

M7 Osberstown Interchange & R407 Sallins Bypass Scheme

Human Beings / Socio-economics

Brief of Evidence

by

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the Brief of Evidence for the socio-economic assessment of the impact on human beings of the proposed M7 Osberstown Interchange and R407 Sallins Bypass. This brief has been prepared by Craig Bullock who has 13 years experience of working on socio-economic impact assessments, mostly on road developments. His formal qualifications are a PhD in environmental economics and a diploma in environmental impact assessment.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 From a socio-economic perspective:

- The proposed R407 Sallins Bypass, in combination with the proposed Osberstown Interchange with the M7, will improve connectivity and reduce journey time between the R407 and M7;
- The bypass will remove much traffic from the centre of the community of Sallins reducing the level of community severance and congestion;
- The transference of vehicular traffic from Sallins will improve the environment for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians;
- The scheme will improve connectivity between Sallins and Naas for cyclists and for traffic accessing Sallins mainline railway station, including potentially public transport.

3. Impact Assessment Methodology

- 3.1 The purpose of the socio-economic assessment is to examine the impact of the proposed scheme on the social and economic functioning of the local community. Specifically the assessment examines:
- Journey characteristics, including journey patterns, journey time, journey time reliability, connectivity and accessibility.
 - Severance or barriers to the accessibility of community facilities, especially as these affect vulnerable population subsets.
 - Journey amenity, namely the pleasantness or ease of journeys due to factors such as comfort, minimal congestion, perceived safety and spatial legibility for all road users.
 - General amenity, namely impacts on local community wellbeing and amenities.
 - Economic impacts including any potential stimulus to business and employment as well as any adverse impacts for specific businesses.
- 3.2 The significance of these impacts depends, among other considerations, on the nature of the environment affected, the duration of an impact, and the probability of its occurrence. Impacts of a socio-economic nature are often a function of the scale of the impact itself or the impact on vulnerable or sensitive groups.
- 3.3 Socio-economic impacts are addressed at the community level rather than for individuals or identifiable properties, although impacts for individual non-farm

businesses beside the proposed scheme are discussed in the relevant chapter. The significance of impacts as they would affect the worst hit subset of the population are summarised in Tables 7.11.-7.15.

- 3.4 Further information on methodology is contained in section 7.2 of the EIS.

4. Existing environment

- 4.1 Information on the receiving environment is contained in section 7.3 of the EIS

5. Impact assessment

Construction phase

- 5.1 Construction traffic is predicted to increase daily traffic volumes on the R407 to Clane by only 1%. However, a proportion of construction traffic is likely to use sections of the R403 to access a quarry near Prosperous. Some community facilities are located on this road and there is a prospect of a slight to moderate negative impact for a period of up to 18 months. Along the route of the bypass, construction traffic will require use of Canal Road for a short period. Once bridge supports are in place, construction traffic will be able to avoid use of local roads.

Operational phase

Journey characteristics

- 5.2 On operation, the proposed M7 interchange and bypass will provide improved access to lands zoned for commercial development along the Western Distributor Road. Most other traffic for Naas will continue to use the Maudlins and Newlands Interchanges, although some traffic for Sallins and the Western Distributor Road will be transferred from the busy Monread Road. On the basis of the criteria given for journey characteristics, there will be a slight to moderate positive impact in terms of journey time and journey time reliability for typical journeys from the M7 to the North West Quadrant of Naas. There will also be moderate positive impacts for peak hour journeys using the R407 to reach the M7 or the North West Quadrant.
- 5.3 Due to the transference of through traffic from the centre of Sallins, there will also be a slight positive impact on local journey times. The proposed interchange and bypass, together with the transference of traffic from existing roads, will greatly improve connectivity to Sallins, Sallins railway station and the North West Quadrant, both directly and through the reduction in traffic on local roads. The proposed interchange will improve connectivity with the M7, but the scheme as a whole will also allow rail to become a more viable alternative for journeys to Dublin.

Community Severance

- 5.4 The transference of traffic to the proposed bypass will provide for moderate positive relief from severance on Sallins Main Street, Monread Road and at the Sallins Road/Monread Road roundabout. This positive impact will apply to pedestrians accessing schools, shops and other community facilities. The

significance of this relief from severance will apply especially to sensitive population subsets such as children and elderly people. In addition, there will also be a moderate positive impact for cyclists looking to cross these roads from side roads. Slight positive relief from severance is also anticipated on the built-up section of Osberstown Road in Sallins.

- 5.5 New severance due to the presence of the proposed Link Road from Sallins to the bypass will be imperceptible to slight. Traffic on this road will be light for most of the day, but the road will cut across land between the Castlesize Estate and a crèche. The adjoining land includes the local soccer pitch and an area that is currently derelict, but which is zoned for residential. In addition, a small increase of 4% in daily traffic is predicted for the R407, although there is the option for traffic to bypass the centre of Clane.

