



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 3rd Meeting PL17.HC0003

Development	Slane Bypass, County Meath.		
Location	The Offices of An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation.		
Meeting	3 rd		
Date	12 th March 2020	Time	11:15-12:57

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Anne Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Mairéad Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector		
Josephine Hayes, Senior Executive Officer		
Maeve Williams, Executive Officer	m.williams@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Peter Walsh, Director of Capital Programmes, TII		
Geraldine Fitzpatrick, Head of Roads Capital Programme, TII		
Patrick Duffy, Regional Manager, TII		
Mary Deevy, Senior Archaeologist, TII		

Nicholas Whyatt, Senior Engineer, Meath County Council
Padraig Maguire, Senior Executive Planner, Meath County Council
Ambrose Clarke, Senior Engineer, Westmeath National Roads Office
Una Mullen , Senior Executive Engineer, Westmeath National Roads Office
Michael Noonan, Project Manager, RPS Consulting Engineers.

Introduction

The Board referred to its previous meeting with the prospective applicant held on the 7th of December 2018 and the associated record of that meeting. The prospective applicant indicated that they had no further comments regarding the record of the last meeting. Any comments had been forwarded to An Bord Pleanála after the record of the 2nd meeting was issued. The prospective applicant outlined the benefits of the pre-application consultation and indicated that it sought to gain a greater understanding of the Board's previous decision.

Presentation

The prospective applicant gave an update of the proposed development. The N2 Slane Bypass Scheme Development is currently near the end of Phase 2 Option Selection.

The prospective applicant described how the approach to the project addresses the key issues raised in the refusal of the previous permission. The appointment of Dr Stephen Carter from the earliest stage of project design was noted. A number of differences in the context of heritage planning and policy prevail and are responded to in the applicant's approach. Independent assessments of the World Heritage Site (WHS), of archaeological and cultural heritage including architectural heritage were made at option selection stage.

The prospective applicant indicated that it had its third consultation meeting with ICOMOS in February 2020. ICOMOS recommended consideration of cumulative impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of World Heritage Site and this was assessed and is included in the updated Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA).

The prospective applicant noted that detailed consideration of alternatives to a Bypass had been undertaken. Construction of a Wide Area Traffic model enabled

full assessment of all options. The prospective applicant noted that the Slane Bypass will not alleviate east – west traffic movements in Slane and that a feasibility assessment was carried out on East-West Bypass options.

A public realm strategy for Slane has been commenced by Meath County Council. The prospective applicant stated the purpose of the Slane Bypass as a road improvement project to remove traffic from the sub-standard N2 in Slane, and thus improve traffic, safety and environmental issues in the village and improve its tourist potential. The project has strong policy support in the National Development Plan 2018 – 2027, the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016 – 2035, the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy and the Meath County Development Plan 2013 – 2019.

The prospective applicant noted that public display of the emerging preferred option had taken place in November 2019. In summary the outcome of the option selection process to date is:

- Traffic Management Alternatives were assessed to not be appropriate alternatives to a bypass. They would not address problems in Slane and would result in HGV traffic being diverted to less suitable routes.
- Western options are less favourable than eastern. Western options would all have a direct impact on Annex I priority habitat and would be considered to have a greater negative impact on architectural heritage and agricultural holdings. All eastern options would have a minor adverse impact of moderate significance on the OUV of the WHS.
- Eastern Bypass Option EG emerged as the preferred N2 Bypass option. It scored well in terms of avoidance of Annex I habitats, better screening of the bridge crossing in views from Knowth, avoidance of archaeological sites, is least visually intrusive on the landscape and has least impact on agriculture and presents one of the best choices in terms of benefit to cost ratio. It removes traffic from Slane and enables public realm enhancement.

The prospective applicant noted that while the HIA had identified that the on-line and western options were preferable it did not identify a significant negative impact on the WHS by any of the eastern routes. It was acknowledged that any adverse impact on the OUV of the WHS requires justification in the overall balance of harm

and benefits. In comparison to the previous proposal the southern section of the preferred option is 440m further away from the WHS buffer zone and the bridge crossing is better screened.

Regarding the option of an East-West Bypass the prospective applicant presented an assessment of options. It was concluded that an East-West Bypass is not feasible at this time due to additional environmental impact and poor value for money but would not be precluded in the future. It was considered that the residual traffic which would pass through the village can be accommodated efficiently with the aid of the proposed traffic management arrangements. Meath County Council is progressing a public realm study incorporating traffic management proposals, to complement the preferred option. The prospective applicant stated that this would be the most effective way to significantly improve the traffic problems in Slane. The traffic management measures, which would include a full HGV ban on Slane bridge and on the N2 north of the square were described.

