

Planning Statement

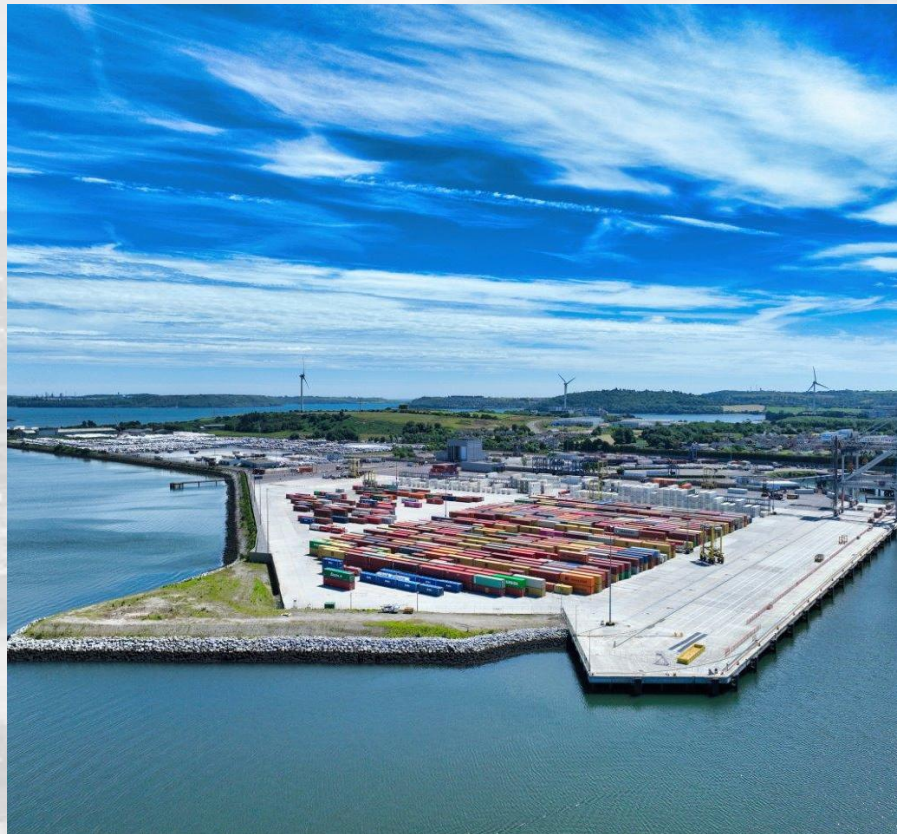
For Redevelopment of Port Facilities at:

Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork

Section 291 Application to An Bord Pleanála

on behalf of Port of Cork Company

January 2025



McCutcheon Halley
CHARTERED PLANNING CONSULTANTS

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context

This planning statement has been prepared by McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultants on behalf of the Port of Cork Company (POCC), to accompany a planning application for the redevelopment of its port facilities at Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork. The purpose of this report is to outline the details of the proposed development, the need for the development and the relevant planning policy context.

POCC was granted a 10-year Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) permission by An Bord Pleanála on 28th May 2015, planning reference PA0035, as altered by PM0010, 304437-19 and 310847-21. Much of the work permitted under the permission has been completed and the Ringaskiddy Container Terminal commenced operations in 2022. However, some elements of the permitted project remain to be developed. The planning permission expires on the 20th of October 2025¹ and it will not be possible to complete all of the remaining elements of the permission within the lifetime of the permission. The remaining elements of the permission will require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA).

It is not possible to seek an extension of duration of the permitted SID because the provisions of 42(8) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), hereafter referred to as the PDA 2000, provide that a planning authority shall not extend the appropriate period if an EIA or an AA would be required in relation to the proposed extension.

Further, transitional provisions associated with the forthcoming Planning and Development Act 2024 (PDA 2024) prohibit permissions with less than 3 years left to run from seeking an extension of duration under the new Act. It will therefore not be possible for POCC to seek an extension of duration of the permitted development under the PDA 2024.

As it will not be possible to extend the duration of permission of the SID, POCC are applying for a ten-year permission to construct the remaining elements of the permitted development. The remaining redevelopment works include the extension to its deep-water berth at Ringaskiddy West, provision of a second Cork Container Terminal / Multi-purpose berth (CCT2) at Ringaskiddy East, provision of the roll-on / roll-off ramp and ancillary works.

This planning statement outlines the need for this development, its alignment with relevant policy frameworks, and its significance in ensuring

¹ Notwithstanding the 10-year timeline of the permitted development, section 251 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 states that a nine day 'Christmas' period is disregarded in respect of timelines referred to in the Act. Applying this to each year of the SID permission would add an additional 90 days to the duration of the permission. Section 251A also added a further 56 days to the duration of any permissions impacted by Covid-19. Applying both section 251 and 251A to the SID permission, the date of the expiry of the permission is 20th October 2025.

future growth and competitiveness of the Port of Cork. The extension is a critical component of a broader strategy to accommodate the shift of port facilities from Cork City Centre to the lower harbour, driven by increasing vessel sizes and the projected growth in both population and commercial activities. It will also provide infrastructure which will be able to support Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE), as CCT 2 is being constructed with sufficient loading capacity to accommodate marshalling and assembly of ORE components

1.2 SID Permitted Development

In summary, the 2015 SID (PA0035), included the development of:

- A new 314 Container Berth Multi-purpose berth (CCT 1).
- Installation of link-span and access bridge to facilitate Roll-on Roll-off (RoRo) traffic.
- An additional 200m Container Berth, with capacity for multi-purpose use (CCT 2).
- An extension to POCC's existing Deepwater Berth (DWB).
- Capital dredging associated with the new and extended berths.
- Installation of new container handling cranes and terminal transport equipment.
- Road Improvements.
- New community amenity area at Paddy's Point, Ringaskiddy.

The permission was subsequently altered as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: SID Alteration Permissions

Planning Ref.	Alteration Permitted
PM0010	Lengthening of the permitted main berth to 361m, relocation of mooring dolphins, changes to the landside handling of containers and changes to the design and layout of ancillary buildings.
304437-19	Doubling the size of the customs building and related changes in terms of location and floor levels.
310847-21	Amendments to the ferry terminal building to accommodate staff, relocation of car parking and installation of four modular building units to serve as staff welfare facilities
PA-0035M	Modification to condition 5 of the parent permission reducing the timeline for agreeing the Ringaskiddy Mobility Management Plan from six months prior to commencement, to one month prior to commencement

The works which have been completed under the PA0035 permission (as altered) are:

- **Ringaskiddy East**

- A new 361m Container Berth 1/ Multipurpose Berth (CCT 1)
- Surfacing of existing port lands to provide operational areas
- Demolition of existing link-span
- Terminal Transport Equipment
- Maintenance building, administrative buildings and entrance kiosks

- **Road Improvements**

- Improvements to the external road entrance into the Ringaskiddy
- Deepwater Terminal and to Ringaskiddy West
- Improvements to the internal link road between Ringaskiddy East and Ringaskiddy West

- **Paddy's Point**

- Construction of a new public pier, slipway and boarding platform
- New planting and landscaping to provide public amenity area
- Boat storage, lighting and fencing

The works applied for under this application are described in Section 2 of this planning statement.

The proposed development includes works within the nearshore, which falls within the Eight Schedule of the PDA 2000 and therefore the application is made under the provisions of s.291 of the PDA 2000.

The s.291 application is for works as previously permitted. No changes are proposed to the layout or structural works. The cover letter to An Bord Pleanála details the plans and particulars which accompany this application.

A summary of the pre-planning consultations undertaken is provided in Appendix B and the details of the pre-planning consultations undertaken with An Bord Pleanála are provided in Appendix C.

2. Description of Proposed Development

2.1 Scheme Description

The proposed development will consist of:

Completion of the redevelopment of port facilities at Ringaskiddy previously permitted under PA0035, as altered by PM0010, 304437-19 and 310847-21. The proposed development will consist of the following:

Ringaskiddy East:

- Construction of the remaining phases of a 200m Container / Multi-purpose Berth which are not completed by 20th October 2025. The berth is under construction and being developed in four phases (1. Combi wall quay wall, 2. Concrete deck piling, 3. Structural slab and 4. Upper slab and yard surfacing),
- Dredging of the seabed to a level of -13 m Chart Datum (CD)
- Installation of link-span comprising a floating pontoon and access bridge
- Ancillary works, including services, lighting and fencing

Ringaskiddy West:

- Extension to the existing Deepwater Berth (DWB), which will comprise a filled quay structure extending no further than the edge of the existing DWB
- Dredging works to varying levels to facilitate navigational access to the new facilities, and
- Ancillary works, including services and lighting

Road Improvements:

- Improvements to internal road network at Ringaskiddy East
- Ancillary works, including lighting and fencing

An Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura Impact Statement have been prepared and accompany the application. A 'Dumping at Sea' licence will be required. The application is located within a consultation zone for establishments to which the Major Accident Directive Applies.

