

DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Representing: Blanchardstown-Castleknock-Clonsilla-Mulhuddart

By e-mailed to: electoralareacommittees@environ.ie

Public consultation.

The Secretary,
Electoral Area Boundary Committee,
Room 2.03, Custom House,
Dublin 1

13 March 2008

Re: Constituency Commission Submission

Dear Sirs,

On behalf of DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL I wish to make the following observations on the call for written submissions in relation to Committees to review local electoral areas.

1.0 General

The Dublin 15 community council welcomes the review of constituencies particularly Dublin 15 where the area is currently under represented in population ratio.

Who are the Dublin 15 Community Council?

The Dublin 15 Community Council was formed 15 years ago (merging the Castleknock & Blanchardstown community councils which date from the early 1970's) to provide an umbrella organisation for the many residents and voluntary community groups in the Dublin 15 area.

Residents Associations and Community groups focus on their own specific areas but often feel powerless to influence the big issues like transport, educational, recreational & sporting infrastructure or crime prevention. The Community Council provides a forum to discuss these issues and potential solutions.

Our main objective is to develop the consensus views of the Dublin 15 community in matters relating to Planning & Development, Public Transport, Environment, Education, Health Care, Policing, Job Creation, Recreational Facilities, General Infrastructure and Tourist facilities. Having developed the consensus, make representation to State and other Statutory Bodies through a wide variety of communication channels, with the aim of improving the quality of life for the residents of Dublin 15.

2.0 Growth of Dublin 15.

The greater Blanchardstown area (Dublin 15) was earmarked from the early seventies as one of County Dublin's three new towns. It has been anticipated for the past twenty years that this area would eventually accommodate a population of circa 100,000 persons. The adoption of residential density guidelines has resulted in increased densities particularly along the Maynooth rail line leading to the expectation that the area will exceed a population of 120,000 based on the availability of lands currently residentially zoned.

The break up of Dublin County Council into 3 county councils and 1 city council has helped develop a specific identity for the area. This is reinforced by the Fingal county council who have an administrative office in the Blanchardstown Town centre and an area committee based on the Castleknock and Mulhuddart wards to develop a strong local identity.

The Greater Blanchardstown area is defined by the river Liffey to the South, the Phoenix Park to the East, the county border with Meath to the West and the N2 road to the North.

Fingal development board report (strategy 2002-2011) predict Dublin 15 population reaching 118,000 by 2011 based on zoned lands and current rate of development. The Census figures support that projection

2002 census data is as follows:

- The Dublin 15 area has grown rapidly from 53,221 in 1996 to 69,566 an increase of 31%.
- Within Dublin 15 some areas have increased by 60%.

2006 census data is as follows

- The Dublin 15 area has grown rapidly from 69,566 in 2002 to 90,952 an increase of 20%.

In the past few years the Ireland has undergone a radical transformation. Our economy has achieved annual growth rates, which are the envy of our European partners. All indications are that for the immediate future, the economy will continue to grow at levels exceeding the EU norm. The greater Blanchardstown area is currently one of fastest growing regions in the EU and an important area in terms of satisfying the appetite of the 'Celtic Tiger'.

With the explosion in economic development and the growth of residential developments in Dublin 15 have come many of the associated problems that accompany such success.

Those relevant are;-

- Higher demand for housing.
- Increased inward investment in industrial / commercial activity, much of it attracted to the greater Blanchardstown area in turn generating local housing needs.

Future expansion

- There was land zoned to build 13,732 new homes in Dublin 15 prior to the adoption of the current development plan. The 2005 – 2011 plan added additional residentially zoned lands at Barnhill to the west and Hollystown to the north east of Dublin 15.
- CSO population trends: The report forecasts that the figure for Dublin will grow by 317,000 by 2021 (from 1.123 million) a 28% increase. It is expected that development pressure will continue in Fingal and in the Dublin 15 area.

3.0 Growth of Fingal.

Fingal is the fastest growing area in the state. It is almost entirely contained within Dublin West and Dublin North Dáil constituencies. Given the CSO population projections it is likely to continue to grow at a faster pace than other areas within the state.

Both the National Spatial Strategy and the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Greater Dublin Area set out the levels of population growth expected and how each region and county should accommodate the expected growth.

The National Spatial Strategy provides population projections up to 2020 and gives a projection for the Greater Dublin Area (Dublin, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow) of between 1.9 and 2.2 million. The Regional Planning Guidelines set out population projections HI and LO for the Greater Dublin Area for the years 2010, 2016 and 2020. The favoured LO projection for the GDA 2010 is 1,696,581. The Guidelines forecast a population of 259,757 for Fingal for 2010.

The Regional Planning Guidelines - Greater Dublin Area set out the household numbers required for each county from 2002 up to 2010. It gives a provision requirement for Fingal to 2010 of 44,996 new dwellings.

Fingal development plan has the strategic policy of

- Consolidating the growth of the major centres of Blanchardstown, Swords and Balbriggan largely within their previously identified limits by encouraging infill rather than Greenfield development and by intensification at appropriately identified locations.
- Consolidating development to prevent urban sprawl.

It is clear from the population projections in the National Spatial Strategy and the trends measured and predicted by the CSO the population growth in Fingal will continue to expand faster than the Dublin region and the country as a whole.

