

Westgate 2040 - Drogheda, Co. Louth

Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Volume 1 – Non Technical Summary

December 2023



Comhairle Contae Lú
Louth County Council



Rialtas na
hÉireann
Government
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann
Project Ireland
2040

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Client

Louth County Council

Our reference

LOUB3004

December 2023

1. Introduction

Overview

- 1.1 This document is a non-technical summary (NTS) of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), prepared to facilitate the dissemination of the information presented in the EIAR to the general public.
- 1.2 This NTS has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Louth County Council (LCC) in respect of the proposed public realm regeneration/improvement works on a 1.89ha site within the 'Westgate Vision Area' of Drogheda, Co. Louth.
- 1.3 The EIAR, and this associated NTS, will accompany a planning application to An Bord Pleanála under Section 175 and 177AE of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) which seeks permission for the proposed development.
- 1.4 This document provides a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the assessments undertaken and contained in the EIAR (i.e., Volume 2), and acts as a shortened and simplified version of the EIAR in plain language, as much as practicable.
- 1.5 This NTS has been prepared to help make it easier for the general public to review, understand and access the information contained within the wider EIAR document.

The Applicant

- 1.6 As noted above, the Applicant for this planning application is Louth County Council (LCC). Louth County Council's main office is located at Millennium Centre, County Hall, Dundalk, Co. Louth, A91 KFW6.
- 1.7 Louth County Council holds title to a considerable extent of the land within the boundary of the application site. However, the application site also includes lands that are owned by third parties, these being the Office of Public Works and the owner of 56 Narrow West Street.
- 1.8 In this regard, the following Letters of Consent are attached as appendices to the Cover Letter accompanying the planning application package:
 - Letter of Consent (dated 16 December 2022) signed by Yvonne Fawcett, P.P Seamus O'Neill, Office of Public Works; and
 - Letter of Consent (dated 08 September 2022) signed by David Courtney (landowner of 56/57 West Street, Drogheda).

Proposed Project

- 1.9 LCC intends to carry out public realm regeneration/improvement works on lands within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda in accordance with international and national best practice. The overall objective of the project (known as the 'Westgate 2040 Project')

is to act as a catalyst to support positive regeneration, compact growth, and sustainable development in the 'Westgate Vision Area' and the wider Drogheda Town Centre.

1.10 This planning application represents the next stage of the Westgate Vision, launched by Louth County Council in 2018, which is a targeted planning response aimed at channelling investment into this core area of Drogheda.

1.11 The Project Brief includes the following key objectives:

- Create a quality gateway / arrival space, public spaces, pedestrian linkages, and public realm.
- Ensure inclusivity for all members of the community; the very young, the youth, the old, the mobility impaired, socially disadvantaged, the pedestrian and cyclist.
- Develop proposals which meet the design principles of national and international best practice.
- Promote proposals an environment which leads to both day and night-time activities.
- Improve connectivity and legibility for all members of the community and for visitors/tourists to the town.
- Capitalise and respect the rich heritage of this town centre location.
- Operate / employ sustainable development principles by minimising energy consumption and maximising the use of renewable energy technology.

1.12 The funding for this project is anticipated to be primarily from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), a flagship element of Project Ireland 2040.

1.13 Chapter 5 of Volume 2 of the EIAR provides further details on the proposed development and readers should also refer to the planning drawings package, Design Statement and Planning Statement accompanying the planning application.

The Application Site

1.14 The application site is located within the 'Westgate Vision Area' of Drogheda and covers an area of approx. 1.89 hectares. The site comprises following lanes/streets/roads/areas and their adjoining footpath/public realm areas: R132/Bridge of Peace/George's Street (including the underpass on the northern side of the River Boyne); George's Square; Father Connolly Way (including part of an existing car park area); Dominick Street; Patrickswell Lane; Old Abbey Lane (including an area to the rear of 56/57 West Street); Scholes Lane; R900/West Street/Narrow West Street; Fair Street; and Wellington Quay, in the townland of Moneymore, Drogheda, Co Louth.

1.15 The extent and general location of the application site is illustrated in **Figure 1.1** below.



Figure 1.1: Extract of Drawing No. LOUX3001-P-000-101-A - Site Location Plan

1.16 A full description of the application site and the immediate/surrounding context is provided in Chapter 3 of Volume 2 of the EIAR.

Format and Structure of the EIAR

1.17 **Table 1.1** below sets out the format and structure of this NTS, which aligns with the structure and format of Volume 2 of the EIAR and identifies the lead author for each chapter. Further information with respect to all contributors to the EIAR and their respective qualifications is provided at Chapter 2 of Volume 2 of the EIAR.

Table 1.1: Structure of the NTS and Volume 2 of the EIAR

Structure of the NTS and Volume 2 of the EIAR	Company	Lead Author
Chapter 1 - Introduction	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 2 - The EIA Process	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 3 - Site Location & Context	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 4 - Key Alternatives Considered	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 5 - Description of Development	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 6 - Consultation	Turley	Paul McMonagle

Chapter 7 - Population & Human Health	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 8 - Biodiversity	RSK	Mark Lang
Chapter 9 - Land, Soils and Geology	RSK	Sven Klinkenbergh
Chapter 10 - Hydrology and Hydrogeology	RSK	Sven Klinkenbergh
Chapter 11 - Air & Climate	RSK	Dr Srinivas Srimath
Chapter 12 - Noise & Vibration	RSK	James Mangan
Chapter 13 - Material Assets (Waste)	RSK	Ryan Murphy
Chapter 14 - Material Assets (Traffic & Transportation)	Hegsons	Ken Hegarty
Chapter 15 - Material Assets (Site Services)	NOD	Delecia Reddy
Chapter 16 - Cultural Heritage and Archaeology	IAC Archaeology	Faith Bailey
Chapter 17 - Architectural Heritage	Mesh Architects	Tom Mc Gimsey
Chapter 18 - Landscape and Visual Impact	Park Hood	Andrew Bunbury
Chapter 19 - Interactions	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 20 - Cumulative Impacts	Turley	Paul McMonagle
Chapter 21 - Mitigation Measures	Turley	Paul McMonagle

1.18 This EIAR is also accompanied by:

- **Volume 2 – Environmental Impact Assessment Report:** being the main EIAR report which contains the relevant specialist chapters and detailed assessments.
- **Volume 3 - Appendices:** contains all relevant surveys, reports, analysis undertaken in association with the specialist Chapters contained in Volume 2.

EIAR Team

1.19 The EIAR was project managed and co-ordinated by Turley. Turley co-ordinated the EIA process and liaised between the Project Team, the various environmental specialists and Louth County Council. The specialist environmental chapters of the EIAR have been prepared by suitably qualified and competent environmental experts, as required by the amended Directive 2014/52/EU.

Availability of the EIAR

1.20 A copy of this EIAR document and Non-Technical Summary of the EIAR document are available for purchase at the offices of An Bord Pleanála and Louth County Council at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of reproducing the document. Details on the EIAR can also be viewed online at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's EIA Portal and on the Louth County Council's website: www.louthcoco.ie.

Impartiality

- 1.21 This EIAR document has been prepared with reference to a standardised methodology which is universally accepted and acknowledged. Experienced environmental specialists have been used throughout the EIA process to ensure the EIAR is robust, impartial and objective.

Statement of Difficulties Encountered

- 1.22 No particular difficulties, such as technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge, were encountered in compiling any of the specified information contained in this EIAR, such that the prediction of impacts has not been possible. Where any specific difficulties were encountered these are outlined in the relevant chapter of the EIAR.

Forecasting Methods Used for Environmental Effects

- 1.23 The evidence used to identify the significant effects on the various aspects of the environment, and the methods employed to forecast effects, are standard techniques used by each of the individual disciplines. The general approach adopted was to identify the receiving environment, to add a projection of the “loading” placed on the various aspects of the receiving environment by the development, and to put forward enhancement measures where appropriate to lessen or remove an impact, to determine the net predicted impact. Where specific methodologies are employed within the EIAR assessment, these are referred to in the respective Receiving Environment/Baseline sections of the EIAR.

Errors

- 1.24 While every effort has been made to ensure that the content of this EIAR document is error free and consistent there may be instances in this document where typographical errors and/or minor inconsistencies do occur. These typographical errors and/or minor inconsistencies are unlikely to have any material impact on the overall findings and assessment contained in this EIAR.

2. The EIA Process

EIA Legislation

- 2.1 Directive 85/337/EEC came into force in June 1985 and required Member States to ensure that before a development consent is given, any public or private projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment regarding their nature, size, or location, are made subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of their effects on the environment. Directive 2011/92/EU codified Directive 85/337/EEC and its three (1997, 2003 and 2009) subsequent amendments in December 2011.
- 2.2 Directive 2011/92/EU was then amended by Directive 2014/52/EU in April 2014, which aimed to address certain problems of implementation, reduce unnecessary administrative burdens, simplify the assessment procedure, and reinforce certain levels of environmental protection taking into account emerging challenges such as resource efficiency, climate change, biodiversity, and disaster prevention.
- 2.3 The amending Directive took effect in Ireland on 16th May 2017 and was transposed into Irish law by the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296/2018) on 1st September 2018.
- 2.4 The European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 further amended the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) transposing the amended Directive into the Irish planning code.

EIA Guidance

- 2.5 The abovementioned EIA legislation is supported by a number of guidance documents, circulars, and advice notes, which help to provide direction and clarity in terms of satisfying the requirements of EIA legislation.
- 2.6 This assessment of environmental impacts has been completed in accordance with the aforementioned prevailing EIA legislation and in accordance with the relevant guidelines which are outlined in Chapter 2 of Volume 2 of the EIAR.
- 2.7 In addition to these guidance documents, all EU Directives and national legislation relating to the specialist areas have been considered under each relevant environmental aspect and addressed in the relevant EIAR chapters.