3. Legislative Basis

3.1 Legislative Context

Under the PDA 2000, section 278, Maritime development is defined as development carried out within the maritime area, or the making of any material change in the use of the sea, seabed or any structure in the maritime area.

Applications for development within a Maritime Area, which falls within Chapter III of the PDA 2000 are to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála, this includes any development which falls within a class specified in the Eighth Schedule.

Sub-section 21 the Eight of Schedule includes:

A harbour or port installation, including –

(e) areas for the weighing, handing or transport of goods or the movement or transport of passengers (including customs or passport control facilities), and any associated offices or other similar facilities that would –

...

(iii) involve the construction of a quay greater than 100 meters in length,

Or

(iv) be capable of admitting a vessel of more than 1,350 tonnes.

As the proposed development includes the construction of a quay greater than 100 meters in length and will be capable of admitting vessels of more than 1,350 tonnes, it falls with the provisions of the Eighth Schedule. Accordingly, an application is to be made to An Bord Pleanála under section 291 of the PDA 2000.

A Maritime Area Consent application in respect of the proposed dredging works accompanies this application. A 35-year foreshore lease was granted for the permitted quay structures (CCT1, CCT2 and the Deepwater Berth) in 2017. This lease allowed for a 10-year construction period. The lease was amended in September 2024 to allow for a construction period up to 31st May 2030. POCC will liaise with the Maritime Area Consent Authority if any further amendments to this lease are required.

4. Use of Adjoining Lands

4.1 Ringaskiddy – Local Context

Ringaskiddy is located 16km south-east of Cork City, on the western side of Cork Harbour. It is adjacent to the seaport and is southeast of Cork City and separated from the city suburbs by open green belt.

Ringaskiddy has excellent port facilities and contains predominantly largescale manufacturing industrial uses that occupy large, standalone sites with seven of the Top 10 largest pharmaceutical companies located in the area. Ringaskiddy is the location of modern deep water port facilities, a naval and marine training institution and has successfully attracted major, large scale, high technology manufacturing plants. There are advanced preparatory works completed to date for the delivery of the M28 motorway from Cork to Ringaskiddy.

As part of the permitted Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID), funding has been invested in the public realm and community amenities of Ringaskiddy, including the development of Paddy's Point and a contribution to Cork County Council of €1 million towards public realm improvement works in Ringaskiddy village. The public realm improvement works are currently under construction.

Ringaskiddy has a small residential population, with a population of 580 recorded in the 2022 Census. The strategic planning objective for the village is to *'reaffirm Ringaskiddy's focus on industrial and port related roles which reflects its status as a Strategic Employment Location.'* There is also an objective to protect, maintain and enhance the residential amenity of the existing Ringaskiddy community.

The area surrounding the village is primarily designated for industrial development, reflecting its strategic importance in supporting the region's economic growth. The lands immediately adjacent to the existing road entrance to the Port of Cork are zoned as *'Town Centre/Neighbourhood Centres'*.

4.2 Adjoining Lands

The proposed development is located within the Port of Cork's own landholding, to the north of the N28 and consists of proposals at 'Ringaskiddy West' and 'Ringaskiddy East'.

The Port's landholding incorporates the ADM Jetty on the western boundary of the site. To the far east of the land holding there are some undeveloped lands, both east and west of the National Maritime College of Ireland. The National Maritime College of Ireland is located to the east of Ringaskiddy village.

5. Need for the Project

5.1 National and Economic Context

Since 2014, PoCC has been working to progressively shift its services and facilities from Cork City Centre to the Lower Harbour, driven by the growing size of vessels and the increasing difficulty of accommodating them at the City Docks and Tivoli Docks. This relocation is also in response to the global demand for reliable, safe, and high-performing port facilities situated in deeper waters near primary shipping routes.

Commercial growth projections indicate a pressing need to provide for future expansion in the short, medium, and long term. The Port of Cork Masterplan 2050 predicts that the Cork Container Terminal (CCT) will reach capacity by 2025, necessitating continued operations at Tivoli Docks until the Lower Harbour facilities are fully expanded. Additionally, the population of Cork City, currently over 210,000, is expected to grow by 105,000 to 125,000 by 2040, which will further increase the volume of goods transiting through the Port of Cork. Therefore, the expansion of the Ringaskiddy Port facilities is crucial to accommodate this growth and ensure the Port of Cork remains a vital link in global trade networks.

The Port of Cork Masterplan projections anticipate that additional commodities and cargoes will be moved from the City Docks to Ringaskiddy, by 2030. This is subject to the delivery of the planned deep water berth extension of 231m, required to handle an additional 2 million tonnes of dry bulks and project cargoes per year. The Port of Cork Masterplan 2050 anticipates that an additional 7.8ha of off-site landside storage will be needed to facilitate this operational capacity.

In addition, the construction of the second container berth at Ringaskiddy will provide capacity to support ORE, as the berth will have the loading capacity to accommodate the marshalling and assembly of ORE components. National planning policy, discussed in section 7 of this report, emphasises that ports should, where feasible, facilitate the development, maintenance and operation of offshore renewable electricity generating developments.

6. Strategic Infrastructure Planning History

6.1 POC Strategic Infrastructure Applications

PL 04.PA003: Port of Cork

POCC lodged an application for approval for Strategic Infrastructure Development with the Board in November 2007 to provide for a new container terminal and multi-purpose berth.

The proposal was refused in June 2008 on the grounds of traffic related issues.

04.PA0035: Port of Cork

Permission was granted for Strategic Infrastructure Development by the Board in May 2014. The application was for the development of a new container terminal and multipurpose roll-on roll-off berth at Cork's Lower Harbour, to accommodate the relocation of certain port activities from elsewhere within the Cork Harbour Area.

The proposed development consisted of the following:

A 10-year planning permission for the redevelopment of existing port facilities consisting of:

Ringaskiddy East (Container Berths and Multi-purpose Berth (CB/MPB))

- A new 314-metre container berth 1/ multipurpose berth that will be capable of accommodating vessels carrying a range of different cargoes including containers, freight and general cargoes
- An additional 200-metre container berth 2
- Surfacing of existing port lands to provide operational areas
- Dredging of the seabed to a level of -13.0 m Chart Datum (CD)
- Demolition of existing link-span
- Installation of link-span comprising a floating pontoon and access bridge
- Installation of container handling cranes and terminal transport equipment
- Maintenance building, administrative buildings and entrance kiosks; and
- Ancillary car parking, lighting and fencing.

Ringaskiddy West (Deepwater Berth Extension)

- A new 182-metre extension to the existing deep-water berth (DWB) which will comprise a filled quay structure extending no further seaward than the edge of the existing deep-water berth.
- Dredging works to varying levels to facilitate navigational access to the new facilities; and
- Lighting.

Road Improvements

- Improvements to the external road entrance into the RINGASKIDDY Deepwater Terminal and to Ringaskiddy West
- Improvements to the internal link road between Ringaskiddy East and Ringaskiddy West
- Improvements to internal road network at Ringaskiddy East to facilitate future access to the N28 National Road and
- Lighting and Fencing.

Paddy's Point Amenity Area

- Construction of a new public pier, slipway and boarding platform
- New planting and landscaping to provide public amenity area and
- Boat storage, lighting and fencing

The PA0035 SID permission was altered by planning permissions referenced in Table 1 of this report.

6.2 Other SID Applications at Ringaskiddy

PL 04.PA0010: Indaver Ireland

Permission was originally granted on this site for a waste to energy facility, waste transfer station and community recycling park by the Board in 2004. Development of the site did not progress, and permission lapsed in January 2009. A revised application was made to the Board under Strategic Infrastructure Development provisions for a 10-year planning permission for a larger scale waste and transfer station facility, on a 12-hectare site, including the development of 23,390 square metres of buildings.

The Board acknowledged that the proposal was in accordance with national policy for the treatment of hazardous and industrial waste, but refused the application for four reasons:

- The proposal was not fully consistent with the current strategy of the Cork Local Authorities in respect of waste management,
- The scale of the development would constitute overdevelopment of the site,
- The concerns over the risk of flooding to the road has not been adequately addressed; and
- The concerns regarding the risk of future coastal erosion had not been adequately addressed.

7. Planning History

Appendix A provides a summary of the planning history within POCC's landholding, and of industrial and large-scale planning permissions since the development was first permitted in 2014.

The review highlights a significant increase in activity within the pharmaceutical industry, with companies such as Pfizer Ireland Pharmaceuticals and Janssen Sciences Ireland continuing to expand their operations and employment bases. Multiple planning applications have been lodged for infrastructure extensions and expansions.

