in the more upland parts of this area, as the screening abilities of landscape features in this area are limited.*
- (c) Encourage use of species native to this particular area in landscaping developments. Species native to the upland parts of this area could be used, such as mountain ash and birch.*
- (d) Ensure that forestry applications subject to planning are confined to infill and below 300m above sea level, as much of the Ballyhouras is a Special Area of Conservation. Volume 1 Environment and Heritage Limerick County Development Plan 2010 – 2016 November 2010 (as varied) 7 - 10*
- (e) Applications for wind energy will be only be considered in the areas open for consideration in Map 8.4.*
- (f) Encourage development within existing settlements.*

There are no designated scenic views and prospects in the vicinity of the Thomastown site or Fantstown site.

Roads

The N/M20 Cork to Limerick Project Office have no objections to the Cork Line Level Crossing Project in respect of the N/M20 Cork to Limerick Project (full submission enclosed).

Council's Roads Section has made the following comments in respect of the Thomastown site:

- Limerick City and County council should be kept apprised of the scheme progression with quarterly updates from Irish Rail.
- To avoid any unnecessary queuing of traffic on the R515 at the proposed junction, the realigned road from its junction with the R515 should be widened locally to allow traffic from the R515 enter onto the proposed road and pass safely any traffic (including large vehicles such as agricultural machinery) that may be queuing in the opposite direction. The length of the road that will require localised widening to be agreed with Limerick City and County Council prior to the commencement of construction.
- Design Phase

The design of all works must be in accordance with the TII suite of technical standards for all road and structural elements of the works. The designer of all works should be a Chartered Engineer and a declaration should be provided that all design works are completed in accordance with the TII suite of Technical Standards.

- **Construction Phase**

All construction works should be carried in accordance with the technical standards indicated in 2 above. All construction works must be supervised by a suitably qualified team led by a Chartered Engineer who has over 15 years experience in the management and supervision of Civil Engineering works of a similar nature to those proposed under the Railway Order. The supervision team should ensure that all construction works including materials testing are recorded correctly and the safety file is updated throughout the construction phase.

- **Handover**

The full safety file including as built information pertaining to the road should be submitted to Limerick City and County Council for review at least 4 months prior to the road being handed over.

Full submission enclosed.

Part V

N/A

Habitats Directive Project screening assessment

The Planning Authority notes that the Board is the competent authority with regard to the consideration of the Natura Impact Statement carried out by the applicant in the assessment of the Railway Order application. The Board should satisfy themselves that the proposed development, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects, does not exercise a significant effect on the conservation status of any SAC or SPA.

Development Contributions

The proposed development is subject to the Limerick City and County Council Development Contribution Scheme 2017-2021. There is no applicable Supplementary Development Contribution (Section 49) Scheme.

Assessment

The proposed development will improve the efficiency and safety of the Dublin-Cork railway line and is considered to accord with national, regional and local policy in enhancing regional accessibility and promoting sustainable mobility. On this basis, the Planning Authority is supportive of the project in principle.

The proposed development involves the closure of the level crossing at Fantstown and it is noted that no construction work is required. In respect of Thomastown, the proposed development involves the construction of a new bridge over the railway line and realignment of the local road to tie in with the R-515. It is considered that the railway order application including the EIAR has provided a comprehensive assessment of the proposed development including predicted and cumulative impacts and has put forward mitigation measures as appropriate.

There is a recorded monument in the vicinity of the Thomastown site and Council's Archaeologist has advised that the works require to be Notified to the National Monuments Service (National Monuments Act 1930-2014 (Amendment 1994 Section 12).

Council's Roads Section has requested conditions in respect of the Thomastown site, which are included in the section below.

Proposed Conditions

In the event of the Board deciding to make a railway order, it is recommended that the following conditions be included in respect of the Fantstown and Thomastown sites:

1. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) submitted with the application shall be complied with. All mitigation proposed in the EIAR shall be carried out in full.

Reason - In the interests of preserving the environment, proper planning and sustainable development.

2. Works at XC201 Thomastown require to be Notified to the National Monuments Service (National Monuments Act 1930-2014 (Amendment 1994 Section 12).

Reason: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site and to secure the preservation of any remains which may exist within the site.

3. Limerick City and County council should be kept apprised of the scheme progression with quarterly updates from Irish Rail.

Reason: In the interest of clarity and orderly development.

