



COMHAIRLE CONTAE
CHEATHARLACH
CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council

in conjunction with



Gore's Bridge Pedestrian Improvement Scheme

**Proposal Summary to Accompany
Public Consultation**

January 2024

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1. Description of the Proposed Development



Figure 1 - Site Location

In 2021 Carlow & Kilkenny County Council's identified the need for pedestrian safety improvements at Gore's Bridge. It was agreed that both local authorities would seek funding from the National Transport Authority's (NTA's) Active Travel Investment Programme to advance a scheme to address the safety issues faced by pedestrians at the bridge. It should also be noted that the last Goresbridge Local Area Plan (2005) had the stated objective "To examine and bring forward proposals for the improvement of pedestrian facilities on the bridge in conjunction with Carlow County Council."

In 2022 the NTA provided funding and Clandillon Civil Consulting were engaged by Kilkenny County Council (KCC) and Carlow County Council (CCC) to undertake a Stage (i) Preliminary Design of pedestrian improvements to Gore's Bridge. The primary objective was to produce an Option Design Report that identified a minimum of three design solutions for pedestrian improvement at the bridge.

Clandillon Civil Consulting subsequently provided the Option Design Report in September 2023, which reviewed 3 options for pedestrian improvements at Gore's Bridge;

- Option 1 – Shared Bridge with Raised Footpath
- Option 2 – Cantilever Footway
- Option 3 – Standalone Footbridge

Clandillon Civil Consulting then carried out an appraisal of the options in accordance with the 'Common Appraisal Framework' Multi-Criteria Analysis and the National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (NIFTI) appraisal guidance. The appraisal proposed Option 1 – Shared Bridge with Raised Footways be taken forward as the preferred option as it strikes the best balance between environmental impacts and provision of the active travel infrastructure over the bridge at a sustainable level of investment. At the same time Option 1 preserves the natural heritage of the structure while together with traffic control measures can achieve a safe shared use between pedestrians and motorised traffic.

The preferred option includes the following elements:

- A new raised footpath of 1.800m width to allow for the safe movement of pedestrians in both directions;
- New pedestrian railing independent of the existing masonry parapet to protect the heritage of the bridge;
- A new traffic light controlled shuttle system will be installed;
- The carriageway width will be reduced to one lane of 3.250m;
- A rubbing strip will be introduced on the downstream side of the bridge with a raised kerb to segregate the running surface;
- Approaches to the bridge will be modified by narrowing the running lanes and calming the traffic, improving pedestrian access to the proposed footway by introducing pedestrian crossings and raised footways.
- Installation of associated signage and road markings as necessary.

2. Consistency with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area and the County Development Plan

The proposed development is in compliance with the policies and objectives of the Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028. In particular the following policies and objectives, which are set out in the following sections of the plan:

Draft Carlow County Development Plan, Ch.5: Sustainable Travel & Transportation

5.3 Sustainable Mobility / Modal Shift

It is the policy of the Council to:

MS.P1: Seek investment in sustainable transport solutions, improved walking and cycling connectivity routes, the provision of a public bus service in Carlow Town and the expansion of rural transport initiatives throughout the county.

It is an objective of the Council to:

MS. O1: Support a modal shift from private vehicles to access work / school / college from circa 23% (2016) to 28% (2028).

5.4 Walking and Cycling

It is the policy of the Council to:

WC. P1: Prioritise and promote more sustainable and convenient modes of travel by the development of high quality walking and cycling infrastructure including greenways within a safe environment.

WC. P2: Work with the National Trails Office, Coillte, relevant Government Departments, and other relevant stakeholders, to improve on the existing level of infrastructure and facilities for walking and cycling.

WC. P3: Ensure that connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists is maximised in new communities and improved within existing areas particularly towns and villages throughout the county including associated infrastructure, to maximise access to local shops, educational facilities, public transport services, employment locations and other amenities.

WC. P4: Provide for safer routes to schools within the County and promote walking and cycling as suitable modes of transport as part of the Green Schools Programme and other local traffic management improvements.