Permitted developments in the agriculture and aquaculture sectors include the extension of R&H Hall agri-feed stores (Pl. ref: 14/467) and Good Fish Processing Ltds 2022 permission for a value-added seafood factory building with R&D and office facilities.

The renewable energy sector is gradually establishing a presence in Ringaskiddy. Since 2014, permissions have been granted for several wind turbines and solar PV installations. For instance, DePuy Ireland was granted permission in 2015 for a single wind turbine (Pl. ref: 15/6967), and ENGIE Development Ireland Ltd secured permission in 2018 for a battery storage facility (Pl. ref: 18/4664).

The Port of Cork Company received permission in 2022 for a new vehicular entrance off the L2545 and the temporary use of lands for the open storage of port related cargo, reflecting ongoing investments in logistical improvements.

In addition to industrial and energy projects, there has been limited residential development in Ringaskiddy since 2014. Permissions have been granted for a total of 100 residential units across four separate planning applications. This figure excludes smaller-scale permissions for one or two residential units, which were not included in this review. These developments contribute to addressing local housing needs, although they remain modest in scale compared to the significant industrial and infrastructural activity in the area.

These permissions collectively illustrate the evolving character of Ringaskiddy, where industrial growth, port logistics and diversification into renewable energy are reshaping the area's planning baseline. This progression highlights the strategic importance of Ringaskiddy in accommodating Ireland's industrial and energy infrastructure needs.

8. Planning Policy Context

8.1 National Economic Policy

Ireland's Ocean Economy

This latest review of Ireland's Ocean Economy published by the Socioeconomic Marine Research Unit at NUI Galway in December 2023, found that in 2022 Ireland's ocean economy had a turnover of €7 billion and a direct economic contribution, as measured by Gross Value Added (GVA), of €2.85 billion.

The Shipping and Maritime Transport industry is the highest contributor to this in terms of turnover, GVA and employment. In 2022, shipping and maritime transport recorded a turnover of €2.5bn, GVA of €665m and employment of over 4,720 FTE employees.

Brexit and the resulting alteration of trade flows, and the impact to the functioning of the UK Landbridge means that there is now a need for an increased focus on direct Ireland-Europe connections to protect Ireland's supply chain to continental markets. Brexit has brought into renewed focus the importance of Ireland's ports as nodes in the logistics chain and in keeping Ireland connected internationally. As the economy grows, the ability of our ports to respond by adding capacity and adjusting to new environmental and technological demands is imperative to ensure the sustainability of our economic success.

8.2 European Context

The Port of Cork is identified as a Core Port within the TransEuropean Transport Network (Ten-T). Improving its capacity and efficiency will contribute to the development of an integrated European transport network.

The European Union has recognised the need for ports to adapt to the increasing size of ships, which has led to significant rise in demand for port services and deeper water areas. EU Directive 2021/1187 aims to streamline the realisation of the Trans-European Network (TEN-T), identifying the development of Tier 1 ports as crucial to the broader EU transport infrastructure strategy. The EU Regulation No 1313/2013 sets binding targets for the completion of the core network by 2030 and the comprehensive network by 2050. The PoCC, through its infrastructure development, including the provision of capacity at the Ringaskiddy West deep-water berth, is enhancing Ireland's position within the Trans-European Transport Network and bolstering its economic advantages.

8.3 National Context

8.3.1 National Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018 underscores the strategic importance of ports in facilitating international trade and enabling economic growth. It emphasises the evolution of ports from facilitators of goods transportation to critical enablers of new industries, such as ORE. The NPF

recognises that Ireland's economic growth is highly dependent on the quality and efficiency of its ports, more so than many of its trading partners. To sustain this growth, Ireland must deliver additional port capacity in a timely and predictable manner.

The NPF highlights that Tier 1 and Tier 2 ports, including Cork, Dublin, and Shannon, must lead the response to meet Ireland's future port capacity requirements. The expansion of Ringaskiddy Port is essential for aligning Cork's City growth strategies with national and regional objectives, ensuring the effective growth and sustainable development of the city region.

The expansion of the Port of Cork at Ringaskiddy is identified as a key enabler of largescale regeneration projects in Cork, particularly the redevelopment of former port sites in the City Docks and Tivoli Docks. This is outlined in **Chapter 3 "Effective Regional development" of the NPF**. National policy advocates for the transformation of these sites into sustainable, mixed-use developments, which is contingent on the successful relocation of existing port facilities to the Lower Harbour. The proposed extension at Ringaskiddy will facilitate this transition, minimising disruption to business and enabling the city's regeneration.

The **NPF's Chapter 7, "Realising Our Island and Marine Potential"**, places strong emphasis on the maritime industry, particularly the role of ports in regional competitiveness. It identifies the maritime sector as a critical enabler of regional development and highlights the need for ports to support emerging industries, such as ORE. The expansion of the Ringaskiddy Cork Container Terminal and multi-purpose berth, aligns with these strategic priorities, ensuring that Cork remains a vital gateway for Ireland's international trade and emerging industries. The expansion will not only meet the immediate needs of port operations but also support the long-term strategic goals of the region, ensuring that Cork remains a key player in Ireland's economic and maritime landscape.

National Strategic Outcome 6: 'High-Quality International Connectivity' underscores the increasingly pivotal role that ports will play in Ireland's transport and international trade strategies. The NPF emphasises that Ireland's National Ports Policy, along with the hierarchical tiering of ports, recognises the global trend toward the consolidation of resources in the maritime sector. This trend is driven by the need to achieve optimum efficiencies of scale, which has significant implications for port infrastructure, including the size of vessels, the required depths of water, and the scale of hinterland transport connections.

The proposed extension of the port facilities at Ringaskiddy is a strategic necessity that aligns with both European and national policies. It is crucial for accommodating the growing size of vessels, supporting Ireland's economic growth, and enabling the successful redevelopment of Cork City's Docklands. The development is in line with the National Planning Framework's objectives and is essential for maintaining the Port of Cork's competitiveness and efficiency in global trade. The expansion will not only meet the immediate needs of port operations but also support the long-term strategic goals of

the region, ensuring that Cork remains a key player in Ireland's economic and maritime landscape.

8.3.2 Draft NPF Review 2024

The draft NPF Review 2024 was published in July 2024 and is due for adoption during 2025. One of the key shifts in the national policy context for ports and port-related development is the increasing emphasis on supporting the onshore infrastructural requirements for the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) industry. The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2018 noted that the naturally occurring deep water at ports in the south and southwest of Ireland offers significant potential for industrial development, especially for industries reliant on deep-water berths. The draft revised NPF 2024 further emphasises the critical role that ports will play in facilitating the development, maintenance, and operation of the ORE sector. This represents an enhanced focus in national policy, which now explicitly acknowledges the vital role of ports in enabling not only economic growth but also the development of ORE and their contribution to achieving National Climate Targets.

National Policy Objective (NPO) 42, revised in the 2024 draft review of the NPF, expands the role of ports beyond traditional economic activities to include the sustainable delivery of port and harbour infrastructure to support the ORE sector. Specifically, the **draft revised National Policy Objective 52** aims to

"Support the sustainable delivery of port and harbour infrastructure to facilitate the development, maintenance, and operation of offshore renewable electricity generating developments."

This expanded role underscores the importance of Tier 1 ports in meeting Ireland's renewable energy targets. The **draft revised National Policy Objective 56** from Chapter 7: Realising Our Island and Marine Potential, introduces port infrastructure as a crucial enabler of ORE projects. The inclusion of port infrastructure in the national policy objective highlights the increasing responsibilities of ports in delivering on Ireland's ORE potential.

Whereas the NPF 2018 noted that the natural occurring deep water at ports in the south and south-west offer the potential for industrial development that depends currently, or will depend in the future, of deepwater berths, the draft revised NPF specifically identifies the critical role that ports will play in facilitating the development, maintenance and operation of the ORE sector through the accommodation of supporting infrastructure. This is an important shift in the overall national planning framework which recognises the critical role of ports in enabling economic growth and the development of other industries. The draft reviewed NPF further supports this development, stating:

"Proposals that adapt or repurpose existing maritime infrastructure facilities to ensure their sustainability or increase access for marine users should be supported."

8.3.3 National Development Plan 2021 – 2030

The National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP) was published in October 2021, setting out the state's investment priorities to guide national, regional and local planning and investment of decisions. The revised NDP sets out the ten-year capital investment ceilings to 2030 which will support economic, social, environmental and cultural development across all parts of the country under Project Ireland 2040, in parallel with the NPF which sets the overarching spatial strategy for the next twenty years. Under NSO 6: *High-Quality International Connectivity*, investment is not only focused on supporting international connectivity and competitiveness, but also the 'greening' of airports and ports, whereby pathways towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 are already being identified.

