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N62 Slievenamon Road Phase 2 Road Improvement Scheme

Preliminary Examination for Environmental Impact Assessment

July 2022

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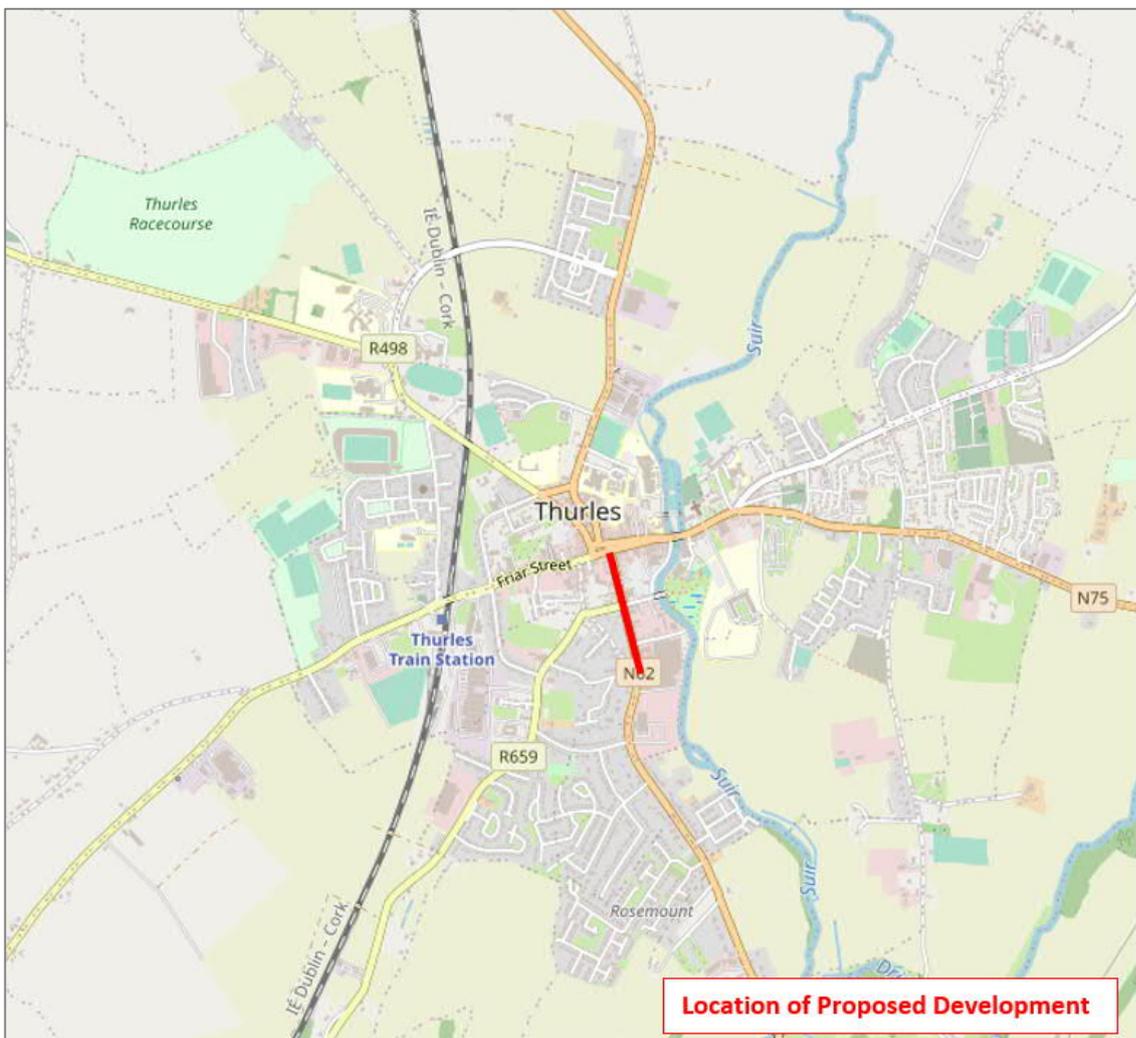
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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Tipperary County Council appointed Mott MacDonald Ireland Limited to prepare this preliminary examination of the proposed N62 Slievenamon Road Phase 2 Road Improvement Scheme (hereafter the proposed development), to inform a view as to whether the proposed development should be subject to the requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The location of the proposed development is shown in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Location of Proposed Development



