

## 2. Existing Conditions and Need for the Scheme

### Introduction

- 2.1. Enniskillen lies within the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council (FODC) area and has a population of approximately 14,000, providing many essential and non-essential services for the surrounding region. Positioned between the Upper and Lower Sections of Lough Erne, Enniskillen is the only strategic east-west crossing of the Erne system between Belleek (approximately 20 miles to the north west) and Inishmore Viaduct (approximately 11.5 miles to the southwest). As a result, the town is a major thoroughfare for both strategic and local traffic. Figure 1-1 displays Enniskillen and the surrounding area.

### Existing Conditions

#### Existing Road Network

- 2.2. Enniskillen town is located at the intersection of the A32 (from Omagh) and the A4 corridor (extending between Belcoo in the west to Belfast in the east via the M1 motorway). Currently, Enniskillen offers the only strategic east-west crossing between Upper and Lower Lough Erne and as such the town is a major confluence point for local and strategic road traffic.
- 2.3. From the Killyhevlin Hotel in the east to the A4 Sligo Road roundabout in the west, the A4 corridor passes through Enniskillen town (Dublin Road - Wellington Road - Henry Street - Sligo Road) for c. 5.3km. The A4 corridor through the town suffers from significant congestion, as the existing road network has insufficient capacity for current levels of local and strategic traffic journeying within and through the town respectively. In addition, along this route there are eight signalised junctions, three pedestrian crossings and several other priority junctions/uncontrolled pedestrian crossings, all of which contribute to significant congestion within the town.
- 2.4. In addition to the A4 corridor, several other A-class roads radiate from Enniskillen, including the A32 to Omagh, A46 to Belleek, and the A509 Derrylin Road.
- 2.5. The National Cycle Route 91, otherwise known as the "Kingfisher Trail", also passes through the study area. It follows minor country roads through the border counties of Cavan, Leitrim, Monaghan, Donegal and Fermanagh.
- 2.6. The existing Non-Motorised User (NMU) provision within the study area is mainly provided within the urban environs of Enniskillen, broadly defined by the extent of the 30mph/40mph speed limits.

#### Traffic Congestion

- 2.7. Enniskillen suffers from traffic congestion particularly at peak times because of the existing road network not providing sufficient capacity to meet the needs of local and strategic traffic converging at key junctions and river crossings within the town. This results in unreliable journey times for all traffic, driver frustration and a poor-quality town centre environment for road users and the community.
- 2.8. Significant parts of the town become congested at certain times including Wellington Road and Gaol Square. The current 24-hour Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) flow on the A4 Dublin Road approaching the town is 15,328 with approximately 4.5% Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).
- 2.9. It is also the case that congestion levels are predicted to increase as the level of car ownership increases. As such, the current situation in Enniskillen is expected to worsen over time and negative impacts on the local population and town centre environment will intensify. Without the

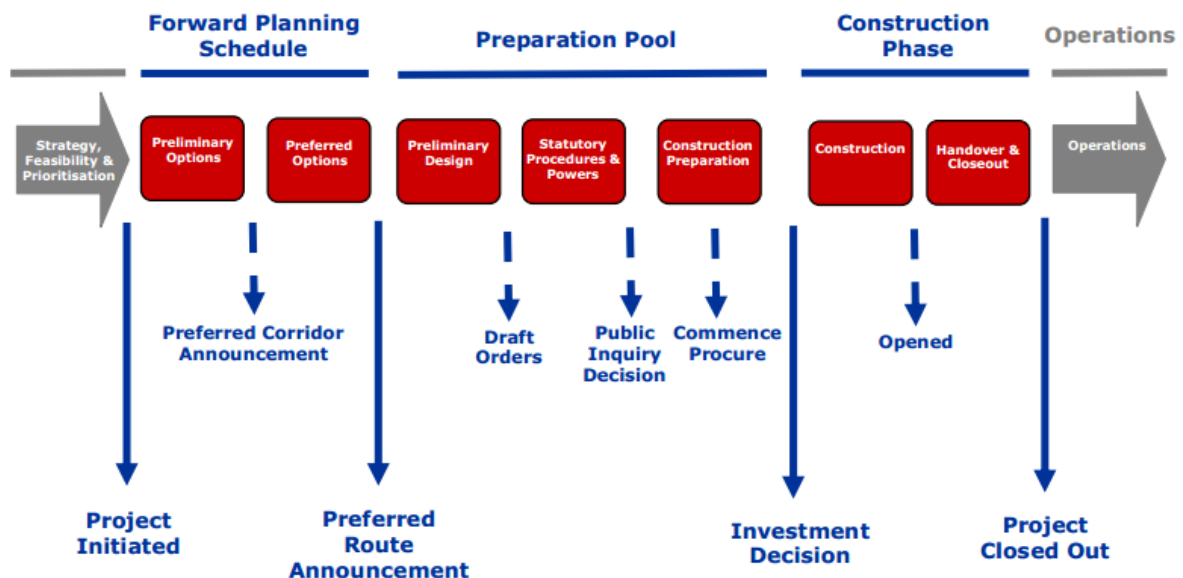
proposed scheme it is estimated that the AADT flow on the Dublin Road will increase to approximately 17,972 (with 5.3% HGVs) by the year 2035<sup>1</sup>.

