

Route Options Report on the N17 Milltown to Gortnagunned Road Improvements Scheme

Archaeology and Architectural Heritage

Jerry O'Sullivan, TII Archaeologist
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1. Summary

This report considers four route options for the N17 Milltown to Gortnagunned road improvement project in relation to its potential impacts on the archaeological and architectural heritage. The report was compiled using standard methods and with reference to the relevant published guidelines for architectural and archaeological heritage in a development context, published by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and Island (1999), The Heritage Council (2002) and the National Roads Authority (2010). The study area was a corridor c. 3.5 km long and 0.5 km wide.

None of the four options considered would have any impact on any known archaeological site or monument, though it would be wise to conduct archaeological test excavations, on a precautionary basis in any offline area affected by the project, on whatever route might be approved. Testing would seek to identify and record any previously undiscovered archaeological remains in those sectors.

All four options have potential impacts on elements of the architectural heritage. These are mostly early modern farm buildings and dwelling houses of local interest—variously ruined, derelict or well maintained and in use. The potential impacts are mostly to roadside boundary features (walls, gateways, mature trees) and these are deemed to be 'slight' or 'moderate'. In two cases the impacts would result in the demolition of a ruined farmhouse or byre and these are deemed to be 'moderate impacts'. In two other cases the impacts would result in the demolition of attractive, well maintained dwelling houses—both of them of a traditional form and scale and in highly visible locations—and these are deemed to be 'severe' impacts. One option would result in the demolition of a railway crossing keeper's cottage and this is also rated a 'severe' impact. In fact, this is the least desirable impact of any of the options, because of the group associations of a railway building and because the building type is less common than the other rural building types (dwellings, byres) potentially affected by this project.

Comparing the number and severity of the impacts of the three route options, the preferred option here is Option 1, followed by Option 3, then Options 2 and 2A.

2. Desk assessment

Prior to inspecting the road corridor in the field, a desk-based assessment of the study area was made with reference to the following sources.

- Ordnance Survey first and second-edition six-inch maps of County Galway (Sheet 4 surveyed 1839, revised 1925–26; and Sheet 16 surveyed 1838, revised 1926).
- Record of Protected Structures for County Galway per the *Galway County Development Plan 2015–2021* (amended 2017)
- Record of Monuments and Places in County Galway (OPW 1997)
- *Archaeological Inventory of County Galway, Vol. II – North Galway* (Alcock et al. 1999)
- vertical aerial photographs available from the Ordnance Survey at Galway County Council (2010, 2015) and also on the Internet at www.bing.com (undated)
- local publication on the *Milltown Heritage Trail* (2010) by the Milltown Development Company Ltd and Milltown Tidy Towns Group and also local heritage and information websites (www.milltown.galwaycommunityheritage.org and www.milltowngalway.com)
- online gazetteer of licensed archaeological excavations in Ireland at www.excavations.ie for the townlands traversed by the route options for the project.
- Sites and Monuments Record for County Galway maintained by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (National Monuments Service) and available to view online at www.heritage.ie
- National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) for County Galway compiled by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2008–11 and available to view online at www.buildingsofireland.ie
- Bedrock geology and soils maps of the Geological Survey of Ireland at www.gsi.ie and Teagasc at www.gis.teagasc.ie

From these sources over 20 places of potential interest were identified for inspection in the field, including archaeological sites and monuments within the corridor and roadside buildings or sites of buildings as indicated on the early Ordnance Survey maps.

3. Fieldwork

All of the features and sites of potential interest that were identified by the desk study were inspected, photographed and described in the field by the writer, over the course of two visits, in October 2017 and July 2018.

Some additional features were identified in the field by a 'windscreen' survey of the route corridor (i.e. as seen from the existing N17) and these were also inspected, photographed and described.

The writer made a third visit to the study area with Project Engineer Andrew O'Halloran, in July 2018, to confirm some of the impacts, with reference to detailed route options drawings that Mr O'Halloran had prepared for the project.

4. Consultations

The writer took the opportunity to speak with householders and landowners wherever possible in the course of the two field inspections in October 2017 and July 2018 and also met in July 2018 with Mr Frank Glynn and Mr Tony Murphy of the Milltown Heritage Group. The writer also attended a public consultation event for the scheme in Milltown Community Hall in December 2018.

More widespread written consultations with interested organisations and individuals (e.g. County Conservation Officer, County Heritage Officer, An Taisce, Galway Archaeological and Historical Society) would have potential value if the project proceeds to design stage for a preferred route.

5. Statutory Protections

5.1 Archaeology

The principal protections for archaeological sites and monuments in Ireland are afforded by the *National Monuments Acts 1930–2004*. They include a Ministerial Preservation Order (for National Monuments) or entry on the Register of Historic Monuments or entry on the Record of Monuments and Places. The Record of Monuments and Places for County Galway was published in 1997.