Journey amenity and general amenity

- 5.6 The proposed scheme will have a moderate positive impact on the journey amenity of pedestrians and cyclists using Monread Road and Sallins Main Street due to the transference of traffic to the bypass. Planned improvements to cyclist and pedestrian facilities noted in the Local Area Plan, but outside of the scope of the proposed scheme, have the potential to underpin this positive impact. The journey amenity of drivers will also be enhanced by a reduction in congestion in Sallins and on Monread Road and by the availability of alternative route options to destinations such as the M7, the North West Quadrant and the railway station.
- 5.7 With regard to the proposed scheme itself, pedestrians and cyclists will have the opportunity to use a segregated footway and cycle track on the Link Road from the centre of Sallins and south along part of the eastern side of the bypass from the Clane Road junction. They will then be able to descend to a dedicated track on Canal Road through Drumlish to Osberstown Road. There is then the option to pass under the M7 to the Millennium Park development or to join cycle lanes on the Western Distributor Road, or to continue into central Naas along Canal Bank. As a safer alternative to existing roads, this new infrastructure represents a major positive impact. For safety reasons the footway/ cycleway will not extend to the proposed M7 interchange.
- 5.8 The footway and cycle track also represent a new amenity. Cyclists and pedestrians will also be able to connect with the Grand Canal tow path. The same facility will provide a circular walking opportunity through a green area and include views from the two Liffey bridges.
- 5.9 The transference of through traffic from the centre of Sallins will provide for improved environmental amenity for residents and presents an opportunity to enhance the urban environment. In addition, there will be an improvement in general amenity for people living along rural sections of Osberstown Road and Kerdiffstown Road due to small, but significant reductions in traffic using these minor roads at peak times to access the R407 or M7.

Economic

- 5.10 A major positive economic impact will apply to the North West Quadrant of Naas, the Millennium Park development and other proposed commercial/industrial development due to the improved connectivity provided by the proposed interchange and bypass. The improvement in the general

amenity of Sallins Main Street due to the transference of traffic will stimulate more pedestrian activity and present new retail or business opportunities. Similarly, the reduction in traffic on Monread Road and the easing of congestion at the Sallins Road/Monread Road roundabout will improve the accessibility of businesses here.

- 5.11 On the other hand, the transference of traffic from the Main Street and Clane Road in Sallins will have a negative impact on passing trade or on the familiarity of some businesses, most especially a service station, grocery store and a furniture business.

6. Mitigation

- 6.1 Various mitigation measures have been proposed by the socio-economist during the period of the road design and are listed in Chapters 7 and 21. These include:

- A roadside footpath along Clane Road south from the junction with the bypass;
- Signage and surfacing on Osberstown Road to alert drivers to the possibility of cyclists or pedestrians crossing this road at Chainage 0+400 to join Canal Bank;
- Provision of an uncontrolled crossing of the Link Road near to the soccer pitch;
- Provision for angler access along the River Liffey beneath the bridge crossings;
- Protection and improvement of the tow path in the immediate vicinity of the canal crossing.

7. Residual impacts

- 7.1 The proposed scheme will have a significant net positive residual impact on journey characteristics, community severance and general amenity. Negative impacts will apply to a few businesses in Sallins that are currently patronised by drivers passing through the town.

8. Summary

- 8.1 The proposed interchange and bypass will greatly improve connectivity between the M7 and the town of Naas, the North-West Quadrant of Naas (including lands zoned for commercial development) and the R407 Clane Road. This connectivity will permit improved access to the M7 for vehicular traffic, but also improved access to Sallins and the railway station. Pedestrian and cyclist facilities included in the proposed scheme design will provide improved connectivity and safety for these groups, encouraging more sustainable modes of travel and having the potential to provide for amenity use. The transference of traffic from Sallins Main Street and Monread Road will improve accessibility and provide significant relief from severance at these locations. There is also the future potential to capitalise on the improved environment through investment in the streetscape of Sallins and through improved pedestrian and cycle facilities.

- 8.2 The scheme will have a positive cumulative impact together with the proposed widening of the M7 by further improving the accessibility of the North-West

Quadrant of Naas. The pedestrian and cycle facilities included in the road design will have a positive cumulative impact with other walking and cycle facilities proposed in the Kildare County Development Plan.

9. Response to submissions

9.1 An Taisce

An Taisce refer to the risk that the interchange will stimulate additional vehicle traffic contrary to the objectives of the Government's strategy for Smarter Travel. However, the proposed scheme also includes new dedicated pedestrian and cycle facilities that will encourage greater use of these more sustainable modes of transport including for commuting. The transference of vehicle traffic from Sallins Main Street and Monread Road will improve the environment at these locations including their attractiveness for walking and cycling. The An Taisce submission makes the case that more sustainable forms of transport, including public transport, should be promoted. I agree that the potential benefits arising from the facilities included in the design and the transference of traffic will be strengthened by such promotion and complementary future initiatives.

9.2 Castlesize Drive Residents

The residents of Castlesize Drive assert that the green area beside by the proposed Sallins Link Road is used by children from the estate and express concerns that this area will be lost and that the road will present safety issues. However, only a small fraction of the green area will be lost and much of this is currently shrubbery. The light traffic predicted for the Link Road will be safely separated from Castlesize Estate by a wall. The Link Road itself will allow access to the bypass from the centre of Sallins and contribute positively to the safer accessibility.

9.3 Mr. Kieren O'Flaherty and Mr. Morgan O'Flaherty

Maguire Associates representing Mr. Kieren O'Flaherty and Mr. Morgan O'Flaherty comment on their clients' concerns that their landholding will become accessible to the public from the bridges crossing the River Liffey. Anglers will be provided with access under the two bridge crossings, but no new access facilities are proposed to the river banks. No car parking will be provided or permitted alongside the bypass. The rest of the river will be no more or less accessible than it is at present from the Grand Canal.

9.4 Mr. Alan Lloyd

Mr. Lloyd's submission refers to the perceived narrowness and inadequacy of the Grand Canal tow path. By way of mitigation it is proposed to protect the tow path in the immediate vicinity of the canal crossing. Any improvements to the rest of the tow path would complement pedestrian and cycle facilities in the scheme design, but responsibility for these facilities is outside of the scheme. Mr Lloyd also argues that the proposed egress for pedestrians and cyclists from the bypass to Canal Road would be hazardous. It is not clear to me why a significant hazard should arise as traffic on Canal Road is very light. To allow for the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, on-road signage and road surfacing is to be provided on Osberstown Road by way of mitigation.