



16 June 2021

**Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Westmeath County Council**

**Re: Local Authority Development File Ref LA (A)-01 2021  
Public Realm Enhancement Works at Mardyke Street, Pump Lane and Sean Costello  
Street, Athlone Co Westmeath**

**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)**

Dear Cathaoirleach and Members,

Westmeath County Council (WCC) has made considerable investment in recent years in the enhancement of public realm in the town centre of Athlone. In this context, the Regeneration Project Office has put forward a Part 8 project proposal for the development of further public realm enhancement works, encompassing Mardyke Street, Pump Lane and Sean Costello Street.

## ***Section 1***

### ***1.0 Site Overview***

The project works proposed relate to a triangular enclosure associated with Mardyke Street, Sean Costello Street and Pump Lane, which connect to the eastern end of Church Street and Dublin Gate Street in Athlone.

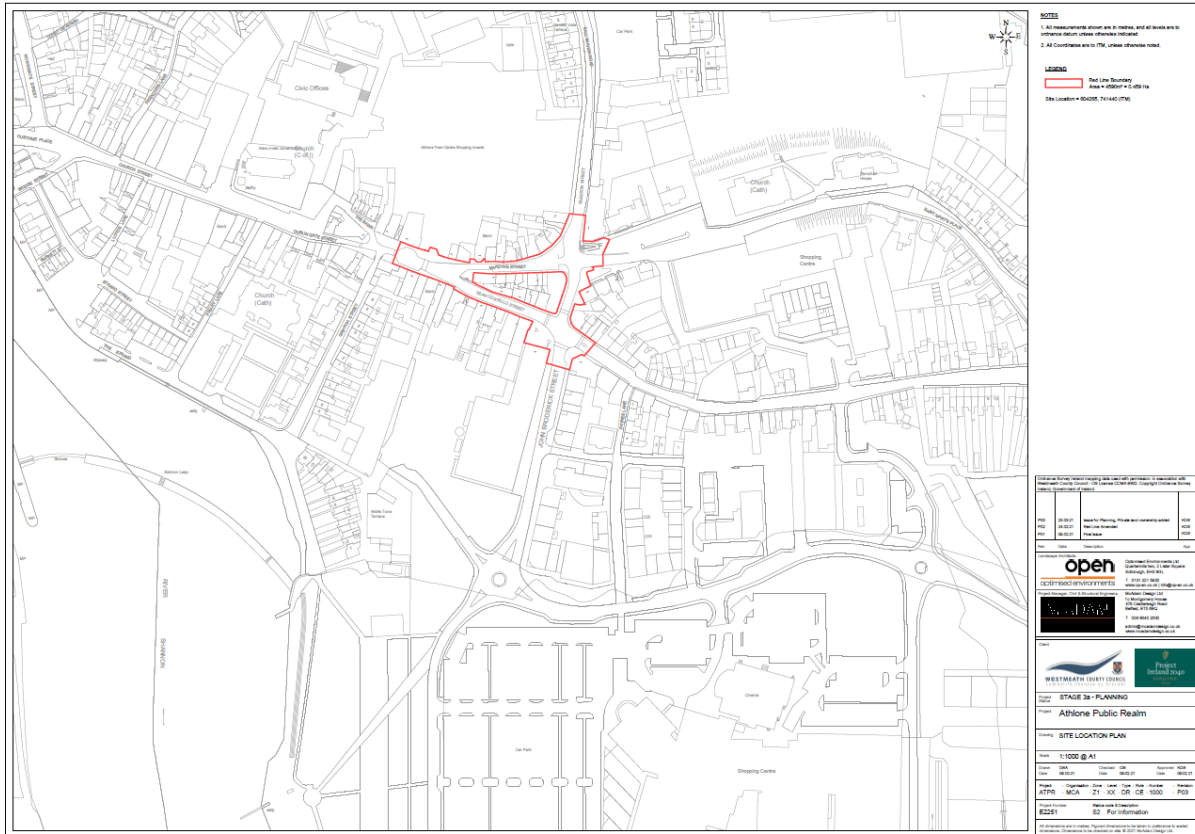


Figure 1: Site Location Map

Each of these streets accommodate vehicular traffic and are characterised by narrow footpaths, uneven surfaces and a range of paving materials and surface finishes.

