

PART VIII REPORT

GREAT SOUTHERN GREENWAY LIMERICK IMPROVEMENT WORKS PHASE 2: NEWCASTLEWEST CAR PARK

Prepared for: Limerick City and County Council



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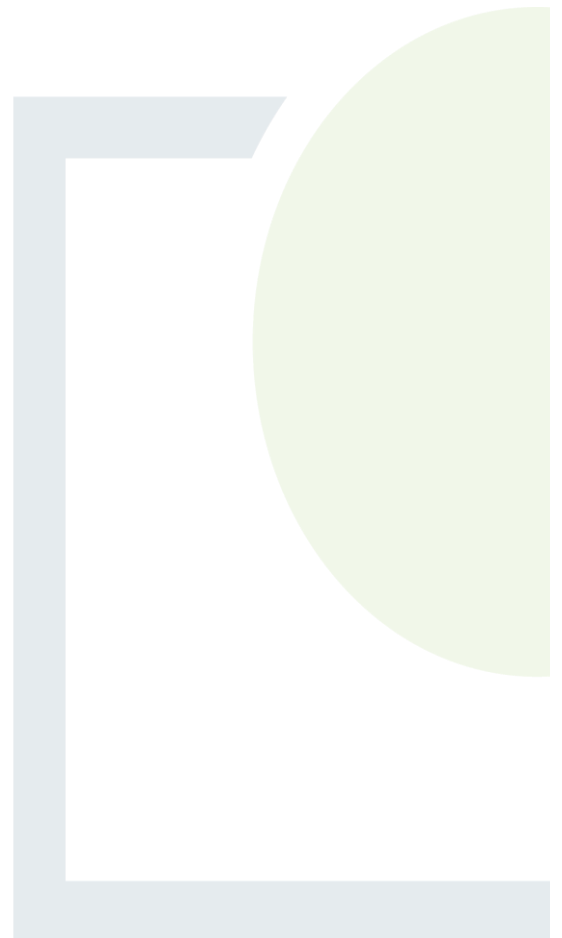
Date: OCTOBER 2020

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GREAT SOUTHERN GREENWAY LIMERICK IMPROVEMENT WORKS PHASE 2 – NEWCASTLEWEST CAR PARK

REVISION CONTROL TABLE, CLIENT, KEYWORDS AND ABSTRACT User is responsible for Checking the Revision Status of This Document

Rev. No.	Description of Changes	Prepared by:	Checked by:	Approved by:	Date:
01	Issue for Planning	ED/TL/MG	BB	BDH	14.10.2020

Client: Limerick City and County Council.

Keywords: Part VIII, Greenway, Newcastlewest Car Park

Abstract: This Part VIII Planning Report is in relation to the proposed car park to be constructed for the Great Southern Greenway at Newcastlewest in Co. Limerick.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As part of continuous process of improvement works to the Great Southern Greenway, Limerick City and County Council are seeking PART VIII planning approval for the construction of a car park at Station road Newcastlewest. The existing Great Southern Greenway is a 39km walking and cycling off road route running along the old railway line connecting the towns of Rathkeale, Ardagh, Newcastlewest and Abbeyfeale. It is intended that the Great Southern Greenway project will become an international greenway of significance capturing the essence of rural Ireland which will promote West Limerick as a tourist destination and provide opportunities for new visitor growth as well as providing linkage between communities.

The Greenway is 39km in length and can be split into the sections below:

- Rathkeale to Ardagh;
- Ardagh to Newcastlewest;
- Newcastlewest to Barnagh;
- Barnagh to Templeglantine;
- Templeglantine to Abbeyfeale;
- Abbeyfeale to the Kerry Border.

1.1 Project Overview

The Irish Government policy entitled “Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future” 2009 to 2020, identifies key goals and objectives to be met in order to introduce a national transport network, A National Cycle Policy (NCP) was implemented to run alongside the main “Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future” document. The NCP aims to create a strong cycling culture in Ireland, while also encouraging recreational cycling. The NCP also identifies the importance of the National Cycle Network in attracting overseas tourists if the project is implemented.

These policies are reinforced in the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways 2018 which recognises the benefits arising from the development of greenways, as a tourism product with the potential to attract overseas visitors, for local communities in terms of economic benefits, and as an amenity for physical activity contributing to the health and wellbeing of the population.