Three major capital investment programmes in Tier 1 Ports are highlighted as ongoing including Dublin, Cork and Shannon Foynes. The aim is to enhance national and international connectivity, provide for future increases in trade and national port capacity requirements by facilitating more vessels, larger sized vessels and increased tonnage and throughput. Ireland's

The Ringaskiddy Redevelopment is given special mention (Box 11.1. Page 109):

"The Port of Cork is investing to redevelop the port's existing facilities at Ringaskiddy. Planning permission was granted in 2015 towards this development. Delays due to Covid-19 have pushed the completion date out to Q3 2021 with the new facility operational in Q4 2021. The development will enable the Port to accommodate larger vessels and further develop it as an international gateway for trade. The project will alleviate the physical constraints (for example, water depths) of current operations at City Quays and Tivoli, allowing the Port to increase capacity and throughput, diversify customers, cater to the trend of increasing vessel sizes and free the City Quays and Tivoli properties for development and/or divestment."

The proposed expansion at Ringaskiddy aligns with this national priority by enhancing the port's capacity to handle larger vessels and increased freight volumes, thereby supporting Ireland's international trade and economic development.

8.3.4 National Marine Planning Framework – Project Ireland 2040

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) establishes overarching marine planning policies that apply to all proposals within Ireland's extensive maritime area. Public bodies are legally required to ensure the objectives of the NMPF are met. A statement of compliance against each of the 92 policies outlined in the NMPF is provided in Appendix E of this report.

In summary, the NMPF emphasises a balance of economic and social marine planning objectives while underscoring the importance of environmental protection in the maritime area. the policies most relevant to the project, with which the proposal is consistent, are outlined below.

The National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) recognises that ports of national significance are key international gateways and facilitators of economic development. It highlights the ongoing phased infrastructure investments at Tier 1 ports, including the Port of Cork stating in Chapter 18, page 155 that, ,

'All three Tier 1 ports are currently engaged in significant phased infrastructure investment in relation to key elements of their masterplans... Supporting the existing and future development of ports in line with their approved master / strategic plans is essential to ensure the continued economic prosperity of the country.'

The policy document highlights that with the expected increase in freight volumes and vessel size, accessibility, capacity and navigational safety will bring significant challenges for Ireland's maritime sector. The expansion of port facilities at Ringaskiddy is a strategic response to these challenges.

The NMPF outlines its support for land-based infrastructure proposals that enhance the economic and social benefits of marine activities. The document refers to port infrastructure as essential for achieving this objective, including facilities for the landing, storage, and processing of catch or freight, as well as related transport infrastructure. The framework also acknowledges that certain primarily land-based developments and activities rely on associated marine infrastructure, which is essential for their effective operation. Section 2.2 states,

"This policy supports proposals for the development of land-based infrastructure that facilitates marine activity and the diversification or regeneration of marine industries. It also supports proposals for the development of marine infrastructure that facilitates land-based activity."

This is supported by Infrastructure Policy 1: which states that,

Appropriate land-based infrastructure which facilitates marine activity (and vice versa) should be supported. Proposals for appropriate infrastructure that facilitates the diversification or regeneration of marine industries should be supported."

The policy framework encourages the adaptation of existing marine infrastructure to support emerging industries, such as ORE and the diversification of marine industries.

ORE Policy 7 states:

"Where potential for ports to contribute to ORE is identified, plans and policies related to this port must encourage development in such a way as to facilitate ORE and related supply chain activity"

The policy framework requires that marine activities be managed in a way that protects the environment by ensuring adequate space is allocated for the growth of new or emerging industries. It stipulates that if a proposal results in significant adverse impacts, such as displacement, that cannot be

minimised or mitigated, the proposal must include a rationale demonstrating how space optimisation can be achieved.

It is also an objective of the NMPF that marine based activity addresses environmental considerations. The continued dredging in the River Lee, necessary to accommodate larger vessels, has been identified as having negative environmental impacts. This proposed development effectively responds to these environmental concerns by reducing the need for large commercial vessels to enter the upper part of Cork Harbour. By increasing capacity at Ringaskiddy, the number of vessels needing to dock at Tivoli or travel up the River Lee will decrease, minimising environmental impacts.

The NMPF sets out its policy framework for addressing environmental considerations in marine spatial planning. While shipping can lead to the introduction of non-native species, safe and efficient shipping offers significant environmental benefits. Conversely, unnecessary diversions of sea traffic can increase environmental impacts and the risk of maritime incidents. The Marine Planning Policy Framework supports the sustainable development of ports as a means to provide adequate capacity to meet present and future demand, while also adapting to the consequences of climate change. The policy advocates for the protection of the shortest shipping routes to minimise environmental impacts and enhance navigational safety. By providing a more efficient and direct route to port facilities in the Cork Lower Harbour, the proposed Ringaskiddy development will contribute to reducing the overall carbon footprint of shipping activities.

8.3.5 Marine Planning Policy Statement 2019

The Marine Planning Policy Statement was published in 2019 on a non-statutory basis, pending the introduction of legislation in 2020 which provided for the preparation, adoption, and review of statutory marine planning policy statements on six-yearly cycles. The purpose of the statement is to set out the core principles to inform the new marine planning and development management process.

The new marine planning and development management process comprises three elements, a marine spatial plan, a new marine development management system and new marine enforcement systems. The marine spatial plan is now called the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).

8.3.6 National Ports Policy 2013

The Port of Cork is identified within the National Ports Policy (NPP) as a critical asset within Ireland's national and regional infrastructure framework. Recognised as a Port of National Significance (Tier 1) under the NPP, the Port of Cork is one of three Irish ports included in the European Union's TransEuropean Transport Network (TEN-T) as part of the North Sea Mediterranean Corridor. This designation underscores the port's importance due to its significant volumes of freight and passenger traffic, its high level of international connectivity, and the expectation that it will be integrated into the core European rail and road network by 2030.

The National Ports Policy establishes the Port of Cork as a critical component in addressing Ireland's future port capacity requirements. With global trends increasingly favouring larger commercial vessels that require deeper water, the Port of Cork is committed to leading the expansion of infrastructure to meet these evolving demands.

This development proposal addresses the immediate challenges of maritime logistics while also enhancing the port's role as a key driver of national economic growth.

The policy document underscores the importance of the Port of Cork, as it is one of only two ports capable of handling traffic across five principal traffic modes (LoLo, Ro-Ro, Break Bulk, Dry Bulk and Liquid Bulk). The policy document highlights the high-level support for the development of facilities at Ringaskiddy to accommodate additional port facilities stating

"The Government endorses the core principles underpinning the company's Strategic Development Plan Review (its intention to relocate commercial trade to the lower harbour area at Ringaskiddy) and the continued commercial development of the Port of Cork Company is a key strategic objective of National Ports Policy."

The government's support for the Port of Cork's Strategic Development Plan, particularly its strategy to relocate commercial trade operations to Ringaskiddy, underscores the strategic importance of this expansion. This plan is closely aligned with broader objectives to redevelop Cork City's Docklands and Tivoli Docks, both of which depend on the relocation of port activities to Ringaskiddy.

8.3.7 Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Acts 2015 to 2021

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 laid the groundwork for Ireland's transition to a low-carbon, climate resilient, and sustainable economy by establishing a National Mitigation Plan (NMP) and National Adaptation Framework (NAF) and set out obligations for public bodies to consider climate objectives in their activities.

The 2021 Act, which amends the 2015 Act, strengthens Ireland's climate ambitions by embedding legally binding carbon budgets, a target of net-zero emissions by 2050, and a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (compared to 2018 levels). It also requires the preparation of updated Climate Action Plans (CAPs) and the introduction of Sectoral Emission Ceilings to achieve these targets.

The first two Carbon Budgets are:

2021-2025: 295 Mt CO₂ equivalent (MtCO₂eq), averaging a 4.8% annual emissions reduction.

2026-2030: 200 MtCO₂eq, averaging an 8.3% annual emissions reduction.

In July 2022, the Irish government approved sectoral emissions ceilings for these periods, setting maximum permissible emissions for each sector, as outlined in Figure 1.

Further information			
Sector	Reduction	2018 *	2030 ceiling *
Electricity	75%	10.5 MtCO ₂ eq	3 MtCO ₂ eq
Transport	50%	12 MtCO ₂ eq	6 MtCO ₂ eq
Buildings (Commercial and Public)	45%	2 MtCO ₂ eq	1 MtCO ₂ eq
Buildings (Residential)	40%	7 MtCO ₂ eq	4 MtCO ₂ eq
Industry	35%	7 MtCO ₂ eq	4 MtCO ₂ eq
Agriculture	25%	23 MtCO ₂ eq	17.25 MtCO ₂ eq
Other**	50%	2 MtCO ₂ eq	1 MtCO ₂ eq

Figure 1: Ireland's Sectoral Emissions included in Climate Action Plan 2024

However, as of May 2024², projections indicate that most sectors, including Agriculture, Electricity and Transport, are on a trajectory to exceed their assigned carbon ceilings.