Currently there is a prevalence of car parking and on-street loading areas along Mardyke Street. A formalised pedestrian crossing is in situ at the signalised junction of Sean Costello Street, Irishtown and St Mary’s Place and a series of bollards along Sean Costello Street accommodate a segregated space for cyclists and pedestrians through the creation of a reduced width carriageway in this area.

Pump Lane currently comprises a two-way carriageway together with footpath provision and associated intersections serving St Marys Place and Mardyke Street.

The development boundary for the proposed enhancement works also contains three internal public spaces which lie alongside the streetscape environment, namely; ‘Sweeny Corner’ bounded by Mardyke Street and Sean Costello Street; a public space at Dunnes Stores bounded by Sean Costello Street and John Broderick Street and a public space bounded by Gleeson Street and St Mary’s Square. These public spaces comprise varying surface treatment at different levels. A ‘Marist Brother Memorial Statue’ with associated retaining walls comprising a series of galvanized mild steel railings and handrails is located on a public space bounded by Gleeson Street and St. Mary’s Square.

### 1.1 Origins of Funding

WCC was successful in an application for funding under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (2019) for these project works.

## 1.2 Advertising and Referrals

A public notice in respect of this Part 8 was placed in the Westmeath Independent (circulated 27 March 2021). Site notices were also erected on the subject lands in accordance with legislative requirements. The application was referred to the following prescribed bodies and internal sections within WCC:

<b>Referrals:</b>	<b>Response Received</b>
<b><i>External Bodies</i></b>	
Development Applications Unit (Natural/Built Heritage) Dept of Tourism, Culture, Arts Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	√
An Taisce	
The Heritage Council	
Irish Water	√
<b><i>Internal Sections</i></b>	
District Engineer	√
Fire Services	√
Heritage Officer	√
WCC Architect	

## 1.3 Consultation Process

This Part 8 was placed on public display during the period 29 March 2021 to 27 April 2021 (both dates inclusive) at the following locations:

- Online Consultation Portal <http://consult.westmeathcoco.ie/en>
- Civic Centre, Church Street, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

Submissions were invited during the period Thursday 29 March 2021 up to and including Friday 12 May 2021 (both dates inclusive).

## 1.4 Description and extent of the development proposed

The development of Public Realm Enhancement Works, encompassing approximately 0.6Ha. The public realm enhancements include;

- Provision of upgraded footpaths and realignment of existing carriage way along Mardyke Street, including 120m of a shared surface;
- Pedestrianisation of 90m of Sean Costello Street, from its junction with Pump Lane to its junction with Mardyke Street, to take account of the access needs of pedestrians, mobility impaired persons and service vehicles;
- Provision of an enhanced public realm and landscape improvements, including street furniture, incidental play equipment, cycle parking, street tree planting, and soft landscaping to enhance biodiversity;
- Provision of a priority signalised junction, including enhanced pedestrian facilities, at the junction of Mardyke Street, Gleeson Street, Pump Lane, and St Mary's Square;

- Upgrade to public lighting, including focal lighting to Sean Costello Street; and
- All necessary accommodation works, including utility provision, drainage, signage, and other ancillary works.



