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## R446 and R389 Kilbeggan Active Travel Infrastructure

### Report to support Part 8 Planning Application

Westmeath County Council  
Transportation Department (Active Travel)  
County Buildings, Mullingar Co Westmeath, N91 FH4N.

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## Introduction

Westmeath County Council (Transportation - Active Travel) propose works to upgrade the R446 Dublin Road together with its junction with the R389 Tullamore Road, Kilbeggan to better provide for active travel modes (cycling and walking). The proposed development is to be considered under Part XI of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001-2023.

## Application

The application consists of this “Report to support Part 8 Planning Application” together with the following documents and drawings:

- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (*ORS, 2023*)
- Environment Impact Assessment Screening Report (*ORS, 2023*)
- Traffic Modelling Report (*ORS, 2023*)

Drawing No.	Drawing Title
220379-ORS-ZZ-00-TII-001 Rev P01	Site Location Map & Site Layout Plan
220379-ORS-ZZ-00-TII-002 Rev P01	Site Layout Plan - R389/R466/ Dublin Road Junction
220379-ORS-ZZ-00-TII-003 Rev P01	Site Layout Plan - Dublin Road
220379-ORS-ZZ-00-TII-1100 Rev P01	Typical Kerbs, Footways & Paved Areas Details

## Site Location and Context

The Mercy Secondary School is currently constructing a new school premises, in Kilbeggan on the R446 (Dublin Road), which is nearing completion. As part of the project provision is being made for walking and cycling infrastructure, including the construction of a 4m shared pedestrian/cycle facility along the R446. This takes in the frontage of the school site and back along the R446 towards town up to the existing speed limit gateway.

Westmeath County Council are proposing to continue these pedestrian/cycle facilities back along the R446 to the junction with the R389 Tullamore Road (approximate length of 520m). In addition, WCC are proposing to upgrade the R446/R389 junction layout to provide for pedestrian and cyclist friendly measures. The reconfiguration of the junction will extend down to Harbour Road and St Mary’s Avenue junctions on the Tullamore Road. The proposed

route passes Scoil an Chlochair National School which is in the current *Safe Routes to School* (SRTS) Programme and a delivery plan is currently being prepared by An Taisce under the Green Schools Programme.

The extent of the site is outlined in red on the site plan below, the new school site nearing completion is highlighted orange and the cycle and pedestrian facilities recently provided as part of the school development are outlined in blue.

