Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Determination

The proposal is a bridge, approximately 80m in length and known as the Salmon Weir Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge and is a project on behalf of Galway City Council, the relevant road authority. It does not meet the criteria or exceed the thresholds outlined in Section 50(1) (a) as set out in the Roads Act 1993 (as Amended) and/or Article 8 of the Road Regulations of 1994 to trigger the threshold for mandatory EIA/EIAR and has been assessed as a sub-threshold EIA development.

The proposed development is to be located between Gaol Road and Newtownsmith in Galway City and will cross the Lower River Corrib. To the west of the proposed development lies Galway Cathedral, to the east, the Convent of Mercy and to the north lies the existing Salmon Weir Bridge. The proposed bridge will cross three separate watercourses, Persse's Distillery River (formerly called Mill Race), the Lower River Corrib and Friar's River (formerly called Waterside canal). The span arrangement of the bridge is to be approximately 10m, 55m and 15m over the three watercourses. The Lower River Corrib is a designated Natura 2000 site; Lough Corrib SAC (000297). In addition, other Natura 2000 sites are located within the immediate zone of influence of the proposed development.

Section 50(1) (d) of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended) states that where the construction of a proposed public road (the bridge falls into this classification) is located on a European site (or other important sites as listed in 50(1) (d)), the road authority proposing the development must make an EIA screening determination and it must also make its decision publicly available.

In this regard -

Article 4(5) of the EIA Directive states: The competent authority shall make its determination, on the basis of information provided by the developer in accordance with paragraph 4 taking into account, where relevant, the results of preliminary verifications or assessments of the effects on the environment carried out pursuant to Union legislation other than this Directive.

The determination shall be made available to the public and: (a) where it is decided that an environmental impact assessment is required, state the main reasons for requiring such assessment with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Annex III; or (b) where it is decided that an environmental impact assessment is not required, state the main reasons for not requiring such assessment with reference to the relevant criteria listed in Annex III, and, where proposed by the developer, state any features of the project and/or measures envisaged to avoid or prevent what might otherwise have been significant adverse effects on the environment.

It is also acknowledged that the Roads Act (1993), as amended, in Section 50(1)(c) states that where a road authority considers that a proposed road development, (other than development as listed in Section 50(1)(a)) consisting of the "construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of an existing public road" would be likely to have significant effects on the environment it must carry out EIA Screening and shall inform An Bord Pleanála in writing prior to making any application for consent for such development.
This EIA Screening Report has concluded that the effects of the proposed development are considered to be of likely significance. This is because the proposed development is located within a European site and is in close proximity to other European sites and given the nature of the construction works, there is the potential for significant negative effects on biodiversity and water quality during the construction phase (in the absence of mitigation measures).

In addition, the proposed development is acknowledged in the EIA Screening Report to be located in an area of significant archaeological, architectural and cultural importance, surrounded by many protected structures and is of scenic value. The report considers that the proposal could have potential for significant effects on these aspects during the construction phase (in the absence of mitigation measures).

The EIA screening report concludes that, having considered the appropriate criteria, the proposed development has the potential to have significant effects on the environment.

As the competent authority Galway City Council has considered the information in the EIA Screening Report and taken into account the relevant selection criteria specified in Annex III (of the EIA Directive) and made an assessment and determined that an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for the proposed development.

This determination shall be made available to the public and An Bord Pleanála shall be informed in writing prior to making an application.

Signed Caroline Phelan

Senior Planner

Galway City Council

25/06/20