Figure 2: Illustrative Map of Proposed Works

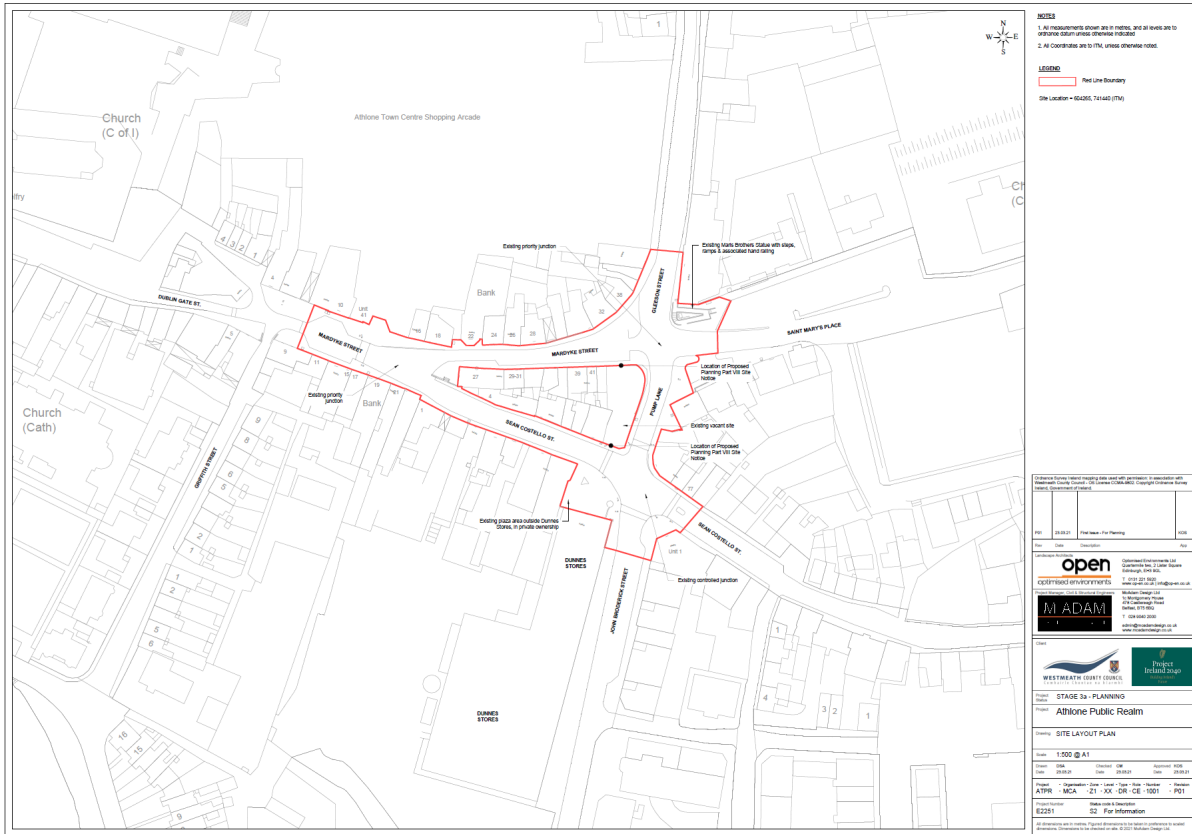


Figure 3: Site Layout Plan

A detailed description of the project development features is set out under Figure 4 below.

<b>Carriageways</b>	<p>Proposed carriageways to comprise either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Asphalt with an upstand kerb (natural stone band of setts against either upstand kerb);</li> <li>- Natural stone setted carriageway that is flush with the footpath to include natural stone hazard warning paving and associated bollards /street furniture to define the boundary between carriageway / footpath.</li> </ul>
<b>Roadway and Footpaths</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The removal of vehicles (except for time restricted service access and emergency access) from Sean Costello Street in order to create a pedestrianised street;</li> <li>- Natural stone paved footpaths;</li> <li>- Junction improvement works at Mardyke Street / Gleeson Street / St Mary’s Square;</li> <li>- Widened footways where space allows, including along Mardyke Street and Dublin Gate Street;</li> <li>- Surfacing on Sean Costello Street to promote a pedestrian priority environment (natural stone to withstand the vehicle loadings).</li> </ul>
<b>Crossing Points</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- One existing crossing point at Sean Costello Street will be removed due to the proposed pedestrianisation. The remaining crossings at</li> </ul>

