

National Transport Authority

# Rathfarnham/ Templeogue to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme

## Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

The National Transport Authority (the "NTA") is proposing to carry out the Rathfarnham/ Templeogue to City Centre Core Bus Corridor Scheme (the "Proposed Scheme").

The Proposed Scheme has an overall length of approximately 10km from end to end online with additional offline upgrades and quiet street treatment of approximately 2km and 1.5km respectively. The Proposed Scheme will be comprised of two main alignments, namely from Templeogue to Terenure (3.7km), and from Rathfarnham to the City Centre (6.3km). The Templeogue to Terenure section will commence on the R137 Tallaght Road, east of the M50 junction 11 interchange. From here, the Proposed Scheme is routed via the R137 along Tallaght Road and Templeogue Road, through Templeogue Village, to Terenure Cross, where it joins the Rathfarnham to City Centre section.

The Rathfarnham to City Centre section will commence on the R821 Grange Road at the junction with Nutgrove Avenue, and is routed along the R821 Grange Road, the R115 Rathfarnham Road, the R114 Rathfarnham Road, Terenure Road East, Rathgar Road, Rathmines Road Lower, Richmond Street South, Camden Street Upper and Lower and Wexford Street as far as the junction with the R110 at Kevin Street Lower and Cuffe Street where priority bus lanes end. From Cuffe Street to Dame Street along Redmond's Hill, Aungier Street, and South Great George's Street the route will involve a traffic lane and a cycle track in both directions where it will join the prevailing traffic management regime in the city centre. In addition to the above, an alternative cycle facility will be provided along Harold's Cross Road / Terenure Road North between Terenure Cross and Parkview Avenue, as well as along Bushy Park Road, Wasdale Park, Wasdale Grove, Zion Road and Orwell Road.

The Proposed Scheme includes an upgrade of the existing bus priority and cycle facilities. The scheme includes a substantial increase in the level of bus priority provided along the corridor, including the provision of additional lengths of bus lane resulting in improved journey time reliability. Throughout the Proposed Scheme bus stops will be enhanced to improve the overall journey experience for bus passengers and cycle facilities will be substantially improved with segregated cycle tracks provided along the links and protected junctions with enhanced signalling for cyclists provided at junctions.

The Proposed Scheme, which will provide segregated cycling facilities, bus priority infrastructure and improvement pedestrian facilities, is within the Dublin City Council (DCC) and South Dublin County Council (SDCC) administrative areas.

The NTA appointed Scott Cawley Ltd. to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening Report for the Proposed Scheme to consider, analyse and assess whether in view of best scientific knowledge and objective information and the conservation objectives of the European site(s) (which are discussed further below), if the Proposed Scheme individually or in-combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site(s).

- Habitat degradation as a result of air quality impacts; and,
- Disturbance and displacement impacts.

Further detail is provided below on each of the potential impacts identified.

### **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation**

- 1 The Proposed Scheme does not overlap with any European sites. The nearest European site to the Proposed Scheme is South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, which is located approximately 900m away with a hydrological connection downstream of the Proposed Scheme. Therefore there is no potential for direct habitat loss and fragmentation to occur. Habitat loss may occur indirectly as a consequence of severe habitat degradation arising from a reduction in water quality and / or a change to the hydrological regime, as described in the section below.
- 2 Special Conservation Interest (SCI) species for which SPAs in the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme have been designated are known to utilise ex situ feeding sites in the Dublin area (i.e. North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Lambay Island SPA and The Murrrough SPA). The Proposed Scheme will not result in temporary and / or permanent loss of inland sites within the Proposed Scheme footprint suitable to support breeding gull and wintering bird species. As only small numbers of birds were recorded during the two seasons of survey (2020/2021 and 2021/2022) at potential inland feeding sites immediately adjacent to the Proposed Scheme, and the lack of records of light-bellied Brent goose at these sites, they are not deemed to be a significant inland foraging resource. Therefore, there is no potential for impacts on SCI species associated with SPAs to occur as a result of habitat loss / fragmentation.

