



Chapter 02

Background and Need for the Proposed Development

Contents

2.	Background and Need for the Proposed Development	1
2.1	Introduction	1
2.2	Background	1
2.3	Need for the Proposed Development	1
2.4	Relevant Policy	2
2.5	Conclusion	8
2.6	References	9

Figures

Image 2.1:	National Strategic Outcomes	2
------------	-----------------------------	---

2. Background and Need for the Proposed Development

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the EIAR provides a summary of the background and context to the Proposed Development. It also outlines the need for the Proposed Development and its alignment with objectives outlined in current national, regional and local transport and planning policy.

2.2 Background

Cork County Council (CCC) undertook the Little Island Transportation Study in 2017 to identify the existing transport issues in Little Island and to explore potential solutions which would ensure an integrated and balanced approach to transport for the Little Island area in the future. The findings of the study were published in the ‘Little Island Transportation Study - Final Strategy Development Report’ in 2018 (CCC, 2018) and the ‘Little Island Transportation Study – Strategy Design Report’ in 2019 (CCC, 2019). The study is generally consistent with the Cork Metropolitan Area Transportation Strategy (CMATS) 2040 (NTA, 2020). A Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Little Island Transport Study was undertaken, while the study was also subject to Appropriate Assessment Screening and a Natura Impact Statement was prepared.

Further details related to the Little Island Transport Study Strategy Design Report and the CMATS are included in **Chapter 6, Planning and Policy**.

Support for the Little Island Transport Study Strategy Design Report was received from the elected members of the CCC Cobh Municipal District in February 2019.

On foot of this support, Arup was commissioned to design the short-term interventions identified in the Little Island Transport Study. This project, titled the Little Island Sustainable Transport Interventions (LISTI), comprises a series of measures which may be implemented to achieve an immediate improvement in the transport issues in Little Island. The N25 Pedestrian and Cyclist Bridge (i.e., the Proposed Development) is one of these measures.

2.3 Need for the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development will cross the N25 and connect the Little Island train station, the L3004 Glounthaune Road and the Dunkettle to Carrigtwohill pedestrian and cycle route to the Eastgate Business Park in Little Island, Cork. The objective of the Proposed Development is to provide efficient pedestrian and cycle connectivity between Little Island train station and Eastgate Business Park and to promote sustainable transport modes, while minimising impacts on the surrounding area and environment.

In recent years, there has been a major shift towards sustainable transport which is reflected in a number of transport and planning policy documents at a national, regional and local level. The changing demographics in our society whereby population is migrating to metropolitan areas to avail of employment opportunities, education and improved living conditions necessitates the promotion of a wholly sustainable transportation network. Our metropolitan areas are undergoing fundamental change as they strive to become living spaces for an increased population which is concentrated in a smaller tighter space. Key to a thriving urban experience is the ability to navigate a metropolitan area at leisure, whether as a pedestrian or a cyclist. Therefore, the shift from private vehicles and public transport to other modes of transport is key to creating a more people friendly environment and improved metropolitan areas.

The Proposed Development supports the need for a shift towards sustainable transport and will provide additional cycling and walking facilities in the Cork metropolitan area which will foster sustainable and healthy behaviours.

2.4 Relevant Policy

As outlined in the following sections of this chapter, the Proposed Development is congruent with the objectives of current national, regional and local transport and planning policy, as set out in the various relevant planning and policy documents referenced herein.

Further details have also been included in **Chapter 6, Planning and Policy**.

2.4.1 National Planning Policy and Guidance

2.4.1.1 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government published Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework (NPF) in February 2018 (DHLGH, 2018). The NPF represents the overarching national planning policy document, of direct relevance to the planning functions of regional and planning authorities, including An Bord Pleanála, and from the 16th of February 2018, it replaced the National Spatial Strategy (NSS).

The NPF, which provides the framework for future development and investment in Ireland, is fully supported by the Government’s investment strategy for public capital investment and investment by the State sector in general. It is the overall Plan from which other, more detailed plans will take their lead, including city and county development plans and regional strategies, hence the title, National Planning ‘Framework’.

The goals of the NPF are expressed as National Strategic Outcomes and are illustrated in **Image 2.1**.



Image 2.1: National Strategic Outcomes

Section 3.4 of the NPF focuses on the southern region of Ireland. Cork Metropolitan Area lies within the south-west regional area of the southern region, and it is within this area that the Proposed Development is located.

