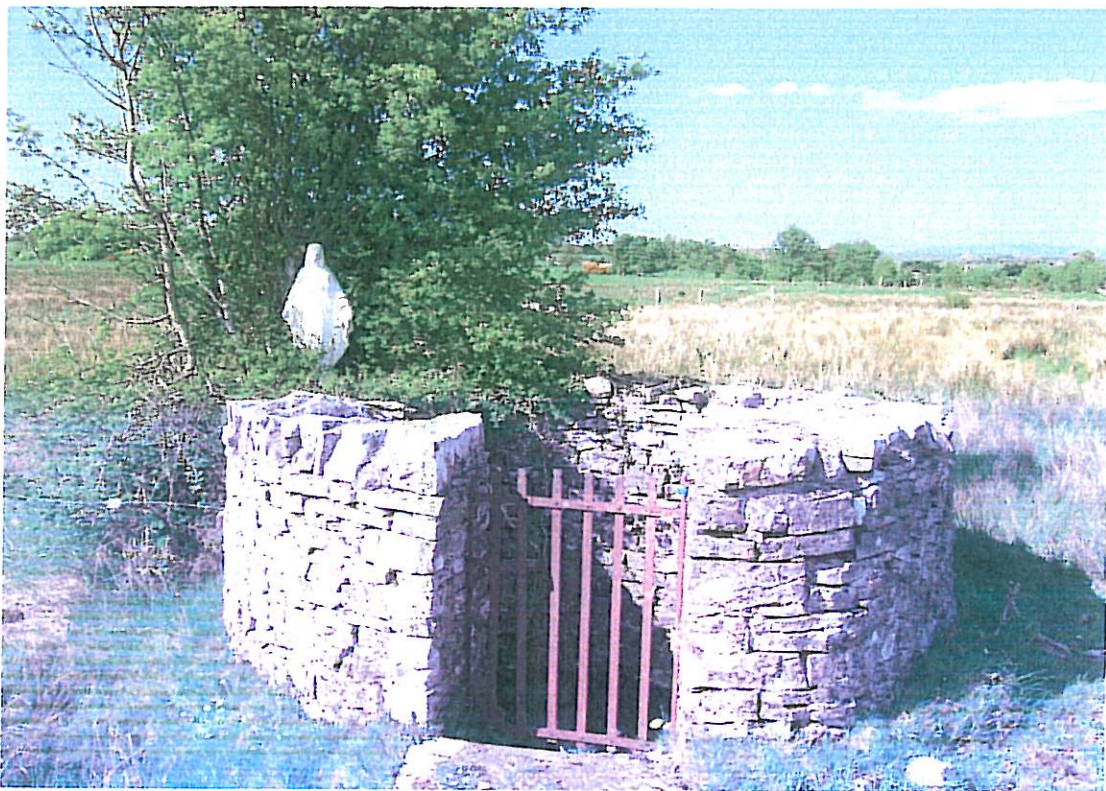


Appendix 3I Socio-Economic

N5 STRATEGIC ROUTE CORRIDOR SELECTION STUDY

COMMUNITY IMPACTS



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1.1 Non-technical summary

Four route options (including sub-options) are being considered for the re-alignment of the N5 between Strokestown and Frenchpark in County Roscommon. A “do-minimum option” represented by improvements to the existing N5, is included among these four options. The Community Assessment considers the relative merits of these four options based on the socio-economic impacts on:

- 1 Journey characteristics, i.e. impact on journey duration and journey time reliability, particularly for local traffic.
- 2 Community severance, i.e. disruption caused by the presence of roads to local journeys to community facilities, particularly journeys by vulnerable groups such as older people and children.
- 3 Amenity, i.e. journey amenity factors such as comfort and perceived safety especially as it affects vulnerable groups, pedestrians and cyclists, plus impacts on quality of life resulting from, for example, impacts on local amenities used by for recreation.
- 4 Economic, i.e. impacts on economic opportunities for local businesses and employment.

Each of these impacts can be either positive or negative. The magnitude of expected impacts is discussed within the Route Options Report and would be quantified within a full environmental impact statement once more detailed information is available on road design.

The proposed re-alignment would affect towns found on the current N5, namely Frenchpark, Bellanagare, Tulsk and Strokestown, as well as others towns and communities in the vicinity, notably Elphin. The current N5 imposes significant community impacts on towns along the route as well as some schools. Safety hazards also arise at several points where there are crossroads with minor roads and with the N61 and R361. Nevertheless, the do-minimum option cannot be discounted given that new impacts will be imposed by the selection of alternative options. Each of these alternatives does, however, aim to minimise or avoid impacts on the Cruachan complex which is of great archaeological value, but also a socio-economic asset.

