

Memo

To: Pat Daly, Chief Executive

From: Vincent Murray, Director of Services, Planning, Environment and Place Making

Date: 19/01/2024

Re: Part 8 proposal, Reference 23/8016 – The proposal is for the development of the Limerick Greenway Hub at Ardagh. The Ardagh Station House, Goods Shed, Railway Carriage and site will become one of the main Visitor Experiences and Service Centre Hubs on the Limerick Greenway. Development to include: Refurbishment and renovation of the Ardagh Station House and Goods Shed (which is a protected structure, RPS 900) and change of use to commercial, community and tourism. Develop the buildings and site to include toilets, café, playground, interpretation and camper van facilities. The provision of on-site parking to include car and universal access parking spaces, electric vehicle charging point spaces and camper van parking bays. Installation of a railway carriage on the site for commercial, community, and tourism use, and all associated site works. Construction of extensions to the Station House and Goods Shed. Works to include all site development works for the buildings and site including utilities, drainage, landscaping and public realm. Widening of the existing entrance to accommodate 2-way traffic.

Dear Chief Executive,

Please find attached for your consideration report prepared in accordance with Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in respect of a proposal for the development of the Limerick Greenway Hub at Ardgah Railway Station.

The proposal prepared by the Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism Directorate has been evaluated taking into consideration all submissions received. It is concluded that the proposed development is in accordance with the objectives of the Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028, and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

It is recommended that the proposed development be recommended to the Elected Members of Limerick City & County Council for their approval.

Signed: Mary O'Malley
Mary O'Malley, Executive Planner

Signed: Donogh O'Donoghue
Donogh O'Donoghue, Senior Executive Planner

Signed: Vincent Murray
Vincent Murray, Director of Services, Planning, Environment and Place Making

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT & RECOMMENDATION IN ACCORDANCE
WITH SECTION 179 3(a) OF THE PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
ACT 2000 (AS AMENDED)**

Re: Proposed Development:

The proposed development is for the development of the Limerick Greenway Hub at Ardagh. The Ardagh Station House, Goods Shed, Railway Carriage and site will become one of the main Visitor Experiences and Service Centre Hubs on the Limerick Greenway. Development to include: Refurbishment and renovation of the Ardagh Station House and Goods Shed (which is a protected structure, RPS 900) and change of use to commercial, community and tourism. Develop the buildings and site to include toilets, café, playground, interpretation and camper van facilities. The provision of on-site parking to include car and universal access parking spaces, electric vehicle charging point spaces and camper van parking bays. Installation of a railway carriage on the site for commercial, community, and tourism use, and all associated site works. Construction of extensions to the Station House and Goods Shed. Works to include all site development works for the buildings and site including utilities, drainage, landscaping and public realm. Widening of the existing entrance to accommodate 2-way traffic.

At: Limerick Greenway, Kilreash, Ardagh, Co. Limerick

Reference Number 23/8016

1.0 Introduction

This Chief Executive's Report and Recommendation has been prepared pursuant to Section 179 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended), and Part 8 of the Planning & Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

2.0 Description of the nature and extent of the proposed development

The proposed development site, containing a former Railway Station and Good Shed (protected structure, RPS 900), is located at Limerick Greenway, Kilreash, Ardagh, Co. Limerick. This site is located along the Limerick Greenway, which is a 40km off-road walking and cycling route located along an old railway line that connects the three market towns of Rathkeale, Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale in West Limerick and links to Listowel, Co. Kerry. A refurbishment works contract has been competed to carry out stabilisation and conservation works to the Station House and Goods Shed (stonework repairs and re-pointing, new roof and coverings). A temporary car parking facility is in place for members of the public to access the Limerick Greenway from Ardagh. As part of the current the Ardagh Station House, Goods Shed, Railway Carriage and site will become one of the main Visitor Experiences and Service Centre Hubs on the Limerick Greenway. The development to include:

- Refurbishment and renovation of the Ardagh Station House and Goods Shed (which is a protected structure, RPS 900) and change of use to commercial, community and tourism.
- Development of the buildings and site to include toilets, café, playground, interpretation and camper van facilities.
- The provision of on-site parking to include car and universal access parking spaces, electric vehicle charging point spaces and camper van parking bays. Installation of a railway carriage on the site for commercial, community, and tourism use, and all associated site works.
- Construction of extensions to the Station House and Goods Shed.
- Works to include all site development works for the buildings and site including utilities, drainage, landscaping and public realm.
- Widening of the existing entrance to accommodate 2-way traffic.