The NPF states that Cork and its Metropolitan Area “*focus on more balanced and compact, connected growth. This means that housing development should be based on employment growth, higher densities, access to amenities and sustainable transport modes, in order to avoid long-distance commuting patterns and quality of life impacts*”. The NPF states that strategies will be developed deliver “*improved public spaces and enhanced public transport as well as safe and pleasant options for walking and cycling*”.

‘Key future growth enablers’ set out for Cork include:

- The development of a much-enhanced public transport system; and
- Improving sustainable transport links.

The Proposed Development is wholly compliant with these key growth enablers and will assist in meeting the objectives of the NPF, as:

- It will contribute to the wider growth of the Southern Region;
- It is located on an existing public transport corridor and will maximise the potential of this public transport service;
- It will link transportation and employment areas to pedestrian routes and a strategic cycleway network; and
- It will provide an enhanced public realm and amenity area.

2.4.1.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030

The National Development Plan (NDP) 2021-2030 (Government of Ireland, 2021) is the national plan setting out investment priorities to guide national, regional and local planning and investment decisions over the timeframe of the plan. The priorities of the plan are stated as National Strategic Outcomes (NSO). Refer to **Image 2.1**.

NSO 2 focuses on enhanced regional accessibility. With respect to transport, the NDP aims to implement measures to “*enhance intra-regional accessibility through improving transport links between key urban centres of population and their respective regions, as well as improving transport links between the regions themselves.*”

NSO 4 focuses on sustainable mobility and recognises that the implementation of an environmentally sustainable public transport system will meet the increase in travel demands and address urban congestion while contributing towards the “*national policy vision of a low-carbon economy. Furthermore, the provision of safe alternative active travel options such as segregated cycling and walking facilities can also help alleviate congestion and meet climate action objectives...*”.

NSO 7 focuses on enhanced amenity and heritage. Cultural heritage is recognised as a key component and contributor to the attractiveness and sustainability of cities. In addition, “*all elements of living space including streets, public spaces, built heritage and natural amenity areas, cultural and sporting opportunities and sustainable transport networks, all of which play a central part in defining the character and attractiveness of places*”.

The Proposed Development complements the NDP as it will provide additional sustainable travel options and encourage a significant modal shift in transport. In addition to providing segregated cycle and walking facilities, the Proposed Development will also assist in providing an enhanced public realm and amenity area which will add to the attractiveness of the area.

2.4.1.3 Climate Action Plan 2023

The first Climate Action Plan was prepared by the Government of Ireland in 2019, with an updated version published in 2023 (DECC, 2023). The purpose of the Action Plan is to identify actions to be put in place for each sector with the objective of reducing Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions and thereby achieving EU targets of economy-wide carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The sectors identified as having a high carbon footprint include agriculture, electricity, buildings, industry, transport and waste management.

In relation to the transport sector, the Climate Action Plan seeks to provide good public transport, cycling and walking infrastructure, improve the energy efficiency of vehicles, and adopt the “Avoid-Shift-Improve” approach to reduce the need for travel and the use of encourage sustainable travel modes.

The Proposed Development supports the principles of the Climate Action Plan in so far as it will encourage people to choose alternative modes of transport (walking and cycling). Every shift, however small, from the private vehicle to public transport, walking or cycling is positive and is a gain in terms of climate action.

An assessment of the impact of the Proposed Development under the heading of climate is included in **Chapter 12, Climate**.

2.4.1.4 Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020

‘Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future’ (Department of Transport, 2009) is a policy framework which sets out how the vision of a sustainable travel and transport system can be achieved. The objective of the policy framework is to reduce the demand for private car travel: *“To support sustainable travel, future population and employment growth will have to predominantly take place in sustainable compact urban areas or rural areas, which discourage dispersed development and long commuting”*.

Chapter 5 of the Smarter Travel Policy document identifies actions to deliver alternative ways of travelling. The policy recognises that to successfully promote cycling and walking as realistic alternatives to the private car, a safe and pleasant experience must be provided.

Action 7 of the Smarter Travel Policy document identifies the requirement to *“implement safe walking and cycling routes to and from schools and other educational institutions”* and Action 16 recognises the *“strong convergence between walking as a tourism asset and walking as recreational activity for local residents”*.

