



N62 Slievenamon Road Phase 2 Road Improvement Scheme

Part 8 Planning Report

July 2022

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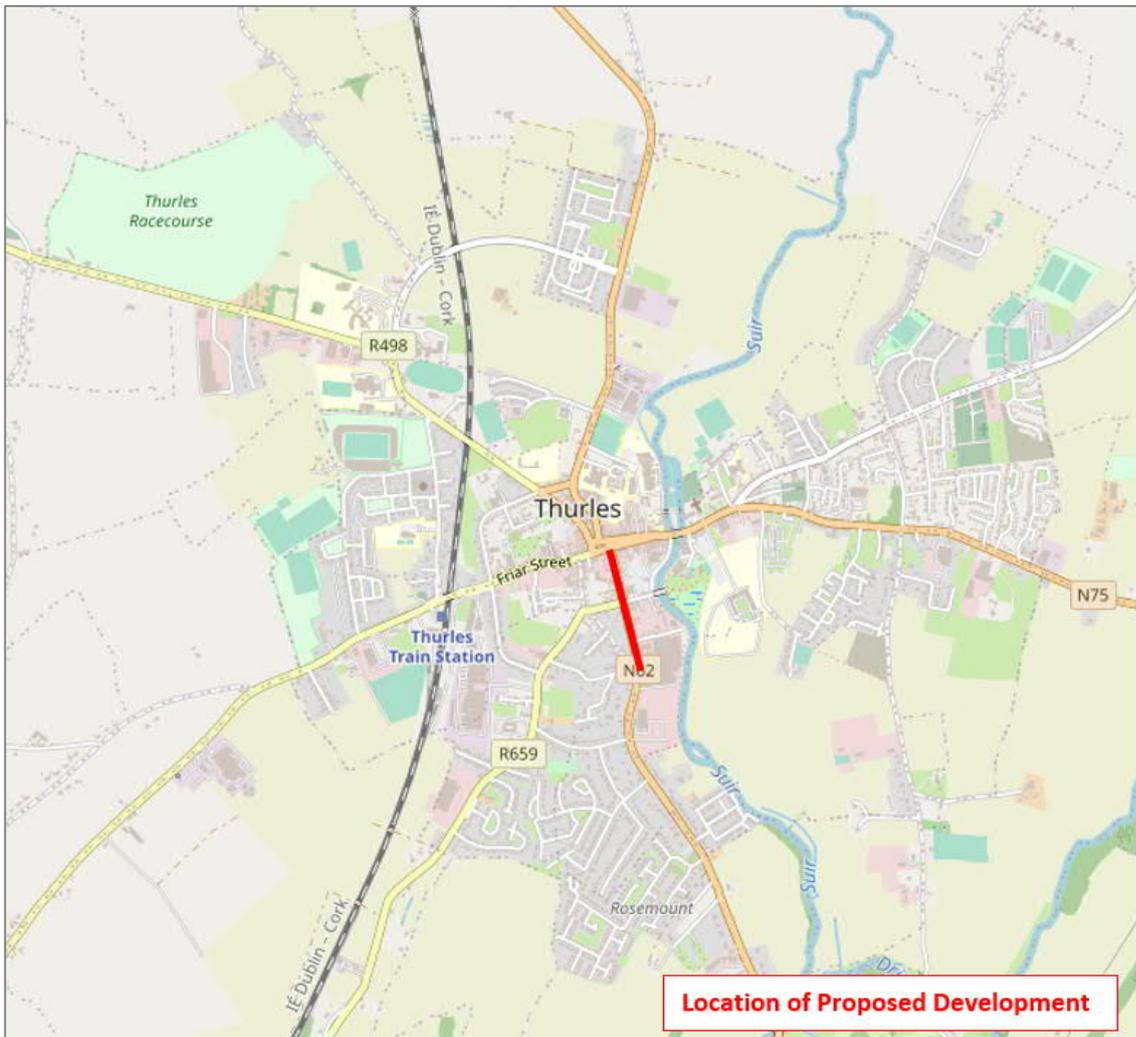
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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

This planning report accompanies a Part 8 application by Tipperary County Council (TCC) for a proposed road safety and pavement improvement scheme along an approximate 450m section of the N62 Slievenamon Road in Thurles, Co. Tipperary. The location of the proposed development is shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Location of Proposed Development



Source: © OpenStreetMap contributors

Part XI (Development by Local and State Authorities) of the *Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended* (hereafter referred to as the Act), and Part 8 (Requirements in Respect of Specified Development by, on behalf of, or in Partnership with Local Authorities) of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended* (hereafter referred to as 'the Regulations'), set out the requirements of the legislation as it pertains to Local Authority Own Development.

Part 8, Article 80, of the Regulations outlines the prescribed classes of development for the purposes of Part 8. In this regard, the proposed development falls under the following class of development:

Section 80(1)(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—*

in the case of a road in an urban area, 100 metres or more...”

Also applicable, is Section 80(1)(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.”*

This report is prepared for inclusion with the Plans and Particulars being made available for public inspection in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Development Act and Regulations. It describes the need for and objectives of the proposed development and provides a detailed description of it, as well as outlining how the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with planning objectives and policies and thus the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

1.2 Need and Objectives of Proposed Development

The current public realm is deteriorating along Slievenamon Road as shown in Photo 1.1, and is worsened by vehicular parking on footpaths which results in footpath surface cracking and breakup. Unauthorised parking on footpaths is also reducing usability for pedestrians, especially for mobility restricted or disabled people. The proposed development seeks to address this issue through increased footpath widths (where implementable) and dedicated on-street parking spaces.

Photo 1.1: Existing Public Realm



Source: Mott MacDonald

Although the N62 Slievenamon Road has not been identified as a high collision location in historic reviews by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Road Safety Section, an evaluation of the latest Road Safety Inspections for the N62 shows deficiencies with respect to the road layout, signage and road markings. These deficiencies increase the risk of collisions with pedestrians and vehicles.

