



LABRE PARK REDEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Labre Park, on the Kylemore Road in Ballyfermot, Dublin 10 is located to the south-east of Kylemore Park, between Kylemore Park Industrial Estate (to the north) and the Grand Canal and Gallblack Stream (to the south). Access to the existing site is from Kylemore Road with the estate road ending in a cul-de-sac. Labre Park is Dublin City Council's (DCC) oldest Traveller group housing scheme, established in 1967 and was the first site built specifically for Travellers by a Local Authority in Ireland. It is one of 3 Traveller specific accommodation sites available to Travellers on the Southside. Kylemore Grove lies adjacent to Labre Park and consists of 8 houses built in 1995, 3 of which were rebuilt in 2016 under Phase 1 of the Labre Park Redevelopment.

38 families currently live in Labre Park. There are 20 existing houses comprised of Kylemore Grove (8) and Labre (14 houses on the right hand side of the estate road). Including 2 extensions to existing houses, this will leave 16 families awaiting permanent accommodation.

a. Redevelopment of Labre Park

In 2014, it was proposed that Clúid Housing Association (Clúid) would act as development agent for the redevelopment of Labre Park and be appointed by DCC to manage the design and construction programme. Phase 1 of the Redevelopment was the rebuilding of 3 houses in Kylemore Grove by DCC, which completed in 2016.

Clúid would manage the completed scheme under a service level agreement while DCC retained ownership of the scheme. Clúid and the Ballyfermot Travellers Action Project (BTAP) would consult with the residents in Labre Park and gather information on the housing needs of families. Walsh & Associates were appointed by Clúid to design a development based on the consultation outcomes and in line with planning and design regulations to meet the housing needs of the Traveller community in Labre Park.

The consultation completed in December 2016 with residents agreeing on the type of accommodation to be provided e.g. bays, bungalows, two story houses semidetached etc. At that time there were 45 families living in Labre Park. Further consultations regarding play space, fire safety, road safety and community centre/space took place at later stages. It was also agreed over the course of the consultation that the existing accommodation would also be refurbished as part of the redevelopment.

Information sessions were provided from stakeholders which included and informed the final Plan:

- The Fire Safety Officer on the layout of the scheme
- Local Gardaí on anti-social behaviour

- Architects and the feedback received from residents
- Dublin City Council's Play Development Officer
- Labre Park residents on Traveller Culture
- Clúid Housing's Housing Management Team and Property Services Team.

A final plan was agreed in March 2018 and was brought before the South Central Area Committee where approval was given to begin the pre Part 8 process.

b. Pre Part 8 Planning Application

The pre-Part 8 Planning process consists of the compilation of a Design and Architectural package which is sent to the Planning section for comment. Included in this package are soil and sample surveys, Mechanical/Electrical Engineer Reports, Civic and Structural Engineer Reports which, in this case, included a Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment. Walsh & Associates were retained by Clúid to provide the necessary documentation that would support a Part 8 application.

In May 2019, the Planning Department reviewed the documentation provided and the pre Part 8 package was sent to all technical DCC departments/sections and other stakeholders for comment.

A number of issues were identified regarding fire safety, access, roads & traffic and drainage. These were all resolved with mitigations. Below is detailed the Flood Risk Assessment issue which has not been resolved despite a number of attempts by the Traveller Accommodation unit and Clúid to try to sufficiently respond to the risks identified during the technical department consultation process.

c. Flood Risk Assessment

The most contentious issue regarding the redevelopment plans was the drainage and flood risk management of the proposed development. From July 2019 to October 2020 a number of mitigation measures were put forward at meetings with Dublin City Council's Drainage Services and its Flood Projects and Water Framework Directive Division.

In essence the issues identified were:

- All of Labre Park, including the existing houses, is in an area of high flood risk.
- The proposed development in Labre Park, including the existing houses, is in an area designated Flood Zone A. The Gallblack stream which runs to the south of Labre Park and adjoining lands lie within Zone A of the Camac River System Floodplain. The area is undefended in terms of flooding, contains a stream that is prone to flooding periodically and further south of the location is the Grand Canal which could also have a lesser impact on any proposed development.