4. The following requirements shall be complied with in respect of XC201 Thomastown:

(a) To avoid any unnecessary queuing of traffic on the R515 at the proposed junction, the realigned road from its junction with the R515 should be widened locally to allow traffic from the R515 enter onto the proposed road and pass safely any traffic (including large vehicles such as agricultural machinery) that may be queuing in the opposite direction. The length of the road that will require localised widening to be agreed with Limerick City and County Council prior to the commencement of construction.

(b) The design of all works must be in accordance with the TII suite of technical standards for all road and structural elements of the works. The designer of all works should be a Chartered Engineer and a declaration should be provided that all design works are completed in accordance with the TII suite of Technical Standards.

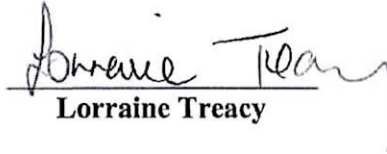
(c) All construction works should be carried in accordance with the technical standards indicated in 2 above. All construction works must be supervised by a suitably qualified team

led by a Chartered Engineer who has over 15 years experience in the management and supervision of Civil Engineering works of a similar nature to those proposed under the Railway Order. The supervision team should ensure that all construction works including materials testing are recorded correctly and the safety file is updated throughout the construction phase.

(d) The full safety file including as built information pertaining to the road should be submitted to Limerick City and County Council for review at least 4 months prior to the road being handed over.

Reason: In the interest of orderly development and road safety.

Assistant Planner:


Lorraine Treacy

Senior Executive Planner:

 30/09/21
Donogh O'Donoghue

Enclosures (4):

- NM20 Cork to Limerick Project Team Submission
- Limerick City & County Council Roads Dept. Submission
- Limerick City & County Council Archaeologist Submission
- Limerick City & County Council Architectural Conservation Officer Submission

N20

Cork to Limerick

N/M20 Project Office
Lissanalta House, Dooradoyle, Limerick
V94 H5RR, Ireland
Phone: +353 61 973 730
Email: info@corklimerick.ie
web: www.corklimerick.ie

Our Ref: 0132_03_00374

**Donogh O'Donoghue
Planning Department
Limerick City & County Council
Civic Offices
Dooradoyle
Limerick**

By: Email to planning@limerick.ie

Date: 14th September 2021

RE: Proposed Railway Order - Cork Line Level Crossing Project (ABP Ref PL04 .305149)

Dear Sir / Madam,

I refer to the above application by CIE for a Railway Order for the Cork Line Level Crossing Project which has been submitted to An Bord Pleanála (Case Reference PL04 .305149). The following is the observations of the N/M20 Cork to Limerick Project Office for consideration as part of the Local Authority submission to An Bord Pleanála.

The project team for Irish Rail has held significant consultation with the N/M20 Cork to Limerick project team over the last two years during the development of the Cork Line Level Crossing Project. A number of the proposed Railway Order sites fall within the study area for the N/M20 project including: XC201 Thomastown; XC209 Ballyhay; XC212 Ballycoskery; XC215 Shinanagh and XC219 Buttevant Gates.

However, the N/M20 Cork to Limerick project team is supportive of the Cork Line Level Crossings Project and the potential safety benefits it will provide. We would welcome the continued liaison between the two project teams as the two projects move through the planning, design and implementation phases.

Therefore, we have no objections to the Cork Line Level Crossing Project in respect of the N/M20 Cork to Limerick Project.

Yours sincerely,



**Jari Howard
NM20 Project Coordinator
Limerick City and County Council**

Lorraine Treacy

Subject: FW: Referral: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

From: McKechnie, Trevor
Sent: Friday, September 24, 2021 7:44 AM
To: Lorraine Treacy <Lorraine.Treacy@limerick.ie>
Subject: RE: Referral: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

Hi Lorraine,

The comments refer to Thomastown only.

Regards,

TRevor

From: Lorraine Treacy <Lorraine.Treacy@limerick.ie>
Sent: Thursday, September 23, 2021 8:55 PM
To: McKechnie, Trevor <trevor.mckechnie@limerick.ie>
Subject: RE: Referral: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

Hi Trevor,

Can you confirm which comments apply to Fantstown and which apply to Thomastown, or both.