- 2.10. DfI Roads is therefore developing a road improvement scheme to provide a southern bypass to Enniskillen to provide a new link for traffic between the A4 Dublin Road and the A4 Sligo Road. The proposed scheme aims to alleviate traffic congestion within the town and provide improved journey times for through traffic.

## Policy and Strategic Context

- 2.11. It is widely recognised that transport is a key driver of economic development and it provides the means for all citizens to access social and educational services as well as leisure activities. Therefore, it is essential that NI has an efficient and low-cost transport system to compete in the global marketplace.
- 2.12. Strategic Road Improvements (SRIs) are essential for meeting these needs as they are aimed at developing and improving NI's motorway and trunk road network. SRIs play a key role in delivering a modern, safe and sustainable transport system within NI. They target removing congestion on the key network, where a lack of capacity is causing serious problems, and improving the environment by providing bypasses of towns situated on the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN), relieving the effects of heavy through traffic in the town centres.
- 2.13. Each SRI is proposed through the Strategic Road Improvement Programme and is managed under the following three categories (Figure 2-1 SRI Process):
- Forward Planning Schedule - A list of major road improvement schemes identified for preliminary development. The highest priority schemes will be considered for progression into the Preparation Pool;
  - Preparation Pool - Allows high priority schemes to be advanced through the statutory processes up to the point where a decision to commit to invest in building the solution can be made. Subsequent progression into the Construction Phase is dependent on the level of funding available at that time; and
  - Construction Phase - Schemes already under construction.

Figure 2-1 SRI Process



<sup>1</sup> Stage 3 Scheme Assessment Report, Atkins, March 2018

- 2.14. The A4 Enniskillen Bypass has been identified in the 'Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015 – Consultation Document' as one of the schemes that should be considered for implementation in the following 10 years. The conclusion of Scheme Assessment Stages 1 and 2 completed the schemes progress through the Forward Planning Schedule.

## Appraisal of SRI Schemes

- 2.15. SRI schemes are appraised against five objectives in a three-stage appraisal procedure. This EIAR has been developed to support the Stage 3 scheme appraisal.
- 2.16. The appraisal of any form of transport investment requires a clear understanding of the objectives, which are to be met, and appropriate criteria to be used to decide whether a proposal meets them. The Government's five objectives for transport are pivotal to the appraisal process and are outlined below:
- Environmental - Environmental impact involves reducing the direct and indirect impacts of transport facilities on the environment;
  - Safety - Concerned with reducing the loss of life, injuries and damage to property resulting from transport incidents and crime;
  - Economy - Concerned with improving the economic efficiency of transport;
  - Accessibility - Concerned with the ability with which people can reach different locations and facilities by different modes; and
  - Integration - Integration aims to ensure that all decisions are taken in the context of the Government's integrated transport policy and other relevant policies.

## Strategic Context

### A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone

- 2.17. The UK Government's White Paper entitled, "A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone" (1998) set out a new approach to transport policy which has relevance throughout the UK. It embodied new, modern thinking on integrating transport with other aspects of Government policy.
- 2.18. It recognised that different parts of the UK will have different transport needs and that the devolved regions will consider their own transport priorities and separate documents would be published for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as England is covered within this White Paper.
- 2.19. In response to this White Paper, "Moving Forward: The Northern Ireland Transport Policy Statement" was published in 1998 and outlined a strategy for implementing the Government's objectives in the special context of Northern Ireland. This informed the Regional Strategies for Northern Ireland set out below.

### Moving Forward: The Northern Ireland Transport Policy Statement

- 2.20. This policy statement outlines the strategy for implementing the objectives of the White Paper 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone', in a way which reflects the particular circumstances of NI.
- 2.21. The policy sets out both main elements and more specific measures which the Department hopes will gear towards a more balanced and integrated transport system that will encourage users to use public and Non-Motorised transport.
- 2.22. In addition to this the Policy Statement contains other important recommendations relating to partnerships, education and awareness. The measures will be put into effect through the Regional Transport Plan process which will contain several implementation programmes and targets for specific measures in particular areas.

