



**Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann**  
Tipperary County Council

## **Part 8 Chief Executive's Report**

# **R498 ACTIVE TRAVEL PROJECT AT CASTLEMEADOWS, THURLES**

**PT8TT1**

**March 2023**

## 1. NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND THE PRINCIPAL FEATURES THEREOF:

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The proposed improvements along the R498 will comprise the following:

- Works include site clearance, construction of a new footpath – cycle path.
- The provision of 700m of 1.5m wide raised cycle tracks from the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout to the R498/Bohernanave Junction;
- Upgrading of the existing footpaths from the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout to the R498/Bohernanave Junction;
- Provision of minimum footpath widths of 1.8m;
- The provision of new bus set down area adjacent to Coláiste Mhuire;
- Improvement to entrances and accesses to businesses and residential properties;
- Reduction in the width of the R498 traffic lanes to 3.25m lanes to reduce vehicle speeds;
- Controlled and uncontrolled pedestrian and cyclist road crossings;
- Reduction in junction widths to reduce crossing times and distances; and
- The installation of new artwork, to celebrate Thurles as the birthplace of the GAA, at the entrance to Semples Stadium which may be lit at night.
- All associated ancillary works..

The proposed improvement works to the R498 in Thurles commence at the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout and extends to the Bohernanave junction with the R498.

1.50m wide raised cycle tracks will be constructed between the R498 carriageway and the existing footpaths along both sides of the R498. The cycle lanes will extend around the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout to connect with existing cycle lanes on Racecourse Road.

The existing road lanes will be narrowed to provide 3.25m wide traffic lanes in order to slow vehicle speeds and to provide additional width for the cyclist and pedestrian facilities. Junctions will be narrowed where excess width is currently provided by reducing the existing corner radii. Existing footpaths will be widened to provide a minimum width of 1.8m.

Widening or moving of the footpath outside the Greyhound Stadium entrance will match the existing stone paving type in that area.

Part of the existing verge will be excavated to allow the construction of the proposed cycle and pedestrian facilities. The proposed cycle tracks will have an asphalt surface and the proposed footpaths will have a concrete surface finish. Proposed drainage will generally consist of moving existing gullies to the new kerb line and the provision of new gullies where required.

A new bus set down area will be constructed between the Coláiste Mhuire boundary wall and the R498. The bus set-down area will allow busses to enter adjacent to the existing Coláiste Mhuire entrance, drive one-way through the area and exit onto the existing Coláiste Mhuire exit. Parking is provided for two school busses.

The existing area in front of the Teagasc entrance will be separated from the Coláiste Mhuire entrance with a footpath and planted area. Car parking spaces for 5 vehicles will be provided immediately north of the entrance.

New controlled pedestrian crossing facilities are provided on Bohernanave, the exit from Coláiste Mhuire, the entry to the proposed bus set down area at Coláiste Mhuire and at each approach road to the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout.

