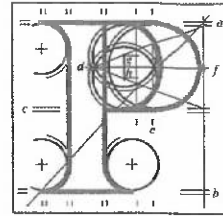


**Our Case Number:** ABP-314597-22

**Your Reference:** The Courts Service



**An  
Bord  
Pleanála**

TOBIN Consulting Engineers  
Fairgreen House  
Fairgreen Road  
Co. Galway  
H91 AXK8

**Date:** 05 December 2022

**Re:** BusConnects Galway Cross-City Link Scheme.  
University Road to Dublin Road, Galway City.

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above-mentioned proposed road development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

Please note that the proposed road development shall not be carried out unless the Board has approved it or approved it with modifications.

The Board has also received an application for confirmation of a compulsory purchase order which relates to this proposed road development. The Board has absolute discretion to hold an oral hearing in respect of any application before it, in accordance with section 218 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Accordingly, the Board will inform you in due course on this matter. The Board shall also make a decision on both applications at the same time.

Please be advised that landowners listed on the Compulsory Purchase Order schedule associated with this application are not required to pay the €50 fee associated with this case. As you are listed as a landowner, a refund of €50 will be issued to the debit/credit card used to make payment for this submission.

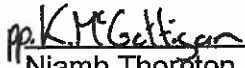
<b>Tel</b>	<b>Tel</b>	(01) 858 8100
<b>Glaó Áitiúil</b>	<b>LoCall</b>	1890 275 175
<b>Facs</b>	<b>Fax</b>	(01) 872 2684
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64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
Baile Átha Cliath 1	Dublin 1
D01 V902	D01 V902

If you have any queries in relation to this matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Board.

Please quote the above-mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,



Niamh Thornton  
Executive Officer  
Direct Line: 01-8737247

HA02A

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**Our Ref: 11571**

17/11/2022

Offices of An Bord

Pleanála,

64 Marlborough Street,

Dublin 1,

D01 V902

**RE: HA61.314597 University Road to Dublin Road, Galway**

**Proposed development: - BusConnects Galway- An Bord Pleanála – SID Application**

**Submission via ABP <https://www.pleanala.ie/en-ie/case/314597> portal**

Dear Sirs/Madam,

We act on behalf of the Courts Service and wish to make a submission to this SID Application HA61.314597 University Road to Dublin Road, Galway, on their instruction.

Please find enclosed in respect of the above application a copy of a submission on behalf of the Courts Service with reference to Galway Courthouse.

**Address of Courts Service**

The Courts Service, Phoenix House, 15 - 24 Phoenix Street North, Dublin 7

**Address of Property**

Galway Courthouse, Courthouse Square, Galway, Co. Galway. H91 CDT6

If you require any further information, please contact the undersigned.

Yours sincerely

*Declan Moran (Agent)*

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For and on behalf of TOBIN Consulting Engineers

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H91 AXK8



# TOBIN

CONSULTING ENGINEERS

BUILT ON KNOWLEDGE

## BUSCONNECTS GALWAY

An Bord Pleanála – SID Application  
HA61.314597 University Road to Dublin Road, Galway



**REPORT NAME** THE COURTS SERVICE BUSCONNECTS GALWAY  
**SUBMISSION**

Document Control Sheet	
Document Reference	THE COURTS SERVICE BUSCONNECTS GALWAY SUBMISSION
Report Status	
Report Date	NOV 2022
Current Revision	A
Client:	Courts Service
Client Address:	
Project Number	

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Revision	Description	Author:	Date	Reviewed By:	Date	Authorised by:	Date
A	Issue	DM	14/11/2022	BH		BH	

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**ACEI** ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING ENGINEERS OF IRELAND



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

We have been instructed by our Client, the Courts Service to make a planning submission to the SID Application, to An Bord Pleanála, (Case Ref. HA61.314597) as they are an impacted landowner who have planning grounds for concern relating to the proposed scheme.

The Courts Service is responsible for the administration and management of the courts in Ireland. Its primary functions are to:

- manage the courts
- support the judges
- provide information on the courts system to the public and
- provide court buildings and facilities for court users.

Galway City Council has applied to An Bord Pleanála, under Section 51 of the Roads Act 1993, for the proposed BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link scheme, with the application currently on official public display. (SID Case Reference HA61.314597 University Road to Dublin Road, Galway)

It is in the context of the important role of the Courts Service for the administration and management of the courts in Galway, that we make this submission on behalf of **The Courts Service**, which relates to lands in their ownership, which are directly impacted upon by the proposals. i.e., Galway Courthouse and associated curtilage. Please see site location map (Figure 1).

There is a separate CPO process running concurrently which the Courts Service has made submissions on separately. (CPO Case Reference KA61314654, University Road to Dublin Road, Galway)

The overall aims of BusConnects Galway and its general layout are supported by the Courts Service. The proposal will be a welcome improvement to the city centre bringing enhancements to the public realm and removing heavy traffic from the core shopping and CBD area. The vision of Galway City Council and NTA is to be commended, in this regard.