Overall, Routes 1 and 2 are given equal ranking in the assessment (together with sub-options 1A and 2A). The proximity of Route 1 to Elphin presents some potential benefits to the town, but ultimately the relative merits of Routes 1 and 2 depend on the precise choice of routing and on junction location and design that address potential economic and amenity impacts in Frenchpark and the vicinity of Strokestown. Route 4 is identified as an inferior option in that it provides fewer significant socio-economic benefits, acknowledging its adverse landscape impact. Route 3 (do-minimum) perpetuates the existing significant adverse severance and journey amenity impacts even in the event that some schools are re-located.

1.2 Introduction

Roscommon National Roads Design Office has been commissioned by Roscommon County Council and the National Roads Authority to advance the evaluation of options for the N5 between Frenchpark and Strokestown.

Four principal Route Corridor Options are being considered, Options 1, 2, 3 and 4. These include a number of sub-options, namely 1A, 2A and 2B.

1.1.1 Route Option 1

In common with all Route Corridor Options, Route Option 1 runs from Teevnacreeva at the western tie-in with the proposed Ballaghaderreen Bypass west of Frenchpark to Scramoge east of Strokestown. The route takes a line north of the existing N5 to the south of Elphin, before following the R368 east of Strokestown.

1.1.2 Route Option 1A

Route Option 1A follows much of that of Option 1, but for the section that is located south the Frenchpark before following the line of Option 2 until Carrigeenacreeha where it departs in an easterly direction to join the line of Route 1.

1.1.3 Route Option 2

Route Option 2 begins at Teevanacreeva and takes a direction south of Frenchpark and the existing N5 similar to that of option 1A before switching north of the N5 at Bellanagare. From here it follows a line north of Rathcroghan before falling back to cross the N61 around 1.4km north of Tulsk. It crosses the existing N5 again at Corbally, continuing thereafter south of Strokestown.

1.1.4 Route Option 2A

Route Option 2A follows a similar line to that of Option 2, but for a small variation at the western tie-in and east of the N5 crossing at Ardakillin from where it takes a line to the south of Strokestown through Cloonfinlough and across to Ballyhammont.

1.1.5 Route Option 2B

Route Option 2B is substantially similar to Route 2, but for the area east of the N61 where it takes a more northerly line through Correagh, thereafter following Option 2A after the N5 crossing.

1.1.6 Route Option 3

This Route Option is represented by the baseline, being a proposed upgrade of the existing N5 passing through the towns/villages of Frenchpark, Bellanagare, Tulsk and Strokestown. The corridor is necessarily more narrow than the alternatives at 150 metres.

1.1.7 Route Option 4

Route Option 4 continues south of the existing N5 throughout its length. In common with Options 2, 2a and 2B, it passes 1km south of Frenchpark and just 0.7km south of Bellanagare.

1.3 Objectives and Methodology

The purpose of the Community Assessment of the Route Corridor Options is to identify potential impacts on local people and communities. Potential impacts fall into four key categories, namely:

- Journey characteristics: an assessment of the impact of the proposed route on journey time, journey time reliability and travel patterns.
- Community severance: an assessment of the impact of the proposed route with regard to community severance, including impacts on the use of community facilities, particularly those used by older people, children or other vulnerable groups. The category includes both new severance and relief from existing severance.
- Amenity: An assessment of the impact on amenity and quality of life. This category also includes journey amenity arising from people's exposure to traffic (i.e. safety, noise, dirt, air quality) as well as impacts for various types of road users on both existing and proposed roads arising from factors such as visual intrusion and congestion.
- Economic impacts: an evaluation of the proposed road in the context of economic prospects and employment.

There are potential interactions between each of these categories and between community impacts and other identified environmental impacts. In addition, there is the potential for cumulative impacts where one type of predicted impact can lead directly or indirectly to another. Induced residential development could be one such impact.

Impacts can be positive or negative. Their significance depends, among other considerations, on the nature of the environment affected, the duration of an impact and the probability of its occurrence. It often follows that impacts of a community nature are a function of:

- a) the scale of the impact itself,
- b) the numbers of people likely to be affected, and
- c) the impact on vulnerable or sensitive groups.

The emphasis is on social and economic impacts at a community level rather than for individuals or identifiable properties.

