

Active Travel Infrastructure - Ballyalbany Bridge

Planning Report

Monaghan County Council

14/11/2023



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1. Introduction

1.1. Scheme Overview

Monaghan County Council (the Client/MCC) as the Contracting Authority, appointed Atkins (the Consultant) to provide Engineering Multi-disciplinary Consultancy and Design services for the Concept development, Option selection, Preliminary design, Statutory processes, Detailed design, and Construction support for the delivery of a pedestrian and cyclist footbridge within Monaghan Town. The footbridge will be located adjacent to an existing vehicular Bridge structure in the townland of Ballyalbany, and its purpose is to enhance active travel infrastructure across the Blackwater River. Figure 1-1 below illustrates the location of the proposed footbridge.

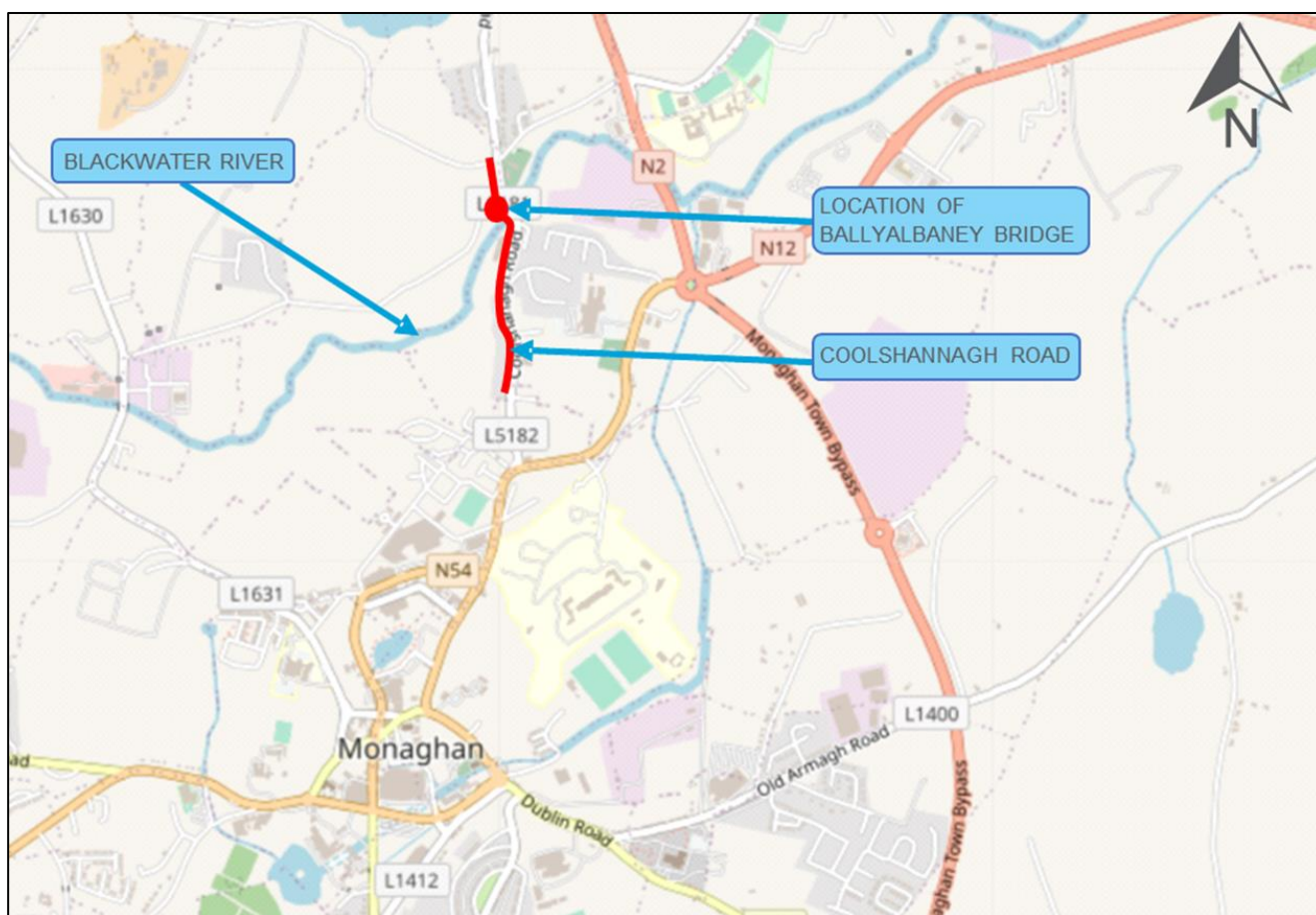


Figure 1-1 - Proposed Bridge Location

1.2. Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholder consultation has been undertaken with the following key stakeholders:

- National Transport Authority
- Monaghan County Council
- OPW
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Ballyalbany Church (Private landowner)
- Lakeland Dairies (Private landowner)
- Leonards Steel Ltd. (Private landowner)
- All other relevant bodies

1.3. Part 8 Planning Documentation

This Part 8 planning report has been prepared in accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 as amended. This report should be read in conjunction with the following complementary documentation:

- Drawing(s):
 - 5213957-ATK-01-ZZ-DR-ST-900801 – Site Context and Boundaries Map
 - 5213957-ATK-01-ZZ-DR-ST-900802 – Site Location Map
 - 5213957-ATK-01-ZZ-DR-ST-900803 – Existing Site Layout Plan
 - 5213957-ATK-01-ZZ-DR-ST-900804 – Planning Drawing (Site Layout Plan)
 - 5213957-ATK-01-ZZ-DR-ST-900805 – Planning Drawing (Cross Sections and Elevation)
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report (*Atkins Ref: 5213957DG0044*)
- Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report (*Atkins Ref: 5213957DG0047*)
- Archaeological Impact Assessment & Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (*Refs: AHIA MON BRD 1123 and AIA Final*)
- Tree Impact Summary (*Atkins Ref: 5213957DG0072*)
- Flood Risk Assessment (*Atkins Ref: 5213957DG0062*)
- Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and Stage 1 Quality Audit (*Atkins Ref: 5213957DG0041/28*)

2. Purpose of the Scheme

2.1. Project Aim & Objectives

The overall purpose of the Project is to provide linkage and permeability to existing and proposed active travel provisions in the town which will integrate with the overall active travel policy for Monaghan Town. This will improve safety and contribute towards an increased number of trips in the area by pedestrians and cyclists.