Ports play a key role in helping Ireland remain within the limits of the transport carbon budget, which aims to achieve a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030. The redevelopment of port facilities at Ringaskiddy supports this objective through planned expansions, enabling the relocation of industrial activities from the City Docks and Tivoli. This transition reduces shipping journeys, eliminates the need for harmful activities along the River Lee such as dredging, to accommodate larger vessels, and frees up city-centre land to accommodate the planned redevelopment of these areas.

² Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions projections. Accessed: Online [Accessed 21/01/2025].

8.3.8 Climate Action Plan 2024

The Climate Action Plan 2024 (CAP 2024) is the third update to Ireland's Climate Action Plan, prepared in compliance with the Climate Acts. It was approved by Government on 20 December 2023.

The CAP 2024 builds upon the previous CAP's (2019, 2021, and 2023) by refining and updating the measures and actions required to deliver the carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings. The CAP 2024 provides a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050, as committed in the Climate Acts. It considers that by or before 2030, Ireland will achieve 80% of electricity demand from renewable sources and a projected decrease in GHG emissions of 75% in 2030 relative to 2018 levels. The CAP's objective is to assist in the delivery of the required GHG emissions abatement to meet climate targets.

8.4 Regional Context

8.4.1 Southern Assembly: Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020

The Southern Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) provides a twelve-year framework for spatial and economic development in the Southern region.

Interlinked Strategic and Regional Growth

The RSES envisions Cork as a central node in Ireland's economic network, with strategic employment hubs such as Carrigtwohill, Little Island, and Ringaskiddy serving as catalysts for regional development. Among these, Ringaskiddy emerges as a focal point for the Port of Cork's proposed expansion. The RSES recognises that the port's shift from City Docks and Tivoli Docks to Ringaskiddy is a strategic alignment with broader economic objectives. The regeneration of Cork City's docklands and Tivoli Docks depends on the successful expansion of facilities at Ringaskiddy. The RSES underscores this by stressing that the capacity at Ringaskiddy must be sufficient to support the port's operations before regeneration projects in the city can fully proceed. This interdependency highlights the urgency of expanding the deep-water berth at Ringaskiddy as a critical step in facilitating the City Centre Dockland Regeneration and supporting economic development. **Regional Policy Objective 146 states:**

"It is an objective to achieve NSO: High Quality International Connectivity. The following port development actions are identified: Continued support for capital infrastructure projects in the Port of Cork's Strategic Development Plan including redevelopment of existing port facilities in Ringaskiddy and preparing City Docks and Tivoli for future regeneration."

As the Port of Cork transitions its services and facilities from City Docks and Tivoli Docks to Ringaskiddy, the RSES emphasises the integral role of Ringaskiddy in this shift. The strategy stipulates that the successful regeneration of City Docks and Tivoli Docks is contingent upon the effective

development of port facilities at Ringaskiddy. Without adequate capacity at Ringaskiddy, these regeneration projects face significant hurdles.

To address this, **Regional Policy Objective 146** mandates to:

“Support capital infrastructure projects in the Port of Cork Strategic Development Plan, including the redevelopment of existing port facilities in Ringaskiddy and preparing City Docks and Tivoli Docks for future regeneration.”

And

“Strengthen and maintain access to ports through enhanced transport networks and improved journey times including support for M11 and N80 improved connectivity to Rosslare, N28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Road and N21/N69 (Foynes to Limerick Road Scheme including Adare Bypass).”

Maritime Spatial Planning

Ireland has developed its National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF) as the marine counterpart to terrestrial spatial plans, such as the NPF. The NMPF sets out sectoral policies in areas such as offshore energy, port development and the marine environment as well as addressing the impact of climate change including implications from changes in sea levels and rising sea temperature.

The RSES acknowledges the Southern Region’s potential to enhance economic growth through the sustainable use of its marine resources. **RPO 76** highlights the importance of the marine economy to Ireland, stating:

“It is an objective to ensure alignment, and consistency between land use and ocean-based planning, and to ensure co-ordination, which supports the protection of the marine environment and the growth of the marine economy.”

RPO 77 supports the integration of various marine activities and aims to ensure consistency across national, regional, and local planning frameworks, including the NMPF, maritime spatial planning, and coastal zone management plans.

RPO 78 promotes the sustainable development of the marine environment to foster innovation in the maritime economy, positioning the Region as a leader in marine spatial planning.

Economy and Employment

The RSES underscores the importance of Ringaskiddy as strategic asset for employment growth and a critical regional asset. It recognises the need for an intensification of employment in strategic locations including Ringaskiddy. **Regional Policy Objective 147**, “Economic Opportunities of Ports,” advocates for the protection of marine-related functions of ports and supports the development of sustainable infrastructure. This includes port facilities that support renewable energy and export potential. The expansion of the Port of Cork aligns with these objectives by increasing capacity for vessels and

containers, which supports both regional economic opportunities and sustainable development goals.

Transport and Connectivity

The RSES highlights the role of Tier 1 ports in sustaining global trade and underlines the need for continued development to meet national and international demands. The Port of Cork's proposal to extend its facilities at Ringaskiddy is thus positioned as a vital response to these policy imperatives, enhancing its capacity to handle increased freight volumes and larger vessels, and thereby bolstering regional and international trade links.

Regional Policy Objective 140 states:

"It is an objective to maintain, support and enhance the Region's International Connectivity Transport Network including the Trans European Network (TEN-T) which seeks the development of a Europe-wide network of railway lines, roads, inland waterways, maritime shipping routes, ports, airports and railroad terminals."

This objective highlights the need for ongoing development of ports to maintain high-quality international connections.

RPO 142 outlines the objective to strengthen investment to deliver actions under National Ports Policy and investment in sustainable infrastructure projects that:

"a. Strengthen and develop the strategic international, national and regional economic roles of our Tier 1 Ports (Port of Cork and Shannon-Foynes Port) and Tier 2 Ports (Port of Waterford and Rosslare Europort) and support the strategic role of our Region's port and harbour assets under the National Marine Planning Framework;

Regional Policy Objective 143 states:

"The critical role of the region's port and airport assets will be protected by ensuring that local land-use policies subject to required planning and environmental processes facilitate and do not undermine their functions and their landside access capacity, subject to consideration of environmental concerns including water quality, flood risks, human health, natural and built heritage."

8.4.2 Cork Metropolitan Area Spatial Plan (MASP) 2020

The Cork MASP provides a comprehensive framework that ties together the expansion of the Port of Cork, the development of key infrastructure, and the regeneration of Cork City. **Policy Objective 1 of the Cork MASP** emphasises the importance of integrating population and employment growth with the regeneration of the city centre, Docklands, and Tivoli areas. This objective highlights the role of the Port of Cork's expansion in enabling the redevelopment of these urban areas by facilitating the relocation of port activities from the city centre to Ringaskiddy.

Cork MASP Policy Objective 1:

“(b) To promote the Cork Metropolitan Area as a cohesive metropolitan employment and property market where population and employment growth is integrated with: (i) the city centre as the primary location at the heart of the metropolitan area and region reinforced by (ii) the continued regeneration, consolidation and infrastructure led growth of the city centre, Cork City Docklands, Tivoli and suburban areas (iii) active land management initiatives to enable future infrastructure led expansion of the city and suburbs (to be assessed by Core Strategy initiatives).”

This objective is further reinforced **by Cork MASP Policy Objective 2**, which aims to:

“(a) strengthen the consolidation and regeneration of Cork City Centre to drive its role as a vibrant living, retailing and working city, the economic, social and cultural heart of the Cork Metropolitan Area and Region.”

Furthermore, **Cork MASP Policy Objective 13** specifically supports the expansion of Port of Cork’s facilities to accommodate projected growth in population and trade.

“The relocation of existing port activities from Cork City and investment in infrastructure to remediate sites and enable regeneration of the Cork City Docks and Tivoli”

This strategic alignment underscores the interconnectedness of port infrastructure development and urban regeneration, with the deep-water berth extension at Ringaskiddy being a crucial element in this broader vision.