To realise the above and ensure successful delivery of the benefits the greenway can bring to the local area, it was decided that the initial improvement works to the Great Southern Greenway would be split into 3 separate phases as outlined below:

Phase 1 involves widening and surfacing improvement works for the greenway. This includes improvement to drainage, farm crossings, public road junctions and repairs to several bridges along the greenway route. The Phase 1 works began in April 2020 and are expected to be completed in July 2021.

Phase 2 involves improvement to greenway access points. The need for improved access points has been identified at a number of locations along the greenway, such as at Ardagh Village and at Newcastle West in particular. This application refer to the car park at Newcastlewest.



Phase 3 includes the design of cattle passes at several locations along the greenway route. These cattle-passes will allow local farms the ability to move cattle across the greenway without negatively impacting greenway users.



2. PLANNING CONTEXT

The following strategies, policies, guidelines and plans support the creation of greenways and are relevant therefore to the Part VIII proposal:

- Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework;
- National Development Plan 2018-2027;
- The Government’s Smarter Travel Initiative;
- The National Cycle Policy Framework;
- People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025;
- The Action Plan for Rural Development Realising our Rural Potential;
- Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways;
- The Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016;
- Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2014-2024;
- Abbeyfeale Local Area Plan 2014-2024;
- Rathkeale Local Area Plan 2014-2022.

2.1 Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework:

The National Planning Framework recognises that creating the environment to support job creation in rural areas will be a key enabler to rejuvenating rural towns and villages, sustaining vibrant rural communities and reversing rural decline. The following overarching objectives in relation to tourism, transport and greenways are noted;

National Policy Objective 22:

Facilitate tourism development and in particular a National Greenways, Blueways and Peatway Strategy, which priorities projects on the basis of achieving maximum impact and connectivity at national and regional level.

National Policy Objective 46:

In cooperation with relevant Departments in Northern Ireland, enhanced connectivity between Ireland and Northern Ireland, to include cross-border road and rail, cycling and walking routes, as well as blueways, greenways and peatways.

National Strategic Outcome 3:

Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities – Rural Development; Invest in greenways, blueways and peatways as part of a nationally coordinated strategy.

National Strategic Outcome 7:

Enhanced Amenities and heritage-Amenities and Heritage:

“Implementation of planning and transport strategies for the five cities and other urban areas will be progressed with a major focus on improving walking and cycling routes, including continuous greenway networks and targeted measures to enhance permeability and connectivity”.



2.2 National Development Plan 2018-2027

Launched in conjunction with Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework, the National Development Plan is a ten year strategy for public capital investment totalling almost €116 billion. This document makes provision for the following investment actions.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund: €1 billion.

Rural Recreation Infrastructure Scheme	This scheme supports the development and necessary maintenance, enhancement or promotion of recreational infrastructure throughout Ireland in light of the huge potential to develop the economic value of Activity and Recreational Tourism by Local Authorities, State Agencies and communities. Initiatives funded covered a broad spectrum, and range from walking trails to greenways and blueways.
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Under the Strategic Investment Priorities 2018-2027:

Transition to a Low-Carbon and Climate Resilient Society	Sustainable travel measures, including comprehensive Cycling and Walking Network for metropolitan areas of Ireland's cities and expanded greenways.
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2.3 Smarter Travel: A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020

Launched in 2009 by the Department of Transport as the national transport policy document for Ireland. One of the main aims of the policy is to develop walking and cycling as viable commuter modes in the short to medium term with a long term aim to fostering a lasting walking and cycling culture in Ireland.

2.4 The National Cycle Policy Framework (NCPF) 2009-2020

The NCPF recognises the positive benefits of cycling as a mechanism to improve quality of life for the countries citizens, by way of improved health but also on a broader communal sense, in terms of a reduction in CO2 emissions and increased social integration as people walk and cycle together. It is an overarching objective of the NCPF that 10% of all trips in Ireland will be made by bike by the year 2020.

2.5 People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025

The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport's policy statement People, Place and Policy Growing Tourism to 2025 outlines the Government's objectives for tourism with a view to increase overseas visitors and revenue and employment. The Policy highlights the importance of sustainable development of tourism and recognises the contribution of facilities for activity for activity-based holidays to Ireland's positive image and attraction as a tourist destination. It supports the development and improvement of physical visitor attractions, visitor infrastructure and facilities for visitor activities, including Greenways.



2.6 Action Plan for Rural Development Realising our Rural Potential

The Action Plan for Rural Development Realising our Rural Potential highlights the potential of activity to contribute to economic growth in rural areas, recognising “Outdoor adventure tourism is a key growth sector worldwide and has been identified as a priority for Irish tourism in future years. The development and promotion of this sector provides opportunities for growth, in rural areas in particular by facilitating businesses to leverage the tourism assets in their area in a sustainable way to support recreational activities such as canoeing, cycling, angling and hill walking”.

2.7 Action Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways

The publication of the Strategy for the Future Development of National and Regional Greenways to support activity tourism in rural areas is identified as an action point in the Action Plan for Rural Development Realising our Rural Potential. The Strategy seeks to assist in the strategic development of nationally and regionally significant greenways in appropriate locations constructed to an appropriate standard to deliver a quality experience for greenway users. The Strategy also seeks to increase the number and geographical spread of greenways to deliver an increase in activity tourism to Ireland and also a recreational amenity for domestic visitors and locals, thereby promoting physical activity and contributing to a healthier society. The Strategy aims to provide substantially segregated off-road experience linking places of interest, recreation and leisure in areas with beautiful scenery and attractions.

2.8 Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016

The Limerick County Development Plan 2010-2016 includes specific policies and objectives supporting the proposed development of green infrastructure within the City and County. The following are considered most pertinent in relation to the improvement works to the Great Southern Greenway Limerick:

Chapter 5 – Economic Development

5.5.2 - Tourism

Policy ED P19 - Sustainable development of tourism facilities:

“To promote the development of sustainable tourism facilities and amenities without damage to the local environment’s essential qualities or features and their requirements for conservation and management.”

Chapter 6 – Community and Recreation

6.10.13 - Walking Routes, Cycling Routes, Right of Way

Objective COM 027 – Co-operation with Other Agencies:

“It is the objective of the Council to co-operate with representative bodies of walking and cycling groups, landowners, **farmers**, local groups and communities, and others to support the improvement and development of walking and cycling routes in an environmentally sustainable manner.”



Objective COM 028 – Encourage Active and Healthy Lifestyle:

“It is the objective of the Council to promote the development of safe and convenient pedestrian and cycling facilities in the towns and villages to minimise the dependence on private motor vehicles and to encourage an active and healthy lifestyle.”

Chapter 8 – Transport and Infrastructure

8.2.5 - Cyclists and Pedestrians

Objective IN 08 – Cycle and pedestrian facilities:

“It is an objective of the Council to encourage the successful incorporation of safe and efficient cycle and pedestrian facilities, and accessible cycleways, footpaths and pedestrian routes into the design schemes for residential, educational, employment, and recreational developments. Consideration will be given in these schemes to existing or proposed routes where applicable.”

2.9 Newcastle West Local Area Plan 2014-2024

The Newcastle West Area Plan 2014-2024 includes specific policies and objectives supporting the proposed development. The following are considered most pertinent in relation to the improvement works to the Great Southern Greenway Limerick:

Chapter 5 – Economic Development

5.6 – Tourism

Objective ED 6 – Tourism:

“It is the objective of the Council to:

- a) Enhance the tourism potential of the town including the promotion of new tourism products in an environmentally sustainable manner in partnership with other agencies and the local community.
- b) Encourage new development for the tourist industry to be located within the LAP boundary to maximise existing services.
- c) Protect and enhance where possible any biodiversity / natural environment, built and cultural heritage features from unwarranted encroachment of unsuitable development.”

Chapter 6 – Transport

6.2 – Movement and accessibility

Objective T1 – Network of pedestrian and cycle facilities:

“It is an objective of the Council to encourage walking and cycling as more convenient, popular and safe methods of movement in Newcastle West through supporting the recommendations of the Walking and Cycling Strategy for Newcastle West (2013).”



2.10 Abbeyfeale Area Plan 2014-2024

The Abbeyfeale Area Plan 2014-2024 includes specific policies and objectives supporting the proposed development. The following are considered most pertinent in relation to the improvement works to the Great Southern Greenway Limerick:

Chapter 5 – Economic Development

5.6 – Tourism

Objective ED 5 – Tourism:

“It is the objective of the Council to:

- a) Enhance the tourism potential of the town including the promotion of new tourism products in an environmentally sustainable manner in partnership with other agencies and the local community.
- b) Encourage new development for the tourist industry to be located within the LAP boundary to maximise existing services.
- c) Protect the natural, built and cultural heritage features from unwarranted encroachment of unsuitable development.”