The objectives for the scheme are based on multi criteria requirements outlined by the Department of Transport in their report 'Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes (March 2016, updated October 2021)' (CAF). The multi-criteria headings are as follows:

- **Safety:** To reduce the potential for conflict between all road users along the route through the provision of a facility which is in line with the current standards. The project will seek to improve safety for vulnerable road users by providing safe means of passage across the Blackwater River.
- **Physical Activity:** Provide improved opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists, thereby promoting physical activity, through improvements to footpaths and crossings, and the provision of new cycling facilities.
- **Environment:** To minimise impacts on the receiving environment.
- **Accessibility & Social Inclusion:** To improve accessibility for all road users and bring social inclusion benefits to those for whom non-motorised means are the predominate form of transit.
- **Integration:** To support the strategies set out in national and regional policies and guidelines.
- **Economy:** To provide an investment that offers good value for money.

In addition to the above CAF objectives, the project seeks to meet the following localised objectives:

- Provide a sustainable transport alternative for the workers.
- Facilitate students to walk/cycle to the educational campus.
- Provide a valuable leisure amenity for the local population; and
- Encourage active travel in preference to motorised travel, which will result in clear sustainability and health benefits.

2.2. Design Principles

The proposed infrastructure has been designed in accordance with the guidance set out in the NTA's National Cycle Manual (NCM) and the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS).

The following principles were considered:

- **Road Safety:** Measures should be implemented which increase safety and the perception of safety.
- **Coherence:** Route and link type should have continuity and layout to be obvious at junctions.
- **Directness:** Route should be direct, minimising delays and bestowing the advantage to cyclists.
- **Comfort:** Routes should be of adequate width and surface quality with minimal delays.
- **Attractiveness:** Route should be well maintained with landscaping and adequate lighting.

3. Planning and Policy Context

National, Regional and Local planning policy has been considered to ascertain compliance and is summarised below.

3.1. National Transport Policy

The purpose of NIFTI is to plan for how Ireland will invest in its transport system over the coming years and decades. As part of Project Ireland 2040, it notes that the population of Ireland will grow to almost 5.7 million people by 2040. This framework aims to improve the transport system while focusing on the most environmentally sustainable modes of transport so that the increase in demand brought on by the increased population is met sustainably.

NIFTI notes that decarbonising the transport sector is an urgent priority in the context of our climate change targets, and so aims to support sustainable mobility wherever it is feasible and encourage modal shift to these modes, namely active travel, and public transport. The Framework recognises that many of the same measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions can also have a beneficial impact for other elements of environmental sustainability. Increased public transport and alternative fuel usage can help to improve air quality and reduce noise pollution, while active travel brings health benefits.

The four NIFTI Investment Priorities, which identify what will be invested in, are supplemented by modal and Intervention Hierarchies, which set out how NIFTI will undertake investment. It can be seen below in Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-2 that active travel is a core element of the four identified Investment Priorities and that NIFTI emphasises active travel as the most desirable mode of transport in the framework.



Figure 3-1 - NIFTI Four Investment Priorities (source: gov.ie/transport)

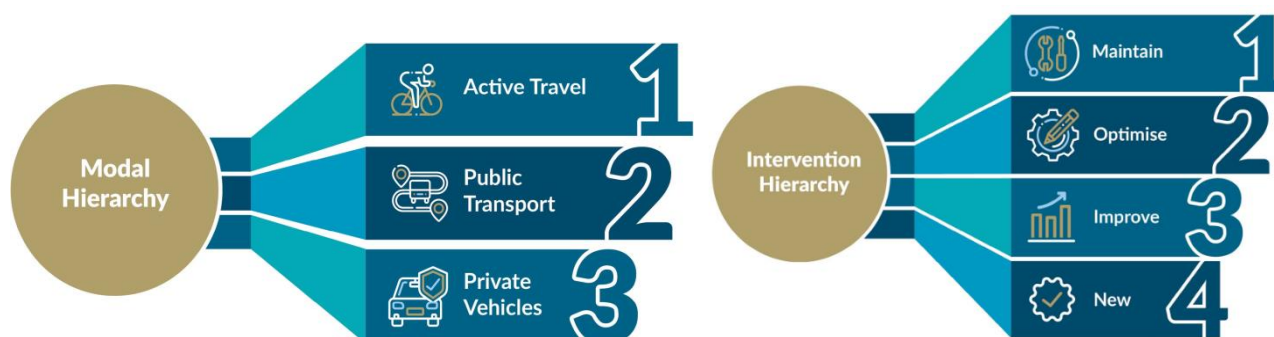


Figure 3-2 - NIFTI Modal and Intervention Hierarchies (source: gov.ie/transport)

NIFTI recognises that investments in transport networks and services, and the policies that drive these investments, can impact on the environment, and several environmental assessments have been carried out in parallel with its development, which includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), which highlighted

several potential impacts associated with the outcomes, Investment Priorities and Hierarchies proposed by NIFTI, as follows:

- Negative Impacts include, but are not limited to:
 - Short-term/localised negative impacts on water quality and increased noise pollution during construction.
 - Localised increases in pollution or increased CO2 emissions, or localised climate vulnerability such as flooding.
 - Long-term impacts on biodiversity, landscape, or cultural heritage features because of new infrastructure developments.
 - Long-term impacts because of land-take and changes in land use required for new developments.
- Positive Impacts include, but are not limited to:
 - Positive impacts to population and human health because of increased safety, with improvements to signage, adequate road surfacing, junction upgrades or realignment works.
 - Benefits for the economy, tourism and regional connectivity providing better social inclusion.
 - Reduced carbon emissions and improved air quality because of sustainable mobility developments.
 - Reduction in localised noise pollution and vibration because of development in sustainable and active travel modes and actions to promote electric vehicles.

3.1.1.1. National Sustainable Mobility Policy

In parallel with NIFTI, the Department of Transport has published a new National Sustainable Mobility Policy. This sets out the policy framework for walking, cycling and public transport to support Ireland's overall requirement to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The new policy is primarily focused on measures to promote and facilitate active travel and public transport for all thereby encouraging less private car usage nationally to support the Government's climate commitment.

The policy outlines a set of actions to increase active travel infrastructure provision and improve public transport capacity and services across the country. These will be supported by behavioural change and demand management measures to make sustainable transport modes the preferred choice for as many people as possible. The Climate Action Plan sets out additional measures to promote other complementary transport mitigation measures such as the switch over to electric car usage and greater use of renewable fuels for transport.

3.1.2. National Cycle Policy Framework 2009 – 2020

The backdrop to this policy is the government's transport policy for Ireland. The NCPF sets out a suite of interventions to improve the ease and safety of cycling to achieve greater mode share going forward. The framework states that the focus needs to be on:

- Reducing volumes of through-traffic, especially Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), in city and town centres and especially in the vicinity of schools and colleges.
- Calming traffic/enforcing low traffic speeds in urban areas.
- Making junctions safe for cyclists and removing cyclist-unfriendly multi-lane one-way street systems.
- Paying special attention to integrating cycling and public transport.