In the context of the N5 Strategic Corridor Selection Study, the key impacts of journey characteristics and severance depend firstly on projections of changes in traffic flows and, secondly, on the design and location of junctions with the proposed road. At this stage, this information is not available and therefore it would be unreliable to assign impacts as *Not significant, Minor, Moderate, Major* or *Profound*. Such an assessment would need to be included in the Environmental Impact Assessment once the preferred route has been selected and its design has been consolidated.

Rather, the focus of the Strategic Corridor Selection Study is to identify possible impacts at an early stage and to contribute to a judgement as to which corridor is associated with the minimum overall impact. In advance of full public consultation, it would be inappropriate to introduce possible anxiety by discussing route options with local people who might be affected by one or other route. Instead, an understanding of the existing community has been built up through background research and on-the-ground primary assessments of each option. Relevant information in this regard has included:

- Demographic data from the 2006 Census;

- Drawings of the proposed Route Options provided by the Roscommon National Roads Design Office;
- Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 maps No. 32, 33 and 40;
- Traffic report prepared by TPi;
- A review of secondary sources such as the Roscommon County Development Plans (2003-2009) and the Local Area Plans for Strokestown and Elphin.

The community assessment of the road has been undertaken broadly in line with guidelines provided by the EPA Advice Notes on Current Practice in the Preparation of Environmental Impact Statements (2003), EPA Guidelines on the Information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements (2002) and the NRA Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide (2006). In addition, reference is made to the guidelines provided on Community Effects in Part 8, Section 3 of the UK Department of Transport Publication Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Volume 11 (DMRB et. al. 1993, updated 2000).

1.4 Demographic Profile

The study area is represented by a predominantly rural area with the nearest towns being Ballaghaderreen to the west, Longford to the east, Boyle to the north and Castlerea to the south. Located within the study area along the existing N5 are the small local towns of Strokestown, Frenchpark, Bellanagare and Tulsk with the town of Elphin located on the northern study area boundary and Castleplunket on the southern boundary. The populations of these towns and villages are included in the Electoral Division figures in Table 1a and identified separately in Table 1b.

In common with national trends, the population of the area has increased since the last Census in 2002. However, the increase is modest, having been at a lower rate than for the county as a whole. Most of this increase has occurred in the hinterland of existing towns and villages. The western and central parts of the study area are very rural and population density is light.

Table 1a Population: Electoral Divisions

Electoral division	2006	2002	Percent change
Buckill	371	387	-4.1%
Frenchpark	886	793	11.7%
Fairymount	366	350	4.6%
Baslick	152	147	3.4%
Bellanagare	575	536	7.3%
Mantua	68	75	-9.3%
Rossmore	150	170	-11.8%
Elphin	769	711	8.2%
Cregga	172	161	6.8%
Annaghmore	327	318	2.8%
Ogulla	227	251	-9.6%
Tulsk	268	215	24.7%
Strokestown	984	943	4.3%
Total Study area	5,315	5,057	5.1%
Total County Roscommon	58,768	53,774	9.3%

Table 1b Population: Local towns

	<i>Strokestown</i>	<i>Elphin</i>	<i>Frenchpark</i>	<i>Bellanagare</i>	<i>Longford</i>	<i>Ballaghaderreen</i>
2006	773	591	454	134	3,694	1,720
2002	631	527	358	Not recorded	3,279	1,416
%	22.5%	12.1%	26.8%	-	12.7%	21.5%

1.5 Planning

Elphin and Strokestown are the main local towns and both have been the subjects of Local Area Plans which aim to consolidate the built environment and to improve aspects of quality of life.

Elphin has the appearance of a quiet rural town, although its support role to the local area is noted in the Development Plan and it does possess a busy agricultural mart. Heritage features include a restored windmill and the remains of the former Elphin Cathedral. Most new development is evident from very recent times and has occurred mainly on the western edge of the town towards the N61. The town possess the usual community facilities, namely churches, a National School, Community College, medical centre, day care centre/nursing home, library and playing field. The main street contains evidence of some dereliction, but also some preserved heritage features. The most northern of the Route Options would enhance accessibility and provide some opportunity for new residential and possible business development.

Strokestown is identified in the National Spatial Strategy as a rural town with potential for diversification and urban strengthening. The Local Area Plan acknowledges the potential of the town as a heritage centre. Indeed, it possesses a major heritage attraction in the form of Strokestown Park House and the Famine Museum. It also includes a recently renovated walled garden. These tourist attractions are complemented by the St. John's Genealogy Centre on the western fringe of the town. Strokestown House is a popular destination for visitors and tour buses, although its local amenity contribution is more limited in that most of the former demesne is currently used for grazing.

