

DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Representing: Blanchardstown-Castleknock-Clonsilla-Mulhuddart

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

5 December 2007

Dear Sirs,

On behalf of DUBLIN 15 COMMUNITY COUNCIL I wish to make the following observations on the Clonsilla Village Urban Centre Strategy, DUBLIN 15.

The area is bounded by the Clonsilla Road to the North, the Maynooth rail line to the South, Clonsilla rail station to the West and the Dr Troy Bridge to the East.

The intent of the strategy is to create a realistic vision for the future enhancement of the vitality and viability of the Village as an Urban Centre within Dublin 15, providing a framework to guide the formulation of future development proposals.

We have structured our submission to address the issues for investigation in the strategy:

- Proposals for the co-ordinated development of greenfield sites and future infill development
- Creation of a network of safe pedestrian and cyclist routes
- Traffic management and car parking strategy for the village
- Potential of the Royal Canal as a local amenity and preservation of existing local heritage
- Creation of a network of public open spaces and an enhanced public realm and character within the Village

1.0 Current situation:

Clonsilla Village has grown organically over a long period of time, in comparison with the rest of Dublin 15. The organic growth reflects a rural village that has grown one building at a time on a largely ad hoc basis. There are some landmark buildings, for example St Mary's Church (C of I), the graveyard, the Gate Lodge and the original 3 story St Mochta's primary school (derelict). However much of the village reflects a 1950's rural village of modest architectural quality, some of which is in poor state of repair.

The result of the aforementioned pattern of uncoordinated development, with no clearly defined/purpose built village centre, lack of parking (except for Clonsilla Inn), poor access to existing businesses, traffic black-spots at the junctions of Sherlin Road, at train station / Hansfield Rd, narrow footpaths, no room for a cycle path, etc has led to a village which lacks a 'Heart' / character and a sense of quality. Contrast this with the type of development encouraged in the coastal areas of Fingal and the many 'high quality' villages that are present there.

The level of community amenities in the village have not kept pace with the development of the surrounding residential areas, with a single room community centre (with a 1950's style tin roof), a restored gate lodge and a room available at St Mary's church for community use. Sporting facilities are available at St Mochta's AFC which dates to the 1930's.

This review is long overdue and it is our strong desire as a Community to see a Community centric Local Area Plan for Clonsilla emerge from this process which will give real meaning to the undertaking by the Council management and Councillors to create Sustainable Communities.

2.0 Concerns:

The concerns and fears of the local residents are:

- That re-development of the village would displace some critical infrastructure, for example the petrol station could be closed and redeveloped as residential. There are many areas in Dublin where the petrol station site is more valuable for residential development. This has resulted in reduced number of filling stations, less competitive pressure and higher fuel costs and greater distances to be travelled to avail of fuel.
- Concern that backlands would be developed with inadequate access, would be high density, needing acoustic protection from train tracks.

- The current school situation, in Dublin 15 in general and this area in particular has reached crisis proportions. Year on year growth in primary school enrolments in the Porterstown parish has resulted in 2 classes at 6th class and 10 classes at Junior Infants. This growth has yet to plateau and there is no provision at second level for this growth at primary level to feed through. Sustainable development will require significantly more school places or constraints on the pace of re-development.
- Three zones identified for mixed retail / residential. Given the current and future traffic situation in the vicinity of Clonsilla rail station (even with a new road drawing off traffic) it is difficult to see how retail development in the vicinity of the rail station and the consequential traffic it would generate would conform to best traffic management criteria or the principles of sustainable development for that area.
- The age profile of the residents of Clonsilla Village encompasses many who are in their latter years. As those existing residents pass on, their properties become redevelopment opportunities. Regretfully we have witnessed many of these types of properties being turned into faceless Apartment blocks of poor quality, being occupied by mainly transient type occupiers, the majority of whom have no interest in participating in the local community. Also as we have seen with the Corduff Cottages developers tend to wait, allowing properties remain unoccupied and becoming derelict. This dereliction has a domino effect on adjacent properties and results in lower property values in surrounding dwellings.
- While Fingal County Council have done a good job in preserving existing hedgerows on either side of the Clonsilla Road, they are under pressure from development. The Clonsilla Village Urban Centre Strategy will need to ensure hedgerows continue to be preserved.
- There is little or no safe access to canal from Clonsilla (other than at existing canal bridges). Also the path as it exists is scarcely useable.