## The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 – ‘Building a Better Future’

- 2.23. The Regional Development Strategy (Building a Better Future) 2035 (RDS 2035) was published by the Department for Regional Development in March 2012 superseding the previous 2025 RDS.
- 2.24. The RDS is a long-term plan to deliver the spatial aspects of the Programme for Government, recognising the need for balanced sub-regional growth and importance of key settlements as centres for growth and investment. It recognises the need to maximise the potential of the Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN) to enhance accessibility to towns; to help build an integrated regional economy; facilitate tourist travel including improving connections to key tourism sites; and reduces where possible, traffic flows within towns.
- 2.25. The RDS 2035 contains a Spatial Framework and Strategic Planning Guidelines based on focusing development in gateways, hubs and clusters, and prioritising the improvement of the main transport corridors that form the regional transportation network.
- 2.26. Enniskillen is identified within the RDS 2035 as a main hub which is located on one of the Key Transport Corridors making it a gateway to the south west. It is therefore strategically important to improve transport links around the town of Enniskillen.

## The Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) 2002 - 2012

- 2.27. The Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS) was published in 2002 by the Department for Regional Development following an extensive consultation period. It was developed to support the Regional Development Strategy and was aimed at making a significant contribution over the ten-year period from 2002-2012 towards achieving the longer-term vision for transportation noted in the 2025 RDS.
- 2.28. The RTS identifies strategic transportation investment priorities and considers potential funding sources and affordability of planned initiatives over the ten-year period. It outlined that the implementation of the strategy was to be through three Transport Plans. These Transport Plans present detailed programmes of major schemes and transport initiatives that support the objectives of the RTS and contribute to the RTS targets, taking full account of relevant Development Plans.
- 2.29. Since the publication of the RTS in 2002, its termination date of 2012 has been extended and will now be used until the ‘New Approach’ developed in 2015 (see following paragraphs) has been fully implemented and a new Delivery Plan is developed.

## Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future: A New Approach to Regional Transportation 2015

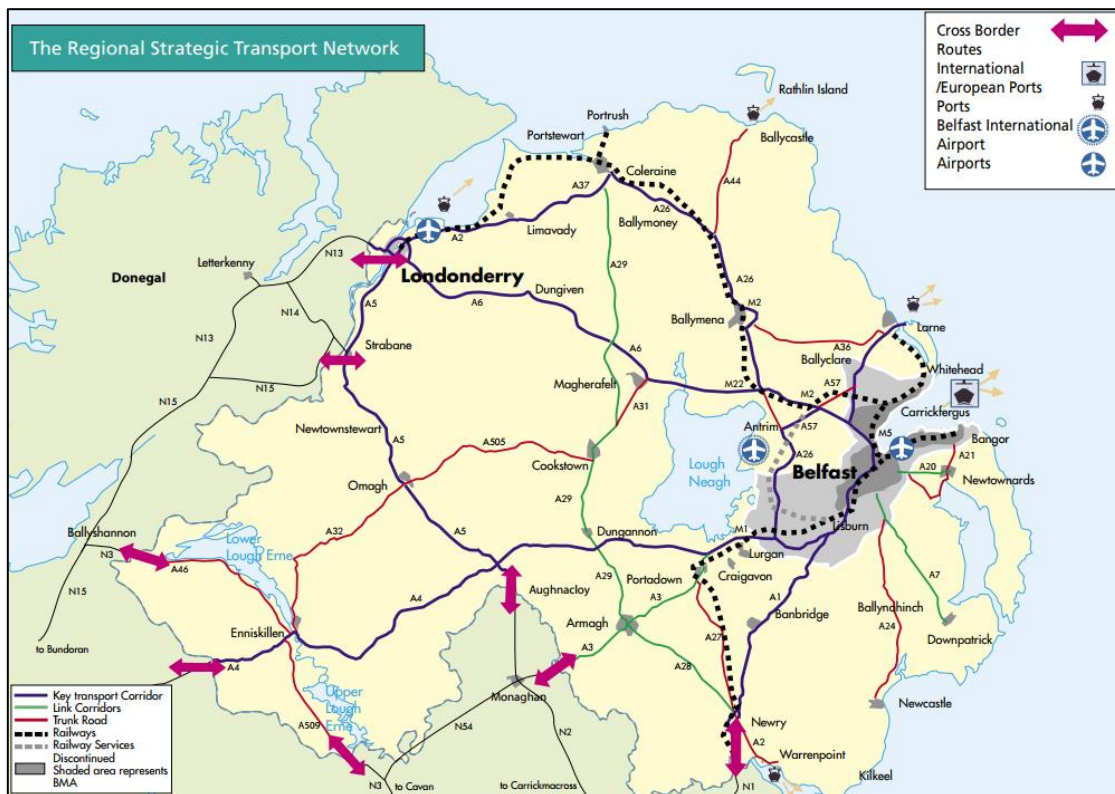
- 2.30. The New Approach to Regional Transportation (the ‘New Approach’) was launched in April 2012, to set out how the Department was to develop regional transportation beyond 2015, the end time horizon of the previous Regional Transportation Strategy (2002). The New Approach was developed to complement the RDS 2035 and starts with the assumption that the decision to travel has been made. The infrastructure and services provided to facilitate the journey must therefore be as sustainable as possible.
- 2.31. The New Approach lists three high level aims for transportation; support the growth of economy, enhance the quality of life for all and reduce the environment impact of transport. Within each high level aim several strategic objectives were developed to address the challenges identified during the review.
- 2.32. In contrast to previous approaches, where transport problems were identified and infrastructure solutions were defined to solve them, decision-making is now derived through a new Policy Prioritisation Framework. This approach is instead objective-led, with a broad view on which programmes contribute to specific policy objectives. The aim is to link strategic transportation