The Pakenham-Mahon family aspired that Strokestown's main street should be the widest in Europe, yet despite its attraction there is little evidence of service facilities for tourist or passing trade aside from the Percy French Hotel. Most shops are located on the Elphin Road and much recent residential development has occurred on the south-western extremity of the town or in the surrounding rural area while leaving the centre looking down-at-heal. The distance of a preferred Route Option from the town is of socio-economic relevance even though only a handful of businesses have a partial dependence on passing trade. Rather, a potential opportunity exists to enhance the town's heritage fabric to attract more tourist activity away from Strokestown House to the greater part of the town.

1.6 Community facilities

Schools and churches are located throughout the study area, including along the existing N5. All four towns on the existing N5 have schools and churches that are located beside the busy road. Each presents issues of safety and severance due either to current traffic volumes or road alignment. Rathcroghan National School is especially exposed and has no dedicated parking. A short dirt lay-by on the opposite side of the road provides parking for the school

and also for access to the remains of Rathmore fort. Land has been purchased for the construction of a new school near Rathcroghan Crossroads, although the crossroads itself has been the site of road accidents.

Frenchpark possesses a large community childcare facility behind the main street. A playing field is located on the northern side of the existing N5. Various shops, pubs and a petrol station each benefit from passing trade to one degree or another. A good number of pubs are located on the N5 in or outside of the main towns. Some of those out of town rely heavily on passing trade. B&Bs are located in Frenchpark, Bellanagare and Strokestown.

There are two major tourist facilities in the study area. The first of these is the Cruachan ancient settlement site centred on Rathcroghan. The historic remains are scattered on either side of the existing N5 and are of archaeological and mythological interest. A visitor centre is located in Tulsk, although difficulty of access and interpretation means that the sites themselves are visited mainly by those with specialist interests. However, any investment in the site means that this situation could always change in the future.

The other major tourist attraction is Strokestown Park House and the Famine Museum, described above. A new golf course is located to the east of the town. Other more minor or specialist tourist attractions include the Douglas Hyde Centre west of Frenchpark, the birthplace of Percy French near Cloonyquin and the Elphin Windmill.

Community facilities in the wider study area that could potentially be affected by the road or changes in access include the one-teacher Mantua School near Bellanagare. Although, the school currently caters for fewer than ten local children, a new pre-school is being added and could attract families from a wider area. To the east, the Holy Trinity Church is located in quiet countryside to the east at Kinclare. Killynagh Church and National School are located at Cloonyquin on the N61 Boyle Road.

Community facilities south of the existing N5 include St. Paul's Church at Kilmurry, the Carnaska church and school at Carrownaskeagh and a larger school at Castleplunket. The Ogulla Shrine near Tulsk attracts small numbers of devotees. Burial grounds associated with the famine are located at Toberelvia near Castleplunket and at Strokestown.

The main amenities are local lakes which are used for angling. Numerous quiet and pleasant lakes are located between Strokestown and Elphin, several of which are used by anglers. Annaghmore Lough is a National Heritage Area and a popular destination for families (small numbers). The surrounding area is understood to be of high ecological value but has been little surveyed. To the south-east, forest walks are found near Strokestown at Slieve Bawn (Sliabh Ban). Much of the central area north and south of the existing N5 contains attractive open countryside of high visual amenity.

1.7 Community impacts of proposed Route Options

1.7.1 Journey Characteristics

Issues of journey patterns and times depend on the presence of major junctions and on road closures. Although assumptions have been made with regard to a couple of inter-sections between the Route Options and the more trafficked secondary routes, this section rather identifies potential issues with regard to local roads crossed by the various route alternatives.

Route 1 & 1A

Route 1 is the only option which passes north of Frenchpark. Although close to recent ribbon development along the R361, a junction here would reduce the amount of Boyle traffic entering Frenchpark. Most of the traffic leaving the R361 from this direction is likely to be westbound. There would be safety benefits in that this traffic could avoid the existing awkward junction with the N5 (although the relative priorities could be changed). However, residual traffic on the existing N5 is predicted to be greater for Route 1 than 1A. In either case, traffic levels of the existing N5 would be reduced by the selection of any option other than the Do-minimum and access to the National School would be safer due to this reduced through traffic.