In concluding the presentation the prospective applicant noted that the project would now move to Phase 3 – Design and Environmental Assessment.

Discussion

The Board's representatives queried if the matter of possible future development at the roundabout at the northern end of the proposed Bypass had been raised by ICOMOS as an issue during consultations. The Board noted that this matter had been raised in the consideration of the previous application. The prospective applicant indicated that it had not been raised as a significant matter in discussions with ICOMOS.

The Board's representatives noted the deep cutting which would be required to the south of Rosnaree Road and queried if it would be visible from Brú na Bóinne. The prospective applicant indicated that due to the topography and alignment combined, the cutting would be shielded from view.

The prospective applicant provided further information relating to the bridge. It is proposed to be a three span bridge constructed using box pushing methods. A 10m zone around the river will be retained free of construction. The Board's representatives queried the height of the bridge in relation to potential conflicts with

birds and bats. The prospective applicant indicated that this would be considered and that studies to date did not raise any significant concerns.

The Board's representatives indicated that they will have a meeting with the SID Section of the Board and will outline the matters raised at this pre-application consultation. The Board's representatives informed the prospective applicant that if they decide to close the pre-application consultation a notification period of a minimum of four weeks is required.

In discussion on policy matters the prospective applicant noted that the Meath County Development Plan is currently in draft form and is due to be adopted later in 2020. New issues which emerged from the Brú na Bóinne Management Plan have been addressed in the Development Plan.

Noting the use of a traffic light colour system in the assessment of the options, the Board questioned whether the prospective applicant is satisfied that this method is sufficient in the circumstances. The Board noted that some receptors might be given a higher weight than others.

Regarding the consultation with ICOMOS the prospective applicant noted that ICOMOS has welcomed the opportunity to be involved at the early stages of the proposed development.

In response to questions the prospective applicant noted that the project would result in more traffic on the N51 East. There will be ramps to reduce the speed of vehicles going through the village.

Regarding the improvements to the public realm the Board's representatives asked whether it was proposed to include this under the application and a discussion ensued about the merits of different approaches. The Board's representatives noted that it would be necessary to assess the cumulative impacts in the Natura Impact Assessment (NIS) and the EIAR.

The Board's representatives recommended that in the preparation of the EIAR the prospective applicant should ensure that any adverse effects are fully communicated and clearly described.

Regarding the selection of visual representation techniques, the Board's representatives noted that the simple balloon test utilised during the previous

application process proved to be highly informative. The prospective applicant stated that it will investigate various options, including 3D models and video.

Regarding the extent to which the proposed development would be visible, Dr. Carter as part of the Heritage Impact Assessment identified that a short section of the bridge will be visible from Knowth. There will be three junctions none of which will be visible from Knowth.

In terms of the potential visibility of the cutting the Board's representatives queried the geology at this location and whether it would be in rock. The prospective applicant confirmed that it will be in rock and that the geological investigation is ongoing.

The Board's representatives noted that the context has changed since 2009 including in relation to Appropriate Assessment. The prospective applicant noted that seasonal surveys have been undertaken and will continue until the end of the process. It has been established that there will be no direct impact or habitat loss in relation to European sites.

The prospective applicant asked if it was possible to seek the Board's views on the matter of transboundary effects. The Board's representatives explained the procedure which would be undertaken by the Board if the application relates to a development which is deemed to have transboundary effects. This would include the Board contacting the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The Board's representatives noted the relatively limited number of prescribed bodies under the 1993 Roads Act as amended. The Board's policy is to undertake wider consultation and to refer applications to a greater number of prescribed bodies, taken from the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended.

The prospective applicant noted that public consultation is ongoing. Previous events indicated there was a great deal of support from the public. East-west traffic in the village was the main concern along with some issues relating to access to property along the N51. The Board's representatives noted that the attendees at such events would be from the locality.

The prospective applicant noted that ICOMOS is kept up-to-date on all elements of the proposed development and that ICOMOS have been extremely generous with their time, advice and feedback.

The Board's representatives questioned if the prospective applicants have met with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. The prospective applicant confirmed that they have engaged with the said Department, to establish their role, alongside the role of UNESCO and ICOMOS. They are due to have a fourth meeting with the Department.

In response to a query relating to the funding of the scheme, the prospective applicant informed the Board's representatives that they were seeking some of the funding from the TII, from Meath County Council and from other government sources. The Board noted that such information may be sought during any oral hearing which may be held.

1.0 Conclusion

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant and it will then be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so. Following this, the prospective applicant can seek a further meeting with the Board or request closure to the pre-application process.

If closure to the pre-application process is requested, the reporting inspector will complete the report which will be forwarded to the Board.

A copy of the procedures for the making of an application to the Board are attached.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Assistant Director of Planning

