

MWP

Project Summary

**Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)
for Carn Park Link Trail at Baylin, Co. Westmeath**

Westmeath County Council

August 2023

5. Identification of Need

The Westmeath County Council Development Plan (2021-2027) includes in their Council Proposed Policies (CPO's) specific objectives which aligns with the project proposals for the Baylin ORIS outlined within this planning report. A few of the identified objectives outlined within the Development Plan written statement are:

- **CPO 6.21:** Encourage the celebration of the unique attributes of towns and villages in the design and delivery of all visitor interpretation, signage, and public realm schemes in order to provide tourists with a strong 'Sense of Place' and a more memorable visit.
- **CPO 6.59:** Support increased opportunities for off-road walking, including looped walks and longer distance trails, taking account of 'positive control points' in trail design, such as areas of natural beauty, lakeshores or rivers, bogs, built heritage and archaeological features and with links to towns and villages where services may be provided for walkers and hikers. In designing walking trails, the Sport Ireland Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails will be consulted.
- **CPO 6.60:** Continue to maintain and further enhance the County's walking and cycling trails, striving to achieve National Trails accreditation and other standards as set by Sport Ireland, in partnership with local communities and landowners.
- **CPO 6.61:** Support the re-routing and upgrade of the Westmeath Way walking trail, bringing it off-road and link to scenic areas where possible, ensuring its status as an accredited National Waymarked way in the long term and exploring options such as the Walks Scheme for future maintenance.
- **CPO 6.62:** Support the provision of visitor interpretation along walking and cycling trails, including storyboards, artworks, and other media, to create a greater sense of place, connecting and immersing visitors in our local heritage and stories.
- **CPO 6.63:** Support the provision of services for visitors using walking and cycling trails which are appropriate to the location and activity, including bike service points, picnic benches at scenic locations, public toilets in remote areas etc.

The project proposals have considered universal access design guidelines, including the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS). The approach promotes sustainable design and accommodates vulnerable road users by providing adequate width and access facilities on new infrastructure for people with disabilities. Additionally, the proposals include for the improving on safety elements surrounding the primary school, improving the crossing facility and implements designs which dictate the priority of pedestrians above that of vehicular traffic.

6. Environmental Assessment Report

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) was undertaken in line with the requirements of Article 6[3] of the EU Habitats Directive (EC 92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora; the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010; and the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended, for the development of a recreational trail and boardwalk linking Carn Park Forest Walk and the Baylin Bog Trail, Baylin, Co. Westmeath. The assessment concluded that no impacts are likely as a result of the proposed works on the conservation objectives or overall integrity of Carn Park Bog SAC 002336 due to the scale and nature of the works, and the lack of any pathways for indirect impact on any other European site. It was therefore recommended that Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required, and the project is screened out.

7. Ecological Impact Assessment

In addition to the Appropriate Assessment Screening Report, an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) was also created as per the requirements of Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, in order to establish the potential for significant impact on any of the qualifying interests of the nearby Natura 2000 sites. This report comprises information regarding the ecological status of the proposed site of works, including an assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed works on the ecology of the surrounding areas. The screening assessment concluded that there was no likelihood of significant effect on any European Site and recommended that the project need not proceed to Stage 2 AA.

8. Sewerage Facilities and Surface Water Drainage

The proposed scheme does not include any new demands on the surface water infrastructure or sewerage facilities.

9. Design Standards

The scheme was designed in accordance with the various publications as listed:

- National Cycle Manual (NCM), 2007, National Transport Authority. <https://www.cyclemanual.ie/>
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) Version 1.1, 2019, Government of Ireland. <https://www.dmurs.ie/>
- Traffic Management Guidelines, 2003, Department of Transport, Government of Ireland.
- Traffic Signs Manual, Chapter 7 Road Markings, 2019, Department of Transport, Government of Ireland.
- Cycle Infrastructure Design, Local Transport Note 1/20, July 2020, UK Department for Transport.

- TII Publications (Standards), Transport Infrastructure Ireland. <https://www.tiipublications.ie/>
- TII Publications (Technical), Transport Infrastructure Ireland. <https://www.tiipublications.ie/>
- DN-PAV-03021 Pavement and Foundation Design.
- DN-PAV-03024 Bituminous Mixtures, Surface Treatments, and Miscellaneous Products and Processes DETR Guidance on the use of Tactile Paving surfaces
- <http://universaldesign.ie>
- Natural Stone Surfacing – Good Practice Guide
- Guideline for Managing Openings in Public Roads

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1 Conclusion

The proposed design incorporations for the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme in Baylin, provides pedestrian and cycleway linkages between the town centre and two leisure routes namely the Baylin Bog Trail and Carn Park Forest Walk. These improvements include the connecting of the towns assets while improving, safety, sense of place and linkages. Wayfinding to and from the leisure routes and the Old Rail Trail Greenway is incorporated throughout the design proposals.

The new boardwalk provides an essential link creating a larger active travel loop and aligns with Westmeath County Council objectives. This alongside the incorporation of the shared space zones creates a high quality, comfortable and safe link for pedestrians to access from multiple points.

The overall increase in awareness of pedestrians and cyclists throughout the proposals further improves the safety for vehicular traffic as well by the passive traffic calming measures and lines and signs improvements. Additionally, the project includes philosophy adapted by 'safe routes to schools' to provide a designated and safe crossing for school children, establishing pedestrian dominance along vulnerable routes.

10.2 Recommendations

The Active travel and connectivity improvements proposed throughout this scheme will significantly improve the sense of place within the town of Baylin. It further aims to enhance and optimise the surrounding environmental assets that have been neglected. The scheme proposals, incorporating traffic related improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles are envisaged to have no negative impact on the mobility of the surrounding transport network. It is thus the opinion of MWP that all transport related elements brought by the proposals result in a positive impact on the town and its surrounding network.

The Appropriate Assessment Screening report concluded that Natura 2000 sites within the zone of influence are not likely to be significantly affected by the proposed works and can therefore be screened out for further consideration for Appropriate Assessment.