However, there are a unique set of operational and circulation arrangements associated with Galway Courthouse, which are impacted on by the proposals and which are of serious concern to the Courts Service. These are outlined in detail below with our requests for amendments to the scheme in the vicinity of the Courthouse to mitigate same.

### 1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT:

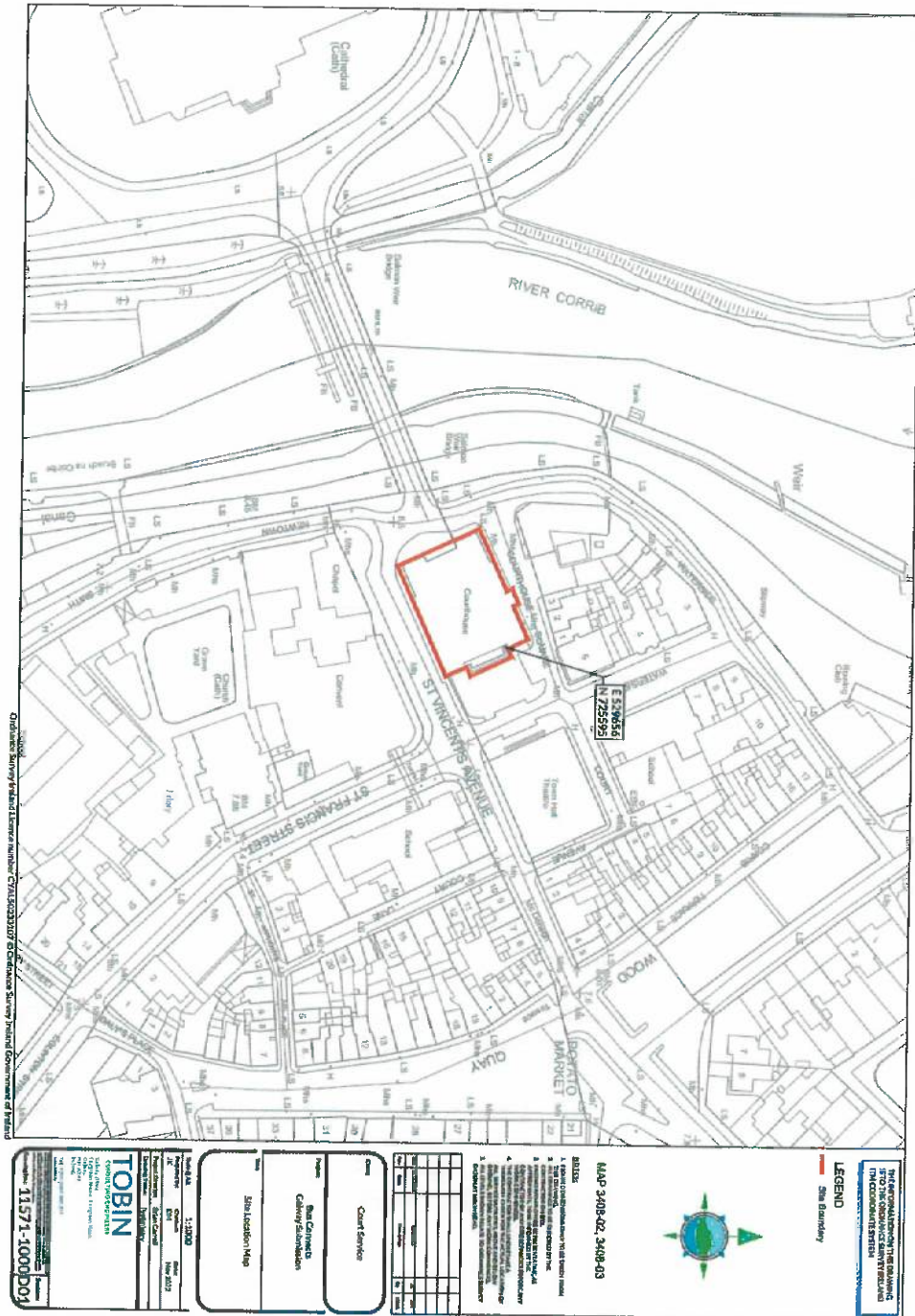
This report is structured as follows:

1. Introductory Section providing a general overview of the Courts Service and the Proposed Scheme.
2. Details in brief the Planning Context
3. Description of BusConnects Galway and main elements of the scheme, relating to the Court Services property.

4. Details the areas of concern / objection to the proposed BusConnects Galway proposal relevant to the Courts Service in Galway. This section also includes amendments, as requested by the Courts Service.

