

18 July 2023

Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Westmeath County Council

Westmeath County Council Local Authority Development - File Ref. LA(M)-137

Active Travel Upgrade Scheme- Phase 3 at Ardmore Road, Mullingar

Provision of a hard-surfaced shared footpath/cycling route, segregated from the vehicular carriageway on the northern and southern side of the Ardmore Road, provision of a controlled crossing point and the upgrading of public lighting along the route.

A Chathaoirligh is a Chomhairleoiri,

Planning Report in Accordance with Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

Project Background

The Council are in the process of improving the cycling and pedestrian infrastructure along the Ardmore Road. In this regard a number of Part 8 applications, to provide cycling and pedestrian permeability along this road and at the adjacent Saunders Bridge, have previously been approved with works completed for some sections.

This current proposal relates to a mid-section of the roadway situated at the eastern end of the Ardmore Road. Footpath and cycleway improvements are proposed to provide pedestrians and cyclists with a safe route along this road as an integral element of the overall scheme to provide safe facilities from Saunders Bridge to the Dublin Road and the Holy Family National School. This scheme is the third phase of the upgrade of Ardmore Road.

The proposed works comprise the provision of cycleway and footpaths over a distance of approximately 425 metres from the east of Ardmore Close to the entrance serving Ardmore Hills, as a continuation of Phase 1 and Phase 2 works which were completed by the Municipal District Mullingar Kinnegad (MDMK) in association with the development of Holy Family National School, Curraghmore. The Part 8 process which was completed in relation to Curraghmore school development required that necessary improvement works along Ardmore Road be carried out in accordance with an approved programme which included that a footpath and cycle track along the north side of Ardmore Road from Saunders Bridge to the school be provided.

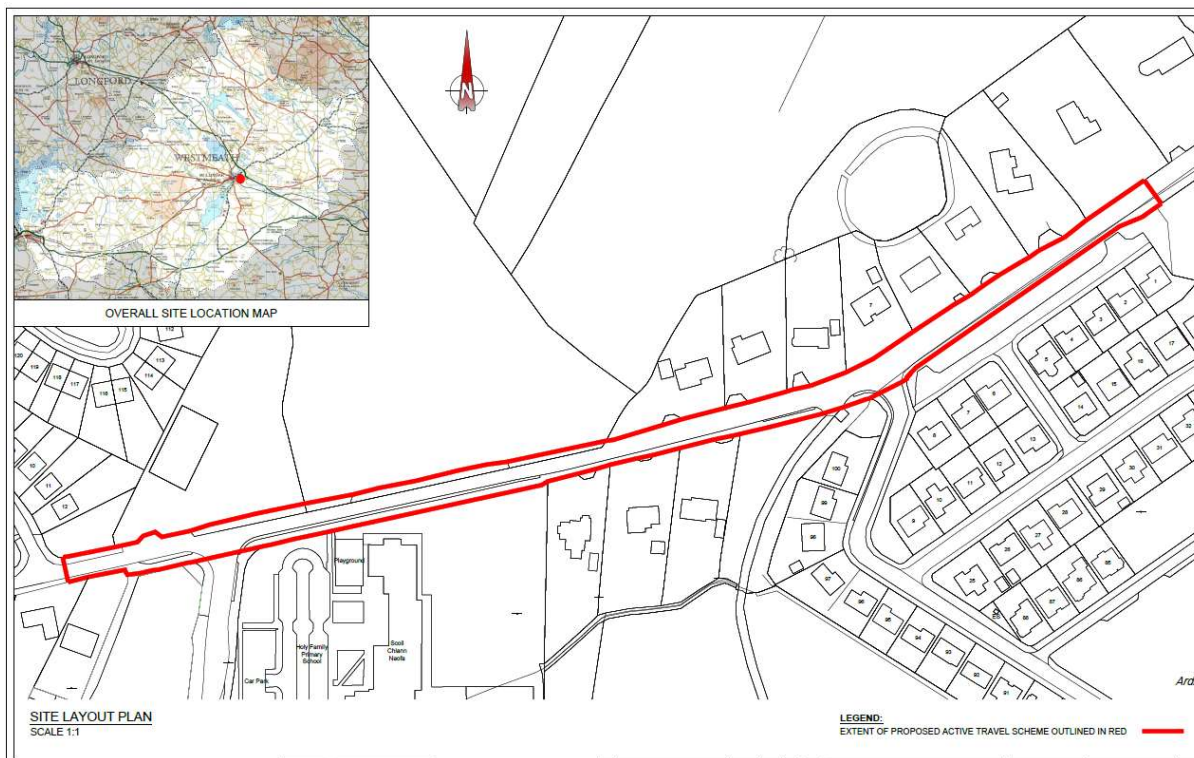
Phase 1 of the Ardmore Road Scheme comprised upgrading works (including pedestrian and cycle facilities on the south side of the road) from the Dublin Road to Curraghmore National School. As such, MDMK have indicated that it is necessary to further extend these works and continue in providing connectivity and the upgrading of existing road infrastructure provisions along the Ardmore Road to accommodate all modes of transport including pedestrians and cyclists, particularly considering recent developments (including Holy Family National School) which have intensified traffic movements along this road in recent years.

