

N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Road Realignment

Equine Assessment

**Messers Francis, Noleen and Paddy Kerins
Toberbride
Collooney
Co. Sligo**

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1. Introduction

I was invited by Ms. Freda Salley of P.J. Farrelly and Associates, on behalf of Sligo County Council to examine and report on the impact that the proposed road development would have on the equine enterprise of Messers. Francis, Noleen and Paddy Kerins, Toberbride, Co. Sligo.

I visited the property on the 26th August 2013 and met with one of the affected owners Mrs Noleen Kerins at her home in Toberbride, Collooney, Co. Sligo. Mrs Kerins guided me around the farm and explained the nature of her family's equine enterprise. We then travelled to the out farm in Toberbride, Collooney, Co. Sligo and walked that farm together. She then outlined how the proposed development would impact on their equine enterprise. My written report is based on the information gained from my discussion with Mrs Kerins, the observations made during my farm visit, the impact the proposed development will have on the health and welfare of the horses involved, the mitigation measures proposed and the overall impact that the proposed development would have on their equestrian enterprise.

2. Methodology

Perusal of maps, a farm walk in conjunction with a discussion with the owner, consultation with the design team and consideration of good farming practice and horse health. The discussion with the owner included the land-take and other impacts associated with the location of the proposed development. The owner was shown mapping of the proposed development and the future operation of the enterprise was discussed.

Assessment

An initial assessment of the equine enterprise was made based on the intensive and extensive equine management. Intensive equine management was defined as the close interaction between man and horse such as riding, breaking, race training, yearling preparation, and mare and foal management. Health and safety issues for the horse handlers are important considerations in intensive

equine management. Extensive management was defined as horses at pasture that required minimal interaction between man and horse.

The equine assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the farm considered the following:

- Land take
- Drainage
- Fencing during and after construction
- Screen planting
- Mixed species hedgerows
- Water supply
- Access to divided lands

3. Farm Assessment of Francis, Noleen and Paddy Kerins

The Kerins farms approximately 22 acres in two separate land parcels. The home farm was in Toberbride, Collooney, Co. Sligo. This farm, consisting of approximately 6 acres was subdivided into four different portfolios.

Folio number 113 was owned by Francis Kerins and consisted of approximately ½ acre. The dwelling house of Francis and Noleen Kerins was located on this site.

Folio number 115 was owned by Paddy Kerins and again was approximately ¼ in size and the dwelling house of Mr. Paddy Kerins was located at this site. Both these dwellings were directly accessed by a local road directly off the N4.

Folio number 110 was owned by Francis and Noleen Kerins and consisted of approximately 5.5 acres. This land was used for 3 outdoor arenas, a large car and trailer park, a small turnout paddock (to the north of Folio 113) and a two acre field to the south of the carpark which was used as turn out. Mrs Kerins did tell me that they planned to develop that field for a cross country course.

During my visit there were a few well established cross country fences in that field.

Folio 114 was owned by both Francis and Paddy Kerins. This area was approximately 2 acres in size. On this site was a stable block to the east with 6 stables and a feed room (Barn 1), another building complex further west containing 12 stables and a storage shed.(Barn 2). To the west of the concreted stable yard there was a large indoor school. Attached to the southern side of the school there were 6 further stables, and behind the stables there was a 6 horse walker. Attached to the northern side of the school was an accommodation block consisting of a three bed roomed apartment, groom accommodation and an office. The stable yard and the large car park, to the west of the indoor school could be accessed by another slip road off the N4, approximately 150 meters south of the slip road accessing the two dwelling houses.

The out farm at Override, Clooney, Co. Silo was approximately 1/4 miles south of the main farm on the western side of the existing N4. This farm consisted of one large field of approximately 14 acres. The farm was accessed by a 5 bar gate adjacent to the N4. There was another slip road directly south of this field which passed to the west of the field and continued north roughly parallel with the N4. It intersected with the slip road accessing the stable yard on the westerly boundary of the car and trailer park. The field could also be accessed from a farm gate on this slip road. The field was used for grazing and there was a small concreted yard and pens in the north-easterly aspect of this field.

The Kerins have an intensive equestrian enterprise. They deal mainly with warm blood horses, most usually show jumpers. These keep horses at livery (clients pay them to keep their horses stabled) – Mrs Kerins told me that that number could vary but the minimum would be 14 and occasionally they would have 26 horses on livery stabled in their yard. They have made considerable investment in their facilities with one large indoor school and three outdoor schools, including one which was flood lit. They also deal in horses where

they buy, school and sell on show jumpers either nationally or internationally. It would appear following my discussion with Mrs Kerins that a substantial part of their income is through running horse shows at their facility throughout the year. Riders would come, pay an entry fee and jump their horses around specially constructed show jumping courses. They also let the indoor school to local pony clubs, Horse Sport Ireland and other bodies.