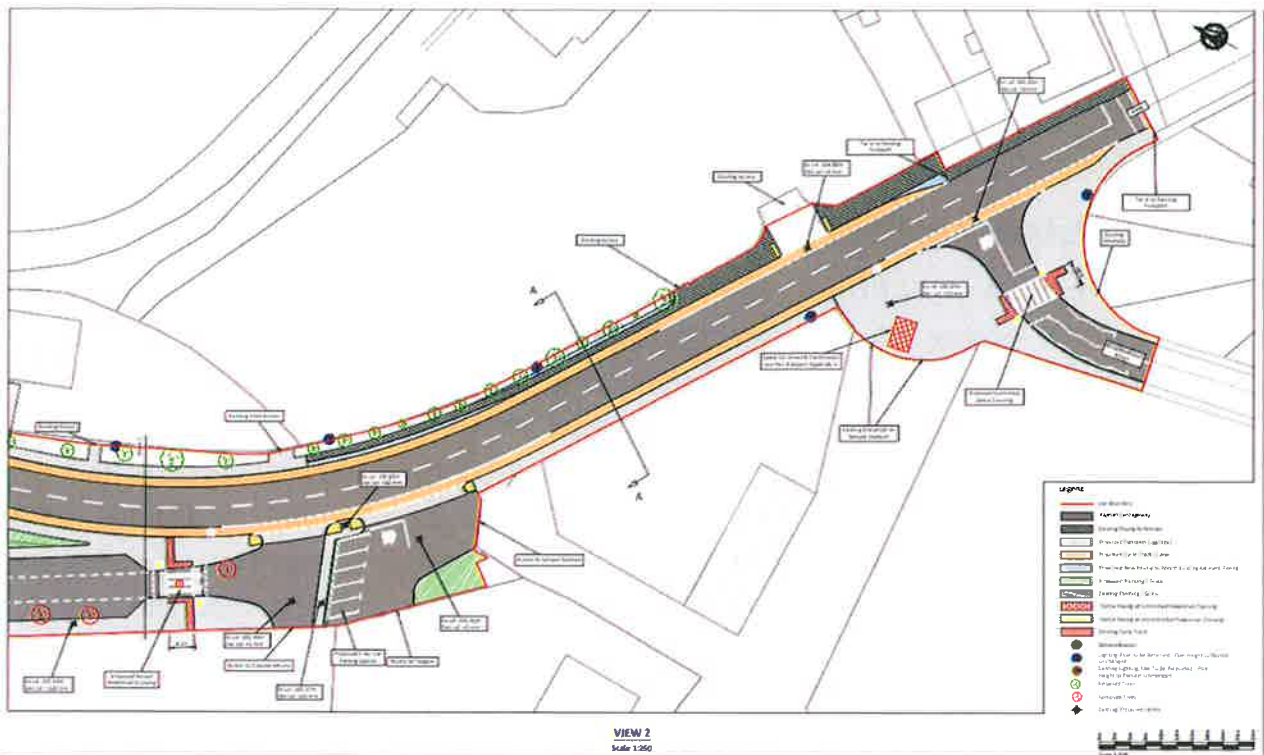
Areas of additional or altered landscaping will be provided outside the Teagasc entrance, adjacent to the entrance to the proposed bus set-down area and in areas bordering the roundabout carriageway.

The public lighting along the R498 is proposed to be broadly maintained with additional lighting provided where possible in areas where the current provision is inadequate. Where the proposed cycle tracks end at the scheme extents, advance warning signs will be provided to indicate an end to the dedicated cycling tracks.

## 2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION:

The scheme commences at the roundabout junction at the Technology University of the Shannon and extends to the junction of Bohernanave, a distance of approximately 0.35 km. A scheme location map is shown in Figure 1.1 below. The scheme is located on the R498 Regional Road and lies within the townlands of Thurles Townsparks and Racecourse. The project will include the installation of cycle and pedestrian infrastructure to improve active travel connectivity along the R498.





### 3. PUBLIC CONSULTATION:

In accordance with Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, Tipperary County Council made available for public inspection the plans and particulars of the proposed development from 21/12/2022 to 30/01/2023 (excluding bank holidays).

- Plans and particulars for the proposed development were available for inspection or purchase at the following locations;
  - Tipperary County Council, Civic Offices, Castle Avenue, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, E41 KA44
  - Tipperary County Council, Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, E45 A099

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development will be situated, could be made in writing to the Director of Service, Roads, Transportation and Infrastructure to be received no later than 16:30, 14/02/2023.

### 4. SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED:

No submissions were received during the public consultation period.

### 5. PRESCRIBED BODIES:

The plans and particulars of the proposed development were not referred to any of the prescribed bodies.

### 6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT:

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN OR OTHER DESIGNATIONS**

The following policies and objectives are relevant to the site:

#### **Project Ireland 2040 / National Development Plan 2021 -2030**

The Government is firmly committed to encouraging the use of walking, cycling and other active travel methods, and this has been signalled by the recent increase in the active travel budget. This NDP represents a step-change in the approach towards funding active travel in Ireland. Over the next 10 years approximately €360 million per annum will be invested in walking and cycling infrastructure in cities, towns and villages across the country, including Greenways. This investment has a transformative potential to substantially increase the numbers choosing to make active travel part of their daily life, improving personal health and mental well-being, making our city, town, and village centres more vibrant and people focused spaces, and significantly addressing our climate action challenge.

#### **The National Sustainability Mobility Policy**

The National Sustainable Mobility Policy sets out a strategic framework to 2030 for active travel (walking and cycling) and public transport journeys to help Ireland meet its climate obligations. It is accompanied by an action plan to 2025 which contains actions to improve and expand sustainable mobility options across the country by providing safe, green, accessible and efficient alternatives to car journeys.

The policy aims to deliver at least 500,000 additional daily active travel and public transport journeys by 2030 and a 10% reduction in the number of kilometres driven by fossil fuelled cars.