Traffic using the R361 from the direction of Castlerea would need to enter Frenchpark to reach Route 1. Most traffic would be either northbound or local (given alternative westbound and eastbound access to the N5) and would therefore need to cross the existing N5. The converse would be true for Route 1A, but the benefit is less due to traffic volumes being less on the Castlerea road than on the Boyle road.

Local and pedestrian traffic originating in the rural hinterland of Frenchpark would not be greatly affected by any route alternative (excepting the Do-minimum). Local access would depend on measures (i.e. bridging) applied to local minor roads in contact with the Route Options. For instance, a scattering of houses in the vicinity of Sheepwalk have few alternative options by which to access the existing N5, but there is alternative access for those households in the vicinity of the old Frenchpark Demesne. Properties along the minor roads to the east of Frenchpark would experience long detours in the event of any closures, but the population density here is very light. In the case of Route 1A, impacts on journey characteristics in this area are as for Route 2.

The R369 from Elphin to Bellanagare carries a light level of traffic (1006 AADT) compared with other secondary roads in the study area. Traffic is east-west and would not be greatly inconvenienced by any absence of a junction with Route 1/1A. No obvious problem arises in relation to any potential closure of one of the two lanes crossed at Cartronagor in that alternative access is available here.

It is assumed that junction access would be provided from Route Option 1 to the N61. This could provide the main route access for Elphin. Access to Route 1 would shorten journey times for east and southbound traffic relative to the N4 for journeys originating in the vicinity of Boyle. This could stimulate an increase in traffic on the N61 and the R368 from Cortober.

The parallel minor road to the east of the N61 between Elphin and the existing N5 is used by light traffic and for local access. Further east, access arrangements are not defined for the R368, but as Route 1 runs parallel to this road, there are no particular impacts on journey characteristics. The minor road behind Cregga Hill and Greywood Hill serves a large hinterland and is well used by local traffic (1399 AADT), including a good proportion of

HGVs carrying gravel from the busy quarry at Moyglass. This aggregate traffic is likely to continue to pass through Strokestown and Elphin.

Routes 2, 2A & 2B

In contrast to Route 1, Routes 2, 2A and 2B (and 1A) pass to the south of Frenchpark. As such, Boyle traffic would continue to enter Frenchpark and to use the rather awkward junction at this point, although traffic levels on the existing N5 would be reduced and this could allow priority to be given to the R361. The position in relation to Castlerea traffic would depend on the location of a junction, although the volume of traffic from this direction is less than for the R361 North.

For local access, the same comments apply to Route 2 as for Route 1 for Sheepwalk. Route 2A passes through a quiet area in which alternative access is potentially available. This same applies for Turlaghnamador in the case of Route 2 after it has cut south across the existing N5. Further east (after Routes 2 and 2A have merged) the route crosses a few minor roads, all of which are lightly used. Once again, east-west journeys on the R369 are unlikely to be affected by the presence of the route or any junction.

A junction between Route 2 and the N61 (south of that for Route 1) would better facilitate access to Tulsk than Elphin. As for all alternatives except the Do-minimum, lower traffic levels on the existing N5 would mitigate (but not remove) the crossing hazard at the existing junction between the N5 and the N61. Were it to be an option, a junction on the N61 in preference to the existing N5 east of Tulsk would reduce traffic volumes on the more built up and very narrow section of this road where a school and church are also located. A footpath continues this far, but cycle journeys along the length of road would be safer due to the reduced traffic. Consequently, there could be benefits to local vehicle and pedestrian journeys, but these are dependent on junction location rather than the route choice *per se*.

As with all Route Options except the Do-minimum, Route 2 (and 2A, 2B) would also reduce hazard at the crossing between Cartron and Clooncullaan where N5 traffic speeds are currently increased by the improved re-alignment of the road at this point. Departures from the N5 are presently facilitated by right-hand lanes, but journeys across the road still involve a hazard factor. The central line of Route 2 would facilitate continued access to Strokestown in that the town would be visible from the road and involve a shorter return detour for stops by passing traffic than for Routes 2A, 2B and possibly Route 1. The section east of Strokestown has already been upgraded.

By comparison, Route 2A and 2B avoid the vicinity of the existing N5 altogether, crossing the minor Elphin to Clooncullaan road instead. The route also crosses other moderately used local roads at Clonfinlough and south of Ballyhammon as well as the R368 south of Strokestown.