Source: © OpenStreetMap contributors

This preliminary examination fulfils Tipperary County Council's obligation under Article 120(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended to "carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development" in relation to [EIA] sub-threshold development. This preliminary examination will accompany the Part 8 application.

1.2 Project Background

Along the N62 Slievenamon Road, the current public realm is deteriorating. This is worsened by vehicular parking on footpaths which results in footpath surface cracking and breakup. Unauthorised parking on footpaths is also reducing usability for pedestrians, especially for mobility restricted or disabled people. The proposed development seeks to address this issue through increased footpath widths (where implementable) and dedicated on-street parking spaces.

Although the N62 Slievenamon Road has not been identified as a high collision location in historic reviews by Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Road Safety Section, an evaluation of the latest Road Safety Inspections for the N62 shows deficiencies with respect to the road layout, signage and road markings. These deficiencies increase the risk of collisions with pedestrians and vehicles.

Furthermore, Road Safety Inspections carried out on the N62 in May 2018 recommended that, *'this section of the N62 inside the 50km/h zone should be upgraded to improve safety and comfort for vulnerable road users and to reduce the severity and frequency of traffic collisions.'*

The completed Liberty Square public realm enhancement project represents an important project for Thurles which is hoped will be a catalyst for growth in the commercial centre of the town and enhance the attractiveness of Thurles as a place to live and a place for investment and employment. The proposed development along Slievenamon Road will link Liberty Square and continue the enhancement of the public realm between Liberty Square and another commercial node within the town, Thurles Shopping Centre.

The proposed development is intrinsically a road safety and pedestrian safety scheme which has incorporated a strong focus on the enhancement of the public realm. The delivery of the project objectives reflects both the safety aspects and the continued renewal of Thurles town, especially through the redevelopment of the public realm. The project objectives are detailed hereunder;

- **Objective 1** – Promote traffic calming along the N62 and maintain reduced speeds through the urban core.
- **Objective 2** – Ensure all crossings are conspicuous with buildouts and removal of obstructions to improve visibility for motorists and vulnerable road users.
- **Objective 3** – Increase safety and comfort for vulnerable road users through improved pedestrian infrastructure in line with DMURS principles.
- **Objective 4** – Provide an improved sense of place to promote walking and cycling over private motor vehicle use in the town.
- **Objective 5** – Support national, regional and local policies to increase the modal share for walking and cycling within Thurles Town.

1.3 Statement of Competency

Mott MacDonald is a multidisciplinary consultancy with over 20 years' experience of undertaking complex and challenging EIA Screenings and of writing environmental impact assessment reports for a wide range of projects. These include some of the Ireland's largest infrastructure, engineering and development projects.

Mott MacDonald is a corporate member of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and hold its EIA Quality Mark. The Quality Mark Scheme allows organisations that lead the co-ordination of statutory EIAs in Ireland and the UK to make a commitment to excellence in their EIA activities and have this commitment independently reviewed. The EIA

Quality Mark is a voluntary scheme, with organisations free to choose whether they are ready to operate to its seven EIA Commitments.

2 Description of Development

2.1 Project Location

The proposed development is located in Thurles town centre, Co. Tipperary, and comprises improvement works to a section of the existing N62 national road known as the Slievenamon Road. It extends from the junction of Slievenamon Road and Liberty Square at the northern extent, for a distance of approximately 450m along the N62 to the Thurles Shopping Centre roundabout, which forms the southern extent of the project [central grid co-ordinates at the junction of Slievenamon Road and Fianna Road (Irish Transverse Mercator (ITM) grid reference: 612660E, 658463N)].

