

**Laois County Council
Comhairle Chontae Laois**



**Triogue Way
People's Park to Greenmill Lane**

Proposed Development by a Local Authority

**Part 8
Explanatory Booklet**

In accordance with Part XI, Section 179 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, and Part VIII, Article 80 & 81 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended)

January 2024

1.0 Introduction

This document has been prepared in compliance with Part 8 of the Local Government (Planning & Development) Regulations, 2001 -2011. The document informs a proposed development by a Local Authority and serves to accompany public display documents, informing and outlining development proposals proposed by Laois County Council.

20240 and Beyond - A Vision for Portlaoise prioritises enhanced pedestrian and cycling linkages. Poorly addressed cyclist and pedestrian desire lines mitigate against the shift towards more sustainable forms of transport and discourage active travel to school campuses, places of work and the Town Centre.

To address the above, *20240 and Beyond - A Vision for Portlaoise* identified the Triogue Way as both an environmental and amenity objective, providing a largely off-road pedestrian and cycling corridor from the residential areas to the north to and thorough the Town Centre, continuing though the People's Park linking with the various school campuses etc at Summerhill.

Earlier works on the Triogue Way provided a link from Summerhill to the People's Park. The proposed development in this instance envisages a similar standard of development from the People's Park to Green Mill Lane.

The proposed development provides for a 3m wide, two-way, cycle/walkway with associated drainage, landscaping and public lighting. The development, in it's entirety, is located adjacent to the bank of the River Triogue.

The proposed development includes for development of the cycle/walkway through the privately-owned Lands and the proposals are published with the consent of the owner, which is acknowledged and appreciated.

2.0 Need for the Proposed Development –

National policy requires reallocation and redesign of public spaces such that greater priority is afforded to cyclists and pedestrians. The Triogue Way is the key component of redesigned public spaces, providing a largely off-road cycle/walkway, connecting key residential districts, the Town Centre, numerous school campuses and places of employment.

Every morning over 5000 people in Portlaoise drive less than 15 minutes to School. Census 2016 illustrated a 0.76% Portlaoise take-up in cycling and walking to work, as compared to a national average of 1.19%. Similarly, Census 2016 illustrates that 5022 Portlaoise-based residents drive less than 15 minutes to work/school/college every day.

In 2022, Laois County Council appointed A Playful City to consult with the local community with a view to promoting active travel as an alternative, sustainable form of daily transport. In executing the Brief, A Playful City undertook preliminary and primary research with the community of Portlaoise. The overwhelming majority (70%) of those consulted (parents and schoolchildren who drive to school) would prefer to walk or cycle to School and 80% of those who currently walk or cycle to school want to continue doing so.

The Triogue Way is a key intervention to support a low carbon town. The principal benefits of the Triogue Way are:

1. **Enhanced Sustainability** by way of less reliance on motor vehicles, reduced congestion, reduced carbon emissions etc.
2. **Enhanced Safety** by way of separation of cyclists/pedestrians from motorists, enhanced accessibility for mobility and visually impaired people, older persons etc.
3. **Enhanced Use of Local Amenities** such as the Linear Park and People's Park

3.0 Principal Features of the Proposed Development

The points set out below should be read in conjunction with drawings set out in **Appendix 1** to this Explanatory Booklet.

The principal features of the proposed development are as follows:

- 3m wide tarmac-finished surface along the line of existing (circa 1.5m wide) pathways through the People's Park and the Linear Park
- Associated Landscaping, Drainage and Public Lighting
- 3m wide, 2-way cycle track and 2m footpath on JFL Avenue from People's Park exit to Bridge Street
- New Toucan Crossing to replace existing Zebra Crossing at Bridge Street Roundabout
- Reconfiguration of Car-Parking with the loss of 8 car-park spaces at the Triogue/Church Avenue Car Park
- Upgrade/Replacement of Bridges at Tower Hill and between Tower Hill and rail line
- Introduction of ecological recommendations set out in the AA Screening Report and summarised in Section 6 of this Report

