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Dear Sir/Madam

Submission to Pre-Draft Public Consultation Phase of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2021-2027

We make this submission to pre-draft public consultation stage of the Roscommon County Development Plan 2021-2027 in relation to the the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project. Arup has been appointed to provide multi-disciplinary technical consultancy services for the delivery of the planning phase of the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project, on behalf of Leitrim County Council and Roscommon County Council.

The section of the N4 under consideration falls within two local authority administrative areas with the River Shannon acting as the boundary. The study area to the west of the River Shannon lies within County Roscommon and to the east within County Leitrim.

The aims of the project are to firstly determine the need for a transportation solution to resolve the transportation issues within an identified study area, and thereafter determine an appropriate sustainable solution which meets the project objectives.

We have recently completed Phase 1, Concept and Feasibility stage where we examined the existing transportation network and the feasibility of potential transport solutions. The project has now moved to Phase 2 commencing with a constraints study with further development of transportation solutions following this, which could include multiple route corridors.

The purpose of this submission is to highlight the strategic importance of the N4 corridor to both the North and West Region's transport network and the proper planning and sustainable development of County Roscommon, and to request acknowledgement of same within the policies and objectives of the new County Development Plan.

Noting the Issues Paper's emphasis on the fundamental link between transport and land use planning, this submission also supports the county settlement hierarchy, which identifies the need to develop Cortober in the context of the larger settlement of Carrick-on-Shannon.

With regard to this, we note the matters raised in the Planning Authority's Issues Paper for this part of the plan making process and would comment as follows.

Specifically, in relation to infrastructure and transport provision, the Issues Paper advises that the provision of adequate infrastructure is essential for the county to function, now and into the future. The Paper also acknowledges:

There is a fundamental link between transport and land use planning, and the adequacy or inadequacy of the transport network can have a significant impact on the daily movement of people into and around County Roscommon.

In acknowledging that the County Development Plan will nonetheless provide a policy framework for the delivery of infrastructure services throughout Co. Roscommon, among the questions posed are the following:

- What infrastructure improvements do you think are necessary for the county?
- What measures would help reduce traffic congestion at peak times and school hours?

With regard to these questions, it is submitted that the N4 National Primary route is a strategic corridor from Dublin to the northwest and border counties which is of particular importance in enhancing accessibility to some of the most peripheral areas in the northwest (including Leitrim / Roscommon / Sligo and Donegal) and west of the River Shannon.

The N4 forms part of the EU TEN-T Comprehensive road network providing a strategic link between Dublin and Sligo. It carries both long-distance traffic from the east of the country to the northwest of the country and significant regional and inter-urban traffic flows between Mullingar, Longford, Carrick-on-Shannon, Boyle and Sligo. The section of the N4 through Carrick-on-Shannon also provides regional connections to the towns of Elphin (R368), Frenchpark (R370) and Manorhamilton (R280).

Improvements to this corridor would thus facilitate development in the northwest of the country and help achieve the goal of enhanced regional connectivity, as set out in the NPF and the RSES; particularly given that Cortober / Carrick-on-Shannon remains the only regional strategic centre on the N4 between Dublin and Sligo which has not been bypassed to date and has become a bottleneck for long distance and regional traffic.

The Issues Paper also notes that the new Plan will be set within the framework of and be guided, by a series of European, national and regional legislation and policy documents.

With respect to these various plans and provisions, it is evident that there is significant policy support within same for the proposed N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project.

The *National Planning Framework (NPF)* sets out a strategic planning and development strategy for Ireland and all its regions up to 2040. Its goals are expressed as ‘National Strategic Outcomes’ (NSOs) and of relevance to this submission is NSO 2, which seeks ‘Enhanced Regional Accessibility’. Section 1.3 states the following in relation to this:

“A co-priority is to enhance accessibility between key urban centres of population and their regions. This means ensuring that all regions and urban areas in the country have a high degree of accessibility to Dublin, as well as to each other.”

In discussing ‘Enhanced Regional Accessibility’, the NPF states the following objectives in relation to inter-urban roads:

“maintaining the strategic capacity and safety of the national road network including planning for future capacity enhancements.....improving average journey times targeting an average inter-urban speed of 90kph”

The *National Development Plan 2018–2027 (NDP)* is aligned with the delivery of the outcomes and objectives of the NPF and sets out under corresponding ‘Strategic Investment

Priorities' how investment will underpin the successful implementation of each of the National Strategic Outcomes in the NPF.

In this regard, for National Strategic Outcome 2 (Enhanced Regional Accessibility) and National Policy Objective 7, the NDP outlines a number of the major road developments to be delivered under the National Development Plan. Within this list, the NDP includes the 'N4 Carrick on Shannon' as one of the sections of the national road network which "*will be progressed through pre-appraisal and early planning during 2018 to prioritise projects which are proceeding to construction in the National Development Plan*".