Other interventions include the following:

- Schools will be a strong focus of the NCPF.
- Supporting the provision of dedicated signed rural cycle networks for Cycling Tourism.
- Ensuring surfaces used by cyclists are maintained to a high standard and are well lit.
- Ensuring that all cycling networks are sign-posted to a high standard.
- Supporting the provision of secure cycle parking at all destinations of importance.
- Integrating cycling and Public Transport, including cycle parking at stations, and the capability to carry bikes on Public Transport services.
- Creation of municipal bike systems to complement an improved Public Transport system.
- Ensuring proposals cater for a 10% modal share of cyclists.

The NCPF states that making provision for cyclists in the urban environment does not merely consist of providing dedicated cycling facilities, but also involves wider traffic interventions that benefit all vulnerable road users.

3.1.3. National Cycle Manual 2011 – Present

The National Cycling Manual (NCM) embraces the principles of Sustainable Safety, as this will offer a safe traffic environment for all road users including cyclists. The five principles of Sustainable Safety are described in the NCM (Section 1.1) and noted below:

- Functionality – i.e., the design which is fit for purpose is safer.
- Homogeneity – i.e., reducing the relative speed, mass and directional differences of different road users sharing the same space increases safety.
- Legibility – i.e., a road environment that all road users can read and understand is safer.
- Forgivingness – i.e., environments that contribute to benign outcomes of accidents are safer (“passive safety”).
- Self-awareness – i.e., where road users are aware of their own abilities and limitations to negotiate a road environment, the environment is safer.

The NCM offers guidance on integrating the bicycle in the design of urban areas. Throughout the option selection and design process of this project the NCM is used.

3.1.4. National Cycle Network (NCN)

The National Cycle Network is one of the initiatives being rolled out by the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport. Over the next ten years, the Department hopes to work with local authorities to create a network of high-quality, long-distance, off-road walking and cycling paths. See Figure 3-3 below for the proposed routes. These routes will become ‘trip attractors’, thus increasing the tourism amenities in the country, and opening the countryside for the enjoyment of visitors and local people alike.

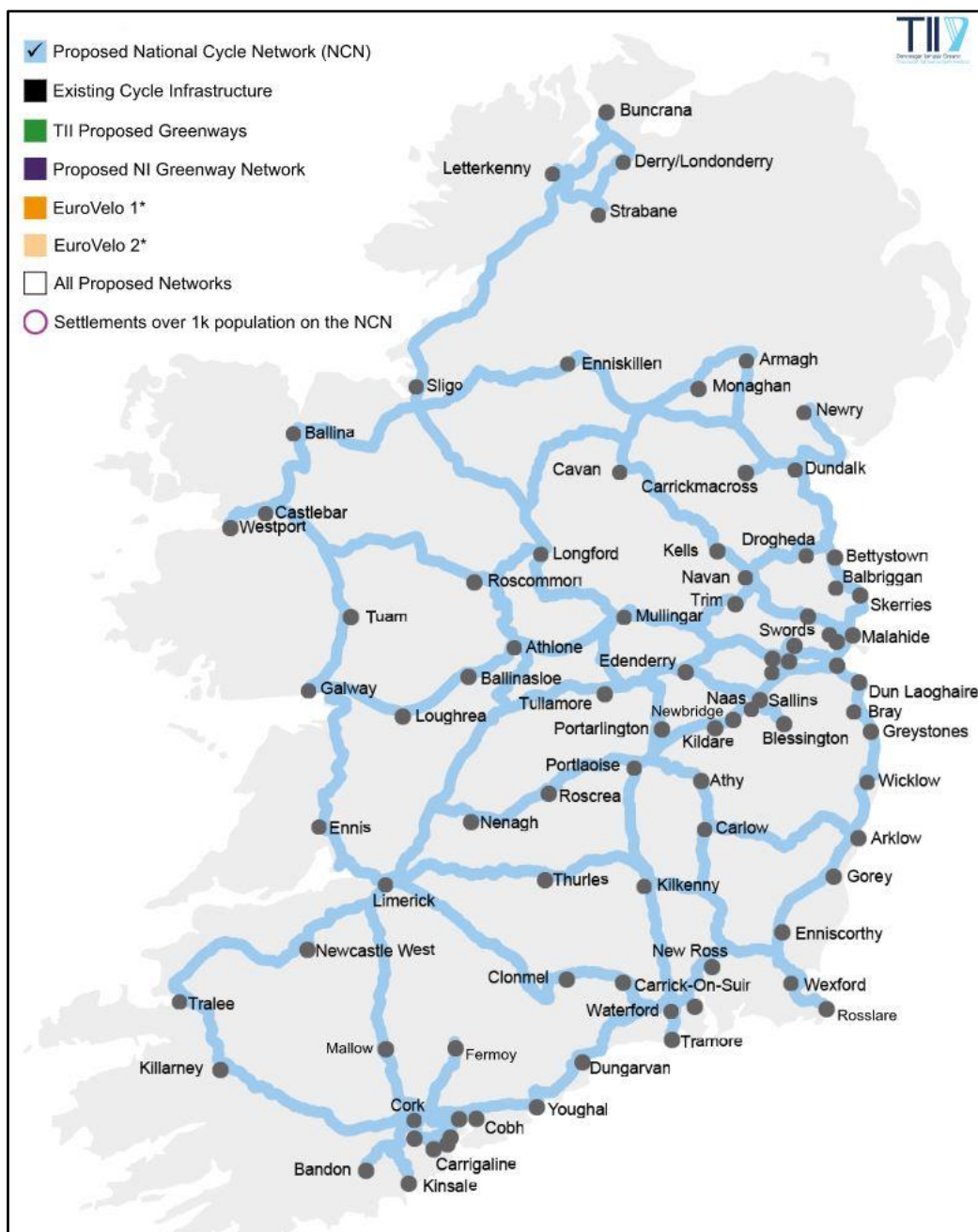


Figure 3-3 - Proposed National Cycle Network (NCN)

3.1.5. Climate Action Plan 2021

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) sets out a course of action over the coming years to address climate disruption, which is acknowledged as having diverse and wide-ranging impacts. The document outlines the aims for each sector of industry in Ireland. Electricity, Transport, Built Environment, Industry, Agriculture and Waste have all been assessed in the document with a roadmap laid out to deliver a reduction of emissions in each of these sectors between 2021 and 2030, and to reach net zero nationally by no later than 2050.

As part of the plans for a significant cut in transport emissions, the CAP sets a target of a 50% increase in Active Travel journeys per day by 2030.