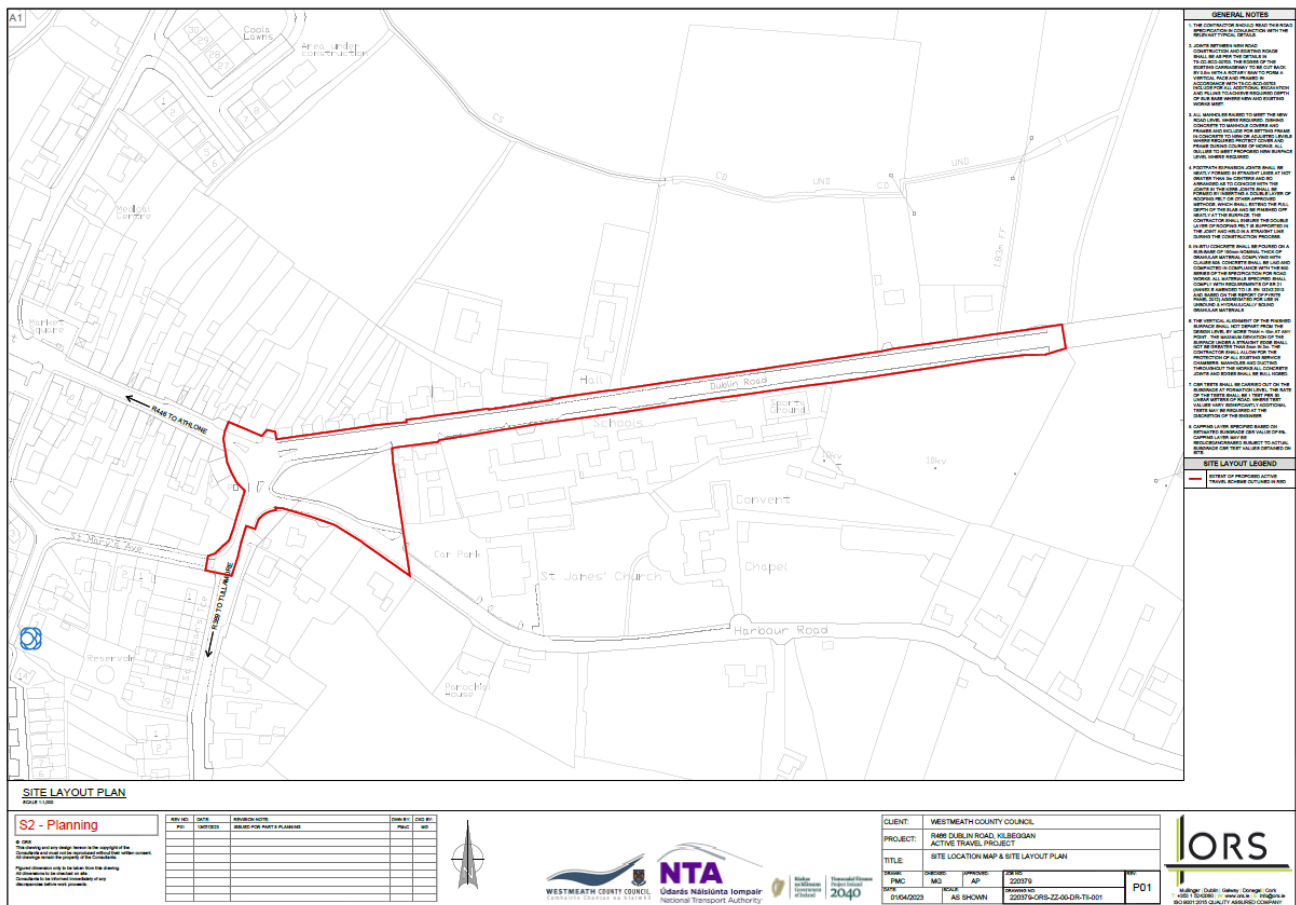


Figure 1: Location Map of proposal

The site is contained within the road boundaries along the R466, the road boundaries of the R389 down to its junction with St. Mary’s Avenue, the green space to the east of this junction and the adjacent Harbour Road to the south side of the green space (L1102). The green space is primarily grassed with a number of mature specimen trees. Pathways cross over the green space with a statue, commemorative plaques, cycle racks, raised flower bed, tables and seating provided within.

The site abuts a mixture of land uses with residential, commercial, open space and education uses at the western end of the site and agricultural, school playing fields and one-off dwellings at its eastern end. The western end of the site abuts a number of buildings that are included in the Record of Protected Structures, including “The Crescent” (RPS ref. no.: 038-046) and terraced houses along the northern side of the R446 (RPS ref. no.s: 038-049; 038-050; and 038-051). The western end of the site is contained within the town’s Architectural Conservation Area and also falls within an area designated as a Zone of Archaeological Potential.

### **Proposed Development**

It is proposed to provide a 4m wide shared pedestrian/cyclist footpath on the south side of the R446, with a landscape buffer to the carriageway (this buffer will be included in the detailed design drawings), to join with the works currently being undertaken by contractors for the new Mercy Secondary School to the east. This will include for a reduction in the width of the roadway to 6m and the reallocation and regularisation of street parking.

On the north side of the R446 it is proposed to provide a minimum 1.8m wide footpath for the full length of the scheme. A landscape buffer will also be provided between the footway and vehicular carriageway. Dedicated on street parking is to be provided in certain locations (over approx. 115m) to regularise the current practice of parking vehicles on the footpath.

In the vicinity of Scoil An Chlochair a school zone area is to be marked. Raised tables are proposed at either end of the zone which will form an entrance gateway and in turn control traffic speed.

It is also proposed to upgrade the junction of the R446 and R389 to improve the movement, safety and accessibility of pedestrians and cyclists across the junction. The existing roundabout arrangement is proposed to be upgraded to a priority junction. In light of traffic survey data the priority route will run from the R446 Main Street to the R389 Tullamore Road. Raised table zebra crossings are to be installed on the three main arms of the junction together with an uncontrolled pedestrian crossing on its northern arm. The works at the junction will, in addition, facilitate increased areas for the provision of improved public realm elements (for example seating, art works and planting beds).

The scheme will continue along the Tullamore Road to the junctions with Harbour Road on the east side and St Mary's Avenue on the west. On the two side roads it is proposed to undertake junction tightening works together with raised table uncontrolled pedestrian crossings.

The works will generally consist of the following:

- Excavation of bituminous road surface, concrete footpath, soils and subsoils
- Disposal of surplus Construction and Demolition waste and soil off site to an authorised waste facility
- Drainage works
- Importation, placement and compaction of hardcore (crushed stone)
- Installation of macadam surfacing and concrete/macadam footpaths
- Ducting for and provision of public lighting
- Localised landscaping works
- Noise and general construction disturbance during daytime hours
- Works duration expected to be approximately 6 months.