### **Habitat Degradation / Effects on QI / SCI Species as a Result of Hydrological Impacts**

The Proposed Scheme is hydrologically connected to Dublin Bay via the Dodder\_50, Brewery Stream\_010, Kill of the Grange Stream\_010, Carrickmines Stream\_010, Shanganagh\_010, Dargle\_040, South-western Irish Sea - Killiney Bay, and the Ringsend WWTP.

The potential release of contaminated surface water runoff and / or an accidental spillage or pollution event into any surface water features during construction, or operation, has the potential to affect water quality in the receiving aquatic environment. Such a pollution event may include: the release of sediment into receiving waters and the subsequent increase in mobilised suspended solids; and, the accidental spillage and / or leaks of contaminants into receiving waters. It should be noted that a highly substantial event or events would be required to generate such quantities, which is considered unlikely.

The associated effects of a reduction of surface water quality could potentially extend for a considerable distance downstream of the location of the accidental pollution event or the discharge point and therefore impact the downstream waterbodies, i.e., in Dublin Bay and beyond, including the following European sites: South Dublin Bay SAC, Rathfarnham/ Templeogue Head SAC, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC, Wicklow Mountains SAC, Howth Head SAC, Lambay Island SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Dalkey Island SPA, North Bull Island SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, The Murrrough SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Skerries Islands SPA and Rockabill SPA. This reduction in water quality (either alone or in combination with other pressures on water quality) could result in the degradation of sensitive

In summary, the Proposed Scheme does not have the potential to result in habitat degradation of the Qualifying / Special Conservation Interest species of any European site as the result of hydrogeological impacts.

#### **Habitat Degradation as a Result of Introducing / Spreading Non-Native Invasive Species**

There are 18 areas of non-native invasive plant species (Giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, and Japanese knotweed) listed on the Third Schedule of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 present within, or in close proximity to, the Proposed Scheme. In the absence of mitigation, there is potential for this to spread or be introduced, during construction and / or routine maintenance / management works, to terrestrial habitat areas in European sites downstream in Dublin Bay and beyond (i.e., South Dublin Bay SAC, Rathfarnham / Templeogue Head SAC, Rockabill to Dalkey Island SAC, North Dublin Bay SAC, Wicklow Mountains SAC, Howth Head SAC, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, Dalkey Island SPA, North Bull Island SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, The Murrough SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Skerries Islands SPA and Rockabill SPA). The introduction and / or spread of these invasive species to downstream European sites could potentially result in the degradation of existing habitats present, in particular coastal habitats not permanently or regularly inundated by seawater. These species may outcompete other native species present, negatively impacting the species composition, diversity and abundance and the physical structural integrity of the habitat. This in turn could undermine the conservation objectives of these European sites.

It is considered unlikely that invasive species could spread to European sites which are located a significant distance from the outfall locations of the Dodder\_50, Brewery Stream\_010, Kill of the Grange Stream\_010, Carrickmines Stream\_010, Shanganagh\_010, Dargle\_040, South-western Irish Sea - Killiney Bay or Ringsend WWTP, and separated by a large marine waterbody (i.e. Howth Head SAC, Lambay Island SAC, Baldoyle Bay SPA, The Murrough SPA, Howth Head Coast SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Skerries Islands SPA and Rockabill SPA).

#### **Habitat Degradation as a Result of Air Quality Impacts**

A reduction in air quality within the immediate vicinity of the construction works may occur as a consequence of dust deposition associated with these construction activities. This includes reduction in photosynthesis due to smothering from dust on the plants and chemical changes such as acidity to soils. Furthermore, emissions from car exhausts, and the deposition of particulate matter and heavy metals produced by engine, brake and tyre wear, can contribute to increased deposition of pollutants such as oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>, NO<sub>s</sub>), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), particulate matter (PM), heavy metals (HM) and ammonia (NH<sub>4</sub>) in the vicinity of a road carriageway. This can affect the ecosystems and vegetation present, influencing plant growth rates and species composition, diversity, and abundance.