Chapter 6 – Transport

6.2 – Movement and accessibility

Objective T2 – Network of pedestrian and cycle facilities:

“It is an objective of the Council to encourage walking and cycling as more convenient, popular and safe methods of movement in Abbeyfeale, and facilitate the provision of an attractive and coherent network of off-road footpaths and cycle facilities. This will be achieved by:

- a) The seeking of secure cycle parking facilities at appropriate locations as opportunities arise.
- b) The encouragement of combined off-road footpath and cycleway links along Railway Road and along the River Feale.
- c) A pedestrian/cycle network will be encouraged where identified linking existing and proposed residential areas to each other and to amenity areas and to provide connections to the town centre.”



2.11 Rathkeale Area Plan 2014-2022

The Abbeyfeale Area Plan 2014-2024 includes specific policies and objectives supporting the proposed development. The following are considered most pertinent in relation to the improvement works to the Great Southern Greenway Limerick:

Chapter 5 – Economic Development

5.6 – Tourism

Objective ED 5 – Tourism:

“It is the objective of the Council to:

- a) Enhance the tourism potential of the town including the promotion of new tourism products in an environmentally sustainable manner in partnership with other agencies and the local community.
- b) Encourage new development for the tourist industry to be located within the LAP boundary to maximise existing services.
- c) Protect the natural, built and cultural heritage features from unwarranted encroachment of unsuitable development.”

Chapter 6 – Transport

6.3 – Movement and accessibility

Objective T3 – Network of pedestrian and cycle facilities:

“It is an objective of the Council to encourage walking and cycling as more convenient, popular and safe methods of movement in Rathkeale, and facilitate the provision of an attractive and coherent network of off-road footpaths and cycle facilities. This will be achieved by:

- a) Secure cycle parking facilities at appropriate locations as opportunities arise.
- b) Combined off-road footpath and cycleway links will be encouraged along the proposed distributor road and along the Deel river.
- c) A pedestrian/cycle network will be encouraged where identified linking existing and proposed residential areas to each other and to amenity areas and to provide connections to the town centre.”

2.12 Assessment

The provision of car parking at Newcastlewest will facilitate increased visitor numbers on the greenway which is considered to be in accordance with the frameworks, initiatives, development plans, and local area plans outlined above.



3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 Great Southern Greenway Route

This Part VIII proposal is for construction of a car park at the location as outlined in Figure 3.1 below. The overall greenway route begins in Rathkeale and runs through Ardagh, Newcastle West, Barnagh, Templeglantine and Abbeyfeale. Although the greenway ends at the Kerry border under the scope of this project, Kerry County Council plan to extend it along the route of the old Limerick to Tralee rail line through Listowel, Tralee and Fenit. Once complete, a first-class walking and cycling amenity spanning much of Co. Kerry and Co. Limerick will be provided.