8.5 Local Context

8.5.1 Cork County Development Plan

The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 (CCoDP) designates Ringaskiddy as a Strategic Employment Location, emphasising its suitability for large-scale industrial developments. This designation is aligned with relevant environmental, nature, and landscape protection policies applicable to the Cork Harbour area. The plan underscores the critical role of Cork Harbour in the economic success of the Southwest region, highlighting the strategic significance of relocating port services and facilities to the Lower Harbour. This relocation is intended to increase shipping trade capacity, improve delivery efficiency through shorter shipping distances, and support broader regional economic objectives.

Principle of Proposed Development

The site is zoned for industry (RY-I-18). The main policy objective for Industrial areas as detailed in Volume 1 of the CCoDP (ZU 18-16: Industrial Areas), provides to:

“Promote the development of industrial areas as the primary location for uses that include heavy industry, manufacturing, repairs, medium to large scale warehousing and distribution, biomedical, pharmaceutical,

bioenergy plants, open storage, waste materials treatment, port related facilities and port related activities and recovery and transport operating centres.”

The zoning reflects the site’s strategic importance in supporting industrial and logistical activities critical to both regional and national economic growth.

The site-specific zoning objective RY-I-18 is detailed in Volume 4 of the CCoDP:

Port Facilities and Port Related Activities. This zone adjoins the Cork Harbour SPA and Monkstown Creek proposed Natural Heritage Area pNHA. Areas within this zoned are used Special Conservation Interest bird species for which the Cork Harbour SPA is designated. Account will be taken of this when considering new development proposals in this area. Any development of this site will need to take account of the biodiversity sensitivities of the side and area.

The site specific zoning objective notes that the site is subject to flood risk.

The CCoDP notes that Ireland’s economy is heavily reliant on international trade, with exports of goods and services representing 126% of GDP in 2019, significantly higher than the EU average of 46.6%. Similarly, imports constituted 114% of GDP, compared to the EU average of 47%. This reliance underscores the importance of efficient port infrastructure to support the flow of goods and services.

Under **Section 12.7.4** of the CCoDP, the policy for Freight and Ports is outlined, with the plan aiming to:

“Secure the appropriate infrastructure for the effective movement of goods, especially to and from the region’s ports;

Facilitate the planned development of port infrastructure to enhance the region’s sustainability and general economic competitiveness.”

The plan also recognises the impact of Brexit, which has increased the demand for enhanced services, facilities, and infrastructure at the Port of Cork. The Port of Cork Company (PoCC) is therefore tasked with preparing for increased shipping trade and accommodating larger vessels to ensure Ireland’s import and export trade can be conducted directly with mainland Europe.

The development is further supported by **County Development Plan Objective CS 2-3: County Metropolitan Cork Strategic Planning Area**. This objective aims to:

“Continue to assist in the redevelopment of industrial uses and major port facilities, primarily at Ringaskiddy, to where deep-water berths are viable and appropriate infrastructure is planned to facilitate freight transport.”

The County Council support for this proposal is further reinforced under Section 1.7.26 of Volume 4 of the CCoDP 2022, which states:

“The Plan supports the port of Cork’s proposals to expand its facilities in Ringaskiddy so that port centred operations and logistics can become more efficient through the accommodation of larger ships and so that port traffic can directly access the National Road Network without passing through the city centre.”

This policy is further strengthened by **County Objectives TM 12-15**, which include provisions to:

c) Support the landside capacity of Port of Cork subject to consideration of environmental concerns including water quality, flood risks, human health, natural and built heritage.

d) Support the relocation of port activities and other industry away from the upper harbour on the eastern approaches to the city.

e) Support Ringaskiddy as the preferred location for the relocation of the majority of port related activities having regard to the need for a significant improvement to the road network. Also recognising the key role that Marino Point can play in providing an alternative relocation option for some of the port related uses that could best be served by rail transport taking account of residential amenity, tourism, recreation and renewable energy. The Council is committed to engage with the Port of Cork and other relevant stakeholders in achieving this objective.

M28

County Development Plan Objective TM 12-15 A emphasises the importance of:

“Ensuring that the strategic port facilities at Ringaskiddy, Whitegate and Marino Point have appropriate road transport capacity to facilitate their sustainable development in future years.”

Specific Development Objective RY-U-02 mandates for the delivery of the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Motorway Scheme.

A planning condition currently limits throughput at the Ringaskiddy Port facility to 322,846 TEU until the completion of the M28 and Dunkettle road schemes. The Dunkettle road scheme is now fully completed and operational. Preparatory works on the M28 have commenced. The Port of Cork Company recognises that a comparable condition, limiting TEU throughput at Ringaskiddy Port facility is appropriate pending the completion of the M28.

City Centre Redevelopment

Under **Section 12.20.3**, the CCoDP 2022 acknowledges the necessity of extending capacity at Ringaskiddy to accommodate the relocation of services from Cork City Docklands and Tivoli Docks to the lower harbour. This relocation is essential to unlocking the redevelopment potential of dockland areas close to the city, in line with proposals set out in the City Council’s development plans.

The Port of Cork is vital to the stability and future growth of the economy in the South-West Region and is a key contributor to both the national economy and the European infrastructure network. To respond to future growth requirements and changes in shipping trends, particularly the shift towards larger vessels, the Port of Cork must continue its relocation from the Upper Harbour. This relocation is also necessary to facilitate the redevelopment of the Docklands and Tivoli for mixed-use development. Furthermore, the Port of Cork must realise the equity of lands in the Upper Harbour in the longer term to fund its infrastructural and operational requirements, in line with government policy.

Policy Section 8.7.17 of the County Development Plan supports the Port of Cork's proposals to expand its facilities at Ringaskiddy, aiming to enhance the efficiency of port-centred operations and logistics through the accommodation of larger ships.

This expansion will also enable direct access to the National Road Network without passing through the city centre. Ringaskiddy is also identified as a suitable location for accommodating uses that need to relocate from the city to facilitate the redevelopment of the Docklands.

Heritage and Environment

There are a number of proposed Natural Heritage Areas, a Special Protection Area and a Special Area of Conservation within Cork Harbour. The CDP reflects the legislation on protection of designated areas through **Objective BE 15-2**, which aims to:

"Protect all natural heritage sites which are designated or proposed for designation under European legislation, National legislation and International Agreements. Maintain and where possible enhance appropriate ecological linkages between these. This includes Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Marine Protected Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Statutory Nature Reserves, Refuges for Fauna and Ramsar Sites."

The proposed development is adjacent to the Cork Harbour SPA. A Natura Impact Assessment report accompanies the application.

Biodiversity and Environment

The CDP acknowledges the threat to biodiversity globally and includes within the definition of biodiversity, native plants, animals and the places (habitats and ecosystems) they occupy.

The overarching policy in relation to biodiversity in the CDP is to:

- a) *Support and comply with the objectives of the National Biodiversity Plan 2017-2021 (and any future National Biodiversity Plan which may be adopted during the period of this Plan) as appropriate,*
- b) *Implement the current County Biodiversity Action Plan and any future updated Plan;*

- c) *Support and comply with biodiversity policy set out in other national and regional policy documents as appropriate.*

8.5.2 Cork City Development Plan

The Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 (CCiDP 2022) recognises the Port of Cork as a port of national significance and a critical driver of economic development in the Cork region. The plan emphasises the importance of increasing the Port's capacity in the lower harbour to free up land in the City Centre for other uses, with a vision to develop sustainable, people-centred neighbourhoods in these areas. The plan explicitly supports the relocation of port facilities from the City Docks and Tivoli to Ringaskiddy, stating:

"The plan supports the relocation of port facilities from the City Docks and Tivoli to Ringaskiddy, to deliver new sustainable, people-centred city neighbourhoods will be developed at these locations."

Moreover, Section 4.144 of the CCiDP 2022 elaborates on the significance of this move:

"The relocation of Port Facilities away from the City will free up significant landbanks for housing and employment and allow the creation of compact, vibrant urban neighbourhoods in Cork Docklands. This will be integral to the realisation of the significant population and housing ambitions for Cork contained in the NPF."

This strategic relocation is further reinforced by **Objective 10.40. 'Planning Relocation of Tivoli Docks'**, which asserts:

"Cork City Council will seek to protect the role of the Port of Cork as a nationally important strategic asset during its ongoing relocation from Tivoli Docks to other locations within Cork Harbour."

The relocation of port activities is thus a cornerstone of the broader regeneration plans for Cork City. However, the plan also notes that the successful relocation and subsequent redevelopment of city sites are contingent upon the completion of new facilities and capacity expansions in the Lower Harbour. These developments include the expansion of services at Ringaskiddy West and East, as well as the construction of the new M28 corridor.

8.5.3 Port of Cork Masterplan

The Port of Cork Masterplan 2050 provides a vision of how the Port of Cork Company (PoCC) can continue to adapt and grow to meet the increasing demand for port capacity in Ireland. The Masterplan maps PoCC's journey from a "River to Sea Port", aiming to consolidate activities in the lower harbour by 2050, freeing up vital space in the city centre for much needed mixed-use development in designated regeneration areas including the City Docks and Tivoli.