The Proposed Development aligns with the Smarter Travel Policy document both at a national and local level by encouraging people to move from private vehicle use to alternative modes of transport. The alternative transport modes of cycling and walking directly contribute to the sustainable transport future envisioned within the Smarter Travel Policy document.

2.4.1.5 Achieving Effective Workplace Travel Plans: Guidance for Local Authorities

The National Transport Authority (NTA) published the document ‘Achieving Effective Workplace Travel Plans: Guidance for Local Authorities’ (NTA, 2013) to assist local authorities in implementing workplace travel plans into the development plan process and the development management process.

The guidance recommends that consideration should be given to the location and scale of development, the precise nature of the uses proposed and the anticipated impact on the surrounding area regarding trip volume and congestion. ‘Standard’ workplace travel plans should be required if an existing or Proposed Development has the potential to employ over 100 people.

The Proposed Development aligns with the guidance by facilitating the active travel of employees to their place of work at a number of businesses and industries within the Cork Metropolitan Area.

2.4.1.6 Spatial Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities

‘Spatial Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities’ (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012) sets out planning policy considerations relating to developments affecting national primary and secondary roads, including motorways and associated junctions, outside the 50-60km/h zones for cities, towns and villages.

The guidelines aim to achieve and maintain a safe and efficient network of national roads within the broader context of sustainable development and transportation strategies. The Proposed Development directly facilitates this by providing an accessible and active travel alternative for pedestrians and cyclists within the region.

2.4.2 Regional Planning Policy

2.4.2.1 Southern Regional Assembly: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Southern Region (Southern Regional Assembly, 2020) sets out a 12-year strategic development framework. The RSES includes Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) to guide the future development of the Region's three main cities and metropolitan areas – Cork, Limerick-Shannon, and Waterford.

The purpose of the RSES is to support the implementation of the NPF while facilitating choices that reflect the differing needs of the regions. The strategies are proposed in the context of a renewed focus on “Regional Parity” in the NPF, being promoted to address anti-competitive pressures on Dublin by offering more sustainable choices and options for people, businesses and communities that can positively influence more sustainable patterns of living and working which benefit our entire society and make our economy more equitable and resilient.

As noted in Section 2.4.1.1, the Proposed Development is wholly compliant with the objectives of the NPF and by extension, directly aligns with the objectives of the Southern Region's RSES.

2.4.2.2 Southwest Regional Planning Guidelines

The Southwest Regional Planning Guidelines (Southwest Regional Authority, 2010) were implemented to fulfil the southern region's obligations to prepare regional planning guidelines (RPGs) under the Planning and Development Act, 2000.

A key component of the RPGs is to drive the sustainable growth and prosperity of the region. The RPGs contain statements and analysis of key economic objectives with a set of planning guidelines to be incorporated within the development plans of all local authorities within the region. Development priorities in these RPGs that are listed that relate specifically to the Greater Cork Area (including Little Island) include:

- Realignment and reinforcement of spatial planning and land use policies;
- Plan for an increase in the population and employment of the Cork Gateway;
- Refocusing of economic and investment strategy; and
- Front-loading of infrastructure investments for the Cork Docklands.

There are also a number of infrastructural provisions and upgrades for the Cork Greater Area that have been prioritised that include:

- Upgrading of N25 Cork-Waterford;
- Dunkettle Interchange; and
- The N25 flyovers within Cork.

The RPGs directly reference upgrade works to the N25, of which the Proposed Development is directly enabling. The Proposed Development will provide an accessible travel alternative for pedestrians and cyclists from Little Island Train Station to Little Island over the N25. This benefit will enable the sustainable delivery of the key economic objectives outlined for the local area (refer to Section 2.3.3).

2.4.3 Local Planning and Transport Policy

2.4.3.1 Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028

The Cork County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 (CCC, 2022) sets out how the County will develop until 2028, while also considering a long-term vision for 2040. The Plan sets out the County's approach to creating vibrant, liveable, climate resilient, and sustainable communities, consistent with the National Planning Framework 2018.

One of the goals of the Plan is to support the delivery of an efficient transport system and to “*make sustainable travel modes an attractive and convenient choice for as many people as possible in order to deliver economic, social, health, wellbeing, environmental and climate action benefits*”. These goals are expected to be achieved by:

- Implementing the Avoid-Shift-Improve Framework (to encourage active travel and improve energy efficiency of sustainable transport modes);
- Increasing funding for active travel projects within Cork County; and
- Implementing the Little Island Transport Strategy.