5. The Conclusion includes a summation of the main planning concerns and the requested local amendments to the scheme.

Figure 1. Indicative Site Location Map



## 2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

The Proposed BusConnects Galway Scheme is supported by a range of International, National Regional and Local legislation, planning policy documents and statutory plans.

From the United Nations, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to European Commission Policy for Smart & Sustainable Mobility Strategy 2020, to the National Development Plan (NDP) and National Planning Framework (NPF), to the Regional Plan for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly - Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy - 2020-2032, **Sustainable Mobility Models** are supported through legislation, strategic policies and fiscal incentives via various wide-ranging instruments. All these elements are detailed in the Planning Report, associated with the published documentation of the BusConnects Galway scheme and are duly noted.

### LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT - GALWAY CITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2017-2023)

The existing Galway City Development Plan (2017 - 2023) sets out a strategic transport aim as follows: 'To integrate sustainable land use and transportation, facilitating access and choice to a range of transport modes, accessible to all sections of the community that ensures safety and ease of movement to and within the city and onward connectivity to the wider area of County Galway and the West Region.'

The implementation of the GTS is also a strategic aim of GCC, as set out within the City Development Plan; in particular the implementation of the Proposed Scheme and a reduction in car movements through the city centre and the implementation of the proposed cross-city radial bus network as identified in the GTS.

The Galway City Development Plan also lists the following specific objectives in relation to Transportation and specifically in relation to Public Transport and Pedestrians:

- Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the provision of the 'Cross - City Link' as part of the GTS;
- Implement traffic management and infrastructural changes to facilitate the development of a public bus network in accordance with the GTS;
- Support the improvement of access for public transport, pedestrian and cyclists to and within major employment areas and institutions.
- Prioritise improvements to pedestrian movements and safety within the city centre including extension of pedestrianisation, provision of wider footpaths and shared streets;

*Extract from BusConnects Galway Preliminary Design Report as published*

We acknowledge that the wider BusConnects Galway Scheme is supported by the Current City Development Plan 2017-2022, and by draft City Development Plan 2023-2029.

### 3.0 BUSCONNECTS GALWAY

# BUS CONNECTS GALWAY

## SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FOR A BETTER CITY.

BusConnects is the National Transport Authority's ("NTA") programme to improve bus and sustainable transport services.

BusConnects Galway: Cross-City Link arises from the Galway Transport Strategy ("GTS"), Bus Connects Infrastructure Program and Project Ireland 2040.

#### **Background:**

The Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) is a key part of the Government's policies to improve public transport, encourage active travel and address climate change in Galway. The GTS was published by Galway City Council (GCC) and Galway County Council in 2016. The GTS has informed the policies and objectives of both the Galway City Development Plan and the Galway County Development Plan. The strategy provides a framework for the development of the transport network over the next 20 to 30 years and was prepared in partnership with the NTA. The GTS identified the CCL, along with a number of other transport improvement projects, with the aim of addressing the transportation issues experienced in the city and its environs. The CCL is to form a central route for public transport, cyclists and pedestrians along a corridor from west to east, through the city centre. It will complement the proposed new city bus network routes approaching from the east and west of the city centre, which coalesce along this high-quality corridor, providing high frequency services with journey time reliability and opportunities for interchange.

*(Extract from BusConnects Galway Preliminary Design Report as published)*



Figure 2. Proposed Scheme Route Overview

The main focus of this proposed scheme is the connection of University Road with the Dublin Road, via Salmon Weir Bridge, Eyre Square and College Road, with a Bus, Pedestrian and Cyclist priority route. This proposed route is adjacent to and overlaps with the property of the Courts Service i.e. Galway Courthouse.

### 3.1 MAIN ELEMENTS OF BUSCONNECTS GALWAY

There are 3 main elements to BusConnects Galway

- Cross City Link (Blue)
- City Centre Access Network (Black)
- Inner City Access Route (Magenta)

The GTS identified the proposed improvements to the city transport network including the 'Cross-City Link', 'City Centre Access Network', and 'Inner City Access Route'. These three elements are illustrated below in Figure 3.

