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Part VIII Planning Report

Bilberry to City Centre Waterford Greenway Link



Comhairle Cathrach
& Contae Phort Láirge
Waterford City
& County Council

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1 Introduction & Background

The proposed scheme will provide a link between the Waterford Greenway at Bilberry and the planned South Quay Plaza, where the proposed River Suir Sustainable Transport Bridge is planned to connect to the South Quays. The council wish to provide a safer and more attractive connection between the Greenway at Bilberry and the City centre. The length of the scheme is approximately 2km.

The Waterford Greenway was officially opened on the 26th March 2017. The existing link to Waterford City Centre is by way of a local road (Bilberry Road L1501) which has a restricted cross section. The four key drivers that promoted the development of the Greenway were,

1. Local Investment
2. Tourism Development
3. Mobility and Access
4. Health and Recreation

In early 2019, Waterford City & County Council (WCCC) undertook an options selection process for the Bilberry to City Centre Greenway Link which concluded with a preferred route. During the optioneering process a number of studies were carried out including ecological, archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage, flood assessment, traffic assessment and a constraints study.

The scheme includes improvements to the Rice Bridge/Bridge Street/Grattan Quay junction to improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists without significant reduction in capacity for vehicular traffic.

The Greenway Link is designed to service all residents of, and visitors to Waterford regardless of ability and age. This proposed Greenway Link improves the 2km section closest to Waterford City of the 46km long Waterford Greenway, completing the linear continuous feature across Waterford contributing to the wellbeing of all residents, rural and urban.

2 Need for the Scheme & Existing Conditions

At present, users of the Waterford Greenway enter or exit the segregated rural Greenway via a carpark at the Quarry Road junction with Bilberry Road. Cyclists travelling towards the City must cross the road (which is a cul-de-sac for local access only) in order to reach an 2.2 – 3.2m wide (varies) shared pedestrian and cycle facility that runs along the northern side of Bilberry Road towards Waterford City Centre. The Greenway link shared path is accommodated through a one way shuttle system for motorised traffic over a distance of 300m (250m towards Waterford City Centre from the end of the greenway). The one way shuttle system is a constraint on motorised traffic, and was provided at this location due to the narrow existing cross-section of Bilberry Road.

The Rice Bridge junction suffers significant traffic congestion, particularly during peak travel periods, due significantly to the fact that the city centre has only this single bridge. This bridge currently has signalised pedestrian crossings on each arm, however, these are staggered on the Bilberry Road arm. From Bilberry Road, motorised traffic is only permitted to turn left onto the bridge and cannot travel straight towards the City centre, however, there is a roundabout at the other side of Rice Bridge affording motorists the opportunity to return to the city centre.

While there is signage for the Waterford Greenway at the junction, there is no signage or other means of way finding/directing cyclists towards the city centre, or the bicycle hire shops that can be found in the vicinity of O'Connell Street (Hanover Street, etc.).

There are currently discontinuous on road cycle lanes on Grattan Quay and Merchants Quay, with many conflicts with left turning vehicles (car parks, set down areas, etc.).

Continued provision needs to be made for the safe and efficient movement of people within Waterford City. In addition, the continued success of the Waterford Greenway can be supported by the provision of a first rate link between the Greenway and the City that shares its name. Recreational users of the greenway would be encouraged to cycle the greenway to and from Waterford City Centre, and to cycle to the future greenway that will be connected to the City by the proposed sustainable transport bridge. This provision would be an investment in Waterford City and County, its economy, environment and its public realm. This investment would facilitate increased pedestrian, cycle movement across the city improving connectivity between businesses, schools, housing, places of worship, etc. It would also encourage the use of the greenway by medium to long distance cycle commuters from places such as Kilmeadan and beyond, it could also promote an important active travel commute for students and staff of WIT who live in the city centre.

