

# **M7 Osberstown Interchange & R407 Sallins Bypass Scheme**

## **Landscape and Visual Aspects**

### **Brief of Evidence**

**by**

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**June 2014**

## **1. Introduction**

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- 1.1 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by Thomas Burns, Partner and Landscape Architect with Brady Shipman Martin, landscape, planning and environmental consultants. My qualifications include a Bachelor of Agriculture Science in Landscape from University College Dublin and a post-graduate Diploma in Environmental Impact Assessment Management also from University College Dublin. I am a full member of the Irish Landscape Institute.
- 1.2 I have over 20 years of experience of landscape and visual issues in relation to the planning, assessment and construction of national primary and other road projects. I was the principal author of the NRA Guide to Landscape Treatments for National Road Schemes in Ireland.

## **2. Executive Summary**

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- 2.1 The landscape and visual impact assessment of the proposed scheme has been prepared with regard to EPA Guidelines and Advice Notes on Environmental Impact Statements and in line with the NRA's Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment and Landscape Treatments of National Road Schemes.
- 2.2 The assessment has had regard to the findings and recommendations of other chapters of the EIS, in particular to Ecology, Noise and Architecture and Archaeology & Cultural Heritage.
- 2.3 It is considered that with the establishment of mitigation measures, the proposed road development will be successfully integrated within its landscape setting. Some residual landscape impact will remain at the crossing of the Grand Canal and the River Liffey.
- 2.4 Residual visual impact will be limited to a small number of properties, including Osberstown House; a house at the crossing of Osberstown Local Road and for properties at the crossing of the Grand Canal.
- 2.5 During the operational phase, the transfer of traffic from the existing R407 to the new bypass will result in a positive impact for amenity and character of Sallins town.

## **3. Impact Assessment Methodology**

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- 3.1 The landscape and visual impact assessment methodology is set out in Section 10.2 of Volume 2 of the EIS.

## **4. Existing Environment**

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- 4.1 The description of the existing (receiving) environment is set out in Section 10.3 of Volume 2 of the EIS.

## 5. Impact Assessment

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5.1 The assessment of the predicted impacts of the proposed development on the landscape and visual environment are set out in detail in Section 10.4 of Volume 2 of the EIS. In summary the assessment is described as follows:

### Landscape Impact

- 5.2 Potential for landscape impact was assessed from 6 separate landscape units located along the proposed scheme and the assessment of landscape impact is set out in detail in Section 10.3 and Table 10.3 of the EIS.
- 5.3 Landscape impacts are most pronounced where the scheme crosses distinctive and/or historic landscapes and where the route impacts on particular landscape features of note, e.g. the Grand Canal or the River Liffey Corridor.
- 5.4 Therefore, while much of the scheme has typical or 'as might be expected' impact, particular sections of the proposed scheme give rise to localised moderate impact where it passes to the fore of the historic landscape setting of Osberstown House and localised significant impact where it crosses the landscape of the River Liffey Corridor and the Grand Canal. This arises where new bridging structures and elevated sections of proposed road (with associated illumination) introduce notable change to the existing environment. Outside of these areas of specific landscape diversity and feature the impact on landscape character will not be significant.

### Visual Impact

- 5.5 Potential for visual impact was assessed from 35 separate property locations and 7 separate landscape locations along the road development. These impacts are described in detail in Section 10.4 and Table 10.4 and Figures 10.1a to 10.1d of the EIS.
- 5.6 The proposed road development will give rise to some level of significant visual impact – primarily related to:
- Osberstown House (Property R8);
  - properties at the crossing of Osberstown Local Road (Properties R10 & R15),
  - properties at the crossing of the Grand Canal (Properties R22 to R25), and
  - Castlesize Drive (Properties R29).
- Otherwise, initially significant construction and early operation stage landscape and visual impact can be directly mitigated and the proposed development readily assimilated into its setting.
- 5.7 Additional illumination is not a major feature of the proposed road development, nevertheless, the introduction of the road and its associated traffic will accentuate the level of residual and permanent change of the landscape along the corridor.
- 5.8 The removal of through traffic from the centre of Sallins has the potential for significant improvement in the amenity, social and visual character of the town and its streetscapes.