The promotion of walking, cycling and public transport, and a modal shift from the use of private vehicles will all contribute to the achievement of the targets set out in relation to climate action.

3.2. Local & Regional Policy

3.2.1. Walking & Cycling Strategy for County Monaghan 2021-2026

Monaghan County Council has produced a Walking & Cycling Strategy in response to the increasing demand from the community sector for more walking and cycling infrastructure and amenities, both to facilitate leisure activity and commuting. The strategy will help and guide the development of walking and cycling infrastructure and to support people to walk and cycle more, for wellbeing, recreation, active travel (journeys with a purpose, such as shopping or commuting to work) and economic gain (e.g., tourism). The strategy aims to develop safe and appealing walking & cycling infrastructure in Co. Monaghan and to create an environment in which people will find it easy and attractive to walk and cycle, both recreationally, and for everyday journeys.

5 no. themes are included in the strategy and are listed below:

- Theme 1: Governance & Resources: creating the internal conditions necessary to ensure successful delivery of the Strategy.
- Theme 2: Plan for a Sustainable Future: the role of walking and cycling in reducing carbon emissions, and the need for good town planning to facilitate this transition to more sustainable transport modes.
- Theme 3: Removing the barriers to walking and cycling: Make walking and cycling easy and safe options.
- Theme 4: Embed walking & cycling into everyday life in Co. Monaghan
- Theme 5: Continue to innovate and collaborate.

3.2.2. Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025

The Monaghan County Development Plan (MCDP) contains an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Monaghan over the lifetime of the Plan. It takes on board national and regional planning legislation and adapts them to take account of local conditions.

The MCDP fully supports the development of more walking and cycling infrastructure for both leisure and active travel purposes.

The Plan includes the following Cycling and Walking Policies:

- To promote and facilitate the development of walkways, cycleways, and recreational routes in appropriate locations throughout the County to deliver the objectives of the County Walking and Cycling Strategy and any subsequent strategy document.
- To promote and encourage the development of walks and cycleways in accordance with the Smarter Travel Policy and to protect established routes from development that would adversely impact upon them.
- To develop, in co-operation and consultation with adjoining local authorities and cross border bodies sections of the Ulster Canal Greenway Network to connect the main urban centres throughout central Ulster.
- To encourage the provision of bicycle infrastructure such as shelters and parking facilities in appropriate locations and make provisions for such infrastructure in new developments.

Land use zoning around the Ballyalbany includes 'Landscape Protection/Conservation' 'Industry, Enterprise and Employment' and 'Community Services and Facilities'. As per Table 9.3 of the development plan, recreational facilities are 'Open for Consideration' on all land use zonings. A use that is "open for consideration" is one that by reason of its nature and scale would not be in conflict with the primary zoning objective for the area subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

Project compliance with the relevant MCDP policies and objectives is set out in Appendix E.

3.2.3. Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) 2020-2032

Co. Monaghan belongs to the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, one of three Assemblies in Ireland. Each Assembly has interpreted Project Ireland 2040's planning framework for their region, producing a Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, whose purpose is to consider the local conditions and factor them into an appropriate response in developing the Strategy. In turn, each Local Authority is obliged to take its respective region's RSES into account when developing local planning strategies.

The Strategy supports the development of greenways and networks of walking and cycling routes as tourism amenities as well as necessary active travel infrastructure. The Strategy heavily supports compact urban development with an emphasis on design which creates accessible, attractive, vibrant, and safe places to work, live, shop, and engage in community life. It sees the creation of permeable town centres where walking and

cycling are given a competitive edge over motorised forms of transport as the future of sustainable placemaking, where people live within a short distance of the services and amenities they most frequently use.

4. Description of Existing Network

4.1. Coolshannagh Road in the Proximity of Ballyalbaney Bridge

4.1.1. Road Network

The existing Ballyalbaney Bridge carries Coolshannagh Road over the Blackwater River. Figure 4-1 illustrates the location of the bridge in the townland of Ballyalbaney, Monaghan.

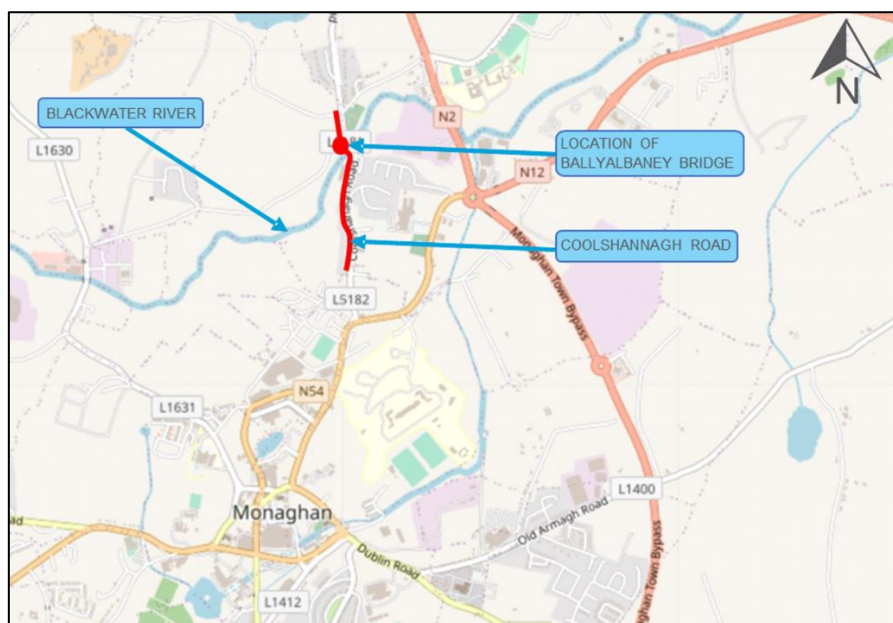


Figure 4-1 - Proposed Bridge Location

An aerial view of the existing Ballyalbaney Bridge and the surrounding road network is shown in Figure 4-2.