4.0 Drawings and Documents Supporting these Proposals

The following documents serve to advise and support the proposed development;

- Triogue Way Part VIII Explanatory Booklet
- Triogue Way Screening for Appropriate Assessment (Atkins)
- Triogue Way screening for Environmental Impact Assessment Report (Atkins)
- Archaeological Impact Assessment Report (Horizon)
- A Playful City – Community Consultation Report

3.0 Drawings

The full extent of the proposed works are detailed on the following drawings:

Drawing No:	Title:
Triogue 1001-100	Scheme Overall Key Map
Triogue 1001-101	Proposed Layout Map 1
Triogue 1001-102	Proposed Layout Map 2
Triogue 1001-103	Proposed Layout Map 3
Triogue 1001-104	Proposed Layout Map 4
Triogue 1001-105	Proposed Layout Map 5
Triogue 1001-106	Proposed Layout Map 6
Triogue 1001-107	Proposed Cross Sections
Triogue 1001-201	Scheme Location Map

5.0 Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and associated Ecological/Environmental Enhancements

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report and a screening for Environmental impact Assessment Report have been prepared for Laois County Council by Atkins Consultants, for the proposed development and the findings of these reports are provided in **Appendix 2**.

The Assessment finds that *'it can be concluded beyond reasonable scientific doubt that the proposed project will not, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, give rise to any impacts which would constitute significant effects'* on any Natura 2000 site.

The Screening Report does make some ecological recommendations and it is confirmed that the recommendations made will be incorporated into the project. The ecological recommendations include;

- Public lighting design will minimise light spill including the use of cowled and/or hooded lighting,
- Additional roosting opportunities to be provided for bats, in a variety of designs, suitable for bats with different roosting habits, on mature trees with the Ridge of Portlaoise pNHA, People's Park and River Triogue Linear Park. Bat boxes will be installed on mature trees, position to face south, south-east or south-west and at heights no less than 4m above ground level.

Both measures above will be overseen by suitably experienced ecologists.

In addition to the above, it is also noted that suitable habitat exists alongside the development for the creation of wildflower meadows, increasing food and nectar sources for butterflies, bees and beetles and feeding areas for birds and bats.

The proposed development avoids disturbance of scheduled invasive species (Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam). As part of any implementation of the proposed development, Laois County Council will seek specialist advice on appropriate eradication techniques which will likely involve the preparation and implementation of an Invasive Species Management Plan.

Lastly, there is potential for the creation of sand martin nests along the River Triogue which would enhance bird species diversity with the urban environs of Portlaoise Town. Specialist advice will be sought from Birdwatch Ireland regarding appropriate site selection (in a suitable habitat at publicly inaccessible locations) and artificial nest installation.

6.0 Funding

Subject to approval of Part 8 proposals, this project will be primarily funded by the National Transport Authority, through the annual allocation for Active Travel Measures. The project will also benefit from funding from the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, including match funding from Laois County Council. The estimated value of the Project is €1.85 million euros.

7.0 Public Display Period and Submissions

A copy of the Public Notice is contained in **Appendix 3** to this Explanatory Booklet.

Any person may, from **11th January 2024 to 09th February 2024** inclusive, apply to An Bord Pleanála for a screening determination as to whether the development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment.

From **11th January 2024 to 09th February 2024** inclusive, plans and particulars of the proposed development are available for viewing and inspection as follows;

- on Laois County Council's online consultation portal at <https://consult.laois.ie>.
- at the offices of Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, JFL Avenue, Portlaoise.

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development is to be situated, may be made **online** at <https://consult.laois.ie> **before 5.00 p.m. on 23rd February 2024**.

Submissions or observations with respect to the proposed development, dealing with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which the development is to be situated, may also be made **in writing** to: Simon Walton, Director of Services, Laois County Council, Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, to be received **before 5.00 p.m. on 23rd February 2024**.

Submissions should be clearly marked: **Triogue Blueway - Part VIII**.



Paul McLoughlin
Senior Engineer
Laois County Council

Signed:  .
Director of Services

Simon Walton
Director of Services
Laois County Council