EIA Process

- 2.8 EIA can be described as a 'process' for predicting effects on the environment caused by a proposed project. Where effects would be unacceptable, design or other mitigation measures can be implemented to avoid or reduce the effects to acceptable levels.
- 2.9 **Figure 2.1** below identifies the various stages involved in the EIA process:

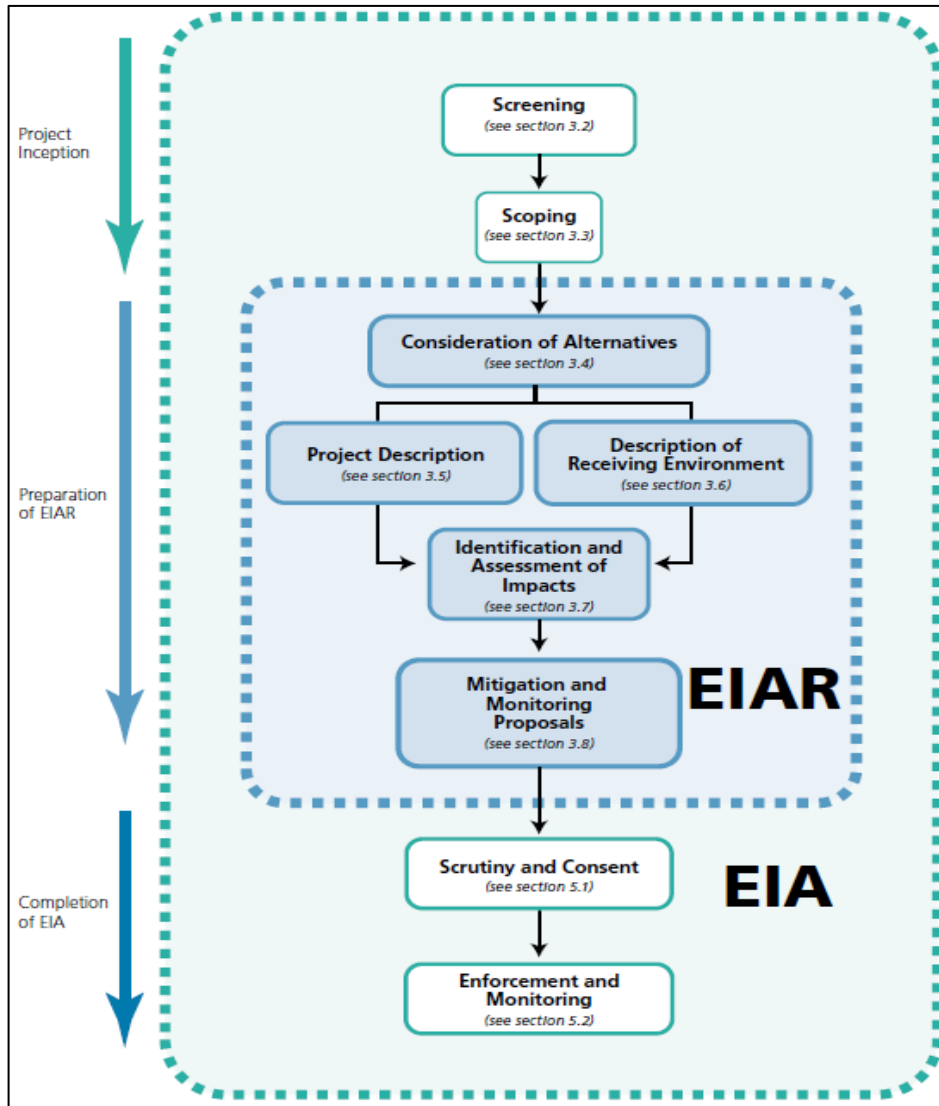


Figure 2.1: EIA Process Flow Chart [Source: EPA’s 2022 Guidelines]

EIA Screening

- 2.10 EIA Screening represents the first stage of the EIA process. It involves deciding whether an EIA needs to be undertaken or not.
- 2.11 The projects listed in Annex I of the EIA Directive are subject to a mandatory EIA. Those listed in Annex II are subject to a screening procedure, followed by an EIA when thresholds established at national level or a case-by-case examination so demand.
- 2.12 The Annexes contained within the amended Directive have been transposed into Irish law by the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).
- 2.13 Specifically, Annex I projects are listed in Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) and Annex II projects are listed in Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

2.14 The proposed project **does not fall** within a development category contained in Part 1 of Schedule 5 and therefore a mandatory EIA is not a requirement under this provision.

2.15 Part 2 of Schedule 5 of the *Planning & Development Regulations 2001* (as amended) sets mandatory thresholds for each project category above which EIA is required. Category 10 of Part 2 relates to 'infrastructure projects' with sub-category 10(b) making specific reference to urban development:

'Category 10 - Infrastructure Projects:

(b) (iv) Urban development which would involve an area greater than 2 hectares in the case of a business district, 10 hectares in the case of other parts of a built-up area and 20 hectares elsewhere'.

2.16 The regeneration site, which measures an area of approx. 1.89ha, and the proposed regeneration works do not trigger any of the thresholds identified in Schedule 5 Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (the 2001 Regulations) (as amended). However, the proposed works represent 'sub-threshold' development with respect to *'Category 10 - Infrastructure Projects: (iv) Urban development'*.

2.17 The European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (the 2018 EIA Regulations) amended the P&D Regulations 2001 (as amended) and introduced a mandatory process for screening of all 'sub-threshold developments' defined as:

'...development of a type set out in Part 2 of Schedule 5 which does not equal or exceed, as the case may be, a quantity, area or other limit specified in that Schedule in respect of the relevant class of development'.

2.18 Article 120(1)(a) of the P&D Regulations 2001 (as amended) states that *'Where a local authority proposes to carry out a subthreshold development, the authority shall carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development'.*

2.19 There are 3 potential outcomes for a Preliminary Examination, as set out under Article 120(1)(b) of the P&D Regulations 2001 (as amended), i.e:

'(b) Where the local authority concludes, based on such preliminary examination, that—

(i) there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall conclude that an EIA is not required,

(ii) there is significant and realistic doubt in regard to the likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, the information specified in Schedule 7A for the purposes of a screening determination,

or

(iii) there is a real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development, it shall—

- (I) conclude that the development would be likely to have such effects, and*
- (II) prepare, or cause to be prepared, an EIA in respect of the development.'*

2.20 The project team noted that the overall site area is just marginally below the relevant threshold of '*...2 hectares in the case of a business district...*' and that the site can be reasonably described as being 'sensitive' due to the following:

- its location adjacent, and partly within, the River Boyne SAC;
- there is a potential risk of flooding within parts of the site;
- the site is partly located within 3 no. Architectural Conservation Areas; and
- the site contains a number of National Monuments and Protected Structures, and is bound by/adjoins a number of Protected Structures.

2.21 Noting the nature, size and location of the proposed public realm works, it was considered that a sub-threshold EIA be prepared in accordance with the requirements set out in Schedule 6 of the 2001 Regulations (as amended) to accompany and be submitted with the planning application.

EIA Scoping

2.22 The EPA's 2022 Guidelines state that 'Scoping' is a '*...process of deciding what information should be contained in an EIA and what methods should be used to gather and assess that information*'.

2.23 To summarise, the following environmental factors/topics are scoped in for this EIA:

- Population & Human Health
- Biodiversity
- Land, Soils and Geology
- Hydrology and Hydrogeology
- Air & Climate
- Noise & Vibration
- Material Assets (Waste)
- Material Assets (Traffic & Transportation)
- Material Assets (Site Services)
- Cultural Heritage (Architectural Heritage)

- Cultural Heritage (Archaeology)
- Landscape and Visual Impact

Major Accidents & Disasters

2.24 Article 3 of the amended Directive requires that an EIAR shall include ‘...*the expected effects deriving from the vulnerability of the project **to risks of major accidents and/or disasters** that are relevant to the project concerned*’. **[our emphasis.]**

2.25 The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that relevant safety and precautionary measures are identified so as to protect the proposed project in the event of a major accidents and/or disasters (MADs) and that appropriate mitigation measures are incorporated to the protect the environment, if such an event were to occur.

2.26 The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment’s (IEMA) document, ‘Major Accidents and Disasters in EIA: A Primer’, dated September 2020, provides helpful guidance in terms of scoping a MAD into an EIAR:

“A major accidents and/or disasters assessment will be relevant to some developments more than others, and for many developments it is likely to be scoped out of the assessment”. **[our emphasis.]**

2.27 The 2020 IEMA document (pg. 12) further advises that the topic may be scoped out if:

- *‘There is no source-pathway-receptor linkage of a hazard that could trigger a major accident and / or disaster, or potential for the proposed development to lead to a significant environmental effect; or*
- *All possible MADs are adequately considered elsewhere in the assessment or covered by existing design measures or compliance with legislation and best practice.’*

2.28 The MADs impact assessment typically includes an assessment of the potential effects in relation to ‘Seveso Sites’, i.e. major industrial establishments with a presence of certain dangerous substances in sufficient quantities. These sites are regulated under the ‘Seveso III Directive’ (Directive 2012/18/EU) on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances.

2.29 The closest identified Seveso site to the application site is the Flogas Ireland Limited site, being an Upper Tier Seveso site which is located at Marsh Road, Drogheda, Co. Louth. Table 11.1 of the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 titled ‘Notified Seveso Establishments’ identifies a consultation distance of 600m for this Seveso site.

2.30 As this Seveso site is located approximately 1.9km¹ east from the application site, the application site is therefore located outside of the relevant consultation distance. It is further noted that a significant amount of established development is located between the Seveso site and the application site which includes the town of Drogheda, the River

¹ Using the closest site boundary of the application site and the closest site boundary of the Seveso site.

Boyne, a railway line, road infrastructure, established residential neighbourhoods, port developments and etc.

- 2.31 Noting the amount of intervening development located between the application site and the Seveso site, combined with the distance from the application site and the Seveso site, it is considered that there is no source-pathway-receptor linkage which would lead to a likelihood of the proposed project being affected by a MAD associated with this Seveso site.
- 2.32 As such, an assessment of impacts specifically in relation to MADs has been scoped out of this EIAR. The risk/effects of any potential accidents and/or natural events are addressed in the relevant specialist chapters of this EIAR.

Appropriate Assessment

- 2.33 Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, which was translated into Irish law by the European Union (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2015 (the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations) and the Planning and Development Act, 2000-2021 (as amended), lays out the specifications for an appropriate assessment (AA).
- 2.34 A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) has been prepared by RSK and is submitted as part of the planning application package to address the relevant policy objectives and requirements with respect to Appropriate Assessment and European Sites.
- 2.35 The NIS confirms that the southern boundary of the application site adjoins the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC, and that a small section of the application site is located within the SAC. However, none of the qualifying interests of this SAC are located within the overlapping section of the application site and the SAC, and so there will be no direct effects on the SAC.
- 2.36 The NIS also identifies three other European Sites located within 4km of the subject site, these being: Boyne Estuary SPA (4080) – 2.2km east; River Boyne and River Blackwater SPA (4232) – 2.6 km west; and Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC (1957) 3.4km east.
- 2.37 The NIS concludes, subject to the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures, that the proposed development will not adversely affect the integrity of any European site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Please refer to Chapter 8 – Biodiversity of Volume 2 of the EIAR and the accompanying Natura Impact Statement for further details.

EIA Methodology

- 2.38 Each chapter of this EIAR assesses the direct, indirect, cumulative, and residual impact of the proposed development for both the construction and operational stage of the proposed development.
- 2.39 This EIAR is structured in accordance with current EIA legislation, policy, and guidance and contains all pertinent information, as required. The criteria for defining particular environmental effects are listed in Table 2.1 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR in accordance with the EPA's 2022 Guidelines, unless specifically specified in the relevant chapters.

2.40 In accordance with the EPA’s 2022 Guidelines, the quality, significance, and duration of an effect is determined by comparing the character of the predicted effect to the sensitivity of the receiving environment (see Figure 2.4 of Chapter 2 of the EIAR), unless stated otherwise within the respective specialist chapters.

The Environmental Impact Assessment Team

2.41 Turley are the planning consultant and Environmental Impact Assessment coordinator for the proposed development. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report was prepared by Turley, with input from the project design team and various environmental specialists, as listed in **Table 2.3 of Volume 2** of the EIAR.