## Relevant Planning History

- 18/6278      The Board of Management - Mean Scoil Clochair Kilbeggan (Mercy Secondary School) construction of a two storey, 650 pupil, post-primary school (c. 8300sqm) - including general teaching and administration rooms, a PE Hall with fitness suites, a Special Needs Unit, external stores, ESB substation, 58 staff car park spaces, 70 cycle parking spaces, bus and car set down and pick up facilities, 2 no. basketball courts, hard and grass play areas, soft landscaping, new vehicular and pedestrian site entrance and exit points and associated site development works. The proposed development also includes the following works outside the site boundary: a new footpath and cycle lane along R446 road, new street light posts, connection to existing foul sewer network, traffic calming measures including median islands, new road markings and alteration to existing road markings.  
CONDITIONAL
- 17/6082      The Board of Management Mean Scoil Clochair Kilbeggan  
The construction of a two storey 650 pupil post primary school(c. 8300sqm) - including general teaching and administration rooms, a PE Hall with fitness suites, a Special Needs Unit, external stores, ESB substation, 58 staff car park spaces, 70 cycle parking spaces, bus and car set down and pick up facilities, 2 no basketball courts, hard and grass play areas, soft landscaping, new vehicular and pedestrian site entrance and exit points and associated site development works, The proposed development also includes the following works outside the site boundary: a new footpath and cycle lane along R446 road, new street light posts, connection to existing foul sewer network via rising main, traffic calming measures including median islands, new road

LA(M)113 – 2017  
Kilbeggan Main Street Enhancement Works

## **Policy Context**

### **National Policy Context**

#### **Project Ireland 2040**

Project Ireland 2040 is a strategy set up by the Irish Government to make Ireland better for everyone and to build a more resilient and sustainable future. The strategy ensures the alignment of investment plans with the stated National Strategic Outcomes for 2040 in a considered, cohesive and defined manner. The National Planning Framework and the National Development Plan 2021-2030 combine to form Project Ireland 2040.

#### **National Planning Framework**

The National Planning Framework (NPF), part of Project Ireland 2040, is the Government's high-level strategic plan for shaping future growth and development. It identifies nine strategic outcomes which include inter alia; compact growth, sustainable mobility and transition to a low carbon and climate resilient society.

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).

The NPF seeks to reduce the dependence on the car as a mode of travel and enhance public health by encouraging and facilitating more active lifestyles by creating a more walkable and cycling friendly urban environment. The National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and National Policy Objectives (NPOs) which are particularly relevant to the proposed project are as follows:



- NPO 4: Ensure the creation of attractive, liveable, well designed, high quality urban places that are home to diverse and integrated communities that enjoy a high quality of life and well-being.
- NPO 26: Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, though integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy.
- NPO 27: 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 and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.
- NPO 28: Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.
- NPO 62: Identify and strengthen the value of greenbelts and green spaces at a regional and city scale, to enable enhanced connectivity to wider strategic networks, prevent coalescence of settlements and to allow for the long-term strategic expansion of urban areas.
- NPO 64: Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.
- NPO 65: Promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations through national planning guidance and Noise Action Plans.

The project supports the NPF aims to promote walking and cycling and provide for convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages.

### **Climate Action Plan 2023**

The Climate Action Plan 2023, published by the Government of Ireland, sets out a roadmap for taking decisive action to halve Carbon emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government. The Plan sets out how Ireland can accelerate the actions that are required to respond to the climate crisis, putting climate solutions at the centre of Ireland’s social and economic development.

The transport network in Ireland will play a key role in reaching the goals set out in this plan. It sets out to transform how we travel and has a goal to reduce transport emissions by 50% by 2030 by:

- changing the way we use our road space;
- reducing the total distance driven across all car journeys by 20%;
- for walking, cycling and public transport to account for 50% of our journeys;
- ensuring that nearly 1 in 3 private cars will be an Electric Vehicle;
- increase walking and cycling networks;
- ensuring that 70% of people in rural Ireland will have buses that provide at least 3 trips to the nearby town daily by 2030.

Investments in walking, cycling and public transport will promote a modal shift reducing the level of private car use in the country and thereby assist in reducing greenhouse emissions.

### **National Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSMP) and Action Plan 2022-2025**

In April 2022, the Department of Transport (DT) published the “National Sustainable Mobility Policy” (NSMP) and the supporting “NSMP Action Plan 2022-2025”. These documents align with the existing Project Ireland 2040 Framework.

The NSMP sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and

public transport journeys to help Ireland meet its climate obligations. It is accompanied by an action plan to 2025 which contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible, efficient alternatives to car journeys. It also includes demand management and behavioural change measures to manage daily travel demand more efficiently and to reduce the journeys taken by private car.

The policy aims to deliver at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030 and a 10% reduction in the number of kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars.

### **National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland**

The Department of Transport (DT) has published the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI). NIFTI is the DT's framework for prioritising future investment in the land transport network to support the delivery of the National Strategic Outcomes. Through our investment we will contribute to Ireland's decarbonisation efforts, support vibrant and successful communities, deliver a high-performing transport system, and promote a strong and balanced economy.