Definition of Flood Zones

Zone A: High probability of flooding: This zone defines areas with the highest risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. more than 1% probability or more than 1 in 100) and the coast (i.e. more than 0.5% probability or more than 1 in 200).

Highly vulnerable, including residential properties, essential infrastructure and emergency service facilities.

Zone B: Moderate probability of flooding: This zone defines areas with a moderate risk of flooding from rivers (i.e. 0.1% to 1% probability or between 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000) and the coast (i.e. 0.1% to 0.5% probability or between 1 in 200 and 1 in 1000).

Less vulnerable, such as retail and commercial and local transport infrastructure.

Zone C: Low probability of flooding: This zone defines areas with a low risk of flooding from rivers and the coast (i.e. less than 0.1% probability or less than 1 in 1000).

Water compatible, including open space, outdoor recreation and associated essential infrastructure, such as changing rooms.

The objective of the 'Planning System and Flood Risk Management' is to integrate flood risk management into the planning process, thereby assisting in the delivery of sustainable development. For this to be achieved, flood risk must be assessed as early as possible in the planning process.

Paragraph 1.6 of the Guidelines states that the core objectives are to:

- avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding;
- avoid new developments increasing flood risk elsewhere, including that which may arise from surface run-off;
- ensure effective management of residual risks for development permitted in floodplains;
- avoid unnecessary restriction of national, regional or local economic and social growth;
- improve the understanding of flood risk among relevant stakeholders; and
- ensure that the requirements of EU and national law in relation to the natural environment and nature conservation are complied with at all stages of flood risk management.

The guidelines aim to facilitate “the transparent consideration of flood risk at all levels of the planning process, ensuring a consistency of approach throughout the country”. Strategic Flood Risk Assessments therefore become a key evidence base in meeting these objectives.

In the case of Labre Park/Kylemore Road, the most notable floods have taken place in May 2001, March/September 2008, October 2011 and October/November 2016 following heavy rainfall. A further flood in 2005 was the result of a blockage of the Gallblack stream at the culvert to the west of Labre Park. This is significant in that the increased rainfall over the last twenty to twenty five years which has impacted greatly in the Labre Park/Kylemore Road area of Ballyfermot should now be determined as 20-30 year events as against the current norm of 100 year events given the frequency of flooding at that location.

Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment (SSFRA) – The purpose of site or project specific flood risk assessment is to consider all types of flood risk associated with the site and propose appropriate site management and mitigation measures to reduce flood risk to and from the site to an acceptable level.

An SSFRA for Labre Park was prepared by DBFL Consultant Engineers for Clúid and proposed various measures to address the flood risk, but acknowledged (section 7.6) that residual risks remain that require mitigation measures such as evacuation and erection of flood barriers.

A revised Flood Risk Assessment was submitted on the 31st January 2020. On the 6th of February the Flood Projects and Water Framework Directive Division raised a number of issues with that report. Broadly these include,