The unmitigated ZoI for construction related air quality effects arising from the Proposed Scheme has the potential to extend 50m from the Proposed Scheme boundary, and 500m from construction compounds during the construction phase. Vehicle emission related air quality effects arising from the Proposed Scheme has potential to extend up to 200m from the Proposed Scheme boundary or associated diversion roads during the construction year and the operational phase. There are no European sites present within these distances. The nearest European site, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka Estuary SPA, is located approximately 900m from the Proposed Scheme (as the crow flies) and therefore not located within the ZoI of this potential impact.

As the Proposed Scheme does not have the potential to result in habitat degradation of the Qualifying / Special Conservation Interest species of any European site as the result of air quality impacts, either during

European site. Kingfisher territories can extend over approximately 3-5km of a river catchment<sup>3</sup>. The nearest SPA for which kingfisher has been designated is the River Boyne and Blackwater SPA which is located in a separate catchment approximately 39.7km away, therefore kingfisher present in the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme are not associated with an SPA population.

There are a number of SPAs which are designated for SCI species that are known to forage and / or roost at inland sites, such as amenity grassland playing pitches (i.e., North Bull Island SPA, South Dublin Bay and River Tolka SPA, Malahide Estuary SPA, Baldoyle Bay SPA, Rogerstown Estuary SPA, Skerries Islands SPA, Lambay Island SPA, Ireland's Eye SPA and The Murrough SPA.). Five of these species were returned from the desk study and include light-bellied Brent goose, lapwing, black-headed gull, herring gull and lesser black-backed gull. Suitable inland foraging / roosting sites, which these bird species utilise, are located within the potential ZoI of the Proposed Scheme (See Section **Error! Reference source not found.** above). Therefore, there is potential for the Proposed Scheme to result in the disturbance / displacement of SCI bird species associated with SPA populations.

Wicklow Mountains SPA, located approximately 7.2km east of the Proposed Scheme, has been designated for SCI species, peregrine Falco peregrinus and merlin Falco columbarius. Both species are known to occur in the wider study area. Most peregrine prey is taken within 2km of the eyrie and few birds are taken beyond 6km (Hardey et al., 2013). The home range of breeding merlin is unknown but it could be expected to be similar to peregrine considering they will defend their immediate nesting territory (Lusby et al., 2017; Hardey et al., 2013). Considering the distance between the Wicklow Mountains SPA and the Proposed Scheme, any peregrine and / or merlin recorded in its immediate vicinity, do not form part of the Wicklow Mountains SPA SCI populations. Therefore, there is no potential for the Proposed Scheme to result in the disturbance / displacement of SCI peregrine and / or merlin associated with SPA populations.

### **Summary**

The hydrological, non-native invasive species and disturbance and displacement impacts associated with the Proposed Scheme have the potential to affect the receiving environment and, consequently, have the potential to affect the conservation objectives supporting the Qualifying Interests / Special Conservation Interests of a European site(s). Therefore, the potential for the Proposed Scheme to have significant effects on a European site(s) cannot be excluded.

As the Proposed Scheme itself is likely to affect the QIs / SCIs or conservation objectives of a European site(s), there is also the potential for other plans or projects to act in combination with it to result in likely significant effects on European sites.

The potential impacts of the Proposed Scheme on the receiving environment, their ZoI, and the European sites for which likely significant effects cannot be excluded are summarised in **Error! Reference source not found.** below. In assessing the potential for the Proposed Scheme to result in a significant effect on any European sites, any measures intended to avoid or reduce the harmful effects of the project on European sites are not taken into account.

### **In Combination Effects**

There is potential for developments planned or granted, or those implemented under a range of land use and other plans to lie either within European sites, or be situated in a location where they may be within the ZoI of the European sites which also fall within the ZoI of the Proposed Scheme.

Key development projects with potential for in-combination effects due to their size, nature and / or location include other Core Bus Corridor Schemes, upgrades to or new rail infrastructure, utility infrastructure including proposed or consented water utility improvement.

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<sup>3</sup> RSPB. Kingfisher breeding, feeding and territory webpage. Available at: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/kingfisher/feeding-territory/>

Signed: *Aine Cullen*

For and on behalf of the BusConnects Programme Board of the NTA

Dated:- [1st November 2022]