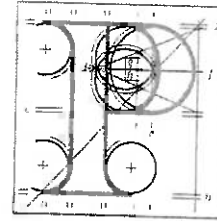


Our Case Number: ABP-318093-23



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

William Corby
Carrig Bán
22 Knockaun Court
Clonmel
Co. Tipperary
E91 X283

Date: 19 December 2023

Re: Proposed road development at The Quay, Quay Street, Suir Island and Raheen Road
The Quay, Quay Street, Suir Island and Raheen Road, Clonmel County Tipperary

Dear Sir / Madam,

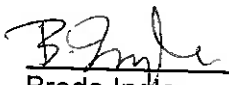
An Bord Pleanála has received your recent submission (including your fee of €50) in relation to the above-mentioned proposed road development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

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

If you have any queries in the mean time, please contact the undersigned officer of the Board at laps@pleanala.ie

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

Yours faithfully,


Breda Ingile
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01 873 7291

HA02

Teil	Tel	(01) 858 8100
Glaó Áitiúil	LoCall	1800 275 175
Facs	Fax	(01) 872 2684
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64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
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D01 V902	D01 V902

**Report on Proposed footbridge at Suir Island Clonmel
(aka Suir Island Infrastructure Links project)**

To: An Bord Pleanála

Date: 17 December 2023

Reference: HA92.318093 (Closing date for comments 18th Dec 2023 at 5.30pm)
Decision date May 2024 ABP History – Lodged 25-9-23

Applicant: Tipperary County Council

Author: William Corby B.A.B.A.I, M.B.A. (Local Govt)
(See Appendix 1 for Authors background)

Author's Address: "Carraig Bán", 22 Knockaun Court, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary E91 X283

Submissions or observations may be made, in writing, to the Board at An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough St, Dublin 1, D01 V902 and must be received during the period specified above i.e., on or before 5.30pm on Monday 18th December 2023 in relation to:

- i. the implications of the proposed development for proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development is concerned;
- ii. the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development, and
- iii. the likely significant effects of the proposed development on a European site, if carried out.

The report below will mainly focus on Items (i) & (ii) above with regard to the implications of the proposed development for proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development is concerned and the likely effects on the Environment of the proposed development.

The report will make minor references to Item (iii) with regard to the likely significant effects on a European Site (i.e. the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) along the River Suir). The Author considers that the footbridge proposals to make Suir Island more accessible for cyclists and pedestrians will be welcome in addition to the current road access available via Oldbridge and Suir Island Car-park.

The Author is fully supportive of more Cycling and Walking initiatives in the Clonmel area and wider afield being an avid cyclist and walker himself. During the period 2014 to 2017, the Author was Project Manager for the 20km Suir Blueway Walking and Cycling Route from Clonmel to Carrick-on-Suir as well as some Active Travel Cycle route Projects on Regional roads in Clonmel.

The Author has had considerable experience in dealing with the River Suir and the OPW as he was involved in the design stages of the Flood scheme following some significant flood events in the 2000 -2009 period. The Flood scheme walls and embankments along with associated underground pump infrastructure were constructed in the 2009-2012 period. The scheme is widely regarded as a tremendous success & Clonmel is rarely in the news these days during flood events. It is noted that the Suir Island footbridge proposals are designed to clear the top of the "dismountable" barrier system and it is hoped the metal barriers can be easily installed after the footbridge is constructed.

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Section 1 Clonmel and Environs Development Plan (C & EDP) 2013

The Author is aware that a new Draft Local Area Plan (LAP) for Clonmel is in process of being prepared as per Tipperary Co Co website. The new 2022-2028 Tipperary County Development Plan was launched in July 2022. References to current Planning Policy will be commented upon further when considering the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) in detail.

Until such time as the new LAP for Clonmel is finalised and adopted, the earlier Clonmel & Environs Development Plan (C & EDP) adopted on 4th Nov 2013 remains in place. It can be accessed via the following link

<https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/sites/default/files/2022-08/Volume%201%20-%20Clonmel%20%20Environs%20Development%20Plan%202013%20%282%29.pdf>

The 2013 C & EDP is referred to in the EIAR in support the Consultants proposals for the new Suir Island footbridge project. The Author has reviewed the 2013 C & EDP in this regard. It is apparent that a detailed Consultants brief would have emanated from the C & EDP 2013 for linking Suir Island to the Town Centre. The brief has not been included with the EIAR documentation to confirm how they were instructed to interpret Appendix 1 of the C & EDP and to check if any amendments to the agreed policy were proposed by Tipperary Co Co.

Section 2.4 of the C & EDP sets out a list of “Key Themes” and it is notable that the first of these is to consolidate the town centre as the “Primary Retail Area (PRA)” and by extension not to create further challenges for retail business. Figure 3.2 and associated commentary on Page 17 of the C & EDP again highlights the PRA to be O’Connell St, Gladstone St, Market St & Mitchell St. A further map on Page 18 highlights the “Central Area” and highlights the proposed linkage with Suir Island.

Policy TC 2 and associated comments on Page 21 identify a strategy of maintaining the Town Centre as the PRA and this policy distinguishes the type of retailing appropriate to the PRA versus shopping centres & business parks on the outskirts of the town. Section 3.3 refers to improved car-parking as an essential ingredient of maintaining “Town centre vitality”. In the decade since the C & EDP was launched, the Author considers there has been an ever worsening situation with regard to Town Centre dereliction and shop vacancy rates following the economic crash in 2010-2012. For example 2 major retailers departed O’Connell St in the past 5 years and the units have not been reoccupied. The Author undertook a walking survey of all Town Centre streets on 29th Nov 2023 and identified 104 vacant units (See Appendix 2 for street by street breakdown). 19 of vacancies are along O’Connell St with 7 more on Gladstone St within the PRA. There are a further 9 on Mitchell St and 23 at Market Place. Therefore the “Primary Retail Area” in one of Ireland’s largest inland towns currently has 58 vacant units (i.e. over half of the total vacancies).

In Section 9.8 (Page 82) of the C & EDP, Suir Island is identified as No. 1 on a list of “Opportunity sites”. In Appendix 1 of the C & EDP (Page 114 -116), there is a map of Opportunity Site No 1 along with a list of comments as follows:

Any proposal to develop Opportunity Site number 1 shall illustrate how it is compatible with and can contribute to the delivery of the following Development Objectives:

The potential to develop a pedestrian link (possibly raised) from the junction of O'Connell St and Sarsfield Street along the Clonmel Arms site, over the flood defence wall and across the River Suir onto Suir Island, must be investigated to determine if it is feasible at this location. It will be a key requirement of any proposal to demonstrate that road width along the Quays remains suitable to accommodate two-way traffic flows with footpath, and that the flood defences along the Quays are not undermined.

The site shall be redeveloped as a mixed use town centre scheme, with a high quality retail anchor unit with office and/or residential uses over.

Suir Island shall be developed as the 'Green Heart' of the town with extensive formal and informal/natural garden areas, footpaths and views across the Suir subject to the protection of the existing habitats within the Special Area of Conservation. The island is suitable for a dedicated urban sports and leisure complex/emporium and it is envisaged that this could cater for new indoor and outdoor sports and leisure activities for all ages.

Suir Island is to be connected to Denis Bourke Park via a footbridge, thus linking the South Bank and Denis Bourke Park with the town centre.

The development of the site shall incorporate car-parking especially at ground floor level with potential for access underneath raised footpath/plaza area. The development of Suir Island shall incorporate car-parking and coach parking at appropriate locations with easy access to the town centre via the proposed footbridge.

Any development on opportunity Site No. 1 shall have regard to the site specific issues set out in the accompanying SFRA.

The Author considers there can be no deviation from the stated policy above without amending the Development Plan. The Elected members have agreed for the Quays to remain 2-way traffic flow and that any proposed raised plaza was to have as much car-parking as possible retained. It should also be noted that the Policy does not seek a new "Performance Space" to be created on the Quays. These points are fundamental to the Author's opinion that the current North Plaza proposals with no parking retained and with a proposed 1 way traffic system are in contravention of the Town Development Plan.