interventions to the Executive’s objectives for Northern Ireland, based on qualitative and quantitative evidence. The Policy Prioritisation Framework is used to identify the priority strategic transportation interventions that most closely align with the strategic direction set by the Executive’s Programme for Government and the Regional Development Strategy 2035.

### The Regional Strategic Transport Network – Transport Plan (RSTN-TP) 2015

- 2.33. The Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan (RSTN-TP) was prepared within the framework established by the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the associated Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS).
- 2.34. A major theme of the RDS with regards to transportation is the development of the Regional Strategic Transport Network, RSTN. The RSTN of NI comprises the complete rail network, five Key Transport Corridors (KTCs), four Link Corridors, the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network.
- 2.35. The RSTN-TP includes initiatives that look to improve several modes of transport including walking/cycling, public transport (both buses and rail) and others using the road network including, but not limited to private cars and freights.
- 2.36. The RSTN-TP sets out a programme which incorporates improvements for all modes of transport by:
- Developing a Regional Strategic Transport Network based on key transport corridors, to enhance accessibility to regional facilities and services;
  - Extending travel choice for all sections of the community by enhancing public transport;
  - Integrating land use and transportation; and
  - Changing the regional travel culture and contribute to healthier lifestyles.
- 2.37. Figure 2-2 displays the Regional Strategic Transport Network for NI.

**Figure 2-2 The Regional Strategic Transport Network (RSTN-TP 2015)**





## Sub Regional Transport Plan 2015

- 2.38. Enniskillen's Settlement Status is described within DRD's Sub-Regional Transport Plan (SRTP) 2015 as the 'Main Hub and Major Inter-Regional Gateway' within Fermanagh District Council (now amalgamated with Omagh District Council to form the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council).
- 2.39. The SRTP highlights Enniskillen's strategic location on the South-Western Corridor between Belfast and Sligo (identified as one of the Key Transport Corridors within Northern Ireland, see Figure 2-2). Positioned between the Upper and Lower sections of Lough Erne, Enniskillen is the only strategic east-west crossing in the South-West, which sees it as a focal point for strategic journeys within South-West Northern Ireland, and for strategic traffic to/from the Republic of Ireland (RoI) via cross-border transport links to Sligo (via the A4), Cavan (via the A509) and Donegal (via the A46). As a result, the town is a major thoroughfare for strategic traffic as well as being the focus of many local traffic journeys.

## Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015 – Consultation Document

- 2.40. The 'Expanding the Strategic Road Improvement Programme 2015 – Consultation Document', was developed in 2006 to consult key stakeholders on the make-up of an expanded Strategic Road Improvement (SRI) programme, made possible by the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) which was developed by the Strategic Investment Board and announced in December 2005. At that time, it was estimated that an additional £400million would be available for strategic road improvements within NI towards the end of the 2015 period.
- 2.41. The document outlines the schemes that were already in the SRI programme at the time and the newly proposed SRI schemes along with details of their assessment. The A4 Enniskillen Bypass was included within the newly proposed SRI schemes within this consultation document.

## Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI)

- 2.42. Launched in December 2005, ISNI set a new, comprehensive approach to be used by government to make informed decisions as to the investment priorities for NI over the ten-year period 2005-2015.
- 2.43. The ISNI confirmed that implementation of the existing RTS was already bringing considerable investment in the roads network across NI. To achieve the aspirations of the Economic Vision for NI required an even more forward-looking approach to ensure the key infrastructure was in place so that NI is prepared for inward investment. ISNI confirmed plans to commence additional investment that would result in higher standard roads providing improved access for commercial traffic, buses and private cars on the Key Transport Corridors connecting NI's major cities, including key cross border routes. This would be the start of what could become a £1bn investment on the strategic network which would allow additional major road improvement schemes over and above those in the RSTN-TP.
- 2.44. A revised ISNI for the ten-year period 2008-2018 was published in 2008, and envisaged an investment of £3.1bn in roads infrastructure. Approximately £2.5bn was targeted at the Strategic Road Network and included major schemes on the key strategic routes.
- 2.45. The ISNI 2011-2021, published in 2012 provides updates to the 2005 and 2008 Investment Strategies in line with the Executive's strategic priorities and key plans as outlined in the Programme for Government. The focus of this updated Strategy is on protecting jobs, fostering economic recovery and protecting public services all with the new economic climate in mind.
- 2.46. The ISNI sets out the forward programme for investment in public infrastructure and reflects the urgent priority that is placed on tackling the legacy of under-investment inherited from past administrations. It sets out the framework which will help to create a sustainable 21st century infrastructure. It also identifies priority areas for investment in the years ahead and is intended to

assist government and private sector partners to plan for the challenge of delivering the largest ever investment programme in NI.

- 2.47. The ISNI recognises the need to invest in efficient, reliable, competitive and sustainable networks (road, public transport, gateways, telecoms and energy) to grow a dynamic and innovative economy. It specifically states that investment in the Roads Network will be aimed at reducing journey times, improving safety and providing enhanced access to our urban centres and inter-regional gateways.

### Investment Delivery Plan for Roads (IDP)

- 2.48. The Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) For Roads identifies DFI Roads's capital investment priorities over a ten-year period, given the funding levels envisaged through the ISNI 2008-2018 rather than the updated ISNI 2011-2021.
- 2.49. In developing a Strategic Road Improvement Programme, DFI Roads has ensured that the contribution to the Executive's three cross-cutting strategic objectives (social, economic and environmental) of ISNI have been maximised.
- 2.50. Annex 1 in the IDP for Roads shows the programme of SRIs that are proposed over the ten-year period to 2017/2018. Within this Annex the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass (ESB) is identified and described as a "3.2km 2+1 single carriageway to bypass Enniskillen from the A4 Sligo Road to the A4 Belfast Road". Following more detailed scheme assessments the route chosen has been modified and is now a shorter 2.1km 2+1 single carriageway. The evolution to the current preferred route is detailed in Chapter 3.0: Assessment of Alternatives.

### Policy Context

- 2.51. The Planning Strategy for Rural NI has been largely replaced by a series of Planning Policy Statements<sup>2</sup> (PPS). It is the intention that this series will eventually replace the Rural Strategy, but until this occurs, some aspects of the strategy remain relevant. It should also be noted that due to changes in local government organisation, a Strategic Planning Policy Statement<sup>3</sup> (SPPS) was published in September 2015. This SPPS applies to the whole of NI and takes account of new planning powers granted to local authorities. The existing suite of PPSs and the remaining provisions of 'A Planning Strategy for Rural Northern Ireland' will be cancelled when all eleven councils have adopted a new Plan Strategy for the whole of their council area. This has not occurred at the time of writing and as such the following PPSs remain relevant, along with the SPPS.
- 2.52. The PPS that are relevant to this scheme are therefore as follows:
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland;
  - PPS2: Natural Heritage;
  - PPS3: Access, Movement and Parking (and Clarification);
  - PPS4: Planning and Economic Development;
  - PPS6: Planning, Archaeology and The Built Heritage;
  - PPS11: Planning and Waste Management;
  - PPS13: Transportation and Land Use;
  - PPS15: Planning and Flood Risk (Revised);
  - PPS 16: Tourism; and
  - PPS21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside.
- 2.53. Planning policy is discussed in the relevant assessment chapters and also Chapter 23: Impact on Plans and Policies.

<sup>2</sup> DOE, [https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/planning\\_statements\\_and\\_supplementary\\_planning\\_guidance.htm](https://www.planningni.gov.uk/index/policy/planning_statements_and_supplementary_planning_guidance.htm)

<sup>3</sup> DOE, Sept 2015, <https://www.planningni.gov.uk/spps>