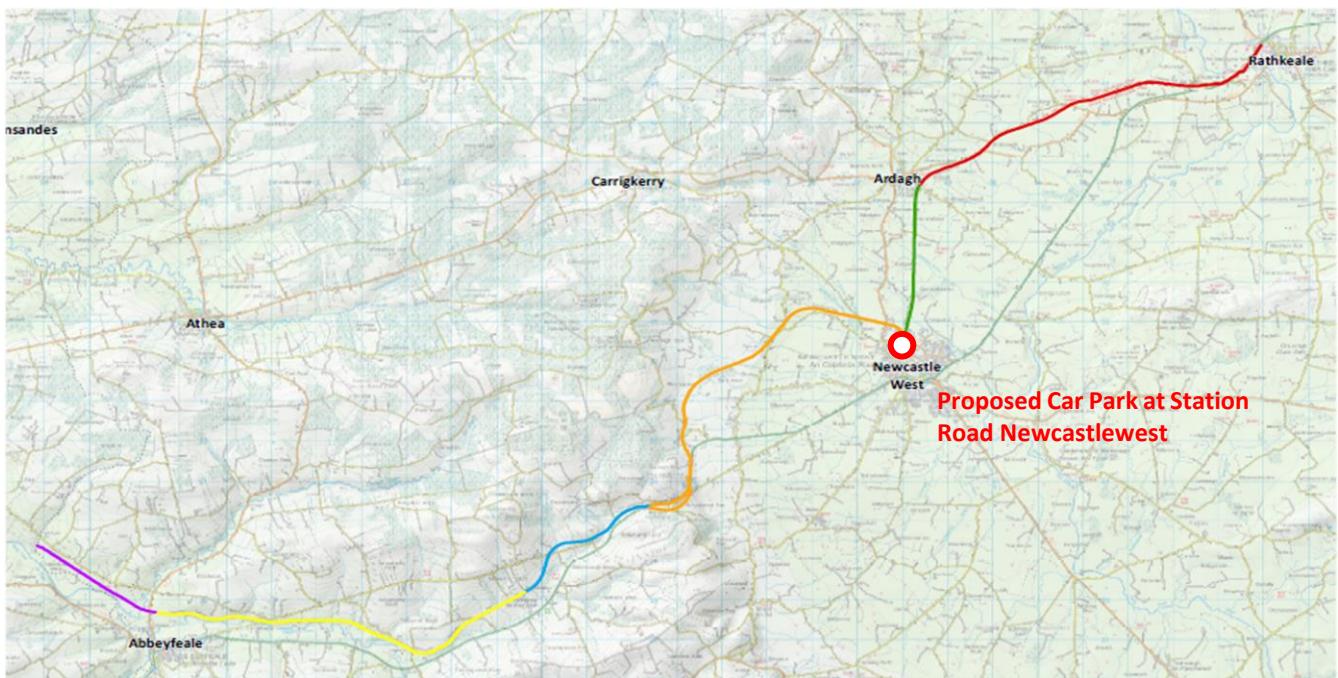


Figure 3.1: Great Southern Greenway Limerick Route

The Great Southern Greenway in Limerick is considered in line with the National Greenway Strategy and will provide a nationally and regionally important high-quality shared cycle way and footpath. Following the proposed improvement works, the greenway will provide a safe, scenic and substantially segregated amenity for the enjoyment of all ages and abilities. It is also envisaged that the greenway will contribute to Ireland's tourism product and make a significant contribution to the rural development of County Limerick.

3.2 Scheme Description

The proposed car park location is on a section of land adjacent to station road Newcastlewest. This location will provide greenway users starting their journey at Newcastlewest with the choice of travelling east towards Ardagh (3.8km) and Rathkeale (12.6km) or west towards Templeglantine (13.2km) and Abbeyfeale (22.3km). The proposed car parking facility will significantly increase the ease of access for all users and will accommodate the increased number of visitors expected as a result of the ongoing improvement works.



The proposed car park will provide:

- 50nr. Standard Car Parking Spaces
- 3nr. Disability Spaces
- 1nr. space for Electric Vehicle Charging
- 2nr Mini Bus Spaces

The existing site is steeply sloped and the gradient will be moderated during the construction of the proposed car park to ensure that the achieved gradient is suitable for all users. All surfacing, kerbs, access points at the car park will be designed for universal accessibility.

To provide for safe access to both the proposed greenway car park and the existing civic amenity centre on the west side a one-way entrance/exist system with central pedestrian island is proposed. The width of the central island has been increased to provide additional space for greenway users (in particular those towing trailers with children) while they wait to cross the station road if they choose to continue on to Newcastlewest town centre via the Bishops court trail section.

An existing signalized pedestrian crossing is located 60m west of the proposed car park. The pedestrian crossing services the existing school on the south side of station road. It was not considered appropriate to provide a second signalised pedestrian crossing for the greenway so close to the existing crossing. Instead a speed table and courtesy crossing is proposed to link the bishops court trail section south of the car park with the main greenway. The speed table will act as a traffic calming feature and give greenway users wishing to continue on to the town centre via the bishops court trail section a raised courtesy crossing point.

3.3 Local Residents and Adjacent Properties

Access to the adjacent civic amenity site shall be maintained through the construction process. A Swept path analysis shall be carried out to ensure that the larger vehicles required for the civic amenity site will be able to navigate the proposed entry and exist system. During construction the contractor shall comply with the recommendations of BS 5228: Code of Practice for Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites to ensure construction related noise which may affect local residents is minimized.

3.4 Public Lighting

Public Lighting and CCTV shall be provided for the proposed car park. Public lighting shall be provided in accordance with the recommendations of BS5489 Part 1, Lighting of Roads and Public Amenity Areas .

3.5 Services

A number of existing services are located at the station road site. In consultation with the service owners these services shall be protected in place or diverted to facilitate the proposed works.



3.6 Architectural Heritage

Based on a desktop review there are no historical structures located within the area affected by the proposed works.