The Author believes that the Consultants proposals will have a significant knock-on effect on Town centre traffic management and availability of parking as discussed later in this report. The local economy within the PRA remains very fragile and every effort must be made to preserve all remaining retail units while seeking to reduce the overall vacancy rate towards the 1990s levels of approx 10%. In the Author's opinion, it would be preferable not to have any footbridge if it will destabilize the PRA further with significant parking changes and introduction of a 1-way traffic system on the quays. Small shops with minimal turnover in the PRA are competing with similar units with free car parking on the periphery of the town. It also has to be borne in mind that a recently introduced Town Bus service, while welcome for Public transport purposes, has removed 12 Parking spaces at 4 new town centre bus-stops (6 spaces removed at 2 bus-stops on O Connell St & another 6 spaces removed at 2 bus-stops at Parnell St/Anglesea St junction). Thus all remaining spaces Town centre spaces become even more valuable for business and particularly for shops and restaurants trading near the Quays. A significant number (approx 20) car-park spaces on Sarsfield St and the Quays are currently blocked off while demolition and reconstruction takes place at the Old Clonmel Arms hotel which will add to difficulties for the PRA over next 2 years. Hopefully

the hotel reconstruction when completed will bring about a transformation in terms of viability & vitality of the PRA.

Chapter 2 of the EIAR (Pages 28-29) indicates that a Suir Island Masterplan was drawn up in 2018-2019 by a local firm of architects in Clonmel supported by others. The Author has not seen the Masterplan to verify what was agreed as its not available on the Council website. It is referenced in the EIAR and in the Traffic & Transport Assessment for the Clonmel Arms Hotel Planning file (PA 1860 1355). The text on Pages 28-29 of Chapter 2 of EIAR clearly indicates that no approval was given to amend the 2013 C & EDP with regard to traffic management changes and removal of parking on the North Quay. Therefore it appears that the Suir Island Footbridge consultants have decided to introduce these changes themselves and have not considered that the 2013 C & EDP would have to be formally amended by the Elected Members.

Section 2 - General Comments

The Author requests An Bord Pleanála to take note of the following points (a) to (w):

(a) The overall Planning Application for the Suir Island footbridge development is being made under the Roads Act 1993 and associated legislation. It is essentially a Roads proposal for a new footbridge which An Bord Pleanála have decided may have a potential Environmental Impact on the River Suir Special Area of Conservation. Hence an EIAR has been drawn up as requested by An Bord Pleanála (ABP) in Sept 2023

(b) The Author's main contention throughout this report is that there is no justification for the large North Plaza at the Quays in Clonmel. A more slimmed down plaza area (e.g. a set of steps and a ramp like Option 3) would have the same effect of transferring pedestrians & cyclists from the footbridge to street level and vice versa and can be designed in accordance with Part M Requirements for slope design. In terms of accessibility, the consultants have chosen Option 1 ahead of 2 other similar options. The Author asks the simple question why the northern end of the proposed footbridge needs to be so radically different from the southern end at Raheen Road given that both ends will effectively carry the same volumes of pedestrians and cyclists in future?

(c) The consultants have suggested that a new "performance" space will be created at the proposed Northern Plaza (Option 1). No reference is made to the many high quality public "performance" spaces already available in Clonmel as listed below and there are plenty of other venues in the hinterland not included. It is noteworthy that Tipperary County Council has not issued a copy of the "consultants brief" to verify if an extra "performance space" was requested. The consultants make no reference to the following list of performance spaces currently available (some like the Mainguard almost within a "stones throw"):

- (i) Newly constructed Kickham Plaza at old Kickham Army Barracks site, Dillon Street/Old Waterford Rd which has a number of raised "performance" spaces with steps and a very aesthetic lighting scheme.
- (ii) Outdoor amphitheatre designed "performance" space at Denis Burke Park on southern bank of River Suir upstream of Gashouse Bridge.
- (iii) Covered "performance" space underneath the Main Guard as well as an internal room for events upstairs. (Main Guard performance spaces are regularly used during festivals and busking events including winter events - being at north end of Sarsfield St it is considered a much more central location than the Quays for street performances).
- (iv) Mick Delahunty Square in front of the Bandhall/County Museum which is often used by "Banna Cluain Meala" for band practice sessions etc <https://www.facebook.com/p/Banna-Chluain-Meala-100064551738334/>
- (v) County Library and County Museum both of which host literary & art events
- (vi) South Tipperary Arts Chapel (STAC) at old Army Barracks which has recently hosted concert performances as part of Christmas Market event on nearby Kickham plaza.
- (vii) Local Protestant and Catholic Churches regularly stage concerts and performances.
- (viii) White Memorial Theatre, Wolfe Tone Street used for indoor concerts/shows
- (ix) Clonmel World Music attracts regular International Acts to Raheen House Hotel (approx 100 seats) and to Moynihans Public House, Upper Gladstone St (approx 60 seats) <https://www.clonmelworldmusic.com/>

(vii) The Main Council Chamber of Clonmel Borough Council, Parnell St which hosts events & Civic functions.

Based on the above listing, the Author considers there is no shortage of Performance areas around the town. It does not make sense therefore for the consultants to suggest that a new enlarged "Northern Plaza" for performance events is required as part of the footbridge. This area must retain parking & 2-way traffic in accordance with the 2013 C & EDP.

(d) According to Table 3-1 on Page 13 Chapter 3 of EIAR, approximately €4 million of the overall €13million project costs will be required to construct the North Plaza element of Option 1. A more modest landing area with some parking retained could be constructed for perhaps ¼ of this amount i.e. €1 million in the Author's opinion and thereby save €3million for other improvement works within Suir Island area itself subject to permission & funding being in place. It appears that Tipperary County Council has not assessed the value for money aspects of the proposed North Plaza in comparison to other elements of the project. Instead they have proceeded immediately into a Public display of the latest proposals following the ABP decision to seek an EIAR. While the Author understands that ABP may not be concerned about project costs, nevertheless it is an important consideration to seek value for money and seek the best possible presentation of Suir Island's assets in the public interest.

(e) As an aside, the Author was involved in traffic management when Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann was held in Clonmel in 2003 & 2004. The 2 main "gig-rig" articulated lorry trailers were perpendicularly parked at (1) across the lower end of Sarsfield St facing up towards the Main Guard which was a natural amphitheatre setting and (2) perpendicularly across Parnell Street at its junction with Nelson St so that performances were watched from Parnell St in front of the Old Town Hall. It is assumed that if a future Fleadh Cheoil or similar event is held in Clonmel, these "gig-rig" locations would again be used. Thus the proposed "North Plaza" may end up on the river side of a future "gig-rig" parked at end of Sarsfield st and essentially be hidden from view from the town centre.

(f) The Author also considers there will be a significant Road Safety hazard for vehicles driving along the Quays as a new 90 degree bend is proposed for all traffic compared to the current layout where the majority of traffic heading westwards faces no obstruction at Sarsfield St junction. The author suggests new road safety measures (e.g. ramps, signage & road-markings) will be required on the Quays ahead of Sarsfield st to slow down traffic. This potential road safety hazard has not been assessed by the consultants in their "Optioneering" of the various proposals and is a matter of concern given the increasing volume of urban accidents (including Clonmel) where speed has been a contributory factor.

(g) The proposal to change traffic flows on the quays from two-way to one-way will have a major effect on local residents and businesses in Clonmel Town Centre (to be discussed in detail hereunder). The Author has 23 years of local Traffic engineering knowledge compared to the external traffic consultant who has apparently only 3 years experience along with the local knowledge of staff currently working for Clonmel Borough District who don't appear to have given sufficient time to adjudicate fully on the Consultants final proposals. This conclusion is based on date of the ABP decision to seek an EIAR dated 18 Sept 2023

followed by almost immediate publication of the advertisements and public display period on 22nd Sept 2023. Dates of the Consultants reports in Sept 2023 tie in with this conclusion that the latest design and documentation have not been thoroughly assessed.