The Framework establishes key principles and priorities to guide the allocation of investment to best develop and manage Ireland's land transport network. It outlines that for a given transport problem the modal hierarchy to address is:

1. Active Travel;
2. Public Transport;
3. Private Vehicles.

And It also outlines the intervention hierarchy as being:

1. Maintain;
2. Optimise;
3. Improve;
4. New.

### **CycleConnects: Ireland's Cycle Network Programme (National Transport Authority (NTA)) (draft plan – consultation ended on 18.11.2022)**

CycleConnects: Ireland's Cycle Network is a draft plan developed by AECOM on behalf of the NTA. The plan aims to improve sustainable travel by providing the potential for more trips on a safe, accessible and convenient cycling network, connecting more people to more places.

The draft plan outlines a National Plan comprising 22 individual cycle networks in each respective county. The plan does not prescribe any cycle infrastructure for the routes presented but mainly serves to illustrate the potential cycle connections between all major towns and cities outside the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

Indicative proposals for cycling links in key cities, towns and villages in each county are included in the plan, in addition to connections between the larger towns, villages and settlements. The plan also incorporates existing and planned cycle routes such as greenways and blueways.

The draft plan for Mullingar shows an Urban Secondary route to run along the length of Ardmore Road.

### **National Cycle Network (Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)) (draft plan – consultation ended on 07.06.2022)**

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) invited views on the development of a new National Cycle Network (NCN). The NCN is a planned core cycle network of 3,500km to criss-cross the country, connecting more than 200 villages, towns and cities. The network will include cycling links to transport hubs, education centres, employment centres, leisure and tourist destinations, and support “last mile” bicycle deliveries.

Mullingar contains elements of the proposed network with some facilities already in place.

### **National Cycle Manual (NTA, 2011)**

The Manual indicates that the “cycling offer” within urban areas must be improved to encourage more people to cycle, including those who are risk-averse. It's aim is to provide for two abreast cycling in a stress free and safe environment. It embraces the *Principles of Sustainable Safety* as this will offer a safe traffic environment for all road users including

cyclists. It offers guidance on integrating the bike in the design of urban areas.

The Manual is currently under review.

### **Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets**

The Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) is a mandatory strategy to be used to address street design within urban areas. It sets out an integrated street design approach which: is Influenced by the type of place in which the street is located; and balances the needs of all users.

### **Get Ireland Active – The National Physical Activity Plan**

Healthy Ireland, A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025 (Department of Health, 2013) is the national framework for whole of Government and whole of society to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Ireland. The National Physical Activity Plan contributes to the Framework.

The Plan includes actions to develop, promote and support active travel modes and ensure that an active travel network is delivered.

### **Get Ireland Walking**

Get Ireland Walking is a national initiative that aims to maximise the number of people participating in walking - for health, wellbeing and fitness - throughout Ireland.

### **Permeability: A Best Practice Guide (NTA)**

This publication from the National Transport Authority (NTA) aims to encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport, ensuring that the wider considerations of mode choice are addressed in the land use planning process. This guide strives to maximise the potential in sustainably meeting the mobility needs of people in their day-to-day routines by proper integration at the land use planning stage.

As a guidance note, the NTA provides a basis for the delivery of sustainable mode choices in existing built-up areas by promoting permeability for pedestrians and cyclists, whilst also addressing the legacy of severance inherent in the recent expansions of Irish towns and cities. Characteristics of a permeable environment are highlighted as:

- Interconnected pedestrian and cycle street network.

- Absence of high walls and fences segregating housing areas and local/district centres.
- Absence of cul-de-sacs for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Secure, well-lit, overlooked pedestrian and cycle links between housing areas and between housing and local/district centres.

### **UN Convention for the Rights of People with Disabilities**

In March 2019, Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. Article 9 of the ‘UNCPRD’ includes the right to transport and creating an accessible end to end journey, with the user focus central to this approach.

*To enable persons with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.*

*These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility, shall apply to, inter alia:*

*a) Buildings, roads, transportation and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces.*

*b) Information, communications and other services, including electronic services and emergency services.*

This Article enshrines the right to transport within Irish legislation. The focus on Usability and Accessibility has implications and opportunities across transport planning and provision.

### **Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities**

This set of updated standards include a default policy for car parking provision to be minimised, substantially reduced or wholly eliminated in highly accessible areas; and a significant uptake in the quantity and quality of cycle parking provision and design.

### **Regional Policy Context**

#### **Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) (2019-2031)**

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) is a strategic plan and investment framework to shape future growth and to better manage regional planning and economic

development throughout the Region. It identifies regional assets, opportunities and pressures and provides appropriate policy responses in the form of Regional Policy Objectives.

Throughout the strategy there are 3 cross cutting key principles;

- **Healthy Placemaking** - To promote people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit, invest and study in.
- **Climate Action** - The need to enhance climate resilience and to accelerate a transition to a low carbon society recognising the role of natural capital and ecosystem services in achieving this.
- **Economic Opportunity** - To create the right conditions and opportunities for the Region to realise sustainable economic growth and quality jobs that ensure a good living standard for all.

The RSES promotes healthy placemaking and people's quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit, and invest in, and focus on placemaking to create attractive and sustainable communities to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling.