Site Location



2.1 Public Consultation:

The plans and particulars were placed on public display from the 09th of November, 2023 up to and including 07th of December, 2023. Submissions and observations were invited up to the 21st of December, 2023.

3.0 Submissions with respect to the proposed development

A total of 3 x No. written submissions/observations were received and are listed below:

No.	Name
1	Grainne O'Keeffe
2	Health Service Executive
3	Uisce Eireann

SUB (1) Grainne O'Keeffe via MyPoint

Submission Summary:

Submission in full support of the proposal, welcoming the inclusion of campervan facilities and interpretive space. Also made suggestions with regards to universal access in and around the station house building.

Chief Executive's Response:

Noted and will be considered further

SUB (2) Health Service Executive via email

Submission Summary:

No objection to the proposed development subject to conditions

Chief Executive's Response:

Noted.

SUB (3) Uisce Eireann via email

Submission Summary:

No objection to the proposed development subject to conditions

Chief Executive's Response:

Points noted. All items conditioned will be adhered to, and all permissions and will be

carried out, designed and constructed in accordance with all relevant Uisce Eireann Guidelines and Best Practice.

4.0 Habitats Directive Project Screening Assessment

The site at Ardagh is located approximately 1.7km from the nearest Natura 2000 site, the Stack's to Mullaghareirks Mountains, West Limerick Hills and Mount Eagle SPA. It has been determined that the works as outlined will not have a significant negative impact on any Natura 2000 site. An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was submitted as part of this application prepared by Rory Dalton, Independent Ecologist. The report concluded 'that the proposed development either individually or in combination with other plans and projects, is not likely to have a significant effect on any European Site'. Overall, the executive is satisfied that having regard to the scale of the development and the distance of the development from any SAC and SPA, the development as proposed should not exercise a significant effect on the conservation status of any SAC or SPA either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and therefore a Stage 2 NIS is not necessary.

5.0 Environmental Impact Assessment Screening

An EIAR screening report has been undertaken by Rory Dalton, Independent Ecologist for the proposed development. The proposed development is to refurbish the buildings and immediate surrounding area. This will include upgrading the existing station house and goods shed on site and change of use to commercial, community and tourism, installing railway carriage on site, constructing car park, constructing camper van parking spaces and building a playground and amenity area for Greenways users and locals alike. The development does not fall within any of the threshold requirements for a mandatory EIA as specified in Section 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Having regard to the characteristics of the proposal, the location of the proposed works and the scale of the proposed development, significant impacts on the environment are not anticipated. In general, all potential impacts relate to the construction stage (during which a strict CEMP will be employed) and potential impacts relating to the operational stage are positive. Overall having reviewed the EIAR screening report and considered other additional information the Executive is satisfied that the proposal as outlined does not require a sub threshold Environmental Impact Assessment Report

6.0 Key Policy Provisions

Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028

Objective ECON O48 Limerick Greenways

It is an objective of the Council to support:

- a. The provision of car parking, bike hire and ancillary facilities at suitable locations along the Limerick Greenway.
- b. Extend the Limerick Greenway from Rathkeale to Adare/Patrickwell.
- c. Extend the greenway from the University of Limerick to Annacotty.
- d. Develop a greenway from the University of Limerick to Montpelier.
- e. Support the development of the Limerick to Scariff/Tuamgraney Greenway in partnership with Waterways Ireland and Clare County Council.
- f. Examine the potential for a greenway from Patrickswell, Bruree to the Limerick/Cork Border (Charleville).
- g. Support the development of a greenway link from Limerick City to connect with the Suir Blueway in Cahir, County Tipperary, in so far as it falls within County Limerick, subject to ecological assessment and design.

Tourism projects will be required to adhere to adequate environmental and ecological assessment to ensure that they do not cause adverse environmental and ecological effects.

Objective ECON O50 Facilities and Amenities incidental to Tourist and Recreational Attractions and Scenic Views

It is an objective of the Council to consider public facilities and amenities of a type and scale that are incidental to tourist attractions and associated services where they would:

- a. Allow these attractions to be enjoyed and accessed by the public;
- b. Cater for basic needs of the public, incidental to the enjoyment of these attractions;
- c. Help to protect sensitive features through information and by appropriate management;
- d. Be adequately serviced and managed;
- e. Be inclusive to all members of the community. Applications must be accompanied by a management plan and justified by reference to a coherent, evidence-based tourism and recreational strategy applicable to the area. Such development should not impair the capacity of the road network.