Furthermore, Road Safety Inspections carried out on the N62 in May 2018 recommended that, *‘this section of the N62 inside the 50km/h zone should be upgraded to improve safety and comfort for vulnerable road users and to reduce the severity and frequency of traffic collisions.’*

The completed Liberty Square public realm enhancement project represents an important project for Thurles which is hoped will be a catalyst for growth in the commercial centre of the town and enhance the attractiveness of Thurles as a place to live and a place for investment and employment. The proposed development along Slievenamon Road will link Liberty Square and continue the enhancement of the public realm between Liberty Square and another commercial node within the town, Thurles Shopping Centre.

The proposed development is intrinsically a road safety and pedestrian safety scheme which has incorporated a strong focus on the enhancement of the public realm. The delivery of the project objectives reflects both the safety aspects and the continued renewal of Thurles town, especially through the redevelopment of the public realm. The project objectives are detailed hereunder;

- **Objective 1** – Promote traffic calming along the N62 and maintain reduced speeds through the urban core.
- **Objective 2** – Ensure all crossings are conspicuous with buildouts and removal of obstructions to improve visibility for motorists and vulnerable road users.
- **Objective 3** – Increase safety and comfort for vulnerable road users through improved pedestrian infrastructure in line with DMURS principles.
- **Objective 4** – Provide an improved sense of place to promote walking and cycling over private motor vehicle use in the town.
- **Objective 5** – Support national, regional and local policies to increase the modal share for walking and cycling within Thurles Town.

1.3 Structure of the Part 8 Application

The Part 8 application includes the following documentation listed within Table 1.1 below. Additionally, all documentation is available for review and download on TCC's consultation portal <https://consultations.tipperarycoco.ie/consultations>.

Table 1.1: Structure of Part 8 Application

Item No.	Document Type	Document Name
1	Statutory Particulars	Site Notice
2		Newspaper Notice
3		Schedule of Drawings
4	Drawings	Drawings
5	Planning and Environmental Reports	Part 8 Planning Report
6		Preliminary Examination for Environmental Impact Assessment
7		Screening for Appropriate Assessment
8		Cultural Heritage Assessment
9		Photomontages

2 Description of Development

2.1 Project Location

The proposed development is located in Thurles town centre, Co. Tipperary, and comprises improvement works to a section of the existing N62 national road known as the Slievenamon Road. It extends from the junction of Slievenamon Road and Liberty Square at the northern extent, for a distance of approximately 450m along the N62 to the Thurles Shopping Centre roundabout, which forms the southern extent of the project [central grid co-ordinates at the junction of Slievenamon Road and Fianna Road (Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM) grid reference: 612660E, 658463N)].

2.2 Project Description

The proposed development is presented in Figure 2.1 and will comprise the following:

- upgraded road layout with reduced carriageway width (approximately 6.5m)
- improved junctions with enhanced infrastructure for pedestrians and vulnerable road users
- widened footways with new paving (widths ranging from 1.8m to 2.5m)
- road resurfacing
- upgraded public lighting comprising 15no. lighting columns at 25m intervals
- 416m of 225mm diameter surface water drainage infrastructure
- enhanced soft and hard landscaping including the provision of upgraded street furniture.
- associated site works

Figure 2.1: Proposed Development – General Layout

Northern Section (Chainage 0m – 220m)



Southern Section (Chainage 220m – 380m and roundabout)



Source: Extract from Mott MacDonald Drawing 229100430-MMD-0100-01-DR-C-0101

While every effort has been made in the design to prioritise pedestrians and provide minimum footway widths in line with principles of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMRUS) (Government of Ireland, 2019), this scheme is a retrofit situation where available space is constrained by established building lines and property boundaries.

2.3 Road Layout

The proposed road layout improvement works will reduce the existing road carriageway by approximately 6.5m width. This will allow for a number of beneficial improvements along the road for pedestrians and road safety, particularly at existing junctions.

Footpaths of 1.8m width or greater will be established along the northbound carriageway. Additionally, pedestrian footpaths will be of 2.5m width or greater (with localised 2m pinch points) along the southbound carriageway.

Approximately 11 no. formalised parking spaces will be established on the northbound carriageway between Liberty Square and Thomond/Fianna Road junction. An additional 12 no. formalised parking spaces will be created at the southern end of the project proximal to Kavanagh Place. Additionally, there will be a number of formalised parking spaces established along the southbound carriageway between Thomond/Fianna Road junction and the Thurles Shopping Centre roundabout. Existing car parking spaces reserved for Thurles Garda Station will be retaining.

Raised table pedestrian crossing facilities will be provided at the Thomond Road and Kavanagh Place junctions.

The proposed project kerbing along the Slievenamon Road will tie into existing kerb lines along the N62.

2.4 Drainage

The proposed development requires new surface water drainage within the public road which will replicate the existing arrangement and drain to the existing storm water and combined drainage networks adjacent to the N62.

The drainage design has been prepared in accordance with best practice standards listed below:

- TII Publications for Drainage
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) Government of Ireland, 2019
- CIRIA Guidance Document C753: The SuDS Manual, 2015
- The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS): Volume 2 New Development, Dublin City Council, March 2005

It is proposed to provide a new surface drainage network which will connect to existing sections of surface water networks adjacent to the scheme extents. A total of approximately 416m of 225mm diameter surface water drains will be laid within Slievenamon Road. A kerb and gully system will be constructed to convey run-off from the pavement surface to the surface water network.

As part of the proposed development, sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) are proposed, in accordance with 'The SuDS Manual' and DMURS. The proposed development incorporates SuDS elements into the landscaping and drainage design via the inclusion of vegetated filter strips, where possible, at soft landscaping locations, and through tree pits.

The inclusion of soft landscaping will reduce the overall amount of surface water run-off which enters the surface water drainage system.

2.5 Public Lighting

It is proposed to upgrade the lighting along the N62 Slievenamon Road scheme in accordance with TII Publication DN-LHT-03038 Design of Road Lighting for the National Road Network.