Mullingar is designated as a 'key town' within the RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region. The proposed development is consistent with the RSES which contains the following Regional Strategic Outcomes (RSO) and the following Regional Policy Objectives (RPO):

- **RSO 4: Healthy Communities:** Protect and enhance the quality of our built and natural environment to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling, ensure clean air and water for all and quality healthcare and services that support human health. (NSO 10)
- **RSO 6: Integrated Transport and Land Use:** Promote best use of Transport Infrastructure, existing and planned, and promote sustainable and active modes of travel to ensure the proper integration of transportation and land use planning. (NSO 2, 6, 8,9)
- **RSO 9: Support the Transition to Low Carbon and Clean Energy:** Pursue climate mitigation in line with global and national targets and harness the potential for a more distributed renewables - focussed energy system to support the transition to a low carbon economy by 2050. (NSO 8, 9)

- **RPO 4.64** Support Mullingar’s role as a tourism hub having regard to its accessibility to key tourist destinations in the Region including proximity to natural amenities and recreational opportunities including the Galway to Dublin Greenway. The development proposed will further complement existing greenway trails within the town and provide an attractive recreation hub which will benefit both the local community, tourists and visitors.
- **RPO 7.24:** Promote the development of a sustainable Strategic Greenway Network of national and regional routes, with a number of high capacity flagship routes that can be extended and /or linked with local greenways and other cycling and walking infrastructure, notwithstanding that capacity of a greenway is limited to what is ecologically sustainable.
- **RPO 9.14:** Local authorities shall 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.

The following guiding principles are outlined in relation to the Integration of Land Use and Transport:

- The management of space in town and village centres should deliver a high level of priority and permeability for walking, cycling and public transport modes to create accessible, attractive, vibrant and safe, places to work, live, shop and engage in community life. Accessibility by car does need to be provided for, but in a manner, which complements the alternative available modes. Local traffic management and the location / management of destination car parking should be carefully provided.

## **Local Policy Context**

### **Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 (WCDP)**

#### ***2.19 Core Strategy Policies and Objectives***

- CPO 2.16** Promote the integration of land use and transportation policies and to prioritise provision for cycling and walking travel modes and the strengthening of public transport.



### ***2.7.1 Settlement Hierarchy for Westmeath 2021-2027***

Kilbeggan is identified as a self sustaining growth town in the settlement hierarchy “with a moderate level of jobs and services – includes sub-county market towns and commuter towns with good transport links and capacity for continued commensurate growth to become more self-sustaining.

### ***4.8 Creating Sustainable Neighbourhoods:***

The creation of sustainable neighbourhoods play an important role in quality of life factors and foster a wider sense of community. Creating successful urban neighbourhoods to support sustainable communities requires the efficient use of land and sustainable densities to enable viable provision of the necessary range of facilities, services and good public transport connections – all of which should be within walking distance of residents and workers and of a high-quality urban design to create places where people will want to live.

### ***Sustainable Communities Policy Objectives***

**CPO 4.1** Support sustainable transport infrastructure, by developing mixed use schemes, higher densities close to public transport hubs, safe walking routes in developments, promoting alternative modes of transport and reduce the need to travel.

**CPO 4.2** Support and promote the development of socially inclusive, sustainable communities in the County and seek to ensure that all citizens enjoy optimal health and well-being along with associated mental health supports and youth services.

### ***7.44 Healthy Placemaking***

A key element of healthy placemaking is the need to ensure alternatives to the car in the design of streets and public spaces and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking as active transport modes. The provision of high-quality public transport, greenways and cycleways can enhance areas, contributing to more attractive places and creating opportunities to be physically active and reduce the necessity for car-based commuting.

**CPO 7.6** Promote the development of healthy and attractive places by ensuring:

- Good urban design principles are integrated into the layout and design of

new development. Future development prioritises the need for people to be physically active in their daily lives and promote walking and cycling in the design of streets and public spaces.

- New schools and workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks.
- The provision of open space considers different types of recreation and amenity uses with connectivity by way of safe, secure walking and cycling routes.
- Developments are planned for on a multi-functional basis incorporating ecosystem services, climate change measures, Green Infrastructure and key landscape features in their design.

### ***8.3.2 Kilbeggan***

The County Development Plan outlines that the provision of walks and links to the town centre is imperative and further that the placemaking strategy for the town should be focused on, *inter alia*, “Development of safe and secure pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure links to key community services, schools, amenities and local attractions, so to enhance pedestrian and cycle permeability” and “Street Enhancements works along with additional street furniture and tree planting”.

**CPO 8.58** Promote cycling and walking within the community through the implementation of a walking/cycling strategy and improved walking/cycling infrastructure within the town, its hinterlands and at areas of interest and attractions.

The plan further continues that the designation of Kilbeggan town centre as an Architectural Conservation Area is to protect its character. Policies aim to promote enhance and protect archaeological and built heritage of the town.

**CPO 8.79** Promote and enhance existing archaeological, built and natural heritage elements associated with Kilbeggan and ensure their protection.