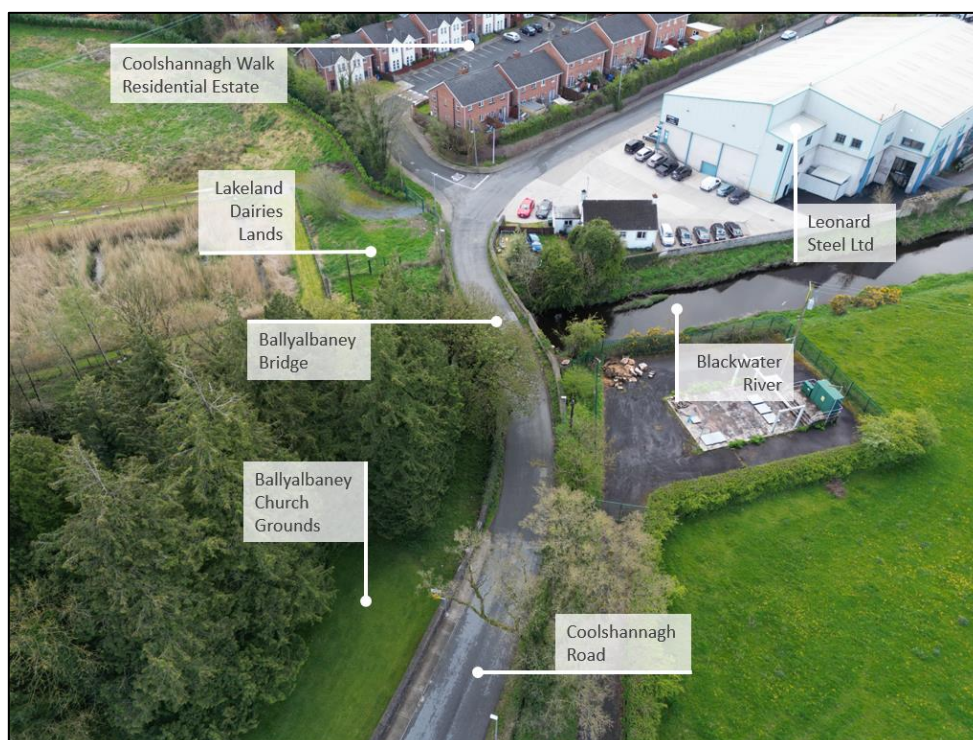


Figure 4-2 - Aerial View of Ballyalbaney Bridge

The carriageway on Ballyalbany Bridge includes two horizontal curves and a vertical crest curve over the Bridge. The southern approach to the Bridge is a 5.1m (approx.) wide carriageway with a footpath on its eastern side. The footpath runs parallel to the boundary wall of a residential estate and provides pedestrian access at a T-junction leading into the estate. A short section of the footpath is also present on the north side of the junction but terminates in advance of the Bridge. The land on the southeast and northeast side of the Bridge is owned by Lakeland Dairies and Ballyalbany Church respectively. Please refer to Figure 4-3 for a view from the south side of the Bridge facing north.



Figure 4-3 - Road cross section on southern side of Ballyalbany Bridge

The carriageway width on the existing road Bridge is 5.3m (approx.), with intermittent grass verges. See Figure 4-4 for a view of the carriageway on the Bridge deck.



Figure 4-4 - Road cross section over Ballyalbany Bridge

The carriageway width on the north side of the Bridge is 5.7m (approx.) with a footpath on the east side. The footpath terminates in advance of the existing Bridge. The Mullaghmore East Road meets Coolshannagh Road at a T-junction on the northwest side of the Bridge. Please see Figure 4-5 for a view facing north.

There are no existing Active Travel provisions on the existing Bridge. This is an unsafe arrangement for non-motorised users.



Figure 4-5 - Road cross section on north side of Ballyalbaney Bridge

4.1.2. Ballyalbaney Bridge details

Ballyalbaney Bridge is listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) as a protected structure with registration number 41302007. The bridge is separately listed as a Protected Structure in the Monaghan County Development Plan, Reference ID: 41400943. The Bridge carries Coolshannagh Road over the Blackwater River. It is a two-span masonry arch structure with each span measuring approximately 5.2m in length. Masonry retaining walls support the road on both approaches. The central pier incorporates cutwaters (protrusions of stone attached to piers that improve the hydraulic properties of the Bridge) on both sides of the structure. A buttress support wall is located on the southeast side of the Bridge. Please see Figure 4-6 for the east elevation.



Figure 4-6 - Ballyalbany Bridge east elevation

4.1.3. Junctions

Coolshannagh Walk residential estate is accessed via a T-junction on the southeast side of the Bridge. Mullaghmore East Road is accessed via a T-junction on the northwest side of the Bridge.

4.1.4. Public Transport

Coolshannagh Road is part of Bus Eireann Route 32. There are no bus stops within the extents of the scheme.

4.1.5. Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities

There is a footpath on the east side of Coolshannagh Road; however, it does not extend over Ballyalbany Bridge. Additionally, there are no designated cycling facilities along this section of Coolshannagh Road.

4.1.6. Collision History

No collisions have been recorded at this location in the recent past.

5. Description of Proposed Scheme

5.1. Preferred Option

Following the completion of a detailed Options Appraisal, undertaken in line with the Department of Transport's Common Appraisal Framework, the Preferred Option for the new Ballyalbany pedestrian and cycle bridge is the construction of a new footbridge on the east side of the existing Bridge. Please refer to Appendix A for the Planning drawings which outlines the proposal. The proposed works are outlined as follows:

- A new pedestrian and cycle Bridge will be constructed on the east side of the existing Ballyalbany Bridge. New embankments will connect to the new Bridge to the existing road and footpath infrastructure.
- Pedestrians traveling northbound and southbound will use the new Bridge to cross the Blackwater River.
- Pedestrians will cross Coolshannagh Walk junction on a new uncontrolled crossing.
- Cyclists traveling southbound will use the new Bridge to cross the river. Cyclists will egress on the south side of the new link and cross the Coolshannagh Walk junction on an advisory cycle lane before re-joining the south bound carriageway on Coolshannagh Road.
- Cyclists traveling northbound will cross the Blackwater River using the existing Bridge in a Narrow Shared Street arrangement.
- Northbound and southbound motorists will continue to use the existing carriageway as per the current arrangement.
- The Coolshannagh Walk junction will be narrowed by introducing override areas that are suitable to be traversed by HGVs.
- An existing masonry dry span on the north side of the existing bridge will be extended through the new north approach embankment.

5.1.1. Structures

The proposed Bridge is a 14m single span steel structure which will be made integral with concrete abutments (see Figure 5-1). The superstructure will consist of 3 no. main steel girders, stiffened transversely by bracing or cross beams, and a 3m wide anti-slip deck surface on top (refer to Figure 5-2). The substructure will comprise full height abutments and wingwalls founded on piled foundations (TBC).