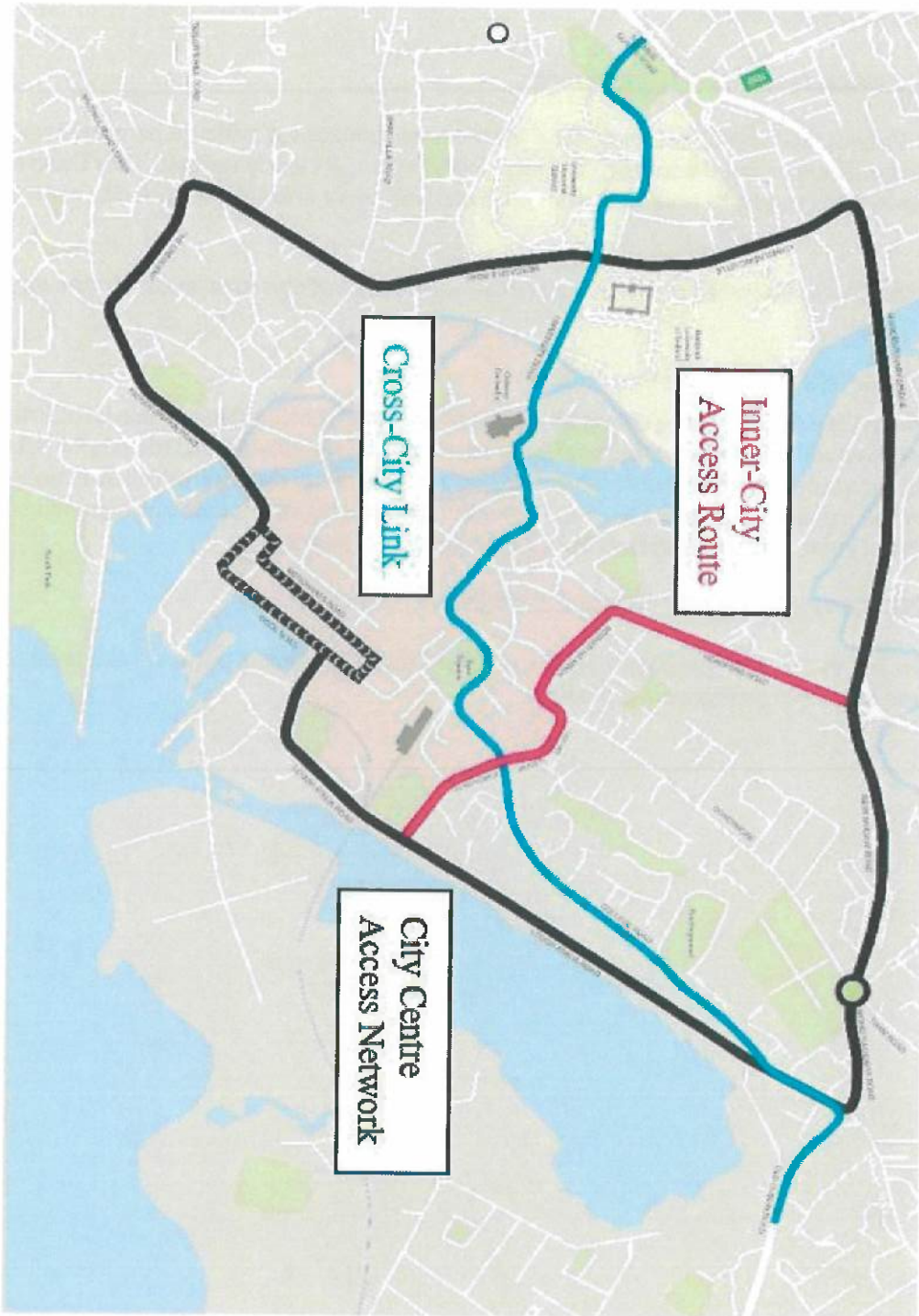


Figure 3. Cross City Link - City Centre Access Network and Inner City Access Route: (BusConnects Galway - Appendix B2 General Arrangements)

### ***3.1.1 Cross City Link (Blue Route)***

### ***3.1.2 City Centre Access Network (Black Route)***

BusConnects Galway acknowledges that some journeys by private car will still be necessary, and HGVs will continue to need access to the city and the port. A clearly defined 'City Centre Access Network' is proposed to enable traffic to access and move around the core city centre area.

The City Centre Access Network provides an orbital route which allows local access to the city centre.

### ***3.1.3 Inner City Access Route (Magenta Route)***

A two-way, Inner-City Access Route comprising Bóthar Na mBan, Bóthar Bhreandáin Uí hEithir and Fairgreen Road will provide an additional inner link from the Headford Road to Lough Atalia Road. In effect, private motorised traffic will be able to access the city centre from all directions, and to exit on the same side. In order to circulate within the city however, cars will have to use the orbital River Corrib crossings on the City Centre Access Network.

## **3.2 THE NEWTOWN SMITH / ST. FRANCIS STREET SECTION**

The Newtown Smith / St. Francis Street Section of the **Cross City Link** is of most relevance to this submission as shown on **Figure 4 & 5** below.