2.2 Project Description

The proposed development is presented in Figure 2.1 and will comprise the following:

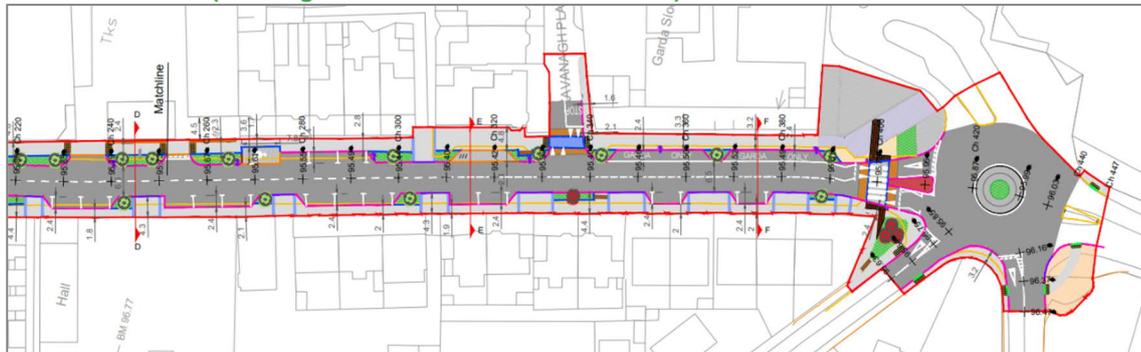
- upgraded road layout with reduced carriageway width (approximately 6.5m)
- improved junctions with enhanced infrastructure for pedestrians and vulnerable road users
- widened footways with new paving (widths ranging from 1.8m to 2.5m)
- road resurfacing
- upgraded public lighting comprising 15 no. lighting columns at 25m intervals
- 416m of 225mm diameter surface water drainage infrastructure
- enhanced soft and hard landscaping including the provision of upgraded street furniture.
- associated site works

Figure 2.1: Proposed Development – General Layout

Northern Section (Chainage 0m – 220m)



Southern Section (Chainage 220m – 380m and roundabout)



Source: Extract from Mott MacDonald Drawing 229100430-MMD-0100-01-DR-C-0101

2.3 Project Programme

It is anticipated that the construction will commence in the third quarter of 2023, with the construction programme anticipated to be of 14 months duration. The proposed project is expected to be completed by the end of 2024. An outline of the construction programme is detailed in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Indicative Construction Programme

Stage	Stage Description	Duration (Months)	Month													
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	Site Setup (incl. Traffic Management)	1	█													
2	Setting Out	1	█													
3	Site Clearance	2	█	█												
4	Ducting & Drainage	6		█	█	█	█	█	█							
5	Kerbs, Footways & Paved Areas	6				█	█	█	█	█						
6	Road Pavement	4							█	█	█	█				
7	Public Lighting	3								█	█	█				
8	Accommodation Works	3									█	█	█			
9	Landscaping & Street Furniture	3										█	█	█		
10	Traffic Signs and Road Markings	2												█	█	
11	Removal of Traffic Management & Site Handover	1														█

Notes & Assumptions:

1. This programme is indicative only and will change as further information becomes available during detail design.
2. The durations of individual tasks have been calculated drawing on experience of previous projects of a similar scale and nature. The final construction programme will be the responsibility of the Works Contractor.
3. Traffic Management arrangements have not been confirmed and therefore it is assumed that day-time works with stop-go measures will be implemented

2.4 Construction Activities

2.4.1 Temporary Site Compound

As the works will extend over a period of 14 months, a temporary site compound will be required. The temporary compound will include site offices i.e. portacabins that will be prefabricated and delivered to site, site welfare facilities and the provision of hard standing areas to provide car parking facilities and equipment laydown areas. It is noted that the exact location of the temporary works compound is not known at this time, however, the compound(s) will be sited in a convenient centralised location within Thurles town.

