

DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Representing: Blanchardstown-Castleknock-Clonsilla-Mulhuddart

Chair: C. Kurtz. Vice Chair: J Greene, Secretary: C Durnin, Treasurer: Leo Gibson, P.R.O: K. O'Neill

By e-mailed to devplan@fingalcoco.ie
Senior Executive Officer,
Planning Department,
Fingal County Council
County Hall
Swords
Co. Dublin

15 September 2007

Dear Senior Executive Officer

On behalf of DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL I wish to make the following observations on the Draft of Proposed Variation of the Fingal Development Plan 2005-2011 in relation to LANDS AT BARBERSTOWN, BARNHILL, DUBLIN 15.

1.0 General planning issue

The existing residentially zoned lands at Barnhill comprise approximately **40.55 hectares (100 acres)** and are zoned RS1:

“To provide for new residential communities in accordance with approved Local Area Plans and subject to the provision of the necessary social and physical infrastructure
and include the Local Objective 385: No development shall occur on these lands until Iarnrod Eireann gives a written commitment to provide a train service to a new station at this site

- As the council is aware, this development takes place to the south of the Hansfield SDZ, and will be serviced from Hansfield for water, sewage, road access and public transport. Development on these lands should not undermine the phased delivery of the infrastructure promised with Hansfield. For this reason no development should take place on these lands until the entire infrastructure required for Phase 3 of the Hansfield SDZ is in place and functioning.
- The approved SDZ plan for Hansfield will be the dominant influence on the general Barnhill lands.

2.0 Integration with existing development.

This development takes place to the south of the Hansfield SDZ, and will be serviced from Hansfield for water, sewage, road access and public transport. Development on these lands should not undermine the phased delivery of the infrastructure promised with Hansfield. For this reason the LAP needs to clearly state that no development shall take place on these lands until the entire infrastructure required for Phase 3 of the Hansfield SDZ is in place and functioning.

The key Hansfield SDZ phasing requirements were:

No more than 1,000 units occupied without:

- ❑ The permanent construction of the first primary school with a minimum of 8 number classrooms of permanent construction.

No more than 2,000 units occupied without:

- ❑ Construction of a second Primary School and Post Primary School each with a minimum of 8 number classrooms of permanent construction,
- ❑ The provision of a community centre.
- ❑ The provision of a 15-minute train service at Hansfield Station (4 per hr) and a 7.5 minute train service at Clonsilla Station (8 per hr) during the peak hours, each train with a capacity of 1,250 passengers.

The community council welcomed An Bord Pleanála decision to grant permission for the Hansfield SDZ as a landmark decision which will ensure that the growth of Dublin 15 will be constrained by the timely delivery of schools, community facilities and transport infrastructure.

Of particular concern is the possibility that development in the Barnhill would “leap frog” phase 2 or phase 3 of the Hansfield SDZ. If this was to occur the results for the general Dublin 15 area would be catastrophic.

3.0 Format of future residential development

The Barnhill area is located in the periphery of an outer suburban area. The Dublin 15 area has traditionally attracted new families and young couples preparing to have a family.

Recent trends have confirmed this, although the building pattern has changed (from exclusively semi-detached estate houses 15 years ago to a mix of houses, duplex and apartments today), the area continues to attract new families and young couples preparing to have a family.

Given the proximity of the proposed rail line to Dunboyne it is expected that duplex and apartments will feature close to the proposed rail station.

4.0 Provision of local community and educational facilities

This development will generate demand for services, experience elsewhere in Dublin 15 has shown that when developments are constructed sequentially their education facilities need to be provided as part of the new area rather than rely on adjacent facilities with subsequent overcrowding.

The community's experience is that the delivery of new schools is painfully slow and with little or no co operation from developers. An example is where Menolly Holmes & Manor Park appealed the requirement in the Hansfield SDZ to provide the site for the post primary school; the Dept. of Education robustly defended the school site at the An Bord Pleanala oral hearing stating clearly that there was no spare capacity in the existing primary and post primary schools in Dublin 15.

At the Oral Hearing to the Hansfield SDZ in November 2005 the Department of Education presented it's formula for calculating new school places as follows:

- ❑ Assumed occupancy rate of 3 per household
- ❑ National average figure for primary school attendance as a % of total population (11.3%)
- ❑ National average figure for post primary school attendance as a % of total population (8.5%)
- ❑ At a density of 20 housing units / acre, population would require 678 primary school places and 510 post primary school places.

From the formula used by the Dept. of Education the criterion is national average, it is to be expected that this would be surpassed in a rapidly growing area like Dublin 15. Clearly if the density was to increase this would drive a need for more school places.

Hansfield SDZ oral hearing the Dept. of Education clearly stated that the schools in Hansfield were required for Hansfield – unless development is delayed for at least 10 years after Hansfield is complete, Barnhill will have to provide sites for a primary and post primary school.

For the Barnhill area to be a successful development Fingal county council planning department must identify and hold secure sites for primary and post primary schools. The development plan currently fails to reserve any sites for schools for the general Barnhill area. **This gap must be addressed by reserving school sites in the land changing from (Open Space) OS to (Residential) RS1.**

Ideally schools should be located adjacent to the Class 1 public open space at Barberstown, Clonsilla, so that playing fields are available in close proximity to the schools. The council may consider subsequently swapping school sites within the Barnhill area in the interest of effective land use, **however experience has shown that if the site is not reserved it will be immensely difficult to subsequently acquire a school site.**

5.0 Legacy of planning failures in Dublin 15

Local public representatives are aware of the annual crisis for parents in Dublin 15 in securing a place for their children's education.