Extract from Site Location Drawing BCG-SP-00-01

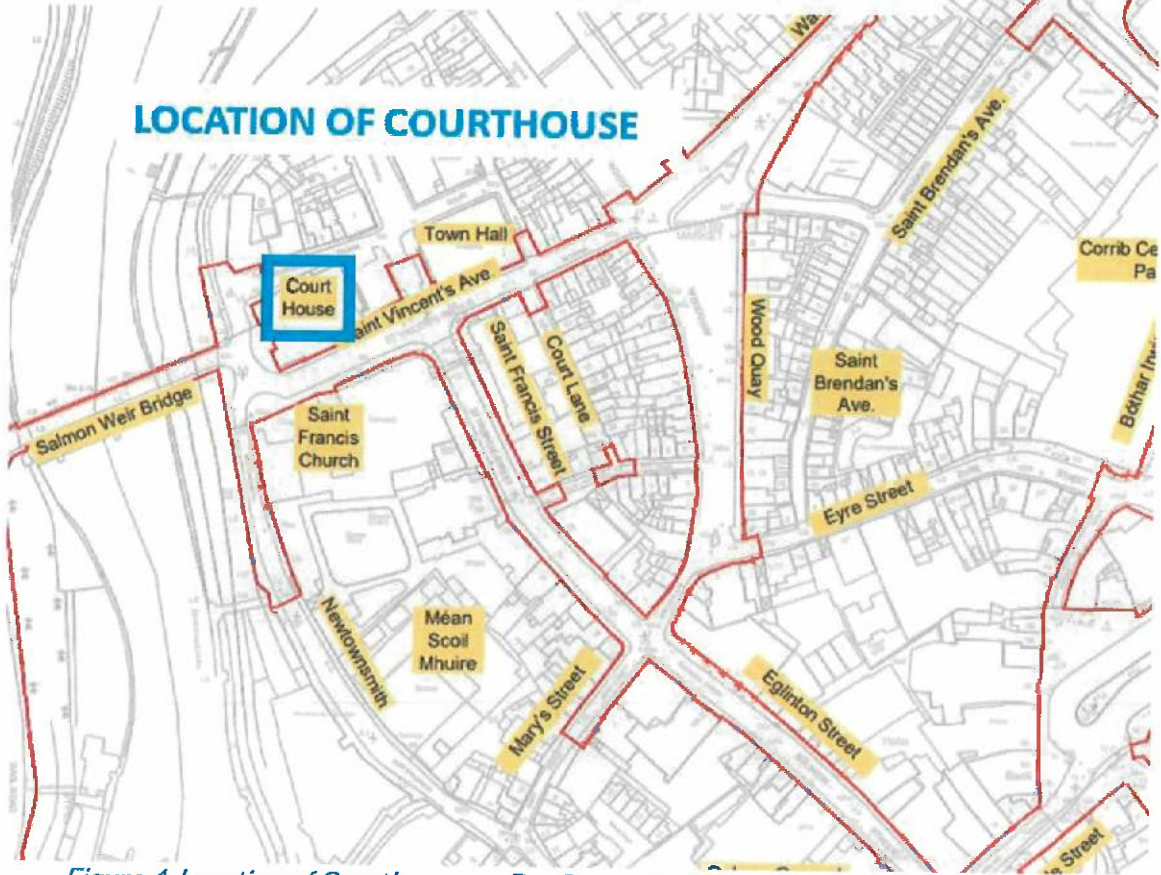


Figure 4. Location of Courthouse on BusConnects Galway Scheme, Cross City Link.