The Proposed Development represents an active travel project that will encourage a model shift to sustainable travel modes, while it will also form a critical element of the Little Island Transport Strategy.

2.4.3.2 Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040

The Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) (NTA, 2020) has been published in the context of the NPF which envisages that Cork will become the fastest growing city region in Ireland in the coming years. Cork’s population is estimated to result in a projected 50% to 60% increase in the period up to 2040. This projected population and associated economic growth will result in a significant increase in the demand for travel. This demand needs to be managed and planned for carefully to safeguard and enhance Cork’s attractiveness to live, work, visit and invest in.

The Strategy will provide a coherent transport planning policy framework and implementation plan around which other agencies involved in land use planning, environmental protection, and delivery of other infrastructure such as housing and water can align their investment priorities. CMATS will inform the development of regional and local planning, and associated investment frameworks.

The CMATS contains a number of guiding principles across a number of transport modes including the following:

- **Principle 1:** ‘To support the future growth of the CMA through the provision of an efficient and safe transport network’;
- **Principle 2:** ‘To prioritise sustainable and active travel and reduce car dependency within the CMA’; and
- **Principle 3:** ‘To provide a high level of public transport connectivity to key destinations within high demand corridors’.

The Proposed Development achieves the principles listed within the CMATS, particularly those relating to sustainable and active travel. In providing the residents, visitors and employees of Little Island with accessible pedestrian and cyclist access to the Little Island area and the Little Island train station, the Proposed Development will enable sustainable transportation alongside a rapidly growing environment.

CMATs identifies two new crossings of the N25 which are identified as primary cycle routes. The first of these crosses the N25 to the east of the Proposed Development and forms part of the Dunkettle Scheme which is currently under construction. The other primary crossing identified is to the east of Junction 2 Little Island Interchange, close to the location of the proposed crossing which is the subject of this assessment. Therefore, the Proposed Development directly aligns with the CMATs proposal.

2.4.3.3 Cork Cycle Network Plan

The Cork Cycle Network Plan (CCNP) (CCC, 2017) has been prepared for the Cork Metropolitan Area and surrounding towns to provide a clear path for the future development of the cycle network within the region. Development of the CCNP has been driven by the need to respond to national targets for sustainable transport. The Plan identified the modal share for cycling within the Cork Metropolitan Area as 1.7% in 2017 and set a target for this to increase to 10% in 2020.

The purpose of the CCNP is limited purely to recommendations for cycling infrastructure and the development of an integrated and coherent cycling network. The CCNP details that the areas of Glanmire,

Glounthaune and Little Island are proposed areas for new cycle infrastructure. There is currently a general lack of access routes to Little Island. Dedicated cycling facilities currently exist along the Dunkettle Q-link Road to Little Island. However, these facilities lack continuity at junctions and major crossing points. The CCNP identifies two new crossings of the N25 which are identified as primary cycle routes. The first of these crosses the N25 to the east of the Proposed Development and forms part of the Dunkettle Scheme which is currently under construction. The other primary crossing identified is to the east of Junction 2 Little Island Interchange, close to the location of the proposed crossing which is the subject of this assessment.

The Proposed Development is directly aligned with the objectives of the CCNP which includes the provision of a high-quality direct cycle link between the Tivoli area of Cork City and Little Island. Furthermore, the Proposed Development will enhance the accessibility of the region to vulnerable users by removing the need for travel via the Dunkettle overbridge.

2.4.3.4 Cork 2050: Cork's Submission to the NPF

'Cork 2050: Cork's Submission to the NPF' (Cork 2050) (CCC and Cork City Council, 2017) is a joint submission by Cork County and City Councils to the NPF as part of the consultation process for a new framework. Cork 2050 establishes a strategic vision for the growth of the 'whole of Cork' which is focused on future sustainable development.

The submission outlines the region's approach to maximising the potential of Cork by building on strengths and addressing issues that limit opportunities. A key component of the submission outlines the capacity of Cork to relieve pressure on Dublin and drive the growth in the southern region to support a stronger national economy. The East-West Metropolitan Growth Corridor is identified within Cork 2050 and incorporates Little Island. The Little Island Train Station and the N25 are noted as being part of the strategic transport corridor which is vital for the future growth of the region.