(h) The proposal to remove 34 valuable car-parking spaces in this “side street area” off the Primary Retail Area has been poorly evaluated in the Author’s opinion with lack of adequate surveying of traffic and parking in the submitted Traffic Impact Assessment. Clonmel is one of the largest inland towns in Ireland and has a very busy town centre area by day which depends solely on surface car-parking both on-street and off-street. During the “Celtic Tiger” boom years of 2000 -2009, the Author is aware that the Borough Council sought to have a multi-store car-park (MSCP) with ground-floor retail units constructed at the existing Mary St surface car-park. Despite tax-breaks available, these efforts to set up a Design-Build-Operate-Finance (DBOF) project failed to materialise for various reasons including trying to maintain access to some 40 “rights of way” off the car-park. Prospective car park operators also considered that an MSCP at this location would not be viable & they sought assurances on an increased level of on-street enforcement and clamping which the Council could not deliver in the political climate at that time. Subsequently extra surface car-parking was constructed at Suir Island - prior to 2008 most of Suir Island was a derelict site (Old Creamery) partly owned the Local Authority and subsequently enlarged following some land acquisition. It should also be noted that Suir Island car-park has approx 26 “private spaces” including 7 “reserved” spaces at Hughes Mill apartments/former retail units. These “private spaces” are not referred to in the Consultants proposals and they limit the full capacity of the site. A recent on-site count of the available “Public pay & display spaces”(following camper van changes last year) indicates 214 spaces including 10 disabled and 4 EV charging spaces. This is 50 less than the EIAR stated figure of approx 264 spaces which appears to include the fenced-off private spaces at the Apartment building and spaces now dedicated for camper vans etc.

(i) During the “Celtic Tiger” period 2000-2009, 3 new “out of town” shopping centres were constructed at Tesco on the N24, at Poppyfields to the west of the town (adjacent to Talbot Hotel) and at the Showgrounds, Davis Road to the east of the Town Centre. In addition 2 large “Retail Warehouse” business parks were constructed at Ardgaoithe Cashel Rd and at Gurtnafleur Rd off the N24. Several older shop units in the town centre have closed down and relocated to these “out-of town” shopping centres and business parks where free car parking is available. Other smaller retail areas have also been constructed along the N24 Frank Drohan Rd e.g. there is a concentration of business units at the N24 Cashel Road roundabout area which again pull from the primary retail function of the town centre. The Author is also aware that the Dovehill shopping development (Blarney Woolen Mills) on the N24 at Ballydine approx 10km east of Clonmel has a lot of comparison goods retail space and free car parking with restaurant facilities and therefore competes with similar businesses in the Primary Retail area of Clonmel. While new shopping centre & business park developments are beneficial in terms of increased local authority rates, the Author’s opinion is that following the economic crash, the town centre of Clonmel has been badly “hollowed out” in terms of vitality and viability and the Local Authority needs to tread very carefully and be mindful of the stated 2013 C & EDP policy to protect and enhance the PRA.

(j) The Author would urge the ABP Inspector to walk around the town centre including side-streets such as Market Place off Gladstone St and take note of some 104 vacant units that currently exist. (See Appendix 2 for breakdown). The Inspector may also be in a position to meet Chamber of Commerce representatives and Borough Council staff/Elected Members if an oral Hearing is required. The Author is aware that the Town centre area becomes exceptionally quiet in late evenings with very little night time economy & pub trade compared to much busier nearby locations such as Dungarvan, Kilkenny and Cashel. Obviously there are a myriad of factors for retail units to close not least of which is Online shopping etc. Many of the subsequent re-openings are seen as struggling in terms of phone shops, tattoo parlours, betting shops and hair salons etc. Only 1-2 shoe shops remain while major retailers such as Dunnes Stores and Heaton's have left large vacant units on O'Connell St. Local Auctioneers will confirm that any large units become very difficult to re-let or be sold on in the current environment. From reading the weekly Nationalist Newspaper, the Author is aware of ongoing meetings between Council staff, Elected Members and vacant property owners with regard to long term vacant units. It appears many of the larger units and sites may need to be converted for other uses subject to Planning approval and provided that interested parties will take them over. Therefore every effort has to be made to re-energise and reopen as many units as possible within the PRA over the coming years in accordance with the current Development Plan policies.

(k) A new Public Transport solution for Clonmel has been launched from Mon 11th Dec 2023 in terms of a new town bus-service linking sub-urban areas to the town centre. A rural Link Bus-service has existed for a number of years serving the hinterland of Clonmel. It is envisaged that all bus services along with increased cycling and walking in summer months in particular will encourage modal shift away from private car and are therefore to be welcomed. These new public transport initiatives are in their infancy & are coupled with a very poor train service (approx 3 trains per day in each direction) on the Limerick-Waterford rail line which is a single line route at present. Hence all available off-street car-parking spaces which do not interfere with the new public transport proposals need to be retained in order to maintain business life in the town centre. Eventually if people become more familiar with Public transport, there will be a switch-over but it will take time. A long term suggestion to create more balance between free parking on the outskirts versus paid parking in the town centre is for the Local Authority to licence the out of town car parks and have licence conditions imposed to charge a parking fee. This suggestion would require legislation to be passed in the first instance. The Author is aware of licencing of private Multi-Storey car parks in Dublin and elsewhere to discourage all day commuter parking.

(l) The Author considers the above background ought to have been fully assessed under "material assets" in the EIAR and with regard to the proper Planning and Sustainable Development of the area. It appears the Consultants staff who prepared Chapter 4 of the EIAR were not aware that a new County Development Plan was adopted in July 2022 as this document is not included in the list of "References" in Section 4.10. Reliance on older Planning background when newer documents exist is a significant flaw of this part of the EIAR as presented for Public Consultation & again displays incompetence of the external experts. It therefore appears that the EIAR lacks coherence and the Council Planners/Engineers did not proof read same prior to the formal display taking place.

(m) The Author is aware from his previous Local Authority background that if the proposed footbridge had been treated as a “Part 8” public consultation under Planning legislation, some of the local Elected Members would have reviewed the Chief Executive’s report and sought amendments if required before agreeing to proceed. The Author is of the view that the footbridge project with proposed traffic and parking changes remains essentially a “Roads Proposal” under Roads legislation which requires consideration by the wider community affected and particularly by businesses and residents of the Quays in a similar manner as if it were a Part 8 project. The Author considers referral to An Bord Pleanála which requires payment of a €50 fee may have deterred local people and residents from making a submission in this case.

(n) With no disrespect to Tipperary County Council staff who are following statutory requirements, the Author considers that that very few local people will have digested the large advertisement in the Nationalist dated 28 Sep 2023 and will not have grasped the significance of a major change to traffic on the North Quays. Tipperary Co Co will confirm that the Author took it upon himself to advise former colleagues that the initial site notice was deficient both on the paper and online as it made no reference to the proposed traffic changes. ABP can confirm that the initial consultation period was extended to Dec 18th 2023 when Roads Section amended the Site Notice.

(o) ABP will also note there is no link from the main Tipperary Co Co website to the specific online portal for this project <https://consultations.tipperarycoco.ie/suir-island-infrastructure-links-project>. While it is a mandatory requirement to have a website for public consultation on EIA, an Internet Search using “Suir Island footbridge” is required to find the drawings and documentation. The Author is familiar with public consultations for over 23 years working with Tipperary Co Co and finds it unusual that no link from the main website was provided despite a request to his former colleagues to improve the situation.

(p) From a perusal of Planning file documentation associated with the Clonmel Arms Hotel and from reading the Planners & District Engineer reports and the Traffic & Transport Assessment, it is evident that 1-way traffic flow on the quays between Sarsfield St & Oldbridge/Bridge St Junction was not part of the earlier proposals discussed with Elected Members and the public in 2018-2019. In addition Auto-track analysis for bus-turning movements at the hotel were sought on the Planning file. An Auto Track analysis should again be presented as part of a slimmed down North Plaza design to ensure that both sets of consultants are communicating with each other as regards design of kerb-lines and parking arrangements. (*Hotel Planning file reference PA 1860 1355 granted on 26 July 2019 refers*).

