



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting PL17.HC0003 4th meeting

Case Reference / Description	Slane Bypass, County Meath.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	4th		
Date	27/02/2023	Start Time	11:00 a.m.
Location	N/A	End Time	12:25 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Ciara Kellett, Director of Planning (Chair)
Mairéad Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Nicholas Whyatt, Meath County Council
Wendy Bagnall, Meath County Council
Enda Weldon, Meath County Council
Michael Noonan, RPS Consulting Engineers
Mary Deevy, TII
Daragh Delaney, TII
Geraldine Fitzpatrick, TII
Patrick Duffy, TII

Una Mullen, Westmeath National Roads Office
Ambrose Clarke, Westmeath National Roads Office

The meeting commenced at 11:00 am.

The Board's representatives referred to the last meeting in March, 2020 and welcomed the prospective applicant to the fourth consultation meeting. The prospective applicant stated that it had no further comments regarding the record of the last meeting. The prospective applicant thanked the Board for facilitating a further meeting.

Presentation:

The prospective applicant opened its presentation with an update on the progress of the project since the last meeting. The scheme is now titled "N2 Slane Bypass & Public Realm Enhancement Scheme". Phase 3 design is complete and the statutory documents including EIAR, NIS and CPO are nearing completion. It was stated that the purpose of this meeting is to give an overview of the final design of some of the key elements.

It was stated that it is now proposed to include public realm improvements in the village of Slane as part of the proposed application. Since the last meeting the design has been developed to address potential impacts on the world heritage site, Brú na Bóinne, the River Boyne SPA/SAC and to address changes to policy documents including NIFTI, Climate Action Plans and the Meath County Development Plan, among others.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed public realm improvement works, which will include all N2 HGV through traffic being re-assigned to the bypass, reconfiguration of the N2/N51 junction in the village, re-allocation of substantial road space for other road users, promotion of active travel within the village and landscaping. It was stated that these public realm enhancements should create a much-improved living environment within the village.

The prospective applicant presented a drawing of the proposed road project and public enhancement scheme and gave an overview of the key elements of the

development. It was noted that there would be extensive temporary works to allow for the construction of the bridge over the River Boyne, to ensure no adverse impact on qualifying interests. It was also noted that four residential properties would be included in the CPO.

Regarding the choice of a type 2 dual carriageway over a type 1 single carriageway, which the applicant stated were the two realistic options, it was stated that the type 2 dual carriageway emerged as the preferred option for a number of reasons including economic benefits and road safety. It was stated that only circa. 3m extra width was needed to provide the type 2 dual carriage way, resulting in only a marginal increase in the scheme footprint.

The prospective applicant presented a detailed drawing of the proposed River Boyne bridge and photomontage images from the east and west. Photomontages of the scheme viewed from Knowth were also presented.

The prospective applicant stated that one of the construction constraints was to avoid any impact on the River Boyne SAC/SPA. It was stated that construction phase measures which have been designed will be put in place to control run-off to the river. These measures include advanced construction of catchment drainage, vortex grit separators, attenuation ponds etc, for use during the main construction phase. There will be restrictions on earthworks methodologies to ensure no adverse impacts on qualifying interests. Drawings illustrating the drainage and scope of temporary works for construction of the bridge were presented.

Further details of the public realm enhancement plans were presented including illustrations of the reconfigured N2/N51 junction and the proposed car park and active travel link.

The prospective applicant presented the key mitigation measures: stringent water control measures and appointment of a project ecologist; surface water monitoring; and, a habitat restoration plan for the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC. It was stated that, with the implementation of these mitigation measures, the outcome of the NIS will state that “the Proposed Scheme will not result in direct, indirect or cumulative impacts which would have the potential to adversely affect the qualifying interests/special conservation interests of the Natura 2000 sites within the study area”.

Regarding the impact on the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site, it was stated that design changes and implementation of mitigation measure to the emerging preferred option changed Dr. Carter's (World Heritage expert) original assessment of the impact from 'minor magnitude and moderate significance' to 'negligible impact and minor significance'. These changes and mitigation measures include refinement of the vertical alignment of the bypass and bridge, selection of a shallow-profile bridge span, material and colour selection, and screening by planting.

The prospective applicant gave a detailed update on consultations to date with National Monuments Surveys, ICOMOS, the public, statutory consultees and landowners. Specific consultation meetings have been held with Inland Waterways Association of Ireland and the NPWS.

It was stated that climate impact has become a significant factor in the project design and assessments. The Climate Impact Assessment is currently being updated.

The prospective applicant concluded the presentation by stating that the proposed development offers a multi-modal transport solution, addressing a range of transportation needs.

Discussion:

The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to provide robust reasoning in the application for the route selection and stated that alternatives should be fully assessed with focus on environmental aspects and reasonings. In particular this should address the decision to locate the bypass to the east of Slane.

The prospective applicant was advised to review the alternatives previously considered, together with the reasons for selecting key aspects of the scheme including bridge height, and to address these reasons as part of the assessment of alternatives.

Regarding appropriate assessment and impacts on the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, the prospective applicant stated that a construction methodology has been developed which demonstrates there will be no adverse effect on the site.

The prospective applicant clarified when asked, that only a very short section of the bridge will be visible from Knowth, as illustrated in the photomontages, and this will be minimised further with screening.

Regarding visual impact assessment techniques, the prospective applicant stated that a wide range of options are under consideration.

The prospective applicant clarified that it has been in ongoing consultation with the Department regarding the project and that a report has been submitted to UNESCO. The prospective applicant has been in consultation with ICOMOS and it is intended to meet during the pre-application stage.

The prospective applicant clarified the condition of the four houses proposed to be included in the CPO. Three houses are occupied, and one is unoccupied.

The prospective applicant also confirmed that it intends to arrange a meeting with Inland Fisheries Ireland during pre-application stage. A meeting has been held with the NPWS who advised on surveys that could be carried out and this surveying is ongoing.

The Board's representatives referred to the Galway ring road as an example of how climate has become a main issue in assessing road cases. It was advised that any issues on induced traffic and encouraging car use be addressed.

The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to look at the Galway and Foynes road cases with respect to climate impact assessment.

The Board confirmed that the pre-application file becomes public once the consultation is closed.

Conclusion:

The onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the pre-application consultation process.

The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have.

The meeting concluded at 12:25 p.m.

 13/3/23

Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning