



Longford County Council

N63 Athlone Road Active Travel Scheme

REPORT OF PARTICULARS OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT TO BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC DISPLAY

Longford County Council Great Water Street Longford		Kilgallen & Partners Consulting Engineers Well Road, Portlaoise Co. Laois
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REVISION HISTORY

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1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Part XI, Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, and Part VIII, Article 80 & 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 as amended, Longford County Council has given notice of its intention to carry out development ('the proposed development') comprising the provision of active travel facilities on the N63 southwest of Longford between the canal crossing and railway bridge.

This report is prepared for inclusion with the Plans and Particulars being made available for public inspection in accordance with the above Act and Regulations. It is to be read in conjunction with the drawings listed in which show details of the proposed development and which, along with this Report, will also be made available for public inspection.

Drawing No	Title
Drawing No. 18048-P8-DR-00	Cover Site Location
Drawing No. 18048-P8-DR-01	General Layout (Sheet 1 of 4)
Drawing No. 18048-P8-DR-02	General Layout (Sheet 2 of 4)
Drawing No. 18048-P8-DR-03	General Layout (Sheet 3 of 4)
Drawing No. 18048-P8-DR-04	General Layout (Sheet 4 of 4)
Drawing No. 18048-P8-DR-05	Typical Sections

Table 1.1 Drawings being made available for Inspection

2. NEED FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Characteristics of N63

For the purposes of this report, the N63 is divided into the four sections shown in Figure 2-1.



Figure 2-1 Characteristics of N63

South Section

The south section is located between the Canal Crossing and the LR1151 Cloontrim Road and the horizontal alignment is straight throughout.

The context for this section provides mixed signals to road users. The lands on both sides of the N63 are agricultural and the speed limit is 100kph for most part, suggesting a rural context. However, route lighting is present throughout and there is a footway on the east side of the N63, suggesting an urban context.

The northbound carriageway is 3.25m wide and has effectively no hard strip. The southbound carriageway is the same width but has hard shoulder approximately 1.75m wide.

South of the Canal Crossing, there has been substantial ribbon development on the N63 and on the local road LR5268 which has its junction with the N63 immediately south of the Canal Crossing; in addition, the canal towpath is itself a destination for active leisure walkers and cyclists. These features explain the extension of the footway and lighting beyond the town's limits.

There are no defined crossing facilities for people using the canal towpath and typically no cycle facilities to link the Canal Crossing to the town.



Figure 2-2 Typical cross-section through South Section



Figure 2-3 N63 at Canal Crossing

Middle Section

The middle-section is located entirely within the 60kph zone and is characterised by a 6.30m to 6.75m wide carriageway with hard shoulders on both sides and multiple accesses to commercial developments on both sides. The middle-section includes a long ghost island junction, 175m from nose-to-nose. The horizontal alignment of the N63 is straight.

Typically, the east side of the N63 has a footway of varying width and the west side has either a rough grassed verge or boundary, although there are short sections of footway also.

The geometry of the commercial accesses varies greatly but typically have wide mouths that are unsuited to pedestrian or cyclist crossing movements.

There are no dedicated cycle facilities and no crossing points for non-motorised road users through this section.

These characteristics result in an excessively wide drivable surface that, combined with straight horizontal alignment, invites inappropriate speed, poorly defined accesses, limited facilities for pedestrians and no facilities for cyclists. The wide hard shoulders also invite parking which can restrict sightlines at accesses.



Figure 2-4 Typical cross-section of N63 through Middle Section

Flancare South Section

The geometry of the N63 changes as the middle section gives way to the north section. The horizontal alignment becomes curved and there are no hard shoulders and minimal hard strips.

Agricultural lands adjoin the west side of the N63 and the roadside boundary is formed by poorly maintained hedgerow; there is only grass verge of varying width outside the northbound carriageway.

The lands on the east side of the N63 are developed and the roadside boundary is defined by either fence or railing. A footway and cycleway adjoin the southbound carriageway; both are 1.5m wide (at 1.5m, the cycleway is not wide enough for two-way use).

As with the Middle Section, accesses are poorly defined and excessively wide and thus difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to cross.

This section includes Flancare Roundabout; there are pedestrian and cyclist facilities in the verges of the approach arms however there are no crossing facilities.



Figure 2-5 Typical cross-section of N63 through Flancare South Section



Figure 2-6 Facilities for non-motorised road users at Flancare Roundabout

Flancare North Section

This section is similar to Flancare South except that a wide hard shoulder (currently hatched out) adjoins the southbound carriageway and there are no facilities for cyclists. Also, the verge adjoining the northbound carriageway is much narrower, to the extent that there is effectively no verge adjoining the northbound carriageway for most of this section.

The one-way shuttle system at the Railway Bridge does not make any provision for cyclists.



Figure 2-7 Typical cross-section through Flancare North Section



Figure 2-8 Traffic signals on south approach to Railway Bridge



Figure 2-9 Cross-section at Railway Bridge

2.2 Pavement Condition

Insitu testing has identified a requirement for renewal of the existing pavement on the N63.

2.3 Vulnerable Road Users

Footpath widths vary but in many cases are less than recommended by modern standards.

Apart from the immediate vicinity of Flancare Roundabout, there are no dedicated facilities for cyclists.

There are neither controlled nor uncontrolled pedestrian crossings.

2.4 Road Safety Inspection report

A Road Safety Inspection carried out by Longford County Council identified numerous road safety issues on this part of the N63. The majority of these relate to the undefined and overly wide accesses and the absence of appropriate facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

2.5 Summary

The open geometry of the N63, particularly through the Middle Section, invites inappropriate speeds, particularly as it is preceded to the south by a 100kph speed limit zone.