The preliminary design provides 15 no. lighting columns along the N62 at approximately 25m spacings. Lighting columns are to be 8m overground height, manufactured from steel with a tapered octagonal section, root mounted, hot dip galvanised to BS EN 1461.

Feature lighting columns similar to those installed as part of the Liberty Square Redevelopment will be used on the southbound carriageway between Chainage 0+000 and 0+110 to reflect the objectives of the proposed development as set out in Section 1.2.

2.6 Utilities

It is intended to maintain the existing services in their current location within the carriageway and/or footway. Where existing services are directly impacted by the works (i.e. new kerbline, improved pavement foundation etc.), the protection or relocation of services will be required in accordance with the relevant service provider's guidelines.

2.7 Traffic Management

Traffic management will be required during the construction phase of the works. A Preliminary Temporary Traffic Management Plan (pTTMP) has been prepared to highlight a non-exhaustive list of potential diversion routes that may be utilised by the Contractor in the design and preparation of the Traffic Management Plan to be implemented during the construction phase of the works. The pTTMP also outlines the minimum requirements for traffic management in the execution of the works in accordance with current industry best practice.

A detailed traffic management plan will be produced by the Contractor following consultation and agreement with the Gardaí and Tipperary County Council in advance of construction of the scheme. The Traffic Management Plan shall comply with the requirements of Chapter 8 of the Traffic Signs Manual August 2019 & the Temporary Traffic Management Document Suite. The Contractor shall also take account of the "Guidance for the Control and Management of Traffic at Road Works" Second Edition issued by the Department of Transport (2010) in the implementation of the plan and the "Guidelines for Managing Openings in Public Roads" Second Edition issued by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (2015).

2.8 Construction Programme

It is anticipated that the construction will commence in the third quarter of 2023, with the construction programme lasting for an anticipated duration of 14 months. The proposed projected is expected to be complete by the end of 2024. An outline of the construction programme is detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Indicative Construction programme

Stage	Stage Description	Duration (Months)	Month														
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
1	Site Setup (incl. Traffic Management)	1	█														
2	Setting Out	1	█														
3	Site Clearance	2	█	█													
4	Ducting & Drainage	6		█	█	█	█	█	█								
5	Kerbs, Footways & Paved Areas	6				█	█	█	█	█							
6	Road Pavement	4							█	█	█	█					
7	Public Lighting	3								█	█	█					
8	Accommodation Works	3									█	█	█				
9	Landscaping & Street Furniture	3										█	█	█			
10	Traffic Signs and Road Markings	2												█	█		
11	Removal of Traffic Management & Site Handover	1															█

Notes & Assumptions:

1. This programme is indicative only and will change as further information becomes available during detail design.
2. The durations of individual tasks have been calculated drawing on experience of previous projects of a similar scale and nature. The final construction programme will be the responsibility of the Works Contractor.
3. Traffic Management arrangements have not been confirmed and therefore it is assumed that day-time works with stop-go measures will be implemented

2.9 Operational Phase

The proposed works will enhance the public realm and safety for vulnerable road users through the renewal of the pavement surface, improving pedestrian infrastructure and widening (where feasible) of the footpath along a 450m section of the Slievenamon Road. The design life of the proposed pavement works is 20 years.

3 Planning Policy Assessment

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the sectoral and planning policy context at a national, regional and local level, demonstrating that the need for the proposed development is consistent with the objectives of these – especially in terms of improving this section of the N62 in order to improve accessibility and road safety, and will therefore contribute towards the achievement of proper planning and the sustainable development of the area.

3.2 Sectoral Policy

3.2.1 Road Safety Authority Road Safety Strategy 2021-2030

This sets out targets to be achieved in terms of road safety and the policy to achieve these targets. The primary target is a reduction of road collision fatalities on Irish roads to 25 per million population or less by 2020 and a provisional target for the reduction of serious injuries to 61 per million population or less by 2020.

“Some of the key interventions that this strategy will deliver include significant investment in the provision of safe, segregated infrastructure to protect those walking and cycling on our roads, and initiatives to promote modal shift from motor vehicle travel to support environmental, safety and health objectives.”

The strategy identifies seven Safe System priority intervention areas, one of these being:

- Safe roads and roadsides – To improve the protective quality of our roads and infrastructure.

Under the above intervention area, a number of high-impact actions are identified, including:

- Delivering *“an average of 60 road safety improvement schemes and fund an average of four minor realignment schemes on national roads per year, to create forgiving roadsides, self-explaining roads and a safe environment for vulnerable road users*
- *Over the period 2021 to 2025, 1,000 km of segregated walking and cycling facilities will be constructed or under construction on the national, local and regional road network, to provide safe cycling and walking arrangements for users of all ages”.*

3.2.2 National Sustainable Mobility Policy

In April 2022 the Department of Transport published the National Sustainable Mobility Policy (NSMP), it replaces existing active travel and public transport policy as set out in the 2009 policy documents - Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future and the National Cycle Policy 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 and is accompanied by an Action Plan to 2025. The Action Plan contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and 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.

The Plan seeks to continue to make existing and new walking, cycling and public transport networks more accessible for all users. The Plan's vision for sustainability mobility is *"To connect people and places with sustainable mobility that is safe, green, accessible and efficient"*.

The Vision is based on three core objectives and ten goals; relevant goals for the proposed development include:

- Goal 1: Improve mobility safety
- Goal 5: Encourage people to choose sustainable mobility over the private car
- Goal 6: Take a whole of journey approach to mobility, promoting inclusive access for all
- Goal 7: Design infrastructure according to Universal Design Principles and the Hierarchy of Road Users model

3.2.3 TII Sustainability Implementation Plan – Our Future

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) has a vision to lead in the delivery and operation of sustainable transport, enabling public transport networks to drive inclusive growth, create job opportunities, enhance the well-being of all persons including vulnerable groups, strengthen resilience to address climate change, maintain the TII's commitment to the environment and continue to prioritise safety.