The Kerins currently operate their business adjacent to the pre-existing N4. The road is sunken approximately 3 meters below eye level when viewed from the yard in front of Barn 1. There was plenty of hedging and trees growing between the road and the boundary of the Kerins farm which shielding the farm from the road. However, traffic noise was quite audible in the yard especially in front of Barn 1.

The proposed road development will impact on the Kerin's equine enterprise in a few different ways.

1. Traffic noise – If the pre-existing boundary vegetation is left in place or replaced during the development and the road is kept to the same level, then it is difficult to argue that the proposed development will result in significantly increased traffic noise on the farm

2. Road Access – Stable Yard.

The current access road to the stable yard will be closed. Access for the stable yard is being provided via the Toberbride Overbridge which will be constructed on the 2 acres field to the south of the stable yard. Large Lorries travel to their shows so this road will need to be able to accommodate the largest of rigid and articulated Lorries comfortably. This will require a wide turning circle at the westerly end of the Toberbride Overbridge road and widening of the pre-existing lane.

3. Road Access - Dwelling Houses.

Francis and Noleen Kerins and Paddy Kerins currently have direct access to their houses without coming through the farm yard. It is proposed to demolish the stables closest to the existing national road as well as the shed to the rear of these stables to provide separate entrances to the dwelling houses without having to go through the yard

4. Land Loss – The Kerins will lose 0.63 acres of the 1.9 acre paddock to the south of the stable yard with the Proposed Road Development. They had planned to use this paddock (currently used for hay making and an overflow car park) as a cross country course readily accessible from the stable yard. This planned cross country course will have to be abandoned.

5. Out Farm – The access to the out farm from the N4 will be closed and the only access will be from the country lane via the Toberbride Overbridge. The concrete yard and lean to shed will now be at the opposite side of the field and a roadway will have to be provided to allow all weather access to this area. Another option would be that a replacement yard be built adjacent to the new entrance.

6. Equestrian Enterprise – The Kerins already carry out a successful enterprise adjacent to the pre existing N4 and providing the current shielding is not affected and proper access for large lorries into the car park is provided, then their current business should not be significantly affected in the long term. However, during the construction phase, temporary stables will have to be provided to replace the stables that are being removed to facilitate the provision of entrances to the two dwelling houses.

7. Construction Works

a. There will be some rock breaking required to the western rock bank adjacent to Paddy Kerin's dwelling house in order

to widen the road. It is proposed that rock breakers (rather than rock blasting) will be used. Horses will be initially disturbed by the strange noise and vibrations but will accommodate quite quickly. However, I would recommend that all horses be removed from Barn 1 during the planned rock breaking works, that Barn 1 and the shed behind it be left in situ to act as a baffle during the rock breaking, that all ridden exercise be ceased during the rock breaking works and that horses that react negatively be removed from the stable yard during the rock breaking works.

b. The noise and dust associated with the building of the proposed road will require monitoring, watering and possibly the Kerins may have to move some horses out of the stables most adjacent to the N4 during the proposed works.

4. Mitigation Measures

Mitigating measures were defined as measures that would reduce the impacts from construction of the proposed scheme on the individual farm. The measures suggested are based on common sense, good farming practices and practical reasons. The measures of reducing impacts varied from farm to farm.

The principle measures suggested are as follows:

- **Accommodation Works**
 - Provision of adequate access to the parcels of land separated by the proposed development, using local roads
 - Effective screen planting around the proposed development
 - Provision of safe and secure permanent stud farm fencing
 - Maintain existing drainage systems
 - Provision of adequate and potable water for grazing stock
 - Provision of suitable handling facilities for stock on the lands separated by the development from the main farm facilities

- **Replacing Acreage Lost to Development**
 - Replacing acreage lost to the development with an equivalent parcel of land
- **Mitigation of construction impacts**
 - Control of noise and dust during construction phase
 - Control of litter during construction phase

Once the road has been built, providing that there is adequate natural screening left in situ and that adequate vehicular access has been provided, the stable yard should continue to perform as normal.

5. Conclusion

It is my opinion that the overall impact of the N4 Collooney to Castlebaldwin Road Realignment on the Kerins Equine Enterprise at Toberbride will be moderate.

**CLASSIFICATION OF IMPACTS ON EQUESTRIAN ENTERPRISES
(as per Michael Osborne MVB MRCVS - 2006)**

These are basic criteria that may vary in specialist equestrian enterprises.

JUDGMENT CRITERIA

· **SEVERE**

Severe Impact occurs where the equestrian enterprise cannot continue as a result of the proposed scheme:

· **MAJOR**

Major impact occurs where the equestrian enterprise cannot continue without major management and operational changes:

· **MODERATE**

Moderate impact occurs where the current farm enterprises can continue as before but with increased management difficulties:

· **MINOR**

Minor impact occurs where the enterprise suffers some interference but remains viable:

· **NOT SIGNIFICANT**

Where the enterprise suffers a slight inconvenience