Any site or monument that is a scheduled National Monument or that is entered on the Register of Historic Monuments will appear in the Record of Monuments and Places (unless a more recent Preservation Order has been issued), so that this may be regarded for practical purposes as a comprehensive source for sites and monuments having legal protection in our study area.

The minimum legal protection afforded an archaeological site or monument entered in the Record of Monuments and Places is that anyone proposing to do works to the site or monument (including an investigation) must give not less than two months' notice to the Minister. Archaeological excavations are subject to licensing by the Minister and an excavation licence will only be granted to a competent and suitably qualified person.

There are three Recorded Monuments in or near our study area. None of them would be affected by any of the three route options.

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- A ringfort (RMP GA016:123) in the northern outskirts of the village has been more or less been entirely removed. The site is c. 100 m from the present road and is now occupied by modern farm buildings.
 - An earthwork enclosure (GA016:124) in the village, c. 300 m from the project road, was shown on the first edition Ordnance Survey map (c. 1840) but is not extant and the site is now occupied by a modern dwelling house.
 - A children's burial ground or *cillin* (RMP GA016:016A) occupies an irregular area of rough ground in a pasture field south of the existing road, again in the western outskirts of Milltown. The site is c. 150 m from the present road but note that the Milltown Heritage Group has placed a plaque identifying the site on a gate pier at the main road, within the limits of the project road.

No other, newly identified archaeological sites or monuments were identified in the study area by the desk study or by field inspection for this assessment.

For completeness, signage for the Milltown Heritage Trail indicates a *fulacht fiadh* or burnt mound site north of the village, in rough pasture east of the (L2212) Dunmore road. This is a very common type site of Bronze Age date, typically found in wet, low-lying ground. It was not inspected by the writer. It would not be affected by any of the three route options.

5.2 Architecture

Architectural Heritage in Ireland is protected under the Planning and Development Acts and especially Part IV of the 2000 Act. This requires all local authorities to include in their development plans a Record of Protected Structures. The current Record of Protected Structures for County Galway is published as Appendix V in the *Galway County Development Plan 2015–2021* and was last amended in 2017. Any works or alterations to a Protected Structure must be authorised by the Council, as the planning authority, and must have regard to the setting, character and features of special interest of the Protected Structure.

There are no Protected Structures within the study area for this project (< 500 m corridor) but there are a few within 1 km of the project road. These include the single-arch masonry bridge (RPS 3858) that carries the N17 over the Clare River in Milltown village; Millbrook House (RPS 0014), in Lack, north of the village; the old railway station building (RPS 3856) in Pollaturrick, west of the village; and the Edmond Hopkins monument (RPS 3857) in Cloonacross, which is also a Recorded Monument, as we saw above. None of these Protected Structures would be affected by any of the route options for the project.

All three route options would affect local elements of the architectural heritage that are not Protected Structures, as we shall see below.

6. Impacts of the route options compared

None of the three options will have any impacts on known elements of the archaeological heritage. All three options would have slight impacts on elements of the architectural heritage. What separates the three options is the number and character of the moderate and severe impacts they would have on elements of the architectural heritage, as set out here (and see Table 6.1 below).

- **Route Option 1** would have four slight impacts, three moderate impacts and no severe impacts. The slight impacts would be to boundary features (walls, gateways), the railway level crossing (Inventory No. 7) and townland name plaques along the margins of the existing road (No. 24). The moderate impacts would be the loss of boundaries with mature broadleaf trees at two early modern houses (Inventory Nos 17 and 25) and demolition of a ruined early modern farmhouse (No. 26).
- **Route Option 2** would have five slight impacts, two moderate impacts and one severe impact. Again, the slight impacts would be to boundary features (walls, gateways), the railway level crossing (No. 7), and townland name plaques along the margins of the existing road (No. 24). The moderate impacts would be the loss of a boundary wall with mature broadleaf trees (No. 25); and demolition of a ruined early modern farmhouse (No. 26). The severe impact would be demolition of a well maintained farmhouse in a highly visible roadside setting (No. 15).
- **Route Option 2A** would have two slight impacts, one moderate impact and one severe impact. Again, the slight impacts would be to boundary features (walls, gateway) and roadside name plaques (No. 24). The moderate impact would be the loss of a boundary wall with mature broadleaf trees (No. 25). The severe impact would be to a group of railway features including crossing barriers, a boundary wall and pedestrian stile and the crossing-keeper's cottage (No. 7).
- **Route Option 3** would have two slight impacts, one moderate impact and one severe impact. Once again, the slight impacts are to boundary features (No. 4) and townland name plaques along the margins of the existing road (No. 24). The moderate impact would be the loss of a boundary wall with mature broadleaf trees (No. 25). The severe impact would be the demolition of an attractive, well maintained house with traditional features, in a highly visible roadside setting (No. 18).