2.4.2 Road Layout Improvement Works

The proposed road layout improvement works will provide a carriageway of approximately 6.5m width. This will allow for a number of beneficial improvements along the road for pedestrians and road safety, particularly at existing junctions.

Footpaths of 1.8m width, or greater, will be established along the northbound carriageway. Additionally, pedestrian footpaths will be of 2.5m width or greater (with localised 2m wide pinch-points) along the southbound carriageway.

Approximately 11 no. formalised parking spaces will be provided on the northbound carriageway between Liberty Square and Thomond/ Fianna Road junction. An additional 12 no. formalised parking spaces will be created at the southern end of the project proximate to Kavanagh Place. Additionally, there will be a number of formalised parking spaces provided along the southbound carriageway between Thomond/ Fianna Road junction and the Thurles Shopping Centre roundabout. Existing car parking spaces reserved for Thurles Garda Station will be retained.

Raised table pedestrian crossing facilities will be provided at the Thomond Road and Kavanagh Place junctions.

The proposed project kerbing along the Slievenamon Road will tie into existing kerb lines along the N62.

2.4.3 Drainage Improvement Works

The project area is already served by an existing surface water drainage system. However, as part of the project, a new surface water drainage network will be constructed within the public road. This will comprise a total of 416m of 225mm diameter surface water drains which will be laid along Slievenamon Road. The proposed new surface water drainage network will connect into the existing surface water network. No works will be undertaken to the existing drainage system.

Drainage of the footpaths will be achieved via dished channels conveying flow to the existing road drainage system. Existing surface water channels will be supplemented by additional channels where the footpath drainage is known to be inadequate, including at existing downpipes.

As the kerblines will be modified to facilitate the new road cross section, it is proposed to relocate existing road gullies and provide additional road gullies and connecting pipes where required, in accordance with TII publication DN-DNG-03067-02 and DMURS.

The hard paved surface contributing surface run-off to the existing sealed drainage network, will reduce volumes to the drainage network through the inclusion of soft landscaping and tree pits. A holistic approach will be adopted to incorporate elements of SuDS treatments into the

landscaping and drainage design where possible (specifically the inclusion of vegetated filter strips at soft landscaping locations), in accordance with 'the SuDS Manual' and DMURS.

Proposed surface water drainage works are illustrated in Appendix A.

2.4.4 Public Lighting Improvements

Lighting along the N62 Slievenamon Road scheme will be upgraded in accordance with TII Publication DN-LHT-03038 Design of Road Lighting for the National Road Network.

Public lighting for the proposed development will be achieved by a combination of luminaires mounted on top of existing ESB poles along the street and 15 no. new dedicated galvanised steel columns, at approximately 25m spacings.

New lighting columns will be 8m overground height, manufactured from steel with a tapered octagonal section, root mounted, hot dip galvanised to BS EN 1461. Columns are to be fitted with access doors to allow for cable connections and mounting of local electrical cut-outs (fuse/isolators).

Feature lighting columns similar to those installed as part of the Liberty Square Redevelopment will be used on the southbound carriageway between Chainage 0+000 and 0+110 to reflect the objectives of the proposed development.

3 EIA Legislative Context

3.1 Requirements under the EIA Directive

The requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has its origins in Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment. This Directive has been amended three times and was codified by Directive 2011/92/EU in 2011. Directive 2011/92/EU was then subsequently amended by Directive 2014/52/EU in 2014 (together, the “EIA Directive”).

The primary objective of the of the EIA Directive is to ensure a high level of protection of the environment and human health, through the establishment of minimum requirements for environmental impact assessment (EIA), prior to development consent being awarded, of public and private developments that are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

Directive 2014/52/EU provides a definition of environmental impact assessment as being a process consisting of:

- The preparation of an environmental impact assessment report (EIAR);
- The carrying out of consultations required to inform the EIAR;
- The examination by the competent authority of the information presented in the EIAR and any supplementary information provided, where necessary, by the developer and relevant information received through consultations with the public, prescribed bodies and any affected Member States;
- The reasoned conclusion by the competent authority on the significant effects of the project on the environment; and
- The integration of the competent authority's reasoned conclusion into any development consent decision.