The *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2020* is focused on delivering effective regional development for the northern and western region and, in doing so, it seeks to ensure coordination between the City and County Development Plans of the Local Authorities in the Region.

The RSES acknowledges that the region has several historical challenges impacting on its competitiveness and sustainability, most notably the comparably lower level of investment in enabling infrastructures such as ports, harbours, roads, rail and utilities. Some of the key responses for this part of the region are set out in Section 3.7 (c) and incorporate securing enhanced investment in transport infrastructure, including the strengthening of connections to the east coast via the N4 to Dublin.

Chapter 6 of the RSES is concerned with Growth Ambition No. 3 - connectivity and the development of a connected region. 'High-level Transport Principles' identified include support for improved strategic and local connectivity, the reduction of congestion and catering to the demands associated with longer-term population and employment growth, in a sustainable manner. These principles are in turn developed through what are termed 'Priority Core Outcomes', to be delivered across the region, and include:

- *Strengthening inter-regional connectivity, through the improvement of inter-urban road and rail connectivity, with a particular emphasis on improved connectivity between the largest urban centres and access to ports and airports, for the movement of both people and goods.*
- *Protecting the capacity of inter-urban road connectivity within and around the largest cities, ports and airports, through effective traffic management and transport demand management.*

Section 6.3 of the RSES addresses transport investment priorities and first acknowledges that high-quality accessibility to international gateways, located both within and outside of the region, for people and internationally traded goods/services, is of fundamental importance to economic competitiveness at regional and national levels.

Section 6.3 focuses on the region's road network stating that both the NPF and the NDP strongly acknowledge that accessibility from the northern and western region will need to be significantly improved. It further states that the national road network is a critical enabler in facilitating an island-wide sustainable national transport system and that improving and maintaining the assets of all national roads is critical and must be maintained, including the requirement to safeguard the strategic links into urban centres identified as key economic drivers in the region.

It is stated that it is not intended to establish an exhaustive list of road schemes for development over the period of the RSES. Instead, it is intended that schemes are developed in accordance with all relevant legislation and guidelines and in accordance with the RSES's objectives and priorities. Regional Policy Objective 6.7 commits support to progress a number of schemes through pre-appraisal and early planning, including the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project.

It can this be seen that existing national and regional policy strongly supports the aims and objectives of the the N4 Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project. We ask that this support is reflected in the new County Development Plan.

It is worthwhile noting that the existing Roscommon County Development Plan already commits the Planning Authority to the maintenance and upgrading the county's network of roads in conjunction with National Roads Authority (now TII), and the Department of Transport.

It is also acknowledged that the county's national road network is of major significance as it carries a disproportionately large volume of the county's traffic and is thus the primary artery of trade within the region. With respect to the N4, the Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod Project as identified in Table 4.1, which outlines 'Planned Motorway and National Primary Road Projects'. It is noted:

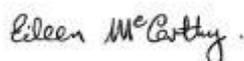
"The N4: The recent upgrade to the N4 between Boyle and Sligo (Border Region Gateway City), have significantly improved journey times and transportation links between Sligo and the North of County Roscommon. The planned upgrade to the Carrick-on-Shannon to Dromod section of the N4 (portions of which fall within County Roscommon) has been suspended until further notice and may not be completed in the period of this CDP."

While current policies in place are therefore supportive in terms of the advancement of improved infrastructure along the N4 corridor, it is submitted that that policy objectives could be included to specifically indicate the Council's support for the proposed improvement of connectivity along the N4 corridor.

Furthermore, in relation to the core strategy and settlement policy, the Issues Paper advises that future residential development is planned for the town of Cortober in the context of the larger settlement of Carrick-on-Shannon. As noted above, this Paper also acknowledges the fundamental link between transport and land use planning, and it is in this context of the earlier question of *what infrastructure improvements do you think are necessary for the county* that this again merits reference. Currently the combined urban space of Cortober and Carrick-on-Shannon is traversed and bisected by the N4 national road corridor. This space is ideally positioned on the River Shannon, and would benefit greatly from improved place making, compact development, and improved facilities for movement of people by modes other than the car. The Issues Paper does reference all these elements individually and applying all these collectively to the Cortober environs would align with the vision as set out for County Roscommon.

It is trusted that the submission will be seen as a constructive and productive contribution to the preparation of the final Plan and, in this regard, we request that it is given favourable consideration. Please forward all correspondence in relation to this submission to this office.

Yours sincerely



Eileen McCarthy
Director