

APPLICATION NO. 22/04630

APPLICANT: - Irish Water

DESCRIPTION: - Upgrade works at the wastewater treatment plant which will consist of 1. Construction of a new storm overflow and flow splitting chamber, inlet works including grit removal system and full flow to treatment pumping station, 2 no. new integrated fixed-film activated sludge reactor tanks (Aeration Tanks), 2 no. final settlement tanks, final water sampling manhole while retaining the existing outfall to the River Sullane, return and waste activated sludge pumping stations, chemical building including lime and ferric sulphate dosing systems with banded chemical storage tanks, 1no. storm water storage tank equipped with storm water pumps, 1 no. sludge picket fence thickener, odour control system, a sheet pile flood protection wall within the site boundary, boundary treatments include a weld mesh security fence, new internal access road and public lighting. 2. Construction of a new control and administration building. 3. Decommissioning of the existing wastewater treatment plant, equipment and associated structures as part of the upgrade works. 4. Construction of a 42 kWp photovoltaic (PV) solar panels on ground mounted frames on the north western area of the site. The PV panel shall be used to supplement the energy demands of the proposed WwTP and will be arranged with a panel area of 185sqm approximately. 5. Establishment of a designated area to be utilized by Cork County Council Roads Department and construction of a new entrance point. 6. All associated site development works above and below ground. A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted to the planning authority with the application.

LOCATION: - Wastewater Treatment Plant (WwTP) Macroom Sleveen East Co. Cork

DECISION DUE DATE: 17/05/2022

## Assessment

### Summary

Irish Water are seeking permission to upgrade the Macroom Wastewater Treatment Plant. The site notice was displayed correctly within the statutory period.

The applicants have submitted a Habitats Directive Screening Assessment Report, Natura Impact Statement, and an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Report. They have also included a Flood Risk Assessment, an Invasive Alien Species Survey Report and Construction and Environmental Management Plan.

### Planning Designations

In terms of planning designations, the site is located within the settlement of Macroom in an area zoned as "PU – Quasi Public Services, Utilities and/or facilities", as set out in the Macroom TCP 2009 – 2015

### Planning History

On Site

16/5670 – Irish Water - Construction of a single storey welfare unit consisting of a kitchen, toilet, lobby/store room and , together with ancillary works, replacement of an existing sludge holding tank

with a Picket Fence Thickener Unit of maximum dimensions, 4.5m diameter by 6.2 high. Permission Granted.

#### Adjacent Site

11/54005 - Owen Hurley - Erection of 3 no. roller shutter doors on the western elevation of existing commercial unit – Permission Granted.

#### Internal Reports

Public Lighting Engineer (report dated 19/4/22) - No objection to the proposal but includes a recommended condition to ensure that any lighting which will be installed within this development does not cause nuisance to others.

Area Engineer (report dated 21/4/22) - The Area Engineer has considered the various engineering issues and recommends that the application should be permitted, subject to recommended conditions.

Environmental Officer (report dated 22/4/22) - Conditional permission is recommended.

Archaeologist (report dated 3/5/22) – Expresses some concern about the quality of the assessment set out in the supporting documents but, ultimately, recommends a Grant of permission:

Ecologist (12/5/22) - While the benefits of the proposed upgrade are recognised the assessment has highlighted the need for Further Information. Consideration of the potential impacts on the Freshwater Pearl Mussel is required along with assessment of the impacts on freshwater habitats and species arising from the flood measures.

#### Statutory Reports

Inland Fisheries Ireland (Letter dated 8/4/22) – IFI highlights the importance of preserving and improving the existing receiving water quality standards and also of meeting legislative requirements.

Transport Infrastructure Ireland (Letter dated 21/4/22) – Indicates that there is no objection to the proposal.

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Submissions

There are no 3<sup>rd</sup> Party submissions on file.

### ASSESSMENT & RECOMMENDATION

#### ***Background***

Wastewater in Macroom is conveyed via a largely combined sewer system and pump stations to the Macroom Wastewater Treatment Plant. The upgrade of the facility is required in order to ensure that the WWTP can meet the required standards, for example compliance with the Wastewater Discharge Licence emission limit values. These works will facilitate the continued growth of Macroom town.

#### ***Proposed Development***

Upgrade works at the wastewater treatment plant which will consist of

1. Construction of a new storm overflow and flow splitting chamber, inlet works including grit removal system and full flow to treatment pumping station, 2 no. new integrated fixed-film

activated sludge reactor tanks (Aeration Tanks), 2 no. final settlement tanks, final water sampling manhole while retaining the existing outfall to the River Sullane, return and waste activated sludge pumping stations, chemical building including lime and ferric sulphate dosing systems with bunded chemical storage tanks, 1no. storm water storage tank equipped with storm water pumps, 1 no. sludge picket fence thickener, odour control system, a sheet pile flood protection wall within the site boundary, boundary treatments include a weld mesh security fence, new internal access road and public lighting.