Name	Company	Qualification
Rosemary Daly	Turley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc (Hons) Environmental Planning • Postgraduate Diploma in Town and Country Planning • MSc Rural Development • MRTPI
Paul McMonagle	Turley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA (Hons) English and Geography • MRUP • MIPI • MRTPI
Catherine Norris	Turley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B(Hons) Social Science • M(Hons) Planning and Urban Design • MIPI • MRTPI
Leo Kilkenny	Turley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA English and Politics • MRUP • MIPI • MRTPI
Nick Marchant	RSK Group/NM Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc in Ecosystem Conservation Landscape Management • BSc in Environmental Science
Lisa Colleen McClung	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Sc. (Environmental Studies) • MSc Environmental Science
Sven Klinkenbergh	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Sc. Environmental Science & P.G. • P.G. Dip. Environmental Protection
Jayne Stephens	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B.Sc. (Environmental Science), • PhD (Environmental Microbiology).
Mairéad Duffy	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.Sc. (Environmental Science) • M.Sc. (Climate Change)
Aarron Hamilton	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOA Diploma in Acoustics and Noise Control • Member of the Institute of Acoustics (AMIOA)
James Mangan	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IOA Diploma in Acoustics and Noise Control

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate member of the Institute of Acoustics (MIOA)
Dr Srinivas Srimath	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc Environmental Engineering • Phd Air Quality
Robert Clarke	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A full member of the Institute of Air Quality Management
Ryan Murphy	RSK Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc Environmental Engineering
Ken Hegarty	Hegsons Design Consultancy Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BE Civil & Environmental Engineering • MEng Sc Transport Planning • CEng MIEI • MCIHT
Delecia Reddy	Nicholas O'Dwyer Ltd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BTech in Civil Engineering. • National Diploma in Civil Engineering • MIEI
Faith Bailey	IAC Archaeology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Cultural Landscape Management, • BA (Hons) Archaeology • MIAI • MCIfA • Licence eligible archaeologist
Jacqui Anderson	IAC Archaeology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA Archaeology • BA Archaeology and Classics • MIAI
Tom McGimsey	Mesh Architects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA Architecture • MSC Historic Preservation • RIAI (Architecture & conservation)
Andrew Bunbury	Park Hood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA Landscape Architecture • DipLA Landscape Architecture • CMLI
Conor Thallon	Park Hood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BA Landscape Architecture • DipLA Landscape Architecture • CMLI

3. Application Site and Context

Introduction

3.1 In accordance with Annex IV(1) of the amended Directive, this Chapter provides information on the application site and its immediate/surrounding context.

Site Description

3.2 The application site, as illustrated in **Figure 3.1**, is located within the ‘Westgate Vision Area’ of Drogheda and covers an area of approx. 1.89 hectares.



Figure 3.1: Extract - Drawing No. LOUX3001-P-000-101-A - Site Location Plan

3.3 The application site is located in the townland of Moneymore, Drogheda and includes the following roads/streets/lanes/areas and their adjoining footpath/public realm areas: R132/Bridge of Peace/George’s Street (including the underpass on the northern side of the River Boyne); George’s Square; Father Connolly Way (including part of the existing car park area); Dominick Street; Patrickswell Lane; Old Abbey Lane; Scholes Lane; R900/West Street/Narrow West Street; Fair Street; and Wellington Quay.

3.4 The application site contains the following key site features/land uses/public realm areas:

- George’s Square which includes a public parking area, public footpaths, public toilets, a bus stop area and adjoins existing premises;
 - Medieval Wall ruins adjacent to the eastern side of the Bridge of Peace/George’s Street (R132);
 - The ‘Old Abbey’ ruins within Old Abbey Lane including the freestanding gable ruin;
 - Lands beneath and adjacent to the Bridge of Peace/George Street on the northern side of the River Boyne;
 - Road infrastructure including carriageways, footpaths, retaining walls, junctions, bus stops, loading bays, car parking spaces, etc;
 - Public utilities such as post boxes, street lighting, overhead electrical cabling and poles, underground services, CCTV cameras, electrical boxes, manholes, signage, parking meters, etc;
 - Street furniture including public art, seating/benches, planter boxes, raised flower beds, bins, bicycle parking, hanging flower baskets, water fountain, railings, etc;
 - The embankment of the River Boyne;
 - Hard landscaped areas including stepped, sloping and level components; and
 - Soft landscaped areas including grass, trees, shrubs, bushes, flowers, etc.
- 3.5 The application site also comprises third party lands, being the rear of 56/57 West Street and a small area of the Office of Public Work’s (OPW) existing car park adjacent the former town wall/River Boyne/Father Connolly Way.

Adjoining/Surrounding Area

- 3.6 The application site is immediately bound by the River Boyne to the south and a diverse mix of urban development to the north, east and west.
- 3.7 Notable buildings and structures in the adjoining/surrounding area include:
- the Abbey Shopping Centre;
 - Barlow House (Drogheda Arts Centre),
 - Drogheda Courthouse;
 - Drogheda Garda Station;
 - Drogheda Civic Offices;
 - the Dominican Church;

- the Bridge of Peace; and
- Mill Lane Apartments (under construction) and
- St. Dominick's Bridge (recently refurbished).

Wider Area

3.8 The wider area comprises the urban footprint of Drogheda Town Centre. Notable buildings within the wider area include:

- Drogheda Town Centre Shopping Centre (and cinema);
- St. Dominic's Park;
- Boyne Shopping Centre (and cinema);
- Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital;
- St. Peter's Cathedral;
- St. Peter's Church; and
- St. Peter's National School.

Drogheda

3.9 The application site is located within Drogheda, a town that is located predominantly within the southern edge of Co. Louth. Drogheda is currently identified as a 'Regional Growth Centre' within national, regional and local planning policy. The town is also located along the strategic Dublin-Belfast Corridor.

3.10 A key priority for Drogheda is to promote the continued sustainable and compact growth of the town as a regional driver of city scale with a target population of 50,000 by 2031.

3.11 This priority is supported by objectives to regenerate the town centre, promote compact growth in the town's hinterlands and enhance the role of Drogheda as a self-sustaining strategic employment centre on the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

4. Consideration of Alternatives

Introduction

- 4.1 In accordance with Part 1(d) of Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, this Chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report provides a “A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the person or persons who prepared the [Environmental Impact Assessment Report], which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the proposed development on the environment”.
- 4.2 As per the Environmental Protection Agency’s 2022 Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, the alternatives are discussed under headings as follows:
- Do Nothing Alternative
 - Alternative Location
 - Alternative Design / Layout
 - Alternative Processes
 - Alternative Mitigation Measures

‘Do-Nothing’ Alternative

- 4.3 The ‘Do-Nothing’ alternative considers the likely scenario that would arise, assuming the proposed development was not progressed, i.e. if nothing were done. Note that this chapter discusses the Do-Nothing scenario in terms of development (or lack thereof) in the absence of the proposed development. The likely impacts of a Do-Nothing scenario in relation to the various environmental topics (e.g. cultural heritage, biodiversity, traffic and so on) are discussed in the respective specialist chapters of this EIAR. In this case, the Do-Nothing scenario might entail:
- **Scenario A:** a continuation of the existing conditions and use of the subject lands (i.e. underutilised public realm and riverfront areas, vacancy/dereliction, car dominated environment, underutilised built and natural heritage); or
 - **Scenario B:** development of an alternative proposal (likely to be similar in nature to the current proposal) and related planning application in the future.

Scenario A – No Development

- 4.4 If Scenario A occurred, i.e. if the proposed project was not constructed, this could result in a missed opportunity and a significant loss of potential funding for the regeneration of Westgate and to upgrade the public realm areas, provide enhanced community infrastructure, protect and celebrate important rich heritage and to reprioritise the

roads/streets/lanes/footpaths in this area to encourage more sustainable modes of transport, such as active travel.

- 4.5 This scenario would not align with the current 'D1 – Regeneration' land use zoning for this area or the wider social, environmental or economic policies contained within the Louth County Development Plan (LCDP) 2021 – 2027.
- 4.6 Ultimately, the overall objective of the 'Westgate 2040' project, which is to act as a catalyst to support positive regeneration, compact growth and sustainable development in the 'Westgate Vision' area, would not be realised and the existing dereliction and decline of the area would likely perpetuate. As a result the 'do-nothing' scenario is not considered to represent a viable option and has been discounted.

Scenario B – An Alternative Proposal

- 4.7 We consider that Scenario B is the more likely alternative, i.e. if the proposed project were not to come forward at this stage it is likely that LCC would propose a similar development under a separate proposal.
- 4.8 This course of action is considered to be likely noting that LCC owns the majority of the application site and noting that the LCDP 2021 – 2027 contains policy objectives to deliver regeneration in this area. Indeed, the Growth Strategy of the Plan places a '*...significant focus on promoting the regeneration of the town centre through the identification of specific areas and land for regeneration uses **and the progression of regeneration projects such as the Westgate Vision***' [our emphasis].
- 4.9 The impacts of this scenario would depend on the specific nature, siting and design of the proposals but it is likely that these would be similar to the proposed project, noting the policy objectives contained in the LCDP 2021-2027.

Alternative Locations

- 4.10 It is considered that there are no alternative locations for the proposed project noting that:
- this area of Drogheda has been identified as a location in urgent need of regeneration for a considerable time;
 - the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 contains policy objectives to target regeneration of this specific area; and that
 - the proposed project will deliver public realm improvements and interventions that have been designed to respond to the constraints and opportunities within this specific area.

Alternative Design Approach (Layout and Design)

- 4.11 An extensive masterplanning process was undertaken to establish the optimal redevelopment principles and proposals for the application site. This masterplanning process included an extensive review of the site and the wider area by an integrated multidisciplinary design team, including roads engineers, architects, urban designers,

landscape architects, civil and structural engineers, conservation architects, town planners, ecologists, and etc to identify potential physical, social, environmental, economic and planning constraints and opportunities for the project.

- 4.12 In addition, in May 2021, Louth County Council undertook extensive engagement and consultation to help inform the vision and design process for the proposed project. Stakeholders and members of the community were engaged to understand their needs and wants in relation to the 'Westgate Vision' area and to gain feedback on design principles, as part of a co-design process.
- 4.13 Using the information collated during the initial site analysis stage by the integrated multidisciplinary design team and the clear themes and development ambitions that emerged from the community and stakeholder consultations, an overarching design vision was conceived for the project and 3 no. concept development design options were then prepared for each character area and presented to Louth County Council for consideration.
- 4.14 Further information on each of the alternative concept design options considered for the 4 no. key character areas during the concept development stage of the project and the reasons why they were discounted as the preferred option for the final development proposal are provided within Chapter 4 of Volume 2 of the EIAR.
- 4.15 Ultimately, it was concluded that the preferred design options, proposed by the current planning application, represented a better outcome with respect to design, economic, social and environmental factors.

Alternative Processes

- 4.16 Alternative processes are not considered to be relevant for the proposed project or this EIAR having regard to the detailed Masterplanning and engagement stages/processes that were undertaken and noting the nature, location, and design specifics of the proposed project.

Alternative Mitigation Measures

- 4.17 The mitigation measures which are outlined in the various chapters of the EIAR, and summarised in Chapter 21 of this EIAR, are considered appropriate to the location, nature and extent of the project and its potential impacts. As such, no alternative mitigation measures were considered.

Conclusion

- 4.18 Having examined various reasonable alternative designs for each Character Area it is considered that the proposed development is the preferred option in terms of the sustainable development of the application site.

5. Description of the Proposed Development

Overview

- 5.1 Louth County Council is seeking approval to undertake public realm/urban regeneration works on lands within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda, Co. Louth.
- 5.2 The overall objective of the project (known as the 'Westgate 2040 Project') is to act as a catalyst to support positive regeneration, compact growth and sustainable development in the Westgate Vision Area and the wider Drogheda Town Centre.
- 5.3 This planning application represents the next stage in delivering the Westgate Vision, launched by Louth County Council in 2018, which is a targeted planning response aimed at channelling investment into this core area of Drogheda Town Centre.