(q) The Author was made aware that there had been a preliminary public consultation in 2021 as regards the proposed footbridge but he made no comment at that time. The Author has recently been in contact with business people in the area to ascertain if they were aware of the proposals to make the quays 1-way and remove all parking and those spoken to have replied in the negative. In any event the Author considers that any earlier discussions held cannot be taken as approval of the latest design. There remains a legal obligation on Tipperary Co Co to assess all alternatives and one of the alternatives should be to retain existing traffic arrangements and create a smaller and safer plaza area on the

North Quays. The Author is aware that an important part of all Environmental Impact Assessments is for all Alternative designs to receive a thorough & impartial assessment.

(r) Instead the Consultants have presented 3 similar Options of the new North Plaza and settled for Option 1 for their own reasons. All 3 Options are effectively the same footprint with some variations to the proposed steps and ramps. Consideration should have been given to a smaller North Plaza footprint with a less obtrusive & safer design so as to minimise the Environmental Impact on Material Assets. As stated earlier the Material Assets affected are that proposed traffic changes and loss of parking will definitely impact town centre business interests in contravention of the 2013 C & EDP.

(s) It is noted that the new 2 way bus traffic route on O'Connell Street appears to reverse the earlier "Public Realm Plan" proposal to make O'Connell St one-way west to east from West gate to Main Guard which is referred to in the Consultants Traffic Study. The schematic bus routes are available on the following link and can be verified on site <https://www.transportforireland.ie/plan-a-journey/network-maps/clonmel-town-services/>

If 2-way traffic is to be retained along O'Connell St to facilitate the 3 bus routes CI-1, CI-2 & CI-9, it begs the question should the quays remain 2-way so that drivers heading west on O'Connell St have the option to turn left down Bridge St and left onto the quays to return to Sarsfield St & Gladstone St as at present. Otherwise if the quays become 1-way as proposed, drivers on Bridge St will have to cross Oldbridge onto Raheen Rd or turn right towards Joyce's Lane/Irishtown. Also the Consultants traffic study makes no reference to the fact that Flood Barriers are sometimes installed in the middle of Oldbridge closing it to through traffic and during this time Suir Island car-park and other residential properties & businesses off Oldbridge are only accessible from north of the river.

Also if 2-way traffic remains on O'Connell St, buses and cars will continue to turn right onto Mary St. The area in front of Sisters of Charity School on Mary St becomes very congested at school drop-off and collection times with ongoing risks for vulnerable road users over many years. By retaining 2 way traffic flow on the quays, it will lessen the impact on the school at Mary St. In addition the junction of Mary St with Queen St is also busy during business hours due to a new LIDL supermarket, complicated sets of traffic signals and long distance bus stops on Queen St. Retaining 2-way traffic on the quays will therefore be of benefit to Mary St and with regard to keeping the new Town Bus-services moving more freely as they traverse the town centre area.

(t) The Author considers an updated Traffic Impact Assessment of the whole town centre area to include the new Town Bus service could be prepared before any decision is made to change the direction of traffic on the Quays. The Author has had previous experience in Dublin City Council of computerised traffic models using "S-Paramics" software (This package is available from an Irish based specialist traffic consultancy ILTP). A computer simulation such as "S-Paramics" or similar would facilitate a review of all proposals and could be retained indefinitely by the local authority to test other scenarios in future. The Author believes it would lead to better long term planning and avoidance of costly errors particularly with regard to both the Suir Island footbridge and Public Realm proposals.

(u) The Author has reviewed the Clonmel Arms Hotel Planning File (PA 1860 -1355) in detail and notes the District Planner's final report was issued on 23rd July 2019. On Page 8 he calculates the overall "Parking Shortfall" for the new hotel will be 62 spaces and a financial contribution is to be levied for same. He considered that there is adequate capacity within nearby car-parks and he referred to Suir Island car-park having 264 spaces available (This number is disputed by the Author based on his own recent survey of spaces – see below). If the proposed North Plaza proceeds as planned and removes 34 spaces along with the Consultants proposals that these cars be relocated to Suir Island, the overall increase of almost 100 spaces & taking account of losses due to bus-stops will significantly add to traffic management issues on the relatively narrow Old Bridge where pedestrians and cars occupy a shared surface at pinch-points. There is an overall limit to the capacity of Suir Island car-park which already has an average of approx 48-50 spaces occupied daily in the "public section" (discounting the 26 "private spaces" at Hughes Mill apartments).

(v) The Author considers that an overall analysis of permitted car-park developments in the town centre is required to ensure Suir Island and other car-parks have capacity and with regard to future proposals to remove some on-street parking on O'Connell St as part of "Public Realm" plan proposals. Some spare capacity is also necessary for Christmas time and other periods of high demand & to avoid people cruising around and causing further congestion. This may oblige future "park & ride" facilities to be developed as people will become more familiar with the new Town Bus Service and are discouraged from bringing cars into the Town Centre at busy periods. Major mode shift is problematic as noted in ongoing traffic surveys and Clonmel possibly needs increased parking charges to be considered in due course. However this makes the PRA less attractive as a shopping destination compared to cheaper parking elsewhere. The Author notes a recent front page article in the local Nationalist Newspaper which described as "Scandalous" that Clonmel parking costs €1.20 per hour while other urban centres such as Nenagh are at only €0.50 per hour. It was stated that Business interests are seeking "harmonisation" across the County similar to what happened with business rates after the Tipperary merger in 2014.

(w) Consideration is also required to the Consultants proposals to create a temporary construction compound to rear of Suir Island car-park and thereby cut its capacity in half to approx 100 spaces for upto 2 years. This will impact some 10 Camper van parking spaces which have been installed. These facilities have become popular in summer months as Clonmel hosts various festivals and other events and more camper vans are in use since the Pandemic partly because of the cost & shortage of temporary accommodation in general. The Author considers a smaller construction compound (as small as possible) should be included so as to lessen the impact on Town Centre parking and to ensure that temporary alternative camper van parking is installed for use by tourists during the construction period. The consultants can't have it both ways to deny the use of the 34 space North quays car-park and propose temporary occupation of at least 50% of the Suir Island car-park at the same time. It should also be noted that a newly constructed "slalom course" on River Suir to south of Suir Island attracts "white water" events and practise sessions on an ongoing basis. Associated parking is required to facilitate users of these facilities who otherwise will tend to park at unsafe locations such as Raheen Road. No consideration has been given therefore to the knock-on effect of the proposed construction compound and further analysis of the proposals is called for.

Section 3 EPA Guidelines on EIAR (May 2022)

The Author has examined the Guidelines to gain a better understanding of what's required in an EIAR and has made notes below with regard to various extracts from the Guidelines.

2.4.1 ANTICIPATING, AVOIDING AND MITIGATING SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Throughout the EIA process, anticipation of effects is the most effective means of avoiding significant adverse effects. Anticipation works best when applied in the earliest stages of a project.....

The Author considers the Consultants ought to have anticipated a negative response to their proposals in terms of traffic changes rather than proceeding to propose a major change and presenting conclusions throughout the EIAR that such changes would have minimal effects on the town centre.

2.4.2 MAINTAINING OBJECTIVITY

Objectivity has two key components. The first is derived from the rigour of the assessment and analysis. This ensures that replicable work based on high-quality scientific information is carried out using recognised methods that are presented in a fully transparent manner. The second is to ensure that credibility of the EIAR is not undermined by any perception of bias or subjectivity in assessments by experts lacking appropriate competency, objectivity or independence.

The Author considers that there is a definite "bias" towards the Consultants proposals throughout the EIAR which demonstrates lack of "objectivity" despite the EPA Guidance. In the Author's opinion this undermines the credibility of the EIAR when no consideration was given to a less ambitious but none the less effective layout of trying to retain the present traffic and parking arrangements.

2.4.3 ENSURING CLARITY AND QUALITY

Clear, concise, unambiguous communication is essential throughout an EIAR. A systematic approach, standard descriptive methods and the use of replicable assessment techniques and standardised effect descriptions must be adopted to ensure that all likely significant effects are adequately considered and clearly communicated.