	<p>the signalised junction at Sean Costello Street, John Broderick Street and Pump Lane will be modified to comply with the prevailing design standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Two existing uncontrolled crossings and a new link east to west across Pump Lane will be incorporated into the proposed signalised junction at Mardyke Street, Gleeson Street and St. Mary's Place.</li> <li>- The existing pelican crossing at Mardyke Street at the entrance to the Athlone Town Centre shopping mall is proposed to be removed. The road at this location is proposed to be narrowed with an extended raised table with a natural stone surfacing.</li> </ul>
<b>Lighting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Column or building mounted luminaires depending on location.</li> <li>- Proposed lighting on Sean Costello Street will reflect the pedestrian environment with lower columns / poles and multi-head luminaires.</li> </ul>
<b>Drainage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Surface water drainage to be collected using road gullies, footpath gullies and linear slot drains. Existing roof drainage from adjoining buildings will be redirected using bottle gullies.</li> <li>- All storm water to be routed in a new dedicated storm sewer and discharged to the Irish Water combined sewer system for onward conveyance and treatment at Athlone Wastewater Treatment Works. Connections to the Irish Water sewers at Gleeson Street, Pump Lane and Sean Costello Street.</li> </ul>
<b>Road Markings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adjusted road markings in line with the Traffic Signs Manual.</li> <li>- Removal of south-bound right turn lane from Gleeson Street to Mardyke Street. Right turning from Gleeson Street will be controlled under traffic light phasing.</li> </ul>
<b>Signage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Traffic Signage for the adjusted junction at Sean Costello Street, John Broderick Street and Pump Lane and for the proposed signalised junction at Mardyke Street, Gleeson Street and St. Mary's Square. Additional signage to promote the proposed access restrictions for service deliveries on Sean Costello Street.</li> </ul>
<b>Landscaping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The rejuvenation of spaces at 'Sweeny's Corner', Dunnes Stores and on the corner of Gleeson Street / St Mary's Square;</li> <li>- Soft landscape proposals including street trees and raised planters along Sean Costello Street and street tree planting on Dublin Gate Street and Sean Costello Street</li> <li>-</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Features of Proposed Works

## 1.5 Documentation Included with Part 8 Proposal

- Newspaper Notice/Site Notice
- Environmental Impact Screening Report
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report
- Ecological Impact Screening Assessment
- Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment
- Archaeological & Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment
- Micro- Simulation Traffic Modelling Report
- Public Lighting Report
- Design Report
- 3D Artistic Impressions of Proposal

## 1.6 Relevant Planning History

### Adjacent Lands

**Part 8 LA(A) 2016-01** - Athlone Town Centre Enhancement including traffic calming of Church Street and the junctions with Northgate Street, Costume Place, Church Street and the Bawn, Mardyke Street and Dublin Gate Street intersections; the paving of Church Street in a combination of different stone types to include mobility impaired persons and service vehicles; the provision of new street furniture, soft landscaping and trees and the installation of new route signage (Approved 2017).

## 1.7 Policy Context

### 1.7.1 National & Regional Policy Context

**Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework 2018-2027 (NPF)**. The NPF sets out a high-level strategic plan for shaping the future growth and development of the Country to the year 2040.

The National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) which are particularly relevant to the proposed project are as follows:

*Enhanced Amenity and Heritage:* Ensuring towns are attractive and can offer a good quality of life through well-designed public realm, linked to and integrated with built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban areas, adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.

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

**Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region 2019-2031 (RSES).** The proposed project enhancement works align with the three overarching key principles of the RSES i.e. healthy placemaking, climate action and economic opportunity.

Athlone is designated as a 'Regional Centre' under the RSES with opportunity identified to enhance the public realm and to contribute to overall placemaking within the Regional Centre impacting positively on the convenience, image and function of Athlone as a Regional Centre. The RSES further seeks to:

Realise sustained economic growth and employment including the integration of better urban design, public realm, amenities, and heritage to create attractive places to live, work, visit and invest in. Focus on placemaking to create attractive and sustainable communities to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling.

Provide for improvements in the appearance of streetscapes and for revitalising vacant spaces.

