

**The Chairman and Members of
North West Area Committee.**

Meeting: 15th June 2021

Item No: 9

**RE: Initiation of the Part 8 Process for Cearnog an tSeachtar Laoch
(Ballymun Civic Plaza) - for information purposes only.**

The existing plaza is located on the eastern side of main street, Ballymun. At present the site comprises of a combination of hardstand (concrete surface) and soft landscaping. The site is predominantly flat with an overall area of 6,375m² and is bound by Shangan Road to the north and east, Ballymun Main Street to the west and commercial buildings to the south.

Development:

The application seeks to improve the public realm within Cearnog an tSeachtar Laoch (Ballymun Civic Plaza) through a series of landscape enhancements that aims to create an identifiable central core within Main Street to act as a focal point for Ballymun in accordance with the recommendations of the Ballymun Local Area Plan.

Content of the Submission

The following documentation was lodged:

- Design and Part 8 Planning Proposal for the Town Centre of Ballymun prepared by AECOM, January 2021;
- Soft works Specification Ballymun Plaza prepared by AECOM January 2021
- Ballymun Plaza infrastructure Report prepared by AECOM, 7 August 2020;
- Various layout plans, landscape plans, landscape specification and cross sections prepared by AECOM;
- Memo from Architects Division dated 12/4/21;
- Comments Environment & Transportation Department (including Air Quality Monitoring and Noise Control, Roads & Traffic – Transportation, Transportation Planning Division, Traffic Management and Control, Public Lighting Services Division, Waste Management Services – Waste Regulation, Road Maintenance Services, Road Design & Construction, Flood Projects and Water Framework Directive Division, Drainage Services, Maintenance – Pollution Control, Surface Water Maintenance Division, Wastewater Capital Projects, Sustainable Transport Unit, Air Quality Monitoring & Noise Control Unit); and
- E-Mail from City Archaeologist dated 25 MARCH 2020

Planning Context:

Zoning & Policy

The site is located in an area zoned objective 'Z4' within the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 (CDP), with the accompanying land-use objective to *'provide for and improve mixed services facilities'*. Library uses (community facility) are permissible under the Z4 zoning.

Dublin City Development Plan 2016 - 2020 Context

Section 14.8.4- District Centres

The site is governed by the land use zoning District Centre – Zone Z4 with objective “*To provide for and improve mixed-services facilities*”.

Open space is a permissible use in the Z4 zone.

Ballymun is identified as an SDRA (SDRA 2) in the DCDP 2016 -2022. 18no. such areas have been identified in the city as being capable of accommodating significant mixed-use new development in order to regenerate their respective area. These guiding principles for the SDRA have been incorporated into the Local Area Plan:

Ballymun is one of 8 designated Key District Centres (KDC 3) under the Dublin City Development Plan 2016 – 2022. As the top tier of the urban centres outside the city centre, key district centres have been identified which will provide a comprehensive range of commercial and community services

In relation to the Built Environment, it is noted that Key District Centres encourage the creation of high quality, mixed-use urban districts with a distinctive spatial identity and coherent urban structure of interconnected streets and child-friendly public spaces and urban parks.

Chapter 10 of Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022 sets out the following policies in relation to the development of public open space. The following policies are of relevance:

GH10: To continue to manage and protect and/ or enhance public open spaces to meet the social, recreational, conservation and ecological needs of the city and to consider the development of appropriate complementary facilities which do not detract from the amenities of spaces.

G19: To incorporate open space into the green infrastructure network for the city, providing a multi-functional role including urban drainage, flood management, biodiversity, outdoor recreation and carbon absorption

GH12: To ensure equality of access for all citizens to the public parks and open spaces in Dublin City and to promote more open space with increased accessibility and passive surveillance where feasible. In this regard the ‘Fields in Trust’ benchmark for green/recreational space city wide shall be a policy goal and quality standards.

G14: To promote the development of soft landscaping in public open spaces, where feasible, in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

The proposal is deemed to be consistent with the policies and objectives outlined in the Dublin City Development Plan 2016-2022.

Ballymun Local Area Plan

The site also falls within the boundaries of the Ballymun LAP 2017. While the site is not identified as one of the sites suitable for redevelopment in the LAP, there are a number of policies which are of relevance including:

E07: Sees the reconfiguration of Cearnog an tSeachtar to provide a high quality civic space with cycle parking within the heart of Ballymun.

E11: Support the delivery of Metro North and the provision of a station in the heart of Ballymun Main Street (in the vicinity of Cearnog an tSeachtar Laoch) and also in the vicinity of/ linking to the M50 lands.

