

DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Chairperson: B. Brennan. Vice Chairperson: S. Jay Secretary: S. Boyle.
Treasurer: K. O'Neill PRO: C. Kurtz

Re: Review of Dublin Docklands Development 1997 Master Plan

Dear Ms. Prendergast ,

I refer to our recent telephone conversation regarding the proposed review of the 1997 Docklands Master Plan and wish to make the following submission for consideration and inclusion in any draft amendments.

Preface

The Dublin 15 Community Council is a voluntary Community umbrella group representing between 40 / 50 community and residential groups in the Dublin 15 area.

Planning and transport matters are amongst the issues which the Community Council involves itself. Since the early 80s we have consistently lobbied for improved public transport in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA).

In 1997 we suggested to Government the use of the Spencer Dock railhead as an alternative commuter station / line to supplement the congested Connolly / Tara Street commuter stations. The development of Spencer Dock for such a purpose has since been a consistent objective of the Community Councils transport and planning strategies.

Blanchardstown

The greater Blanchardstown area is the fastest growing suburban region in Ireland. It has been officially recognised for some years now that the area suffers from an inadequate communications infrastructure. Such is the extent of the problem that over the past four years two official studies have been commissioned to attempt to deal with the present / future issues arising from the lack of an adequate / integrated communications framework for Blanchardstown. In addition separate studies have also been carried out on the Heavy / Light Rail potential for the area.

In our view the maximum exploitation of the Maynooth heavy rail line is an essential element in any integrated framework that is to be implemented.

Our view has been consistently supported by any of the official reports published to date (including the DTO Platform for Change 2016).

Constraints on provision of additional rail services for the GDA out of the City Centre

Irish Rail confirms that the number heavy rail services from the Western and North/South routes into Connolly / City Centre cannot be increased as the existing signalling system is operating at capacity.

The provision of additional carriages over the coming year for existing rail sets will alleviate the problem to a limited extent.

With the many thousands of new residents / employees etc commuting to / from the western areas of the GDA it is vital that they are provided with sustainable public transport options. As the permanent way is in place for the heavy rail services (including Spencer Dock) for these areas, for a relatively modest investment these commuters can be provided with sustainable transport options.

The opening up of Spencer Dock to the Maynooth Line would serve as a partial solution to the capacity constraint that exists in the current city centre lines.

However, for an optimal solution, the funds must be provided to improve the signalling in the city centre. By doing so we would ensure that the heavy rail links are fully exploited and that we retain the maximum flexibility that the use of both the heavy / light rail would bring to public transportation use in the GDA.

DDDA Transport policy

We have reviewed the 1997 Master Plan and were pleased to note that the DDDA has placed a high emphasis on the use of the Docklands as a modal hub for public transport.

In our view ,

Public Transport - To be effective must have the following characteristics

BE : REGULAR, RELIABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE, FLEXIBLE and INTEGRATED

High Quality Public Transport is the key to success in sustaining increased densities in Urban / Suburban areas.

We would suggest that the Docklands has additional potential as a Modal Hub to that previously outlined in the 1997 Master Plan.

It is also noted that the Docklands is not specifically serviced by LUAS in so far as these services are between 1Km / 1.5Km from the centre of the Docklands Area. We would urge that the service be extended to the Centre Docklands(to the Modal interchange - see below).

We would suggest that the Docklands represent an ideal / once off opportunity to ensure that we Plan In, rather than Plan Out the maximum flexibility / integration possible into the City Centres congested public transport arrangements.

Accordingly we have set out below a number of options which should be considered in order to deliver the benefits of a regular ,flexible ,and integrated public transport system .

It can service

- Heavy rail links from the Maynooth (Western GDA).
- Heavy rail links from the Drogheda (Northern GDA).
- DART from the Northern approach.
- Metro – primarily Dublin Airport
- LUAS city centre terminal - extend line from Abbey St.
- Extend either light / heavy rail link to North Wall Ferry terminals or connect via DABS
- Subterranean link under the Liffey to provide a link to the North / South rail line in the vicinity of Grand Canal Dock (and possibly LUAS / Metro expansion links).
Alternatively, provide a DABS link from the DDDA terminal station to the North / South rail line via Macken St bridge to the Grand Canal Dock station.
- Ensure frequent DABS link from the termini to the City Centre.
- Provide an interchange station (uplink) between Western rail line and North / South line at point marked with pink circle on map submitted.
- Provide a link to Hueston Station by reopening Phoenix Park heavy rail tunnel link to feed into Maynooth line.