Use targeted financial incentives to re-establish the dominant role of town centres provided for in planning policy.

The public realm enhancement works proposed will promote placemaking by way of improving the aesthetics of the town centre, increasing pedestrian safety and footfall, improving access to shops and businesses and providing the potential to attract retail and other activity into the town centre, thereby contributing to its vitality and vibrancy.

### 1.7.3 Local Policy

**Athlone Town Development Plan (ATDP).** Support for this proposal is set out by under the ATDP as follows:

A Strategic aim of the ATDP is to focus development on *"continuing to respect the primacy of the town centre, including prioritising the improvement and enhancement of the public realm"*.

Furthermore, it is an aim of the Council *"to promote quality of the public realm: public spaces and routes that are attractive, safe and uncluttered and work effectively for all in society including people with disabilities and elderly people"* (section 5.4).

It is an objective of the Council to *prioritise the improvement and enhancement of the public realm, as a support to a vibrant retail sector"* (section 2.11)

### 1.8 Services Provision

No water or foul water connection is required to serve the proposed works. The surface water outfall will discharge to the existing combined wastewater system. It is stated that ongoing consultations with utility providers will be conducted through the design stages to ensure that all utility works are co-ordinated as part of the scheme design and construction delivery programme. In this context, further engagement with IW should be undertaken in relation to potential



requirements for diversion works of existing services, where required. There are no outstanding issues raised in this regard by the District Engineer.

### 1.9 Archaeology

An Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment which accompanies this application. The assessment indicates that the development is located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential for Athlone as identified in the Urban Archaeological Survey for Westmeath. This area corresponds with the Zone of Notification as shown on the National Monuments Service map-viewer which represents the historic core of the town. Given the high archaeological potential of this area, monitoring of all ground penetrating works should be conducted during construction works.

### 1.10 Architectural Heritage

An Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment was carried out by a specialist Conservation Architect, (Grade I) RIBA SCA, to assess any likely impacts of proposed development. This assessment considered the proposed project works in respect of the context of the area, its buildings, and the contribution that they make, existing protected structures within the area, the ACA, conservation principles and policies of the Council.

The assessment concluded that the proposed works are appropriate for both the setting of the protected structures within the area and the ACA.

It is considered that the proposed works will enhance rather than detract from the protected structures and ACA.

### 1.11 Urban Design and Landscaping

The proposal is accompanied by an 'Athlone Town Centre Public Realm Enhancement Design Report' which sets out material finishes in respect of hard landscaping and street furniture. The palette and detailing are consistent with those of the newly enhanced Church Street area, except for complimentary materials that are proposed to be introduced as part of the proposed pedestrianised area of Sean Costello Street (Refer Section 5.6 Hard Landscape, 5.7 Street Furniture).

It is proposed to provide soft landscaping with a focus on planting that can support biodiversity in association with the proposed pedestrianised area of Sean Costello Street. Soft landscaping proposed includes street trees, specimen shrubs, grasses and wildflowers, groundcover species and bulbs.

Details on proposed public lighting are set out under an accompanying report prepared by Wallace Whittle Consultants.

The urban design and landscaping measures proposed are acceptable in principle, however, it is considered that final details in respect of hard and soft landscaping, street furniture and lighting detail appropriate to the character of the ACA should be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority in advance of the commencement of project works.

### 1.12 Environmental Impact Assessment

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report accompanies this Part 8. The EIA Screening Report determined that the development does not exceed the thresholds that trigger the mandatory requirement for EIA and therefore it has been screened out in accordance with Schedule 7A.

The development works do not fall within the scope of the Infrastructure project types prescribed. In this regard and having considered the appropriate criteria, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the development and that an EIA is therefore not required.

### 1.13 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 proposed development is located within the zone of influence of four European sites i.e. River Shannon Callows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code 000216), Middle River Shannon Callows Special Protection Area (SPA) (Site Code 004096), and Lough Ree SAC (Site Code 000440) and SPA (Site Code 004064). The nearest European sites to the proposed works are the River Shannon Callows (c.470m) and Lough Ree (c. 1.5km).

