

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) examines the potential impacts which may result from the development of a proposed Grade Separated Interchange at the location of the existing accommodation bridge spanning the M7 at Osberstown. A location plan for the proposed interchange is presented in Figure 1.1.

The proposed interchange will form part of a regional integrated transport plan for Naas and its environs. It is intended that it will relieve peak period traffic congestion currently experienced at the existing 'Maudlins' and 'Newhall' M7 interchanges as well as the local and regional road network. The interchange will facilitate the planned development of zoned land within the Naas Northwest Quadrant and has the potential to provide connectivity to the Regional Road Network to the north of the M7 (R407 Sallins Bypass). The interchange may also provide for transfer to the rail network and the proposed Sallins / Regional Railway Interchange Station.

The proposed Grade Separated Interchange Layout and surrounding area is shown in Figure 1.2.

The proposed interchange which is described in detail in Chapter 4 will comprise the following:

- Single interchange roundabout formed by two bridges across the existing M7.
- Merge/Diverge Slip Roads.
- Auxiliary lanes.
- Northern spur for future connectivity to the proposed Sallins Bypass.
- Provision of a new road link in the order of 0.2km in length connecting the interchange roundabout with the existing Naas western distributor road.
- Appropriate landscaping scheme (as described in Section 9.6.1).

1.2 Purpose of this Report

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has been prepared as part of the statutory development consent procedure for the proposed plan to develop a grade separated interchange in accordance with the Roads Act 1993 (Section 50) and its subsequent amendments (including the EC Environmental Impact Assessment (Amendment) Regulations 1999), and highlights the proposed mitigation measures, where applicable.

1.3 Scope

This EIS is a statement of the likely effects of the proposed development on the environment and identifies a suite of potential mitigation measures.

1.4 Planning Procedure for the Proposed Development

The Grade Separated Interchange at the location of the existing accommodation bridge spanning the M7 at Osberstown is being pursued pursuant to the provisions of the Roads Act 1993 as amended and the proposed Scheme and EIS will be submitted pursuant to Sections 49 and 51 of the Roads Act 1993, as amended, to the Strategic Infrastructure Division of An Bord Pleanála for approval, this Scheme coming within the definition of strategic infrastructure development.

1.5 EIS Methodology

1.5.1 Introduction

The EPA provides two advisory documents in relation to the preparation and content of an EIS including:

- Guidelines on the Information to be contained in an EIS (EPA, 2002), which provides guidance on the issues to be addressed in the EIS.
- Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of an EIS (EPA, 2003);

Due cognisance was also paid to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (NRA, 2007) and the Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide (NRA, 2006).

1.5.2 General EIS Methodology

The EIS methodology is a systematic analysis of the proposed development in relation to the existing environment. The overall methodology for preparation of the EIS is discussed under the following headings:

- Basis for Assessment
- Impact Assessment and Mitigation
- Significance of Environmental Issues

1.5.2.1 Basis for Assessment

The impact assessment examined the existing conditions of the proposed development area for each element of assessment and then determined the potential impacts associated with the construction and operational phases.

The impact assessment compared a range of scenarios:

- The Do-Minimum Scenario assumes that the junction is not constructed with traffic scenarios for 2010 and 2025. The 2025 traffic scenario does not include for the Sallins Bypass.
- The ‘Do-Something’ Scenario assumes that the junction is operational and development of the surrounding area occurs in line with the current Development Plan zoning. The assessment utilised traffic predictions for 2010 and 2025.
- The ‘Do-Something with Sallins Link Road’ Scenario assumes that the junction is operational with connectivity to the proposed R407 Sallins Bypass. The assessment utilised traffic predictions for 2025.

The geographical area of investigation for this EIS incorporates the extent of the likely construction impacts and operational impacts. The area of direct construction impact has been taken to be all land within the proposed scheme boundary. The overall study area for each environmental aspect is discussed in the relevant chapter.

1.5.2.2 Impact Assessment and Mitigation

The preparation of the EIS was an iterative process, which by its very nature was inherently linked with the design development process. The approach adopted in the assessment and preparation of the EIS document was generally based on that recommended in the EPA ‘Guidelines on the Information to be contained in an Environmental Impact Statements 2002’.

A preliminary design was developed and the potential impacts of the proposal on the receiving environment were identified along with mitigation measures

1.5.2.3 Significance of Environmental Issues

An initial description of the proposed scheme was prepared and a baseline survey of the existing environment undertaken. Next the likely impacts of the scheme on the receiving environment were addressed.

In assessing the significance of impacts, the probability, duration, magnitude and intensity of the impacts were considered together with the condition and the significance of the existing environment. Detailed methodologies utilised for the assessment of each environmental aspect are included in the relevant EIS chapter.

Where no impact or a positive impact was predicted to occur, the design of the scheme remained unchanged. In the case where significant adverse impacts were predicted, mitigation measures were proposed to avoid or minimise impacts. Where feasible these measures were then incorporated into the final design of the proposed scheme.