Adherence to the process, structure and content set out in the Directive ensures a systematic approach that is transparently supported by evidence supplied by competent experts throughout. The structure of clearly separating data (descriptions of the receiving environment and of the project) from predictions (effects) and mitigation measures facilitates the CA in their assessment of the likely conformity of effects with accepted standards and objectives.

With regard to last part of first paragraph above, the Author considers that "all likely significant effects" were not considered nor were they communicated. In particular the effects of the proposal to remove 2-way traffic and switch to a 1 way system was not debated in the EIAR and not clearly communicated and explained to local residents and business people nor to the wider community with parents dropping children to schools etc. Proper consultation with Blue light services such as Gardai, Ambulance & Fire Service also appears absent in the documentation. Usually the local Garda Superintendent and Chief Fire Officer are consulted with regard to proposed traffic changes in accordance with Roads legislation. How is this to take place or should correspondence have been included with the EIAR documentation?

2.4.4 PROVIDING RELEVANT INFORMATION TO DECISION MAKERS

An EIAR is prepared before a consent decision is made. This enables the CA to reach a decision in the full knowledge of the project's likely significant effects on the environment, if any. Information should be relevant, complete and legally compliant. It should also be appropriate to the requirements of the consent procedure and the scale of the project. The information should be systematically presented and assessed.

The Author considers an incomplete EIAR has been prepared and rushed out for a decision to be made by ABP. It is noted that ABP made a decision to seek an EIAR in September 2023 and within a few days Tipperary County Council took the EIAR from their consultants and presented it on public display without giving consideration to the matter in detail. There is clearly a lack of consideration of the effects on the local Environment in terms of "Material Assets" and traffic/business life of the Town centre.

2.4.5 FACILITATING BETTER CONSULTATION

Good practice in preparing EIARs involves clear and focused consultation with various parties at key stages in the assessment process.

Compliance with the Aarhus Convention requires that the structure, presentation and the non-technical summary of the EIAR, as well as the arrangements for public access, all facilitate the dissemination of the information contained in the EIAR. The core objective of public consultation is to ensure that the public is made as fully aware as possible of the likely environmental impacts of projects prior to a decision being made by the CA.

In the Author's opinion, there has been a lack of consultation with local business and residents and with the wider community and Elected Members & Chamber of Commerce to assess their views on the proposed traffic changes and loss of 34 parking spaces on the North Quays. No back-up documentation has been provided from the preliminary of consultation in mid 2021 to assess what was discussed at that time.

Tipperary County Council made a decision to place a large almost one page advertisement on the Nationalist newspaper dated Thurs 28th Sept 2023 which the Author considers as difficult to absorb by the general public. The wording of this Advertisement can be reviewed by the ABP Inspector. In particular the advertisement refers to a specific consultation website which is not easy to find unless an Internet search is undertaken for "Suir Island Footbridge". The Council did not provide any link or reference from their own website to this new website to improve access by the public.

There is a significant flaw in the online consultation website as no electronic copy of the "Non-Technical Summary" document has been included. A hard copy of the Non-Technical summary was included with the other hard copy documents on a table at reception desk in the County Council offices Clonmel (The Author did not visit the other hard copy presentation in Nenagh Civic Offices to check same). The Author has checked the list of documents issued to An Bord Pleanála last September and noted that a Non-technical summary was included and uploaded to the case file. The lack of a "Non-Technical Summary" with the Tipperary County Council consultation portal does not comply with Paragraph 2.4.5 of the EPA Guidance as referred to above.

4.6 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

The Directive includes the requirement for a non-technical summary because one of the fundamental objectives of the EIA process is to ensure that the public is made aware of the environmental implications of any decisions about whether to allow new projects to take place. This should be a summary of the information provided under points 1 to 8 in Annex IV of the amended Directive.

While it is a summary, it is important to cover the issues that arose in sufficient detail so that the key issues and their implications can be clearly understood.

For larger projects it can be useful to present the non-technical summary as a separate document, which can be widely distributed to the public who are likely to be affected by the project.

A non-technical summary of an EIAR is different to and should not be confused with public relations or promotional material, which should not form any part of an EIAR (see also [section 2.6](#)).

Structure and Contents

The non-technical summary is generally laid out in a similar, but condensed, format to the main EIAR, i.e. describing the project, existing environment, effects and mitigation measures, etc. The inclusion of clear maps, plans and other illustrations can be useful.

Language and Terms

The non-technical summary should be short and easily followed, but it should not omit or understate any effects which may be controversial. All key likely significant effects should be included.

Technical terms, abbreviations, references or jargon should not be used.

The Author has read through the hard copy of the Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of this EIAR and considers it to be deficient in terms of presentation and proper synopsis of the conclusions on this development. In particular the Author considers there is significant lack of compliance with above EPA Guidelines such that the General Public are faced with the task of wading through the full EIAR and drawings etc as the Author has done himself. The fact that that the NTS its omitted altogether from the online presentation of the EIAR indicates a rushed decision to launch the Public Consultation and referral to ABP last September within days of the ABP decision to seek an EIA for the project.

The Author himself fortunately spotted the first advertisement and map in the local paper and then contacted his former colleagues to ask about the proposed traffic changes. This spurred Tipperary County Council to change the advertisement and re-launch the public consultation with an extended closing date of 18th Dec 2023. During the preparation of this report, the Author subsequently noted online version of the NTS does not exist. Rather than contacting his former colleagues again, the Author decided to refer the matter to ABP for adjudication.

Section 4 APB decision to seek Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)

Following a referral by Tipperary Co Co in June 2023 with regard to the requirement to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment , ABP made a decision in Sept 2023 that a EIAR be submitted

Review of ABP Decision ABP-317411-23 dated 18 Sept 2023 (Authors comments in red)

Inspectors Report – Section 3.0

3.0 Proposed Development (NB - No reference to proposed traffic changes on Quays)

3.1. The proposal is for road infrastructure works including construction of pedestrian bridges, provision of a bus stop, and upgrading of footpaths at The Quay, Quay Street, New Quay, Suir Island and Raheen Road, Clonmel town, Co. Tipperary. The development includes the following:

- Two 4-metre-wide pedestrian bridges, the first bridge linking the proposed North Plaza on The Quay/Quay St/Sarsfield St Junction to Suir Island, and the second bridge connecting Suir Island to Raheen Road.
- Provision of a new public open space called the North Plaza which will be aligned with Sarsfield Street.
- Provision of a bus stop on the western side of the North Plaza located on Quay Street with five benches providing comfortable facilities for public transport users.
- Upgrading of the existing 2-metre-wide sidewalk along Quay Street into a 4- metre-wide shared pedestrian/cycle path
- Provision of a sloping landscaped terrace with public seating, located inside the hairpin-shaped access ramp leading up to the northern bridge crossing.
- Provision of a pedestrian path or promenade along the existing berm embankment across Suir Island linking the two pedestrian bridges
- Construction of a pedestrian/bicycle ramp from the link promenade onto Suir Island Carpark.
- Provision of a mini public space within Suir Island Carpark at the entrance to the proposed Suir Island Gardens
- Road improvements for the safety of pedestrians/cyclists at the South Arrival Point.
- Installation of two uncontrolled pedestrian crossings positioned at either ends of the proposed access ramp and flight of steps to provide traffic calming at the South Arrival Point.
- Construction of a new foul pumping station to be located within Suir Island car park which will facilitate future Irish Water connections.
- Ancillary site development works to include, but not limited to, surface water drainage, lighting and associated electrical works, hard and soft landscaping, road works to include surfacing and line marking, landscaping and installation of street furniture.

Inspectors Report – Top of Page 15

Due to the nature and limited scale of the development, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in significant negative impacts on materials assets in the area.