Route 3

The Do-minimum option involves the upgrading of the existing N5. The existing road is sub-standard in structure and alignment. Passing opportunities are few, especially in the vicinity west of Strokestown. Journey characteristics would continue as at present unless some minor rural roads joining the N5 are closed off.

The option would involve traffic continuing through Frenchpark, Ballanagare, Tulsk and Strokestown (unless local by-passes are provided). In Frenchpark, the crossing hazard at the R361 would persist. The same would be true of crossroads at Rathcroghan, Tulsk and Carltron/Clooncullaan. Indeed, local journeys to community facilities in all towns would continue to share the road with regional traffic. This traffic includes HGVs and would

generally be travelling faster. It is also predicted to increase significantly over time, although improved road safety and access could be provided through the up-grading.

East of Bellanagare, there are a number of properties along the road that would be directly affected by realignment and widening. More recent properties tend to be fronted by good sized lawns, although this would obviously involve compulsory purchase. At Tulsk, realignment and widening would be essential to the east of the community at Corbally. Further east, a number of properties are located on both sides of the N5 between Cloonfree and Strokestown. Given the inadequacy of the existing road at this point, modifications would be necessary including the widening and straightening of the existing road. These could be awkward given the number of properties.

Route 4

Route 4 follows the existing N5 for a short distance from its western tie-in before branching off without raising any new journey impacts for the small, scattered communities of Sheepwalk and Porthaghard. The road passes south of Frenchpark and, like Route 2 (2A, 2B) would benefit Castlerea access rather than journeys to or from Boyle on the N361 North. Route 4 passes close to Bellanagare, but is unlikely to provide access or to interfere with the locally used minor roads most used by people in the community. A junction with the R367 north of Castleplunket may be unlikely given traffic volumes on this road.

Likewise, impacts on journey characteristics in the vicinity of the N61 and the existing N5 east of Tulsk depend on decisions made with respect to junctions in either or both of these locations. Severance of the Ballintemple road and the Carrownclogher road would probably need to be avoided due to local access and the presence a school and church along the latter. Continued access would also be needed on the Lachan road along which linear development has been allowed in recent years in the vicinity of the proposed crossing point.

1.7.2 Severance

As with 'journey characteristics', issues of severance obviously depend on the presence of major junctions and on road closures. As these have yet to be determined, this section deals rather with the location of community facilities in relation to the various route options. Access to all facilities, including schools and churches, within the towns along the existing N5 will be made considerably safer by reduced traffic on the existing N5 in all cases but for the Do-minimum.

Route 1 & 1A

As with all the Route Options, Routes 1 and 1A run close to Frenchpark, but access to community facilities would likely continue. A degree of severance would apply to the choice of Route 1A in that traffic from the direction of Boyle is greater than for that from Castlerea. On the other hand, the TPi study indicates that more traffic would continue through Frenchpark on the old N5 than would be the case for Route 1A which crosses this road between Frenchpark and Bellanagare. In either case, severance could be mitigated through junction prioritisation or pedestrian crossing facilities. To the east of Frenchpark, decisions on potential closures of minor roads on Route 1 would need to consider the low population density, but also the potentially long detours that could follow. There are possible issues in relation to turbary access here too.

There are two community facilities of note in the area east of Bellanagare. Firstly, both corridors, but especially Route 1A, pass close to the school at Mantua. Only a few of the children currently at the school reside outside the immediate area, although the catchment of

the new pre-school facility is likely to be greater. Any closure of the road could be difficult to contemplate given the continued presence of a school. Likewise, the Holy Trinity Church could be affected by any closure of the minor road to the south even though this road carries very light traffic.

There are no community facilities elsewhere on the route to the east except for those in Elphin and Strokestown. Access to the new Strokestown Golf Course at the very end of the corridor would not be affected.

Route 2, 2A & 2B

The only community facility directly affected by the corridor for these route options is Mantua School, for which the same comments apply as for Routes 1 and 1A. The golf course at Cloonfinlough has now transferred to the new site east of Strokestown.

The routes do not directly impact on community facilities in towns alongside the existing N5. As before, access to these facilities would be considerably safer due to the transference of much traffic. The choice of accessibility options to Tusk could have the effect of further reducing traffic flows on the N5 outside both the school and the church, although consideration would need to be given to the eastern catchment for these facilities. The TPI study predicts lower traffic flows on the existing N5 on either side of Tusk.