Project Brief

- 5.4 The Westgate 2040 Project brings forward a vision for urban regeneration and development of the town with the following objectives at the forefront:
 - *Create a quality gateway / arrival space, public spaces, pedestrian linkages and public realm.*
 - *Ensure inclusivity for all members of the community; the very young, the youth, the old, the mobility impaired, socially disadvantaged, the pedestrian and cyclist.*
 - *Develop proposals which meet the design principles of national and international best practice.*
 - *Promote proposals an environment which leads to both day and night time activities.*
 - *Improve connectivity and legibility for all members of the community and for visitors/tourists to the town.*
 - *Capitalise and respect the rich heritage of this town centre location.*
 - *Operate / employ sustainable development principles by minimising energy consumption and maximising the use of renewable energy technology.*

Description of Development

- 5.5 The proposed development consists of the following:
 1. Public realm improvement works comprising: new hard landscaping including resurfacing, soft landscaping including new tree planting, a water feature channel with stepped concrete elements and integrated landscaping, a Corten steel ground insert delineating the location of the former medieval town wall, a wayfinding Corten steel ground insert, Corten steel signs, Corten steel walkways, street

furniture, new pedestrian connections, a SUDS rainwater retention pond, cycle lanes, pedestrian footpaths, external steps, tactile paving, road signs, cycle parking stands and provision of new railings;

2. Public realm improvement works will also include the creation of a new urban plaza gateway/arrival area at Georges Square and a new enhanced public amenity area adjacent the River Boyne riverfront including a new pedestrian wooden deck promenade/boardwalk;
3. Demolition of the existing public toilet block at George's Square (between the junctions of George's Street/Fair Street and George's Street/West Street), a section of boundary wall located between Old Abbey Lane and Father Connolly Way and a section of wall located between Dominick Street and Dominick Street car park;
4. A new raised, free-standing, curved walkway located between the R132 and the existing Medieval Wall to provide a universally accessible connection from West Street to the River Boyne riverfront;
5. A new freestanding Corten steel pavilion located adjacent the River Boyne riverfront to create a new mixed use/public space;
6. A new freestanding Corten steel canopy located within, and offset from, the remains of the Old Abbey (being a Protected Structure – ID No. DB-187 and a recorded monument - RMP No. LH024-041011) to create a new flexible community and cultural space;
7. Two freestanding Corten steel structures located at the junction of West Street and the R132/George's Street to mark the location of the former medieval West Gate;
8. Repair and restoration of the old Medieval Wall located adjacent the R132/George's Street (being a Protected Structure – ID No. DB-188 and a recorded monument - RMP No. LH024-041014);
9. Repair and restoration of the Old Abbey (being a Protected Structure – ID No. DB-187 and a recorded monument - RMP No. LH024-041011) including the west gable of its north aisle located within Old Abbey Lane;
10. Reprioritisation of traffic and movement patterns for the streets/roads/lanes/footpaths within the application site to accommodate the proposed public realm improvement works and integrate with the Council's emerging Active Travel projects to the north and south of George's Street/R132;
11. Road improvement works to include alteration of road alignment, resurfacing, shared surface treatments, revised access arrangements, cycle lanes, pedestrian crossing points, parking bays, loading bays, accessible parking bays, bus stops and new public lighting; and
12. All associated site works including: drainage, undergrounding of services and all associated ancillary development works.

Character Areas

- 5.6 As outlined previously in Chapter 4, the application site has been divided into key character areas for design/development purposes, as illustrated in **Figure 5.1**.

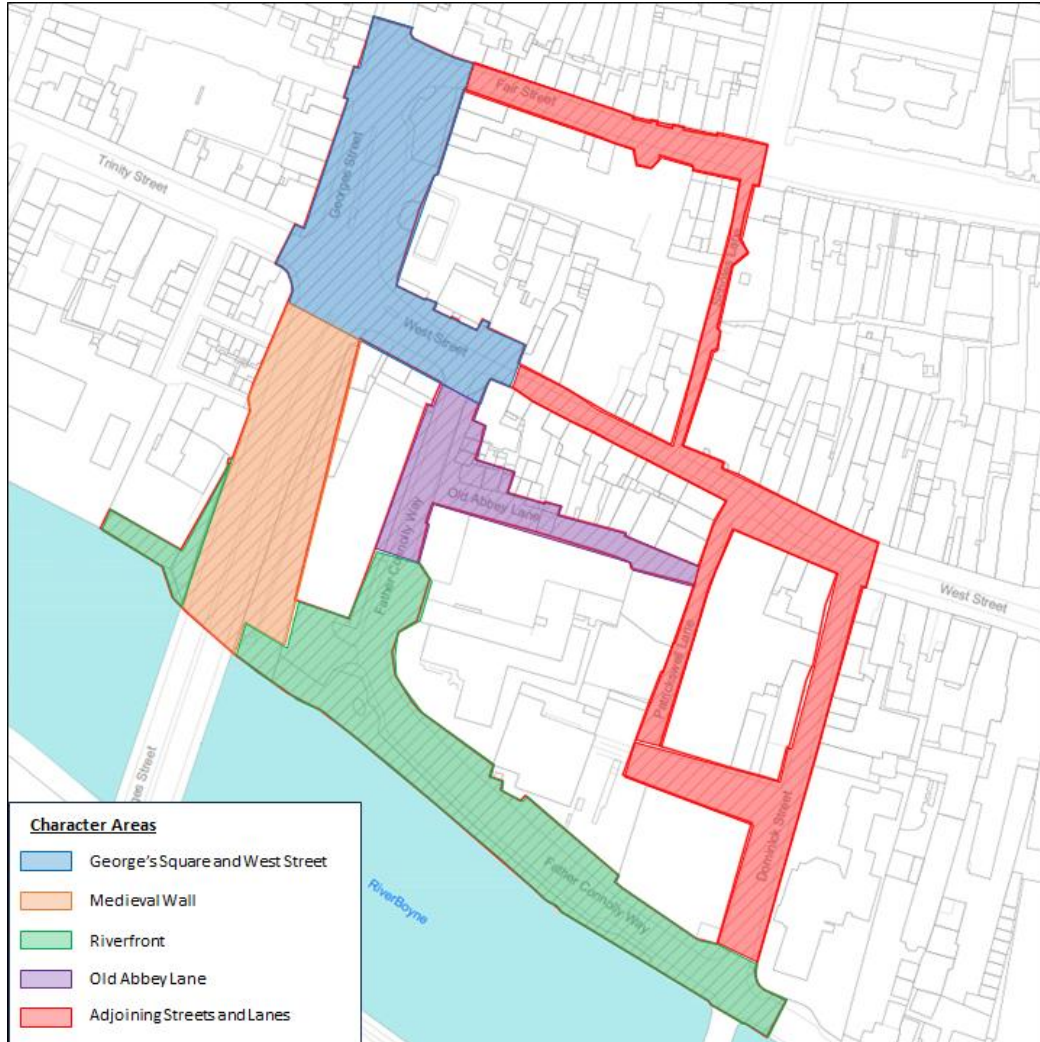


Figure 5.1: Westgate 2040 - Character Areas

- 5.7 Chapter 5 of Volume 2 of the EIA provides a more detailed overview of the proposed development. Please also refer to the drawings package, Design Statement and Planning Statement accompanying the planning application.

6. Consultation

Introduction

- 6.1 This Chapter describes the consultation process in respect of the proposed project. The planning application is submitted to An Bord Pleanála by Louth County Council under Sections 175 and 177AE of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- 6.2 Statutory consultation prior to submission of the planning application is not required under Sections 175 and 177AE, however the applicant acknowledges the importance of effective public participation in large scale Council regeneration projects. On this basis extensive non-statutory community consultation has been undertaken. The consultation process is described in detail below.

Non-Statutory Consultation

- 6.3 In May 2021 Louth County Council undertook preliminary engagement and consultation for the preparation of a vision for the regeneration of the 'Westgate 2040' project area. As part of the design development process, stakeholders and members of the community were engaged to understand their needs and wants in relation to the area and to gain feedback on design principles, as part of a co-design process.
- 6.4 A consultation survey was carried out online. A total of 458 completed submissions were received from a diverse range of stakeholders with an interest in the Westgate area or connections within Drogheda in general.
- 6.5 Having considered the combined results of the qualitative and quantitative data generated from the survey, a number of very clear themes emerged and demonstrate strong community sentiment. This sentiment was further evidenced in the online breakout room discussions and additional stakeholder consultation meetings. The themes are:
- Maximise the potential of and protection for historic assets;
 - Improve traffic congestion and flow, centralised parking and car-free zones;
 - Improve safety and a sense of arrival;
 - Develop a focus on culture;
 - Maximise tourism potential;
 - Create structured outdoor space and amenities; and
 - Address underutilisation of the River Boyne.

Statutory Consultation

- 6.6 This planning application is submitted directly to An Bord Pleanála for assessment. As part of this planning application process, the following consultation will be undertaken:
- Placing of a public notice in a local newspaper;
 - Placing a copy of the application and all accompanying documents on display in the offices of Louth County Council, and on the Council's website; and
 - Issuing details of the planning application and a copy of the EIA Report to the Department of Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage's EIA Portal.
- 6.7 Pursuant to Sections 175(4)(b) and 177AE(4)(b) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), the following prescribed authorities are also being notified directly in respect of this planning application:
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
 - An Taisce
 - Fáilte Ireland
 - Heritage Council
 - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
 - Transport Infrastructure Ireland
 - Uisce Éireann
 - Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
 - National Transport Authority
 - Inland Fisheries Ireland
- 6.8 Any submissions arising from the consultation and notification process will be submitted directly to An Bord Pleanála and considered as part of the planning application assessment and decision-making process.

7. Population & Human Health

7.1 Article 3 of the amended Directive states the following:

“The environmental impact assessment shall identify, describe and assess in an appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case, the direct and indirect significant effects of a project on the following factors:

(a) population and human health; ...”

7.2 In accordance with the amended Directive, this Chapter evaluates the likely direct and indirect significant effects of the proposed project (as defined in Chapter 5) on ‘Population and Human Health’ during both the construction and operational stages. Where associated and inter-related potential likely and significant effects are identified with respect to other environmental factors, these are referred to and the reader is directed to the relevant specialist chapter of the EIAR for the detailed assessment

7.3 In accordance with the EPA’s 2022 Guidelines, this Chapter provides information on the baseline/receiving environment with respect to the following:

- Economic and Employment Activity;
- Settlement Patterns;
- Land Use Patterns;
- Baseline Population;
- Demographic Trends;
- Human health; and
- Amenity.

7.4 The application site is located in County Louth, within the southern area of the electoral division of Fair Gate (ED 147014), Drogheda. Fair Gate ED and three surrounding electoral divisions (West Gate ED, St. Laurence Gate ED and St Mary’s ED) were taken as the study area for the project. The population of the study area represented approximately 20% of Louth County’s population in 2022. The study area experienced a population growth of 2.5% since 2016 which is behind the overall national growth figure of 8.1%. The application site is identified in the Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027 (LCDP) as land zoned for regeneration.

7.5 ‘Chapter 7 – Population and Human Health’, as contained within Volume 2 of the EIAR, provides a detailed overview of the economic, health and other social trends for Drogheda.

7.6 The construction stage of the proposed project is predicted to create environmental effects typically associated with a development of this nature, type and scale, including

elevated noise levels, dust generation, increased traffic on the road network, generation of waste, visual impacts, and etc.