The Author considers that there will be a significant negative impact on materials assets caused by the proposed 1-way system which is currently 2-way. It will be a permanent road closure causing significant disruption to residents and business life in Clonmel Town centre and particularly in view of the decision to grant permission for a new hotel at site of former Clonmel Arms Hotel. The loss of parking and loading facilities in the area due to proposed

“Northern Plaza” is very significant in the Author’s opinion. Based on paragraph 3.0 of Inspectors Report it appears that the Local Authority did not refer to these issues in the project description. The original LA documentation sent to ABP last June when seeking the determination is no longer available online. The Author notes that this lack of information on changes in traffic was again not part of the subsequent site notice submitted to ABP last September. It was only after the Author contacted the Local Authority in early Oct 2023 that a revised site notice was issued and an extended public consultation period to 18 Dec 2023 was arranged. Hence there has been some confusion and lack of coherence on the proposed changes going back to last June and possibly earlier.

Section 5 Review of Roads Act 1993 Section 50 (as amended)

To better understand the roles of the Local Authority and An Bord Pleanála in the assessment of an EIAR, the Author copied Section 50 (2) below. The text is the amended “consolidated” version from legislative website. (The Author has experience in Planning matters while working as a Local Authority Engineer and has a knowledge of the requirements for an EIAR from various projects and Planning reports undertaken.)

The text below will be used to assess the overall process underway and facilitate further comments if required.

(2) The road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, shall ensure that an environmental impact assessment report referred to in subsection (1B)—

(a) is prepared by competent experts,

(b) subject to subsection (3), contains the following information:

(i) a description of the proposed road development comprising information on the site, design, size and other relevant features of the development;

(ii) a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed road development on the environment;

(iii) a description of any features of the proposed road development and of any measures envisaged in order to avoid, prevent or reduce and, if possible, offset likely significant adverse effects on the environment;

(iv) a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, which are relevant to the proposed road development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the proposed road development on the environment;

(v) a non-technical summary of the information referred to in subparagraphs (i) to (iv);

(vi) any additional information specified in Annex IV that is relevant to the specific characteristics of the particular proposed road development or type of proposed road development and to the environmental features likely to be affected;

and

(c) takes into account the available results of other relevant assessments carried out pursuant to any Act of the Oireachtas or under European Union legislation with a view to avoiding duplication of assessments.

(3) Where An Bord Pleanála issues an opinion under subsection (4) the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, shall—

(a) prepare the environmental impact assessment report referred to in subsection (1B) based on that opinion, and

(b) include in the report the information that may reasonably be required for reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed road development on the environment, taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment.

(4) (a) An Bord Pleanála shall, on the request of a road authority, or the Authority, that proposes a road development to which this section applies made before the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, has submitted an environmental impact assessment report—

(i) consult with the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be,

(ii) consult the authorities referred to in section 51(3)(b), and

(iii) taking into account the information provided by the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, in particular on the specific characteristics of the project, including its location and technical capacity, and its likely impact on the environment, issue an opinion on the scope, and level of detail, of the information to be included by the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, in the environmental impact assessment report in accordance with subsection (2).

(b) The issuing of an opinion under this subsection shall not prejudice the exercise by An Bord Pleanála of its powers pursuant to section 51(4) to require the road authority concerned or the Authority, as the case may be, to furnish it with specified additional information in relation to the likely effects on the environment of the proposed road development.

(5) In this section, 'construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road' includes any change or extension to a proposed road development already authorised, executed or in the process of being executed.]

Section 6 EIA review with comments

The Author has reviewed various Chapters of the EIA and made comments hereunder.

Chapter 1

1.6.5 of EIA - Air Quality Assessment — Mitigation of Air pollution at schools...**has it been addressed that extra traffic will be obliged to pass schools (Mary St & Raheen Rd) if proposed traffic changes are implemented?**

1.6.9 Traffic

Evaluating the proposed development in relation to all road users including general traffic, HGV's, cyclists and pedestrians; **(A full evaluation of proposed traffic changes on the town centre has not been undertaken)**

Parking and loading availability at the proposed development during the construction and operational phases; • Identifying and characterising the significance of any potential impacts; • Incorporating measures to avoid and mitigate (reduce) any significant impacts (where they occur); and • Assessing the significance of any residual impacts after mitigation.
(The permanent loss of the 34 space car park

1.6.13

Consultation with statutory bodies

The developer would have to demonstrate that the proposed development will not impact on the operation of the Clonmel Flood Defence Scheme. **Has Clonmel & OPW definitely confirmed no interference/Impact – Ability to install barriers quickly and without hindrance is critical to operation of flood scheme**

Effect on Town centre traffic when a flood causes closure of Oldbridge was not assessed – all traffic on O'Connell St must turn right onto Mary St & Queen st or right towards quays and Irishtown in order to eventually double back around town – i.e. removal of eastbound link of Bridge St & Quay St has a significant effect on traffic movements

Bottom table 1.2 – still awaiting info as of 19 June 2023 – EIA incomplete – why was it submitted hastily in Sept 2023? Open to legal challenge when incomplete??

Page 30 – bottom of page - 3 years experience of traffic engineer – This is considered very short. Also how much of this relates to knowledge of Clonmel Town centre and knock-on effects on Primary Retail Area??

1.7 Screening of Appropriate Assessment

The Author notes that a Natura Impact Statement is required for this project based on a Screening Assessment undertaken by Doherty Environmental Consultants (DEC) Ltd. It is noted that the red line boundary for this project includes an area to south west of Suir Island to be used for Crane access. This area appears to be the same area where a proposed "Suir Island Garden" project went through a Part 8 Public Consultation period August to Oct 2022. The Screening Assessment for EIA attached to the Suir Garden Part 8 documents indicates that there would be no likely effect on a Natura 2000 site and therefore an EIA was not required. Given that the same consultants DEC Ltd are making a decision that an EIA is now required, it is considered that there should be clarity on whether the Suir Island garden project can proceed and when it is included within the red line boundary. In addition other areas to the east of Suir Island (which are flood prone) have been demarcated with

proposed footpaths on some drawings but are not included within the red-line boundary for the “Suir Island Links Infrastructure Links” project. (e.g. Option 1 Overall Layout (Drg 3 of 48)) It is confusing whether there will be a 3rd Public Consultation and Appropriate Assessment for the Eastern part of the Suir Island Natura 2000 site. It would appear preferable to have an EIA for one overall “Suir Island project” reviewed by ABP rather than what appears to be “project splitting” in this case.

1.11 Methodology

This EIAR has been prepared with reference to a standardised methodology which is universally accepted and acknowledged. Recognised and experienced environmental specialists have been used throughout the EIA process to ensure the EIAR produced is robust, impartial and objective.??? The Author considers that impartiality and objectiveness has been called into question in a number of areas particularly with regard to not reviewing the traffic impacts of the proposed Northern Plaza

1.12

No exceptional difficulties were experienced in compiling the necessary information for the proposed development. Where any specific difficulties were encountered these are outlined in the relevant chapter of the EIAR. – Significant data gaps in the traffic assessment & parking analysis undertaken were experienced and acknowledged by the consultants – Alternative data used needed far more validation and should have been backed up by upto-date traffic counts etc – Single day samples of traffic and parking were used and there is a poor confidence level that these represent an accurate analysis of the situation.

1.9 EIAR Team

A review of list of specialists indicates that Traffic Engineer only has 3 years experience and the Authors opinion is unlikely to have sufficient background and experience to assess the major impacts of losing 34 parking spaces and making a significant traffic change to the town centre of Clonmel.

Public Realm Design Objectives – bottom page 32-top page 33

Retain as many shoppers and recreational users as possible, and maximise this to the greatest possible extent..... Making it easier to circulate around the town with good access to parking and facilities within easy reach – removal of vital links such as Quay st is contrary to this objective

Non- technical Summary

1.14 Non-Technical Summary The 2018 EIA Guidelines prepared by the DHPLG state that the Non-Technical Summary “should be concise and comprehensive and should be written in language easily understood by a lay member of the public not having a background in environmental matters or an in-depth knowledge of the proposed project.” A Non-Technical Summary of the EIAR has been prepared which summarises the key environmental impacts and is provided as a separately bound document

A Non-technical summary has **not** been included with online documentation — In authors opinion TCC are in breach of EIA legislation/EPA guidance-A lay-person who logs-into the online display would struggle to grasp the effects of this project on the local environment.

