

Senior Engineer,
Infrastructure Development,
Cork City Council,
City Hall,
Cork,
T12 T997.

March 5, 2025

Re: Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme

To whom it may concern,

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork City and County, uniting, representing and supporting our members and community. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for 2024-25.

Cork Chamber's advocacy efforts are guided by the views and priorities of our partners, and are shaped by our continuous engagement with members, our board and key stakeholders in Cork City and County. Cork Chamber is deeply committed to sustainability, embedding it within all our activities and initiatives.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process on the Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme.

The stated aim of the scheme is to improve access between the South Docklands and the City Centre in terms of convenience, safety and capacity, with a particular emphasis on sustainable modes of transport. It also aims to create a high-quality public realm, embracing the riverside amenity potential of the area.

Cork Chamber shares in this vision of creating sustainable transport corridors and people-centric environments. Such projects will contribute to Cork's development as a sustainable city with vibrant communities and a strong quality of life. In doing so, Cork will be well positioned to attract and retain investment and talent.

Yours Sincerely,



Conor Healy
CEO

Observations

Introduction

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to comment on Cork City Council's public consultation on the Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme.

Cork has been designated an EU mission city for climate neutrality to 2030. The transition to a more sustainable and climate-resilient city and region will lay the foundations for sustainable economic development and improved quality of life.

Projects, such as the Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme, which prioritise sustainable modes of transport, including bus and cycle corridors and pedestrian access, are of the utmost importance in achieving these objectives.

This project aims to improve access between the South Docklands, which will be the site of significant residential and commercial development in the coming years, and the existing City Centre, with an emphasis on convenience, safety and capacity in all modes of transport, but with a particular focus on walking, cycling and public transport.

It also proposes the creation of a high-quality public realm aligned with the ambitious redevelopment plans for the area, incorporating the existing community in the area. A balance of hard- and soft-landscaping is proposed, with sustainability and a focus on the riverside amenity are all prioritised.

The project will result in improved and increase bus services and also serve to better connect the City Centre with the Docklands, aiding in the development of a 15-minute city and walkable neighbourhoods, two concepts supported by Cork Chamber as a means to achieve a city that is attractive to live and work in, or visit.

Project Need

The Cork Docklands area is home to Ireland's biggest redevelopment project and will see billions of euro of planned investment in the coming years. It has the capacity to provide thousands of new homes, with planning and construction already underway for a significant number of these, as well as thousands of new jobs too.

The redevelopment of Cork Docklands is not just of local significance but of national strategic importance and its inclusion in the National Development Plan and commitment of multiannual government funding has underlined this.

Urban evolution has been identified by Cork Chamber's members as a key priority for Cork's future development. Creating and maintaining safe, welcoming and thriving public realm spaces in our urban centre is critical to ensure that Cork remains an attractive place for those wishing to live, work, visit or invest in Ireland. Urban centres across the country have undergone significant changes in recent years, presenting challenges for businesses and residents alike, and demanding a renewed approach to sustainable urban development.

Revitalising our urban centres must be a priority for all levels of government, in line with the ambitions set out in key policy documents including the National Planning Framework, Cork City

Development Plan, Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, Cork City Centre Revitalisation Action Plan, City Centre Movement Strategy, and Cork City Climate Action Plan.

The National Planning Framework, in particular, sets out ambitious targets in terms of the development of more sustainable environments, including improved public spaces and more sustainable, active travel options.

At the heart of the Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme is the creation of sustainable transport corridors, including upgrading existing facilities. New infrastructure that prioritises pedestrians, cyclists and buses is essential to ensuring connectivity between the existing city centre and the new docklands area.

The creation of dedicated bus corridors will help to improve the reliability of the bus service in the area, and it is noted that in addition to reduced public transport journey times, there will be an addition of six bus trips per hour as a result of the new contra-flow bus lane on Albert Quay East and Victoria Road North. While two existing general outbound lanes will be removed to facilitate these new bus corridors, it is welcomed that there will be a boost in the reliability and frequency of public transport in the area.

The project is a key facet in the wider redevelopment of the Cork Docklands project, and it will serve as further promotion of the docklands as a location to live and work. Cork Chamber recognises the economic benefit to residents, business owners and the wider city region of having high-quality and well-connected amenities.