It is the objective of the Council to:

WC. O2: Ensure that all streets and street networks seek to facilitate permeability, are designed in accordance with best practice standards including the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and the National Cycle Manual which seek to prioritise the movement of pedestrians and cyclists within a safe and comfortable environment for a wide range of ages, abilities and journey types.

WC. O4: Prioritise where required the upgrade and maintenance of footpaths, cycleways, public lighting, traffic management and public realm works and supporting signage on public roads / paths

WC. O6: Improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to rail station locations and other public transport interchanges within the county.

5.8.5 Urban Roads and Street

It is the policy of the Council to:

UR. P1: Ensure that all urban roads and streets in our towns and villages, including residential streets in housing estates are designed in accordance with the principles, approaches and standards set out in the 'Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets' (2013/2019) and any further update to the Manual during the life of this Plan and to implement TII Publication Standard DN-GEO-03084 'The Treatment of Transition Zones to Towns and Villages on National Roads' as appropriate.

5.17 Accessibility

It is the policy of the Council to:

AC. P1: Support suitable access for people with disabilities, including improvements to buildings, streets and public spaces.

Conclusion

The proposed development is consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in that:

- It will provide improved access to retail premises, recreational amenities, educational facilities and town centre services for pedestrians, cyclists and vulnerable road users.
- It will facilitate modal shift away from private car use towards more sustainable modes of transport such as cycling and walking.
- It will facilitate permeability and improved connectivity between residential areas for pedestrians and cyclists.
- It will provide pedestrians and cyclists within a safe and comfortable environment by reducing interactions with motorised traffic and through the provision of new and improved public lighting.

3 Scheme Justification

Gore's Bridge is a robust masonry river bridge, which was built in the 1760s by Ralph Gore first and last Earl of Ross and is located on the River Barrow along the border of County Kilkenny and County Carlow. The village of Goresbridge is named after the bridge and lies approximately 20 kilometres east of Kilkenny City. It is situated on the R702 which is a regional road linking Kilkenny to Enniscorthy.

Goresbridge has seen substantial population growth over the last 20yrs +, and is predicted to see further substantial population growth from within the life of the current County Development Plan. There is a need to develop supporting services and in particular to support sustainable travel and alternatives to car-based commuting. There are also issues around possible conflicts between vehicular traffic and vulnerable road users wishing to utilise the bridge to access the village's many services and amenities on the Kilkenny side of the bridge or to access the Barrow Way walking trail and Goodly Barrow Café on the Carlow side.

The bridge provides a vital link between Goresbridge village on the Kilkenny side and the residents of Ballyellen and the Barrow Way walking trail on the Carlow side. The bridge currently has no road marking or segregation of pedestrians across the structure. Pedestrians are regularly observed walking along both sides of the carriageway. The safety of pedestrians is compromised further by the lack of speed control measures on approaches to the structure and the geometry of the bridge which limits the visibility of all road users.

The project proposes to adopt a one-way traffic system on the bridge with signalised traffic controls. The carriageway surface will be narrowed to 3.25m width by the introduction of a raised 1.8m wide footpath and raised 0.3m – 0.4m rubbing strip. The raised footpath will provide pedestrians with a safe means of crossing Gore's Bridge by segregating them from the general traffic.

The scheme when delivered will achieve the following key benefits;

- Greatly improves safety for vulnerable road users through the separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- Encourages modal shift by enabling shorts trips, currently being made by car, to be made by walking.
- Facilitates improved connectivity and permeability.
- Provides a vital pedestrian link to nearby retail premises, recreational amenities, educational facilities and town centre services.

4 Impact of the Proposed Scheme

Impact on traffic

It is envisaged that this scheme will not have a significant impact on traffic either during construction or in the longer term.