#### **Smarter Travel – A Sustainable Transport Future 2009-2020**

Actions 15 and 16 of the policy outlines the Government’s vision of creating strong cycling and walking cultures for all towns, villages and rural areas.

‘Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future’, published by the Department of Transport, recognises that investment in transport infrastructure is important, however, one of the key elements of the document is to ensure people choose sustainable transport modes such as walking, cycling and public transport. The policy is a response to the fact that continued growth in demand for road transport is unsustainable as it will lead to further congestion, further local air pollution, contribute to global warming, and result in negative impacts to health through promoting increasing sedentary lifestyles.

#### **Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy**

Active walking and cycle infrastructure will support active health initiatives and healthy communities, encourage transition to sustainable modes of travel, promote sustainable mobility and significantly assist our transition to a lower carbon society.

Walking and Cycling The following walking and cycling objectives are supported and will guide investment subject to the required appraisal:

- Enhance pedestrian facilities in all urban areas in the region;
- Delivery of high-quality safe cycle route network across the Region and cycling environments (applicable to cities, towns and villages) with provision for segregated cycle tracks;

## **Tipperary County Development Plan 2022 -2028**

### **3.4.4 Sustainable Transport and Active Travel**

Sustainable transport and active travel are a key focus of the Programme for Government as illustrated by the commitment of an allocation of 10% of the total transport capital budget for cycling projects, and an allocation of 10% of the total capital budget for pedestrian infrastructure. Key areas of focus and change include:

- unprecedented modal shift in all areas by a reorientation of investment to walking, cycling and public transport,
- Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan,
- Accelerating the electrification of the transport system, including electric bikes, electric vehicles, and electric public transport.

### **4.3.3 Thurles**

#### **Thurles Strategy for Growth**

....The Council will work with the community to support more sustainable transport patterns, active travel and modal shift.....

### **12.4 Modal Shift**

Smarter Travel a Sustainable Transport Future 2009 – 2020 sets a target for work-related and school-related commuting. In particular, it seeks commuting by car to be reduced from a modal share of 66% to 45% of journeys. The 2016 modal share for work/school related car journeys in Tipperary was 70%, thus, illustrating the challenge ahead. Although the existing countywide modal share is heavily reliant on the private car for commuter/school journeys, there is an opportunity to achieve a modal shift to sustainable transport within Tipperary’s compact urban settlements, particularly for the 42% of people who commute for less than 15 minutes each day. The Council will work with the National Transport Authority through the preparation of LTPs and Active Travel Plans (in identifying the cohort of people that can be targeted for a shift to sustainable modes of transport).

## **Thurles and Environs Development Plan 2009 - 2015**

The Councils aim to maximise dedicated provision for pedestrians and cyclists. Walking and cycling are healthy, cost effective and non-polluting modes of transport.

Sustainable development is a long term strategy, and this Plan represents a step towards the achievement of this aim by promoting the use of walking and cycling thus reducing the reliance on the private car.

### **Policy TRANS 8: Cycle lanes**

It is the policy of the Council to seek the provision of improved facilities for cyclists through the development of a network of cycleways, and the provision of secure cycle parking where permissions are being granted for commercial, residential or educational/institutional developments. Secure cycle parking facilities shall be provided in new office blocks, apartment blocks, shopping centres, hospitals, etc. Secure bicycle racks shall be provided in all cases where bicycle parking is deemed necessary by the Planning Authorities.

## **7 PRINCIPLE OF PROPOSAL**

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The 'Need for the Scheme' is defined by the identified deficiencies and safety issues of the existing road infrastructure.

In terms of identified deficiencies the existing section of the R498 under consideration presents significant infrastructural and safety deficiencies for pedestrians and cyclists, and are summarised below:

- 1) Existing Cyclist Facilities - The section of the R498 under consideration does not have dedicated facilities for cyclists.
- 2) Active Travel Route Connections - The existing network of active travel routes requires additional pathways and connections to create a more comprehensive network to encourage modal shift.
- 3) Existing Road Layout - There are a high number of direct accesses to the R498, particularly at Coláiste Mhuire and on the approach to the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout. Junction layouts, including pedestrian crossing facilities, are poor.
- 4) Coláiste Mhuire - The extent and condition of existing active travel infrastructure servicing Coláiste Mhuire is poor with no cycling infrastructure and gaps in the footpath provision.

With the existing infrastructural and safety deficiencies outlined above, the need for an improvement to the R498 between the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout and Bohernanave junction has been identified in order to meet the current and future demands on the route in a safe and efficient manner. The delivery of active travel infrastructure along this section of the R498 is key to the provision of a high-quality active travel network within Thurles which will enable the growth of sustainable and active travel alternatives to private vehicles.