TII have six sustainability policies which ensure that the Sustainability Implementation Plan is delivered, these are:

- Provide effective, efficient and equitable mobility
- Enable safe and resilient networks and services
- Collaborate for a holistic approach
- Deliver end-to-end improvements
- Transition to net zero
- Create total value for society

The Plan recognises the need for evolving change within the transport system to ensure sustainable transport solutions are provided, it seeks to provide in the next five years *"expansion of access for all to active travel e,g cycle lanes, footpaths, greenways and segregated from other modes where possible"*. Within the next 10 years it seeks to provide *"cycling and walking to be safe, enjoyable and accessible and the first choice for local journeys (combined with public transport for longer journeys)", "reduced impact of vehicles in our towns and city centres, enabling more attractive and accessible public spaces" and "visibly more space within our towns and villages, enhancing safety of movement and liveability"*.

Project Response

The strategic goals of the Government to promote a greater share of sustainable modes as well as creating more liveable urban environments is evidenced throughout the sectoral policy noted above. The importance of changing behaviours and reducing reliance on private car use through the provision of a safer environment for vulnerable road users is also reflected in the objectives for the proposed development – identified in Section 1.2, and associated elements of the subject proposed development. The proposed development is supported and will help to fulfil the sectoral policy objectives on road user safety, enhanced facilities for pedestrians and vulnerable users and reducing private car journeys on a local scale.

3.3 National Planning Policy

3.3.1 Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework

Project Ireland 2040 - National Planning Framework (hereafter referred to as the NPF) published by the Government in February 2018, is a 20-year planning framework designed to guide public and private investment, to create and promote opportunities for Irish citizens, and to protect and enhance Ireland's built and natural environment.

The main ambition of the NPF is to achieve sustainable development through the compact growth of cities, towns and villages, with growth which is more evenly distributed at a regional level. The NPF seeks to ensure that towns and villages continue to remain attractive places to live. Placemaking is a multi-faceted process and attractiveness of the public realm and providing a safe environment for pedestrians, is vital to the success of our towns and villages. The proposed development supports a number of National Strategic Outcomes (NSOs) and National Policy Objectives (NPOs), the most relevant to the proposed development are detailed below.

NSO2 Enhanced Regional Accessibility

The N62 is a national road which connects Templemore and Thurles and these towns and their hinterlands to the M8 towards Cork in a southbound direction, or toward Portlaoise in a northbound direction. The NPF states, under Inter-Urban Roads, that it is an objective to *'maintain the strategic capacity and safety of national roads network including planning for future capacity enhancements.'*

The proposed development will not result in any changes to traffic volumes but will ensure that increased safety for vehicles and pedestrians, is provided.

NSO4 Sustainable Mobility

The proposed development will help to promote active modes of transport by creating a safer pedestrian environment for all. The proposed development helps to contribute towards providing sustainable mobility through providing safer and accessible choices/ options for walking and cycling.

NSO7 Enhanced Amenities and Heritage

NSO7 seeks to ensure that our cities, towns and villages are attractive and can offer a good quality of life. It states that it requires investment in well-designed public realm, which includes public spaces, parks and streets, as well as recreational infrastructure. It also includes amenities in rural areas, such as national and forest parks, activity-based tourism and trails such as greenways, blueways and peatways. This is linked to and must integrate with, our built, cultural and natural heritage, which has intrinsic value in defining the character of urban and rural areas and adding to their attractiveness and sense of place.

National Policy Objective 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.

National Policy Objective 6

Regenerate and rejuvenate cities, towns and villages of all types and scale as environmental assets, that can accommodate changing roles and functions, increased residential population and employment activity and enhanced levels of amenity and design quality, in order to sustainably influence and support their surrounding area.

National Policy Objective 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.

National Policy Objective 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.

National Policy Objective 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”.

3.3.2 National Development Plan 2021-2030

The National Development Plan (NDP) details several funding schemes which support and are directly aligned with the objectives of the proposed development. This includes the allocation of funding for active travel, road safety works and public realm enhancements.

The NDP sets out details of a new National Active Travel Programme which will complement active travel investments in cities, towns and villages as described in NSO 3: Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities and NSO 4: Sustainable Mobility and deliver significant additional walking and cycling infrastructure around the country by 2025. The Government is firmly committed to encouraging the use of walking, cycling and other active travel methods, and has allocated an annual investment of €360 million for the period 2021-2025.

In addition to maintaining the regional and local road network in good repair, it is a priority of the Government to carry out targeted improvements to sections of the network. This includes addressing sections of road with poor safety characteristics and poor safety records, as well as also minor projects where the appraisal demonstrates a significant benefit in areas such as support for the local economy and the Town Centre First policy, improved accessibility (including areas remote from the major national road network), protection of lifeline routes, and traffic management.

The renewal and rejuvenation of rural towns is also detailed within the NDP through the Rural Regeneration and Development Programme which funds the development of public realm enhancements to support NSO 3 of the NPF.

Project Response

The proposed development supports the NSO's and NPO's aforementioned, as it directly supports sustainable, zero-carbon personal mobility options (i.e. walking and cycling) through enhanced and widened footpaths which in turn provides increased safety for pedestrian movements within Thurles town. Consequently, these safety improvements contribute to the quality of life, and the design quality has sought to provide a continuity with the Liberty Square development and create an attractive and rejuvenated town centre. Funding for the proposed development has been provided through a number of schemes within the NDP which in turn are aligned to support the fulfilment of NSO's and NPO's.

The drawings submitted in support of this application demonstrate how the public realm area will be improved through the provision of safer and wider roadsides to encourage their increased

use and improved connectivity to other areas of the town, as well as through the introduction of planting and other aspects of green infrastructure – e.g. SuDS.

3.4 Regional Planning Policy

3.4.1 Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region

The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region (hereafter referred to as the RSES) came into effect on 31st January 2020. The RSES sets out a 12-year strategic regional development framework for the Southern Region, the primary aim of the RSES is to support and implement Project Ireland 2040 - the National Planning Framework (NPF) and National Development Plan 2018-2027.