Phase 2 of the Ardmore Road Upgrading Scheme comprise the provision of cycleway and footpaths along Ardmore Road over approximately 872 metres and sited c.15 metres northeast of Saunders Bridge and c.70 metres southwest of Holy Family National School.

Section 1

1.0 Site Overview

The development works proposed are sited along the Ardmore Road, a local primary road, L-1133 which links the Dublin Road and Russellstown Road, southeast of Mullingar town in the townlands of Petitswood and Marlinstown. The works proposed extend along both the northern and southern sides of the Ardmore Road, over c.425 metres. The site extends from east of the entrance into Ardmore Close along the Ardmore Road in front of the recently constructed Holy Family National School and further east along several individual house plots and terminates at the residential estate of Ardmore Hills where the proposed works, if approved, will connect in with existing walking and cycling infrastructure. The adjoining land uses are residential, agricultural, and educational in character. Residential lands contain a mix of single house plots and residential estates.



Map 1: Site Location (Ardmore Road, Mullingar)

1.1 Origins of Proposal

This is Phase 3 of a programme of works to upgrade walking and cycling infrastructure along Ardmore Road.

1.2 Advertising and Referrals

A public notice in respect of this Part 8 was placed in the Westmeath Examiner and a site notice was also erected on the subject lands in accordance with legislative requirements. The application was referred to the following prescribed bodies and internal sections in Westmeath County Council:

Referrals:	Response Received
External Bodies	
Development Applications Unit (Natural & Built Heritage) Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	✓
An Taisce	
The Heritage Council	
Iarnród Éireann	
Railway Safety Commission	
Waterways Ireland	
Inland Fisheries Ireland	
Irish Water	
TII	✓
Internal Sections	
MDMK District Engineer	✓
Water Services Section	
Fire Services Section	

Environment Section	
NRDO – Project Office	
Road Design	

1.3 Consultation Process

This Part 8 was placed on public display during the period 15th May 2023 to 12th June 2023 (both dates inclusive) at the following locations:

- Consultation portal <http://consult.westmeathcoco.ie/en>
- Áras an Chontae, Mount Street, Mullingar.

Submissions were invited from the public up to and including Monday 26 June 2023 (both dates inclusive).

1.4 Description and extent of the development proposed

It is proposed to develop a hard-surfaced shared footpath/cycling route, segregated from the vehicular carriageway, which will require the widening of the roadway with the consequent removal of trees and culverting of a drain. The southern side of the site in front of the Holy Family National School and the three no. dwellings to the east have a shared cycle/footpath which will remain in its current form. The southern side of the site in front of the housing estate, Ardmore Hills, will be subject to works to widen the existing footpath to create a shared pedestrian/cycling route. A crossing point will be provided to the eastern end of the site to connect the north side and south side pedestrian/cycle paths.

The northern side of the site has no cycling or pedestrian infrastructure. It is proposed to develop a hard-surfaced shared footpath/cycling route, segregated from the vehicular carriageway on the northern side of the Ardmore Road. These works will require the widening of the roadway with consequent removal of field boundary trees and hedging together with the culverting of a drain.

The southern side of the site in front of the Holy Family National School and the three no. dwellings to the east has a shared cycle/footpath which will remain in its current form. The southern side of the site in front of a housing estate, Ardmore Hills, will be subject to works to widen the existing footpath to create a shared pedestrian/cycling route. A crossing point will be provided to the eastern end of the site to connect the north side and south side pedestrian/cycle paths.

The vehicular carriageway will have a 5.5m width in the vicinity of the Holy Family National School and 6m width in the remaining sections. Public lighting will be upgraded along the route.