1. *DBFL has assessed the flood risk from the Grand Canal onto the southern portion of the site and have determined that the likelihood of flooding from the Canal at this point is 'remote'. As a minimum, DBFL would need to analyse typical and high canal levels to prove that flooding of the Gallinstown stream from the Canal is unlikely.*
2. *The flood risk assessment doesn't appear to directly address the fact that the proposed development includes a high wall between the Gallblack Stream and the proposed new houses. The exact line of the proposed wall and its proposed height need to be clarified. A flood route which floods an adjoining main roadway is not likely to be favoured by Roads and Traffic. Can they provide more information on this? Is this an existing flow path? And what happens to the water after it enters the public road?*
3. *The calculation of the necessary compensatory storage refers only to the 1% AEP but gives no indication as to what is the likely impact of the previously discussed boundary wall on the flood regime for storm events that have a lesser probability than the 100 year event. This risk needs to be addressed, as highlighted to DBFL at the last meeting. Specifically, they must establish the impact of the proposed development in an estimated 1,000 year flood event. As part of this exercise, they would need to include an assessment on the potential impact on neighbouring and downstream properties as well as an assessment on the site itself...as per the guidelines.*
4. *The compensatory storage is referred to in the report as 'level for level', in accordance with the OPW Guidelines, but neither the report nor the drawings clarify how this is to be achieved by the reprofiling of an area that is already part of the floodplain.*
5. *An outfall to stream from an underground attenuation system is shown and a flap valve is mentioned. DBFL has highlighted previously difficulties with the maintenance of the nearby culvert. There is no mention of any proposed maintenance regime for the proposed flap valve, nor is the flood risk associated with an absence of maintenance assessed for potential impacts.*
6. *The report refers to the Water Framework Directive and we are interest in finding out how the following aspects of that piece of legislation are addressed in the proposals:*
 - a. *There is a requirement to maintain a riparian corridor along all watercourses included in the City Development Plan. This is typically 10-15m on either side. Even from a practical point of view, a clearance of 3m between the top of the bank and such a substantial wall seems entirely insufficient.*
 - b. *The presence of waste on the site and any excavation of it can have impacts on the nearby watercourse and on the Camac River downstream. The proposed 'compensatory storage' is shown in an area where it is believed that an historical dump was located. The potential placement of deeper water over what is presumably an unlined dump has potential to cause increased contamination to both groundwater and the stream. Ordinarily a consultant would demonstrate that no infiltration into waste would result from proposals to develop a site. The lowering of ground at this location will also result in increased flooding during more frequent storm events. This would also potentially have the effect of increasing the infiltration of water into waste, increasing the environmental risks.*

Clúid attempted (with their engineers) to mitigate the very serious issues raised by the Flood Projects and Water Framework Directive Division and submitted a revised SSFRA. In April 2020 the division acknowledged the significant improvement in the SSFRA but advised that:

"At this point, given the complex nature of the existing flood plain and the associated properties including Labre Park, it would appear as though a full and proper understanding cannot be achieved in the absence of a full-catchment modelling

exercise, given the potential for flooding and the perceived impacts due to the proposed development in Zone A at this location. A contract that includes the development of a full-catchment model is currently underway, managed by Dublin City Council in partnership with the Office of Public Works and South Dublin County Council.

It is the opinion of the Flood Projects and Water Framework Directive Division that if a planning application was lodged on the basis of the documents submitted thus far for this site, the determination would be likely to be as along the following lines:

The proposed development is in an area that is at risk of flooding and the full extent of the flood risks and possible mitigation measures, if any, cannot be fully determined at present such that the Site Specific Flood Risk Assessment complies with the Ministerial Guidance. A determination on this proposed development is premature pending the outcome of the Camac River Flood Alleviation Study that is currently underway.

Several recently submitted applications for proposed developments within Zone A of the Camac River System Floodplain have been similarly regarded.”

Communication continued and by October, consultations with senior engineers suggested that they are unlikely to have an objection to the refurbishment of existing buildings that previously had Planning Permission, or to building new accommodation on the site where previous buildings had stood, subject to certain precautions that will ease flood risk concerns.

Recommendations for Moving Forward

The above details the current status of the redevelopment. The question is what we do now. There remains the option for redevelopment on the right hand side of Labre Park to cater for the majority of families. This will require developing additional new site(s) or housing options (including temporary lettings until additional culturally appropriate sites can be developed) as the number of families will exceed what is possible to build on the existing footprint.

As agreed with residents and Councillors, we will not proceed until all stakeholders have had a chance to consider the current position in full.

We have proposed putting in place a Regeneration Committee with an Independent Chair such as that which successfully oversaw the redevelopment of Charlemont Street flats. This would involve residents of Labre as part of the **oversight** as well as the **consultation**. I am not yet clear if residents wish to proceed with this proposal and I certainly believe it would not work without Traveller representation from Labre Park. We are open to alternative suggestions.

In the meantime, Dublin City Council and Clúid Housing Association are ready to work in close collaboration with the residents of Labre Park to agree a path forward.

Mary Hayes
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