- 7.7 The operation stage of the proposed regeneration project will include the use of the improved landscaped/public realm areas, as well as new cycle/walking paths, by residents and visitors to the Westgate Vision Area. It is considered that the operational stage of the proposed project will result in an overall positive effect on 'Population and Human Health'.
- 7.8 Potential impacts with respect to the following environmental factors are addressed in Chapter 7 of Volume 2 of this EIA:
- Air Quality;
 - Noise Exposure and Vibration;
 - Traffic and Transportation;
 - Landscape and Visual Amenity; and
 - Economic and Employment Activity.
- 7.9 Chapter 7 also notes that the LCDP 2021-2027 identifies the Flogas Ireland Ltd site within the Drogheda Marine Terminal (approx. 1.8km from the application site) as an Upper Tier site under the Seveso III Directive.
- 7.10 Noting that the application site is located outside the applicable consultation distance/zone of the Flogas Seveso site, and the extensive intervening development between it and the application site, it is considered that there is no source-pathway-receptor linkage which would lead to a likelihood of the proposed project being affected by, or triggering/exacerbating, a Major Accident and/or Disaster (MAD) associated with this Seveso site.
- 7.11 The risks/effects of any potential accidents and/or natural events are addressed in the relevant specialist chapters of this EIA, for example flood risk is addressed in Chapter 10 - Hydrology and Hydrogeology and the accompany Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment, geohazards are addressed in Chapter 9 - Land, Soils & Geology, and etc.
- 7.12 Considering the design, nature and location/siting of the proposed project, and having regard to the construction and operation best practice, mitigation and monitoring measures prescribed in the various specialist chapters of this EIA, no likely significant direct or indirect effects are predicted during either the construction or operation stages of the proposed project with respect to 'Population and Human Health'.
- 7.13 As part of the assessment of potential effects on 'Population and Human Health', the other specialist chapters of the EIA have been reviewed to identify any interactions with the other environmental factors assessed and to ensure any likely significant effects are addressed. These are set out in Chapter 19 of Volume 2 of the EIA.

8. Biodiversity

- 8.1 The aim of the Biodiversity Chapter is to identify, quantify and evaluate the impacts of the proposed development on ecosystems and their components, including designated sites, habitats, flora, and fauna.
- 8.2 The southern boundary of the Site adjoins the *River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC*, and a small section of the Site is within the SAC. The SAC boundary is irregular and does not appear to follow either the river bank or the edge of the road. It should be noted that the Natura Impact Assessment (NIS) that accompanies this EIA confirms that none of the qualifying interests of this SAC are located within the overlapping section of the application site and the SAC. Potential indirect impacts on other Natura 2000 sites were considered using the source-pathway-receptor model. The primary consideration was Natura 2000 sites downstream on the River Boyne such as the Boyne Coast and Estuary SAC
- 8.3 There is no risk of direct impacts on any European sites, but there is a risk that pollutants generated during construction work could have an indirect impact on aquatic / estuarine habitats and fauna. In response, a range of pollution-prevention measures will be implemented during the construction of the proposed development, to avoid or minimise any impacts on the European sites. Please refer to the Natura Impact Statement for further details.
- 8.4 Habitats within the site include artificial surfaces, dry meadow, scrub / treeline, and ornamental / non-native shrubs. The dry meadow is of Local ecological importance, and all other habitats are of Negligible importance. The proposed development will require the removal of the dry meadow habitat, but it will also involve substantial landscape planting along the riverfront and near the Medieval Wall, including trees, shrubs and groundcover. Overall, this will result in a significant increase in the biodiversity value of the site, more than compensating for the dry meadow habitat that will be lost.
- 8.5 The dense foliage of the trees and scrub may provide breeding opportunities for nesting birds. Impacts will be avoided by scheduling site clearance works for the non-breeding season (October – February), or by commissioning a pre-construction survey by a suitably-qualified ecologist.
- 8.6 Some of the buildings in the vicinity of the proposed development site were considered to have features suitable for roosting bats. A series of bat surveys were carried out, but no bat roosts were identified. The Boyne Estuary is an important foraging area for bats, so all new lighting along the edge of the river has been designed using bat-sensitive lighting principles.
- 8.7 Subject to the successful implementation of mitigation measures, it can be concluded that the proposed development will not cause any significant negative impacts on designated sites, habitats, legally protected species, or any other features of ecological importance.

9. Land, Soils & Geology

- 9.1 This chapter considers the likely significant effects on the receiving geological, land and soil environments associated with the construction and operation of the proposed development.
- 9.2 Consultation with available soil maps (SIS, EPA, Teagasc) indicate that soil types across the Site include 'Artificial Surfaces' of 'Discontinuous Urban Fabric', bordered by 'Water' to the south of the Site boundary. Subsoil maps indicate that subsoil types across the Site are of 'Man Made Ground', again, bordered by 'Water' to the south of the Site boundary.
- 9.3 There will be changes in topography on the site as platforms and terraces will be created but there will be some surface level changes to topography. The geological formation underlying the Site is of Visean limestone and calcareous shale.
- 9.4 The main land use in the vicinity of the site is urban. Consultation with Historical Maps indicates that part of the site was used as a timber yard and saw mill during the mid-1800s. Since the Site is situated in an Urban Area, there is likely to be some level of contamination in the soil from previous impacts such as construction waste and vehicular impacts of leaking hydrocarbons which may have been buried from previous developments.
- 9.5 Given that the proposed works include earthworks or excavating ground, it is recommended to carry out a further assessment of the underlying soils to determine their nature and if contamination of any kind is present.
- 9.6 Groundwater bodies underlying the Development Site are protected under EU Water Framework Directive Legislation as Designated Groundwater in SPA and SAC Habitats. All receptors associated with the Development i.e. streams, rivers, and groundwater, are considered highly sensitive receptors.
- 9.7 The predicted impacts of the proposed development with regard to the land, soil and geology environment were assessed for the construction and operational phases and were identified as Soil Sealing, Land Take, Subsoil/Bedrock removal, Soil/subsoil compaction and Soil contamination.
- 9.8 The first four impacts identified here will be mitigated by reduction and avoidance, where possible. There will be the addition of hard and soft landscaped areas, reducing the removal of subsoil and bedrock further. Some existing infrastructure will remain reducing the disturbance of subsoil and bedrock.
- 9.9 The hazard posed by hydrocarbon contamination to soil is deemed significant in terms of adversely impacting on the health of the soils associated with the proposed site and the flora and fauna it supports, however the risk is considered limited considering the movement of same is limited. The use and storage of hydrocarbons and small volumes of chemicals is a standard risk associated with all construction sites. The measures identified in Volume 2 of the EIAR will mitigate the risk of spills and leaks during the

construction phase. The residual effect is assessed as - Negative, imperceptible, direct, short-term, low probability effect on subsoils, bedrock and groundwater.

- 9.10 Mitigation measures have been prescribed for protecting the existing Geological regime of the Site. Subsoil and bedrock which are excavated as part of the construction phase will be reused onsite where possible. To mitigate by reduction and reuse; the volume of material required to be excavated, will be minimised. To protect ground stability particular earth works tasks should be completed under suitable meteorological conditions, construction activities will not occur during periods of sustained significant rainfall events.
- 9.11 Vehicular movements will be restricted to the footprint of the Development and advancing ahead of any construction will be minimised in so far as practical. Hydrological monitoring will give indications on whether the mitigations on land and soil management is being adhered to.
- 9.12 The cumulative construction effects of the development are localised and not considered to vary dramatically or behave synergistically when considering the Site in conjunction with other developments in the vicinity or downgradient of the Site. No cumulative effects on the land, soils, and geological environment are envisaged during the operational stage. This is due to the existing infrastructure and the addition of more permeable soils being exposed on site.

10. Hydrology & Hydrogeology

- 10.1 The River Boyne flows east along the southern boundary of the Site, and meets the coast of the Irish Sea. Under the WFD, this section of the River Boyne holds a 'Moderate' Water quality status (2016-2021). Site surveys identified the hard surfacing on site was combined with an existing surface water runoff drainage network (i.e., storm water drainage infrastructure), along Father Connolly Way. A GPR-Utility Survey conducted by Scantech Geoscience was conducted and identified available data on sewer drainage, the survey identified there are extensive storm water drains within the Site.
- 10.2 Consultation with GSI (2022) Groundwater maps indicates that the Site is underlain by bedrock which is limestone. The bedrock is classified as a 'Regionally-Important Aquifer' (Rkd). The site area has groundwater vulnerability; classified predominantly by Moderate (M) vulnerability rating, with small areas of High (H) and Low (L) rating within the site boundaries.
- 10.3 The Site Specific Flood Risk Assessments, prepared by NOD, concludes that parts of the application site are at risk of potential flood, these being the riverfront/Father Connolly Way area, lower Dominick Street and parts of Patrickswell Lane. NOD (2023) conclude that certain areas of the proposed development lie within Flood Zone A (1% AEP) and Flood Zone B (0.1%AEP) and are at risk of fluvial and coastal flooding. However, NOD further concludes the need and the sustainable flood risk management associated with the proposed project were at a satisfactory level in respect of the Justification Test for development in Flood Zone A.
- 10.4 While the site is not positioned within a designated area, the site is located directly adjacent to, with a small part located within, the River Boyne and River Blackwater SAC (Site Code: 2299). It is noted that the Boyne River Islands pNHA (Site Code: 1862) is located approx. 2.1 km west of the site.
- 10.5 Groundwater bodies underlying the Development Site are protected under EU Water Framework Directive Legislation as Designated Groundwater in SPA and SAC Habitats. All receptors associated with the Development i.e. streams, rivers, and groundwater, are considered highly sensitive receptors.
- 10.6 Two surface water sampling events took place to understand the baseline hydrological and hydrogeological conditions. Assessment of these conditions indicates that areas of the site have already experienced impacts, through urban development and agricultural practices in the area.
- 10.7 While assessing the potential effects of the application site, it was identified that the proposed project could result in the release of contaminants, particularly suspended solids during the construction phase of the project, and to a lesser extent during the operational phase relative to baseline conditions. Release of suspended solids and other contaminants in runoff are the principal risks to surface water quality. Appropriate environmental engineering controls and properly executed mitigation measures will significantly reduce the risk of these potential impacts, and the magnitude of any potential impact to within acceptable levels.

- 10.8 The introduction of any cementitious material can lead to a local change in hydrochemistry and impact on sensitive attributes in the water environments. Mitigation measures have been prescribed for protecting the existing hydrological regime of the Site.
- 10.9 Buffer zones are intended to drive the design and build process by minimising or avoiding the risk to surface water features by restricting construction disturbance to outside these zones. Preventing run-off is an effective method of preventing sediment pollution in the water environment, for example earthworks will be limited to seasonally dry periods and the installation of silt fencing.
- 10.10 It is essential to ensure that the use of wet concrete is carefully controlled so as to minimise the risk of any material entering the water. Surface water monitoring is proposed during construction of the development.
- 10.11 The effects of the Development are considered to contribute to the cumulative nature of adverse effects imposed on the surface water network in the catchments associated with the Development. However, if the mitigation measures are adhered to, the project will reach the Mitigated Potential Impacts, which are the achievable benchmarks provided measures are implemented adequately. This will reduce the overall impact the project will have on the hydrology of the site and the wider area surrounding the site, creating a neutral impact.