The works will generally consist of the following:

- excavation of soils and subsoils
- disposal of surplus soil off site to an authorised waste facility
- culvert drain
- importation, placement and compaction of hardcore (crushed stone)
- installation of 50mm macadam surfacing
- ducting for and provision of public lighting
- tree removal
- plantings (new field boundaries will be marked with fencing and a compensatory hedge and tree line)

1.5 Documentation Included with Part 8 Proposal

- Newspaper Notice/Site Notice
- Project Particulars Statement
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report
- Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)
- Baseline Environmental Noise Survey Report 2023
- Site Location Map
- Site Layout encompassing project proposal and associated indicative details (4 no. Sheets).

1.6 Relevant Planning History

LA(M) 124: Provision of cycleway and footpaths along Ardmore Road which extend over approximately 872 metres on lands sited 15 metres east of Saunders Bridge, Mullingar and 70 metres west of Curraghmore National School. Works completed.

LA(M)104: Curraghmore National school, access road and associated infrastructure. Works completed.

LA(M) 108: Phase 1 upgrading of the Ardmore Road from the Dublin Road to the Curraghmore school site (800metres), with a 6m wide road carriageway and pedestrian and cycle facilities on the south side of the road. Works completed.

LA(M) 119: Pedestrian and cycleway bridge over the Royal Canal and Dublin to Sligo railway line adjacent to the north side of Saunders Bridge. Part 8 approval, however no works have commenced to date.

1.7 Policy Context

1.7.1 National & Regional Policy Context

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework 2018 (NPF)

The NPF seeks to reduce the dependence on the car as a mode of travel and enhance public health by way of encouraging and facilitating more active lifestyles and creating a more walkable and cycling friendly urban environment. It is a National Policy Objective to ensure the integration of safe and

convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments... (NPO 27).

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region (RSES) (2019-2031)

The RSES promotes healthy placemaking and recognises the importance of active travel measures to bring about behavioural changes and more sustainable transport use. In this regard it is recognised that the provision of cycleways can enhance areas, contributing to more attractive places and create opportunities to be physically active and reduce the negative consequences of car-based commuting.

It is a Regional Policy Objective that Local authorities seek to support the planned provision of easily accessible social, community, cultural and recreational facilities and ensure that all communities have access to a range of facilities that meet the needs of the communities they serve (RPO 9.14).

Climate Action Plan 2019

The Climate Action Plan is committed to achieving a net zero carbon energy systems objective for Irish society and in the process, create a resilient, vibrant and sustainable country. The expansion of walking, cycling and public transport is promoted to change the modal shift from the car and expand sustainable-travel measures.

Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020

This policy document sets out the necessary steps in promoting more sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport.

1.7.2 Local Policy Context

Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 (WCDP)

It is Council policy to develop walking and cycling routes in Mullingar (policy P-WC2), and to seek the provision and extension of comprehensive footpath links to town centres and schools thereby promoting permeability therein (policy P-WC4).

Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (Extended)(MLAP)

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the policies as set out under the MLAP.

Policy P-TM5 seeks *'to promote the development of walking and cycling in the Mullingar area. Cycling and walking are environmentally friendly, fuel efficient and healthy modes of transport, and their development is in line with the principles of sustainability'*.

Furthermore, P-TM6 seeks *'to ensure that the safety of road users, including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, will be a primary consideration in the design and/or improvement of roads...Cyclists and pedestrians are especially vulnerable in road accidents and new design must pay particular attention to securing their safety'*.

Policy P-FP7 of the Ardmore/Marlinstown Framework Plan as set out under the MLAP sets out policy *'to provide for the establishment of an integrated movement network serving all modes with connectivity to the town centre and adjoining areas'*.

1.8 Ecology

The proposed works are not located within any designated pNHA, NHA, SAC or SPA. It is Council policy 'to protect plant, animal, species and habitats which have been identified by the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Wildlife Act (1976) and (Amendment Act) 2000, and the Flora Protection Order S.I No. 94 of 1999' (policy P-NAT3 WCDP). The closest designated site to the subject site is Wooddown Bog SAC 2.5km to the northeast and Lough Ennell SAC and SPA is 3.6km to the southwest. It has been indicated as part of the Part 8 proposal that new field boundaries shall be planted with a compensatory native planting.

1.9 Archaeology & Architectural Heritage

The subject lands are not situated within any archaeological zone. The nearest recorded monument WD0119-077 a ringfort is sited 61m south of the Ardmore Road. The proposed development works are at a distance removed from this monument and, if permitted, would not negatively impact on their setting.

No comments on archaeology or architectural heritage were received as part of the statutory consultation process.