A Road Safety Inspection identified numerous road safety issues arising from the absence of pedestrian / cyclist crossing points, the lack of continuity for existing pedestrian and cyclist facilities and the undefined and excessively wide accesses.

Pedestrian crossing facilities are sub-standard, particularly at junctions and there are almost no dedicated cycle facilities.

There is a particular risk of conflict between vehicles and cyclists at the Railway Bridge.

The pavement requires renewal.

The dominant visual elements for most of this section of the N63 relates to vehicles and supporting infrastructure such as signage and road markings.

The wide hard shoulders also invite parking which can restrict sightlines at accesses.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 60 km/h speed limit zone

(comprises the Flancare North, Flancare South and Middle Sections described in Section 2)

Design Standard

The principles, approaches and standards set out in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets [DMURS], and also the Cycle Design Manual [CDM] apply to that part of the N63 within a 60km/h speed limit zone (which is the case for most of the proposed development).

Carriageway Width

The appropriate category for the N63 as defined in DMURS is that of an arterial street frequently used by larger vehicles and so a carriageway width of 6.5m is proposed for the N63.

Cycle Facilities

The width of the cycle track is determined using the Width Calculator provided in the CDM as set out in Table 3-1.

Element	Feature	Width	
		Desirable	Absolute min.
Inside Clearance	Kerb < 60mm high	0.00m	0.00m
One-way Cycle Track	Flow < 300 cyclists per hour	2.00m	1.50m
Outside Clearance	Flush or near-flush	0.00m	0.00m
Total		2.00m	1.50m
Buffer Width	Speed limit = 60 kph	1.00m	0.50m

Table 3-1 Minimum Width Required for Cycle Tracks

It is not possible to provide the desirable width within the space available. Instead, the following widths are proposed:

- Cycle Track 1.75m wide (exceeds absolute minimum required);
- Buffer 0.50m wide (meets absolute minimum required).

Pedestrian Facilities

In areas of low pedestrian activity, DMURS recommends a 1.8m wide footway to allow people to pass comfortably. The nominal footway width will be 2.0m, slightly exceeding the minimum required.

Crossing Facilities

High-Visibility controlled crossings will be provided on all approach arms to Flancare Roundabout and in the Middle Section. Uncontrolled crossings will be provided at various locations throughout the proposed development.

Railway Bridge

A signalised one-way shuttle system will be implemented at the Railway Bridge to allow for safer movements by vulnerable road users.

Flancare Roundabout

It is not proposed to change the junction type at Flancare Roundabout. However, it is proposed to provide Belisha crossings on all approach arms.

Local Road

There is a lightly trafficked local road at the south end of the Middle Section. This was currently a simple priority junction and will remain as such, but with the geometry improved to comply with DMURS.

Accesses

The numerous commercial accesses on to the N63 will continue as priority junctions but their widths will be reduced to encourage appropriate entry and exit speeds.

Cycleways and footways will continue across these accesses at a raised level relative to the carriageway and thus non-motorised road users will have priority when crossing the accesses.

3.2 100 km/h speed limit zone

(comprises the South Section described in Section 2)

The Design Standard for the short section of the N63 located in a 100 km/h zone will be TII Geometry Standards.

Carriageway Width

The carriageway width will be 7.0m, matching the existing width, with a 0.5m hard strip on both sides.

Transition

Rural fringe signs and gateway signs will be provided on the approach to the 60 km/h zone.

Pedestrian / Cyclist Facilities

A shared surface will be provided on both sides of the N63. An active travel crossing will be provided to serve the towpath route.

Ancillary Works

The finished level of the proposed development is at or close to existing ground level.

Surface water run-off will drain to the existing surface water drainage system; this system will be upgraded where required ensure appropriate drainage is available.

Services will be diverted as required to avoid clashes with proposed kerbs. Where the diversion relates to overhead cables, the preference will be to underground these services rather than have them remain overhead.

The surface courses of the existing pavement will be replaced.

Accommodation Works, such as fencing, boundary treatment and local drainage, will be carried where required to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on private properties.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Appropriate Assessment

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was prepared to assess whether the proposed development individually or in combination with other plans or projects, and in view of best scientific knowledge, is likely to have significant effect on a European site(s).

The Source-Pathway-Receptor model was used for detailed assessment. The potential impact was considered in the context of the Conservation objectives of the Qualifying Interests and Special Conservation Interests of the following European sites within the potential zone of influence of the project:

- Ballykenny Fishertown Bog SPA
- Lough Forbes Complex SAC
- Mount Jessop Bog SAC

The assessment concluded that the proposed development, individually or in-combination with other plans or projects is not predicted to result in likely significant effects on the European sites identified to be within the potential zone of influence, or any other European sites, in view of their respective conservation objectives.

A copy of the Screening Report is included with the Plans and Particulars being made available for inspection under the Part 8 process.

4.2 EIA Screening

The proposed development was subject to screening for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The purpose of this screening was to establish the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment and advise if EIA is required.

The screening process determined that the proposed development is not expected to give rise to significant environmental impacts, either individually or cumulatively and concluded that the preparation and submission of an EIAR is not required.

A copy of the Screening Report is included with the Plans and Particulars being made available for inspection under the Part 8 process.

5. LAND ACQUISITION

5.1 Land acquisition

The Proposed development requires the acquisition of lands from several private properties adjoining the N63.

5.2 Rights of way

The Proposed development does not propose the elimination of any rights of way.