Expansion for Global Shipping Needs

In pursuing efficiencies in container shipping through economies of scale, the PoCC plans to expand its facilities to accommodate the growing trend of increased global vessel sizes. This expansion requires ports to:

- Be closer to main shipping lines
- Feature deeper drafts and wider navigation channels
- Include spacious terminals capable of handling large vessels and container volumes efficiently.

Increased Hinterland Access

The Masterplan emphasises the importance of high-quality road access to ensure the PoCC fulfils its obligations as a Tier 1 port under the European TEN-T core network. Article 9 of the decision 661/2010EU requires Tier 1 ports to connect to the primary national road network. Key infrastructure developments include:

Ringaskiddy Development: The opening of the Cork Container Terminal (CCT) in September 2022 marked a significant milestone. However, a planning condition currently limits throughput at the Ringaskiddy facility to 322,846 TEU until the completion of the M28 and Dunkettle road schemes. The PoCC is required to operate dual container operations at both Tivoli and CCT in the interim.

Dunkettle Interchange: the Dunkettle Interchange Upgrade in Cork was officially opened on February 12th, 2024. The €215 million project saw the interchange develop into a free-flowing junction, significantly enhancing transportation infrastructure and connectivity, ensuring smoother access to the port and the surrounding area.

M28 Motorway: Approved by An Bord Pleanála in June 2018, the M28 motorway will facilitate the relocation of the PoCC activities from Tivoli Docks to Ringaskiddy, unlocking substantial port capacity in the lower harbour.

The Port as an Energy Hub

The Port of Cork PoCC envisions transforming its port into a net-zero Energy Hub, aligned with the County Development Plan's recognition of Ringaskiddy as a strategic location capable of meeting both current and future energy demands. Future opportunities under consideration by the PoCC include the development of industries such as:

- Solid Biomass Fuels: These require substantial dry storage capacity due to the hydrophilic nature of the products.
- Liquid Bulks: The PoCC is exploring the possibility of leasing port lands to energy providers for the construction of necessary infrastructure and storage facilities, while also providing access to quays and jetties to facilitate the import, export, and distribution of energy products.

The PoCC aims to harness these opportunities through the adaptation of existing infrastructure though it acknowledges that, in some cases, additional infrastructure will be necessary to fully realise these objectives.

Support for Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE)

As part of its diversification strategy, the PoCC aims to support the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) sector through the development of industrial infrastructure and landside facilities, including on-dock areas for:

- Laydown and assembly of turbines
- Handling heavy-duty structures required for large wind turbine installations.
- Catering to support vessels for the deployment and maintenance of ORE projects.

The delivery of this objective in the masterplan is contingent on the completion of works previously permitted but not yet finished, which are the subject of this planning application.

9. Planning Assessment

9.1 Principle of Proposed Development

The redevelopment of port facilities at Ringaskiddy is a permitted development and the first phase has been constructed and is now operational. The port land use is well established and consistent with European, national, regional and local planning policy. Since the original application was permitted in 2015, the planning policy context for the redevelopment and expansion of port facilities at Ringaskiddy has strengthened considerably.

9.2 Strategic Location and Alternatives

The principle of container port operations at Ringaskiddy as the long-term alternative to Tivoli container terminal has been established by the PA0035 SID permission and subsequent alterations. The container terminal at Ringaskiddy is now operational, although not working to full capacity. Some container terminal operations remain at Tivoli. The construction of the second container terminal / multi-purpose berth is required to facilitate increased capacity for container activities and to provide facilities which have capacity to support ORE.

Alternatives were assessed in detail in respect of the original SID application, and it was concluded that Ringaskiddy was the most appropriate location for the expansion of port activities and the relocation of container terminal.

Chapter 2 of the accompanying Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) considers the need for the scheme and alternative locations in terms of the current proposed development.

9.3 Rail Freight Potential

The potential for rail freight connectivity to the Port of Cork was extensively assessed during the original SID application. It was accepted that, while rail connectivity may have potential for niche cargos in the southern region, it was not appropriate for the nature of cargo proposed for Ringaskiddy terminal. Since the SID permission was granted, POCC has acquired ownership of Marino Point (Belvelly Port Facility). This facility has rail connectivity, should a demand arise for niche cargo through the port.

9.4 Traffic and Transportation

The original SID application was permitted subject to restrictions in relation to construction and operational traffic, including the following conditions:

- Agreement on the implementation of Ringaskiddy Mobility Management Plan (RMMP).
- Pending the completion of the N28 and Dunkettle road schemes, throughput at the permitted Ringaskiddy port facility shall be limited to 322,846 TEU. Prior to the commencement of operations at Ringaskiddy East the developer shall submit proposals for the monitoring of

compliance with this limit for the written agreement of the planning authority.

The RMMP was agreed with Cork County Council prior to the operational phase of the Ringaskiddy terminal and is in active operation. The RMMP includes a detailed booking system for HGV vehicles entering and existing the container terminal and is effectively managing container port related traffic.

The Dunkettle Road Scheme is now completed, and preparatory works are underway to deliver the M28 from Cork to Ringaskiddy. In the meantime, TEU throughput remains below the limits set by the permission.

The EIAR that accompanies this application provides an assessment of the traffic impacts associated with the remaining proposed works. The level of activity to be facilitated by the proposed infrastructure works is in line with that envisaged under the original permission and previously assessed. A copy of the RMMP is appended to the EIAR.

9.5 Noise

The construction and operational phases of the works already undertaken have fully complied with the noise limits set out in the conditions of the permitted development. This included the construction of noise barriers in advance of initial construction works.

The proposed redevelopment at Ringaskiddy Port has the potential to alter the noise environment at sensitive receptors, particularly during peak construction and operational phases if worst-case scenarios occur without mitigation. Noise and vibration assessments have recommended a suite of mitigation measures to minimise impacts, such as the installation of noise barriers and the implementation of alternative quieter alarm systems. These measures are further outlined in Chapter 9 of the EIAR accompanying this application. With these measures implemented, the construction and operational phases are expected to remain within established noise thresholds. Moreover, road traffic noise is anticipated to remain the dominant ambient noise source in the vicinity, with minimal contributions from port operations leading to no significant deviation from current noise levels.

9.6 Dust and Air Quality

A Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) was agreed with Cork County Council prior to the commencement of development. An Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) was also agreed with Cork County Council prior to the commencement of the operational phase.

Dust and Air Quality limits set out in the CEMP and OEMP have been fully complied with during the construction and operational phases of the development.

The remaining works covered by this application may result in short-term air quality impacts during construction, primarily due to dust generation from earthworks and emissions from construction vehicles and machinery. However, mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 10 such as a

comprehensive dust minimisation plan, on-site monitoring, and strict adherence to best practices in dust suppression, are expected to significantly reduce these effects.

Overall, the residual impacts on air quality are expected to be negligible, ensuring compliance with Irish and EU air quality standards

An outline CEMP and copy of PoCC's OEMP are appended to the EIAR.

9.7 Climate

Under the original SID application, the Board Inspector noted that:

- There were no specific policies for shipping and ports in relation to climate change and that operational measures to minimise CO₂ emissions included good environmental management procedures.
- Reductions in carbon emissions associated with road-based traffic was more likely to arise from technological developments than from modal shift.

The Policy context around climate Change has strengthened since the original SID was permitted. POCC now have a Port Climate Action Policy, which sets out a roadmap to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve its climate targets to reduce its carbon footprint and improve energy efficiency.

The proposed redevelopment at Ringaskiddy Port aligns with strengthened national climate policies and the Port of Cork Company's (PoCC) Climate Action Policy, which outlines initiatives to decarbonise operations and improve energy efficiency. Although short-term increases in greenhouse gas emissions are anticipated due to additional shipping activities at Ringaskiddy, the extent of emissions are gradually reducing given the existing legal requirements around fuel and emissions for shipping. Furthermore, the more efficient use of ships and their respective turn-around time will help reduce emissions coupled with the reduced travel time from no longer having the requirement to go to existing upriver facilities. Larger ships will also prove to be more efficient (in terms of energy consumption) and will avail of the use of the proposed Deep Water Berth extension and CCT 2 and negate the existing journey up-river.

Additionally, the assessment notes that the Port of Cork are introducing a number of initiatives to decarbonise their operations (Port of Cork, 2023). These initiatives include:

- The introduction of renewables on Port lands (solar PV and wind turbines) to power Port equipment such as our cranes and reefers.
- The planning for electrification of future Port equipment and the supply of electricity to vessels berthed at Port facilities – onshore power supply (OPS).
- Pilot the use of HVO with a view to utilising the fuel as we transition towards net zero.
- Continue to purchase efficient equipment as per the recent investment in diesel-battery-hybrid straddle carriers.