3.0 Our proposals:

Attached please find our proposals in the format suggested in the invitation for submissions.

3.1 Proposals for the co-ordinated development of greenfield sites and future infill development

The Clonsilla village is one of the few areas in Dublin 15 that predate the urban conurbation of 90,000 people. As discussed in section “1 Current situation”. There is an opportunity to build on the existing “heritage” by preserving a sense of where the village originated from, while modernising it and turning it into a thriving centre. Some quality examples come to mind:

- √ Kilkenny where the medieval sense is preserved yet provides housing and retail to 21st century standards.
- √ Ongar Village which is scarcely 5 years old but is based on the traditional rural village street concept.

A starting point is to identify what is worthy of retention and ensure that re-development enhances and reinforces a coherent sense of place. We recommend the following for inclusion in the Clonsilla Village Urban Centre Strategy:

- Audit of existing buildings to determine what is worthy of retaining to preserve existing local heritage. This should form the basis of an architectural framework plan;

The architectural framework plan should address:

- Where complementary building form is required along the Clonsilla road and in the commercial centres.
 - New residential development external finishes are in keeping with the village scheme.
 - Back-land developments have sufficient set back and graduated increase in building heights, so that a sense of place in Clonsilla Village is retained.
- Encourage new mixed retail / residential developments in the style of Ongar Village, with courtyard spaces for retail.
 - Residential development should focus on creating / providing mainly family type dwellings in higher density Housing layouts (not apartments). In addressing this we would encourage the provision of a pre defined number of two bed housing units to enable some of our more elderly residents opt for trading down, whilst freeing up their existing larger housing units for families. Such designs should incorporate best practices with regard to creating sustainable communities.
 - In this instance and into the future we wish to see an emphasis on Community centric Planning and Development and a distinct move away from Developer led Planning and Development policies.
 - Limit and reduce “neon signs”, aim for “Killkenny standards.
- Phasing. The current school situation, in Dublin 15 in general and this area in particular has reached crisis proportions. 2 alternatives exist – more schools or phased development leading to sustainable increase in population.
 - Given the difficulty of identifying and acquiring school sites in the area and the inability of existing schools to further expand, the redevelopment of Clonsilla Village must be phased.
 - The Clonsilla Village Urban Centre Strategy must identify what the maximum sustainable yearly increase in population is. This needs to be enforceable as a planning condition.

- The re-development of the village **must not** displace critical infrastructure. As discussed in section “2. Concerns” the Clonsilla Village Urban Centre Strategy must seek to retain:
 - Petrol / Diesel filling station.
 - Funeral home.
 - Public House.
 - Existing diversity of restaurants, shops and community facilities.

3.2 Creation of a network of safe pedestrian and cyclist routes

- Safe pedestrian & cycle path along canal (High level with railing).

Provide a safe pedestrian footpath along the canal at the height of the surrounding fields, complete with railings to prevent someone falling into the deep cutting. Ensure that there is a high degree of passive supervision of the footpath when developing the “back lands”. Canal level walkway for daylight access.

Provide a safe pedestrian footpath along the canal at lower level, ensure that area is safe by trimming lower branches on trees and keeping shrub vegetation low.

The Canal amenity presents special challenges in this regard as collaterally such redevelopment will also present opportunities for anti social activity to take place (similar to Boardwalk along the Liffey). It is therefore vitally important that we redesign this walk in such a way to plan out/minimise the opportunity for such occurrences.(See 3.4 below).

- Existing footpaths along Clonsilla road to be widened.

This is a particular hazard for children and parents walking to the primary school as footpaths are very narrow.