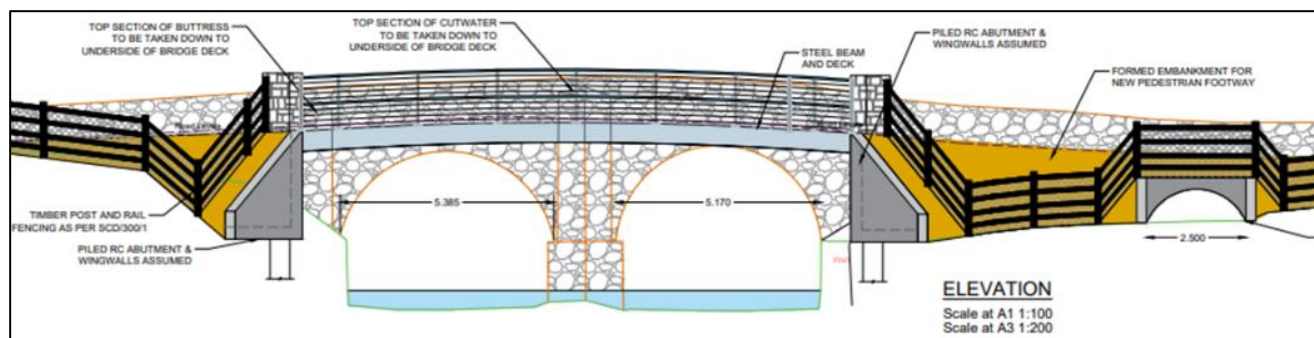


Figure 5-1 - Elevation of proposed Bridge

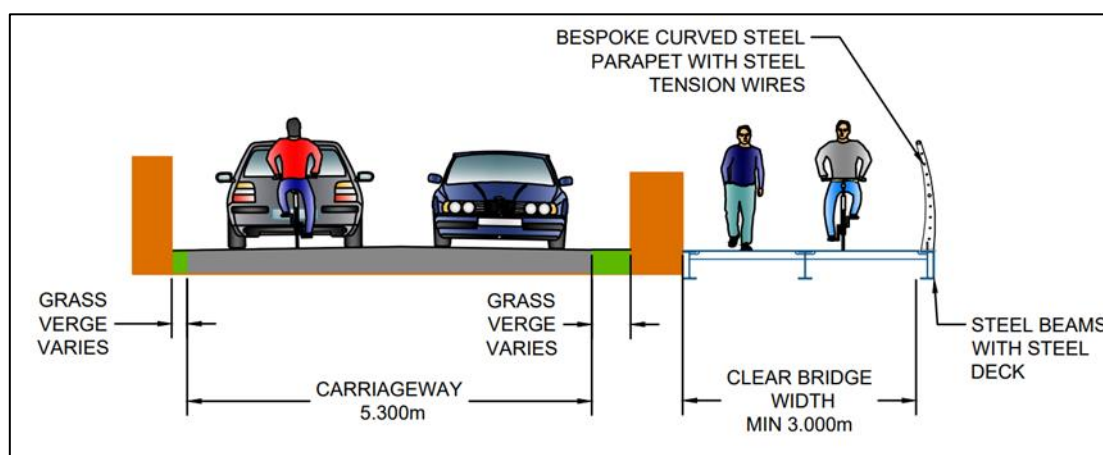


Figure 5-2 - Cross section of proposed Bridge

The Bridge length was selected to span across the full width of the river, avoiding the need for a central support in the watercourse, and to maintain an unobstructed view of the existing masonry structure. The proposed structure will be adjacent to the existing Bridge but there will be no load transfer between the structures. A hydraulic analysis has found that the new Bridge proposal will not unduly the hydraulic capacity of the existing structure.

To ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, a 1.45m high steel parapet will be installed on the outer edge of the new Bridge. The final parapet form will be determined at Detailed Design stage. The existing Bridge parapet will remain on the inner edge. Additionally, anti-slip steel decking will be used as the walking/riding surface.

The proposed steel structure solution facilitates a straightforward construction process, as the steel elements can be fabricated and assembled offsite, transported, and craned into position.

5.1.2. Alterations to Existing Bridge

To accommodate the new Bridge deck, a section of the buttress on the southeast side of the existing Bridge, as well as a section of the pier cutwater on the east side of the existing Bridge, will be taken down. These sections will be brought down to a level just below the new Bridge deck soffit. This is required to adjoin the new Bridge to the existing Bridge.

To preserve the historical fabric of the protected structure, it is proposed to reuse the masonry that will be taken down from the buttress and cutwater. Specifically, these materials will be repurposed as new pilasters at the ends of the new bridge parapets.

The masonry will be carefully taken down from the buttress and cutwater and set aside before being reincorporated. The exposed surfaces will be treated and repaired in accordance with the localised conservation and repair methodology set out in the Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment (AHIA) report. The bridge will be de-vegetated and undergo a condition inspection before construction. Any masonry defects identified will be repaired in accordance with the conservation strategy as outlined in the AHIA.



Figure 5-3 - East elevation of existing Bridge

5.1.3. Dry Span

To accommodate the new embankment on the northeast side of the existing Bridge, it will be necessary to extend the existing dry span masonry arch structure through the new embankment. The proposed solution involves using a precast arch structure with headwalls.

5.1.4. Masonry wall/parapet

Partial taking down of 2 no. sections of existing masonry wall/parapet are required. These openings are necessary to provide access points for pedestrians and cyclists onto the new Bridge and embankments.

To preserve the historic fabric of the existing walls, the masonry removed from the wall/parapet will be reused to construct a new curved entrance wall at the north entry/exit point of the new north embankment. All works will be carried out in accordance with the conservation strategy.



Figure 5-4 - South side of existing bridge (facing north)



Figure 5-5 - North side of existing bridge (facing south)

5.2. Key Ancillary Elements

5.2.1. Junctions & Entrances

The Coolshannagh Walk junction on the south side of the Bridge will be narrowed to improve safety for non-motorised users. This will be achieved with the introduction of over-ride areas. The over-ride areas can be traversed by HGVs and as such will retain the existing geometry required for long load deliveries to and from Leonard Steel's yard.

An uncontrolled cycle crossing will be provided to enable southbound cyclists to cross Cooshannagh Walk junction and access the southbound lane of Cooshannagh Road. An uncontrolled pedestrian crossing will be introduced at the Cooshannagh Walk junction. The existing stop line will be repositioned to facilitate the introduction of the uncontrolled cycle and pedestrian crossings, while maintaining the sight line requirements for traffic exiting Cooshannagh Walk. The final arrangement of the pedestrian and cyclist crossings, over-ride areas and stop line location will be finalised at the Detailed Design Phase and will take account of Road Safety Audit findings and sightline requirements.

5.2.2. Pedestrian Crossings

The new uncontrolled crossings Cooshannagh Walk junction will comply with the guidelines outlined in Section 4.3.2 of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and Section 7.16 of the Traffic Sign Manual.

5.2.3. Drainage

The proposed active travel scheme is not expected to have a significant impact on the drainage of the main carriageway. Currently, it is proposed to construct the new footpath/cycle track with a crossfall falling away from the road and discharging onto the new embankments which will have with toe of slope filter drains. The drainage specification for the new shared areas and Bridge deck will be developed during the Detailed Design Phase.