In determining the requirement for EIA, the EIA Directive differentiates between the projects that always require EIA (mandatory) and those for which an EIA may be required. These projects are listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive, respectively.

3.2 Requirements under the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended

As of the 1st of September 2018, the European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 296 of 2018) transposed the requirements of the 2014 EIA Directive (Directive 2014/52/EU) into existing Irish planning consent procedures, i.e. the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

In determining the requirement for EIA, the Directive differentiates between projects that always require EIA and those for which an EIA may be required. These projects are listed in Schedule 5, Part 1 and Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended (hereafter the P&D Regulations).

- Part 1 projects are projects which are considered as having significant effects on the environment and require a mandatory EIA; and
- Part 2 projects are those not included in Part 1 but which may require EIA where the proposed development is of a class specified in Part 2 and equals or exceeds the relevant thresholds; or, where the proposed development would be of a class specified in Part 2, but does not equal or exceed prescribed threshold in Part 2, yet it is concluded, determined or

decided, that the proposed development is likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

3.2.1 Schedule 5, Part 1 Projects

The proposed development is not a type of project identified in Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the *Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended*. An EIA is therefore not automatically required.

3.2.2 Schedule 5, Part 2 Projects

The proposed development can be described as an urban development project type and therefore Paragraph 10(b)(iv) of the P&D Regulations may be applicable - the provisions of which are quoted below. The proposed development may also be considered a business district, as this is defined in Paragraph 10 as “*a district within a city or town in which the predominant land use is retail or commercial use*”. However, the proposed development comprises an area of no greater than 0.8 hectares and is therefore below the threshold set out within Paragraph 10(b)(iv). The proposed development is also subject to the considerations relevant to Paragraph 15, as it has been identified as a project under Paragraph 10(b)(iv). The likely significance of effects will therefore be determined in Section 4 of this report.

Paragraph 10 (b)(iv) [Infrastructure projects]: 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.

Paragraph 15: Any project listed in this Part which does not exceed a quantity, area or other limit specified in this Part in respect of the relevant class of development but which would be likely to have significant effects on the environment, having regard to the criteria set out in Schedule 7.

3.3 Requirements under the Roads Act 1993 as amended

The provisions of the Roads Act 1993 (Roads Act), as amended, also apply to the proposed development as a ‘road’ development. Private roads are considered under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. The applicability of EIA to public road developments is prescribed under the Roads Act 1993, as amended.

Section 50 (1)(a) [Environmental Impact Assessment Report] of the Roads Act, requires a road development comprising any of the following road development types listed in Table 3.1 (below), to be subject to an environmental impact assessment. For clarity, Tipperary County Council are considered to be the ‘Road Authority’ in the subject instance for the purposes of Section 50 (1) of the Roads Act 1993, as amended.

Table 3.1: EIA Requirements under Section 50(1) of the Roads Act

Section 50(1) Roads Act reference		EIA Required on this basis?
(a)(i) Construction of a motorway		No. The proposed development consists of improvements to an existing regional road.
(ii) Construction of a busway	Section 44 (1) of the Roads Act 1993 as amended provides a definition of a busway; “A busway means a public road or proposed public road specified to be a busway in a busway scheme approved by the Minister under Section 49 of the Act.”	No. The proposed development does not include the construction of a busway.
(iii) Construction of a service area		No. The proposed development does not include any service area.
(iv) Any prescribed type of proposed road development consisting of the construction of a proposed public road or the improvement of a public road The types of road development are prescribed under Article 8 the Roads Regulations 1994 (S.I. No. 119 of 1994), as comprising;	The construction of a new road ¹ of four lanes, or the realignment or widening of an existing road so as to provide four or more lanes, where such new, realigned or widened road would be eight kilometres or more in length on a rural area, or 500 metres or more in length an urban area	No. The proposed road development comprises improvements to an existing public road and will not result in the widening of the road carriageway and does not require realignment.
	The construction of a new bridge or tunnel which would be 100 metres or more in length	The proposed development does not require the construction of a new bridge or tunnel.
(b) Where an An Bord Pleanála (ABP) considers that a proposed road development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment it shall direct the road authority to prepare an EIS		No. Determination based on the outcome of this preliminary EIA Screening assessment; no determination has been requested.
(c) Where a road authority considers that a proposed road development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment it shall inform ABP in writing		No. No mandatory requirement for EIA based on description of development and type. Significance of