With the completion of the Port extension, the above initiatives can more readily be introduced facilitated by the new infrastructure to decarbonise the operations.

Regional assessments using the DMRB Screening Model confirm that percentage increases in atmospheric emissions remain below 5%, signifying no significant impact at the national level. Moreover, the project supports Ireland's energy security by enabling offshore renewable energy developments.

The EIAR which accompanies this application concludes that the redevelopment will contribute positively to national decarbonisation goals, facilitating the transition of the energy grid and ensuring a long-term net benefit for climate action.

9.8 Landscape & Visual Impact

The landscape and visual impacts of the proposed development were fully assessed under the original SID application. No additional infrastructural works are proposed.

Local views from the Ringaskiddy area are largely screened by mature tree belts and the natural topography, leading to an imperceptible to neutral, and at worst, a slight negative visual impact within the area. However, due to the open nature of the port lands and the requirement for clear access to the water, the proposed redevelopment will be visible, or partially visible, from lands across Cork Harbour, such as Monkstown and Cobh. These views will be experienced from a distance and in the context of existing port activities, resulting in a slight negative impact on the visual character of the surrounding area.

Photomontages included in Chapter 7 of the EIAR demonstrate that the proposed redevelopment structures will not break the skyline and will integrate with the existing port infrastructure. While complete mitigation of visual impacts is not feasible, the assessment concludes that the proposed redevelopment aligns with the current land use and development patterns in the area. The assessment concludes that the landscape has the capacity to accommodate this scale of redevelopment without significant negative impacts on visual or landscape character.

9.9 Coastal Process

The impact on coastal processes was fully assessed under the original SID application. No additional infrastructural works are proposed, nor is any additional dredging proposed over and above that original permitted.

Numerical modelling by RPS evaluated the hydrodynamic and sediment transport impacts of the proposed re-development at Ringaskiddy during construction and operational phases. Results indicate no significant changes to the tidal current or sediment transport regime beyond the immediate vicinity of the site. Sediment plume and deposition modelling for construction dredging at Ringaskiddy East and West confirmed minimal

deposition outside the dredging envelope, with short-lived turbidity peaks confined to the local area.

Cumulative impact assessments considered a marina at Monkstown and remedial works at Haulbowline Island, identifying no significant effects from these projects in conjunction with the proposed re-development.

An updated assessment of coastal processes for the remaining proposed works is included in Chapter 13 of the accompanying EIAR. Mitigation measures for dredging activities are detailed in Section 13.6.

9.10 Ecology

The original application included several conditions related to ecological protection during the construction and operational phase, which have been fully complied with.

POCC has very successfully implemented an extensive conservation management plan for the tern population in the Lower Harbour, with the provision of pontoons as nesting sites. The success of this project has been measured by the fact that record number of terns are now breeding in Cork Harbour. The EIAR demonstrates the success of conservation works already undertaken by PoCC.

The ecological report for the proposed development identifies potential environmental impacts, particularly on Natura 2000 sites, local habitats, and species. The development could result in habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation, with specific concerns for water quality, wildlife disturbance, and direct and indirect mortality risks.

Mitigation measures have been proposed to address these impacts, including construction-phase controls on water quality, noise, and vibration, as well as safeguards for terrestrial mammals, such as otters, and tree protection during construction. These measures aim to prevent significant harm to ecological receptors and ensure compliance with environmental standards, including protection for birds and other wildlife.

The assessment concludes that, with proper mitigation, the risks to nearby European sites and local biodiversity can be minimised

9.11 Leisure and Amenity

As part of the first phase of the original SID development, POCC delivered a new public amenity, including a new slipway, at Paddy's Point to the east of Ringaskiddy. POCC also made a significant contribution to Cork County Council towards public realm improvements in the village.

The Leisure and Amenity requirements of the entire permitted SID have been fully delivered, and it is not considered that are any further requirements associated with the unconstructed elements of work to be applied for under the forthcoming application.

9.12 Water, wastewater and overhead powerlines

The original application included several conditions related to water and wastewater management during the construction and operational phases, which have been fully complied with. The Port of Cork Company has implemented robust measures to ensure compliance with environmental standards, including the use of oil interceptors, sediment traps, and an Oil Spill Contingency Plan.

The EIAR identifies potential environmental impacts related to water quality, flood risk, and wastewater management. Key concerns include temporary increases of suspended sediment during construction, the risk of oil and chemical spills, and the potential for stormwater runoff to carry contaminants.

Mitigation measures have been proposed to address these impacts, including real-time water quality monitoring, the use of suction dredging where feasible, strict controls on oil and chemical storage, and pre-cast concrete elements to minimise pollution risks. The construction and operational drainage systems have been designed to manage stormwater effectively, directing runoff through oil interceptors and sediment traps prior to discharge.

The assessment concludes that, with these mitigation measures in place, the risks to Cork Harbour's water quality, flood regime, and wastewater infrastructure will be minimised, ensuring compliance with the Water Framework Directive and other relevant standards. Residual impacts are assessed as negligible or imperceptible.

The proposed development is not anticipated to have any additional impacts associated with water, wastewater over the original permitted development.

No works to overhead powerlines will be required under the proposed development.

9.13 Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

Archaeological monitoring was undertaken on all seabed works associated with the works completed to date and the archaeological report issued to the Department of Housing and Local Government, and to Cork County Council. The assessment confirmed no upstanding remains of archaeological or architectural significance within the proposed development area. While the locations retain cultural heritage potential, there is no cultural heritage reason why the development should not proceed.

The report recommends archaeological monitoring during all seabed, intertidal/foreshore and terrestrial disturbances associated with the development.

The Foreshore Lease obtained for Phase 1b and Phase 2 of the quay structures includes provisions for archaeological monitoring and remains valid until 2052.

Chapter 6 of the EIAR accompanying this application assesses impacts on archaeology and cultural heritage for the remaining proposed works, concluding that no significant impacts are anticipated.

9.14 Contributions and Community Gain

The original permission provided for the development of Paddy's Point Amenity area, which was completed during the first of the development and is now open to the public. A special contribution of €1m was also paid to Cork County Council to contribute towards public realm improvement works in Ringaskiddy village. The public realm works are currently under construction.

All development contributions and community gain requirements associated with the original SID permission have been fully delivered and paid. It is considered that the proposed development will have no additional contribution or community gain requirements, as no additional works are proposed.

9.15 Appropriate Assessment

The original application was accompanied by a Natura Impact Assessment. An updated Natura Impact Assessment has been carried out and is submitted as part of this application.

9.16 Compliance with Conditions

The original permission PA0035 was subject to 17 conditions. Alteration PM0010 was subject to 7 conditions. No additional conditions were applied to the permitted alterations reference 304437-19 or 310847-21.

A compliance report is provided in Appendix D, detailing a summary of compliance agreements reached with Cork County Council and comments on the relevance of each condition to the proposed development.

10. Summary & Conclusions

The proposed redevelopment of the Port of Cork's facilities at Ringaskiddy is a strategically vital project that aligns with national, regional, and local planning policies.

This application is for completion of development previously permitted under Strategic Infrastructure Development reference PA0035 (as altered) and is necessary to accommodate future port growth, particularly in light of the increasing vessel sizes and anticipated growth in commercial activities. The expansion supports the relocation of port services from Cork City to the Lower Harbour, a key enabler of the Cork Docklands regeneration.

The proposed development can also support ORE, as the second berth (CCT 2) is being constructed with sufficient loading capacity to accommodate marshalling and assembly of ORE components

The proposed works, including the extension of the deep-water berth and the construction of a second container / multi-purpose berth, are critical in maintaining the Port of Cork's competitiveness within international trade networks and facilitating Ireland's growing offshore renewable energy sector. These developments align with the National Marine Planning Framework's objectives for high-quality international connectivity and economic resilience, as well as the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for Cork's role in Ireland's economic growth.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) accompanying this application confirms that no significant additional environmental, traffic, noise, or visual impacts are expected beyond those assessed under the original 2015 permission. The Port of Cork has successfully implemented conservation and public amenity measures, enhancing local ecology and leisure infrastructure.

In conclusion, the redevelopment of Ringaskiddy's port facilities will secure the Port of Cork's role as a critical national and regional asset, will contribute to Ireland's long-term economic and environmental sustainability, and will provide infrastructure to with capacity to support the ORE sector.

Appendices

Appendix A: Planning History

Appendix B: Schedule of Pre-application consultation

Appendix C: An Bord Pleanála Pre-application consultation

Appendix D: Report on Compliance with Conditions of PA0035

Appendix E: Statement on Consistency with NMPF