A Stage 1 Screening for Appropriate Assessment for the proposed project, prepared by Blackstaff Ecology Consultants accompanies this application.

An assessment of potential effects arising from both the construction and operation stages of the development has been undertaken. The project works are not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a Natura 2000 site. It is indicated that the enhancement works and the surrounding urban area will continue to be served by an existing stormwater sewer system. There will be no significant change to the area of impermeable surface or consequent runoff volume arising from the scheme, and stormwater runoff will discharge into the sewer system, resulting in no direct hydrological links with the Middle Shannon Callows SPA or Lough Ree SAC and SPA.

Having regard to the conservation objectives associated with the European sites within the zone of influence and given the nature of the development, together with the existence of the existing built realm and associated infrastructure and absence of direct hydrological links from same to any European 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.

### 1.14 Other Ecology

An Ecological Impact Assessment accompanies this Part 8 proposal. The entire project works site consists of artificial surfaces, namely tarmac and concrete roads and pavements, and has negligible value for nature conservation. The assessment concluded that the project works would have a

neutral effect through upgrading the site with no net loss of biodiversity. No significant residual effects are anticipated on any faunal population following measures to avoid and mitigate against adverse effects on sensitive ecological receptors, including birds, fish, and otter. It is further noted that the proposed soft landscaping with a focus on planting that can support biodiversity within the pedestrianised area of Sean Costello Street will further promote biodiversity within this urban context.

Having regard to the assessment submitted and given the nature and siting of the project works proposed, it is considered that there are no further outstanding matters in relation to ecology arising from the works proposed.

## SECTION 2

### 2.0 Internal Reports and Prescribed Bodies Submissions

#### Internal Reports Received

**District Engineer (1/6/21):** No objection, subject to the works being carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted.

**Heritage Officer (13/5/21):** Recommends that archaeological monitoring be undertaken during construction works given that the project works are located within the zone of Archaeological Potential for Athlone. Further notes that the proposal does not include any alteration to the structures within the ACA and that sensitive and appropriate works will enhance rather than detract from the protected structures and the ACA. The Heritage Officer considers that the 'historic rubble wall' referred to on page 13 & 16 of the AHIA report should be retained in line with Policy CPO 14.39 '*Avoid the removal of structures and distinctive elements that positively contribute to the character of ACA's*'.

**Fire Officer (8/4/21):** No objection, subject to conditions in relation to the maintaining of current emergency access through Sean Costello Street, Athlone for both standard Class B fire appliances and high reach appliances in accordance with the requirements of Technical Guidance Document B (2006-2020) and the upgrading of existing hydrants and delivery of flow rates to the satisfaction of the Athlone Fire Brigade/Westmeath Fire & Rescue Service.

#### Prescribed Bodies Reports Received

One number submission was received from prescribed bodies as follows;

**Development Applications Unit (12/5/2021):** Notes that the proposed development involves ground works within the area of archaeological potential around recorded monument WM029-042 (TOWN) which is subject to statutory protection under the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1994. Concurs with the recommendation set out in the archaeological assessment report which accompanied the Part 8 documentation, that archaeological monitoring carried out under the terms of a license should be required as a condition of planning.

## SECTION 3

### 3.0 Public Observations/Submissions Received

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

### 3.1 Summary of submissions and response of the Chief Executive.

**Submission. No. 1 & No. 2 - Liam Madden Planning Consultant on behalf of owners/occupiers of St Marys Terrace, Athlone:**

Provides support to the proposed development and proposes further enhancement works and the extending of the project area to include St Marys Square/Terrace. Attached sketch proposal on the Part 8 Scheme.

The second submission received 10/5/21 refers to a revised sketch which addresses an anomaly in respect of the size of the Little Theatre .

