

Background Information

Re: Proposed Variation of Sligo and Environs Development 2004 – 2010 – Sligo Western Bypass

The Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2004-2010 sets out proposals for the development of a strategic road network outside the city centre.

The overall concept defined by this proposal consists of the Inner Relief Road followed at a later stage by the W2 Western Distributor Road and by an Eastern Crossing of the Garavogue River.

As part of a longer term strategy the Sligo and Environs Development Plan introduced the concept of a Western Bypass of the City. It was envisaged that it would commence at either the Caltragh Interchange (and possibly form part of the W2 Western Distributor Road) or possibly start further to the south at the Carraroe Interchange. It was proposed that it would run through Ballydoogan and Finisklin with a number of options for crossing the environmentally sensitive harbour area.

Although it was seen as a long term objective, it was included in the development plan so as to ensure that no short term planning and development decisions would hinder or restrict its implementation in subsequent development periods, for lack of foresight or vision. It was proposed that a route would be investigated which would preserve the integrity of the area bound by the two Sea Roads as a residential zone and would avoid the serious effects of a motorway development on an area which includes both long established residences and recently developed housing. It proposed that route selection options would focus on alignments that lessen the impact on residential development.

In 2006 the NRA provided funding for a feasibility study which included for design of route options and identification of the most feasible route. Three route options were identified which are shown as Route 1 (Pink), Route 2 (Blue) and Route 3 (Red) in the Environmental Report which accompanies this proposed variation. Extensive environmental studies were carried out in relation to these routes which are detailed in the Environmental Report. Route 1 (Pink) and Route 2 (Blue) were the two most westerly options and avoided the area between the two Sea Roads. However there were serious environmental impacts on Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, Gibraltar Point, Finisklin coastline and Cartron Marsh in relation to these routes. Both routes would impact directly on six houses.

The proposed route is Route 3 (Red) which is located closer to the urban area and passes between the First and Second Sea Roads. This also impacts directly on six houses. However it avoids any impact on Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, the coastline at Gibraltar and Cartron Marsh. While it does pass between the two Sea Roads any impact in relation to severance will be mitigated by means of grade separation at the crossing of the R292, Strandhill Road and local roads. The impact due to noise will be reduced by noise reduction methods such as noise barriers and the visual impact will be reduced by means of landscaping.

The proposed variation is part of a long term strategic plan for roads in County Sligo and it is not envisaged that it will be constructed before completion of the other major inter-urban routes in County Sligo. Therefore construction is unlikely to commence before 2020.

As the proposed route crosses Sligo Harbour which is both a Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) and a Special Protection Area (SPA) it was determined that the proposed route would have a significant effect on the environment and therefore a Strategic Environmental Assessment was also carried out. The results of this assessment are presented in the Environmental Report which accompanies this proposed variation. The report includes a Non-technical Summary.