¹ Section 2 of the Roads Act 1993 (as amended), provides the following definition and interpretation of a “road” – it includes (a) any street, lane, footpath, square, court, alley or passage, (b) any bridge, viaduct, underpass, subway, tunnel, overpass, overbridge, flyover, carriageway (whether single or multiple), pavement or footway, (c) any weighbridge or other facility for the weighing or inspection of vehicles, toll plaza or other facility for the collection of tolls, service area, emergency telephone, first aid post, culvert, arch, gully, railing, fence, wall, barrier, guardrail, margin, kerb, lay-by, hard shoulder, island, pedestrian refuge, median, central reserve, channeliser, roundabout, gantry, pole, ramp, bollard, pipe, wire, cable, sign, signal or lighting forming part of the road, and (d) any other structure or thing forming part of the road and— (i) necessary for the safety, convenience or amenity of road users or for the construction, maintenance, operation or management of the road or for the protection of the environment, or (ii) prescribed by the Minister;

Section 50(1) Roads Act reference

EIA Required on this basis?

and where ABP concurs it shall direct the road authority to prepare an EIS

effects on the environment to be addressed in the preliminary examination – Section 4 - of this report.

(d) Where a proposed road development would be located on certain environmental sites the road authority shall decide whether the proposed road development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The sites concerned are:

- (i) a European Site within the meaning of Regulation 2 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011),
- (ii) land established or recognised as a nature reserve within the meaning of section 15 or 16 of the Wildlife Act 1976 (No. 39 of 1976),
- (iii) land designated as a refuge for fauna or flora under section 17 of the Wildlife Act 1976 (No. 39 of 1976), or
- (iv) land designated a natural heritage area under section 18 of the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000,
- (v) A Nature Reserve within the meaning of sections 15 or 16 of the Wildlife Act, 1976

No.
 The proposed development is not within or proximate to any European Site or any site listed under the Wildlife Act. The Appropriate Assessment Screening Report prepared for this application confirms no significant effects to European Sites within proximity of the proposed road development. Sites designated under the Wildlife Act are not adversely or significantly impacted by the proposed development.

the road authority or the Authority, as the case may be, proposing the development shall decide whether or not the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

(e) Where a decision is being made pursuant to this subsection on whether a road development that is proposed would or would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, An Bord Pleanála, or the road authority or the Authority concerned (as the case may be), shall take into account the relevant selection criteria specified in Annex III.

The outcome of this preliminary examination will provide a conclusion on the likely significance of effects.

3.4 Guidance

In addition to the various requirements of planning legislation, the following guidance was also considered in the preparation of this preliminary EIA Screening Report:

- Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports, EPA, May 2022;
- Environmental Impact Screening Assessment, Practice Note 02 [PN02], Office of the Planning Regulator, June 2021;
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, August 2018
- Guidance on EIA Screening (Directive 2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU), European Commission, 2017;
- Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government 2009; and
- EIA, Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub-Threshold Development, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2003.