1.10 Infrastructure Design & Effective Assimilation into its Surroundings

The proposed scheme has been designed in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) (2019) in terms of cycle/pedestrian widths.

1.11 Road Safety & Sustainable Travel

It is indicated that the proposal is designed in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Road and Streets (2019) (DMURS).

There are no issues in relation to road safety associated with this Part 8 proposal (note District Engineer Report in this regard).

A framework requirement of the Ardmore/Marlinstown Framework Plan states that 'the area shall be pedestrian/cycle friendly'. It is considered that the development is in accordance with adopted policy in promoting sustainable transport modes and in encouraging the promotion of a modal shift, to walking and cycling.

1.12 Appropriate Assessment

Appropriate Assessment is a standard legal requirement for all plans and projects likely to have a significant impact on European sites i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA). The subject lands are not designated within a European Site. The nearest Natura 2000 site(s) are Lough Ennell SAC (Site Code: 000685) and Wooddown Bog SAC (Site Code: 002205), located a distance of circa 4.1km and 2.5km respectively from the proposed works. Lough Ennell SPA (Site Code 004044) and Lough Owel SAC (Site Code 000688) & SPA Site Code (004047) are located a distance of circa 4.1-5.1km respectively from the project works.

The proposed scheme has undergone an Appropriate Assessment screening in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. Having regard to the Appropriate Assessment Screening prepared in association with proposed development and given the nature, type, scale and location of the proposed

works within a built-up urban area, remote from any Natura 2000 site(s). It is considered that the proposed development, including construction stage works, either in combination or alone, will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 sites having regard to their conservation objectives. It is therefore concluded that progression to the second stage, a full Appropriate Assessment and accompanying Natura Impact Statement are not required.

Having considered the contents of the Screening for Appropriate Assessment report together the scale and nature of the development, it is considered that the proposed development, will not give rise to significant adverse direct, indirect, or secondary impacts on the integrity of any Natura 2000 site(s) having regard to their conservation objectives. The development, individually or in combination with another plan or project, is not likely to have a significant effect on a European site.

1.13 Environmental Impact Assessment

The development works do not fall within the scope of the Infrastructure project types prescribed. In this regard and having considered the appropriate criteria, the project is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental impacts and an Environmental Impact Assessment Report for this development is not required.

Section 2

2.0 Internal Section Reports and Prescribed Bodies Submissions

2.1 Internal Sections Reports Received

District Engineer, Mullingar Kinnegad Municipal District

No objection, subject to the development being carried out in accordance with Part 8 documentation.

2.2 Prescribed Bodies Reports Received

Development Applications Unit, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DAU)

The Department notes that the proposed development site includes a field hedgerow and drainage ditch along the northern site boundary, which support habitat such as frog and wild birds, which are protected under the Wildlife Act 1976. In this context, it is recommended that works to the drainage ditch should not be carried out at times when frog spawn or tadpoles are likely to be present (January to July inclusive) or when frogs would be hibernating within the drain (November to January inclusive).

It is recommended that new hedgerow of equal length should be established in close proximity to any hedge lines removed as compensatory habitat, with suggestions provided for a number of native species to be planted.

Chief Executive Response

The content of the submission from the Department is acknowledged.

The Council will continue to comply with all legislative requirements as set out under National and European legislation, including the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Wildlife Act (1976-2018) in ensuring the protective status of species (including common frog and wild birds) and promoting biodiversity.

In terms of landscaping, it is considered that all landscaping and planting along the road should be of indigenous species.

It is considered that the proposed works are consistent with Council policy *'to protect plant, animal, species and habitats which have been identified by the Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Wildlife Act (1976) and (Amendment Act) 2000, and the Flora Protection Order S.I No. 94 of 1999 (policy P-NAT3 WCDP)*, subject to the inclusion of the recommendations below:

Chief Executive's Recommendation

It is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed, subject to the following;

1. A Landscaping Plan shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, prior to the commencement of development.

The scheme shall:

- Include a survey of existing hedgerow and trees along the existing roadside boundaries associated with the proposed works.
 - Indicate proposals to remove/replace any hedgerow, together with proposals for supplementary planting to include planting of appropriate native trees and hedgerow together with the provision of an associated grass margin (where achievable). A new hedgerow of equal length should be established, as compensatory habitat, in close proximity to any hedge lines removed.
 - Any additional planting to comprise of native trees and hedgerow including the following: (Prunus spinosa), whitethorn (Crataegus monogyna), ash (Fraxinus excelsior), crab apple (Malus sylvestris), downy birch (Betula pubescens), guelder rose (Viburnum opulus), hazel (Corylus avellana), holly (Ilex aquifolium), pendunculate oak (Quercus robur), rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), spindle (Euonymus europaeus), whitebeam (Sorbus aria), wild cherry (Prunus avium), elm (Ulmus glabra).
2. Any works to the existing drainage ditch shall be carried out between the months of August to October to avoid harmful effects on the common frog.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)

In the case of this application, Transport Infrastructure Ireland has indicated that they have no observations to make.