Route 3

All of the towns along the route possess schools and churches sited along the road itself. Issues of access and safety to these facilities apply in all cases. Local by-passes have not been included in the Route Options but, without these, selection of Route 3 is not tenable from a community impact perspective. Even were such by-passes to be provided, significant moderate to severe severance and hazard issues would apply to some rural pubs, three crossroads, the Douglas Hyde Centre, Rathcroghan School, Rathmore Mound and to householders throughout the length of the route, though especially those just west of Strokestown.

There are significant adverse severance and safety issues in relation to Frenchpark National School, the playing field and other community facilities in the town. Significant adverse severance also applies to the school, church and other community facilities in both Bellanagare and Tusk.

Adverse severance of *profound* significance apply to Rathcroghan School (and to visits to the Rathmore Mound heritage feature). There are no parking facilities at this location, except for a short dirt lay-by/turning point opposite the school. Newspaper reports indicate that approval for a new school will shortly be forthcoming and it is likely that the school will have moved to a site near the Rathcroghan Crossroads by the time route construction commences. Parking facilities would be provided at this location and, while the approach across the crossroads could present a traffic hazard, this would be far less significant than before.

Adverse severance also applies to one of the two schools in Strokestown and to housing estate access on the western edge of the town. Severance within the town is more moderate in that traffic speeds are slower. Nevertheless, it is significant enough to discourage both local and tourist use of facilities. The severance would also worsen over time as traffic volumes increase.

Along the whole route, neighbourhood interaction across the road is reduced by the high traffic volumes. A significant hazard and severance issue also arises in relation to vehicular and other access to rural pubs west of Frenchpark and east of Bellanagare.

Route 4

The road runs close to St. Paul's Church at Kilmurry and severance here should be avoided. Access to the school and other community facilities in Castleplunket is unlikely to be affected. A pub is located near the crossing of the N61, but the former Clashaganny School is now a private house. Further east, both a school and church are located at Carrownaskeagh on a minor road which is crossed by the route at its western end. Continued access to these facilities would be needed.

1.7.3 Amenity

Routes 1 & 1A

Route 1 passes beside Cloonshanville Bog, a reasonably intact bog where a broadwalk has recently been extended, and also the remains of the fourteenth century Cloonshanville Abbey, which is in much disrepair, but is of heritage interest and occasionally visited by tourists. Neither are major amenities, but both are dependent on a surrounding ambience that would be disturbed by road noise. The abbey is also situated in a cemetery that is still in use. Both Routes 1 and 1 A pass along a low escarpment between Cartronagor and Lugboy, views from which have appealed to owners or some scattered new residential development. On the other hand, there would be minor journey amenity benefits from positioning the route at a slightly elevated position, but away from the ecologically and scenic area of wetland just to the south.

To the east, the route passes through a scenic area of hills, wetland and woodland beside the R368 between Elphin and Strokestown. This location is not publicly accessible, but can be viewed by bicycle and vehicular traffic on the R368, thereby contributing to journey amenity. Adverse landscape and amenity impacts could be avoided or mitigated, for instance by keeping to the western edge of the corridor near Dunmurraghoe. The Elphin Local Area Plan makes reference to the location's attractiveness and the views available from Cregga Hill in the context of local tourism development.

East of Strokestown, Route 1 runs close to some areas of deciduous woodland. Examples of such habitat would be few. The woods are used by a local gun club, but could also be of natural heritage interest (see relevant section). In the same vicinity, the route is far enough away from Strokestown House and from the town golf course, to have only minor impacts on the environment of these two amenities.

Most visits to Strokestown Park House and the Rathcroghan Complex are unlikely to be affected in that they involve dedicated trips. However, the distance of Route 1 from the Cruachan Aí Heritage Centre in Tulsk could discourage some spontaneous stops.

Routes 2, 2A and 2B

As with Route 1, these routes do not impact on amenity facilities. However, the route does pass through an area of attractive open countryside between Flaskagh Beg and Kilvoy. As noted above, the golf course at Cloonfinlough (which the route traverses) has now transferred to the east of Strokestown. Of the three principal route options, Route 2 passes slightly closer to the birthplace of Percy French near Cloonequin, but this is not a significant destination for passing traffic. It also passes close to the playing field in Strokestown. However, Route 2B does have a greater impact on landscape related local amenity than Route 2 by taking a relatively new line through quiet countryside in the proximity of Correagh/Cartron.

Route 3

On the one hand, Route 3 involves a lower impact on the amenity value of surrounding countryside in that it does not involve a new linear intrusion into the landscape. On the other hand, it passes through an important heritage landscape on which visual and noise impacts are imposed.