#### CE Response

The content of submissions which supports the project is welcomed. The proactive approach undertaken by the owners/occupiers in seeking regeneration works is acknowledged; however, in respect of the request to further extend the project area, it is considered that this matter lies outside the remit of the development brief for this Part 8 development. All public realm schemes are subject to Council approval, detailed assessment, consultation with key stakeholders and securing the required funding to allow for project delivery. It should be noted that the Council has recently commenced the tendering process in the appointment of consultants for the undertaking of an Urban Design and Regeneration Framework Plan for Athlone. This plan will provide a framework for a holistic approach to the future urban design and regeneration of Athlone in a plan-led manner.

#### CE Recommendation

It is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

#### **Submission No. 3 - Iain Murray**

Provides support for the public realm enhancement works and outlines suggestions for incorporation into the scheme. Proposals include the provision of secure bicycle parking stands on the eastern end of Sean Costello Street with designated motorcycle parking to be provided immediately adjacent to the public realm areas (to incorporate drop kerbs/bollards with steel D rings). It is further suggested that a designated space for on-street dining/coffee shops/kiosks should be provided.

#### CE Response

The support and suggestions put forward are acknowledged and welcomed. The suggestion to provide secure bicycle parking stands on the eastern end of Sean Costello Street is considered in keeping with and complementary to the scheme. The provision of same (considered temporary in nature and subject to relocation) is not considered to constitute works which require a Part 8 planning application and such introduction will be considered as part of an ongoing overall assessment of cycle parking requirements for the town, as part of a strategic transport planning exercise.

It is considered that there is sufficient motorcycle parking available in Athlone and the incorporation of vehicular parking, including motorcycle parking, as part of the proposed public realm enhancement scheme would undermine the schemes ability to provide a pedestrian friendly environment in this area.

Businesses will be afforded the opportunity to utilise the public realm area for the provision of on-street dining and other such uses, where appropriate and subject to a Section 254 licence agreement with the Council.

#### CE Recommendation

It is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

#### Submission No. 4 - Jacqui Thaker - Level Access for All

States that the design of accessible areas should not be exclusive but inclusive for all. Considers that there is a need for a covered and secure lockable parking area in the project area for wheelchairs, mobility scooters, buggies and push bikes. It is considered that such facility will allow for social interaction and facilitate the experience of exploring the town by all.

The submission further suggests that an overhead cover which provides shelter from rain or sun should also be provided as part of the scheme.

The need for on-going maintenance and cleaning of the streetscape on a regular basis and incorporation of robust materials has also been raised within this submission.

#### CE Response

The content of submission is acknowledged. It is considered that the design proposal, which incorporates robust materials from a maintenance perspective, is people-friendly, accessible and inclusive for a range of users of all ages and abilities in accordance with the principles of universal design.

The provision of further secure facilities for wheelchairs, mobility scooters etc. (considered temporary in nature and subject to relocation) are not considered to constitute works which require Part 8 planning and such introduction can be considered as part of an overall assessment of requirements for the town.

#### CE Recommendation

It is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

#### Submission No. 5 - Mary Nee, Mary Verdon, Claire Verdon, Michael & Jeanette Leonard

This submission refers to matters associated with the potential impacts on local residential communities as a result of the project works. It is considered that the proposal is designed to strengthen the retail and commercial function of Athlone town centre and that no assessment was carried out in respect of impact on residents in the surrounding communities. It is requested that a comprehensive assessment survey be carried out on the impact of this plan on the immediate residential neighbourhoods and communities – particularly in relation to traffic flow/traffic safety.

The submission refers to the content of the traffic modelling report which accompanies this Part 8 and expresses concerns that the proposal together with potential future developments as part of the 'Loughanaskin Development Plan', has the potential to increase traffic flow in the residential area of Scotch Parade, St. Mary's Place and St Mary's Terrace.

#### CE Response

The content of the submission is acknowledged.

It is considered that the works proposed will enhance the attractiveness and liveability of the town centre and create an attractive, safe, inclusive and accessible destination that appeals to people of all ages and abilities while boosting the viability and vitality of the town centre.