Table 6.1
Impacts of Route Options 1, 2 and 3 on the Archaeological and Architectural Heritage

FEATURES OF INTEREST			IMPACTS OF ROUTE OPTIONS COMPARED					Impact
No	Description	Grid Ref (Irish) (and ITM)	Significance	1	2	2A	3	
1	Farm buildings	137870 265400 (537834 765421)	Local	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
4	Derelict cottage	138110 265230 (538074 765250)	Local	—	Slight	Slight	Slight	Direct impact on roadside boundary
5	Farmstead	138430 265080 (538394 765101)	Local	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
6	House (former cottage)	138320 264800 (538284 764821)	Local	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
7	Railway crossing	138760 264720 (538724 764741)	Regional	Slight	Slight	Severe	—	Direct impact on barriers, boundary, and stile; also keeper's cottage if 2A
8	Farmhouse	138830 264720 (538794 764741)	Local	Slight	Slight	—	—	Direct impact on roadside boundary
9	Connolly's Shop (former)	138870 264690 (538834 764711)	Local	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
10	Ruined byre house	139080 264500 (539044 764521)	Local	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
16	Chapel (site of)	139120 264340 (539084 764361)	Nil	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
15	Farmhouse	139230 264220 (539194 764241)	Local	—	Severe	—	—	Direct impact, demolition if Option 2
17	Farmhouse, mature boundary planting	139550 263980 (539514 764001)	Local	Moderate	—	—	—	Direct impact on boundary and mature trees (beech)
18	House (site of cottage), ruined byre	139540 263760 (539504 763781)	Local	—	—	—	Severe	Direct impact, demolition if Option 3.

Table 6.1 (continued)

FEATURES OF INTEREST			IMPACTS OF THREE ROUTE OPTIONS COMPARED					Impact
No	Description	Grid Ref (Irish) (and ITM)	Significance	1	2	2A	3	
26	Farmhouse (ruins)	139584 263766 (539548 763787)	Local	Moderate	Mod.	—	—	Shell of 19th-cent. house, demolished if Option 1 or 2.
23	M J Molloy cottage (playwright)	139705 263535 (539669 763556)	Local	Slight	Slight	—	—	Options 1 and 2 affect stone boundary.
19	Pound (site of)	139750 263610 (539714 763631)	Nil	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
25	House with mature boundary planting	138835 263490 (538799 763511)	Local	Moderate	Mod.	Mod.	Mod.	Direct impact on boundary and mature trees (beech, sycamore) with rookery.
20	Ringfort (site of) RMP GA016:123	140150 263470 (540114 763491)	Local	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
21	Children's burial ground (RMP GA016:016)	140075 263210 (540039 763231)	Local	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
22	Early buildings (site of)	140161 263335 (540125 763356)	Nil	—	—	—	—	Nil impact
24	Townland name stones	Various	Local	Slight	Slight	Slight	Slight	Direct impact on one or more plaques by all options

7. Preferred option

Arising from the above the preferred route option in terms of potential impacts on the archaeological and architectural heritage is Option 1, followed by Option 3 then Options 2 and 2A. Although three options have severe impacts, the loss of a railway crossing-keeper's cottage on Route 2A is deemed to be a worse outcome than the loss of dwelling houses, albeit well maintained and of traditional form, because the crossing-keeper's cottage is part of a larger group and is a less common building type.

Options	Impacts				Ranking
	Slight	Moderate	Severe	Profound	
Option 1	4	3	0	0	A
Option 2	5	2	1	0	C
Option 2A	2	1	1	0	D
Option 3	2	1	1	0	B

Selected photos of architectural heritage features potentially affected by the three route options being considered in this report appear on the following pages.



Illus. 5.1 and 5.2—Two attractive, well-maintained houses with traditional features are directly threatened by Route Option 2 (Inventory No. 15, above) and Route Option 3 (No. 18, below) and would be demolished, amounting to severe impacts of these options.



Illus. 5.3 and 5.4—Roadside boundaries with mature trees are threatened by all four options: Inventory No. 17, above (Option 1) and No. 25, below (Options 1, 2, 2A and 3). These are rated moderate impacts of these options.



Illus. 5.5 and 5.6—A ruined early modern farmhouse would be demolished on Route Options 1 and 2 (Inventory No. 26, above), which is rated a moderate impact. Inscribed townland names along the existing N17 (No. 24) would be removed by all four options, and should be reinstated on the new road.



Illus. 5.7 and 5.8—Railway crossing on the N17 (Inventory No. 7). Options 1 and 2 would affect the boundary wall and pedestrian stile (below); Option 2A would result in the demolition of the keeper's cottage also, which is rated a severe impact of the road project.