3 Concept and Objectives

The function of the route will be manifold. The following is a non-exhaustive list of objectives for the route taken into account during the development of the Project:

- (i) To cater for tourist amenity – The Waterford Greenway attracted 283,503No. users in 2018 (128,689No. pedestrians, 154,814No. cyclists), however, the Bilberry counter recorded the lowest number of users in 2018, in particular for cyclists (<75,000No.) despite its close proximity to Waterford City. It is envisaged that improvement of the route from Bilberry to the City Centre will attract cycle tourists undertaking the Waterford Greenway cycle.
- (ii) To cater for commuting - the route will have to be sufficiently attractive to compete as an active travel alternative for commutes into Waterford City from Waterford IT and towns and villages such as Kilmeadan and Kilmacthomas.
- (iii) To cater for local amenity - the route should benefit local communities through providing improved pedestrian and cycle linkage from Waterford City to adjacent residential developments such as Water's Gate and Bowefield.
- (iv) To enhance the ecological corridor - the proposed Greenway Link should have a neutral to positive impact on local ecology. This can be achieved by inclusion of complementary planting and features for flora and fauna.
- (v) To complete a Greenway of international renown - the proposed Greenway Link must avoid compromises and be on a par with the best greenways in the world.

4 Planning and Development Context

4.1 Local Policy Context

The Waterford County Development Plan 2011 - 2017 states the Council's commitment to "facilitate the expansion of tourist activities in appropriate locations where they can be supported by, and provide support for, existing communities". The Council recognises walking as becoming one of the main recreational pastimes within the County. In this regard, a walking strategy was published as part of County Development Board's "Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Waterford 2002-2012", and through this strategy the ambition has been set to make Waterford the walking capital of Ireland. Further provision is made for the development of cycling tourism in the county, building on the success of the "Sean Kelly Cycling Routes". The Greenway will become a section of the Irish portion of Eurovelo 1, which itself is part of a network of 14 long distance cycle routes connecting and uniting the whole European continent. The Waterford City Development Plan 2013 – 2019 states the objective *'Realignment/improvement of Bilberry /Quarry Road, providing for improved safety and facilities for buses, pedestrians and cyclists, with new vehicular access provision to Bilberry Opportunity site. (OBJ 6.2.5).'* and a Proposed Cycle Lane is shown on Bilberry Road on Map A – City Extent from this Plan. This Greenway Link supports these strategies and objectives.

4.2 National and Regional Policy Context

The objective of Smarter Travel is to promote and encourage sustainable modes of transport. Protection and safety of vulnerable road users is paramount. The construction of the Greenway Link provides a clear, direct, safe and connected route and will improve permeability into Waterford City Centre. The HSE, as part of their Get Ireland Active campaign, promote that adults need 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity 5 days a week, while children need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity every day. This Greenway Link will provide the facility for healthy recreational activity, in a safe and secure environment, segregated from motorised vehicles.

5 Description of the Proposed Works

5.1 Proposed Works

The proposed Greenway Link is located along Bilberry Road and Merchants Quay for the majority of its length, linking the Waterford Greenway to Waterford City and the proposed River Suir Sustainable Transport Bridge – covering a distance of approximately 2km. The Waterford Greenway currently runs for more than 40kms in a north-easterly direction from Dungarvan in south west Waterford, past Kilmacthomas to Bilberry, which is 2km west of Waterford City Centre. The location of the proposed route is shown in Appendix B.

The proposed scheme involves:

- Construction of an approximate 4000 mm wide cycle and pedestrian corridor from the Greenway car park at Bilberry, along Bilberry Road, Grattan Quay and Merchants Quay, to the proposed South Quay Plaza.
- Road widening along Bilberry Road, erect railings and fences and provision of accommodation works where necessary for adjoining landowners;
- provide 2No. 4000 mm wide boardwalks at the eastern end of Bilberry Road;
- upgrade the existing facilities on Grattan Quay and Merchants Quay, and upgrade the existing facilities in the car parks in Merchants Quay.

5.2 Construction Methodology

5.2.1 Pre-Construction Works

Additional geotechnical investigation will also be carried out pre-construction. A geotechnical investigation will typically comprise of the supervised excavation of boreholes and trial pits. Moderately sized plant will be used and consist of small to medium sized excavators, cable percussive rigs, rotary drilling rigs, compressors, water bowsers, low loaders and 4-wheel drive vehicles.