3.7 Drainage and Flooding

The car park drainage system shall be designed to manage surface water runoff from the site in a way that mimics the existing hydrology in so far as is practical. Based on the results of a site investigation the surface water drainage system shall be designed in accordance with the GSDSD Report, Greater Dublin Code of Practice for Drainage Works and the Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS) manual CIRIA C753.



4. METHODOLOGY FOR CONSTRUCTION

An outline Construction and Environmental Management Plan (OCEMP) will be prepared for the proposed works. The OCEMP will provide particular focus and detail on how the proposed works will negate any impact on the local environment. The OCEMP shall also take into consideration and align with the findings of both the EIAR and AA Screening. Furthermore, the OCEMP shall set out the design rationale for the proposed works, access details, environmental management (i.e. provision of an Ecological Clerk of Works and the development and implementation of an Environmental Management Plan) and construction methodology.

The preparation and implementation of a detailed Construction Management Plan and Environmental Management Plan shall be the responsibility of the contractor and will be reviewed by the project ecologist at the preconstruction stage. This will include method statements for all construction works, environmental management and supervision.

It is expected that the construction sequence will take place as follows:

1. Site Clearance;
2. Utility services: location, diversion and protection of existing services on site;
3. Drainage: Installation of sustainable storm water drainage system, attenuation, oil interceptor & infiltration systems;
4. Earthworks: Import and compaction of acceptable fill material to moderate the existing site gradient;
5. Fencing & Kerbs: Boundary fencing to provide screening, kerbs and footways to be construction to allow universal access;
6. Landscaping: Top soiling and planting;
7. Pavement: installation of 804 subbase with an asphalt paving;
8. Ancillary Works: Road marking, lighting, signage, CCTV.



5. HEALTH AND SAFETY

5.1 Safety during Construction – Traffic Management

The construction of the proposed car parking facility is to be executed using appropriate traffic management procedures. The PSCS appointed to the project will be required to develop a traffic management plan to ensure access and egress for construction activities are managed in line with best practice. An independent road safety audit shall be carried out on the contractors traffic management plans.

5.2 Safety during Construction – Earthworks

The risk of burial in earthfalls has been identified in relation to the works. The PSCS will be required to put in place safe systems for the management and control of these risks in compliance with the current Construction Regulations and best practice guidance.

5.3 Safety during Construction – Underground Services

Underground services have been identified at the carpark location. The PSCS will verify the location of all services on site and liaise with the relevant service owner to ensure the service is adequately protected from damage during the works.

5.4 Safety in Use – Inspection and Maintenance

The as built records and Maintenance Manual shall highlight the requirements for inspection and maintenance.

5.5 Safety in Use - Traffic Management

Considering the existing entrance to the civic amenity centre adjacent to the proposed car park, a one-way circulation system for entry and exit is thought to be the most appropriate means of facilitating safe access to both the proposed greenway car park and the existing civic amenity centre.

Within the car park area colour contrast surfacing, signage, tactile paving and road markings will be provided to identify pedestrian and cycle areas and crossing points, public lighting shall be provided to ensure adequate visibility, signage, road markings and adequate sightlines will be provided for vehicles, a speed table and courtesy crossing point has been incorporated to facilitate greenway users crossing station road and continuing on to Newcastlewest town centre via the bishops court trail. A large central island has been included in the design proposal adjacent to station road to ensure that all users including cyclists towing bike trailers have adequate space to wait until it is safe to cross at Station Road. Additional detailed signage and road marking specifications will be developed during the detailed design stage.

In line with the recommendations of TII standard GE-STY-01024 a combined stage 1&2 road safety audit shall be carried out by an independent road safety audit team. All recommendations of the road safety audit shall be incorporated into the design in advance of construction. A Stage 3 road safety audit shall also be carried out in advance of the opening of the car park in line with TII recommendations.



6. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION

Limerick City and County Council are undertaking a process of continuous improvement works to the Great Southern Greenway. It is expected that the works will bring an increased number of visitors to the greenway. In order to accommodate the additional visitor numbers a new car parking facility is proposed at Station Road, Newcastlewest.

Overall, the purpose of this report and its accompanying documents is to demonstrate the proposals suitability and conformity to the planning policy that is in place, while also highlighting the steps to be taken to ensure the works are carried out with the highest concern for both safety and environmental considerations. The proposed car parking facility is an important aspect of the programme of continuous improvement works on the Great Southern Greenway and is expected to bring significant benefits to the local area. The proposals set out are considered to be in agreement with the development plans and objectives set out by Limerick City and County Council and the relevant townlands.



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