Thanks,

Lorraine

From: McKechnie, Trevor
Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2021 2:32 PM
To: Lorraine Treacy <Lorraine.Treacy@limerick.ie>
Subject: FW: Referral: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

Hi Lorraine,

Please see attached report from the Cappamore-Kilmallock MD Office I sent back to Heather.

Regards,

Trevor

Trevor McKechnie | Senior Executive Engineer | Operation & Maintenance (Cappamore-Kilmallock)
Limerick City & County Council | Railway Road | Kilmallock | Co. Limerick
t: 061 556563 | e: trevor.mckechnie@limerick.ie

From: McKechnie, Trevor

Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2021 2:05 PM

To: Supple, Heather <heather.supple@limerick.ie>

Cc: McGrath, Hugh <hugh.mcgrath@limerick.ie>; O'Donoghue, Donogh <donogh.odonoghue@limerick.ie>

Subject: RE: Referral: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

Hi Heather,

The comments of the Cappamore-Kilmallock MD office are as follows:

Limerick City and County council should be kept apprised of the scheme progression with quarterly updates from Irish Rail.

To avoid any unnecessary queuing of traffic on the R515 at the proposed junction, the realigned road from its junction with the R515 should be widened locally to allow traffic from the R515 enter onto the proposed road and pass safely any traffic (including large vehicles such as agricultural machinery) that may be queuing in the opposite direction. The length of the road that will require localised widening to be agreed with Limerick City and County Council prior to the commencement of construction.

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Regards,

Trevor

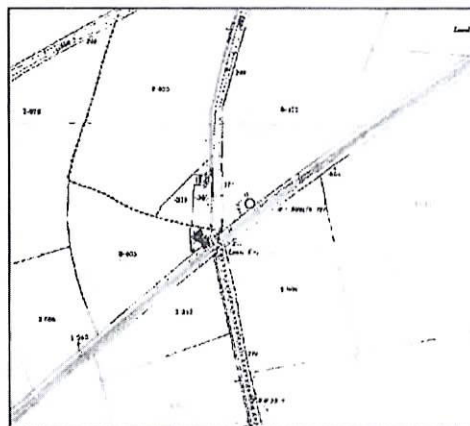
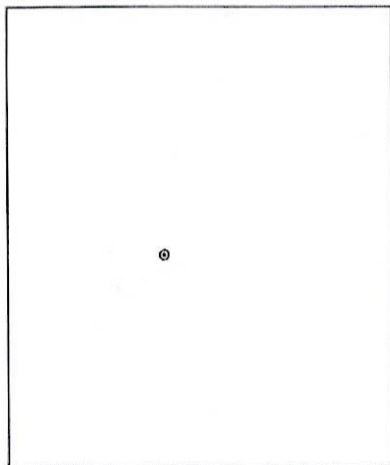
Trevor McKechnie | Senior Executive Engineer | Operation & Maintenance (Cappamore-Kilmallock)
Limerick City & County Council | Railway Road | Kilmallock | Co. Limerick
t: 061 556563 | e: trevor.mckechnie@limerick.ie

Lorraine Treacy

From: McCutcheon, Sarah
Sent: Friday 17 September 2021 16:41
To: Lorraine Treacy; Supple, Heather
Subject: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

Thomastown: LI047-045 Earthwork



I haven't been able to access the files, as the link has expired. The crossing in Fantstown does not appear to have any archaeological issues. The two maps above show the Thomastown crossing which is immediately adjacent to a recorded Monument and within the zone of notification and consequently the works require to be Notified to the National Monuments Service (National Monuments Act 1930-2014 (Amendment 1994 Section 12).

Yours

Sarah McCutcheon

Local Authority Archaeologist

Limerick City and County Council

17.09.2021

Lorraine Treacy

Subject: FW: Referral: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

From: Cassidy, Tom

Sent: Thursday, September 16, 2021 6:47 PM

To: Lorraine Treacy <Lorraine.Treacy@limerick.ie>

Subject: RE: Referral: Proposed Railway Order - Replacement of 7No. manned level crossing on the main Dublin to Cork Railway Line - CIE (Limerick Council)

Lorraine,

Though I am not able to get out to inspect these locations, due to the short notice provided, I am familiar with both crossings. There are no implication, insofar as I can determine at this remove, in respect of the built heritage other than the loss of traditional level crossing infrastructure.

Regards,

Tom

Tom Cassidy,
Architectural Conservation Officer,
Planning, Environmental Services,
and Place-Making Directorate,
Limerick City and County Council,
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