1.5.3 EIS Format

The format used in this EIS document seeks to enable the reader to access the issues of interest as easily as possible. Therefore, the EIS document has been divided accordingly:

- Non-Technical Summary
- Main Text
- Figures & Photographs
- Appendices

The Main Text of the EIS has been further divided into the following categories:

- Chapter 1 – Introduction
- Chapter 2 – Planning and Policy Context
- Chapter 3 – Background to the Project / Alternatives
- Chapter 4 – The Proposed Scheme
- Chapter 5 – Transportation Assessment
- Chapter 6 – Material Assets
- Chapter 7 – Community
- Chapter 8 – Archaeology, Architecture and Cultural Heritage
- Chapter 9 – Landscape and Visual
- Chapter 10 – Noise and Vibration
- Chapter 11 – Air Quality
- Chapter 12 – Climate
- Chapter 13 – Flora and Fauna
- Chapter 14 – Soils, Geology and Hydrogeology
- Chapter 15 – Surface Water and Drainage
- Chapter 16 – Summary of Mitigation Measures, Residual Impacts and Interaction of Effects

Each element of the environment is generally described under the following headings appearing in each chapter:

- Introduction
- Methodology
- Existing Environment
- Predicted Impacts
- Mitigation Measures
- Residual Impacts

1.6 Consultation Process

Public consultation for the proposed interchange is undertaken in two phases:

- Informal Consultation – took place during the preparation of the EIS.
- Formal Consultation – a statutory requirement to be undertaken following the submission of the proposed interchange scheme to An Bord Pleanála.

1.6.1 Informal Consultation

Consultations with the community were undertaken during the planning, preliminary design development and the EIS preparation phase of the Scheme.

This consultation consisted of two open information sessions on Thursday 6th and Friday 7th September 2007 at the GAA Club, Naas. The sessions were advertised in the Kildare Nationalist newspaper for the week ending August 24th 2007 and also on local radio (Kildare FM) where a Community Notice was broadcast over the period 20th – 23rd August. In addition, information on the proposed scheme was displayed at Kildare County Council offices from August 23rd until September 24th.

These two open information sessions provided an opportunity for the general public to review and comment on the proposed scheme. Over the two sessions approximately 40-50 people attended.

There were two responses received following the public consultation. From these, the following potential impacts of the scheme were identified as very important:

	Relevant EIS Chapter
• Improvement in traffic conditions	Chapter 5
• Improvement in road safety	Chapter 5
• Impact on community near the proposed scheme	Chapter 7
• Improving the environment of Naas	Various
• Impact on pedestrians and cyclists	Chapters 5 and 7
• Effect on archaeology and historic sites	Chapter 8
• Impact on commerce or industry	Chapter 7

These issues and concerns were incorporated into the design of the scheme where possible and addressed within relevant chapters of the EIS (as above). The responses were in general supportive of the scheme particularly of the potential link with the Sallins Bypass.

1.6.2 Formal Statutory Consultation

Statutory consultation is required to be undertaken after the EIS has been submitted to An Bord Pleanála and details of this statutory consultation will be advertised in accordance with the provisions of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended).

The EIS will be available for inspection on the Kildare County Council website (<http://kildare.ie/countycouncil/index.html>) and at the following locations:

Kildare County Council	Naas Town Council	Kildare County Council
Aras Chill Dara	Aras Chill Dara	National Roads Design Office
Devoy Park	Devoy Park	Maudlins
Naas	Naas	Naas
Co. Kildare	Co. Kildare	Co. Kildare

Written submissions in relation to the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development may be made to An Bord Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1 prior to the date specified in the newspaper notices to be published.

1.7 Study and Design Team

The Preliminary Design and EIS have been prepared by Arup Consulting Engineers.

The EIS team drew primarily on in-house resources in traffic and highway engineering, construction activities, environmental and planning management. Specialist technical contribution was provided in:

- Noise and Vibration Assessment by AWN Consulting Limited.
- Flora and Fauna Assessment by EirEco Environmental Consultants.
- Landscape and Visual Assessment by BHL Landscape Design.
- Community Impacts by Optimize Consultant
- Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage Assessment by Valerie J. Keeley Limited.

The assistance of all organisations and individuals consulted during the preparation of the EIS and the assistance of local residents over the course of the investigations is gratefully acknowledged.

1.8 Difficulties Encountered During the Study

No particular difficulties were encountered in the preparation of the EIS. Any technical limitations associated with assessment of an environmental aspect are detailed in the relevant EIS chapter.

1.9 References

Roads Act 1993 (No. 14 of 1993) Government Publications, Dublin, Ireland.

Roads (Amendment) Act 1998 (No. 23 of 1998) Government Publications, Dublin, Ireland.

Roads Act 2007 (No. 34 of 2007) Government Publications, Dublin, Ireland.

EC (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 1999 (SI No. 93 of 1999) Government Publications, Dublin, Ireland.

Environmental Protection Agency. 2003. Advice Notes on Current Practice in the preparation of an EIS.

Environmental Protection Agency. 2002. Guidelines on the Information to be contained in an EIS.

European Communities (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations, 1998 (S.I. No. 351 of 1998) Government Publications, Dublin, Ireland.

European Commission (EC) Environmental Assessment Directive 85/337/EC as amended by Environmental Assessment Directive 97/11/EC.

National Roads Authority. Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. 2007.

National Roads Authority. 2006. Environmental Impact Assessment of National Road Schemes – A Practical Guide.

Planning & Development Act 2000 (No. 30 of 2000). Government Publications, Dublin, Ireland.