3.3 Traffic management and car parking strategy for the village.

- Current car parking is haphazard. As noted earlier the village has grown organically, with many dwellings converted from residential to commercial or replaced by commercial units. Examples are the Indian & Italian restaurants who have very limited car parking spaces (typically 2 – 3 spaces). These restaurants have an agreement with the Clonsilla Inn for customer parking.
- The Spar, take-away restaurants, laundry, pharmacy, Clonsilla Hall and the Lodge have very limited parking which is inadequate for existing uses and rely on adjacent parking in the Clonsilla Inn.
- Undue reliance on Clonsilla Inn to provide parking for shops & restaurants. This is a very high risk that this arrangement is unlikely to continue, if the site is developed for other uses. It is reasonable to expect the Clonsilla Inn site to develop as a consequence of the Urban Centre Strategy.
- Clonsilla Hall (community centre) inaccessible for parents to drop of their children and there is no provision for community centre user car parking.
- Car parking at St Mochta NS a problem at drop / collection time. The school have an agreement with the Clonsilla Inn for parent parking in the morning. While the problem in the area reduced when St Patrick’s NS relocated to Diswellstown it is expected that this problem will re-emerge as St Mochta’s NS expands to a full 32 classroom school.
- Clonsilla Rail station is a major draw for commuter traffic. The council is aware of the problems faced by residents of Portersgate estate and has provided limited parking. Given the growth of the surrounding area it is impossible to address the parking demand. The obvious solution is a feeder bus to provide reasonable access to commuters. Any parking for mixed retail / residential will attract commuter park & ride – is this really a viable location for retail?
- Current Clonsilla Rail station - Hansfield Rd junction a bottleneck (traffic turning right to Hansfield Rd and the level crossing gates impact surrounding area).
- One way on Clonsilla road adding to congestion. Fingal commitment to re-examine this is noted and supported.
- Provide alternative access to Orchard Ave as the current access is substandard. Access could be improved by requiring the adjacent “back-lands” to provide a suburban standard road access and converting the existing access to a pedestrian only access.
- Ensure that new residential developments in “back-lands” are accessed via “cul de sac” from the Clonsilla road. Provide pedestrian & cycle linkage alongside the canal but avoid a vehicular rat-run.
- Discourage surface car parking by providing underground car parking for new retail and residential where possible.

- 3.4 Develop the potential amenity and heritage value of the Royal Canal and its environs. The Royal Canal is currently a “no go” area. The Clonsilla Village Urban Centre Strategy needs to make this an attractive amenity.
- All developments should face the canal and provide a high degree of passive supervision.
 - Trees & shrubs need to be managed to enhance canal amenity while providing a safe public space.
 - Fly tipping & dumping needs to be addressed by vigorous enforcement. Consider use of surveillance cameras to identify habitual “fly tippers”
 - The original St Mochta’s NS (currently derelict) needs to be restored as a heritage attraction.
 - Safe pedestrian & cycle path along canal (High level with railing).
 - Canal level walkway for daylight access.
 - Adjacent development should not overwhelm canal environment.
 - Where opportunities present, the class 2 Public Open Space should be located beside canal, railed off though to ensure young children cannot fall into Canal.
- 3.5 Creation of a network of public open spaces and an enhanced public realm and character within the Village.
- Audit of existing buildings & public spaces to determine what is worthy of retaining to preserve existing local heritage – whilst at the same time not permitting any loss of public open space.
 - Link network of public open spaces via the canal.
 - Address the shortage of active recreational amenities. Considerable development has taken place between the Clonsilla Road and the New Ongar Road. Little if any class 1 public open space was handed over. There are no children’s playgrounds in the Clonsilla area.
 - A children’s playground be provided in mixed retail / residential developments. This playground be located to the rear of the retail units and be clearly available for the general public.
 - ensure anti social behaviours do not occur on the children’s playground by ensuring it is open during store opening hours but secured when store is closed, and passive supervision.
 - Mixed use hard surface football / basketball and or tennis courts as part of new higher density residential development, generally available to the residents and clubs (on a similar basis that Fingal county council makes playing pitches available to clubs).

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

Yours sincerely,

Kieran O'Neill

Kieran O'Neill
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Dublin 15 Community Council