Slit trenches will also be required at selected locations in order to confirm the location of buried services. Saw cutting of the existing pavement and the subsequent hand excavation, photographing and logging of the uncovered services will be the main activities. Archaeological test trenches under licence will also be excavated pre-construction.

All works undertaken as part of the ground investigation contract will be undertaken in accordance with recognised best practice procedures in order to ensure that they do not result in any environmental impacts. All works will take place in existing road bed, and brownfield sites, and will not impact on the River Suir or its banks.

5.2.2 Main Construction Works

Construction Compounds

A construction compound or compounds will be required for the duration of the construction works. Compound locations will be determined by the appointed Contractor to the approval of WCCC.

Potential Impacts on Adjacent Landowners

Residents in the areas of Water's Gate, and other nearby developments, closest to the construction works will experience some level of noise, vibration and dust arising from general works and construction traffic in close proximity to their properties. Service diversion works may also directly affect properties on Bilberry Road, in particular in the vicinity of the cantilevered boardwalks.

Revised access arrangements, both permanent and temporary, will be required for a number of sites including the old foundry site, Fastnet Shipping, and Irish Heritage Crystal.

Traffic Management

The impact of construction on users of the existing road network will be likely to include temporary road closures and shuttle systems while the works are on site, however, these should be short term in nature. Service diversions may be required in order to accommodate the foundations of the cantilevered boardwalk, and a temporary road closure may be required to facilitate these diversions and the construction of the foundations. Continuous access will be provided for local residents and other users, including the businesses on Bilberry Road.

5.3 Access to Site

Primary access to the site, and site compound, will be via the Bilberry Road.

6 Impact of the Proposed Works

6.1 Environmental Assessment

A Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report have been prepared, and are given in support of this planning application.

The Screening Report for Appropriate Assessment concludes that the project is not likely, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, to have a significant effect on any European Sites.

In the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report, the proposed Greenway Link has been assessed as a sub-threshold Environmental Impact Assessment development, and concluded that an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

6.2 Flood Risk Assessment

A flood risk assessment was undertaken in order to determine potential for the proposal to affect flood risk. The proposed Greenway Link footprint will be affected by flooding in one area on its route at the cantilevered boardwalk that commences at the Fastnet Shipping site. The proposed Greenway Link follows the existing road alignment of Bilberry Road and Merchants Quay, and follows existing road and ground levels. The proposal is therefore deemed unlikely to have a significant adverse effect on flood conveyance.

The scheme proposes to remove two short stretches of flood wall in order to allow access to the proposed boardwalk opposite Waterford Distillery. In addition, two further stretches of walls will be removed for the boardwalk at Fastnet Shipping. Floodgates will be provided for these breaks in the wall, and they will be added to the WCCC list of flood gate sites that require action by the outdoor staff under specific weather condition that may lead to flooding.

Surface water runoff generated from the hardstanding of the proposed development will be collected by sealed drainage system, e.g. gullies, storm sewer pipes and discharge to the proposed attenuation system and discharge into the existing watercourse via by-pass oil interceptor. The design of the permanent drainage system shall be in accordance with the local authority requirements and Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SuDS).

There is no significant potential for the proposal to cause an adverse effect on flood risk elsewhere as a result of effect on overland flood conveyance or displacement of flood storage.

6.3 Built Heritage

An Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment of the proposed scheme has concluded that there is no significant risk of negative impacts on archaeological or architectural resources. Where the maximum impact of the works occurs, east of the bridge, the land is newly forged in the 19th century. Whilst there will always be the possibility of a stray find in a riverine situation, extensive examination of the mudflats in 2010 did not yield any results. The overriding result of the scheme would serve to enhance the enjoyment of cultural heritage providing greater access and safety to pedestrians and cyclists from the city to its origins on the banks of the Suir and westwards to the countryside. The Development Applications Unit and the Heritage and Planning Division of the National Monuments Service of the Dept. Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht will assess and decide on the best approach to ensure complete protection of as yet unknown archaeological material within the proposed works where as yet undisturbed ground is to be affected, which in the case of this development is minimal.