## **6. Mitigation Measures**

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- 6.1 The measures proposed to avoid, reduce and remediate both construction and operation stage landscape and visual impacts are detailed in Section 10.5 of Volume 2 of the EIS.
- 6.2 The measures take account of the approaches and principles as set out in 'A Guide to Landscape Treatments for National Road Schemes in Ireland', and in particular to Chapter 4: Components of the Roadside Landscape; Chapter 5: Soil Geographic Factors; and Chapter 6: Landscape Treatments.
- 6.3 These measures include proposals to be applied over the entire proposed road development, depending on the nature of the particular road section. Where feasible, such measures include for the re-connection of field boundaries with tree-lines and hedgerows established along the boundary of the proposed road development. Trees within such hedgerows will be randomly spaced in a visually naturalistic manner.
- 6.4 Specific landscape and visual mitigation measures are set out in detail in Tables 10.5 and 10.6 and Figures 10.1a to 10.1e of Volume 2 of the EIS. These extend to 30 separate measures, ranging from protection and retention of existing features; to temporary construction screening; to post-construction reinstatement and the planting of native species – except where non-native species are appropriate, *e.g.* Osberstown House.
- 6.5 The measures include for a significant extent of planting for screening of the road development and for reduction of visual impact – especially where the road is in proximity to residential properties.
- 6.6 Specific measures are proposed to reduce landscape and visual impact on and from Osberstown House (refer to LM-8 on Table 10.5 of Volume 2 of the EIS) and for other properties effected by visual impact arising from the scheme.
- 6.7 At Osberstown House this includes for the retention and protection of existing mature trees and hedgerows, the provision of a screening berm in the form a 'false-cutting' and appropriate semi-mature tree planting provided in a sympathetic parkland style. The overall effect is to reduce the visual intrusion of the road and its traffic, with obscuring long-range views beyond the road development.

## **7. Residual Impacts**

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- 7.1 It is considered that with the establishment of mitigation measures, the proposed road development will in the longer-term be successfully integrated within its landscape setting. Nevertheless, it is considered that some level of moderate residual landscape impact will remain at Osberstown House, in crossing the Grand Canal and in crossing the River Liffey corridor.
- 7.2 After planting and mitigation measures have established, residual visual impact will be limited to a small number of properties, including Osberstown House (Property R8); the house at the crossing of Osberstown Local Road (Property R10) and for properties at the crossing of the Grand Canal (Properties R22 to R26). Otherwise, the severity and prominence of visual intrusion will gradually and increasingly be mitigated over time.
- 7.3 Cumulative landscape and visual impact arising from combination of the proposed scheme with the adjoining proposed M7 Widening Scheme is limited to the location of the interchange and to the Osberstown area.

The provision of the interchange and the R407 Sallins Bypass is the dominant / principal feature in this area and as such, cumulative impacts with the proposed M7 Widening Scheme do not give rise to increased or accentuated landscape or visual impacts.

## **8. Response to Submissions**

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### **8.1 Submission Mr Lloyd**

Mr Lloyd raises some general landscape-related issues.

In response, the scheme includes for detailed landscape proposals (Measures LM 17 to LM19; & LM 23) aimed at reducing the visual impact of the canal crossing and the elevated road sections to either side of the bridge. No roadside illumination is to be provided at the canal crossing. 'As existing' and 'as proposed' photomontage images of the bridge crossing of the canal are provided in the EIS at Figures 10.7 (a, b, c), 10.8 (a, b, c) and 10.9 (a, b, c).

Planting proposals (as described at LM 17 to LM19, in Table 10.5 and Figure 10.3 of the EIS) provide for full planting of the roadside embankments leading to and from the canal bridge crossing. The planting includes for tree and shrub planting with the specific aim of providing a dense canopy capable of screening the elevated road and its associated traffic.