### ***Transport Infrastructure and Energy – Transport Policies***

It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council to:

**CPO 10.1** Promote and deliver a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system

with ease of movement throughout County Westmeath by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of road, bus, rail, cycling and pedestrian facilities.

**CPO 10.2** Support the development of a low carbon transport system by continuing to promote modal shift from private car use towards increased use of more sustainable forms of transport such as cycling, walking and public transport.

**CPO 10.3** Support the implementation of the following national and regional transport policies as they apply to Westmeath:

- The National Planning Framework
- The RSES for the Eastern and Midland Region
- Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS)
- Spatial Planning and National Roads - Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2012
- National Cycling Policy Framework and National Cycle Manual
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways, 2018.
- Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022.

The Council also supports the implementation of sustainable transport solutions.

**CPO 10.4** Seek to ensure primacy for transport options that provide for unit reductions in carbon emissions. This can most effectively be done by promoting public transport, walking and cycling, and by actively seeking to reduce car use in circumstances where alternative options are available.

#### ***10.3.12 Integration of Land Use Planning and Transportation***

The integration of land use and transportation is a fundamental principle of the national policy

document *Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future, 2009 - 2020* which will inform policies and objectives in this Plan. By shaping the pattern of development and influencing the location, scale, density, design and mix of land-uses, the integration of land-use and transportation can help reduce the need to travel and facilitate sustainable urban development.

The Plan promotes an integrated approach to land-use and transportation which aligns with the Core Strategy and directs future development into existing towns and settlements within Westmeath in order to reduce car dependency. The Plan supports the creation of compact urban growth, consolidation of existing settlements and prioritisation of the development of brownfield lands across the settlement hierarchy which in turn will encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking as viable alternatives to the private car. Furthermore, allowing higher density development to occur along public transport corridors increases the number of people within the walking catchment of the public transport service, which in turn increases the patronage of the service, and leads to an increase in its financial and economic viability and in turn a positive environmental impact.

#### ***10.4.1 Walking and Cycling***

Walking and cycling are the most sustainable modes of transport and are key components to movement and accessibility in urban and inter-urban areas. Benefits accruing for both the environment and population, include reducing air and noise pollution and traffic congestion as well as contributing to healthy and more active lifestyles. Encouraging and promoting walking and cycling as a sustainable mode of transport and moving away from reliance on the private car will depend on providing well connected and integrated pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. Pedestrian and cycle facilities will be most successful where they form a coherent network, place an emphasis on safety, directly serve the main areas where people wish to travel, provide priority over vehicular traffic at junctions, are free from obstructions and have adequate public lighting where considered appropriate.

#### ***Infrastructure and Mobility Policy Objectives - Walking and Cycling***

It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council to:

**CPO 10.11** Promote walking and cycling as efficient, healthy and environmentally friendly modes of transport by securing the development of a network of direct,

comfortable, convenient and safe cycle routes and footpaths, particularly in urban areas and in the vicinity of schools.

- CPO 10.12** Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to stations and other public transport interchanges and request Iarnród Éireann to provide accommodation for bicycles on inter-city and commuter trains.
- CPO 10.13** Design pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the National Cycle Manual, the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and international best practice.
- CPO 10.14** Encourage and seek sustainable transport movement at the earliest design stage of development proposals, to ensure accessibility by all modes of transport and all sections of society and promote the provision of parking space for bicycles in development schemes.
- CPO 10.15** Improve the streetscape environment for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with special mobility needs by providing facilities to enhance safety and convenience, including separation for pedestrian infrastructure from vehicular traffic.
- CPO 10.16** Provide better sign posting and public lighting where considered appropriate and ensure that the upgrading of roads will not impact negatively on the safety and perceived safety of cyclists.
- CPO 10.17** Work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.
- CPO 10.30** Continue to work with the relevant transport providers, agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the integration of active travel (walking, cycling etc.) with public transport, thereby making it easier for people to access and use the public transport system.

### ***10.6 Mobility Management Plans***

Mobility planning by business, educational facilities and institutions that have high numbers of employees is a way of promoting sustainable means of access, reducing traffic congestion in urban areas and making more efficient use of land by reducing the need for car parking. It is Council policy to promote the use of mobility management and travel plans to bring about behaviour change and more sustainable transport use and the achievement of reduced car dependency.

Mobility management plans will be required to accompany planning applications for significant new developments or trip intensive developments. Mobility management plans must address:

- The need to provide adequate, affordable and sustainable means of access for employees, visitors and others (e.g. students).
- The need to promote and support alternative means of transport to the private car, i.e. public transport, cycling, walking.
- The need to minimise the impact of traffic and parking generated by the business, educational facility or institution in the surrounding areas.
- The need to manage on-site parking (if any is to be provided).