It should be noted that the project proposal is accompanied by traffic modelling and traffic assessment, undertaken by suitably qualified consultants and which informed the overall design of the public realm enhancement scheme. Based on the findings, it is not considered that there will be any negative impact on local residential communities as a result of the project works.

#### CE Recommendation

It is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

#### Submission No. 6 - Athlone Chamber of Commerce

The Athlone Chamber of Commerce broadly welcomes the proposed public realm enhancement works and considers that the proposal will further enhance town centre spaces and assist in progressing the town as an attractive centre for tourism, families and living in the Midlands.

It is requested that further studies/strategies be developed in relation to the following;

- a) Occupancy of units at Sean Costello Street. It is submitted that the strategy should also address occupancy of units on Church Street, Athlone.
- b) Parking facilities for primary shopping streets (including Church Street and Sean Costello Street).

On-going concerns in relation to traffic flow and any potential further delays to traffic that may arise due to the project works are further expressed within this submission.

#### CE Response

The support provided by Athlone Chamber of Commerce in respect of the proposed project works is acknowledged and welcomed.

In terms of wider strategies for the area, it should be noted that the Council has recently commenced the tendering process in the appointment of consultants for the undertaking of an Urban Design and Regeneration Framework Plan for Athlone. This plan will provide a framework for a holistic approach to the future urban design and regeneration of Athlone in a plan-led manner.

It should be noted that the project proposal is accompanied by traffic modelling and traffic assessment, undertaken by suitably qualified consultants and which informed the overall design of

the public realm enhancement scheme. Based on the findings, it is not considered that there will be any negative impact as a result of the project works.

#### CE Recommendation

It is recommended that the development should proceed as proposed.

## SECTION 4

### 4.0 Conclusion

Westmeath County Council is committed to enabling positive regeneration in order to consolidate and manage the sustainable growth of Athlone while adding value to the urban fabric through the creation of more attractive places in which people can choose to live and work.

It is considered that the proposed public realm enhancement works will positively enhance the attractiveness of Sean Costello Street, Mardyke Street and Pump Lane, create a safer environment, promote sustainable mobility, and create a positive social space capable of attracting a vibrant mix of uses.

The proposed scheme is considered to complement the recent enhancement works undertaken at Church Street and will improve pedestrian connectivity across the town.

Having considered the plans and particulars, together with submissions received from prescribed bodies and the public, subject to the recommendations set out, it is considered that the proposed development would not impact negatively on architectural and natural heritage

- would not seriously injure the amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity
- would not be prejudicial to public health
- would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience.

Having considered the plans and particulars, together with submissions received in association with the development proposal, it is considered that the development is consistent with national, regional and local (Athlone Town Plan) policy and as such is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

#### 4.1 Chief Executive's Recommendation

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal will provide an enhanced public realm environment for the town of Athlone, consistent with the provisions of the Athlone Town Development Plan and, as such, is considered to be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the proposed public realm enhancement works proceed in accordance with the scheme documentation, except as may otherwise be necessary in order to comply with the following requirements:

1. Archaeological Monitoring
  - i. A suitably qualified archaeologist shall be engaged to monitor and report on all groundworks associated with this development.
  - ii. The archaeologist shall notify the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in writing at least four weeks prior to the commencement of site preparations.

- iii. The report of the archaeological monitoring shall include photographs of the area before, during and after monitoring has taken place, as well as detailed photographs of specific areas, as required.
- iv. A key plan, clearly showing the location and direction from which photographs were taken should be included in the report (e.g. annotated site location map).
- v. Should archaeological material be found during the course of monitoring, the archaeologist may have work on the site stopped, pending a decision as to how best to deal with the archaeology. The developer shall liaise with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and implement any necessary mitigating action.
- vi. The Planning Authority and the Department shall be furnished with a report describing the results of the monitoring.

2. Landscaping:

Full final details in respect of hard and soft landscaping, street furniture and lighting suitable to the character of the Architectural Conservation Area to be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority in advance of the commencement of project works.

Yours Sincerely



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**Pat Gallagher**  
**Chief Executive**