2. Construction of a new control and administration building.
3. Decommissioning of the existing wastewater treatment plant, equipment and associated structures as part of the upgrade works.
4. Construction of a 42 kWp photovoltaic (PV) solar panels on ground mounted frames on the north western area of the site. The PV panel shall be used to supplement the energy demands of the proposed WwTP and will be arranged with a panel area of 185sqm approximately.
5. Establishment of a designated area to be utilized by Cork County Council Roads Department and construction of a new entrance point.
6. All associated site development works above and below ground.

A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted to the planning authority with the application.

### ***Principle of Development***

Macroom is a key Town with significant growth envisaged for the settlement in the existing Town Plan and in the new Cork County Development Plan. The Elected Members of Cork County Council have adopted the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 at the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 25th April 2022. The Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028 will come into effect on Monday 6th June 2022. Having regard to the established facility and the national, regional, and local policy context, there is no objection to the proposed development in principle, subject to appropriate safeguards.

### ***Amenity Issues***

It is proposed to expand the facility on the site. This is a significant development and will involve the loss (albeit with replacement) of some of the mature vegetation on site. Having reviewed the site along with the supporting documentation submitted with the application it is considered that the proposed works can be accommodated at this location.

There are a number of residences in the vicinity of the site particularly the Saint Coleman's Park development to the south. There is significant planting along this boundary and there are no proposals to alter this boundary. A comprehensive landscape plan should be submitted for the remainder of the site. From a visual perspective there is no objection to the proposal.

Given the nature and scale of the development and the site context, it is considered that there would not be significant adverse impacts in terms of amenity, subject to satisfactory screening. The nature of the facility and the varying site levels are noted.

### ***Engineering Issues***

The Area Engineer is satisfied with the proposal. There are some concerns about the access route to the site and a Special Contribution is recommended as a contribution towards resurfacing works along the access route. All other engineering aspects of the proposal are acceptable.

### ***Flood Risk***

The site is susceptible to flooding (fluvial flooding). There has been a comprehensive flood risk assessment supplied with the required flood defence system proposed in the flood protection drawing submitted. The Area Engineer has no objection to same.

***Environmental Impact***

The Environmental Officer has no objection. He recommends that conditional permission should be granted.

***Archaeological Impact***

The Archaeologist has no objection to the proposal.

***EIAR***

Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, sets out the prescribed classes of development for the purposes of EIAR. The submitted documentation states that a preliminary examination was carried out by the applicant which states that an EIAR is not required as the development does not constitute a class of development for which an EIAR is required under the Regulations. It is considered that a mandatory or sub-threshold EIAR is not required in this case.

***Appropriate Assessment***

In term of AA, an NIS has been submitted and the Council's Ecologist notes the following in his assessment: The NIS concludes that following an analysis and evaluation of the relevant information including in particular the nature of the proposed upgrade, characteristics of the qualifying interests of the SAC and the potential link between the proposed development and the SAC, no significant adverse effect on the integrity of the European site during development and operation of the proposed upgraded wastewater treatment plant is anticipated alone or in combination with any other plans or projects.

The conclusions of the EIAR screening assessment report is that the proposed development is not a sub threshold development. Furthermore, the report has concluded that the proposed development isn't unlikely to result in significant effects on the environment and that the consideration of appropriate mitigation measure reduces the potential for significant effects further. The conclusions reached in the Natura Impact Statement are noted and accepted.

There is a concern that no assessment has been made in respect of Freshwater Pearl Mussel population, a highly sensitive species which has been recorded downstream of the site. Furthermore, while it is noted the FRA has concluded that the flood protection measures would have an imperceptible impact on flood levels upstream and downstream of the treatment plant there is a concern that there may be changes to the hydrology of the section of river proximal to the site which could affect the riverbed and its banks. Therefore, this could have negative implications for freshwater habitats and species. Further information is to be sought on these points/.

**Recommendation**

While the benefits of the scheme are noted, further information is required to address concerns, as set out.

On the basis of the above assessment, I recommend Deferal for further information as set out.

1. While the proposed upgrade to the treatment plant is to be welcomed, the applicants are requested to clarify whether the proposed treatment standard is compatible with meeting the standards to protect a recorded population of Freshwater Pearl Mussel downstream of the site.

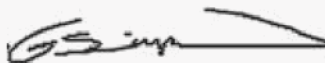
Applicants are requested to clarify the locations, status and extent of the recorded Freshwater Pearl Mussel populations downstream of the proposed development as part of their response. This may be submitted as a confidential report if there are relevant issues of concern relating to the locations arising.

2. The erection of flood defence infrastructure on this site could have the potential to affect flow rates/volumes in the section of river proximal to the site. While it is noted that the conclusions of the FRA is that the flood protection works are not predicted to increase risk of flooding elsewhere, there is a concern that changes to the hydrology of the river could affect the riverbed and banks, and could thereby have negative implications for freshwater habitats and species. Therefore, the applicants are requested to submit an assessment of possible implications of the development of flood defences on natural hydrological and ecological processes in the adjoining section of the River Sullane.

## **Conclusion**

Defer Application

## **Conditions/Reasons**



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Greg Simpson  
Senior Executive Planner  
13/05/2022