

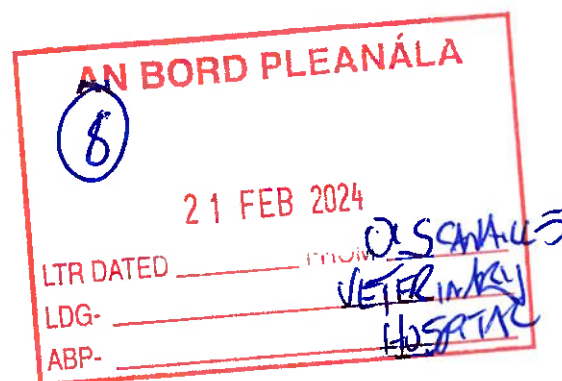
# METROLINK

## Equine and Veterinary Assessment

Dr. Conor O'Scanaill  
O'Scanaills Veterinary Hospital  
Milltown Fields  
Swords  
Co. Dublin

Michael P Sadlier  
MVB CertESM MACVSc(EqSurg) CertES(Orth) MRCVS

EVC  
108 Sandford Road  
Ranelagh  
Dublin 6



## **1. Introduction**

I was invited by Ms. Shannon Byrne, Jacobs, to examine and report on the impact that the proposed MetroLink rail line development would have on the equine and veterinary enterprises of Dr Conor O'Scanaill, O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital, Swords, Co. Dublin.

I visited the property on the 14th October 2021 and met with Dr. Conor O'Scanaill. Dr O'Scanaill guided me around the premises and explained the nature of his veterinary practice. He outlined how he felt the proposed development would impact his business. My written report is based on the information gained from my discussion with Dr O'Scanaill, observations I made during my site visit, my understanding of the works involved in the proposed scheme, the impact the proposed development will have on the health and welfare of the animals involved, the mitigation measures proposed and the overall impact that the proposed development would have on the veterinary practice.

## **2. Methodology**

Perusal of maps, a premises walk in conjunction with a discussion with the owner, consultation with the design team and consideration of the regulatory, animal health and human health and safety requirements of managing a veterinary practice. The discussion with the owner included the land-take and other impacts associated with the location of the proposed development. The owner had extensive mapping of the proposed development and these were reviewed while discussing the future operation of his enterprise.

## **3. Assessment**

An initial assessment of the equine aspect of the veterinary practice was made based on the intensive and extensive equine management. Intensive equine management was defined as the close interaction between man and horse such as riding, breaking, exercising, leading, turning out, race training, yearling preparation and mare and foal management. Health and safety issues for the horse handlers are important considerations in intensive equine management. Extensive management was defined as horses at pasture that required minimal interaction between man and horse.

The equine assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the farm considered the following:

- Land take
- Loss of amenities

- Fencing during and after construction
- Screen planting
- Mixed species hedgerows
- Water supply
- Impact of noise and dust on the equines on the premises
- Access to divided lands

I also assessed the impact on the veterinary practice based on access to the practice during and post construction, the impact of noise and dust on the health and welfare of staff, patients and clients during and post construction, the impact of land loss on car parking and accessibility and the impact the proposed development would have on the current value of the practice.