As the regional tier of the national planning hierarchy, the RSES seeks to achieve coordination, cohesion and balanced regional development. The RSES is also divided into three sub-regional areas, called Strategic Planning Areas (SPAs) - the Mid-West, South-East and South-West. Tipperary County is included in both the Mid-West and South-East areas due to strong linkages between North Tipperary and Limerick, and South Tipperary and Waterford.

The strategic vision of the RSES is to;

- Nurture all our places to realise their full potential
- Protect and enhance our environment
- Successfully combat climate change
- Achieve economic prosperity and improved quality of life for all our citizens
- Accommodate expanded growth and development in suitable locations; and
- Make the Southern Region one of Europe's most creative, innovative, greenest and liveable regions.

A key enabler of the RSES is the revitalising of urban and rural areas through creative and regenerative place-making, through the use of quality urban design to enhance the character of a place and to ensure the development is respectful of the existing physical, social and environmental and cultural context. The RSES also seeks to improve pedestrian accessibility, safety and facilities.

Within the RSES Thurles is identified as a Key Town in the Mid-West and is categorised with strategic attributes, namely “*significant employment potential, regional and inter-regional connectivity*”. Thurles will be a significant national economic and employment driver following its designation as one of six sites within the EU for piloting the next generation of the bio-economy, including bio-energy and bio-technology.

A number of Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) are supported by and in turn support, the proposed development and are detailed herein. Only specifically relevant provisions of the RPOs are reproduced.

RPO11 Key Towns

d) To support and promote vibrant, culturally-rich and revitalised Key Towns with enhanced social inclusion, engaged and active voluntary, non-profit and social enterprise sectors, sustainable neighbourhoods and a high level of environmental quality to ensure an excellent quality of life for all

e) To support and promote placemaking in all Key Towns to include public realm regeneration and urban renewal initiatives and public private partnership approaches for town centre regeneration

RPO21 Thurles

a) To support and promote the role of Thurles as a strategically located urban centre of significant influence in a sub-regional context and driver of county and regional prosperity by harnessing the employment and economic potential of the town together with Lisheen, Thurles National Bio Economy Hub and the emergence of a new economic model focused on two principal pillars: low carbon growth and resource efficiency, while leveraging its strategic location and accessibility on inter-regional road and rail networks

c) To support the delivery of the infrastructural requirements identified for Thurles including support for the delivery of projects submitted under the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund subject to the outcome of the planning process and environmental assessments

RPO 166 Investment in Strategic Inter Regional Multi Modal Connectivity to Metropolitan Areas and Economic Corridors

Under RPO166(c) the following is stated “maintain the efficiency and safety of the existing national primary and secondary roads network by targeted transport demand management and infrastructure improvements.”

RPO 174 Walking and Cycling

RPO 174 sets out objectives to support active health initiative, promote sustainable mobility and promote sustainable modes of transport. The most project relevant objectives under RPO174 are reproduced herein:

- All significant development proposals shall be required to provide a Quality Audit, as referred to in the Design Manual for Roads and Streets
- Place walkability and accessibility by walking mode as a central objective in the planning and design of all new developments/new development areas, transport infrastructure and public transport services
- Enhance pedestrian facilities in all urban areas in the region
- Support accessibility to walking routes for people with disabilities

Project Response

The proposed development supports the place making of Thurles town, which is identified as a Key Town in the RSES, and specifically, the continued investment in the urban renewal of the town. Additionally, the proposed development will support a better quality of life for residents of the town through the enhancement of accessibility for all and pedestrian safety along Slievenamon Road, this is aligned directly with project objective 4.

The proposed development is consistent with the relevant planning objectives of the RSES as it supports active travel within Thurles through the enhancement of pedestrian facilities and seeks to improve the safety of a national primary road network route – the N62, this aligns with project objective 1 and 3, while project objective 5 directly seeks to support regional policies to increase the modal share for walking and cycling within Thurles Town.

The proposed development is considered consistent with, and will provide, both direct and indirect support, to the attainment of the above identified RSES policy objectives.

3.5 Local Planning Policy

3.5.1 North Tipperary County Development Plan 2010-2016 (as extended and varied)

The North Tipperary County Development Plan 2009-2015 (as varied) (hereafter referred to as the CDP) will continue to be the extant statutory development plan for development until the Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 is adopted.

The CDP provides a framework for economic development, and in line with the Corporate Plan is built on the ethos of acknowledging the unique identity of Tipperary. The CDP will ensure that development is designed and managed to protect and enhance local distinctiveness in the county's towns and villages. The CDP sets out a vision centred around sustainable communities, strong economy and a quality environment.

A set of seven Strategic Core Aims underpin the CDP, the most relevant of these is Retail and Town Centre Management (associated with Chapter 6) which seeks *"to promote strong, competitive retail centres in accordance with the settlement and retail hierarchy of the county and to enhance and revitalise town centres as a vibrant and viable place in which to live, work and visit"*.

The CDP states that the quality of public realm design and new development is expected to make an important contribution to the vitality of town centres, as such, design should seek to improve the character and quality of the area. The policies which are most relevant to the proposed development, are RTC7 and RTC9, which are reproduced below:

Policy RTC7 Design and Innovation in the Town Centre

It is the policy of the Council to require new town centre developments to respect the character, visual quality and context of its setting, enhance permeability, protect residential amenity and offer the best solution to its successful integration into the town centre. The Council will expect high quality design and finishes in accordance with the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities – Retail Design Manual (DECLG 2012) and any amendment thereof.

Policy RTC9 Regeneration of Strategic Town Centre Sites

The Council will support and facilitate the appropriate redevelopment of strategic town centre and disused/underused sites as the opportunities arise and in line with existing town centre policies and framework plans for towns and villages.

A specific objective within Chapter 6 Retail and Town Centres also states it is an objective of the Council to enhancement of public realm within towns and villages, as stated below:

SO6-6 It is an objective of the Council to implement proposals to enhance the public realm of town and village centres as opportunities arise in line with the Town Centre Initiative (TCI). Such measures may include the development of town centre public realm plans, village centre enhancement schemes, design guidelines, site development frameworks etc. as the case may be.