### ***10.7 Car Parking***

The management of parking in the County is important to its efficient economic development. Providing for additional parking in towns encourages further use of private cars and makes public transport a less attractive or viable option. Access to the town centre is essential for the successful operation of business. There is a balance to be achieved between facilitating necessary parking in the short term, and the overall objective, of having improved public transport as a viable alternative and as that becomes available of discouraging use of private cars. That can only be achieved in the medium term. In this regard, it is Council policy that a reduced car parking requirement will operate in both Mullingar and Athlone town centres, in order to encourage the establishment and the expansion of small businesses in these towns. Car parking standards will also be reviewed in Town Centres to reflect the proposed modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public

transport, cycling and walking.

### *Transport and Infrastructure Policy Objectives – Parking*

It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council to:

- CPO 10.65** Allow for the reduction in car parking standards in suitable locations in order to encourage a modal shift away from the private car to more sustainable forms of transport, such as public transport, cycling and walking.
- CPO 10.66** Manage on-street and off-street car-parking to accommodate longer term parking in less convenient and under-utilised off street car parks.
- CPO 10.67** Facilitate and support purpose built off-street car parks including multi-storey carparks, in preference to on-street parking.
- CPO 10.68** Ensure that applications for surface car parking are accompanied by landscaping proposals.
- CPO 10.69** Seek and promote the provision of Aged Friendly parking arrangements and further provide for the improvement of parking arrangements for people with disabilities.

### *10.8 Bicycle Parking Facilities*

Cycling is becoming increasingly recognised for the contribution it provides as a sustainable and healthy form of transport for work, education and leisure trips within and around the County. Provision of secure cycle parking facilities is essential for supporting the promotion and development of cycling as a more sustainable mode of transport. A lack of appropriate cycle parking facilities is often cited as a barrier to cycling and cycle ownership and could be a constraint on the future growth of cycling. In that regard, high quality secure cycle parking at origins and destinations is considered to be a key element of any strategy aimed at encouraging cycling. High quality cycle parking should be regarded as an integral part of any new development.

- CPO 16.25** New development proposals should be fully permeable for walking and cycling and the retrospective implementation of walking and cycling facilities should be undertaken where practicable in existing neighbourhoods, in order to give

competitive advantage to these modes for local trip making. Where possible, new residential developments should provide for filtered permeability, i.e. provide for walking, cycling, public transport and private vehicle access while restricting or discouraging private car through trips.

#### *Development Management Standards Policy Objectives - Roads and Transportation*

It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council in assessing development proposals, that the following road safety considerations be taken into account:

**CPO 16.35** Traffic Management and Road Safety: All new road layouts should be designed in accordance with the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and relevant TII publications. Development proposals should also include provision for a sustainable modal split, with pedestrian and cycling facilities recognised as an important aspect of new design proposals.

Road Safety Audit: A Road Safety Audit may be required to demonstrate that a proposed development does not pose a risk to road users, create a traffic nuisance or contribute to congestion. It should be carried out on all new national road infrastructure projects and on any schemes/proposal which results in a permanent change to the layout of a national road by suitably competent persons, in accordance with TII Publications GE-STY-01024 Road Safety Audit).

Road Safety Impact Assessment (RSIA): A Road Safety Impact Assessment (RSIA) provides a strategic comparative analysis of the impact of a new road, or for substantial modifications to an existing road, on the safety performance of the road network as defined within the EU Directive on Road Infrastructure Safety Management (EU RISM) 2008/96/EC. The RSIA shall be prepared by suitably competent persons, in accordance with TII Publications PE-PMG-02001 Road Safety Impact Assessment.

Traffic and Transport Assessments (TTAs): Development proposals that are likely to create significant vehicular movements will be required to undertake a site-specific assessment to demonstrate the impact of the proposal on the



integrated transport system by means of a Transport and Transport Assessment (TTA). The TTA should include an assessment of the impact of the proposal on the full range of modes of transport and incorporate traffic impact statements, road safety audits and measures to maximise accessibility of non-private car related movement, carried out by suitably competent persons, in accordance with the *'TII's Traffic and Transport Assessment Guidelines'*.

Mobility Management Plans (MMPs): (Refer Chapter 10, Section 10.6 Mobility Management Plans for instances where MMPs are required) Mobility Management Plans should include achievable measures to reduce dependency on private car use for daily commutes and incorporate where possible;

- Measures to promote use of public transport, cycling and walking;
- Car sharing/carpooling;
- Charges for parking;
- Staggered working/business hours.

Mobility Management Plans may be subject to annual reviews. It is recognised that the first (and subsequent) annual reviews of an Mobility Management Plan are the key stages in making them tangible as they will be tailored to real travel-to-work patterns and not a generic model based upon assumptions).

### ***14.3 Archaeological Heritage***

It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council to:

**CPO 14.5** Seek to ensure the protection and sympathetic enhancement of archaeological heritage, and in this regard applications will be referred to the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht for comment.