These changes will result in a positive impact by making the area more attractive in which to live, work and visit. The changes to the road layout and loss of some on-street parking along Victoria Road North, Marina Terrace and Albert Road will have a potential impact on businesses and residents in the area, but this will be counter-balanced by the public realm improvements.

Existing Conditions

The majority of the area in which the proposed development will be located consists of existing publicly owned hardstanding land, mostly road surface, cycle lane and footpath, with pockets of landscaped planting along the streets.

It is noted that a small area of land will be acquired to facilitate the construction of a new residential link between Rosefield Terrace (Rosehill) and Electric Terrace (Eastville), and small areas of private residential gardens will be acquired to facilitate the realignment of the Old Blackrock Road/Victoria Road junction.

The works will take place on land around the River Lee, but no works are required in the river itself, and much of the work will take place on well-used roads.

Some works will take place in residential areas and Cork Chamber encourages efforts to minimise the impact on residents, but welcomes the proposed addition of trees, planting, public lighting and street furniture in these areas.

Environmental Impact

One of the key aims of the project is to create priority bus and cycle corridors, as well as dedicated pedestrian space, all of which has the potential for significant environmental benefits.

An increased number of bus services will be scheduled, while segregated bus lanes should also result in improved travel times, all of which should make the bus services a more attractive proposition in encouraging people to choose more sustainable modes of transport ahead of private cars.

In addition, the recent completion of a significant phase of the nearby Marina Promenade and the further development of the cycle and pedestrian facilities has created a safe route connecting Blackrock to Centre Park Road. The further investment in pedestrian and cycle infrastructure as part of the Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme will further enhance pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, encouraging more people to choose these environmentally friendly and sustainable modes of transport.

It also notes that while two trees will be removed from the area, it is proposed to plant 83 trees, in addition to ornamental grasses. The increase volume of greenery and planting is welcome as it enhances the area as a place to live and work in, enhancing the visual amenities and providing health benefits.

We have a unique opportunity at present to incorporate climate neutrality and sustainability into every aspect of Cork's growth and development in the coming years and the inclusion of greenery as a standard in this proposal is welcome. It will also serve to connect the City Centre to the 100-acres of parks which will be developed in the South Docklands in the coming years, providing greater access to these amenities.

Cork Chamber notes that no works are required in the River Lee, but we encourage that due care and attention be given to minimise the potential for accidental pollution events, surface water run-off or dust entering the river.

The majority of the works to take place in a works area that consists of existing publicly owned, hard-standing land, the majority of which are road surfaces.

Modifications to existing drainage works, including non-return valves to minimise the risk of sewer flooding, are also proposed which, in conjunction with the nearby flood defence and public amenity works at Morrison's Island, should serve to reduce the damaging impact of flooding in the area.

Design Approach

Cork Chamber welcomes the people-centric approach to redevelopment proposed by Cork City Council. Aligning the area's revitalisation with Cork's broader climate and sustainability goals, will enhance Cork's attractiveness and support economic growth and resilience.

The urban greening proposals will also play an important role in enhancing the attractiveness of the space and contributing to a greener, more sustainable city centre.

The prioritising of bus, cycling and pedestrian amenities in the area are a welcome improvement as it will improve travel times, reduce vehicular traffic, and benefit the wider city in an economic and environmental sense.

Material

It is welcomed that high-quality materials are proposed throughout the works, including a mix of hard materials and green surfaces.

Cork Chamber particularly welcomes the inclusion of proposed rain gardens on Monahan Road and Albert Road, as well as planting strips, and clear, coloured tarmac, cycle lanes and pedestrian facilities in other parts of the scheme.

Conclusion

Cork Chamber welcomes the proposals outlined in Cork City Council's public consultation on the Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme

The overall project aims to provide a network for the optimum movement of all modes of transport between Cork Docklands and the city centre, and to provide a high-quality public realm consistent with the overall ambition for the Cork Docklands area as a vibrant, innovative, mixed-use, sustainable, socially inclusive, new urban quarter.

These aims align with Cork Chamber's own priorities and values. Our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for 2024-25.

Cork has been designated an EU mission city for climate neutrality to 2030, along with Dublin. The transition to a more sustainable and climate-resilient city and region will lay the foundations for sustainable economic development and improved quality of life.

Projects, such as the Cork Docklands to City Centre Road Network Improvement Scheme, which prioritise sustainable modes of transport, including bus and cycle corridors and pedestrian access, are of the utmost importance in achieving these objectives.