The encouragement of a shift towards increased access to retailing by public transport, cycling and walking in accordance with the Government's 'Smarter Travel' programme, is a key policy of the Retail Planning Guidelines. The protection of pedestrian improvements, as will be provided by the proposed development, will help to revitalise town centres and are set out under Policy T15 in Chapter 9 (Transport, Water Services & Environmental Management).

Policy T15: Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

It is the policy of the Council to improve and create additional facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and to improve access for people with mobility needs.

Project Response

The project objectives are directly aligned with the above identified policies, as the project objectives seeks to promote traffic calming and increase safety for vulnerable road users, promote and increase walking and cycling over private motor vehicles and remove obstructions which improve visibility for motorist and pedestrians alike.

The proposed development is consistent with, and expressly supported and facilitated by the Development Plan policies and objectives in respect of the public realm and pedestrian improvements. Implementation of the proposed development will, in addition, contribute towards and fulfil the attainment of the above-identified policies.

3.5.2 Draft Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028

The Draft Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028 (hereafter referred to as the Draft CDP), will replace the two extant county development plans, once adopted. The Vision Statement for the county is to make Tipperary *“a vibrant place where people can live, visit and work in a competitive and resilient economy, a sustainable environment and an inclusive and active community”*. This vision is supported by five core strategic ambitions, with specific relevance to towns of the county; one of these core ambitions states *“vibrant living towns driving the local and regional economy”*.

The Draft CDP supports the “Town Centre First” approach within the Our Rural Future, Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 (Government of Ireland, 2021), which puts the town centre at the heart of decision making. This approach aims to address vibrancy and opportunities for investment and regeneration while promoting residential occupancy. Thurles has recently benefited from investment through the redevelopment of Liberty Square and this continues as the Council and its stakeholders are actively working to achieve the Strategic Regeneration vision of the ‘Thurles Market Quarter’ and ‘Thurles Town Centre Renewal Strategy 2021’.

Chapter 7 Town Centres & Placemaking of the Draft CDP lists several aspects of placemaking which are key to supporting the regeneration of towns in rural areas, central to this is ‘streets as places for people’. These key aspects are stated as:

- To support towns and villages through the Settlement Strategy thus ensuring that new homes are provided in the right locations, at an appropriate scale and density.
- To deliver affordable and ‘lifetime adaptable homes’ for changing needs of households.
- To ensure an integrated planning approach to ensure that employment, infrastructure, services and housing supply are considered together.
- To strengthen the relationship between the movement of people between places, emphasising sustainable transport, public realm and integration of multi modal travel chains.
- Support the regeneration and retrofit of existing building stock, including housing, to tackle vacancy and improve energy efficiency.
- To improve and invest in the quality of the public realm for settlements of all scales.

Within Chapter 7, it is noted that the following planning policy and objective are supported by the proposed development through the inclusion of landscaping and SuDS proposals within the public realm.

Policy 7-3 Require the inclusion of urban greening/landscaping as a fundamental element of design, incorporating features and design solutions such as biodiversity friendly landscaping, nature-based solutions to SuDS and providing attractive routes and facilities for the pedestrian and cyclist.

Objective 7-C Support and facilitate the development of town centre strategies / public realm strategies, where appropriate, liaising closely with residents, visitors and other relevant stakeholders

Chapter 12 - Sustainable Transport, states that the Council aims to support and promote sustainable transport; it is furthermore acknowledged that, linked to the concept of sustainable transport, is the regeneration of the county's towns which will support compact growth and reduce travel demand. The following development plan policy and objective are supported and will be realised by the proposed development.

Policy 12-4 Maintain and protect the safety, capacity and efficiency of Tipperary's roads network and associated junctions in accordance with the Spatial Planning and National Roads Guidelines for Planning Authorities, (DECLG, 2012) and the Trans-European Networks Regulations.

Objective 12-G Through Council own development, such as public realm upgrading and regeneration programmes, seek to encourage the following principles;

- a) Implement improvements to facilitate pedestrians and cyclists and to improve access for people with mobility needs.
- b) Support the '10-minute towns' concept and active travel projects.
- c) Seek funding under the 'Active Travel Towns Initiative' for the implementation of strategies and infrastructure to support walking and cycling.
- d) To consider how existing and proposed transport services may be supported and facilitated through the spatial planning process.
- e) In installing active travel infrastructure, provide a facility for monitoring and reporting of footfall and use.

Project Response

The objectives for the proposed development are aligned with the planning policies and objectives of the Draft CDP referred to above. Project Objective 5 specifically seeks to support local policies to increase the modal share for walking and cycling within Thurles, as such, the proposed development directly supports Objective 12-G. The proposed development will enhance the public realm through the use of quality materials, enhanced public lighting, street furniture and landscaping which will complement the public realm improvements completed at Liberty Square to enhance place making within Thurles town.

The proposed development has been designed in cognisance of the planning policies and objectives, having ensured the inclusion of SuDS and urban landscaping and directly fulfils Policy 7-3.

The proposed development will support the Draft CDP objectives for the safety of vulnerable road users and assist the promotion of active travel in the town through the provision of safety measures comprising raised crossing which will act as a traffic calming measure, roundabout splitter island, widened footpaths and tactile paving at crossings.

3.5.3 Thurles and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015 (as varied and extended)

The Thurles and Environs Development Plan sets out the strategic planning framework, policies and objectives of the Council for land use development within the plan boundary. This plan will be reviewed and eventually replaced by a Local Area Plan. The emphasis in the Plan is to protect and reinforce the role and viability of the Town Centre. Strategic Policies seek to increase urban residential development within the urban area, improve the attractiveness of the town for commerce and investment and protect the historical and cultural character and appearance of the town.

The implementation of the proposed development is supported and supports the following planning policies and objectives relating to town centres and transport.