The Proposed Development directly supports Cork 2050 by delivering on the targets to develop sustainable infrastructure within an area identified as a key Growth Corridor. In providing alternative means of sustainable transport to Little Island from the region, the Proposed Development provides an active transport route that satisfies the objective of Cork 2050.

2.4.3.5 Little Island Transportation Study – Final Strategy Development Report

CCC commissioned the Little Island Transportation Study (LITS) (CCC, 2018) to identify existing transportation issues within Little Island and to explore potential solutions. The LITS aims to determine what transport infrastructure improvements and policy measures are required to alleviate severe peak hour traffic congestion. Among the measures proposed, increasing active travel and public transport use are promoted which will improve the environment for general traffic, cyclists, pedestrians, and public transport vehicles.

A public questionnaire was conducted as part of the plan preparation which noted that better quality walking and cycling links from the Railway Station to Little Island was the top reason to encourage people to use the train to travel to Little Island. Additionally, 77% of respondents rated the general traffic conditions in Little Island as very poor with 35% and 67% stating that pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure respectively was very poor. The LITS determined that pedestrian volume was highest in the PM peak at the N25 overbridge with 249 pedestrians travelling towards Little Island train station.

The Proposed Development will satisfy the objectives of the LITS by providing a necessary upgrade to the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure within Little Island. In turn, this will drive a necessary reduction in vehicle movements within Little Island which is a key objective in the overarching regional and local policy and planning frameworks listed above.

2.4.3.6 Little Island Transportation Study – Strategy Design Report (2019)

The 'Little Island Transportation Study – Strategy Design Report' (SDR) (CCC, 2019) provides additional detail in relation to the design of the proposed infrastructure and policy measures to be implemented in Little Island over a 20-year period. The SDR should be read in conjunction with the LITS (refer to Section 2.4.3.5) as it focuses on the key elements of the transport strategy developed for Little Island.

The SDR categorised the implementation of required measures to achieve the objectives for the region into three delivery streams:

- Short-term (2018-2023) strategy measures;
- Medium-term (2023-2030) strategy measures; and
- Long-term (2030-2040) strategy measures.

The SDR recommended that the transport strategy proposals aimed at increasing the mode share for sustainable modes are frontloaded in the implementation plan. As a result, the following short-term strategy measure was incorporated within the report:

The mobility hub at the Little Island Train Station, incorporating the pedestrian/cycle footbridge should be prioritised within the first five years of the strategy. It is recommended that a masterplan for the mobility hub, including the pedestrian/cycle footbridge, is commenced on completion of the Little Island Transportation Study, and that it is delivered prior to the delivery of the N25 Interchange to Ballytrasna Park Junction bus priority scheme.

The Proposed Development provides the pedestrian / cyclist footbridge outlined as a required measure within the SDR. Therefore, the SDR, in conjunction with the LITS, demonstrate the need for the Proposed Development in enhancing the uptake of active travel modes within Little Island and the surrounding region.

2.5 Conclusion

The Proposed Development will support the need for a shift towards sustainable transport and the provision of an efficient pedestrian and cycle connectivity between the Little Island Train Station and the Eastgate Business Park.

The Proposed Development is considered to align with the national, regional and local policies summarised above.

2.6 References

CCC (2017) Cobh Municipal District Local Area Plan.

Cork County Council (CCC) (2017) Cork Cycle Network Plan.

CCC, Cork City Council (2017) Cork 2050: Realising the Full Potential – Cork’s Submission to the National Planning Framework.

CCC (2018) Little Island Transportation Study – Final Strategy Development Report.

CCC (2019) Little Island Transportation Study – Strategy Design Report.

CCC (2022) Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028.

Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (2012) Spatial Planning and National Roads: Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2018) Project Ireland 2040: National Planning Framework.

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) (2021) Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.

DECC (2021) Climate Action Plan 2021.

DECC (2023). Climate Action Plan 2023.

Department of Transport (2009) Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020.

Government of Ireland (2021) National Development Plan 2021-2030.

National Transport Authority (2013) Achieving Effective Workplace Travel Plans: Guidance for Local Authorities.

National Transport Authority (2020) Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy 2040.

Southern Regional Assembly (2020) Southern Regional Assembly: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region.

Southwest Regional Authority (2010) Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.