Chief Executive Response

The acknowledgement of the Part 8 proposal by TII is noted.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

It is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

Section 3

3.0 Public Observations/Submissions Received

2 (no.) number public submissions were received during the statutory public consultation period. A synopsis of the issues raised within these submissions and the Chief Executive's response to same is set out in Section 3.1 below.

3.1 Summary of submissions and subsequent response from the Chief Executive to each submission received.

Submission 1: Shane Bell

This submission welcomes the proposed Phase 3 footpath and cycle upgrade along the Ardmore Road. Endorses the use of development contributions to improve both safety and access to zoned and serviced lands for the whole community.

Chief Executive Response (Submission 1)

The support afforded to this Part 8 is acknowledged and welcomed.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Having regard to the issues raised above, it is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

Submission 2: Eamonn Guilfoyle

Reference is made to 'The Traffic Management Guidelines' document published by the Department of Transport, Department of Environment, and the Dublin Transportation Office and in particular the advice contained therein which discourages the use of ramps unless no other suitable measure can be used.

It is stated that the existing ramps which are constructed on the Ardmore Road fail to control the speed of traffic within prescribed speed limits and within the vicinity of the Holy Family Primary School. Concern is raised that the ramps cause significant noise nuisance to residents in the area when traversed by cars and articulated trucks. Reference is made to the volume of traffic using the Ardmore Road as a by-pass road which has increased significantly, resulting in the ramp at the entrance to Ardmore Hills becoming a significant cause of noise nuisance. It is suggested that consideration should be given to the use of alternative traffic calming measures in place of ramps on the Ardmore Road, taking cognisance of the living conditions of local residents.

Chief Executive Response (Submission 2)

The content of the submission is noted. It should be noted that the works proposed constitute active travel measures to facilitate and promote a modal shift from the private car to pedestrian/cycle movement thereby reducing the extent of car traffic and positively contributing to the facilities and amenities of the area.

Further, no additional ramps are proposed as part of this application.

The control of traffic speeds and road use in the area is considered an operational issue, outside the remit of the Part 8 proposal. Such matters are assessed on an ongoing basis by the District.

Chief Executive's Recommendation

Having regard to the issues raised above, it is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

Section 4

4.0 Conclusion

It is considered that the development works proposed will provide for an improvement of traffic, pedestrian, and cyclist safety. The proposal will provide enhanced active travel measures which are considered necessary to bring about behavioural changes and more sustainable transport use. In this regard it is considered that the provision of this cycle and pedestrian infrastructure, serving existing residential and school developments, will enhance the area and contribute to a more attractive neighbourhood by creating opportunities to be physically active and reducing car-based commuting.

Having regard to the plans and particulars submitted as part of this Part 8 application and the content of submissions received, subject to the recommendations set out above, it is considered that the proposed development:

- would not impact negatively on natural or architectural heritage
- would not seriously injure the amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity
- would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience.

Accordingly, having considered the above, together with submissions received in association with the development proposal, it is considered that the development is consistent with national, regional and local (Mullingar Local Area Plan 2014-2020 (as extended)) policy and as such is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

4.1 Chief Executive Recommendation

It is considered that the proposed development, is consistent with the provisions of the Mullingar Local Area Plan, and, as such, is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the development proceeds in accordance with the scheme documentation, except as may otherwise be necessary to comply with the following requirements:

1. A Landscaping Plan shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, prior to the commencement of development.

The scheme shall:

- Include a survey of existing hedgerow and trees along the existing roadside boundaries associated with the proposed works.

- Indicate proposals to remove/replace any hedgerow, together with proposals for supplementary planting to include planting of appropriate native trees and hedgerow together with the provision of an associated grass margin (where achievable). A new hedgerow of equal length should be established, as compensatory habitat, in close proximity to any hedge lines removed.
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2. Any works to the existing drainage ditch shall be carried out between the months of August to October to avoid harmful effects on the common frog.

Is mise le meas,



Pat Gallagher

Príomh Fheidhmeannach