Policy ECON 3: Environmental Improvement of Existing Employment Areas

It is the policy of the Councils to improve the environment of the employment/commercial areas (including the town centre) through one or more of the following:

- a) Landscaping where development borders other uses
- b) Signage
- c) Streetscape in town
- d) Landscaping of turning and service areas
- e) Improved access for pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities; and
- f) Enhancement of protected structure, areas of archaeological interest or the Architectural Conservation Areas

Policy ECON 8: Townscape Improvement

It is the policy of the Councils to seek improvements to the quality of the town centre as part of new development, in accordance with the standards set out in Chapter 8 on Development Management and the guidelines within the Architectural Conservation Area Design Statement and the Town Centre Strategy

Specific Transport and Accessibility Objectives

T.2 To proceed with a programme of improving and upgrading the pavement network throughout the town, particularly in areas where access is impeded for the mobility impaired, especially the implementation of the Liberty Square Traffic Management Plan

T.3 Provide an improvement in the approach entrance to the town to include:

- a) Traffic calming;
- b) Improved pavements; pavement pull-outs and planting calming and;
- c) Gateway features.

Project Response

The proposed development directly supports a Town Centre First approach and the Thurles and Environs Development Plan policies for the enhancement of the public realm within the centre of the town. The public realm improvements have been designed to a high specification and are in keeping with the completed improvement works at Liberty Square.

As previously stated, project objectives 1, 2 and 3 seek to improve the safety of vulnerable road users through the provision of increase footpath widths, raised crossing, tactile paving and safety measurements such as a roundabout splitter island and removal of obstructions. These project objectives are in alignment with the accessibility objectives identified above.

The proposed development is in accordance with the above policies and objectives of the Thurles and Environs Development Plan.

3.5.4 Thurles Town Centre Renewal Strategy (September 2021)

The Renewal Strategy reflects a collaborative effort between the local authority and the community of Thurles to present an informed and evidence based 10-year vision, grounded on an appreciation of the key characteristics and issues within the town centre.

The Strategy is intended to inform and add weight to future applications for funding by community and business groups in Thurles with the support of the local authority. Specific to Slievenamon Road are plans to retrofit trees along the road as part of the Urban Tree Network envisaged for Thurles, which invokes the original setting of the road which was once treelined.

The Strategy is aligned to the NPF NSO's, with the Urban Tree Network contributing to NSO1 Compact Growth through enhancing the attractiveness, viability and vibrancy of Thurles and NSO7 Enhanced Amenities and Heritage by supporting transformational public realm initiatives to give Town Centre areas back to citizens.

Project Response

The proposed development has been designed to ensure that the vision for Slievenamon Road will be realised, as such, it has included the retrofitting of trees along the route of the proposed development.

3.6 Conclusion

The implementation of the proposed development is supported and aligned with both sectoral and planning policies and objectives throughout the planning hierarchy. The revitalisation of towns in rural areas is important to ensuring that they become centre of growth for employment and residential development. The implementation of the proposed development will follow on from the flagship regeneration project for the town, Liberty Square. The enhancement of Slievenamon Road will further improve the attractiveness of the town while acknowledging the Slievenamon Road as an important link between the traditional commercial town centre and Thurles shopping centre.

In conclusion, it can be seen that the proposed development accords with the overall development principles, policies and objectives set out in the relevant sectoral and planning policy documents.

The subject development proposal will ensure that the N62 will serve its purpose as a national road in a safe manner whilst encouraging a modal split by increased walking and cycling, and an increased attractive public realm.

The proposed development is thus demonstrated to be:

- In accordance with the NPF National Strategic Outcomes of Compact Growth and Sustainable Mobility, and supports the Strategic Investment Priorities for Sustainable Mobility, as detailed in the NDP.
- Aligns with the approach in the RSES to facilitate compact growth to transition to sustainable and lower carbon forms of transport.
- Is supported by the policies and objectives of the County Development Plan and Thurles and Environs Development Plan which support sustainable transport modes and active travel.
- Is in compliance with specific policies within the County and Thurles and Environs Development plans and the Thurles Town Centre Renewal Strategy as they relate to sustainable transport, active travel, enhanced amenities and heritage and reducing the impact of climate change.
- Conforms with policy and objectives promoting and supporting the protection of the environment, green infrastructure, regeneration and improving the townscape and public realm.
- Does not bear any significant unmitigable consequences for the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

The proposed development helps to further the aims of attractive and interactive placemaking within the town and will enhance the attractiveness of the Slievenamon Road. The proposed development provides a link to the quality public realm provided at Liberty Square, through a shared use of materials. The proposed development will increase safety for pedestrians via the

provision of wider footpaths, raised crossing, tactile paving, additional lighting and designated parking spaces to ensure that footpaths are for pedestrian use only.

The proposed development is consistent with the planning policies and objectives of the respective statutory development plans relating to enhanced amenities, supporting the continued development and rejuvenation of town centres, placemaking and integrating a safe environment for pedestrians.

4 Supporting Assessments

4.1 Environmental Impact Assessment

A review of the proposed development in accordance with Article 120(1)(a) [Sub-threshold EIAR] of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended* has been undertaken. Article 120(1)(a) states:

“Where a local authority proposes to carry out a subthreshold development, the authority shall carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development.”

The assessment states that the proposed development is a type of work that has been carried out recently within Thurles town (and completed in 2022), through the redevelopment and renewal of Liberty Square. The proposed development is therefore not exceptional in the context of the existing environment. During the construction phase, noise and dust emissions will occur as a result of the proposed development but are not considered to be significant; additionally these will be managed and mitigated through the implementation of construction best practice measures.

The overall scale of the development is spatially limited as it is limited to a 450m section of the Slievenamon Road. The proposed development is not likely to result in any significant cumulative and/ or in-combination impacts between any granted or approved developments and the proposed development.