4.0 Specific concerns

4.1 Planning for growth

Fingal development plan has the strategic policy of consolidating the growth of the major centres of Blanchardstown, Swords and Balbriggan. It is inevitable that these 3 areas will continue to grow relative to the remainder of the constituency. In planning for growth the commission should endeavour to ensure that these areas are over represented (i.e. with lower number of electors to elected representatives) as they will shortly become underrepresented as the area grows.

The coastal communities of Howth and Malahide electoral areas will continue to decline relative to the population of Fingal. These areas are already overrepresented with 6,684 electors per councillor in Howth and 7,438 electors per councillor in Malahide, compared to an average 10,000 electors per councillor in Fingal. Our recommendation is that these 2 electoral areas be combined and increased to at least 10,000 electors per councillor.

4.2 Recognizing the Fingal wards of Mulhuddart & Castleknock as central to the constituency of Dublin West.

The reform of local government in Dublin has transformed the administration of the greater Blanchardstown area. We now have a large office in the Blanchardstown Town centre where approximately 50% of Fingal County Council's staff are located. The county council has adopted a 3 area committee approach with all local issues debated at the Mulhuddart & Castleknock Area Committee prior to decision making at the monthly county council meeting.

From an administrative and political perspective the Fingal wards of Mulhuddart & Castleknock as central to the constituency of Dublin West Dáil constituency.

The growth in Dublin 15 over the last 10 years has been to the west of both the Mulhuddart & Castleknock electoral areas. The growth in Mulhuddart electoral area has been much faster, with the population justifying an increase from 4 to 5 councillors.

Making this change alone would not bring both areas close to the average of 10,000 electors per councillor.

Number of options:

Option A

Leave wards the same just add extra seat to Mulhuddart, this would fall within 10% variance, Mulhuddart (+6.6%) Castleknock (-5.8%)

1998 Report had the following variance: Mulhuddart (+3.52%) Castleknock (-4.24%)

Option B

Move an existing Electoral Division of 2500/3000 population out of Mulhuddart into Castleknock. No electoral division (ED's) with that number adjacent to Castleknock.

Option C

Move 2500/3000 population out of Mulhuddart into Castleknock. The least disruptive to both elected councillors and the electorate would be to move the recently constructed estates between the New Ongar Rd and Clonsilla Road as a boundary.

As the population growth in Mulhuddart is likely to continue to grow faster than Castleknock (due to undeveloped residentially zoned lands our recommendation is that electoral areas should be balanced by transferring some population from Mulhuddart to the Castleknock electoral area.

4.3 Positioning the constituency for the inevitable planned growth to “endeavour to maintain continuity in relation to the arrangement of constituencies”

In planning for this growth we recommend that the constituency commission consider the following long term strategy for Dublin North and Dublin West (Fingal) Dáil constituencies.

Constituency	2007 (population 213,209)	Proposed 2011 (population 259,757)
Dublin North	4 seats	5 seats
Dublin West	4 seats	5 seats

Fingal is the one of the fastest growing area in Western Europe, this growth is likely to continue as the primary growth center in the Dublin region. The slowdown in residential construction observed over the last 12 months may mean that the growth targets in the Fingal County Development Plan may not be met by the 2011 date. However given the major infrastructural programs in place (Metro North, Metro West and the city center Rail Interconnector) and the fact that zoned residential development land is primarily in the ownership of the state's major property developers, this growth is expected to occur over the short to medium term.

As can be seen from the above analysis, Fingal's Dáil representation is expected to increase from 8 to 10 over the period. The most likely scenario is that it will go from 8 currently to 9 and eventually to 10 TD's. This representation is likely to result in Electoral Divisions in the Swords area moving between Dublin West and Dublin North (Fingal) Dáil constituencies to maintain an equitable Dáil electorate..

The committee's brief was to separate local electoral areas into Dáil Constituencies, however this is likely to be fluid in the Swords area. Perhaps it is logical to retain Swords as a single electoral area.

5.0 Proposed Local electoral areas changes for Fingal

Population Electoral Area	Persons	Males	Females	Councilor assigned to area	Current People per Councilor	Proposed	Proposed People per Councilor	Variation
Fingal	239992	119200	120792	24	10,000	24	10,000	
Balbriggan	40786	20219	20567	4	10,197	4	10,197	102.0%
Castleknock	37668	18789	18879	4	9,417	4	9,417	94.2%
Howth	20052	9811	10241	3	6,684	2	10,026	100.3%
Malahide	29752	14729	15023	4	7,438	3	9,917	99.2%
Mulhuddart	53306	26470	26836	4	13,327	5	10,661	106.6%
Swords	58428	29182	29246	5	11,686	6	9,738	97.4%
A combined Howth and Malahide electoral area would be as follows:								
Howth - Malahide	49804	24540	25264	7	7,115	5	9,961	99.6%

6.0 Overall representation numbers

Although outside the committee's brief, the average number of population to councillors in Fingal at 10,000 is very high. Unlike TD's councillors do not receive a salary. The onerous nature of representing effectively a population of 30,000 to 70,000 people per constituency may reduce the attractiveness of standing for election. The community council request the committee to make a recommendation to government to address this issue by increasing the number of councillors.

We are available to discuss further any of the issues raised in our submission, should the need arise.

Yours sincerely,

Dublin 15 Community Council