Extract from General Arrangement Drawing Sheet 2 of 13- BCG-GA-00-02

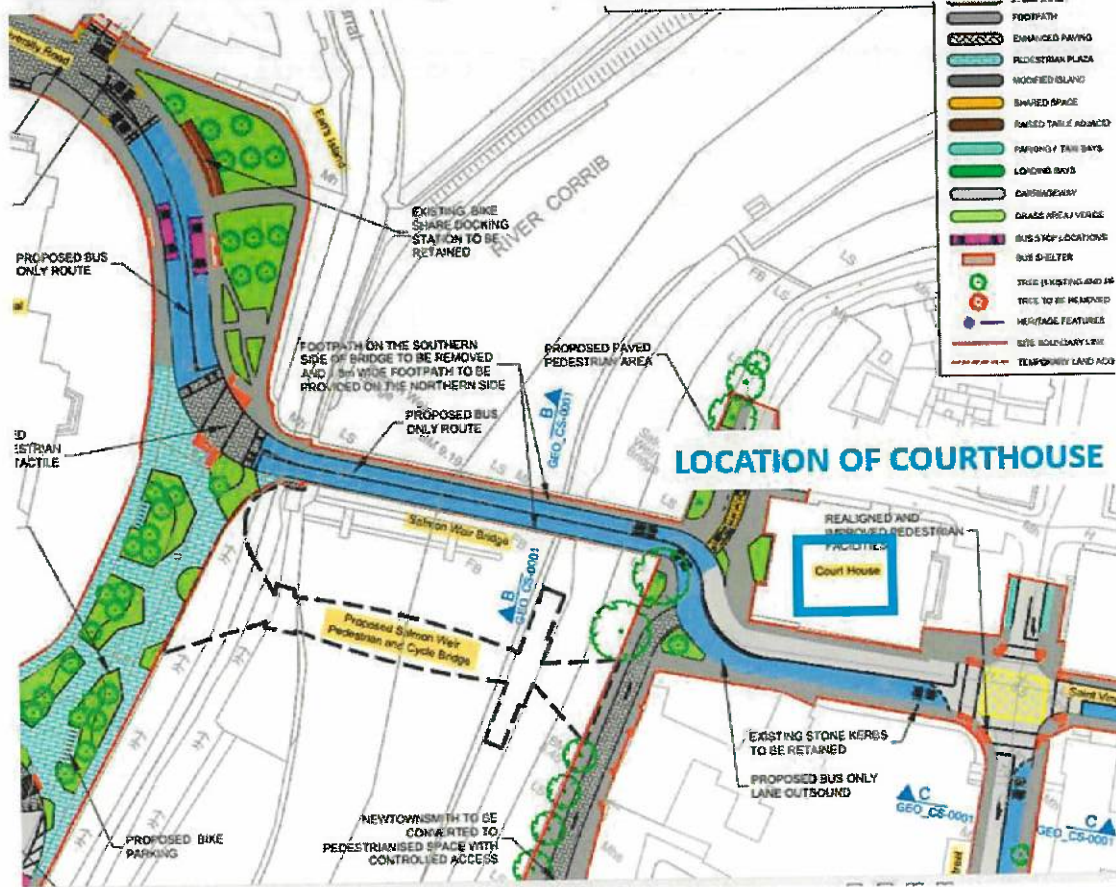


Figure 5. Extract from General Arrangement Drawing BCG-GA-00-02

Section 3.2.3 of the Preliminary Design Report is outlined below.

### **3.2.3 Newtownsmith/St. Francis Street**

#### **3.2.3.1 General vehicular provision**

From the eastern end of Salmon Weir Bridge, it is proposed to close Waterside (to the west of the Courthouse) to traffic and increase the public space at this location.

The eastbound lane (travelling away from the bridge) is to remain open to general traffic in order to facilitate traffic exiting from Newtownsmith, turning right and heading east. Similar to the western side of the Salmon Weir Bridge, it is also proposed to improve the public space at the northern extent of Newtownsmith. In tandem with Galway City Council BusConnects Galway Cross City Link (University Road to Dublin Road) this, it is proposed to implement restrictions on traffic flow from Newtownsmith onto St. Vincent's Avenue. Newtownsmith will remain a two-way route as far north as the Mercy College Car Park. From this point, the route will become one-way northbound only, and at the junction with St. Vincent's Avenue Newtownsmith will be realigned so as to permit right-turns only.

This section of northbound-only route on Newtownsmith will be bollard controlled so as to restrict traffic from using the route to access St. Vincent's Avenue (and routing on to the Cross-City Link), at specific times. Localised access will still be permitted at specific times to facilitate the movements of delivery and loading vehicles along Newtownsmith (for example, at the Abhainn na mBradán retail premises). Outside of these times, the northern extent of Newtownsmith will be closed so as to prohibit traffic from turning right onto St Vincent's Avenue.

#### **3.2.3.2 Bus**

There is no proposed bus improvements on Newtownsmith.

#### **3.2.3.3 Pedestrian**

Footpaths will be widened and replaced where possible. Newtownsmith is to be pedestrianised with controlled access. Proposed bollard controlled access is to be implemented.

#### **3.2.3.4 Cycling**

Virtual bus priority and full bus priority on St Vincent's Avenue to the junction of Newtownsmith will enable safer and more efficient cycling in the inbound and outbound travel lanes, due to traffic reduction effects. No segregated cycle lanes are to be provided. Newtownsmith is to be pedestrianised with cycle access and with controlled access for other vehicles. This will make it safer for cyclists. Cyclists will also have access to the newly proposed Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge from Newtownsmith.

#### **3.2.3.5 Geometry**

The Newtownsmith sub-section General Arrangement design is illustrated on BCG-GA-00-02. The design provides a single traffic lane (pedestrianised and bollard controlled) ; having a width of 4.0m. A footpath of width 2.0m to 5.6m is provided in both directions.

*Extract from BusConnects Galway Preliminary Design Report as published*

The Courts Service have concerns with the proposals of this section on the route (**3.2.3 Newtownsmith/St. Francis Street**) in terms of the general arrangements for the circulation around the courthouse and access to the west and north of the courthouse, and the proposed hard and soft landscaping, which will be outlined in section 4 below.

#### 4.0 MAIN PLANNING CONCERNS

The Courts Service welcome broadly the aims and objectives of the proposed scheme for a pedestrian and cycle friendly city centre and the removal of unnecessary car trips from the area, but have fundamental planning grounds for concern, as will be detailed in section below.

Galway Courthouse and its continued operation as a functioning courthouse, has a unique set of requirements for high levels of security and safety, which means the proposals which restrict access, circulation and parking as outlined in BusConnects Galway (as published) compromise that safe and secure operation.