The proposed development does not have the potential to impact any ecologically sensitive site, including European Sites, as concluded by the accompanying Screening for Appropriate Assessment. The proposed development is located partially within an Architectural Conservation Area and Zone of Archaeological Potential. The proposed works will not impact any of the Protected Structures or buildings listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage which occur along Slievenamon Road. The proposed development will not result in any significant impacts to any archaeological or cultural heritage sites, it is proposed that archaeological monitoring shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified archaeologist between chainage 0m to 200m as a mitigating measure.

The preliminary examination has concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, and EIA is not required.

A copy of the Preliminary Examination for Environmental Impact Assessment is provided with the Part 8 application documentation.

4.2 Appropriate Assessment

A Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) report has been prepared for the proposed development.

The closest European Site is the Lower River Suir Species Area of Conservation (SAC), which is located approximately 1.60km (straight-line distance) from the southern extent of the proposed development.

The northern extent of the development proposal, situated at the junction between the N62/N75, is located approximately 215m west of the existing Cathedral Street (N75) road bridge and the River Suir. Here, the Lower River Suir SAC is located approximately 4.2km (hydrological distance) downstream from the Cathedral Street bridge across the River Suir.

The AA Screening report concluded that there is no potential for likely significant effects as a result of the proposed development due to the distance separating the Sites from the Project and the dispersal and dilution of any sediment / pollutants that could be released to connected waterbodies, before reaching the European Sites. Consequently, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not required.

A copy of the Screening for Appropriate Assessment is provided with the Part 8 application documentation.

4.3 Cultural Heritage

The early historical development of Thurles dates to the medieval period having been established as an Anglo-Norman town in the late 12th century. Thurles is classified as a historic town under the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) (RMP Ref: TN041-042), with several medieval monuments listed, including the Town Defences (TN041-042007), Castle - tower houses (RMP: TN041-042001 and TN041-042002) and town defences (TN041-042007). No physical remains of a town wall have yet been identified.

As the proposed development involves an upgrade of the N62 Slievenamon Road, c.200m of the works are located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP), and c.60m of the works are located within the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA), respectively identified within Thurles & Environs Development Plan (2009-2015 as extended and varied). No buildings/structures currently listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) or Recorded Protected Structures (RPS) will be impacted by the proposed development.

A Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment Report (CHIA) has been prepared by Transport Infrastructure Ireland. The CHIA Report has proposed that mitigation measures during construction be implemented. These will comprise archaeological monitoring, by a suitably qualified licensed archaeologist, of the portion of the proposed development within the Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP), and the Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) of Thurles Town. This will involve archaeological monitoring of 200m of the scheme between Liberty Square to the junction of Slievenamon Road and Fianna Road. No archaeological and/or architectural services are required elsewhere on the scheme.

Ministerial Consent, in accordance with Section 14 of the National Monuments Act, will be sought, in advance, to undertake archaeological services. Should archaeological remains be found, mitigation in the form of preservation in-situ or preservation by record, will be proposed to the relevant statutory authorities.

A copy of the CHIA report is included with the application documentation.

4.4 Flood Risk

A review of flood risk to and by the proposed development has been undertaken. It is noted that the section of the N62 which relates to the proposed development has not been subject of any historical flood events.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) prepared for North Tipperary County Development Plan does not include Thurles town. Preliminary Flood Risk Assessments (PFRAs) were prepared subsequent to the adoption of the North Tipperary County Development Plan under the National Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Programme in 2011. The PFRAs identified areas at risk of significant flooding and include maps showing areas deemed to be at risk. The areas in County Tipperary deemed to be at most significant risk, where flood risk that is of particular concern nationally, are identified as Areas for Further Assessment, this includes Thurles.

A Flood Relief Scheme has been proposed as a mitigation measure for Thurles within the PFRA (this does not form part of the proposed development), which would protect at-risk properties against the 1% AEP Fluvial flood event. The potential flood defences of this scheme would consist of a series of flood embankments (average height of 1.5 m and a total length of 493m), flood walls (average height of 1.2m and total length of 589m) and a flood gate (1m at bridge opening at crossing of Emmet Street and Thomond Road).

A small section of the application boundary is included in a low-risk flood zone (0.1% AEP fluvial extent) along Thomond Road, this is to facilitate the connection of the proposed surface water drainage to the existing network.

The proposed development has been subject to the sequential approach for flood risk management as per “The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities” (OPW/Department of Environment and Local Government, 2009). As per Table 3.2¹ of The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities, the proposed development is considered to be a type of “less vulnerable development” as it can be categorised as “local transport infrastructure” within the provided types of development.

As the proposed development is located within Flood Zone C and B, it is therefore considered to be ‘appropriate development’ in relation to flood risk and does not require a flood risk assessment to be completed.

The proposed development meets specific criteria for proper planning and sustainable development and demonstrates that it will not be subject to unacceptable risk, nor increase flood risk elsewhere.

¹ Table 3.2 - Matrix of vulnerability versus flood zone to illustrate appropriate development and that required to meet the Justification Test

5 Conclusion

The proposed development is clearly identified within the Thurles and Environs Development Plan and the continued investment and improvement of the public realm to enhance place making is a reoccurring objective throughout the planning hierarchy. The proposed development will assist in the promotion of active travel and will improve safety for vulnerable road users.

Having regard to the following:

- The nature, scale and location of the proposed development, which is associated with objectives aimed at increased pedestrian and road/traffic safety, attractiveness and general improvement of an existing arterial road and roadside edges through Thurles town;
- Compliance and alignment with the sectoral and planning policy and objective provisions as outlined in Section 3 of this report;
- The nature of the receiving environment, comprising existing hardstanding of the public road network, the history of a similar recently completed scheme in the area, and the nature of the landscape including any specific conservation and amenity designations along or in proximity to the proposed development;
- Conclusion that the proposed development will not result in any potential for likely significant effects on any European Site; and
- The supporting documentation prepared as part of the Part 8 application, including EIA Screening, Cultural Heritage Assessment and photomontages.

It is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with and supports the delivery of relevant policies and objectives at a sectoral, national, regional and local level and it is concluded that the proposed development would, therefore be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