5.2.4. Lighting

The proposed infrastructure will be lit in accordance with current best practices and design guidelines for public lighting. To improve energy efficiency, it is recommended that all lighting within the scheme, including both new

and existing fixtures, use LED technology. The details of this upgrade will be determined during the detailed design phase. The lighting will be designed to be wildlife sensitive.

5.2.5. Pavements

In line with the National Cycle Manual's guidelines for providing the highest quality of service for cyclists, it is recommended to use a smooth asphalt surface course (SMA or AC10) for the proposed footpath/cycle track. Tactile paving will be installed as shown on the Preliminary Design Drawing.

To ensure that the carriageway pavement is in good condition, a pavement condition survey will be conducted to identify whether any repair works are needed. Based on the survey results, appropriate measures will be taken to maintain the quality of the carriageway pavement, ensuring that the road remains safe and accessible for all users.

5.2.6. Services

At the outset of the project, utility companies were contacted seeking information relating to their plant and ducting at the bridge. The following information was received.

Table 5-1 - Summary of Utility Companies' Infrastructure

Service Provider	Services Present
BT	No
Eir	Yes, at southern approach of bridge,
Enet	Yes, underground through bridge
ESB	Yes – overhead cables and light poles
GNI	No
Irish Water	Yes – Watermain underground through bridge, foul water services, Ballyalbany pumpstation on southwest embankment
Virgin Media	Unconfirmed

5.2.7. Land Take

The proposed works will require land take from two privately owned properties. The property on the north side of the new Bridge is in the ownership of Ballyalbany Church. The property on the south side of the new Bridge is in the ownership of Lakeland Dairies. Details of the land take areas are presented on drawing numbers 5213957-ATK-01-ZZ-SK-ST-900104 and 5213957-ATK-01-ZZ-SK-ST-900105 in Appendix I. Consultation has been initiated with both landowners.

5.2.8. Tree Removal and Proposed Landscaping

To accommodate the provision of the necessary infrastructure, the proposed scheme requires the removal of trees over the construction area and working area (6m offset approx. from permanent works). A tree survey has been undertaken in the vicinity of the bridge and based on the preliminary design. The expert advice of an arboriculturist has been used to determine the value, age, and condition of all trees/tree groups in the vicinity. A tree impact statement has been produced by the arboriculturist, the values from which are summarised in Appendix F. Landscaping, in the form of replacement trees and new trees is proposed and will be finalised in the Detailed Design Phase. The new embankment fill will be landscaped and sown with pollinator friendly species in compliance with Development Plan Policy HLP 6.

6. Environment Assessments

6.1. Appropriate Assessment

As part of the Preliminary Design Phase a Screening for Appropriate Assessment (AA) Report was undertaken (Atkins ref. 5213957DG0044, as contained within Appendix C). The purpose of the Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report is to determine the likelihood of significant effects, if any, that the proposed project could have on Natura 2000 sites either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

Following the assessment detailed in this report, it can be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed development will not, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, give rise to any impacts which would constitute significant effects on Slieve Beagh SPA (site code: 004167) or any other Natura 2000 sites or any UK Protected Sites, in view of their conservation objectives.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the authors of this report that Monaghan County Council, as the competent authority in this case may determine that Appropriate Assessment is not required in respect of the proposed works.

6.2. Environmental Impact Assessment

As part of the Preliminary Design Phase an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report was prepared (Atkins ref. 5213957DG0047, as contained within Appendix B). The purpose of this report is to determine whether the project requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

It is concluded that the proposed active travel bridge development is not a development type identified in Schedule 5 Part 1 or Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. There is no requirement under the EIA Directive for the proposed development to be subject to EIA.

7. Impact of the Proposed Scheme

7.1. Pedestrians, Cyclists, Traffic & Transportation

7.1.1. Pedestrians

At present, pedestrians who cross the Blackwater River over the Ballyalbany Bridge have no dedicated facilities and must share the road with vehicles. The proposed route will offer a safe, accessible, and attractive option for pedestrians to cross the river. The new route will connect with existing footpaths on either side of the Bridge, eliminating the need to cross the road when traveling north to south and vice versa. Additionally, a new crossing will be installed at a narrowed junction on the south side of the Bridge, improving safety for pedestrians.

To ensure that the new route is inclusive for all users, features such as tactile paving and flush kerbs will be provided as required. These features will be particularly beneficial for users with visual or mobility impairments.

7.1.2. Cyclists

The facilities for northbound cyclists will remain the same, while southbound cyclists will have access to the proposed new Bridge to cross the river. As a result, the cycling facilities for southbound riders are significantly improved. Furthermore, the introduction of high-quality cycling infrastructure will offer an appealing route for cyclists, linking numerous residential, educational, and commercial areas.

7.1.3. Vehicular Traffic

To enhance vehicular traffic flow over the existing Ballyalbany Bridge, the following benefits will be realised:

- Northbound motorists will no longer have to share the lane over the Bridge with pedestrians.
- Southbound motorists will no longer have to share the lane over the Bridge with cyclists and pedestrians.

The proposed measures will reduce the likelihood of conflicts between all road users, ultimately improving safety. The improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure will encourage a shift away from private vehicles, leading to a corresponding decrease in traffic volumes locally.

7.1.4. Construction Traffic

During the construction phase, vehicular movement will increase in the immediate area, and temporary vertical elements such as hoarding or protective fencing, may be put in place. All construction impacts will be temporary. Prior to the commencement of works, the contractor should prepare a Construction Environmental Management Plan in line with best practice measures to avoid and minimise potential impacts on sensitive environmental receptors that could potentially occur during the construction phase.

7.1.5. Road Safety

The scheme's preliminary design has been subject to an independent Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and Stage 1 Quality Audit (Appendix J), the findings of which will be accounted for in the proposals; and it will be subject to Stage 2 and 3 Road Safety Audits upon completion of the Detailed Design and after Construction, respectively.

7.2. Landscape & Visual

The new Bridge location has been designed to minimise the requirement for land take however land take from Ballyalbany Church and Lakeland Dairies will be required.

To accommodate the provision of the necessary infrastructure, the proposed scheme does require the removal of trees adjacent to the protected structure. A targeted tree survey has been undertaken based on the preliminary design and the expert advice of an arboriculturist has been used to determine the value, age, and condition of all trees/tree groups. Replacement trees will be proposed at adjacent locations where possible. A net gain in trees is proposed as part of the scheme which will have a positive visual impact.

Molloy & Associates (Conservation Architects) have described the visual impact of the proposals as follows.