### ***14.7 Architectural Heritage and Protected Structures***

It is a policy objective of Westmeath County Council to:

**CPO 14.27** Protect and conserve buildings, structures and sites contained in the Record of

Protected Structures and to encourage the sympathetic re-use and long-term viability of such structures without detracting from their special interest and character.

**CPO 14.30** Seek that the form and structural integrity of Protected Structures is retained as part of any redevelopment proposal and that the relationship between the Protected Structure and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, or designed views or vistas from or to the structure is considered.

#### ***14.8 Architectural Conservation Areas***

It is a policy of Westmeath County Council to:

**CPO 14.39** Promote development that positively contributes to the character and appearance of the Architectural Conservation Area. New development or alterations to existing building(s) in an ACA shall respect the special character of the ACA and reflect the historic architecture in terms of scale, design and materials used. Regard shall be had to any guidance contained in the Statement of Characters prepared for ACAs.

**CPO 14.40** Consider development proposals within ACAs in accordance with the Statements of Character prepared for ACAs in Castlepollard, Kilbeggan, Moate, Tyrrellspass, Mullingar and Athlone.

**CPO 14.42** Ensure that Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs), including any associated public realm area, are protected and ensure that any new development or alteration of a building within or adjoining an ACA positively enhances the character of the area and is appropriate in terms of the plot size, proposed design, including: scale, mass, height, proportions, density, layout, materials, plot ratio and building lines.

**CPO 14.43** Avoid the removal of structures and distinctive elements (such as boundary treatments, street furniture, paving and landscaping) that positively contribute to the character of Architectural Conservation Areas.

## **Need**

To support the implementation of WCDP policies and objectives, in relation to pedestrian and cyclist links from schools to the town centre, it is necessary to upgrade the R446 and its junction with the R389 to accommodate all modes of transport in a safe manner, including pedestrians, cyclists, as well as vehicular traffic.

Development works are nearly complete for Mercy Secondary School together with pedestrian and cycling facilities segregated from vehicular traffic to the towns existing gateway speed limit. These works will complement the works undertaken in association with the school development and will ensure that a safe segregated pedestrian and cycle link is provided to facilitate and encourage modal shift from the private vehicle to active modes.

The works have been designed having regard to the west end of the site being located within the designated Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) and adjacent protected structures. The works will replace existing hard surfaces and facilitate increased areas for the provision of improved public realm elements (for example seating, art works and planting beds). Materials at the junction of the R446 and R389 will be selected to complement the materials used in the Kilbeggan Main Street Enhancement Works undertaken following part 8 consent in 2017 (LA(M)113). The scheme is considered to have a positive impact on the character of the ACA and the setting of the adjacent Protected Structures.

The proposal to undertake the works satisfies the requirements of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027 and in particular:

- Core Policy Objective CPO 2.16 to prioritise the provision of cycling and walking travel modes; and
- Policy Objective CPO 10.1 to deliver a sustainable, integrated and low carbon transport system with ease of movement throughout County Westmeath by enhancing the existing transport infrastructure in terms of road, bus, rail, cycling and pedestrian facilities.

## **Appropriate Assessment**

The initial stage (1) of the Appropriate Assessment process is to undertake a screening

exercise to determine:

- a. Whether the proposed plan or project is directly connected with or necessary for the management of the European designated site for nature conservation
- b. If it is likely to have a significant adverse effect on the European designated site, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects.

The proposed scheme has undergone an Appropriate Assessment screening exercise under the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). A copy of the report, Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (ORS, 2023) is included with this Part 8 Planning Application.

The following European designated sites are within 15km of the scheme and have been considered in Appropriate Assessment Screening Report:

SiteCode	Name	Type	Distance From (km)
001831	Split Hills and Long Hills Esker SAC	SAC	2.6
000572	Clara Bog SAC	SAC	7.3
000685	Lough Ennell SAC	SAC	8
004044	Lough Ennell SPA	SPA	8.8
000582	Raheenmore Bog SAC	SAC	9.1
000571	Charleville Wood SAC	SAC	10.2
000216	River Shannon Callows SAC	SAC	53
004096	Middle Shannon Callows SPA	SPA	53

The report concludes:

*It is of the opinion of the author that an AA of the proposed development is not required as it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information provided in this report, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects, will not have a significant effect on any European sites. Therefore, this proposed project does not need to proceed to Stage II of the Appropriate Assessment Process, i.e., a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).*

**EIAR Screening Report**

The proposed scheme has undergone screening for Environmental Impact Assessment

under the EIA Directive 2014/52/EU to identify whether there is a need to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment Report for the proposed works. The Environment Impact Assessment Screening Report, (ORS, 2023) is included with this Part 8 Planning Application and states:

*The overall conclusion for this screening exercise is that having considered the appropriate statutory criteria, Environmental Impact Assessment is not required for the proposed development.*

## **Conclusion**

The recommended carriageway, footpath and cycleway facilities is consistent with the development objectives of the Westmeath County Development Plan.

**Appendix 1: Preliminary Screening Assessment for AA and EIA**