The Dublin 15 area has grown rapidly from 53,221 in 1996 to 90,952 (prelim census 2006 figures) an increase of 71%, the Castleknock area has grown from 15,875 ('96) to 21,504 an increase of 35%.

With this growth, the diversity of the area has also changed, with a significant numbers of UK nationals, citizens from Eastern Europe, professionals from Asia (healthcare and technology) and asylum seekers. This was initially a positive experience for both the native Irish and the "newcomers". The children experienced diversity within the classroom, parent interaction between the native Irish and the "new Irish", Irish people have a natural curiosity and a long tradition in Dublin 15 of welcoming people originating outside the area.

Recent developments.

The pressure on primary school places in Diswellstown increased significantly in 2006, where demand in the catchment area of St Patrick's NS was enough to fill 6 ½ classes of junior infants, the capacity of St Patrick's NS was 3 classes per year. As the school had empty classrooms at senior level (no students at 5th & 6th class) this situation was diffused somewhat by enrolling a fourth class of junior infants.

The pressure on school places continued in 2007, with schools in Dublin 15 clearly not able to cope with the demand for school places. In response to this demand schools are retreating to their core catchment group:

- Educate Together schools maintain a maximum of two classes per year and enroll on a first come basis (where children can enroll from birth).
- Faith based schools are enrolling based on children's religion / sibling already in school.
- Community College enrolls with preference to sibling already in school / length of time in catchment area.

The outcome of this situation of inadequate supply of school places is:-

- Serious dissatisfaction and resentment amongst parents who are refused school places for their children
- Tensions rising in the community between native Irish and the "new Irish".
- Reasonable expectation amongst parents that an area designed for new family housing would make provision for school places.

Both Educate Together and the Catholic Schools have stated that while the media focus is on enrolment policies the current crisis has come about due to a failure to plan for school sites and the absence of a satisfactory mechanism to release them for schools.

Growth in demand for primary school places continues, Scoil Colm was established this year as an emergency school for the Diswellstown area and has enrolled 3 classes of Junior Infants.

This month the Multi-denominational group Educate Together has submitted plans to open 25 new schools across the state, 4 of these schools are in the Dublin 15 area (East Carpenterstown/ Luttrellstown/ Porterstown, Phibblestown and Phoenix Park). Only 2 of the 4 schools proposed for Dublin 15 have reserved sites (Phibblestown and Phoenix Park).

There is an urgent need for Fingal county council to address the school crisis in partnership with the Department of Education & Science. The Department of Education & Science has recognised Dublin 15 as the priority 1 area. **Site identification and acquisition is the bottleneck**

The community council is frustrated that this current crisis has come to pass; we have raised this issue on many occasions, noticeably in writing on the following occasions:

- 26 November 2000 in our submission on the Draft Area Action Plan for the former Phoenix Park Racecourse we requested a reserved site for primary school and a post primary school. (Fingal declined to reserve a site for a post primary school.
- 5 September 2003 in our submissions on the Draft Fingal County Council Development Plan we made a detailed submission outlining the need for additional reserved sites for a second post primary school site in Castleknock and expressing concern with the explosive growth of the Littlepace / Castaheaney / Hansfield area the community council believe that the area is inadequately provided for in terms of school sites.
- In December 2004 all four Castleknock elected members sponsored a motion that the manager reserve a site in Castleknock for a post primary school.
- Department of Education & Science submission to Hansfield SDZ oral hearings at An Bord Pleanála.
 - Oral hearing November 2005:
 - School planning section 2004 identified the need for 4,000 additional post primary school places in the Dublin 15 area based on housing developments since 2002 + outstanding planning permissions.
 - Figures do not take account of zoned land where no planning permission exists.
 - Oral hearing October 2003:
 - No surplus accommodation in existing schools.
 - Reduction in maximum class sizes and changing nature of post primary education impacts (previous) maximum capacity of existing schools.
 - Recognizes need for diversity where resources allow.

The Dublin 15 Community Council welcome the commitment from the Department of Education is to build up to 30 new schools over the next three years in the Fingal County Council area as part of a new fast-track building programme, we are particularly pleased that Dublin 15 has featured prominently in the list of primary and post primary school.

Our analysis is that at least 4 new post primary schools are required to provide an education to the children currently in existing primary schools in Dublin 15. Phibblestown and Castleknock's needs are most pressing.

The Barnhill area at a density of 20 housing units / acre, population would require 678 primary school places and 510 post primary school places. Given the proximity of the proposed Hansfield rail station the density is expected to be in excess of that.

In view of the urgent need to provide for the ever increasing demand for primary and post primary school places, we request that Fingal County Council address this issue by reserving this site of 3.8 hectares for two primary schools and a post primary school in the lands subject to this variation.

We are available to discuss further any of the issues raised in our submission.

Yours sincerely,

Kieran O'Neill

Kieran O'Neill
Public Relations Officer
Dublin 15 Community Council