11. Air & climate

- 11.1 The Air Quality Chapter has assessed the potential effects of the proposed project on local air quality during both the construction phase and the operational phase.
- 11.2 The principal air quality pollutants relevant to this assessment are considered to be nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}). A desk-based study has been undertaken using data obtained from the (Environmental Protection Agency) EPA website. The Dundalk monitoring site is the nearest monitoring station, which is located approximately 3km to the north-east of the development site. Monitored air quality at Dundalk station was used in the assessment, which saw no exceedances to the of the relevant air quality standards (AQs) in 2021-2022. Background air quality concentrations at the Site are anticipated to be below the relevant AQs.
- 11.3 For the construction phase, a qualitative construction dust assessment has been undertaken to consider potential impacts from dust nuisance from soiling and impacts on human health from particulate matter generation. The assessment defines the pre-mitigation risk of dust impacts of the activities during construction, and site-specific mitigation measures have been recommended. With the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures where appropriate, the effect of dust and particulate matter generated by construction phase activities is considered to be not significant.
- 11.4 During the operational phase, the key air pollutants of concern are NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}, which are related to emissions from road vehicles. However, the Proposed Development is not anticipated to bring additional traffic to the area and the proposed Active Travel Scheme will reduce traffic on the surrounding road network. No thresholds identified within the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) screening method tool and the TII Guidance criteria were exceeded and therefore the Proposed Development is not anticipated to have a significant impact on local air quality.
- 11.5 The potential climate effects and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from both construction and operational phase were assessed.
- 11.6 Construction phase GHG emissions were assessed using the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) 2017 guidance. The estimated annual average construction phase GHG emissions were predicted to be 0.0002% of Ireland's 2020 and 2030 GHG emissions target and are therefore considered to have a negligible impact and not significant.
- 11.7 Operational phase GHG emissions were estimated using the DMRB screening model for the 'Do Nothing' and 'Do Something' scenarios. The results show that the impact of the Proposed Development will be to increase CO₂ emissions by less than 0.001% of Ireland's EU 2020 and 2030 emissions targets for CO₂. The overall operational phase magnitude of the change on climate is considered to be not significant.

12. Noise & Vibration

- 12.1 An assessment of the likely noise and vibration impacts associated with the proposed project has been undertaken by RSK. The existing noise climate has been surveyed across the site at five locations, over the course of typical daytime periods.

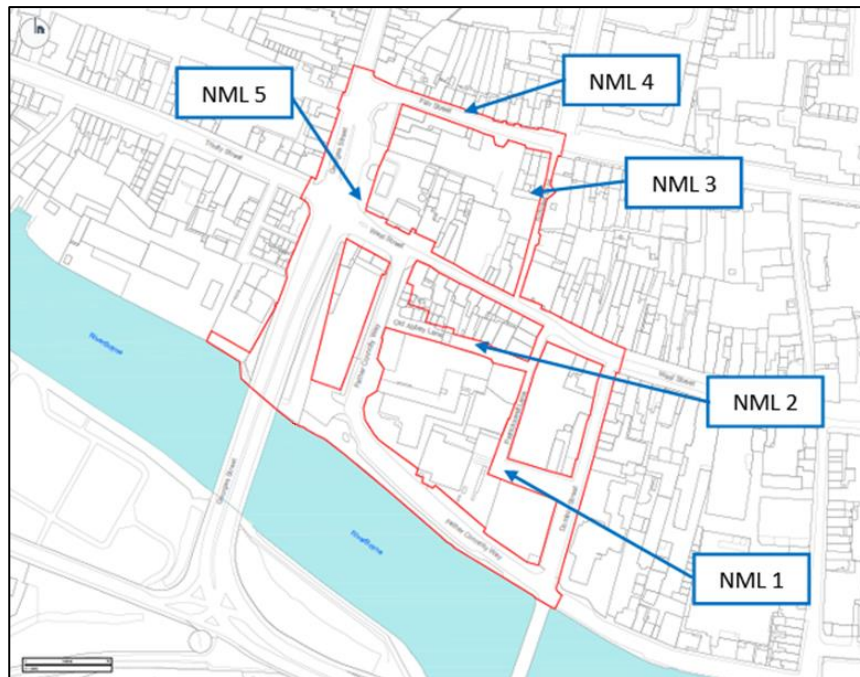


Figure 12.1: Site Location Plan Indicating Baseline Noise Monitoring Locations

- 12.2 The key noise sources noted at the site were local road traffic. Other sources of intermittent noise included distant traffic, birdsong, distant construction noise and pedestrian activity. The noise and vibration impact assessment has focused on the potential noise and vibration resulting from the construction and operational phases of the proposed project on surrounding noise sensitive locations.
- 12.3 During the construction phases of the proposed project there will be some impact on nearby residential properties due to noise emissions from site traffic and other activities. The application of site hoarding and limiting the hours of operation, along with the implementation of appropriate noise and vibration control measures, will ensure that noise and vibration impact is kept to a minimum. The resultant residual noise impact from this source will be of negative, moderate, short-term impact.
- 12.4 The operational assessment of road traffic noise concluded that the predicted increase in noise level on nearby roads is 'Negligible' and the associated impact is 'Not Significant'.
- 12.5 The residual noise impact of the operational phase of this project was found to be neutral, not-significant and permanent.

13. Material Assets (Waste)

- 13.1 Chapter 13 of the EIA has been prepared by RSK Group to identify and assess the likely impact of the waste generated from the proposed project. The Chapter identifies mitigation measures to ensure the proposed project is constructed and operated in an environmentally sustainable manner.
- 13.2 The construction and demolition phase of the project will generate a range of non-hazardous and hazardous waste materials. The chapter outlines a management strategy to ensure that there are no significant impacts from the waste generated. Factors such as permitted waste haulers and collectors, appropriate waste storage and segregation areas, correct classification of waste materials and using opportunities for waste materials to be reused off-site will ensure that there are no significant impacts from waste generated throughout the C&D phase. The predicted impacts on the environment from waste generation during the construction and demolition phase are expected to be likely, negative, short term and not significant.
- 13.3 The operational phase of the project will result in long-term waste generation. The chapter outlines a management strategy to ensure that there are no significant impacts from the waste generated. Factors such as correct waste storage and segregation, the use of permitted waste contractors and authorised facilities will give rise to appropriate management of waste and environmental impacts. The potential impact of operational waste generation from the development is expected to be negative, long term and not significant.
- 13.4 The implementation of the mitigation measures outlined in the chapter will ensure that a high rate of reuse, recovery and recycling is achieved throughout the entire development.

14. Material Assets (Traffic & Transportation)

- 14.1 Chapter 14 of the EIAR provides an assessment of the potential impact on the road network due to the development proposals has been undertaken. This assessment has focused on the impacts associated with the construction and operational phases of the development proposals.
- 14.2 This Chapter identifies the characteristics of the application site and surrounding area, examine the likely transport implications, ensure sustainable accessibility is maximised and appropriate infrastructure provided. A baseline analysis of the transport environment is presented including reporting on traffic counts carried out on the surrounding street network and an analysis of the road safety data available. The projected change in traffic associated with the operation of the proposed scheme and its likely significant effects on the baseline transport networks is also presented.
- 14.3 The application site is considered to be the primary zone of influence with respect to the management of traffic during the construction of the proposed scheme and is the area most likely to experience changes, if any, in traffic flow. Access to the area is primarily via the R132/Georges Street with vehicular access also achieved via Wellington Quay, Fair Street and West Street/Narrow West Street. A number of internal streets form the subject area which include Father Connolly Way, Dominick Street and Patrickswell Lane to the south of Narrow West Street and a pedestrian only streets consisting of Old Abbey Lane and Scholes Lane. Pedestrian and cycle access is also achieved via the Dominick Street Bridge.
- 14.4 The proposed development comprises public realm regeneration works on lands within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda, Co. Louth. It should be noted that one of the key proposals, the proposed reprioritisation of George's Street, has been undertaken in conjunction with the NTA and Louth County Council's Active Travel team to ensure alignment with the upcoming wider active travel improvements to the R132, which will involve the upgrade of junctions to better facilitate pedestrian / cyclist / transport movement along this route, slowing the existing traffic speeds along the R132. The relevant schemes include:
- Drogheda R132 Bridge of Peace to MacBride Train Station: Construction of segregated cycle lanes from the Bridge of Peace along the old Dublin Road (the R132) and terminating at MacBride Railway Station (approximately 1.55km); and
 - Drogheda Dublin and North Road Cycle/ Pedestrian Design Scheme: Provision of cycle lanes along the R132 North Road from the Rosehill Junction south to the R900 Fair Street junction (approximately 2.0 km).
- 14.5 A preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan (pCEMP) has been prepared in support of the application and a final CEMP will be prepared in order to detail the scope of the site works and processes, a detailed scheme of works will be set out in the final CEMP. A Construction Stage Temporary Traffic Management Plan will be developed by the appointed contractor in consultation with the local authority. The surrounding road network is considered to be suitable to accommodate the construction traffic associated with the proposed development. The Construction Stage Temporary

Traffic Management Plan will include a range of mitigating measures as identified in the pCEMP to ensure the safety of the workforce and the public and to minimise construction traffic generation and disruption on the surrounding road network.

- 14.6 An accessibility review was undertaken to assess the opportunities for travel to the site by all relevant modes of transport and review walking, cycling and public transport provision, as well as access by private car. The site is located within an existing and established urban centre and therefore benefits from good pedestrian and cycle links which will be further enhanced by the proposed NTA / Louth County Council - Active Travel Schemes proposed for the wider area. The proposed development will also significantly improve pedestrian and cycle facilities by completing a short connection between the Active Travel Schemes and providing new walking and cycle infrastructure. The development proposals will not generate any additional traffic when compared with the traffic that is currently experienced in the town centre but could in fact reduce the need for private vehicle movements through the provision of the enhanced sustainable travel facilities. Therefore, it is concluded that the proposed development can be accommodated within the surrounding road network.
- 14.7 The overall proposed scheme will include a number of measures that are deemed beneficial to improve the public realm, enhancing the pedestrian and cycle connectivity and road safety across the area. The measures which will be implemented as part of the overall development to influence the use of sustainable modes of transport and help minimise the need for private vehicle trips. The design and layout of the development will facilitate ease of access to public transport, support walking and cycling and meet the needs of people with disabilities and others whose mobility is impaired through adherence to current design guidelines.
- 14.8 The development proposals recognise opportunities to encourage use of sustainable modes of travel by:
- Promoting cycling and walking as viable sustainable transport modes for all members of the community; and
 - Providing, where possible, traffic free pedestrian and cycle routes, especially where they would facilitate more direct, safer and pleasant alternatives to those used by the private car.
- 14.9 Noting that the proposals will encourage prioritisation of pedestrian and cyclist modes of transport within the town, it will have a positive effect by setting a benchmark for lowering traffic levels in the town in the short, medium and long term.
- 14.10 Subject to the implementation of the various mitigation measures recommended in the EIAR, the proposed development is not anticipated to have any significant adverse impacts. This chapter concludes that there is unlikely to be any significant adverse impacts on Material Assets (Traffic and Transportation) as a result of the proposed development during either the construction or operational phases of development.