7 Conclusion

From an economic, safety, physical activity, environmental, accessibility and social inclusion and integration perspective the proposed Greenway Link is an important development for the city and county of Waterford. Following a review of constraints, alternatives, and environmental impacts, planning permission is being sought for the Greenway Link as shown on Drawings No. 18_200-CSE-GEN-XX-DR-C-2216 – 2219.

The development will provide a clear and dedicated link between the Waterford Greenway and Waterford City Centre. The scheme will also have the ability to connect the Waterford Greenway to possible future schemes, such as the Waterford to New Ross Greenway. This will generate positive economic benefits to businesses and consumers. It supports Smarter Travel objectives by providing a safe improved link for pedestrians and cyclists.

This project provides improved safety by delivering a facility to current design standards and best practice, and will provide high quality infrastructure for all active transport users including the mobility impaired and those with other disabilities.

The proposed scheme will provide increased opportunity for the residents of Waterford City and county to engage in physical activity through the provision of high quality cycle and pedestrian facilities. This will assist in encouraging modal shift from vehicular traffic to healthier modes of travel such as walking and cycling.

8 Legislation

Waterford City & County Council is now submitting the proposed scheme for the necessary planning procedure required by the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), in accordance with the requirements of Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended),

The following extract is taken from the Planning and Development Regulations 2001

‘PART 8

Requirements in respect of Specified Development by, on Behalf of, or in Partnership with Local Authorities

Development which relates to establishment to which the Major Accident Regulations apply.

79. *Any development of a type referred to in article 145 shall be subject to the requirements of Chapter 4 of Part 11 in addition to the requirements of this Part.*

Development prescribed for purposes for section 179 of Act.

80. (1) *Subject to sub-article (2) and sub-section (6) of section 179 of the Act, the following classes of development, hereafter in this Part referred to as “proposed development”, are hereby prescribed for the purposes of section 179 of the Act—*

(a) the construction or erection of a house,

(b) the construction of a new road or the widening or realignment of an existing road, where the length of the new road or of the widened or realigned portion of the existing road, as the case may be, would be—

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- (i) in the case of a road in an urban area, 100 metres or more, or
- (ii) in the case of a road in any other area, 1 kilometre or more,
- (c) the construction of a bridge or tunnel,
- (d) the construction or erection of pumping stations, treatment works, holding tanks or outfall facilities for waste water or storm water,
- (e) the construction or erection of water intake or treatment works, overground aqueducts, or dams or other installations designed to hold water or to store it on a long-term basis,
- (f) drilling for water supplies,
- (g) the construction of a swimming pool,
- (h) the use of land, or the construction or erection of any installation or facility, for the disposal of waste, not being—
- (i) development which comprises or is for the purposes of an activity in relation to which a waste licence is required or
- (ii) development consisting of the provision of a bring facility which comprises not more than 5 receptacles,
- (i) the use of land as a burial ground,
- (j) the construction or erection of a fire station, a library or a public toilet, and
- (k) any development other than those specified in paragraphs (a) to (j), the estimated cost of which exceeds €126,000, not being development consisting of the laying underground of sewers, mains, pipes or other apparatus.
- (2) (a) Subject to paragraph (b), this Part shall not apply to proposed development that a local authority that is a planning authority proposes to carry out outside its functional area.
- (b) This Part shall apply to development of a class specified in sub-article (1) (b) or (c) that a local authority that is a planning authority proposes to carry out outside its functional area.
- (c) This Part shall also apply to development which is carried out within the functional area of a local authority that is a planning authority, on behalf of, or in partnership with the local authority, pursuant to a contract with the local authority.'

In accordance with section 80(1)(k) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 Part 8 planning approval is required for the Development the Bilberry to City Centre Waterford Greenway Link.

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Appendix A: Drawings (at A3 size – also on display at A1 size)

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Appendix B: Part 8 Development Notice

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