### **8.2 Submission Mr. O'Flaherty**

Mr. O'Flaherty raises issues in relation to significant and serious visual impact on the landscape of the River Liffey.

In response, it is noted in the Chapter 10 of the EIS, that the proposed road development will give rise to initially significant visual impacts on the corridor of the River Liffey. In recognition of this impact, detailed and specific proposals have been proposed to mitigate this impact. These proposals, which are set out at LM 24 and LM 25 in Tables 10.5 & 10.6 and Figures 10.3 and 10.4 of the EIS, include for:

- retention and protection, where possible of existing vegetation and within the landtake - especially along the river edge;
- reinstatement of all damaged areas, having regard to the recommendations of Chapter 14 Ecology section of the EIS
- Establishment of low-canopy tree and shrub woodland across the full extent of all embankments/slopes;
- Establishment of a new boundary tree-lined hedgerow along the landtake fence line.

These measures will ensure that the initially significant visual impact will be appropriately mitigated over time.

### **8.3 Submission Mr Ward**

Mr Ward raises general landscape related issues.

In response it is noted that Mr Ward's property (Property R18, Figure 10.2 of the EIS) is located circa 100m east of the proposed road, where it is also sited east of the local road. The proposed road is set in shallow cutting as it moves north to underpass the railway line. Under specific landscape mitigation measures (LM15, Table 10.5 and Figure 10.2 of the EIS) it is proposed to fully plant the significant area between the proposed road and the local road to low-canopy tree and shrub woodland. Establishment of this planting will quickly reduce any visual impact of the scheme from this property to slight at most.

### **8.4 Submission Mr O'Brien**

Mr O'Brien raises general landscape related issues.

In response it is noted that Mr O'Brien's property (Property R17, Figure 10.2 of the EIS) is located circa 100m east of the proposed road, where it is also sited east of the local road. The proposed road is set in shallow cutting as it moves north to underpass the railway line. Under specific landscape mitigation measures (LM15, Table 10.5 and Figure 10.2 of the EIS) it is proposed to fully plant the significant area between the proposed road and the local road to low-canopy tree and shrub woodland. Establishment of this planting will quickly reduce any visual impact of the scheme from this property to slight at most.

### **8.5 Submission Castlesize Residents Association**

Castlesize Residents Association raises specific issues in relation to impact on the open space at Castlesize Drive.

In response it is noted that the Sallins Link Road directly impacts on the south-eastern corner of open space at Castlesize Drive. The area impacted is primarily a narrow corner, densely planting with young trees and shrubs and the area removed is a very small portion of the open space at this location. In addition, the area removed does not form part of the main actively used area of the amenity. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that the initial impact will be significant.

Under specific landscape mitigation measure LM22 (Table 10.5 and Figure 10.3 of the EIS) it is proposed to provide the new permanent boundary wall at open space (and adjoining property) prior to the construction of the road scheme itself. This will provide for early and immediate security and visual screening. Specific measures also include for provision of planting alongside the boundary of the proposed road.

### **8.6 Submission Mr Heavey**

Mr O'Neill raises general landscape issues in relation to the property.

In response the proposed scheme includes for significant landscape measures (LM 19 to LM 23, Table 10.5 and Figure 10.3 of the EIS) which will ensure that completed scheme does not result in adverse visual impact on its existing or likely emerging uses on this property.

### **8.7 Submission Mr & Mrs Boran**

Mr and Mrs Boran raises specific landscape and visual issues in relation to their property.

In response it is noted that the property (Property R10, Figure 10.2 of the EIS) is directly impacted by the scheme and it is acknowledged In Chapter 10 that the property will be significantly impacted by the proposed scheme.

The proposed scheme includes for specific measures (LM10 & LM11, Table 10.5 and Figure 10.3 of the EIS) to address this significant visual impact. The measures include for:

- the protection of southern and eastern property boundaries;
- provision of new entrance and front boundary wall in agreement with the property owner;
- reinstatement works within the garden;
- screen planting on the proposed embankments, and
- 1.0m high solid screen fencing along the top of the embankments.

Ends.