#### **4. Premises Assessment of O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital**

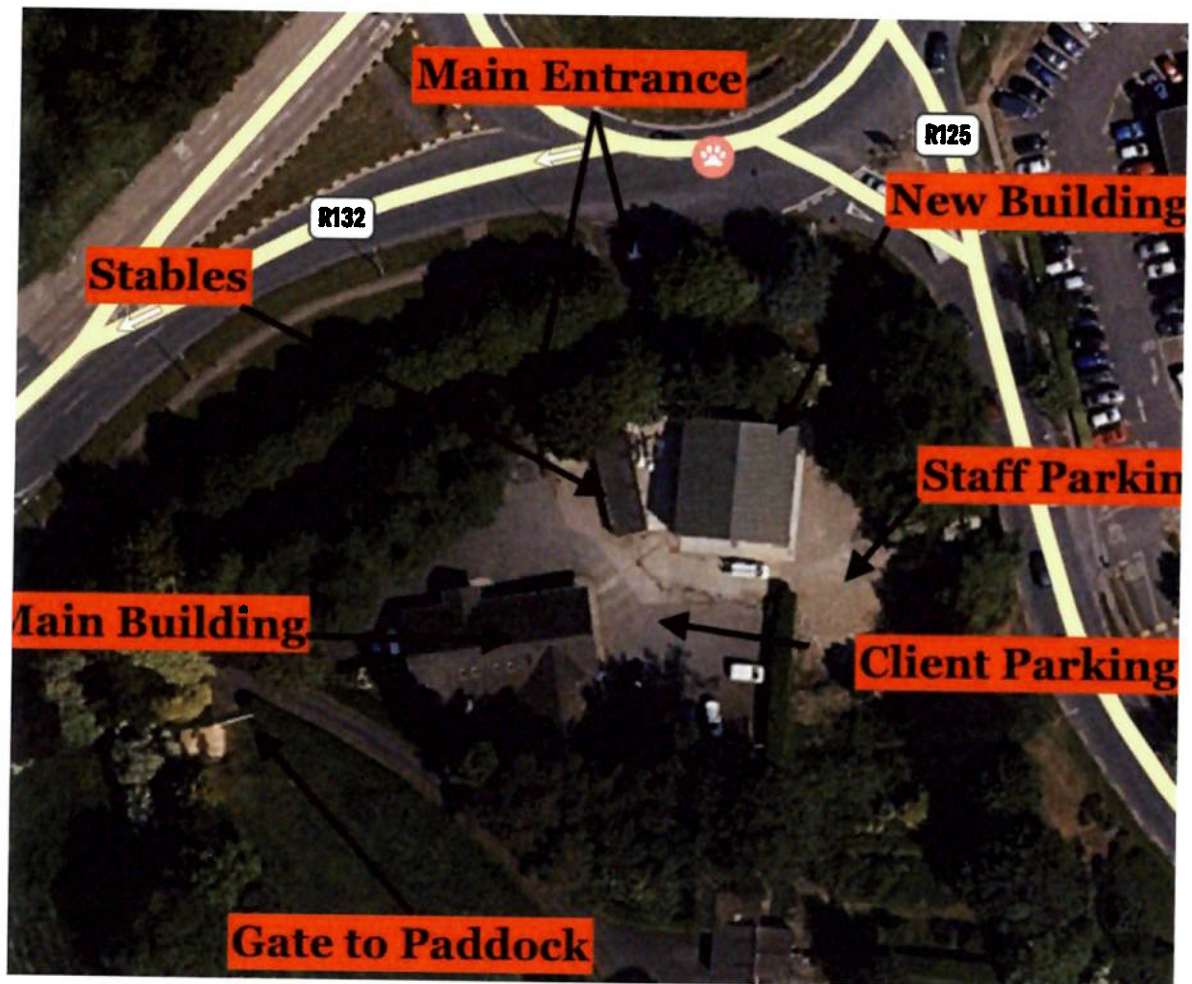
The O'Scanaill family has a long tradition of providing a veterinary service to the people of Swords and the surrounding areas in North County Dublin, which goes back to the founding of the original veterinary practice by Conor's father Tadhg O'Scanaill in 1949. Originally the practice was strictly large animal (cows, sheep and horses) with a very small companion animal element. The practice evolved over the years and the current veterinary hospital is located at Pinnock Hill roundabout. This premises was opened in 2001 by Conor and Tadhg O'Scanaill, on a site adjacent to the family home which was built on the lands in 1954 .