Figure 6 below highlights the area which is the focus of the objection to the BusConnects Galway proposal. This is specifically the area to the west and north of the Courthouse.

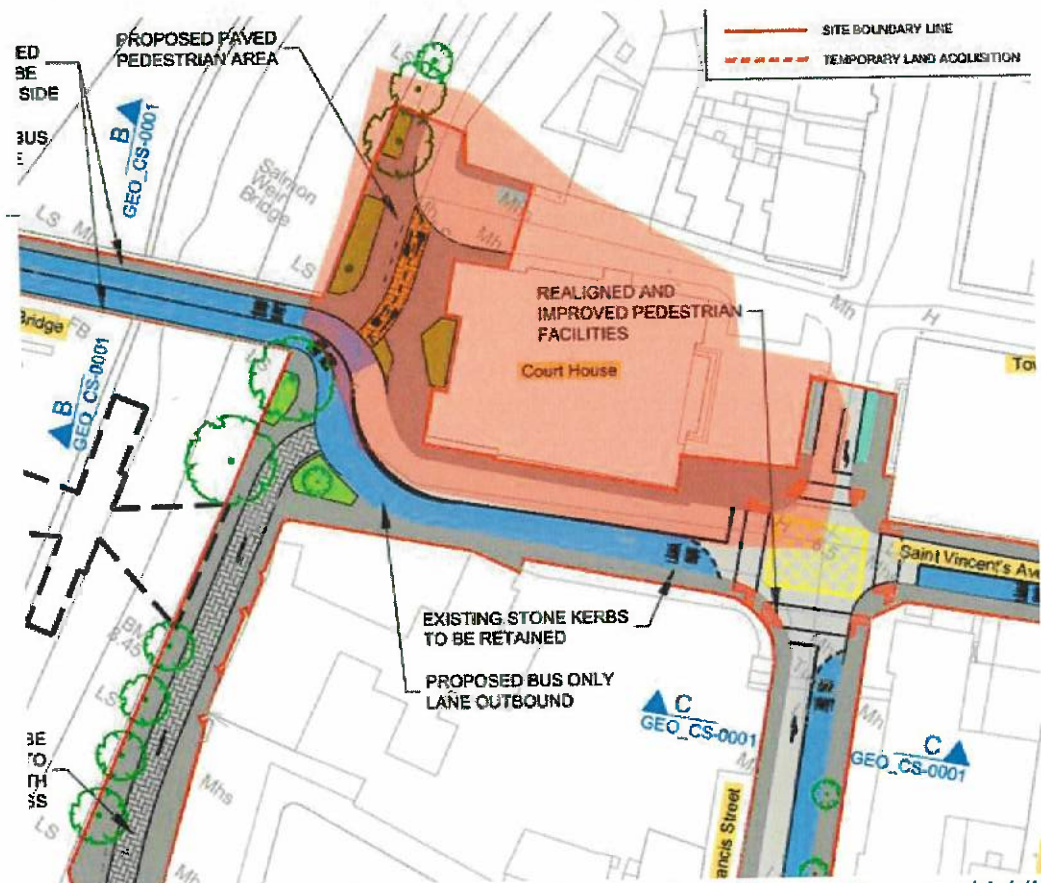


Figure 6. Extract from General Arrangement Drawing with area of concern highlighted

#### 4.1 IMPACT ON ACCESSIBILITY AND FUNCTIONING OF THE COURT:

The removal of the direct road access to the rear of the Courthouse is of serious concern to the Courts Service, as it will impact directly on the accessibility and functionality of the Courthouse. At present the rear of the Courthouse, where there are two entrances, is used as an access point for the judiciary, the Courthouse staff, jury members, the Gardaí and, most significantly, is used for the transfer of prisoners to and from the Courthouse by the Gardaí and the Irish Prison Service. Should the road access to the rear of the Courthouse be removed and subsumed into a pedestrianised area this will severely affect the operation and functioning, and thereby the viability, of the Courthouse that deals with a full schedule of District and Circuit civil and criminal actions as well as accommodating the High Court on circuit for over eight weeks a year.

The current level of access and circulation for the Irish Prison Service vehicles, Gardaí, and Staff is requested to be retained.

#### 4.2 PROPOSED PEDESTRIANISED AREA/ PLAZA

The proposed development of the pedestrianised area to the west and north of the Courthouse would also have a direct impact on the Courts Service's capacity to provide for separate circulation routes within the Courthouse which are required particularly for criminal court venues and will impact on their ability to comply with the EU Victims Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU) in that respect.

This element of existing circulation / access is requested to be retained

#### 4.3 REMOVAL OF CARPARKING

While the Courts Service fully endorses the prioritisation of sustainable transport options including public transport, cycling and walking, the Scheme requires the removal of the car parking spaces from the Lands that are available for Court staff, where many staff are residing far outside the city's environs and have no alternative to commuting into the city. It is expected that this will cause an issue for the availability of Courts Service staff. These spaces are also used by visiting Judges and staff of the High Court for more than eight weeks of each year for various court business. It will also seriously curtail the capacity of Courts Service staff to transport sensitive documents as this area is used to load and unload these documents.