A detailed traffic assessment has been carried out by ORS Consulting which assessed the impact that the scheme would have on traffic flows approaching and crossing Gore's Bridge. This assessment concluded that the proposed infrastructure enhancements will improve pedestrian safety and accessibility in the area, while not having a detrimental effect on the existing road network. It further concluded that there does not appear to be any significant traffic-related reasons that would prevent a positive determination of the application by Kilkenny and Carlow County Council's for the proposed development.

Also, the construction of this segregated pedestrian infrastructure will facilitate sustainable transport in a safe environment by allowing residents make journeys on foot which they may previously have made by car. This will result in fewer car journeys and result in a long-term positive impact on traffic.

Impact on pedestrians and vulnerable road users

The proposed works will have a significantly positive impact on pedestrians and vulnerable road users seeking to access retail premises, recreational amenities, educational facilities and town centre services. The scheme will provide improved connectivity in a safe and comfortable environment.

Impact during construction

The following impacts during construction will be temporary:

- Site mobilisation and operations
- Temporary traffic management
- Construction traffic and materials deliveries
- Construction dust and noise
- Temporary hoarding/fencing/barriers/traffic cones
- Temporary site lighting, if deemed necessary

Impact on landscape and visual amenity

Gore's Bridge is located in the "Lowland" landscape character area. There are no highly sensitive landscape characteristics at this location. An extract from the "Views and Prospects" section of the Kilkenny City and County Development Plan (2021-2027) identifies that development should not detract from views of bridges. The scheme is sensitive to the form of the façade of the existing structure with respect to this goal.

The works will take place primarily within an existing road corridor. It is envisaged that this scheme will have a negligible impact on landscape and visual amenity.

Impact on built and cultural heritage

The Bridge is listed as a protected structure (NIAH Ref. 12311002). Gore's Bridge is an important structure both from the historical and aesthetic perspectives. Because of its heritage significance, the preferred option for the scheme is considered to have the least intrusive impact on the bridge. The aesthetics of the scheme have been carefully considered to ensure it is sympathetic to the aesthetics of the existing structure.

The detached five-bay two-storey raised basement grain store now occupied by "The Goodly Barrow" café and museum is also a registered building (NIAH Ref 12311001). The building dates from 1843 to 1858. The grain store is noted to represent an integral component of the mid nineteenth-century industrial heritage of Goresbridge. The location of this building deters new structural works from being placed on the south side of the bridge.

It was determined that the scheme will have a minimal impact on the built and cultural heritage.

Conclusion

It is expected that the proposed development will preserve the natural heritage of the structure and no impacts requiring mitigation are expected to arise.

5 Appropriate Assessment (AA)

Stage 1 Screening was carried out in accordance with Article 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora).

This is transposed in Ireland primarily by the *European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011* (S.I. No. 477/2011) (hereafter the Birds and Habitats Regulations) and the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2010 as amended.

An Appropriate Assessment (AA) is required if likely significant effects on European Sites arising from the proposed development cannot be ruled out at the screening stage, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Following an examination and evaluation of the relevant information, including in particular, the fact that the proposed works will not impinge or impact on any European Sites, it is possible to rule out likely significant effects on all European Sites.

The AA screening process has identified that no European Sites are within the potential zone of influence of surface water discharges from the proposed development either during construction or upon completion of the works.

On the basis of the AA screening process, the proposed development does **not** require an Appropriate Assessment with no requirement to proceed to Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.

6 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The scheme does not fall within any of the categories requiring a mandatory EIA under Schedule 5 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). It can be considered not to comprise 'sub-threshold development' and it can be 'screened out' for Environmental Impact Assessment purposes on this basis. However, for the avoidance of doubt, the scheme has been screened for the need for a sub-threshold EIA as per the criteria listed under Schedule 7 of the Regulations.

Having considered the nature, scale and location of the proposal; having regard to the characteristics and location of the proposed development and having regard to the characteristics of potential impacts it is considered that the project is unlikely to give rise to significant environmental impacts.

It is considered that the proposed scheme does **not** need to be subject to Environmental Impact Assessment and no Environmental Impact Assessment Report is required for it.