Dr O'Scanaill informed me that the current site was originally the family home and the original veterinary clinic was built adjacent to the old Dublin to Belfast road. As the Swords area evolved and grew down through the years, the road layout changed significantly and the practice is now entered directly off the Pinnock Hill roundabout, a roundabout that merges the busy dual carriageway (R132), a link road to the M1 Motorway (R125) and an access road into the town of Swords (R836). There is a separate entrance and exit from the family home onto the southbound carriageway of the R132.

Dr. O'Scanaill informed me that the original family home was built on a 4 acres site which has now been divided into 0.8 acres around the veterinary clinic, a 2.5 acre field owned by his mother but used by him to occasionally turn out horses and a further 0.7 acre around the family home, currently occupied by his mother. There is another approximately 1 acres of public land, containing wild plants and trees which acts as a natural buffer and screen between the O'Scanaill land parcels and the R125 and the southbound section of the R132.

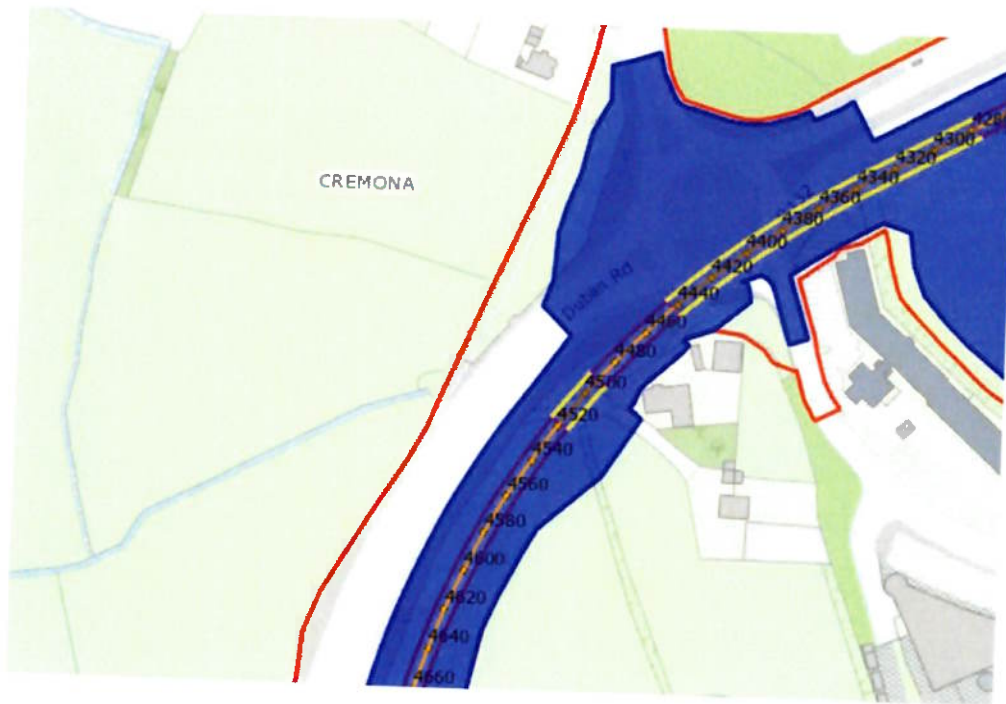






Dr O'Scanaill outlined an all too familiar progress of his veterinary business. Over the years, as Swords grew, farm numbers reduced considerably but conversely, the average farm size became significantly larger with less veterinary input required. Equine work flourished in the area along with companion animal practice but during the recession of 2007-2010, the equine work decreased significantly while the companion animal portion of the practice kept growing.

The practice now has a team of 7 veterinary surgeons, 8 veterinary nurses and another 7 ancillary staff. Over 90% of practice income derives from companion animal practice with the remainder consisting of 5% equine and 5% large animal.



Dr. O'Scanaill then demonstrated to me the route of the proposed MetroLink rail line and the section of his property that would be taken under a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). The rail line will run on the public land adjacent to the north-western boundary of the veterinary hospital but it's construction will require a land take, extending approximately 20 – 40 metres onto the site of the veterinary clinic. This land take will extend beyond the current main entrance which is located on the Pinnock Hill roundabout.