Further to the above, Section 5.5.2 of the Ballymun LAP sets out design principles for the local area which are guided by the provisions of the Development Plan. The following objective is of relevance to the proposal:

To create an identifiable central core within Main Street to act as a focal point for Ballymun. This should include the improvement and visual upgrading of the plaza space in front of axis to define the space and improve its use.

The proposal is deemed to be consistent with the policies and objectives outlined in the Ballymun Local Area Plan 2017.

Assessment

Cearnog an tSeachtar Laoch (Ballymun Civic Plaza) is the main public open space in Ballymun Town Centre and comprises of a combination of hardstand (concrete surfaces) and soft landscaping. It is acknowledged that the current layout of the plaza does not allow for the plaza to act as a focal point for the area and does not create a distinct sense of place within Ballymun.

The Local Area Plan seeks to create an identifiable central core within Main Street to act as a focal point for Ballymun. This is to be achieved by the improvement and visual upgrading of the plaza space in front of axis to define the space and improve its use.

In response to this the proposed development seeks to improve the public realm within the plaza through a series of landscape enhancements which aims to create an identifiable central core within Main Street to act as a focal point for Ballymun in accordance with the objectives of the Ballymun Local Area Plan (as outlined above). This is considered to be acceptable.

Principle of development

It is noted that open space is permissible under the Z4 zoning which applies to the site. Further to this, the proposal is deemed to be consistent with the policies and objectives outlined in the Ballymun Local Area Plan 2017.

Scale and Design

The proposed design is based on a system of access routes across the plaza that will allow for ease of navigation while also ensuring clear sight lines across the site and improved legibility of Axis Arts Centre.

Access to the Axis Arts Centre and Theatre

A key design principle of the proposed development is to enhance the access to the Axis Art Centre and Theatre. In this regard, the main path across the plaza space would lead to the Axis theatre entrance. This would provide greater legibility to this important facility. Further to this it is proposed to upgrade the footpath along Shangan Road adjacent to the rear of Axis building.

It is noted the access to the Axis Arts Centre is suitably designed for mobility impaired people and this is considered to be acceptable.

Principles of the design

In overall terms, the intention of the design of the proposal is to soften and “green” the space within the Plaza and create *human scale* spaces by providing improved high quality hardscaped areas broken up by a number of lawn and planted areas that incorporate

specimen tree planting. The intention is that the plaza would be a more enjoyable for the public to spend time in.

The application would also see the introduction of pockets of ground cover planting which would act as a buffer to the heavily trafficked Ballymun Road to the west and will also facilitate SUDS within the space. The planting of large sized specimen trees will also provide shelter across what is currently an open and windswept flat space.

In addition to the above the proposal would also include measures which would facilitate the multi-functional use of the plaza.. This would include including a weekly market and also the provision of a tea/coffee kiosk near the bus stop.

Finally the proposal seeks to relocate the Anode/ Cathode sculpture to a more central position within the plaza. This proposed new location has been agreed in consultation with the artist, Andrew Clancy. Feature public lighting is also included as part of the proposed scheme.

In general terms, it is considered that the upgrade of the primarily leisure and recreation facilities including opportunities for performances, market stalls, cafes, social meeting venue associated within the existing civic plaza would provide for an identifiable core within the Main Street of Ballymun as envisaged in Ballymun Local Area Plan 2017. This is considered to be acceptable.

Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that the overall design could benefit from:

- An appropriate design for the proposed container café.
- A second dipped kerb to facilitate enhanced access for vehicles to the proposed market area;
- Removable bollards to all of the pedestrian access points, to ensure that there would be no unauthorised access of vehicles.
- Ensuring that the design is flexible to integrate with any proposed Metro North station.

Technical issues

The application includes responses from a number of internal departments. It is noted that some of the responses are not dated so the Planning Department are unable to verify which iteration of the proposals the various departments are making comments on. A summary of the technical issues are set out below:

Architects Division: Memo dated 12/4/21. No objection but a number of suggestions relating to street furniture / planting to the front at the entrances / need for specification of paving materials, paving patterns, height of the low walls, need for arm rests on benches, impacts on Metro North and Bus connects should be considered and the area might be a suitable location for a drinking fountain.

Environmental Health – Air Quality Monitoring and Noise Control: No objection, subject to conditions.

Roads & Traffic – Transportation: No objections and no comments.

Transportation Planning Division. No objections but a number of suggestions including the final detail of the parallel parking bays to be agreed with TAG, The materials in the public footpath should be agreed with Roads Maintenance and the new lighting along the kerbside should be agreed with Public Lighting. All of whom may comment separately. The exact

locations of the proposed kerb side lighting poles and their set back from the kerb line should be agreed with E&T Department.