Objective EH O50 Work to Protected Structures

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a) Protect structures included on the RPS from any works that would negatively impact their special character and appearance.
- b) Ensure that any development proposals to Protected Structures, their curtilage and setting, shall have regard to the Architectural Heritage Protection Guidelines for Planning Authorities published by the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.
- c) Ensure that all works are carried out under the supervision of a qualified professional with specialised conservation expertise.
- d) Ensure that any development, modification, alteration, or extension affecting a Protected Structure and/ or its setting, is sensitively sited and designed and is appropriate in terms of the proposed scale, mass, height, density, layout and materials.
- e) Ensure that the form and structural integrity of the Protected Structure is retained in any redevelopment and that the relationship between the Protected Structure and any complex of adjoining buildings, designed landscape features, or views and vistas from within the grounds of the structure are respected.
- f) Respect the special interest of the interior, including its plan form, hierarchy of spaces, architectural detail, fixtures and fittings and materials.
- g) Support the re-introduction of traditional features on protected structures where there is evidence that such features (e.g. window styles, finishes etc.) previously existed.
- h) Ensure that new and adapted uses are compatible with the character and special interest of the Protected Structure.
- i) Protect the curtilage of Protected Structures and to refuse planning permission for inappropriate development within the curtilage and attendant grounds, that would adversely impact on the special character of the Protected Structure.
- j) Protect and retain important elements of built heritage including historic gardens, stone walls, entrance gates and piers and any other associated curtilage features.

k) Ensure historic landscapes and gardens associated with Protected Structures are protected from inappropriate development.

Objective EH O12 Blue and Green Infrastructure

It is an objective of the Council to:

- a. Promote a network of blue and green infrastructure throughout Limerick.
- b. Promote connecting corridors for the movement of species and encourage the retention and creation of features of biodiversity value, ecological corridors and networks that connect areas of high conservation value such as woodlands, hedgerows, earth banks, watercourses, wetlands and designated sites. In this regard, new infrastructural projects and linear developments in particular, will have to demonstrate at design stage, sufficient measures to assist in the conservation of and dispersal of species. Projects which would be detrimental to existing blue and green infrastructure features will not be permitted.
- c. Ensure the integration and strengthening of green infrastructure into the preparation of Local Area Plans.
- d. Where possible remove barriers to species movement, such as the removal of in-stream barriers to fish passage for example.
- e. Seek to advance the use of an ecosystem services approach and ecosystem services valuation as a decision-making tool in plans and projects, subject to appropriate ecological assessment

7.0 Appraisal

The Ardagh Railway Station complex is an important historic site. The buildings retain much of their original fabric. The Ardagh Station House, Goods Shed, Railway Carriage and site will become one of the main Visitor Experiences and Service Centre Hubs on the Limerick Greenway. It will be a trailhead and an access point for the Greenway. The proposed development will incorporate the conservation of the site in that the best way of preserving a building is to ensure its continued use. The proposed design aims to provide for the reuse of the buildings without the loss of character. The overall objective of the Station House site and buildings development is to ensure that Ardagh becomes a destination in its own right with visitors and users travelling to the Limerick Greenway Hub at Ardagh, parking up, accessing the Greenway but also availing of the facilities and services on offer locally. The hub will help to reinforce the existing connections to Ardagh village.

A detailed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to include a traffic management plan, which will take account of the site location, access issues, hydrocarbons, earth works, run-offs and location of services, will be prepared before any development is carried out and will include input from the design team, all specialist consultants and Limerick City & County Council. All suggested mitigations outlined in the Archaeological Impact Assessment report accompanying this application will be implemented in full.

The proposal as set out is considered to be in compliance with the objectives of the Limerick Development Plan, 2022-2028 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

8.0 Conclusion

Having regard to the foregoing evaluation and the reason and considerations as set out, the Chief Executive is satisfied that the proposal is in accordance with the objectives of the Limerick Development Plan, 2022 - 2028 and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Pursuant to Section 179(3)(a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) the proposed development is recommended to the Elected Members of Limerick City & County Council for their approval.



Dr. Pat Daly

Chief Executive,

Limerick City & County Council

Date: 19.1.2024