In conclusion, it is my opinion that the O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital operates two separate veterinary businesses. One is the companion animal clinic which is extremely busy and there is a constant flow of clients in and out of the main entrance. The secondary business is the equine side of the practice and although there are stables and a turn out paddock available, the traffic flow for this aspect of the business would be nowhere near as significant as the companion animal practice.

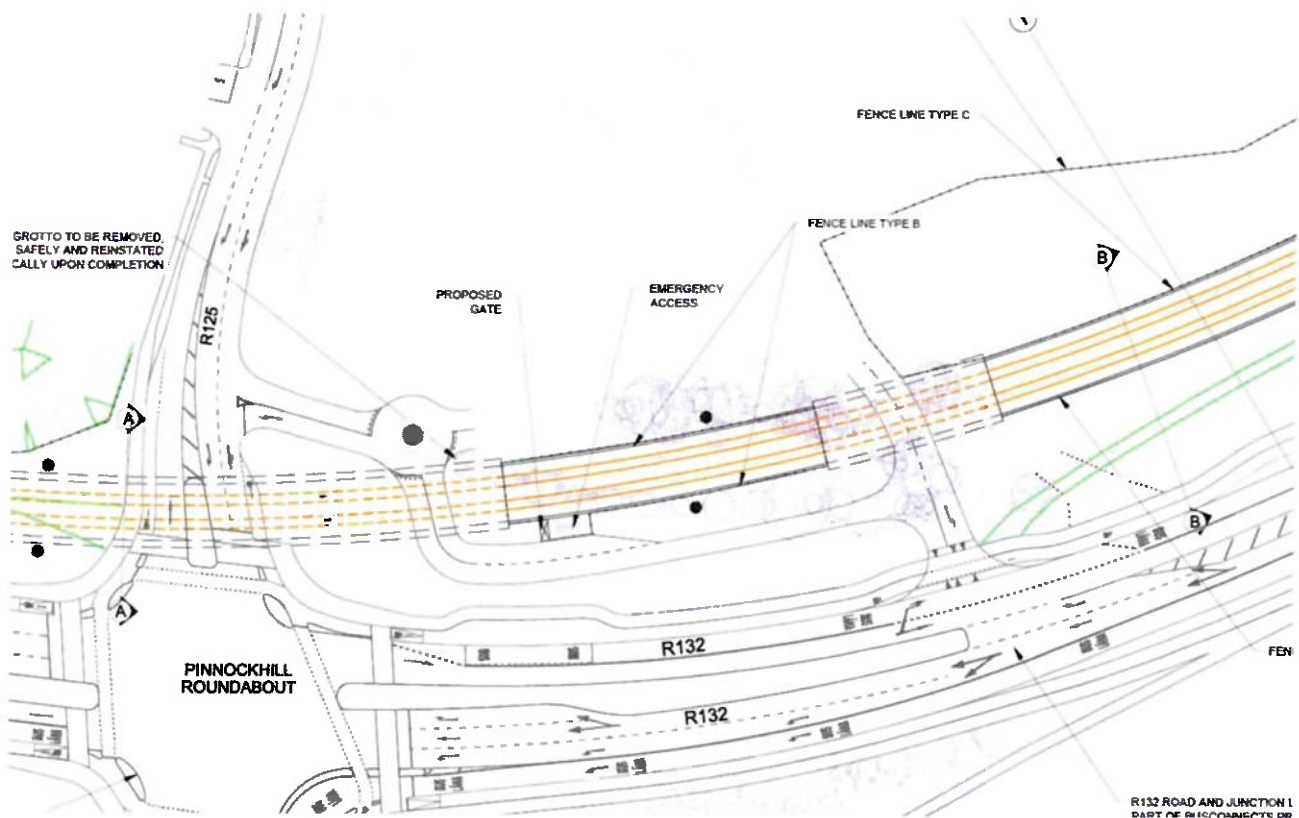
## **5. Impacts on O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital**

The impacts on the veterinary hospital will be discussed under two headings – During Construction and Post Commissioning.