In considering these options we would point out that the Maynooth line should not be entirely diverted to a Spencer Dock station as to do so would make the train unattractive to the greater proportion of commuters who travel to destinations outside the area of Spencer Dock. It is recommended that Spencer Dock is seen as a parallel destination during peak commuting hours and a secondary destination in off peak hours.

Rail Reservations

The Authority will be aware of the need to preserve the maximum degree of flexibility for public transport links in the Docklands Area .In an era of increasing traffic congestion, the attractiveness or otherwise of the Docklands will be seen in terms of its accessibility and ease of communication etc.

It is therefore vital to ensure that the revised Master Plan incorporates twin track(both Light and Heavy Rail) reservations in line with our suggestions above.

In the short to medium term it is essential for the future development of our Area that we have access to Spencer Dock , to fail to ensure this will result in sever adverse impacts on the economic and social development of those communities serviced by the Western heavy rail suburban service.

In determining the rail reservations for the Heavy Rail services please note that it is planned to electrify the Maynooth Service by 2007 (DTO Platform for change). Therefore provisions for an electrified service needs to be factored into the decision on the alignments etc.

Additional matters for consideration

The success of any Public Mass Transit System depends on a number of factors. We have listed below a couple of issues that we feel are essential ingredients for any policy on Public transport for the Docklands / GDA .

Fare structures

By international standards public transport in Dublin is expensive and inflexible in its ticketing arrangements.

Currently bus and train travel pricing does not encourage crossover onto other services or multi use of a bus fare outside a single transfer within a 90 minute period.

Integrated ticketing is required to increase the flexibility and attractiveness of Public Transport.

The DTO must not place barriers in the way of cash paying passengers and treat them less favourably than non-cash customers. To do so would be interpreted as taking a stick instead of a carrot to the travelling public. All customers should be welcome, regardless of how they pay.

Currently fares are structured for both bus & train so as to discourage short hops. This policy should be reversed outside of peak hours so as to maximise the use of public transport throughout the day.

A complete rethink is required on pricing strategy and fare/ticket structures to promote public transport usage.

- Reduce fares generally and in particular for local bus network to encourage full use of local services, even for short hops. The same logic should also apply to the train services.
- Off peak, weekend fares should encourage ,act as an incentive for usage.
- This would reduce unnecessary car trips for shopping / leisure activities etc.
- It would serve to promote social inclusion.
- By making it readily available, affordable etc, more use would be made of it.

Caution that the entry of private operated transport does not mean that existing arrangements for social welfare recipients are disturbed. To upset the current highly regarded system would be to promote Social Exclusion.

Internal traffic

The absence of a comprehensive local bus network in the GDA is generating unnecessary car journeys and failing to exploit available public transport. Is the suggested DBAS as comprehensive and frequent as it needs to be ?

- Is any section of the community (residential / commercial etc) more than 5 minutes walk from a Bus.
- Will those buses co-ordinate / link in with city centre and rail heads ?
- Ensure that the DABS serves new communities as soon as the first of the new properties are occupied to ensure that sustainable commuting habits are formed upon ones arrival in an area(in the suburbs bus services lag development by years).

Summary

The Docklands has tremendous potential to greatly enhance the sustainable development of public transport in the GDA.

It is regarded by us as an essential element in the future development of the Maynooth Heavy Rail service and is vital to the economic and social development of this area.

Accordingly we ask that as a minimum, the revised Master Plan incorporate twin track reservations for our Heavy rail service and that of the Light rail services.

Thank you for affording us this opportunity to present our views on the review process.

We look forward to using the Docklands (Spencer Dock) as our new city centre destination on our electrified DART service !

Yours Sincerely,

Charlie Kurtz
PRO