15. Material Assets (Site Services)

- 15.1 This section discusses the potential impacts of the proposed project on site services, including:
- Wastewater;
 - water supply;
 - surface water;
 - electricity;
 - gas;
 - telecommunications;
 - waste management; and
 - lighting.
- 15.2 The baseline data of the existing infrastructure and services is described, including their approximate location and size. The potential impacts during the construction phase, such as the need for new connections or adjustments to existing infrastructure, are discussed, as well as the measures to mitigate them, such as recording and incorporating drainage networks, electrical cabling, gas pipelines, and telecommunications infrastructure into the detailed design of the scheme, and notifying businesses and residents in advance of any service disruptions.
- 15.3 The interactions between site services and various environmental factors, such as population and human health, biodiversity, land, soils, and geology, hydrology and hydrogeology, air quality and climate, noise and vibration, landscape, roads, traffic and transportation, archaeology, and architectural heritage, are also considered.
- 15.4 Finally, the cumulative impact of the proposed development on the existing and future residential and community infrastructure is discussed, and the anticipated residual impacts on site services after applying the mitigation measures are described as slight.

16. Cultural Heritage & Archaeology

- 16.1 IAC Archaeology has prepared this chapter in order to assess the impact, if any, on the archaeological and cultural heritage resource within and in the vicinity of lands within the Westgate Vision Area of Drogheda, Co. Louth. The assessment was carried out by Faith Bailey and Jacqui Anderson of IAC Archaeology.
- 16.2 The application site is predominantly located within the zone of archaeological potential for the historic town of Drogheda (LH024-041), which is a recorded monument. There are three individual recorded monuments within the proposed development area. These comprise the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso) (LH024-041011) and the path of the medieval town wall and the site of two gates (recorded as town defences LH024-041014), which are both National Monuments and a site of a quay (LH024-041079). The medieval town walls have been subject to a conservation plan, published in 2006.
- 16.3 There are two further recorded archaeological sites within the 100m study area of the proposed development area. In addition, a number of cultural heritage assets have been identified, including a sculpture within the proposed development area, on the banks of the River Boyne. 'Shafts of Light' draws inspiration from the solar alignments seen with some passage tombs, in particular those in the Boyne Valley.
- 16.4 At the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso) (LH024-041011), it is proposed to conserve and repair the upstanding walls associated with the abbey and erect a new roof, covering the area to the east of the medieval tower. The new roof will not be attached to the medieval masonry, comprising a free-standing corten steel canopy. Prior to the application of mitigation, it is possible that the proposed repair works and construction of the canopy may have a direct, very significant negative impact on the medieval fabric of the abbey.
- 16.5 New paving will also be required throughout this area and as such, ground disturbances associated with the development may have a direct, negative and very significant impact on any buried archaeological remains along the path of Old Abbey Lane.
- 16.6 Prior to the commencement of works, a detailed measured photogrammetry survey will be carried out of the upstanding medieval fabric associated with the abbey. This will provide an accurate and measured record of all the existing built remains on site. All repair and conservation work to the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso) (LH024-041011) will require a detailed methodology to be produced in advance of the development proceeding. This will be produced by a Grade 1 Conservation Architect. The method statement and works detailed within, will require approval under Ministerial Consent as the structure is a National Monument. The method statement will also clearly state how the free-standing roof canopy will not affect the existing built fabric and include measures to protect the upstanding remains from inadvertent impacts during construction.
- 16.7 In addition, all ground disturbances relating to the resurfacing of Old Abbey Lane will be subject to archaeological monitoring. This will be carried out under Ministerial Consent, by a licence eligible archaeologist.

- 16.8 It is also proposed to conserve and repair the c. 70m section of medieval town wall to the east of the Bridge of Peace and construct an adjacent footpath and wooden walk way to the west of the wall, along with a water feature channel and a rainwater retention pond. The car park to the east of the wall will retain its current function. The town wall (both upstanding and buried remains) is a National Monument. Prior to the application of mitigation it is possible that the proposed repair works and construction of the footpath, water feature channel and retention pond may have a direct, very significant negative impact on the medieval fabric of the wall and any adjacent buried archaeological remains.
- 16.9 Prior to the commencement of works a detailed measured photogrammetry survey will be carried out of the upstanding town walls. This will provide an accurate and measured record of all the existing built remains. All repair and conservation work to the wall will require a detailed methodology to be produced in advance of the development proceeding. This will be produced by a Grade 1 Conservation Architect. The method statement and works detailed within, will require approval under Ministerial Consent as the structure is a National Monument. This may also require removal of vegetation by a suitably qualified contractor.
- 16.10 In addition, all ground disturbances (expected to be minimal) relating to the laying of the new footpath to the west of the wall and the insertion of a water feature channel and rainwater retention pond will be subject to archaeological monitoring. This will be carried out under Ministerial Consent, by a licence eligible archaeologist.
- 16.11 Overall, ground disturbances associated with the proposed scheme will be relatively low impact, as the proposed public realm regeneration scheme will comprise the installation of new surfaces, footpaths and road markings. As part of the scheme, new trees and signage is proposed, which will require excavations that may affect buried archaeological remains below the modern road/tarmac surface. Impacts have the potential to be direct, negative and moderate, significant or very significant, dependant on the nature, extent and significance of any such remains that are present.
- 16.12 All excavations within the public realm area (with the exception of re-surfacing) will be subject to archaeological monitoring under licence, as issued by the National Monuments Service of the DoHLGH. If archaeological remains are identified, further mitigation may be required, such as preservation in situ or by record. Any further mitigation will require agreement from the DoHLGH.
- 16.13 The proposals also seek to mark/delineate the path of the buried town wall along the northern side of the River Boyne and Father Connolly Way. This will be done with a stretch of corten steel plate enclosed within the pavement. This is a surface treatment and no direct negative impacts are predicted on the buried remains of the wall. Previous archaeological investigations have identified that the wall is buried at least 0.6m below the current ground level.
- 16.14 The Shafts of Light Sculpture will be retained within the scheme at its current location and will not be impacted by construction activities associated with the proposed development.

- 16.15 During the operation of the proposed development there will be a direct significant positive impact on the site of the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso) (LH024-041011), due to the fact that the medieval fabric will be conserved and repaired (as per the mitigation below) and the National Monument will be fully accessible to the public. The presence of the free-standing canopy will result in a slight indirect negative impact on the setting of the ruins but this is offset by the conservation of the structure and its active function within a new public realm area.
- 16.16 In order to ensure the ongoing conservation of the remains of the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso) (LH024-041011), during its operation within the public realm area, a Conservation Management Plan will be produced by a Conservation Architect and archaeologist in order to ensure that the protection of the medieval fabric and archaeology is managed throughout the use of the public realm scheme.
- 16.17 During the operation of the proposed development there will be a direct very significant positive impact on the c. 70m section of the medieval town walls, due to the fact that the medieval fabric will be conserved and repaired (as per the mitigation below); this section of the National Monument will be fully accessible to the public and the path of the town wall will be inscribed in the landscape along the northern bank of the River Boyne.
- 16.18 In order to ensure the ongoing conservation of the c. 70m section of the medieval town walls, during its operation within the public realm area, a Conservation Management Plan will be produced by a Conservation Architect and archaeologist in order to ensure that the protection of the medieval fabric and archaeology is managed throughout the use of the public realm scheme. This will represent an update to the existing 2006 Conservation Plan for the walls in Drogheda.
- 16.19 During the operation of the proposed development there will be a direct significant positive impact on the Shafts of Light Sculpture, due to the improvement to its setting arising from the establishment of the public realm scheme.
- 16.20 Proposals seek to celebrate and bring the existing heritage into greater use and enhance appreciate and understanding of them.
- 16.21 Once all mitigation measures are applied successfully, there will be no predicted significant negative residual impacts on the archaeological and cultural heritage of the proposed development area. There will be residual significant positive impacts on the site of the abbey and the town walls due to the fact that the monuments will form part of publicly accessible townscape.

17. Architectural Heritage

- 17.1 Mesh Architects has prepared this Chapter on behalf of Louth County Council to assess the impact, if any, as a result of the proposed project, on the architectural and townscape heritage that exists within, and in the vicinity of, the application site (ITM 708472, 775280). Upstanding heritage assets that will be affected, or are likely to be affected, by the proposed developments, have been identified and characterised in relation to their heritage value.
- 17.2 The heritage assets have been assessed in relation to their sensitivity to change, and to the degree to which the proposed developments is likely to cause a direct or indirect change to them. Possible and likely impacts are judged to be Positive, Neutral or Negative, and the degree of such impacts is considered, ranging from Very Significant to Negligible.
- 17.3 In the event that a negative impact is considered to be a possibility, mitigation measures will be proposed to eliminate the impact, or to reduce its severity. Such mitigation measures include increased protection of the heritage asset to prevent mechanical damaged during the works, and proposals to improve public access and understanding of the heritage assets.
- 17.4 This section describes the methodology used by MESH Architects to assess the likely effects of the proposed development on the heritage value of the Environmental Impact Assessment guidance as listed below have been used to guide this process.
- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, prepared by EPA Draft, August 2017.
 - Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects: Guidance on the Preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) (European Commission, 2017).
- 17.5 The project area encompasses a portion of the ancient medieval town of Drogheda, one of Ireland's oldest towns. Founded around 1186 by Hugh de Lacy, the town grew to be one of the busiest and wealthiest towns in Ireland, rivalling Dublin and Kilkenny in scale. Like many other towns in Ireland, Drogheda depended on a stout perimeter wall for its security, surrounding the compact city and entered through several well-protected gates. Of the two primary gates, which formed the main entrance points to the city's long high street, only the magnificent St. Laurence's Gate survives on the east end of the road. West Gate, possibly of similar scale and design, stood at the west end of West Street, the western continuation of Drogheda's principal street.
- 17.6 Although the West Gate itself has vanished, a substantial portion of the adjacent medieval town wall survives in reasonable condition, running down to the banks of the River Boyne. The West Gate and the adjacent town wall are believed to date from mid to late C13th when the town's walls were extended to the west, to enclose the medieval hospital of the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso), the ruins of which partially survive along Abbey Lane.

17.7 In addition to the ancient remains, many significant structures from the C17th through the early C20th remain standing along the streets and laneways in the Westgate quarter. Those include the nationally significant Barlow House, the RC Church of St. Mary Magdalene, a large stone warehouse on Fair Street, and an impressive concentration of small-scale domestic and commercial structures of varying architectural quality and cultural significance. The Architectural Heritage Assets that have been identified as having specific significance, and are susceptible to change by the Proposed Development, are as follows:

- Medieval Town Wall, running from the site of the former West Gate, down to the River Boyne.
- Ruins of the Priory of the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso).
- Barlow House, the early C18th townhouse of regional significance.
- Church of St. Mary Magdalene, and its adjacent Chapter House.
- West Gate House, a late C18th house close to the location of the former West Gate.
- The grouping of small-scale houses and commercial shops along the development areas streets and laneways.

17.8 Chapter 17 of Volume 2 provides a detailed assessment of any potential impacts of the proposed project with respect to Architectural Heritage Assets in the area. Impacts to the setting and context of heritage assets can be mitigated as noted in Chapter 17 of Volume 2 of the EIAR. Noting the nature of the Heritage Assets, the mitigation measures aim principally to lessen the severity of any potential impact and include the following:

- The construction of the hard and soft landscaping adjacent to the medieval town walls will be carefully detailed and monitored, to avoid any undermining or physical impact to the medieval masonry. The masonry will also be subjected to careful conservation repairs.
- The construction of the covered shelter adjacent to the ruined chapel tower of the Priory of the Old Abbey (St. Mary d'Urso) will be carefully detailed and monitored, to avoid any undermining or physical impact to the medieval masonry. The masonry will also be subjected to careful conservation repairs including structural stabilisation to the free-standing west gable.
- The works to the public realm will generally include new footpaths and pavements, new public lighting and signage. The works will be carried out under expert monitoring to avoid direct impacts to any of the many protected structures that stand along the edge of these public roads and laneways.