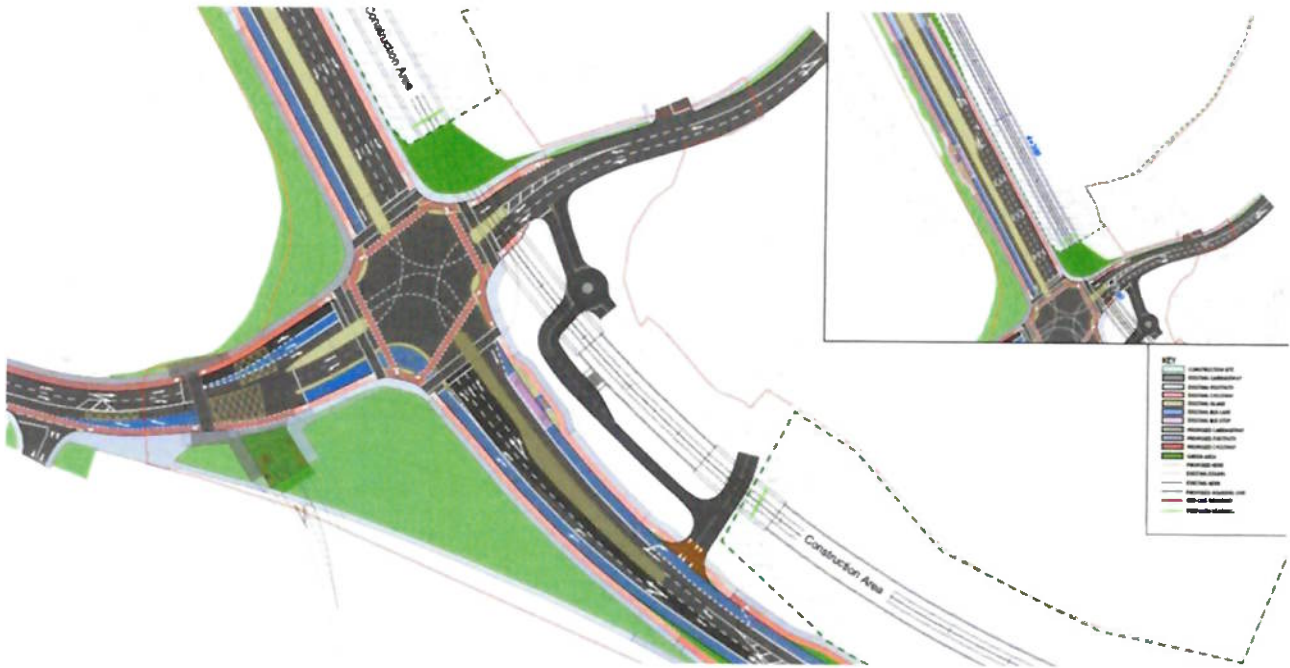
## During Construction

The proposed rail line development could take approximately 3 years from start to finish and a further 3-6 months would have to be allowed for reinstatement of the lands taken. It is my opinion that the veterinary hospital will have the following impacts:

1. Access - It would appear that the Metrolink project is one of two proposed infrastructural projects affecting the immediate vicinity of the O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital, which also includes BusConnects. The R132 Connectivity Project does not affect O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital. It would appear that as part of the proposed BusConnects Scheme, the main entrance to the hospital will originate off the R125 via a link road and a local roundabout, rather than the current R132 entrance at the Pinnock Hill Roundabout. It would also appear that the proposed BusConnects scheme will precede the Metrolink. The Metrolink plans proposes to provide access across the proposed works to both the main entrance and also to the more southerly R132 entrance at all times. If this is the case, then the impact of Metrolink on the entrance to the O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital will be minimal.