The existing car parking arrangement is requested to be retained. This existing level of car parking provision, which is already limited, is essential for the continued safe functioning of the courthouse.

#### 4.4 SECURITY RISK

The pedestrianisation of this area without allowance for Gardaí and the Irish Prison Service (IPS) parking to the rear of the Courthouse presents a **significant security risk** for the Courthouse and for the general public as a whole. Separately, as this is the entrance used by staff, jury members and the judiciary to access the Courthouse, where this becomes a pedestrian plaza this presents serious security concerns for those persons, and in particular for the judiciary who may use this access outside of normal working hours and at weekends where necessary. It is also a particular security concern with respect to jury members as the significant increase in public access and use of the Lands would expose them to considerably greater risk of interference or intimidation by interested parties.

The pedestrian plaza arrangement as proposed is objected to by the Courts Service as it compromises health and safety and operation of the courts.

#### 4.5 PRIVACY AND ASSOCIATED SAFETY ISSUES

The area at the rear of the courthouse consists of meeting rooms that are used for client and counsel meetings and discussions of the most private, privileged and confidential nature which could potentially be overheard by members of the public and third parties where a pedestrianised plaza abuts the Courthouse.

The location of the new pedestrian plaza adjacent to the rear to the Courthouse may also present a security risk to staff, jury members, judiciary and the building itself, in circumstances where the space could be used for public gatherings or anti-social behaviour and could result in damage to the rear of the Courthouse. This could potentially cause further issues and interrupt the day to day running of the Courthouse.

As per 4.4 above, the pedestrian plaza arrangement as proposed is objected to by the Courts Service, as it compromises health and safety and operation of the courts.

#### 4.6 PROPOSED SOLUTION / AMENDMENTS

In order to overcome these serious planning concerns with the proposed BusConnects Galway scheme and associated CPO, which are specific to the Courts Services, we propose the following amendments to the scheme which will retain the integrity of the Cross City Link (CCL) and address the operation and security issues pertaining to the courthouse.

##### *4.6.1 Retention of The Current Pedestrian Walkway And Provision Of Additional Cycleway*

A revised proposal which retains the current pedestrian walkway and provides an additional cycleway along Waterside could be accommodated at the rear of the courthouse, which would not impact on the Courthouse property (as per point 4.1-4.5 above). The Courts Service would welcome consultation with Galway City Council, as appropriate, in relation to this detail.

##### *4.6.2 Revised Traffic Flow Arrangement*

The traffic flow on Waterside at the rear of the Courthouse should be revised to allow prison vans to access St Vincent's Avenue (R863) from the rear of the courthouse. The Courts Service would welcome consultation with Galway City Council, as appropriate, in relation to this detail.

We respectfully submit that the detailed drawings in **BCG-GA-00-02** and the descriptive text in **Section 3.2.3 of the Preliminary Design Report** and the **Section 4, Planning Report**, published, be amended appropriately to reflect the Court Services concerns. A *follow through* amendment on all documentation to reflect the amended proposal as requested by the Courts Service, would be required in that instance.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while welcoming the overall scheme of BusConnects Galway, we would like to voice our strong concerns with the proposal as follows;

The Courts Service Property, Galway Courthouse performs a vital judicial role of a national and regional importance and has a unique set of operational and access requirements which must be maintained to function in a safe and secure and sustainable way into the future. The current proposal for BusConnects Galway seriously compromises this continued operation and safe functioning of the courts and would potentially constitute a public safety issue.

The main areas of concern are centred around the proposals for revisions to the Courts Property and adjoining lands at the western and northern sections of the property, which include;

- Restrictions on the current traffic and circulation arrangements
- Removal of circulation / access for IPS vehicles Gardaí, and Staff, including parking for Judges and staff.
- Proposal for a pedestrian plaza and associated hard and soft landscaping
- Removal of existing car parking

The submission includes amendments which we contend;

- will retain the integrity of the Cross City Link (CCL)
- will not undermine any of the objectives of the GTS or the relevant City Development Plan and
- will address the operational and security issues pertaining to the courthouse.

These are summarised as follows;

- 1- Revisions which retain the pedestrian walkway and provide an additional cycleway along Waterside are requested
- 2- The traffic flow on Waterside at the rear of the Courthouse should be revised to allow IPS vehicles (prison vans) to access St Vincent's Avenue (R863) from the rear of the courthouse.

In conclusion, we respectfully request that the above planning grounds of concern, which relate to public safety, access, security and operations of the Courthouse, are taken on board by the Planning Authority and the proposed amendments to the scheme are incorporated.

[www.tobin.ie](http://www.tobin.ie)



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