The Non-Technical Summary has been included in actual display in Tipp Co Co offices , Clonmel –its is assumed it was also available at Nenagh Civic Offices.

Chapter 3 – EIAR Alternatives considered

3.6 New North Plaza layout (A smaller Plaza was not considered as an Alternative design)

The new public space proposed offers a generous plaza to the Town. (this is not required in view of Kickham Plaza, Denis Burke Park etc) The view of this plaza is clear from O’Connell Street and Sarsfield Street and allows an appreciation of the natural backdrop of trees towards Suir Island. A dog-leg ramp is provided with this design allowing access to the bridge without obstructing the space of the plaza. The steps and the seating create a very generous performance space in the form of an amphitheatre. A bus stop will be provided on the western end of the plaza. The Author has reviewed Options 1, 2 & 3 layouts for the North Plaza. A slimmed down version of Option 3 would be preferable along with retaining 2 way traffic and as much parking as possible in the area. A slimmed down version of Option 3 would also be in accordance with the 2013 Clonmel & Environs Development Plan which required retention of 2-way traffic and some parking in the area

Table 3.2 MCA Analysis

User benefits associated with more efficient transport and lower journey times?? Most people use cars – Longer journey times due to new 1-way system – more pollution

Overall scoring under MCA analysis considered dubious when one considers volume of cyclists in Clonmel at a very low level (less than 1%) compared to car transport – benefits to various sectors of society very dubious

Safety – mid Pg 19 With the proposal to reduce lane widths in Raheen Road and with the creation of a one-way road in a westerly direction for Quay Street, vehicle speeds will automatically reduce which will enhance safety for all users. Not accepted – the new 90degree turn for west bound traffic on the quays at Sarsfield st will require advance warning.

Environment – Pg 19 of Ch 3 -: All three bridge options scored similarly to have a minor positive impact as the proposals would encourage people to take less vehicular trips either for employment commuting, shopping trips and recreational activities. Fewer trips taken with vehicles reduces greenhouse gas emissions which increases air quality and reduces noise With best will in the world,– no surveys of peoples behaviour to justify this statement

Accessibility & Social Inclusion – Pg 20 Ch 3

Active Travel & Gender: All three bridge options were scored to have a major positive impact on active travel and gender equality. With the increase in visitors and users of a walking and cycling facility and with the addition of public lighting, anti-social behaviour will be discouraged and thus reducing the gender disparity. Not proven or accepted

Social Inclusion: All three bridge options were scored to have a major positive impact on social inclusion in the surrounding communities. The bridge options will improve access to services, increase social interaction, improve health and wellbeing, reduce crime by increasing visitors and increase accessibility for vulnerable groups Not proven or accepted

Integration – Pg 21 Ch 3

The bridge proposals aims to enhance access to public transport systems by providing an additional bus stop in the town centre. The proposals will increase connection to O’Connell Street which contains multiple public transport facilities. O’Connell St has only 2 new bus-

stops installed in 1st week Dec 2023 to facilitate a new Town Bus Service– there is 1 bus-stop outside Easons on Gladstone St for the Town/Rural Link Service – Also Long distance buses from Limerick, Waterford & Dublin but these don't pass through O'Connell St or the Town centre streets. Only 3 trains per day in each direction at Clonmel station making it very difficult for users of public transport in general

Health & Recreation – Pg 21 of Ch 3

The bridge proposal will encourage people to make use of active travel methods for commuting, shopping or recreational activities. Walking and cycling increases cardiovascular health, increases muscular strength and endurance and promotes weight loss

Short 100 m long bridges have no impact on human health – the nearby Suir Blueway is 21km long towards Carrick on-Suir – it is designed to fulfil this purpose – connectivity with Suir Blueway was mentioned elsewhere in EIAR and should also have been stated here – Author considers there is lack of coordination between various chapters of the EIAR.

3.6.14 Non-Statutory Public Consultation A non-statutory public consultation for the project was undertaken between 28th July and 27th August 2021 allowing the public to provide their views and feedback on the different designs presented within this report. A total of 41 submissions were received by the closing date of the public consultation period. Of these submission, 35 responses were received via the Innovision on-line portal, and 6 responses were received via email by Tipperary County Council's Representative or submitted at the Public Consultation Exhibition at Clonmel Library. The results obtained from the public consultation showed that the majority of submissions are supportive of the proposed development. 82% of the respondents expressed support to the proposed development implementation. 13% of the respondents were not in favour of the proposed development, and the remaining 5% did not provide any feedback.

(Other than above statement, there is no background report on the earlier consultation with list of submissions & comments received. The Author would like to have reviewed all submissions to digest what people said and if any were from local residents or businesses)

Ch 4 of EIAR - Population & Human Health

See comparison tables between 2011 & 2016 of no of people travelling by Car, Bike & train when comparing Clonmel with rest of Tipperary & the State data. Clearly mode shift towards public transport and bicycle is very challenging regardless of how its to be achieved and amount of funding involved.

The relevant development plan to the Chapter 4 assessment should have been the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, which was adopted on 11th July 2022 and came into effect on 22nd August 2022. There is a reference in Chapter 2 to the new County Development plan. This indicates a lack of consistency amongst the consultancy staff and calls into question their competence.

EIAR Chapter 11 – Material Assets Built Services

Review of this chapter indicates no effect on existing services caused by proposed footbridge development. The Author has some comments as follows:

Refer to Sheet 42 of 48 of the Book of Drawings. The Drawing title is 20_071 - CSE - GEN - XX - DR - C – 2501 dated 22/9/23 and it shows a plan view of proposed North Plaza with existing and proposed underground services marked on. It is noted there are significant underground services underneath and near the proposed footbridge ramp which will restrict future access to these services if required. The Drawings indicate a large diameter foul sewer of 450mm diameter (possibly a typo) whereas Uisce Eireann records (Appendix to Ch 11) indicate there is a 900mm diameter foul sewer along the north quays. Section 11.4.6 of EIAR Chapter 11 also refers to a 900mm diameter foul sewer.

Similarly on Raheen Road, the Uisce Eireann service records (in Appendix to Ch 11) indicate a 525mm diameter foul sewer on river side of road under footpath. It is noted the proposed ramp and steps will be directly over this service.

On Page 14 of Ch 11, the Consultants indicate as follows

“A pre-connection enquiry (PCE) application form has been submitted to Irish Water (IW) and consultation has confirmed that the connection to wastewater infrastructure is feasible without infrastructure upgrade by Irish Water. Further details are provided within the Planning Engineering Report (Report No. RPT-20_071-059). There is a long-term, neutral, not significant impact on foul water infrastructure during the operational phase of the proposed development.”

While it may never be necessary to have to access underground services after the proposed footbridge and ramps are constructed, there is a question if service diversions should be considered beforehand and included in scheme costs. The Planning Engineering Report referred to above isn't made available with the EIAR to check Uisce Eireann views on this matter.

Ch 12 of EIAR Material Assets – Traffic & Transportation

Section 12.4 of EIAR (page 7) refers to proposed “elimination” of 2-way traffic flow and car-parking. In the Author’s opinion, “elimination” of valuable material assets & resources in the town centre which is already struggling to stay alive is unacceptable and contravene the stated objectives of the 2013 C & EDP.