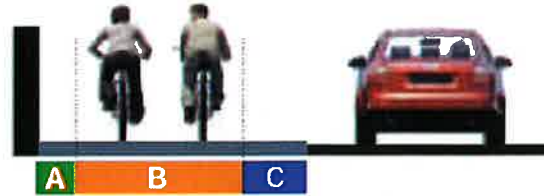
Photo of the Wide entrance outside Coláiste Mhuire with no defined path for pedestrians or cyclists














The purpose of these works is to provide a safe walking and cycling environment for local people. The objectives of the project can be summarised as follows:

- Provide continuous segregated cycle and pedestrian facilities along the R498;
- Provision of a bus set down area at Coláiste Mhuire;
- Improve pedestrian facilities to provide minimum footpath widths of 1.8m;
- Appropriate treatment of domestic and business entrances, including junction tightening where appropriate, along the R498;
- Provision of safe pedestrian and cyclist crossing points at the Technology University of the Shannon Roundabout;
- Consideration of existing parking along the R498;
- Redesign of the existing R498/Bohernanave junction with due consideration of pedestrian and traffic flows on match days; and
- Provide connectivity to Semple Stadium and to existing active travel routes on Racecourse Road.

## DESIGN AND LAYOUT

The width of cycle facilities was determined in accordance with the recommendations of the National Cycle Manual width calculator as shown in Figure 3.1 of the Part 8 documentation and depicted below:



A Inside Edge	B Cycling Regime	C Outside Edge	D Additional Features
Kerb  0.25m	Single File  0.75m	30kph, 3.0m wide lane  0.50m	Uphill 0.25m Sharp bends 0.25m
Channel Gully  0.25m	Single File + Overtaking. Partially using next lane  1.25m	50kph, 3.0m wide lane  0.75m	Cyclist stacking. Stopping and starting 0.50m
Wall, Fence or Crash Barrier  0.65m	Basic Two-Way  1.75m	Raised kerb, dropped kerb or physical barrier  0.50m	Around primary schools, interchanges, or for larger tourist bikes 0.25m
Poles or Bollards  0.50m	Single File + Overtaking. Partially using next lane  2.00m	Kerb to vegetation etc. (ie. cycleway)  0.25m	Taxi ranks, loading, line of parked cars (min 0.8m) 1.00m
	2 Abreast + overtaking (tracks and cycleways)  2.50m		Turning pocket cyclists 0.50m

The typical cross section configuration for the improvement works provides a raised cycle track between the footpath and the traffic lanes. The width of the cycle track is therefore determined on the following basis:

Element	Condition	Min. Width
A - Inside Edge	-	0.00m
B - Cycling Regime	Single File	0.75m
C - Outside Edge	Raised Kerb	0.50m
D - Additional Features	-	0.00m
Minimum Width Required:		1.25m
Proposed Width:		1.50m

The width of the footpaths was determined by reference to DMURS Section 4.3.1. A minimum footpath width of 1.8m (min) has been applied throughout the scheme.

The typical section, as shown in Figure 2 below, shows reduced traffic lane widths of 3.25m which act to slow traffic. The available width along the R498

corridor varies and therefore the typical cross section below provides additional width for pedestrian infrastructure and verges where the space is available.