4 Preliminary Examination

Criteria to be assessed	Commentary
<p>Nature of the Development Is the nature of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</p>	<p>No, the proposed works are not exceptional in the context of the existing environment.</p> <p>The proposed development comprises works to the existing N62. The proposed works are of a nature and type that are common in County Tipperary and across Ireland. They are a type of 'works' that have been recently carried out recently within Thurles town, (and completed in 2022) through the redevelopment and renewal of Liberty Square.</p>
<p>Will the development result in the production of any significant waste, or result in significant emissions or pollutants?</p>	<p>No, the proposed development will not result in the production of any significant volumes of waste. The dominant waste stream will be the existing concrete pavement which is proposed to be removed as part of the works. All waste generated will be handled and disposed of in compliance with the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended, and associated Regulations. This will ensure that significant adverse effects in terms of waste management can be avoided.</p> <p>The proposed construction phase will result in temporary noise and dust disturbance which will be managed through the implementation of best practice. These impacts are negative but short term and temporary and are not considered to be significant. They can be appropriately mitigated and managed in accordance with environmental good practice e.g. CIRIA Environmental Handbook for Building and Civil Engineering Projects: Part 2 Construction, Mitigation measures will be outlined in the appointed Contractor's construction environmental management plan. The temporary noise and dust disturbance will not result in significant emissions or pollutants following the implementation of best practice measures.</p> <p>Upon completion of construction, the proposed development will operate in a similar manner to existing conditions. Accordingly, operational impacts are not considered to be significant.</p>
<p>Size of the Development Is the size of the proposed development exceptional in the context of the existing environment?</p>	<p>No, the size of the proposed development is not exceptional in the context of the existing environment, as it is limited to works along a 450m section of the existing N62.</p>
<p>Are there cumulative considerations having regard to other existing and/or permitted projects?</p>	<p>It is concluded that significant cumulative and/ or in-combination impacts between these activities and the proposal, are not reasonably foreseeable.</p> <p>A review of planning applications (private, local authority and strategic developments), which have been approved in Thurles town within the last five years was undertaken. The majority of these relate to extensions to existing properties, or changes of use. Other granted developments relate to larger-scale residential developments (up to 75no. units), and the redevelopment of an agricultural building along Cathedral Street (Part 8 application). Those projects occurring outside the town (such as a proposed solar PV farm approx. 1.6km south-southwest of the subject proposed development), will not have cumulative impacts with the proposed development due to their distance from the proposed development.</p>
<p>Location of the Development Is the proposed development located on, in, adjoining or does it have the potential to</p>	<p>No.</p> <p>The proposed development is located approx. 1.6km (straight line distance) northeast of the nearest European site, Lower River Suir</p>

Criteria to be assessed	Commentary
impact on an ecologically sensitive site or location?	<p>Species Area of Conservation (Site code: 002137). A Screening for Appropriate Assessment report has been prepared to accompany the application and concluded that there would be no potential for any effects on European Sites from the proposed works, either alone or in-combination with other plans and/or projects, due the distance separating the Sites from the proposed development and the dispersal and dilution of any sediment / pollutants that could be released to connected waterbodies before reaching the European Sites.</p>
Does the proposed development have the potential to affect other significant environmental sensitivities in the area?	<p>No.</p> <p>There are several Protected Structures listed along Slievenamon Road, identified on Policy Map 2B of the Thurles and Environs Development Plan (2009-2015, as varied and extended). Notwithstanding, these are not included in the Draft Tipperary County Development Plan (2022-2028).</p> <p>The proposed development also falls partially within the locally designated Architectural Conservation Area and Zone of Archaeological Potential identified in the Thurles and Environs Development Plan.</p> <p>There is a total of 11No. buildings which are adjacent or abutting the application boundary which are listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. There are no national monuments listed in close proximity to the proposed works.</p> <p>A Cultural Heritage Assessment has been prepared to accompany the application and address impacts. It concludes that the proposed development will not result in any significant impacts to any archaeological or cultural heritage sites and that archaeological monitoring shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified archaeologist between chainage 0m to 200m.</p>

5 Conclusion

This preliminary examination fulfils Tipperary County Council's obligation under Article 120(1)(a) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended to "*carry out a preliminary examination of, at the least, the nature, size or location of the development*" in relation to [EIA] sub-threshold development.

This preliminary examination represents Tipperary County Council's conclusion on the requirements for EIA. This report has concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development. There is thus no requirement for formal EIA Screening to be undertaken and an EIA is not required.