Section 12.5 seeks to play down the effect of this “elimination” by suggesting anticipated “Parking redistribution and parking impacts”. In the author’s opinion other anticipated impacts should have been considered in detail as is required under an Environmental Impact Assessment. One such possible impact is to cause further close-down of businesses in the Town centre as traffic and local people will become deterred from entering the Town due to congestion effects and difficulties with access and egress. Another Impact not properly assessed is with regard to the proposed relocation of 34 car-parking spaces onto Suir Island. People in provincial towns with only a moderate level of enforcement (i.e. no clamping) invariably will try to park as close to where they want to for delivery and access. They are happy to pay €1.20 per hour for this privilege for whatever length of time they require (The current on-street tariff structure also indicates the willingness of the Local Authority & its elected members to retain significant amounts of on-street parking at a modest rate of around €1 per hour for almost 20 years and can be compared to tariff structures in other towns & cities . Drivers are not happy to spend time scouring for spaces and if they perceive difficulties more of them will move their business to out of town locations or other towns further afield. ABP will be aware that the Council originally had a policy of not facilitating coffee-shops and restaurants in the out of town centres but they were obliged to forego

those policies over time due to various appeals taken. Now that there are many suitable edge of town outlets and filling stations serving food and coffee all with free parking available, its no-longer a necessity to head for the Town centre for coffee shops and most people are reluctant to walk a distance if they can't park on-street relatively close to their destinations. Thus the Environmental effect of relocating car-parking from the Quays to Suir Island has not been properly assessed and alternatives such as the further undermining of the town centre by this proposal have not been considered. The Author considers a detailed assessment of these knock-on effects on "material assets" and local economic life is required by EIA legislation & EPA Guidelines.

In Section 12.6.3 of the EIAR, it is noted only historic data from a single day 14th June 2019 was used with regard to car-parking accumulations at various sites in the Town centre. This is regarded as very deficient in terms of the assessment of the effect of relocating the 34 no car-parking spaces from the Quays to Suir Island. A far more comprehensive and upto date study ought to have been undertaken and interviews held with local residents and businesses who regularly park at this location to assess the overall Environmental effect of the proposal. In the last sentence, the consultants admit that they had no data available for some locations which again highlights the very poor assessment undertaken. The relative lack of experience (3 years) of the lead Traffic consultant should be noted and the Author considers that "competency of experts" for undertaking an EIA is again called into question.

The graph of Suir Island Occupancy levels on Fig 12.9 page 12 highlights how Suir Island is a relatively unattractive location for town centre parking. This graph based on a 1 day analysis is hardly representative of the average situation. The Author is familiar with the town and is aware Suir Island was constructed as a "spill-over" location for shoppers in the busy weeks before Christmas but otherwise is under-utilised. It has a relatively low tariff of €3.50 for parking all day but even this fails to make it that attractive given that people seek to be closer to their destination in the town centre. The Author is also aware of anecdotal evidence of drug-taking in the vicinity of Suir Island and this can be verified with An Garda Síochána. This deters people using that location for parking and will certainly be of concern to residents & business people living & working a few hundred metres away on the Quays who won't be able to supervise their vehicles. The EIA therefore did not assess the usability and attractiveness of Suir Island Car-park and the Author considers parking of some vehicles will continue at the Quay St area even if bollards and yellow lines are installed.

The Author undertook his own survey of Suir Island Car-park and noted it is split into 2 areas. The northern section (approx 26 spaces of which 7 are marked reserved) near Hughes Mill apartments is obviously for Apartment and the former retail use. Almost all 26 spaces were occupied at time of survey. The southern public section contains approximately 204 spaces plus 10 disabled spaces (4 spaces are marked for EV charging). Adding the southern and northern total spaces suggests there are approx 240 spaces and not 280 spaces as indicated by the consultants. Also they ignored to reference the different uses within the car-park which means only approx 200 spaces are available if disabled spaces & EV spaces are excluded.

On 29/11/23 there were 47 vehicles parked plus 4 other vehicles undertaking water sport activity at rear where the "camper van" usage is also facilitated. Assuming approx 50 spaces

occupied on average suggests a 25% occupancy rate which can be compared with Consultants data of 48 spaces occupied as shown on Figure 12.8 of Ch 12 of EIAR.

Section 12.6.4 of the EIAR dealing with traffic counts again highlights the paucity of information available to the consultants as part of the overall assessment of traffic. It is considered that older data and modelling of same and trying to validate the models is not a substitute for undertaking a detailed study and submitting a detailed EIAR as required. The Author has significant traffic experience working in local authorities in Dublin and Tipperary during his career and considers that it is not difficult to undertake upto date traffic counts of junctions and these should have been undertaken prior to submission of the EIAR as a validation exercise. The traffic and parking assessments based on single historic days of data are considered open to legal challenge and cannot be relied upon in making a detailed assessment of the effects of the proposed development.

The Author is aware from his own experience that “Linsig” Analysis & software is generally used to model Traffic signalised junctions. A Google search confirms this and makes reference to various specialist companies such as ILTP based in Ireland whom the Author is aware of. On the other hand “Picady” software is generally used to analyse “Priority controlled junctions” i.e. those with a Stop & Give way arrangement which is what exists at all 5 junctions assessed in the EIAR. The Author therefore does not accept the introduction to Section 12.11 that “Linsig” analysis can replace a “Picady” assessment of the junctions. The Consultants ought to have employed a specialist sub-consultant to provide quality assurance on their traffic assessment as the competency of the lead traffic consultant is questionable.

The Author has also read the Traffic & Transport Assessment of the Clonmel Arms Hotel development (PA 1860 1355) and notes that their Traffic Consultant Coakley Consulting Engineers used TRICS database system to analyse traffic. Given that this Planning application was lodged in 2018 and finalised by mid 2019, it is surprising that the current traffic consultant did not take it on board in the EIAR of the proposed footbridge. It is also noteworthy that the Coakley Traffic assessment of the same junctions did not refer to making the quays 1-way as part of the Masterplan proposals for the footbridge which were known about at that time.

It is noted that a Separate document entitled “Traffic Impact Assessment” is included with the Public Consultation Documents. The Author notes this is a replica of Chapter 12 of the EIAR containing exactly the same text other than it has “Linsig” computerised analysis of junctions included as an Appendix which are considered meaningless in the context of my earlier comments.

EIAR Chapter 16 Identification of Significant Impacts & Interactions

16.2.8 Material Assets: Built Services including Traffic Utilities and Waste

Operation Phase

There are no potentially significant interactions identified between Population and Human Health and built services and utilities during the operation phase. There is likely to be positive long-term cumulative effects on journey characteristics, journey amenity, time, and reduction in severance as a result of the proposed improvements in the pedestrian and cycle network that will be linked via the proposed development. The removal of 33 car parking spaces from 'The Quays' car park will remove a facility for road users. These impacts will be minimised once the pedestrian route from the Suir Island Car Park to the Quays is completed. Based on the traffic flows associated with the operation of the proposed development the effects are predicted to vary from negative, imperceptible and long-term to positive, imperceptible and long-term.

Above commentary is not accepted by the Author given the very significant permanent disruption to Town Centre traffic caused by changing the 2-way system to 1-way system on North Quays along with the transfer of 34 parking spaces onto Suir Island.

Appendix 1

Author – William Corby B.A.B.A.I. (1983) MBA (Local Govt) 2007

The Author was employed by Dublin City Council for period 1985-2000 and was involved in design & installation of 5 no Quality Bus Corridors and Cycle facilities in period 1995-1998. Transferred to South Tipperary County Council in 2000 & worked as Senior Executive Engineer in Clonmel Borough District and Road Design Section (2001-2017) other than a 5 year period in Cashel Area 2009-2014. The Author was Project Manager for 3 no Active Travel cycle route projects on Regional Roads in Clonmel as well as the 20km Clonmel to Carrick-on-Suir Blueway along River Suir constructed in 2015-2017 period. The Author was District Engineer for Carrick-on-Suir Municipal District (2017-2023) and was involved in various Active Travel Projects in Carrick-on-Suir as well as a lead role in the design of the Carrick-on-Suir Regeneration Plan. In summary, the Author has over 30 years experience in transport planning & encouragement towards modal shift in both Dublin & South Tipperary.

Appendix 2

Survey of Vacant Units - Clonmel Town Centre - Tuesday 29th Nov 2023

Irishtown (St Marys Church to Westgate)	3
O'Connell Street (Westgate to Mary St)	9
O'Connell Street (Mary St to Mainguard)	10
Mary St (O'Connell St to Primary School)	4
Mary St Car-park & Marystone Mall	11
Gladstone St & Upper Gladstone St	11
Sarsfield St	1
Market Place	23
Market St	1
Emmet St	4
Parnell St	11
Nelson St	2
Mitchell St (aka Narrow St)	9
Abbey St	5
Total Vacant Units	104