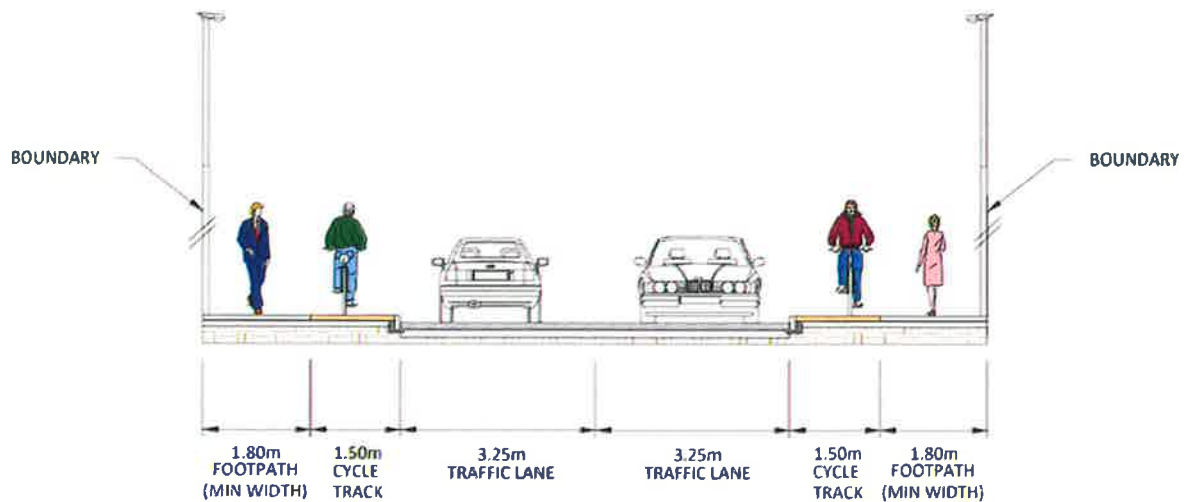


Figure 2; Typical Cross Section

### **Artwork Design and Purpose:**

In relation to the proposed Art Installation Tipperary County Council in partnership with The Tipperary GAA County Board/Semple Stadium, plans to commission an artwork to celebrate Thurles as the birthplace of the GAA.

The new artwork will be located at the entrance to Semple Stadium and may be lit at night. The artwork will be aesthetically significant and symbolic, represent the uniqueness of the GAA and celebrate Gaelic Games and Thurles as the town in which the GAA was founded in 1884. The artwork location will be in a public outdoor space, exposed to the elements. It will be necessary that the artwork will be made from durable, low maintenance materials e.g. metal/bronze/stone/steel/plastic which will be determined as part of the Artwork commissioning process.

The artwork will be fixed to the public realm at the entrance to Semple Stadium and may be lit at night (no details included). It will occupy a prominent position between the two gates to Semple Stadium as detailed on drawing P22-089-0200-0006. The distance between the two gates is 4m and it is intended that the commissioned artwork would be a maximum width of 3.5m to ensure the unobstructed operation of both gates for pedestrian and vehicular movements. The depth of the artwork can be greater than 3.5m with an upper limit of 5m as the receiving space is of adequate size to suitably accommodate it. The artwork will have a max height of 6m included the height of any plinth.

The artwork is to be located a considerable setback from the edge of the public road and outside the sight line envelope for vehicles existing on to the public road. As a result there will be no impact on vehicular movements.

The artwork will be securely anchored/fixed to an appropriately sized base to accommodate it. The foundation/substructure required will be located below the finished pavement level.

It is considered appropriate that final details in relation to the Artwork installation be agreed with the Planning Authority prior to erection on site.

## **FLOODING**

A preliminary flood risk assessment has been undertaken by reviewing information from the Office of Public Works (OPW) national flood information portal ([www.floodinfo.ie](http://www.floodinfo.ie)).

The scheme extents are not subject to fluvial (river) flooding with no fluvial flood catchment area in proximity to the site.

## **SERVICES - WASTEWATER DISPOSAL AND SURFACE WATER DISPOSAL**

The proposals do not include for any changes to the existing watermains, wastewater sewers or existing surface trunk drainage services.

## **8. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

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The Planning Authority has had regard to the document 'Appropriate Assessment of Plans and Projects in Ireland - Guidance for Planning Authorities' published by the DoEHLG in December 2009. This document provides a guide to the requirements of Articles 6(3) and 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Reports have been prepared by Tipperary County Council.

The scheme extents are not within any Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The nearest SAC is the Lower River Suir SAC, at a distance of over 1km from the scheme. There are no Natura 2000 sites within 1km of the project.

The AA and EIA Screening Reports conclude that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment and therefore Appropriate Assessment and an EIAR are not required.

## **9. SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS**

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No submissions were made on the proposed development.

## **10. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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The Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposal, subject to the following considerations being implemented, is in line with the Thurles and Environs Development Plan 2009-2015, and will improve pedestrian and cycle facilities, will not impact on the visual amenity of this area, is acceptable in terms of drainage,

presents no significant impacts on the conservation objectives of any Natura 2000 site and presents no flood risk issues.

The development as set out on the plans and particulars is considered acceptable and is consistent with the principle of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. Therefore, it is recommended that the proposed development should proceed.

Lighting details in relation to the Artwork installation shall be agreed with the Roads Authority prior to erection on site.

Signed:   
District Planner

Date: 06.03.2023

Signed:   
Senior Executive Planner

Date: 07/03/2023

Signed:   
A/Director of Services

Date: 9/3/23