2. Land Loss – The land loss will impact on this tight site, especially when it comes to client and staff parking, a highly prized commodity in any commercial business
  
3. Equine – The O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital has three stables and a turnout paddock but during my conversation with Dr O'Scanaill, it would appear that equine work at the Hospital is small and reducing. During the construction phase, it would appear that there will be access from the stables to the paddock, through the same access that is being made available to the main entrance. It may prove more problematic to examine lame horses in the trot up area to the north of the main building which is part of the proposed land take but when you consider that equine work is a small percentage of the practice turn over, this loss of facilities will have a minor impact on that side of the business.
  
4. Construction Impacts – The proposed construction site is within 50 metres of both the main and new veterinary buildings and there will be negative impacts, such as noise and dust on the working environment for staff, clients and animals alike.
  
5. Commercial – Small animal clients rarely have a contractual relationship with a veterinary practice and there is a significant risk that clients may be deterred from using the practice during construction due to poor access, reduced parking and the inconvenience of the construction activity. Once these clients find and bond to another practice, of which there are plenty in the greater Swords region, these clients may not return.



6. Practice Valuation – Veterinary practices, particularly companion animal practices are currently very valuable commercial enterprises with steady cash flows and moderate to good profitability. The buyers, normally corporate groups, purchase practices that are financially secure with premises and facilities that have excellent and secure covenants. With the current proposed development on the horizon, and the uncertainty that it brings, the O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital may be undervalued and/or may not attract a purchaser until the works are completed.

7. Loss of Natural Screening – What is remarkable about this veterinary hospital is the depth and density of the natural screening between the veterinary buildings and the very busy arterial routes. The natural screening is in sympathy with the surrounding environment and provides the hospital with significant noise control, considering how close the hospital is to a major dual carriageway. Most of this screening will have to be removed during the construction phase which will alter the hospital's surrounding environment significantly.

### **Post Commissioning**

I am making the assumption that all the lands taken for the building of the rail line will be returned to O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital once the construction is completed. If this is the case, then the most significant post construction impact would be the loss of natural screening from the R132., Swiftway and Metrolink.. However, these impacts could be mitigated by heavily planting the returned land take with mature hedgerows.

### **6. Mitigation Measures**

Mitigating measures were defined as measures that would reduce the impacts from construction of the proposed scheme on the individual farm, stud, riding stables or veterinary clinic. The measures suggested are based on common sense, good farming practices, good animal husbandry, health and safety regulations and practical reasons. The measures of reducing impacts varied from farm to farm. Many of the mitigation measures will be outlined in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) when it is published.

The principal measures suggested are as follows:

#### **Accommodation Works**

- Provision of adequate access to the hospital and family home
- Effective screen planting around the proposed development

**Mitigation of construction impacts**

- Control of noise and dust during construction phase
- Control of litter during construction phase

The noise and dust associated with the building of the proposed rail link will require monitoring and watering.

**7. Conclusion**

It is my opinion that the overall impact of the MetroLink on the O'Scanaill Veterinary Hospital will be moderate during construction and minor post commissioning.

## CLASSIFICATION OF IMPACTS ON EQUESTRIAN/VETERINARY ENTERPRISES

These are basic criteria that may vary in specialist equestrian enterprises.

### **Significance Level** Judgement Criteria

- **Severe**

Severe Impact occurs where the enterprise cannot continue as a result of the proposed scheme:

- **Major**

Major impact occurs where the equestrian enterprise cannot continue without major management and operational changes:

- **Moderate**

Moderate impact occurs where the current farm enterprises can continue as before but with increased management difficulties:

- **Minor**

Minor impact occurs where the enterprise suffers some interference but remains viable:

- **Not Significant**

Where the enterprise suffers a slight inconvenience.