18. Landscape & Visual Impact

Statement of Expertise

- 18.1 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by Park Hood Chartered Landscape Architects in conjunction with Turley. Its purpose is to identify and determine the potential effects on the character and visual amenity of the landscape / townscape as a result of the proposed development on this part of Drogheda town.

Baseline Landscape and Townscape Setting

- 18.2 The site is located within the 'Westgate Vision Area' of Drogheda and extends to an area of approximately 1.89 hectares. The site comprises the streets, roads and lanes and their adjoining public realm and footpath areas that form the key streetscapes in this part of the town. The area is zoned 'D1 – Regeneration' and merges into areas zoned 'B1 – Town Centre' and 'G1 - Community Facilities' (though no works are proposed within B1 and G1 lands).
- 18.3 In general terms, this part of Drogheda has a mix of good and ordinary and poor townscape. The site includes three Architectural Conservation Areas which suggests, in principle, it should possess a high quality and value in terms of townscape baseline. The River Boyne corridor also gives this part of Drogheda an inherent aesthetic core and the associated public realm and pedestrian bridge are an important amenity and landscape being rated as attractive and subject to high numbers of visual receptors. However, unoccupied or little-used buildings that have a degraded appearance give incidental street sections a more dishevelled character that lowers the townscape quality. Recent public realm projects on West Street and in the vicinity of Barlow House have improved the townscape but there are notable neglected areas aside the historic walls off George's Street with extensive graffiti evident aside areas of unkempt landscape. Many areas could be categorised as "poor" townscape of low sensitivity being damaged landscapes and very capable of accommodating change.
- 18.4 The townscape sensitivity is classified as high adjacent to listed buildings and the river but drops to medium and low across the wider site on account of the very mixed townscape quality. The surface car parks off Father Connolly Way and Dominic Street and functional transport corridor of the busy George's Street / R132 inner by-pass are notable areas of low sensitivity.

Key considerations include the following:

- 18.5 The site has been identified for urban regeneration, comprising redevelopment, and public realm improvement, to recover the streetscape and this formed the basis of the earlier Westgate Vision; and
- 18.6 The nature of the proposed development is one of public realm improvement that is sympathetic to and compliments the historic fabric, architectural heritage and riverside character of the Westgate area.

Predicted Townscape / Landscape and Visual Effects

- 18.7 The proposed works are predominantly to streetscape areas and include built elements and structures designed to enhance the townscape character of the Westgate area. The magnitude of change is assessed as being of a medium rating, which when measured against the baseline sensitivity of the receiving environment would result in the overall townscape effects being rated as being of moderate to substantial significance.
- 18.8 While rated as significant, these impacts/ effects would be inherently positive in nature on all the key elements of the receiving townscape namely (a) the land use, (b) the urban grain and movement patterns, (c) the network of public realm and communal open spaces, (d) green infrastructure, and (e) the overall perception of quality and liveliness of the townscape.
- 18.9 Beyond the immediate site, the effects will be less easy to discern due to the nature of the townscape but there will be an overall perception that the quality, condition and sense of place of the Westgate area has improved and this will have wider positive effects on the Drogheda area.

Conclusions

- 18.10 On balance, the site is rated as having mixed townscape sensitivity / quality / condition but given the nature of this proposal, it would be considered that the site has a good ability to absorb changes without any detriment to landscape / townscape character or visual amenity of this area. The proposed development will be a positive statement in terms of the townscape character, legibility and future use while tying effectively in with many of the ambitions and objectives of the LCDP and Westgate Vision. In visual amenity terms, the development will improve the quality and character of this area symbolising progress, revitalisation resulting in wider townscape benefits.

19. Interactions

19.1 This Chapter of the EIAR, in accordance with Article 3 of the amended Directive, provides an overview of the key interactions between the environmental factors assessed within the preceding specialist chapters of this EIAR.

19.2 The EPA's 2022 Guidelines advise the following in terms of the information that should be included in this Chapter:

“The interactions between impacts on different environmental factors should be addressed as relevant throughout the [Environmental Impact Assessment Report]. For example, where it is established in the Hydrology section that there will be an increase in suspended solids in discharged surface waters during construction, then the Biodiversity section should assess the effect of that on sensitive aquatic receptors. [...]

It is general practice to include a matrix to show where interactions between effects on different factors have been addressed. [...] This is typically accompanied by text describing the interactions.” (Section 3, p. 56)

19.3 In keeping with the EPA's Guidelines, an interactions matrix is provided below (see Table 19.1) which identifies the potential interactions between the various environmental factors assessed in this EIAR.

19.4 'Chapter 19 – Interactions' of Volume 2 of the EIAR, provides a brief description of the interactions and an overview of the potential impacts that may occur between the various environmental topics as a direct or indirect result of the proposed project and any mitigation measures required to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset any potential significant effects on the environment (please refer to Table 19.2 of 'Chapter 19 – Interactions' in Volume 2 of this EIAR for further details).

19.5 It is important to note that the authors of the specialist EIAR chapters have liaised with each other and relevant members of the design team, where necessary, to address any potential impacts arising as a result of interactions between one or more environmental factors.

19.6 It is also important to note that 'Chapter 19 – Interactions' does not seek to repeat the detailed analysis/assessment of the potential effects already set out in the respective specialist EIAR chapters, nor does it reiterate any mitigation measures identified to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset any potential significant effects on the environment.

Table 19.1: Interactions Matrix - Summary of Environmental Interactions associated with the Proposed Project

		Receptor											
		Interaction Between Environmental Factors											
		Population and human health	Biodiversity	Land, Soils and Geology	Hydrogeology & Hydrology	Air & Climate	Noise & Vibration	Material Assets (Waste)	Material Assets (Traffic and Transportation)	Material Assets (Site Services)	Cultural Heritage & Archaeology	Architectural Heritage	Landscape and Visuals
Source	Population and human health				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	Biodiversity				✓								
	Land, Soils and Geology				✓								
	Hydrogeology & Hydrology		✓	✓									
	Air and Climate	✓	✓	✓					✓				
	Noise & Vibration	✓	✓						✓				
	Material Assets (Waste)	✓	✓	✓					✓				
	Material Assets (Traffic and Transportation)	✓				✓	✓						
	Material Assets (Site Services)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Cultural Heritage & Archaeology											✓	
	Architectural Heritage										✓		
Landscape and Visuals	✓	✓								✓			

20. Cumulative Impacts

- 20.1 This chapter reviews the potential for cumulative impacts associated with the proposed development and other relevant projects.
- 20.2 The EPA's 2022 Guidelines define cumulative effects as:
- "The addition of many minor or significant effects, including effects of other projects, to create larger, more significant effects" (Section 3, p. 52).*
- 20.3 The assessment of cumulative impacts requires a detailed understanding of the baseline environment and then a consideration of the potential in-combination effects of the proposed project along with other relevant existing, proposed and permitted projects.
- 20.4 The potential for cumulative impacts to occur as a result of the proposed development in combination with other proposed plans and projects in the area has been assessed in the various specialist chapters of this Environmental Impact Assessment Report. This chapter provides an account of the plans and projects that have been scoped into the cumulative impact assessment.
- 20.5 Considering the nature and scale of the proposed development, and its likely impacts as assessed in this Environmental Impact Assessment Report, a search for projects that may have the potential to result in cumulative impacts was carried out. For the purposes of this initial search, a review of all planning applications which were recorded on the National Planning Applications Database (DoHPLG) with extant permissions or were otherwise under consideration at the time of writing were included. A further review of An Bord Pleanála's website was undertaken to identify relevant applications.
- 20.6 The search for relevant projects which may have the potential to create in-combination/cumulative impacts was based on the location/siting, design, nature and scale of the proposed development. A full list of relevant projects is set out in Chapter 20 of Volume 2 of the EIAR.
- 20.7 The specialist contributors to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report have considered the potential for the above-listed plans and projects to give rise to cumulative impacts in combination with the proposed development. A full description of this assessment is included in Chapter 20 of Volume 2 of the EIAR. No significant negative cumulative impacts are expected to arise during the construction or operation of the proposed development.

21. Mitigation Measures

21.1 The EPA’s 2022 Guidelines state that an EIA should include the following:

“A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent, to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases.”

21.2 The EPA’s 2022 Guidelines recommend the below strategy for identifying appropriate mitigating measures for a proposed project (see **Figure 21.1** below).

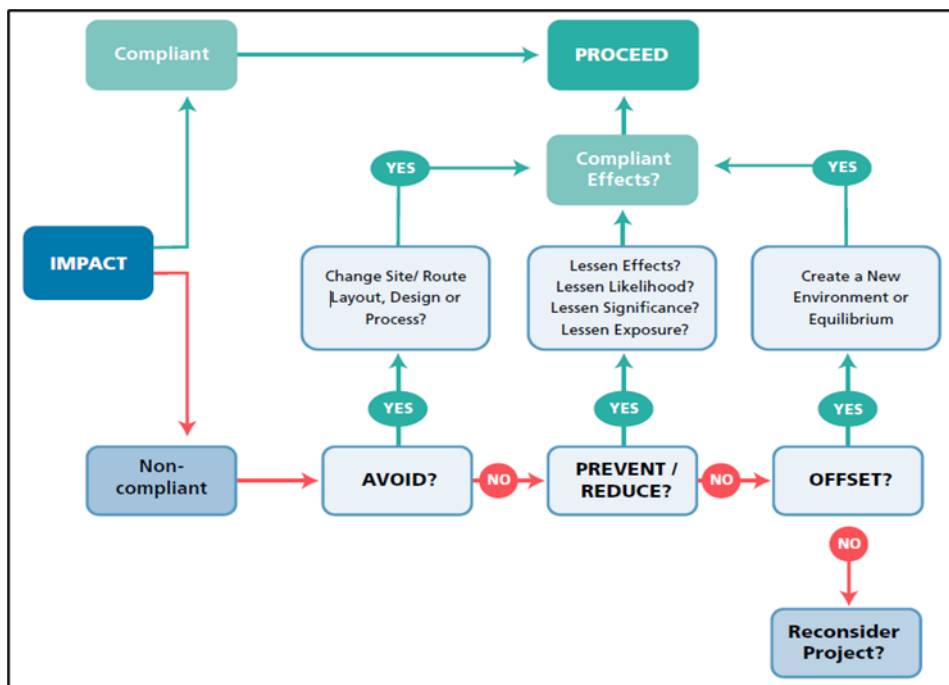


Figure 21.1: Strategies for Identification of Appropriate Mitigation or Offsetting Measures

21.3 In accordance with the EPA’s 2022 Guidelines, this chapter collates and reproduces/ lists the relevant mitigation and monitoring measures that have been prescribed in each of the specialist environmental Chapters to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if necessary, offset any potential significant adverse effects on the environment associated with the construction and operational stages of the proposed project.

21.4 Importantly, this Chapter does not seek to elaborate on the reasoning or expected effectiveness of those measures, as this is provided within the main body of each specialist Chapter. Please refer to ‘Chapter 21 – Mitigation & Monitoring Measures’ of Volume 2 of the EIA for further details.



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