There are limited opportunities for viewing the ancient remains of the Rathcroghan Complex and site visits tend to involve more specialist or determined visitors. Most casual visits are made to the Cruachan Ai Heritage Centre. Individual sites are on private land. They are accessible in some instances, but sometimes located behind electric livestock fencing. One of the few readily accessible sites is located beside the road opposite Rathcroghan School where stops and parking is difficult. Inevitably, the existing N5 does bisect an ancient landscape whose integrity could be better appreciated by the transference of the majority of the traffic to another location. It is not impossible to conceive that better access and facilities could one day allow visitors to appreciate the site more fully.

Route 4

The southerly route again passes through an area of very attractive countryside east of Kilmurry which possesses wide open vistas that could not conceal a major road. It passes a pleasant lake at Carrowbaun, although there is no evidence that this is used for recreation. A well-maintained holy well is sited beside the route east of here and its environment would be significantly impacted by the proximity of the road. The ruined Bumlin church and cemetery are located beside the route at its eastern tie-in with the existing N5.

1.7.4 Economic

In common with all the Route Options, but for the Do-minimum, passing traffic in towns on the existing N5 would be reduced. Inevitably, this would adversely affect petrol stations and pubs or cafes offering food or accommodation, although this impact would be slightly less in the case of Route 2.

Route 1 opens up some development opportunities in Elphin, particularly if access from both the east and west is available. On the other hand, there is a corresponding loss of potential development in Strokestown, Tulsk and Bellanagare, although Elphin is identified for urban strengthening in the County Development Plan. There are slightly higher passing trade benefits to Frenchpark from Boyle traffic in the case of Route 1 compared with other options, but also correspondingly higher community severance.

By comparison, Route 2 is further away from Elphin and supplies corresponding benefits to Tulsk and Bellanagare in that regional access to towns such as Longford would be improved. Neither town appears to have notably benefited from the existing N5 to date, although the impact of loss of passing trade would be somewhat diminished by the selection of Route 2. There are potential economic benefits to Bellanagare and Frenchpark in the event that a junction with the current N5 is located between the two towns.

Of potentially more significance is that the relative proximity of the central line of Route 2 to Strokestown compared to the other non-baseline routes, including 2A and 2B. This could reduce the potential loss of passing trade in the town while still facilitating tourism related development and urban renewal. Alignment alterations to Route Options 2A, 2B or 4 could remove this relative advantage for Route 2, as could any siting of a junction between Route 1 and the R368 just outside of the town.

Route 4 would pass further from Tulsk to the south. It would run close to Bellanagare, but it seems unlikely that there would be direct access from the route to the town. Access to Frenchpark is the greater possibility depending partly on the role ultimately envisaged for the western tie-in.

The up-grading of the N5 proposed for Route 3 could provide economic opportunities for Frenchpark, Ballanagare and Tulsk, although these opportunities would be restricted by the contradictory relationship between quality of life in the town, accessibility and rising traffic volumes. A distinct conflict between these factors would emerge over time in Strokestown. In principle the main street is wide enough to accommodate additional traffic, but its potential attractiveness means that it is better suited the objective of developing the heritage vision. At present, there is little reason to linger in the town following visits to Strokestown Park House, but the transference of traffic envisaged by the other route options could facilitate the urban renewal and sensitive development of the town.

1.8 Overall Assessment and ranking

The Do-minimum Route Option 3 has significant relative disadvantages from the perspectives of economic opportunity, but particularly in terms of its very adverse impacts on journey characteristics and severance (in the absence of local by-passes). On the other hand, selection of this route should not be discounted altogether as it would avoid major new disruption to material assets and landscape. It may also involve lower financial cost.

Of Route Options 1 and 2, there is very little in the way of relative advantages or disadvantages so long as due consideration is ultimately given to journey and severance issues arising from junction location and road closure. Without this information, no meaningful absolute quantification can be proffered at this stage. Some improvement could be provided to Route 1 through reconsideration of the corridor routing in the vicinity of the R368 that would reduce landscape amenity impacts and encourage easier access to Strokestown. On the other hand, some further advantage could be given to Route 2 by a junction between Bellanagare and Frenchpark.

Route 4 has relative disadvantages in terms of landscape amenity and economic opportunity.

Table 2 Ranking

Route 1, 1A, 2 & 2A	1
Route 2B	5
Route 4	6
Route 3	7