- The proposed secondary footbridge is positioned above the double arched arrangement, with guarding heights aligned with the bridge capping, this reflects an intention to minimise visual impacts associated with the intervention, when viewed from the northeast of the Blackwater Riverbank

- The intervention is not likely to be visible from the southwest riverbank.
- The position of the bridge will make it visible from the protected Ballyalbaney Presbyterian Church ecclesial building group. The deck levels on the new bridge will closely match those of the existing bridge. Notwithstanding possible visual connection between the two, the intervention is at a distance from the historic enclosure and separated from it by a greenbelt of established mature trees, minimise alterations to historic settings.
- It is proposed to remove a section of the Ballyalbaney Graveyard wall to facilitate an access point onto the new embankment link and bridge. It is intended, using salvaged its masonry, to construct a section of wall at the end of the new embankment.

7.3. Built & Cultural Heritage

An Archaeological Impact Assessment and Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment were undertaken by Archer Heritage Planning (Archaeologist) and Molloy & Associates (Conservation Architects) respectively (Appendix D).

Archaeological Impact Assessment Summary

There is low potential for the survival of archaeological remains at Ballyalbaney Bridge. It is recommended that; Continuous Archaeological Monitoring of all ground works take place at Ballyalbaney Bridge. All work is to be undertaken under licence to Department of Housing, local Government and Heritage (DHLGH).

Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment Summary

The existing bridge, whilst of significant heritage interest and contributing to a wider urban character of heritage interest, has the capacity to accommodate the proposed secondary bridge as proposed.

The existing bridge has heritage buildings in proximity. In response, the intervention has been designed to respect the character of these buildings and their enclosures, as interacting with a shared urban realm.

Following receipt of statutory consent and commencement of works, improved site access following clearance of works will enable a detailed survey of the existing structure to be carried out. Findings, which will be submitted with the Authority by way of qualification of the proposal, will inform a strategy for repair and conservation of vulnerable masonry at the existing bridge, together with improved presentation of its respective environs - all in order to visually enhance the heritage significance.

The upper section of the eastern pier cutwater and south-eastern retaining buttress will be removed to accommodate the new deck. To preserve the historical fabric of the protected structure, it is proposed to reuse the masonry that will be removed from the buttress and cutwater. Specifically, these materials will be repurposed as pilaster at the ends of the new bridge parapets.

Partial removal is required along 2 no. short sections of the masonry wall/parapet running along the east side of the existing Bridge approaches. The masonry removed from the wall/parapet will be reused to construct a new curved entrance wall at the northern entry/exit point. This approach ensures the preservation of the historical fabric, which will be incorporated into the new design.

7.4. Land Use

Land use zoning around the Ballyalbaney includes 'Landscape Protection/Conservation' 'Industry, Enterprise and Employment' and 'Community Services and Facilities'. As per Table 9.3 of the development plan, recreational facilities are 'Open for Consideration' on all land use zonings. A use that is "open for consideration" is one that by reason of its nature and scale would not be in conflict with the primary zoning objective for the area subject to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. The proposed scheme will provide Active Travel Infrastructure that can be used as a recreational amenity.

7.5. Other Environmental Impacts

Other Environmental Impacts (noise, air quality, etc) are as noted in the EIA Screening Report, which as noted in Section 6 is recommended to be screened out.)

7.6. Flooding

The proposed structure is located within a floodplain. A Stage 1 and Stage 2 Flood Risk Assessments (FRA) of the proposal has been undertaken. The FRA has concluded that there is no increase in flood risk to the existing bridge, Ballyalbaney Church & Graveyard, Lakeland Dairies, Leonard Steel, or any other properties in the neighbouring proximity. Please refer to Appendix G for the FRA.

A hydraulic analysis of the proposal has been undertaken. This has determined that the post-development freeboard to the new and existing bridges will be in excess of 300mm for 1% AEP + Climate Change allowance. A Section 50 application has been approved by the OPW. Please refer to Appendix H for the OPW approval letter.

The new bridge is not considered to be a Sensitive development. The proposal is considered to be the only feasible Option at this location.

7.7. Conclusion

The preliminary design for the scheme has been undertaken in line with DMURS and the NCM, developing the preferred options as outlined in the *Feasibility Study and Options Selection & Appraisal Report*.

The proposed improvements realised as part of the scheme align with the aims and objectives, as follows:

- **Safety (Conflict)**
 - Pedestrians and southbound cyclists travelling over the Blackwater River will be segregated from vehicular traffic.
 - The potential for conflicts will be reduced through the provision of formalised crossing facilities at the junction on the southeast side of the Ballyalbany Bridge.
- **Safety (Vulnerable Road Users)**
 - Vulnerable road users shall be catered for through the provision of kerbing and tactile paving in line with best practice.
- **Physical Activity**
 - The provision of the proposed facilities will bring enhancements for pedestrians and cyclists, thereby promoting physical activity, particularly for those travelling to the adjacent residential, recreational, commercial, and educational areas.
- **Accessibility and Social Inclusion**
 - Similarly, as with Physical Activity, accessibility and social inclusion will be improved for those road users who rely on a non-motorised means of transport.
- **Environment**
 - The impact on the environment is deemed to be minimal. An Environmental Impact Assessment screening and an Appropriate Assessment screening have both screened-out the proposals.
- **Integration and Economy**
 - From these benefits the proposals will offer good value for money, both at a strategic level, and to those individual users for whom the scheme will enable a modal switch from the private car to walking /cycling; and aligns with national, regional, and local policies, as outlined in Section 3.
- **Localised objectives**
 - The proposals offer a sustainable alternative to workers and students and a valuable leisure amenity for the local community. Encouraging and promoting active travel which will have clear sustainability and health benefits.

8. Submissions

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development would be situated, may be made in writing to the Local Authority; Monaghan County Council, Planning Section, No. 1 Dublin Street, Co. Monaghan, H18 X982. Submissions shall be made on or before the deadline as noted on Monaghan County Council's website with respect to the scheme (www.monaghan.ie).

Submissions should be headed: "Active Travel Infrastructure - Ballyalbany Bridge".

All comments, including names and address of those making submissions regarding this scheme will form part of the statutorily required report to be presented to the monthly meeting of Monaghan County Council.

Accordingly, these details will be included in the meeting minutes of that meeting and may appear in the public domain.

Appendices

Appendix A. Drawings

Appendix B. EIA Screening Report

Appendix C. AA Screening Report

Appendix D. Archaeological & Architectural Heritage Impact Assessment

Appendix E. Compliance with MCDP

Appendix F. Tree Impact Summary

Appendix G. Flood Risk Assessment

Appendix H. OPW Section 50 Approval

Appendix I. Land Take Drawings

Appendix J. Stage 1 Road Safety Audit & Stage 1 & Quality Audit

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