Traffic Management and Control: No objection but queries relating to “upgrade” the 2 sets of Traffic Signals (as indicated in Drawing) as part of this re-development and comments relating to the requirement to install Fibre Ducting between the 2 sets of Traffic Signals (from Shangan Rd to Pedestrian Crossing north of same) and to do away with Pedestrian Barriers (as per DMURS) on both sets of Traffic Signals.

Public Lighting Services Division: No objection but a number of comments relating to the extent of public lighting proposed, need to agree on light levels, details of lighting columns, ducting, cabling, confirmation of who is responsible for maintenance. The Public lighting services division requests a meeting to discuss.

Waste Management Services – Waste Regulations: No objections.

Road Maintenance Services: No objection but a number of comments relating to SUDS, confirmation of paving, design safety, paving holding details. Paving protection from vehicles, high strength mortar and the need for comply with paving materials comply with colours in ‘Construction Standards for Road and Street Works in Dublin City Council’

Road Design & Construction: No objection but a number of comments relating to the need for a second dropped kerb on Shangan Road to allow vehicles / plant access upper area for maintenance purposes or access market stalls.

Flood Projects and Water Framework Directive Division: No objection and agrees with comments of Drainage service-pollution control.

Drainage Services, Maintenance – Pollution Control. No objection but comments in relation to how the runoff from the hard surfaces is going to be dealt with, all trees should be incorporated into tree pits or tree trenches to manage storm water, all paving should be permeable where possible, especially all pedestrian only pathways, all downpipes from roofs (e.g. from the axis theatre) that face onto the site should be diverted to planters or infiltration basins. This site is a great opportunity to showcase how GI and SuDs can both do the job they are supposed to do.

Surface Water Maintenance Division: No objection but comments relating to All surface water drainage must comply with the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Strategy (version 6.0) with particular reference to Section 14 regarding gully requirements. Surface water drainage proposals must be submitted to this office for approval prior finalising detailed design.

Wastewater Capital Projects: E-mail dated 17/7/18. No objection but drainage requirements included.

Sustainable Transport Unit: E-mail dated 24/3/21. No objection but comments relating to the number and location of bicycle stands.

Air Quality Monitoring & Noise Control Unit. No objection but air pollution and noise pollution requirements set out.

City Archaeologist: E-mail dated 25/3/21. No Archaeological Constraints confirmed.

Requirement of Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The application has been accompanied with the following information in relation to the requirement for an Appropriate Assessment:

The site is approximately 5km from the nearest Natura 2000 site, with no hydrological connectivity, and not used as feeding grounds for any special conservation interests.

There will be no habitat loss or fragmentation, species disturbance, or other interference with the qualifying interests of any Natura 2000 sites.

Having regard to the nature and scale of the proposed development and the proximity to the nearest Natura 2000 sites, it is considered that no Appropriate Assessment issues arise and it is considered that the proposed development would be unlikely to have a significant effect, individually, or in combination with other plans or projects, on a Natura 2000 site.

In relation to the requirement for an Environmental Impact Assessment it is noted that:

The projects which require EIA are listed in Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive as amended. Projects listed in Annex I of the EIA Directive have mandatory EIA requirements. Annex II projects are considered on a case-by-case basis at national level and thresholds have been set for Annex II projects in Irish legislation. But even projects which do not meet the threshold may require an EIA if the project is likely to have significant effects on the environment (sub-threshold development).

Schedule 5 (Part 1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018 (as amended) sets mandatory thresholds for projects. The proposed development does not meet or exceed the mandatory threshold for projects set out in the Schedule therefore a mandatory EIA is not required.

Schedule 5 (Part 1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001-2018 (as amended) sets out national thresholds none of which the proposed development appears to fall under.

Having regard to the nature of the development comprising the upgrade to an existing civic plaza in an urban context, it is considered that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed development and the need for environmental impact assessment can therefore be excluded.

Conclusion

While the proposal would appear to be broadly consistent with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area the following issues should be addressed prior to the submission of the final application, as follows: -

- Assurances should be given ensuring that the design is sufficiently flexible to integrate with any proposed Metro North station;
- Consideration should be given to the comments from internal departments;
- Liaison should take place with Dublin City Council's Arts Office/Public Art Officer re the relocation of 'Anode/ Cathode sculpture
- Consideration should be given to an appropriate design for the proposed container café
- Ensure compliance with Appendix 15 – Access for All – of the Dublin City Development Plan and seek to comply with 'Buildings for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach. External Environment and Approach 1' (NDA Centre for Excellence in Universal Design)

Note: The Applicant should note that Article 81(2)(ca) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) require that public notices indicate the conclusion under article 120(1)(b)(i) of the Planning and Development (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 as follows:

It has been concluded that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment and as such an EIAR is not required.

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